

**A Reminiscence of War
1939-1945**

James Glass

War was declared on September 1939. It was obvious that conscription was on its way. All the territorials had already been called up. I decided that I would enlist in the Navy. I queued with some fifty others outside the Central halls, Tollcross. We were there in an answer to an announcement in the local papers, News and Dispatch which called for skilled craftsmen. The interview panel were junior type officers and were only interested if you were willing to sign up for twelve years. Since I was only wanting to serve for the duration of hostilities, it was not on! I was told I would hear shortly if I was required on this basis, but no word was forthcoming. After two weeks, on 4th October, I signed on at the Music Hall, George St, "accepted the King's shilling", had a medical, got a rail warrant, and caught the London train at 9.30. Hectic! I got into Kings Cross at 8.30 the following morning. Although it was the regular service train, it was mostly troops from Edinburgh and all stations north.

From Kings Cross I went to Buller Barracks in Aldershot. There, they went through all the army routine - lectures, parades, lots of coming and going as we were assessed and divided up. I was sent, after about a week, to Bullford (kitted out in uniform), where I stayed for two weeks.

Then I was sent in a draft of 50, to Worksop (billeted in the Golden Ball pub, Worksop), to join the 552 Co of the RASC which was part of the first Cavalry Division - which originated in Hull. I parcelled up my civvi clothes and posted them home. At Worksop, we did our marching in Worksop football ground, did rifle drill, went to lectures on duties of the regiment in battle. It was explained to us that being a field regiment, first echelon, we had to supply the front line troops with what was required - petrol, water, ammo.

On 1st December, all the draft got embarkation leave. We got rail warrants. I went from Worksop to Retford to get the train - with lots of the same chaps that came down with me - Charlie Kerr, Edinburgh, Kenny Campbell from Portobello, Alex

Senter, Edinburgh. We had a week's leave, then back to Worksop. During leave, we met in Edinburgh in uniform and had our photo taken at Jerome's. After our week's leave we said our last farewells and returned to Worksop to await the call to arms for real.

I liked Worksop. It was a scenic part of the country. Everyone was very friendly - perhaps because of the uniform. I got friendly with a Methodist Minister in the town and he arranged with friends to get four bikes for us, and we cycled all round the area. We went to Edwinstowe - through the forest on dirt tracks. We met Sherwood foresters who told us directions to the Major Oak, and Long Green where the archers practised.

However, on 28th December, we marched at night to the railway sidings and boarded the troop train for the Southampton - Cherbourg crossing. We went right to the docks and boarded a small boat - "Amsterdam" - an old ferry. It was overcrowded. We slept on deck - about 800 of us. The dock area was full of troops, and the sea was full of small boats like ours - a terrific hive of activity - a whole division, the 1st Cavalry Division, about 12,000 men, on the move.

After disembarking at Cherbourg, we marched through the town to the railway station. En route, we stopped at a French Army field kitchen and were fed. We were all handed a postcard, ready printed: "I am well - arrived safely in France". No other message was allowed - only the name. The cards, duly signed were handed back for dispatch to the UK.

The troop train set off to Marseilles. I remember it stopped at Lyons and we were all allowed out to walk round the town - to get a bit of exercise I suppose. The train went right into the docks and I was almost immediately transferred onto the troopship "Devonshire". On the 30th December we were paraded on the quay and marched through the town - the gallant heroes! Crowds came out to watch and I presume, wish us good luck. On Hogmanay the Devonshire sailed a mile out into the

“roads” to let another ship dock and fill up. Hogmanay looking across the water at the bright lights of Marseilles! We set sail on 3rd January with umpteen other ships - a convoy of troopships, and even ‘horse’ ships - to Haifa. It was so hot through the Med that I slept on the deck, lying looking up at the stars.

The approach to Haifa was beautiful: like a bright painting. The houses were pure white, with red tiles, splashes of bright blue here and there, and above all, Mount Carmel with the lighthouse Stella Maris on the top.

We docked at Haifa, and on to the train for our next camp - Sarafand. I think the journey took about one hour. This was c..20th Jan 1940. It was a huge camp. It was a peacetime camp and was originally wooden bungalows. Wartime had fairly increased it with tents. It was like a small town. It had shops, churches, a hospital. It was five miles east of Tel Aviv. Rahovat camp, with the Scots Greys and their horses, was just over the hill. Robert Haig, in the Greys, came over to visit, and we took photos. The greys had a permanent garrison there.

We were at Sarafand for training. We practised marching, shooting (I won the ‘Cup’ there), did trade tests and workshop practice. I was there for about six months, then we all moved to a new camp at Haifa. It was called Khayat Beach. There were new workshops, and here were the trucks and lorries - and few could drive!

I remember in the middle of the camp had been a girls school, and films were shown on one of the walls. We were only a stones throw from the beach, which was very good. Along the beach was a Crusaders’ Castle - Atlit Castle. Haifa was a good shopping centre, and had beautiful open-roofed cinemas, especially in the Jewish quarter. This allowed all the smoke to drift upward and outward. Everybody smoked.

At this time there had been no fighting in the Middle East at all. Only local skirmishes had to be dealt with, and since it was a British Protectorate, this was mostly done by the Palestinian Police. As the war in Europe increased, hundreds and hundreds

of Jews were landing all along the beaches - not in the harbours off large boats - but in little boats that drove right up on to the sand. The occupants, men, women and children would vanish quick as they could into the hinterland. Of course, they tried to settle on land belonging to the native Arabs, and sporadic fighting took place - too much for the police alone. I was not involved in this.

It was when I was at Khayat Beach that I got sand fly fever. It’s like malaria, except that it doesn’t recur. You run a very high temperature, hot, next minute shivering. The hospital was absolutely full - even the corridors were full. I was taken by ambulance to the hospital at Nazareth. While I was there, General Wavell announced on the B.F. Network that Italy had entered the war. From then on, the Med was closed and all supplies and troops would have to make the long journey round the Cape and up through the Red Sea and Suez. Italy declared War on 10th July 1940 and Paris fell 14th June 1940.

When hostilities ceased, and France accepted terms, on 25th June, what concerned us all was the number of French Foreign Legion troops, all over the Middle East under the control of the Vichy government. We knew trouble would come from them.

Meantime, we continued as before, but realised that the war was on its way to us. The driving instruction was mostly completed; we learned navigation, map reading, how to use sun compasses.

On one of my leave days I went to visit Jerusalem. I went through the Allenby Gate in the wall, into the old city - walked down the Via Dolorosa, saw all the stations of the Cross, and right down into Gethsemane. I went to the Church of all Nations at the foot of the Mount of Olives. I remember St Stephen’s Gate where the first Christian martyr was stoned. There was even a room of the Last Supper! I visited the Wailing Wall. It was most interesting - made a great impression. I remember it very clearly: as if it were yesterday!

Now, Italy had invaded Abyssinia in 1936 and had huge armies in Italian Eritrea and

Libya. The Scots Guards were at the Egyptian/Libyan border in a holding position. That border had been defended against Italy long before the war started. It was obvious that they were hungry for land, and that they would make a push for Suez.

Our division was ordered to Egypt along with the 1st Aussie contingent from Gaza. It took us three days, two night to cross the Sinai desert to El Quantara. The roads were only tarmaced to about a mile outside towns and from then on it was rough, tossing about in the cabs of lorries. El Quantara is near Ismailia on the banks of the Suez canal.

We were heading for Tel el Kebir on the Sweet Water canal bank. There was no road bridge across the Suez and we were ferried across, two trucks at a time. It took forever. Tel el Kebir was a small village. We put up tents and made camp. It was the beginning of a huge camp. It eventually had roads, and filters for the canal water etc. However, this was November 1940 and we only had water in 'Bowsers' - 2 wheeled water trailers holding about 220 gallons.

We stayed for about a month in Tel el Kebir. I remember we spent Christmas there. We put up tents and facilities, and generally got the place ready for more troops.

We got a day's leave to Cairo. We went in trucks. It was about an hour's journey along the Sweetwater canal, through several Arab villages, then Abassia and a tram to Cairo. Five of us kept in a small group. We were required to keep to the European part of town, so we 'did' the shops. I particularly recall the many perfume shops - perfumes made up to order. All the while we were pestered by Arab guides, and at last we took a tram to the pyramids.

We hired a guide who took us to the Sphinx and the temple of the Sun God. I had a camera and took a few snaps. When we came to the pyramid of Cheops, three of us decided to climb to the top. We had to hire a specialist guide for the climb. The pyramid was built of huge sandstone blocks which had been brought down the

Nile on barges from the quarries inland. It had been covered with a smooth coat of alabaster and this had been stripped off by Saladin to build his mosque.

It was a hard climb up these big, rough, weathered blocks, zig-zagging along the ledges covered with scree and sand. A guide was a pure necessity. When we got to the top we took photos. Cairo was below us, slightly hazy - no heat shimmer - it was December! We looked down on all the small pyramids of the wives and daughters. We also saw the barges which had brought the stones - they were built in and covered when the work was done. It was time to go down. The guide demanded more money or he would be off and leave us. We grabbed him and threatened to chuck him off. Then we started down with him guiding under duress. I went first so he could not make off. He gave instructions to me, and the other two brought up the rear. The descent was worse than the climb, but at last we reached the bottom and our two pals.

We all decided that we would maybe never get such an opportunity again, so we hired another guide who specialised in the interior of the pyramid. We climbed, an easy climb, up to the opening. The guide lit a magnesium flare and in we went- level at first and then upward sloping. My recollection is of confusion - of meeting crowds, crawling through small rat holes, entering high chambers where the light was lost in the vastness, squeezing past people. At last we came to the inner chamber, and saw the sarcophagus - empty of course. We noted that electric cables were being put in but were unconnected to a supply. We made our way, with our guide, to the exit, walked to the tram terminus and began the journey back to Tel el Kebir. We had packed a lot into just one day!

General Wavell had the 7th Armoured Division in position by now, holding the line. The Italians were pushing forward; there was much fighting. Wavell had wooden 25lb field guns made in workshops in Cairo - they looked like real guns in the distance. We moved forward along the coast, bringing up the supplies - this was

known as 'The Wavell Push' - the 8th Army on the move. The fighting at the front was advance and retire, circle round, get behind; the 'Eyeties' surrendered at the drop of a hat. January '41.

We got to Sidi Barrani, and were told we'd be there for some time. We started to dig ourselves in. Three of us dug a trench, six feet square. This was our home. We went into Sidi Barrani and got wood. Jim Barbour, Ted Woodley and myself set up house. We made a roof of corrugated tin and made a ladder to get down in. We even had a table and chairs made. We were very busy. It was cold, especially the nights. We stayed there a month, and just as we were all set to push on, the sand storms started. They were to last almost a month.

The severity of the storms waxed and waned. It got into everything - the sand. Sometimes when forced out into the storm, we even put on our gas masks. Sometime the sand came at you horizontally, and other times little tornadoes, or whirlies. Everything closed down.

At the end of two months wait in Barrani, our Division and the Aussies were to leave the coast, and move down to the oases, Jaghub and Siwa, before they were taken by the Italians coming north from Eritrea. We set off in convoy, taking all the supplies necessary. The Bedford lorries were all canvas roofed, the canvas stretched on metal frames. Even the petrol and water carriers had the same canvas camouflage.

As we moved, so did the Eytie prisoners coming west. We passed by places that had been held by them. They left everything - no attempt to destroy their stores. Thousands of them were coming down the line.

The Italian trucks were diesels. Ours were old Bedfords. We took the diesels with us. We used them to pull ours out of the sand! They were marvellous. We got all their ammo from their dumps and their food stores were terrific. They were far better equipped than we were. I remember the super tinned milk they had, lovely stews, corned beef, and great huge tins of tuna.

Even their bikes were marvellous. Push bikes - they had front and rear suspension,

like a good motor bike, and you could ride them over the stony bumpy ground nae bother - even standing on the pedals.

We never did get to Siwa. About half way there, we, the 8th Brigade, were ordered back to Palestine - exactly the same journey in reverse. A revolt had broken out in Iraq led by Raschid Ali, and all the British forces had been taken south from Palestine to Egypt. It was necessary to put down this revolt. There was terrific fighting and destruction. Habbaniya Airport had all the runways destroyed.

How we worked when we got back to Sarafand! We worked day and night, sorting vehicles (they were shaken to bits), loading petrol, ammo, food, and at last we were ready for off - setting off to Baghdad to quell this revolt under the command of Lieut General Kingston. We were to become known as "Kingston's Column". There were 7,000 of us, viz. the First Battalion Essex Regiment, the Household Cavalry in assault trucks, a regiment of Artillery up from Egypt, a Light Aid attachment of Ordnance, First Corps Signals, Field Ambulance Co and two Battalions of Infantry. The column was 6-7 miles long. We were divided up, in case of attack, or some disaster. In other words, the signals, say, were all dispersed throughout the column. It was known as "dispersation of resources".

We set off up to Trans Jordan, up the 'H' pipeline - there were pumping stations every hundred miles or so. At Mafraq we were met by "Glubb's Girls" - native troops (named after Glubb Pasha!) who came with us as navigators. I was Asst Driver on our lorry. In the back, beside the requisite kit of tools, we had ten Essex infantrymen. It was to take up to three weeks to reach Baghdad, across the desert. We used old tracks; there were no roads. Sometimes we had smooth hard sand, sometimes soft sand that we sank in. We would also come across acres and acres of large boulders and we had to find the best way through - we would lose our sense of direction. The mileage travelled per day varied hugely. Lots of drivers couldn't read the surface and so many got bogged down, and it was out

with the sand tracks, ropes, spades, etc and get the b-----s out. We couldn't leave any of the vehicles. They were all necessary.

The first village we came to was Rutba Wells. It was completely empty. I don't know why, and it was a large oasis. I should say here that the tracks through the desert were lined with dead animals, decomposing fast, and bleached bones - indeed whole skeletons. There had been no military engagements so there were no human remains. Of course, we knew that we would have to bury bodies immediately, if death occurred for any reason.

Our camping arrangements were interesting. We went into "leagar - as the Roman Legions did - as North American settlers did. We drove round into a huge square, two deep. In the centre we settled the ambulances and Field Hospital, also the HQ and Signals. The Signals busied themselves putting up the aerials and transmitters, and setting up the connections. The Field Artillery on the perimeter turned their 25lb guns round facing outwards at the ready. Then the little scout cars went out, about a mile - we could see them with their flares at the ready in case of surprise attacks. At this stage, no attack was expected, but practice was essential. During the day, one "spotter" plane surveyed the area.

Every pumping station on the line was a small fort. As said previously, they were every 100 miles or so. Inside the fort perimeter were the water wells, pumps for the oil, civvi houses and a small landing strip. Only a small plane could use the landing strip - mostly Lysanders.

Our first fighting was at Ramadi in Iraq, held by Raschid Ali. Our front line boys fought him, and cleared him out. Then we captured El Faliya, captured the bridge over the Euphrates, and liberated Habbaniya Airport. The RAF boys were virtually prisoners. There was fighting going on all round about. In the true British manner, half the planes on the damaged runways were wooden dummies. This was the main peacetime airport of Iraq, serving Baghdad, and was garrisoned by Assyrians.

The Assyrians were a tribe of Christians, the only ones who still spoke the language of Christ - Aramaic. In the 1914-18 War they had suffered at the hands of the Turks, and they had marched in their thousands to throw themselves on the mercy of the Allies. Being Christians they could not get employment and so they were taken on at British Embassies, airports, pipe line forts etc, in all the protectorates.

We moved to Baghdad and stayed till about June '41. We had to put down the rising, show the flag! There were pockets of fighting, and we had to find and liberate pockets of prisoners. For instance, a hundred of us were sent away for days, up to Mosul, and Kirkuk, mostly in Kurdistan, about 200 miles over road less terrain. There were about a dozen lorries. We were to release the Kurds and British nationals.

Mosul and Kirkuk were oil towns, sending oil down to Tripoli in Syria, the "T" pipeline. After his coup, Raschid Ali had stopped the oil. The British staff and engineers and those holding British passports had all been arrested. We liberated them. The rebels did not put up much resistance - rather, they made off, hoping to fight another day. Whilst we were on this mission, others in the column were on similar sorties.

Suddenly we were recalled, and had to set off, the whole column, up the "T" pipeline to confront the "Vichy" French Foreign Legion. We travelled north, up the Euphrates, to the "T" pipeline, and along it. We met the Legion west of Palmyra - a ruined city, only peopled by a few Bedouin. It was just a mass of toppled columns, like ruins anywhere in the Middle East - or Egypt or Athens. It was a large oasis.

We were held up by the Legion who held the heights all around. They were owing allegiance to the Vichy government, and thus to Germany. We were held on the plains, and the fighting was intense. We lost one third of our transport. We had to dig in and began to run short of food and water. A detachment of transport was sent south towards the "H" pipeline unescorted, for speed. They were captured by a pocket of Iraqis. Another detachment had to be

sent, this time with armoured cars, to try to bring back supplies from our "dumps" on the "H" line.

I remember I lent a chap, Roy Risdale, two piastres to buy some drink at the Naafi van. Another chap, Harvey, came up and said, "Did you lend him money? I lent him some and he's never repaid me". Next day Harvey says, "Risdale's bought it! Told you you'd never get your money back!". That was the army!

Eventually we got supplies of food and ammo, got the vehicles ready and broke through to Homs, Hama and finally Aleppo. This was the fiercest fighting of "my" war. (The French Armistice - 9 July '41).

We were stationed in Aleppo, Syria, some two weeks. We stayed in a fig grove, nets all up on the trees. We liberated the prisoners of the French. Some of them were blokes from our own column who had been taken back in Palmyra, Iraq. We put the French legionnaires into "the cage" - the POW camp. It was a large compound with observation towers. Soon the whole place quietened down and we could stroll out round the groves and into town - not singly, of course, but in small groups. It was a beautiful green town, full of fruit trees: plums, pears and apples. It was the wrong time of year for the citrus fruits. You just picked your own fruit and paid what was asked. French was the spoken language and the growers had lost all the markets for the fruit. They had no way to export it.

Then we were ordered off south to Sarafand, for refit and leave. We made off south through Hama, Homs. Then to Tripoli on the coast, and we stayed in the French Foreign Legion barracks and made ourselves very visible - showing the flag - for a day or two before moving to Damascus.

I remember one of our funnier incidents in Damascus. We were near the rear of the column at that time and a halt was called for a meal. When this happened, we did not leagar, but set up kitchen as we were. The field kitchens were metal containers, like a cloche, like a tunnel with round holes on

top on which to place the pots or billie-cans. A strong, noisy paraffin blower - like a large blow lamp - was placed at one end and blew into the tunnel. To make it quicker we could close the other end. Well, when the column halted, we were still (the end of the column) in the middle of the town - the main thoroughfare - a beautiful street - and we had to set to. The watchers gathered round - crowds of men and children - and watched us cooking and eating. A real public performance.

In the desert, when we cooked, it was with sand fires. We had some of our petrol in "bowsers" and some in four gallon tins. With difficulty we cut the tin in half, horizontally, with our bayonets and filled them with sand. Then we dug the tin down in the sand to steady it, poured in petrol and lit it. It burned with a low blue flame, but very hot. Then we put on the dixie. When the flame died low we would lift the dixie, and stir the sand with a bayonet, and it would brighten up again. Experience taught us how much petrol was required, for there was no way you could add any to the fire.

We got to Sarafand looking forward to leave, through into the Lebanon, Beirut, Tyre and Sidon, and Haifa. After one day in Sarafand and two on leave in Tel Aviv, we were ordered back to Aleppo by the same route!

I should say here how I spent my two days leave. We went to Tel Aviv and walked around the shops - they were big town shops - not your Arab sort. Very modern town - we went into the tea or coffee shops, bought fruit juices. I remember in particular "Aziz" fruit juice, especially the grapefruit. The juice was in a large iced glass square container and grapefruit twirled around on the top. You bought a pint, or a half. I stayed at the Tipperary Club. It was run by the British women - from the Embassies, the Society of Friends and the Sally Army. The club was similar to the YMCA. However the military police came down from Sarafand and rounded us all up. We just couldn't believe it and wondered what awful catastrophe must have occurred.

Well, north we went, and mustered in Aleppo, and moved off across the East Syrian desert to Deir ez-Zor, down the Euphrates. Deir ez-Zor was a beautiful village, with plenty of water which was pumped up from the river. There were plenty of trees and green grass. We knew that there were still roaming bands of Raschid Ali's supporters, so we took precautions at night.

We had with us a heavy Albion workshop truck, holding every kind of tool and equipment to carry our repairs. It had lathes, welding equipment and could handle all types of work - all trades. We were always repairing this most essential truck. The heavy bracket holding the fan belt and the dynamo kept breaking with constant vibration. We had repaired it at Deir ez-Zor and were hopeful that it would last all the way to Baghdad. It was not to be. It broke down half a days journey away. The whole column could not be stopped so a dozen of us "tiffers" were left, with our lorries, to repair the truck, and the others rolled on. We pulled the Albion to the edge of the Euphrates and tried to camouflage ourselves. We were very apprehensive. We had not even one machine gun - only our rifles - and we got dug in and got the ammo our ready.

It was when I was on look out that I saw dust swirls in the distance. Then as they came nearer, I could see the sand was in long trails. We all dived for our holes and waited. It turned out to be a battalion of Gurkhas with British officers. They stopped; the Gurkhas leapt out, and set up machine guns about half a mile away. The Gurkhas don't hang about! They observed us then sent out a Scout Car with the Colonel in it. "Who the hell left you here?", shouted the Colonel. We're left to repair the truck", we replied. "This is the most dangerous place imaginable! You can't stay here", shouted the Colonel, outraged. We answered that we were to journey on to Baghdad when we had the Albion ready, and that we'd been before and knew the way! He would have none of it. "We can't leave you here. We'll escort you back to Deir ez-Zor" and they did, and we towed

the Albion and we mended it and then we were not allowed to leave!

We had to wait and join the next convoy to Baghdad. This proved to be a company of transports taking supplies to Habbanya only. We joined them. En route we went through the most Arab town I had ever been in. We saw it in the distance, shimmering - the walled city of Abu Kemal. They opened the gates and we went through. The populace kept out of sight. The streets were hardly wider than our trucks.

We held together at night and travelled all day. A good day's journey would be 100 miles, but some days we could only manage 30 - detouring, digging out. To stop reflections off the windscreens, we oiled the glass and stuck on sand, then cleared a slot to look through. Lots of the Bedfords had their windscreens broken with rifle butts for the same reason.

We got to Habbaniya, and left the convoy and went straight, by compass to Baghdad. The military police at the road blocks, gave us directions to our column. We were beside date palms but it was terrifically hot. We worked from first light till about 8.30am. Then it was too hot and we had to stand down. We lay under the trucks all day. I remember seeing an Arab lying straight in the shadow of a lamp standard. He moved round with the sun!

I was amazed at the number of Indian troops in Baghdad - around 30,000. Sikhs in armoured cars; infantry divisions of Gurkhas and Sepoys - the Indian 10th Armoured Division.

The bunds, or high river banks on the Tigris had been blown, and the river had flowed over the countryside. The higher land had made little islands, and here some of the Iraqis had set up batteries of 25 pounders. They were British made guns and we might have needed them. The Iraqis, all dead, lay or crouched over their guns. We were sent with our trucks to get as many guns as possible. We had to wade in mud, up to our waists, to get to the islands. We had to take guns because the pyeads, wild dogs, were everywhere, eating the bodies. All exposed flesh had been eaten away, licked clean. We

just pushed the bodies aside and pulled the guns with hawsers. Then into the river to wash. On our previous visit to Baghdad we had never thought that we might need the guns.

So in August '41 we moved north from Baghdad - thousands of us - not in a column, more in dribs and drabs. We had no idea why or where we were going, but we moved north to Khanaqin on the Iraq - Iran (we called it Persia) border. I found out much later that this had all been arranged by Churchill and Stalin to take over Iran. We stayed a couple of days in Khanaqin and then our group set off to Kermanshah in the mountains. What a change in temperature from Baghdad. The roads, tracks rather, zig-zagged up the mountains and down into the valleys. We now had to set up our own bivvies at night - two per tent.

The valleys were wet, and marshy and full of mosquitoes. The bivouac was only a rectangle of waterproof fabric, with a centre pole, and netting. The air was thick at night with "mozzies". Some came up in huge lumps, but I was never affected. Then of course, we had plagues of Blackwater Fever, and many went down with malaria. Some were ill all the way - many died. The R.C. padre asked me to make crosses. I remember he would speak to the head man of the village and request a burial, and assurances that the grave would be respected. The Roman Catholic padres were the only ones in the field, although all denominations were represented. In all the years, I never saw any others. They all stayed back at base! Our R.C. padre had an old horn gramophone and a few records, and had wee services after breakfast. A circle of men would form round him. I can see him yet, dusting his records and putting them on.

We were now on Indian rations. The Gurkhas purchased meat locally, and butchered it, sheep and goats. It was really awful - very, very oily, and their biscuits were damp with grease - like linseed oil. I couldn't clean out my mouth with the tongue - had to use a finger and scrape the biscuit off the teeth and roof of the mouth.

After a few days at Kermanshah, we moved on to Hamadan. This was a most interesting town. We were allowed into the town in groups. It was a fair size, with covered bazaars. There were streets of trades - carpet makers, coppersmiths, furniture workshops. There were wee kids sewing carpets. A family could spend a lifetime on one carpet. They were huge. The children would finish what their parents had begun. I bought an embroidered sheepskin coat - very cheap. I was pleased to have it, because it was very cold at nights, but after a short time I had to throw it away. It had not been properly cured and it stank to high heaven.

We travelled on to Shahabad, a small town in a valley. There were grapes and fruit growing in the valley and it was the centre of the sugar beet industry. The town was at the end of the valley, and there were a few hundred of us there when scout cars came speeding round with ammo and rations. We were told to prepare ourselves because a regiment of Iranian cavalry were lined up and ready to charge. We had to dig in, machine guns at the ready. The machine guns were of three types - Hotchkiss guns, ancient, belt-driven; Lewis guns (both these were First World War guns) and the odd "Bren". I had my rifle, a Lee Enfield, at the ready. We looked along the valley, in the shimmer, and could see nothing. We lay for two days and two nights. We never moved! On the third day, it was clear, and they had gone.

We moved on towards Qom. We passed through Iranian villages - poor, poor people, filthy and dirty, in rags, most of them with sores and all of them pock-marked. They came begging, and we threw them our Indian biscuits. They kept their distance. They were in a terrible state of ill health. So many were just lying on the ground, we just had to step over them. If the biscuits fell in the muck, they dived onto them - men, women and children. The men wore pantaloons, and had bare feet.

We were camped one place for a few days and a reasonably clean chap came up and made signs that he would do our washing. About six of us gave over our socks and

vests and off he went. We never expected to see him again, but he returned with the washing done and pressed and folded. Thereafter he considered himself a sort of bat-man to us, and he did the odd jobs and we paid him with a few coins. However, the "muzzies" were bad and we had to move a short distance up hill. A lot went down with malaria. We could hardly believe our eyes when he arrived next day, driven in a gharry, by a driver with a whip! Our few coins had made him into someone of consequence. The driver and gharry waited patiently all day for him. I suppose when we moved on he would attach himself to another crowd.

We by-passed Qom. It is a golden city - of domes and minarets. It is the holiest city in Iran. In fact, it is one of the holiest in the Middle East. It would not have done for us to enter it, so we manoeuvred round it slowly.

Then our company were gathered together for lectures and the purpose of our journey was made clear. The Russian offensive was well under way, and it was thought that German troops would make their way down between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea and occupy Iran. Churchill was famous, or infamous rather, for opening "second fronts". We were told that at Teheran we would meet up with Russian troops. We were warned that there were to be no incidents - no accidental guns going off etc. We were also informed that there was quite a large German civilian presence in Iran. They were mostly engineers or technicians, and they had several factories.

It was late August '41 when we reached Teheran. We were directed to ground beside one of the factories and settled in and looked around. The factory made ammo and small arms and tools. We had to smarten up - no "shit order"! - but we were pretty grubby and our uniforms were the worse for wear. However, we did our best, carried rifles, tins hats on.

We saw the Russian troops now and again. My impression is of long marching columns, carrying machine guns between two, with bandoleers and grenades fixed to

their belts. There were a lot of horses. Teheran was well and truly occupied.

It was a beautiful town with straight streets, and intersections with floodlit statues. It was very grand, something like Edinburgh new town. The mountain behind the town, Demavend, was about 15,000ft and snow-capped. It was hot in Teheran, but nothing like Baghdad.

On the second day there, five of us set off to explore the town. There was no restriction on our movements, but the Gurkhas and Sikhs stayed put, and the Russians too. The five of us did the shops and then went for tea in the poshest hotel. We had Russian tea in glass cups with silver holders, waiters serving and gorgeous cakes - big gateaux. We divided the bill by five and it came to 4 1/2 d each!

That evening we went to another hotel and into the garden for a concert. There were beautiful flowers and the stage had a background shaped like a cockle shell. We bought beer and listened to the band and singers - no, not Persian music, but a western touring group. I remember particularly the song, "A nightingale sang in Berkeley Square".

Next evening the staff sergeant came with a job. A water bowser had a wheel blown off with a mine. It had to be repaired right away in case we were ordered to move. We had to dismantle the bowser and build it on to a 15cwt Bedford truck. We set up floodlights and brought the faithful old Albion workshop. We stripped it down and rebuilt it on the Bedford - all trades working - welders, joiners, fitters. We worked all night, six of us mostly and finished by breakfast.

In Teheran, many trucks were required for ambulance work. My truck was one such. It was tidied up and had to accommodate six stretchers and a medical orderly. We were to take sick and wounded to Baghdad.

Before we left, some chaps broke into the German factory and brought a box of tools, a big cross-cut saw and a screwdriver. They thought they would be handy! We hid them in the truck. On the day of leaving we picked up the sick and the orderly and started the very same way back to

Baghdad. I was second driver. First driver was a jolly Scots chap from West Lothian. Its funny I have forgotten his name. He sang a lot; he had a good voice. Our patients liked his singing. They were ill with malaria and dysentery. He helped the orderly with them. Teheran was left mostly with Indians in occupation. We off loaded the sick in Baghdad.

Throughout our journey in the desert, whenever we stopped, Arabs would appear from nowhere and stand watching us cook, and work. Where they came from, and how they came, we never knew. They would come back at night, silently in the darkness, past the sentries and trading began. It was like a Persian market. We sold them the German tools but I kept the screwdriver, and they had no use for the saw. We flogged the things we had bought in Persia - clothes, blankets, carpets - haggling over prices. Of course what they wanted was ammo and small arms. Our lot never sold guns but lots of others did. We had a surplus of small arms, because we naturally lifted guns when we came across them. Stupid to leave them and have them used against you in the future. Months later, in Cairo, I was sent to buy a cross-cut saw, by the staff sergeant, so I sold my one to the army!

We set off to cross the Iraqi desert, first to Habbaniya, were we hoped to camp with the RAF whom we had "liberated" on the outward journey. To our surprise this request was refused! We made our way via Rutba Wells and after quite an uneventful journey reached Sarafand.

We spent a day or so refitting, then left Sarafand for the last time, and the whole Brigade crossed the Sinai, bypassed Gaza, went through Beersheba, and as before, headed for El Quantara. (Canadian Chevrolet trucks 4*4). Instead of the old ferry there was now a pontoon bridge and quite quickly we reached Tel el Kebir. Great changes had been made. There were now showers, cinemas, roads, railway lines. It had expanded to become the biggest garrison in the Middle East, approximately 20 miles long and 10 miles in breadth. It had swallowed up two more villages.

We did not stay long because various regiments in the Division were picking up new tanks, so we moved to halfway between Alexandria and Cairo - Qatarba to the tank ranges for practice. We pulled moving targets, in the shape of tanks, back and forth while the gunners practised.

The "Division" was the 10th Armoured Division, consisting of the 8th and 9th Brigades, three regiments in each Brigade. The composition varied, and infantry was attached e.g. the Buffs or the Essex to the 8th.

From Qatarba we struggled up the Western Desert, through Mersa Matruh to Sidi Barrani where we had been two years before. Once again we made our way south heading for Jaghbub and Siwa. Jerry had broken through at Tobruk and the 8th Army was in full retreat. We changed direction and headed west. As we went west we met others retreating east all shouting, "you're going the wrong way!" but we carried on regardless. We came to a valley - a Wadi - and got the shock of our lives. The whole Wadi was packed full of armour: tanks, guns, lorries. It was unbelievable! It was the Anzacs - the 1st New Zealand Division, with around 20,000 infantry - some of the Maoris. We drove up to them and stopped. There was hardly any b---y room.

In the afternoon, planes came roaring down the Wadi, shaking their wings. They were Stukas - dive bombers. Every gun opened up. Bombs dropping, tracers flying up, machine guns, Bofors guns -all hell let loose! Not one plane was shot down. How they could all have missed I'll never know. When they were gone, the only damage was two trucks burning. I was under my lorry. P.A.D. it was called. Passive Air Defence - do now!

Of course, the Stukas did their reporting. All the N.Z. guns had been facing south, expecting attack from the quarter. Flares were dropped all night. It was as light as day, and Rommel came from the north - not called the desert fox for nothing. Early on, shells were landing from the Panzers - softening us up. The Anzacs couldn't turn because of overcrowding and we were

between them and Rommel. We had to move sideways, eastwards, to let them prepare for battle.

Then we got word that Mersa Matruh was being bombed, and the stores being destroyed. The trucks in our column were ordered up to Matruh to bring out the stores - we loaded up with tea, sugar etc. A great system of barter was set up. We had tea; we were rich! Of course, this job had its dangers and a lot of us were wounded. This was the start of the war in the air.

I was taken with another bloke, and dropped off a defence truck to dig in and cover a small Wadi with a Bren gun. Well, we dug in, covered with our net. Number two on the gun busied himself filling the magazines. After a few hours, down below us in the Wadi appeared a Bedford truck. A Sergeant came up on foot. "Bring the gun and ammo, We're surrounded". I couldn't believe it! There was only the Bedford to be seen. We left our hole, left my coat, blanket, my faithful dixie, and carried the Bren and the ammo. We clamped the Bren on to the steel shaft fitting on the truck, ready for action.

We sped off and here, crawling along eastwards, a whole line of German tanks. They never fired - they must have seen us - perhaps we were beneath their notice! We carried on till we saw Rusevat Ridge and hit the tapes (Alamein). They led us to the front line - led us to a wooden bridge over the trenches. They were full of infantry, down below, looking up at us. Behind them were all our new tanks. We were interviewed, and told how to find the rest of the Brigade. We caught up with them at Amerya near Alexandria. September '42.

I should explain that "the tapes" were put down when fighting a rearguard action, to show where the mines were. The last lot through lifted the tapes.

Back we went to Amerya to the remnants of the Brigade. They had all been scattered. We stayed there until all units were complete, and we were refurbished with all the equipment and clothing that had been lost in the retreat. This must have taken about two weeks. I got letters from old friends in Cairo. Blackie from

Newtongrange got a lift over to Alex to see me. I heard that Nicolson, Woodley, Barbour and Campbell were all enjoying life in the Cairo workshops. Now, after about 18 months at the various fronts, and I had been 2 years, one was entitled to be posted to a depot. I put word about that I should go back to Cairo.

However refurbishment complete, the 8th Armoured Brigade set off to Alamein (October '42). We had just arrived when word came of a posting to Abbassia Garrison in Cairo. I went back down from Alamein on the next truck. The uppermost thought in my mind was that, at last, I was confident of survival. Abbassia was a huge garrison with shops, churches, cinemas. It even had an internal bus service. I stayed at Cambrai barracks. All the barracks had First World War names. They had been built by the Turks who occupied the Middle East before the 14-18 War. At the end of the hostilities, all the Middle East was carved up by the Allies who were given mandates by the League of Nations. The barracks were renamed by the Allies after the Turks were defeated.

I was walking along when I met old friend Robert Haig from Balerno - he was in the Scots Greys. He had been wounded in the arm by shrapnel, spent some time in hospital and was now ready to join the Brigade.

He reminded me of the time, two years previously when we were in Sidi Barrani for the first time. Robert had been sent word that Chow McCue, from Balerno, had been wounded and was in the Scottish General Hospital in Cairo. He asked, "any chance of getting there?". As luck would have it, I was going for spares to Abbassia. It took three days. The driver collected the spares and Haig and I visited the hospital and saw Chow. He had had an amputation, above the knee. He was sent home on a red cross ship. No such luck for Haig! He was sent back down the line.

Probably the greatest benefit of the garrison was the water supply. It was mains water. It was pumped into water towers, through purification plants, and wasn't rationed. We were some two miles from the Nile.

For our journeys, we had each been issued with a water "chatty". It was a three pint canvas container which we hung on the truck. We were issued with three pints per day of which two pints went to the cookhouse/field kitchen. You can see that we had collect water to supplement this, whenever we could. We all had, in the trucks, gallon tins which we lined with tar, and filled from wells.

The canvas "chatty" self-cooled by sweating. There were good ones and bad ones. If there was too much condensation it all dripped out and the water wasted. If there was no sweat, the water got too hot to drink. We could cure those that over-sweated by making a mud paste and smoothing it on.

At wells we lowered our tins with a "sinking stone". There was never any depth of water - not like wells at home. We shook the stone to one side to tip the tin and try for water. Once we were desperate for water and I went down on the end of a rope. It wasn't far but it felt like forever. At the bottom I lit matches to look for bodies, then walked round the small water hole. The well was narrow at the top and bellowed out at the bottom. I kept digging out the hole and filling the tins. It was surprisingly clean water. After efforts like this it was unbelievable to turn on a tap, and have a shower.

In this garrison were various sub-workshops. Vehicles were towed in from the desert, tested and graded for repairs. Some were stripped completely. The various workshops worked on a specific part. Some did engines, others gearboxes, axles, or steering. We took apart the springs, made new leafs, reassembled them and passed them on to the body building workshop. This is where I was to work for several months. There were about seventy military, and five to six hundred civilians employed here. A Staff Sergeant was in charge and a "native" foreman e.g. a Maltese, or an Armenian. The bodies were assembled, put into test bays, and over vehicle pits. All new engine and chassis numbers were noted, and then the vehicle was taken to the paint shop to be sprayed

and camouflaged. We had our own pumps and tyres depot. The testers took the vehicle out - about 40 miles - put it back on the pits and looked for oil or water leaks, saw that the brakes were cool, that the tyres were correct.

One day, the Public Works foreman asked if I could drive and I denied it. I did not know where it would lead, and I remembered the old Army motto, "Never Volunteer!" Some fifteen minutes later, Alan Nicolson, from the old column, came from his work at the vehicle park and asked me to volunteer as a driver. I told him he was too late, and he was really cast down. He was stuck in the garrison all day and he wanted out to see and A.T.S. girl, Joan, who lived outside the garrison in a large private house. Now, if you were a vehicle tester, you had a pass, number plates, your own tool kit, and you could drive the vehicles out without a work's permit. Alan reckoned that he could use me to get out whenever he was free. Then he could see his girlfriend, later fiancée, and also buy tickets for the pictures. All seats were bookable, and tickets had to be bought in advance. Taking pity on him, I went to the Public Works foreman and confessed that I could drive. "I knew you could", he said. My knowledge of the internal combustion engine was tested by a panel - a W.O. and a couple of officers. Then I was taken on to the test staff, and had to swot up on all the modifications required for Middle East conditions. Usually a test was a good forty miles - then back to its test bay for Return Off Test (R.O.T.) check - ten more miles and if all was correct, to the pass out bays for delivery.

A WO2 was in charge of the tests. He had an office an Egyptian clerk, and a car for his own use. he travelled round the workshops, and also along the test route. The garrison was on the outskirts of Cairo - a posh suburb, Heliopolis. Here were big houses and tree lined streets, leading to the Suez road. We could not deviate from the route in case of break down. If this happened, the next lorry along would report to the WO2 and he would arrange a recovery vehicle, and would often come

along in his car - an Austin 8, open tourer. This was a very popular car, much used by the Army.

I drove all kinds of vehicles on test, for example, Austin 8s, 15cwt Bedfords, 30cwt and 3 ton Bedfords, Leyland Tigers with breakdown hawsers etc, "tough buses" for towing guns; personnel lorries for towing bofors. It was interesting, not the least monotonous, and almost enjoyable, especially the Class 'A', almost new vehicles. My assistant, a Nubian, would be waiting when I came back, to see if any more work, or testing, was required.

Apart from the "tiffers" and the native workers, there were thousands of unskilled labourers on site. They arrived in buses, with their passes. Of course, there were many scams, wheeling and dealing among them. Every day entrepreneurs would come in with pony and cart, and go round the cookhouses to collect the food scraps in large drums. I used to watch them lay out large sheets on the ground and then begin sorting the food. It was laid out in heaps and sold to the labourers! They did not buy it for themselves, but folded it into a square of fabric and took it back home to their families. They were poor people, but nothing like the Persians! They considered themselves to have grand jobs.

Sometime early in '43, the test staff and workshops staff started to be withdrawn, and a new draft came in for duties to replace them. Shortly before this, a proclamation came that all military personnel in the work shops be transferred to the R.E.M.E. The C.O., Major Gayford, put me in charge of the Test Staff, because his WO2 had been posted. I was only a Lance Corporal but there was no opening for promotion unless I changed to Engineer/Fitter. This I was unwilling to do. I knew Major Gayford quite well. He lived in a big house in Heliopolis and I collected him every morning and brought him to the Officers Mess, in the camp, for breakfast.

The Staff being withdrawn were posted to a depot to form another company. We found out eventually that it was in readiness for the invasion of Sicily in July '43.

About this time, February '43, Kenny Campbell died. He had been complaining for some time of chest pains - indigestion, he thought. One day, when he was very pained, I said to him that it was time he reported sick. He was sent to hospital and died. He was buried in the cemetery in Heliopolis - I was one of the bearers. I remembered getting on the train with him at Waverley, and seeing him say goodbye to his wife and little daughter. I found later a family history of early death from heart disease.

We were still very busy in the workshops, and test staff. I went on short leave with Alan Nicolson to Alexandria. We stayed at the Tipperary Club there. Sicily fell, and the forces landed on the Italian mainland in September '43, and Italy surrendered four days later.

The Med was now opened to ships and the African campaign virtually over. Italy was occupied by German troops and the fighting was bitter. We were still working hard. We had the odd troop concert in Abbassia. I particularly remember Lena Horne. Churchill decided to give us 3d a day extra, to even up with what munitions workers were making at home. What a bloody farce! What a nest egg that would give us!

In July '44, Alan Nicolson and his fiancée Joan Morgan were married in St George's church, Abbassia. I gave the bride away. That morning, Major Gayford asked if I was going to the wedding. "I'm not pleased, you know", he said, "I usually sleep in the afternoon". On being told that I was giving the bride away he tutted, "That's her father's job, surely". I pointed out that her father was in Wales; he had never thought of that!

Prior to this, I heard that my brother Edward, was in Basra, then that he was in the Canal Zone. I had to go to Tel el Kebir for supplies and there I spoke to a green and told him I would like to meet up with Edward. "Take a motor bike", he said, "and go to the General Post Office and look him up". Off I went to the GPO and gave his squadron number on his last letter. They insisted he was in Basra and I insisted he

was in Alex. Away they went to enquire, and came back with the information, "He was in Basra, but they've left". I had to leave, having got nowhere.

Next letter from Edward was cryptic. It said, "I am in the same place as Muriel Reucassel". I knew that Muriel, in the WRNS, was in Alex (she was from South Africa, but was born in Currie). We were not allowed to name places, in case the enemy was opening the mail!

Well, I got a pass out from Abbassia, and took the train to Alex. Once again, I went to the GPO, found where he was, found the place, found the squadron, found his tent, gear etc, and found that he and his pals were off into Alex for the afternoon! I hung around, awn then asked about and got a bed for the night. I found him next morning. We had one day together, in Alex, got out photos taken, and I stayed over another night and left for Cairo in the morning.

Back in my unit in Cairo, I continued with the test staff for a few weeks. Then, with five years continuous service abroad, I was eligible for a home posting under the "Python" scheme.

Word got around that I was leaving. John Blackie was posted to Cyprus and he asked me to take his valuable home - he had brought out his gold watch and ring, his 21st birthday presents! I promised, if all went well, I would deliver them to his mother in Newtongrange.

Worse still, Jack Berwick asked me to deliver his kilt to the George Hotel in Edinburgh! I must have been off my bloody head!

From Cairo, we travelled by truck to Tel el Kebir, and remained there for six weeks or so, waiting for a convoy from India to come through Suez. We mustered in Port Said, December '44, and boarded P&O Mabodja. It was amazing to find that, after five years travelling all over the Middle East, Nicolson, Senter, Kerr were on the ship - along with 4,000 - 5,000 others!

The convoy zig-zagged through the Medi - very rough at times. I watched as we passed between Gib and North Africa, then through the Bay of Biscay, and into the

Channel. At the western approaches, we were on standby - fully dressed for 2 days and nights. I should think we were a convoy of twenty ships plus naval protection. Again, it was very rough. As we headed north, ships gradually dispersed until six or seven of us entered the mouth of the Mersey. We sat there for three days waiting a berth, looking at the Liver building.

At last we berthed and go the troop train at the docks - band playing, great reception - and headed off to Nottingham for the REME depot. We stayed there for three nights while all the paper work was done. We got our warrants and instructions, passes and tickets. I boarded the Edinburgh train, still with Kerr and Senter, and many more, and came home to Currie for one month's leave.

I got the last bus to leave St Andrews Square. It was black dark, and the bus was packed. I had my two kit bags. The house was in darkness. The family didn't know I was in the UK. I knocked the door and my father came down and let me in. They were so surprised - we had a cuppa, much talk, and I put off opening my kit until the morning.

I had brought a few little mementos - silver filigree jewellery, silk stockings, shell necklace, small embroidered hankies, and a bag of mixed nuts. When we began to shell the nuts, we found ants had got into them!

During my leave I took "the kilt" to the George Hotel, and was thanked profusely. I got on my motorbike - a 350cc Sports Rudge - and took the valuables to Newtongrange and handed them over to Blackie's sister. I later learned that he had married a Cypriot girl. I visited relations and spent time in town. I found it very cold, and wore my uniform and greatcoat all the time, and at the end of the month I reported to Laurieston Castle - the REME transit camp. We were in Nissen Huts and had to do the usual guard duty, fire patrols etc. It was deadly boring and time passed slowly. Some had been there since Narvik (1939). They had themselves organised making toys and gifts in wood - just a bloody racket! They had spent the whole

war in comfort. They had hired a hall in Davidsons Mains to stack their supplies and made a goodly living. The powers that be had turned a blind eye for four years!

When I was drafted to Gourock, after a few weeks, I was glad to go - that would be about February '45. It was small camp at the "Tail O' the Bank" near the Clyde boom. We were required to maintain the guns on the fortifications on the Clyde - servicing, oiling and greasing the shore batteries. We could see the tugs opening the boom to let the convoys through and then pulling it closed. I saw the Queen Mary and Queen Elizabeth passing our camp loaded with troops. I was amazed at the height and size of them.

I got home about once a month. I caught the Largs bus just outside the camp. To beat the crowds in Glasgow at weekends, I got off at Govan Cross, and took the train from there to Buchanan St station and home to Edinburgh by train.

While at Gourock the C.O., Captain Nelson, came into the workshops looking for someone to go on a course at Bellahouston Park for three weeks. It was a rehabilitation course of sorts. Contrary to army wisdom, "never volunteer", I said I would go.

We lived in huge buildings that had been built for the Empire Exhibition in 1938. I really should not have been there for I knew it all! It was just elementary trades experience. I helped the Staff Sergeant. I made a little box there, with "secret dovetails". It was much admired; "Lovely mahogany", said the Sergeant to his pupils, showing it. It was teak! I still have it. I got a Q1 qualification. Captain Nelson was chuffed!

A month later, a notice came from GHQ. Would I attend a course at the College of Education at Curden Hall, near Preston? I would, so off I set with a warrant on the London train, got off at Preston and was met by a truck and taken to Curden Hall. I found that the others were all Senior NCOs. We studied technical subjects - no practical, all theory, also technical drawing and design. I found it very interesting and the month passed quickly. The war was now coming to a close, but truth to tell, I took

little interest in events, nor did any of us. It was quite different to previous years abroad when the talk and rumour was a way of life. "Got any griff?", they used to say.

Back in Gourock, things went on as usual, then one day I was summoned for interview at the Scottish Education Corps. This was a large building at one end of Sauchiehall Street. It must have been in May '45 because VE day had come and gone. I was shown into an interview room and confronted by a Major of the old school. I had done well at the course at Curden Hall, and I was offered a job in the Education Corps. "You'll be immediately promoted to Staff Sergeant", he barked. "What d'you say?". I knew I would soon be due for demob and the thought of staying in the Army one minute longer than was necessary was not on! "I wouldn't stay if I was offered that crown off your shoulder!", I answered. "Get out! Get out!", he raged. I saluted smartly and left.

Back in Gourock, I found Captain Nelson, and told him. I was sorry that I had let him down. He had arranged these courses for me and had been more than helpful. "You're quite right", he said, "I would have said the same. I expect to be demobbed before you!". "However", he continued, "you did well in these courses. What do you intend to do when you leave? Have you thought of teaching technical subjects? I almost went in for teaching myself. My father owns Nelson's Commercial College in Edinburgh!". I said that I had intended first to complete my courses at the Watt. "Well", he said, "if you're agreeable, I think you should try Moray House. I'll send for the appropriate forms and we'll get them filled in."

When the forms arrived, I went to his billet one evening and he helped me fill them in. He even posted them off. Shortly I was called to Moray House for an interview. I got leave and passes. There were quite a few on the interview panel. After the formalities and questions, they said, "Tell us about yourself". It was a sort of oral C.V. I suppose they wanted to hear if I could express myself in a grammatical way. What

school? What night school? Why are you just a Private? I had to tell them that the "Corporal" was never war substantiated, so it was lost on return to base. Then I told all about, well nearly all about, the Major and his offer of a Staff Sergeant. They accepted my night school at the Watt and recommendation from Captain Nelson. (I later found that most of the other applicants had had an entrance exam).

I was just back to Gourock when Captain Nelson was demobbed and went back to his Insurance job. Before he left, he filled up my demob papers. I continued on after VJ day, and then at last I was sent for demob to the base depot - Laurieston Castle. I was there for 2-3 weeks. We were being sent in drafts up to Redford to get kitted out in civvi clothes. The suit was tried for fit, we got shirts, socks, shoes, underwear - the lot. I handed in my army uniform. Everything was checked in, even my cutlery, (I bought my army greatcoat for £1 and later had in dyed) and that was it!

I had paid leave - 20 days demob leave on full pay, plus one day for every month spent overseas. In total that was 78 days' pay. I got a Grant from the Education Department and entered Moray House for teacher training in January '46.