



DOWN MEMORY
LANE IN
TANGANYIKA



Personal History
By
John Richard Allen
1916 - 1942



CHAPTER 1

THE FORMATIVE YEARS

This article is a brief history of my life from the bygone ages beginning at some unearthly hour on the morning of the 5th January 1916 at some address in Nottingham. I am not sure where, whether at home or in hospital I know not, but my parents had lived in the house, in the Sherwood area, since April 1912. This was where I was brought up in my infancy to the ripe old age of 6 years whereafter the family moved out to the village of Keyworth in 1922, or thereabouts, some eight miles south of the town. There were only four of us in the family, the parents (Gilbert) Percy and Margaret Magub Allen, my older brother Charles and myself. My brother Charles being almost three years my senior.

Father was in business with his father in what is commonly known as the 'lace trade' and from 1911 to the early months of 1914 spent much of his time in Germany (Bavaria) representing the firm, He often mentioned that he always carried around with him a return ticket to England in the event of war becoming imminent!!! It did, but he was out by then. He was one of six children, three brothers and two sisters. Who was the eldest, I am not too sure but it was either one of the two girls or my father. They all lived in a large house in Regent Street, New Basford. By the time I made my debut into this world the grandparents had moved to a smaller house in Mayo Road, which runs between Hucknall Road and Nottingham Road, and from where, as a toddler, I would gaze for hours, from a bedroom window, watching the horses pulling the huge slabs of granite, on trolleys, that went into the building of T Formans printing works. In those days the land between the printing works and Haydn Road was under cultivation or grazing but was being absorbed rapidly for building expansion. From our house to my grandparents the distance could not have been more than one and a quarter miles yet on my little legs the walk seemed like an eternity.

On my Mother's side of the family, they were all Northerners living in 'Geordie land', Sunderland. What a large family too. Ten girls and three boys!!! No shortage of Aunts and Uncles!!! Her father was a ships captain on colliers carrying coals to UK and continental ports; hence the number of children, maybe. The three lads, with the sea in their blood, all took to the sea after training as ships engineers. I have no recollection whatsoever of the 'old boy' as his demise came before 1918/19. G'mama, as I remember her, was a great matriarchal figure always sitting in a chair by the fireside wearing a black shawl over her shoulders, but in spite of her stern looks was a kindly old soul. So much for the immediate forbears of the family.

Back to my childhood. I remember very little of my father until about 1920 as he had enlisted into the army soon after my birth, drafted into the Royal Artillery or Royal Horse Artillery, serving in Belgium. Consequently he came home on leave on rare occasions to see the family and sort out his business interests, which on the manufacturing side, was prospering in spite of the war. Probably making mosquito nets for the army overseas. Incidentally, on one occasion all four brothers met in Ypres, no doubt during a lull in battle! (All survived the war). For the young and uninitiated this war refers to the 1914/18 World War 1. He was invalided out of Belgium/France sometime during 1917 and sent to hospital in Stob Hill near Glasgow, Scotland. In due course mother, with two kids in tow, travelled up there to visit him, but that was short lived. No sooner had we entered the ward than dear brother suddenly started with a blood curdling attack of whooping cough which terminated the visit forthwith, or so the tale goes. After treatment and convalescence Pa was posted to Southern Ireland, taking part in the troubled times prevailing there. He eventually received his discharge from the army in 1919. That's when I started to call him 'father' instead of 'uncle'! That came about because I saw one of my uncles more frequently!

I suppose from about the age of 2.2 to 3 years I began taking more notice of my surroundings and possibly more amenable to discipline now that my brother was off to school. He was, or could be, a little rebel at times! At the age of 5 years he was expelled from his first school for 'being a bad influence on the other children'. His next establishment of learning was different. A private school ruled over by two formidable spinster sisters of unknown vintage whose word was law. I know, having followed in his footsteps two or three years later. Tuition there was excellent, although I did not appreciate it at the time. Who would at that age!

My religious education was also catered for when I became old enough to be dragged along by my brother to catch a tram, by the Sherwood tram sheds, for St Andrews Church at the top of the 'Forest' hill. After the service a long walk to our grandparent's house in Mayo Road for tea. That routine went on until we left New Basford. Wherever we lived afterwards (until we left for Africa) we attended church at least once each Sunday. My father was a nonconformist who, so far as I recollect, attended nothing except a pub. In his early days his parents took all their children to chapel three times each Sunday which did not please him so he decided quite early in life that if he ever had a family his children would not be subjected to such an ordeal, and he kept his pledge. Another Sunday routine would be to accompany him in the morning to a couple of allotments, which he shared with his father, near the junction of Haydn Road and Nottingham Road, where the three generations would meet, weather permitting. In due course I would be given a basket of vegetables and fruit and told to get back home, without undue delay en-route. At that early age I wondered why the two gents crossed over the road and disappeared into a 'house' on the corner. The house later recognised as 'The Star Inn' brought me to the realisation of what attractions lay within.

One of the great attractions for all youngsters was (and still is) the annual event of 'Goose Fair', which in my day was held in the Old Market Square of Nottingham. The huge roundabouts of galloping horses, dragons, cocks and hens with the blare of steam organs all playing different tunes and the smell of coal fired steam engines created a lasting memory in the young mind. I suppose it is history now, but I do remember seeing the very last appearance of the fair in the Square in 1927, thereafter, its venue being moved to the current 'Forest Fields' site. The next visit I made to the event was in 1962, together with my wife and three sons, but the whole atmosphere of it all was totally different. Loudspeakers blaring from all directions, electronic gadgetry with flashing lights, etc; OK for the modern generation but not for me.

As mentioned earlier my father returned to the lace business in 1919 but from what I gathered in later years the lace trade market was on a downward trend having lost much of the continental market to foreign manufacturers, possibly due to the war. Having had an insight into German and Belgian methods of production he tried to persuade the other members in the business to modernise the machinery, and their methods, but without success. That, combined with internal politics, caused the firm to suffer losses from which it could not recover. With the post war slump, or recession, on the way it meant the whole lot had to be sold up.

It was at about this time that the family moved out to Keyworth after selling the 'happy' house in Osbourne Avenue. I think my father had a taste for the 'good life'. Our rented house, with a nameplate on the gate, was a little primitive, no electric, gas or water laid on. The water had to be pumped up from a large cistern and, when that ran dry, there was always the well and bucket. No bathroom!!! A tin bath in front of the kitchen fire, ideal in winter! The house, quite large and well built, stood on its own in about three quarters of an acre of land half a mile south of the village. Father always had an inkling for the countryside having been at some stage in his life (early 1900s) in partnership with a farming friend alongside his business interest in the textile industry. This was a necessity for him to maintain the cash flow into the farm. Sadly the partner died before the farm became a viable proposition and was sold, much to my father's disappointment. Soon after our arrival at the new address one large and two small poultry houses were erected, plus a shed, all of wooden construction. Soon after this about 200 pullets went into the large poultry house, White Wyandottes (I think). Into the two smaller houses went Rhode Island Reds and Light Sussex Hens. A goat with two kids also appeared on the scene (from that date onwards I could never appreciate goat's milk). Not long after this, what should appear but a rabbit hutch, followed a few days later by some Chinchilla rabbits, and to add to the menagerie, a fox terrier and a black and white kitten. The two goat kids became very tame and were inclined to follow any human being out into the lane.

With all the upheaval going on around us the routine had to carry on. Father, now freelancing as a textile manufacturers agent made the journey to his office in Pepper Street, Nottingham – between Bridlesmith Gate and St Peters Church. My brother and I also had to make the long drag into town to our respective schools, which meant leaving the house just before 8am, walking a mile and a quarter to Plumtree Station to catch the commuter train to the Midland Station. This was followed by a trip by tram to the Market Square where we caught a second tram to Sherwood (Carrington). That's where the two of us parted. One point in its favour, I had to leave school half an hour earlier than the other pupils in order to connect with the train home. I was given a midday meal at school which I ate in solitary silence. There was one memorable occasion I shall never forget – the headmistress standing over me, in one of the classrooms, forcing me to eat up a plate of Tapioca pudding!!! She won, but it took a good twenty minutes wait before I swallowed the last mouthful. I continued with my schooling at Mountford House for a month or two but the long journey five times per week was proving unsatisfactory, sometimes missing the train or tram connections, usually on the way home because a little boy would, on occasions, spend his tram fare from the Market Square to Midland Station on a 'pen'north' of sweets!!! (Something less than ½p in today's currency – 1922) and, therefore, had to walk, or run, and hope the train's departure would be delayed by eight minutes or so.

The next school my parents found for me brought me down to earth with a bit of a shock. Although, as far as I was concerned, there were two points in its favour. No French lessons and no changing from outdoor shoes into slippers, or some such footwear, on arrival at school. In fact I found the lessons were much easier than I expected at the 'junior infants', but never the less, the building was a bit early Victorian in many respects. I have forgotten its exact location but was somewhere between Arkwright Street and the Mundella Grammar school. It still meant a walk from the Midland station but that didn't take too long. As meals weren't available in 'day' schools during that period I had to walk to my father's office in Pepper Street for a midday snack and cup of tea. That procedure went on for a while until I again changed school. This time to a primary school in West Bridgford. By the time I started at this school a bus service was being operated from Keyworth to Canal Street, Nottingham, two or three times daily which made a great saving on shoe leather, fares and time. From our house to the bus stop in the village was only a matter of 500 yards and about the same distance between the bust stop and school in West Bridgford. The bus driver was an obliging chap who would stop anywhere, within reason, to pick up and drop off passengers. I had my own 'bus stop' at the end of the road from school. Most convenient! My brother Charles had also swapped schools but had to carry on to Trent Bridge for a short period before moving to the Musters Road secondary school. During the winter, when snow and ice covered the road.

The bus journey could be a little hazardous and on many occasions the passengers had to alight to push the bus up Edwalton hill, much to the delight of the half dozen or so children on board. Only twice in four years did I have to walk the whole distance from school back to our home. The first time was due to thick 'smog' and the second during the general strike of 1926, where the 'strikers were inclined to overturn buses, particularly those operated by the Barton company.

Life in Keyworth was all my brother and I could have asked for. In fact, I would say the happiest days of our childhood. There were two farms and a market garden close by where we could help out when the opportunity arose. During early summer, at weekends, we would be off to the haymaking, usually leading the carthorses with a wagonload of hay back to the farmyard and return with the empty wagon for a refill. When the summer holidays came around we would assist in the cornfields picking up the wheat, barley or oat sheaves as the binder chucked them out and then 'stooking' them to enable them to dry out until ready for carting back to the farm. There, the 'experts' would make neat stacks, as waterproof as possible, to await the day the corn had to be separated from the straw with a threshing machine. This was operated by a steam traction engine blowing smoke, steam, 'smuts' and dust all around the place. As the labourers tossed the sheaves of corn into the thresher and the stack shrank to almost ground level the young lads would be given sticks and told to deal with the rats and mice that rushed out seeking safer havens. Needless to say, many survived the onslaught. Another job I enjoyed was taking the horses along to the village blacksmith for 'shoeing', although the smell of burning hoof was somewhat pungent.

To vary the active life that I led I would wander along to the nearby market garden and, depending on the season, give a helping hand collecting the vegetables, etc, for the Saturday market in Nottingham. At times I would be given a hoe with instructions to weed the cabbage patch or whichever bed required the necessary attention. At other times I would

boil the pig swill and feed the brutes. If, by the end of the week, I had helped for quite a number of hours the 'boss' would give me sixpence (2½ new pence), which to me, in those days was a small fortune. Whilst these extra mural activities went on my brother and I still had the home chores to deal with. Feeding and watering the poultry and rabbits came before disappearing into the countryside. Referring back to the hens, once egg production was under way there were eggs everywhere, overflowing from the pantry into a corner of the dining room. However, word soon got around that eggs were available and a steady outlet developed. To add to the 'furniture' an incubator was installed into a spare room and within a short space of time the sound of 'chirping' chicks could be heard prior to their departure to a foster mother. The incubator was a strange contraption heated by a paraffin lamp.

When into Autumn, at the commencement of the fox hunting season, we, my brother and I, would scan the hunting appointments column of the local newspaper to find out where the Quorn hunt would 'meet' on the Saturday. If the 'meet' was in easy reach we would be off to join all the other foot-followers in the chase. Excellent exercise for young limbs but, by the end of the day, complete exhaustion on arrival back home, and usually covered in mud. Probably twice during the season the 'hunt' would trot past our house churning up the grass verge between our hedge and the lane much to my father's disgust, judging by his remarks.

Reading through these pages one would perhaps get the impression that the two youthful members of the family behaved like 'little angels'! There were the odd occasions when we thought the apples and pears in our neighbours gardens tasted better than ours, we played in forbidden places, plus a few more activities I have long forgotten about. One of the forbidden areas was close at hand, two ponds surrounded by trees. One pond was deep and murky, which we respected. The second, on the opposite side of the lane, was about 4 feet deep and muddy. On one occasion we were fooling around in the trees overhanging the shallow pond when I reached out and grabbed hold of a branch, which, unfortunately for me, happened to be dead one.....snap.....and in I went, total submersion!! I managed to 'dog paddle' and flounder to the bank where my brother pulled me out. What a sight I must have looked, wet through and covered in mud. Our greatest worry at that point was, what to do next? If we went into the house we knew what would happen!!! The answer, into the rabbit shed for a rub down with straw and old sacking. Fortunately, the day was hot and sunny so outside for a further drying session and rub down. The footwear went into a bucket of water, so no problems there! Eventually, I considered myself dry enough to make a dash indoors and up the stairs in double quick time for a wash down in a hand basin, and a change of clothes. Meanwhile the other culprit was outside attending his chores. At tea time we were called in by MaMa who, unfortunately for us, was entertaining one of her lady friends. One step into the room and she immediately wanted to know what we had been up to. "Nothing very much" said I. "Well why is your hair in such a mess?" said she. I'd obviously forgotten to wash and comb it!!! The 'telling off' came later.

There were times when we were incorrectly accused of causing damage to various things. We being my brother, two school pals and I. There was the occasion when during our train commuting school days we got the blame for rolling a large boulder down the rail embankment and through the Stationmaster's poultry house! We eventually convinced him that we were not responsible for such a wicked act. Explaining that, in any event, how could we have carried this out with so many commuters, including my father, keeping an eye on us whilst waiting for the morning train. On another occasion a farmers hedge went up in smoke and that little episode brought the village policeman to the front door, much to mother's consternation, but she was able to point out to him that her two sons were not involved because at the time of the alleged offence they were both in school in Nottingham, some eight miles away. The culprits were eventually tracked down in the village. During our few years in Keyworth the local 'Bobby' called at our house in an official capacity only twice. On both occasions he failed to gain any satisfaction.

By this time, 1926 or early 1927 father must have got 'itchy' feet again! The poultry business was not very lucrative as it took up a lot of time and energy. He decided to cut his losses and move back to Nottingham, this time to West Bridgford. The house we moved to was in North Road, not very far from our respective schools and as a real bonus, Trent Bridge Cricket Ground.. As brothers grow older they tend to drift apart because of age differences and individual friendships. It was at this time that my brother and I followed this trend.

It was towards the end of 1927 when the words 'East Africa', Kenya and Coffee planting cropped up at odd times in the conversations between my mother and father. Sometimes within my hearing range but completely beyond my comprehension. Also, two or three handbooks about East Africa appeared on the scene, the contents of which I glanced through with typical schoolboys interest.

I have no idea of how it came about but the parents showed sufficient interest to pursue the whole concept of a new life in East Africa, Kenya, 'the land of milk and honey', etc; Whom their contact was remains a mystery to me. Person or persons unknown and residing in London is all I knew then or now. My father must have made frequent journeys down to London to thrash out the many details and problems which must have arisen before coming to a definite decision on moving. Meanwhile my brother and I carried on with life as normal as one would expect.

CHAPTER 2

THE GREAT ADVENTURE BEGINS

I cannot remember the actual month, possibly March or April 1928, the two of us were told that sometime in the very near future the family would be moving to East Africa, Tanganyika to be exact, to take over an estate in a district called Iringa. Preparations were then started to pack into crates all our household possessions, bed linen, crockery, tableware, the lot. The house, which was on a weekly rental basis was no problem, but all the furniture and oddments which we would not be taking had to go off to the auctioneers. Following this great upheaval the family had to split up until departure date. Mother and Charles went off to an Aunt's house in Leamington Spa, Father and I to the grandparents who, by this time, had moved to a smaller house on Central Avenue in New Basford. Papa had to deal with his business interests in and around the town, whilst I had to carry on with my education in West Bridgford which meant I was back to a long daily journey again. Not having any friends in the Basford area my spare time was taken up helping my grandfather in his allotment.

This time, at school, the midday meal was no problem, An Uncle, with family, had moved to West Bridgford not long before our intended departure, fortunately, not too far away from the school and in an area where two of my school friends lived. Travelling to and from school was much better now the bus service ran direct to Bridgford from the Market Square. Also, the journey from the Market Square to Basford had improved with the introduction of the new electric trolley buses along that route.

Eventually the day dawned when I was told by my dad to make my farewells at school after the morning sessions. I was also, on my way home, to call at my Aunt and Uncles house to bid them good bye and thank them for kindly providing me with my midday meal for the past few weeks. A sad moment for me. The date was 19th June 1928. That afternoon and evening was spent calling on other Aunts and Uncles who lived in the vicinity to bid them all 'farewell'. This actually turned out to be a fairly profitable undertaking. The following day was taken up by last minute shopping and packing. On the 21st we were off to London where the family was reunited at a friends house, where we were to spend the night. That evening taking a stroll in Hyde Park I was in luck finding a half crown (2s 6d in pre decimal currency, 12½ New pence today) lying in the grass. An absolute fortune for a boy of 12 years at that time.

The following morning, the 22nd June, the great adventure began. Off in a taxi, past Buckingham Palace, to Waterloo Station to catch the 'Boat Train' to Southampton docks. On one of the platforms at Waterloo I noticed a crowd of people standing around all looking rather elegant. The menfolk wearing grey top hats and grey morning suits, the ladies dressed in flowery, flowing dresses with queer creations, called hats, on their heads. On enquiry I was informed that it was Royal Ascot week and that they were waiting for a train to take them in that direction.

We reached the docks in the early afternoon and were directed to board the M.V. Watussi owned by the Deutsche Ost Afrika Line (or in other words the German East Africa Line) of Bremmerhaven or Hamburg? The ship was quite large, through my eyes, but didn't compare with the larger Union Castle liners. Also, it was new, in fact, was on its maiden voyage around Africa via the Mediterranean Sea, Suez Canal, Red Sea and down the East coast of Africa to Capetown, thence back to Hamburg via the West coast. We were to travel to the port of Dar es Salaam on the east coast, the chief port of Tanganyika. Being so new the cabins, corridors, washrooms, etc, reeked with the smell of fresh paint and varnish. All rather overpowering and inclined to turn one's 'tum', mine anyway! The cabins were well appointed. My brother and I shared a four berth outer cabin which had portholes which, when opened, allowed a pleasant flow of fresh air in, and the occasional wave when conditions outside were a bit 'choppy'. Mum and Dad were in a double berth inner cabin which was rather dark and airless, tho' it did have air ducts.

After sorting OUT the luggage we all went in search of the lounge or dining room for a cup of tea. The dining room proved successful. The cups, etc, were all laid out on a table for one to help oneself, the only snag being that our 'tea time' is the Germans 'coffee time', however, the coffee was very palatable but not as thirst quenching as tea. The ship was due to sail sometime during the evening and since it was mid summer plenty of daylight remained.

So far as I recollect, the weather was fine and many of the passengers lined the deck as 'sailing time' approached to bid farewell to Southampton and any family and friends who happened to be on the dockside to see them off. Eventually, activity on the dockside increased and with three loud blasts on the steam siren, and the ship's band belting forth with great gusto playing 'oom pah pah' music, the ship was cast off and with a tug boat fussing around we progressed into Southampton Water, then away down the Solent. All went well for possibly an hour, during which time the evening meal was served (I think). There must have been a slight swell on the sea at the time causing a little discomfort within me. As good fortune would have it I happened to be in the 'Herren' (German for the Gents) when I was as sick as the proverbial dog, and remained in that condition for the next two days. I was not the only one in the family to suffer, both Mother and brother had to retire to their bunks with a dose of 'Mal de Mer'. I think the old man must have been a seasoned traveller as the ship's motion didn't appear to affect him, which was just as well. He could at least keep us supplied with soda water. The English Channel was choppy which did not improve the situation, but as the ship ploughed and rolled its way through the Bay of Biscay all thoughts of recovery disappeared. It was awful!!!!

The majority of those that had suffered during the past few days surfaced when a calmer sea prevailed, by which time we were off Cape Finistere and the North Spanish/Portugese coast. The day was warm with the sunshine pouring into the deck-lounge when I had to excel myself once again. Feeling rather weak I arose rather quickly from a deck chair and immediately flaked out in a heap on the deck. That caused a 'flap', my very first fainting attack. However, I soon recovered and was able to enjoy the voyage and deck games in spite of the ship's slight roll. The M.V. Watussi, so named after an African tribe with roots in Ruanda-Urundi, was a three class ship. 1st, 2nd and 3rd class. Needless to say most of the British fraternity were travelling 3rd class, we were! The 2nd and 3rd class passengers intermingled quite freely in one

another's deck space and lounges but not the dining rooms. In fact there was very little difference to those between the two apart from the fare. Drinks were perhaps a little cheaper in 3rd.

The fare, at the time, for a single adult, for the passage Southampton to Dar es Salaam was somewhere in the region of £37:00. Not unreasonable for a 30 day voyage! On this trip I would say that roughly half the cabin accommodation, throughout all classes on board, was empty judging by the number of passengers walking about. Perhaps just as well, since it avoided the necessity of having two 'sittings' at meal times and also having lots of deck space for games.

My father, who could converse with the Germans in their own language, learned from one of the Deck Officers that one of the causes of the severe 'rolling' motion through the Bay of Biscay was due to the ship's ballast tanks. Apparently a few hundred tons of railway lines, destined for South Africa, should have been loaded into the holds at Antwerp but the Dockers there to be on strike, consequently, the ballast tanks had to be filled with water. This is not as efficient as a 'dead' weight to keep a ship steady.

I cannot remember the days, or dates, between our 'Ports of Call'; the first call was into Lisbon in Portugal, for a stay of 24 hours or so. Leaving Lisbon the ship's course took us southwards towards the North African coast, eventually dropping anchor almost half a mile offshore at Tangiers. This was a sight-seeing visit for the benefit of all the tourists on board who were having a cruise holiday as far as Genoa. They would then return home overland by train. Later in the evening we set off for an overnight voyage to Malaga, another sight-seers destination. Here the mid summer heat was almost unbearable to those, like me, who were unacclimatised to such conditions. We tramped around the town looking at 'this and that' until midday; then returned to the boat for lunch and a cool place to recline on deck. Setting sail, again in the night, we headed for Genoa, one or two days sailing ahead. The night before docking there was a 'Grand Ball' held in honour of all the tourists who would be disembarking the following day. I think a good time was enjoyed by all those participating, even at my age (which is easily calculated). I noticed a number of dancers, and others enjoying the festivities, had a little difficulty with their legs trying to keep time with both the music and the ship's rolling motion!

Laying to, alongside one of the docks took my interest for a while, amused by the shouting and gesticulating of the 'tug's' crews. I was to learn many years later how excitable the Italians could be. Later in the day the Allen family went ashore on a sight-seeing tour of the city. One or two purchases were made, which had its amusing moments when confronted by the shop keepers who could not speak English – and we couldn't speak a word of their language – and it came to calculating the currency exchange rate --!! However, we managed. Sitting in an open air café enjoying a cup of coffee and cakes there was sudden noise and commotion behind us. This was caused by four Italian youths having a good fight. Suddenly one of them let out a terrific yell, stabbed right through the cheek with a knife. In no time at all two Carabinieri (Italian police) appeared on the scene to deal with the situation. They soon had the gang rounded up and off to ----? I wonder where?

By the time we returned to the ship a whole batch of new faces were around the decks, representing a few different nationalities. What did strike me as rather queer, a number of Mussolini's 'Blackshirt Brigade' were patrolling the dockside, and at the same time, begging for cigarettes!

As usual, on departure from a port, three blasts on the ship's 'hooter' and a few bars from the 'Oom Pah Pah' band in full swing saw us off to the next port of call, Port Said, a further few days sailing away. Somewhere on route we passed the huge lump of extinct (I think) volcano, Stromboli. An awesome sight, rising out of the sea to quite a height.

Early one morning I peered through the porthole and, to my surprise, saw the frontage of shops as the ship drifted closely and slowly past on its way into the harbour, dropping anchor near the Port Said Signal Station. In no time at all the Egyptian 'bumboat' traders were alongside trying hard to sell their wares, leather goods, curios and other junk at exorbitant prices. As the day drew on and competition between the traders became more acute the prices for their goods dropped dramatically. A few had managed to climb aboard, mainly the 'Guli Guli' men who classed themselves as 'magicians', who would produce small live chicks out of ones pockets, ears and various other places. Some of the youths who got aboard would dive off the deck rail into the water to retrieve coins thrown into the sea by the passengers. Incidentally, the passengers were advised to close portholes and lock their cabin doors whilst the ship was in port.

During the morning many of those on board went ashore, including the Allen family. This was by way of a long and narrow pontoon bridge linking the ship to shore. By this time the day was warming up somewhat, so after having a look at the shops along the seafront to see what was on offer we retreated into that famous emporium, Simon Artz, to cool off. Here, there were many interesting items of every description on offer. These generally were expensive unless you were prepared to 'haggle' over the price. Once back on board it was a little cooler than on shore but, even so, it was still rather warm for us Europeans. (Strange to say, that on a return visit to the port in 1946 I felt half frozen. That's acclimatisation for you.) The harbour was very busy with vessels loading and unloading cargo. One of the older vessels was being re-bunkered with coal in the old fashioned way, dozens of labourers carrying panniers of coal on their shoulders from the coal barge up a long wooden ramp and into the ship through two massive steel doors in the ship's side.

That evening, as the sun was sinking over the horizon, we departed from the harbour and after a very short time entered the Suez Canal proceeding at a very slow pace towards Port Suez at the southern end. In order for the Pilot to navigate his way along the canal a large searchlight had been lashed to the ship's prow, which did at least show up the many sand dredgers positioned at various sites along the route. Their task being to keep the canal clear. It is a great pity that the trip down the entire length of the canal was undertaken during the hours of darkness. (The second time I travelled the same route the same thing happened again, although the daylight did manage to last out until we passed Ishmalia.) Arrival time in Port Suez was at about 7am. The anchor was dropped overboard some distance from the shore. The searchlight offloaded into the Pilot boat and whisked away to await the next convoy proceeding northwards. There appeared to be no other activity on board, only members of the crew trying their luck fishing for sharks (so they said?) with no success. The ship swung around at the end of its anchor chain for a few hours until a party of 1st class passengers arrived back on board. Apparently they had disembarked at Port Said, travelled to Cairo on a sightseeing trip and boarded a train for the trip down to Suez. When all had embarked, and the anchor hauled up, we headed off towards

the Red Sea. Aden was our next port of call but I cannot remember how many days lapsed before we reached there! All I do remember is the overpowering heat as we travelled southwards. How the cooks and kitchen staff managed to survive such temperatures I do not know. The hot blast of air as we passed the open kitchen (galley) doors was terrible.

We arrived off Aden early one morning and dropped anchor in the harbour, fairly close to another, much larger, liner, the P & O ship S.S. Rawalpindi, bound for Bombay. How did I know? Well, three of our passengers destined for India transferred over to the other ship. Only a short stay in Aden, then off on the next leg of our journey, through the Indian Ocean to Mombasa.

By nightfall we were off the East coast of Somaliland swinging southwards round Cape Guardafui, the horn of Africa, straight into the full blast of a monsoon. In no time at all many of those on deck and in the lounges either made a dash to the ships railing or to their cabins, all feeling rather unwell, our family included. As the night drew on the storm became worse, tossing the ship from one high wave in to a low trough, and then climbing out again. By now, from the tales circulating later, all the storm doors were shut, dining rooms and lounges closed including the galleys. Sleep was impossible. What with the rolling and tossing and trying to be 'ill' every fifteen minutes or so life wasn't worth living and had the ship gone under not many would have cared!! To make matters worse, and at regular intervals, the propeller would leave the water, making a horrible noise, followed by a loud 'thump' as it re-entered the next wave. How long all this lasted is rather vague in my memory, but at a rough estimate somewhere in the region of 24 to 30 hours. As the sea became calmer many pale faces started to appear on deck, but not showing a great interest in food. From all accounts it was said that 85% of the passengers and crew suffered (and I am happy to relate that was the last time I ever suffered from travel sickness – famous last words).

The next 'fun' event on the voyage was the 'Crossing the Line' (Equator) ceremony. Great preparations were made around the swimming pool, with a throne for 'King Neptune' and a 'Barber's Chair' placed over the pool for the unfortunate victims to undergo a very course shave (!!) before being tipped into the water. I don't know if the actual ceremony had to commence or coincide with the moment in time when the ship crossed the Equator, but anyway the fun started in the early afternoon with members of the crew in 'fancy dress' with a few of the passengers similarly attired, and trying to avoid being grabbed, dumped unceremoniously in the 'Barber's Chair, well and truly lathered with some horrible looking 'goo' by the 'barber', followed by a quick dip into the pool. Even some of those dressed in their normal attire did not escape and suffered the same fate. In due course the frivolities ceased and in no time at all the deck crew cleared away the mess.

The following day preparations were underway prior to docking in Kilindini harbour (Mombasa, Kenya) later in the day. 'Later in the day' was sometime around 6:30pm by which hour, the sun had almost disappeared over the horizon, darkness almost prevailed. I presume that was the reason the ship had been anchored a few hundred yards off shore. Passengers were not allowed to disembark until the following morning but the folk who had travelled to the port to greet their families or friends arrival were allowed aboard for a few hours. I would suggest that some of these 'visitors' came up the steps more to sample the cheap duty-free drinks in the bar than to meet friends!! By 8am next morning the ship was alongside one of the deep water berths with a great deal of activity on board and on the dockside. Many of the passengers were disembarking here with the majority bound 'up country' to Nairobi, 320 miles to the North West.

Later in the day the Allens took a walk as far as the shopping area to see what Mombasa had to offer, apart from a very hot sun. We then ambled along to the railway station to see our travelling companions and acquaintances from the voyage off on their journey to the capitol of Kenya. The time was approaching 6pm so it was back to the ship without further dawdling around. During our absence there had been an influx of passengers, again of many nationalities, bound for the southern African ports, with a few returning to Europe via the 'Cape Route' (Round the Cape of Good Hope and up the Western coast of Africa). That evening, quite late, we were cast off from our berth, cruised slowly south, and tied up in Tanga in the early hours to drop off and pick-up more passengers. The stay there was relatively short and we were soon under way again heading for Zanzibar. This was another short stay to allow the sightseers a few hours ashore. As Dar es Salaam is only 48 miles from Zanzibar, we must have left there in the early hours of July 23rd 1928, because we were at the outer anchorage off Dar es Salaam by 7am to await either the tide, or the Pilot to steer us in, after a voyage of some 6,800 miles from Southampton. By 9am, up came the anchor for our last time and we slipped into the harbour, which is almost land-locked and entered through a narrow channel to the side of which lay the wreckage of a floating dock, which the Germans had sunk there in 1914 to close off the port to the British. There were no deep water berths so the ship was moored approximately 400 yards from the landing stage. Motor launches plied back and forth between the ship and shore with the passengers and their baggage. The passengers had to wait aboard the ship whilst immigration formalities were gone through. In time, it was our families turn to disembark and we were escorted ashore by two gentlemen who had come aboard to meet and greet us. They having being briefed before our arrival, by someone unbeknownst to me, to help us 'feel our feet' in a strange and foreign land. One was an ex-army Major and the other an ex-RAF pilot, both being in the same organisation as my father. It turned out that these two stalwart chaps were, when we reached our final destination up country, to be our near neighbours. Whether they just happened to be in Dar on our day of arrival, or had planned to meet us, I do not know, however we were soon piled into three rickshaws and set off for the New Africa Hotel. For those readers who have a knowledge of Dar es Salaam, the tarmac was being laid along the Azania Front and Main Street opposite the Customs House on 23rd July 1928. Acacia Avenue and the surrounding roads were still sandy tracks full of potholes, and huge puddles after a tropical rainstorm had drenched the town earlier that afternoon.

Historical Note

Dar es Salaam (Capital of the Mandated Territory of Tanganyika)

Dar es Salaam was only a fishing village when the country was occupied by the Germans in 1884. It succeeded Bagamoyo as the Capital of German East Africa in 1891. The town is situated on the shores of a palm fringed bay and still contains many fine buildings erected by the Germans. During the First World (or Great) War, 1914/18. the town was occupied by the British Forces sometime prior to the end of hostilities in 1918. The name, Dar es Salaam, is an Arabic phrase meaning 'Haven of Peace'.

CHAPTER 3

A FOREIGN LAND

We now return to the New Safari Hotel on 23rd July 1928.

Over luncheon our two 'technical advisors' briefed my parents on a whole lot of interesting facts, including what to purchase in Dar and what could be bought in Iringa, our ultimate 'shopping' town. So, after the rainstorm ended – leaving the atmosphere in a very humid condition, the family made its way to the main shopping area in Acacia Avenue to purchase the necessary essentials, This included groceries which could withstand the tropical heat, tinned goods, medicines and odd bits of hardware. The kindly Indian shopkeeper, Mr Kassam Suderji Samji, well known to hundreds of Europeans over the years, and main importer of practically everything in the food and drink lines, said his minions would pack up the purchases into a crate and consign it to Dodoma by rail that evening, the same train on which we would be travelling.

D'Salaam is the terminus for the Central Railway line which extends westward for 780 miles to Kigoma, near Ujiji, where the great explorers Stanley and Livingstone met. Dodoma, headquarters of the Central Province, is approximately 260 miles inland from D'Salaam towards Kigoma, or, a 17 hour journey by train. Passenger/mail trains run at infrequent intervals, only three per week in either direction, which accounts for us having to travel that evening, otherwise it would have meant another two days wait in Dar es Salaam for the next train.

One of the drawbacks of moving to a foreign country is the language problem. Kiswahili is the common language throughout East Africa. None of the family knew a word of it, in spite of having perused, at odd moments, a text book on the subject. However, many of the Africans we encountered could speak a smattering of English which helped the situation slightly. The other item we had to accustom ourselves to was the currency, which being metric, was easily grasped. The legal tender was East African shillings and cents, no Pounds. 100 cents equalled One shilling. The copper coinage came in 1, 5 and 10 cent pieces with a silver 50 cent piece. Banknotes were in denominations of 5, 10, 20, 100 and, I think, 1000 shillings, though I don't recall seeing any of the latter!! The copper coins had a hole drilled through their centre, a most useful innovation, allowing the coins to be strung together in 1 shilling lots! When writing sums the denomination was expressed as --/-- (e.g. 5/20 for 5 shillings and 20 cents).

Note; later in this journal my father does quote being paid in £s. The reason for this is probably because he was at the time in the Army and his paymasters used the British Army accounting system.

After a bath, brush-up and dinner, preparations were made for the departure for the station. Four rickshaws were called, double man powered contraptions – one fore, one aft, to carry the six of us and all our luggage at a trot to the station and our waiting train, which was due to depart at 9:30pm. Berths had been booked for us all (by our friendly companions) with the parents in one two berth coupe with my brother and me in a similar compartment. Being the younger 'kid' brother I was relegated to the upper bunk, where I lay in fear of falling out until someone found a rail to prevent such an incident happening. It was a disturbed night, with snatches of sleep between stations. The babble of voices that went on at every stop was enough to awaken the dead. Soon after dawn the train pulled into a station where there appeared to be nothing other than trees, thorn bushes and the station building. No doubt, there was probably a trading centre with an Indian owned duka (shop) not too far away but out of sight to us. As we travelled though the dry scrub-bush countryside my eyes were glued to the window looking for the 'wild animals' newcomers expect to see lurking behind every bush. I was sadly disappointed, although I did see a flock of wild Guinea fowl!! The Restaurant Carriage attached to the train felt as though it had been fitted with oval wheels. It rocked and lurched to such an extent that pouring out, or drinking a cup of tea/coffee, was well nigh impossible without spilling it over the table or oneself. As the afternoon drew on the countryside we passed through looked rather arid and scarred with gullies, erosion, caused by the heavy downpours encountered during the rainy seasons. Judging by the number of mud huts scattered around there was a fair sized population living in the area. Also, the cattle, sheep and goat herds seen near the railway were in a very poor condition, which is understandable considering that there was not a blade of grass to be seen anywhere. The goats, however, fared slightly better, browsing off the different species of bushes.

The train pulled into Dodoma soon after 4pm. The Greek owned hotel was close by so in no time at all we were settled in and ready for a cup of tea. The building resembled a very large square bungalow with open arches along part of the outside wall to allow the ingress of fresh air, plus moths and mosquitoes, to keep the inner rooms cool. The large dining room was surrounded by a 4ft high wall surmounted by a 4ft high wooden lattice screen thus allowing any breeze, warm or cool, to circulate freely. The double bedded rooms were large but sparsely furnished with, apart from the bed, a dressing table and an old fashioned wash stand complete with enamel wash basin and matching water jug in a 'chipped white' décor. The lounge was rather small and airless. That night, much to our disgust, the parents locked us in our bedroom and took away the key! Why??!!, perhaps they thought we would sleepwalk off to Ugogoland during the night! Although it could have proved disastrous had there been a 'loo-call' during the night.

Dodoma was a busy little town, Provincial Headquarters for the Central Province, the boundaries of which encompassed many hundreds of square miles and populated with five different African tribes. The railway depot is a busy place. All the freight consigned to the towns and outlying areas to the South of Dodoma had to be transferred to motor transport for the long haul over rough earth roads to Iringa, and beyond; A trip of somewhere in the region of 792 miles with the return journey. The main snag with this was that there was little or no return loads, consequently, the empty lorries bumped and bounced their way back, much to the detriment of suspensions and bodywork. The Great North Road,

or Cape (Capetown, S Africa) to Cairo (Egypt) road, runs through the town. This was the road we were travel down, in a Southerly direction, after our night in the hotel.

By 8:30am, on the 25th July 1928, we were ready to depart for Iringa, 162 miles away. The 'Major' loaded all of the luggage, bits and pieces and two 4 gallon cans of petrol (the next available source was in Iringa) into the back of his 1927 model Buick 'box body' car (a fore-runner of the ubiquitous 'station wagon'). Space was somewhat limited which resulted in Father, brother and the 'Major's' cook making themselves as comfortable as possible on top of boxes, etc, in the rear. Mother and I were OK, we had the front seat with the 'Major'. With such a heavy load on board care had to be taken to avoid the many potholes on the earth road surface, thus keeping the speed low. After about 80 miles, or so, we arrived at the Great Ruaha River. A fairly large river by East African standards and at this point fairly wide. The crossing of the river was to be undertaken on a pontoon ferry. A long wire hawser was anchored to each bank with the pontoon attached to the hawser, which passed through two pulleys, fore and aft. The complete ferry was hauled or winched across using local man-power. Being well inland and at a low altitude the heat was rather overpowering to us not having being acclimatised. We were soon on our way once again. After about 25 miles the land began to rise towards the hills ahead. A few miles further on we came to the foot of what is known as the 'escarpment' where the narrow road twists, turns and climbs up the side of a range of hills for six or seven miles to an altitude of 4,000+ ft above sea level. At that altitude the air is certainly cooler than on the plains below. From the top of the escarpment the tree covered countryside continued to rise all the way to Iringa, which is surrounded by a few hills. The town is 5,000ft above Sea Level and , at this time of year, the middle of the 'dry season', the air becomes quite chilly in the evenings.

During the journey from Dodoma to Iringa very few wild animals were seen. A few Dik Dik (a very small species of antelope), an Impala antelope, a baboon and numerous flocks of Guinea fowl was the tally.

Note;

I have travelled that same route many times since that initial journey seeing many species of wild animals. These include lions, which made their appearance moments after I had returned to my car following a short 'comfort stop' and preparing to continue on my journey, and Elephants. The latter caused me, at night, to apply the car brakes rather suddenly and instantly reverse, this to avoid becoming entangled in their legs.

We arrived in Iringa sometime in the afternoon, booked in at the Colonist Hotel, later to become the Iringa Hotel, and downed a very welcome and refreshing cup of tea. The main hotel building did not contain any bedrooms, instead, a number of rondavels, round mud huts with thatched roofs, dotted around a central compound. The bar was also housed in a separate building a few yards from the dining and sitting rooms. I have no recollection of a kitchen! The dining room was long and narrow with a long dining table, almost the length of the room, down the centre. The guests sat opposite one another – all very 'matey'!! The bedroom furnishings consisted of two single beds, a dressing table, a small table and a washstand with the inevitable enamelware washbasin, jug and bucket. When bath-time came around the room boy would bring in a hip bath two 'debis' of hot water. A 'debi' is a 4 gallon petrol or paraffin can which, when emptied and scrubbed clean, serves as an excellent bucket or container. The two debis of hot water would fill the hip bath to a depth of about 5 inches, just enough to wallow in.

The other European hotel in the town was Meyer's Hotel patronised, as the name suggests, by the German fraternity, of whom there were any in the district. Rumour has it that the Great War was occasionally re-fought time and again when a few Britishers descended on the place and drank a few too many!

The provision stores, hardware and allied building materials stores are all Indian owned and much of the transport business is also in their hands. I have no recollection of seeing any European owned businesses other than the two hotels and an Accountant's office.

Iringa, being the Provincial Capital and District Headquarters was well represented by the different Government departments, i.e, Provincial administration, Medical, Veterinary, Police, Agriculture, Post and Telegraph, Public Works, Education and Forestry but !! no banks. The nearest being in Dar es Salaam !! The European farming community, of whom there were many spread around the district, were known as 'settlers', a term brought down from Kenya.

26th July 1928 is the last precise date that I recollect; henceforth, it is a case of 'guesstimating' to within a few weeks or months.

After a chilly start to the day my father and Major Brummel went off somewhere on business, returning about an hour and a half later. The car was again loaded up with luggage and passengers for the last leg of the journey to Rungemba Estate, forty miles further south, the abode of an ex-RAF, or RFC, officer, Guy T.....? , with whom we were to stay for a week or so. Incidentally, I cannot remember seeing our host to be since the night in Dodoma. Leaving Iringa the road dropped down a very short, and sharp, escarpment – extremely rough going – to the valley below. There was not much improvement to the road surface as we travelled past the small villages on either side of the road. For the first 20 miles, or so, the land was well populated and widely cultivated but, at this time of the year, the crops had been harvested leaving the land looking rather bare, although the Banana clumps added a bit of greenery to the scene. After passing through the cultivation belt the road began to ascend the hilly country to an altitude of 6,500 ft asl. The climate becoming very temperate indeed! From the top of Nyamanda Hill the undulating countryside dropped to a slightly lower level and into the land of the 'settlers'. The major gave a running commentary on who lived where as we drove along, but there was no visible evidence of any 'homesteads' (mud brick houses) or cultivation. Merely a board nailed to a post giving the name of the Estate to be found at the end of a rough track on the roadside. Practically all the land owners were experimenting with the production of Turkish tobacco leaf as an export crop.

At long last we arrived at our 'short term' destination, somewhat bewildered, but never-the-less, curious. By the time all our paraphernalia was off loaded and dumped somewhere, Guy's cook had produced tea and snacks for the five of us. (Many African cooks are marvellous at conjuring up meals at a moments notice!). As the Major had a further 27 miles to cover to reach the estate he managed for Fawcus Estates Ltd. He bid us Good Luck (!!) and was off. A little later our host duly arrived on the scene and organised the sleeping arrangements.

During the next few days Guy enlightened father in the various procedures for dealing with African labour, wattle and daub (mud hut) building and many other useful aspects of life in this strange land. He also learnt that, unlike the UK,

Africa has only two very distinct seasons, the wet and dry! The wet, or better known as the 'rainy', season usually occurs between Oct/Nov and April, followed by six months of dry weather, during which time building projects must be completed. Whilst the adults were going about their respective business my brother and I, left to our own devices, wandered around various parts of the estate to see what there was to see. Once we accompanied the estate Headman on a 'meat for the pot'. There was great excitement when he shot an unfortunate Reedbuck. Generally that was the only method of making meat available, no butchers anywhere near here!!

On one afternoon the four Allens went to visit another settler who lived three miles away, who was in partnership with a fellow Australian whom we had met in Dar es Salaam on the way through. On the way a lorry, approaching us from the opposite direction, stopped and a voice from the driver's seat said "If you see Mark (whom we were hoping to meet) would you please tell him the 'General' called". "General who?" asked father. "Oh. He'll know." Said the voice, and was off!!

We must have spent a week at Rungemba when his 'Lordship' decided the time had come to move ourselves to the future home some twenty miles further along the road to a place, as yet un-named. A visitor happened to call in at the right moment and offered to give us a lift, however, it had been agreed that Pa and Chas would go on ahead and prepare the mud hut, which we inherited from the previous occupant (whoever he happened to be), before Ma and I moved in. They departed leaving Ma and me to fend for ourselves. It was a case of having to since our host had gone off 'visiting' for a few days! The cook, who spoke English quite well, attended to our needs. By the time Guy returned home we had already departed.

After allowing the 'advance party' a week to get organised Mama thought it was time for her to get involved, but how to get there? Stop a passing lorry and beg a lift! Vehicles are few and far between along the main road but, fortunately, luck was on our side. With John's, the cook, assistance a message was sent along to the African shopkeeper, who lived at the end of the estate road, explaining our predicament, and asking to pass on the information to any lorry driver who happened to stop at his 'duka' (shop). After a couple of hours a well laden lorry, driven by a South African, arrived at the house to pick us up. Having packed our cases in anticipation we were soon off on our travels once again, only this time quite short, 20 miles. Our driver had a 280 miles haul to his destination! After 17 rough miles the road came to the foot of a ridge followed by an uphill drag of 2½ miles to the top where the road levelled out for 800 yards. It was up here, at an altitude of 6,600 ft asl, that we turned off to the left, down a short, steep track of about 400 yards in length, and there it was! A very large mud and pole dwelling – HOME SWEET HOME !!! 60 miles from the nearest town, doctor, hospital provisions store, post office, etc; - and no transport!!!!

CHAPTER 4

A NEW BEGINNING

After a cup of tea, or two, where it came from ??, the milk came out of a tin, our helpful friend Roy L...? continued on his way. From now onwards whenever he passed by, usually three times a month, he would call in and enquire whether there was anything we required from Iringa. He also kept us supplied with empty petrol cases and debris.

A tour of inspection did not take long! There was hardly anything to inspect! The 'house' was oblong in shape, approximately 65ft by 16ft, containing four rooms of equal size. The walls were about 7ft high and covering the whole lot was a steeply pitched thatched roof. It was built across a slope and faced eastwards, from which direction a bitter prevailing wind blew. Walking from South to North there was a side door into room No 1, a general 'dump' room, room 2, the living room, rooms 3 and 4, bedrooms, No 4 having a back door – a short cut to the 'loo' hut, of the 'thunder box' and 'bombing range' type, some 12 yards, or so, away. The living room was also accessible through a 'front' door and porch, but very seldom used because of the howling wind during the cold season. All the rooms had wooden framed windows but, alas, no glass. Sheets of calico had been nailed to the outside of the frames in an effort to reduce the blast, making the rooms rather dark, and airy. The kitchen was a separate mud hut some 20 to 30ft away. If, during a meal, heavy rain came down there could be a long wait between courses. All the floors in the house were plain earth scraped to a reasonable level which became rather dusty after a while. Furnishings were virtually non-existent. One table, two chairs, some 'petrol case' cupboards and shelves, three rustic beds (made on the premises from wild wattle trees growing in a nearby valley. There was also a camp bed and tent. By some strange stroke of luck our two cases of household effects from the UK and two other boxes containing hardware and provisions, purchased in Dar and Iringa, had arrived. How, who or when? So we did have some bed linen and food to make life a little more comfortable.

I cannot remember but think the 'Boss' (father) must have met our predecessor before he departed, as there was an assortment of tools, garden and otherwise, in one corner of the 'junk' room; plus a few other items of interest that had been taken over.

After tea, and a biscuit or two, preparations were made for the evening in anticipation of the uncomfortable night ahead. A bundle of firewood was brought in to boost the dying embers in a badly designed fireplace – the smoke preferred the room rather than going up the chimney, and as for heating the room!! An impossibility, due to all the draughts from the doors and windows. If I remember correctly, the tent was pitched in the middle bedroom and, with camp bed, commandeered by Mother! How the previous occupant had borne the discomfort remains a mystery. Perhaps he too slept in the tent! After our uncomfortable night a concerted all out effort was made to ameliorate the misery of feeling cold.

The evening meal came out of tins, an expensive pastime to indulge in too often. Imported items such as Biscuits, Quaker Oats, tea, coffee, pea soup powder, cigarettes, tobacco and a few more things all came in hermetically sealed tins to preserve the contents from mould. The tinned butter imported from India was not very palatable, what would you expect from Water Buffalo milk? Mother tried her hand at bread making with tinned dry yeast! The result was a small, oblong, brick like object as hard as iron. However, she persevered, but one could hardly call it bread. The oven was blamed for the failure which could possibly be true. In my experience, African cooks are the only persons able to operate African type ovens with any degree of success.

I think the parents must have engaged a cook in Iringa, with the assistance of the 'Major's' cook who gave him directions to where he could find us, which he did without any difficulty. His name – M'Sabah. Also, a day or two later, a young lad appeared on the premises asking for employment as a 'house – boy'. He was engaged for a trial period to ascertain his ability to cope with housework and the daily clothes wash. To complete the kitchen staff one of the labourers was given the job of 'wood and water' carrier. It was his responsibility to ensure an adequate supply of water and firewood was always available at the house. The water came from a spring in the valley below the house, 250 yards down the slope. Making the return journey, with two, four gallon debris full of water on a home made yoke across his shoulders, an uphill slog. (The correct plural term for 'debi' in Kiswahili is 'madebi'). Adjacent to the spring was a small vegetable garden producing a few cabbages, beans and tough lettuces. After enlargement, and a few months, the selection of vegetables was greatly improved.

The language situation was a problem at times but with the Cook's, who could speak a little English, as could the houseboy, having being taught the basic principles at a mission school in Nyasaland, help, and with the aid of the Swahili Grammar and Dictionary we managed to make ourselves understood – at least my brother and I could. The parents never managed to master the language – only an off-shoot commonly known as 'Ki-settler'.

In the past, before the German, invasion which occurred sometime around 1883 (?), the Iringa district was known as Uhehe, being the tribal land of the WaHehe (pronounced Wa Hay hay), who were a warrior tribe whose favourite pastime was plundering, cattle stealing and other unpleasant activities, from adjoining tribes. Consequently, they did not take kindly to manual labour for a couple of decades, or so. At times we would have a labour force of 20 labourers on the register, but seldom would more than fifteen turn up on any one day. When a labourer completed a thirty working days period he would be paid, but it usually took each of them from six to eight weeks to complete the requisite thirty days.

Word soon got around the local population that a new family of 'Wazungu' (Europeans) had arrived in the area and within a day or two some came along to the house selling eggs and poultry. The price of eggs was a shilling for fifty, tho' they were small. The roosters and hens cost fifty cents (sixpence in £.s.d. or 2½ new pence) each, and again, they were rather small, hardly enough meat on one for four people! Since chicken was the only meat available we soon ended up with quite a flock. This entailed the building of a vermin-proof hut without undue delay. The vermin being Hyenas, wild cats and other nocturnal predators. With our small labour force the job was soon completed.

As the days moved on a varied assortment of improvements were made to the house to make life a little more comfortable. With the use of more wattle poles and boxes more rustic furniture was cobbled together, including, with wattle, a double bed. What is in very short supply here is sawn timber which could only be obtained from Iringa. During our wanderings over the estate my brother and I found a deposit of kaolin which, when mixed with water, came in useful as a pale 'pink-wash' to brighten up interior mud walls, though not, I hasten to add, in the house. Mud huts seemed to be forever on the agenda. One for the estate overseer, an African ex-Army Sergeant, originally from Nyasaland (Malawi), and another hut for the migrant labour force, who came from another district, who would usually stay for a three or four months before returning home at the onset of the Rainy season to cultivate their own crops. A few of them returned to us year after year, in fact, one of them was on the muster roll for 25 years!

My father also purchased at this time a couple of cattle, the pair costing £5 0s 0d (500 E.A. shillings, I believe) which was the market value at the time. Some form of cattle enclosure had also to be erected to safeguard at night the two recently purchased beasts, a cow and heifer, from inquisitive animals such as hyenas, wild dogs and the occasional lion. So, a huge, and high, stockade was built with tall slender trees enclosing sufficient ground to accommodate up to 150 cattle. The term for this sort of stockade in Swahili is 'boma', which came to be, by the colonists, the accepted name for any type of walled or fenced fortification and also the name given to all the Provincial and District Government office complexes, walled or not. The cattle bomas had to be completely predator proof to a height at which they could not leap over. During the months ahead a herd of about 30 cows, some with calves, was built up. A number of bullocks were also bought to be trained as oxen at a later date. Unfortunately, a tick born disease called East Coast Fever was endemic throughout the area which accounted for a mortality rate of 60% amongst the calves. Those surviving the disease were immune for life. Regular 'dipping' is the answer, but there aren't any cattle dips around! African cows do not yield much milk but what they do has a high fat content.

It is surprising what the local inhabitants brought along to sell. One day it was a young Vervet monkey for which I paid two shillings and named him 'Bimbo'. On another occasion it was a Pangolin or Scaly Anteater, the vendor wanting sixty shillings for the animal! He was told that a zoo might pay six hundred shillings for it, but that it was no earthly (!!) use to us, whereupon, he turned it loose - and within a few minutes it had buried itself in a newly prepared flowerbed!! Another item was a Leopard's skin, that cost seven shillings and 50 cents.

The weather gradually improved from September onwards, becoming quite warm, an indication of the approaching 'rainy' season. Our first torrential downpour, tropical thunderstorm, in November, left us in a very damp state. The thatched roof was useless in preventing the heavy rain to leak through. Water came in everywhere, which called for drastic action to cover the beds with any suitable coverings, raincoats, the tent inner and outer flysheets, ground sheets and even wash basins to catch the heavier drips. It so happened that the District Agricultural Officer called by to introduce himself, so three adults, one lad and a monkey, on his indoor abode, shared the only dry patch of floor measuring about 5 square yards. The drips continued for quite a while after the storm had passed over. At least something was gained from the experience. The Agricultural Officer, a South African of Scottish descent, explained to us the method used in South Africa for thatching with coarse grass, which, later on, proved very successful.

As the year was drawing towards its close development in various directions continued. A pert of the valley below the house was cleared of thicket and dense undergrowth, approximately 5 acres, which had then to be cultivated with hand tools, since there was no mechanical means at that time. A large pert of the area was for planting different species of fruit trees which would be ordered from South Africa in time to coincide with the beginning of our next rainy season. The trees, peach, apple, fig, orange, lemon and grapefruit did arrive on time.

The 2,500 acres of the 'estate' were rather poor so far as the soil was concerned. The open grassland, with a number of clumps of trees and thickets scattered around, made a picturesque landscape, but years and years of bush fires sweeping over the land annually destroyed any saplings trying to survive. The fertile land is in the well watered valleys. Also, growing on the sparse grassland was the African Protea Bush which is a good indicator of poor soil. At least there were enough acres of grass to support a large number of cattle.

Although neighbours are few, and far between, and the nearest town 60 miles away, no feeling of isolation occurred. This was mainly due to the fact that neighbours, officials of the different Government departments - who could smell Tea from a half mile away, and strangers seeking assistance, usually those whose car or lorry engines had boiled-up after climbing the long hill from the Iringa side, would call in to offer advice on their particular subjects, with the odd spot of gossip thrown in.

The populated Hehe settlement at the bottom of the 'hill' is called Sao (pronounced as in pig - sow) so the estate was named Sao Hill, which, a few years later, could be found on the Territorial and Road maps of the country, and to this day still is. Father often bragged about putting SAO HILL on the map!

When supplies ran low Mother would beg a lift from any neighbour who called en-route to Iringa, to make the necessary purchases of provisions and items of hardware. On one occasion I accompanied her, as I was rapidly growing out of my footwear. Fortunately, my size was available at a newly opened German owned store. The return journey home was rather prolonged due to mechanical troubles. The first breakdown occurred near an Italian Mission; quite a large set up, where our African's friend went to seek help. An Italian priest came along to invite us in for coffee and cake - a most welcome break!! After some delay we set off again but our driver, Henni De beer, wasn't too happy with the vehicles performance, so, twenty miles further on, he pulled into a place called Ulete, where a new Bacon factory was being built, and also, where my brother happened to be employed at that time. As it was rather late in the day accommodation was found for us to spend the night. The Next morning, with the factory engineer's assistance, the mechanical fault was remedied and we resumed our journey home.

During the first few weeks after our arrival at Sao Hill we, brother and I, would explore the estate and surrounding countryside to find out what was going on around us. Of the different species of antelope and game birds we saw Duiker, Steinbuck, Bushbuck, Mountain Reedbuck and occasionally a herd of Eland, huge antelope the size of an African cow. Of the game birds there were Partridge, Duck, Greater and Lesser Bustard. Our firearms consisted of a Winchester automatic repeating .22 rifle and Mauser pistol so 'shooting for the pot' was out.

CHAPTER 5

MODERNISATION & DIVERSIFICATION

Our first Christmas in Tanganyika came and went much the same as any other day of the week! For Xmas dinner we had the inevitable roast chicken, vegetables, and instead of Xmas pudding, a steamed Ginger pud.

Into 1929 the development continued apace, especially after the rainy season was over. One project was brick making. A suitable clay was found not too far away so the site had to be cleared sufficiently for a few thousand 'wet' bricks could be laid out to be sun-dried. Word was sent around to the nearby villages that employment was available for anyone with brick-making experience. Within a few days one fellow came along, perhaps a little aged, saying he could cope with the job, and he could! With his gang of labourers he made two hundred plus bricks a day, whilst, at the same time, training a couple of assistants. He remained in employment on the farm in work other than brick-making until 1957, although a year or three before then, in semi-retirement, he became 'watchman'.

The bricks were required to build a large pig-sty with five compartments to accommodate four sows and a boar. The whole concept being to breed pigs for sale to the Bacon factory, still under construction at Uleti, and where, by this time, my brother Charlie was employed. The only way of transporting the bricks to the building site was by hand, each labourer carrying five per journey, a never ending task. Unfortunately the bricks were sun-dried as there were too few to warrant building a kiln for baking them. However, three bricklayers were engaged, so within a short period the walls were up, but collecting and preparing the other items to complete the construction took quite a time. Preparing the course grass for thatching, South African style, was a long and tedious job but the end result proved highly successful.

One afternoon, during thatching operation two strangers appeared on the scene, a European lady and Gent. The gent introduced himself to Father saying "My name is Delamare, and this is my wife, Gladys, and you must be Mr Allen – and family?". Introductions over his Lordship (They were Lord and Lady Delamare) and wife sat down on a bundle of grass to discuss farming prospects in the area. He owned large estates in Kenya, and also, it was his organisation, Delamare Estates Ltd who were financing the new Uleti Bacon factory, hence his interest in assessing the prospects for the future. One remark he made that I will never forget was "you know, Mr Allen, it would pay me better to build a bloody greyhound stadium judging by some of the pigs I've seen around the area". Apparently, many of the specimens that he had seen were Brown Razorbacks with long snouts, long legs and capable of running at about 30 mph, not far removed from the wild pig! After the visitors had had a look around we all retired to the Allen 'Manor House' for Tea, and more gossip by the elders.

Various items of equipment would be delivered sporadically, including a Lister cream Separator, which I, very quickly, learned to hate. One of the nearby village cattle owners supplied to us a quantity of milk daily, some of which had to be separated for the cream used in butter making. Delivery could be any time between midday and 3:30pm, which was a cursed nuisance. On arrival it would be separated, cream out of one spout and skimmed milk out of the second. That operation over, the important items had to be taken apart, scalded and washed thoroughly. The separator unit contained thirty two cone-shaped discs all of which had to be thoroughly cleansed and dried. That procedure went on for years, no wonder why I hated the thing!!!! A year or two later eight gallons of milk per day were being separated to cope with the increase in butter and cream cheese sales.

We soon discovered there were a few 'nasties' around in the insect and reptile world. Jigger fleas were a nuisance - the female jigger would, somehow or other, find one's toe and would proceed to burrow down between the nail and flesh, leaving its outer skin on the surface, to lay her eggs! After three or four days the toe would itch and become slightly inflamed. After confirming the cause, one of the servants would be called in to administer assistance with a sterilised needle to 'dig' out the egg sac, complete, if possible. Usually, the needle punctured the sac and out flowed the eggs, which were then dealt with by iodine or methylated spirit, I always used paraffin!! A definite killer of jigger eggs? Later on, after becoming accustomed to the slight irritation caused by the first few nibbles I operated on myself - with success!! Another one, commonly called a 'Mango' fly, (probably a species of Warble fly) would lay its eggs on the washing hanging out to dry, and if its 'landing stage' happened to be a vest, pants, shirt, sheet or anything else worn close to the skin, the egg, grub or whatever it is? would penetrate the skin, causing irritation and the natural reaction to that is to rub the itch, thus helping the offending visitor on its way!! A few days later a painful swelling, like a 'boil', would appear. The unfortunate victim would then have to suffer until the wretched maggot was ripe for extraction!! (It happened to me about six times over a period of nine years).

When walking through the 'bush', or along footpaths, it was necessary to be on the alert for snakes. The majority are harmless and wriggle away on sight, but the most dangerous species, the Puff Adder, behaves differently - and there were plenty around. They seemed to make a habit of moving very sluggishly along footpaths and when confronted would behave in a belligerent manner, puff themselves up and hiss. Fortunately, being so sluggish, fat, heavy and short, an agile person has time to jump over it, or take evasive action. If, however, anyone is unlucky enough to be bitten, and fails to have the correct treatment life ends after a couple of hours! Bimbo, the monkey, was the finest 'snake alarm' ever invented. Whenever a snake came into his view he would climb up the pole and onto the top of his box making the most horrible screeches imaginable and at the same time keeping his eye on the intruder - which was a good indication regarding its whereabouts. On one such occasion when going out to investigate the frantic screeches there was a puff adder making its way through the doorway into the room! It was dispatched without undue delay.

Our next door neighbour, Maj Brummel, (who met us in Dar es Salaam) who managed the Fawcus Estates seven miles further along the main road in an area called Matanana, departed back to Kenya. His place being taken by another young chap from Kenya - Pat W....?. Four miles beyond Matanana lived the Afrikaans family De Beer on a small estate named Mkewe; They had a few acres of coffee bushes planted but not yet in full production. Their land was more fertile

than ours, therefore producing better crops - although the occasional frost nipped the tops of the coffee bushes. (No doubt both these places will be referred to later. Also, our nearest neighbour, across-country, the Brigadier General). With 1929 behind us 1930 became a hectic year as there was so much to be done. A new house was a necessity; therefore plans had to be drawn up to calculate the quantities of materials required. My task, to keep my mathematics up to scratch, under the watchful eye of the Boss. Some figure like 23,000 bricks, 'x' number of cubic feet of sawn timber for all the wood work, including door-frames, doors etc. The roof covering would be corrugated iron, the windows, Crittalls steel casements. Again, the house and ancillary buildings - 'outside' kitchen, dairy, office and storeroom would, unfortunately, be built with sun-dried bricks, which would entail all exterior walls being covered by a lime plaster - as well as the interior walls.

On the agricultural side. Five pigs, four Middle White gilts and a Large White boar were installed in the new pigsty (Better housed than ourselves - or the labourers!). Four trained oxen were bought, two wheelers and two leaders, and with the imported light weight American four wheeled cart improved the farm transport problems considerably. Now the great question arose - where to find a suitable person to train the young bullocks? Luck came our way once again. The De Beers had a South African Hottentot cattle-man living on their farm who was looking for employment - and who, could be better? William was the ideal person for the job. He supervised the making of all the necessary equipment thongs, straps, reins, or anything else which required doing for the yokes. The bullocks were trained in pairs between the wheelers and leaders who could withstand the 'Rodeo-like' antics of the younger bullocks. After a few days dragging a heavy tree stump around they became more docile. That procedure continued until a total of thirty two were trained to make up two spans of sixteen oxen each; that number being necessary to pull a heavy two-disc plough. (Maybe I was not very good at Algebra but, at least, I learned how to train oxen! And use a whip with a lash 30 feet long, with great accuracy, and without harming the beast - just a loud 'crack' over the 'slacker's' head to wake him up.) William, whom one could trust to carry on without supervision, departed after eighteen months with us to continue his vocation elsewhere. He turned up again two years later - only this time with an Afrikaner Land Surveyor who was surveying the estates around the area.

Now that we had pigs to feed a message was sent to., the villagers who lived within a radius of four miles from the farm, that more 'pumba' (maize husk and the 'grain' (?) knocked off the corn when being ground for maize flour by the 'Nestle and mortar' method) was required, They did as requested, It was always the women-folk who brought the pumba along but instead of money they wanted salt? Back to the old 'barter system'!! So some form of exchange rate had to be devised - X number of empty 'condensed milk' tin measures of salt per sack of pumba? Agreement by both parties concerned was reached after a long deliberation! One dilemma - very few local women can speak Kiswahili, only KiHehe, so I had to learn the basics of that language, which came in quite useful as the years progressed.

With the anticipated building programme for the coming year it became necessary to fell some of the larger trees growing on the estate to allow them to season in preparation for sawing into different sizes of timber for roofing rafters, door frames, planks, etc, etc. All the sawing would have to be done by hand labour using a 'pit-saw' a cumbersome, and dangerous, piece of equipment - in the wrong hands. Word filtered through the area to the effect that a pair of sawyers would be required for a month or two commencing in April. During the intervening period many of the logs were manhandled (rolled) to a central position where a saw-pit would be dug, measuring 5ft deep by 4ft wide by approximately 8ft wide, with a grass roof and usually one grass side screen to protect the 'upper' sawyer from the prevailing cold wind. Some of the felled trees were too far away to be rolled in so another pit had to be dug. I think there were eventually three different sites! The final preparation of the pit for sawing activity was left to the sawyers to sort out.

Into the beginning of a new year, 1931. When climatic conditions were favourable the everlasting chore of brick making commenced once again. This time the target was 40,000, which, with three brick makers, would take about three months to produce. I hasten to add that bricks are larger than the standard British brick - measuring 12ins, x 5 $\frac{3}{4}$ ins wide 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ ins deep. The balance left over from the proposed buildings would be 'fired' in a kiln later in the year to verify the suitability of the product for future building requirements.

The site of the new house, on the opposite side of the shallow valley, approximately 700 yds away, tho, further by road (track!), had been selected in a more sheltered position and facing the West to gain the benefit of the afternoon sun, most necessary. Leveling the ground in preparation for the foundations took quite a time, Whilst all this was going on another, labour gang was collecting lumps of granite, from an outcrop about a mile away, and brought it in by ox-cart for the base of the foundations.

By this time I am not too sure of my brother's movements. I think he had left the Bacon Factory and after a spell at home took on a temporary appointment with the Public Works Department (PWD), in a supervisory capacity, on roads and bridges. On my part, since the beginning of 1930, all my spare time was spent in studying the three 'R's, under the watchful eye of whoever happened to be around! Normally, the hours of study were flexible dependant upon my progress through the Correspondence Course's fortnightly ration of material, which I usually completed in ten days or so. There were however, snags, Sometimes two fortnightly sessions would come through the mail together! Once, I had five weeks unofficial holiday due to the non-arrival of lessons, caused by torrential storms which had washed away a large section of the railway line between Kilosa and Dodoma. Also, the road from Dodoma to the South (past Sao Hill) was flooded in many places, hence no postal deliveries in or out. It so happened at that time father and a neighbour, Pat Walters, from Matanana, went to Iringa for the usual monthly supplies. Theirs was the last lorry into Iringa and the first out, after a three weeks wait, whilst our pantry became rather bare. I do not recommend scones made from millet flour, nor honey as a sweetener in a cup of tea! All this occurred early in 1932, or '33. At the time one of mother's sisters', a widow, was staying with us, having come out from the U.K. on a visit - rather prolonged, so we were obviously installed in the new house.

The first attempt at 'baking' the clay bricks was a success. A kiln was made with approximately 25,000 bricks stacked in layers to a height of 6 - 7 ft, (I have forgotten the other dimensions) with three equidistant 'firing' holes running its length. Once the fires were lit it was a 24 hrs a day for three days job to keep the fires stoked with firewood. Huge trunks and branches of dead trees, and sometimes, with the odd green tree thrown in. Firing completed, the ends of the fire-holes would be sealed with bricks and clay (an extremely hot undertaking), and then the whole lot left to cool off,

which would take a fortnight, even then, it would still be rather warm! All building construction work in the future would be done with fired bricks - and there were plenty of building projects anticipated. The first being a large pig shed to accommodate the new generation of pigs growing up.

Other improvements in the District were also taking place. One of which was the re-alignment of the main road from Iringa southwards. The first 20 miles from the town followed a new route, missing out the swamps along the old road. From Rungemba, where we had spent our first fortnight in the area, to Sao Hill, the distance along the new road was increased by three miles, a bonus! considering the time, and discomfort, one suffered along that stretch of the old track. Whether by coincidence, or good judgment, I know not, but the new section followed the higher ground across the rolling countryside and joined the old road again at the top of the 'hill' just by our driveway down to the old house! From that point onwards, for the next 20 miles, the old section of road was brought up to a much higher standard and then continued along a new route to Mbeya, approximately 180 miles South, thus eliminating the three months closure of the old road during the rainy season. Needless to say, all roads are of plain earth, not a smell of tarmac anywhere in the province.

The Ulete Bacon Factory had opened for business, but was not having much luck. It was blighted by frequent mechanical breakdowns. A large flywheel spun off its shaft and went through a wall, the refrigeration plant had its problems, the tinned products were not up to standard in the beginning, consequently sales were poor, and, generally speaking, was not a very rosy picture at all! However, the teething troubles were overcome but after a few more years the place was closed down partly due to the lack of pigs. Because the price paid per kilo was too low, the farmers gave up their pig breeding. We had a few 'porkers' around so Pa decided to produce our own bacon, hams, etc. The only item we could not manage was sausages! No skins nor preservative and no refrigerator. The old mud house became useful again. My ex bedroom became the 'bacon room'? But due to the climatic conditions could only be used from June until the end of August when the temperature was low, All the necessary equipment to cure the hams, shoulders and sides of bacon, arrived from somewhere (?), including a very large syringe for injecting a saline solution into the hams and shoulders. The carpenter knocked up a large bench with high sides to hold pounds of sea-salt into which went the hams etc; all of which had to be turned daily to ensure an even penetration of the damp salt - and that performance went on for a few weeks; but the end product was well worth eating.

It must have been sometime in 1931 the 'Old Man' decided a car was a necessity, although the only one in the family who could drive was my brother - who happened to be in 'residence' at home at the time. Mac, the Agricultural Officer, was changing cars so offered to sell his 1928 model, 4 cylinder Chevrolet 'box-body' to us for £55:00 with about 26, 000 miles on the 'clock'. So the deal was agreed and the vehicle collected by Chas who was told by Pa to teach his younger brother how to drive! We managed that ordeal, after a number of noise shattering sounds emanated from the gearbox and was heard over a wide area. No such thing in those days as synchromesh gears in the average car - and on this model, no shock absorbers. Being only 15 years of age at the time I was not legally allowed to drive on public roads (even in Tanganyika!), but I did, until my 17th. (or 18th) birthday. When I went for my test the Examiner, who owned the garage and a transport business in Iringa and who had called in at Sao Hill on many occasions for a cup of tea, gave me a quizzical look then after a few moments of silence He said "I've seen you driving around the country side for years?", "Only two", said I. whereupon he issued me with a Certificate of Competence, End of test! A week, or two later - giving the Inspector of Police, an ex-Metropolitan Policeman (who liked everyone to know it) a lift, he said, "By the way Jack, have you a Driving License?" I assured him I was perfectly legal.

The activity on and around the farm in 1932 became a little more hectic. I had reached the end of my Correspondence Course - tho' I was still lumbered with maths. A family acquaintance occasionally came out from Iringa to spend a weekend with us and he would put me through a session of algebra, or other unpleasanties he thought would be of benefit to me! All this extra-mural tuition took place after we had moved from the old mud house.

Now that we were living in a more civilised manner in comfortable surroundings with more rooms, larger bedrooms and a bathroom the place seemed to attract more callers! A few of the European lorry drivers, engaged on the long haul from Dodoma to Mbeya and back, who often called in for a cup of tea at the old house now, by strange coincidence, rolled along sometime around dusk and usually stayed the night. They were a pleasant lot of lads trying to make a living in the transport business and were very helpful in many respects such as posting or collecting our mail, or bringing, free charge from the Stores in Iringa or Dodoma any parcels for us, which happened to be awaiting collection. (That was during the era 1928 to 1933, before road transport became more efficient and competitive.)

I am not too sure whether events between 1931 & 1934 are in chronological order, but why worry?

Soon after we had moved over to the new abode one of Father's brothers, Vincent, came out from the U, K. to join us with the intention of looking around for a place of his own. After 6 to 7 months or so, an undeveloped estate became available at the bottom of the 'hill' on the old road in the area known as Sao. The extent of the estate was, I think, between 1,500 to 2,000 acres, a fair slice of country, covered by woodland with a few fertile valleys and well watered. He soon had a corrugated iron shed knocked up which had to serve as a 'home' until a house could be built, When the brick making and the building jobs were completed he was joined by his wife, my Aunt Betty, and Vincent jnr, They stayed there for a few years but, as farming was at a very low ebb in the mid-thirties he joined the Agricultural Department and remained in that Dept's employ for many years. When his appointment became permanent he sold the property.

Meanwhile, Mother's sister, Maud, had seen enough of Africa so returned to the U.K. Not that I shed any tears over her departure. Too 'bossy', and may her dear soul rest in peace.

Brother Charles put in appearances at different times, only staying a short while until some other assignment came along. One of which was to return to Rungemba to salvage various items and generally tidy up the 'Rungemba Country Club' which Guy T....? had opened, enjoyed and perhaps lost money on, before abandoning the place - and, at the same time taking the 'General's' daughter with him! I believe the only time the General ever called in to see us was when charging around making enquiries regarding the whereabouts of the two absconders. Yet, later on, after his demise, his wife often called in to discuss the 'affairs of state' with Father. The two naughty ones married and lived in London. After a lapse of 22 yrs M.....? with a new husband! returned to the District, although, by which time, her mother had sold

the estate and returned to the U.K.

Just before Uncle Vincent moved down to Mugali, the name of his new plot of land, a cousin of Aunt Betty's came out from the U.K. to live with us for a few months, for an insight into the 'pros and cons' of farming in our area, with the emphasis on tobacco growing, a plant which did not come up to expectations at Sao Hill!! However, George assisted us on various jobs around the farm gaining experience in brick making, building, etc, etc; and, in due course, had a look around the area to see what land was on offer. A distant neighbour with a large acreage of proven tobacco- growing land offered to sell a portion to George, who accepted the offer, to become another 'settler'. He was, later on, joined by his younger brother, John, who, unfortunately, came to an un-timely end in 1947 when he attempted to jump-started his car in reverse gear on the Iringa escarpment, shot over the edge, and rolled 500 ft to the bottom of the slope. From Sao Hill to George's farm, 'as the crow flies' is seven miles or so, but by road and track double that figure. The then completed house was just visible across the valley from ours - without the aid of binoculars. We devised a system whereby, resorting to the old heliograph idea, I would use a mirror to flash a series of dots and dashes across to attract their attention, and which meant "Send Someone over for your mail " or anything else awaiting collection. Either George or John would flash the O.K, signal in reply.

When George came out from England he brought with him a home-assembled wireless set. I think the first into the district, but needless to say, it wouldn't pick up any broadcasting stations, other than Morse code signals. Night after night it kept us busy changing the circuitry which only produced queer whistles and noises, Eventually with the aid of books and diagrams success was achieved - but only if I, or anyone else, kept a finger on one of the components! The Nairobi Broadcasting Station broadcasting the evening news was picked up at 8pm Tanganyika time (There was a half an hour time difference between Kenya and Tanganyika in those days!). The signal was very weak, only just audible through earphones, but at least history was made! A 'first' for Sao Hill

As mentioned previously, from 1932 onwards the flow of travellers along the Great North Road from Kenya to South Africa, and vice versa, and Countries between, increased - also the local traffic from various parts of the Territory to Mbeya and the newly opened mining area, the Lupa Gold fields, which attracted many prospectors, and the 'get rich quick' fraternity. It was at this stage the Parents decided an hotel would be a more profitable proposition than farming. So more bricks, more building, and up went what became known throughout Tanganyika, and parts of Kenya, as the Highlands Hotel, Sao Hill, circa 1933. Unfortunately popularity was misjudged necessitating the building of additional bedrooms and 'other offices'. The distance to Dodoma was 222 miles and to Mbeya 185 miles which made it an ideal halfway house. An added bonus was that mosquito nets over the beds were unnecessary! The Hotel Register contained many names from the 'well known' to the 'not so well known' Including a German ex-Governor of Tanganyika (pre the 1914 - 18 Great War), a couple of our own Tanganyika 'Excellencies' (Governors), down to a de-frocked parson, and not forgetting the one-legged Greek who was walking from Nairobi to Johannesburg; complete with a two wheeled handcart - with a monkey on top, and pushed by an African! A few months after its completion a mini hurricane hit us one afternoon with devastating results. As I stood at a window watching the rain lashing almost horizontally across the estate and, at many mph, I saw the front half of the hotel roof suddenly lift and fold over the rear portion like a page in a book! What a mess! Two days later all was restored to normal, but it took a few days before the interior dried out; and this time with wall plates and other timber work well and truly anchored down. A similar occurrence did not happen again.

In 1932-33 aviation was on its way into the area. On the Fawcus estate at Matanana Pat W....? had cleared, stumped and generally, with hand labour, constructed a two directional air strip capable of taking large aircraft, although, at that time, the only large aircraft around were the Imperial Airways planes flying on the scheduled passenger and mail route between the UK and Johannesburg, and vice versa, a journey of about eight or nine days. Somehow, someone, no doubt Colonel Fawcus, had approached the Airline company asking whether, or not, the aircraft could land at Matanana to set down or pick up passengers. To everyone's great surprise, they agreed, but there had to be a minimum of two passengers! The only navigational aid was a 'windsock'. No Firefighting equipment or signalling devices. A concrete bunker contained a quantity of aviation spirit in four gallon cans (debris), oils and other necessary impedimenta for refueling light aircraft, and that was the lot.

The great day arrived when one of the old Hercules Class aircraft was scheduled to land at Matanana with two passengers, no other than Col, Fawcus and a Mr Howse (of Howse & McGeorge, Chemists, fame!). The estimated time of arrival was around 2.30pm, after departing from Nairobi at 7.00am, with a couple of stops en route at Moshi and Dodoma. The welcoming 'Committee' Pat. W....? and three Allens. The moment it touched down it became invisible due to the dust cloud, and only when the great lumbering thing reached the parking spot did we have a glimpse of it through dust-laden eyes. Being a biplane with three (I think) huge engines fitted between the wings it was an awesome sight to me, never having seen anything larger than a Sopwith Pup or similar aircraft, at close range. Being nosey, and with the Captain's permission, I went aboard to have a look around. From What I remember the seats were of wicker-work construction (occupied by a few pale-faced Europeans - who must have wondered why some folk live in such outlandish places). I also have a vague recollection of seeing silver vases, complete with flowers, attached to the sides of the cabin! Take-off time, with all engines doing their best at an altitude of 6,600ft. asl, and off it went down the airstrip creating the largest dust cloud ever seen over the district. After a few moments it suddenly appeared through the murk and with a low pass and waves from the occupants, headed off towards Mbeya for the overnight stopover. Another historical 'first' over! The Colonel, and his travelling companion, went off with Pat, the Estate Manager, to deal with estate problems, and no doubt, a good wash to remove the coating of dust we all had collected! Mr Howse was given a lift into Iringa, to satisfy himself whether or, not another Branch of his Chemist's shops would be a feasible proposition in the town ???

In the late '20s and early '30s another area known as Mufindi was being developed. Situated approximately 25 to 30 miles East of Sao Hill (45 miles by road) in the rain forest 'belt' where the rainfall is considerably higher than at Sao. The contrast between the two places is incredible considering the short distance apart.

Mufindi is hilly, afforested (or was), Fertile and humid. With that combination it was an ideal area for tea-planting. Also, in some parts, for the production of coffee beans. The land was split up into areas of various acreage by the 'Crown' (Government) to be leased on a 99 year lease basis, with an annual rental fee of £???? per acre,

The majority of those acquiring the estates were Germans, some of whom had lived in the Territory prior to the Great War. My Father submitted his application for a small estate on offer comprising of approximately 300 acres, The application was successful, which now made him the third Britisher (if I remember correctly) occupying land amongst the several German estates in that particular area of Mufindi East. A German firm with a fairly large acreage of land, erected a tea factory which, when we arrived on the scene, was just starting production on a small scale - until the tea bushes had developed a little more. Our small plot bordered on the tea company's land - with the factory situated about half a mile away - most convenient! Around this time Charlie was at home so he was given the task of instituting development. The first job was to clear a car track down to the plot from the so-called main road. The 'main' road was a track approx 80 miles in length. Our track was a hazardous route down a very steep slope which, later on, caused the old car's clutch to burn-out! Fortunately not too far from the camp site so was able to be freewheeled back to, almost, level ground for the necessary repairs, as and when a new clutch plate arrived. In the beginning Chas, had to live in a grass hut, as did the resident labour gang, until bricks were made and dried for a habitable abode. During the interim period some land was cleared for cultivation, leaving the large trees standing for subsequent shade purposes. Meanwhile, at Sao, seed and nursery beds were prepared for the tea seed on order. In due course it arrived, from where ...? one 'maund' of the stuff. A maund weighs about 40 lbs. An awful lot of tea seeds! I was amazed at the size of a tea seed! Almost half the size of a walnut! The seed bed received its quota of seeds, spread out over the surface and given a good watering daily; and well shaded by grass shades to prevent the warm sunshine drying the exposed seeds too quickly. After germination the seeds were transferred to the nursery beds where they remained for a long time, until ready for transplanting to a permanent site, The Government had allocated quotas regarding the number of acres of tea each estate was permitted to plant. Ours was 30 acres! Enough.

At some stage during development and certainly before the corrugated iron roof went on the new house, Charlie left the happy home to take up an appointment with the Agricultural Department, a more profitable enterprise,; and remained in that organisation for many years - until 1946/47. His departure meant more traveling to and fro between the two properties for the 'Old Man' and me, at least once a week. Since Pa's driving and mechanical knowledge were deplorable (?), it fell to my 'lot' to coax the old car into action and do all the driving. Between us, with a couple of labourers help, we managed to fix the roof on during one of our day trips. On another occasion we walked over to the tea factory for a 'tour of inspection' to see how tea is processed from the green leaf to the finished product. Most interesting, and to round off the visit the Manager gave us a few 1lb packets from the top grade, 'Orange Pekoe (?) Tips to the No.3 quality', to sample. Henceforth all the tea for the hotel, and family use, was purchased, in bulk, direct from the factory. The flavour was most palatable, even the hotel guests remarked on its quality to such an extent that a few of them bought a packet or two.

Not satisfied with his own problems father, after being approached by Col Fawcus, agreed to hold a watching brief over the Matanana Estates due to the departure of Pat W....? back to Kenya. There was a small labour force, with a good M'nyasa Headman to oversee the general activities. Mainly herding approximately 300 head of cattle, and keeping the place tidy. On one of my visits over there I was greeted by the news that lions had got into a paddock and killed eight beasts, followed by four more the following night! Enough was enough, so we came to a decision that a carcass would be dragged to the house and conveniently placed on the lawn ten feet away from a bedroom window. The plan of action was simple! I would go back later in the day, do a few odd jobs until darkness prevailed, have a picnic 'dinner' and then make myself comfortable in an easy-chair by the partially open bedroom window armed with a very good sporting rifle, which Pa had bought earlier on. A Hauser 9,3 mm, capable of knocking anything in the game line over, except elephant and rhino. To keep me company was the African headman whose job that night would be to shine a torch from behind, down the gun barrel and, hopefully, into the eyes of a lion munching on the carcass whilst 'Yours truly' took aim, and performed the necessary action. Fortunately, there was a full moon which was a great advantage. All was peaceful and, with heavy eyes, I remember looking at the clock, 3.00 am. When I surfaced at daylight?, no carcass, no lion(s)? They, or it, had dragged the carcass out of sight and obviously enjoyed an early breakfast! My companion had also fallen asleep!

That was my second encounter with lions. A year or two previously Chas. and I were tramping back home after an exploratory trip to a fair sized river to test its fishing potential. En-route we passed through a village where we knew a few of the inhabitants, so stopped, for a sit-down and chat. After a short time feeling hungry and tired, I set off homewards, leaving him discussing the day's affairs with the assembled company (and, I think, accepting their hospitality by partaking of a mug of 'local brew'. Very nutritious, I sampled some!). About a mile from the village I glanced around and there, sitting watching me, were a couple of lions about sixty yards away. Every hair on my head shot straight upright! There were plenty of climbable trees around, easy for me, and also for lions! So I stood there not daring to move in any direction. After a few minutes they ambled off, giving me a farewell glance. About five minutes later Chas. arrived on the scene to find a pale faced brother. He had the rifle!!

After the wanton slaughter episode at Matanana all the cattle were moved to Sao Hill where a large lion-proof boma (stockade) was available. With the herd went a massive three quarter bred 'Belted' Galloway' bull, the most docile animal that ever walked on four legs. His progeny were in great demand by the indigenous population.

The problems which cropped up between the three places, Sao Hill, Matanana and Mufindi were many and varied tending to keep one on the 'hop'.

CHAPTER 6

EMPLOYMENT AND MY FIRST SAFARI

Many changes happened throughout the whole area during the 1933/35 period. The Post and Telegraph Department approached father enquiring whether he would be prepared to let them have a small plot of land on which to build a new Post Office and staff quarters, since it was their intention to close down the Ulete Post Office due to the lack of business. The immediate area, within a radius of twenty miles of Sao Hill, was attracting more 'settlers' due to a concession granted by the Government to an organisation called the Southern Highland Estates who had an option on many hundreds of square acres. There was already a telegraph line running from Iringa to Tukuyu, some 200 = miles, which followed the old road so could be quite easily rerouted through a new Post Office. Only half a mile of new line would be required. After both parties had reached agreement on detail the 'boss' was given the contract to erect a building to the P & T's specification. More brick making, etc, to produce the required quantity of red bricks! When the building was completed and all the 'telegraph' bits and pieces installed it was most convenient! Only a 300 yard walk to conduct ones postal business, instead of having to rely on others to do it for you, or travel 30 or 60 miles yourself. Progress can be sweet!

The De Beers had sold their estate, Mkewe, to the MacDonald family who had moved down from Kenya. 'Mac' had been sent to manage an estate near Ulete, which he did, and when the De Beer place came onto the market, Mrs 'Mac', who wanted a place of their own, bought it. Consequently there was much to-ing and fro-ing between both places for Mac who always popped in to see whether he could be of assistance to us in any way. He was a motor engineer by profession, and I owe him my grateful thanks for imparting a great deal of his mechanical knowledge to me during my early years. It came in very useful when dealing with breakdowns and servicing of our ageing Chevrolet, and, was to prove immensely valuable in my later employment.

The tea bushes in the nursery were doing well. However, other trees, mainly fruit, we had planted were a complete failure. The peaches developed a disease, root canker, picked up from infected soil. The citrus trees did grow but the high altitude and weather were against them. Although the grapefruit and oranges looked healthy enough the fruit was very thick skinned and tasted rather sour, yet, the lemons were OK? Other trees had also been planted, 'Blue Gum' (Eucalyptus), Cyprus and Australian Black Wattle, all of which flourished. The last time I saw the 'Blue Gum', in 1958, they were enormous, at least 40 to 50ft high. The Black Wattle, planted later, was also serving its purpose as a windbreak.

The Matanana herd of cattle were sold off, usually singly to whoever offered a reasonable price. I cannot remember what happened to the old Galloway bull! The trained oxen were kept as 'spares'. Holding a watching brief over Matanana had its uses. Once a week I would go over with a sack of maize for milling on the engine powered mill, ours being hand operated took an awfully long time to produce a sack of maize flour. The flour being used for issue to the migrant labourers. Sometimes a hurried visit to the airfield would be necessary to refuel a plane, meet someone, and take delivery of trout fingerlings (!!). The pilots, even strangers, new the drill. A low circuit over our house to attract our attention, and, fingers crossed, for the availability of transport.

Journeys over to our Tea Plantation (!) continued at regular intervals to check on the labour force engaged on clearing, stumping and cultivation. 'X' number of square yards are apportioned out as 'piece work' on a daily basis and when completed the labourers are free to go about their own pursuits. A system which works fairly well.

To throw matters into slight confusion the owner of the Matanana Estates, Col Fawcus, was killed in a plane crash (somewhere near Brighton?). That disaster brought in reams of correspondence I from many quarters, especially from Mrs Fawcus who favoured disposal of the estate as it was all too remote for her attention. Accordingly, after all the business was completed, which took months, she asked father if he could assist in finding a buyer! Fortunately he managed that, to the newly formed Southern Highlands Estates. So that was one less item to worry about.

During the 1935 period (and beyond) Mother had a mania for building extra rooms? Some near the hotel block and one adjacent to the house (two bedrooms). One for the parents and the other for the sons. If the sons were not in residence it could always be used as an overflow for the hotel. As soon as that little job was finished the dividing wall between the bedroom and lounge in the house came down to be transformed into a rather large lounge measuring approximately 35ft x 16ft. Later on, when I was away earning my living (circa 1940) further alterations took place. The wall between a single bedroom and small double bedroom came down and the end product finishing up as a 'bar'. An alteration approved by all!

Towards the end of the year (1935) our friend Mac (the Agricultural Dept 'Mac') called in to see us and, during the course of conversation, mentioned that his department would shortly be advertising for someone to take up a temporary appointment, for three months, in the Tabora District, as Cotton Supervisor in time for the cotton planting season in early January. So it was decided that when the vacancy became public I should apply, in spite of knowing nothing about cotton other than on a cotton reel or clothing, and never having seen a cotton plant in my life.

In due course the advert appeared so 'yours truly', with 'tongue in cheek' submitted his application and, much to our great surprise, got the job. Someone, somewhere, must have put in a good word! The letter of appointment, together with Bus and Railway Wart-rants, and instructions to report to the Agricultural Officer, Tabora, came during the last week in Dec 1935 but fate intervened? Between Xmas and the New Year I picked up an infection on my left arm. I also had to make a final dash to the Mufindi estate. On the way back, cruising down a long hill there was an awful bang (?) in the car's differential, no retardation or propulsion, and gathering speed every second. The brakes were, more or less, useless. However, after a considerable distance the car eventually came to a halt before reaching a bridge at the bottom of the hill and, conveniently, opposite a road gang's hut. There was no point in looking to find out what had happened, I

knew! The pinion had sheared off the end of the propeller shaft. The decision now was do I walk home seven miles across country or fourteen along the road? I chose the latter hoping a passing vehicle going in my direction would give me a lift. Meanwhile, my infected arm looked less healthy and was painful. After foot-slogging about four miles my prayers were answered (?). A passing lorry driver obliged. Unfortunately for me, he was going to Iringa so we had to part company when we reached the main road. Luck was with me tho! After walking a couple of miles another African driver stopped his lorry and asked if I wanted a lift home!! So within a very short time - about fifteen minutes, he dropped me off ten yards from the house - and much needed refreshment - and medical attention.

Knowing that repairs to the car could not be undertaken on the roadside, having guessed, correctly, the cause of the trouble, there was only one action to take, tow the damn thing home to be dealt with. Spares could not be ordered until the differential was stripped out so it was a question of retrieving it as soon as possible. The next morning, bright and early, I set off with two workmen and a span of six oxen, plus chains, in-lieu of a tow rope, to pull it back home. This time it was necessary to take the seven mile cross country route which took between 2 to 3 hours. After the animals had had a little graze and water down by the river, the last drink until we reached home, we soon had the tow organised then off on the fourteen miles drag back at about 3 mph! The thought of the next five hours ahead was rather daunting. At least it gave my throbbing arm a chance to recuperate a little sitting there keeping the car on a straight course. A few queer noises emanating from the back axle! Three tired chaps and six very tired oxen arrived back home just before sunset.

It became obvious that some drastic action had to be administered on my swollen arm so the following day I packed my bag in preparation for a lift into Iringa for a visit to the hospital! Our friend, the very helpful Road Foreman took me in. The Doctor, who was a fairly regular visitor to Sao Hill, and often produced a punctured tyre for me to mend, took one look at the arm and said, "Jack, you've got blood poisoning so it's hospital and bed for you", and there I stayed, receiving the best attention, with excellent food, for a week. I don't think penicillin had yet been discovered!

Meanwhile, whilst I was enjoying hospital, Mac, the Engineer, had dismantled the differential etc; ordered the spares required, a new prop shaft, crown-wheel and pinion, plus odd bits and pieces, hoping the Iringa Garage could supply such items for an old model Chevrolet. Luckily, the Manager, grovelling around in the obsolete Parts Section, found all that was necessary.

During my week's convalescence at home the parts arrived and Mac came along to assemble the diff. He showed me how to adjust a crown-wheel and pinion (they're always machined as a pair) to the correct clearance, with the aid of a piece of cigarette packet in the absence of the correct gauge! After a 'running in' period, and much later in the year, re-adjustment was necessary so out came the cigarette packet once again! The cheapest gauge ever!

By this time my thoughts had to turn towards the new job in the Tabora District. This meant raiding the kitchen for pots and pans, crockery, blankets, sheets and other impedimenta; so essential, knowing that, for the next three months, the only roof over my head would be a tent - or, on the odd occasion, a Govt. Rest House. The Dept, would supply the tent and camp bed,

With one suitcase, two boxes and a bedding roll I caught the Thursday afternoon bus, Sao Hill being a scheduled stopping place, for Iringa, The following day on to Dodoma for the night. The hotel was still in the same state as I had seen it eight years previously no improvements! Saturday morning at 8.30am climbed aboard the train bound for Tabora - a Journey of fourteen hours westwards. A family friend met me off the train sometime around 10pm and introduced me to my new 'boss', who took me along to the 'hotel!' That was shock number one. I was going to say a typical Tanganyikan, Greek owned, hotel but it was worse than that. Full of mosquitoes which one has to accept, but not the horrible smell of stale dairy produce emanating from an adjacent room or building where the proprietor makes cheese of the local 'Digger's Sock' variety! The bedroom left a lot to be desired. Two beds! and sparsely furnished. One seldom knew who would be occupying the other bed from day to day. I hate to think what the kitchen was like. The following morning, Sunday, I asked the room-boy to organise a bath for me! After ten minutes or so he returned to tell me it was ready but when I saw the colour of the water it was debatable whether I stepped in. The water was a dark brown fluid with an earthy smell. Whether I came out cleaner afterwards remained to be seen. However, I took the plunge which freshened me up but the towel suffered a slight colour change!

After breakfast a wander around to see the sights. The main shopping, residential areas and Government offices were quite a hike from the hotel. I also came across another hotel, the Railway Hotel, again Greek managed and, so I was told, a little better than my abode; but at the moment closed due to alterations.

Monday morning the 'boss' collected me for an office briefing into the ways of Government procedure, local agricultural policy and 101 other things which I found difficult to assimilate in such a small space of time. He didn't offer to run me back to the hotel for lunch so that was a rush in the midday heat. That afternoon we went out to an Agricultural Experimental Farm where I was introduced to a cotton plant, and various other projects.

On the Tuesday. I was taken along to the Provincial and District Offices to meet the Provincial Commissioner, whom I had met many years previously in Iringa, and the District Commissioner (in those days they were called District Officers). The rest of the day was taken up with sorting out camping equipment, collecting an imprest for 100/- to pay porters for lugging my safari kit around my allotted area, buying a month's supply of provisions from the Surat Stores and, 'last but not least', engaging the services of a cook cum servant who is prepared to foot-slog from A to B etc. for a number of days throughout the next few weeks. I had, soon after my arrival at the hotel, asked the servants if they knew of a cook seeking employment. Eventually one turned up on the Tuesday evening with reasonable references, so, after explaining to him the conditions he could expect on safari he agreed to take on the job. Thank heavens!

On the Wednesday morning off to the office to collect my marching orders, an A4 sheet full of closely typed instructions, with a map showing my itinerary for the next few weeks, subject to variations. After lunch my 'Superior' came down to the hotel to take me, with all my kit, including the cook, to a Rest House about six miles out of town from where I would commence operations. The Rest House was more pleasant than the hotel, certainly cleaner! The water was also much better.

The whole area is well populated by the M'nyamwesi tribe whose tribal land extends over many hundreds of square miles, a fair portion of which is uninhabitable due to the prevalence of the Tsetse Fly. This fly (similar in size to an

English Horse Fly) is a carrier of the disease called Trypanosomiasis (sleeping sickness) which can cause death to humans and cattle alike. (But more about that problem will be mentioned later in this article).

My first night 'on safari', the first of many hundreds throughout my career in Government service, for which an 'allowance per night' is claimable! One of the snags of camping out is the evening inrush of mosquitoes and all the other many species of flying insects which have one ambition in life, to drown themselves in a plate of soup. During the rainy season there are always many more to cause ones discomfort and Government Rest houses are not 'insect proofed', as are most European dwellings, with fine-wired mesh netting.

The new cook produced a palatable meal on the first evening. Three courses, all cooked over a 'homemade' stove of four large lumps of rock with a piece of corrugated iron across the top and plenty of firewood! As time progressed the soup alternated between 'pea-flour', quite good, and 'groundnut'(more commonly known as peanut). The meat course was invariably the African chicken (or the old rooster). Away from civilisation vegetables, were difficult to find. My only decent supply came from the White Father's Mission tucked away in a corner of my 'domain' and run by a Dutch Catholic Order. In the more inhospitable, uninhabited, places the Sub-Chief or Area Headman, would bring along an unfortunate sheep as a token of goodwill, which kept me and the staff in meat for a day or two, provided my share was cooked as soon as possible due to climatic conditions and flies! On departure the Headman would expect a 'handout' and I'm sure the rightful owner of the sheep did not see any of it.

The following morning my entourage duly assembled at the appointed hour. With the African Agricultural Assistant, the local Area Headman and his underling(s) ready to guide me around the cultivated areas, where cotton was being grown. This was to enable me to assess, approximately, the acreage involved. Other matters also cropped up, soil erosion was an important factor which required attention. The farming community was inclined to cultivate their crops on ridges running from top to bottom of the hill, instead of across the slope. That procedure was a never ending battle between them and me.

That routine went on for weeks. Every two or three days I would have to move camp to the next area which usually entailed a walk of any distance between 7 and 22 miles with 12 porters to carry the equipment on their heads or shoulders. Not a very popular form of employment. To make life a little less comfortable and with the 'rains' in full swing with floods aplenty, I was amazed to see such extensive flooding in the lower lying areas, many of which we had to wade through. One section of my itinerary involved a journey, on foot, of 22 miles of which 15 miles were along a perfectly good (earth) main road passing through an uninhabited woodland area. That boring hike always annoyed me (except on the last occasion, almost 4 years later when I drove along that section in a comfortable car at 40 mph).

Reading material became a problem at times. The family friend now stationed in Tabora very kindly gave me a bundle of magazines and a few books, but I had to ration myself very strictly by reading only at night, in bed, under the mosquito net for comfort from the flying bugs, some of which had a nasty habit of causing blisters with their secret weapon when disturbed on exposed skin; Quite painful. On two occasions the reading material ran out before I could organise a fresh supply. One has to experience such a predicament to appreciate the value of books and magazines when you have to suffer your own company during the leisure hours. Whenever I got to Igalula, where the decent Rest House is situated, I would send my Agricultural 'shadow' in to Tabora on his bicycle to collect any mail, or 'missives', from the office.

Living in one place for some days in succession was a pleasant change although, at some stage during the 3 week period, I would be visiting an outlying area, thinly populated, seldom seen by European Government Officers during the rainy season, when all bush roads are impassable. (Many do not like getting their feet wet!).

The long walk from the Rest House to the 'town', twice a day, kept my muscles in trim, but that little exercise didn't last long! I had ordered, a fortnight previously, a bicycle from my provisions merchant. So my first priority was a note off to him requesting it to be consigned to Igalula Station. Within three days it was in my possession. A new standard Raleigh bike manufactured in the centre of England, transported all the way to East Africa, and delivered to its final destination for £8.10s.0d!

The most important item on the list of jobs to be done without undue delay was the construction of a temporary 'Groundnut Auction Mart' in preparation for the on coming groundnut harvest. The Plan was an artistic 'masterpiece', at a guess, drawn up by my tormentor! The edifice was circular in shape, with two wide, opposing, openings and, internally, six 'booths' on each side. The dimensions were quite large and all the constructional work had to be done with bush timber, long grass tied together with what is commonly known as 'kamba', the flexible inner layer of bark from a certain tree. Its scientific name I wouldn't know. Since urgency was a matter of importance the 'town' Headman was asked to recruit 20 labourers as soon as possible. He succeeded. The first action did not take long, clearing the site chosen by the Agricultural Officer. After that dozens of pegs had to be cut for marking out the positions where each stabilising pole had to be placed. That took ages! From then onwards progress proceeded without any serious hitches. Life in Igalula was an improvement after what I had endured during the past two months. At least I could socialise with the Asian Stationmaster, and whose wife would often produce a cup of tea for me. On many evenings (5 pm) the Station Master, two Asian traders and myself would forgather to play a board game, the size of the board being approximately 2½ ft square with 2 in high sides and various markings on the base for scoring points. The counters were slightly larger than 'draughts' and had to be flicked with forefinger and thumb at opposing counters. Although the game was easily learned, I have, long ago, forgotten the moves.

During my stay another European turned up, pitching his tent near the station. During our initial conversation he mentioned he was prospecting for gold around the area! Like the majority of that ilk he appeared to be a 'down and out'! However, we had many conversations together during the short time he was around. (His surname, Brazier, will appear in print again later on).

The construction work was progressing favourably so I decided to make my last safari 'On His Majesty's Service' to the outpost of the Sub Chiefdom, a village called Imalakuseko, 6 miles eastwards then 3 miles inland, along the railway track, but, this time, I pedaled instead of walking. One of the disadvantages of this mode of transport, I would arrive long before the porters! And on this occasion it was a very hot day and I would willingly have paid two shillings for a glassful of

clean cold water. After three days spent on checking the general aspect of the growing crops, and vermin damage caused mainly by baboons and birds, I returned to Igalula.

Readers may wonder how I managed for money on my trekking around. It would have been unusual to find an Asian shopkeeper, en-route, who wouldn't cash a cheque for the 'Bwana' (Mr) from the Government!

After my miscellaneous assortment of activities had been completed in Igalula, and surrounding countryside, it was almost the end of March, the 31st being my appointment termination date. A day I was not sorry to see, after ruining two pairs of shoes and walking through 4 pairs of khaki stockings. Neither would I miss the few minor mishaps occurring during the few weeks I had spent in the Tabora District, such as my first month's salary being paid into Mr J W Allen's Bank account instead of J R Allen's! Fortunately I knew the gentleman from the bygone days when he was stationed in the Iringa District, so between us we extracted an apology from the Bank.

Rather than wait the three days for the passenger train which would deposit me in Tabora at 10.30 pm I decided to take advantage of the Guard's Van on a conveniently timed Goods train. That would allow me two clear days in the town to settle all my official, and personal, business. But, there was one snag! A few days in the hotel.

Off back on the boring Journey to Dodoma, the bumpy bus ride to Iringa, then "Home sweet Home" to comfort and good food once again. It did not take long to drop back into the old routine, and it was a pleasure to find that nothing of great consequence had occurred during my short absence

The old car was still in one piece, but did need a little attention here and there. A few trips over to the Tea Estate had been accomplished successfully by the 'Old Man'! More tea plants had been lifted from the nursery and transplanted into their permanent site, and that procedure went on for a long time.

About three weeks after my return I had to retire to bed for three days with flu-like symptoms and no appetite whatsoever. After a few more days the fever hit me again, together with horrible hallucinations. Luckily, our good friend Dr Harkness, the District Medical Officer, happened to call in and diagnosed malaria being the cause of my complaint, a present from Tabora! but to confirm it he took a blood slide for examination in Iringa. The following day a telegram arrived telling me to proceed to the Iringa Hospital immediately. Which I did, and spent a week there being pumped full of quinine, an unpleasant cure which makes one's head 'buzz' for days.

The end of the year (1936) was drawing near when, in November, a family friend, fairly senior in Government circles, wrote informing me there was the possibility of employment in the Medical Department at the Sleeping Sickness Research Laboratory in Tinde, a place I had not even heard of. Should I be interested in the position to write to the Officer in charge who was looking for an Assistant to cope with the more menial tasks at the Laboratory, to succeed the one who had recently transferred over to the Veterinary Dept.? After perusing the map to find Tinde, a small dot where two main roads meet approximately 120 miles north of Tabora (!), I wrote to the Doctor in charge asking for more information about the vacancy. By return, I received a most interesting letter from him explaining the complexities of the work undertaken at the laboratory and, if it appealed to me, to submit a formal application, which I did without undue delay. In due course the news came through from the Medical Office, D' Salaam, that I had been appointed, on a temporary basis, until further notice, as Assistant to the Medical Officer l/c Sleeping Sickness Research. (Again, I think, a case of 'who you know!').

CHAPTER 7

TINDE & SLEEPING SICKNESS RESEARCH

It was left to my own discretion when to proceed to Tinde. Any time after the New Year! So I chose to go after my 21st birthday (Jan. 5th), My Railway/Bus Warrant for the now familiar journey to Dodoma and then onwards by rail stated the destination being Lohumbo, another dot on the map I knew nothing about, - except the Tinde postal address is 'Via Lohumbo'. Out came the map once again and I found it was 6 miles west of Tinde, on the Tabora to Mwanza Branch line. This time I was booked through in the Mwanza bound coach which is shunted off at Tabora and attached to the Mwanza train. Departure time from Tabora 11pm, arrival time at Lohumbo, 5.30am! (It is even worse in the opposite direction, Departure time from Lohumbo, 3.30am). The Doctor, Dr Corson, had made all the necessary arrangements for me to be met off the train. My 'taxi' for the short journey to Tinde was a huge American "Diamond T" truck driven by a young Arab gentleman. His father owned the lorry. By the time we reached the Doctor's house the sun was just appearing on the horizon, but he was about, in his dressing gown, on the veranda with a pot of tea and two cups, a most welcome drink at that hour in the morning, A Sunday morning too! I soon discovered that was part of his daily routine, early morning tea at dawn.

A member of his kitchen staff had been sent over to 'my house' to prepare hot water, etc, for a bath, and general tidy up, which was very refreshing after the dusty train journey. Until I managed to engage the household staff, so necessary for bachelors living in outlandish places, the Doctor said he would provide all meals, for which I was most grateful. Tinde, being such a small village/Minor Settlement/Chiefdom HQ could not offer much in the way of servants but the Dr, thoughtful chap, had put the word around a few days prior to my arrival that a newcomer would, probably, require a cook and houseboy.

Returning to the Dr's for breakfast I was introduced to another guest, Dr MacLean, who happened to be the Deputy Director of Medical Services for the Territory! The 'highest' and the 'lowest' at the same table! (More about him later on). Before his promotion he had been the Sleeping Sickness Officer for Tanganyika based in Tabora, the permanent 'home' of Sleeping Sickness Officers.

I soon learned that. Sundays and public holidays, were the same as any other working day of the week! Since experiments, routine research activities and a miscellaneous assortment of animals, from white mice to huge eland antelopes, had to be catered for. That side of the setup will be dealt with later.

After breakfast I went back to take stock of my new abode and unpack my worldly possessions not too many, yet; The furniture was adequate for a bachelor, all the necessary number of tables& chairs, a settee and two easy chairs with hard cushions plus the usual bedroom furniture. The house was quite large. Three very spacious rooms, sitting, dining and bed rooms with similar sized veranda. A 'roomy' bathroom and, to complete the floor plan, a storeroom cum pantry to accommodate the junk one accumulates over a period of time. There was, however, one great snag! After a rain shower, combined with the humidity factor, the reek of bat guano was rather overpowering. There were dozens of the little creatures in the roof! Not having anyone to do it for me I dealt with the bed making. Struggling with the tangled mosquito net from the super structure in preparation for a Sunday afternoon's kip. That domestic chore over, off to work.

Apparently Sunday morning was "Market Day", when a number of the local women from the surrounding villages would converge by the food store with an assortment of produce to sell, bananas, maize bran, groundnuts, sweet potato tops (the greenery!), baobab tree-leaves!), fruit and any other foodstuffs in season for feeding to the various animals. Milk was purchased on a daily basis for the monkeys, some of the smaller animals and, at one stage, lion cubs,

After dealing with the business of the moment the Dr then took me round on a tour of inspection explaining in detail various aspects of the continuation of his research programme, and the reason for the 'mini zoo'. That over, back into the laboratory building which contained three rooms. At one end the office, a centre room, where a lot of the daily activity took place, which contained a number of tables on which were large galvanised trays containing water and covered with stiff small meshed wire netting. On top of all that lot were boxes containing tsetse flies. A number of the flies having tested positive for trypanosomiasis (sleeping sickness), therefore, precautions had to be taken when handling the boxes. Some boxes contained tsetse fly pupae and any flies emerging therefrom were perfectly safe. Lesson No 1! The water was there for the humidity factor. The main room, fairly large, had a wide bench along the whole length of the back wall and covered with all the usual equipment associated with medical laboratories. The Dr's desk at one end and, to complete the picture, a table and chair for me opposite a window overlooking the front veranda, and a part of Africa.

With that briefing over it was lunch time; so off on the quarter mile hike up the hill to the house. After lunch the Deputy D.M.S. who had been working on his notes in the house, departed on his travels, and I went on mine to recover from the night's train journey and early awakening.

Later on two lads came along to the back veranda seeking employment as cook and houseboy. Both, at some stage, had been in the Dr's employ as Kitchen boys, and like most African kitchen boys had gained some knowledge on the very basic facts of cooking very simple meals, and the essentials of housework. On making enquiries the Doctor said they had left of their own accord and he thought both could cope, so long as dinner parties were not envisaged, and there was no chance of that in Tinde!

All that remained now, for my own personal comfort, was the purchase of a month's supply of food. The nearest Provision Store being 23 miles away in the town of Shinyanga, the District HQ, with an European population of about 11 souls, including wives, All mainly Government and European Railway Officials, one of whom was my brother Chas, who had moved up here from the Southern Province a few months earlier to take over the management of an Agricultural Experimental Farm one mile out of the town. Ten miles further North is Old Shinyanga which, during the German occupation prior to 1918 was the District HQ, but is now the Headquarters for the Tsetse Research Dept with a staff of

approximately 10 or twelve Entomologists, Botanists, Field Officers, a Director and Deputy, plus their wives. Quite a crowd for a small place.

After engaging my household staff the Doctor knowing my pantry was bare, said I could borrow his car the following day for a trip in to Shinyanga to make the necessary purchases and at the same time call in at my brother's place for- lunch! Just as well Charlie was around! It enabled me to buy more household items 'on tick' from the Asian duka (shop) 'wallah' after our introduction by Chas.

A few brief words about my new boss. He was tall and of a wiry build - white hair - age? difficult to assess but at a guess I would say late fifties or early sixties. Not very communicative about himself, but he did mention that he originally served in the Colonial Service in West Africa, Nigeria. Whilst out there, before, during or after the 1914/18 War I know not. He unfortunately, lost his Wife, who died from an attack of malaria, in one of Nigeria's outposts. 'There was a son, of whom, he never mentioned until a few months before his retirement. Sometime around 1925/26 he transferred over to the East African Medical Service, around 1925/26 to become the Research Officer for Sleeping Sickness until his retirement in 1939.

Back to Tinde. The two houses were built at the top of a slope, at the base of a range of very rocky hills, inhabited by baboons, rock hyrax, hyenas, leopards, snakes and porcupines. The distance between the two buildings would be 250 yds. From each veranda there was a fairly extensive view southwards looking over a wide expanse of part of what is commonly known as 'Sukumaland' which, correctly speaking, should be called Usukuma, covering thousands of square miles and well populated by the WaSukuma tribe. Looking around there was hardly a tree to be seen anywhere, most of the area being under cultivation with odd patches of grassland for grazing cattle, sheep and goats. This being the cause of much soil erosion on the lower slopes of the hills. At this time of the year, January, with the rainy season upon us, the countryside was green all over, a totally different picture to what it would be look like at the height of the 'dry-season' during July / Aug/Sept.

My only mode of transport was the bicycle I had purchased in Tabora the previous year. Free-wheeling down to the office took about a minute but there was one snag! The bike had to be pushed back up the hill. For our normal transport requirements the Dr's car had to be used until such time as the Government lorry allocated to the establishment came back from the Tsetse Research Dept's Workshop, where their European mechanic made every effort to cure a persistent fault in the engine, and failed, in spite of a complete overhaul! It was a 1932 model Chevrolet on a 1½ ton chassis with a safari type body painted brilliant white to discourage tsetse flies from cadging a lift! Its registration number, GT 200 (Government Transport), dates its age but it hadn't covered a large mileage. The day dawned when we had to collect it, so off to Old Shinyanga to our 'sister' organisation, where we were wined and dined, followed by a look at their research work. On the way back I soon discovered the 'persistent fault'! When applying power to the engine it would only fire on five cylinders yet, when cruising all six would fire? And that went on until the day I left Tinde, after many attempts on my part to cure it! Normally, government vehicles have an African driver but, in our case, such a person would be almost a sinecure as there was very little driving to be done. There was, however, a 'lorry-boy' whose sole job was to grease and clean the vehicle after each outing and, I hasten to add, it was probably the cleanest lorry in Tanganyika! Even the chassis was always spotless.

Life followed a routine pattern. 8am down to where all the activity took place. 12.30pm home for lunch. 1.30pm back to work. 3.30pm our respective house-boy or 'kitchen toto', would bring down a tray of tea. 5.30pm I would walk round to check that all animals were locked up, as well as all the other doors into the buildings. The night watchman usually appeared before the Doctor and I ambled off up to the house for a refreshing drink of lime juice and listen to the 6pm BBC news bulletin (3pm GMT). Following that, back to my own quarters for a bath, change into slacks, the legs of which were tucked into mosquito boots to prevent the pests from dining around my ankles, read a few pages of reading material, then dinner at 9pm, or thereabouts, into bed under the mosquito net to avoid the voracious flying insects, then read until the eyelids closed. Not a very exciting existence! What I would have done without the Doctor's well stocked book shelves and month old overseas weekly editions of the 'Daily Sketch' I hate to think. In those days surface mail from the UK to East Africa would take between four to six weeks to reach us.

Since my salary was only 400 shillings per month (£20:00?) I had to forget about luxuries like beer, camera, radio, etc, though I did indulge in cigarettes, but a hermetically sealed tin of Player's 'Country Life' cost only shillings 1/75 for fifty, or 1s 9d in pre metric currency, and my limit was only ten per day. Taking everything into consideration the cost of living was cheap. On one occasion I bought six excellent white cotton shirts for 12/-, the lot! Shorts, white or khaki, were 4/- a pair, slacks at 6/-, all made to measure. However, over a period of a few months I did manage to save enough cash to buy one of the latest American Superheterodyne Shortwave radios which picked up plenty of overseas broadcasting stations, including the local one, Nairobi....., but the radio cost 1½ months pay! Alcohol was definitelyout.....! The kitchen staff accounted for 90/- per month. By this time one of the ex-Sao Hill servant's, Ali, was in my employ and was capable of plain cooking, excellent at 'dhobi' (washing clothes), and generally useful to have around. He was with me for sixteen years, apart from two years during the war. When on safari, walking or otherwise, all domestic duties were left to him. I digress!

Visitors called in to see us occasionally, usually, on a Sunday afternoon from Shinyanga or Nzega. Those with young children would, particularly, come out to have a look at the animals, especially the monkeys. There were about 30 of the little devils. Each one chained to a 4ft upright pole surmounted by a nailed on 'petrol box' residence. The poles were spaced 10ft apart which was just sufficient to prevent the 'dears' shaking hands with one another. Their bedtime – 5pm.

There were several varieties of animals in other pens. These were two Impala, a Duiker (small deer), a Reedbuck, two Thompson's Gazelle, one with a nasty temper, two adult Eland with calves, a female Greater Kudu, Rabbits, Guinea Pigs, white Mice, a flock of sheep and, for a short while, a porcupine. From time to time other species of herbivorous and carnivorous animals would be brought in by the locals in the hope of making a sale. The two animals causing the greatest mayhem were the male Thompson's Gazelle who would, with horns down, charge and rebound of the heavy gauge wire netting at the end of the run. Next door was the 'lady' 'Tommy' who, after a short while, was moved

to a pen further away in an effort to calm the male down. The other temperamental beast was the porcupine. It would 'fix' quills and attack! So a stout box had to be placed in a strategic position in the pen to act as an 'isle of refuge' to jump on. I think Porcupines must have very thin skulls. The wicked animal received a slight blow to the head and was out 'like the proverbial light'. The Eland and Kudu would, during the day, graze within the confines of the plot, approximately 4 acres in size.

I soon found myself having to cope with the office work, mainly on the financial side. Checking the accounts and preparing all the payment vouchers, the African staff's monthly pay sheets, etc. Most of the accounting occurred at the end of the month and, when completed, I would go into Shinyanga to the District Cash Office to exchange some vouchers for hard cash to pay the staff. Needless to say, I was given the Colonial Governments 'Financial Orders' and 'General Orders' quite early on. These I had to read and inwardly digest to prevent any serious errors in our accounting.

On such visits the following month's requirements would be sought out from the various Asian merchants, including our own provisions and anything else required by the organisation... After having dealt with the business of the day I would go out to my brother's place, hoping there would be enough lunch for two!

After a few months I became familiar with laboratory techniques including microscopy and its allied subjects appertaining to sleeping sickness, malaria (This was a bonus) and spirillum fever which is a tick borne disease transmitted by the Spirillum Tick. This tick lurks in the wall cracks of mud huts and usually pops out at night to give one a nasty nip. Another widespread disease I could identify and diagnose under the microscope was Schistosomiasis, or bilhazia, water borne fluke transmitted by a certain species of small snail which acts as host and is usually found in slow moving water channels or water-holes. One item I did have difficulty with was dissection, too ham fisted!, for delicate things like mosquitoes or tsetse fly. The African lab assistant was very efficient and certainly able to cope with such delicate jobs.

After about seven months of being in residence the Doctor thought a little field work wouldn't do me any harm, so sent me off on a few days safari to gather certain information from an area 70 miles away, westward, in another district, where there had been a serious out-break of sleeping sickness a few years previously. That made a pleasant break away from all the routine chores, and a chance to acquaint myself with a further chunk of Tanganyika. Most of the information sought came to hand, but one request was impossible without a few weeks advance notice. That was the capture of a particular species of antelope, a young Mountain Reedbuck, for a blood test to ascertain whether or not such animals were still carrying the human strain of the sleeping sickness parasite, Trypanosoma Rhodesiense. I hasten to add, that if such animals were caught they would be released immediately after the necessary blood smears were taken. However, this time, that problem did not arise. My camp was in a Tsetse Fly free sleeping sickness settlement which had been cleared of all trees in an area of approximately 6 square miles, 6 or 7 years previously, and where a large number of the indigenous families were resettled after evacuation from their isolated homesteads, deep in the Tsetse infected bush where sleeping sickness was depleting their numbers.

Somewhere during my travels I met the Sleeping Sickness Settlement Agricultural Surveyor in charge of all the settlements in that particular area of the Western Province and, in true protocol procedure, informed him of my intentions. Those were, to go around that particular settlement to take some blood smears from any local inhabitants with a fever for examination back at the research laboratory. The Sleeping Sickness Scout, whose job it is to visit all habitations once a week to search out the ailing, accompanied me on my rounds. Usually each settlement has a Dispensary with a Medical Orderly/ Dresser in charge, who is capable of examining a blood smear through a microscope and making the correct diagnosis.

That little jaunt over - back to the routine of the laboratory,

As the months passed by I cannot think of anything very exciting happening. The monotony was lifted twice, the first time when Charlie came into the area for a few days on his agricultural pursuits, and a little later the Assistant District Officer from Shinyanga stayed with me for a couple of nights. Otherwise, only the casual visitor to the lab, called in. The calendar eventually came round to 25th December, a normal working day so far as we were concerned. Half our staff had the day off to attend Mass at the nearby 'White Father's' Mission run by French Canadians, so there was plenty to keep ourselves occupied during the morning. However, the Doctor did say that if I wanted to join the festivities in Shinyanga that evening and Boxing Day, I could borrow his car and go, and go I did; To stay with Charlie, and indulge in the tasting of alcohol etc, at a few of the friends houses where time was no object! I returned to Tinde Boxing Day night feeling a little jaded.

1938 ...A busier year than the last.

After having completed my first 12 months of service in January I was entitled to 14 days holiday but, decided to wait until March when I should have earned a few more shillings. Even then, I couldn't afford to go to any exotic place on the Coast, Sao Hill would, therefore, have to suffice, and it was cheaper there! Railway and bus fares are paid by the Government, so all I would spend money on would be food and hotel accommodation en route, with the odd beer thrown in! The day of departure finally arrived so, with camp bed, mosquito net and blankets, the Doc dumped me at Lohumbo Station, the train due in at 3am, or thereabouts, hence the need of the bed and bedding which was put up in the Station Master's office. That's where it stayed, after packing it all up, to await my return. Three days later, after following the usual route via Tabora - Dodoma - Iringa I arrived home to a comfortable climate, bed and good food! Having caught up with the past year's news and activities around the place the first job of importance was to service the old car, DS 949, (we also had DS 939 for spares !), now 10 years old and showing its age. However, it was still running which enabled me to make a few excursions to the neighbours for a chat; and also a trip to the Mufindi Tea Estate to see how some of my earlier handiwork was progressing - Quite well! Father at this stage was seriously considering selling the Mufindi property because it was becoming too great a burden looking after both places, with unreliable transport making it even more difficult to move around.

The holiday was soon over, almost half of it being taken up by travelling time. One of the disadvantages of being without one's own transport,

During my absence the Doc had drawn up rough plans for two new buildings he wanted, One a small-ish two-roomed shack, and the other an animal house with five compartments, with access through a side door into a rear passage-way and doors into each compartment to enable the animal attendant, and ourselves, to gain access without having to walk the length of the pen and scaring the beasties en-route.

As time was of great importance to complete all building projects during the 'dry season', which usually ends in October, all the necessary materials had to be ordered through the Public Works Department in Dar es Salaam, which all took time. White-ant proof 'posts' had to come from the Railway Stores, obsolete railway lines cut to size and holes drilled through to specification! The 'bricks', large cement blocks similar to breize blocks but measuring 2ft x 1ft x 4ins, made with a cement mix of 1 part sand and 1 part cement, which I thought rather weak, but, after a couple of months 'cooking' they're anything but 'weak'. Whilst awaiting the main ingredient, cement, a large patch of ground was prepared for the 'brick' drying process. Another gang of labourers toiled away up the hill, behind my house, digging out and rolling down large sized lumps of granite for transportation down to the building site to be broken up into small pieces, by hand, with small 'stone' hammers. Aggregate for the foundations and floors. A long and tedious job!

During all this time the old lorry, and its driver, me, were working overtime. The cement, corrugated iron and posts (rails) had to be collected from Lohumbo station. As soon as the cement was to hand block making commenced. A huge pile of sand from a nearby dry river bed was already on the site. Placing the block moulds on the levelled ground the dryish cement mix would be tipped in and then well tamped down, all rather time consuming. When ready the mould would be unhinged and carefully removed and then refastened for the next one, etc, etc; One of the snags of such a system was the lack of perfect right angled corners on the blocks! After quite a number had been made it was necessary to cover them with long dry grass to prevent them from 'baked' too quickly in the hot sun. Then, every morning for a few days they would have to be watered to slow down the drying process, making the finished product a little expensive! Another problem arose, our water supply, from a well, is just adequate to suffice until the next rainy season comes along, but with increased consumption for building purposes the water level dropped rather alarmingly. Therefore, alternative arrangements had to be made for non-domestic supplies. This entailed a search around the local area for a convenient water-hole which was accessible to the lorry but would not deprive the local populace of their requirements. Two suitable watering places were found about 1½ miles away; so on the way back, I called on the local Chief at his Headquarters to explain our predicament. He readily agreed that we could help ourselves. More time would now be taken up by loading six empty 45 gallon petrol drums into the lorry every morning and, with four labourers, go off to fill them. A long, boring and tedious job for me having to hang around until all the drums was full.

As soon as sufficient blocks for both projects had been made the first batch was ready for use, which relieved the water situation, somewhat. Before building commenced the Dr had asked me whether I could lay the blocks, as he was rather reluctant to pay a brick-layer a full days wage for half a days work! This was because the blocks being large and thin could only be laid at the rate of one course per day, otherwise, troubles! The blocks being 2ft long a course was soon completed. So lay them I did, they were damned heavy too, and seemed to become heavier as the walls went up! With only a 4in width to work on, one had to be extremely careful, otherwise, the previous days work came adrift.

There was a resident carpenter on the place who was kept fully occupied making door frames from the most difficult timber to work with, M'ninga, which defies white ants - and also nails! Within a fortnight the two roomed building was up and ready for its roof. Another job for the carpenter, with a little assistance from me.

Now for the animal quarters. A much larger undertaking to be tackled than the first building. I forget its dimensions but somewhere in the region of 35ft x 12ft which, with the partition walls, made it a formidable task to complete one brick course per day. However; fate took a hand in operations. When the walls were half way up I went down with an attack of malaria which, on recovery, left me too weak to lift cement blocks so the services of a brick-layer had to be sought -- much to my delight supervising the construction was less painful!

By June/July most of the construction work was, more or less, finished, except for doors which kept the carpenter busy for weeks.

The Doc was becoming a little worried about the shortage of tsetse fly pupae which came to us through the post, in special containers, from Singida - many miles away. In one area of that district, M'gori, there was a heavy infestation of tsetse, luckily at that time, not carrying the sleeping sickness bug, trypanosomiasis. The system for the collection of tsetse pupae went as follows; A Sleeping Sickness Scout would, on his rounds to the scattered villages, distribute the pupae containers to those inhabitants who wanted to earn a few shillings, usually the 10 - 13 year old children, who would go off into the bush (countryside) and search in the ground, in the shade of fallen trees, or other shady places, for the pupae. The youngsters were paid at the rate of 2 cents per pupa when the S S Scout called again. Any imprisoned flies which had emerged in the container during the interim period were also paid for! The organisation for all the arrangements was in the hands of the Sub Assistant Surgeon in charge of the Singida Hospital, so our thanks went to him.

CHAPTER 8

MORE SAFARIS!

As mentioned earlier, the lack of pupae could become a problem for the continuation of some research work so the Dr decided to send me to Singida to see what could be done to improve the situation. So plans were made and, in true protocol tradition, the District Officer, Singida, and the Sub Assistant Surgeon at the Hospital, were informed that I would be visiting the area, and the reason why. It so happened that the date I had chosen to travel by train to Singida, via Manyoni Station, coincided with my brother's departure date from Shinyanga, on transfer, to a District in the Northern Province somewhere near Moshi. My safari gear was booked through to Singida from Lohumbo Station since I would be leaving From Shinyanga and did not want to be lumbered with six heavy-ish packages there. Dr C took me in to Shinyanga to meet up with Chas who was staying with the Agricultural Officer who, very kindly, had invited me to partake of meals with them and also a bed until 2am. The train departed between 2 – 3am! So by the time it reached Lohumbo at about 4:30am we were asleep, only to be disturbed at the next station (soon after 5am) by a passenger, whom I knew, coming into our four berth compartment and persisted in having a conversation at that unearthly hour.

Soon after breakfast we rolled into Tabora to await the D' Salaam bound train from Kigoma, to which our carriage would be coupled for the onward journey. With an hour and half to spare we strolled around chatting to any acquaintances who happened to be travelling, or residents whom we knew bidding their friends farewell.

Soon after leaving Tabora it was 'cold beer' time so off to the Restaurant Car to enjoy a cold drink whilst Africa slipped past, the most enjoyable way of seeing the country! Our first stop was at Igalula where, in 1936, I had spent a few weeks on agricultural duties. Two chaps in the milling crowd on the station who seemed to 'recognised' me came over to enquire about my health and, "where had I been?", "where was I going?" Etc, etc, in true traditional manner. I hadn't a clue who they were!

After lunch two 'corpses' were flat-out on their respective bunks recovering from their disturbed night. But, before reaching Manyoni I had to make a decision! Do I leave the train at Manyoni and look for assistance to carry the safari kit to the Rest House? This would mean spending the next 22 hours there, then head back to the station to await the Dar es Salaam to Tabora train's arrival, where the Singida bound passenger's would alight to change over to the 'Hornby like train set-up' waiting on the Branch line! Or, do I carry on to Dodoma, enjoy a few drinks and dinner on the train, book into the Dodoma Hotel for a bed, and breakfast and leave on the aforementioned Tabora train at 8,45am, have a cold beer and lunch on board and arrive back at Manyoni at about 2.30 – 3pm. Whatever the decision it would be followed by a slow journey to Singida, arriving about 6pm. The latter won. At Dodoma the brother's Allen bid each other farewell.

Note; We were not to meet again until August/September 1940, in the Northern Frontier District, at Isiolo, Kenya. Both of us being in the Forces then but in different Units. More about that will appear in print later.

On arrival at Singida some kind person, I cannot remember who, gave me a lift to the Rest House. Also stationed in Singida at that time were my Uncle Vincent and Aunt Betty. He was In charge of the Agricultural Office and allied field works for the District. After a bath and brush up darkness was drawing in and not knowing where they lived, how far away and having no transport, I decided to call on them after breakfast the next morning. So that evening my cook and houseboy had to get themselves organised organised to produce a three course dinner for me, which was no great hardship since there was a stove, of sorts, in the kitchen with a pile of firewood alongside. All the necessary cooking utensils, food and drinking water were in my safari boxes. I always made sure 12 empty Gordon's Gin bottles were filled with drinking water and put in - with a few bottles of beer as well! The Gordon's Gin bottles are the best shape for packing into a box. Where the bath, and washing up, water came from ...!!!!... I really haven't a clue - and did not enquire!

In the morning I made my presence known to the other branch of the Allen family who insisted I partake in all meals with them, and very nice they were too. Our paths hadn't crossed for a long time so there was plenty of news, family and otherwise, to catch up on. The second 'port of call' was to the District Office to brief the District Officer ('Officer' was changed to 'Commissioner' a few years later), a Mr Z E Kingdon, about my intentions and safari plans in the M'gori area of the district and, at the same time, requesting from him a letter to the Sub-Chief of that area to provide me with 12 porters to carry my safari loads beyond M'gori, where the appalling bush road ended, to some of the outlying villages. Following that little Interlude off I went to the hospital to see the Sub Assistant: Surgeon to thank him for the part he, and some of his staff, undertook to ensure the tsetse pupae reached the laboratory. After lunch it was into the town to make the necessary arrangements to hire a lorry for tomorrow's journey down to M'gori. With that lot over I could now relax.

The journey was rather bumpy to M'gori. I cannot remember the distance but I was thankful when we eventually arrived, the lorry seats were rather hard on the posterior.

Job No 1. Find the village Headman or any other high-ranking member of the Native Authority who happened to be around to 'press-gang' some unfortunate local standing within calling range, to deliver the D.O's letter to the Chief, or Sub-Chief, regarding porters for the few days foot safari commencing the next morning. In due course the tents, mine and one for the staff, were pitched on the outskirts of the village, much to the local youngster's interest. After a short time the Headman appeared complete with a 'bevy of beauty' bringing 'debis' of slightly cloudy water and firewood for the culinary department and also the customary gift of a cockerel, (Sometimes a sheep!). However, on ones departure from a camp site the Headman usually turns up in expectation of a 'gift' in return for his! Cockerel, shs.5/-, and a sheep, a shs.20/- note! I doubt whether the respective owners of the 'kuku' (chicken) or sheep ever saw the cash!

Up early the next morning to pack all the kit into porter's loads, finishing up with 15. I had taken the precaution of asking for 16 porters so, with luck, 15 would appear. They did, in twos and threes, over a period of half an hour plus, thus delaying departure time, an important factor when the destination is 15 miles away, and with a hot sun to contend with! The assembled company of WaN'yaturu tribesmen did not impress me. A 'weedy' looking lot but maybe they had the stamina to withstand carrying a 30/50 lbs load on their backs, shoulders or heads for the length of the journey. We eventually left later than I had anticipated, with my guide and houseboy leading the column, with the cook and myself following in the rear. All went well for a couple of hours when the porter carrying my bedding roll, one of the lighter loads, decided he'd had enough so threw it into the bush and bolted! There was no point in trying to catch him so one of his companions, carrying the lightest load, found himself emburdened with another bundle, much to his disgust! I told him to argue it out with his naughty friend when they next met, and to demand a day's pay from him! Since we were in the middle of the 'dry season' walking through the uninhabited and lightly wooded savannah areas, the heat from the sun was rather overpowering. Eventually our destination hove into sight after a six hour trek. Not having walked such a distance for a few months the leg muscles let me know that I still had some. On arrival there was no time for relaxation - yet! The porters were paid off and then had to retrace their footsteps back home! Whilst the three members of staff and myself put up the tents. The village Headman soon appeared followed by a few henchmen and also a horde of inquisitive youngsters. In no time at all he voiced his authority by organising two or three onlookers to fetch water and firewood without delay. Just as well because a pot of tea was an urgent necessity to quench the thirst!

Whilst the Headman was still around I took him aside and we had a long chat together to allay any suspicions he might have regarding my visit to such a remote area. After being briefed he assured me the young tsetse pupae searchers would be around the following morning, and the day after, to show me their sharp-eyed skill at finding pupae out in the bush. One of the local youth's standing by was willing to act as wood and water carrier and do any other menial tasks which might occur during the next three days, for a few shillings. All the business over a few cups of tea went down very well.

At dusk I relaxed in a refreshing bath, tho' in murky water, followed by a 'cool' beer, the beer 'cooling system' was a canvas water bucket filled with water and hung in a shady and, preferably, draughty spot. Unfortunately it hadn't been there long enough to have much effect.

After the evening meal there was only thing to do! Go to bed for a good read under the protection of the mosquito net to avoid all the flying bugs.

When the small army of youngsters had foregathered in the morning off we went into the tsetse habitat area to dig out the pupae. To be precise, they scraped the surface of the loose earth, in the most likely places, with a thin stick, and with their keen eyesight picked up the odd pupa here and there. I tried my hand at this, and failed! The one great snag to the whole performance is the adult tsetse flies. They will persist in trying to have the meal of a life-time on the exposed parts of your body. Fortunately, I'm not allergic to tsetse or mosquito bites. During the search the lads collected about seventy pupae which I considered a satisfactory result. The next day a similar procedure was carried out but this time at a different village a mile or two away, with the S.S.Scout leading the way as he was familiar with the whole area. Again, more pupae collected which would boost our reserves back in the laboratory. The 'searches' ended up with a total of 160 and, on this occasion, the collectors were paid on the spot, which pleased them, plus a little extra for goodwill, making them even happier. With one more day in hand other villages were visited but no searching undertaken - merely a chat to enlighten the menfolk of our requirements. The S.S.Scout having to act as interpreter.

You may be wondering what happens to any young, hungry, tsetse fly emerging from their shells when in transit regarding food. Normally, they can survive for a few days without a feed but on this occasion any hatchings would be in luck! I would put a special container, which had one side covered with a fine wire mesh, downwards on my arm and any hungry fly would push its probosis through the mesh into the arm and enjoy a feast of Allen blood! There is no risk whatsoever of newly hatched tsetse flies transmitting sleeping sickness. They have to feed on an infected human or animal first. It then takes about 10 to 15 days for the trypanosomes to enter the flies' salivary glands. When that stage has been reached you've got trouble. As the probosis enters the skin a minute quantity of saliva containing the trypanosomes is injected. Seven to fifteen days later the unfortunate recipient (human) feels rather ill with, usually, a high fever as well. If left untreated the trypanosomes find their way into the spinal fluid and into the brain. Within three to six months death occurs. Strangely enough wild animals are immune to the disease, yet domesticated animals succumb!

DAY 4. Today's destination, Singida. The camp was packed up early, with the porters also arriving early, so off back to M'gori where I had arranged for a lorry to meet me there at 2pm or thereabouts, to pick us up, - therefore no time to spare dawdling en-route. We reached the village in good time and before I had finished paying the porters the lorry arrived, Remarkable, all as planned! On arrival in Singida I sent the lorry and staff to the Rest House to offload the kit; whilst I went along to the Agricultural Office to make my presence known to my uncle, who took me to the house for a very welcome cup of tea.

The next day was spent going the 'diplomatic' rounds to let the Admin and Medical Departments know what I had been up to in their district. I also took the opportunity of restocking with provisions at the local well-stocked grocery store. I also bought some bread, a chunk of cheese and a couple of bottles of beer which would go down very nicely the following evening in Manyoni, where I would be spending the night awaiting the 'UP' mail train from D'Salaam due in about 2.30pm the next afternoon. This would be followed by the 15hr Journey to Lohumbo, via Tabora, and back in to Tinde at about 6am on Sunday morning.

Whilst in Singida my Uncle and Aunt again invited me round for all meals. I declined breakfasts because there was no point in arising too early! However, I was most grateful to them for all the assistance and help given to me during the short stay.

Tinde once again. After a cup of tea, bath and brush up, followed with a good breakfast of Singida-bought bread and bacon, in that order. I now felt equal to tackling the Sunday morning's work, mainly passing on to the Doctor the results of my safari and suggestions about maintaining an adequate flow of pupae, which, really, all hinged around the low price we paid, He agreed. The pupae I brought back pleased him!

During my absence he must have been deep in thought regarding his future movements. He would be due for 6 months UK leave in, or about, February/March 1939 and was undecided whether to retire or not. If retirement won the day plans must be set in motion in the very near future as his successor would have to be appointed, which involves the Crown Agents Recruiting Department in London. Also, some of his research projects would have to be finalised and the resultant findings published in one of the Medical journals, usually The "Tropical Diseases and Hygiene" magazine, and "The Lancet", to which he had contributed many articles on sleeping sickness over the years.

Retirement won, and in that respect I, again, became involved. This time on an assignment which did not have my whole-hearted enthusiasm! By this time the month of August was approaching and, since the Doctor had decided to retire, he was anxious for the field work, necessary for the completion of his research projects, to go ahead without undue delay. My involvement in it would mean going into an old sleeping sickness area, Mkwemi, 65 miles away to the west of Tinde, where a serious outbreak of the disease had occurred some six or seven years previously. All the inhabitants were evacuated to a resettlement area about ten miles further westwards. I had passed through the area in question some months previously so had a rough idea of the surroundings in which I would be conducting my part in the research activities. In order to ascertain whether the carriers of the disease, wild game animals, were still acting as hosts after some years entailed one thing! Shooting them! I would then inject a few drops of the unfortunate animal's blood into two white rats and also taking blood smears for microscopic examination back at the laboratory. If positive the rats would react within a week. Permission regarding the hunting of game would have to be sought from the Game Department and, therefore, create a mass of correspondence, which was the Doctor's worry!

The Doctor eventually convinced the 'powers that be' that such drastic action was necessary in the interest of human survival!

Time was becoming an important factor. However, sometime during the middle of August I was granted a 'Governor's Game Licence' which permitted me to shoot any number of 'Game' animals, with the exception of Elephant, Rhino, Giraffe and, if I remember correctly, Leopard and Cheetah. With the licence in our hands all the other necessary arrangements could be made. Mainly, ordering .404 rifle ammunition, 100 rounds, for the Doctor's .404 mm Vickers rifle which, incidentally, had a 'kick' like a mule, in spite of its rubber recoil pad!

With the 'rains' due in October, only six to/eight weeks away, the moment the ammunition arrived I had to be off to Mkwemi. That day soon came along, so, with the lorry well laden with all the paraphernalia attributable to such a hunting safari, including a couple of boxes of white rats and another box full of medical equipment, necessary for the fieldwork, I sallied forth accompanied by the cook and houseboy. En-route I called in to see the District Commissioner in charge of the Kahama District to inform him of my intentions etc, and then to the hospital to brief the Asian doctor likewise. The Kahama township is not very large and I don't think there were more than four or five European families, working for the Government, stationed there at the time. There was the usual Indian owned shop which stocked practically everything from a packet of pins to a ton or two of corrugated iron sheeting and a packet of salt to a tin of caviar. That little job over it was then off to see the Chief of the area who lived about three miles further out along my route. I needed to ask him if he could find three intelligent locals for me with hunting and tracking experience who had knowledge of the area I would be hunting in. He turned up trumps by finding three very good men. Fortunately all lived nearby so within a short space of time they were back with their kit and some very sharp spears.

The camp site was another 20 miles or so further along the main road (which carried on westwards to the towns of Biharamulo and Bukoba, many miles away). The only human life at Mkwemi was the Public Works road gang, numbering about fifteen labourers, who lived in a large mud hut surrounded by a huge stockade. Outside there was a vacant mud hut, a pitiful edifice, it officially called a Rest House. One look inside was enough for me, so up went the tent. The hut, after being cleaned out became quite a good kitchen. By 4pm everything was where it should be so a belated lunch and pot of tea went down very well. The other members of the party sorted themselves out! The three locals, being sensible, went in with their road gang pals. The cook and houseboy decided they would sleep in the back of the lorry which was as good as a tent when the canvas side curtains were strapped down. The road gang headman came over for a chat so I quizzed him about the area in general regarding water, game, and also the large stockade. I knew the answer to that one, lions! He said they're always around! I thought he was possibly exaggerating a little, but I soon changed my mind. The following morning, when 'Jeeves' brought in my early-morning cup of tea he told me that I had had a visitor during the night. The large pad marks of a lion were all round the tent, just as well I was fast asleep. Although the loaded gun was by the bedside, I doubt very much whether I would have been in a fit state to use it! Also, sleeping under a mosquito net always gives one a false sense of security. Another point, when I am 'tenting', I always have a lighted paraffin hurricane lamp glowing throughout the night and the fumes from that is inclined to deter 'proglers of the night'. Maybe the lion got a nose full. Following its track back to the road, only a few yards away, were many more footprints. Apparently, a pride of three had wandered along the road, milled around for a short time abeam of the tent until one plucked up courage to investigate and, after a good sniff round, rejoined the other two. They then went on their journey along the road to do whatever lions have to do in the early hours of the morning. A couple of nights later another 'visitor' called, only this time it woke me up by raking around among the pots and pans dumped on the veranda, this visitor happened to be a hyena.

The area I proposed to cover for hunting over amounted to 30 to 35 sq miles which included open savannah, thick scrub bush and lightly wooded land, with a few dried-up swampy places thrown in. The main road being the southern boundary. Just south of the road and running parallel to it was a high rocky ridge which I had no intention of climbing, although I did later on and, much to my surprise, came across a large herd of Greater Kudu, such magnificent animals. As there are few herds I refrained from shooting a young male.

The Public Works Road Engineer in charge of the road from Mwanza to Biharamulo and based in Shinyanga, had mentioned to me that two years ago a fellow named Clissold had been prospecting for gold (without success) in the hills, 3 miles north of the Mkwemi camp, but after a few months, had abandoned his camp. The car track leading to it from the

of all I had to send my small labour force of three, armed with machetes (commonly known as 'upanga(s)' throughout East main road was nearby so, as soon as possible, I would make a 'recce' to see what there was in the mud hut line! But first Africa), to clear the regenerated bush and tree growth between the tracks. Fortunately, it was only the first mile that required attention, the rest being perfectly motorable, in fact one stretch of track, about a mile in length, was like a race track. It crossed over a large area of grassland, devoid of trees or bushes, and therefore not so good for hunting over, as any herd of antelope grazing around the fringes would see danger approaching and immediately be off,

The 'camp' was in very good repair and, with a good clean up, would be adequate for my needs. What was once Clissold's house would be my living quarters, the tent would remain my bedroom! There was one fair sized room and a large veranda which would suffice for sitting and dining rooms! One snag, it faced the West therefore warmed up in the afternoon sun. There were three other mud huts two for the staff and the third would be used to store all the miscellaneous equipment. The white rats went in with the three workmen! Water? That could be a problem! For the time being the Mkwemi water hole would have to keep us supplied. As soon as the new site was ready for occupation we moved over. On arrival there we found a troop of baboons had occupied the place but they didn't waste much time in making a quick get away. However, I had parked the lorry in the shade of a tall tree and there in the uppermost branches was the grand patriarch of the troop, a huge devil who was going frantic, and, being cornered, was becoming rather aggressive, making short lunges at us with bared vicious fangs. So, without more ado, he was at the receiving end of a .404 bullet. Dropping him out of the tree and hitting the ground with a terrific thud! A real heavyweight, capable of tearing any one of us apart. With that affray over my 'house' had to be swept out again. Luckily, the floors were made with cement. The tent, my sleeping quarters and bathroom, was pitched nearby.

After all creature comforts were organised the time had arrived for me to carry on with the work for which I had been sent. Whilst my gang of three was tidying the site, prior to moving in, I had taken the opportunity to follow any visible vehicle tracks that happened to be around. The first one I followed led me to a deep adit (passage) into the hillside, obviously the work of the unfortunate gold prospector, but now serving as a refuge for baboons! The next track followed the base of the hill through a thickly wooded area and over a slight rise between two hills, overlooking a large expanse of Africa, flat, with a few trees, but plenty of medium sized clumps of bushes, making it ideal for stalking the wild game animals, antelopes, of various species. The track petered out so I came to the conclusion that the prospector probably came here to shoot animals for his labourers meat ration, how often is impossible to tell!!!!

Not wanting to disturb the animals more than necessary I made a point of hunting in a different area or direction twice a day. My day started at dawn, with the inevitable cup of tea to wake me up, Soon after 6am we, myself and the three henchmen, would usually set off on foot to seek out any likely target that happened to be around. One chap carried a box containing a few white rats, his mate carried the medical equipment box and number three had the honour of carrying the rifle which, so far as I was concerned, became heavier and heavier after every mile! The 'kills' would be dealt with on the spot and when all was over the rats would be given their 'registration' marks. It's surprising how many combinations of marks can be made using three different colours, literally dozens. That over, the men would cut up the animal into manageable portions, dump them in a convenient spot, and cover the meat with branches to keep the vultures away until I had time to collect it all in the lorry. The three would spend the next few hours cutting the meat into thin strips to dry out on a line in the sun. When dry it would be put into sacks and, in due course, taken home, to their meat-starved families, relations and friends. So the unfortunate animal did, at least, benefit someone.

Some days we would walk miles without seeing a thing. Other times two or three herds of different antelope, but all had to be searched for and the first shot would scatter everything within a radius of a mile or more! For the evening shoot we would set off between 4 - 5 pm, often in the lorry, and, depending on our success, return at nightfall weary and filthy! The latter caused by the bushfire ash. If an animal had been shot the three lads would work long into the night cutting the meat into strips.

Altogether, I spotted thirteen different species of small and large game, Starting with the smallest: - Duiker, Steinbuck, Oribi, Reedbuck, Bushbuck, Hartebeest, Topi (or Kob), Roan antelope, Greater Kudu, Eland, Zebra, Giraffe, and Warthog and, in the bird line, Ostrich. Other mammals seen were Honey Badger, Hyena, Leopard and Baboon. Yet, although I heard the lions roaring practically every night, or in the early hours, during the whole time I spent there not once did I set eyes on them. They probably saw me and then retreated. However, I certainly had no intention of shooting one as that would be asking for trouble!!

The Doctor came out to see me every ten days or so bringing any mail and also reading material for me, along with any fresh vegetables he could lay his hands on, and a few spare rats! In return he took away any letters for posting and the 'used' rats for his necessary attention. My only other visitor was the Road Engineer when he passed by, and that was not very often, twice, I think!!

On this safari I had brought with me the radio, which helped to relieve the monotonous evenings. The set-up could hardly be called 'portable'. The cabinet was quite large holding three large 45 volt dry batteries, three smaller 9 volt dry batteries and a large, heavy, 2 volt accumulator. Daytime reception was rather hopeless but as the sun dropped over the horizon the Nairobi Radio Station, became audible and by 8 or 9pm the BBC and other European stations came in reasonably well, tho' the atmospheric were a nuisance at times. Anyway, at that time the news was rather depressing, Germany demanding this, that and the other, annexing parts of other nearby countries and, generally speaking, behaving in a warlike manner.

Some news from the parents came as a shock. The 'Old Man' wrote saying he had sold the Mufindi tea estate because he couldn't cope with both places, Mufindi and Sao Hill, so the former had to go. It was sold to a German! Which then placed about 99% of all the tea plantations into the hands of the many German nationals who had settled there? (With hind-sight the sale was one of my father's bigger mistakes!).

The daily routine carried on but there were the few incidents which cropped up. Tramping through the thinnish scrub bush one evening we disturbed an ostrich sitting on its nest containing 14 eggs. The size of the nest was colossal. Passing by a few days later my 'friends', the lions, had, obviously, pounced on the unfortunate bird, feathers were everywhere and the eggs scattered over a wide area. On another occasion walking across the wide expanse of open

grassland in the early hours we came across the tail of an Eland pulled out by the root within the past two hours. So, following the spoor of the eland and lion we eventually reached the end of the open plain and then advanced very warily into the wooded area. Not many yards in we saw the Eland carcass 100 yards or so ahead. There wasn't any activity around it so with eyes peering in all directions and gun and spears at the ready we, very slowly, walked to the beast. The lion(s) had had a good breakfast, leaving the hind quarters intact. Whereupon, the three lads set about carving up the decent cuts for collection later in the day. We set off once again, but not before hiding the meat away from the local scavengers, hyenas and vultures. After that little diversion the only animal we saw was a lone, Greater Kudu male, an excellent specimen which I had no intention of shooting.

Further incidents occurred which, to me, were out of the ordinary daily scene. Stalking a reedbuck one evening over some very rough ground I noticed something else stalking it too, a leopard. Being a little too far away to risk a shot I continued on my course, the leopard doing likewise from his/her angle and, being rather intent on its prey, had not noticed me shuffling along or just didn't want to know, it was gaining ground so when I considered it had gone far enough I took aim at the buck and down it fell thus saving it from a worse death in the claws of a leopard, which beat a very hasty retreat. Another time I was standing, having a look around, when a strange rumbling sound was most audible when, suddenly, a mother Warthog with six little hog-lets shot out of an antbear's hole close by. There was a second Warthog episode. I wounded a boar and was following it to give it another shot when the beast spun round and, with great agility, reversed into an antbear hole. That meant sending the 'box carriers' back to the lorry for tools to dig him out. Both these jobs taking a very long time resulting in a very late breakfast that morning! Once, and to my surprise, I shot two Roan Antelope, quite large animals, with one cartridge. Number one was standing broadside on and, unbeknown to me, there was a second, slightly smaller, standing in a similar position behind it. When two fell I considered that a bonus.

Petrol stocks and provisions had to be replenished at intervals which entailed a trip into Kahama, to Sharma's Store for the necessary purchases. He would also oblige by cashing a cheque when loose cash is required, though the only place I could spend money, for fruit and oddments, was in the native market and the expenditure there didn't amount to many shillings.

From the middle of October onwards the weather became humid and oppressive, a sure sign that the rains were on the way so I would soon have to think about packing up. I had warned Dr Corson on his last visit that I would return to Tinde after the fourth thunderstorm! Between the camp and main road was a nasty little depression and if that became flooded, catching the lorry on the wrong side, it would be marooned for months,

Into the first week of November the first thunderstorm arrived in the early hours of the morning and, before very long, there was a good stream of water flowing through the tent. But no harm done, since I knew what would happen during a deluge and therefore had taken all necessary precautions. The ground around the tent was very bare and as hard as cement so hadn't worried about having a ditch to divert any storm water. The hot sun soon dried the surrounding countryside enabling the work to carry on!

The storm had freshened the atmosphere and within a week the dry grassland would green over, and the few herds of game would disperse over a wider area. Then it would be my turn to bid them a fond farewell and peace. The lions could take over. The noisy devils with their roaring quite often woke me up in the night. That, at least, was no worry, but if heard grunting nearby, that is a different story! Beware! After all the past weeks in their hunting ground I was disappointed not seeing them in the flesh. However, halfway through November I decided to call it all off, pack up the camp and proceed homewards. The road labourers were sorry to see me depart as I had also kept them well supplied with fresh meat!

En-route to Tinde I dropped off my three assistants at their destination together with umpteen sacks of dried meat, which must have kept them happy for weeks. They also asked me to come back the next year!! "Not likely" was my reply! So far as big game hunting is concerned enough was enough for me! Passing through Kahama the vehicle almost came to grief in a ditch. At a 'T' junction I turned the steering wheel to the right but received no response from the wheels. I managed to pull up about 18 inches from the ditch on the opposite side of the junction completely blocking the narrow track, this being the least of my worries! On inspection, I found that the steering arm had dropped out from its socket linkage due to wear. Fortunately, none of the springs, ball sockets and spacers had fallen out, so with a touch of brute force and, ? knowledge, the lot was reassembled, tightened and tested. Success, After groveling around in the dust for a quarter of an hour I was on my way once again. After a couple of months of 'bush' life it was quite a change to be back in a house once again, and able to enjoy a good long soak in a proper bath, rather than in the canvas safari type.

Back at Tinde I soon caught up with the routine. None of the rats that I had sent back had proved positive for Trypanosomiasis. So, that was that, leaving the doctor to form his own conclusions regarding that particular research programme.

CHAPTER 8

A NEW BROOM

A successor for the position of Research Officer had been confirmed but it would be many months before he could take up his appointment, as he was stationed in another region of the country conducting some experimental work on a different species of Tsetse Fly. On completion of that he would be coming to Tinde for a brief period before heading off back to the U K for some leave and to write a thesis for his PhD degree, all of which would take a fair amount of time. It was, therefore, highly improbable that he would be in permanent residence here until July/August 1939! His name, Eric B. I had met him on one of his previous visits, duly arrived either in December/January on a short visit for an introductory session or two with Dr Corson on the many aspects of what the lab work involved.

Another Christmas came, and went, but to us it was like any normal working day, tho' half the staff was given Xmas Day off, and the other half Boxing Day. By way of a change I think I knocked off at 4pm instead of the usual 5.30/6.00pm.

January 1939. Sometime during the month I took my annual fourteen days leave and, as usual, went home to Sao Hill to catch up on all the local activities and gossip. Anyway, it was cheaper than going elsewhere for a holiday! With the disposal of the Mufindi property gave the family one less worry. Mother, with her maniacal tendencies for building, or altering interior walls, continued with her favourite hobby. Otherwise, little had changed. There were one or two new faces in the area. Folks taking up plots of land from the recently formed Southern Highlands Estates Ltd.

One stroke of luck, on my return to Tinde the Sleeping Sickness Officer, Dr F, whom I had met on a few occasions, happened to call in with his wife, who could cook, or prepare, the most palatable 'Groundnut Stew' I have ever tasted! In the course of conversation he mentioned that in his branch of the organisation a vacancy would soon occur for a Field Officer and would I be interested? If so, to forward my application as soon as the appointment was advertised, as I had all the necessary qualifications, for what they were worth, plus a few more after all the experience I had gained in the Research Laboratory. Since the present job was on a temporary basis only, with no future, my only choice was to go for permanent employment. The two doctors had obviously discussed the whole thing over their lunch. So now it was only a question of awaiting the advert to appear in print and then submit my application through the usual channels. Judging by the hints from both doctors there was a 99% chance that I would be chosen.

Meanwhile, life carried on. As March drew nearer the Dr began disposing of a few items and since I was on hand I had the first choice. I bought all his camping equipment, which was almost new (I think I was the only person who had used it, on three safaris, Singida, Mkwemi and another short one), the .404 Vickers rifle with all its cleaning gadgets and ammunition, table linen, glassware, EPNS (Electro Plated Nickel Silver) tea set, silver fish knives and forks (the EPNS & fish things are still in use today March, 1993). The books I declined, since I'd read most of them, including; 'The Rise and Fall of the Roman Empire', the 'Joseph Conrad' Volumes, 'Moliere' - or some suchlike name! and many more which had taken some wading through! One good point; he could use the household stuff I'd bought from him right up to the day of his departure.

It had been arranged that the Director of Tsetse Research, based in Old Shinyanga, would hold a watching brief over the Laboratory during the interim period between Dr C's departure and Eric B's arrival, and one of the Tsetse Dept's young entomologists' would come from Shinyanga to "sit in Dr C's chair" for a few months, whilst I carried on as per usual. Dr C, had, however, suggested to all concerned that I should remain in Tinde until August with the new boy, Lionel V, even if I were fortunate enough to become a member of the SSO's staff. Lionel, and four of his fellow entomologists, had not been in Tanganyika many weeks so lacked experience of the country, and language.

Sometime in January an old car (the Lohumbo Chief's pride and joy) pulled up outside the lab. and out stepped a lady and gent whom I recognised but had not seen since about 1934, the Hickson-Woods', who had often called in at Sao Hill. I think our first meeting was way back in 1929. 'Hicky' was a colourful character and well known throughout Tanganyika and was now employed by the Provincial Administration in Shinyanga as District Foreman. A bit of a 'come down' after having been a District Commissioner in the middle 1920s. But, unfortunately for him, a misdemeanor on his part in helping a friend, resulted in dismissal from the Service! (Going back to the Sao Hill days the person responsible for Hicky's departure, and Hicky, met over the family dining table and afterwards over a game of cards but neither party showed any hatred towards one another. What their inner feelings were !!!!!!!). Anyway, I introduced Hicky and Kathy to the Dr who took them up to his house for tea and a consultation. When working in the area they always called in and I soon learned not to put a full bottle of whiskey in front of them.

Early in March Lionel V joined us at Tinde to take over the scientific side of the establishment, whilst I coped with the rest, and also introduced him to such things as Government 'Financial Orders' and 'General Orders' - in which Sections in both books were forever being amended.

The day dawned when it was time to say farewell to Dr Corson and wish him a happy retirement. I was sorry to see him depart after the two and a bit years we had spent together and to whom I owe a great deal for his advice and guidance. We corresponded until the war intervened. He remarried, took on a part time job with the Tropical Diseases and Hygiene Institute in Gower St, London. When on leave in 1946 I had intended to see him but never did it. Reading the 'Daily Telegraph' one day in 1964, 65 or 6? I came across his Obituary Notice.

Lionel had bought the Dr's car at a 'give-away' price, £30! So he was OK for transport whenever he felt like visiting his friends in Old Shinyanga although, quite often, they would come along to Tinde accompanied by their wives, on a Sunday afternoon to see our 'zoo', and afterwards a cup of tea. Having the fairer sex around was quite a pleasant change for me! Lionel, like me, was a batchelor, but not for much longer! His fiancée was due to arrive in Dar es Salaam sometime in April and he would be going there to meet her off the ship. The two of them would travel up to Tabora to stay

with friends for a few days, have a 'Boma' (Registry Office) wedding there, and a few hours later catch the train to Lohumbo Stn, and on to Tinde for their honeymoon !!!!! I suppose Tinde is as good as anywhere for such an occasion, and cheaper! All that went off according to plan. I met them off the train at the unearthly hour of 5.30/ 6am on a Sunday morning. The rain had been pouring down all night so, knowing what the normally dry and bridgeless rivers would be like; I took the lorry, which I knew would get through, to meet them. On the journey back I thought the poor bride was about to have a heart attack when the lorry developed a broadside skid on the slippery slope leading down to the rocky causeway across the riverbed. The water was fairly high but once the wheels hit the unseen stones all was well, and the frightened bride soon recovered and stopped clinging to her new husband, but she was a little apprehensive at the next water-jump!

My application for the job on the SS0's staff had been submitted and early in May I received a letter from the Director of Medical Service's office confirming the appointment wef 4th May 1939, and that my temporary service would be classed as permanent employment. Up went the salary by £5 per month and in those days that was real money!

Now that a fair young lady, Gwen, was on the premises there was one slight difference Lionel and I would share a chunk of cake at teatime in the lab. She must have felt a little lonely at times not having other ladies around for a good gossip! But, at least, they were able to get away from the place at weekends to visit their friends.

By the end of May I had accumulated a few savings so decided to look around for a good second-hand car but there wasn't anything on offer locally, So I wrote off to the two main garages in Dar es Salaam asking what they had available. In reply, they sent me a list of cars in stock, with their prices. The Ford Agent had a Ford 1936 model V8 saloon, with a brand new engine, for £150. The General Motors Agency offered a 1937 Chevrolet saloon with only 13,000 miles, plus a few hundred, on the Speedo, for £135. There were others, cheaper, but did not interest me. It was a toss-up between the V8 and Chevy. Chevrolet engines are much easier to work on than the V8 so I chose the Chevy. Buying a second hand car without seeing or testing it is a crazy thing to do but, there was no other way round it but to accept their assurance that it was in perfect condition. There being no such organisation as Hire Purchase firms in those days, not in Tanganyika anyway, the Company Manager agreed to accept my offer of £75 down and the balance to be paid in 12 monthly installments at £5 per month, so I had to sign and forward to him, 12 post-dated cheques. That transaction took quite a time! Also, its Journey from D'Salaam to Lohumbo on a railway wagon took a week, by which time the month of June was almost out. I was a little apprehensive about the vehicle but, I must confess. it was in perfect condition and the only faults I could find were two tyres which would soon need replacing. But the comfort after the old lorry!!!!

The B. B. C. World Service news was all gloom and doom with the threat of war over our heads, which really struck home when we began to receive confidential letters from our Departmental Headquarters about volunteering for active service in the event of hostilities? That apart, I decided there were more urgent matters to contend with! A visit to the dentist in Mwanza 130 miles north of Tinde on the shores of Lake Victoria. The dentist was also the District Medical Officer; none other than the Allen's good friend Dr Harkness, who had attended to my medical needs at Sao Hill and Iringa in 1936. The appointment was confirmed and across the bottom of the letter was written, "Expect to see you for dinner on the night of ????" J.H. I thought that invitation would keep me out of trouble - but did it!

A few days before the trip to Mwanza the Hicky-Ws called in and I happened to mention that I would be going there for dental treatment on such and such a day; whereupon he asked if I could possibly give them both a lift, Which I did. All went according to plan. A pleasant, but hot, drive through the barren looking countryside commonly known as UsukumaLand. Booked in at the hotel and, after a welcome cup or two of tea, we went our different ways. As arranged, I dined with the Harkness family, leaving their house at around 10pm-ish. Returning to the hotel I made a grave mistake by walking through the lounge (if one could call it that) where a few familiar faces were seated, including the Hickys. They all insisted I joined in and, being foolish, I did! The following morning I felt dreadful, and with the prospect of having to face an electric drill on my teeth in a couple of hours time didn't improve the situation. However, I chewed some Extra Strong Mints hoping they would allay the fumes "' hair of the dog' would be a little beneficial to my health,- and it was. After lunch I was ready for the return journey but the H-Ws were not.

The Provincial Commissioner wanted to see Hicky at 3pm so that put paid to a departure before 4pm, and having vacated my room the only place left for a much needed snooze was the hotel lounge! At 4pm Kathy and I had a cup of tea. 5pm, still waiting for him. Sometime just before 6.30pm he appeared slightly 'the worse for wear' and after a few well chosen sentences from his wife he departed once again saying he had to collect a car he had bought. I accompanied him outside and stressed the point that I wanted to get moving. He then told me that the Provincial Commissioner had given him a Month's Notice with effect from the beginning of the next month, due to lack of funds, but he didn't want Kathy to know until they were back in Shinyanga. He then went off, not to be seen again until 8.30pm, a little more than slightly inebriated! By this time Kathy was speechless; refusing to go anywhere with him, 'new' car, or no 'new' car. Expecting to be off at any moment we, Kathy and I, had not bothered about having an evening meal in spite of feeling peck-ish. By 9pm I managed to get Hicky organised so sent him off ahead, in case of trouble with his 'banger', or erratic driving! I had noticed a carton containing 6 bottles of beer on the front seat so I guessed he had a bottle opener somewhere. Progress was rather slow and, after 25/30 miles, we soon knew the reason. He was steering the car with one hand and, with the other, clutching a bottle of beer. When one was empty he would hurl the bottle out of the window probably thinking we wouldn't see it! Every so often he would stop no doubt to open another one, and then carry on again. When about halfway home he stopped, for comfort I should imagine, and asked us to go on ahead which we did, for 20 miles or so; then waited for him to catch up. We waited - and waited, and waited, for almost two hours before he arrived on the scene. He had stopped somewhere on the side of the road and fallen asleep! Kathy was more than furious so asked me to tell "the f!!!!g man" that we were going on without another stop and so far as she was concerned he could "rot in H---"! After those few pleasantries we shot off in a cloud of dust and arrived at their house at about 5am. A quick drink of orange squash, tea would have taken too long (no electrics, no gas) and I wanted to be away before Hicky arrived as I had no wish to be witness to a slanging match, or murder! An apologetic farewell from Kathy, then home for an early cuppa at 5.45am and bed, after arousing the 'servantry'.

At the beginning of August the news filtered through that Eric Burr, the new Research Officer, would be with us, to take over from Lionel V, in a fortnight's time, There was no news of my successor yet, so I would have to remain in Tinde until one was found. Housing would be a problem! When Eric arrived he had to stay with me and sleep on a camp bed in either the sitting room or open veranda. His choice! As soon as Lionel and Gwen departed he would move into their house. But it didn't work out like that! Eric duly arrived, so he and Lionel got down to their scientific business which took them a week to complete. In the meantime we received a telegram saying "Mr John Hunter accompanied by wife and young child would arrive in Tinde on ????", which did not please Eric because he would have to stay on in my abode instead of moving over to the other one. Mine, with only one bedroom, was most unsuitable for a family.

I regret to say that there was a feeling of animosity going round. Eric and Lionel didn't see eye to eye over something, what? I never did find out! So it must have been quite trivial. Although, I must confess, the 'new boy' was inclined to drop 'hints' about the accommodation. To such an extent that, after a few days I elected to pack up all my possessions, since it would have to be done sometime soon, put up a tent near the laboratory and move in, There was a building close by with two empty rooms which were ideal for the servants. Another small hovel would have to do for a kitchen, and my office desk, the dining table! Life became a little less strained after that episode.

It was in the tent, lying down on the camp bed, on a Sunday afternoon (if I remember correctly) at 13.00 hours local time on September 3rd, 1939, the voice of Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain came over the radio saying, "We are at war with Germany". "Good gracious!?" I said to myself! Having already volunteered for active service that announcement deprived me of an afternoon's kip.

I cannot remember whether John Hunter arrived just before, or after, the 3rd but arrive he did; so, without undue delay, the business of handing over commenced. I reckoned three days would suffice so I made plans accordingly. I would leave for Tabora in the afternoon of Day 4. In the morning most of my belongings would have to be taken to the Rly Station for the journey to Tabora. However, my arrangements went as planned but the unfortunate John's did not. On Day 3 he received a telegram telling him to report to the King's African Rifles Depot in Dar es Salaam immediately. So that was that. The following afternoon he had to abandon his poor wife and child in a strange house, in strange surroundings, and accompany me in the car to Tabora, to avoid the early morning hassle of catching the train from Lohumbo. The road journey was uneventful but what I really appreciated was the last 30 miles drive, in comfort, into Tabora, where, during the first quarter of 1936, I had to foot slog every inch of that particular stretch of road four times!

Since my last visit to the town, in 1936, the Railway Hotel had been smartened up to a fair degree of cleanliness, but the food was still mediocre. The following morning I reported to my new master, Dr Fairbairn, and told him the Tinde news, which gave him food-for-thought, as he always showed great interest in the proceedings there. Not knowing when I would arrive he hadn't made any specific plans for me so after our chat told me to go off and do whatever had to be done, which was to give John a lift to the station at 10am, then call at the Railway Parcels Office for my goods and chattels which should have come down on the train that John would be leaving on.

In the afternoon my worldly possessions, except my safari kit, were dumped in the Medical Office store, Fortunately, I hadn't accumulated much in the household line. I then introduced myself to the aged gent who would soon be retiring. Before that day materialised he had to take me around on an introductory visit to the various Settlements under his control. There was, however, one blot on the horizon, the war. All Government Departments were being depleted, particularly the Medical Dept. Dr Fairburn informed me that it was highly probable that I, having volunteered for active service, would, in the very near future, be called to Dar es Salaam, but in the meantime carry on normally. So, with my senior colleague, Mr MacQuarrie, whose retirement now was rather distant, we planned our safari for the morrow to some area about 35 miles North West. Its name long forgotten by me. We traveled in comfort, a change for Mac, along a bush track with his lorry bumping along behind us with all the camp kit. Luckily the 'dry season' was still with us, otherwise? In fact, I had walked along the first 10 miles when engaged on agricultural duties in February 1936, when it was rather damp, with floods in the lower lying areas.

Two days later a Messenger from Tabora arrived on the scene with a letter (in a cleft stick!) for me from the Boss telling me to return immediately, so that was that. The Messenger must have left Tabora soon after us! His return journey was much less tiring.

Back in Tabora I was told I had to report to the Deputy Director of Medical Services in Dar es Salaam as soon as possible. As the next passenger train for that town was not due out until the Friday morning at 11am I had two clear days to repack all my belongings into suitable containers, label everything and put it all into storage in the Departments store. All I would take with me was one suitcase of clothes and my bedding roll. The rifle and ammunition had to go to the Police Armoury for safe custody. My biggest worry was my 'pride and joy', the car. That had to be parked in a large shed with a whole lot of others, in the Public Works Department yard! This did not please me at all! However, I soon made alternative arrangements to have it entrained to Dodoma, collected, and driven to Sao Hill for safe keeping. Although I nearly lost it there. The Authorities, whoever they were, tried to commandeer it for the Army, but Father, being of strong character, soon dealt with that one.

Arriving in D'Salaam the first person I met on the Station was Dr (now Captain) Caldwell, another sleeping sickness boffin whom I had met many times in Tinde. He was here to meet his wife and young son who had travelled down from Tabora on the same train. He turned to a nearby stranger dressed in army uniform, with three stripes on the sleeve, and said, "Here Sergeant, this is the chap you've come to meet". So, after introductions were over, the Sergeant took me along to an hotel, and the least said about that dump, the better: The decent ones were booked up with Army personnel and their wives, (That chap in Germany was really disorganizing our lives). The day was a Saturday so I would have a few more hours of freedom before my escort called again to pick me up on the Monday morning to take me around to the 'Holy of Holies', the 'War Office', to swear my Allegiance to the King and Country! However, that evening (Saturday) I treated myself to shs 2/50 worth of moving pictures at the Empire Cinema,

which was history! My very first viewing of a 'talkie' film, and as an added bonus in 'glorious Technicolor'! I'd been living in the 'wilds' too long! This was my first visit to Dar' since July 1928, but the only difference I noticed; the streets and roads were all tarmac'd.

John (Jack) Richard Allen

Addis Ababa, 1941

THE WAR YEARS

OCTOBER 1939 to DECEMBER 1942.

1939 - Tanganyika

Some senior War Office Guru in the UK had decreed that the three East African Territories, Uganda, Kenya and Tanganyika each had to form three medical units. A Field Ambulance Company, a Motor Ambulance Convoy Company, and Casualty Clearing Station Company, abbreviated to, 1st (Ugandan) FAC, 1st (Kenyan) FAC, and 1st (Tanganyikan) FAC, etc. Hence the sudden depletion of many Medical Officers, Health Inspectors, others, like me, and African Medical Orderlies, employed by the Governments concerned. Some doctors were drafted into the Kings African Rifles Battalions. Consequently the Medical Departments, suffered more shrinkage than other Government Departments.

Anyway, back to my story, On the Monday morning my uniformed friend collected me from the hotel then took me along to the 'War Office' to sign on the dotted line. In I went as Mr Allen, following a charted course which led to a door with a piece of cardboard pinned to it on which was written 'Deputy Director of Medical Services, Please Knock', I did. A voice from the other side bade me to enter. At the far side of the room there sat two figures. One behind the desk, resplendent in uniform with brass buttons and red 'flashes' on the collar, denoting 'Staff Officer', the other gentleman, a second officer, was, so I learned later, the Adjutant.

The Staff Officer just happened to be my civilian boss, Dr Maclean (now Colonel), whom I had met on the day of my arrival at Tinde. two and three quarter years ago. He told me to sit down and then proceeded to ask about the research work at Tinde, etc, etc. During our conversation the Adjutant looked on bewildered wondering what on earth were tryps, trypanosomiasis, Morsitans, spirillum, schistosomiasis and a few other scientific words and terms. After that interlude, down to business. A form of some sort was produced which was duly completed by the Adjutant after many questions, Ending up with "I swear by " !! The Col then said "Sgt Allen, (rapid promotion!) your posting is to the 1st (Tanganyikan) Motor Ambulance Convoy Company, who are, at the moment, on active service repatriating to Nyasaland the wives and families of the 1st Battalion, Kings African Rifles (KAR) askaris from Moshi to Mwaya. (A port on the Tanganyikan side of Lake Nyasa.) so meanwhile, until you meet up with that Coy, you are temporarily posted to the 1st (T) FAC. here in Dar es Salaam.". "Yes sir", I replied, and after a few more words of wisdom from him he wished me luck and, which I considered a most rewarding remark, thanked me for the time I had spent at Tinde, contributing towards the eventual eradication of sleeping sickness.

With that ordeal over I then had to look for my 'fellow' Sgt Bob Stewart, he was one of Dar es Salaam's Health Inspectors before being 'called up', which meant he had the pleasure of living at home!! He took me on a 'Cook' s Tour' around the town before making our way to the Field Ambulance and Casualty Clearing Station Company's location which was about a mile out over the Causeway past the Kings African Rifles cantonments and towards the aerodrome. A flat, sandy area without a shade tree anywhere near.

Some readers may be wondering why East Africa had to form an Army when the theatre of war was 5 to 6000 miles away in Europe? The reason being that Abyssinia and Italian Somaliland both having common Borders with Kenya and Uganda, were 'choc a bloc' full of Italians, mainly Army Brigades. Also, a reasonable Air Force. At that time Hitler and 'il Duce' ,Mussolini, were rather friendly. The British Intelligence Service thought it highly probable that the pair would join forces, and the Italians would launch their attack on the African Continent. But when? Therefore, we had to "Be Prepared", Meanwhile, Italy continued to send army equipment into Eritrea and Somaliland – no doubt all the way around West and South Africa to dock at Mogadisho and Massawa to avoid the Suez Canal!

After that short explanation more about the raw recruit trying to become a soldier!

I soon learned that European Non Commissioned Officers were commonly known as BNCOs - in this case the B meaning 'British' as opposed to the Africans - NCOs without the 'B'. It took me a little time to sort out who was FAC or CCS since there were five doctors of varying rank. Two Majors, two Captains, one Lieutenant and a Service Corps Transport Officer all milling about as well as the Non Commissioned side; comprising of six Health Inspectors, myself and another lad who was non-government. When split up into our respective Companies. the Field Ambulance Company had three doctors and four BNCOs. The Casualty Clearing Station Company, two doctors, four BNCOs, with more staff to be added at a later date, On the African side there were many Medical Orderlies, Male Nurses etc. Whether they were all volunteers or 'semi press-ganged' I know not! I expect the former.

On that first day, after lunch, I collected from the Quarter Master (QM) a couple of order forms, one for the KAR QM, to issue me with a complete set of equipment, a formidable list, and the other for Haji Bros. Tailors to have, made to measure, two khaki, military style Bush Jackets and two pairs of Shorts (no slacks!). If you wanted a third uniform, in case of accidents, you had to buy your own !! Which I did. With a certain amount of reluctance the Transport Officer let me take a staff car to collect all my equipment from the KAR store and visit the Tailors. The latter was the first port of call to have the uniforms made up as early as possible as one felt a bit 'off side 'playing soldiers in civvies!'. Although I wore my safari kit which was almost 'uniform'. Collecting all the other essentials from the QM Stores took ages. Every item meant a foot safari for the storeman who would disappear for an unreasonable length of time only to return with the answer, 'out of stock'? Eventually I finished up with a fair heap, including many non reflective buttons and badges. The most useless thing was the locally made folding campbed, a two-piece contraption which, after a short period of time became lethal. The 'mattress' consisted of 2 runners 6ft 6ins long which were nonfolding, to which was nailed a piece of canvas giving a width of 2' 6" . The legs were 'scissor-like' with an iron rod running through the centres. On the top of the three prs of legs were open ended metal brackets into which the two long runners dropped. After a period of use the brackets became wider allowing the runners to twist round - and with the weight of the body - down you went with a painful thud. So once in bed - lie still. Fortunately the staff car was of the 'Estate' variety so I was able to fit the bed in!! Henceforth, it would have to travel on the back of a lorry or in an ambulance.

For the next ten days or so, stores, medical equipment, drugs and dressings, vehicles, tentage and 101 other things had to be collected, sorted, checked and repacked prior to our impending departure - westwards and northwards.

One of the duties I was landed with was not to my liking!! A new 1939 model Ford V8 saloon in perfect showroom condition was delivered to us and I was detailed off to camouflage it using four different colours of paint!! Absolute sacrilege. Before the paint dried a few handfuls of sand had to be thrown over it to give a more realistic effect!! And as abrasive as coarse sandpaper !!

The so-called ambulances, lorries, with a roof over the back, commandeered by the Army from the local transport firms were in a shocking condition, and extremely poor state of repair. From what I gathered the vendors were very happy with their transactions!! Altogether we had about 25 vehicles including three staff cars.

Our departure date loomed up sometime around the 20th October. The first leg of the Journey being by train to Dodoma. Anything to do with transport always landed in my direction partly because I had lorry-driving experience, consequently, it fell to my lot to load all the vehicles on the 'open flats' (railway trucks). That little exercise took a long time since the gap between each truck had to be bridged with two hefty planks manhandled by railway employees and then they had the task of lashing down each vehicle with ropes. As luck would have it our Sgt, Bob Stewart, had his car handy, a great asset when the Companies transport is parked on railway wagons. The nearby Railway Hotel was another asset, so far as I was concerned, cold beer and a good snack. Where the next meal was coming from was anyone's guess???

One item I have failed to mention yet is that my houseboy/servant, Ali, accompanied me to Dar'Salaam and when given the option of returning home to Iringa or enlisting as my 'batman' he chose the latter, for which I was truly thankful. Looking for a new servant is always a dicey business without knowing their capabilities. With Ali I knew I could leave him to look after the 'domestic' side of camp life, either static or on the move, and this first move from Dar' relieved me of worrying about packing, etc.

By the time all the rank and file of both Units were assembled on the 'station platform' our 'special' was shunted in complete with a 3rd Class coach for the African personnel and a 1st Class

coach for the Officers and BNCOs. No facilities for making a cup of tea or preparing a meal - only filtered(?) water. Those chaps with a wife in DSM were lucky, they had flasks of tea and packets of sandwiches whilst the bachelors and 'grass widowers' would have what the QM doled out. A tin of corned beef, bread and butter which would have to suffice. We, the BNCOs, all had at least two bottles of beer each to slake the thirst later in the afternoon. Time of departure was 2.30pm, which soon came round, leaving a few unhappy ladies on the platform.

All of us, having been up since the crack of dawn, were soon on our bunks enjoying 'Egyptian' PT for an hour or so. Word filtered through from the 'upper hierarchy' saying the train would pull into a siding at Morogoro for an hour to swop engines and also to give those who required an evening meal a chance to do so at the nearby Hotel. Those with sandwiches elected to remain on board - to keep an eye on our kit!

After chugging away through the night we reached Dodoma at about 8.00am, so whilst the railway staff were shunting things around we beat a hasty retreat to the adjacent hotel - so well known by me, for breakfast. By the time that meal was over the railway flat bed wagons had been backed up to the unloading ramp. Unloading the vehicles would be a long and tedious job. All of them had to be reversed over the 'bridge' between each wagon!! To hasten the offloading I picked out three of our better African drivers to assist. All went well until the tenth vehicle when disaster struck; the driver switched on the ignition, or tried to, but instead the key snapped in half leaving the lower half in the switch which also locked the steering. All our efforts to remove it failed so one of our officers, standing nearby, was detailed off to go along to the local Garage for help. The Proprietor, Geo Kypris, soon appeared complete with his oxy-acetylene apparatus and proceeded to cut out the offending switch/steering lock assembly with the oxy-acetylene burner. He soon had it out and then had the job of rewiring lots of charred ends of wire and fitting a push/pull type switch. He had obviously done this sort of thing before!! As for the steering lock, good riddance to it. After that hiccup the off-loading carried on without further mishap.

Our destination that day was a quarter of a mile out along the Iringa road to a large cleared area which had the beginnings of a fairly extensive Convoy Transit Camp, but on this occasion we were much too early to enjoy the comfort of a wooden hut, instead, we pitched tents. The Transport Officer had enough work on hand to keep himself and the drivers fully occupied until nightfall, myself included. All the vehicles had to be checked over, loaded with sufficient petrol for a 300 mile trip, a difficult figure to assess not knowing the mpg of each truck, an allowance of 30 galls per vehicle was deemed to be enough. Oil and water ?????? Departure time 8.30 am the following morning for a place on the map called Bereko! 135 miles away to the north. During our short stay in Dodoma we had our meals in the hotel, at our own expense!!

I had already been briefed that I would be 'tail-end Charlie' to cope with the breakdowns en route! So, to be on the safe side, I picked out for my own personal transport the best vehicle I could find, an almost new, long wheel base, 3 ton, Bedford lorry, the ideal machine for towing any non starters due to battery troubles.

Up bright and early in the morning, although I didn't feel so bright with a shocking chest and head cold. In fact, I felt 'lousy'. The convoy left more or less on time with the two staff cars full of doctors leading the way. Where the Transport Officer got to I didn't know as he should have been behind me, but wasn't!

Driving north from Dodoma was all new country for me. After the first 10 miles out the cultivated areas ceased and the road then passed through broken country, well wooded with 'Miombo' trees (Latin name is *Brachystegia*, but which one of the 30 different species ?????). After passing through that five mile belt of forest the landscape changed completely to dry scrub and thorn bush, uninhabited, to the passing motorist. (But 7 years later I was to discover otherwise?). At about 80 miles from Dodoma the large native settlement named Kelema was reached. Here, four or five native dukas (shops) sold a miscellaneous assortment of goods, mainly cloth and local foodstuffs, My only purchase was a hand of bananas to munch on the way. Judging by a few remarks, I gathered some of our vehicles had also stopped there, so the convoy was not wholly 'in convoy'! So far, on the journey, only two stops had been made to sort out minor mechanical troubles on a couple of vehicles. From Kelema, for the next 30 miles, onwards, the area was thickly populated by the Irangi tribe. The land is fairly hilly and scarred with soil erosion gullies, some measuring hundreds of feet wide. Many 'sand rivers' crossed the road which could be a great hazard to motorists when the normally dry

riverbeds are in full spate after a storm. At Kelema there is a very wide one, a quarter of a mile, which I know has claimed many vehicles driven by impatient motorists.

At exactly 100 miles from Dodoma I stopped, in the shade of a large baobab tree, to eat a few biscuits washed down with a bottle of warm 'pop'. Here, a road branched off, almost due west, down a slope for two miles into the small township of Kondoa Irangi. The District HQ for the Kondoa District. On the opposite side of the road there was a small lake with a fair population of wildfowl. By now the time had crept round to about 15.30 hours, so off we went continuing our journey. The countryside for the next 18 miles along the road was rather barren, over-populated, over-grazed, hilly, eroded and the only trees were baobabs. After passing through the Minor Settlement of Kolo, the road began to ascend into the hills known as Pienaar's Heights, so-named after a South African General who, during the 1914/18 war routed the enemy forcing them to retreat to Kondoa and beyond. However, history apart: Half way up the short escarpment was one stationary 'ambulance' or, in reality, a 2 ton Ford V8 lorry converted for passenger carrying, but on this occasion it had a load of medical equipment on board weighing less than a ton. I wondered how the contents in the boxes would survive after being bounced over miles of a 'corrugated' road surface? After struggling with various engine components for over an hour the thing eventually started but firing on only 7 cylinders. As for the 8th, to hell with it. (my feverish cold taking over!). Off on the road again ascending to an altitude of 6,000 ft. above sea level and with darkness approaching rather quickly. There was a definite chill in the air and, to my sorrow, my British 'warm' army greatcoat was, by now, in Bereko! There were more stops en route, but we eventually made it to the camp by 9.30 pm. The Mess cook had put aside a plateful of dinner for me, no doubt on Ali's instructions. Some kind soul gave me a stiff whisky. The tent was up and my campbed all ready to flop into. The CO came over to ask where I'd been, so told him! Whereupon, he withdrew. By the time I had swallowed my drink, eaten my dinner, performed my ablutions, my colleagues had retired to their respective nests so I did likewise, under three blankets in this cold spot. We were at an altitude of about 6,500 ft, asl.

Morning came round much too early but the cup of tea brought in by Ali at 6.15 am was most welcome. A busy morning began with breakfast at 7.30 am and a departure for Arusha at 8.30 am, about 130 miles away. My departure time, anybody's guess! I scrounged as many spanners, screwdrivers etc. I could lay my hands on to deal with that wretched Ford lorry. One point I insisted on, the Bedford lorry, with its driver, would follow me, since I would be driving the 'wreck.', with the inexperienced driver sitting alongside. After cleaning all the fuel pipes, carburettor, the ignition system, petrol pump and anything else I could find, within reason, the engine actually fired on the fourth attempt. Like me, it coughed a lot and then picked up, sometimes on 7 cylinders, sometimes 8!

It was just after 11.00 am when I set forth. After nine miles, or so, the road descended to a much lower altitude and the area was flat apart from a few distant hills. The next minor settlement of note, was a place called Babati, with an extensive African population and about six Asian owned dukas - so I stopped close by to a large 'tin' (corrugated iron) duka and was welcomed in by its Asian owner. I was amazed at the variety of tinned provisions he stocked, also beer and soft drinks galore! So I treated myself to a Coca Cola straight from the fridge and a packet of savory biscuits. I also gave the two drivers shgs.2.00 each to buy themselves a meal as the chances of reaching Arusha in time for their evening meal with the mob was rather remote.

Arusha was still 110 miles away so as soon as possible after that short break, we were off, into a very warm afternoon. The Indian duka-wallah told me the main convoy had gone through about 10 am so, with luck, it should be 'home and dry' by 16.00 hours.

We made good progress for the next 50 miles through an area known as the Mbugwe 'flats' but when the undulating country was reached, more trouble. Being a hot afternoon the engine had been running at a higher temperature than usual but now, crawling up slight inclines in second gear the water boiled which made me suspect either the cylinder head was cracked or a 'blown' cylinder head gasket. Either way, I could do nothing about that, full stop! At the top of the slopes a halt was necessary to allow the engine cool down sufficiently before replenishing the water, which all took time. Bouncing along a flat stretch of road, in the dark, with the wooden bodywork and medical boxes creating a dreadful din there was almost an 'Incident on the Highway'? Unbeknown to me a car following in my wake of dust had been trying to pass but with all the noise I hadn't heard his dual car horns blaring forth. The first indication I got was from a bush on the roadside reflecting a strong light beam so I immediately pulled over to let the car pass. A few yards further along the road the car pulled up and out stepped a European male who beckoned me to stop. He strode over and, when he

was a couple of feet away I wound down the window to be greeted with, in an Australian accent, a mouthful of abuse ending with " – you bastard"? Just what I needed! Momentarily, I was taken aback and just when I was about to give him a well directed punch in the face he stepped back realising that he wasn't speaking to an African lorry driver. I saw him later that evening in the hotel but he did not recognise me. Apparently, he was a high ranking official in the Govt. the Director of Lands and Mines! A pity he stepped away at the wrong moment before I could teach him a lesson in manners. However, the CO dealt with him on my behalf,

Arusha was like a tonic. Warm days, cool nights and living in an hotel, the New Arusha Hotel, where the meals were excellent and ridiculously cheap at shs. 3. 00 per day for breakfast. lunch, tea and dinner! The proprietor's good deed towards the 'War Effort'. He also made available for our use (the 7 BNCOs), a large empty room which accommodated all our campbeds and kit. The Army paid for that. Bar sales shot up, no doubt off-setting the cheap meals? At this point another Sgt joined us from the Service Corps, a mechanic, who could carry on where I left off. The 'heap' I drove for 150 miles did, in fact, have a cracked cylinder-head. And the mystery of the missing Transport Officer; he was abandoned in Dodoma suffering from an attack of malaria!

I must digress for a while. Practically all the German nationals in the Territory were collected from here, there and everywhere as soon as war was declared. The number probably totaling 3,000 plus but where they were all interned prior to their evacuation to South Africa I cannot recollect. Their homes, estates, businesses etc, had to be abandoned and were left in the care of a newly formed Department, The Custodian of Enemy Property, thus creating plenty of employment for the older generation. Chaos reigned for a while but gradually sanity was restored. One shining example was in Arusha. The Ford Motor Co's agent was a German firm stocking a vast amount of spare parts dating from the present day back to 1930. With their German masters gone the Asian clerks were a little out of their depth when it came to searching for individual vehicle parts, consequently, one invariably had to go behind the counter, into the parts department, to find the necessary spare part(s) required.

I haven't mentioned my brother for some considerable time! A month or two before hostilities commenced he went on six months leave to the UK and was therefore 'trapped', not knowing when he would be returning due to the unpredictable state of the shipping movements.

Back to Arusha. The township is situated on the lower slopes of an extinct volcano, Mt. Meru, which is 14,000 plus feet above sea level at the peak. In the European sector are well kept gardens with a profusion of flowers, and a whole variety of vegetables in the kitchen gardens . Plenty of beer in the two hotels. There was also a Chemists shop, most unusual in 'up-country' towns.

Two days after our (1st (T) Field Ambulance Coy) arrival the unit to which I was originally posted, the 1st (T) Motor Ambulance Company., turned up, so, in due course, I reported to its CO Major (Dr) Johnnie Walker, of whom you will hear more as the story unfolds. I had met him before in the early '30s in Iringa.

The Company comprised of :- The CO, Transport Officer, Company Sgt Major (CSM), Company Quartermaster Sgt (CQMS), 2 Medical Sgts (the other being John Reiss) and 3 transport Sgts, one of whom was a mechanic. We were still short of a 2nd. In Command (2ic), 1 Medical Sgt. and a Transport Sgt. On the African side there were, approximately, 130 Drivers, 10 Medical Orderlies and a few 'hangers on', cooks, 'bottlewashers', servants and the C.O's 'flipping' dog.

Our full complement of vehicles should have totaled about 82, but at this stage the 40/50 we had would suffice for the time being,

All good things come to an end and after a fortnight Orders came through instructing us, the MAC to move to Moshi, 50 miles to the north, situated at the base of Mt. Kilimanjaro. The only reason I could think of for such a move was a training exercise for the drivers, some of whom needed further tuition in driving techniques. That kept some of us busy for a week, dicing with death, daily.

Sometime during the first few days into November we were off on the move again, this time to 'somewhere in Kenya'? With everything more or less organised we were off early one morning bound for Namanga, a few miles into Kenya across the inter-territorial boundary. Our route was through Arusha and then North along the Great North Road towards Nairobi with our estimated time of arrival at Namanga being 4.00 pm(ish), There, the Officers occupied the small empty hotel building. The BNCOs and Other Ranks had to fend for themselves! Three of us did, on the front drive, under the stars! Very pleasant too, waking up to see Kilimanjaro silhouetted against the early sunrise.

On checking the vehicles in the previous evening one of the African NCO's came along to report that a driver, with vehicle, a Ford V8 Estate, was missing? Our mechanic was the last man in

and he hadn't seen him anywhere en route! The Officer i/c Transport was informed but he merely said, " He'll turn up" ? But he hadn't by the time we all left for Nairobi so was therefore AWOL (Absent Without Leave). An offence. As usual, I was detailed to tag along at the end of the convoy just in case of accidents en route. Behind me were the two Workshop repair vehicles with our Service Corps mechanic and assistants, so any breakdowns that I encountered would have to await their arrival. That morning there were one or two of our vehicles on the roadside awaiting attention but I pressed on with the intention of waiting for them at the small trading centre of Kajiado, approximately 60 miles South of Nairobi. However, before reaching Kajiado my well worn vehicle died climbing a steep-ish hill, and by good fortune in the shade of a large tree. The toolbox lacked tools, perhaps as well, since I did not feel like repairing a Ford V8 engine. They are a menace to work on. Instead, I sat in the shade munching a few biscuits and drinking 'pop', and managed a short snooze before the first breakdown I had passed came along. There were still two more to come through before my turn. One more came along and disappeared over the brow of the hill. After waiting another hour, by which time evening was drawing in, who should turn up but the missing driver and car? He reeked of pombe (African beer). Apparently, when passing through Arusha he turned into a side street and then went on a glorious day's binge. At this late stage in the day he was still 'glassy eyed' and how he managed to travel this distance without a serious accident is a miracle, So before anything serious happened I decided to take over the car, leaving my driver with the lorry for the repair gang to deal with whenever that would be ? I also handed to him some bananas I found in the car! Once on our way my 'new' companion was soon fast asleep, and remained so until we reached the outskirts of Nairobi at about 8 pm.

I hadn't a clue where the unit was parked for the night, other than in a Transit Camp somewhere! The tarmac road was followed until it branched off in three different directions and not a signpost in sight, so I took the one which appeared to be heading for the bright lights and by good fortune it was the correct one. A little further along, parked by the roadside, was one of our 'ambulances' with an NCO to give the latecomers the necessary directions to find the Camp. On arrival at the entrance a figure loomed out of the darkness and thrust a rifle, with bayonet fixed, almost into my face shouting "Halt, who going here." My impolite reply satisfied the African Duty Guard that I was 'a'flend'! By the time I had discharged my duties and found 'my patch' for the night the hour had crept round to 9.15 pm and, sensibly, all my colleagues had gone into the town to slake their thirsts and have a decent meal. Here, there were no visible facilities whatsoever for eating, making a cup of tea, water only. so, not knowing Nairobi, I had to be content with my 'emergency rations', corned beef and biscuits washed down with water, and so to bed; only to be awakened a little later by an influx of well wined humanity. Mostly lads from other Units.

The following morning our mob of BNCOs piled into a respectable vehicle and went off for breakfast, a very good one too, at an excellent private hotel. We also lunched there and ate an early breakfast the next day, all at the army's expense. After completing our menial tasks during the morning the rest of the day was ours so, after an excellent lunch retired to our respective cots until the urge for a cup of tea befell us. A shower (cold only), and brush up, then off to see what Nairobi had to offer.

My AWOL friend was placed under 'open arrest' by the Sgt Major who would deal with him at a later date.

After our brief, two night, stop-over in Nairobi we were on our way again; this time to Nanyuki, situated on the lower slopes of Mt Kenya and astride the Equator. I cannot remember the actual distance between the two places but somewhere in the region of 140 miles. Practically the whole way the road passed through well populated areas, Thika, Fort Hall, Sagana, Nyeri, Naro Moru and on to Nanyuki. All in the tribal lands of the Wa-Kikuyu.

Although late leaving Nairobi the convoy made good progress until Naro Moru was reached. From there to Nanyuki a heavy rain storm had turned the road into a skating rink. By this time the tail-enders, like me, were driving through the darkness and doing their best to stay on the crown of the road. Behind me were the two 'Workshop' vans. The driver of the vehicle in front was having a hard time trying not to slide into the side of the road but, eventually, he did. Carrying on, with the engine revving rather fast it overheated and then caught fire. By that time I was also in the ditch so that was my driving over for the day! The mechanic had a look at the burned out wiring and said, "Tomorrow". Fortunately, both his vans were still on the road so, abandoning the two in the ditch, we all went in

search of the Unit, food and bed. Also to inform the early arrivals to organise guards for the two trucks left behind in the mud.

The altitude at Nanyuki is quite high - 6,000 plus. feet asl and with a wind blowing from the direction of the mountain can be darned cold, and it certainly was that night. To such an extent that the rank and file had to be issued with an extra blanket. A second night was spent there after our Service Corps chaps had checked their vehicles in preparation for the short journey to our destination, Isiolo, in the Northern Frontier District, commonly known as the NFD, only 60 miles from Nanyuki but at a much lower altitude and, as we were soon to learn, as hot as Hades. From Nanyuki the road climbed up to 7, 000 ft asl through the European owned farms at Timau and then dropped down a short, sharp escarpment to the 3,000 ft level.

Isiolo

Isiolo is a Trading Centre with a long row of dukas, Indian and Somali owned and also has a District Office complete with a District Commissioner and Assistant, a small prison, a few Police and that is about the lot. The convoy carried on through the 'town' then turned left along the Archer's Post - Marsabit Road for 2 miles then left again into what was the Abyssinian Refugee Camp during the Italian/Abyssinian war in 1935-37. It covered acres. Mud huts galore in all shapes and sizes, row upon row of the wretched things. The 1st, (T) MAC block (us) was adjacent to a large Parade Ground where our transport had to be parked, in two neat lines, after we had sorted out everything, ourselves included,

Organised chaos reigned that day and spread over into the second. The BNCOs were allocated a large hut, well inhabited with jigger fleas and dirty great rats, for sleeping, eating and relaxing in! Three of the EAASC (East African Army Service Corps) lads (the QM was knocking-on towards 60 yrs of age ?) managed to acquire tents. The QM had one for himself and the two Seychellois, Maurice Tyrant and Frank Finnis, shared one.

To reiterate our 'Establishment' now the Unit was, more or less, on active service : -

E. A. A. Medical Corps	The CO	'Mad' Johnnie Walker
	Sgts	Reiss and Allen.
E. A. A. Service Corps	Transport Officer	Lt. Hughes.
	CSM	Dick Adams.
	QM	Reg Goodson
	Sgts	Tyrant and Finnis
	Mechanic	Arthur Palfrey
African ranks (approx)	EAASC	100
	EAAMC	15

Spread around the 'Camp' area were other Units. A company of the 1st Battalion, King's African Rifles, the Pioneer, Signals and Service Corps, and a couple of miles away, on the airfield, a Wing of the Rhodesian Air Force with three ageing aircraft, a Hawker Fury and two Hawker Harts.

The sick were catered for by the KAR Medical Officer, another flamboyant character from the Tanganyika Medical Service whom I knew. We dealt with our own 'sick parade'. We soon got into a routine knowing that the Unit would be operating from there for at least 3 months (what a thought!), From Isiolo a road trailed northwards for 300+ miles through Wajir and up to the Abyssinia/Kenya Border at Moyale. There are two Moyales, one Italian the other British and in very close proximity with one another. It was a known fact that the Italians had a fair sized garrison there and further back there were back-up units, including a large airfield, well stocked with aircraft of the Italian Air Force. But, since Italy was still a neutral country all that East African Command could do was watch and wait. In comparison, our Army was very 'thin on the ground' in all sectors of the NFD. A few companies of the 1st and 5th Battalions, KAR, were deployed, but I wont go into all that right now.

European civilians had to be in possession of a Pass if they wished to drive through from Isiolo to Moyale or vice versa or, for that matter, anywhere else in the Northern Frontier District, and for reasons of security such a document was most difficult to obtain.

Our ambulances were soon on their way, in pairs, daily to Wajir to evacuate the ailing from the 1st (T) FAC to the 1st (T) CCS in Nanyuki. Between Isiolo and Wajir the road was dreadful. For miles it was merely a well worn track with very sharp volcanic rocks poking through the surface which played havoc with the tyres necessitating a complete set all round every five or six return .journeys! The countryside was covered by dry scrub and thorny bushes, the ground as hard as concrete. Any greenery growing would be browsed upon by elephants and there were plenty of those in some areas. Water, however, was scarce.

There was nothing in the entertainment line during the evenings except to sit around a radio with a glass of beer in one hand and a cigarette in the other. The lighting was rather primitive, Hurricane lamps which gave a dim light and almost useless to read by. One form of 'entertainment' occurred every Sunday evening at 6.00 pm when a Company of the KAR, with band, would march on to the parade ground to Beat Retreat under the direction of the Duty Officer for the week, usually a recruit 2nd or 1st Lieut who, invariably, made a hash of his Drill Orders whilst the CSM turned purple

muttering through his teeth as loud as he dare "Bring them to attention before marching off Mr. "?!~;"'. One could not help but feel sorry for the young inexperienced chaps.

Another of our Sunday activities would be to borrow an estate car type ambulance, with the CO's permission of course, and drive up to a small town, Meru, at 6000ft asl, on one of the lower slopes of Mt Kenya, to the "Pig and Whistle" hotel where the most excellent Curry Lunch was served. For those so inclined, and with the gear, would go off trout fishing in the cool afternoon air. The less active members of the party, like me, would settle down in a comfortable lounge chair to catch up on the newspapers and magazines. In due course a pot of tea and plateful of cakes would be brought in and suitably dealt with. By the time the keen anglers returned there was just enough time for a 'quickie' in the Bar before returning to 'Home Sweet Home'. Such excursions for a decent meal occurred only once in each three week period. The wives of two of the 'Tanganyika' doctors based in Nanyuki were, more or less, permanent boarders at the 'Pig and Whistle' and would be joined by their husbands at the weekends so, during our periodic visits there, we would catch up on the gossip!

With Christmas looming up John Reiss and I applied for a week's leave and, much to our surprise, Johnnie Walker, the CO, granted it. Most unusual to allow two Medic Sgts away at the same time so we obviously caught him on one of his better days!

It was our intention to spend four days over Xmas in Nairobi but after the second night there and, checking on the cash-flow, we decided it was no place for us. John had a few more 20/- shgs notes in his pocket than me and seemed set on the idea of buying a cheap car. He did. An old 1932 Ford V8 'box body' from an Indian garage in Victoria St. Its cost, East African pounds £20.00!

We set off for Nyeri at about 9.30 am with the intention of spending the night there at the White Rhino Hotel, and on to Nanyuki the following day. However, fate took a hand in our plans. Just past Thika we stopped by the Chania River bridge, overlooking the Falls, to replenish the water in a very warm, or in other words, damned hot, engine and radiator. Starting up once again John revved the engine just a little too fast when suddenly there was an almighty bang in the engine followed by a clonking noise until the engine stopped. On examination a mixture of oil and water was pouring out of the sump ? Not bothering to look any further John set off into Thika in the hope of finding a lorry driver going to Nairobi who could give us a tow back to the garage! Luck was with us. Within a couple of very dusty hours we were back at the garage. John conferred with the owner telling him the car had stopped and wouldn't start again ? True, but he failed to explain why! Whereupon the co-operative garage owner offered to swop it for a large, and ancient, Open Tourer Buick for an extra £5.00! Deal confirmed followed by a quick departure! With fingers crossed we reached Nyeri without incident.

At the 'White Rhino' John made enquiries regarding the whereabouts of a newly acquired sister-in-law who farmed somewhere in the area, whom he had not met. With the necessary directions to hand and still a couple of hours of daylight left John was in favour of calling on the lady hoping she would invite us to stay the night. The brother/husband was away in the NFD. with his Army Unit. Once again on our way to Naro Moru. Leaving the main road we turned off up a track road towards Mt Kenya climbing steadily up to the forest line on the lower slopes of the mountain at an altitude of 6/7000 ft. After quite a few miles we reached the farm tucked away in the trees and soon pulled up in front of a large rambling house. John went up to the front door to introduce himself to the new sister-in-law where they chatted for a minute or two then beckoned me to join them. In that short space of time the dear lady, who looked a little older than John had imagined, invited us to spend not only the night there but also to stay over Xmas. Once inside it was obvious she was of the 'upper crust' fraternity, and lived accordingly!

'Wallowing' in comfort is very nice but after sleeping on a hard camped for a few months I found the bed too comfortable, consequently, on that first night sleep almost evaded me. My bedroom, like all the other rooms in the house, was rather 'plush'! Fortunately, against the Rules and Regulations, both John and I had packed some 'civvy' clothes so after a good soaking in a large bath, a dry-off, and into civvies with a feeling of being civilised once again, more so when seated in a comfortable easy chair, with a fine selection of drinks to choose from. There were cigars too but I preferred my own brand of cigarette.

Next day, Xmas Eve, we went on a tour of 'inspection' around the farm, quite a chilly walk too. Also, walking through part of the forest I had my first ever sighting of a troop of Collobus monkeys wending their way through the tree tops. An attractive primate with black hair and long flowing white hairs growing from around the shoulders. As the day wore on John suggested we should all go into

Nyeri for drinks and dinner at the 'White Rhino' that evening, putting our trust in the old Buick to get us there and back. Soon after 6 pm. we set off down the bumpy 4 miles to the main road and into Nyeri without any mechanical troubles. The Bar was well patronised and remained so until the early hours of Christmas Day. At some late hour we sat down for dinner which helped to act as 'blotting paper' before returning to the fray. By midnight plus one we decided the time had come to make our farewells and face a cold journey back to our 'lodgings'. At that altitude, in an open tourer without side screens, at that time of the night, I can assure you all that it is very very cold in spite of being only 25 miles south of the Equator, but it did help us to sober up! Surfacing later that morning was an effort but our kind hostess (cannot remember her christian name!) had had the forethought to prepare the traditional Xmas Dinner for that evening. A 'hair of the dog' was beneficial at lunch time, followed by an afternoon snooze which restored us to normal.

After lunch on Boxing Day John and I had to depart towards Isiolo via the 'Pig and Whistle' but, alas, we didn't quite make it? One of the rear tyres was punctured, with no jack, a long bent screwdriver and a split-rim tool with handle (an old fashioned device for removing the rim from the tyre?) we searched around for lumps of granite to prop up the axle. When that little job was finished a hole had to be dug in the road deep enough to allow the tyre and rim to drop into after being unbolted off the wheel (The split-rim method went out circa 1930). That took a long time with the tools available! No foot or hand air pump, so it was necessary to stuff and ram as much dry grass as possible into the tyre, then replace the rim on the tyre and the rim on to the wheel? Fill up the large hole in the road and off - with the most queer looking tyre ever seen on a car! The nearest garage was in Nanyuki and it was debatable whether the grass filling would last the ,journey. Luckily, it did. We came across one of our ambulances in the town so back to the camp that evening, a day earlier than anticipated! The car was abandoned at the garage, to be collected at a later date, March 1940, when John traded it in for a 1930 Ford 4 cylinder Pick-up. A model almost impossible to 'kill'

1940

Instead of this chapter beginning on New Year's Day, 1940, it will have to be New Year's Eve 1939!

The reason? I have no idea what caused the rumpus but a company of the Pioneer Corps, at about 6pm, were on the point of causing a fracas. Whether amongst themselves or against their superiors I don't not know, but a Platoon of KAR askaris were detailed to go along to the Pioneers Lines to keep order armed with hefty sticks or pickaxe handles. Something happened which sparked off the situation resulting in a conflict between both sides. The askaris, without further hesitation, went into the mob wielding their sticks with great accuracy and within a minute order was restored but in that short space in time about sixty Pioneers were in a sorry state! Two of our ambulances went to bring the casualties along to the Camp Medical Centre, close to our quarters, for the necessary attention. The Camp's Medical Officer, that 'colourful' character from the Tanganyika Medical Service, whom I shall call Stanley, should have been back from leave by 6pm, but wasn't! In his absence our CO was deputising for him, and due to go off on leave, and to a 'Hogmanay party' in Nanyuki at midnight.

To say our Johnnie was peeved is putting it mildly; By the time the Medical Orderlies had cleaned all the wounds on the injured and the three of us, Johnnie Walker (J. W.), John and I started stitching all the cut heads, arms, shoulders, etc. the time had crept round to 8.15pm, or thereabouts. We were still busily stitching at 11.00pm. when Stanley arrived on the scene all aglow, with slurring speech and smiling like the proverbial Cheshire Cat. A few uncomplimentary words to him and J W was off as fast as his thin legs would carry him. To watch a doctor stitching away in an alcoholic haze was an eye-opener! Not a stitch dropped anywhere! We finished soon after midnight and went to our beds without having touched a drop of New Year's 'spirit', How the news of the fracas got around so quickly was a mystery. Two evenings later sitting around the radio listening to the 'English' news being broadcast from Berlin we were surprised to hear that "A company of the East African troops, the King's African Rifles, had mutinied in Isiolo, Kenya"! Not quite correct but, nevertheless, the news reached Germany somehow?

Our 'fresh' rations, meat, vegetables and fruit, brought down daily from Nanyuki were deplorable considering the Kenyan Highlands produced such excellent food crops. The QM complained but it made no difference, the 'take it or leave it' attitude prevailed in the EAASC. It was surprising how easy promotion from the NCO ranks to the Commissioned ranks came about in that Corps. Sergeant one day, 2nd Lieut the next day and within 6 months up to a Captaincy, sometimes Major. We always said their 'pips' came with the rations.

Our Transport Officer went off on leave as soon as J.W. returned from his ten days away and in no time at all 'Johnnie' had me in the Orderly Room doing the T0' s job.

One day an Australian Cattle Buyer, who lived about 4 miles away and employed by the Veterinary Dept called in to tell us there was a large herd of elephant near his house and, if interested, to go along to have a look at them. So three of us took a vehicle out 'to test' in order to see the beasts. Leaving the car at the Aussie's house we followed a footpath for about half a mile and there on the other side of a deep chasm, about 6ft wide, too wide for any self-respecting elephant to jump across were, at least, a hundred of them. They were everywhere: some only 15yds from us pulling down the tree branches and feeding on the greenery. A few young bulls were having a playful time pushing one another through thorn thickets. Feeling perfectly safe we continued along the path for a few yards chatting as we walked. The path skirted round a very large outcrop of granite and there on the other side I was confronted by a large bull elephant's backside 4 yds ahead! Never before have three 'squaddies' 'about turned' so quickly to make a hasty retreat. My only regret, I forgot to take my camera; which, under one of the Army Regulations, should have been handed in for 'safe custody' until the cessation of hostilities. (Ha ha).

One evening a colleague and I went out to see what we could find to shoot for the "pot", either guinea fowl or spur-fowl (similar to a pheasant but without long tail feathers). Arthur had a shotgun and I took along my .303 Service rifle, just in case of trouble. Wandering around looking for birds we came across a herd of Grevy's zebra and stood admiring them for a moment or two from a distance of about 150 yds. When, all of a sudden, a bullet ricocheted off the ground by our feet followed by the report of a rifle? After a few seconds the same thing happened again so down we dropped

awaiting the third shot which, fortunately for us, never came! We looked in the direction from whence the two reports came but saw no movement of any description so decided to depart without undue delay. The mystery was never solved so we were never to know whether some unkind person(s) was shooting at us or the zebra? Not a pleasant experience!

Towards the end of February word filtered through to the effect that in the near future the Unit would be moving back to Nanyuki for a few weeks to re-equip the transport section with new vehicles. The lorries commandeered off the streets of Dar es Salaam were dropping to pieces due to the rough state of the NFD roads. It was also necessary to stock up with a quantity of tents, as the two we had would hardly suffice for our requirements in the event of having to live under 'canvas'!

During the same period the rats in our mud hut were on the increase and becoming a menace so down went the poison, which seemed to appeal to them. A few days later the stench of dead rats was so overpowering that we had the beds put outside and we slept under the stars. This was quite pleasant! We were still sleeping out of doors the night before our departure for Nanyuki, scheduled for 7.30 in the morning. Whilst the five of us were snoring away some thieving "so an' so" walked past and into the hut to help himself to whatever was handy, my suitcase! And with it my 'civvy' clothes (not many), a very good camera (maybe I should have handed it in for safe keeping), 160/- , plus a few other irreplaceable bits and pieces. Most annoying to say the least, and unable to follow it up due to our early departure.

The 'convoy' was off by 8.15am. On this occasion we hadn't bothered about breakfast, thinking we would be in Nanyuki by 12.30pm and have something to eat then, but how wrong we were. About 15 miles short of our destination the convoy stopped and there it waited, and waited. 1 hour, 2 hours, 3 hours and, as usual, being at the tail-end with the Sgt mechanic, we had no idea what the delay was in aid of. By this time the pangs of hunger were becoming evident. Eventually by 3.30 pm there was movement so off towards a cup of tea and, hopefully, something to chew on. The delay was due to our lack of tentage (and bad organisation by 'guess who', the CO). Apparently, a flat-ish plot of ground was allocated for our Unit about two miles out of the town by the side of a road leading to the cantonment area. Not having any tents to erect on the site the CO and QM had gone along to the Ordnance Depot for the necessary equipment. A tall order at short notice. Hence the long delay en-route. The QM managed to extract from the Ordnance folk some excellent tents. Six large EF/IP marquee type tents - each with ample space for moving around in, in spite of eight camp beds around the walls. The BNCOs were issued two, one for sleeping in and the other to be used as the mess tent.

By the time we had sorted ourselves out darkness was upon us and we still had had nothing to eat, so off to the CO for permission to go along to the Silverbeck Hotel for a meal. He reluctantly agreed but stipulated that three BNCOs must be in the camp at all times as per Orders going back to November. So between ourselves we decided who would go first. One mistake I made, rather foolishly, was to drink a second bottle of beer before the evening meal, consequently, by the time the 'first sitting' was back in camp my legs were a wee bit watery! Fortunately, Ali had prepared my cot, a very useful piece of equipment when in my state.

Nanyuki

Nanyuki was a pleasant change after the heat of Isiolo. The social life was a great improvement too, when we were allowed out, during our recreational hours, Our 'Johnnie', the CO, was a very strict disciplinarian, who never smiled, but brought us all up to a high standard of efficiency in comparison with other non-combatant Units. In spite of his drawbacks, liking the ladies being one of his worst (or maybe best), I cannot recollect a single instance during the two years he was our CO of any one of his underlings letting him down.

Once settled into our new surroundings the routine took over. Twice a week two 'ambulance' loads of African casualties would be taken to Nairobi for hospitalization, which meant John Reiss and myself would alternate with each other to civilisation, which cost us a few shillings for a night's lodging! Accommodation and food was available free of charge at the Medical Corps Transit Camp but we preferred the comfort of the New Stanley Hotel, or Queens. On one occasion I left my cash behind in Camp, a predicament I did not discover until well on the way to Nairobi. All my pocket could produce was a couple of shillings. Luckily, my colleague John had not passed me, traveling in the opposite direction, so there was a chance of borrowing shgs.40/- from him. We eventually met and he kindly lent me his one and only shgs.20/- note; for which I was truly thankful. Now he was 'skint', apart from a little loose change. After dumping the two loads of humanity at the Military Hospital I made my way to the New Stanley, parked both vehicles in a side street behind the hotel with instructions to the drivers to await my return, After explaining my financial situation to the attractive young lady receptionist she said, " You can have a room up on the top floor but it's very sparsely furnished, a campbed, chair, and old fashioned washstand, the bathroom is on the lower floor, and that lot will cost you shgs 8/50 for the night". So, giving her a nice smile and many thanks I paid up and moved in. Thankfully there was sufficient cash left for a beer, evening meal, a seat in the cinema and breakfast!

One important factor I have yet to mention. On our return trips to Nanyuki we had to call in at the Vehicle Repair Depot to hand-in our old junk and collect new Chevrolet ambulances, imported chassis with locally made wooden bodies to seat 16, or 4 stretcher cases, and guaranteed to loose their shape if overturned. A few did later on! The suspension had not been modified, consequently it was a rough ride on a bumpy road. We always said "heaven help us" if any of us became a casualty and had to travel in the back. All told, I suppose we collected about 40 ambulances including two International lightweight chassis vehicles with safari-type wooden bodies capable of carrying two stretcher cases in reasonable comfort. Both were donated to our Unit by a 'War effort' organisation in Tanganyika.

Our EAASC European personnel was forever changing. The Transport Officer, Mechanic and another Sergeant departed. Their places were soon filled by another TO, Mechanic. Sgt Major, two Sgts and another Sgt. on the Medical side. When the new Transport Officer and I met I couldn't help uttering an uncomplimentary remark. He did likewise. We both met way back in 1936 in the Tabora District, in Igalula, when I was with the Agricultural Department. Earlier in this article I mentioned him as being a gold prospector trying to eke out a living, his name is Brazier. The war came as a God-send to many like him!. However, holding the King's Commission as a Lieutenant I treated him accordingly, but in the confines of a tent rank was forgotten since it was necessary to enlighten him on various aspects of running a mobile unit. He wasn't what one would call, as the old saying goes, the COs 'cup of tea'. Consequently he did not stay with us for more than a few weeks.

Mt Kenya Safari

Easter would soon be upon the nation and for the lucky ones a few days off. One of our new BNCOs, Terry Cowdrey, expressed his desire to climb Mt. Kenya, 17,000, plus a few feet. To ascend and descend in four days is an impossibility, but he would be quite happy to climb as far as possible in the time available. One snag however; he wanted a companion, to share expenses, since it would involve a Guide, four mules and their attendants, all of which had to be hired from a nearby farmer, Raymond Hook, one of Kenya's characters. Why, I do not know but in a moment of weakness I agreed to accompany him? But on one condition. That he made all the necessary arrangements. So, on the Thursday afternoon before Good Friday we set off climbing steadily through the forest until 6 pm. Put up the tent, borrowed from the QMs Stores, and prepared ourselves for a cold damp night. What really surprised me was a species of 'stinging' nettle I had never seen before in East Africa.

Off on our travels once again through the damp, cold and misty forest climbing steadily the whole time. After an hour and half the rainforest was left behind and then we entered the bamboo forest, Passing through that belt took about an hour, the track becoming steeper as we progressed, rather slowly as the altitude was nearing the 8000 ft asl mark. After the bamboos we came to the open boggy moorland and onwards up to the Alpine flora levels where the track sometimes leveled out, even going downhill at times, but that only meant climbing again further on. When we reached a good vantage point a halt was made whilst we regained our strength with the aid of a hot cup of coffee, laced with 'something', and biscuits.

The near-views over the lower slopes were quite spectacular but the distant panoramic vista to the West was hopeless due to the midday heat haze rising from places like Isiolo. I had not replaced my stolen camera so it was left to Terry to act as cameraman. During our jaunt he reeled off a few rolls of film but unfortunately the so-called photographer who developed them ruined the lot! Only one roll survived and that was processed by a different person.

The rarified atmosphere was becoming a little chilly as we forged ahead through the outcrops of rock as we went up, and up, towards a formidable looking ridge, The wretched mules appeared not to worry but at this height it made us puff! The guide eventually led us to the base of a perpendicular wall of rock and, in due course, stopped in front of a cave telling us that we would be sleeping in it for the next three nights (Much more comfortable, and warmer, than a tent, unless the wind came from a westerly direction. By the time we had unpacked, prepared our sleeping bags etc. it was almost 6 pm and time to think about the evenings menu. Hot soup followed by two tins of 'meat and vegetable' stew heated on a primus stove, our only external warmth. The internal warmth came out of a bottle. As soon as we had eaten, feeling rather weary, we got into our sleeping bags for warmth, assisted by a mug of hot coffee. It didn't take us long to find out that water boils at a lower temperature at such a high altitude. To boil a few potatoes took It hours before becoming soft enough to eat.

Climbing out of the sleeping-bag in the morning for a wash and brush-up took some courage as there was a thin film of ice in the wash basin. Shaving was definitely out. I cannot remember what we had for breakfast, certainly nothing cooked but a mug of hot coffee went down well.

Our plan of action was to make our way up to the snow-line and, if possible, to the large glacier which, from time to time, would give a tremendous 'crack'. So, leaving the muleteers behind to keep an eye on their animals the guide, Terry and I made off on our travels to the more spectacular parts on our side of the mountain. In some places we had to traverse the scree, one step forward and slide two steps backwards. It was awful stuff to negotiate and at that altitude (12,000 ft asl) we suffered from lack of breath.

We slowly, very slowly, made our way back towards the camp. Every 50 yds or so I had to sit down for a few moments to regain my 'puff', partly due to the fact that we had been hurrying as the swirling mist was descending rather rapidly and we had no intention of being caught out in it. However, we were; but luckily not far from our destination. At regular intervals the guide would give a loud shout and listen out for an acknowledging reply from his mates back at the camp. Eventually we heard a call from somewhere immediately below which gave us a clue regarding our whereabouts, on top of the high sheer cliff face above the cave. Even so to reach 'Home sweet Home' a fair distance had to be negotiated over roughish ground before we found the right level to back track to the camp. By this time, 4.30pm, visibility was down to about 50 yds and a definite chill was in the air. We were two shattered humans thankful to see a primus stove, water, tea and food. (As the saying goes,

"There's one born every minute". In this case - two.). The tea and biscuits helped to restore our sanity. A couple of good 'tots' of the 'hard stuff' made us feel much better. A fire would be appreciated but there was no firewood around, which meant one thing, early to bed and warmth after our diet of hot soup and tinned 'Meat and Veg. Fortunately we brought a good supply including 'bully' beef. The unused tent came in useful as a mattress and also as a 'wardrobe' to keep the clothes dry.

The following day the mist was still with us so there was no point in vacating a warm bed until the outlook improved and that didn't occur until after 2pm. So early (?) morning tea, breakfast and lunch were prepared from the confines of the sleeping bag. Sheer laziness! The 'staff' seemed to be content in their tent, pitched in a sheltered spot nearby; they also had the advantage of a fire after having spent many hours yesterday combing the hillside for combustible material. The mules had to be tethered wherever there was suitable grazing and, in the evening, retethered in the shelter of the rock face. If left loose they would be back in Nanyuki in no time at all. The water supply came from a nearby spring.

Next morning up bright and early to prepare for the downhill walk back to a warmer climate. During the night a passing sleet shower left the place looking rather wintry but by the time we were up and about there wasn't a cloud in the sky and the distant views over a large area of Kenya were superb, well worth the discomfort to see it all but, alas, no record of it due to some individual who made a nonsense when processing the rolls of film.

By 9.30am with the mules loaded up, we departed. One of the wretched animals, when being brought along to be loaded, slipped his/her halter and, being sensible, refused to be caught so enjoyed a nice easy walk back home, always just a few yards out of 'catching' range. So its unfortunate keeper had to carry one light weight box. By 4.00pm we were back in Camp, ready for a shave, to remove four days growth of 'stubble', a bath and a meal, in that order. Needless to say that evening was spent enjoying at pint or two and a decent meal in the Silverbeck Hotel.

Nanyuki (Continued)

Soon after our return from the Mt. Kenya hike (we had no ambition whatsoever of climbing to the peak!) I had to go into the small Military Hospital on a prearranged date for a minor operation on my legs. The hospital was staffed by my friends, the Tanganyika Casualty Clearing Station, one of whom was the Deputy Sleeping Sickness Officer, ex Tabora. After three days I was discharged but a few days later I was readmitted. One of the incisions on the thigh developed an infection which looked ghastly, scarring me for life. With the other five inmates of the Ward a good time was had by all in spite of our ailments, and admonishments from one Matron and two attractive young nurses. The latter would occasionally partake of a gin and lime from one of our smuggled-in bottle(s) kept under a mattress away from the prying eyes of the Matron i/c. I remained in hospital for about three weeks enjoying good food, care and attention, almost a 'one star' hotel. With the infection cleared I was discharged in spite of a large expanse of wound to heal over which would take weeks, and did! As the Doctor said, "You're in a Medical Unit with all the necessary dressings etc, at your finger tips, you have the 'know-how', so go off and deal with it yourself, but on light duties only for quite awhile!". Which landed me at an office desk in the Orderly Room again. However, on departure I did manage to "dinner-date" Iris, the attractive nineteen year old nurse, which made a pleasant change, but not to be repeated too often. Unless you have your own transport, it meant hiring a car for 24 hours just in case it was not possible to return it within a shorter period, The WTS girls (East Africa's equivalent to the ATS or WAACs) were better organised. Whenever they gave a 'party' in their Mess, and I was usually invited, one of the twelve young ladies would come along to the camp to collect me, and take me back at some unearthly hour. Most obliging.

During my absence in hospital one or two staff changes had occurred. A new arrival on the medical side, Bill Lawrence-Brown, complete with monocle! He soon put that away when in our company, the remarks passed around did not impress him! My 'mountaineering friend, Terry, had departed and another new boy came in his place. My old acquaintance Brazier, the Transport Officer, was still with us and, during my sojourn in the Orderly tent, we would chat about anything except work. At some stage a high ranking 'Brass Hat', the G.O.C. East African Forces, who was in the area, sent a 'signal' through to the office informing us that he would be along to 'Inspect' the Unit within the next two days! 'Panic stations'. The 'Parade' would have to be held on the Cantonment Parade Ground about a mile away. By the time the scheduled hour was upon us there were four lines of very clean vehicles, inside and out, and two lines of Drivers and a few Medical Orderlies in various stages of untidiness. We had done our best to smarten them up, but 'pig's ears' and 'purses' spring to mind! There we stood for two hours awaiting the pleasure of the General, by which time none of us cared how we looked, although we felt a trifle warm, with a good thirst building up. Once that episode was over normality was restored.

The day came when we had to pack up and leave the cool and pleasant life of Nanyuki for another session in the Northern Frontier District, Isiolo once again.

I cannot recollect definite dates but I think it must have been early May. On arrival in Isiolo, this time, having plenty of tentage available, the CO decided on a camp site under the trees about three quarters of a mile from the Trading Centre, rather than returning to the unhygienic, rat infested and jigger ridden Habash Refugee Camp. Thank heavens,

The Italians had not yet declared war but judging by the amount of activity going on around us it looked as though such a prospect seemed imminent since reinforcements from West Africa were joining our Forces. The Gold Coast Regiment, Nigerian Regiment, the Royal West African Frontier Force and ancillary back-up units including the Medics.

When established on our new camp site it didn't take 'JW' long to make up his mind what to do with his three Medical Sections. Said he to the three of us, "Sort out your Sections and necessary equipment and be prepared to travel northwards in two days time"! "Yes Sir", we replied. Anything to get out of his way! John Riess was destined for (British) Moyale on the Kenya - Ethiopia Border around 350 miles from Isiolo. Bill Brown to Garbatula, a remote trading centre well populated by Somalis and camels with an airstrip from where a Wing of the Rhodesian Air Force operated with three obsolete aircraft. Two Hawker Furies' and a 'Hartebeest'. My slot was a place called El Dera, about 100 miles up the 'road', 25 miles beyond Garbatula. There was absolutely nothing there except very thorny scrub bush, elephants, a few Somalis with their camels and goats and a cluster of grass

huts, built as a staging post for the (T)MAC by a gang from the Pioneer Corps. A dry sand river meandered through the area with Acacia (umbrella) trees and large thickets of greenery along the banks hence its popularity with the elephants. One good point in their favour they would dig with their tusks into the sand for water which we would improve upon with spades, but, one snag, the devils would ruin the hole on their next visit. More about them later.

El Dera

The only indication for anyone looking for me was a small board with the number 279 painted on it,- our Unit Code number, nailed to a post on the roadside. Surprisingly, during the few months I was in residence the number of strangers who called in amazed me. From the lowest NCO rank through to the Brigadier fraternity. One RAMC Major was a regular visitor, always enjoying a cup or two of tea. He had something to do with Field Hygiene and between us almost wrangled my transfer to a Field Unit, with a Commission thrown in? When it all reached 'JWs' ears he blew his 'top', not at me, but to the Establishment Officer in Nairobi and the culprit, Maj Gilkes who, many months later, was killed in an air crash in Burma.

On another occasion an Army Chaplain, the Reverend Joe Harper, (a Church Missionary Society missionary from Dodoma), pulled in one very hot afternoon and asked if I had any Protestants on my staff? "Six" I replied, and before I could say another word he had us on our knees in the hot sand! The 'Service' was rather too long with the ground temperature well over 100 degrees F. However, he was only doing his job. Many months later the ship he was traveling in to South Africa was torpedoed in the Mozambique Channel, between Madagascar and Mozambique, and, unfortunately, he went down with the ship.

My 'visitors' invariably called in during the early afternoon when I was enjoying a spell of 'Egyptian PT '. As good fortune would have it I was up and about when the Brigadier (Medical) called in, no doubt hoping for a cup of tea provided by 'Allen's Hotel'. Just as well I had 'patients rations' to plunder when mine were running low! He asked me how I spent my time in such a God-forsaken place? So he was told the brief details, "Up at the crack of dawn to ensure the Medical Orderlies, and cook, were doing their respective jobs of doling out medicines, renewing dressings where necessary and giving the 'casualties' a meal before their early departure at 07.30 hours for Nanyuki. At 09.00 hrs the daily routine chores had to be dealt with in preparation for the next batch of ailing askaris, who usually arrived sometime after 16.00 hrs from Wajir, with another pick-up point en-route at Habaswein. Attending to their needs took three hours or thereabouts. Also, the ambulances had to be checked over, refueled etc. in readiness for the morning". Conversing further with the gentleman regarding recreation I felt like saying tennis and golf but instead stuck to the truth, walking down the river bed to watch the lone resident jumbo feeding or standing under an Acacia tree flapping its ears. It was well behaved, when walking past from a distance of 75 yards it would give one a quick glance and continue flapping. More about jumbo later. Still quizzing me the Brigadier asked how I managed for reading material. "Not very well," was the reply. He, having had a glance around my abode, had noticed a large tome of 'Shakespeare' on a box and passed some cryptic remark about being studious(?). Six months later in a Nairobi cinema as I made my way to a seat a voice from two rows back bawled out, "Hello Sgt. Are you still reading Shakespeare to the elephants?". At least he recognised me!

I hasten to add that a week or two after my arrival at El Dera the Italians, at long last, joined forces with Hitler's mob, thus creating plenty of activity around Moyale and other border outposts.

The British Asst Superintendent of Police in charge of Moyale District was most unfortunate. He was walking along our side of the border at 6.00 pm when he was captured by an Italian patrol, six hours before the official Declaration of War at midnight on 10 June 1940. The British forces eventually released him from the POW Camp in Addis Ababa eleven months later.

More elephant tales. The lone jumbo was quite domesticated. One day it (I think it was a 'He') was surrounded by a mixed herd of goats and sheep, all animals searching for anything edible. On another occasion jumbo was feeding on one side of a large thicket and on the other side a camel doing likewise. In a short time both came face to face - looked at one another for a minute and then about turned to go their own ways. At night he would wander through the camp feeding on anything he could find.

My 'shack' was rather 'open plan' for 'coolth', no grass walls, only poles to hold up the grass roof, all erected within a fairly large thicket. One night my friend the elephant came along browsing on the greenery almost over my head and I was completely oblivious of the fact until I saw his footprints in the sand by the 'front entrance' in the morning! The European 'Ward' was a large grass hut with grass walls on three sides, the front wall having grass to a height of about 3ft 6ins. When the place was occupied the inmate(s) had to be warned to put their campbeds and belongings well back

against the rear wall, otherwise an inquisitive elephant might disarrange things. One poor fellow whom I warned said he didn't sleep a wink all night worrying about the wretched animal. One afternoon, returning from Habaswein, I noticed six elephants ambling quite happily towards the road when they suddenly panicked in my direction! One pilot, in a flight of three low-flying South African Air Force 'Hartebeestes', no doubt with a warped sense of humour, deliberately 'buzzed' them with the intention of frightening the person driving the vehicle. But he chose the wrong man,

Whilst on the subject of aircraft. On one of my visits to see my colleague, Bill Brown, at Garbatula, (usually to buy some bottles of beer at the local Indian store), we got: the fright of our lives. Just as we sat down to our lunch of hashed-up bully beef and tinned veg, there was a terrific explosion with shrapnel flying through the tree branches above the hut. Being only 250 yds from the airstrip, where an aircraft was parked, we thought the Italians were having a little bombing practice, so flat on the ground we flopped. There was the sound of a lot of ammunition crackling away but no noise of an aircraft? After a few minutes curiosity got the better of us so, in spite of the ammunition banging away, we had a look outside to where a column of black smoke was billowing up. When the noise of exploding ammunition ended we walked over to see what had happened. What a mess! The remains of a Hawker Fury were halfway up a tree with odd bits and pieces still smouldering away. The SAAF Squadron Leader was of the opinion that the Armourer was either loading or unloading wing bombs and carelessly dropped a 'primed' one. One good thing, the Armourer would never have known what hit him. The main trunk of his body landed 50 yds away. The Sqn Ldr gave Bill and me the unpleasant task of searching around to pick up the 'bits'. A job I have no wish to repeat. After that experience neither of us could bear the thought of eating hashed-up bully beef for lunch!

As time went on the Ities, with their artillery and tanks, against our ill-equipped forces, advanced slowly southwards until more of our reinforcement's carne on to the scene, including the South African Armoured cars. The enemy was eventually brought to a halt at an isolated spot commonly known as Buna, and a few other places to the east bordering on Somaliland, Mandera and El Wak.

The Italian Air Force was also having its own way? The Caproni bombers were regular 'visitors' to Wajir picking out their targets then dropping the bombs from a low-ish altitude. The SAAF 'Hartebeestes' and 'Furys' hadn't the speed to catch up with them so they had to change their technique, climbing up to a high altitude to cruise around until a Caproni was sighted below and then dive at great speed to the target. First time lucky for the 'friendlies', although the crashing Caproni almost did more damage on the ground than one of its bombs by crashing near two large Army Units. The crew, although injured, can consider themselves extremely lucky it didn't catch fire.

There were very few 'war casualties' coming through in the daily convoy. The casualties were mainly the result of accidents, usually the result of overturned vehicles, and a miscellaneous assortment of ailments requiring hospitalization. One problem we found was that the units loading the patients were allowing them to proceed with their rifles and webbing pouches full of .303 ammunition. Strictly verboten under the Geneva Convention when casualties are traveling by ambulance. Consequently, I ended up with a whole lot of ammunition and Mills bombs (hand grenades) and no combatant Company nearby to which I could pass it all on to!? I therefore handed it out to anyone wanting a 'free issue' for target practice? The Mills bombs were more difficult to dispose of, but useful for frightening away non resident elephants that are inclined to be a little naughty. I hasten to add, the bomb was hurled away from the animals, not towards them!

The routine continued as the weeks, and months, clicked on with the odd diversion here and there.

The only news I had of my brother's whereabouts was from one of my parents who wrote that he was somewhere in East Africa? However, one day, sometime during the latter half of September, one of our BNCOs called in to pass on the news that my brother had called in at our HQ in Isiolo enquiring after my whereabouts. It so happened that. Early in October orders came through instructing all Sections of the 1st (T)MAC to return to Isiolo.

On my arrival back in Isiolo it did not take long to find Charlie, his crowd of 'ruffians' were parked just over the road from our camp. Apparently, he had 'signed on' and in due course found himself doing six weeks training in the Kenya Regiment at Gil Gil. With that over he, and a whole lot of others, volunteered to join a new unit being formed called "Drought's Scouts" under the command of a 'Major Drought' whose Company was mounted on mules? The general idea being to 'live off the land' and infiltrate behind the enemy lines on scouting activities and cause mayhem, but, after their

short spell of training around the Isiolo area, the news came through that the Company was to be disbanded much to their disappointment. Why? Possibly because the Italians could retreat much faster than mules could advance?

In view of their disbandment Charlie, together with a colleague, also from the Tanganyika Agricultural Dept, Brian Fowler, had an interview with our CO expressing their desire to transfer to a Tanganyika Unit, and asking if there were any vacancies in the (T)MAC? It so happened that there were, so the necessary transfer procedure went into action; which all took time. Meanwhile, our orders were to pack up the camp and proceed to the M'bagathi Holding Camp, five miles south (?) of Nairobi, where a large conglomeration of buildings built of poles with cement-washed hessian walls had been erected over a fair expanse of land. At night M'bagathi is a cold and windy spot and the hessian walls of our quarters would billow in the breeze and shower us with cement dust!

After we had settled in the time was ripe for making arrangements for leave, for those so entitled, both European and African. My turn came round about the middle of October. Two days before departure too Sao Hill, I developed 'German measles' so decided not to report it otherwise off into quarantine I'd go for 21 days! Fortunately, by the time I set off towards the Southern Highlands of Tanganyika I felt slightly better. The journey was rather tedious. I Departed from Nairobi Railway Station at 5.00 pm, or thereabouts, to Voi arriving there 01.00 am and then transferring to the Voi/Moshi train, due in at Moshi at about 4.00 pm. Being a 'Hornby' type railway set-up there were very few facilities, No restaurant car! But at Maktau Station there was a dak-bungalow, or station cafe, where one could buy a cup of tea and a few 'eats'. In my case I wanted some breakfast but, having overslept, by the time I was ready the train was about to depart so my next meal looked like being in Moshi much later in the afternoon.

My recollection of events in Moshi is rather vague! I met a family friend, now a captain in one of the KAR Battalion's, who told me to use his army quarter in the cantonment as he was living in the hotel with his wife. After a good night's sleep I was up at 6.30 am preparing for the lorry convoy departing for Mbeya, far to the south at 7.30 am. That day we, there were others like me proceeding on leave, traveled as far as Babati where the convoy pulled off the road for the overnight stop! There was no accommodation whatsoever, nor anything else, which meant sleeping under the stars on 'Mother Earth'. Fortunately, I had my bedding roll with me but no campbed, and was that earth hard! Food? the old standby, bully beef and biscuits, eaten in the flickering light of a small fire. Ablutions and calls to nature left a lot to be desired with us floundering around in the darkness. The convoy Commander could have warned us of what to expect on the journey, not that it would have made much difference. Anyway, I think everyone was mighty pleased to see the dawn. Next stopover, Dodoma. On reaching the Babati Trading Centre a hurried stop to make a few purchases of food and soft drinks to ensure I did not suffer from dehydration during the next 160 hot miles!

The convoy reached the Dodoma Transit Camp about 5.00 pm. Traveling in convoy is an ordeal, mile after mile in a constant cloud of dust, some grey, some red, resulting in a queer application of 'makeup'. The camp consisted of dozens of wooden huts, some large, some small, all equipped with the essentials for comfort, with adjacent 'shower' huts. However, luck was on my side; making my way to the Camp Commandant's office for instructions on where to park myself I met the gentleman concerned. none other than my old friend from the Shinyanga days, 'Hicky', now, Major Hickson- Wood! The first words he muttered were, "Where the bloody hell have you come from?" rank forgotten, I told him. He insisted I spent the night in his large house and that Kathy would be only too pleased to see me once again. Within an hour I felt much better after having had a good long soak in the bath, most necessary after living in a dust haze for the two past two days. Three more dinner guests came in later, officers off a northbound South African convoy, so, much to Hicky's pleasure, the alcohol flowed rather freely

Next day we were away on the familiar 162 mile journey to Iringa, arriving there just before 6.00 pm. I had sent a telegram to my parents informing them that I would be in Iringa on the evening of 'such an' such' a date, hoping the 'Old Man' would take the hint to come and meet me. Thankfully, he did! Much to my surprise he appeared driving a very smart 1938 model Chevrolet estate car and when I asked who had been bold enough to lend him such a vehicle his reply was short and to the point. "I bought it," said he!

After chasing all round Iringa looking for the lorry my kit was on I eventually tracked it down and then retraced my way back to the hotel for something to wash down the dust in my throat. The Bar was full of young Rhodesians on their way to Nairobi to enlist. One of them, hearing I had just

spent eleven months in the 'battle zone' (?) insisted on buying me drinks. After the second pint of beer I thought it advisable to make for home! I Rounded up Pa then away on the last lap of the journey - 61 miles in comfort. A pleasant change after being bounced around in lorries for the past twelve months. Those miles did not take long to cover, one and a half hours.

The first job to hand the following morning was servicing my car in preparation for holiday use and the return journey to Nairobi in a weeks time. Half the leave is taken up by traveling, a swindle.

For the sake of a few days I had to license the car for three months, a bit of a bind knowing that the thing would have to be reregistered and re-licensed in Kenya without undue delay for as long as I used it there. There was the question of petrol too, a commodity strictly rationed, However, that did not impose too great a problem! The dear lady behind the desk in the Rationing Office, whom I knew, very kindly allowed me 12 gallons for the holiday, and, since I would be traveling back to Nairobi, passing through Dodoma at an unsociable hour, issued me with coupons for enough fuel to reach Arusha where I could collect more for the final leg to Nairobi.

The few days relaxation soon petered out but it was a change from army routine, although that couldn't be ruled out completely as there was a constant flow of Army personnel calling in at the hotel enroute North or South , whose requirements had to be catered for with the emphasis on food and drink. The latter other than tea or coffee having to be dispensed by me at times. Who's grumbling.

Departure day came along too quickly as there were two jobs I had to complete which would take about four hours. That lot finished I got away soon after 1.00 pm making for Kondoa Irangi, 324 miles away to the north, where there was a Rest House (of sorts) to spend the night? With the intention of driving the 360 miles to Nairobi the following day: But the best made plans go wrong! I reached Dodoma 6.00 pm-ish, filled up the car with petrol and, feeling rather thirsty, went along to the Hickson-Wood house to scrounge a cup of tea. That was where the itinery went wrong? Staying with the H-Ws was a Sao Hill neighbour Esme Creswell, and young son aged 5 - 6 yrs, looking for a lift to Nairobi to join her husband, a Captain in one of the KAR. Battalions stationed there.

With an almost empty car I agreed to take them, with the proviso that they would have to be prepared to travel another 100 miles on to Kondoa and spend the night in an awful four-roomed Government Rest House containing a bed with a terrible mattress, a table and couple of chairs! That information had been passed on to me by someone who knew the place, and I found I was not wrong! Poor Esme was in a bit of a quandary as she didn't have any bedding, only two cases full of clothes. I had my bedding roll and whilst at home I'd knocked up a 'chop' box and stocked it with the bare necessities of life to last a day or two. So that didn't pose any great problem. Kathy H-W. offered to lend Esme two blankets which were gratefully accepted. After tea and a snack we set off on the two hour drive to Kondoa. After covering something like 25 miles it was all too obvious the young lad suffered from car-sickness! Mopping up operations took time and thereafter I had to adjust my driving accordingly hoping it would prevent further mishaps, but there were two more. So instead of the journey taking two hours it was more like three.

The Rest House was rather grotty, but did boast of a caretaker who managed to provide water, both hot and cold! The building contained four rooms with cement floors. The walls were constructed with sun-dried mud bricks and a corrugated iron roof over the lot. A coat of whitewash, inside and out, would have made a great improvement. However, we had to sort ourselves out. One room contained a bed and mattress, another room a table and three rickety chairs and the other two empty. So, into one of them went the mattress, dumped on the floor for Esme and son with the two borrowed blankets (I often wondered whether they were returned?). My bedding roll went on the bedstead, not quite as hard as the floor, and since I had a pair of pillows the lady was in luck. She had one of them. Lighting was by torchlight! A good lesson in 'How to be uncomfortable on safari'. For supper a Cream Cracker or two washed down with 'pop', and so to bed.

Next morning the caretaker produced a wash basin, a most useful piece of equipment, and better still, hot water for washing ourselves in, which also gave Esme a chance to clean up the young lad after the previous night's ordeal.

The idea of driving through to Nairobi in the one day had to be abandoned due to 'junior' (I cannot remember his name) being such a poor traveler, so there was no violent rush to leave Kondoa as our next night stop would be Arusha, a distance of 175 miles, which, on this occasion, would take about five hours. We arrived there mid afternoon, clocked in at the hotel, and after a few cups of tea we retired to our respective rooms where I enjoyed a long soak in the bath followed by a useful nap before climbing into a clean uniform etc. and making my way to see what the Bar had to offer. But not

before going to a nearby shop to invest in a large Thermos flask! Esme eventually appeared for a 'quickie' before dinner, after having spent most of her time attending to the domestic chores involved when traveling around with a young child. Incidentally, he survived the day's journey without any trouble. Thank heaven.

Nairobi next. 184 miles, which would take five hours. By the time I'd collected my petrol coupons, filled up the tank, and Esme had sent a telegram off to her husband, Richard, saying that she would, hopefully, be at the New Stanley Hotel anytime after 3.00 pm it was 10 am.

The journey to Nairobi was uneventful. A stop enroute to look at a few giraffe browsing happily on the roadside trees and time to devour our sandwiches the Arusha Hotel had prepared for us. The Thermos flask I bought yesterday was duly christened too, and poured a very refreshing cup of tea!

The New Stanley Hotel was a popular meeting place at any time, morning, noon or night. We arrived there just after 4.00 pm but no sign of Richard so that gave Esme something to worry about. We found a vacant table and a waiter eventually brought along a pot of tea and plate of cakes. That helped to pass away the time until the husband arrived, and Esme hadn't a phone number to contact him. However, he did turn up three quarters of an hour later. That was the last time we met, Regrettably, he was killed in action in Abyssinia (Ethiopia) a few months later. A year or two after that I happened to meet Esme somewhere and she mentioned she was now married to a Naval Officer.

After off loading their suitcases, plus two blankets, I made tracks for the M'bagathi Camp, only to find the Unit had departed in my absence along with all my kit, but to where? Local enquiries drew a blank so I went back into the town and, as luck would have it I managed to find accommodation at the New Stanley. More expense! My memory is a little hazy regarding the next move but, so far as I recollect, I went out to the Muthaiga Hospital to enquire whether any of the (T) MAC ambulances had been in lately, and if so, from where? Not very helpful there, so paid a visit to the Army Details Transit Camp where the African askaris (Servicemen) had to report when returning from leave to await collection by their respective units if not too far away. I found out where my lot had disappeared to, a place called Mwinyi (**Mwingi**)? I'd Never heard of it but after perusing a map I soon knew where. 60/70 miles in an Easterly direction from Nairobi! What it was doing there?

To cut a long story short, I put my car in a respectable looking Garage for a minor repair job on the braking system, telling the owner that I'd be along to collect it in a few days time! That was the only excuse I could think of to have it safely garaged until I was able to collect it.

I eventually reached Mwinyi. By this time three weeks had elapsed during my absence and, during that intervening period, brother Charlie and his friend Brian Fowler had joined the Unit. Mwinyi did not impress me, undulating, cold, wet, muddy land and, to cap it all, down I went with a good attack of 'Delhi belly'. As for the loo! A contraption beyond belief. Its roof was just about 4 feet from the ground and leaked like a sieve when the rain came down. For a six footer like me, it made life difficult, more so after making somewhere in the region of 30 'visits' in 24 hours!!

A South African Medical Unit of sorts joined us, for what reason I cannot remember, unless it was to see 'how the other half lived'. However, after a short time we were on our way back to Nairobi, Langata Camp, which wasn't so far out of town and overlooked the Wilson Airfield where the 'Tiger Moths', 'Hurricanes', 'Swordfish' and other miscellaneous types of aircraft flying around reminded us that there was still an Air Force.

Nairobi

The Langata Camp was a very pleasant change. Large wooden huts were provided for both sleeping and feeding accommodation, but such comfort was not to last long. The South African Army Units were pouring into Nairobi so decent accommodation for them was at a premium consequently we were kicked out of Langata back to the not-so-pleasant M'bagathi Service Corps Camp. Not that that worried us so long as we had a roof over our heads. Whilst we were there Christmas came round but I cannot remember anything about it or how we celebrated the festive season but there must have been jollifications of sorts!

One of the first persons Charlie and I met there was the Allen protégé from the Sao Hill days in 1932. George Cathles (Aunt Betty's cousin) whom we hadn't seen for a number of years. He was now a Sergeant in the Service Corps. The next time our paths crossed, about 15 months later, it was Capt G Cathles complete with fiancée.

On the subject of promotion the CO summoned me to the office one December morning to inform me that I had been promoted to Staff Sergeant! One of the better ranks in the army but, more important, a few more shillings in the monthly pay packet.

There was something afoot in Military circles. Nairobi was overflowing with Army personnel. In our unit there was plenty of activity mainly with the transport. Batches of ambulances would be sent off to the VRD (Vehicle Repair Depot) for necessary attention. New ones came in to join the fleet. The Workshops Section received both a well fitted-out mobile workshop with electric generator to operate the equipment and a 'breakdown' lorry with crane and winch, all of which meant 'ACTION' somewhere. I had to deal with the medical aspect. Re-charging all the medical boxes as per the Army Medical Handbook, including brandy and champagne '!! The other BNCOs took the recruit drivers out on driving and convoy training exercises with the vehicles that were around. Requests for "danger money" were ignored '.

Sometime about that period, Jan 1941, that well known South African General, Jan Smuts, came up to Nairobi to see for himself what his troops were doing! Legend has it that he was appalled by the number of SA Forces to be seen having a good time in the town. They were soon out on training exercises.

It became obvious that an onslaught was about to be launched against the Italian forces in three directions, North, North East and East from Nairobi. The (T)MAC as a Unit had its full complement of vehicles – 75/80. Personnel included Four Officers. The CO, two Transport Officers and a South African Army Medical Officer, but we were short of BNCOs.

My colleague, John Reiss, had left us; transferred over to the East African Army Reconnaissance Regiment as their Medical Sergeant. A more exciting Unit to be in than a Motor Ambulance Convoy he reckoned, which is perfectly true, as he was to find out later.

With Xmas over the warlords decided the time was ripe for the 12th Division, of which we were a part, to get cracking, The 22nd East African Infantry Brigade were already having skirmishes with the Italian Forces on the Kenya/Somaliland Border.

1941

Garrissa

Early in January 1941, our Marching Orders came through so, bidding Nairobi a fond farewell (and handing my car over to the girl friend to look after!) the Convoy moved out in close formation snarling up the traffic as we passed through the centre of Nairobi. Eighty vehicles traveling along at 15 mph takes quite a time to pass by! Our route was along the familiar road towards Nanyuki but when we reached Thika we turned right for Garissa. An outlandish outpost of the Empire, situated on the eastern bank of the River Tana about 180 miles further on down the road, which was well corrugated and dusty; passing through miles of uninhabited scrub bush country. Why is it that when traveling in convoy on earth roads with the lead vehicle traveling at a steady 30 mph. the poor devils at the rear end have to bat along at 40+ mph in order to keep up with the main body? That is when the accidents occur. After miles and miles of experience I know the answer to that one!

Our destination was reached sometime between 4 - 5 pm. which didn't allow us much time to organise ourselves before sunset. The camp area was a typical chunk of African bushland, hot, dry, well wooded and covered with vicious thorn bushes everywhere, and heaven help you if you were caught up in one. Not the best of camp sites but there we were and there we stayed, The Tana River was about 6 miles further on and our nearest water supply. That kept our mobile water bowser busy. The following day things were more or less organised and a large labour force of drivers armed with machetes was set to work on hacking down and clearing away the thorn bushes, which had a knock-on effect of improving the 'language' that occasionally drifted through the air!

From midday until sun-down the heat was overpowering to such an extent that it was almost impossible to survive in a tent pitched in the conventional manner. The brothers Allen had their's in the 'open plan' mode, one half of the outer fly sheet for the roof and the other half as a back-drop thus allowing the slightest breeze to waft through.

For some reason only known to himself the CO chose from the Staff car pool in Nairobi an ancient Rolls Royce, well camouflaged, and a mechanic's nightmare. Its general condition in a shocking state of repair. The bodywork suffered with severe metal fatigue, cracks everywhere. The suspension springs were lumps of rusty metal. Engine-wise, it guzzled oil at the rate of 200 miles to the gallon with petrol consumption about 8 miles to the gallon and when moving it left a thick blue haze to poison the atmosphere. Spare parts were unobtainable!

By the time the Sgt Major (Mechanic) had filled a foolscap page of faults 'Our Johnnie' decided a Rolls Royce was not for him so returned it from whence it came. His next choice was much better, a new Chevrolet saloon. Our other Staff car was also new, a Dodge saloon, and very comfortable to ride in over the rough roads.

We were soon back to the old routine. Collecting the ailing, who needed hospitalization, from a Field Ambulance Coy, and transporting them back to Nairobi. A long uncomfortable trip for those unfortunate enough to succumb to a miscellany of assorted ailments.

One afternoon, about a week after settling down on our bit of Africa, the Sgt Major came over to where Charlie and I were 'hogging' it (siesta time, as it was too hot to work unnecessarily) to tell me, since I happened to be Orderly Sgt that day, that three RAMC' Imperial' BNCOs (as members of the British Forces sent to boost the East African mob were known, nothing derogatory,,,) had arrived and would I go along to settle them in. The first job, and most important was to organize a large pot of tea to quench their thirsts. Although they hadn't been in the country many days and had only traveled from Mombasa to Nairobi and on to here their description of Kenya is unprintable, which is understandable, having left their wives and families back in the UK knowing that they would not meet up with them again for a very long time.

In the course of conversation I asked them from which part of the UK did they hail, and by strange coincidence all came from Nottingham, my own 'home town'! One, Arthur, from Sherwood hailed from within half a mile of where I spent the first six years of my childhood, during which time I had passed his house on very many occasions when visiting my Grandparents. Another lad, "Clarkie", came from New Basford, quite near to the allotments and "The Star Inn" mentioned much earlier in this article not far from where my Grandfather lived. The third member, "Buster", was a 'foreigner' He came from a new housing estate on the outskirts of the city, Bilborough, a 'roughish'

area! Fortunately they had been 'kitted out' in Nairobi, as our QM Stores did not carry such items as 'X Frame' campbeds, an essential piece of furniture. To add to their problems, 'How to communicate with the African rank and file', very few of whom could speak English! The obvious answer learn Swahili - and 'sign' language!

Agadera/Liboi

A few days later Allen Junior (but senior in rank to the other Allen) was summoned to the Orderly Room/Tent to receive instructions regarding his part in the next phase of action which was "to organize the personnel, equipment and vehicles to establish a Medical Staging Post at Agadera(?)(Hagadera) (60 miles further along the track towards Somalia) and report to the Brigade Staff Captain for further instructions Take Sgt Corral (Arthur) with you and also take plenty of water because there is none available there. You will depart from here at 09.00 hrs tomorrow ". "Yes Sir". It was all very well saying, "take plenty of water" but the only containers available were two 45 gallon drums, and 90 gallons would not last long for 10 persons excluding any wounded or sick individuals brought to the Staging Post for medical treatment!

As per schedule my little party was ready to sally forth at the appointed hour complete with a week's rations, water and other paraphernalia conducive to the war effort. Proceeding eastwards along a so-called road with a very corrugated surface the Tana River, a few miles ahead, had to be crossed by a pontoon bridge, and that to me was a new experience. With a well laden goods vehicle the moment the rear wheels were on the pontoon it would dip a couple of feet which gave the effect of climbing a steep hill therefore making it necessary to change into 1st gear with the foot well down on the accelerator. A most uncanny feeling. As we rattled on the countryside was very uninteresting. Flat, covered with dry thorn bushes, scrub and the temperature quite high. Somewhere along the line we were overtaken by an Indian Army Mountain Artillery Battery convoy in a hurry to reach somewhere. The nearest mountain being Mt Kenya, many miles away in the opposite direction. However, they are just as capable on the flat as in the mountains.

On arrival at our destination I duly reported to the Officer i/c who told me to sort out a suitable site for my outfit, preferably under any available trees, but there was not one in sight, only thorn bushes, so that was that. Exposed to enemy aircraft! Just before dusk we had managed to get ourselves organized when, in the distance, the throb of a plane was heard, becoming louder as the seconds ticked by! Just a low-flying friendly "Hurricane" on patrol, apparently a daily occurrence.

Business was very slack, the odd individual from other Units in the area would appear for medical attention. The morning 'Sick Parade' was, by army standards, a little late, at 07.30 hrs, followed by a leisurely breakfast consisting of Army biscuits and marmalade. The modern army biscuit is quite palatable, or was, in my day! Conserving water was a problem, Rationing ourselves to a gallon a day each was a bit of a 'hit and miss' effort when a certain amount of cleanliness has to be maintained in matters medical. Consequently, after a few days an ambulance had to be sent back to Garissa to refill the two water containers. A round trip of 125 miles. That happened twice during our stay. After ten days in Agadera instructions came through ordering me to move the section to Liboi on the Kenya/Somaliland Border, 60 miles or so further eastwards where Brigade HQ was situated. The 'battle zone' was 15/20 miles further ahead where skirmishes with the Italian troops were taking place. At one stage our African troops fixed bayonets and charged which soon put the enemy to flight.

Liboi consisted of a series of Army Units camped under the trees. I was duly allocated my patch with its quota of thorn bushes. The water situation here was no better, if not worse than the last place but, a little ray of hope! An Engineering Section was drilling for water and the result of their efforts would be known in a few days time. Meanwhile we had to exist on half a gallon each per day whether one suffered from body odour or not!

We, Arthur and I, decided it would be much too hot to survive in a tent pitched in accordance with the 'book' so we fixed it in the 'Allen' mode. Half the outer fly for the roof and the other half as a back-drop to prevent a draught blowing down your neck at night. All very 'open plan' but more comfortable and fewer hideouts for snakes. Tents for any patients we had to accommodate were pitched in the conventional way, and how the poor devils suffered notwithstanding their various ailments!

Just before our arrival on the scene the Field Ambulance Company had moved forward, nearer the battle zone, so we had to continue their job where they left off with not a doctor in sight other than a Battalion MO, who moved around rather often. Our own Unit MO was sitting back in Garissa doing ----- (what) ?. The morning sick parade was rather more than I had anticipated, consequently, I was faced with the prospect of running short of pills, potions and lotions. The Nigerian

and Gold Coast Regiment's askaris had a queer brand of "pidgin" English which, at times, was difficult to translate but nevertheless amusing. I shall never forget one Nigerian sergeant who came along with a great smile all over his face saying, "Good morning Sah. Please, my cock sick" ! I had to laugh, and gave him the prescribed number of M & B 693 tablets to effect a cure!

It so happened that our MO, Capt Dannie Theron, did actually put in an appearance one day. Not necessarily to check-up on our medical ability but to sort out something to do with a South African Medical unit operating at a place called Dif. He asked me to accompany him and do the driving in one of the ambulances. Dif was a place recently occupied by the Italians, who were now on the run somewhere near the Somali town of Afmadu (**Afmadow**). To reach it one had to drive northwards for about 30 miles along a track which followed part of the Inter-territorial boundary between Kenya and Somaliland. I did not relish the idea as there was always the possibility that the Ities had 'mined' the track at the far end and since it was seldom used we had no information? However, we set off and I was pleased to see the tyre tracks of a vehicle of sorts had passed along a few days previously, and I doubt whether I deviated from those tyre tracks by more than six inches the whole way. After what seemed like an eternity (21 hrs) we came to the Mandera - Dif - Afmadu track. The map indicated that Dif was at the 'T' junction, but it wasn't? So turning right we carried on towards Afmadu for a short distance before deciding it could become 'unhealthy' to proceed much further. Retracing our tracks we eventually found Dif and the unit the Capt. wanted. After a couple of hours we set off back for 'home'.

Whilst the MO was in residence he did check my patients. One European and three Africans. The European was suffering with a terrible crop of very painful carbuncles on his neck which only time could cure! With regard to the Africans he thought they could be suffering from cerebral spinal meningitis! Who was I to argue with the learned gentleman! Anyway, he was wrong, it was only malaria.

The Engineers with their boring equipment duly struck water at about 300ft below the surface and in no time at all fitted a pump, erected tanks and also a few 'shower' points, but there was a snag. Although crystal clear the water was very brackish (salty) and tasted foul. Even sweet condensed milk curdled in the tea. It also, generally, played havoc with our stomachs. Ordinary soap was useless, no lather whatsoever, and no chance to acquire any soap made specifically for such water. However, there was one redeeming feature in its favour, a lovely cool shower in the evening, soap or no soap. Needless to say it was all very public - no cubicles!

Every night at about 8.00 pm a meteorological phenomenon occurred. The warm still night air suddenly became an easterly howling gale covering everything with dust and sand. That would last for three or four minutes and then we were back to square one, still, warm air. After the second occurrence the necessary precautions were taken. Beds covered and anything liable to be blown away made safe.

About three weeks after our arrival in Liboi the main body of our Unit came through en route to Kismayu (**Kismaanyo**), a port on the East African coast, recently vacated by the Italians who were in danger of being caught in pincer movement by an attacking force from the south and the brigade I was, once, following. The majority of the opposing force managed to make a hasty retreat northwards along the coast road to Mogadisho with the EA army in hot pursuit. The Italian civilians who were caught up in the 'net' en-route were only too happy to be under guard by our troops as a precautionary measure against the local Somalis.

While all my colleagues were supping tea, made with decent water!, I made sure all the camp water containers were emptied and refilled with water from the water bowser. I was hoping the CO would give me definite orders when to rejoin the Unit but all he said was, "Carry on until you hear from me." The hierarchy somewhere must have insisted a Medical Aid Post remained in the area until all Units had moved on. There were still five patients languishing in discomfort, three Europeans and two Africans who, like us, lived on a monotonous diet of tinned 'Meat and Veg', 'Bully beef' and biscuits. The lad with the carbuncles was still with us, a South African serviceman who had shot himself in the thigh with the revolver bullet well and truly embedded within and I forget what the other had, something painful! The Africans had horrible tropical ulcers. All five should have been in a hospital for better treatment and decent food. As there was a landing strip about a mile away, bulldozed very hurriedly and therefore rather rough but serviceable, so a signal had been sent off to the 'powers that be' requesting an airlift for the patients to Nairobi. Back came the reply confirming a pick-up would be arranged sometime during the next four days. The four days passed by but nothing

materialized. Two days later and rather late in the day a South African Air Force aircrew member rode up on a bicycle (!!) to tell us the plane was waiting and would we load the patients on board as quickly as possible. There were no stretcher cases to contend with so within twenty minutes they were off. The aircraft, a Vickers 'Valencia' was a large old fashioned biplane, pre1930 vintage (I think) with the engines slung between the wings. If I remember correctly the pilot and navigator sat out in the 'nose' exposed to the elements while those within the roomy interior almost froze in chillier climes!! When I saw its size I wondered whether it would stand the strain of becoming airborne on such a rough and short airstrip. However, after rattling and bouncing for the first 200 or so yards it managed to clear the high bushes at the far end.

After having got rid of the patients there was very little to occupy our time. I tormented my assistant, Sgt Arthur Carroll, by talking him into learning Ki-Swahili with four half-hourly sessions per day, We didn't have any books on the subject but managed with pencil and paper and one of the Tanganyikan Orderlies who spoke the language correctly while I acted as interpreter. The Kenya 'up-country' brand of Ki-Swahili is dreadful, and commonly known as Ki-Settler since the European community, other than Government Servants, seldom bothered to refer to a Swahili Handbook. Instead they picked it up from their local labourers to whom Ki-Swahili is a foreign language.

Practically all the other Units around had packed up and gone, including the "Signals", and therefore we had no way of communicating with the outside World so, after a few more days, I instructed Arthur to pack up his kit, sling it into the ambulance and we would make for Kismayu for instructions, whether the CO liked it or not! Kismayu being about 125 miles away meant a round journey of 250 miles in daylight hours, a tall order for poorly maintained earth roads.

Kismayu & Mogadishu, Somalia

We were off at the crack of dawn and traveling at a fair pace when the first obstacle, and last, loomed up after about 30 miles. A bottomless pit of black soil that had been pulverized into a very fine dust by scores of vehicles, whose drivers had chosen their own way through, resulting in the track becoming a quarter of a mile wide and extending in length for a mile and a half. The dust was about sixteen inches deep and every vehicle passing through scraped its under-works through it causing a huge cloud of dust to penetrate everything within range. Our ambulances being door-less in the front gave no protection whatsoever against dust billowing in (when it rained a canvas curtain could be lowered) consequently we emerged at the other end covered in a fine coating of the stuff. Two hours or so later Kismayu appeared and we soon found our Unit parked on the outskirts of the town.

Our colleagues seemed to be living in the lap of luxury, apart from the heat and plague of flies. However, the first item on the agenda was a pot of tea to wash the dust down, and very welcome too.

My chat with the CO didn't last very long! After explaining the position to him he merely said, "Go back, pack up and come back here."

After a bottle of ice-cold (??) beer and an indifferent lunch I set off back without undue delay, without Arthur, since he had his kit with him. So, for a change, I sat back and let the driver carry on whilst I had a look around at the passing scenery. In places the soil looked fertile enough to produce good crops during the rainy season but at this time of the year (April/May) everywhere is rather parched. It was just as well, otherwise we wouldn't be here! Back 'home' just before dusk, then along to the water point for a shower. Fortunately, whoever was in charge of the waterworks hadn't moved out. I suppose the installation would, in due course, be handed over to the Somalis. (Incidentally, during the recent troubles in Somalia (Aug/Sept 1993) it was announced over the radio that 20,000 Somalis were starving in and around the Liboi area. During my time there the indigenous population was, "nil"?) Maybe the water borehole had attracted a nucleus of peasant farmers which later snowballed.

It did not take long to pack up the camp and generally tidy the site the following day as the staff were very eager to vacate those few square yards of Africa.

Once again, and for the last time, the 'dust bole' was tackled. This time I donned my gasmask which made breathing much easier but was a terrible thing to wear in a hot climate! With a good load in the back of the vehicle the bumps in the road were ironed-out enabling us to make good progress, arriving at HQ in the early afternoon inevitably feeling hot and dusty.

On making enquiries about the facilities for having a bath someone pointed to the sea, about a mile away! Apparently the daily routine was, for those so wishing, to pile into a vehicle, drive down to the beach, remove clothes and wade out, or swim, to a spot where the sea was a little cooler than inshore. Usually three or four 'bods' who wanted a 'warm bath' would go down before 6.00 pm and those who preferred a cooler swim would go any time between sunset and midnight, in the moonlight!

There didn't appear to be much activity in and around Kismayu and I cannot say we were overworked. A few other Units were, like us, hanging around awaiting orders to proceed northwards to Mogadishu. One of the more popular branches of the army, the NAAFI (Navy, Army & Air Force Institute), had established a Depot for the sale of provisions, tinned goods, bottled drinks, etc, to unit messes but trade was slack, consequently we were able to invest in more bottled drinks, tinned foods for the Mess than is usual! For ourselves a fair stock of cigarettes, soap, toothpaste and other household requisites.

The local water supply had been sabotaged consequently water for domestic purposes had been shipped all the way from Mombasa, Kenya, in 4 gallon cans (debris)! Hundreds of them, of which a great many were empty due to leakage!

Sometime before Kismayu was occupied by the East African Forces three enemy cargo ships had sought refuge in the off-shore harbour anchorage, and when activity was hotting-up on land and sea the captains decided to scuttle the ships and, with the crews, beat a hasty retreat to Mogadishu. One of the ships was in fairly deep water with only the funnel and masts showing above water. The second was half submerged with the stern awash, but No. 3 was almost high and dry; the forward holds, deck and superstructure well above the waterline. It had obviously settled on a shallow sloping sandbank. While Arthur and I were sweating it out in Liboi our more adventurous colleagues, on

arrival in Kismayu, had lost no time in prowling around to see what was on 'offer'! One of the most useful 'finds' was an Electrolux paraffin-operated fridge, in fact there were two. The larger one went into our Mess and the other to the Officers Mess. What a pleasant change to enjoy a cold drink, non liquid 'bully beef' and butter. Venturing further afield they managed to board No 3 ship, had a look around for anything that would come in handy and then work out a plan of action.

Their plan of action was, hire a dhow, sail out to the ship, tie up near the stern on the seaboard side, clamber aboard and then help themselves to anything they thought would come in useful! Such as half a ton of plywood, from 3 ply to 5 ply and any other useful timber, (This pleased our Sikh carpenter who was always after sawn wood for repairs to the wooden bodied ambulances.), rope, paint, plus other items of interest, including the ship's cat! A black and white 'moggy' which enjoyed life ashore, living on the best 'bully beef', and a very friendly creature it was to have around.

Not long after that little episode, sheer looting, piracy, or whatever you like to call it, the Royal Navy appeared on the scene to 'take stock', which rather dashed all further hopes of exploration, Two other ships came in while we there. the Hospital ship which plied between Aden and Durban collecting long term patients for hospitalization from Ports enroute and an East African Navy minesweeper which had on board an ex-colleague of brother Charlie and Brian Fowlers', so the three of us helped ourselves to a boat on the beach one evening and rowed out for a social visit. It made a pleasant change to have a cool sea breeze to help the beer down,

A few days after my arrival on the scene the news came through that we would be moving northwards to Mogadishu (**Muqdisho**) within a couple of days so a visit to the NAAFI store was necessary to replenish stocks. The QM had a case of jam surplus to requirements so managed to swap it for a case of tinned fruit. We reckoned 4 cases of beer would suffice and that's all we could pay for but the NAAFI chap pleaded with us to take more as he had such a large stock in and very few customers. He even agreed to let us have 7 cases 'on tick', with each case containing 48 bottles. That lot kept us going for about three weeks. Our Mess system for those who wanted a beer had to sign for it and pay later! Not a very satisfactory system because certain persons conveniently forgot to sign the book!

Departure date loomed closer which pleased us all in spite of the enjoyable evening swim in a warm sea that we would miss. The first item to be loaded into the Allen's particular vehicle was the fridge (Which gave us perfect service until we left Addis Ababa in January 1942. (The hundreds of miles it traveled over rough roads did it more good than harm!).The cat was also dumped into the back of the ambulance and whenever we stopped he/she would jump out to dig a little hole in the sand, but we couldn't train it to jump back in.

The distance from Kismayu to 'Mog' is around 350 miles along an earth road (in 1941). A few miles into the journey the, wide, River Juba was crossed on a pontoon bridge and soon after that a huge metal sign with the word 'EQUATOR' stamped on it loomed up, so we were back into the Northern Hemisphere. The surrounding countryside was rather flat and uninteresting with a few Somali villages scattered along the route but later in the day we passed through a very fertile area in which were large patches of cultivated land, some with growing crops, obviously under irrigation and probably Italian controlled judging by the civilized looking factory and houses we noticed in the middle distance,

I cannot remember whether we spent 1½ or 2½ days on the journey to 'Mog', not that it matters, but arrive we did, being directed to high ground on the outskirts of the town at the base of the lighthouse, thus having a decent view overlooking the town, harbour and, in the distance, the airfield. A bonus was a pleasant breeze off the sea. Our billet was a very large wooden shed which, when cleaned up, was quite respectable although the interior became a little warm during the day, not that we spent much time in it between 8.00am and 4.00pm. It was here I sampled my first ever scorpion sting, not a very pleasant experience.

The Italians had declared Mogadishu an "open town" and therefore it escaped being bombed from the air or bombarded from the sea. Essential supplies, water and electricity, carried on normally with Italian and Somali personnel but under the watchful supervision of South African Army engineers. Judging by the number of high ranking Staff Officers around, occupying all the decent hotels, Force HQ in Nairobi must be severely depleted! The Italian civilian population appeared to be a little apprehensive about their future movements. Like the Prisoners Of War I think they were shipped off to South Africa.

For a pleasant change our CQMS managed to find some reasonable rations for us, fresh fruit, fresh vegetables and, almost fresh meat. The cat enjoyed its personal ration of beef-steak.

The Unit didn't linger for long in the Capital of Somalia. After a week we were off on a long haul through Somalia, the Ogaden, to Jijjiga (**Jijiga**) in Abyssinia (Ethiopia). A four day safari which would take us towards, and nearer, the 'front line' again. For the first 100 miles into the interior the road was tarmac and well maintained since it probably carried a fair amount of traffic to the fertile area and town where the tarmac came to an abrupt end. Crops, bananas and tropical fruit trees growing on either side of the road looked very healthy; probably due to an irrigation system. Prior to reaching this 'Garden of Eden' the countryside was very flat, dry and covered in places with dry thorn scrub bush. Most uninteresting. After Villagio -?? (Cannot remember the other two names) progress became slower but we managed to make our night-stop, Bulu Burti (**Buulobarde**), with an hour to spare before dusk, giving us time to organize our sleeping accommodation in a large, grotty, corrugated iron barn that reeked of a non appetizing odour.

Jigjiga, Ethiopia (Abyssinia)

Next morning up at the crack of dawn for a 7.30am start. By 8.00am we hadn't moved a yard! The CO's dog had sniffed the morning air then shot off upwind at great speed for a 'honeymoon' with a bitch with a posse of Drivers in hot pursuit. Why we all had to hang around when there were other Officers capable of leading a convoy remains a mystery.

The road meandered on through dry, barren land and Somali settlements. The land being overgrazed by the herds of camels, cattle, goats and sheep. In the event of a drought, God help them all.

On reaching an Administrative HQ in a small town called Belet Uen (**Belet Huen** or **Beledweyne**) the Allen Brothers made a slight detour to call on the new Administrator, a District Officer, whom Charlie knew from months gone by in Southern Tanganyika. Our friend had only been in residence two or three days but had made himself very comfortable in the ex Italian Administrator's house! Plush furnishings with very comfortable easy chairs which we were rather reluctant to leave after partaking of tea and biscuits and a half hour's chat.

Apparently, a new organization had been formed to administer the country, O.E.T.A. (Occupied Enemy Territory Administration but more commonly referred to as "Odds & Ends of Tanganyika Administration"! So quite a few of the Admin Officers from the three territories Tanganyika, Kenya & Uganda who had volunteered for army service found themselves sorting out the Somalis problems.

Having played 'truant' for half an hour we had to rattle along at a fair pace to catch up with the convoy which had forged ahead instead of stopping for a midday break. That night, and the one following, we all slept under the stars and very refreshing it was too. On day 3 the country was as flat as a pancake covered with large stones and boulders with the odd bush here and there. From 11.00am onwards the view was one long mirage with the distant hills 'floating in water'! Even the vehicles in front looked queer in the shimmering haze. One object we passed on the side of the road was a well directed large bomb dropped by one of our planes, on the retreating Italians, which had failed to detonate with its business end well and truly embedded to a depth of about 12 - 16 inches in the concrete-like ground. A lovely 'toy' for some unsuspecting Somali to play with!

Some of the larger settlements we passed through had strange names such as Sasabaneh (**Sasbeneh**), Gorahei (**K'orahe**), Gabra Dareh (**Kebri Dehar**) and the easy one to remember, Graba Hor! That's what it sounded like?

Day 4 (I think). The terrain changed from an arid rock-strewn desert to light woodland but no sign of human habitation. Judging by the vegetation and species of Acacia trees growing in the area, one can only assume that the land becomes somewhat soggy during the rainy season. In fact to prove such an assumption we were traveling along the bumpy track when, out of the blue (or dusty grey), we were driving up onto an embankment covered with a wide tarmac roadway! "Thank God for that we murmured". Two miles further along it came to an abrupt end! We were back to the dusty track! In the afternoon the convoy struck another of those bottomless pits of choking pulverized black soil covering hundreds of acres. The vehicles ploughed into it in 'Line astern' which soon became 'Line Abreast'; eventually it was every man for himself. Feeling his way through the 'fog', Charlie was driving and had made a wide detour to evade the choking dust. On our way back to where we thought the road should be I noticed a stationary Staff car about 70 yards away so very slowly we drove towards it to render assistance if necessary. As we drew nearer I saw the Officer concerned was in the 'Top Brass' category. We pulled up a short distance away and as he walked across he said, "Hello Jack. Fancy meeting you here". Followed by, "Good God, Charlie here as well, Have you got Percy (father) in the back?" He was John Dew, once one of our neighbours at Sao Hill who sold his estate in 1938 and moved up to Kenya, now a Colonel or Lt Colonel (Staff).

After a good gossip we all thought we'd better carry on with the war effort with the Col leading the way and not looking forward to the prospect of trying to overtake about 70 vehicles ahead, on a narrow earth road. However, luck was with him. Our convoy had stopped once clear of the dust bowl for a check-up to make sure all vehicles were safely through.

The landscape changed yet again to dry scrub thorn bush for a while and then again to undulating, sparsely wooded, country with a good covering of grass, and inhabited by Abyssinians or Somalis with lots of well fed camels around.

The Abyssinian town of Jigjiga was eventually reached. Not a very large place, and gave the impression of being a little primitive. Our little patch for camping was a mile and a half to the East along the Hargeisha (**Hargeysa**) road on a slightly sloping ridge devoid of trees or any other vegetation, overlooking the airfield and town. In the distance, about 10 miles Westwards the rugged hills loomed up. This was where the opposing forces were busy battling it out for control of the Mardo Pass, a strategic point which had to be taken by our troops without undue delay! The Italians were well dug-in on the mountainside consequently there were plenty of casualties who kept us busy for a change.

At night the battle carried on. From our viewpoint the 'star shells' and other flashes and bangs reminded one of a firework display. After a few days the opposition gave up and beat a hasty retreat to Harrar (**Harer**) and beyond. Harrar had been declared an 'open town' therefore escaped aerial bombardment and other onslaughts by artillery, etc.

One of the casualties brought in was our old friend and ex-colleague, John Riess, who had left us to join the East African 'Recce' Squadron just over a year ago. The Sgt Major, QM and I went along to see him but he was still in a state of shock after having stopped a piece of shrapnel which had shattered his ankle and foot. With others he was airlifted to?? (Somewhere) and eventually South Africa. (There is a sequel to this much later on). Incidentally, the local hospital was dreadful but the best Jigjiga could offer.

Two days after our arrival we were treated to more entertainment. About 11.00am three SAAF bombers, Blenheims, I think, came over heading westwards on a bombing raid. An hour later they returned and had just passed overhead making for their base when three more SAAF planes came into the circuit to land on the Jigjiga Airfield. They were 2 Junkers and an old Vickers 'Valencia' bringing in Advance Force HQs and supplies. No1 aircraft landed and taxied to its parking place, No 2 was taxiing along and No 3 had just touched down when 'out of the blue', literally, traveling at great speed, appeared a small Italian bi-plane fighter aircraft. The pilot, probably thinking he was going to write-off three bombers, almost wiped out the 'Top Brass'! Within a minute all three aircraft were burning fiercely and how all the occupants escaped injury is a mystery. In his very maneuverable fighter aircraft the pilot made a couple more passes shooting up buildings and then chased after a 'Hurricane' that had just taken-off from a nearby satellite airstrip, and shot that down as well! With smoke billowing from its tail the Hurricane pilot managed to land it back on the airstrip. Why the Italian did not take a few potshots at us will never be known as we were a sitting target with our six large white tents plus three lines of smaller khaki ones and plenty of vehicles around, nothing camouflaged, not even a Red Cross pointing skywards. However, one of the ambulances was hit by a stray bullet which frightened the two drivers! They just happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time, driving along the main road at the end of the airfield, but no serious damage just a hole through the roof and one side.

The Unit was soon on its way again. This time to Harrar, an old Abyssinian town nestling in a mountainous region about 50 miles further westwards from Jigjiga. To get there the Mardo Pass had to be negotiated. Whilst in retreat, the Italians had, quite naturally, blown up the road in many places as it wound its way up the mountainside. The South African Engineers had patched it up quite quickly but with the volume of traffic passing over the repaired holes the loose stone and rock filling had compressed causing the nearside of the repair to sink lower than the offside resulting in one peering over the edge of a precipice at an off putting angle from the cab of a lorry. A most frightening experience.

The convoy crawled slowly up the hillsides to an altitude much higher than previously encountered en route, and into a different environment. Cool during the day, chilly and damp at night. We passed through the (new) town where a lot of constructional work was being undertaken by the Italians, following the Italo / Abyssinian war in 1936/37.

Our allotted camping area was about 2 miles out among the hills and valleys. In fact we had two slots. One for the vehicles and African personnel with a second for the Europeans, both being about half a mile apart. The latter situated in a flat-ish valley where Italian families had settled in what appeared to be small-holdings. Anyway, they supplied us with fresh vegetables and whatever fruit was available. Quite a change. It was here our 'shipwrecked moggy' left us for more comfortable surroundings. From Europe to Harrar, a truly well traveled cat!

Where the vehicles and drivers, etc, were parked was a hospital of sorts occupied by a few casualties, most of whom were West African askaris and therefore very difficult to converse with

unless a 'pidgin English' speaking askari happened to be available. Our three RAMC lads had the misfortune to be delegated to look after them, with our Afrikaans MO, Capt Theron. My first job was to find an Italian civilian hospital tucked away, half way down a steep valley and under the control of civilian medical staff, two members of which were in charge of the X-ray Dept, which we required to examine two casualties in order to locate bullets embedded in their thighs. I came to the conclusion that it was a Catholic Mission hospital as the nurses were wearing 'Nuns habits'. However, in spite of the shortage of X-ray materials and, not showing much enthusiasm, they agreed carry out the work necessary.

After a day or two I was laid low with a potent tummy bug. Hardly the ideal place or surroundings for such an ailment!

Some of us, during our off duty moments, went in to Harrar, both old and new, to see what the place could offer which was not very much! The new town had the beginnings of a concrete jungle. Iron girders and concrete blocks everywhere. A few Italian owned shops were still open for business but their stock was rather low. There was a cafe of sorts where a reasonable cup of coffee was on tap, Espresso! The old walled town was much more interesting dating back many many years when it was necessary to keep out the marauding tribes. The place was overcrowded, overpopulated, choc-a-block with houses, huts and hovels with narrow passages in between the buildings. The alleyways were full of filth. There was a Palace, the Duke of Harrar's residence, Prince 'something or the other', Haille Selasse's son! However Abyssinia's second city is no place for Europeans.

By way of recreation some of the other lads went duck shooting on a nearby lake taking with them their .303 Service rifle! Rather harsh treatment for the birds. However, they managed to shoot two or three but unfortunately their ducks happened to be Coots! Hardly what one could call a 'table bird'!?

Awash

On about the eighth day in camp Messrs Capt Theron and S/Sgt. Allen J R received Orders to proceed to a place called Awash to establish a Medical Aid Post. This was about 120 miles further along the road towards Addis Ababa (**Adis Abeba**). The Italians, having blown-up the road bridge over the Awash River, the road- way up the side of the gorge and also the large railway bridge over the gorge, had hoped to halt our advancing troops in this area but having failed in this endeavour and after a six hour battle the enemy was beating a hasty retreat. Their next stop being Addis Ababa!

In Harrar the MO and I managed to get ourselves organised for an early departure the following day. With an ambulance loaded up to the roof with equipment and staff we set off. After a few miles the road wound down the hills until it leveled out at a much lower altitude where the countryside was back to the familiar scrub-bush vegetation and the air temperature was hot.

We passed through Dire Dawa, a large town which could boast of a railway station and railway workshops. The line ran between Djibouti, on the Red Sea coast, and Addis Ababa. Most of the rolling stock was penned up in Djibouti and since that place was occupied by the 'Vichy' French it looked like remaining there for the duration of hostilities.

At Dire Dawa the Italians accused the SAAF of bombing the place with Mustard gas bombs! But when the truth came out an ammunition dump had been hit which contained some of their own gas shells left over from the Italian/Abyssinian war in 1936/37.

After a bumpy ride we eventually reached Awash, and what a place. Hot, dusty, bare and not a tree in sight. As for quarters it was a case of 'sort something for yourselves'. Two platoons of the 2nd Btn 6th Regt, KAR being the first in had the pick of the buildings, mainly the Railway Station and adjacent offices. After searching around we eventually decided the Petrol Station, about 200 to 300 yards out along the Addis road would have to do for us. The building had three rooms and was rather small. A single room with just enough space to take a couple of campbeds with a gap of about 4ft between them with sufficient room left at the foot of the beds to take a camp table and two chairs to live in. Another smaller room had to suffice as a bathroom. It's just as well the army issue canvas bath does not take up much room. Room No 3 was the loo of the "Asiatic" squat type. In front of the building were two manually operated fuel pumps, one petrol and the other diesel. The former tank had been emptied but diesel fuel was still available in the latter! Before touching either we made sure they were not 'booby trapped'! The Medical orderlies, driver, and my Cook 'cum' dhobi, 'cum' scrounger, had to suffer the pleasantries of tenting in a very hot climate!

Little did we realise that for the next six weeks that AGIP petrol office would be our home, tho' in my case it dragged on for eight weeks! Unfortunately the building faced West so from about 2.00pm onwards the sun blazed through the windows warming the place to 100+ degrees F. By midnight the temperature was down to about 85 F. It's one of the drawbacks of living in the Great African Rift Valley.

On the day after our arrival we, the Doctor and I, went round various places to introduce ourselves to the other army units to let it be known that we were in business for the inevitable morning "Sick Parade". So popular with the African serviceman.

Much to our consternation there was also a POW Camp, a small, high, wire mesh contraption containing a corrugated iron building and housing approximately 250 'Habashi' (Ethiopian) and Somali nationals who had joined the Italian Army. Conditions within in were dreadful. Overcrowded, a lack of reasonable sanitation facilities and knee deep in filth. Daily, we had to tackle that lot until their departure to wherever. On one such visit a bed bug must have crawled on to my shoe and made itself at home on my stocking until I dossed down on my bed half an hour later. It then decided to seek a refuge and deposit its eggs, or whatever bugs deposit. Generally the seams between the canvas were favourable sites. A few days later my Orderly, when making the bed, found some of the little devils crawling around that called for immediate attention. Two kettles full of boiling water around all the seams soon dealt with that problem with no repeat performances.

The Medical Dispensary in the town also received our attention. Whoever was in charge had disappeared leaving the Caretaker to keep an eye on things. So before the locals looted it, we did! There were lots of useful items but all the instructions for administering them were in Italian, nevertheless, we helped ourselves to medicines, phials, dressings and concoctions Dannie Theron thought would be useful. Since we had to attend to the ailments of the townsfolk as well we felt no

guilt! As luck would have it very few of the locals came along for treatment, which was just as well since the replenishment of stocks was still a little difficult as the 'powers-that-be' in Addis Ababa were not fully organised to issue medical supplies to outlandish places.

The No 1 priority for Awash was the railway. The Italians had blown-up (down!) the large box-girder railway bridge spanning the Awash River Gorge, and to repair that on the original site would necessitate a major constructional undertaking which would take months to complete. So a new route had to be found to link up the two ends as soon as possible. A Company of South African Army Engineers was soon on the job and within a very short time had surveyed a new route about three miles in length which would entail a steep descent (in relation to railways) to the river and ascent on the West side of the gorge. The Sappers worked like slaves in that awful heat, dismantling the useable section of the wrecked bridge, moving it to the new site, reassembling it, building fairly high piers and then rolling the whole thing over the river adopting the 'Cantilever' principle (as shown on the illustrations!). All that plus bulldozing the new route, blasting their way up the side of the rocky gorge and laying the tracks only took six weeks to complete, but not without incident! We had to cope with the sick and injured. Most mornings a Pick-up truck would roll up with a few 'bodies' requiring medical attention, At least those patients and the doctor could gabble away in their own language, Afrikaans. When dealing with Africans yours truly had to interpret.

Apart from the Italians breaching the railway line the South African Air Force did quite well with a couple of well directed bombs on the Awash Railway Workshops and Sheds, at the same time making a mess of the marshalling yard and main line tracks. Before trains could operate between Addis Ababa and Awash the Franco - Ethiopian Railway Company had to send a work squad along to lay new rails. Fortunately there was a pile of them, undamaged, at hand. The engine turntable (triangle) was serviceable so when that was connected to the main line the Railway Authority was in business between the two towns. Until the three mile gap was closed goods and passengers were ferried across by an Army Service Corps transport unit.

Within a few days of our arrival in Awash the rest of our Unit came through on their way to Addis Ababa which had been declared an 'open town' and therefore had not suffered any bombardment by land or air. The East and West African Forces actually reached the outskirts of the town first but for reasons political they were ordered to halt to allow the South Africans to pass through and have the honour of receiving the surrender of the Capital from one of the many Italian Generals floating around.

After a brief stop our colleagues wished us well and in true soldierly manner hoped we would not melt in that heat. Our Quartermaster had the forethought to leave a few days rations with us saying, "When that lot's gone you're on your own"! Unbeknown to him a Ration Depot would soon be in business in one of the railway buildings. On the subject of rations we managed quite well once the new Depot was established. Instead of the 'oozy' bully beef we enjoyed Walls tinned sausages, most excellent, followed by South African tinned fruit twice daily. It is surprising how many non-existent European in-patients we catered for! Although I must confess, some of the excess rations were given, for the journey, to those who were sent off for further medical care in Addis Ababa, once the trains were functioning in case the engine broke down somewhere along the route which was a regular occurrence.

Two days after our arrival an Italian, riding a white horse, came along the road and gave us a wave so I returned the compliment and at the same time kept an eye on him to make sure he reported his presence to the OC of the KAR Company. Apparently he had been the administrator for the Awash region and when hostilities warmed up he had taken to the bush, sensible fellow! After debriefing he was sent to the 'civilian compound' in Dire Dawa. The horse proved popular with the KAR officers but what they fed it on...?

Ten days, or so, later we had another surprise visitor. This time a genuine Italian Army Medical Officer who came over from the KAR lines to introduce himself and explain the reason for his presence in Awash. That was a difficult conversation since he spoke no English and our command of the Italian language was, at best, minimal at this stage. With the odd word of very basic 'schoolboys' Latin and a lot of arm waving thrown in, we managed! Signor Doktor's age would be somewhere in the region of 33 yrs. He was a quite cheerful character with a good sense of humour, war or no war. The reason for his presence in this 'Holiday Resort' was to oversee the health of Italian evacuees moving South. Now that the railway was operational-ish from Addis Ababa the 'warlords' there decided the time had come to evacuate the majority of Italian women, children, frail and infirm to

somewhere more suited for their wellbeing and survival. I believe South Africa was their destination. Because of the break in the railway line at Awash the passengers had to detrain, travel a short distance by road and entrain on the other side of the gorge for the next leg of their journey. The medics at Force HQ considered it advisable to position an Italian doctor at Awash to cope with any emergencies, although there were Nuns and Italian nurses traveling with the evacuees. Most of his time seemed to be taken up with dealing with pregnant women. Every second day a train loaded with between 200 to 230 passengers came through. This little exercise lasted quite a while, hence a daily visit by our 'friend' for a morning cup of coffee, biscuit and an English/Italian language lesson. It isn't known where he was sent after leaving Awash.

As the days passed by good progress was being made on the railway reconstruction job. But, looking at the gradient one wondered whether the poorly maintained locomotives would have sufficient power to haul anything to the crest of the gorge. As for the descent, an efficient braking system was an absolute necessity.

The local 'Habashi' (Ethiopians) and the more war-like Galla tribe came in once a week, from near and far, to sell or buy whatever happened to be on offer. Anything from salt to camels. The stench from the assembled mass of animals and humanity could be a little overpowering. The Galla tribesmen could be a bit barbaric when dealing with their neighbouring tribes when away from civilization. Acts of naughtiness such as bodily mutilation against their foes occurred whenever the opportunity arose. We had one unfortunate Habashi lad, aged about 7, who was brought in for medical attention having had his penis cut off at the root!! Nasty!!!!

Studying the local natural habitat of the Ethiopian hornet, species unknown, was also a fascinating pastime. Particularly since a rather vicious looking specimen decided to build it's 'hive' of little mud 'cubicles' on the wall just above the pillow of my bed. If the fellow misbehaved it's homemaking activities would have come to an abrupt halt. However, live and let live. Fortunately it was not interested in anything except the building of it's mud huts and so survived, carrying on demonstrating a part of the life cycle of a questionable species of the hornet family. It slaved away for two long days just on cubicle No 1 leaving a small hole on the top into which it deposited it's egg, lava or something. Soon after a most insignificant looking insect would fly in, fuss around for awhile, halt, disappear into the hole and do whatever the male of the species has to do, probably fertilise whatever was inside then depart. Then 'mother' would return carrying a green caterpillar 1" long by an 1/8" wide and well anaesthetized with hornet 'embalming' fluid. That would then be stuffed in to the hole and sealed in with mud. All ready for 'Junior's' first few meals. After the sixth 'cubicle' was filled and finished 'mother' departed. I had hoped to see what emerged from the 'chambers' but my departure came first.

The railway construction progressed well. With the box-girder bridge in place and the and the two sections of lines joined together the moment of decision arrived. 'Wanted', one locomotive to test the gradients and bends on either side of the gorge. All went well until the loco was halfway across the bridge when the funnel contacted a low cross member. Off came the funnel with a resounding clang as it hit the iron-work but, as luck would have it, didn't drop into the river. In due course another engine appeared on the scene and after all necessary modifications were completed the trains rattled through to Dire Dawa once again. Within three days of finishing the job the Engineers were off to the Middle East.

Towards the end of our presence in Awash a signal came through telling me to report to a Capt Black (whom I had met somewhere before), M0 to a Company of the 2/6 KAR stationed in a place called Asba Littorio back towards Dire Dawa from Awash. I was to take the ambulance, two orderlies and some medical equipment with me immediately! So off I went. In due course I found my destination, 7 miles off the beaten track, and duly reported to the M0 and C0. After a while I asked the M0 why my presence was really necessary. Apparently, a platoon of the KAR Company, with a Lieutenant in charge had gone out on patrol to search-out a gang of Somali "Shifita" (Brigands/ Bandits) that were marauding Ethiopian settlements about 30 miles away, over the hills, and deep in the bush towards the Ogaden area in Somalia. After a few days word filtered through to the effect that the whole platoon made contact with the Shifita, engaged them in a skirmish but was outnumbered by the Somalis who annihilated the patrol. Fortunately, two Abyssinian guides who accompanied the patrol managed to elude the slaughter and were therefore able to bring back a fairly detailed account of the battle.

There was plenty of activity around the place next morning since zero hour into the hinterland was scheduled for 2.00 pm. A little late I thought! Eventually the small Force consisting of the CO, a couple of Lieutenants, a Sgt Major, two platoons of askaris, the MO, myself, three South Africans with an armoured car, five lorries, an ambulance, a water bowser, and last but not least a lorry complete with a tractor on board, set off along an indifferent track to?(I never did find out due to the lack of a map of the area). Sometime around 6.00pm the convoy reached a small settlement so the CO decided that that was far enough after our slow progress through the hills and valleys. While the others struggled with tents and sundry items of camp equipment the MO and I made ourselves comfortable in the ambulance. Bunk beds and an electric light! In due course a palatable dinner was served thanks to the Company cook.

The dawn was damp, dull and chilly which called for the warmth of the army Greatcoat and, as luck would have it, I had mine with me. After a reasonable start and driving through a very fertile area sparsely settled by the indigenous population we eventually came to journey's end so far as the track was concerned. From now on it was a question of 'bush bashing', with the few tons of armoured car leading the way and acting as a bulldozer. A guide was picked up in a village. Progress had been slow but was now even slower, grinding along in 2nd gear and no hope of a higher ratio as the leader dodged around doing his best to avoid the denser parts of the bush and woodland. By this time the sun had warmed the atmosphere so it did not take long for some of the vehicles to overheat thereafter causing quite a number of stops to be made. However, we finally reached our destination. A small patch of Ethiopia. Where? A blank space on the map. By this time the hour had crept round to 5.00pm which meant two important factors, pitch camp and eat before nightfall. No lights or fires after 6.45pm just in case any Somalis (Shifita) happened to be around. A case of 'early to bed' which was perhaps as well since our Orders were "to Stand-to" at 5.00am in preparation for a dawn attack! Which did not materialise?

After a leisurely wash, brush-up, and breakfast the CO briefed the assembled company on his plan of action for the day. Nothing really exciting, merely to search the area, in the first instance, within a radius of 800 yards from the camp for any evidence of a skirmish. The guide whom the CO had picked up at the last village we passed through yesterday knew just where to lead us. He took us to an area where a few outcrops of rocks occurred and, judging by what we found, was obviously the battle ground where the ill-fated Platoon was annihilated. The only evidence found were skeletons and skulls, all that remained of the corpses after the hyenas and vultures had picked the bones clean. Rather gruesome, to say the least. Not knowing who was friend or foe all the bones found were dumped into sacks and taken back to Asba Littorio for burial. Apart from spent cartridge cases and bones the only other piece of equipment found was a small fragment of khaki uniform. The victors must have gone home with a few spare rifles, ammunition, uniforms and other equipment!

After that bizarre morning's experience the tractor was offloaded and, complete with dozer blade, improved the depth of a small depression, which was lined with a large tarpaulin followed by many gallons of water from the bowser, and in we went for a good tepid soak. Most refreshing.

With 'Mission accomplished' the CO said we would be returning to base the following day without having to spend another night out enroute. The next morning I had a friendly chat with the CO, whose two brothers I had met on a few occasions when they were farming in the Iringa District during the early '30s. Lunch over, I took leave of my colleagues then bumped back to Awash.

A day or two after my return to Awash the inevitable occurred! A goods train bound for Dire Dawa came to grief, in the early hours, on the descent section of new track to the bridge. Due to a brake failure at the top of the incline the train gathered speed as it traveled downhill for about a quarter of a mile before the engine failed to negotiate a bend, derailed itself and made rather a mess. Sadly, the four occupants on the engine footplate were killed. (Photocopies showing various aspects of the gorge etc. are at the end of this 'manuscript'. With thanks to my brother for buying a camera in Addis and sending it along to me. An identical model to the one stolen from my kit way back in Isiolo, and which was still in service in 1963!).

Long before the track was repaired after the accident we were on our way to pastures anew. The Doctor's marching orders came through first. He had to report to a South African Medical Unit somewhere about 40 miles south of Addis Ababa. The Journey by ambulance was somewhat bumpy and also further than we had anticipated, consequently I had to decline the hospitality offered by the SA medics. So, after bidding my friend Dannie Theron farewell, I beat a hasty retreat back to 'Home sweet Home', with fingers crossed hoping the brigands were not out on the prowl.

Addis Ababa

My Orders came through a few days later. I was to return to my base unit in Addis Ababa. Welcome news, since I had seen quite enough of the countryside around Awash. With regard to the railway, that was back to 'square one' with the train from Addis Ababa terminating at Awash until the necessary repairs to the track lower down were completed.

For some reason I decided to travel to Addis Ababa by train which turned out to be the wrong decision! Normally, there is a passenger coach attached to a goods train but on this occasion that was not to be. I arranged for the staff and medical equipment etc, to go off in the ambulance to give the driver something to do for a change, whilst I had a smoother Journey along the rails! All the tentage, and my own kit, was dumped in a goods van, the tentage being so arranged that I could sit or stretch out in comfort, and with the side doors wide open, to enjoy the passing views, and to allow the cool breeze to waft through.

All went well for the first five or six miles when the train came to a steaming halt to load up the tender with firewood for the engine from a great heap of the stuff alongside the track. That performance took ages and how far would it take us? The last item aboard was an unfortunate goat, alive, and doing its best to balance itself on top of the logs! I think someone climbed up to hold it when we set off.

The locomotive was suffering from lack of maintenance. There were numerous stops to stem the flow of steam and hot water from various joints and pipes. So far as the driver and fireman were concerned time was no object. At every station, about four, the crew would wander off for a cup tea or 'tedje' the local 'brew', then wander back to make any necessary adjustments.

By 6.00pm we were still 30 miles from journey's end consequently the next couple of hours had to be endured in a dark and cold goods wagon. I learned my lesson! Avoid Ethiopian railways. Incidentally, the chaps I had sent off by road had arrived at the unit lines during the afternoon. However, there was a van awaiting me at the station to whisk me off to the Unit HQ. This was about three miles away up a long hill. The altitude was somewhere between 7 - 8,000 ft ASL. Hence the nip in the air, which I considered damned cold after having spent a few weeks in one of Ethiopia's hotter regions.

Apparently, when the unit arrived in Addis Ababa the quarters allocated were somewhere near the railway station amongst all the muck and flies. All rather depressing, so I was told. But within a week or three better accommodation was found, in fact palatial in comparison to what we have had in the past. All 'mod cons', electricity and water laid on (hot and cold). A plentiful supply of rooms including dining, sitting, bath and spacious bedrooms to accommodate 12 of us.

Generally speaking life wasn't so bad in the Capital of Ethiopia. Plenty of off-duty time to go shopping (?). Quite a number of Italians were still in business trying to sell off their wares at greatly reduced prices, especially cameras and watches, the best makes too! Bartering also came into the game. One of the lads managed to swop a packet of 50 cigarettes for a brand new Leica camera, worth quite a lot of money! I bought two excellent wrist watches for next to nothing and both kept me in good time for years. Lovely glass bowls inlaid with gold or silver designs were on offer for a pound or two but unfortunately too fragile to withstand bumpy journeys until one returned home, whenever that would be!

A week or two after my arrival in the place I went down with an attack of malaria. The CO insisting I must go to hospital, which I thought was a waste of time, as I was quite capable of curing myself, in comfortable surroundings, However, his word was law. The hospital, run by the South African Medical Corps was dreadful. Dirty wards, the wash-rooms awash with water, toilets unserviceable and the food was beyond description. The general attitude of the Orderlies being 'take it or leave it'. Thank heavens I was discharged after three days as cured, but I knew otherwise, so retired to my cot and carried on with the treatment for another few days.

The routine activities of the Company continued. Ambulances going out to the isolated towns in Western Ethiopia where a few of our troops continued to be engaged in 'mopping up' duties, Although the war was virtually over there were some 10,000 Italian troops more or less penned up in the Gondar region in the North Western corner of the country, and they would be dealt with in due course.

In early September the Ethiopians celebrate what is called "Mescal". A feast of some sort and an excuse to enjoy a three-day binge where anything is likely to occur including the irresponsible firing of firearms fired in any direction! Expecting trouble the War Lords issued instructions to all army units to "stand to" for the duration of festivities from 6.00pm to 7.00am. I drew the short straw which landed me in the Orderly Room on 'telephone duty'. Trying to keep awake was most difficult. Yet, when I crawled on to my cot during the daytime all sleep evaded me. thanks to my noisy colleagues who had enjoyed cat-naps during their off-duty moments.

During those three days nothing of great importance happened, in spite of the many bangs throughout the night. What was noticeable though was that the Italian POW, mainly ambulance drivers we had burdened upon us, did not venture very far from their billets which were within the confines of our cantonment.

With the Italians came their ambulances. Far superior than ours - in fact there was no comparison. The 'fleet' consisted of five huge Mercedes Benz ambulances, four smaller of similar make (and absolutely gutless when laden with six adults), two converted Alfa Romeo overland coaches and a municipal bus, all diesel engined. It's just as well the Italians came with them because our mechanics knew nothing, or very little about diesel engines! All the Mercedes were very well appointed within. The larger version had two very comfortable 'easy' chairs, a 7 ft, long sprung couch, wash basin, with water laid on, electric lights and racks to accommodate four 'stretcher cases'. Seating accommodation for about 10 to 12 adults. The interior lining was a white plastic material spotlessly clean, like all the other furnishings, thanks to their drivers.

Sometime around the middle of September the CO, Johnnie Walker, became more affable than usual. He approached all the white NCOs individually to pass on the information that he would soon be leaving the unit on promotion to Lt Col to form a new Field Ambulance Company and would we like to join him? All the old hands were unanimous in saying "No thank you, sir, we prefer to remain in a Tanganyikan unit". The only 'takers' were the three RAMC lads who joined us in February. I think he got the message, 'Mr unpopular'! His successor duly appeared on the scene, another Tanganyika Medical Department doctor, Major Ken Edmondson, whom I first met way back in 1935, and a few times since. On a historical note he, with his wife, my parents and myself, sat round our indifferent radio at Sao Hill listening to King Edward VIII broadcasting his Abdication speech in December, 1936. (if my memory serves me correctly!).

The 'new boy' made no sweeping changes. Was polite to all his underlings and, unlike his predecessor, didn't wander around with a permanent scowl on his face.

A miscellaneous assortment of mishaps occurred during September. One of our Transport Officers' having dined and wine rather well in the town failed to negotiate a bridge over a deep ravine. He drove the staff car through the parapet, dropped 30ft. into the ravine with the car landing on its roof and was a complete write-off. The officer survived the bump but forever after suffered from 'double vision'. After removing a few useful components the wreck was abandoned. About three years later I met the gentleman concerned and he was still suffering from impaired vision.

Another serious problem arose - two of our African drivers went down with that infectious disease, typhus; which caused a panic. Sadly both died. All the bedding, clothing, etc, in the African lines had to be fumigated without delay. We couldn't find a decontamination unit within our own army groups so had to call on the services of the Italian Health Dept. The de-bugging squad was soon with us with the most ancient looking equipment, but it was very efficient in spite of resembling a 'Heath Robinson' cartoon, The fumigant was most powerful and pungent, bringing tears to our eyes plus choking as an added bonus for the supervisory staff. The Italians, of course, had breathing apparatus. We did contemplate wearing our gas-masks then decided the discomfort wasn't worth it! However, the exercise was a success; we had no further cases of typhus come to light.

Another not-so-serious mishap occurred one night. All the lights went out rather suddenly. Soon afterwards the Mechanic Sgt Major came staggering in after having been on the beer somewhere and cursing about the 'b****y' lack of light. In the course of a short, fairly incoherent conversation he told us that on the way back to camp in his breakdown truck a large pole had placed itself in front of the said vehicle which he couldn't avoid! It Just happened to be a pole carrying our electricity supply. When told what he had obviously done he decided his 'b****y' bed was the best place for him. The assembled company agreed. Fortunately, paraffin lamps were on hand.

Early in October I was off on my travels once again. This time rather a long way from 'home'. The destination was to be Asmara, in Eritrea, where I would be given further instructions. Addis

Ababa to Asmara is a long way, in fact some 850 miles between the two towns, with hardly a level or straight half-mile along the whole route. But that, I was to find out later.

Asmara, Eritrea & Adowa, Ethiopia

My small detachment consisted of 3 large and 2 small Mercedes ambulances, 2 converted overland coaches and our Ford V8 troop carrier, to carry all the impedimenta, fuel for the journey, water etc. etc. All the vehicles were driven by the Italian POW, with a couple of spare drivers thrown in. Six African Orderlies brought up the total number of mouths to be fed, including my cook/batman and my own, to twenty, So to make sure we didn't starve in a strange land I insisted a fortnights rations went on board.

The convoy eventually pulled out three hours later than anticipated. From the moment we left our 'patch' we began climbing the hills where the temperature dropped degree by degree. Round about the 9,000 ft. ASL mark the mist was swirling up the side of an escarpment making a dismal outlook. After 60 miles or so we came to the 'Passo Mussolini', a fine piece of Italian engineering where the road had been carved out of the mountain side. At one place there is a spur so rather than follow the side of the mountain a short cut was taken by tunneling through the rock for almost three quarters of a mile. It must have taken ages to drill through.

That evening we pulled into a rather bleak spot where one of my colleagues was in charge of a 'Staging Post' for the benefit of casualties' en-route from Desseye (**Dese**) to Addis. Thank heavens for army Great-coats, a most necessary item of uniform in these cold climes. The following day was a case of uphill and down dale to Desseye, a large town by Abyssinian standards, nestling in the swirling mists just below some very high hills shrouded in cloud. The rain did not improve the view. A hard-standing for all the vehicles was found near the hospital. A place I had to visit to find out whether any army inmates required a lift to Asmara. There was only one 'taker', a South African who thought he'd better rejoin his Unit. It was there I met the Ethiopian Emperor's (Haile Selassie) daughter, Princess T'sai (**Tsehai**), a very pleasant and attractive young lady who worked in the hospital alongside all the other nurses.

Day 3. Again, the most fantastic scenery en-route. High plateaus with vertical sides, mountains galore as far as the eye could see. The Italian road-making engineers must have had a flair for mountaineering. If a mountain happened to be in the way they would zig-zag the road up over the top and down the other side. This enabled me to take stock of the my convoy without having to stop. Hair-pin bends were 'ten a penny'. My Italian driver knew the route well so was forever keeping up a running commentary about the various places we passed through. If nothing else it improved my knowledge of the Italian language! That evening we parked on the outskirts of a small town, its name long forgotten without a decent map to refer to, where there was the most attractive view across a fairly large lake surrounded by mountains. In the middle of the lake a huge rocky island with a sparse covering of trees, and a house! Probably where the late Italian Administrator resided. A weekend bolt-hole perhaps? My South African passenger and I dined well that night thanks to one of the drivers who produced a very palatable 'pasta' meal, much better than my African cook/boy could ever produce.

Day 4. Through the early morning mists and the usual quota of hills and 'Passo's when, at midday, we reached the formidable 'Passo Toselli', so-named after the gentleman who engineered the road up and along the very solid and rock strewn mountain where, a month or two previously, an Italian Division had tried, unsuccessfully, to hold out from their excellent vantage points against the East African Division advancing from the south and an Indian Division advancing from the north. It was here that the Commander - in - Chief of the Italian colonial troops, the Duke D'Aosta, surrendered, which virtually ended the East African campaign, apart from the 10,000 Italians pinned up around Gondar. As one can imagine the road along the mountain-side was extremely rough after being mined, bombed by the SAAF's and shelled by the artillery. The Engineers had done their best to restore it to a passable state but it was a poor best. Fortunately the large Mercedes ambulances had eight gears forward so were able to crawl along at a very slow pace. As for the other vehicles????????? but when I stopped at the bottom of the mountain (Mt. Amba Alage) they all appeared within 15 minutes.

Our destination that evening was the large-ish Eritrean town called Decamere (**Dekemhare**) still many miles away, and the other side of another range of hills! Leaving Amba Alage the road improved so a little more speed was called for. The small 'gutless' Mercedes ambulances were inclined to hold us back whenever the slightest uphill slope appeared. Passing through the Makalle

(Mek'ele) area a strong wind was causing severe wind erosion to such an extent that in the none too distant future all plant life would disappear - and helped on by too many cattle and goats grazing on whatever they could find.

In the late afternoon the last range of hills before Decamere confronted us, Never before, or since, have I ever seen so many hairpin bends along one stretch of road, at least three per mile over a distance of 30+ miles. By the end of that journey I was reduced to a physical wreck due to the automatic reaction of my feet pressing hard on the floor board to slow down the vehicle at every corner!

By the time we reached the town the sun had long since set and although the place was ablaze with lights it was a question of where do we go from here. Fortunately a large signboard loomed up, 'Military Vehicle Park', so following the arrows into the maze of vehicles I eventually came to a large 'Gin Palace' (posh military caravan) to which I had to report. The occupants were a South African Service Corps captain, well 'sozzled', with an attractive young Italian lady on his lap chewing away at his neck. The door was open so I gave a polite cough followed by "Excuse me, Sir, have I your permission to park my convoy here for the night and if so, where?" His reply, " Sarge, go and park where you b****y well like. Don't you think she's lovely?" I had to agree with him that his choice was excellent! Following that little interlude off I went to sort out my own problems. Making sure the African Orderlies went to bed with a full stomach and the Italians, knowing what the town had to offer, left to fend for themselves. My South African passenger and I had to be satisfied with the 'good old army issue', which was adequate but monotonous. He tried to talk me into searching out a Bar/Restaurant for a drink and meal but I declined as a hot bath and bed were more in my line! On the way in I had noticed a 'Casa del Banio Publico' (Public Bath House) sign so decided to sample it in spite of the place looking a bit grotty. However, the water was hot and refreshing.

Asmara is about 30 miles from Decamere so there was no rush for an early start. My only worry being where to locate the person to whom I had to report, Asmara being a very large town.

On arrival in the town I found an inconspicuous place to park the vehicles while I continued on with my quest for the proverbial 'needle in a haystack'. An hour and a half later, after a 'Cook's Tour' of Asmara, I espied a sign painted on a wall on which was written " Army ET Centre " with lots of arrow signs painted along the wall in a certain direction. Knowing what the letters 'ET' stood for, not 'Extra Terrestrial' but 'Early Treatment' (for the 'Naughty' squaddies who'd been out on the 'tiles!') in true scout-like fashion, I followed the signs hoping they would lead me to a RAMC Officer/Sergeant/Orderly, and they did. Entering the disinfectant scented building I found a young doctor who, after I had explained my predicament, said, "Thank God for that! I thought you were a customer!" Whereupon he gave me directions to find the elusive building and person I was seeking.

The building was palatial, no doubt full of high ranking Staff Officers. My contact was only a Staff Captain who, after a short chat, directed me to yet another HQ for further instructions! This time it was to the 'War Office', a very large building with a maze of passages and dozens of rooms each with at least one occupant. Even with names on the doors it took me ages to find my man who soon had me on my way with further instructions to report to a British Motor Ambulance Convoy Unit billeted on the outskirts of the town along the Keren road,

By this time I was famished and rather thirsty so told the driver to head off in the direction of a cafe for refreshments. That didn't take too long to find and was quite respectable too, but heaven only knows what the concoction they called coffee was, some ersatz mixture with colouring added! But such a state of affairs had to be accepted as no goods or foodstuffs had been imported since the commencement of hostilities in May/June, 1940, although coffee is grown in Ethiopia.

The next undertaking was - find our companions! Luckily, the driver knew his geography of the town and in a very short space of time they were rounded up and sorted out. It was then off on another game of 'find the Unit'. At this point I'd better mention that Asmara had also been declared an 'open town' after a well-directed cluster of bombs had completely destroyed an important Italian Army GHQ.

The Ambulance Coy was no trouble to find so I reported my presence to the Sgt Major and CO in that order, The two gentlemen were told that my drivers were Italian POWs and the orderlies were African, That gave the 'British Army' something to think about! However, after much deliberation we came to an amicable decision concerning my lots sleeping, cooking and eating arrangements for the next couple of days. My accommodation was in the Sgts Mess which made quite a welcome change eating some decent meals cooked by a British cook.

My brief was to take over, from my newly found friends, the section Asmara to Adowa (**Adwa**) and, if necessary, beyond. A distance of 65 miles apart, along the Asmara to Gondar (**Gonder**) road. I spent a day or two familiarising myself with the setup in and around Asmara with regard to hospitals, Army Medical Store, Vehicle Repair Depot, etc, etc, all miles apart, My hosts were busy packing up in preparation for their impending departure to the Western Desert, During the few days with them I lost my liking for bagpipes! Over the wall, in the next cantonment, the 2nd Battalion, Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders were in residence complete with their band, and to hear the latter practicing was a fate almost worse than death!

The road out to Adowa, my base, was excellent. Tarmac all the way and passing through two small towns, Adi Ugri and Adi Quala (**Adi Kwala**). Further along near the Eritrea/Ethiopia Border there is a fairly large cemetery alongside the road and as we passed by the driver waved his arm to the deceased, When asked why, he told me that soon after the Italian/Ethiopian war in 1936/37 ended a large gang of Italian engineers and labourers employed on road construction works there were, one night, all massacred by a large force of Ethiopian tribesmen from the Tigre Province. A notorious part of Northern Ethiopia where the inhabitants are inclined to take the law into their own hands. Even Haille Selassie, their Emperor, seldom visits the area as he and the Provincial Raps (Governor) didn't see 'eye to eye', or so the story goes?.

Approaching Adowa the surrounding countryside is very hilly, rather barren and most uninteresting. However, on reaching my destination I found the Local and Military Hospital complex, currently in the charge of the 5th Indian Army Field Hospital Company. I made my presence known to their Commanding Officer whom I found to be a very pleasant gentleman.

The CO very kindly invited me into the Mess for a most welcome cup of tea and during our conversation he mentioned that his Unit was in the throes of packing up and would be leaving in two days time for the Western Desert (Egypt). In the meantime I should familiarise myself with the general running of the place, including equipment, medical stores, in-patients and the daily sick-parades from the other Units stationed around here until a doctor arrived on the scene, whenever that would be. Even then, the in-coming doctor's main occupation would be attending to the medical requirements of the local indigenous population, although he would always be available to attend any military patients whose ailments were beyond my capabilities. So it looks as though he will be kept rather busy. And all that information from the Indian Major.

As soon as the Field Hospital wallah's had departed I made sure of my own comfort by annexing a pleasant little house on open ground up a steep-ish slope above the hospital road entrance, well away from the main buildings. The resident(!) doctor's house was further up the hill commanding an excellent view over the area. But, as yet, no doctor. During my wanderings on the first day in charge I discovered there were two Italian nuns in residence, Medical Sisters, who were there to administer their skills on the local female population. A male Medical Assistant was around to deal with the males.

The town is about 2½ miles from the hospital, along a rough road Also in that direction other army units were scattered around. The Town Major, (who in civilian life is a District Commissioner in Tanganyika). Other Units close by were a detachment of 'Signals', a South African Field Bakery, NAAFI stores, a few Ethiopian Army Infantry Companies, Rations Depot and a few other odds and ends. In the Town Major's Dept there was a Pay Office of sorts which came in very useful at times! Our rations had to be collected daily. The tinned foods were OK but the so called fresh stuff was pretty ghastly. The Field Bakery produced the most excellent bread, and occasionally very tasty bread rolls. Rounding off my first visit to the 'Metropolis' I called in at the 'Signals' office whereupon I was handed my first missive (the first of many), from some person unknown to me, with information about the Medical Officer's non-arrival! A hitch somewhere down the line. But more importantly, one of the Signaler's very kindly handed me a mug of tea. In fact dropping in for a cuppa almost became a daily routine.

My first intake of casualties, four of them with shrapnel wounds, happened to be part of our Advance Headquarters staff. When asked how they managed to get in the way of the non-existent Italian Air Force I was told in no uncertain terms that either a South African or Australian Air Force pilot was Incapable of reading a map reference! That must have been the last bomb to be dropped in that particular war-zone of the Gander Highlands.

The 10,000, or thereabouts, Italian troops who were completely surrounded in the Highlands by two of our Army Divisions were rapidly running out of food, medical supplies and, in fact,

everything. So it was only a matter of time before the Italian GOC one General Nasi, with a few of his other Generals (4 of them) would capitulate, and they did. Then began the great evacuation of the POWs, both the fit, and the infirm. I didn't see much of the former but the latter all came through our hospital! But more about: that later.

Meanwhile, my new assistant appeared on the scene, Sgt. Edward Dixon, from the Ugandan Ambulance Company. A stocky individual, and as strong as the proverbial horse. Before being called-up into the army he was a quarryman, with muscles to prove it, in the Ambleside area of the 'Lake District'. Surprise, surprise! the doctor also put in an appearance. He was a rather stout, flabby Czechoslovakian ('spelling') gentleman who perspired rather freely in the hot climatic conditions prevailing in Adowa,. I felt sorry for the poor chap. Although he wore a Captain's uniform his rank was only honorary and I think he was paid by some obscure organisation to do with Aid for Ethiopia. He had to cope with all the sick and ailing locals as well as the more serious military casualties. From the day we first met until my departure I could not pronounce his name, a real tongue twister.

Calling in at the NAAFI shop one day to make a few purchases I was rather intrigued by their cash flow system. When I asked the chap behind the counter how much I owed he said, "--- ackers" (piaster's), so I duly handed over two East African Currency notes and he gave me the change in Italian lire, which, at that time, with the current exchange rate, was somewhere in the region of 1,000 lire to the East African £1! I believe the Abyssinian Marie Therese dollar was also an acceptable currency.

I have lost track of the dates, but I think it was during the second week in November I received a signal from whoever was organising the evacuation of the Gondar POW patients informing me when to expect the first batch. The journey between Gondar and Asmara was a three day affair. The first night-stop was with an EA Field Ambulance Coy. The Ugandan MAC brought them to Adowa and my lot delivered them to Asmara. Not a very comfortable journey for the genuinely ill.

From somewhere, and some unit, (I've forgotten the details) a young 19 year old South African turned up saying his orders were to report to me for duty. This was news to me as I hadn't put in a request for more assistance, however, he did mention something about training ""? That proved to be an impossibility as he was a typical 'Dennis the Menace'. Young and wild is a fair description and he was one whom almost drove me to complete distraction. After three days I had to ban him from driving any of the vehicles as he almost wrecked our one and only lorry by driving like a maniac along a rather bumpy road. More tales later.

One afternoon a few days before the great invasion of ailing Italians arrived on our doorstep an ambulance from the Uganda MAC drew up in the reception area. So, wandering over to see who had arrived to disturb the peace at 02.30pm on a hot afternoon, I was greeted by a Service Corps Captain, who had, obviously, lunched very well in some Unit's Mess! His first words were, "I've got three Italian 'tarts' in the back for you". So, thanking him for his generosity I asked what I was supposed to do with them? The conversation cannot be repeated here! However, glancing up at the small, expanded mesh, metal ventilation screens I noticed three pairs of eyes staring through, no doubt wondering what happens next. Out they came looking rather disheveled clutching their worldly possessions, two tatty handbags. When asked if that was the lot the Captain did say two suitcases were on another lorry which wouldn't arrive at the Service Corps Depot until 05.00 pm and would have to be collected by us. With that remark he departed.

Now began the chore of sorting out their accommodation problems. When shown a large cubicle, with wash basin and loo, in one of the empty wards, the spokeswoman, a good looking young lady of about 26 years, was most adamant about the dangers of sleeping in such a place as the Abyssinians would come along in the middle of the night to slit their throats. Eventually, we came to an amicable agreement whereby they would sleep in one of the large ambulances. It was more comfortable than the Ward, The driver was to lock them in at bedtime and then he would 'kip-down' across the seats in the cab! For food, a few bits and pieces from the ration store for the Italian driver/cook to sort something out for their evening meal.

Later, in the early evening, the affable and attractive young lady came along to ask if their suitcases could be collected from the Service Depot, about three miles away, so I bundled her into one of the small ambulances and off we went. On the way out I stopped by the steep path leading up to my house to collect some cigarettes. 20 yards ahead, at the entrance gates, were two villainous looking Ethiopian Army guards, genuine fuzzy-wuzzy types, each with a rifle and bandoliers full of cartridges slung over their shoulders. I told my passenger to stay in the vehicle while I went up to the

house. Her immediate reaction to that was, in Italian, and roughly translated, "Not on your life with those two Abyssinians there"!! Following me into the house she had a good look around and eventually caught sight of herself in a very large wall-mirror and expressed great concern at her disheveled state. I doubt whether she'd seen any face powder or lipstick for months. After a cigarette, her next request was for permission to have a wash and brush-up in the bathroom. That over, which hadn't made a great deal of difference, I told her we had an errand to complete. Passing my large locker, and with a doleful look in her eyes, she remarked about the number of tins of cigarettes on a shelf. There were quite a few, 9 tins each containing 50 cigarettes, courtesy of Mr Player, hermetically sealed and costing one shilling and sixpence per tin in 'old money'. Her strategy worked and I passed over one tin but told her to share the contents with her mates. A tablet of soap was also thrown in.

Fortunately, the journey to collect their kit was short, as she chattered the whole way in Italian which was beyond my comprehension, but I did gather that General Nasi was the most unpopular person in Gondar for not surrendering earlier.

On my return I asked my two henchmen why they were working overtime!! The answer, 'Birds'! Incidentally, we men folk all shared the one house, the other two having to double-up in one room.

The three visitors survived the night without mishap with no marauding Ethiopians around to frighten them! It was my intention to send them off to Asmara sometime during the day but there were not enough patients to warrant the Journey to the Asmara Military Hospital. I insisted that the ambulances travel in pairs, when carrying patients, in case of hitches en-route. However, the ladies were not unduly worried. They enjoyed their food and in their circumstances who wouldn't. Excellent Field Bakery bread, Kenya tinned butter, South American corned beef and South African tinned fruit, plus whatever the Italian drivers gave them. Pasta and spaghetti Bolognese(!). On their departure the following morning I asked what they intended doing in Asmara? A stupid question to ask, but they gave an honest reply! To raise their spirits in their plight I gave each a tin of cigarettes and an East African 20/- note, which, at that time, was legal tender in Eritrea. And with an "Arriva dechi" they were away.

The majority of our army casualties were the result of traffic accidents, overturned lorries, mainly due to the poor standard of driving by the Africans. In one incident the cause of the accident was an army boot! The sole of the driver's right boot was worn right through and somehow the end of the lorry accelerator pedal went through the hole and in his efforts to free his foot and boot he lost control, hit a bank and overturned. His right arm was in an awful state and after a thorough examination the doctor said, "Ve haf to amputate - ya ?" There were internal injuries as well. The operating theatre was over in the civilian part of the complex, rather primitive and not entirely bug-free.

I dreaded the thought of having to assist the Doctor, but what has to be done has to be done! As the unfortunate patient lay on the operating table he suddenly came out with, (in Kiswahili) "Jambo Bwana Alleni, How are you etc, etc? And how are your parents?" Needless to say, he was from a village near Sao Hill. Regrettably, he was another war casualty interred far from home.

During the three months I spent in Adowa we only 'lost' four patients, two Africans one Scotsman and an Italian. The Scots laddie was brought in with a severely fractured skull, again due to a lorry overturning, and he didn't survive for many hours. But the Italian caused problems. I couldn't locate a Padre or Roman Catholic Priest anywhere at a moments notice so did the next best thing and called upon the services of an Ethiopian Coptic priest to conduct a short Burial Service in a remote burial ground about a mile away. (The Copts are Christians (!). Two days after the Italian's demise there suddenly appeared on the scene an Italian Priest whose, when told he was too late, excitable nature came to the fore, so, in rather strong language, was told to go away. I learned later that he was an inmate from the POW. camp a few miles out.

The amount of office work these little problems entail is amazing. Maps giving the exact location of burials have to be drawn up and all the deceased's kit and possessions listed in triplicate. The two most important items being the Army Identity discs and their Army Pay Book. One ID disc has to be tied round the deceased's neck and buried with him/her for identification when the War Graves Commission go round exhuming the remains for re-interment in a central War Graves Cemetery. The second ID disc goes to Army Records. I often wonder whether the War Graves Commission ever made any attempt to search for my unfortunate three allied losses.

Even my POW driver's particulars created a fair amount of correspondence. Umpteen copies for each one with all their family details, history etc, for the Red Cross who passed on the information to their Italian counterpart. Weeks must have passed before the news filtered through to those families anxious to know the fate of their kith and kin.

On the subject of correspondence, during my three months in Adowa I received missives from the base HQ in Addis Ababa via the Army Post Offices, yet not one private letter came through! And not until my return to Addis did I find the reason why. There was a pile of my mail in a tray on the Sgt Major's desk! A fine example of 'out of sight, out of mind'!

The young South African 'menace' continued to drive me up the wall. The only time peace reigned was when he went off in the evenings to see his South African friends who were in charge of the Fuel Depot. One evening he returned on a potent motorcycle, but whose was it? Possibly acquired 'free of charge' from the 'other side' by a member of the Fuel Depot. As in all wars equipment disappears rather mysteriously. Our unit once lost a perfectly good ambulance with only about 2,000 miles on the 'clock'. The driver skidded off the road and the whole lot slipped down the embankment and became embedded in the mud a few miles out from Addis. Instead of sending a message back he thumbed a lift back to HQ to fetch the breakdown truck to winch the vehicle out. By the time the rescue gang arrived back on the scene there was nothing to tow out! The foolish man had also left the ignition key in the switch. I'm digressing!

More trouble with Italian women! Two evenings before the first batch of ailing POWs were due in for the night-stop we were quite surprised to see a group of European women crossing the compound heading in our direction. 35 of them in all shapes and sizes. The 'war zone' is forbidden territory to Italian civilians south of Adi Quala, a small town between Asmara and Adowa. When asked what they were doing here, and why? Their immediate answer was, 'for food and accommodation'. When told the place was a hospital and not an hotel they became rather 'stropy', demanding this and that. By this time it was almost dark and pointless to continue arguing, so the 'Menace' was detailed off to show them where to sleep, whilst Ted Dixon and I tried to find enough food for 35 meals at such short notice. With a fluctuating number of patients to be catered for we usually had a few spare rations left over but on this occasion no such luck so all the hungry ladies got was bread (three loaves) a few tins of 'bully' beef, a little cheese, and water to wash it all down. If they didn't like it they could go without. 'The Menace' showed them their sleeping quarters, one ward, which they very reluctantly accepted. though 'the Menace' had to bear the brunt of their vociferous remarks about the beds which, I must confess, were a little grotty.

He, 'the Menace' poor fool, had fallen in 'instant' love with a young lady of 18 years who was accompanying her sister, a very one-sided affair!

Next morning there were more complaints, in one instance quite justifiable. Little 'insects' had crawled out of the seams of the mattresses and nipped the ladies during the night! That problem was dealt with under 'the Menace's' supervision. Ted D went off to the Ration Depot with a list detailing our requirements for 35 'patients' (European)! Someone had to feed them until they were shipped back. The next item on the list was to trace the source of their information regarding the movement of POWs, and the transport routes they used to get into a war zone where public transport and private cars were forbidden south of Adi Quala. Picking out and questioning two of the ladies, who seemed to have a little authority over the rest, a Colonel's wife, and the other, the wife of an officer two ranks lower down the scale, who spoke a little English, I found the reason for the sudden influx 'of so many Italian army wives. Apparently, word had filtered through to the general public in Asmara that the Gondar POWs would commence their Journey to ??? on a certain date with an overnight stop behind the 'wire' in Adowa and the medically infirm through this hospital. As there were no public transport buses plying between Adowa and Asmara somebody had contacted my drivers at the hospital who obviously cashed-in on the deal by filling their ambulances with 'patients' on the return Journey. The three 'gentlemen' concerned were warned that any future nonsense would be followed by a deduction from their pay to help to defray expenses for the items purchased from the NAAFI for our 'guests' welfare.

One large bosomed lady came along to the office complaining about very painful breasts, and no wonder! She had left her suckling baby behind with a wet nurse and was, therefore, suffering from over production! So we went off to find the Doctor who was in the civilian section to see what he could conjure up in the absence of a breast pump? Between us we managed to make one with the

aid of a large syringe, a glass funnel and a few inches of Elastoplast! Anyway it relieved the tension but what an awful waste of baby food. 'Mama' was sent back home on the next ambulance out,

During the day most of the women walked along to the POW Camp to chat to the inmates through the wire seeking information about their husbands and boy-friends. When the first, and subsequent, batches of patients arrived, at about 05.00pm, it was pandemonium. Patients and women everywhere. Some of the women were lucky enough to meet up with their ailing husbands while the less fortunate ones went round the menfolk seeking information regarding the whereabouts of theirs. All this was a fine example of 'How NOT to run a hospital!' To ease the situation, medically speaking, some helpful person at the dispatch end included, in each convoy, two Italian army doctors and a few orderlies to care for their companions en route, which relieved us of a few problems. The rations were handed over to the orderlies who were then told to "get on with it". Meanwhile, the mixed company had sorted themselves out but not entirely to their satisfaction. The married couples came along to ask, very politely, if it was possible to have separate cubicles? I'm only human, so that subject was solved satisfactorily. Next morning the wives, with husbands, were packed into the back of the ambulances sardine fashion! With the next convoy a similar performance occurred only this time the higher echelon was involved. An old-ish looking individual, not exactly the picture of health, and wearing a Corporal's tunic, came up to me with his wife and 'Julie' his attractive young daughter of 17 years, whom I had noticed, and asked if they could have a room away from the others as he wasn't feeling very well! Soon after that I discovered he was an Italian Army General who'd lost his uniform! So, having a spare room, granted their request but no other preferential treatment,

One evening during the 'invasion' I had a surprise visitor, our 'double visioned' Transport Officer. When asked the reason for the pleasure of his company he said he was fed-up with hanging around in Addis so decided to visit (inspect!) his outlying sections and at the same time have a look at Ethiopia. With hostilities being over he followed the western route, over the Blue Nile, up to Gondar and eventually pitching up in Adowa which he considered an excellent place to be stationed with so many European women about. Little did he realise how difficult they could be when their requests were not met! After a brief check on the vehicles the following morning he headed off to have a look at Asmara and then return to Addis down the 'other' road. From what I heard later from my fellow NCOs he must have spread some lurid tales about John Allen and his harem!

On one occasion 'the Menace' excelled himself by inviting his heart--throb, with two of her companions, into the house. He had the audacity to let them sit on my campbed, with the inevitable result! One broken leg which didn't add to the bed's comfort. To say the air was 'blue' is an understatement, and never have four people shot out of a room so quickly since. The time came when drastic measures had to be taken to send all the Women back to Asmara together. The services of the Town Major, an 'Old Sweat' from the Tanganyika Administration, was called upon to bring in the Military Police. Early one morning a large 5 ton FIAT lorry with high sides and an open top arrived, complete with one Military Policeman as escort, to take them back home. After a few insults had been hurled in our direction and with the aid of a ladder all were soon aboard. As they departed all shouted as loud as they possibly could, 'Viva Italia, Viva Italia' until clear of the hospital grounds. Thank heavens that little episode 'In the life of a Staff Sergeant' was over and I could get back to normal.

Two or three days later the 'Menace' came into the office with some 'cock and bull' story requesting permission to visit Asmara! Permission was gladly given and, as an added bonus, I told him not to hurry back. So off on his acquired motorcycle he went. Unfortunately for me he returned after two days with a long face. I never did find out whether he couldn't find his girl friend, or got the 'cold shoulder'. However, it removed some of his ego and as luck would have it he was recalled to his own Unit soon after that.

When the surge of activity ended we were into the first week of December so, during the lull, I took the opportunity to take one of the larger ambulances into Asmara to the Heavy Vehicle Repair Depot for urgent mechanical attention. That entailed spending a night in the town. For a night's accommodation I went along to the Church Army outfit where, for five shillings per night, one could have a cubicle containing, bed, wash basin, hot and cold water laid on and all spotlessly clean. Tea was available but no food, so one had to rely on an Italian Restaurant for that, or starve! So after a bath and brush-up I donned my No 1 uniform and launched myself into the night air heading for the conveniently situated army 'watering hole', the 'Croce del Sudd' for a beer, or perhaps even two. On

the way there, passing a restaurant, I noticed a few British Army types were dining within so decided to sample it after having slaked my thirst.

The restaurant proved reasonable enough, and more to the point, cheap, by our standards considering the circumstances. The meal, an assortment of pasta concoctions, vegetables and meat (mutton or probably goat!). The 'sweet' that great African standby, fruit and baked custard! Whilst sitting there chewing I noticed a very elegant couple came into the dining room. He wearing an immaculate evening suit and his slender and very attractive girl friend wearing a long evening dress, necklace with ear-rings to match and hair styled perfectly with not one hair out of place, and her make-up, perfect. As they came towards me I recognised both. The gent was one of the POW Italian Army doctor's who came through from Gondar with a load of patients. But what he was doing here in a posh civilian outfit remains a mystery. The young lady, was non other than the attractive one of the three 'girls 'from Gondar'. Walking to their table she suddenly recognised me and, abandoning her escort, came over to greet me like a long lost boyfriend! She gabbled away in Italian, little of which I understood. A pity. But what a transformation in three weeks, Phew!. I could just imagine what the other uniformed diners in the room were thinking. 'That chap has been fraternising with the enemy'. A punishable offence.

Breakfast the following morning was a little sparse. Two cups of tea had to suffice until the Italian restaurateurs surfaced, usually about midday. My next assignment later in the day was back to the Vehicle Repair Depot to collect the ambulance. It only went in to have a few 'bits' replaced, adjustments to the diesel compressor pump and new starter/heater plugs. But what had the idiots in charge done? Taken out the whole engine and replaced it with a similar re--conditioned unit, which was much noisier than the original. The driver, who had treated the vehicle with 'loving care' since I don't know when, almost went berserk, as only excitable 'Latins' can. Anyway, the Royal Army Service Corp was rather unpopular on that warm and late afternoon in December, 1941.

On another occasion when en route to Asmara an amusing incident occurred. We, the driver, myself and a few patients in the back, were following a POW convoy when, about five miles out from Asmara the convoy ground to a halt so we had no option but to do likewise. The lorry in front of us was well laden with POWs with a KAR askari (soldier) guard sitting well up behind the cab gazing into space when, suddenly, one of the prisoners jumped off, rolled down a small embankment and was up and away in one movement, running like an Olympic athlete. He was a fair distance away before the guard realised what had happened. My Italian driver enjoyed every moment watching a fellow countryman escaping.

During my early days in Adowa I took the opportunity to visit the old historical town of Axum, only twenty miles away, to have a look at the huge monoliths dating back to the bygone ages, 400 years I am told. But I need confirmation for that statement; nevertheless it was all quite interesting.

Just before Christmas, 1941, the water pump engine that supplied all the hospital buildings with water was rapidly becoming unserviceable due to fair wear and tear, old age and lack of spare parts, which were unobtainable. Consequently it had to be coaxed into action daily! When the engine finally takes its last breath I hate to think what will happen but I'll leave that worry for the Doctor to cope with since the Ethiopian Government is responsible for maintaining buildings, services, etc, which includes the water supply. As long as I'm around there is always a lorry to bring in drums of water from an outside source but after my departure, unless some kind person sends a suitable vehicle to my successor, Ted Dixon. Unless he departs before me!

Christmas came and went. Our Christmas Day was like any other day except for one slight deviation. At midday the heat was rather oppressive so Ted and I retired to the coolest place, which happened to be the Medical Store. In there, on one of the shelves, were six bottles of champagne, 'for medicinal purposes'. So without further ado a couple of enamel basins were found and the contents of one bottle shared equally between us we then wished one another a 'Happy Xmas'. Only two complaints, it would have tasted better chilled and drunk out of a wine glass. The Doctor missed out as he had disappeared off somewhere with a fellow Czech doctor.

For the past fortnight an Italian Army ambulance driver, complete with a small type Mercedes ambulance, seemed to have adopted us for reasons known only to himself. He came along from Gondar with one of the convoys. So next morning his vehicle was loaded with patients and his instructions were to follow our drivers into Asmara, off load the patients and then report his presence to the Officer i/c of the Hospital, but the wretched fellow didn't. Back he came on at least four

occasions, until in the end I gave up. So long as his vehicle tank was filled with fuel he was perfectly happy to 'fetch and carry' for us. What He did for money?

On or about the 29th December a signal came through from Addis Ababa recalling me and my merry men back to Headquarters. Packing up would not take long and Ted knew the routine so there was no point in going through any 'handing over' procedure with him. The important task was calculating the amount of diesel fuel necessary for the Journey. 8 vehicles X 900 miles each which will account for quite a few gallons.

Departure date would be the 31st December with a night stop in Asmara, to sample what New Year's Eve had on offer! So after bidding the Doctor and Ted a fond farewell we were away. A suitable parking lot was found for the vehicles, whilst I parked at the Church Army Hostel. By strange coincidence the first person whom I met there was Arthur Corral, one of the three Nottingham lads who joined us in Garissa in March, and left us on transfer to a field Ambulance unit just before I came up north from Addis.

We soon found a Bar/Bistro where locally brewed beer was available so in and up the stairs to the quieter bar of the two. The other was full of rather rowdy South African (Cape coloured) drivers, slightly the worse for wear. We ordered a couple of beers when, having just sat down, two rather hideous looking Italian girls plastered with make-up came to the table, sat down and engaged us in conversation much to our annoyance. They also asking for a drink (coloured water which was given some fancy name). However, the situation was saved by the South Africans who were having a pitched battle between themselves with empty bottles and glasses flying everywhere. The girls ran away screaming. We finished our beer, ducked under the barrage of glassware and got out. Our next Port of Call was the 'Croce del Sudd'. More peaceful! And so endeth 1941.

1942

Return to Nairobi

There was a slight hitch before I could bid Asmara a fond farewell because one of the Italian drivers decided he preferred the life Asmara had to offer rather than Addis, and since all my drivers wore civvy clothing, joining the hordes of civilian Italians around was a simple matter and therefore almost pointless reporting the absconder to the Military Police. However, I did, but they were not really interested and I certainly was not worried since, fortunately, there was a spare driver available to fill the gap. One other slight problem was how to rid myself of the limpet-like, self attached, Italian driver complete with ambulance, who insisted on accompanying us! Apparently his 'Home-base' was Addis. Anyway, another ambulance would be useful in the Unit so the new recruit joined the convoy. I often wondered who got the rap for losing one perfectly good serviceable ambulance and driver!

After sorting that little lot out our departure was much later than I had anticipated so where I was to pull-in for the night was anybody's guess. On reaching a small town, Adigrat, I called on the Signals Detachment there with a request to phone through to their counterpart in Adowa to pass on a message to Ted Dixon for me. Much to my dismay my Signals friend at the other end informed me that during that morning one of the troublesome Ugandan Medical Orderlies had shot Ted through the arm but he couldn't give me any details. That was the first and last I ever heard of the incident, but where the gun came from?

The convoy rumbled on, perhaps a little faster than usual because I wanted to be clear of the Passo Toselli in daylight. On the roadside at the bottom of the Pass some thoughtful person/s had rigged up a very useful water supply from a spring somewhere up the mountainside. The water was flowing well through the 2 inch pipe which ended about 4 ft above the ditch. Just the right height for a roadside wash! Ablutions over and ready to proceed when an old 1936 model Ford V8 lorry pulled up alongside full of Ethiopian Army Irregulars all armed 'to the hilt' and with a machine gun mounted on the cab. Most impressive. The Chap i/c asked if we were OK. I assured him we were, whereupon they went off to do their 'thing' with my lot following in their wake, fairly close behind. I gathered the Irregulars patrolled a certain section of road to discourage the 'shifita'/' banda' ' brigands' from causing problems with passing traffic, such as my little convoy. Choosing where to pull-in for a night-stop I left to my driver as he knew the small towns en-route having traveled many times along that road as a civilian and an army driver.

The journey took three and a half days due to the topographical nature of the country, mountains, hills and more hills. However, no incidents worth mentioning plagued us so into the fold we arrived, on January 4th. Just in time to celebrate my 26th birthday the following day, and we did! During my three months absence from HQ a few changes within the ranks had occurred. Our aged Quartermaster had been replaced by one 'Tiny' Bodmer who, as the name implies, was. Charlie, my brother, had managed to wangle some leave so was somewhere south of Addis Ababa, probably at Sao Hill.

Having been away from the Unit for such a long while I took a 'back seat' whilst the others carried on with their daily routine tasks. Two other Sections had been recalled to base sometime before me so my arrival triggered off the plans for the long haul back to Nairobi sometime within the next fortnight. A popular move approved by all.

The Transport Officer was given his 'Present from Eritrea' one perfectly good camouflaged Mercedes Benz 4 cylinder, ambulance complete with driver wearing the uniform of the Italian Army. The poor chap, our Transport Lieutenant, didn't know whether to laugh or swear. A bit of both, much to the onlookers amusement. However, a satisfactory solution to the problem was found so the 'limpet-like' driver joined our miscellaneous assortment of POWs.

All the activity now was centered around the vehicles (except the ex Italian lot which would be taken over by whoever occupied our patch) to make sure they were in a reasonable state before tackling the 1,000 miles plus, over earth roads, to Nairobi. The first forty miles was tarmac.

The Italians were given the option of accompanying us or staying behind to wait and see what future developments, had to offer. 10 to 12 volunteered for the Journey southwards.

Eventually the CO decided on a departure date, and hour; which we considered a little early as there was bound to be a 'hangover' or two wandering around after a celebratory drink, or three, the night before.

THE day arrived, a damp and cold morning too, with a few 'headaches' wandering around with their owners trying to look happy. For this journey I had 'commandeered' a comfortable vehicle in which to travel. An International half ton Estate-bodied ambulance converted to carry a couple of stretcher cases. I had my usual slot in the convoy, at the tail end with the Mechanic Sgt Major and his two Breakdown/Recovery vehicles, One great advantage being at the rear was that we could adjust our speeds accordingly to avoid the clouds of dust kicked up by the main body of the convoy.

So far as I recollect the whole Journey took six days and except for the fifth night we slept under the stars. The second night, parked in a clearing within a huge expanse of 'rain forest', we all woke up wet through, not by rain but a very heavy dew! Fortunately my canvas bed-roll cover was new which kept the blankets dry but the pillow suffered.

Day 4 (I think) was not my day. After leaving a place called Mega, a well fortified outpost now abandoned, the road and surrounding countryside deteriorated somewhat due to volcanic action many years ago. The vehicles bounced from one lump of rock to another and it went on for miles. I passed two of our ambulances awaiting the attention of the breakdown gang. Half an hour later mine was to become the third 'casualty'. Grinding up a rough slope in 1st gear I became aware of a pungent smell of burning oil which called for an immediate halt. Diagnosing the trouble took only moment. Smoke was pouring out of the differential cover plate so it was obvious the crown wheel, pinion etc, were almost red hot due to the lack of lubrication. The rough terrain had caused the flange bolts to work loose allowing the oil to leak out thus causing the moving parts to overheat. The sizzling sound of burning oil lasted ages. When the casing had cooled down sufficiently the driver was sent underneath to tighten the bolts which, fortunately, were all there. When the time came to replenish the oil bad luck struck again, no spare oil on board, so it was a case of 'bashing on regardless' or awaiting the Workshops Section. After a further half hour wait the overpowering heat from the sun reflecting off the surrounding volcanic rock made me take the former option. So with 'fingers crossed' and a prayer (?) we set off towards the small trading centre and Administrative HQ of Marsabit. Perched on the lower slopes of an extinct volcano, and one of the far-flung outposts of the British Empire in the Northern Frontier District of Kenya, it was about 20/30 miles ahead. There I should find an Army Motor Transport unit of sorts around. Soon after setting off the countryside changed completely into a hardpan desert known as the Chabe (**Chalbi**) Desert, as flat as a pancake and almost as smooth as a cricket pitch stretching away into the distance on all sides. Traveling on the level helped to relieve the strain on the differential bearings, pinion etc. but it wasn't long before the 'works' developed a 'whine'. However, so far so good! After what seemed like eternity the Marsabit turn-off appeared, so leaving the main track (the Marsabit by-pass!) I headed uphill towards civilization expecting to hear a horrible 'graunching' sound from the back end at any moment. My 'Guardian Angel' was with me! I soon found a Transport unit, with a most helpful Sgt in charge. By this time the differential, was well and truly warmed up and almost red hot again. We decided to pour in a thick-ish gear oil rather than the correct grade to absorb some of the whine. The first squirt of oil into the 'works' sizzled furiously, producing volumes of smoke. So another half hours wait for the machinery to cool down was called for. Even then it was still sizzling and smoking when the refill was complete and the filler cap screwed back in. So with thanks to the helpful Sgt I was off. A much happier person than when I arrived. The 'back end' produced groans and whines but it eventually reached Nairobi, still many miles away, without further trouble. A good advertisement for 'International' vehicles.

That day's night-stop was to be at Archer' Post still a many number of miles ahead, a place well known to those of us who had been stationed in Isiolo in 1939/40. Its claim to fame is the Uaso Nyiro River which flows through the area and is popular for fishing and Big-game watching, or was! It also has resident crocodiles which always put me off having a moonlight wash-down in any of the pools.

Up at the crack of dawn with a breakfast of sorts, knowing that the chance of another meal en-route is rather remote. Today's destination is Thika, about 3 miles from Nairobi, along a route very familiar to those of us who had spent the first nine months of the war in the Northern Frontier District, and Nanyuki for a short spell. As we drove through Isiolo what a pleasant thought knowing we wouldn't be spending another 10 months there. The convoy leader, the CO, had issued a directive

that no stops would be allowed in the Nanyuki or Nyeri Townships! However, there are ways and means of dodging the column when stuck at the tail-end of a convoy that stretched for miles ahead; so being in familiar surroundings, Nanyuki, the Mechanic Sgt Major and I deviated to quench our thirsts. The ice-cold beer went down very well indeed.

Thika was reached about 4.00 pm, rather early to night-stop, but just as well, otherwise we'd arrive at our unfamiliar allotted camp site somewhere five miles north of Nairobi at dusk, and end up fuddling around in the dark which would have taxed our patience. It so happened that our 'campsite' was to be Jeanes School', quite a complex of buildings with all 'mod cons' except piped hot water.

Our officers, except the unfortunate Duty Officer, and some of the NCOs couldn't wait for the following day to greet their loved ones, so, they piled into staff cars and ambulances and headed for Nairobi, returning, rather noisily, at 3.00am. The few of us left in camp enjoyed a leisurely and very necessary, bath and brush up to remove the accumulated grime collected over the past two days. Following that a short trip into the town to see what the shops had on offer in the fresh fruit, and alcohol lines. By 09.00 hours the following morning we were on the move and after passing through the outskirts of Nairobi duly arrived at our destination, Jeanes School, sometime around midday. The students had obviously been sent elsewhere long ago. However, there were numerous corrugated iron buildings around, some of which were currently occupied by the Army Education Corps and 'Signals' for their particular army courses, usually of 7 to 14 days duration consequently creating a 'floating' population'. It was a change for us to meet other members of the Forces instead of seeing the same familiar faces across the table every day and constantly 'talking shop'!

Jeanes School, Nairobi

Since leaving Addis. I have not mentioned the Italian POWs who volunteered to accompany us to Nairobi. Under what conditions or promises they came I have no knowledge whatsoever but within three hours of our arrival at Jeanes School the Military Police arrived on the scene to take them away to a local POW Camp. Good bye freedom, although many of their countrymen came out on a day-release work system. In fact one of the mechanics who was with me in Adowa and Eritrea was, after a week or two, working in the garage where my car went for servicing. He appeared to be happy, but perhaps that was due to the cigarettes and 10/- note I always handed to him.

When the School was planned the Authorities, quite naturally, wouldn't have known that one day parking space for 70 army vehicles would be required somewhere close by. The only solution to that problem was a sloping sports field a quarter of a mile away from our living quarters. The Orderly, QM Stores, Medical and Guard tents and Parade ground, all shared the same field so plenty of walking and running exercise a number of times a day. However, with the rain came chaos, turning the field into the perfect 'skid pan' which was soon churned into a fine textured red mud by those 'hopefuls' who tried to drive out on to the tarmac road into Nairobi. Where the road went to in the opposite direction, anyone's guess! Fortunately the 'rainy season' was drawing to a close with the heavier showers becoming fewer and further between. The area surrounding the school was thickly populated by the Wa-Kikuyu tribe who cultivated every square yard of their family plot for various crops, mainly maize, bananas and coffee.

Returning to our arrival in the new surroundings. One of the afternoon surprises was the appearance of brother Charlie from somewhere, possibly the Army Medical Corps Transit Camp where he would have been informed about his Unit's whereabouts, etc, etc.

That first afternoon life was fairly hectic but by 5,00pm most of the essential chores had been organised, except for one, the most important. A cup or two of tea! The resident Company Sgt Major and his Sergeant, soon remedied that. An evening meal in the Mess was more difficult to organise since extra rations were not immediately available to feed another ten mouths, but that didn't cause us any worries since the majority of us had every intention of 'wining and dining' out in one of Nairobi's restaurants.

After the short tea session our Sgt Major's wife, Corporal Lilian Adams, WTS (the East African equivalent to the UK ATS), appeared on the scene complete with my car. A very welcome sight for both the Sgt Major and myself! Earlier in this story I mentioned that on our departure from Nairobi for 'points' East and North to the battle front (!) that I'd left my car with a girl friend, also a Corporal at that time in the WTS. Sometime during the year she was transferred to Mombasa so taking her responsibilities seriously had given the job of car-keeper to our mutual friend, Cpl Lil, and I must say both ladies had discharged that duty very conscientiously. However, although my lady friend was back in Nairobi she was unable to hand over the car personally due to other duties. We all met up later for an excellent meal at the 'Lobster Pot' followed by, a little later on, the odd 'nightcap' or two in the New Stanley Hotel. A favourite late night 'watering hole'. Not having collected much pay before leaving Addis. funds were dwindling to an unhealthy state rather rapidly with no hope of a pay day for a couple of days!

One surprise that first evening, the young lady Corporal was now a young lady Lieutenant! (Officers and Other Ranks shall not mix, so say the War Lords!).

Having ones own conveyance was a great boon living in a place like Jeanes School but one had to keep an eye on the mileage since petrol was rationed and my monthly quota was eight gallons which worked out to about 170 miles worth.

The car license had expired two months ago so it was necessary to 'run the gauntlet' for a day or two until the Orderly Room (tent) staff called in the whole Company's Pay Books to calculate how much the army owed us to date. Meanwhile we were 'skint'. The CO did make that most necessary action priority No 1. Within the next thirty six hours my pocket was bulging with almost a year's pay. £300 in 100/- notes, and, not wishing to carry that lot around on my person permission was granted to make a hasty journey into the Nairobi branch of my Bank to have it all, less 500/- spending money until the next pay day, transferred to my account in Dar es Salaam, far away and more difficult to withdraw! I also called at the Vehicle Tax office to make the car legal once again. Still on the subject of cash. After two weeks I, and the other NCOs soon realised a month's pay would hardly suffice to

meet the demands of our current life style, which was a pleasant change after our travels over the past twelve months.

Priority number 2. 'LEAVE!' Practically all the personnel in the Company were due a fortnight's leave. Since only a small percentage are allowed to be absent from the Unit at any one time preparing the Leave Roster was a nightmare for some unfortunate soul. When the Roster finally appeared on the Notice Board it almost caused mayhem within the African ranks since each and every one had an excuse of some sort, mainly serious family problems, demanding immediate attention, usually unfaithful wives. With regard to the white NCOs we soon had ourselves organised and within a short time four were off, one of whom failed to return. Brian Fowler, who, on arrival in Dar es Salaam, contacted the head of his Government Department who in turn contacted the Director of Manpower and between all parties concerned, Brian was back in his civilian job! 'Though in all fairness to Brian the Tanganyika Government was recalling many of its officers back to their civilian posts. It was usually those employed in the Medical, Agricultural and Veterinary Depts. My turn came later. Since hostilities were over in East Africa, Nairobi, and many other places in Kenya were overflowing with British Forces from the UK who were being absorbed into the EA Army units. We got our fair share within the first fortnight of our return. Two young Army Service Corps 2nd Lieutenants, and the biggest surprise of all a new CO one (Dr) Major Peacock, RAMC who turned out to be the most pleasant CO one could wish for. His predecessor, Major Ken Edmundson was also very pleasant to work with, but his sudden departure, without a hint, came as a shock.; Unfortunately he had domestic troubles which reduced him to the status of 'bachelor' and it wasn't long before he was back in Tanganyika administering to the sick. Soon after the war ended he became Medical Officer of Health, Gibraltar.

My leave date eventually came round and since I was going to the ancestral home, Sao Hill, 680 miles away in a southerly direction, it was necessary to plan the pick up points for petrol ration coupons en route. To complicate the problem even more I would be traveling over the weekend when Petrol Ration Offices would be closed from 12.30pm Saturday until 08.00am Monday. On the Friday afternoon I called at the Nairobi Office and after explaining to the pleasant young lady behind the desk that I wanted sufficient fuel to reach Kondoa Irangi, 360 miles away. This was to insure against the Arusha Office being closed. So she gave me 16 gallons worth of coupons. I offered to take her out for a dinner on my return but She declined.

Our Sgt. Maurice Tyrant was in luck in more ways than one. Since he was spending his leave in Dodoma his transport worries were over as I had to pass through the town to reach my destination, another 220 miles further on. Also, by giving him a lift instead of taking the usual route by train and bus he gained two extra days holiday, plus saving expenses on food and accommodation en route. For my part I was thankful for his company since it is not advisable to make long car journeys solo in Africa.

It was my intention to leave Nairobi at 7.30am on the Saturday but like all well made plans there is always a hitch, which delayed us for 30 minutes. Time was an important factor since I wanted to reach Arusha by 12.30 pm, a distance of 184 miles. That meant averaging a speed of 41 miles per hour over an indifferent earth road. A tall order. For the first 60 miles the road surface was corrugated and there is only one way to tackle such a surface to avoid rattling the car to pieces - speed! Consequently, after one hour that came to an end and from there onwards the road wasn't too bad and we carried on non-stop, except for a very brief halt at the Customs Post on the Kenya/Tanganyika Border. And on to Arusha in time to collect some petrol coupons, by which time our dry throats were in need of a gargle. So along to hotel where the cold beer tasted like nectar. Entirely the wrong liquid to drink knowing there is a hot afternoons driving ahead, By the time we had quenched our thirst, partaken of a good lunch followed by coffee and taken fifteen minutes shut eye in a comfortable chair the hour of departure was upon us and I had yet to make a decision whether to spend the night in Kondoa or carry on another 100 miles beyond to Dodoma, From Arusha that would entail a total of 280 miles or six hours driving. A tiring thought after the morning's rush, Maurice, who is in the Transport Section of the Service Corps was not, in my estimation, a very good driver so that left me to do all the work!

After filling up with petrol, and purchasing a few groceries to top up my 'chop' box - in case of emergency, the hour had moved round to 1430hrs. So, without further delay - off. Glancing sky-wards in our general direction the clouds were rather black and heavy and it was the 'rainy' season. After a few more miles the heavens opened and remained 'open' for miles which reduced our speed.

An army convoy of about 50 vehicles that he would be along to see her in the very near future - and Dodoma had its fair share of licentious soldiery (to be continued later!). The last 60 miles to Kondoa Irangi - to give the place its full name, took more time than anticipated due to the wet conditions prevailing over a 35 mile section of road commonly known as 'Pienars Heights', with plenty of bends and hills to contend with. By the time the sun had long disappeared over the horizon, and with no lamp available in the Rest House, we had to grope around with a torch and the car lights shining through the doorway. With regard to beds etc. I was self-contained with campbed, bedding, food and drink. Maurice had no choice, He had a couple of blankets in his kitbag to put on the rickety old iron bedstead and mattress, too dreadful to describe! travelling in the opposite direction had churned-up a few muddy stretches of road. By this time it became obvious that the Kondoa Rest House would be our sleeping quarters for the night. Perhaps just as well because Maurice hadn't informed his wife, an attractive, young, 'white' Seychellois lady, who enjoyed life to the full,

Our greatest priority was a cup of tea so calling on the services of the RH attendant a kettle full of boiling water was soon on the table. With the torchlight becoming dimmer by the minute we didn't waste much time sitting around drinking tea. To quell that empty feeling the edibles purchased in Arusha, biscuits, butter, ham and cheese went down very well. And so to bed, rather earlier than usual. Breakfast on that Sunday morning was a repeat of last night's 'dinner'. At 8.30am I plucked up courage to call on the Asst District Officer to enquire about the possibility of petrol coupons, eight gallons worth. He was very pleasant and co-operative, so along to the Boma (District Office) which was not far from the ADO's house, for the important piece of paper. I now had on board sufficient petrol for the 324 miles to Sao Hill with a drop or three to spare! By the time we arrived at the Dodoma Hotel, 11.00am, I felt the need for a cup of coffee so, after Maurice had unloaded his kit, we went into the so-called hotel lounge where Mrs Maurice just happened to be with six army chaps in tow! Safety in numbers, but the look of surprise on her face was worth being photographed! The menfolk disappeared into thin air.

Maurice had told me she was forever running into debt in spite of collecting practically all his monthly pay in the form of family allowance and he, rather foolishly, was accepting more pay over the table in excess of the amount he had elected to receive, due to the lack of an endorsement in his Pay Book. When the Army Pay Records discovered the anomaly his wife's allowance was cancelled until the over-payments had been paid off. Result - a broken marriage. After his leave he transferred to another unit and I didn't see him again until the mid 1950s. But a few months after their separation - or divorce, the young lady made the headlines rather tragically. Her demise being recorded as murder, a mystery which I do not think was ever solved.

After that digression, back to Dodoma. I left at 11.30am and after an uneventful 222 miles, or 5 hours of driving, I arrived at my destination to enjoy many cups of excellent tea and good food, etc, etc; But I couldn't get away from the army! Every day members of the Forces travelling from Nairobi and South Africa and in the opposite direction would call in at the hotel for refreshments and accommodation. This was all good for trade, but acting as barman, to give the OM a rest, made a slight hole in my pocket. But it was enjoyable. I visited a few friends and acquaintances to catch up on the local news. Mother had been invited to attend a wedding in Iringa so I had to act as chauffeur. in uniform, and 'gatecrashed' the party, but that was no problem since I knew the bride and her two sisters well enough not to worry about being the uninvited guest and their father couldn't care less. Anyway, a good time was enjoyed by all and the party was still in full swing when 'Mama' and I left at 5.00 pm.

My ten days leave didn't seem to last very long before it was time to think about the return Journey with a couple of passengers with large suitcases, plus my kit. Mother had decided a holiday in Nairobi would be a pleasant change -- if she could find a friend to accompany her. That was soon organised. A lady, Mrs Iris MacGregor, who lived in Mbeya, a town about 200 miles away in a south westerly direction from Sao.

One relief, travelling mid week I wouldn't have to worry about carrying gallons of spare petrol since I could collect the necessary coupons during normal office hours in Iringa and Arusha. Refuelling points were a little distant apart - the longest hop being 185 miles. Except for Nairobi all the other places sold the petrol in sealed 4 gallon tin containers (debis) which were very prone to leakage and also had to be bought in multiples of 4 galls so heaven help you if you miscalculated the amount to top up the tank!

Departing one morning at 9.00am, our first stop was Iringa for the fuel coupons, and a short gossip with the lady who issued them, whom I knew. The two 'passengers' were very pleased to see Dodoma, and the hotel, sometime around 4.30pm after the hot afternoon's Journey. Neither of them were accustomed to tropical heat after living in the Southern Highlands for years. Cups of tea followed by a bath revived them but they still complained about the heat! The next day would be equally as warm to within 50 miles of Arusha. We left the hotel at a respectable hour after breakfast but soon after leaving the town disaster almost hit us. About a mile out there was an iron barrier across the road to stop vehicles to have their loads checked. Something to do with the 'black-market' and grain trade. However, approaching the barrier at 40mph, I applied pressure on the foot brake pedal and, to my surprise, it went all the way down to the floorboards. Without brakes and an iron barrier in the way a quick decision was called. There was only one choice to avoid a pile-up and that was to aim for a narrow gap approx 6ft wide between the barrier and guard hut. So with two deft movements the car was through the gap and back on to the road before the ladies realised what had happened! Fortunately, the barrier attendant was in the hut instead of standing by the barrier unaware of a vehicle in the vicinity until I shot past his front door. Back we went to Dodoma for urgent repairs. The owner of the garage, a Greek, was very co-operative and soon had a couple of mechanics removing the brake master cylinder, etc, to renew all the hydraulic seals contained therein. After about an hour we were back on the road once again heading towards Arusha. There were no more hitches en-route and we rolled into Arusha soon after 4.30pm to a well earned cup or two of tea. At breakfast the following morning a member of the hotel kitchen staff ambled across to our table to greet mother like a long lost friend, which I suppose she was, he having been our first cook when we settled at Sao Hill way back in 1928, thirteen year's ago. Since he was now the hotel cook I asked him to knock up some decent sandwiches for our lunch at Namanga. we reached Nairobi at about 4.00pm, After dumping my passengers at the Queen's Hotel I carried on to my army abode, returning later with Charlie to dine in comfort with Ma and friend. They enjoyed their week's spree in civilisation but were not looking forward to the return journey by train and bus, the former taking 25 hours and the latter 3 days.

Back to the routine once more only this time with a slight difference. The meals in the Mess were not very appetising so it was arranged that all personnel feeding there would hold a meeting to appoint a Mess Caterer, as an extra duty! The assembled company agreed that a Mess Fee would be paid weekly to cover the wage for a decent cook and also buy in food on a daily basis. The so-called daily fresh rations supplied by the army were dreadful. For these rations we had to pay 2,00 shillings per day, or thereabouts, deducted from our monthly pay. Not much, but it went against the grain considering we lived in the "land of milk and honey". Then came the question of who'd act as Caterer. In one voice they all picked on me saying I had more spare time than the others after dealing with the morning Sick Parade. I couldn't argue about that remark! But I refused to take on the job of barman. Too costly on the 'pocket'! Someone found a Cook who proved to be capable of producing a decent meal. When we were organised he and I would make the daily trip to the Nairobi market where excellent vegetables, fruit and meat were available at reasonable prices. After that I would do the personal shopping for the other lads. Most convenient for me.

After a while the previous year's 'diet' took its toll on me in the form of a wonderful crop of carbuncles on my neck and one on the tip of my nose, most painful, all of which put me into hospital for a week. Later on malaria also landed me hospital-wards.

As time went on we had our amusing moments. Charlie had been into Nairobi and, wandering along the pavement, had failed to salute an Officer. A Lieutenant (Nairobi was overpopulated with them at that time) who took his name, Unit, etc, and forwarded an official complaint of the incident to our CO, who had to take action. In due course the Sergeant Major prepared the documentation, organised the escort, another Sgt and myself (!), to march the 'Accused' into the Orderly 'Tent' which lacked space. The Sgt Major giving the orders brought us to attention, "Quick marched" us into the tent. "Halt," in front of the CO's table. "Accused and escort – right turn", "Accused and escort -- Off hats". "One pace backwards -- March" and then all hell broke loose. Charlie had stepped backwards onto the CO's dog! And that little episode disorganised everything so the CO read out the "Charge" rather hurriedly, the "Accused" pleaded guilty. The verdict, "Reprimanded", which really didn't mean anything apart from the 'Charge' being entered in ones records.

I also had the pleasure of being 'Marched up' before the CO on a Charge carefully engineered by the Sgt Major and myself to shake up the Orderly Room staff in their lacksadaisical ways - and to many (2) young pink-kneed Lieutenants, straight out from the UK wandering around voicing their opinions on what we should, and should not, do! However, they were soon replaced by two more gentlemen who were more amenable to take advice from the lower ranks.

All this came about because I, being the Orderly Sgt of the Day had to parade the night guard to take over from the day guard without rifles because the Orderly Sgt of the previous day had gone off to Nairobi with the Arracury door key in his pocket! A serious offence.

The Orderly Officer had a lot to say about it, quite rightly, to the Sgt Major who, in turn, asked for an explanation, which I gave him. So, by mutual agreement he placed me under 'open arrest', Charging me under some Army Regulation. The following morning I was in front of the CO who read out the 'Charge', blah, blah, blah, and then asked why, as Orderly Sgt of the day I had failed to equip the night guard with rifles. My reply to that question was emphasized to the effect that I had no knowledge of being Orderly Sgt that day until 4.00 pm. Lots more blah, blah, and then the CO said that the day's Orders are pinned on the Notice Board every morning by 8.00am. That is where I plunged in the sword by telling him I had looked at the Board at 8, 9, and 11.30am, 1, and 2.00pm and no 'Orders for the Day' had been pinned up by the last time I checked. The CO then asked the Adjutant at what time had he signed the Orders? "12,30pm. Sir", said the Adjutant. And, when asked, the Clerk said he stuck them on the Board soon after that. "Charge dismissed". So the 'Prisoner and Escort' departed whilst the CO dealt with his underlings. My colleague who had waltzed off with the key thought the whole affair quite amusing when he realised he was not on a 'Charge' as well.

By this time, after 10 weeks or more of Nairobi's night-life we were all beginning to feel the pinch since our pay was hardly enough to allow wining and dining, with suitable escort, more than twice a week., Although my carbuncles and malaria hospitalization spells did help to curtail the spending bug. Needless to say my young lady friend was soon an ex-young lady friend! After that short romance I gave up entertaining the opposite sex, too demanding! Our Quartermaster ('Tiny') was of the same opinion so we drifted around the various 'watering holes' together.

Tiny was a Nairobi-ite in civilian life so, consequently, knew his way around. One of his attributes was 'Double-bass, or Cello' player in Torr's Hotel Dance Band, The bandsmen were all in the Services and occasionally Tiny would go along to make up the full complement. He is hardly visible sitting behind his instrument. Other times we would call in to see the lads during their break period and enjoy a couple of free beers with them. To reach the band room comfortably would cost about 10/-, the price of a dance ticket, since one had to cross through the dance hall, but Tiny, knowing his way around, through passages, rooms full of Junk, up stairs, a very dusty obstacle course and eventually into the room. The beer was on the 'house', I presumed, since none of us ever paid the bar waiter who staggered in with 6 or 7 pints! Our exit was much easier, through a door and down the fire-escape.

Another of our haunts was the Aero Club of East Africa. Tiny was a full member so proposed me to become a temporary Country Member and in due course after being vetted, the Committee voted me in. Ones army rank did not really matter as there were members from all walks of life, The Clubhouse was a large wooden structure, spacious, with very comfortable three piece suites dotted around and, more important, the Bar prices were cheaper than anywhere else. Also a 'fry-up' meal consisting of bread, sausages, bacon, eggs and tomatoes was available from 9.00pm until midnight, a useful piece of 'blotting paper' before driving back to Camp, and all for 2 shillings & 50 cents! Another attraction was the 'One-Armed Bandit' that gobbled up one shilling pieces. One night we did win 320/-- (shillings) between us.

Yatta Camp

Sometime around June/July the Army Education Corps decided they wanted the school buildings for educational purposes so our CO, with his minions, chose a site half a mile further along the road away from Nairobi. So it was a case of going under canvas for the NCOs and Other Ranks, not that we minded, since the tents were roomy enough and the climate temperate, sometimes darned chilly.

We managed to acquire two "day lodgers", a South African S/Sgt. who was in charge of a Field Bakery unit close-by and his young lady Secretary. They would appear for breakfast, lunch and a cup of tea at 4,00pm and after that they went their respective ways. Needless to say, we enjoyed the warm freshly baked bread and rolls, although we would have liked more of the latter, pure greed!

Malaria struck me down once again so another short spell spent in hospital, followed by a few days "excused duty". But that is an expensive pastime as the inclination tends to draw one towards the town for decent meals one could well do without.

Having been demoted from a 1st Line transport unit to a 3rd Line outfit some of our decent vehicles had been called in for a complete overhaul and into the vehicle pool for re-issue to units further afield requiring reliable transport, Burma and one other place that was awaiting mopping up action, "Vichy" Madagascar, where German and Jap 'U' boats lurked and sank some of our shipping travelling through the Mozambique Channel. A narrow strip of the Indian Ocean between the East African coast and the island of Madagascar. Back to the vehicles. The replacements had certainly seen better days, the front mudguards were made of wooden planks 12ins wide with modified brackets welded together to support the whole contraption, all very 'Heath Robinson-ish'.

Life continued in its own sweet way, Some of our colleagues transferred to other units and their places were usually filled by lads recently out from the UK who felt a little out of their depth, as one would expect.

When our transport problem was back to normal, in July/August, the "Powers-that-be" soon had us packing our bags once again. Only this time quite a short move, 50 miles out to a place on the map called the Yatta Plateau, where a Large training area had been established to toughen-up the Infantry battalions, Artillery, Engineers and other miscellaneous units prior to their departure to Burma. Our role at Yatta was merely to operate the ambulance service between both places, Yatta/Nairobi, not a very exciting pastime. The virgin patch of African bush allocated to us for a vehicle park, and tents galore, was soon tidied up by about 80 drivers armed with their issue machetes chopping down all the thorn bushes and other vegetation bushes growing over the 2-3 acre site. The driving fraternity also had to construct a road with a gravel foundation to prevent the vehicles becoming bogged down in the event of a passing thunder storm or two. Charlie took on the job of 'Constructional Engineer' using a lorry with about four tons of gravel on board to act as a road-roller to great effect! Over a short period of time lumps of rock edged the road and, in true army tradition, were duly whitewashed adding a bit of colour to the landscape!

Recreational facilities were nil although there was a large wooden hut available for games. The only time it appeared to be used was on Wednesday afternoons and evenings when the expatriate European ladies from the estates around the Thika area, a sort of Womens Voluntary Service organisation, brought lots of edible "goodies"; sandwiches, cakes, ham salads, and the ingredients for a 'fry-up' supper, all of which was greatly appreciated by the recipients, A change from our own monotonous army rations which had to be seen to be believed.

Not far from our camp there flowed a fair sized river, by East African standards (the Chania, I think!), where, a little way upstream there is a ver picturesque spot known as Fourteen Falls. A sort of mini-Niagra in the shape of a horseshoe with 14 individual waterfalls. Below the falls are deepish pools where the anglers in our midst, Charlie and Albert, the Mechanic Sgt Major, tried their luck. On recollection I think they caught a few 'tiddlers' but hardly enough to warrant a plate of fish and chips.

One Sunday afternoon. or non-duty afternoon, the brothers Allen decided to have a look at the river further downstream. So, following a path in the general direction towards the river, which we reckoned was not more than half a mile away from our start point, We soon reached the riverine thicket and not knowing what wild "beasties" could be lurking therein we carried on, with caution, towards the river which could be heard a few yards further ahead. Proceeding a little further towards a sandbank we heard a sudden scuffle in the dry under-growth ahead followed by a splash. On

further investigation. the tracks were those of a crocodile enjoying an afternoons bask in the sun until being so rudely disturbed by a couple of oafs. A crocodile was the last thing we expected to flush out so far upcountry. A warning to those chaps who enjoy fishing not to stand too near the waters edge when casting a line.

A few days after that little episode our two anglers were seen disappearing with a lorry on an expedition towards the Stores Depot, or somewhere in that direction. Half an hour later they returned with a large canvas, folding, assault boat! At the first opportunity a launch-party was pressganged into transporting the boat to a suitable launch point below the falls. It slid very easily down a steep bank on its steel bottom, in fact, too easily, almost launching itself into a deep pool! When unfolded and various bolts in place it resembled a boat with a capacity for carrying eight persons, plus kit. Its presence in the pool did not improve the fish quota and although there were other pools downstream the river was too shallow to float the boat down to them. So farewell to a fish and chip suppers for the foreseeable future.

Our Sgt Major who had served with the unit since its inception in September 1939, decided it was time to apply for a transfer within the Service Corps hoping that the move would lead to promotion into the Commissioned ranks (to be on par with his wife who was a Lieutenant in the W.T.S.), but I never heard whether his ambition ever came to fruition. His departure, naturally, called for a farewell party and, like all army farewell parties, ended in chaos. The evening prior to his departure the BNCOs and Officers (the CO and two Lieutenants) foregathered in our large Mess tent soon after the sun dipped over the horizon to sample the contents in the array of bottles set out on the table. There was a mixture, too. In due course the food appeared, mainly out of tins which helped to allay the exuberance shown by our young colleagues recently out from the UK whose tongues were becoming 'loosened'. However, as the night progressed the happier the assembled company became until two idiots decided to unhitch the tent guy-ropes with the inevitable result. As the roof came down I could visualise the two paraffin pressure lamps being knocked over and causing a conflagration. Someone rescued the one near the door whilst I grabbed the one at the rear and then had to 'burrow' my way to the exit. The only casualty was one of the Lieutenants who, in the rush, tripped over a tent peg and fractured his wrist. The CO and I took him off to the Medical tent for the necessary treatment, 'splinting and bandaging'! The three of us must have been in a 'mellow' state judging by the unsympathetic remarks we made trying to straighten the poor chap's wrist. He wasn't quite so happy the following morning when sent off to Nairobi for an X-ray and the usual plaster job. The CO didn't bear any malice towards the two culprits who 'dropped' the tent and, in fact, thought it all rather amusing!

Calling me aside one day the CO told me I had upset all his plans which were at that moment in time still at the "hush, hush" stage. 'Loose Talk Costs Lives' as the wartime posters inferred. I queried the reason why my presence should afflict his plans. Apparently, he had me down to go on an overseas assignment but word had filtered through from Army Headquarters in Nairobi that many of the Government

Officers who joined the East African Forces from, the three Governments of Kenya, Uganda and Tanganyika at the outbreak of the war would be recalled from army service at any time to resume their former occupations and my name was on the 'hit' list. Many had already returned to their civilian posts as more UK army personnel were drafted to East Africa to take over many of the E A Army units scattered around in Kenya, Somalia, Eritrea and Ethiopia. So instead of me seeing a little more of the world Charlie was the lucky one who had the honour of organing a detachment of ambulances with medical personnel for this 'mysterious' trip over the water! Although no places were mentioned it was quite obvious preparations were underway for an all out onslaught on the unfriendly 'Vichy French' island of Madagascar, where German and Japanese submarines were based, which was causing trouble with our shipping travelling between South Africa and the East African ports through the Mozambique Channel.

Voi

We must be popular with the War-lords in Nairobi. Instructions came through to the effect that we had to set up a Field Hospital in the Voi area, which is roughly half way between Nairobi and Mombasa, where an Army Brigade was preparing to carry out manoeuvres.

In passing the CO said to me "You know more about this sort of thing than me so get busy -- and we'll be leaving the day after tomorrow and that includes you and me". Since he was 'the only doctor available and the two Allens the only two European medico NCOs In the unit it was obvious my presence would be required. Our role in the 'Army Game' being purely functional - coping with the injured and sick.

Our departure date loomed up, so, wishing the overseas bound colleagues 'Happy landings' our small convoy of five vehicles, one staff car and four ambulances -- with the CO leading and me in my usual slot at the rear. The route was through Thika, Nairobi, then southward for a few miles over a very corrugated stretch of main road leading to Tanganyika and, ultimately, South Africa. In due course, we turned left at the Mombasa signpost. Considering. It is the main road to the coast it could have been maintained to a higher standard although I suspect politics came into it, as the Railways do not like having to compete with road transport! After a rather dusty drive we reached our destination with two and a half hours of daylight to spare which allowed us, the orderlies and drivers time to clear a site in the thorn scrub to pitch the tents. Each and every bush being armed with vicious thorns.

Maj Peacock hadn't a clue where the 'manouveres' were taking place other than Voi; which could mean anywhere within a five miles radius from the town. However, that was a minor detail which could be shelved until the following day since we had more pressing matters requiring attention. A beer, a bath, clean clothes and dinner - in that order! And, of course. making sure our African drivers and orderlies were reasonably happy.

Voi is a small town and the Administrative HQs for the Voi and Tsavo Districts. In the shopping area there are quite a number of Indian dukas (shops). A railway station which is slightly larger than most 'bush' stations as the branch line to Tanganyika (Moshi), Arusha, etc, takes off from the Kenya Railway system here (and, I might add, the change-over occurs, for passengers, at the worst possible time of day -- 01.30am, - having, personally, sampled that Journey twice!).

Commissioned and non-commissioned rank made little difference on this occaslom since we, the 'Boss' and 'yours truly, fed together - not to mention the evening ritual of a 'gargle' - or two, watching the sun disappear over the horizon at the same time, 06.45pm daily, when I would enlighten the Major on "The Private Life of the Tsetse Fly", plus plus a few other tropical diseases and bugs he had yet to come up against on his travels.. He Was a little uneasy after I told him about the "Man-eaters of Tsavo" since we were quite near the Tsavo area - and lions have no respect for district boundaries!

Over the breakfast table we would decide on a plan of action for the day to relieve the boredom of playing 'Hospitals' once the morning sick parade was over. However, on the first day we had plenty of things to contend with without the risk of being bored. Item No 1 on the agenda - to find a suitable place to erect the large hospital tent preferably under some shade trees. But there weren't any around so instead it went up on a clear patch alongside a sisal plant hedge - which later proved to be the wrong decision!

Now that we're in business the Officer IC "War Games" had to be Informed. but where to find him? Our instructions were rather scanty, but after a few false starts we eventually ran him to earth in the thick thorn scrub two or three miles out of the town. After making the necessary arrangements with the Company Sgt Major for the daily collection of troops requiring medical attention we headed off In the direction of the District Office. I had mentioned to the Major earlier that the question of protocol was around since District Commissioners liked to know what, where and who were operating in their District. On arrival into the Office went the Major to inform the District Commmissioner about our presence in the area - but he was soon out mumbling about the non-welcome attitude shown by the DC, who, so we gathered a little later, had his own worries.

Driving along to the Rly Station a strange sight drew our attention, In one of the railway sidings there were four Fleet Air Arm aircraftsmen who were, with the aid of winches and lifting gear,

'pouring' a rather bent "Swordfish" aircraft into a large railway wagon. Being nosey we wandered over to have a look at the wreck and in the course conversation with the Petty Officer he gave us his version of the accident!

The pilot and aircraft were based at a place called MacKinnon Road miles inland (55 from the nearest aircraft carrier, or ocean), where the FAA had a Maintenance Depot. Vol being 43 miles further on along the road towards Nairobi, The young pilot was friendly with the DC and his wife and when flying over Voi on a routine exercise wished to impress the residents down below by demonstrating his aerobatic skills above the DC's house etc; Unfortunately he misjudged his height and came to roost with his Swordfish in the tree tops - most embarrassing, but luckily he crept out without serious injury.

Our camp was adjacent to the official landing strip, and later on in the day in came another "Swordfish" and out stepped two high ranking Naval Officers. They were ushered into an awaiting car then headed off towards the town, no doubt to interview the DC whose house was the centre of attraction for the unfortunate young airman.

After the morning 'Sick Parade' had been dealt with, usually by 08.30am, the boredom became a little tedious for all concerned. There were no 'in-patients' so the orderlies and drivers had an easy time of it since the only chore thrust upon them was the CO's daily inspection of their tents and kit. Woe betide anyone whose bedding roll was not folded as per regulations. One of his pet foibles was 'kit inspections' which his wretched dog used to aid and abet by finding bones from the rations which had been carelessly discarded in all sorts of places by the diners.

The Railway Station was another place we visited daily to collect any 'signals' that may have come in for us via the railway telegraph and at the same time quench our thirst with a mug of tea in the so called Restaurant Room with the Asian Stationmaster.

In the evenings we would drive a few miles out along the different bush tracks hoping to see some of the fauna of the region but with no luck. The only 'beastie' seen was the back end of a rhino disappearing into the thick thorn scrub.

A young european officer, a 2nd Lieutenant, was brought in one morning suffering with alcoholic poisoning - or in other words "the DTs", He was in a dreadful state with awful hallucinations of "things" trying to catch him to such an extent that it was necessary to detail four orderlies to restrain him the whole time. On the second day he managed to escape, charged out of the tent, and straight into the aforementioned young sisal hedge, which stopped him in his tracks. At the tip of each sisal leaf is very hard and sharp thorn and he had literally impaled himself on the plants.