

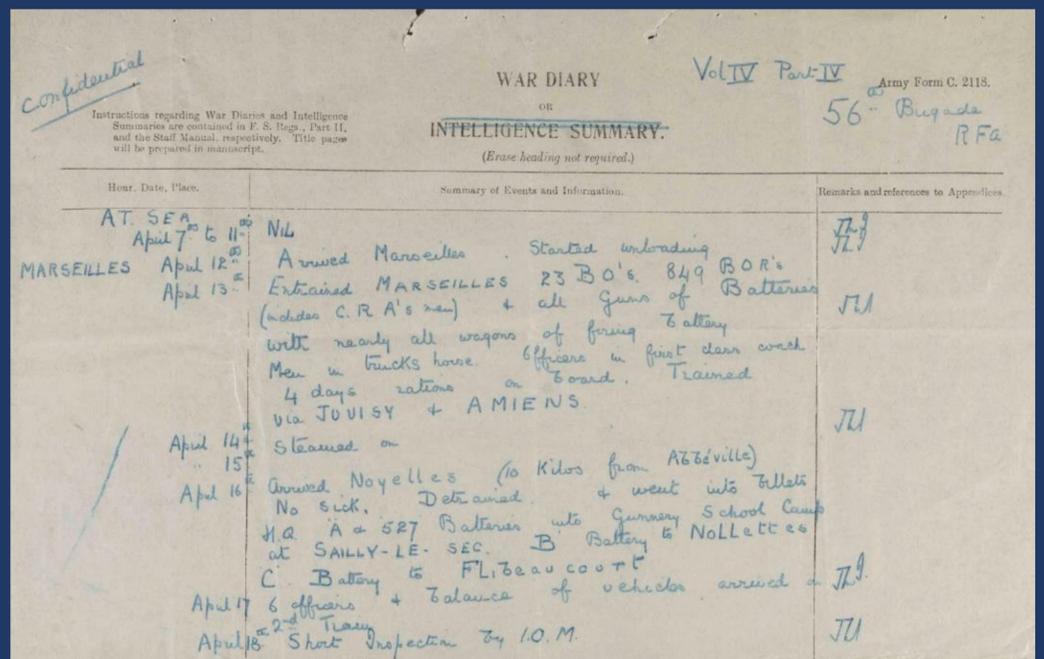
# Albert Rowlett: surviving France

Following their arrival in Marseilles in April 1918 (right), Albert's unit transferred to Flibeaucourt, near Abbeville, serving with the 52<sup>nd</sup> Lowland Infantry Division. By 19<sup>th</sup> May, the 56<sup>th</sup> Brigade were stationed near Gouay-Servins, close to Vimy. This was to be the third front on which Albert had served since joining the army. By the end of July, the Brigade received orders to relieve artillery units between Marœuil and

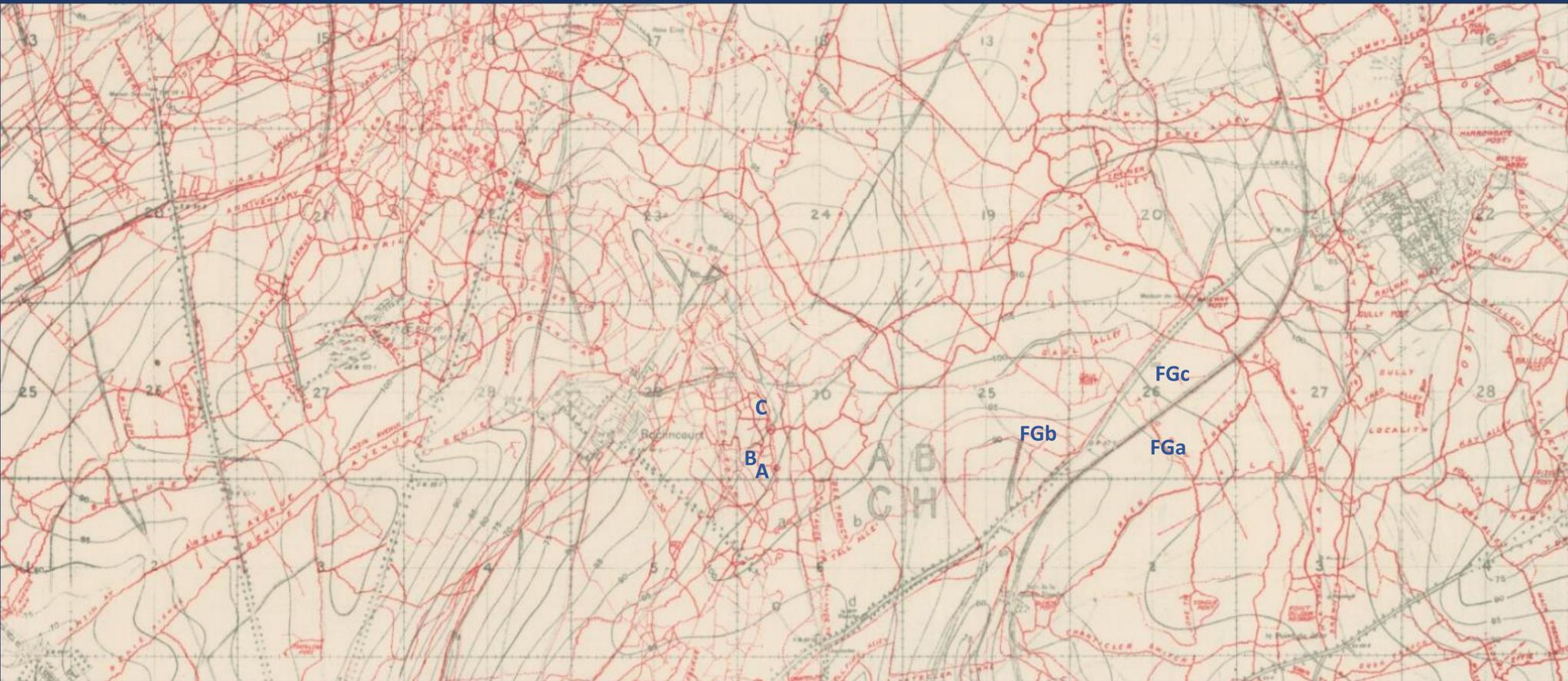
**23.5.18**  
"Batteries sent one section each to relieve 65<sup>th</sup> Army Brigade behind Vimy Ridge."

Roclincourt, north of Arras. The C Battery's precise position

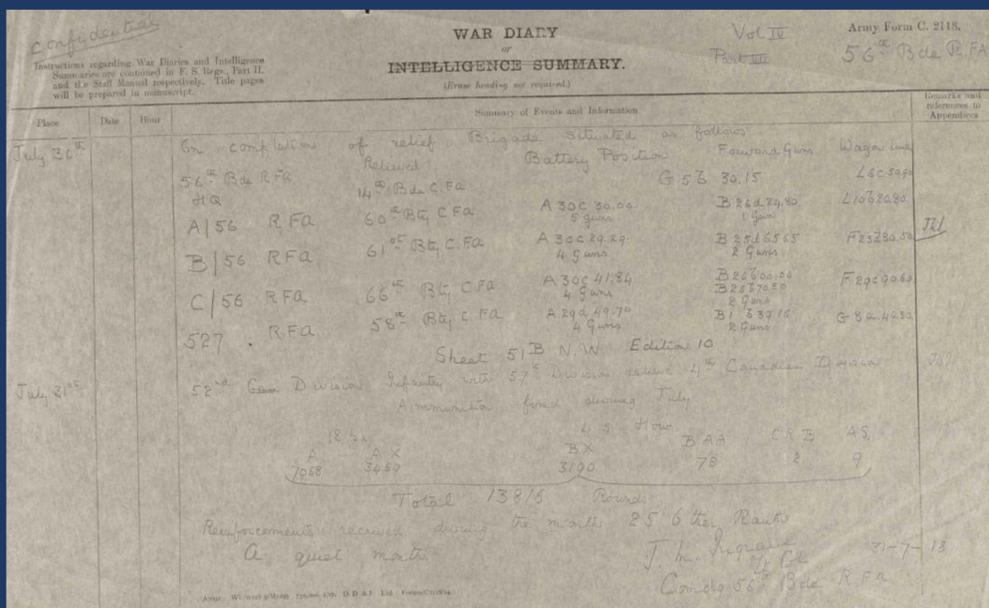
was recorded in the war diary on 30<sup>th</sup> July (position C, below), alongside those of A and B Batteries, north-east of Roclincourt. The forward gun positions for each respective battery are also indicated. 13, 816 total rounds of ammunition were fired by the 56<sup>th</sup> Brigade in July 1918.



Extract from 56<sup>th</sup> Brigade War Diary, April 1918



British Trench Map 51B NW, Edition 10C, 8 July 1918, for the area around Roclincourt, France



Extract from 56<sup>th</sup> Brigade War Diary, 30<sup>th</sup> - 31<sup>st</sup> July 1918

The Brigade withdrew from its positions at Roclincourt on 15<sup>th</sup> August to the wagon lines. Throughout the following months, Albert's unit continued to work on or close to the front line near Cambrai. On 16<sup>th</sup> September 1918, as fighting was intensifying around Cambrai, Albert

**2.9.18**  
"Barraged the Drocourt-Quéant line at 5 a.m. The 57 Div. Infantry got through ... and worked south."



Part of the German Drocourt-Quéant Line

was granted two week's leave back to the UK. It seems that during his break, he married Mary Johnson. Very shortly afterwards, Mary died. This perhaps explains Albert being allowed leave at such a crucial time in France. We can only speculate, but it seems likely that Albert had

received a letter indicating that his sweetheart was gravely ill, and had returned to marry her. His records show that the War Office granted him a further two weeks leave, perhaps because his wife had died, or that her death was imminent. Albert returned to the front line in France on the 9<sup>th</sup> December. Whilst in England, Albert's unit fought in the Battle of Cambrai, in which more than 44,000 allied troops alongside an estimated 45,000 German troops were wounded or killed. Albert may have been heartbroken, but he was at least alive. He married again in 1920 after the end of the war, and settled locally with his family.

This photograph of the Rowlett's mother, Eliza, (right) was kindly supplied by the men's descendant, Geoff Rowlett. Geoff believes this cottage to be what is now known as Thatch End Cottage. If so, the photograph must have been taken before the extension 'infill' between Thatch End and Barn Cottage (now the garage and front door of Thatch End).



Eliza Rowlett, mother to Albert, Arthur and William