

RANDOM RECOLLECTIONS

SNAPSHOTS OF A LIFE

PART 1

FROM



Me age 3

TO

O/C 2 Troop
No 2 Wireless Regiment
Royal Signals
Cyprus 1947



Officer Commanding 2 Troop
No 2 Wireless Regiment
Royal Signals
Cyprus 1947

Compiled 2006

RANDOM RECOLLECTIONS

EARLY DAYS

My father was born on 17th October 1893 in Sheffield to George Arthur Lee a cabinet-maker and undertaker and his wife Jane Elizabeth (Lizzie). As a youth and young man dad lived at 82 Cross Bedford St. Sheffield where he learned to play the bugle in the 'Boys' Brigade' and later joined the Territorial Army as a bugler.

His keen interest in music and the stage led to much involvement in amateur theatre shows, charity concerts and 'pierrot troops' in Sheffield during the First World War, whilst working in a munitions factory and later as a pattern maker for Cammell Laird.

Early in 1919, then living at 12 Blakehouse Terrace in Sheffield he decided to become a professional Music Hall Artist and during 1919, 1920 and 1921 toured Music Halls in Wales, Scotland and the North as a solo musical act under the name "Zillo" (a melange of music, mirth and mimicry). His instruments included the xylophone, one-string fiddle, banjo, mandolin and 'musical luncheon'.



Mother aged 25 Father aged 15 and about 25 Wedding 1916 With his parents Me aged 3

My mother Ethel Rose Norton, born on 16th February 1891, came from Lincolnshire stock but the family, including brothers Bernard and Laurence and sisters Cassie and 'Sis', was living at 27 Mount Road in Sheffield around 1911 when she met my father. They were married during the war in 1916 (she was then about three months pregnant with my sister Dorothy) whilst she was working as a packer in a Sheffield cutlery factory.

Her father was a Goods Guard on the railway but had died from Tuberculosis in his forties.

My only recollection of her mother is of a severe looking lady with wire-frame spectacles and wearing long black skirts.

I was born on May 2nd 1923 at 12 Blakehouse Terrace, Sheffield where my parents had been living for some years.

Deciding on a change of career, dad took evening classes in building science and sanitation at Sheffield University but he obtained maintenance work in Grimethorpe Colliery, near Barnsley in Yorkshire and we lived for a short while (1925/6) at 47 Ladywood Road Grimethorpe. The place is probably remembered today only for the famous "Grimethorpe Colliery Band" but in the 1920's it was part of a major coal mining area and the mine provided the bulk of employment in that district.

In 1926 dad was successful in an application for the job of Building Inspector with Southall Urban District Council.

Thus at the age of three I moved 'down south' into lodgings with the Blewitt family in Oswald Road, Southall. In later years Frank Blewitt, the son, became a senior test-gear engineer at HMV. At the time we moved there (1926) Southall was a small and attractive market town but was already a target area for speculative builders, no doubt because of good communications - the Great Western Railway, the Grand Union canal, and the A4 road carrying the tramway between Uxbridge and Shepherds Bush.

All this time dad's parents were living at 37 Lime Street Sheffield. It was a terraced house with a small cobbled yard and a garden, which also housed the lavatory. It had two rooms downstairs, a front 'parlour' that was virtually never used and the back 'living room' that doubled as kitchen and dining room.

A traditional black-leaded 'range' provided cooking and hot water and in one corner a large shallow stone sink with a single cold-water tap was the means of all personal and domestic washing. The two downstairs rooms had gas lighting but candles were needed elsewhere.

A large cellar extending beneath the house was accessed via a planked door and a steep narrow staircase and housed a large collection of timber, no doubt left over from the coffin making business. As a small boy I invariably demanded to 'go down the cellar steps' whenever we visited the house. This required use of a candle and greatly worried 'granddad' who – probably correctly - was scared I would burn the house down.

The mantelpiece over the range in the kitchen was hung with the usual heavy fringed and tasselled cloth and carried a marble clock in the centre and a pair of spelter 'prancing horses' on either side.

My paternal grandmother outlived her husband a number of years and came to stay with us in Beresford Road from time to time. As a small boy I felt no particular affinity with her and although she was my "grandma Lee" she was just an elderly person dressed usually in long black clothes whom we saw occasionally either in Southall or Sheffield. I remember getting into trouble because dressed in my 'cowboy' outfit I would lurk at the bend in the stairs and lasso her as she came down the hall. When at her house I always got the job of cutting up old newspapers, either into long strips to twist up to make 'spills' for lighting candles from the fire in the grate or into squares which were then threaded onto a loop of string to hang on a nail in the lavatory. Fortunately in those days the black printing ink did not transfer onto fingers or bottoms like the modern stuff.

For a number of years dad sent her a ten-shilling note by post each week. I suppose I was seven or eight when she died and I clearly remember the shock that I felt when taken to see her in her coffin whilst the undertaker waited to screw the lid on.

Summer holidays were a signal to visit the relatives. Mostly, I didn't particularly enjoy the Sheffield trips; they involved seemingly endless tours to relatives scattered all over Sheffield. 'Aunt' Ada and 'Uncle' Henry (I think she was my mother's aunt) were elderly and I only recall them sitting in their armchairs on either side of the kitchen range, with the longcase clock loudly ticking the hours away. There was some sort of long-standing animosity between my mother and her brother Bernard so he was not on the visiting list. Uncle Sam (Dixon), married to one of mother's sisters, Aunt Cis, was more fun - from my perspective. Their daughter, cousin Ena, married a Canadian serviceman during the war and went back to Canada with him. Dorothy and I stayed for three days with Ena and husband Romeo at their home just outside Chicago in September 1979 when we were there for the IR100 "Watermark Magnetics" award ceremony and dinner.

She is now widowed and lives in Trenton Illinois near to one of her three sons. I still keep in touch by 'phone. [2007: Ena is now wheelchair bound and living permanently in a nursing home in Breese, Illinois.]

Aunt Kitty was a small wiry energetic lady, married to my mother's brother Laurence (Uncle Lol) who died from cancer. She survived to be just over 100. Their son Stanley, a couple of years older than me, is still living in the Sheffield area; we keep in touch by phone and letter. He and wife 'Lil' came to stay with me for a week in 2006.

Stan and I had some happy times together as boys, at least until on one holiday with us he 'stole' my first girlfriend Audrey.

For some years he worked on local farms and then for a Sheffield removals firm. Later he became chauffeur to the Bishop of Sheffield. Once, in the late 50's when he had to drive the Bishop to a London conference he came to stay the night with us in Furze Platt. It caused some comment amongst the neighbours to see this large gleaming Daimler parked outside the house all night.

Mother's other sister Cassandra was a bit odd. She was married to Albert Neal and lived in Grimsby. Uncle Albert worked as a casual labourer at Grimsby Docks, going off down the cobbled street in his clogs at about 5am every morning in the hope of getting a day's work unloading the trawlers. If he was successful he would return in the late afternoon reeking of fish but at least he was made to keep his working clothes in an outhouse at the back of the house. I've often wondered whether my enduring dislike of most fish stems from holidays spent there. They had a son Kenneth and a daughter Mary, who had chronic asthma and disgusted me with her habit of putting sugar on her bread and butter. She later became a nun.

Holidays spent in Lincolnshire with mother's many relatives (the Stubbs) were much more enjoyable. Mostly they were farming and country people living on smallholdings scattered around the flat landscape between Louth and the sea. One maiden aunt, Nelly, kept a small number of livestock and had a single manually operated petrol pump - the only supply for miles around - alongside the road in front of her house. She also kept chickens and every morning my job was to collect the eggs from the hen house and, in the season, to go into the fields and pick mushrooms. One day she said that if I could catch a particular cockerel I could take it home to Southall. Seemingly for hours I unsuccessfully chased that darned bird around its run; but in the end she took pity on me, came along, and caught it. When we got it home (I cannot remember how we did this) dad built an enclosure at the end of the garden and I started to look after this bird, making up its mash, cleaning the run and so on. But quickly it became horribly vicious, attacking anyone who went near it. I soon became scared stiff of the brute. It shortly ended up on the family dinner table.

Other members of the Stubbs family are vague figures in my memory. I recall playing ball in a cow field with one of them who was probably 5 or 6 years older than me. His job was to look after the cattle in spite of being badly crippled. I hated it when the ball kept ending up in a cowpat. I remember too visiting the patriarch of the tribe who seemed to me as old as Methuselah; I believe he was a great uncle of my mother's. He and his wife (with others) lived in a vast old farmhouse. The kitchen floor was stone flagged and in one corner of it was the well that supplied all domestic water. A little way away behind the house was the privy, a wooden structure housing a two-seater earth closet with a most distinctive aroma. I visited it frequently one day after gorging myself on the delicious Victoria Plums that grew in their orchard.

My favourite Lincolnshire relative was actually a cousin but about 20 years older than me.

Cousin Bryce (Bramwell) was married to a lovely lady (Mary) and had two sons just a few years younger than me. They lived in Kirton-in-Lindsey in a house with a large amount of land around it containing a maze of old outbuildings that had once been the local slaughterhouse. This of course was a perfect 'playground' for we three boys. The front part of the house was the village store, a general shop selling pretty much everything you could mention, from foodstuffs to haberdashery. Mary ran it whilst Bryce toured the farmhouses for many miles around selling anything and everything that was stacked in the back of his little Morris 8.

The house had no mains services; each morning I would help fetch some buckets of water from the village pump further down the street. Lighting in the house was by oil lamps and candles; the earth privy was in the garden. I remember milk being delivered by pony and trap. When we heard the horse I would go out with a jug and collect one or two 'jills' which were measured in a 'dipper' from a large galvanized chum that in summer was kept covered with a white sheet. No milk bottles, cartons or refrigerators then.

Bryce taught me many things during my holidays there. He would take me with him on his 'rounds'; I learned how to fold squares of blue paper into conical bags and fill them with sugar from a big tub, and how to use 'butter pats' to make up half-pound blocks of butter. He taught me how to make photographic prints, using the light from an oil lamp to expose the gaslight paper, and even taught me the rudiments of driving a car. Tragically he died in his forties from cancer. His mother, my aunt, had earlier died from stomach cancer. Mary died a few years ago aged almost 100.

I also loved going to stay with relatives in Louth. 'Uncle' Charlie (Melton) had a cobbler's shop in Eve Sheet and lived on the premises, which had, at one time, been an old pub. It was an ancient rambling building with lots of dark corridors and empty rooms, but it did have running water - one cold tap over the kitchen sink - and gas lighting, but only downstairs. Again, the privy was at the end of a cobbled yard behind the house.

I was allowed to 'mend' old shoes, using discarded bits of leather and to grind the edges smooth on a great treadle machine. Often Charlie who was very 'laidback' and lots of fun would suddenly say "lets have a game of darts" and we would retire to the back yard, lift the dartboard out of the big rainwater butt and hang it on the privy door. Other times we would go into 'Hubbards Hills' nearby and play cricket whilst Mr. English, a strange country character, who spent a great deal of time in the shop, would be left in charge.

Charlie's wife Mabel was a small, quiet lady, very 'proper' and very house-proud. Apparently she was illegitimate and still bore something of that stigma within the family.

Several times they came to stay with us and were taken on their first ever visits to London by dad.

An oft-repeated story was how one day Mabel was nervously ascending the outside staircase of a moving London bus when Charlie, in his very broad Lincolnshire accent, loudly remarked to the entire lower deck, "You look just like a bloody monkey climbing a stick". One day Charlie gave me a rasp to take home; I still have and use this little measure. They had a son, Maurice and, I believe, a daughter.

Occasionally we had holidays that were not spent with relatives. They were always seaside locations such as Lowestoft, Clacton, Cleethorpes, and once Blackpool. But I loved the sand dunes on the east coast, and places like Mablethorpe and Theddlethorpe. We would go out in the early morning at low tide and collect lots of samphire, which was taken home and pickled in large glass jars. But in Lowestoft, the main joys for me were the donkey rides. I used to think that the best job in the whole world must be that of the donkey man.



Our Christmas treat each year was to be taken to Bertram Mill's Circus at Olympia. I loved the clowns, Coco and company, and the crazy car that fell apart during the act. When 'steam' billowed from the car's radiator cap they would sit the smallest clown on the leak whereupon the steam would pour from the top of his head.

Another annual treat was a visit to the Royal Tournament at Olympia; a tradition that I carried on when Anthony was young.

LIFE 'DOWN SOUTH'

After about six months in lodgings we moved into a newly completed 'three up, two down' end terrace house in Beresford Road, where I lived until I married. The house and garden backed onto a small field, which extended right up to the towpath of the Grand Union canal. From the house I would watch the slow progress of horse-drawn barges heavily laden with bricks or coal or timber.

Many happy childhood hours were spent fishing in the canal for gudgeon and roach and birdsnesting in the towpath hedges. Our garden was narrow but very long and at the far end, up against the canal field fence I had my 'camp'. Usually it would be 1st World War redoubt, inspired by my favourite book of war stories and the fact that my uncle Jack who had lost an arm in the war gave me a breech loading air gun - without any pellets. My friend Alan Dobson and I killed thousands of imaginary 'Huns' from our impregnable fortress. Sadly, many years later Alan, as an RAF navigator, was shot down on a bombing raid over Germany.

Uncle Jack (Clark) was an inspector on Sheffield Corporation tramway. In those days it was a job of considerable authority and standing, very well matched to a man of military appearance and a maimed war veteran. He was married to Aunt Jessie, dad's sister, a somewhat austere lady - rather a 'Brunhilda' type. They lived in a rented terraced house - with a detached lavatory block - in Camille Road in Wadsley Bridge in Sheffield. They had no children. Even at a distance of 150 miles, Aunt Jessie was a moral force to be reckoned with in our home. If mother saw me picking my nose or scratching my crotch she only had to say, "Whatever would Auntie Jessie say if she saw you doing that!" to put an instant stop to it and trouble my conscience for weeks.



With sister Dorothy, at 46 Beresford Rd Southall

At the age of six I started at Tudor Road School, being taken there in the mornings on the pillion of dad's BSA motorbike. The first black person I ever saw was a guest at one of the school's annual 'Empire Day' celebration when the whole school would march round the playground and salute the Union Jack. Most days, walking home from school I would stop off at the little sweet shop opposite the entrance to Tudor Road which was run by a small, freckled, American lady and buy a farthing 'liquorice stick' or a halfpenny 'sherbet dab'. Later on I graduated to penny bags of stale cakes from the corner bakers' shop. Still later, I would spend hours browsing through the stock of second hand Beans, Wizards, Hotspurs, Modern Boys and such like in 'Johns' bookshop. Each magazine was a penny but you got a halfpenny back if you returned it.

I well remember my first day at school. It didn't seem too terrible a place after all and I enjoyed threading a whole shoebox full of wooden beads on to long lengths of string. I also enjoyed the bottle of milk that all pupils at the school were given to drink at morning playtime. Later on I was very proud to be made 'milk monitor' with the job of handing out the straws and collecting the empty bottles. I suppose the prize job was that of 'blackboard monitor' who would clean all the writing off the blackboard at the end of a lesson, getting covered in chalk dust in the process but, if no teachers were in the room, to have the chance to add comic face drawings to the board before cleaning it. We sat at individual desks placed on the tiered wooden flooring and big hot-water pipes running around the walls just above floor level provided heating in winter. Room lighting consisted of about six large gas lamps hanging from the ceiling. On the whole, elementary and junior school was a happy time and I still have several adventure storybooks given as prizes by teachers at the end of a year.

In the absence of a National Health Service each visit by, or to, a doctor was paid for in cash and therefore was to be avoided if at all possible. In the early days at Southall our local GP was Dr. Mackenor, a very autocratic gentleman, followed in the 1940's by Dr. John. A visit to Dr. John's surgery cost half-a-

crown but this usually included a bottle of medicine, often a 'tonic', mixed up on the premises by the doctor whilst you waited. Other medication that I remember from those days includes 'Parrish's Food', Fenning's Fever-cure', 'Cod liver oil and malt', 'Beecham's Pills', 'Scott's Emulsion' and 'Carter's Little Liver pills'.

When I was about five I had my tonsils removed. This involved being taken on the train to Paddington Green Children's Hospital in the morning, having the operation about lunch time and coming home before tea time. I remember having a frightening looking metal instrument being pushed into my mouth and screwed wide open. The next thing I knew, I was waking up, wrapped in a blanket and lying on a wooden bench crying for my mum.

A visit to the dentist was also a cash transaction. I went to Mr. Dunkin who had a surgery above the Home and Colonial Stores in the High Street. A filling cost two and six pence and involved considerable discomfort, whereas an extraction was only one and six pence and was generally less gruesome. For a filling, Mr. Dunkin (who had Halitosis) would balance on one foot and treadle the drilling machine furiously with his other foot whilst wielding a large drill-head inside your mouth and breathing his fumes all over you. But he had a pretty daughter of my age whom I went out with for a while.

Good friends of the family were the Comforts. Mr. Comfort was second officer of the Southall Fire Brigade, and a great treat for me as a very small boy was to be allowed to sit in the driving seat of the fire engine and to wear one of the shiny brass helmets and to clang the big brass bell. Mr. Comfort was later compulsorily retired from the Council's fire service because his great bulk prevented his climbing the ladders (or so it was said). For a short time afterwards he was in the HMV factory fire brigade at Hayes. His son Henry also worked somewhere in the factory.

Other friends of my parents were the Cavills. Tom Cavill was a burly Irishman who worked in the Philco radio factory. He would bring me brightly colour-coded resistors, no doubt pilfered from the factory, which I greatly treasured. His wife was a small gentle woman who many years into widowhood surprised us all by becoming mayor of Southall.

With my sister Dorothy being seven years older than me, as children we were never very close to one another and when she began 'courting' I always seemed to be in the way (perhaps that was sometimes arranged by our mother). As was the custom at the time, Dorothy had a 'Grand 21st Birthday Party' held in the ballroom of the Dominion Cinema in Southall. She was working at the Ministry of Pensions in Acton at that time and was going out with Alan Roy - a draughtsman at the Dubilier Condenser works in Acton. Alan's father was a 'representative' with the Sunripe Cigarette Company and needless to say he and his wife both smoked heavily. I chiefly remember him for his large 'military' moustache, nicotine stained a remarkable yellow/brown. They lived in a Victorian/Edwardian house in Acton.

Alan had two older sisters - twins - very attractive girls and I remember transferring my 'crush' from Diana Durbin to one of them (whose name I have forgotten) in spite of her being married to a seemingly wealthy chap called Bill.

Then along came the war and Alan was conscripted into the army - the London Irish Rifles and eventually served in India and Burma. He and Dorothy were married whilst he was still in the army and they set up home in a flat in Acton.

Of course he was demobilised well before me, probably in late '45, and went to work for the Prudential Insurance Company. Much later he worked as a draughtsman for EM1 at Hayes. Six months before retirement from there, at the age of 64, he died from cancer. They had two children, Stuart who married (and later divorced) Anna, and Margaret who quickly divorced her first husband and then married Reg Hole. They had two sons but Margaret developed MS and died from a heart attack in 2004. My sister spent most of her widowhood living alone at her house in Newhaw and she also died in 2004.

For about three years dad was secretary of Southall Football Club and I used to be dragged very reluctantly to the ground in Western Road on Sundays to watch team practice, wearing, in winter, my 'leggings', which I hated.

Sunday evenings at home were usually given over to music, hymns from Sankey's hymnbook, played by mother on the mandolin and dad on the banjo. Maybe that is why I was put off learning to play any instrument.

As a small boy I was fascinated by the 'wonders' of new technology. I remember the first set of traffic lights being installed nearby. I and small groups of people would wait for ages at that road junction just to watch the lights change. Whenever I heard the rare sound of an aeroplane engine I would dash outside to see the plane and marvel at it.

One day my parents took me to see one of Sir Alan Cobham's flying circuses and then to have a "five-shilling" flight in an open cockpit biplane; terrifying but wonderful. Occasionally we would see from our garden the graceful sight of the German airships "Hindenburg" or "Graf Zeppelin" heading over London and sometimes the Imperial Airways four engine "Hannibal" class biplanes could be seen on their way to or from Croydon Aerodrome.

Dad kept in contact with some of the people he had known from his Music Hall days and when one of them was appearing at Chiswick Empire or in Shepherds Bush we would be taken to see the act. I remember going back stage when one of his particular friends 'Palette and his performing dogs' was at Shepherds Bush Empire. I also saw many 'big' names of the day at these theatres - Gracie Fields, Nervo and Knocks, Henry Hall and his orchestra, Flanagan and Alan, Vesta Tilley, Syd Seymour, Rob Wilton, and so on.

Every year a large travelling fair would set up in a field near Hayes Bridge and for years its star attraction was "Daredevil Peggy". Each evening after dark, Peggy - a small wiry man with a wooden leg - would slowly climb to the top of a tower, about 25 feet high, his clothes would be set alight and he would dive, flaming, from the tower into a shallow water tank below. Whilst he climbed out of the water his assistant would go round the spectators with a collecting tin. Other favourite fairground attractions of mine were the 'Ghost Train', the 'Helter-skelter, and the 'Cakewalk'.

It was through the windows of a small transport cafe near the fairground that in 1936 I saw my first television picture. Little did I then guess that 14 years later I would be a member of the team designing HMV television receivers.

GRAMMAR SCHOOL

Having passed the 'Eleven Plus' examination I followed in my sister's footsteps to the local Grammar School. It was a good school - under the Headmaster C G Vernon. (One of the 'senior' boys of my time there become a Law Lord).

In one corner of the playing field was an old cannon that had been captured during the Crimean War and during 'playtime' there was usually intense rivalry for the honour of sitting on top of the barrel.

In the two-hour lunch break I went home for my meal, travelling on the tram for a penny fare. A few 'wealthy' pupils ate, with some staff, at the ABC restaurant in the High Street.

I took French, Latin and (my favourite) Chemistry - the latter taught by 'Stinker' Stubbs.

Via Palgrave's 'Golden Treasury' I gained from Mrs. Thomas, the senior English mistress, some lasting appreciation of poetry. However I did not enjoy having to study Stevenson's 'Travels with a Donkey' and 'Addinson's Essays'.

Physical fitness was considered important, so frequent 'periods' were spent either in the gym or on the sports field. Occasionally, groups were taken by coach to a privately run swimming pool, the "Blue Pool" in Hayes or to Ealing Baths. Except for cricket, I disliked most sports (included boxing taught by the school's ageing sports master Mr. Jordan, himself an ex amateur boxer). One popular subject for the boys was 'woodwork and metalcraft'; the girls meanwhile doing 'domestic science'. In 'woodwork' I made a test-tube stand - a useful addition to my home chemistry set, and a bowsaw. Less useful, in 'metalcraft' my projects were a 'milk dipper' and an ornate lampshade.

As a teenager (although that term hadn't yet been invented) the only practical way of getting around was by bicycle. I had been given my first (and only) one for passing the 'Eleven Plus'. It was a Hercules sports model with drop handlebars, a narrow leather saddle and 'toe-grips'. For several years I would cycle with a small group of school friends to Putney or Hammersmith to watch 'the boat race' and in 1938 cycled to Heston Airport (later part of Heathrow) to see Neville Chamberlain arrive back from Germany waving the infamous "Peace in our time" paper. Another short trip was to watch the funeral train carrying the body of King George 5th pass through Southall on its way for burial at Windsor (and I did remember to remove my cap as it passed).

In July 1939 I gained my School Certificate and might well have stayed on the following year to take Matriculation had not the outbreak of the war two months later resulted in the closure of the school and its rumoured later move to Wales.

So I left, at the age of 16 and found a temporary job as a Civil Defence Messenger. After a short course on first-aid, use of stirrup pumps, and suchlike, I began work, which involved carrying messages on my bicycle from the Civil Defence Headquarters, deep in the basement of the Quaker Oats factory, to various Wardens' posts in the town. Our own 'headquarters' was the "Grange", a rambling old house in South Road.

The idea of getting paid for cycling around - which I did a lot of anyway - was very appealing and I felt truly 'grown-up' when, on Friday, I went to the Treasurer's Office in the Town Hall to collect my first pay packet containing twelve shillings and six pence.

WORK

My father wanted me to follow in his footsteps and work in local government, preferably becoming a Sanitary Inspector but having been taken round a slaughterhouse and sewage works by dad, I wasn't at all keen on the idea. So we compromised and I became a junior Library Assistant, thanks to dad's friendship with Jas. E. Percival, the Borough Librarian. But my heart was firmly tied to radio and electrical things and after about a year in the library service I told my parents that either I had to get work in the technical field or I would join the armed forces (RAF).

I wrote to HMV and in late 1940 was offered a job as a 'trainee' in the plant at Hayes. I promptly gave in my notice to the Librarian and whilst working out the notice period, my replacement at the library arrived; it was Dorothy. I was quite attracted to this young lady but never imagined when I left in January 1941 that 61 years later we would still be together.

I had a short spell in the CRT factory run by Mr. Colbourn and another spell as a repairman on a production line in the assembly factory, then producing airborne radar units (on a basic rate of five pence farthing - about two new pence an hour) before being allowed through the hallowed doors of the Research and Designs building to spend three or four months in each of a number of departments including the drawing office, test-gear department, components lab. and the model shop. Later, under some wonderful department heads - such as Faudell, Oura, Robinson, I worked on airborne, naval and ground radar systems. Evening and Saturday morning study at Southall Technical College was somehow fitted in with Home Guard parades and 'courting' Dorothy.

During much of this time there were nightly German air raids and occasional daytime ones. Not having an air-raid shelter at home we usually slept on the floor under the dining-room table. I think that in the Southall area flying shell splinters from the nightly anti-aircraft barrage were as much a menace as the bombs. One night, mother had just gone up to the lavatory when a shell splinter smashed the bathroom window; she came down those stairs like greased lightning.

One day whilst I was on duty at the branch library a lone German day bomber dropped a load of incendiary bombs all round the library area. By some miracle, none hit the building although several fell on the pathways and some houses opposite were set on fire. Remembering my ARP training I donned my tin hat, grabbed a fire bucket and stirrup pump and quite quickly extinguished those burning in the library grounds. I kept one of the tail fins as a souvenir.

It was later that the Germans took to adding high explosives to the incendiaries. It all seemed rather exciting at the time.

THE HOME GUARD

I joined the Local Defence Volunteers, later the Home Guard, when it was formed in 1940. Most of our training took place in and around the Territorial Drill Hall by the canal bridge on the A4 where we would parade one evening a week and every Sunday morning. Some all-night duties were spent guarding the Battalion HQ, which happily was centred on an old pub at Sipson. This pub long ago disappeared under one of the Heathrow runways.

We had some real characters in the unit; one was an incredibly scruffy chap, a jobbing cobbler by trade, who always seemed to find an opportunity during night exercises to stalk rabbits. Sometimes he would catch one, gut it on the spot and stuff it in his small pack, a valuable supplement to the one shillings worth of meat per week allowed on the ration card.

When the Company needed its own transport - i.e. when Battalion HQ or regular army didn't provide it, a truck belonging to one of the privates in the Company was borrowed (he got a petrol allowance for this). Unfortunately he was a local fishmonger and travelling in the back of his truck was not a popular thing to have to do; the fishy smell could cling to your battledress for days afterwards.

During my years with this Middlesex Battalion Home Guard I was fortunate enough to fire at the famous Bisley rifle range several times and to spend one memorable week living with a Guards Battalion in their barracks in Windsor.

Our Company Commander Major Fred Parsons also lived in Beresford Road and was the father of my school friend Derek; perhaps that had something to do with my being promoted to platoon sergeant at age 19.

There was great excitement in the unit when the first consignment of rifles arrived. These were American 0.300 calibre (World-War 1 vintage) and the ammunition was severely rationed but they made us feel like 'real soldiers' at last. There were no slings to go with them so motley improvisation took place. I made my sling out of a leather trouser belt and some 4BA screws. We kept our rifles at home, mine being parked in the old toy cupboard under the stairs.

Later on we acquired some fearsome looking weapons, like the 'Blacker Bombard' and a half-inch calibre antitank rifle with a hefty recoil. I became Company instructor (with a certificate to prove it) on the American 'Browning heavy machine gun'. This had a water-cooled barrel attached by a hose to a 'jerrycan' holding the cooling water (sometimes water from rather doubtful sources). A team of three men operated it, and it certainly justified its title of 'heavy'.

After three years of evening classes at Southall Technical College I passed the 'National Certificate' in electrical engineering, intending to carry on to the 'Higher National', but the Government had other ideas and in the spring of 1944 I was called for a service medical. This took place in a church hall in Hounslow - done by five or six medical people using a sort of conveyor belt system - one looking in ears, one listening to chests, one doing the "drop them and bend over". In about 20 minutes I emerged, graded A1.

Around that time Dorothy and I went on our first holiday together, a short cycling trip, staying at Youth Hostels for one shilling (5p) per night and visiting places such as Warwick and Stratford on Avon. Previously I had cycled down to Dawlish (in Devon) to see her when she was there on holiday with her parents - again I stayed in Youth Hostels.

Another long solo ride was to Sheffield, covering the 160 odd miles in a day and a half, staying with my aunt Jessie overnight before starting the return ride the next day.

On the Warwick trip I remember we were amazed at the vast quantities of armaments and military equipment - stacked in, seemingly, every woodland and copse that we passed. This was part of the huge build up to the Normandy invasion.

NATIONAL SERVICE ACTS

GRADE CARD.

Registration No. SMB. 12245
 Mr. Cecil Lee
 whose address on his registration card is
46, Boneford Rd.
Southall
 was medically examined on 25 MAY 44
 at _____
 and placed in
 GRADE* I (one)
 Chairman of Board [Signature]
 Medical Board stamp **HOUNSLOW MEDICAL BOARD (No 2)**
 Man's Signature [Signature]

*The roman numeral denoting the man's Grade (with number also spell out) will be entered in RED ink by the Chairman himself. e.g., Grade I (one) Grade II (two) (a) (Vision).

N.S. 55. [P.T.O.]

NATIONAL SERVICE ACTS

ENLISTMENT NOTICE

Minister of Labour and National Service (Enlistment) Order, 1941

121, 121 ST. JEROME'S ST.
LONDON, W. 1.
1944

[Signature]

Residence of [Name]

Every man liable to be called upon to serve in the armed forces of the Crown is hereby notified that he is required to register himself with the Ministry of Labour and National Service at the address above mentioned as soon as he is liable to be called upon to serve in the armed forces of the Crown. It is the duty of every man liable to be called upon to serve in the armed forces of the Crown to register himself with the Ministry of Labour and National Service at the address above mentioned as soon as he is liable to be called upon to serve in the armed forces of the Crown. It is the duty of every man liable to be called upon to serve in the armed forces of the Crown to register himself with the Ministry of Labour and National Service at the address above mentioned as soon as he is liable to be called upon to serve in the armed forces of the Crown.

The Director-General of Enlistment

GENERAL ROOM
F. Coy.
4th BATT. KING. REG.

Mill Hall,
Uxbridge Road,
Southall.

17 July, 44.

The Commanding Officer
S.S.C. No. 26 F.P. Centre,
Fort George,
Inverness.

Subject: - Sgt. Lee C.A.S.

The above N.S.C. has been with me since the Home Guard was started in 1940.

During the whole of the period he has been under my command he has been most conscientious, giving more than his maximum amount of parade and also studying to better himself, with the result that he ended up as Platoon Sergeant.

I understand that he is a technician and in that respect has made application to be posted to a unit where his technical knowledge will be of some use.

Of course, this is a matter for you to decide, but I can thoroughly recommend him as being conscientious, trustworthy and willing to study to make himself proficient in whatever duty he has to perform.

I have no idea as to what his views are as regards a commission, but he has always struck me as being of the officer-type, and received quite a reasonable education.

He brings with him the undermentioned:-

Kilnes, Treasurer,
 Best, Cap, Sergeant.

Signature S. A. Lee

F. E. FURNESS
MAJOR,
C.O. 7th COMPANY
4th BATT. KING. REG. HOME GUARD.

THE ARMY

Very soon the expected, but rather dreaded, 'call up papers' arrived. I was to report to an army 'primary training centre' at Fort George, Invernesshire. Enclosed was a travel warrant and 4 shillings advance of pay. It was a 23 hour journey in crowded, blacked-out trains, arriving at the 18th century fort - which was the base depot of the Seaforth Highlanders, on the shore of the Moray Forth - in an army truck that had met the train at the nearest station (Gollanfield Junction). I remember my first army meal, cauliflower cheese; it tasted marvellous after that awful journey (no dining cars provided).

Most of the training staff were from the Seaforths and a tough bunch they were too. It was a harsh introduction to army life in a harsh setting and led to several suicides amongst recruits there. Fortunately I was there in the summertime and so spared the extra misery of bad weather.

I was lucky also in that the four years of Home Guard training meant that I was tolerably proficient in all aspects of the basic training, and whilst at Fort George even won a 15 shilling Savings Certificate as the best rifle shot in the platoon, no doubt thanks to Bisley and lots of practice on the .22 range in the Southall Drill Hall. Also I was awarded a 'Proficiency Certificate' for being the 'best all round recruit' of No.8 Platoon; so the years of leisure time given to the Home Guard were now paying dividends.

It was something of a cultural shock for me to sleep in a barrack room with about thirty other chaps, people from all walks of life. I'd gone from grammar school to library service and into R&D laboratories so had never met or mixed with such a motley bunch of people - it was a much-needed facet of education for life.

Amid all the pain there was still some humour to be found. I shall never forget Potter, a small rather 'weedy' looking trainee pharmacist with very bad feet; these were sufficiently bad to allow him to be excused the wearing of army boots. He was universally known there as "'scused boots Potter" and always appeared on parade in his gym shoes and clutching the MO's exemption chitty, much to the fury of the hapless drill sergeants.

There was much 'weeding out' during the six weeks of basic training, one or two were discharged as unfit for military service, some were sent to another unit for 'physical development' and some had to repeat the course from the beginning.

Some of the least pleasant events were the inoculation parades. Most chaps had sore arms and felt rough for a day or two afterwards but training proceeded without interruption. Unfortunately, for some strange reason my parents had gone to some lengths to avoid having me vaccinated when a child, so at Fort George I had to suffer the after effects of a smallpox vaccination on top of the normal typhoid and tetanus jabs. Thankfully, I was duly posted to a REME training unit and, unknown to me at the time, had been classified as "potential officer material".

REME

Arriving at No.2 Radio Mechanics School at Gopsall Hall near Twycross in Warwickshire I became a nobody. There had been some foul-up with the paperwork, which meant that I wasn't officially on the unit's establishment and therefore could not join a training course. For about three weeks at each morning I was detailed for 'fatigues'; this sometimes involved loading a 15 cwt. truck with empty food tins - jam, corned beef, butter, Spam, tomatoes, condensed milk etc. - and driving to a clearing in woodland at the edge of the camp where the driver and I had to stand the tins one at a time on a stone slab, whack them flat with a large wooden mallet and then put them back on the truck to be taken away for metal salvage. We took it in turns to be 'stander-upper' and 'whacker'. Once in a while a full tin would slip through the net and when whacked would spray the 'stander-upper' with its contents; perhaps fair retribution for inattention to the job in hand.

Eventually the paperwork was sorted out and I joined a 'wireless mechanics' course, learning to repair, test, and adjust various short-range transmitter/receivers, both backpack and vehicle sets. Upon satisfactorily completing the course I became "14807337 craftsman Lee" and, importantly, my pay went up from three shillings to three and six pence a day.

Life at Gopsall Hall was decidedly more pleasant than at Fort George. For one thing, there was more off-duty time and we were not permanently 'confined to barracks'. On Saturday or Sunday afternoons one could walk or scrounge a lift from the camp to Shakerstone station and get the occasional "Shakerstone Flier" to Nuneaton and beyond.

Gopsall Hall itself was a requisitioned 'stately home' of imposing character. Although we lived in Nissen huts in the spacious grounds, most activities took place in the house which was still replete with a

magnificent Ballroom, silk hangings on the walls, and extensive (empty) cellars. The camp 'cookhouse' was located in the cellars and I would sneak in there whenever the opportunity arose, to scrounge a tin mug of stewed tea leavened with two teaspoonfuls of condensed milk. In the neglected formal gardens were rare and stately trees that, according to still readable plaques, had been planted over many years by visiting nobility and royalty; rather sad to see these relics of a lost age.

It was in the verges of the local lanes that I saw my first (and only) fireflies.

One of the GWR 'Hall' class steam locomotives of that era was named "Gopsall Hall".

WOSBI

At the end of November 1944 I was told that on the 5th December I was to travel to London to undergo a three-day WOSBI (War Office Selection Board). Apparently I had a right to refuse to attend but that if I did, it would be entered on my service record and, much more important to me, I would lose the weekend pass that went with it.

So on the 5th off to London I went, spent the night at the Great Central Hotel in Marylebone, reporting at 0930 hrs. the following morning at No. 11 W.O.S.B. in Golders Green where I was to spend the next three action-packed days, and nights, undergoing a wide range of trials and tests both mental and physical. There was a panel of 'assessors' – including psychologists - monitoring the written tests, mental agility tests, leadership tests, puzzle-solving, impromptu speaking on a given subject, physical capability tests, a very formal 'dining evening' in the officers' mess (which was decorated with an impressive array of weaponry from the Tower of London collection), etc. etc. Altogether an interesting and reasonably enjoyable experience. No inkling of one's rating was given at any stage, or at the final interview by a board comprising the C.O. and all his staff.

Then home for that all too brief weekend. At teatime on Sunday it was back again to London for the evening train to Nuneaton in time to fight one's way onto the grossly overloaded and ramshackle coach, run by an enterprising local farmer, for the lengthy trip to Gopsall Hall to arrive before the 0500 hrs. deadline of the dreaded AWOL. If you failed to get on the coach you had to walk.

When the wireless course was finished I had a brief spell at the big armoured fighting vehicle depot at Chilwell near Nottingham, seeing for the first time the 'amphibious' tanks with their large canvas flotation skirts.

I was at Chilwell over Christmas 1944 and note in my diary that on Boxing Day I walked from the camp to Nottingham and that it took me 2hrs 10 mins. (I got a train back).

Then almost immediately – 30th December - I was posted to a REME unit at Merstham near Redhill, to fit modified (higher power) wireless equipment into small armoured fighting vehicles (Stag scout cars and light tanks) for use in France. Whilst there I learned - by trial and error- the art of driving a tracked vehicle, the bren-gun carrier. This was great fun. What wasn't much fun was having to sleep on the concrete floor during a bitterly cold January since there were no beds in the unit - except for the officers - not even any straw to fill our palliasses and then spending the day sitting or lying on the steel hull of an AFV either in the open or in an unheated 'hanger'. It was a treat to be detailed for cookhouse fatigues, usually peeling the mountain of potatoes needed each day, because it was warm in the cookhouse and there were lots of mugs of tea - with condensed milk - to drink.

PRE-OCTU

At about eleven o'clock one morning in late January 1945 the CSM appeared, told me I was posted, to drop everything, pack my kit and report to the office at midday when a truck would take me to the station to catch a train to London Bridge en-route to Pre-OCTU at Wrotham in Kent.

It was a busy but not unpleasant nine weeks at Wrotham spent going over yet again many aspects of basic training - drill, weapons training, fieldcraft and map-reading, assault courses, and, more

enjoyable, driving lessons in a three ton truck (no synchromesh) and a week's course of motorcycle riding; both skills deemed essential for potential Signals officers.

Quite often on Sundays I was free by midday - after church parade - and would run the two miles or so to Wrotham station to meet Dorothy. We got to know the Pilgrims' Way and its masses of wild primroses quite well! And we got engaged at about that time. At the end of the course came a posting to No. 150 Royal Signals OCTU at Catterick camp.

OCTU

Together with some 20 or so other cadets I arrived at Catterick (N. Yorkshire) on Good Friday afternoon in 1945. We were met and shown to our barrack block, by a Company Sergeant Major whose ominous greeting was "I feel sorry for you chaps, you have a hard time ahead you"; he wasn't joking.

About 22 of us formed 'Course 151', 11 survived to the end. A few found the going too tough and were allowed to leave OCTU, the others who vanished were compulsorily "RTU'd" - 'returned to unit' as unsuitable material. One of the first chaps to go was a rather studious and timid fellow; his name was Salmon and, oddly, his ultimate crime was to be totally scared of immersion in water, since jumping into the local swimming pool from the spring board and getting yourself out by some means or other was an essential accomplishment, among a great many others, for every cadet. Dick Chadwick, Harry Saunders (an old pal from Wrotham) and two weeks later Bill Paish were other RTU victims.

Cadet Laurence was another memorable character, tall, very laid-back, and a real Lothario. We couldn't understand what it was that he had - that we didn't - that was so successful in getting ATS girls to go out with him. To everyone else's envy he started dating the very attractive manageress of the local NAFFI. A week or so later we certainly discovered one thing that he had that we didn't; he joined sick parade one morning, returning with a confirmed diagnosis of V.D. - a present, presumably, from the manageress. I suppose he was just accident prone; some weeks later he fell whilst negotiating the hated 'obstacle course' and broke his arm rather badly and promptly joined the RTU list.

There were many 'schemes' devised to put each cadet under impossible pressures in order to see if he would 'break'. Particularly, this was so during the three-day (and night) tactical exercises that took place up on the Yorkshire moors. I clearly remember the times I have washed and shaved before 5am in the cold waters of the River Swale following some three hours sleep in the open or under a truck.

In addition to the training regime one was regularly detailed for night Guard Duty. This ran from 7pm to 7am on the normal 'two hours on, four hours off' pattern. After finishing a day's training at 5 or 5.30pm there was just time to wash and shave, grab something to eat, change into 'best' battledress, clean kit and parade for inspection.

There was little chance of a decent sleep during one's '4 hrs. off' as the removal of any item of kit during the 12 hours was rigorously forbidden. One constant fear was that of scratching the required mirror-like polish on the long SMLE type leather bayonet scabbard hanging from one's belt. Come 7am there was just time to wash and shave, have some breakfast and prepare for morning parade.

Perhaps the ultimate toughness test was to survive the two weeks spent at 'battle camp' in the Lake District. 'Helvelling' and the 'Patterdale run' were two experiences never to be forgotten: pure physical agony!

Most of the two-week period was taken up with battle 'schemes' with a strong infantry bias, which included the use of weapons not normally included in Signals training - mortars and anti-tank guns for example.

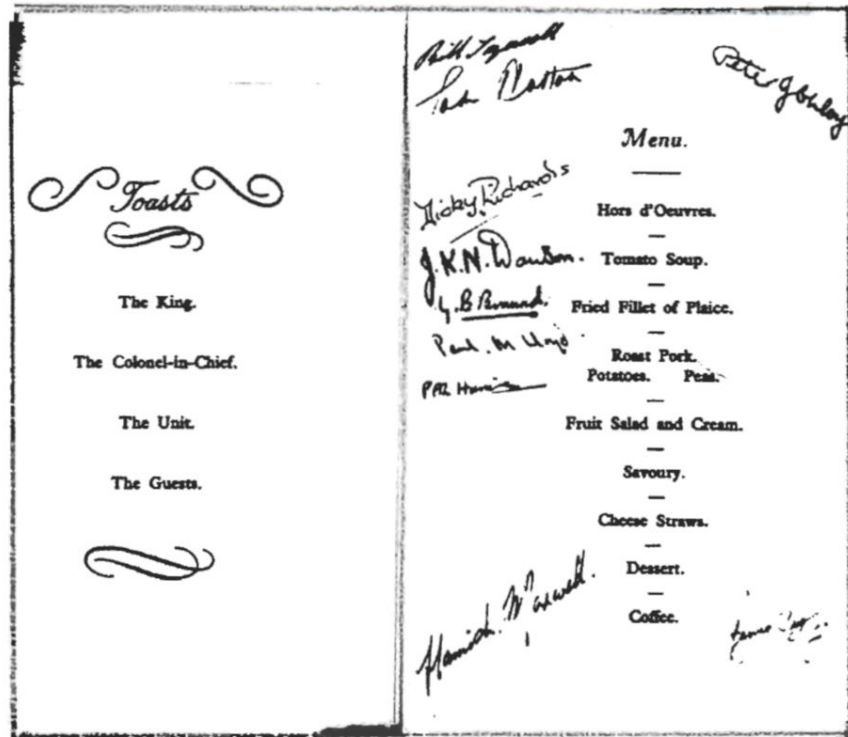
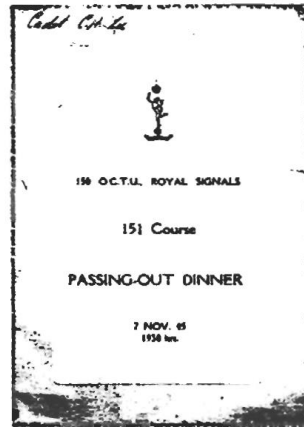
On 'VE Day' itself (5th May) training at Catterick continued as usual until 1300 hrs. when the Commandant addressed the assembled unit and then we had the remainder of the day off and enjoyed free beer and snacks in the NAFFI in the evening.

The German surrender occurring part way through the course immediately changed the character of our training. Jungle warfare, clearing Japanese mines, firing Japanese weapons, study of their military

organisation and tactics, and so on, prepared us for involvement in the Far East campaign. However the Japanese surrender following the atom bomb explosions altered training plans again. For 'VJ Day' on August 15th we were given the afternoon off, but no free beer.

The intense pressures of all this training generated a terrific sense of comradeship, to a degree I have not experienced before or since OCTU. The survivors were a terrific bunch of fellows and mostly characters in their own right. There was Hamish Maxwell who, when he was unit cook out on an exercise, insisted on making the breakfast porridge the Scots way - no sugar and lots of salt - and once earned a dunking in the river for his persistence.

The other survivors that I recall with affection from 'Course 151' were PAL Harris, Tom Hatton (a Regular CSM), James Pugh, Bill Tazewell, Peter Lloyd, Paul Lloyd, Dicky Richards, George Braund, and John Dawson; all great chaps.



OCTU and 'Passing Out' dinner

THE WAR OFFICE,
Hobart House,
London S.W.1.

112/Signals/2516 L.G.11(0).

10 Nov 45.

Sir,

His Majesty having been graciously pleased to approve your appointment to an Emergency Commission in the Royal Signals, I am directed to order you to report as stated below:-

RANK:- **Second Lieutenant.**
WITH EFFECT FROM:- **14 Nov 45.**
REPORT TO:- **O.C., War Office Wireless Station, Harpenden**
ON:- **14 Nov 45.**

You should place yourself in communication with the Commanding Officer, with a view to your being informed of any change of quarters, and also to ascertain from him what articles of clothing it will be necessary to provide yourself with. A pamphlet regarding arrangements for obtaining uniform, and a memorandum explaining the steps necessary to obtain your pay and allowances, together with appropriate forms, can be obtained from your Commanding Officer.

I am to request that you acknowledge receipt of this letter. Your attention is drawn to Army Order 45/1941.

I am,
Sir,
Your Obedient Servant.

[Handwritten signature]
Director of Organization.

2/Lt. C.A. Lee, R. Signals,
150 O.C.T.U., R. Signals.

THE KING'S COMMISSION

The ending of officer training always came with a formal Mess Dinner and a 'Passing out Parade' involving the whole unit complete with military band and usually a senior staff officer or minor royalty to take the salute.

The 11 cadets who were 'passing out' from course 151 were allotted the various command roles of the parade - I was to be a platoon commander. A couple of weeks of intensive rehearsals, with corresponding bellowing of orders resulted in my developing an ulcerated throat for which I was forced to spend six days in the local military hospital. I recovered in time to travel down to Sheffield to collect my mother and take her to Catterick to witness the ceremony and my emergence as a holder of His Majesty's Commission - resplendent in a new tailor-made uniform with a shiny pip on each shoulder.

After a brief spell of home leave I reported for duty at the big radio intercept station, Forest Moor, up on the bleak snow covered moors near Harrogate where I began to learn the rudiments of eavesdropping on radio signals, military, naval and diplomatic, from both 'friendly' and potentially hostile countries.

It was a 'mixed' unit under the command of Colonel Ducross, an elderly regular soldier who walked with his toes turned outwards and was therefore universally known as 'Old Kipperfeet'. It was there that I became friendly with a delightful ATS officer, Brenda Bairnshter, daughter of the artist who created the famous 'Old Bill' cartoons in the 1914 war. She and her friend Margaret often played squash with John Dawson and me.

At Harrogate I was obliged (reluctantly) to learn to transmit and receive Morse Code at 10 words per minute and I had one brief trip south to deliver by hand classified 'top secret' intercepted material to Bletchley Park, later publicly famed for its wartime decode work.

After about three months I was listed for an overseas posting and moved from Harrogate to a mobilization centre at Kirkburton near Huddersfield from where I was given two weeks 'embarkation leave' during which Dorothy and I were married by Rev Wilson in Holy Trinity Church in Southall. We had a four-day honeymoon in Hungerford in a freezingly cold hotel room with twin beds at The Three Swans - following which I got a week's extension of my leave due to troop ship delays at Southampton.

February 9th 1946

The Three Swans
Fishing Inn, HUNGERFORD, Berks.
 PROPRIETOR: H. FAIRFAX HARVEY.

13 Feb. 1946

9 Feb.	2 Dinner	10 -
10	2 B+B. 2 Lunch. 2 Tea 2 Dinner	2 6 -
11	2 B+B 2 Dinner	1 11 -
12	2 B+B. 2 Dinner	1 11 -
13	2 B+B.	1 1 -
	Service @ 7 1/2%	9 6
		<u>£ 7 3 6</u>



Wedding



Leaving for honeymoon

Then it was back to Huddersfield to pick up tropical kit and have more inoculations only to learn of another delay in the overseas posting - more shipping problems. So after spending an idle 3 days hanging about at Kirkburton I managed to get a five-day pass and travelled home again on 1st of March.

On the 6th it was return to Huddersfield and four days later came the overnight train journey to Euston, breakfast at King George V club, then to Victoria station and onto Newhaven via Brighton.

OVERSEAS

At Newhaven we boarded the "Royal Daffodil" just before midnight, arriving in Dieppe soon after 5am and moved straight into the transit camp there. About 18.30 hrs the following evening we began the slow and tedious 37 hour train journey to Toulon and there booked into the big transit camp. After catching up on some food and sleep I walked into the massively damaged city and wandered around for a few hours before returning to watch a film and retire early.

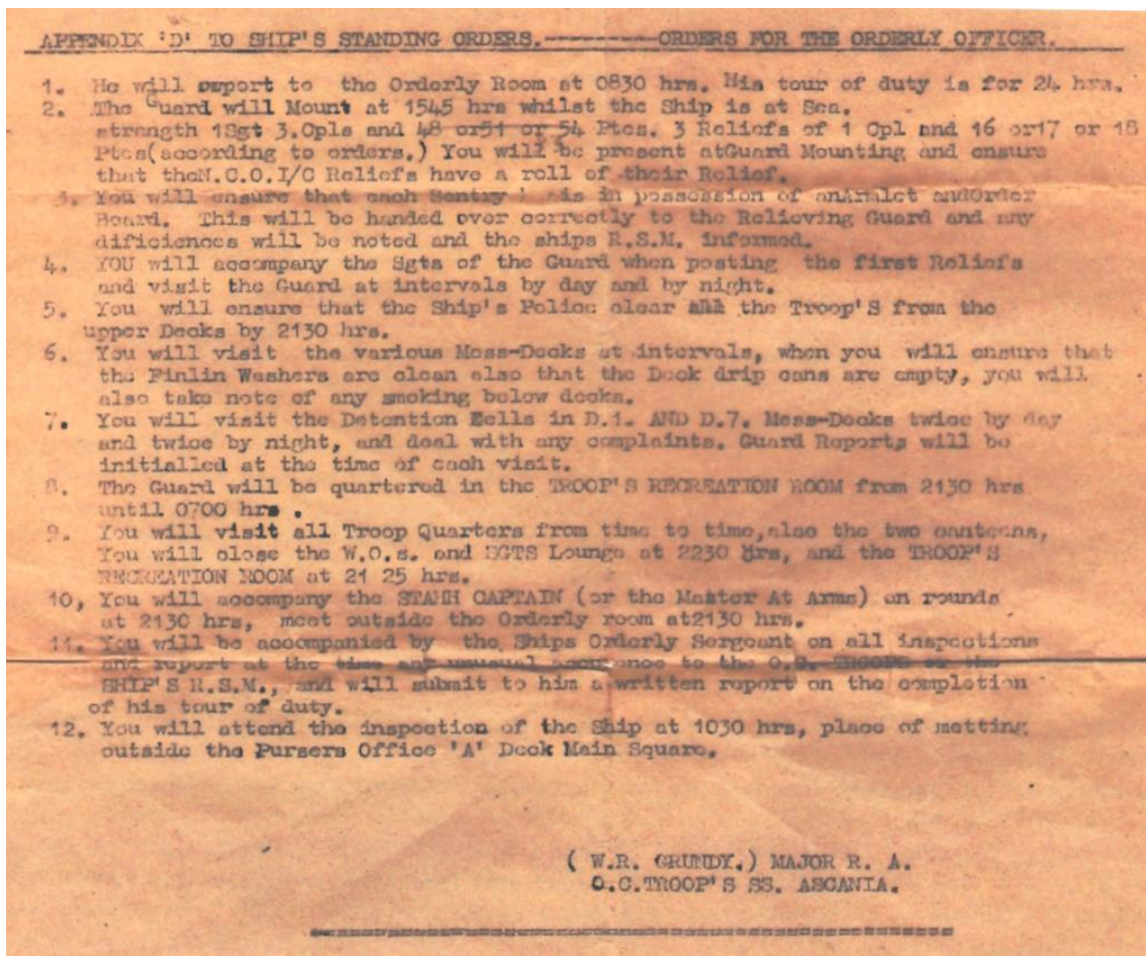
At lunchtime the next day we were bussed down to the docks and I embarked aboard HMT Ascania, together with about 2,100 other troops, including two pals from 150 OCTU – 2nd Lieuts P.A.L.Harris and John Dawson.

The 14,400-ton Ascania was built in 1925 in Newcastle and for the first three years of the war served as an armed merchant cruiser before being refitted as a troopship. She was scrapped in 1956.

It was an exciting time for me since I didn't know what life was like on a troopship or where in the world I would end up.

I was allocated a small cabin on 'A' deck and settled-in ready for the 1700 hrs sailing. One of the many discomforts of life aboard a crowded troopship was the fact that life jackets had to be worn at all times because of the danger from stray floating mines.

On the second day out I was detailed as 'Field Officer of the Day' and given a typed list of duties. These included inspecting something called 'finlin washers' (I never did discover what or where these were), checking on the various guard posts dotted throughout the ship and regularly visiting all the troop decks (and the cells). This latter task was something of a trial; firstly I hardly knew my way around the ship, and secondly the sea was getting a bit rough by this time.



In the dim, airless and crowded troop decks there was much sea-seasickness and general misery. How I managed to avoid being sick too, I shall never know.

The rest of the voyage was relatively pleasant with little to do apart from the frequent boat-drills. As the ship made its way south I was excited to see the distant islands of Corsica and Sardinia, Elba and Monte Christo.

Soon, Lipari and the conical mass of Stromboli signalled our approach to the Straights of Messina between Italy and Sicily and a glimpse of Mount Etna. For hours I watched the dolphins just ahead of the ship, leaping and diving in the bright sunshine. But for the next two days there were heavy seas and rain, so much of the time was spent reading and sleeping in my bunk, just getting up for meals, boat drills and occasional regimental duties. Early on the sixth day a line of white buildings arose from the sea like the tips of a submerged city. As the ship neared, we could see it was the entrance to the Suez Canal. We moored directly alongside the beautiful gleaming white headquarters building of the Suez Canal Company.

Disembarkation soon began and continued all through the day and into the evening. By late evening I was aboard a dockside troop train starting its leisurely journey (it never exceeded about 20 miles an hour) South and West towards Cairo. Within half an hour I suddenly glimpsed a white-garbed figure in the corridor reaching into the compartment and taking my colleague's holdall from the rack. We ran after the thief but he went through the end door of the carriage, onto the buffers, and jumped off the train clutching his swag.

EGYPT

At about 5.30 next morning the white buildings of Cairo suburbs appeared out of the endless desert sand and we were soon off the train and onto army transport for the road journey to our tented camp on the edge of the city.

In the following seven days in Cairo I merely needed to attend a few interviews at GHQ, the rest of the time was mine. Consequently I was able to explore the city at leisure, visiting the Cairo Museum with its fabulous treasures, the pyramids and sphinx, the bazaars and the old quarter. The great pyramid was most impressive. I climbed with difficulty a little way up the outside - something I'm sure is totally forbidden these days - and spent time exploring the steep internal passages.

The bazaars were a new wonder to me; the narrow cobbled streets with open fronted workshops in which workmen and boys sitting cross-legged on the floor produced wonderful silver objects, pots and jewellery using the most primitive of tools. Workshops of a particular kind all clustered together with the result that in say the copper-pot area, the noise was deafening. Often one had to give way to an oncoming donkey carrying laden panniers as it trudged wearily along the cobbles.

I was appalled by the seemingly total indifference to animal suffering and cruelty. It was common to see horses pulling heavy carts whilst showing on their flanks terrible open sores covered in flies. I saw one horse pulling a ghany just collapse in the busy street and die on the spot whilst his driver flogged him for all he was worth to try to make him get up.

Traffic noise was just incredible, every driver leaned on his horn most of the time he was moving - or stationary, and few seemed to have more than a rudimentary idea of traffic rules.

PALESTINE

The week quickly passed and then came the posting to Sarafand in Palestine which was then HQ of Middle East Special Wireless Regiment. This posting involved a rail journey from Cairo on a train of indeterminate age, pulled by an oil-fired locomotive of gigantic size and fearsome smell, through exotic sounding places like Kantara Junction and Zagazig, across the Egypt-Palestine border, to Lydda.

I remember little about the 18 hr. journey itself, just heat and an endless vista of sand with occasional clumps of date palm and a few camels and the rickety single track, going on and on and on but threatening to disappear at any moment beneath the sand: it was all straight out of T.E.Laurence.

Sarafand was a relatively pleasant place, with a comfortable climate. The camp of single storey buildings was in an area of low hills and lush vegetation, orange and lemon trees and palms. It was there that I first discovered that dates picked from the date palm were not sticky brown wrinkled things but smooth, dry and greenish.

One odd problem that we came across later was a significant shift in the calibration of one of the DF¹ units occurring briefly every week or so; it turned out to be due to an Arab farmer watering his orange groves on the hillside opposite.

Of course the station had its inevitable forest of wireless aerials and was protected by a formidable double perimeter fence with a searchlight probing it all night long and a platoon of West African troops to guard it.

Because of the activities of Jewish terrorist gangs it was in fact a rather dangerous place for British troops and a number were murdered around the time I was there. Of necessity, security was pretty tight in the whole of Palestine; vehicles could only travel in convoy and soldiers were not allowed alone outside camp. By order, I carried a loaded revolver at all times and slept with it under my pillow at night. The sleeping quarters were surrounded by blast-walls and the operational area was within an inner stronghold with its own barbed wire defences and armed guards.

Part of the work of the unit was to keep track of illegal immigrant ships trying to enter Palestinian waters in contravention of the internationally agreed immigration quotas; and a sideline was the attempt to locate and capture illegal Jewish terrorist radio transmitters operating in the Jerusalem and Haifa regions, for which unmarked cars fitted with DF units were used.

Bitterness against the Jews increased markedly when one of their gangs captured two British sergeants, hung them and then booby-trapped their bodies. The blowing up of the King David Hotel in Jerusalem, which was a British officers' club, was no doubt their most spectacular achievement of that time. From initially having much sympathy for the Jewish cause after their suffering in Europe during the war, I soon switched my opinions strongly in favour of the Palestinians – a view that has been hugely reinforced by Israeli actions since then. Middle East politics as played by the Western Powers since the war has been a disgusting and deceitful business, controlled mainly by US self-interest.

In spite of the difficult security situation I was able to make visits to Jerusalem, Haifa and Jaffa, but unfortunately not to Bethlehem. There were no tourists around of course but I did get to see most of the principal religious sites in and near the city. The atmosphere in the old city of Jerusalem was incredible and totally unforgettable.

IRAQ

In addition to all the Arab/Jewish troubles in the Middle East, there were signs that the recently victorious Russians had designs on the oilfields of the Persian Gulf. There were ominous Russian troop and naval movements in the southern Caspian Sea area and near the Persian frontier. It was therefore ordered that a mobile Intercept/DF unit be sent immediately into Iraq to monitor Russian naval, military and diplomatic signals and to track the movements of naval vessels and army - units in the Caspian area.

A highly mobile unit of 25 men was assembled and oddly, I as a junior subaltern, was detailed to command it.

So after less than three weeks at MESWR HQ in Palestine I went by road to the airfield at Lydda (Lydda was also a rail junction) and flew a turbulent and uncomfortable 6 hr. journey in an RAF Dakota

¹ Direction Finder

transport plane from Lydda to Habbaniya, ahead of the road convoy, which made the three-night overland journey a few days later.

Habbaniya was a major RAF airfield about 60 miles west of Baghdad, close to Lake Habbaniya, and it was also a staging post on the newly established civilian air routes to the Far East.

My orders were to set up a mobile 24 hr. intercept and direction finding facility on the fringe of the airfield and to remain ready to move into Persia at a day's notice. I had equipment to monitor 5 or so 'targets' simultaneously and continuously, one long-distance DF unit, a powerful transmitter to communicate over the 600+ miles back to Palestine HQ, cipher machines (and code books), several three-kilowatt generators mounted on trailers and sufficient general transport to accommodate the whole unit.

I would receive coded information from Sarafand about the Russian units that were of immediate interest. We would endeavour to locate their transmitters, take down the (4 letter coded) messages and try to work out and follow up their radio links to other units so those communications also could be monitored. Skilful operators could soon build up a picture of a whole network of interlinked transmitters - say between a corps headquarters and its brigades, perhaps down to divisions.

It was quite a battle of wits, because every 24 hours all the station call-signs and transmission frequencies would simultaneously change, so our search and build-up operation would begin all over again. We used similar procedures of course for our own wireless links. Intercepted traffic was either recoded and sent to HQ by radio link or, more usually, sealed in a "pilot's bag" and sent away by air.

Within a week of starting operations my senior NCO S/Sgt Mansell fell ill and had to spend two weeks in hospital and a fierce storm developed that blew down some of our newly erected wireless masts. Storm damage to our direction finding aerials was a particular nuisance because it required a complete and lengthy recalibration procedure.

As summer approached, it became increasingly intolerable to work in our signals trucks so I managed to negotiate the use of some unused RAF huts. We moved as much of our operation as possible into these buildings which, having no air-conditioning of course, were far from luxurious but a hell of a lot better than the trucks.

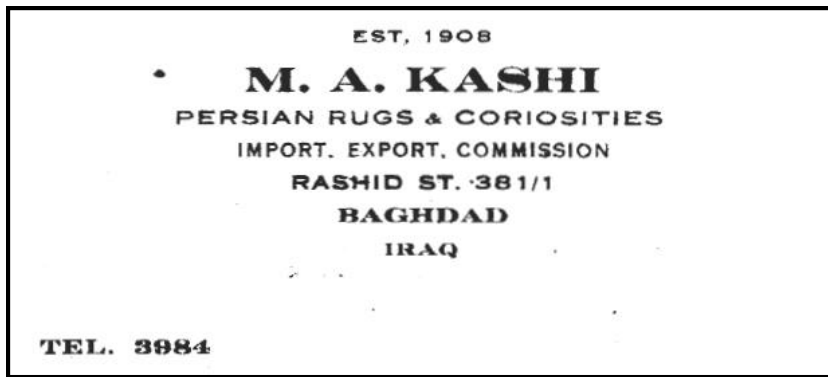
Living conditions for the chaps and for myself were pretty good, thanks to the RAF and on the whole we stayed fairly healthy. Heatstroke was the most common problem, in spite of the daily ration of salt tablets but my only malady in the first couple of months was a swollen arm resulting from too many insect bites. Regular spraying with DDT and sleeping under mosquito/sandfly nets were our main defences.

I stayed in turn in several of the station Messes, made tremendous use of the swimming pool and acquired some very good friends amongst the junior RAF officers whom I would join from time to time on some of their 'recreational' trips into Baghdad, to a cinema or bar or cabaret (etc.). These trips were self-funding since one could save up one's whiskey ration (for which we paid twelve and sixpence a bottle in the Mess) and, unofficially and illegally, sell it for about three pounds a bottle in certain Baghdad establishments. There was also a YMCA where we could stay overnight and have decent meals very cheaply. The toilet arrangements there were a little unusual by UK standards in that under the seat was a large bucket-like receptacle but on the wall was a notice requiring that used toilet paper be placed in the separate tin can nailed to the door.

One day whilst in Baghdad I spent some time wandering into carpet sellers' 'shops' and finally decided to buy a Persian carpet from the emporium of a Mr Kashi in Rashid Street. It was a lengthy transaction starting with the boy assistant being sent out for cups of thick Turkish coffee, to be drunk with a glass of water, before the selection and 'haggling' could begin. Eventually we reached an agreed price and I then had to buy the largest suitcase I could find to carry it in.

Supposedly all these carpets had travelled overland from Persia and were then washed in the Tigris before being sun-dried and delivered to Kashi.

For more than a year I lugged that millstone to every posting in the Middle East, but finally got it home safely.



Mr Kashi's business card

LOG SHEET NO. 1 OPERATOR 716

DATE 17 JAN 46

CONFIDENTIAL

TIME	RC'S	TO	FROM	TYPE OF MESSAGE AND REMARKS	BEARING
001	427L			LOG OPENED	
13		IL	CD de 805	vs calls QSV 137SLV 137 OK? QSV NA 137 OK?	
14			AIZ de 805	OK	
15			AIZ de 805	vs calls	
15			DNL de 805	vs calls OK?	
16			DNL de 805	DRK?	
17			DNL de 805	DRK?	
17			DNL de 805	DRK?	
17			DNL de 805	DRK?	
18			CD de 805	DRK?	
19			DNL de 805	DRK?	
20			CD de 805	DRK?	

137
25
2685
3425

A typical intercepted 'netting' call.

FMB122 0939/7/8/45 15095 R4 4072

DRAWL

EJK DE HVJ

SS 32 CV 23 6 1400 VATGOVT = ARCHDEACON MACHAHON

CLONTARF DUBLIN =

HOLY FATHER OCCASION MARRIAGE MICHAEL DUFFY VERONICA

STAVELEY X LOVINGLY IMPARTS PATERNAL APOSTOLIC BLESSING

PLEDGE ABUNDANT CELESTIAL GRACES = MONTINI SUBSTITUTE AR'

TS 1353 VC

An intercept of Vatican traffic. (Don't trust anyone)
 (note the "Abundant celestial graces. !!)

TOP SECRET

No. 5 S.I.Coy.,
M.E.L.F.

51S/170/A

5 October 46

Dear *Lynd*

Thank you very much for your letter and the change from my mess-bill. You were certainly pretty lucky with your trip back. The normal DAK seating is about as uncomfortable as it could be. It must have been quite a pleasant journey with civvy seating.

Thank you indeed for your good wishes for my journey home. I am due to depart tomorrow. I have had to wait a pretty long time for Lt. Denison's return and I can assure you that I am now looking forward to that departure very much.

I would like, before I go, to extend my sincere thanks to the whole Habbaniya Detachment, and to yourself in particular, for the excellent service you have given me in the way of vital material. Since its inception the Detachment has succeeded in finding an extraordinary proportion of new and wanted groups and its work on both search and exploitation has been highly successful. With the arrival of Twirl at Hab there has been an enormous increase in activity which is most gratifying, especially in view of the fact that it is one of the highest priority groups on our cover list.

Please give my good wishes for the future to the whole section and please accept my grateful thanks, yourself, for all the help you have given me, especially during my recent visit.

All the best,

Lawis (CAHILL) (Intelligence Corps Captain)

Lt. C. A. Lee
Det. 2 W/T Coy.,
R.A.F. Station,
HABBANIYA, IRAQ.

COPY

~~Page 17A~~

IRAQ EDITION

INCORPORATING GREECE PROGRAMMES

FORCES' RADIO TIMES

COMPLETE FORCES' PROGRAMME from JUNE 30th to JULY 6th, 1946
PRODUCED BY THE FORCES' BROADCASTING SERVICE, A.W.2(b), G.H.Q., M.E.F., IN CONJUNCTION WITH B.B.C., CAIRO

● LOCAL TIMES: All times shown are correct for Iraq. Except in the case of Postal Programmes from Athens where the times shown are correct for Greece (Iraq time is one hour ahead of Greece).



SATURDAY

JULY 6

BBC

GENERAL FORCES
PROGRAMME

24.30 M. (12.05 M.C.T.)

5:00 NEWS AND HOME NEWS
5:10 RECORD ROUNDABOUT.
5:30 BRIGHT AND SHINING.
5:50 RECORD ALBUM.

19.41 M. (15.30 M.C.T.)

4:30 WORLD AFFAIRS by Wickham
Steed.

20:45 KAY ON THE KEYS.

19.41 M. (15.30 M.C.T.) and
16.55 M. (12.50 M.C.T.)

9:00 NEWS.

9:10 Daily Service.

9:15 MORNING MUSIC

16.55 M. (12.50 M.C.T.)

20:45 MORNING STAR - Jack
Buchanan.

10:00 NEWS read at dictation speed

10:15 BILLY TERNENT and his
Orchestra.

9:45 SOUTHERN SERENADE

11:00 NEWS.

11:10 Interlude.

11:15 MUSIC PARADE.

12:30 FORCES' FAVOURITES.

12:50 MUSIC WHILE YOU WORK—
Harry Fryer and his Orchestra.

12:55 Programme Announcements

1:00 SHORT AND SWEET.

1:15 HERE'S WISHING YOU WELL
AGAIN—Programme for Hospital
patients.

14:20 NEWS AND HOME NEWS

14:35 FORCES' FAVOURITES.

15:15 SPORTS COMMENTARY

15:30 VIC OLIVER INTRODUCES -
Guests: Mary Ella, Robert New
bitt and Sally Rogers.

16:00 NEWS.

16:05 PIANO PARADE.

16:15 RADIO NEWSREEL.

16:30 STRING ALONG WITH SANDY

17:00 SPORTS JAMBOREE, followed
by Programme Announcements.

18:00 NEWS.

19:00 FROM TODAY'S PAPERS

19:15 George Elrick's Band Party

19:45 SPORTS COMMENTARY.

20:05 NEWS AND HOME NEWS

19.44 M. (15.45 M.C.T.)

20:15 In Town Tonight.

20:45 RENDEZVOUS PLAYERS

21:00 FORCES' FAVOURITES.

21:45 RICHARD TAUBER in a two-
well programme with the George
Melachrino Orchestra.

22:30 HOME FLASH.

23:45 AS THE COMMENTATOR SAW
IT.

23:50 NEWS.

23:10 SPORTS SUMMARY

23:15 MUSIC HALL.

ALL IRAQ

STATION JCKW SHORTWAVE

41.25 Metres (7.22 Mc/s)

4630

MUSICAL
CLOCK

Frequent time announcements.

07:00 NEWS AND HOME NEWS.

07:10 MUSICAL CLOCK (Contd.)

07:45 SINGING FOR YOU - Anna
Ziegler and Webster Booth.08:00 Local weather forecast followed
by RECORDS AT RANDOM

08:30 Sign off until 11:00

11:00 BAND STAND—Music, Melody
and Song by the BBC Revue
Orchestra.11:30 THE ARMY RADIO ORCHE-
STRA

12:00 SPOTLIGHT ON SPORT

12:15 SERVICES' MUSIC BOX -
Army Salon Orchestra.

12:30 MUSIC WHILE YOU WORK

13:00 Programme for Indian Troops.

14:00 NEWS AND HOME NEWS

14:15 HANDS IN HARMONY - To
Town on two Pianos.

14:30 MUSICAL MAGAZINE

15:00 POPULAR MUSIC

16:00 BREAK FOR MUSIC - Uralato
and his Concert Orchestra.

16:30 STRING ALONG WITH

SANDY.

17:00 KAY ON THE KEYS.

17:15 GEORGE FORMBY.

17:30 Programme for Indian Troops

19:00 EVENING STAR - The Mad
Bones.19:15 SERVICES MUSIC HALL -
Famous Variety Artists from the
three Services.19:45 Local weather forecast followed
by TEASER TIME.

20:00 NEWS AND HOME NEWS.

20:15*

IN
TOWN
TONIGHT

20:45 TIME FOR SONG.

21:00 ASK FOR ANOTHER - Your
own request programme presented
by Zena. Mail your requests to
No. 1 P.B.U., M.E.F.

21:45 CHORUS GENTLEMEN

22:00 MUSIC FOR DANCING

23:00 Close down.

FOR INDIAN TROOPS

STATION JFPB BASRAH

245 Metres (870 Kc/s)

12:00 Hindustani Programme.

12:30 Devotional followed by film music.

13:15 Hindustani Programme.

14:20 Sign off until 16:30.

16:30 Light music.

16:50 Announcements.

17:00 Songs sung by famous film stars.

Punjabi film songs.

17:30 Hindustani Programme (Relayed
from J.C.K.W.).

18:30 News from A.I.R.

18:45 An interesting story, songs by
SHEILA SARKAR, Marathi
songs, songs from film
"CHHAMIA" and variety music
programme.

20:00 Troops Programme.

21:15 MANJOO—Film song and contra-
mental.

21:30 Close down.

GREECE

FORCES' PROGRAMME FROM RADIO ATHENS

47.1 Metres (641 Kc/s)

and relayed by RADIO SALONIKA

57.3 Metres (504 Kc/s)

TIMES ARE CORRECT FOR GREECE

1230

MUSIC
FROM
THE
MOVIES

13:00 WORLD NEWS.

13:30 MAGIC OF THE WALTZ

13:50 Sign off until 16:30.

16:30 LETTER BOX—Requests

19:00 WORLD AND HOME NEWS

19:15 EVENING STAR

19:30 SERVICES' RADIOGRAM

20:00 HANDS IN HARMONY.

20:15 Sign off.

SOUTH IRAQ

STATION JFPA BASRAH

212.5 Metres (577 Kc/s)

9:00 MUSICAL CLOCK.

Frequent time announcements.

09:30 NEWS AND HOME NEWS

07:15 MORNING IN MAQIL.

07:45 SINGING FOR YOU - Layton
and Johnston.08:00 Local weather forecast followed
by MUSIC WITH A LILY

08:30 Sign off until 10:00.

10:00 NEWS read at dictation speed

10:15 SERVICES' MUSIC BOX -
The R.C.A.P. "Streamliners."10:30 BRITISH BAND OF THE
A.I.F.11:00 SWING SERENADE - Earl
Hines, the Ink Spots, Ella Fitz-
gerald, Harry Farrow and Fate
Walker.11:30 ORCHESTRAL HALF HOUR -
Halle Orchestra.

12:00 BREAK FOR MUSIC.

12:30 MUSIC WHILE YOU WORK.

13:00 CANADIAN CARAVAN -
Featuring the Canadian Band
and Canadian Artists.

13:30 ARMY RADIO ORCHESTRA

14:00 NEWS AND HOME NEWS

14:15 THE NEW ORGANOLIANS

14:45 PIANO PLAYTIME

14:00 CLEVELAND SYMPHONY
ORCHESTRA

Conducted by Rudolph Ringwald

Excerpts from Tannhauser

(Wagner)

Symphony No. 6 in B Minor

(Tchaikovsky) (Tchaikovsky)

16:45 STRICTLY INSTRUMENTAL

Modyer of Medley.

16:30 STRING ALONG WITH

SANDY.

17:00 MUSICAL MAGAZINE—Antee
and the ENSA Salon Orchestra17:30 PALM COURT—Albert Sandier
and Sidney McEwan.18:30 ACCENT ON RHYTHM—With
the Bachelor Girls, Peter Akover,
George Elliott and James Moody
at the piano.

18:15 ASK FOR ANOTHER

Your own request programme
presented by Frank Parsons.19:15 EVENING STAR - Isobe
Ballie.19:45 Local weather forecast followed
by IN THE SHADOWS

20:00 NEWS AND HOME NEWS

20:15 IN TOWN TONIGHT.

20:45 EIGHT BOYS AND A GIRL

21:00 FORCES' FAVOURITES.

21:45 SERENADE TO THE STARS

22:00 MUSIC FOR DANCING.

23:00 Close down.

Printed by The Printing
and Stationery Services, M.E.F.

* Rebroadcast from B.B.C.

† Rebroadcast from All India Radio.

TOWN MAJOR CAIRO

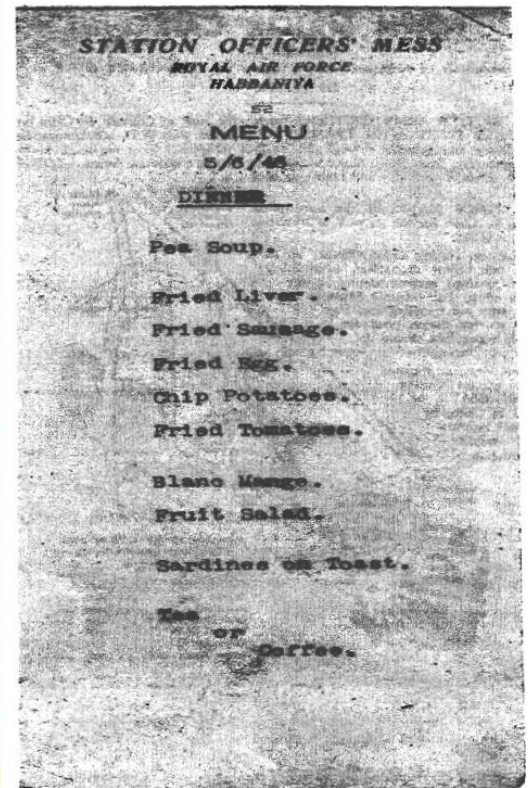
Accommodation of Officers visiting Cairo on TEMPORARY DUTY or IN TRANSIT

● ALL BRITISH ARMY OFFICERS (under the rank of Colonel) in Cairo on TEMPORARY DUTY or IN TRANSIT are provided with W.D. accommodation under military arrangements through the TOWN MAJOR. They are required to obtain, personally, from Town Major the special billeting requisition forms. TOWN MAJOR'S office is open day and night—24 hour service.

● The TOWN MAJOR is the only officer appointed for Cairo for the purpose of allocation of accommodation.

● All officers visiting Cairo whether on leave or duty will report themselves, immediately they have obtained accommodation, to the D.P.M.'s office, Bab-el-Hadid Barracks. (Officers who are spending less than 24 hours in this station need not necessarily report but should do so when practicable.)

● Town Major is prepared to assist officers visiting Cairo ON LEAVE, or stationed in Cairo, by advice and information on available accommodation.



Always 'gourmet' food and healthy eating in the Station Officers' Mess

I had my own transport - a Chevrolet 'staff-car', so getting around was no problem; I particularly enjoyed driving the few miles to Lake Habbaniya to see the weekly British Overseas Airways flying boat come into land on the lake for an overnight stay, en-route to the Far-East; an unforgettably beautiful sight.

One day I came across a 30 cwt truck standing out in the desert, apparently abandoned. It was painted in RAF colour and was seemingly complete. I made a few discrete enquiries at the station transport depot and was assured that no RAF trucks were listed as missing. So my two vehicle mechanics went out to check it over and reported that apart from what appeared to be damaged engine bearings and bad tyres it seemed in reasonable condition. We towed it back to our little compound and over the following weeks fixed it up with spare parts and usable tyres scrounged from my friends in the Transport Officers' Mess where I was living at the time. After repainted it khaki and giving it a fictitious army-style serial number we now had a truck that could be used freely for recreational journeys without the complication of army paperwork.

Petrol was no problem; I would sign an army requisition form for petrol for a particular vehicle, it would go, with the vehicle to the RAF petrol depot, and be handed in for a tank full. The RAF didn't know what to do with this army form - it didn't fit into their paperwork system and there were no other army units to send it to for hundreds of miles around so they sent it back to me, where it could disappear without trace. By this means I was able to take a group of the lads on a successful and memorable weekend trip to Babylon and Hilla, for example. I still have the fragment of coloured mud brick with a bit of cuniform writing on it that I picked up at Babylon.

Later on I found out that this truck had been captured by the Iraqi rebels during their German-backed uprising in - I think- 1943. When the rebels were defeated, the truck and much other military hardware was just abandoned.

I have often wondered what eventually happened to it. I expect the lads sold it to one of the many local sheikhs.

I had a couple of duty trips to CICI (Combined Intelligence Centre Iraq) in central Baghdad. This unit was housed in an impressive and interesting old building, a central courtyard surrounded by a two storey balconied honeycomb of rooms - ideal for office purposes - but which I was told had been in fact a Harem. There were no females in residence at this time. The Iraqi climate, with summer shade temperatures in excess of 120°F was deemed, apparently, unsuitable for British females, except for a handful of senior nursing sisters at the base hospital. We were lucky if the night-time temperature dropped as low as 90°F.

Having set-up the unit in late spring I was pretty well acclimatised to these conditions by the time summer arrived so I derived a certain inner satisfaction when a rather pompous I-Corps. captain from Sarafand decided to fly in to 'inspect' the unit for 4 or 5 days in late July. When I met his (RAF transport) plane he was already sweating profusely and within a couple of days was suffering from a bad attack of 'prickly heat' and so beat a hasty retreat back to Palestine; after that I had few unwelcome H.Q. intruders that summer.

It was much too hot at night to sleep indoors on a mattress so I used my portable canvas army bed on the outside tiled veranda with just a thin cotton sheet and a mosquito net for cover - no pyjamas. A mass of pomegranates grew around pergolas over the verandas and as the fruits swelled towards ripening time a minor hazard in the dark was crashing your head on a low hanging pomegranate, a surprisingly painful mishap.

Unless there was a particularly important 24 hr. monitoring task to do, I worked from around 5.30 to 11.30 in the morning and again in the evening from perhaps 6 to 9. I spent most afternoons in the Club swimming pool where, under the tutorship of a mad flight lieutenant - he had completed three full tours (the maximum allowed) as a bomber pilot over Germany and was really crazy - I became a reasonably proficient swimmer and diver. Unfortunately, all this exposure to U.V. radiation has caused a mass of skin lesions to develop some 40 years later but none, so far, has been found to be malignant. Of course we knew nothing of radiation hazards at that time. The only army edict on the subject said that if you rendered yourself unfit for duty through sunburn you would be charged with 'self-inflicted wounding'.

Apart from the camp cinema, a principal pass-time at the RAF station was horse riding. A number of horses were stabled at the airfield and looked after by native grooms. The practice was for a serviceman to buy a horse - usually from the existing owner who was being posted, pay a small sum each week for its stabling and care and sell it on to someone else when leaving. The desert was an ideal place for riding and there was even a (basic) station racetrack on the edge of the airfield, a big social event being the annual race meeting at which local sheikhs were also invited to compete.

I became well acquainted with the DAPM (Deputy Assistant Provost Marshall) of the station. Like other senior military police that I came across he appeared to me to have something of the bully with a streak of sadism in him, but we seemed to get along OK, perhaps because he had absolutely no disciplinary powers over my detachment. Several times he invited me to join him in his favourite hobby in which, armed with 0.22 rifles, we scoured the open desert in his jeep searching for the packs of wild dogs that would appear at dusk.

A hair-raising chase would then ensue trying to get close enough to get off a few shots at these big powerful creatures. If one was hit and wounded, the others in the pack would sometimes turn on it and tear it to pieces. Usually the packs stayed close to the small native camps and village settlements dotted around and one not uncommon mishap was to shoot a domesticated dog by mistake, sometimes leading to a complaint to the station commander by the village sheikh. The 'official' reason for these hunts by the

DAPM and his cronies was the risk posed to health by the rabies that was supposedly endemic in the packs.

Sometimes there were severe sandstorms across the whole area and these could last up to three days at a time. All flying had to cease and the radio static made wireless communications useless. In addition, aerials were sometimes damaged. During such storms, fine sand and dust would get everywhere; it was just impossible to keep it out so there was a lot of cleaning up of equipment and kit to do afterwards.

One day a regular scheduled French passenger flight en-route to the Far East had landed for its overnight stop when a sudden storm brewed up and kept the plane grounded. At the time I was sharing a billet with an RAF flying officer who had struck up a friendship with a certain French air hostess who regularly worked on this route. Not wishing to miss such a golden opportunity as that presented by the storm he asked if as a great favour to him I would move out of our billet whilst the storm lasted so that he could 'entertain' his lady friend. Obliging I camped in an empty room nearby. I'm sure he found his next two days and nights much more enjoyable than I did.

One of the civilians employed of the station was a stunningly attractive young Syrian woman called Kamellia Marton whose home was in Baghdad. She had a pleasant singing voice and I first met her when she was invited one evening to entertain the Officers Club with a few songs. Perhaps because I was the only army officer amongst a great many air-force officers or because I spent most afternoons in the swimming pool at the Club and she was keen to learn to swim, a brief friendship sprang up between us. She learned to swim and I enjoyed some pleasant company - amid a fair amount of envy from my fellow officers.

Necessarily we had erected our own wireless aerials in a group just beyond the airfield perimeter and for security purposes an armed native 'levee' was employed to guard them through the night. The various aerials were supported on 36 ft. and 72 ft. steel masts stayed with steel guy ropes which in turn had porcelain insulators inserted every 6 ft or so.

One night during a bad electric storm I drove out to check on them, only to find the guard terrified by the big electric sparks crackling across the insulators in a sort of miniature fireworks display. I must admit it was pretty impressive and not at all conducive to the use of radio equipment.

Any equipment that was not closely guarded was liable to vanish without trace. After we had moved our operations out of the trucks and into buildings we had no immediate use for the large vehicle that normally housed all the wireless receivers and duty operators. This mobile operations room was entered through a single door at the rear of the truck, so we removed everything that could be removed from the outside of the vehicle - spare wheels, jerricans, mast sections etc. and stowed them inside the locked cabin. We then drove the truck into an inner compound of the airfield and backed it hard up against an 8 ft. brick wall. A few weeks later I went to check on the truck, which was still hard up against the wall, but miraculously the spare wheels from inside the locked cabin had gone, never to be seen again.

Fortunately, I never lost a cipher machine or a codebook or any firearms as all were Court Martial offences.

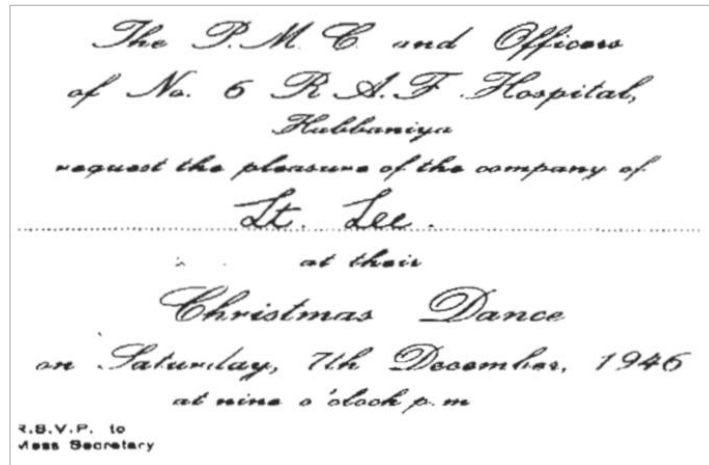
One day I noticed that two American fighter-bombers were parked on the very edge of the airfield perimeter and that a squad of RAF mechanics had just finished stripping out the twin engines from both planes. I found out that these two planes had been declared unfit for further active service and had been flown in just to be set alight in order to give the station fire-crew some live practice. Out of curiosity my sergeant and I decided to have a look around the planes before they were destroyed and to our surprise found that very little internal equipment had been removed. This seemed a dreadful waste so we proceeded to help ourselves to any goodies that were readily removable. For example I acquired the direction finding radio receiver and promptly converted it into a normal short-wave receiver that I used for listening to the Forces broadcasting stations; it travelled home to England in my kit box and was finally dumped when we moved house in 1991.

For most of my time at Habbaniya ("Hab." to the locals) I was very comfortably housed in spacious billets and looked after by a young Iraqi bearer called Siamantha who would wake me in the morning with a cup of chai, clean my equipment, see to the laundry, clean the billet, all those sorts of chores. Generally, the overseas allowance covered all my expenses, and as Dorothy was working and still living at home we could save my pay and married allowance for later use.

On the 24th of May (1946) my promotion from Second to Full Lieutenant came through, and of course I got a certain amount of ribbing from the lads when I first appeared wearing my second 'pip'.

In September I was ordered to attend a briefing at HQ so on the 15th I left my billet at 2am, drove to the airfield and boarded a Dakota heading for Lydda, arriving before breakfast, and then travelled on by road to Sarafand.

As a result of these meetings I was allocated another five wireless operators and extra receivers to cope with an increasing work load. Three days later a similar reverse journey took me back to Hab.



PALESTINE, EGYPT AND CYPRUS

Eventually (December 18th 1946) my stint in Iraq finished and I returned to Sarafand HQ.

Only two days later I was on my travels again, this time by train to Alexandria in Egypt.

I noted in my diary "left Sarafand 08.30, Lydda 10.00, Lunch 12.30 at Gaza, Dinner 18.00 at Kantara, change at Benha 23.15, arrive Alex 05.30, arrive SCU4 Sidi Bishr 07.45".

My job at Sidi Bishr was to help close down the Special Wireless Squadron there and move it to Cyprus.

In comparison with Cairo, Alexandria seemed to me to be a fine city. The big curving bay with its sea front lined with smart gleaming white buildings under an intense blue sky and reflected in a shimmering blue sea was a most attractive sight. It had some fine shops and avenues and exuded a 'Parisian' feeling, which was reinforced by the extensive use of French instead of English as the second language. I suppose I had a lot more nerve at that time, for one day I boldly walked into an expensive looking lingerie shop in the city centre and with the aid of the pretty young French speaking assistant purchased a rather flimsy bra as a present for Dorothy. I doubt it fitted, but after nine months absence one's memory for such detail is bound to be hazy.

At SCU4 I was detailed to take over all the monetary activities in the Unit and then look after the funds during and after the move. The biggest headache was the "imprest" account from which all the unit personnel were paid (in cash) each week.

I found it a tricky job in normal times but to do it in the middle of a move with a lot of individual postings and a change of banking facilities from one country to another was certainly difficult.

When all was ready for the move, most of my kit went on one of the trucks in the large convoy that was to make the road journey to Port Said and then the sea crossing to Famagusta, whilst I went to Cairo by train (a 3½ hr. journey).

I reported to the Town Major and was lodged in the 'Grand Hotel' for the next 4 days before leaving (at 4.30am) for Almaza and flying from there to Nicosia in Cyprus, arriving at the new Unit at 2.30pm on 3 1st December 1946.

We proceeded to take over a newly built camp between Famagusta and Nicosia where for a while I became Adjutant of No.3 Squadron - a job for which I had no training at all. It was interesting!

Inevitably, some of my kit (brown boots etc.) was stolen from the trucks, but eventually I got the £ 9- 16s- 10d insurance money for it (officers had to buy some uniform items themselves, having been given an initial cash clothing allowance).

LEAVE

In early March, having been in the Middle East continuously for a full year, I became eligible for home leave - known as LIAP, Leave In Advance of Python. But first I was required to report to Sarafand HQ and so on the 8th of March 1947 at Famagusta I boarded the ferry EOLA for the 16 hr. crossing to Haifa, completing the journey 6am there to Sarafand by road. The EOLA was a dumpy little ferryboat that had been 'appropriated' from the Italians and had a reputation for rolling rather alarmingly in any swell; fortunately the sea was pretty calm on this occasion.

After two days at HQ I boarded the 9.30am train at Lydda arriving 8 hours later at El Kantara Junction, to face a 5 hour wait for the connecting train to Port Said, reaching 156 transit camp in the early hours next morning.

The following days were taken up with routine admin. duties whilst awaiting the arrival of the troopship.

I was detailed as "Draft Conducting Officer" for a party consisting of one sergeant, fifty-five men and myself. The rather grand title of DCO concealed the fact that really the job was to be general dogsbody to 56 blokes, doing such chores as changing their Egyptian money into Sterling. I see from the papers I still have that Pte. Dumville changed £E.15-50 and received £15- 17-9, whilst Sgmn. Ward handed in 20 piastres in exchange for four shillings and one penny. There were three or four days of this sort of duty, roll call each morning, billet inspections, kit checks, blanket and ration issue etc., before we boarded the waiting "HMT Highland Princess" bound for Toulon. It was a large ship (by troopship standards) with a 28,300 ton displacement and 96,000 hp engines that gave it a speed of 16 knots.

It was an uneventful cruise to France and then transfer to the transit camp at nearby Hiers on 24th March 1947.

Two days later began the tedious 24 hour train journey from Toulon via Marseilles, Avignon, Lyon, Dijon, Paris and Amiens to Calais. After 10 or 12 hours the train would stop for a couple of hours at a trackside staging post, where you could clean up and have a hot meal served to you in the Mess Hall by impressively efficient waiters who were all German POWs. -

I was staggered to see that near many stations we passed in southern France there were groups of ragged looking civilians begging for us to throw them any half eaten left-overs from our haversack rations.

Calais was terribly battered, though I saw little of it having arrived late in the evening and leaving after an early breakfast next morning to board the Cross Channel Ferry to Dover from whence I reached home about 5pm on March 27th.

At Dover the Customs charged me £2 duty on the Persian carpet that I had carried, like a ball and chain, all over the Middle East since buying it in Baghdad but as it is still in use - after some 60 years, I guess it was worth the effort.

After 4 weeks of leave in Greenford it was time to retrace my steps to Port Said.

Leaving home at midday on April 27th I travelled by train to Southampton and then by road to Chandlers Ford for an overnight stay in the transit camp there. I left at 4am next morning for Southampton docks to board the troopship Dunnotar Castle.

We sailed at lunch-time, passing sister ships Warwick Castle and Capetown Castle and the huge and impressive Queen Mary. Next day a heavy swell kept me in my bunk all morning without breakfast but I went to the ships cinema that evening and felt fine for the rest of the voyage. On the 4th day out (my birthday) we passed Gibraltar and the following evening saw the lights of Algiers. Two days later we docked in the Grand Harbour in Malta for a 6 hour stay, reaching Port Said on the morning of May 8th (the 10th day of the voyage).

After 3 days in Port Said I took an overnight train to Lydda, then by road to Sarafand HQ. Two days later it was back to Haifa and the EOLA to Famagusta and then by road to rejoin the Squadron.

It was a great deal of travelling for a rather brief spell of home leave but seemed well worth it after being away for more than a year.

Little had changed at RHQ whilst I was away and I had hardly settled down to the routines before I was on the move yet again, this time to take over command from (acting) Captain Davidson of No. 2 Troop, a 'Y' unit stationed about 10 miles north of Nicosia.

2 TROOP, NO 2 WIRELESS REGIMENT

After a few days of 'handing over', Davidson returned to Regimental HQ whilst I took on responsibility for this unit of about 125 men and a mountain of equipment (for which I had to sign). The transport alone included five 3-ton trucks, four 15 cwt trucks, two cars, two motorcycles, and four 1-ton trailers.

It was a very different and more difficult job from that of looking after the small Iraqi detachment. But, being a largish unit, it did have a warrant officer and several sergeants on roll, so responsibilities could be shared. Our own diesel generators produced all the electrical power for the camp but, unfortunately, all our water had to be carried from a spring about 15 miles away. By some stroke of bureaucratic stupidity we were only allocated one water truck and trailer to do this job. Fitting-in routine maintenance work on the truck, which meant one day a week off the road, was difficult enough, but of course a day came when it had a major breakdown and the camp was literally left 'high and dry'.

Transport was a perpetual headache; the drivers, driver mechanics and vehicle mechanics that we had were in general an idle lot. One day a couple of REME vehicle inspectors arrived unannounced to check over our fleet.

Inevitably, the state of maintenance on some trucks was declared unsatisfactory and I got quite a rocket from RHQ when the inspectors' report reached there. So for a week I had the transport section on parade at 6.30 each morning, to be inspected and then carry out an hours' extra maintenance before dismissal for breakfast. But one morning, they got their own back; they all turned up on parade unwashed and unshaven, with the irrefutable excuse that the ablutions water tank had run dry.

I soon learned too that it was essential to keep a very close watch on the vehicle logs to see how many miles-per-gallon each truck realistically should be doing. Otherwise, the recorded consumption rate would steadily rise to a high imaginary figure, allowing the unused diesel fuel to be siphoned off by the driver and flogged at a handsome price in the local civilian market.

I had my own transport, a station wagon and batman/driver - Dvr. Holt - so I managed to get out to visit some of the antiquities on the Island and some of the ancient monasteries hidden high up in the mountains.

As part of the Unit's compulsory 'Educational Activities' we frequently organised 'swimming instruction' (so called) on the glorious beaches around Kyrenia; one of our favourite amusements there was to swim across the narrow but fast flowing channel between the beach and a small uninhabited island which we knew as 'Snake Island'. Sometimes we also had recreational swimming trips to the beach at Famagusta.

One weekend in February I took a small party in one of our 15 cwt trucks up into the Trodos Mountains. It was an exciting journey along the narrow hairpin roads, which, as we climbed ever higher,

became snow covered. I can't remember where they came from but I had managed to borrow some sets of skis, so somewhere in the high forests we spent a most energetic afternoon trying to master the basics of moving and staying mostly upright on the deep crisp snow. Time just slipped away and it was long after dark when we finally found our way back to the truck and its welcome box of rations.

We were on the point of starting a cold and uncomfortable night in the truck when we noticed a faint light coming from a previously unseen hut deep in the woods. We went to investigate and found it to be a watchman/forester's hut occupied by a solitary ancient-looking Greek fellow. It was warm in this single room hut and after much comic mime and gesticulation it was agreed that we could spend the night there. Having politely declined the offer to share his meal of bread and sausage, both items of which were hanging by string from the roof (to keep them out of the way of rats, we later understood) we fetched our blankets and settled down on the floor for a surprisingly good night's sleep, undisturbed by rats or anything else. Apparently there are many watchmen employed by the forestry department in an endeavour to restrict the amount of illegal grazing by itinerant herds of goats that would otherwise do a lot of damage to young tree growth.

For some months I had, on attachment to the Troop, an Armenian linguist by the name of Dannelian. He held the rank of Major in the Intelligence Corps, but a less military looking character would be hard to find.

Sometimes there were little difficulties with Dan over the fact that whilst he was of senior rank I was in command of the Unit and therefore if, for example, he wanted transport to his bank in Nicosia he had to ask me for it and he much resented being told sometimes that he couldn't have the 'staff car' this morning but could go as passenger in the laundry or ration truck.

When you join the armed services you are required, of course, to state your religion. This is then entered in your records, pay-book, etc. and engraved on your 'dog-tags'. During my first two years or so of army service, attendance on Church Parade every Sunday morning was compulsory for all personnel. A few recruits thought that if they claimed to belong to some more unusual religious sect - Mormon, Buddhist, Hindu, then they would get Sunday mornings free. But of course it never worked because anyone unable or unwilling to attend the usual C-of-E or Catholic services was automatically detailed for fatigue duties which would often involve floor scrubbing or latrine cleaning. Sitting in a church pew for an hour was much the better option.

However, whilst I was in the Middle East attendance at Church Services became voluntary. In consequence the visiting Padre would sometimes find that from a 125 strong unit he would get a congregation of half a dozen or so. One of my less enjoyable jobs, therefore, was to tour the men's billets at 7.30 every Sunday morning and try to persuade or cajole a few more reluctant souls into attendance in order to keep the Padre happy.

DAILY ORDERS
BY
LIEUT. C.A.LEE, ROYAL SIGNALS,
COMMANDING No 2 WIRELESS REGT., ROYAL SIGNALS.

FRIDAY

NO 568

29 AUG 47.

DUTIES -30 AUG 47

Orderly Office	Sgt. Shipley	Next For Duty :- S.S.M. Mc Clenaghan
Orderly NCO	L/Cpl. Dawber	Next For Duty :- L/Cpl. Waud
Duty Driver	Dvr. Carter	Next For Duty :- Dvr. McGurk
Duty R M	Sigmn. Watson	Next For Duty :- Sigmn. Hyde
Fire Picquet	Cpl. Ashby	Next for Duty :- L/Cpl. Gaffyne
	Sigmn. Rudge	Sigmn. McLaren
	" Stansfield	" Partridge
	" O' Neil	" Cook J

PARADES As detailed in Station Standing Order Section 22 dated 19 May 47.

M.T. Tasks Vehicles Task No 9 (Charging System, Batteries)
M/Cycles Task No 1 (Engine)
All Vehicles - Check Tyre Pressures.

Discipline -Sigint Passes. New Sigint Passes will be issued on Monday, 1 Sept 47. at 1145 and 1425 hrs. All personnel will parade at one of the above stated times.

CHURCH SERVICES. The following times are published for information of all personnel wishing to attend church :-
Church of England - Nicosia 0800 hrs - Holy communion
1830 hrs - Evensong
0900 hrs - Mass & Holy Communion
Roman Catholic - Nicosia 1800 hrs - Benediction

Drinking water. Drinking water may now be obtained from any of the following points:-
(1) Cookhouse -- (2) Water truck -- (3) Water Trailer. The Ablution Water supply will NOT be used for drinking purposes.

DISCIPLINE -STORES. All Buckets G.S. will be returned to "Q" stores immediately.
Bowls washing will NOT be removed from the Ablution.

MOVES. The w/m will move by road to H. Q. No 2 Wireless Regt., on Monday 1 Sept 47.
Sgt. Norwood -- Dvr. McGurk -- Dvr. Groom -- Dvr. Dunn.
They will report to the S.S.M.'s office at 0800 hrs, Saturday 30 Aug 47.
Kits will be laid for inspection by 1000 hrs, 30 Aug 47. Dvr. McGurk and Dvr. Green will report at M. T. Office at 1100 hrs, 30 Aug 47. Dvr. Dunn will report to Troop Office at 1100 hrs, 30 Aug 47.

DISCIPLINE --INSPECTION. The O.C. will inspect the Camp Area tomorrow, Saturday 30 Aug 47 commencing at 1100 hrs. Canteen, Cookhouse, Ablution shed, Stores Area, Messroom, M. T. Area and all Tents, Billets and Office will be thoroughly cleaned and prepared for inspection. Particular attention will be paid to kit layout and cleanliness of Boots and Shoes. Personnel i/c Tents and Billets will ensure that all Kit is laid out in accordance with the Kitplate.

Lieut. Royal Signals.
O.C. No 2 Troop, No 2 Wireless Regt., Royal Signals.

NOTICES. Help Society Parcels Scheme. Help Society Five Shilling Parcels containing 1 tin of marmalade or jam, 1lb of sugar, 1 tin of dripping, and 1 tin of meat, are available. Those wishing to avail themselves of this scheme will see the Welfare Officer by 1300 hrs. Monday 1 Sept. 47.
Owing to more than 26 names being appended to the list for Sunday's Educational Trip to SALAMIS names will be drawn for. The list of names will be put on the Order Board. Saturday 30 Aug 47.
Transport will leave Troop Office at 0830 Sunday 31 Aug 47.

O/C 2 Troop
No 2 Wireless Regiment
Royal Signals
Cyprus 1947



THE BIRTHDAY OF HIS MAJESTY THE KING

CEREMONIAL PARADE

8 a.m., Thursday, June 12th, 1947
in the Moat.

The Commissioner of Nicosia has pleasure in inviting

Mr. B. D. Lee.

to attend the parade.

Guests are requested to bring their cards with them and to be in their seats by 7.55 a.m. The southern entrance to the Moat will be used and cars will not be admitted.

Dress:—Morning dress or uniform, if available.

I made frequent visits to the Famagusta HQ, for both duty and pleasure, so kept in close touch with friends there. I would be invited to the Mess parties where Capt. Davidson was always the source of much fun. He was a small Irishman with a large 'sergeant-major' style waxed moustache that he constantly twirled between finger and thumb. He was a very heavy drinker, but the more he drank the more amusing he became. He was known throughout the Regiment as 'Zoob' which- I understand was an abbreviation of the Arabic word for penis, but no one could explain to me why this should be. One of his party tricks was to plunge fully clothed into the station swimming pool around midnight and swim up and down imitating a sea-lion. At one HQ party, held when the Colonel was away in Egypt, Zoob drank even more than usual and we had to put him to bed in the only spare bed - which was the Colonel's. Next morning we found that he had been sick in the only available container alongside the bed - which unfortunately was the Colonel's wellington boot.

The Mess parties usually involved a round or two of that stupid drinking game 'Cardinal Puff', followed by full-throated renditions of 'The Ball of Killimure' in various bawdy versions.

Another friend at HQ was Capt. John Seltman whose father was an Oxford professor of antiquities. John himself was well known in the archaeological circles in the Middle East and would sometimes take me with him on his social visits to the Curator of the Cyprus Museum and to the Museum itself.

Whilst visiting 2 Troop one day he pointed out to me that the camp was standing on the site of a Greco-Roman settlement (100 BC - 100 AD) and that the slight depressions on the scrubby hillside were tombs of that period. As a hobby I began to excavate some of these and found indeed that each consisted of a rectangular pit with a large vertical stone slab against one end blocking the entrance to a second small burial chamber. Most of the tombs we looked at had been robbed long ago and were empty except for small fragments of pottery but in a couple we found some complete pots and a small stone 'Roman' style oil lamp. These were handed over to the Museum but I kept a small stone headless male torso and a slightly larger female Roman head, both of which I found on the surface some distance from the burial area near the known site of a small temple. Such figurines were apparently votive offerings.

I discovered that technical refresher courses were being run in the Middle East for those intending to resume interrupted studies on release. Of course I applied to the C/O of my regiment for permission to attend. Needless to say, it was refused. (See correspondence below.)

SUBJECT: Education Courses
666

No 2 Troop, 2 Wireless Regt,
Royal Signals,
Cyprus District,
M.E.L.F.3.
MCA MILs Direct line,
Ref: 2WR2/10/67.

To :-
Commanding Officer,
No 2 Wireless Regt,
Royal Signals,
M.E.L.F.3.

16 June 47.

Sir,
I respectfully submit this my application for HECCO course in accordance with HECCO's 36 and 373 of 1946. I have ascertained from the local Army Education Authorities that I am eligible for such a course on the grounds of previous studies having been interrupted by Military Service. Since it will be necessary to resume these studies after release in the autumn of this year, a refresher course will be of very considerable value to me. The duration of the course is four weeks, and should commence approximately six weeks before the date of release.

3/1/26 June
12

Ed Lee
Lt. C.A. Lee, Royal Signals,
No 2 Troop, 2 Wireless Regt, Royal Signals.

Subject:- EDUCATION COURSE.

H.Q. 2 Wireless Regiment,
R. Signals. M.E.L.F.3.
Ref:- 50/9. 27 June 47.
Tel:- Famagusta Mil. 421.

O.C. No. 2 Troop,
1 Squadron,
2 Wireless Regiment,
R. Signals.
M.E.L.F.3.

Reference attached application from Lieut. C.A. LEE.

Please inform this Officer that the O.C. regrets he cannot spare Lieut. LEE owing to the shortage of Officers in the Regiment.

TJW. -

R. Dreyer
(R. DREYER).
Capt. and Adjt.
No. 2 Wireless Regiment, R. Signals.

When my release date drew nearer, a young lieutenant named Page, ex Rajputana Rifles and Ox. & Bucks Light Infantry was sent to 2 Troop to take over from me. Why an officer from a Light Infantry Regiment was taking over a Special Wireless unit remains a mystery, but by then I was only really interested in getting the equipment handed over on time so that I could get home. Handing over all the big equipment and stores posed no great problems but a hold-up came when '6 Caps, cooks, white,' were nowhere to be found. An organized search of the camp and huts drew a blank and no one admitted ever to have seen such items. Somehow I contrived to get them written off the inventory so all was well and the vital documentation could be signed.

The night before leaving I was asked by the TSM to go down to the mess hall. There, most of the troop was waiting and I was duly presented with an electric clock from the lads. It is still one of my little treasures.

Next morning, 11th September 1947, it was down to the docks to board the ferry for the crossing to Haifa. But something had fouled up the arrangements and there was no ferry. So I spent the night in the transit camp and idled around for four more days before crossing to Haifa on the 'Tripolitania'. After breakfast I took the midday train heading for Egypt again, travelling via Gaza and Kantara to arrive at Port Fuad at 6am next morning.

Seaview Holiday Camp - Port Fouad
Sunday 21st Sept. 1947 at 8 p.m.
 ARMY WELFARE SERVICES
 CANAL NORTH DISTRICT
 Present
SYMPHONY CONCERT
 Conducted by - Dr. HANS HOERNER

Programme

Overture, Egmont Op. 84	Beethoven
Symphony No. 97 in C major	Haydn
Adagio - Vivace	
Adagio ma non troppo	
Menuetto & Trio	
Finale - Presto assai	
INTERVAL 10 MINUTES	
Norwegian Dances Nos. 2 & 4. Op. 35	Grieg
Elegy	Tchaikovsky
Overture, Fledermaus	Strauss
Waltz, Wine, Women and Song	Strauss

CANAL CENTRAL SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
 Leader, Erich Kaltwasser.
 Concert arranged by
 R.W.S. Theatre & Orchestra Group,
 C. C. D.

Andrew's Press Ismailia

Q. M. OFFICE
 156 TRANSIT CAMP
 Dated 17/9/47
 156 TRANSIT CAMP

This is to certify that the
 U/M Arms & Ammunition were withdrawn
 from:-

Army No:- 357941
 Rank:- LIEUT
 Name:- LEE, C. A.
 Regt/Corps:- R. SIGS
 Rifle No:- /
 T.S.M.G. No:- /
 Sten Gun:- /
 Revolver No:- 26 2942
 SLING:- YES/NO
 RATION:- YES/NO
 Number of Rounds:- 12
 Before proceeding to U.K.
 Received By:- [Signature]
 NOT VALID UNLESS STAMPED.

Two of the activities undertaken whilst awaiting the Worcestershire



DEMOB

I quickly settled down in No.156 transit camp at Port Fuad (opposite Port Said) to await the homeward-bound troopship. Two days later we were taken by a 'Z' type landing craft out to the 'Worcestershire' that sailed the next morning.

This ship was a rather ancient looking, single funnel, straight-stem vessel belonging to the 'Bibby' line. It had a displacement of 15,000 tons but engines of only 10,000hp so was rather slow. On the third day out it reduced speed due to engine trouble and later stopped completely for 5 hours. However we passed Malta on the 4th day and Gibraltar on the 6th, averaging just over 300 miles a day.

On the 10th day we saw the Bishops Rock lighthouse and at 7.30 next morning picked up the pilot to take the ship into Liverpool. By 8pm that day I had disembarked and was aboard the dockside train ready to head for Aldershot where we arrived at 3.30am the following morning.

After a bath, an hours sleep and some breakfast I handed in kit, collected my 'demob. suit' (complete with trilby hat) some ration cards, a travel warrant and then headed for home and 'civvy street'.

I think that the most striking thing about landing back in England was the blinding greenness everywhere and of course it felt very chilly.

Officially, I was on leave for the next 6 or 7 weeks, the formal termination of army service coming in late November 1947, although I remained compulsorily on the officer reserve for another 10 years, and in fact was called up five years later for two weeks reserve training at a Signals Unit in Leicestershire. Fortunately I still had all my uniform and kit.

To my surprise and pleasure the C.O. of this unit was an officer that I knew very well from my time in Palestine.

A large wooden packing case, into which I had stowed all my excess kit together with the aircraft DF receiver, landed at Liverpool some six weeks after me and following customs clearance it was sent on to 143 King's Avenue Greenford where we were then living with Dorothy's parents.

So began, after nearly 3½ years of army life - much of it overseas - the readjustment to civilian life and a return to my job as a lowly laboratory assistant at EMI, Hayes.

It all seemed very strange at first.

ADDENDUM 1.

The responsibilities of the OK of any army unit, whether large or small, encompass a wide and diverse range, the detail of which clearly depends upon the type of unit.

The following examples are taken from my own experiences of events in "Special Wireless Units", i.e. of communication intercept work in the Middle East.

Responsibilities perhaps fell into the following categories:

Operational. It was essential that the operators succeeded in locating and monitoring those targets specified by the Intelligence Corps staff at H.Q. So a prime responsibility was to ensure that all the wireless equipment - power generators, receivers, aerials, feeders, direction finders, etc. functioned efficiently. Then there had to be sufficient numbers of adequately trained operators available at any time to cover the 24 hr work schedule, taking into account postings, leave and sickness. Getting to know the strengths and weaknesses of individual operators was desirable in allocating tasks and preventing time wasting.

Example. I would visit the operations room at odd times during day and night. One snap check was to see that no receiver had its beat-frequency oscillator turned off. This very occasionally happened and indicated that the operator had been listening to a broadcast station instead of searching for specified CW signals.

Administrative. This covered a wide range of activities to ensure the smooth running of the unit.

Discipline - issuing daily orders and deciding on appropriate retribution for minor infringements, visiting guard posts at various times of day and night, visiting the Mess Hall at meal times, dealing with complaints, holding weekly Pay Parades, authorizing fuel and stores requisitions, issuing weekly 'casualty' (unit strength) returns to HQ. etc. Regularly visiting any member of the unit admitted to hospital .

Cleanliness - of troops and the camp,, holding regular parades and inspecting all camp buildings, particularly kitchens and mess halls, ensuring adequate water supplies.

Transport - ensuring that at all times there were sufficient personnel and vehicles to fetch water and rations, take and fetch laundry, move posted personnel, collect mail, provide recreational trips, etc.

Examples. Three men from the unit were reported to me by the Military Police for being drunk and disorderly one night in Nicosia. Result, all three on a Charge: I gave them two weeks 'confined to barracks' and extra daily fatigues.

I had complaints about an on-going shortage of toilet paper. Upon investigation it turned out that the unit was mistakenly on a 'hospital' scale of toilet roll issue which was about 3 sheets a day per man less than regular issue.

There were moans about lack of local civilian shops and cafes to supplement army rations. After discussions I agreed that the cookhouse could be used each evening for the preparation and sale (at cost) of eggs and chips, provisions that were bulk bought in a local market.

Once a month I had to hold an 'Army Bureau of Current Affairs' discussion meeting. I would receive, beforehand, a small booklet on a particular topic such as 'The Palestine Problem' and 'Manufacturing and Exports in post war Britain'. This would be the basis of the half hour 'discussion'.

Personal. Inevitably there were chaps who encountered individual problems and sought help.

Examples. A signalman came to me tearfully one day brandishing a letter he had received that morning from his wife saying that she had fallen in love with another man, had left home and wanted a divorce. He was due for UK leave in about 3 months time. So all I could do was to arrange, with difficulty, for his leave to be brought forward by a couple of months on compassionate grounds and arrange for him to talk to the Padre.

Another chap came to see me about the fact that his hair was falling out. He had been to see the MO² who told him there was no proven treatment for male hair loss but if he wanted he could try one of

² Medical Officer

the proprietary creams available in the local chemists. However this chap had heard that there was a hair specialist in Egypt who treated such conditions.

I had to point out to him that whether a soldier has hair or is bald is of no concern of the Army and there was no way in which he could be given several weeks leave and travel to Egypt at Army expense to get treatment for a condition dismissed by the MO.

Three replacement operators arrived at the unit one day. After they had settled into their billet the CSM marched them into my office for the normal introduction and 'pep' talk.

After the usual "keeping up the good name of the unit, not letting their mates down, keeping out of trouble" and so on, I ended with the routine warning against intimacy with the local 'ladies' who could pass on unmentionable diseases.

At this point one of the three became very pale and said he was not feeling well, which suggested that perhaps my warning had come too late. Needless to say, I had a word later with the MO who then called for an extra FFI (free from infection) inspection for all recent arrivals. Happily all was well.

In Cyprus the MO was based at the British Military Hospital in Nicosia but would visit the unit from time-to-time.

Of course it would be impossible to run a unit of any size without some good NCOs on strength.

I was extremely lucky to have some first rate senior NCOs both in Cyprus and in Iraq.

I guess they helped to make up for my considerable inexperience.

I recall with shame the time I awarded a transgressor a 'Reprimand' when Kings Regulations stated that for his rank it should have been an 'Admonishment'.

ADDENDUM 2



P/357941

The War Office,

London, S.W.1.

14th October, 1947.

Sir,

I am directed to inform you that, in consequence of your release from active military duty, at the end of the emergency you will relinquish your commission and at that time a notification will appear in the London Gazette (Supplement) granting you the honorary rank of Lieutenant. Meanwhile you have permission to use that rank with effect from the date of your release.

I am to take this opportunity of thanking you for your services in the Army.

I am, Sir,
Your obedient servant,

J. R. [Signature]
for Lieutenant-General,
Military Secretary.

Lieutenant C.A. Lee,
Royal Corps of Signals.