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The beginning of this booklet is in William's own words and was written by him in his last few years as a task to keep him occupied and to provide a record of his early life. His War Diary was written by him in 1945 when he was just 18. It was just a few lines each day in an exercise book which a young man took with him to war. It is a poignant day to day record of just one soldier.

I left school at 16 in 1941 and my headmaster suggested to my parents that I should follow either accountancy or quantity surveying. The head got me an interview at a large building contractors – Harry Neal Ltd who due to having been 'bombed out' of central London (Baker St) had their offices in a row of cottages attached to their joinery works at Northwood – only two stations from North Harrow. I was taken on as a trainee in the surveying office. However, after a couple of weeks I was summoned to the office of the M.D – Godfrey Neal.

He explained that due to the war there was no building going on in London – all their contracts were in the county areas and if I was to be trained in surveying I must go where the work was. They had the need of help at a site a few miles north of Henley on Thames on the Oxford Road. Thus I would need to leave home and go into digs – I ended up in Wallingford with the firm providing my boarding cost and I travelled with six other workers to work each day (7 miles each way) by taxi paid by the firm to Huntercombe Place. Thus I started training on site each day measuring the volume of work done by various 'gangs' which had been introduced by the Ministry of Works to increase productivity under a 'Payment by Results' scheme. I was also taught to use a dumpy level and staff which is used in ensuring that buildings were built to the correct levels. I worked for the visiting senior surveyor – Mr Pearce who had a resident assistant who took me in hand. After several months I was transferred to another site (a RAF station at Henlow in Bedfordshire) where I had similar duties working for the surveyor Mr Tiller. The air ministry surveyor was resident on site and he had digs in Hitchin and through his landlady I got digs in Hitchin and he took me back and forth in his little sports car. On Saturday lunch time he would drive me to London and he dropped me off at Finchley Road station and picked me up on Monday morning.

I was later transferred back to Huntercombe Place but as the workers who were in Wallingford had left the site I had to find new 'digs' in Reading where a coach brought workers to and from each day. I was fortunate to get digs in the same house as a couple of carpenters whose landlady had a spare room. I remained at Huntercombe Place until the job finished although for the last fortnight I had to move to Oxford as the Reading coach was stopped. The foreman carpenter Jack Everitt offered me digs at his home for the last two weeks – they were very good to me at that time.

Years later June and I planned a week-end in Oxford staying at a hotel and I phoned Jack and asked if we could pop in to see them while we were there – they immediately agreed but insisted that we stay with them for the week-end.

After leaving Huntercombe I returned to Northwood for a few days and the contracts director Mr. Burfitt said he would like me to go to a new job at Saltby RAF station in Leicestershire with a new team headed by the site agent who was a family man and I felt I could work with him.

The sites in that area at the time were under the control of a director based in Grantham, Mr Bowden, and he was unknown to me, but I had an agreement with Mr Burfitt that I would go to Saltby with the new team but I would not be prepared to work elsewhere.

We had 'digs' in Melton Mowbray and travelled to work by coach. All went well for some months until one day I received a telephone call telling me I was to transfer to another RAF station at North Witham. I had no means of travel to North Witham except by a lorry which passed through Melton Mowbray at 7:30 each morning.

On arrival on my first morning at North Witham I was introduced to two 'draft dodgers' called Burton and Maytum and they informed me that I was to assist them on a permanent basis – they didn't arrive each day until 9:00 am but I could not get there if I didn't use the lorry.

One day I did miss the lorry and went to Saltby instead and the next day Burton said if I couldn't get there each day I could collect my cards. I explained that the site did not have my cards because I was on head office staff and if he wanted to sack me they could get the cards themselves.

I had in the meantime, telephoned Mr Burfitt and explained the situation. A day or so later Mr Bowden was on site and sent for me. He said he understood that I had been in touch with H.O. and he then said the transfer had only been temporary but I said Burton told me it was permanent. However, I was to return to Saltby the following day. Time marched on and it was 1943 and in June I was 18 and had to register for war service. On the 19<sup>th</sup> August I was called up to report to Maryhill Barracks in Glasgow for basic training.

### **War Service**

#### **1943 – 1946**

19<sup>th</sup> August 1943 saw me catch a train at Harrow and Wealdstone station bound for Glasgow Central Station and thence by train to Maryhill barracks where we were to have 8 weeks basic training.

Days 1 and 2 were taken up by inoculations and general introductions.

I was allocated to 8 Platoon whose instruction and mentor for the next 8 weeks was an Irish sergeant in the Royal Scots Fusiliers – He was a very good instructor but he had been demoted twice for various misdemeanours.

He said to us I am responsible for you lot but if you go out in the evening I don't want to know what you get up to, but if you are late back don't try to come in by the main gate – and if you don't know how to get in other than the main gate its high time you did.

The training was tough but good and everything was done at the double. You could be in full denims dress for 1 session, 2 minutes later in shorts and P.T kit outside ready for next session.

At the end of the 8 weeks I was fitter than I have ever been in my life.

After basic training I was posted to Clitheroe in Lancashire to No. 1 Training Battalion Royal Engineers based in a onetime cotton mill at Low Moor Mill on the banks of the River Ribble. I was no longer a Private Soldier – I was a Sapper and all those who arrived at the time were in No. 102 War Party for 13 weeks at the end of which we were due 2 weeks leave, which meant we would be home for Christmas – but for me it was not to be – after several weeks training I had a finger on my right hand punctured under the nail by a frayed and rusty piece of steel wire rope which turned into a whitlow which was very painful – but if you reported sick and was off training for some time you were shunted into the next War Party which would not have Christmas leave.

I reported to the Medical Room in the evening and the nurse on duty dressed it for me and I continued training – which the next day involved the Assault Course.

By the time I had finished the course the dressing had come undone and I could not do it up – and I asked the Physical Training Sergeant if he would do it for me.

He said he did not like the look of it and said I should see the M.O. in the morning. – This involved packing and storing all kit before going on Sick Parade.

I duly attended the M.O. (A Czech Dr ?? or more likely butcher.) He looked at the finger, swabbed it with antiseptic and picked up a pair of scissors and made a V-shaped slit in my finger nail to release the pressure on the whitlow.

I am surprised the nail stayed on when he did it – his comment, yes – it will hurt won't it.

I had to report back two days later and he examined it and said I don't like the look of it – wait outside.

I was then transported by ambulance to Calderstones Hospital, a huge complex of a mental hospital within which the army had taken over a ward block staffed by Civilian Doctors and Nurses – because I was under 21 they sent to my parents by telegram for permission to operate to remove the finger nail – that evening I was in theatre – I also had a cut on my left hand which had turned septic and also a septic blister on my heel (following a route march).

I had to remain in hospital for a while until they could get rid of the poison in the blood.

Each day a P.T. instructor attached to the hospital would take us out for an exercise in 3 groups; fast squad, medium squad and slow squad – I was in the medium squad. The exercise always ended up in a coffee shop – we had to pay but the instructors were given theirs for free for bringing the trade.

When discharged from hospital I was sent to a rehabilitation unit in Blackburn before being returned to Clitheroe – but my Sappers training was not completed – I was posted to 283 Field Coy R.E. in Romsey (Hants.)

We were in a tented camp in the grounds of Broadlands in Romsey.

We were each day taken to Brockenhurst in the New Forest where we were building a transit camp with a load of Spanish Pioneer Corps doing the labouring work.

Later we moved a few miles to Sway where we were billeted in a big house – better than a tent anyway. With the South coast being ‘flooded’ with troops in the build-up to D-Day there was a need for transit facilities with so much transport on the move.

We were next sent to Wyke Regis (in Weymouth) for bridging training on Chesil Beach, and it was where we were on D-Day.

The night before, we looked down into Portland Harbour and you could not see the water for ships – when we awoke on 06/06/44 they had all gone and we could hear the big guns of the battleships off the Normandy Beaches and the Liberator Bombers of the U.S air force returning from Normandy. Weymouth and Portland were embarkation points for the U.S. troops.

We were later sent to Bishops Waltham (Nr Southampton) to assist with an extension to the command supply depot in Southampton. Our unit went back to Bishops Waltham each night – I was given the job of storeman and I remained in the stores overnight and got my meals at the supply depot across the road – if you could not eat well at a C.S. Depot, hard luck.

I learned that one of my mothers’ relatives Ruby Jenkins was working in Southampton with the Red Cross and was boarding with a family close by so I was able to make contact with her and one week-end we both went to London to stay at my home for Saturday night and returned on Sunday evening.

Southampton was extremely busy at the time as the casualties from Normandy were brought in to the Field Hospitals set up on the common approaching the city centre.

When we left Southampton we moved to ‘Chelwood Gate’ Nr. Hayward’s Heath in Sussex and we resumed intensive training in readiness for posting overseas. Whilst undergoing intensive training at Chelwood Gate, we were sent on a three day scheme with very little sleep. The scheme culminated with a Bailey bridge being built on a lake in Mote Park in Maidstone. The bridge was built on Saturday and we were told that if we got the bridge erected, dismantled, and loaded back on the bridging Lorries by early Sunday morning we could have a day pass for the Sunday until 06.30 on Monday morning. We went back to Chelwood Gate camp, cleaned ourselves up and changed into decent uniform and were taken to Hayward’s Heath Station. I caught the train to London, Victoria and then on to Rayners Lane on the underground. In the evening I travelled back to Victoria and on a train for Hayward’s Heath.

Having not had much sleep for several days and in “black out” conditions I thought it possible I would nod off to sleep and so I asked others in the carriage to kick me out at Hayward’s Heath. The next thing I knew there was a lot of movement in the carriage and so I got up and off the train. As I walked up the platform I realised it was a terminus. I was at Eastbourne. The ticket collector said to me “if you get on that train you will get back to Brighton tonight, but no further.”

Thus I returned to Brighton and reported to the Railway Transport Officer who stamped my pass as having been in Brighton that night. I enquired about a Hostel for the night, but he said it was on the other side of town and that I would not find it at this time of night.

As I was wondering what to do a civilian asked me if I was stuck for a bed and he said if I went with him his landlady would give me a bed for the night and get me up in time for the first train to Hayward's Heath in the morning.

Thus I found myself at Hayward's Heath station at about 6.00a.m. On Monday morning going through the barrier which was policed by "red caps" checking passes.

I was let through with a pass for 6.30 a.m. but what they didn't know was that I still had 10 miles to go in that 30 minutes. After leaving the station I got to a phone box and phoned my unit office and asked the duty clerk if the duty driver could pick me up when he came to the Post Office for the Company mail. Unfortunately the duty driver had had an accident and the dispatch rider had to cover his duties. They recommended I start walking. This I did and walked about 7 miles before getting a lift in a lorry.

The lorry driver dropped me off at the camp gates just as my platoon were driving off to the rifle range. I reported to the Company office and was put on a charge for being A.W.O.L. and had to report to the officer of the day at 7.00p.m. that evening.

I was saved severe punishment because I had had my pass stamped by the R.T.O. in Brighton so that it was known I was at least trying to get back. I was let off with several days' pay stopped.

Then in December 1944 I was sent to Halifax to Depot Battalion R.E. where we were given embarkation leave and told our draft code No. RJXJK.

After returning from leave I, with other lads, were returning from an evening in town and when we got back to the Guard Room we were told RJXJK was off and we had to collect our kit and parade at 1 a.m.

We were then marched to the station and on to a train which travelled through the night and finally stopped at a station in Tilbury (Essex) and we were moved to a transit camp to await our ship.

We were then put aboard a Tank Landing ship and set sail. However, we only travelled as far as Southend and moored in the channel where we remained for 3 days in a snow storm.

There was only very limited space for us to sleep on board as there were only enough bunks for half of us so we had to share as best we could.

Eventually we upped anchor and sailed at night for Ostend in Belgium but we had to anchor until daylight as it was too dangerous to navigate into the harbour in darkness.

We were then put on a train to Brussels where we changed on to another train which would take us to Bergen Op Zoom in Northern Holland where 52 Lowland Division – (sister to 51<sup>st</sup> Highland Division) had set up a Rest and Rehabilitation Centre in the grounds of an asylum. Here some of the inmates tended the gardens.

It transpired that around a dozen of us Sappers were destined for 241 Field Coy R.E. as reinforcements for a complete platoon which had lost a dozen men when laying a minefield and a German mortar landed in the mine dump. In the resulting explosion all they found of 12 men was an Army pay book

found in the branches of a tree. As 241 F.C.R.E. were on the move we could not be sent to join them until they were in one place long enough for us to catch up with them.

This we did a few days later in the ruins of a small town on the River Maas called Gennepe on the edge of the Reichswald Forest, which was a part of the German Siegfried line which utilised natural areas as part of their defence.

There was also an anti – tank ditch at Afferden (Nr Gennepe) which we were ordered to install a folding boat bridge in the A.T. ditch to allow some vehicles to cross. This area was a part of the push to the next objective – the Rhine Crossing.

The Germans defending this area were their 2<sup>nd</sup> Parachute Regiment who had been ordered to fight a delaying action.



By the 9<sup>th</sup> March all the German resistance in this Sector had been overcome and the Germans retreated across the Rhine to the East bank at Wesel.

There followed a period of about 10 days of preparation and build-up of equipment and artillery in readiness for the crossing of the Rhine.

There was much watching and waiting for we were unaware of the strength of the enemy on the opposite bank. There was a massive artillery barrage bombing by the R.A.F on Wesel prior to the final attack on 24/03/45.

There was also a massive airborne assault by gliders which unfortunately suffered from crashing and glider fires on landing. The artillery pounded the far bank for 12 hours on the night before the main attack.

The Rhine crossing was a massive operation involving airborne troops and amphibious vehicles which ferried men and equipment to the far bank until a pontoon bridge had been erected across the river to carry heavy armour and supply Lorries.

After crossing, the 52<sup>nd</sup> Division took the town of Regensburg and followed through to the town on the River Ems. Called Rheine. After capturing Rheine we faced the task of getting a bridge over the Dortmund Ems Canal.

We had to wait for some time to allow the bridging Lorries to arrive with the Bailey bridge equipment.

We were under fire from a Self-Propelled Gun for a long while and eventually we started the bridge which was built under fire all night and was finally completed at about 1.30p.m, although our relief came at 6 a.m. in the morning. Thus the infantry could get the armoured support to enable the advance to proceed toward the Port and city of Bremen.

This was achieved 23 days later on the 27/04/45.

The Divisional R.E. worked in shifts to build a massive Bailey bridge across the River Aller at Verden, and it was called St. Andrews Bridge. We were billeted in a yacht club, on the river bank and we were able to use 4 man skiffs on the River in our 'off duty' time.

11 days after entering Bremen the war in Europe was over. 08/05/45.

There followed a period of occupational type duties which included a period in Belgium, Nr Brussels, a trip to Hanover, and taking over security duties from the Yanks at a large tented P.O.W Camp.

Finally I asked if I could do something to use my brains instead of just my hands.

This resulted in my transfer to H.Q. Platoon and working in the Company Office and shortly being given one stripe and given the job of Company Pay NCO which I did until I was 'demobbed' under the Class B release scheme in January 1946.

### **End of My War Service**





## War Diary of William A.M. Hartley

14/01/1945

Left Halifax. Entrained during night.

15/01/1945

Arrived Tilbury 12.00. By tucks to transit camp. Billeted in tents.

16/01/1945

Rest.

17/01/1945

Rest.

18/01/1945

Up at 5.00. On trucks to docks. Embarked at 9.00. On board all day.

19/01/1945

Sailed to Southend, dropped anchor.

20/01/1945

Still on board.

21/01/1945

Sailed at 4.00. Fairly rough.

22/01/1945

Anchored off Ostend at 3.00a.m. Landed at 10.30a.m. Marched to transit camp. Went to pictures at night.

23/01/1945

By trucks to Bruges.

24/01/1945

By train to Bourg-Leopold via Brussels.

18/02/1945

Left Bergen. Travelled all day. Slept in Hall.

19/02/1945

Arrived at Gennep. Joined Company.

20/02/1945

Mines School.

21/02/1945

Mines School.

22/02/1945

Mines School.

23/01/1945

Practiced building F.B.C. Rained all day.

24/01/1945

Road work.

25/01/1945

Road Work.

26/01/1945

Road work on axis road.

27/01/1945

In cookhouse all day. News came of attack going in overnight. Stood by to bridge Anti-tank ditch.

28/02/1945

Up at 3.00 Went up to front to build F.B.C over anti-tank ditch for assault. Bridge built. Mines cleared and road maintained. Relieved by 2 platoon at 6.00p.m. Very tired. Buried German paratroopers.

01/03/1945

Rest in morning. Went out to build 80 ft D.S.B.B. in evening. Finished at 11.00hrs. A few shells about. Rum ration issued. Bridge called "Rabs Loup".

02/03/1945

Rest in morning. Out on bridge maintenance in afternoon. Remainder of platoon on crater filling.

03/03/1945

Moved from Grennep to clear Afferden-Venlo road. Cleared road blocks and filled craters in morning. Out again in afternoon clearing mines and filling craters. Section Commander lost leg and 2 fingers on sha mine. Very nasty accident.

04/03/1945

On road maintenance all day. Very wet.

05/03/1945

Rested until 1.00. Went out on my own to maintain "Rabs loup" bridge.

06/03/1945

Nobby Black and I went out to maintain small 20ft bailey over crater on A-V road. Saw 3 lads from 2 Platoon go up on a Sha mine. 2 Very serious. Moved in the afternoon as advance party to Walbeck. Billeted in hay loft. First billet in Germany.

07/03/1945

Cleaned up billets and rested until platoon arrived. Went to bed early.

08/03/1945

Earl reveille. Moved off as advance party to Geldern. Good billets in house. Cleaned up rooms for remainder of platoon who came up later in the day.

09/03/1945

More cleaning up and then rest.

10/03/1945

Major's inspection and clothing exchange.

11/03/1945

Rest in morning. Bath in afternoon.

12/03/1945

Reveille 4.00. Moved up to Alpen to build 160 ft triple double B.B. Completed 20.30 hrs. Longest bridge built by British troops in Germany until the Rhine. Balogie Bridge. Rum ration issued at night.

13/03/1945

Up pretty late. Pictures at Issum in evening.

13/03/1945

Rest.

14/03/1945

Rest all day. Moved as advance party to Bonninghardt at night.

15/03/1945

Cleaned up German huts for billets.

16/03/1945

Detailed as Electrician to wire H.A. billets for lighting. Found field kitchen.

17/03/1945

Road maintenance at Xantern.

18/03/1945

More roads. Some shelling going on.

19/03/1945

More roads. More shelling. Mr Pilditch and Mr MacLennan killed by shellfire. Lost 2 very good officers.

20/03/1945

Attended funeral service at Issum at divisional burial ground.

21/03/1945  
Rest.

22/03/1945  
Worked on road at Marianbaum with bulldozer. More shellfire.

23/03/1945  
Rest.

24/03/1945  
Rhine assault. Watched airborne landings. Glorious sight. Saw 4 Dakotas shot down. Waved to pilots of Liberators flying at 0 ft.

25/03/1945  
Rest

26/03/1945  
Early reveille. Out filling craters on banks of Rhine. I had a job controlling convoys on way road over craters. Saw Monty, Churchill and Gen. Dempsey.

27/03/1945  
Rest.

28/03/1945  
Moved over Rhine at night. Reached village of Haffen at 12.00.

29/03/1945  
Rest.

30/03/1945  
Rest.

31/03/1945  
Rest.

01/04/1945  
Moved about 30kms. Under canvas for the night.

02/04/1945  
Rest. Very wet. Moved again arrived at Ashaus at 11.00. In hay loft.

03/04/1945  
Moved to Wettringen. Billeted in cigar factory.

04/04/1945  
Moved up through Rheine to bridge Dortmund-Ems canal.

05/04/1945  
Got within 400yds of bridge then were stopped by snipers. Returned to farm. Moved up later in afternoon. Pinned down in ditch by mortars. R.A.F. Typhoons went in with rockets gave us 10 mins in which to retire to shelter of farm. Good old R.A.F. went up at darkness, preceded with bridge. Were mortared and sniped throughout the night. Packed up when relief came at 6.00. Returned to farm. Slept till 1.00. Very tired. Bridge complete at 1.30. Returned to billets in afternoon.

06/04/1945  
Moved up with 4<sup>th</sup> armoured Brigade billeted in German hut at Horstel.

07/04/1945  
Out in morning to fill craters for the advancing tanks. Pocket of resistance by N.C.O.'s school from Hanover quickly overcome. Returned to billet in evening.

08/04/1945  
Moved up again with armour and dug in under canvas owing to shellfire

09/04/1945

Moved up road about 3 miles. Filled craters. Tanks fighting 2 mile ahead on outskirts of Rieunhirchen. Listened to battle over radio from tanks wireless.

10/04/1945

Rest and general cleaning up.

11/04/1945

Moved on once again. Had to fill crater 100ft wide. Chopped trees down all day and built corduroy road over crater when filled in. Billeted in farm at Alfhausen. Very tired.

12/04/1945

Rest all day. Moved on again at 10.30 p.m. Travelled all night.

13/04/1945

Arrived at farm in vicinity of Hoya at 9.30 a.m. Bedded down and slept till 4.00 p.m.

14/04/1945

Moved off at 12.00 with C.S.M. as advance party to Stedorf. Good billets in Hotel-shop.

15/04/1945

Rest all day.

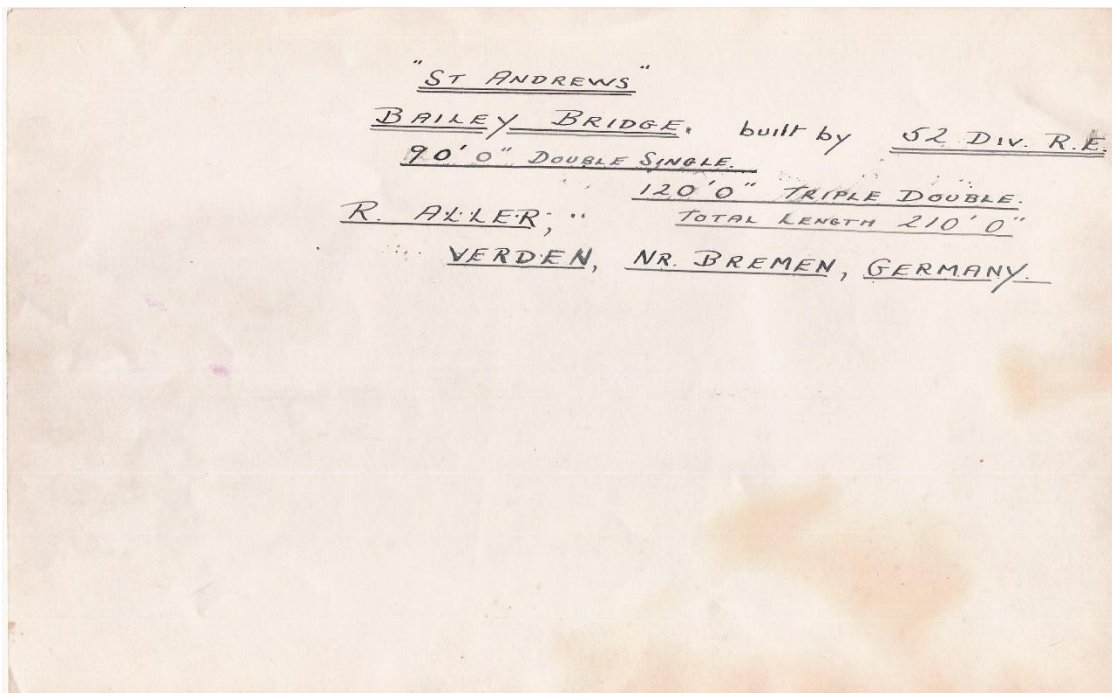
16/04/1945

Practiced erecting Bailey and rib pier in preparation for bridging R. Aller at Verden.

17/04/1945

Moved into Verden in afternoon place deserted everyone in cellars. Started bridging 18.00 hrs. Relieved at midnight, a few shells mostly airbursts. Slept till 6.00.





18/04/1945

Up at 6.00 continued with pier until 1.00. Nearly finished pier. Relieved at 1.00. Back on the job at 7.00. Jacked down and ramped down and completed decking down. Bridge completed and ready for traffic by 23.40 hrs. 36 hrs before schedule.

19/04/1945

Out again at 8.30 hrs. Put up shuttering for concreting pier.

20/04/1945

Started concreting pier at 8.00 hrs. Finished at 5.00 hrs. Bridge finally completed.

21/04/1945

Up at 4.30 and moved to new location a few miles from Verden. Guarding a petrol dump

22/04/1945.

Church parade in morning. Bags of Bull. Rest in afternoon. Patrol at night.

23/04/1945

Rest all day.

24/04/1945

Rest. Moved to our new location at Ahim just outside Bremen.

25/04/1945

Rest all day.

26/04/1945

Up at 4.30 a.m. Moved into Bremen. First R.E. coy into the city. Shelling and mortaring in city still going on Snipers about. Cleared roads for 25 pound guns. Then moved into billets. Searched houses for snipers or arms. Toured streets for cars for C.E.

27/04/1945

Clearing streets of mines and filling craters in the morning. Rest in evening.

28/04/1945

Rafting on R.Weser in afternoon. Ferrying vehicles across.

29/04/1945

Went to Div. thanksgiving service in morning. Rafting in the afternoon. Did guard on site at night. Billeted in big German house. Very cold. Rum ration issued.

30/04/1945  
Rafting from 7.00 till 1.00 Baths in afternoon. Early to bed.

01/05/1945  
O.C's inspection in the morning. Pictures in the afternoon. Saw "shine on Harvest Moon".

02/05/1945  
Rest all day.

03/05/1945  
Out to work all day on large craters.

04/05/1945  
Working on craters all day. News came in evening of capitulation of all German forces on 21 A.G. Fronts. Great celebration in billets.

05/05/1945  
On craters all day. Not much work done.

06/05/1945  
Rest all day.

07/05/1945  
Stores checking all day.

08/05/1945  
Stores checking all day.

09/05/1945  
On advance party to Vegesec. Cleaned up billets and settled in.

10/05/1945  
More general clearing up.

11/05/1945  
Day off. On river in racing skiff all day.

12/05/1945  
Went to boating club as waterman in charge of canoes.

13/05/1945  
More rowing in canoes etc.

14/05/1945  
Guard on boat club in morning. Rowing in afternoon.

15/05/1945  
Back to billets in morning. Kit exchange in afternoon.

16/05/1945  
Section moved to H.Q. R.E. as C. R.E's guard.

17/05/1945  
C.R.E.'s guard.

18/05/1945  
Guard. Moved to Syke with H.Q.R.E.

19/05/1945  
Guard.

20/05/1945  
Guard.

21/05/1945  
Guard.

22/05/1945  
Moved back to coy at Draye. Went to Dalmenhorst to pictures in the evening.

23/05/1945  
General work. Guard at night.

24/05/1945  
General work in morning. E.N.S.O. at Dalmenhorst in afternoon.

25/05/1945  
Packing up trucks in morning. Pictures at Dalmenhorst in afternoon.

26/05/1945  
Packed up and cleaned billets in morning. Moved at 12.00 on long journey to Glindenberg nr Magdeburg. Travelled on autobahn. Arrived at new billets at 8.00 at night. Billeted in model village 1 house per section.

27/05/1945  
Cleaned up billets etc all day.

28/05/1945  
Started work dismantling sectional hut to be rebuilt as cookhouse.

29/05/1945  
Working on hut once more.

30/05/1945  
Working on hut once more.

31/05/1945  
Moved off at 10.00 to Calbe to guard POWs. Relieved Yanks at 8.00. Guard all night.

01/06/1945  
Day off.

02/06/1945  
Guard all night.

03/06/1945  
Day off.

04/06/1945  
Guard all night.

05/06/1945  
Guard all night.

06/06/1945  
Moved our billets into Calbe village.

07/06/1945  
Guard all night.

08/06/1945  
Day off. Baths in afternoon.

09/06/1945  
Moved back to M.V. at Glindenberg.

10/06/1945  
Cleaning trucks all day. Guard at night.

11/06/1945  
Cleaning trucks all day.

12/06/1945  
Cleaning trucks all day.

13/06/1945  
Packing up.

14/06/1945 & 15/06/1945  
Travelled all day and all night and throughout the remainder of the day. Arrived Serskamp, Belgium at 9.00 at night. Cury billets.

16/06/1945  
Cleaning trucks all day. Guard at night.

17/06/1945

Guard all day.

18/06/1945

March in morning. Afternoon free.

19/06/1945

P.T. in morning. Afternoon free.

20/06/1945

Baths in morning. Afternoon free.

21/06/1945

Drill in morning. Afternoon free.

22/06/1945

Day pass to Brussels. Good day out.

23/06/1945

Drill in morning. Afternoon free.

24/06/1945

Church parade. Afternoon free.

25/06/1945

Cleaning stores in morning. Afternoon free.

26/06/1945

Baths in morning. Afternoon free.

BREMEN IS TAKEN: Our troops had got to the great Europa Haven, one of the biggest docks in Europe, by last night, and all this morning the 52nd Division went ahead, without too much difficulty in clearing the rest. They reached the far side of the port by 3 o'clock this afternoon. So we were able to go right through the dock area and have a good look at the port. The first thing that struck us was how few ships there seemed to be left in the docks. We'd rather expected to see the long line of wrecks and sunken mer-



A dockside at Bremen, captured on April 27 by the 52nd Lowland Scottish Division, showing cases of food and drink, labelled 'For Wehrmacht Only', broken into and looted by freed slaves



MENU

XMAS

1945



241 Fd Coy RE

OERLINGHAUSEN

## M E N U

CHRISTMAS DAY 1945

241 FLD COY RE

## SOUP

## TOMATO SOUP

## ENTRÉE

## ROAST TURKEY

## ROAST PORK

### BROWN SAUCE

### APPLE SAUCE

## ROAST POTATOES

### CREAMED POTATOES

BRUSSELS SPROUTS

SWEET

XMAS PUDDING

### RUM SAUCE

CHEESE

BEER

AUTOGRAPHS

J. Gravity  
86 Hill

H. Thompson

*A. Ashton*

L. Mearns

Quora.net

A. E. W.

J. L. Scott.

10/10/10

A. Addison

Lass. m. & n.

*[Faint handwritten notes at the bottom of the page]*

Y. MC

Mr. Benson

P. Lac

16

Robert

St. Louis

He V

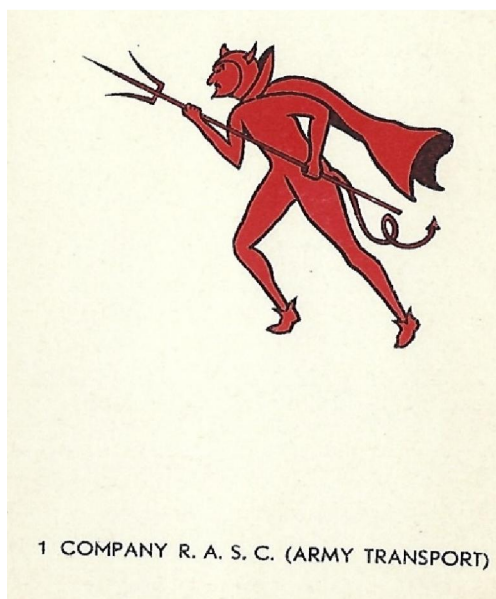
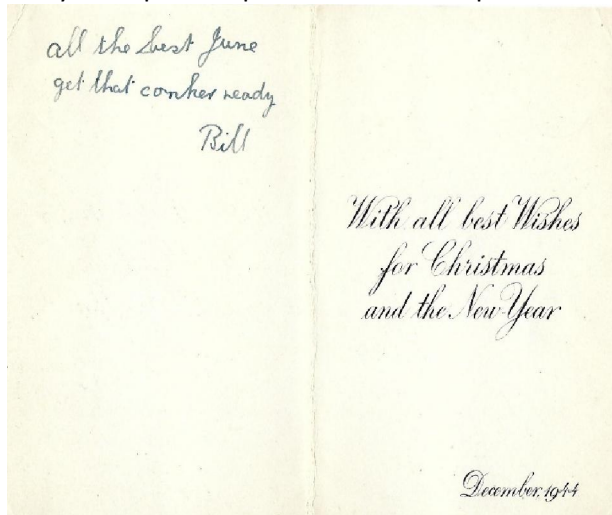
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2. 22

## Epilogue

It is perhaps the question every child asks their parents." How did you meet?" But often they don't think to ask "When did you meet?" Now I wish I had. As a child you accept the answer you are given without question. "We met through our church". But when? I never asked until I found something in mum's papers which made me ask the question. Too late to ask either parent, I asked dad's best friend he'd known since his teens. The answer was "They met at the National conference of the Anglican Young People's Association, the year that the conference was held at mum's church, All Saint's Woodham, Surrey." When asked if it was during the war or afterwards, he was certain it was after the war. However, mum's papers suggest otherwise, as I found a Christmas card from Christmas 1944 from dad to mum. The card was an Army transport Corps card and read "all the best June and get that conker ready, Bill". So was the conference in autumn 1944? If it was, then June was just 15 years Old! Mum kept the card with her treasured possessions, birth and marriage certificates, and a photo of dad in his army uniform, our baby books and various other papers.

Dad would have been travelling from Halifax to Tilbury at Christmas 1944 according to his diary, so an Army Transport Corps card would be "spot on". The evidence seems conclusive.



Dad was de-mobbed in January 1946 and the Christmas card may have been the only communication mum received from dad during this period. It is the only one that has survived.

Dad returned from war a determined young man, continuing his membership of the Anglican young people's association and taking mum out when he could. This often meant cycling from Harrow, across an aerodrome, to mum's house in Woking, Surrey, sometimes to be told by mum's mum that "June wasn't allowed out that day". So they had a day in!

William married the love of his life, June, at All Saint's Church Woodham, Surrey on 3<sup>rd</sup> May 1952.

