

AN OCTOGENARIAN'S PERSONAL LIFE STORY

PREFACE

This is the story of my life which I started to write as an Octogenarian and, being alone, I wondered if I could write something about myself to pass the idle hours. I had never written anything before, except a letter or two, and so, as I had left school at the age of twelve years in 1905, I was taking on something new.

It is a personal story, not intended for publication, but I would like it to be recorded, particularly for my family if they wish to read it. I believe students of academic (historian) standard are interested in the lives of the elderly and how they fared in by-gone days.

I am greatly indebted to the Editor of "Yours", a monthly publication for "Help the Aged", for giving me a column in their paper under the heading of "An Helpful Author" from which I had many replies of help.

Also I would like to acknowledge the help of Dr. R.R. Sellman, MA, for reading my script, passing an opinion and giving me advice.

During my period of inactivity in voluntary work from 1966, for about ten years, I had the services of a Home Help, a Mrs. Margaret O'Donnell, of Gosport. She was devoted to the elderly and I appreciate her kindness during my wife's illness and subsequently mine. Her husband Pat, too, was a source of helpfulness, in the garden and in the home.

Above all, I would like to thank my son George and his wife Frances, who stepped into the breach when I commenced to ail caused by my experiences in the First World War. They indeed welcomed me into their home, offering me separate accommodation and help, which I do appreciate now that I am getting less mobile.

I can only say thank you to them all.

Y.C. ELLIOTT
JANUARY, 1976
OSWINGTON

"MEMOIRS OF AN OLD AGE PENSIONER"

CHAPTER ONE

"My Childhood"

What has prompted me to write my memoirs I really do not know; at my age it seems farcical. Perhaps it is because of loneliness or lack of human companionship - it certainly is not boredom, the time passes very quickly, week by week, month by month. At present I am not very mobile because of a leg complaint, which is probably hereditary, and has been very much aggravated by the first world war.

My son some time ago, when making a visit, said to me "Pop, you should write a book". I laughed and said "What about?". Then it occurred to me there was something in what he said, but I forgot all about the matter.

A few weeks ago I had one of those rare visits from the Minister of the Church to which I belong. In the course of conversation, when I narrated little episodes of my life, he reiterated my son's remarks; "You ought to write a book". So I am endeavouring to put pen to paper and write what I can remember.

However, I am starting this story the wrong way round. I should commence as it does in the Bible, Genesis Chapter 1 with the first words, "In the beginning".

So it was in the beginning I was born in January 1893 at Admiralty Street, Stonehouse, Plymouth. Obviously, I did not know much about it but, from what I can gather, my mother and father married late in life. My mother was about thirty six years of age, she was born in 1857, and my father was about thirty one years of age, he was born in 1862. I got this information later on in life when I had to deal with my father's affairs when he passed away at Sanderstead, Surrey in 1942 at the age of seventy nine years. My mother died in 1929 at the age of seventy two years, at Pennycomquick, Plymouth at the home of my eldest sister. However, there were five children of the marriage. My father was a Royal Marine; strangely enough I cannot ever remember seeing him in uniform as a serving member of the Force. He must have been discharged to pension for long service when I was about three years of age.

I too was a Royal Marine, serving at RM Barracks, Stonehouse, Plymouth and when I was pensioned in 1952 the house where I was born was still there. It was close to the Barracks. I often saw it and often

wondered how my mother and father fared in those days. They could only have occupied a room there as wages of the members of the services were small, about six or seven shillings a week. It is doubtful if the houses are still standing as Plymouth was blitzed rather badly and probably the area has been rebuilt.

At some time or other we moved from that locality into another area, still around the Barracks, because I started my school days at the age of five at High Street, Stonehouse, Plymouth, which ran parallel to Edgcombe Street, the latter being the main road connecting Plymouth to Devonport.

My grandfathers I never knew but my grandmothers I knew faintly. One of them lived in St. Mary Street off Edgcombe Street. Often I made her a visit on a Saturday morning; I think I used to go to the little shop for her, for which I was rewarded with a farthing. This I clutched in my hand on the way home after my visit and presented it to my mother. Yes, a farthing could purchase something those days, even a small packet of sweets but I cannot remember buying such a luxury. Money was scarce, even for sweets. Occasionally, when my mother had a couple of coppers to spare, she sent me to the bakers shop at the bottom of the street; when the shop opened at 9am I could get a bag of stale buns, which were left over from the previous day, for two pence.

Our next move, as far as I can gather, was to Kidderminster, Worcester. Father was appointed a Recruiting Officer for that district for the Royal Navy and Royal Marines. At last I saw father in uniform. Every week-day he was away on his bicycle touring the district, trying to get recruits and leaving posters here and there. Our front room was used as an office, with the height standard in the corner, bare floor, no furniture except a table used as a desk and a chair of sorts. Whether father was successful in his efforts, I do not know because I did not ever see any recruits.

My memory at that time was not a good one, being so young. I did however remember something that impressed my small mind at the time. Once I got on a chair in the front bedroom and started playing with the naked gas lights each side of the windows, and burnt the curtains down. Another time a hullaballo was set up by my disappearance all day; I had been in another boy's backyard playing; they fed me but did not know where I came from. Periodically a tableau passed at the bottom of the street, depicting "Mother Shipton" on a lorry. She was dressed colourfully with a conical tall hat; what she intended to represent I never knew - more like a witch to me! Good Friday was "Hot Cross Bun" day. Early morning about 6am a man with a basket came along crying out "Hot Cross Buns, steaming hot, just come out of

the Bakers Shop". They were two a penny or three a penny. Even at that time in the morning, I and my sisters were eager for a hot bun. Father forked out a penny. Well that is the extent of my memory at Kidderminster.

Once more the family moved, this time I remember faintly, to Ford a district of Devonport, Plymouth. We had rooms off Cambridge Road. Father evidently finished the recruiting appointment and had now obtained employment in H.M. Dockyard.

Most boys are interested in trains and I was an enthusiast proper. There was a railway at the top of Cambridge Road which ran under the road to Devonport Station. Being small, I could not see the trains unless I climbed the parapet. This was my undoing. Father had sent me to buy a bottle of Tarragona Port Wine for mother, who was not too good, and I was in possession of this wine when I heard a train. Up I climbed on the parapet but the steam of the engine frightened me; I fell and broke the bottle of wine, so you can guess the results when I got home to father.

I attended Cambridge Road Board School for quite a while and I liked school very much. I must have been very studious because I reached the Seventh Standard within a couple of years. In those days one passed from Standard to Standard by merit, not like the modern way by age (when you go up automatically whether you like it or not). Soon I was in the Ex Seventh Standard and my teacher's name was the same as mine, spelt with one T. He taught Euclid, Algebra, Geometry, Trigonometry, Science and even Music, the latter subject being optional after school hours. I was an average boy, not too intelligent, but I was making good progress as time went on.

Somehow or another father moved again, this time in Lower St. Budeaux. I expect it was because I had acquired two sisters in recent years and they were growing up. I can remember it quite well, it was No. 3 Coldswick Street. Fortunately, or unfortunately, for me it was situated a long way from Ford School. I had hoped I should have gone to a new school, with my sisters, at St. Budeaux. But no, I had to go to Cambridge Road, Ford. Father had his reasons I suppose. I dare not question my father, I had to do as I was told. The class which I was in entered apprentices to the Artificers Branch of the Royal Navy and also Dockyard Apprenticeships. Did he intend to place me in that category? Was I a bright enough boy adjudged by my superiors to take the next examination? I never knew the answer.

Well, I had the long trek to school, Mondays to Fridays. I can see myself now making my way along the road with my schoolbag on my back towards Camels Head (which was about two miles), then through the town and up the long country road to Ford - about three miles in all. My dinner was either sandwiches or a penny; with that penny I bought a pasty from the little

shop outside the school, which I ate in the playground. I got a drink by putting my head under a tap somewhere. After school I had to walk back home again. In the winter when it was getting dark I was afraid of that country walk and was always glad to see the gas lamps of Camels Head in the distance. Then when I got home, I had homework to do, by which time it was bedtime and sleep to refresh me for the next day.

From where we lived at Lower St. Budeaux, which was situated at the bottom of the hill to the Bull Point Armament Depot, a short distance along the road was a farm. Mother sent me to that farm, mornings, for a jug of skimmed milk. Cost, one penny; about a quart I should imagine. Many Saturdays I was sent to Fore Street Devonport to get margarine from Maypole Limited. That took me all the forenoon. What a jaunt it was too; however, I could avoid Camels Head by using the Great Western Railway bridge which carried the trains into Keyham Station from Cornwall. We did not eat much butter, if any at all, but my favourite food was bread and lard. The lard we got was from the Butcher's shop; with pepper and salt, it went down well, it was good eating.

On Sundays we went to the Baptist Church on the Main Road, three times, morning, afternoon Sunday School and evening. We could have a little walk to Bull Point and back, in the afternoon after Sunday School which was our leisure for that day.

I was old enough then to take my sister out in a Push Chair. I invariably took her to Saltash Passage to see the boats on the River Tamer and the working of the Floating Bridge across to Saltash. Mostly I loved to see the train, high overhead, ambling its way across the river on the Brumel Bridge; we called it Saltash Bridge. It was only a single track and trains did not move more than five or six miles an hour. There were two stations at St. Budeaux, one G.W.R. and the other L.S.W.R. One went to Cornwall and the other to North Devon. As a boy it bewildered me to see two trains going the same way, one west to Cornwall and the other north to London.

My age then must have been about ten or eleven years. There was no such thing as organised games at school. We had a break during the forenoon and afternoon sessions when we played in the playground as we thought fit, making our own fun, running wild for half an hour, then back to our Class.

Teachers grouse these days because there are too many in the classes, say, thirty to forty pupils. We had the same number of pupils then, in 1903 or 1904, but we were fully under the control of the Teacher, there was no talking or chewing, etc. etc. and any indiscretion was quickly spotted by him. We were admonished with the cane. It hurt but the sting soon wore off and we would not dare to tell our parents, because they too would say that

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we deserved the punishment for doing wrong.

During my school days I don't remember playing much with other boys and girls at home. Perhaps it was because we did not stay long enough anywhere to make friends. My sisters learned the way to cook and sew at home, making their clothes. At Easter time especially they looked quite smart in their starched and ironed frocks. Why they were turned out like that at Easter, I do not know; it was fashionable I suppose.

Myself, my task on Saturdays was to clean the knives and forks; stainless steel had not reached our home then. I rubbed the knives up and down the board which was covered with brick dust to make them bright and clean. My father seemed to be always mending our boots - we very rarely took them to a proper repairer. Washing clothes was my mother's task and she used a dolly and tub; when I was home from school I tried to work the dolly as best I could and, when the mangling had to be done, turning the handle was my job. I could just reach to do it, I didn't mind at all, it was amusing.

So you see there was not much time for me to play during the time we were at Coldswick Street. Mondays to Fridays backwards and forwards to school, then homework, Saturdays odd jobs at home to keep me out of mischief and Sundays, most of the day at Church; well, that was our life. I didn't know any other, I didn't seem to get into any trouble at all and I wasn't mischievous as far as I know - perhaps it was because I never had the chance, my mind was so occupied. Little did I know then that my schooldays would soon be over. Neither did I know that the subjects which were taught me then were going to be very beneficial in my after life. Euclid Books 1, 2, 3 and 12, Algebra with simultaneous equations, the use of a, b, x and y, Geometry, Trigonometry with its figures and angles, together with a smattering of science, all these subjects were the ground work to mind training even at so tender an age of eleven years. Now I know; I can read a lot of good books, use the English language in a moderate way, not perfect by a long way but am able to spell and speak correctly which is a great asset in after life.

I did so long to travel on a train, especially on the Brunel Bridge to Saltash but that pleasure was denied me. However, the Church once a year had a Sunday School Outing. One year we went to Bere Alston where a field was hired for our pleasure and, wonder of wonders, it was by train. How we enjoyed that ride, though very short, and I remember singing "Good Luck to the Engine Driver". We all, I think, enjoyed the train ride more than the sports which were provided in the field. Trams did run from St. Budeaux but I never got a ride on one; it was Shank's pony for me but I did not mind it all, I took it for granted I had to walk everywhere.

You may think this is a hard luck story, it is not, it was just

life as I remembered it, we were happy, we had good wholesome food, as much as my parents could afford and we didn't go hungry. There was never much money about and we were never in debt. The glad and sorry system of "Hire Purchase" had not caught on then, although my parents did belong to a Provident Society but it was only used to get a few clothes now and again in emergency.

There are gaps in my memory during my childhood days. One of them is a faint recollection of being in Falmouth; how long I cannot remember but we did live there. Another is, why did we leave St. Budeaux and how did we leave? Father worked in H.M. Dockyard. I expect he was declared redundant for he was apparently out of work for a time but for how long, again my memory fails me. We must have gone on the Parish as it was called; I know we did not go to Ford Workhouse which I passed every day going to school.

I have tried to remember the accommodation at Coldswick Street but that is also missing. I can see the front door of the house now but to explain what was in it, such as furniture, rooms, etc. I cannot tell. The next thing I know was that Father obtained employment at the R.N. College, Dartmouth. He was a messenger, in uniform, blue with red anchors on the lapels of his coat and a peak cap with an anchor as a badge.

Dartmouth is one of the prettiest towns I have ever lived in and it is the only place I know which had a railway station with no trains. One could transact all railway business there, including booking of tickets, handling luggage, etc., which was all transported across the River Dart to Kingswear from where the trains ran regularly to Newton Abbot. Dartmouth Harbour was described to me by a colleague with whom I served later on in life, that to enter Dartmouth by boat, early morning, was a wonderful sight. The two Castles, one on each side of the harbour, were once upon a time fitted with chains which could be pulled up across the mouth, to prevent unwanted ships from entering. One could see on entering the harbour the hills on each side, dotted with houses here and there, the College in the distance high up over the west bank, the yachts at their moorings, small boats bobbing about and a shipyard in the distance at Sandquay.

I was soon to know the beauty of Dartmouth because the family obtained accommodation in one of a pair of cottages situated on the side of the hill in Ford Valley. They were called "Providence Cottages", very old with no modern conveniences whatever but habitable. There was one room downstairs, the others were upstairs built on the side of the hill. The cottages were reached by about forty steps from the bottom of the valley. Outside a small cottage at the bottom was a well, from which we drew water

in cans and carried them up to the cottage. You can just imagine the amount of water a family would use and the number of times we had to climb the hill with fresh supplies. My stay at Dartmouth was only about two and a half years, although the remainder of the family remained there quite a considerable time. My brother Samuel is still there; he is nearly seventy eight years of age and must have been five years of age when he first came to the town. I am not sure, but I do not think he has been out of the town but once during his lifetime and then only for a very short period.

Father then started my sisters at Newcomen Road School. What happened about me remains a mystery, I was never told, there must have been some explanation, perhaps I was too far advanced. The next thing I remember was that I had a paper round, employed by Cranford's Library; my round consisted of all the large houses on top of the Hill which was called Townstal, making my way back through the College to Sandquay, then back to the shop. On Fridays the Dartmouth and South Hams Chronicle was published by the Library, so I had a second jaunt over the same area. My pay was four shillings a week, plus one penny a dozen on the papers I sold which was generally four pence. How long I remained at Cranford's Library, I cannot remember but I did stop there quite a considerable time, the biggest part of my two and a half years in the town.

Then I found myself employed by Wyman's Bookstall on the Dartmouth pontoon; I did not get any more money however. Did I get the sack from Cranford's? I cannot remember doing anything wrong. Often I was left in charge of the Bookstall at Dartmouth and after a little while I was transferred to Kingswear Bookstall; I relieved a man named "Smuggler" - it may have been his nickname. If I remember rightly, when I took over the Bookstall there was some talk between the Manager and the newsboy about money matters but whatever it was I did not come into the matter. Now I come to think about it in latter years, it was a responsibility for a boy of just thirteen years of age to be in charge of a bookstall, although I was under the supervision of a Manager at Dartmouth.

End of term time at Dartmouth College, the stall did wonderfully well, the Cadets storming for the station with their baggage, buying up all the magazines, periodicals, papers, chocolates and sweets we had in stock. The Manager took over the Stall (which I resented by the way) and I worked the train. I liked the job very much because I could watch the trains coming in and departing. I cannot say I was much of a salesman, that would never be my vocation, customers would have to come to me to purchase what they wanted, I could never approach anyone to sell my goods.

Well, how long did I stop there? That's anyone's guess but I left

that employment and the next thing I was doing was cleaning Frisby's Boot Shop in Victoria Road and distributing circulars from house to house in Dartmouth. I also went over the river to Kingswear. That job was simply boring, very uninteresting, monotonous and tiring. My young life seemed to be just simply climbing hills and going from door to door - it took me weeks and weeks to cover the whole of Dartmouth. However, I left.

During this period of my stay at Dartmouth, mother and father obtained a better place to live; we moved to Victoria Road on the main route to Townstal, better accommodation altogether. The family lived there quite a considerable time, except myself as soon I was on the move again. My hobbies at home were watching an upright steam engine, which I watched working for hours, and latterly I did a lot of fret work, making all sorts of models, with three ply wood and a fretsaw. Sundays were again, and every Sunday three times a day, attending the Methodist Church.

Sometimes I wonder how I got into these places of employment and, funnily enough, why did I leave? I certainly did not give any notice, I certainly didn't do anything wrong, I wasn't cheeky on any account, I always did as I was told without question - I was brought up that way; and why didn't I go to school? My father must have been instrumental in all these things; I certainly should have remembered something about it in later years.

My eldest sister went to do office work in a butchers shop, my youngest sister was apprenticed to dressmaking, my eldest brother was set to a trade at the Shipbuilders on the river and my youngest brother was apprenticed to boat building. There did not seem to be any outlet for me whatsoever. Father did not exploit my talents in any way; perhaps it was force of circumstances but he must have known I could write legibly, was good at mathematics and had a good knowledge of science. Perhaps he couldn't placate me but what he did do eventually, and I had no say in the matter, is in the next chapter of my life.

CHAPTER TWO

"Adolescence"

The word "Adolescence" I understand means the passing of childhood into maturity. What a coincidence it was to start that period from the place of my birth. How long is the period of adolescence?

Again I am back at Stonehouse, Plymouth at the Royal Marine Barracks, about three hundred yards from the place where I was born; at the age of fourteen years, nine months my childhood had ended and I start on the road to maturity; I am now severed from my mother's apron strings and my father's supervision.

My father brought me here to enlist in the Royal Marines as a Bugler. I was not asked, neither was I told of my parents' decision. It would appear I had no say in the matter and so I remember seeing myself in the Orderly Room of the Barracks in the presence of the Regimental Sergeant Major. Measurements of height and chest were taken as a preliminary to my acceptance, which were 5' 9½" and 32" respectively. The R.S.M. told my father that my chest measurement was ½" below the minimum. Perhaps I was going to fail after all I thought, but no, it did not go that way, the R.S.M. said "We shall fill him out". What he meant by that I was soon to learn.

Well, next day I had a medical examination. I was marked "Fit" and I suppose my father signed the necessary documents, and departed; I do not remember seeing him go; anyway I was left in the safe hands of the Regimental Drum Major.

My room in the Band and Drums Block was No. 27. I was allocated a bed, with racks above it for my clothes. The Non-Commissioned Officer in charge of the room showed me how to make my bed, which was rolled up, with blankets and sheets on top. It consisted of a straw mattress with a straw pillow, two sheets and two blankets. About every three months the straw was changed, clean sheets and pillow cases were also changed periodically. I suppose I must have slept on it alright but it was a bit rough.

Then I was kitted up at the First Quartermasters Stores and my uniform was given me by the storekeeper; he gave me a glance as to height, size, etc., then I was paraded in front of an officer, who made remarks; the Master Tailor, with his chalk, marked the articles of uniform accordingly for alterations at the Tailor Shop. My accoutrements were then issued to me - Drum, Fife, Bugle, Carrier, etc., Belts and Braces (which were then cleaned with white blacco). All this was then taken in a Kit Bag to the Markers Shop,

to be marked with my Regimental Number: PIX 13896.

When I had sorted myself out in the Barrack Room and donned my uniform, I did not like myself at all, but there I must make the best of it and embark on a new career and a new way of life.

Next day I started my duties. Physical Training, Instructions in the use of the Instruments, School and Parade work. I soon learned the way to stand to attention and the different movements laid down in the Drill Book. The Physical Training was carried out in the Gymnasium; I had cause to come across the Instructor later in my life. However, in the Gym I put up a poor show, I never was an acrobat, I could never stand on my hands and, least of all, could I hang from the wall bars like a monkey. As for jumping the horse, well that was out of the question; I tried, but no go; you see there were no such things as trampolines to help one to jump any height. I was good at marching and running, so that was one consolation I suppose. This is what was meant by the R.S.M. when he said "we will fill him out". Another bug bear to me was swimming. I couldn't swim although I had lived by the seaside during my fifteen years of life, but that was soon overcome as we got put in the sea at Devils Point and soon learned to swim; I didn't mind that at all.

School in the afternoons I looked forward to very much. My first invitation into the class at Longroom School was to complete a test paper, to see if I could write at all or do arithmetic. The teacher was a Sergeant and I gave him the papers back completed in a quarter of an hour - he was surprised. I was told that I would sit for my Second Class Certificate at the next sitting, so I jumped the queue for a Third Class Certificate. Well, I got my Second Class Certificate at the next examination and remained at school to take my First Class Certificate. That was my first hurdle as a Bugler.

Bugle instruction was conducted at Drummers Pit at the Longroom. Gosh, what a din, a number of learners like myself trying to blow the bugle out straight. My lips became numb, I couldn't form a note but after a little while I was taught to use my tongue to form the notes and my lips became hardened. Soon, I had all the bugle calls taped off and was able to take part in any bugle parade. Instruction in the B Flat Flute was in a Barrack Room; well, I got on well with that but I came to the conclusion I would never be a musician. Drum practice in the Band Room was a little difficult. I could not handle the sticks as well as I ought but with practice I was able to do a roll.

After about nine months I was told I would go before a Board which consisted of the Field Officer, Bandmaster, Bugle Major and my instructor. Well, I carried out my antics before the Board, waved my sticks on the drum like a professional, played the March Past and the Grenadiers on the Flute,

blew a few calls on the Bugle and, "Lo and Behold", I was passed fit for duty as a Bugler. My pay increased by about one penny a day. I think I was then receiving about seven shillings a week, may be a couple of coppers more.

During the week we did not have much time to ourselves; some instructions were carried out after tea and the evenings were spent mostly in polishing our instruments, cleaning the equipment, polishing boots, dusting the clothes racks and clothes, before retiring on the straw mattress. "Lights Out" at Ten Fifteen and not a murmur until the morning - we were too tired. At the sound of "Reveille" at Cam, out we jumped, the Duty N.C.O. made a muster of all the Rooms and reported "All Correct" to the Guardroom", or otherwise.

I remember during my period of training as a Bugler, what was done on Saturdays. First of all the Room was properly scrubbed out, beds were moved from one side of the room to the other and, to prevent the floor becoming dirty during the week-end, brown blankets were placed on the floor. Our next impost was to lay all our equipment on the bed, properly cleaned, for inspection by the duty N.C.O. We then bathed in the Bath House. We could do our own washing, but ten chances to one, we could never get it dry; the one way out was to give it to the Corporal who was a married man. He took it home and got it washed and dried for us. My washing invariably cost me One Shilling and Two Pence a week. You might say we could ill afford it; well, as a matter of fact, we could not out of Six Shillings and Eight Pence. We had to supplement our rations by going to the canteen and getting Two Pence worth of jam, or a piece of cheese which cost the same. The Duty Cook of the room got our coffee each morning and tea each afternoon, and served it out in basins on the room table. He also got the meat and bread from the 2nd Quartermasters Stores for our mid-day meal. Whatever else we wanted we clubbed together and bought.

Weekends we could go out of Barracks, but had to be in the room by Ten pm Muster. If we came in the gate late we were detained because we had no passes. Later on, as we became older, a pass was issued but only until midnight.

The Adjutant was our Company Commander. He inspected us every morning on parade under the eyes of the Drum Major who was the senior N.C.O. in charge of the Band and Drums.

I was now fifteen and a half years of age.

Mobilisation drill was carried out at certain periods; at these drills one had to collect all one's kit and parade under the Boards with the name of the ship to which you were detailed on the Mobilisation Board. In August or September 1908, one of these drills was carried out and I was detailed for H.M.S. "Blake". We were mustered in marching order this time and promptly marched out of the Barracks to the Dockyard where the ship was berthed. A

surprise for me, I had never been on a ship before, I was simply lost, the Senior Sergeant however collected me; apparently Boy Buglers had to be messed in the Sergeants' Mess, under his supervision. Well, we went to sea in the course of a few days; it was rough and I was seasick badly, I didn't care if I died, everything was a maze to me but I carried out my duties as best I could. Somehow or other, I cannot remember much about it, we disembarked, and I found myself back in the Barracks once more. My initiation into sea service was rather abrupt and how I spent my time on board during that period is anyone's guess. I knew the seas were rough, I was badly sea-sick - in fact I don't remember appearing on deck. I suppose I must have done at some time or other. I am in Barracks, I had to do guard duties, I could blow my Bugle much better without making mistakes, the Buglers younger than myself said I was an old soldier as I had been on board a ship, quite laughable isn't it.

Now I wonder if my father's influence had been at work again, I don't remember going home at all; however, I looked at the Duty Board one day, and what do you think, I was on draft to "H.M.S. Britannia". The official name to the Royal Naval College, Dartmouth. My father's place of employment. So one day later I was at the College, in the Royal Marine's Mess. There were two Buglers, my colleague had two Badges, so I was under his wing. Soon I was rubbing shoulders with the Cadets of the College, they were everywhere, I did envy them, dodging from Classroom to Classroom at the sound of the Bugle call, their training was strict and various, there was plenty of sport as a relaxation, but their studies took them well into the evening. Rugby was one of their special sports, funnily enough, soccer was not included, it was a real man's game. Following the beagles on foot was fascinating, with the dogs baying and cadets in pursuit, it was a picture to watch. At Sandquay a number of small boats were available, attached to H.M.S. "Britannia" for the cadets to use on their sailing exercises on the River Dart. I was conversant with all the territory around the College, with its hills and dales, orchards and copses, didn't I ought to be! I was a newspaper boy, who, a couple of years ago delivered papers to the houses in the area. It was, and still is, a perfect setting for the training of the future officers of the Royal Navy.

During my service at Dartmouth College the Duke of Windsor and Earl Mountbatten were serving as cadets. I remember my father, who was then Hall Porter, was in an argument with the Cadet Gunner as to which of us was the tallest. We were all about the same height, I should imagine. What decision they came to I don't know.

When term time ended for the cadets, we were allowed leave; this I spent at home. Leave was limited as I had to be on duty like the members of the detachment, the College was not closed at all, but the hustle and bustle of the

cadets was sadly missed. You cannot imagine what term time is really like unless you experience it. The corridors and rooms are a mass of movement from early morning to pipe down at night, then silence until 6.30 a.m. when the bugles sound once more and the dormitories become alive. At night, duty messengers are on patrol throughout the building, reporting to the Hall Porter of any unusual occurrences.

My service at the College was uneventful, except that I enjoyed it, being young myself; the activities of the Cadets was a practice of discipline. They had their prefects, who they obeyed strictly, and as far as I know no trouble existed; as a matter of fact, there was no time for trouble. Their sports, physical training, and lectures, kept them extremely busy. I do not remember ever seeing any Cadet in the town for relaxation.

Well, once more I was on the move. My service at the College was finished, I was there twelve months, my relief had arrived and again I was stationed at the T.M. Barracks, Stonehouse. I must now be seventeen years of age. I cannot remember the exact dates but soon my career was taking another shape.

Volunteers were required to transfer to the ranks from the Band and Drums and I put my name down for transfer; I felt I wanted a change. I had no further interest as a Bugler and so at a later period a dozen ex-Buglers became Privates, for training in field work and sea service. My Drum, Fife and Bugle were returned to the Stores and in its place I mustered with the others at the Armourers Shop for a Rifle and Bayonet. Also I was allocated a room in "F" Company where I started to mix with others of the Regiment.

There was not much parade work to do, except for the handling of the rifle and this was accomplished in about six weeks. Normally, a recruit who joins for the first time was sent to the Royal Marine Depot at Deal where he received extensive training for twelve months. As all the rough edges were knocked off ex-Buglers, we were not required to do that training. When a squad came from Deal, to join the Division, we joined up with them for further training in Musketry and Service in the Field and at Sea.

Musketry training was carried out at Fort Tregantle, Cornwall; there were were given preliminary instruction in Small Arms, culminating in firing our weapons on the ranges. The final test was made after a few weeks when we were awarded our qualifications, such as Marksman, First Class Shot or Second Class. A Marksman wore Crossed Rifles on his left sleeve and I am sorry to say that didn't include myself. Field Training was at Fort Scraesdon, the Forts being a couple of miles distant from each other. I think I am right in saying they were nicknamed "Palmerston Follies". Palmerston was Secretary for War from 1809 to 1828. Well, we remained at Fort Scraesdon about a month, during which time we were trained in field work, and given various lectures on the subject.

This was, up to the present, the soldier's training of a Royal Marine. The next part was a long course of Naval Gunnery at the Gun Battery, at Longroom, near the Barracks and constituted learning all about Naval Guns from the 3-Pounder to the 7.5 Gun. Belonging to the Infantry part of the Royal Marines, our instruction did not take us into any heavier guns as that was allocated to the training of the Artillery Section of the Regiment. We were termed "Red Marines" and "Blue Marines". The Reds manned the smaller guns of a ship and the Blues the heavier ones. To finish our training in gunnery, we embarked on an old flat bottomed vessel called the "Rinaldo" where we carried out actual firing of Naval guns at sea. And so I am a Royal Marine, fully qualified in all duties for shore and sea. I did not excel in any subject in particular but I can safely say that I was termed a good soldier, in that I was recommended to join the "Drill Class". This I did not take up because I was soon drafted to sea once more.

I embarked in H.M.S. "Bristol" soon afterwards and here my troubles started. I was getting a bit wayward, discontented and frustrated, somehow or other I did not seem to care, life afloat was not my kind of life, I got into bad company and started drinking more than was good for me. I know the ship visited Bristol for a short while, about a week, but I cannot remember how long I was on board. However, the culminating point was that I was discharged back to Barracks, as a second class for conduct man. If I had remained on board, I would not be allowed ashore on leave for months and then only at the Captain's discretion.

So back in Barracks once more, but the stigma of my waywardness still stuck to me. I had to be in Barracks by 10 pm each evening, I was not allowed a standing pass, for a start, and I would not return to first class for conduct for six months; at the end of the year, when assessments were made, I was awarded a "Good" instead of "Very Good". When consideration is made at the end of fifteen years service for a "Good Conduct Medal", that was denied so I had to wait eighteen years in Very Good Conduct before an award was made and ultimately on going to pension, a penny a day is awarded on retirement for "All V.C.'s"; that was the last straw - all my life I would be punished for indiscretion of waywardness in my adolescence.

I thought about asking my father to buy me out of the services which would cost him £20 and I knew he never had that money, nor was likely to have. Should I desert? If I did they would find me and I would be in worse trouble than ever; I would never recover my well-being, what should I do? I know I was not habitually a wrong doer. I was a good soldier, liked my pint of beer, was non violent, never gave anyone else any trouble - only a fool to myself. I could not see it then. The penalty of my wrong doing was a s

on my better nature.

Well at times I went home on leave, not often; I learned from my sisters later that an altercation took place between my mother and my father. My mother was heard to remark "You're not going to send my other sons in the Services, they will choose for themselves".

It all came down to this, I was misplaced in life, I wanted more freedom to expand my natural abilities. My father could not see this apparently but my brothers, at my expense, were placed in trades at Dartmouth and both did very well for themselves.

But no...what should I do? I had this blot on my life which I would never be able to shake off. Others would think no more of it, not me, the stain was there. I can still remember my indiscretion. This is not self-pity but a serious thinking of my life and what I should do to make good.

So I am in Barracks to gain my First Class for Conduct which I did eventually but not without more personal trouble.

The Senior N.C.O. then was allowed, unofficially, to have a man to clean his office, clean his equipment and uniform, and as I had to remain at Headquarters I was detailed for this work. As a side line, to complete a day's work I had to go to his married quarters to do the chores of the house. Funny enough, he was the same N.C.O. who took me through my physical training at the Gymnasium when I first joined the Regiment. Things went well for a few months, but the wife seemed attracted to me. She had no children and was about thirty eight years of age, twenty one years my senior; I did not care much for it, I had no inclination to make any attachment and never had in my life, but things got rather warm. However, her sister called one day, unexpectedly. I was polishing the floor and the wife was upstairs calling to me. Her remark was "What's going on between you two?" I had no answer to that one except "Nothing". So very soon after that I was detailed for another ship, this time H.M.S. "Argyll". I was glad to have been extricated from that delicate position but the wife did write to me later, although afterwards the letters ceased. I have since read of ladies in public life making attachments to the opposite sex who were many years younger than themselves. So it may have been a common occurrence of which, at that time, I was innocently ignorant.

I am now on board H.M.S. "Argyll", a cruiser. We were stationed in the Mediterranean at Gibraltar. Showing the Flag in different foreign ports, in Portugal, Spain, Italy, Greece and other countries, it was the role of the Fleet in addition to carrying out exercises in Gunnery, towing targets, boat drills and various other work.

Nothing startling happened on board the ship which I could remember very clearly. He called my Sergeant Major "Taff". The Royal Marine

officer was called Captain Weller. We did have a sergeant, a man who was rather nasty first thing in the morning, in consequence of which we humble privates kept clear of him, if possible, at least until after eleven o'clock when he retired to his mess to partake his rum ration; Sergeants were allowed neat rum but we youngsters, being under twenty years of age, were denied the privilege of a three water drink but were allowed a small sum per month added to our pay in lieu.

During the commission, National Insurance commenced; the year was 1912 and I must have been nineteen years of age. Taff was a member of the Oddfellows; he informed us all that we had to belong or become a member of a Society of our own choice, or opt out. Obviously, we were ignorant of any Society in existence so Taff gathered a number of recruits to become members of the Oddfellows.

During our stay in Gibraltar the ship was refitted. Apparently on my parchments was a record of my having joined the Drill Class and I was approached by the Royal Marine Officer who enquired of me whether I was in possession of any drill books; I replied in the affirmative. He said "I am sending you to the Officers Recreation Ground every day; there you can have the opportunity of reading your books, in between serving drinks and refreshments to officers of the Services." Well there it was. I was having a nice time while the remainder of the Ship's Company was cleaning, scraping and painting the ship during the refit.

Occasionally I went on shore leave, especially at the end of the month. My first port of call was the N.A.A.F.I. Canteen where I had a huge meal, frequently a "Baby's Head" (a small meat pudding) with vegetables and of course a pint of draught beer which went down fine. I found out though that beer and port wine don't mix and invariably found myself in the morning, asleep on the bandstand in Alameda Gardens. However, I was always smart for Divisions on board, dressed in a nice white suit which the dobbie boys washed and ironed for me.

Well, after visiting quite a number of ports in the Mediterranean with the Fleet, we eventually came home to Devonport and paid off. As I said the commission was uneventful, except that we visited the majority of the ports in the Mediterranean, which was an experience for me as it was my first commission abroad in foreign waters. I gained considerable knowledge of the way of life of foreign subjects, places of history and such like. What little money I had to spend was used in moving around the different cities I visited. While many other colleagues were in the cafes and wine shops, I was wandering around places, obviously at times getting lost.

So, while in Barracks once more, I went through Refresher Courses

of musketry and field training, to keep the soldier side of the duties of a Royal Marine up to date.

Now, I must be twenty years of age. At the beginning of this Chapter I wrote, "how long is the period of adolescence?". It would now be appropriate to call a halt to adolescence. I seemed to be more settled in my attitude to life, I had lost that frustration and waywardness and was more eager to find a career.

I wonder what my future will be, one can never tell. Life must go on, am I going to remain as I am, I don't know, time will tell; one can never forecast what one will do until it happens and then we can say "where do we go from here?" Will it be for the better or the worse I wonder?

CHAPTER THREE"Adulthood"

During my course of revision on Musketry I was fortunate enough to qualify as a "Marksman" which entitled me to wear the "Cross Rifles" on the left sleeve of my serge tunic. I was quite bucked to obtain my first special qualification. This gave me the incentive to qualify for other examinations. The opportunity arose to go through another course of Gunnery, namely Q.M. (Qualified Man). I passed this course quite well which entitled me to another penny per day. My wages were now twelve shillings and three pence per week. The Musketry Course gave me no extra emoluments, so I was more inclined to follow gunnery than musketry. Should I go into the next drill class for promotion, I was still very much undecided! Now I was granted a Midnight Pass having reached first class for conduct once more. Normally at the age of twenty one years, that is three years man service, I would be entitled to a Good Conduct Badge, but I still had to wait three years in first class for conduct before I could gain that distinction. So that waywardness was still following me up.

I still liked a pint of beer, in moderation; my favourite routine on a Friday evening after we got paid was to walk to the top of Union Street, enter the "Posada", a select public house, have a glass of ale and a crab sandwich, for which they were renowned. Then along Russell Street and sport two pence for a variety show or drama in an off street theatre. I could not afford to go to a proper Variety Theatre like the "Palace Theatre".

Then I started saving as much as I could, my object being to get a civilian suit and to be able to move about with more freedom. I was not allowed to wear civilian clothes at all, because I did not have a Good Conduct Badge, but there were always ways and means.

In Stonchouse, to pass into Devonport, one had to pay a half-penny toll. There was one exception. A Royal Marine in uniform passed over free. Why I don't know! All other service men and civilians had to pay that toll on the Bridge. On the other side of the Bridge was the "Church of England Institute". In that establishment one could get a nice meal, a comfortable bed and if you were lucky you could hire a locker to house your civilian clothes, with a changing room, all for six pence a week. Now you can see my object in starting to save a bit of money for the purpose of wearing civilian clothes again.

Well I bought a suit eventually, collars, ties, trilby hat, gloves

and walking stick; the suit was waisted, a blue pattern and it was a treat to wear shoes again. I spent a lot of my time at the Institute, even my leaves were spent there, I didn't much care for going home. The food was good and reasonable in price. I donned my suit after breakfast and wandered about Plymouth mostly, lolling about on the Hoe watching the swimming, nosing around the shops, reading at the Library and taking it easy, but one could not disguise the fact that I was a serviceman.

Why I was so long in Barracks I cannot explain. Of course I was a QM and had to be placed on a ship that carried that qualification. They still wanted me to go on the Drill Class but I fought shy of it somehow, every evening after drills, at lectures I could not swallow it. After I had finished my duties during the day I had had enough, I wanted more recreation. I was never interested in sport much except when I was forced to take part, then I did not put much energy into it.

Everyone had to do physical training first thing in the morning. In winter we had to do the obstacle course in full pack about twice a week, and in the summer swimming at Devils Point. These exercises before breakfast made you hungry, but our reward then was a basin of coffee and a piece of bread, with butter or jam if you had it. Thursdays was Route Marching Day, with the Band in attendance. Generally we covered about twenty miles, returning about 1 pm, tired and dirty because sometimes we did field exercises. Anyway it was a change from arms drill or company drill.

And so in January 1914 I became of the age of twenty one years; many men at that age were married and had children, but I think I was of a more venturesome spirit. I had seen quite a bit of the world and I wished to see more of it; the opposite sex didn't worry me at all - besides, I never had the money and I think that was the biggest deterrent. A girl those days wanted to be entertained, very few went out to work, so I kept myself to myself mostly.

There was an exception however, I did meet casually two young ladies on the Hoe one Sunday, nicely dressed in long dresses and large hats, which was the fashion those days. They did not seem to mind me speaking to them. They came from different parts of Plymouth, one at Laira and one at Stonehouse. In the course of conversation one of them made a nasty remark about my collar. I must admit I was very thin skinned, and still am, so I politely withdrew from their company. Well, the one that did not make the bad remark I saw quite often on the Hoe, parading as people do, but she was in the company of an older lady, I suppose it was her mother; I could see they wanted to make acquaintance but no, I fought shy. I was not interested as I said previously.

Well time went on. I had four ships in my short period of service of six and a half years and of that four years was sea-service; the remainder was spent in training and revision classes, so I started well considering, and would say the rough edges were smoothed off; it was a hard life, plenty of tumbles, but at that age one could say one was very fit.

As I can remember it, July 1914 came and we were mobilised as before. This time it was HMS "Ocean", a battleship. It was a large ship to me; we trundled on board in the Dockyard at Devonport but there only seemed to be a skeleton crew, not enough to man a large ship. In those days Royal Fleet Reserve came up for training every year, including Royal Marines, and it was not very long before the ship came up to full complement by these Reservists, most of whom were hardy seamen from Devon and Cornwall.

My memory fails me at times, it was so long ago but I do know we were soon at sea heading for somewhere, doing exercises, then we found ourselves heading south and in four days we were at Gibraltar. Where now; we coaled ship at Gib and were soon on our way east in the Mediterranean. This time we reached Malta and, as far as I can remember, we did not know where our next port of call was going to be. Things happened swiftly; on August 4th 1914 we were in a state of war and soon Alexandria was reached where the bunkers had to be filled again, this time by shore labour with baskets. What a relief for the ship's company.

At Alexandria we took on board a number of natives to take over the duties of the stokers in the boiler rooms. At that time of the year, the heat was unbearable especially for the stoker branch in the stokehold. The natives were accommodated on the boat deck and were not allowed on our messdecks; the ship stewards provided their food and they were fed well. There was an overseer in each gang who could speak English, as a liaison between them and the Engineer Officers.

Soon we were on our way again, through the Suez Canal and we reached the port of Suez the next day. On the opposite shore to Suez was Port Tewfik; camped on the sands behind the town were a Battalion of Punjabis and Ghurkas. Our Royal Marine Officer got permission to land a detachment of Royal Marines on the beach, to give us a chance of marching to the Oasis, a few miles in the distance. The trek was long and tedious, we were out of trim for marching (being cooped up in a ship so long), it was tiring, the heat got some of us down but we survived the exercise and, by and large, it did us good.

Our next port of call was Aden where the ship was coaled by native labour and we were allowed ashore for a few hours. There was not much English Beer on shore there but I remember quite clearly two things I did do; one was to buy an Ostrich Feather, they could be bought quite cheaply. My

her would like that I am sure, the ladies wore feathers those days in their hats. The other thing was to get twenty one shillings for a sovereign which was exchanged quite freely. I did not see much of the town; it was dirty, dusty, roads not made up, the houses appeared to me to be very ramshackle ones.

On our way once more, steaming up the Persian Gulf, we did not call at Bahrein where there was pearl fishing. We passed a number of Dhows, the B.l Boats occasionally passed us, en route for somewhere; they came close enough to us for the passengers to give us a hail and throw us chocolates and cigarettes, which were welcome. I do remember having a pocketful of rupees which were paid us - not much value to us as we couldn't spend them. Eventually, we dropped anchor at Koweit or Kuwait. Next day the Sheik of Kuwait came on board, covered with pistols and swords, with a number of his staff. They went to the Officers' Mess or Ward Room, had a drink of sorts and then appeared on deck. We carried 14" Guns. I had forgotten to mention the Sheik was shown how the guns worked, traversing the turrets and elevating the guns. He seemed to be very pleased with the performance we set up for him. Next day a dhow of sheep came alongside, a present from the Sheik. Oh! they were skinny specimens and what about the butcher - he had a job, I can tell you. Royal Marine butchers in those days were properly trained in killing animals for consumption, besides being able to cut meat for distribution to the Ship's Company. How those animals lived on shore is anyone's guess, there was no weight on them whatsoever; however, we did enjoy a little fresh meat.

Fresh water was not obtainable on board, only condensed water, no life in it at all; as fast as you drank it, so you sweat it out.

The Royal Marines were then ordered to dye a white suit, in coffee to make them look like khaki. What a patchy sight they looked. The "Ocean" was a battleship remember, we were now in Kuwait at the top of the Persian Gulf. If we had to go any further, it could not be by the "Ocean". The River Tigris and River Euphrates joined somewhere near Basra, and found the Shah-el-Arab which flowed into the Persian Gulf. This river was shallow but soon the S.S. Varela arrived with military personnel on board and the Royal Marines embarked on the Varela, and the ship sailed over the bar, upstream.

Boats were lowered on the starboard side, manned by the Royal Marines, with the keels just touching the water. The Varela steamed as close as possible to the shore. How far we had to go I don't know, but we did know we had to make a surprise landing at a small place called Fao. This landing was to make cover for the remainder of the personnel who were on board. The order to stand by came eventually, and the Varela eased down nearly stationary, when the order "Slip" came. Boats dropped in the water, some

It round the stern of the ship, some around the bows and we made for shore. We landed in a quiet deserted place, it seemed to me, but away we went inland and took up firing positions in a semi-circle, and waited. There was no opposition at all.

Eventually the Punjabis and Ghurkas landed, passed through our positions and were soon out of sight. After a time we advanced, with the Ghurkas in front; we must have carried on like that for two or three days. We did not move at night, we slept in our coats, it was ever so cold and during the day it was stinking hot. The water in our water bottles was warm, we were told not to drink it, but take a sip, as we did not know where the next supply would be coming from.

Well, after four or five days of the sweltering heat of the day and the cold at night, and we were jolly hungry too, the Royal Marines were ordered to return and soon we were at the same place as where we landed. Boats were ready to take us back to the ship once more. The whole operation must have lasted about a week; what it was for or what objective it had, as far as we were concerned it was a useless operation. However, we did not see the Punjabis or Ghurkas any more, so perhaps they remained at Fao, in occupation.

On the move once more the "Ocean" left Kuwait and moved down the Persian Gulf to some other destination; strange as it may seem we never knew where we were bound for next. We passed in view of the Bahrein Isles and continued our journey the way we had come. We were glad to be on the move once more, it did cause a bit of a breeze. Although it was winter time in England the heat was unbearable - sweat, sweat, sweat - the majority of the ships company slept on deck, just simply flopped down on our hammocks. The food we got was mostly corned beef (we did get some sweet potatoes from somewhere) and we called it all sorts of names, canned hash, fritters, stews or simply beef. We did have a variation at times, salt pork, but not often.

I may be confused, but I think I grew a beard or a moustache; it was ginger by the way, but my hair was dark.

After a few days we were back at Aden. We coaled ship again but we did not go ashore this time, because our stay was short, then once more on the move, back into the Red Sea and eventually reaching Suez. This time the ships company was allowed ashore in watches; what a relief after being cooped up so long. I think the crew drank all the beer that was available on shore, and some of it was awful stuff, but it was beer!

Well, on the move again, back through the Canal. We had already taken aboard a Pilot; being a battleship, we had a wide beam so at times we could nearly touch the sides of the Canal with a stick and it was surprising that we did not go aground at times, but we were moving very slowly with the

ahead of us. A whole day and we reached Ismailia where we anchored head to stern. Rumour had it that the Turks had attempted to cross the Canal into Egypt by means of small boats. We had our heavy guns trained on some distant object in the desert but nothing happened. The powers that be were obviously in touch with the enemy. Turkey, as you can probably guess was our enemy, unlike today when she is an ally.

I did not interest myself much in politics, except that England declared war on Germany on August 4th 1914 and on Turkey on November 5th 1914, and we knew that a British submarine B.11 dived under a row of mines in the Dardanelles and sunk a Turkish warship on the 13th December 1914. But as you see from our movements we were well aware of the movements of the enemy, as we had many interests in the Gulf, oil mostly, and Egypt became a Protectorate on the 17th December 1914. The Turks could easily have moved down through Iraq to Basra to get at our valuable oilfields and we did find out later that the Turks had attempted to cross the Canal on February 2nd 1915, at Toussoum, near Ismailia, where we were now stationed.

Soon we were out of the Canal again and steaming north. In a couple of days we were at the Island of Tenedos outside the mouth of the Dardanelles, in company with about thirty other British and French vessels and it was not long before we knew what we were there for, because every day we moved into the Dardanelles, bombing the forts and their defences. Then one day, in the middle of March 1915, we proceeded through the Dardanelles as usual but this time making further headway through the "Narrows". The French battleship "Bouvet" was leading, next the "Irresistible" and following was the "Ocean". I was at one of the 6" guns, when all at once the "Bouvet" started to heel over as if she was top heavy and we saw her disappear, not however before the "Irresistible" got the same fate. I should imagine we were steaming slowly to assist the crews of both ships, but there was a sudden shake to our own ship; we had got it as well and we were sinking fast. What happened to me I cannot remember much, except that later I found I was wet and on a Destroyer, steaming fast down the straits - I said "thank goodness we got out of that lot". You must remember that we were bombarding all day, there was such a din. However, I was put aboard the "Lord Nelson", with many others and well looked after.

When I came to reconsider the event in recent years, we knew those mines were there because the B.11 dived under five rows of mines in the December. Why were they not swept; the powers that be must have known three battleships could not ride over them without instant destruction. There was some folly somewhere, in fact the whole event was a farce. To my mind, we definitely under-estimated the fighting qualities of the Turks; even the

le show fell through latterly, with the withdrawal of the Forces from the other side of the Peninsula.

That is how I see it now; it shook me a bit, things were so tense, as they always are in war. Well, I did not get any reaction to this episode until long afterwards, but that is another story.

My stay aboard the "Lord Nelson" was not long because after a while we were mustered and asked our qualifications. Because I was a "Gunner Third Class", with others of similar ratings, seamen or Royal Marines, we were put on board a fast cruiser called the "Phaeton". In a few days we arrived at Malta and were accommodated at Fort St. Angelo. There we remained for sometime awaiting transport to England. We had nothing except borrowed uniforms which we wore and a clean towel. I myself had an old pair of blue marine's trousers which in those days had a broad stripe, and a red marine's tunic with no ornaments.

Now the sequence of events which now follows is confusing and its rotation may be out of order. It is obvious one could not keep a diary, in fact I lost all my littleknick-knacks in the Dardanelles - probably they are still there. All at once we were on the move again, this time to Gibraltar by transport. Apparently, as we were all gunnery ratings, we had to be sent home to qualify in a higher gunnery rank. Eventually we arrived in England. I reported myself to the Royal Marine Barracks and after identification, etc. I was once more kitted up with a full kit. Remember when I mobilised in 1914, I took with me only a mobilising kit, just the bare essentials, so the remainder of my belongings was unearthed from some store and restored to me to make me complete.

I was sent home, as I said, to qualify in a Higher Gunnery Rating. I attended instructions at the Gunnery School and later embarked on a Canadian Pacific ship for Canada. This was a surprise to me. We disembarked eventually at St. Johns and travelled by train, quite a long way, to another seaport where we embarked once more. Immediately, I sensed the ship had been carrying sugar or rum as a strong smell was all about the ship. Well, we sailed after a few days and subsequently arrived at Bermuda, Ireland's Island. Again we disembarked and were transported to HMS "Charybdis" which was moored in the Dockyard. An old battleship was at anchor in the harbour; once again we were on the move to this ship to qualify in heavy gun firing. Within a few days we all had our firing practice and examinations on the ship at sea, at a towed target, and again disembarked to "Charybdis". How long we remained there I cannot tell or remember. I did have a few trips to Devonshire Island, where a lot of American tourists were enjoying their holidays, but I am afraid the going was too expensive for me, so my trips on shore were

ted. Anyway I very much appreciated the break, the peaceful atmosphere, weather and climate. I would like to have stayed there. The war was forgotten for the time - in fact I do not think anyone out there troubled about it. All good things come to an end. Soon we were on our way north in another sugar boat to Canada, disembarked after a week or so, caught the train once more and embarked on another liner for England.

Nowadays all that travel would seem ridiculous. It must have taken months to move from the Dardenelles, to Malta, Gibraltar, England, Canada and Jamaica (Bermuda) just to qualify a few of us in Higher Gunnery. To carry out practices like that around the English Coasts was out of the question because of the presence of submarines. What an expense it must have been to move from the Eastern Mediterranean to the West Indies and back again.

It must have been some time in May 1915 that I finished my journey from the Persian Gulf travelling by sea, through many countries, east and west and ending up in England once more. It has been said very often that some Royal Marines do more of their time at sea than on land, and I was one of them. I didn't mind at all, I was of that disposition, it was a life of adventure really to see so many countries.

In Barracks once more, terra-firma under my feet, but only for a couple of months though. I was detailed for the D.A.M.S. (Defensively Armed Merchant Ships). This time I used my civilian clothes. My ship was the S.S. Annan, a small trading vessel, moving from Glasgow to Swansea and Bristol to London. There were two Royal Marines and one Three Pounder gun mounted aft under cover on the poop. I did not stay long on that vessel; if I can remember, about two months. In the Captain's correspondence there was a letter from the Admiralty - I was promoted to Corporal and I had to be discharged at the next port of call, where a relief would be waiting.

Who wanted to be a Corporal? It wasn't me, I had no inclination for promotion, I was happy in my way of life as I had been going. So I was in Barracks once more, this time as a Corporal. They were pushing through candidates for Corporal at the Barracks and as I had not passed for the rank, they wanted me to go in the Drill Class to pass for the rank which I already had. I couldn't see daylight at all in the move; as far as I was concerned they could take the rank away from me, but they would not, or could not, which I do not know; I never solved the problem till this day. Weeks went by, even months, then something happened that changed my career.

To pass for the rank of Sergeant, Non-Commissioned Officers, from the three Divisions, Portsmouth, Plymouth and Chatham, were selected to go to the R.M. Depot at Deal where the training of the recruits was carried out. Why they picked on me, I don't know. I had not passed for the rank I held, but I

if I would pass for Sergeant; I was flabbergasted, it took my away, but I said "Yes". What made me say that I do not know. I told before in this narrative, I think I was a good soldier, Captain Webber on "Argyll" had sent me ashore to read my drill books and I read them. Now unearthed them once more, brushed up my knowledge and took train for Deal with many others.

It was an experience for me to be with the raw recruits who did not know their right foot from their left. I seemed to have found out I could impart my knowledge to others and to be able to teach. It was hard going, parade work every day, in the gymnasium, in the field, map reading, lectures, all day every day, except Sunday when one went to Church. The Course there was two months, two months slog. They talk about Commandos - you were really Royal Marines were always Commandos, and trained as such - you were really honest to goodness fit for anything. And so examinations took place, and I was awarded a distinguished pass mark.

Well I never, I had never passed for Corporal but returned to Plymouth Barracks passed for Sergeant. My life seemed to have changed somewhat, I seemed to have the flair for teaching, I wonder if that will mature years go by.

The war was still on when I was detailed for another ship, HMS Sutlej, or funnel cruiser that could burn coal as fast as you could feed it in the hole. It was early in 1916, about February, when we left the Dockyard South, zig-zagging all the way across the channel to the Bay of Biscay, Gibraltar, on our way once again into the Atlantic. We were on patrol West Coast of Africa, calling at different ports en route, mostly at continually watching day and night. Raiders were at work sinking our ships but we never came across anything that we could have a go at. We

en months on that ship and it was continually boring; sometimes we sea, sometimes at Sierra Leone. We were allowed on shore once at but there was very little to see - could not get an English beer sphere was stifling on shore, sweating all the time. In those to wear flannels, for some reason or other, or a white suit. The was distilled water, and not much of that; there was a drinking ss deck and Tanky filled these up once a day, when they were o without. It was policy those days to make friends with one

Their tanks were invariably kept full because after each dirty from the stoke hold and had to wash. Go along to I see him with your basin and he would give you a drink. go to their tank and help yourself. Rum was issued at water; if you did not drink your ration, you could

ny friends. Stokers and Marines got on very well together. Why I could ever imagine, but they did and a drink out of your rum basin would work wonders. Similarly, it was policy to keep on the right side of the butcher, a Royal Marine; he could help sometimes with a bit of kidney or some suet. Yet another man was very important too, the Lamptrimmer, invariably in charge of the drying room. Your washing had to be dried somehow and he would take it and dry it for you. Lampy as we called him would sit all day over the wash tub in the lamp room or drying room, washing men's clothes for those that didn't want to do it themselves. It was a paying sideline.

The Barber was always busy on the mess deck after evening quarters, cutting hair at two pence a time; that was a paying game too. The seamen branch of the ship sometimes made their jumpers and trousers. I have seen a sewing machine very busy on the seamen's mess deck.

Bathing was a problem too, where there was a scarcity of water. Each mess had two wooden tubs under the mess tables. When one could get some water and by speaking nicely to the cook in the galley, two of you could get a reasonable bath on the mess deck; on coal ship day one had to queue up for a tub or go on deck and get under a hose. Officers had a shallow bath in their cabins. There were no ladies about within miles, so modesty was out of the question. It was one of those things. It was life on board ship.

It was on board the "Sutlej" that I first saw a Director. Not a human being but an instrument. It was fitted in the Fore Top. The object of the Director was to direct all guns at once on the same target and fire them. This was when I first felt the reaction of the "Ocea" episode in the Dardenelles. We were detailed to climb the Foremast to inspect the instrument. I had never climbed more than six feet in my life, except a tree when I was a boy. I trembled and shook all the way up there; it was a nerve-racking experience for me. I accomplished it however and got down alright, but never again. Since that time I was always feared of heights. I came to realise that my nerves had been shaken, with the tension of the war.

So in May 1917, we returned to England, disembarked, on Terra Firma once more. I must be now twenty four years of age, and manhood.

CHAPTER FOUR"Manhood"

Another chapter of my life has started because it was during this period of my short stay in Barracks that the powers that be appointed me to be a Lance Sergeant. You will notice that I spelt the word with a "g"; it always was spelt like that in the Royal Marines, but in other services it is spelt with a "j". Although this was not a substantive rank, I became a member of the Sergeant's Mess. My wage was raised by fourpence a day. However, to be a Sergeant at my age was rare; promotion was not very quick in the Corps, there was only a certain number allowed in the Establishment and it was not exceeded. No, I felt myself someone of consequence which is why this chapter I considered to be my manhood. To be an adult is generally applied to grown up mature people, but as I look at it, manhood is applied to a man of distinctive manly character. A marked difference. I had a good knowledge of the world in my travels, mixed with all kinds and races, my mind was broadened and I was able to advise and instruct others. You may say I thought a lot of myself but no, it was not that kind of feeling, it was a feeling of being someone to whom I was entitled to respect by others.

Anyway I was in Barracks just two months and I was on the move again. I was detailed for an armed liner called the S.S. "Morea". I was a gunnery rating and they do not stay at Headquarters long, so in July 1917 I was on board once more as a Sergeant; my senior was also a sergeant. The detachment of Marines consisted of two sergeants, one corporal and twenty five other ranks. This was my first ship that was powered by oil and that made a lot of difference. The store rooms were stocked with plenty of fresh food and the crew were mainly reserve ratings. We saw little of them as they were quartered somewhere forward in the ship and we were aft, in cabins.

My duties consisted of manning a 6" gun aft and providing look outs at sea, other things were the responsibility of the detachment on the mess deck, and provide work and drills as required. My first impression of my colleague, he kept aloof pretty much, mixed with the Chief Petty Officers and did not bring me into his confidence. He was the senior of course and I respected him as such. I was a lone wolf, sort of, I had to keep my status with the men whom I supervised, but got no advice or companionship, even off duty. My Corporal understandably mixed with the men and was more in their confidence. There was no trouble however, only that coolness. Obviously I kept to myself quite a lot.

Generally speaking, in Barracks, at drill or on duty, Sergeants treated each other with strict decorum; we would berate each other on parade, in a strict disciplinary manner, but once you stepped on the mat at the entrance to the Sergeants Mess, all discipline, duties, etc. were dropped and you would never hear a word against each other; irrespective of rank, you called each other Bill, Tom or Jack and offered them a pint of beer. There never was talking shop as it was called.

I was on that ship till the end of the war, patrolling the Atlantic for months on end, sometimes we were three months at sea without sighting a ship. We visited such places as Sierra Leone, Ascension Island, Rio de Janeiro but only for short stays; we were allowed ashore at Rio but not long enough to explore the city and its attractions. The food on board was good and in plenty. A liner which catered for so many passengers had to be well stocked, there was plenty of fresh meat of all kinds, fresh bread every day and plenty of vegetables. On other ships we were issued with lime juice because we had no fresh food in the way of vegetables.

During my long terms at sea I read a lot of books, which were available to the ship's company. There was a magnificent library on board, obviously for the use of passengers, and I availed myself of the use of this opportunity. It was during this period of lack of companionship that I approached the Captain's Secretary and asked him if he would make arrangements for me to sit for my First Class Certificate of Education, and he said he would at the first opportunity.

Any Merchant Ship we could stop and dump our correspondence and letters on them - that is, those that were homeward bound of course.

I knew the subjects to be taken for my Certificate but I was pretty shaky on history, so I got hold of as many historical books as I could and read them well. The Library was fairly comprehensive. In the early part of 1918 the papers arrived on board and arrangements were made for me to sit in an Officer's Cabin for each of the four subjects; when completed, the Secretary sent them home. Well, in September I was awarded the First Class Certificate of Education by the Captain. That Certificate is still in my possession, 1974, one of my most prized possessions.

Nothing particularly happened aboard that ship, we occasionally met a merchant ship and exchanged greetings. We had the ceremony of "Crossing the Line" when we went to Ascension; Father Neptune came on board, held his court and presented us with certificates; otherwise life was pretty humdrum. My Senior Sergeant still paraded the poop smoking his pipe with his mustache bristling in the air, he was still stand offish, sort of "I am it", he seemed a sham, and so he proved to be when I came across him about ten years later, when he was still a Sergeant and never got any further, neither was he

specialised in any subject. Every non commissioned officer in the Royal Marines, if he wanted to get anywhere, must specialise in some subject. There were various things one could follow, gunnery, musketry, machine gun, physical training, signals, but the people who did not go to sea much were clerks and office workers. Their lives must be simply boring and you did not require much education to push a pen.

Well November 1918 came along, the end of the war, the ship was withdrawn from service and we disembarked once more. I could say the war period was spent mostly at sea, continually on the watch, tensed up, didn't know what would happen next, always on the alert for the hidden enemy. We never came across that "Q" Ship, the "Noewe" which we were hunting for; she was about somewhere in the Atlantic but the Atlantic Ocean is large and we never came across her.

In and out of that Barracks I was, like a "Jack in the Box", perhaps I was destined to stay at Headquarters for a while. As I was a Lance Sergeant on arrival in Barracks, I had to discharge my Lance Rank to Corporal automatically but I was not like that long. A couple of weeks went by and Divisional Orders, which were published every day, put me back to where I was before, Lance Sergeant.

It must have been in December 1918 or January 1919 that I was on the move again, this time I was detailed for a Battalion. Where we were going no one seemed to know. Back again to the rigmarole of drawing khaki clothing from the 1st Quartermasters Stores and stowing away our Blue Uniform. Then we were entrained and subsequently arrived at Gosport where there was a camp at Bedenham, Gosport. Portsmouth and Chatham units soon joined us and a Battalion was formed. We carried out various drills and exercises for a week or so, then moved to Whitchurch, near Tavistock, Devon and we were put under canvas. We had good field training there, mostly on the moors, and settled down for a while. Soon we were on the move again, this time by what means I do not know because I can only remember landing at the port of Murmansk in North Russia. The moving from Devon to Russia is one of the gaps in my life. I simply cannot remember, it must have been by ship but what class of ship is a complete blank.

At Murmansk we occupied a Camp, composed of Nissen Huts, by the side of the railway; drawn up on the siding was a train; we found out later that it was occupied by a General and his staff. Furthermore, No. 3 Platoon of my Company was detailed to guard the train under the platoon sergeant. We did not stay long in Murmansk because we were entrained in cattle trucks, eight men to each truck. Cosh it was cold and draughty! Our Company Quarter Master Sergeant was in charge of the stores and food at the rear of the train. The engine was fired with wood logs; every now and again we would stop, the train had run out of logs, the tender had to be loaded up once more; this was an

opportunity to jump out and relieve the calls of nature.

The journey seemed endless, miles and miles of forest, the train passed along a rickety old track, through the trees; there didn't seem to be anyone living in the area. I have never seen such a vast area of forest before in my life. It was a rough journey and in a cattle truck it made it worse. Eventually we arrived at some sort of clearing where there were huts and also army personnel. Apparently this place had been in occupation by them for some time because as soon as we arrived, I was detailed to take charge of a hut containing stationery. I had left my unit; where they were camped I never found out. I didn't seem to mind it at all, I slept in the hut, there were no such things as bunks or beds but one was lucky to be under cover. I found a Sergeants Mess where there were all kinds of ranks of various regiments. No one seemed to mind me barging in, I had good food there and beer of the bulldog breed, so I made myself at home with the various members of the Army's Sergeants' Mess.

After a while I joined up with my regiment and proceeded by train to a place called Medvezhyegorsk (I hope I have got that right), anyway that is what we called it. Another camp of Nissen huts and again we stayed there a few weeks. Funny thing about this grand tour, as I now call it, there did not seem to be any native population, except at Murmansk. This time the Portsmouth Company was in company with the Plymouth Company. Eventually we were on the move again - on foot - for days we marched, counting the Versts as we passed them, camping at night with a vanguard in front. We could easily be ambushed, because of the trees and there was no visibility through them; we subsequently came to a clearing and halted. Then we extended our ranks and crept forward to a rise where we dug ourselves in with our entrenching tools. From what I could learn we were at a place called Usunski (I hope I have got that right too), and we learned that the Portsmouth Company was occupying a place on our right called Koikurri. There were no such things as road signs whatsoever, just simply Verst stones by the side of the road, or track would be a better name for it. Well, there we were; there was some firing ahead, spasmodic and an occasional whistle over our heads. The Company Commander was alert with his field glasses and maps, but there was no further movement.

Orders came eventually to withdraw and back we went to Medvezhyegorsk once more, a short stay there and back by train to Murmansk - the whole operation took about a couple of months. To my mind it was an unsuccessful one. What we were there for no-one seemed to know; it was at the time of the Russian Revolution when the Bolshevik armies were overcoming the smaller forces of General Denikin in the south, and the Allied intervention in the north. So apparently we came out of it in time, as the whole country was

come by the Bolsheviks. There was one nasty smell about the operation; the Chatham Company did not move from Murmansk, there was discontent among the Ranks. What happened to them and their officers I never found out.

Our Company eventually arrived at Plymouth Barracks and we were glad to get out of that mess. One medal of distinction was awarded to the Royal Marines for that operation and we were all astonished it went to the Sergeant who guarded the train which never left the siding. Whether he had the cheek to wear it, I don't know. I know the Sergeant of my platoon didn't like it much.

So that was my episode in North Russia in 1919 after the first world war had finished in 1918. I understand the anti-Bolshevik groups, who were our allies at the time were not suppressed until 1920.

Well that was my World War Service. The commencement was in the Persian Gulf, the finish in North Russia and in between I had travelled from East to West and then from South to North. It would be very interesting to know how many miles I had travelled by sea and land during that period. Today the whole distance could possibly be covered in a week by aeroplane.

Unlike the Second World War the people at home did not realise there was a war on; in 1914 - 1918 it wasn't brought home to them. They knew there was a war of course but there were little or no privations like there was in the Second World War when everyone was on the tip of their toes. I have often thought about it, when I was hungry and sometimes thirsty, sleeping on the bed at Shah-el-Arab, freezing cold at night, scorching during the day, or cuddled up in a trench in North Russia trying to get a bit warm, or continually sweating, night and day, in the tropics.

Anyway, as the saying goes, "There is no rest for the wicked" and within a couple of months, before I had a chance to see a bit of England, I was on my way again, like a tramp. This time it was HMS "Centaur", a cruiser, oil fired. My senior Sergeant was Sergeant N. who was in my platoon in North Russia and we got on well together. He was a Physical Training Instructor and I having a First Class Certificate of Education, as a side line, was the School Master. For that extra duty I was awarded fourpence a day. So with my Lance Sergeant's pay of fourpence and Schoolmaster's fourpence, I had the large amount of an extra Four Shillings and Eight Pence a week on top of my Corporal's pay. I must be getting about One Pound per week; not much more.

We spent most of our time with the Fleet, either at Malta or Gibraltar. There was quite a large fleet in the Mediterranean at the time, two Battle Squadrons of ten ships, a Cruiser Squadron, submarines and small craft. A commission was then two years and six months; invariably there was one battleship refitting at Malta and a cruiser at Gibraltar. Now and again

ship would leave the Fleet to pay off at home, and recommission with another crew.

I continued to teach the young seaman boys a variety of subjects in education; some of them decided to take the Higher Educational Test and I thought to myself I would like to take the Test as well. So my name was forwarded with the boys and I sat my test with them. In due course I was awarded a Second Class Higher Education (Naval) which was another qualification.

Soon it was our turn to be refitted, which was done at Gibraltar. We had been in dock and were lying alongside the Mole when my health seemed to be deteriorating. I was becoming nervous and irritable. The tension of being keyed up during the war, the sinking of the ship in the Dardenelles and my service in Russia; all these factors added up to a breakdown. I visited the doctor on board who examined me and confirmed that I was suffering from a reaction to the war. I was sent to the Gibraltar Naval Hospital, and detained, suffering from neurasthenia. I was there quite a while. My kit was sent from the ship so I did not see her any more. I was sorry as I liked the ship and my colleagues on board. Well, things do happen that way. In due course I was invalided home. I remember though I came home on an Army Transport Ship which took about five days to reach Plymouth, where I was discharged to the R.N. Hospital, Stonehouse.

And so the events of the war had exacted their toll, bodily and mental weariness, tired right out, the shock of the Dardenelles sinking of the ship, the tenseness of so much sea time, then Russia, all amounted up to a breakdown. Well I was in hospital for quite a while, plenty of rest and tonics. I always wanted to be out in the air; I would walk round the hospital grounds and blocks for hours, and then rest and sleep. Eventually I was allowed out of hospital for a few hours in the afternoon, wearing a blue band on my arm. I could not smoke and anyone who spoke to me with a cigarette or pipe I had to ignore and walk away. I tried to have a few hours in a Cinema at the top of Union Street but I had to come out of it; sort of claustrophobia but gradually I got better through sheer will power. I was determined to conquer the complaint but it was a long job.

I was asked by the doctors if I would like to get back to duty and I said yes I would try. I think they would have invalided me out of the service at this stage if I had refused, so sometime in 1920 I returned to Barracks to pick up where I had left off. I remained at Headquarters a few months, then bother me if I wasn't off again. I was detailed for another Battalion. Well when I went to pass the doctor, I told him of my condition; I did not wish to shirk duty because of health reasons, but I felt I should be given a chance.

Whatever happened I don't know, but on returning to Barracks from the Infirmary I was ordered to the Drafting Office. My mind was confused - would I have to go to sea or to a Battalion I wondered; well, it was neither. I was asked if I was good at figures, I said yes (mathematics was my best subject). They considered my qualifications, overlooked that I was a gunnery rating, the First Class Certificate and Higher Educational Test were in my favour and I was detailed again for duty at the Royal Marine Barracks at Gosport on Home Base Ledger. That same day I was in a train for Gosport, arriving later in the evening.

I was among strangers, but what of it. I was given a chance so I must make good. I had never been in an office to do any kind of office work at all, I was a good writer, could compose a letter, was good at figures - what had I to worry about? I was of the worrying kind however I must admit that, so I made a start next day under the supervision of a Warrant Officer, with three other colleagues, one from each Division of the Royal Marines. All had previous office experience I found out later.

Soon I picked up the ropes and routine with the ledgers and got on very well, totting up figures never worried me at all; it was what to do and how to do it but I was put wise to routine and settled down to pushing a pen and pencil. I found out it was exacting work, one didn't get physically tired but mentally tired, especially if one tried to do too much, and me being new to the job, unlike the others, I was inclined to worry more perhaps.

CHAPTER FIVEA Change of Circumstances

I am now twenty seven years of age in the year 1920, my colleagues in the office were all married except one; after office hours, naturally, they went home to their wives and children. This other member of the office was from Chatham and, like me, was not a native of the district. How he spent his time off duty I don't know but as he liked his pint of beer, and I did not, it is obvious we did not link companionship. I still had not properly recovered from my breakdown but, as I had civilian clothes with me, I spent most of my time exploring Gosport and Portsmouth. I enjoyed walking, in fact, it would not be the first time, when I could not sleep at night, that I would dress myself and walk along the road to Fareham for a couple of miles and return tired, and then retired to sleep. After a few months I began to get command of myself and took a great interest in my dress and appearance.

Being in the Band as a boy, I loved music and consequently on Sundays I spent most of my time on Southsea Pier, where invariably there was a Band giving a performance. I still could not visit a cinema, nor could I smoke or enter a public house to have a drink, but I enjoyed seeing what was going on around me in my walks, and studying the people, wondering who they were and what were their occupations.

As I was born and bred in the South Hams of Devonshire, I was surprised at seeing so many people and children riding bicycles; I suppose that the country around was so flat that a bicycle was an easy method of transport. Myself, I admit I never learned to ride a cycle; I never had the opportunity to stay long in a flat district, apart from not being able to afford one. Perhaps I may be able to afford one one day, but at present my legs have served me very well.

I got to like Gosport and Portsmouth, especially the long stretch from Clarence Pier to Eastney which I frequented a lot. It was all so different from the Hoe at Plymouth, but not so historical. Although I liked the country around me, the West Country would always be my home - when I got into conversation with my colleagues my accent became known to them and I could not hide the fact that I came from Guzz (Plymouth). During my service on one of the ships of the Royal Navy, a Commander on making himself known to the West Country crew, remarked that he was told that men from the west were slow in speech, their gait was slow and they were not very quick on the up-take.

Although we had those characteristics, he was proved to be very wrong in under-estimating the intelligence of a West Country man and eventually he was very proud that he had a ships company, like those from the West, and he told us so too. We called him "Tunga"; he knew it and was proud of his nickname, but that is another story. I am wandering too far ahead.

So I enjoyed the summer of that year, 1920, in my wanderings. I got very much better, more confidence in myself, my work I enjoyed, it did not worry me at all, because I adapted myself to it very quickly.

I cannot remember writing many letters to my parents and whether I received any from them I do not know, I must have done. Somehow, however, there was never much to tell them. I know for a fact I never received any visitors while I was in the Royal Naval Hospital; perhaps I did not tell them I was there, perhaps I was ashamed to, in any case I have no knowledge of the fact. I did go home on leave occasionally but it was very rarely; really, I lost contact somehow since I left the R.N. College as a Bugler.

There was a surprise for me one day, however. Divisional Orders, which were published every day, contained my name - Ply 13896 Corporal W.G. Elliott is promoted to the Rank of Sergeant. I felt quite elated. I was given a Sergeants' dormitory and became a member of the Sergeants Mess permanently. For the next few days I was altering my clothing; I drew a Sergeants' Sash, changed my buttons, etc. etc. I had now nine years man's service and promoted Sergeant which was good going and this gave me a greater incentive.

As I said before in this narrative, office work was boring, but it suited my purpose. I was more relaxed, time was passing very quickly and then it happened. I came across one of the opposite sex. I had been over to Portsmouth to get some photographs and came across on the Ferry to Gosport. Standing on the pavement was a girl, nicely dressed. I looked at her, she walked away. What prompted me to follow her I do not know, but I did, and what prompted me to catch up with her and speak to her I don't know either, but again I did. I was attracted, I asked her where she was going and she simply said "home". I walked with her, got into conversation and she did not seem to mind. Eventually she stopped, told me she was going home and would not let me go any further with her. In our conversation I found out that she was working as a tailoress and came out for a walk in the evening after she had had her dinner. I said I would like to see her again next evening after her dinner, but she would not promise. Perhaps she had a boy friend somewhere, anyhow, she left me.

Next evening I was hanging about the place where she left me the previous evening, for some time; then she appeared; again I spoke to her and took her for a walk in Alverstoke and Anglesea Gardens, until she got a bit

tired and returned home. Again she would not promise to see me but again I was waiting for her if she did happen to leave home for a walk, and so we became friendly.

Well that's how it happened. Never before had I been so attracted to a member of the opposite sex. I liked them, respected them but never thought I could be a companion to them. This girl I did, I wanted to see more of her, I got used to talking to her, I was shaking off my shyness and, although I had sisters, this girl was different. So I became very much attached to her, I liked her company. Whether she liked mine I do not know, I never asked her, so I thought if she did not like my company she would have said so and that was the answer.

I went home on leave at Christmas that year, 1920. If I had been in Plymouth I would have forfeited home leave and stayed at the Church of English Institute. As I was a stranger at Gosport I did not know where to stay. I could not remain in Barracks, it would have looked rather odd, so the few days at home were spent restlessly. I did however find a nice box of chocolates which I sent to Ada as a present, but at the first opportunity I made an excuse and returned to Gosport. My parents asked no questions and I did not give any reason.

On returning from leave I visited Ada's home and was introduced to her mother and father. Later I found out that her father was an ex-Army man and there was no love lost between the Army and Royal Marines at Gosport. The HQ's of both regiments were very close to each other. However, there was no enmity between her father and myself.

It was about February 1921 that I asked Ada if we could become engaged; she was non-committal but I promised and bought her a ring of her choice which she wore. A month passed during which time we saw a lot of each other but to my surprise, without any reason, argument or tiff, she returned the ring to me, and somehow or other we did not see each other; our meetings had ceased.

I was very upset of course. I did not go near her home, neither did I see her out anywhere. I wandered about Gosport for about six weeks but there was no sign of Ada. By chance I met her mother, I enquired after her welfare and asked if I could see her; she advised me to go to their home. Ada answered the door, I invited her out for a walk, we resumed our association, I gave her back the ring and I told her I was going to marry her. She simply said "If you want me". Right, I said, give notice at your work and be ready in a fortnight's time, so I could give notice to the Registrar. I was still not certain of her, but I impressed on her I meant what I said and married her on May 11th. I knew very well if I did not do it that way I would lose her,

and she was happy that I had made the decision for her really.

We had known each other five months, not a long time in those days when an engagement lasted sometimes years, but that old saying "Marry in haste, repent at leisure" was all a myth as far as we were concerned, because our marriage lasted forty nine years. It was not all a bed of roses; we had our differences in our early days; Ada was often admonished by my mother-in-law for her remarks to me, but I tolerated a lot. Another thing was, we had no home and I was grateful for Ada's parents to accommodate us.

My sister was very good to me, for placing her place at my disposal for our honeymoon which was in Norwood, London. So all round we were very lucky in starting our married life.

When I look back at the episode of not having anything to do with the opposite sex in my life, and then come across a pal, as I did, it was surprising; not only that, but my wife was just six months younger than myself so our ages were just right, it had to be that way.

The reason that the Royal Marines were formed as a Battalion and sent to Ireland in 1921 was because of the Sinn Fein outrages. Their Headquarters was stationed at Queenstown on HMS "Cumberland" which was in dock there. The Pay Ledgers and Accounts were conducted from Forton Barracks. It became apparent that there should be a link between the active service members of the Battalion, and the administrative side. In that respect I was on the move again and sent to an office on the ship in Ireland. The Royal Marines were dispersed at all the coast guard stations on the west coast. Tarbert, Cappa, Seafield, Liscafer, Ballinacull and Castletownsend. The Irish people did not care much for the khaki uniforms in Ireland, although they were Royal Marines but I myself was dressed in the blue uniform which they considered to be friendly. I was there for about four months, during which time my wife Ada thought she would like to see Queenstown. I got her lodgings with an English family but she did not stay long as the accommodation was very primitive and the Irish were hostile to her. So back she went to England but it was an experience for her. During my stay there I ran the pay and accounts for the six stations. At the end of my term I was relieved by another colleague at the office, and returned to Forton Barracks.

It was early in 1922 that the Battalion returned to England, our accounts at Forton were wound up and I, with my colleagues, returned to our respective Divisions, Chatham, Eastney and Plymouth.

The sequence of the events which followed I am not too certain about, it was such a long time ago but I do know, in order to stay at home for a while, I must specialise in some subject, and also to get a higher rate of pay, now that I am married. The only subject for which I could qualify was Gunnery

instructor.

Harking back to my service in the Battalion at Whitchurch, Bedenham and Russia, all my colleagues with whom I was serving, called me George; it followed me in that period in 1919, even to the end of my services, and on to my retirement at the age of 65 years. It emanated from a newspaper joke - "Where's George" "Gone to Lunch". So whenever I was missed in the mess, that was the remark made in answer.

During my stay at Headquarters which was longer than usual, I was unable to get into a class for Gunnery Instructor. I expect the quota for the establishment was full, so I was unlucky.

My brother-in-law I saw quite a lot of during that time and eventually he invited me to become a member of the Freemason Society. After interrogation and the different formalities I became initiated into Huyshe 1099 but I did not take the final degrees until later.

Meanwhile in October 1922 my son George was born. I remember receiving a telegram from my mother-in-law giving me the news, so at the first available opportunity I visited Gosport to see the new arrival. My wife was ever so pleased and happy that it was a boy, and I was too. We had then been married seventeen months; as we had no home, we did not want one at first but it was unnatural for a woman not to want a child. Whenever I could see an opportunity I would look for furnished rooms at Plymouth or Devonport because Ada liked to be with me. It was awkward for me to belong to the Plymouth Division and my wife living with her parents in Gosport, but what could I do? I was always on the move, it was only natural for us to be together, we had no home. Another thing, we could not save anything to start a home; going backwards and forwards between the two ports and furnished apartments were not a cheap proposition. This time I tried to get a room without success, so my sister Violet let us have a room at Townsend Avenue, Keyham. It was the worst thing I did. We were under an obligation to her, so many arguments arose about cooking, etc., that my brother-in-law was brought into it. He was an easy going chap, but my sister was difficult, so back to Gosport went Ada with the boy. Never would I like to live with Violet again - it was extremely unpleasant. Funnily enough, I was happy at Gosport with Ada's parents and I got on very well with my mother-in-law and father-in-law, so I cannot say the fault was with us.

I say this because I remember in a later episode when Ada and I lived at Haddington Road, we visited my mother who was lodging with my sister in Hungerford Road and what we saw appalled us both. Mother was upstairs ill and the kitchenette was piled with crockery; there was friction then so we quietly withdrew. Another incident when my father resided at Coronado Road

and I visited him from Gosport. My sister then was present but she was safely tucked up in bed; what happened on that occasion was anyone's guess. I do know the bedside table was covered with bottles containing tablets and medicines of some sort. Again we steered clear of that situation and returned home.

My sister Jenny, who was the first one to get married in our family, lived in South Croydon and Thornton Heath before settling at Sanderstead, Surrey. I expect she could relate some amusing episodes but that would not be my memoirs, although I know of them.

Back to the sea once more, this time it was HMS Cleopatra, a three funnelled cruiser. We carried two Sergeants, three Corporals and about thirty Royal Marines. Naturally, it was the Mediterranean again - one was very lucky if one could get drafted to a Home Service ship. There was always a big Fleet in the Mediterranean; by the time I finish my service in the Regiment, I shall have done more than my quota of sea time and the majority of it was served between Gibraltar and Alexandria. There would be very few big ports that I hadn't visited.

My colleague this time was Sergeant C. Nice enough fellow, I got on well with him. I do not think he did much sea time however, because he had been stationed at Malta for sometime. He was an "Hypnotist". He gave shows on board and at the Canteen at Malta. All his paraphernalia he carried in a box, which he stowed in the "Mess". We had a rough passage to Malta, the ship seemed top heavy and rolled a lot. I can see myself now standing on the mess deck in bare feet, trousers rolled up to the knees, and the water swishing backwards and forwards across the deck, because the scuppers could not take it. Well we arrived at Valetta harbour once more, the place was a second home to me.

While on passage to Malta, my colleague Sergeant C exposed himself in a conversation we had together, which revealed to me that he was a member of a Freemason's Society. I tackled him with it, with the little knowledge I knew, and it transpired that he was a well known figure in the Brotherhood. I explained my circumstances, with the result he obtained a dispensation and invited me to his Lodge in Malta. At this Lodge I took my second and third degrees and, furthermore, in a couple of months I obtained a Mark degree with the Royal Ark Wanner. My colleague had taken about twelve degrees in the past years and was a Master of his Lodge.

Some people are very sceptical of this Society, Hitler banned it altogether and very rarely a Roman Catholic becomes a member that I know of because of confessions, etc., and to the uninitiated some silly remarks are passed, not knowing that some of the ritual is based on the Bible. Dr. John Phillips, the Bishop of Portsmouth gave an interview to an "Evening News"

While we were there all the Royal Marines landed and marched to a place the other side of the island, for one month. The place was called Chain Tuffeħa. All Royal Marines in the Fleet occupied this camp at different times of their stay, for a Musketry Course and Small Arms firing on the ranges. This month was really a holiday from the ship, bathing facilities were first class and there was plenty of entertainment. Of course we had to carry out firings on the ranges every day, but the fresh air and the sunshine, and exercises were a change from being cooped up in a ship.

Malta catered for the British Navy absolutely. There was a large Naval Hospital at Bighi, a Naval Dockyard, which provided employment for thousands of Maltese, "Fort St. Angelo", a Naval Base, flying the flag of a Red Admiral, which was used as a transit base, besides various Naval Stores. Many English people lived there permanently, the Maltese spoke English, besides their own Maltese lingo which took some understanding.

A feature of Malta was the many Ikons at the corners of the streets, with the little candles burning day and night. Maltese crossed themselves in passing these symbols. The goats followed their masters along the streets, baa-ing like lambs and their owners crying "Allee Allee". Jugs came out from the doorways and the goats were milked there and then. I do not think I ever saw a cow in Malta in those days -- well, the place was bereft of green pastures. In contrast, the neighbouring island Gozo grew a lot of garden produce and produced dairy goods. There were canaries in abundance. When a ship was paying off and going home, the tradesmen came on board, swopping a canary for a pair of old trousers or a jacket. The canaries were hung up overhead on the mess deck, on the way home, invariably 75 per cent of them died.

Dhobi-wallahs were allowed on board every day, one to each mess deck; they took washing and returned it in a couple of days. A white suit came back pressed and ironed beautifully. One wore a clean suit every day. We never wore blue suits in Malta during the day.

The refuse from the mess tables was placed in tubs on deck, not thrown down the shute. The tubs were taken ashore and picked over; there was a profit made on the sale of this commodity.

Beautiful Italian operas were staged on shore at the Opera House in Valetta. The cafes and bars in Strata Reale and Strata Stretta were brilliantly lit at night, providing entertainment. One could get a nice coffee royal before going on board at 7am in the morning; good coffee, laced with rum - a fine pick-me-up.

That's why I say Malta, in those days, was a home from home to the British sailor. One must bear in mind, a ship commissioned for the Mediterranean was away two and a half years, so some outlet had to be made for

parted from their homes for that period. What a contrast it was to servicemen serving in the forces nowadays.

Spain, France, Italy, Greece and Egypt all liked the British sailor. When one went on shore, of course, one had to watch one's step and not get into any fracas or argument, but on the whole they were very friendly.

In those days there were no aeroplanes but letters only took two and a half days to come from home; three times a week, the mail boat "Lubejania" arrived in early morning from Brindisi and discharged her mail; a naval sorting office was on shore and the ship's postman (a Royal Marine by the way) got our mail and distributed it on board. He had a small office where you could get stamps, postcards, registered letters, etc. for your use, and took your mail ashore every day. I don't think I had ever missed a mail in writing to Ada, you could safely say a letter was on that boat addressed to her. She was just the same, a letter was always on that boat for me. Even when we visited foreign ports, the Commander would pipe the closing of the mail for delivery on shore. It was at one of the French ports that I was haggling over a kimona that I wanted to send to Ada, when an English lady behind me at the bazaar said "Don't give them that, I'll buy it for you". I was ever so grateful; she could see I was being done down in price. In the Egyptian bazaars, the favourite articles for sale were tea-sets. Supposed to have been made in China, but when getting them on board, one found they were made in the Midlands, England. Tradesmen were allowed on board at Alexandria to sell their wares but one had to be careful of your purchase; if you halved the price they asked you could get a good deal.

In France and Egypt, we visited Masonic Lodges and watched their workings - very interesting, it broadens one's mind besides making friends locally.

The "Cleopatra" was an old fashioned cruiser, although oil burning. The modern cruiser was of the "Centaur" class, faster and less cumbersome to manoeuvre. I think that we were sent out there to replace a modern vessel which was refitting or paying off at home. Anyway, our ship was on the way home again, after about nine months in the Mediterranean. We were sorry to leave the ship; she was so happy and easy going, and our visits to the ports in the Mediterranean were very instructive and interesting.

Well, we paid off, back to Headquarters once more, after leave at Gosport to see Ada and the boy, my chance came to qualify as a Gunnery Instructor. This course was the longest one that I know in Naval circles. Twelve months and I could see Ada and the boy more. I started off with three months at School, and then nine months instructing at the Royal Naval Barracks Gunnery School. Ada did not come to Plymouth the whole of that period, but

came two or three months at a time, and between times I visited Gosport as opportunity offered.

At this point I would like to reminisce little things that impressed me so long ago, at the accommodation I obtained for Ada when she made me a visit.

The first place was in Fitzroy Terrace, one room, containing bed and the usual offices, but what I would like to remark about is that the sofa was devoid of springs and the legs were propped up on condensed milk tins. We did not stay there long. The next place was Alcester Street, very nice and comfortable, two rooms, bedroom upstairs of course and a room downstairs for cooking, etc. The landlady was a termagant, big made person and her husband a meek individual who would not say boo to a goose; he was small, of little height and she was overwhelmingly overbearing. He was entirely subject to her manner and she treated him very shabbily. She made a sneering remark to Ada one morning, "What have you had for breakfast, Kippers?" Ada was quick on the draw and said "No, Bloaters". Apparently she didn't like the smell to invade her house. The stairs were polished and Ada fell one day; I had to get medical treatment for her. It was at this place that Ada cried so bitterly. It always impressed me and I never found out the reason why. My son George was very much attached to me, it was on a Sunday and I was dressed in my Sunday best; during the forenoon, I told him I was taking him out to the park, of course with Ada, and as the boy and myself were walking hand in hand out of the door, Ada decided not to go. So I said I would take the boy myself. Then it happened. I consoled her and eventually we had a pleasant morning together. I shall always remember that incident, so trivial to me. Did she think I was taking the boy away from her, or was it because the boy desired my company more than hers. Very puzzling?

Another time we stayed at Haddington Road; all these places were in Stoke, Devonport, not far from the Royal Marine Barracks where I was doing this course of Gunnery. This time it was the boy's turn to cry. Ada and George always met me outside the gates of the Barracks and it was his practice to run to me and catch hold of my hand. But there was another Sergeant before me and George ran and took hold of his hand; the sergeant looked and the boy looked. He then realised it wasn't his Daddy and so he cried, he was so self conscious that he had made a mistake.

George went to Peel Road School, supervised by Miss Blanch, when he was three years of age, mornings only of course. When he started school proper at five years he was well advanced in tables of figures and reading.

Mum (my mother-in-law) used to read to him for hours at the kitchen table from children's books. Mum used to get so sleepy at times and try to

a few pages, but that did not suit George, he knew she was cheating him, to the consternation of Mum and Dad.

I do not think my own mother and father saw much of my son, I never had a chance much to make them visits. When I left home at fourteen years I did not see much of my family; my leave periods were infrequent at home but since I got married I took to my wife's mother and father. I liked them very much, they were good to us and I treated them as my own parents.

Why I thought of it as home I don't know. I was happy with them, the older people were very fond of George too. I say older people because there was Ada's grandmother living with us which constituted a very nice family. Mum had two sons and two daughters. Both sons died because of their services in the forces in the first world war, so perhaps that is why they were so attached to the boy and myself. Many a time George had to be admonished for doing something he oughtn't to, with a gentle smack on his legs by Ada, but Gran always called to her "Don't you touch that boy". Ada's sister Alice also died young, under thirty years of age. She married young to a non commissioned officer of the King's Royal Rifles and had one daughter called May. However, May got married to an Air Force Sergeant and, apart from an occasional visit, she soon left the fold, had three sons and was virtually forgotten. Ada continued the friendship with her niece for a long while, but letters got forgotten and correspondence dropped.

It must be purely a coincidence but my grandfather on my father's side, whom I never saw, was connected with the sale of alcoholic liquor and was a licensee of the "Two Trees" public house in Fore Street, Devonport, for years. Ada's grandparents, too, were licensees of the "Benin" public house in North Street, Gosport; also her father was a steward of the Liberal Club in Clarence Square, Gosport. I never knew however that my mother and father ever took intoxicating liquor, but my wife's parents always had a drink of the beverage to the last years of their lives. It was their way of life and I always encouraged him to have a drink, although sometimes she could ill afford it. I remark on this because of the difference in the two families.

Some time about this period during my course of Gunnery, I had to make a big decision. The complement of the services was being reduced. Bonuses were offered to officers, rank and file to volunteer to leave the services. I must have been very impulsive; I thought about it and thought about it, over and over again. I wanted to be home with Ada and the boy; what a chance it was to be together permanently and make a home. I had no trade, what I had learned inside the services was of no use in outside life. But surely I could make another start. The bonus in my case was about £100. That was a lot of money to me and my family.

I had done such a long time at sea during my service, I was home very little, I knew more of foreign countries than my own; now that I was married Ada was a part of me and, with the boy, we were very close, as it were. When we walked out together our hands were unconsciously linked together and it was always that way, even so late in life. So I put my name forward to be discharged.

Ada and I talked about it, what I could do if I came out of the service but she, with that womanly intuition, looked further ahead than I did. She said to me "I will stick it for another nine years until you get your pension". She said it was not much of a married life and I was bound to go to sea again. So, after talking it over, next day I withdrew my request.

As it so happened, fortune was with me, Ada was right, in those nine years remaining I did only two years at sea, and I was with Ada and the boy more.

Well I passed very well in my course of Gunnery, it was an education. I enjoyed learning, and still do up to the present day. On returning to Headquarters soon after, I was appointed Gunnery Instructor. The emolument was one and sixpence a day. I was delighted. So I started another chapter of my life again, what was going to be the answer.

CHAPTER SIX

I take up Teaching

I would like to express my views about the art of teaching. It is an art because, not only has one to have experience of the subject, but also the knowledge. To be able to impart your knowledge and experience is another matter altogether. One can be an orator or, in common terms, to have the gift of the gab and at the same time do not know what you are talking about. One also can be academic and at the same time have knowledge, and not be able to make others understand what you are saying.

Again, taking another view, one can be an orator, with experience, and the knowledge, and cannot speak clearly and distinctly. A lot of our announcers and speakers should first of all take a speech therapy course. Some of them talk between their teeth, hardly ever opening their mouth to form the words they speak; others do not form the words which they speak, by their lips and tongue. I am very critical of this, not because I am one who is able to speak grammatically (which I am not) but because the art of conversation, I consider, is a gift, like a good pianist, or an actor, or a painter.

Well then, now that I have expressed my views, how did I fare in teaching? I remember when as a young boy, about eight or nine years of age, I was taught to analyse and parse a sentence or phrase. It used to befog me. I had a hard job to say what a verb, an adjective or a conjunction was but I could get on very well with nouns, pronouns, personal or otherwise. However, with my slight knowledge of grammar, I claim to be able to speak the English language well enough to make people understand what I am talking about. By constantly reading books, one can learn a lot (I don't mean technical books). To have recourse to a dictionary is also an asset, although I avoid that because I call it cheating.

As I am not tongue-tied as it were, having taught boys on board one of my ships, and having passed an examination at the Depot, with raw recruits, I was over the first hurdle. What I call initial experience. My First Class Certificate of Education and Higher Educational Test helped a lot, so when I was appointed to the Gun Battery and allocated my first class, I started off well.

The hours of teaching were from 9 am to 1 pm, with half an hour break in between; three and a half hours talking. Holding the attention of the class was a bit exhausting, one had to repeat oneself so many times

because your class was not all of the same intelligence.

I spoke to one of my colleagues that I had told my class all I knew in the first couple of hours, in one particular subject. He laughed and said "Keep going, in another couple of weeks you won't stop talking!"

There is a well known saying that the person who listens is more enlightened than the person who talks, because he learns something.

When a squad came from the Depot at Deal, their duties at sea were given at the Gun Battery and the squad was divided up into three classes, about twelve in a class, invariably the same three instructors were allocated to the squad on their arrival. Why this was so, I don't know. However, I was always one of the three.

There was such a variety of guns and subjects to be taught, and so that the teaching was not boring, one hour at each gun or subject during a forenoon was sufficient; the next day it was again different, may be one would not come back to a previous subject for a week - that is where a young person with a retentive memory scores over one who is not so quick on the up-take. However, one could not stop for the slightly backward, they would have to pick up on revision and, ten chances to one, they would scramble through with passing points at the final examination.

Young recruits of 16 or 17 years of age are inclined to take advantage if there is any laxity of supervision on the instructor's part. At times a man seemed rather inattentive in class and inclined to smirk and giggle. We instructors had an antedote to that, by ordering the man to take a hundred pound shell to another instructor; when he arrived there he was told to take it back. This rarely happened, but discipline had to be maintained.

Well for about nine months I turned out fairly good classes. The youngsters appreciated your efforts in getting them through the drills and lectures, they did not mind you being strict with them - that was the esprit-de-corps. Ada was not with me all the time at Plymouth because of the boy's schooling and he seemed to like school a lot.

The Instructor of Gunnery, Major J-H asked me if I would care for a course of Repository. I asked him what it was. He said the building of sheers, derricks and rafts, for the purpose of transporting guns from one place to another, and the course was at Fort "Cumberland", Eastney, Portsmouth. I jumped at the idea, I would be with Ada and the boy. The course also included knots, splices, ropes and boat-pulling.

Well later I was established at Eastney for a few months; the course was fairly hard, but it was an education.

I passed the course fairly well, after a few months and to stop at Portsmouth I volunteered for a Battery Commanders Assistant Course. This included military surveying, the use of the theodolite for taking ranges in the firing of artillery armament. Very interesting indeed, but a lot of paper work. All good things come to an end. There was nothing left for me to do when I passed the course, but to return to Plymouth.

So I took on classes at the Gun Battery in building sheers, derricks, building rafts and teaching the youngsters knots, splices, etc.

Soon it would be my turn for sea, and so it came about, but I did not go until another instructor was qualified in repository, so I was safe again for a few months. I could not grumble at all, it was a relief and a change from sea service.

During my stay in the Portsmouth Area I was impressed by the massive assembly of ships of the Royal Navy. It was an occasion with the Review of the Fleet. I did not know such ships existed, apart from Battleships, Cruisers, Submarines, etc., but there were repair ships, colliers, victualling vessels, besides a lot of harbour craft. It was a fine sight, for a week, when all the vessels were lit overall at night time.

I must record also that during my stay at Eastney I was very eager to pass my examinations, but I received a set back in my ambitions in the Royal Marines. At that time, Senior N.C.Os of Gunnery Qualifications were eligible for promotion to R.M. Gunner. This rank was similar to a Gunner in the Royal Navy, a Warrant Officer. This stepping stone was one from which you could get a Commission in the Royal Marines.

Because of my qualifications, my service documents were already marked as "Passed for R.M. Gunner" I had hopes! So did five others in the Royal Marines but the Admiralty, for economy, phased out the Rank altogether. My colleague who was also on the rota, before me, had even bought his uniform; it must have been more of a set back for him than for me. There were only about six of that rank in the Royal Marines, for duty on shore, and at sea. Well that was that. I could see no further promotion except to Colour Sergeant, which came automatically. I was after bigger things as it were, I was aiming high at about thirty three years of age, but it was not to be.

The appointment of Quartermasters and Assistant Paymasters, with others were generally drawn from the Warrant Rank, holding the Rank of Lieutenant, Captain were, in common terms, "Rankers" but held commissions. In fact one of my colleagues in later life reached the rank of Lieutenant Colonel on the Staff of the Adjutant General. I did not aspire to that position however, but I did think there may be a chance subsequently of perhaps being a Lieutenant and Quartermaster; however that was not to be.

And so, as I mentioned previously, my turn for sea came once more. I had had a good innings on shore, which I appreciated now that I was married, so I was detailed to HMS "Warspite". This ship was in the battle of Jutland and was one of the battleships that got a few knocks from the German Navy. There were five battleships of her class and five battleships of the "Royal Oak" class; the latter are named after the letter "R", such as Revenge, "Resolution" and "Ramillies", not forgetting the "Royal Oak" which came to an untimely end.

Again my memory fails me as to what happened on that ship and the two subsequent ships of her class in which I served, but I have a faint recollection of my services in them. We commissioned the "Warspite" at Plymouth, but the detachment consisted of Red and Blue Marines, short for Infantry and Artillery. I was a Red Marine obviously from Plymouth Barracks and the Blues came from Eastney, their Headquarters. The role of the Red Marines was to man the Light Guns, 6" and downwards, the Blue Marines manned the 15" Guns in turrets.

This was my first big ship, manned by about 1,200 men, except for the "Ocean" on which I served in 1914; although a battleship the "Ocean" was not so big and did not carry such heavy armament. The detachment consisted of roughly a Major, two Lieutenants, a Colour Sergeant and about six to eight Sergeants with a number of Corporals, and about one hundred men; we occupied the Mess Deck, adjacent to the Officers' Quarters, which were Aft. The Colour Sergeant (termed Sergeant Major on board) was a Blue Marine; there was an equal proportion of Blue Marine Sergeants and Red Marine Sergeants; however, we got on well together. All were experienced in ship life with different duties and roles to perform. Quite a number of the men were employed on sentry duties, another proportion were Officers' Servants, each servant having two or three officers, except the Commander who had one.

So back I went to the Mediterranean, once more. There was a massive fleet in that part of the world, based on Malta at that time; Valetta harbour contained all the battleships, Sleema the cruisers and the submarines were based on the other side of the island. Of course there were oilers, repair ships and stores ships, all based somewhere in the vicinity.

On that ship also was a "Royal Marine Band" from the "School of Music" at Eastney, a Bandmaster, Band Corporal and about fifteen musicians. Their role consisted of providing music on festive occasions, dances and Officers Mess Dinners. Of course each of these musicians had a role also to play in the defence of the ship, such as manning communications and the Plotting Table below decks.

Believe it or not, the ship was fitted with a billiards table on

the Royal Marines Mess Deck. It was surprising how stable the ship was at sea, more so in harbour, so many a good game could be played by sections of the ships company.

In ships of that size, with so many men, it was at least six months before you could get to know your own ships company; we knew our own men of course but when it came to the other branches, like seaman, stokers, stewards, cooks, artificers of all kinds, one met a fresh face every day and could say to oneself, how long has he been on board. However, the ship settled down to routine very well, drills, exercises, gunnery instruction, lifeboat drills and others which are too numerous to mention; everyone seemed to fit into their job and complete the efficiency of the ship. Really it was like a jig saw puzzle.

We did a lot of time at sea, doing manoeuvres, exercises, gunnery firings and landings, and ended up our cruises by being dispersed to various parts in the Mediterranean, showing the flag and eventually returning to Malta.

There was plenty of time at sea to write letters, mostly to my wife Ada, and she regularly wrote at least twice a week. Included in my letters were small drawings and sketches for the boy; he expected always to see something from Daddy. It was a hard job sometimes to think of something to draw for him, as I was never inclined to paint, draw or sketch.

I suppose we must have been in commission about twelve months when, all at once, we were informed that we were going home, to be transferred to another ship. As I said previously, there was always one of a squadron re-fitting at an home port and the "Warspite" wanted a thorough refit; her decks were badly buckled in places through enemy action. It was a happy ship and I was much happier than most because the ship was going to Portsmouth to transfer ships company. There must have been a complete reshuffle, but my memory fails me again as to how the reshuffle took place. As far as I was concerned I was going home to see Ada and the boy but I knew I should have to complete another term at sea, to complete a commission.

As I cannot remember what actually did happen, I do know we spent a couple of months at home and that HMS "Queen Elizabeth" was commissioned with entirely a West Country ships company and I was one of the detachment of Royal Marines. She was in a terrible condition when we took her over, after coming out of dockyard hands, and we soon came to the conclusion that she had been fitted out for a special role in the Fleet. She was going to be the Flag Ship of the Fleet, flying the flag of a full Admiral, Sir Roger Keyes, of Zeebrugge fame.

When an Admiral of his rank goes to sea in a ship there is obviously a large staff of secretaries. His Chief of Staff is a senior

n or Rear Admiral; then there are Signal Officers, Intelligence Officers, Staff Officers, Flag Captains of one sort or another, who all had to be accommodated on board. In consequence, the after part of the ship consisted solely of Admirals Staff. The Ships Company was larger, of course, to carry out the extra duties, not forgetting the Royal Marines which had a larger detachment and a larger Royal Marine Band. There were extra Royal Marine Officers and all the Sergeants of the Royal Marines were specialists. In addition to the Sergeant Major there was a Colour Sergeant who was the C-in-C's printer, we had a Signal Sergeant, Physical Training Sergeant, Gunnery Instructor and a 1st Class Heavy Gun Layer.

Well we sailed, flying the flag of a full Admiral. When we got to know our officers, we found out that most of them were in the upper social class. Our Commander was a smart officer indeed; he was responsible for the cleanliness of the ship and the discipline. He seemed to have a way with him, which everyone liked, but all knew he was the Commander.

For instance, as soon as we got to sea, he ordered everyone aft on the Quarter Deck, including officers. He gave us a lecture but I remember some of his remarks which impressed me very forcibly. He said he had not ever had a ship with a West Country crew before and remarked that West Countrymen were supposed to be slow in gait, slow in speech and not so quick on the uptake. He also said there would be tons of work, tons of leave, tons of sport and play. Thereafter he was nicknamed by the Ships Company "Tunza". A very appropriate name and soon he got to know his nickname and he lived up to what he said he would do.

Well he said, there was a ship present in the Fleet which holds the "Cock". This emblem was passed down from one ship to another for efficiency in gunnery, small arms, fleet exercises, all kinds of sport and cleanliness, and "Tunza" said we were going to get it. Well during the next twelve months all kinds of exercises were carried out, sailing, boat pulling, gunnery, rifle, sport of all kinds, and the ships company were all for it and worked hard for "Tunza".

The Royal Marines were not backward either in taking part in the different exercises; we had a lovely football team and polo team, we did well in boat pulling and also in various other exercises. When all the points for efficiency and sports were added together, HMS "Queen Elizabeth" gained the "Cock of the Fleet". I remember the Commander being pulled by his officers in the Galley to receive the "Cock". The whole ships company was on deck, yelling at him "Good old Tunza". It was what he wanted with a West Country Crew, we were proud of him and he was proud of his ships company.

We had our rewards. When the Admiral made his social calls at

the well known ports, there was always a ball or a fete of some sort. The officers had their guests on board one day, followed by the ships company who had their guests the next day. And that is how it was.

We were very much welcomed at the ports we visited. Of course there were an awful lot of ceremonial occasions when the big noises on shore made return visits to the ship. The guard and band were always playing some national anthem or other when these visits took place, so the Royal Marines had to be always spick and span, ready to jump on deck to receive the notables in the proper manner. So, all in all, although we received our rewards on leave etc., there was such a lot of hard work on board to keep the ship clean, inside and out, for appearances.

I myself spent a lot of time sightseeing on shore at the many ports of call although money was not very plentiful, but it was enjoyable. anyway one could see the sights as much by sitting in a cafe drinking wine which was rather cheap. Beer, if you could get it, was a dear drink except at Malta.

On returning to Malta on one occasion, it was the end of the month; money was at a discount before pay day. The Sergeant Major (Jack) noticed that there were no Sergeants going on shore leave. Jack was a single man, we were all married. The curtains of the mess were suddenly drawn aside, Jack was in the dorrway and with his booming voice, he said "Well, what's the matter with all you silly B....s". "End of the month Jack" a reply came. He said "Who's the Duty Sergeant". It was a man called "C". Jack said "All of you, get your glad togs on - I'll meet you on deck in ten minutes". Jack took us all ashore and gave us a grand evening. He was like that, a thorough grand Sergeant Major and a good Free Mason. As it happened, I was the only Freemason in the mess, apart from Jack, but he never showed any favouritism to me apart from the others. There were parties of Freemasons which numbered about a dozen in the ship, who were invited to Lodges on shore in France and Egypt. We knew each other obviously and had nice talks together of friendship and adventures in masonry. There was one thing about Jack, he always upheld your decisions with the officers, and backed you up in anything you did.

I would like to say the atmosphere in that ship was the most pleasant I had experienced; my mess mates were a grand lot, no friction whatsoever. I think it was because the Sergeant Major (Jack) made us like that - he was a grand person himself.

Well during my stay in that ship, I was surprised one day when the Chief Writer sent for me and told me quietly that I was promoted to Colour Sergeant. Of course, the correspondence from Headquarters had to go to the Major of the Royal Marines first and he would acquaint me officially, by taking me in front of the Captain. Jack was pleased; I was shifted into

Jack's mess, but my duties were the same, taking classes at gunnery, small arms and machine guns. I was then asked to the Royal Marines Storerooms where I was issued with Crowns for my clothing and to make the necessary alterations to my tunics in the Tailors Shop.

However, we made another cruise, this time to Greece, did some gunnery trials and exercises, then once again after a couple of months, returned to Malta.

Something fortunate happened on our return to Malta. The Major of Marines on board was informed that I could not hold the rank of Colour Sergeant and a Gunnery Instructor; each of these qualifications gave me an emolument of One and Six a day and, in my case, King's Regulations quoted where this occurred I had to be disembarked at the first opportunity. I did not know of this regulation and I did not wish to be mulcted with one of these emoluments. So a relief was applied for, as I was an excess to the complement of the ship.

Was I sorry this happened; I do not know. Would I go to sea again, that was a problem. I did not have many more years to serve because I was about thirty five years of age. I could certainly go on teaching at the Battery if there was a vacancy - another four years to do for pension, and then what? Jack and I had a talk about it in the mess and he said there was nothing we could do about it. Someone must have known of this regulation and started the ball rolling. So it happened, my relief arrived and I was sent to Fort St. Angelo to await transport home.

I got home eventually to Plymouth Barracks and reported to the Orderly Room. I was then in "A" Company. I went on Foreign Service leave, about twenty eight days being absent two years, and spent it at Gosport of course with Ada and the boy, who was now about six years of age. A month's leave soon passed however and I had to return, and reported to the Orderly Room, my documents having arrived home.

Before I left the "Queen Elizabeth" the Major of Marines interviewed me and asked me about my future. He said, "I am sending you home with a good recommendation for further promotion, what is your next step?" I said, "Quarter Master Sergeant". "Alright", he said, "I strongly recommend you for that rank because of your good service on board".

So I was on parade once more at Headquarters but not for long. I was soon spotted, a Gunnery Instructor doing General Duties - it was out of the question and I was allocated to the Gun Battery, teaching once more.

My documents were circulated to the Brigade Office, Company Commander and the Adjutant, who was generally in charge of all the N.C.Os, although they were attached to different departments.

Major J.H., who was in charge of the Gun Battery, obviously was pleased that he had gained a Gunnery Instructor and a Repository Instructor. The Adjutant having examined my documents and my recommendations was also pleased; he had come across the man to fill a vacancy which would happen in a few months time.

I was sent for one day by the Adjutant and when I appeared before him, he said "I have your recommendations here, but I cannot offer you a post as a QMS in the near future but, in a few months, a Company Sergeant Major's post will become vacant; would you take it?". I said, "Yes". "Alright", he said, "I'll make the necessary arrangements".

A few days elapsed and my name appeared on the N.C.O. Duty Board to report to "A" Company Sergeant Major for instruction in Company office work; so you see how a person can be earmarked for a post without the post yet to become vacant. I didn't mind at all. I was receiving Colour Sergeant's pay and Gunnery Instructor's pay. I was quite bucked. I told Ada. I also told her if I was promoted, she would have to live in Quarters in the Barracks.

Well, the chapter of teaching was now over. Must start on another phase of taking charge of a company, supervising the goings and comings of men attached to a company. One thing was certain. I would not go to sea again; my remaining service would be at home with Ada and the boy.

In the Royal Marine Barracks all key personnel are allocated Quarters; there were eight Staff Sergeants and a Drum Major all residing inside the Gates, together with the principal officers of the Division.

In due course I was promoted to Company Sergeant Major and allocated No.8 Married Quarter, just inside the Sea Gate, and took over "C" Company.

CHAPTER SEVENThe End of the Road

My next three to four years were going to be spent on Terra Firma and I was to have a home of my own. I must say that I was one of Britain's Sea Soldiers. I did quite a lot of service at sea and quite a lot on shore, and I saw a good bit of fighting in the Persian Gulf, the Dardenelles and Russia. I saw service in the Fleet and service on a Merchant Ship. Patrolling the seas in search of Raiders and Submarines was extremely boring; one was always tensed up and didn't know what would happen next.

Now the Admiralty had issued me with a brown belt and a sword, gold piping on my tunics and a staff cap with a broad red band. I returned my web equipment, khaki clothing, rifle, bayonet, entrenching tool, etc. and was no longer an active service combatant, but on the administrative staff.

My next problem was how to go about finding furniture, etc. to make the quarters to which I was allocated comfortable for Ada and the boy. Remember, I had no home, Ada was mostly at Gosport and I was mostly at sea or at Plymouth Headquarters. It was nonsense to find a home for her when I was away so much and she was comfortable at home - her own home and one I gladly accepted. In point of fact, I was happy living with Ada's parents, when I could get there; when I left my own home I was fourteen and a half years of age and never returned to it. You can imagine what a difference was offered to me, comfort and good companionship. Sleeping in a hammock, or on a mess stool, and sleeping on the bed of the Euphrates when it was scorching in the day and freezing at night, or in Russia in a hole dug in the ground, huddled together to keep warm; around the guns at sea, in a duffle suit on deck with one man always on watch; grasping the guard rail for dear life when lifebuoy sentry, when the ship stuck her nose into a nasty one - all that had now ended. But it was a man's life - no good being soft - at times it was thrilling, and at times too I have been hungry and thirsty.

At this point I would like to narrate the coincidences that come to my mind. Firstly, I was going to live about thirty paces away from where I was born; remember my father was a Royal Marine and lived in a room in Admiralty Street, when I came to town, I was born just outside the Barrack walls and now I shall finish my service inside them. Secondly, No. 8 Quarters was where I visited every day, as a young marine, cleaning and polishing the floors and doing odd jobs for the wife of the house who became attracted to me, although twenty years my senior. In passing I would like to mention

One Colour Sergeant, for whom I worked, was the gym instructor who had to fill me out, as the Sergeant Major said, and nearly broke my heart.

Thirdly, I am going to occupy the self same house, which I know so well and have a batman to carry coal, clean grates, polish my straps, boots, etc., so that Ada would have no dirty work to do.

By occupying this Quarter, I was entitled to free coal and light, and I could draw rations from the 2nd Quartermasters Stores, such as meat, etc. on production of a chit. The Canteen was not far away, where Ada could get her provisions. The only disadvantage was, at sunset the gates were locked and we were inside, surrounded by a 12 foot wall. Outside the wall one could hear the shunting of waggons, where work continued day and night, moving the produce from Millbay Docks. The back of the Quarters was surrounded by the self same wall, but if I remember rightly, from the upstairs windows, the front faced the docks and the sea; in the distance was Drake's Island and the Hoe, of historical fame.

Well I had a talk with the 1st QM Sergeant who lent me a few articles from the stores; he lived next door. Prior to the arrival of Ada I was able to get the place clean with the help of the batman.

By the way, my neighbour next door at No. 7 was lucky in his ambition - he retired as a Lieutenant Colonel on the General Staff. They had no children and the wife did not seem to mix very well. However, we all can't be the same.

Ada arrived with the boy eventually. She looked over the house, saw what was required as a temporary measure and away we went to George Street, Plymouth where we purchased a quantity of second hand furniture, such as beds, curtains, etc., pots and pans, and soon got ourselves sorted out. My wife soon got to know who was who in the other seven quarters; they were all of the same rank and so she settled in quite amicably for the next few years of my service.

I did not see many of my colleagues during the day as they all had their separate duties to perform in different parts of the Establishment. We had our Mess Meetings, of course, when we came together and on social occasions we had Dances, when Ada was entitled to attend, and which she thoroughly enjoyed.

George must have been six or seven years of age; he attended school somewhere in the vicinity and there were other children, of course, some older and some younger. At that early age he was interested in fireworks. I can see him now, on the lawn in front of the house, thrilled as all boys are on Guy Fawkes Day.

My duties were various, always on call, not like now with telephones

everywhere, by a system of bugle calls, each Sergeant Major could be contacted to report to the Orderly Room for Orders.

Three or four incidents occurred during my last tour of service - the first was the arrival of the second child. Ada had a rough time of it. The doctor who lived just outside the gates neglected her, as far as I could see. I had engaged a midwife who lived a mile away. It was urgent, so I was away in the middle of the night to her residence; she came but nothing happened till the next morning when the baby was born but it only lived a few hours before it died. We named it John. It was buried the next day. The doctor was so unconcerned about the matter when I saw him; he gave me a Death Certificate on the spot. So that was that. Ada recovered, I had a few days leave at home so that I could be with her.

The second incident; I was detailed to go to Camp Wellsworthy on the Moors, I had charge of the Plymouth Company. It lasted about a month. Portsmouth and Chatham also sent companies which were assembled at Plymouth Barracks. It was a long march, about twenty miles. I was nearly fagged out on arrival, I was not so young and out of trim, but I made it and a couple of pints of beer washed all the dust down. However, the next day we started exercises on the moors with the companies of the battalion. Whilst at Wellsworthy during training, Ada and George went to Gosport for a change, to see Mum. It was a change for her and I should have liked to have gone myself. Funnily enough, she arrived back on the same day I marched back from the training camp, and my poor feet were tired and sore. However, we survived that episode very well, considering I was out of trim and not so young, to take on strenuous exercises.

Time passed very quickly, there was always plenty to do and one had to be always on call. I did get some leave at times but I cannot remember where I went.

During my service in Barracks, my father visited me once - he lived at that time at Feverell, Plymouth. I expect he wanted to see how I looked in uniform; he never got any further in promotion than Sergeant. During the first world war he served on board an armed liner. Whether he was called up or not I do not know. However, he was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal during that service. What he did I never really knew because I never went home much to have any conversation. That's how it was. There was one thing - his name was on the Roll of Honour, on a board for all to see, in the Drill Shed at the Barracks. My father had three medals previous to the First World War for service in Egypt, so with his service in 1914-1918 he was the possessor of about eight medals.

Time was running out; I was on my last period of service, I had

ok to the future, employment was not an easy proposition outside the .tes, so I took advantage of a motor course at the R.N. Barracks, for about six weeks. It was a good course on internal combustion engines and driving all sorts of vehicles. I took an examination sponsored by the R.A.C. and passed very well, with 71 per cent of the marks.

At that time, once every year, Reservists (called Fleet Reserve) attended for training for a short period, to revise their drills. In the year prior to my being pensioned, i.e. 1931, who should appear for training but the Sergeant with the bristling mustache with whom I served on the "Morea". He was attached to my company. The boot was on the other foot, as the saying goes. Gosh! How I longed to be on parade, to put him through his paces. He was astounded to see me, but if looks could kill; well, that was all that happened, I had to keep my position and rank. He was not there long.

There is not much more to relate, except the routine of the Barracks. I had many men pass through my hands during my term of office; ships had to be commissioned, revision of drills, new squads of recruits from the Depot, Deal at regular intervals; I remembered a few in after life and I have been accosted many times by men on the street "Don't you know me Sir". It would be a hard job to remember so many!

Soon I got down to talk with Ada in a sort of "where do we go from here". My relief would soon be appointed and I would have to leave the quarters which was our first home. I intimated to Ada that we could stop in Plymouth or should I approach my father, who resided at Peverell, to put us up temporarily until I found employment and somewhere to live. Now I had experienced having a home together I did not necessarily want to live with in-laws. I had one experience of that with my sister and it didn't work out. My sister lived at Hungerford Road, Swilly and my mother, I know, lived with them; things were not too happy then. I wanted to remain in Plymouth, because I had contacts where someone might give me employment. Unemployment in England at that time, 1932, was over a million; what chance had I with no trade.

We weighed things up together and contacted Ada's mother who was only too glad to welcome us. But I had no friends at Gosport at all but there was one advantage, a six roomed house occupied only by Mum and Dad, and I could have two rooms, upstairs, having our meals with the family. As I said before, Ada's parents were good to me and now they jumped into the breach and provided shelter for us. I would receive unemployment pay and with a small pension we could get along very well meanwhile. So it was decided we should go to Gosport. I would receive a removal allowance for us

om the Service. I would be happy enough and I knew Ada would; she was brought up in Gosport, her pals and workmates she was very friendly with, and that was half the battle.

I did not look forward to leaving the Royal Marines as I had not looked forward to joining the Regiment in 1907. One gets accustomed to service life - it is really a sheltered occupation; and then, all of a sudden to be pushed out into civilian life. It was like starting life all over again and this time with a wife and child.

So in February 1932 a removal van appeared at No. 8 Quarters to take our few bits of furniture to Gosport. Ada, the boy and I travelled by train. I had a month's leave with full pay and allowances before I signed on at the Employment Exchange. I think my pay as a Sergeant Major was ten shillings and nine pence a day, not including marriage and child allowance, added, and also rent allowance, called provision allowance. That was fairly good for that period and to think I started off with six shillings and eight pence a week when I joined in 1907, about eleven pence a day.

To sum it all up, what did I gain in my twenty four and a half years from 1907 to 1932? I had seen the world, east and west, north and south, my mind was broadened because I saw how other nations lived and existed; sometimes it was hard going but I survived. I worked hard and had a full measure of employment. Sometimes when the corned beef turned up for dinner every day, for a month or so, it got monotonous, water was not too plentiful and sleeping facilities were not too comfortable, but what matters when you are young and in good health?

The answer to the sum is that the Service is a man's life, or was, I do not know if it is now; one had to work hard if you wanted to get anywhere; one has got to work for it, it is not a feather bed, home life doesn't come into it - at least you don't think about it, you simply plod on and on. Soon I shall be in civvy street, what is to be my future. One can never tell. Besides, it wouldn't do to know what you were going to do next. It wouldn't be life, would it?

Well, to sum it all up, although I was pushed into the services against my will, I did not like it much, it was not what I should have liked, in consequence of which I became frustrated and unsettled. I had a fairly good education as a boy up to the age of eleven and a half when I left school, I loved reading and learning (I still do) and I think I was suited for something better. However, after a while I became more settled, as I mentioned before, I was a good soldier, if not a sailor, promotion came easy to me, I was able to pass examinations without much trouble at all, and there were many, if there was a course of some sort came my way, I was eager to

...re it and got interested. In later years I often looked at the back of my documents and smiled at the subjects which I had taken to make myself more efficient in this and that. None of it was any good in after life, after donning a civilian suit, by the way of obtaining employment, in competition with many others.

And so it was, Ada, the boy and myself, at Gosport, comfortably housed but a man's life is not to be idle, it brings discontent and apathy. I have to make a fresh start and that surely is a fresh chapter of my life.

I would like to enumerate here the ships in which I served and there is one fact, I never did a full commission on a ship. In those days it was two and a half years and I should say the longest term I spent in one ship was about eighteen months. I was continually on the move, like a Methodist Minister, an itinerant.

As I never kept any diaries of my movements, and my documents became lost, I can only state I served in:-

H.M.S. "Blake"

H.M.S. "Brittania" (Royal Naval College)

H.M.S. Argyll"

H.M.S. "Bristol"

H.M.S. "Ocean"

H.M.S. "Sutley"

S.S. "Morea" (D.A.M.S.)

S.S. "Annan" (D.A.M.S.)

H.M.S. "Cleopatra"

H.M.S. "Centaur"

H.M.S. Warspite"

H.M.S. "Queen Elizabeth"

I also did duty for a short while in H.M.S. "Cumberland" in Ireland during the Black and Tan affair and with my short service in Russia, and short durations at Headquarters at Forton and Plymouth, the whole constituted my twenty four and a half years' service in the Royal Marines.

CHAPTER EIGHTIn Civilian Life

It was in February 1932 that I completed my leave from the Forces. Ada could not go to the Post Office to get her allowance, she had to rely solely on me to provide the wherewithal. I was helped somewhat, however, as I elected to draw my pension from the Service quarterly. This was paid in advance. So I received a lump sum in respect of my pension up to the 1st April. Well that was a help. I explained to Ada the situation and she accepted the circumstances. She didn't complain. Daily I signed on at the Labour Exchange, and received my first week's dole; I think that was about two pounds, ten shillings. Ada and I had the princely sum of four pounds per week to play about with.

All sorts of schemes were started by the Authorities for the unemployed, but none with a monetary award at the end of it, the schemes were started to occupy the mind.

I went to the Library and scanned the Daily Papers, with many others all on the same racket. The Exchange at Portsmouth, solely for the benefit of Regular Soldiers and Sailors, provided nothing whatsoever. Anyway I registered my name there, in case anything should turn up. I tried the N.S.P.C.C. at Leicester Square, was granted an interview and they said I would be put on the waiting list.

One day an advert appeared in the Daily Telegraph, advertising a vacancy in the Northampton Polytechnic School in London. They wanted a Caretaker, with a knowledge of hydraulics and machinery. I applied and a month must have gone by when I got a reply. There was such a big batch of applicants but I got in the last five. I was asked to attend an interview. I took Ada with me, in fact it was a point in my favour, because they said it was right to have a wife's opinion as to where she would live. Apparently there was a flat on the premises awaiting occupation. Well things went smoothly at the interview and I was told to await results, I would be informed of the decision. Eventually I received a letter informing me that the post was filled, by an overseas applicant, but I was a runner-up. Time went on. I could see no hopes of any job, it was affecting my health, I was worrying. I saw my doctor. He jumped to it right away. He said "You're unemployed", I said "Yes" - "Well stop worrying, it won't get you anywhere". He could do nothing but give advice. You must realise that this was the first time in my life that I had experienced idleness, others perhaps were more used to

the situation.

Six months had elapsed, which was the limit one could receive money from the Exchange and what to do next I hadn't a clue. At least I had a Naval Pension and a roof over my head. To get more money I cashed in on my insurance policy. I remember going to Spring Garden Lane, where the Head Office of the Prudential was situated. I got a certain amount of money I paid in and that was all. Well it helped.

Then I saw an appointment advertised in the Daily Telegraph for the post of a Butler at the Dunstable Grammar School. I applied for the job and was granted an interview. The railway fare was being paid by the Governors of the School for my wife and myself. I never did any butling in my life. Why they selected me I do not know, at least I did not at the time. When Ada and I got to the School at the appointed date, we found out that the Headmaster had been an Instructor Commander in the war, and he had a knowledge of what a Royal Marine on board a ship did in the Wardroom. I did not tell him I had never been a servant on board, that would be throwing the job away. Well the wage was thirty shillings a week; the wife had to look after the Preparatory School and the masters billeted there. There were two rooms downstairs as quarters and two upstairs. There was, of course, coal and light with plenty of linen to use. Again I talked it over with Ada, she was willing to have a go, which was a job foreign to her, and I was nearly in the same circumstances, except I knew how to manage the boys in Hall. Well we accepted the job. The other chap who I relieved was in possession but soon moved out. I had no instructions from him, he simply went and Ada and I moved in. It must have been just before the starting of the Christmas Term.

Well we settled in. I had to buy some furniture to suit the living room downstairs; I need not have done that because we never used the room. We experienced a very cold winter in 1932, snow was on the ground in Bedfordshire most of the time. For comfort, the kitchen contained a large boiler which kept the linen cupboards dry upstairs and naturally we kept that going night and day. There were two classrooms downstairs, which had to be kept warm during school hours with coal fires. The school was old fashioned and cold. Half the time the water tank in the attic was frozen and I had to keep thawing it out, because of the water supply. The main school had some form of central heating, which was kept going by the kitchen staff. The Masters Room had a fire, which was an exception, but they were very rarely in it.

The school boasted a Headmaster, several masters, a Housekeeper, a Matron, a cook, parlour maid and kitchen maid. Of course, one of the masters was a Housemaster who lived in the main school, to supervise the boys, and

together with Ada and myself there must have been a large staff.

The school ran a Cadet Force; in charge was an Army Sergeant Major. His left arm was disabled, he was a retired man; what his duties were I do not know, except that he was in charge of the Tuck Shop. He did not live on the premises, however, but now and again he appeared from somewhere and trained the Cadets in military training on different days of the week.

There was also a sports field, somewhere in the vicinity for use of the school's games and sports; this I never saw as my duties were always inside the school.

Whether I was a good butler, I don't know - anyway they put up with me. Whilst the term was on there was plenty to do. Ada was busy keeping the classrooms clean and lighting fires and she also kept most of the masters' rooms clean upstairs. The boy went to school not far away. Myself, I was continually on the go, keeping the Mess Hall clean, supervising at meals, etc. All the masters and the matron, with the housekeeper, had meals with the boys, i.e. breakfast and lunch. The housemaid or parlour maid attended the Headmaster at dinner. He dined alone. Whether he was married I don't know but he lived in the house alone, attached to the school. Invariably I took tea to the matron's room, and housekeeper's room and attended the boys in the Hall when they came in at odd times. Where they got the cook from is anyone's guess, she served up some burnt sacrifices pretty often.

I cannot say I was happy there, neither was Ada. The job was new to me. The only consolation was when end of term came and the boys and masters departed, we all had a good clean up for about a fortnight, and then went on holiday, returning about a fortnight before the boys started. We managed to save enough money to return to Gosport to have a break with Mum.

There were two great attractions at Dunstable for visitors, one was Whipsnade Zoo, where the animals were allowed to run wild in their own environment and the other was Gliding on Dunstable Downs, where the hills around were very suitable for that kind of sport.

Dunstable was built around Watling Street. Traffic, and heavy traffic at that, continually passed through the town from the North to London, day and night one could hear the heavy lorries rumbling through at all times. The School was built on the Main Road. There was plenty of industry in Dunstable, and more so at Luton where the straw hats came from. We did go into Luton once or twice, but we were not much enamoured of the town.

Funnily enough, although there was a lot of snow about while we were there, it was a different kind of weather to what we experienced on

the coast, the air was much drier.

While I was at Gosport on holiday I heard that the Dockyard at Portsmouth was to be policed, in the future, by Royal Marines; there were already Royal Marine Police at most of the armament depots. The Metropolitan Police were going to be reverted to their proper station in the Metropolis. I could get nothing concrete about it. I did go to Dunstable Exchange and made enquiries but they knew nothing. I persevered and applied at Portsmouth, and had a reply that my name was noted, but there was no vacancy at present.

When term time came again, Ada complained about one of the masters who kept soiled linen in his chest of drawers. They were soiled to the extent that he could not send them to the laundry, these underwear things were smelling and neither of us could do anything about it; it was most unpleasant.

Anyway I wrote to a friend at Portsmouth who was Sergeant Major of the Portsmouth Company with me at Wellsworthy but got no reply. Ada knew his wife very well; they were both brought up in Gosport. I knew he also was unemployed.

Eventually I thought matters over and made the decision I should get back to Gosport. I had heard that the Metropolitan Police was being relieved at Portsmouth Dockyard in August.

I gave in my notice to the Headmaster that I intended to leave at the end of the Spring Term and, of course, he wanted to know the reason why. I explained that I thought I would take my chance, a better chance too, of being selected for Police work at the first opportunity if I was unemployed, and also that I was a resident in the Portsmouth area. I would get unemployment money in the interim because I had been at work for six months or over.

Back we came to Gosport once more and parked ourselves on Mum; she was delighted to welcome us once more. I must say I owe a lot to Ada's Mum.

Well it happened. I was detailed to pass the doctor at Eastney Barracks and soon after, in July, I joined with many others the Royal Marine Police for duty in the Dockyards. The pay was £2.12 a week plus 10/6d lodging allowance. Not a magnificent sum but they took into consideration you were on a pension and with this one could live in a moderate way, and it was a permanent job.

Because of the duties I would have to live somewhere in Portsmouth. I didn't mind that, Ada would be near her mother who was now getting on in years, and I should be more happy doing something which was more in my street.

We had to have a month's initial training, under the supervision of the Metropolitan Police; some said we would not be able to cope with

policing a big yard, we were more fitted for the work in armament depots. Anyhow we were on trial for that month and it proved satisfactory; the Mets left at the end of August. They did not like it at all as they had been policing the yards for years and years.

Each of us was attested, as for service in the Royal Marines, and we found out we were on active service and complied with the same conditions as the services. Uniform was provided at the Royal Marine Stores and we were allocated numbers as for the outside police. Inspectors, Sergeants, Constables were drawn from the Armament Depots to form a nucleus for training us in Police work. A Handbook was provided for reading to help us along in our duties.

So once more I was back again in uniform, to start life again at the age of forty years. The job was not pensionable, but a bonus was given if one had to leave for some reason or other, according to the length of service.

Well, enough Royal Marines were recruited to police the yard. We were a mixed bunch and we all started at the bottom of the ladder, irrespective of rank in the Service. There was one exception; our officers at that time were all retired officers from the Corps, even the Chief Constable who was serving at the Admiralty was a Lieutenant Colonel, in charge of administration in London.

Well that was something off my mind. I had a job, permanent one too as long as I kept my nose clean, the pay was not great but Ada was more relieved to know there was a pay packet for her each week. There was one snag; we were liable to be sent anywhere. Well as we were all servicemen at that time, we had got used to that - it was nothing out of the ordinary.

Another chapter in my life had started, there was one thing - we didn't go to sea and, another thing, a certain number of police quarters were available, especially at the Armament Depots, where the police were on the spot for any emergency.

CHAPTER NINE

My Service in the Royal Marine Police

Fortunately enough I was detailed for H.M. Dockyard at Portsmouth. I had to have a medical examination of course, and was kitted up at the Royal Marine Barracks at Eastney. A badge was issued for the Peak Cap and the letters on my shoulder lapels were R.M.P.; as we were attested we were allocated a number which was worn on each side of the collar, mine was 114.

All of us realised it was like joining the Royal Marines again, we were of course disciplined men and we had to abide by the R.M. Police Manual, which described the administration and duties of the police, the emphasis for the latter being that we were dealing with civilian employees, together with service ratings of the Royal Navy.

A part of our equipment was a revolver holster; revolvers are issued at night always at Armament Depots and are worn by Police in the Dockyards on special occasions like guarding the Pay Office and escorting large sums of money. Naturally enough, we had practice in the use of the revolver at the Ranges at Eastney. On our left arm we wore a red and white band on the sleeve, the Metropolitan Police wore blue and white. This was worn only on duty. All police carry a truncheon which was only used in case of emergencies, and a whistle to draw attention and call for assistance.

Quarters were provided to a limited number of Constables, in the yard, mostly to those doing duty as Firemen on the Fire Engines. All the police, however, were taught to use the Fire Engines in case of emergency; this was part of our duties. All Police Officers lived in the Dockyards, except Inspectors who had to find accommodation outside the yard, together with the remainder of the force.

We were all asked to attend lectures on Police work and at the end of six months a proficiency examination was held, which qualified one as a Constable. The preliminary work in training in our new job was carried out in my first six months of service.

The force was divided up into three sections for Forenoon, Afternoon and Night Duties. During this time we were attached to a Metropolitan Police Constable, to learn the Beats of the Dockyard and duties on the Gates. This was to prevent any unauthorised person entering the Yard.

It was in July when we commenced our duties with the Mets and by the end of August we were left to our own devices, as the Metropolitan Police had gradually dwindled away. Some had retired, some took up

stations in the London Area.

We paraded in the Parade Room before each watch, were inspected and our accoutrements proved. (Trunchson, whistle and note-book). The most important duties were those posted on the gates, when stores leaving the yard had to be checked as authorised; vehicles and persons coming into the yard had to be stopped and examined. All sorts of ruses were made to get smuggled goods out of the yard, especially from H.M. Ships. The Dock Yard had three Gates, Main Gate, Marlborough Gate and Unicorn; these were always open during the day, at night they were closed except for pedestrians. A bell was in a prominent position at each gate, raised to about thirty feet. These were tolled a slow toll for the last fifteen minutes prior to clocking on, a quick toll was used in the last five minutes, warning the work people at a distance that time was getting short.

Generally speaking, it was hard to detect any person entering the Yard at this period, who were not authorised, but the police on the beats interrogated any suspicious person who was not at work. Smoking was prohibited.

In due course, we soon became acquainted with Home Dockyard Regulations, which comprised a variety of subjects relating to the duties of Principal Officers of the Yard, like Production Manager, Construction Manager and Electrical Manager. The whole set-up was supervised by an Admiral Superintendent, with a Civilian Staff.

One of our principal duties was fire prevention; we were all trained in the use of the fire engine and the use of hydrants in the Yard, which were numerous.

After work people had left the Yard, Storehouses were checked, keys lodged on the Gate and signed for as correct. A Constable finding a store open immediately contacted the Gate and remained there on duty. The person responsible was sent for, brought to the Yard and requested to examine his storehouse and sign the book. These rules were very strict and the work people knew it.

Fire points were fitted on the walls on each Beat. These were tested at 10 pm each night by the Night Watch.

The duties were too numerous to mention; one acted as the situation arose in each case and after a few weeks one could become aware of the different situations and what to do - every day was different. Ships were continually on the move, leaving their jetties or undocking and docking; the pattern of the yard altered day by day.

Anyway, I passed my proficiency examination, not that it gave me any more money, it didn't, but one had to be contented with a permanent job.

During my stay at Portsmouth, which was four years, Ada, I and

the boy lived at three addresses in the town. All in the Somers Road district. In one case we had a flat, and in another a house. At that time I was unable to ride a bicycle, so I had to walk to the Yard, in most cases, before starting my tour of duty. Portsmouth being flat, everyone seemed to have bicycles but I came from the West Country where, if one had a bicycle, one would have to push it most of the time. I could have learned to ride but I didn't and I did not have much money to buy one.

George went to the Secondary School not far away. He seemed to like it and got on well. He was at a disadvantage really, he had so many schools in his term of education that I wondered he got on so well. I was continually on the move and consequently George had to come with me; even in my short stays at Plymouth, George attended schools as much as possible.

The flat which we occupied in Carlisle Road was an Upper Flat, the owner lived next door. The place was fairly draughty at times; the owner came in the mornings, opened up all doors, in her process of cleaning, and it was not too comfortable. When I was on early turn I was up at 4.30 am, to clean myself and have a hot drink of sorts; Ada was up too, packing my case with my breakfast and seeing me off at 5.15 am. I had to walk. It was a good half hour to the gate where we paraded at 5.45 am. I must say I had a good wife who attended to me; some of those very cold mornings she would not let me go until I had had something hot because I could not get anything to help the inner man until about 9 am. Early turn being over, I got home about 2.30pm, to my dinner and rest until next day. The afternoon turn commenced at 1.15 when I left home and returned at 10.30pm and again night duty commenced at 9.30pm and finished at 6am. Not much of a life for the wife of a policeman, she saw little of him at times, especially on night duty when he was away all night and slept half the day. Anyway we managed to get along very well, very little money but what we did have was put to good use, by way of food, clothes and rent.

We then looked for other accommodation, the flat was not comfortable at all, and somehow or other we were lucky, a house a couple of streets away was being redecorated throughout and, when reading the Evening Paper, we found out it was to let. "Apply to an Agent in Eastney". I applied, the rent was £1. 1s. 0d. a week - just as much as we were paying for the flat. The Agent gave us the key, we accepted and eventually we moved in. As you can imagine, after the decorators had moved out there was a lot of cleaning to do. However, in the course of a few weeks we made it habitable. It was a terraced house, not large but big enough for the three of us. George had a room of his own where he pottered around a lot with his hobbies. He was never a one for going out but amused himself quite a lot, with chemistry

and radio.

Ada and I started to save a bit, I didn't smoke or drink and Ada was a good housekeeper. I was able to pay the rent from my pension and the clothes we wanted, and the pay packet was Ada's income to provide the where-withal. But to better ourselves, I told Ada, I was going to go for promotion. She did not demur, she left all the decisions to me, but I warned her I might be sent to another establishment. I did think of George, of course, but not very seriously as I did not know of his accomplishments at school. However, I took a chance and within the next twelve months I passed for Sergeant; this was in 1935.

Things were going along very well in the yard, different episodes happened every day, accidents, fires and occasional smuggling cases. Reports had to be made of course and we were learning every day. The work was interesting because there was always something different, day by day and eventually we came to be more proficient in our new work. The only time when the watch became boring was during night duty, then occasionally a small fire came along which had been lying dormant after the work people had left. The only break we had was breakfast time, between 1am and 2am, when one longed for a cup of tea to come along.

Things got better financially that year because we were saving a bit and didn't spend much on holidays, which were spent at Gosport mostly. I remarked to Ada that we might acquire a second hand car to get about a bit in our leisure hours, so we made an outlay of about £30., and bought an Austin 7, quite a small affair, and there had only been one owner, an officer stationed in the Dockyard. Looking around I found a garage which I shared in partnership for 5/- a week, around the end of the Somers Road area, not so convenient as things go these days, but at that time it was a novelty, petrol was fairly cheap and there did not seem to be much wrong with the car - at any rate I didn't spend much on it. We had trips to Gosport to see Mum, runs in the country and even went to Plymouth to see my father. My father would certainly have liked to see me settled in the West Country but we could not see it that way. As far as I was concerned the car was never any trouble, it simply took us where we wanted to go, and that was that. Unfortunately, George with his long legs had to sit sideways in the back but he didn't seem to mind. So we got a bit of pleasure out of it during my ownership, which was about two years, besides giving me some experience in driving. There were three incidents, however, not accidents really. One was when a wasp got in the car as we were leaving Portsmouth, another was when we were in a traffic jam in Fratton Road when a car bumped into us and another, when returning from Plymouth, I managed to turn into Carlisle Road where we lived on two wheels instead of four.

My duties in the Yard were mostly Gate work. The Chief Inspector had to see an ex C.S.M. on that duty, why I don't know as we all started from scratch; my colleague was also an ex C.S.M. and his wife was a friend of Ada, so we got on well together. I think that was why I was very contented on the job, when one works with people who have a common interest.

The Chief Inspector of Police was an ex Captain, RM; we called him the great White Chief, he had white hair and a white moustache hence his nickname; he was always on the prowl around the yard, but he was always spotted and bells started to ring to put police on the alert. Not that there was any wrong being done, but he did not like to see you lounging around or talking to work people, as one would naturally do, except on service work. He was an ex Physical Training Instructor too. I have seen him at Fire Drill mount a Fire Ladder to the top of a building, despite his age. Well he was the right chap to keep us on our toes. He tried to give us lessons in Ju-Jitsu which was a farce, as we were all men over forty years of age, set in our ways and this was not a suitable subject to teach men of our class, we were too old. I noticed, when he appeared in uniform, that he could not display many medals, I expect he was older than we thought.

Our Superintendent of Police, also an ex Captain RM was in charge of the whole area of establishments manned by the R.M. Police and there were quite a few. In addition to Armament Depots, of which there were four in the Gosport area, there were five other establishments which employed civilian work people. In uniform, the Superintendent was undoubtedly a smart man, carried himself well, with a fine display of medals and he was on top of his job.

Employed also by the Admiralty, from the Metropolitan Police, was an ex C.I.D. Inspector who had a small staff of three in civilian clothes; surprisingly, there was plenty of work for them to do. They worked in conjunction with the Civilian Police, as a sort of liaison, involving searching of premises for naval stores and work people that had to be vetted by the outside authorities. For instance, no work people were allowed to become a licensee of certain premises banned by the Admiralty authorities.

The extent of Police jurisdiction was great in the Portsmouth area; for instance, there were Police Boats patrolling the harbour, day and night, manned by R.M. Police. Some people do not know it but the foreshores of Harbours like Portsmouth are under the supervision of the Admiralty, and that constituted many miles of patrolling. Buoys and moorings are all Admiralty and come under the Captain of the Dockyard, termed the King's Harbour Master. All movements of ships, in and out of harbour, moving from one place to another are under his supervision, with tugs in attendance.

During my tour of duty at H.M. Dockyard, one outstanding event is very clear in my memory. The abdication of our King in 1936. I happened to be on duty that night in December when two cars approached the Yard along the Harbour front about midnight. They were allowed to enter and proceed to the South Railway Jetty, where a destroyer was tied up ready to sail. Everything was done quietly and secretly. Soon the destroyer left. Not a person knew much about it.

Another incident for which I was personally responsible. I received a message that all lighting in the Dockyards was to be extinguished at 2000 hours, so that aircraft from Lee could fly over and make observation. But in the order book I transcribed it as 2200 hours, in consequence of which the aircraft came over and the Dockyard was well illuminated. I was guilty of a grave error and received a black mark. A slip of memory. Immediately I was called from home - I knew what I had done. Surprising how one's memory reacts instantly on such an occasion.

Whilst on training in the Dockyard, a number of Constables were detailed to attend the Gas School for a course of instruction. We were taught the uses of different gases at lectures and engaged in a variety of Exercises where gases were used, wearing our own personal gas mask. But to make certain that gas masks were effective, we were bundled into a Gas Chamber where Chlorine Gas was released. An interesting experiment.

I have often thought to myself, what am I going to get up to next. The number of courses in different subjects that I had taken up to the present - I really must be a Jack of All Trades!

However, the instruction was useful and interesting, and maybe the knowledge would be of use later on.

The Chief Constable of the Police was an ex-Lieutenant Colonel, Royal Marines, a short man with a club foot. Apparently he had an administrative job in one of the Divisions. All due respect to him in his disability but I cannot say he looked much like a Police Officer, whatever his accomplishments were. We all, at the Yard, looked like Police officers and had the stature of Royal Marines. Anyway we did not see much of him.

George was very fond of playing about with chemicals, he must have had a small knowledge of the subject; at that time, there was a shop in Elm Grove where he could get a supply of the substances he required with which to experiment. What I am leading up to is this; one day Ada and I went out without George and when we returned later that afternoon a familiar smell greeted me on opening the door. Then it occurred to me, a similar smell I experienced on the Gas Course. I went upstairs to the backroom and there was George, playing with his stinks; I said, "George, that smells like chlorine". Whether it was or not I don't know but I told him to open the window.

ic was hanging on the door and the buttons were discoloured; what I to him, I don't know, or I don' remember, but I didn't care much for his .periment. He should have taken precautions.

My memory fails me once more; we resided also in a small house, next to a garage. Whether it was before or after we lived in Carlisle Road - I have lost count of the sequence of our moving from one place to another - but the house belonged to the garage and was not very comfortable. I know the gardens about the area were infested by cats, the cries and fights during the nights were very frequent. It was at this place I won a large hamper from the "People's" crossword. It came on Christmas Eve and its contents consisted of a large turkey which wouldn't go into our little oven so I took it to Gosport, to Mum, she managed it alright. It was from here we went on a holiday somewhere and we had to park the goldfish, "Romelous", George's pet, a few doors down the road. When we came back to retrieve the goldfish, we were told it had died. I was sorry, so was George.

Sometime in October 1937 I was approached by the Superintendent of Police with the information that a promotion was going in the Chatham Dockyard the following month. Would I take it. I was given 48 hours to decide. They were very tactful in all movements in the promotion field, because you could turn it down but if you did your chance was lost and you could get jumped in consequence of your refusal.

Well, Ada and I had a conflagration. Meanwhile, some friends of ours with whom we got pally in the Royal Marines at Plymouth got wind of the offer and informed us that there were no quarters available but there was a small house going to let in Gillingham, Hamilton Road. So luck was on our side, in that respect; also I was told that the Education Authorities were very good in offering a school for George. Well that clinched the matter. It was more money, so I accepted. The friend in Gillingham, as it happened was a Q.M. Sergeant at the Gun Battery, where I served. He and his wife were very helpful in that respect.

And so once more we were on the move, to Gillingham, Kent. All our goods and chattels went by road and we went by train. When we arrived at Chatham Station we thought we were under ground, the place was dark and dirty, quite different from where we left.

The place that was got for us was a little semi-detached bungalow, very small, the front door opened up into our sitting room. In any case, we never used the front door, we always used the back door. Anyway, although it was small we settled in very well and I started my duties in Chatham Dockyard as a Sergeant.

Well, previous to moving to Gillingham I found a buyer for my

stin. I wanted £40. for it. The buyer was a constable like myself but
d not drive it because he never drove a car in his life, but he had a
ce for a motor cycle.

A condition of the sale was that I should teach him to drive, so
aring the few hours I had left between my duties, I taught him to drive; he
picked it up quickly so one evening he said "It's mine". He gave me the money
and drove it home to Stride Avenue, Gosport by himself, but I never enquired
if he got there safely, however, he must have because I never heard otherwise.

CHAPTER TEN

Promotion in another Field of the Royal Marines

The Dockyard was situated partly in Gillingham and partly in Chatham on the River Medway; unlike Portsmouth Yard, although about the same area, it was not so congested and big ships could not use the Docks because of the tides and its situation. Coming from a busy yard like Portsmouth, I soon settled down to my duties, with one snag - I had to ride a bicycle, I found that to patrol the Yard and visit the Constables on the beats on foot was beyond me, so I visited Chatham High Street and bought a cycle. I learned to ride it by keeping it in the Section House of the Yard and using it for short distances at first, and soon I had mastered it and became quite confident. The duties in the Yard were the same as in any Dockyard; in fact, having served in such a busy yard as Portsmouth, one was able to cope with any situation that arose by previous experience. Once again, I came across a Police Officer with a disability, it was the Chief Inspector this time, he had a limp. I often wondered why they could not recruit retired officers to take up these posts, without disabilities. I never saw any of the Rank and File of the force with a disability. Why?

Ada made friends with a number of people whose husbands were serving in the force, so she was not lonely. The shops at Gillingham were not far away, so she could get her wants very easily.

On my day off Ada and I would pop up to London, with a cheap ticket, about two shillings return, it was a change, it was only an hour's run.

The bungalow was very small, a bedroom in the front which was the largest, a small room at the back which was George's room, and a sitting room; the little kitchenette was at the back with conveniences. I had a fair size garden where I could play around, growing this and that; there were no houses at the back, it was an open space.

George went to a school in Barnsale Road, it was his last year before he could sit for his School Certificate. He was never more dissatisfied than at that school but it was a means to an end. He was at the school about twelve months and took his examination. I was a little despondent about him because it was my fault that he had to be shifted from one school to another. Anyway George came home from school one day, a few months later and told us he had passed his School Certificate. Ada and I were pleased, myself especially. I did so want to see him make good as he

was pushed all over the place, from one school to another during his lifetime, so I was a little down in the dumps about it. The boy was of a studious nature, he wanted to learn, he was thirsting for knowledge, he spent hours in his room with his radio and chemicals, and was quite happy with his hobbies. I do not think he made many friends because he didn't go out, although he was free to do so, but there, he was not of that nature. There came the time, however, to decide what he wanted to do, he was nearly sixteen years of age. I remember asking him, "Well, what do you want to do George". He said, "You know Dad" and that was chemistry. I thought to myself, he shall have his chance, I didn't. I was pushed into the services against my will and against my mother's wishes, the same thing shall not happen to him. I recall my sister's son, Eric, who was steered into one job and another by his parents, which proved to be a disaster. The boy disappeared, unknown to his parents, married and took his wife's mother with him to Australia. He made good and is now doing well at the work he liked best. Well, at Gillingham there was a Technical College; the Headmaster was approached and I interviewed him. George was accepted to start the next term to read Chemistry and Physics, with the object of getting a degree at London University. George was pleased, so were Ada and I. The one snag was finance, but we would be able to manage; Ada and I kept our finances very straight, we didn't skimp or go short of food, got on comfortably; George didn't get much pocket money, in fact he did not want it. So George was settled. His hobby was Radio and he went very deeply into the subject - in those days it was in its infancy.

I was not serving very long at Chatham Dockyard, however, before I had a shock. An Armament Depot in Scotland required a Police Sergeant as a temporary measure and unfortunately, Juggins, I, had to go. I was wild. So was Ada. We had settled in the bungalow only a few months. Being the junior Sergeant, I suppose it fell to my lot. Ada was in a strange place, she had friends I know, she took it calmly. It was during the winter that I was called away from her and the boy. In East Country it was extremely cold at times, snow piled up at the back door (our only entrance) which was facing east, open to the River Medway.

Myself, I arrived at Crombie, R.N. Armament Depot, a bleak show, miles away from anywhere, facing the old Forth Bridge. Snow was on the ground and it was very cold. Of course, they had to find accommodation for me; there were no houses about whatsoever, except those occupied by the Police. Where do you think they put me? In a field at the bottom of the hill. It was used as a sort of Canteen but it contained a couple of rooms, with a bed, a chair and a coke boiler which I had to stoke up to keep warm. My food I got from a police constable's house, who cooked for me. A makeshift affair indeed!

What a difference this place was from a busy Dockyard. One extreme to another. I was in charge of a relief of about seven or eight men and they were posted in different parts of the Danger Areas, in contact with no-one except by telephone. At night it was weird when the fog came down in the Firth of Forth and the fog horn sounded its eerie howl across the Forth from the Jetty. A constable had to walk the whole length of the Jetty to switch it on. There was a Chief Inspector of Police residing in the Depot, he was in charge of Crombie and Rosyth Dockyard.

Occasionally I gave lectures to the Police on Dockyard work, I was told by the Chief Inspector I had to start at the beginning as the Police serving at the Depot had never seen a Dockyard, what it consisted of or how it was policed, so once again I was glad that I was able to teach and to be able to impart my knowledge to them.

Sometimes I went into Dunfermline for a change, but I didn't appreciate the visits much - it was just to say I had been there. I was about three months at Crombie, to me the place was dead and I was glad when they told me I had to return to Chatham. One snag was, while I was there I was paid in Scottish notes so when I sent money to Ada she lost money when she went to cash them. Nothing startling happened while I was there except the work people were excavating under the hill to make storage for ammunition. The job was now finished so back I came to Gillingham, to Ada and the boy.

Once again I was not long doing duty in the Yard, when I was detailed for a Fire Service Course; there were three Sergeants detailed for this course, not far outside Gillingham. It lasted three weeks and I passed it very well but I very much disliked climbing fire escapes. I was out of my element there. However, that was something else I had qualified for. What next?

An Inspector in the Police had to qualify in Military Law and Home Dockyard Regulations - why Military Law was a subject for use in Police work, I haven't a clue. Probably because we were on active service and members of the R.M. Forces. Well, I armed myself with a copy of the Military Law Manual and Home Dockyard Regulations and started studying. So there were two of us at home, flogging away, swotting up for examinations. I did not neglect Ada in any way, although Ada saw little of me we managed to get out together fairly often.

Gillingham was a nice town, very compact and plenty of shops, but all three of us did a good bit of walking in our spare time. Our favourite walk was along the Lower Rainham Road, through the orchards and back along the upper road to home. Ada was fond of greengages, so was I, and if we bought a couple of pounds from the Farmhouse, ten chances to one we had none

left when we got home.

As I look back on my first couple of years at Gillingham, they were happy ones, Ada was contented, the boy was happy at school; we didn't have much money but enough to keep us going. An occasional trip to London for Ada to look at the shops was a change. George was not interested in shopping.

Now and again I attended lectures on Military Law, but it was a complicated subject; although I was brought up on the parade ground, I had never studied the why's and wherefore's - it was more Brigade office work. Anyway I delved into it and, having a retentive memory, I got along very well.

At the examination you were allowed to have the book on the desk by your side; the answers were there if you could find them and they were a job to find. In other words, if you didn't read your book, there were no hopes of passing. And so I came to pass my examination for an Inspector. First the H.D.R. paper, two hours examination, the next day was the hardest with another two hours. I was glad it was over. I did my best, thumbing through the leaves of the book, quoting the Law with its sections and paragraphs to substantiate my answers.

I expect George would wish he could take his exams like that. He had to take his Inter first to see if he could go on and then, later on, his finals to qualify for a degree.

Two months elapsed and the results of the examination were published. I received 67% of the marks, which was considered good for persons of our age, and with no knowledge of the subject. Well, that was how I passed for Inspector.

Well, all went well for a time, then in 1939 the Second World War was in full swing as far as England was concerned, and consequently we were all on hot bricks as it were. Gas masks were issued and shelters dug all over the place. We knew what we were in for, being so near the Continent. Shelters were provided in gardens and tank traps in woods and fields.

In the Dockyard, Identification Kiosks were built at the gates with photographs of every person employed in the Yard. Every person had to be identified by his Chargeman or Supervisor

Windows were blacked out at night, no lights were allowed in the Yard at all, people were groping about in darkness, special police were on duty and street wardens were located at different points in the town. As the war progressed and France was invaded, it became very evident that the German Army was on our doorstep.

By this time I had a good knowledge of the Dockyard; one had to be very wary at night-time of moving around, safely, because of docks,

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caissons and badly made roads. The Constables on the Beats had to be visited twice in each watch, for their own safety as well as seeing they were on the alert.

I cannot remember the exact period of the war when the Germans started their bombing of the capital City of London. Waves of bombers came over each night to destroy the City. Sirens commenced their cry at about 11pm each night and by midnight they were over the Kent coast heading for London; anti-aircraft fire was intense, often one could see the bomber in the searchlights, then the defences of London opened up, one could hear them in the distance, but that was not all. The towns in our vicinity had to wait until they returned, often about three or four o'clock in the morning. Obviously, some of the bombers could not, or did not have the chance to, drop their bombs but released them on their return from London. The Dockyard was a vulnerable target for this operation, so we had our share of the bombs. We had a little passage in the bungalow and it was in this passage that we invariably bunked down together. Ada was very brave and I often thought about her and the boy, when I was on night duty in the Yard.

Once we had a narrow shave. I was on night duty when a bomb was dropped a few yards away on the side of a slope on which six houses were built. It must have hit the lower house, the one nearest us, and the whole six toppled over, one on top of the other. When I came home that was my greeting but the boy and Ada were safe. Another bomb was found not far away. I had the early turn; it was exploded by a bomb disposal squad and I was on tenterhooks but I was informed by my neighbour, who came in for duty at 9 am, that we were alright. The River Medway received quite a number of bombs that missed their mark on the Dockyard which was a good target for the Luftwaffe.

George, meanwhile, continued his studies at home, under difficulties. He took his intermediate examination, as an external student, and passed very well. Now he was all out to get his final degree.

I remember once I failed to carry my Identity Card. We made a visit to Maidstone and on our return we were checked - I was caught out, I had my Warrant Card but no Identity Card. Next day I had to report to the Police at Gillingham with my card; that taught me a lesson.

George was available to be called up for training and he had to appear before a Board, consisting of a businessman, a scientist and a Recruiting Officer, for examination. Because of his qualifications, he was excused recruitment to the Forces, by the scientist, but however he had to join the Home Guard. He was issued with a uniform and a cap, an article he had never worn in his life. He did look awful and I expect he felt more so; he had to do training in Home Guard duties, which he hated very much. I often

said "Poor George". Well it was better than joining up in the Forces. I was glad in one way because he was able to continue his studies, he had had enough set backs as it was, and he did not want any more.

The war was in full swing, bombs were dropping here and there, nights of little sleep, rationing was the order of the day. Ada did her best to feed us and we lived a life in the Chatham area of extreme tenseness. Once they concentrated on the Dockyard; they knew H.M.S. "Ajax" was in dock but they didn't get her quite - they missed by a few yards. Of course, they wanted to destroy the "Ajax", she was in the battle near the Falklands with the Graf Spee, if I remember rightly.

I cannot remember what year it was but George went to take his finals at London University, I think it was 1941 when he was just nineteen years of age. A few months later he was notified that he had attained his objective, as B.Sc. with Honours. I was delighted. So was Ada. At this point I would like to restate his remarks to me once. He said, "Anyone would think you were taking this examination Pop". George was witty at times. One day we came back from shopping and found all our front room windows broken. A little boy approached us and said "It wasn't me Sir". Perhaps his conscience pricked him, perhaps he was truthful but I gave him a quiet lecture. After the boy had gone, George put up his fore finger and said, "And let that be a lesson to you".

As George was available to be called up for the services, he had instructions to take up employment as detailed by the Government. His first job was at K.B. Sidcup and he was there for a little while, a few months perhaps, commuting backwards and forwards to Gillingham. What happened about this job I am not certain but he was instructed to go to an Ammunition Depot at Caerwent in South Wales. This was not to his liking, but there it was; he had to go where he was instructed. I remember his first letter to his mother, he was very unhappy.

I remember another incident that occurred to me at Gillingham. I was walking up the hill from my home, with my bicycle, to go on Night Duty at 9.30 pm when I was accosted by two Special Police and told I would be reported for showing a light on my bicycle. The cycle was fitted with a dynamo but there was hardly a glimmer of light from it as I was plodding up the hill at a snail's pace. When I came off duty at 6 am, I rode straight to the Police Station and informed the Sergeant in Charge to instruct his Specials to use their commonsense, and not be so efficient. The Sergeant laughed and said "Alright, I'll see to it".

Well, George was not happy at Caerwent either. I remember his letter to his mother...

think I could stomach it either. Anyway he moved to another place and it seemed much better, in fact Ada went to visit him once to see how things were going. Obviously, the first time away from home would upset him and he was a boy that didn't eat some things - he had his fancies.

It was on the 27th August 1942 my father, who had been living at Sanderstead with my sister Jenny, passed away. Being the eldest son, I was called to help my sister to decide what to do about the arrangements. Jenny's husband Bert was of great assistance, he knew Croydon very well; he introduced me to an Undertaker and a Solicitor to make the necessary arrangements.

Father was taken to Plymouth to be interred with my mother at Weston Mill Cemetery. My other sister and brothers were in the South Devon area, so they could all attend the funeral. Father was seventy nine years of age.

It was a long time afterwards before the affair was finally wound up. I know the Will was not properly attested so my sister Violet and I had to attend a Commissioner of Oaths before a settlement could be made. Father owned a bungalow in Plymouth, and that was bombed flat, so it was a long time before the solicitors could make any headway. However, it all came right in the end. There were five children of my fathers marriage and we were all in different parts of the country, so everything had to be done by post.

I, as the eldest son, was given possession of his medals, which were awarded to him during his service in the Royal Marines. Very soon afterwards I forwarded them to the Officers' Mess at Plymouth Division. I received a nice letter of thanks from them, as the medals were exhibited in the Officers' Mess, for the information of young officers. They even put them in a Bank for safe custody during the War.

Well I think I did things properly, with the help of my sister, to the satisfaction of all concerned.

The sequence of events which followed, once again, I am not certain of because I did not stay in Gillingham when I was promoted to Inspector of Police, which was in 1943. I was promoted to a post at Portsmouth Dockyard. George during this period had employment in the Chemical Laboratory at Portsmouth, followed by work as an analyst at the Co-operative Milk Depot, also at Portsmouth. And he definitely didn't like milk. Midst all the turmoil at Chatham, I left my little bungalow in Gillingham and came to live with Mum (Ada's mother) at Gosport. She was pleased to see us and gave us a welcome. Our few bits of chattels we found room for in two rooms which we occupied. I never met such a good person as my mother-in-law, she always welcomed us, I got on well with her and Ada's Dad, there never was any friction between us at all. I think I spent more years with my wife's mother than I did with my own. Sometime previously, Ada's Dad passed away and Mum was alone in a six-roomed

house, so we were company for her and I didn't mind at all, I was happy enough. She was very glad, too, because financially we could help her out. She only had a widow's pension and five shillings a week pension awarded her through the loss of her son George in the war. A lot of repairs wanted doing, better lighting, more coal, etc. etc. These things she could not afford. Well we made the deficiencies good in course of time. Mum had her room and a glass of beer, she was very happy, there were no bills to pay and the small pension that she had was hers to do as she wished.

Although there was an electric light switch outside her door, at night in our bedroom we could see the candle flickering along the dark, long passage; often I said to Ada "There goes Mum".

My duty in the Dockyard was, of course, watchkeeping and an Inspector was on constant duty day and night. A bit new at first but being conversant with the Dockyard and its layout, knowledge of the beats from previous experience as a constable, it was like coming home, except the responsibility was greater than that of a constable. The war was still on, doodlebugs were flying over head and the Dockyard was pitch dark at night, so one had to know one's way around, otherwise one may have a nasty accident. Things were not as tense as at Chatham; Ada was not alone but was with her Mum. George was at his job but I think he was itching to get away from it. There was one thing, he did not do any Home Guard duties at Gosport. Ada was happy with friends, as she was well known around the area. Portsmouth got blitzed like many other towns but not so badly as some. I seemed to get on well with my superiors. They, of course, knew who was who and who they could rely on which was half the battle.

Then all at once orders came for me to be transferred to Clarence Yard. This was really a promotion because I was in charge of three Establishments, which included Paddy's Hard (Armament Depot) and Haslar Gun Boat Depot. I was under the supervision of a Chief Inspector who resided at Bedenham and who was in charge of all the stations the Gosport side of the water, which were policed by Admiralty police. There were four Inspectors that side of the water, one each at Lee-on-Solent, Fleetlands and Bedenham. I had served in the Royal Marines with the two Inspectors at Fleetlands and Bedenham, so we ought to be a happy family and, in fact, the Chief Inspector was a Royal Marine. Of course, we did not see much of each other, as we were too far apart, but there was always the telephone.

However, there was a Station Sergeant in each Yard, the one at Clarence Yard I didn't get on well with, a shifty individual whom I could never fathom out. On this job I didn't keep night watches, a sort of nine to five duty. After the out muster of the workmen I could go home, and the Yard would

look after themselves.

A house was provided for the Inspector inside Clarence Yard but I never saw such a disgraceful affair - filthy, paper hanging off the walls, damp and very small rooms. I thought to myself, if ever they think I am going to put my wife there, they will have to think again. However, it didn't happen because I didn't force anyone to make the repairs good; in any case it would have cost hundreds of pounds to make it habitable, a real downright slum of a house.

I was always on tenterhooks in that Yard, there was meat, provisions, clothing and above all spirits, besides tobacco and cigarettes for the Navy. The other Yards could look after themselves really, no-one would want to run away with a box of ammunition or an underwater tank. But a pair of boots, joint of meat or tins of fruit, which were there in abundance was a different story. Anyway I expect things did get out of the Yard at times, naturally, but I was a lone wolf, always on the alert, police could be bribed, although I trusted them, but things do happen.

The Victualling Store Officer confirmed one day he was losing a lot of tins of fruit. My enquiries came to naught, didn't expect them to come to anything but it puzzled me. One day, during the Neap Tide period, I was sauntering along the water front in the Yard, the tide was dead out, when all at once I spotted piles of fruit tins close up to the sea wall. I brought the Storeman to see it and said "There's your fruit". It certainly did go out of the yard but in someone's tummy. My Station Sergeant at Gun Boat Yard was an excellent man but he spoilt himself from being promoted when he told the Chief Constable, on one of his visits, the Force was cheap and nasty; so it was but I would not have the courage he had to tell him so. It was during this period at Clarence Yard that I was allowed to ride a service cycle. Finances were never very good, so I sold my cycle which I had had about six years, and got ten shillings more than what I paid for it at Chatham, and the man had a bargain too at the current prices.

My first Chief Inspector who resided at Bedenham, was a good man, on top of his job and we got on well together. Whenever he went on leave or was sick, he wanted me to be Acting Chief Inspector, although I was the junior out of the three of us - my face fitted I guess, the others didn't. The next Chief Inspector who replaced him came from an office across the water; he couldn't ride a cycle, nor drive a car and consequently he never visited anyone. Not only that, he never seemed to be smart and clean.

A case occurred when one of my police filled an empty case of rum and drank the contents. Consequently he got drunk and went berserk in the middle of the night. I was called and rounded up this man and put him in

hospital because he was deranged. But on his coming out, I informed my superior and he didn't seem interested. The Officer of the Establishment got to hear about this, although it was a Police Discipline job, and he reported it to the Admiral in the Dockyard. So the Chief Inspector and I got hauled over the coals, as it were, but it was nothing to do with him, no stores had been stolen, it was simply a man putting hot water in a cask and drinking it.

Another case was when a man on one of the boats shot himself and fell over the side. We got him aboard but he was dead. I made my report but the next day the press had it "Drama in Portsmouth Harbour". I did right in that case and was commended. But, there were a lot of petty cases - not worth writing about.

However, on the whole, I was doing well but it was a worrying job, things were starting to get on top of me and the Chief Inspector was no help to anyone. I was conscientious in my work, perhaps more so than I should be, but there I was of a worrying nature.

It was in 1946 that I decided to get out. I saw the doctor about my legs. Eventually, I was sent to the R.N. Hospital, Haslar where they made a medical examination, put me up for survey and I was invalided before I knew where I was. I was a proud man that day because I had told no-one I had seen the doctor, and when they handed me my papers and told me I would be sent on forty two days leave, I was delighted. It was about 3 pm the same day when I walked into the Superintendent of Police Office in the Dockyard, handed my papers to the Chief Clerk and said "Here you are, I'm invalided". They said What! I said "I'm on leave" and walked out of the office.

I ignored the Chief Inspector, handed over my duties to the Station Sergeants of the three Yards and left them. I did telephone the Chief Inspector telling him what I had done, but he made no reply so I left. I understand there were some resignations from some of the others afterwards but I was not concerned, that was their affair. I got a substantial bonus and signed on at the Employment Exchange.

I had been in the Police thirteen years, I had had enough and I did not intend to carry around other people. The Sergeant at Gun Boat Yard was correct in saying the Force was cheap and nasty; some of the men who joined never saw a beat, neither did they move on promotion. However, it served my purpose. I was now fifty three years of age and I wasn't going to move any more. I was going to stay put.

The leaving of the Police was rather abrupt; I had made a decision, to the consternation of all my colleagues; it was, as far as I was concerned, a correct one. There was only Ada and myself, George was

earning, so there was little to worry about.

All my life since I was fourteen and a half years of age, I was out in life, on my own to make my own way and that I did. At my age, it would appear to be silly to start afresh but surely my talent was worth more than about £3. a week.

Well, once again, where do we go from here? I don't know but I'll get by somehow. Ada knew that too. I had a good wife who never grumbled, left things to me. So my chapter finishes here and we shall see what happens next.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Civilian Life Once Again

Looking back on my departure from the Police, I made a wise decision, I got out while the going was good. As I was invalided I was discharged under the War Disabled Persons Act. Not only that, I was remunerated with a 20% disability pension. I remember the Senior Surgeon asking me if I had been in hospital before. I said "Yes, the R.N. Hospital, Plymouth". They must have checked up on my service in the First World War and come to the conclusion that the defect in my legs was aggravated by war service, and Police Service.

I signed on at the Labour Exchange for a little while; then the Manager of the Exchange apparently had received my Disability Report, in consequence of which they employed me as a cleaner. Early morning, about 7 am, I unlocked the Exchange, tended the Boilers, and got the heat going before the staff arrived at 9 am. Then I emptied the waste paper baskets and cleaned up.

During the little while I was unemployed, being a late Inspector of Police, I got acquainted with the Personnel Officers of the Yards who were likely to give me employment. One of these was the Civil Assistant at Fleetlands; I was introduced to him by a late Q.M. Sergeant of the Royal Marines. However, it was in January 1947 when I was busy cleaning the offices of the Exchange that these Personnel Officers arrived for a meeting re employment. The Civil Assistant noticed me and said, "What are you doing here?". I said, "Cleaning" and he said, "Oh, are you".

Next morning when the Manager arrived and I handed him the keys, he said "Report to Fleetlands on Monday". So on the Monday I reported. The Civil Assistant said, "I have got a vacancy for a clerk in my office". I said "Good". "Report then to Mr. B. in there", he said and that is how I started pushing a pen and pencil.

Of course, office work was not new to me, I had previous experience at Forton Barracks so I fell into the job right away; I was good at figures, could get out a letter and had a knowledge of King's Regulations and Admiralty Instructions.

So, there it was, a desk and a 'phone at my side. I soon got to know who was who and fell into the jig saw puzzle of the Yard easily.

There were seventeen administrative staff in the office, consisting of one H.C.O., five typists (two of which were Shorthand Typists) and eleven

clerks (five Personnel, five Correspondence and one Mail). When I came to measure up who was who, the Civil Assistant had picked or employed nine of those men from the services, seven of which were persons of authority when serving in the Armed Forces. We had a Wing Commander Paymaster, two ex Army Captains, two Q.M.S. of the Royal Marines and two lady clerks who were in the services. So we were a motley throng as it were. We were all known by our Christian names except the H.C.O., even the ladies and typists were always called and named in that way. We got on very well together but of course we were all bound up in each others work, in that we had to refer to each other for information.

Of course the Civil Assistant never composed a letter himself; we replied to the several letters, got them typed and put them before him for signature. Sometimes he would throw a letter out, sometimes he would ring for you to explain to him the reason for your reply. Not much use to him if you could not spell, or phrase a letter but, in the majority of circumstances, the typist would pick up the mistake before it was typed.

I think I did about eight years in that office. Of course, I was moved from one desk to another to get conversant with the workings of each kind of correspondence.

In my first three years there my lunch consisted of sandwiches but later I managed to get home to Ada and have a nice dinner. It was a long way but I had twenty minutes at home, the dinner was always on the table and I was sure Ada had a decent meal.

During my early period at Fleetlands, Ada lost her mother and I lost a good friend; in fact, she was more than a friend, she treated me as a son. We missed her badly and Ada was alone in the house; I think that was about the time I started to go home for dinner.

George was away all day. He was now employed as an Analyst in the Milk Department of the Co-operative Society at Fratton, he didn't like the job, I imagine he hadn't yet attained what he ultimately wanted to do. We know, however, he didn't like milk. While he was at this work he was sent on a course to Reading in respect of his employment. That must have been sometime between 1947 and 1950, as far as I can remember.

In one of those years also we thought about a holiday, all three of us. I had not made up my mind to go anywhere, neither had Ada, but George suggested Reading. Well, Reading it was, I had never been there and we managed to get accommodation at an hotel on the Bath Road. I cannot remember what we did with ourselves much; we may have gone down the river, or gone shopping, perhaps sojourned in the Park but the outstanding event was when George suggested a walk one evening and in the course of our walk the boy

wanted to visit a Y.W.C.A. Club, I think it was; within a few minutes he appeared with a young lady and introduced us, then politely I said "Come on Ada we will go" or something. That was how we met Frances who is now his wife. It took the wind out of our sails. George, so far as we knew, had never been attracted to the opposite sex.

Another episode I remembered very clearly - it must have been before Mum died. George and Frances, on one of their visits, presented us with a dog, it was really a nice animal, it was not used to being boxed up but we were very much afraid, when racing along the long passage, it would come in contact with Mum - we were on tenterhooks all the time, we did not know what to do, there would surely be an accident. Eventually Ada decided to keep it in the room where we were living all day. She was unaccustomed to dogs, so was I for that matter, but it was unnatural for the dog. I took it out every evening but rarely let it off the lead. I liked the dog very much. When I came home in the evening and I approached our living room I could hear the dog behind the door. Ada said, "Look out, he's behind the door waiting for you". I open the door, up he jumps all over me, he was so delighted. Well eventually we had to find a home for it. We were very sorry, it was our first present from George and Frances; I do not think they liked it very much, I do not suppose I would, but there, we were definitely afraid for Mum that some accident would happen.

Also during these three years George obtained another employment at Ilminster, with the Standard Cable Company and it was then that George and Frances got married. George had had enough of digs and with a partner he would be much happier, so it happened. He was married at Oxford and from then we lost him altogether. We did not expect it so quickly but Ada and I knew George had left us, as all young men do, to make a home for himself with the lady of his choice. He was our only son, we had done our best for him, under the circumstances and we sincerely hoped he would be happy.

These events in my first three years of my service at Fleetlands, although not in proper sequence, are the ones I can remember most - George getting married, the dog and the passing of Mum (my mother-in-law). My work at Fleetlands was mostly routine work, that happens every day in an office; my colleagues and the girls worked together very amicably, no friction, everyone happy in their work. What happened outside is anyone's guess. I got to know people in different offices, they got to know me and somehow my Christian name seemed to follow me; that was George, I was never called Will, William or Bill in the services but the name George had followed me for about thirty three years; only my wife, my brothers and sisters called me Will. Even now, so long after retirement, I am accosted at times by "Hello George".

Then, it was about this period that I became an established Clerk, before I was called a Temporary Clerk Grade 3 but with many others I was a Clerical Assistant. By this means, being an established man, I would in due course become eligible for a pension if I could serve long enough, but there was a minimum of ten years established service to qualify. I may be able to make it in due course.

A snag cropped up about this time. Interview Boards were set up for the purpose of promoting Clerical Assistants to Clerical Officers and I was selected to appear before this Board. In the course of this interview, one question was asked of each candidate - are you prepared to be sent anywhere? I thought about this matter very much and I came to the conclusion my answer would be "NO". And so I said "No". I had had my fill of moving, here I am and here I am going to stay. I remember the interviewing officer asking me a second time He said, "Just think about it Mr. Elliott, I ask you again". I replied "NO". In consequence of this I never became a "Clerical Officer". My conscience was clear, I had my Royal Marine Pension, a substantial bonus from the Police and Ada and I could rub along fairly well during my working life until retirement. I was now fifty seven years of age and I did not feel like careering off to some other town. Enough was enough.

This was the second time in my life that I refused promotion; the first time as a Corporal in the Royal Marines, after holding the rank for a substantial period, on active service too, I was wanted to pass for it. On principle I could not accept it, but they came to my way of thinking and allowed me to pass for a higher rank, which I did with credit and now the offer of being a Clerical Officer by simply saying "Yes, I would go anywhere". I could not accept that either - it didn't cost much to my way of thinking. I wanted to settle down and have a home, so did Ada, and this I did.

Now Ada and I put our heads together. I had saved a bit and the bonus from the Police gave me an incentive to look a little ahead. Ada was the owner of the house in which we lived, six rooms, four unoccupied. I could not see my wife keeping such a large place tidy, so we decided to sell. We looked at various properties in Gosport but nothing was suitable for just two of us. Ada, in her spare time, was looking further afield on the outskirts of the town. After a little while, she came to me at Fleetlands, during the dinner break and asked me to look at a bungalow not far from the Yard. The owner wanted a certain price for the premises. We asked him to come down and we would seriously consider his offer. Meanwhile I contacted an agent and offered my own place for sale with a minimum price. Well, we were lucky, a person who was dispensing and a receptionist for a doctor at the top of the road wanted our house badly, it was so convenient to her, and

the owner of the bungalow came down in price which suited our pockets, and between the agent and the solicitors the deal was clinched. That was in March 1950. The next thing was the lady wanted to move in and I wanted to move into the bungalow, the owner of which had bought a place at Alverstoke. There were no mortgages on my side nor the lady in question, a cash deal, so we occupied the bungalow as our first real home.

When one moves from a house to a bungalow there is such an awful lot of furniture surplus, so we sold the excess to our requirements which helped a bit and I was able to do a bit of decorating, repairs and gardening, and gradually we settled down. Ada felt the loss of her friends at Gosport; she seemed to dislike it a bit, she was uprooted from her old home. I was a wanderer and could settle anywhere but a wife wanted friends. I had mine at work, whereas she had to make her friends with her neighbours and I suppose it wasn't easy. Anyway, gradually we became more settled.

My life in the office was much the same, day by day and to make matters more interesting, there was always something cropping up on the production side of the Yard, like new aircraft, schemes of bonus payment, merit pay and such like. Books of Regulations had to be kept up to date for the necessary information to be afforded to the Supervisors of the Yard. I was in that office for about another four years, there was no movement of personnel in the office, we were all practical, staid and static, even the typing people. The work people got to know who to come to if they required any information, etc. and so it went on.

Meanwhile, at home Ada had made friends locally. There were not many houses in the vicinity with the exception of the main road. There was a Mr. and Mrs. Watts living two doors down; he was a retired Major in the Royal Engineers and both were ardent Churchgoers, attending a very small Chapel in the vicinity. Florence (Mrs. Watts) got Ada to deliver Church magazines and John (Mr. Watts) got me to join a Toc H Club which he had formed.

We were both inclined to mix well and so we got to know people round about us. We had meetings, whist drives and dances which were organised, visits to the sick and the collection of old clothes and what not for distribution. We got to know the Red Cross people which helped a lot and that made life more pleasant and was a diversion from every day life. The Minister appreciated our efforts. I took on Secretary to the Toc H Club and Treasurer on one occasion, so I was able to pass away some time which I had to spare at home. Decorating had to be done, I was always interested in gardening and Ada liked flowers. I did not think Ada would settle down but she did. More houses were being built locally and in consequence we got to meet more and more people.

Our social life became interesting and mixing with people was quite an innovation to me as I was inclined to be of a retiring nature. But Ada knowing so many people in Gosport, it being her home town, and me a foreigner as it were, I was beginning to pick up mixing with strangers. Police work spoilt me a lot because we couldn't have friends very well.

The Toc H Club was gradually losing its members and when it got down to a minimum of about four we were talking about giving up. John, meanwhile, was very anxious to carry on. Then one day, we were strolling along to a meeting at the school, when John complained of indigestion and stopped. He wished me to go on but he recovered enough to go to the meeting. I guessed something was more serious about his health than he had told me; then the next evening he came back from a meeting at another club, sat in his chair and said to Florrie his wife, "I'm tired". That was the end of John and we had eventually to pack up with our meetings at the School and conclude the Toc H Club.

At work I was transferred to the Publication Department. It was situated near the Drawing Office. There were four clerks all continually amending the manuals relating to the aircraft and distributing them around the Yard, for information. My senior was an ex Captain Royal Marines and my colleagues consisted of an ex Warrant Officer R.A.F., a widow whose husband was an ex Captain Royal Marines and a Q.M.S. from the Army. So we had a lot to talk about in our spare time. It was a change for me; I must be now sixty two years of age, still active in mind and body but I knew when the time came I did not intend to work any more. Naturally, Ada was a bit worried but I gave her to understand we would be alright financially.

I am afraid I am missing a very important event which occurred in 1950 and that was the birth of a son to George and Frances at Bridgewater, Somerset. Grandma and Grandad were very pleased to hear of the event and the boy was named Brian. George and Frances must have been living in Chard, Somerset which is just inside the border from Devonshire. Then, two years later another son was born in 1952 at Axminster, Devon and he was named Russell. So we were grandparents twice. I hope I have got the years right; however, I do not think I am far out.

My work in the Publication Department was not boring at all, it was interesting rather, and there was something different every day. Sometimes there was a lot to do and sometimes one could ease off but it was imperative that the books were amended, so that the aircraft staff could be kept up to date as soon as improvements were made.

Knowing the Commandant of the Red Cross movement, we were asked to join as Associate Members, which we did, attending their Whist Drives

and functions in the Bridgeway area. Eventually we got our neighbours to join and then we became the working party, or committee, at their meetings. The active organiser at the Club worked near me at Fleetlands, so we were able to confer together at times, to make the Club into a going concern. We devoted three evenings a week at the Red Cross Hall and Ada enjoyed it. She, with her friends, looked after the catering side while my friends and I ran the show. On the whole it provided entertainment for about twenty to thirty people each evening, besides helping the Red Cross movement.

It must have been two years we spent going backward and forward until an element crept in, in the way of youngsters who seemed to want to smash the show up and it got worse. These hooligans we could not bar from entering into our functions, so the regular comers dwindled away and we started to think of closing down as we could not cope.

On Sunday evenings, we attended a Church service at the school in Bridgeway. It was soon evident it was going to be a built up area. It was during the latter part of my service at Fleetlands that a start was made in the building of a Methodist Church. I think it was during the time the Red Cross Club was dwindling rapidly - at any rate it was during the period 1956 to 1958. When the Church was completed, and the Red Cross shut down, my friend and I with our wives joined the Church, as members, and later assisted in all their functions. There were meetings each evening of one kind or another, mostly for young people and those who wished to attend.

However, there were fetes, bazaars and decorations to be done at the different functions, stalls to be erected, and cakes, sponges, teas, etc. all made work. Well we interested ourselves in this kind of work and the Church was pleased with the voluntary help. My friend and I did a bit of gardening around the Church, planted flowers and bushes, mowed the lawns, etc. during weekends and our time passed very quickly.

Soon I was approaching the age for retirement. I considered it very closely. Perhaps I would be able to stay on, I was still active at sixty five years of age; but then I thought about it more seriously - I had been at work since I was fourteen years of age, except for a short period when I left the Royal Marines. That was fifty one years. Very little enjoyment except in the latter days. How would I fare financially? Ada didn't like it much, she was a bit nervous about it. Six months before my date of completion, I was asked by my superiors what I intended to do, would I like to take on for twelve months at a time, subject to my good health. Ada and I had a talk. With the Retirement Pension we ought to be able to carry on alright; neither of us were big spenders and Ada was a good housekeeper, but we had rates, electricity, gas, etc. to pay - my pension was a little

better and I would get a small civil pension. To sum it all up, I reckoned we could manage, so I told my superior I was leaving on the date due for retirement.

Would I be able to employ myself in retirement, I don't know, it would be funny, home all the time. Ada could carry on as before, but surely there was gardening, decorating and odd jobs to do to get out of Ada's way in the home. I would be alright I imagined to myself. My friend with whom I worked in the Church was in the same predicament; he retired later when he decided to pack up work and take things a bit easy.

So it came about, in early 1958, I finished work. There was no pay packet coming in, I gave Ada the retirement books and she seemed to be quite happy about it. She just had to provide meals, etc. and I would meet all the other bills.

Before I left Fleetlands, a subscription was made and I was presented with a Clock. I made a small speech, explaining my services and thanking them all for the kindness, and I said I was pleased to have met them all and to have worked with them.

Another life had started. I hoped I wouldn't get too rusty and crusty. I did not worry about it at all, I just simply fell into the way of having nothing to do and make my own employment and enjoyment, which I started to do. The summer was before us, we could have a holiday when we liked - no-one to please except ourselves. The bungalow was our own, no fear of rent or mortgages; I considered myself lucky.

So the next chapter must be my last one. I hope I have written all I could of my active life. Of course there are gaps, one cannot remember every little detail. I considered I had been lucky to have met such a number of people, both inside and outside the services and I had made many friends of both sexes and from all classes.

Well, there it is - I have to start again on a different life and I hope to enjoy it with my partner, who has stuck it out, very bravely through our thin times, and they had been thin too. But there, that is life.

CHAPTER TWELVEIn Retirement

It was some time about the middle of April that I finished work and of course it was on a Friday; the weekend passed as usual, as it always does, but on Monday morning there was no getting up early to clean, breakfast and say to the wife "Goodbye" - "I'm off". At that time of the year it was fairly good weather so I was away to potter about in the garden, while Ada got on with the chores. It was no change for her, as it was for me. However, our Pension Books had arrived so we could get the wherewithal for the week.

We could now go to the shops and do a bit of shopping in comfort, instead of joining up with the scramble on a Saturday but we missed the usual faces that we normally met in the High Street, and there were very few people about.

Ada visited one or two friends in the afternoons; invariably I went over to the Church which had been newly built, and potted about in the garden, busying myself weeding, etc. for an hour, taking things very quietly. The evenings we spent listening to the radio or having some music on the radiogram which I rented. Some time later I bought a record player and amassed a good number of records. Ada was fond of music, so was I. We did not go in for classical music, nor pop stuff and mostly we loved the musical shows which we had seen.

Two evenings a week were spent at the Red Cross Centre, at a Whist Drive or Beetle Drive and every month on a Saturday we arranged a Dance, employing some local musicians. With the Church work and the Red Cross, we came to know quite a lot of people. Myself, as I said before, I was of a retiring nature but with meeting so many people I came out in my true light, let my hair down so to speak and enjoyed the pastimes that came our way.

Often we visited George at Chard, where he managed to get a house, but it was an awkward place to get to by train, although it was only two counties away and we spent quite a number of hours getting there. We had to change at Yeovil Junction and Chard Junction. Well time was our own, so what matter. The train from Fareham was fairly slow but from Salisbury it was a fast train to Yeovil, where we changed for the train to Chard, on a small branch-line. I remember an amusing episode. One day we had got off at Yeovil Junction, changed over to the Chard Line, the train was there but no driver or guard. On looking around, there was a small public house close to the Junction; we ventured in for a drink and there were the driver and his

colleague enjoying a drink. Apparently they saw we were strangers, so they waited until we had finished our drink, then out they came, we got on the train and they took us to Chard. There were no other passengers, it was one of those lines that was rarely used.

Chard was a nice country town, the people were very affable and knew we were strangers; when we went out for a walk, the natives of the town always passed the time of day with us. At Christmas time in Chard, on Boxing Day, the hounds or beagles mustered with the Hunt outside the George Hotel. It was pleasant to watch.

I don't know how long George worked for the Standard Cable Company at Ilminster but there was some talk of the firm moving to Paignton in Devon and I don't think George was disposed to live in that area. However, I am not able to say the whys and wherefores, because I don't know but George got an appointment with a firm at Reading which I think was more to his liking.

Ada and I saved a little between us from our incomes, she from her housekeeping and myself from my pension. By this means we were able to have a holiday, a holiday away from it all. Neither of us ever considered it a holiday to go to relatives, where one was obliged to wash up and make our own beds. We did spend holidays with George and Frances at their homes and enjoyed it for a change but it did not amount to a holiday like a coach tour to be waited on and conducted here and there to places of interest. Our best holiday one year was to Devon and Cornwall, where we were able to visit the areas of my childhood days. Ada I think loved the Scottish tour the best, she loved to see Scotch Salmon put before her at a meal.

I could always find something to do about the house, one room after another was painted and decorated and we had the place rewired as the lighting and power lines were defective. We abolished the old coal fire for a Gas convector heater, for our own comfort, because at times during the severe winters we had a job to keep warm. All these things were done in the course of a few years, together with the bungalow being repainted.

Ada taught me how to knit and it was laughable to see some of my amateur efforts, but eventually I became proficient enough to make a woollen garment for myself. Sometime I would be clicking away with my needles and all at once, on examining my handiwork, I would exclaim "Oh, I have dropped a stitch". I could never pick it up myself so invariably I passed it to Ada.

On one side of us as neighbours was a family with whom we became very friendly but the other side was the opposite. The friendly people were very quiet; he was a school teacher, more of a sober kind of man but his wife was directly opposite - jovial, laughing and occasionally singing away to herself when he was at school. She loved gardening, so did I, and often

a hose was directed to me, catching me unawares, to which I replied with a lump of earth. The next thing I knew, she had jumped the wall and chased me into the house. Ada's remark was, "What's the matter with you two". But it was like that. She was a lovely singer also, with a strong contralto voice.

I can't enumerate all the things that happened in my retirement, the days passed very quickly in my first six or seven years. There was the Red Cross, Church, gardening, with always something to do; even in the winter there was knitting, painting, making rugs, etc. Ada and I got on very well together. I expect she was more settled. Since our marriage I was always on the move, one ship after another, and then my police work where we were on the move again. But now we were happy to stay put and it was a change of life.

More than that I seemed to have acquired a more, what do they call it, a more facetious kind of nature. Where it came from I don't know, I was never like it before in my occupation as a stern Sergeant Major or an Inspector of Police. And so it was, that is how I made friends and to this day my sense of humour I cannot help, but I enjoy life as it is meant to be. Playing games at the Red Cross Club or Whist Drives, I couldn't take a game seriously - it was a game to me, not a task or chore that had to be endured.

During the summer months we had an occasional day's outing and on occasions a holiday, a real holiday as we called it, by coach touring England.

One day I said to Ada, "We have been married thirty odd years, living mostly at Gosport, and I have never been to the Isle of Wight". Surprising but very true, we disliked the sea, we very rarely visited Southsea, with its piers, etc., always it was the country where we most enjoyed ourselves. However, we did make a visit to the Island one day, toured around it by coach, came home in the evening that same day and never wanted to go there again. Tourists enjoyed it, the Island was everything to them but to us, NO. If we did decide to go to Southsea, which was very rare, we would pack a few sandwiches and take the bus all the way around, through Fareham, Cosham, Portchester and Portsmouth to get to Southsea.

When my son lived at Chard, Somerset, Ada and I made a visit for a few days and I wrote a letter to the Chard weekly newspaper, explaining how lovely it was to live at Chard in preference to where we had come from. One place depicted Peace and the other War. We lived near an Aircraft Yard, where the prop engines were being tested. The constant roar for hours on end was not very pleasant and at Lee-on-Solent the 'planes came up doing their tests, which was another bug-bear. However, we got used to the din and eventually, in the course of a few years, silencing tunnels were fitted, which greatly reduced the noise and Lee-on-Solent became too small a station to test

the modern aircraft, so it became much quieter. It was convenient for me then to live where I was because my place of employment was very near.

For two years in succession when we went on Coach Tours Ada complained of her legs becoming stiff through sitting so much in the Coaches. I thought little of it at the time, I agreed with her friends when she complained of the sitting so much, when they replied that one does get stiff on these journeys. Then again, one year, I remember at Stratford-on-Avon, when we got out of the coach for a break, Ada couldn't walk far. Also I remember in 1965 we were out shopping and, piloting her across the road to avoid the traffic, she said she could not bend her knees. Following that, my first indication that something was wrong was when she fell in the kitchenette and cut her head. I asked her if she had tripped and she said, "No, I simply fell".

I called the doctor next day; he examined her and prescribed some heart tablets and another kind of tablet, but she fell down again, this time in the hall. Things got worse, she became incontinent and constipated. I was then told on the doctor's next visit that she had Arterial Sclerosis. Although I still believed she could get better, I was raising false hopes in myself because she got worse.

I think I carried on all that year, nursing her as best I could, then I was advised I must have a Home Help and a nurse to make a visit.

The nurse did not realise at that time under what difficulties I was working until she came one morning and found me struggling to get Ada's wet clothes off and change her. I explained to the nurse there and then how I was coping; she then took the reins, as it were, explained what I had to do and visited me every day without fail. The Home Help was also instructed to attend and, between us, it made it easier for me.

George and Frances meanwhile had moved once more, this time to Chelmsford in Essex, so I could not expect any help from them, it was too far away.

However, I had a friend in the road who was able to get food in for me which helped a lot, and I seemed to be getting on as well as I possibly could under the circumstances, until the doctor came one day with a specialist and informed me she would have to go to hospital. Then I realised the seriousness of her complaint; she was admitted to the Queen Alexander Hospital and remained there five weeks. I visited her every day without fail, took little niceties into her, but she was getting worse, then I did not understand, I found out she could not stand at all. Eventually, they gave her Therapy Courses but it was of no use. Each day she had the same request "Will you get me out of here". I said, "I can't" and she asked me to see her own doctor. I did see him. He said, "If you do get her out, you will have an awful job!"

I approached the Sister of the Ward who said I was too sentimental; perhaps I was but she was my wife and I wanted to please her. My whole thoughts then were that I must have her with me, she was a part of me and I must care for her if I could. However, at the end of five weeks I was allowed to have her at home.

Her own doctor was aware of her discharge, of course, and he made arrangements for a nurse and a Home Help to make daily visits. Well, I devoted all my time to her, day and night. It was a job but I plodded on, day by day, month by month. I had, or shall I say we had, two friends nearby who brought my provisions day by day; they were very helpful and one of them wanted me to go out but she found out she could not manage Ada. She was helpless, so I remained with her, not caring so long as I was in attendance. I talked to her but she did not reply. I wondered why and asked the doctor why she did not talk to me. He said some time or other she had had a stroke. Then, once again, I realised the enormous task I had taken on.

Now I had been nursing her two years, how the time went by, it was surprising. I received a letter from the doctor inviting me to have a holiday. My wife Ada would be cared for at Farhan Hospital for a fortnight. I didn't like it at all. I made enquiries from the nurse and a friend in the road, who I knew was a nurse, and was informed that it was a routine to help the relatives to have a break. Ada had good hearing and I told her what would happen; she said "You go Will", in her mumbled voice and so I made arrangements with my son to go to his home near Chelmsford for a fortnight in September. This must have been about March 1968.

Soon it was past midsummer; day by day Ada and I looked out of the front room windows, watching the passers-by, she was able to see slightly out of one eye and I lifted her hand in response to a wave from many passers-by.

George and Frances visited her occasionally and they could see how things were going but, of course, they couldn't do much being so far away. It was during one of these visits of my son and daughter-in-law that I told them I had a bad leg. As it happened the doctor arrived, saw my wife, prescribed for her and as he was about to leave Frances informed him I had a bad leg. I had forgotten my own troubles as I was most concerned with Ada. However, the doctor gave me a prescription for an elastic stocking, for which I was thankful - in fact, he told me where to get one. George whisked me away in his car to the Clinic, they measured my leg, gave me a stocking and we returned home. Next day I went to put on this stocking and it was defective. I was fuming, so when our friend came up to visit the wife, I asked her if I could leave Ada with her so I could change this stocking. Things like that would happen to me I thought, with so much to do. This incident imprinted itself on my

amory.

Then, one day in August, in the first week, I had prepared a dinner for us both - I used to have mine hurriedly and then pay attention to Ada. This day I brought the dinner in and tried to feed her as usual but she would not take it, she held her head down. I looked at her, spoke to her but there was no response - something was the matter I thought, I must contact the nurse. She came immediately. Our own doctor was on holiday apparently but the nurse was lucky as the doctors had not left the Surgery for lunch, and within a few minutes Doctor H. rang the bell. I knew him to be very blunt and straightforward, he always called a spade a spade. He examined Ada and said "Haemorrhage, there is nothing in the world can be done". He said he could move her to hospital but there was no point in doing so, put her to bed, it may be a few days or a week. Then after Ada was made comfortable in bed, he drew me on one side and said, "Have you thought about an Undertaker?". I said, "No, but Churcher and Son had done all her family work!" Well, he asked what kind of burial I would prefer and I said Cremation. "Alright", he said, "I'll see Churcher and Son and make arrangements for you". Ada lasted about three days, pneumonia set in, the doctor visited her every day, the nurse twice a day. Then on a Tuesday morning, on 10th August, I was sitting by her side about 9 am when the nurse arrived. She looked at her and said "I'm sorry Mr. Elliott" and with that Ada passed away. The nurse dressed her, I telephoned the doctor and the Undertaker. They were all prepared evidently and she was moved to the "Chapel of Rest". Arrangements were made for the Cremation at Portchester on Friday, 13th August 1968.

So I had lost a pal who for nearly fortyeight years was a good wife and mother. George and Frances arrived the same day and we talked matters over. While they were there my mind was occupied, I consoled myself that I had done my best for her and I am sure she was pleased that I had brought her home from that hospital which she dreaded so much. She was at home. She never grumbled. She knew we were doing our very best for her. Margaret the Home Help she was very fond of, she called her her adopted daughter.

The next few days were busy ones for George and myself. With Frances of course, we visited the Chapel of Rest where George saw his mother and I paid my last respects to her. It was then, for the first time, I broke down and had a little cry. During the whole period I had nursed her, I was too busy to do such a thing, maybe I was so tensed up and now it had happened. I was glad of my son's assistance with his car as we had to visit the various departments in the town, on 'business, to wind things up before the funeral.

Friday came, all too quickly. There were six mourners, the people

who were closest to her and who did the most during her illness. It was a simple ceremony, with just one wreath of Red Roses. We did not attend the church in which we were interested because their visits were non-existent during her illness. Mr. and Mrs. Constable and her Home Help were the only ones outside her family.

Saturday came, George and Frances took me away to their new home for a while, just a change for me, I felt lost after being confined to my little bungalow for so long. Well, there it is, for all intents and purposes I was alone; I had been always with her, although she rarely spoke and could not see, she was there and I was happy to think my health kept good to be in constant attendance.

CHAPTER THIRTEENLoneliness

Will this be the last chapter of my life story? I don't know, maybe it will, I have still five years or more to write about, it should not be a long episode.

Of course, I did not realise my loss very much while I was at Howe Green, my son's home. They made me comfortable, providing the food, etc. for my well being. It was the time of the year when there was plenty of sunshine and I was able to sit on the lawn at the rear of the house, in a nice chair, enjoying the surroundings of the garden and the fruit trees. Most days I had a letter to post, so my exercise consisted of walking up the rise to the Post Box. Near the box was a seat where invariably the traffic passed along the Southend Road to the South. The neighbourhood was very pretty, absolutely devoid of shops of any sort. I think the inhabitants did most of their shopping at Great Baddow or Chelmsford. I did go to Great Baddow once to have a look round, when my daughter-in-law went shopping. The 'bus that served the district was not a frequent service, so one had to know the time of day one was expected, to get into town.

While I was there my thoughts were constantly of home, what should I do and how should I do it. I would have to have help once or twice a week, and arrange about my food, etc., etc. The keys of the bungalow, the Home Help had, so she was able to keep it clean and forward on any letters of importance. George and Frances had plenty to do, central heating was being installed and an addition made for George's workshop. He was always doing something or other, he was of an inventive mind, kept fairly busy and they never seemed to be idle.

I went to bed fairly early, according to their standards, and did some reading. I was a wakeful individual, rarely enjoying a full night's sleep. I think Police work spoilt my sleeping habits and then again, when Ada became ill, I was always on my toes as it were. Many a time, in order to obtain a reasonable amount of sleep, I would barricade the bed with chairs, make the wife comfortable, take an eiderdown and try to sleep on the settee in the other room. I would always hear when she moved. I had learned my lesson in that respect; my wife got out of bed one afternoon, I hadn't put a chair by the bed and consequently, she fell and cut her head.

Many incidents I recalled while I was quiet and in bed at Howe Green. What would it be like on my own, would I sleep or not? I doubt it.

The days passed and I got restless, there were no more letters to write, after about a fortnight, and I thought I had better get back home. George and Frances were surprised but I felt I had to make a start on my own sometime, so it might as well be now. I acquainted my Home Help when I should return, and my neighbour down the road, who got me some food in, and George brought me back home once more.

We came back from Howe Green on Friday, 30th August, with my grandsons Russell and Richard. They parked themselves in the bungalow, somehow or other, and in the morning the family left me to visit the Isle of Wight for the weekend, so when they had gone I settled down to write some business letters. The family returned early on Tuesday, after their short holiday, and had a snack, then left to get back home at about one o'clock. The week passed uneventfully, until Friday when I employed some workmen to modernise my front windows. They worked all the weekend and finished them on Monday. During this week I had some business appointments in the town in respect of my wife.

Early in November of that year I had a touch of 'flu. It got worse during the week, so I had to see the Doctor at the Surgery and he gave me some tablets and medicine, but on the following Friday I broke out in a rash. I called the doctor, who came along and gave me an injection. On Saturday, 23rd November, I felt so ill, I laid on the bed in a burning condition. Pat and Margaret called by chance in the afternoon, saw my condition, called the doctor and with his colleague gave me another two injections. My next of kin was contacted and asked to come, Margaret remaining with me until they arrived about 11 pm.

Sunday I was very ill, I had Penicillin Poisoning. Frances remained with me all that week, with Richard my grandson and by the end of the week I had got better. On Saturday I was able to get about with a stick, but my legs were very much swollen. As I was able to get about again, Frances left for home on the Sunday and left me to the tender mercies of the Home Help. Once more the doctor prescribed tablets to reduce the swelling in my legs. Christmas came and my legs were swollen still. Margaret and Pat invited me to their home on Christmas Day, I enjoyed the company and they brought me back fairly early when I retired, but to the end of the year 1968 my legs were very bad, swollen and bandaged.

The doctor who had been attending me for a long time was an assistant to my own doctor, so about the end of January 1969 he came for the last time, to say goodbye as he was taking up another practice. He tried hard to heal my legs but, as it turned out eventually, it was going to be a long job. However, my doctor started coming again in the following weeks and gave me tablets to kill the pain.

It was in the end of February that I was able to walk again, previously my legs were so swollen, I could only get about with difficulty round the house, but now once more I went out for a walk. Then in April I started doing some decorating, but I am afraid I could not manage it myself, so Pat (my Home Help's husband) came to my rescue and painted and papered the Bathroom. After that the lounge was cleared and I had the place painted and papered, and had new curtains. So you see, my mind is fully occupied and I was making good use of my time, although being alone.

At the beginning of May I started looking at my furniture; the stuff was heavy and old fashioned, could I sell it and modernise my home? Well, I did look around and discovered that the dining chairs and the lamp standard had wood worm, so the only thing worth selling was the table; this I did and promptly had a good burn up of the remainder.

There was a Review of the Fleet in the middle of May and I went to Southsea to see it; I was never in a Review of that sort, as a matter of fact, I was never at home to take part in the celebration.

A Power Boat Race was taking place in the Solent in the middle of June. Pat took me to Gilkicker Fort to watch the race; we were there nearly all day and the weather was lovely.

Then Pat and Margaret invited me to go on a holiday with them in the end of July; they wanted to travel in a westerly direction, they had never been away before from what I could understand. However, the holiday commenced on the 21st July, when they took me to see my sister Jenny at Sanderstead; we had a nice day, coming back later in the evening. Next day off we went west, to try our luck for bed and breakfast, here and there but on our way I looked up my nephew William at Yeovil Police Station. I hardly knew him; he invited us to his house for a cup of coffee and directed us out of Yeovil on our way. Where to, we hadn't a clue.

We stayed at two or three places en route that day, then late afternoon we hopped into a village called Huish Episcopi, so our minds were naturally centred on looking for a bed and breakfast place. Well we found one, a lovely house on the Main Road and they were able to accommodate six of us. We decided to stay, make our Headquarters there for the week and travel each day through Somerset and East Devon, returning at night. A most enjoyable week, ending up at Longleat on the Saturday, returning home at about 5 pm, before the shops shut.

I enjoyed that holiday. I hadn't had one since 1965, after being boxed up for about four years, and I am sure the party I was with enjoyed it too. If I can remember rightly, my last holiday was a tour of Scotland, which commenced on my wife's birthday, July 8th 1965. Somerset is rather a nice

county, but I think the panorama of Devon can beat it. I had seen a lot of Devon, being brought up there as a boy, and again doing a lot of training on the Moors during my service in the Royal Marines.

So I rang Jenny one day and asked if she would accompany me on a coach tour of Devon and Cornwall. She was highly delighted at the offer. I do not think she did much touring because when her husband was alive, and having a car, they did all their holidays with their own transport, much cheaper perhaps, but a coach tour as it is now is wonderful. Well, on Saturday in late August we departed from Gosport on our tour of Devon and Cornwall, my sister having previously come from London to make the start. We visited Salisbury en route for lunch that day and proceeded toward Devonshire, to arrive at our first stopping place, which was Dartmouth.

Jenny was delighted and I saw my brother Sam, for the first time for a number of years. As I mentioned earlier, my days at Dartmouth were from the age of eleven to fourteen years, but I knew a lot about it because, as a newsboy, I tramped the whole town from one end to the other. If we had to go anywhere, it was by Shank's pony in those days; the only transport at Dartmouth in those days was a taxi, there were no buses or trams, etc. Even a bicycle was an impossibility because of the hills surrounding the town. My sister of course who was younger than I, knew more of Dartmouth, who lived there and who died there. She, with my brothers and sisters, one can say spent the whole of their childhood and adolescence in the town. We stayed at the Raleigh Hotel that night and we were able to entertain our relatives, and have a good talk about things in general. I did not know my sister-in-law very well, or her children. However, it was nice to see them, especially me who was like a stranger coming back after about fifty nine years.

Fortunately, the next day, according to our itinerary, we provided our own amusement and, of course, we saw much more of my brother and his wife, and my niece with her husband and children. The day was glorious, we sat on the front enjoying the scenery and, after lunch, decided to make a trip up the River Dart. When we went to book the steamer, we were turned away because a large party was en route from Kingswear to make the trip to Totnes. The steamer was fully booked. I was ever so disappointed. Believe it or not, I had never been up the River Dart on a cruise, although I was a native of the town. My father and mother, when I was a boy, could not possibly afford such luxuries. My sisters and brother obviously had more chances than I had. However, my brother Sam came to the rescue. He had been employed for a number of years, until he retired, at Philip and Sons, the boat and yacht builders up the river, and they did all the repairs to the steamers. Sam, being a foreman or something of the yard, made himself known and we were all

bundled on the steamer for the trip. I enjoyed that afternoon, I knew more about the river than I had ever known. The commentator was humorous and informative. As he was an old hand at the game, when we returned I said to him "Did you tell the same story about the River fifty years ago?" - he said, "Yes Sir, it's the same River". He was quick on the uptake, although Devonshire people are supposed to be slow in their remarks. It impressed me somewhat. Well, we spent the evening with our friends and relatives and, of course, we had a lot to talk about. Next day, Monday, we did a bit of touring of the countryside; we made a visit to Dartmouth Castle en route and enjoyed that day, ending up in the evening at the Hotel in the company of my brother and sister-in-law. We made the most of our visit to Dartmouth as we were off early next day to do the remainder of our tour.

Morning came, breakfast and the coach was ready to move away; my sister was outside the coach, she thought she may have seen my brother once more. Jenny was loathe to leave, she had made contact with friends of her childhood and after all she had spent most of her young days at Dartmouth, until she got married; myself, I had no wish to remain, since leaving the town as a boy, I had lived here, there and everywhere. I had no permanent friends, except my wife and her home was my home, but with my sister it was different. However, we moved off sharp to time, my sister got on board, disappointed.

We passed through Taunton to Lynmouth during the forenoon. The country was lovely; we lunched at Lynton and proceeded to Bude where we stayed the night. I had been to Bude before with my wife. That day, however, was a very wet one and Bude was being lashed with a storm from the North West, but this visit showed the beauty of the countryside. On the next day we toured North Devon and Cornwall.

Next day we were away back to East Devon, arriving at Exeter for the night. We spent another day there then, after doing a bit of shopping, we were off again to return home on Friday PM. Well, all good things come to an end, home once more. We made a few friends on the Coach, my sister was pleased with the holiday and I think that after being cooped up so long, it made an impact on me somewhat, brought me out of my shell and, despite my age, I let my hair down.

My sister remained with me for six or seven weeks but later in September I had to get a doctor for her. However, the ailment cleared up enough for her to return home in early October. I was glad in one way. I didn't wish her to go but I was very worried, perhaps unduly, that I would have to look after her, another sick person. As a matter of fact, the day after she left, I did not feel too good myself, I felt tired - it was the re-action I expect. Anyway, Jenny wrote to me a week after and told me she had the

complaint back again and, myself, my legs were playing me up again. I also contracted bronchitis. I had never had that complaint, so the doctor prescribed for me. He was attending me for my leg troubles already, and so I was confined to the house once more, and remained so for some considerable time. Christmas came and went, I was getting used to being on my own once more. I had very few visitors, even the Church never made any visits.

January 1970 was a cold month. My leg was getting very painful, in fact, it was weeping. I got very little sleep at night, it seemed it was worse at night than during the day. Doctor Simpson visited me, I told her about the pain but she did not prescribe anything. It was one of those things. Then, in late February, I contracted a virus infection, my cough was bad and my throat was sore; the doctor called twice that week, my throat was still sore but there was a slight improvement. Early March my foot gave me a lot of pain and eventually the doctor provided a nurse to attend to my foot. She bandaged it with Itchototape and I then found I could hardly walk.

All through January, February and March I was in acute pain; there was one thing, Pat and Margaret visited me quite often, the nurse started to come every Monday, my foot was so bad, but there was no improvement. Then in early May, the nurse came twice a week; I slept a lot in the chair during the day because of the pain at night. The nurse said it was rheumatism.

My sister paid me a visit during May and June for about four weeks. I could not get out much, it was painful to walk about. However, for a change I went to Jenny's place for a fortnight. I didn't enjoy it much because I was in such pain, and for my sister I was poor company, although she did her best and bandaged my leg everyday. When I got back home again in early August, the nurse called and altered the treatment for my leg; the nurse was now calling three times a week.

And so throughout the year I was receiving medical attention, very little sleep as the pain was worse during that period; I did relieve it at times by sitting in the chair which apparently, as I know now, I shouldn't have done because of circulatory troubles, but during the year I helped to do a lot of decorating and improvements to the bungalow; I was glad I could occupy my mind, other than my disability.

Another year had started, it was very cold, as winters in England usually are, and about this time the gas appliances were altered to Natural Gas. Having no coal fires and my heating appliances being gas, I had to rely on electricity; for a couple of days, the bungalow cooled down, and I felt the cold a bit but I had to stick it out.

Of course, during the ensuing months I
not go out because of the

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attention. It was in late March when the doctor made a visit, he looked at the bandage on my leg and took it off, and the next day the nurse called and put on a proper bandage. The next week I was informed I would have to attend Hospital, as an out-patient, twice a week.

Well, it was quite a treat for me to get out, even by Ambulance, because I saw quite a lot of Gosport. I was amazed at the size of the borough. Sometimes, a private car called and I was taken as far as Lee-on-Solent and Stubbington. One person was very good, she took me out of the usual route on return journeys, letting me see more and more of Gosport than I would do otherwise. Of course, there were regular patients like myself, on regular days, so I was able to make friends and have a chat; although I am hard of hearing I was able to converse with them and struck up a measure of sociability.

CHAPTER FOURTEENHospital Treatment

I would like at this point to relate about some of the people that impressed me mostly when going backwards and forwards to the Hospital for two years. I make friends very easily and I was surprised that the majority of people whom I met were very much worse than I was. They may not have experienced the amount of pain that I went through, but at least I was able to hobble around with my legs strapped up.

A car called for a patient who resided at Lee-on-Solent; to all intents and purposes he looked quite well but he had attended Hospital for twelve years, every day except Sundays, and I never knew his complaint. He was quite cheerful, conversed ordinarily to people with whom he came in contact, but he never left his home except to go to Hospital; he must have been about forty five years of age - I will call him Mr. R.

But Mr. I, who had to travel by Ambulance on a stretcher for treatment could not, because of spinal trouble, sit down; he had to stand or lie down. I have heard that man singing in the corridor of the Hospital, hobbling along with his two sticks. He had been attending the Out-Patients' Department for thirteen years; aged about fifty years. He lived alone, cooked his own food, was smartly dressed, nicely shaved and clean. How did he do it?

In contrast to that, a man and his wife, Mr. and Mrs. M, about seventy five years of age attended Hospital, both with the same complaint as myself. Invariably he had to give his wife smelling salts en route, because she used to pass out very often. They were both of a more serious nature - I could not crack a joke with them, they could not see the funny side of life at all. However, when I missed them in the Ambulance one week, I enquired as to their welfare and found that it wasn't she who had passed out but it was him; he had got himself into a state of refusing to eat.

A young lady, about thirty years of age, contracted a virus infection. She wore a surgical collar, wore calipers and walked with crutches, always cracking jokes and laughing - a hearty laugh too. What a disability for a young person. One of my regular companions informed me that she too, was or got very despondent; her whole life had changed and she laughed no more. I can realise the situation.

Another fragile old lady, about eighty five years of age so she told me, was always collected on the same day as I had to attend. She had

g trouble but could walk fairly well. She looked after her husband, who was bedridden, for seven or eight years. She said, "I never know what to expect when I get home". One day, she told me, she looked through the letter-box of her next door neighbour and he was lying in the hall. He had got so far and no further. Eventually her husband passed away. She still attends hospital with me. What experiences some people seem to have in their lifetimes.

Last week a lady was collected, from an old peoples' bungalow; she was carried to the ambulance, in the arms of an attendant, very old, very slight, no weight at all; she was put down near me, she was smiling and seemed ever so pleased, and when people spoke to her she smiled and replied. What ailment did she have except old age? She was obviously immobile, couldn't walk, her hands folded in her lap. I thought it was wonderful how some people endure their disablement.

I asked one lady, who was about forty years of age, if there was any improvement in her condition; she could just hobble with her sticks. She said, "With my complaint there is no cure known yet". She told me she gets about her chores and cooking in a chair, and she was quite happy about it too. About once a month someone takes her out in a car, during the summer. In all these cases, and many more with whom I came in contact, they never complained about their ailments. Their conversation was always something other than what they were afflicted with.

My Home Help, Mrs. O, first came to me in 1967 and we were her first assignment as a Home Help during my wife's long illness. She was extremely good and considerate, nothing was too much trouble for her. Promptly on time she was at the house, as soon as the nurse arrived, to help and give assistance, and run my errands. I kept her on when the wife passed away and very soon, within nine months, I required her constant attention myself.

She, of course, had about five or six patients to visit during a day, so I was able to gather from her the disposition of those for whom she worked. One lady, who was confined to an armchair, was rather interested in flowers, so was I. As she was on the telephone, we naturally had a natter - she was on her own practically all day. There was another lady who was totally blind but managed to get about the house somehow. Through my Home Help we got to exchanging letters. Her epistles were rather scrawly but I was able to read them. She got someone to read mine. I sent her a bowl of growing flowers and she was delighted, although they were dead within a few weeks. My Home Help said she had a job to take them away from her.

And so I could go on and on about these people who became known to me casually. I used to think a lot about them and how they fared, some

with just a pension to play about with, trying to make ends meet.

My Home Help sometimes was assigned to the younger generation but she didn't like it very much; some, of course, were genuine cases of people needing help, but quite a lot were tired and lazy. They could go in the garden, dig and tend flowers, but housework, NO. She got very annoyed sometimes and refused to attend them.

Through my daughter-in-law, I joined the Red Cross Club. Some voluntary workers took me and others to the Club and I found jolly company. All were elderly, some disabled; I looked forward to the Friday afternoons, for an hour, and I made many friends. My legs ached a lot but I managed to forget, just for an hour, with the companionship of the members. I went on outings with them too, sometimes just for the afternoon. I was very much at a disadvantage at times because I was not able to walk far. I was always looking for somewhere to rest when I got out of the coach. But I enjoyed the company and they were a jolly crowd. The Organiser, a Mrs. W, shepherded us around like a flock of sheep. She was kind considerate, even tempered and her whole enjoyment seemed to be to make us comfortable and happy.

It was one day in October 1971, that Mrs. C. came to me for help, her husband was taken ill - my wife and I were their great friends. I hobbled around and got a doctor for her, and gave her what assistance I could. Mr. C. had had a stroke. I was deeply sorry for them both, especially for her who decided to nurse him at home. She was my wife's very close friend. They worked together on Red Cross work at Viam Close and later they teamed up together and did some good work for the Church, which had just been built. I myself, as I have mentioned previously, was interested in Toc H work; then when that was disbanded I worked with Mr. C. at the Church, tending the gardens, lawns, and their many fetes and bazaars. Both of our families were very interested but I had to drop out when my wife became ill. But Mr. C. carried on and worked hard, and now he was disabled. So the Church lost both of our services.

Now and again I visited him and I know Mrs. C. had a problem. I had mine but hers was a greater one, because she could not lift him about, whereas I could lift my wife from here to there in a chair.

Sometime in November I had a nasty fall in the Lounge. I turned quickly, after turning off the television, and went spinning across the Lounge and caught the left side of my chest on the arm of the chair. There I was on the floor helpless for about ten minutes. I managed to climb up the chair and sit down. My chest was painful. As it happened it was on a Wednesday, the day before making my routine attendance at the Hospital. I was examined but apart from two nasty bruises, there were no bones broken, so I nursed my

st for about three weeks until the bruises disappeared. I think Christmas that year, for me, passed off very quickly. With leg pains and a bruised chest Christmas was nothing much to me. I did provide myself with a little extra fare. Christmas Day was on Saturday and my Home Help and her husband visited me on Friday but I did not see anyone until the following Wednesday. However, I broke the monotony on Christmas Day by ringing my relations and friends to wish them the compliments of the season. That year my son and daughter-in-law visited me a week before Christmas. Their home was quite a distance away in Essex but somehow I got used to being alone and I expect many others were like me, in similar circumstances. That year, 1971, at Christmas I bought a few presents by post from the Welfare Fund to patronise their Charity. The parcels came one by one eventually. I amused myself by parcelling them up and forwarding them to the people concerned. In addition a reputable firm in Hampshire supplied my Christmas fare for me, so at least I was able to enjoy my own company.

The New Year came along too soon and it was very cold but I kept my bungalow warm. Then on the first Sunday of the New Year, I had a surprise visit from my Home Help and her husband; they informed me that her mother had passed away, so I had no Home Help that week but I managed on my own as best I could. I still attended Hospital twice a week for treatment. How long am I going to be like this I wonder? I was still in pain but I managed to forget it at times. I still attended the Red Cross Club which was a break. I even went to their party in late January.

During February of that year, the Electricity Union decided to make cuts in the power and lighting and I had to resort to candles. I didn't have many and I wrote to my sister in Croydon. She sent me a dozen by post; in this area the shops had sold out. I could not even get an oil lamp; naturally, the television was a blank but I had a radio which I was able to use in the dark when I had run out of candles.

In late February I contracted Bronchitis, the first time in my life that I had the complaint. It was very unpleasant. I was feeling rather rough but eventually it eased up and by early March I was able to get out of doors once more. Summer time for the clocks came around which made things more pleasant, although the winter was still with us. Easter Holidays were early in April, then during that period I saw no-one from Thursday to Tuesday but, as I said previously, I was used to my own company.

It was in May my sister paid me a visit and I could put her up easily. She was good company, not able to walk very well (like myself) but I was able to get her a seat in the Coach for a trip to Sheffield Park one afternoon which she enjoyed and so did I. It was a Red Cross affair so we

and jolly company. On these trips it is obvious people pair up, they are either with their wives or husbands, or their friends, so having her with me was a change. My visit to the Hospital that week I remember plainly. The Nurse informed me my leg was swelling and it had to be reported to the doctor. He ordered me to take water tablets. My sister did not stay long this time, just three weeks. She had placed an order to have her bungalow painted and they wanted to start, so I had to say goodbye to her.

In early July I went on an Outing organised by the Red Cross. It was an all day affair at Eastbourne. I enjoyed the trip immensely, except that the stay at Eastbourne was too long. After lunch we were allowed to enjoy the facilities of the town and beaches; I was handicapped, could not walk far, so I had to spend most of my time on the sea front, going from seat to seat and, as I said before, I had my own company. Anyway the trip was pleasant but, in my opinion and I have heard it said by others, the long stays at seaside resorts for old people become boring. One cannot bathe, visit the sights or tour the town - you have to stay put. Anyway it was a change.

During this month the weather was warm; I was able to sit in the garden and read, watch the birds, even do a bit of weeding but the flowers were very sparse as I was unable to plant any plants in the spring.

Then, in late July, I started to put pen to paper and start writing. What sort of a hash can I make of it. I have to rely on my memory since I had no records of my life I could refer to. Undoubtedly I cannot remember everything that happened day by day. Anyway I was now eighty years of age and I have been able to give some sort of story about myself and what happened during my life.

But this month was not a nice one for me. My Home Help started her holiday, and it was on the second day of her holiday that I had a visit from the Home Help Organiser. She politely informed me that the Minister of Social Security was cutting down on the Home Help Services. Being as I had an income above the Retirement Pension, the service to me was to be taken away. What was I going to do? I was paying the Council at top rate for the service and was not a burden on the Rates. Why! She suggested I should write to the Social Security and explain the circumstances, which I did and I got an answer that my case would come up later for investigation. I did get a visit from the Welfare Officer but nothing happened. I also wrote to the Welfare Officer of the Disablement Pension Board to which I had an acknowledgment and two months later someone appeared, took a few particulars but nothing happened. I know what they did take into consideration and that was the well kept condition of my home, in contrast to others who allowed the place to fall into disrepair and use their means in another way. They were

..lowed to keep the services of a Home Help. I felt victimised! Later an article appeared in the Local Press that there was no cut in the Home Help Service. These people were misinformed obviously. Letters appeared in the Local Press, bearing out the statement that the Home Help services were being cut down, even to those with very low incomes.

I did not see or hear from the Home Help Service after that but matters came to a head. When my Home Help returned from her holiday, she was told by the Organiser the amount of work that would be cut from the service; she promptly gave in her notice and left. I was sorry, she had been with my wife and myself for five and a half years, she gave me good service, and others she attended were equally sorry at her going. They tried to heal the wound by giving her extra work but it didn't work - the people to whom she was attached were taken away from her. The service lost a good servant and her patients a reliable friend. It was pure unadulterated red tape and balderdash on the part of the Social Security Authority. It was inhuman to take help away from people who needed it badly. One sees a lot on Television of the local services available to the elderly, a lot of which is eye-wash, propoganda and poppycock. I feel sure about this, like many others. Little do they know that the expectation of a friendly smile, a chat and a cup of tea to a house bound person makes their day.

In this area, where female labour in industry is hard to get, what chance has an old person to get help; that was my problem. Well luck came my way, for once. A Home Help who was attending a couple a few doors away, I waylaid one day and I asked her if she could help on a private basis; she said she could but I had to wait until she contacted the Organiser. I had the opinion she was not too happy with the people she attended. What happened I am not prepared to say but, as soon as my present Home Help left the service, she came along to help me out.

For the latter part of August I had no help at all. I relied on my neighbour to get a few things as I could not walk to the shops myself - that was out of the question but I could hobble around the house. In early September, the new Home Help came twice a week to get a few necessities for me and do a bit of cleaning.

I was still attending Hospital twice a week but my foot was very painful, more so than usual and I could not sleep at night at all. Many a time I sat in the high chair with the rug round me to get some sleep. Then in early October, on my visit to the Hospital, I told the nurse the sores were getting larger and more painful; then the doctor saw it and recommended heat treatment. I attended Hospital every day and saw the specialist, who examined my leg and recommended certain treatment. All that year, 1972, I

attended Hospital twice a week, and sometimes three times a week until toward the end of the year I went every day. It was just before Christmas that the therapist seemed to be getting nowhere with the treatment - Violet Rays, Infra Red Rays and massage. Mr. P. tried hard to make some impression, but at last he said I had better come into Hospital and have at least a fortnight's rest. Anyway, he would have to speak to the doctor and wait for an opportunity for a bed.

There was one thing about my attendance at Hospital - I had seen more of Gosport than I would otherwise. We sometimes said we were having a "Free Grand Tour". Sometimes a private car picked up three or four; mostly, for those who resided some distance away, it was cheaper to run a car than an ambulance. One lady, Mrs. P.B., said to me more than once, when picking me up to return home, "We will go the long way round to get you home and have a cup of coffee at Stokes Bay en route", getting home just before noon.

It must have been two years since I started receiving "Meals on Wheels". It was a grand service. I would never have had as decent a dinner as they provided for me, for a few days of the week. So it did not matter what time I got home from Hospital, my dinner was outside the door when I returned. When one comes to think about it, I did have quite a change very often from sitting indoors.

Another year had dawned, sometimes it was cold and sometimes wet; like my leg, the pain eased some days and other days it was painful. In fact, once or twice it passed off altogether and I remarked to myself, "What a relief it is to be without pain". Sometimes I said to myself, will it go altogether but no, back it came and very painful it was in the mornings.

Then in the beginning of February, on a Sunday as usual, I rang my sister and she said she was in bed with a heart attack. There was one thing, she had a good neighbour; the doctor had ordered her to stay in bed and a nurse would be in attendance. I was sorry and I hoped she would get well, but I could not go to her and she had no children to call, but she was well looked after.

On the day following my visit to Hospital for treatment, I was told I would have to see the doctor on my next visit. Then on Wednesday he examined my foot and informed the therapist I would have to go into Hospital, and told me that he was going to see about getting a bed. Then on Friday of the same week, the therapist and the Matron had a talk and the result was I had to come into Hospital at 10.30 am the next day. So, as soon as I arrived home, I contacted my Home Help and did a few 'phone calls to tell my relatives. My one concern was "Bobby" the bird, but Margaret said she would look after that, it would amuse the children and I was simply to lock up in

morning and go, leaving the remainder for her to look after. The ambulance was quite early next day, about 9.30 am, so off I went for a rest. That night I had a good

By 11 am, I was safely tucked in bed. Each night's sleep, which was wonderful and the next night was the same. Each day I had Heat Treatment and Wet Dressings - it would seem that Rest was the cure for this complaint. I had good food and the nurses were considerate and helpful, the Sister especially. Thereafter, I spent each day in the Lounge, on a special "Relaxor" chair from about 10 am to 6 p.m.; this chair, by means of a lever, tilted the legs up in the air, my food was brought regularly and I was in no circumstances allowed to put my feet on the ground.

My Home Help visited me occasionally, with Margaret and Pat fairly often but otherwise I had no visitors as all my relations were too far away. I owe a lot to Margaret and Pat. This is the second occasion when I was sick and needed someone to talk to to break the monotony, they took an interest.

During my second week in Hospital my bed was moved to the Sun Trap, where I was able to look out onto the lawn, and even watch the traffic on the cross roads where the Hospital was situated. I still spent most of my time in the Lounge. My third week seemed to have made some improvement, the constant rest with Heat Treatment and Wet Dressings was doing the trick, the therapist mentioned that the leg was healing.

When the doctor visited me at the beginning of my fourth week he ordered the treatment. My bandages had to stay on for a whole week and I allowed to walk but, on no account, was I to sit down without my legs being I hobbled down to the Lounge each morning of that week, returning to the at meal times. I was getting used to walking; I had no treatment that except Rest. On the following Monday I spoke to the Sister in charge the situation and she said I could have the same treatment at home as I living there, with a Home Help and Meals-on-Wheels. I agreed. However, doctor examined my leg again. He was pleased with the results, but he must rest at home and have the services provided.

So I came home the following day, the Home Help had got me some the place warmed up, so I was in clover. I may mention also that Frances, my daughter-in-law, promised to come down by little pain. I must say it was a bit of a rush one msford on my release from Hospital, but there was such a rush one other, there was no chance for her to arrive on time. However, I got indoors, I rang my relatives and friends to acquaint them with the situation. I must say it was a bit of a rush Help, to bring my clothes to Hospital, get food, warm up the .c. Even Bobby my budgerigar was in his usual position again. The doctor ordered me to attend Hospital fortnightly and

leg in the ward from where I was discharged. During the next few weeks, I played ball with the doctor, kept my leg up when sitting, but I was able to get about the bungalow for exercise, then it was in the middle of May that I was able to go out in the garden for the first time. Pat kept the garden tidy and put in some sweet peas, his wife Margaret planted some gladioli. I started pottering about in the garden in early June but on my return from Hospital, one Tuesday, I didn't feel well, sort of run down feeling. The next day I realised that I had caught the virus that was prevalent in Gosport at the time and it lasted about a week. The following Tuesday I attended the Hospital. The doctor was pleased with the condition of the leg but I was to continue keeping it strapped up. His remarks bucked me immensely because I felt fine the next day. I had got over the virus infection apparently.

At the end of July I visited the Hospital, the doctor was on holiday. The sister attended to my dressings, however, was satisfied at the progress and informed me she would contact the doctor to ask him when he wanted to see me again. However, nothing happened. I didn't bother. I bandaged my leg every morning, there did not seem to be any pain now at all - what a relief. My legs got tired but I rested a lot and felt the benefit of the rest. I could not walk far, got out of the way of walking I expect, I must try to get myself more mobile. I walked down the road, for the first time for a long time, to visit a friend and I was quite bucked at my performance.

Apparently, I had ceased attending the Hospital for treatment, because no ambulance called and the doctor must have written me off. At times my legs got very tired and I had to rest them a lot which was to be expected, the condition of my legs being so bad, but I was without pain at last. Funny thing, I haven't wanted to sleep during the day time lately, many a day in the forenoon, I had gone to sleep in the chair. Having so many disturbed nights, I had to make up for the sleep lost. At times I got a bit down in the dumps and have tried very hard to rouse myself to normal.

It was during one of those periods in August when I did not feel well myself, that my Home Help fell sick. The weather was very hot and, to make matters worse, things were not going to plan. My refrigerator started to defrost, my lounge lights went out for no apparent reason and I did not have a scrap of bread in the house. Well, I stopped a Baker who was passing and got out of one difficulty. I remembered the Gas people who came once before in similar circumstances when they disconnected the refrigerator, topped it up, shook it and then put it back when it frosted. I could not do all that but I shook it, lifted it from side to side and it frosted again. When my friend came and saw to the lights in the lounge, and I was in clover

ce more, all the difficulties had been overcome.

Now it was the difficulty of the Home Help Service. I could get along very well with the help of my neighbours - so I did too, but how long will I be able to do it? However, I wrote to my Home Help thanking her for what she had done for me. I know she was sick and I expected her to be sick for some time, but after a fortnight she called on me and said she was feeling much better and she would call again. In the meantime, I tried to get down to the shop to do a bit of shopping, the first time for a very, very long time. I met a few friends on my way there and also on my way back, but I was ever so sorry I over-estimated my ability. I made the journey there all right, but I arrived home very much exhausted. I tried to do too much. I had learned another lesson. I spent two days in bed as a result. My friend called as usual and tried to get a doctor but it was a weekend and there was difficulty. Eventually, I picked up my strength again, after the rest. One cannot go against nature and I must treat it with respect. Well, I am not going to try that again. I was really ill. When I rang my sister in Surrey and told her of my experience, I told her I must practice what I preach. I have often told her she must stay put, because she cannot walk - so must I.

It was early in September that my Home Help called, saw my condition and got my doctor who examined me and informed me that there was nothing specifically wrong. He gave me tablets for my head and medicine for my sickness; he told my Home Help I had to rest and that I was worrying. Anyway within a week I was much better, but I had learned a lesson - to consider my age, take things easily and not fancy I could do this and that.

So I put my writing on the shelf until such times as I am able to collect my thoughts and put pen to paper once more; perhaps I can take up some other pastime or hobby to stop thinking about myself, because that is all it is, alone with your thoughts and imaginations, and they grow and grow to immense proportions. Really one is wrong all the time, until you can come down to earth once more and reason with yourself in a logical way, and listen to the voice of reason.

CHAPTER FIFTEENHappy Ending.

This chapter may or may not be the last one, as I do not know when to finish. My daughter-in-law, a few months ago, said to me "At what point are you going to stop Pop?" I said, "I don't know". There may be many things happen and I am still alive and kicking, so the saying goes. But now the New Year has dawned on me, 1974, and with it a lot of trouble, industrially and economically.

I must pick up the threads of what was left of last year, however. There may be something I would like to write about. I know for instance that my eyesight was failing and it was suggested I should have better lighting arrangements in my rooms. Well, I got that done, so there was a very marked improvement in the dark hours. Even in late September, the weather was good enough for me to potter about in the garden but it was much cooler in the evenings when I was sitting about, reading so I started to enjoy a little warmth from the fire. However, in October the weather was good, so I ventured into the garden once more. Of course, I did too much as usual and did not feel well afterwards. Another lesson - when am I going to learn? But gardening was one of my hobbies, I would stay out in a garden all day.

Well November came, with occasional frosts and rain. My sister became restless once more and went to stay with friends, but returned within a week and said she had a miserable time. Well, that's it. She won't stay put. I, myself, am happy to remain indoors as long as my health is good, but she always wanted to be on the move and cannot enjoy her own company, which is just one of those things. Nature.

During November I passed my time reading and doing jig-saw puzzles and I found out then I was not as good as I was - it took me about four times as long to do a puzzle. Then I started knitting which was a hobby my wife taught me when I first retired in 1958. After a few blunders and dropped stitches, I got into the way of it once more and clicked the needles very comfortably.

December came, and so did something else; my leg started to weep once more, after all that time, and the doctor's efforts, healing my leg as he did, all became undone. I was terribly disappointed. Was I going through all that pain and rigmarole once more? Anyway, a nurse started to attend me again, and I hope there will be a healing once again.

I started worrying about myself more often. On the Thursday

Before Christmas, the nurse said she called on Tuesday but there was no answer. I could hardly credit it, but when the Greengrocer came on Thursday, he also said he could not get any answer. What was I doing on that Tuesday? I didn't go out. I remember getting my dinner from the W.R.V.S. and I remember enjoying my dinner at the usual time, but what happened I do not know. I tested the bell and it was working correctly. Again, later when a friend visited me, she could get no answer. What was happening I do not know. Anyway, there were no further instances, so I passed it off as one of those things.

Christmas cards were arriving and so, although I was alone, I was not forgotten. I could not expect my Home Help to be constantly on my doorstep, as she had her own family gathering. Anyway the days passed, there was food, and television, and warmth, so I must be very thankful that I had that enjoyment at Christmastide, but there is nothing like human companionship.

So the year passed with strife in the coal mines, strife on the Railways, bombs and letter bombs being placed and posted, soldiers being killed in Ulster and Industry easing down because of the unrest. I have my own opinions about these things and I think Greed is uppermost in my mind; to think I served in two world wars for a mere pittance, and to experience such attitudes of the British working man, I am simply astounded. Anyway, nurse came on New Year's Eve, bandaged my leg once more, said it was coming along splendidly, so I was quite bucked at the remarks. That night I retired before the New Year commenced and I think I enjoyed the best rest I had had for a long time. The Year had passed and another had started; what is in store for us all, with such arrogant militant work people. Underlying it all is some vicious factor, like a disease, which must be wiped out and killed, before it can do the British nation some grievous harm.

My 81st birthday passed without incident. I received about four cards wishing me good luck and, like all birthdays when one gets older, they pass with the hope that another one will quickly be in the offing. The days pass, and weeks, the routine of getting up, eating, sitting about reading and amusing oneself as best one can.

It was during the second week of January that we had such terrible gales and strong winds. There was quite a bit of destruction everywhere. I myself, not being able to venture out of the house, was informed by a good Samaritan that a Ridge tile was loose on my roof. I made great efforts to replace it, but I was wasting my time 'phoning for help in consequence of which, in the following morning very early, there was a crash and I knew what was happening. My worry was, would the rain come into the bedroom? However, after a few days I got it replaced, just in time as the rain came down again very heavily, so I was in luck. My brother Henry, I was told, would

to go to Hospital and I was informed, to make matters worse, he had a grene in the leg which made an amputation necessary. My Home Help was away that week, so I saw no-one, except the Women's Voluntary Service which brought my dinners four times a week.

Advertisements appeared in the Daily Press, supplying a form, which could be forwarded to the Electoral Officer. There was to be a General Election on 28th February. I applied, getting my Home Help to sign it when she appeared the following week, and later I received a ballot form. Election Day came but I went to bed early; I was sick and depressed. This had been coming on for a fortnight but I was fighting it without the aid of a doctor's advice, but on the first day of March I had to call the doctor who prescribed medicine and tablets. He told my Home Help I was getting old - as if I didn't know. I expect he knew what was wrong with me but he didn't know the cause. Silly-like, I didn't tell him because I never thought about it. It was a nervous re-action from the First World War and my experiences, which he knew nothing about - in fact, he was not old enough to know much about the Second World War either.

That same night I went to bed early, Bobby (my budgerigar) seemed to be ailing, sitting about at the bottom of the cage. During the day, when I opened his cage door, he flew out and sat on the back of my chair, only going back to his cage to feed. My friend Pat came early next morning to pay me a visit, as he knew I was groggy, and I asked him to look at the bird. Bobby was dead. I felt the loss of that bird a lot. He was a pal, I talked to him, like I would a child. That's how one gets when alone, which I have been for days on end. I have even been a week without seeing anyone. So you can imagine my disquiet at my loss and, not being too good myself, it made matters worse. There are many more like me, but I am just expressing my feelings on paper. It's a very lonely life.

Once again, I had another attack of nerves. I walked the bungalow, backwards and forwards, my head was bad, I was sick and trembling. I tried hard to overcome my condition - it seemed to be always happening at weekends, when my own doctor was perhaps not available. However, a duty doctor of the group came along on a Sunday in mid March, a Doctor Hanken. I knew him casually and I knew he was very forthright. He sat in the chair opposite me and I told him of my past experience and trouble (he was one to whom one could talk) and I think I did most of the talking. It was good to share one's troubles; anyway, he sized up the situation, prescribed a stronger tablet and informed me that it was up to me to fight it. He also told me I should have companionship of my own age and would recommend that I should go to a local Old Folks' Home in due course. His remarks were reasonable

my way of thinking correct. But, how was I to go about it. I wanted to decide what was to be done.

It is now the beginning of July. I have not been able to write this last few weeks, but at last I have taken hold of myself and thrown off the depression, sickness and nerves. They are really beasts and when one is by oneself it is worse, because nothing on earth can stop a person thinking. The time spent, since my doctor visited me, was conjuring up in my mind the ways and means of getting human companionship. I shared my trouble with a friend and she, knowing of my efforts in nursing my wife for so long, immediately said - Re-action and Stress.

Then I had a long talk with my sister on the telephone (she resides in the London area); she advised me to let people know how I was situated and it is surprising what help you can get voluntarily. This I did through the Welfare Officer and I received a visit from a voluntary worker. Next I contacted an agency who supplied me with a visitor two or three times a week. This lasted three weeks and during that time I did most of the talking - quite a one-sided affair. Well, that didn't work because I wanted conversation, no matter what the subject, because really my knowledge of the world in general had broadened my mind.

Now I am back to square one, once more. My son and daughter-in-law made me a visit and we had quite a talk about things, so now I am waiting on their decision as to what advice they can give me.

Well my son and family went on holiday in late July to Tenby in North Wales, they seemed to enjoy the break with just one bad day. I am rather inclined to think they would like the West Country because of the mild atmosphere as the East Country where they are is rather cold, spicy breezes from the North Sea but there, that's where their work is, so they must stay put for a while.

A copy of "Yours", a "Help the Aged" publication, was given me by the Welfare Officer which started me off on another tack to employ my mind. The articles in the paper were good, down to earth sense, written by people who had a close knowledge of the elderly. One advert advised people to take up the idea of writing letters to "Pen Friends". Well I sent two letters and I got four replies, in due course; it takes a long time, so they advised writers to wait. My letters all came from women, one from Bradford-on-Avon, two from Sussex and one from Chelmsford in Essex. All four writers are younger than I am, as they get about shopping, travelling, going to Clubs, riding cycles, but their replies were most interesting. Well, up to the present I am keeping up the correspondence, as I like writing. One said she wished she could write like me, but you see I have a lot to write about, my

ences, my life and I cannot express it all in one single letter, so I
 , them some of my episodes, piecemeal as it were; whether I repeat myself,
 don't know.

July came and my Home Help informed me she was going to an appoint-
 ment at a school, as a cleaner for a fortnight, after which she was going on
 a week's holiday. I could not do anything about it, she wanted more money
 and they were paying well. Meanwhile, a domestic agency supplied me with
 another person during the interim period. I disliked it very much but I was
 glad to have some-one to post letters, do my shopping, etc. During this
 period I had another attack of nerves but I got over it very well in a couple
 of days. Anyway, before the three weeks were up of Margaret's absence, she
 wanted to come back but she could not come back until the three weeks had
 elapsed as the other lady was engaged for that period.

It was at the end of July that George and Frances made a decision
 that they would welcome me to live with them at Howe Green and I was only too
 glad to agree with the decision they made. George was placing the sale of
 the bungalow in House Agents' hands and was taking responsibility for the
 selling. That relieved my mind quite a lot.

My friend Pat had previously hinted he would paint the bungalow for
 me so during the holiday week, at the beginning of August, he made a good
 start. He had to carry on the following week, on returning from work, but by
 the Saturday of the week ending 17th August the bungalow was repainted and my
 previous Home Help, his wife, mowed the lawns, cleared up the weeds and made
 the place most presentable. It was most opportune because House Agents arrived
 soon after, and started measuring up for the information of probable customers
 wishing to buy.

Then Margaret, my Home Help, wished to terminate the job with me.
 I anticipated this, somehow or other, I sensed that she was ill at ease, as she
 was trying to do too much. Anyway she was unpredictable and could not be
 depended on, although she was a good worker and good shopper, but the fact of
 the matter was she had work in the evenings at a Nursing Home at Stubbington,
 so perhaps she thought that was enough. When I say she was unpredictable,
 one never knew whether she was going to turn up or not. Another thing, she
 had three or four jobs, during the last couple of months of an evening, so
 there is a possibility she will not stay in the Nursing Home work for long.
 Anyway, I have only seen her once this week, so she might as well stay away
 altogether, as far as I am concerned. I am lucky, however, as my previous
 Home Help volunteered to come back to me, to do a bit of cleaning, shopping,
 etc. I myself can get around the bungalow a bit, so I have nothing to worry
 about except the old complaint, human companionship.

There have been five or six callers visiting the bungalow as prospective buyers. They all seemed pleased at what they saw but, of course, far as I know money is in short supply at the present, especially among the younger generation, although the majority earn good wages. What with rising costs and prices, it is hard going for some people with families. Where people of my time went without if they could not buy, there is a different attitude to life at present. They marry young, not thinking of the responsibility of costs and accommodation, then complain to the Social Security for help. Anyway, it's not my world, that has gone, but not forgotten because we were happier. Sometimes I wonder if I am doing right in leaving my little bungalow home. Ada and I were very happy here, with friends we had made, when we were active, but now it seems I shall enjoy the welcome given me by my son and daughter-in-law, in that I shall have a sense of nearness, of belonging to someone, with a friendly chat and a joke, which will make life worth living.

It was a little while, probably three weeks, before anything transpired about the purchasing of the bungalow. I was like a guide to an historic house at times, showing all the good points of the conveniences, but not the bad points. No house is what you like it to be and everyone has a different idea to suit themselves. Likely purchasers came from far and near, Carlisle, Birmingham and London; all expressed their appreciation of what they saw but the crux of the matter was money. I was sorry for some of the young people, some married, some not married - how they would like it, if only! The housing shortage is extremely acute and young people making a start in life should be given a chance. The older ones have their home but, of course, want to better themselves; they have the advantage because they can possibly sell their present home but that is a longer wait and a more complicated job. I had a letter from a lady in the Midlands who was extremely anxious to buy - she offered £1,000 down and £20. per month, how nice of her but she thought I suppose such a transaction was possible over so many years.

Then a bolt from the blue, the agent named a possible customer. I was delighted, my worries would soon be over, but it was such a long drawn out affair - Building Societies, surveyors, etc., made a visit, including dry rot and wood worm firms, and so I waited. Are they going to give a favourable report or not? Anyway a deposit was made eventually and one had to hope for the best and, meanwhile, still a trail of people came and wanted to buy. Then the solicitors of both parties got together and the matter was left to them. Eventually, a date was named for the completion of the sale, it was in four weeks time. Still I could not refuse possible customers who wished to view, my son warned me, nothing is sure until the customer signs

the conveyance.

I had a visit from my son and daughter-in-law. In the few hours they had with me, they covered a lot of ground as to the disposal of the furniture and getting me to their home out of it. Well, I started in my own way towards collecting things together. My Home Help and her husband did all the donkey work, providing boxes, cartons, etc., and it was surprising the amount of junk one acquires, which would never be of any use to me, or to anyone else for that matter.

It is often said that a move is a good thing in one way because all those things put by for a rainy day come to light and you say, "What am I going to do with this?". In any case, it was going to another person's home and they did not want all my leavings, otherwise the removal people could have moved junk and all. I was kept fairly busy in the ensuing weeks, packing with my Home Help and writing letters to my Pension Authorities and Local Boards, such as Rates, Gas, Electricity, Telephone, etc. etc. I think I wrote about fourteen letters in all, including our beloved friend the Income Tax Inspector, who incidentally did not have the courtesy to reply and it was the one and only case too. Well, they will find me, they always do, there is no hope of getting out of their clutches. There was only one incident that worried me in this period - the refrigerator decided to call it a day. It was part of the furnishings to be sold. I got someone to deal with it, but No, it had had its day. Fortunately, I knew some local repair people who replaced it with a second hand one for £5., which actually worked and my conscience was clear.

And so the day came to move, I had to go the day before the removal people arrived. Various authorities came and inspected my meters by 10 am and I was ready at the appointed time for the car, which was going to take me to my new home. Well, the time came but no car. I waited nearly half an hour and after a 'phone message to the people concerned a car came. I honestly believe they had forgotten or failed to book the order - not very businesslike. Anyway, I was on my way; the driver was dumb, I tried to get into conversation with him but there was no hope and, another thing, he had no idea which way he was going, except that the destination was a town in Essex.

So after enquiring at a factory and some Council sewerage people, we got out of Hammersmith and the Tower Bridge area in London and well on our way to Chelmsford. How he got into the London area is anyone's guess, a good hour wasted. He must have used an unnecessary amount of petrol on the trip because, to me, he was just following the traffic, going round and round. All's well that ends well, we arrived, my son and daughter-in-law were there to welcome me and...

but that fell on deaf ears. I am hard of hearing but, to my mind, he was worse.

Smoky, my bird in the back seat, wondered what was happening and it was a whole day before he started chirping once more. I did glance behind me once or twice to see how he was faring, but now he is back to normal.

Now I can say it is a happy ending to my twenty four and a half years at Gosport. I liked the place very much. Did I make the right decision or not; that remains to be seen in the next chapter.

CHAPTER SIXTEENThe End of the Road

I did say, in my previous chapter, that it may be my last chapter, but this one surely must be the end of my memories. I must record however two days after my arrival I acquired a cold, it was a nasty one too. The sudden change of atmosphere in the car obviously left me sneezing and coughing and most of the time during my first fortnight at Howe Green was spent in dirtying paper handkerchiefs. Then it got on my chest so I started to think about doing something about it. My daughter-in-law had already reported to the local surgery to register, so I requested a doctor to give me a visit. I already had a large bottle of dope, which the nurse recommended for me, but still the coughing persisted. My last attack of this kind was five years ago, when I was given penicillin, which eventually left me with poisoning which was the first notion I had that I was allergic to that treatment. It was a nasty affair and I wanted no more, so I am now just coming back to normal and, as the saying goes when enquiring the health of a hospital patient, "Able to sit up and take a little nourishment".

Fortunately, or unfortunately, the room allocated to me was upstairs, the reason being obviously that the bathroom and toilet facilities were there. When one becomes of a certain age, in most cases, these offices are a necessity, more so than when one is younger. The body starts to get fair wear and tear, the calls of nature become more often. It was a large room, centrally heated, with a large view overlooking the Southend Road. At this period of the year, clouds are more persistent than the sun. I should say the view in the summer was very pleasant and even now I can watch the cows grazing in the field opposite the house, which lies back about thirty yards from the main road. To me the English countryside is beautiful, even in winter, the leaves on the trees are brown, rain has left puddles on the road, the grass is green; if I could paint. The view from my window shows me the country as it really is and soon the spring will come, and the trees will come back to their real colour. Although I am a West Countryman, and there is no place like the West Country by the way, not because it was where I was born, but because there is some fascination in the hills and dales of a countryside, wherever it may be.

In my travels in early life, both as a boy and a man, I was, in my element, climbing hills, scrambling through woods, mounting hedges to get a better view, watching the cattle grazing and enjoying the smell of a

farmstead as one passed through. Some people can walk through the country lanes and see nothing; just walk and if you were to ask them if that was a beech tree, oak or conifer, or what kind of hedges they were passing through, they simply would not know. I did a lot of time in the Mediterranean and the sun shone most days. I enjoyed the scenery at the various ports I visited but when I came home I was always pleased to be back again in England.

What could one see in the Persian Gulf, for instance, simply nothing, Kuwait with sun baked sands, Bahrein where they dive for pearls, or Aden where I got twenty one silver shillings for a pound; then Port Tewfik and Suez, all much the same, bathed in sweat all day long. The Mediterranean was a little more seasonable, mostly warm but not too hot, Mentone, Villagarcia and Hyeres are nice places but I could not live there permanently, even Malta which, at that time, was the only place where one could get a pint of good English beer; wine is the drink of these Mediterranean countries, and good wine it is, but I always preferred a good English dinner with a pint of English Beer at the N.A.A.F.I. Canteen at Gibraltar, where there were trees and monkeys to watch and admire. So, I say, give me England with all its trouble and strife caused by people who do not know how people exist abroad in those countries.

Living near and on the sea all my life, can you blame me when I say I like to see cows and chickens in preference to ships and oceans of water. We are a sea-going people in our country, because we are surrounded by it, but to get away from it all it is not necessary to go to Malaga or Barcelona, the countryside at home is beautiful, if you look for it, and it's cheaper too. I may be wrong, probably am, but at eighty years of age, there is no more call of the sea, as they say. I hope to be satisfied and stay put, the spirit of adventure has gone, the younger generation must take over. Eminent people of my age, Mr. Macmillan, Earl Mountbatten are all in the "Rest your arms Reversed" position, as it says in a section of the Drill Book.

It is November, winter is approaching, there is plenty of rain, fields are flooded but the cows are still grazing opposite, there is very little sunshine, at times it is mild, but we have not yet experienced any cold weather. I watch the traffic along the road and wonder where they are all going; yesterday the road was blocked, above and below where I am living, flood waters has made the traffic ease down, but now it has subsided. People grumble at times of the English weather, but it is England and we are subject to all kinds of weather.

I have a notion just lately that soon, in the future maybe, we shall not be able to discern whether it is Spring or Autumn, Summer or winter. Our winters this last couple of years have not been winter as I

d to know it and the summers, too, cannot be relied on to be able to get out without a raincoat or an umbrella. Daylight lengthens and shortens as we pass through the seasons, but when I was young we could safely say, July and August would be sunny, and around Christmas time there would be snow, lasting until February; the weather is altering to be the same all the year round. There was an interesting programme on Television lately about the Ice Age coming to us again, sooner than we think. The experts with their instruments all over the world seem to bear out my own observations, through the past years.

Soon it will be Christmas, the festivities will start, gifts will pass one to the other, we greet each other with good will, despite all the troublesome times we are experiencing - when will the minority of our people extend their goodwill to others who are less fortunate. There seems to be an element of greed in our people, there is too much money going to the few.

It is early December, as I lay quietly on my bed, I watched the dawn coming in the sky, it must be about 7.30 am. The weather is mild for December but the clouds are moving slowly in the sky, there cannot be much wind and they are not rain clouds, so it must be a fairly dry morning and, as I watched, I tried to memorise what happened to me last Christmas. I knew I was in pain with my leg, I could not get about and, except for my Home Help making me a visit during the week, I knew I would be alone from Friday until the following Thursday, like many others, but at least I got in a stock of food of sorts, so that I would not be hungry. On Christmas Day I promised myself a small tin of chicken, boiled tinned potatoes and Peas, with Fruit and Custard, but it never happened. I felt depressed, I tried to shake it off by walking the bungalow as best I could, so I laid down, got up later and had some hot soup with bread. Eventually, the mood passed and during the remainder of the day I called up my relatives and friends, wished them a Merry Christmas and I felt much better. On Wednesday, Boxing Day, I had my Christmas dinner. Quite a lot of time, off and on, I would gaze out of my front room window but, as usual, not a person passed or any kind of vehicle; everyone was enjoying their own fireside companionship. So, Christmas 1973 was over; on the Thursday the vicinity came to life once more, and my Home Help made her usual visit, and a Meals-on-Wheels came at 11.30 am, by the W.R.V.S. with whom I had an occasional chat. Although I had a couple of bottles of wine in the cupboard, I touched none of it; one of the bottles was given to me by my son who had made a visit a week before Christmas and it was quite a long time afterwards that I thought of tasting the wine, - even my Christmas pudding which I had bought was still in the cupboard in February.

Now this year there is a different view of life, contentment, me-one to talk to occasionally, better food, something to see, even if I on't go far, cows grazing in the field opposite, my son, daughter-in-law and grandson I see, which has made things more interesting. Gosport is a memory which can be easily forgotten, except that I left behind two good friends, and only two - those two stuck to me in my bad times, when I nursed my wife for so long, and helped me over the stile.

My narrative or story must end; there must be a finish as now it is only a day by day affair. I have tried to remember what happened from when I was born in 1893 to the present day. Next month I shall be eighty two years of age. I was eighty when I started writing on the impulse of the moment but this last few months I have not felt like writing anything at all. Obviously, there are a lot of gaps that I am unable to fill up, as I never kept a record of anything, not even a diary until later years, so I haven't done too badly in piecing together what I could remember.

I donated a small sum to the "Help the Aged" Charity and in return I receive a free copy of their monthly paper called "Yours". In the October 1974 issue was an article under the title "To a great Lady". Whoever wrote that article had an intimate knowledge of the lives of those born in the years 1892-1893. It described that they were of age when the "First World War" broke out, when they experienced hunger and depression in their young lives, and the misery that existed up to 1932 and 1933. What was written in that article was true. I had been hungry and even thirsty during that period, we had a struggle to exist, not live. It was a sad time.

On top of the rough time I had during that War, coming out of the services, on the dole for six months, I got desperate. Fortunately for me I had somewhere to live, with my wife's mother; she was good to us both and between us we survived.

Christmas 1974 is over, a New Year has started, but I must say, I did enjoy the company at Christmas, although only brief, what a difference it was to my basin of soup last year, when I felt very much alone.

Once again on New Year's Day I felt under the weather, slightly depressed and wanting to sleep. I spoke to my daughter-in-law about these funny feelings that I experienced and she said, "Pop, you are getting old, you will get these ups and downs, just think of the things you haven't got". That is it in a nutshell. Well, today I feel like writing again and think of those I saw on television, young people confined to a chair who cannot feed themselves, and what their life must be like, so I must be thankful at my age I am able to walk, eat, read and write, and think of others in less fortunate circumstances. Even today I remembered a nursing sister who was

interested in spastics, so I gathered Christmas cards together, made a parcel of them to send to her as, in some way, they may get enjoyment out of them.

Now Easter has passed, the last three months have been months of low clouds and gloom, if it wasn't raining, it was not much better because of very little sunshine. Gardeners have been frustrated during the Easter period, when they normally would be spending their break from every day life mowing lawns, turning the ground over and plantings seeds for the summer showing. I don't remember such inclement weather during the Easter period.

My doctor visited me a few days ago to give me a check-up. The Englishman's disease has made me puff and blow like a broken down cab horse, the least exertion has been accompanied by fits of coughing. I explained to him I wanted to get cracking, moving about and doing something worth while. He said, "If you were perfectly fit you will never be like me". I thought to myself, what a polite way of telling a patient he was getting old. Somehow, I refuse to think I am getting older. I suppose I am and with all the attendant aches and pains, coupled with partial immobility, it must be so.

Yesterday morning I sat in my chair, after making three attempts to make my bed, and said to myself "You have got two speeds old boy - Dead Slow and Stop". This brought to my mind the West Countryman's way of life; he is said to be slow in gait, slow in speech and not very quick on the uptake, but as I am a West Countryman myself, although having left it since I was fourteen years of age, I would like to add to that little quotation and say "But don't underestimate his intelligence, whatever you do, he gets to his target just as quick, if not quicker, than the most of us".

Since living alone for a considerable period, I have learned to talk to myself, it's company, yet there is an old saying that to talk to yourself was a sign of insanity but lately, according to an eminent professor of the U.S.A., it is considered a sign of intelligence. Who knows? I read and listen to all these eminent people who express their views, and they are allowed to of course, but I have come to the conclusion they are all riding their own "Hobby Horses". Like the Press, T.V. and Radio, they exaggerate and express their views but you know, as one who has lived a long time, I listen to and read what they have to say, and smile to myself and say, ten chances to one, you're wrong. That's life, isn't it. In a democratic society you are allowed to say what you like, as long as you do not libel anyone. But, as one gets older, day by day, the fact of saying what you think and not what other people think you ought to say becomes natural. Similarly, you get into the habit of doing what you want to do, and not what other people think you ought to do; it's just like that. To be a good listener is a gift; as one who has knocked about a bit, it is reasonable

to say, when another person makes a remark, "Why did they say that", what is in the back of his mind to say it. It's worth thinking about.

While I am on the subject of the mind, I would like to relate that I have been dubbed as Psychic. Two years ago I was watching television and, all at once, I saw my wife in duplicate in my vision. Definitely, I didn't imagine it, the picture of her was there for about five seconds. When the Vicar of a nearby Church visited me, I spoke to him about it. He did not seem surprised but asked for my Bible and turned it up, somewhere in the New Testament which related to that sort of thing. Also I know I am telepathic. In several instances, I wrote a letter to someone and a letter arrived from that person the same day; we had both been writing at the same time - can it be a coincidence? I think not. Then, in the course of conversation it has happened that what I had been thinking in reply was answered by the person with whom I was in conversation. However, the subject is too deep for me to understand or fathom; so I must let it rest.

So I must come to an end of my story sometime and it might as well be now as day by day passes and nothing untoward happens. I am simply enjoying the rest and the quietness of every day life. Nothing seems to matter about things in general. The present generation and the future ones must fight their own battles of everyday life, the same as I did when I was younger and full of zeal in my various occupations.

Well, I haven't written for such a long time now; the weather has been cloudy and because of my age I must have a good light. I even had the cheek to go to an optician but they said they could help me just a little but I must realise I was nearly eighty three. Well, there is nothing like trying and as I have said all my life, don't give in - "Have a go". So I thought this should be the end of my story, but something else turned up.

My son and daughter-in-law wanted to go on holiday and I could not tramp around with them. So the Social Services were contacted and after quite a long time, we had information that I could go to Brewster House, Heybridge as a guest, so I accepted the inevitable and went. It was an experience and that's about all; the people were very old, hospitalised, well looked after but I was out of my element altogether. No-one wrote a letter, no-one read a book, no games, just put in a chair, day by day, went to sleep and waited for the next meal bells. So after a few days I was disappointed but I had to stop there. It was such a lovely place, so I decided to write about it to finish off my experiences. I shall be able to write a letter, but not as I do now, putting thoughts on paper for hours.

So, I shall add Brewster House to my story and that will be the end.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

Brewster House, Heybridge - Home for the Elderly

I would like to relate how I came to be on a holiday at this Home, during the absence of my son and daughter-in-law, who were on holiday.

SERVICES My first intimation of the fact was the appearance of a Social Security Officer earlier in the year. Not being in good health at the time, I accepted the fact of her enquiries, not being much concerned as to what was happening. I was quite averse to entering a social institution voluntarily, as the same situation arose from my previous visit from another doctor in another town. At that time I intended to sell up and place myself in a Nursing Home but there was a waiting list. However, I came to live at Howe Green, near Chelmsford as my son and daughter-in-law had invited me to live with them, giving me separate accommodation and, after a period of nine months, I seemed to have improved in health quite a lot, for which I was thankful in more ways than one.

Anyway, a date was given me by the Authorities concerned, with accommodation at Brewster House. Obviously my relatives wanted a holiday and at eighty two years of age, they couldn't take me, as I would certainly be a damp squib to their activities. So I visited the Home one very hot day in August, so you can imagine that the elderly felt just the same as I did, with little or no energy. The Matron was very kind and showed us around the establishment and I could see everyone was well looked after. Still I was pessimistic as I do not like the loss of my freedom, as I thought, well time will tell and see how I get on.

I hoped to be able to do a little knitting, writing and reading. I should be bored stiff without having something to read, do or talk about. It will be an experience which I had not contemplated during the latter days of my life, so I shall be able to add a little more to my memoirs which I have been writing.

Well Saturday, August 16th came and we left home at Howe Green about 10.45 am and after a little dashing around Heybridge we eventually found the place once more. The day was very uneventful for me, as I was in strange surroundings - everyone seemed so quiet and lonely. I was allocated a seat at the dinner table, but could not get much conversation with anyone. I was given a chair in a room mostly of ladies, and I think I spent nearly all my day there, except for tea which was at 4.30 pm. I had to revert to my book for quite a long time and it seemed to me a sheer waste of time. I was

able to negotiate the stairs fairly well, very slowly of course, and arranged all my belongings in the room.

The room consisted of a bed, wardrobe, bedside table, wash basin and clothes chest; of course, most of my belongings consisted of salt and sterile dressings. (I was having saline treatment).

As I said, tea time was at 4.30 pm, fairly nice tea but from what I could gather there would be nothing more to eat until 8.30 am next morning.

Brewster House is a splendid house and the elderly are well looked after, regimented sort of, but I am sorry to say it is not my cup of tea; people are so quiet, I cannot expect otherwise I suppose but I do like to get into conversation with people. However, that's my first day at Brewster House. Well 7 pm came that evening and I was proved wrong because there was a cup of Ovaltine ready, with a piece of bread and butter. Eventually, I went to the BBC 1 Room and watched a programme there until about 10 pm. Bed-time came and I didn't seem to like it much, the lights were switched off at 11 pm and I tried to get to sleep but it must have been very late before I dropped off.

Sunday came with a cup of tea at 6 am and by the time I had made myself presentable the breakfast bell rang, so we all trooped into the dining hall. I picked up my knitting for the first time, but as I was allocated a chair in the dark part of the room, I made a hash of it. So, I said to myself, it's no good reading or knitting as my eyesight was failing, even with new spectacles it was not much better.

Monday arrived, as all days do; I hadn't had a bad night - about four or five hours; the bed was extremely low, it wanted an acrobat to get out of it. I was visited about 11 pm because I had a low light on and when I woke up again about 4 am, I put it on to see the time, and laid there for a while. However, the light was noticed and the Night Lady popped her head inside the door and asked if I was alright. Anyway, a cup of tea arrived as usual about 6 am, so I started to get a move on because breakfast was at 8 am. Anyway, you ought to see the procession moving on with their sticks and supports to keep them upright. The lift is used by a lot of people, apart from those walking on crutches, but I try to make it a practice to use the stairs, it does keep the joints moving.

There was a good breakfast at 8 am, tea about 10.30 am and dinner at 12.30 pm. One could have a cup of tea in the afternoon and tea at 4.30 pm with an extra drink of Ovaltine at about 7 pm.

Today I walked to the newsagents to get a paper and I found there was a General Store there as well, but I believe the Post Office is a long way away. Of course, the elderly have their pensions collected for them, so

now I must start writing letters.

This is my third day here, things seem rather hum-drum as I call it. There are about three sitting rooms where the in-mates can sit and, except for one or two, they sit there practically all day, except for meals when they actually get up to go to the dining hall. It seems to me it is a lovely place, well run with a very effective staff who bathe you, feed you, see that you are in bed by 10 pm, but to me there is a lack of activity. People must be allowed to choose as they wish of course, but there are no games like dominos, cards, chess or ludo, and such things to cause a little brightness. There are, of course, people who cannot walk very far because of their infirmities, but there are quite a lot who could bestir themselves in walking, talking, playing table games - that's my view but I may be wrong of course. But, to sit around in chairs in rooms, seems to me all wrong.

Today, Wednesday, is a nice day, a bit blowy but I got my paper from the shop, had a good read as best I could and passed it to someone else. Despite my bad leg, I decided to have a walk, to keep myself going, just for half an hour. I felt quite able to walk better. I was asked when I returned if it was cold. I said, "No". The air was lovely and I seemed to have enjoyed it. I wrote a couple of letters which were posted by the tea girl (a lady who comes in at 6 am with a cup of tea); the post box is yet too far for me to venture, but I am going to have a try later.

Yesterday was bath day. I cannot bath because of the dressing on my leg, but Dom said I could wash in the ladies' bathroom and dress my leg at the same time; this I did with the assistance of Dom, who gave me a good rub down. Whether or not I put too much salt in the water, I know not, but I didn't have a good night at all, but I suppose it was enough to carry me through the day. There is not much sun today, and being as I am stuck in the corner of a room, knitting and reading were out of the question. So the day is passing and I am writing what has happened for the third day. Up to the present, I don't appreciate it very much; it's too quiet and if one passes a joke there is very little response, that's how it is. Anyway, we will survive; as I said before, this is not my cup of tea. But time will pass as in other days, the worst part is that one is getting older.

So my fourth day is nearly ended. I cannot expect people with all sorts of complaints to be lively; in my opinion they ought to be housed by relatives, but the circumstances do not allow this. What made me think of that, I got into conversation with a lady through knitting. Her son visited her with her in-laws and she told me her son had a nice farm, just a few miles away from here, but here she was on her own and had only been here a week. It makes one think.

day, Thursday, has been very uneventful, it started to rain this morning but it cleared by 10 am. My foot is very painful but I was able to walk to get my paper and a little way round the block. I wish I could have my chair with the light at the back of me, so I could read. Anyway I received three letters, all through "YOURS", the magazine, and also one from Mrs. Keogh, a pen pal. So I spent the afternoon after a little rest in writing a couple more replies to my correspondents. One letter interested me a lot. It was a reply from "Yours" to my letter re "Bereavement". Funnily enough, they agreed partially to what I said so my letter had a little recognition.

Life is very hum-drum. I enquired at the office if they ever received a copy of "Yours". They said, "Yes, at times" but the people never read them. It is funny to see them all sitting around the room just waiting for the bell to ring for the next meal. There are no games like Ludo, Snakes and Ladders, etc. etc. They just simply sit, one or two smoke, but it is very cheerless.

Anyway, I still have some more letters to write tomorrow; perhaps I may be able to add to "Memoirs". Whether I shall get them published, who knows? What matters, but I would like my leg to heal. I must ring up Jenny this evening to see how she is getting on.

Friday, the 22nd August. I am losing count of the days and dates, time passes so quickly, although it seems I have accomplished nothing. I did have a talk with the Matron about the Elderly Magazine of Help the Aged, but there was no effect and I spoke to one official on the staff who said the residents wouldn't read them. There does not seem to be any interest, there are very few getting a morning paper although the newsagent is a hundred yards away, and some of them walk very well, better than I can. Anyway I got out my camera and took a couple of snaps of Brewster House. I must chance whether they come out, there was a little sunshine about, so perhaps it may be alright.

I got a letter from Margaret Constable; her news was not so bright of Pere. It seems he is weakening despite all the attention he is getting at St. Christopher's Hospital. She seems to be very lonely and talks about her neighbour always in pain. I wrote another couple of letters to people in answer to my enquiry in "Yours". I think I am up to date now with my letter writing and able to concentrate on my writing. What writing it will be I don't know, except to put my thoughts on paper just for the record.

The nurse promised to come today but I expect it has been forgotten; I hope I am wrong but they are very busy people. Still, there is plenty of time. At last we are having a little rain, the weather is changing, the mornings get quite cool and, as you can imagine, the cleaners open all the windows and some inmates feel the cold.

I came into the room to have a chat but within a few moments they all started to move. I had noticed this before. In my room there are about eight ladies and two men; the time was 7.30 pm. I enquired from the lady to whom I speak about knitting whether she was going to see the Television programme and she replied, no they were all going to bed. Most of them sleep a lot during the day in the chairs and it is a wonder how they sleep at night. Many a day when I have had my foot treated, and finished about 8.50 pm, I go down to the television for the news but there are never more than two people watching. Life must be so dull for them day after day. I have never caught anyone reading a library book since I have been here. One or two men buy a daily paper but as for the remainder, they are not interested.

Today is Saturday and, as usual, it is quiet. The only movement in the room is when the meal bell rings. Unfortunately, I cannot read my paper downstairs, because I am stuck in the corner where I cannot see. If I have another holiday, it is going to be different from this. The nurse from Maldon was supposed to have called but it was forgotten as usual; I shall have something to say when I get back home again. No good worrying them as they have enough to do, so I must do as best I can. Last night I laid in bed, about 9 pm, as I decided to read, but it was out of the question. I tried to do some knitting today, but it was hopeless. Soon I must get down to tea and watch the grim faces, really there are very few laughs.

Today is Sunday, the 24th August, as usual very early awake, waiting for a cup of tea at 6 am, which never arrived - well, one has to go without. My foot was less painful this morning; I think I was putting too much salt in the water when I bathed it in the evenings. It was rather chilly first thing and down below all the windows were open for fresh air, but it was really too cool for some of the patients sitting about, and I had to remark there was a gale over where I was sitting with the others. Well breakfast came and I had a long felt wanted cup of tea, and had a good breakfast. Then I rested for a while and got a paper to read but where I was sitting I could not read the headlines. However, during the morning I had a walk and got some apples from the fruit shop - he was doing a roaring trade. The sun came out and I sat on the bench for half an hour, then I had another walk and came back about 10.30 am, just as the bell was ringing for tea. So dinner time came. I tried to knit but abandoned it because I could not see, so now it is afternoon and I am doing a bit of writing to record the events of the day. I haven't even got into my book yet; it is interesting but my sight is failing except in a good light, when I am able to read a little, so I shall proceed downstairs once more and see if it is very breezy outside.

I explained to Tom Wright I am not enjoying much of a holiday

ng to wash my foot every evening at 8.30 pm; he replied that it was a holiday for me but that I was here to allow my relatives to have a holiday and, come to think of it, that is correct. The people here seem sleepy with not much life about them; some can walk, others not - anyway I try to get a laugh out of them but it is a hard job.

Today, Monday 25th August with the usual routine and a letter from the Essex Authority about the bill to pay, £19.23 a week, but it is a nice sunny day. I sat on the seat in front reading. For a wonder, they cleared out all the people who sleep in their chairs and put them outside in the fresh air. If you don't make these people move, they won't - they are just simply too tired to move their limbs and they are much better at walking than I am. Well, I can't get on with my knitting, so I am reading but I am taking a long time about it. My foot was very bad in the night, painful, but I eventually got to sleep.

Today has been a lovely sunny day, in fact, too hot for some of us. Lately I have had a lot of trouble with my foot at night; the least movement and the pain starts; the sore does feel really sore and I wonder if anything can be done about it because I cannot sleep. So I reported it to the Matron and within a short while Don Parish arrived. He inspected it and told me to carry on the treatment, but will it affect the pain?

I wrote to George and Frances about the bill for residence at Brewster House. They won't be back until Saturday and I hope to be collected on Sunday - I hope there is no delay. Will they have had a nice holiday. I hope they have. It is very hot indeed to sit outside and the best place is under cover. On Wednesday there is an outing so I shall have to bandage my leg to put my shoe on - what a game!

The 27th August (Wednesday) was an exciting day for me; I hardly anticipated anything like it. I have always wanted to have a good canal cruise, even when my wife was alive, but never knew how to go about it and there are no canals in the Gosport area. However, I was invited to an outing of the inmates of Brewster House, which I naturally accepted and the Matron very kindly herded us into a coach at about one o'clock after dinner. I asked where we were going but no-one seemed to know. However, off we went through villages and lanes; the weather was hot, in fact too hot for me as I sat on the sunny side of the coach.

Eventually, we arrived at Bishops Stortford near a waterway and then I could not fathom out what was happening. Anyway after ten minutes we were invited on board a canal boat called the "Adventuress". We all sat down, the boat started to move and then I realised we were going on a short cruise. At about 3 pm ices were served, where we were sitting (very nice

1) and the boat moved on, weaving its way through the foliage, under ages and the speed was no more than a walking pace. On and on we went through Locks, where we were tied up for a few minutes and passed through a lot of winding waterways - it's funny but no boat passed us in the opposite direction.

About 4.30 pm along came a sumptuous tea of bread and butter, cakes, lettuce, onions, tomatoes, complete with a knife and fork. This was very unexpected and we were all served very well indeed. The Matron with her assistant shepherded us like a hen with her chicks; most were unable to walk very far but even the spastic boy was carried on board to enjoy the fun. I cannot tell you the names of all the places we passed through, there were so many, and the names were all of a peculiar nature. Very few houses were in sight and so we wended our way through hedges, trees and locks until about 5.30 pm and, from the itinerary I bought I learned this canal passed through Essex and Hertford.

So eventually we came to the end of our journey by water; the boat was tied up and we were all on terra firma once more. From what I can gather we were very near the River Thames, so we must have covered some distance. I noticed that the little engine that was pushing us along was in the bows where the boatman sat, guiding his way through all the locks and foliage. He did mention that some of the waterways had been cleaned lately for that purpose. It was a marvellous arrangement; the coach was at the landing stage and in we piled for our return journey. It seemed a long way, we did not get back until 7.30 pm and I was tired. I sent off a card to George and Frances and went to bed - there was no time to look at my foot but, funnily enough, I had no pain whatsoever, I did not take a sleeping pill and I was awake about 6 am, after the best sleep I had had since I came here. It was a glorious trip and I enjoyed it, and I feel fine after my good night's sleep with no pain. I wonder if the salt treatment agrees with me at all - it takes a lot of thinking about.

Today is Thursday and nothing untoward has happened. I had a nice walk round the block, the furthest I have been for a long time. It must have been about a mile and I was a bit tired, but it was good to be able to walk so far. I urgently want to get home for treatment; I do not doubt the treatment is correct but it must be rather a coincidence that I feel so fit today. I have knocked off knitting; I am stuck in a corner, with bad light; my eyesight is failing I know but I do not want to be a cabbage, sitting, sleeping, eating, like the majority are doing. When I see these people so infirm, and the way I feel, I am absolutely out of my element altogether. I can talk to the staff, who are excellent, but Oh! my, of

On the other side of me was a real nose parker; if anyone had any guests she would listen and then join in the conversation, which may have been on family matters. She admitted she could not read or write and when I asked her about the roads around the Home, she said someone had told her their names. Her neighbour, as soon as she had had her breakfast went to sleep, and that is how she spent most of her day. The people on the other side of the room must have been really elderly because they sat where they were put until an attendant came every hour to attend to them. Another man, whoever he was, was about my age and drank a pint of milk before breakfast. He had a small table loaded with fruit; his feet were always on the move and he never stopped twiddling his thumbs - it was constant. Very few of these people received any letters; perhaps they had no-one who was interested in them but, another thing, I never saw anyone write a letter.

Well, these were the type of people I had to sit with all day long and it got monotonous. It was a beautiful home for the elderly, well conducted and supervised, spotlessly clean and the staff showed every consideration to them, dressing them, feeding them, putting them to bed, and no harsh words spoken. There were books for them to read but no-one bothered, they were simply just there and that's all I can say.

Being a policeman once upon a time taught me to be very observant, otherwise I would not have noticed such a lot, but there were two courting couples. When I wrote my letters upstairs in a small alcove, there were two who met regularly but, obviously, I took no notice of them; then there were two who seemed to have the same complaint of running in little steps. Every meal time she met him at his room and off they went, hand in hand to the meal table.

There were two pitiful sights, to my mind, whilst I was there. One was a spastic whose arms were folded permanently across his chest. He had a special chair which he moved with his feet and the daily paper was thrown on the floor in front of him, which he could read and turn over the pages with his toes and after he had finished he handed the paper to someone else, with his feet. The two toes of his right foot were used to do a jig-saw puzzle on the floor and sometimes the attendants helped him. He could only have been about thirty years of age.

The other case was a lady who sat at my table for meals (we always sat at the same table). She was about fifty years of age, very prettily dressed with a head of lovely hair, a charming oval face, slim and she walked well, but to eat food was out of the question; one cut up her food for her but she pushed it away. The attendants knew her, folded a piece of bread and butter and placed it in her mouth. She drank her tea

ne Staff, Matron and Governor did only what was in their interests, but would appear to me that they were "Hospitalized" and didn't want to get out of the rut by meeting other people, which is Life as I see it. Of course, very many had to be looked after and one must consider they are there for a purpose, by an authorised person, but none for me, if I can help it.

In 1972, the B.B.C. ran a programme of "Living for the Elderly" and they also published a booklet called "Seventy Plus" and on page 30 of this booklet was a story of a gentleman of eighty one years who was allotted a chair in a room of elderly people. After sitting for half an hour, this Mr. Scott bawled out - "Good Lord, don't you people ever say anything". Well, that's how I was at this Socialist Hotel at Heybridge - the patients were dumb and never went out into the lovely sunshine.

Since being at Howe Green for a little while, I have made friends. It is a lovely part of Essex with just four houses but the young lady next door visits me on alternate Tuesdays and I visit her. She is now seventy nine years of age but we have a lovely chat. When we part her favourite saying is "Count your Blessings".

I may add I am a proud father and grandfather. My son has three University Degrees, my eldest grandson is an M.Sc. of Computerisation and my second grandson is a B.Sc. in Physics at Cheltenham. To cap it all, my third grandson, now fifteen years of age, on return from my rest at Brewster House in August, presented me with a document to say he had six 'O' Levels. I had promised him a pound for each 'O' Level he got, so I had to fork out.

I am very selective in my television viewing and my favourite programmes are, John Betjeman on Cathedrals, Ernest Clark on "Civilisation", David Attenborough, University Challenge, Ask the Family and, above all, Master Mind. I am not averse to seeing "Top of the Pops" or the "Young Generation" - anything lively.

The light is failing - my eyesight is failing too and because of the First World War my hearing is not as it should be but I hobble around and keep my mind occupied. As I cannot write much nowadays, my mind is employed reading large print books, knitting blankets for the Red Cross and, as my young lady of seventy nine says, the remainder of the time is spent on "Counting my Blessings".

The story of my life may be of use to someone, although perhaps uninteresting, but I can assure you that at times I had to "scrape the barrel" to exist. Well, that's my story. Last year the editor of "Yours" published an article under the heading of "To a great Lady" but the theme of the story was that people who were born in the years 1892, 1893 and 1894 had a rough time.

However, in conclusion if my writing of my life at eighty odd years of any use to any Academic (Historian) students, or others, I am happy to think I have done something for someone, and it has passed away my time, without notes or diaries.

When I look at the current programme on the B.B.C. called "On the Move", I wonder sometimes what sort of life they live, not being able to read or write.

The light is going from my window, it is January and I cannot see very much, but I do hope everyone who reads this will read it as fact and not as imagination.

So, I will continue to "Count my Blessings" and live a contented life in the evening of my days which are left to me, with all the complaints of being old, but I would rather use the word "elderly". I still have a very active mind, although the body is beginning to wear out - like an old car that perhaps ought to be put on the scrap heap.

But life is very sweet.

W.G. ELLIOTT

HOWE GREEN,
CHELMSFORD