My life in the Army
1921 - 1928

by Levi Armsby

On February 28th 1921, I got up and, as usual, had a good breakfast then set out for Hilgay Fen Station. Walking along the railway line from Ouse Bridge my thoughts went back home. Harriett was the only one who knew I was hoping to join the Army. She was very sad because we got on so well together. I wondered what father and mother would think. Albert was still working for farmer Bob. Although I slept with him he did not know where I was going. Edith and Laura were going to school. I should miss them all!

Arriving at the station I looked for Les Walker but he was not there. The train was not due for ten minutes. He was sure to be there in time I thought.
The train came with no Les in sight, so determined to go through with it I closed the carriage door behind me and we were away. Perhaps after all it would be best if I went alone. There were bound to be other lads joining up and I would soon find a friend. I remembered Les and his brother Herbut quarrelling over the amount of clay they had to spread. Their father Eaves Walker told them to stop it, but they did'nt so he dug and threw a piece of clay at them then told them to go home and tell their mother that she wanted them and they went.
As the train left the station I looked out the window and could see several places in the fen where I had worked during the past few years including in the drains and thrashing in various stacksyards and in the distance was Hiam's fen farm. I had no regrets in leaving these jobs behind.

The train gathered speed as it passed Southery Siding and on by Blackhorse Drove to Littleport where it stopped dropping one passenger and picking up two. As we approached Ely I had a good

view of that magnificent building Ely cathedral.

Having plenty of time before my appointment with the recruiting sergeant I walked along Broad Street and up Forehall where I met sergeant O'Niel. On the way to his office we passed the market place where I saw Dorothy Butcher whom I had'nt seen for about seven years. She had grown into a fine young lady. Not stopping I just said "hello" and was soon in the recruiting office. Sergeant O'Niel gave me a railway warrant to take me to Bury St. Edmunds with other particulars he had taken and wished me well.

A few hours later I found myself walking beside a very high wall, in Bury St. Edmunds, leading to the entrance of the depot of the Suffolk Regiment. As I walked through the huge gates to the guard room a feeling of anxiety crept over me. A soldier stood with a bayonet fixed on his rifle looking at me suspiciously. There were rather large buildings on three sides of the parade ground with one brick building and some wooden huts at the far end. The corporal in charge of the guard directed me to the orderly room where I was given some instructions what to do and where to go.

There were four blocks of barracks with four large rooms in each and each block was named after a regimental battle honour. The one where I was to live was named "Minden" and a few other lads had arrived just before me. These were Cotton from Yarmouth, Sharp from Norwich, Bull from Beccles and Barfield from Langham, Suffolk, Cutting from Bury St. Edmunds. Soon others came from various parts of the country.

I soon found they were in the same cart as me, wondering what would happen next and looking for a friend. We were each given beds comprising 3 biscuits 2 foot square about 3" thick which made a mattress, 3 blankets, 2 unbleached sheets, 1 pillow flock and case, from the stores nearby. The bedstead in two halves with iron slats, the foot end pushed under the head end when not used as a bed. One blanket was wrapped round two biscuits and stood up on end and one blanket wrapped round the other biscuit and laid flat on the bedstead to make a chair.

After sorting ourselves out my bed was in a corner next to Barfield and we soon became friends. My earlier anxiety was in the past and things happened so quickly from then on.

Our next move was to be examined by the medical officer who passed us all A.1. This was followed by a visit to the company officer to whom we took the oath of Allegeance to King and Country which we signed and was given one shilling generally known as the Kings Shilling.

When I was asked by the recruiting officer at Ely which regiment I preferred my reply was the Norfolks, being my home county, but after looking at the form I had signed I was about to start 7 years in the colours and 5 years on the reserve with Suffolk Regt. After all what was the difference they were both foot sloggers and I had just found new friends.

The next morning, after rather a restless night on a hard bed, a corporal came into the room soon after 6.30 a.m. shouting "Show a leg. Come on my lucky lads". A few minutes earlier I had heard a bugle call soon to learn it was reveille to wake us up. We were shown how to make our beds up for

the day and each one had to sweep under and round his bed into the middle of the room ready for the room orderly to clear up.
The room had 30 beds and 28 were now occupied. Enough to form a squad, (a name for a small number of men). Sergeant Butler was our senior instructor and corporal Chandler his assistant who introduced themselves.

After breakfast we all went to the main stores to obtain our uniform, kit and rifle. There were two ex-old soldiers in the stores. One of them was named Mudd who checked each item as follows:- tunics 2, trousers pairs 2, khaki, shirts (grey back) 2, long pants pairs 2, grey socks pairs 2, cardigan 1, cap comforter 1, caps stiff 1, caps soft 1, braces pair 1, overcoat 1, putties pairs 2, boots (hobnail) pairs 2, shoes gym pair 1, shorts (drill) gym pair 1, gloves wool pair 1, housewife 1, (including needles, cotton, wool, buttons, thimble), dixy 1.
Holdall (including razor, comb, lather brush, tooth brush, button stick, knife, fork, spoon, mug 1, clothes brush 1, boot brushes 2, canes 1, bible 1, belt white 1, kitbag 1.
Equipment: Webbing khaki belt 1, harness with pouch 1, valise 1, haversack 1, water bottle 1, trenching tool with handle 1.
Rifle 1, bayonet with scabbard 1, sling 1, steel helmet 1.

Soon after I had changed into khaki uniform my civilian clothes were parceled up and sent to my home where my sister Harriett would tell the rest of the family that I had joined the army.

"Get on parade" shouted the orderly sergeant and I with the rest of the squad started six months intensive training. A lot of it was known as square

bashing. Starting with foot drill and marching. We quickly realised no time had to be lost between each parade. About 5 minutes allowed.
After making our beds and having a quick wash and shave there might be time to dash to the cook house for a mug of tea containing epsom salts (known as gunfire) before parading for P.T. (which we called physical jerks) before breakfast.

Bugle calls had to be learned from each other or from older soldiers. The first one I learned was "Come to the cookhouse" which was sounded at breakfast and dinner times. The regimental call always preceded each call so that became easy to remember.

At 08:45 the main parades of the day started. Each lasting 3/4 to 1 hour until 12:15. Dinner at 13:00, parading again at 13:45 until 16:00. Saluting by hand was introduced early because it is an offense punishable by C.B. (confined to barracks) if one did not salute an officer when meeting him. It was important to know who was an officer and exactly what to do and when.

I was keen to learn and do everything right but I was soon to make a fool of myself. One morning all recruits had to parade in the gymnasium for a medical inspection and to be weighed with no clothes on. When we were dismissed I went to get dressed and discovered my new cardigan was gone. The regimental sergeant major was in charge so I went up to him and saluted him with no cap on and told him what had happened. He straight away stopped everyone from going out and formed them into two ranks then inspected each one with me but no one was wearing my cardigan. Perhaps the R.S.M. thought I had'nt taken it with me! Returning to the barracks I went to the outside latrine and saw my cardigan on the floor just inside. Someone had

got away with it quickly but became frightened and threw it away. I took it to the R.S.M. but this time I did'nt salute him because someone had told me he was not an officer and not to salute without a cap on.

Sometimes when we had finished parades there were jobs to be done which were known as fatigues such as ration, coal and barrackroom cleaning. A few days after joining I was put on ration fatigue which meant carrying the meat from the stores to the cookhouse. This happened as the troops were queuing up to get into the dining hall for dinner. An officer was there waiting to inspect the food. Having both arms round the meat container I could not salute without dropping it, so I put the container on the ground then stood up and gave what I thought was a smart salute, much to the amusement of everyone and no doubt including the officer. What I should have done was - turned my head smartly towards the Officer as I passed him while holding tight to the meat ration.

Saluting while carrying a cane was one of our first lessons. The cane was carried horizontally between the thumb and forefinger of the right hand. When approaching an officer the cane was placed under the left arm and the salute with the right hand was carried out 3 paces each side of the officer while looking at him straight in the eyes. We were told "It's not the man you salute but his rank and uniform". We were considered improperly dressed without the cane when walking out, which could mean C.B. I always thought the cane did help soldiers to look and walk smarter. Unfortunately the cane has not been carried for many years.

The order of the day was obedience, pride in the regiment and ones self, punctuality, and cleanliness, especially the latter. Our instructors were very strict about buttons, boots and equipment being clean. The R.S.M.'s favourite remark when inspecting our rifle was "where there's dust there is rust and where there's rust there's days to barracks".

Our square bashing did'nt always pass without some amusing incident. One might turn right instead of left or left about turn instead of left turn. For a start this met with toleration and helpful advice but one day corporal Chandler (who was hoping for quick promotion), took us in foot and squad drill when something happened making everyone laugh including him. Suddenly he said "The next one who laughs will be on a charge". I just could'nt stop laughing.

The next morning at 09:00 hrs. I stood outside the company officer. Sergeant major Pegg said "Private Armsby, properly at ease. Attention, cap off, right turn, quick march, halt, left turn". I was facing the company officer who said "You are charged with laughing on parade what have you to say". I told him what had happened and came out with five days C.B. which took the smile off my face. At 12:15 the bugler sounded the call for defaulters at the double which meant that I had to run and report to the guard commander which occurred about every hour after normal parades with an hours drill on the parade ground in full marching order at 18:00 hrs. Extra fatigues were added like peeling potatoes for an hour in the cookhouse I did'nt mind that because we usually got a cup of tea. The last visit of the day to the guardroom was at 22:00 with full marching

order. I was glad to get to bed before lights out at 22:15 hrs. We were not allowed out of barracks.

This incident taught me how easy it was to laugh into trouble, also not to help Chandler with desired promotion.

Another lad who was caught in the same trap just could not help laughing at anything funny on parade. No matter how often he was given 5 or 7 days C.B. Finally the company officer sympathised with him and he was given a staff job.

During the first month, recruits were not allowed leave passes to home. Meanwhile all the lads in our room were getting to know each other. Barfield and I became good friends and we usually went to the NAAFI canteen at midday for tea and a cake where there was a piano which Barfield could play so we and some of the other lads had a little sing song sometimes. There was a beer canteen but neither of us were very keen so we did'nt go there. At the weekends we went into the town perhaps to walk around or go to the cinema or the pub for one or two pints of beer.

After parades we were allowed to make our beds. Some would lie on the bed and read books for a time, but invariably there would be something to clean every night which sometimes could take quite a while, especially brasses on equipment. Bayonet scabbards were polished with Kiwi and burnished with a tooth brush handle, likewise the chin strap and wooden parts on the rifle. Spit and polish became a way of life.

Some of the lads could not spread the 18,- wage over the week and soon got into the habit of borrowing a few shillings by Tuesday which made them worse off the next week but that did'nt matter to some who offered 1/6 for 1,-. Barfield and I had 3 or 4 regular ones who borrowed enough to get them over the weekend then stayed in until pay day when they always paid us back. One lad named Quinn got desperate at times and insisted on giving me 2,- for 1,-. Cotton (the Yarmouth lad) kept a record book of his clients and made a small business of it.

During the spring of 1921 there was a general strike in the country. With the railways and miners out riots occurred in many towns and I heard the riot act read out in Bury St. Edmunds. All the reserve soldiers were called up and soon the barrackrooms in our depot were so full that all our beadsteads were put in stores and we slept on our mattresses on the floor close together to make room for the reserves.

Tables, forms and kit boxes were stacked in the middle of the room. With some other lads, one day, I was jumping over these things and knocked my left shin which bled a little and I did'nt take much notice of it then.

Most of us recruits had been working in a field near the barracks half a day each week levelling the soil to make a sports ground. A few days after the above incident I was on the field when my left leg became very painful. The sergeant major in charge noticed that I was'nt doing much and told me to get on with it or go sick. I was soon in the first aid room where I had to stay the night. The next day I was taken to Colchester military hospital with a septic leg in a military ambulance.

In those days there was very little antidote available so I had the slow treatment of hot fomentations 3 times a day applied to my leg and I stayed in bed for a month with a further 2 weeks getting on my feet again, often on the Abbey fields which was 1.000 acres surrounded by military buildings. Apart from being handicapped with the leg I rather enjoyed being there.

Back to the depot, I was now 6 weeks behind my squad and not feeling very sure of myself. The sergeant major was a bit doubtful about letting me join them when he tried me out in drill I turned left instead of right. After some further exercises he was convinced that I would catch up with my squad so he let me rejoin them.

The strike was over and the barrack rooms back to normal and I soon got back to the routine parades. The others had already done guard duties. This needed extra spit and polish and care in packing the valise. We put thin pieces of board inside to make it look neat. When on sentry duty there were a list of orders to learn by heart. I was rather nervous about them. Often I could'nt remember them in rotation and my mouth went dry but the orderly officer was satified that I knew them. It did'nt matter what order. Saluting with a rifle was strange to begin with. The butt salute was given to officers with rank below major and above the present. We had to make sure if it was a crown or a pip on the officers shoulder.

From the start we had been having lessons in education and most of us were studying for the third class certificate which I gained before we left the depot. Sergeant Haxley was our instructor who I did'nt see again until several years later.

At that time service men were entitled to one third reduction in railway fare once in three months so on my first weekend leave I took advantage if it. Walking home from Hilgay Fen Station I felt strangely free although I was in uniform.

Harriet had gone into service again otherwise things were much the same. They were all pleased to see me especially father because he was thinking of buying two houses at Denver Sluice, but he had'nt enough money to pay them and would I lend or give him £100. As I had nearly seven years to serve in the Army I agreed hoping that I would benefit by it later on. That was all my savings which I suppose, at that time, was worth having because the two houses only cost £200. In those days there was no mention of mortage in helping to buy a house at least not in the way property is bought and sold these days.

Albert was keen to know what it was like living in barracks, so as male relatives were welcome to come and see us we arranged that he would come one weekend which he did a few weeks later. One of the other lads was on weekend leave so Albert slept in his bed and he had meals in the dining hall. He was surprised that we had basins to drink our tea from and that we took it in turn to scrub the tables and forms every day after dinner. He enjoyed his short stay but said that the bed was rather hard.

During the war Albert went to Norwich for an army medical test but was passed unfit because it was discovered that he only had one good lung and yet he worked very hard on the land.

Barfield and I were still good friends and he invited me to go to see his parents so one Saturday afternoon we hired two cycles at 6d. an hour and set out for Langham about 10 miles. On the way we met a funeral procession. We were not sure what to do. In civilian clothes we would have stopped and taken off our caps to show respect to the dead but now we had to do something quick. As the procession came nearer we both jumped off our bikes and stood at attention then saluted both together. After they had passed we wondered had we done right? Or should we have kept going on our bikes and just turned out heads towards the coffin? Later some of the funeral party told Barfield parents that they were delighted to see us stop and salute so smartly!

During the summer I cycled home for a weekend a few times and one Sunday I took Barfield with me. It was about 35 miles each way but we had all day to do it. Our passes were valid until 23:59 hrs. and we started at 9 am. arriving at the Creek soon after mid-day. Harriett was there with her husband to be, George Turner. Later he helped to tie some eating apples in bags on our cycles to take back with us. When we arrived back at the depot and opened the bags with the intention of sharing the apples with some of the other lads we found that George had put a brick in each bag which spoiled most of the apples. Perhaps he thought it was a joke but we did'nt at the time. I have'nt seen Barfield since we left the army but he met Albert's wife in Hilgay during 1982 and laughed about the incident.

During the 6 months training in Bury St. Edmunds there was very little time for sport and the ground was far from being ready. Other recruits coming along would carry on the good work. However, if anyone fancied some extra exercise the

gymnasium was usually open 4 evenings a week and boxing was encouraged. I was'nt very keen on it but one of the lads had a go. A lad named Hearn, in our squad, entered a contest and as the first round was ending a long roll of excreta fell from his shorts onto the canvas. He quickly climbed out of the ring and retired from boxing.

From the start of our training, if we were not on fatigue, guard, or leave, we had to go on church parade into the town which made a relaxing change. We had walking out dress with white belt and cane.

Occasionally route marchs took us into the surrounding countryside up to 15 or 20 miles which resulted in blisters on the feet sometimes, usually the journey was made more interesting by coming back a different way.

As we became used to handling the rifle firing on the range was introduced, first the 22 and then 303 on a 50 yard range.
Having had some experience with a gun I did reasonably well.

By now our training was coming to an end. All the squad had passed alright except Sharp, a lad from Norwich, who was very nervous and he bought himself out. After I had been on weekend leave a few times other lads from Ten Mile Bank began to join the Suffolks. Tom Walker and Frank Cornwall were the first and when I thought they were in bed the first night I went into their room and gave them the same treatment that met me on my first night which was just lift the foot of their beds up and it fell in half. They took it as joke and I tried to give them a few tips. It was'nt long before Tom decided he did not like army life so he worked his ticket by making himself ill.

During my weekend trips home I fell into the old habit of going to Downham Market on Saturday evening and on the way home through Denver, stop to see Aunt Alice and Eric where I met Evelyn Robinson, Aunt Alice's niece, who's home was in Fulham Rd. Chelsea. She was about my age and we became friendly although I did'nt take it seriously because of strong rumours that my squad, among others were shortly going to Ireland. We wrote to each other a few times while I was at the depot and I told her when we were going.

Lieutenant Lloyd was in charge of the draft of 80 men from 3 squads including ours going to Ireland at the end of August 1921.

Leaving the train at Liverpool Str. Station we marched in full marching order with rifles to Euston railway station. The train was waiting for us and we soon discarded our equipment then began to settle down when someone shouted "Private Armsby you are wanted" I looked onto the platform and saw Evelyn with her young sister. Somehow she had found out the time we would be there which surprised me. I was pleased to see her and greeted her with a kiss which brought some whistles from the troops. Soon most of the 80 heads popped out of the train to see what the attraction was. Evelyn and I only had eyes for each other and took no notice of the troops until someone said that the train was ready to start so we hurredly kissed goodbye which started off more whistling. As I went back to get on the train several of the lads said "You lucky so and so".

We arrived at Holly Head soon after midnight and we went straight on board a cattle boat. Having travelled all day I was very tired and like most

of the others I went below deck. Cattle were blaring out and there were no beds or hammocks to lie on so we were soon asleep on the boards.

About 04:00 hrs I woke up and wanted to go to the toilet but could'nt get near it because so many were sea sick. The boat was not very big and was rolling all over the water. I climbed onto the deck. It was raining hard with a strong wind and I slid to the outside rail then almost straight back to the mast which I hung on to.

This was the first time I had ever seen the sea and I wished I had never seen it because an awful feeling of sea sickness came over me. Going below a terrible stench of sick and excreta met me practically forcing me back on deck where I had a good vomit which made me feel better but it was'nt safe on that deck so going below again I crept to the side of the boat and laid down hoping to sleep again without success. There did'nt seem anyone who were not effected.

It took over 8 hours to cross the Irish Sea where a normal crossing took 3-4 hours. We landed at Kingstown a few miles south of Dublin. As we were sorting ourselves out on the quay I could hear the cattle bellowing and I wondered how they had felt during the crossing.

The corporal lined us up and called the roll to make sure none of us had fallen overboard, then after having some light refreshment, we boarded the train for Kildare. The carriages were open plan with seats on each side. During the journey lieutenant Lloyd came and chatted with us about army life and where we were going. He seemed very nice and was what one could call an officer and a

gentleman. His uncle Massey Lloyd was a general in command of the British forces in the Madras District of India.

Getting out the train at Kildare Station we looked on the Land of Donkeys and thrupenney bits (three penny piece) which we often were paid with.
We marched the four miles to Rath Camp where members of the I.R.A. were interned. The countryside was rather rugged moorland with a few low built houses dotted about.
R.S.M. Parkinson took charge of the draft while lieut. Lloyd went into the orderly room to report to the officer commanding the Second Battalion the Suffolks. After Parkinson had lined us up for inspection he marched up and down in front of the orderly room waiting for the C.O. As he did so I thought he was the smartest man I had ever seen and looking back through my seven years of army service I still think so. He carried himself so upright and every movement was a fine example for any soldier. It was rumoured that he wore a steel corset. His word of command was loud and clear and when he was in charge of the parade the junior officers felt the sharp edge of his tongue. If any officers were inspecting the parade or guard he would not say anything unless the officer checked a man for being improperly dressed or dirty then he would take over and report the man to appear before his company officer to receive some punishment.

One man in our draft, named Rose was often untidy and on the day of our arrival he was checked by the inspecting officer. R.S.M. Parkinson looked at him and said "A rose between two thorns".

Our home was to be in wooden huts with bedboards to sleep on. The boards were 6 ft. long by 4 ins and when put together were shaped something like a canoe on rests about 2" off the floor. Rather hard but better then nothing.

The internment camp was in a square with a lookout post at each corner. The sentry box was built on top of the guardroom and had two open windows so that each sentry could see straight to the next post. In between each post was two high rows of entangled barbed wire about 12 ft. apart, which was known as the death walk. It was lit up during the hours of darkness. The posts were numbered 1 to 4 and a sentry called to the next post every 15 minutes e.g. "Number one post alls well" or otherwise. In addition a patrol of 6 to 10 men walked round the camp and grounds frequently calling at each post to make sure that everything was alright.

Even so this did not stop the internees from trying to tunnel their way out.
One night I was on sentry duty at the main guard when it was very foggy I heard some shots being fired. We soon learned that 5 internees had escaped through a short tunnel. Three men were later recaptured by the patrol.

Our orders were to challenge anyone three times when we were on a sentry duty and if they kept approaching we should shoot to kill. One man was on sentry duty at the main guard when he saw an object moving in the dark distance. He shouted "Halt who goes there" three times but it still moved towards him so he pulled the trigger and killed a goat. Perhaps he thought it was an elderly man with a beard.

The Curragh race course was not very far from Rath Camp but it was out of bounds to us. However, we were allowed to go half a mile across the moors which surrounded the camp, so during one of my brief few minutes of leisure I walked to one of the odd farm buildings that were dotted about the moors. Getting nearer to the long bungalow type building I could see something moving and looking out the top half of the stable like doors. Smoke was coming from the chimmey so I expected to see a human being. Just as I was going to say "Hello" to someone I noticed it was a donkey. It appears that Irish people were in the habit of having animals living with them.

Every day a party of men had to go in the internees huts with fixed bayonets looking for any plans of escape. Most of the internees had a crafty look on their face and watched us as if they were thinking "You will be lucky if you find our escape tunnel". Although my rifle was loaded and a bayonet on the end I did not feel very comfortable at times.

All available men took turns in guard duties which meant that these duties came every other day and night. Consequently some of us were getting tired.
One night I was on sentry duty with Ben King at one of the internment camp posts. We both had hard work to keep our eyes open. Standing up and gazing out of our windows along the avenues of bright lights. Suddenly I heard someone say "How many sentries have you on duty here" and the guard commander said "Two sir". I looked at Ben and he was on his knees sound asleep. I shook him to try to wake him up before anyone saw us but it was too late. The officer and his escort with the guard commander ran up the steps into the sentry box just as poor old Ben realised what was happening.

The officer said "Put both these men on a charge of sleeping on their posts". Soon we were escorted to the main guard room where we were confined until our trail by court-martial.

Sleeping on duty was a very serious charge and during war time the sentence was to be shot at dawn and had been carried out during the war with Germany.
Although we were on a war footing in Ireland the death sentence had been reduced to the "glass house" imprisonment.
While awaiting our trial in the guard room I thought of my people and friends at home. How could I keep this a secret from them. I had been in the habit of writing to them each week and they would soon think there was something wrong if they got no letters.

We had no idea how long imprisonment we would get if we were found guilty!!
I decided to take a chance and write three or four letters to each one and get Barfield my closest friend, to post them one each week. Some of the letters did not quite tally with the ones they sent me and one or two thought it rather strange, but I got away with it without being questioned much when I went home. It was a gamble to try to keep it a secret and as the years went by I had almost forgotten it. Having spent two years in India and two years in Gibralter I was back home on a month furlough when my father asked me if it was true that I had a court martial in Ireland. Naturally I was shocked and asked him how long he had known about it and who told him. He said that Jim Sindle told him when he came home from Gibraltar.

Jim joined the Suffolk Regiment about 8 months after I did. He had followed George Hill and George Long with others from Ten Mile Bank. None of these went to Ireland but some went to India including Jim. We were all friends and during the 3 1/2 to 4 years we were in the army together the incident was never mentioned, not to me anyway so I thought none of them knew. However details of the court martial had been posted on the notice board at the depot Bury St. Edmunds so there was not much point in trying to keep it a secret but I did not consider Jim Sindle as a friend when he told my family after four years.

The reason why I am writing about it now is because it seems interesting to note the difference between conditions and treatment of then and now. There was no question of being fined or having a mattress to sleep on with other comforts in the call. Nor being taught further education or having visitors.

Back to guardroom at Rath Camp where Ben and I were awaiting the court martial. 2nd lieutenant Grey had been appointed to act as solicitor in our defence. He was better educated then we were but this was his first experience in court martial trails. After talking it over with us and gaining our side of the picture he thought it best if Ben pleaded guilty and I should plead not guilty considering what had been said before the officer came into the post.

About another week past and we were taken to the Military Headquarters at the Curragh for the court martial. A general acted as judge assisted by two high ranked officers. Ben went in first and soon came out with 56 days detention. My case took a little longer but the judge ruled that as one was

asleep we both must have been and our defending officer could not say anything to help me so I also received 56 days detention.

We were taken back to the guardroom under escort and after a few more days we were marched onto the parade ground in front of the whole battalion where our sentences were read out and the reason why we received the punishment. However, one piece of good news was that owing to our previous good conduct the 56 days were commuted to 28 days detention.
The next day corporal Church escorted us by train to Mount Joy prison in Dublin. (The same prison from where a leading member of the I.R.A. escaped with the help of a helicopter a few years ago). Nobody thought of escaping in my days there.
After our entrance the strong doors clanged behind us and were met with the order double!! Which seemed to be the order until we got out. The first thing was to hand over our belongings followed by a short cropped hair cut and a bath after which we put on prison clothes and were taken to our cells one to each person. This was solitary confinement.
The furniture and articles in the cell comprised one solid wooden bed with wooded pillow, two blankets, one desert spoon, one urinal pot (enamel), one bible, salt and pepper pots, one towel, one shaving brush, soap. To shave, every morning a cut throat razor was handed through a pigeon-hole in the door by a member of the staff to be collected in two minutes or less.

During my first day a large bowl was put in my cell. Nobody said what it was for but late in the evening someone looked through a peep-hole in the door and said "Have you finished your task?". I had no idea what he was talking about! The next morning as I stood facing the governor in his

office, I soon learned why the bowl was in my cell. "Why did'nt you clean it?" asked the governor looking at me as if I had done a murder. I tried to explain that no one told me what to do but that was no excuse. Still looking at me he said "You are here for punishment and having failed to do your task you will lose one day remission and don't come here again".

Having gone in with every intention of obeying orders and hoping to gain all the remission possible which was one day per week. Yet here I was with one day lost on my first day of confinement. How easy it was to do something wrong when doing nothing. However, I decided to try and do my best.

My cell was on the first floor and the door opened onto a veranda about 4 ft. wide which went all round a large hall. A steel bridge was built across the centre with stairs down to the ground floor.
Ben King was in a cell directly opposite me across the hall. We saw each other occasionally when our doors or pigeon holes were open at the same time. He had a round face and when he smiled, which he often did, it looked like a ray of sunshine that encouraged me to make the best of it.

Each morning we lined up on the veranda with our urinal pots in our hands to be taken down stairs and emptied. The order came from the staff sergeant "Shun right and left turn, double march". Care had to be taken that we did'nt spill the urine as we ran down stairs.

We always had porridge for breakfast with very little sugar so to give a little taste I put extra salt in which we had plenty of. After plenty of exercise which included P.T. and running round the

court yard, we made flock mattresses during most of the stay there. It was'nt really hard work but we were kept busy and we were'nt allowed to talk to other inmates although Ben and I managed to whisper to each other occasionally. I got quite an expert in sewing the tabs on. They were about the size of an old penny and don't seem to be used these days.
Every evening we had a task to do of some sort which I never forgot to do!
Some of us had a break from mattress making to painting rails round the veranda, bridge and stairs. One man near me was working very fast and seemed to be doing twice as much as I and the others were. Thinking that he was an expert painter I watched him hoping I might learn something. It soon became obvious what was happening as paint was flying from his brush in all directions and the floor below was being sprayed. I had not done much painting before but I soon realised rails were not easy things to paint in a hurry so not getting much paint on my brush at a time and working at a steady pace I seemed to be doing fairly well.

A staff sergeant, who had been watching us, went to the man next to me and said "You are making a fine mess of that. Get back to your bed making" and he went at the double.

When we had finished the job the same staff sergeant came to me and said "I want you to paint the woodwork in the governor's office at the weekend". Not being able to refuse I said "Very good sergeant".

After working some hours by myself I realised there would not be enough paint so not knowing anything about mixing paint I added some linseed oil and stirred it up then carried on painting. I

finished late on Sunday afternoon and it looked good. I felt pleased with myself and the sergeant seemed pleased with it and thanked me very much.

All was well until the governor had been in his office a short time on Monday morning. He called the staff sergeant and said "What B.F. have you had in my office during the weekend?" he was in a terrible rage because he had paint on his hands and had moved several things on his desk including papers.

The sergeant tried to explain that he hoped the paint would be dry before anyone had to work in the office but that was'nt good enough I had to go and tell him what paint I used and how it was mixed.
When he knew that I used more linseed oil he told me I should have used turpentine as well and became quite reaonable when he realised I had never mixed paints before.

The worst part about prison was being locked in especially during the evening after I had finished my task with nothing to read except the bible and I did read quite a lot of that until the main light went out at 9:30 pm. A small dim light was left on all night so that the staff on duty could see what was going on when he moved the flap over the spy hole in the door.

Sometimes I could'nt sleep for long periods thinking of all sorts of things like "Why did I join the army to come to this, I was'nt forced to?" Poor old Ben across the hall. He was on the promotion roll expecting to be made lance corporal had he not got into this mess. I could have been with the lads at Ouse Bridge playing pontoon or brag on Sunday. Had my letters been posted at the right time? What would my parents and friends

think or say if they knew where I was? Would Evelyn want to see me again? After all there was no telling who either of us might meet during the remaining 6 years of my army service so why worry! All these thoughts and more flashed through my mind most nights to wake up in the morning with the order "Come on there, get a move on".

The longest day of my sentence came when Ben went out. He had not lost one day remission. How I envied him but it was my own fault I could have been with Ben on the way back to our unit if I had completed my task on the first day instead I had to endure what seemed like a week on my last day making mattresses.

The next morning the atmosphere seem quite different. After I was dressed in uniform and received my private belongings back I went to see the governor who gave me a few words of advice including "Do not come back".

Corporal Church, who I was pleased to see, came to escort me back. As I went through that massive door I heaved a sigh of relief but looking back it did'nt seem so bad after all and although the staff were very strict they had their job to do. The staff sergeant who set me painting, shook hands with me and wished me well.
As the train crepted through the Irish countryside corporal Church told me that the internees had been released from Rath Camp after the government had agreed to grant South Ireland home rule and retain the North East, chiefly Ulster, as part of the British Isles. The majority of the population in Ulster were protestants who were quite happy to remain under British rule.

Meanwhile our battalion had moved into barracks at the Carragh where a number of Irish men who did not agree with breaking from Britain had joined our regiment.
The local transport was mainly pony and trap with two seats back to back fixed sideways.
I soon settled down to routine training and the sound of R.S.M. Parkinsons voice. He was in charge of a battalion exercise on the parade ground beside a main road when he became dissatisfied with our efforts. He halted the parade and turned us so that we faced the road "Now" he said in a loud voice "Pay attention, what the girl pushing a blue pram is wearing", he gave a full description of her dress then said "and she had a little dog running behind, now we will get on with some work".
The girl quickly disappeared and the drilling improved. Although very strict the R.S.M. was a very nice man and would help anyone if possible.
As British troops began to move out of Ireland a draft from our battalion was soon prepared to join the 1st. battalion in India. All my pals were on it except Jack Tyrill of Cambridge.
Lieutenant Lloyd was again in charge of us and I hoped he would keep with us on our journey to India because he seemed a likeable officer. As the train left the Curragh with memories of Rath Camp still pictured in my mind, I looked at the open countryside sailing by and thought I had never seen grass so green.

Arriving at Kingston harbour I remembered the trip across the Irish channel a few months previous so I was'nt looking forward to a repeat of that. We all carried our kit bags from the train to the boat which was larger than the one we came over on and there were no cattle on board.

As we moved from the quayside the sun was shining and it was really warm for late December. Looking over the side I could hardly believe my eyes because the only ripples on the water were made by the ship gliding through it which, instead of heaving my stomach up, I heaved a sigh of relief.

While in Ireland I became friends with a man from Lowestoft named Maltby whom I saw a great deal of during our four years abroad. He had been in the Merchant Navy during the war. After having some refreshments and watching Ireland getting smaller in the distance we laid on the deck in the sunshine and were soon asleep. It did'nt seem long when someone shouted "Holyhead in sight". We stood up and saw land getting nearer. The water was still calm and I changed my opinion of the sea that I made on the previous crossing.

As the train travelled across Anglesey, North Wales and on towards our destination I thought of Evelyn whom I had kept in touch with while in Ireland. She knew that we were going home but no one seemed to know which way we were going so there was no point in her going to Euston station.

Eventually we arrived at Bury St. Edmunds and prepared to go home on a months furlough.
During the time we were in Ireland quite a number of recruits had joined the Suffolks including more from Ten Mile Bank and Ouse Bridge area. Among them were George Long from next door and George Hill from Pictures Farm. They had not completed six months training but were being prepared to go to India with us.
Home on leave I learned that father had bought the two houses at Denver Sluice. He was disappointed because I could'nt give him more money. It appeared that he had hoped to get some from Albert but he was saving up to get married to Beattie Warner

whom he met at a chapel in Hilgay where she played the organ. Albert had become very keen on being a chapel preacher at Ten Mile Bank and later joined the circuit of preachers amongst whom he was well liked.

Aunt Alice and Eric were staying with her father in Fulham Road, Chelsea, London for a time so it was arranged that I should go to see her and she would take me to see her niece Evelyn who also lived in Fulham Rd. with her parents. They all made me very welcome and I stayed till late in the evening. From there I had planned to spend a few days at Uxbridge with Aunt Maryellen and Uncle John. Evelyn took me to the nearest way to Sloane Square railway station where we stood talking for a few minutes. Suddenly she said "There goes your last train to Uxbridge tonight". I did not know when or if I should see Evelyn again for some years but I had promised Aunt Maryellen to see her that day. There were other trains going towards Uxbridge so I said a hurried goodbye to Evelyn hoping to catch a bus or tram from somewhere. Eventually a train took me to Harrow about six miles from Uxbridge. Going from the station I met a policeman who told me there were no trains until 8 a.m. the next day so I decided to start walking after all what was six miles at 20 years of age? I had'nt gone far when the last street light was behind me and cross roads were in front with no visable signpost. It was dark by now but the shape of a building appeared by the road side. I soon found that it was a small cart shed containing a buggy. Realising it was hopeless to go further in the dark I climbed into the buggy and was soon asleep. On waking up about 5.30 am. thinking of what might have happened to me had the policeman or the owner of the buggy found me there

I hurriedly got out and made my way to the road where it did'nt take long to get on the right way to Uxbridge.
It gradually got lighter as I walked along the open country road feeling refreshed after an unusual nights kip!
About two miles from Harrow an electric tram car appeared off my left side but some distance away. It was on the main Ealing to Uxbridge road and going the same way as me. The lights were full on although it was nearly daylight. Many times since, my memory had recalled the sight of that tram going to Uxbridge when I had another four miles to walk on a different road.

On my arrival at Uxbridge Aunt Maryellen was preparing breakfast for Maud and Hilda. So I joined them. My walk from Harrow had made me hungry. During breakfast I tried to explain to them what had happened but they seem convinced that I had been on the tiles. Never-the-less they made me very welcome and my Aunt was anxious to hear about mother and our family.

Uncle John had gone to work helping to deliver beer and other drinks to public house from the local brewery. I went with him a few times and at each pub we received a half a pint of beer free. That was always Uncle Johns limit but the driver of the lorry always had his pint at each stop. Uncle John was very deaf but that did not seem to be much handicap to him. I think he could lip read because very rarely he asked what people said. He was always cheerful and was not short of stories to tell.
Cousin George came in with two sparking plugs and laid them near the fire to dry and get warm because he said that as it was cold his engine would'nt start. He was employed at a furniture shop taking goods round in a small van. I

remember going with George somewhere in London the first time I saw a football match, knowing nothing about it I did not enjoy the game. George tried to explain it to me but I needed more than one lesson. Anyway it was an experience.

My oldest cousin William was married and lived in a flat in the High Street. He worked with another man making breese blocks by hand. Some years ago he had a stroke but is still alive and living in a home for disabled men. He is now 82. Died 1980.

On Sunday morning Uncle John took me to his allotment and I was very surprised to see quite a number of people working on their allotments. It was a habit for town people to watch football matches on Saturday afternoon and do their gardens on Sunday morning which was almost a sin in the country. Although Aunt Maryellen and her family were strictly chapel goers they had grown used to town life.

After a few days in Uxbridge my months furlough seemed to be slipping away. On my way home I met Aunt Alice and Eric in London on their way back to Denver and having an hour before our train was to leave Liverpool Street we had a quick visit to St. Pauls Cathedral and my impressions were "What a magnificent building".

Another few days at home and I was on my way back to Bury St. Edmunds to join the draft for India. I soon met George Hill and George Long who already had been on draft leave. I had not seen them since they joined the army. Like me they were looking forward to our trip to India. We drew our tropical kit from the stores which included a suit of khaki drill, a side hat, 2 pairs of drill shorts, 1 mosquito net and a spine pad, which we never wore, also a topee or pith helmet or toppee.

On 2nd February 1922 we arrived at Southampton Docks ready for embarkation. There were ships of various sizes. We were directed onto the Breamer Castle 8.000 tons, a huge ship compared with the ones that took us to and from Ireland but looking round at some of the other ships that seemed to overpower ours I saw the Mauitania 35.000 tons. The Breamer Castle looked like a tug boat compared with that. I was beginning to see some of the wonders of the world.

A band on the quayside played Old Lang Zine as we started to move. This was the usual thing when troops were being shipped abroad, perhaps to bring back memories of relatives and friends who we might not see again for several years, but our attention was soon drawn to other ships around the docks, some moving in different directions while others still towered over us. I felt rather envious of the passengers in the Mauitania waiting to go to New York.

After a few hours we were in the English Channel heading for the Bay of Biscay. Up till then I had enjoyed every moment watching the coast of England disappear in the distance while the coast of France came into view.

Our first parade was life boat drill. A large box on the deck contained life jackets. These were made up of four lumps of cork, each about 6" x 4" and 4" thick held together by tape. Two tied on the chest and two on the back. We collected the life jackets and lined up by the side of our life boat. This was an every day exercise while we were at sea at no set time.

Every evening we collected hammocks from the stores and hung them to the beams to sleep in, but it was'nt unusual to be tipped out by someone trying to walk underneath because one had to stoop to get around and in trying to stand up invariably someones hammock was in the way and often it was done for a joke.
The next morning we did P.T. exercises on the deck which included running round all the top deck, except married quarters.

Soon afterwards the sea began to get rough and the ship started to pitch and roll. Each time the forward end went down the stern rose bringing the propeller out of the water allowing it to spin round and causing the ship to shudder all over.

We had been told that the Bremer Castle was used as a hospital ship during the first world war and on her return from India she was to be broken up. At times we thought she would never make it. Her maximum speed was eight knots and if the weather was rather rough or the tides were against us she could barely do four.

It soon became obvious that conditions were beginning to effect some of us. A lad named Tubby Ellis stood near a shute where rubbish was tipped over the side of the ship. He looked white and very ill then suddenly he grasped the boat rail and vomitted into the shute, which seemed to have an immediate effect on others standing nearby.

Having memories of my trip to Ireland I kept to the middle of the ship as much as possible. Apparently ships rarely go into the middle of the Bay of Biscay where several tides meet, making the waters very rough. Goodness knows what it was like there. I thought it was rough enough where we were at the outside. Soon the conditions had most

of us hanging our head over the side feeding the fish. For two days the sight of food, the smell from the galley or the disinfectant from the latrine made me reach but I had nothing in my stomach to come up. That is the worst part of being sea sick so if possible I found it best to drink or eat something even if it came up soon after there is not so much strain on the stomach.

After three days conditions began to calm down and those of us who had been upset started to eat again rather to the annoyance of those who had kept well. They had their pick and as much as they wanted.

By now we had been allocated our duties and fatigues. Private Hearn, who had given up his lance corporal stripes before we left Ireland and I had been given the job of cleaning utensils and cutlery in the married quarters during our voyage. After some P/T and breakfart we started at nine and worked until 12 noon then finished for the day.

After lunch we had a choice of pastime from lounging on the deck in the sun, play housey housey or as it is now known as Bingo which was very popular with the majority of the troops, play card games such as nap, banker, brag or solo whist. Gambling in the army was not allowed so we had to keep an eye out for senior N.C.O.'s. Crown and ankor was a game that I had not seen before, was started on deck at every opportunity but again it was a crime in army law so often the game would disappear when military police (known as red caps) came into view. This was a game of chance and more often than not the banker would win.

I spent many hours leaning on the rail watching fish in the water. They varied from jelly fish to porpoises. The latter would race our ship with ease by coming out the water and continually diving in again. Flying fish came out and often flew the length of the ship. Occasionally another ship passed by near or in the distance and sometimes land came into view.

As we passed through the Straits of Gibraltar it was dark but lights on the rock more or less outlined the shape and size which was a fascinating sight. On the other side of the Straits there were a few lights dotted here and there but the outline of a huge rock at Cueta nearly the same shape as Gibraltar could be seen faintly. Legend says that Hercules divided and pushed the two rocks apart some thousands of years ago.

The Mediterranean sea was just my type of sea going. There being no tide and unless the wind was very strong the going was very smooth and I enjoyed it very much. The task each morning cleaning cutlery in the married quarters was interesting. There were rumours that some young wifes, who were going to join their husbands in India, were having affairs with the lads aboard. It came to a head when one of our lads was caught by the red caps on the married quarters deck with one of the young wives in the early hours. They arrested him and after a court martial he was locked up until we arrived at Bombay.

It took several days to get rid of the sea sickness feeling but after a few days in the Mediterranean I remembered that I had a tin of 50 Players cigarettes in my kit bag, so thinking of enjoying a smoke I opened the tin and discovered that they were all mouldy. I threw them overboard and decided to give up smoking.

During our cruise through the Mediterranean we sighted land occasionally including Malta, the north coast of Algeria, Sicily with the famous volcano on Mount Etna. The toe and heel of Italy. Although it became warmer as we moved eastwards snow could be seen on some of the mountains.

Each piece of land we saw I wondered what the scenery was like and what kind of people, if any lived there. Often we were too far off to recognise any object except some palm trees. Others might be orange or olive. As we moved towards Port Said harbour there seemed to be quite a lot of activity. Soon after we anchored near the entrance to the Suez canal our ship was surrounded by natives swimming around and calling for money to be thrown into the water which they dived after. Every penny was recovered soon after it hit the water.
One man climbed up a rope onto the deck then dived off the rail into the sea under the ship and came up the other side. He received a few sixpences for that which encouraged him to do it again.

Several small boats containing goods of various kinds came onto the scene. The owners tried to bargain with the troops and when both were satisfied a rope is thrown up with a basket on the other end which is hauled up, money put in and lowered. Goods are then hauled up for the buyer. Various kinds of fruit such as oranges, bananas and dates were cheap compared with english prices. Turkish delight was another cheap buy. Other things on sale were vests, shirts and soaps. Much shouting went on during these exchanges.

Off the starboard side of our ship a number of native workmen were carrying coal in baskets on their heads into the side of the Breamer Castle from a low quay. Their overseer carried a whip which often cracked and did not fail to use on the men if they slackened their pace. It took all day to get enough coal on board but no one was allowed ashore.

During the night we moved into the Suez Canal after taking a pilot aboard where it did need an expert to stop the ship from running into the sand banks.
Since we had left England the panorama had changed considerably from views of arable land, green meadows surrounded by hedges and various numbers of English trees to almost desert of sand with palm trees in and around the small towns and villages or perhaps oasis surrounded by a few palm trees.

As we moved slowly through the canal, from where I stood, it seem that we were ploughing through sand because that was all I could see from miles around. Later I saw some rugged hills in the distance that could have been rocks.

It was late in the day as we approach half way through the canal. Suddenly blazing lights came from a ships deck and port holes a short distance from our starboard side. It was a fascinating sight because the ship seemed to be resting on sand but as we drew nearer we could see it was floating in water at Ismailia with palm trees growing among the buildings which all helped to make a lovely picture. The waters were used by ships passing in the canal.

Some miles further along we went through the Great Bitter Lake during the early hours of the morning so I did'nt see anything of that but it is much larger than the waters at Ismailia.
After passing through Little Bitter Lake and another 20 miles of the canal we entered the Bay and Gulf of Suez which is much wider and 300 miles before entering the Red Sea. Altogether from Suez to Aden is 1.310 miles. The Red Sea averages about 200 miles across.

I remember how very hot it was during that week. We had strict orders to keep our pith helmets on if we went on the top deck. After some P.T. and breakfast Hearne and I carried on with our task in married quarters every day. In fact that was one of the coolest places on the boat.

Sometimes during the afternoons we strolled on the deck but kept in the shade if possible. While watching hundreds of miles of sand going by with an occasional sea port or small village in the distance. Some palm trees helped to change the scenery here and there.
Going through the Gulf of Aden we saw some rather large round tanks that could have held fresh water for the troops in Aden.

Gradually we left the Gulf and into the wide open Arabian Sea to India. It is 1.450 miles from Aden to Bombay.

During the journey our routine changed very little and most of the time we did not see land. Occasionally I met George Hill and Long who had been doing guard duties and various fatigues. Nearly every day we joined a housey housey school for a little flutter sometimes winning or loosing a few pence.

Since leaving the Bay of Biscay I had really enjoyed the trip without any uncomfortable feeling in the tummy but half way across the Arabian Sea we ran into a rough patch and I had one day retching over the side and feeding the fish.

Bombay was a welcome sight with its famous buildings and palm trees. I wondered what kind of people they were. Perhaps they were like the lascars who helped to make up the crew on board.

Only a few people were on the quay as we drew alongside. Our boat was made fast at each end. The slipway was put in place and we were soon in India. The first Indian I saw wore only a loin cloth which was wrapped between his legs and around his hips. He met me with "You buy cigar sahib? Only two pie?" They were tobacco leaves rolled up something like a small sharoot. I bought one to try it which put me off smoking for a long time.

Our last weekly pay on the boat was in Indian currency and any English money we had was exchanged. The rate of exchange was 17 Rupees to the english pound. 16 annas = one Rupee and 4 pie = one anna. One anna was nearly the value of one english penny.

We marched to the railway station where a train was waiting to take us to the foot of the Nilgri Hills in the south. The carriages comprised small compartments each with room for four persons to sleep. Two seats on each side, one above the other. Just plain wood. The windows and top half of the door had no glass. I chose one of the top seats or should I say rack thinking that I should not be disturbed at night.

Having now settled I looked along the platform to see a number of natives sleeping on the concrete. Some may have been waiting for a train while others begged for a living. One teenage lad walked up and down the platform patting his tummy with his hand in time to repeatedly shouting Sahib, Sahib, backsheesh sahib while holding out his begging bowl.

A guards van was used as a cookhouse and kitchen. It did'nt take our cooks long to prepare some hot lentil soup, our first meal in India. It had taken just 28 days on our voyage from Southampton to Bombay and now we were looking forward to our 600 mile train journey to Wellington in the Nilgri Hills.

During the past month I had got quite used to sleeping in a hammock and I liked the way it remained almost static when the boat rolled, pitched or tossed its way through the waves. Now as I looked up at the shelf I was hoping to sleep on, it did not look as if it would give and take to the sway of the train like the hammock had done to the sway of the ship.

With the sound of a voice calling Sahib Sahib we started to move out of Bombay station into what seemed to be a strange land. Day was turning into night and being tired we prepared ourselves ready for bed as the train gathered speed.

My makeshift bed was far from being comfortable but as I felt that I could sleep on a clothes line it did'nt take me long to fall asleep. During the early hours I woke up with an itching feeling in several places. After a good scratch I still felt tired and went to sleep again. Not for long

though as the itching soon returned, making me restless and I was glad when it was time to get up.

After looking at some itchy places on my body it seemed that I had been bitten by something. One of the other lads had been bitten too so we decided to look for our attackers. At first we looked for fleas in the blankets but could not find any. Suddenly I saw something moving in a crevice at the back of my shelf. It did'nt jump like a flea or try to disappear. Looking closer I could see several small brown objects clustered together and I soon learned that they were bugs.

I had never seen a bug before and wished then that I never had. We all searched around our seats and shelves but apart from the bunch that I had found there were none to be seen. Making sure those we had found were destroyed I hoped none of us would be disturbed by any more.

That was wishful thinking. They seemed to like me a lot more than I like them and I was tormented by them every night while on that train. The strange thing about it was none of my mates were attacked. George Hill was with us and he said that during the early hours he could not sleep because the engine made such a chugging noise as if it was hard work to pull the train so he got up to look outside and received the shock of his life. We were going over a viaduct through a range of mountains known as the Knats that ran down the west side of India some few miles from the coast. George said that as he looked over the side he could not see the bottom because of clouds or mist and he had to force himself to have a second look. As he pulled himself back he became fascinated by the peaks of hills all around us. I wished he had aroused us all so that we could have seen it.

We stopped at Poona station to take on coal and water. During that time Captain Lloyd ordered us all out to do some marching and other exercises on the platform. We did not seem to disturb many of the natives huddled together under their loin clothes, but there were beggars active with or without their begging bowls chanting backsheesh sahib, which seemed to be the usual thing on the larger stations when there were a number of troops.

Travelling through the open country in that part of India was not very interesting especially on the plains. There did not seem to be much land cultivated. Some places there were huge ant or termite hills.

We stopped at Bangalore which was the main junction for the Madras and Mysore districts. Life in and around the town was more active than any place we passed through since leaving Bombay and Poona. There were banana, coconut and other palm trees growing in and around the town. Four wheeled four seater open horse drawn vehicles called garries and rickshaws, (two wheeled man drawn vehicles) were near the station plying for customers and bullock tongas moving slowly about made the scenery quite different to what we had been used to in England.

After having our daily one cooked meal and collecting sandwiches for the rest of the day we moved on towards the Nilgri Hills which promised to be interesting for me at any rate. Apart from the hills between bombay and Poona (which I did not see) I had never been up high enough to know anything about hills.

There was a small village at the foot of the Nilgris where we had some time to wait for the train. It was not yet daylight, so we could not see the hills. There was one tilly lamp on the platform which gave enough light for us to see the

beginning of the mountain railway. It had three metal lines the middle one being cogged to take the cogged wheel on the engine.

I was thinking how interesting it would be to see it working when Captain Lloyd came along and said that if we wished to have a drink the refreshment bar was now open. That was just what we had been waiting for and soon the taste of english beer was being enjoyed by most of us.
Excitement grew as the train arrived, but we were rather disappointed with the carraiges which were little more than trucks with just a flat roof and very little sides. Never-the-less we looked forward to our rise in the world.
Right from the start the engine seemed to make hard work of it pushing from behind. Smoke puffed out of the chimmey in rings which soon faded away.

It was now full daylight as the train seemed to be going round the side of the hill and came to a viaduct. It slowed down which gave us a good chance to look over the side into the valley below. I think most of us held tight to what little woodwork there was in reach. Several gasps of astonishment came from the lads as they looked around in wonderment. At times we could not see what was holding the train up and our anxiety rose higher as we approached the other side of the valley, it seemed the train was going to run into another hill.
Actually it did but into a tunnel that went through a bulge on the side of the hill where it was dark. I thought 'This is the thrill of my life, what is going to happen next'? We soon found out when the train went out of the tunnel onto a ledge alongside of the hill. Talk about thrills, like most of our lads, I was almost afraid to look over the side where there was a sheer drop of

several hundred feet and look up the other side it was almost vertical for several hundred feet. It almost took ones breath away.

Looking back on these views at that time I had never seen anything like it before and was fascinated by every change in the panorama that occurred all the time as we rose higher and higher.

More peaks became visible around. The few clouds that had been above us were now on our level or below as they went near a hill the wind seemed to grab hold and pull them round the hill so fast that they disappeared in white streaks.
With each viaduct we crossed, somewhere water rushed underneath, we gained confidence in this unusual railway.
Sometimes we could see the road which snaked up the hill often in hair pin bends to disappear into the trees.

We arrived at Conoor, a native town, that was also the station for Wellington two miles further up the hill where our barracks were. Our kit was loaded on to waiting bullock tongas and we marched up onto the barrack square which was surrounded by two story blocks of buildings that housed most of the first battalion The Suffolk Regiment.

It appeared that all the draft was to join "B" company and while we stood in two ranks various NCO's came around to ask us questions such as "What sport were we interested in or followed". "Which platoon would we like to join".

George Hill and I had never played any sport and said so. George Long fancied football and others like Barfield and a few from my squad at the depot

had played some kind of sport. Most of these lads went to number five platoon where captain Lieghay Clark tried to encourage the best sportsmen to go.

George Hill and I went to eight platoon where we got on well together. Our beds were next to each other and we were in the lewis gun section. Corporal Davey was our lewis gun instructor and rather strict too. He knew what he was talking about and if we followed his instructions and tried to learn we found that his bark was worse than his bite. He gained a nickname 'bears breath' but not to his face!

There were four sections in each platoon and four platoons in each company and five companys 'A', 'B', 'C', 'D' and 'HQ' plus the band and drums in the battalion totalling about 1.000 men.

Our platoon sergeant was sergeant Chalk and C.S.M. Clarke was our company sergeant major. CQMS Mann was the company quarter master sergeant. Captain Lloyd was our platoon officer and captain Lieghay Clark was the company officer. Also there were 1st and 2nd leutenants in most of the platoons.

The majority of officers had been to a training college before being commissioned. Odd ones gained promotion through the ranks. They were all trained to be gentlemen and to set an example to men serving under them.

Wellington is 6.000 ft. above sea level and at that time it was a military village plus a few other buildings.

To so-called barrack square was rectangular enclosed by two storey barracks blocks. The entrance was at one end through an arch-way next

to the guardroom and a first aid room. On the right hand side of the arch was the regimental quarters masters stores.

On the left going onto the barrack square was 'A' company block then the Nappies or barber's shop followed with 'B' company and at the end of the block was a Derzi or tailor's shop.

Across the other end of the left was the canteen which was under the control of army authority but ran by natives who did a good job. Various hot or cold meals could be bought, also tea and soft drinks and many other things that the troops might require.

The natives employed there could understand English and we soon got used to them. I was rather amused at how they described the menu and sometimes asked them to repeat it which went something like this:- Cheakin, Eagges, Fiss, Mud Cutlets (mutton cutlets), reassolles etc.

If chicken was ordered the whole bird would be served with not much trimmings. It was either a very young bird or bantam just enough for one person. A very occasional feast for any of us.

The wet canteen came next where beer, lemonade and spirits were sold. I went there very occasionally to have 1/2 a pint of beer or shandy.

The top floor of this block comprised the recreation and billiards room. There were two billiard tables one with a very good cloth and the other not so good for learners like myself. In the recreation room there were some books, newspapers from England over a month old and a few games.

Along the other side of the square was the band and drums the latter upstairs and 'D' company in the next block.
Each company had their own cookhouse, wash houses and lavatory at the back. All the barrack blocks had a veranda on both floors facing the parade ground. They were built mainly so that parades and exercises could be carried out during monsoon rains also they were protection from the hot sun. Besides troops and other spectators could sit there and watch sports such as football, hockey and cricket and they were used as dining halls.

A short distance off to the left of the barracks was the commanding officer's office and orderly room. The C.O. was leutenant colonel Wilson, the adjutant was Major Frier and the R.S.M. (regimental sergeant major) Parsons.

Nearby was the gymnasiom where P.T. (physical training) was given. Regimental boxing contests were held there, also meetings of various kinds and occasional concerts.

Near the front entrance on the opposite side of the road was a post office and also a bazaar. Six open front places were built with mud. A low wall was built all round the inside on which goods for sale were displayed and there was room for the owner and some customers to sit while they bargained over the price.

Various types of clothing or materials and lengths of silk could be bought from one place, another had shoes, boots or slippers. One man made various pieces of jewellery such as rings, bracelets or brooches while you wait. He was fascinating to watch because his furnace in part of a coconut shell burned charcoal and for bellows he used metal tube to blow through into the fire. When

the article, which was held with small tongs, was hot enough he welded it on a very small anvil. Sitting with crossed legs sometimes his toes were used when he needed more than two hands.
I doubt if the things that this man made were all silver but seemed very good and well made. Several of the troops bought rings from him.

Another man did tattooing and was kept busy during the first few months we were there. I had a swallow carrying a letter in its beak with MOTHER written underneath put on my right foreman. It is still there. While that was being put on, George Long printed L.A. on my right leg.

There were other bazaars on the outskirts of Canoor which we visited occasionally. Sometime we had no intention of buying anything but just to argue about the price of something. We soon got to know at first they would ask twice as much as the thing was worth or what they would take if you walked away.

A photographer near the post office did a good trade with the troops. I think most of us had a photo of ourselves taken in tropical uniform to send home. George Hill, George Long and I were taken together and I had one taken with snaps of Albert, Harriet, Edie and Laura put in the four corners. Unfortunately those pictures of the Nilgri hills and other places on India have vanished during our moves from place to place over the years.

The C of E church was about 400 yards from the barracks where parades were held every Sunday. The dress was with skeleton marching order. Rifle and bayonet with ten rounds in the magazine and 20 more in the pouches. This was in case of any trouble with the natives.

Not far from the church was the Y.M.C.A., where we could all go during our free time and join in various games and buy refreshments at a small charge. Weekly whist drives were held. Discussions on various subjects (but not politics) were conducted by the person in charge. Usually a vote was taken to test the views of the meeting.

Competitions in games like draughts or dominos were organised where each player played each other until one winner was left. I had the luck to be winner at draughts while we were there.

Table tennis was a favourite with most of us but there was only one table and we had to book and take our turn.
There was a small concert hall where anyone could go onto the stage and display their talent. Quite a number of the lads gave free entertainment. Some could sing, dance or play instruments or perhaps tell a good tale. George Hill could sing 'A man on holiday from Melbourne, Australia' whose favourite song went something like this:-
"Give me old Melbourne and give me my tart.
Then I am simply alright.
Could anyone point to a better old joint.
Than Birk Street on Saturday night.
Where me and my Maudie went strolling along"

It was a catchy tune and he soon got people singing it but I cannot remember anymore of it.

A Roman Catholic church with a room where all soldiers were welcome to go for refreshments and some entertainment but it did not seem to be very popular. There were not many Catholics in the battalion and the place did not seem very attractive.

George Hill and I went there several times for the simple reason we had plenty of chance to practise on a billiards table for a small fee also on a second hand piano for nothing.

Since leaving Bury St. Edmunds six months previously we had done very little serious training and so far none of our draught had fired a rifle, only on a 50 yard range, so now we started in earnest.
At first our dress felt rather strange. I had not worn shorts since at the age of eleven. Now we had khaki drill shorts and tunic and puttees. The bottom of the shorts four inches above the knee. After retreat at 7 pm. we could wear full length trousers when the temperature was cooler.

After some drill on the parade ground we quickly went on to practise, firing the rifle on the long range up to 600 yards. As I had fired a shot gun several times I soon got used to the rifle, although taking aim was a little different.

Sergeant major Issicson was the chief musketry instructor for the battalion. Although he was an excellent instructor, unfortunately he was a third class shot. After a few lessons from him and more shooting practice we fired what was to be an annual course, that tested our ability and skill, firing the rifle from one to six hundred yards which varied by firing application in our own time, rapid, fire, snap shooting, grouping, advancing from 600 to 100 yards, firing in the prone position at 6, 5, 4 and 300 yards then kneel at 200 and stand at 100 yards all with fixed bayonets which tends to make the bullet rise.

At the end of the course, points were added up and classified. 110 points or over = marksman, 100 to 110 first class, 75 to 100 2nd class and under 75 third class.
I was delighted to know that my score was in the marksman class. Not only that if one got a first or over it meant an extra six pence a day in pay which brought mine up to 2 1/6 a week.
We were having frequent lessons on the lewis gun and soon started firing practice then after a few months we fired a course.

The sighting was different to the rifle. Instead of getting the tip of the foresight in the centre of the U of the backsight and in line with the shoulders and aim at 6 o'clock of the target. It was:- get the tip of the foresight in the centre of the aperture backsight which I found much easier than the U on the rifle.

There was no marksman class with the lewis gun but I got a good first class. I like firing the gun because it stood on a tripod near the muzzle which held it steady. Unfortunately there was no extra pay attached to it.

Soldiering in India was much easier than in England or Ireland. In the first place we did'nt have very much work to do such as cleaning equipment, because natives did all cleaning except rifles and guns. They were known as boot boys no matter how old they were.
Each boy was allocated nine or ten soldiers and we each paid him 10 annas. They seemed happy with that and did their work very well. Although when we were going on guard duty I always made sure that the brasses were as clean as if I had done them myself and often gave them an extra polish.

This paid off too because the only time that I mounted guard with George Hill I was given the stick. An extra man was always added and after being inspected the cleanest and smartest man was excused guard duty. This was to encourage the men to be extra smart.

The stick man took the other mens blankets and private things to the guard room and back the next day. I remember George saying that he was disappointed because we did'nt do a guard together.

We did several different parades together and being about the same height we stood side by side in the ranks. One day something happened that made us both laugh. The next morning I remember C.S.M. Clarke saying "Shun. Caps off. Quick march. Halt. Left turn" and we were facing capt. Leigh Hay Clark ('B' Coy. Officer) charged with laughing on parade. Our excuse had no effect and we came out with five days confined to barracks. Often referred to as 'Jankers'.

In India this meant reporting to the guardroom every hour when off duty and some extra drill during the evening. Sergeant Headford of seven platoon being orderly sgt. took us on what should have been half an hour on extra drill, stopped after ten minutes and asked us what we had done wrong. When we told him he laughed and said "Fall out and forget the drill".

The native's dress varied according to their religion. Some men wore trousers with a shirt outside. The majority wore a white cloth wrapped round the body and in between the legs with or without the shirt. Very few people wore shoes.

The sikhs are strict on wearing the turban (a long piece of material wrapped many times round the head) often looked like the work of art.

Some religious tribes did not wear turbans or hair because it was shaved off. Others had a few strands of hair growing long from the top of their heads.
There were quite a number of untouchables with long untidy hair which looked as if it had never been washed.
A party of women of this class carried large bundles of grass on their heads to the market. The majority of them were topless with just a loin cloth. They were well developed and were known as grass bivvies.

The Moplar tribes were similarly dressed but were taller and slimmer. Some of the women when they bent forward had breasts that nearly touched the ground. One of our lads said that if they slung them over their shoulders they would be able to carry them better.

Among the larger religious groups were the moslems, but the hindus were the largest with much support from the moplers.

During 1921 and up to the time when our draught arrived in 1922, Mahatma Gandhi was planning civil disabedience against british rule, if possible without violence, but at the time there was a mopla rebellion in the southern area.

There was not a great deal of trouble at first. Although Gandhi broke the law by collecting salt from the sea off the west coast of India he gave himself up and asked the police to arrest him every time he was caught. He told his followers to do the same and not to cause any violence.

Our 1st. battalion had served in Julbulpore in the north central where the majority of the men had gone down with malaria that is why the head quarters were in Wellington when we arrived.
Not only did they have malaria but several of them had VD as well, so the battalion looked far from being fighting fit and was in need of convalescence.

Along with other natives we were to get used to were the nappies. These were busy people. Besides their shop where hair was cut and some people shaved, they came round to all who wanted them and shaved soldiers, often while we were asleep.
They started about 6 am. with no boots or shoes on not making a sound, carrying a small hurricane lamp which was stood on your chest, that is if you were asleep on your back. Then the man with a cut throat razor stradded across your bed. Loaded his brush with lather and grab the tip of your nose to guide the razor round your face and he was gone like a fly by night to the next bed.
This operation would cost you one pie per day settled up at the weekend. A hair cut cost two pie.

Apart from guard duties our days training finished at 12 noon because of the heat, which average 75° during the day when we wore toppees and during the evening khaki side caps. Sometimes the nights turned rather cold with occasional slight frosts.

From the barracks we could see various hill peaks. One in particular known as the sugar loaf did not seem all that far away. A party of us decided to walk to the top one afternoon. Among the party were:- Hill, Long, Barfield, Cotton and myself. The tea ration was left in the dining hall at 4:15 pm. We all felt sure of being back before then.

At 1.15 pm. we started off with a spirit of adventure, enjoying panoramas in different directions. After an hour we came to the foot of the Sugar Loaf then came the climb which was rather steep.

There was several rocks of different sizes dotted about, some had snakes on the top bathing in the hot sunshine. While having a good view we kept a safe distance away from them and were always on the lookout for others that might be moving around.

Eventually we arrived at the top before realising the time was 4 pm. and there was no hope of getting back before tea was cleared away.

But we were well satisfied with the magnificent views there were all round us. We could see over the top of some of the peaks while others were somewhat higher.

On the way down we dare not hurry too much in case we were not able to stop ourslves slipping or rolling down.
The time was 6.30 pm. when we arrived back to barracks feeling rather hungry and no one was surprised to find no tea was left for us so we went to the canteen for a snack.

Every day as soon as we had finished parade or exercises a 'char wallah' appeared on the verandah ready to sell char and wads (tea and cakes). He had a large tea urn with a charcoal fire underneath to keep the tea warm. There was always one somewhere around the barracks until tea time.

Part of a song about the char wallah went as follows:- "Char wallah char wallah I will follow the char wallah, everywhere the char wallah goes I will follow on".

The char wallah always kept a peachy book (to give credit). Men wrote their names and how much they owed in the book and promised to pay later. Some were honest but others had no intention of paying and wrote all kinds of names and things, hoping not to be recognised the next time but these wallahs had good memories for faces.
If they could not get money that was owed to them they reported it to the canteen manager and then refused to serve the scrounger who knew that if he wanted char and wads without going to the canteen he would have to ask someone else to get them for him.

At Wellington we collected our tea ration from a small room near the cookhouse, which meant walking about 20 yards in the open. It was usually a slice of bread with a small lump or piece of margarine on the top. The first time I fetched mine the marg disappeared. A bird we called a shite hawk, kite of the vulture family, swooped down and took it clean off the bread.

Most of the other lads were served the same and we soon learned to take two enamelled plates and put the food in between them. Sometimes we threw pieces of bread into the air and the kites would get them before they touched the ground. I was very surprised that they did not try to take the bread out of our hands.

After dark, when out for a walk, small mysterious lights floated about, which at first we thought someone was carrying a lighted cigarette and

waving his hands about, but later learned that fire flies were deceiving us. They are nocturnal beetles with abdominal light producing organs.

We soon got used to various regimental parades which included church parade, C.O.'s adjutants and R.S.M.'s.
Our R.S.M. was known as daddy Parsons. He was upright, rather short and not really smart. I think he knew his job but invariably nearly every time he gave an order he said "As you were" and very often he said "without a doubt". It seemed more by force of habit than the necessity to say it.

He had a sense of humour on the quiet. While on one of his parades he gave the order "Stand easy" and he did not say "As you were". When standing easy a soldier can move any of his limbs except his feet.
After a few seconds daddy lifted the bottom of his tunic and displayed a cork hanging on a piece of string then looked straight at a sergeant standing near me. Quickly the sergeant did the same thing displaying a cork with a slight smile on his face. There was no sign of a smile on the R.S.M.'s face as he called the battalion to attention and carried on with the parade.

This little incident quickly stirred up curiosity among new comers to the battalion like myself who had seen it. Hardly were we off parade before tongues began to wag. What was it all about?
Some of the older soldiers seemed pleased even eager to put us wise to the facts, but it tended to be a long story as far as they were concerned.

Their story started with a sergeant from 'B' Coy, who had been sent to Madras on postal staff duty with divisional Head Quarters but his wife was

left behind in married quarters. He was doing very well until some lose wallahs (male prostitutes) attracted his attention.

Things seemed to run smoothly for him for a time but eventually it came to light and the sergeant was court martialled as a result he was reduced to full corporal and sent back to duty.

Homosexuality was not new but it was a serious crime in the army and as far as I knew not very often mentioned among soldiers.

Soon after the sergeant's case, members of the sergeants mess put their head together and came up with the idea of the cork and it was agreed that all members should carry and display a cord when and where ever under any circumstances any other member displayed his cork in their presence. If any member failed to do so they would have to pay for drinks all round.

I don't know if there were anyone having to pay a round but it can be imagined what amusing thoughts the members had!
All male natives employed at the barracks were called boys, irrespective of age, and occasionally there were rumours that a soldier had relations with a boy and even a regimental policeman bragged that he had a punker wallah on the altar in a nearby chapel but believe it if you like I thought.

Daddy Parsons appeared to have reasonable domestic relations with his wife, but I sometimes suspected that the majority of the troops would liked to have rung her scraggy neck at times. Invariably every church parade she would stand on the right hand side of the arch outlet from the barrack square. The guardroom also being on the right so that the guard turned out and presented arms as

the commanding officer gave the order "Eyes right" to the battalion. She would be in direct line between the guard and the eyes of every man on parade as though she was taking the salute.
The looks she got from the men varied between amusement for her audacity to black looks wishing her off the face of the earth. On the other hand by the looks most of us got we could well have been inside the guardroom on a charge of insolence.

Once through the archway we could breathe more easily, but not for long, this eagle eyed women was waiting for us in church. She reported several men to her husband who in turn told an N.C.O. to put them on a charge and most of them received punishment. Sometimes she stood up in church to tell someone to behave himself. I could never understand her being allowed to do that when there were plenty of N.C.O.'s among us.

Because of previous unrest and the uncertainity of the natives in India we had to take our rifles and bayonets to church with 9 rounds in the magazine and one up the breech with a safety catch to the rear.
I wonder when those lads were doing jankers if thoughts ran through minds about pushing the safety catch forward in the presence of the woman above?
Her activities did not end with church parades, that was only a small item. It did not matter whether we were on or off duty, watching sport on the parade ground, at a boxing match or concert. If you came within her vision you would be scanned to the very depth.

It was at a concert one evening where she noticed a man sitting down with the bottom of his shorts higher than 4" above his knees and what she might have imagined she saw was not suitable for her 16 years old daughter to see. Perhaps the shorts were pulled up as the man sat down but that was by the way, the regulations said 4" above the knee. So when a reminder appeared on the notice board the next day it included they must not be too wide.

A word in the lady's favour she may have been proud of her R.S.M. husband and wanted his battalion well behaved and to look as smart as possible.

Not only was she keen on that but was also looking to the future of her daughter who was with her parents at most functions. One evening at a boxing match a young corporal was included in their party. He was in my squad at the depot. His parents had a dairy business in Yarmouth, Norfolk. They had given him a good education and I knew that he was keen on promotion.

It may have been with that in mind daddy and Mrs. P encourage the young couple to get closer. For once in a while Mrs. P. smiled at corporal Cotton. He tried to be sociable but from where I sat he looked rather uncomfortable at times. No doubt he realised that most of the audience were watching him as well as the boxing and I don't think anything came of it.

Since arriving at Wellington I had received a few letters from home and from Evelyn who seemed keen to keep in touch. It took at least four weeks for letters to arrive from England. The last letter I had from her she told me that she had won a prize at dancing. I was pleased for her but dancing was

not my favourite pastime and the only time I had seen any was the step dance on a brick floor of a public house.

I did not wish to spoil her enjoyment so I wished her well and hoped she would have further success and a happy life. I also pointed out that it could be five years before our return to England and many things could happen during that time. I did not receive a reply to that letter.

A few months later my Aunt Alice wrote and told me that Evelyn was married and starting a family!

After my experience with bugs on the train I was not anxious to meet with any more, but the first night in Wellington I soon realised that I was not alone in bed the bugs were after my blood.

The next day we quickly took advice from the older soldiers who were in the habit of taking their beds to pieces to burn the bugs out of the joints with a blow lamp, but there were a few lads who were not disturbed by bugs so they did not use the blow lamp. Later everyone had to do it and beds were inspected weekly.

Our beds comprised a tick filled with coconut fibre, pillow the same and was very comfortable but after more than two weeks they became lumpy and had to be picked apart. It took me more than an hour to do mine so I got one of the boys to do it who was pleased to earn an extra anna.

People who did the laundry were known as dobie wallahs. The actual washing was done by women standing in a stream, dipping clothes in water and swinging them onto a large stone. Each time the stone was hit they made a harsh noise as if to say "Take that you so and so".

The military hospital was run by the R.A.M.C. with some half-cast doctors and orderlies from the regiment stationed there. Maltby, who I had been friendly with was stationed at the hospital with some more lads from the battalion. They all had some medical training previous to and while working on the wards.

Some weeks after having a piece of tattoo put on my arm I developed a series of boils, mostly on the back of my neck and as they persisted I had to attend hospital to have a vaccine which did help to stop them.

While having treament for the boils I was on light duty which gave me time to visit Maltby at the hospital. If he was on duty I looked through or read some of his medical books. I also went to the recreation room where I caught up with some world news from papers that were several weeks old.

There were other lads on light duty who I practised playing billiards with. Private Newman from Littleport was in charge of the billiard tables.

Among the trees growing around Wellington there were several eucalyptus trees, consequently this liquid was very cheap and was used a lot to help check colds and clear the nose.

Pineapples were cultivated a short distance from the barracks. I was very surprised to see how short the rigid spiny stems were about 3′ to 4′ high with recurved leaves and we could buy them for two annas each.

Plantains grew wild nearby. They grew and looked like bananas but were very bitter. Bananas were plentiful, large and cheap, usually 10 for one anna. Sometimes we got 12 when we bargained with a wallah who had other fruit and monkey nuts.

During off duty time we often sat in the shade of a coconut tree where monkeys visited us and did various tricks and acts which no doubt they had learned from previous troops who had been stationed there. To skin a banana was no trouble to them. If we held a monkey nut up and said "Salaam" they would clasp their hands on top of their heads and look so pitiful until the nut was handed over which they took, shelled neatly and ate thankfully. Then a display of somersaults might be given before another nut was expected. We often spent a few minutes with them.

Quite a lot of rice was grown on the slopes of the hills. Various sized plots of land were flooded with a few inches of water. Cultivated by bullock power and rice plants set. As the higher plots were established the majority of water was let onto the next lower plot and so on down the hill.

These plots were called paddy fields. Paddy is uncut or rice in the husk. Three crops a year were grown on those fields.

Rice was the stable food for the country and as so much was grown it was very cheap. It was interesting to watch the bazaar owners having a meal. They did not use knife, fork and spoon. As my father often said "Fingers before forks". They produced a bowl of rice, already cooked, dived a hand in and seemed to roll the rice into a ball with the fingers and popped it into the mouth. There was no-

thing else to follow and they seem quite satisfied. Perhaps fruit of some sort was enjoyed later?
Occasionally we had rice but it was cooked in the english manner. When curry was on the menu it was always with stew at two strengths one fairly strong and the other medium. I always had the medium and liked it. Sometimes we had mountain goat which I thought was good.

After a time Hill got interested in boxing so he and I sparred together in the gymnasium and did exercises like skipping but I soon got blisters on my right forefinger. To carry on with the skipping I put the rope between my middle and third finger of the right hand but quickly broke some skin on the latter finger.
Just at that time 'B' coy moved to Mallappuram, a village on the plains towards the west coast. Another platoon from 'A' coy went to Calicut on the west coast for a period of 6 months. All coy's except H.Q. took turns in this change.

The temperature on the plains was somewhat higher than the hills and as we marched 18 miles from Tuarur railway station to Mallappuram, quite a lot of sandy dust was floating about and some of it must have got into my finger because a few days afterwards it turned septic.

I attended the hospital nearby every day to have the finger dressed but after 2 weeks it began to get worse and I could not rest at night because prickly heat developed and I itched all over. In addition bugs had been biting me which helped to make things uncomfortable.

The monsoon weather had started and the rain fell continuously. The heat was becoming worse at night. My bed was on the verandah and not far from the rain so I stripped and stood naked in the pouring rain. What a relief! I felt like staying there all night but after a time I became tired so I went to bed and slept well.

At the hospital the next morning the doctor decided to admit me because he did not like the look of my finger. He said "Get into bed and I will give you a good exam".

When he saw the state of my body he said that I had got scabies but after hearing about the bugs he changed his mind but was still concerned about the finger which had turned nearly black.
The orderly brought a bowl with some liquid in saying that I was to put my finger in it and keep it there as long as possible even at night.
Later during the day the doctor came and said that he had considered about taking the finger off but decided to give the soaking a trial.
After three days there was some improvement so the doctor dropped the idea of removing the finger and I was very pleased to hear that I had not been troubled with bugs since being admitted to the ward. That was another relief. My finger and general condition gradually improved.

There was only one ward which was often full. The doctor was kept busy with three male orderlies to help him. They dealt with all illnesses except long stay and very serious cases which, if possible, were taken to Wellington.

Several of the patients were there with a relapse of malaria which had been caught when they were at Jubulpore.

Returning to duty I did not take up skipping again but Hill and I often went for walks in the countryside where there were many coconuts groves. The nuts were very cheap, usually one anna each. I liked the milk inside. When first gathered a sharp knife would cut through the husk and shell.

Quite a number of betel-nut palms grew around the village. They are a very tall tree growing straight up. With both hands I could span round some of the trunks. It was interesting to see the natives climb those trees.

They put a loop of strong material on their bare feet and just leaped up the tree. Coconut trees seemed just as easy for them with their feet splayed more according to the size of the tree.

The betel-nut was not very big. After the inside was ground into a white powder the natives used a lot of it by putting some onto a lime leaf then chewed it. After several chews the juice turned red and they could spit the juice for many yards.

There was a fast flowing river near the village which flowed much faster during the monsoon seasons, bringing with it muddy water from the hills.
Other dangers lurked in some parts of the river in the shape of muggers (broad snouted crocodiles). It was not unusual to see a mugger being carried on a long pole by a party of natives. They carried it for some of our officers who had been out shooting.

One of the lads in 'B' platoon had a set of iron quiots. He came from Sudbury in Suffolk. His father was a lamp lighter when gas lamps were used in the streets.

Many an hour was passed away playing quoits. Most of us in the platoon joined in with knock out and team competitions. The owner of the quoits Sawman and his pal Stow were often the winners but not always. After some practice others became very good.

Those of us who could not play other sports when we joined the battalion got very little chance of playing at all. At Wellington there was only one ground to play on, that was the parade ground and the same applied to Mallappuram apart from a small piece of waste land where we were all given a chance to show our skills. I remember having one game of football, hockey and cricket but was not asked to play again!
A few were picked out to play for the platoon or company but most men like me had to be content to watch others play or find their own pastime.

Some kept pets such as a mongoose which was used by natives to distroy rats and they could kill poisonous snakes without themselves being harmed yet to people they were harmless as a ferret.

One man in our platoon was very fond of his mongoose. He took it back to England with him and got it through the customs by putting it inside his shirt.

Others had a dog which was handy to let us know when wild animals were near such as jackals or pieards. Jackals hunted in packs but pieards sometimes came into the barracks. There was no fence round the barracks and nearly every night they could be seen lurking among the trees.

Two of the lads kept some chickens in a shed near the barracks. They built nest boxes so as to collect eggs without going into the shed. One day one of them put his hand in the box to collect the eggs and felt something unusual. It was a six foot snake.

After recovering from the shock he and his pal managed to kill the snake, then wondered what they should do with it. One said that he would like it made into a belt but who would skin it.

News like that travelled very quickly and soon we all knew. Like several more I went to have a look at it. There was a discussion as to what sort it was. Eventually it was agreed that it was a young python that was not poisonous.

I thought of the many eels I had skinned, but a snake of that size was different, besides my pen knife was very small. Nobody knew how to start taking the skin off so I decided to have a go and started the same as with an eel, by cutting head nearly off but not cutting through the skin, then a short slit down the belly from the head to get a start and leaving the head on the skin. Pulling the head and skin from the body went very well at first. It seemed as easy as skinning an eel but at four feet the flesh, what little there was, began clinging to the skin so I had to very carefully cut it off as the tail got smaller all the way. At five feet the skin refused to move without breaking.

Quite a crowd gathered round to watch me skin the snake and the lads who killed it were very pleased with the five feet of skin, because there was ample to make a belt.

There were several beggars in the village, some deformed naturally but others were self inflicted. One blind man was nearly adopted by the troops, he was a likeable man. Every day he came to the barracks without assistance. When he knew a soldier was near him he would say "Any rice pie today sahib"? In a way we could not refuse him because if given one pie he was quite satisfied and said that it was enough to buy rice for a day and you would not see him again that day.

One of the tropical diseases in India was elephantiasis, which is gross enlargement of a part of the body, usually the leg due in most cases to blockage of the lymphatic vessels by the filaris (a parasitic worm). A man in Mallappuram had it in both legs and it was painful to see him walking about.

The transport system was interesting, usually by bullock tonga or carried in bundles or baskets on heads often womens', but one thing was always carried by men was our mail once a week 18 miles from the railway station. There were two men with long sticks and a string of small bells on their legs. As they jogged along the bells jingled with each step they took. This was done to help keep wild dogs and other animals at bay. I always looked for a letter each week but did not always get one because it took five weeks for letters to reach Mallappuram. Harriet sent me a christmas pudding but by the time it arrived it was mouldy. Baskets of fish were carried to the market by women who placed them on the ground in small lots for sale. There was no need to ask the way to the market the smell was enough. Mosquitos were a nuisance all the time and more so at night. We had to make sure our mosquito nets were fixed properly and with no holes in them.

Bugs were still active at every opportunity. When on guard duty one night I came off sentry for a four hour rest. Lying on the bed and nearly asleep I felt something crawling just below my nose. I pressed my finger on it and soon there was a horrible smell as it's body broke. I blew my nose and tried not to breathe in while hurriedly washing it out. The smell was bad enough at a distance without having it in the nose.

During the hottest part of the day we kept in the shade if possible but even so our thirst increased and to quench it we drank lime juice and soda, which was made by natives in one corner of the barracks and sold to us very cheap.

Captain Lieghay Clark was posted to divisional staff duty in Madras so captian Morrison was in charge of 'B' Coy. He seemed to be fond of route marches and organised one every few weeks.

Usually parades were finished for the day at 12 noon but route marches were 20 miles or more and often lasted well into the afternoon and sometimes we carried full marching order.
This was a fleece packed with a great coat, socks, underwear, house wife, holdall containing knife, fork and spoon, razor, lather brush, needles and cotton, buttons, button stick, towels, mess tin. The fleece was strapped to strong webbing braces which held 12 ammunition pouches. The braces were fastened to a strong belt which held a trenching tool with handle also a bayonet scabbard holder or frog.
A haversack containing rations was hung from the shoulder on the left side and water bottle on the right side. Twenty rounds of ammunition was carried in each pouch and of course we had rifle and bayonet.

As we left the barracks rifles were slung on the left shoulders. If there were no band or drums someone had a mouth organ to strike up a tune which invariably started the troops whistling. This seemed to help us to swing along more easily.

After some miles as mouths became dry the whistling would gradually stop and marching seemed much harder. N.C.O.s' in the ranks drew attention of the C.O. who would give orders to halt and fall out for 15 minutes rest. At this point although we all had a bottle full of water it was forbidden to drink more than a mouthful and it was advisable to spit it out because of the hot sun.

The next spell of marching was'nt quite so good. With no music or whistling some of the weaker lads began to look weary. One in particular a short thick set lad named Page nicknamed "Iggly" I often carried his rifle. Pip Newson, a small very clean lad, soon got tired of carrying full pack in the heat, someone else carried his rifle and so it went on. The strongest of us helped the weakest.

At our 2nd halt those who had developed sore feet or were too weak to carry on were given first aid and allowed to ride in a mule drawn truck that followed us.

After some refreshments and a good rest and with the thought of passing the half way mark put new life into us knowing each step we took was nearer to barracks in a round about way.

For a start there was'nt other mens rifles to carry and a mouth organ was being played not far away encouraging us to whistle again.

Our last halt and rest was beside a coconut grove. As we rested in the shade some natives were working amoung the trees. Capt. Morrison went and spoke to them and soon they were climbing the trees to cut coconuts down. Enough so that we all had a good drink of coconut milk which was very refreshing.

Apart from being a bit foot sore most of us enjoyed the day out but the last few hundred yards took the steam out of us because Capt. Morrison who had been riding on his horse most of the day gave the order "March to attention" and sat on his horse by the side of the road, expecting every man to turn his head smartly to the right when the sgt. major gave the order "Eyes right" in salute. I did not see any heads turn except to look straight ahead and ignore the order we marched on to the parade ground where sgt. major Clarke dismissed us. Nothing was said officially about the incident but two weeks later we had another route march when captain Morrison marched all the way with us leaving his horse in the stable.

Birds living around Mallapuram were interesting. Among the usual kitehawks were some vultures. Scores of jackdaws kept close to the barracks ready to pounce on any scraps. Some distance away there were quite a number of parakeets and small birds that looked like budgerigars. The most unusual sight as far as I was concerned was the flying fox, hanging upside down from trees not far from the barracks.

After six months on the plains we returned to Wellington to find another draft had arrived from England. Amoung them was Jim Sindle who went to Ten Mile Bank school when I did. His father and

mother kept the Dog and Duck pub along the hundred foot bank. He had joined 'D' Coy and I often saw him from then on.
George Hill had taken up boxing earnstly also to playing the flute with the hope of joining the drums.

During his visits to the drums he met Ned of the Butcher family who used to live on Martins farm at Ouse Bridge when he was younger. They soon got to know each other and as a result Ned came to see me.
He had been with the battalion for some time and neither of us knew each other were there so now we had a good talk about our younger days when we went to school, worked on the land and played together, how we both joined the same regiment without knowing it and where we had been.
We also talked about our brothers and sisters. How they had been plagued with dephtheria and Edith had died with it. The first time I had seen Ned was during the first world war when I went to the cinema in Ely and he was helping to show the pictures and he only had time to say "Hello".
A few weeks after we had this talk he told me that his sister Dot would like to hear from me and from then on we exchanged friendly letters for about two years.

Ned had joined the Suffolks about 18 months before I did and now he was full blown drummer playing the flute and bugle. He had taken up long distant running and already won a prize.

Hill joined the drums and was liking it and he had won his first contest as a welter weight in boxing.

Corporal Weavers who had joined 'B' Coy from the latest draft was a very good instructor on drill and musketry. He was in no. 6 platoon. One day I walked into his room while he was giving a lecture to a small group who seemed very interested so I stopped to listen. He was explaining the moves on a chess board. Although I was very keen on draughts I did not know anything about chess but listening to cpl. Weavers I soon became interested. It seemed just as easy to follow his instructions on chess as it did on musketry.

I soon realised it was quite a different game to draughts and needed much more patience, but when you know how all the pieces move and the object of the game then you can start to play.

Cpl. Weavers seemed to have the right idea of planning who should play who and he set two beginners to play each other. He did not agree with one player winning every time. That was likely to make the loser get fed up and the winner would not enjoy the game.

At first I tended to try to take pieces off like draughts. In a way that might be a good idea after gaining one more of your opponents major pieces then plan to put his king into check mate. That does not always work because your opponent might gain one of your major pieces making numbers even then you have to plan afresh.

The more I played the more keen I became and with further instructions from cpl. Weavers I gradually improved enough to give him a reasonable game but his help soon became restricted because standing orders were the N.C.O.'s should not associate with privates and the sgt. major drew cpl. Weavers attention to it.

This rather annoyed the corporal because he seemed to like the company of privates rather than the higher ranks of N.C.O.'s and he told the sgt. major that he thought it was necessary to talk to the men so as to gain their confidence and make it easier for them to follow his instructions, but he was told it was against army rules and regulations.

A few days later he told me that he was going on an N.C.O.'s course and as a result of the restrictions and extra studies he would not be able to carry on with the chess lessons but as I was interested in the game he offered to sell me the set cheaply which I accepted and continued to have some interesting games with other lads.

Like all general duty men I took my turn in occasional guards as I did not get the stick every time. Those on the main guard took turns of two hours duty at the magazine where arms and ammunition was stored. It was about 400 yards from the main guard surrounded by trees and bushes.

One night I was on duty there when the orderly officer came on his visiting rounds. He was accompanied by a lance corporal. The lance corporal carried a hurricane lamp and as they came nearer I could see the officer was (Chinny) capt. Lloyd.

When they were about ten paces away I shouted "Halt who goes there" the answer was "friend", I said "advance friend to be recognised". As they came forward I sloped my rifle and stood to attention.
The lance corporal got the order board which hung on the wall but instead of asking me what my orders were captain Lloyd went behind me and tried

to take my rifle away from me. I managed to keep hold of it and came on guard at him with the bayonet point near his body.
He said "alright Armsby, I was only testing you to see what you would do if someone attacked you". I told him that if I had not recognised who he was I should not have come to attention and waited for him to ask what the orders were. With that he asked if everything was alright and bid me goodnight.

As the light from their lamp and their foot steps faded behind trees and bushes my thoughts were not very complimentary towards capt. Lloyd. On the other hand he may have done that for my benefit because a sentry on that post was open to attack from nearly every direction.

To make things more complicated in that respect a lighted hurricane lamp stood about 10 yards in front of the sentry box to keep wild animals away during the hours of darkness. Looking back over the years I have often thought how vulnerable a sentry was as soon as he moved from the sentry box into the light from the lamp. Although there was a quiet period after the Moplar rebellion we were always kept on the alert and we were not allowed into the native parts of the towns.

It is over 60 years since I did sentry duty at that magazine, but the memory of the jackals calling out, numerous frogs croaking from a lake nearby, reptiles and various insects making all kinds of noises coupled with weird musical sounds coming from native quarters in Canoor is still with me. I always had mixed feelings with some relief each time I was relieved from that post.

Mounting guard was a special occasion for the ajutant major Frier who often inspected the guard. He had a mania for cleanliness and went to the extreme. A strip of coco matting was laid for the guard to mount on and during his inspection he undid all studs to see if the backs and insides were clean. The same applied to all brasses and cap badges. If there were any signs of dirt or stains, a charge of dirty equipment on guard would be made.

Major Frier wore a monocle and many a man would liked to have smashed that for him. He was the officer who expected the men to clean all brasses front and back including buttons and to inspect the guard on coco matting.

Regimental sports were held once a year with competitions for all sorts. Usually the only sport I took part in was 'Tug-o-war'. I was a member of 'B' coy team and sgt. Chalk was our coach. 'D' coy was often the winners with 'B' coy 2nd.

One year a donkey race was held which I entered. My mount ran well and was leading by about six lengths 50 yards from the winning post when it turned sharply into a lane leading to its stable. I had a struggle to get it back on the course but eventually we come in second. The prize was a bronze medal.

As the sports finished a thunder storm developed and the barracks was some distance away and up hill. There were several boys with riskshaws nearby. Corporal Cotton was with me as we hopped on and rode in style back to barracks in the dry. I remember it cost one rupee each. That was the only time I rode in a rickshaw pulled by a native on the trot.

After Sindle joined the battalion he and Long often went to the Y.M.C.A. with Hill and I. We also went for walks in the countryside and eventually found some tea gardens where tea and snacks could be obtained.

It was ran by an English man who very soon made friends with us and invited us to his living quarters after business hours, where he gave us a small bottle of beer each and said that he did not make a habit of selling beer but any evening we fancied a drink he would welcome us to go and buy one which we did occasionally. One evening when all four of us were there Jim Sindle was in the mood to sing. The owner agreed only if Jim kept it quiet as possible. The song was about drink measures all called pots from the smallest to one gallon.

It was rather amusing but I had never heard it before. Perhaps he had sung it in his fathers pub along the Hundred Foot bank. The "Dog and Duck".

Very often Hill and I sat on the veranda during the evening to watch games of sport such as football which was mostly very entertaining to watch especially when Means was goal keeper and in good humour he seemed to fly across the goal mouth to get the ball from any angle.

Unfortunately very occasionally he was moody when something or someone upset him then we would stand against the goalpost and watch the ball go in the net.
At those times the relief goalkeeper took over. Once Means was suspended for a month until his supporters demanded that he should play again.

The relief goalkeeper was a good player. His home was in Ely, Cambs. and he was in the drums. Ned knew him before they joined the army. His name was Gotobed and nicknamed "Charpie" because that is the Indian name for bed.

He was an interesting man who talked a lot. At that time there was a saying among the troops:- "Cut a whelk" if it was thought you were leg pulling. One day as Gotobed and others were marching back from the rifle range the corporal in charge told Gotobed to do something and he replied "Cut a whelk". The next morning he received five days C.B. for insubordination which was a set back to his potential promotion. More about him later.

Another sport we watched was hockey. A very quick game. Usually there were some very good players in the inter-company teams. The best player I saw was the C.O. lieut. colonel Wilson. He was so quick to hook the ball when it was in the air.

I well remember my only game. As goalkeeper it was up to me to keep the ball out of the net! The ball was rolling along the ground straight to me. Hoping to knock it back to the other goal, I took one mighty swipe and missed it. On looking round it went straight into my net?!
Cricket was another game to watch and there never seemed to be a shortage of good players.

When the band was with the battalion it usually played on the barrack square during Sunday afternoon and attracted most of the officers wives and families from married quarters. Very often that was the only time we saw a white woman apart from the R.S.M.'s wife.

Periodically some of the sports teams went to Calicut, a small place on the south west coast, for two weeks training. 'B' coy's tug-o-war team was in one batch. Cpl. Weavers and I were part of the team, so during our spare time we had several good games of chess at which I was learning all the time.

We made several visits to the sea, which was not far away. The water was always too rough and dangerous to go in so we had to be satisfied with walking along the beach where quite a number of rocks crabs ran about.

We were not allowed to go very far from the barracks but what I saw of it was clean with coconut and other palm trees all around.
While we were there the rest of the company had gone to Mallapuram and the monsoom season had started in earnest.

A bullock tonga was waiting for us at the railway to carry our kit 18 miles to our destination.

As we squeezed the last kit bag into the tonga rain just pelting down as it knows how to do in a monsoon. There was no room for any of us to ride and even if there was the poor old bullock had as much as it could stagger along with at 2 1/2 miles an hour.

All the party were in good health and were either members of the tug-o-war or boxing team. As darkness fell we decided to follow the tonga and hope for the best. Occasionally we broke into song or cracked jokes.
We were all in a jovial mood and were surprised when the tonga stopped at a village and the driver said that we were halfway. He went and spoke to some natives in some kind of bazaar. Soon he

called to us and we were supplied with a mug of tea made with goats milk. It was jolly good I thought and well worth the two pie each we paid for it.
After a short rest we felt refreshed and resumed our journey in the continuous rain soaked to the skin. That did not seem to worry us because there was nothing we could do about it so we followed the tonga regardless.

About 3:15 am. we arrived at the barracks in Mallapuram. We made so much noise unloading our kit from the tonga and putting it into the most convenient barrack room but there were no beds ready for us.
Most of the party changed into dry clothes and laid on the floor hoping to sleep after the other lads complained about the noise.
I was lucky because George Long was in the room and he suggested I got into bed with him. Not waiting for a second invitation I took off my wet clothes and put a dry shirt on, there were no pygamas in those days, and hopped in bed. We were very tired and were soon asleep.

Soon after reveille was sounded the next morning 1. cpl. Dunk the orderly cpl., came into the room calling "Come along lads, show a leg". When he came to our bed his hair seemed to stand up. He gasped "What's this, two in one bed. Do you know that is a serious crime?"

We hastely explained that there were no beds ready when we arrived from Calicut, but it took several minutes to convince him that it was an emergency.

Our party was given a few hours to get settled in. To make our beds we filled our bed tics with coco-nut fibre, which had to be picked to pieces. After

I had fixed my mosquitoe net up I went to catch up with orders on the company order board outside the office.

There was a surprise for me. I was to report as soon as possible to private Jack Fenn who was in charge of the mule coy. transport.

Jack was in eight platoon and was a bit of a character. He had a crown and anchor board, was a heavy weight boxer and liked his beer. He had a brother Bill who had been with the battalion but had gone home. It was said that when they were together no other two men could stand up to them in a fight but when Jack was alone cpl. Cant had given him a good thrashing after a very hard fight.

I met Jack at midday when he came off duty. He told me that I was to join him the next morning at the stables and he would show me what to do.
The next morning I arrived at the stables to find that I was to take over a mule which stood beside Jack Fenn's. It appeared that each man had one mule each to look after.
When Jack came he gave me a hand brush, curry comb and a hand pad for grooming purposes and showed me what to do.
My mule was named Tommy. He was 2-3 years old, grey in colour and looked like a greyhound with its slim features and alert eyes. He had never been ridden but I fell in love with him at once and was looking forward to see how he performed. I had worked horses on the land but never a mule. There was an old saying "As stubborn as a mule", were they really stubborn? A donkey could be, I had recent experience of that and I was soon to learn something about mules.

I was introduced to Tommy by grooming him with caution which Jack Fenn had noticed and decided to have a little fun by jabbing Tommy in his side which made him jump. I looked at Jack who had a grin on his face and I smiled at him patted my mule on his neck and carried on grooming quietly without further disturbance.

It was the practice to exercise the mules every morning and it was arranged to try to ride Tommy. We took a long rope and went into a grass field. At first the rope was tied to Tommy's bridle and I held the rope and let him trot or walk round in a wide circle.

After some time at that he seemed to be fairly quiet so I tried to get on his back but he was'nt having any. Then Jack suggested tying him to Jack's mule which was the quietest one in the stable.

This we did and Tommy could'nt get away. Jack got on his mule and one of the other lads gave me a leg up onto Tommy's back. He tried to buck and rear up but I managed to keep on and we started walking round the field.
During the next three days we did the same exercises until I was able to control him by myself. At first the trouble was he did not like me trying to get on his back so one of the other lads held him while I did so. Once I was on he did not seem to mind. Every day we got more used to each other until I was able to get on his back without help. But he remained rather touchy and quick in his movements. I soon found that if it came to a race for the stable he would be there first.

This came to fact one day, we were exercising on the firing range and Jack decided to take us over the back of the butts as a short cut to get onto the road. However, from the top behind the butts was very steep so all the other riders dismounted and slowly went down with their mules.
I had second thoughts because if I dismounted I may have had trouble in getting on again so I decided to go back and get onto the road at the entrance to the firing range.
At the road junction I wanted Tommy to turn left but he had other ideas and went straight to the stables and I could not stop him. At the entrance to the stables the eave was very low and if I had not laid on Tommy's neck goodness knows where my head would have been!
Immediately we were in the stable Tommy stopped and was quieter than I expected he would be. Having dismounted I let him rest for a few minutes then took him outside and after fixing my chin strap on my topee, round my chin I remounted.

Quietly we started going back towards the road when suddenly bells started to ring from behind a rock. They were bells on native mules ridden by Sikhs' coming down the hill. I had my topee in one hand to put the chin strap inside. Tommy took fright and turned round very sharp and I fell off cutting the palm of my right hand on a stone.
It bled rather badly so after taking Tommy back to the stable I walked to the hospital and had my hand dressed then went back to the stable. The Sikh soldiers had disappeared into their stable nearby and Tommy was calm as if nothing had happened so I thought we would try again. This time all went well. After walking up the hill to the road I let Tommy go and he soon broke into a canter which I really enjoyed.

Tommy seemed to be enjoying it as well and it was'nt long before the other mules were in sight. I thought he would stop when we caught up but no he ran right past them. In fact I had rather a job to stop him. That seemed to be the stubborn side of him.
A few days later it was my turn to take all the mules down to the river for a drink and a splash in the water. The river was half a mile from the stable so I put a bridle on Tommy and hopped on his back. They all knew the way to the river and soon started to run. Tommy did not need any encouraging, he was away and soon in front. Along the river bank was a thick row of tall bamboo trees with a gap at intervals.

Tommy went through the smallest gap, no doubt he had been through it many times before. Bamboo have some vicious thorns on their branches and both my arms got in the way of some of them!
The river bank was very steep and Tommy did'nt slack speed as he plunged down towards the water. I flew over Tommy's head into welcome sand and was I pleased it was sand. Luckily I was not hurt. As I picked myself up, ways of trying to gain better control over Tommy flashed through my mind.
All the mules were now in the river having a good drink and after a walk in the water they came out ready to return to the stables, but as we approached the building they could not get in.
A teenaged native stood nearby so I asked him to stop the mules from going back to the river while I went to open the stable door but he just stood still and let them go by. This made me angry so I punched him in the tummy and he collapsed like a concertina. I had no time to stay with him but when I came back with the mules he was gone.

Afterwards I regretted hitting the lad. It was on the spur of the moment. It appeared that he belonged to one of the sikh's who's mules were nearby. One day two sikh's stood near me and Wheyman (one of our lads) said that he thought they were going to hit me. Perhaps I was lucky? Or maybe they had second thoughts because I was not alone.

As time went on I gradually gained better control over Tommy but he still gave me some surprises. One day while exercising we were in front as usual and approaching a lane going down hill when suddenly Tommy turned round quickly. Luckily I managed to hold him and looking over my shoulder I saw a huge elephant coming up which seemed to fill the lane.

Another time we were walking quietly along the road when suddenly a python about 20 ft. long appeared on the top of a hedge close by. Tommy reared up and turned sharply. I was lucky to keep control of him. These incidents taught me to be on the alert all the time.

Although I enjoyed riding and exercising the mules the object was to keep them in good trim ready for their transport work. The fact that we did not have riding saddles proved that our comfort in that respect had not been studied.

They were pack mules used by the army to carry guns, ammunition and stores over rough ground and slopes of hills because of their sure footedness. The harlequin saddle was made especially to carry guns and other armour. Four wheel trucks pulled by teams of mules were also used on the more flatter ground.

As batches of recruits joined the battalion, those who had finished their period of service returned to Britain for discharge. Some were to receive pensions with 18 or 21 years service, while others had joined for 7 years or for the duration of the war.

Cpl. Carr, a member of the then famous biscuit family, cpl. Cant and Jack Fenn were among a batch soon to be on their way home.
I should miss Jack who had helped me a lot with the mules and memories would linger of the way he ran his crown and anchor. Every opportunity when off duty he had it on the go and nearly every day he was the winner.
We all had a medium sized kit box at the foot of our beds and nearly every time Jack had a C and A session he put his winnings in the kit box which had very little kit in it but sometimes he had to put weight on it to close it. Excepting when putting money in or taking out the box was made secure with a strong lock.
No one appeared to know how many Rupee notes Jack had. He was never seen counting them.

I had a few flutters on Jack's C and A but never lost or won very much.

When the party were preparing to go home Jack took his money in a kit bag to the post office to be exchanged into english money.

Soon after they had settled on the boat from Bombay, Jack introduced his C and A board and cpl. Cant, who dislike Jack, started to work out a plan to break him if possible. First he watched how the disc turned up while other players put their money down. After a few spells of watching he put small bets on. The anchor then started to double his stakes and kept on until eventually he did win

all Jack's money which was about £5.000,-. What a disappointment to go back to civil life. I think that would put me off crown and anchor for ever.

A man named Jasper, who had gone home, used to be a secretary in the company office. Every afternoon he produced a large book and entered everything of interest that had happened during the day. His intentions were to write his memoirs later on in life.

Since I have been writing about my life I often think what a great help it would have been now and during the past several months if I had kept a diary. Many event and names of people would have been at my finger tips at the flip of a page. It seems easy!
On the other hand it may have been too easy, as it is I have been forced to think, which has enabled me to look back and recall things that I had almost forgotten.

Since G. Hill had not been with me at Mallapuram this time I had got into the habit of playing cards, mostly solo whist, with three other lads for small stakes. As there was very little other entertainment apart from Housey Housey (bingo) cards was a good pastime. But it was an offence in the army so we had to watch out for the senior N.C.O. who at that time was corporal Davey.

His christian name was Napoleon and we called him Nap, not to his face of course.
Most afternoons when off duty he had a nap on his bed, so when we played at table we laid a blanket on it with our loose money underneath and by laying money on the blanket to make a bet, he would not hear it jingle.

I believe he knew we played for money and he gave us a warning by saying "If I catch you playing for money you will be on the mat". Once he thought he heard the jingle of money but there was none to be seen on his arrival at the table. It was under the blanket and we were playing for match sticks!

A few months after I started with the mules the powers that be thought I was good with animals and it was arranged that I should go to Poona for a months animal management course. I was given a lance corporal protection stripe (unpaid), a months advanced pay and sent to Wellington to collect a return railway ticket.

After one day and night there I was on my way to Poona. George Hill went with me to Conoor railway station and wished me well.
I left the bulk of my equipment and kit in the coy. stores and took a skeleton outfit with rifle, bayonet and 20 rounds of ammunition.
Once again I enjoyed the scenery going down the Nilgri Hills but this time I was alone. Nevertheless the ever changing views kept my mind well occupied.

Arriving at Bangalor I had just 12 hours to wait for the next train at 7 pm. I did'nt fancy hanging about the station all day. The station was quiet with not many people about. As I walked along the platform I noticed a police office and wondered if they would take care of my rifle while I had a look round the town, but on making enquiries they would not take the responsibility of it. I did not want to carry my rifle in the town so as there was no one in the waiting room, I left it under a seat and took a horse drawn carriage and rode in style around the town. There

were some interesting typical indian buildings, such as the mosque and plenty of mud built bazaars thatched with banana branches and leaves. Returning to the station my rifle was safe enough and there was still no one waiting for trains. I had taken enough sandwiches with me to last the journey of three days and two nights. Tea was available at the larger stations.

I was glad when the train came in for Poona. There would be no changes. At first I had a compartment to myself but at the next stop there was a party of pharisees got in. They are a Jewish sect from the middle east, who settled in India and appeared to be doing very well for themselves. This party looked very clean and respectable and kept close together. There were two very good looking women, aged about 39, almost white and dressed similar to Hindu women with no head covering.

Although I was quite close to them they did not take any notice of me or my rifle, which I kept hold of, especially as more natives entered the compartment.

Being alone on a train among Indians of various tribes was not a happy thought. I was not afraid because no one tried to interfere with me in any-way. It was just that I had no one to talk to and now as night and darkness was creeping on I had plenty of time to think.

Since the Moplar rebellion had stopped and civil disobedience had been checked for the time being probably the natives took it for granted that troops would be travelling around sometimes alone. I think Ghandi was in prison at that time, but he had'nt given up his struggle for independance.

That night I laid on a top shelf next to one of the Pharisee women. She slept like a log but I only had cat naps and felt like sleeping with one eye open so that I should not lose sight of my rifle.

It was a relief the next morning to arrive at Poona station and find a truck to take me to the bandroom of the Argile and Southern Highlanders which was to be the living quarters for members of the animal management course.

I was the last one to arrive and found that the party came from different regiments or squadrons in various parts of India.

After reporting to the veterinary officer I met some of my fellow students. One of the first was corporal Rann from an artillary regiment stationed near Bombay. He was a very good friend to me. At the same time we met lance corporal Marshall of the Manchester regiment stationed at Punjab. He appeared to be a nice lad and we quickly made friends to last during the course.
After breakfast we assembled in the lecture room some distance from the barracks. There we were checked in and given an animal management book to read and study.

Our first lecture was on the general care and welfare of animals in general, followed by lectures on various animals, beginning with the horse and parts of its body from illustrations and drawings on the black board. The latter part of the day was spent getting settled and meeting other students. They were of various ranks including three full sergeants from different regiments and with several years service. It seemed that some of them knew as much as our instructors and had come there on a refresher course.

Corporal Rann found it was not necessary for him to do any studying after lectures.
Arriving back to the barracks with the sound of bagpipes it seemed that we might have music while we worked.

I rather like the sound of bagpipes from a distance, but it was a different matter when the bandsmen marched up and down the room where we tried to read and study while they practised on these bags of wind.
Luckily it was not continuous, so I read as much as possible during quiet spells and did some writing at other unsettled times and I did some reading in the lecture room.

The second day onwards it was all go from the lecture room to the veterinary stables where we practised grooming and were given lectures and demonstations by the vetrinary office how to judge the horses health, defects and age. It is possible to tell the age by their teeth, which gradually protrude as they grow older.
After some years the horse's teeth need regular attention. They may become irregular, in which case they have to be rasped. I almost felt the nerve ends under my teeth being rasped as I watched a horse being treated. Surprisingly it stood quite calm and seemed to like it.

Next we all took part in practising taking the horse's temperature. This was done by inserting the thermometer into the rectum. Care had to be taken because some horses will kick but if someone lifts up the front foot the same side as you are standing it can not kick.

One day a horse was to be killed owing to a severe disability so we all watched the veterinary officer place a loaded humane killer at the centre of the horses forehead and strike it with a mallet. All use and strength left the horses legs and it just collapsed.

Another day we saw a horse being castrated. First it was given an anaesthic to put it down then the scrotum was cut open and the testicles removed.

Some of these lectures and demonstrations were above my every day work with mules but it was very interesting to learn how experts deal with problems that does happen to animals.

Knowledge of the farriers work seemed more down to earth because we all had to take part in shoeing the horse. First various sized shoes were made then the hoof trimmed and a shoe fitted for size. When the right size was found, it was heated up and placed on the hoof for a few seconds burning it level then plunged into cold water to cool.

The shoe was then nailed on with the nails coming out the side of the horny hoof and twisted off with the hammer head then filed off smoothly. Although I had'nt anything to do with horses in India most of the officers made use of them playing polo. The C.O. and company officers had one each and they had their own grooms. In view of this I thought that it was advisable to learn as much as possible.

We had lectures on various dieseases, such as foot and mouth disease, anthrax, colic and many other complaints and how to threat them. How to groom and feed horses and mules.

We were often asked questions during the lectures and if a wrong answer was given the right answer was explained fully, which seemed to be the best way to learn.
Some of the senior N.C.O.'s were able to go out in front of the class and give a talk on various subjects. No doubt they had been on these courses before. For me it was hard work especially trying to read and study with the weird sound of a bagpipe being practiced.
Sometimes during the evening I went with corporal Rann to the canteen for a meal or refreshment and on Sundays we went for walks as far as we were allowed to go. The native bazaars were out of bounds so I could'nt say very much about Poona except as far as we went there were different schools for military purposes. Lance corporal Barber from my battalion was on a P.T. instructors course at a school in the vicinity.
Corporal Rann told me about a street in Bombay name Grant Road where every house was a brothel and there were women of many nationalities exposing themselves against a glassless barred window, inviting men to go inside.
He said that had Bombay been nearer he would have taken me there just to see what it was like but I told him that I had no wish to go there because black women did not attract me, moreover, when I first joined the battalion quite a number of the men had contacted veneral disease in one form or another.

It was because of this that a brothel was introduced near the barracks for the use of the troops. A medical officer visited the brothel every morning and inspected the women and it was said that he "dipped his wick" as the saying went, sometimes after the inspection. Even so, I still did'nt fancy them.

Like me, lance corporal Marshall had not been with his transport section very long so we often studied together and he joined corporal Rann and me in the recreation room.

After the second week he ran short of money and said that his regiment had promised to send him some any day. As he seemed a very nice genuine sort of lad I lent him 10 Rupees. We were both confident that we would get our money back when Marshall's came through.

During our last week there he was very angry that his regiment had not sent him any money and said that they had let him down, but as soon as possible after rejoining his regiment he would send us our money.
He could not thank us enough for helping him out and we parted good friends.
Our examination took most of one day, with written questions in the morning and verbal in the afternoon. I remember being asked my opinion of some crushed oats. I had not seen any before so I said "fairly good". In fact they were poor! Nevertheless I was given a pass certificate to take back with me. Although corporal Rann did very little studying he passed with credit.

The journey back to Wellington was uneventful but on arrival the barracks were almost deserted because of rat plague. Apart from a few in the C.O.'s office the battalion had moved about 2 miles away and were in tents. One private soldier had died and another was in hospital.

I reported to the orderly room and saw the C.O. lieutenant colonel Wilson. He welcomed me back to the battalion and asked me if I enjoyed the course and if I would like to keep the lance corporal stripe. I said "yes" to the first question and

"no" to the second. Nothing was said if I had passed or not so I kept the certificate in my pocket.
I was taken to the camp in pouring rain. All the tents had grips dug round them leading to a trench that carried the water away. George Hill soon made room for me in his tent because 'B' Coy was still at Mallapuram.

As usual during monsoons the rain fell continuously day and night. When we were in barracks at these wet times we did various exercises on the verander but in tents it was nearly impossible to do much except having lectures or eduction lessons.
By now George had become a full blown bugler and took his turn in guard duties for 24 hours sounding the necessary calls. Most of the buglers were recognised by their speed or sound. George was the slowest and I think he tried to be too regimental, but every note was correct.

After three weeks in the tents we were all pleased to move back to barrack rooms which had been cleared of rats and disinfected.
I joined the battalion transport section where lieutenant Bott was the officer in charge and sgt. Johnson was his assistant.
I was given rather an awkward mule to look after and was warned that it was likely to kick, so I groomed him with caution and we got on reasonably well together.
One morning while grooming him as usual with a mitten in a half circular movement, lieutenant Bott came along and after watching me for a few minutes he said "Let me show you the way to do that". I took the pad off my hand and gave it to him, thinking he was an officer I might learn something. After putting the pad on his hand he raised it up then brought it down with force onto

the mules hind quarters instantly the mule shot both hind feet into the air narrowly missing Bott's head. He dropped the pad and went of without a word. Sgt. Johnson said "Don't take any notice of him". I had already made up my mind about that because it took some minutes to calm Snowy, my grey mule down again.

Sgt. Johnson's comment set me thinking that the incident with my mule was not the only thing that he was concerned with and I soon learned what it was. It appeared that lieut. Bott had two horses which he used for playing polo and riding for pleasure. These horses needed food and Bott was responsible for the payment of it.
The only corn that our mules received was a ration of gram, grown locally and Bott had part of that ration diverted to his horses. Hence the reason for sgt. Johnsons dislike for him.
Snowy was not such good fun to look after as Tommy at Mallapuram where I had enjoyed some good rides and we were able to give our mules a good wash in the river. At Wellington it was quite different. The going was often rough meandering through rocks and fast flowing water, not to mention steep inclines where it was impossible to ride, even when the mules were not carrying harliquin saddles loaded with guns and ammunition.
One day I had a pleasant surprise. A letter from corporal Rann saying that because of the non payment of our loan to lance corporal Marshall he had written to Marshall's C.O. telling him what had happened and he had received a reply with his money and an apology also that I should receive mine very shortly.
Sure enough I received my ten Rupees with a letter of apology the next day.
Corporal Rann explained that he had given Marshall a month to repay the money without result. The C.O. had given Marshall a severe reprimand.

I at once sent a letter of thanks to the C.O. and a special one to corporal Rann for his help and advice during the course.
After some months we had a change of mules, not by my choice, the one I got was a large old black one which ought to have been retired some years previous. It had a back bone that protruded about 3 ins. I tried riding once. Talk about a B.S.A., I would rather have sore feet and told the sergeant who quickly transferred me to another transport section with waggons and teams of mules which was quite different. Most of us had two mules to groom. There were teams of two or four to each waggon according to the load. I was getting used to that when rumour had it that we were moving to Mesopotamia, now known as Iraq, which was a dangerous country to live in.

Every ten years, if there were two battalions in a regiment, the battalion serving abroad would gradually move back to England and the other battalion would go abroad and so it was our 1st battalion to be on the move.
When rumours start about moves there are many speculations as to where, some think they know, others say they know where and sometimes it leads to serious arguments. Very rare these movements are put on the notice board especially in war time. I don't suppose they ever were.
After a week or so it was confirmed that a battalion of the Inerskillern's had gone to Mesopotamia. Immediately an argument started as to why they were moved there. Some thought while others knew it was a punishment because many members of the battalion had misbehaved themselves. How and where did the rumour start that we were going to Mesopotamia! Had our battalion misbehaved? Not according to general Massey Lloyd, commander in chief of the Madras district recently. He said that we were an example to the

british army and he was very pleased with our turn out. No doubt his report was well received by his nephew captain Chinny Lloyd of 'B' coy.
An unusual item appeared on the notice board one day. A retired colonel living at Oatacamund, 2,000 ft. higher up the Nilgri Hills, had invited all members of 'B' coy to visit his house and be entertained for a day. Most of the company took advantage of the offer.
As usual the so-called carriages on the train had no sides, so we were not obstructed from seeing the ever changing views which were somewhat different from going down from Canoor to the plains. Going higher we could gradually see over the top of some of the peaks.
On our arrival at the station it was hard to believe that we were 8,000 ft. above sea level, Oatacamund was the highest point.
There was no need to wonder why army officers went to live there in their retirement. It was a delightful place. The temperature was a little lower than in Wellington but still quite warm during the day.
A fine hotel stood near the railway station and nearby was a shop that stocked amost everything for the household, including food.
There were several well built houses with large gardens and grounds. A C of E church could be seen in the distance.
One of the colonel's staff met us and led us to the house where the colonel, his wife and daughter welcomed us with a refreshing drink and a good lunch.
Afterwards we split into three parties. One staying in the house for a time playing billiards and other games while the second went into the gardens to play clock golf, tennis and other games, the third went sight seeing with the colonel who pointed out quite a number of wonderful views.

While walking around we came across a polo game in play. I wondered if lieut. Bott was among them with one of his horses which made me think of the gram that he was pinching from our mules.
Each party changed over with the others so that we all had a chance to take part in all that went on and we all had a very enjoyable time.
About 4.30 pm. we sat down to tea with a variety of edibles quite different to our usual bread and margerine or char and wad. After which the colonel said how pleased he and his family were to have us with them and hoped we all had enjoyed ourselves. Our senior N.C.O. replied for us and we sang "For he's a jolly good fellow", then made our way to the train and back down the hill with a different view to Wellington.
There were still rumours that we were moving in the near future but no one knew where to. Before we go I will try to recall a few more things that happened.

Although N.C.O.'s were forbidden to mix with privates, corporal Cotton and I were still friends. I remember the derzi shop getting on fire and Cotton was there when some of the things were salvaged and he was given a quilted bedspread which was not damaged. He kept it for a time and gave it to me. Although it was a bit bulky to pack in with my kit, I was pleased with it because when we had hard beds I layed on it and sometimes if the weather was very cold at night it was as good as two extra blankets.
Later on Cotton wished he had not given it to me. In fact I used it a few years after returning to civil life.
Our big drummer was named Pilgrim and stood well over six foot. He was the heavy weight champion of the battalion but sometimes he took to drink

and he was known to have 12 pints of beer between 12 noon and 1 pm. Occasionally he appeared so drunk that he could not undress himself.
Both Hill and Ned said that several times they helped to undress him but when they came to his belt (where his money was) next to his skin he dared anyone to touch that! No one ever did because they knew he had a knockout punch.
George Hill was rather amused by Pilgrim because he said that it was well practised by the side drummers sometimes to turn their drums over all together when they were on special parades like beating off retreat. Sometimes Pilgrim would do it unofficially and Hill knew that to turn a big drum over and keep in time with the others was a most complicated thing to do. No other big drummer had been known to do it.
After Barfield got settled down in 5 platoon, he became interested in photography and he developed his own pictures. Often when I went to see him he had some nice views of the Nilgri Hills. Had I have been more interested in them then I might have had some of them to help in writing now.

When both 'B' coy and 'D' coy were at Wellington, Sindle often joined Hill and me on our visits to the tea gardens or the Y.M.C.A. and sometimes Long went with us but he had found other friends in 5 platoon.

Corporal Davey had been promoted to lance sgt. but he continued to live in the room with us and often practised swinging his clubs.
Ginger Nightall, who had been musketry storeman for several years had now completed 18 years service and was retiring on a small pension. He liked his beer and after pay day every weekend during the evening he would be much worse for drink.

His home was in Littleport and when he knew Hill and I came from not so many miles away he often told us about his life in the fens added to his experience in the army.

A man was attached to us who had married a black Indian woman some years previous. He lived with her and their children in a mud built place in Canoor and came to the barracks every day to take charge of a party of Indians who kept the barracks and lavatories clean.

Every time another regiment took over the Wellington barracks, he transferred to them and was hoping to do so as long as possible and then retire and settle down with the natives. He seem quite happy with life and did not want to go back to England. He had his own reason for that.

Very often rumour has some fact. We did'nt wait long before we had the order to pack our kit and we were soon on our way to Devlali or as it was well known as Dulali and was a transitional camp where the troops stayed for a month or so when first going to India to get acclimatised before going to a much warmer place.

Devlali is about 2,000 ft. above sea level and cooler than many places in India. The reason we did'nt stay there when we first arrived was because we went straight to Wellington.

There were several wooden huts where the troops normally stayed, but these were all occupied so we had to go into tents. Our tent was large enough to hold all eight platoon. When we arrived there was a gang of wallahs seemed to be waiting for us. Here are some who I remember:- Char, Wad, Ham and

Bacon, Name on kit bag put it, Monkey nut, Nappie, Derzi, Banana, Orange and many more all wallahs calling one against the other hoping for trade. Monkey nuts were very cheap because they were grown in fields nearby. The canteen had a stall with roasted nuts and did a very good trade with them.

During the day the walls of the tent was rolled and stood up so that air could flow under the tent. One evening private Gilbert was helping to unroll the wall when a scorpion ran up his leg and stung one of his testicles. He was rushed to the first aid post and received anti-poison treatment. It was'nt often these creatures struck but we never knew where they would be lurking. I always felt concerned if a centipede should get on me. They have so many legs that could dig in but advice was given that in the event of an attack "sweep it off the same way it is going".

Native quarters could be seen in the far distance and as usual they were out of bounds. Flat top buildings occupied by vultures often eating something were on the outskirts. it was said "thats how dead bodies were disposed of".

On thing I like to remember of Dulali was several times we had sea pie for the main meal that was a double decker meat pudding cooked in a large boiler and brought to our tent. I can taste it now.

After a month we moved to Calabar barracks just north of Bombay and we still were not sure where we would finally settle.

It was very pleasant there with trees among the barracks blocks and nice civilian houses not far away. Very often tree rats scampered up the trunks to disappear among the branches.

We had been there about a week when I developed a high temperature and was sent to hospital which was nearby and ran by the R.A.M.C. One of our lads named Chapman was orderly on duty. He put me to bed and made me comfortable.

The next morning the doctor came round and said that I had the flu and should stay in bed for a few days.

On the fourth day I developed a terrible itch under my armpits and in between my legs around my privates. I soon discovered there were hundreds of tiny red insects crawling around.
I told Chapman who said that they were crabs, a louse almost like a tiny spider. He took action at once and told me not to tell anyone as it was unheard of to get things like that while in hospital. He shaved me where ever the insects were. Then gave me a bath and treated me with blue unction. I thinks its the same as some sheep dip.

I don't know if Chapman told the doctor, but I never heard it mentioned by anyone and it may have been fortunate that I never saw nor felt any more of them. The only snag was when hairs started to grow again in various parts it was little different to meeting pins and needles.
Later when I saw Chapman he said "Have you had crabs on the rocks anymore"? We had a laugh and my answer was in the negative.

For the rest of my stay in Bombay I spent mostly on light duty so I was'nt able to see much of Bombay, but one day I did get to where there were some shops or bazaars and bought a piece of sugar cane which I had never seen before.
Some of the other lads did jobs in different parts of Bombay. For instance George Long was a temporary military policeman and spent some of his time in the Grant Road area where his duty was to advise men in uniform not to go in any brothels, but if they did then he had to report them.

We had been near Bombay a month and rumours were moving us to various places but not many took any notice. However sooner than most of us expected orders came out to pack our kit as we were to embark on the Glengorm Castle the next day.
As we left Bombay harbour I had been in India exactly two years and we still did'nt know where we were going to. As usual rumours started to circle until the next day, when we were well away from any land official orders were posted on the notice board, we were going to Gibraltar.

The Glengorm was sister ship to the Breamer Castle but not so old. The capacity was about the same but the whole ship seemed that much better. It did not roll and pitch quite so much and it seemed to travel faster.

The journey seemed nearly the same as going out only just the opposite. We stopped at Port Said again to refuel. The same people in the same boats were offering similar things. In fact things had changed very little.

We arrived in Gibraltar harbour soon after mid day 20th April, 1924 and with 5 more lads I was detailed to go into the hold to put our kits into the net as it came down to unload. We each recognised

our own kit as we came to it. In addition to a kit bag I had a small tin box which I put safely on the top of a net full to make sure it did not get squashed and I watched it go up. That was the last I saw of it for a month.
My kit bag with the rest of 'B' coy baggage went to the spanish frontier and my tin box went to Buna Vista, the other end of Gib. The box had my name, number and 'B' coy on, the same as my kit bag and yet it went the opposite way. I reported it as soon as I realised it had not gone to the frontier with us. I could never understand why it took so long to get it.

It was eventually found not far from the guardroom at Buna Vista and had been been broken open. When I received it I discovered that several things had been stolen, things that I had collected or was taking home as gifts also some Indian money. Nothing was done about it.
Lance sgt. Davey was sent in charge of the advance guard. When we arrived he was under arrest, drunk, in the guardroom. It appears rum was very cheap so he took advantage of it and that got the better of him.
Recently he had been living in a sgts. room but he was soon reduced to corporal and came to live in our room. To try and gain back his lost stripe he decided to be strict off as well as on parade.
On Sunday afternoons if we were not on guard duty, we rested on our beds or went for walks. Cpl. Davey thought different. There was a piece of orange peeling on the floor so he ordered private Stow to sweep up the room. We had a saying if we took anything with a pinch of salt that was Him-a-ha and Stow said it to cpl. Davey and walked out of the room.

Cpl. Davey turned to me and said sweep up the room Armsby. I said "Him-a-ha" and walked out. He then turned to private Kemp, who came from Littleport, and told him to sweep the room up and he did which let Stow and I down straight away. That gave cpl. Davey courage to put Stow and I on a charge of disobeying an order. The next morning we were marched into the coy. office with caps off and faced captain Lloyd who was then 'B' Coy officer. He listened to Davey's evidence then to our reply in which we both said that we thought Cpl. Davey was overstepping the mark on Sunday afternoon, especially when there were only two pieces of orange peel on the floor and we always rested or went out at that time.

I always seemed to get on well with capt. Lloyd. He looked at me and said "Well Armsby, the army rules are you should obey all orders given to you by your superior officer and if you think it unfair then you should complain about it. However I will dismiss both cases but don't let it occur again". To cpl. Davey he said "I would like to speak to you". Later we heard that Davey got a good telling off and was told to mind his p's and q's.
Stow and I told Kemp what we thought of him, then the atmosphere in the room was quiet for a time until Garwood, a man who's bed was next to mine acquired some bottles of beer one evening and he invited cpl. Davey and another lad to join him in a booze up behind some large water tanks nearby. Davey still feeling sorry for himself joined the party. It was nearly midnight when Garwood came in talking with a loud voice and waking most of us up. He had left Davey and his mate outside.

I told him to be quiet and he said "Get out of that bed I'll soon quieten you". I got out of bed and he said "Alright Armsby, I did'nt mean it" and he undressed got into bed and was soon asleep. I did not hear Davey come in.
Garwood was a man who usually made a mountain out of a mole hill, but he was quiet about his booze up. When we were in India he had a bitch dog as a pet which had a litter of pups and all during the event he was under his bed helping the bitch to deliver each pup and made more fuss about that than any mid-wife would delivering a baby.
Often when he went out he came back with tales of very important people he had met and exciting things that was suppose to have happened. The first night we were in Gibraltar exciting things did happen, he went into town and had a few glasses of creme de menth and on the way back to the barracks he lost the use of his legs. His mates carried him most of the way then put him down outside his room and he crawled the rest of the way which caused some excitement. It appears this drink does not effect the head very much but it does the legs.
He appeared to be lucky because several others went into the town and met colonel Scott C.O. of the troops on the rock. He was in civilian clothes and they did not know who he was but that did not matter, he took their names and reported them for not saluting him. Most of them received some days C.B.

Colonel Scott was a very smart soldier in mufte or uniform and once seen never forgotten, especially if he caught a soldier improperly dressed or who did'nt salute him. He would give them the length of his rough tongue and report them. Aldershot was reckoned to be the strictest garrison town in

the british army and col. Scott brought Gibraltar a close 2nd. he always kept the military on their toes.
There was no transport attached to 'B' coy at the spanish frontier so I went back to duty and competition for the guard stick started again and the first time on the list I managed to get the stick. The next time on the list I did not get the stick because Newson did every time we were booked for guard together. He was not very big but there is no doubt he was the cleanest man in 'B' coy.

I only did two guards during the six months we were at the frontier. There were two sentry posts and I had one spell of duty at each. The main one was opposite the gate where people passed through to cross over the frontier which included many hundreds of dock workers from Lalina and other parts of Spain. They were all checked both ways by the civilian police.

We were quite near the sea and could see across the bay to Algeciras. Twice a week we had bathing parades until we were able to pass a test to swimm 200 yds in canvas. I practiced hard until I was able to do it but found it hard work.
Sometimes with others I went to Catalan or Sandy Bay for a swim because it was much cleaner off the east coast and it was only a mile to Sandy Bay which was the best.

There was a stretch of flat land of about half a mile between the vertical end of the rock and the first fence of the frontier. The largest part of this area was a horse race course and on the rest were sports grounds, a rifle or firing range and a road.

The road leading into the town seemed too chalky. It was sprayed with water every day and even then it soon got dusty. Probably the hundreds of dock workers walking backwards and forwards helped to stir the dust up. The goods transport was mostly by pack donkeys.
As it was'nt far into Lalina a party of us got passes and walked in the town to see a bull fight. It was an elaborate affair with many flags flying around. When all is ready for the fight to begin a team of horses trimmed up with ribbons and brasses are ridden in and made to bow to the celebraties then continued round the ring and taken out through the same door that they came in. Next a toreador entered on horseback with a lance under his arm. He rode round the ring then the bull entered and stood for a few seconds looking around when he saw the horse he charged after it, but was beaten back by the lance being thrust into his body. This was repeated 3 or 4 times which seemed to make the bull become more infuriated.
Two men then went into the ring and teased the bull with red flags. Several times they were chased behind protection boards or the men turned to one side hoping the bull would miss them, but they were not always luckly. Sometimes one was knocked down then there was a struggle to get up and dash behind the board which excited the audience, some of whom shouted as though they hoped that the bull would win.

After a few minutes of flag waving the toreador might have another go. In some of the fights the horse was injured, perhaps with its intestines exposed then it was taken out, repaired, and used again in the next fight.
The torment was carried on with long darts which were thrown to hang from the bull's withers.

By this time the bull was really mad and the matador went in with his sword under a red flag to tease a little more and slip to one side as the bull charge, then at the appropriate time the sword was hopefully plunged into the bull's heart. Loud applause was given to the matador each time he was successful. If the bull was not killed outright it was soon completed by another man who hammered a spike into the bull's poll.
At the end of each fight the decorated team of horses came on and dragged the dead bull out. Altogether six bulls went through a similar procedure.
This was a cruel sport but after some complaints protection was given to the horse. Even so I would not go to see any more like that.

Later I saw a comic bull fight in Algicairs which was really funny. The bulls were young and not killed. The toreadors jumped and others leap frogged over the bulls and generally played around with them until they were tired. Five or six others were brought in and similar displays were repeated to the amusement of the audience.

Sometimes these young bulls got really angry and had not the staff been well trained to dodge the horns, they could well have been seriously injured.

As we crossed the Algecairs bay several porpoises seemed to act as escort or were trying to race us as they came out of the water and plunged in again.

After we had been in Gib. a few months an offer appeared on the notice board for the return fare to England, we could have one month leave, but it was to be staggered over six months.

Most of us would have liked a month leave as we had not been on leave for over two and half years but not many had £5, because it was easy to spend our 21,- to 24,- a week.

The Londoners in my platoon l/cpl. Tanner and private Young had the urge to go and quickly overcame their shortage of money by offering to wash other mens shirts etc. for a small payment.
At first the snag was water. There were some large water tanks nearby which were all padlocked and the keys were kept under lock and key in the guardroom, but these lads cleverly found a way to get it without unlocking the taps. A bit risky perhaps but everyone kept mum.
They worked hard for nearly three months until enough for their fare was raised, plus a little pocket money.
Most of us envied them as they went to catch their boat. I had considered it, but having memories of the rough trip going by the Bay of Biscay on our way out and the fact that we were due to go home in about 18 months time, I really did'nt think it was worth the expense and discomfort.

Archie Richardson from March slept in a bed next to me. He had been one of our solo school for some time and occasionally we went to the town for fish and chips and a drink which was mostly coffee royals. This was rum and coffee with or without milk and sugar for 4 pence.

We always kept a sharp lookout for colonel Scott, who always seemed to be on the lookout for trouble.
There were several pubs, but we did not often go in them. Food was more in our line and we soon found a small fish and chip restaurant which was good and reasonable in price.

On the King's official birthday, if it was convenient, we trooped the colours and had been practising for it early in June. Being away from battalion H.Q., 'B' coy practised on the frontier parade ground, then met the rest of the battalion once on the Alamedia the other side of the town where the actual trooping was held.
This gave the battalion an opportunity to show off the colours and smartness of troops to a large audience on the slope of the rock where there could be many seats and the general would take the salute in the front.

I always found these parades rather exhausting owing to having to stand to attention or at ease so long. Sometimes one would faint. To stand and look at one thing for long is fatal. Occasionally I felt a bit faint, but always kept my eyes moving around.
That same year trouble was brewing in China especially where we had some troops in Weihai Wei, a few miles from Shanghai. There was some question if we should go and reinforce our troops already there, but as our 2nd battalion was due to go abroad the next year it was arranged for them to go.
It is a very rare occasion for two battalions of the same regiments to meet because one is kept at home while the other is abroad for several years, but as the 2nd battalion would be passing Gibraltar it would be a unique opportunity to stop for a few weeks and both battalions troop the colour together.

This was arranged and each company in alphabetical order played each other at football and both battalions prepared to troop their colours on August 1st. that being Minden day when the Suffolk's helped to win the Battle of Minden.

As usual I was one of those picked to make up the number for 'B' coy's guard and we were doing well until one day lieut. Bott arrived on the parade ground, I had'nt seen him since being with the transport in India.
Now he was in charge of the guard and as soon as he caught sight of me he looked daggers at me as much to say now I'll get my own back. He got the guard marching in line across the parade ground, then came straight up to me and started walking backwards so that if I had taken the normal step I should have tread on his toes. Perhaps that's what I should have done but I did not and the next day I was not on the guard.
He did not report me or make any charge against me. Cpl. Davey and sgt. Chalk could not understand it. That seemed to be Bott's revenge?

At that time Gibraltar was a fortress. With its long range guns it controlled the mouth of the mediterranean sea, the spanish frontier and for many miles all round. It was a base for the mediterranean fleet which, although the first world war had taken its toll, still controlled the mediterranean sea and british people were proud of our navy.
The maintenance of the fleet was carried out in the dockyards at Gibraltar and Malta where thousands of people were employed.
Very often one of the naval boats stayed in the harbour for the weekend and the staff held a dance in a large gymnasium near Buna Vista barracks. Tickets were usually available for troops stationed on the rock, also for members of the dock staff and their families.

On November 11th, 1924 we held our remembrance parade outside the frontier barracks. It was very cold as the command "Rest on your arms reverse" was given, I remember as we stood to attention

with the muzzles of our rifles resting on our left toecaps and both hands resting on the butts we bowed our heads in two minutes silence. After a few seconds some noses began to drip, which caused us to sniff and with everything so quiet it sounded like the troops were crying but it seemed so funny even cpl. Davey had to laugh.
When we moved to Gib. C.S.M. Clark retired and C.S.M. Meeks took his place. It seemed to me that he should be retired as well. His room was close to ours and every morning he came on to his verandah to cough up flem from his tobacoo smoke filled conjested lungs.
His antics on parade amused me. Everytime he gave a word of command he screwed his face upwards and if the order was attention instead of saying "shun" for short and sharp as most instructors did, he said "chew" which sounded and he looked so comical.

At the end of November I was posted to garrison H.Q. and lived in a barrack block known as the grange in the town centre. Other men on various jobs lived there. Some did duties in the Governor's house or were clerks in offices. In a block next to ours was a unit of red caps or military police.
My job was to issue fresh water to married quarters. A Gibraltarian brought a water cart pulled by a mule from the transport depot at 9 am. every day except Sunday. The cart was filled with water from a pump on the promenade and the fresh water came from a large tank under the spanish cathedral.
After the driver got used to me he filled the first load then we went to various houses occupied by service men on the staff. Some had tanks and caught water when it rained, but others could not catch any. The adjutant to the Governor general

needed five pails full every day and others had four, three, two or one according to their numbers in family.
I had two pails or buckets, which hung on the back of the cart. I don't know if they had ever been cleaned but they looked very dirty when the other men handed them over to me, so I got some Vim and gave them a good clean and kept them so. It was soon appreciated by all the people where I took the water.
One place where I left two pails full was not on my list but I had orders to do so by C.S.M. Cheoh, in charge of H.Q. employees and the place was the Y.M.C.A. I usually called there about 10.45 am. when he gave me a cup of tea and a cheese cake.
Captain Leigh Hay-Clarke was the only Suffolk man on the garrison staff who's house I went to. He and his wife had three servants, one Suffolk man and two spanish girls with them. I never saw the captain, I wondered if he still had his cycle.
Another place I went to a lieut lived with his male servant who was cook general. He and most of the others were R.E.'s were in charge of or did engineering or maintenance work for the garrison H.Q.
Even in the driest time, when the most water was needed I always finished my days work by 12 noon and without doubt it was the easiest job I ever had during my life.
My driver would take the mule and cart back to the transport depot and he called for me each morning with a cart full of water and very often that was enough for the day.
During the warmer weather I went with some of the other lads to the garrison canteen for a drink of beer which was not far along the road. This gave us an appetite for lunch at 1 pm. followed by an afternoons leisure.

The only time our beds were not made up was on Friday morning, that was when the garrison adjutant came round to inspect our bedsteads for bugs. This had started because one man would not bother to debug his bedstead even though they bit him rather badly.

One thing I was pleased about leaving India and several times on the way to Gib. I thought thank god we shall be free from bugs only to find there were just as many and the walls in our room at H.Q. was honey combed by them. They came out of holes in the ceiling and dropped on our beds. So at least every Friday morning we took our bedsteads to pieces, debugged them with a blow lamp and left them for inspection.
Most of leisure time was spent gambling, especially during the afternoons when Richardson and Harris were there, and it was easy to find a 4th to make a solo whist school.

Really it was only a pastime gamble because as a rule we played 1, 2, 3, which meant 1d. for solo= 5 tricks, 2d. for abundance, 9 tricks or mazair lose them all 3d., abundance declare 13 tricks or mazairevare lose them all but lay cards on the table after the first round so no one lost or won very much. Sometimes we doubled the stakes to make it more interesting.
The best of it there were no N.C.O.'s hoping to catch us at it. Although the military police were in the next block they never came in our room.

After all apart from the wet canteen with only beer there was very little entertainment in Gib. I went to a spanish cinema once and could not understand much of.

Occasionally there was a concert or other funtion on at the theatre. I remember a hypnotist giving an amusing show. Some volenteers went on the stage and did things they would not normally do. He had one man giving a speech then brought him round with his arms up making a strong point. He was so surprised and ran off the stage.
Since arriving in Gibraltar some of the troops and wives had become members of an amateur dramatic society who produced Solanthe at the theatre. Captain Leath Hay Clark's wife was one of the actresses. She could act and sing very well. Drummer Gotobed, who I had mentioned before, surprised us by singing a song as follows:- Chic chic chic chic chicken, lay a little egg for me. I have'nt had one since Christmas, and now it's half past three, so chic chic chic chicken, lay a little egg for me.
I have never heard it sung since.

There were not many Catholics in our battalion so an R.C. pardre served for all R.C. members in the forces on the rocks but he had a servant named Mcfall, an Irishman and a member of my platoon. He lived in a room at the pardre's quarters in the town some distance from us. I knew he liked his beer, because occasionally he came to our room more than three parts drunk and usually tried to borrow money but he was unlucky, we all knew him to be a scrounger.
The pardre soon learned of his habits and tried to advise him not to drink so much, but while Mcfall had money he soon spent it on beer and was seen drunk in the street too often by the garrison sgt. major until one day he saw Macfall rolling along the street towards our room. He rang the military police and told them to arrest Macfall as soon as he arrived which they did.

The result was that Macfall received 10 days C.B. and returned to duty. When the military police went to collect his kit and other things they found that his bed was soaked with urine and the mattress was practically rotten. The pardre got a shock. It appears that he never went into Macfall's room and had no idea he was in such a state.
A younger Irish lad took over the job as servant which he held for the remainder of our stay on the rock.

Macfall kept sober for sometime afterwards, having to pay for the things that he had ruined, his accounts were well in the red.
Maltby still retained his job as first aid attendant and was attached to the military hospital. He often came to see me and we went out for an occasional coffee royal or glass of beer at the naval canteen and usually finished up at Mackenzies for a fish and chip supper.

During my visits to the Y.M.C.A. I learned that a woman named Mrs. Newby ran dancing classes there one or two evenings each week, so I decided to have a few lessons.
Mrs. Newby, who was well into her 40's, was a good dancer, very friendly and had all the patience needed to teach dancing. Her husband worked in the docks She had two daughters one about 24 married to a bombardier in the royal artillary and the other 16 living at home.

I had never tried to dance before and it soon became obvious that I was hard work for her. I could manage the one step which seemed to be walking round in time to the music. After a time I got on fairly well with the polka, boston two step and military two step, but the waltz was not so easy. Mrs. Newby perservered with me but she could not

stay with me all the time because there were several others needing attention and she always found a partner for me, perhaps another learner.

There were members from various units of the forces, including the Suffolks, Buffs, R.A., R.E.'s, navy and other smaller units.
Mrs. Newby sometimes invited members of the classes to her house for little parties. She invited me and Maltby, and on our arrival there were already three lads from my platoon.
Her daughter Grace was there, she was friendly with Drummer Salmon of the Suffolks. They were both good dancers and very often led off with each dance and he was usually the official announcer at dances in the main gymnasium held by any of the forces.
We had an enjoyable time at the party and Mrs. Newby invited Maltby and me to join a family party to go into Spain for a picnic for following Sunday. We agreed but when we arrvied at the mentioned starting place the family were not there. We thought they had gone so as we had a pass to go into Spain and a cab was going to the races at a course towards Barbella, we got in and was soon over the border.
At the races the horses were totally strange to us. In fact that was my first visit to any race course. After looking at the list of horses, we placed bets with the bookmakers which did'nt get a place. Maltby did get a winner in the second race but apart from that all our bets were losers. I lost all the money I had with me and Maltby paid our cab fare back to Gib.
The next time we met Mrs. Newby she said how sorry she was but her party were late in starting from home and hoped there would be another time.

Some weeks later a lad who was on the garrison staff named Clarke and I went to Larlina. On our arrival we went to a restaurant and ordered some tined salmon. When it arrived they had put some olives in with it and neither of us fancied them. A lot of cooking was done with olive oil and the smell of it put me off.
We asked the waiter to take it back and bring some fresh but he refused and the owner of the restaurant called the police who said that if we did not pay for it we would be arrested so rather than go into a spanish prison we paid for it and gave it to some of the crowd who had quickly gathered, perhaps hoping to see an arrest.

We got into a cab and went to the soldiers home in Gibraltar, where we enjoyed sliced fried potatoes and eggs. That was the last time I went to Spain.

On my rounds delivering fresh water, I met various people and one was colonel Scott's nurse maid, who was a girl friend of private Bull, a lad who joined the army about the same time as I did.
Knowing who she was I stopped and spoke to her when she was out with Scott's baby in the pram. I stooped down to speak to the child when suddenly all went quiet and as I looked up Mrs. Scott was staring at me looking black as thunder. She did not speak so I said "I beg your pardon mam" and walked away.
One staff officer's wife, where I delivered water, asked me if I could drive a car and if I liked cleaning things. My reply was no to the first question and yes to the second. It appeared they employed a Gibraltarian who did not like cleaning anything.
She had noticed how clean I kept the buckets and said it was a pity that I could not drive because she could have found me a job. It gave me food for thought because most probaby I could have

transferred to our 2nd battalion who were due to return to Gib. when the disturbance at Wei-hai-Wei had been settled. At that time I would liked to have stayed in Gib. for a few years.
Near the entrance to the Naval dockyards was a large garrison canteen and recreation room where the forces of all units were welcomed. Several members of the Buffs and Suffolks often met there and usually they were friendly but arguments cropped up occasionally like which was the best regiment in sport of various kind. As it happened three of our boxers who were champions at their weight became targets through jealousy and as they passed the Buff's barracks on their way to Buna Vista they were sometimes attacked by gangs of Buffs until the three decided to take further action.
Three more strong lads were persuaded to join them and one Saturday evening they met a gang of Buff ring leaders. All the Suffolk lads took their walking out belts off, which had large buckles and gave the Buff lads a good thrashing.
Unluckily the Suffolk champions were well known by the Buffs, who reported them to the garrison military police and a charge of assault and battery was brought against them. At first it was thought that they would be severely punished, but after pleading self defence and the fact that the lads had been provoked, they were finally discharged. It did have an effect on the Buffs because none of our lads were attacked by them again.

While I was on the fresh water job, all the lads on the garrison staff had plenty of chance to see St. Michaels's cave where there were stalactites and stalagmites because pte. Harris was clerk to G.S.M. Gheoh, who was in charge of the key. Harris said that he would bring the key if anyone wanted to go but nobody seemed interested. Many times since I have regretted not going.

Sometimes the rock apes came down when they were hungry, usually during semi-darkness and they did not stay long. During the latter part of 1925 the government of the day decided to reduce numbers of the armed forces by voluntary means. Some who had only a few years to serve could take an early discharge. Sindle and Long were among those who took advantage of it. Ned and G. Hill and many others like me had second thoughts. After all I joined the army because work was hard to find and according to news from home things had'nt improved. Seven years was my signed contract and I decided to complete it.

A few weeks before Christmas 25th, I returned to duty with 'B' Coy at Buna Vista to fire my rifle and Lewis gun course. Each day for nearly a week we marched through the town to the firing range.

As usual we started at 100 yds. with application and grouping repeated at each 100 to 600 yds. followed by rapid fire and snap shooting usually from three to one hundred yards. Finally from 600 yds. to 100 we fired five rounds at each point in the prone position up to 300 yds. kneel at 200 and stand at 100 yds. Sometimes with fixed bayonets, which tends to make the bullets rise.

When the result was posted on the notice board I was pleased to know that I had gained marksman with the rifle and a good first with the lewis gun. On parade the next day the coy officer congratulated me on my effort.
I was among a few members of the lewis gun section to fire a revolver course and it would be a few days before things were ready so I was detailed for guard duty for the first time at Buna Vista and yet it was'nt to be because I was given the stick.

During the day I took a message to the adjutant's office and found Ned there. He was the adjutant's bugler and carried a silver bugle. The C.O.'s bugler and Ned took alternate turns on duty.
While there we had a chat about our younger days and he asked me if I had heard from his sister Dot. But in fact we had not written to each other only once since we moved to Gib. We did again soon afterwards.

Regimental sgt. major Firth came in the office. I had'nt seen much of him since he took over from Daddy Parson. He was much taller and smarter than Daddy.
My experience with the revolver was not quite so successful as with the rifle or lewis gun. It was the first time I had handled a service revolver.
We had to stand sideways with the right shoulder pointing towards the target and legs apart.
Before taking aim we held the revolver in the right hand with the forefinger alongside the barrel and with arm half way between the right toe and the target as the arm is raised the forefinger should point straight at the bulls eye, then hopefully squeeze the trigger with good result.
After some practice in standing right and bringing a still arm up and down with an empty revolver I was instructed to load and have a go.
Some of my bullets hit the bull or very near it but the trouble was after firing, I brought the revolver too far down, sometimes it pointed at my right toes. It was a good thing I did not pull the trigger.
Before getting out of the habit I had to have a lot of practice. Nowadays it looks like the police have the best idea by holding the revolver with both hands straight at the target all the time.

Eight platoon was in a room on the first floor of a barrack block on the far side of the parade ground. There were large windows on the square side with a good view of Algecairs Bay, the docks and the town side of the rock. The broad window sill was just the right height to lean on and look out of the window.
Ships of various kinds came into the harbour every day:- P & O liners such as the Rawlapindi on their way to and from India and the Far East. Members of the Mediterranean fleet:- Revenge, Repluse, Hood, Royal Oak. Battle ships and cruisers. Pegasus, Eagle and Ark Royal aircraft carriers. Destroyers, submarines, supply ships and tugs. Some stayed in the docks for repairs, overhaul or painting. Perhaps a few days or weeks.

Everytime Maltby came to see me we always stood against the window to look at the boats that were alongside the quay. Once day the Royal Oak was there and he said that he would make arrangements to visit it the next day Sunday. I agreed and on Sunday afternoon we were both ready to go and went to the window to look at it.
Low and behold on looking through the window we could'nt believe our eyes, the Royal Oak was on the move and soon disappeared into the Mediterranean. They may have had orders to move quick.
Naturally we were disappointed but a few days afterwards the aircraft carrier Pegasus came in. We made sure it was staying there until Sunday. This time we were successful. The crew welcomed us aboard showed us round and gave us some refreshment. It was only 3,000 tons and carried only three planes but it was very interesting.

Usually when these ships came in for a few days the captain and other officers would arrange for a dance in the Buna Vista gymnasium which were always enjoyable occasions.

Many members of the Gib. stationed forces were invited and sometimes I was among them. Not because I was really keen on dancing, but I enjoyed having an occasional drink and watching other people dance.
Once I went to the bar for a drink Ned was one of the servers behind the bar. After having a few words with him I ordered a drink and was surprised to find my change amounted to the same as what I had given him. I wished him good health then sat down to enjoy a free drink.
Sometimes when Maltby had a few drinks he would insist on singing "My brother silvest. He was forty feet across the chest?" etc.

One night we went into the R.A. canteen where he started to sing, but one of the lads getting past one over the eight, went for Maltby who I managed to coax outside. For some reason the other man came as well and followed us until Maltby turned round sharply and hit him on the jaw knocking him down where he stayed. I was surprised that we never heard any more about it.

One of the first people I met on rejoining 8 platoon at B.V. was Macfall who said "Will you lend me a couple of bob?" I said "I'm broke myself". He had returned to his usual drinking habits and making a nuisance of himself. During one night he got out of bed and walked to the window. The bottom of the window being 4ft. 6" high he opened the window then urinated against the wall and returned to bed. Someone saw him and told cpl. Davey who made him get some water and wash the wall and floor.

A few nights afterwards Macfall, full of beer again, arose from his bed passed three beds on his way to the window then turned to a man who was asleep and urinated all over the man's face.
Immediately there was uproar fists flew, from all directions into Macfalls face until cpl. Davey stopped the fray and with two men escorted Macfall to the guardroom for his own safety and was charged with being drunk and indecent behaviour.
The next day he received 10 days C.B. which automatically barred him from the wet canteen. Soon afterwards he was drummed from the army and was good riddance to a waster.

A few weeks before Christmas captain Prarer took over 'B' coy office because he was the senior and what a difference between the two. Capt. Lloyd had taken over from capt. Leigh Hay Clarke when we came to Gib. and he was well liked because he was fair to everyone. Prarer on the other hand was unnecessarily strict.

At Christmas dinner as usual all privates were waited on by the officers and N.C.O.'s. We had beer to drink. Turkey with the trimmings and Christmas pudding to eat after which each capt. gave a speech. Capt. Lloyd was received with loud cheers and clapping but Prarer only received a few claps from N.C.O.'s who probably taught him a lesson.
Corporal Gilbert, who came from Great Yarmouth, decided to celebrate his last Christmas in the army with some of his friends. Among their drinks was a bottle of Ogwalianti. Gilbert had not drank any before but he rather liked it and had a good drink which soon took hold of him and put him out of the count. On waking next morning he felt thirsty and drank some water. After a few minutes he became just as drunk again. Luckily those not

on guard duty had Christmas day and Boxing day off but the usual parades and duties returned the next day.
The day after Boxing day I returned to garrison head quarters to continue my duties with the fresh water. I am not sure what happened with cpl. Gilbert but I was told that he was just as bad on the third day and he did'nt do any duties!
While I was away from H.Q. my job was done by a lad from the Buffs regiment. I did not need the lads in our room to tell that me he had not cleaned the buckets because they were very dirty so I soon applied some elbow grease.
The street on which our barrack room was built was rather narrow. On the opposite side was a small tobacco and sweet shop. To the left of that an alley way led to the backs of the houses. Like in most built up areas there were several cats roaming about the streets at night. About 3 am. one morning I could not sleep because some cats were making a terrible noise in the yard. As I went down the iron stairway from the veranda, they moved into the street still creating. I picked some pieces of coal from the heap in the yard and threw at the cats and they scampered down the alley way.
The next day the military police were on the trail of a coal thief who they thought went up the alley way because they found some coal there. It seemed rather a disappointment for them when I told them that it was me who had thrown a few pieces of coal after the cats.
During January 1926 most of the 2nd battalion returned from Wei hai Wei and they began taking over duties ready for our departure. On my return to 'B' coy I had one day free so there was no need to unpack my kit.
I saw Maltby who was transferring to the 2nd battalion to keep on his medical job.

We sailed from Gibraltar early in March in the "Nevsa", a troop ship, not so old and more stabilised then the Breamer or Glengorm Castle.

Remembering the uncomfortable trip by the Bay of Biscay on the way out, I was'nt looking forward to this return trip. I do believe that if I had not kept thinking about it I should not have been sick because the water was nothing near so rough and as it was I got away with one day of sickness.

It may have been luck or a coincidence that pte. Hearn and I were given the same job in married quarters as we had going to India. On the whole the journey was quite pleasant.

On our arrival at Southampton we were welcomed by a military band, customs officers who asked if we had anything to declare and a party of red cross who gave us two oranges and half a pound of Cadbury's chocolate each and cups of tea, which was very much appreciated. Then we boarded a train and went to Colchester.

The next day we all went home on a months furlough which we have been looking forward to during the past four years.

Those who had any distance to go received a free travel warrant on the train.
At Cambridge I had several minutes to wait for my train. I was in the company of the two Strongwards who's home was in Cambridge. They were anxious for their parents to know where they were but wanted to have a drink on the way home so they gave me some money to send a telegram to their parents to say that they would soon be home.

Hill's parents had moved to near Ramsey so he caught a train that was going to March. I was the only one for Hilgay Fen Station.

I arrived there at 2.15 pm and walked towards Ten Mile Bank wondering if I might see Laura at the school. The children were out to play as I approached the school and Laura came running out to meet me. She had grown a lot since I had last seen her over four years previous.

As there was only 3/4 of an hour to go before the end of the days lessons I told the Laura to ask the teacher if she could go home with me. The teacher agreed and Laura and I walked home via the river bank I recalled the last time I left the school to cycle home twelve years before.

What a difference at home. Albert was married with one daughter and living at Hilgay. Harriett was married with a son and daughter and living at Denver, Edith had left school and was working on the land for Martin Brothers at Ouse Bridge. Albert was still with Farmer Bob. Father and mother were reasonably well.
My cycle was still in riding condition so the next day I went to see Harriett and her family. On the way I stopped for a drink in the Jenyns Arms at Denver Sluice where there was a new landlord with two daughters who had the cheek to ask me to buy them a drink.
I quickly drank up and told them to ask their father for a drink.
Harriett, who married George Turner of Denver Station, had two bonny children, Gordon and Sybil. We had a good talk about old times and family affairs.

On the Thursday I went to Ely by train. It was market day where I met Ned. He had finished his seven years in the army and was then working and living in Cambridge. He told me that his mother and sister Dot would like to see me so I went to 41 New Barnes Road and received a nice welcome.
I learned that Dot had left Addenbrooks hospital, where she had worked for some years and was nursing at an isolation hospital in Exning near Newmarket.
We arranged to meet again then I went back to the market and to catch the train back home.
At the station I met a man whom I knew worked for the drainage commissioners when I did some years before. His wife and daughter were with him and we got into the same carriage. He said that his daughter was fascinated by soldiers in uniform because her brother was in the army.

It did'nt take long to learn that the daughter's name was Ethel and 20 years old. I soon made friends with her and we walked together from the station to Ten Mile Bank. As I was not yet tied to any one I promised to meet her the next day which I did and went to her home.
They seemed quite a nice family and made me very welcome but in spite of that I had to make a choice and I kept my appointment at Ely with Dot.

We soon became very good friends and on her day off I cycled with her back to the isolation hospital, which I did during the following three weeks of my furlough. Each time I cycled from Hilgay Creek a total of 50 miles. Dot's mothers said "You must be in love".

After my return to Colchester we often wrote to each other and some weeks before Dot's birthday I bought a gold watch which I intended to take or

send to her. In the meantime since most of the battalion had returned from furlough we had settled down to the usual routine.

I was posted to the regimental police and our office was attached to the guardsroom. Sometimes we did duty outside the main gate directing traffic when there were troop movements.
Other duties were keeping an eye on prisoners, if any, and escorting them to and from the company office.

Education lessons were started again. It was nearly three years since the last time I attended one, in fact we had very few in India, now I had a chance to study for a 2nd class certificate and if successful it would mean an extra six pence a day.

When a battalion was at full strength, there were at least 1,000 but, with some taking advantage of early discharge and others completing their term of seven years, our battalion had been reduced by more than 200 and there were very few new recruits joining us.

It did seem that instead of letting so many young ones go it might be better to discharge some of the older officers. For instance our commanding officer lieutenant colonel Nickleson was in charge of a church parade one Sunday and dismissed the battalion with fixed bayonents. What a shamble with the men trying to get their bayonets into their scabboards as quickly as possible. I had never seen that happen before.

While we were abroad, the battalion had not been all together, excepting on the boats, which meant that we had not been on a route march as one body. Now we were settled in Colchester our first battalion route march was under way.

I was enjoying the walk until we fell out for our first break. Sitting on the grass by the roadside I developed what I thought was a hunger pain so I took a corn beef sandwich from my haversack and ate it, but the pain did not go away so I had another one without relief.

Continuing our march we went off the Clacton Road to Wivenhoe and Layer de la Hay areas, where the land was mostly flat but with very nice scenery. Most of the troops either sang or whistled as we went along.

Although we carried full marching order, it was much easier to march in the cool english weather than in the heat of India, where we only wore skeleton order.

At the halfway mark we fell out for the 2nd break and the troops were soon devouring their haversack rations. I had some left but owing to the increasing pain in my tummy I could not eat it.
The walk back to the barracks was not easy for me and I was glad to lie on my bed.
During the night I went to the lavatory a few times and sicked green and pains were shooting from my lower right side towards the middle of my tummy.
The next morning I reported sick and the medical officer diagnosed acute appendicitis and sent me straight to the military hospital, where I had an emergency operation.

After a few days I began to feel really well again but then my tummy began to swell, making me feel very uncomfortable. The doctor suspected peritonitis and put me on the dangerously ill list. My parents were notified which brought my father, Albert and George Turner to see me.

They arrived late in the evening and the nurse in charge told them that I was asleep and thought it advisable not to disturb me. They were surprised the next morning when I told them that I had not slept all night.

After staying with me for three hours, they went into the town and came back for another two hours in the afternoon.
When the doctor told them that he thought I would recover, they left for home.
For some days there was very little change. Several of my pals came to see me including Hill and Barfield. As it seemed that I would not be out of hospital before Dot's birthday, I asked Barfield to get the watch out of my box and send it to her which he did.

After a week I began to improve and at the end of another three weeks I was out of hospital and was given one month sick leave.

On my way home I called at 41 New Barnes Rd. Ely where I found Dot at home looking worried. Her brother Horace, who worked as a scalfolder at Ely sugar beet factory had fallen 17 feet to a concrete floor while working and had just been brought home badly bruised and shocked.
Dot's father who had helped to bring Horace home was just going for the doctor. It was mentioned that Horace's cycle was left at the factory so as there was nothing else I could do I fetched it home then went on to Hilgay Creek.

The Creek was a good place for rest and quiet which I took advantage of for a few days. There was no one at home during the day except mother who looked after me.

On my return to Ely, Horace had recovered remarkably well and was back at work with no bones broken.
Dot was at the hospital on duty and her mother invited me to stay for a few days because from the next day Dot was having a weeks holiday.
That was one of the quickest weeks or seemed to be of my life as we walked and cycled around Ely. I took Dot to Hilgay Creek and introduced her to my family.

On 20th October, 1926 we were married and had rooms with Mrs. Moore, a widow living not far from the barracks. She was a friendly person and we were quite happy there.

Luckily I was just old enough to get marriage allowance and I collected our bread and meat rations each week from the cookhouse. Dot did not go out to work but we managed quite well.

Being married made me more eager to get my 2nd class education certificate. One of the subjects was the Prisoner of Zender by Anthony Hope. I found it very interesting and was able to study it at home easier than in the barracks room. In fact Dot helped me a lot by asking me questions about it and I passed the exam with fairly good marks.
One day a notice came on the order board "Applicants wanted to join the signallers section in H.Q. company" so I applied and was accepted. I soon found this was a totally different aspect on life.

The whole exercise was centred on the morse code so we had to study and learn that first. Then the corporal gave lessons on electricity and how it is conducted. He demonstrated that water was a good conductor by putting two wire ends in a glass of water, then sent a telegraph message through it.

Lessons on the morse code were given by the junior N.C.O.'s, which included the alphabet, signs and figures. After learning those we had keyboards to practice tapping the code.
To get us used to handling the flag we had practices on the parade ground which were followed by semaphore.
This was holding the flag stick in the right hand and extending the right arm at an angle of 45° while standing at east gives the signal of letter A. Raise the arm to 90° gives the signal 'B' and so on to the left side of the body continued with a flag in each hand to complete the alphabet.

At that time semaphore was widely used by the navy and sometimes by the army but I should doubt if it is used much these days.

In my time, during the mid twenties, we nearly always used the morse code starting with the flag. Standing at ease holding the flag stick with both hands (left one at bottom) straight up above the head. For a dot swing flag to the right halfway between head and shoulder. For a dash in line with the right shoulder. So that the flag does not cling to the stick move it in a figure of eight.
Next the shutter. A piece of canvas on springs attached to a frame 12" wide and 18" deep. The front of the canvas was white. For a dot the canvas was pulled half way down and for a dash right down, by a cord, then released and each time the white vanished.
The flag and shutter were used during daylight. The heliograph was the most useful because it could be used day or night. This comprised a lamp with a moving mirror which flashes beams of lights to a distance.

When receiving messages from all these devices it is necessary to work in pairs, one to read the signal and the other to write the message down.
During all exercises some signallers were kept close to the officer in charge so that messages could be sent or received. In some cases temporary lines could be laid between companies.
In these days of walkie talkies I sometimes wonder what sort of devices are used in the forces and if codes have to be changed very often.

The lad I was working with when we took our examination said that his eyes kept watering which prevented him from seeing the signal clearly and asked if I would read his message for him. It was risky but I did and we both passed alright. Afterwards it occurred to me that he was'nt sure of his morse code.

I really enjoyed being with the signallers and would like to have signed on for further service but the officer in charge told me that the forces were still being reduced and there was no chance to extend my time.

In the meantime Dot and I were settling down nicely. I had a sleeping out pass and found it much better than living in barracks. There was not any need to apply for a late night pass nor having to stand by my bed before lights out.

We went to Clacton from St. Bothels station near the barracks occasionally and visited places in and around Colchester.

There were no shops in our street but in those days various hawkers came round selling all sorts of goods. I remember a man came very often with a

barrow selling fresh fish. Herring were 7 for 6d. We had a lb. of sprats once and found there were a lot more than we could eat.

At the end of July our first son was born in the military hospital. Dot was very ill and for some days she was on the dangerously ill list. The doctor told me that he was doubtful if she would get over it. These were worrying times but eventually she had a turn for the better and gradually recovered.

While Dot was attending the clinic she met a young woman with two babies whose husband was in the Essex regiment. We made friends with them and visited each other occasionally. They had more or less been adopted by an elderly couple who lived near them who had a large garden and supplied our friends with a lot of vegetables. Dot and I were introduced to and accepted by the elderly couple in-so-much that we were given vegetables as well.

They were fond of children no matter what age. I think it was because they did'nt have any of their own. We were all made very welcome and we visited them most weekends.
As most of us were leaving the forces when the time of service expired we were all offered a course of six months vocational training of our own choice in most trades.
Some chose brick laying, but not many houses were being built and there were many people out of work in all walks of life.

A six months vocational training in boot repairing at the regimental shoemakers shop appeared on the notice board so I applied for it and was successful.

The master bootmaker was Mr. Butler. He had been a sergeant in the Suffolks during the first world war. He was now recognised as that rank and was allowed to make use of the sergeants mess. He was married and had a young daughter. The family lived in the town near the barracks.
Mr. Butler contracted to do all repairs for the battalion but ran the business as his own and paid rent for the shop. Repairs of the soldiers hobnail boots was the main work, but he also repaired ladies and gents shoes, some of which needed the soles sewing on and he had a small stock of shoes, rubbers and other things in the business for sale.

The only machine in the shop was a small sewing machines which was rarely used except for sewing patches on or restitching, all other work was done by hand. Sometimes Mr. Butler was too busy to sew on soles. Luckily he had a friend shoe maker in the town who sewed them on with this machine. I took them to him after Mr. Butler had prepared the new soles by soaking the leather overnight and hitting it on the flesh side with a hammer to harden it then tacking it on the shoe and cut a grove round near the outside edge to take the stitches. Gum paste was put on the stitches then the grove was closed.

Oak bark tanned leather was used for sewing on soles because after the above treatment the grove (or channel) was easier to cut and it was hard wearing.
The apprenticeship for boot and shoe repairing was four years so I was'nt expected to learn the trade in six months but there might by a chance of getting somewhere as an improveror, at least I could learn enough to do my own and the families.

At first I spent some time watching Mr. Butler then by doing the less important jobs such as polishing the heels and round the soles after they were rasped and sand papered.

The soles of army boots had an iron tip and hobnails usually five rows so to get used to the hammer I put in a lot of hobnails before trying to put the tip plate on.
Cleats were put on heels. They were iron stips 1/4" shaped like the heel and nailed on. The inside filled with leather.
After a few weeks I could manage the tips, hobnails and cleats while Mr. Butler nailed on the soles, cut more soles off the bend of leather, which is the whole hide of some animals such as cow family.
Cutting the soles and marking them out so as not to waste more than neccessary was the work of art. Small pieces could be used for heels of womens shoes or for building up and leveling heels.

To help me look like a boot and shoe mender Mr. Butler had given me a black apron, hammer, knife, pincers and rasp. Sharpening the knife was most important, but to get the knack of it was not easy.

As I watched Mr. Butler's hand that held the knife it was moving so quick, I could hardly see which way it was going as he rubbed it on the emery board. One of his knifes had been sharpened to the last half inch. Needless to say it was his favourite knife. 56 years later I have a similar one.
To get the shape of sole, we laid a piece of paper on the shoe then cut the paper round the edge of the sole with a rasp which left a pattern. This was laid on the leather and pencil marked all round then the knife followed the pencil mark.

After some weeks I was about to put my first sole on. Going through the whole procedure. Taking a pattern, cut the sole, put it in water overnight, hammered it on an upturned flatation, trimmed the rear end and some off the shoe so that they met evenly, laid sole on shoe, holding sole in position put one nail in two inches from toe towards centre, two temporary nails each side, holding nails pointing slightly inwards, with the right length nails start at toe, work along both sides hammer nails well home.
When finished cut any over hanging leather away from around edge of sole, rasp all round then sand paper until smooth. Ink is applied and when dry halball is applied with hot iron, this is rubbed smooth with velvet and polished.

I gradually got into Mr. Butler's habit of popping nails into my mouth and working one at a time head first ready to get hold of. I admired the way he took each nail and put it in the right spot then giving it a light tap with his old rasp (he had used for years) followed by a quick clout sending the nail right home. One, two just like that, as quick as I could do 3 or 4 but with practice and time I did become quicker. The main thing was to get the nails in right.
While I was shoe mending there was only one parade that I had to attend which was my favourite and that was pay parade.
Just before I started with Mr. Butler I fired my last rifle course in Middlewick range, one mile from the barracks. It was rather a disappointment for me because my score was two points below marksman and I had to be satisfied with first class and it did'nt effect my proficiency pay.

Now I was doing reasonable well with Mr. Butler and he was trying to get a contract with the Essex regiment stationed next to the Suffolks. If he was successful he would keep me on.

I was starting to try my hand at sewing on soles. First a wax end was needed, usually 6 or 7 lengths of hemp varying around 6 ft. for tapering off each end.
The ends were not cut but unfurled on the knee and pulled apart. Then shoemakers wax was applied evenly covering the whole length, followed with a thin covering of bees wax making it water proof. Finally a bores bristle is fixed on each end. The wax end is twisted with the palm of your hand on your knee making it stronger.

After watching Mr. Butler making easy work of the sewing I did not find it very easy nor cutting the channel on the sole the depth had to be maintained all round. A special awl is used for making the wax end holes.
The sharp end is curved and the curved holes help to protect the wax end, the bristle is passed through the holes from each end making a very strong stitch.

After the stitching is completed and gum paste applied, the raised leather of the channel is pressed down. Then a hard smooth piece of wood about 1 ft. long, 1 1/2" by 1" through it. A piece was cut out one end to allow the stick to rest over the edge of the sole so extra pressure could be put over the channel so you could hardly see where it had been. The stick was rubbed on the sole to put a shine on the leather.
When Mr. Butler sold a pair of rubber soles he did'nt tell people that he would put them on for

nothing. While some took them away others who asked him to put the rubbers on were surprised when there was no extra charge.

There were instructions with the rubbers how to put them on but I had additional from Mr. Butler when I made my first effort. While I was learning shoe mending something in the back of my mind reminded me that I should try to secure a job and a house to live in by the end of the next February.

As I looked through a local newspaper I saw farm labourer wanted, good house and garden supplied. Thinking it might be an opportunity I applied for it.
After a few days a farmer from Coggeshall in Essex came to see me. He seemed a nice man but I soon knew the job was'nt for me because the wages were 25,- per week. There was no piece work and no potatoes were grown on the farm. He explained the house was rent free but I remembered that before I joined the army, wages in Hilgay Fen were 35,- and often there was piecework for those who wanted it. However we parted good friends.

Christmas 1927 was drawing near and our son was beginning to sit up and take notice. He looked strong, healthy and was full of life.
We had arranged to stay in Colchester for Christmas and a few days before Dot's mother sent us a chicken but Dot felt sure that her mother was eager to see the baby and I realised that she was anxious to see her mother.

On Christmas eve we got on the train with the chicken for Ely and needless to say we had a good reception. Dot's mum was delighted to see her first grandchild. We all enjoyed christmas,

especially our son when he sat at the piano making all the noise he could and no one seemed to object to it.

During a few weeks before Christmas there had been hard frosts and quite a lot of snow, but a thaw had set in and snow started to slip off the roofs by boxing day.
As I had four more days leave I thought my family would like to see our son and Dot agreed with me, but her mum said that it was too cold to take the child. However, we thought it only fair that my family should see him.
The day after boxing day we wrapped our son well and I carried him to Ely station and we went to Hilgay Fen station by train. From there I carried him along the railway line to Hilgay Creek.
My family were very pleased to see us, Laura and Edie were overjoyed to see our son. But within two hours our joy turned to an awful tragedy, our son suddenly became very ill. At first it seemed that he was having a fit. He face turned various colours and we all became very worried.

My father hurried across the river to ask George Turner to ring the doctor, who came as soon as possible. After examining the baby, Doctor Gibbs said that it was meningitis. He did'nt give us much hope but told us what to try to do for the best.

To get across the river my father had to brake the ice. Owing to the thaw and the water moving slowly towards the sluice the ice had started to break up into huge pieces.

That night Dot and I spent watching over our son as he occasionally went into spasms. He must have been in terrible pain and we could'nt help him.

The next morning my father had to go to work but he found the tide was running very fast. The sluice doors had been opened over night and the river was full of fast moving blocks of ice. Father said that it was too dangerous to cross in the boat and he went over the Ouse bridge.
Later during the day Doctor Gibbs stood on the other side of the river calling for the boat. I told him it was too dangerous to use it. He became very angry when I asked him to come over Ouse bridge but he eventually got in his car and went to the bridge.
He had calmed down by the time he arrived at our house and was concerned about the baby who was becoming worse. After telling us he did not think there was much hope of recovery he said that if he did recover it was almost certain to leave some brain damage behind.

Feeling very worried I asked the doctor if he thought bringing the baby from Ely had brought the illness on. He said that was not the cause of it and it would have happened where ever he was.

The next day the baby died and Little Bob's wife came and laid him out for us. Naturally we were both very upset. Dot wished he could be buried at Ely so we got in touch with her mother and she arranged for the funeral to be held there.
After things were settled we returned to Colchester. It seemed we had to start a new life. We had each other to console but for a long time there was a vacant spot in our lives.

I continued shoe mending until the end of January 1928, when I finished with Mr. Butler who wished me well in civilian life and gave me all the tools I had been working with plus another knife and

other things. He had not taken on the Essex contract so I could'nt rely on that for a job in future.

The final month of my service was given to me in a months furlough so Dot and I went to Hilgay Creek. Most of the month turned out to be interesting and rather exciting.

During the first three weeks of January quite a lot of snow had fallen followed by a quick thaw and heavy rains bringing water from the highlands of Buckinghamshire and Northamptonshire into the Great Ouse.
Now the rivers were getting full and some places water was running over the top of the banks and through holes made in the banks by moles and rats. One of those places was into our orchard.
Only thirty yards away from our house, for an hour at high tides, water one foot deep was pouring over the top of the Wissey bank. Over the Wissey, along the Great Ouse bank, water was pouring over almost continuously 15" deep along a gap of 20 yards. This was going onto Farmer Bobs land. I went to help men filling sandbags with earth and dropping on the watery bank. Farmer Bob was among them working like a trojan with mud all over him.

The bank ran through a plantation and tree roots helped to stop the bank from being washed away. Eventually with the help of my father, Albert, little Bob, who was taking over that farm with the help of his father farmer Bob, and other men the bank was repaired and strengthened.

A party of local men had been organised to watch the banks during high tides especially at night. They took turns and carried hurricane lamps when it was dark. The highest tides were at full and new moon.

Although our house stood nearly level with the top of the bank we were all on thorns when water poured over the bank.
The two Bobs were pleased that the mended bank in the plantation held but were soon to be disappointed. Two nights after the Wissey bank, on little Bob's side, burst about a 1/4 mile from his low house. There was a gap in the bank about 20 yards. Soon there was a noticeable drop in the water level.
People rushed to helped little Bob first to get his live stock onto higher ground. The lane to the A10 road between Hilgay and Denver was a little higher than the surrounding land but it was a race with time.

The house was about 2ft. above land level which allowed a little time to play with. Little Bob's wife (Sue) took her two children (son Bob and Ivy) across the Wissey to stay with farmer Bob and family in the farm house beside the Great Ouse river.

Furniture and other things were placed on the river bank until they could be taken across the river by boat.

Water soon covered low lying land to a depth of several ft. including about 1/4 mile of the A10 road near Hilgay. The area under water was over four miles which followed the Wissey above Hilgay and the Great Ouse below Downham Market and the width varied from a few yards up to one mile.

The Great Ouse Drainage Board officials were soon on the scene. Captain Mathews of the head office in Cambridge was in charge, assisted by the local foreman Mr. Aisthorpe of Denver.

Very little could be done at the site until the water found its own level but preparations were soon under way. A huge piece of wood 40 ft. long and 2 ft. by 2 ft. was towed from the Ely maintenance yard by tug to the breach. The tug driver, often rather reckless, nearly went through the breach because he did not estimate the speed of the water. Only a party of spectators saved him by hanging on to a rope that was fastened to the tug.
Barges with sandbags and tools were brought from Ely. As luck had it several hundred tons of soil that were dredged out of the river near Denver Sluice during 1919 had been dumped onto the Ouse river bank between our house and Ouse bridge as if in readiness of an occasion like this.

Meanwhile Albert, who had been working for the two Bobs had a few hours to spare so he came to see us with a bright idea.
A lot of land that belonged to Squire Pratt was flooded including some plantations, where pheasants were bound to be sitting on the branches of trees. Would I go with him to try to get some? I was all for it!

There would be no game keepers or man traps to worry about. Neither of us were poachers but this seemed like a bit of sport and a good meal that could not be missed.

Father had two shot guns so we took one each. Pulled the pleasure boat out of the river Wissey over the opposite bank into the floor water and away under the railway bridge past little Bob's house and we were soon among the trees.

Very soon Albert pulled the trigger and down came a pheasant into the water. I pulled my trigger and down came another.

They were easy targets which did not try to fly away as we went from tree to tree picking them out of the water. In about 15 minutes we got 10 birds then quickly left the plantation and steered to some higher ground towards Denver station 1/2 mile away.

This had become an island overnight. Albert was right in assuming that rabbits lived there. The water was still rising and soon brought 4 rabbits out of their holes. We quickly put them to sleep and took them home.
Having got them there we were not quite sure what to do with them all. Dot suggested that I take some to Ely where her mother might dispose of them for us.
Albert only wanted one bird and one rabbit. We kept 2 birds and a rabbit and I was soon on my way to Ely with the remainder in a suitcase.
I was in uniform as I passed men filling sandbags and putting them into barges when Captan Mathews called to me and asked if I would take on the time keepers job for a few weeks. Thinking quickly I had more than 3 weeks of my furlough left so I agreed to start the next morning then walked along the railway line to Hilgay Fen station.

On arrival on New Barnes, Ely my mother-in-law agreed to take the pheasants to her butchers. She did'nt want any herself but had the two rabbits. I returned on the next train to get ready for work the next day.

Although I had practiced some writing during the past two years getting my 2nd class certificate and 18 months with the signallers I had no experience in clerical work but was determined to do my best.

The next morning I met Mr. Aishorpe, who gave me a list of 25 names of men he had started filling sandbags and another list of 6 men at the breach. So my first job was to go round to check all the men and their time.

I had a whistle which I blew at start and stopping times. They soon got to know the time at mid-day break because I blew the whistle on my way home for my lunch. Capt. Mathews came every day usually during the morning. Both he and Mr. Aisthorpe were very nice to work with.
The first job at the breach was to get the beam straddled across the mouth and firmly staked then each barge came to rest against it while it was being unloaded.

At the beginning dropping sand bags into the breach was a waste of time because an undercurrent just washed them away so they had to wait until the lowest tide.

While I was on this job one of the houses that I had helped father to buy became empty and I was given the chance to have it. After talking it over with Dot we decided not to live there because there did'nt seem much chance of employment except perhaps on the land and I wanted something different to that if possible, besides it was a long way from the shops.
I liked the time keepers job and wished it would last a long time but it was finished at the end of my furlough. The river side of the breach had been reinforced with gault from the pits of Ely. All the men except the regular hands were paid off. I was left on for a few days to help square up and each day up to my last I had a feeling of superiority when people I had known most of my life came to ask me for a job and I had to tell

them that there was no work. At the same time there was a feeling of failure because the next day I was being paid off myself.

Two days before the end of my seven years service, Dot and I went to Ely where I left her with her mother and went on to Colchester to finish my time and hand in my rifle and other things that did'nt belong to me.
I went to see Mr. Butler and my pals who were still there including Barfield. He was finishing his time in the officers mess and like me waiting his last day. Hill who had three months to do was looking forward to his last day.
Finally I went to see Mrs. Moore and thanked her for her kindness to us then settled my accounts with the quarter master sergeant and left the army!