

Edith Elizabeth Appleton Diaries - Volume 4 (21 June to 27 December 1918)

June 1918

Volume Three of Edie's diaries ended on 15 November 1916 and we have no diaries for the next 18 months.

This Volume (Four) begins on 21 June 1918 which suggests that one or two volumes have gone missing.

If anyone reading this website knows the location of the missing volumes - perhaps in a secondhand bookshop or even in a museum collection - we would dearly love to hear from you; please contact Dick Robinson at dick@gardencottage.org.uk

Treport.

June 21st. I returned to Abbeville from leave - June 15th & found orders awaiting me to proceed forthwith to No 3 Gen. Hosp.

They seemed a sad little group at Sick Sisters & the Home - & I was sorry to leave them. There was very little work being done - & why they don't close both places remains a mystery. I did not proceed at once. I wanted a few hours to say Goodbye & collect my odds & ends. So - postponed the procedure to next morning.

Major Jolley of the R.A.F. very kindly lent a tender to take me - instead of going by train - & we made a good spin of it round by Dieppe etc - a good day & I enjoyed the trip, but not the arriving at a fresh hospital. There is nothing I hate much more than that - The hospital is splendid - partly in a huge hotel perched on the top of a high cliff - In a way it reminds me of when we (No 3. C.C.S.) were in the International Lunatic Asylum at Bailleul.

I arrived in time for second lunch 1 p.m. & after that, not being wanted for duty - made myself scarce in my room for the rest of the day - picking my trunk lock - & sawing off the padlock of my kit bag - as I had by accident left my keys either in Leeds or Burnsall - or Abbeville or at the Gibbs.

I have a ward of 60 beds - in the big building - acute medical & surgical - At present there are only 40 patients in it - but some of them are pretty bad. It felt a little strange at first being back to large numbers, big wounds - the smells of g.g. (gas gangrene) & pus - & antiseptics - but my nose is getting used to them now. One poor fellow died a few hours after admission - & another two are I am afraid following him - One badly gassed - & the other was in the C.C.S. suffering from Trench fever - when it was bombed. He has lost an arm - & one foot is useless. I am afraid he will not get over it. *[Entry added later:]* * **Dec 17th** he did get over it & is now on his way home to Australia.

Every day I have been for a long & lonely walk - A big mess is a rare place for making one feel desperately alone - but as I enjoy my own company all is well.

Yesterday & today have been very stormy & I can hardly see the vessels at anchor for the storm of mist or spray over the sea. Fourteen small steamers came in to anchor this evening. It is rather a pathetic sight - I think they all anchor near some one else - & I suppose it is that there shall be some one to rescue the other - if the other gets hit.

Up on this cliff there are 4 or 5 hospitals & no other camps within about 2 miles - but we know the Bosche so well now - that every hut is being sandbagged as a protection in time of air raid - I have been down into the town once - rather a "dirty little place" was my impression. There is a funicular railway down the cliff - or if you like to walk - you can do so, down 365 steps - I chose the steps, as there were people I had never set eyes on at the railway - Sisters! terrifying people! The M.O. of my ward is a Yankee. Young & quite amenable & conscientious. No 2 Canadian, had a convoy in today & I think we take the next.

The last one we had was chiefly wounded - & many badly wounded.

There is a concert on tonight, but as you see I am not there.

Now as day light is fading I think I will turn in.

June 24th. We have had a continuous big wind storm since I last wrote - this morning seems a wee bit calmer - Although the sea is still very rough - A sister went a joy ride to Abbeville yesterday - they had Fritz over twice during the day - so were probably bombed again last

night - I wish they would send the few remaining sisters away from there. It is very trying having your night's rest shortened to two or three hours. My ward is lighter than it was - we have sent about 16 patients to England - The poor "gassed" boy has died - & the one with bomb wounds is better, may live, but is still quite off his head.

It is a great interest to listen to the mens' conversation. Their opinion on the situation in Ireland. How prisoners should be treated, what was the matter - that the 5th Army played false - & the general situation. I wonder if there is truth in what they say about the bombing of hospitals.

They say - that in German territory (the flying men) have seen - what are without doubt - aeroplane hangers & amunition dumps - marked with huge red crosses, near no railway - & so placed that they simply cannot be hospitals - I suppose they think we do the same - & they bomb us on the chance of it - we - of course bomb their hangers & dumps - should be fools if we didn't! I am quite sure though that they do know - what is a hospital. They can see the wounded men walking about & some lying out in beds. No as a nation they are dirty dogs! In one C.C.S. a German spat at a Sister - & the Tommy nearest him, hit him over the head with the butt of his rifle, & got punished, ought not to have been.

June 25th. I awoke this morning to find the weather had changed from very rough - high wind & sea - to a gentle breeze & sea dead calm - If I were an artist - I would show you what I can see from my window - The cliff edge - with many crows very busy along it - & beyond - a big, wide stretch of calm grey blue sea - one little steamer & about a dozen fishing smacks getting on with their daily work.

Shrieks! are coming from the plot of grass just below - some V.A.D.s are out early, practising cricket for the match tomorrow - The Patients were well satisfied with the news in the Daily Mail yesterday - "Get the Austrians to give in - & we'll see this war over, by the end of July" If only that would happen! Anyway the Austrians have made a bit of a failure of their offensive so far! & for once the weather favoured the Allies - rain came down in big storms & swept away the bridge across the Piane - & made it impossible for the enemy to bring up supplies or guns. The night super - Tilney got orders last night to report at Abbeville - in a way - I envy her - but believe in taking what comes. How near turn I am for night duty - I don't know, or for the matter of that - care.

June 28th. We had a Convoy in yesterday - I only took 8 of them. Some nasty wounds - 2 with appendicitis - one a New Zealander who has been in the war since 1914. He thinks Taff [*Edie's youngest brother, Alfred James Appleton (but known as Taff or Jim) was born 19 January 1887 and went to South Africa and later to New Zealand*] must be at Doullens- as all the N.Z.ers are there. I hope he is - as at the moment that part of the line is quiet - if you can call any part of it quiet.

Another sister got her orders for Abbeville yesterday.

A sad tragedy happened at 5 yesterday morning. A mental patient - a lady driver - managed to dodge her special attendant - & flung herself over the cliff. Her body was soon picked up - quite smashed in every part. She evidently meant to do it - as she had left letters for people telling them so.

It is said - she had a similar attack a few years ago - & her father insisted on her coming out to France to work - he thought the complete change & occupation would cure her.

I think myself - if he knew her tendency - it was wrong - at any time to allow her to be in charge of helpless men.

The cricket match was much enjoyed by all - but no one seems to know quite clearly who won. They all turned up smiling for a strawberry & cream tea after it - so I think no one was badly beaten.

I have not dared to bathe yet - it looks cold. Have found one nice country walk - & must look for others - I usually take myself for my walks - as I don't know any one here - & naturally they all have their own plans - & friends - & catch me putting myself in with any party! Anyhow - what is the matter with a walk alone - I enjoy it.

It is evidently calmer this morning - the crows are able to drill - during the stormy weather they could not - but they had fine fun - They used to start off from the edge of the cliff - & see who could stay like an aeroplane longest - without moving tails or wings - they are funny creatures. I shouldn't wonder if Miss McCarthy or Miss W. Smith comes today - after

yesterday's tragedy.

The other end of Treport - the one like the South end of Deal - is very typical - of a French seaside resort - Gay - quite gaudy little houses - in all odd shapes & forms - very gimcrackily built, & painted all colours - are along the whole sea front - which is - from our cliff - to the next - Treport is in a valley - or a little dip - in the cliffs.

It quite interested me yesterday - watching the visitors - well off people - are staying along there with nice children - all smartly dressed - Their little youngsters have to play in smart clothes - you hardly ever see a child dressed for digging in the sand - or doing just what it likes like you do in England.

The lads in the ward are still satisfied with the news - & we are all hoping hard that Austria Bulgaria - & Turkey - will get themselves a separate peace - Then according to yesterday - Russia would not mind coming in again - & having another go at the Germans - but - that is not exciting - as I don't suppose they would be much use - for ages - long after - the war is over perhaps. Now up.

June 29th. When I got down to breakfast yesterday, everyone was asking if I were kept awake long - by the air raid warning - a bugle call - & saying how many hours they were kept awake - etc - etc. I lay dead low - as I had slept through it all. The morning before I was wakened by Bosche planes passing overhead - that is a noise once heard, never slept through I think - & tonight - I was up like a bird at what I thought was a bomb - but as I heard no planes or other excitement, think it must have been a door banging. It ought to be a punishable crime - to bang a door in these days.

This morning the sea is like glass - with a light haze over it - going to be a hot day I think. The poor suicide is to be buried this morning. I went for a nice long country walk last night. Have somehow felt off the cliff walk - alone - the last day or two.

Letter from Major Martyn - he has broke[n] loose from his moorings & is to report to D.D.M.S. [*Deputy Director of Medical Services*] Etaples for a fresh job - I wonder - what & where it will be - hope somewhere nearer than his last one.

Some of my lost laundry has returned, & in with it was a packet of delicious, Blackie made, rock cakes - they are kind.

June 30th. The poor suicide girl was buried yesterday.

To my way of thinking - far too much of a pageant was made of it. There was a long procession headed by the C. Camp band - The ambulance with the coffin - smothered in flowers first - then all the Drivers - about 40 - then the girls own car - also full of most lovely flowers - then big contingents of M.O.s - Sisters from 47. G.H. our own hospital - the Can[adian] & American hospitals - men from the C. Camp. then the [*D.D.M. crossed through. Ed*] our own Col. & the Surgeon General, then the 3 commandants of the Drivers. Must have been about 300 people. The French photographers were all over the place taking photos for post cards! If I were her people I should be heartily disgusted at the whole thing. A quiet funeral would surely have been more comely. The whole thing reminded me of when the bomb victims were buried at Abbeville - I was on my way to the Station with some patients, & all round the Cathedral was so absolutely blocked by debris of fallen houses - about 20 (hurses)(hearses) gaudily trapped - with the bodies of the dead - & a crowd of 100s & 100s of civilians seething round. Our M.P.s - were keeping order - & sending all traffic another way.

Yesterday - I had a half day off - & went with other 3 to Bois de Cise - a very pretty wooded little place about 4 miles along the coast.

We walked by the main road - as the flag was flying from the Tank Camp - warning us that they were practising firing - & that it was not safe to walk seawards of them.

We passed right through their camp. It is very well laid out - there are blocks of huts - divided by broad roads - each road named after a battle - "Poelcapple [*Poelcappelle. Ed*] Street - Messines Street - Bois Boulins - etc. etc. In front of the huts the ground has been worked into little flower beds - with big green tubs of shrubs - to mark the entrances - every hut & tub has a yellow painted Tank - on it.

It is a big camp. It is a school for Officers & men - for instruction in the working of tanks. We had our tea at a Restaurant at Bois de Cise - like everywhere else near here - It was already thick with officers & Sisters & Tommies - for my own part I would take tea - & have a quiet picnic where no other folk are - We took a loaf - which came in very handy for our own - &

other people's tea. They had only a very little there.

Have just come back from early service - quite a big congregation today. about a dozen sisters & V.A.D.s - & 2 men. Now I must get ready for breakfast. My view was charming first thing - there was a brigantine in full sail - coming in. Sun - full on her, besides lots of other little fishing boats.

Evening I heard today - from two New Zealanders who were visiting one in my ward - that the New Zealanders were to go over the top last night - I am wondering if our boy [*Edie's youngest brother 'Taff'*] was going with them - & hope he is all right - am longing to hear from him.

The whole line seems to be livening up a bit - & the Germans are preparing for an offensive again. Hope they will fail as badly as the Austrians did.

A Padre - who is down to rest with the 21st Division preached tonight - I have heard since that he has a church at Leeds - must try to find out if he knows Fred.

There is a very virulent form of influenza spreading like wild fire among the hosps & our hospital is nearly full up with them - Temperatures anything up to 104° or 105°. The good thing is, it is usually over in a week - but if everyone is going to get it! We shall have a long time with it.