

Note: This Autobiography was begun  
on Friday, 30th June, 1972

Owing to a ~~bad~~ ~~poor~~ ~~state~~  
vision, only one hour per day is  
being given to this narrative.

A. Sabre  
2. 7. 1972.

Book one

Autobiography of an ex workhouse and  
Poor Law School boy.

Birth.

I was born on 1st April, 1895 at 6, Saint  
Margaret's Court, Southwark, London. The  
birth was registered on 6th April, 1895 in  
the Sub-District of Saint Saviour in the  
County of London. Neither my name or  
Baptismal name were recorded in the  
appropriate columns numbered 2 and 10 of  
the Certificate, a copy of which I did not  
obtain from the General Register Office at  
Somerset House, London, W.C.2 until I was  
obliged to do so after passing a Civil  
Service examination <sup>just to six years</sup> ~~soon~~ after the end of  
the first world war - 1914-18.

In all other respects the Certificate  
~~is~~ <sup>is</sup> in order, and shows ~~my~~ <sup>my</sup> father's  
name as G. T. Sabre and the mother  
as D. C. Sabre formerly Devel.

Two years before I reached the age of 65

- When I would then be ~~paid~~ <sup>paid</sup> a national Insurance Pension, I wrote to Somerset House and explained that my identity was not fully established by the information recorded on the birth certificate. This action was taken, because I could foresee that when the time came for me to apply for a national Insurance Pension, it would be difficult to prove beyond any reasonable doubt that my name was indeed - Edward Balne.

In the reply I received from Somerset House, I was advised that if I was unable to trace a record of the baptism, the difficulty could be overcome by making a Statutory declaration to a Justice of the Peace or <sup>to</sup> a magistrate etc to the effect, that although the birth was registered in the surname Balne only, I have always used and been known by the name Edward Balne. This was done <sup>(in the presence of a Justice of the Peace)</sup> and accordingly a National Insurance Pension was awarded me at the

age of 65.

Although I have quoted the particulars of my birth as recorded on the birth certificate, this does not mean that I have any recollection of ever having seen either my father or mother or in fact any other children which may have resulted from my parents' union. And throughout the whole of my life I have never known a single personal relative. The only kind I have been loosely linked with, are those acquired by the accident of marriage - and ~~the rest of these have been a nephew, now deceased, and two distant Cousins.~~

My memory can reach back to the autumn of 1896 when I was about eighteen months old. At that time I was a tiny inmate of Southwark workhouse. My "parents" were members of the staff. And so far as I can recall, I was treated with a deal of kindness and petted by all the

women who were responsible for my welfare.

As I learnt later, I must have been two and a half years old and able to toddle around on my own, when I was transferred from the workhouse to a large Poor-law School.

<sup>Incidentally,</sup>  
During the changing years of the 19th century when the poor were literally the outcasts and pariahs of the then richest and most powerful nation in the world, schools of this kind (the Poor law type) were not only few in number but pretty grim establishments. The Queen's administration of the cane and the birch were the rule and not (repeat) not the exception.

It was therefore with some surprise and delight that a few years after my entry, I was told by one of my mentors that the "Cuckoo" schools (<sup>this is</sup> not its official name) was one of the best if not the most comprehensive of its kind in all respects,

throughout Great Britain. And I was able to fully endorse this assessment when I was about six to seven years old.

However, I go too fast; and will now describe the School's situation, its size and its assets.

The School was situated at the top end of Church Road, Hanwell, Middlesex, W.Y. And by the time "Cuckoo Hill" (opposite the gates of the Establishment) was reached, one had had to encounter a very steep climb indeed. But the effort was worth while, because just a few steps farther <sup>on</sup> one entered one of the <sup>many</sup> lovely leafy lanes of Greenford, with a vista of the wide open country <sup>side</sup> spread out before one like some magic and gaily decorated carpet.

A few yards inside the entrance to the School was a Porters' Lodge where one always had to report either upon entry or

departure. Having reported, one had now to walk along a spacious drive to another Porters' Lodge. This was not far from the Superintendent's office and private residence. The second official also recorded one's name and the time and date of entry.

It is here worth mentioning that the drive along which an incoming had to traverse to reach the inner precincts of the main building was about 200 yards in length. And during the walk one was treated ~~(with)~~ <sup>(to)</sup> a wonderful view of spacious playing fields, country lanes, extensive farm lands, which included a wide variety of fruit trees, a well kept cricket ground and a football pitch; the School Band practice room and a sleepy old time Country Railway Halt called Castle Bar Park which ran alongside and parallel with the

School grounds. And all the acreage within <sup>(except the Railway tracks)</sup> sight belonged to and was within the ~~precincts of the~~ School's boundaries. This may provide a rough idea of the great size of this "Academy" and the land and farming and Sporting facilities that went with it. And this <sup>was</sup> only part (although perhaps the largest area) of the School's dominions.

At this point it would be as well to furnish the title given to the School by the Board of Guardians. It was: The Central London District Schools, Hanwell, Middlesex, W.7. But it was generally known as the "Cuckoo School".

To continue with the School's assets: On the other side of the "estate" and directly opposite the farm lands etc heretofore mentioned and to the main building (the latter was situated approx: in the centre of the whole property) were

Additional playing fields, the "Educational" School, a spacious swimming bath, a Hospital and a large house in which a Steward and his family lived. This house was enclosed in a large and lovely garden, which included many fruit trees.

The main building which, as already mentioned was the central piece, was the place where the boys and girls were housed, fed and bedded.

There were two separate living areas: one for the boys (about 200 to 250) and another for the girls (approx a similar number - 200 to 250). There was, in addition, a third segregated part where the tiny tots were housed.

Ages of the boys and girls ranged from six to 14 and 15: The tots from 3 to 5 or 6.

Approx 50% of the boys were housed in one block known as "A" block and

a.

the other half in Block "B".

There were four dormitories in each block and each dormitory held about 30 boys. Ten slept on each side of the room and another ten along the centre of the room. The boys who occupied the beds in the middle were called "wet beds".

There was a closed in cubicle at one end where the nurse in charge of the dormitory slept. This cubicle was in the form of a bed-sitting room which was comfortably furnished.

At the ends of each dormitory there were two large fire places and a closed in lavatory at one end. Immediately outside the nurse's cubicle and in front of the fireplace was a very comfortable armchair, a foot stool, a rock-chair and a large table with drawers used by the nurse in charge as a

desk.

There was an offshoot to each block which was used as a workshop by the nurses. Most of the bedding, blankets and sheets etc were kept in this workshop. Repairs to sheets and blankets and all kinds of needlework to boys clothes etc were done there.

At one end of each corridor attached to the dormitories was a wash place. The boys were obliged to clean their teeth and wash themselves first thing each morning and at 7 pm each evening. The washplace was simply constructed. There was a lengthy type of deep trough with a long rail as a ~~reach~~ <sup>reach</sup> along the whole length of the room on which were fixed about fifteen water sprinklers on each side of the rail. ~~On~~ Upon the wall on each side were built in a similar number of racks. These were used for storing each boys toothbrush

11.  
Soap and towel.

When wanted, the Sprinklers were turned on by one main tap which allowed 30 boys to wash themselves morning and evening. At the end of this chore, the head nurse inspected each boy in order to ensure that the face and neck cleansing and the teeth had been done properly.

Outside Block 'A' and 'B' was a ~~large~~ <sup>large</sup> yard. Along two sides of it there were: The Yards master's office, a large Communal Bath Room, and all kinds of ~~hand~~ <sup>hand</sup> Artisan's workshops. Carpenters, Cobblers, metal, etc etc. Leading off from the Yard one entered a gigantic dining room where both boys and girls "dined". And almost directly opposite the dining room were steep circular iron steps which led up to the School Church - a surprisingly

fine building.

Down below were the Superintendent's office and residence and one or two other offices for clerical staff. A Porter's Lodge was nearby.

Going out into the yard again there were the communal outside lavatories and a huge dayroom where the boys lectured, wrote or played games. There was also an under-cover archway where the boys could sit and talk as well as play when it rained.

In order to go to the Educational part of the school, there were two steep flights of steps leading from the "Yard". At the top of the steps the class rooms were about one hundred yards away. This was the area where the Hospital and Swimming bath were situated as well as additional and extensive playing fields. The "drive" could

13.

also be seen from the top of these steps.

So far I have made no comment about the girls who were housed and educated at this Poor Law School. And the reason is, that throughout the whole of the twelve years I was a ~~member~~<sup>pupil</sup>, I cannot remember ever having entered the grounds where they lived. And I knew little or nothing about how they fared apart from meal times when ~~both~~ both boys and girls dined in the same dining room - although strictly separated from each other.

However, I will set down the daily programme, so far as it affected the boys.

From the "Yard" a boy bugler sounded the reveille at 5.30 am. This was the signal for the boys to get up. They then proceeded to make their

own beds. The parquet floors would then be beeswaxed, the windows sills etc dusted and the lavatories cleaned. By the time these chores were done, the nurses would be up and about. Just before they did get themselves ready, a sergeant and two boy corporals were responsible for ensuring that the initial jobs had been completed.

The boys would then be assembled and taken out into the corridor and the washhouse. Having carried out their morning ablutions under the watchful eyes of the nurses, they would then be taken into the yard. Brown dib of paper and all rubbish left over from the previous day's activities had to be picked up and placed in a dustbin. And this was done under the supervision of the "non-commissioned" officers, afterwards, shoes that were not too clean and

15.

somewhat grubby, had to be cleaned in the Shoeshop.

At 7.30 am the school bugler would "sound off" for breakfast. The boys were fell in by the Yard Master (an ex naval man in my time) in ~~four~~<sup>eight</sup> Companies - approx 30 boys to each company and then marched off to the dining room.

All the boys and girls as well as the nurses, to supervise, and the Yard Master, were obliged to attend this and the other two meals ceremonies of the day.

Before the previous boys and girls could start on that meagre breakfast, the Yard Master who was the master of Ceremonies and the boss of the school, called everybody to attention to say Grace.

The Childrens Breakfast



16.  
consisted of one bread roll, one pat of margarine and a mug of Cocoa. An interesting situation would arise if say, one or two of the Company of 30 boys at the mess table were absent because of illness. This meant that two dolls and two pats of margarine and two ~~but~~ mugs of Cocoa were left without the owners. And when it is remembered that a small bread roll and an equally tiny pat of margarine can be swallowed by a very hungry youngster in five seconds flat, it is not difficult to visualize in imagination, the bulging eyes of 28 boys who are hoping and fervently praying that the Nurse who is supervising the modest meal will not take the "extras" back to the kitchen. At "my" mess table, a list of the names of the boys in alphabetical order was kept for the purpose of dealing out extra rolls. This was a fair method, and ensured that each boy

17.

~~in turn~~ received an extra bread roll when his turn came.

After breakfast and following certain daily announcements made by the Master of Ceremonies (Yard Master), the boys were marched from the dining room out into the yard. The time would be about 8am to 8.15am which left 30 to 45 minutes for the boys to use the lavatories and to brush their clothes etc before being mustered again and taken to the School class rooms.

School started at approximately 8.45am. The first session lasted until noon with a ten minutes break at 11am: and the second session from 2pm until 5pm. The subjects taught were the usual ones for that period: Reading and Writing (which embraced English and ~~Arithmetic~~ <sup>Geometry</sup> Arithmetic, Geography and History. The boys were also <sup>taught</sup> (unusual during the early part of the 20th Century) to speak

clearly and distinctly and to sound the  
 aitches. A few of the teachers were strict  
 and precise about these aitches and  
 woe betide the boy who made a  
 persistent habit in dropping them.  
 This form of discipline could well be  
 applied to day - especially in English  
 schools with a good deal of profit.

There ~~was~~ <sup>were</sup> eight classes in  
 schools for the ~~set~~ poor, and they progressed  
 progressively consecutively from class one  
 to class seven and to the ~~se-~~ seventh for  
 the eighth and top class for boys of  
 14 and 15.

Some of us reached the ~~se-~~ seventh  
 as early as twelve which was as fast as  
 a highly intelligent boy could reach,  
 unless, (as I was) the pupil was fortunate  
 enough to be called to work in the Head-  
 master's office. I learned (broadly  
 speaking) far more in that office during

my last two and a half years at the school  
 whilst working in the ~~Head~~ Office than ever  
 I did in the class. Doome. I was  
 taught algebra, Graphs, Map Reading,  
 Euclid and a certain something about  
 the political set-up in Britain. And  
 the Headmaster - (a Mr Gill) taught me  
 to play chess. Mr Gill also checked and  
 mildly scolded me every time I fell short  
 of the high speaking standards he had  
 set not only for me personally but for  
 all the pupils under his authority from  
~~at~~ 8.45 am to 5 pm or 4.30 pm every  
 day.

Apart from the Headmaster (Mr Gill)  
 there were three other teachers whose names  
 I still remember with affection. They are:  
 Mr Napp - who was also responsible for the  
 School Cricket Team; Mr Wadsworth -  
 "Daddy" Wadsworth the boys called him  
 because of his years and fatherly air. (Daddy

was a first class teacher) and a Mr Gould. Mr Gould's extra duties were training the boy footballers and administering the School team.

The Education the boys received at this Poor-Law-School was sound and prepared a boy for a fair start in life. The three R's were properly drilled in to the minds of all as well as the great and vital importance the teachers placed upon them as being the solid basis from which all Education and Knowledge Springs.

Some of the balderdash taught to-day makes it absolutely obvious that 1972 teaching techniques fall far, far short of the standards set by the old masters of seventy and more years ago. And in my view, this is the principal reason why a very large percentage of young people are

almost completely illiterate when they leave School and another large percentage semi-illiterate. And what makes this paucity in teaching standards so disastrous is the fact, that unlike 70 to 80 years ago, millions and billions of pounds are being <sup>spent and</sup> literally <sup>being</sup> thrown down the drains because of fancy and utterly incompetent modern teaching methods.

And unfortunately, the same troubles arise in our Universities. Generally speaking the enormous numbers who are educated at these Establishments, finish the course far less fitted for highly responsible jobs in comparison with the graduates of yesterday.

The exception are of course ~~the~~ comparatively small percentage of brilliant students who would be equally outstanding in whatever generation they were born, who eventually rise to the top in whatever profession.

they may choose or in whatever branch of Industry they decide to join.

Another valuable and important subject taught at "Cuekoo" was music. As mentioned in the foregoing, there was a band-room situated at one end of the playing fields nearest to the Cricket ground. The bandmaster was an ex Army band sergeant and himself a brilliant all round musician.

All the boys chosen for ~~the~~ eventual entry to the School band were given an excellent training. The Bandmaster's first job was to teach the boys to read music, and as the trainees were among the most intelligent in the School, the pupils were quick to learn - speedier in this regard because most of them were fanatical lovers of music - as I was.

Then the lads were asked the

23.

type of instrument they would wish to play - whether brass or wood-wind and then on to the actual instrument. It was not always possible to meet every boy with and some were "advised" to opt for a second choice.

A week was allowed for each boy to practice diligently in the "blowing" techniques both for brass and wood-wind. And after that period, each lad would be given simple scales and simple pieces to negotiate on ~~their~~<sup>their</sup> own but with the personal tuition and advice from the Bandmaster.

It is surprising how quickly and efficiently young boys who are ultra keen and eager to learn, will progress, especially when the master to advise and guide them is <sup>only</sup> an expert teacher but has the added qualities of kindness and understanding.

Within a few weeks from the starting point, simple pieces of music <sup>were</sup> handed out to the boys. And this is where they first begin to operate, not as individuals, but as a band. Somehow or other they come through this initial ordeal, not perhaps with flying colors, but nevertheless not without <sup>some</sup> degree of success. When the last notes <sup>have</sup> been sounded, both the Bandmaster and his pupils could be forgiven for a feeling of justifiable pride and achievement.

From that point, the band proceed from strength to strength while still learning in the process. Within three to six months the band is fully capable of playing at School fetes and concerts and on other special occasions both inside and outside the ~~premises~~ of the school.

This is a rough idea of how

bands were started and trained to competency within my young lifetime at Cuckoo. And I might add that this old school turned out hundreds of brilliant Army Musicians as well as Bandmasters during the years of the "Academy" existence which I believe came to a sad end in the 1930's. I myself was a trumpet player and moderately competent.

On the sporting front, <sup>there were</sup> ~~many~~ <sup>plenty</sup> cricket, football, hockey, Gymnastics, and athletics.

As this is an Auto biography, may I say that I was a good at all sports and a star ~~boy~~ a'board cricketer.

The cricket ground and its surrounds would not have disgraced a minor County Club. In some respects I consider that it was even better.

26.  
The School team joined a league playing ~~twice~~ through out each season about eight other schools - 16 games in all - playing <sup>each</sup> school both at home and away. 'Cuckoo' finishes each season invariably as champion or runner up. Some of our opponents were situated as far away as Ashford and Mitcham.

The School's trainer and manager (Mr. Mapp one of the school teachers) always took the team on these outings when we were playing away from home.

We used to practice in the nets under the tutelage of Mr. Mapp during two evenings of each <sup>week</sup> (sometimes on three evenings before a particularly important match).

I was chosen to join the school team at eleven years of age as an ~~all-rounder~~ - a fast-medium bowler,

27.  
~~an opening batsman and a fine slip fielder.~~

During my school cricket career I scored many fifties and reached the nineties several times, but never succeeded in reaching the magic 'ton' (one hundred). Being the principal bowler as well, I took many hundreds of wickets and rarely failed to top both batting and bowling averages.

The number of bats and balls and cricket pads I obtained as prizes at the end of each cricket season, were left with my old nurse when my school days ~~had~~ ended in 1909 at the age of 14 years and nearly 5<sup>5</sup> weeks.

I also left behind many books earned as prizes for school work and triumphal playing.

There were two fete days each year. one was held in January and the other in July. Both were the occasions for the Head of the School (the Superintendent) to present prizes for ~~each~~ School efficiency in music and sports. In the winter, the Jollifications took place in the School Dining Room and the band had a <sup>to undertake</sup> major part in the proceedings. <sup>On these auspicious occasions</sup> One Apple, one orange and a bag of Nuts as well as a sifter were presented to each boy and girl throughout the School.

The day finished up with a "still" picture show. There were also dancing, recitations, a band performance, and several speeches made by the P.D.B. of the School.

The Summer fete was held in the playing fields. There were roundabouts, swings, a fair and schoolboy actor performers, as well as a

29.

comic cricket match between the School team and officials. Prizes also were awarded on this day for Sports and Athletics. The Summer 'do' was certainly the most enjoyable of the two annual fetes. And on these occasions both boys and girls were allowed to mix if they <sup>so</sup> wished.

In regard to Cricket, I wrote <sup>earlier</sup> a book an 'offshoot' or workshop to ~~both~~ School blocks A and B: ~~edition~~. Well, during the Summer holidays, when the Cricket master was away on holiday (he lived incidentally outside the school) the boys played cricket in the large School yard. A normal leather Cricket ball was considered by the Myle master to be too hard and therefore dangerous to onlookers if the ball was hit in their direction with any degree of force. So we had to think of a way to produce a ball which

which would be just as firm (if not quite so hard) as a leather ball, and which would bounce just as freely.

A few of us put our heads together and devised a scheme for making a Rag ball. And you must take it from me my dear reader that a "Rag" ball if properly and competently made ~~from~~ <sup>is</sup> a first class substitute for the regulation leather ball and almost nearly as lethal.

And this is where the workroom came in useful.

There was quite a fair quantity of cotton cloth material left over from repair jobs and one or two of the kinder Nurses would give away some of this spare cloth to boys who wanted the stuff to make not one but several balls.

The idea ~~was~~ <sup>is</sup> to tear some of the material into thin ~~ish~~ strips. These

31

would be made into a rough round ball. When that initial operation had been done, "covers" (square covers) would be cut out from the spare linen. These covers (one at a time) would be fitted over the ball. Two ends of the cover would be drawn ~~together~~ tightly together over the ball of strips (they ~~would~~ <sup>would</sup> the ends) would overlap a little) and then the ends would be sewn together. The same process would be gone through with the other two ends. Then there would be a few side pieces of the cover to be neatly "tacked in": these would also be sewn and joined tightly (tightly is the <sup>operative</sup> ~~important~~ word) together. This would be only the first cover, but already the ball was firm and fairly hard.

It was the general policy to sew on about six to 12 covers. Twelve covers would bring the ball to the size of a regulation leather cricket ball. By the time the



work had been finished, the "synthetic" ball was virtually as hard as the original. In fact, if the cloth from which the ball had been "manufactured" had been coloured a darkish red-brown instead of dead white, few of the boys not in the know, would have known the difference. And a hit on any part of the leg, <sup>made</sup> by one of these balls when bowled by a fast bowler would not only bruise but sometimes cut the limb and bring the blood gushing forth.

And another great advantage attached to these "home made" pills was that they could be used just as effectively on turf.

In these modern days of 1992 "Rag Balls" would be <sup>in certain circumstances</sup> a godsend <sup>in need</sup> of the enormous price of the real thing. Continuing with the

subject of Cricket (still, at 78, my favourite game) the Hanwell town Cricket Club used the School cricket ground to play some of their fixtures. (Our Mr. Mapp was the Captain of the Hanwell team).

And Mr. Mapp (one of the School's teachers and Cricket Manager - as I said before) arranged for two of the senior boys to score regularly for the mens team.

During my last two years as a "Cuckoo" I was one of the honoured search. It was an interesting adjunct to my <sup>cricketing</sup> ~~cricketing~~ young life. We not only did the job at Hanwell's own ground but journeyed with the team (under the <sup>and protection</sup> authority of Mr. Mapp) to all their opponents' grounds - and one or two of these ~~places~~ <sup>were situated in</sup> ~~the far~~ <sup>North and</sup> ~~South~~ <sup>South</sup> borders.

This job means that many pennies went into our pockets from the

collection made on our behalf from both teams at the end of each game. and of course we enjoyed a slip-up tea as well. And now and again if you please, would be the possibility of one of us being chosen to take the place of a team member who had failed to arrive at the ground.

These undertakings were "very" enjoyable outings.

But when I was fourteen, it was when scoring for the Harwell team one Saturday afternoon at an away game, that I first became conscious of my lowly status in Society. And being a highly sensitive lad, I was never to forget the incident (which I will not describe here) which occurred that afternoon. The shock of that realization of being in what that I was considered to be a member of the lowest

35.

form of human creation, was an experience from which I have never fully recovered. It affected the nerves and my whole outlook upon life. It affected my confidence and personality and it left a feeling of a deep and profound inferiority complex which generally had overshadowed ~~every~~ everything I have tried to accomplish over the years.

The late nineteenth century and the first fourteen years of the twentieth ~~century~~ <sup>was</sup> ~~fully~~ not a period enjoyed by the poorer members of this ancient land. They <sup>(the poor)</sup> were at a great disadvantage from an educational point of view, and had no social standing whatever. The most menial and hardest working labouring jobs plus long long hours at work <sup>with their lot and at</sup> ~~to see~~ which today would cause a riot.

So-called <sup>poor</sup> ~~poor~~ homes were hovels and

hardly fit for dogs to live in. And the  
majority, if not all of these wretched  
men and women suffered from Malaria.  
It is hard to wonder that the death toll  
among such people was very high indeed.

And I for one was determined  
to get something better from life than  
toil of the hand, wages of the lowest  
and a home like a kennel as well as  
the humiliation and the degradation such  
a life entailed. I cannot pretend that  
any vast improvement in my living  
conditions since those early years has  
been made, but the soul-destroying  
poverty has long since ceased to  
overshadow my life. And in my old  
age I am fairly comfortably off.

In August, 1909, I was 14  
years and <sup>nearly five</sup> months and in that month  
I was drafted, as a boy musician, into  
the regular army, with <sup>another</sup> ~~another~~ boy.

37.

a few months older than myself. I  
travelled across the Irish Sea to Dublin  
to join (temporarily) the second battalion  
hereafter I think then stationed at  
Phoenix? barracks. We were actually  
due to be sent to the 1<sup>st</sup> battalion, but  
the final was at the time serving at  
Multan in northern India. So for  
the time being we had to do duty with  
the band of the 2<sup>nd</sup> battalion which  
was itself shortly to be moved to the Assaye  
barracks at Tidworth in England.

When the day actually dawned  
for me and my companion to leave the  
Cuckoo School, which had been my home,  
friend and teacher for twelve of my fourteen  
and a half years, it was a great wrench.  
All this time I had felt protected and  
cared for and as a sports boy and a  
top boy educationally had been favoured  
by being granted many privileges. And

from henceforth I was obliged to begin  
a new life and to find new companions  
and in a sense to be introduced into a  
wider world. Being highly sensitive and  
ultra nervous, the change terrified me.

And in addition to this  
apprehension, the sensitiveness about the  
size of my physique, was acute.

At almost 14½ years, my height  
was a mere four feet, five inches and I  
weighed under five stones. I do not  
imagine that there is the slightest  
doubt that a smaller boy has ever  
joined the British Army throughout its  
long history.

A ~~new~~ uniform had to be  
specially made and nearly six months  
had elapsed before I was able to proudly  
stomp around as a fully fledged boy  
soldier. And being a "Fusilier", also  
meant that when the Regiment was

201  
marching the colour, busbies were the order  
of the day. This tall fur cap was not only  
nearly as tall as myself but almost  
as heavy.

Note: I request that I should have  
to divert for a moment to record a  
respectable fact about the discipline at the  
Cuckoo School which I have previously  
omitted to mention <sup>as</sup> with other establishments  
of this kind, the cane and the birch were  
both used as correctives - and fairly  
frequently. The ~~best~~ birch was  
administered by the yard master, and  
other boys who were available were obliged  
to be present to watch this form of  
punishment which even as a boy, I  
considered to be barbaric.

The culprit would be ordered  
either six or twelve strokes. The only  
protection he had was his shirt or pants  
(the shirt or underparts) which were drawn

rightly about his seat.

The Yard Master in my day was a burly man and strong. If I was compelled to be an onlooker at such a spectacle, I would watch the first heavy swish and then close my eyes for the rest of the session. Sometimes we ~~as~~ spectators would have to listen to the screams of the victim and I have known boys to faint - watching these ghastly scenes.

Some boys of course, tougher and made of sterner stuff than their weaker brethren would disdain to utter a sound and would take the medicine like men.

I attach no blame to the Yard Master. He was only carrying out his duty. The one who I knew was normally a pleasant and kindly man and could have inflicted the wrong

41.

doers much more heavily, had he been a masochist. He most certainly did not care for this side of his job.

But cruelty among the Educational controlling bodies of the time was rife throughout of Britain. In this connection, I can recall the sad story of Elizabeth Lecharbe handed about Christ's Hospital. One incident in the story is about a boy who ran away from the school and the cruel and dastardly punishments inflicted upon him for his misdemeanour. And Christ's Hospital was not a Poor Law School but a fee-paying Public School. To return to the Army.

I spent five to six weeks in Dublin but cannot remember a great deal about that interlude except that I was mostly confined to barracks. I engaged in a considerable amount

of trumpet practice. There were no band practices or parades of any kind, as the bulk of the bandmen as well as the battalion had already proceeded to Tidworth. Those left behind in Dublin were finishing off the packing etc. The bandmaster had also left with the senior members of the band, and only a corporal was in charge of the remainder - generally junior members.

The journey across the sea to Dublin from Holyhead was exceedingly rough and bumpy and I was a sick lad throughout the trip. Nobody in authority escorted us and we were <sup>indeed</sup> compelled to find our own way to the barracks when we ~~left~~ stepped on to Irish soil. But a grand feed given us on our arrival at the appointed place, considerably

LB.

eased our disappointment. On the whole I was reasonably happy after the initial minor disaster. The few of the boys musicians we met, were a mixed bunch but very friendly and constantly chaffed us about our numbers (Regimental numbers which ~~are~~ <sup>are</sup> initially allotted men are given) being still "wet" and far from dry. In other words we were tenderfoots (new boys) and likely to remain that way at least for the first six to twelve months.

These boys had also been drafted into the Army from certain schools - Poor Law Schools and Schools for correction. Few ever entered the Army from a private home. Most were badly tough and ready, but nevertheless budding musicians, and some of them later on more than justified their

44.

early promise. The army, even in those days, besides teaching certain skills and disciplines etc was a fine educational organisation and many a band boy as well as ordinary ~~private~~ private soldiers who were wise enough to take every advantage of the Army's teaching methods. Left the Service in due course, fairly well-educated men.

The remnant of the band and of the battalion, journeyed to Tidworth about the end of September, 1909.

Tidworth so far as I can recall was a semi-rural place, and what businesses and ~~shops~~ <sup>virtually and wholly</sup> there were in this area relied <sup>upon</sup> the many Regiments stationed there, for their livelihood.

I stayed at Tidworth for approximately one year. During that

45.

time I considerably improved my trumpet playing and began delving more deeply into the theory of music. I began to learn also the best method of transposing, that is, to produce notes different in pitch from the written notes, and gradually became fairly competent at it.

There being plenty of open spaces around, also, I was able, once again, to resume playing my beloved cricket, and little 'itch' the more I played quickly applied to me. By brother bandsmen and boys, became well known as a promising cricketer.

I worked hard at music, but I played hard as well and although tiny, I went in for paper chasing, running long distances and athletics generally. In addition I speedily secured two Army certificates of education.

16.  
Sometimes on a Saturday when there was no band practice and no engagements of any sort for that day, a few of the bandmen would travel either to Huggershall, a small Pembrokeshire town in the same County - Pembrokeshire to watch a football match. In those days Huggershall was reputed to have produced a first class team. On other Saturday occasions a trip would be made to Swindon (a longish journey) to watch the professional side play.

On the whole I spent a fairly happy year at Tidworth and spent an idle or two.

Round about September, 1910, a draft left for India and the 1st Battalion.

~~On the 1st of September, 1910, the 1st Battalion of the Buffs was ordered to move to India. The draft consisted of about two hundred men and included eight boy bandmen.~~

The draft consisted of about two hundred men and included eight boy bandmen.

We left Tidworth one September morning after saying farewell to our friends of the 2nd Battalion. It was a lovely, late early autumn day and a foretaste of the <sup>weather</sup> conditions to come. Everybody was happy and cheerful. A long sea journey of six weeks' duration which an ocean trip to India lasted in 1910 was ~~sharply~~ anticipated by these very young soldiers, with excitement. And it must be remembered that most, if not all of this contingent, came from the homes of families <sup>when</sup> exhibiting for a soldier was then the only work-outlet open to them. The longest trip these lads had so far made was perhaps to the local Road School and back and to the nearest Public House to



buy and to take back home books  
of beer for their parents. &

To be able to go on a journey  
of such nature <sup>to</sup> far, far away place was  
(initially at least) a luxury which  
they had merely been able to dream  
about only, and never for one moment  
ever expecting that such a dream  
would eventually be fulfilled.

We travelled by train from  
Lidworth to Southampton. At Southampton  
we boarded a troop ship and, although,  
~~I cannot now be sure~~ (after a lapse  
of more than ~~60~~ 60 years) I cannot now  
be certain of the ship's name, I believe  
that it was the "Rear".

The ~~cabins~~ <sup>Cabin</sup> that I was  
shepherded into contained four bunks  
one up and one down on each side  
of the Cabin. ~~Under these were~~  
~~compartments~~ <sup>compartments</sup>. I slept like a top  
~~ship~~ ~~like a top~~  
~~etc~~ favourable

After the first week or so  
however, the occupants of this and  
other Cabins (which in those "far-off"  
days would be considered "high class"  
quarters for lonely Soldiers) ~~we~~ <sup>were</sup> all ~~sent~~  
transferred to ~~the~~ ~~lower~~ ~~deck~~ ~~below~~  
deck quarters where Hammocks  
(two hundred of them) had been  
strung. If anything, I preferred  
Hammocks to the bunks and slept  
~~if possible~~ <sup>if possible</sup>, even sounder.

The ship got under way late the  
same day we had boarded her, and ~~she~~  
a cheer went up as the old "Rear"  
edged her bulk out of the Port. At  
last the real adventure for us simple  
lads, had begun.

Booming and rolling through  
the rough seas of the English Channel  
and the Bay of Biscay was now the  
pinnacle of our dreams. Almost to a man

and boy we became sea-sick and physically wretched. Normally, I was always more than ready for my food and was able literally to eat a horse without the appetite being <sup>even then</sup> fully appeased. But a spell of sea-sickness ended all that. I even prayed to my master and the Almighty, who, I then understood, lived somewhere in the infinite, to let me die peacefully in my sleep. But no response was forthcoming and I was obliged to endure four interminable days of utterly bodily misery and without food or sustenance of any kind which in that state was <sup>in any case,</sup> anathema to me. However, all good and bad things come to an end in time due course and by the time the ship came near to the entrance to the

Straits of Gibraltar, I and my many companions had recovered, and were full of high spirits and in good humour. What was far more important, was the return of hunger and the desire to eat and eat and to eat again.

The food supplied to the troops on the Reva'i was somewhat rough but plentiful. But hungry and <sup>lean</sup> empty bellied young men do not <sup>know</sup> the meaning of the word "fastidiousness". They could "scoff" anything that was put in front of them, including stale bread, half cooked potatoes, misshapen looking cabbage and meat that was always raw and contained loads of fat. The whole Caboodle <sup>would be</sup> ~~was~~ shovelled down the gullet with enthusiasm and had no adverse effect upon a man's health. In fact these queer concoctions appeared to

keep the men surprisingly fit and strong. To day, 63 years later, I personally would become ill just looking at such horrible preparations.

The passengers gradually settled down to a ~~fixed~~ routine. Boat drill was given twice a week and prizes were awarded for the person getting nearest to the actual number of knots which the ship had covered each day. Evening concerts were arranged, and the artists had of course to be found among the troops and there were quite a few talented ones.

"Crown and anchor", a gambling game was started by one or two of the more adventurous.

The Rewari had by now ~~had~~ passed Gibraltar and had entered the warmth of the Mediterranean sea. The sea itself was calm and a

rate shade of blue. It was now becoming a wonderful voyage. The nights were so warm that many of us deserted our hammocks below deck, and slept on a blanket laid upon the upper deck in order to obtain all the coolness and any high breeze blowing in from the ocean.

Soon the old veteran ("The Rewari") arrived at Malta. The ship slowed down as it came near to the Island, but no stop was made there. We could see a few ships of the Royal Navy anchored in the harbour, and a great resounding cheer went up from the raw troops on the "Rewari", and happily there came back to us a loud <sup>answering</sup> cheer from some of the naval ratings assembled upon the decks of the B.N. ships.

It was a thrilling experience

for all concerned and some gas gain discussed this "long distance" meeting and the friendly greetings during the quiet of the late evening before returning to work.

Our most highly exciting experience occurred when we reached Port Said. The Dewar stopped at Port Said to refuel. In the far off days of 1910, Royal Navy ships were fueled by coal. Fuel oil was only just beginning to be introduced.

The sight of Egyptian Coolies carrying loads of coal on their backs ~~to the~~ along a gangway to the ship bunkers was a fascinating experience. The only clothing the men <sup>wore</sup> was a very brief ~~loincloth~~ loincloth, with their grey brown bodies and ~~that~~ coal-dusted faces and white teeth and grinning (in spite of their hard labour) like happy school boys, they resembled

the old time young English Chimney sweeps. In this connection it may be mentioned that in <sup>another</sup> ~~part~~ of "Edia's Short Stories" "The Praise of Chimney Sweeps," he says: (this concerns boy chimney sweeps) "yet must I confess that from the mouth of a true sweep, a display (even to ostentation) of show white and shiny ossification (teeth) strikes me as an agreeable anomaly in manners and an allowable piece of jockey. It is, as when"

"O sable cloud  
I was for'd her silver lining on the night"  
And this <sup>description</sup> ~~description~~ could <sup>have</sup> ~~be~~ applied equally to the "ossification" of the young ~~of~~ Egyptian Coolies.

The ship stayed at Port Said for about twelve hours and then sailed on through the Suez Canal, into the Red Sea, past Aden

and into the Indian Ocean. By the  
time the Rewari reached <sup>Karachi</sup> ~~India~~,  
we had spent on the whole approx:  
six weeks at sea. And although  
I travelled through <sup>most</sup> of these same seas  
~~four~~ times more in later years,  
the thrills and enjoyment of this  
first trip was never afterwards  
to be fully recaptured. The later  
journeys were made in times of war.  
The first was <sup>made</sup> in the happy-go-lucky  
days of 1910 when my voice as a  
boy of 15 had not yet broken.

~~Since those early days, I  
have travelled around a good deal,  
especially in world war. It too has  
the happiest <sup>enjoyed</sup> and the enchanting  
voyage days and evenings spent in  
my "lovable" Rewari were never  
again repeated.~~

And it may be of interest to  
the moderns that the enchantment  
of that first long sea trip was  
not due to ~~any~~ the possession of any  
material belongings or to a big  
bank balance. My possessions in  
fact were non-existent and  
money I had none. The sixpence a  
day I earned as a boy musician  
went speedily the way of all flesh.  
Paid weekly at 3/6d per week,  
the cash remained in my pocket  
for no more than two days. In  
India our only real food was a small  
loaf of bread a day, a mid-day  
indifferent dinner and cocoa. ~~See~~  
Breakfast (usually bread & marg for  
me) had to be bought and I spent  
one half of the princely weekly wage  
of 3/6d on one breakfast: Eggs  
and bacon & tomatoes and the other

1192 on one ten. For the remaining days of the week, I endeavoured to earn a few pennies by cleaning the brass buttons of Randem's uniformed coats. Mareson's, cleaning boots and mending evards. As I grew older, I did manage to earn a little extra ~~also~~ from Rand engagements. Yet my pockets were always destitute and that is the way, I departed from India in 1914 at the age of 19.

However I have diverted from a description of the trip to our Indian destination.

At <sup>Kanpur</sup> ~~Kanpur~~ we took train en-route to Multan in the Punjab, Northern India. The journey occupied almost a week in travel and turned out to be a very uncomfortable trip. The seats in

all the carriages were cushionless - just hard wooden seats on which we not only sat but slept. The contrast after the luxury of a long sea trip was striking. By the time we reached Multan, we were tired, dirty, miserable and hungry.

The carriages were in fact little better than cattle trucks. The well fed, well paid and pampered British Army of to day would certainly never tolerate such conditions. Nevertheless it must be said that

these contrasts gave a spice to life. <sup>by the to army of 60 odd years ago.</sup> The ~~en~~ enjoyable events would never have been half so delightful had it not been for the <sup>same</sup> contrasting soul destroying and back breaking days march beneath a hot Indian sun and so on.

The soldiers really "earned

and luxuriated in their moments of ~~leisure~~ leisure and relaxation in those far off days of '50, so long ago. We were apt to take each day as it came, and endeavored to extract as much interest, joy and happiness and humor from otherwise drab and ~~hollow~~ <sup>and plodding</sup> working hours, ~~and fairly paid as we were.~~

It was somewhere in the second half (the later one) of October '50 when we arrived at Multan. After a few days <sup>the newcomers</sup> gradually began to fit into their new units: the Soldiers with the respective companies to which they were drafted, and the boy bandmen musicians with the Regimental band.

The barracks rooms which were allocated to the band were large, airy and spacious. Spacious balconies surrounded the rooms ~~that~~

There was a separate dining room ~~to~~ in which we could consume our meals. Daily band practice however were held on one of the large barrack room balconies. Usually these band practices lasted from 9:00 am to noon with a ten-minute break at 11:00 am.

One drawback was having to stand during those long morning hours. And the Bandmaster <sup>to put up with</sup> had the same treatment.

Once a week the whole band (approximately 30 to 40 strong) played at the Officers mess during their 8 pm dinner ceremony. And this programme lasted until 9:30 to 10 pm.

On two other ~~even~~ nights of the week, a string band, which included a couple of trumpet players, would play at an Officers' dance and at a play which took

place  
in a large military theatre. The Band  
was paid for the two latter weekly  
engagements. of course, the band  
had to be present at special military  
parades such as Trooping the Colours,  
and military tattoos etc. and these were  
part of our military duties and no  
extra payment over and above our  
modest wages was made.

It was on these occasions,  
that I, as a junior boy bandman,  
worked like a slave, in order to earn  
some pennies. I did so, <sup>(as I have said before)</sup> by smoothing  
the fur of bushes, polishing the bestia  
brass chain which fitted round the  
chin and cleaning the brass buttons  
of the Red coats. Also I bleached  
the Cuffs, collar and lapels of the  
coat and I soved the blue trousers  
as well as cleaning the Bandsmen's  
shoes. A pocket full of pennies

63.

or in Indian money, annas, was my  
reward for hours of hard and tedious  
toil. But these annas meant,  
what was then of paramount  
importance to a underfed lad  
of 15 to 16, food. I could never  
get enough of it, and the word  
~~"fastidiousness"~~ was unknown to  
~~me~~. Any "left overs" from the  
dinner plates of other Bandsmen,  
always found a welcome on my  
own "always empty" one. I was the  
host to all tit-bits, bread crumbs,  
hard crouts, tough meat, sour  
milk, greasy gravy - the dustbin in  
fact for unwanted bits of all  
kinds - good or bad. But however  
much I swallowed, <sup>the food,</sup> made not the  
slightest difference to my tiny frame.  
It remained small and compact,  
but tough as teak.



In between band engagements and parades there was plenty of sport and recreation - both collectively and individually.

Multan was situated in a hot zone and the troops could not indulge in active outdoor games between noon and around five in the afternoon.

After mid-day dinner was over, the whole battalion except those on guard and <sup>on</sup> posts duties took the opportunity of a siesta or perhaps played a quiet game of cards throughout the hottest hours.

Outdoor activities (except perhaps cricket matches which could be begun about 3 pm) generally began about 5 pm. Football, matches Hockey, Swimming, athletics and sometimes tennis (even in the old days a modest number of "other" ranks

(non commissioned) could play tennis.

The Regiment possessed a first class Cricket and football team and many Indian sides came to respect our prowess at cricket. Regarding football there were cups to be played for among the many Regiments stationed in Northern India and the 156 battalion Lancashire Fusiliers ~~was~~ was one of the top units in these competitions. And thousands of people both Indian and the troops and other Europeans turned out to watch these usually exciting and competitive games.

The Regiment (and I believe this was operative among all units in India) was granted one full days holiday a week, when we went to the hills from the plains of Multan

for six months of every year in order to escape the worst of the Samuch Heat at Multan, ~~we~~ many of the Bandemen used to hire "Lats" as they were called (they were in fact mules) for this one day holiday. And there was no little danger in riding these Lats along the twisting, turning, narrow (very narrow) cliff paths among the hills of Ghulibval (a hill station near the Mubul Hills) and of Walthouse near Sialkot. A slight mistake by the mule, and both horse and rider would be tumbling down steep cliffs.

But for me it was an exciting and wonderful experience. The Hill paths meandered along sometimes ~~up~~ <sup>up</sup> a steep incline and then down a steep decline. A forest like atmosphere was everywhere and the deathly silence among the trees, plants,

67.  
wild flowers and chips could be felt. The Samuch filtered through the wall of thick greenery which was prevalent everywhere.

The band and drums and about 50% of the battalion went to these Hill Stations for the period of the Summer. The other half of the Regiment were needed to remain at Multan.

The journey to the Hill Stations ~~was~~ was usually made about March and the expedition was made on foot. It was about a weeks journey and we marched ~~about~~ between 12 to 15 miles each day before striking tents for the night's rest. Pack Horses were used to carry equipment of all sorts, food ~~and~~ and water. And each man carried his rifle and a full pack on

his back. The dust and fire constituted the main obstacle - and of course the never unending heat, because even in the Hill Stations the heat could be a great burden.

Occasionally, at Dathom, the troops were organized into a Cheetah hunting party when this animal decided to enter the camp at night to grab what food it could. Several Cheetahs would invade the camp, and when they were becoming dangerous to both men and camp horses, a beating party was then organized, and usually with successful results.

At ~~Dathom~~ <sup>Richmond</sup> the band and the troops lived ~~in the camp~~ <sup>in barracks</sup>. This station was particularly enjoyable. There were peach trees in abundance as well as coco nut trees and

69.

mangoes could also be obtained with little trouble.

I was thinking also to wander down the cliff sides exploring the plants and the wide variety of small trees which grew there. And there was also plenty of smaller soft fruit ready at hand for the taking.

For the peaches - very large and juicy specimens - it was necessary to climb at least half way up the bare part of the tree before one could see it and pick the fruit. I was also a somewhat hysterical climber but when the near summit was reached the toil involved would be rewarded by a large supply of enormous peaches. The band boys were the best "mountainers" and snaffled the bulk of this wonderful delicacy. And we were not adverse to

Conducting a 'Covers-Garden' market for  
the sale of our surplus peaches and  
did quite well with our native form  
of barter bargaining.

~~Barthonsie~~ <sup>Gharibwal</sup> was a more  
popular hill station with the troops  
than was ~~Barthonsie~~ <sup>Gharibwal</sup>. ~~Barthonsie~~  
must have been an older station as ~~there~~  
<sup>in addition to the</sup> ~~there were~~ <sup>there were</sup> ~~but~~ <sup>adequate</sup>  
facilities for indoor and outdoor  
sports, and much better surroundings  
as was the case at ~~Barthonsie~~ <sup>Barthonsie</sup>.  
And it was a more equitable  
climate.

~~Barthonsie~~ <sup>Barthonsie</sup> was not nearly  
so beautiful a place and there  
we lived under canvas. The long  
distant views however were glorious.  
As at ~~Barthonsie~~ <sup>Gharibwal</sup> which was <sup>also</sup> ~~near~~ <sup>near</sup> to  
the Himalaya mountains ~~could be~~  
~~seen in the distance and far off~~

71.

(Could be seen in the <sup>bar</sup> distance.)  
Kashmir but there were great hills  
and steep cliffs and greenery in  
abundance everywhere at both Stations.  
I can recall, vividly, the  
track the bandmen made along the  
narrow cliff path from <sup>the</sup> ~~Barthonsie~~ <sup>Barthonsie</sup> Camp  
~~barracks~~ to the officers' mess. It was  
a steepish climb. The Asian blackness  
had settled down upon the mountains  
even before we had set out about  
7.30 pm. And it was black and  
gloomy, <sup>somewhat</sup> ~~yet~~ <sup>romantic</sup>, during most of the  
walk. On these occasions every  
bandman carried a Hurricane  
lamp otherwise there would have  
been real danger of one of two of us  
falling down steep declines.  
The band was due to start  
playing on the lovely lawn in front  
of the mess building at 8 pm.  
That late evening scene

2.  
always fascinated and impressed <sup>me</sup> as a boy. I can still see over the long long distance of time and events, that brilliantly lit-up officers mess, and the officers, senior and junior alike, dressed in their military dinner 'bum-frezer' jackets and trousers and patent black shoes coming out on to the veranda after dinner. Some to settle down and to chat while ~~to~~ listening to the music beneath the stars and the cool purple night enveloping the awesome mountain <sup>and</sup> hills and ~~the~~ <sup>the</sup> green beauty <sup>of the country</sup>. Others, the junior and younger officers, a little merry after the wine they had drunk, performing sonnets and other antics, ~~not~~ enjoying themselves in their own way as young gentlemen have done from time ~~to~~ immemorial. And it was usually

43.

these younger officers who would persuade the bandmaster to get the band to play a few dance tunes. And of course the bandmaster would be invited into the mess after the evening programme (which usually ended at 10 pm) had ended, for a drink or two.

For this weekly performance four ~~lights~~ <sup>tall</sup> kerosene lamps would be erected on the lawn, which provided sufficient light for every bandsman to be able to read the music. With the brilliant mess lights and the surrounding thickly wooded forests, mountains and hills and cliffs, and the mystery of the silent trees in the intense blackness of an early night, ~~gave~~ a touch of the romantic, blended with imaginary ghostly figures, were Indian experiences which have

remained with me for more than sixty long years.

I journeyed <sup>with the usual contingents</sup> on foot to the hill stations three times - twice to Dalhousie and once to Ghazibwad.

In 1913 the Regiment's period of duty at Multan came to an end and sometime during that year we were transferred to Karachi.

<sup>before</sup> during 1911 - before two years we departed from Multan - I recall the great excitement which spread across the whole Indian Continent during the Delhi-Durbah celebrations. Nineteen hundred and eleven was the year King George V was crowned. nevertheless, unrest and the desire for independence was also already manifesting itself.

Karachi appeared to me to be an even better military station

75.

than Multan had been. It was near the Sea: the barracks ~~etc~~ were more modern; the sporting facilities greater - especially for cricket. The Regiment's put on two shows during our year's service at this station. Two of the officers - a captain Crowley and lieutenant G. Talbot - ~~for~~ were the producers and ~~the~~ organizers. The Sandermen were the principal performers. But there were also a few talented performers among the soldiers.

The Shows were: "Sinbad the Sailor" and "Aladdin".

In "Sinbad the Sailor" I was a chorus "girl" and a member of a team of "ten little magick boys". In "Aladdin" I was a Chinese member of the Chorus. Each show lasted one week and to packed houses.

They were a complete success -  
financially and otherwise. A Captain  
Willie, later at Gallipoli, to be awarded  
a V.C. for gallantry was also one  
of the organisers. 'Ibladin' finished  
the wicket run <sup>in 10 long</sup> before the  
first world war began.

I can still vividly remember  
the day - 4th August, 1914 - when the  
news came through that Britain  
had declared war on Germany.  
The same afternoon I was playing  
in the Sand Cricket team against  
one of the Companies of the Regiment,  
and I had performed remarkably  
well both with bat and ball -  
taking 8 wickets for 14 runs and  
scoring 50 not out with the bat.  
The Sand won the match easily.  
Soon after the declaration of  
war, I, with three other junior

47.

Handsomen (I was then 19 years of age)  
I became a Cycling orderly. About  
a month later, the whole battalion  
moved from Karachi to Aden.

The whole <sup>of most</sup> of the British  
India regulars, as well as those  
stationed in Aden, Egypt, Malta  
and Gibraltar, expected to be sent  
home without too much delay in  
order to join up with the Expeditionary  
force already fighting for its life in  
France.

The Battalion stayed at  
Aden for about four to six weeks.  
I rather liked the place, but it  
was very, very lonely on sentry  
duties doing a spell of guard duty  
right through a whole night and  
~~most~~ of us were on the alert for  
<sup>mahandras</sup> Arab terrorists during those  
silent hours of darkness, as a

Junior bondsman, I had already  
been transferred to a Company of  
the Battalion to do the best I  
could as a private soldier, apart  
from being a ~~private~~ <sup>private</sup> shot. I  
~~do not~~ believe I was really much  
of a soldier and doubt whether I  
ever would have been.

There was one small personal  
incident which might be worth recording,  
concerning the shot spell of duty at  
Aden. One day with a party of men,  
I was helping in the job of cutting  
down a mass of thick Cactus  
bushes. The result was that a lot  
of <sup>the</sup> juice from these Cactus  
plants, penetrated both my eyes,  
and I was obliged to spend a  
week in the Military Hospital  
as I was made temporarily  
quite blind. This experience was a

29.

frightening one, and ever since  
I have looked upon cactus plants  
with suspicion and a good deal  
of trepidation. Actually it was  
nearly three to four weeks before  
my sight ~~had been~~ <sup>was</sup> fully restored.  
~~As was.~~

I enjoyed the late evenings,  
sitting with many of my comrades  
on the cliff top overlooking the harbour.  
The weather was glorious and the  
sunsets enchanting. Ships at anchor  
appeared to have <sup>been</sup> painted all the  
delightful colours of the rainbow, and  
a full moon dappled the sea with  
silvery lights. A calm, peaceful  
silence reigned over those many  
magical evening moments, and the  
grim specter <sup>of war</sup> rearing its ugly shadow  
across the fair land of France, seemed  
to be but a dream, and had no



time meaning or reality, with the present scenes of what could only be described as a touch of heaven in all its ethereal beauty.

We left Aden towards the end of October or beginning of November, 1914. It was with a feeling of genuine and deep regret and sadness that I said my own personal farewell to this (what had been to me) a wondrous spot - not so much during the daylights hours, but throughout those long lovely eventides when the nights were purple and the blackness seemed as to be nearer to a deep blue. The many scented flowers were at their most fragrant in the late eve, and even the insects "purred" lazily with contentment.

I have never wholly forgotten those balmy and happy

81.

"Arabian" nights. Gold could not buy this form of magic. All the happier moments of my long life have not cost me a single farthing. Not that I had too many even the almost valueless coin in the days of 1914.

I believe it was somewhat later than the beginning of November, 1914 when we actually sailed from Aden, because we arrived at Port Said together with thousands of other overseas troops on Christmas day. This was for me, ~~an~~ <sup>an</sup> ~~historical~~ <sup>and memorable moment</sup> ~~and one of the~~ <sup>most outstanding</sup> days given over to a feeling of excitement at its highest.

We arrived, or converged rather, on Port Said during that memorable Christmas day of 1914 approximately ~~(50000)~~ <sup>50000</sup> troops - half

from the near and far bases  
whose destination was home and  
the war front in France, and  
the other half who came out from  
Britain ~~under~~ (almost all  
Territorials) to ~~take~~ relieve the  
regular troops in distant stations.

The overseas regulars were  
baked brown and almost blackly  
the same of the least, whereas  
the home troops relieving us were  
as pale as snowdrops.

It was a happy and a  
cheerful concourse of British  
service men, and many a lot  
of rum was drunk in order  
to celebrate this unique occasion.

The "Armada" of Regulars  
reached Arras mouth early in January,  
1915 and the various units then split  
up to travel their different ways.

The first battalion Leicestershire  
Infantry journeyed by train to Tamworth  
in Warwickshire and nearly all the  
men were billeted in tiny miners'  
cottages where one would walk  
straight into the front room when  
entering from the street door. These  
cottages were very small and rather gloomy.

A narrow staircase led into two  
minute bedrooms, and in order to get  
to one of them, it was always necessary  
to pass through the other one. Besides  
the front room downstairs, there was a  
small kitchen cum wash house  
combined, and the floor was a stone  
one. ~~There~~ A lavatory (small and dark)  
had been built in a pocket sized yard.

The whole edifice appeared to have <sup>been</sup> of  
17th or early 18th century design and was  
only too typical of the type of accommodation  
provided for the working man and his

no family before the Trade Unions managed to get some improvements in this field 100 or more years later.

During our stay at Muneaton which lasted about two months, all the Bandsmen including those who were returned to the ranks when war broke out, were given back their instruments for the time being and they were only handed back to the Authorities again the day before the Regiment left Muneaton.

The band did duty at social concerts and displays and was used ~~when~~ whenever the Regiment went on a route march for fitness purposes.

The occupants of the tiny cottage in which myself and another bandsman ~~and~~ were billeted were a miner, his wife and daughter of ten, a young lodger of about my own

age lived there also.

They (husband and wife) were good and kind people. Although very poor. The little cottage was kept scrupulously clean and nothing of any use was ever wasted. Also, the wife was a good cook and served up simple but tasty mid-day dinners which we all enjoyed.

The miner did not drink and smoked only occasionally. Unfortunately, I have long since forgotten his name. This true and honest and upright man did everything possible to make our stay happy and contented. He was then 45 and his wife 37. The young daughter was ~~then~~ 10, but eleven during the same year, 1915. It is unlikely that either the man or his wife are still alive, but the daughter no doubt is, as she would now be 68 and she is still



in Britains quest

For the Gallipoli Peninsula. Late that  
same ~~evening~~ <sup>night</sup> we anchored <sup>some distance</sup>  
<sup>away from</sup> ~~off~~ Gallipoli, and I have also  
no doubt that the <sup>even</sup> ~~if~~ they  
could not hear would have known of  
about our movements. The troops

during that same gorgeous and wonderful  
<sup>evening</sup> ~~evening~~ <sup>evening</sup> sang any number of sentimental  
songs, and among the best to be ~~for~~  
sung and wafted to a Golden <sup>thunder</sup> sky  
of ineffable loveliness, was "When Irish  
Eyes are Smiling". I have never  
since, when listening to this ~~out~~  
song of old Ireland, failed to  
remember that wonderful <sup>late</sup> evening  
of Saturday, 24<sup>th</sup> April, 1915.

Ironically ~~it was~~ only a few hours  
later, many of those young men  
who had taken part in ~~that~~ that  
evening of song were lying dead  
on the beaches and many others

89

had had a limb or two blown  
hither and thither away from  
their bodies. It would seem that  
~~beauty~~ tragedy and happiness are  
always intertwined about the  
lives of vulnerable human beings.

No doubt during the early  
hours of the morning of Sunday, 25<sup>th</sup>  
April, 1915, the ship quietly ~~sailed~~  
upped anchor and moved as near  
as it was wise to do, to the  
Peninsula so that the troops  
could start landing from tiny <sup>tinny</sup> ~~tinny~~ <sup>primitive</sup> ~~primitive~~  
boats <sup>at</sup> ~~by~~ <sup>5.30 am.</sup>

The early moon of the fateful  
day, 25<sup>th</sup> April, 1915 (a Sunday) was  
a golden one. And in addition to a  
perfect sky, was the calm and peace and  
splendour of a wonderful early Spring  
day. The Navy Ship's Officers and their

Crews and the troops who were to ~~embark~~  
land on the beaches were cheerful and  
in good spirits - not of course realizing  
for a moment what a tremendous  
concentration of fire power ~~was~~  
had been prepared for us all about  
the surrounding hill-tops.

Now all was hustle and  
bustle, and the troops were being  
"accommodated" in the hundreds of small  
rowing boats which were to be rowed  
by young snatches <sup>to</sup> within a few  
yards of the beaches.

According to a cheap  
wrist watch which I sported at the  
time, it was dead on the appointed  
time - 5.30 am - when the boats left  
the safety of the ship's side. For a few  
moments only the sound of the boat's  
oars could be heard. Everybody -  
officers and men were quiet, wondering

91.

no doubt, what (if anything) was in store  
for them as soon as the boats had  
grounded. They had not long to wait!  
The boats by the way, had proceeded to the  
beaches in single file (one behind the  
other). Immediately the front line  
boats had touched bottom <sup>and</sup> began to  
diesel back, most of <sup>the cargo</sup> ~~the cargo~~ <sup>falling</sup> ~~falling~~  
to their ~~top~~ <sup>side</sup> in sea water was suddenly  
let loose. The human cargo, all hell was  
suddenly let loose. Most of the troops  
were initially up to their middles in  
water and had to wade about six to a  
dozen yards to the beach. Meanwhile  
however, men all around me <sup>were</sup> ~~were~~ falling  
like unexploded and must have been  
drowned. We were in peril between the  
devil and the deep sea. It seemed that  
in whatever direction we went, backwards  
or forwards, disaster was awaiting us.  
In any case, our orders were to go forward

and forward we went without hesitation.

I myself waded forwards as quickly as I could. With a heavy pack and other equipment it was not easy. My objective was a point in the hillside which even in such fearful circumstances I had noticed just before I jumped out of the boat. But it was not to be.

I was just about to step ashore when the right leg was shattered.

I still do not know what <sup>this</sup> ~~part~~ <sup>it</sup> was, but whatever it was, it had felt like a ton weight. The bullet or shrapnel went through the knee and down the leg out of the calf, and left a shattered bone as well as two gaping wounds. A great effort was made to walk further forward, but it was quite impossible to do so. I fell therefore with my body on the beach and both my legs partly in the

93.

sea. The next few minutes ~~was~~ were pandemonium. Screams and groans could be heard from all points of the compass. A man on my left and another one on my right were both dead. I saw another one - a few yards further along the beach (Cape Hellie was <sup>name of</sup> the landing place) and it looked as if part of both his head and face had been shot away. This man also had breathed his last.

Meanwhile, I was making a superhuman effort to drag my legs - the right was bleeding profusely and was causing me considerable pain - from the sea. And my body had to be dragged upwards as well. These movements had to be made very slowly and gradually, as the Turks were still firing at anything still moving on the beaches. I also managed to take off my pack and to

placed in front of my head to in order to form some sort of protection. But this proved to be my undoing, as always as soon as the pack had been placed into position, the other and left leg was also badly shattered. This wound was the worst. one half of the leg below the knee was wobbling from the other half and I was dreadfully worried about ~~the~~ losing this leg altogether. It had certainly caused considerable trouble throughout my life and it has been because of this leg and the side effects which has arisen as a result of these old wounds that I am still receiving a very generous disability pension.

Soon after the left leg had been hit, I received another wound in the back of the neck. Fortunately for me, a bullet must

95.

have hit the neck and then bounced off. It did no serious damage and the wound was not even recorded in my file held by the Ministry of Pensions.

I was forced to remain in my position upon the edge of the beach from 5.30 a.m. to dusk, when it was decided to send the stretcher bearers to the beach. A bandman from the stretcher bearers found me. He put a rough dressing upon the wounds and with the help of a colleague carried me to a boat which was waiting alongside to take off as many wounded as the boat would hold, and convey us to a Hospital ship which was berthed some distance away.

The ship took on more than a full load of wounded and waited until the early hours of 26th April before



beginning its voyage of mercy to <sup>Alexandria</sup> ~~Cuba~~  
As many wounded as possible (the  
worse cases) were landed at <sup>Alexandria</sup> ~~Kathak~~ and  
sent to the local Hospital. The  
Remainder were shipped to Malta and  
Britain.

I remained at <sup>Alex:</sup> ~~Radio~~  
for approximately two months and  
underwent several operations on  
both legs, but as they <sup>were</sup> not making  
a deal of progress (it was found and  
go about amputating the left leg) it  
was decided to send me home.

Eventually I found myself  
installed in a Hospital <sup>opposite</sup>  
Wandsworth Prison. The patients  
were principally Australians and  
New Zealanders. I remained there for  
approximately nine months having  
undergone further operations and  
suffering from a severe and

91.

dangerous attack of thrombosis. During  
that spell I was sent for a time to  
a fever Hospital in Stockwell.

I was officially discharged  
from the Army on account of wounds  
on 16th January, 1916, but it was  
some time afterwards before I actually  
left Wandsworth Hospital. Only a  
few months <sup>later</sup> I was back again  
in the fever Hospital with suffering  
from yet another acute attack  
of thrombosis.

Meanwhile, having no home  
of my own or relatives - I was obliged  
to take lodgings in St. Honor at a  
small house in a poor district which was  
rented by the Mother and Father of a  
former <sup>and</sup> war friend. There was  
really no adequate room available for  
me, as a large family had to make  
do in <sup>only</sup> two rooms and a kitchen. I left

these lodgings soon after I departed from the Sever Hospital.

I was awarded a hundred per cent war pension for six months but the first payment did not come through until after a few weeks after I had left Wardsworth Hospital. Without also the small back pay sum which was due to me, the first few weeks being as a civilian without a single brass farthing to my name were not particularly happy ones.

Fortunately for me, while I was a patient at Wardsworth, a Higher Executive Admiralty Civil Servant and his wife, learning that nobody came to the Hospital to visit me, took it upon themselves to visit me every Sunday and besides bringing me

99.

Cigarettes and fruit etc, the gentleman (a Mister P.R. Allison) promised to fix me up with a Job as soon as I was fit enough to start work. So, in August, 1916 after I had recovered from a further attack of Thrombosis, I called at Mr Allison's Home in Greff Road, Wardsworth. As a result of that call, I started the following day as a temporary Clerk in the Naval Store Department of the R.N. Air Station, White City, Shepherds Bush, W.12. And, while I was involved from the Admiralty Service as a Higher Executive in October, 1946 at the age of 53, that the Civil Service became my profession. I passed a Civil Service examination at <sup>White</sup> ~~W~~ashington House West London, West <sup>five to six years after the</sup> ~~from after the first~~

first  
World War.

The years between the two  
World Wars were for me somewhat dull  
and uneventful. After the initial award  
of 100% my war pension was reduced to  
20%. In 1927 however following a  
spell of two to three months in  
Richmond Hospital with another  
bad and painful attack of thrombosis,  
it was discovered that a band  
of <sup>thick</sup> varicose veins had appeared at the  
very foot of the stomach. My own  
doctor when he saw them advised  
me to ask for the Ministry of War  
Pensions to arrange for a medical  
examination. I was examined  
in September 1927 and was granted  
an increased pension of 50%.

So far as my lodgings  
were concerned I moved from place  
to place fairly frequently in the

101.

vicinity of North London.

During my Civil Service career,  
I served at the White City, London,  
Nov 2, from August, 1916 until January,  
1920. Then at the R.N. Store Depot,  
Cumberland Market, Albany St.,  
North 8 from January, 1920 until  
September, 1935. at West India  
Dock from Sept 1935 until 1.1.1936.  
at Admiralty, Whitehall, SW1.  
from 1<sup>st</sup> January, 1936 until July,  
1939 - first as Headquarters, then as  
Victoria St and Rumbold St,  
London. at Portland Dockyard  
from July 1939 until March, 1941.  
at London, Naval Base from March  
1941 until August 1944. at  
Sydney, Australia from Sept 44 until  
Aug: 1945. (Here I served as a  
Temporary Lieutenant Commander).  
at Hillindini, Mombasa, East Africa

from Aug: 1945 until Sept: 1946.  
As Admiralty Headquarters in  
Whitehall, London from  
November, 1946 until October, 1948.

Perhaps I should record  
some of the more important  
events of my life which occurred  
between 1918 and 1939 (the year the  
Second world war started) and  
the special memories of the later  
period from 1939 until the  
current year 1977.

To the benefit of any  
unfortunate who has suffered for any  
length of time from kidney trouble, here  
are a few of my own sad experiences.

I first had trouble with my  
right kidney (I did not realise it  
at the beginning) in and around  
January, 1919. Just before I was 24  
years of age. The pain started in the

back - mildly at first and subsequently  
more acutely and more frequently. At  
the outset, I did <sup>not</sup> ~~not~~ notice the  
varying shades of brown of the water  
that I was passing. Here I will  
interpose by saying, that apart  
from my old wounds, I never  
bothered the doctor at all. And I  
did not do so in this instance.

This ever increasing pain in  
the back and in ~~the~~ and about the  
stomach continued almost incessantly  
until 1925 - that is, for six long  
years. From time to time I was  
almost paralysed with <sup>pain</sup> writhing  
about the floor in agony, ~~with this~~  
~~wretched trouble~~, and <sup>at least</sup> even I was  
beginning to notice the thick and  
dark colour of the water. Every now  
and again also, spots of blood and  
globules of blood and puss could be

seen in the water. I must have been stark raving mad or quite ignorant of the seriousness of this disease. Perhaps it was that in these matters of going to the lavatory, I had always been particularly shy, and felt almost ashamed when in company, of relieving myself when it was necessary to do so. Perhaps also, this was the one great defect, in my early days, of the <sup>superiority at that time</sup> teaching methods. All grown up (at least in institutions) seemed to consider it to be "naughty" to speak to children about the way the human body functioned, and the vital importance of keeping the "inside" of the body clean and wholesome by making a daily habit or habits of going to the lavatory immediately the urge to do so became apparent. The necessity also to drink plenty

of liquid - particularly water. The trouble, I am now convinced, started when I was a boy. Service abroad in India and Aden, made matters worse because of the heat and the eternal dust, <sup>encountered</sup> when on route marches and even when performing normal duties in barracks.

This long standing series of agonised back aches and severe internal pains came to a head when I moved <sup>about the 20th Oct of</sup> to <sup>latest days</sup> ~~the~~ <sup>my</sup> ~~new~~ <sup>new</sup> ~~days~~ <sup>days</sup>. The boss of the <sup>latest days</sup> ~~shop~~ had been a trained nurse and one day noticed the colour of my water after I had had to spend a couple of days in bed because of this vile pain. A doctor was called in and soon after I was X-rayed. It was then discovered that two large stones as well as a

number of ~~small~~ spiky small ones were in the kidney.

A few weeks later in June 1925, the stones were removed by an operation in the Great Northern Hospital, Holloway, N.Y. After a fortnight I was sent to the Hospital's Recovery Home in Gloucester (a lovely place) on the outer edge of North London. Three weeks after that, the Hospital authorities arranged for me to go to one of their Holiday Homes in Clacton.

This was a wonderful service, and a full three months expired before I reported back to the Am. Store Depot, Albany St, Cumberland Market, N.W.1. for duty.

I had no further kidney trouble until 1938 - 13 years after

the operation. One day when serving at Admiralty, three once well known pains returned. They were so bad, that the Admiralty Authorities sent me home to North London in an official ambulance. Late that night I passed a stone and fortunately the pain immediately eased. I was able to return to duty the following morning.

My doctor however, advised me to have the kidneys X-rayed again, but it proved to be "all clear". To be on the safe side however, I made an appointment to visit the Harley St. Rooms of the Surgeon ~~Mr~~ (Mr Kenneth Walker) who had removed the stones thirteen years before. The Specialists gave me certain advice about what to do, which incidentally coincided with my own long standing routine.

But this was only a further

Temporary respite from this "second hand" kidney of mine. Some years later, in 1942, when serving at R.N. Naval Base, at Londonderry, this kidney gave me more trouble. Nevertheless, I did not report sick as this was an anxious time. The 'U' Boats were still operating in the Atlantic with great and even increasing effect. By skilful resting whilst still working at full pressure, I managed ~~I managed~~ to subdue this bane of my life throughout the remainder of service at Londonderry.

In August, 1944, I was appointed to Sydney, Australia, and was given a temporary Naval rank as a Lieutenant Commander. Taking the first and only holiday during the war, I went home to England, but this much needed break was marred by the return of the kidney pains which

were worse than ever. Once again however, by will power and a super human effort, I surmounted the bodily ill. But this scourge never again left me for long periods at a time.

Eventually, when I returned to England after my spell of duty abroad had ended in October, 1946, the kidney was removed in Charing Cross Hospital in March, 1947 - not nearly 25 1/2 years ago.

I will refer to this painful period of my life later on in this autobiography.

The second major event between the war <sup>(a serious attack of thrombosis)</sup> which I have already described earlier.

In 1928 on 15th October, I married. The marriage lasted until 24th February, 1962 when my beloved <sup>wife</sup> died at the ~~then~~ age of 78.

During the Spring of 1932, I decided to buy a house. I had already lost virtually every penny I possessed - gave over \$2000 operating on the Stock Exchange. I began this form of gambling just unfortunately, as the the World Industrial Slump was beginning. It had taken me ten years to accumulate this capital, by working all day in the Civil Service job and from 6.30 pm to 10.30 pm (sometimes much later) as an orchestral musician.

From the Stock Exchange disaster I managed to retrieve a mere \$250, and this was put down as a deposit on a desirable three bedroomed house situated at 6, Chestnut Avenue, Crown Point, N.Y. The house, ever then, in early May, 1932, was valued at \$1085 fwhold.

III.

I lived there with my wife and nephew Compton until I was transferred from Admiralty, London to H.M. Dockyard, Portland just before the second world war broke out in September, 1939.

In 1930 I bought four plots of <sup>(at Millenary, Exeter)</sup> land for ~~at~~ approx \$150 in all. To day these plots would have been worth a small fortune. Instead, I sold them about three years later for \$180.

~~But~~ 1926 was <sup>the year of</sup> of course the general strike. In those days "Pickets" did not operate so widely and effectively as they do to day, otherwise the Nations business in 1926 could have been brought to a full stop. As it was, ~~some~~ business men Volunteered and others worked in the Railways as Drivers and Conductors, at Smithfield



in the meat markets and in the docks etc. thus blunting the edge of the strike weapon. The miners who started it all, were, in the end, almost starved into surrender.

1929 was the year in which trade slumped all over the world and its disastrous effects on Britain were the hunger marches which took place in the 1920's. Llewellyn Jones, a prominent Labour M.P. and a former Minister led <sup>some of</sup> these hunger marches from ~~Barnes~~ to London.

1935 was the Silver Jubilee year of the reign of King George V.

In 1936 King George V died and his son Edward Prince of Wales came to the throne. <sup>King</sup> Edward VIII abdicated later the same year (1936) in order to marry a ~~miss~~ <sup>Miss</sup> Wallis an American divorcee. King Edward

113.

VIII never again was permitted to live in England. He made his home in France, and a second home in America where he was always a popular figure.

King Edward VIII died in May, 1972 at the age of 77 and was buried in his native country. A few years before his death, King Edward VIII wrote a book and called it "A King's Story" and a very interesting story it ~~was~~ is.

In 1935 also, when a man named Hitler was becoming a force to be reckoned with in Germany and was aided and abetted by the Italian Dictator, Mussolini, Italy invaded Abyssinia on the flimsiest of pretexts, and conquered the country.

The Abyssinian crisis was the start for me of thirteen years of ultra arduous duties which concluded in 1948

14  
with my leaving the Admiralty Service  
on health grounds at the then early  
age of 53.

1938 was the year during  
which the British Prime Minister  
Neville Chamberlain made his  
historic <sup>visit</sup> to the mountain fortress  
home of Herr Hitler, the Dictator  
and Nazi leader of Germany,  
whose ~~megalomania~~ megalomania  
drove him on to try and conquer the  
world.

1939 saw the commencement  
(3<sup>rd</sup> September 1939) of the second world  
war. In July of that year I was  
transferred from the Rainbridge  
Street, London, branch of the Admiralty  
Headquarters to HM Dockyard, Portland,  
Dorset. This meant having to let  
(I could not sell it) my house in  
London in which I had lived for

115  
seven to eight years with my wife  
and Nephew - Cum - son. The latter  
who had already joined the Territorials  
and was a permanent Civil Servant  
serving with the then Board of Education  
was called up. (Incidentally, this had  
with a promising career ahead of him  
(then only 19) was subsequently killed  
in action in June, 1942 in the retreat  
to Blamein.)

After living in a small  
Hotel, I decided to take a risk  
by buying a ~~two~~ chalet bungalow  
and a large Garage in the process of  
being built, a month or two after  
I reported for duty at Portland.

The wife and myself took  
possession in January, 1940. It was a  
two bedroomed bungalow - Spanish and  
roomy and with 'upstairs' accommodation.  
The Garage was a large double one! The

"garden" covered three quarters of an acre.

The bungalow was an excellent home. Immediately one opened the front door, one stepped into a huge lounge. It was even larger than a normal sized lounge, because ~~a fair part~~ of it had been designed for two rooms, but we decided to have instead, one large room and the builder had <sup>had</sup> no objection.

As soon as one entered the front door one could look down a passage way through other rooms, when the doors were left ajar, right the way through across the fields and the cliffs and on to the sea.

In the summer time when the sun was shining, it was a glorious view and during the whole of the eighteen months I lived there, this slice of beachfront never pulled. & This

117.

magnificent "picture" helped also to ease the considerable worry occasioned by the overwhelming volume of work which became necessary during the early months of the war.

In addition to the remarkable lounge there were a bathroom cum toilet, a fair sized modern kitchen two ~~other~~ rooms on one side of the passage, <sup>and</sup> a large dining cum drawing room.

Regarding the two rooms, we got the builder to take down the wall dividing the rooms. Instead, we had a sliding partition fitted. We hardly ever however used this partition. So therefore we enjoyed the use of yet another spacious lounge.

There was a large and rather tall terrace outside the back door, and steps had been made in order to reach the garden itself.

Upstairs, there was a loft which ran the full ~~width~~<sup>width</sup> of the building. In this loft the Electric light meters were kept. Also "up above" were two large bedrooms - very roomy and spacious. <sup>the second</sup> One of them was furnished just in case the boy was able to spend a few days with us from his unit which was stationed temporarily somewhere in Berkshire.

Undoubtedly, it was almost a dream home. The first half of the Garden ~~was~~ (all the ground was rough and had never been tended before this and other bungalows had been built on the estate) was made into a lovely lawn and there were borders of all types of flowers. The other half was made into a kitchen Garden or something to that effect. In that half, potatoes, peas, cabbages,

beans, marrow and other vegetables were grown.

In the first place, it was necessary to employ a Gardener full time. And we were lucky, inasmuch ~~as~~<sup>as</sup> the man concerned was something of an expert.

There was also a large Garage, and just about this time, or a little before ~~the~~ war with Germany had actually been declared, my wife was beginning to learn to drive a car. She was getting on fairly well when <sup>the</sup> war started. Alas, due to restrictions, and the subsequent strict rationing of petrol, the project had to be abandoned.

In September, 1940, we enjoyed our first kitchen garden benefits. Part of the Garage was used to store the bumper harvest for the initial year. There were first rate stocks of new potatoes and every other vegetable

and we had had a good supply of potatoes. After attending to our needs and supplying our immediate neighbours with some of this largesse from Nature or rather Mother Earth, we sold the remainder of our supplies to the local tradesmen.

We were not permitted however to get our home in perfect order in absolute peace.

In July <sup>1940</sup> this area, particularly Portland Dockyard had to undergo a series of particularly vicious air raids from the Nazi air force. We were strafed and dived bombed by German bombers both by day and <sup>by</sup> night. A Portland Harbour Depot ship was sunk by one of these dive bombers. In fact the whole area of the Dockyard-ships, buildings and workshops were harassed continuously by these devilish

machines of the air.

One of the R.M. Ratings serving on the Sunken Ship was afterwards awarded a VC for conspicuous gallantry under fire. It is still clear in my memory also <sup>concerning</sup> the considerable number of times the civilian staff were bombed and strafed by machine gun fire by the pilots <sup>or their assistants</sup> of these Stukas when we had to make a dash from ~~an~~ a make-shift and exposed office building to the main (old established) building in order to seek reasonable shelter. ~~It~~ They were night-time dashes.

The night raids were always as bad. The wretched planes would be buzzing around all through the night not only with a desire to destroy those on the ground but to prevent anybody getting a night's sleep.

A stick of eight bombs were

dropped late one evening about 100 yds  
away from the Bangalore in a field, and  
their impact shook the Bangalore  
shrub to its foundations.

These daily and nightly raids  
continued right through July,  
August and part of September and  
they certainly did a lot of damage  
and also from the point of view of  
loss output.

We had lived in this lovely  
home <sup>for 16 months</sup> with its equally glorious surroundings,  
when the first blow came.

I was suddenly <sup>(in March, 1941)</sup> transferred,  
upon promotion, to the R.N. Base  
at Londonderry, Northern Ireland.  
This was a vital western Approaches  
Base. Myself, together with  
several other members of the permanent  
Admiralty Staff, were made responsible  
for starting up (from scratch) a Naval

123.

store supply depot in this area of Northern  
Ireland. And it proved to be a colossal of  
an undertaking.

We first had to rent Office  
accommodation <sup>and</sup> large Storehouse  
accommodation. Local Irish staff had to  
be employed and trained. And the  
necessary and urgent war work to be  
got under way without delay.

This meant buying <sup>Office</sup> furniture  
wherever he could get the stuff  
and stocking up with large supplies  
of Naval Stores which comprised a  
vast number of individual items.

An initial supply of Stores  
were shipped over from England, but  
these to start with, were merely a few  
bits and supplementary items had to be  
obtained locally. ~~whereas~~ <sup>Grounding</sup>, at  
the early stage of the war, was in short  
supply.

The Admiralty were requisitioning  
trawlers from all over Britain and  
when they were made ready for war  
service and joined the R. Navy as  
Great net boats they were sent to  
Londonderry. And when they arrived  
they had to (in most cases at this  
period of the war) to be ~~completely~~<sup>completely</sup>  
fitted out with navy equipment  
and with a full complement of ~~Naval~~  
Naval Stores. This ~~made~~ increased  
the pressures on the staff of the  
R.N. Store Dept very considerably,  
and with the naval administration  
staff constantly pressing us to  
get these ex-merchant vessels  
stored up, our days and nights were  
full to overflowing.

Meanwhile at Portland,  
my wife who was coming to Ireland  
to join me, had unfortunately to go

125

to London to nurse a sick elder Sister.  
My wife continued to live with and nurse  
her sister, until the latter died in late  
1943.

In the interim also, our lovely  
Bangalow at Portland had had to be  
let, and I never, alas, saw it again. It  
was eventually sold to the sitting tenant  
at the pre-war price. Today, in 1972  
it would be worth £10,000 at least.  
That was what my war service in  
Ireland, Australia and East Africa  
did for me.

The house in London had also  
to be sold to the sitting tenants in  
1951 at the pre-war price.

The total sum of money which  
I received after selling both the Bangalow  
and the London property was short by  
£1,000 of the amount I required in 1952  
in order to buy me a third house

16.  
birds 50 years before.

Such is the luck and the gamble of life. And to cap it all, as I have stated in the earlier part of this Chronicle, I was invalided from the Admiralty service in 1918 at the age of 53 with a considerably reduced pension and ~~the~~ money-award due to all Civil Servants incidentally upon retirement.

Back to Londonderry!

I spent three years and five months at this Western Approaches Base. They were weeks of hard slog both by day - and for me, by night also. Together with my colleagues, I saw the whole organisation, starting from nothing, build itself up into a highly efficient and successful offensive unit, which eventually was

127.  
able to defeat and rout the menace of the German "U" boats in the Atlantic Ocean. And the Naval Store Department at Londonderry played a major part in this victory.

The merchant vessels plying between Londonderry and Halifax and escorted with great skill by the Royal Fleet of frigates, destroyers, Corvettes and so on did excellent work. And by the time 1944 had arrived, the losses suffered by the merchant vessels, as the result of "U" boat forays, had dropped to negligible numbers. In fact, when the invading armada from the Southern coast of England had sailed across to France in June, 1944, in order to drive the Germans away out of France with the aid of the Russian from the East, little more was heard of the German submarines.



66  
Although, only a small permanent Admiralty Civil Servant I have always felt proud of the fact that I was in at the start of this fight against the North Atlantic German Submarines which were then menacing our shipping routes across the North Atlantic.

In August, 1944, I was again transferred on further promotion to a Deputy Naval Store Officer (a higher executive officer) to Sydney, Australia. For this appointment, I was given a temporary <sup>(which has been mentioned earlier)</sup> Naval Commission with the rank of a Lt Commander, R.N.V.R.

At Sydney also, I was one of a nucleus of permanent Naval Store Staff responsible for opening up a British Naval Store Department. And the story of starting

129  
up afresh began once more. And again, for twelve long months, I dedicated myself to work and cut out pleasures of all sorts exactly as I had done for 3 1/2 years at hardihood.

During the first few months and before some of the senior staff arrived from England, I had to deal with Staff matters. Local Australians had to be employed and trained.

~~Each~~ Separate Section changed, wages and salaries to be dealt with and all the hundred and <sup>three</sup> ~~one~~ details to be organised. and furthermore I was obliged to spend hours dealing with Australian <sup>Trade</sup> Union Leaders - a headache indeed.

~~In~~ In August, 1945 when the far Eastern war was on the verge of coming to an end, I was transferred yet again to Kikindini, Mombasa.

East Africa. At Kilindini I was  
to take charge of a Naval Store  
Depot.

Before however, I continue  
with my Kilindini stint, may I  
record that I had made many  
friends among both the British and  
the Australian Staff at Sydney. And  
I was given a rousing farewell when  
I finally said my piece. Many  
useful gifts were heaped upon me  
including a large album containing  
the signatures and farewell notes of  
almost every member of the Staff.

The album, I regret to say,  
was lost together with several other  
treasured articles when moving from  
Australia to Kilindini.

For some months after my  
departure from the Antipodes, I

131.

received many letters but as time  
went by, these communications stopped.  
It was the same procedure when I  
moved from Londonderry. They were  
all good friends - for the time being.  
Then, as ships pass in the night, so  
too did the human associations of  
Londonderry, Sydney and Kilindini.  
And perhaps this is as it should be.  
Time sped away rapidly, and the  
passing years introduced new faces, new  
friends and sometimes more new scenes  
and places. And then again we all  
become older. Matters we once deemed  
urgent and important are viewed in  
a calmer light. Then we smile and  
reflect upon the way we were wont when  
young and enthusiastic - to worry ourselves  
viciously ~~into~~ our graves over maddening  
minor troubles we <sup>would not</sup> ~~put~~ <sup>now</sup> in our maturity,  
consider to be of <sup>any</sup> ~~great~~ importance whatsoever.

Kilindini, Mombasa was indeed a brand new experience.

The journey from Sydney had been made by air. As the first leg of the war had ended by the time I reached Perth - a day's flying journey across the Australian Continent - the original urgency concerning my early arrival at Kilindini had eased somewhat. I was therefore able in most cases to stay a day or two at most of the stopping places. At Perth, I stopped for only 24 hours - putting up at a Hotel for one night. Unfortunately, it rained during the whole of the 24 hours.

I therefore saw little or nothing of Perth. We left by air the following morning for Colombo, Ceylon and arrived there during the evening of the same day.

I stayed at Ceylon for about five days. (Incidentally, before we arrived

133.

at Colombo, the plane had to make a landing on one of the Maldivic Islands for refuelling purposes. There, whilst the refuelling job was put into operation, we enjoyed refreshments in the R.A.F.'s quarters. So although it seemed to be a beautiful little Island, it must have been a pretty lonely spot in which to live for the R.A.F. unit based there.

Within one hour, the plane was on its way again to Colombo.

I was accommodated in a barn of a place at Colombo, which was specially reserved for British Military officers from all three services.

What I did see of Colombo, I liked. But it was much too hot to tempt us to wander too far afield. In any case, I had an attack of kidney pain and took the opportunity to pass as much as possible. It was interesting to

4.  
exchange experience with other British officers, all of whom had seen active service in various theatres of war and were now waiting for transit places to carry them back to the old Country.

Eventually, I too, had to bid farewell to my temporary companions when I caught a plane for Karachi - my next ~~for~~ stopping point. It was an uneventful flight and the pilot brought us to our destination about five pm. The same evening, I stayed in a transit camp under canvas with other officers for four or five days. It was the same old Karachi I <sup>had</sup> known in my youth, naturally hot, dusty, dry and full of smog. The kabir wallah, the sweet wallah and the spair wallah were

135.

still plugging their trades as in the days of yore, and the wandering itinerant was also a never ending figure to be reckoned with.

I ~~was~~ always made friends with the locale and endeavored to absorb something of their ~~own~~ culture and fatalism. Also, it pleased me to know that I had not entirely forgotten a goodly smattering of ~~the~~ Hindustani which had stood me in good stead as a boy some 30 to 40 years before, when serving as a bandsman at this same Karachi and at Malton in the Punjab, North India - now of course part of Pakistan.

From Karachi I flew on to Bahrain in the Persian Gulf. Bahrain was hotter even than Karachi. I and my plane companions stopped one night only which was more than sufficient for

me, as the heat was indeed ~~still~~  
sifting not only during the day but  
at night also. Early the following  
morning we took off for ~~Suez Island~~  
~~in the Gulf - the same which had~~  
~~escaped me where we remained for~~  
~~one more night, before moving on~~  
to Cairo. ~~I have just remembered~~  
~~that the name of the second island~~  
~~was Basra. Basra <sup>in Iraq</sup> <sup>also</sup> was in the a~~  
tropical zone and the colossal heat at  
noon sapped everybody's energy. It was  
almost an effort even to move in the  
mid day middle Eastern Sun.

I was extremely thankful  
~~when~~ we moved off for Cairo, very  
early, around 4.30 am, the next  
morning. The sun was already  
beginning its ascent into the Eastern  
Mediterranean sky when the plane  
rose from the Salmae. As that

137.

time in the morning, it was cool  
and truly delightful. I cannot recall  
whether we were travelling in a  
Quantas air line plane or in a  
plane of the B.O.A.C. But whatever  
air line the plane belonged to was  
very comfortable and the service was  
excellent. Practically all of the passengers  
were Service men and most of them  
were on the way home.

After a grand trip, the plane  
touchdown at the Cairo airport  
some time during the afternoon. After  
the preliminaries concerning passports etc  
were over, I together with several of  
my co-travellers booked in at the  
Shepherds Hotel. Again suffering from  
kidney ~~trouble~~ <sup>trouble</sup> ~~for~~ <sup>for</sup> ~~hours~~ later, I made  
arrangements to leave Shepherds two  
days later, in order to travel on to  
Helopolis where there was a substantial

8.  
service transit establishments for officers  
on the move. It was a glorious place,  
infinitely superior to Shepherd Hotel.

I stayed at this excellent  
half way house as it were, for  
nearly ten days and I was able  
to lead a quiet and peaceful interlude  
at this delightful spot whilst the  
ragging pain in my right kidney  
was simmering down, until the  
next plane became available to  
convey myself and several other  
officers, including a few Americans,  
to Khartoum in the then Anglo Egyptian  
Sudan.

The Khartoum Hotel at  
which the travellers stayed was <sup>virtually</sup> full,  
and consequently I was obliged to  
share a room with an American  
Army Colonel - a regular army  
officer. He was a huge man

1299  
physically. He was <sup>also</sup> an interesting man,  
and regaled me <sup>with</sup> not without a deal  
of dry humour, <sup>with</sup> stories of his youth  
in Alabama and of his days in  
America's top military academy.

We dined together at dinner,  
and the conversation flowed along right  
throughout the meal with nearly all  
the talk coming from the gigantic  
American.

Unfortunately I never saw this  
fine and happy <sup>American</sup> <sup>man</sup> again after I  
left the Hotel early the following  
day to catch the plane which would  
<sup>take me to Djibouti</sup> ~~convey me to my~~ <sup>final</sup> destination -  
Khartoum in ~~Sudan~~, East Africa.

I met many fine men in that  
way during the second world war. Men,  
I would have been delighted, in normal  
circumstances, to have made permanent  
friends. War time however is usually a

10.  
period when "here today and gone tomorrow" is the usual pattern of a Service man's life.

I had spent one night only at Khartoum.

The plane arrived at Kisumu in Kenya Colony during the mid-afternoon of 30th August, 1945.

Here again my memory has failed me concerning the type of place Kisumu was. During the journey from Khartoum however, the plane did pass over parts of the lovely Lake Victoria. Parts of the wonderful lake is in Kenya Colony and parts in Tanganyika.

It was a one night stop only, at Kisumu, and on, early in the morning, ~~we~~ travelled to my final destination - Kilindini, Mombasa, East Africa. The air

141.  
trip as with all the others had been a marvellous one. En route, I got a view of that mighty Mountain - Mount Kilimanjaro which is in Tanganyika.

During the afternoon of 31st August, 1945, the plane landed at the Mombasa airport. And from there an R.N. Store Depot car was waiting to pick me up and take me to the depot at Kilindini.

After a few days, the Naval Store Officer (now a Commander) who I was relieving, left Kilindini for Sydney, Australia and I was now in full charge of the depot. I was seeing of course, as were the heads of the other departments of the dockyard, i.e. the backyard departments, Electrical Department etc, under the overall command of the East

2  
African Station - a then Commodore  
Sir Phillip Dower - Smythe. In view  
of the transfer of <sup>the</sup> Far Eastern Fleet  
from Kikindini to Colombo after  
the Japanese were defeated, Kikindini  
or the East African Station had  
been considerably reduced in status.  
The former Commander of the  
Base was a Vice Admiral or  
Rear Admiral.

my <sup>office</sup> staff consisted of a  
nucleus of European white civil servants  
and Asians and Africans. The outside  
staff (the Storehouses members) were  
the white Storehousemen in charge  
of each over particular Storehouses  
plus an Inspector and a Foreman.  
All the remainder - hundreds of them  
were also Asians including Indians  
and Arabs and Africans.

The approximate value

143.

of the Naval Stores which I was  
responsible for was something over  
£1,000,000.

Between October and December  
of 1945, a signal arrived from  
Admiralty, Whitehall, London stating  
that the Naval Store Department  
was to be closed down on 31<sup>st</sup>  
August 1946.

The Naval Stores had to be  
transferred over to the appropriate  
controlling body of the Kenji Government  
Department concerned. This was a terrific  
job! With only a minute number of  
Admiralty men (only three of us at the  
finish) - myself, my deputy and a  
Chief Officer, we had to arrange  
for a comprehensive stock taking  
and to devise a first class accounting  
system, as well <sup>as</sup> its rate and  
value each single item of the large



and valuable stocks. And we had as well to contend with the pilfering of stocks by several of the African employees.

Four to six months after Admiralty instructions had come through to close the Depot, a R.D.P. of the Naval Store Department at home was sent out to Kikindini to find out what progress was being made.

The visit was made in April, 1946 - four months before the show was due to come to an end.

The officer concerned was a Deputy Director of Naval Stores. This gentleman stayed for a fortnight, and after voicing his satisfaction at the progress made and receiving further instructions he bade me farewell and good luck. And I speeded all the good luck that was to be had.

Suffering almost daily as I now was, with ever increasing kidney pains, I needed all my "quite" strength and patience to finish the work in the four months now left for completion.

And I am glad to report that this colossal effort proved successful. All stores and records were handed over to the East African Governors Conference body on the due date - 31st August, 1946. Also, my assistants and myself obtained local jobs for practically every member of the Asian and African Staff.

A report on the history of the Depot which the Director of Naval Stores required as well was duly completed and despatched to <sup>London</sup> ~~London~~ with a further report upon the closure.

A few of the Asian Staff were left in the office at Kikindini in

order to help the East African Governors  
Conference body following the U.K. Staff's  
departure.

Early in September, 1946, I  
arranged for all members of the White  
Staff to be sent home by ship. I  
myself had to remain for a couple  
of weeks longer in order to give some  
assistance to an Assistant Director of  
Naval Stores who had arrived at Delimiton  
from Colombo for the purpose of attending a top Military  
conference at which a decision would be  
made about the possibility of <sup>East Africa</sup> ~~Kenya~~  
~~being~~ a substitute in place of Egypt  
- as a major military base.

I kept the Department  
cal temporarily to drive the Director  
around while he was waiting for the  
top brass of the three services to arrive.

As however a ship in the  
harbour was due to sail for Britain

147.

on 21<sup>st</sup> September, 1946, I took the  
opportunity of booking my passage and  
sailed in her.

It had been thirteen months  
of hard ~~employment~~ graft at this lovely  
East African Station and I said  
goodbye to it with mixed feelings.  
The climate was delightful and I  
had made many friends among  
the local community. And I sometimes  
wished I had been able to spend the  
rest of my life in that wonderful  
spot. But it was not to be. And  
perhaps in view of subsequent events, it was  
just as well.

Up to this point, I had done  
most of my travelling by air. But  
with my <sup>freedom</sup> ~~trouble~~, a journey by sea was  
a respite change.

It was a grand trip, made  
as it was, with my mind <sup>free</sup> ~~free~~ of worry



me of Port Said when I had first seen  
 this Port some 36 years before, when I  
 was a boy of 15 sailing to India in the  
 old S.S. "Dewar". Hundreds of small  
 boats loaded with merchandise of all  
 kinds were dancing about the waves  
 and around the ship flying for trade  
 among the troops on board and a  
 lively trade they all did. The articles -  
 fruit, chocolate, cakes and all sorts  
 of Italian Souvenirs were placed in small  
 baskets which were hoisted up to the  
 keel. Then the money to be paid for the  
 goods was wrapped up by the purchaser  
 placed in the basket and let down  
 with the aid of a long piece of  
 wire or tough cord to the owner of  
 the little boat supplying the articles.

This period of bazaar trading  
 and haggling in the harbour engaged  
 in by the boatmen and the troops, was

Book two

Autobiography of an ex Workhouse and Poor Law School Boy.

Continued:

Great fun. The young Italian footmen brought by the Mediterranean Sun were all gay and as happy-quinning and showing lovely white teeth - as sand boys. And before they left - a little before dusk had set in - about twelve of the youngest of them regaled the troops with several Neapolitan ~~love~~ love songs. The songs were beautifully rendered and sang as only Italians can do - with great depth of feeling. At the conclusion, the lads waved and cheered and said their farewells - in Italian. But before they actually departed, coins of gold were generously thrown into the boats by the troops. The subsequent scramble for the money was like a tough Rugby <sup>Scrum</sup> ~~scrum~~ and the troops cheered long and loudly.

It had been a wonderful and entertaining afternoon and everybody enjoyed it all, including the Ship's Captain and all his crew.

We set sail again late the same evening. On our departure from Naples we did manage to obtain a long distance view of the Island of Capri. We also saw Vesuvius which was in eruption. The red glow at the top of the Volcano stood out like a beacon in the darkening surroundings.

It was a sight not to be missed and was awe-inspiring. Stromboli also was aglow, and those

Two unforgettable experiences alone were enough to stock the memory for review in the later and calmer years of life.

On just Malta and Gibraltar were this smooth sailing vessel belonging to a South African line. The time spent on deck going through this glorious Mediterranean sea were hours ~~of numerous~~ ~~hours~~. For me, time seemed to stand still as it always did, whenever I was fortunate enough to be provided with the luxury of travelling by boat through this enchanting blue sea. It seems to me that this sea is the one touch of heaven in this otherwise heathenish world of ours.

In due time - on 18th October, 1946 to be precise, the ship at last arrived at Liverpool. And down to catch I promptly came after this wonderful dream of a voyage, which had lasted for twenty one happy carefree days. But the glorious weather we had been blessed with right throughout the trip continued even in cold old England.

After eventually passing through the Customs, I took train from Liverpool to Waterloo.

This last journey too, proved to be enjoyable. The weather was sunny but a little

nippy. From the carriage windows I saw just before twilight descended upon the land, one of the most beautiful and gorgeous sunsets I had ever seen before, and I had enjoyed a few of these tropical evening glories in East Africa. I kept my eyes glued upon this scene of magic until the twilight and the eventual blackness completely blotted out this <sup>particular</sup> form of loveliness.

The train arrived at Waterloo about 7pm. As I was carrying two very large and full packed travelling bags, I telephoned the Admiralty and asked whether a car could be sent along to convey me to my home in South West London and this was done.

I was reunited with my beloved wife after an absence of something over two years - 30 minutes later - at 7.30pm. So many have mentioned that I had seen my wife only twice since March, 1941. The other occasion being in late August, 1944 while on a spot of leave before flying off to Australia.

My wife had been left the possession of an old house occupied by her sister who had died in 1943, but the property had not yet been paid for. Eventually, what I was

servings in East Africa, she sold this ancient house to a large laundry concern, which had already bought up every other house in that particular road. No profit was made as a result of the sale. This property was situated in Highbury, North London.

The wife had a cousin living in Norbury, S.W. London ~~at~~ whom she was wont to visit most week-ends while I was away. And through that association she managed to obtain two rooms, a kitchen and use of the Bathroom. The owner of the house was away in the Army doing duty somewhere in Britain. And this was the place to which I was driven from Waterloo Station on 10th October, 1946.

The following day, 11th October, 1946, I reported to the Admiralty and after being congratulated on the good work I had performed abroad as well as closing down the Kilindini Naval Store depot, I was granted a month's leave.

During that period, the wife and myself discussed the possibility of making an effort to recover possession of my house in North London.

But we were told that there would be no possibility whatsoever of getting possession. There were five adults living in my house at a small and uneconomic rent.

We therefore continued to live in our cramped surroundings until 1951, when I sold my house to the Sitting Quarts at the pre-war price. And the tenants wanted the property at a price even lower than the pre-1939 price.

Meanwhile, when I returned to the Admiralty to resume duty after a month's holiday, I collapsed only a few moments following my arrival. I was at once conveyed to Charing Cross Hospital. I remained there for two days, and was then sent home. On the third day I again reported for duty and continued with the job until nine days before Xmas, 1946 when I was again taken seriously ill. A few days later I was X-rayed at Charing Cross Hospital and it was discovered that I had what is called a "blown" kidney.

I fell sick again and remained at home until I was called to the Hospital for an operation on 3rd March, 1947. The actual removal of the diseased organ took place three days later.

I left hospital on 24th March, 1947 still weak and not particularly fit. Also, the Hospital doctor advised me to have all my teeth extracted

which I did the following month ~~under~~ ~~the~~ ~~dentist~~ ~~was~~. The whole of the top teeth were extracted on one day, and the bottom too about a week later. After the second extraction, I caught a chill in the game and the ensuing fortnight was one of torment.

At the beginning of May, 1947, I resumed duty at Admiralty - toothless. Apparently I ~~must~~ must have presented an unhealthy picture, because after only one week I was granted two to three weeks' leave.

<sup>(wife and I)</sup> We stopped at Brighton and in spite of my toothlessness, I managed to consume the food placed in front of me but not without some difficulty and a considerable amount of hamour to the evident delight of other guests.

The holiday was an enjoyable one thanks to the great help and attention given to me by my darling wife, and the weather had been well nigh perfect.

I felt a new man when I got back to London and I was in fact become accustomed to using my gums as a substitute for ~~teeth~~ teeth.

The day before I resumed work at the Admiralty, the dentist fitted a temporary

set of teeth in my mouth. The first day with these ~~false~~ dentures slipping about all over the place (I almost swallowed the lot on at least two occasions within the initial two hours of fitting) I felt like a contraptionist. My powers of speech even were affected, and when the time arrived for luncheon, the ordeal started all over again. The manufactured "ossification" played merry hell whenever they came into contact with a piece of meat or even the soft cooked potato substance. Up and down they all went like a yo-yo and the upper and the lower sets changing places in an already sore mouth like musical chairs. And an Admiralty colleague who was sitting opposite to me in the Admiralty luncheon room, held his sides in his uncontrolled gey in what, no doubt to him, was one of the funniest spectacles he had ever beheld. And if I coughed (as "psychologically" I was compelled to from time to time) the mouth had to be covered with an handkerchief for fear of these biting monsters flying out and hitting somebody in the face.

I had <sup>to</sup> contend with these "fighting maniacs" for at least ~~(a)~~ <sup>(a)</sup> week. At first, I had decided in my rage, to have the damn teeth in the dustbin, but I persevered and



eventually persuaded the dumb things to do their job properly. A permanent set was substituted about a month later, but after the first making trouble this set was more amenable.

Another and much better set was fitted in 1949 and this batch I am still using.

I started work after the holiday on 9th June, 1947 and continued until I was <sup>invalided</sup> sixteenth months later - in October, 1948.

After almost 32 1/2 years service - <sup>approx 26 1/2 counting for pension</sup>, I was granted a pension as a Deputy Naval Store Officer (Higher Executive Officer) of £235 a year together with a money grant of £750.

My age at retirement was 53 1/2 years.

Having had the semi-freedom of working at various out stations as virtually my own boss for approximately nine years, working at Headquarters cut me down to size as it were. There appeared to be little <sup>or scope</sup> outlet for personal initiative and the channels thro' which one's work had to pass seemed to be endless. In addition to this unhappiness, the latent reaction of the

immense mental strain of years of incessant work beginning at the time of the Abyssinian crisis of 1935, together with the ever present kidney seachase, was now coming home to roost. The nerves were in shreds, and a serious breakdown appeared to be imminent. My dear beloved wife could see what was happening. She discussed the position with me during the afternoon of one Sunday in July, 1948. And as a result of that conference, I decided with Mrs Babie's full backing, to apply for a medical examination with a view to being <sup>invalided</sup> from the service.

This was done on 19th July, 1948. On 26th August, <sup>1948</sup> I was medically examined at a house in Downing St, and was sent home the same day with the assurance that I would be <sup>invalided</sup>.

The actual date was 4th <sup>or 5th</sup> October, 1948 and that was the date my career with the Admiralty ended. ~~I was almost exactly 53 1/2 years old.~~

Both my <sup>and</sup> wife were considerably relieved in spite of the fact that we would have to live on a reduced budget. Nevertheless we were both contented and happy and more than glad that the mental strain and the constant separations from each other were over.

I did obtain a small pay office job

some years later, but it was simply not worth doing. By the time I had paid my fees to the City and my lunches, plus the extra income tax, the amount left over was negligible. Also, although it was a part-time job, i.e. 10 am to 5 pm, I unobtainably gave very many <sup>extra</sup> hours of work to the firm concerned without any additional payments. So I relinquished the job. My wife never wanted me to take it on in any case.

I consider that a searchlight comes very well be directed by the Press on this side of Industry. There is absolutely no doubt whatsoever that firms treat retired people who work for them very shabbily indeed, so far as payments <sup>in</sup> concerned. That is why that generally, <sup>speaking</sup> very few men and women who have retired from a good post, rarely, if ever, seek further temporary employment. The money they are offered, is little short of an insult.

We possessed a certain amount of Savings to help us along. These, plus the £1085 (the pre-war price) I received from the sale of my Gordon House in 1951 decided us to buy a three bedroomed house only five minutes' walk away from our present cramped quarters. The house needed a considerable amount of repairs. Also,

it was then in March 1952, fifty years old. We were obliged to move, as the owner of the house in which we had been staying, was about to get married.

We moved to the House situated at 65, Wilmore Avenue, Norbury, S.W.16 on 7th March, 1952. The then price was £2500. In addition the Solicitor etc fees came to approx £100, repairs to £230, and we also paid £90 for some furniture left behind by the seller. So in all, right at the start, the cost of the house reached up to £2920.

We lived in this house until November, 1959 and they were happy years on the whole. The wife played bridge a lot and became a prominent member of the local Women's Conservative branch. She also did good work for Doctor Barnardos Homes and was presented with a medal on the anniversary of either her 25th or 30th year of service to this cause.

For myself, I joined a Bowling Club, but did not play very often as I was having a good deal of trouble with old war wounds.

The house was a large one. All the rooms were spacious and the Hall and Kitchen seemed to be ~~abnormally~~ abnormally large. There were gardens back and front, both a goodly size and with a

double garage at the end of the back garden. It was hard work for me to keep both the garden and the inside of the House Speck and span.

Gradually the property was becoming a little too much for both of us. ~~Both of us~~ <sup>we</sup> had suffered several illnesses during the last few years of our stay there. So we decided to sell up and live at the seaside but not to burden ourselves with another house. And perhaps that is where we both went wrong.

The wife became ill soon after we moved from London. We were living in furnished apartments at the time - our own furniture being in a large storehouse. The illness gradually developed into a serious one. After ten weeks spent in a private nursing home, she was sent to Hospital expecting to lose one of her legs. The anticipated amputation was postponed and Mrs Baine was moved to another Hospital in Brighton. There it was expected that a complicated operation on the vein system would be carried out, but subsequently this action did not take place - apparently because of the great danger to her life.

Mrs Baine stayed at the Brighton

Hospital until May, 1961 before being sent home. It seemed that the disease was incurable and nine months later when I was on the point of buying a new two-bedroom flat, ~~which I~~ <sup>upon the death of my wife I cancelled</sup> Mrs Baine died. ~~She had been unconscious from 5 am on the Friday, 23rd February, 1962 until 1.30 am the following morning.~~ <sup>She had been unconscious from 5 am on the Friday, 23rd February, 1962 until 1.30 am on the following morning.</sup> Her passing took place at a <sup>Hospital in Brighton-on-Sea.</sup> Even after a lapse of ten and a half years - almost to the day - (Feb is now 25th August, 1972) I still miss a wife in a million.

At the time of Mrs Baine's passing I was living in furnished quarters at Goring-on-Sea adjoining Worthing. All our furniture had already been sold or should I say, virtually given away to a second-hand dealer, who not only collected the material (nearly a houseful) from a worthing Storehouse but offered a mere £26 for the job, which I accepted, being too upset and under the weather to haggle with the person concerned.

After searching around first for a tiny flat to buy, then for a Hotel to live in, I finally found this tiny self-contained flat at Bognor Regis and took out a five-year lease. I have lived here ever since - that is, from

24<sup>th</sup> March, 1962 (actual date of occupation was 29<sup>th</sup> May, 1962) until the present time.

So far, I have been able to cope for myself reasonably well. Until a few years ago, I always went out for my lunch, but a year or so ago (for personal reasons) I decided to "scratch up" my lunches in the flat. And this is what I am doing at the present time.

In December, 1962, my eyes began to fail and after visiting an optician and getting fitted with long distance glasses (I had already been using reading glasses since 1945) they became normal again but only for a short time.

During January 1963 I first began to be affected by what I can only describe as spasms of quick flashes of ~~the~~ electric light flashing on from the side of ~~the~~ the left eye. I waited for a few days in order to discover <sup>whether</sup> these flashes would continue - always when in the dark incidentally - as they did. I consulted the doctor and he arranged for me to attend the eye department of the Royal West Sussex Hospital, Chichester. I attended the hospital in March, 1963 and I have attended

periodically ever since and will probably continue to do <sup>so</sup> until my death.

I take eye-drops - one drop in each eye, twice a day - morning and night. They were not quite so good on test during my last visit to the hospital in July, 1972. The next appointments have been arranged for January 1973.

Since I have lived at Bosgrove, the left leg has troubled me virtually every winter, either with wound eruptions (principally this) or with thrombosis. Early this year (1972) I suffered from the initial pain of Arthritis in the knee, thigh, and hip bone of the left leg. The pain was acute and continued without any respite whatsoever from late February until about the middle of April. On March 17<sup>th</sup>, my doctor arranged for me to see a Specialist at the Bosgrove Deje War Memorial Hospital. I did so on 27<sup>th</sup> April and was told that any future renewal of this trouble in acute form would necessitate an operation.

On May 30<sup>th</sup>, I was examined by a doctor nominee of the Ministry of War Pensions, and as a result of his report, the



settle down for the evening and night, I look forward with pleasurable anticipation to the evening radio programmes. The ~~joy~~ ~~of~~ ~~knowing~~ oneself of listening to the radio before six pm ~~is~~ ~~made~~ gives an added interest and excitement to the evening listening. The news is fresh, ~~and~~ one's favourite radio personality appears to be more interesting and entertaining, and of course postponing one's hunger for the radio (now the sole source of my daily relaxation) gives one <sup>also</sup> an added zest and thrill, just as if <sup>after</sup> ~~one~~ had been working all day, we were getting ourselves ready for an evening out at the theatre. The difference, here being ~~instead of~~ ~~that~~ ~~an~~ evening out at the theatre <sup>it</sup> is an evening lying cozily and comfortably between the sheets listening to radio programmes coming from a Radio within easy reach of one's hand to switch on or off as necessary. In the latter case, there is no having dressing up, no travelling to the place of entertainment, no feeding one's face with restaurant food on a busy night, no braving the snow and cold winds and perhaps heavy rain, in the depths of winter, and no risk of the smells emanating from other human bodies in an

overheated and tightly packed theatre or concert hall.

Allow me to return, as I promised, to the years of excruciating pain as a result of <sup>a</sup> kidney obstruction. To reflect now, many years later, upon the continuous suffering I bore, virtually in silence, day after day, and year after year without consulting anybody, less of all a doctor, is a peculiarity that no other human being, or ~~could~~ should I say "rational" human being, could even begin to understand. In my case, optimism fought alongside pessimism. It was only necessary for the pain to disappear just for one whole day (two days ~~would~~ represented a taste of heaven) and my whole outlook upon life was changed completely. A brief respite of this kind and I was supremely happy. In some odd and queer way, a taste (or a taste) of temporary perfect health and fitness, gave me the strength, ~~and~~ determination and fortitude to bear this heavy physical burden when it did reappear, and for length periods, without whining or squealing. This "bearing up" under long drawn out stress has nothing of course to do with courage or bravery. So far as I was concerned, it was ignorance, plus an inborn sense of cowardice as, perhaps it was, that I did

<sup>not</sup> want to know the cause of the trouble just in case it was an incurable disease. The twisted mind of mine was content to fight on, if it meant that by doing so, I would reap the reward of some little freedom of unimpeded movement - just now and again. And I conceded that that "just now and again" was always worth waiting for.

Poor unalloyed fool and madman that I was.

In the end it was a shie of luck for me, that a humane ~~hand~~ landlady (once a professional nurse) diagnosed the cause of my distress.

I have had no further trouble since the kidney was removed 25 1/2 years ago. This is the method I use in order to avoid any further possible trouble with the remaining kidney.

First thing every morning, soon after six am when I arise, I drink (wait for it) five glasses of water. About two hours later ~~at~~ at eight am when I am eating breakfast, I drink 2 1/2 to 3 cups of tea. Some twenty to thirty minutes after breakfast, I

swallow a further four glasses of water. After lunch or dinner which I start eating about eleven am or a little before, I drink three more glasses of water. Except for a sip or two to swallow a pill at eight pm, the water drunk after lunch is the final drink <sup>of water for</sup> the day. But as to the third and less meal, which I take somewhere in the region of 3.30 pm. every day, two cups of tea are drunk. And that completes my overall liquid consumption for the day. The <sup>total</sup> daily amount therefore is: twelve glasses of water and five cups of tea.

Whether a medical <sup>man</sup> would recommend this large intake of liquid is doubtful. A doctor would probably consider that the quantity of liquid I consume is tantamount to overloading the lone kidney, and perhaps in normal circumstances that would be a correct assessment. But as I have long since been retired, I have the facilities always close to hand and the necessary time to discharge the liquid in the body, as soon as the kidney issues a warning. I have to admit however that the necessity to be continually pushing to the well house is somewhat inconvenient. Nevertheless I believe the trouble has been worth while as the liquid has helped in other

ways in addition to maintaining a healthy kidney. And 25<sup>1/2</sup> years without further pain is proof that my home made treatment has been successful. And it should be remembered also, that I am now within a hairs touching distance of 80.

My home treatment concerning the left leg (the troublesome one) has also been a complete success. Nobody "advised" me when I was discharged from the Army in 1916 to wear crepe bandages permanently around the foot and right up the leg to the knee. This was my own method of ~~healing~~ treatment, as I knew that without bandages <sup>the leg</sup> would have experienced far more trouble than it actually has done during the last 57 years <sup>and</sup> with the possibility also of amputation. I have had a lot of trouble in any case and particularly during the last ten to fifteen years. Bad age also may have been a ~~contributory~~ factor.

I am now 77 years and five months. How much longer I have to live is of course unknown. Whether it is another five or even ten years, I ~~do~~ do not intend (unless a serious illness attacks me) to alter my

way of life. I like and prefer the solitude, the peace and quiet, the occasional day dreams about what might have been, the long long summer evenings, and when a great red ball of sun colouring the surrounding sky, disappears gradually and gently down behind the distant hills. This is a part of late summer evenings which affords me the most exquisite joy and happiness. If I am to be spared say for another five years, I pray that I may be blessed with many more summer evenings of beauty and of the peace that passes all understanding. If that is a selfish hope, may I also say, that weak and frail human beings are a long, long time dead.

Youth is a time to be up and away ~~and~~ when life is just beginning. Middle-age is a period of stability, of reviewing the successes or failures of earlier years, and with a determination to make the most of what life may still have to offer before old age creeps up upon one. And old age is the season for reflection and the desire to savour the delights of ease and comfort with a well-loved pipe and a favourite book to read. And, apart from grandchildren, if ~~there~~ there is an old friend with whom <sup>he can</sup> spend a hour or two from time to time and to chat about this and that



over a quiet drink at some country inn, then  
 life indeed can be made happy and graceful  
 and satisfying in the winter of <sup>his</sup> existence.

I have concluded my story. Whether  
 the reading of it would interest a modern young <sup>man</sup>  
 or woman is a matter for conjecture. My own  
 opinion however, is that to-day's generation would  
 not only doubt the verities of the tale, but  
 that most of the matter would depress and bore  
 them.

A. S. S. S.  
 30th August, 1992.

### Happy Reflections

1. We have hidden thro' the winds and the heather,  
 And sailed the wide blue ocean seas together.  
 We have tramped across the hills and the fringes,  
 And watched - wide eyed with wonder - the Springtime changes.
2. Hand in hand we have wandered thro' the forest and the glades  
 Amid the sunlight and the shadows and the shades.  
 The blue-coloured tit and the robin and the lark  
 Have shared our modest feast - there in that lovely glen.
3. We have flown in a man-made machine,

3. And soared above the clouds where the sky is Queen.  
 We have seen - nearby - the magic of the twinkling stars  
 And the fairy lights of Jupiter and of Mars.

4. We have been enchanted by the crimson-hued Sun  
 Waving the Goodnight as her day was done,  
 And have bided her return at dawn of day  
 Smiling warmly, to cheer us on our dawning way.

5. We have sat beside <sup>a</sup> beauteous rippling brook  
 Where the willow with her sad and weepy look,  
 Bids her tears beneath a sunset sunlit sky  
 Only, alas, to weep again - bye and bye.

6. We have kissed and pledged our troth  
 Under a midnight moon and the Southern Cross,  
 And joined our lot with tears and with laughter  
 And, as true lovers will, have lived happily ever after.

A. S. S. S.  
 20th November, 1997.

I was born on 1st April, 1895, at 6 Saint Margaret's Court, Southwark, London. The birth was registered on 6th April, 1895, in the Sub-District of Saint Saviour in the County of London. Neither my name nor baptismal name were recorded in the appropriate columns numbered 2 and 10 of the certificate, a copy of which I did not obtain from the General Register Office at Somerset House, London, W.C.2., until I was obliged to do so after passing a Civil Service examination five to six years after the end of the First World War, 1914-18.

In all other respects the certificate is in order, and shows my father's name as E.T. Balne and the mother as D.C. Balne, formerly Reeves.

Two years before I reached the age of 65 - when I would then be paid a national insurance pension - I wrote to Somerset House and explained that my identity was not fully established by the information recorded on the birth certificate. This action was taken because I could foresee that when the time came for me to apply for a national insurance pension it would be difficult to prove beyond any reasonable doubt that my name was indeed Edward Balne.

In the reply I received from Somerset House I was advised that if I was unable to trace a record of the baptism the difficulty could be overcome by making a statutory declaration to a Justice of the Peace or to a magistrate, etc., to the effect that although the birth was registered in the surname Balne only I have always used and been known by the name Edward Balne. This was done (in the presence of a Justice of the Peace) and accordingly a national insurance pension was awarded me at the age of 65.

Although I have quoted the particulars of my birth as recorded on the birth certificate, this does not mean that I have any recollection of ever having seen either my father or mother or in fact any other children which may have resulted from my parents' union, and throughout the whole of my life I have never known a single personal relative. The only kind I have been loosely linked with are those acquired by the accident of marriage.

My memory can reach back to the autumn of 1896 when I was about eighteen months old. At that time I was a tiny inmate of Southwark workhouse. My "parents" were members of the staff, and so far as I can recall I was treated with a deal of kindness and petted by all the women who were responsible for my welfare.

As I learnt later, I must have been two and a half years old and able to toddle around on my own when I was transferred from the workhouse to a large Poor Law School.

Incidentally, during the closing years of the 19th century, when the poor were literally the outcasts and pariahs of the then richest and most powerful nation in the world, schools of this kind (the Poor Law type) were not only few in number but pretty grim establishments. Frequent administrations of the cane and the birch were the rule and not (repeat) not the exception.

It was therefore with some surprise and delight that a few years after my entry I was told by one of my mentors that the "cuckoo" school (this is not its official name) was one of the best if not the most comprehensive of its kind in all respects throughout Great Britain. And I was able to fully endorse this assessment when I was about six to seven years old.

However, I go too fast and will now describe the school's situation, its size and its assets.

The school was situated at the top end of Church Road, Hanwell, Middlesex, W.7. And by the time "Cuckoo Hill" (opposite the gates of the establishment) was reached one had had to encounter a very steep climb indeed. But the effort was worth while, because just a few steps farther on one entered one of the many lovely leafy lanes of Greenford with a vista of the wide open countryside spread out before one like some magic and gaily decorated carpet.

A few yards inside the entrance to the school was a porter's lodge where one always had to report either upon entry or departure. Having reported, one had now to walk along a spacious drive to another porter's lodge. This was not far from the Superintendent's office and private residence. The second official also recorded one's name and the time and date of entry.

It is here worth mentioning that the drive along which an incomer had to traverse to reach the inner precincts of the main building was about 200 yards in length. And during the walk one was treated to a wonderful view of spacious playing fields, country lanes, extensive farm lands, which included a wide variety of fruit trees, a well-kept cricket ground and a football pitch; the School Band practice room and a sleepy old-time country railway halt called Castle Bar Park which ran alongside and parallel with the school grounds, and all the acreage within sight (except the railway track) belonged to and was within the school's boundaries. This may provide a rough idea of the great size of this "academy" and the land and farming and sporting facilities that went with it. And this was only part (although perhaps the largest area) of the school's dominions.

At this point it would be as well to furnish the title given to the school by the Board of Guardians. It was: The Central London District School, Hanwell, Middlesex, W.7. But it was generally known as the "Cuckoo School".

To continue with the school's assets: on the other side of the "estate" and directly opposite the farm lands, etc., heretofore mentioned and to the main building (the latter was situated approximately in the centre of the whole property) were additional playing fields, the "Educational" school; a spacious swimming bath, a hospital and a large house in which a steward and his family lived. This house was enclosed in a large and lovely garden.

The main building, which, as already mentioned, was the centrepiece, was the place where the boys and girls were housed, fed and bedded.

There were two separate living areas: one for the boys (about 200 to 250) and another for the girls (approximately a similar number - 200 to 250). There was, in addition, a third segregated part where the tiny tots were housed.

Ages of the boys and girls ranged from six to 14 and 15: the tots from 3 to 5 or 6.

Approximately 50% of the boys were housed in one block known as "A" block and the other half in Block "B".

There were four dormitories in each block and each dormitory held about 30 boys. Ten slept on each side of the dorm and another ten along the centre of the room. The boys who occupied the beds in the middle were called "wet beds".

There was a closed-in cubicle at one end where the nurse in charge of the dormitory slept. This cubicle was in the form of a bed-sitting room which was comfortably furnished.

At the ends of each dormitory there were two huge fire-places and a closed-in lavatory at one end. Immediately outside the nurse's cubicle and in front of the fire-place was a very comfortable armchair, a foot-stool, a work-chair and a large table with drawers used by the nurse in charge as a desk.

There was an offshoot to each block which was used as a workshop by the nurses. Most of the bedding, blankets and sheets, etc., were kept in this workshop. Repairs to sheets and blankets and all kinds of needlework to boys' clothes, etc., were done in there.

At one end of each corridor attached to the dormitories was a wash-place. The boys were obliged to clean their teeth and wash themselves first thing each morning and at 7 p.m. each evening. The wash-place was simply constructed. There was a lengthy type of deep trough with a long rail reaching along the whole length of the room on which were fixed about fifteen water sprinklers on each side of the rail. Upon the wall on each side were built in a similar number of racks. These were used for storing each boy's toothbrush, soap and towel.

When wanted, the sprinklers were turned on by one main tap which allowed 30 boys to wash themselves morning and evening. At the end of this chore, the head nurse inspected each boy in order to ensure that the face and neck cleansing and the teeth had been done properly.

Outside Blocks "A" and "B" was a large yard. Along two sides of it there were: the Yard Master's office, a large communal bathroom, and all kinds of artisans' workshops, carpenters, cobblers, metal, etc. etc. Leading off from the "Yard" one entered a gigantic dining room where both boys and girls "dined". And almost directly opposite the dining room were steep circular iron steps which led up to the school church - a surprisingly fine building.

Down below were the Superintendent's office and residence and one or two other offices for clerical staff. A Porter's lodge was nearby.

Going out into the "Yard" again there were the communal outside lavatories and a huge dayroom where the boys rested, wrote or played games. There was also an undercover archway where the boys could sit and talk as well as play when it rained.

In order to go to the educational part of the school there were two steep flights of steps leading from the "yard". At the top of the steps the classrooms were about one hundred yards away. There was the area where the hospital and swimming bath were situated as well as additional and extensive playing fields. The "drive" could also be seen from the top of these steps.

So far, I have made no comment about the girls who were housed and educated at this Poor Law school, and the reason is that throughout the whole of the twelve years I was a pupil I cannot remember ever having entered the grounds where they lived. And I knew little or nothing about how they fared apart from meal times when both boys and girls dined in the same dining room - although strictly separated from each other.

However, I will set down the daily programme so far as it affected the boys.

From the "yard" a boy bugler sounded the reveille at 5.30 a.m. This was the signal for the boys to get up. They then proceeded to make their own beds. The parquet floors would then be beeswaxed, the window sills, etc., dusted and the lavatories cleaned. By the time these chores were done, the nurses would be up and about. But before they did get themselves ready, a sergeant and two boy corporals were responsible for ensuring that the initial jobs had been completed.

The boys would then be assembled and taken out into the corridor and the washhouse. Having carried out their morning ablutions under the watchful eyes of the nurses, they would then be taken into the yard. Every bit of paper and all rubbish left over from the previous day's activities had to be picked up and placed in a dustbin, and this was done under the supervision of the "non-commissioned officers". Afterwards, shoes that were not too clean and somewhat grubby had to be cleaned in the shoeshop.

At 7.30 a.m. the school bugler would "sound off" for breakfast. The boys were "fell in" by the Yard Master (an ex-naval man in my time) in eight companies - approximately 30 boys to each company and then marched off to the dining room.

All the boys and girls as well as the nurses, to supervise, and the Yard Master, were obliged to attend this and the other two meal ceremonies of the day.

Before the ravenous boys and girls could start on their meagre breakfast, the Yard Master who was the master of ceremonies and the boss of the show called everybody to attention to say grace.

The children's breakfast consisted of one bread roll, one pat of margarine and a mug of cocoa. An interesting situation would arise if, say, one or two of the company of 30 boys at the mess table were absent because of illness. This meant that two rolls and two pats of margarine and two mugs of cocoa were left without the owners, and when it is remembered that a small bread roll and an equally tiny pat of margarine can be swallowed by a very hungry youngster in five seconds flat, it is not difficult to visualise in imagination the bulging eyes of 28 boys who are hoping and fervently praying that the nurse who is supervising the modest meal will not take the "extras" back to the kitchen. At "my" mess table, a list of the names of the boys in alphabetical order was kept for the purpose of dealing out extra rolls. This was a fair method, and ensured that each boy received an extra bread roll when his turn came.

After breakfast and following certain daily announcements made by the master of ceremonies (Yard Master), the boys were marched from the dining room out into the yard. The time would be about 8 a.m. to 8.15 a.m. which left 30 to 45 minutes for the boys to use the lavatories and to brush their clothes, etc., before being mustered again and taken to the school classrooms.

School started at approximately 8.45 a.m. The first session lasted until noon with a ten minutes break at 11 a.m., and the second session from 2 p.m. until 5 p.m.

The subjects taught were the usual ones for that period: reading and writing (which embraced English generally), arithmetic, geography, geometry and history.

The boys were also taught (unusual during the early part of the 20th century) to speak clearly and distinctly and to sound the aitches. A few of the teachers were strict and precise about these aitches and woe betide the boy who made a persistent habit in dropping them. This form of discipline could well be applied today, especially in English schools, with a good deal of profit.

There were eight classes in schools for the poor, and they progressed consecutively from class one to class seven and to the ex-seventh for the eighth and top class for boys of 14 and 15.

Some of us reached the ex-seventh as early as twelve which was as far as a highly intelligent boy could reach, unless (as I was) the pupil was fortunate enough to be called to work in the Headmaster's office. I learnt (broadly speaking) far more in this office during my last two and a half years at the school than ever I did in the classrooms. I was taught algebra, graphs, map reading, Euclid, and something about the political set-up in Britain. And the Headmaster (A.M. Gill) taught me to play chess. Mr. Gill also checked and mildly scolded me every time I fell short of the high speaking standards he had set not only for me personally but for all the pupils under his authority from 8.45 a.m. to 5 p.m. or 4.30 p.m. every day.

Apart from the Headmaster (Mr. Gill) there were three other teachers whose names I still remember with affection. They are: Mr. Mapp, who was also responsible for the school cricket team, Mr. Wadsworth - "Daddy" Wadsworth the boys called him because of his years and fatherly air (Daddy was a first class teacher) - and a Mr. Gould. Mr. Gould's extra duties were training the boy footballers and administering the school team.

The education the boys received at this Poor Law school was sound and prepared a boy for a fair start in life. The three R's were properly dinned in to the minds of all as well as the great and vital importance the teachers placed upon them as being the solid basis from which all education and knowledge springs.

Some of the balderdash taught today makes it absolutely obvious that 1972 teaching techniques fall far, far short of the standards set by the old masters of seventy and more years ago. And in my view, this is the principal reason why a very large percentage of young people are almost completely illiterate when they leave school and another large percentage semi-illiterate. And what makes this paucity in teaching standards so disastrous is the fact that, unlike 70 to 80 years ago, millions and billions of pounds are being spent and literally being thrown down the drains because of fancy and utterly incompetent modern teaching methods.

And unfortunately the same troubles arise in our universities. Generally speaking, the enormous numbers who are "educated" at these establishments finish the course far less fitted for highly responsible jobs in comparison with the graduates of yesteryear.

The exceptions are, of course, the comparatively small percentage of brilliant students who would be equally outstanding in whatever generation they were born, who eventually rise to the top in whatever profession they may choose or in whatever branch of industry they decide to join.

Another valuable and important subject taught at "Cuckoo" was music. As mentioned in the foregoing, there was a band-room situated at one end of the playing fields nearest to the cricket ground. The bandmaster was an ex-army band sergeant and himself a brilliant all-round musician.

All the boys chosen for eventual entry to the school band were given an excellent training. The bandmaster's first job was to teach the boys to "read" music, and as the trainees were among the most intelligent in the school the pupils were quick to learn - speedier in this regard because most of them were fanatical lovers of music, as I was.

Then the lads were asked the type of instrument they would wish to play - whether brass or woodwind, and then on to the actual instrument. It was not always possible to meet every boy's wish and some were "advised" to opt for a second choice.



A week was allowed for each boy to practise diligently in the "blowing" techniques both for brass and woodwind, and after that period each lad would be given simple scales and simple pieces to negotiate on his own but with the personal tuition and advice from the bandmaster.

It is surprising how speedily and efficiently young boys who are ultra keen and eager to learn will progress, especially when the master to advise and guide them is not only an expert teacher but has the added qualities of kindness and understanding.

Within a few weeks from the starting point, simple pieces of music were handed out to the boys. And this is where they first begin to operate, not as individuals but as a band. Somehow or other they come through this initial ordeal, not perhaps worth flying colours, but nevertheless not without some degree of success. When the last notes have been sounded, both the bandmaster and his pupils could be forgiven for a feeling of justifiable pride and achievement.

From that point, the band proceed from strength to strength while still learning in the process. Within three to six months the band is fully capable of playing at school fetes and concerts and on other special occasions both inside and outside the school.

This is a rough idea of how bands were started and trained to competency within my young lifetime at "Cuckoo", and I might add that this old school turned out hundreds of brilliant army musicians as well as bandmasters during the years of this "academy's" existence which I believe came to a sad end in the 1930's.

I myself was a trumpet player and moderately competent.

On the sporting front there were cricket, football, hockey, gymnastics, and athletics.

As this is an autobiography, may I say that I was good at all sports and a star

The cricket ground and its surrounds would not have disgraced a minor county club. In some respects I consider that it was even better.

The school team joined a league playing throughout each season about eight other schools - 16 games in all - playing each school both at home and away. "Cuckoo" finished each season invariably as champions or runners up. Some of our opponents were situated as far away as Ashford and Mitcham.

The school's trainer and manager (Mr. Mapp, one of the schoolteachers) always took the team on these outings when we were playing away from home.

We used to practise in the nets under the tutelage of Mr. Mapp during two evenings of each week - sometimes on three evenings before a particularly important match.

I was chosen to join the school team at eleven years of age.

During my school cricket career I scored many fifties and reached the nineties several times, but never succeeded in reaching the magic "ton" (one hundred). Being the principal trundler as well, I took many hundreds of wickets and rarely failed to top both batting and bowling averages.

The number of bats and balls and cricket pads I obtained in prizes at the end of each cricket season were left with my old nurse when my schooldays ended in 1909 at the age of 14 years and nearly 5 months.

I also left behind many books earned as prizes for school work and trumpet playing.

There were two "fete" days each year. One was held in January and the other in July. Both were the occasions for the Head of the school (the Superintendent) to present prizes for school efficiency in music and sport. In the winter the jollifications took place in the school dining room and the band had a major part to undertake in the proceedings. On these auspicious occasions one apple, one orange and a bag of nuts as well as a sixpence were presented to each boy and girl throughout the school.

The day finished up with a "still" picture show. There were also dancing, recitations, a band performance, and several speeches made by the V.I.Ps of the school.

The summer fete was held in the playing fields. There were roundabouts, swings, a "fair" and schoolboy actor performers as well as a comic cricket match between the school team and officials. Prizes also were awarded on this day for sports and athletics. The summer "do" was certainly the most enjoyable of the two annual fetes. And on these occasions both boys and girls were allowed to mix if they so wished.

In regard to cricket, I wrote earlier about an "offshoot" or workshop to both school blocks "A" and "B". Well, during the summer holidays when the cricket master was away on holiday (he lived, incidentally, outside the school) the boys played cricket in the large school yard. A normal leather cricket ball was considered by the Yard Master to be too hard and therefore dangerous to onlookers if the ball was hit in their direction with any degree of force. So we had to think of a way to produce a ball which would be just as firm (if not quite so hard) as a leather ball, and which would "bounce" just as freely.

A few of us put our heads together and devised a scheme for "making" a rag ball. And you must take it from me, my dear reader, that a rag ball, if properly and competently made, is a first class substitute for the regulation leather ball and almost nearly as lethal.

And this is where the workrooms came in useful.

There was quite a fair quantity of cotton cloth material left over from repair jobs and one or two of the kinder nurses would give away some of this spare cloth to boys who wanted the stuff to make not one but several balls.

The idea is to tear some of the material into thin strips. These would be made into a rough round ball. When that initial operation had been done, "covers" (square covers) would be cut out from the spare linen. These covers (one at a time) would be fitted over the ball. Two ends of the cover would be drawn tightly together over the ball of strips (they, the ends, would overlap a little) and then the ends would be sewn together. The same process would be gone through with the other two ends. Then there would be a few side pieces of the cover to be neatly "tucked in": these would also be sewn and joined tightly (tightly is the operative word) together. This would be only the first cover, but already the ball was firm and fairly hard.

It was the general policy to sew on about six to twelve covers. Twelve covers would bring the ball to the size of a regulation leather cricket ball. By the time the work had been finished, the "synthetic" ball was virtually as hard as the original. In fact, if the cloth from which the ball had been "manufactured" had been coloured a darkish red-brown instead of dead white, few of the boys not in the know would have known the difference, and a hit on any part of the leg made by one of these balls when bowled by a fast bowler would not only bruise but sometimes cut the limb and bring the blood gushing forth.

And another great advantage attached to these home-made "pills" was that they could be used just as effectively on turf.

In these modern days of 1972 rag balls would be a godsend in certain circumstances in view of the enormous price of the real thing.

Continuing with the subject of cricket (still, at 78, my favourite game) the Hanwell Town Cricket Club used the school cricket ground to play some of their fixtures. (Our Mr. Mapp was the Captain of the Hanwell team).

And Mr. Mapp (one of the schoolteachers and Cricket Manager, as I said before) arranged for two of the senior boys to score regularly for the men's team). During my last two years as a "Cuckooean" I was one of the honoured scorers. It was an interesting adjunct to my young cricketing life. We not only did the job at Hanwell's own ground but journeyed with the team (under the authority and protection of Mr. Mapp) to all their opponents' grounds - and one or two of these were situated in North and S.W. London.

This job meant that many pennies went into our pockets from the collection made on our behalf from both teams at the end of each game, and of course we enjoyed a slap-up tea as well. And now and again, if you please, would be the possibility of one of us being chosen to take the place of a team member who had failed to arrive at the ground.

These undoubtedly were very enjoyable outings.

But when I was fourteen, it was when scoring for the Hanwell team one Saturday afternoon at an away game that I first became conscious of my lowly status in society. And being a highly sensitive lad, I was never to forget the incident (which I will not describe here) which occurred that afternoon. The shock of the realization that I was considered to be a member of the lowest form of human creation was an experience from which I have never fully recovered. It affected the nerves and my whole outlook upon life. It affected my confidence and personality and it left a feeling of a deep and profound inferiority complex which generally has overshadowed everything I have tried to accomplish over the years.

---

I regret that I shall have to divert for a moment to record a regrettable fact about the discipline at the Cuckoo School which I have previously omitted to mention.

As with other establishments of this kind, the cane and the birch were both used as correctives - and fairly frequently. The birch was administered by the Yard Master, and other boys who were available were obliged to be present to watch this form of punishment which even as a boy I considered to be barbaric.

The culprit would be ordered either six or twelve strokes. The only protection he had was his shorts or pants (no shirt or underpants) which were drawn tightly about his rear.

The Yard Master in my day was a burly man and strong. If I was compelled to be an onlooker at such a spectacle, I would watch the first heavy swish and then close my eyes for the rest of the session. Sometimes we spectators would have to listen to the screams of the victim and I have known boys to faint watching these ghastly scenes.

Some boys, of course, tougher and made of sterner stuff than their weaker brethren, would disdain to utter a sound and would take the medicine like men.

I attach no blame to the Yard Master. He was only carrying out his duty. The one who I knew was normally a pleasant and kindly man and could have birched the wrong-doers much more heavily had he been a masochist. He most certainly did not care for this side of his job.

But cruelty among the educational controlling bodies of the time was rife throughout Britain. In this connection I can recall the short story of Elia by Charles Lamb about Christ's Hospital. One incident in the story is about a boy who ran away from the school and the cruel and dastardly punishment inflicted upon him for his misdemeanours, and Christ's Hospital was not a Poor Law school but a fee-paying Public School.