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his unit had

## SECOND WORLD WAR INTERVIEW

### Background Information.

*My Granddad, Alan Moger was born in East Cowes in the Isle of Wight in 1926. He lived on the Island until 1936 when his family moved to Devon. He witnessed, at the age of 13, the terrible Plymouth Blitzes [1941] before being evacuated with his school to Penzance for 3 years. In May 1944, aged 18, he was 'called up' and joined the Army serving with the Royal Engineers. He saw action in Belgium, Holland and Germany during the year 1944 - 1945. When he was de-mobbed he joined the Civil Service where he remained until his retirement in 1986.*

### Memories of the War years.

*'The 3rd of September 1939 was when war was declared and everybody started sticking brown sticky paper on windows. The siren went, my Father who had been in the First World War, was an organiser - a Captain Mainwaring type. He got everybody organised. It was a lovely sunny Sunday morning, I can see it now, we listened to the Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain, saying that this country was at war. The siren went, everybody rushed to the shelter but it was a false alarm. Nothing was really happening at home, the war could have been anywhere. I was 13 at the outbreak of war.*

*I went through the Plymouth Blitzes, which were very terrible things. People don't really understand and I hope they won't ever have to experience those sort of things but, as a young lad, even then, it was exciting. There were bombs coming whistling down and incendiary bombs and flares and anti-aircraft guns and the drone of planes - it was exciting for a young chap. You can't deny it. For elderly people though, who had been close to the 1st World War, people like my Father, who had been through the Somme, and all the those terrible experiences, visualising all the sort of things that were going to happen they were worried. They didn't see the Blitzes in the same way that a young person saw them.*

*After the Plymouth Blitzes I was evacuated for 3 years to Penzance with two of my brothers and even then I enjoyed my life.*

*For a long time, depending on where you were there was no fighting. There was certainly no fighting in this country, there were air raids, but no fighting - 'The phoney war'. The Troops went over into France and Germany when war was declared and then of course the Germans pushed us back with Dunkirk but there was fighting going on in Japan and the Far East and later on in the Middle East but those didn't really affect you back in Britain. It was a funny sort of war.*

*I was called up into the Army in May 1944 when I was 18. It was a condensed sort of war as far as I was concerned but a lot of people spent 4 or 5 years in the services and never heard a shot fired in anger.*

*The actual war that affected most people in this country was between D-Day, 6th June 1944 until VE-Day 8th May 1945 with VJ-Day on 15th August 1945 when they dropped the Atom bomb in Japan. That finished the war virtually. The actual war in Europe that most people were concerned with and that I was involved with was June 1944 [I went into the army in May 1944] through to VE-Day, 8th May 1945. When the war finished, in 1945 I was 19.*



I can't say that I was unhappy during the war years, that would be wrong. It brought many experiences, some you wanted but some have stood you in good stead throughout your life.

### The Interview

Q *What was your occupation during the war?*

A Well, If you mean when I was in the army, I was a driver wireless operator in the Royal Engineers. Before I went into the army in 1944 I was a student at high school.

Q *Were you excited when you joined the war?*

A Yes, at 18 years of age most people are excited because the only experience you have to measure against is your own experience at that time. I was a young active man and I was excited.

Q *Were your friends excited as well?*

A It depended really because a number of them were going on to University, few like myself, were going into the forces and I think a lot depended on what interests they had in life generally as to whether they were excited or not.

Q *What were the worst aspects of the war?*

A Well, the worst aspect of the war was of course the death rate, so many of your friends and relatives died. Not in my case relatives but many friends from school days in the Blitzes on Plymouth, right the way through the war and even after the war. I remember soldiers I was working with in the Royal Engineers - we were clearing shells from the River Weser when one blew up and two of our men were killed.

Q *What was the best aspect of the war?*

A The best aspect of the war was easily the friendships that you developed under certain circumstances. It was the opportunity to play sports of all kinds because, surprisingly enough, these went on during the war whilst still at school and also in the services.

Q *What sports did you play?*

A Football, rugby, running. I wasn't much good at running but I took part in it and also football, mainly rugby, hockey and boxing.

Q *Were you good at boxing?*

A Well I boxed when I was initially called up and to show how good I was I won the best loser's prize! But I was good at boxing, I enjoyed boxing.



Q **What are your other fondest memories?**

A Fondest memories? Well, travel of the type. I enjoyed the services. I didn't enjoy the Blitzes in the war years but I enjoyed being in the forces and learning to drive and all those sort of experiences. It was very much a new experience.

Q **What did you think about the Dunkirk incident?**

A Well, Dunkirk, I was only a young chap, still at school in those days and the most that we saw, being in the West Country was the arrival back of some of the troops. We were always told that it was such a marvellous victory but history shows that it was probably not such a marvellous victory. You see the influence of Dunkirk was mainly experienced on the East side of the country.

Q **Did it worry you or did it strengthen your morale?**

A Dunkirk didn't do anything other than people were talking about the Dunkirk spirit which I suppose helped morale but we didn't know too much about it or at least I didn't.

Q **Were you aware of what was going on in Britain while you were fighting?**

A Generally speaking but I didn't go in until 1944 and we were avid listeners of the radio and newspapers that were produced. We always had newspapers and as far as it was possible to be aware, yes we were aware. There was a lot of course that we didn't know.

Q **Were you allowed to <sup>write</sup> home?**

A When I was in the forces?

Q **Yes**

A **Oh yes.**

Q **Were they censored?**

A Yes, they were always 'blue pencilled,' that was the expression in those days because your officer had to censor it. I remember one of the first letters that I wrote home when I was in Belgium. The officer said to me, "Who do you think you are, a War correspondent?" and he 'blue pencilled' nearly the lot. You see you were not allowed to give any indication to where you were. All your relatives knew perhaps was that you were in Europe. Later on when I went down to the Middle-East we were issued with a khaki drill for tropical countries so they knew we were going that way then.

Q **Did you realise that ladies had taken over the jobs that the men had left behind?**



A Oh yes, we were very much aware of this on buses and factories and driving in the forces. The 'Fannies' as they were called, the auxiliary ATS. We were well aware of women taking over and of course able bodied women were in fact called up to some of the factories and to be land army girls.

Q *Did you know how terrible the German concentration camps were?*

A Only by word of mouth because I had no contact with them. I didn't get to that part of Germany I only got there after the atrocities but we were aware of word of mouth that these were pretty terrible places.

Q *Did you ever have a brush with death?*

A Yes, it is difficult to define what a brush with death means because if you talk in terms of the Blitzes on Plymouth as a boy I experienced quite a number of air raids. Then when we crossed the Rhine it was quite a nasty experience. Those were isolated incidences rather than what a lot of people think that battles go on and you're fighting all the time.

Q *Did you have an Anderson shelter or did you have to go to the local air raid shelter?*

A No, in Plymouth we had a Morrison shelter which was indoors and under the stairs and we had an Anderson shelter in the back garden. When we moved to Devonport we had a brick built surface street shelter with a concrete roof. The whole neighbourhood used to have to get in there.

Q *Did you have any nicknames?*

A Yes, the one that followed me round for a while was 'Oxford' because when I was called up I was called up with quite a lot of farm workers from Berkshire who were pretty illiterate and when I was called to Northampton with this lot many of them couldn't read letters from home. So, I was called upon to read their letters and write their replies. Because I was slightly more educated than they were, 'Oxford' was my nickname. When I went to Holland I was nick-named, 'Noggins'! Other than there was something similar to my name it had no connection with anything.

Q *Did you meet many foreign people?*

A Yes, because I went to France, Holland, Belgium, Germany, out to the Middle-East, Egypt, Palestine and came back through Malta. Some people from each of those nationalities. I didn't carry on any of the friendships with these people once I had left the forces. I think that is partly because I'm an 'Islander'.

Q *Were you relieved when the war was finally over?*

A Yes, from the worst aspect the deaths of people that you knew. I would have stayed in the forces if I hadn't have intended to get married. I was due to go down to



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1945 Alan was in Haverstadt, near Minden,  
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Chapter 8.

Life for Alan during the period covered so far in this chapter was still largely not accountable. He still enjoyed his schooling and football and won another medal during 1938/39 football season when Public Central School won the Plymouth Schools Football Association Cup. From school reports of the time the Headmaster commented:-

"1938/39- A very satisfactory boy who is both keen and interested. He ought to do well in the future. Arithmetic excellent and French very good."

"Christmas 1940- Alan is putting forward his best effort."

He remembered war being declared on a beautiful sunny Sunday morning, 3<sup>rd</sup> September 1939, and his father William

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Alan can recall little of the house, however, except the "Morrison" Shelter in the dining room and an "Anderson" Shelter in the small back garden. The reason for his lack of memory is probably due to the fact that life outside the house was to become much more exciting.

As mentioned earlier Plymouth had been subject to many alerts and sporadic bombing but it was not until the end of 1940 that substantial bombing took place and continued throughout the rest of the winter of 1940/41 culminating in the major blitzes of March and April 1941. Plymouth was devastated by the bombing and Alan remembers the city central shops and public buildings blazing; the oil tanks near the River Tamar afire with dense black smoke billowing across the city; the Plymouth Argyll football stand, isolated in the middle of Central Park, a veritable beacon as the furniture stored inside having been rescued from the March blitzes, reacted to the incendiary bombs like tinder to a match. Some 18,000 houses and twelve schools were demolished in the March raids but Alan's was not among them. Hundreds of people were killed or injured and Alan lost several of his school friends as a result of a direct hit on an air raid shelter. Their funerals were awesome and unreal to him.

Before the last major blitz in April 1941, however, the Plymouth Education Authority decided that voluntary evacuation of some school children should take place and Stan and Geoff who were both at Davenport High School, were evacuated with the school to Penzance. The April blitz brought further devastation to Plymouth because by anybody's standards the bombing was totally indiscriminate. A further 30,000 people were left homeless. At night, however, it is estimated that some 50,000 people left the city to seek safety on the moors. This meant that many streets such as

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supervising the sticking of brown paper strips on windows just in case we were bombed. This blackout was total and being a naval town there was a great deal of interest and concern over any sea activity which might affect the ships on which the husbands and sons of friends and neighbours were serving. First Avenue, being a cul-de-sac, has a brick surface air raid shelter built in the road at the Rugby Club end and we were soon to pay frequent visits to that shelter when air activity was threatened. Broken sleep, tiredness, and the coldness of the winter took their toll of Alan, who was walking to the Central School each day and he recalls fainting at home through fatigue and hitting his head on the dining table.

It was some time towards the end of the 1940 that the Moger family was to move again, William having rented a pleasant bay windowed terraced house in Meredith Road, P?????, Plymouth. Alan can recall little of the house, however, except that it had a "Morrison" Shelter in the dining room and an "Anderson" Shelter in the small back garden. The reason for his lack of memory is probably due to the fact that life outside the house was to become much more exciting.

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Meredith Road were left empty and anyone remaining who was able bodied, especially boys such as Alan, who was then nearly fifteen, were heavily involved in extinguishing incendiary bombs lodged in gutters or in the lofts of houses. Wearing steel helmets, and carrying our gas masks we would use stirrup pumps and buckets of sand to extinguish the bombs or dislodge them from the more inaccessible places with long poles. There was a lot of exciting fear being experienced as the whistle and explosion of the bombs took place but philosophy abounded that you were unlikely to hear the one that would get you! There was also touched of humour and Alan recalls that many fire engines from rural towns and villages were parked on the playground of the school nearby. The incompatibility of their equipment with the city's hydrants; the age of some of their equipment; the Laurel and Hardy antics of some of them when the school received a shower of incendiary bombs brought light relief. It must be said, however, that most of these firemen were volunteers who had done sterling work on previous nights and were just tired out. The whole scene was permanently lit by the blazing football club stand. So intense was the bombing at first that Esme, living some thirty-five miles away from Plymouth, could see the flames in the night sky. They were exciting times for some of us children but Alan still recalls the spiralling, twisted girders and that utter devastation he was to see each day on his walk to school.

School life was never to be the same again for Alan. Because so many schools had been destroyed a "premises sharing" policy was devised and Alan's school then went on half day attendance with pupils from another school taking over for the rest of the day. He recalls the Horlick's tablets, chocolate or plain flavour, that were provided presumably for the giving of energy and the raw carrots we were encouraged to eat so that we, it was claimed, could see better in the dark.

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## Chapter 9:-

Alan for his part was to be on the move yet again.

After the blitzes in 1941, Stan and Geoff had gone to Penzance and Bill was in the Royal Engineers. He had been a civilian surveyor's clerk working alongside William and joining the Royal Engineers at this stage meant little more than changing into a uniform and carrying on with the same work in the same place.

But the War Department Works Department in its wisdom considered that the barracks in Devonport, where it was located, was too vulnerable to further air raids and a decision was taken to move out to the Manor Hotel, Lydford, Nr. Oakhampton. The decision was also taken that the families of the civilian employees should be offered living accommodation in the Moorside Hotel, Lydford, both hotels having been requisitioned by the War Office as being essential to the war effort.

What did this move mean in terms of Alan's life style in particular and the family in general? The geography of Lydford, and the location of the Moorside Hotel will illustrate it all.

Having lived in a major port and dockyard City (although at the time we still talked of the three towns Plymouth, Stonehouse and Devonport) the move to an isolated country hotel on the western edge of Dartmoor on the A366 road halfway between Okehampton and Tavistock, was overwhelming indeed. The village of Lydford was perhaps a good mile away to the west, and the railway station perhaps a further two miles away near the Manor Hotel. There was another station about the same distance away to the north of the Moorside Hotel but along more windswept open roads at B?????????. To the east was nothing but Dartmoor with the famous prison just ten miles away in a straight line but Dartmoor has no straight lines and few self-respecting prisoners would have gone in our direction. The main road, A366, passed our front door with a war time bus service to either Okehampton or Tavistock and infrequent in the extreme. Lydford itself was then claimed to have been the largest parish in England and in its ruined castle Blood Judge Jeffreys is said to have held court. The Manor Hotel possessed a magnificent waterfall and Lydford Gorge, a noted beauty spot, although in need of maintenance when Alan lived at Lydford.

On the black side it seemed that Alan's contact with the sea was at an end; his happy school days appeared to have finished because he was then fifteen years of age, which was really school



leaving age, and some twenty-four miles from Plymouth which was beyond travelling distance. It meant the loss of his friends, including his girlfriend Marjorie; no football- although perhaps this was no more than an emotional loss because at the time a bad injury to his left knee prevented him from playing. But on the bright side, although observers would have noted a change in the disposition of the carefree lad, he found great peace and enjoyed the freedom, solitude and moods of the moors which he was to get to know well. He was to walk for hours, which helped to strengthen his knee, climbing the nearby tors; scouting around old tin mines; studying butterflies; following the course of the River Lyd enjoying the d???? of weather as well as the halcyon days of summer. Whilst there were several families located in the hotel there were no children of Alan's age or interests and he was a loner doing whatever c??????? chores were required of him but not seeking, or desperate for, company and getting it only when Stan and Geoff returned home from their summer holidays.

William, however, was concerned that Alan's education had abruptly appeared to have come to an end and he entered into correspondence with the Plymouth Local Education Authority to seek their cooperation in allowing Alan to join his two brothers at Devonport High School in Penzance. Although Alan had passed the scholarship, his schooling has not been compatible with the standard of the grammar schools and there was much heart searching about such a transfer. The range and depth of subjects studied differed considerably and Alan's age was a critical factor. How could he be expected to cope especially being away from home?

The decision was finally taken, however, and Alan found himself on the train to Penzance with his two brothers in September 1941, and to three more very happy years although he had to make and accept considerable adjustments so as to be fitted in.

For instance because of the lack of depth of knowledge of some subjects and the need to begin some subjects from first base, he entered the fourth form which meant that he was about twelve months older than the other pupils in his class. He had to drop all his commercial subjects and to take pure science subjects for the first time. One thing he could really compete with on equal terms was his football and he moved straight into the first team with his seventeen and eighteen year olds, including his brother Stan, and he was to remain a first team player gaining his school colours, for the rest of his school career.



At Penzance the school just could not function as an entity and Alan's schooling took place in a variety of buildings. For instance his classroom was a converted snooker hall; the science laboratories were functional but old and belonged to the Camborne School of Mines; assemblies were held in a church which was also the location of the Head, Senior Masters and the Sixth Form; gymnasium facilities were made available at the local Grammar School, with which we were to have a love/hate relationship, and we also used their playing fields as well as the town's main sport facilities at St. Clare and occasionally the parkas L?????.

The mansion in which Alan was to live was a far different proposition. The school was organised on house lines named after famous Devon seafarers and on evacuation, pupils in each house were kept together. Grenville House was located in the Hotel Royale, then a splendid modern hotel; Raleigh House just around the corner in another hotel whilst Gilbert House was an hotel on the sea front (which of course was all barbed wired off at the time). Alan had been allocated to Drake House, to be with his two brothers, and was locked at "Ponsandane" a mansion standing in its own grounds. It had originally belonged to the British merchant banking Bolitho family but had been acquired by the Youth Hostelling Association who still own it in to this day (1986). Although it was run on boarding school lines the housemasters and their wives certainly created as homely atmosphere as was possible and compulsory preparatory/homework periods in such pleasant surroundings certainly helped Alan in his studies. Table tennis; billiards; records were pastimes and the cutting up of logs for the big inglenook fire; the fatigues of washing up and the potato peeling rota etc., etc., all went to provide a varied life. In addition the Senior Housemaster, Taffy Webb, and his wife often held musical evenings when he played the violin and Nellie played the piano.

With three Mogers under her wing Nellie wrote to Florence on 6<sup>th</sup> November 1941 in the following terms:-

"Dear Mrs. Moger, It must seem such a long time to you since you last saw your sons, and I thought you might like to hear from me how they are. They all look very fit and seem very happy. They are very charming boys and I have grown to love them very much. In fact I don't know which of them is the nicest- Stanley is our head prefect and the boys all look up to him and think he is a grand fellow. Alan is also very popular and has "come out" quite a lot, he often teases me in his shy way. Our little "Bimbo" (Geoff) as we call him, is our family pet and my small daughters adore him. I do envy you your four sons and hope one day I shall have a son as nice as



sometimes a chicken; frequently some ?????? and saffron cake, all parcelled up by Mother.

Alan's family were to be on the move yet once more in 1944. He had returned to school in the New Year when the War Department decided that they should relocate the Works Department in a large country house near Exeter and whilst civilian staff returned to Plymouth others, including the Moger family, were to be offered requisitioned unfurnished houses in the Exeter area. In the case of the Mogers it was to be "Ellerton", Endsleigh Crescent, Honiton C?????, Nr. Exeter, and the move took place in February 1944. Cyst

Again this was a house in the country but far from being as isolated as the Moorside Hotel. It was situated on the main Exeter-Honiton road just four miles from Exeter city centre and an hourly bus service passed the door. More to the point it was only five minutes from where Esme was now living. Again Alan recalls little of this house because apart from an eventful Easter holiday from school spent there, his visits in the short time the family were to live there, were fleeting and he was more concerned with the new way of life he was about to start.

Because of Alan's age, now nearing eighteen, the spectre of his call up for service was ever present in the minds of William and Florence. There was no way he would be allowed to remain at school and William tried to obtain an Engineering Cadetship, tenable at a college, for him. That Alan had no interest in engineering, or was in fact very practical, was beside the point and William fought long and hard to try to get the age conditions of the scheme altered as this was to be the main impediment to Alan having a cadetship.

Easter 1944 was then seen as the last period of freedom for him before his call up. The Easter was long and hot and Alan got badly sunburned through dropping off to sleep under an apple tree in the garden. He was particularly affected in the face and chest and the degree of burning was excessive and was to be evident for many years to come. It became a painful holiday physically but an exciting one emotionally because Alan in a strange way, was looking forward to joining the Forces and he had already registered for National Service when he nominated the Army as being his choice. His return to Penzance was met by an official document telling him to report to Redruth for his medical examination. This he duly did where the civilian doctors, many ex-colonial service or retired military doctors, were more interested in his sunburn and blisters rather than his general condition. Graded A1 and having had an interview with the Personal Selection Officer, Alan was to receive his



Training

instructions to report to the Initial Training Centre, Quebec Barracks, Northampton, on 18<sup>th</sup> May 1944.

Again readers need to be updated as to what was happening nationally in order to put Alan's call up in the proper context. This was May 1944, and talk was rife about the need for the opening of a second front. The whole of Southern England was like a fortress with men and equipment massing along to lanes and in the fields. For the public nearly all travelling was at a standstill. America had joined the war in December 1941 and the invasion by the Allies of the Atlantic and Mediterranean Coasts of Africa had taken place in 1942; the war at sea continued as also did the war in the air including the bombing of German cities. Although Allied troops had landed in Italy on 3<sup>rd</sup> September 1943, at home the big psychological happening would have to be the second front, the come-uppance of the Germans to assuage the retreat through Dunkirk.

The atmosphere in which Alan reported at Quebec Barracks was very much of "you won't be sitting around for long". He had travelled from Exeter to Paddington and then from Euston to Northampton - a major adventure this crossing London on his own for the first time. But the Regimental Transport Officers and Military Police ensured that a young recruit would reach Northampton on time to be picked up with the other recruits by lorry and taken to the comparatively new Barracks which were located outside of the town. This was to be our home for six weeks whilst they tried to knock some discipline into us whilst at the same time assessing where, as individuals, we would be best suited to meet the needs of the Army at that time.

We were a motley crew of young men the majority being agricultural workers who had not sufficient skill to warrant deferment and who came from the Southern counties of England. Out of an intake of about thirty only about three of us had reasonable standards of education. So bad was the literary level of the group that Alan was accorded the nickname "Oxford" just because he could read and write and he was the Padre's right hand man in helping recruits deal with letters to and from home. Drill and the discipline side came easily to Alan because he had been in the Air Training Corps whilst at school and his own difficulties in marching had already been ironed out. However due to the many recruits who were in the awkward squad this resulted in extra drills for all of us and this became an everyday occurrence and we would be drilling morning, afternoon and evening being confined to barracks until an acceptable standard had been attained. Inoculations; gas training; bayonet practice; grenade training; rifle



and bren gun training were all features of the six weeks – but also they were part of the excitement for Alan. Sport still was a must for him and it was at Quebec Barracks where he was to excel, among the recruits, at boxing.

It was whilst he was at Quebec Barracks though, that the big day was to come in that on 6<sup>th</sup> June 1944 the invasion of Europe, the Second Front, took place. Although Northampton was far from any major activity, Alan recalls one sunny Sunday afternoon, just after "D" Day, going on his own to the edge of the sports field which surrounded the Barracks, and although he had taken a book with him to read, most of his time was spent laying on the grass watching large numbers of planes, some towing gliders, going overhead in support of the invasion.

At the end of the six weeks we were duly told where and what was to be done with us. Some of the illiterates were discharged; some recruits went to branches of the Army where, perhaps, physical attributes were required and at least on went on for officer selection courses. As for Alan he was assessed as suitable for training as a driver / wireless operator and after a week's leave, some of which he spent in uniform at Penzance, he was on his way to No.1 Motor Transport Training Depot, Royal Engineers, The Racecourse, Ayr, Scotland, for some three and a half months specialist training.

To see Ayr Racecourse nowadays it is difficult to imagine what it was like in war time. We didn't use the racecourse itself apart from the fact that it provided us with a good football pitch and keep fit running sessions also took part on it. We did, however, have to undertake passion patrols, ejecting courting couples from the long grass in the centre of the course. Our living accommodation was either in the boarded up grandstand or in the tote houses – and Alan was in one of the latter. The car park, crescent shaped, on the roadside of the course contained all the different types of vehicles which we were to learn to drive. These included jeeps; P.U.s; Humber Snipes; 15cwts; 30 cwts; 3 tonners; White Scout Cars and half tracks. The public area in front of the grandstand was our parade ground. We learnt our Morse Code (pass speed 12 words per minute, course reading speed 28 words per minute) the use of secret codes and motor theory in classrooms but we learned to drive in the lowlands of Robert Burn's country and along the sea coast of Ayrshire and we did our wet landing training on the Isle of Arran. Whilst under Army discipline and subject to the chores of fatigue, parades, etc., the standard of recruit and the instructors was higher than the courses demanded and the atmosphere at times resembled a relaxed school rather than a military



establishment. Getting into the Depot's first team for football and having a trial for a Scottish professional club as well as playing rugby for the Depot were the highlights on the sports side. Visiting C??????? Abbey Ruins with its magical acoustic effect which made untrained voices sound like an organ and the fish, which was ray, and chips bought in Kilmarnock as well as the Electric Brae optical illusion were, apart from Burns, the cultural memories for him. Less happy memories were the route marches in full pack kit which he was required to do with the resultant blistered feet.

With the conclusion of the courses came the parting of the ways for the course members. Some were posted to other Royal Engineer Units in the UK but the bulk of the twelve or so found themselves on their way to the Duke of Wellington Barracks, Halifax, Yorkshire, which was then the main holding unit for Royal Engineers who would be held there until drafted to who knew where. By an amazing coincidence Alan's brother Bill, now Sergeant, had been caught up with and he too was at Wellington Barracks awaiting draft. Our contact was fleeting, however, because he was suffering from the effects of concentrated course of inoculation and was about to go on leave and was due to be married.

Alan was to wait a comparatively short time before he was drafted at the minimum age of eighteen and a half years for overseas service in a theatre of war and apart from the fact that he was not issued with tropical kit, for security reasons he still did not know where he was going. However all was soon to be revealed for in October 1944, after being under canvas at Purfleet in Essex, he was marched aboard L.S.T. 313 moored in Tilbury Docks, issued with vomit bags, for which he was grateful, and he was on his way across a choppy North Sea to Europe to join the British Liberation Army.



Chapter 12.  
On 8<sup>th</sup> May 1945, Alan was in Haverstadt, near Minden, Germany, and he recalls it as a lovely sunny day. His unit had become fairly static now and he was to remain in Haverstadt until 5<sup>th</sup> July 1945, when he was again due to be re-mustered - he was so liable because of his age - for tropical beach landing training for ultimate posting to the Far East. He was to be employed during the period May 1945 to July 1945 mainly as a driver because the need for wireless operators had greatly diminished. Being a Royal Engineers Unit he helped to sweep the road side verges to keep them free of mines laid the previous night by the "Werewolves", the German civilian resistance movement; repairing road surfaces using a heavy roller was another of his jobs as was helping to blow up the remains of concrete bridges that had been partially demolished by the retreating Germans especially on the Wese-E???? Canal. A non-fraternisation rule was rigidly imposed for the occupying troops and social contact with German civilians was taboo. However when sunbathing on the banks of the River Weser, or better still when swimming in it, British troops in swimming costumes looked little different from German civilian men in their costumes - the products of the Hitler Youth movements and considerable fraternisation took place! For their own social life, however, Alan's unit had not been backward as they took over a small hostelry and developed a contact with the watchman of a local brewery who was able to provide carboys of vermouth and barrels of beer in exchange for chocolate, etc., and the "club" had a very supportive clientele.

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...to become the permanent home that Florence and William had had for many years.

His leave over, Alan returned to his unit in Haverstadt on 3<sup>rd</sup> July 1945, only to find that he had been posted in his absence to a Beach Training Unit at Inverary in Argyllshire, Scotland, where he was scheduled to undergo wet landing and jungle warfare training. He duly arrived at Inverary towards the end of July 1945, sad to be breaking up friendships with his still much older colleagues with whom he had shared physical danger as well as humour under very difficult conditions. Still there was some compensation because on arriving at Inverary he was then sent immediately on a month's leave which consisted of two weeks disembarkation leave and two weeks embarkation leave - the signs were ominous in that on his return to Inverary he could expect no more leave before being sent to the Far East. Still at nineteen years of age a month's leave was a month's leave and quite naturally he would not be spending it by just sitting around in "Clistford". He was to go frequently into Exeter but this time he had the choice of either bus or train and frequently chose the latter. Whilst waiting at Exeter Central he would be conscious of the station announcer's voice especially when announcing the twenty-nine station which then existed between

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Late June 1945 found Alan returning to the UK on a week's leave which was to be spent in yet another home because in May 1945 the Moger family had been moved from the requisitioned house in Honiton Clyst to another requisitioned house, "Clistford", Station Road, Broadclyst, Devon. I think "Ellerton" had been de-requisitioned and returned to its owners and this had precipitated this particular move. Perhaps some three miles further out from Exeter, "Clistford" was located just off the main road but served by the same busses as when we lived at "Ellerton" but it was also just above Broadclyst Railway Station which Alan was to use quite frequently as he travelled into Exeter Central Station when on leave. "Clistford" was a small detached house surrounded by fields but looking over Exeter Airport and the small aircraft factory. It had modern facilities but water had to be pumped from a well and a cess pit in an adjoining field provided the sewage outlet. The rooms were all very small indeed but the family at home on a permanent basis at that time was William, Florence, Harry and Dorothy. Alan's younger brother Geoff was about to go off to University whilst the three eldest brother were all in the Army and overseas. It is worth the reader remembering both the location and smallness of "Clistford" which was a house that was to play a major part in Esme and Alan's lives and to provide great happiness as well as unhappiness and to make major physical and emotional demands especially on Esme. It was also the house which was to become the nearest to a permanent home that Florence and William had had for many years.

His leave over, Alan returned to his unit in Haverstadt on 3<sup>rd</sup> July 1945, only to find that he had been posted in his absence to a Beach Training Unit at Inverary in Argyllshire, Scotland, where he was scheduled to undergo wet landing and jungle warfare training. He duly arrived at Inverary towards the end of July 1945, sad to be breaking up friendships with his still much older colleagues with whom he had shared physical danger as well as humour under very difficult conditions. Still there was some compensation because on arriving at Inverary he was then sent immediately on a month's leave which consisted of two weeks disembarkation leave and two weeks embarkation leave - the signs were ominous in that on his return to Inverary he could expect no more leave before being sent to the Far East. Still at nineteen years of age a month's leave was a month's leave and quite naturally he would not be spending it by just sitting around in "Clistford". He was to go frequently into Exeter but this time he had the choice of either bus or train and frequently chose the latter. Whilst waiting at Exeter Central he would be conscious of the station announcer's voice especially when announcing the twenty-nine station which then existed between



Exeter Central and Portsmouth Harbour on what was, perhaps, the longest journey a train from Exeter Central made. The names must be said aloud with clear enunciation and a whisper of a Welsh accent to get the sensual effect of the voice on Alan especially where the names had a poetic quality such as "Dinton, Wilton, Salisbury " and "Sherborne, Templecombe, Gillingham". The full impact of the voice, however, did not register with Alan at this stage but it was still like music to his ears. This was to be one of two lots of happening, destiny if you like, during that leave which was to greatly affect Alan's life. The other which was to affect the lives of many more people was to be the dropping of the atom bombs on Hiroshima (6<sup>th</sup> August 1945) and Nagasaki (9<sup>th</sup> August 1945) which culminated in Japan's unconditional surrender on 15<sup>th</sup> August 1945. Alan remembers the last date well because he went to Exeter to join in the celebrations. Being a war hardened veteran of nineteen years of age and having missed the V.E. celebrations he was determined to enjoy the day especially as he was in uniform and could expect to be feted. It was "carnival" the whole day with the tempo increasing as inhibitions were swept aside only to find Alan was not so brave, however, when someone dropped a thunder flash behind him and our hero beat a retreat for home.

On returning to Inverary following his month's leave there of course was confusion because the raison d'être for being trained for wet landings and jungle warfare no longer existed and it was a question of what should we do with these young active conscripts to keep them occupied in such an isolated place as Inverary. But a combination of sport, including hockey and football, plus training under strict spartan discipline kept them out of mischief until other tasks were found for them and in Alan's case he was sent to Crookston Camp, Glasgow, to help in its demolition. Hardly a constructive chore but it did give him some social life in Glasgow including amongst other things, a visit to the theatre where he saw Moira Shearer and the Sadlers Wells Ballet Company in excerpts from different ballets. But he was not to remain on this task very long for he was soon to be rescued through an educational scheme which had just been set up for long serving soldiers who would be returning to academic training or jobs. The Government had set up a number of educational centres and the one in Scotland was No. 1 Formation College, N????? Abbey, Dalkeith, near Edinburgh, and the service authorities were having difficulty in finding enough students of the right academic level who might profit from a month's intensive academic course. So all units in Scotland were trawled to find a number of suitable, younger students who could fill the places and Alan was selected for the No. 1 course during October - November 1945. It was like returning to school for a month and he enjoyed the subjects he chose to study which were



English Literature and History. Advantage was also taken of the facilities around Edinburgh and these included a tour of a coal mine; a visit to the Leith theatre to see Nat G???? and his Georgians and an enthusiastic dance for which he was roped in by the girls of the Duncan Chocolate Factory. A very happy and worthwhile interlude.

By the conclusion of the course, however, the machinery for re-mustering young soldiers had recovered and Alan once more was to find himself on the way to Halifax for a posting. Inevitably he was sent on leave again and spent Christmas 1945 at "Clystford" to a somewhat different Christmas from that he had experienced just a year before. But during that period of leave he was to write another secret poem which he called "The Voice". He did not think it a particularly good effort but it seemed to catch what he felt for "The Voice" who was only doing her job. He left the poem at home secreted with his other poems and its contents will remain a secret a little longer from the reader because it was to be some eight months before the poem was to surface. In the interim Esme was to be beset by much sadness and heartache and the trivia of a poem written by an unknown is of little relevance at this stage.

The trip to Port Said in Egypt, which was Alan's initial destination, was another adventure for him. He travelled on what was known as the Medloc route which took him by unheated train in the middle of winter, across France from Calais in the north to Hyers, near Toulon, in the south of France. Put into the inevitable transit camp whilst awaiting a berth on a troopship Alan was to experience the French way of life for the first time. This lasted only a few days, however, for he sailed on the "S.S. Ascania" from Toulon and bound for Port Said. An abysmal sailor, due to sea sickness Alan recalls mainly the food smells as well as male sweat and other associated smells made by a large body of men sleeping in hammocks in very crowded conditions. He could have died. But he recalls seeing Stromboll smouldering at night; the coast of Sicily; the Arab bum-boats at Port Said. From Port Said he was to travel by train on a line running parallel with the Suez Canal, to Al Quantara and then by truck to El Ballah, which was yet another transit camp, from which he would be posted in due course.

Having got him this far, however, postings were not swift and he was to remain for some three to four weeks at El Ballah and this was a tedious period. We slept in breeze-block dug outs, under canvas, and our main preoccupations under disciplinary conditions was to keep the sand smooth for a certain distance around the tent and to try to keep the sand out of our dug outs which were subject to frequent inspections. Although there just before the "Khamsin period" this strong, warm wind created minor sand storms and the



fight against the creeping sand was incessant. The other job Alan had was to help in trying to round up all the stray pye dogs (or pyards as they were known to us) who tended to go through the camp like a pack of ghosts, raiding the waste bins in the process. Rabies was the main fear from these animals. But the great escape at El Ballah was to be football and Alan had managed to get into the unit first team which was most unusual for someone in transit. What's more he was to play for the unit on the superb grass pitch at Moascar(?) Garrison in a representative match watched by the top brass and troops from miles around. In spite of this, however, he was very pleased to be on the move again. He returned to Al Quantara where he caught the troop train to Handera in North Palestine, travelling across the Sinai Dessert, through Rafah and Gaza in the process, and joining up with a field company once more.

Again there is a need to set Alan's being in Palestine in the context of what was happening there in 1946 although it is presumptuous to try to sum up in a few words the conflict between the Jews and the Arabs. Suffice it to say that the reason for British troops being in Palestine at all was that the area west of the River Jordan was awarded to Britain under a League of Nations mandate in 1920. By 1946 the conflict over the entitlement to the country between Arabs and Jews had heated up not only because of the historical, racial, political and religious differences but also because large numbers of Jewish immigrants (many illegal) were seeking to enter the country escaping from the horrors and aftermath of Hitler's war. Whilst political solutions were being sought extremist groups such as the Irgun Zwei Leumi on the one hand and the Mufti who had the Arab faction were creating much trouble with the British forces being their target, and trying to keep the peace. The blowing up of the King David Hotel and the hanging of two Army Sergeants in a Tel Aviv car park were among the many horrors that the troops knew about but, as with all wars, they were as expendable as the whim of politicians and extremists of all kinds took them at the time and they could never be aware of what it was all about because nothing is as black and white as that. Suffice it to say that at the beginning of 1946 Britain had a substantial army in Palestine and boredom was the enemy many troops were faced with.

Being in a sunny climate with the sea on your doorstep has its attractions but when subject to military constraints and indeterminate duration of service still to run, feelings were high. This was particularly so in the unit which Alan was to join and a major effort was made to provide current affair lectures and broad educational sessions to keep troops occupied. For these sessions



instructions were required and successful candidates were made temporary Sergeants so that they carried a status when taking classes. During February/March 1946 Alan passed the instructor's course with a "V.G" grading for a Unit Instructor and the subject he taught was the basic principles of algebra. However he was not to do this for long because his brother Bill, being in the same command as well as being in the Royal Engineers had a right to claim Alan for service in his unit and on 16<sup>th</sup> March 1946 Alan joined him at Julis, near Gaza, having re-mustered as an Engineer Clerk with 356 R.E Works Section whilst Bill was a Warrant Officer at the HQ unit.

The three sections which worked to HQ 62 CRE works were responsible for building multi-million pound camps for large units at Julis, Klassa and Isdud. As an Engineer Clerk and being Southern Palestine away from the main terrorist activity, discipline was rather laxer in this kind of unit compared with what Alan had been used to in the Field companies. As a Chief Clerk he had European Jews, nearly all professional people, working for him and the office virtually ran itself. It was mainly work in the morning, and in the afternoon either football on either the sand or later on our own grass pitch; or swimming in the Mediterranean at Majdal, near Ashelon; or perhaps a trip to Jerusalem or Bethlehem; perhaps Tel Aviv or the Military town of Sarafand. Other cultural and social activities included visits to Arab villages to take coffee and sweetbreads etc., with the elders or visits to the local kibbutz to see the Jewish cooperative approach to living.

Bill and Alan went on leave to Cairo and Alexandria from 4<sup>th</sup> May 1946 to 18<sup>th</sup> May 1946 and they experienced rioting against the British in Alexandria (including being stoned) whilst in Cairo they were chased out of the Arab quarter by a crowd of noisy Arabs and the laughter of Egyptian police. But they also visited the Pyramids and in the Cairo museum they saw the treasures of Tutankhamun.

It was during this period too that Bill and Alan were to receive the news that their grandfather, Harry, had died at the age of eighty-one.

It was also at this time that Esme was experiencing her most personal tragedy. Whilst at the farm little Geraldine was taken ill with meningitis and, although she was rushed to Greenbank Hospital, Plymouth, sadly she was to die and Esme was absolutely desolate. To put this disease in some sort of context, in 1940 there had been a major outbreak of 13,000 cases and prior to antibodies being developed the disease had a 90% fatality rate. Esme needed



all the support of her friends, especially the Sillifants, the Reverend William Price, and her colleagues from the Southern Railway. Again, she had to face such adversity with great personal courage and to start rebuilding her life once again but this time on her own. But such was her nature and character that bitterness and self-pity did not consume her for in her faith there must have been a reason for Geraldine's death. That is not to say that her death was less than shattering. It was through friends at the Southern Railway Social Club that she was to meet a man called Stan, who was a commercial traveller and with whom she was to become friendly and might well have married if fate had not interfered.

The word "interfered" is used advisedly because Alan's secret poems had come to light including the one entitled "The Voice". Alan's father wrote to him saying that they had come across the poems and that if his help had been sought the poems could have been improved! But he had also done something else for he has sent a copy of the poem to the station master at Central Station and at the same time contrived a letter to be sent to the "express and Echo" newspaper by a friend of his and he too praised the "Golden Voice".

The letter, which was published 21<sup>st</sup> August 1946, went as follows under a headline "Golden Arrow – and Voice":-

"Sir,

*Arriving in Exeter on Saturday last I was halted in my hurried exit from Central Station by the friendliest voice one could wish to hear. It was an announceress and the clear enunciation, the warmth and beauty of tonal inflexions and, above all, the friendliness, made me pause and think: If this is how Exeter is run then I'm going to enjoy my stay here! My work takes me all over the country. Thus I have to opportunity of hearing many railway announcers but never have I heard one even nearly approaching this West-country songbird. It seemed to me, here is someone who loves her work and is actuated by a sincere desire to be as helpful and friendly as her anonymity permits, and though I think the work can be boringly repetitive, never once in the half dozen times I listened specially to the announcements did I detect the slightest note of "fed up-ness" and "take it or leave it" which one so unhappily hears elsewhere. The Southern Railway Company is rightly proud of its famous "Golden Arrow"; it should be proud too of its "Golden Voice".*

*Yours sincerely."*



This letter was followed by an "Express and Echo" reporter and a photographer and the following human interest story, together with a photograph of Esme at her microphone. The copy went as follows under the headline "West-Country Song Bird" and the sub-heading "The Voice at Exeter Central Station" :-

*"Who is the announceress at Exeter Central Southern Railway Station - the possessor of what a correspondent in yesterday's 'E and E' described as 'this West Country song bird?' An 'E and E' reporter was, at the station yesterday, introduced to Mrs. E. M. Fitzgerald of Okehampton Road, Exeter.*

*Naturally she was pleased at the praise expressed in the letter to the Editor, but when asked if she ever got 'fed up' or 'boringly repetitive' replied: "Of course not. I love this job. I've had praise like this before but whether it's deserved or not, I can't say. You see, making the announcements I can't hear my own voice!"*

*The Soldier's Poem.*

*The other day the Stationmaster (Mr E. E. Bowder) received a poem written by a soldier in Palestine about:-*

*"The sweetest voice in all Creation*

*Spreads helpful news at Central Station".*

*The soldier's father, who delivered the poem, said his son had heard 'the voice' when leaving Exeter Central Station for overseas and the memory of it had remained with him in Holland, Germany and Palestine.*

*But Mrs. Fitzgerald does not seek publicity - she wished to be just 'a voice' and to be as helpful as she can".*

*Another letter appeared a few days later under the heading "Exeter's Golden Voice":-*

*"Sir,*

*We read with great interest the recent letter and article praising the announceress at the Central Station. As service men we have travelled widely and the 'Golden Voice' is one of the few which can be clearly understood at all times.*

*Mrs. Fitzgerald should rightly be proud of her friendly voice. We hope that she will accept these thanks for that little extra she puts into her job.*

*Five Grateful Tommies."*



All this happened without Alan's knowledge and the discovery and public exposure of his poem he considered was an intrusion on his own privacy as well as Mrs. Fitzgerald's who he had never met and whose personal circumstances none of us were aware of at the time. His father, always the one for playing a leading part and courting an audience, then made personal contact with Esme and perhaps should have been despatched with a flea in his ear. However he learned of her personal misfortunes and at the same time extolled the virtues of all his sons with pride and exaggeration which he was wont to do. Alan is certain he meant well. However he tended to boast too loudly and too long and Esme's initial reaction was one of not wishing to meet with or have anything to do with a son who was put on such a pedestal and the world told of what he had done (which was not very much really) in the past and what he was going to do in the future.

Alan, however, was very unhappy over the whole experience. He already had a girlfriend with whom he was in correspondence and the poem, although genuine in its sentiment was also presumptuous and was not very good in any case. The action his father had taken by interfering in Mrs. Fitzgerald's grief with such nonsense was unwarranted and the reason for having done so, perhaps he was on an ego trip, left Alan disconsolate and bewildered because feelings of and for people had always been something special for Alan. William's letter to Alan in Palestine would have recorded in absolute detail the whole episode and Alan, for his part, felt there was only one thing to do and that was to write to Mrs. Fitzgerald apologising for this intrusion.

Being such a kind and considerate person she did not hold the intrusion against Alan and wrote back in a friendly way, one of her letters which were such joy, and they continued to correspond on an irregular "pen pal" basis. She would tell of her social life with her friend Stan when he was in Exeter; of her dancing at the Social Club; of her visits to the farm and the goodness of the Sillifant family and her friendship with Jane. She sent a photograph at my request and Alan reciprocated with one of himself simply endorsed "Yours sincerely, Alan".

She also wrote about her new job because once more fate was to work against Esme. The war having finished and men being demobilised and returning to their jobs meant that jobs such as the one Esme was doing became vulnerable and in September 1946, shortly after the newspaper feature, she had to leave her job as announceress which she loved and to seek other employment. She was to be lucky in this because she secured a post as a general clerk with the "Exeter and Western Counties Hospital Aid Society"



for whom she was to work from 9<sup>th</sup> September to 18<sup>th</sup> March 1949, and then only to leave for very personal reasons which will become evident later.

The poem which precipitated all this activity was as follows:-

*"The Voice"*

*I've wandered far o'er land and sea  
But still that Voice is haunting me.  
From Holland, Germany, far Palestine  
My thoughts return to that earthly shrine  
Where the sweetest Voice in all Creation  
Spreads helpful news at Central station.*

*I close my eyes and once again  
I hear that Voice: "The 10.10 train..."  
Oh! Magic Voice- There is no word  
To describe Thee- no wild song bird  
Can thee excel! No lark nor nightingale  
Compares with Thee, oh Voice so frail.*

*When next I hear the Voice again  
I shall be home, there to remain.  
And I shall come each day to hear  
Your sweet instructions ringing clear  
And to myself I'll say:- That is the Voice  
Which made my longing heart rejoice.*

At Christmas 1941 Alan's Christmas card to Esme which contained dried flowers from the Holy Land had simply said "To Esme, Wishing you all the very best for the future. Yours, Alan."

There was no talk or hint of love or affection but Alan ordered a crate of unripened lemons/oranges to be sent to her as they were still a luxury in England.





## SECOND ARMY TROOPS NEWS

No. 306

Friday, 13 April 1945

0600 hrs

### NINTH ARMY CROSSES THE ELBE

Tank spearheads of General Simpson's Ninth Army have crossed the Elbe, the last big river-barrier before Berlin.

The exact spot at which this quick crossing has been achieved has not so far been indicated; but less than 24 hours earlier it was announced that the Ninth had reached the Elbe at Wolmirstedt, close to Magdeburg and 64 miles west of Berlin.

The infantry has been following fast in the tracks of the armour, and was last reported at Halberstadt, 26 miles south-west of Magdeburg.

The columns which reached the Elbe by-passed Brunswick, but fighting is now going on in the centre of the town.

Thirty-seven of the big Luftwaffe force which attempted to interfere with the dash to the Elbe were shot down.

### MORE OF THE RUHR CLEARED

The troops of the First and Ninth Armies who are attacking the Ruhr pocket have made more good headway in pushing from the western end of the industrial valley. Essen, and nearby Gelsenkirchen have been finally cleared, while slightly further east the big town of Bochum has been entered.

### SECOND ARMY BRIDGES THE ALLER

Units of the Second Army have forced two crossings of the River Aller, the next large river east of the Weser, which it enters 20 miles south of Bremen.

The first bridgehead was established 10 miles north-west of Rethem, due west of the original Weser bridgehead at Hoya; the other, further upstream, was made 6 miles west of Celle.

The Second Army is now reported to be swinging north towards Hamburg, not much more than 50 miles away, and much enemy traffic has been observed moving in the direction of the port.

### CELLE OVERRUN

Moving also to the east, the Second Army has overrun the town of Celle, 20 miles north-east of Hanover. Celle, which stands on the Aller, is an important

communications centre, the meeting place of road and rail routes linking the North Sea ports with Hanover and Berlin.

It is also Germany's sole natural oil-producing area, and during the war it has been used as a chemical warfare centre. Some gas instructors were among the prisoners taken there.

### GOOD CANADIAN PROGRESS OVER IJssel

After crossing the River IJssel between Zutphen and Deventer, the Canadian First Army has established a bridgehead at least  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles wide.

Canadian infantry, with the Polish First Armoured Division, is moving forward, west of Zwolle, towards the Zuyder Zee, threatening to outflank the fortified line of the IJssel.

Opposition remains strong to both thrusts, and it is probable that towns such as Apeldoorn and Amersfoort will be defended as fortresses. The Germans have also strengthened a line, first built by the Dutch, across the "waist" of Holland, near Zwolle.

Resistance is lighter to the Canadian advance on Groningen, in north-east Holland. In general, the enemy seems to be swinging back his right flank to a more defensible line in the region of Oldenburg.

### FIRST AND THIRD ARMIES FANNING OUT

"Security silence" again covers the movements of the American First and Third Army spearheads in central Germany. It is known, however, that at least 12 armoured columns are fanning out well in advance of the consolidated line running south from Hanover.

German forces are trying to get back behind the Elbe; though considerable enemy movement is reported in the direction of the Salzburg and Berchtesgaden area.

Unofficially, First Army men are reported to be nearing Halle, less than 20 miles north-west of Leipzig, and beyond Nordhausen, the capture of which has been completed.

The Third Army's 6th Armoured Division is reported to have advanced 46 miles in a day, while another of its divisions has gone 25 miles forward. One column is



## ★ THIRD ARMIES FANNING OUT (CONTD)

coaching Naumburg, 25 miles south-west Leipzig.

### WEIMAR OCCUPIED

The Third Army has occupied the German cultural centre of Weimar, which gave its name to the Republic overthrown by Hitler.

Severe opposition is still being met in Erfurt, west of Weimar, but to the east the Saale River has been crossed on a wide front and the university town of Jena reached.

### SEVENTH ARMY TAKES HEILBRONN

The Seventh Army has finally captured Heilbronn, on the Neckar, after a fierce nine days' battle. Further east, the Americans have withdrawn from the wedge at Crailsheim, but have occupied the ballbearing manufacturing town of Schweinfurt.

### FRENCH ADVANCES IN THE SOUTH

The French First Army has entered the Black Forest near Pforzheim, and begun to break into the Siegfried Line defences opposite the French frontier. The towns of Rastatt, near the Rhine, and Baden-Baden have fallen to the French.

### 11 DESTROY 78

A surprise attack was made yesterday by 11 American bombers on German aircraft grounded near Leipzig. The Americans continued firing until their ammunition gave out. Of 378 enemy planes 78 were destroyed and 18 damaged.

Reports coming from Germany indicate much disaffection among Luftwaffe pilots. Apparently they object to the "suicidal" orders of Goering regarding the handling of jet-propelled planes. Criticism reached its peak in March. A purge inside the Luftwaffe is reported to be in progress. Already a number of prominent German airmen are said to have been shot.

### FAR EAST SUMMARY

TOKYO WAS RAIDED yesterday by Super-Fortresses. The Japanese say the raid lasted two hours.

SPAIN has broken off diplomatic relations with Japan. One of the reasons given is the destruction in Manila of the Spanish Consulate.

MR FORDE, Deputy Premier of Australia, has said that there is no reason for thinking the Japanese war will end soon. The Japanese would die rather than come to terms.

## RADIO RENDEZVOUS

### SELECTIONS FROM TOMORROW'S PROGRAMMES

**A.E.F. PROGRAMME** : 1230 - Lou Preager and Band ; 1315 - Music by Army Pipe Bands ; 1510 - Harry James ; 1830 - Variety, with Bob Hope ; 2115 - "Music of the Footlights".  
**GENERAL FORCES** : 1330 - ENSA Concert ; 1515 - Football Commentary -- Scotland v England, from Hampden Park, Glasgow ; 1715 - Forces' Favourites ; 1915 - "Music from the Movies" ; 2030 - BBC Scottish Orchestra ; 2200 - Jack Benny ; 2230 - K.O.S.B. Band.

**HOME SERVICE** : 1215 - Sergt. Powell's Sextet ; 1230 - "Paradise Isle" ; 1330 - Scottish G.W.S. Band ; 1400 - Tango Orchestra ; 1430 - BBC Symphony Orchestra ; 1630 - George Scott-Wood and Band ; 1830 - "The World Goes By" ; 1855 - Old-Time dance music ; 1945 - "The Week in Westminster" (Capt. Thorneycroft) ; 2000 - "Music-Hall" ; 2130 - Play - "Payment Deferred".

### RUSSIAN PACT WITH YUGOSLAVIA

A 20-year agreement has been reached between the U.S.S.R. and the National Government of Yugoslavia.

News from Tito's battlefield is of the compression of the Germans in north-west Yugoslavia, by the capture of more towns south-west of Zagreb.

### VIENNA BATTLE REACHING CLIMAX

The climax of the battle for Vienna is being reached. The Russians have captured the main electrical power-station and large oil-storage depots, and pressed the enemy back to the Danube.

Soviet gunboats are forcing their way up the river, and the Germans report Russian landings on both banks. Over 4,000 Germans have been killed in a single day's fighting.

Outside Vienna, other units under Marshal Tolbukhin's command are driving west up the Danube valley towards Bavaria. Marshal Malinovsky's forces have cut the road and railway north of Vienna to the Czech town of Brno.

### POSTSCRIPT TO KÖNIGSBERG

A new decree, signed by Himmler, Keitel and Hitler's deputy, Bormann, imposes the death penalty on all German commanders who surrender the towns for which they are responsible. General Lasch, who surrendered Königsberg, has been sentenced.

**LATE NEWS** - President Roosevelt died suddenly, of a cerebral hemorrhage, at Warm Springs, Georgia, yesterday afternoon.

Second Army : In the Field 13 Apr 1945