

THIS IS A COLLECTION OF MATERIAL THAT WE USED AS A RESOURCE TO START THE PROCESS OF CREATING PLAYLETS ABOUT GALLIPOLI. THE EXTRACTS ARE FROM A MIXTURE OF DIARIES, BOOKS, NEWSPAPERS AND WEBSITES.

Dates given are all from 1915

THE JOURNEY

From the diary of Herbert Algar:-

Sept 25th sailed at 10 am from Liverpool and all aboard were in best of spirits and we were escorted by 3 destroyers. Soon saw the last of dear old England.

Sept 27th In the Bay of Biscay. Slight attack of 'Mal de Mer'. Went to bed rather early

Sept 29th land in sight . North Coast of Africa. Beautiful weather & am quite enjoying the trip.

Oct 1st: Very exciting day. Rescued 32 French Algerian sailors in the Mediterranean. Their ship had been torpedoed. Shortly afterwards they told us how the Austrian submarine was waiting for us. At 4.30 'Alarm' was sounded and as we 'fell in' with our life belts on, our guns, both forrard and aft started speaking. Torpedo missed us and our Naval Gunners claimed hitting her. Good order was kept on board. Captain managed the ship remarkably well. Narrow escape tho'.

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CLACTON TO LIVERPOOL

When we arrived back to Clacton we got the word that we were for the Mediterranean in the course of a fortnight. We were given another leave from Sat. Sept. 11th to 13th. On returning to Camp we were kept very busy preparing for to go off. There has been some more promotions made. L/cpl Rawle being made L/Sergt, in the place of Sergt. Williams as Sergt. Williams being temporarily unfit for foreign service. Some of the cpls did not like that either. But it's just like this they got to like it. Well by Sept. 20th we were all ready to start as an infantry regiment. Our horses being handed over to the Reserve and artillery and some sent to the remount depot. Old Ginger I think was sent to the Remount department. The Reserve has come to Colchester and is going to be billeted there. On Sept. 22nd a lot of them was sent to Clacton to fetch our horses.

On Sept. 22nd we had orders to be ready to move at 11.15 p.m. We were all ready in the train by 12.15 and we left Clacton at 1.10 a.m. 23rd Sept. 1915. All the time we did not know where we were going to get on board to. We went to sleep again then found ourself at Rugby. Where we got some refreshments it being about 7 a.m. From that place on as far as this which is Standon Bridge I have been scribbling in this book as well as viewing the country so you will know why the scribbling is so shaky. I don't think I should like to live up this way as the country is not looking very special. The grass looks rather poor and the roots is choked to death with weed. By what I can find out now we are on the road to Liverpool. Have passed a lot of mines from Rugby to this. Well it's now 9 o'clock and all my mates in this compartment is asleep. The train has not stopped since we left Rugby but I think I must now. Although we did not leave Clacton till late, there were hundreds of people down to the Station to give us a happy send off. We arrived at Liverpool at 11.15 a.m. Had to walk about $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile and carry our packs for to get to the boat. We got on board 11.45 a.m. put away our rifles helmets and got some dinner. The boat we were on was the Olympic. A fine boat she is too. Our billets was on F deck or level. The top being A so we were 6 storeys down as you might say. Our deck is just about the same level as the water. We could keep the port holes open when we were in port but when we got out to sea we had to keep them shut. It is awful close with them closed too but I suppose we must put up with it. As regards sleeping we have to sleep about 100 in a room 40 ft by 20 ft hung up in hammocks and has to be hung up in such a way that when we are in bed we are tap and lap as they say and as tight as anything. We lay in the dock that night. On Friday morn Sept. 24th at about 10 a.m. we moved out of dock to the mouth of the River Mersey and anchored there. Thinking we were going to move the same night. However we were still there the next morn. On Sat morn at 9.45 a.m. Sept. 25th when we were all on Parade on our Parade Deck she started off and has not stopped since.

THE TORPEDO INCIDENT

[ALGAR] Oct 1st: Very exciting day. Rescued 32 French Algerian sailors in the Mediterranean. Their ship had been torpedoed. Shortly afterwards they told us how the Austrian submarine was waiting for us. At 4.30 'Alarm' was sounded and as we 'fell in' with our life belts on, our guns, both forward and aft started speaking. Torpedo missed us and our Naval Gunners claimed hitting her. Good order was kept on board. Captain managed the ship remarkably well. Narrow escape tho'.

[BAKER] A mail is going out tomorrow morning so I must get just a few lines off to you to let you know of our safe arrival at our destination. No sooner had we got here than we heard the Germans had been announcing that they had sunk us with all hands. Well, you can see for yourself that this is not true; I cannot tell you all I would like to, but I think I may safely say that they, or rather their pals, the Austrians, had a go at us but luckily missed us. A very exciting time as you may imagine. Only a few hours previously we had picked up a couple of rowing boats containing the Skipper and crew of a French steamer sunk that very morning by the same fellow that greeted us.

[CROCKER] Oct. 1st and 2nd 1915 – Now I think I must be thankful to be able to write anything in this book. Well on Friday morn when we turned out we were still steaming towards the East. We passed Malta last night sometime. Everything went well before about 2 p.m. when I was sat down in billets. When the boat began to shake a good bit. So to find out he was back pedalling as I say or stopped the boat. That was to pick up two boat loads of sailors that had had their boat blown up by German or Austrian submarine. It was a French Coal Steamer. The party with the submarine came up to them and ordered them to get in their boats then they blew up the coal steamer. Now when we were all waiting for tea at five o'clock all of a sudden the alarm sounded so we rushed for the decks, before we could get there the gun at the stern fired three shots. I thought it was a false alarm like we had had before but as I passed the hospital door I noticed the sick putting on their life belts. All this was real this time for we very narrowly escaped being torpedoed. But we had one of the finest Captains in the world. Called Cpt. Hayes. He saw the submarine but did not alter his course the slightest bit, before he saw the torpedo fired then he turned his boat as quick as he could and turning the bow around in the same direction as the torpedo was coming. Of course that made the stern swing around quickly and luckily just missed the torpedo. Some said the torpedo struck the stern, if he did it must have been very faint or he would have exploded. They said that it was the third time the Captain had turned his ship and escaped the torpedo. When our gun fired on the submarine he disappeared. One of the sailors said they never saw a boat so near upset in his life. The Captain had two reasons for doing as he did, i.e. turning the boat so short right around towards the submarine. One was to swing the stern of the boat around out of the way which luckily he did do and to bring the boat over on one side which I expect was done by turning so short. That causing the side of the boat against the submarine to sink very deep in the water. Then if the torpedo did strike her of course the torpedo travels just below the surface of the water. The torpedo would strike her in such a place that when the boat was brought level again the hole may be above the surface of the water.

This was done in the Ionian Sea just the south west of Greece. This made us alter our course a bit and drove us further around the south of Greece. Well we found out that day about where we were going to. We thought all the time that we were going to Alexandria in Egypt but that was not so for we were making for a small island called Lemnos just off the Dardanelles. Well nothing else happened that day. In fact I think that was enough.

IN MUDROS BAY

[ALGAR] Oct 2nd Arrived at Mudros Harbour after picking up our escort an hour previously. Scores of Allied ships anchored here. Boom put across mouth of harbour. Airships passed overhead.

Oct 3rd Still on board

Oct 4th Transports full of troops leaving for Salonika

Oct 5th still on board

Oct 6th Olympic busy coaling

Oct 7th Gave us Khaki Drill for our serge. South Eastern Mtd Brigade sailed for Cape Helles (Dardanelles) on S.S. Partridge. Gave them a good send off.

Oct 8th Transferred from Olympic to S.S.Osmanieh and left Mudros amid cheers from sailors aboard for Suvla Bay at 3pm.

[CROCKER] Oct.2nd 1915 – When we turned out this morn we found ourselves going north through the Grecian Islands and by 11 a.m. we were in sight of our Island Lemnos. We got in the bay place and anchored by 1 p.m. I was very much surprised to see so many battle ships in there. I don't think there is any place where we can get right on land from this big boat. I should say by the look of it that there's about 50 battleships and about 50 cruisers and a lot of little motor boats. Well nothing is doing, our General has been and seen his master and it don't seem they know what to do with us. It being so hot I am going to sleep on the open deck tonight.

Sunday 3rd Oct. 1915 - The first thing I went to Communion Service at 6.30 a.m. Then I went to a voluntary service on the poop deck. At 10.30 we had to parade with Web equipment less a pack for an inspection by General Halden. I think he was called. Nothing else for the day. The grub was very scarce.

Mon. 4th Oct. – Well here we are stuck in the bay of Lemnos Island. We don't know what they are going to do with us yet. In fact I don't think they know what to do with us. We have not had the chance to land here yet and I am afraid we are not going to have the chance. They were going to let so many per day go off in small boats, but they soon stopped it, as there is some very bad disease on the Island, I think its smallpox. Our boat is taking in water, coal and provisions, so it looks as if we are going to move again in a day or so. The grub we get is very poor. For breakfast we get a small quantity of bread some porage or rather barley meal boiled without any sugar in fact I think there was salt in it this morn. A small bit of very poor butter. And one cup of tea or it may be coffee without any milk or sugar. All together it's about half a belly-full and very poor stuff at that. For dinner we get a drop of soup a bit of meat that almost makes you sick to look at it, a few potatoes and a dry biscuit. The meat is so poor that the most I eat is the biscuit soaked in the soup. For tea a bit of bread and about a teaspoonful of jam and tea without any milk. I have been mess orderly today, lovely weather. That all tonight.

Oct. 5th Tuesday – Same old case. Here we are again stuck in this old bay in the Olympic nearly starved. Breakfast and dinner the same as yesterday but for tea we had a little bit of cheese instead of butter. So we had a cup of tea without sugar a hunch of bread and a bit of cheese. I should not think that they treat the German prisoners worse than that.

Wed. 6th Oct. – Same old tale stuck in the hollow of Lemnos. Parades as usual. One of our parties has gone off the boat tonight and I believe is now proceeding o the Dardanelles. I have heard and I think is correct that we are going there on Friday. This boat has been taking coal all the day, but I don't think we are going any further in this boat. As it's altogether too large to go up there, and I don't suppose they would risk her there either. Our grub is as bad as ever.

Thursday 7th Oct. – Still stuck here in the bay of Lemnos. They have kept us very busy all the day preparing for disembarking tomorrow for a move up the Dardanelles. Have been issued with iron rations as they call it, that is hard biscuits and a tin of corned beef so we have a darn good load. Also a hundred rounds of ammunition. There has been a lot left this boat today. The R.E. Company that's left last night that I mentioned. I heard today that 14 of them were killed by shell fire in landing. Nothing else now I don't think.

Friday Oct. 8th – Turn out in the morn at 4 a.m. and go on parade in marching order at 5.30. Left our equipment on the parade deck. Had breakfast and then paraded again for disembarkment. We got on our new boat at 1.45 p.m. and started off at 2.15 a.m. It was an English boat I believe. But it was a crew of Egyptians on it. It was most amusing to hear them talking. The name of the boat (Osmaneigh). We had a nice trip before we got near the bay of Suvla. We anchored there about 6 p.m. it was nearly dark by that time.

LANDING AT SUVLA BAY

Oct 8th Transferred from Olympic to S.S.Osmanieh and left Mudros amid cheers from sailors aboard for Suvla Bay at 3pm. Arrived at Suvla Bay in evening. Too rough to land. Several men of the West Somerset Yeomanry were precipitated into the sea through trying to board Lighter.

Oct 9th Disembarked from the Osmanieh to a Lighter at 10am and had a rough trip ashore. We were the only troops ever landed by day without being shelled. First experience of shell fire just afterwards. Bit nervous but soon settled down to it. Turks shelling the Base (where we are) pretty heavy.

Oct 10th Had a look round during the day. Didn't appreciate our new home at all. Under artillery range anytime and anywhere.

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[CROCKER] Crocker:- Friday Oct. 8th – Turn out in the morn at 4 a.m. and go on parade in marching order at 5.30. Had breakfast and then paraded again for disembarkment. We got on our new boat at 1.45 p.m. and started off at 2.15 a.m. It was an English boat I believe. But it was a crew of Egyptians on it. It was most amusing to hear them talking. The name of the boat (Osmaneigh). We had a nice trip before we got near the bay of Suvla. We anchored there about 6 p.m. it was nearly dark by that time. About 7.30 p.m. there was a lighter come to take us ashore. Just as the lighter came a thunder storm broke over and a gale of wind. The sea began to raise a good bit. The West Somersets were the first to get off. A very hard job they had too. For the lighter would rise and drop about 10 or 12 ft with the sea. Two of the men slipped overboard but was rescued again. It got so bad that those that was on the lighter had to come back on the Osmaneigh again and it was all dropped about landing till the next morn. It was a small steamer we were on so we had to sleep on the open decks.

Sat. Oct. 9th – Well we got on the lighter and got on land about 2 p.m. I was told off with several others to look after the bagegh (baggage?). So we had a hard trip of it, a lot of hard work carrying the bagegh from the lighter up to the place where it had to be packed. We came under shell fire but none of our party was struck. Although they dropped all around us that was left in charge of the bagegh. When the first shell came we all rushed for the cliff as we saw the others doing. I think there was about 6 or 7 shells killing three moals (sic) and wounded a few men. One piece of shrapnel about 1 ½ lb weigh struck the rock about 3 yards above our heads. So we had hard work very little sleep and very little to eat. As our rations was gone with the regiment.

Sunday Oct. 10th – Sergt. Rawle and myself started off with a part of our bagegh strapped on moals (mules) and small horses. 6 teams all together of course they had their own attendants. We found our Regiment after a lot of searching. About two miles east of the bay of Suvla. I went back again and got some more bagegh and all my own equipment and stayed with the regiment this time. My section had a very good dugout by this time and I had a fairly good sleep that night but the bed was very hard. Only one blanket per man so two sleep together put one blanket on the hard ground and one on the top of us. Any body would hardly think it was a Sunday. We had an open air Service in the night after dark. So we could not sing much for we did not know the hymns and of course we could not see them in our books as it was dark.

[SUTCLIFFE] I heard the engine of another vessel chugging nearby for several minutes until it bumped against our ship's side. It had no superstructure, a lighter of some sort. With the decks of the two vessels roughly level, although the sea was choppy, part of our rail was removed, and a voice from the lighter quietly instructed us to "Move across carefully when you turn comes. Watch the rise and fall, then step across".

Those nearest to the gap in the rail started to do as he said. Occasional pauses brought requests to be quick – but careful – and I soon found myself at the edge trying earnestly to estimate the right moment to step across. One foot on the lighter deck, then it rose 12 inches or so, and in the moment while it sank again I forced myself across the slight gap and the weight of my body and all my equipment carried me forward. It was difficult to avoid crashing into men ahead of me, but this I managed somehow and then braced myself to steady the next oncoming bloke. By lucky chance I hadn't pushed anyone overboard and I certainly didn't intend to be shoved off the lighter by anyone else.

Its deck, I found, was metal – as were the tip and heels of our army boots, so retaining a good foothold presented difficulties. The chaps around me did afford me some support, but they were not to be leant against or grabbed, as their remarks quickly made clear. Certainly, the men on the seaward edge must have had a very dicey trip towards the shore.

[BAKER] We got the first view of the country we are to fight in. I can't say I was overjoyed with the view. Bare rugged hills everywhere and nothing green to be seen. Soon after 10 am the barges came alongside again, and now it was our turn to disembark. There was still enough sea to make the fellows horribly sick during the short passage to shore.

I was in charge of a baggage party and very soon was left with my men whilst all the rest of the Regt.' was marched off up into the hills above. Now commenced a strenuous and exhausting time for me and my men, for we had to sort out every bit of our own Regt.'s baggage from the baggage of the whole brigade, it was an awful job and was rendered none the more agreeable by the fact that, after we had been working hard from noon to four thirty pm the Turks suddenly started shelling our landing place. We all legged to the nearest cover and I own I was in a rotten funk at this my baptism of fire. You hear "bang" quite close and then a whizzing sort of whistling screech and then another bang as the shell explodes. We were right in the line of fire and our cover was not particularly good. I saw a horse badly lacerated and a big piece of shell fell only a few yards from me and just missed a man's head by inches. Altogether eight shells came at three minutes intervals, and then, by common consent so it seemed, everyone came out of dug-outs and cover holes and started calmly to work again. Most of my little party looked pretty scared when I got them together again, but they were quite cheerful. We had to work on long after dark, with precious little to eat and only condense water to drink and the day had been blazing hot. by about 10 pm our quartermaster (who completely lost head and behaved like a silly old woman lost in London) collected twelve mule carts with Indian drivers, and finding that they understood Hindustani I soon had them organised and had the baggage packed. Then off we started into the unknown with a guide at our head.

By midnight we arrived as near our position as the carts could get. By this time my men were pretty near dropping. But I got them to unload the carts and dump the stuff on the hill side and then our adjutant appeared, with a relief party to take over from my men, who had worked, like Trojans, for more than twelve hours. I threw a rug over me and dossed down beneath a bolder but by 3 am I was so cold I couldn't sleep much.

ALGAR'S DIARY – LANDING AT SUVLA BAY

Oct 10th

[ALGAR] Had a look round during the day. Didn't appreciate our new home at all. Under artillery range anytime and anywhere.

Oct 11th

[ALGAR] Saw four of our soldiers killed by enemy skill. Made me pretty nigh sick as this was my first experience of such a thing. Fitting up my dug-out a bit.

Oct 12th

[ALGAR] Regiment on sea shore by day as it is too unhealthy to remain in our night positions. Helped digging 2nd Line Trench under Lieut. Bird, the famous cricketer.

Oct 13th

[ALGAR] Fellows starting to get dysentery. Several gone to Hospital. Heat terrific and flies chronic. Oh for a mosquito net.

Oct 14th

[ALGAR] In the trenches for 24 hours. Enjoyed the experience. Used "best friend" [rifle] with good effect.

Oct 10th

(ALGAR) Had a look round during the day. Didn't appreciate our new home at all. Under artillery range any time and anywhere.

(CROCKER) My section had a very good dugout by this time and I had a fairly good sleep that night but the bed was very hard. Only one blanket per man so two sleep together put one blanket on the hard ground and one on the top of us. Anybody would hardly think it was a Sunday. We had an open air Service in the night after dark. So we could not sing much for we did not know the hymns and of course we could not see them in our books as it was dark.

[BAKER] I am getting along quite well out here, tho' the Turk shells are pretty warm at times. In fact having been up in the firing line twice for 24 hours at a time I feel sure it is a jolly sight safer up there than back in reserve where we are. As far as I can see this campaign has arrived at a sort of stalemate. Both sides have dug themselves in and there they are.

Oct 11th

(ALGAR) Saw four R.Es killed by enemy skill. Made me pretty nigh sick as this was my first experience of such a thing. Fitting up my dug-out a bit.

(CROCKER) Well today we have not done much more than finish our dugout and get things a bit square. There being shells passing overhead most all the time. We being between a lot of our artillery and the Turks artillery. You can hear the shell coming screeching like anything some bursting quite close to us.

Oct 12th

(ALGAR) Regiment on sea shore by day as it is too unhealthy to remain in our night positions. Helped digging 2nd Line Trench under Lieut. Bird, the famous cricketer.

[WIKIPEDIA] [Morice Carlos Bird (25 March 1888, St Michael's Hamlet, Liverpool, Lancashire – 9 December 1933, Broadstone, Dorset) was an English cricketer who played in 10 Tests from 1910 to 1914, all of them in South Africa.

Bird's fame as a cricketer in the years before the First World War rested more on his deeds as a schoolboy than on his prowess as a county or Test player. In 1907, as captain of the Harrow School team, he scored two centuries in the annual match at Lord's against Eton College that was one of the social highlights of the year.

He played a few games for Lancashire that season, then disappeared for two years, reappearing in 1909 with Surrey. On a fairly flimsy record, he was taken by HDG Leveson-Gower on the 1909-10 MCC tour to South Africa, where he played in all five Tests. He took three wickets for 11 runs in his first Test against South Africa at Johannesburg and in the third Test he put on 95 for the seventh wicket with Jack Hobbs, a stand that enabled England to win the match by three wickets. In the fourth match at Cape Town he scored 57 in the first innings.

Back in England, Bird played regularly for Surrey in 1910 and took over as the county's captain from Leveson-Gower for two years from 1911. A forceful right-handed batsman, he scored 1,000 runs in three seasons and also took useful wickets with medium-pace bowling. But he appears never to have been in serious contention for a Test place until selected again for a South African tour in 1913-14, under Johnny Douglas. He made his highest Test score, 61, in the first Test at Durban, putting on 115 for the seventh wicket with Douglas, but achieved little else in the series until he took the first three wickets in South Africa's second innings in the final match, played at Port Elizabeth.

Bird played only a few first-class matches after the First World War. He was coach at his old school and later at Surrey, but Wisden reported that he had been ill for several years before his death at the age of 45.]

(CROCKER) In the afternoon we went by the sea and had a bathe. I have just heard that all the letters we sent from the Olympic has gone down to the bottom of the sea the boat being torpedoed.

Oct 13th

(ALGAR) Fellows starting to get dysentery. Several gone to Hospital. Heat terrific and flies chronic. Oh for a mosquito net.

(CROCKER) In the morn had another bathing parade nothing else much for the day. About midday had the headache something dreadful then I had the diarrhoea nearly half in the camp suffered from the same complaint.

Oct 14th

(ALGAR) In the trenches for 24 hours. Enjoyed the experience. Used "best friend" [rifle] with good effect.

(CROCKER) Went to Doctor this morning. He gave me a number nine and said we were to go to our bunks and keep ourselves as warm as we could. The weather here is very trying for in the night it is VERY cold and mid-day it's all so hot.

[BAKER] What ho the whistling bullets and the screaming shells. Here we are in the midst of 'em.

A detachment of the R1stDY paraded at 04.30am Thursday morning under Major Lord Vivian and marched off to the trenches, arriving at 05.45am. We found they were not ready for us so we had to find what shelter we could on the hill side, and it was a cruelly cold morning. About 9 we got a move on & soon found ourselves with nothing but sandbags between ourselves and Turkish bullets. The section of the trench to which I was deputed runs slick down the side of a rocky steep hill and it must have been an awful job digging down even 3ft. This is the average depth of the trench but of course a high parapet of sand bags filled with stones and rubble is built up all the length of the trench between us and the enemy. On the whole one feels curiously safe. If it were only a matter of bullets, one would not mind, as the sand bags are quite bullet proof, and as you walk up and down the trench you can hear the bullets cracking into the bags or else whistling overhead. It is the shells from the big guns that do all the damage. We have plenty of them all day long but they did hardly any damage this time – one broken arm and a scratched forehead. It is splendid to hear the shells from our own big guns go screaming over our heads and then bang right on to the Turkish trenches. It is surprising how soon one gets accustomed to the noise.

I was having lunch with a couple of officers. Bullet after bullet came crack against the sand bags, behind which we sat in a small dug-out. "It's only old Abdul" said one of the officers laughing "He always carries on like that at our meal times". One shell burst pretty close to our lines during the afternoon, and a hefty piece whizzed past one of the officers' heads. All he did was pick it up and examined it closely. "hullo" he said coolly "Blowed if they ain't getting some new ammunition".

Some of the old hands are extraordinarily cool and think nothing of exposing their heads above the parapet. Our snipers fire through loopholes and a pal looks over the top with binoculars to spot where the shot goes.

FOOD AND FLIES

[IMPERIAL WAR MUSEUM] The hot climate, putrefying bodies and unsanitary conditions led to huge swarms of flies at Gallipoli, which made life almost unbearable for the men there. The flies plagued them all the time, covering any food they opened and making it impossible to eat anything without swallowing some of the insects with it.

[SUTCLIFFE] Most days there were only two items of “solid” food available, namely, hard biscuits and apricot jam. It appeared that, for some weeks, a ship stuffed with these two eatables plus tea, sugar, and canned milk, served as our sole source of supplies.

At first the weather stayed hot, very hot. Some troops, not compelled to English standards of hygiene on account of their easy-going colonial habits, unwittingly fed and caused to multiply millions of dirty, fat flies and any foodstuff, or even hot tea, exposed, however briefly, to their attention instantly turned black with swarms of these filth carriers.

[BAKER] Oh the flies! I forgot to tell you about the flies in the trenches. I thought they were bad enough back here but oh my aunt when I was having my dinner in the officers’ dug-out I literally couldn’t see my mess tin for the cloud of flies. I must have eaten about a million and there were still millions left. A veil to go right over the head and bang down on the shoulders would be invaluable out here.

Flies – flies – flies – millions of ‘em round me as I write, but 20 times worse up in the trenches.

I am writing this in a dug-out in the front-line trenches with forty million flies dancing an insane quadrille around my head and a Turk machine-gun playing on the parapet just outside. I don’t think I have ever been so unspeakably dirty in my life before. Back in the reserve dug-outs, we at least had the sea to wash in. Here every pint of water is doled out with meticulous care, so that for washing purposes one is literally reduced to about a tea-cup full every 24 hours. Everything and everyone is covered with a thick layer of grey powdery dust and, if it rains, goodness alone knows what the state of the trench will be.

LICE

[SUTCLIFFE] In my hole I could sometimes remove my tunic, shirt and vest and destroy all the body lice I could find, replace these garments then take off my trousers. With candle ends scrounged from the office, I could burn off the filthy things infesting the inside seams of my trousers, crush the devils in my long pants and have a couple of days free of the continual biting.

THE TRENCHES

[SUTCLIFFE] An order was given to spread out and, in pairs, start digging holes to give us cover from enemy fire. We had to do this before dawn came with only our small trenching tools to help us. A few blows with our light tools revealed little ordinary soil – instead, it was hard and broke away in flakes and pieces. In my hand it felt like a soft sort of rock. “This is marvellous,” I grumbled. “I suppose we must try, but we shan’t make much of a hole in the time we’ve got.”

We slogged away at it, took turns trying to make a hole just long enough for we two to crouch in. As we penetrated a few inches we could hear the sides shedding bits and pieces, which had to be shovelled out. By dawn our hard, non-stop work had excavated a shallow trench about four feet long, two feet wide and two deep, providing very little cover for two now exhausted, shaky, and rather scared youngsters.

The section of the trench to which I was deputed runs slick down the side of a rocky steep hill and it must have been an awful job digging down even 3ft. This is the average depth of the trench but of course a high parapet of sand bags filled with stones and rubble is built up all the length of the trench between us and the enemy. On the whole one feels curiously safe.

We have made rock dug-outs for ourselves and are by now as comfortable as one amy expect to be in so utterly desolate and abominable a country. Rugged hills and scrub-covered rock everywhere. Not a house or dwelling of any kind to be seen anywhere and water almost as precious as gold and most of it condenser water at that.

General Info:-

The trenches along the western front were easily dug because of the soft chalky ground, but had to be reinforced with wood, sand bags and barbed wire at the top of these trenches to make sure that the soldiers were protected from enemy fire, the trenches were only round 18 inches deep but were hundredths of meters long and there main purpose was to gain more ground by digging more and more to push back the enemy line.

“The trenches weren’t always dug in straight lines. Ideally, they were built with notches consisting of two right – angle bends every 15 meters or so, these were called traverses. If the enemy could get guns in a position where they could fire down the length of a straight trench, the effects could be devastating. Traverse gave protection against this side – on fire (known as enfilade) and from exploding grenades as well.



A few had bivvies, excavated in the walls of trenches, but most men had only the floor of the trench upon which to lie. Here, clothed in their overcoats and wrapped in their single blankets, they slumbered – only to be rudely awakened now and then by the pressure on some part of their anatomy of the feet of a passenger to or from the front line...In the front trenches, where garrisons were relieved by the supports every 24 hours, sleep was, theoretically, not to be thought of. However, the normal man felt that at some time during the 24 hours it was good to close his tired eyes – if only for a few minutes.

the chief occupation is the digging of mile upon mile of endless trench, of sunken road...the carrying of biscuit boxes and building timber for hours daily...the sweeping and disinfecting of trenches in the never ending battle against flies – this is the soldiers life for nine days out of ten in a modern battle.”



The actual fighting at Anzac was easiest of all. The fatigue work was enormous, colossal.

Some may regard a trench as a romantic place, but it makes a thankless home. Most trenches were deep and narrow, safe from rifle fire and pretty secure from shrapnel. Nevertheless accidents did occur. A fellow would keep his head too far above the parapet or look too long through a peep hole and get sniped. Sometimes a bullet penetrated a badly filled sandbag and settled some poor devils account...the trenches zig-zagged all the way, so enemy fire couldn't enfilade for any distance. The sun stared down onto the baked earth and searched out every corner. To provide some shade, fellows stretched blankets overhead, pinned to the walls with bayonets. Sometimes attempts were made to get little comforts, such as seats, shelves and pictures from illustrated papers. But nothing really disguised the horror of these homes.”



Many times one could pass through the trenches without a sign of war other than men polishing their rifles. One would find men shaving, men cooking little dinners, men reading old newspapers or writing love letters, while others were sleeping. Some were naked to the waist, hunting for body lice among the seams and crevices of their shirts.

DEATHS - MAJOR GREIG AND TEDDY HAIN

[ALGAR] Another black day for us. I went to Holy Communion at 7.30 a.m. which was held in the roadway by our camp. When I returned, I met our chaps with picks and shovels going to dig and make houses for the officers. I went with them. We had not been there long before they started shelling us. One shell dropped just behind one of our guns where all the men were just getting ready for firing. That gun was about 400 yards from us. It served them rough. I heard the poor chaps groaning from where we were to work. I don't know really what damage it did do but I heard that 2 men were killed right out and one has his leg and arm blown off and he died later. Several more shells dropped around quite near and very powerful shells too. The strongest I had seen. We were several of us ducked under a stone. We heard a shell coming. The shell exploded about three paces from me and I was hit and had two cuts in the ribs and one in the rear of the shoulder. I don't know if it was a part of the casing of the shell or else it was the stones that he lifted in bursting. It was not much but if we had not ducked under the rock probably we should all have been hurt or killed. This is a sight I shall never forget. When I arose after being hit by the shell and I felt half stunned too it was to see poor Major Greig stretched out with his head nearly off In fact a lot of it gone. A piece of his face nearly as large as the palm of my hand was up by the side of me. I was about three paces from Major Grieg. Major Greig, myself and where the shell bursted formed a triangle. The shell passed through Major's face and neck before he struck the ground and exploded. I think it was a high explosive shell that did the damage.

[NORTH DEVON HERALD] Major Morland Greig, the popular Master of the Devon and Somerset Staghounds, has been killed in action, and in consequence a meet of the hounds which was arranged for Monday morning at Raleigh's Cross has been cancelled. Major Greig had served for many years in the Royal North Devon Hussars (Yeomanry)

[BAKER] Unfortunately the regiment did not come out unscathed this time. Two or three wounded and three killed – one of the latter, alas, my very good pal, Teddy Hain. It was horrible bad luck his going out the way he did. At ten thirty am he was sitting in his dug-out talking to an officer of the Border Regt. Which was relieving us that evening, and the Turk gun nicknamed 'Douglas' started shelling our lines. The very first shell fell bang into Teddy's dug-out and blew the back of his head clean off. The Border officer only got a few wounds in one arm. Teddy's servant who was there, got a hole in his chest – not serious. And the Sergeant Major who was talking to Teddy never even got a scratch. Such are the dreadful whims of warfare.

DYSENTERY

(ALGAR) Fellows starting to get dysentery. Several gone to Hospital. Heat terrific and flies chronic. Oh for a mosquito net.

(CROCKER) In the morn had another bathing parade nothing else much for the day. About midday had the headache something dreadful then I had the diarrhoea nearly half in the camp suffered from the same complaint.

[SPARTACUS EDUCATIONAL] Dysentery is a disease involving the inflammation of the lining of the large intestines. The inflammation causes stomach pains and diarrhoea. Some cases involve vomiting and fever. The bacteria enters the body through the mouth in food or water, and also by human faeces and contact with infected people. The diarrhoea causes people suffering from dysentery to lose important salts and fluids from the body. This can be fatal if the body dehydrates. This disease struck the men in the trenches as there was no proper sanitation. Latrines in the trenches were pits four to five feet deep. When they were within one foot they were supposed to be filled in and the soldiers had the job of digging a new one. Sometimes there was not time for this and men used a nearby shell-hole.

Dysentery caused by contaminated water was especially a problem in the early stages of the war. The main reason for this was that it was some time before regular supplies of water to the trenches could be organised. Soldiers were supplied with water bottles, that could be refilled when they returned to reserve lines. However, the water-bottle supply was rarely enough for their needs and soldiers in the trenches often depended on impure water collected from shell-holes or other cavities. Later, to purify it, chloride of lime was added to the water. This was not popular with the soldiers as they disliked the taste of the purified water.

[IMPERIAL WAR MUSEUM] Fresh water was scarce on the dusty, dry Gallipoli peninsula – particularly at Anzac Cove – and was strictly rationed out. Getting water supplies to the troops was an arduous process. It was brought from abroad by sea and kept in tanks on the coast, then taken up to the trenches by troops or animal transport. The water shortage soon took its toll on men who were already weakened by the harsh climate and living conditions.

[SUTCLIFFE] Dysentery plagued the Army and many men existed in a weakened, dazed condition with only a moderate chance of survival because they had no opportunity to replace the large loss of body fluid caused by the disease. When they finally collapsed, they had to be carried off to the beach, there to await transport to the Greek island hospital or to Egypt. This scourge spread alarmingly and one missed comrades only to learn that they had succumbed to it.

[BAKER] We had had a lot of diarrhoea in the Regt. And one or two dysentery cases, but nothing very serious so far. I expect the winter will do a lot damage and also the water is by no means above suspicion. It would be hard to imagine a more barren and desolate country with its rocky hills and arid plains.

[CROCKER] As you know i was on the sick list but was asked if I would go out in the trenches. I said I would try and did try but i found it very trying as we had a long walk to get there, and this kind of sickness makes anyone very weak.

[North Devon Herald] FREMINGTON SOLDIERS' DEATHS

Fremington has been called upon to mourn the loss of two of her soldier sons, Corpl. FH Withercombe and Trooper Reggie Huxtable, both members of the 1/1st Royal North Devon Hussars, who have found heroes' graves, in that they have given their lives in their country's service. The sad news was received on Tuesday morning in an official communication stating that they had passed away in a Mediterranean Hospital from dysentery.

Corpl. Withecombe was the eldest son of Mr and Mrs EE Withecombe, of Hill Top, Fremington, well-known and respected residents. Prior to the outbreak of war he was in the clerical department of the Barnstaple Cabinet Works, his happy and genial disposition making him extremely popular with the employees. Among the first of a constant stream of callers at Hill Top on Tuesday was Mr Adam Oliver, the manager of the Barnstaple Cabinet Company, who expressed his own deep sympathy and condolences with the bereaved parents and also that of the firm. The deceased's was a promising career, and the regrets occasioned by his early death at the age of 22 extend throughout a wide district, for he was well-known in North Devon and greatly esteemed. Corpl. Withecombe and his brother, Lance-Corpl. Wm. Withecombe (RNDH) inherited their martial zeal from their father. For a quarter of a century Mr EE Withecombe was a member of the Royal North Devon Hussars, and only retired when he reached the age limit. At the time of leaving the service Mr. Withecombe had attained the rank of Farrier Sergeant. The deceased's parents in their great sorrow, made all the more poignant by the news that their youngest son is seriously ill, will have the sincere sympathy of a wide circle of friends and acquaintances.

Trooper Reggie Huxtable, although not a Fremingtonian by birth, is by adoption for he was brought up by his aunt, Miss Huxtable, of Fremington. His parents reside at Bristol. The deceased, who was only 18 years of age, was of excellent physique. Prior to the outbreak of war he was employed on Lord Exmouth's estate, near Exeter. Miss Huxtable has already received many expressions of sympathy in her bereavement.

[North Devon Herald] BARUMITE'S DEATH

Another name has to be added to the list of members of the Royal North Devon Hussars who have succumbed to dysentery while on active service with the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force in the person of Trumpeter Stanley Rowe, eldest son of Mr and Mrs JH Rowe of Sticklepath, Barnstaple. The deceased, who was a member of the regiment prior to the outbreak of war, was 21 years of age and was employed at Braunton Pottery.

[North Devon Herald] MILITARY FUNERAL AT WESTDOWN

The funeral of late Trooper John Robins of the Royal North Devon Hussars took place on Tuesday afternoon amid signs of general sympathy and regret. It was only six weeks ago that the deceased was home on leave, seemingly in the best of health. Afterwards he sailed with his troop to the Mediterranean. He was brought home to Southampton on Monday the 1st, suffering from dysentery, which ended fatally on Friday 5th. He leaves a widow and nine children, seven daughters and two sons.

He was 44 years old.

December 9th

Remainder of Regiment went up to the Rabbit Warren. Fifth of us left behind on account of our feet. Slight improvement altho' can't wear my boots. Strong rumours of evacuation. Hope it's true.

December 10th

Turks shelled in evening as usual. Only 28 fit men left in our Squadron. Am much better. Can walk fairly well.

December 11th

Fed up with going sick. Reported for duty. Formed one of the Advance Guard under Lt Holley as the evacuation was taking place in a few days.

December 12th

Left the peninsular on the SS Ermin for Mudros. Very thankful indeed.

December 13th

Arrived at Mudros safely after a nice trip and embarked on HMS Ascania. Feet much better and can wear my boots.

December 14th

Left Mudros on the Ascania for Alexandria, Egypt, where we eventually arrived on December 21st. Very much struck with the beauty of the harbour and appearance of the town.

December 22nd

Landed at Alexandria and arrived at Sidi Bishr Camp – 7 miles by means of electric trams. What a grand experience to get to a Town once more.

December 23rd and 24th

Resting. Feet nearly well thank goodness.

December 25th

Xmas Day. Thought a lot about Home and felt a bit homesick. Feet decidedly better. Never do I want frost-bite again. Had a fair dinner of boiled beef but no "Duff". Had an orange and bottle of lemonade – a present from the Government. Spent the evening singing Carols etc.

140 men all told – after a Muster Roll Call – out of 500 odd that left England with the Royal 1st Devon Yeomanry.

FROST-BITTEN

[BAKER] 9th December

Since that awful storm on the 26/28th Nov we have had quite lovely, mild weather. I had to go to a Field Ambulance for a couple of days with bad feet. They are really not absolutely right now, as they ache cruelly at nights and have a funny, woolly sort of feeling by day. I'm sure I couldn't march very far on them and am wondering if I shall really be able to get up to the trenches tonight.

[SUTCLIFFE] The man had removed his boots because his feet were so painful. Now swollen considerably they could not be forced back into the boots so he was a right mess. Cold, wet, without footwear, and exposed to weather which I suspect was coming to us direct from Siberia.

To make tea I had to find clean ice, put it in my mess tin, and melt it over the small methylated spirit heater. This Harry could drink and meanwhile phoned Brigade HQ for a man to replace him. Throughout that night he moaned and groaned and sobbed being in awful pain.

My feet felt uncomfortable but I didn't remove my boots then nor for a week or more afterwards. Later, back in Egypt, my already brown toenails turned gradually darker and, at intervals, fell out.

A gradual thaw set in and I learnt more of the tragedy of those of us who now remained. Many men had drowned in flooded trenches from which they could not escape quickly enough or had fallen into when they took a step in the wrong direction in the dark. Others died of cold – a few had laid hands on jars of rum sent up for distribution as tots for all, then drank themselves insensible and perished in the freezing winds.

[ALGAR] Nov 28th: I am very nigh frozen, especially my poor feet. I can't feel them at all.

Nov 29th: Feet very bad and painful. All the regiment bar two men reported sick.

Nov 30th: Resting. Feet very swollen and still no feeling in them after repeatedly massaging them with oil.

Dec 2nd: Feeling stronger though feet no better.

Dec 3rd: Can walk a little today.

Dec 8th: Feet still the same as ever. No improvement.

Dec 9th: Remainder of regiment went up to the Rabbit Warren. Fifth of us left behind on account of our feet. Slight improvement altho' can't wear my boots.

Dec 10th: Am much better. Can walk fairly well.

Dec 13th: Left the peninsular. Feet much better and can wear my boots.

Dec 23rd & 24th: Resting. Feet nearly well thank goodness.

Dec 25th: Feet decidedly better. Never do I want frost bite again.

[WIKIPEDIA] **Frostbite** is the [medical condition](#) in which localized damage is caused to [skin](#) and other [tissues](#) due to [freezing](#). Frostbite is most likely to happen in body parts farthest from the heart and those with large exposed areas. The initial stages of frostbite are sometimes called **frostnip**.

There are four degrees of frostbite. Each of these degrees has varying degrees of pain.^[2]

First degree

This is called frostnip and only affects the surface of the skin, which is frozen. On the onset, there is [itching](#) and [pain](#), and then the skin develops white, red, and yellow patches and becomes numb. The area affected by frostnip usually does not become permanently damaged as only the skin's top layers are affected. Long-term insensitivity to both heat and cold can sometimes happen after suffering from frostnip.

Second degree

If freezing continues, the skin may freeze and harden, but the deep tissues are not affected and remain soft and normal. Second-degree injury usually [blisters](#) 1–2 days after becoming frozen. The blisters may become hard and blackened, but usually appear worse than they are. Most of the injuries heal in one month, but the area may become permanently insensitive to both heat and cold.

Third and fourth degrees



Frostbite 12 days later

If the area freezes further, deep frostbite occurs. The muscles, tendons, blood vessels, and nerves all freeze. The skin is hard, feels waxy, and use of the area is lost temporarily, and in severe cases, permanently. The deep frostbite results in areas of purplish blisters which turn black and which are generally blood-filled. Nerve damage in the area can result in a loss of feeling. This extreme frostbite may result in fingers and toes being [amputated](#) if the area becomes infected with [gangrene](#). If the frostbite has gone on untreated, they may fall off. The extent of the damage done to the area by the freezing process of the frostbite may take several months to assess, and this often delays surgery to remove the dead tissue.^[3]

RUMOURS OF EVACUATION

[BAKER] 11th December

Only 3 minutes to finish this so will just say that important developments are in hand here. Can't say more, but my next letter may probably be from another place.

12th December

I haven't the faintest idea when I shall see the numerous parcels that must be on their way to me. However, all being well, I think I may hint that it won't be in these parts that I shall receive them but in some more peaceful spot further south. For obvious reasons it is quite important for me not to say more than this, but I am hoping that in my next letter I may be able to give full particulars.

[SUTCLIFFE] I also took back to Nieter a rumour, whispered to me as I left Brigade HQ, suggesting that our days on this foreign shore were numbered. The promise of release from our deprivation and danger, so useless, so purposeless, cheered us up considerably

[ALGAR] December 9th

Strong rumours of evacuation. Hope it's true.

PREPARATIONS FOR EVACUATION

[BAKER] 21st December

I had a talk with an officer who was one of the very last to leave the trenches. He told me that he felt it very eerie to walk down the trenches and only to find one man every 50 yds or so. "When it was time for us to go" said the officer, "my word we fairly legged it."

OC'D' and I left a little packet in the reserve trenches for Abdul. It was a box which had contained a lot of luxuries from Morel Cobbett of Bond Street. We filled it half full of earth and put a few empty tins on top and I drew a little sketch and OC'D' wrote a little note to Abdul. We screwed down the lid carefully and left it. I don't know whether Abdul will be taken in, but I expect he will fear a mine, especially as the Engineers left lots of surprise packets of this sort all over the place. There was one particular treat which was rigged up. In an old ruined farm we had stored a lot of cases of biscuits and bully beef which to be left behind. But if Abdul tries to grab any of those boxes and pull it out – well – there will be a considerable explosion.

[SUTCLIFFE] Groups of men quietly withdrew and those remaining had instructions to appear busy and show themselves more – but with reasonable care – to enemy observers.

I heard that members of the Engineer Corps were working in the forward trenches, fixing fuses connected to detonators along the parapets. We hoped they would bang off at regular intervals and kid the Turks that our positions were still manned for a long while after the last soldier had put to sea on a lighter.

[SUTCLIFFE] We reached what I assumed to be the front line trench where all the men, except lookouts, were dozing. Forward again and the front line was our next stop. There, we were each handed a pick or a shovel and our guide led the way up over the firing step and parapet into no man's land, the space between us and the enemy. He spaced us out in groups of four and told us to start digging holes. The picks made more than enough noise on that hard, peculiar ground and we were sitting ducks for any Turks who cared to take a pot shot.

When several Turk light field guns let fly, their nearness surprised me.

No one told us why, at this stage in the campaign, we poor mugs were digging holes in front of the Turk's trenches at great risk to ourselves and our underpants, but even we of the lower orders could guess that we played a part in the great game of bluff. Our top brass hoped John Turk would reason," They can't be leaving yet or they wouldn't be digging work in advanced positions." I

wonder if they were right – if the enemy even cared what we were up to. Perhaps he too had seen enough of the farce. We suffered no casualties.

THE EVACUATION

[BAKER] So many things had to go just right for us if we were all to get away without any catastrophe. Weather had to be just right, there being no jetties or piers, the lighters having to get right up on the beach. And all these conditions had to be just right for us every night for 10 nights. Imagine then our feelings, sitting and waiting our turn to go.

At last our orders came that we were to quit soon after sunset on Sat 18th Dec. We had a perfectly calm and still night with moon well hidden by clouds and mist. We had a 2 ½ mile march from the trenches to the beach where we were to embark. The men were terribly loaded up and I'm afraid there was a lot of straggling.

At last we got to the beach and after a short wait marched aboard the lighter – the same sort of flat-bottomed affair that we first landed in. Out we went to the transport lying out at sea and very soon got on board. As soon as the last man was on, the transport steamed off at full speed and it didn't take us much more than an hour to get across to the island. Here we had another dreadful job as all the regiment had got beautifully mixed up by now and as they had to be landed in small boats there was a lot of sorting out to be done.

Now followed another weary march to our camping ground quite 2 miles off. Most of the men were perfectly exhausted and I don't think the last of us got in much before 2am. Luckily there was a hot meal ready for the men, after which they had to turn to and put up tents. By about 4am they were all under cover and fast asleep. I took a last look round and then collapsed, being utterly done in myself.

[SUTCLIFFE] Impatient and excited, under a partial moon, I waited one night for a code word over the headphones. When it came I passed the "Now" along the line and machine guns were dismantled, our signal lines disconnected, container satchels hung over our shoulders, and rifles and all equipment taken with us, as we all very quietly moved beachwards in a single line. By then, all troops in forward positions had already departed.

Whatever other skills we lacked, organising evacuations was not among them. As we passed a huge store dump, I could see that oil drums had been placed at intervals around it. Thick wires connected them. Fuse wired perhaps....

With no undue hurry we got aboard those all metal lighters once more and chug-chugged away. On a calm sea we transferred without any real accident to a smallish steamboat – it accommodated all who were left of our big Battalion: many had died, but more had gone away sick, some wounded.

The Navy was lobbing shells at the Turks, probably to keep them busy while the very last of our men got way. I noticed positions to the left of our old lines receiving particular attention, but couldn't imagine why.

Soon out of sight of the explosions, some singing started up, our first for many a day. And then we really gave vent to the joy and relief we felt.

[ALGAR]December 12th

Left the peninsular on the SS Ermin for Mudros. Very thankful indeed.

December 13th

Arrived at Mudros safely after a nice trip and embarked on HMS Ascania. Feet much better and can wear my boots.

December 14th

Left Mudros on the Ascania for Alexandria, Egypt, where we eventually arrived on December 21st. Very much struck with the beauty of the harbour and appearance of the town.

December 22nd

Landed at Alexandria and arrived at Sidi Bishr Camp – 7 miles by means of electric trams. What a grand experience to get to a Town once more.

CHRISTMAS DAY

[BAKER] Orders to leave our camp on Imbros came very suddenly at 3pm on Christmas Eve. We marched away down to the landing place and by 8.30pm we were steaming full speed ahead for Mudros Bay (on the island of Limnos). We arrived there at about 11pm the same night and Christmas morning found us packed like sardines (the decks of the small paddle-steamer a literal welter of sprawling humanity) anchored in this wonderful rock-bound harbour which is as big as all Torbay. At about noon on Christmas Day (a very fine hot morning) we hove up and moved alongside the transport which we are now on, a big freighter with iron decks. Having got our Brigade aboard with various details from other units, we officers were 'delighted' to hear that there was only cabin accommodation for 23 out of the 60 odd which we mustered! However, dug-out life hardens one to most things and we soon made ourselves beds in sheltered corners on the upper deck – said beds consisting mostly of a blanket and a waterproof sheet. Presently news came round that several beds in the ship's hospital had been curtained off for officers. I was down there mighty quick and actually got a top bunk with a mattress and pillow! Goodness – how I slept that night – my first night off the ground for 10 weeks! We all had to work much too hard to celebrate Christmas Day in any way. The ship at the time was quit unprepared for such an invasion of troops and it was an awful business getting a meal with 63 of us trying to sit down at tables only meant to sit 20.

On Boxing Day we took on a lot of Australian and New Zealand gunners and guns and yesterday (Monday) we took on 200 horses. They are stamping about above my head as I write this and I'm jolly glad the decks are of iron.

[CROCKER] Sat. Dec. 25th Xmas Day – When we got out this morn we found ourself in sight of Alexandria. We got in port about 8 a.m. Stayed in the bay all the morn. Had a Communion Service and a Church Service. Our dinner was not bad considering we were on board. We had a bit of roast pork and vegetables and a bit of pudding after.

We got off board at 4 p.m. and then walked through and got the other side of Alex where we sat down for about 1 hour and waited for a tram car that took us about 3 miles out along by the side of the sea. On to the sand which covers the country all over here with several palm trees growing about. That night we slept in a mess shed. We got some tea only.

[ALGAR] December 25th – in Sidi Bishr Camp

Xmas Day. Though a lot about Home and felt a bit homesick. Feet decidedly better. Never do I want frost-bite again. Had a fair dinner of boiled beef but no "Duff". Had an orange and bottle of lemonade – a present from the Government. Spent the evening singing Carols etc.

[SUTCLIFFE] Later that night, a message circulated that after careful thought and discussion it had been decided that all parcels intended for men no longer with us – in one sense or another – should be opened and the contents fairly divided among us. The absent men's letters would be cared for pending final disposal.

Christmas nearly upon us, and, next morning, our generous Major had our crowd assemble and announced that arrangement had been made for a supply of beer, lots of it, to be collected from the Forces' Canteen. Volunteers, genuine on this occasion, set off, carrying the large dixies in which the cooks normally prepared stews or tea. When they returned, noticeably more talkative and cheerful than before, they carried far more beer than it appeared likely we could cope with. The distribution of cakes, biscuits, Christmas puddings and sweets from the parcels of absent comrades followed – such a plenitude of good eatables compared with the scarcity during recent months.

[North Devon Herald] XMAS PUDDINGS FOR N DEVON SOLDIERS

Sir, Might I be allowed to trespass on your valuable space, to commend to your readers the fund which it is hoped to raise for despatching a Christmas pudding to each of our own North Devon men on service?

It is proposed to obtain the necessary money for this most worthy object by means of a series of concerts, to be given in the Forester's Hall, Barnstaple, the first of which will be on Monday evening next, the 25th inst., particulars of which will be found in your advertisement columns.

Sympathisers with this endeavour to do something for our own local men on service can therefore, whilst enjoying a high-class musical entertainment, feel they are at the same time helping to send a Christmas pudding to some North Devon soldier.