



Private Calvin Ellis Briant No 3239. Enlisted 8th July 1915 Australian Expeditionary Forces. Training in Melbourne then Embarked 11th Oct 1915 Boat diverted and went into action by charging Mt Sugar Loaf, The British 61st Div did not attack and a large number of them killed and Cal wounded. He was taken back to Lemnos Island and then Egypt for recovery then on the SS GALEKA with the 6th Battalion charged Gallipoli and was wounded, returned to safety and recovery then back into action being captured as Prisoner of War at Levantie by the Germans on 19 July 1916. Taken to a Prisoner of War camp on the 12th August 1916. Exchange Prisoner of War repatriated to Holland 18th April 1918. Returned to England to Weymouth Hospital 27th February 1919. Returned to Australia on the Nevasa on the 5th March 1919.

Winner of the following decorations:-

1914 to 1918 Star, British War Medal, Victory Medal. Kings Prisoner of War Medal.

Part II The KAISER Threatens World Conquest and oppression.
 Calvin Ellis Briant goes to War.

DECISION TO GO TO WAR

Cal and his brother Alf decided that they would join a number of other boys from the Ballarat area to join forces and fix up these Hun that threatened the British empire. There was a feeling that all we treasured as people with freedom was about to be taken away from the world. My grand parents had fought against the a few people that thought they could dominate us and they were not going to get away with it. They were not going to sit around and wait for the Kaiser's German troops to dominate the world with their arrogance.

Alf was and I were determined to join up, while Cal was only 18 years old and was equally determined. Les wanted to come but he was much to young and had a bad leg. Their father Alfred said that Cal was too young but he would rather have both boys keeping an eye on each other so he agreed to let Cal go.

TRAINING IN BALLARAT AND THEN MELBOURNE

Initial training in Ballarat was done to both boys Alf joining first and this meant Alf was placed in one platoon and Cal in the other. The initial training kitted them out and gave some basic training prior to bringing them to Melbourne, to be based at Ascot Vale just outside Melbourne. Before leaving some were given rifles to carry while we marched down Sturt St with all the crowds waving us goodbye. At the end of the march we had to give the rifles back as they had been borrowed from private people, police and anyone that could loan them. The tunics or outfits that they gave us were very itchy and they didn't fit very well but the officers just said we would grow into them or they would shrink until they fitted. So it was off to Melbourne.

At Melbourne there were thousands of troops everywhere, you could not recognise each other we all looked the same. Basic training was to handle a rifle, clip on the bayonet and learn how to charge. Drill was to instil obedience but we were keen and did what had to be done. I was not looking forward to the trip by sea as this was not an experience I had other than boating on the lake once.

INFORMATION SUPPLIED BY THE AUSTRALIAN IMPERIAL FORCES.

Calvin Ellis Briant Private No 3239 AIF World War I, Background Information and Important Dates / His years of age.

1. 27th July 1896 C E Briant Born Maryborough Aged 0 Years
2. Educated Geelong Grammar
3. Moved to Ballarat as a motor mechanic.
4. 24 June 1915 Application to Join forces Aged 18 years
5. 8th July 1915 Date of Enlistment Aged 18 years
6. 9th July 1915 Oath of enlistment AIF Aged 18 years
7. 14th July 1915 Training camp Ascot Vale Aged 18 Years
8. 22nd August 1915 8th Battalion Flemington Aged 19 Years
9. 11th Oct 1915 Date of Embarkment 19 years
10. February 1916 58th Bat. (15th Brgd) from 6th Btn. Landed Levantie and charged Sugar Loaf & Retreat.
11. 21st March 1916 Wounded in action France Aged 20 Years
12. Repatriated for recovery (England we think but may have been Egypt)
13. 3rd April 1916 Taken on strength 59th Bat from Ferry Post 2nd Training Battalion Aged 20 Years
14. 4th April 1916 2nd Field to 58th Bat. Aged 20 Years
15. 12th April 1916 6th Bat. on Board SS GALEKA at Lemnos for Landing on Gallipoli. Wounded retreated Aged 20 Years
16. 17th June 1916 Embarked to BEF Alexandria on H7 Transylvania Aged 20 Years
17. 23rd June 1916 Disembarked from Transylvania at Marseilles Aged 20 Years
18. 15th July 1916 Prisoner of War Captured at Levantie Aged 20 Years
19. 18th Oct 1916 Detention at Haishen from Dislinen Aged 20 Years
20. Dec 1917 Note from King and Queen to Prisoner of War Aged 21 Years
21. 14th April 1918 Prisoner Exchange Holland Hospital. Aged 22 Years
22. 18th Nov 1918 arrived in England Aged 22 Years
23. 1918 Letter from King at Buckingham Palace Aged 22 Years
24. Awarded the King George 5th Medal for returning Prisoners of War.
25. 22nd February 1919 Sick to Hospital Weymouth Aged 23 Years
26. 27th February 1919 No 2 Com Dep Weymouth Hospital Aged 23 years
27. 5th March 1919 embarked from England on SS Nevasa to Portland Victoria. Aged 23 Years
28. 3rd March 1919 Discharged from Hospital Avonmouth Aged 23 Years
29. 19th August 1919 Served with Honour and disabled. Discharged Aged 23 Years

23. Britishers on the Engines

There were 24 Auxiliary engines working in this quarry and the greater part of the drivers were Frenchmen who had the plumb jobs before we arrived, this was much lighter work and after all it was the engines that worked not the drivers as they weren't hard to drive anyway, well the Germans put some Britishers on to coupling wagons and replaced the Frenchies with German drivers and guess who got selected. I think the selection of me for this job was crazy but I wasn't going to complain. My illness was falling away now and often my stomach became empty more often than before so I was getting better. The Germans recognised that I was deteriorating and had got painfully thin and not capable of heavy work. Well we both couldn't be right and I hoped that I knew I had turned the corner now.

The German drivers were bored with this menial task of driving and it was not long before I was doing all the driving on my engine and the German did the coupling up. The boss Herr Muller saw this and picked the three best driver operators, a Scotsman and two Australians to drive on a permanent basis. As I had been one picked I had great pride in looking after the engine and trying to take care of my mates as well. Two of my mates became my assistants with coupling and stoking the engine, we changed over as we got tired of jumping up and down from the engine to tend to the wagons. This work we enjoyed doing but also this released more Germans to fight our comrades in the trenches.

24. A One Days Job, How Long ?

It was a beautiful day and the morning sun shone on the rails and our engine, we had little supervision now and decided that we would take a joy ride, this would mean we would lose our jobs but what the hell lets do it and enjoy it. We were told by the German controller to get some wagons of dirt, these had already been sorted out from the stone in the marshalling yard. We picked up the wagons of dirt and took them to an incline and chocked them, going off to get another lot and another engine to pull the load. The two engines pushed the wagons up the incline at the end of which was an area for dumping dirt. We pushed them up and left the other engine on top to assist with the dumping procedure.

Back down the slope we sped, down the hill as fast as we could without heeding the violent movement of the engine rocking along the rails, we thought it a great joke and my comrades started yelling and screaming for joy, the engine was getting out of hand and I applied the brakes hard but too late as the engine left the rails and started to plough through the soft dirt at the edges of the track some forty feet above a road running alongside. As the engine slowed it started to topple over at a peculiar angle and just before it stopped we jumped off on the safe side.

When we got to our feet there was our engine perched some forty feet above the road at a crazy angle with this large mound of earth holding her up. The flying gang soon arrived and with great assistance from many people, the earth was removed and new rails and sleepers installed. The engine was boarded up and a flat area around it constructed for a number of large jacks which were used to slowly manoeuvre the engine back on the tracks. When this was done we had to light the boilers again and proceed very slowly over the temporary tracks until back into the normal lines again. We had succeeded in blocking off for some time a vital piece of line which caused quite a fuss. For some reason everybody was involved in correcting the problems and delays to start blaming anyone. We were detailed to the central area on the broad gauge line to pick up some new wagons. This area was the real railway area with very large and impressive engines teamed up for bulk haulage of heavy war equipment. We came back as fast as we could speeding along the tracks, seeing German carts and truck going along the road parallel to the line, as the tracks crossed the roads we blew our whistle and just barged straight on through the crossing sometimes just missing German Vehicles as we did our flat out run back to the quarry.

25. Escape

Christmas was well clear and the Allied forces had a raid on the Germans, this meant that the Germans would then take some reprisals. This time they made us stand to for the entire day, 8 hours without sitting down or moving around, It had been snowing of course and we were ill equipped with clothing.

One of the newly arrived Australians got frozen and fell down. I was near him and naturally went to help him, while my back was turned a sentry hit me and another prisoner started arguing with the sentry and he got the butt for his efforts too. This was very unfortunate as we only had less than five minutes to finish the 8 hours. When I came to they were working on the other lad who I had helped but was in a bad way. They helped me back to bed and I was pretty sick. I tried to go down the steps and ended up crawling back inside. I could not get warm and couldn't sleep with this terrible headache and the hack of my head felt like someone had pasted an egg on it and the soft sticky lump throbbed away all night.

When I was shaken by a comrade it was just after 5:00am and time for work. I was not thinking to well and the chaps helped me get dressed and assisted me to work. You had to go to work or get a dose of lead in the belly, prisoners that disappeared these days did not return. On a rare occasion someone refused to work or complained of being ill and they just got it there and then with a bang, straight through the head.

I shuffled off to work as if there was nothing wrong with close support from work mates. But when I started working oh boy oh boy, I fell and stumbled and groaned all day and the pain just got worse and worse and I could not get a good nights sleep, just dropping off for a while and then I would wake up again. One of the guards had mentioned that I was failing and I was sent to the Doctor who had me transported to the Hospital that I had attended before.

After several days of treatment and a little tenderness from nurses and some good food I was shifted into the barracks where some English and Australians were kept. This made a good change talking to mates in our own lingo and the conversations about places we all knew back home made me feel a bit homesick. I was moved into another ward in the barracks with different nationalities and a view outside the camp through two rows of barbed wire and a perimeter road separating a farmers paddock. The group here were not as friendly and I guess I had to prove myself with them so I made friends with another man who had a bed near me.

The ward of sick prisoners was about twenty feet from the wire and we watched as the sentries patrolled outside the two lots of wire about 8 feet tall.

About twelve o'clock at night we suddenly had two more prisoners in our barracks, they turned out to be Russians and climbed under our beds until the sentries had checked our ward. We looked out the window and the sentry had returned to his sentry box. The Russians slipped outside and ran to the wire cutting the bottom strands and slipped through to the next fence doing the same they were off.

Two other Russians came into the ward and came over to the window. One said UGO, UGO, And the two of us did not hesitate, we did not need a second invitation. It was cold and we had all our clothes on, so we put on our coats and slipped out of the window and ran to the wire, crouched up and as silent as possible we slipped under the wire sliding along on our bellies through the two fences and ran like hell across the perimeter track and into the farmers paddock of Swede turnips. WE crouched over and ran along the rows of Swedes, why couldn't they have been higher. I didn't know where we were going but knew we had to get there as fast as possible away from the sentries. In our condition we were not moving very well and then two shots rang out. A sweeping light suddenly with its beam full into the field and we tried to disappear into the dirt.

When the light moved over to another area we ran again and suddenly there was someone standing in front of us. I don't know who got the biggest shock, he or us. We were done in and he had a shot gun pointed at us. After much shouting we started walking back towards the camp. Sentries were running around everywhere. As we neared the camp gate we were taken by the sentries and pushed at the point of their bayonets into the camp past the sentries and into the compound. The sentries stood guard over us and we were exhausted and couldn't move anyhow.

Suddenly there were prisoners everywhere and we were picked up and moved off. The guards were bellowing and started firing in the air. What pandemonium there was, our dirty old cloths were taken of us and new one put on. The sentries made everyone stand still and the searched for the prisoners who had disappeared in the crowd. Lights swept across the area and when the Germans came to me I thought I was done for as it was a cold night and here I was standing there sweating. He didn't seem to notice and moved on. We were ordered back into the barracks and the sentries combed the wards counting heads and still they did not notice I was the only one there sweating little later the other prisoner with me returned to the ward but we had no time to discuss what happened.

The next morning we were told that just after we left the other two Russians slipped out the window and through the wire, The sentry didn't see them until they were well clear. however he spotted one Russian and fired at him as he ran, he didn't get all that far some 30 feet into the Swede paddock he fell dead. The other Russian gave up and they carried the other back into camp. As there was a great deal of noise the German farmer was out patrolling his field when he came across us. There were about 15 soldiers running all over his fields and the light swinging here and there when the sentries came in with the two of us. They all went outside to look and you know the rest as I have described.

The dead Russian had on a Frogs boots and they were returned to him after a lot of questions being asked, he was under a great deal of suspicion and had to behave himself all the time or would get the rifle butt.

We heard later that the first two Russians got away into Holland and were sent back to England and then back to Russia. While in England they sent parcels to there mates with letters wishing them well.

26. Not Very Happy Time

The Germans were very upset over this escape and all areas were told to improve their security. They sent all the Britishers back to their camps, whether the wounds had healed or not. This gave me a fortnight back in a different camp that I enjoyed very much as they had concerts and other activities that provided a diversion from prison life. This place was far more safeguarded with both gates on two wire fences with sentries on the inner wire as well as the perimeter. The inner ten foot wire fence had a electrified wire five foot above the ground and another on the top, the outer fence also ten foot high and then a twenty foot canal running around the perimeter for most of the camp area. This was not a place to escape from easily.

The French had built a tunnel under all of this and had timbered the walls to avoid earth falls, they had lit the tunnel with electricity from the camp. The tunnel was crude but they finally got across to another Swede turnip paddock. One night twenty seven prisoners escaped. Out of this lot only three got to Holland, several other died and twenty two were returned to the camp.

There was now good knowledge of the surrounding area, the prisoners told of their journeys and that the border was only twenty kilometres away with only one small river to cross. They had managed to stop halfway and layover during the day and travel at night. This information made many peoples mind think about escaping and unsettled many.

One thing seemed certain now that I didn't think I would go back to the Quarry again, or at least I hoped I wouldn't.

27. Parcels are Life

This camp was filled with many nationalities who were separated, each with their own parcel office and mail was sorted and distributed to the different working parties in their districts. Nearly all the men were NCO's with just a few privates who were being transferred somewhere else. A few were kept for camp duties such as going to the station and collecting the parcels and mail etc.

At this time there was a lot of new prisoners among us and we had difficulty in supplying enough food, we did the best we could as in about three days time they would be in different camps and someone else problem. The German Officer who was in charge of the transfers was a real "B", when he gave an order you jumped very quickly. Prisoners avoid him like the plague, if he entered a barrack you would see men jumping out the windows everywhere, especially those who were dodging work. The officer soon woke to this ploy and had guards around the outside and they were then detailed the heaviest work around the camp as punishment.

One thing about this place was that the Red Cross supplied clothing and the men looked spick and span dresses in their black suits with a broad brown band around their left arm and a band down their trouser legs. The buttons were polished brass and we had boots that were cleaned. The black uniform had a matching cap and the whole outfit was a dream to own and deserved looking after. They came in two sizes, too big and too small but a bit of stretching or shrinking solved that problem. The material was coarse woven and itched for a bit but good and warm. There were men who worked up in Poland and they were issued with Goatskins and Jackboots and woollen caps that they wore at a funny angle. They certainly did look tricks but were appreciated. I had what was called a good time here although the civilian were abominable to work with. I was put onto peeling potatoes and one or two other light jobs that I didn't mind too much.

28. A New Friend

I was introduced to a corporal POPE, a Frenchy who lived in Australia and had a business in SYDNEY and when war broke out he went to help his motherland and deserves great praise for the work he did for the Australians, he could speak French, German and a number of other languages with difficulty, and had the job of getting compasses and maps for those being transferred, he spent a great deal of time instructing these men on what to do if they managed to escape. Those that did escape invariably made it safely to the border and back home.

He helped dozens of people get away from the Germans. On one occasion he found two German uniforms and gave them to two Australians who simply walked out of camp and into Holland without any difficulty. Only two days walking, but if caught they would have been shot according to Marshall Law. That Law states that prisoners who were attempting to escape in prison clothes and were caught would get 14 days of hard labour, in civilian clothes 21 days of hard labour such as in the Quarries etc. but in a German uniform they were just shot.

Well you can take it from me that you not only were put too work in the quarries you got beatings and it seemed never to be released from the quarry, although I had. The bitter experience at escaping and then being caught had put me into the Quarry work very quickly.

This camp was large and called Fredricksfield by name, it had a high platform mounted on towers at each corner on which was mounted machine gun emplacement, with the strong surveillance team of German soldiers and very strong action if any offence occurred.

Outside this was a large military camp, with infantry, artillery and a full command and staff facilities. There were German soldiers everywhere at all times of the day or night. You can see that it was a difficult place to escape from, but where there is a will there is a way, this was difficult to plan with the large number of obstacles and unknown circumstances, which had caused the many that had tried to be captured before getting far away. Those that had succeeded were very lucky indeed.

29. Travel Back to the Quarries

After two weeks here I was suddenly summoned and informed that I was being sent back to the Quarry working party. Boy oh boy was I depressed, I thought I had got away from all of that, oh well.

The trip back was quite pleasant as I could see the country side which was all under cultivation. A large coal mine with huge cable running overhead for miles and trolleys of coal passing each other swinging back and forth along these cables. The mines often a mile or two apart are connected up to each other while in other places there seemed a bunch of mines in a group that fed the main trolley line which went all the way to the River RHINE Reloaded onto other transport for distribution throughout the country.

As we travelled across the country we finally came to the RHINE, which was a beautiful river so wide and with so many river boats you would not believe it. There were boats everywhere up on the banks, all with many lights that illuminated the entire area. The main city was just ahead and soon we drew into the huge DUSSELDORF station which was very busy indeed, people rushing everywhere, we were taken down long steps to a deep tunnel and finally reached a platform to catch the DUISBURG train which was to leave less than half an hour later. While walking along the platform a woman came up to me and spat in my face. I was shocked and made a move towards her, she panicked and screamed and the guard rushed me onwards by giving me the rifle butt in the back.

We arrived at DUISBURG and changed to our train for WULFRATH, the journey being uneventful with the dismal thought of going back again made arrival very quick getting there early Sunday morning, we walked back to the place I used to like, the familiar stone quarry and barracks. We slept and ate what food was left over from others as there was no work that Sunday. This had been the only Sunday off they had in the past 3 weeks and they told me the only day off for the next month. What a home coming.

35. Towards the End.

We were sent over to No 2 Quarry for some wagons, the steam engine but I had to ascend the greater part of the dirt track, then down again into the No 2 Quarry on the other side. On arriving at the far end of the quarry, two other steam engines had given us assistance by pushing the wagons up the hill on the dirt line, so that from with their we could manage to the top of the steep part, there was a small rise we could handle then it was all down hill. One engine would leave so the other two of us had to stop to break or uncouple the engine next to ours. This was done and we started to push up to the final top of the rise, on arriving the wagons started to leave us behind, just as we intended. We blew the whistle repeatedly as a warning to others and tried to catch up, bumping them on faster, it looked as if we were trying to relink them again, oh what courageous attempts we were making.

One of the lower powered engines was shunting (sorting) wagons below and could hardly move along, the driver seeing he could not get out of the way in time, opened up her throttles as far as he could to get as much speed and then jumped clear.

This was easily the best thing he could have done for within the next instant there was an enormous crash as the wagons struck it from behind. The wagons drove through the cab and on into the boiler which went off like a huge bomb throwing large stones up into the air. Stones rained every where some went fifty yards or more. The back of the was smashed right in with wagons piled around it. The wagons looked as if they were just thrown from a great height and lay in a heap pile up on both side of the track. Some were lined up in fours and others were sticking up in the air while others slid over the edge of the quarry and lay on their sides and on the other side they fell twenty feet into a ditch in a vacant block of land. You could say things were a bit of a mess. Our engine had ground to a halt at a safe distance as we watched the spectacular effect.

We were amused to say the least this would slow them down a bit, but we had to be very careful as the Germans were running everywhere and not at all happy. The terrible damage that had occurred to the poor Germans that were supervising operations, they were crazy with action running around like chooks with their heads cut off, we stayed clear and watched as this would give the boys a bit of a break from the normal routine. Heck it wasn't our fault the Germans checked the coupling.

Every man for himself was the rule as the surveyed the scene and started to clean up the mess. Every now and then you would catch someone laughing and the guards would yell and hit out. The BABS or chief foreman arrived and did he roar a treat, you could hear him for miles. No equipment was working in the quarry and you could hear his echo's around the quarry. he started in on us but how could we help faulty equipment and we had done our best to correct the problem by trying to recipe at great risk to ourselves. As we had made such a noise about it the guards all nodded agreement to this. Witnesses had told of our attempts. It was finally established that a link had broken and amounts this mess who new what wagon was which. So it wasn't our fault at all and we could hardly keep the smiles of our faces.

You should have seen the BABS, he ranted and raved like a wild man bedevilled, he tore at his hair in his temper, then threw a large piece of iron at one of my mates who just avoided it. He finally left and then started in on the men in the other engine, they fortunately said the same as us about the incident.

This was a very busy line as it served two quarries, the dirt tip and the trucking yard, nothing could pass until the mess was cleaned up and then the removal of many broken wagons had to be achieved. This was the only way back to our quarry and the rotters mad us stay until they had thing fixed up temporarily. All the heavy equipment was bought in and hundreds of men now working to clear the way.

I was terrified as each of the men passed me they winched or patted me on the back to show they understood. But if the German understood then we would get a bullet in the stomach for our troubles. While we were grounded by order, the engine ran out of water and it had a good fire in the grate, we tried to warn them and they told us to keep away. Next thing we new the fire had burnt through the fireplate in the boiler. The Germans rushed around not knowing what to do. This really put the icing on the cake as a new one cost about 2000 marks. The BABS started up again yelling at the Germans this time. Quite a few day work to clean up and this slowed production for the area and we got away with it but had to be very careful. From that time on the Britishers were not allowed to drive any engines again.

36. Putting Buicuits in the Pockets of the Sentries.

Of course there were other ways of getting back at the sentries but the German authorities were very strict with stealing, even from prisoners parcels, if any sentry was caught it meant imprisonment. Some sentries stole while censoring parcels. When the parcel was picked up some prisoners would slip a few biscuits into the nasty sentries pocket while someone talked to him to distract him. Then they would tip off the underofficer that they had seen him taking things from the parcels. We could always find witnesses and he was usually found guilty and had to serve one weeks sentence. This would ensure the sentries had to be fair and then of course those that were found guilty would get very aggressive. One such sentry was present when he was supervising a prisoner cupple a wagon. Their was about twenty of us present when the German driver got infront of the large railway engine buffer when he was trying to cupple up and a prisoner inside the cab was hit over the head with a rifle butt and he fell across the throttle and the engine moved forward crushing the drive in the chest. He died instantly without a sound right in front of us and the sentries just laughed out loud. What sort of mind do you have to have to do this.

Things were getting pretty desperate and we were getting to the end of our tether, most prisoners being driven beyond the limit. We could sense that things were not going well with the war for the Germans by the way they treated us. There were no smiles on our faces and no silly pranks or jokes, we were sent to work at a large coal dump which was situated at the side of the standard gauge railway line. We were working there and watched as a large train went by carrying coal for the dump. The men were standing up the embankment a bit to clear the train and a Scotsman slid down straight onto the tracks and the train just cut him to pieces throwing bit of the body about as all the wheels passed over him. We had to pick him up and placed him in several bags to be carried back to the barracks. The following day half the British troops were allowed to attend the funeral which meant half a day off for the prisoners.

Gee he had a lot of friends and the sentries did not like it a bit but the underofficer had given the command and was not going to change it. We sorted out who should go and the weak and sick were decided on, so I had to go back to work.

One very cold day we were suffering a reprisal for some incident which no one could understand as we had to stand at attention for some hours, well if anyone dared to move he would be struck down by the sentry. This was becoming a more frequent event my mate Richard's and Australian fell down faint. The sentry came over and hit him while he was on the ground ensuring he stayed unconscious for a while. We later were dismissed and helped him back to the barracks.

37, How Much Can We Stand.

There was the same routine day after day and the ill treatment increased as the war went worse for the Germans. There were some prisoners being exchanged for Germans that were held by the allies and word had got around very quickly indeed. There was an inspection by the underofficer and some other men, one of whom came from Red Cross. Some very weak prisoners were taken away from our area and never seen again, this then was how we could get home, by exchange, four Germans for two weak Britishers that could hardly walk. That was strongly rumoured that this was going to be a weekly event.

I agreed with him. He came over to see me later to ask if I was serious, and I said I had been here for years and of course I would do anything to get away. Well said I how are we going to manage it, to transform our skinny frames to look terribly sick but not really be so. All this had to be achieved by the end of the week.

Several busy days had me drained of energy but my brain just could not come up with an idea and time was slipping away. One night Richard's came in and said he had some idea's so we discussed all manner of hair brained idea's, some very foolish and some downright dangerous, when one of the prisoners came out with an idea to help, he had scrounged some cordite and kept it just in case. Ok I said how can we use this to get sick and one fellow said swallow it of course, some of the men said they had heard it was very poisonous and would kill you, oh what the heck we had nothing to lose and time had run out. We talked more about it but we then divided the cordite into two portions and both swallowed it on the spot. I waited all night and nothing much happened so I bottled some more and swallowed it.

By midday I wasn't feeling too good and everyone said I looked very ill which didn't help. It seemed the more I worked the sicker I got. By the end of work I was very sick. The other men had to help me. I was puffing and running a temperature as they helped me back to the Barracks. Richard's came over to see me he wasn't feeling too good either but not as bad as me. If only the Red Cross and the Germans would come now. It was just not possible for me to go to work the next day as I had been taken to the doctor, he was suspicious and let me stay in the barracks.

By the time the others got back from work I was so sick I couldn't get up and they thought I was mad and was going to die. two days since taking the cordite and was I sick. I was beginning to think I wouldn't make it. The next morning they had a parade with the underofficers and Red Cross. The men dragged me out and supported me because I could not stand. The underofficer and Red Cross man came over and looked at me and pronounced to sick take him to hospital. The sentries helped me back to the barracks. I felt terrible and thinking about it I wished I was dead. Later I heard that Richard's was taken away. The doctor came I cannot remember much but the next day I feeling a little better.

38 A Last Chance

The hospital doctor came around to see me and had me shifted out to a room where some men came and put me on a lorry. Well back to my barracks again I supposed. The lorry bumped along and finally stopped, I was pushed out and fell heavily on the ground. As I lay there in a crumpled heap just conscious I heard a voice and some men started helping me up but I couldn't stand. someone grabbed me and called out Cal, Cal. It was Richard's and we were waiting for a train.

Its all very fuzzy but we bordered and the train took us across the boarder into Holland. I couldn't care less at that stage. Each movement of the train made me feel sicker if that was possible.. We arrived and I don't remember anything more until waking up one day in a Dutch Hospital being cared for.

While in hospital recovering for some weeks the Armistice was signed, it was all over and there I was as sick as a dog in hospital. another two weeks went by and I was transferred to England and sent to a rehabilitation hospital in Weymouth to stay for a further two months before being sent home to Australia. You beauty I was going home, I was really going home. It didn't seem possible and I simply couldn't believe it I was going home...

My father came home arriving at Portland Victoria and then transferred to the family at Maryborough where medical treatment was available. Alfred Briant live here for a while and then bought a property for Cal and Les at Clear Springs halfway between Ballarat and Daylesford. The property was rich brown soil with a large lake on the lower side of a large spring that beautiful clear fresh water flowed out of a cone about eighteen inches above the ground level flowing into the lake which was shallow water at a maximum of two feet from here down to the end of the lake about two hundreds yards. The water coming out of the spring had a slight taste but this had disappeared by the time it flowed over the rocks into the creek. This was were the house was built. I have been to the property with my father and he explained where everything was. Just a few pieces left, here and there to verify his story.

Dad couldn't settle down very well and began to want to roam around relishing the freedom he had. He took his sulky and favourite horse and off he would go for the day, Ballarat, Daylesford where ever. One day he went down the road to a town called Newlyn and found the family that had sent parcels to him as a prisoner. Nellie Yelland had knitted some socks and was very glad to see Cal and that he was ok, It was just a fluke that the socks found there way to dad but one thing dad had noticed was Ivy, Nellies older sister and that's how Mum and Dad met.