

25th LONDON (CYCLIST) OLD COMRADES ASSOCIATION

President

Paul H. Nicol.

Vice Presidents

Major W.S. Stafford, T.D., E.S. Mitchell, H.W. Procktor, F.C. Wood.

WAZIRISTAN 1917

BULLETIN No.97.

15a, Carlton Drive,

AFGHANISTAN 1919

JULY 1959.

Putney, S.W.15.

SECRETARY'S NOTES

REUNION DINNER, May 8th, 1959. Paul H. Nicol took the Chair as President. 125 were present (as against 131 last year). Apologies for absence were received, together with greetings to all present, from:- Major Peyton Baly, Capt. S.H. Kittoe, G.W. Alexander, M.W. Barton, Bill Basing, F.J. Bullen, E.F. Butler, A.D. Buckmaster, D.A. Carmichael, W. Cawte, H. Cole, O.A. Crack, W.C. Dodkins, J.H. Durnford, W.M. Glazebrook, G. Hazell, D.W. Hennings, A.E. Hickford, H.G. Kirby, E.C. Lambert, R.O. Pringle, E.S. Mitchell, C.C.P. Tindall, C.M. Topham, F. Trussler and H.G. White.

Our Guests included representatives from the "Hants", "Sussex's" and "Kent's".

General Fund Collection. During the evening, as the result of an appeal, £48.10. 0. was collected for this Fund. The Committee wish to thank all present for this splendid response.

SUBSCRIPTIONS, PLEASE. Have you paid your subscription for 1959 yet? If not, please let me have same by Aug. 30th. Thank you. Outstanding receipts are enclosed with this Bulletin.

PERSONAL PARS. E.F. BUTLER. Frank Butler, the Chairman of the Committee, met with a car accident last Easter Sunday, in which both his wife and himself suffered bad injuries. I am glad to say that both are now well on the mend.

A.D. BUCKMASTER, of 29, Oakdale Road, Herne Bay, Kent. Mr. Buckmaster who is a pre 1914 ex 25th, and was one of the team who took part in the Military Tournament at the Olympia in 1909, would like to contact any other 25th who was a member of this display. Were you one? If so, will you please write direct to Mr. Buckmaster, to the above address.

E.W. APPELEGATE, "Appy" who joined us from the "Suffolks" at Chiseldon, has been elected MAYOR of his home town, GREAT YARMOUTH. CONGRATULATIONS, and may you and your Wife, the MAYORESS, have a Happy and Peaceful year of Office.

E. CHURCHILL. Teddy writes me saying that whilst spending his holidays up in Suffolk and Norfolk recently, he attended the "Suffolk's" Reunion. As a 25th he had a very enjoyable time. The "SUFFOLK'S" are going to try and fix up a coach party of twenty Members to come down to our next Reunion Dinner. We shall look forward to their visit, and give them a good time.

MEMBERS OVERSEAS. From time to time I have received letters from our Comrades abroad, and reading between the lines, I think they would welcome letters from OLD COMRADES who knew them 40/50 years ago. I therefore give below their names and addresses.

W. Andrews, P.O. Box 421, Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada.

D.R. Lysaght, c/o John Lysaght Ltd., 33, Macqueries Place, Sydney, N.S.W., Australia.

H. Falconer, Box 6015, South Africa.

H.A. Sell, Palmerston, Octago, New Zealand.

E.F. Groombridge, 23, Rue de rivoli, Nice, A/M France.

J.A. Suttle, 825 5th Avenue, N.W., Calgary, Alberta, Canada.

F. Oswell Jones, Ferndale, Jamestown, St. Helena.

F.G. Trussler, 22, Woods Road, Molesworth Road, Mangawhai Roads, Northland, New Zealand.

It is now up to you!

OBITUARY. Since the Publication of the last Bulletin (96), I regret to inform you of the following OLD COMRADES who have "Passed on" :-

J. Billing, T.H. Denny; G. Emberson, G.H. Godbolt, F. Harding, T. Jacobs,
H. Putman, C.E. Scuffle, D.S. Stewart, J.H.D. Taylor.

N.B. Whenever possible the 25th are represented at the Funerals of our departing Comrades.

REGIMENTAL TIES. We have now a new stock of Ties. 9/6d. post free.

J.J.G.

MEMBERS' CONTRIBUTIONS

HISTORY WITHOUT MYSTERY

William Rufus, who'd a head
Of hair a kind of squirrel red,
Was shot out hunting. William Tyrrell
Mistook him for a ruddy squirrel.

Mary Tudor, who was tough,
Believed in treating people rough.
If you should care to study Mary
You'd guess why she's called "Bloody Mary".

She fought her wars, some drawn but many won -
Victoria stood no buck from anyone.
Her little British Army may
Be why - it went a damn long way.

B. McQ.

OFF THE SECRET LIST

The mention of Seringapatam by Pringle in Bulletin No. 95 reminds me of a story which, I think, may now be told.

After our musketry course had finished at Hebbal in 1916, Tom Lacey and I applied at "B" Company Orderly Room for one day's leave "to catch butterflies in the locality of Krishnarajapuram". At the time, I believe, leave for one day could be granted provided the place visited was within 10 miles radius of the camp. Capt. Wildy explained, however, that there had been a slight outbreak of plague in that area, and having butterflies in our stomachs already, we promised to go somewhere else. We kept our word! We went to Seringapatam, the historic old fortress city about 90 miles from Bangalore.

Early next morning, after successfully dodging some military police on duty at the station we started on our journey, stopping at Closepet for about 10 minutes where we stretched our legs.

We found the old capital of Tippu Sultan looking deserted and decayed. We saw the remains of the greatest fortress ever built in Southern India. No wonder the double ramparts - constructed secretly by French engineers - so surprised the gallant storming party led by Sir David Baird in 1799. The "Tiger of Mysore" was killed and his tomb is in the Lal Bagh. When he was buried the thunder and lightning was so prolonged his sorrowing Moslem followers took it as a sign that the British would rule for ever in Mysore. How wrong they were!

We visited Tippu's Mosque, and after climbing a seemingly never-ending spiral staircase, reached the top of the tower. Our guide pointed out River Canvery, the red-roofed hovels of the village, and various places of interest far below us. He could not understand our limited Hindustani, but we brought into play our picture postcards previously purchased in the local bazaar. Having shown us all round, he then presented us each with a necklace of flowers and a rose from the Holy Garden!

We then explored Tippu's Pleasure Palace, the wonderful Daria Dowlat. The walls were covered with bright pigment in a splendid state of preservation. One large canvas contained about 1,500 figures including British soldiers in white trousers, red tunics and tall hats, besides several elephants, camels, and other animals. In one of the Palace rooms, the walls and ceilings of which were gorgeously decorated, we found a Eurasian and his wife. They had motored in from Mysore City and their bearer was just carrying in a huge hamper. Our luck was in for they promptly invited us to lunch. We were the first Territorials they had met. We had to decline their kind offer to run us into Mysore, but as we said goodbye they loaded us with cigarettes and chocolate.

We found the dungeons where some 40 British officers and men taken prisoners during the first siege in 1792 were confined for seven weary years. Each man wore heavy shackles chained to a piece of granite projecting from the low wall. One prisoner to every six feet. A Captain Lucas voluntarily wore a double set of chains for four years to relieve a comrade too weak to bear the burden. Looking at this horrible prison it was easy to picture the joy of those long-suffering men when General Baird finally released them.

We then located Scott's bungalow, which our Eurasian friends had mentioned. Scott was an officer in charge of the gun-carriage factory here in 1817. The sudden death of his wife and child from cholera broke his heart and he left India immediately, never to return. The furniture remained just as he left it.

After some trouble we eventually found the brick arch built by the French engineer de Havilland when France was Tippu's ally. It was in a deserted spot, partly hidden by coconut palms and foliage. We jumped on the centre-stone and felt the arch tremble, but the curious little native boy who followed us failed to produce any signs of a wobble. I believe the Duke of Windsor, then Prince of Wales, was highly amused when he tried the experiment a few years later.

We got back to camp just before midnight. We had been "out of bounds" all right. But what a wonderful day to remember!

Con. B. Hendrick, "B" Company, 1/25th LONDONS.

"JOY-RIDE FROM JANDOLA"

"Get packed, and be ready to move in 10 minutes - you're going down the line today!" This was the most welcome news I had received for many weeks, for it betokened a release from a wearisome spell of mental and physical purgatory spent 'twixt nightly watches on the perimeter and admissions, discharges, and all-too-soon re-admissions to the hospital tent.

Life in the depot at Jandola lacked the movement and excitement of the remainder of the Battalion, which had moved up towards Haidari Kach and beyond. We were all sick men, and after that first gruelling day when we manhandled the entire stores and tents to pitch camp nearer to the Fort for safety, the days and nights in the sweltering heat grew very tedious. What a day that had been! Back and forth over the boulders with as much as we could carry each time - staggering under our loads to get them in before nightfall, lest the Mahsuds should sweep down and loot the lot. Someone succeeded in finding a solitary camel to assist in the process, and for the noble work that animal put in (not without violent and voluble opposition!) I always feel that a memorial to him should have been erected on the Frontier.

The ensuing days dragged on - batches of further sick or wounded came through and were sent down to base. For us, several M.O.'s inspections resulted in weeding out two or three men to send up the line. One day (20th June) a Y.M.C.A. man penetrated to our "far North", bringing a gramophone for an hour, and for a few brief moments fatigue was banished while Sullivan reigned supreme with the strains of "The Gondoliers"; "Balm of Gilead" indeed! or like Omar Khayyam -

"Like snow upon the desert's dusty face,
Lighting a little hour or two, is gone!"

News of "our front" was scarce, brought only by returning comrades whose accounts varied according to the colouring of the imagination. Rations were reduced to the minimum, but when bully-beef turns green within 15 minutes of opening a tin, we were never in danger of over-eating. Instead, our minds centred on favourite items of diet enjoyed in civilian life, now so far away in a rapidly receding past; I pictured a homely little restaurant in Water Lane, where delectable steak-and-kidney puddings were served, and vowed that if ever I got out of this horror and reached London I would make it one of my first visits. (I did, to find the business closed!). At other times I visioned cool fruit salad and cream, luscious helpings of which had made week-end visits to a rose-covered cottage at Whyteleafe an episode in my young career. But many of us were beyond the inclination to eat, and day by day life became more "stale and unprofitable". The sun made the removal of helmets a danger, even inside the tents, and we lay and watched the sweat emerge steadily from our pores to trickle in a tickling stream down our chests. The massacre of flies by day and mosquitoes by night made no appreciable reduction in their numbers. We waged a losing battle from the start. "Prickly heat" added to our comfort. Our only relief was to resort to a "swimming pool" - a muddy rectangular pond filled from the Zam River, which had been diverted from its course by the engineers and roofed with straw matting. This was the coolest spot in Jandola, and we shared the water with enormous frogs and hairy spiders of alarming proportions.

To return to the morning of June 29th. I dragged myself up from the stretcher which served as a hospital bed, feeling as weak as a rat. Three "admissions" in a fortnight with malaria, sunstroke, ague, etc. to break the monotony of nightly guards no sleep and nothing to eat for three days since last being brought in, made effort an agony, but I gathered together my allotted 19 lbs. 4 ozs. of kit per man (duly weighed for the transport) and staggered out unwashed and unshaven to find a camel with two covered coffin-like stretchers slung precariously across his hump. There were only four of us to go that day - a man from the 6th Sussex (Cyclists) and a "25th" (both riding ponies), and a Wireless man to balance me on this Heath-Robinson contraption, which, by the way, could only have been constructed by a carpenter who hadn't enough wood, or had been brought up amongst pygmies - for the space was so confined that there was neither width nor length in which to lie - the only advantage was that the meagre awning kept off some of the sun.

There were about 200 camels returning with us (half-a-dozen would have smelt ample!), and so with a jerk forward, a bump backward and a lurch sideways, as our steed untelescoped his limbs and rose, we set forth on our trek, leaving that depot of Satan's behind us. Soon we descended to the river-bed, where it felt a trifle cooler from the river which we continually forded as we wound up the gorge. As I looked over the edge of my coffin, I was thankful that at least I had not to repeat that previous nightmare march we endured at the outset of the campaign, with feet swollen and burning from slipping on the stony river-bed, then lulled into temporary bliss by the coolness of the water, only to return to agony a few moments later as the boots dried stiff and the contracting socks made a solid ball to walk on. My spirits began to revive with interest in my surroundings - our former acquaintance with this spot had finished in a state of exhaustion, and for many, delirium, and details were consequently hazy memories. Viewed now, the prospect was awe-inspiring in its rugged grandeur. Immense crags towered above the river-bed and threw a deep shadow on one side, but their boulder-strewn base made it impossible to take advantage of the shade. The ground appeared to quiver in the heat, the distant hills shimmered in its haze; of vegetation there was none, and over all the merciless sun stabbed down from a deep blue sky. We traversed a few miles thus - bump, thud, bump, thud - the crazy coffin and the motion of the camel inducing a feeling akin to sea-sickness. I endeavoured to sit up, to turn on one side, to squat, to crouch, to hang my legs over the edge, to reverse - but every attempt to ease the discomfort was useless, and so we proceeded to the creak of leather, the chonk-chonk of the camel bells and a high-pitched wailing song from a camel driver which echoed back from the cliffs. At one point we passed a dead camel fallen by the way: a cloud of flies and several vultures battled for its revolting remains. Later, we met an up-going convoy - the camels, nose-to-tail, laden with bully-beef, biscuits, tinned milk, petrol and bales of "bhoosa". Apart from this we encountered no-one, although on the heights I detected occasional groups of Tribesmen, and wondered as to our chances if attacked, for we were unarmed, having had to hand in our rifles before leaving. Maybe an empty convoy did not interest them, or they may have been Waziristan Militia or local levies. In glancing round, I became aware that one of our riding cases was not with us, and before we turned a bend I managed to just spot him in the distance, sitting at the side of the track with his head in his hands, his pony waiting beside him. I halted our convoy, "hooshed" our camel, who swore horribly as he collapsed in sections, whereon I clambered out on to terra firma and made my way back along the stream. It proved to be the Sussex man - he had got a touch of the sun, been sick three times, and was feeling very groggy. I helped him back, meanwhile offering him my camel if he cared to submit to its discomforts for the sake of the shade provided by the awning. This he eagerly accepted, so I mounted his pony and the cavalcade resumed its journey, coming in sight of Kot Khirgi late in the afternoon. Here we had some milk, lime juice, tea, sago and bread and butter - the first I had tasted for over a month: it was oily and semi-liquid, but tasted delicious. With only four in the party, the orderlies had an easier time and we received more attention than would have otherwise been possible. An officer came in with a pile of "Tatlers" etc. - a few weeks old but very acceptable, so I regaled myself with theatrical news, learning that two new London shows had made a sensation - "CHU CHIN CHOW" and "THE MAID OF THE MOUNTAINS". Other than reading there was nothing else for it than to catch up with sleep. Khirgi, by the way, had now become a town of tents, far different to when we first saw it.

We got up at 6.0., and after a mug of char, set out for Zam Post. The Sussex man was still a bit queer, and readily accepted my camel again in exchange for his pony, but when I went in search of it, I discovered that the ponies had been sent back, so I had to mount a camel. I had indeed done him a good turn! There was no saddle - a

few rough boards lashed together served its purpose, and before many miles had passed I was rubbed sore and chafed all over. I assumed every conceivable position on that "oont", short of balancing on my head: side-saddle, backwards, nearly upside-down! but my acrobatics proved fruitless in search of comfort and I was in no condition to do other than submit my body to the torments.

We at last left the river-bed and emerged into the open, to the scene of our first encounter with the enemy. Several Mahsuds still lay where they dropped - the corpses by now being bleached white by the sun and picked quite clean by vultures and ants. The reader may consider this personal angle on my character how he will, but for weeks I had anticipated passing this place again and intended to collect, if possible, a skull! I was forever adding to my theatrical "prop-box", and having already essayed several Shakespearean roles in civi-life, I wanted a REAL skull for "Hamlet". "Alas, poor Yorick!" When the moment of attainment arrived I had to abandon the notion, for by this time I was so exhausted by the bumping and swaying of that camel, and feeling once more "the heat o' the sun", that I knew if once I'd got down I could never have climbed back again. After all, I console myself, it wouldn't have been the right shape! Ethnologically speaking, of course!

I noticed several boulders splashed with blood and empty cartridge cases lying around; in one vital spot a semi-circle of hastily thrown-up stones for head cover told their own tale of the gallant stand put up by the Gurkhas, the remnant of whom we saved at dawn on that 7th June. We arrived, at last at Zam Fort, utterly fagged out. Here we were met by a Red Cross motor ambulance which made quick work of the last 9 miles, and landed us safely at Tank Hospital. My temperature was 103.8° and malaria had commenced again. That camel must have jerked me up too much, for in the afternoon I was sick three times - quinine and lime-juice - but not before I'd indulged in a glorious bath and a shave and been reprimanded for so doing. I had ice on my neck that night.

On the 2nd July I had some milk and gravy, but was feeling starved, having had practically nothing solid for a week, but the hospital was comfortable - spring mattresses, electric fans, punkahs and plenty of magazines to read. Like the Mogul inscription at Delhi, "If there be a Paradise on earth, it is this, it is this" A gramophone was turned on at night, but there was only one decent record - "Rubenstein's Melody".

On the 3rd I was marked for Pindi - leaving the British General Hospital No. 36 in bullock tongas and arriving at Tank station, to entrain in Red Cross compartments to accommodate 12 men; these were fitted with fans, electric light and shower bath. We left Tank at 8.37 p.m. and the only thing of interest on the journey was the Pezu Pass by moonlight. This was a 2'6" guage railway. There was an engine at each end, and in case of attack, an improvised armoured truck, front and rear, each with 25 rifles of the 94th Reg., with machine guns. We reached Kalabagh Ghat at 6.45 the next morning, and on the journey across the Indus in the twin-funnelled paddle boat we obtained a more detailed view of the town. The tumble-down houses are straw-roofed and built in tiers, with deep shaded verandahs. The townsfolk have an ingenious method of letting down the chatties of their water-wheels direct into the river, instead of into wells. Animated groups of women were dhobying and bathing as we passed. Rock salt mining is carried on in the red hills at the rear.

Arriving at Mari Indus, a narrow gauge railway took us to the top, and to the N.W. Railway - bound for Rawal Pindi, which we reached at 6 p.m., motor ambulances taking us on to the 18th British General Hospital where I was overjoyed to rejoin my particular pal. During the next few days, Waziristan began to drift into the past, as

we sat in the evenings on the phulnana-scented verandah and smoked, watching the fire-flies and talking of "shoes and ships and sealing-wax", and picturing the cool pine-clad hills of Dagshai, to which we were destined to be sent for recuperation.

PERCY CHISNALL.

NOTICES

REUNION DINNER
FRIDAY, 6th MAY, 1960.
at the
WINDSOR CASTLE HOTEL, VICTORIA, S.W.1.

- REGIMENTAL TIES: From the Secretary. 9/6d. post free.
- FURS: Of all kinds, Renovations, Cold Storage, W.T. Davidson, 21, South Molton Street, W.1. MAYfair 2676.
- OPHTHALMIC OPTICIAN: W.G. Middleton, 20, Bath Road, Hounslow, Middx., HOUNslow 0024.
- HOLIDAY APARTMENTS: Sheringham - V. Champion, "Arundel", St. Peters Road, Sheringham, Norfolk.
- Bournemouth - W.L. Liggins, The White House Hotel, Overcliff Drive, Southbourne, Bournemouth. Southbourne 45121.
- CARAVANS: Fully equipped Caravans for hire. Close to beach in beautiful sandy bay, ideal for a quiet holiday. Special terms for ex 25th's. Apply to:- Tony Paine, Lakeside Cafe, Freshwater East, Lamphoy, Pembrokeshire.
- MINE HOSTS: W.A. Budd, Station Hotel, Sutton, Surrey.
E.S. Mitchell, "Warren House", Forest Road, nr. Wokingham, Berks.
-

Reference the item "Joy-Ride from Jandola".

My father told me this tale many times. He said that Percy Chisnall certainly saved his life when he went back to fetch him after he had dropped by the wayside with sickness and sun-stroke.

My father was born at Whybourne Grange on 18th January 1890. At that time Whybourne Grange, Frant was in the County of Sussex. Frant is now part of the Tunbridge Wells area in Kent.

My father said his journey on the camel, whilst welcome instead of travel on a pony, was a most unpleasant experience as he was at times under the animal and arrived at his journeys end most smelly and dirty - but alive.

A. W. H.