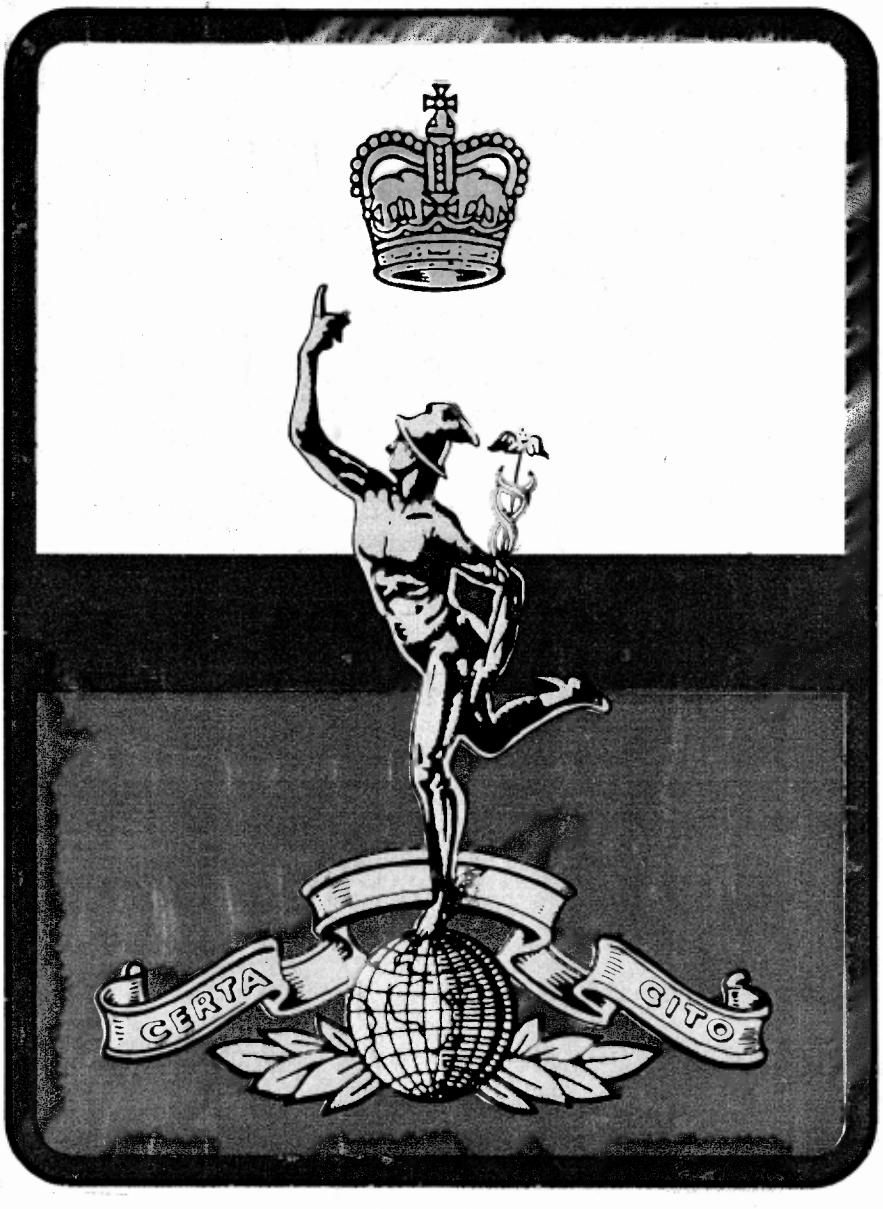
CERTA
CITO

27, Fairfield Road,
Borough Green,
Kent,
England.
12th., July 1989

Dear Richard,

I hope that you will enjoy reading my notes. To record everything would fill a book so I have had to keep them short and simple.

Pardon any spelling errors. I have just got a new typewriter and it is not spelling very well.

Love from Gran & Grandad

51 Zoom

THE ROYAL CORPS OF SIGNALS.

The Royal Signals is a comparatively young Corps. Until 1921 communications in the Army was the responsibility of the Royal Engineers.

What then was and is the role of Signals? Members of the Corps are to be found wherever soldiers of the British Army are engaged. They drop by parachute, they land in gliders. They march with the Infantry, they land with Commandos.
They use specially equipped vehicles. In Burma when transport could not be used they had mules to carry their wireless sets and field cable.

Before the 1939/45 war Royal Signals was a mounted formation but they exchanged their horses for lorries and motor cycles. They maintain communications between all Army formations and between the Royal Air Force and the Royal Navy.

They lay and maintain field cable between the various Army formations in the field. From Division to Brigade and from Brigade to Battalion They build overhead telegraph routes and lay submarine cable under the ocean.

Although Royal Signals were specialist troops, in communications, they were also specialists in combat. They used rifle and bayonet, Thompson sub machine gun, the Sten gun and hand grenades. In the Burma campaign they 'stood to' on the perimeters night and morning and they were engaged in fierce hand to hand fighting, with the enemy, on many occasions.

On the 3rd., of September 1939, at 11.15 a.m., the Prime Minister, Mr., Neville Chaimberlin, broadcast to the British people. He told them that France and Britain were at war with Nazi Germany. His words, heavy with grief and solemnity, fell like stones on the hearts of the people. They were stunned and silent.

This is the story of what happened to me from August 1939 to March 1946. My tale is of war and hard work and enterprises, sometimes stirring but more often ludicrous : of sudden reversals of fortune : of people in high places who were ruled by convention and others who were not : of lowly men of foreign nations whose devotion to our cause exceeded our own : of bloodshed and violence, but more of cunning and deceipt and high spirits and then again more hard work : above all of friendship.

At the beginning of August 1939 the 55th., British Infantry Division, of which I was a lowly member, was already mobilised. I had reached the rank of local acting unpaid Lance Corporal but, on 3rd., September I was promoted to the rank of Sergeant (paid this time of course). We were ready to move to France with the British Expeditionary Force but a transfer to the 59th., Infantry Division delayed any move until August 1940 when we embarked, at King George V dock in Glasgow, on His Majesty's Troop Transport the Empress of Canada. As we sailed down the River Clyde we passed three destoyers and the crews came on deck and gave us three cheers. Then a strange thing happened. The convoy of thirty ships sailed West for four days right up to the Canadian seaboard then South for two days and then East to the African coast. During all this time the convoy was subjected to gale force winds but, on reaching the African coast, at Lagos, South to Cape Town and then North to Suez the sea was calm and the sun shone.

On June 10th., 1940, Italy had declared war on the Allies. On September 14th., General Graziani moved forward from the Egyptian border at Sollum and, though he met no resistance from our troops, he had exhausted himself when he reached Sidi Barrani, sixty miles away and there he stopped.

In October 1940 we had joined General Wavell's Western Desert Force and it soon became obvious that we would attack the Italian army very shortly. On 16th., December our army attacked Sidi Barrani, took it, completely defeated the Italian army, captured some two hundred thousand prisoners and pushed four hundred miles forward to a position South of Benghazi.

I was now sent on a communications survey to the Egyptian sand sea four hundred miles South of the African coast.

We struck the sand at Ain Dalla and, for the next three hundred miles, we drove across the loveliness of the great sand dunes. The long successive ranges of tangled sand hills, five hundred feet high or more from trough to crest, had bold sharp curves and deep shadows on the soft slopes. Valleys of sand, sometimes three miles wide, ran roughly North and South between the ranges, completely lifeless but for, every two or three days, a rounded bush of vivid green. its fleshy leaves swollen with sap, fresh, shiny and alone. The wind fashioned landscape recalled the beauty of mountain snows : the shapes were alike and, as off an Alpine peak, blown plumes streamed from the tops of the dunes, but not a stone broke the purity of the sand, whereas, in the mountains, rocks stick up incongruous through the clean lines of swept snow. The uper ridges of the dunes were white with yellow depths,,not the blue white of snow. The lower slopes and the valley bottoms had colours from butter yellow to pale purple, rippled or infinitely smooth. They stood out boldly in the morning then dimmed to a common grey under the mid day sun.

From the higher dunes a wide tangle of ranges showed, razor edged ridges, crescent shaped circuses, nearly verticle slopes drawn with acute precision In nature there is nothing tidier than blown sand. But, above all, silence. Nowhere else have I ever been where not a sound disturbs the tranquility.

One morning I saw, along the top of a slope to my left, a multitude of small serrations bobbing up and down. I drove up the slope and my serrations were the heads of a herd of gazelle bounding along in the same direction as we were going and keeping pretty well the same speed. There were, we estimated, more than two thousand of them.

This was probably the most pleasant time I was to spend in the Western Desert but it did not last forever and soon we returned to Tobruk.

On March 31st., 1941, General Rommel, in command of the German Afrika Korps and of an Italian Army quite unexpectedly struck South of Benghazi and rolled back our forces as far as the Egyptian border. It was not a British Army in retreat it was a rout. Troops sped hither and thither in their hurry to avoid contact with the enemy. I was lost and foundmyself at Tmimi, with the 4th., Indian Division in a rearguard action. This was the first time I had had the opportunity to see these magnificent troops in action but I was to serve alongside them in the not very distant future.

There was a haze over the plain as the sun came up. Curtains of dust over moving vehicles and, rising above them, black mushrooms of smoke. Many dumps and the landing ground at Tmimi being incompletely evacuated had to be destroyed at this last hour. A number of troops were getting on the move to the rear. In the opposite direction field guns were coming up in support of the Indians. The going was fair all over the plain so no one kept to the road and vehicles moved in every direction. Nothing could be seen but hazy forms looming out of the dust and fading out again but, in the still morning air, crystal clear sounds cut across the distant hum and buzz and supplied the images that the eye could not see. A vast cheerful purposefulness filled the plain.

By mid day the expectant front line hush fell once more : our friends had left us to protect them against an interfering enemy. From the sea to the distant hills an escarpment runs here, at right angles to the coast and road. On the upper plain were the dispersed Indian vehicles our own and the Artillery. On the downward slope of the escarpment, dug in with their weapons, were the men overlooking an empty plain that rose slowly to hills on the horizon with the road winding its way to the sky line. The air was clear now over the lower plain in the afternoon sun. Standing on the edge of the escarpment I could see the Indians below me on the forward slope and as far as the hills on the sky line four or five miles away, out of which the enemy was expected to debouch.

As neither the Germans nor ourselves had any aircraft over Tmimi that day the engagement took an old fashioned turn with reconnaissance on both sides done from the ground. Sitting on top of the escarpment I could not only see with my own eyes the movements of the battle but also guess what went on in the minds of the commanders on either side. They had no knowledge which was denied to me. On this only occasion I found it possible to follow the developement of a battle from a seat in the very first line. Usually to the fighter all, except a narrow sector, is confusion and uncertainty and a general view can be perceived only in the peace of Headquarters far in the rear, where maps and messages tell the tale at second hand.

About two o'clock the sound of five bursts of machine gun fire drifted over from the plain. Three of our armoured cars appeared from a fold in the distant hills and made a liesurely way back to our lines. Watching the strip of road where it dipped away out of view over the sky line I had a glimpse of a German armoured car returning to their lines. Contact had been made between the opposite armoured patrols, a few shots exchanged and both sides were reporting back. The last of our cars stopped at the foot of the escarpment where the crew got out to do something with mines on the road. For half an hour nothing happened then some German vehicles moved over the sky line and went into a fold of the ground. Ten minutes later more followed. For another half hour nothing : then a solitary shell whined high overhead and sent up a small puff of dust and grey smoke behind me. For many minutes quiet : then slowly three thuds from our field guns. The battle was on but,except for the liesurely noise nothing happened. The Indians, behind their rocks, were sitting back and chatting cheerfully in their sweet voices.

German vehicles moved cautiously towards us spreading over the lower plain - in and out of sight as they dipped into wadis and out again. Puffs of smoke sprang up around them but made no difference to their deliberate movments. At a quarter to four whines of a different kind sounded overhead with slowly increasing frequency and dispersed bursts began to dot our upper plain amongst the vehicles and also the slopes where the men lay. A sharp dry crack issued from each burst - the Germans had now brought mortars within range of our positions. From down below they could not see what they were firing at and they were contented to pepper the upper plain. As our mortars had a shorter range than the Germans there was still nothing for the Indian Infantry to do and they went on chatting. Our field guns intensified their fire searching out the enemy.

The mortaring began to be heavier but still quite enjoyable. Dispersed it had no nasty concentrations that feel that the enemy has seen you and is after you personally. We now thought that the enemy would attack at any moment and, sure enough, five minutes later, clumsy half track troop carriers appeared in numbers and disgorged their men eight hundred yards from the foot of the escarpment. The Indians stopped chattering and opened up with short well spaced bursts and German bullets came spattering and drew sparks from the rocks around us.

For some reason I like machine gun fire less than shell fire but I was so intrigued by the way the Indians were quite unperturbed - went about their business with accuracy and a great economy of movement and cheerful grins lighted up their now dusty faces. A few men fell and were quietly carried away. A call for ammunition came up and I joined the party that went for the ammunition truck - a shell landing on it sent it up in thick clouds of black smoke. Picking our way amongst the bursts we made for another, drove it to the escarpment edge and manhandled the boxes down to gun positions.

I could see the Germans - by now they seemed to be quite numerous - moving forward methodically from cover to cover a section at a time over the lower plain, carrying their weapons towards the foot of the escarpment. There were plenty of pieces of metal and chipped stones flying about on both sides and each man took good care not to expose himself unnecessarily - but no passion - anger or fear - went into the conflict. The familiar risks of battle were accepted. The elaborate strenuous work of attack and defence was done carefully - a well known routine that caused no excitement.

At a quarter to six the German fire seemed to thin out and I could see small

groups of men dashing back to cover. Very few of them had reached the foot of the escarpment and there was no reason why they should press the attack now with the sun just down and darkness coming very shortly. The Germans slackened their machine gun fire as they pulled out but they gave us an extra pasting with mortars. I suddenly found myself lying flat on my face, blown over but unhurt. When the bits stopped showering down I counted twelve paces to the whitish smudge which showed where the shell had hit the ground and I was delighted to find that it had landed so near as if my luck in avoiding the flying pieces was something to my credit.

The German fire stopped when darkness fell. The Indian streams of tracer thinned out with precision and only now broke the unnatural silence.

An unconquerable weariness sent me to sleep as we drove away.

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Now what about the necessities of life. Food, water, relaxation, chocolate, razor blades, a hair cut. Of all these food was the most important. There was no fuel so no fire on which to cook but we soon overcame that difficulty. One empty four gallon petrol can with one end cut off. Fill the can half full with sand and pour a few pints of petrol into the sand. Stand back and ignite the mixture which would go off with a bang but would quickly settle down and and provide a steady flame on which to heat a dixie. What to put into the dixie. Well we could fill it with water and then pop into it half a dozen tins of bully beef together with a few packets of biscuits. Bring to the boil and there was quite a good stew.

There were no potatoes except the sweet variety and no one really wanted to eat them. However we soon found that if we steeped the sweet potatoes in brine dried them out and fried them they were reasonably palatable.

Eggs were not provided but, now and again, we would send one of the men back to Alexandria to buy a few dozen. This was usually a hundred and sixty miles round trip but well worth it. During all my time in Egypt I never did see a fowl but Egypt seemed to be overflowing with eggs.. Where they came from we never did find out. When we bought fresh eggs at home we believed that they were fresh but that has never been the case. By the time a fresh egg got to the table it would be, at least, four weeks old. How old they were in Egypt we never found out but, if they did not smell, they were fresh to us.

A fried egg and fried bully beef was a delicacy spoiled rather by sand which seemed to get into everything.

Fresh meat was unknown but we could get water buffalo now and again. The problem with water buffalo was, if we tried to stew it, that it turned into something like india rubber. So again we learned that if we minced it it was easier to chew.

And the flies ---- soon after sunrise, every day, they arrive in hoards from nowhere and plague us with malign persistance all through the day, swarming and buzzing around trying desperately to land on our faces, in our ears, eyes and nostrils, on our arms, hands, knees and necks. Once settled they bite

hard. Desert sores, oases of succulence, draw them like magnets. In fact everything unwholesome, filthy and putrefied is manna to them.

The desert so saturates consciousness that it makes the mind as sterile as itself. It is only now you realise how much you normally live through the senses. Here there is nothing for them. Nothing in the landscape to rest or distract the eye : nothing to smell but exhaust fumes and the reek of petrol. Food has lost its taste and is insipid and appetites fade.

We learn to live with minimum requirements and ordinary items, normally taken for granted, become precious commodities - soap, razor blades, water, cigarettes, clothing. We learn to scrounge and steal anything in view which might be useful.

By now we have become hardened to the climate and fit for the coming fight and the Western Desert Force, as we have been known, is now to receive the title, which it would carry proudly to fame, the 8th., Army.

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Once again things began to 'hot up'. Royal Signals began working flat out, twenty four hours a day. Cable men began laying hundred of miles of field cable. Wireless operators, day and night, began to transmit dummy messages to non existant formations and receiving dummy replies. Non existant armoured Divisions suddenly located themselves in non existant places. Non existant Infantry Divisions occupy vast areas. Artillery was presumably digging in all over the place. The Royal Air Force were building airfields fully equipped with dummy aircraft. Dummy water pipes stretched North and South. Royal Engineers placed forty gallon drums of petrol round the dummy airfields. When the enemy bombed the dummy aircraft the Engineers detonated the drums of petrol and searing flames leapt into the air. From North to South great activity could be seen from the air but men, with dummy tanks, were moving from here to there and back again from there to here. The enemy was, of course, monitoring our wireless traffic. Non existant formations were ordered to move to new locations and then to further new locations.

At the same time hundreds of real tanks and guns and thousands of Infantrymen were arriving all being camouflaged and hidden Shells, small arms ammunition, mines, food and water were coming forward in huge quantities.

The British, who had until now, been experts in monumental 'cock ups' were now showing an art in deceipt and deception.

On the 16th., and 17th., of November British armour and Infantry moved to their assembly areas and start lines. Fuel and water was still coming forward. Petrol was being consumed at the rate of 180,000 gallons each day.

Only hours remained before the beginning of the advance when dark clouds suddenly opened and lightning flashed along the whole front. The thunder rumbled and crashed like gunfire above the glistening tanks. Cold rain flowed across the desert floor and then the monstrous black hulks began to creak forward for the most violent battle of the desrt war. Wireless communications fell temporarily silent as the tanks and Infantry moved forward over the rain soaked ground. As far as the eye could see there were lines of vehicles moving forward - tanks and armoured cars, guns and limbers, troop carriers, trucks and lorries all speeding westwards. Operation 'Crusader' had begun.

36th Div

Royal Navy

Royal Marines

Royal Indian Navy

Merchant Navy

SEAC

ALFSEA

12th Army

14th Army

Royal Air Force

Combined Operations

IV Corps

2nd Div

3rd Ind Div

5th Ind Div

7th Ind Div

14th Ind Div

17th Ind Div

19th Ind Div

20th Ind Div

23rd Ind Div

25th Ind Div

26th Ind Div

XV Ind Corps

XXXIII Ind Corps

81st W.A. Div

82nd W.A. Div

Ind Air Formation Signals

1st Burma Div

50th Ind Para Bde

11th E.A. Div

On 8th., December 1941, the whole course of the war was altered by the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour and Malaya. A few days later I was promoted to the rank of Company Quartermaster Sergeant and ordered to report to Port Said en route to Rangoon to join the 17th., Indian Infantry Division (The Black Cats) in Burma.

I now embarked on His Majesty's Troop Transport 'Silverteak'. She was a tramp steamer of about 5,000 tons and, early in January 1942, we sailed through the Suez Canal, down the Red Sea and into the Indian Ocean. Our first landfall was Colombo in Ceylon, where we stayed for five days and then on to Rangoon. By the time we were two or three days away from Rangoon the Japanese forces over ran it and we now began the long voyage to Bombay. When we reached Bombay we had been at sea for forty two days and I was grateful that, during all of that time, the sea had been as calm as a mill pond.

During this voyage we would stay on deck until the early hours of the morning watching the Southern Lights. The whole horizon would be brilliantly illuminated and I was always reluctant to 'turn in' and get some sleep. The nightly spectacle was quite fantastic.

One morning 'boat stations'sounded and shortly afterwards we saw, on the horizon, a large 'man of war'. Was it a British ship or a Japanese. It sailed on a parallel course and, after a few hours, it dissapeared. We were indeed greatly relieved. If it had been a Jap it would have blown us out of the water as the Silverteak was unescorted and sailing alone.

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Bombay - Gateway to India. I have disembarked and now I am in Colaba camp just outside the city. No one knows anything about me. When I enquire about joining my Division in burma the staff look at me in amazement - how could anyone, in the camp, getting three square meals a day and with nothing to do even contemplate moving to an area where rations would be in short supply, where there would be no tents or beds and where it might even be dangerous. The Army had abandoned me or so it would seem.

I was determined to reach my Division and I soon realised that devious means would have to be employed. My experiences in the Western Desert had made me an expert in all manner of deceiptful ways. I did not have a 'movement order' - an important and vital document of great value and I could not persaude anyone to issue me with one - in fact very few people had heard of such a document. The war had not yet come to Bombay. A visit to the railway station was my next move. There is always a Railway Transport Officer at main stations. He is usually not too bright and of no use to anyone elsewhere and he is, therefore, shunted into an office to issue rail warrants and to supervise troop movements. I found my R.T.O.,and, of course he said 'Where is your movement order ?' 'Ah', I said, 'I don't have a movement order as I am travelling on security duties and my journey is secret and urgent. I must get to Calcutta as quickly as possible.' He considered this for a time and then wrote me out a railway warrant and I dashed back to camp and drew 1,000 rupees (£75) which I duly signed for. This would buy me food on the journey.

From Bombay to Calcutta is 1,000 miles and so I decided to break my journey about half way at Jubbalpore where I knew there was a Royal Signals depot. And so I left Bombay and considering myself to be a very important person and

ORDER OF BATTLE 26TH., INDIAN INFANTRY DIVISION. (23 APRIL 1943.)

Headquarters 26th., Indian Infantry Division. (Major General C.E.N.Lomax.)

ARTILLERY.

99th., Field Regiment Royal Artillery.
130th., Field Regiment Royal Artillery.
23rd., Indian Mountain Regiment.
44th., Light Anti Aircraft Regiment.

ENGINEERS.

28th., Field Company.
72nd., Field Company.
73rd., Field Company.
The Sirmoor Field Company.

DIVISIONAL HEADQUARTERS INFANTRY.

2/8th., Punjab Regiment.
9th., Jat Machine Gun Battalion.

ROYAL SIGNALS.

26th., Indian Divisional Signals.

Rear H.Q. Major A.W.Wilson.
Warrant Officer Class II R.Q.M.S. Charlie Turner.
Warrant Officer Class II C.S.M. Lofty Guy.

Advanced H.Q. Lieutenant Colonel Gore-Gambier.
Warrant Officer Class I R.S.M. R.H.Kitson.

INFANTRY.

4th., Indian Infantry Brigade. (Brigadier A,W,Lowther.)
2nd., Durham Light Infantry.
3/9th., Gurkha Rifles.
7/15th., Punjab Regiment.
8/8th., Punjab Regiment.

6th., British Infantry Brigade. (Colonel B.H.Hopkins.)
1st., Royal Scots.
1st., Royal Welch Fusiliers.
1st., Royal Berkshire Regiment.

36th., Indian Infantry Brigade. (Brigadier L.C.Thomas.)
1st., North Staffordshire Regiment.
8/13th., Frontier Force Rifles.
5/16th., Punjab Regiment.

Mayforce. (Brigadier A.C.Curtis)
1/17th., Dogra Regiment.
One Company 1/15th., Punjab Regiment.
One Company 4th., Burma Regiment.

55th., Indian Infantry Brigade. (Brigadier P.H.Gates.)
2/1st., Punjab Regiment.
6/11th., Sikh Regiment.
1/15th., Punjab Regiment.

71st., Indian Infantry Brigade. (Btigadier G.G.C.Bull.)
1st., Lincolnshire Regiment.
10th., Lancashire Fusiliers.
9/15th., Punjab Regiment.

ORGANISATION OF JAPANESE 55TH., INFANTRY DIVISION. TATE.

The code name for 55th., Japanese Division was 'TATE' - being translated meaning 'Shield'.

KAWASHIMA BRIGADE.

Commander. - Colonel Kawashima, O.C. 55 Cavalry Regiment.
55 Cavalry Regiment. (less tank company.)

SAKURAI BRIGADE.

Commander. - Major General Sakurai. G.O.C., 55 Divisional Infantry Group.
H.Q. 55 Div.Inf.Gp.
112 Infantry Regiment.
2 Battalion 143 Infantry Regiment.
4 Company and Heavy Machine Gun Company 213 Infantry Regiment.
One Troop 55 Mountain Artillery Regiment.
3 Battery 55 Mountain Artillery Regiment.
55 Engineers Regiment.
One Section Divisional Wireless Troop.
One Platoon 10 Bridging Stores Company (5 Folding Boats.)
Armourer Unit.
Medical Troops.
Water purefying Troops.

DOI BRIGADE.

Commander. - Colonel Doi. O.C.143 Infantry Regiment.
143 Infantry Regiment.
4 Troop 55 Mountain Artillery Regiment.
One Platoon Engimeers.
Medical Troops.
A Detachment of water purefying Troops.

YOSHIDA BRIGADE.

Commander. - Colonel Yoshida. O.C. 144 Infantry Regiment.
144 Infantry Regiment.
14 Independant Anti Tank Battery.
Tank Company 55 Cavalry Regiment.
1 Battery 55 Mountain Artillery Regiment.
One Section of composite Field Artillery.
Detachment of medical troops. (30 men)
Water purefying troops. (8 men)

RESERVES.

2 Battalion 144 Infantry Regiment.

ARTILLERY.

Commander. - Lt.Col. Kobayashi. O.C. 55 Mountain Artillery Regiment.
2 Battery 55 Mountain Artillery Regiment.
8 Troop 55 Mountain Artillery Regiment.
2 Troop 3 Heavy Field Artillery Regiment.

looking for a bit of comfort I travelled first class. Three days later I arrived at 'Jub'. No one there, of course, knew anything about me and I believe they thought me a bit mad but I got a bed and the food was good. After a few days I set off again and finally found myself in Calcutta where I got accomodation at Fort William a barracks which must have been in use ever since the Indian mutiny.

I still had a long way to go - at least 500 miles - but how to get there. Now I struck it lucky when I met a Sergeant Major in the Gloucestershire Regiment. He told me that his Battalion was due to leave Calcutta by train for northern Assam and then fly into Burma. He did not know when he was leaving but, as the Battalion was also in Fort William, I watched for any sign of movement. Sure enough, on the following Friday, the Glosters began to move. I waited until they had left and then got a taxi and headed for the railway station. When the troops had boarded the train I strolled along the platform and climbed into the last carriage.

Eventually we moved off. The carriages were the crudest I had seen - wooden benches to sit on and no facilities. This journey was to last for eight days. Each evening the train would stop - everyone got off - the cooks would prepare a meal and, after eating, off we would go again. Although there was no rain the temperature dropped sharply as we were climbing to 5,000 feet above sea level but, eventually, we reached our destination - a small village called Tinsukia on the Chinese / Burma frontier. Troops were being flown from here to somewhere inside Burma and now we had to wait our turn.

After about a week all flights into Burma stopped and the aircraft now began to fly troops out of Burma. The Japs had over run the country. Where to go now ? -, back to Calcutta I thought and try again by another route but, before I could make a start, I was laid low by an attack of malaria. By this time there was no quinine available to treat malaria so I just had to grin and bear it. I did find a field hospital but it was staffed by Burmese doctors and nurses who took me in but there was no food. The next two weeks were very unpleasant until a dispatch rider called at the hospital. He was wearing the blue and white armband of the Royal Signals. With his help I discharged myself and I was welcomed by a Detachment of Signals who were operating a wireless interception station. Now I could eat again and, a few days later, I was on a train bound for Calcutta. The monsoon had started, it falls in this part of the world at the rate of 800 inches a year, and everywhere was mud and flood.

Halfway to Calcutta I had a relapse, got off the train at a place called Gauhati and found myself in a camp full of troops who had escaped from Burma, some of them had walked all the way from Rangoon and Mandalay. There was no accomodation and very little to eat and no medical facilities. I was lucky to find a small tent which I shared with an R.A.F., Corporal for a week, sleeping on a very wet muddy floor. Although I still felt very ill I got on a train and, four days later I arrived at Barrackpore, outside Calcutta,. The malaria had almost gone and I slept and ate for a week.

'Are there any Signals here ?' I heard someone call. When I went outside I saw Lieutenant Colonel Gore Gambier. 'Here' I said. 'Where have you come from ?' said the Colonel. I replied, 'The Middle East' 'Get your kit and get into my Jeep ' Soon I found myself a a dry clean bungalow in Calcutta and I found that it was the Headquarters of the 26th., Indian Divisional Signals being held in reserve to move into Burma.

We now embarked on an intensive training programme. My job was to obtain, by hook or by crook, wireless sets, field cable, transport, rations, clothing and equipment. This was indeed a full time job and, once again my previous experience helped me to get all I wanted by fair means or foul. Shortly afterwards I was promoted to the rank of Warrant Officer Class II, Regimental Quartermaster Sergeant. We were ready for a move when, suddenly, all of our vehicles were withdrawn and we were given mules in their place. The mules were big Argentinians and we quickly became very fond of them. They never complained, poor animals, they had been de-vocalised. The Division was not called for until March 1943 and, in the meantime, I had again been promoted to the rank of Warrant Officer Class I, Regimental Sergeant Major.

Our move was an epic one. First of all by rail and then across river, three miles wide, by boat and then again by rail to Chittagong. From there we march a hundred miles into Southern Burma (The Arakan.) No sooner than we had taken up our positions the monsoon began. Six inches of rain fell every day. Our boots rotted on our feet and everything was covered in mould. Rations were at a mimimum, bully beef, biscuits and tinned stew when the cooks could light a fire, which was very seldom, ascorbic tablets and daily rations of salt. The biggest worry, apart from the Japs, was the swarms of mosquitos which attacked our bare flesh night and day. There are many varieties of mosquitos but only one kind carries malaria and these were the ones attacking us. Trousers were fastened at the ankles and shirt sleeves at the wrists. Hands, face and neck covered in a filthy smelling anti malarial cream. With the temperature around one hundred and humidity of 90 % every movement was an effort and very soon we were being decimated by sickness. There was, of course, no quinine available and drugs had not yet been introduced to combat malaria. Everything ground to a halt and the Japanese, who were suffering even more than we were, broke off contact.

In August the rains stopped and the ground dried out quickly. The advance into Arakan now began. We had still a lot to learn and, although the men in our Division were fine types, in good heart and highly trained- trained to shoot, strangle, knife and bludgeon - to run with full equipment over obstacle courses - to swim rivers and dynamite bridges they were not trained to look after themselves in tropical jungle - not trained to save energy instead of expending it recklessly - nor to powder their feet and obey all the anti malarial precautions. But we were learning and soon we would develope into jungle fighters.

Jungle toughness is only in part muscle toughness. Jungle toughness is primarily a condition of mind and of a bloodstream with antibodies in it.

We were learning that we were campaigning against specialised coolie troops in terrain so rugged that machines and technological superiority could give little help in the actual fighting.

The Japanese valued human life and comfort only in so far as it could contribute to the attainment of a racial objective - the domination of the Far East and the Pacific by Japan. The human being was no less and no more expendable than the machine. Both existed simply to perform a task. Where choice of preserving man or machine had to be made it fell logically upon whichever could contribute most to performance.

Unfortunately the realities of conquest are not influenced by ethics. Any nation that wages war and at the same time observes the ethics of a democracy is fighting under a material, if not a moral, handicap.

ADMIRAL
THE LORD LOUIS
MOUNTBATTEN.

SUPREME ALLIED COMMANDER
SOUTH EAST ASIA.
1943 — 1946.

A HURRICANE IIc of 34 SQUADRON
WITH LONG RANGE DROP TANKS AT
PALEL IN 1944.

Massif was a hill. A huge hill a mile across. The enemy had had plenty of time to turn it into an almost impregnable obstacle which now lay between the advancing Division and the Burmese interior. It was a typically defensive area which the Japs had perfected throughout South East Asia. All round the face of the fire trenches had been built out of huge trees strong enough to be proof against direct hits from our guns. Leading from the fire trenches were galleries dug deep into the hill to where the Japs would retreat under shell fire but, as soon as the barrage was lifted, they would re-appear and open fire on the attacking troops. In front of the hill the Japs had cleared away all the trees and scrubland giving them a field of fire all around. Our Infantry would have to attack up the hill in the face of Jap machine guns. An unpleasant task to say the least and the casualties would be enormous. However there was to be an Artillery barrage before the attack went in.

Our job was to lay field cable all round the hill so that every formation - Divisional H.Q., Brigade H.Q., Battalion H.Q's and Company H.Q's would be in communication during the battle. We could not do this in daylight as we would have been seen well within the range of the Jap machine guns so we laid our cable during the night. Even so this was not too easy as the Japs fired intermitantly all night. By early morning and before first light we had completed our tasks and we now awaited the first barrage.

Just after day broke the Artillery opened fire. From positions away to our rear the mediums began. We could hear the shells whistling overhead and see them explode on the hill. Then the twenty five pounders, to our rear, opened up, then the tank 75 m.m.,guns started followed by our 2" mortars. The hill was now covered in smoke and dust and we lay awaiting the end of the barrage. After about half an hour the mediums and the 25 pounders stopped firing and we began to move forward. Our job now was to maintain our field cable. Very quickly the Japs emerged from their bunkers and a hail of bullets met us. Our advance stopped and the Artillery opened fire again but when it stopped up popped the enemy once again from deep below the ground and, once more, the advance was brought to a halt. Again the guns plastered the hill with high explosives and, again, the the Japs went underground. This went on all morning and further advance seemed impossible.

Suddenly, overhead, there appeared the Indian Air Force circling around the hill. Then a plane peeled off, followed by another then another. As soon as one formation of bombers unloded another formation appeared and so it continued. The Artillery was still firing as were our tanks and mortars. Lying on the ground it felt like an eartquake and, as we moved forward, we could feel the ground tremble under the devastating weight of bombs and shells. The barrage was falling no more than one hundred and fifty yards in front of us. Eventually the bombardment stopped but where were the Japs - of them there was little sign.

Even in their deep bunkers there was no protection from this evil and vicious attack. They were not wounded or killed but the noise and terrible battering had left them so shocked that they were unable to climb onto their fire trenches. We knew that this effect would not last for very long but it now gave our Infantry the chance to get into the enemy positions and make use of the bayonet and hand grenade. As the Japs began to emerge half dazed the task of winkling them out began. Those who did not surface were dealt with by hand grenades thrown down into the galleries. The balltle continued until late afternoon when, suddenly, all became quiet - there were no Japs left. Our wounded were now being rushed to field hospitals in our immediate rear and the Division went about the routine task of consolidating and reforming for the next move.

During the next few months we were engaged, as were other Divisions, in action but we were not making a very good job of it. and, in early December, after being in the Arakan for nine months we were relieved by 7th.,Indian Division. We pulled back into reserve at Chittagong.

When we came out of Burma I knew that if we were to win the war we would have to do better in the jungle than we had done. The last nine months had not produced even the semblance of a victory. We came out without having gained any territory, in fact, we had probably lost more than we had gained. When we met the Japs in the open we could always beat them but not so in the jungle. We were afraid of the jungle, we were afraid of the dark. But the jungle could be our friend if only we were trained as jungle fighters and we were led by competant and confident officers.

I had always had an affectionate contempt for officers. I had met, but a few who could inspire their men in battle. I had seen some who, if they strayed from their unit alone, would not be able to find their way back because they could not read a compass or take a bearing. Nor did they understand anything about the jungle and had not taken the trouble to find out. They could not recognise jungle sounds and what these sounds indicated.

But this was to change. Two men took command. Lord Louis Mountbatten was appointed Supreme Commander South East Asia Command. (S.E.A.C.), and Bill Slim became the General Officer Commanding 14th., Army. We knew Bill Slim and we knew he was soldier's soldier. We had heard of Mountbatten and admired him. Here were two Commanders we could trust. Previously we hadn't even known the names of our Commanders. General Slim was to become known to us as 'Uncle Bill'. He was to become the most skillful, succesful and well loved Commander of all time. Lord Louis Mountbatten was to be known as 'Supremo' but more familiarly as Lord Louis. They did not lead from the rear. We saw and met them in the very front line. They made sure that new training was introduced. They inspired men to fight the Japs in the open or in the jungle. Under their leadership men fought and willingly tolerated conditions never before contemplated. Without 'Uncle Bill' and Lord Louis our cause must surely have been lost.

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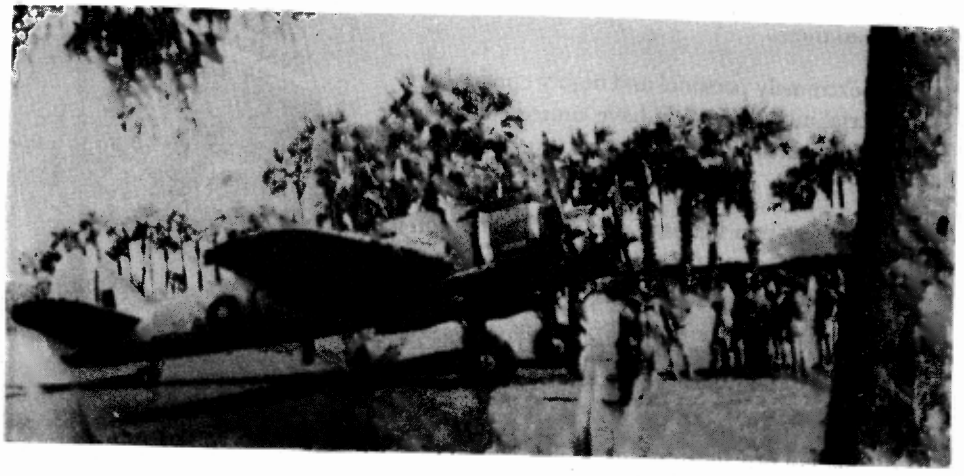
We had been out of Burma now for two months. December 1943 was spent just outside Chittagong and Christmas was celebrated in peace and quiet. We had bought ducks, in the bazaar, and the cooks presented us with roast duck for dinner but no potatoes. We did manage to get an issue of bread which was full of weevils, cooked of course, but when we spread ghee (fat) over the bread we did not notice the weevils. We did, however, get three bottles of beer each and more than an adequate ration of rum.

Shortly after Christmas we moved to an area about thirty miles North of Chittagong where we established a tented camp and we began an intensive period of jungle training. Here it was that I saw my one and only Bengal tiger. Here also, for the first time, we met Lord Louis.

On 9th., February 1944 a runner came to me and said that the C.O., wanted me in his office. When I got to the orderly room I met the C.O., and the Adjutant. The C.O., said '7th., Indian is in trouble, we are going back in and we start tomorrow - get things moving we will only take essentials.'

7th., Indian Division had relieved us, in the Arakan, at the beginning of December. They had established themselves in a place with an unpronouncible name which was to remain in our memories for ever. It was called Ngakyedauk. It was to become known as the 'Admin Box'. The 'Box' was an area of flat

FIVE OF THE SIX SURVIVING GURKHA V.C's WERE PRESENTED TO H.M.THE QUEEN WHEN SHE MADE A STATE VISIT TO NEPAL IN 1985. THE PHOTOGRAPH WAS TAKEN AT KATHMANDU AND HAS SINCE BEEN USED AS A GREETING CARD BY THE GURKHA BRIGADE ASSOCIATION.



BEAUFIGHTER VI, 89 SQUADRON.

open ground roughly a mile square, surrounded on all sides by hills and jungle. It contained most of the first line and all the second line MT of the Division which was operating on an animal transport basis : the hospital, medical supplies ordnance, ammunition and engineers dumps stocked up with at least a month's reserves : spare mules, provost, artillery and much else besides. The area was, in consequence, somewhat congested. It was organised as a 'Box', that is the units and sub units composing it were in a rough defensive position and were supposed to be able to protect themselves against minor enemy enterprises using their own weapons and man power.

During the night of 5/6 February strange rustling in the jungle was interspersed with odd rifle shots, some quite close. There was a feeling of impending crises. The question was when would the storm break, for break it must. At about 0530 hrs it looked as if the units were going to get through the night without being attacked but this thought was shattered by a sudden and dramatic outburst of shouts and screams from the Divisional Headquarters Jeep car park about three hundred yards away. Shortly afterwards very loud shouting was heard on the immediate front coupled with a stentorian voice yelling orders. Suddenly, out of the dark, misty night a long line of figures could be seen approaching the perimeter. There was no doubt who these were and fire was opened. A Bren gun on the left flank brought enfilading fire to bear and this weapon took its toll, causing a number of casualties who were seen to fall. The advance wavered, came to a halt and the swiftly withdrew. The 'Battle of the Box' had begun.

On the night of 6/7 the Japanese 55th., Division and renegade Indian troops burst through the perimeter. They reached the Signals Office and killed all the British ranks on duty. The Royal Signals C.O., rallied the remainder of his men. He led them to high ground where they dug in and for the next three days repulsed attacks by the enemy. After destroying the Signal Office and all communications the Japs turned their attention to the Field Hospital which held some five hundred sick and wounded men. The wounded on stretchers were shot. The Medical Officers and Orderlies were taken into the jungle, tied to trees and used for bayonet practice. Fighting went on all night inside the 'Box' but, eventually the Japs were forced back. For the next three or four days the enemy pounded the troops inside the perimeter with their artillery. The Divisional Commander became separated from his Division and casualties mounted at an alarming rate.

Divisional Signals now re-located on the perimeter. Leading Japanese elements penetrated to within a few feet of the Signal's position whose hail of fire caused the attack to halt. The Signals pulled a wounded Jap into their trenches 7th., Indian Divisional Signals had taken its first prisoner, an unusual feat as the taking of Japanese prisoners was very rare. The attack started again , A Japanese Battalion was now concentrating on the trenches held by the Signals but they held them off for five hours until help arrived and, in the process, killed, at least forty Japs.

26th., Division was now heavily involved, particularly 71st., Brigade. As they fought their way through the pass their advance came to a halt. There was a Japanese strong point holding up the whole Brigade. The task of clearing this strong point was given to the 1st., Battalion, The Lincolnshire Regiment. The Company making the final and crucial attack was commanded by a very gallant Canadian. He had already won the Military Cross in 1943.

Charles Ferguson Hoey was born on the Pacific shores of Canada and one can only surmise that he was working in England in 1939 and enlisted in the Old Country's service as many Canadians did. He was posted to India in 1942 to 71st., Brigade, 26 Indian Division.) and to the 1st., Battalion The Lincolnshire Regiment.

The following extract, from the London Gazette, tells the story of Major Hoey's actions in 1944.

> The King has been graciously pleased to approve the posthumous award of the Victoria Cross to Captain (temporary Major) Charles Ferguson Hoey, M.C., The Lincolnshire Regiment. (Vancouver).

In Burma, on 16th., February 1944, Major Hoey's Company formed part a a force which was ordered to capture a position at all costs.

After a night march through enemy held territory the force was met at the foot of the position by heavy machine gun fire.

Major Hoey personally led his Company under heavy machine gun and rifle fire up to the objective. Although wounded at least twice in the leg and head he seized a Bren gun from one of his men and, firing from the hip, led his Company on to the objective. In spite of his wounds the Company had difficulty in keeping up with him and Major Hoey reached the enemy strong post first where he killed all the occupants before being mortally wounded.

Major Hoey's outstanding gallantry and leadership, his total disregard of personal safety and his grim determination to reach the objective resulted in the capture of this vital position.

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Both Major Hoey's Victoria Cross and his Military Cross were presented to his widowed Mother, Mary Hoey, in Vancouver on 16th., January 1945 by the Lieutenant Governor of British Columbia.

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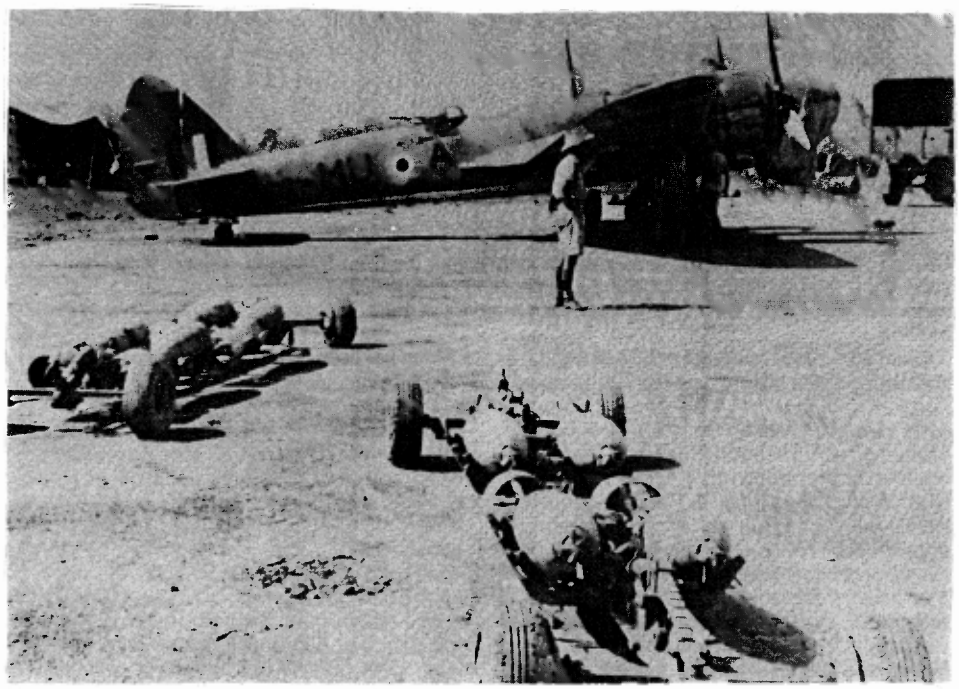
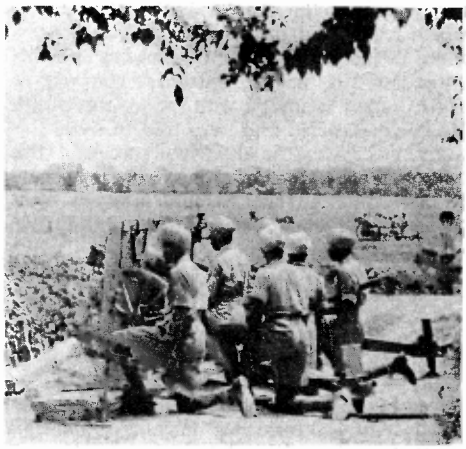
As a result of this action by Major Hoey and his Company we finally reached 7th., Indian Division. We were soon joined, in the vanguard, by our other two Brigades 4th., and 36th., together with our Artillery and, within a few weeks the Japs had been driven back, at least for the time being. Later 7th., Indian was withdrawn to reserve and my Division, now veterans of this campaign, remained in Burma until the end of the war.

On the 24th., of February the 'Battle of the Box' was ended. The Japanese had exhausted themselves, they were short of food and ammunition. They had lost five thousand dead. Although the area was now secured the Japs had no intention of giving up although they did now realise that they would not win the war in Asia.



A BLENHEIM IV OF 60 SQUADRÓN.



A SIKH DETACHMENT OF 28TH.,MOUNTAIN REGIMENT

KOHIMA. 1943.

On 24th., February the Battle of the Box was ended. The Japanese had exhausted themselves, they were short of food and ammunition. Although the area was now secured the Japs had no intention of giving up nor, of course, had the Indian or British Divisions.

For the first time in history a Japanese army had been defeated on level terms in the jungle it had made its own. From that moment antil VJ day, eighteen months later, the Japanese were never to win another major victory.

Now was the time to move forward and the offensive was resumed at once. 5th., Indian in the centre. 26th., Division from the East together with 7th., Indian Division. By 5th., March the offensive was in full swing. The 29th., Brigade and the 72nd., Brigade of the 36th., British Division took over the whole of the Ngakyedauk area. This was the drive to re-capture Rangoon but there was to be very heavy fighting before this was achieved.

The 55th., Japanese Division never fully recovered from its mauling during and after the Battle of the Box and later it was transferred to the central front but not before it had the impertinance to attack 26th., Division at a place called Goppe Bazaar. This attack was a failure. The British estimates of casualties in the Japanese Division, up to now, was 9,628. This Japanese was now split in two and retreated in the face of our troops.

The war was not yet finished. Fresh Japanese Divisions now faced us and all the violence began afresh. Morale in our Army was high and we now knew that we could sweep the Japs out of Burma.

The Royal Air Force and the United States Army Air Force had sustained us through out by dropping our food and ammunition whenever called for.These transport 'planes had a difficult and dangerous task coming down as low as two hundred feet to ensure that the supplies were landed in the right places.

By the beginning of July I began to feel unwell. This was not like me. I had malaria three times and other assorted complaints none of which put me out of action for more than a few days but this was different. I was having stomach cramps, loss of appetite, listlessness and generally feeling pretty miserable. Eventually the Medical Officer diagnosed me as having contracted an intestinal complaint which had now become common. It was caused by bad water and the many hazards of the jungle including being attacked by leeches.. And so I was evacuated from the battle area on a stretcher and, over the next two weeks, transported to Chittagong where I was carried on to a hospital ship destined for Madras. The ship was painted with red crosses and, at night, was floodlit to indicate that it was a hospital ship. I now began to feel afraid because we were sailing across the Bay of Bengal and the Japs did not hesitate to sink hospital ships when they found them.

My stay in Madras was very pleasant and after five weeks in hospital I was discharged and caught a train to the Royal Signals depot at Mhow, a journey of 1,000 miles. I would have preferred to reurn to my Division but red tape intervened - the war had not yet reached India nor the peace time staff . I did not like the depot was was soon posted to Southern Signals in Bangalore.

Bangalore was a peace time station and I was not at all keen to start polishing boots and buttons. This was a boring and frustrating time and I missed the action and the frienship of the men I had left in Burma.

AERIAL VIEWS OF RANGOON SHOWING THE SCHWE DAGON PAGODA AND THE CITY JAIL. THE JAPANESE HAD VACATED RANGOON IN A HURRY AND LEFT THE CITY JAIL FULL YOU WILL SEE THE MESSAGE PAINTED ON THE ROOF OF THE JAIL FOR THE ROYAL AIR FORCE. 'JAPS GONE.'

At the beginning of February 1945 I was ordered to report to Bombay where I went on board His Majesty's Troop Transport El Kantara a 30,000 monster. We sailed quietly through the Indian Ocean, the Red Sea and the Med until we got to Gibralter. From now on we were in an area subject to attack by German submarines and aircraft but, fortunately, a thick fog desended and, for four days we could not even see the other ships in our convoy.

On the 19th., of February we docked at Liverpool but there was no one to unload the ship. True to their nature the dockers were on strike so we had to 'man' the ship's cranes and unload the ship ourselves. For the first time, during the war, I bacame angry and resentful at men who had lived in comparative comfort and safety all this time. Most of us, on board, had been in the Middle East and the Far East for five years or more.

Until I left the Army in April 1946 I spent a very monotonous existance. The war was still going strong in Germany and I applied for a posting to a Division there but this was turned down and so I sat in various barraks, drinking whisky when possible and making rugs in my spare time.

Meeting Americans was a pleasant experience in Burma. They were always well fed and supplied with good food and other goodies. They were also very generous and often sent us some of their rations when they could. An American grumbled to me that they were always short of sweetened condensed milk so I made a bargain with him that he would let me have a case of whisky for each case of milk I let him have. This worked out to our satisfaction.

The 1939 - 45 war was the uneccesary war. We were totally unprepared. The Army had been run down and lacked equipment. The Royal Air Force began the war with only a handful of front line aircraft although the Royal Navy was in a better state. Even so the Royal Canadian Navy had to bolster up the number of warships required for the Atlantic convoys.

By late 1945 the Japanese were in full retreat, heading towards Malaya and Siam but they had to cross the river Salween and the river Sittang. These rivers become raging torrents and the British and Indian troops had, by now, cut the Japs off.

Now a terrible anger arose amongst the Allied troops. We had seen it all happen. We had seen the dead bodies of our wounded comrades - killed savagely by Jap bayonets as they lay helpless on stretchers. We had seen the dead bodies of our friends brutally beaten to death, our Medical Officers tied to trees and shot. We remembered the men on the Burma Railway, in the jails of Rangoon and Singapore But, above all, we remembered the British and Australian women, all civilians, herded into camps in jungle locations, denied food and medical supplies. Locked up in the most atrocious and filthy accomodation, tortured, humiliated and killed by starvation and disease.

No other nation had treated its prisoners as the Japs had done - viciously and with such extreme cruelty and barbarism. From the Emperor of Japan down to the lowest Japanese coolie they all took part in this orgy of annihilation.

Unfortuanately I was not there at the end but a soldier who was there recorded the scene, his name was Arthur Swinson.

BURMA : THE LAST BATTLES, 1945.

If the Japanese had not earned such an unenviable reputation for cruelty and barbarism in their days of triumph, the soldiers looking at them now might well have afforded mercy. With their ragged, threadbare uniforms, they looked more like scarecrows than troops, and to a man they were emaciated, filthy and stinking. However they still spang one surprise : among the gaunt, ferocious creatures who were slaughtered in their hundreds as they tried to cross the main road, were young wild eyed Japanese women. They had advanced with the Japanese supermen as their nurses and their paramours. Now with the superman myth shattered and dispelled forever they attempted to escape along with the broken but still vicious rabble. The Jap women had scant clothing left in this deserate hour. Some carried rifles which they fired at the British troops while others grasped grenades and blew themselves to pieces when capture was imminent. Those who were captured, were clothed and fed and set to nurse the wounded and starving Jap soldiers, now falling into British hands in increasing numbers. They made the most devoted nurses to thier own men.

Day after day the Japanese streamed east from the Yomas (hills). Day after day they met the same fate. The machine guns got them, the Brens and rifles got them the tanks got them, the guns got them. They drowned by the hundred in the Sittang and their corpses floated in the fields and among the reeds. In July 1945 , we of the 14th., Army, killed and captured 11,500 Japanese for the loss of 96 British and Indian dead. The slaughter went on till August 4th., and then no more Japanese came. There were none to come. The last battle in Burma was over. Of the 18,000 men who came out of the Yomas the Japanese admitted that barely 6,000 reached the east bank of the Sittang and, of these, many were too weak and ill to march on to Malaya. They also said that 2,000 men who could not even start the journey had been left behind to die in the hills and there many of the bodies were later found.

More than perhaps any campaign in the Second World War, save the Russian defence of Stalingrad, the Burma campaign has the elements of a great Homeric saga. It took place in a fantastic terrain, isolated by the great mountains and jungles from any other theatre. It went on unbroken for three years and eight months. It covered vast areas. It sucked into its maelstrom nearly 2,000,000 men. It encompassed great disaster and ended in great triumphs. It produced prodigies of heroism, pateince,resolution and endurance. It brought about great suffering but it fascinated and enthralled those taking part in it. It was like no war that had ever been in the history of conflict.

It evolved the 14th., Army, one of the most remarkable armies the world has seen. It spawned General Slim, perhaps the greatest soldier the British have produced in the 20th., century, perhaps the greatest since the Duke of Wellington : few Englishmen have commanded a bigger army, few have enjoyed a greater victory. None has so freely admitted his mistakes nor been so generous to his men. None has commanded such affection and respect from all ranks. Slim will surely hold a unique place in the annals of the Second World War and of the British people.

At this distance in time it may be argued that the Allies triumphs in Burma from Agust 1944 onwards were a waste of resources, as Japan was doomed by that date and the atom bomb would have sealed its fate, whether the 15th.,28th., and 33rd., Japanese armies had been destroyed in the field or not. But such an argument ignores the fact that a soldier is not a prophet and must do his duty wherever he finds himself - the laughter of the gods is not his business.

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SMOKING IS A HEALTH HAZARD.

Remember the times you paraded for the top brass ; those special turnouts when at least the Corps Commander, if not Bill Slim or Lord Louis, complete with retinue, traipsed through your unit hours and hours after you had had reveille at 0200 hours.

That retinue always had a doctor -- one member of our medical profession -- disguised as a full colonel. He was along to check hygiene I suppose, and had his finger tips on all the statistics on dysentry and malaria and anti malaria precautions and ration scales and casualty percentages. I didn't mind those jokers at the time - they seemed harmless enough, and always looking uncomfortable and out of place in uniform, even sometimes with the Sam Browne cross belt over the left shoulder - or, at least, looking like they were wearing someone else's gear.

What really bugs me was when they all got back to civvy street and those doctors peered through their microscopes and came up with the belated verdict that smoking was hazardous to your health....after we, all fresh and trusting and innocent-like had spent the war years avoiding the bullet with our name on it, but getting well and truly hooked on cigarettes they'd seen we got supplied with in our rations, as regular as the ascorbic acid tablets and the mepacrine... talk about locking the stable door after the gee-gee's scarpered.

Many years later an old soldier was hospitalised and this ditty describes the result.

The old soldier lay in his hospital bed
And his mates had come round from the club.
They brought him some fags, and one or two cans
Just to wash down the hospital grub.

The nurse had got rid of his empties
She said 'If you smoke be discreet '
Then the sister cried 'Smoking here isn't allowed'
So he had to smoke under the sheet.

The matron was doing her rounds next day
All starched and proper and prim,
And she came up to the soldier's bed
Where she stopped and smiled at him.
'If you'd like a light for your cigarette
Get them out without delay'
So the old fella pulled out his packet of fags
AND THE MATRON TOOK THEM AWAY.