

# MEMORIES AND HISTORIES

From 1912 to 1992



by  
P. R. GOLD

To SCG

From P.R.G

Swap with yours

Dear Mike and Lier,  
This should keep you  
busy!  
Wylare Jas.

P . R . G O L D .

( Retired Colonel, Royal Artillery.)

" M E M O R I E S   &   H I S T O R I E S "

From 1912 to 1992

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## Family Background

In August 1912 I was christened Philip Roland at Birchanger Church, 4 weeks after I'd been born on 22nd July to my parents Philip and Amy Frances Gold at Whitehall Cottage, their second child, my sister Barbara having been born in February 2 years previously, later to be followed by my brother Stephen in August 1915. Godparents were Geoffrey Perry, Gilbert Gilbey and Enid Mann (nee Tilney).

My father Philip Gold the 4th son of Sir Charles Gold's family of 13 children (Hatty, Sonny, Wally, Waggy, Philly, Amy, Archie, Gerry, Annie, Katie, Blanche, Mary, Guy.) married my mother in 1909 later by 5 years than he intended.

My mother's story was that she was staying with her school friend Blanche at the Gold family home The Limes, Stansted when my father, who had been courting her for some months asked her to come down half an hour before supper as he had something very important to ask her. She went up early to change before dinner and got involved with Blanche and Annie, always in the latest fashion, trying on dresses. Time passed too quickly and they were all late for dinner, Philip's place was vacant he had left for London. It was five years before the courtship was renewed this time successfully.

Granny Gold was so pleased at her last unmarried son's engagement that she gave him her precious diamond cluster ring, which had been a present on the birth of her youngest child Guy in 1877. The portrait of her painted by Charlie Ellis in 1878 and now owned by Jan Judd (nee Fraser) shows her proudly wearing it, now in turn it is my wife Heather's engagement ring.

Grandfather Gold born in 1837 was very much the head of his large family and known as The Governor. He served as a Volunteer in the Crimean War where he met Walter and Alfred Gilbey, on return home he married their sister Fanny Georgina while his brother James to complicate the family, married another sister Charlotte.

The legend runs that when James and Charles, dressed in their best, called at the Gilbey home in search of a job the two sisters looked from an upstairs window at the young men walking up to the door and decided which they were going to marry. Charlotte chose the shorter more solid looking James while Fanny picked the tall and handsome Charles.

The family business of W & A Gilbey Wine Merchants was started and both Charles and Henry became founder Members of the Board, the former was sent to

Edinburgh to open the business in Scotland and James went to Dublin.

From simple beginnings, Charles walked 5 miles into Edinburgh every morning to open the shop by 8 am and closed the shutters himself at 8 in the evening before walking the 5 miles back home again, the business thrived and expanded, remarkably soon the family became prosperous then affluent.

Charles bought the Limes, just opposite the Bell Inn where Fanny had been born from a Gold relation and added new wings to it as his family increased. He won the Saffron Walden Parliamentary seat as a Liberal M.P. and succeeded in steering the Grocers Bill through Parliament to the great benefit of the firm. In 1906 he was knighted for Public Services. Apart from trips to London and Scotland he lived at The Limes until he died aged 85 in 1924. He was devoted to his numerous children, grand children and the first great grand child Nancy Veronica daughter of Lettice Watney and Charlie Gilbey. Grandfather was never happier than when they were round him, he was generous to them all.

Every Christmas he presented us three small children with a new £1 note, to be divided between us, 6/8d each a Lawyers Fee he always said. He had a pierced ear drum and was deaf, his fascinating parlour trick was to blow a stream of cigarette smoke out of his ear. After Granny died in 1910 Aunt Amy Syd (in the family my Mother was Aunt Amy Phil) kept house for him, he enjoyed presiding over dinner parties in great state at the Limes, the table seating 28 was covered with silver and two large glass jugs filled with brownish liquid, one containing brandy and water the other toast-water, we were served the latter.

My father Philip was born in London at the Manchester Square house in 1867 and was brought up at the Limes where an extra bedroom had been built for him and his devoted Nursemaid Sue. (I have letters from him to Sue begging to be allowed to stay up late). He went to Bruce Payne's School in the Hadham Road, Stortford graduating from day boy to boarder and well used to walking the 4 miles to and from school. He showed a flair for mathematics, every year winning the form prize. He went up to Trinity College, Cambridge at the age of 18 and read Law. Having obtained a degree he was admitted to the Law Society as a Solicitor, but never practised.

It was his father's policy to put all his sons into businesses which could benefit Gilbeys. So Philip and his cousin Gilbert Gilbey were placed as Directors of the glass bottle manufacturing firm of Richard Candlish with an Office in the City and a factory at Charlton.

There seemed to be plenty of spare time to enjoy hunting, shooting, fishing and above all polo. The Stansted Polo team of himself No1, Tresham Gilbey No2, Gerald Gold No3 and Bennet Gosling back, played on Tresham's ground

at Silver Leys and 2 years running won the County Championship at Hurlingham.

He hunted regularly every season with both the Essex and Puckeridge hounds and won several large silver Point to Point cups. He was a Lightweight, a short round man only 5ft 7ins tall with tiny feet and very steady capable hands.

Sir Charles had taken a lease of the Easter Elchis sporting estate at Craigelochie, the fishing on the Spey was excellent, Philip was well able to use the Spey cast and became a successful and keen salmon fisherman. He once landed a very large fish, the girls had come down to watch in a pony trap and offered to ferry the monster back in the cart. On return in the evening his father said "The fish weighed 45 lbs, it was too big for us so I had it cut up and sent to my friends."

Philip also had an interest in amateur theatricals and for many years organised the family concert party known as the G.Gs. giving entertainments for charity in the surrounding towns and villages during the winter.

When the Boer War broke out Philip, his brother Guy and cousin Rupert Blyth volunteered and enlisted with their own horses in the 13th Duke of Cambridge's Own Yeomanry. The Yeomanry was quickly shipped to S.Africa but all too soon surrounded by the Boers at Lindley and taken prisoner for the duration. After peace terms had been agreed the Regiment returned home and was disbanded. (A full account of this disastrous expedition is in my Archives.)

My father returned to Candlish, the firm later being merged with others to become United Glass Bottles, he retained his Directorship until his death. Polo proved too difficult but he continued hunting, shooting and fishing at every possible opportunity and took an especial interest in encouraging and instructing his teenage nephews in these sports particularly Humphrey Watney, Norman Gold and the Streeter brothers Tom and John.

#### WHITEHALL COTTAGE.

He married Amy Frances Perry in April 1909 at the age of 42 and never rode to hounds again. I have some of his meticulous accounts, in 1912 his income was £1,800 p.a. on which he kept a wife and two children, a chauffeur/gardener, a garden boy, a cook, a parlourmaid, a housemaid, a tweeny, a nurse and a nurserymaid, with this staff he enjoyed regular entertaining at Whitehall Cottage, which he enlarged with the addition of a nursery wing with drawing room and maid's bedroom below.

In 1914 when War was imminent his firm was turned over, to making glass bubble floats to support anti-submarine nets, we had many as toys. He joined up although well over age and was Commissioned Lieutenant in the Hertfordshire Regiment and allocated to local training duties, so was able to continue living mainly at home with weekly visits to his Office in London. As petrol was unavailable he converted our Ford car to run on gas with a balloon on the roof so that he could drive to the Station.

In the autumn of 1917, always a cigar smoker, he developed cancer of the throat and by Christmas was confined to bed at home, Attended by Dr Newman and nursed by my mother he died at home in February 1918 aged 51 and was buried in the family plot at Birchanger Churchyard. My mother was left in a large house with three small children, the youngest 2 years old and a much reduced income. Grandfather came to the rescue with a loan of £4,000 to tide her over, which by strict economy was repaid in 1922.

As my father died when I was only 5 years old my memories of him are limited to odd incidents. I remember riding on a blanket strapped in front of his saddle, the excitement of meeting him at the gate returning from the station in his car and being allowed to stand for the rest of the journey on the running board. Him making a model armoured car for me out of a biscuit tin and also a rickshaw cart for use on picnics to his special house up in the hornbeam tree, which he had used himself as a boy and also making the rope ladder for us to clamber up into it. Sometimes after tea in the winter he read to us from "Lives of the Hunted" and similar nature books.

He always smoked Romeo y Julieta Havana cigars and the nostalgic smell of them still brings back to me a splendid sense of ease, confidence and all's right with the world.

Whitehall Cottage was a wonderful house for children growing up, situated in farmland to the north of Stortford, 1 mile exactly from the Station, looking south across paddocks to the old Roman Road, now Cricket Field Lane with the roofs of the town rising beyond. It had large gardens, 2 tennis courts and was completely secluded in the middle of Uncle Tresh's estate over which we had free run. As a Wedding Present Sir Walter Gilbey gave his son Tresham on his marriage to Annie Barker the two adjacent farms of Whitehall and Dane O'Coys. At the same time Sir John Barker, who owned the huge Department Store of Barkers in Kensington and lived at The Grange gave his daughter the farm of Foxdells, together making a large and compact estate. Later Uncle Tresh was to add a fourth farm, Marsh Barns.



They first lived at Whitehall enlarging and modernising the old farm house, which included building a large butlers pantry. Also re-modelling the old farm buildings into a magnificent polo pony stud to house 30 brood mares and their foals.

Uncle Tresh had been terribly injured when umpiring an International Polo match, there was no hope of ever playing again himself nor unfortunately of having children. His stud became his main interest in life and rewarded him by becoming world famous. In 1908 he built a larger and grander house on his estate more suitable to his wealth and position. He took the name of Whitehall to his new mansion, even though it was built of red brick, and offered the lease of the old farm house to his cousin and great friend my father Philip on his marriage to my mother in 1909. My Father took a 21 year lease, which he wisely drew up himself, at a rent of £150 p.a. and altered the name of the house to Whitehall Cottage as a sly dig at the grandeur of the new Whitehall.

My mother born in Ireland in 1887 had a strong and fearless character with high principles, I both admired her and loved her dearly. Her father James Perry was very Irish he spoke with a strong brogue, very good looking and charming, the 6th son of a Protestant and impecunious family, supported by a flour mill and small brewery, he had no inheritance nor did he ever earn an income. At one time he had interests in salt mines in Silesia which vanished during the 1st War, leaving only his ability to speak German fluently.

He was a keen cricketer and played for All Ireland, in his later years an avid spectator. How he came to marry my strong minded and practical grandmother Mary Batten is a mystery. They lived at Lisderg, a small cottage beside the Perry mill, near Banagher where my mother was born and later her brother Geoffrey.

Granny Perry hated the petty and restricted life of an Irish squireen and moved the family to Brighton as soon as my mother was of school age, where they met and made many lasting friends. My mother's first years school report in the family archives reads "Idle, Ignorant and Impertinent." she must have been too high-spirited and attractive for the Headmistress' approval.

Another daughter Vera was born in Brighton but when Geoffrey was entered for Charterhouse the family moved to Vevey in Switzerland to economise in order to pay the school fees. Although the family could not afford 2d buns this was a happy time for my mother. She studied music playing the violin in several good orchestras and acquired the skill of sight reading piano music. Besides being pretty and vivacious she spoke French and German making many friends of both sexes including Jerome K Jerome the author.

As soon as my Uncle Geoff had left Charterhouse, University College Oxford and become a Solicitor in Waltons the family moved back to London to make a home for him taking a large 6 bedroom flat on the 3rd floor of 125 Victoria St. However Grandfather Perry preferred Brighton and lived at 3 Palmeira Avenue, Hove with Nurse Thomas to look after him. This odd arrangement appeared amicable, they visited each other and even went on holidays together.

There was no Perry money but Geoff was now earning and the division of the Batten Trust at this time made all the difference to Granny's finances, she was a firm and excellent manager with an encyclopaedic knowledge of London and it's prices, unsurpassed at mental arithmetic making a little money go a long long way.

When I knew her she was partially blind and wore reversible pince-nez, it did not stop her shopping daily at the Army and Navy Stores, taking us to the Zoo, of which she was a Fellow, nor endlessly making fine tapestry covers whilst instructing her grandchildren. (My framed cock pheasant is a sample of her work, she left it uncompleted on her death in 1926.)

Unhappily Vera was smitten with multiple sclerosis in her early twenties and became totally immobile, just being able to get food to her mouth using both hands. Granny had to spend most of her time looking after her daughter until Providence intervened. Vera still looked lovely and made many friends, she met Daniel Garrie in the Park who offered to push her wheel-chair. They became very friendly, he came every day to take her out and after some months against furious family opposition they decided to marry. Dan was about 50, an out-of-work miner, an active Socialist who had been to prison for wife desertion, he could hardly have appeared more unsuitable.

They did marry and went to live at Whitley Bay, where I visited them several times. Aunt Vera had the income from her share of the Batten Trust and Dan had many contacts in the community. They managed to live comfortably and very happily in a small way even keeping a car. Dan gave his whole life without stint to looking after his crippled wife, he did absolutely everything for her kindly and efficiently besides all the household work. She adored him to the day of her death in 1947.

Afterwards I met Dan at an ABC for tea in London when he gave me a bunch of old family records. He insisted on paying for tea as he said he had just made a fortune by selling Japanese Bonds which he had bought very cheaply during the War on a tip from Mr Attlee, he was now sufficiently well off and needed no financial help from our family.

After Father's death my mother decided to bring her young family up at Whitehall Cottage although she had lost any affection for the house. It was war-time with all it's stringencies. To economise the car was sold, we did not have one again until my sister Barbara was old enough to drive, relying on hired taxis, Jackson's fly or bicycles for transport. The staff was reduced, Kathie Stubbs aged 17 took us over and all the nursery work, a tower of strength, she stayed for nearly 20 years.

Two Officers were billeted on us, I remember Colonel Grant as he gave me a perfect working model of an open touring Daimler, much too good for me to be allowed to play with. The second pair were Pook and Palmer, I met the latter 50 years later in Dereham where his daughter Susan was a G.P. Pook was dashing and entertaining, he made sheep's eyes at my mother and the family feared she might fall but proved far too level headed. My recollections of the actual War are limited to the sadness felt when the cook Bessie's brother Bert, our special friend, was killed and also being woken up to see out of the Nursery window a Zeppelin come down in flames in the direction of Potters Bar.

Our contribution was eating dandelion leaf salad, being allowed only half a boiled egg each, being dressed up in wounded soldiers blue uniform for Charity Fund raising events and rolling endless bandages for my mother, who was Quartermaster of Herts/12 Red Cross V.A.D. Detachment with Fanny Stacey as Commandant.

Frank Stacey farmed Wickham Hall on the North side of Uncle Tresh's estate, he was a bachelor and a real friend of my Father's, after every days hunting he drove over in his trap to visit him in bed and describe each run in detail. Whenever we children met Mr Stacey on our walks he invariably fished out his net purse and presented me with a new shilling.

We went for long walks every day whatever the weather, sometimes with Mother and terrier Ikey (called after Uncle Geoff whose first name was Isaac, they shared a birthday) over the stiles along the field paths or through Hoggetts Wood where there were plenty of rabbit but more often with Kathie to Stortford on shopping errands. Nanny Astley had said that walking was good for my weak ankles

Our life was supremely happy, we had good health and plenty of work and play. My sister and I walked daily across the fields to Chantry Mount School, we had a living in Governess Miss Maffey, who made me un-naturally write with my right hand, beat me with Mother's permission and then jumped out of a 5th floor window in London, her successor Elsie Kearns, a distant Irish relation, developed a nervous breakdown, after that I was packed off to Boarding School.

Every evening we were presented to my mother washed, brushed and clean at 5 o'clock for an hour before bed time when she either read to us, taught us games or played for us to sing round the piano. We had all our meals in the Nursery except for Sunday lunch when we joined Mother in the dining room. It was not until Barbara was 13 that she was allowed to stay up to supper to keep Mother company, previously it must have been lonely, we often heard the piano played long into the evening, she joined the Stortford Ladies Bridge Club more for the society than the play. Twice a week we had much enjoyed carpentry lessons by Mr Littlewood in our splendid workshop which Father had made in the old servants sleeping hut and even more enjoyable PT sessions under Sergeant Salmon who taught me to box, which later I found of great advantage.

We were brought up as firm members of the Church of England, learnt our Catechism, to read Bible stories, to pray meaningfully night and morning and to say a thankful Grace before and after meals. We went to Matins every Sunday either walking to St Michael's Stortford or bicycling to Birchanger with Stephen on Mother's carrier.

There were plenty of children's parties, we visited the houses of mother's two great friends regularly, Aunt Amy Syd and Elizabeth at the Limes and Aunt Blanche at Thorley Place with her family of six Streeter children, who became in turn our best friends, often staying over-night. Directly after the War Uncle George took Lees Lodge on the front at Sheringham and for many years we joined the Streeter family there for a fortnight in the summer.

Sheringham was a favourite resort of the Golds, Grandfather used to take a house as did Uncles Archie, Gerald, Guy and Quiller. Such a large family party made for endless fun for all the children on the beach, while the Nannies clucked in the bathing huts the grown-ups played golf over a course dotted with defensive works and dug-outs. Sheringham became synonymous with happy holidays.

During the War the Williams family came to live at Lindsey House, our nearest neighbours quarter of a mile away. Their four children were grown up but we all became friendly. Old Mrs Williams having no grandchildren of her own came daily to play with my angelic looking small brother and got into my permanent black books by tearing, in a game of tug of war, the tag off the foxes brush given to me when the hounds killed in our veg garden. Lee Williams was killed in the War, Glenton returned safely as a Lance Corporal, he was first and foremost interested in wild life and all sports pertaining, luckily for me he took me under his benevolent instruction. Dorothy Williams soon married Mr Osborne the Precentor at Malvern.

Muriel was an artist and used the studio built by Charlie Ellis, a connection of the Golds, a Royal Academician who painted many portraits of the family and could have been famous had he worked without the aid of brandy. Muriel was a great friend to us all particularly my Mother, who took her as a companion on many of her trips to Europe. She painted our portraits (mine still exists at the back of a photograph album) and taught us to play billiards on their table. When Mr Williams died they had no money so Mother bought Lindsey House for £1,100 and allowed them to go on living there. When old Mrs Williams died some years later Glenton and Muriel decided to run a hotel in Cornwall. Mother sold Lindsey House to Mrs Johnstone at a profit and lent the money, which was duly paid back, to Glenton to buy Wilsey Down Hotel near Launceston where he could indulge his flair for animals and sport, he kept a tame badger Sally in the coal hole. We spent many happy holidays staying in their hotel.

After he had been invalided out of the Army Uncle Geoff was an ever popular and generous week-end visitor. He had in France suffered severe internal injury when his horse was killed and rolled on him. Though far from fit His legal knowledge and common sense were of immense help and support to my mother in all her business affairs.

He tried nobly to fill the gap left by our father's death encouraging and guiding us through all a boy's youthful ambitions and problems. It was he who finally decided I should go to Cottesmore School then on to Radley College as he knew both Headmasters.

### SCHOOL DAYS

G. Davison Brown nicknamed "The Baron", an old Carthusian, was Headmaster and owner of Cottesmore School, The Drive, Brighton. He was an excellent Headmaster who understood boys, a fierce disciplinarian who could be a genial companion too. The boys feared, admired and respected him, he had the knack of appearing when least expected. The six Form Masters all lived out and were obviously chosen for their prowess at games as well as their ability to teach.

The school buildings were purpose built and excellent, besides the usual run of class rooms, dormitories etc there was a large central hall where every boy, about 65 in number, had his own desk. Besides a Chapel, which we attended every day, there was a large Library of modern books and a pioneer wireless room where we made cat's whisker receiving sets to listen to "2LO Calling".

The boys and staff eat in a large dining room, the motto over the door read "It is better to keep your mouth shut and be thought a fool than open it and remove all possible doubt." Food was adequate but on a weekly menu, sausages and mash on Thursday, boiled fish on Friday etc. The boys had to pass a clean hands inspection as they filed in, the examiner too often being The Baron with a foot rule at the ready.

The games and sports facilities were excellent, a famous cricket field in front, delinquent boys spent many hours rolling the pitch, two football fields behind. Also a gym, squash court, indoor swimming bath and .22 rifle range. Games were compulsory for 2 hours every afternoon except Sundays. A play was put on each autumn term, to my shame in my first year I was cast as Alice for the Mad Hatter's tea party dressed in girls clothes with a straw coloured tow wig.

In May 1920 at the age of 7½ I was sent with 5/- pocket money to Cottesmore School, travelling with one other new boy by train to Hove, where we were met and walked up to the school carrying our attache cases of night things. Trunks had been sent on "Luggage in Advance" containing uniform, grey suits summer and winter, Eton suit with 4 inch starched white collar for Sundays. I was the smallest boy in the school only 4 ft tall and weighing just 4 stone, so when on the second day of term I stopped a cricket ball with my cheek and gained a beautiful black eye I was known by staff and boys as "Susie", a nickname which stuck.

Boys were never allowed out of the school grounds unless accompanied by an approved adult. Once or twice a term on Sunday I was collected by either Mother or Nurse Thomas and walked down to my Grandfather's House in Hove to have a good lunch with him cooked by Minnie. In the afternoon we went on the Pier or Black Rock Railway and if there was a good match to watch cricket. Grandfather Perry was old, very good looking and mildly eccentric, he ate his cheese off four different plates and talked with such a strong Irish brogue that I found it very difficult to understand him, it always astonished me that mother could easily understand him and talk back in the same idiom. Grandfather Perry died in 1924 at the age of 82, his house was sold and these welcome outings came to an end.

I started in the 1st Form under Miss Colclough, the only Mistress and found work easy enough to gain the Form Prize, I also learnt not to be late, the Baron caught me outside the class room and administered summary justice with his slipper. We all got beaten from time to time, usually with good reason, I can recall for pillow-fighting, for throwing ink darts and for secreting coconut ice in my stud box, the indignity was to me more of a lesson than the smart.

Thereafter gradually working up the school until I got into the Sixth Form at the age of 12. Maths and memorising luckily I found easy but Latin and Greek desperately uninspiring.

The Masters, partly selected for their ability at sport, were expected besides taking their forms in class to coach and run games. The Baron started and ran the Sussex Martlets Cricket Club, which played on the school pitch, the sides usually containing some County players with one or two of the best players from the school 1st XI. I got my Cricket Colours at the age of 11 as slow left arm bowler. Previously I had bowled for the 3rd XI in the famous match against Mowden taking 3 wickets and Pat Wilkins 7 when we got their side out for 0! I enjoyed games and was awarded my Colours for them all with the exception of rifle shooting. In September 1923 my brother Stephen joined me at Cottesmore.

One Master was very different and especially helpful to me. Eric Houghton was a 30 year old Roman Catholic precious dilettante, wealthy, a mathematician and a wireless pioneer, also a tone perfect pianist. He took a benevolent interest in the school, it was said he had put up money, and occasionally taught boys of his own choosing. I was one of the five lucky ones, without realising it we were grounded in Maths and Physics way above Prep School standard.

My two best friends were Tony Mellor and Dick Wilkins, we stayed at each others homes during the holidays. Mr Mellor lived near Edenbridge and had a pig farm with 2 prize boars. It was our sport to ride the boars and race them round the paddock, the boars were resistant and squealed like savages, one day we were caught, Tony got a thrashing and I a lecture on prize pigs. Staying with the Wilkins family at Sendhurst Grange, Ripley was much grander, they wore silk socks. Mr Wilkins was a very rich Stock Jobber, who spoilt his sons and gave them anything they wanted. We went to shooting schools for clay pigeon shoots, to Brooklands where we were allowed to pilot doctored racing cars round the track and to London where on one trip Dick spent 18/- on a haircut with all the trimmings and got beaten for it. Challis was their Chauffeur, formerly he had been with Sir Walter Gilbey, who he told us never had a bath but rubbed himself with oil which stank, he also had fresh straw laid on the floor of his Rolls every day, just like a stable.

I had hoped to go into the Navy via Osborne when I reached 14 and went up for a preliminary interview but was failed for bad eyesight. Mother promptly took me to see Mr Duke Elder, the famous eye specialist in Harley St, he diagnosed acute astigmatism and prescribed spectacles, which I have worn ever since, but have never ever seen well enough to shoot straight.

When I first put my spectacles on I said "I can see all down the street", Mother was horrified that I hadn't been able to see down the street before. Uncle Geoff tactfully started to encourage me to aim for an Army career.

We looked forward to the School Holidays, which were always exciting, at Easter and in the Summer Mother always took us abroad usually with a companion for herself and another girl cousin or friend to pair up with Barbara. In the winter we put on the Harlequinade and other simple plays with the Streeters and cousin Elizabeth, acting them in the local village halls, but as soon as Stephen was 7 we went ski-ing in the Alps every January.

The first ski-ing holiday we had in 1924 was at Claviers, there were no ski-lifts in those days, no skiing clothes, we wore riding breeches and puttees. There was no proper sanitation in the hotel so we all got sore throats, for which an Australian Doctor prescribed champagne, not too unpleasant a cure.

The ski-ing was hard work herring-boning up the slopes over unbeaten snow and then curving down using telemarks, the experts were extremely graceful to watch. In after years we went to Zermatt several times and then to Davos with Mother and when we were older Klosters with our own friends.

There was no shortage of Christmas parties, we went constantly to Thorley and always to the traditional one on Christmas Day at the Limes, and always to Whitehall where Uncle Tresh loved to entertain us children with his old G.G.'s nigger minstrel acts. My brother and I played very happily together bicycling round and round and round the lawns when it was fine, making Meccano models or carpentering in the workshop, playing pat ball tennis and biking down to swim in the new Stortford swimming bath presented to the Town by Aunt Annie Tresh.

Once taking out the donkey cart for a drive, both donkey and cart belonged to Uncle Tresh but we had free use, we clumsily dropped the reins and Ikey Mo stood on them, nothing we could do would move him so Stephen ran the  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile back for Mother, she understood donkeys from her girlhood in Ireland. She told us to get in the cart, gave the donkey's leg a smart kick, handed us the reins and thumped him with her umbrella raising a cloud of dust. The donkey set off at a trot pursued by appropriate donkey yells of encouragement from Mother, we had no further troubles.

Of course every holiday we stayed several nights with Granny Perry and Aunt Vera at 125 Victoria Street, the huge flat being presided over by Annie a no-nonsense house parlourmaid and Mary a more indulgent cook. Granny Perry was a great educator and encouraged us to find our way about London.

She took us on the open top of every bus and to all the famous buildings, museums, galleries and Parks. If it was fine we went to the Zoo on Sunday, when



it was reserved for Fellows and grandly had tea in the Fellows room.

A very great treat was to be taken to Gunters or Buzzards in Bond Street to eat ice creams. We enjoyed these visits, far from being spoiled we unconsciously learnt about London and basic history and art.

The first time Mother took me abroad, with Muriel Williams as her companion, was to Diekirch for a fortnight in the summer of 1920, we travelled by train and occasionally hired a car and driver for sightseeing trips. Once we went to Treves, which was occupied by French coloured troops, the inhabitants were scared. There was rampant inflation, I remember buying a silver souvenir pepper pot, the jeweller had to phone up twice during the purchase to check the rate of exchange and then the change from my pound note was several hundred thousand reich-marks. Muriel sketched, I fished and caught several blue trout large enough to eat. Mother loved travelling and enjoyed being on the Continent, she spoke French fluently and fair German, she liked the people, the atmosphere and the best food.

The following two years we all went to Veules les Rose and Aunt Podge came too. Aunt Podge was a school friend of Mother's her real name Vi Stewart. A fierce outspoken dragon, a born spinster, though later she became Mrs Wilkinson but left her husband after 3 weeks as he was a pig! We had to be very careful not to offend her, but in the end she became a real friend, you couldn't help admiring her, when nearly blind her method of discovering whether her gas rings were on was to hold her hand over them! We visited her in Addison Avenue and had her to stay long after Mother had died and we were married ourselves. At Veules Mother shocked us by gambling at the Casino in Dieppe, we were childishly horrified to learn she had lost 20 francs at Boule in one night.

In 1922 Mother took us all to Paris for Easter on a pioneer flight from Croydon to le Bourget in a 4 engined Hercules, costing £22 return, she was nothing if not adventurous. We stayed at the Hotel Dalyrac, all red plush and gilt furniture, at that time Mother's favourite Hotel though later she changed to the Daunou, she disliked large international expensive hotels and always stayed in middle class establishments patronised by the locals. We did the sights and went out to meals at good restaurants. Mother had made friends with M. Mazard the proprietor of The Reine Pedauque, we often went there, the food was superb and we had red carpet treatment.

In 1924 and '25 we all went to the Grove Hotel, Skull run by Captain Jago and Miss Hungerford with Uncle Geoff, Aunt Vi and Mick, crossing from Fishguard to Cork and train on to Skibereen. These were lovely holidays, we played tennis, I learnt to swim in the flat calm bay, explored and went on excursions and

picnics. Miss Hungerford introduced Mother to some of the local bigwigs with "She's English but she's quite nice."

Uncle Geoff had just married his old flame Violet Maude (nee Thornton). Captain Maude had been killed in the War, leaving a son Michael, born in 1916, as heir to large estates near Skipton. Although Uncle Geoff considered Mick as his own son he still continued to help Mother and all of us with care bordering on parental rather than avuncular.

Mother's finances had improved, ever a good and careful manager, we always travelled 2nd Class with couchettes if necessary never sleepers. In 1920 Mr Hatry had at last paid up the £29,000 owing on my Father's shares in United Glass Bottles, which had been taken over by his financial empire, very soon after his business failed and he went to gaol. Grandfather's loan was repaid the rest had been skilfully invested by Uncle Geoff and our Stockbroker George Schwerdt.

Grandfather Gold died in 1924 and left 1/27 of the residue of his estate in trust for us three children. Mother was then able to pay for our schooling.

The Schwerdts, George, Sylvia and family came to live in Water Lane, Stortford about this time with an introduction to Mother, they became great friends. George, a successful Stockbroker gave us excellent professional advice and taught me about the Stock Market and general business matters.

Their daughter Cilla, 10 years younger than I, was a dear and very pretty, there was parental talk that we should eventually marry, unhappily Cilla developed polio at the age of 17 and was crippled. After years of treatment she recovered enough to marry a parson and raise a healthy family of 7 children.

Uncles Geoff, Tresh and George Streeter as well as Glenton and George Schwerdt all took trouble in teaching me field sports, for which I am ever grateful. Uncle Geoff gave me a .410 to supersede Father's old BSA air rifle also my first fly fishing rod and tackle.

He had some trout fishing and a gun in a shoot near Biggleswade, where he used to take me for instruction and practice. George Schwerdt had fishing on the Stort, we caught more crayfish in traps than trout on our flies. Uncle George always included me whenever the Streeter boys were shooting and gave me every encouragement, as did Uncle Tresh to shoot rabbits on his land. Glenton was much more fun, he really understood boys, he took me riding, hunting on foot with his terriers which were much in demand during the cubbing season. beagling, which I especially enjoyed and eventually became 2nd whip during the holidays to the Widford Beagles under the Master Jack Pawle.

On special occasions Glenton took me badger digging at night, he himself was an expert and figures in the Encyclopedia of Sport, at the end of the dig it

was always he who tailed the badger, dropping it into a sack for release in Epping Forest. He gave me a badger skin mat which I treasured for years.

Stupidly I did not make the most of my golden opportunity to learn to ride and play polo offered by Uncle Tresh's polo pony stud, I think it was all too high-powered and formal for a small lone boy. I was always allowed and encouraged to ride the old ponies, mostly too fat and wide for short legs, but I had to be on time and properly turned out in smart riding clothes. The rather dour stud groom Herbert Bush always came with me and seemed much keener on instruction and repetitive practice than fun. Rarely was I allowed to knock a polo ball about for fear of damaging the valuable bloodstock.

After nearly 6 years at Cottesmore it was high time to move on, I'd become a School Monitor, top of the Sixth Form with my school colours in every sport and so far unbeaten in the boxing ring. A big fish in a very small pool.

### RADLEY

In May 1926 I went to Radley College by train under the care of Philip Connell and found the freedom and the food wonderful. We had our own bicycles, there were no bounds except that permission to ride into Oxford or Abingdon had to be obtained from the Social Tutor. It was hoped that I might get a Scholarship or at least an Exhibition, however an epidemic of measles, chicken pox and German measles combined to attack Cottesmore in the Easter term, I got all three and had to be hauled out of bed to take the exams. I can't have done at all well as though excused Common Entrance was placed in the lower Fourth form under that terrifying martinet The Rev Newman.

Luckily I did not find the work difficult and avoided the benevolent thrashings, achieving the form prize my first term "The Wind in the Willows" and a triple jump the next term into Upper Shell. Thereafter I made steady progress up the School at the rate of a form a year. The big jumps, first to lower fifth form meant moving out of Social Hall to one's own study, in Middle Market shared with John Dixon and being allowed to give up Latin and Greek to concentrate on physics and chemistry. The second in 1928 after a successful School Certificate with 7 credits, even one in Divinity, moving up into the Sixth Form with all its privileges. We wore stiff white collars and dark blue suits always covered with a gown, except for Chapel when it was surplices and mortarboards, for activities outside red school caps or boaters were obligatory.

Chapel was a great feature of Radley life, we filed in down 'covered passage' every evening, twice on Sunday and sometimes three times when we went voluntarily to Holy Communion or Compline. The boy's singing was inspiring, the choir 60 strong was coached to excellence by the Precentor Mr Huggins,

The whole school, 650 boys, was given Congregation Practice once a month by the Warden himself or if he was not satisfied more often. In my first year I was Confirmed by the Bishop of Oxford and became like so many other boys of my age sincerely religious.

Living conditions for the boys were Spartan, the lucky ones had cubicles with a small hip bath under the bed, cold baths were compulsory first thing every morning on pain of a Prefect's beating, they entailed much splashing and the minimum of washing. There was no form of heating in the dormitories, it was icy cold in the winter. The lavatories were outdoors and disgusting, privacy was forbidden and there were no washing facilities near.

The junior boys existed in Social Hall each with his own flap-top desk, there was never any peace or privacy until the haven of a shared study was reached. John and I were very proud of our Study, it was the best furnished and cleanest in the Social. The food was good and plentiful much better than at Cottesmore, also there was a Tuck Shop where we could supplement our meals if funds were available, I had 15/- to spend my first term.

Fagging was part of a new boys life, once outside Social Hall the cry of "Fag" had all the smaller boys running to the call, the last to arrive got the chore, those who failed to come a beating. To my great advantage Philip Connell, a Prefect and Captain of Gym, took me and Joey his younger brother on as Private Gym Fags, we were supposed to sweep and keep the gym clean and tidy for which service we were immune from general fagging.

The large family of Connells lived at Ugley, Mother knew Mrs Connell so Philip was asked to keep an eye on me, which he kindly did and provided the only buffer between a new boy and the heirarchy of demanding Bloods and Prefects. He has been my friend and support ever since, to our delight in 1935 he married my sister Barbara. Both Joey and myself as well as John Dixon were included in the School Boxing team. Philip himself and John were unbeaten at their weights in 4 years, Joey's and my records were more varied.

Although we had many dissimilar interests John Dixon and I became inseparable friends, we shared a study together for 3 years and became something of a joke as we did everything together, we visited each other's homes, his in Blundellsands, during the holidays and went on walking tours in the Lake District. We have remained real friends now for 60 years, though with increasing

immobility we don't see each other often but we still keep in touch by phone and letter.

In May 1926 we were both new boys in Smale's Social living in College, John was on the Classics side and I on the Science. Our Social Tutor Mr Smale was of grotesque shape and speech, an excellent Housemaster and History teacher, he knew and guided all his boys without apparently interfering or imposing a strict discipline. He ran a happy and successful Social, which for many years won all the sports Social competitions.

The rest of the Dons, five of them clerics, looking back were very odd indeed, they were all highly qualified in their own subjects some of them inspired respect, some friendship and some the urge to work, am afraid I found the French and Art Masters a tiresome joke. Dr Clayton a very dry PhD interested me in Physics to the extent that I became his star pupil all the way to the Upper Sixth.

The Wilson Library in the Mansion was full of good books, novels, adventures, interesting subjects galore, I read them all at the rate of a book a day, Compared with the hurly burly of Social Hall the Library was blissful peace. In my last year I became Wilson Librarian and was lucky enough to receive a splendid donation of £500 from Mr Applin of St Ivel Cheese to acquire a whole new section of sporting books.

Sports were given as much importance as class room work, in fact the Bloods like Philip Connell were looked up to far more than the scholars in the sixth form. Games were compulsory every afternoon, occasionally in the mornings and evenings too. On Sundays afternoons we were expected to go out for long walks in the country and not sit stuffily in our studies.

Lists of teams, playing times and venue made out by the Captains of Games were posted up on the notice board the evening before, those not selected for any team had to do a specified long run minimum 3 miles. I played cricket in the summer, rugger in the autumn and hockey in the Easter terms. Tennis, golf, squash, fives etc were not considered games but recreation to be pursued in one's spare time, rackets alone was the exception. I played them all with zest and enjoyment if not great skill.

My first year, still being small for my age, I found myself Captain of the School Midgets team, which had many matches against the surrounding Prep Schools, it was a popular team on account of the good teas provided at close of play. We were always hungry in spite of the good food, second helpings for the asking provided in Hall, my "Jam Account" at Shop was raised to 30/- a term plus pocket money 2/6d a week, Marmite lasted longer than jam and was cheaper, hot

dogs cost a princely 9d. Occasionally Mother sent a cake, which perforce shared round.

After the Midgets I graduated to the Colts, where we were well coached, but I never made progress beyond the school third teams in cricket and rugger but played for the 1st hockey team my last two seasons. I quite enjoyed the compulsory long runs, being light in weight made it easy, it was an opportunity to see the countryside around and feel free of College authority. I was never a good long distance runner like Philip Connell, who won the School Runs consistently by the simple expedient of running faster himself if anyone tried to overtake him. My best performance was to come 7th, some half mile behind the winner in the Senior Long Run, nearly 15 miles.

Radley was then famed as a Rowing School and it was hoped by the family that I would be a wet-bob and follow my famous Uncle Harcourt's example. Before we were allowed in a boat on the river we had to pass the swimming test of 100 yards fully dressed, in fact it took place in a still backwater and we were allowed to discard jackets, wear gym shoes and take it slowly. As I was then relegated to Cox the 3rd Social Four, seeing no future in becoming a permanent cox I opted for cricket. We all supported Social Fours racing along the tow path shouting encouragement, later taking a skiff out on the river for my own fun.

Henley Regatta was one of our great festivals, as long as our first VIII was competing in the Ladies Plate the whole school had a holiday to cheer them on. Dressed in white trousers, blue blazer, Radley ties and boater with red and white hat band and buttonhole, we packed into a special train, on arrival at Henley there was a race to hire a punt for the day. The punts, usually shared by 4 boys, tied up alongside the booms three or four deep to watch the races, often umpired by Uncle Harcourt in his launch.

Refreshments were provided by various benefactors who had taken or lived in houses with gardens running down to the river. The Radley boys being well behaved and in traditional dress were always welcome to tie up and come up to the house for lunch, I went several times to Mr Moss' large villa where there appeared to be an unlimited spread of luxury food. Uncle Syd and Aunt Amy with a large family party took a house next to Phyllis Court, we were expected to turn up there for strawberry tea. After the races we went to the Fun Fair which always meant a frantic rush back to the Station to catch our special train home.

Mother liked boating, we had many outings with picnics, she taught us to scull and punt on the Backs at Cambridge being herself neat and graceful. We had family parties for Henley for many years after we'd left school, staying to watch the fabulous firework display late into the night.

Radley was not ungenerous with holidays, every Saints Day was a half holiday, red letter ones and Ascension Day being a complete whole holiday. St Peters Day "Gaudy" was the school festival when parents came for the entertainments and were allowed to take their boys out for supper in the evening. Every 2 years there was an Exeat of two nights away after Gaudy, we usually went to Bournemouth by train to visit Barbara at Grassendale. In spite of these days off the 12 week terms always seemed ages long.

Each term I was asked to lunch in Oxford by Canon and Mary Nolloth, he was Dean of Merton and she a distant cousin of mother's and also invited by Bishop and Agnes Shaw (nee Gilbey, Aunt Mary Wag's sister), he was then Dean of Christ Church and lived in style with his seven children, venison from the College estates was usually on the menu, it was not difficult to get permission to bicycle to Oxford with such impeccable sponsors.

At about this time two other impeccable sponsors Frank Mann my Godmother Aunt Enid's husband and Pelham "Plum" Warner, (Uncle Archie's brother-in-law) Aunt Agnes' (nee Blyth) husband, both famous Captains of England Cricket, nominated me for Membership of the M.C.C. So naturally I was elected at the earliest possible date and remained a Member for 55 years.

My brother Stephen joined me at Radley in September 1929, also in Smale's Social. Mother wrote to us both regularly every week and every Sunday I wrote back to her, a habit I continued until she died in 1943. Unfortunately Stephen found her letters difficult to read, a whole term's worth were discovered unopened in his trunk on return for the holidays! Pusskins in the dog-house.

Mother visited us at Radley every autumn and summer term usually staying at the Clarendon Hotel, Oxford and always coming to tea in our Study having previously requested something difficult such as Greengage jam, cucumber sandwiches or macaroons, it was her tiresome way of teaching us to get something special for others. In the Easter term she went abroad mostly to Rome, where for many years she had a flat leased from Lord Rennel of Rodd, the former British Ambassador. As soon as Barbara left school they went together and made many Italian friends, who visited us at Whitehall Cottage and severely shocked the Gardener by sun-bathing very scantily clad. When visiting Mother in Rome an England hockey team was playing Italy, one of our team was ill and I was impressed to play, it was fairly light hearted and we won 1 - 0, our Captain d'Arcy said to me "Thanks, now you can say you've played for England!"

Cousin Norman came down to take me out to tea occasionally at a farmhouse on the Thames where he was well known from his illicit shooting exploits as a Radley boy himself. When we sat down he ordered 6 boiled eggs while we were

deciding what to have! Mixed grill and apple pie at 4.30 in the afternoon usually followed with no problem, he was a very popular visitor and always especially good to me.

Besides singing in Chapel orchestral music was a feature of Radley life. There were concerts given by visiting groups which we had to attend. The school orchestra was reasonably proficient and gave a concert each term. Every Social was expected to have it's own Orchestra and there was an annual drive to press gang recruits. I was started off on the bassoon, next year the piccolo and finally the tympanum before thankfully being allowed to fade out.

The O.T.C. flourished at College, we had drill parades every Tuesday with our rifles but on Thursdays wore uniform with full webbing equipment, which had to be blanched with brasses polished the night before. After inspection we had arms and field training under the two Sergeant Majors followed by Battalion Ceremonial Parade. When John and I went on our first Field Day we were considered too small to carry rifles so were armed with rattles to simulate Lewis guns. For an enjoyable but rugged week every summer holiday we all went to O.T.C. Camp at Tidworth or Strensall with contingents from most Public Schools and consequent off duty running battles.

I enjoyed the Corps in spite of the number of extra drills earned for a dirty rifle, it was a factor in my decision to join the Army. The other factors were Uncle Geoff's enthusiasm for a military life and opportunity to serve abroad coupled with his insistence that the Royal Horse Artillery was the Army's handpicked Corps d'elite. John Streeter had just joined The Bays and became my schoolboy hero with his success at local Point to Points on his chargers "The Hoot and Harry Gittings", unhappily a few years later he was killed schooling a new horse. George Streeter my constant and best friend at home had been accepted too for The Bays. My father's Boer War rifle hung in the Hall at home together with his bandolier still full of live ammunition fascinating to a small boy.

I was at my most impressionable age when the War ended in 1918, the Navy and Army were wonderful, all sailors and soldiers heroes, I was hooked by the time I reached 7 without knowing it. The result was that as soon as I had passed School Certificate at the age of 16 I started to work for the Royal Military Academy Entrance Exam, which was then considered far stiffer than the School Higher Certificate.

Grannie Perry died in 1928, she was old and ill almost totally blind but indomitable. I overheard her say to Mother "Pray that I'll die next Thursday" she did. The flat at 125 Victoria Street was sold as Aunt Vera had by then



married and moved to Whitley Bay, Uncle Geoff too had married Ant Vi and lived at 65 Ashley Gardens. Mother inherited some of the furniture and furnishings, more important her share of the Batten Trust, becoming for the first time in her life well off.

As soon as Barbara was old enough to drive, there were no Driving Tests in those days, Mother bought a car from her good friend Mr John Whalley, a Wolsey Hornet which revolutionised her mobility and our holidays.

Barbara was a good fast driver but Mother though she could drive from A to B never seemed to be in full control. Roads round Stortford were narrow, many of them gravel surfaced but there were very very few cars on the road compared with to-day, often and particularly in the summer evenings we would just go for a drive with no other object but to explore and see the country.

I learnt to drive by being allowed to bring the car round from our Garage to the front door and taking it back after use. There were no tests in 1928 but it was necessary to be 18 before obtaining a driving licence for any sort of vehicle but only 14 for a motor-bike.

Holidays were far from dull, we went on visits or trips abroad every holiday and when at home had tennis, bathing and supper picnic parties in the summer. In the winter hunting, beagling, Christmas celebrations, dances and of course the Cinema, we were all addicts and sometimes even went twice a day. Mother once went to Prague for a couple of nights just to see Conrad Veidt! In the New Year we regularly set off with a winter sporting party to Switzerland.

We had outgrown Sheringham so Mother took us to some memorable holidays twice to Brioni with Joan Norton, Barbara's life long school friend, where we rode and learnt to water ski. When Tito took over Brioni as his private residence we went twice to Juan les Pins staying at the Hotel Provencal in great luxury, Philip Connell and Charlotte Fry making up the party. The Beaumonts had their yacht "Pauline" there so we had several day cruises as their guests. When the dates were right we all went to Paris for Easter for shopping, sight seeing, restaurants and the opera. Mother rather liked taking a Box for the Opera, which she, Barbara and Stephen thoroughly enjoyed, while I found room, after a large supper, to sleep on the floor at the back of the Box. Stephen on Johnny's introduction asked Connie a member of the Folies Bergeres chorus to a meal and Cinema. He said they sat at the back, he didn't see much of the film but he learnt a lot.

Mother always liked going to first class restaurants, the food and the people, she had many favourites in London, Rome and Paris and was always ready to try a new one. Quite often at home in the evening she would say "Let's drive

up to Oddeninos for supper on the hop", where she always had a special Mont Blanc bombe made of marons glace. When we were out with Mother she always paid, usually handing me her purse to foot any bills and tip according to service. When we went out on our own we paid for ourselves from our regular weekly pocket money rising every year from a start of 2/6 to £1 by the time I left Radley. We learnt to be careful and to save up for a special possession.

Mother took us to stay regularly with the Crosses at Gatehouse, with the Williams' at Wilsey Down and twice to Dublin and her old home near Banagher to meet her Irish cousins. Mother and Mrs Evelyn Cross, who had been a girl friend of my Father's years before, were themselves real and long standing friends. Mrs Cross was a widow with 4 daughters Claren, Josephine, and twins Sheila and Ishbel of our age group and very rich, her husband had owned the firm of Agar Cross and was said to have spent 11 months of the year at "le Sport" and one month doing his Income Tax. They lived at Cally Castle near Gatehouse, a vast house on the coast with 2 Rolls Royces and a head chauffeur Campbell. One day Mrs Cross took us all to the County Show in her Rolls, the Car Park cost 1/- but she called a boy over to look after the car for 6d. I was surprised and said to Campbell I thought she was rich, he replied "Ay and that's why." The girls were entertaining and good value, we played tennis, bathed, danced, fished and shot rabbits from the library window, they were all good skiers and usually join our party at Davos. I got on well with "Boba", our two mothers obviously enjoyed a spell of matchmaking.

Wilsey Down was an Hotel, we stayed as guests but worked to help Muriel and Glenton so that they could have more free time to play with us. My job was to serve the petrol pumps, which in those days were cranked by hand, to pump 20 gallons into a lorry was hard work for a profit of a halfpenny per gallon.

Glenton kept 2 hunters and had a large expanse of rough shooting. I exercised the horses and was taken hunting with the North Cornwall hounds, on one occasion killing a fox right at the top of Brown Willy. Glenton used to take me snipe shooting over the bogs, he rarely missed I rarely scored. The hotel itself was damp, cold, hard work and uncomfortable, but we all enjoyed our holidays there. Years later I was to be Glenton's Bestman at his wedding to Mary Darlington in Carnforth.

For several consecutive summers we joined the Streeter family at their tented caravan holidays on the cliffs at Dunwich, 'Lexa and Nessie Mavrojani were always of the party, we thought Tom was going to marry the sweet and gentle Lexa but he switched to Nessie a splendid robust character with a bank balance to match, a tireless and ideal partner who was to give him 5 sons. Tom farmed

the Thorley and Harps estates, he kept a string of good hunters which he kindly allowed me to exercise in Hatfield Forest and also regularly mounted me for hunting with the Puckeridge.

I had one famous day on Froggie, an old Army Veteran with a broad arrow brand on his quarters, then aged 23, hounds ran for 23 miles without a break, sadly it was too much for Froggie the next day he went permanently lame and was retired to grass. Tom was always very kind to me, he encouraged me to ride his horses and later helped me buy my own, never very well himself he died of asthma in April 1962.

In July 1930 I took the "Shop" entrance exam, as the result would not be known until September it was arranged that I should stay on at Radley for one term. That suited me as I was made a School Prefect, head of Smale's Social which moved out of College to Stevenson's old House and I inherited Bill Vestey's study with its wall to wall carpeting, the largest and most luxurious at Radley all to myself, John Dixon had left at the end of the summer term to take a job in Shell found for him by Uncle Geoff.

The Prefects had their own room, "Pup's Study" off Covered Passage where they met every evening after Chapel to plan ahead and administer justice. Only once did I have to cane a boy, a scruffy little imp called Waites for the crime of cutting cold baths, the sentence was an automatic "6 of the best."

When the results of the Shop exam were published I was placed 17th out of 152, with the offer of entrance in January subject to passing interview and medical. My artistic effort at drawing a saddle on a step-ladder had, to my surprise, gained me 15 free marks and two places. I went up from Radley to Woolwich for the medical and was careful to memorise the letters on the eye-sight test screen, so managed to pass without comment.

The interview at Burlington House in front of 5 Generals was something of a farce. As I walked up to the President, one of the Members at the edge of the semi-circle shouted "What colour's a brown bus, boy?" I answered "Brown, Sir". The President said "Why do you want to join the Army?" "To play polo Sir" Pause- then "Send in the next boy." Interview was over and Passed.

I was measured for uniforms by Plumb, the Regimental tailor and for boots by Craig & Davies, all to be delivered on arrival at The Royal Military Academy, Woolwich, both proved highly efficient and satisfactory, though afterwards I went to the smarter and more fashionable tailor Hawkes and to Maxwell for hunting boots, Herbert Johnson of course for military caps.

I returned to Radley to finish the term, don't think I did much work, it was my second year in the Upper VIth and we were covering old ground, most of my

time was spent putting on Plays as had become President of the Amateur Dramatic Society and was interested in the lighting and scenery rather than the acting.

I left Radley at the end of the term in December 1930, I had worked hard and enjoyed my school days and was grateful to have received a reasonable all round education. I had been sufficiently indoctrinated to send my two sons there in their turn 30 years later. In his final Report the Warden Ferguson wrote "I am as sorry to lose him as I am glad to have had him." A phrase which might be taken either way.

Oddly the only Don I kept up with was the French Master A.C.Rawlinson known of course as "Plugs", He was a gallant and much decorated Officer in World War I and commanded the College O.T.C. he and his Doctor wife, no beauty, befriended me, not for my ability in French, lessons were pain and grief to us both, but perhaps because I was destined for the Army, his real love. They lived in the picturesque old cottage in the Walled Garden, many years later as a wedding present they gave me a needle work picture of the Cottage worked by his wife, which still hangs over the door in my dressing room. To-day the old walled garden has made way for new swimming pool and Labs, I expect the Old Cottage has been demolished, so the picture might well end up in the College Museum.

#### THE ROYAL MILITARY ACADEMY

On a cold wet January day in 1931 I arrived at Woolwich Arsenal with my military trunk and shared a horse drawn cab with Robin Eden up Shooters Hill to the Royal Military Academy known universally as "The Shop". We reported to the Guardroom and were directed to B. House on the front parade. I was too overawed to notice the two dog's drinking bowls outside the Guardroom, which some wit had labelled one "Dogs" and the other "Officers Dogs". There were 8 of us in B.House, one Senior term Mike Calvert in charge and seven new 1st term Cadets known as "Snookers" and of very small account. One gruff old soldier Batman looked after us all, he was highly efficient and always had our clothes ready for the next parade with boots and belts cleaned, buttons and rifles shining.

The Officer Cadet Course lasted 18 months and was split into three terms, with an entry of 150 new Cadets each term. The first term was Hell and meant to be in order to weed out the frailer members, we were flat out from 7 in the morning 'til 8 at night with monthly all night guard duties and Seniors P.T. Parades known as Snooker Dances thrown in.

Company Drill with rifles on the Front Parade for 2 hours under the Company Drill Sergeant Major 5 days a week with a full Battalion Ceremonial Parade every Saturday, the slightest mistake earned extra drills at 6 am, under at that hour a touchy Drill Sergeant. There were drills for everything including riding a bicycle. Daily PT and Riding Instruction at the Riding School, besides games every afternoon, kept us very fit and taught us to be quick change artists as well as to appreciate the masses of excellent food swallowed at top speed. Even now I remember the huge helpings of delicious toad-in-the-hole and Bakewell tart. We could even have free beer for the asking.

Our Company Commander was "Lord" George Sanger, a Gunner Captain, a too strict disciplinarian, he had eyes in the back of his head, but a popular and understanding leader. As Gentlemen Cadets (almost an Officer not quite a gentleman) we were not strictly subject to Military Law, however we were too busy or tired to give the Adjutant Brian Kimmins much trouble. Though I do remember after a Guest Night spreading butter on the tram lines up Shooters Hill so that all the trams going up skidded to a halt. The Drill Instructors always finished their unfriendly comments with an emphatic "Sir". Normally we wore khaki tunics, collar and tie, with belt, breeches, brown boots and puttees, for riding we changed to riding breeches and leggings, in the evening it was blues with Wellington Boots, spurs and overalls. For gun drill, earthworks and workshops etc it was denim fatigue dress, clean, pressed and smart - or else.

Every sort of sport or games were encouraged and the facilities were excellent. I played cricket for the 2nd XI and hockey for the 1st, as well as rugger and squash. I was still a very light weight tho' there were 3 G.C.s shorter than I, so tried boxing but in my first fight was floored in a few seconds by a formidable right swing from a heavier opponent and never boxed in the ring again.

We had a short Easter break and the term finished at the end of July with the Seniors Passing-Out Parade. Holidays lasted 6 weeks until the beginning of our 2nd term in September.

Mother took us to Juan again and later to stay with the Crosses at Gatehouse, unhappily she gradually became ill, cancer was diagnosed so she entered the Empire Nursing Home, Vincent Square, in April 1931 for a colostomy operation performed by Sir Charles Gordon Watson, whom she admired. It was far from the quick and painless operation of today as it entailed the patient tightening the screw on surgical pincers daily in order to sever the intestines. An agonising procedure. We visited her in hospital as much as possible, but she hated being seen so ill and did not encourage us to come.

Mother was in great distress and pain when Aunt May Garle went to see her in hospital. After a short visit Aunt May said "Pull yourself together Amy, remember you are Mary Batten's daughter." This brisk comfort Mother acknowledged later did her so much good, it was the turning point, from then on she made an enormous and successful effort of will to return to normal life. After 6 weeks in hospital she returned home with a Nurse, Hilda Baird, to convalesce.

Hilda was an angel and looked like one, we all adored her, she stayed for 2 months until Mother could manage by herself, then left us to get married, lucky man. Although Mother managed to carry on as before "Tough old Mother" she was never really fit again and increasingly relied on Nurse Smith, who came daily to help her bath and dress.

On my birthday I came down to breakfast in the dining room as usual to see a beautiful new blue Baby Austin Saloon car standing at the front door, my present from Mother, I believe it cost then £125, it gave me marvellous service and transformed my life style, as I could drive to Woolwich, home or London at will. It had no self-starter, windscreen wiper nor traffic indicators, it's top speed was 38 miles an hour, it did 40 miles to the gallon of petrol then costing 1/6d per gal. It was my pride and joy. There was so little traffic on the roads that journeys took little longer than they do today.

We were paid at the Shop as G.C.s 3/4d per day, with messing at 8d per day deducted, but had to pay for all our new uniforms which were expensive, however the Army tailors were ever generous with credit. Mother gave me an allowance of £150 p.a. and as I spent most of my holidays at home or abroad with Mother was not short of cash for necessities nor the Cinema, the best seats cost 3/6d.

The second term at the Shop though still intensely energetic was geared more to studies and practical work rather than basic Drills. We studied Military History, Imperial Military Geography, Tactics and Strategy as well as quite advanced Maths in Ballistics, Probability, Dynamics, Statics and Hydraulics. We had map making exercises, field works and workshops and of course more ambitious riding instruction with much practice in the school and jumping fields. Transport was by bicycle in columns of route with the necessary gear strapped to our backs. As a result of bicycle polo most of our machines were damaged and unreliable.

One memorable exercise we all bicycled in military formation to join Sandhurst in Camp at Aldershot. 150 cyclists 2 abreast made quite a long queue, I was near the tail, whenever the Officer in the lead, Adrian Murray, came to a

steep hill he gave the order to dismount and when he got to the top to re-mount again. Unfortunately I was about half a mile behind him so was compelled to ride up the steep hills and walk pushing bicycle down the other side. Owing to traffic hold ups and some poor map reading, night came on before we got through London, so without previous warning we put into Hounslow Barracks, there was no food or accommodation, we slept supperless on a concrete floor without even a blanket, the hardest bed I had in my life, mercifully we were called at 4 am with char and stew to continue our miserable journey.

Several times I went hunting with the Woolwich Drag Hounds in Essex across the Thames. We were allowed to hire Army horses for a few shillings to cover insurance and all crossed over on the Woolwich Ferry together. It was great fun, we had a couple of good gallops over fences but not strictly hunting, the drag lines were too well known.

We were even allowed occasional weekends after duty on Saturday until midnight on Sunday. I kept my Austin 7 in a lock up garage just outside the Shop gates and used it to go home or drive to matches or for shopping expeditions. Only one other G.C. in our term had a car, Geoffrey Rowley Conway had an old open 2 seater Lea Francis, naturally we were both continually cajoled for lifts.

In October a midge bite on my elbow turned septic and I developed blood poisoning. I was immured in the Infirmary, there were no antibiotics in those days, Dr Williamson sent for the Commandant General Wagstaff who after a conflagration said "Send for his next of kin". Mother was abroad so Uncle Geoff was hauled down to my bedside, presumably to say goodbye. However I was basically very fit, Dr Williamson's cure and care proved effective and in 10 days I was back to light duty i.e. no rifle on parade.

Christmas holidays were spent at Whitehall Cottage with family parties at The Limes and Thorley, Barbara enjoyed organising entertainments so we also gave a large party with a different twist. We went to several dances both locally and in London, usually with a dinner party first, which our Staff seemed to enjoy, Sybil Livings was a very good if touchy cook, she refused to welcome us in her kitchen standing furiously with arms folded until we left. She had flaming red hair, and a powerful motorbike, rare for a Cook in those days but off duty could relax and be her age - just 23. I got my ears rightly boxed by her for riding her motorbike without permission and into a ditch.

I had several days hunting and a week's ski-ing at Davos, for the first time Mother did not come with us, her condition made it too difficult, but she still enjoyed parties and entertaining plus a glass of her special cocktail made

up of one third each of orange juice, gin and Italian vermouth shaken with ice. Her invariable night-cap was a glass of hot water brought in at 10 o'clock by Rose Rogers on a silver salver.

Each morning after Mother on her daily session to the kitchen had written out the day's menus on a slate, Sybil ordered the food and groceries over the telephone, to be delivered by a boy on a bicycle that morning. If they were not up to her standard she simply sent them back for re-delivery of exactly what she wanted, but invariably on Sunday mornings we had a special delivery of sausages freshly made by Mr Reade the pork butcher in Thorley ready for our 9 o'clock breakfast. I still remember how delicious they were.

May Piggtt was house-parlourmaid again of many years standing, the best servant Mother ever had. Occasional scullery maids came and went, but Kathie remained a tower of strength in command of the Nursery, as help to Mother, general sempstress and gentle Jeeves to Stephen and myself.

Saunders was our gardener for 25 years, he bicycled to and from Birchanger 7 days a week, grew superb vegetables and mowed the extensive lawns with a push mower, he reported to Mother every Friday for his weekly wages of £2.3s.6d, otherwise he didn't communicate much, just got on with the job wet or fine. The gardens were always well kept and stocked with veg and fruit with cages for gooseberries, raspberries etc well out of sight of the house, there were no greenhouses Sanders relied on a series of frames, he was too a bonfire expert,

In January 1932 I returned to The Shop for our last and Senior Term, the pace of instruction was still frantic but as we were "Almost Officers" the syllabus was framed to bring out responsibility and initiative. Studies in mathematics and military subjects continued with a much wider scope, so did Workshops and Equipment, we were allowed to go on voluntary riding expeditions independently and away for weekends after the weekly Saturday Battalion Drill on the Front Parade.

I played hockey and cricket and bicycle polo to the damage of my poor bicycle, we had Guest Nights once a month to which we could ask friends, they were very rough affairs and usually ended with the singing of bawdy songs and trials of strength. The more mature Cadets began to have an eye for the girls but generally we were kept so very busy that there was little time or energy left for much indulgence.

By virtue of my car to carry saddles and tack I was appointed Reserve for the RMA Riding Team and went to the Aldershot Show with the team for 3 memorable nights staying at Sandhurst, we were badly beaten in the riding competition but victorious in the games organised after an hilarious Guest Night, the infamous



evening when a London Actress put herself up for Lottery (1/- tickets) and then to the dismay of all refused the Prize Giving.

In 1932 I started to keep a daily diary recording personal events rather than normal routine, a practice continued to this day with the exception of the War years, when for Security reasons we were asked to keep no records.

The entry for Wednesday 6th July reads:- "The proudest day of my life according to Uncle George Milne (Field Marshal Lord Milne, the Master Gunner), who came to inspect us and Pass-us-Out. He presented me with The Workshops Prize £8. After the Ceremonies I packed and dashed up to London in my car to see Hawkes the tailor and got home by 5ish. Mrs Bessie Wright, who was acting as Caretaker, gave me tea while I unpacked and repacked, left home 9ish in my car with Cooper, drove to Victoria and caught the 11 pm Boat Train for Folkestone."

A few weeks later I received my formal Commission as a 2nd Lieutenant in the Royal Artillery addressed to "My trusty and well beloved" signed by His Majesty King George V himself in rather a shaky hand.

The Workshop Prize was unexpected but enabled me to buy a second Sam Browne belt and a hunting crop from Groves the Woolwich saddler. The 3 hour tests had included making a horseshoe to fit a particular horse (not to nail it on for fear of pricking him), to make a nut and bolt to a particular size and thread from scrap metal and to strip, decarbonize and reassemble an old Morris car engine.

The day after our Passing Out Parade I joined Mother, Barbara, Mrs Rose and Char at Dax where we spent a happy week exploring the Pyrenees in a hired car and the famed restaurants of Biarritz and Hossegor, the later was so pleasant that we went house hunting for a villa to lease for the following year.

After a couple of hectic nights at the Opera and Bal Tabarin in Paris on our return journey I was at home only for a few hours to repack before joining the Streeter party in Camp at Dunwich. Cousin Elizabeth and I were teamed together as duty breakfast cooks, we were inexperienced and had problems, breakfast for 14 was often late, the porridge burnt and the eggs broken.

The rest of my 6 weeks leave was spent at home with odd visits to London. Stephen and I played tennis, cricket and as the weather was good bathed most days in the Peddie's lake at Hallingbury.

In London I stayed with Aunt Vera and usually met Johnny Dixon for an outing in the evening, I visited the Military Tailors Hawkes and Enns for my new uniforms and Maxwells for the fitting of riding boots. As I was about to be paid by the Army the princely sum of 9/4d a day as a 2nd Lieutenant, I opened a Bank Account with the Army Agents Cox and King at Lloyds Bank, Pall Mall, in

those days we were paid a month in advance. Mr Wilkins the Bank Manager became a personal friend, at his invitation I always called on him whenever I went to cash a cheque, 15 years later he even sent me a wedding present of a silver cream jug. Mother generously made some of her Capital over to me in the form of Stocks and Shares, enough to produce an income of £150 p.a. which with my Army Pay meant affluence.

I was extremely lucky to have so many friends to help and advise me in all my business affairs. Uncle Geoff at Waltons as a respected and well known Solicitor in the City had many contacts particularly in Lloyds and Shell for whom he acted, he was unfailing in his wise help and interest. Cousin Humphrey Watney of Sedgwick Collins managed all my Insurances, George Schwerdt looked after my investments as if I were his own son, over the years his advice proved faultless, while Mr John Whalley in Stortford was ever helpful in providing and maintaining my various cars.

Mr Whalley had been expelled from Radley for shooting at the San windows, he was an amusing character besides being a good business man and a great admirer of my Mother, he would often drop in for tea to show off some new model and take us for a hair raising test drive. He invited me many times to accompany him in the special V8 supplied by Fords as map reader on the annual Monte Carlo Rally. The only time I could accept our car was dropped off the crane on to the dock at Umea broke an axle and so a non starter.

Mother was not ever really well again after her major operations, but in spite of her handicaps was indomitable and refused to become an invalid however awful she felt. At the beginning of September I drove her, Barbara, Stephen, Philip Connell and cousin Elizabeth to Folkestone in our Rover for their fortnight's holiday at Juan les Pins, I returned home alone to get ready for joining the Young Gunner Officers Course at Larkhill.

On Sunday September 4th 1932 I left home early in my Austin 7 to join the School of Artillery as an Officer, but on arrival found that the Course did not start work until Monday afternoon, so having clocked in at A Mess and dumped some of my kit at my room in Z Hut drove the 150 miles back home again to return to Larkhill the next morning.

The 3 month course was both exacting and exciting, we were taught to be efficient Gunner Officers with all the complex details of directing gun-fire, the handling of guns, their design including all types of ammunition, their capabilities in theory and much practice on the Ranges. We found daily Gun Drill to be no less exacting than Foot Drill at the Shop.

In December we got our postings, at that time there was a total of 31 Gunner Regiments, mine was lucky enough to be to the 3rd Light Brigade, stationed at Norwich and due to go overseas to Egypt in 18 months. We were given a months leave before joining, so I went home for the usual family Christmas celebrations. The weather that year was exceptionally hard, with thick ice on all the ponds, we played endless games of ice hockey on the Peddies lake or Stansted Flats and became skilled enough to have team competitions, Nessie was always the most energetic and dangerous player.

### Pre-War Army 1932 - 1939

Gunner etiquette and behaviour was also drilled into us. The instruction under the I.G's Brian Wainwright and Micky Culverwell was first class. We were all fit and keen, so the whole course was enjoyable and a firm foundation for the future.

As always in the Army sport and games were encouraged, I hunted with the R.A.Harriers on Army Horses, played most games against teams from other Courses and whenever possible went to the Races with Carey Hayward and Desmond Clarke, both life long friends,

Carey Hayward lived at Maddington Manor, Shrewton, his father farmed a huge acreage of downland and was most hospitable, we were invited constantly to tennis, supper and bridge parties so having the opportunity to meet the local girls.

But it was another big farmer Geoffrey Parsons a friend of Cousin Donald who introduced me to Molly Long, my first tentative flame, who accompanied me to the Cinema in Salisbury and night drives round the Plain.

We wore khaki uniform, Sam Brown belt. breeches and field boots for lectures, denim overalls for Gun Drill and field work, and Mess Kit for dinner at 8 pm every night except Sunday. We were allowed to sign out 2 nights a week and usually went to Salisbury for a pub supper and Cinema.

I drove home for the occasional weekend or to Radley to stay with my old Tutor, Mr Smale and take brother Stephen out for the day to Abingdon or Oxford. Once to London to see my sister Barbara in "Playground" her first part in a West End theatre, and to order an evening hunting pink tail coat from Hawkes. Tissiman had taken in my father's black hunting coat to fit me reasonably, but I thought Subalterns should be properly dressed in the hunting field so ordered a new pink coat as well, plus 3 pairs of white breeches.

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The weather that winter was exceptionally hard, with thick ice on all the ponds, hunting was cancelled so we played endless games of ice hockey on the Peddies lake or Stansted Flats and became skilled enough to have team competitions, Nessie was always the most energetic and dangerous player.

On 30th January I drove to Nelson Barracks, Norwich and proudly reported for duty as a fully fledged but very green Gunner Subaltern. I was sent to 118th Light Battery as Right Section Commander and shown the ropes kindly and meticulously by Norman Foster commanding the Left Section. Norman was an exceptionally good Officer in every way, 2 year's older than I he had won the Sword of Honour at the Shop. was a first class games player and completely on top of his job, all was work and serious including playing the bagpipes.

The Centre Section Commander was Harry Hall, a very senior Subaltern aged 30, married with 3 children and lived out, he did not ooze efficiency, rather gentle benevolence, but with plenty of common sense, was a knowledgeable horse master and keen follower to hounds, we became firm friends. The Battery Captain was John (Daddy) Warde, a courtly country gentleman with a huge estate Squerryes at Westerham, he was busy courting his future wife Anne Cook and did not appear much and soon became Adjutant taking over from Captain Askwith.

H.S.(Hotstuff) Browne was our Battery Commander, much decorated in the First War and Staff College trained, his interests appeared to us to be in arranging Tactical Exercises and Mobilisation schemes rather than in routine Gun Drill, our horses or individual training. As we were equipped with 3.7 Pack Howitzers all our training was with a view to service on the N.W. Frontier of India, when the sun shone we even used heliograph signals between the Observation Posts and the gun position.

Our Colonel P.M.Medill was not a fit man, he retired in a few months and died a year later. My Section of 2 guns with 2 experienced No 1 Sergeants Stimson and Tripp, 20 pack Gunners, selected for strength to lift the heavy loads, 20 Drivers and 6 Signaller Specialists plus 6 employed men in Offices, Stores etc. had as transport 16 pack mules, 8 horses for the Signallers and Staff and 4 draught horses for 2 ammunition wagons. I was also allotted a Charger, named Sheer Delight, a blood weed, showy on parade but a chicken hearted hunter. My Batman was Gunner Stubbs, a phlegmatic giant with no training but he served me faithfully and well for 2½ years.

Perforce a large amount of time was spent in looking after the animals and training them, the mules were terrific characters, milk and honey with their own drivers but full of mischief for the unwary. Of my prize pair Abbi and Bess, Abbi hated Officers and amused himself by trying to lure them in reach of his heels, while docile Bess liked nothing so much as wiping her drooling mouth on the front of a clean uniform. Two of the horses were steady hunters and I hired them for 15/- a season from the Government and kept them out at Scarning in the centre of the West Norfolk country.

There was one old sinner of a horse Lawyer aged 20 who was too old idle lame and poorly ever to do any work, but the one day of the year he came out of his stall like a two year old, tail up and kicking his heels was the Annual Remount Inspection, when unfit or unsuitable horses were cast. The brute always managed to fool the vets and get an annual reprieve.

And so began 6 halcyon years as a Gunner Subaltern. We worked hard, played hard, were heavily involved socially and expected to do something definite with our generous leaves. Every morning, except Sunday, started at 6.30 with an hours bareback mounted exercise for those not detailed for Riding Instruction either in the School or on Mousehold Heath, the rest of the morning was spent on training or exercises finishing up with Stables and Feed at 12.45. I usually managed to ride 2 or 3 times a day either exercising or schooling my section horses or others lent me by Officers on leave or courses.

Orderly Officer duties came round about every 9 days when we had to stay in Barracks for 24 hours, be available for any emergency, mount and turn out the Guard and Pickets in the horse lines by day and by night, visit the Messes during meal times, finally make a detailed report to the Adjutant the next morning. I spent any intervening spare time in the Riding School or catching up with my letters, at that time I had a large correspondence.

The animals were supposed to have 2 hours rest after their mid-day Feed so the Officers and men played games. The Regiment had good Rugger and Hockey teams for which I played regularly, also many soccer teams trained by our Battery Sergeant Major Mr Hatcher who was himself an Official 1st Class Referee.

For 2 seasons I was scrum half for our Regimental Rugger team, Captained and trained by Puffin Tyler, which won the MacIlwaine Cup, the worldwide Challenge Competition for all Gunner Regiments, the Final being played at Woolwich.

Lady Morse allowed us the use of her private squash court, there were no Army tennis courts but we seemed to be invited to play house party tennis nearly every weekend in the summer.

The Army considered hunting essential training for mounted Officers so when ever there was a suitable Meet of the West Norfolk, Norwich Staghounds or Dunston Harriers we were encouraged to go out, so besides enjoying myself I met and made many good friends.

I bought my first hunter with the advice of Tom Streeter from Sydney Smith of Stansted for £100, a 16 hand 4 year old bright chestnut named Primrose Lad, very showy and over impetuous.

Woosey Smith and I joined the Aeroclub on Mousehold and learnt to fly. Mother had promised to pay for lessons if I got my Pilot's Licence before I was 21, I did just after a second eyesight test. We flew de Havilland Moths with an open cockpit, I found flying around by myself rather dull and landing generally fraught. There were no directional aids I got lost once flying over the sea in misty conditions and was highly relieved to pick up Yarmouth on the coast and friendly railway lines leading me back to Norwich.

Every year we went for a fortnight's Practice Camp at Larkhill to fire our guns on the Ranges under field conditions, this was the practical assessment of the previous years training, the examining Instructors in Gunnery were notoriously hard to satisfy. Also every year we went on Eastern Command manoeuvres for a week in September bivouacing around Colchester area.

At the end of one exercise to save time our Battery decided to march the 65 miles back to Norwich without stopping for the night. We did it in just under 18 hours and Nevill's boots had to be cut off on arrival, not being so Spartan I walked and rode alternatively. Some months later we had a complaint from the house where my Section had halted for a short break that the Cook aged 35 was pregnant by one of the soldiers. On investigation it was found that my Trumpeter Green aged 17 had boasted of his prowess, it cost him 1/- a week Paternity Order from his 2/6d a week pay.

A 2nd Lieutenant's pay was 9/4d per day plus 4d allowances. Living was remarkably cheap and with a small private income I was well off. Mess Bills were under £10 a month, if they were over £15 the Adjutant demanded an explanation. Extra Messing on top of Army Rations was 1/6d a day, there was no Bar in the Mess, all drinks had to be ordered from the waiter and signed for, there was a strict no standing rule. Certain topics of conversation were taboo in the Mess, Politics, Religion and girl's names.

We lived comfortably but not luxuriously in a large antequated building presided over by a Mess Sergeant, housing 1 Major, 2 Captains and about 9 subalterns, there were only 2 bathrooms with no basins in the bedrooms. We dined at 8pm every evening in mess kit for a 5 course meal and then the table was cleared for the port to circulate and the Kings Health drunk, failure to sign out before midday incurred a fine. Sundays we relaxed over a running supper from 7.30 pm wearing dinner jackets.

After dinner we were free, sometimes we went out but usually stayed in, listened to the News on Radio and retired to our rooms to work for Promotion Exams and write letters, then to bed about midnight. Only on monthly Guest Nights did we play cards, billiards fives etc.

I exchanged my faithful Baby Austin for a new one with fabric body, supposed to be smarter and quieter and after 2 years changed again before we left Norwich for a very smart bright blue Vauxhall coupe, which had a self starter and electric windscreen wipers. A city slicker's car and quite unsuitable for the rough use it was to get in Egypt bumping over desert tracks.

We were very social and expected to "call" on first coming to Norwich on the local dignitaries. I was given a long list by the Adjutant of people to call on or leave cards, starting with the Colonel and finishing with the Dean and Mrs Cranage. I always hoped when I rang the front door bell at 3.30 pm for the "Not at Home." reply, if unlucky it was considered bad form not to stay for at least 20 mins agonising chat. We were usually made welcome by families with unmarried daughters.

Calling on General and Mrs Hare I was shown into the drawing room to wait, the fire was laid but not lit, I started a cigarette and when I heard the General approaching threw it into the grate, the fire caught in a blaze. "Ah" the General said "I see you've made yourself at home!".

I had two introductions, one to General Stewart, Aunt Podge's brother, who lived at Seething. I was considerably shaken in my first week to be sent for by the Colonel and told there was a General waiting in the Mess to see me. However he was extremely kind and having been the youngest Gunner Brigadier in the Great War was most interested to visit a Gunner Regiment again. He and his wife Harry, they had no children, entertained me many times to lunch in their house and he always came himself to support any Gunner event.

My second introduction was from Cousin Humphrey Watney to his ex-girl friend now wife of Sir Roderick Wigan of Horstead Hall, a huge mansion surrounded by an imposing park. I was made welcome and partnered their daughter Joan on many occasions to dances and tennis parties.

In those palmy days the County Landowners with large houses in Norfolk were extremely hospitable, there was no shortage of Staff, any parents with eligible daughters entertained regularly and were glad to have Subalterns to their various parties. There was even a noticeboard in the Mess for invitations via the PMC for the company of 2 or 3 unspecified subalterns to tennis parties and dances. I was of an age to accept any invitation going, my diary records a succession of engagements to dinner, picnics, days on the Broads and Balls.

Molly Bell was my most frequent partner, we hunted together and made up cinema/dance evening parties or just evenings, she was decorative and lively, we enjoyed each others company and became very good friends.



I'd been introduced to the McLeans by our Adjutant's wife Anne Warde and was asked many times to partner my future wife Heather, it was no hardship except for the 20 mile drive back to Barracks in the early morning. Subalterns were not permitted to marry, anyhow we were too immature, a good-night peck on the cheek was the official advice, good advice but not always followed.

When Colonel St Clair took over Command of the Brigade my activities blossomed faster and further. He had a string of thoroughbred hunters and a family of 5 girls with a boy at the end. The two elder girls had just "Come Out" and were ready for partners and escorts, many of which duties came my way but were heavy going.

Colonel "Peckham" St Clair was the perfect pre-War Commanding Officer, he had every attribute from looking the part, a real extrovert with apparently wealth to be truly hospitable and above all no-nonsense common sense, naturally he became a General. He encouraged his Officers in every sport and activity and kindly allowed me to ride his good horses for exercise, hunting, gymkhanas and in Point to Points. I was lucky enough to be given many rides in the local Point to Points, usually mounted by some farmer or brother Officer who wished to try out a young horse. I had both my share of falls and successes. Mother sometimes came up with a party from Essex to witness my triumph or disaster.

The Colonel sent me on two long Courses. An Anti-Gas Course for a month at Porton Down, where I was guinea pig in the development of special spectacles for wearing inside a gas mask, so I received a "D" Distinguished report. Automatically I became Brigade Gas Officer responsible for the training of All Ranks.

At that time Anti-Gas precautions were taken seriously through out the country. The Red Cross VAD Detachments had a special course and exam, I was roped in for both and had the doubtful pleasure of testing Mrs McLean's Dereham Detachment including my future wife Heather, she passed the exam!

The second was a 3 month Signals Officer Course at Catterick in September for which there was a Passing-In exam including the ability to send and receive Morse Code messages by buzzer, lamp and flag at so many words per minute. Idly I had made no attempt to reach the standard required and failed the entry test, so with 3 or 4 others we were returned to our Units. My Colonel was not pleased and said "No leave until you've passed the test." So for the next 12 weeks I sweated at the Morse Code day and night until in December was able to pass at the required speeds.

I returned to Catterick for the next Course in January, deep snow on the ground, and paid for my previous idleness by many hours reading and sending messages out on the Ranges in arctic conditions.

It was not an enjoyable Course but enabled me to spend week ends with friends in the North, the Crosses at Gatehouse, Johnny Dixon at Blundellsands and the Nortons at Grice Hall near Huddersfield, the only house I ever stayed where my car was automatically taken away cleaned and filled up with petrol.

On return to 3rd Light Brigade I was appointed Signal Officer and Assistant Adjutant at the same time as Regimental MT Officer. We were to be mechanised on arrival in Egypt so started driving and maintenance training on six very old half track vehicles, the soldiers thoroughly enjoyed learning to drive but the number of accidents and breakdowns was appalling.

Norwich was an easy drive home so I was able to nip down on Sundays for the day and also for many weekends when Mother was there, though not really well she travelled abroad several times a year and took a flat in Rome for the winter months. She determined to leave Whitehall Cottage on it's cold, damp clay soil for a house built on gravel which would be better for her rheumatism, after 6 months house hunting in 1933 she bought "Hollies" in Stansted, built on a disused gravel pit, from Mr Cooper the Dentist for £1,500. After many improvements and alterations including extra bedrooms, central heating, a large outside play room cum workshop and a tennis court she finally moved in on 9th November to the family's sadness and Uncle Tresh's pained surprise.

Whitehall Cottage a lovely country house had been our spacious home for twenty years and more, in our selfish opinion Hollies a new Villa in suburban St John's road compared very unfavourably. But Mother knew what she was doing as always and made the house very comfortable and pleasant both for herself and for us three grown up children no longer based at home. She had a Cook Annie, Rose and Kathy to look after her as well as gardener Saunders.

In July 1933 Mother gave me a sumptuous 21st Birthday Party Ball at Whitehall Cottage for 150 friends and relations, the last big party we were to have there. Kingston & Miller made all the arrangements for marquees, catering and bands etc, for me a wonderful evening and a great success. A posse of Subalterns came from Norwich and Larkhill and were put up by Uncle Tresh in the bachelor Guest Rooms in the Stables. We danced joyously to Reg Pursglove's Band 'til 3 am finishing with a bacon and eggs breakfast. The only untoward incident was loud cries of Help from the summerhouse, Heloise Orbach had fallen into the clutches of Johnny Dixon, Phil of course to the rescue.

Mother never interfered with our arrangements or offered advice unless asked, it was then definite and direct based on her own inflexible high principles. But she made plenty of arrangements for us in the way of holidays abroad, parties in London and entertainments at home and somehow managed to ensure that there was sufficient cash for all. I adored her, for her love, principles and originality, she was good fun, knowledgeable and widely read.

### EGYPT 1936

In March 1936 the 3rd Light Brigade moved to Egypt to take over from 2nd Light Brigade, a routine Trooping. My diary records a hectic last day in Norwich. Schooling a horse over jumps at 6.30am, spending the morning handing over my Section and various Regimental duties to Ben Atkinson, then driving with Mimi to a Point to Point at Stibbard where we both had rides, followed by a dash back to change and take Molly Bell out to a farewell dinner in Norwich finally getting back to Barracks at 3 am. The next morning at 9 am the Battery, only 47 strong, marched to Norwich Station for London and Southampton where we boarded the Troopship Dorsetshire and immediately went on shore to a Farewell Dinner given by Colonel St Clair, we sailed on the tide the next morning early with the Regimental Band playing us off.

After 2 weeks voyage the Regiment was landed at Alexandria and entrained to Cairo arriving after dark and was met by 2nd Light Brigade and driven out to their Barracks at Helieh 12 miles out of Cairo in semi desert country. The first few days were spent in taking over the out-going Regiment's equipment and their 3.7 howitzers towed by Dragons, a tracked vehicle powered by superb Meadows marine engines. The Regiment was completely mechanised except for a few polo ponies belonging to Officers, I bought 2 from the Officers leaving, one a beautiful Arab stallion "Fudge" from Owen Williams Wynn.

Several of the Officers had not completed their overseas tour and so joined 3rd Light Brigade including an old friend from Stortford, Graham Peddie. Colonel St Clair was still our C.O., Keith Beddington Adjutant, I was pulled in as his Assistant Adjutant. We all found the climate very hot, it took us some weeks to acclimatise but we played games every afternoon polo, cricket, tennis and even squash. There were no Parades in the afternoon, we started work early around first light instead.

Thanks to the Colonel's recommendation in June I got "My Jacket" on appointment to the Royal Horse Artillery and was posted to 1st R.H.A. Regt at Abbassia, 6 miles down the road to Cairo. My early appointment was a considerable honour, I had not completed the 4 years service as a Subaltern normally required. As there were only 2 Horse Artillery Regiments out of a total of 31 Gunner Regiments it seemed I was one of the 20 picked Subalterns in the whole Royal Artillery.

I joined 1st RHA in July '36 and was posted to B.Battery RHA, the other 2 Subalterns were Rob Hodson Mackenzie and Barrie Wilson. Jackie Wooroffe was Battery Captain, sadly the very first official ceremonial parade I attended was the funeral of our Battery Commander "Monkey " McKie, who had died suddenly from a chill after playing polo. It was several months before Dickie Richards arrived with his 2 Kadir Cup winning horses to take over B Battery.

Colonel Sebag Montefiore came out to take over from Col Toby Butler, it was his first ever service out of the UK, previously he had always "bought an exchange". Colonel Sebag was a practicing Jew, a widower, wealthy with boundless drive, energy and enthusiasm, a real extrovert, everything he owned must be the best including his Regiment. He must have upset the more staid Senior Officers but to us Subalterns he was marvellous pushing us to excel and supporting us with his forceful and generous personality, he expected a superlative standard of training, initiative and behaviour and got it.

One day I was summoned by the Adjutant "Smee" Hyde Smith, the Army Squash and Rackets Champion to his Office. Sebag walked in seeing the piles of paper on the desk he tossed them all up in the air shouting "Snow Smee, Snow!"

The Regiment had only just been mechanised 3.7 howitzers towed by Dragons, the Battery Staff had Austin 10 open cars, very prone to get stuck in the sand dunes, fitted with radio 22 Sets having a range of about 5 miles. My excellent signaller/driver Gnr Faith later rose to become the formidable and famous R.S.M. Mister Faith.

It was mostly desert training, there were many long reconnaissance schemes into unmapped areas, navigation by sun compass, we got to know the deserts either side of the Nile well. Sleeping out at night was surprisingly cold, by day the all pervading sand and flies were unpleasing.

In Barracks parades and duties were organised by the BSM Mr Wright, a very efficient pocket Napoleon, each evening he reclined on his bed while the 5 Sergeants stood to Attention to receive their orders, his meticulously hand written Order Book for the next day was then circulated to the Subalterns detailing the parades to be attended with times and dress.

All equipment and vehicles had to be maintained to a perfect standard, Dickie Richards devised the distinctive Battery emblem of a black and white chequer board, which is still in use.

Polo was taken seriously, the Army still provided each Officer with a pony, forage and share of a groom, the few who didn't play loaned out their perks. So I had 2 ponies of my own and 2 Army ones. We played at the luxurious Gezira Club twice a week in the season, the ponies being trotted down by the grooms through the 6 miles of Cairo traffic. Mostly we played friendly chukkas organised the night before, but at the end of the season Competitions at all grades were held, the high light being the Inter-Regimental Championship.

I spent hours every day schooling ponies and practising in the polo pits and enjoyed it all tremendously, with a Handicap of -1, was just good enough to play in our Subalterns team but not the Regimental one. However I played regulary for the Regimental and Battery cricket, hockey and Rugger sides, we had some first class players amongst the troops, Dvr Birch one of my Limber Gunners played cricket and hockey for the Army.

Our Officers Mess one of four in a row had originally been part of the harem of the King's Uncle, the 7th Hussars, 8th Hussars and Northumberland Fusiliers occupied the other three blocks. The Mess was spacious and cool with two walled garden courtyards, there were 14 of us living-in each with a large room, sharing an Egyptian batman between two. Mine was known as "Christmas".

The kind Adjutant's wife Peggy de Robeck supervised the washing and mending of our clothes! The de Robecks brought out two nieces to join the "fishing fleet" one Peggy Reed was very soignee and pretty, the other James was very lively and amusing, they both were easy to entertain and much in demand. Eventually Peggy married Rob Mackenzie and James Jack Slade Powell.

There was never any shortage of girls for dances, picnics, parties and week-end Camp at Sukhnur on the Suez Canal only faintly chaperoned by a gay grass widow. We dined in Mess Kit every night except Sunday but could sign out before lunch and go down to Cairo for supper to one of the excellent restaurants which also provided a show, cinema or buckle jumping. Caviar and champagne were both cheap and affordable. With the girls we cut a dash at Shepherds famous Hotel for champagne cocktails at 10 piastres each.

I tried to stay in 2 nights a week to work at my Metropolitan Services Correspondence Course for Staff College Entrance Exam but always got behindhand submitting papers and finally gave up the struggle when we moved back to England.

I had my blue Vauxhall Coupe for town driving and shared an old Ford with John Northern for rough work over desert tracks. It was a splendid vehicle, cost £10 from a Russian Garage mechanic, never failed to start on the handle, the petrol tank was above the dash-board (drip feed) and the cylinder block could be seen through the gaps in the floor-boards glowing a dull red hot. After 2 years very hard work we sold it when we left Cairo for £12.

I more or less gave up flying from Heliopolis, radius of action had a fuel limit of about 150 miles, a solitary non social activity which became boring, after several excursions up and down the Nile or Suez Canal, just overflying the endless deserts seemed unrewarding and slightly hazardous. Once I did fly between the Pyramids and got justly reprimanded by Authority.

Leave for expeditions was generous but not quite enough for a driving safari trip to Kenya which I had taken some trouble planning. "Jacko" took John Northern and myself in his large Pontiac up the Nile through Luxor and as far as we could get in three weeks to sight-see ancient Egyptology.

Twice with "Prince" Elliott to Greece, ferrying my car from Alexandria to Athens, to explore ancient remains and climb the mountains. At that time the track to Olympia was completely overgrown and we had to cut a way through to get to the unvisited Stadium. Crossing to Corfu "Prince" was mistaken for HRH who was cruising in the Aegean at that time and we had an embarrassing red carpet reception from the Mayor with welcoming speeches, for one night until the mistake was put right we were housed in the Kaiser's Villa, "Acheillon".

The longest car trip I did took three weeks with Tom Jago in his Ford V8 through Greece, Albania, Yugoslavia, Hungary, Austria, Germany and home in time to watch the Silver Jubilee procession from Uncle Syd's flat in the Northumberland Hotel with a large family party.

In Albania the car broke a spring on an atrocious mountain road miles from any civilisation. The only person in sight was a shepherd on the mountains, he came down and unbelievably spoke in American, he had worked in a garage in Chicago for four years. He undertook to fetch the blacksmith to repair the broken spring but as it would take all day directed us to a bus cum lorry going to Tirana where we put up for the night at the Metropole hotel. Our beds were wooden slats covered with a single goat skin dyed red, there were no water taps and the sanitary arrangements just a simple round hole in a concrete floor.

King Zog was in residence, we noticed the sentries outside the Palace were facing inwards instead of out and understood by sign language it was so that they could get a shot at the King should he show himself. The next day we

returned to the car and found it repaired with extra leaves bolted on, a rough job but quite serviceable enough to take us home.

We had two other major delays, first when we were stopped and accused of photographing a Naval Base near Split and only allowed to proceed after many hours questioning, but without our used camera films. The second was when Tom went absent for 24 hours in Budapest and was eventually found in the Arizona Night Club quite unrepentant, he was always extremely good looking and fond of the ladies. So we had to cut out a visit to Baroness Montefiore in Zell am Zee in spite of our Colonel's introduction and went straight on to Germany spending 2 nights at the Rota Hahn in Munich before crossing the Channel at Dieppe.

I spent the rest of my leave at Hollies, where Mother lived comfortably with a cook and Rose as house parlour-maid, Kathy had left to run a Children's Home but Saunders still managed the garden admirably, bicycling in from Birchanger every day including Sundays by 7.30 am to stoke the boiler.

Mother had kept her Ambassadorial flat in Rome where she spent most of the winter with Barbara or a travelling friend, though by no means an invalid she was not really well and often had a daily Nurse in to help her get up.

Barbara, who was courting several Italians at once, Stephen, who was still at Cambridge living in luxurious digs with a grand piano and I all continued to use Hollies as our base, our belongings were kept there with rooms and beds ready, I am afraid we all used it when it suited us as an ever welcoming and free hotel.

#### Aldershot & Bulford 1937- 1939

In September 1937 1st Regiment RHA handed over to the 2nd Regiment and returned to Waterloo Barracks. Aldershot. After a champagne send-off party at Cairo Station, I left Daphne Watson in tears, we embarked in the Somersetshire at Alexandria. Mrs Campbell wife of the Captain of HMS Hood and her daughter were also on board, when we got to Malta the Hood was in, so we had a round of Naval entertainments for the 3 nights of our visit.

On arrival at Waterloo Barracks, Aldershot we took over the guns, vehicles and equipment which 2nd Regt RHA had left behind for us. Our Regiment was very much under strength, a large number of men were due for release and transfer to the Reserve. Frank Weldon took over from Rob Hodson McKenzie on his promotion to Captain, to make the third Subaltern in B Battery with Percy Gough and myself.

Recruits were slow to arrive so that our role was that of a basic training cadre. Having set up the classes in gun drill, driving and signalling with the necessary instructors and equipment there was little for the subalterns to do except routine supervision and checks.

The peacetime sports facilities at Aldershot were quite excellent so we were able to raise and train teams for all recognised forms of Army Sport and naturally take part. The Sports facilities at the Officers Club were equally good, we played polo regularly twice a week, cricket and tennis in the summer, hockey and squash in the winter.

We still had some Army horses together with grooms and free fodder. One of my duties was Administration of the R.A. Mounted Band which, besides doing the Accounts and ordering expensive sheet music, entailed looking after the 30 band horses, some of which were good hunters. We were able to hire them for 15/- from the Army for the season. I acquired Duke, the flute carrier, a very strong steady performer in the S.Berks country. I bought Salverre, a thoroughbred steeplechaser from Fred Tod and acquired a charger Ground Ginger an excellent hunter and jumper, with my 4 polo ponies I had a stud of 7 horses to exercise and use with enjoyment. I found the time, by starting early, to ride 3 times a day.

Colonel Sebag encouraged us to hunt so Mark Maunsell, Poley and I sent 2 horses each to William Whiteley's stables at Bletchley together with 3 Army Grooms. William Whiteley had served in the Chestnut Troop, besides owning Whiteley's Department Store in Bayswater he was an MP. under Mark's skilled blandishments he was most helpful and generous to us. Sharing transport we had a wonderful seasons hunting with Lord Roseberry's Whaddon Chase, I also hunted regularly with the S.Berks keeping Duke in either Rupert Gilbey's or Bassie's stables. Percy was always keen to join me as Peggy Wallace, whom he was courting and eventually married, was a staunch follower.

Gnr Cartwright became my batman, I taught him to drive so that he could use my Austin 10 as a forerunner, while I drove my plush new Rover Pilot 14. We were very social, girls were plentiful around Aldershot as parteners, on many occasions Jumbo or Mary Simonds happily accompanied me as did Noreen McGill, Pam Smith and Cynthia Cook to the local Balls or Dance Halls combined with Point to Points, Horse-shows, Gymkhanas etc.

London was not too far away to go up for the evening, Sebag liked to drive up at the rate of knots after dinner in the Mess with a party of Subalterns and foot the bill. I often went up by myself to meet a partner see a Show, have supper and dance afterwards.



I joined The United Services Club "The Senior" sponsored by Hammer Matthews in order to have a base and place where I could entertain and spend the night, I also joined, through Uncle Tresh, Hurlingham for polo and tennis as well as Ciro's and several other popular Night Clubs. The St Clair daughters were doing the London Season so I was often asked to dine and escort them to Deb's Balls. Madeleine Griffiths and Moyra Charlton were my frequent partners, whenever Madeleine and I went to the Savoy we were treated to a large silver bowl of roses on our table, her mother "Blue" Griffiths had the contract for supplying flowers to the Savoy. Occasionally I was able to meet Heather, she happily accompanied me to the Caius May Week Ball with Stephen, Pam Bryans, Charlie Cunningham and Diana Higgs, which proved to be a highlight in our wayward courtship.

Mother had taken the lease of a flat in St Mary's Mansions, Paddington to be close to Barbara and her children and to have a base in London again. We all had keys and were allowed to use it, occasionally I slept there after late dances when my partner professed to not being expected home.

Nowdays this sort of life style would be very expensive, but in 1937 a £5 note covered an evening out for two in London including a theatre, supper and dancing at the Savoy. Petrol cost only 1/6d a gallon, vintage champagne 9/- a bottle. I received my Grandfather Gold's legacy, one third of one twenty seventh of the residue of his estate, which amounted to about £10,000 including some of the original W&A Gilbey £10 shares. George Schwerdt and Uncle Geoff gave me excellent advice on how to invest this Capital, which owing to inflation has grown astronomically in paper value over 50 years.

For the first time I had to pay surtax on my Gross Income, which at that time was only levied on a few thousand supposedly rich taxpayers. I was able to save enough money to buy further Stocks and Shares. I have kept the old hand-written Contract Notes of my first dealings on the Stock Exchange.

In the Spring the Regiment was modernised and reorganised into only 2 Batteries of 8 guns instead of 3 Batteries of 6 guns each, but still equipped with 3.7 howitzers towed by dragons, with a new system of fire control by plane table and window to enable a target to be engaged quickly by massed Artillery fire. B Battery amalgamated with the Rocket Troop to form B/O Battery and the Chestnuts joined E to become A/E Battery RHA.

The whole Regiment moved to Bulford into new barraccks built by Hore Belisha, which were very comfortable but we lost the use of the Band Horses as the Mounted Band remained in Aldershot. Bill Duncan took over from Sebag as Colonel, with Philip Balfour as 2 IC, Dolly de Fanblanque later replaced by

John Chillingworth commanding B/O Battery. The international crisis looming with the Nazis in Germany resulted in a flood of recruits and equipment, also our Reserve Officers including Ralph Vickers joined, training in the 2nd Division, earmarked as first overseas for a possible war, became much more serious and rigorous, Drill Orders, TEWTs and Study Sessions proliferated..

With Bill and Patience Chestermaster's kind help, then living at Oxford House, I kept Salverre and Ground Ginger at Cirencester for the 1938/39 Hunting Season with the VWH. Lord Knebworth was Master and hunted hounds himself. The season was marred by two stupid accidents, both my own fault, Ground Ginger was badly cut by barbed wire jumping a fence and my Rover severely damaged when I skidded into a lorry on a hump back bridge driving to the Meet in full Hunting kit on a snowy day. Luckily both times only suffered bruises myself. Alas the car was mended much the most quickly, I had a second car but not another good hunter.

In January I joined Stephen's large party of friends at Klosters for 10 days ski-ing, unfortunately I was laid up for a couple of days with a 'flu bug. On my way home, travelling alone 2nd Class Sleeper as usual. I called on Mother for the last time in her flat in Rome, I broke my journey for one night at Monte Carlo, went to the Sporting Club in the evening and had an incredible run of good luck at Roulette backing number 18, I came away £150 richer.

Barbara and Philip Connell married in 1935, first in a Registry Office in London under Joan Norton's compelling eye, a few months later at St Michael's, Stortford where I euphemistically gave her away. They took and lived in a flat at St Mary's Mansions, Paddington. When their first daughter Annabel was born Mother gave up her flat in Rome for patriotic reasons and moved into the next door flat in St Mary's Mansions in order to enjoy her first grandchild to the full. Mother furnished her flat comfortably with a spare bedroom, which I could use. As we were now stationed on the Plain it was easier to meet in London than at Hollies especially as Stephen by then lived in a maisonette with Charlie Cunningham at 25 Quebec St while qualifying as a Doctor at St Georges.

From this account it sounds as though we were idle and absentee Officers intent on our own pleasures, in fact we were trained to be quick and able to squeeze a lot into a short time, we lived at a racing pace. Being fit and young a few hours sleep sufficed, we were never tired only bored at inactivity. Once and once only in 7 years was I late for a parade.

Our Senior Officers in RHA were chosen for their ability and efficiency, they saw to it that their Subalterns were smart, highly trained technically and had initiative to plan ahead. The Subalterns took care to pass these precepts on

to their own N.C.O.s. The standard of turn-out, drill and manoeuvre was very high and the competition between Batteries and their Officers fierce.

With plenty of practice, my bent for mathematics and a photographic memory, the technical side of Gunnery was no problem, I could memorise the relevant sections in the Range Tables and work out gun and fuze settings for predicted fire in my head, such calculations would have taken a beginner very, very much longer. there were no computers at the Gun position, all ballistic problems had to be solved with paper, pencil, Range Table and Slide Rule.

In addition the multitude of Sports and Games ensured that we really got to know the N.C.O.s and men, as well as the Subalterns in the Cavalry Regiments in our Division.

#### WAR YEARS 1939 - 1945

We were sailing in the Solent on Hammer Matthews' converted lifeboat "The Cormorant" when we heard on the Radio that Mussolini had invaded Abyssinia. Hammer said "That's it, we're off!" and put the helm down for Cracknore Hard and back to the Regiment in Bulford as quickly as possible. He was right, 2 days later we with the 2nd Division were ordered to mobilise.

(The keeping of personal Diaries was forbidden during the War. I restarted my Daily Diary in May 1945. Some of my letters home, which have been preserved, give general if guarded information.)

2nd Div including 1st RHA were ordered to mobilise for War in July 1939 and to concentrate near Blandford ready for embarkation overseas at 48 hours notice. The Mobilisation Plan was put into operation and the Regiment ordered into billets at Shillingstone, near Blandford. A large number of Reservists trickled in and there was much cross posting of Officers and senior Other Ranks in order to supplement T.A. Regiments and form Cadres for the raising of new Regiments. More Reserve Officers were posted in Bill Williams, Ted Kavanagh, Bill Lowesley Williams and "soft" Rowe, the latter an ineffectual bane.

Colonel Tosco Peppe took over Command with Bill Williams as his 2IC. John Chillingworth commanded B/O and Hammer Matthews A/E Batteries. The other Regular Officers in B/O Battery being Nat Kindersley, Tosti Wright, Frank Weldon and Bunny Hanwell.

Lyndon Bolton became Adjutant and I was appointed Assistant Adjutant with a whole string of other duties added, far too many for efficiency. I was made Regtl HQ Troop Commander, Technical Adjutant, Intelligence Officer, Regtl Messing Officer, Regtl Signals Officer, Regtl Gas Officer, Mess Secretary, Billeting Officer and for a time until Robert Loder Symonds arrived to take over Survey Officer as well. It is interesting that by the end of the War a Major and 3 other Officers were included on Regimental HQ strength for just these duties.

Indents for all the necessary equipment and spares were sent to the relevant depots, everything seemed to be in short supply particularly MF spares, so that I had to make constant trips all over the South of England to the various Ordnance Depots, themselves in a state of Mobilisation chaos, in order to wheedle the issue of our missing necessities.

By the time War with Germany and Italy was declared on 3rd September the Regiment was ready in billets at Shillingstone. I had reserved for myself a room in Mrs Florence Portman's spacious house, as she still kept a cook and a maid, we lived very comfortably and dining together most evenings became friends.

Private cars were either taken over by the Government, sold or laid up. I drove my Rover home for a weekend with Mother at Hollies and laid it up in the garage, strict petrol rationing was brought in. All Army horses were returned to Remounts, but I still kept Salverre at a near by farm and rode out over Bulbarrow in the early mornings. Once I was tactless enough to disturb Bet Barclay, a dancing partner from Norwich days, under a gorse bush with a friend.

Local transport was by my bicycle. One Saturday afternoon I cycled over to the McGills at Spencers Wood, a distance of 50 miles with suitcase on the carrier. I arrived before supper so stiff, sore and tired that I fell asleep in the bath and afterwards failed to do justice to Noreen's hospitality.

At the end of September 1939 the Regiment was ordered to France with the 2nd Division to support the left flank of the French Army already deployed to face the threat of a German attack through Belgium, and so crossed the Channel during the night of 21st October from Southampton to Cherbourg in the "Duke of Argyll."

As the I.O. travelling with the Colonel in his staff car we went ahead while the main body followed the route we had signed to their billets. We spent 3 very comfortable nights in a small hotel outside le Mans, Madame was a superb cook. It took the best part of an icy cold fortnight driving through snow storms to assemble the Regiment complete with men, guns (still 3.7 howitzers), stores and equipment in our deployment area about 6 miles North of Lille.

The Regiment was billeted in the surrounding villages with Regimental Headquarters at the Chateau Debailleux. It was my thankless task to allocate billets, the Mairies were uninterested, the French owners were far from helpful and everyone complained that their accommodation was worse than their neighbours.

I set up the HQ Mess in the Chateau with very inadequate staff, the Colonel complained bitterly at being served bully fritters on the first night by the inexperienced Gunner cook, I was hungry and thought them excellent.

I settled myself comfortably in the home of the local brewer, the family were kind and co-operative particularly the 14 year old daughter who was learning English at school and only too willing to act as interpreter. My grasp of French was of the tourist variety and not up to military technicalities.

Our orders were to liaise with the French Regiments on our right and to prepare defensive positions. Constant liaison with the French units was painful and unproductive, their official Liaison Officers showed no other interest than to dine and wine free in our Mess.

That winter of the Phoney War was very cold with hard frost, which made gun emplacements and dug-outs difficult to construct without the help of the Sappers. It was not easy to keep the men fit and happy, route marches were organised, individual training re-started and TEWTS held at all levels. The only recreations seemed to be visits to Lille, a few scratch soccer games on frozen fields or sliding on the sheets of ice.

In February there was a fresh appraisal of the military situation and we were ordered to be ready to move forward into Belgium leaving our prepared positions but not allowed to recce ahead across the border into Belgium. The Colonel with prescience decided to send all records, plate and valuables back to the U.K. and I was put in charge, so with 5 large boxes and my batman Cartwright made my way against the traffic by train and lorry-hopping to Le Havre, crossed the Channel in an empty supply ship and eventually arrived at the R.A. Depot, Woolwich, where I handed over the records and boxes for safe keeping. Such was the chaos on the French railway that while we were waiting at a station a train with German markings chugged steadily through.

I went home for the night to find the house on a war footing all blacked out, the cellar made into an Airaid Shelter, the valuables packed away and long term stores packed in crates with misleading labels to confuse invaders, champagne was labelled "Raspberry Jam" and Whisky "Malvern Water"! All signs and signposts had been removed from roads and Railway Stations for the same purpose. The local inhabitants had been instructed not to give directions nor

answer questions, which made travelling even more fraught.

I collected my Rover car and the next day reported to AG6 (Colonel Jerry Napier) in London. He said "Do you speak Scotch as you are going to be posted to the Lanarkshire Yeomanry as Adjutant to convert them into a Gunner Field Regiment."

I was sad to leave 1 RHA after 4 very happy years, but as it turned out extremely lucky. When the German attack came in May the Regiment moved up into Belgium and was surrounded almost at once, the whole of Regt1 HQ and B/O Battery were taken "Prisoner of War." including many of my Officer friends. Most of the personnel of A/E Battery were evacuated without their guns and equipment through Dunkirk.

I had a week's leave, Tom Streeter kindly mounted me for 2 days hunting with the Puckeridge, it was still the "Phoney War" and everyone tried to keep up their normal activities in spite of the Black-out and food and petrol rationing.

I drove to Lanark with my batman Cartwright mid February and took over as Adjutant from Harry Scott. The Lanarkshire Yeomanry were then a horsed Cavalry Regiment with strong traditions, not all the Officers and men relished the change of becoming a Gunner Regiment and insisted that the new Regiment be called 155 (Lanarkshire Yeomanry) Field Regiment R.A. with authority to wear the Lanarkshire Yeomanry cap badge.

The Colonel Alan Murdoch, with one eye and a monocle, was a marvellous enthusiast and go getter, we got on well from the start. Later when the order came to split and form a second 156 Regiment Jack Bates came up as their Adjutant and the Colonel ruthlessly sent all the older and weaker Officers to the new sister Regiment. The horses were returned to Remounts or sold off and the three new Batteries equipped with old 18 pdr guns, 4.5 inch howtzers and a very mixed bag of civilian and old military vehicles. The Batteries were billeted round Lanark, Strathaven and Lesmahagow, the Officers Mess in the Clydesdale Arms, Lanark across the road from Regimental HQ, we lived very comfortably. The Yeomanry Officers were used to a high standard of living and comfort, many of them were very well off and heirs to large Estates.

Alec Lord Dunglass was one of the Squadron Leaders but also Mr Churchill's Private Secretary, he later as Sir Alec Douglas Home became Prime Minister himself, he did not appear at Lanark much but the Colonel was often on the phone to him in Parliament to get problems solved at the highest level.

Several of the Yeomanry Officers had spent their lives previously as "Playboys" perhaps the most notable being the 2IC Gerald Sanderson, a huge, fine looking bachelor and very fit. He was artistic, painted neat water colours and

had a curiously direct simple mind. The grandson of the founder of Vat 69, he was a rich man, it was said that his brother paid him £250,000 a year to stay away from the family firm.

Gerald owned superb horses and cars, lived in his Grandfather's house in Edinburgh looked after by a "Jeeves" and cultivated Russell lupins, every day he received by post 20 new £1 notes and 5 Havana cigars. He was devoted to the Yeomanry's welfare but not interested in technical matters, he was always very generous and amusing company. On one occasion he lent me one of his cars a V12 Lagonda open coupe, driving it out from Edinburgh to Haddington I was horrified to see the speedometer registering 103 mph before I had even got into top gear.

The Regiment received a steady trickle of National Service Officers, Reservists and recruits with a very few Regular trained Gunner N.C.O.s and Y.Os. As Adjutant I was kept extremely busy with postings, interviews, documentation, arranging training programmes and visiting the out lying Batteries. Colonel Russell a dug-out old I.G. arrived to take Gunnery Classes, very knowledgeable he delighted to blind the Yeomen with the rarer aspects of the art, so I was left to teach the practical basics.

By May the War had started disastrously for Great Britain, our particular role was to guard against and apprehend any enemy Parachutists landing over an enormous area, two county size. This entailed patrols and picket posts but worst of all Standing-To for an hour before dark and an hour after and the same again at dawn, the long daylight hours in Scotland in summer meant that we got very little sleep. Our neighbouring Regiment did actually catch one German parachutist, but all our own efforts were in vain.

In August at the time of the Invasion scare our Regiment was ordered to take over the coast defences around North Berwick, for this role we were issued with old naval 6" guns mounted on enormous trailers, which could only be moved by traction engines. We took over a warren of observation posts looking out to sea constructed on the cliff faces by the Sappers and were allowed some practice firing at targets towed on a very long cable out to sea by the Navy.

Regimental Headquarters moved to Haddington and the Officers Mess to fabulous Lennoxlove, very grand, historic and cold. It was a very cold winter, my Rover in spite of "anti-freeze" froze solid and had to be repaired. Petrol rationing, the black-out and pressure of work day and night precluded sport and much social activity, once a week Gerald and I played squash in Edinburgh and stayed to dine, usually at the Cally. I went to two or three Highland Balls partenered by Liz Hannah or Mary Colville. At the Perth Ball I took our French Liaison Officer to watch from the gallery, after several reels he turned to me

and said "Are they savages?"

In December the Regiment was put on a month's notice for duty overseas as a Field Regiment, which we imagined meant North Africa where our Army was engaged in desperate battles. Re-training, with inadequate equipment and insufficient Instructors, was at full stretch.

I took a week's leave and drove home and sold my Rover to Mr Whalley for a paltry £400. Mother had just returned to Hollies after her evacuation with Barbara and her two small daughters to live with Mrs Cross in Dumfriesshire. Phil was in an AA Regiment as Troop Commander near Arbroath and Stephen just finishing his Doctor's qualifying training in St George's Hospital, he had become engaged to Betty Sheedy, I went up to London to meet them for a rushed meal at the Landsdown Club in the black-out where I met Betty for the first time, what a jewel!

Mother was finding life hard, she was not well, feeling old and frustrated with no domestic servants, no petrol, food rationing and the black-out. It was almost impossible to entertain and driving in the dark extremely hazardous, she felt besieged. Although Barbara and her family had come to live at Hollies, bringing near blind Miss Asper, it was a full time effort just to keep going. I said my Good-byes to Mother, both of us thought it could be for the last time and returned to Haddinton by train, a long broken journey with no heat or light in the carriages and not much food.

In January 1941 we received embarkation orders to sail from Liverpool at a week's notice. As our Regiment was to be the major unit on the troopship I was appointed Ships Adjutant, When the order came in February I went on ahead to make arrangements for loading and accommodation. Our Troopship was the Strathmore, a luxury liner in Peacetime hastily converted to transport 4,000 troops with the very minimum of elbow room. As Ships Adjutant I had the old Purser's cabin to myself both as sleeping berth and office, real luxury. Colonel Tiger Jackson of the Buffs was permanent O.C. Troops on board and a stickler for twice daily boat drill.

It took 10 days to embark the Regiment, without guns or vehicles, all the many other detachments, including 26 Nurses and the other troop ships making up the large convoy of 23 ships. I was kept very busy in a strange environment, few were satisfied with their accommodation, but the food was excellent in the Officers Dining room, up to peace time cruise ship standard. By mid March the largest convoy of troopships ever assembled in the UK was grouped in the blackout off Liverpool waiting for Naval Escort.

The huge Escort started to arrive consisting of 5 battleships with



supporting Cruisers and Destroyers all surrounding the convoy as far as the eye could see. The Battleship Repulse was stationed on our port bow. We sailed due North, the most dangerous leg of the voyage, and then West when we reached the Arctic Circle. When we came under shore based air support from Canada we turned South down the American coast. The Naval escort started to be thinned out as our convoy was reckoned to be out of German U-boat range.

At the Equator the convoy altered course West for Freetown, where we were regrouped and further escort ships returned to UK. I had to take a demented electrician ashore at Freetown to hospital. During the long trip in the launch from ship to shore he repeatedly tried to throw himself overboard to the following sharks and had to be forcibly restrained, I was thankful to hand him over to the waiting ambulance.

I spent the afternoon exploring Freetown, very hot and sweaty, was non-plussed to meet a cheetah walking down the street, I just hoped he was tame but quickly entered the nearest shop as a precaution.

After leaving Freetown we enjoyed a balmy cruise down the coast of Africa to Cape Town. Urdu classes were started and we learnt simple phrases, P.T., Boxing, Swimming Competitions and Concerts were arranged to keep the troops occupied and still of course endless Boat Drill, until old Tiger Jackson entertaining the Nurses slipped, broke his ribs and was confined to his cabin, but still seemed to need a lot of the Nurses attention.

At Capetown the convoy of troopships split, those for North Africa going on to Durban while our half en route to India and the Far East put into Capetown for 3 days to take on water and stores.

It was wonderful to see the lights of Capetown twinkling across the Bay after the drab black-out at home, as yet War had not touched South Africa. Immediately we anchored a telephone line was run from shore into my Office and calls started flooding in. A few were on Service matters but by far the most were offers of hospitality to the Troops and Officers.

In the mornings we arranged route marches for all, everyone needed exercise on dry land, afterwards boat loads of liberty men enjoyed the welcoming hospitality of the people of Capetown.

So much so that by evening I was the only soldier left on board, the P&O Agent took pity on me and asked me to go back to supper with him, he had a lovely house and garden high up on Table Mountain. He invited me to meet him next day at one of the big multiple stores, on arrival he asked if I would like anything sent home. he'd be pleased to arrange it as a gift. Tentatively I suggested oranges and sugar, 3 months later a crate of oranges and a loaf of

sugar arrived at Hollies - untold riches - labelled "A present from Capetown"!

That evening my kind friend took me to a palatial and luxurious Country Club outside Capetown where there were girls a-plenty, music and dancing, good food and wine. Many other Officers from the ships were there too by invitation, we were well and truly feted and had a glorious evening. When the Convoy sailed early the next day out of the 4000 men aboard Lt Niles Duner was the only absentee, a wealthy South African he had disappeared, he was an awkward fellow and no loss.

Our convoy plugged on through the Indian Ocean with a diminished escort of 2 Cruisers arriving at Bombay in May after 11 weeks at sea. The Regiment disembarked and moved by train to a hatted Camp at Ahmednagar to pick up guns 18 pdrs and 4,5 howitzers plus ancilliary vehicles and equipment, but most of all to acclimatise, it was very hot and dusty and we were all short of exercise.

The Regiment was ordered to form 3 Batteries of 6 guns instead of the original 2 Batteries of 8 guns each. I was ordered to form the new C Battery as Battery Commander and promoted Temporary Major, which made a considerable difference to pay as we were taken on to higher Indian Army rates. Jim Fassen became my Battery Captain, John MacKenzie took over as Adjutant from me. The two other Battery Commanders were Jock Wilson and Brian Johnson Ferguson, there was a great shortage of trained Officers and N.C.Os. My single recreation was a trip to explore Chand Bibi's memorial.

In June the Regiment moved by road to the Gunner Barracks at Kirkee, which were excellent with every amenity and fully staffed. I acquired an experienced Bearer and the usual ancillary Indian servants. Cartwright became my Jeep driver. So far the War had not touched Army life in India, besides normal weekends the Queen's holiday was still observed every Thursday, the Officers Clubs at Poona and Kirkee maintained their peace time amenities and luxuries.

The Officers Mess was famous, we dined in state every night with full staff of Kitmagars on the notorious dining room table on which the bodies of 11 Officers killed in the battle of Chillianwallah had been laid out. Basic training continued up to Battery Drill Order level but there was no opportunity to practice firing our new old equipment, but we did plenty of water crossing training on Lake Karavasala instead.

John Mackenzie who was in peacetime a Lawyer in Edinburgh discovered that native servants were subject to the old Military Law. The Colonel being new to India and dis-satisfied with his hair cut ordered the native Mess barber "6 strokes of the rattan", the barber wisely disappeared and the rest of the many

servants became a bit more industrious.

I found 2 chargers in the stables, nominally the Commanding General's but not used by him, by arrangement I took them over and as I had brought my saddle boxes with me enjoyed riding out in the country most early mornings. Jim Fassen and I bought a steeplechaser Essex Lad, which ran well. The day before the Kirkee Races Essex Lad developed unsightly warts and I was all for scratching him, I took him to the local English Vet who gave him an injection and said bring him back for another to-morrow, which I did and the Vet then insisted that I ran him that afternoon in the Champion Chase. When I mounted in the saddling enclosure found myself riding a power house, we won easily, I suspected that the Vet made a killing with the Bookmakers as he made no charge and the warts disappeared. I never knew whether I was riding a doped horse, not a word was ever said.

At the Races I met Claudine Sprott again, then married to Colonel Brown on the Staff in Singapore, she and her baby son were parked with her Uncle General Ridell Webster at Government House, Poona.

I contracted jaundice and had a fortnight's sick leave, most of it spent in Claudine's company, we went shopping in the bazaars where she helped me buy materials to send home and afterwards dined with me in the Officers Clubs most evenings, as I was not supposed to eat fats we stuck to pate-de-fois-gras and champagne, both surprisingly in abundant supply.

I wrote to Mother every Sunday and received Air Mail letter cards or mimeographs in return. Life at home sounded very grim with air-raids, bombs and constant alerts, all very drab contrasted with our safe peace time existence. Brother Stephen and Betty were married that July, perforce I missed their wedding.

#### MALAYA Sept 1941 - Feb 1942

In August the Regiment, less Brian Johnson Ferguson's Battery which was destined for the Garrison of Ceylon, embarked at Bombay in the H.M.T Eckma. Regtl Headquarters, Jock Wilson's and my Batteries were transported to Malaya where we disembarked at Port Swettenham on 3rd of September 1941 We moved by road to Ipoh into a hutted camp under the rubber trees. It was a depressing camp, wet, hot very humid and dark, we were quite unused to the frequent torrential rainstorms.

We had been brought in to help protect the Colony from a mythical Japanese invasion, but at that time no one seemed to think it was likely or even

possible. To our way of thinking it would be impossible to attack through the jungles in the North and there was only one road as a line of communication from the South to the North of the peninsula, any how the Royal Navy and the Air Force would easily prevent any sea borne landings.

On 30th September the Regiment moved North to another depressing camp under the rubber trees at Sungei Patani and joined 11 Indian Division commanded by General Murray Lyon. Brigadier Rusher was C.R.A. with 22 Mountain Regiment 3.7 hows also under his command. At last we could start integrating and training with a Division. Colonel Murdoch was excellent at liaising and as ever full of enthusiasm and drive, as too was Gordon Brown who had taken over as Adjutant. The Infantry Companies, mostly newly formed, were training patrols but avoided the impenetrable jungle, there was no higher level training nor briefing, I spent my time with our recce parties getting to know the country and looking for Gun Positions and Observation posts up to the Thailand border.

The terrain was not easy for a Field Regiment, the rubber plantations were vast and covered most of the area giving way to paddy fields near the coast. to the East seemingly impenetrable jungle stretched for ever. Though the plantations were intersected by paths they were narrow, unsurfaced with deep ditches either side to drain the everlasting rain, without cutting down rubber trees, of course forbidden, and building access roads it was almost imposible to find a gun position with any satisfactory field of fire. As for Observation Posts any high point gave a useless view of uninterrupted tree tops.

The local inhabitants mainly Malays with a section of Chinese seemed resigned to our presence neither helpful nor openly hostile, though we were warned that there was a strong Communist element and a well organnised Jap 5th Column. I managed to make a couple of trips to the Cameron Highlands and also to the famous Oriental Club at Penang for memorable Sunday reistaffles. There was little recreatiion for the men living in depressing conditions. Most of the Planters and Officials had sent their families away but carried on with a skeleton staff, they were as co-operative as possible producing local advice and large scale maps of their vast rubber estates.

On Nov 30th 1941 Japanese forces cccupied Indo China giving them bases from which to launch a landing on the East coast of Malaya. 11 Indian Division made plans for advancing into Thailand and defending the landing beaches around Singora. Secret Operation Orders were issued for this advance to be activated on receipt of a codeword.

Jock Wilson and I were called to Force Headquarters at Kuala Lumpur and ordered to spy out the land for our advance through Thailand, then a fiercely

neutral country determined not to become involved with either the British or Japanese. We were kitted out with civilian clothes, a civilian car and papers purporting that Jock was a representative of his family's Steel Works and I was a whisky salesman. We were also each given a large sum of money in various currencies, about £3,000 worth with which to buy information and co-operation from the Thai officials plus the address of a disaffected Sikh in Haadyai as a useful contact.

We drove up the deserted single main road and crossed the frontier without trouble, the Frontier Officer giving us a valedictory "Good luck old boy". At the first sizeable village we were halted by the Thai Police and taken to their building where our documents were scrutinised, the car searched and a long report telephoned presumably to some superior Headquarters. The police attitude was very unhelpful and un-welcoming. Beside the Police Post was a bamboo cage suspended from the ground, in it a man crouched. As we passed the policeman uttered the one word "Spy", we were not unrelieved at being permitted to drive on.

Arriving safely at Haadyai without further questioning in the evening, the rail junction and a sizeable town, we found the only Westernised Hotel where we were met by a Japanese Colonel in tennis clothes, who cheerfully and in fair American invited us to join him and his friends on the courts. He explained there was no room at the Hotel for us as his friends had taken all the accommodation. Obviously we were well and truly forestalled. We went into the town and after a fruitless search for beds were directed to the best brothel where we were made welcome. Madame was helpful and amused, she showed us to two spotlessly clean small rooms and detailed two girls to look after us, advising us to lock our doors if we didn't require company.

We were called by the two girls early next morning with hot water and breakfast consisting of fruits, some sort of bread and a bottle of fizzy lemonade! We left Madame with mutual esteem and went to look for our contact "the disaffected Sikh", we found the house with some trouble and asked to see him only to be greeted with the finger drawn across the throat sign, again we had been only too obviously forestalled.

In order to appear as ordinary travellers we went shopping, I bought some postcards and silver bracelets to send home, several months later I learnt they had all arrived intact having passed through many censors. We next visited the Railway Station to assess military facilities and had lunch of chicken and rice in the station buffet. In the afternoon we drove slowly to the East Coast towards the village of Singora, stopping to memorise any possible gun positions

or O.P.s, the country was flat, partly cultivated with large tracts of scrub.

We failed to find anywhere to stay near Singora, even at the local brothels, if any, and eventually called on the British Consul Mr Oldham, he reluctantly but kindly arranged to put us up for the night in his house and to feed us. Very naturally he had no wish or authority to be involved with the British Army and was guarded on local information. If there was a Mrs Oldham she did not appear, but he was kind and generous, I often wonder what happened to him when the Japanese landed. The next day Jock and I spent on the beaches bathing and wandering around. There were miles of glorious shelving sandy beaches lapped by the gentle waves of a bright blue sea, a perfect holiday resort ideal for bathers and probably landing craft too.

The next day we drove South to recce an Airfield where we had noticed planes landing and taking off. Though our car was stopped at a road block we were able to walk on until the airfield was in view. On return to the car we found it surrounded with surly natives, it had four completely flat slashed tyres.

I stayed to guard the car and our belongings while Jock walked the 2 miles back to the nearest village to try to arrange salvage. After a couple of hours waiting a dilapidated truck arrived carrying six rough looking Thais armed with machetes and a supervisor of sorts in charge. After a useless attempt to communicate I was forcibly invited to board the truck, sitting in the back with guards either side I was virtually a prisoner. After an hour and a half bumpy ride the truck stopped at an un-named Railway Halt, I was invited to dismount and escorted to the small empty railway platform, the truck drove off leaving me standing on the platform bereft of luggage with two of the Thai guards with drawn machetes. Every time I tried to move away the guards confronted me with too obvious disapproval. A Thai girl carrying a baby wandered on to the very hot and shadeless platform eating oranges, with a smile she offered me a couple, they were the best oranges I have ever eaten.

Towards evening a small steam train heading South stopped at the Station, I was escorted by my guards into a 1st Class compartment, where I found Jock very hot and cross having suffered similar treatment. We were being smartly and forcibly deported by whom we never knew. The train stopped at a station where we were able to get some food and again on a girder bridge over a wide gorge. I leant out of the window and dropped my hat on purpose into the gorge, pulled the communication cord and clambered down to retrieve it watched by the Guard and engine driver.

The bridge had not been prepared for demolition though it appeared easy

enough. The train, the last one out of Thailand for many years, arrived at Kuala Lumpur in the early morning, we reported to Headquarters and were debriefed. Naively we handed back the considerable remains of our cash, we were never asked for an account. After breakfast we returned by truck to the Regiment at Sungai Patani, thus ended our farcical spy adventure, it was 4th December. On the 7th/8th December Japanese forces landed at Khota Baru and Singora, the R.A.F. aerodromes at Alor Star and Sungai Patani were heavily bombed and put out of action, at sea the Prince of Wales Battleship and the Repulse were sunk off the East coast by Japanese torpedo bombers. No major British Naval Force remained in the area.

All plans to advance into Thailand and defend the beaches were scrapped and the Division made hasty arrangements to man a defensive position near the Thai border at Jitra. My Battery was in support of the E.Leicesters straddling the main road. By 10th December the guns with 600 rds of H.E. each and O.P.s were dug in their positions, fields of fire were cleared, telephone cables were laid and buried, the locals perpetually cut and stole the wire,

All this hurried preparation of our defensive position required a tremendous amount of non stop physical work, I and everyone else were fully stretched and short of sleep. The Jap planes were constantly overhead bombing our aerodromes, also the one and only main road and any collection of men or vehicles, there was no R.A.F. presence, it was hot and the heavy rain soon turned tracks into quagmires.

On 11th Dec the Japs surrounded and brushed through the covering screen provided by 6 Brigade and one Mountain Battery positioned 6 miles North of Jitra, very soon their leading patrols appeared on our front. I saw my first Jap soldiers from an O.P. a platoon on bicycles coming towards us along the main road, not all of them appeared to be dressed in uniform, we opened fire for the first time and they dived into the cover of the trees.

At dawn the next day we were called on by the Infantry to fire defensive tasks covering the front, these calls continued all day. The Japs worked through the jungle round our right front which started to disintegrate, the Leicesters suffered heavy casualties, Captain Foster was killed in his OP, our first casualty. The reserve Brigade of Gurkhas (Brig Carpendale) was brought up and we were put in support. The Japs continued to work round and through our Infantry positions,

On my way up to our OPs on foot I met a Jap patrol trotting forward, from behind a rubber tree I fired at them with my revolver, they did not stop. Our N.C.O. i/c Signals was killed by mortar fire on the gun position, we buried

him there, I read my first Burial Service over his grave.

As our front continued to give way I moved the guns back to their alternative positions in boggy ground. It was dark when at 1800 hrs orders were received for an immediate general withdrawal to a defensive position at Alor Star. Without any warning this order caused the maximum confusion, the single road became blocked and detachments divorced from their parent units, it continued to rain making the boggy ground impassable for heavy vehicles, Jap patrols added to the confusion letting off fire crackers and their motor cyclist patrols entangled on the road with our vehicles trying to withdraw.

The Division appeared to be disintegrating and firing indiscriminately at each other, the noise of battle and confusion was fearful. F.Troop was attacked by our own Sappers and a quad towing a gun blown up and abandoned in a bog, I took another Quad back in the dark and pouring rain with a fresh detachment and succeeded in winching the gun out, but the damaged quad had to be abandoned. By 2 am on Dec 13th the Regiment was ready in action at Alor Star 20 miles to the South, my Battery had lost 2 Officers killed, 1 wounded, 3 Other Ranks killed and 3 missing, together with 2 gun-towing Quads and miles of telephone cable. Thus began the disastrous and disgraceful retreat of our Army.

Almost at once the CRA ordered our Regiment back 40 miles to harbour in the Harvard Estate near Gurun, my Battery remaining in support of 28th Infantry Brigade while Regimental Headquarters and B Battery returned to Ipoh to refit. Our guns were dug in, O.P.s manned and a Fire Plan arranged with the Infantry Brigade. Many stragglers trickled back through the jungle, casualties were not as great as feared though there was great disorganisation. My Command Post was in the Estate Managers Bungalow, where we were joined by Divisional Headquarters, as they had failed to conceal their vehicles we were promptly heavily bombed by Jap dive bombers and forced to move out very quickly.

At 4 am on Dec 15th the Japanese attacked the Gurun position, 6 Brigade HQ, where I was with the Battery Recce party, came under accurate mortar fire and the Brigadier was killed. we were in the front line uncomfortably close to the Japs until 6 Brigade withdrew. The Divisional Commander and Brigadiers Carpendale and Selby all met together at my Command Post at 10 am to make fresh plans and to use our Gunner communications.

It was decided to withdraw still further and re-group. Our Divisional Commander was replaced by General Key. By noon our Battery was at Sungei Siput in support of a depleted combined Battalion of the Leicesters and Surreys holding a rearguard position while the rest of the Division passed through. At



6 pm the rearguard withdrew, I was met by Brigadier Rusher, who ordered my Battery to rejoin the Regiment at Ipoh immediately.

Another long drive in the dark through pouring rain, the drivers were very tired, one gun and quad went off the road into a deep dyke, the gun was eventually winched out at dawn but the quad was immovable without a crane. I too was exhausted having had 72 hours without sleep, I ordered the Battery to halt for 3 hours, had my bed put up beside my jeep and slept regardless of any Jap planes or patrols. We joined the Regiment at noon in Ipoh on 16th December over 100 miles south of our original position at Jitra. We received first reinforcements, B Battery was re-equipped with new 25 pdrs, the first time I'd seen these great new guns, we retained the 8 old 4.5 howitzers. Retraining was started, the Regtl Recce parties prepared possible defensive positions from Siput Sungei to the Pera River and Kuala Lumpur.

On 19th December we were enjoying a film show in the bombed out Cinema at Ipoh, when an emergency call was flashed on the screen to man the Pera River position in support of the Argylls, the only Battalion in Malaya fully trained in jungle warfare. The next day Ipoh was heavily bombed again, the civilians evacuated, our Battery Captains able to replenish stocks from abandoned depots.

By 22nd Dec the Regiment was in position in hilly country at Happy Valley near Chendieriang in support of 28 Indian (Gurkhas) Infantry Brigade. This appeared to be a strong position with good fields of fire and observation, guns and O.P.s were dug in and Defensive tasks registered, all tracks leading into the gun positions blocked, barbed wire was badly needed but un-obtainable, obstacles were improvised with local material. We sincerely hoped that at last the deplorable retreat had finished.

On 24th December the Japs started to attack, I was able to watch our guns engaging opportunity targets from Jim Mackenzie's O.P. a convoy being wrecked and a mortar position destroyed. The Gurkhas held firm in this good position until the 4th January when the Japanese landed a force on the East Coast, the Brigade, out manoeuvred but not defeated, was ordered to withdraw yet again.

Our Batteries continued to leapfrog back along the main road supporting rearguards whenever they could hold a position for a few hours, the speed and efficiency of the Japanese advance was excellent from their point of view but surprising and devastating from ours. Jap planes patrolled the single main road, dive bombing any convoy and machine gunning individual vehicles. I was caught once in the open, the Jap plane was well on our flank, I hadn't realised he could swing his machine gun 90 degrees, the burst of bullets made a most

unpleasant zing on the road surface, luckily only 2 hit the Jeep. We were forced to move the guns either at night or at widely spaced intervals.

By 8th January we had reached the Slim river, a useful obstacle on which to make a stand. My Battery was ordered into harbour about 5 miles South of the Slim River Bridge to await the arrival of 28 Bde to take up positions astride the river. We were summoned back in haste by a DR message from Colonel Murdoch, that a column of Jap tanks had smashed through the Infantry Brigade and were crossing the Slim River Bridge and that he was going forward to recce and contact Brigade HQ.

I got the Battery on the move F.Troop under Lt Ronaldson leading. The first gun with BSM Billings met the tanks head on and was blasted off the road, the BSM being killed. The Adjutant Captain Gordon Brown caught up the 2nd 4.5 howitzer on his motor cycle and put it into action on a bend of the road. The first round from the gun at a point blank range of 30 yds stopped the leading tank, the second round set it on fire. The tank commander made to pull himself out of the turret and was shot by the Adjutant with a hastily borrowed rifle.

The road was blocked, the 2nd tank failed to force it's way through but opened cannon and machine gun fire on the 4.5 how, in a matter of seconds the No.1 Sgt Keen was killed, Captain Gordon Brown had his right arm blown off.

I arrived a few minutes after the action, the second tank was withdrawing backwards towards the bridge firing as it manoeuvred. I found Lt Ronaldson wounded in the ditch. I changed the rather shaken detachment on the heroic gun and brought up some more ammunition, put the other 2 guns of the troop into staggered anti tank positions, ordered the rear troop into action and went forward with an O.P. party through the trees until we could get a view of the Jap tanks around the bridge. After a few minutes we were able to shell them and they withdrew under cover.

On return to Regimental Headquarters I found Captain Gordon Brown still on duty in spite of his amputated arm but the Colonel was missing, he had gone forward on the pillion of his DR's motorcycle followed by Lt Kepple in the Signals truck, they must have run straight into the advancing Tanks. A strong search party was sent out under cover alongside the road but found no trace of the Colonel nor his motorcycle. Lt Kepple himself made his way back through the trees after dark, he was badly shaken, exhausted and unable to help, so our splendid C.O. Alan Murdoch had to be reported "Missing believed killed."

The burnt Jap tank was searched for maps etc, the 3 crew were dead, the Commander wore the insignia of a full Colonel, his suitcase contained a dinner jacket and starched white shirt!

Firing continued through out the night, about 6000 infantry men were cut off across the River, some 1000 managed to make their way back down the railway line to our gun areas. As a result of the day's battle our Regiment lost 3 Officers and 15 Other Ranks killed and 3 Officers and 3 Other Ranks wounded and evacuated, as well as 2 more gun towing quads and 3 trucks.

The Official Report of this action published in the London Gazette after the War in 1948 states laconically:- It was not until the Japanese Tanks had reached a point 2 miles south of Slim and 15 miles from their starting point that they were stopped by a 4.5 howitzer of 155 Field Regiment, there was practically nothing between them and Kuala Lumpur,....The 11th Indian Division temporarily ceased to exist as an effective fighting formation."

My Battery was ordered to evacuate all the troops and transport in the area, to withdraw south of Tanjom Malim and blow up all the bridges en route, with the help of a detachment of Sappers this task was completed by midnight.

The next day I was appointed to Command 155 Field Regiment as Acting/Lt Col with a Battery of 137 Regt 25 pdr under command. Captain Fraser Stewart was appointed Adjutant, Jim Fassen took over command of my Battery. I inherited the Colonel's Jeep and Driver Bdr Smith and HQ Command Post truck driven by Gnr Johnstone his batmen, two very stalwart Yeomen.

Bdr Smith was able to cope with any situation and always had the Jeep serviced and ready at the right place at the right time. He was careful enough to keep a chamois leather to filter the petrol stored in Jerricans before filling up. Besides being intelligent he had the invaluable gift of being able to communicate with any native regardless of language problems. Gnr Cartwright continued as my faithful batman, he always seemed to find a place for my camp bed, provide food and keep my clothes and equipment clean and ready.

If the Military situation had been desperate before it was now both desperate and chaotic. There were no co-herent Infantry formations in our Division, no Headquarters and no communications. The Regiment continued to withdraw leapfrogging by Troops and giving support to any scratch collection of Infantry who could hold a rearguard position for even a few hours.

The Jap bombing of the roads and any opportunity targets continued non-stop by daylight, I organised a team of Bren guns to fire at the low level planes, it did not bring any down but seemed to encourage the pilots to look for targets other than our gun positions.

My only means of contacting our Infantry and of giving orders was by personal visit or DR message, It was not easy to find any form of HQ, they were lost or on the move, so I spent nearly all day and night driving round in my

Jeep. Bdr Smith drove, wee Jock Hamilton, who had the eyes of a hawk and pugnacity of a terrier, rode shot-gun on the back with his Bren gun ready.

I made contact with 44 Brigade miles away at Malacca and was preparing to move up in support when I learnt that 15 Australian Brigade were being brought up to Alor Gaja so I moved the Regiment into that area and prepared positions. 15 Brigade arrived the next day and deployed. When their own Artillery Regiment arrived later we handed over and were withdrawn into Corps reserve at Guru for a month's rest in order to refit and train new reinforcements. We all enjoyed baths and regular meals for 4 days and the soldiers were able to visit the town, which was still functioning tho' there was not much to buy in the shops.

I was sent off with a JAG rep to deal with a mutiny in a Chinese Labour Battalion. We found several hundred cowed Chinese squatting in a warehouse surrounded by a Company of Australians with machine guns trained on them. After much interrogation with the aid of an interpreter it appeared the Chinese had run amok the day before and for no understandable reason had hacked to death their 2 white Officers and a Chinese Superintendent.

Four ring leaders were identified, one definitely, an obvious thug who had rushed around brandishing his machete shouting "Pah Pah" which was interpreted as "Kill Kill." I had to preside at a Summary Court Martial, the ring leaders were sentenced and led off, the rest split into batches and transported packed in lorries to other Labour Battalions. A macabre day's work for me.

After 4 days we were ordered by Corps HQ to support 44 Brigade trying to stem the Jap landings on the East coast, so much for our month's rest. B. Battery sent a Troop to support the Cambridgeshires, who had just disembarked with the ill fated 18th Division, to oppose the Jap landings at Batu Pahat and to hold the town. This was a disaster the Troop was overrun, Jock Wilson the Battery Commander and my good friend was killed bringing up fresh ammunition, the 25 pdr guns captured and the survivors evacuated by sea to Singapore, where they were re-fitted and eventually re-joined the Regiment. Major Gilly Campbell from 137 Field Regiment was appointed to command the re-equipped B. Battery.

The other Troop was attacked on its gun position and after a 30 minutes battle at point blank range over open sights cutting swathes through the advancing Japs withdrew in reasonable order. The rest of the Regiment supported counter attacks by a reserve Australian Bde and the 54 Bde as they disembarked piecemeal at Singapore.

C Battery supported the Norfolks at Yong Peng, where Andrew Sewell the

Troop Commander though badly wounded bravely distinguished himself and was awarded an immediate M.C.

I was slightly wounded by mortar fire, a 2 inch gash inside my right ankle, it was plastered up by our RMO and healed well, though it made walking painful for several weeks. I had been surprised at the force of the blow, it was like being hit with a sledge hammer.

The Jap skilled use of road blocks and tanks, we had none, defeated all attempts to drive them back by counter attack. The 44 and Australian Brigades crumbled steadily backwards. All this time our 3-ton lorries were ferrying ammunition and stores back from the forward Depots, including several loads of tinned pineapple, a welcome change of diet. There was luckily no shortage of ammunition for our guns.

By 24th January the Regiment was concentrated at Johore Bahru, C Battery actually in the Palace gardens. Though the heavy bombing of Singapore had started no bombs fell on Johore Bahru, it was rumoured that the Sultan had made a "Quid pro quo" arrangement with the Japs.

On the 25th I was ordered by the BRA Brigadier Goodman to prepare an Artillery Plan to protect the Causeway to Singapore Island. The next day the Regiment crossed on to Singapore Island and the whole of our remaining forces on the mainland started to cross the Causeway unhindered except for a few bombing attacks. the bombing of the aerodromes, docks and Naval Base was continuous.

I got caught on an aerodrome in a raid by high level bombers and received a splinter on the shin of my already unlucky leg, which removed a large piece of skin, this didn't heal until months later my Doctor brother Stephen treated it with scarlet red.

I discovered on one of the abandoned Aerodromes two Brewster Buffalo fighters barely damaged. I climbed into the cockpit and wondered if I could possibly fly it, luckily for me when I came back the next day to try the hanger had been flattened by the bombing with the planes inside it.

I was next ordered to prepare the Artillery defences of the NE Sector of the Island including the Naval base and was allocated an extra Field Battery, a Mountain Battery, a Troop of Beaufors AA guns, 2 old 6 inch howitzers for counter bombardment and 4 very old 75mm guns for anti-tank purposes. So I became a miniature CRA with no Staff. I was very busy sorting all this out and arranging positions and tasks. At first there were no Infantry in the Sector, then a woefully depleted 44 Bde under Colonel Morrison arrived to be superseded 4 days later by 15 Bde commanded by Brigadier Duke,

Positions, alternative positions and roving positions for the guns and

the O.P.s were all dug-in and surrounded with barbed wire fences. Telephone cables were laid and dug in too. Dumps of ammunition were ferried to each position but it's use was now severely restricted as the forward Depots on the Mainland had been overrun. We were told to prepare for a long siege as no relieving force could possibly arrive for 18 months. We were able to acquire much defensive material from the deserted Naval Base including loads of tinned rations. Gerald Sanderson went round the Hospitals and re-inforcement camps and collected 23 of our original Yeomen. Some of the wounded could not be found, they had been moved and no records existed.

On 4th February Jap forces appeared on our front across the strait, supported by artillery with 2 balloon O.P.s directing their fire. We were unable to reply as 22nd Indian Brigade was still in the area for another 3 days trying to break through to the Causeway. The Japs made one or two half hearted attempts at landing, perhaps as a feint, and we engaged their craft effectively enough to turn them back several times. Our Regimental HQ and Officers Mess were in the un-damaged Woodlands Estate Manager's luxurious bungalow, his young English wife had unwisely been left to cope like David's concubines, she was tearful and helpful to us and I hope did not suffer their fate.

On the night of Feb 9th a large force of Japs with tanks landed on the NW Sector of the island and were opposed by the Australian Division with no tanks in support, there weren't any. The Australians were unable to stop the Japs and their force started to disintegrate and drift back in small parties to Singapore town with an eye to evacuation by sea.

The remains of the 11 Indian Division held firm, ad hoc Counter attacks were launched unsuccessfully by all available formations including our 15 Bde, our own NW Sector was quiet in comparison.

By Feb 12th the Japs had reached the centre of the island with 40 tanks harboured on the Racecourse, heavy bombing of the town and docks continued, the huge oil tanks were set on fire, Singapore was covered with a pall of oily black smoke. The writing was on the wall.

There were no Infantry formations left on our front so the Regiment was ordered to withdraw to the outskirts of the town, engage opportunity targets and arrange own local defence. Bombing and shelling by the Japs was stepped up, the Regiment suffered a steady trickle of casualties both to men and equipment, but was still a co-herent undaunted fighting unit.

The Jap planes were flying very low, F Troop took over a couple of Beaufors AA guns and claimed three kills, I witnessed one. The Regiment formed

a rough square round some tennis courts, Regtl HQ was situated in a deserted house with the mains water and electricity still working!

OP's were manned, I was visiting one and watched Lt Anderson successfully demolish a column of Japs on bicycles. On the 13th I was summoned to a conference at Div HQ, passing en route Force HQ with a surrender jeep standing outside covered in white flags, an ill omen. The roads were being strafed, as my Jeep dodged along I passed a party of Norfolks crawling up the ditch beside the road led by John Barrett, a friend from Norwich days.

At the Conference of all senior Artillery Commanders I was ordered directly by Brigadier Rusher to hand over my Regiment, take charge of the official Artillery escaping parties being assembled by Brigadier Paris at Keppel Harbour and to take as many Gunner Instructors back to India as possible, with a rider to restore order at the Docks where fighting between opportunist deserters was in progress.

My protests at this order were brushed aside and the definite order repeated in front of the other Gunner Colonels as witnesses, who named Lt Stephenson and Staff Captain Nandi among others as the leaders of their regimental parties. Div HQ then decided to move into our Regiment's area to take advantage of our communications, which were still working.

I handed over the Regiment to Jim Fassen and collected a fully armed party with BSM Roadnight and Sgts Lindup, Noble and Browne loaded my Jeep and bodyguard Hamilton and a 15 cwt truck driven respectively by Bdr Smith and Gnr Johnstone and set off on my mission.

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The saga of our escape and journey from Singapore via Sumatra to Bombay is recorded in the Appendix.

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INDIA March 1942 - Dec 1944

We arrived in Bombay mid March 1942 wearing the clothes, clean but tattered and carrying the arms and equipment including my "chilumchi" with which we had left Singapore.

My first really good news, I met almost by chance my brother Stephen, who had just disembarked at Bombay as a Doctor with a Field Ambulance due to be stationed at Bangalore. He was able to fill me in with home news, he himself had left his wife Betty at Thorley with the Streeters, pregnant for a July baby. We sent several "Hooray" cables home to Mother and my very long letter recording my many adventures since leaving Malaya.

I stayed at the Taj Mahal Hotel in luxury for a few days to kit myself out again from the very co-operative Army and Navy Stores, spent a couple of nights at Government House with Lord Scarborough and two in Delhi with the MGRA, General Ackerman, everyone wanted to hear first hand news from Singapore. Then to the R.A. Depot at Deolali to arrange postings for my party, I was posted together with Sgt Noble to the new 158 Field Regiment stationed at Ranchi, already on Stand-by for the Burma front, as a Battery Commander, Temporary Major.

In April 1942 I took the long train journey by myself from Bombay to Ranchi, where I joined my new Regiment equipped with 25 pdrs in a tented camp and took over 583 Field Battery with it's 8 guns. The C.O was Lt Col Gallagher, an ex-RSM of long service, a martinet and bully with only a sketchy knowledge of Gunnery or active service, his metier was discipline and the parade ground.

The other Battery Commander being Major Tom Smih an ex-BSM, the Officers and men were mostly reservists or National Service with a thin sprinkling of Regulars, the majority were excellent with the inevitable odd mis-fit, but they had not had time to learn to work together as a co-herent Unit. There was no Brigade nor Divisional Training of any sort, plans had not got that far.

I was almost immediately called back to Bombay to lecture to 33 Corps Artillery on Jungle Warfare for two days. I was not properly prepared at such short notice nor briefed and the conditions of war in Malaya so totally different from his experience in N.Africa that I fell foul of their MGRA Ray Mirlees, who forcibly interrupted my presentations. Again the long solitary train journey back to Ranchi to be met with the news that the Regiment was leaving for Burma to act as a stop gap to the retreating Burma Army, and that my Battery was to go on ahead without guns or vehicles, which would be provided on arrival. All these never-ending long journeys made me feel like Phineas Fogg.

At the end of May we started off on to what was to be a nightmare journey and task. The Battery entrained for Calcutta where we changed trains for Gauhati, the weather of course was Indian hot and there were no facilities for food, drink or comfort, there were not sufficient carriages so we packed into



iron floored trucks. We proceeded by slow fits and starts, the whole railway system was clogged with trains evacuating the Burma Army, some times we spent 2 days stopped in a siding. It was difficult to arrange food, to keep fit and morale high, my BSM Gregory was as always practical and a tower of strength. At Gauhati we detrained, crossed the Brahmaputra in a ferry boat and changed on to a narrow gauge railway. Our tedious journey was relieved one day by the sight of a magnificent tiger sauntering across the railway lines.

We eventually arrived at Lumding (Dimapur) our rail head 14 days after we had left Calcutta and went into Transit Camp to await transport on to Manipur. As we arrived we met General Alexander and his Staff, the last of the Burma Army to be evacuated after they had been chased out by the Japs. The first thing we did was to get into the river to wash and get clean again.

Transport to Manipur 70 miles away, where 23 Indian Division was assembling, was by 3 ton lorries driven by young and inexperienced Indian drivers. A few weeks before the road winding through the steep wooded hills had been little more than a mule track following the contours, the Sappers had run bulldozers along the track widening it by cutting into the hill sides so that land slips on to the road were all too frequent. It was mud surfaced, often boggy with no warning signs at the constant bends and no rails of any sort to prevent the drivers careering over the edge down the precipices below.

I felt sorry for the Indian Drivers they were un-trained, got little rest, the conditions were awful, night driving without lights in the pouring rain and their casualties of men and vehicles falling off the road to destruction were enormous, it was rare for a convoy to make the journey without the loss of a vehicle or two and of course driver, passengers and equipment.

I went on ahead and after a frightening drive with no mishap arrived at Imphal and reported to General Ouvry Roberts commanding the 23rd Indian (Fighting Cock) Division.

Manipur was an independant native State ruled by the Rajah from his palace at the capital Imphal. It is a flat plain roughly the size of the Isle of Wight completely hemmed in by jungle covered mountains up to a height of 7,000 feet so the rainfall is very heavy. There are no communications with the outside world except for 3 primitive mule tracks, one to Kohima and on to Dimapur, the next through Palel to Tamu on the River Chindwin in Burma, the third to Tiddim and 70 miles on into Burma. It was thought that the Japanese would follow up the retreating Burma Army along the two latter routes.

The people of Manipur are self supporting with paddy fields and a little fishing, there is virtually no trade with the outside world. Various tribes

Nagas and Kachins live on a low subsistence sparsely in the miles of jungle covered mountains, there are no clearings. These are picturesque warlike tribes armed with bows and spears, who own no allegiance to any Government.

To our way of thinking these tribes are completely uncivilised and are constantly on the move from one small village encampment to the next. They have their own hidden tracks through the mountainous jungles and are used to covering long distances up and down the precipitous hills bearing very heavy loads, though not overtly hostile they prefer to keep themselves to themselves and not get involved with any outsiders.

I was ordered to take my Battery to "The Saddle" at Shenan the highest pass, about 4,000 ft, on the track between Palel and Tamu where I would find guns and ammunition and to be ready to prevent any Jap advance.

I got a lift in a Jeep to "The Saddle" a cleft in the mountains, the original cart track winding for 15 miles up the steep and jungle covered hills had been bulldozed and was passable for 15 cwt trucks but not 3 ton lorries. Past "The Saddle" the track to Tamu about 40 miles away had not been improved, it was about 8ft wide with a rough rocky surface, just Jeepable with care. Miserably this track was littered with broken vehicles and corpses, mostly of civilians men, women and children who had been trying to escape from the advancing Japs and died of starvation and disease on the way. Unwilling parties of soldiers were dragging these rotting corpses into heaps and burning them with petrol. To add to the misery it rained heavily all the time, annual rainfall being a colossal 250 inches p.a. Everything tents, bedding, clothes all remained sodden.

I found the guns 8 25pdrs covered with grease and 50 rounds of ammunition per gun in good order deployed in the one and only possible position where a Naga foot track ran along a knife edge. How they got there I never knew, it must have been a fantastic effort. I located the nearest Infantry, a battalion of Gurkhas situated around the small native village about half a mile in rear of the guns, they were sending patrols out ahead and reported only minor Jap patrol activity in the area.

The Battery Officers and men with tents and sandbags trickled up in 15 cwt trucks from Palel, by mid-May we had the semblance of a Battery in action with the guns and ammunition covered, camouflaged and dug in, there was luckily a complete absence of any air activity.

So started a miserable 6 months, the rains continued with only short intervals. For the first 3 weeks the only rations we received were sacks of rice and paper bags of tea, no sugar, no milk. Perforce we had rice in some

form for every meal and quickly got heartily sick of it, gradually the back-up organisation improved and we got tins of food and occasionally but never regularly loaves of bread.

Hugh Walker the Battery Captain made constant trips to Palel to obtain supplies both of food and military equipment, there was little to be bought, no such luxury as NAAFI had been established, nor any Ordnance Depots. I do remember him coming back in triumph with a bottle of locally made whisky for the Officers Mess. He managed to contact a local tribe of Nagas and persuade them in return for our surplus rice to build some "bashas" strongly made grass huts, which were infinitely preferable, being roomier and more weather proof than our sodden tents.

Militarily we were not very effective, we fired a few ranging rounds to register targets, communications were hopeless, the few wireless sets damp through, the batteries for them always flat or on charge, telephone cable non existent. The view from our O.P's just rain drenched hilly forest. We had one O.P. close to the guns and could shout across fire orders, one morning I watched a party of Gurkhas with drawn kukris racing up a steep hill and rapidly overhauling a Jap patrol trying to escape. I didn't see the end of the chase but the bloodthirsty little Gurkhas returned grinning and pleased with themselves. They patrolled our area excellently, at night we were often stopped by a cough from a squat shadow coming up from behind, the drill was to stand stock still and say "OK Johnny" the answer would be "OK Johnny" with a chuckle and the shadow would disappear.

Malaria was by far our worst enemy, we had no issue of the protective drugs Pemaquin or Mepacrin, so every single person got malaria, some people several times. There were two sorts "Benign" which killed you in a couple of days and "Malignant" which was not supposed to kill you but recurred for weeks and months afterwards. I had hoped that I'd acquired some immunity in Sumatra but after a month was stricken down unconscious. I came to lying on a charpoy without any bedding in a large wooden hut in Imphal, the "Military Hospital." having lost a day, my Rolex watch and my pocket book.

At that time there were no Doctors, Nurses or food just a few harassed Indian Orderlies chiefly employed in removing corpses from the rows of beds. My life was saved literally by our Adjutant PEG Smith, who was himself an inmate recovering from a milder attack. He brought water and looked after me for 4 days until I could fend for myself. As soon as I could walk I discharged myself and went to our R.M.O. for help, he started me off on an experimental course of arsenic injections and arranged a weeks leave in Shillong.

It took 2 days to travel to Shillong a tea planters Hill Station and 2 days back. There was not much to do and few other visitors, it did not rain continually so for three days I rested, went for walks and wrote letters home.

Some of my Mothers letters written every week since January were beginning to catch up with me, I have kept some of the envelopes covered with stamps and post marks in my stamp album as souvenirs.

I returned to my Battery on the Saddle early July. Conditions were gradually improving and we were learning how to cope with the terrain and climate. Malaria was still the main enemy, but supplies of rations, equipment and mail trickled through. There was still absolutely no means of recreation for the rain sodden soldiers. It was astonishing that neither our Colonel nor the CRA ever visited our Battery, supposedly in action.

With the Gurkhas I made prolonged recces to Tamu in Burma on the river Chindwin, there about a quarter of a mile wide. Tamu was nominally occupied by the Japs, it was an eeyrie place deserted and derelict with the litter of the Army and Civilian retreat everywhere. The Japs were supposed to be in more healthy camps further up river, I didn't see them though the Gurkhas reported some contacts. I went down to the river, that too though normally full of boat traffic was deserted, I walked along the corduroy road of tree trunks built by elephants to make a route for the retreat across the swamps.

In November it was thought the Jap advance would come up the Ukhrul route and not from Tamu so the Regiment and my Battery were concentrated on the Manipur plain to cover any threat from that area.

This position was infinitely better than the Saddle, rain fall was not nearly as heavy, there were native huts for shelter and passable tracks between the paddy fields. My Battery was in support of the Patiala Sikhs, the Maharajah's private Army. They were a formidable body of men drilled to perfection by their Colonel himself a terrifying man, huge, tireless and Jap blood thirsty with apparently the power of life and death over his troops. To start with we had several "Red Alerts" but they petered out and we could "Stand Down" with relaxed manning precautions.

One of our Troop Commanders Higgs had been in the entertainment business before the war, he had a good voice and endless repertoire of barrack-room songs. He arranged Concert Parties for the Troops, there was a surprising amount of varied talent. My HQ signaller had been a professional Female Impersonator and had his props with him, his strip tease act was extraordinary good and much in demand. Higgs was able to arrange a display by the Sultan's famous Dancing Girls, I was asked whether we wanted them dressed or un-dressed.

Naively thinking the troops would prefer to see them in the flesh, I said "Undressed." They gave us an excellent show wearing their every day working clothes and not their state finery!

I was given a week's leave at Christmas 1942 and went by train to Calcutta where my brother Stephen joined me also on leave from Bangalore.

We stayed in luxury at the Great Eastern Hotel until Calcutta was scatter bombed by the Japs, the Hotel Staff disappeared and with them meals and service. However the female guests organised cooking and meals but not the washing up, clean crockery was used from the huge store and dirty plates stacked in spare bedrooms!

We played golf several times, Stephen drove his ball so often into the water hazards that the "argi-wallah" a boy supposed to pin point the lie of the ball refused to swim out to fetch it any more. Quite a scene ensued to everyone's amusement. We had some excellent meals in the Off Limits district shepherded by John (Goat) Newman temporarily in the Military Police, took up some introductions we had to local Big-wigs and wrote long letters home.

On return to my Battery in Manipur I found that we were to be re-equipped with 3 inch mortars thought to be more serviceable and mobile than the heavier 25 pdr guns. Much reorganisation and re-training was involved. and our Division was withdrawn into Corps Reserve for this purpose with the task of defending the Imphal Kohima road.

I received a letter from Barbara to tell me that Mother had died aged 63 on 15th May 1943 in hospital undergoing a further cancer operation by Dr Newman. Very sad news for me as I loved her dearly, she had been always a wonderful support and friend, we had managed to keep up a regular weekly correspondence, latterly it had been obvious that she was not at all well and finding Civilian War conditions more and more unbearable. Poor "Tough old Mother" she was never the "Mild and Meek little Woman" she pretended. Barbara continued to live at Hollies with her family while Phil was serving with an AA Regiment in N.Africa.

Stephen and I spent two splendid leave fortnight's in each other's company after very long journeys. One on a Houseboat in Srinagar with D.R. a Doctor friend. I have still got a wooden pencil-box and ashtray on my desk which I bought at "Suffering Moses" there so long ago.

The second expedition was to stay at Ootacamund with Betty's school friend Lorraine Babington and another temporary War Widow Marcelle Gauvain. They each had baby sons and lived well in a large house with adequate Indian staff. Ooty had a hill station climate, cool and fresh, so my bouts of malaria became less frequent, we rested, read and chatted. Marcelle and I played golf,

we got on very well together. On the Railway from Madras I received to my surprise "red carpet" treatment of the highest order, it transpired that a Mr Gold had been the famous Chief Engineer of the Railway and so I must be his son.

On return to my Battery in Imphal in August 1943 I fell foul of the CRA Brigadier Reggie Andrews, when he came to our O.P. to supervise firing practice, he chose targets for us to engage, unfortunately I had a bout of malaria and had to lie down so he said he'd conduct the shoot himself to show us how it should be done, to his immense chagrin he failed completely as all the targets he'd chosen were out of mortar range. It was all obviously my fault.

Col Gallagher left, he had spent much of his time with the Matron of the Field Hospital when it arrived, they married and he was promoted upstairs to be Commandant of the RA Depot at Deolali, a position more suited to his talents. Col John Daniels took over the Regiment with Jimmy James as his 2IC, a breath of fresh air. However the CRA on account of my recurrent malaria had me Medically Boarded Category C in October as "Un-fit for Active Service."

I suppose it was true but was deeply disappointed and reluctant to leave as the Japs were building up their opposing forces and becoming much more active on all fronts. an attack was in the offing. In a way I was lucky, when the Japs did attack with surprising force in March 1944 the Regiment was in the thick of the fighting on the Kohima road and badly mauled, both Jimmy James and Tom Smith were killed and PEG Smith my successor as Battery Commander seriously wounded.

For good measure the CRA deferred my application to attend a Staff College Course at Quetta. John Daniels said he hated me, as I'd made a fool of him.

In November 1943 I was posted as Major in charge of 4 Corps Jungle Training Team, consisting of 5 Officers and a Doctor, to 33 Indian Corps, then concentrating in the Poona area, commanded by General Stopford, all recently arrived from N.Africa and destined for the Burma front.

I travelled to Calcutta on the Assam Mail arriving on 3rd December where I met the rest of the team and then took the long train journey to Poona. After arranging a programme of visits and training at Corps HQ I visited my brother Stephen at Belgaum for an hilarious week-end. Train journeys were long, tedious and slow but not uncomfortable, Mail trains usually stopped at Stations for passengers to eat in the restaurants. Far the slowest form of transport were the taxis in Belgaum known as "Dumbies" which were basically covered and luxuriously upholstered ox-carts.

In the next few months I made a weeks visit to every Regiment in 28 Bde,

as expected some were keen to learn new techniques while others luke warm. The most amusing visit was to 2nd SAS Regt where the standard of fitness was phenomenal and the set up very strange to me.

As the Regiments were steadily called forward to the Burma fronts I was left with only a Light AA Regt commanded by Rowley Byers based near Mahbleshwar, which was not immediately required as the RAF had a last established Air superiority over our battle grounds.

Mahbleshwar is Poona's small Hill Station with a pleasant climate, the Officers Club was still functioning though some luxuries, such as Scotch Whisky were in short supply, but lone war widows were not, I took the opportunity to enjoy both and spent a happy if reprehensible month there, which must have been good for my health as in June a Medical Board passed me "A" Fit for Active Service again.

So I joined 33 Corps HQ Staff at Poona as A/DQMG organising Holding Camps for a few weeks while waiting for a Gunner Posting and also took the opportunity of another 10 days leave with Stephen staying with Lorraine and Marcelle in Ooty, again another very enjoyable and relaxing visit.

My posting when it came was to 1st Indian Medium Regiment at Ranchi as Battery Commander of 2nd Indian Medium Battery, far from the active service I'd hoped for. I travelled by train to Ranchi and found my way to the Regiment in a very scruffy tented camp outside the town and reported to the C.O. Wilfred Wall.

The Regiment was very new and must have been raised more for political reasons than warlike ones. The men were Madrassis with a thin sprinkling of British reservists, most of the Officers were Indian Dehra Dhun OCTU trained. It was rather pathetic the little undernourished Madrassis just had not the physique nor physical strength to manhandle the 5.5 inch medium guns nor the heavy ammunition.

The other two Battery Commanders were Tom Egerton Jones, who drank himself to suicide and Major Candeth, a regular Indian Officer apt to burst into tears when things went wrong and disappear to his tent. My BSM Messenger, who must have had some Indian forbears, was excellent with the men and ever helpful. He even arranged that we should have the Indian troops daily curry, which was delicious and infinitely better than the efforts of our Mess cook.

I had the good fortune to be taken on by Gunner Spence because I'd been the only Officer to visit him in hospital. His stocky figure appeared one early morning in my tent with a mug of tea and announced "I am your new Batman. I'll see you never go short of anything, as long as you don't ask any questions." Gunner Spence was splendid and looked after me like a Nannie. He was 43 years

old, originally a North Country miner and professional footballer, it was a joy to watch his skilled and unselfish play, he became the lynch pin and coach to the Battery and Regimental teams.

The first evening of his new duties I arrived back to my tent to find the earth floor dug out to a depth of 4 feet and all my equipment re-arranged to give the maximum amount of room, a colossal improvement to comfort and the envy of all. Thereafter it became his standard drill where ever we camped, having been a miner he knew how to dig and it didn't take him long. Thanks to his care life became bearable, besides being super efficient he was a really nice man with a family of 4 children at home.

Slim Somerville, Staff Captain HQRA borrowed the Governor of Bihar's shooting lodge, it still had a basic staff, we spent a comfortable and restful week there in the jungle but failed to see any tigers though at night we could hear them purring loudly in the surrounding area.

On 21st of January 1945 we were out on an exercise when a call came through to me from Douglas Betts in the RA Directorate at Delhi on my Battery HQ field telephone, sounding faint and far away. "I had been nominated for a Gunnery Staff Course at Larkhill, starting in February would I like to go?" As the chances of our hopelessly untrained Regiment ever seeing active service were very remote I accepted and was told to report to Delhi a.s.p. for travel documents.

I left the Regiment within a week and travelled by slow train to Delhi where I met my brother Stephen, who put me up in his Field Ambulance Mess. Charlie Cunningham was in Delhi too as ADC to the Viceroy, General Wavell, we all went out in tongas to an hilarious dinner party. My face was covered with unsightly jungle sores, Stephen with his expertise promptly cured them.

I continued my journey by train next day to Bombay where I took a room in the Taj Hotel for 2 nights. Collected my kit from the Army & Navy Stores, arranged transport by M.F.O. to UK, visited my Banks, went shopping in the Bazaar with my cash balance of rupees and bought two good Persian rugs, a Sarouk and a silk Bokhara to bring home.

On 1st February I trained to Karachi, a long slow, dusty journey through the Sind Desert and on the 7th boarded a Sumerland Flying Boat R.M.A. Courtier for England. It was a leisurely flight taking 4 days and putting down every night successively at Bahrein, Cairo and Jerba, then flying over the battlefields of Normandy eventually reaching Poole. It was the Courtier's last flight as on her return journey she crashed into the sea, a total loss.

There was a most efficient and friendly welcome at Poole with a free



telephone service for arrivals, so I phoned Barbara, who was surprised to hear my voice after four years abroad and asked myself to stay with her at Hollies.

U.K Jan 1945 - Jul 1948

I spent the night in London and took the train to Stortford the next day where I was met by Betty and Barbara in a car, which was a special treat, and given the most lovely welcome. I had a fortnight's leave at Hollies, Phil was still in Italy with his Regiment, Barbara had only Miss Asper as companion help, a half blind Swiss Governess with no other staff. I was agreeably surprised how well Barbara and her two daughters looked and how smart and tidy the house and garden, still under Sanders' care, appeared after 5 years of War time stringency.

The air was full of bombers passing overhead en route for their nightly sorties to Germany, one particular night there were over 600 planes.

Petrol rationing was severe, no social trips, but I managed to call on all my near relations and friends by bicycle or deflecting an "essential" car journey. The family made a great effort and feted me well and truly with dinner parties at the Limes, Thorley, Hawthorns and Ravens up to pre-War standard bringing out their hoarded treasures. Tom kindly mounted me for enjoyable rides through Hatfield Forest. Many days I went up to London by train to visit the War Office, the R.A.Depot at Woolwich, renew old acquaintances and to look for a flat, as felt I must have my own base.

I also spent many hours sorting out my possessions, old clothes and files stored in 5 tin uniform cases, which Barbara had kindly kept for me at Hollies, I acted as chauffeur ferrying the children to school and got Mr Whalley to start trying to find me a car to replace my bicycle.

Getting my Accounts into order again I worked out that my income from investments was £1,500 p.a. this with my Army Pay made me well off, high time I had my own permanent base or got married.

I tried to contact some of my former girl friends, they were all involved in War Work of some sort and had little time or opportunity for social frivolities. Heather and I had kept in touch with occasional letters, she was Nursing at St Thomas Hospital and between duties sometimes able to meet me in London.

My diary records lunch with Heather at Claridges, with Moyra at the Berkeley, Stella Gosling at Hatchetts and dinner with Marcelle at the Savoy, so good we stayed the night. One week-end I spent with Uncle Geoff and Aunt Vi at Ketleys for a pigeon shoot on the Goslings land, on 2nd March Heather came for a pleasant week-end at Hollies and I moved out of my bedroom to sleep in the caravan.

The D Day Landings on the French Coast in June 1944 had been successful and our Armies were slowly pushing forward through France involved in hard fighting against stubborn German resistance. The Allies had established air superiority so the danger of more large bombing raids on England had receded. There was however a steady stream of giant rockets V1s followed by V2s landing on and around London causing large casualties and enormous damage. Air raid shelters were the normal bedrooms for Londoners at night, by contrast the country was not nearly so dangerous and long sessions in the local air raid shelters less frequent.

In spite of the depressing complete black-out at night, the meagre rationing of food and clothing, the anxiety for relatives engaged in fighting abroad etc civilian morale was wonderfully high. The populace had implicit faith in the inspiring leadership of Winston Churchill.

Everyone listened to the BBC broadcasts, we marked the progress of our Armies on large scale maps daily. and with less enthusiasm read the Casualty Lists. England appeared to be full of foreign troops, mostly Americans and Poles training to be sent into Europe, all young men and young girls were dressed in some form of uniform.

On 6th March I trained up to Stoke-on-Trent to join the 1st Long Gunnery Staff Course and meet the 35 other Officer Students. I was billeted with Mrs Allerton sharing a room with Anthony Stanton and Bill Symonds from Canada, we caught a bus at 8.30 each morning for Hartfield Drill Hall, where Professors from the Royal Military College of Science taught us "The design of Guns". The day's work finished at 6pm, we then bused back to find a good evening meal waiting ready for us at 6.30, afterwards we wrote up our notes, listened to the news on the Radio and went to bed, occasionally visiting a pub for a night cap.

On our first free week-end I took the train back to Hollies to pick up my bicycle, which I rode through London from Liverpool St to Euston, there was not much traffic about, thereafter I was able to get out into the country round Stoke or to the squash courts at Trentham Park with Walter Hook of an evening. The following free week-end I went to stay with Muriel Williams, looking old and frail, at Malvern, Barbara was there too to take Annabel out for the day from Cheltenham College.

Mid April the Course moved on to Blurton School for Maths and Mechanical Engineering studies under RMCS Professors, deep water, I found the theory of Ballistics too full of parameters and probabilities to be enthralling.

The news from the front was getting better and better, German Forces were starting to surrender, our Armies were racing forward towards Berlin. Everyone at home was excited and jubilant at the prospect of a quick end to the War.

On 27th the Lights came on, I went up to London and stayed at my Club for the night and walked round the West End with the crowds enjoying the lights in the streets and shops again, it was wonderful. The next morning to celebrate I ordered 3 new suits from different tailors using up the last of my clothing coupons.

On the 4th May we learnt that the German Armies had surrendered to General Montgomery at Luneberg, the Course came to a standstill and everyone started to celebrate in the streets and pubs. I remember being escorted back to billets in the small hours by a kind sailor's wife to find Bill Symonds stretched out on the floor trying to pull the stair-carpet over himself as bedclothes.

On May 7th the German surrendered unconditionally, the whole of Great Britain went wild with joy and relief. The Military College of Science arranged a Celebration Dance where I met Muriel D. a lovely, 20 year old P.T. Instructress, we clicked and arranged to meet again the next day. We did, to listen to Winston Churchill's marvellous broadcast. I found her charming, highly educated, very competent and great fun, we met each other again as often as possible. Later we spent happy week ends exploring England from Catterick to Sevenoaks and M.D. acquired a temporary job and flat in Kensington to keep in touch. We went shopping in Selfridges and bought the first ball point pens "Biros" and portable Roberts radio ever to be sold in England, they were cumbersome by to-day's standards.

Mid May the Course moved from Stoke to Bury by train to learn the theory and practice of Radar, then a secret and new invention, I knew nothing about it and was enthralled, Anthony Stanton and I strove to be top of the form, a few found it too complicated and opted out, others like Bill Norman the Senior Officer on the Course and the only one I had served with previously, just bluffed their way through the electronics.

In Bury we were billeted around the College where we were taught by young civilian Professors. At first Anthony and I were billeted with Ma Filkins in a tiny house in a bleak terrace. Mr Filkins a retired Sergeant Major was made to take a back seat and sit in front of the glowing range, while Ma Filkins spoilt and fed us enormous and excellent meals in the kitchen. There was little space, no heating and no hot water, every morning

Mrs Filkins called us at 6.30 with a mug of steaming tea and a mug of shaving water,

A huge breakfast of bacon, eggs and sausages awaited us at 7 o'clock, she was a marvellous manager and obviously had friends in all the right places, she also had a broad and basic mind and urged us to bring in the girls. there wasn't much else to do in the evenings at Bury once we had written up our day's notes. M.D. and I spent our first week-end in Chester.

I went up to London at the beginning of June to visit my tailors, stayed in the Club and met Marcelle, trying hard to find a second husband she'd taken a flat in St James' Court, so I went to inspect. The next day I met Heather for lunch at Hatchetts and went sightseeing on the top of a bus to Hammersmith, I made obviously a too hesitant and inopportune proposal of marriage and in some dudgeon like d'Arcy received the wrong answer.

My good friend John Whalley at last found me a car, they were nearly impossible to obtain. He sold me ELL18 an eight year old Ford V8 black saloon for £450. I thought it expensive but it turned out a bargain, utterly reliable with astonishing performance and acceleration, in the two years I had it there was no fault in spite of much hard treatment and towing a horsebox. Late one night I went to sleep and drove it through a hedge into a newly ploughed field. having located on foot an exit gate I drove the 80 yards bumping over the furrows back on to the road with no apparent damage.

Having collected the car and garaged it at Hollies until I had built up enough petrol coupons to use it properly, I trained to Milton-on-Sea staying with Mrs Mallinson to play with Barbara, Char. Betty and Lynette who'd taken a house for their children's seaside holiday, not a great success as the beach was still mined and strewn with barbed wire, landing obstacles etc and unfortunately they all felt ill, Barbara herself developed pleurisy.

Stopping in London on the way back I had a very social day, first I met Cousin Norman for a drink, then lunched with Uncle Geoff in the Captains room at Lloyds, the City was giving a Reception to General Eisenhower, called on Aunt Podge in Addison Avenue then on Mick and his new wife Rosamund and finally caught the midnight train back to Bury in time for breakfast and starting work on Radar again at 8.30 am.

Through Cousin Norman's wife Muriel I got an introduction to her cousin Mrs Kenyon, who kindly accepted me as a billet together with Col and Mrs Horne, she already was giving house room to her brother and sister-in-law Mr & Mrs Keene who had been bombed out of their own home.

Maggie Kenyon was a great person, her deceased husband had been both

Owner and Manager of the Cotton Mills, they lived at "The Bury" a large house and garden set in the middle of a fairly squalid town of which she was definitely the feudal Squire's wife, Chairman of the Bench, President of every worth while Committee and Welfare Officer to the Mill operatives. She was exceedingly busy, charming and efficient, her billets were made to feel at home and were certainly made comfortable, though heating and indoor Staff were reduced to a minimum.

In July the Course moved up to Catterick for Wireless instruction, a well organised fortnight and enjoyable, games facilities were excellent and a healthy change from indoor exercise though M.D. came up for a week end at the Bridge Hotel. I was able to arrange a Wireless exercise to take tea with Claudine at Wolsingham, (wireless contact over 70 miles) and spent week-ends with the Nortons in Huddersfield and Aunt Vera with her husband Dan in Hexham. Aunt Vera was quite immobile but happy and cheerful, Dan looked after all her needs himself kindly and efficiently, he adored her and she him. In spite of his background and rabid Socialism he was not all bad, he made a great effort to entertain me and we got on reasonably well.

In August the Course had a fortnight's leave, I went to Lords and sat in the Pavilion to watch the cricket for the first time as a Member of the M.C.C., then down to Hollies. Stephen had just come home from India, he and Betty with baby Sue set up home in the Golf House lent to them by Uncle Wal.

The War against the Japanese in the Pacific was progressing favourably at great cost to American lives. Within a few days America was forced to use the first Atom Bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki to bring an end to the fighting.

On 14th August I drove Barbara up to London in my Ford for shopping and visits to Fripp the dentist. After tea at the Club we joined Stephen and Betty at the Waldorf for his home-coming celebration, afterwards I took them all to Ciro's for supper and dancing, a most enjoyable evening.

Walking back late through Piccadilly Circus to collect my car, Mr Attlee's voice came over the loud speakers to say the Japanese had asked for an Armistice, the War was over. After 6 years of War England had won and was at Peace again.

The crowds went wild, hats thrown in the air, pubs drunk dry as we danced round where Eros should have stood. Gradually benevolent Police shepherded groups away, at 2 am I set off to drive back to Hollies with Barbara.

The next day "VJ" was a public holiday, local celebrations were

non-stop, evry home was open house to friends or casual visitors, flags were flying and drinks flowing, every body loved everybody else, a wonderful demonstration of relief and sccessful achievement, the cost shelved 'til later. It was only very gradually that rationing of food, petrol, clothing etc was relaxed in the coming years.

Our Course re-assembled at the Military College of Science, Shrivenham, it was all very serious, we were treated like schoolboys and blinded with technicalities when we were all feeling light hearted and Peace-Happy.

That Christmas break I spent at Hollies with Barbara and family, after a short leave Phil had gone back to his Regiment in Austria and was waiting for early de-mobilisation. We were not short of parties, Arthur arranged an even bigger one at The Limes up to pre-War standards.

Tom as usual kindly allowed me to exercise his horses and mounted me for close Meets of the Puckeridge. The first time I went out on his champion Point to Pointer Easter Hero I lost control and galloped round and round a ploughed field! Tom, to my loss of face, rightly made me change with Sellars to a less high mettled performer. Later with Tom's advice I bought a three quarter bred 7 year old hunter from Mr Stewart of the Royal Oak, Hatfield for £84 and duly arranged for it's transport by train to the School of Artillery.

Sadly Uncle Geoff died worn out by his non-stop War work. He had been a marvellous Uncle to me almost a Father. He had great wisdom, impeccably high standards, great understanding and kindness and had always been ready to give me practical help and advice besides setting me an example of an upright and respected man. I loved him and owed him much.

I saw the New Year 1946 in with Moyra at Takeley and the next morning drove down to Larkhill for the last leg of the Gunnery Staff Course. Theoretical work finished the Course split, half going to Manorbier for Anti Aircraft training the rest of us remaiining at the School of Artillery.

It was now all practical work on the Ranges, in January icy rain is driven horizontally across the Plain, it was very cold and wet.

We fired every equipment taking each duty on the guns or Command Post in turn and learnt by practice the more advanced subjects of Air Burst Ranginng, Barrages and Counter Battery work etc. and at the end of the day to clean the guns up to inspection standard. Our Instructors were first class Lem Gibson Fleming seemed to know everything and be able to teach it, Tom Cracknell was an excellent organiser, while the senior A.I.G BSM Garrett with

just the right touch insisted on the highest possible standards.

Our Course also visited other Gunnery Establishments, Whale Island the Naval Gunnery School at Portsmouth, the Coast Defence School at Plymouth, The Depot at Woolwich, Fort Halstead for trial equipments and the AA School at Manorbier plus a few days at Aberporth for missile firing. These visits were fun and very interesting, often including a cricket or hockey match, a Guest Night and meeting many friends.

We mustered reasonably good cricket and hockey teams in which I played, also rode out most mornings on the Plain before breakfast. I joined the Officers Fishing Association which owned a superb stretch of water on the Avon impeccably kept by the famous Frank Sawyer. My first attempt at dry fly trout fishing in clear water, I did get a few trout and grayling up to 11lb, no way comparable with the real expert's catches.

Altogether we lived very comfortably in the large well run R.A.Mess, dining in blues and avidly playing bridge afterwards. We had a standard bridge four Terence Dunne and John Madden against Denis Carey, a good player, and myself, we played for Mess stakes 6d a 100. After several months play it worked out almost all square.

Our Instructors were flexible, they were after all junior to most of the students and could be persuaded to bend the programme so we were able to get to Cheltenham, Newbury, Wincanton and of course Sandown for the Gunner Meeting. Point to Points at Larkhill were on Saturdays, I had some undistinguished rides on farmers horses. Other week-ends were spent either in London to watch the cricket at Lords or visiting old friends, staying with the St Clairs in Tetbury thought I was smitten by Helen.

Our Course finished at the beginning of August, I was appointed Instructor in Gunnery, with 5/- a day extra Army pay then £36 a month and posted to the R.A. O.C.T.U. at Deepcut as senior I.G., a plum job.

We had 3 weeks leave with extra petrol coupons, petrol cost 3/6d a gallon, I drove down to Hollies to stay with Barbara and then over to the Dublin Horse Show where I met Rowley Byers again, he tried hard to persuade me to buy his Champion Hunter for £750, then on to stay with Terence Dunne and Marjorie Chance, who were by way of being engaged, at Renvyle.

The house was comfortable perched on an island in the middle of the large lough, well supplied with fishing boats. There was a cook and the provisions were lavish, but meals got later and later until we were a whole 24 hours late and caught up again in an Irish fashion. I spent a lot of time fishing from a boat, plenty of small trout but nothing over 1 lb. I was odd

man out as was supposed to pair up with a tough Irish Nurse, we both disliked each other, probably my fault for trying to rush fences, it finished with her slicing my tie off with a carving knife!

I joined the OCTU at Deepcut on 8th September 1946 and was welcomed by the C.O. Ted Fernyhough and his Adjutant Richard Heaven. My job was to teach the Officer Cadets Field Gunnery and to take each Intake to Practice Camp at Sennybridge every 6 weeks. The Cadets were keen, enthusiastic and easy to teach, the whole organisation was alive and humming with efficiency, the Company Officers being hand picked, commanded by Colin Yeo, Peter Worthington and Brian Teacher.

Sennybridge was fun, I had a special petrol allowance so could take my Ford, I made out the programmes and supervised the firing practice, the only worry was "Safety" trying to prevent the exuberant Cadets blowing themselves up at the guns or landing shells in farms outside the target area, which happened twice luckily harmlessly.

In spare time there was excellent trout fishing on the Usk, the banks were overgrown so not easy for a beginner, the local experts however seemed able to cast accurately without any trouble.

At Deepcut I had a room in the Mess, the food was first class, Nobby Clarke seemed able to get the best in spite of rationing, he had been Head Chef throughout the War and had many outside contacts, even if suspected we didn't dare breathe the words "Black Market."

I bought a Clumber Spaniel 10 weeks old puppy "Peter" named after Pease & Partners on which I had made an unexpectedly large profit on the Stock Exchange, George Schwerdt of Nortcotes still advised me greatly to my advantage. Though far from house trained Peter slept in my room in the Mess and came to my Office to the chagrin of my second I.G. Bashan Bull. I spent much time trying to train him as a gun dog, he eventually became obedient to me only but though he sometimes found and retrieved it was more by chance than proper training. His striking looks belied his performance.

I acquired a second hunter "Sheila" from Jackie Brutton for £100 quite nice looking but slightly bad tempered. Frank Weldon who was in charge of the nearest German Prisoner of War Camp loaned me an excellent farmer "Andrew" as groom for my two horses. He was a good steady worker, absolutely reliable, but his one wish was naturally to be released back to his own big farm in Friesland.

When Andrew was re-patriated I took on a civilian groom Fiddes, he was only quite good, I didn't trust him entirely and suspected he was rough



with the horses, but he never really gave me any cause for complaint. I hacked round the area when time permitted, hunted occasionally with the South Berks but more often with the Staff College Drag, which was closer and certain to provide a short sharp gallop in far less time.

I allowed myself to be co-opted onto the Olympic Games Committee preparing the Equestrian events at Aldershot, my main contribution was to measure the exact distances of the various Cross Country Courses, I spent many hours pushing a measuring wheel round the fields and tracks. I also learned how to make durable brush fences, which stood me in good stead later.

That Autumn Weddings were definitely in the air, six of my Army friends and contemporaries were married as well as Moyra and Marcelle. In December I was Johnny Dixon's Bestman when he married Joy Stock in London. After seeing the happy couple off on their honeymoon I met Heather and she asked me to stay at Humbletoft for the week-end before Christmas.

I went by train to Wymondham where Heather met me with a car. On the drive back to Humbletoft we stopped under a gnarled oak and at long last agreed to marry. Whoopee! When Mrs McLean opened the front door to us Heather said "It's alright, you can congratulate us." Champagne was produced in dusty glasses, we all seemed over the moon with pleasure, Mr & Mrs McLean tactfully retired to bed leaving the engaged couple to plan an ideal future reclining on the sofa in front of the fire.

I returned by myself to Hollies for Christmas with the Connells, which was celebrated in the usual happy family style. Everyone seemed delighted at our engagement, not least ourselves. I collected Mother's engagement ring, which she had bequeathed to me, and slipped it on Heather's finger at the first opportunity, it fitted, a good omen.

In January 1947 Heather returned to St Thomas's and gave in her notice, I went back to Deepcut to continue instructing Officer Cadets and visiting chilly Sennybridge for firing practice. I even started to amend my disreputable and pleasure seeking batchelor existance towards becoming that of a steady married and hopefully a family man.

Heather and I met as often as possible in London and made the necessary arrangements for an April wedding. On one happy occasion we were locked in Hyde Park at night and were found and escorted out by the Police, on another snowy evening my Ford failed to surmount the ice on Egham Hill, so had to wait three chilly hours for the gritting lorries at first light.

As in spie of my blandishments to Ronnie Moorby, the genial and efficent Garrison QM, there was no immeadiate prospect of obtaining an Army

Married Quarter we went house hunting in Camberley and were lucky enough to be able to rent "Doone" fully furnished, a Victorian villa on the A30 main London to Camberley road from the Hay Neaves for 12 months.

In April I took 3 weeks leave, Mr McLean and I each made Marriage Settlement Trusts through Waltons and HVA, I opened a Joint Housekeeping Bank Account at the National Westminster in St James' Square.

On the 12th Heather and I were married at Holy Trinity Church, Brompton. The McLeans gave a large dinner party for close friends and relations at the Hyde Park Hotel the night before, after dinner Mr McLean pressed £5 into my hand saying "Take her out to dance but bring her back by midnight", we slipped off to the Savoy.

Stephen was my kind and efficient Bestman, he took me out to a lavish lunch at the Ritz then to the Church on time. After the Service taken jointly by Mr Boston from Dereham and G. John Halsey the Curate, Heather was handed her new Passport in the name of Mrs Gold and we repaired to 23 Knightsbridge for a Reception given by my in-laws.

We left the Reception in a Rolls Royce, twice round the Park before arriving at Claridges where we were shown into the Bridal Suite the size of a tennis court. We dined in the Restaurant, by chance Aunt Margery and Uncle Eric were at the next door table, after supper we went to the Ballet "les Sylphides" at Covent Garden. After the first Act Heather said she could think of better things to do, so we took a taxi back to Claridges and the Bridal Suite. Next morning Heather complained that it was noisy I had no complaints.

We met the McLean's party for Church at Holy Trinity and spent the afternoon at Kew, only 1d entrance fee. After a second night together at Claridges we caught the Simplon Orient Express for Montreux, where we spent 10 days blissful honeymoon at the Grand Hotel, the weather was kind and the view from our bedroom window as we breakfasted in bed of the sun striking the "Dents du Midi" never to be forgotten. In contrast with British war time stringency the Swiss food was unbelievably good though they still kept to one meatless day a week. Turbot in egg sauce was no hardship to us.

On the way home by train we stopped for 2 nights in Paris at the King George V Hotel where we had silk sheets and acorn coffee at 10/- a cup. One evening we dined at Maxims where the food was better than even pre-war and much more expensive, our dinner cost £27, a large sum then.

We returned to Humbletoft to pick up our belongings and drove down to settle in at Doone with dog Peter, our first and happy house. Peter did

not approve of me being married and unchivalrously treated Heather as junior dog.

Heather managed all the cooking and catering, Alice came in every day to do the cleaning and Gnr Roberts my high class intelligent batman bicycled over from Deepcut every morning to stoke the Janitor boiler with anthracite and to clean clothes and equipment. There was a large garden with some spectacular lupins looked after by Mr Wenham a dear old man and very garden wise, he taught me the rudiments and encouraged me to start gardening myself for the first time. Thanks to him I have enjoyed gardening for the rest of my life.

I drove to my Office in the OCTU every morning and normally stayed to lunch in the Mess while Heather walked down to Camberley to queue in the shops and NAAFI. Food and clothing were still rationed but sometimes a free bonus of goodies appeared by chance. We usually went for a dog walk in the evenings, although the house was very close to the main road, owing to petrol shortage, there was virtually no traffic so we could quite safely walk along it with Peter.

We were very social, all our friends wanted to come and see us in our new house, we went to and gave in return numerous dinner and cocktail parties. Our family relations in turn came to stay, Joy often for week ends, sometimes at the same time as Charlie Cunningham, I suspected Heather of a little match making. Alastair came one week-end resplendent in his new Naval Uniform.

Qut and Lynette stayed for Ascot, we stayed in return with them in Bovington for a sweltering hot week-end., Ralph Vickers took us to the Derby in great state in his firm's Box and entertained us for luxury week-ends at Chisenbury. I made my regular trips to Sennybridge, sometimes Heather came with me and stayed in the Brecon Hotel, there wasn't much for her to do by day but as she was pregnant and feeling sick was quite glad of a peaceful quiet time.

One night our house in Camberley was broken into and burgled while Heather & I were at the Cinema, we came back to find great disorder two suitcases and all our valubales, silver and jewels missing. The Police came, Heather was so obviously very pregnant that they treated her with kid gloves.

All night the Press kept phoning for a story but in the morning the Police asked me to come to the Station in Camberley to identify our property!

It was all there intact except for the largest and most valuable diamond ring, The Police said they would give "him another going over" and it

was found tucked into the hem of his overcoat, he had no intention of sharing it's proceeds with the other thieves.

The previous night the Station Master at Ascot had noticed curtains drawn in a compartment on a London bound train. Expecting to find a courting couple he peeked through the curtains and saw three men sharing out the loot. He promptly alerted the Police who stopped the train, boarded it, apprehended the burglars and took charge of the stolen property. So we got everything back within a matter of hours, the burglars got 2 years each at Sutton Crown Court, the Stationmaster a reward from the Insurance Company and the Surrey Police a good donation from me towards their Benevolent Fund.

We went back to Humbletoft to await the birth of our first son Anthony on 29th February at Grove House Nursing Home. He was of course the most wonderful and beautiful baby ever, in March he was duly Christened at Dereham Church "Anthony Charles Philip" sponsored by Stephen, David and Joy.

After a fortnight cooking suppers for myself, mostly kippers and trifle, I was delighted when Heather and baby, in the softest possible cotton wool, returned to Doone with Nanny Pledger as keeper. Unfortunately I caught scarlet fever and was whisked in to the Aldershot Military Hospital until I peeled and was presentable again. We learnt almost immediately that thanks to John Daniels my former C.O. then AG6, I was to be posted to 3 RHA in B.A.O.R. Germany as "D" Battery Commander in July.

I was very pleased, the high light of a Regimental Gunner Officer's career is to Command a Horse Artillery Battery, especially one with the reputation of "Shiny D". But it meant a whole host of family problems, Heather had had little chance of adjusting to Regimental Army life.

I re-arranged the lease of Doone with the Hay Neaves, advertised my 2 horses for sale, sent one up to Pop Blacktt Orde in Hexham, bought a second hand low loading Rice horsebox from Tom, and packed a few furnishings and household equipment to take with us. Mrs Blackett Orde did not approve of my gift, she sold it and sent me a cheque for £54, Pop promptly married the Earl of Devonshire.

After a round of farewell parties I left in the Ford towing the horse box with dog Peter beside me, crossed Harwich to The Hook and drove through Holland then Bremen to Verden, where 3 RHA was stationed. Heather returned to Humbletoft and followed by train 2 months later also crossing Harwich to Hook to board the slow Military Train with baby, luggage and Sister Joy.

We were sorry to leave Doone, our first family house, we had been superlatively happy there, I had been amazed how quickly and efficiently Heather had become house-keeper, cook and Mother as well as ever loving Wife.

We were allocated 28 Sedan Strasse in Verden as a Married Quarter, the whole street backing on to the River Aller had been taken over as Married Quarters for Officers, our villa formerly belonged to the German dentist, it was very adequately furnished and had a small but prolific garden. At that time it was easy to obtain staff at no cost through the Civil Labour Office, besides my driver/batman Gnr Ingram we had a German Cook, a maid, a Nursemaid and a gardener.

The German economy was only very slowly recovering from the War, conditions were appalling, food and clothes were in very short supply, the children went barefoot, our dustbins were scavenged daily for scraps, the adults would do anything in exchange for food or cigarettes, the shops had nothing to sell, amenities and luxuries were non-existent, the black market flourished but the German Reichmark had little value.

We had our own currency of BAFVs for use in the NAAFI, Mess or Clubs, shopping on the German economy was prohibited so that we fed exclusively on Army rations. At first there was no civilian petrol so we were allowed to use Army vehicles for social and pleasure purposes, families travelling long distances by Jeep to the Dortmund races found it rigorous, especially as the main roads were either lethally slippery black cobbles or bomb cratered Autobahns.

The Allied Civil Organisation was in charge and supposed to be restoring order, too many of its members, who had evaded War Service, were intent on feathering their own nests in a big way. When the large Area Medical Stores in Verden were checked M & B. tablets had been replaced by blackboard chalk dummies, the tens of thousands of Jerricans in the Petrol dump contained only water. An arms factory en route to Hanover was demolished by day and built up again at night.

There was no social contact between the Army and the German population, their labour was used on a large scale but only through the Civil Labour Office which paid all wages. The soldiers and some of the Officers of course had local "frats", a few of them eventually married. There was even a group of bandits in the Guardroom, deserters from British Regiments, who had

terrorised out-lying villages for months. In due course they were tried and sentenced to hang for multiple murder. In all the attitude was "We are the conquering Army you are the conquered."

Verden was a single Regiment station with good barracks on the edge of the town conveniently close to the race course, the other Regiments in 7th Armoured Division, then commanded by General Pip Roberts were stationed in Fallingbostal, Celle and Hohne all in first class German Army Barracks, Married Quarters, Messes, Clubs etc were in requisitioned buildings, naturally the best available in the locality.

I took over D Battery from Tiny Shorland, the Officers and men were a mixture of Regulars, who had served through the War and National Service Conscripts, the Officers and senior NCOs all selected to Horse Artillery standards were excellent. Bombardier Artificer Draper was the longest serving Member, a champion middleweight boxer, he had joined as a Driver 16 years previously, typically he couldn't remember back history.

The Battery had 2 Troops of 4 25pdr guns each towed by Quads, the OP parties were mounted in Comet tanks, I had the gun taken out of mine to make more room in the turret. The 2 Troops were Commanded by Peter Barnet and Geoffrey Collin, Henry Dormer commanded the HQ Section. Tony Nesbitt the Battery Captain handed over a few weeks later to Hugh Nelson. Sergeant Majors Antrobus, Wheeler and Bailey were the highly experienced Warrant Officers. It was a very smart, efficient and happy Battery, I endeavoured to make it even more so.

Militarily there wasn't much to do and an absence of pressure from above, the War had been fought and won, the Russians with their outposts 40 miles away across the Border the only conceivable enemy, most people wanted to get home to repair and continue their peace time employments. So apart from basic training of the National service element and an Autumn Divisional get-together exercise, the aim was to make the most of the amenities available.

3 RHA was commanded by Clive Usher with Henry Peck as 2 IC and Bert Evans the Adjutant. The two other Batteries "J" and "M" were commanded by Dick Cunliffe and Terence O'Brien Butler and later by Peter Worthington and Jack Spencer.

Clive, who had been a senior Subaltern with me in 1RHA in Cairo was unique a law unto himself, he had won 3 DSOs in the War and for the moment had done soldiering, anyhow he hated office work and could seldom be persuaded to go into his C.O.s "Bureau". Possessed of enormous mental energy and untiring stamina, he was a leader of men well known and well liked by his masses of

friends, his own love was first of all for horses and racing. then all other sports hunting, shooting, and sailing especially. He had assembled by one means or another a stable of 30 good horses liberating them from the Germans, including the famous stallion "Abendruf" from the Celle Stud, which he invariably rode himself.

The Stables were a prime feature of Regimental life for Officers and their wives too, all were encouraged even expected to ride. The Stables were run to perfection with a German Riding Master "Walter" in charge of a team of German grooms, the world famous Colonel Rodzianko was brought in to instruct the more experienced, Clive made all the arrangements and gave all the orders.

I was put up on an unknown horse belonging to the Fusiliers at Dortmund Races called "Red Rover" for a 5 furlong sprint race, When I mounted in the Paddock Red Rover was so overcome with nervous excitement that he just could not move, he stood stock still quivering all over. I dismounted and walked him to the Start, he was then triggered off enough to be able to gallop after the disappearing field.

Clive decided that Red Rover and I would get on together and swapped him with the Fusiliers to join our string of race-horses. Red Rover and I with his boy groom Horst stayed together for 4½ years, the best horse I or anyone could ever own. A bright 16 hand chestnut gelding, full of brains, cheek and devilment he was a lamb in the stables and out hacking, but a lion on hot bricks out hunting or on the race course.

He won 12 Steeplechases for me without a fall including the Grand Military at Hanover 3 years in succession and became famous enough to have a book written about him and his picture painted by Professor Kuhlbrandt. He liked to come round the bend into the Finishing Strait well behind the leaders and then accelerate to make them look as though they were gallopinng backwards. After I left BAOR Dick Hodgson smuggled him out to England for his girls to hunt, on paper he was still German property foaled in Micklenberg and christened "Ruf". When he became too old to hunt he was retired to grass, I went to see him in his paddock when he was 23, he still knew me and trotted up to blow nostalgic messages in my face!

Led by Clive on Abendruf the 8 race-horses and riders left the stables at 5.30 every morning, except Sunday, winter and summer for two hours exercise, training and rare gallops on the race course sand-track under the Trainer, Clive's all seeing eye. I loved it and learnt from an expert how it should be done, each horse fine trained according to it's next scheduled race.

During our Christmas leave I bought a private horse "Raggedy Jack" from the dealer Oliver Dixon to add to our string and arranged his shipment to Bremen. He was an honest horse, a good hunter with not really enough stamina to win steeplechases but gamely managed two wins for me on the Flat in his first season.

Jack Spencer with his wife Margaret as Whip started the Rezeqh Hounds with drafts from England. There were a few foxes on the grass lands and farms West of the the Aller, the farmers even if they were asked made no objection to the Hunt on their lands, There was a Meet at least once a week in the season with a field of a dozen or more mounted followers, some hacking over from nearby Cavalry Regiments. We had two most enjoyable seasons on the well trained German horses from our Stables.

There was plenty of rough shooting, Clive was quite capable of saying during a Conference "We'll go shooting this afternoon, 4 guns and beaters from each Battery meet at the Guardroom 1230." Having spotted a covey of partridges while riding that morning, we were lined up on the farmers land without any by your leave and walked forward behind an assortment of dogs, as soon as one showed any interest Clive started to run in order to get a shot. I found it exhausting and unrewarding, we did get some partridges and plenty of hares, which became a drug on our dinner tables.

I bought a racing sailing dinghy "Mrs Smith" which was kept on Steinhuder Meer. The dinghy had just been beautifully built by the famous firm of Abeking & Rasmussen to the order of Geoffrey Rowley Conway, it was said for the price of 2 mackintoshes and a carton of cigarettes. When she was new (and well handled) Mrs Smith won many Regatta events against the older German boats, but in the second season was surpassed by newer boats. Steinhuder Meer, really a gigantic puddle with freak winds was an hours drive from Verden, too far for an occasional evening sail, Heather was not a brave sailor so after 3 seasons use I sold the boat to the Club.

Huge duck shoots were organised on the shore west of Bremen, these were 3 day affairs with a dozen guns or more entailing staying out on the salt marshes for 2 nights. The best part I thought, was in the morning when the shrimping boats came in, eating one's fill of delicious fresh shrimps as they were boiled on the ship's stove. The bag was mostly mallard with an occasional Brent goose.

We were ultra social, coming from similar backgrounds all the Officers and Wives were friends, we entertained each other regularly and made special efforts when relatives had come out to visit or there was some



Regimental event. Mrs McLean by now nicknamed "Gag", Joy, Betty and Stephen, Barbara and Phil and others all came out several times to stay with us for a week or more. It was all great fun, the German Staff did the work, the Officers Clubs provided excellent meals. Heather played wives tennis on courts opposite our house and went for long walks along the Aller with baby, pram and Peter, she was happily pregnant again.

We made occasional trips to Hanover or Hamburg both reduced to rubble by Allied bombing raids, there was little to do or see, except that the Four Seasons Hotel on the Alster had been miraculously preserved and taken over as an Officers Club, it provided accommodation and meals of a surprisingly high standard.

We had leave at Christmas and went to Humbletoft via slow Military Train and the Hook. Heather returned to Humbletoft again in August 1949 for the birth of her second baby, again at Grove House on September 3rd, a huge 10lb lusty boy - Colin. Grins all round. After the Christening at Dereham Church Betty Hart was taken on as Nursemaid and came out to Verden with the family of two baby boys.

I had a month's exchange with a U.S. Army Major commanding a Field Battery in Fussen. We had a gentleman's agreement not to give orders or interfere with each other's Batteries in any way, so the exchange became one of instruction in methods of fire control, training programmes and inspection of U.S. equipment. Leisure facilities and amenities were mostly in Garmisch. I drove down to Fussen in my car to be welcomed and looked after extremely well by my American hosts. I attended their first parade at 7.30 every morning and followed the general programme arranged, in the afternoon I was free to tour the lovely countryside of Bavaria. On return to Verden I found Peter Barnett totally exhausted, he had had to accompany my American counterpart to the Reeperbahn striptease shows in Hamburg every single night!

In October we went to Paris by train to meet Barbara, Phil, Stephen and Betty for a nostalgic gastronomic week-end. We stayed at the Hotel Dounou, still all gilt and red plush, and went to dine and lunch at the best restaurants. Alas only Stephen's and my stomachs could take the quantity of rich food, the others had to fall back on dry toast and bi-carb.

We did the famous sights on Saturday and on Sunday after a bumper lunch at the Cascade in the Bois went to Longchamps where I had an astonishing run of luck. I picked up a newspaper which tipped the winners for the 6 races. We arrived late, the first race was over but the selection in my paper had won. So I put my money on the paper's nap for the 2nd race and it won at

good odds. Followed the paper again for the 3rd race with my considerable winnings and again won. The augmented pile of cash went back on to the Pari Mutuel for the 4th race, same again the paper won. Now I had a huge wad of notes to put on the 5th race following the paper's advice still and won again for the fourth time in a row. The winnings were too much for me to hazard on the last race so we came home with pockets and bags stuffed with notes,

I never counted how much but certainly enough to pay for our week-end trip and take Heather shopping "carte blanche" on Monday morning. We hadn't much time before the train left, only just enough for her to buy a very smart and expensive Parisian dress and dressing gown.

In November I put the two boy's names down for Radley with a lump sum deposit to cover fees in advance, as it turned out a prudent move, I also ordered a new Ford V8 (NNG 8) to replace my 10 year old ELL18. Our Joint income for the year was £3,769 on which I had to pay £256 Sur-Tax.

After Christmas when we were all united again Heather and I went to the Leave Centre at Ehrwald for a weeks ski-ing. We drove down in the Ford, spending one night at Kassel in a U.S.Army Club, then through Nuremberg, the road ran alongside the Russian Border and we could easily see their patrols, a little scary as by now we were no longer Allies but enemies.

The holiday was not a great success, the accommodation was bleak and the weather awful, The first day we went to the top with our hired skis in a blizzard, visibility nil, we did try a few short runs keeping close to the Huts, but it was no good neither of us enjoyed it. We spent most of the week going for walks or on visits by car to Innsbruck and Zell am Zee. On one walk Heather got stuck traversing an outcrop of rock and was spreadeagled on the face of a precipice, not happy, she couldn't wait to get home to her baby boys so back to Verden in one day, an exhausting 730 miles drive.

We left Verden in October 1950 and returned to England for 3 months, Heather went ahead by train and the Hook to Humbletoft, I followed later in the car. As we were due to come back to 3 RHA we left horses and Peter behind with Angela and Geoffrey Collin.

I joined the Senior Officers Course at Erlstoke Park near Devizes. This was the first Course of it's kind, far too large and as the Students were drawn from every conceivable Unit, on the whole a dour lot, the syllabus had to be pitched at a low key and covered everything in detail from basic Infantry tactics to War Graves.

I was very sad to leave my beloved "D" Battery, the best, smartest and fastest Battery in the British Army and a happy family unit.

In January 1951 we returned to 3 RHA in B.A.O.R. the Regiment had just moved from Verden to Munsterlager, a good barracks but isolated in dark, dreary pine forests, rather eerie as it had been the German poison gas school, experimental labs and factory, mostly destroyed but still plenty of evidence to be seen. Some areas were still suspect and were sealed off against possible contamination. The Germans installed an interpreter Siebert to look after their chemical interests and to advise us, he was very useful too in liaising with the Forstmeisters when it came to exercises or deer shooting.

The only playing fields were on the disused aerodrome a mile away through the rubble of the destroyed gas bunkers. There was no town nearer than Soltau, Munsterlager itself only a straggling and poor village.

I was now the Second in Command to the new C.O. George Baker, while Dick Cunliffe, Brian Teacher and Charles Coaker commanded D, J, and M, Batteries. Gerry Coaker was Adjutant to be followed by John Goddard. There was plenty of work for me to finalise the move, arrange all admin support, take over the accounts and sort out the Married Quarters. One of the first things I did was to start a profitable pig farm using swill to provide fresh pork and DMs to buy luxuries for the men's Messes..

George Baker our Commanding Officer and Colonel was a big man in every way, of great charm and even greater ability. He had been SUO at the Shop with me and since held many important Staff jobs with distinction, he was already marked out for super rapid promotion and became in a few years Field Marshal and Master Gunner only to die sadly at the age of 67, He was a splendid and popular C.O. and well able to refer to the new Divisional Commander Splosh Jones as "The learner General." He arranged for Lord Alanbroke, then Master Gunner to visit the Regiment for a grand Review, which lasted several hectic days attended by all the top brass. We entertained in our house two Colonel Commandants, Generals Alan Hornby and Charles Alfrey.

As there was a string of polo ponies at Munsterlager, imported after the war, we left most of the hunting horses in Verden but moved all the Race horses into the ex Veterinary Hospital. I took over as "Trainer," and followed Clive's regime of exercise at 5.30 every morning, we lacked good gallops but had beginners luck and won 11 races, I had more wins than any other jockey in BAOR that season.

We played polo mostly friendly chukkas regularly on the aerodrome twice a week, coached and supervised by Tony Sanger then KRO at Soltau, assembling a reasonable Regimental team of Dick Cunliffe, myself, George Baker and Clavell Mansell to take part in the B.A.O.R. tournaments.

After some frissonance I took over "Auf dem Sulle" as a Married Quarter, a large well equipped house on the edge of the town, which had belonged to the local Gauleiter, the cellars were full of radio sets which he had confiscated. Heather brought Chrissie as cook and Crista over from Verden and engaged Helga locally, she was to stay with us for many years, so with Betty as nursemaid, a gardener, a boilerman and Gunner Redstone as my omniscient driver/batman we had a largish staff and lived very comfortably.

The house had a sizeable formal flower garden and lawn in the front and a prolific vegetable and fruit garden behind. (Helga fell out of her bedroom window trying to pinch ripe peaches.) The splendid show of irises in front disappeared on Mothering Sunday eve, a DM1 note was stuck in the railings as conscience money! Our boilerman had been a General in the German Army and explained to me that he had been a much better General than he was a boilerman.

Later General Shan Hackett Commanding 7th Armd Div, who was polishing his already fluent German, borrowed the boilerman to discuss military and technical matters in German.

Gnr Redstone was a splendid character, a huge rough Yorkshireman up to anything and everything, he took a fancy to Anthony aged 3 and they would solemnly go to the NAAFI together to eat doughnuts and green apples.

We were very social within the Regiment and had many visitors from England. Joy came out in May and went with Heather and the 2 small boys to Hartzburg for a week's holiday, the Ford broke down on the way and Redstone and I had to rescue them, I stayed on for the week-end, it rained all the time, Heather was pregnant again and felt awful, Joy had a streaming cold and the boys at their most querulous "What and Why?" act, not a success.

As a result I ordered another car out from UK. an Austin A 40 and we became a 2 car family. Perversely though she hated the Ford Heather was not pleased as other wives knew it was coming before she did herself!

One never to be forgotten day Wing Commander Donaldson hearing that I had once had a Pilot's Licence persuaded me to come to Fassberg for a flight in a jet, he himself had been a Schneider Trophy Pilot, He took me up in a dual Control Meteor then handed over controls to me, was I scared. After 20 minutes flying as straight and steady as I could, he took over again to show me "What she can do", another 20 minutes of hair raising aerobatics followed, besides being very frightened the abrupt pressure changes made me feel queer, he offered to let me land the plane but wisely I chickened out. A stiff G & T in the Mess afterwards was the best part of the outing.

Heather decided to have her third baby in Hamburg Military Hospital so during the summer we drove to Hamburg for regular check-ups, on 23rd July we went to the 4 Seasons Hotel where we had dinner to a spectacular display of fireworks across the Alster. I left Heather in the BMH next door, on 26th Philippa was born, our first daughter, being born on German soil we had to get her officially Naturalised!

In September Gag and Annabel flew out for her Christening in the Garrison Chapel Munsterlager, Stanley Hinton officiated, Sybil Beever, Annabel and Hugh Nelson were Godparents. As we left the Service the heavens opened in a furious thunderstorm and we all fled to the Officers Mess for a celebration party. Philippa acquired the nickname of "Kleine Dicke" which later shortened to "K." still later when training at St Thomas' the family added "Daws".

Betty slipped up badly and produced a half German son Peter, so was promptly sent home, Lily the Humbletoft cook happily adopted the baby as Peter Palmer. Helga was promoted to Nursemaid. (A family trauma condensed to 3 lines of type.)

For Christmas leave in 1951 all 5 of us and Helga went to Humbletoft for 10 days, I travelled back to BAOR alone Heather and family staying on another week. Our next visit to England was to The Derby in June, a very windy day, even the "Gent's" marquee blew away with the Gents inside fairly caught with their trousers down! Heather and I stayed at the Savoy for 3 nights, did some shopping and played with the S.G's in their new house No 19 Devonshire Street.

I commissioned Mr Poltock of Carringtons to find me a coloured diamond clip for Heather to mark our daughter's birth, the boys had rated a diamond Gunner brooch and an emerald and diamond eternity ring respectively.

Phil decided to leave Barings and become a farmer, with Tom Streeter's experienced advice, he and Barbara bought Amberden Hall, Widdington, a 300 acre farm with 2 large barns and 7 good cottages. Hollies was for sale so I bought it from Barbara for £5,000 as a future family base,

In November 1953 four halcyon years with 3 RHA came to an end, I was posted as Lt Col to the Ordnance Board but first for a month to a Selection Board at Stanmore under General Ford. I handed over to Frank Beale, packed up, disposed of the horses and arranged Peter's quarantine. Before leaving I commissioned Professor Kuhlbrandt to paint portraits of our most successful race horses, Red Rover, The Dragon and Brenda keeping two water colours for myself and presenting the large oil painting to the Regiment as a Farewell present.

U.K. & Ordnance Board 1953 - 1954

Heather and the three small children plus Helga took the long dreary journey by train to The Hook, crossed to Harwich and on to Humbletoft staying there over Christmas. I drove back with the loaded horsebox and Peter, saw him comfortably housed in Hackbridge Kennels for 6 months dreary quarantine and went on myself to Hollies to unload packing cases etc before driving on to join the family party at Humbletoft.

For the month's Selection Board on the future of Gunner Officers I stayed either at the Club or with Barbara or Stephen and their young families.

Heather, Helga and 3 small children arrived at Hollies mid Jan, Barbara had left my share of Mother's furniture, it was barely sufficient so we set about furnishing gradually, buying carpets, curtains, beds etc in London or locally. Much of the goods on sale were war time utility but we managed to get some larger good second hand arm chairs, chests of drawers etc from Maples, our own bed was specially custom made by Heals. After an expensive month we were warm, snug and comfortably at home. Helga was a great worker, occasionally Nanny Lil came in to help with the children, Anthony started to go to school at Miss Cornell's in Stortford.

Mr Jeffreys took over the garden part time, another great worker, a nice chap but not a trained gardener, anyhow he grew sufficient veg, kept the lawns mown and all tidy. I think Helga must have been the boilerman too, she was capable of most things.

On week days I caught the 8.05 train from Stansted to Liverpool St every morning invariably sharing a 1st Class compartment with Arthur Fraser, Bill Mason and Dick Page and our Times newspapers, getting back home again about 6 pm in the evening. Week-ends were free for gardening, household chores and playing with the children, naturally I had masses of friends and relations in the area, many with young children of our age group so plenty of social life and children's parties.

With promotion and inflation my Army pay had risen to £150 a month, £60 of which I transferred to our Housekeeping account. I was also making good money on the Stock Exchange with George Scwerdt's guidance buying New Issues and selling them as soon as they showed 10% clear profit.

In Jan 1954 I joined the Ordnance Board at Charles House just opposite Olympia, a new spacious Government building 8 stories high, mostly filled by the Tax Department. The Ordnance Board had 2 floors and a superb

modern printing press in the basement, The large Boardroom for the 28 Members from all three Services was in the Centre with offices for the Members and their staff all round. I had a large office to myself, well furnished with a dictaphone and an efficient darkie Secretary. It was not a job I wanted being mostly technical paper work and Committee Meetings, but it carried some kudos as the Ordnance Board was highly respected and all powerful in the field of weaponry design, procurement and fitness for Service use. No development of weapons could proceed without the Board's "Recommendation", which was only given at a full Board Meeting after immense and lengthy consideration.

My responsibility was "Carriages" rather an uninspiring brief, the other 2 Gunners were David Lindsay and his G1 John Sharpe with a brief on A.A. systems, they were very busy with new Missile and Radar projects while as there was little need for new Carriages I frankly had not enough to do.

I made regular visits to Trials Establishments at Shoeburyness, Larkhill, Fort Halstead, RRE Malvern and ARDE to advise and watch equipment undergoing the trials I had specified. During lunch hours in London I explored Kensington and either walked to my Club, the V & A Museum or to a pub with Stephen now Skin Consultant at St George's Hospital or John Sharpe an amusing and ribald companion.

During Coronation year Heather and I watched the Procession from the Club in Pall Mall, went to the Ball in the Woolwich Mess and an enormous drinks party at Charles House given by the Ordnance Board.

Two years running for our summer holidays we took the children plus Helga to the seaside at Sheringham, staying at Mrs Middletons and visiting Humbletoft whenever the tide was wrong for the sands. During harvest time we went up to Amberden to try to help Phil, peasant Helga was an expert at potato picking!

Anthony and I joined a ski-ing party at Andermatt with the Connells and Chestermaster girls, it was not a great success Pam fell off the ski lift the first day and broke her leg, Anthony and Mike preferred to play in the coal cellar rather than learn to ski, on one occasion Anthony at the age of 6 was so fed up he started to walk home, a small lone figure on the snowy mountain side!

On 19th May our baby daughter and fourth child Penny was born at Hollies, Sister Lyon who had been waiting in hopes for 10 days had to leave for her next case so Joy nobly took over. The Doctor Tubby Holmes arrived an hour too late but kept me up all night drinking champagne to celebrate. In comparison with the others Penny was a small and squeaky little girl. I and

Heather particularly were very pleased with 4 healthy babies in 6 years and no troubles. "Penelope Jane" was Christened at Birchanger with Susie Warde, Mary Page and Arthur Fraser as God-parents, followed by a champagne party at Hollies, Arthur distinguished himself with an apposite poem and Bill Mason surprised Gag by standing on his head.

In September 1954 I was posted as Lt Col, CO. 94 Locating Regiment R.A. stationed in Munsterlager. I was disappointed to be selected for a Technical rather than a Field Regiment especially as it meant giving up Hollies and going back to B.A.O.R. and gloomy Munsterlager again.

Hastily we eat up our chickens and bottles of fruit, Heather, children and Helga based themselves on Gag and Gaga at Humbletoft, the furniture went into store at the London and Stansted, I bought a 4 year old possible point-to-pointer "Sunlarkin" from Mrs Bullard, ordered a new Morris Oxford car from Mayhews to be exported, sold Hollies perhaps unwisely, but the surrounding land was becoming closely built up and the house rather too small for growing children, anyhow I had ideas above my station for a large Queen Anne country house with stables and a lake.

#### B.A.O.R. 94 Loc Regt Oct 1955 - Aug 1957

Again I drove out in NNG8 with Peter and the horsebox to Munsterlager, Sunlarkin followed by sea, and took over the Regiment from Bertie Bibra early in October 1955.

94 Locating Regiment was the largest Unit in the Army 950 men strong, divided up into a Survey Battery, a Sound Ranging Battery and a Radar Battery commanded respectively by McGrae Brown, Spike Hughes and Pat Brandon to me an odd team. Alan Mills was 2 IC, he and his wife both former Jap P.O.W.s. had problems, he was no keen Regimental Officer but very highly qualified technically and a very nice man to work with. The Regiment appeared to be run by the Adjutant R.K. Berrigan and RSM Harding both having had something like 14 years consecutive service in their appointments.

The N.C.O.s and men were first class, the majority of National Servicemen being in the top S1 grade. Even my batman Gunner Stevens the son of a well known Consultant was halfway through his own Doctor's training. On the other hand the Officers had been mainly selected for their Boffin ability and not their leadership prowess or reliability, many would have been fish out of



water in a Field Regiment. One of my first actions was to Court Martial the Officers Mess Secretary caught systematically stealing the Mess Funds, also the Welsh Padre for selling his Married Quarters furniture.

When Heather and family arrived we took over the C.O's Quarter No.4 Dennis Barracks, a large well found house and garden in the centre of the Camp opposite the Officers Mess. Helga was Nursemaid, Emma the Cook and Frau Mitiendorf made up the inside Staff with Otto gardener, a shared boilerman and Gnr Gore outside. The boys went to the Camp school and Heather started her thankless task of keeping the wives happy, they too were a very mixed bag.

I started to revive the Stables and horses, only one or two Officers and wives could ride or were interested. The string of polo ponies had been taken to Fallingbostal, all but four of the old horses had disappeared, the race horses had been distributed around to Cavalry Regiments and the team of grooms discharged. I was able to salvage "The Dragon" and Fritz one of the experienced grooms and bought "Brenda" back from General Peter Gregson for £18. The Dragon was still the perfect gentleman and game enough to win a couple of short flat races ridden by Godfrey Fausett. I also had Sunlarkin to school in the early morning.

The overall Military situation was a Stalemate with the Russian Armies surrounding Berlin and manning the sealed border 40 miles to our East. The Cold War was on while America and Russia vied with each other to equip their Forces with more and more powerful Atomic weapons.

Apart from the Survey instruments the Regiment's sound ranging and radar equipments were old, obsolete and worn out. New modern equipments were in process of development, from my experience with the Ordnance Board I knew they would not be in Service for several years to come.

We tried locating the guns firing on Hohne Ranges many times without much success and when every area of the Region had been surveyed and recorded, there didn't seem much more we could do to improve performance in our official role. Accordingly I started a programme of basic training under war conditions such simple things as cross-country moves by night without lights, camouflage in town, village and varied sountrysides, digging-in, and "order-counterorder-disorder".

The schemes were made competitive and enjoyed by the National Servicemen if not the Officers. I had one week's full Regimental exercise in the depths of winter, it was an exceptionally cold spell the temperature many degrees below zero, petrol froze as did soda water but fortunately not whisky. Fires had to be lit in the latrines so that trousers could safely be lowered.

After 5 days and nights I called the exercise off as there were several cases of frostbite, and was hauled over the coals by the Medics for putting the soldiers at risk, however the Corps Commander was heard to observe "It'll be damned sight colder when we march on Moscow."

It was during this very cold spell that the Elbe froze over and wolves from East Prussia crossed on to the Luneberg Heath. Mothers kept their children very close to heel and wolf hunts were organised by the foresters and farmers, I saw the carcase of one wolf hung on a barn door, a large, shaggy, emaciated and unpleasant looking monster.

I also started a programme to encourage Officers sailing and skiing. Alan Mills was a fully qualified skipper, he had designed the perfect 6 berth sailing boat whilst a P.O.W. and built it after the war, called "Release", he brought her to Kiel to take us sailing under instruction in the Baltic. There were several Gunner Y.C. boats which could be taken out as well, enough to stage an annual Regatta. Ski-ing leave centres at Ehrwald were open most of the winter, several of the National Servicemen were already proficient skiers, under the leadership of Lt Freeth the Regiment consistently produced winning teams.

We spent Christmas 1955 in Munsterlager, thick snow on the ground, Anthony got his first bicycle. Penny was poorly and not thriving so in the New Year Heather flew with her to Gt Ormonde St Hospital for diagnosis, advice and successful treatment, I was left in charge of the other three for a seemingly long fortnight.

In March 1956 I took ill, after a couple of days in bed at Dennis Barracks I was taken to the BMH at Hanover, by this time quite ill. The Army Specialist and Surgeon failed to diagnose and talked about an obscure Eastern disease. For 10 days I got steadily worse, on the D.I. list and failing fast. Heather drove in to see me every day, she lost faith in the ability of the Hospital, unsheathed her tigress' claws and determined to get me to a proper Hospital in London before it was too late. With the help of the CCRA John Wainwright it was arranged to fly me in a wheelchair with Heather and the Irish Surgeon from Hanover Hospital to Heathrow. Heather alerted Stephen in London to make all arrangements. We were met at Heathrow by a Daimler Hire Ambulance and whisked to Sister Agnes. Stephen, who as a Consultant on the Staff, arranged for Dr James Dow the "best diagnostician in London" to see me at once, he in turn took one look at my swollen stomach and said "Send for the Surgeon, it's appendicitis, it always is." Such was the emergency and efficiency Sir Ralph Marnham operated that evening and cleared up the internal mess of a

ruptured appendix. Heather stayed with Stephen and Betty for a fortnight while I was in Sister Agnes recovering and being sharply brought back to normality by a tyrannical super efficient Sister Mac,

No one had any doubt that I owed my life to my dear Wife.

Heather and I went to the Sackville Court Hotel in Hove for my convalescence, walked along the Front and the Downs, the first occasion Heather had ever been into a Public House. After 10 days on April 12th I was fit enough for us to fly back to resume Regimental duty as C.O 94 Loc Regt at Munsterlager.

In my absence George Price our Quartermaster had his appendix removed in BMH Hanover and died as a result. I went to see the Corps Commander about the standard of skill and treatment in the Army Hospital, he was reluctant to stir up trouble but undertook to see the Chief Medical Officer in BAOR.

In August I went back to Sister Agnes to have my rotten appendix removed again by Ralph Marnham, as I was fit and well at the time this was a comparatively mild affair, I was allowed out of hospital in 10 days to recuperate. For all she had done I gave Heather a diamond solitaire ring as a grateful thank you present.

I had been alerted by Barbara that as his wife had died falling down the stairs and the property was in need of major repairs the Rector, Mr Stevens, wanted to sell the Old Rectory at Widdington. So went to see him and the house and agreed to put down a deposit of £750 to stake my claim as first comer. The house was large with 6 bedrooms, a red brick Georgian front facing the village green, plenty of out buildings and 4 acres of walled garden, orchard and lawns, some lovely trees, altogether ideal for a retired Officer with a young family. We instructed David Denny of Waltons to negotiate with the Ecclesiastical Commissioners for it's purchase at a price of £7,500.

Negotiations were protracted and frustrating, I had to provide a site for the building of a new modern Rectory, which John Dillon Robinson eventually provided on his land at the very reasonable cost of £500. After 9 months of haggling the sale went through, we were the new owners, I at once instructed Gerald Lacoste as Architect to repair the main structure, he employed Glasscocks to re-roof the entire building and re-convert the house back from 3 war time dwellings into one. At the same time Phil let me employ his old odd-job man Jack with his slasher to start clearing the wildly over grown gardens.

After visiting various Prep Schools including Cottesmore, in September we packed Anthony off to Orwell Park, run by "Nolly" Wilkinson. The school was well organised, concentrating more on games and caring for the 66 boys rather than scholastic cramming. Anthony was happy from the start and made many friends.

In November 1956 94 Locating Regiment was ordered to move from Munsterlager to Celle. The lovely old town of Celle was preferable to gloomy Munsterlager but the Barracks though spacious enough were old Prussian Army type with Married Quarters newly built in a crowded sand patch to a cost saving standard. As I was Garrison Commander of Munsterlager and of Celle, the other Regiment being the Dorsets, I was responsible for the move and all the arrangements. Just as the move was due I was sent to Manorbier for a 3 weeks DRA's exercise. My two efficient Deputies, my Wife and the new 2 IC John Lockton arranged and carried out the move of the whole Regiment, equipment, Married Families, stables and vast accumulated stores impeccably, I returned to Celle, to a horrid little Quarter, to find everything running smoothly.

John Lockton was unique an extrovert boffin, enthusiastic at work and sport, with all the right ideas, he spoke good German, an enormous asset and helped us integrate much more freely with the Mayor and German hierarchy. The Celle Stud even gave a huge lunch party for us when I visited old Abendruff in his very special loose box.

In July 1957 I handed over the Regiment to Andrew George, Heather and the three children returned to Humbletoft, somehow they lost all their luggage at the Hook, a major calamity, luckily Sergeant Major Wheeler was then R.T.O. and managed very helpfully to retrieve it all within a few days. For a short time I stayed on at Celle to pack up and sort out the animals then followed by car with horsebox to Amberden. John Lockton bought Sunlarkin rather rashly I thought, poor old Peter was put down, he was very fat, smelly and arthritic, could no longer get into a car without help and would hardly have survived another 6 months quarantine.

I was posted as Colonel Chief Instructor to the School of Artillery but first to another Selection Board for 3 months at AG 6 in Stanmore.

I stayed with Barbara for a week to supervise the work going on at the Old Rectory, it was definitely not yet fit for occupation so Stephen very kindly lent us Park House, Debden, as a temporary home, which he had just bought from Mrs Travers and did not require until Christmas. His builders were digging a swimming pool in the garden but had not started work in the house.

I found that Doug Jaggard, the licensee of The Fleur would take on the Old Rectory garden. He was a difficult man but a trained and knowledgeable gardener, an excellent neat, quick and tidy worker with the know-how and ability to tackle any job. We agreed on the priorities and he started work, our arrangement being he came whenever it suited him and the weather was right for as long as he liked at 3/6d an hour. He did a marvellous job for us.

I joined the family at Humbletoft, unfortunately Gag fell and broke her thigh so had to go to hospital to have it pinned. We took a house in Sheringham for a fortnight children's seaside holiday. I took K. to stay at Amberden to start her at Dame Bradbury's School, Saffron Walden, she was more than un-willing, in floods of tears for four dreary nights and days. Heather packed both boys off to Orwell, Colin for his 1st term, and in September joined me with Penny at Park House, Debden. The house had not been renovated, the drawing room was out of commission and the kitchen rudimentary, the builders were concentrating on making the swimming bath before frosts set in, we were happy and comfortable enough, spending every spare moment at Widdington working as a team in the Old Rectory garden. We bought a large push Hayter and started to clear the old derelict lawns. I drove up to Stanmore every day while Heather drove Penny to Stortford to start her education at Miss Cornell's kindergarten.

The Selection Board under David Block, an amusing and efficient chairman, had the task of selecting which Officers below the rank of Lt Col should be kept on in the depleted Regiment and which retired or offered a "Golden Bowler." Three of us were required to read all the Annual Confidential Reports of each Officer and then grade him. From our combined gradings David Block made out a Master List for the D.R.A.s action. The Confidential Reports made extremely dull reading, so David suggested we also grade the C.O.s who had written the reports, this was much more entertaining.

The Board finished in January, but as Gag was not fit to have a large party of children we stayed a few nights over Christmas at the Kings Head, Dereham and spent the days at Humbletoft plus Joy and David. The S.G's moved to Park House for 10 days, when they left we returned.

In early January 1958 I drove to Larkhill to become C.I.E. responsible for all instruction in equipments and ammunition and for carrying out field trials of new equipments. I was the only Instructor with Security Clearance for Atomic weapons. Brigadier Jock McNeil was Commandant splendid in every way, John Northern the Garrison Commander, the Chief Instructors for Gunnery Colin Yeo followed by Frank McMullen, for Tactics Rodney Burgess

followed by Ginger Bidwell and Peter Worthington followed Eric Cox in the Missile Wing, we were all old friends as were most of our wives it was a pleasure to work together.

Naturally I became heir to the Larkhill Race Course as Clerk of the Course, which entailed building and maintaining course and fences and arranging the annual 5 Point to Points in the Spring. We made sufficient money the first season to build permanent toilets which were badly needed. They were only a qualified success as tended to freeze up and required constant repairs and cleaning. There was a lot of work and responsibility for me, the Official Course Inspectors had high standards, there was a shortage of labour, only old Taffy Gould the fence builder was mis-employed on the job, the rest volunteers or on extra duty pay.

On one occasion Tim Llewellyn Palmer asked me if he might school his horses over the Course the day before a Meeting, I offered to have the training fences ready but certainly the Course and fences prepared for the Meeting could not be used for training gallops. However he was seen with his string of horses galloping over the Course in the early morning, I fined him £50 on the spot. There was a glorious row, he appealed to Jock McNeil, eventually settled by Tim presenting a new fifty guinea silver Challenge Cup to the Race Course.

In February Heather arrived and stayed a few days with the Bibras at Totterdown to organise and settle in our Quarter No.12 Strangways, a large house with lovely views over the Plain to Stonehenge. Though not old it had been built in more spacious days and boasted a butler's pantry among the many usual Offices.

The garden was uninteresting on poor chalk soil, we did just manage to grow a few veg and chalk tolerant flowers. For Staff Heather got Inge over from Germany as Nursemaid, Mrs Oram came daily to clean and jabber non-stop, plus Mrs Butcher occasionally and a series of uncouth batmen, more trouble than they were worth, Heather did all the cooking herself. Philippa started at Avondale School to be followed by Penny a year later.

In Spring 1959 Eric and Margery Hervey, who had already had the boys out to Bealings several times from Orwell, invited us and the boys to stay with them at Abersnithick, Monymusk to fish the Don. We were not very successful Colin caught a 2lb trout and I three salmon with the help of Ross the ghillie. One day we went over to Littlewood, Uncle Alan and Gaga took me down to the river where under Willie's instruction I caught my first Littlewood salmon on a Blue Charm in the Ash Tree, 8½lbs. Sadly Uncle Alan,

the McLean's "Fairy Godmother" died shortly after in May.

Half my job entailed organising the instruction on all Field Artillery equipments and ammunition to each Course as they streamed through the School, I took the lectures and presentations for the senior Officers Courses myself as well as all atomic subjects. The other half of my job was to organise the testing of all equipments as to it's use and serviceability ranging from a new self propelled gun to tannoy systems

I spent several days a month visiting the tests and trials, twice to the RA Hebrides Missile range at S.Uist, flying up to Benbecula. Once we went the 70 miles in the lanch to the Spottin Post on St Kilda, a long dull trip to see a small rocky island and masses of gulls. The next time I went fishing for trout which in the howling wind and rain was hardly more amusing.

The Larkhill Saddle Club kept half a dozen horses in the stables, which were mainly used by the R.A. Harriers hunted by Freddy Edmeads. John Northern and I went to the Leicester sales, where he bought another horse for the Whip and I "So So" for £110, a nice looking brown mare with a calloused fetlock. An indifferent jumper she lived up to her name, but was quite adequate for hacking on the Plain before breakfast to keep an eye on the Racecourse and to follow the Harriers. Whenever we could Charles Coaker and I boxed Saddle Club horses to the Mendip Farmers Hunt, who showed us excellent sport over dry stone walls.

We had any amount of dinner and drinks parties in the Mess and amongst ourselves, also family visitors. The drink of the house was a cocktail of one third each gin, French vermouth and orange juice laced with cointreau and shaken with ice, it seemed popular and was certainly effective in producing noise and jollity.

Heather joined the Amateur Dramatic Society and thoroughly enjoyed acting in their productions. Unfortunately she played a drunken spinster in "The Black Sheep of the Family" so well that her daughters were greatly shocked and made her promise never to act again!

When the Northerns left Jock McNeil asked me to take over the job of Garrison Commander as well as CIE and Clerk of the Course, the bait offered being to move house to Totterdown, an offer impossible to resist.

Totterdown was about the most attractive Quarter in the Army, originally a private house perched on a high bank above the River Avon, it had half a mile of it's own private fishing where I spent many happy hours, a paddock, a box tree wood and a well kept terraced garden. A permanent gardener ex-Sergeant Major Hunter, a permanent cook Mrs Johnson also went

with the house and at last I had an excellent batman in Gnr Stephenson. Mrs Johnson was a poppet and a joy, an excellent cook of the old school she loved cooking for parties. We moved in as soon as possible. With Mrs Male, who also went with the Quarter, as "Daily", Heather was in clover and spent one of the happiest years of her life.

We were able to entertain all our friends and had a constant stream of visitors to stay. Gag and even Gaga came for his first visit, we asked Aunt Enid and Frank Mann over to meet them, a huge success, the two old men at on the sofa shaking with laughter and telling each other non stop anecdotes of the good old days. David's visit was more fraught, demonstrating "Hop, Skip and Jump" to the children down the steep bank, he fell and badly damaged his knee which troubled him ever after.

I bought a Corgi puppy for the family, Jimmy (Lord Jim of Graffham), an instant favourite, made of velvet and so young his ears could only prick for a few moments, He quickly distinguished himself by swallowing a golf ball whole, which had to be cut out by the Vet, he was none the worse. He became the adored friend of all the family, a great character he lived for 15 years.

During the summer Jock organised a sailing trip on the Gunner yacht Sea Falconet with his Chief Instructors and Gerald Mears the previous Commandant as skipper. We sailed from Portsmouth and spent the first night at Cowes, where I stepped carelessly into the pram dinghy carrying a load of supplies and submerged. After 2 days we reached Cherbourg for lunch in a French restaurant, then sailed to Alderney, however before we could land a hideous weather forecast made us return to the shelter of the Solent then to finish a week's hilarious and happy cruise at Hamble.

During a couple of our Summer holidays we all camped at the Old Rectory, there was no furniture nor furnishings, we borrowed camp beds and eat off packing cases, the builders were still working on the back premises so it was basic camp cooking, the children had their bicycles and loved it. We were able to meet and determine future work, decorations etc with the architect and make plans for replanting the garden.

I persuaded Charlie Cunningham as Architect to "do up" the rest of the house to his impeccable standard. He drew up plans, which we agreed omitting some of the more grandiose ideas and then engaged Boatman's of Sawbridgeworth to carry out the estimated 18 months work.

Jock McNeil was appointed Military Attache and General Commanding the British Army Staff in U.S.A. and invited me to join him in Washington as Staff Colonel Royal Artillery. I wanted to go, Heather was doubtful as the



children were satisfactorily at school in England and her parents were getting infirm and needed more family support at Humbletoft.

It was finally arranged that we and the two girls should sail on the Queen Mary mid April 1960, the two boys to stay at Orwell Park and fly out to join us in Washington for their summer holidays but to spend the short holidays at Humbletoft or with friends and relations.

Angela and Geoffrey Colin made no trouble about taking Jimmy for 2 years, he was at his most yappy stage, Angela good naturedly replied yap for yap. I sold "So-So" without a Vet's Certificate at the Ascot sales, then the Ford and horsebox, ordering a new A40 right hand drive (YGN 8) from Austins to be exported to USA. We arranged through my good friend John Watson to let The Old Rectory to the Normans for 2 years, the builders had not finished but most of the rooms were in use.

#### Washington D.C. Apr 1960 - Apr 1962

We kept the black Mini until the last moment, the day it was sold Heather came out with raging chicken pox caught from the girls.

Joy came down to Totterdown to take charge, Betty as ever gallantly came to the rescue, she boarded her own family out and arranged to take Heather in at Park House to recover and convalesce, I had to leave to catch the Queen Mary, a St John Ambulance took Heather, feeling ghastly, to Debden, our house was somehow packed up by the Staff, what happened to the girls I never did discover, however they eventually appeared at Humbletoft with Joy.

I disembarked in New York after a peaceful and comfortable 5 days crossing, went through the usual Customs and Immigration formalities, up the Empire State sky-scraper, to Radio City and spent the night at the Governor Clinton Hotel. Next morning took the train from Penn Station to Washington travelling in a "Drawing Room" to myself, which had been originally reserved for us all. Great luxury and all very strange.

George Drought met me at the Station and took me to the Office, then situated in down-town Washington before moving to the new Embassy building in Mass Avenue. Val Mackenzie was my Secretary, a Fijian, she had held the job for years and was ultra efficient besides being a honey.

George was extremely thorough and helpful in handing over and setting us up in a totally different environment. He helped me to open a Bank

Account, to buy a new Ford Ranch Wagon, a huge powerful car advertised to have "bowling alley space", to buy some thin summer shirts and suits, to get a Driving Licence, I failed the eye sight test but the genial oculist said I'd probably be alright with decent American spectacles and signed the form.

George showed me his house in Kensington on the North edge of Rock Creek Park and then to various house agents to look at other properties. I decided to take on George's house renting it from the Agents and also their English maid Mary. The house was just big enough for us all, in easily the best residential area of Washington with friendly neighbours and in the lower rental bracket too. The House Agents favoured British Army families, rents were assured and in general the properties well looked after.

Mary Traynor our inherited "Maid of all work" was thin and lugubrious, she resembled Pop Eye's Olive Oil and suffered from chronic asthma. She knew the ropes and was totally reliable when well, lived in squalor in the basement, did the cooking and minimum of cleaning and looked after the children when we were out. She drove Heather up the wall, the children despised her for being wet, but we should have been lost without her.

George introduced me to his official contacts in the Pentagon and his local friends, by coincidence the Crosses had just been staying with the Farris in one luxurious house we visited. Marvellously with true American hospitality and kindness they all seemed ready to take us on as friends and guests. George drove me miles to call on Dr Bennett on The Patuxent to a large party where we were fed on oyster stew and clam chowder. Dr Bennet was an Anglophile and very hospitable, he had land and property at Deep Creek in West Virginia and invited us to stay there in one of his Cabins for our vacations.

I was kindly invited to join the Polo Club and the Officers Club in Washington, both over poweringly friendly, I opted out of polo as being too expensive but often used the Officers Club for lunch enjoying the cheapest dish on the menu, excellent Spare Ribs for only \$4.

The British Army Staff (BAS) was commanded by Jock McNeil also Military Attache with Tony Hodgkinson as his ADC. The Deputy Dereck Holbrook and the Staff Colonels Cavalry Rollo Payne, Gunners myself, Sappers Jerry Finch, Signals Basil Barnes, Infantry Bob Flood and Harry Edmonds for all the Services. A good friendly hand-picked team. At first Harold Caccia was the British Ambassador to be replaced by Ormsby Gore, although we were nominally responsible to them we only met at Official functions, Philippa became friendly with the Ormsby Gore children and played with them at the Embassy.

Our Official brief was to liaise with our American counterparts and report any changes or new developments to the War Office. Technically a very wide brief covering Tactics, Fire Control, Training, Equipments, Ammunition, Organisation and Manning levels. Besides gaining information from contacts at the Pentagon we visited all the Headquarters and Training Establishments throughout the States, this entailed much travelling by train and air, all arranged perfectly by Lois Donelly, the pin-up girl of the Embassy Travel Desk.

Fort Sill in Oklahoma was the Field Artillery HQ and Fort Bliss, Texas for Anti Aircraft, with huge new missile and rocket programmes at both. I had resident BLOs at each, Charles Oakley at Fort Sill and Eric Bradley at Fort Bliss. I visited each many times and was always excellently and kindly briefed besides being overwhelmed with entertainment. Eddie Hartshorn the Deputy to General Verdi, B. Barnes at Fort Sill and I became friends, he was an enormous help in guiding me through the maze of new weaponry developments and forward planning.

I visited many other establishments situated in Arizona, California, Colorado, New Mexico, Virginia, Utah and Alabama. Fort Bliss was close to El Paso on the Mexican border, it was standard practice to cross the Rio Grande and explore the Mexican restaurants, on one occasion with Heather we were stopped on the bridge by firing, the guards explained they were only shooting at Mexicans who had crossed to steal American washing off the clothes lines!

"Mr El Paso", Chris Fox always welcomed us, a rabid Anglophile, 30 years earlier he had been Sheriff and ridden the town with his Posse. An impressive character, he held an important position with the State Bank and his own unofficial one of fostering English American relations in a practical and effective way. For his work over many years I instigated and got him an O.B.E. a rare award for an American citizen, he was overwhelmed with delight.

Mrs Schultz was another great El Paso character, she owned the Down Town Shopping Precinct and took Heather for a hair-raising drive in her enormous Cadillac round the area, taking absolutely no notice of traffic signs nor lights, the police just grinned and waved her on, she obviously owned them too. One trip with Granger Reed the BAS M.O. to see an anti-gas set up in Utah we flew to Denver, hired a car and explored the superb scenery of the Rockies. Stupidly driving to the top of Mt McKinley 14,000 ft high we felt like death on arrival at the top. I told Granger to take over and drive down quickly, he was flat out, somehow I steered the car down hair-pin bends 'til we lost sufficient height to recover and breathe in some oxygen again.

Heather and the 2 small girls sailed on the Q.E.2. in May 1960 and arrived on 10th in Washington, I collected the exported A40 car from Baltimore for her use. We went straight to our rented house No 9715 Kingston Rd, Kensington, Maryland to settle in, the neighbours Trammells and Bates being really helpful. Heather arranged for the girls to attend first Larchmont School and later the much better fee paying Convent of the Sacred Heart School and passed her driving test at the second attempt, having failed the first time to drive at 15 mph in an "Alley".

Heather joined the local tennis club and arranged Nursing Duties for herself as a Volunteer both in Bethesda and George Washington Hospitals, where she was much appreciated, made welcome and enjoyed herself in spite of hair-raising drives round Washington Circle in the rush hour.

When I was not away on official visits I drove to our Embassy Office in the Ranch Wagon through the rush hour traffic, leaving the house at 8 am and getting back about 6.30 pm, the amount of traffic was incredible but marvellously controlled with a Police Helicopter overhead broadcasting conditions to the drivers below, some roads were tidal the number of lanes in each direction changing according to the time of day. It was an exhilarating novelty, the traffic just kept moving - fast.

We were very social, it was part of the job to entertain and be entertained by our U.S. contacts, by friends, neighbours and visiting guests, besides there was so much to see and do. Every week-end we made a picnic expedition to visit one of the famous attractions Mount Vernon, Sugar Loaf, Great Falls, the Skyline Drive, Montecello or just the centre of Washington.

The two boys were flown out free by the Army for their summer holidays, as a treat Colin was allowed to sit in the Pilot's seat of the Jumbo Jet. Then en famille went on much longer trips, all packing into the Ranch Wagon and staying nights en route at Holiday Inns. Twice we went to Deep Creek, staying in one of Dr Bennett's cabins, basic but exciting. Twice each to Bethany Beach and Williamsburg, one longer holiday to a cabin on Lake Nipissing in Canada with the McNiels, where Philippa caught a famous large pike "Percy" and Penny who couldn't swim was not allowed to bathe off the steep rock from our cabin. She promptly passed her swimming test at Homestead a few weeks later, lured on by the promise of a giant bottle of "Coke." We visited Niagara Falls on our way up, coming back to Washington via Lake Ontario, Blinkbonny and Gettysburg.

The longest trip, with the girls only, was to Florida at Christmas time staying in a USAF self catering cabin on Homestead Base. Stopping at

Charleston, Jekyll Island and Daytona for a night on the way, we visited the Miami Seaquarium, the Everglades, one of the splendid National Parks, and Key West, where we caught purple and yellow fish off the bridges.

Heather came on one never to be forgotten formal visit to the US Army. General Jock wished to make a state Military Attache's visit to Forts Sill and Bliss with his wife Barbara. He borrowed the Ambassador's 5 seater Heron aeroplane complete with a stand-in pilot, who had to make up his flying hours. Knowing the ropes I had to go too and Heather was invited as companion to Barbara. We left Washington in bad weather which deteriorated so that the plane was leaping and bucketing about, the girls hanging on like grim death, it became a snow storm so for safety we landed at St Louis and spent an uncomfortable night in an hotel.

The next day we landed at Fort Sill to be given red carpet treatment, not only the General, Tony Hodgkinson and I were given visit programmes but the girls too under the formidable eye of the General's wife Mrs Verdi B. Barnes. Heather found herself being taught about giant rockets and missiles and became the first British woman "astronaut" to clamber inside the Mercury space capsule.

Charles Oakley and his wife, another Barbara, entertained us all to dinner in their house 2 Generals, a Brigadier, 2 Colonels all with their wives dressed to the nines, Unfortunately Charles was whisked off to Hospital that evening with a fever but Barbara magnificently carried on alone and gave us an excellent dinner and entertaining evening.

The next day we flew on to Fort Bliss in Texas. Again to be met with a red carpet reception and official programme. The girls had an easier time as were taken care of by Mrs Schultz but Jock and I got the full treatment, a fine looking man, every inch a British General he made a great impression on the American Officers.

After 2 days we flew back stopping at New Orleans for a happy evening on the Town, there was entertainment at all levels of respectability in plenty. We arrived back in Washington in a blizzard, the flying conditions were terrible, the Heron failed to land at the first two attempts and finally put down in a frightening side slip skid. We were all scared including the Pilot.

I flew back to England three times on Official Visits, for a Tripartite Conference in London and DRA's exercises in Woolwich, staying at my Club or with Stephen in 19 Devonshire St or with Barbara at Amberden where I was able to confer with Doug Jaggard re progress in the Old Rectory gardens.

As a bonus I went to the Gunner Meeting at Sandown, which I hadn't missed for many years and of course meet many old racing friends.

Heather flew home for the boy's school holidays in April 1961 on an RAF indulgence passage from McGuire Airport to Lineham, which landed in Lincoln by mistake. I was left in charge of the Girls, Mary and the house for a fortnight, I did a lot of gardening, our patch was on a steep slope, the soil was poor and the climate hostile, the grass appeared to be made of brown steel wire, I never managed to achieve a show of flowers nor a green lawn. But all good exercise, plenty of sweat was good for my figure, I was definitely getting fat with good living and lack of exercise.

Occasionally I rode Bill Shipp's horses, he was the English Electric representative in Washington living in some style in the Potomac Hunt country with an obviously large expense account. His firm was making missiles for sale to the British Services and wished to obtain information on US products and programmes, this was far too close to my work for comfort so I endeavoured to go very carefully with Bill Shipp's determined friendship. He was a very nice chap, efficient at his job, extremely hospitable and took us to the Races, to dinner at Country Clubs and involved me in judging horse trials, without I trust learning any classified information from me.

As usual we went as a family to Church on Sunday, to the Episcopal Church in Kensington, there were 5 churches of various denominations all built side by side. Our Church was always packed with a large congregation dressed in their best, the sidesmen and ushers wearing white carnations. The Services were simple and sincere, there was much protocol amongst the Congregation which formed Guilds to carry out all the peripheral activities, Heather joined the Women's Guild and made some good friends. I received a formal visit from the Finance Committee to arrange my guaranteed subscription.

Jackie and Ray Johnston with their four young children moved into the Bates's house next to ours, there was no fence between our two gardens so we got to know them all well. Heather and Jackie became lasting friends, later when grown up their children visited us in England. Ray was a baseball fan and kindly took me and the boys to Baltimore to see "The Ball Game" whenever there was an important match.

My tour of duty at BAS was up in April 1962 so Heather, who was eager to get home, decided to go ahead with the girls at the end of March in order to get organised at Widdington. I had only just agreed with Charlie Cunningham to carry out further renovations at a cost of £6,800, which meant that though fit for occupation the Old Rectory would still have the builders at work in the house.

The house at Kensington was packed up, Suski was staying with us at the time, after a round of Farewell parties and visits, Heather and girls left by train on 27th March for New York to board the QE 2, while I shut the house and handed the keys to Mallora Chrisman the Agents and moved myself and few belongings to the Windsor Park Hotel.

The next day I flew off with Jock McNeil to Forts Bliss and then Sill for the D.R.A's (Jack Bates) official visits and my farewell. Jack promised to let me know what future Army posting I could expect, not having passed the Staff College with the magic letters "psc" after my name it would not be a Gunner one.

No sooner had I got back from these visits than Uncle David arrived in Washington for a four nights break from his Lamson business meetings. He stayed grandly at the Sheraton, we met for meals, even breakfasts, and I drove him round to see the sights, to try out the restaurants and visit some of our good American friends.

Colonel Dickie Beggs arrived on the 10th to take over from me, with a note from the DRA that it looked as though I should be offered either Garrison Commander, Hong Kong or a "Golden Bowler." We and our children had no wish to spend another 2 years abroad in Hong Kong so it was obviously to be the latter option.

#### WIDDINGTON Apr 1962 - Sep 1974

I left Washington on 16th April, after two very happy and instructive years, drove in the A40 to New York, put the car on board the "Queen Mary" and sailed the next day. After a pleasant voyage in a 1st class cabin and some delay at Cherbourg disembarked self and car at Southampton on the 24th and drove to Widdington, where the London & Stansted were already unloading our furniture from store at the Old Rectory, then on to Humbletoft to find Heather poorly, only just recovering from pneumonia.

For the next few days I and the boys drove backwards and forwards to Widdington to sort out and move furniture with the aid of a family working party from Amberden. We finally moved in on 29th our 10th home, where we lived very happily for the next 12 years. To start with it was sparsely furnished, the builders were still painting in the back premises and there was any amount of work to be done in house, garden and the Old School opposite our back gate, which I had just bought from the Ecclesiastical Commissioners for £1,500.

As a final gift from the Army I went on a month's "Bricks and Mortar

Course" at Aldershot living in the Officers Club and coming home at week-ends. It was an excellent course, which stood me in very good stead, we were taken through every conceivable repair job required in the home and made to do it ourselves under professional supervision. I have still got my notes and have referred to them many times over the last 30 years when attempting DIY jobs.

I was officially retired from the Army in the rank of Colonel on 15th July 1962, aged 50, with an early retirement gratuity of £6,000 and a small Regular Officer's pension. I had had 30 good years in the Royal Artillery and enjoyed the life to the full with very few regrets. I had served with the Gunners in 10 different countries and made many life long friends. I still miss the organised Army life with all it's protocol, challenge, the opportunities for sport and above all the camaraderie of Officers and men working together for the Regiment.

In Widdington we were situated in a family enclave the Connells a mile away up Cornells Lane and the Stephen Golds at Park House, Debden a mile distant across the fields, we met each other constantly. The inhabitants were kind enough to welcome us and many families became lasting friends, Dillon Robinsons, Witherngtons, Pellys, Broke Smiths and Rowleys are still there though the Gages, Springfields, Carmichaels and Morris' have gone. The village was unspoilt by new buildings and compact enough for us to know the Chiefs and Indians living in each house, it had a Village Shop cum Post Office, 2 Pubs and a Garage. Several of the old cottages in the main street were still thatched.

We collected J.Dog from the Collin's very pleased to see us, and they much to Phillipa's delight, lent us their Welsh pony St David for 2 years while they served abroad. Phillipa was at the "pony age" and rode and looked after her pony enthusiastically but obviously there were many occasions while she was at school when the burden of stable work fell on Heather.

Anthony and Colin went off to Radley and Orwell, the girls to Dame Bradburys at Saffron Walden which meant a twice daily school run, while Heather and I sorted, decorated, carpentered and gardened, after so many years of neglect there was everything to do in order to achieve our standard of a well found country house. We did much expensive shopping in Saffron Walden, Cambridge and London for furniture and soft furnishings.

One of the first priorities was to get the garden up for inspection and ready for the Village Fete traditionally held at the Old Rectory on August Bank Holiday, with Mr Jaggard's help it looked lovely on the day. Helen Smith cheekily came rushing up to me to say "Come quickly, I've found a weed".

I was ripe material for all local Committees and became a member of the



Parish Church Council, the Parish Council and the Conservative Association, eventually becoming Chairman. At that time civilian life was new and exciting, I was working all hours in the house and garden, I did not wish to take up a full time job immediately, certainly not one which entailed a daily trip to London. I received one or two offers, which were not attractive so registered with the Officers Association and the Executive Employment Office at Cambridge, who awarded me £6 a week un-employment pay for 13 weeks or until they placed me in a suitable executive job!

As soon as the builders had finished the new kitchen and cooking on the Esse became comparatively simple, Heather besides taking on the local Red Cross started Nursing in St James, Saffron Walden and in Haymeads, Stortford as a regular Red Cross volunteer.

Our overall object was to provide a family climate in which our four children could grow up happily to be useful and worthy citizens. This meant arrangements for health, education, sport and social activities. Living beside the Church made it easy for all to become practising Christians. The lawns gave ample space for cricket, croquet, football and hockey, both Amberden and Park House had hard tennis courts and a swimming pool which we could use for the asking, we all as a family enjoyed games but no one showed any special aptitude.

The boys were started off shooting and fishing, only Philippa was interested in ponies and riding. None could be persuaded to play any form of musical instrument though they listened to Rock and Roll noise on their radios avidly. There was no Television on purpose until Gaga came to stay and presented one to the children, then it was sited for discomfort in the chilly dining room, we preferred our children to take up hobbies or play games ping pong, cards and even Monopoly rather than be glued to pernicious trash on the Box.

The children each had very different characters and interests but they were all anti-social and much preferred to muck about with each other and their cousins rather than to go out to meet any one else at children's parties or support any form of entertainment at home. Each made one or two friends at school who were welcomed to stay and join in without ceremony. Heather steeled herself to give teenage entertainments, much work little reward.

Heather and I went out to drinks or had people in several times a week, we started off by giving dinner parties every Thursday but they gradually became under pressure less and less frequent.

We went on family holidays all together often to Humbletoft, Sheringham and Scotland. The boys stayed with school friends and had them back to stay, as

they grew older they went abroad for ski-ing, walking or exploration, usually in Europe, Anthony went as far as South Africa and got very badly sunburnt. The boys were encouraged to take summer holiday jobs, which they did in cucumber and turkey farms, even as Postman which meant rising at 5 am. Heather and I usually took a break together in the autumn going to Switzerland, South of France, Rome and Positano. I took several fishing holidays in Scotland alone or with Phil.

I had more or less given up riding except for exercising Philippa's ponies, Tom Streeter who had always mounted me out hunting had died, my back was giving trouble, so I turned my enthusiasm to fishing.

We were always able to fish the Don with Aunt Blodwen's permission so went up every Spring and late Summer, staying at Kildrummy Inn or Castle. Phil came many times with us, sometimes members of the family or Percy Gough or the Pages. We fished all and every day whatever the weather, any other ploys were a waste of fishing time, as Willie said "You can't catch a fish unless you've a fly in the water". A picnic of bacon baps and a can of beer on the river bank was de rigeur

One day I went out when the river was in spate with my spinning rod, the first cast in Kalepot hooked a monster, which roared downstream with the line screaming out. I ran to follow keeping the line as tight as possible round Kalepot Bend, past Gorbals dodging under the trees, over Dyke stile to the smoother water beyond where I could gradually recover some line and reel in, by the time we got to Red Stones I was able to drag the brute to the bank, a dead sheep with the minnow firmly caught in the fleece!

Colin became keen and competent, the others fishing occasionally when the weather was fine. Philippa was generally lucky, Penny the reverse. There were plenty of breakfast sized trout to be caught, the larger ones more difficult to find, salmon were few after a short Spring run, we usually managed to catch about 2 a week, average weight 8 lb. The river was so pretty and fascinating that even a blank day in wet cold weather was real pleasure.

The Keeper, Willie was our guide, instructor and friend at all times, a marvellous and tireless man and a great naturalist, with years of experience he knew where and when to find game and fish. He lived in the East Lodge and collected every scrap of local information from passers-by.

I fished many other rivers as a guest, several times on The Ness with Cousin Norman, millionaire's fishing where I once caught a 25lb salmon after an hours battle. In the Hebrides with George Schwerdt where we caught huge 4lb trout and small 4lb salmon trolling from a boat on the lochs. On the Tavy and Tamar with Phil and Alastair fishing after dark for sea trout, on the Spey at

Grantown with the Dillon Robinsons in a heatwave when no salmon were taken only a dozen sea trout. Perhaps the grandest and least productive was fishing the Wye from Moccas at Patience Chestermaster's invitation in another heatwave.

When we first went to Widdigton the children were school age from 14 to 8 years old. When we left 12 years later they were grown up, in jobs of their own choosing. and had left home to live near their work in shared flats with their own friends.

Anthony went straight from Radley to work in Premier Travel, Saffron Walden under the tutelage of Mrs Carr, when he transferred to Thos Cook's Cheapside Office he shared a flat in Shepherds Bush with Stewart Orrack.

Colin went on to Radley from Orwell and then to New College where he read Engineering and passed his Degree exams to become a B.A. he switched to Accountancy and later after apprenticeship and more exams qualified as a C.A. He joined Thompson McLintock in Edinburgh and lived with friends in a series of flats.

Philippa unwillingly progressed from Dame Brad's to the Royal School, Bath which she hated so much that she persuaded us to send her to Chatelard at les Avants in Switzerland for a year to get her A levels, I don't think she ever sat them but had a happy time instead. She did take a Secretarial Course in London to get her Diploma until she was old enough to start her 3 years Nurses training at St Thomas' Hospital. She too shared a series of London flats with friends.

Penny with her one track mind to become a soldier enjoyed the Royal School at Bath and did well at work and games. On leaving she too took a Secretarial Course and then one or two temporary jobs until she was old enough to apply for a Regular Commission in the WRAC. She was accepted for OCTU training at Deepcut, won the Sash of Honour presented to her by Terence McMeekin and posted as 2nd Lt first to the WRAC Depot at Guildford and then to BAOR.

Heather and I were kept busy living our own lives and supporting all these varied activities and paying for them, all the children passed their Driving Tests first go and immediately needed their own cars, which we helped to finance, so we became a 6 car family. Our joint Gross Income in 1964 was £8,011 less £1,144 Sur Tax. Although we were comfortably off, with 4 children at their most expensive stage we had to spend carefully, fortunately Heather has always been a frugal manager keeping detailed accounts of every single small purchase.

We decided that the Children should each have some Capital of their own, so in 1966 we put half of our own share holdings into a Children's Trust with John Marsh of Waltons as Executive Trustee, the children to have their share of

the income when they were 21 and the capital itself when they reached 25. After much correspondence this Trust was finally distributed and wound up in 1979.

Grandfather Colin McLean (Gaga) died in 1972 aged 90, a very good tempered man, one of the 12 best shots in the UK, an indulgent grandfather and a very good friend to me. His obituary in the Field pays tribute to his many interests and successes, his only faux pas being that in the book he wrote on his sporting experiences he failed to mention that he was married! Heather waived any Rights she had to a share in his estate in favour of our children, so they each inherited more capital in the form of stocks and shares, altogether enough to produce an income of £5,000 a year. Probably too much to make them ambitious for their own futures.

The boys refused to have any sort of 21st birthday celebration, when the time came we gave each girl a large Cocktail Party in my London Club for all their friends and relations numbering about 80. Both parties were a success, the Club made excellent arrangements for us in the Waterloo Room, even Gag managed to come and held Court sitting in an arm chair.

We celebrated our own Silver Wedding Anniversary with a large buffet Supper party at The Old Rectory, the main dishes prepared by Wiggie Higgins were excellent, Willie sent us a 14lb salmon he'd caught for the occasion, the Goughs came to stay bringing a case of old vintage port and the children gave us a complete set of Larchmont China, still in daily use 20 years later. Altogether a very happy day for us.

In the summer my back gave out and I was painfully immobilised with a slipped disc. After a few days rest in bed with little improvement Heather took me to see Mr Firbank in Cambridge who put me into a huge plaster cast covering my whole torso. Though unwieldy and uncomfortable I soon got used to it, we held a cocktail party for 40 people with me lying flat on the floor in the dining room and I was able to go up to the Ness by train in September to fish with Cousin Norman, Myles Routledge looked after me like a Nanny. The plaster came off after 2 months and I was able to resume normal life.

By the end of 1964 The Old Rectory and gardens were in good shape, as good as my unskilled workmanship could make them and my back was still protesting at so much manual labour, it was time for me to do something useful either to make more money or for the benefit of the community. I contacted Ted Fernyhough at the Officers Association, he was most helpful and he put me on to the British Red Cross Society as both the Essex and the Hertfordshire Branches had asked him to find a new Branch Director.

As the Hertfordshire HQ was at Ware a shorter journey than the Essex one

at Chelmsford I applied there first and after interviews in London and Ware found myself accepted.

After a weeks visit to the Surrey Branch HQ at Guildford under instruction I was appointed Branch Director of the Hertfordshire Branch at a token salary of £1,000 a year. I felt I ought not to take money from a Charity but that a salary gave the Branch Committee the power to hire and fire me and that if I did not claim any expenses my conscience would be salved.

At that time over half the Branch Directors were paid a Salary in some of the larger Branches up to £7000 a year. While I was Director the Finance Committee increased the meagre salaries of the Branch Staff by 10% each year but I refused any increase myself. Thus started a very happy and rewarding 10 years service. I found the Red Cross Members such very nice, friendly and competent Volunteers.

Hertfordshire was a comparatively small Red Cross Branch with 7 Divisions each with their President and Director and 15 active uniformed Detachments with their attached Junior Groups, much of the Volunteers time and energies were taken up by annual First Aid and Nursing training Courses. This cosy set up was changed drastically when National Headquarters ruled that all Funds be held at Branch level, Divisional Funds and Committees were abolished.

Mrs Guen Boyle was President, an attractive charming personality of the steel hand in the kid glove mould. She worked hard herself coming into the HQ office regularly every week, took a great interest in all activities and appointed an invaluable team of Hon Vice Presidents throughout the County for fund raising and local liaison. She was undaunted and popular, ably supported by Mrs Kat Buxton the Deputy President, of very long service, she had refreshing and unorthodox views in Committee often of immense value.

The Branch HQ Office was in a villa owned by the Red Cross in Ware, arrangements had already been made in principle to sell the building and move to a more central position. The small Staff consisted of Mrs Wiggall, Secretary, Mrs Corne Assistant Secretary, Mrs Bult Francis Welfare Officer, Mrs Dawkins Finance with Mrs Gorski and Mrs Petty typists, all on very low Charity salaries varying from £300 to £200 a year. The Office was open from 9 am to 4.30 pm from Mondays to Fridays.

General Perceval had been the much loved Director for many years and had co-opted Colonel Bult Francis as his Deputy, a highly efficient Canadian, to arrange the Centenary Celebrations the previous year, it was assumed he would carry on as Director when General Perceval resigned on account of ill health, instead he too resigned and took a more highly paid appointment with UNICEF.

Without her husband's help Mrs Bult Francis could not cope with the Welfare department, she was much too kind and caring, spending weeks on one problem case and missing out on Welfare throughout the whole County, so sadly and unhappily had to be asked to resign.

Many of the Officers and Members in the Divisions had been in the Red Cross during both wars, they were truly devoted to the Society and had done marvellous work over the years. It had become the mainstay of their lives, they could not accept the need for any change in activities, training, uniform etc, they were simply getting too old, blocking promotion and progress.

Before the compulsory retirement age of 65 was ordered by National Headquarters in 1970, it required infinite tact to obtain the Veterans resignations or equally effective appointment to Honorary Figureheads with grander sounding titles and the minimum of duties. A lot of the Branch Director's time was spent in smoothing and soothing ruffled feathers.

Joan Wiggall was an outstanding Red Crosser with a gift for repartee, besides being Secretary she was Commandant of the Ware Detachment, had worked for National Headquarters in Cyprus, knew all the ropes and everybody of importance. With a quick brain she was ready to try new ventures and had a very close friendship with the powerful and formidable Divisional President Mrs Harvard Taylor. (Writing 30 years later Mrs Wiggall is now Branch President with an MBE for her Red Cross work.)

We moved the Branch Headquarters Office to the Ware main street over a shop, appointed Joan Wiggall as my Deputy Director and Audrey Corne became Branch Secretary, Mrs Olive Burt joined as typist, a most amusing character who kept an old racehorse, she could type accurately as fast as speech, her draft Minutes of Meetings included all the "Um-s, E-rs" and asides.

We then started negotiations, planning and fundraising for the building of a permanent HQ and Centre in Hertford, as well as for permanent purpose built Club Centres in Croxley Green and Tring. We even received the gift of a house in Berkhamsted. All were achieved with the help of the Local Councils, who invariably backed us in all community projects, not only with advice and co-operation but with building plots and funds. I got to know the Council Chairman and Heads of Department well. The County Council always allowed us to hold our Branch Committee Meetings attended by some of their Officials at County Hall at no cost, even cups of coffee for free.

I drove from Widdington to Ware at first then to Hertford when the new Headquarter building was finished arriving about 9 am and leaving at 4.30 or later if necessary, too often I had to go back in the evening either for

Inspections or Lectures in Red Cross uniform or for Meetings. I took sandwiches for lunch everyday as the telephone was usually quiet for an hour then and I could get letters etc on to my Dictaphone without interruption.

Many new projects were pioneered, the most successful being Pontins Holidays for the Disabled at Pakefield, Junior Handicapped Holidays, Mentally Handicapped Holidays, Medical Loan for the County Council, Welfare Training, Beauty Treatment, Drug Addiction Clinics the formation of Members Groups the number of Services our Members provided for the public were legion, Industrial First Aid Courses, etc, I had the task of providing the right set-up, the financial backing then supervising and recording all in the Branch Annual Report, an annual headache.

Formal parades, uniform inspections and drill were cut down or abolished, training courses continued to a high enough standard for us to win the National First Aid Competition. We ran Branch Competitions and took part in Major Disaster exercises every year with the Civil Defence, St John and WRVS .

All Charities rely on funding by the Public, we had to have sufficient to run the Services, carry out training, maintain and improve the organisation and buildings and also to pay a large quota annually to National Headquarters for Overseas Red Cross work.

Money was always forthcoming for any obvious and eye catching service, but to raise funds for buildings, wages or administration required good public relations and hard work. The best Fund raiser was without doubt The President Mrs Boyle with plenty of ideas and good results. We organised an annual Flag Day and House to House collection, I started an Open Gardens scheme, there were eclectic golf competitions, monthly Little Ernie draws, even knitting competitions. The result of all these efforts meant that our finances prospered so that we could pay for new buildings, equipment, offer expenses to Members and raise salaries. I personally refused any rise but took Thursdays off instead. When I left, with the expertise of Tim Gurney the Hon Branch Treasurer, our capital and income had quadrupled in 10 years.

I did a lot of travelling to visit all groups and activities in the County, often to London to National Headquarters where Dereck Barson presided, a good friend and adviser, to Barnett Hill for Branch Directors Seminars and Norwich for Regional Meetings, all of which required plenty of paper work with Agendas, Minutes and Action instructions.

Dr May a genial Eye Surgeon was our Branch Medical Officer of long standing, he had the right approach and was ever helpful. The Branch Nursing Officer Miss King was also the County Nursing Officer, very experienced and

knowledgable, I found her reasonable and kind, she was respected by all Nursing Staff who were scared stiff of her. We had regular monthly Meetings together to arrange training, competitions and practical exercise programmes.

I was very busy but enjoyed it all, working with such genuinely nice people was a pleasure. I saw my job as to provide encouragement and the right Red Cross climate in which Voluntary Members could work with satisfaction. I was rewarded by their friendship, the results and a thank-you from the National Council of a Badge of Honour for Distinguished Service and Life Membership of the British Red Cross Society!

By 1972 all our children had left home for their own flats and we were left keeping a large house and garden more or less as an hotel for visitors. Heather's domestic help was becoming less easy, she had to do all the washing and cooking herself, she felt the house too cold in winter. The garden was being kept in good order by Mr Stanley, but he was old and lame, I had all the mowing, flowers and veg to do myself, though I revelled in my perfect house and garden, it took all my spare time and couldn't last.

We were no longer living the Squire's retired life. Heather wanted to be closer to Gag at Humbletoft, who was getting old and frail and no longer able to go shopping by herself. I had given my notice to the Red Cross as I thought after 10 years it time the Branch had a new Director with fresh ideas. Disliking change the Red Cross did everything to persuade me to stay on, the only way to make a clean break was to move house. Our old and faithful friend J.Dog died. The one thing to keep us in The Old Rectory was the children's too obvious sadness at losing the house they knew as their Home. To preserve a link we gave the Old School to Anthony, who aged 24 was working at Stortford as Thos Cook's Manager. He had the old building knocked down and built himself a new 3 bedroom house on the site, "School House, Widdington."

We started to look for a retiring house somewhere between Dereham and Widdington on the Suffolk border, there was no particular hurry, and after some months found a house at West Runton "Heath Farm" which we liked and tried to buy. At first the owner was willing and we put down a deposit, but he changed his mind and decided not to sell as his wife was seriously ill. As it turned out we were lucky.



We continued looking at the various houses supplied by Agents and by chance found the details of Stowe House on the back of an advertisement for the Rectory at Sharrington, we went to look and found a dilapidated Victorian Villa surrounded by a garden wilderness, but it had a friendly face covered with wistaria, was about the size we wanted, close to the good shops of Holt and with just 1 acre of garden, the rest of the originally large garden having already been sold off for building development.

The obvious snags were that one day the development would come and we'd have a rash of small houses overlooking our garden and that the entrance was on the busy main road to Cromer, however a Bye-pass had been approved for construction some time in the future.

It had been Dr Hendrie's house for many years, after he died Mrs Hendrie had lived on it 'til she was over 90 and being of a frugal nature had not modernised or kept the house in good repair, it had been empty for 2 years when we first saw it, dilapidated and scruffy but the construction basically sound. The asking price was only £18,500.

We consulted Mr Fetherstone the Architect from Sheringham, who after a detailed inspection advised us that we could alter the accommodation to our wishes and with some repairs to roof, rewiring etc make a good house. He drew up plans and obtained estimates for the necessary work.

We arranged with David that the Marriage Settlement Trust should buy the property and do it up to our specifications, the lowest tender was also £18,500, and that we should live in it rent free but be responsible for all maintenance and outgoings. The builders TGW Ltd started re-roofing Stowe House in September 1973, we drove up once a month to meet the Architect and Builder, Mr Allard, to supervise progress.

We gave a series of Farewell Parties in the Old Rectory and a special Champagne Garden Party for the Hertfordshire Red Cross.

It was expected that the alterations to our new house would take 9 months, so we started slowly to clear out the Old Rectory, pack boxes and decide what was to go and where. We were moving to a smaller house with much fewer outbuildings so there was plenty of surplus furniture and clobber. The children were each pleased to take useful items into their own flats. The less good furniture etc was taken up to furnish Craig Logie. Items for which we had no use were sent to Watsons Sale rooms, piles of good rubbish, some of it of value like hunting boots complete with wooden trees, saddlery and wheelbarrows were cleared by the Council, bonfires accounted for the real rubbish.

When it became known that we were leaving the Old Rectory we had many

prospective purchasers to see round and a lot of acquaintances trying to persuade us to sell to them cheaply. To ensure fair play I arranged with John Watson, always my helpful friend, to advertise and auction the property. David Denny from Waltons came with us to the Auction held in Stortford to handle the legal side, John Watson himself was Auctioneer and sold to Brian Lister at £75,000, just ten times what I had paid for it 15 years before, but of course we had spent several thousand pounds in that time repairing and modernising besides weeks of work and sweat. I and the children were sad, they could not bear us moving to an urban villa in a row of other houses. Heather was secretly relieved.

We gave £5,000 each to the children for their own houses, did not stint on new equipment for Stowe House, fitted carpets, washing machines, frigs, mowers etc and invested the balance for the future.

#### STOWE HOUSE, HOLT Sep 1974

After an August visit to Littlewood, when it was so hot and dry that the moors caught fire, in September 1974 we moved into Stowe House, the builders were still finishing paintwork and clearing up, the fitted carpets were laid, telephone connected and the furniture arrived via London & Stansted on schedule.

We settled down to enjoy concentrated comfort and to contact our old Norfolk friends. For the first few months we had no shortage of visitors and all the Children came for Christmas, which luckily for us became a family tradition, they of course immediately obtained a large coloured television for our use!

Another good family tradition was started, that of logging in the Humbletoft woods with the help of Tommy Hall and an outdoor picnic on Christmas Day, we collected and transported in 5 overloaded cars a years supply of firewood and all enjoyed the outing and the exercise.

Neither Gag nor Joy were well, Humbletoft had been altered with a converted kitchen and dining room to make it easier for them to cope, we went to see and support them as often as possible or brought them back to Stowe House to stay or just for meals. Lily was still at Humbletoft doing the cooking and catering as well as acting as back stop.

Our once lovely garden at Stowe House was a wilderness, the builders had only cleared to Heather's fury the spreading wistaria covering the front of

the old house, however the following year the moribund root put out a new shoot, which rapidly grew to it's former glory.

I employed Mr Smalley to clear some of the fallen trees and encroaching brambles and by chance met Mr Riches over the fence, who agreed to work for 3 hours a day in the garden. As I write in 1991 at the age of 82 he is still working in the garden and has become a reliable friend. He is short and round, very chatty, a frugal peasant brought up by his farmer Father to be a shepherd. As he grows his own vegetables is competent to grow ours, but knows nothing about flowers or shrubs and cares less. However once he understands what is required, he does it thoroughly, meticulously and tidily. We have been lucky and grateful for his dependability, care, honesty but not always for his interminable stories of bygone sheep told standing out in all weathers.

Before she went off with VSO to Papua New Guinea in 1975 Philippa obtained some orchids as occupational therapy for me. I had a new heated greenhouse built and started to learn about orchids and their cultivation, now for many years it has been my main hobby and have had my full share of beginners luck.

In 1973 Aunt Blodwen died and David became the Laird of Littlewood. Heather asked to borrow Craig Logie from the Estate as a holiday and fishing base for us and our family. We arranged the necessary, repairs, new equipment and re-decoration, moving spare furniture, equipment and bedding etc from Widdington and borrowing more from Littlewood. With 5 beds the result was comfortable but cramped, basic and far from being grand.

Heather and Philippa went up in the bitter March of 1974 to get all ready and in April the whole family plus friends crammed in with camp beds and Li-Los, it was fun, the first of many happy holidays at Craig Logie. Willie as always was marvellous, he was determined we should enjoy all the facilities of the Estate and ensured that we did.

Heather started to re-juvenate the Red Cross in Holt raising a Group of Members to give varied services to the community. After a course of Nursing Lectures was able to have a qualified team of Volunteers to assist the District Nurses. She herself did several nursing duties a week both in Kelling Hospital and in patient's own homes always working in close co-operation with the District Nurses. It was something of a feat for her to gain the confidence and respect of the professional Nursing Staff at Kelling and also of a succession of Community Sisters so quickly. Her organisation grew to include 30 Members engaged in Home Nursing, Training Courses, Baby Clinics, Blood Doning, a Shop and of course Fund Raising.

It all called for much time and effort on her part, the telephone rang non-stop and the house was full of Red Cross clobber. It was highly successful and well worth while, Heather only handed over her organisation when she reached 75, too old according to Regulations. I gave her moral support if nothing else, but myself became involved with Norfolk Branch Headquarters for a few months.

The Branch Committee fell out with the Branch Director and wished him to resign but he refused. National Headquarters in the person of Derick Barson persuaded me to join a Panel with General Brind in the Chair, Nancy Walpole and Dr West, County Medical Officer of Health, to sort out the problems. After several meetings in Norwich to hear all points of view, it was decided it would be best for the Red Cross if the Director left, with the help of ACAS an agreement was reached and he resigned with a cash compensation.

Lady Walpole had already resigned as Branch President and Rosemary Stimpson had only just been appointed, there was now no Branch Director nor Deputy. The Branch was at loggerheads without a helmsman.

Again Dereck Barson invited and persuaded me to take over as temporary Hon Branch Director until the Branch Members had simmered down and a new Director could be formally appointed. I worked with Rosemary for 4 months in the Coronation Street Headquarters, there was a deal of ill feeling and mismanagement to be overcome, we advertised the vacant appointment, and as soon as I could hand over a working organisation to Mr Ayres the new Branch Director, I tactfully withdrew with several new presentation books on orchid growing.

In spite of my efforts, to this day Heather still deeply mistrusts and disagrees with Branch Headquarters policies. Members of the Red Cross traditionally have long memories and don't relish change nor paperwork.

At the insistence of The President "Boy" Long in 1975 I took over Chairman of SSAFA Norfolk Branch from Francis Atkinson. The County Office was in Britannia Barracks by courtesy of Col Turnbull the Norfolk Regiment's Secretary, with Ronnie Hodd as Secretary, who soon left to be replaced by an untrained temperamental Ruby Holmes.

I drove into the Office every Wednesday morning and visited the local Divisional Secretaries spread throughout the County, who independently did a good job but without cohesion or any party line. I instituted an Annual Training Day for them usually held in the RAF Mess Swanton Morley. The County Committee only met 3 times a year with an AGM held at County Hall each May.

The case load in Norfolk was not heavy except in Norwich and Swanton

Morley where Sally Knights took charge, about 250 cases a year which rose steadily to 600 as efficiency and Public Relations improved.

Funds were inadequate to meet instant calls or running expenses so I started an Open Gardens scheme and an Annual Fair, which made more than enough to cover annual expenses. A Fund Raising Committee was formed under June Back's leadership and organised a variety of successful events. Also I was able to obtain the backing of the Lady Hind Trust which donated £3,000 a year. I visited National Headquarters in London and attended their training days as far afield as Edinburgh also the Eastern Regional Meetings.

There was a lot of work for me to do, more or less single handed writing letters, agendas and minutes at home to be duplicated in the Office. Visiting Officials, the RAF Stations in Norfolk, our SSAFA Reps and potential supporters and helpers, in a large County like Norfolk there were always vacancies for Volunteers.

It was a heartening experience for me to find so many ex-Members of The Royal Norfolk Regiment and the RAF living in the County and ready to support Servicemen's Families. The Committee Members were mostly ex-Officers or wives, all very friendly and cosy, I met a wide cross section of Volunteers and made many new good friends.

Two successful cases I remember, the first SSAFA had agreed to instal a telephone in an old handicapped Widow's house, but the Telephone Engineers were on strike. I consulted the Territorial Signals Sergeant and he said nothing could be done but suggested I spoke to the local Trades Union Boss.

I phoned him, he said he was busy and couldn't instal it that day but would do it himself to-morrow but as they were officially on Strike he wouldn't be able to charge for it! The phone was installed and working the next day by tea time, I rang again to thank him, he said "It might have been my Mother" and put down the receiver.

The second case started with a phone call to me at home at 6 pm one evening from the Duty Officer in Belfast. One of the Sergeants was very worried about his wife living at Mulbarton, his friend had told him she'd had a nervous break down so he wanted immediate Compassionate Leave. Would SSAFA please investigate and recommend. I phoned our rep in Mulbarton, he had just got back home from the Norfolk Show and told him of the request. By 8 pm he phoned me back to say he had taken the Doctor to see the stricken Wife, she was in a nervous condition about the safety of her husband and would certainly benefit if her husband came home. he had already phoned this advice to Belfast. At 7.30 the next morning the Duty Officer from Belfast came on the line to me

while I was shaving, saying "Thank-you SSAFA, we got the Sergeant on the 10 o'clock plane last night to Lineham and drove him to his house, he is now having breakfast with his wife." Quick work.

After 10 years in the Chair and having got most of my original aims achieved, the paper work was becoming repetitive and tedious I handed over the County SSAFA organisation to Bill Vickers, who was full of new ideas,

In spite of all our local commitments we were able to arrange breaks for holidays. Heather and I went to Cyprus three times to stay with Penny at her villa in Pissouri, once each to Villefranche and Jersey, twice to Guernsey, the second time with the S.G's staying at la Fregate, we also stayed with them in their "time share "Thatch Cottage" at Tresco.(The first time Heather had been in a helicopter). The last continental trip and one of the best was to Vishnau on Lake Lucerne - my last walking holiday, including a 6 miles continuous steep descent from Mt Rigi causing our knees to wobble so much that champagne restorative had to be applied.

We took "sink breaks" regularly to Southwold, Stratford and London as well as staying many happy week-ends with friends and also with the children in their houses, where we revelled in their TLC treatment.

Anthony was living in School House, Widdington with a garden love/hate relationship. Colin after sharing several flats with friends in Edinburgh settled in his own luxurious and spacious flat 25 India St. Philippa was based first in a good flat in Thirlestone Rd, Edinburgh until she bought and moved to Hillside, Blairlogie, a very attractive old house and garden well modernised. Penny bought 17 Fox Corner, Worplesdon, a small terraced house which she later enlarged, she became a keen gardener but had to let the property when she was stationed abroad.

In April 1983 we went to Mike Connell's wedding to Lies in Rotterdam staying a night either side with Barbara and Phil in their new house Meadowford, Newport they had only just left Amberden Farm. We flew from Stansted to Amsterdam and were greeted with red carpet treatment by Lies who worked for KLM, put on a train for Rotterdam and escorted to our large Hotel, the Van Velzen's had reserved a whole floor for wedding guests. The first evening we explored Rotterdam and were taken out to dine in a superb restaurant by Phil, really good food.

The next morning we were ferried to the Church, then after a strange but sincerely happy Service walked to the Van Velzen house for the Reception. It was a very hot day we sweltered in the garden consuming cooling alcoholic drinks being entertained by the KLM air hostesses. At 4 pm we were taken by

the Van Velzens to another superb restaurant over looking the harbour for a large luxurious supper party ending hours later with speeches and songs by the Dutch hosts. When we got back to our hotel all the guests squeezed into our bedroom with duty free bottles, the crush and noise was frightful. Heather answered the phone, it was the Manager calling us to order, instant hush, a few minutes later Rob walked in grinning at the success of his prank.

The next morning in pouring rain with B & Phil we taxied to Amsterdam, all the good restaurants were shut after the previous day's Royal celebrations, we managed to lose each other searching for food but at length all found a cafe with surprisingly excellent cuisine. In the afternoon we took a tram, not without some anxiety, to the van Gogh exhibition, Phil went to sleep while we spent an enthralled hour before getting a taxi back to Schipol Airport. As we finally left every display screen in the Airport bore us a special "Bon Voyage" message! Altogether a memorable and happy trip to Holland.

We went up to Littlewood to stay in Craig Logie every Spring and Summer as well as occasionally in the Autumn for fishing, socialising and walking, Unfortunately Craig Logie was broken into and rifled so many times that after 10 years use we decided to give it up and moved to David's Garage Villa instead, grander and better furnished but not nearly as cosy.

Sometimes we drove all the way breaking the journey for the night at a halfway hotel or staying with friends Ushers or Collin's, alternatively taking the Car Ferry from Ely to Stirling until British Rail cancelled the service. Laterly since I have become lame and given up driving we have flown up from Norwich Airport and relied on family transport in Scotland.

In July 1976 we were at Grantown fishing on the Spey with the Dillon Robinsons in a glorious heat wave, which was hopeless for fishing, when we heard that Gag was desperately ill in the Norfolk and Norwich Hospital.

Using the Car Ferry from Inverness we dashed home immediately, only 3 days later on 4th July Gag died peacefully. Joy, who was terminally ill herself came to live with us.

Alastair decided to sell Humbletoft house and garden but to keep the land, sell some for development and put the rest into a Trust for the next generation. The contents of the house to be divided between the family, any unwanted items to be sold.

We all spent many weeks at Humbletoft sorting out the vast accumulation of 60 years, making lists, burning rubbish and transporting items even to piles of coal. Heather and Alastair bought a retiring house for Lily Palmer in Washbridge, Dereham.

Joy stayed with us until 30th September, when she became so ill that Heather, at her wish, took her by Ambulance to St Thomas Hospital. We went up to visit her many times, St Thomas' looked after her splendidly but sadly she died on 24th October. We were staying with David and Deb at Monken Hadley, he calmly and efficiently took charge in his chauffeur driven Lampson car and drove us to St Thomas' and round London to arrange necessary formalities.

We then had to sort out and clear Joy's flat in London, eventually the furniture was distributed to her nephews and nieces, our children also inherited 1/8th each of her considerable estate.

Our son Anthony had drifted into a batchelor existence in his house in Widdington with never quite enough time to tend his garden, driving into Stortford everyday to Manage Thos Cooks new Branch. He became involvd with the Church and many village activities, travelled abroad for his own holidays and for his firm, he became an enthusiastic golfer. Although fond of parties he made no effort towards girl friends nor marriage. A very kind, caring old fellow, too gentle to fight for his own interests.

Colin came down from Oxford with a slight chip on his shoulder, perhaps because he had not been able to achieve his original aim of a 1st Class Engineering Degree, but he had learned to question every statement or fact and was ready to tell others what they should do, ideal traits for his future calling as a C.A. Having passed his Chartered Accountant's exams he joined Thompson McLintock in Edinburgh and steadily worked his way up the batting order. After sharing flats with his friends he bought a luxurious flat in India St, 5 minutes walk from his Office, which he furnished with good taste. A great party man with many friends of both sexes he avoided female entanglements or the thought of marriage. He liked the open air going for long walks, playing tennis etc and spent most week ends fishing or shooting becoming proficient at both sports. He exuded high social standards but avoided the responsibility of a house, garden, his own sporting property, or a family..

Philippa became a highly qualified St Thomas' Nightingale, she had no trouble passing exams. She was always adventurous and burnt the candle at both ends. She did 2 years with VSO in Papua New Guinea, toured Australia and came home trekking the Himalayas. After midwifery training she became a District Nurse in Edinburgh buying a lovely flat with Penny in Larchmont, then after 4 years moved to Stirling as a Health Visitor and bought Hillside, a really charming house at Blairlogie. An extrovert in every way with countless friends, she took on a 3 months job in Bangalore, walked the Hindu Kush and went to New Zealand every winter to stay with her friend Mops. Although she



had several serious boy friends they were apparently afearred of her overpowering personality and energy, which she lavished on her gorgeous Golden Retriever "Henry". A human and humane non-stop dynamo with a bubbling fund of non-stop chat.

Penny had a one track ambition to become an Army Officer and rise to the top, as a small girl her play was to be on Sentry duty and to dig trenches! After leaving the Royal School for Officers Daughters at Bath she passed a Secretarial Course at Queens in London and did a few temporary jobs until she was old enough to be admitted to the WRAC OCTU at Deepcut. She passed out with the "Sash of Honour" and thereafter had regular 2 yearly postings to Guildford, Middle Wallop, to BAOR twice and Cyprus. She passed the Staff College Course at Camberley and then had 2 Staff Officer postings to MOD in London. Not relishing perpetual Mess life she bought a small house in Worplesdon and became amongst other things a keen gardener. Though far from anti-social is quite satisfied with her own company, doing fiddling jobs and planning efficiently her life, image and finances. A keen games player her watchword has always been "Efficiency".

Extraordinarily none of our 4 children have got married so Heather and I alas have no Grandchildren to spoil nor to carry on our inheritance. As we grow older they are all extremely kind, thoughtful and supportive, which we appreciate enormously. They kindly clubbed together to give us a sumptuous Ruby Wedding Party with all our relatives and friends at Ant's house and The Fleur in Widdington and goodly come to stay for a famly Christmas each year, besides inviting us constantly to stay in their own houses, they are all generous to a fault.

Living in a smaller house and with our children in good jobs all living in their own domiciles our finances improved, from a joint gross income of £18,120 and Higher Rate Tax of £3,920 in 1975, to 10 years later a Gross Income of £52,041 bearing a Higher Rate Tax Bill of £8,998 - so much for inflation. In 1983 we had a Tax Planning session with Leslie Allwood and as a result made an Hill Samuel loan of £40,000 to the children and took out a 2nd Survivor Life Policy written in Trust with the Yorkshire & General.

In 1985 I gradually became lame with painful arthritis in my right hip. With Stephen's help and my G.P.'s Dr Chapman advice I went to see the top hip surgeon Rodney Sweetnam in Harley Street, to my surprise before he had even seen the X-rays he refused to give me a hip replacement recommending a raised shoe sole instead.

Later that Autumn while trying to prune a forsythia hedge, through my

own clumsiness I fell off the stepladder and severely injured my left hand, at the same time without knowing it damaged my neck which caused pressure on my spinal column and loss of feeling and movement in hands and legs, so with the onset of arthritis I became progressively more lame and fumble fisted.

The gash on my left hand severed the tendon of my 2nd finger, it was stitched up at the Surgery but promptly went septic. I was sent to the Norfolk and Norwich Hospital where Mr McNae befriended me, took me under his wing and admitted me to Casualty Ward for 4 uncomfortable days full of anti-biotics with my arm hoisted upright.

With Heather driving me I attended Mr McNae's Hand Clinic twice a week until the swelling had subsided and the gash started to heal. My left hand was now even less useful.

By 1986 my arthritic hip was so painful that I determined to have a replacement operation. This time Sweetnam agreed to do it provided the numbness and loss of movement in my limbs was sorted out first. With my brother Stephen's unfailing help I went to see Dr Chris Earl the nerve specialist, he arranged for me to go into Sister Agnes for observation and a myelogram, which was performed at the Middlesex Hospital. After 4 days I was released and Dr Earl diagnosed an arthritic growth in my neck pressing on the spinal column and advised me to see the Neuro-Surgeon Campbell Connolly. He in turn advised that an operation would be tricky, entail lying prone and still for at least 3 weeks with a 50/50 chance of success or I could wear a hard plastic collar permanently to immobilise my neck. I was fitted with the collar, which I have worn ever since in bed and in a car, Sweetnam after consulting the other experts agreed to operate with collar in place. I was taken to Fox Corner for the week-end, all the family were there for Cog's Wedding at Rustington, owing to my ridiculous collar to H's disappointment I refused to go, on Sunday evening they drove me back home to Holt in a relay of cars.

I returned to Sister Agnes on 13th July 1987 for the hip replacement operation, which Sweetnam carried out with immense expertise and care. He visited me in hospital at 7 am every morning except Sundays!

It was very hot in Hospital my stay coincided with a heatwave and the Duke of York's Wedding, which we all celebrated with champagne on the house and a slice of the Wedding Cake.

Heather stayed in London with the S.G's, visiting me constantly as did Stephen every morning and evening. The family all came and several nephews and nieces, I was not short of company besides I had my own telephone. I was not

ill only testy tho' recovery was marvellously quick after a course of Hydro Therapy, where much to my surprise I discovered I could no longer swim, float yes but arms and legs had lost co-ordination. I was allowed out on the 31st. and driven home. The kind Ward Sisters and Nurses lined up to kiss me Goodbye. The good result was that I was free from the grinding pain but I was still lame and awkward even a 300 yard walk to Church with a stick was an achievement. Over the years I have got gradually less and less mobile, now a 50 yard walk to a Pub Lunch with 2 sticks is about bogey.

My next stupidity was in February 1987, with deep snow on the ground, to trip on a log and fall in our garage smashing my left thumb. Heather Rang 999 and got an Ambulance to take me to Cromer Hospital where they reduced the dislocation but said I must go to Casualty at the Norfolk and Norwich for proper treatment. Snow drifts were blocking the roads so Heather enlisted the help of our neighbour Graham Worrall to drive us via Cromer in our Citroen, it was snowing hard, the drifts were piling up across the road but with care, patience and skill he got us through. For the next 4 days Norwich was snowbound and completey cut off. Mr McNae again took charge of me and my thumb and bedded me down in Casualty once more, until 4 days later Heather was able to drive into Norwich and take me home.

My short stay in hospital had been entertaining, I shared a small room with 4 old ladies who had all fallen on the ice and broken a leg, they were splendid full of cheerful chat and scurilous gossip. Some Nursing Staff couldn't get in so all the patients helped each other, our gallant young Staff Nurse skied in from Saxthorpe and arrived in her ski-ing outfit amid Cheers. Mr McNae himself failed to get home and was marooned in the Hospital, cheerfully and efficiently working non-stop. I lost the use of my top thumb joint.

Gradually I found gardening more difficult until now I can just do my greenhouse full of orchids with enough success to make the effort worthwhile. Having to use 2 sticks outdoors with no hands to carry anything became increasingly frustrating both in the garden and out shopping or at any social activity, as a consequence I gradually withdrew into my shell, only going out to Church on Sundays, to visit relations or understanding old friends plus the occasional pub lunch to give Heather a break from her monotonous chores. For a time I cooked supper once a week but after dropping dishes and a fall or two gave up.

All the work I used to do at home indoors and out devolved on Heather added to the extra hours she spent looking after me with unfailing TLC, it was inevitable that she should become tired and bored, especially as she had had to

give up her beloved Red Cross organisation on account of the 75 year age limit. Perforce our entertaining and visitors dwindled away. Anyhow the "drink and drive" rules and the reluctance of many old fiends to drive at night have put a stop to the sort of lavish Drinks and Supper parties we used to enjoy. I found our small car uncomfortable, we used it very little, Heather did all the driving, mostly short journeys around Holt.

For my entertainment I have now gravitated to sitting on my garden seat, reading large print books from the local Library, selective watching of Telly or Video and eating and growing fat. Just keeping going seems to take so much time and energy. Alas both whisky and cigarettes are losing their addictive charms so at 78 I am now comparatively abstemious.

As an inspired Christmas present in 1987 the Family clubbed together and gave me an Amstrad PCW/8512. This was a challenge and marvellous therapy, I use it constantly for all my correspondence and business accounts and am still intrigued and learning more and more about Computers and how to use Amstrad. Our spare Cupboard Room bedroom has even been converted to a "Play-room" for my unrestricted computer use and the Lift leads straight into it.

In 1989 we installed a Stannah Lift in Stowe House capable of taking a wheel chair, a form of insurance against the future, also I ingratiated myself with the Physiotherapy Department in Kelling Hospital to do exercises on their equipments twice a week. The Physios were always welcoming, kind and helpful they did not expect a cure but just to keep leg muscles going and raise morale.

Barbara died in a Nursing Home in London in May 1990, she had always been a good Sister to me, kind and hospitable. She had been ill for several years and Phil had looked after her at their house in Meadowford, Newport for 2 years until it became too much for him, when they both moved in December 1989 with Manda and James' help to Colin & Torr House on the Ridgeway with separate rooms. Barbara hardly spoke and had lost all will to live, Phil aged 80 was exhausted, undernourished and mentally at sea. At first he was very unhappy in the Nursing Home resenting the loss of freedom and car, only slowly becoming institutionalised. We and all his family kept in touch and gave him constant support.

David known to the family as U.D. took ill in May 1990, went to Aberdeen Hospital and came out after 10 days a bit better but no diagnosis. He came down to Alastair's Ruby Wedding party at Dereham at the beginning of August walking slowly with a stick but in good form. By the end of August he was back in Aberdeen Hospital with a rare virus infection for which there is still no cure. He stayed in Hospital gradually losing out to the virus until

he died at the end of September, a ghastly tragedy.

David was my real friend, a great man in every way with very wide interests, immensely popular, always thinking of others, invariably kind, gently humorous and highly efficient. He managed Heather's Marriage Settlement Trust with such expertise that in 40 years the value of the Trust holdings grew from £10,00 to over half a million. When he died we thought that the Littlewood Estate might have to be sold but so prudent had his arrangements been that Deb is able to go on living there happily with no loss of amenities.

I've spent the winter of 1990/1 compiling these nostalgic notes based on my Diaries of a very happy life, perhaps a selfish one. I have many things to be thankful for, a short list must include my Faith, my Wife and Family, my health and brain and freedom from financial care. Regrets are missed opportunities, only limited travel to see the countries of this wonderful world, my own intolerance and the absence of Grandchildren to become worthy citizens and carry on the Philip Gold tradition and inheritance.

I am now 78, next winter I plan to edit and amend this history to make it readable, being mindful of the hexameter, which I still recall from my Prep School days:-

"Jam veniet tacito curva senecta pede."

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January a year later, I've just finished going through these notes, correcting obvious spelling mistake etc, am in two minds as to whether they are worth printing or of interest to anyone other than myself.

1991 has been a quiet year for me, I don't get about much just sit indoors or the garden and feel frustrated by my lack of agility, but it has been a glorious summer, which I've enjoyed fully, hot, hardly any rain so severe drought, the lawns brown and shrubs dying off. Heather drives me to Church, Library, Dentist etc, I get in and out of the car with some difficulty then hobble off on 2 sticks.

We got a new car in August an up-market red Ford Escort with Automatic gear box for Heather and wide doors for me. We are both pleased with it,

certainly much more comfortable for me than the tinny little Fiesta. The longest journey we've done has been to Widdington.

The highlights of the year have been a trip to Scotland, transported by Anthony, to stay with Philippa for 10 happy days at Blairlogie, then in July a trip to London for Stephen and Betty's superb Golden Wedding Party in their Club. The low light 3 weeks in the Norfolk and Norwich Hospital for removal of a cancer growth on my colon. I was very well looked after by the National Health Service both in Hospital, which was like living in Heathrow, and at home by our GP Dr Chapman and the Community Sisters whilst convalescing. So impressed that I wrote a letter to the Times (unpublished) and the EDP published in shortened form. The arch looker-after and support was of course my Nursing Nannie-Wife from dawn til dusk, as a result she lost a stone in weight.

It dawned on me that the Stage Manager was giving the Curtains a shake before drawing them to a close, I put all my affairs in order and sent "Memento" cheques to my nephews and nieces.

The least of our worries was income, for the first time husbands and wives were taxed separately and Heather made a Tax Return, the fruit of my efforts to balance our estates resulted in us each having Higher Rate Tax Assessments of just under £6,000.

We remain comfortably in Stowe House, entertaining only our Children, Relations and worthy old friends. I use the lift more often and Heather finds the daily grind of shopping, house keeping and looking after me 24 hrs a day more wearing.

I keep in contact with my ancient friends by phone and letter including Phil, Mr Page, Percy Gough and Johnny Dixon, they are all over 80.

Our dear old Gardener Mr Riches has left us at the age of 83, he still calls in for a chat, occasionally bringing me a woodcock for supper. Mick Reynolds is now in charge of the garden adequately, not as clean and tidy as it used to be, but he's a good worker with a fund of stories about bye-gone Holt and it's inhabitants. I still look after the orchid greenhouse with enjoyment, it has already produced prolific blooms this winter, still more to come.

After H's weeks of hard work to make it a success we had a lovely Christmas lasting a whole week with all our Children coming and going on different days. Everyone was in good form and appetite, the boys played Golf,

cut down a dead pear tree, Col, K. and Henry went shooting with Alastair, Fiona brought her 3 baby girls to tea, our girls did the major cooking, the boys washed up, Christmas presents were more numerous and lavish than ever, I just sat and grinned with festive pleasure.

It is now 6th March 1992, my Amstrad has just finished printing this saga, a slow process, first a draft for patient proof reading by Heather then this final edition. It has kept me happily employed in the long winter evenings.

The Country is now in the midst of a mud-slinging and boring General Election. Our children have been to visit and cosset us, in February we spent a spoiling week-end with Penny in her enlarged and greatly improved Fox Corner house.

Spring is early, we've had little snow nor frost, mostly dry and warm above the average, as a result the bulbs have been more gorgeous than ever.

Carpets of aconites then snowdrops and now crocii and scilla, daffodils just starting. Even the flowering shrubs cherry, jasmine, viburnum. daphne and "Cartle's" plant have surpassed themselves and now the forsythias.

There are 4 different sorts of orchid blooms gloriously displaying themselves in the greenhouse, a fitting Finale.

#### J U B I L A T E   D E O

## A P P E N D I X

### E S C A P E   f r o m   S I N G A P O R E

#### Last Days in Singapore

Friday February 13th 1942 dawned I knew it was going to be a bad day, the end of our ammunition was in sight, only 1,000 rounds per gun left and as the Depots had been over-run by the Japs no hope of further supplies. The Japs started to bomb and shell the Town systematically causing terrible damage to civilians and property, it was increasingly difficult to move through the streets owing to debris, fires and shelling.

At about 5 pm I made my way to Divisional HQRA to report to the CR Brigadier Rusher and collect orders and Information. The two mile journey through the streets was hazardous, Bdr Smith was driving the open Austin as usual with Gnr Hamilton, my body guard, perched on the back with Tommy gun at the ready when we ran into a mini battle. John Barrett with drawn revolver was crawling up the ditch leading his Company of Norfolks to try to clear the road block established by the Japs, I gave him local information, Bdr Smith reversed the car which immediately became a target for small arms fire and the odd grenade, luckily without serious damage. We drove round the block and arrived at HQRA to find the CRA a bit shaken by a shell which had passed through his room and exploded outside, there was a gaping hole in the ceiling and opposite wall, everything was covered in dust. The C.O.s of the 5th, 118th and 135th Field Regiments arrived, the CRA decided to move his HQ next to our RHQ to take advantage of our communications and protection and was in the middle of his briefing when he was called to the phone by General Key the Divisional Commander.

Brigadier Rusher came back with a long face, Force Headquarters had ordered 500 Officers and men to be evacuated as Training Instructors to a relieving Force based on India, each Regiment and HQ was ordered to provide an "Escaping Party" of one Officer and 6 O.R's to report to Brigadier Paris by 7pm at No:2 Dock Gate Keppel Harbour. In spite of my protests The CRA ordered me, with the other C.O.s as witnesses to take charge of the Div Gunner parties in person. He took me aside and explained his ideas, that we were to make our way to The RA Depot at Deolali to start training against the Japs in jungle warfare, he gave me messages also to his family at home.



I returned to our RHQ to start this unenviable task passing Force HQ en route with a Surrender Jeep" covered in white flags already standing outside. I found the 2IC Gerald Sanderson and Fraser Stewart the Adjutant in some despondence, bursts of small arms fire were going on all round the area and they had no information. I told Fraser Stewart to assemble our Regtl Party at once with the HQ cwt truck, sent instruction messages to all the Gunner Units in the Division and then went off with RSM Scullion to stop the panic firing. I knew from our OP reports that there was no large formation of Japs in our area and guessed that some of our own troops had become demoralised and in the darkness were shooting at each other, such was the case, by dint of shouting at the top of our voices and identifying ourselves we collected these shaken detachments and slotted them in to our Regtl perimeter defences.

I handed the Regiment over to Jim Fassen and gave instructions re-demolition of guns and equipment, Gnr Cartwright my batman loaded my kit into the Austin; he brought me a welcome plate of tomato soup and a couple of hand grenades to put in my pocket, checked my assembled party and by 9.30 set off in the 2 vehicles for Keppel Harbour. The Members of our Party were B.S.M. Roadnight, Sergeants Browne, Lindup and Noble, Bdr Smith and Gnr Johnstone drivers and wee Jock Hamilton my bodyguard. All hand-picked tough intelligent men and good instructors.

It was pitch dark when we set off in the 2 seater Austin and the 15cwt truck, there was sufficient light from the burning buildings for the drivers to pick their way along nearly deserted streets, there were a few bursts of fire aimed at us by scared sentries and many corpses, mostly Chinese killed by the bombing, which abated during the night but spasmodic enemy shelling continued, their targets being apparently the Docks, our destination!

After much frustrating touring round the vast Dock area to find our rendezvous at No.2 Gate, there was no one to ask in all the shambles, we did arrive at last to find Colonel Sydenham CRE 18th Div in charge of the 500 strong assembly. He confirmed with Force HQ that a Naval Vessel would come in during the night to take the parties off to Java, where they could help the small Dutch Force repel the Jap landings, meanwhile we should all wait at the end of the pier to speed embarkation. There was a complete absence of Naval or Dockyard personnel. We made our way along the quay through the rubble, twisted metal and remains of derelict cranes and waited and waited sitting on our haversacks. Around midnight Col Sydenham managed to contact Force HQ again on the Dock telephone, no change in orders but the boat could be delayed by the shelling.

The spasmodic shelling seemed to increase and shift target to our quay (5th column information?) stone splinters and bits of metal were flying in all directions. I took our party to the narrowest part of the jetty so that short or over shells fell harmlessly in the sea, there was no semblance of cover, we lay flat pressing ourselves into the stone paving and waited, hope dying hard. The warehouse at the entrance to the Dock and the Dock Gates themselves were on fire, casualties began to mount our pile of kit was blown to bits, good riddance to my gas mask, a red hot length of wire hawser entangled us, we all burnt our hands escaping from it.

As it started to get light for the 14th February it was obvious that we had spent the most uncomfortable night of our lives to no purpose. Orders filtered through that all parties were to rendezvous at the YMCA building in the centre of the City to wait for a ship later. I collected our party and the remains of our kit and returned in our transport to the Regiment by 7am without much difficulty nor sleep.

I had breakfast then lay on my bed for an hour, not much chance of sleep owing to the bombing. the Jap pilots had become much more daring flying low over the City straffing and bombing any likely targets. The previous day I'd found a lost AA Troop of Beaufors and taken them under command, helped by the men from F Troop they got 2 kills, one of which I witnessed with satisfaction. Our OP's were still manned for information purposes, they were the front line there was no Infantry to support. From his OP Captain Anderson made a recce 6 miles along the Changi road, he reported no major Jap formations but had been passed by a Jap Company on bicycles pedalling towards the City.

At about 10 am I started a tour of the Regiment, all gun positions, OPs. defensive posts, wagon lines, cookhouses etc the lot, to spread encouragement. Everyone seemed to be in reasonably good spirits, there was no disorganisation nor panic, naturally they were all anxious to know what was going to happen next.

While I was at E & F Troop gun positions, either side of a tennis court we were shelled for several minutes by Jap 75 mm guns without too much damage, one gun set on fire and 2 men wounded, the position was well camouflaged it was difficult to understand how the Japs could have spotted it so accurately without local hostile information. We took cross bearings on the enemy guns and studied the map to locate their probable position, I fired a Battery concentration on this target, there was no reply, the gunners were delighted and naively thought we'd wiped it out.

Ammunition was getting low, firing had to be restricted. I sent a party off to try to recover some which we had buried in our original position on the Island, unfortunately this party was ambushed, lost 2 men killed and a 3 ton lorry and came back led by a shaken BSM Brookes empty handed.

Jim Fassen was at C Bty gun position as always imperturbable and in control, we had a plate of bully stew together and then went round inspecting and tying up local defences. On my way in the Austin to C Bty in action near the watertanks close to Government House we found ourselves in the middle of a pattern bombing attack, 27 Jap bombers in formation came over at about 5,000 ft, their target was probably the water supplies, it was just unlucky we were there too. Bdr Smith slammed on his brakes and dived into the muddy sewer ditch beside the road, I had told him to drive on through the bombs but as always Bdr Smith was right, a stick of 500lb bombs fell across the road 50 yds ahead of us. The ditch was too smelly for me I straddled across it preferring the welfare of my clothes rather than my person, I had become a bit fatalistic, any how all my teaching had been not to let enemy activity interfere with the job on hand, I tried to set an example. We drove on through a hail of rubble and bits of brick pattering on the car to the gun position, one gun had been hit badly and one buried in rubble, Sergeants Farmer and Lockhead had both been wounded. I gave Gilly Campbell a new location for his guns closer in and away from obvious bombing targets and waited to see the guns on the move. The OPs were still in action near the Chinese Cemetery, there was no organised Infantry front line, they reported what appeared to be a confused running battle and withdrawal providing no visible Artillery targets.

One OP Officer reported that he had seen a Padre walk forward across a damaged river bridge to tend 2 wounded soldiers the otherside, Later he walked back over the bridge, the Jap engineers were already working on it but paid no attention to him.

On return to RHQ found all in order and functioning, Fraser Stewart desperately trying to keep the telephone lines open to the Batteries and Div HQ, the cables were being constantly cut by bombs and thieving civilians. Gerald Sanderson was coping with cooking and supplies, he had amassed enough food for a week and had taken over and guarded sufficient wells to provide indefinite fresh water. The main water had been cut off after the bombing of the reservoirs.

At about 5 pm Brigadier Rusher arrived with his HQ vehicles, we were just sitting down to tea when the HQ bungalows were attacked by low flying Zeros with canon and bombs, they must have spotted the new cluster of vehicles. Several men were wounded and one Signaller killed,

We cleaned up the Mess, let the dust settle and as soon as clean cups were brought carried on with our tea. The Brigadier expressed his surprise and displeasure at finding me still with our Regiment and ordered me to report to Brigadier Paris in charge of all the escaping parties at Raffles Hotel. I went to Raffles, for the first time, it was not badly damaged and found it full of people mostly soldiers some in full battle order others lounging about with cocktails, there were a few civilians and several women who looked like Cosmopolitans well able to look after themselves.

I found Brigadier Paris' room and banged on the door to be told there was a Conference in progress and I'd have to wait. A moment later a tall Scots Major appeared carrying a load of haversacks, he said he was Brigade Major for the evacuation and that "It would be no picnic," "Just been collecting some supplies" he said, this chance remark opened my eyes to the stark fact that there was no organisation and "Sauve qui peut" was already in progress at HQ. Brigadier Paris had gone ahead, I never saw him, he and his party were evacuated in the last Naval vessel to leave Singapore, later to be sunk by the Japs, a total loss.

I made my way to the Y.M.C.A. and found a fearful crush of soldiers and no organisation, Col Dillon RASC was supposed to be in charge, he was overwhelmed and fraught but told me the first parties would be leaving for the Docks at 9.30 that night.

I went back to our Regiment and told Fraser Stewart to assemble our party again with a weeks rations and double ammunition (the Docks were being looted by armed gangs), Cartwright loaded my kit into the Austin, unfortunately there was a muddle he put my webbing equipment with field glasses, compass and revolver in my room ready for me to put on and only loaded my shaving basin, tin box and haversack in the car. The order to Ceasefire came over the telephone, this may have been a hoax it was cancelled within half an hour, I went round the perimeter defences with RSM Scullion as cheerful and pugnacious as ever, handed the Regiment over again to Jim Fassen, drank a bowl of soup and at about 8.30 set off with my party for the YMCA in our 2 vehicles, this time using sidelights as thought we were less likely to draw fire.

We arrived to utter chaos and pandemonium in the YMCA, it was being shelled spasmodicaly causing a few casualties, Col Dillon had disappeared, there were no orders, no intructions, no transport just a milling throng of several hundred hungry and bewildered soldiers. I appeared to be the senior Officer so sat down at a table flanked by bodyguards and got the party leaders together to make a list, (which has survived in my archives) then set them off

in five separate columns to march the 2 miles down to the Docks, There were a few vehicles which we crammed with odd soldiery, as we left the YMCA building received a salvo of shells, 27 men were killed, the wounded uncounted.

We arrived at No2 Dock Gate Keppel Harbour at about 10 pm and with some difficulty found the Harbour Command Post, a concrete rabbit warren packed to bursting with Officers and men all seeking for information and orders. At last I found a Naval Staff Captain, he told me all the senior Officers including Col Dillon had already left in the two launches available, that there were a few scattered Chinese fishing boats we could take, and that we could help ourselves from the Naval Stores, he advised heading for Indragiri, which I thought was the name of a town, he shewed me a chart pinned up on the wall, I got Sgt Browne to make a copy which he did neatly on the back of an envelope.

By this time the marching columns were beginning to arrive, with great effort we launched 2 old lifeboats standing on the quay, the first split when it hit the water, the second stayed up-right and was allotted to Lt Murray of 22nd Mountain Regt and his Indian soldiers. Another large boat was allotted to Capt Nandi with 20 Indian Staff from HQRA and launched, both these boats rowed successfully to Sumatra, no mean feat for Indians who had never been in a boat before. It is difficult to image the scene, it was dark the only light from burning warehouses, shells were falling intermitently, hundreds of soldiers milling round desperate for orders and some means of getting away, armed gang were busy looting, the burning City behind and the sea stretching away in front.

I sent parties off to collect stores, under Roadnight to find boats, Sgt Lindup to find oars, Sgt Noble for ropes and Bdr Smith to fill petrol cans with water. Roadnight found a suitable boat for our party and set a guard on it, when he took me to look at it the boat and guard had both gone. While Smith was providing water for other parties my Austin car was stolen with all my kit in it and more important our rations.

I was very tired, everything assumed a nightmare quality, I kept saying to myself "Think, if only you think clearly it'll be alright." By 1am there were still about 100 soldiers on the Quay and no more boats, I split them into parties of 10 and sent them to look on other Docks. I took the 15cwt truck with Johnson, Smith and Browne to try to find any sort of vessel which could take our party. We drove to several other Docks and Quays, they were all derelict with no boats of any sort. I had the idea of going to one of the quays which was on fire as perhaps no one had been foolhardy enough to search there.

## "MARIA" THE JUNK

We drove through a sheet of flame from a burning rubber ware house, it was surprising that our petrol tank did not catch fire, but all was well, we got nearly to the end of the pier when I spotted a dinghy in the water tied to the pier, I climbed down into it, it was in good order with oars and a sail but too small for us, at the most it could only hold 6 people, I gave it to a party from the Beds and Herts who had followed us.

While in the dinghy I thought I could see by the light of the fires a dim shape right at the end of the jetty. I went to inspect but was halted by a barbed wire barricade. I told Bdr Smith to smash through the barricade with the truck, there was not much room and evry chance he would finish in the sea, with great skill he managed it. There was a boat, I pulled her into the side and climbed down the iron steps in the seawall to get aboard. She was a Chinese fishing boat about 20ft long, sturdily and heavily built to sail, there was no provision for rowing, she was derelict and had been burnt, her mast , sails and rigging were in ashes and the hull badly charred. There was about 9 ins of water over the floor boards, she did not appear to be leaking fast so I hoped it was only rain water. I shut my eyes for 30 seconds to try to think, said a quick prayer then called up to the others waiting on the jetty "OK, she'll do."

It was 3 am on the 15th February, only 3 hours 'til dawn by which time we had to be far enough out to sea to be out of sight of the Japs and out of range of their machine guns. I sent Bdr Smith back with the truck to pick up the rest of our party and stores, particularly oars, rope and cans of water.

Two lone figures appeared on the jetty and asked if they could join us, they seemed sensible and as the boat could easily hold a crew of 10, I agreed. One was Lt "Jack" Tarr of 2nd Ghurkas, a tough and reliable Officer, he had once worked in a Bank in Japan so could speak Japanese and fair Malay, he became our invaluable interpreter. The other Sub Conductor Handyside a very senior Warrant Officer in the RAOC though fit and willing he had a desk worker's physique and was more at home with ledgers and stores than in an open boat. Poor chap, I gave him the simple but tedious and never ending task of bailing out,

As soon as the truck came back with the rest of our party and stores we started to load them into the junk. We made holes in the gunwhale with a pickaxe, threaded through rope grumets to act as rowlocks and fitted 4 oars, one oar we rigged as a rudder the 6th was our only spare.

Everyone was doubly armed with rifle and Tommy gun, we had a box of spare ammunition and one of Mills Bombs, a haversack each except for me, 2 petrol cans of water but no rations except for titbits in our pockets. We took the tools from the truck, some petrol in lemonade bottles, I wished later we had taken the canvas cover and spare tyres.

By 4.20 am I could delay no longer and cast off, there was a gentle off shore breeze and the tide seemed to be going out, we drifted smoothly away from the jetty, Docks and Singapore. I took the rudder oar sitting up on a sort of dog kennel glory hole, Hamilton was look-out in the bows, the other 8 under Tarr's tuition started to man the oars. Two men standing up facing each other at each oar, one pushing the other pulling, Tarr set a very slow stroke and after many crabs and mistakes an unsteady rhythm was achieved, I reckoned we were making about 4 knots towards the South. I luckily had a small pocket compass, which was not needed at the start, the pall of smoke from the burning oil tanks in Singapore being only too visible. Our immediate danger was that we should be picked up in the beam of searchlights sweeping the harbour and become a target, the searchlight beams crossed us several times but did not pause, probably looking for ships.

We found a bamboo awning in the boat and with the oars as masts made a sort of sail, which worked quite well until the sun got up and the breeze died away, then back to rowing, hardwork and slow progress, when the tide turned against us in spite of frantic efforts at the oars we started to drift back towards Singapore. We got caught in a tide race off shore and tried desperately to tie up to a buoy, in spite of superhuman efforts by Tarr and the exhausted rowers failed to reach it and we were swept away on to the beach of a small island near Blackamati about 4 miles from where we had started.

It was full daylight so we decided to disembark to get some food and rest. We found a small native fishing village, the Malays were all frightened of the Japs and very unwilling to help us, however Jack Tarr with a little bribery was able to obtain some tea and water. I made the men shave and clean themselves up, sort out and stow the heap of stores lying all over the boat, Tarr and I got a fisherman to rig us a native sail with some old canvas and a jury mast, sailing was obviously going to be more profitable than rowing our heavy junk.

At dawn the first air raids started, squadrons of bombers came over in formation from the South, first dropping their bombs on the Blackamati AA gun sites and then on Singapore City.

To appear less conspicuous to enemy airplanes I made the men disguise themselves as native fisherman, though this might fool the Japs it exposed us to sunburn, Bdr Smith won the prize by finding and wearing Chinese trousers made out of flour bags.

After an hours rest, the wind got up and we set sail, attempting to tack away from the shore the sail split into shreds, it was completely rotten, we rowed back to shore and ourselves re-rigged our square bamboo matting as a wind scoop, which worked well as long as the wind blew from behind. At 10 am the tide turned in our favour, we set off in style and made good progress to the SW. so well that we took another small rowing boat in tow, containing a party of Northumberland Fusiliers led by Major Leach and Captain Beamish (years later an M.P.) as they were overcrowded we took some of them on board our junk. The wind started to get up and blow hard from the East, it became rough, the rowing boat was in danger of being swamped and cast off her tow, there was some difficulty and confusion in transferring the passengers back, Beamish left his trousers behind containing his wallet and revolver or so he said afterwards.

We were being blown off our Southerly course, I decided to head West over the minefields marked on our sketched chart, then if and when we made Sumatra to tide hop down the coast. The crew started to be seasick, useless and miserable, It was getting increasingly difficult to control the boat with my steering oar, at about 5 pm while I was trying to round a headland we were blown on to a lee shore and stuck fast in the mud. I decided to stay there to give the men some rest and a chance to recover, anyhow we should have to wait for the next tide to float us off. I realised that in future on our journey the tides were going to be our main help and enemy. In the narrow channels between the small islands the tides ran like a mill race, no place for a heavy and unweildy boat with a scratch crew.

We waded ashore through the mangrove swamp, leaving as always a guard on the boat, and found a fisherman's hut, I sent off a foraging party with Jack Tarr, we were getting very hungry, I went back to the boat and tried to rig a more effective and manageable sail, searching the glory hole I found an old iron anchor, we rigged this to the boat, waded 50 yds out with it through the shallow sea, a very heavy awkward load, and dropped it, it held fast and would I hope be a help in getting us off the mud when the tide turned.

We had a meal consisting of a packet of Ryvita and a half-pound tin of marmalade between the 10 of us, it was too obvious we were going to be very short of food, I called in all we had and put Sgt Noble in charge with Bdr Smith as Cook to ensure it was evenly distributed.



I allotted jobs to each man to give them something to do and be responsible to the rest of the crew. Lt Tarr was Interpreter in charge of Public Relations, the rowing drill and also Doctor, we pooled all medicaments, a motley collection. Handyside was in charge of water supplies but de-moted, when he let one of our precious petrol cans be kicked over and spilt, to Bailer-man. Sgt Lindup took over water supply. Hamilton in charge of Look-Out and Bailing with Handyside as his assistant. Johnstone was in charge of arms and ammunition, also me as my batman. Roadnight in charge of discipline, guards and turn out, while Sgt Brown was responsible for all stores and equipment.

The foraging party got back after dark with some fish which we left with the fisherman to cook for our breakfast. We arranged a guard and settled down to sleep to be roused almost immediately by the sentry who had spotted figures stealing along the shore towards our boat, it looked as though we might be attacked, in the dark we could see 6 figures it was impossible to see whether they were armed. We picked up our guns, not wishing to be caught all huddled together I posted Smith and Johnstone in the sea up to their waists 20 yards to a flank and sent Tarr, Roadnight and Hamilton away from behind the shelter of the boat to work their way round and come up behind our assailants.

We were still only about 9 miles away from Singapore, so they could be a Jap patrol, a gang of looters or native thieves. After what seemed a long wait there was the sound of a scuffle on shore, then Tarr and his party appeared wading back pushing 10 evil looking Malays in front of them at gun point. They said they had come to sell us food, but really to steal what they could. From their filthy clothes they produced 2 live chickens, probably looted, which we bought standing haggling in the sea. The chickens were dead by morning and stank, they were diseased and certainly not fit to eat.

It was cold that night, we all shivered miserably, a strong wind got up and drove us further on to the mud, I doubted when morning came that we should be able to get off again.

After a wretched night at the glimmerings of first light we waded ashore trying to avoid the dangerously sharp mangrove spikes, the sea was filthy covered with a scum of black oil from the bombed refineries, We found that our breakfast fish had not been cooked just covered in salt, hungry as I was, I tried to eat one but it stuck in my throat, the others managed a few mouthfuls washed down with brackish water from the fisherman's well. We took the remainder of the fish on board, but by midday they stank so much that we threw them over the side.

The tide was coming in and gradually the boat started to float by dint of shoving and heaving on the anchor we were under weigh again before 8 o'clock. Just as we left a queer figure dressed in mackintosh and sun helmet appeared and asked if he could come with us. I interrogated him, an Australian deserter named Brakespear, his only equipment a lemonade bottle and a pack of cards. I allowed him to come as long as he did his fair share of work, a mistake he didn't and became a nuisance to us all, he had plenty of loud mouthed advice to give while avoiding any help himself.

The sun was shining, a good NE wind blowing and the tide with us, under these conditions we made good progress steering by the sight of the palls of black smoke rising from Singapore. I was confident enough to take a short cut between two islands, the fast tide raced us through at a dangrous speed. It began to get very hot and as there was no shade we started to sun-burn. The crew in the waist could get some protection but I was sitting up on the dog kennel with the steering oar and got none. I remained at the tiller day and night for the whole voyage, gave all the orders and decided on course, I reckoned it was my responsibility.

We continued hungry and thirsty to make good progress in a SW direction 'til about 4 pm when the wind got up, the tide turned against us and the sea became rough, steadily becoming very rough, the crew one by one became sea sick quite unfit to man the oars I no longer had any control with the rudder, it became quickly very dark, the junk drifted broadside on to the waves rolling frantically, we were in real danger of being swamped or capsized, I made the men sit in the bottom of the boat to keep her as steady as possible and to bail with evrything they had. The steering oar was threshing about, I couldn't hold it and called Roadnight our most powerful man to help, too strong it proved, we managed to hold the boat steady for a few moments then the steering oar snapped under the strain.

Again we were out of control rolling dreadfully and drifting South down the Philip straight driven by wind and tide at a furious rate, we passed two marker lights at the rate of knots, a Jap patrol boat picked us up in it's searchlight but did not approach over the minefields. After 2 hours of this frightening experience, the most lethal of our voyage, the tide turned again, the waves became less violent and a NE breeze set in. The men began to recover, a fresh rudder was rigged with a spare oar and a bit of bamboo mat hoisted as a sort of sail. Realising thankfully that we had come to no harm in the mine-fields I decided to go straight across them to hit Sumatra somewhere and then work down the coast with the tides to some form of civilisation.

The route indicated on our chart twisted between the islands, we had already been blown a long way off course and it was doubtful if with our lack of control we could follow the chart even if Brown's rough sketch was accurate.

It was pitch dark at about 2 am and we were still flying along at top speed when the 2 look-outs in the bow shouted there was land ahead, we could hear breakers a moment later and immediately cast out the anchor. The anchor dragged and then held, we were pulled up with an almighty jolt, but too late we were already on the rocks with the tide going out, a seaman's nightmare. At first the junk bumped fairly gently, then thudded down on the rocks to become hideous crashes, a battering no boat could stand for long, I expected the timbers to split any moment, this awful pounding went on for half an hour 'til the boat rested firmly on the rocks, it was still very dark all we could do was to wait for dawn and then try to improve our plight. As soon as it was light enough we inspected the damage, unbelievably no planking was broken but water was coming in through large gaps in the seams. We bailed out and caulked the gaps tightly with bits of canvas and clothing, this was partially effective but for the rest of our voyage had to keep one man permanently bailing.

We found ourselves on the rocky shore of an uninhabited and jungle covered atoll a few hundred yards long, and could see a much bigger island to the West on the horizon. We scrambled ashore over the sharp rocks and made a fire, Bdr Smith brewed some tea and opened one tin of bully, a frugal breakfast for 11 famished men.

Worst still we were getting very low in drinking water only 1 gallon left for us all, dangerously low, I sent a party off on a fruitless search, the rest on to making collision mats to try to save the boat being smashed on the rocks when the tide came in, I climbed to the top of the atoll through thick prickly jungle to get a view for our next course, there was nothing to be seen except the one island in the distance. It was very hot, I lost my way in the jungle and had to make a long detour back to the boat.

Brakespear had been making an infernal nuisance of himself, I asked BSM Roadnight, a heavyweight boxer, to lean on him, when I got back from my recce Brakespear was lying on the ground, no one said anything to me, but thereafter Brakespear mended his ways and took his turn at the oars.

We settled down in the heat to wait for the tide, at last the boat floated but not before taking crashing blows on the rocks. The anchor was stuck fast, nothing we could do to raise it, not relishing another bashing on the rocks we cut the anchor rope, buoyed it and prayed we should not suffer the proverbial fate of a ship without an anchor.

It was now Feb 17th our third day at sea, it was very very hot and we were getting desperate for water, I decided to make for the island we could see to the West about 8 miles away. There was a faint breeze to help but the crew rowed nearly all the way arriving parched about midday. We found a fisherman's hut, the Malays were only too anxious to get rid of us, they feared our boat would attract the Jap planes occasionally circling around. On the whole, in contrast to the Chinese, the Malays were always unhelpful by day but at night only too ready to take advantage of our plight and sell us bad food at exorbitant prices.

We filled our petrol cans with dirty brackish water from a well, putting in a few chlorine tablets, and had a good long drink ourselves, there was no food though there might be some fish in the evening from the traps. By midday it was blazing hot, more rowing was out of the question, the wind died down and we were becalmed. I tied up to a fishing stake and made all the men including myself strip and go overboard to get a bit cleaner and relieve constipation. We were unshaven, dirty, and our skins were peeling from bad sun-burn, sea water was painful but somehow refreshing.

It was difficult to avoid getting sunburnt, some fair skins were in a bad way, the darker ones did better, my legs and lips were raw and bleeding, I put on some scarlet lypsy which raised a laugh. Some of the crew had badly cut feet from the rocks when trying to launch the boat in the morning., I called a sick parade, Jack Tarr as Ships Doctor did a good job with my Dettol and Elastoplast, we all felt more comfortable but very hungry.

Bdr Smith made a hot meal of one tin of bully, one of macaroni and some Chinese vegetables mixed together and stewed in the sun, very good but not nearly enough to satisfy.

Towards evening it got cooler and we took to the oars again for a couple of hours, there was no wind but the tide, if any, seemed to be in our favour, we made good progress. As the sun set we were passed by a tug understeam full of escapees, we hailed them and asked for a tow to nearest land, they rudely refused, we then asked for some food and water, this too was nastily refused. One of the passengers lolling over the rails advised us to row back to the island and get some coconuts, this so enraged us that Brakespear took up a rifle and shot at the good Samaritan, the shot missed but I believe we one and all wished it hadn't.

We had our revenge on that tug later when we were able to pass through a narrow channel and it was stuck fast in the mud.

By nightfall we were not near any land when we came across a God sent stake sticking up solitary out of the shallow sea, we tied up to this stake, we had a slice of bully each, cut very thin and a cup of water for supper, we were all dreadfully hungry and it was beginning to take effect on the men, they could talk of nothing but food and drove themselves to a frenzy, I had to ban all talk of food except at meal times!

We spent a quiet night with no alarms and cast off from our mooring at 5 am on 18th February. Starting before first light in the cool of the day with 2 men at each oar, by now rowing rhythmically together, we covered a good distance, by 9 o'clock we had reached an island with a Kamponng or large fishing villlage on it. As usual the natives were most anxious we should not approach, but we knew the form by now, made a show of force, landed had a good drink filled up our watercans and came away with a bag of greasy rice, some dried shrimps and nuts. Bdr Smith made a grand feast by mixing them all together and roasting it in the sun. I enjoyed my bowlful and was amazed that some eat 3 or 4 huge helpings with gusto.

It was midday by the time we had finished this breakfast, the sun was scorching down, there was a slight breeze, the tide was with us and we were making good headway. Suddenly the look-out reported land, in the far distance we could see a long low smudge of coastline, the mainland of Sumatra, rowing in easy stages we gradually approached.

I had originally thought it would take us 4 days to reach Sumatra and here we were on our 4th day miraculously in sight of the coast, what I hadn't bargained for was the coast being miles of uninhabited jungle, accessible only through impassable mangrove swamps, with no towns, villages nor friendly Dutchmen to welcome us.

We were dispirited as slowly we made our way South along the swampy coast keeping Indragiri in mind as our destination. That night was calm and still, we tied up to the stakes of a fish trap some half mile out to sea, we were all tired and hungry again, between watches every one got some sleep huddled together like a litter of puppies in the bottom of the boat for warmth, it was cold and bedding of course non existant.

The next morning we were on our way by 4am to catch the tide, when dawn came we were opposite a small native hovel, we drove the boathook deep into the mud and tied up to it, set a watch on the boat and the rest of us waded ashore, it was hard going through the mud, sometimes up to our waists and took us all of half an hour.

The hut belonged to a very old Chinese boat builder, a man of some standing as he had several employees, he welcomed us gravely and courteously, when Jack Tarr told him I was a "Tuan Besar" or Great Lord he disappeared and came back presently in his best robes. He provided us with a meal of ducks eggs, sweet biscuits and China tea in long glasses, he then ordered a special ceremonial cake to be made in our honour, which he carried up with great dignity to his Altar to be blessed, before helping us to generous slices.

The old man called his village "Nibong Tabal" and with signs and sketches showed us how to proceed to the nearest town, he refused payment so I made him a formal presentation of my silver cigarette case to his evident delight. As a farewell gesture he ordered 4 of his boys to push us out through the mud in a canoe to our boat with food for the guard left on board. We gave the boys for their hours toil in the mud our last 5 cigarettes, they were very pleased! Thereafter we were reduced to native cigarettes, when we could get them, tobacco of a sort rolled round a straw.

No sooner had we got back on board than our boathook mooring came out of the mud and we slipped away on the tide. The sun was beating down, it was very hot all that day with no breeze, I was content to let the tide drift us Southwards along the coast. Though the men were in poor physical shape due to exhaustion, lack of food and water and all dreadfully sunburnt they were in much better heart having reached Sumatra and received a welcome.

The men wanted to row to get to the town the Chinaman had told us about quickly, I wouldn't let them in that heat as wished to conserve their energy and let the tide keep us going. In the evening we came to a channel between the mainland and a large island the crew at the oars as the tide turned had an exhausting struggle to get us through without being swept back out to sea. The junk was terribly heavy to row against the tide with our makeshift equipment.

We came out of the channel into the mouth of a large river, there about 2 miles wide, the water was only slightly salt, I decided to row across the river mouth and then tie up for the night to wait for the morning tide to take us on South.. However after an hours back breaking toil at the oars we failed to cross the river mouth, a strong on-shore wind sprang up and we were deposited on the mud of a mangrove swamp on the near bank, the tide went out, we were well and truly stuck in the mud once again.

We were all dispirited, to raise morale I decreed a bonfire on the mud, we threw our hatch cover over as a base, collected dry rubbish and Bdr Smith with his petrol bottle soon had a fire going and brewed tea with the river water in a petrol can.

It tasted vile even with the last tot of rum added from my flask. The fire and the scalding tea made us all feel better. I heated some water in my basin over the fire and had a wash and shave encouraging the crew to do the same. A full moon came up, someone started to sing and before long we were happily into a chorus of nostalgic songs before drifting off to sleep. It was my turn to stay on watch. By 3am the tide had floated us off the mud but a strong wind drove the boat further and further into the mangrove swamp.

In the early morning I hailed a sampan of fishermen paddling up river from their fish traps, they were surprised as had not spotted our boat and at first suspicious. However they took Jack Tarr and Hamilton into their sampan and set off upstream to the nearest village, the rest of us tidied and sorted the boat and remaining stores, just one tin of food left.

Tarr and Hamilton returned about 11 am in another sampan with a good load of pineapples, coconuts and bananas. Tarr had met an English Officer in the village who could speak Malay fluently, but as he had been badly wounded was hiding up until he had recovered. From this Officer Tarr had learned that it was not possible for our boat to reach the Indragiri river by sea, a headland jutted out for a hundred miles and the currents round it dangerous, we would be foolhardy to try. The only feasible way was to go up river by canoe, cross the jungle to the next river flowing South which would eventually bring us out to the sea the other side of the jutting headland. I was somewhat dismayed at this news.

We persuaded the sampan to tow us up river to the Village, which was called Katiman, a series of hovels built on poles sticking out of the mud, however there was a basic coffee shop and a Sub-Assistant Malay Official. I went to call on him, he gave me a clean glass of water out of his office filter, a real treat, and showed me some instructions on a mill-board written in English. They had been prepared by a white officer who had lived in the village for some weeks a few months ago and were instructions for escaping parties. I copied out the instructions which confirmed Tarr's information, we were directed up river by sampan, then across country by jungle track to another river and so on. I decided we should follow these definite instructions and set about hiring a sampan to take our party of 11 men.

We had very little money between us, it was going to be necessary to buy food, hire canoes and guides. so to raise some cash I decided to sell our faithful junk "Maria" to the local fishermen. Jack Tarr and I spent the morning negotiating and haggling, eventually agreeing to the paltry sum of 41 dollars for the boat, which actually had been stolen by me the week before.

## SUMATRA

We unloaded the boat and threw into the river everything we could not carry nor sell. There was a quantity of ammunition and grenades, although there was a market for them I decided they were best dropped in deep water. It was always a marvel to me the number of odd and useful things we had on the boat, but I suppose a party of sensible men setting off into the unknown take a wide variety of odds and ends with them. We had never been stuck for a necessary piece of equipment, someone always seem to have something which would make do.

We made the remaining equipment up into man packs to the limit which we could carry with our rifles and in the late afternoon loaded ourselves gingerly into a large sampan with a native guide and 2 boys to paddle. The boys sat in the stern and paddled gondola fashion, we were made to lie under a sort of canopy of matting in case we were seen by any Japanese patrols or spies. I could see out of the front, Jack Tarr out of the back, the others could not see out at all.

We set off at about 5 pm with the boys paddling strongly up the side small waterways away from the main stream, but at 8pm they stopped, at first we could not understand why and thought they might be ransoming us for more money, at length we understood they were waiting for the tide to turn before the next stage up the main stream. We were glad to get out of the cramped sampan and stretch our legs, made a fire and brewed some tea.

A party of villagers appeared with their Headman, who wanted to know who we were and how important a man I was, how many wives etc. To save face Jack Tarr told him that I was waiting to marry the Prince's daughter as soon as she became of marriageable age but that already I had many, many concubines! He was obviously impressed, courteous and helpful, the villagers brought us an excellent meal of curried chicken and rice.

Around midnight the tide turned, we woke the boatmen and squeezed ourselves back into the sampan, I had the best place in front and with my air cushion managed to get some fresh air and sleep.

The air cushion, used also as a water bag and life-buoy, was in my extraordinary collection of luggage, a basin with a canvas lid (chilumchi) containing shaving kit, a piece of soap, nail scissors, a comb and all the few medicaments we had, a black tin box containing spare clothes, some papers and useful odds and ends, the most useless a heavy steel thermos flask. I wore bush shirt, shorts, Herbert Johnson Officers nap with a webbing belt, revolver and small haversack attached.



I still wore 2 Rolex wrist watches with stainless steel straps on each arm, an obvious sign of great wealth which caused excited comment wherever we went. Between them Bdr Smith and Gnr Johnstone looked after all my belongings and transported them.

At 5 am the sampan pulled into a small clearing, the start of our jungle trek, we disembarked, the men had a breakfast of raw pineapple, but with my cracked and bleeding lips it was too sharp for me to eat. To add to my discomfort the slight splinter wound in my ankle had turned septic, which with my sunburnt and bleeding shins made walking really painful.

As soon as it was light we shouldered our pack loads and set off in single file behind our guide along the jungle path. The guide said it would take us 5 hours, the path was too narrow for 2 men to walk abreast and completely enclosed overhead by the sweating jungle, still and airless. The surface of the path varied, at best beaten earth sometimes ankle deep swamp and the worst criss crossed with snaking roots so that each step had to be made slowly and carefully.

BSM Roadnight marched close behind the guide with orders to grab him at the least sign of trouble followed by Tarr as interpreter, the men in pairs at 10 yards interval, I brought up the rear to keep an eye on anyone in difficulties and organise help also not to display my lameness to the others, they knew of course so kept a slow pace and shared my load. The loads themselves were heavy enough but we also carried our arms at the ready and spare ammunition. We had no idea whether there were any Jap forces in the area, we knew they had landed at Palembang in the South of Sumatra several days ago and were moving North, I had no intention of falling into an ambush.

We squelched, slipped and tripped making slow progress, the guide seemed to slide along easily through the festoons of creepers, which always caught in a tangle on our loads and then tediously had to be unravelled. When Handyside had fallen for the third time and found difficulty in rising, I called a halt and re-arranged the loads. We had surplus grenades so had a training practice hurling the de-fuzed bombs high into the jungle, less weight for us to carry. After another long stretch we met 3 natives coming the opposite way, we impressed them to turn back and carry some of the loads, surprisingly they seemed willing enough.

It was getting stiflingly hot when we next stopped for a 10 minute rest at a cross track, I was near exhaustion but the guide heartened us by indicating we were half way. We had a sick parade for 1st Aid, my bleeding shins were bound with semi-clean handkerchiefs, the men begged for another 10 minutes rest

but I wanted to push on before the sun got really hot, am not sure that it made much difference as we were in a jungle tunnel shielded from the direct sun's rays.

Somehow the second leg of our journey didn't seem so bad, we were over half way, 3 native bearers were sharing the loads, I got my 2nd wind and was even able to take an interest in the jungle trees and entwined plants. At 10 am we reached a broad river, the end of our march, it had taken just about 5 hours. One of the native bearers swarmed up a palm tree and cut down coconuts, we were dreadfully thirsty, the milk was cool and refreshing, it tasted like nectar.

After much hard bargaining and palaver we hired 5 small sampans to take us down river, they only held 3 passengers each. We piled into these small canoes and set off, the cool of the river and the end of our sweltering trip through the jungle made our spirits rise, the boatmen seemed to catch our mood and raced each other urged on by our shouts and laughter.

The river was wide and calm with no current nor tide, the surface covered with scum and debris only an odd water lily. The jungle and mangrove swamps came right down to the river banks on either side, there were no habitations, insects abounded we were bitten to distraction.

A Japanese reconnaissance plane flew over and circled round twice before flying away, there was nothing we could do but keep going, at 1 pm we reached the village of Chariah.

The instructions at Katiman had noted the Emir of Chariah as a contact well disposed to the English, I had expected a noble and imposing personage rather than the fat and greasy Malay/Dutch official in horn rimmed spectacles who greeted and welcomed us in broken American slang. There was no doubt he was a Great Man in his own district whose word appeared to be law. He ordered a meal for us but insisted we should pay for it in advance, then cleared the villagers away from the well, and invited us to make free of the clean, clear water. posting a policeman to ensure we were not embarrassed by prying eyes, with the aid of a rope and bucket we all had a marvellously refreshing bath, only to find the local barber waiting for us, we then had a shave and hair trim, it was very noticeable when beards were removed how thin and haggard our faces all looked.

Next we were taken to the Emir's Hospital where a Chinese Dresser cleaned and bound up cuts, anointing our grievous sunburn sores with Mexican balm, we all began to feel much better almost human again.

The Emir ordered 2 rooms in the best house in the market to be cleared and cleaned for our use, one for the Officers and one for the Men, where we

could have some privacy and rest until our meal was ready, but the rooms were so stuffy we preferred to sit on the verandah outside surrounded by a squatting semi circle of inquisitive natives.

The Emir sent for the head boatman to arrange the next leg of our trip on the river, we had a long fruitless argument as the Boatman demanded more money than we had in the kitty. So I went back to the Emir for help, he reckoned the Boatman was asking 4 times too much and made the suggestion that we should give all our remaining cash to him and he would settle with the boatman. This was OK for us and agreed, the Boatman only was unhappy, he doubted with past experience whether he'd ever get paid.

An excellent meal was brought, which we had smelt cooking with mouth watering anticipation for some time, consisting of chicken soup, mounds of rice chicken and eggs then pineapples. When we had finished stuffing ourselves we settled down to gorged sleep, the first time for many days when I didn't have to set a guard. Too soon the Emir sent for us to explain his new plan.

The Emir told us that he had managed to obtain a sea going canoe, a "seerang", so we should now walk to another river, about 2 miles away, go down it in the seerang to the sea, then along the coast to a big river the Uragiry and go up this in the seerang to Tembilahan, the first sizeable town where we should meet other Englishmen. This sounded much more like the instructions we'd had at Katiman so were happy to agree, the Emir said he would make all arrangements at no further cost but we should start at once because the tides were favourable. I think for fear of Jap reprisals he wanted to get rid of us quickly, All his arrangements worked like clockwork, he was a kind and efficient man, I shall always be grateful to him.

By 4 pm we donned our packs took up our arms, said Goodbye to the Emir with a long speech of thanks and set off following our guide to the new river. The track was comparatively easy going, we covered the 2 miles without any problem and arrived at the river bank to find the seerang tied up to a bamboo jetty. The seerang was much more heavily built than our previous sampan, there was even less room in it. Our guide found 2 boatmen or rather boatboys they both looked about 15, who the guide said had been instructed by the Emir to take us to Tembilahan, I don't know what the Emir had told the boys, anyhow he had put the fear of God into them, without any argument or directions from us they accomplished an astonishing feat.

We squeezed ourselves into the seerang, the smaller boat boy with paddle in the front and the larger and stronger at the back, it was very very cramped and uncomfortable, as soon as it started to get dark the boys picked up their

paddles and we were off down stream. The boatboys were amazingly tough they paddled that heavy boat loaded with 11 men non-stop all night until 10 am the next morning, we begged them to stop and rest but on the Emir's instructions they refused, covering the 40 miles of waterways including a sea passage and the last 12 miles upstream in 16 hours.

We were packed in the seerang like sardines, uncomfortably lying on top of each other under a canvas cover, it became stiflingly hot as soon as the sun appeared. Bdr Smith produced a slab of chocolate which had been a Christmas present, he divided it up a square each for breakfast, it was the only food we had left on board.

When we arrived at Tembilahan, a small busy town on a wide river, to our surprise and delight we were greeted on the landing stage by a British Naval Officer in uniform, it was wonderful to see his Naval Launch flying the white ensign plying up and down. We disembarked, the smaller of our boatboys collapsed on the landing stage and slept where he fell.

The Officer told us that with the help of the Dutch Authorities he was arranging for all escaping parties to be taken up river to Rengat, the major town on the Indragiri. Several launches carrying parties had already arrived and been directed up river, but we should have to wait until a boat could be found.

While waiting a large pleasure launch came in with Geoffrey Rowley Conway in charge, he had already rescued one party marooned on an island in the Rhio Archipelago and was going back to collect those left on other islands, he gallantly made several successful journeys.

The Naval Officer took us to the Customs shed, a large airy building where we could camp while waiting may be for several days. We had a meal of hard boiled eggs, rice and tea, I left the men to get organised and settle down while I went off to explore the town, it was very hot, siesta time for the inhabitants

The town was smaller than it appeared from the river and dirty, apparently a large group of Australian escapees had gone through several days back and the locals were not now at all well disposed to soldiers. After much bartering both Tarr and I got a stock of hard boiled eggs and native tobacco, am sure our men were bartering too.

While exploring the boats along the river I found an abandoned junk loaded in it's hold with 2 new British Light Tanks. I went to the Dutch Controller as thought the Dutch Military would be only too pleased to have the tanks to help against the Jap advance and might well send a tug for them, on which we could get a lift to Rengat 80 miles upstream.

The Controller came with me to see the tanks, no one seemed to know anything about them, he telegraphed to his Headquarters and shortly heard that a tug would be sent that night.

I returned to the Customs shed to alert our party and tell them not to stray, then spent the night on the look-out in the Harbour Master's Office, bitten to distraction by mosquitos,

At dawn I was having a bath with the aid of an old petrol can when the tug arrived, it very smartly took the junk with it's 2 tanks in tow, we together with 2 other parties and many odd single men clambered on to the deck. The tug set off back upstream without any delay, as we proceeded slowly we picked up more small parties and stragglers until over 100 men were crowded on the decks of the junk and tug.

There was insufficient food or water for this number so the tug Captain goodly halted at villages to gather supplies. Jack Tarr capably took charge, collected cash all round, some people seemed to have plenty and bargained for rice, eggs and pinapples. Bdr Smith made us a good meal with a tin of fruit added by a stray CSM who had joined us. All day the tug going upstream towing the junk was moving slowly about walking pace, it was not too hot on the river but we were very crowded, there was no room to lie down, night came on I propped myself against the foremast of the junk in a squatting position and dozed and planned.

About mid-day the next day, 24th February, we sighted Rengat, an hour and a half later tied up at the jetty. We were met by a British Doctor and a Major who told us the form, the Japs were moving steadily North from Palembang, meeting only little resistance, but were probably still 2 days away. There had been a few Recce planes over but no bombing.

I went to find the Dutch Army to hand over the tanks, I found a Lieutenant who had heard a rumour of their existence and was delighted to take them, Neither of us had any idea how to get the tanks out of the ship's hold without a crane, there were none. Finally we beached the junk, sent for a team of ships carpenters to dismantle it, while a posse of mechanics got the engines started, 6 back breaking hours later the tanks were driven out on to dry land!

I went to the Rest House and had a bath in cold water from the well and a shave in well water which had been allowed to heat up in the sun for 20 minutes, quite hot. We had a meal supplied by the local gaol and brought to us by shackled prisoners, it was probably meant for their dinners, though thin and watery by our hungry standards very good.

As I was "persna grata" with the Dutch Army on account of the tanks they provided a lorry to take us to a Rest Camp at Ayer Moloh 40 miles north of Rengat. As soon as we had finished our prisoners meal we piled into the lorry cramming it full with odd escapees.

The lorry was a brand new Chevrolet, the Dutch driver equally new and furious at being made to start so late in the day. I sat in front beside the driver, a veritable Jehu, the roads were rough, un-metalled and un-cambered, we proceeded at 60 mph in the half light of dusk frightened and bumped unmercifully. There was one respite when we had a long wait for the ferry to cross the wide Indragiri river. We arrived at Ayr Moloh well after dark, as soon as we had dismounted the driver turned his lorry and hared off to keep his date?

The Rest Camp was well organised in a large rubber factory divided into 2 Camps, one for about 500 men the other for about 60 women, mostly Nursing Sisters. The Nurses had been through a terrible ordeal, originally being evacuated with the wounded from a Singapore Hospital, their ship had been bombed and sunk, they had swum 200 yards to a small island making several journeys to rescue wounded patients. They had been marooned on the island for a week without food or water, their patients had all died one by one and some of the Nurses too. They had been rescued by a tug and brought to Rengat, they behaved splendidly, were always ready to help others and well able to look after themselves.

I found the voluntary Camp Commandant Col Dillon, last met in the Singapore YMCA distraught and out of control, he was now a very different man calm, competent and friendly. He had established good relations with the Dutch Authorities who were providing food and one truck a day to railhead at Solok. We had a long talk and agreed that the best way to select the flood of refugees for onward transmission to Solok was the principle of "First in, First out", though this meant parties might have to wait several days in the Camp.

Our quarters were on the second floor of the raw rubber store, no windows so permanently dark and reeking of rubber latex. Gnr Johnstone made me a couch of rubber slabs, we were soon asleep though had a disturbed night, five of the men were very sick. There were 2 meals a day at 10 am and 5 pm prepared by self appointed Australian cooks, the invariable menu black tea and burnt bully stew, we always queued for 2nd helps.

It was hot and steamy in the rubber plantation and we were all impatient to get on the move again, though the enforced rest and regular meals probably did us good.

I spent the time writing, walking and sleeping. There were plenty of planks in the saw mill, I made myself a very serviceable bench and desk in the shade and started a long epic letter of our adventures to Mother.

We spent many hours lying on our rubber mattresses in the dark smoking native cheeroots, to keep fit we went for marches morning and evening round the rubber plantation on good gravel roads, usually in small circuits as didn't wish to go far from the Camp in case transport arrived un-expectedly.

Also in case native 5th Column should inform the Japs advancing fast of our presence and the Camp become a bombing target. Our Dutch grapevine reported Jap columns with motor cycle combinations advancing 60 miles in a day with a screen of local informers ahead.

My small party was fully armed, between the 10 of us, we had a Lewis Gun, 2 Tommy guns, 6 rifles, 2 revolvers and 2 automatic pistols all with plenty of ammunition, in addition a box of grenades. The only organised, disciplined and armed party in the Camp. Where ever I went my bodyguard young Hamilton accompanied me armed to the teeth.

The rubber factory was still working, we were able to bath and wash our clothes in the huge porcelain vats used for washing the latex, Our clothes were getting ragged but my Yeoman all wore proper uniform, many of the other parties had taken to native dress. At all times Bdr Smith and Gnr Johnstone continued to look after me and my equipment, Bdr Smith was always cheerful, resourceful and full of initiative, Gnr Johnstone a reserved, totally reliable and impeccable batman. I owe them both a debt of gratitude.

We had our first serious casualty, Sergeant Major Roadnight, a tower of strength, went down with malaria. He had been sick the night before, though he tried to carry on, the following day he collapsed. We half carried his huge frame to the Factory Hospital, a small 3 bedded building, spotlessly clean, run by the Manager's Dutch wife with the help of 2 coolies.

The hospital though kind and helpful had limited resources, we got Roadnight in bed dosed with quinine, Bdr Smith kept him fed with squeezed lemon juice, weak tea and soup skimmed off our bully stew. We had all been bitten thousands of times by mosquitos, we had a small supply of Mepacrine when we started, but that ran out after a couple of days, it was then a matter of luck who got malaria and when.

Two days later we were warned by the Camp Staff that transport would be ready for our party at dawn the next day 27th February. We were up well before dawn, Sgt Lindup and Bdr Smith collected BSM Roadnight from Hospital, he was very ill and could hardly walk.

We waited 2 hours for the bus, when it came the driver said it had broken down, judging by it's dilapidated appearance this seemed only too probable.

It had no springs, the body was home made of wood, the seats 2 planks. 22 men crowded on to this dubious vehicle and set off for Solok 120 miles away. By virtue of my rank and septic leg I had the front seat on the plank and tried to support Roadnight's great bulk, he was sick all day and became very distressed towards evening.

The truck halted at Toloh mid-day to fill up with petrol and so that we could get something to eat. We were given hot tea and eggs by an old crone, who made us very welcome, she refused payment and was so kind and helpful that we gave her a formal presentation all standing in line with the villagers watching, Jack Tarr nobly gave her his silver cigarette case, the last barterable item of value.

Toloh was a crucial stage in our journey as the East West road on which we were travelling crossed the North South road on which the Jap forces were advancing, there was no reliable information, we learnt afterwards that the cross-roads was blocked 2 days later.

Soon after Toloh it started to pour with tropical rain, the truck kept breaking down and finally came to a halt. There were 2 Dutch/Malay mechanics on board who diagnosed a burnt out coil, as they were used to keeping old corks on the road they could do a make-shift repair if the wiring was kept dry. The driver wanted to wait for help, hours and days were all the same to him. so we rigged a sort of tent over the bonnet, the mechanics set to work and got the engine going, their repairs were very temporary, everytime we tried to go uphill the engine stopped again. We were a strong enough party to push the cork up the hills in the deluging rain then clamber on board to coast down and along the flat to the next hill. At 9.30 pm we got to the top of the last hill and coasted down into Solok.

Our first care on arrival was to get Roadnight into Hospital, this proved surprisingly easy, Roadnight was a Freemason and the local Lodge came forward and took him in charge for treatment.

I contacted the Dutch Authorities, who showed us to a large railway Go-Down half full of the previous week's evacuees from the Ayer Moloh Rest Camp. There was a Dutch Officer in charge and a Private who seemed to us the more important as he was ladling out hot soup to anyone lucky enough to have a receptacle. The Officer directed Tarr and myself to an Hotel in the town, where we should get an "Officers meal".



It was midnight before Tarr and I found the Hotel and sure enough there was a meal waiting for us. We sat down to a white table cloth, white bread and proper knives, fork and spoon, for the first time in 3 weeks. I was tired, my memory is hazy I can't remember what we had except that it was very good nor that we were asked to pay. As there was hot water and electric light in the hotel we both had a good wash and shave, then walked back to the Go-down.

Several more parties had arrived from other rest camps including a party of wounded sailors led by a bearded Lt Campbell, himself wounded, a good go-ahead and pleasant Officer. The Go-down was packed full, Johnstone had made a cosy nest of straw for me on the floor.

After a short sleep we were woken at 3.30 am and told to board a special train, which was due to leave at 4 am. to take us to Padang, a small port on the West coast of Sumatra. The railways had almost come to a stand still, trains were few and far between, this special was to be the first out of Solok for 5 days, so I was anxious we should not miss it.

We found the train in total blackout and crowded into it, but without Roadnight, he was lost. I sent Sgt Lindup to find him and bring him to the station but the Freemasons had hidden him away and would not say where. We searched the hospital and likely places in the town, no easy task in the dark and torrential rain and sent "town criers" round, all without success. I expect he was in some Freemason's house and had been given sleeping pills. I left written instructions for him with the Dutch Authorities and as dared not keep the train waiting any longer, called off the search and gave the order to board.

\* I was very down-hearted to lose one of my faithful band of Yeomen, especially Roadnight the most senior, the toughest and the most capable.

After an uneventful but long, slow and very crowded railway journey through some lovely looking mountain scenery and the coastal paddy fields, we arrived at Padang Station about mid-day, to be greeted by an immaculate looking Staff Captain representing Col Wolfe Murray, self appointed Garrison Commander.

I was given orders how to dispose of the motley crowd of passengers, most of whom I had never seen before. We loaded Handyside with the heavy luggage on a tonga and marched about a mile to the local school, our temporary billets.

I went at once to the HQ Office to arrange the next step and found the imperturbable Col Sydenham CRE 18th Div, he had plans for all eventualities but none for a ship to take the evacuees on from Sumatra to India. I went back to the school, which had been given over for our use, no beds a tiled floor to sleep on but someone found me a Li-Lo, we were brought regular good food, stew and greyish sort of bread.

Jack Tarr and I drove down into the town in a tonga to recce and search for a restaurant, we found a very adequate eating house, which even produced a can of beer each on tick. The town was clean, well conducted by the Dutch with some reasonable looking small shops, there was no evidence of panic nor evacuation of the inhabitants.

The next morning I went the rounds of the 5 main billeting areas with Col Wolfe Murray to organise the inmates into Companies and Sections each with a leader so that there would be some form of control.

At that time there were over 500 escapees in Padang, they were a very mixed lot about half of them Army mostly from the Service Corps and not the teeth arms, a party of 42 Australians, a Naval Detachment mostly walking wounded,, some 30 Nurses and countless civilians of all nationalities mostly from the P.W.D. many had donned uniform with bogus rank badges.

After a lunch of bully stew, no tea as there was no milk left, I took my party of Yeomen to the town. As we had no money at all I went first to the British Consul, I found a fat, worried, half Dutchman sitting sweating in his Consular Office, at first he was unhelpful but relented under persuasion and advanced us some money against our credit with the British Government, I received gratefully 20 guilders and the men 5 each.

With this wealth I sent the men to the bazaar to kit themselves out, mainly socks, soap and razor blades. I treated myself to a badly needed haircut in a Beauty Saloon run by a sensible Frenchman and felt almost respectable again,

We spent 4 long dreary days of waiting in Padang, the Dutch Authorities were as helpful as they could be in a time of war, the town had already been bombed twice, but just were not geared to cope with the influx of so many people in such a sorry state. Nor had they any idea how we could possibly be evacuated to India, the Docks had been thoroughly bombed, there were no ships left, none were likely to come in, any fisherman with a boat either hid it or demanded a King's ransom for it's temporary use.

Many schemes and plans were worked out, some parties collected stores for a march to the port of Sabang in the North of Sumatra, which had not yet been bombed, others started to build and laid down the keel of a 20 ton Liberty Ship. I got in touch with a Chinese fisherman who professed he had a sea-worthy junk with an engine hidden down the coast, but as he was slippery enough not to let us see his boat until he had been paid, any deal was off.

Through the French barber, I was taken to see a man living native in the jungle some miles away, he looked peculiar, spoke Englishman's English and behaved in a very furtive manner, he was supposed to have some contact with British HQ. He was suspicious but after some theatrical behaviour accepted a message to Naval HQ stating the numbers of evacuees at Padang awaiting transport and also a message home. He hustled me away as quickly as he could and said I was firmly told not to visit him again.

On Sunday 1st March we were woken at 6.30 am by the Air Raid sirens, rumours were flying round that the Navy was coming in to take us off.

Colonel Wolfe Murray and I went round the Camp billets, but no bombers came over, we then had a good lunch together at the Oranje Hotel with some locally brewed beer, Col Sydenham joined us and told us the rumour was true the Navy was about 30 miles off the coast.

A Conference was hastily called for 2pm at Camp HQ, attended by the British Consul, he gave out that he had heard from a usually reliable source that a British ship would enter Padang harbour after dark and take off any evacuees waiting on the quay, the ship could not stop for more than half an hour. Splendid news, morale rose high.

I never knew whether my message to the furtive Englishman was responsible or whether perhaps I had naively muscled in on an established clandestine channel of communication, probably a bit of both.

But my message home did get through in 8 days. It arrived at Hollies on 8th March marked "Sans Origen", it was the first news to reach home since the fall of Singapore. Mother noted in her diary for that day "Oh My, Oh My!",

The Dutch Railways agreed to run 2 trains from the Town Station to the Docks, which had been severely bombed, the first train to leave at 4 pm and the second at 6 pm. All the refugees were collected into 2 main parties except for the Australian contingent who decided to wait for a promised ship to take them direct to Australia. I handed Brakespear over to the OC of this contingent, not sorry to be rid of such an ill-disciplined and un-reliable man.

I found myself in charge of the 2nd train and mustered the miscellaneous crowd at the Station by 5.45 pm, at a rough count 313 people boarded the waiting train with a quantity of baggage. It was very crowded in 2 coaches, but everyone waiting was squeezed in somehow, including women, wounded and Chinese civilians of doubtful status.

The train arrived at the bomb damaged docks just as it was getting dark, we could make out a troopship packed with Javanese soldiers lying out in the approaches. Captain Petit was on the spot making all the arrangements, he said

that there were 2 British Destroyers coming in to the far jetty, the first train party was just loading into one Destroyer which would soon go out leaving room for the 2nd Destroyer to come in to berth at the far end of the pier. Captain Petit, stayed behind in case more evacuees arrived later, he was an admirable RTO, transportation was his civilian job and he loved doing it under any conditions.

It was quite dark there were no lights as the 2nd train load lined up on the quay and moved off in a long queue picking their way through the debris of the smashed and derelict docks to the furthest jetty. We saw the first Destroyer go out, a few minutes later the 2nd Destroyer came slowly and carefully in and put out two gangways. We were invited over the loud hailer to climb aboard quickly.

I was nearly at the end of the queue, the CPO at the head of the gangway counted me 323 as we shuffled on board. Just ahead of me was Lt No and his party of Chinese soldiers, one had a bicycle which he pushed up the gangway only to have it seized by the CPO and flung back on to the jetty with a loud clang. The wail which the Chinaman let out made us all laugh and released the tension.

#### By SEA to INDIA

We were packed by the Petty Officers standing as close together as possible on the decks or where we should be least in their way. The Destroyer was hugely overloaded, we were told not to move about at all for fear of altering the trim. Seldom can a Destroyer have carried such a large and motley load of humanity.

The moon was rising over Padang Harbour as the Destroyer slowly and carefully put to sea, the whole embarkation had lasted just half an hour, The first Destroyer HMS Scout was stopped half a mile out in difficulties with sea water in her boilers, we waited beside her for an hour until she was ready to proceed.

It was 10 pm, we were packed uncomfortably tightly like standing in the rush hour Tube, no moving, no lights, no smoking, no talking. Mugs of scalding tea were passed round hand to hand, a sip each. We were all so gloriously happy to be on a British Naval Ship that no physical discomfort could possibly cause us worry.

At 11 pm the Destroyer increased speed to 20 knots, a CPO came round explaining carefully that as the Destroyer could not go far with such a heavy load we were to transfer to a Cruiser waiting for us 50 miles out to sea.

After an hour and a half at speed a huge shape loomed up in the moonlight ahead of us, as we approached we made the shape out to be that of a Cruiser HMAS Hobart. The Captain of the Destroyer spoke on the loud hailer, he said "I am going alongside now, Owing to the danger to the Ships in this swell I can only stay alongside 5 minutes. All passengers on my Destroyer will now board the Cruiser!"

The Cruiser towered over the Destroyer, there was a 50 ft difference in the height of their decks, as the 2 ships manoeuvred ever closer together, the sides of the Cruiser appeared in the darkness higher and higher. As we touched there was a grinding bump and a splintering crash as one of the Destroyer's lifeboats was smashed to pieces.

Immediately rope ladders and scrambling nets came down over the Cruiser's side "Now" shouted the loudspeaker, the wounded and women passengers were pushed up first. The Nurses were marvellous shinning up like Cabin Boys, far better than the soldiers encumbered with their packs and rifles.

The ships were rising and falling in the swell so the distance between their deck rails varied from moment to moment. The Captain's voice kept coming over the loudspeaker "Hurry, Hurry. I can't hold it much longer." There was still a milling throng waiting their turn for the ladders so I called to those nearest me to come on to the top deck. A sailor on the top deck hoisted me up the davit of the smashed lifeboat and as the Cruiser's rail came down with the swell shouted "Jump". I caught the rail and was immediately heaved on to the Cruiser's deck, 20 or 30 passengers followed this route. When I looked back our noble Destroyer was slipping quietly away. All the passengers were safely transferred, there were no casualties except for the inevitable loss of rifles and equipment. Full marks to the Navy.

The Commander of the Cruiser had a team ready to sort the passengers and stow them on various decks I went round with him trying to collect the disorganised parties into their allotted spaces. Our Yeomen were already formed up together and ready for anything, they had lost nothing, Bdr Smith and Johnson had all my kit including the useless steel thermos.

There was a meal ready for those who wanted it, most went straight to sleep. By 3 am we had finished our "Rounds", the Commander took me to the Ward Room and gave me a glass of rum, by the time I'd swallowed it gratefully I too was asleep in my chair.

Monday morning 2nd March we were well out to sea, as I was the senior Army Officer on board so appointed myself O.C. Troops with Lt Creese R.E. as Ships Adjutant.

We arranged a Roll Call and found 513 evacuees on board, 300 Army personnel the rest civilians, how the numbers had increased from Padang was a mystery, anyhow they were all grouped into parties for accommodation, messing and Action Stations.

The Captain, a highpowered and pleasant Australian, summoned me to report and stay to lunch with him in his cabin. We exchanged news and experiences. The Squadron consisted of 3 Light Cruisers, the Hobart, the Dragon and the Danae with 2 Destroyers, which turned back towards Australia the next day. They had all just come from the Battle of the Coral Sea, her sister Cruiser HMAS Perth and the heavy Cruiser HMS Exeter had been sunk, the Hobart had been bombed several times, though damaged and in need of repairs was still operational.

He had thought the Jap forces had already taken Padang when he was ordered to go there, now he was heading for Colombo, as Jap Naval Forces were reported in the area he would take a zig zag course so the journey might take several days.

I told him of the disastrous Malayan Campaign and fall of Singapore, we sadly agreed it would be at least 2 years before we had gained sufficient Air cover and electronic AA equipment to make a successful assault to retake Singapore.

He asked for the passengers help should an action with the Japs occur, a polite way of saying keep out of our way, and gave orders that we were to be made as comfortable as possible. As a result the Ship's Company could not have been kinder nor more considerate, we were all provided with beds of a sort, sometimes hammocks and given excellent meals. I shall always be grateful to the Hobart, Captain and Crew.

The weather was fine and warm, the Indian Ocean was calm, with nothing to do we all enjoyed what would have been a pleasure cruise except for the crowding. I spent the time with the Gunnery Officer learning Navy Fire Control, once we practiced firing pom-poms at Targets laid in the sea. One day a ship was sighted which did not answer the Challenge Signal, Action Stations was sounded and we accelerated to close, only to find a bemused Dutch Merchantman running for safer waters. The third day out we stopped to pick up 2 natives clinging to a raft, they had little information except that they had been on a ship with white men when it had been fired on and sunk.

The day before we reached Ceylon we took the Danae's passengers on board as well, they were rowed over in Life boats and made a very leisurely arrival. The Danae and Dragon then left us and went on a new mission. Colonels Sydenham and Wolfe Murray were among the new arrivals, as the latter was the Senior Officer, with the Captain's permission I handed over the responsibility of O.C. Troops to him.

At 10 am on Thursday 5th March we entered Colombo harbour, it was good to see the battleship Ramilles there as information persisted that a Jap Fleet was heading for Ceylon. I went ashore in a launch and reported to HQ where I was told to transfer all the soldiers to the Merchant Cruiser Chitral which would be sailing for Bombay that afternoon.

I wheedled a large lighter from the Harbour Authorities and in 2 trips transferred my party of Yeomen and all the Army passengers to the Chitral, as they had had no orders our new hosts were surprised to see us. However Commander Seager, who was Commanding as the Captain was ill ashore, made us very welcome and soon had us all accommodated.

Only then did a signal arrive ordering the Chitral to sail at 3 pm, there was just time for me to go ashore to visit A Battery of our Yeomanry Regiment. I found their Gaulface Barracks but unfortunately they were away on an Exercise up-country, only Sergeant Martin the Signal Sgt was left as i/c Rear Party, so I collected limited news and wrote a message to the B.C. Brian Johnson Ferguson.

Then galloped to the Gaulface Hotel for a quick meal with some of the other Officers, we took a cab back to the Docks to find the cutter ready and waiting, for us at 2 pm as promised, so got back just in time as the Chitral sailed promptly at 3 pm.

A rushed visit to Ceylon and my only one. The Movements Staff had worked miracles, 500 odd refugees unexpected and unheralded had been cleared from a Port under threat of invasion within 5 hours!

On calling the roll found there were only 2 absentees, both Officers, who had gone ashore and missed the boat by mistake or design. Col Wolfe Murray ex Seaforths joined the ship at the last minute, so again I handed my embryo organisation over to him. He and I shared a large comfortable cabin. Pre-war the Chitral had been a P. & O. liner, it had a good library in which I spent many hours reading and preparing notes for lectures, presentations and training programmes.

Though food was a bit short and no drinks allowed we had a pleasant and uneventful 5 day voyage. Col Wolfe Murray rightly insisted on twice daily parades and inspections to try to bring some soldierly behaviour back to a crowd of scruffy and disorderly riff raff escapees.

We arrived in Bombay the evening of the 15th March, just a month after starting our travels. We disembarked and were escorted to Colaba Transit Camp, this time our arrival was expected and impeccable arrangements made to receive us. I was proud of my party the only fully armed co-herent Military detachment present.

As soon as I had seen all the men well fed and accommodated I went to the Taj Mahal Hotel where I was given a suite and enjoyed the luxury of a long hot bath, room service, drinks and an air conditioned dining room.

I was the first senior Gunner Officer to arrive in Bombay from Singapore and everyone I met wanted to hear the story and what had happened to their friends, I was inundated with questions about others, only a few could be answered with first hand knowledge.

The next morning I went straight to the Bank for cash and then to the Transit Camp at Colaba. All was going smoothly, each man being interviewed, kitted out and arrangements made for returning to their various Units or Depots. Our Yeomen were going to the R.A. Depot at Deolali the next day.

I found Jack Tarr in the Mess and said Good-bye, unfortunately I have never seen nor heard of him again. An unperturbable and splendid Officer.

The afternoon was spent at the Army and Navy Stores, the Manager was most helpful, on the strength of an old Credit from Mother kitted me out with new clothes, bedding and equipment.

The next day I took the train to Delhi to report to the MGRA General Akerman, there I booked in at Maidens and found Johnny Hope at HQRA who took me to the General at once, he was extremely interested and nice and insisted I stay with him and his family. He kindly noted my requests for the future postings of our party.

The following day I trained back to Deolali and had no difficulty in obtaining a weeks leave as the Governor of Bombay Lord Scarborough had asked me to stay, previously he had lived in Lanark and had always taken an interest in The Yeomanry. I arrived on 23rd March and stayed 2 nights at Government House overawed by semi-regal splendour, both nights we sat down 24 to dinner, the first night I was Guest of Honour and sat on the Governor's right!

I went back to the Taj and with the Greatest Good Luck in the World met by chance my Doctor Brother Stephen, who had just disembarked with a Field Ambulance en route for Bangalore. We played together for 3 days, exchanging news and sending letters and cables home, then he went on to Bangalore and I to Deolali.

Our postings came through exactly as requested, the original Yeomen Smith, Johnstone and Hamilton to A Battery in Ceylon, Sgts Lindup and Brown to the School of Artillery, Sgt Noble and myself to 158 Field Regiment under orders for the Burma front. Before we split up Sgt Lindup took a snapshot of us at Deolali, I still have a copy.

On 8th April I took train to Ranchi to join my new Regiment and resume the normal life of a Battery Commander again.



## NOTES to APPENDIX

### Items still in my Archives 1992

Pocket Compass

List of Parties made in YMCA

Notebook Log

Epic letter to my Mother (Emma) written in Ayer Moloh.

The "Sans Origen" cable received 8th March

Orders by O.C. Troops HMAS Hobart

Cutting from Bombay Times of arrival at Government House.

Snapshot of party on arrival at Deolali.

Sgt Noble's story "Maria".

### \* BSM Roadnight.

Roadnight turned up in Deolali in July 1942. He said that:-

When he had recovered from his bout of malaria, he waited several days in Solok for a train to take him to Padang, he then joined the local Dutch/Malay Volunteers, there was a battle with the Japs, he was wounded in the leg and taken prisoner together with a British Sapper Sergeant.

They were given some sort of a trial in Japanese, which they could not follow, a death sentence was made plain by signs. Roadnight pretended his wound was much worse than it was and that he could not stand or walk. He waited for night and a suitable opportunity, over-powered the guards and he and the Sgt escaped.

They were chased by the Japs, the Sergeant was killed and Roadnight was wounded again, he took refuge with a Chinese family, who hid him and looked after him until he was well enough to be smuggled to the coast and put on board a Chinese fishing junk. The boat went out fishing and after a month reached Ceylon, where he joined A. Battery and was evacuated to India.

Roadnight was Medically down graded and sent back to U.K. After de-mobilisation he became the well known Landlord of the pub at Ascot cross roads. An extrovert giant of a man, he died in 1987 and was accorded a full column Obituary in the Daily Telegraph.

