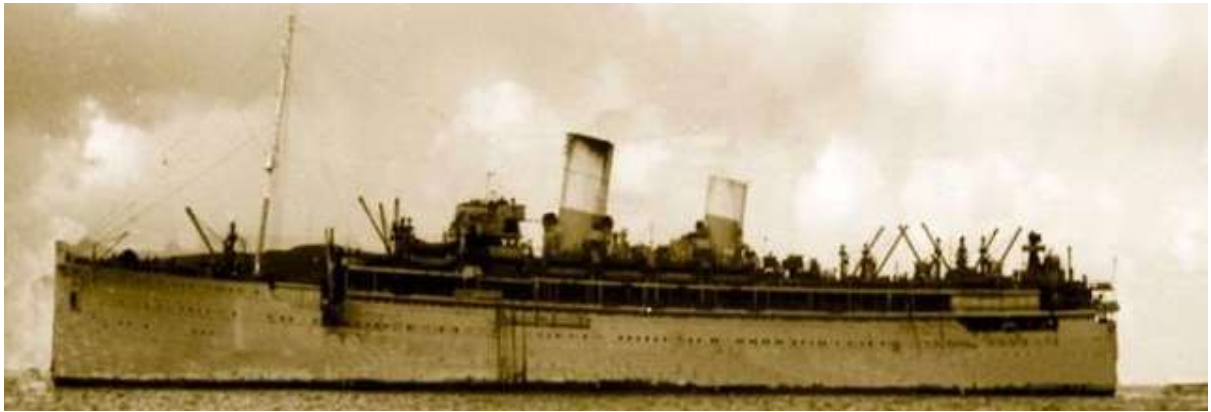


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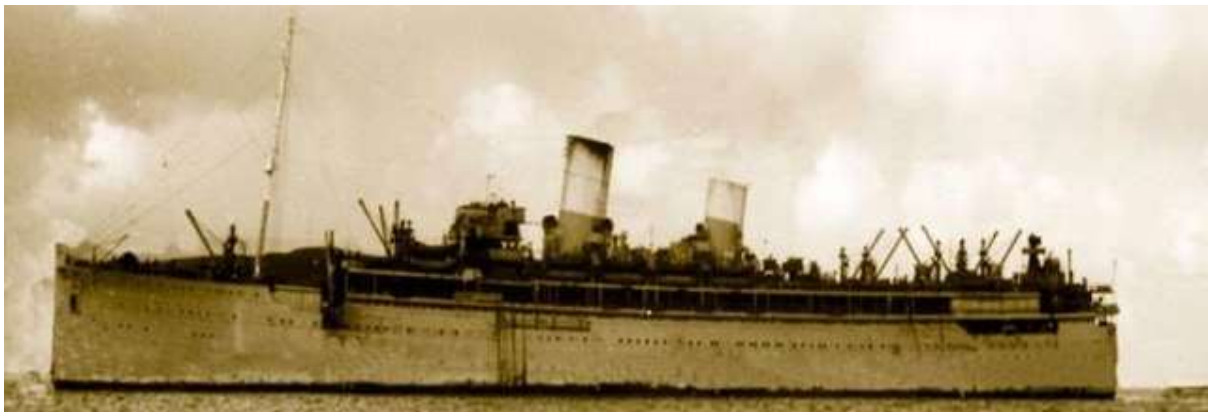


Wartime memories

Elizabeth Dellaway



Destination unknown



Information compiled from Second World War letters to and from his family, by her father Captain Tim Healey, and 20th Battalion Royal Fusiliers' memories in Newsletters

Elizabeth Dellaway

Part 1: HMS Mooltan

Introduction

Voyage from Liverpool to Bombay

Part 2: India

Letters to my mother

Letters to my father's family

Fusiliers' memories from

Regimental Newsletters

1946 – 1990

Reflections

Compiled by Elizabeth Dellaway from letters, airletters,
airgraphs and cables, together with facts and stories later
recorded in Newsletters of the 20th Battalion Royal Fusiliers.
These have all been treasured and kept in his army trunk.

Edited by Tim Bell and printed by
SRP Design and Print, Chichester

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Part 1



The MOOLTAN, this time with two funnels up; the second one a dummy, used 'twas said to store a three year supply of bully beef and K-rations for the 20th. Eat your heart out, Egon Ronay!

RMS Mooltan was an ocean liner and Royal Mail Ship of the Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company known as P&O. She was launched at Belfast on January 15th 1923 and was sometimes known as “the ship of a thousand romances”.

Length was 600.8 ft (Titanic 882.75 ft).

Speed 17.5 knots (Titanic 21 knots)

Speed had been sacrificed for reliability and comfort. On 6th September 1939, just after the outbreak of the Second World War she was requisitioned to be an armed merchant cruiser. Her dummy second funnel was removed to improve the arc of anti-aircraft guns.

On 15th October 1939 she was commissioned into the Royal Navy as HMS Mooltan.

In January 1954 P&O sold Mooltan for £150,000 to the British Iron & Steel Corporation and she was taken to Metal Industries Ltd at Faslane in Scotland to be broken up.



My father, Captain T. Healey No.148858 20th Battalion Royal Fusiliers India Command, had joined the London Rifle Brigade in 1937. After training at Marbury Hall, Cheshire, he was posted to the Isle of Wight and then in 1943 to India.



With Major G.L.
Matthews, OBE,
T.D on the
Isle of Wight on
8th November 1941

Tim Healey in
September 1940



On Sunday 3rd September 1939 the King had broadcast to the nation: "For the second time in the lives of most of us we are at war. Over and over again we have tried to find a peaceful way out of the differences between ourselves and those who are now our enemies. But it has been in vain. We have been forced into a conflict. For we are called, with our allies, to meet the challenge of a principle, which, if it were to prevail, would be fatal to any civilized order in the world."

My parents were married 20 days after war was declared when my father had 48 hours leave. My mother lived with her parents in Dorking until the end of the war. ... Until he went to India they met whenever they could to spend a few precious hours together.



They said "Goodbye" at a bus stop in Whyteleafe, Surrey on the 12th January 1943, having been married for three years and three months, had one daughter of eighteen months and another on the way, although he did not know this until a letter arrived with the news on 2nd April. They were destined not to see each other again for two years and four months.

In his first letter he thanked her and her mother for sausage rolls and cakes they had made for his journey.

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On 20th January 1943 His Majesty's Troopship Mooltan, (P&O) loaded with 4311 troops, including my father with the 20th Battalion, Royal Fusiliers, sailed in a convoy from Liverpool via Greenock, Freetown, Sierra Leone and Durban (25th February 1943) to Bombay. The convoy consisted of about thirty ships with destroyer escort. The voyage took 38 days at sea landing on 16th March when he sent a telegram: "All well and safe". My father kept a diary which I have never seen but my parents did keep all the letters they wrote to each other during their separation.

1st letter: 14th January 1943 In transit

A letter written on the ship on 15th January arrived in Dorking, Surrey, on 28th January having been opened by the Examiner and passed by the Censor. The name of the ship could not be given as an address.

He described his shared double cabin, sleeping on the upper berth ... with my mother and eighteen-month old sister smiling from photos on the wall. *"They gladden my eyes the first and last moments of each day."* Furniture consisted of a wardrobe, chest of drawers and a washbasin with running water. There was a porthole which the strict blackout regulations insisted be closed at night making the cabin like a Turkish bath. Tea and hot water was brought by a steward each morning at 6, who also made beds and cleaned the

cabin. They did not enjoy rather oily powdered milk. Meals in the mess were excellent. *"The fusiliers are very cheerful about this sort of life. Humorous incidents occur quite frequently especially with regard to hammocks which, if slung carelessly, could lower the unsuspecting occupant with startling suddenness to the deck."*

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TIMETABLE

So starts the day- at 5.45, be it noted. A wash or bath, then about 6.30, a cup of oily tea is produced by the steward. Then the edible quality- or otherwise of the Troop's breakfast occupy my attention until 7.30 when we return to the upper deck, now duly washed clean of dirt and of discomfited sleepers alike for 15 minutes P.T. Bill Keeling usually takes this and a jolly time is had by all at this the coolest part of the day. Breakfast follows at 8.30 after which I supervise the cleaning of my Troop deck for inspection at 10 o'clock . Then various occupations planned for the day (this includes organized sun bathing) fill in the times between meals. Deck sports such as relay races, tug o' war, boxing and medicine ball games. (a medicine ball is like a very heavy football). We have lunch at 1 o'clock, tea at 4 and dinner at 7.30.

Meals are excellent and we are waited on by the peacetime ship's staff. Our steward is most attentive. One only has to ask for a thing once and it materializes regularly after that. He knows that I like two pots of tea at breakfast (they only hold one cup anyway), that I like toast instead of rolls and one rarely has to ask for anything to be passed. An enquiring glance up the table is sufficient for him to guess what is wanted ... Sometimes teatime music is played by a trio of experts who play piano, violin and clarinet ...On Sundays there is community hymn singing. It seems curious to sing the prayer in number 370 when we can be numbered in those "in peril". I just think of those in ships sailing the seas elsewhere. One night I was abominably sick, not so much "mal de mer" as one of my periodical attacks which assail me even when on terra firma. A few days of 'flu followed this which laid me rather low but I am now very fit again except for the remains of a nasty cough. I hated to hear about the raids on London and hope and pray that all are safe and well.

Permission to go on deck was from after blackout in the morning until 9 o'clock at night. After daily PT (except Sundays) he enjoyed a hot sea water bath, showers for the troops and increasingly needed later to combat clamminess in the tropical heat. A ship's barber's shop sold soap, petrol lighters, Penguin books, notebooks and Nivea Cream among other things. For entertainment a small concert party, a ship's library, (he was reading Vera Brittain's "England's Hour" at the time). For reasons of security not much detail can be given.

Each day the weather became warm enough to sleep on deck and he took the photos with him. Sometimes caught out by a shower about 3am! *All rise swiftly at 5.30 when rudely awakened by deck hands with long hoses to wash*

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the decks. Dress changes to shirts and shorts; just shorts and gym shoes for PT.

On washing day the troops scrub their clothes which are hung out on lines to flutter on the deck. I have bought a white fabric wristwatch strap – just the thing for the tropics as it is washable.

Morning service in the dining saloon was very well attended. Calling at unnamed ports he describes a greeting to the troops who were crowding the rails, from a white woman on a

deserted quay singing through a megaphone, "Land of Hope and Glory" and "The White Cliffs of Dover". It was good to have a few days shore leave to go for a walk, explore, eat vast meals cheaply in a restaurant and see a film "This above all". He sent parcels of food home but could not find silk stockings for my mother. Mentions a piano piece he likes very much, Grieg's "To the Spring". There were marches, a church parade to a service and sightseeing run and meal with a friendly Scots family they had just met. *The Fusiliers easily retain their position as the "star turn" ... the OC informed them that he was amazed at the cleanliness and good order of their quarters which was of a higher standard than he has ever seen.*

I go to early Communion and Morning Service on Sundays which is held in the dining salon and very well attended. One Sunday when he read the lesson: the ship seemed to lurch violently at the part in Revelation where it says "and there was no more sea." I go out on deck at night with my compass and having worked out as nearly as I can guess from the map, the direction of Dorking, I gaze over the sea in that direction and think about you very very much. When eventually I am coming back to you, I shall think of these moments and how hard it is to be sailing farther and farther away from you. ... From this little England sailing on a wide sea, my thoughts are always of you and our own England, and feeding on our own various adventures together.

(He mentions meeting in Folkestone, Lyminge, Colchester, Newbury, The Isle of Wight, Emsworth, The Swan at Alton, Petersfield, London, a children's camp in The Cotswolds, a show called "Twinkle" at Worthing, climbing Box Hill in wintry sunshine... My mother recalls dances, teas at Fuller's, walks on the Downs, staying at the family holiday home in Lancing and frequent trips to the cinema.)

I am trying to get used to the idea of being parted from you but mercifully perhaps, I cannot realise it. I shall love you more and more until the day

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I come back. Meanwhile take great care of your dear self and little Muffin.

Our ship still goes plodding on. The never-ending throb of her engines is like the beating of her great heart – perhaps the echo of my own heart which you know you possess completely.



"ALL AT SEA WITH THE 20TH"

It was a different story for the troops, as Bill Stewart records in the Newsletter dated November 1982

Jan.
13th 1943. Spent evening in Kenley Arms. Left Kenley Station by bus. Amusing to see half tight men trying to

sort out kit and march straight.

Jan. 14th. First day aboard ship. Arrived at Liverpool and taken to docks by trolley bus. Boarded ship to find it even more crowded than we thought possible. Disgusted at smallness

of rations. Biggest scramble came when we drew hammocks in evening. Decks were almost blacked out when they were slung.

Jan. 15th. After rising at 6am found we had to queue for everything – washing, toilets, – while orderlies queued for meals. Many volunteered for jobs as orderlies in the hope of a cushy time but found they had to do most of the work.

Jan. 16th. Shortage of food became more acute. Price of cigarettes and tobacco better than civvy street but there were long queues for the canteen. Ship left dock for the middle of the river.

Jan. 17th. Played cards most of the time. Watched seagulls fighting for swill in river – wished we could dive down for some of the scraps. Still long queues for the canteen and never able to get in although RAF seemed to do well.

Jan. 18th. My 21st birthday! What a place to be – three cheers for old Borboen who brought me my one and only present. Even if it was just an orange, it was better than a gold watch! After complaints about the food at a mess meeting the problem was solved in true army fashion – fold your

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hammocks properly or else!

Jan. 19th. Units aboard ship were Royal Fusiliers, Royal Artillery, RAF, Royal Corps of Signals, and Officers of the Royal Indian Army Service Corps. Great variety of bright coloured hats.

Jan. 20th. Left river shortly after boat stations at 10am. Rest of convoy consisted of six ships and one destroyer as escort. Air cover provided by seagulls. Never felt sick but a little dizzy during passage through the Irish Sea. Glad to see those who were in front of the canteen queue suffering most from sickness.

Jan. 21st. Reached the Firth of Clyde near Greenock where we were surrounded by ships of all shapes and sizes. Saw new type of aircraft carrier, submarine and MTB [Motor Torpedo Boat]. Sentry duty on a rather warm night. Plenty of activity by Morse signallers.

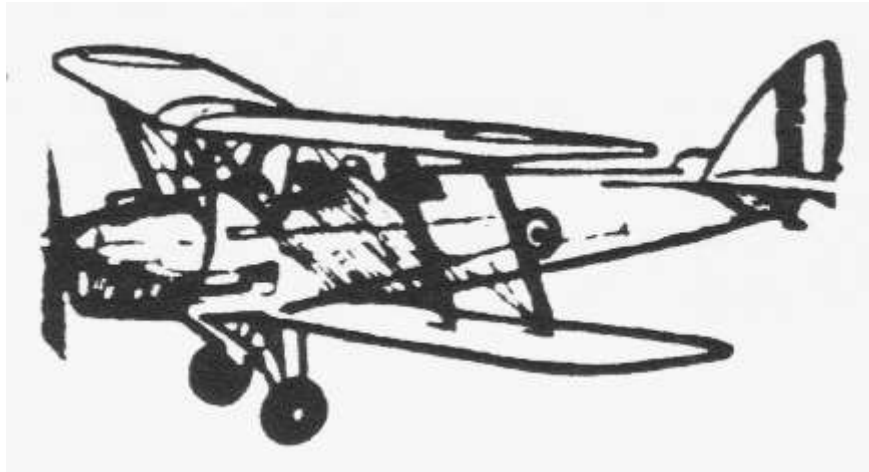
Jan. 22nd. Finished sentry duty and reached canteen door as it closed. Nearly had broken ribs in an attempt to secure my first bar of chocolate. Pay parade for 2 weeks' pay.

Jan. 23rd. Quiet day but something in the wind when the steps were taken on board.

Jan. 24th. Sunday. This is it! Moved off about 1.30am. Passed Isle of Arran along by Northern Ireland. About thirty ships in convoy with destroyer escort. Choppy sea and several people sick. ... No more queues for canteen.

Jan. 27th. Boxing on deck. Discovered that two of the ships are Kaiser's Liberty Ships which were built in seven weeks.

Jan. 28th. Most people recovering from sea sickness. Saw two planes [Swordfish: biplane torpedo bombers] take off and land on aircraft carrier. Complaint of small potato ration got us potatoes with skins on.



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Jan. 29th. Started on a week or more of anti-aircraft guard. Terrible night of wind and rain but managed to make a bit of cover.

Jan. 30th. On guard 12 to 4pm. Lovely afternoon. Passed convoy going in opposite direction and several of our ships and the aircraft carrier joined it and probably went to Gibraltar. Saw plane make three attempts to land on carrier.

Jan. 31st. Bacon and eggs for breakfast. Single ship passed convoy going in opposite direction. Two American Catalina flying boats circled round convoy.

Feb. 1st. P.T. at 9am. Clocks back one hour (GMT). Land sighted on port side of ship, probably Tenerife in Canary Islands. Another island seen in evening. Seaplane lifted by crane into sea from cruiser [converted merchantman]. Plane did not take off and was returned aboard.

Feb. 2nd. Started shirt-sleeve order. P.T. without shoes and socks. Rationing of fresh water for washing started. Only allowed full water bottle. Concert by the Royal Artillery contingent.

Feb. 3rd. More P.T. without shoes (conservation of rubber). Ten minutes sun-bathing period in freezing wind. Dress – P.T. shorts, shirt and boots! Managed to get in sun in afternoon and returned half sunburnt.

A brass plate on the rail of the Mooltan reads:

Length of this deck 525 ft.

Eight and a quarter times round

equals one mile.

Accommodation 4,200 souls

Actually on board on our trip: 6,000.

Feb. 4th. Spent interesting time talking to Indian soldier and trying to pick up a few words of his language. Everything; cigs, sweets, hankies, etc. free for one day in India, he told me. Lovely phosphorescent effect on sea at night.

Feb. 5th. Pay day. Slept on deck for first time. Much cooler and better than below deck. Saw school of dolphins. Washing day. No parades.

Feb. 6th. After fourteen days at sea arrived in Freetown about 12.20. Lovely hilly country on one side. Saw R.A.F. launches and a Hurricane fighter. Water ship came alongside and natives scrambled for money. One dived for beer bottle, another sang "God bless the Prince of Wales" for a shilling.

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Portholes opened at night with lights on all round. Smell of mosquito ointment.

Feb. 7th. Day in port. Amazed at agility of lascar [an East Indian sailor] who was lowered overboard to clean out pipe and climbed back up rope. Saw Catalina take off in harbour. Native sailors looked well in whites. Sailors took off beer, pork, bacon, geese, sausages and eggs probably for Christmas dinner.

Feb. 8th. Started work as mess orderly in sergeants' mess. Oil tanker alongside in morning. Native selling bananas and oranges took care to get money first. Saw three VAD nurses come alongside in boat, probably from ship in same convoy. Sports after tea – putting the medicine ball. All other ships ablaze with lights at night. Free issue of mineral waters.

Feb. 9th. Back to sea. Water ship alongside again – scramble for – pennies – man with peaked cap and big feet. Small canoe came up and man dived overboard for money – uncomplimentary remarks about people who only threw pennies. Left port about 11.15am at good speed to catch up convoy. Saw school of dolphins beside ship and they raced along like steeplechasers. Also saw several flying fish which seemed quite small. Slept on boat deck.

Feb. 10th. Saw more flying fish. Sunderland flying boat and seaplanes around. Watched boxing in afternoon. Slept on boat deck and saw electric storm in sky.

Feb. 11th. Read on deck in afternoon and finished story "H M Corvette". Very much like story of our own convoy. Sun brought bare skins and tattoos to light. Spent evening on deck discussing ship's faults which were many.

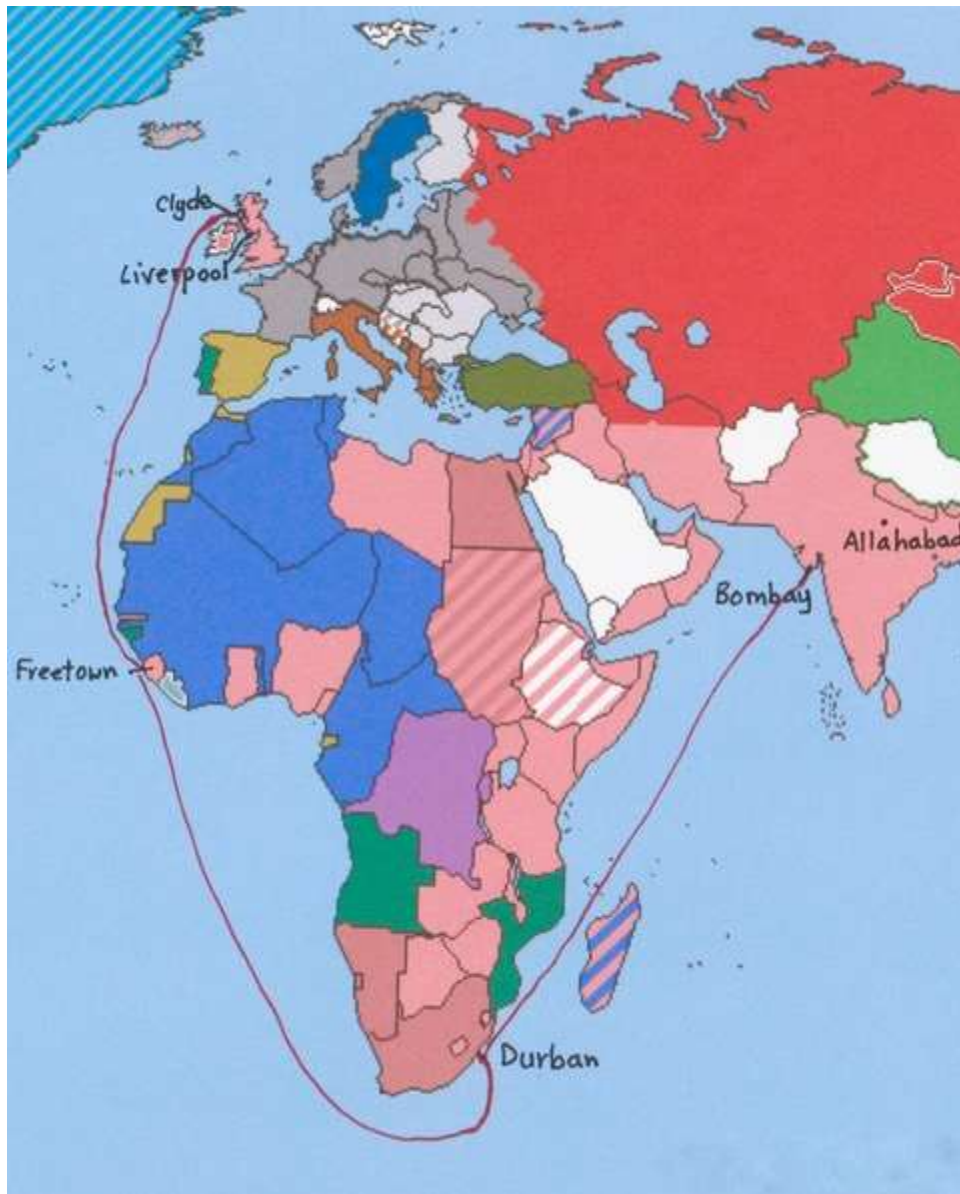
Feb. 12th. Our ship seems to have some say in movement of convoy because the hooter had a busy time (very feeble effort though). Seaplane frequently left cruiser by catapult now and picked up by crane on return.

Feb. 13th. Saw concert on deck by R.A.F. Very good act by man dressed as a woman. During concert we passed Equator at 15.15 hours GMT. Impossible to have 'crossing the line' ceremony but everyone sang "Auld Lang Syne". Finished job in Sergeants' Mess for which I received 6s.3d.

Feb. 14th. Darts match among Mortars. Knocked out in first round. Have reason to remember afternoon because I became extremely sunburnt and had reason to regret it.

Feb. 15th. Back to normal parades with platoon. Deck sports in afternoon when we played kids' games and I nearly had my back broken in wheelbarrow race. I survived with scraped elbow, knee and chin.

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The journey (approximate distances: exact routes not known): Scotland to Durban by sea 10,000 miles; Durban to Bombay by sea 4,000 miles; Bombay to Allahabad by train 1,000 miles.

1944 map

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Feb. 16th. Since we crossed the Equator the weather has been much cooler. Told there was a shortage of food aboard due to delay of four days because of enemy action (probably enemy submarine). Spent most of day trying to get hair cut. Succeeded in the evening.

Feb. 17th. Weather turned much colder, probably because our Battle Dress was packed away. Boxing in the evening.

Feb. 18th. Weather still cold. Lecture on South Africa by Intelligence Officer.

Feb. 19th. Ship's kit inspection – everything in great disorder! Lecture by the Medical Officer on dangers of V.D. in port. Wrote out cablegram. Started 24-hour guard on top deck.

Feb. 20th. Sea much rougher and wind very cold, especially on guard duty up top. Food shortage becoming very acute. Quite a few again seasick. Water rushing into portholes soaked a number of the chaps who had to change their clothes. Long queues after dinner for second helpings.

Feb. 21st. Darned socks in afternoon. Paravanes out on either side of ship. [These were torpedo-shaped devices towed from the bow of a vessel so that the cables would cut the anchors of moored mines.] We seemed to have taken an easterly course. Came fifth (73%) in Platoon competition on battalion administration.

Feb. 22nd. Sighted land and saw Table Mountain. Part of convoy left for Cape town. We're in sight of land all day. Concert by the Mooltan Boys.

Feb. 23rd. No sight of land. Concert by the Browntypes.

Feb. 24th. Prepared kit for landing. Concert on deck. On 24 hour guard.

Feb. 25th. Docked at Durban at 12.45 hours. Allowed on shore after tea. Woman on dockside singing "The white cliffs of Dover" as we pulled in. Bought food and chocolate. Plenty of canteens in town. To pictures to see "Moon over her shoulder." Fish and chips supper. Walked back to docks in pouring rain – soaked to the skin.

Feb. 26th. Durban. Route march cancelled because of rain. Ashore about 13.00 hours – tea in Y.M.C.A.: two eggs, chips, bacon, bread and butter, tea, banana, pineapple and ice cream – all for one shilling! Saw native quarter and had photo taken in a rickshaw. To cinema to see 'Unfinished Business'. Bus to Marine Parade dance in canteen.

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Feb. 27th. Durban. Marvellous and moving sensation when a British cruiser pulled alongside our ship with its band of the Royal Marines playing. Out after dinner in shorts, shirt, ammo boots, etc. Bought ice cream at the dock gates, juicy pears at a shop, then caught a bus to the races. No races so returned to Marine Parade for drinks and more ice cream. Went in to Aquarium and through Fun Fair to Snake Park. Came back along beach to the Jewish Club for fruit and ice cream. Returned to beach for short time and then to Y.M.C.A. for dinner: two eggs, bacon, mash, fruit, ice cream, tea and cream cake for 1s 0d. Took bus back to beach but everyone had vanished. Spent rest of evening in the Fun Fair.

Feb. 28th. Route march in morning. Saw African on guard with a spear. Noticed lots of girls we had not seen before. No shore leave and no reason given. Gave native one shilling for bananas but he vanished with the money. Watched with envy and despair members of crew going ashore. Slept on deck. Boat Stations practice and heard Gunner Moss (R.A. Maritime Regiment) singing on radio.

March 1st. Durban. Still in dock in morning. Hopes of leave dashed when lady singer came alongside and sang to us and wished us goodbye. Left docks about 9.15 am and anchored out

in harbour. Back to normal routine. Left harbour about 4.15. Slept on deck but had to leave because of rain.

March 2nd. Started sunbathing parades again. Queued for tinned fruit in canteen. Saw plane land for cruiser to pick up. Clocks on half an hour.

March 3rd. Spent afternoon asleep on deck. Read most of evening.

March 4th. Lecture by Indian Officer.

March 10th. Some ships left convoy.

March 11th. Lecture on 'Passing a Bill through Parliament'. More ships sailed off, leaving 6 ships in convoy. Crossed the Equator at 09.00 hours.

March 13th. Wash day. Practice on big guns. Passed sailing ship, probably a fishing vessel.

March 16th. Drew up rifles and prepared kit for landing.

March 17th. Arrived in Bombay harbour about midday.

March 18th. Pulled into Ballard Pier Docks in morning. Went ashore for stores. Docks included G.P.O., Customs and Railway Station. Allowed ashore

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from 14.00 to 21.30 hours. Followed by boy who tried to clean boots or finger nails at every step. Tea and ice cream in Chinese restaurant. Not very successful at bargaining with natives. Rode to YMCA in gharrie. [two wheeled horse-drawn vehicle]. Returned to coffee club for tea of eggs, tomato, chips and a cuppa. Tram down to Fun Fair in aid of Spitfire fund. Coffee club for supper and returned to ship.

Mar 19th Left Mooltan about 10.am. 6 Battalions embarked. Boarded train about 11.am. Issued with free tea, ten Woodbines and booklet on India. Slow train with many stops. Used book to try Indian language on a native. Everyone asking for 'backsheesh.' [tip]

Mar 20th Ate about a dozen oranges during the day. Train had difficulty getting up hills.

March 21th. Free canteen at Railway Stations – two cigarettes and a biscuit. Left train about 9.00pm at Allahabad. Marched to McPherson Barracks. Handed rifles in to guard room. Had two cups of tea, four oranges and two pieces of cake. Tried to rig up mosquito net without poles or wires – like attempting Indian rope trick! And so to bed.

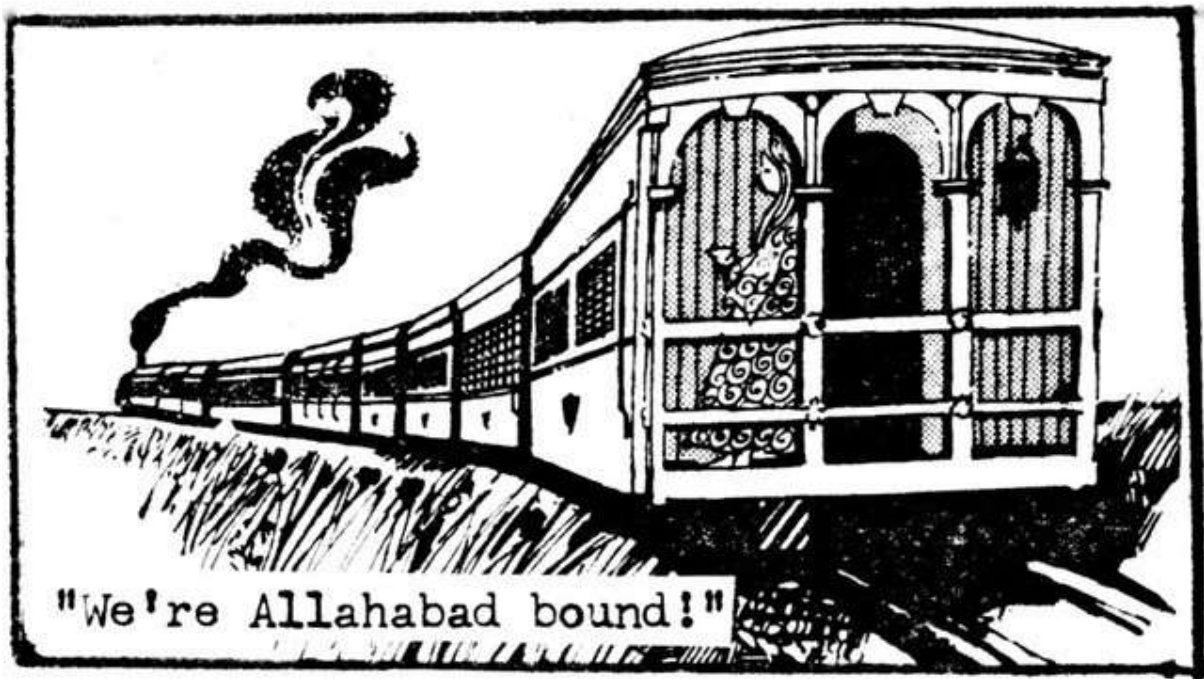


The Taj Mahal Hotel, Bombay: from a book of postcards bought back.

True story by Maj. Winston Drapkin from a Newsletter:

"After we left Durban on the Mooltan, Colonel Ditmas ordered me to prepare and give a couple of lectures on India ... My knowledge was gained from reading a couple of books in the ship's library unseen by me, two Indian Officers had come up to the boat deck and remained till the lecture was finished ... they found what I was saying was so interesting that they had stayed, but as they were not there at the beginning, which country was it I was talking about!

"Do you remember the railway journey to Allahabad? The carriages were cooled by great blocks of ice. The beggars and fruit sellers appeared from nowhere whenever the train was left on a side line while scheduled trains went by on the main track. (I ate my first mango – over ripe, with disastrous results). Do you remember too, the crowded station platforms, people sleeping, always someone washing under a tap and above all the noise and hub-bub? I remember being shocked by the beggars and the apparent poverty of the villages we passed, but being thrilled by the colourfulness and liveliness at the stations."



BOMBAY by Nick Bondonno

On disembarking we posed for and within ten minutes were rewarded with photos of our arrival on Indian soil – a copy of which I still possess. Venturing into the city, immediately struck by what appeared to be streaks of blood over the roads and pavements and began to be worried about how safe we were. Some time later we discovered the wonders of Betel nut.

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In a tribute to John Harman, later to be awarded the VC posthumously for bravery against the Japanese, he could often be seen gathering up the empty beer bottles that were lying around the ship in order to recover the deposits paid on them. With the proceeds he would barter for other people's equipment that was lighter and less cumbersome than his own.

Airletter

Airgraph

BY AIR MAIL

AIR LETTER

IF ANYTHING IS ENCLOSED
THIS LETTER WILL BE SENT
BY ORDINARY MAIL



No. 148858 Captain Tim Healey,
20th Bn. Royal Fusiliers,
c/o A.P.O. 4055.

Sender's name and address:

H. J. Healey,

Warrington,

Cheshire, Rd

Dorking. Surrey



F. 1122.

The Address must be written in LARGE BLOCK LETTERS neatly within the ruled margins.

→

The address must NOT be repeated.

Read Instructions at start. Write this message in ink very clearly below this line.

104314
Always space for Post Office use only
G.P.O.

Sender's Name and Address: **Capt. T. HEALEY.
IN TRANSIT.**

Date: 1

My Darling,

Here is my first airgraph with news that I am quite safe and well.

Lying ashore at a port of call is very welcome and I am enjoying seeing other parts of the World. It is all extremely interesting. If only you were here to enjoy it with me.

In case this overtakes my other letters I can tell you they are on the way.

Meanwhile I hope with all my heart that you are safe and well.

My fondest love to Father, Mother and all. Here is a "photokiss" for Muffin X

With all my love and thinking of you always, For ever yours, Tim.

Tim

This space should not be used.

My mother's letters

It must be a wonderful experience seeing so many different places and types of people – how different it would be if I could share it all with you! ... it always seemed that everything was brighter and more enjoyable when you were with me. I read some words of George Eliot's yesterday which seemed to express in a nutshell very much how I feel. They were: "Indeed you are not apart from any delight I have in life. I long always that you should share it, if not otherwise, at least, your knowing of it which to me is a sort of sharing". Now that letters are the only link between us they will mean so very much to me.

I do hope you are not going to North Africa as I was reading the other day that no Airgraphs or Airletters can be sent there at present ... It is nearly

three weeks since you left so thousands of miles must lie between us by now. Last Sunday we had "Eternal Father" in church specially for you – I wonder if you have services on board ship?

Your cable came as a lovely surprise this morning! I was so thrilled to get it but it has been quite a good time coming since it was dated 27th. Evidently you had set foot on "terra firma" once more – rather a pleasant experience I should think. ... Fancy you trying to find out from the compass the direction of Dorking! It made me feel so sad to think of you doing that, as I know how very much you must feel going further and further away from everybody you love. If only you were on the way back!

I have been in luck's way this week as I've had a letter, a cable and an airgraph from you, all since Monday! Congratulations on the good behaviour of the Fusiliers! You certainly have good reason to be proud of them and their excellent conduct reflects very well on their officers. I must say that that thought (fighting the Japanese) is ever at the back of my mind, and a very hateful one it is.

I rush for the post every time the postman comes.... Do write and tell me all you can and whether your food is very strange and unusual. I expect you get heaps of bananas!

We have heard the wonderful news about Tripoli today – it certainly makes one feel very proud about Montgomery. Mussolini must be feeling a trifle off colour I should think at the thought that all his Italian Empire is now no more.



I hope you won't misunderstand me when I say that I just daren't think too much about you being so far away – it is easier to bear if one doesn't dwell on it.

20TH

1940 1946

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE 20TH BN. ROYAL FUSILIERS

36 PRESTON GARDENS, COCKFOSTERS, HERTS. EN9 9LX TELEPHONE: 01-449-1318

Committee: Tim Healey (President) Philip Hawken (Chairman) Bill Bailey (Hon Sec)
Bert Reed (Jt Treasurer) Stan Payne (Jt Treasurer) Wally Evans Charlie Burton
John Gilbert

1ST DECEMBER 1983

Dear Fusilier,

Friday, 14th October 1983 saw the second celebration of the 20th Battalion's 'Family at Home' at Her Majesty's Tower of London.

It is now 37 years since our first reunion, at Dirty Dick's (stag party of course) in 1946, but in 1983 the presence of sons and daughters of 20th Fusiliers indicated a developing and very welcome spirit of regeneration of those bonds of friendship and esteem, which survives in no easily explained way, but nevertheless pervades the mood and easy enjoyment of the evening.

The writer, in responding to the invitation to provide this 'write up', feels it only proper to refer to the parade state, and I shall refer to it in alphabetical order to avoid any criticism of bias, pulling of rank, or over-consideration towards those who were particularly well disposed to me (or Doril) in the bar!!

Doril and I had a super evening my only regret is that we cannot remember some names without some prompting from Bill Bailey, who never forgets a face and who, with Jo arranged the evening and did so much to make it so enjoyable for us all. I hope Bill realises that the present we gave him is only a small token of the regard we have for both of them. We are glad and relieved that the engraved tankard was retrieved just in time from the washing up machine! Tim, the young friend of theirs who cleared the glasses and washed up after the party deserves a mention and I hope that he comes again next year!

We are very grateful too to Lt Col George Pettifar - 'George' to us all for his friendly and agreeable liaison regarding HM Tower arrangements. We also appreciated the fact that Lt Col Maurice Dale and his son took time off to join us during the evening. And what about the bar service! Did anyone have to wait for a drink? Certainly not with CSM Bob Nicholas in charge. We thank him for looking after us so well.

Now then to my list - the some 90 in number who attended that evening :-
'A' Bert Angles unfortunately minus his wife - she was working late on Cabinet business. He, as usual, his cheerful and enthusiastic self. Also 'A' for 'Anyone' left out. I was omitted from last year's 'Seymour's' list!! 'B' Bert Bartram and his wife. Some of you will have attended his final organ presentation on 9th October. He may be interested to know I saw Tommy Chamberlayne at the Tower on the Friday following our reunion. Fred Billing, a stalwart supporter and a terror on the greens (bowls)! Charlie and Doreen Burton bronzed from the Costa del Sol and justifiably proud of their son who has recently graduated with distinction. Charlie is still taking the treatment - he looks at least 35! The Burtons were in good form. 'C' Ken Cardnell with his wife. Nice to see you both. Ken hopes to see John Bignell next time. Don and Doris Cartwright. Good to see them from the Island with their daughter, Sally. Sally has the job of providing, as a tennis coach, new blood for our ladies Wightman Cup Team. 'D' Don and Mary Donohoe both regulars at our functions including the I.O.N. week-ends. Don's impatient to get hold of his Royal Fusilier tie.
(continued)



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I try so hard to visualise what you are doing but it is very difficult to picture things one really knows so little about and I am probably quite wrong in my surmises! When I heard Big Ben strike nine o'clock last night I did wonder if you were hearing the very same chimes - I do hope so.

If all the time goes as slowly till you come back it will seem a long time indeed.

I was thinking that you must be having a leave about due now? It seems so strange not to have them to look forward to any more... So much has to happen before you come back again! War is indeed a cruel, hard thing.

I do wish you could see Muffin now – I have just brought her in from her walk. She looks so sweet sitting up in her pram dressed in her pink coat and bonnet and holding a piece of prune blossom in her hand.

I think perhaps it is a good idea to send you an ordinary letter occasionally in he hopes that it will reach you safely. But I expect it will be hopelessly out of date by the time you get it.

I do hope you are looking after yourself, sweetheart. Who darns your socks now? How I wish I could do all the little things I used to for you! It meant a lot to me to do them. I can't tell you how much I think of you and long for you. All my dear love to you, darling, Yours for always.

Recd. March 17th 1943.

POST OFFICE TELEGRAM

NO CHARGE FOR DELIVERY

Written 27-2-43

Mrs Tim Healey

Thanington

Chichester Road

Dorking

airgraph



MRS. TIM HEALEY,
"THANINGTON",
CHICHESTER ROAD,
DORKING, SURREY,
ENGLAND.

In a letter to his father, undated for security reasons but received on 13th March 1943, he writes *"I am responsible for a section of the Troop decks and have contrived to make, amongst other things, a library cupboard out of an old packing case. Rings of wire make hinges for the door whilst a wire loop threaded through holes bored in case and door and fastened with a padlock, forms an efficient if primitive lock"*.

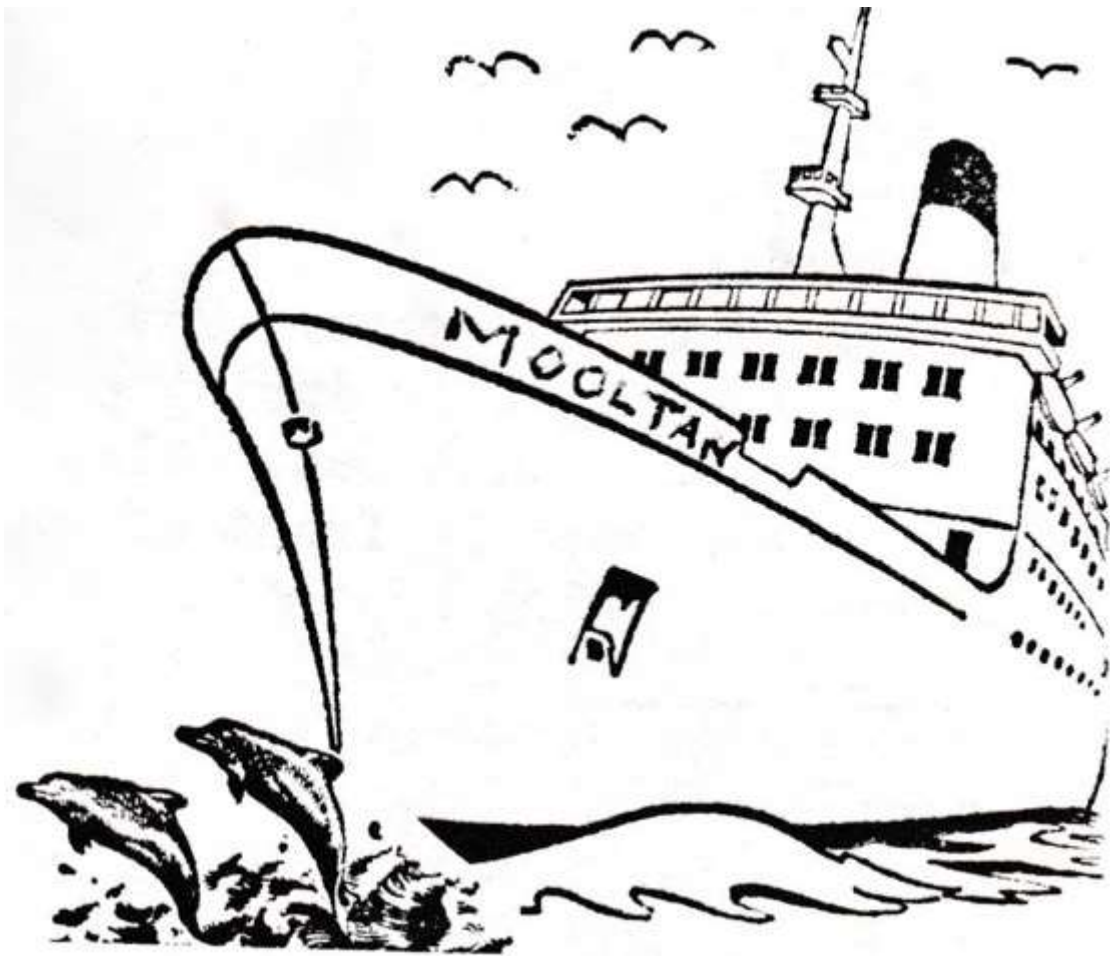
In a letter to his brother Frank he wrote: *"On your birthday I shall toast your good health with a beaker of vodka, coconut milk, quasha chips, or whatever the locals have to offer."*

"The old ship is showing quite a turn of speed, the engines pounding away with no end of vim. As well as the increasing throb of the engines there is the continuous drone (and rattle in some cases) of the ventilators and fans. After blackout, the fans succeed merely in churning up the already used-up atmosphere."

"Recently Derek Borboen and I moved out of our cabin so that the CO, who likes a place for himself, could move in. I now have his old bunk in a four-birth cabin, occupied by, in addition to myself, Tommy Chamberlain (2nd in command), Geoffrey Berry and Ronnie French. This cabin has the advantages of being on a higher deck and has a blackout gadget which makes it unnecessary to seal the place hermetically at night".

His mother wrote:

My dearest Tim, ... I had schooled myself to take the parting like a true Britisher but apparently I did not go to a very good school. I would not have you do anything else but offer yourself for England and all the supporting countries. ... May God's mercy be with you and keep you safe and well is my dearest wish... Your ever-loving Mother



MARITIME INFORMATION CENTRE



"I am afraid I cannot help you with much of an article for your newsletter as regrettably, as with so many ships records dating back to World War II security measures were enforced with the result that ships Masters did not record the destination of the voyage, nor did they disclose any detail of cargoes, or in this case, troop transportation. These measures were employed to ensure that, in the event of the vessel being captured or sunk by enemy forces, no useful information could be disclosed."

Mooltan

THE OFFICIAL LOG
for our voyage.

January-March 1943

Commander: M.G.Draper
Staff Captain: G.S.Stable
Chief Officer: H.P.Mallet

1943	January	13th	1354 left berth. 1721 entered river. 1805 all fast landing stage.
		15th	1322 left stage. 1355 anchored River Mersey.
		20th	0715 Forasat Allea, 3rd class passenger, Liverpool to Bombay, Donkeyman M.N., departed this life, cause of death pneumonia and heart failure
		" 1121	Left Liverpool. 0921 anchors aweigh. 4311 troops.
			1355 Committed to the deep the body of the late Forasat Allea.
		21st 0555	Arrived Clyde. 0739 anchored.
		24th 0215	Left Clyde. 0050 anchors aweigh. In convoy. 4311 troops.
	February	4th	0250 Vazoodeen Maizoodeen, lascar, No.16627, departed this life, cause of death pneumonia and heart failure. 17 13 N., 18 40 W.
		"	1200 Committed to the deep the body of the late Vazoodeen Maizoodeen, lascar. 15 10 N., 18 27 W.
		6th 1032	Arrived Freetown. 1223 anchored.
		9th 1146	Left Freetown. 1106 anchors aweigh. In convoy. 4309 troops.
		25th 1053	Arrived Durban. 1258 all fast alongside.
	March	1st	0846 left berth. 1005 anchored.
		" 1700	Left Durban. 1634 anchors aweigh. In convoy. 4298 troops.
		17th 1025	Arrived Bombay. 1107 anchored.
		18th	0737 anchors aweigh. 0852 all fast alongside, Ballard Pier.
		19th	1830/2105 moved from Ballard Pier into Alexandra Dock.

[After spending two days in dry-dock, the *Mooltan* made the return voyage to Great Britain, calling at Diego Juarez, Cape Town, Takoradi, Freetown, Casablanca, and Gibraltar, and arriving in the Clyde on 4th June. She brought home a number of troops and picked up 750 prisoners of war at Casablanca.]

The British Army in India

Letters to my mother

Letters to my father's family

Fusiliers' memories from

Regimental Newsletters

1946 – 1990

Reflections

The British Army in India

In 1857 rule had passed from the East India Company to the British Government, transferring authority to the Crown and the Company's troops to the British Army. The title of Viceroy was given to the Governor General. From the late 19th Century there had been opposition to British rule. By 1943, when my father arrived at Allahabad, there was already an established British military base there.

This army trunk, now with glass cover to make it a table, is in our lounge after spending 77 years in seven different garages. It is the inspiration for this record of my father's life in India during the 2nd World War along with the letters sent by my parents to each other. The trunk contained his army uniform and Captain's hat, maps and books about India, identity bracelet, evening wear and now the post-war Royal Fusiliers newsletters and the love letters.







Don Cartwright and Captain Tim

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After saying goodbye on 12th January 1943 my mother received one letter written on the 14th before my father left, thanking her and her mother for the sausage rolls and cakes provided for many for the journey and then had to wait until 28th January to receive that and one written on board ship. The next arrived on 5th March. The last letter was written on 26th June 1945.

The convoy arrived in Bombay Harbour on 17th March after 57 days at sea. Two days later having had shore leave, the journey continued by train to McPherson Barracks in Allahabad, which lies at the junction of the Ganges and Jumna Rivers.

Extracts from the letters

20th April 1943. My father's first from India.

The day's work here is rather broken up: 6am Reveille, 7-9 Training, 9am Breakfast, 10-1 training; rest or swimming in the afternoon, then games, lectures or conferences in the evening. The rest in the afternoon is rarely possible as it is the only time one can do any odd jobs. Altogether the days are quite full in spite of the so called lethargy inducing climate.

2nd May 1943

We have only just been able to obtain some air letter forms, this being the first one. I hope to get a ration of it at least one a week after this ... I can just imagine what an energetic little soul young Muffin is now that she has acquired the art of rapid locomotion. I feel so aggrieved at being prevented from seeing her grow up.

I long so desperately to be with you again though knowing all the time that it is utterly futile to do so. But the very thought of you and your sweet and loveable ways is a thing in itself to be cherished and treasured. The time we are parted will make all the more delicious happiness for me in my eventual homecoming. What a day that will be! There is no social life here even if there was any time for it. We belong to a club which at the best of times is not very bright. And there does not seem to be any social element connected with the churches. But as we are here solely for the purpose of proceeding with the War I suppose we should not think of anything social and the people here are certainly not obliged to take any interest in us. You will be astonished to hear that under the able instruction of Bertie Griggs I actually swam a little way in the baths.

When I get home, by the way, you might be able to persuade me to give you a few lessons – if you are very nice to me. You are quite right about

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mosquitos. They are an abomination, but by waging war in the form of mosquitos. They are an abomination, but by waging war in the form of swatting them, I am not bitten very much. You would be amused to see me creeping under the smallest possible opening under my mosquito net when I go to bed. If there are one or two in there I spend ages chasing them out or trying to kill them. Our fan of course keeps them away quite a lot. Another unpleasant insect is the scorpion spider which is sand colour and about the size of a tarantula. I am told that they sting badly. The two I have seen certainly showed fight when touched. But there are other more likeable creatures: the little wall lizards who eat up all the ants in the bath room and the tree rats, (like squirrels) who come into our room for little bits of cake from tea. My valise has not turned up yet though Tony Wright who lost his at the same time has heard that his has been located. I am still managing on the kit I did not lose. Luckily blankets are unnecessary in this heat. We have all had to get a pith hat to replace the topi [pith helmet] which is not fashionable in this place. As KD suits [khaki drill] are also not worn you can see that topi and KD were a waste of money. We wear bush suits which are much cooler. I am lucky in keeping well, which may or may not be through taking a tablespoon of salt each day, drinking two or three gallons of water a day and having fresh lime juice instead of milk in my tea. One just craves for salt after a little while.

I have had, in addition to my normal job, the job of looking after the men's food and feeding arrangements. I wish I could avail myself of your technical knowledge [my mother trained in Domestic Science] to apply to problems such as tough meat, insipid puddings and hard peas. Anyway the meals have improved somehow or other. I publish Messing Reports which contain my "hints" for producing such peculiar dishes as "Savoury rice with seasoned onions", "Rice mould with jam" and "Grilled potato rissoles." You can appreciate that the duties of a soldier include some very domestic ones, though I confess I tackle this particular job with more confidence than qualifications. Derek and I have had our first lesson in Urdu which is the most useful of the Indian languages. Our tutor or "munchi" comes to us for an hour every afternoon.

... When you feel miserable or rebuffed or lonely for someone to comfort or sympathise with you, just think of this lonely man of yours longing to make a fuss of you and to love you with all the passion you inspire. And

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one day, when that comes true, I shall love and squeeze you to the exclusion of all such hurts and miseries – though you will be quite too breathless to tell me they have gone.

The really first images of how poor and how life for the vast majority of Indians was a reality. How can one forget the sights to which we were subjected and not feel compassion for the poor children. Babies and 3, 4 and 5 year olds, subjecting themselves to what I can only describe as tortures to earn a few pice from the rail passengers to enable them to live another day.

The Padre's Indian cook produces English as well as Indian dishes. Indian dishes usually consist of a rice and curry foundation with lots of extra spices and oddments each in its own little dish and which one adds according to taste.

5th May 1943

Even indoors everything is hot. A tumbler from the table is warm to the touch and clothes when put on are as hot as if they have been warmed before a fire. Although this sounds almost unbearable, the air is so dry and hot that it evaporates everything and keeps one dry. I have now bought a bush suit which consists of slacks and an open-necked tunic made of shirting material. It has gilt pips and titles, looks quite smart and is very cool. As I was the last member of the Mess to get one, my entry to dinner when I first wore it, was greeted with a certain amount of flippant comment.

6th May 1943

Our daily Urdu lesson with the "munchi" cuts out any chance of that well-advertised myth – the afternoon siesta.

19th May 1943

On Friday the North Africa victory will be celebrated throughout India. We shall march through the town led by our own brand-new band.

10th June 1943

Frank and I are sharing rooms at a Hill Station where we are staying for a fortnight with most of my company.

18th June 1943

It has been a most enjoyable relief from the heat and dust of our own station ... a great change too to see the mountains and green grass and

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trees clustered around us. Frank and I played hockey yesterday. ... One of our chaps killed a seven foot snake a few days ago. He had it skinned and is having the skin made into a belt. I am disappointed in not having as much fruit as I should like. It can be bought but at a rather prohibitive price. It is much cheaper at our own station. For chota hasri (little breakfast or, in more homely terms, morning tea) we are given tea and two or three plums or apricots. Yesterday I opened an apricot to remove the stone and a large centipede clambered out – not an appetizing find. But I expect that when the rains start numerous insects will be running around and occupying my attention just as much as my beloved mosquitos do. I have already encountered a scorpion-spider which is yellow and about eight inches in length. I touched him with a pencil whereupon he immediately sprang round ready to fight. I am told that his sting is most unpleasant.

The Club Secretary here kindly arranged a Tea Dance for the troops. They all enjoyed it thoroughly. It was good to see them dancing and masticating sweet cakes between times ... There is a cinema here where we have seen again Walt Disney's 'The Reluctant Dragon'. It contains that marvellous feature 'How to ride a horse', which I could watch any number of times. Another film we saw was 'Pimpernel Smith'. How very sad that Leslie Howard and all those people should be killed so violently even though so many of our own bomber crews meet a similar fate.

The Ghesti (hot water wallah) has just brought in my bath water for which he charges me one and a half rupees a week to 'buy wood'. Of course he really cuts the wood out of somebody's hedge and pockets the cash. However that is all part of the Indian system.

25th July 1943

Tom Foster whose hobby is Natural History and Forestry has made his room quite a museum with all the specimens he keeps. There is a variety of brightly plumed birds and butterflies, such a contrast with the vultures and beetles which also abound. We arrange football matches with the Indian teams. The Company team played my bearer's team a few days ago. Of course the Company won but they gave us a good game especially as most of them play with bare feet. I like the Indian Community just around our bungalows. They are very idle but very happy, probably because they are so lazy.

The tiniest children solemnly salute and say

"Salaam Sahib" to us as we go by. The atmosphere is now much cooler.

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owing to the Monsoon. I actually found a blanket necessary the other night.

Did I tell you that I have started to replace my lost kit by buying a valise and three blankets? ... I shall get a bed next.

I have had to leave off my Urdu lessons... It is a pity... so much to do....

August 1943 Telegram

NO NEWS OF YOU FOR SOME TIME

ARE YOU ALRIGHT WORRIED ABOUT YOU

FONDEST LOVE DARLING

16th August 1943 Telegram

DELIGHTED TO HEAR YOU ARE SAFE AND WELL

AM WELL AND FIT

FONDEST LOVE DARLING

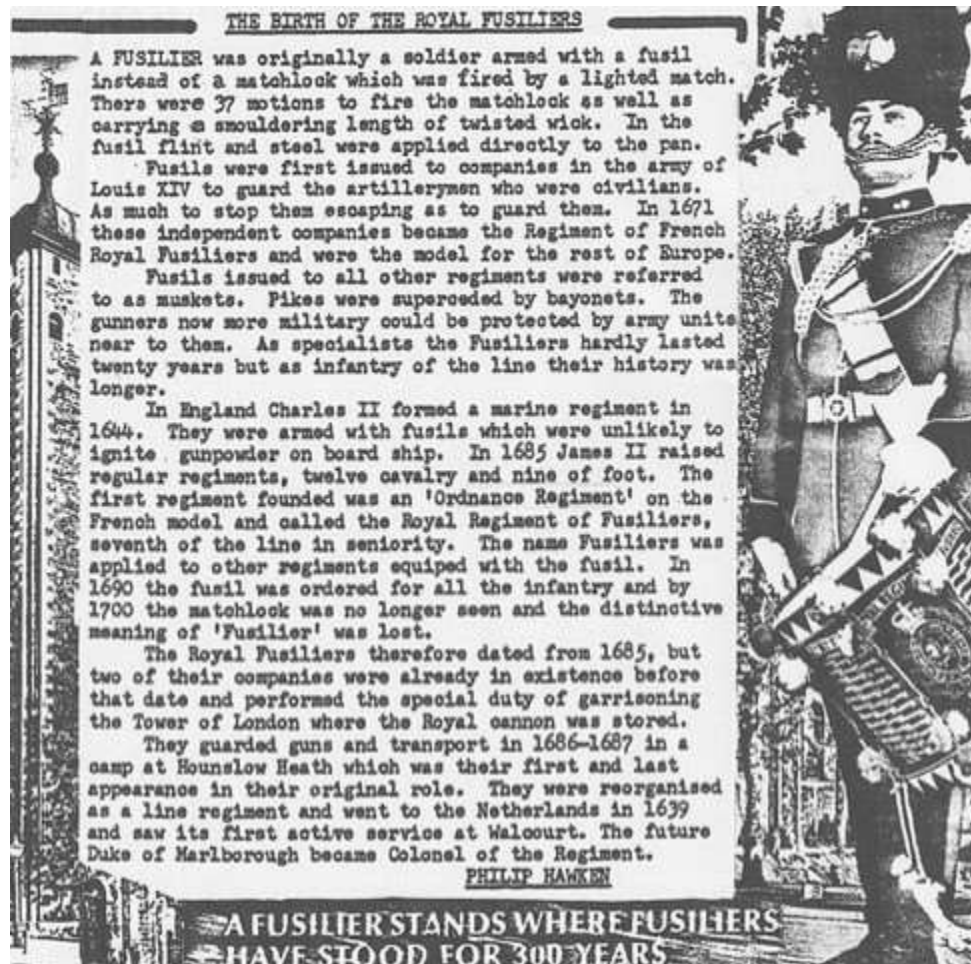
22nd August 1943

... I am lucky in having had no share in the various ailments which seem to belong to this country. You would be highly amused to see me clambering onto my "charpai" under the edge of the mosquito net each night. The net is quite a voluminous affair and does not give the sensation of being closed in as one might expect. With the fan going on hot nights it is quite cool in spite of the net. In the morning I awaken to the sight of Lala's dusky fist thrusting under the net a cup of tea and a biscuit or sometimes a small banana, which, by its very presence alters the simple "morning chai" to the magnificence of "chota hasri". My favourite fruit the mango is prohibited by the Medical Officer because it can convey cholera germs. Most disappointing as I am very partial to mangos. There is remarkably little variety in fruit. Bananas are plentiful but like much in India, of very poor quality.

... You can guess what it means to all of us to know that what air raids there are on England cannot increase very greatly whilst the enemy is so hard pressed. This is certainly the beginning of the end of those monstrous ruffians.

I think I did tell you that I was doing my old job of Adjutant for a while. (This was due to a case of dysentery) ... Germs carry very easily in this climate, mainly through flies and infected Indians. But our sickness rate is very low really.

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Identity bracelet

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★ ★ ★ ★ ——— THE 20TH BATTALION ROYAL FUSILIERS ——— ★ ★ ★ ★
A brief summary of its history and background

The 20th Bn Royal Fusiliers was formed at Marlbury, Cheshire in 1940. A significant contribution in the training of the new Battalion was provided by a nucleus of experienced N.C.Os from the Middlessex Regiment.

The Battalion, however, was commanded by a Fusilier, Lt.-Col. G.F. Finch; his Adjutant, Captain Leslie Gray-Cheape, Seaforth Highlanders stayed for a short while and was succeeded by Capt Tim Healey, Royal Fusiliers.

The Battalion had moved to the I.O.W becoming a member of a Fusilier Brigade (19th, 20th and 21st RF); involved with Home Defence duties ('Bow-Bells' Division); apparently the I.O.W was a prime Reich objective!

Soon after I joined in December 1940, Monty, our Divisional Commander visited, (serge battle dress not enhanced by the wearer standing to, morning and evening, in slit trenches half filled with sea water!)

Our new C.O. became Lt.-Col J.M. Dittmas, the East Yorkshire Regiment.

Then Capt. A.T. Chamberlayne, from the 2nd Battalion joined; he later became Second in Command of the Battalion, succeeding Major G.L. Matthews O.B.E. T.D.

The Battalion was beginning to settle down and the Fusilier tradition established; training was our C.O's metier.

Early in 1942, Monty re-visited, expressed satisfaction with progress and soon after receiving two civilian intakes for primary training, the battalion moved to the mainland; to Fort Widley, Privett Camp and subsequently to Kenley, Surrey as part of London District.

Two embarkation leaves were taken, (one false alarm) and after 4 x 30 mile marches in 5 days round the Surrey countryside, to weed out unfit reinforcements, the 20th embarked in early January 1943 from Liverpool as part of an independent Brigade, with sealed orders; intended destination later learned to be North Africa.

We did not get there - after sundry opposition, the convoy was separated in mid Atlantic and after nearly 2½ months at sea the 20th arrived at Bombay, India.

Our unexpected arrival was followed by a short tour of 'curfew duty' in Allahabad, a hot-bed of Congress disaffection. General Claude Auchinleck, who had assumed command in India then visited us; expressed his sympathy with our natural disappointment at the change of plan but told us we had now to assist in training intakes from U.K in jungle warfare. Shortly we would move to Bhopal State as member of a Brigade commanded by Brigadier H. Alban-Davies and have unlicensed use of unlimited terrain for our purposes.

It seemed that once again the unlikely was our lot, my own Company, predominantly Cockney and including 'London /Bristol Blitz' firefighters were mostly non-swimmers and equated jungle conditions with Hampstead Heath!

However, encouraged, particularly by our C.O., we became fairly expert in our job and persisted for some eighteen months, providing necessary reinforcements for 14th Army and surviving, but with some sad loss, the various onslaught of a particularly unpleasant variety of tropical diseases and environment.

Inevitably over a period of time, a significant number of the 20th left and went into Burma under disparate command; finally the Battalion was disbanded in 1946 at Lohardarga under the command of Lt.-Col. W.G. Vickers.

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However the 'Fusilier' spirit - "once ... always a Fusilier" never left a 'hard core' and thanks particularly to Bill Bailey, a Newsletter, his original inspiration and run by him for some 40 years after the war ended, has held a substantial nucleus in touch.
J.G.

I hope you won't misunderstand me when I say that I just don't think too much about you being so far away - it is easier to bear if one doesn't dwell on it. When I think of you and how happy we've always been then I feel frightfully "Tinselt". Do take care of your dear dear self, & know you are always in my thoughts,
All my love, sweetheart, Helen. XXX

(14) 148858 Capt. T. Healey. 23 Apr 44
20th Bn. Royal Fusiliers. Indian Command.
Helen, my adorable Darling, my heart is very full with the infinitely tender and loving words of your A.C. 108 which came to me to day. To know that you love me so much is wonderful indeed and adds a sweetness and purpose to my life already devoted to loving and caring for you. You wonder if I really mean you and not someone else when I write of my love for you, and then your assertions that you are not at all as lovable as I know you are, just convince me more surely than ever that yet another of your adorable qualities is a sweet modesty. How lucky I am to have won the love of the lovable endearing sweet woman that you are and how I long to respond to and return that love with the tender, passionate ardour which you inspire. Darling

Examples of Helen's and Tim's handwriting

TN014 - APRIL 1943

Continuing BILL STEWART'S DIARY
"The 20th All at Sea (on land as well!)"

Ranikhet, Himalayan Foothills.

13 Apr 1943 Went sick and reported to M.O. Sent to B.M.H. with man's kit for fumigation. Saw some of the Burma casualties. Arrived back about 7.30 pm
14 Apr Range taking in morning. Athletics in afternoon - ran 880 yards in good time.
15 Apr Started on trek from 9am till 5pm. Cooked dinner of spuds, meat and peas, followed by jam and bread. Saw cactus, roses, villages, etc.
16 Apr Spent morning on section stalks. Sports in afternoon.
17 Apr Fire picquet so had very quiet day in billets. Sold pair of shoes for 12 annas to buy supper.
18 Apr Pictures in evening to see Spencer Tracy in Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde.
19 Apr Started on first day of trek about 9am to 7pm. Spent dinner beside stream. Cooked own dinner and had terrific climb up hill later. Very little sleep because of cold.
20 Apr Started off about 8am till 8pm. Perilous ledge where even the sergeant faltered. Saw water snake. Picked mint for dinner. Filled up with drinking water. Had dinner and a bath. Reached foot of hill near Almora. Started back and had long trek to the place where we had dinner on the first day. On guard 2-3am but slept soundly in spite of cold. Sleeping on narrow ledges.
21 Apr Carried on from 8.30am till 4.30pm. Good guide out off long climb for us. Arrived back fairly early and given rupees each by officer.
22 Apr Wakened very late but had good sleep. Wrote air letter in morning. Supposed to be M.A.F.F.I. in afternoon. Rumour of pay but this was put off.
23 Apr Cleaned rifles. Pay parade. Walked around town in the evening and visited shops.
24 Apr Moved off in buses about 8am. Saw wrecked army truck which didn't help our confidence in our driver. Sing song with drums on Bareilly station. Slept on train. Watched Hindu praying, and saw two-man shovel for the first time.
25 Apr Arrived at Allahabad about noon. Rode back to camp in trucks.
26 Apr Walk to C of E canteen and borrowed book "2nd Year of R.A.F."
28 Apr First letters arrived. Regimental talkies to see Bing Crosby in "Waikiki Wedding".
30 Apr Filled in form for extra pay in India. Dance at Coral Club.
1 May Scheme in morning. Palace to see Alan Jones in "Moonlight in Havana".
2 May Dining Hall orderly. Had to blanco equipment with 'Ganges mud'.
3 May Went round to baths but was unable to go swimming. Apparently we should not have been out in the heat of the day!
4 May Inspection of equipment blancoed with 'Ganges mud'. Very interesting lecture on snakes and their bites.
5 May Prepared mortar drill for Brigadier's inspection but he failed to appear.
7 May Reveille 0400hrs. On guard - 'stick man' which means no guard duty. Made C.O.'s runner. Town in evening and saw Hindu wedding and had a very nice free meal, apart from the 'betel nut'. Someone died on the scheme.
8 May Finished job as runner. Played football in the evening. Sand storm.
9 May Church parade - rifle racks at back of church. Organ played by officer who used to be a cinema organist. Who was he?
10 May Worked No.36 set on scheme. Went to first Urdu class but no instructor turned up. Lecture on wireless in evening.
11 May Strained back muscle on mortar drill. Visited by M.O. and spent day in bed.
13 May First Urdu lesson.
14 May Went to Regimental Cinema to see 'Only Angels have Wings' but came out at half time.
15 May Went to baths all afternoon and managed to swim a few strokes.
16 May Vaccination in morning. Cathedral Service in evening.
17 May Baths, and later, C. of E. Club to borrow book.
18 May Second Urdu class but only went over first lesson.
20 May Further mail arrived from home.
21 May Victory March to celebrate Tunisian victory of last Friday. Saw display of fireworks, P.T. and Tent pegging.
22 May Scheme with mortars for Brigadier's benefit.
23 May Signals Runner until about 7.30pm. Working in office until late.
24 May Very hot day. Managed to swim about half a length during the evening.
27 May Normal day apart from a scheme laid on for the General.
29 May Town patrol. Regimental dance in evening.
30 May Church Parade. Cathedral in evening followed by a walk around the town.
1 June Filling in trenches during morning. Evening in barracks.
2 June Arrival of convoy of Royal Artillery en route to Burma from Bombay.

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26th August 1943

I received the long awaited cable today and am overjoyed at the great news. It is just marvellous to know that you and the babe are perfectly alright. I am lucky indeed to possess my lovable, adorable Helen and a sweet little family, too. All speed to the great day when I shall see you all three. Well, what is she like? ... It was very kind of Father to cable me so quickly. The cable reached India on the 23rd and then took three days to come here. ... It is raining now in proper tropical style. I can hear it just toppling down. I have not yet bought a new raincoat. I use my anti-gas cape or one of those mackintosh capes you used to admire so much! When football or hockey is played during one of these torrential showers the players dabble about in great puddles and slide all over the place. It is great fun. At the beginning of this month I gave

Lala, our bearer, a month's notice because he was extremely idle. I found my shirts with loose buttons or without buttons whilst pockets had been torn through the carelessness of the dhobie. Lala has greatly improved since then but he will have to go just the same. A pity because he is a likeable lad as Indians go. [Later he writes that there is no ill feeling and he found another "sahib" to look after and whenever he sees me he grins and salutes.] What I find most trying about Indians is that they have only one object where we are concerned and that is to get all the money they can out of us without actually picking our pockets. There are no marked prices in shops. If an officer goes into a shop, prices quoted are doubled or even trebled. They are extremely stupid to underrate our intelligence because we either offer half ... or do not buy. My expenses have been so high that I had to cable the Bank for £25 and it has cost me about £1 to get it out here.

30th August 1943

.... I honestly think that the terrific ferocity of the strength of our Cause is bringing Victory as soon as ever we have dared to hope. Lord Louis' appointment, popular with everyone, is regarded with especially keen interest in this part of the world.

2nd September 1943

From November I am told, it becomes very bleak and cold, making it necessary to have fires.

35



My father is in row 2, fourth from right



The Regimental Band: Budni, 1944. Capt. Healey centre

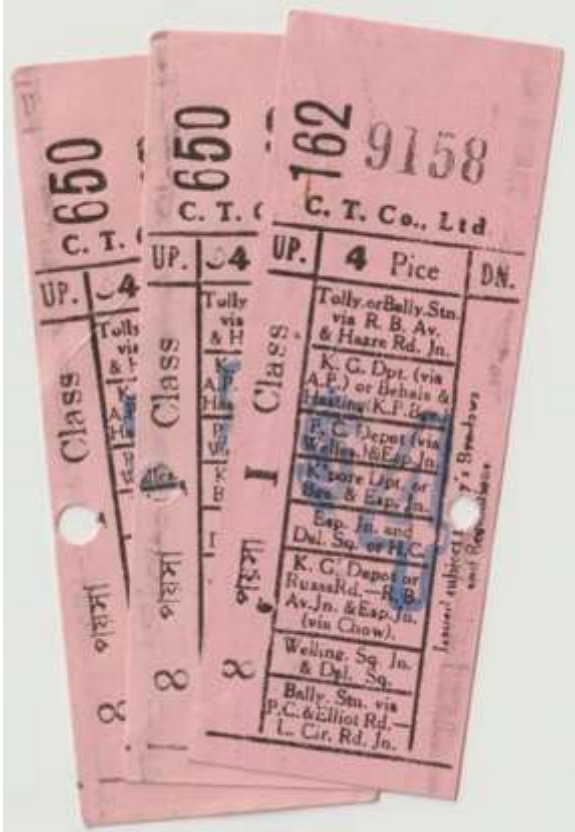




ALLAHABAD CRICKET MATCH.
Officers Team.

Back Row: Carl Reynolds, Tim Healey, Ronnie French, Tommy Chamberlayne, Philip Hawken, Bill Vickers, John Pooley, Michael Fairlam.
Front Row: Derek Borboen, Ray Davis, Frank Price, Don Cartwright, John Gilbert.

My father is 2nd from the left in the back row



April 1944

".....when a large snake came silently into our tent and coiled itself up at my feet. I know not how long he had been keeping me company but had I been aware of his presence, the four minute mile would have been easy, regardless of duckboards and mud! It was at Nazarganj during the monsoons. As I sat on the edge of my charpoy, writing airgraphs by the dim light of a hurricane lamp, the deadly reptile, the length of a rifle, had crept in to get out of the wet. It was disturbed when I stood up to stretch my legs, and slithered away as I shouted: "Look out Blondie, it's a snake!" Blondie Hicks grabbed a hockey stick, by which time the intruder had disappeared into the murky darkness outside."

Bill Bailey



37

7th September 1943

I am writing this in a Railway Station Waiting Room from a scribble epistle which I wrote in the train so you can imagine me writing this as it bowls along. You can guess how excited I was to receive your A.L.Cs dated 22nd and 24th August. I could not read them properly yesterday when they arrived, but, needless to say I have read them over and over again since then. The reason ... was because I was prosecuting at a Court Martial ... I am scribbling all this in a train taking me to a place where we shall be for the next few weeks ... I rose at 4.30 this morning, packed and went to catch the 6.45 train. As so very often happens it did not leave the station until 7.30 but we are now bowling along quite fast. There is little variety in the passing scene – just villages and paddy fields. Sometimes I spot some water buffalo luxuriously wallowing in a muddy pond. Quite a number of monkeys can be seen too. At one station there were several wandering about the platforms and on the line. We are just pulling in to a junction where we have to wait ... before being hitched on to the express. ... Well, here I am back in the train having had a shower and some lunch. At stations of any size we Europeans are very well catered for as far as restaurants and ablutions are concerned. Feeling most refreshed after my shower, I indulged myself in a very good lunch. If only you could be with me. We used to have such good times travelling about. ... The last part of the journey, about 55 miles, had to be made by bus on twisting mountain roads. It is an exciting and very picturesque drive. And so here I am, only just finishing this letter to you on the 11th, the reason being that since arriving here life has been most hectic. You would be amused if you could see the hats some of us are wearing. They are wide brimmed floppy hats and although one side clips up Australian style, they are quite shapeless.

18th September 1943

I am sorry this must be horribly brief but I am writing it just before going into the wilds for a few days.

1st October 1943

... I cannot describe it here but some day I shall tell you what an adventure it was.

15th October 1943

Regarding my Christmas parcels, I feel that the things I have sent are not very exciting but I spent several afternoons searching the shops in the

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bazaar here. Contrary to what one would think, specimens of real Indian craftsmanship are very rare. Most of the stuff is mass produced Woolworths standard. ... If the war goes ahead as fast as it has been for the last few months, I think, in spite of warnings against undue optimism, that the end is in sight. What a grand thought that is, especially when we glance back to the 1940 days.

27th October 1943

... I had prickly heat rather badly after returning from the hills but it has now disappeared – sped on its way by the vast quantity of salt which I daily consume and my morning runs with the Company. ... Now the big problem is to find somewhere for you and the children to live. I am very sorry indeed that Mother's health is no better and I can quite see that she will not get any better through having the noise and bustle of two children in the house. ... I suggest that you advertise for a flat in Dorking. That sounds more simple than it really is because I know perfectly well that Dorking is practically overflowing already but I also know that you would wish to stay there.

10th November 1943

We have a Boxing Tournament here tonight, the gate money to be devoted to the Poppy Fund. I have not gone but can hear the cheering from the ring side. I am going on a Jungle Training Course tomorrow. There is a great deal of packing up to be done and good old Andrews has been pottering about all the evening sorting things out. He is a very thoughtful lad and frequently suggests things which "he thinks I ought to have" such as a proper pillow instead of a folded blanket, or (believe it or not) woollen underclothes!. I played cricket in the Officer's team against the Sergeants ... I am not very bright at games but it was a very pleasant game. You will receive in a long promised airmail letter a photo of a lot of us by the Mess. Incidentally we won the match by a fairly good margin. Then we played them at hockey. I was in goal and, sad to relate, I let three into the net so we lost that match 3-0. I was not included in the football team this time ... although I do not play games very much, I am very fit through the normal activities of the day – and there is plenty of that.

2nd December 1943

I have been on a course which provided a very interesting change both in occupation and scenery ...

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5th December 1943

... the time of parting is already shortened by 10 months and 22 days.

Answers to questions: Time difference varies with the daylight-saving scheme in England ... four and a half hours ahead. So if you ever happen to be awake at 1.30 think of me just getting up at 6am (or thereabouts).

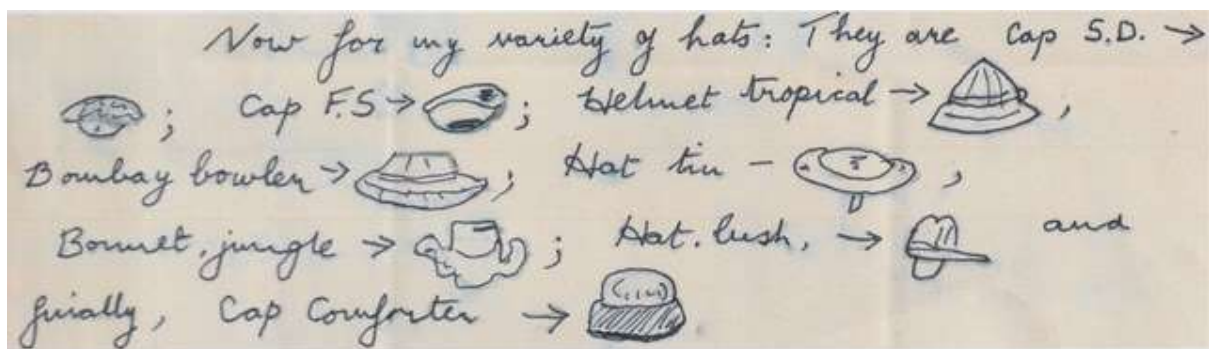
The rupee is the equivalent of roughly 1/6d and there are 16 annas to the rupee making the anna a trifle more than a penny. ...

3 pice = 1 pie
4 pies = 1 anna
16 annas = 1 rupee

The £27 which I send to the Bank each month costs 360 rupees.

... about being happy, I am not prepared to answer but I can say that I am very well and living as comfortably as anyone could wish in War.

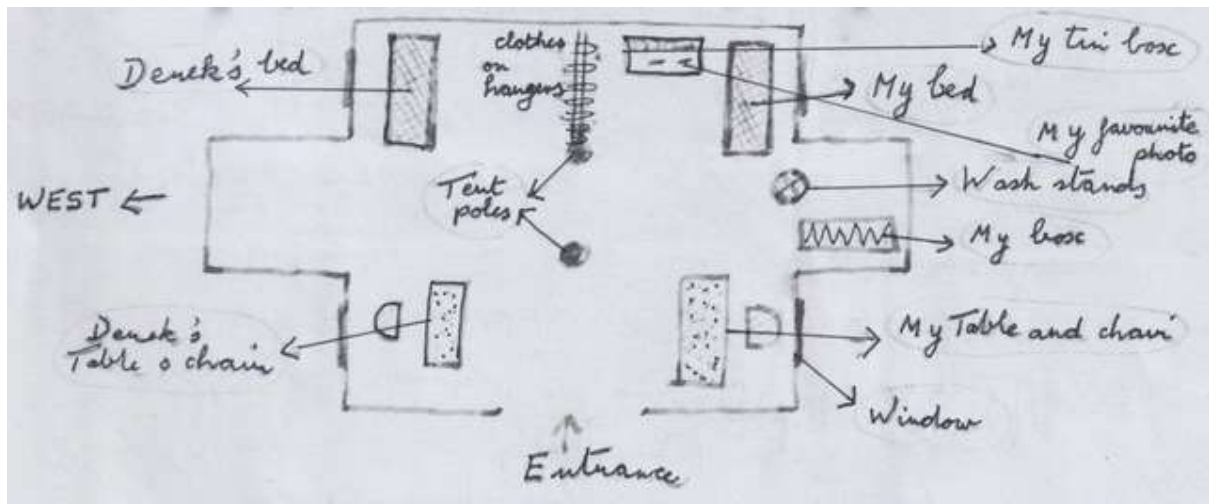
You mention that you still indulge in your love of snappy headgear. I will confess that they are pleasing to the eye though any headgear would win an attractiveness through adorning your sweet head. I remember the various types – the dinner plate type, quite useless as a hat, a mere disc attached to the thatch by some magical and invisible means; then the helmet foundation type consisting of a sort of skull-cap affair supporting some sort of surrealistic superstructure. The horse's sun hat style, I remember, found favour whilst the variations of the Rentonian Wisp were innumerable. As I have always said, the sensible "clorth hat" is a very good all-purpose type but for goodness sake never get one for yourself. Now for my variety of hats: They are cap S.D.; cap F.S.; Helmet, tropical; Bombay bowler; Hat, tin; Bonnet jungle; Hat, bush and finally Cap comforter.



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So you see, I am not doing so badly though we men scorn a lot of variety in clothes of any description.

It is difficult to describe this part of the World without committing a breach of security but there is no harm in describing our tent. This is a plan of it.



The bulges on the ends are little tents in which we keep all our odd gear. There is fibre matting covering most of the floor and there are little bedside mats which we have bought. You can imagine Andrews coming in each morning, dumping a mug of tea down next to your photo and giving his usual greeting of "All right Sir?".

Bathing is rather a problem here. One's turn with the tin bath comes round about once a week...

10th December 1943

... My pressure lamp which is supposed to be 300 candle power is roaring away here and gives quite a lot of warmth as well as light. I boiled a kettle of water on it last night but it took an hour to do so. When I bought it ... wanted the lamp merchant to light 300 candles so as to see if its light really was as good as all that but the fellow excused himself out of it. ... I am commanding Headquarter Company now. Not so nice as a Rifle Company but very interesting and giving a sort of pride of ownership to me. I am also sorting out the messing and once again turn my mind to such things as cooking salt into steamed potatoes and producing meat dishes sufficiently tender not to make all the troops go dental the next day. We all do very well on meat, eggs, butter, sugar,

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oranges – in fact nearly all the things that I would so willingly give up to you all at home. You will hardly believe that some men grumbled because they had two eggs again!! for breakfast this morning. We hope to get a good proportion of turkeys, Christmas puddings, ingredients for cakes, plenty of oranges and of course some beer for Christmas. You will be amused to hear that a small supply of holly and mistletoe! will be sent with the puddings. ... we plan to have a sing-song party round a huge bonfire (no blackout please note) and a good supper in the interval. You will guess what some of the songs will be! We want to give the boys as good a time as possible so as to keep their minds off the Christmas they spent in 1942. Officers are supposed to be immune from such reflections but need I say how we shall all be thinking of the time we had with our loved ones.

19th December 1943

... Judging by an A.L.C ... I have just received from Dorothy, it takes 16 days to reach here. ... I read in today's paper that English mail to India posted between the end of September and 20th October has been lost. It does not serve any good purpose to dwell upon this awful gap in our lives. It only makes me feel more enraged with the promoters of this World Battle. But, in one way, it is time well spent in that it will make for Margaret and Caroline a world free from the dictatorial ruffians we are fighting. I wonder if you and I, when I at last come back to you, will just carry on

where we were parted; I mean without being conscious of such a long time of parting. I do hope it will be like that.

... Last week on three evenings we were entertained by the ACES Concert Party, a film called "Million Dollar Ransom" and a play "Night Must Fall". Each in its own way was really excellent and we are looking forward to more such shows which have been promised. ... I only wish you could see my cook-houses and see how 'mere man' can produce delicious dishes with the aid of a few raw materials, though not so frugal as a "few old crusts". You will be shocked to know that no newspaper is laid down when potatoes are peeled. ... I am considering keeping more chickens both for their eggs if any and to fatten up ... Our football team is still being very much a champion team. We reached the final of the All India Cup but lost by one goal in the final. ... I am going out shooting this week to try to get some pigs (wild ones of course) to supplement our geese with pork. If only it were as easy as that in England! Did I tell you

42

I am commanding Headquarter Company again? It is nice to have my own Company again but I had become very attached to "B" Company knowing all the men so well. Two of my men in HQ Company are on the seriously ill list. ... As they are in hospital about 60 miles away I cannot visit them even if I were allowed to but I am writing to them which is the next best thing.

Christmas Day 1943

We managed to produce the promised scale of good fare from the troops today. Transport was sent specially to collect the beer and we also put cigarettes, nuts, fruit and other things on the tables. There was no holly of course, but the boys cleverly tied large tropical ferns around the tent poles whilst a tame artist put up colourful posters around the tent which accommodates 150 comfortably. ... On Christmas Eve I cast a quick look at the slaughter of the geese and ducks. A dreadful sight but I reprieved a duck and a drake as I want to try to supplement the egg and duck ration. They are looking quite handsome now. I shall never allow them to be slaughtered ... I should have told you before that I started the day with Communion at a Service held by the Bishop of Nagpur, a most delightful old Irishman. Later we attended a Parade Service where our band of flutes played the hymns and a carol. All this in a hot sun under a cloudless sky. How I thought of you in the very early hours of the morning. ... It is very hot this afternoon making me feel drowsy and lazy so I shall ... indulge in 40 winks. I am longing to hear if Muffin understood and enjoyed Christmas. Doubtless her little sister emitted an occasional gurgle in anticipation.

27th December 1943

... I shall write to you more details in an ALC but want to push this off to keep up a flow of mail to you. Whatever happens, there must be as few gaps as possible between letters. I am dreading to hear from you that you are still disappointed but something must have reached you by now.

29th December 1943

... Two of my men who have been dangerously ill are now getting better so I have just sent an Airgraph. to their respective people to reassure them. It must be frightfully worrying to receive the official D. I. note from the War Office.

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31st December 1943

... Conditions here are just the same. Hot days and cool nights and the long promised rain has not turned up yet. It will be a mixed blessing when it does come as, whilst it will freshen the parched countryside, it might flood us out. We have made vast improvements to our camp in the last few

days. Cookers are being pulled down and rebuilt by our own men. The duck and drake I rescued from the Christmas Eve slaughter are thriving now. In addition we are keeping 64 of the poultry ration which is always delivered alive. The troops will not be short of meat, however, as a large blue bull was shot and provides a tremendous quantity of meat. Unfortunately the chickens consist of 62 cocks and two hens – scarcely suitable for egg production on a large scale. I have not managed to shoot anything yet. There is plenty of stuff about such as pig and blue bull but one has to go out quite a way to spot them. Very early one morning Frank's batman brought in a large armadillo – a most queer looking animal covered with a sort of armour. It proceeded to start burrowing at an amazing speed but was soon hauled out and removed. Various types of monkeys are quite a common sight whilst such pleasant things as snakes and scorpions bob up occasionally. ... Far more of a menace are the tiny malaria carrying mosquitos and the common or garden flea with its typhus germs ... In the Mess there are frequent discussions as to how much longer we must expect to stay here. The wishful thinkers take one view whilst the less optimistic calculators take a more depressing view. Nevertheless, whatever the total time is going to be it is 50 weeks less than it was. That defies all argument. Well, my Darling, 1944 is very nearly here and who knows what immense happenings it will bring?

4th January 1944

... I am sorry that I could not write to you on New Year's Eve or even on New Year's Day to wish you a very Happy New Year. But here is that wish, late though it is, Somehow, Darling, I simply must see you this year ... It does not help matters when our hopes are raised by promises of leave – only to be dashed to the ground when the flimsiness of the promise is revealed.

The E.N.S.A. party which gave us two shows after Christmas received a terrific welcome. The girls were greatly appreciated as you may well guess. They lived in our lines for three days. It was very refreshing to see

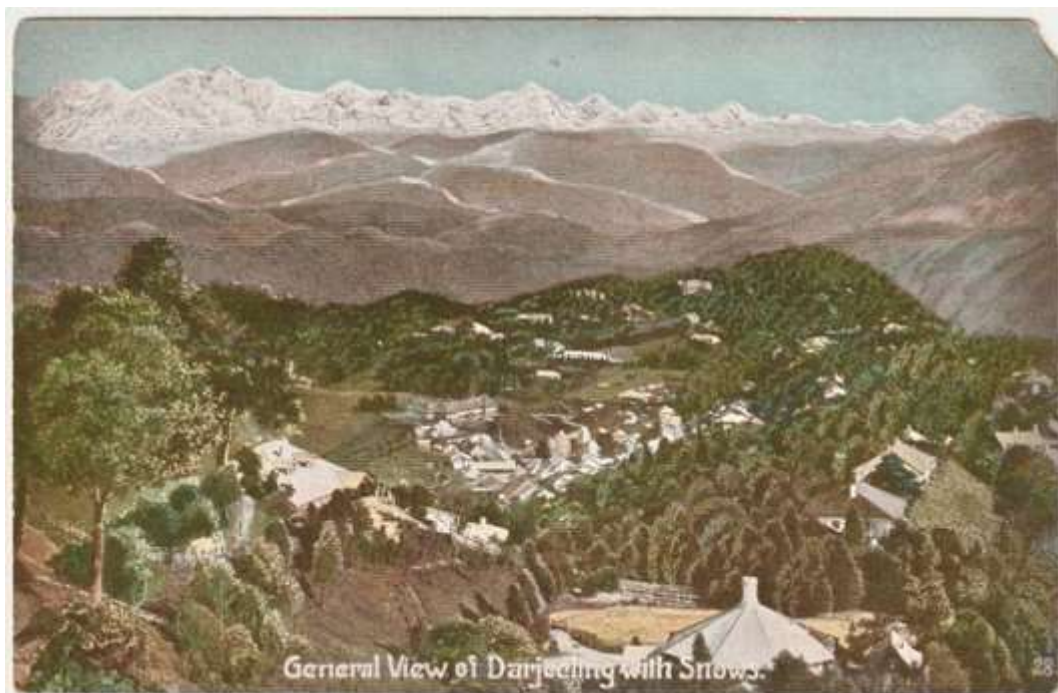


Native drum band celebrating V E Day

Hindu Fakir on a nail bed



A native shop



The South View from Clock Tower, Bombay
 General view of Darjeeling with snows South view from Clock Tower, Bombay



A village in Bombay Presidency
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A native village

Typical hillside dwellings

Mayo Gate, Delhi

Capitol Theatre



Motor Road and Himalayas

Pangolin, Christmas Day 1943

31st December 1943

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47

a few white females about the place

5th January 1944

This afternoon a high wind having blown a lot of dust all over the camp, subsided to give place to our first spot of rain. It is only just enough to lay the dust but even that freshens the air. There is lightning and thunder too. It was quite cold this evening before sundown, so cold, in fact, that I had to roll down my sleeves! On Monday I received your parcel of papers – The Spectator and the Dorking paper, also the Church Quarterly Record, a copy of which I had had with the Church parcel. ... I have also had another present from the Bank, this time a book from Harrods called 'The Horseman's Week-end Book'. I do not yet ride a horse but it is quite interesting reading.

6th January 1944

The rain which I told you about yesterday soon left off and everything is now as dry as ever. You would have been amused and even shocked if you had heard what I muttered as I staggered round the tent last night slackening off the guy ropes. But it was rather unpleasant getting mud all up my pyjamas and drips down my neck. One does not mind discomfort so much when it is necessary, as in battle. Of course I carefully aired the aforementioned garments – at least I should have done had I the means and the patience – before getting into bed.

7th January 1944

... On reading through the Dorking and Leatherhead Advertiser which you sent I came upon an interesting paragraph entitled "Townswomen's Guild". Evidently the monthly talk which aroused great interest was on the subject of "Slipper making from old felt hats." I think this almost equals "How to make a delicious pudding from a few old crusts".

8th January 1944

... My life is divided into four main parts – the time until I found you – the wonderful time we were together until I left England – this dreadful long time of being parted from you – and then the infinitely sweet and wonderful time when I shall come back to you. ... Now as far as news is concerned, there is little enough to tell. As I have already told you I do not know at present if I shall emerge from the "melting pot" as a silver tea pot or a tin kettle.

It is raining very hard at the moment with the not surprising result that

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various leaks are showing themselves in the tent joints ... to make something big enough for a Mess or Canteen we do not have marquees but join several ordinary tents together – with the inside walls rolled up, of course. It is at the joints where the leaks occur. Our long table in the Mess is split into three small ones which are placed in the dry areas whilst miniature cascades trickle between them.

A "distinguished visitor" is coming to see us on Monday so there is a great stir in the Camp in preparation. I have won quite a few blisters from cutting down bamboo for fences and from my efforts to renovate the cookhouses. It is a pity about this rain which will tend to make rather a mess of the whitewash. Speaking of bamboo, it is extremely useful for all sorts of purposes. Normally it is very straight and strong and quite plentiful in the jungle.

9th January 1944

I am feeling better now than I was. Though I did not tell you I have felt rather off-colour for a week – in fact so much so that I have felt most disagreeable with everyone which always annoys me intensely, so I have tried to keep very much to myself. As I say it is all finished now and I feel fit again. So far I have fared remarkably well in this strange climate here. I do not intend to spoil my record.

10th January 1944

I received a "London Opinion" dated 29th Oct and a Manchester Guardian Weekly dated 5th Nov. I am very grateful to Father for kindly sending them. By the way I am finishing off the crossword puzzle in the Guardian which you have found too difficult for you and I shall send it to you in an A.M.L. only solved.

11th January 1944

I have "visited" the local cinema for the first time. It is constructed of fibre matting and lined with fabric, a remarkably good effort as a field cinema. The film "The way of all flesh" was one of those dreadful things with a moral – about a trusted bank cashier who ... loses 100,000 dollars and finishes up as a road sweeper.

12th January 1944

... You are my World and my life. To be with you now is like some impossible dream – your lovely sweetness some beautiful thing ever beyond reach. ... Need I tell you how often I think about a house of our own.

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I foresee great difficulties in the form of scarcity of decent houses and crippling prices both of houses and furniture but we shall build our home somehow ...

13th January 1944

... a date which, I know, means to you exactly what it means to me – the anniversary of the day I had to leave you. ... I wonder when I shall be able to look back on these times as just a horrible dream. [I wonder if this is the reason they hardly talked of their war experiences?] Perhaps sooner than we dare to hope or perhaps such a long time hence that it is merciful for us not to know. But whatever the time may be, each sunset marks off a day from that time ...

I am very glad you had some nice presents at Christmas. I only wish I could have sent you something nice but even what I did send evidently went to the bottom of the sea. Anyway, my plan for flowers to come to you at Christmas seems to have worked. I am keen to know if the chrysanthemums you mentioned are the ones I asked Tomlinsons of Newport (I.O.W.) to send. If you find that they come from some anonymous admirer, then he had better look out as there is a load of jealousy deep down in my primitive self. So if I hear nothing from you ... I shall suspect the worst. ... It is curious here how the surroundings and scenes of this country soon become quite commonplace. In most parts and especially here, the women do most of the labour. They help to make roads and build houses. I was watching some at work only yesterday. Some carry their babies about all the time. The infant is dumped amongst a lot of bricks and things whilst its mother carries stones or cement in a basket affair on her head. One tiny babe was left swinging in a sort of hammock tied between two scaffolding poles. They all seem quite happy and chatter away to each other all the time. The men are extremely idle and utterly unchivalrous. On the few occasions when it rains it is not uncommon to see a man with an umbrella over himself followed by the woman carrying a child and a heavy bundle and without any protection at all. A most remarkable people.

We are each entitled to 31 days leave this year. When I can I shall go to Delhi to visit D.D. It would be nice to stay there if only for a week.

17th January 1944

The company won the Company Challenge Cup and a Brains Trust.

50

18th January 1944

I should not say that I watch the mail very eagerly each day because you have been disappointed so many times. But I do all the same ... It is just life itself to hear from you, my darling.

19th January 1944

This afternoon I walked to a nearby village which is quite a large clean place and entirely Indian. It is very picturesque with its market and the minarets of the numerous little temples and shrines. The women wear skirts and not sarees as they do in other places. They are all made of bright coloured material and make a splash of colours as one approaches the village. The shops are like rooms open to the street and are almost all accessible by a few steps up from the road. One is invited to sit down and a multitude of articles are displayed for the "sahib" who sometimes, but not very often, is tempted to buy. Quite often an audience consisting of all the shopkeeper's relations and a host of small boys gathers round and stare with almost embarrassing intensity. I have never decided whether they are merely curious or whether they want to see to what extent the shopkeeper succeeds in getting away with ridiculously exorbitant prices. I went in search of things like nails and a few oddments for the Company writing tent. I asked in one shop the price of a lamp glass. The reply was 2 rupees. Of course, I was suitably scornful of such a price and I had gone quite a way from the shop before he chased after me and let me have it for 1½ rupees. And then, to cap it all, I was told that the real price is little more than ½ a rupee anyway. Can you imagine such a system? About the Company writing tent, or Quiet Tent as it is called, each Company has one and its purpose is to provide a place where the troops can

read or write with a decent light and in reasonable comfort. Furniture and things like that are subsidized for and we hope to make a comfortable place of it.

20th January 1944

I have just been to see a film shown by the mobile cinema at our open air theatre. The rather old film featuring Wallace Beery was very good but I enjoyed more the other picture entitled "Listen to Britain". It showed various aspects of our England in war time and included such things as the farms, the factories, dance halls and coal mines and a lunchtime concert including part of a concerto played by Myra Hess. A view of Waterloo Station roused particularly poignant memories. I even think

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I recognized the Dorking line platform.

23rd January 1944 Airgraph

... A padre is visiting this area for 10 days. He arrived yesterday and conducted Holy Communion and Morning Service today. I invited him to supper and afterwards we went to a Quiz (quite a Sunday feature now).

23rd January 1944 Airmail letter

... It will be amusing to re-read our letters. ... I almost suspect that you will try to pull my leg about them, if you dare!

I am sorry I have so little news. There is nothing to tell. I think I did tell you we had a padre here on Sunday. But it seems a shame that at Holy Communion only six took part whilst at Morning Service the total was 18. At Service it is so difficult to sing when it becomes a sort of solo effort. ... I read about the raid over London and the S.E. recently and hope that no bombs fell near ... From the news of the war tremendous things seem to be happening in various places – Italy, Russia and the Pacific but so far there is nothing conclusive. Perhaps all those hard fought advances will end in Victory at once. It is astonishing how wholesale is the slaughter in Russia. But the Huns certainly asked for it.

29th January 1944

... I want our happiness to be in our own domain. I am not at all happy about our not having a home of our own yet, nor do I like the prospect of having to face enormous prices after the war. Are any houses being built now, and if so, what are their prices? What I want to do is to start buying a house now, even if it is only a small one and not exactly where we want it. The advantages would be snapping it up before prices rise any higher (as they will do), and having a home at your disposal even if you do not live in it until I come back. I think there is enough money in the bank for a mortgage on the house ... I know it is nice for me to sit back and write all this knowing that I

am helpless to take any part in the search but if you do come across a possible snip, go for it and ask me what I think about it afterwards. I am very glad to hear that Kenneth and Muriel are more hopeful this time but hope that the new arrival will make it snappy. [This baby grew to be the famous composer, John Tavener]. ... Our Corps of Drums (part of HQ Company is showing great improvement now. It consists of flutes and drums and puts up quite a good show. They have to write their own music but I have

saved a lot of tedious work by printing all the copies they want on my duplicator (the one that Father had sent to me at Basing Park). ... One evening they were playing up and down the lines and we all, including the C.O., came out to watch. Unfortunately, the sweepers had put out the buckets which are put in the lines every night for an unmentionable purpose and the drummers were solemnly splitting ranks to avoid these wretched buckets. The C.O. hooted with laughter about it but I mentally registered the whole thing as a regrettable incident. ... Andrews is looking after both Derek and me now. He is really excellent at the job, very conscientious and amazingly punctual.

I was highly amused to find Derek in the tent having a bath. When I commented on the unusual time to have a bath he told me that Andrews had detailed him for it. My turn came the next day and I had no alternative but to comply with the order. He has two married sisters, one of whom is heading for a "performance" [couldn't say the word "pregnant"]. He also corresponds regularly with his "sweetiepie". He is very decided in his opinions on various things and never hesitates in his verdict which is either "That's all right sir" or "That's not much good sir". I am becoming quite a football fan; in fact Andrews looks up the times of matches and arranges my bath for any other time. ... When I come home shall I take you to see football matches on Saturday afternoons and then come home to tea consisting of boiled eggs, thin bread and butter and jam and tea? ...

It must be exhilarating news to you as it is to us to read of our relentless progress in all our battles. ... I find my knitted jacket which you made for me (the one I used to call a "tent") ideal for slipping on in the evenings which are quite cold sometimes. Its associations too, – the way I have teased you about it and the very fact that your dear hands made it for me gives it added comfort. ... Well, here I am nearly at the end of this half ounce (maximum allowed for Air Mail) of epistle.

3rd February 1944

What I want to do is to start buying a house now before the market becomes any more difficult. I shall write to my father and the Bank, in fact to everyone who might spot something suitable. ... I do not even know how much money I have. I hope that a statement is on its way to me. ... There is going to be such a frantic rush for houses after the war.

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A few days ago I found my Company Sergeant Major looking with great interest at the corner of my Company Office tent. A dove had built her nest there and was sitting on her eggs. Yesterday two infant doves appeared much to the delight of everyone. These tents have a double roof to ward off some of the heat and the nest is in a dip between the two. You can imagine now what a peaceful place my office is. You see I am not yet apoplectically affected by the climate and do not storm about the place. Suppose I come home a gouty old thing all red in the face and perpetually grumpy? Indian Officers are supposed to do that. But then, I never became an orthodox sergeant through not getting very fat and red in the face with a huge moustache and strident voice.

Tomorrow Derek is going away for an interview as he has volunteered to go to the battle zone. ... I am now responsible in collaboration with the Doctor for the Anti-malarial precautions here. My job is to see that everyone protects himself from mosquito bites with nets and so on. I also have to keep a watchful eye on settled water where the little beggars breed. Malaria is an awful nuisance, which, if not strictly guarded against can cause a great loss of manpower. The Doctor has given me some literature to read up on the subject and I am going to dig out a local expert who can show me slides and things illustrating the mosquito and the germs.

13th February 1944

But I promise to let you know ... how my fortunes stand with decisions. ... I groan when I think how I lag behind in the promotion list but scarlet fever and the "Y" list let me down very badly. What

hurts most is that it lets you down too ... Just know that I am giving of my best and am still confident of better fortunes ... [The army ruling at one time was that if a soldier had been in hospital for 21 days or more he was put on the Y-list which meant that when he became fit for duty he was sent to a holding unit and then could be sent to any unit other than his own.] I went out with the C.O. to look at some ground on which he plans to do an exercise. ... We went out in a jeep and then tramped for miles. We took our rifles in the hope of bagging something for the pot but all we saw were some peacocks which we did not hit anyway.

Sometimes I plan in my mind some of the things we shall do when I come back: picnics, pantomimes, birthday parties and then just you and

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I together for a few days in London, dinner and a show.

... Santan is supposed to reduce the possibility of getting that dreadfully irritating affliction called "prickly heat" when the heat becomes greater. Luckily I did not have it much last year until I had been to the Hills where it is much cooler – strangely enough. There is always some complaint or disease lurking about in these tropical places. I had another vaccination recently as one or two cases of smallpox had occurred in one of the villages.

15th February 1944

For once in a while I am not feeling quite up to form as the old interior is upset about something. The result, to say the least of it, is a great nuisance and the feeling of sickness most unpleasant. However I think it is only a minor disorder which the tropics dole out to those who venture into its precincts. If I still feel ill on Sunday I'll have a day in bed. This minor malady, however, was quite forgotten this evening when I came

back to camp to find your ALC 82 of 2nd Feb and your AG No 43 of 30th Jan waiting for me. ... There is unfortunately no question of your flattering hopes being realized. On the contrary I shall be thankful to keep my three pips – but do not think the worst. I am not being Court Martialed. As time goes on and I hear no more about it, I hope for the best.

The Company is running a weekly Football Sweep now. We pay 8 annas each which produce a first prize of 40 rupees and 5 rupees for the Sports Fund. ... We run a Tombola evening once a week and we are also having a Whist Drive on Thursday. "Tombola" or "Housey-housey", by the way, is the only betting game officially allowed in the army.

18th February 1944

... I am sorry that you have had an attack of the "dumps". Perhaps you have been thinking too much about the lingering nature of the war.

I know, only too well, how wretched it can make you feel if you give it a chance to get you. But our battles are prospering as fast as conditions

allow and, mercifully not even a war such as this can go on for ever. I brightly say all this but must confess that I feel as "mopey" as anyone else more often than I care to say. ... Just think how all this long time of parting will be just vague, nightmarish memory when we are together again. By the way I think the Doctor's dope is winning the battle with this tiresome malady.

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