



WAR IN THE EAST

I joined the T.A. when I was in the sixth form at school - the Royal Artillery A Field Regiment, equipped with 18 pounder guns, later replaced by 25 pounders. We had 24 guns organised in 3 batteries, each one divided in 2 troops of 4 guns each.

I trained as a troop surveyor - I had to make sure that the troops guns were trained in the right direction, parallel to each other to know the position on a map, and height above sea level and to work out the order to give to the gunners. Targets would be given by wireless, radio or telephone from obs. posts by the Troop Commander. The T.A was called up 2 days before war was declared - September 1st 1939.

First I was a home defence along the south and east coasts, then we trained for Desert Warfare and in late 1941 I sailed from Birkenhead for the Middle East. We sailed in a fast convoy of 8 liners escorted by 4 very old destroyers, and were met mid-Atlantic by a large American

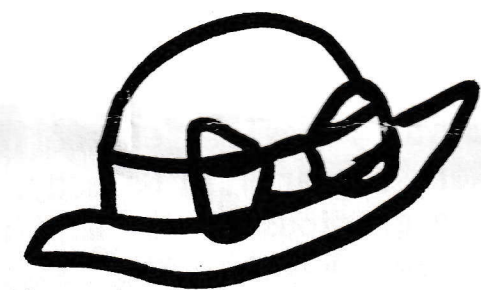
squadron led by a battleship with cruisers and destroyers. America hadn't entered the war at this point in time. When we reached Halifax, Nova Scotia, we transferred to Americas latest and most modern troopship carrying 6,000 men. We went via Trinidad to the South Atlantic, and then into Cape Town, and after starting up the east coast of Africa were directed to India. The Japanese raided Pearl Harbour, and threatened Malaya and Singapore. We were sent from India to Singapore which was only defensible from the sea. It was believed that no army could penetrate the Malaysian jungle or land on the Malayan coasts. Up to then no battleship had been sunk at sea by air attack alone. The Japanese sank the Prince of Wales and the Repulse by air attack, landed armies on the Malaysian coast and penetrated the jungle bringing their tanks with them. War arrived in Singapore in time for the Japanese air bombardment, which was completely unopposed, as there were no planes for the Air Force to fly by the time the Japanese reached the causeway across to Singapore Island.

In the short battle for Singapore, our regiment lost a third of its men. In the following years, as prisoners of war, another third died, mostly on the railway building from Thailand to Burma, but also some being shipped to Japan. The dropping of the atomic bombs on Japan must have saved many 1,000s more Allied lives than the Japanese that were killed by the bombs. Apart from the Americans fighting their way across the Pacific to Japan -

- island by island - men were dying by their hundreds in the camps. In our camp alone, in one cholera season 200 men died in a month.

To us the end of the war came suddenly. We took over the camps. Soon we were trucked to Bangkok, flown to Burma and not long after started the long sea voyage from Rangoon to Southhampton via Colombo and the Suez Canal.

By Mr Burt - Williams Grandpa.



MY WAR

I lived in Surrey, which was in direct line for the German bombers going to London. We used to go up on the downs at Epsom and watch London burn in the blitz. I was nine when war broke out, and the day war was declared, my father was filling sandbags to complete a dug-out shelter in the garden, and a neighbour was with us - she was making me a new garter to hold up my socks.

I was evacuated to some friends in Sherbourne, who owned a poultry farm. While I was there I went to the Village School. It had 3 classes - the headmistress was called Miss Turner and my teacher was Miss Harker. I was upset because they did long division a different way from my own school. We went on nature walks and one day drew the blackberries that we'd picked with pastel. But I was very homesick, and wrote awful letters home, so went home after a month. At home everyone had gas masks and tin hats.