

TRANSCRIPT OF MAURICE DARBY'S NOTES FROM THE FRONT

January 7th 1915

I am writing one day in the trenches. I am too lazy to keep a diary, so shall describe one day. I am commanding a corp. I was woken up by the fellow I share a dug out with, who was going round the sentries. He said I swore in my sleep and proceeded to lecture me on it. We finally went to sleep being well dripped on because our dug out leaks and it has rained hard all night. The drip was increased by the sentry who was bailing out the trench, throwing the water on the top of our dug out But I have since caught that sentry.

6.15 AM We get up and 'stand to arms'. A procedure which means that you all are awake for one hour and get wet if it's raining, in case the Germans attack! Some staff fellow invented it.

7.15 AM Still raining. Thoughts turn on breakfast we wonder how we shall ever get any breakfast, but the servants come to the rescue and give us hopes. Walking along the trench, I tripped on a stick and went

full length in the mud:

such little details

queer I will say.

10 minutes later a private soldier carrying 6 loaves of bread did the same thing.

About 8 AM. Got some breakfast, which proved a great success.

After breakfast we began singing ragtimes and other pleasing and perfunctory patter.

9.15 AM Sung all ragtimes etc, that I ever knew, so have begun on Grand Opera.

Have just been told that more of the trench has fallen in.

On asking [Mr?] Sitwell if he was keen on horses; he replied no: but he was interested in giraffes!

11.5 AM [Mr?] Parker Jervis comes out of his dug out and solemnly remarks 'What a horrible night'

12 noon.

Arrival of Engineer Officer who seemed injured to find his pet lambs had not done the work during the night he had wished to be done; & still more surprised to find 3 feet of water in most parts of the trench in consequence.

(chief fault of the engineers being that they insist on trying to drain water uphill).

1.15 We had some lunch (still raining a bit)

2PM We opened boxes
of peppermints sent by
Uncle A (or his friends) for
the troops: they were much
appreciated.

(the Commanding Officer
came round this morning, but
having been almost drowned
in the next company's trench
to ours; I managed to dissuade
him walking round ours: especially
as I should have had to have
gone with him)