



# Hugh Morgan 1918 - 1990 Worcester Cadet and Officer

## INTRODUCTION

There must be many, who, like myself, have been prospector, sailor, hardrock miner, mining engineer, coconut planter and teacher, and who also spent over five years in His Majesty's forces in World War II.

They too have seen much of the world.

There are, I believe some unique incidents to recall, and friends have urged me to put some of my experiences down on paper, something I have long meant to do, but always managed to put off, and apart perhaps from being good therapy after recovery from a cancer operation, it seems advice worth taking.

Bear with me then, as I search a failing memory, and aided by a few faded snapshots, and an ancient diary, try to tell you much of what happened to me during my boyhood, my adolescence, my "adultery" and my geriatricity, between 1918 and 1990.

A Thank You.

I am particularly grateful to my friends Keith (O.W.) and Toni Broderick and family for their help and support, and the long hours of voluntary word processing that they have done for me in the production of this book.



John Cameron-Stewart (Hugh instructed John while in the Royal Marine), Keith Broderick OW & Hugh Morgan.

## Chapter 1

### Before My Time

The lion lay dozing in the morning shade of a thorn bush, when the sound of galloping hooves brought him to his feet, fully alert. They did not come from any of the large herd of wildebeest that were grazing placidly a quarter of a mile to his left, but from down wind and straight ahead of him. He was startled by the sight on which his eyes quickly focused, just as the rider brought his horse to a sliding halt. The lion had never seen a horse, let alone one with a man on its back. The rider, keeping his eyes on the lion, which he had just seen stand up, slid from his saddle, rifle in hand, with his right hand through a loop of the horse's reins. The nervous horse, seeing the lion start towards him to investigate, reared high in the air, pulling his rider's right arm up with him. This prevented the man from raising and aiming his rifle, while the lion, in turn unsettled by the unusual scene before him, and deciding that discretion was the better part of valour, turned and ran towards the huge herd of wildebeest. Those unpredictable large animals saw him coming, but knowing he was not hunting them, moved aside a little, making a narrow corridor through which the lion ran, before they re-closed their ranks and continued to graze. Meanwhile the young rider, having quieted his horse, remounted, and now intent on shooting the lion, galloped after him. Alas, the tightly packed herd would not let him through, so he had to turn and gallop a good half mile to get round their flank. By this time his quarry was long gone, so he turned his horse and trotted homeward across the plains. The intrepid rider was of course the man who about a decade later, would become my father.

Let me start nearer the beginning though, and tell you that my father, with his parents and brothers and sisters migrated from Wales to South Africa when he, Thomas Oliver Morgan, was six years old. When he was seventeen, he joined, with one or two other British South Africans, a local mounted regiment, The Prince Alfred Guard, to fight against the Boers. He was discharged from the regiment when hostilities

The men arrived in Kenya in 1905 and first settled at Kibwezi between Mombasa and Nairobi, at the western edge of the Athi plains. Here they would farm ostriches on the plains, and previously planted rubber from trees near the house. Ladies of fashion at that time paid high prices for the plumes of the male ostrich, to wear in their hats. 'Ollie' as he was known, realised that collecting eggs on the Athi plains, setting them to hatch, and waiting for the chicks to grow into males large enough to have their tail feathers plucked, would take a long time, and how many of the brood would be male anyway? The drab brown plumage of the female ostriches were not worth much. He decided to buy himself a fast horse, and hasten the process by riding down and lassoing male ostriches on the plains. Hence his run in with the lion when exercising his newly acquired steed.

Some time previously a girl was born in India to an English couple living there. The husband was a Chaplain to the 'British Army in India', although he had originally been a cadet on the Merchant Navy Training Ship H.M.S. Worcester and then gone to sea as a Ship's Officer. The girl was brought up in various 'stations' in India, until, I think, the death of her father, when her mother decided to take her to New Zealand. I am not sure how long they lived there, but can only suppose that they left to return to England, partly so that that the girl, later to become my mother, could study music at the Royal Academy in London, before 1905. They broke their journey in South Africa, spending some time in Port Elizabeth where they met my father's family. How, or wherever they met, Laetitia Horn-Beatty arrived in Mombasa from England in 1910 to marry 'Ollie' my father to be. She was an indomitable little lady, all of five foot two in her lace-up riding boots. By this time the males of the Morgan family had decided there was no money to be made from either ostrich feathers or from rubber, mainly because the new strain, Para rubber, had been introduced to the market from Brazil. They had bought themselves a steam driven stationary engine and milling plant, and set it up on a property they had bought near Sotik, somewhat south and west of Kericho. This was where the new bride was taken, and where the family was to grind corn which would be bartered for Masai cattle or sold for cash.

My elder brother was born in 1915 and named Dean, and by this time father had joined the 3rd K.A.R. and had moved with his Company towards the border with German East Africa. My next younger brother, Richard, was born about 18 months after me. Our childhood was not unusual for Colonials of our day.



Hugh - Richard - Mother - Dean

### **Childhood into Boyhood.**

We all, at the age of seven or eight went to Kenton College, a preparatory boarding school on the eastern heights overlooking the Rift Valley. It nestled in a saddle of Kijabe Hill, 7000 feet above sea level, giving us an excellent view of both Mount Longonot, with its deep crater, fortunately extinct, and of Lake Naivasha, spread below us like a small jewel on the valley floor. Some years later the school was moved to Nairobi.

During most of my "prep" school days, my father was busy building new sections of railway line in various parts of the country for the Kenya and Uganda Railways. My parents also now owned two

completely unprofitable farms; one near a place called Lumbwa, which was a station on the railway that linked Mombasa and Nairobi with Kisumu on Lake Victoria and the other some miles away at Kericho, now well known for its tea plantations and factories, most of which belong to the Brook Bond Tea Company. We used to visit and work the farms from time to time, mainly between railway contracts, which we boys enjoyed. I also remember a manager looking after the Lumbwa Farm for a time, though he seemed to spend all of every day sitting on the verandah playing cards with his wife, so that one only made expenses while my mother was running it.

During our latter days in Kenya, for we moved to Dar es Salaam in Tanganyika later on, my father took on a contract rather different to railway building, even though the cords of firewood that were cut and sent

My father bought in an Essex car which he was very proud of. One day when he was away I climbed in, started the engine, engaged first gear, and drove gently out of the garage, then watched by our cook and one or two other members of our camp staff, did a couple of circuits of the camp site, and drove sedately back into the garage and switched off. I thought to myself, "that was rather good" and decided to have one more 'go'. So off I went again for another circuit; alas this time the improperly closed front door swung open as I entered the garage, caught the door post, swung back, and as I stopped appeared to have developed a large unstraightenable dent. I put the car away and prepared to face the music, the wretched Essex was of course the apple of Father's eye. When he returned he had a look at the damage, walked off and cut himself a nice whippy stick, and then gave me a sound thrashing. I had been given six of the best by the Headmaster a couple of times at school, and one or two other minor punishments, but this one was the Daddy of them all. I never forgot it, neither did I ever borrow a car without permission, I think I was just over ten at the time.

Soon after this my Father won a contract to 'earth-fill' an area of Dar es Salaam harbour so that the wharves of that port could be improved. We moved to Kenya to the capital of Tanganyika Territory in 1928. Here we lived on a houseboat moored in the harbour. The 'Old Man' had bought an old cargo lighter, cemented the inside of the hull, decked it with timber, and built an asbestos walled and roofed house on top. It was fitted with a landing platform where boats could tie up, and a short companion way to the deck. During school holidays my brother Richard and I could often be seen skimming across the harbour in a Canadian canoe, holding up two umbrellas that acted as sails, and using a paddle with which to steer, much to the amusement of many passengers and crew of ships at anchor in the harbour. The name of the harbour comes of course from the Arabic "Bandare wa Salaam", the haven of peace. It is in fact a lovely almost landlocked bay.

My brother Dean was now at a public school in Scotland, but Richard and I used to travel to and from school each holiday, going by ship to Mombasa, via Zanzibar and Tanga, spending a night usually at a Mombasa hotel, either the 'Manor House' or the 'Palace' and catching the daily mail train to Nairobi and beyond, at about three the next afternoon.

More often than not the sea journey was done on a lovely little coaster MV Dumra, which belonged to the B.I.S.N. Co. and carried passengers and mixed cargoes up and down the East African coast between Durban and Lamu. Sometimes we had students from other Kenya schools as fellow passengers. I remember one occasion when a lad from one school went down to visit an older girl in her cabin, only to be interrupted almost immediately by the senior steward knocking on the door he had latched behind him. The young fellow lost no time in wriggling through the open porthole, reaching up to the deck rail above him, and climbing up and over the taffrail to the promenade deck. A ship's officer who saw him step onto the deck gave him a lecture on the foolhardiness of skylarking over the safety rails of ships at sea and of the trouble caused by having to stop and turn the ship to search for, and rescue, a man overboard in shark infested water. The Captain, he said, would not be in the least impressed.

By now I had become one of the House Captains and Monitors at our school, with a few little privileges, like being allowed to use one of the staff bathrooms instead of having to stand under communal showers with all the little boys.

The great depression made itself felt in East Africa at about this time and my parents left Dar es Salaam and went north to Lake Victoria. The intention was to prospect for gold round the Tanganyikan shores of the lake; one or two minor 'strikes' having been reported in this area.

At the end of the current school term, instead of going back to Dar es Salaam, Richard and I were to catch the train to Kisumu, Kenya's port on Lake Victoria, then board one of the lake steamers for the voyage halfway round the lake to Mwanza in Tanganyika where we would meet our parents. Among our luggage was a doubled barreled 0.50 Elephant rifle; this belonged to Kenton Collage's Headmaster, FR Cramb, who was lending it to my father, who at that time only possessed an 8 mm Manlicher rifle; too light a weapon for rhino in thick bush. Cramb had also given us 50 rounds of 'black powder' cartridges.

The only time I remember firing the heavy rifle, I was engulfed in smoke from the cartridge, and the bruise on my shoulder from the 'kick' was spectacular

The lake steamer took us slowly but safely to the port of Mwanza where we were reunited with our parents, and joined in the bustle of preparing safari. Much had already been done, such as checking tents, hurricane lamps, tools and so on, but food had to be packed in boxes, as did bedding, clothing etc. Each box or package had to be of a suitable weight and size to be carried on a porter's head. Our stores included prospecting pans, picks and shovels, and the all important 'dollies', (pestles and mortars) for crushing samples of rock for panning.

All was eventually ready and we hired a 3 ton truck from an Indian trader to take us northwards to the port of Musoma. Not very as the crow flies, but one has to go about 100 kms due east first to round a gulf in the lake, before going north across the South Mara River to head for Musoma.

With stores, ourselves, and our African staff all loaded, we made an early start out of Mwanza, only to find after an hour or so that there was no fuel cap on the aging Chev truck. On this model the fuel tank was at the rear end of the bonnet, and any petrol splashing out of it would trickle down onto a very hot engine, or an even hotter exhaust. Our African driver, terrified of any bump that might cause a spill, crawled along the dirt road. He spoke no English, we were however all fluent in Kiswahili, and after a long conversation persuaded him to stop so that we could improvise some sort of petrol cap. We managed to find among our stores a large chutney jar cork that would fit the tank, and after piercing it with a big needle, to allow air to replace petrol as it was used, were able to continue at a far better pace. We crossed the South Mara without trouble, as the river was fairly low, and went on to Musoma where we received permission to stay at the Government Rest Camp for a day or two.

The next few months were to be spent in walking some 15 miles in a day, with porters engaged for the day, carrying all our stores; a camp would then be set up from which we would prospect in the surrounding area for two or three weeks, before moving on about 15 miles to the next camp.

At the end of the first month Richard and I had to return to school, I for my final term, but he for 6 more terms. We boarded one of the lake steamers for the 30 hour voyage to Kisumu; here we caught the passenger train for the remaining 200 miles back to school.

On finally leaving Kenton Collage, with rather mixed feelings, I rejoined my parents at Musoma, and became part of the prospecting team. Here I should mention that this venture was financed by a syndicate, raised by my parents, and the members each paid a set amount per share per month. I am glad to be able to say that after a little more than 3 years, each syndicate member received all their money back plus 100% interest. Some wished to join a second syndicate, which happily was also successful. More about that later. I fear a good deal of my early prospecting was spent with the Manlicher rifle, sneaking up on the occasional herd of impala, to shoot a buck for meat. Of course our permanent African employees, about 10, had also to be fed by us, so meat was never wasted. Later, in thick bush country, I carried the 0.50 elephant gun, but as I, and the African with me, kept a sharp lookout for any swarm of tick birds suddenly flying up, the odd rhino did not surprise us, and we were able to move out of harm's way. We spent several month's prospecting in the Musoma area steadily working further afield, without making any worthwhile finds.

I worked for a few weeks for a friend of the family who was installing a rock crushing and gold extracting plant on his small mine, and I dare say I learned a little. I know I was very impressed by the Plymouth station sedan that he drove. Most of us had never seen a car with coil springs, independent suspension, or even low pressure 'balloon' tyres; such things were new to East Africa in the early thirties. I remember one occasion when my boss, known to his friends as 'Glog', drove to Musoma to meet the lake steamer, collect the mail, and buy fresh eggs and vegetables. These were usually brought along for sale on 'ship' days, by Africans with small holdings near the town. Eggs were often of dubious age, so the custom was to put them in a bowl of water; any that floated were discarded as being inedible. Glog was offered 100 all of which sank in the bowl, so he bought the lot for 2 shillings, the going price at the time. On reaching

home he found all were rotten, but the salesman had boiled the lot to make sure they would sink! When Glog was asked what he intended to do about being swindled, he said, "the lad is pretty bright so I shall make him my agent, and get him to buy produce for me on commission".

In any case we decided we had pretty well exhausted the possibilities of the local area, so we moved further towards Mwanza to a place opposite Ukerewe Island, to where another old friend of the family, and his artist wife were prospecting and had discovered a small gold bearing lode. We camped near them, and continued to prospect for a week or two, and then decided to move back to Mwanza, with the aim of prospecting further to the west, in an area where the Germans had made a gold strike before World War 1. Apparently no European had been in that isolated region since 1914, however, when we finally got there we found one elderly hermit and prospector, who had come from South Australia, whence he had gone from England many years earlier.

We moved from near Ukerewe Island to Mwanza in one of the dhows that ply Lake Victoria. We camped in the rest house at Mwanza for a few weeks to replenish stores, and engage a few more labourers. During this stay we met a large Italian who had recently been made a Cavalier by Benito Mussolini, for services to Italy.

Cavalier Bonini owned a small old fashioned steam boat with an African crew, which we later hired a couple of times. He was also a prodigious eater, happy to sit down to a 24 egg omelet followed by a roast duck, or a supper of 2 roast chickens and a bowl of pasta!

### **Morning on the Kinankop**

You can step from your tent to the grass  
Bejewelled by the frozen dew  
And gasp as the newborn sun  
Lights the enchanting view  
Away to the left you see  
Clear with the naked eye  
Where the scarps of the wakikuyu  
Meet the plains of the wild Masai

Nearer at hand stands Longonot  
Crated - silent - aloof  
Sullenly guarding the valley  
A mountain without a roof  
Further right shines Lake Naivasha  
Tall fever thorns guarding its shore  
Green reeds fringing its waters  
Like paint on the valley floor

Distantly Elementaita flickers  
It's pinked tinged sheen  
As some of its host of flamingoes  
Pause in their feeding to preen  
The sun beats now on the soda  
That dries on its barren edge  
The bird flock rises in ranks  
To fly north in a giant wedge

### **Prospecting Camp**

The moonlight was cracked by the bark  
Of a vigilant sentry baboon  
Came the snarl like a cross-cut saw  
From the leopard perceived too soon  
As he stalked like a dappled ghost  
Through the shadows cast by the trees  
Intent on his hunt for red meat  
Gnawing hunger once more to appease

A small log rolled in the fire  
And flame flickered high from the brand  
Allowing a glance round the tent  
To ensure the gun was at hand  
Soon the spine chilling roar of a lion  
From the foot of a nearby hill  
Approved of the coming dawn  
Ere he tore once more at the kill

A little beyond the firelight  
A rubbish can teetered and rolled  
Pushed by a scrounging hyena  
Whose hunger had made him bold  
He'd started his long drawn howl  
To bewail the coming of day  
When a stone and a shout from the cook  
Made the scavenger lollop away.

## Chapter 2.

### The Foot of the Rainbow

We also found two German brothers in Mwanza who ran a store and general business, and asked them to act as our agents. This they were happy to do, and they were a great help when we needed business done for us during the isolation of the next two years.

The day finally came to board the lake dhow that we had chartered, to take us and our belongings westwards to the little lakeside village of Nungwe, at the southern end of the Emin Pasha Gulf. On arrival a couple of days later, we found that we had to disembark into small canoes, which then had to wind their way through a narrow channel, between high walls of papyrus, to a small landing beach. Father and our Nubian headman went off first in the dhow's dingy, only to find that the local men had all run off to hide in the bush. They thought that being Europeans, we must have come to collect the taxes they had not paid for years. After a forceful discussion with the village headman he undertook to have thirty porters ready next morning, to carry our loads the twelve miles or so to Saragurwe Hill, clearly visible from the village, and where some Germans had done a little mining in his childhood.

The porters duly arrived and off we went, and finally climbed a spur of the mountain to a pleasant saddle where we had decided to camp.

The next few days were a confusion of getting some huts built as quarters for our workmen, arranging for men to go a couple of miles across the plain below our camp, to fetch water from a river that rose near a small hill, which we later



Grass Huts

of the hillside, it was full of bats, but also contained a good supply of water, good for most things except drinking. We found that our predecessors had uncovered two small quartz stringers, both of which were fairly rich in gold. Before very long our men had crushed enough rock for us to extract some twenty ounces of gold which we then smelted, moulded into an ingot, and sent by a couple of 'runners' to the Bank in Mwanza. All very encouraging, but our troubles began to increase at the same time. The majority of our labourers decided that this corner of the back of beyond was not for them; there were no shops, no available women, in fact no social life, so most left us within a month of arrival. The more desolate the area, the better the African 'grapevine' seems to work, and very soon people began to come to the camp looking for a job, hoping to sell us some of their produce, or just to talk and have a look at these strange 'Wazungu' (White People). On our first Sunday in this new camp, I looked up from what I was doing, and saw walking towards us a bearded strange European wearing khaki slacks and shirt, a funny looking hat, which he told us he had fashioned from oxhide, and with a good stout stick as tall as himself. This was Albert Merry, who I mentioned earlier, and who had walked over from his camp about eight miles away.



Hugh's Mother in the Sedan Chair

I always remember his greeting "well you've got more nerve than I have, whoever you may be. Wouldn't catch me camping up here with no water less than a couple of miles away".

Mother invited him to join us for lunch, which he refused, but said he would be happy to sit and drink a pot of tea with us while we had our food, he liked to let his tea go cold, then drink a whole pot of it during the afternoon. After that not many Sundays passed when 'Old Merry' as we called him, didn't walk over for a drink of tea and a chinwag. Sometimes in the pass between our camp and the valley where he lived, he would meet a small herd of buffalo and he would stand still and wait for them to move on, and they never harmed him.

As the months went by with us producing just enough gold to keep starvation at bay, though there was a period when we had to exist on native porridge and honey, we started to seriously prospect in the surrounding hills. We realised that we had to find some large gold-bearing formation that would interest a big mining company, this we were lucky enough to do, but it took many months of hard work and long hours of prospecting in wild country, with usually just one African companion to eventually find, and offer for sale, what became the Geita Gold Mining Company's Ridge 8 Gold Mine.

In the meantime a couple of other prospectors had arrived in the area. Two friends of my Father's from Dar es Salaam, Messrs. Williams and Doyle, the latter had trained as a mining geologist in his youth. We had already pegged and registered a one square mile block taking in a long ridge, or spur, that ran out from a large hill with twin peaks, this was later known as ridge 8. The square mile block was known as an EPL (Exclusive Prospecting License) and remained ours as long as we carried out a certain minimum of development work annually.



Hugh's Mother with Natives and Prospecting equipment

This area was west of and across a river from the old German workings, known by the way as the Bismark Reef on old maps, where we had first camped. Before we moved from that camp we were visited by F.R.Cramb from Kenton College, who was a member of our syndicate. He stayed for a week and promised to let Richard remain at school another term or two without fees. My Father also persuaded him to take his elephant gun back with him when he left, with the remaining ammunition. Richard continued to go to and from school, and it was often I who accompanied him as far as Mwanza. About this time we moved

Our African employees, who were all members of other tribes like Wasukuma or Wanyamwesi, thought the Barongo sexual customs hilarious to say the least. In fact they spent hours discussing and laughing about them. "Bwana" they would say to me, "do you know that when the Barongo make love, they don't lie down or even stand up?" "The man sits down crossed legged, the women comes and sits in his lap on his hand, facing him, inserts his member which she then manipulates with one hand". "What a ridiculous way to go about things". They would then dissolve into peals of laughter and ribald comments.

Writing of the Barongo, I am reminded of another incident from a little earlier, when in fact money was very tight, and there was certainly none for luxuries like whisky or brandy. Ever since I could remember my parents were used to having a 'sundowner' in the evening while sitting by the campfire after the day's work. With money so short they missed not being able to indulge this habit. Anyway, an African turned up at the camp one day and asked to speak to Dad. He had brought with him a bottle of illegal homemade gin, and wished to know whether Father would like to buy a bottle or two once a week for two shillings each. After sampling it the 'Old Man' thought it good enough to order a bottle per week. It was pretty cheap after all. One day we were out prospecting a few miles from camp when we came to a little Barongo village. In a clear space between the huts was a newly made dug-out canoe, round which sat the older women of the village with their stumps of age blackened teeth, or in some cases toothless gums. They were all busy chewing half ripe bananas and spitting them into the canoe. We stopped to ask what was going on, and were told that the chewed banana was left in the canoe to ferment, this was good medicine, and would make the canoe a safe boat when launched. In the meantime, once fermentation had nearly stopped, the 'brew' would be put through the still, and then would be ready for bottling and selling as gin. Father never drank another drop of the locally distilled liquor!

I began to have some trouble with tooth-ache and it was decided I should go to Mwanza and catch the Mail train to Dar es Salaam, this left every Tuesday at 3pm. Most would-be passengers went to Mwanza on Monday to be sure of catching the weekly train, even then a few missed it through over indulgence, and had to wait a week for the next one. Anyway, I caught my train and was in Dar es Salaam on Thursday afternoon.

### **Chapter 3**

#### **And Adolescence**

Shortly after this our prospecting team was strengthened by the arrival of my elder brother Dean from England, and having taught him the rudiments of the game, and how to use a prospecting pan he and I and a group of porters would go off on prospecting safaris, with things beginning to turn a little in our favour, thus allowing us to leave the 'old man' to get on with developing the find on ridge 8, while he and Mother negotiated with the parent company of Geita Gold Mines, who wished to take an option on the property. Dean and I found some traces of gold in some hills near the toe of the gulf that runs south from Mwanza, Mother joined us there for a short time, as did Richard on one of his school holidays. The area was mainly memorable for a pride of 5 lions, who tried at first to drive us, and our camp, away from their track to a water hole. We refused to move, so they went round, and on more than one occasion were seen passing between our camp and the hill where we were doing some trenching.

Before long we decided further work in the area was not worthwhile, so we trekked back towards ridge 8 area, intending to stop and examine a hill we had been told about, called 'Mawe Meru', white rock in the local dialect, about twenty miles short of our old base camp. We finally arrived and camped on the small hill, took and panned some samples, and they came out very nicely, showing about two ounces of gold per ton of quartz.

We soon built a permanent sort of camp on the hill and settled down to discover how long the gold-bearing lode was, and how deep it was likely to go. Again we had a visit from a lion walking through the labour lines, and wandering onto the hill where our own living huts were. In our camps we always had a large

log fire which we sat around in the evening, and on which the cans of water for our evening baths were heated. Last thing at night we arranged the logs so they would burn all night, and went off to bed.

As there were no proper doors to our sleeping huts we used to prop an old table top across them at night. This early morning I got out of bed and was looking across the table top to see if I could spot the lion when, I saw our cook wandering across from his hut towards the fire. I shouted to him, "get back in your hut, or quickly make the fire up, and get close to it. There is a lion out there". He threw wood on the fire and replied, "no Bwana, that is only the men down in the labour camp playing, and pretending to be a lion". The fire flared, and at that moment the lion roared again ten yards from the cook, then turned and loped off down the hill, his obvious presence having quite cured the cook of constipation.

The mining company with whom we were dealing now confirmed their wish to take an option to purchase our various claims, except Mawe Meru, and that would be bought by them later, and paid a reasonable sum into our account. It was then decided that we should go to Kisumu, buy a reasonable secondhand truck, and then head via Nairobi to the port of Tanga in Tanganyika. Here we would prospect in the Sigi Hills.

We all went by lake steamer from Mwanza to Kisumu, taking with us our Nubian headman, Ramadhan, and our cook, a house-boy, and a general 'hand'. We bought ourselves a secondhand Dodge truck of about two tons capacity, from an aunt of mine who ran a farm near Kisumu. We set off with the truck fully laden, towards Nairobi where we hoped to arrive some time the following day. I seem to remember that my Father who was driving had a bit of trouble with the brakes, but we decided to have them attended to in Nairobi. Unfortunately at the top of the long steep climb from the rift valley to the Kikuyu highlands the brakes all failed as Father changed up a gear and broke the rear universal joint. The truck began to charge backwards down the escarpment, Father managed to edge it into the bank on the side of the road, but the rear wheel climbed the bank tipping the truck on its side and scattering the load across the road. Mother jumped out of the cab and fell, breaking her wrist, Ramadan broke his ankle, but apart from shock the rest of us were uninjured. As far as I remember we got Mother a lift from a good Samaritan to Nairobi Hospital, someone else took the Headman to the African Hospital, Father and Dean, I think, got lifts to Nairobi, about thirty miles away, to arrange for a truck and a tow, while the rest remained with the 'wreckage' until help arrived. We stayed at the New Stanley Hotel for a few days while we reshaped our plans, explained the accident to the Kenya Police, had the truck repaired, made arrangements and left money so that Ramadan could follow us when his ankle allowed him, and eventually saw the rest off by road to Tanga. Meanwhile I was to stay in Nairobi and help Mother until she could travel.

This was made less expensive and much easier for us by some kind friends, who lived in a suburb, inviting us to stay with them. As the girls from Loretto Convent were on holiday I appreciated the company of our hostess' fifteen year old daughter Pamela. Now and then she would have school-friends in to see her, sometimes with their brothers, so she was not a lonely girl. I remember one day, she and a couple of friends and I were playing about in one of the rooms, and I began tickling her under her arms, and she said to me, "that is rather a waste of time. I am not a bit ticklish there, I have only one place where I am ticklish!" I was pretty sure what she meant, but thought I had better back off!

A day or so later the doctor took the plaster off Mother's wrist and replaced it with a lighter one, and said she was fit to travel. We took the train to Mombasa, found a ship going to Tanga, and met up with Dad and Dean who had brought the truck into town to meet us. Our new prospecting area was on and around a large estate, that unlike its sisal growing neighbours, grew a large number of Seville oranges, and a number of spices. It was managed by Baron Von Brandis, who had several other Germans working for him. He very kindly allowed us the use of one of the empty houses on the estate, far more convenient than setting up a camp. We spent some months prospecting the area, and also giving ourselves a bit of a holiday, in that we rented a small flat in Tanga, only twenty miles away, where we spent most week-ends, swimming and lazing about. We found no worthwhile minerals and Father soon headed back towards the Geita area, by train and bus, leaving me, Mother and Dean to follow across country in the truck when we were ready.

Once again we loaded our stores, including petrol, in four gallon tins for the Dodge, and rations for our African retainers, and headed for the little town of Korogwe, one hundred miles inland, at the foot of the Usambara Mountains. Funnily enough my own children went to a school at Lushoto, a small town high in the Usambaras, some twenty years later. We had lunch in the Korogwe Hotel, and then headed further west to the settlement of Handeni. Our map showed a minor road going from here towards Kondoa and Singida, the direction that would eventually take us to Mwanza on Lake Victoria. In Handeni we went to pay a courtesy visit to the District Commissioner, only to find he was away on safari. Probably just as well, for not only were we informed that the track we intended to take was closed, but none of us had a driving license. Anyway we camped for the night, and in the morning headed off on the so-called road towards the Masai steppe. No wonder this track, once used by Arab slavers, was closed. After nursing the old Dodge along it for eight hours, including cutting a way through some bush thickets, shovelling out an approach to, and a way up, the opposite banks of small stream beds, we made camp having covered forty miles. Elephant had also been along fairly soon before us, as the piles of dung they had left were still fresh. Next day the story was much the same, the bush had thinned out a little, but we came to a very rickety looking bridge of light poles and branches across a little wadi. We all got out and had a good look at it, and decided to risk it. Everyone except me crossed over, then I carefully edged the truck onto and across the bridge, a good deal of which dropped into the wadi as I managed to get her across and onto solid ground. We did thirty-eight miles that day. As far as I can recall we reached Kondoa on the Cape to Cairo road during the morning of the fourth day. We then went north to Babati, here we turned west again on a minor road towards Singida. The first part of this road consisted of a number of separate tracks made by various trucks looking for better routes up an escarpment, whose summit was about three thousand metres above sea level. We bumped our way up this long steep hill over outcrops of rock, loose stones and short scrub, to the top, where the track levelled out and became a reasonable dirt road. We made camp in a pleasant little spot overlooking a small lake, about ten or twelve miles short of Singida. The following morning we drove into town, refueled the truck, and replenished our other supplies, and again headed west. After some miles we came to one more escarpment, and looking west from the top of it we could see below us a wide swampy plain over twenty miles wide. This was the Wembere Swamp, which in the wet season flowed into Lake Eyasi. We descended the escarpment by a reasonable but winding road, and came to the Sekenke Gold Mine. On making inquiries we were told by the manager that there would be no chance of any vehicle crossing the Wembere for at least a month. We drove off round the foothills in a northerly direction, until we found a good campsite with a nice little stream nearby, and decided to wait.

We had been in camp for a couple of days, and had a walk or two in the surrounding area when we decided to move the truck a little bit. Dean got in and started up, but when he let in the clutch nothing happened except for a funny noise from the differential. We took that down (not too easy in the bush) and found that a pinion wheel was stripped. Incidentally we had engaged a couple of local Africans to help around the camp with odd jobs. We sent one of them off to Singida with our mail, one letter from Mum to Dad to say the Wembere was flooded and we would have to wait a month, the other to the Dodge agents in Nairobi giving the number of the damaged part, and asking them to send a spare 'soonest'. A year or so before this I had been given a double-barreled sixteen gauge shotgun, and in our present camp we were treated every morning to skeins of wild geese passing overhead on their way to Lake Eyasi, so about every third morning I would shoot one for the pot. Meantime we spent our time prospecting the area, and waiting for our spare part from Nairobi.

One morning Father turned up having got a lift on a lorry from Singida, he had also collected our spare with the mail. We promptly set to work to get the old Dodge together again and on the road. A day or so later the Manager of Sekenke mine sent us a message that a truck had come across the Wembere Swamp, albeit with some difficulty. We loaded up and left the following morning, the first twenty miles was passable but there was a good deal of water lying in the tracks and some deep ruts to be avoided, but once over the Wembere we made good time until we came to what was now a dry river, with steep banks going down twenty feet to a bottom of deep soft sand about ten yards across. On our side was an old four cylinder International truck, on which an Indian mechanic was working, in fact he was sealing off one cylinder with a piece of wood, cut to size and shaped, having removed the piston and 'con' rod. On the other side some of his Indian friends were camped by an old Buick 'buckboard'. We edged down

our side, and by spreading a tarpaulin and small branches, crossed the sand, took most of the load off the truck, and tried to get her up the other bank, but it was much too steep, so we chocked the wheels with some timber, and walked over to see how the Buick had managed to get across. We found that they carried a chain block, or differential purchase, that would winch a truck out of most difficulties. They did not mind us borrowing it they said, besides their other truck was about ready to cross, and we would be in the way. So we fastened one end to a tree and the other to our front axle, and by hauling on the endless chain pulled the old Dodge to the top, and reloaded. The temporarily repaired International truck was now running on its three cylinders. The driver put it in second gear and as he came down the bank put his foot hard on the accelerator, shot across the soft sand and three quarters of the way up our bank before she stalled, and had to be winched up the rest of the way. From here on we had little trouble, got safely to Mwanza, and then went on to Mawe Meru.

During these various adventures Mum had decided that I should continue my formal education. She had been advised that perhaps the best place to approach might be the Thames Nautical Training College, H.M.S.Worcester; after all I had been away from school for three years. Anyway she spent some time in correspondence with Ian Borland the Secretary, probably mentioned that her father E.T.Beatty had been a Cadet from 1865 to 1867, and in fact she had the Good Conduct Medal awarded to him in 1867, it is now in my possession. The outcome was that 'Worcester' was prepared to accept me, and I sailed from Dar es Salaam on a ship of the German East Africa Line (D.O.A.L.) so as to reach England in good time for the September term 1935.

## Chapter 4

### English Schooling

As far as I remember I went on board, with several other new passengers, in the afternoon, and having settled into our various cabins, we were informed that many passengers would be staying ashore until late so the evening meal would be served for all passengers in the tourist class saloon. I was put at a table with a group of young people, some of whom were traveling first class.

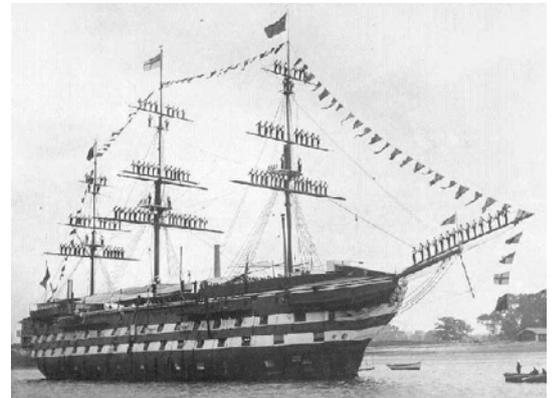
We soon made friends, and among my new acquaintances were a pair of large American girls, Julia, the elder was sixteen or seventeen, and about six foot one inch tall, her little sister Louise was then fourteen and five foot eleven inches - she became my particular friend. I met their parents a bit later, father was about six foot five and mother around six feet. He was a lecturer at Harvard enjoying his vacation, and showing the family a bit of the world. They were extremely kind to me and took me with them whenever they went ashore, and there were a good many ports at which we called before we reached England. Another young person whom I was proud to know was the Honourable James MacDonnel, a younger son of the Earl of Antrim.

His father had sent him to East Africa to shoot a buffalo, or so he told me, to help him grow up the right way. He was an Old Etonian. We all had a lot of fun on that voyage, and on the night that we celebrated the shipping company's fiftieth anniversary all drank a great deal more free beer than we should have.

I met James in London a year or so later and we went on a three day cycle trip together, getting as far as Longleat in Wiltshire, before returning to Town, and cycling the last twenty miles amid all the traffic returning from Ascot races.

Unfortunately James was killed early in World War II, I think, at Dunkirk, he was then a young officer in the Irish Guards.

We finally arrived at Southampton, where I was met by my Aunt Nesta, a sister of my father's, and her daughters, Diana and Phoebe. They were running a boarding house at Lee on Solent in those days. I stayed with them for a couple of weeks, and then had to move to London to be fitted with uniforms and other kit for the Worcester. In London I was to stay with an old friend of my mother, she had been one of her music students, but was now married to a doctor, and had three young grown-up sons. I stayed with



HMS Worcester II



Cadet Hugh Morgan and another on the Gun 1937

see it that way and felt responsible for me. I had no intention of letting that idea develop, and so behaved less well than I might have done otherwise, even to telling the younger son stories about the behaviour of some of the 'Ladies' in Hyde Park, I think he had an idea that I was speaking from personal experience!

Meantime I was kitted out and went off by train to Greenhithe to join the 'Ship' for my first term. How I disliked that 'first term', after three years of living pretty free in the East African bush the irksome routine and harsh discipline was pretty hard to take. Most of it inflicted upon us by Cadet Captains barely older than myself, who did not hesitate to give anyone a couple of strokes with their signal sticks, for cheek, slacking, or any other offence either real or imagined. However I decided to accept it all, and made several friends mainly of my fellow first termers. We used to attend School classes on board for most of the day

from Monday to Friday, but Saturday was devoted to cleaning ship until lunch time. We would line up across the deck with long handled deck scrubbers and move along the deck, side by side, plying our scrubbers athwartships amongst water from a hose and handfuls of sand, for an hour or so, then broom it all away down the scuppers. Then the deck had to be dried off with large mops. During the scrubbing another gang of cadets were below heaving around on a great pump with a long handle each side, so that eight cadets at a time could man it, to pump water to the deck hoses, woe betide them if they could not keep a decent pressure up. This pump also provided water for fire-fighting. Later the Chief Officer would do his rounds with the Chief Cadet Captain, and the Cadet Captain of each Division, to see that all was sparkling clean, this of course included the ship's boats, whose crews had thoroughly scrubbed them as they lay secured to the landing platform. Then came lunch after which all except the crews of the cutters, the Captain's Gig, and the second Gig, landed for games. After which we showered in the swimming bath building, for in those days there were no showers on board. In fact we had a bath, by divisions, in tin tubs each Wednesday evening, after the tub we were hosed down with cold water by the Duty Instructor, and then allowed to dry and dress. How things have changed over the years! In those days we had a ship's staff of Captain Superintendent (Gordon Steele V.C.) who was also an 'Old Worcester', a Chief Officer (Jay Jackson) a Second Officer (Richardson) another 'Old Worcester', who did much of the administrative work, and a Third Officer ( Slim Sullivan) who really acted more as the Bo'sun. Then there were the Instructors, 'Tecus' Read who kept an eye on the Junior Cadets on the lower deck where we all slept in hammocks in our respective divisions, in those days designated Fore, Main and Mizzen. He also was in charge of scrubbing decks, helping maintain the rigging, and taught knots and splices. There was 'Nifty' Bannister who cut our hair, taught a little Seamanship, and did a good deal of the maintenance work. Mr. Windsor taught us Signals, and was very much the ex Chief Yeoman of Signals RN, also Mr. Woods another general Seamanship Instructor, who lived in the grounds ashore, in the Ingress Abbey, and had a pretty daughter who rode a boy's bicycle. In addition there was the staff of Schoolmasters most of whom came on board daily and taught us Maths, Navigation, and various other Nautical subjects, three of them were Extra Master Mariners; one or two other masters taught us English, French and a bit of History and Geography, and Captain Steele taught us Electricity and Magnetism, which very few of us ever understood. When one of the cutters left the ship there was always an Instructor on board and in charge of it. There was also a Duty Instructor in charge of the upper deck when Cadets were on it. Oh, I almost forgot one other, Mr Callaghan our Physical Training Instructor.

Having finally coped with my first term, I went back to dreary London for the Christmas holidays, and my mother's friend at the Doctor's house in South Kensington. I also took a couple of day trips to Otford in Kent where my Uncle Jack lived, he had been a good friend of my father in the early days in South Africa, and had married Dad's eldest sister Mildred, and later became Editor of, I think, the Port Elizabeth Times. Now they had retired to live in Kent. Jack had diabetes, and having always been a very active man it irked him, but he played some golf and went for long fast walks. He suggested that I call in to see some people who lived near him, as the lady of the house had a young male relative of about my age, an elderly mother, and a solicitor friend, living with her, and ran a sort of young people's boarding house, where one or two

We were allowed to spend a fair amount of our so called free time in training, and after winning our first heat I was pleased to hear the Chief Officer say that our win was due to the way I had pulled the bow oar. The course for the race was two miles long, and always rowed at high tide from up river to the ship, later on I was moved from bow to stroke oar of our boat, and we made the finals, but as far as I remember were just beaten in the final race.

In the Christmas term we had a boxing evening every Friday, in my first bout of three rounds I believe my opponent and I managed to complete it without either of us landing a single punch. Something I could never repeat, for I both took, and gave, a fair number in all the other Friday night bouts.

I wrote and thanked my mother's friend for having had me to stay, and explained that I had made different arrangements for all my future holidays. When the term ended I went to my new friends at Otford, and settled in quite happily. A few days later I went to London to collect some belongings that had been left there. On arrival at the house in South Kensington the Parlour Maid came to the door and informed me with a grin that Madam was not at home, and that my gear was on the doorstep in the corner. I collected my kitbag and old suitcase and caught a train back to Otford, from then on that became both my and my brother Richard's holiday home. He joined me on the 'Worcester' for the September term of 1936.

I have rambled on as though I thought everyone knew all about H.M.S. Worcester, I know that is not so, and I must give you some brief facts about that old English Training Ship. 'Worcester' began in 1862 when a frigate of that name was acquired from the Admiralty and fitted out to train young men, as well as to educate them, in sea going skills, for life as Deck Officers in the Merchant Navy, at that time of course equipped with sailing vessels, but that would very soon change. The first Worcester was moored in the

River Thames near Erith. It was no longer intended to be a sea going vessel, but a school on board a ship, where Cadets of fourteen to sixteen would not only be taught the necessary academic skills, but imbibe some knowledge of life at sea from their environment. Later on the small old frigate was replaced by a no longer required three-decker, called 'Fredrick William'. This ship had at some time been fitted with a steam engine and a single screw, I wonder whether her machinery ever pushed her along against a headwind?



There was of course much more room for Cadets and staff, with some better amenities, aboard this ship, whose name was now changed to Worcester, and she was finally anchored at a permanent mooring off the village of Greenhithe, on the south bank of the Thames, a few miles up river from Gravesend; here Cadets continued to live on board and learn their trade as would-be young officers of the Mercantile Marine. A few were also accepted as late entries to the Royal Navy, and in the 1930's there was not only a 'Navy' class, but also one for Air Cadets. It was in this vessel that I served my Cadetship, though when I returned as a member of the staff twenty-five years later, she had been replaced by a far larger and more comfortable ship, designed and built as a boy's training ship, but on sailing vessel lines, and originally named Exmouth.

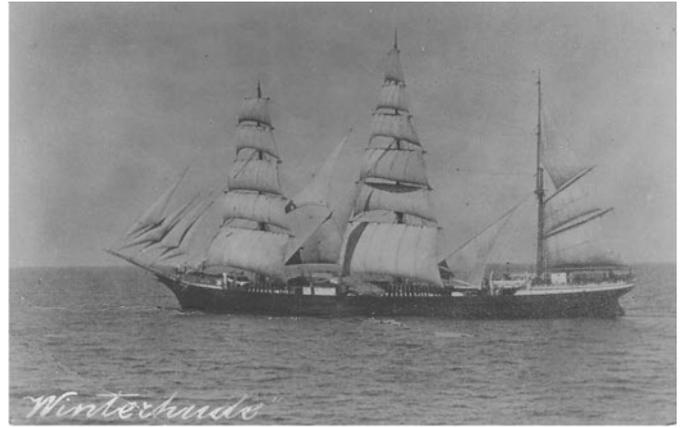
There was of course the contemporary and rival, at least at rowing and rugby, of Worcester, H.M.S. Conway, which in my cadet years was moored in the Mersey at Liverpool, but later moved to the Menai Strait where she eventually caught fire.



Now let me hark back to the Summer term and holidays of 1936.

First perhaps I should mention one or two personalities among the Cadets, my memory goes first to Prince Abdul Hamid Kadjar, Persian, and a year or so my senior in Worcester, he was a good all round sportsman, but shone particularly as a boxer, his name was on a cup for boxing which was still in a showcase of important cups on the quarter deck in 1967, I last met him in, I think 1961, when he brought his wife on board for a look

also my friend Jock Irvine who later accompanied me to sea in the Swedish four masted barque Abraham Rydberg on a voyage from Malmo to Wallaroo in South Australia and back to London, he then signed on for a second voyage in the Finnish barque Winterhude; I met him last in Bombay where he asked me to lunch aboard the R.I.N. frigate of which he was Navigating Officer, that was during the mutiny of a number of R.I.N. ratings so was probably late 1945, at which time I was O.C.420 R.M. Assault Landing Craft flotilla, based about thirty miles north of Bombay. Another friend worth mentioning was Arthur Lucas, he joined the same term as I did, and was in the next hammock to mine. Before he retired to live in Queensland he was Master of the container ship Allunga, and I visited him on board once or twice when his ship was in Adelaide. I am sorry to hear that he has developed leukemia.



Summer term of 1936 on Worcester began as I think most school terms do, cadets greeting each other with questions about the holidays, wondering what the few new boys were like, most joined for the September term, but there were always some who came at other times. Wondering who the new Cadet Captains were, and so forth. At least there was more to look forward to in the summer, other than school work of course. There would be the annual Port versus Starboard boat race, and then the big one, the boat race against H.M.S. Conway, this year to be held on the Mersey, it alternated between Thames and Mersey each year. Worcester had won every year for the last fifteen or so, though I forget the exact number, so the Worcester crew had much to live up to.

One thing about the summer term was that off duty time became a little more bearable. On Wednesday and Saturday after lunch we landed for games; cricket and tennis, and the probable first and second racing crews would usually land for a run and then go boat pulling for an hour's practice. The second crew were in fact reserves for the first. I was not very interested in cricket so put my name down for tennis, but as the very few courts were usually fully booked I was free to wander about in the wooded grounds behind Ingress Abbey, with one or two others, hopeful perhaps of contacting one of the young women who passed along the nearby main road. The following year, as a senior I could go out for what were known as free walks on Sunday afternoons, and actually meet and have passionate flirtations with girls, though we had to be back on board in time for the evening Church service. Still a junior in terms in 1936, I found Sundays rather a bore, after breakfast we cleaned ship, already thoroughly scrubbed the day before, by sweeping all decks, and polishing all the brass and steel work, before Captain's rounds. Then Captain Steele, wearing best uniform and white cotton gloves, and his V.C., would start on his rounds of



Commander Gordon C. Steele, V.C., R.N.  
Cadet, 1907-9; Captain-Superintendent, 1929-37

Bonino, Ltd.

the whole ship followed by the Chief Officer, Chief Cadet Captain, and one of the Instructors. Cadet Captains of each division or other departments would meet him with a salute at his part of ship and follow him around it, to accept the blame for anything that did not meet with the Captain's approval. After rounds we might all land for a walk with the Chief Officer, across country to one of the roadhouses on a main road to London, here we could buy a soft drink and a snack before walking back to Greenhithe and going back aboard in the cutter. Next came Sunday lunch, quite good as a rule, and most of the afternoon was free for writing letters, playing chess, or cards etc. Perhaps I should have mentioned that there were no permanently rigged classrooms on Worcester at that time, we used folding combined desks and benches, which after school were folded and stowed away along the sides of the main deck, leaving the deck itself a free open space, albeit with very low deck beams which one had to duck one's head under as you walked, or more usually doubled along. There were thick blue curtains on runner rails to divide the classes, so that when the pipe went for "hands to rig school" the desks were brought out and unfolded for the number of cadets in each class, and the curtains drawn across between each classroom; on Sunday afternoon we were allowed to bring out desks to use, as long as they were put back.

At that time we did not have a resident Chaplain so Church services were generally held during the early

entailed unslinging the hammock from its hooks and putting it behind ones neck and over ones shoulders, pallias, blankets etc. still in it, and standing on the deck outside his cabin and learning the Ten Commandments for an hour, longer if one could not quote them at the end of the hour. Suffice it to say that Port won the boat race against Starboard, yes I was in the Port Crew, and Worcester beat Conway once more in the annual race, having lost the rugby match; we also lost to the Nautical College Pangbourne at rugby as usual.

Letters from my mother told me that my young brother Richard would be arriving by one of the Union Castle ships in time for the Michaelmas term, and would I arrange to meet him, dates would be given later. Also that they had found another reasonable gold strike, which they had named the Aureole, and expected to operate themselves until a very good offer might turn up. It was no great distance from our old Mawe Meru mine, now owned by Geita Gold Mines.

I went back to Otford for the summer holidays and was silly enough to pay about four pounds for a 1928 BSA motorcycle, one of the old type with a flat petrol tank, a hand gear change on the side of the tank, and a clutch that barely worked. Having registered it and put on the L plates, I took it up a little used side road for some practice, that went O.K., but to return to the 'Digs' I had to cross the main road from Otford to London, normally a pretty quiet thoroughfare, I had forgotten that this was Sunday as well as summer, so all England was out on the road. I did stop before the junction, then the clutch slipped and the bike shot into the main road, a side car combination hit me from the right as I turned in that direction to avoid a fast approaching SS on my left before landing awkwardly in the opposite hedge, unfortunately the pillion passenger from the combination landed under the front of the SS and did not survive. Horror and trauma, but my friends and relations were very kind and helpful, so was the local Constable, and the Coroner was a treasure. Being an RNR cadet helped to some extent also. Result, three years without a license and what would now be considered a trivial fine, but who had five pounds to spare in 1936? A brand new Ford V8 only cost two hundred pounds in those days.

To go back to term time for a moment, we used to have a half term dance in the middle of the summer and a young American cadet, memorable only I think because of his gorgeous and slightly older sister, introduced me to her, as far as I remember her name was Lois, and she worked in a London flower shop, anyway I met her several times during the holidays and enjoyed her company. Louise, the large young lady from Boston, and I, used to write to each other now and then, and she told me that she and her family would be coming over to visit 'London England' during the summer, she arranged to give me a ring when they arrived; I would be staying for a week or so with Arthur Lucas in N. London when they were due, so gave her his phone number. One day she rang and asked could I join them for lunch - I had to explain that it would take me a good hour to get across London to the rather exclusive club where they were, that she said would not matter, so off I went, kept them all waiting and had a good lunch, and then joined them in the large hired Daimler for an afternoon up around the Maidenhead area, before going back to town where they dropped me at a convenient tube station. I invited Louise to come out to lunch with me the following day, and took her to the downstairs Brasserie at Lyons Corner house where a three course lunch cost three shillings. When we parted she said "thank you Hugh for showing me how the other half lives".

They continued on their tourist pilgrimages next day and I have never seen her since, though we continued to correspond once in a while. Meantime I took Lois out once or twice, and scored good points for getting the band to play her favourite tune, 'The Donkey's Serenade', when I took her to dinner at the same Lyon's Corner House.

After all that I had to go and meet brother Richard on his arrival at Tilbury by Union Castle liner. I went up to London and booked us in at some small but reasonable hotel, explaining that I was due to meet my brother from East Africa, I then checked the ship's expected arrival time, but the whole thing almost became a disaster. The next day was Sunday and the ship was due about 10 am. I thought that if I caught a train to Tilbury at 8am I would be in good time. I did not realise that on a fine and sunny Sunday thousands of Londoners would decide to fill every train to Southend-on-Sea, trains which went via Tilbury.

I finally managed to scramble aboard one and got onto the platform when the Union Castle special train to London was loaded and ready to leave, fortunately the ticket collector and everyone else knew all about Richard and that he was being met, so he told me to jump aboard the train, as I worriedly settled in my seat Richard called out to me from the next compartment and I told him we would meet when the train stopped, it was not a corridor train, and the first stop was Charing Cross station in London. As they say, all is well that ends well. After collecting his luggage we went to the hotel, and the following day I took him round to the outfitters to be measured for his Worcester uniforms and other essentials, arranging to return in a week for the fittings, then we went round to what was then still the Standard Bank of South Africa, with whom my family had banked since about 1890, and made the necessary financial arrangements. We were possibly the only two cadets who sent their own cheques for the term's fees to Ian Borland, the secretary. We then went down to Otford where I introduced Richard to our holiday digs, and Miss Coward, the Proprietor, she of course was quite happy for us to go and stay with friends as long as we let her know. Which reminds me of one of the holidays in which I went and stayed with Cadet Stewart and his 17 year old sister, they both lived with an Aunt who ran a boarding school for young Ladies in London.

As the girls had gone home for the holidays there was plenty of room. Apart from we three, ( and his sister was called Margaret,) one of the older girls, whose parents were in India, and a 22 year old teacher called Ursula, were also staying on for the holidays. They were delighted to have a different young man of almost 18 to practice on! Some of the conversations, of which I usually only heard a part, even made me blush, but after a couple of days I realised that it was a bit of a lark on their part, these conversations just happened when I was around. Like when I heard Ursula say " oh I do hope he'll come round to my room late tonight, I'm just going to lie there on the bed only wearing perfume, and hoping he'll try the door". Next morning she said to me " well you're a disappointment, I had hoped you were going to come to my bedroom last night". "Oh", said I "that wouldn't have been much good with your door both locked and bolted". "How on earth do you know that?" "A certain little bird told me, anyway I know what you two are up to". A great pity too, I think she would have been great in bed, with her sense of fun. I took her out to dinner twice and thoroughly enjoyed myself, I think she did also.

After that short and rather enjoyable holiday interlude it was soon time to return to Worcester. I might mention though that later on, when my family came to England for a holiday, Margaret became quite a family friend, we all, my brothers and I, used to go swimming at the local baths and often took her with us, so I saw quite a lot of her!

On return to the ship after the long summer break we settled in to the usual routine, I was now a Badge Cadet, this was usual in one's second year if one had behaved, or at least had not been discovered doing otherwise. Instead of rugby I took up hockey this year, and soon won my colours, being a colourman gave one a number of minor privileges, these would have been enhanced in the summer when I was awarded my 'watch' rowing colours, but that no longer mattered as I became a Cadet Captain at the start of the summer term, which was also my final one. Easter term 1937 saw a new Chief Cadet Captain appointed, who was to reign not only that term, but the following one as well, let us just call him Alan, both the Chief Officer, and the Captain appeared to be most impressed by his efficiency. In fact he was a sadistic young man who took pleasure in beating his juniors, it was not unusual to hear him say to the cadet captains, "don't hang about here in the 'cabin', go out and find me someone to beat, there is always someone doing something wrong". To my mind he lacked the attributes of a leader, and was pretty unpopular. However he was selected by the Staff as a candidate for the King's Gold Medal in the summer term, and after a speech by Captain Steele on the benefits of efficiency, and the fact that being efficient may cause unpopularity, he won by a few votes.

To return however to the summer term of 1937, and my 3 months as a cadet captain, and for most of it as stroke oar of the Worcester second crew, all of which pointed to some sort of success over the last two years. This, my last, was to be a busy term, there was to be a lot of time spent in the racing gigs because Conway had to be beaten once more, this time on the Thames, there were the final exams for those of us leaving which would determine the grade of certificate we would be awarded to be shown to the Shipping Company each of us hoped to join, and later in the term we would practice Manning the

Yards for Prize Day. In spite of all this we managed to go ashore and away from the ship on 'free walks'. I was usually accompanied by Jock Irvine, now a Senior Badge Cadet. On these weekly rambles I met a local lass called Edith, Edie to her friends, who generally wore a large white or pink hat, and loved to sit and have a cuddle in one of the copses. We spent many an hour in each others arms on the grass among the shrubs. One has to remember that before World War II, girls had to be far more careful than many became later, Virginitly was much treasured before marriage, and the Pill not yet invented, so young women when they flirted allowed one so far but no further. No doubt I made up for the frustration later in life.

The middle of this term was the time when the sailing ships began arriving in London with their cargoes of grain from Australia, among them came a Swedish four masted barque 'Abraham Rydberg' and as Captain Steele knew her Master we were allowed to go upto Millwall Dock in groups and look over the ship; I went along one day with Jock Irvine and several others in the motor boat. On return to Worcester we went to see the Captain and asked him whether he could help us to join the Rydberg as crew for her next voyage to Australia, he said he would be delighted, and got on with it. About this time we all had to vote for who was to be awarded the King's Gold Medal. All cadets except the first termers had to muster on the main deck, a black board was then unveiled, after the Captain's speech, and the names of the five possible candidates, chosen by the Staff, were revealed. As I mentioned earlier the Chief Cadet Captain was voted winner, and I came second, this meant that on Prize Day I would be presented with a beautifully inscribed Gold watch presented by the P & O Company annually to the Cadet coming second in the King's Gold Medal competition. The winner and I were both carried round the upper deck on peoples' shoulders after which the ship's normal routine continued.

My parents and elder brother, Dean, had now arrived in England for a holiday, and intended to come on board for the Prize giving, to see brother Richard collect a couple of books he had won for his academic achievements, and me my watch and a prize for school work. In those days on prize day we all got rigged in midshipman type 'bum-freezer' jackets, white waistcoats, and white cotton gloves, the latter to protect our hands from the tar on the rigging. Guests arrived by one of the Thames paddle steamers, which they boarded at Tower Bridge. As the paddle steamer approached we were piped aloft, climbed the rigging to our respective yards, and walked out along them hands sliding along a previously rigged wire stay just above waist height, stretched from the mast to the 'liff' at the yardarm, the smaller cadets were on the topgallant, or highest, yards and the tallest on the main, or lowest yards. We then all turned together to face forward crossing wrists with the next man so that we each had a grip on the wire jackstay behind us. As the ship came alongside to discharge the guests onto Worcester we came down from aloft and took up our appointed positions under a large awning on the upper deck facing the Prize giving platform.

This year we were lucky enough to have one of the more famous Old Worcesters to give the prizes - Admiral Sir Edward. R.G.R. Evans, perhaps better known in those days as 'Evans of the Broke', who had come up river in a destroyer for the occasion.

After prize giving most of us went home aboard the pleasure steamer, on this occasion I think she was the Royal Eagle, but my memory of the occasion is a little hazy.

My family had rented a flat for a short time at Hampstead, and we spent the first part of the summer holiday there, then went to the Isle of Wight for a couple of weeks, I blotted my copybook there by taking a girl who was staying at the same hotel, with her parents, for an afternoon walk and not bringing her back until after 10pm. We also did a little sailing in a sixteen foot dingy we had hired. Jock Irvine spent part of the time with us for he and I had to go to Sweden in August to join the Abraham Rydberg at Malmo. Finally we all went together, including my cousin Monica, later to become Headmistress of one of England's better known Girl's Schools, before dying of cancer in the 1980's. We crossed from Harwich to Esbjerg, where Richard was admitted to hospital with, I think, measles, and remained there until the family returned from Sweden. The rest of us went on to Copenhagen. Here we stayed for a few days to enjoy the beauty, as well as the entertainments offered, in the famous Tivoli Gardens. We also took some of the trips offered by the tourist motorboat operators. One of the things that impressed me most was the

low prices charged for quite luxurious hotel accommodation and service. Of course the long legged Danish girls on their cycles were also delightful to watch. We then had to take the ferry across to Malmo, where we stayed in a temperance Hotel for a few days, and Father and Mother invited Captain Oscar Malmberg, the new Captain of the Abraham Rydberg, and his English wife to dine with us one evening. We then went to Stockholm for a few days, and had some interesting trips among that city's islands in the tourist motorboats. It is a beautiful place especially in late summer.

After that we returned to Malmo, farewelled my family for their return journey to England and then Tanganyika, and Jock and I joined our ship at 10am on Sunday 22nd August, 1937.

## CHAPTER 5

### Preparations for going South

We joined the ship in dry dock where she was having the bottom painted. We were taken by one of the quarter masters to report to the Captain, he told us to get settled in, and that we could start work in the morning. We were then shown the six berth cabin that we would occupy, and as the other crew members assigned to it had not yet joined, took our choice of bunks. All the Swedish crew members who were aboard then came along and we all shook hands and exchanged names. One in particular spoke very good English, his father being a member of the Swedish Embassy in London, he had lived there for some time.



The Swedish Barque  
Abraham Rydberg

At that time, it was necessary for Swedes who wished to qualify as officers in their Merchant Navy to have served for a year in a sailing vessel. Thus all of us were signed on as apprentices. Some of our shipmates had spent at least a year at sea in power driven vessels, one or two longer than that, and all aspired to sit for their Mate's certificate for competence soon after completing this voyage. One had completed the previous Rydberg voyage. We had a final compliment when we sailed of 36 cadets, 4 officers, plus our captain, a bo'sun, sailmaker, carpenter, donkeyman, cook, steward and captain's steward.

We cadets were divided into Styrbord (starboard) and Barbord (port) watches, and each watch was divided into a first and second quarter. A quartermaster was in charge of each.

My diary tells me that we spent the next day bending on sails, mainly the square sails on the foremast, and a number of the staysails. During the forenoon Jock went ashore to see a dentist. After work in the evening, I went ashore with one of the young Swedes, we intended to collect a female companion each and go to a cinema. He put me wise to the fact that the unattached young women wore a flower in their hair on one side, while the ones who were 'bespoken' wore their flower on the opposite side. We soon found a pair of fancy free young ladies and took them to see a Swedish film. At that time, I couldn't speak a word of their language, and taking my partner for a walk through one of the parks, after the film, was a bit of an endurance test for us both. Sailors are pretty versatile, so we managed to convey our wishes, she by shaking her head and me by one or two exploratory moves. Putting my arm around her was allowable, but unbuttoning her blouse was OUT, at least before 11pm. I escorted her home, won a good-night kiss and returned to the ship.

The following day we all continued to bend sails both on the foremast and main masts, and in the late afternoon the gates were opened to flood the dry-dock and float the ship. That evening, we climbed over a dock fence and visited the apprentice of a British tanker that had berthed nearby.

The next morning, a tug moved us from the dry-dock to a berth where we were to load sand ballast. There wasn't cargo available for the outward voyage to Australia, so this meant that we had to ballast the ship with some 300tons of sand to keep her stable. If one considers the towering pyramids of sail on one of

and we had to shovel it out from under the hatches so that it covered the lower holds as a fairly even 'floor' from stem to stern and side to side, this is known as trimming the ballast. It was extremely hard, hot work, and on the third day of it I passed out for a minute or so and was sent to the sickbay to turn in. A doctor came and had a look at me and said, "It is just the change, nothing to worry about," whatever it was, I was quite pleased to remain in a bunk for two more days as an alternative to shoveling ballast all day.

Admittedly only a few of us were used to trim the ballast, while the reminder continued with bending sails and doing other work aloft.

On Thursday 2nd September we were towed by one of the local tugs from Malmo to Helsingborg, this took from 11am to 5pm, we then loaded provisions until 11pm when we were allowed to turn in. Next morning (Friday 3rd September) we were not called until 0730 for breakfast, and we started work at 8am, I found myself trimming ballast again in the forenoon, and after lunch helping to stow the rest of the provisions below. We went to afternoon coffee at 3pm, and from 3.30pm until 5pm did the finishing touches aloft, after this the canteen was opened so that the crew could buy cigarettes. I then opened a parcel of records that I had been given, and tried some of them on my gramophone, they seemed to be quite a good selection. During the afternoon the port watch had been busy putting on the hatch covers, and driving the wooden wedges that keep the canvas, that covers the large hatch boards, tightly in place. The next couple of days were spent waiting for the wind to go round to a more favourable quarter, so that we could sail out of Helsingborg. While we waited we trimmed ballast again, scrubbed the decks, dried sails, and watched a P & O liner, probably Strathnaver, pass during the afternoon, we also had some friendly boxing bouts on deck and I collected a nose bleed and gave my opponent a cut lip.

On Monday conditions were better so we got our anchor at 10am and sailed out of harbour, once clear we sheeted home all sail, and must have been an impressive sight heading north into the Kattegat at eight or nine knots. As the wind continued to freshen we had to take in the Royal and Topgallant sails and upper staysails at about 4 bells in the afternoon watch (2pm). Our next job was overhauling buntlines, ( the ropes that are used to pull the sail up to the yard so it can be furled) and seizing them with bits of twine under the buntline blocks, this ensures that the buntlines hang loose and do not chafe the sail. The first quarter of my watch (starboard) were free from 1500 to 1800 so I went below and had a couple of hours sleep. We then went on watch until midnight, then turned in expecting to be called again as the wind increased. Next morning we beating down the Skaggerak under lower topsails, main upper tops'l, the foresail and a reefed spanker. A lot of the lads were seasick and while furling the fore upper tops'l the chaps on each side of me were being sick, which didn't help me very much. I had now had three 'tricks' at the wheel, and the same number as fo'c'sl look-out, we normally moved after an hour at the wheel to 'policeman', or messenger, then to look-out. Next morning it was blowing even harder and we had to take in more sail. Trying to beat out of the Skaggerat was becoming monotonous, I have not mentioned it so far, but we were fitted with a radio receiver and transmitter, we carried two second mates, one of whom was Radio Operator, Sickbay Attendant, and Schoolmaster, that was Sterna Karlson, the other, Sterna Strumberg, was Watchkeeping second, we also had a Watchkeeping third, Sterna Borg, who always had the middle watch, midnight to 4am, and the First Mate, Sterna Hult, took the morning watch as is customary.

Which brings me back to the fact that the weather report gave the wind force in our area as 90mph.

On Saturday the 11th we were running down the North Sea under all sail, including the Royal, and going fast, and it was rather nice to overtake a steamship going our way. That day we scrubbed decks below, aired bedding, and washed paintwork. The Aurora Borealis was visible during the night. On Sunday we were sailing free on the starboard tack, and nearing the busy waters of the English Channel. It is usual for sailing vessels out of the Skaggerak to pass north of Scotland before turning south towards the equator, but the gale which had gone northerly, had left our Captain little choice. His wife by the way was taking passage with us as far as Madeira.

Monday the 13th brought us fairly near the Thames Estuary with light shifty winds and periods of calm, it was also raining. I had acquired a duck egg sized boil on my right wrist, the second mate tried to lance it without success. Next day we were beating down channel, passed Dinginess at 0700 and at 1000 saw Overdraws Suavity with an Averred barge in tow. That evening we took in our Royal with the wind going to west south west and we had to wear ship half an hour later. The clearing up after this manoeuvre, tightening the braces so that all the yards are at the right angle, then coiling all the braces, sheets and other lines on deck ready for instant use when required, takes between twenty and thirty minutes. We had to wear again in the early morning off the Isle of Wight with the wind westerly but fairly strong. We continued to tack down channel for the next three days, passing a fair amount of traffic, including the Berengaria, and S.S. Monterosa, also a cruiser and 3 destroyers and were very nearly rammed by a steamer off Portland Bill on Saturday night. On Sunday 19th we had the usual inspection and life boat drill, with which the Captain appeared somewhat displeased, but the wind went to the north west and we all cheered up, and got on with the usual Sunday chore of washing clothes. My boil was now much better, and I had been given long spells of messenger and look- out while it healed, instead of harder work. I forgot to mention earlier that among our provisions were 6 live pigs in an enclosure on deck, there were also some chickens destined for the Captain's table, running loose in the hold.

On the following day, having had a fair wind all night, and still going well, our Noon position, as worked out by Jock, who had been allowed to take his sights on the Poop, was 46 degrees 21 minutes north 9 degrees 21 minutes west. Sterna Karlson also told us that he had a news flash saying that Joe Louis had knocked out Max Schmelling. For the next few days we continued southward and the weather got steadily warmer. Jock and I went on the Poop at 0900 most mornings to take sights, and again at Noon to get the Latitude, we also had to rate the chronometers now and then, the rest of the time we were chipping paint, and applying red lead to the bare patches. On the 24th we bent a square mainsail during the forenoon to replace the heavy weather triangular one which we had been using since sailing. The next day being Saturday, we aired bedding, scrubbed out the 'Skans', our mid-ships living area, during the forenoon, scrubbed decks in the afternoon, and then did an hour of celestial navigation with Sterna Karlson. The wind was now dropping, and our hopes of reaching Madeira this Sunday faded rapidly, for on the next day the sea was as flat as a pancake, we idled along at perhaps half a knot. On the 28th we were off the Islands and trying to tack through to Madeira, we then got a strong head wind and took in the topgallants, and Main and Mizzen courses. Next day we tacked all day till 3pm when the wind changed, and lifted our spirits a bit.

On Friday 1st October we anchored in Funchal harbour at 1730, and went aloft to give all sails a 'harbour stow'. It is rather a beautiful Island, especially when seen from the harbour at night, as the lights appear up the mountainside.

On Saturday the Port Watch went ashore, while we of the Starboard rigged stages and painted the ship's side. The locals came out in their 'bum boats' to sell us apples and bananas etc. Jock by the way, tho' Port Watch, was working with us, so that he and I could go ashore together. The next day was Sunday, and the turn of our Watch to go ashore, we got a conducted tour in a bus with the Second Mate. This entailed driving along mountain roads and looking at the scenery. However we finally pulled up at some sort of Cantina where we could buy drinks, and were given lunch. Most of us made up for lost time, by trying different wines and some of the liqueurs, quite a variety was available. We then returned to Funchal and went back aboard about 4pm as the Captain wished to sail with the evening breeze when it came. The boats from off shore had not only brought bananas and apples, I had bought a good store of oranges, and intended to eat one per day while they lasted. They also brought rather nice little one and two litre casks of wine, Jock and I had bought one, and intended to have a small glass each, on most evenings, between here and South Australia. Several others had also bought their share, but had not thought about saving it. When we arrived back on board there was no steam on the donkey engine, used for weighing anchor, in fact the donkeyman had spent the late afternoon trying to count the Captain's chickens in the lower hold, a feat more difficult when you see double most of the time. This meant we would have to hoist the anchor with the hand capstan by the foremast. This was usually only used to hoist the fore upper topsail yard, and the main upper topsail yard. The Captain had just said goodbye to his wife, who was sailing that night on the Royal Mail Ship Apapa, and who he would next see in Australia, and he was not

in a good mood. Some hands were already aloft to loose sails, the anchor was coming in steadily but very slowly, so the helmsman from duty watch was called to man the wheel, he had only just climbed the Poop ladder, somewhat unsteadily, when a good right from the Captain knocked him back to the bottom of it. I was sent for, and told to take the wheel for leaving harbour, and until I could be reliably relieved, a couple of hours, in fact. At the same time Mr. Karlson, whom we had never seen aloft, had climbed to the mizzen cross trees, where he now sat and told everyone in a loud voice that we had all thought him too fat to go aloft. The trouble was it was extremely difficult to get past him to loosen the Mizzen Topgallant and royal. We finally sailed out of Funchal harbour at 8.30pm. We were now in the trade winds, so we spent the next three days bending light canvas sails on all yards. We also heaved the anchor up on deck, where it was secured, we then scrubbed the upper deck with sand, so that it could be oiled for our passage through the tropics. The crews 'heads' were then closed and painted, and all necessary bodily functions from now on were performed outboard at the bowsprit. You can get used to anything. Jock took sights on Thursday 7th and made our position 23 north 22.13 west, about right apparently. We were now drifting along in very hot weather at about 3 knots, red leading paint work on the poop, painting the capstan etc. On Saturday the steward killed one of the pigs during the afternoon so we had an excellent meal of roast pork on Sunday.

On Tuesday we began a new routine with a small number of watch keepers, while the rest of us worked as Daymen. This meant we 'Dagman' worked through the day, but had no night watches to worry about. Also on this day we sailed 226 miles in 24 hours. Yet the next day we only did 55 miles by noon from noon yesterday, also had some heavy falls of rain, and all collected some rainwater in whatever was available. The next few days were spent chipping and painting, sorting out rotten potatoes from the potato locker and filling the galley coal bunker. I note that on Saturday October 16th we were becalmed in latitude 6 degrees 47 minutes north, 25 degrees 30 minutes west and a Dutch steamer passed close and dipped to us, we also caught our first shark, a five footer, and saw another later. On Monday we were painting bulwarks and scuppers all day, there was no wind. After the 3pm coffee break we bent a new sail on the crossjack yard, as the previous one split the night before in a light squall. The doldrums seemed to have reached further north than usual this year and the northeast trade wind seemed to have left us early, yet we got some spasms of fair and favourable wind, and a fair number of rain squalls. The normal routine of chipping paint, and painting ship continued, one day we had a steady drizzle all forenoon, so it was decided we should thoroughly scrub the decks using sand and rainwater. On the night of Wednesday 27th October, we crossed the equator; a fairly hilarious day followed with people attending Neptune's court, for he and his retinue had come aboard, and then being shaved and thoroughly ducked. Having crossed The Line many times in East Africa I was appointed one of Neptune's policeman. Unfortunately one of the pigs fell down into the coal box, but was not much hurt, however he was killed on Saturday, just in case, and eaten on Sunday. This like all our Sundays was a day of Lifeboat drill, inspection, a good lunch, and a day for washing clothes. We now went back to quarter watches, though the routine was much the same. On the 1st November, (Monday), another square rigger was sighted ahead from the fore royal yard, and we appeared to be gaining on her slightly. We now started bending heavy canvas on all yards, instead of the light trade wind sails. Tuesday was of course my birthday, the cook made me a cake for the coffee break, and the Captain invited me aft for a drink in the evening.

The Captain also gave me a track chart, so that Jock and I could complete it for the whole voyage, and hand it over to the Worcester on our return to UK The following day we had gained considerably on the other sailing vessel, she turned out to be the Finnish barque 'Viking', she was abeam at 5 am but later disappeared to the east. The next day we had to adjust the trim of the ship by moving ballast aft, to compensate for fresh water used from a large tank in the after well-deck.

On Friday 6th November, I started to work with the sailmaker sewing sails, it began to blow in the evening, and I was sent aloft to take in the fore royal on my own.



Modern shot of The Viking 2007

In the night we took in the fore and mizzen topgallants. I and one other had our sail lashed and stowed and were back on deck 5 minutes before the three men doing the same job on the mizzen. Our day's run on November 13th was 252 miles. There was now a large swell running from the west and the ship was difficult to steer. On Wednesday 24th, 80 days out it blew hard and we required all hands to shorten sail, we were down to lower topsails, a main upper topsail, and a foresail, and we required two men at the wheel. A couple of days earlier we had each been issued with a piece of canvas to cover our bunks, so that during our watch below we could lie on our bunks in oilskins while waiting to be called, without our bedding getting wet. It was now bitterly cold, and we kept the small coal stove in the alley between our cabins going all the time. While sail making I had the misfortune to step on the sailmaker's spectacles, that did nothing for my popularity rating as he hadn't another pair.

On Monday 29th, 85 days out, we logged 279 miles for the 24 hours, and the following 24 hours gave us another good run of 275 miles.

The following week we spent suji scrubbing decks, and generally cleaning and painting ship for entering harbour, and on Monday 20th December at 9.30 PM we dropped anchor off the port of Wallaroo, and began emptying our cargo of sand ballast next morning. We finally went alongside the jetty on the 30th. Once the bilges were clean and the lower hold painted we were ready for the Stevedores to start loading cargo.

I know I danced till 3am on New Year's morning, mainly with a girl called Nellie. She was 3 or 4 years older than me, but a lot of fun for a cuddle on the beach, but being a strictly brought up Roman Catholic there was a limit she wouldn't pass. We wrote to one another for a couple of years after I sailed.

The Captain suggested that Jock and I should go to have a look at Adelaide for a couple of days, as we might not have an opportunity to do so for many years. He told us War clouds seemed to be gathering in Europe. In any case we caught a train from Wallaroo to Adelaide and took a taxi to a hotel in the Capital, where we booked in for a couple of nights. There did not seem to be very much to do in Adelaide. We caught a tram somewhere, I think Glenelg, where there was a fun fair in progress, we watched the big Indian motorcycles going round the 'wall of death' and then took a ride in a sort of tethered aeroplane, in which two young women seemed interested. So we spoke to them, and finally all four of us wandered down on to the beach, and having paired off, remained there until about midnight. That girl, Pat, I also wrote to for two or three years, and had some interesting letters back. Next day we returned to the ship and watched the final bags of wheat being loaded for London. The Captain having neatly backed the ship away from the jetty under sail and anchored off shore, we left Wallaroo bound for London at 8am the following morning 16th January, 1938.

### **Fifty South and Eighty East**

Cacophonous confusion of crashing canvas-dizzy height,  
Feet edging to windward on the bucking foot-rope,  
I strive in windlashed darkness for the yardarm  
Pockets of the brailed up royal thrash about my head,  
Far below a widening bone of white shows briefly,  
As the distant bow plunges between giant seas,  
My hand, darkly groping, finds the outboard gasket,  
The other, white knuckled, clings grimly to the jackstay,  
Now punching sail into folds upon the yard, I start to fight,  
Back towards the mast, lashing the mastered canvas  
Atop the swaying yard one handed as I move.  
At last, the mast to lean on and draw breath  
And wipe the prickling sweat that freezes near my eyes,  
Then on to leeward, cautiously sliding feet and hands  
As the yard bucks and pitches against restraining braces

And the masthead close above cuts arcs across the sky.  
Once more I fight the flogging canvas, muzzling it,  
Long turns of rope pulled taut around the sail.  
Safe stowed at last I pat the final hitch  
And descend the sagging narrow ratlines to the 'tops'.  
Then perhaps slide down a backstay to the deck  
Where the hustle and the bustle foretells the change of watch.

## CHAPTER 6

### Homeward Bound

I do not propose to write a detailed day to day account of the dreary 122 day voyage home, but merely to tell of the various things of interest which occurred. Like Monday 24th of January, our 9th day out on which we were sailing close hauled to a stiff breeze, to the south of Albany in West Australia when we were overtaken and passed at 6pm by the German ship M.V. Annelise Esseberger on which our Captain's wife was a passenger, they passed fairly close to us, and having dipped their Ensign, gave us a cheer, which we returned as they went by at something like 17 knots. We too must have been a fine sight under our full spread of canvas.

As a matter of interest we sailed the day after the German sail training barque 'Admiral Karpfanger', formerly 'L'Avenir', which disappeared between New Zealand and Cape Horn with all hands. We went home via the Cape of Good Hope, much to our Captain's disgust, however his principals in Sweden ordered him to take that route.

With our holds now full of bags of wheat we were of course sailing much deeper in the water, and took a lot of seas on deck as we ploughed along. Our ship was originally launched as the 'Hawaiian Isles', she was then bought up and became an Alaska Packer named 'Star of Greenland' before being re-sold to Sweden and named 'Abraham Rydberg', but whatever her history she was no clipper ship. Nevertheless on Saturday 20th of February, 36 days out she made what was her record run for the homeward voyage, 264 miles in 24 hours followed by 253 miles the following day.

Most of the 55 days until we rounded Cape Agulhas into the Atlantic I spent sail making. That day, the 55th, which was March 11th, we got a wind shift from the east which took us nicely clear of Africa's most southerly point before backing to the west. This day we heard by wireless that Russia and France had mobilised, that Germany had taken Austria, and filled the Brenner Pass with troops. The Captain also sent for me and told me that while in the trade winds he wished me to take all the First Mate's watches. This change of routine began on 16th March, 60 days out. I went on watch at 4am, the Captain came on deck for about half an hour and then left me to it.

Sunday 3rd of April happened to be Abraham Rydberg's birthday, we had 'colours' at 8am, all hands had wine for tea, and the after-guard took their lunch on the poop. I continued taking the morning watch and the dog watches, and being a Swedish ship the Officer of the Watch was expected to keep himself busy with little jobs like pumice stoning the poop rails, and touching up paintwork, during the watch. I stood a few other watches as well as the Mate's, but that was so the Captain could have four for bridge in the many rubbers played in his quarters.

For some time now there had been friction between the Bo'sun and the Mate, each reckoned the other was either doing jobs that were supposed to be his, or at least interfering with them, hot weather made tempers worse. There was no doubt however that the Bo'sun was becoming more bad tempered, and giving crew members orders that were outside his province. For example at tea one evening he came out of the small Petty Officers mess, which adjoined ours, told us we were making too much noise, and ordered us all to climb to the cross trees and back. The Mate emerged from his cabin, asked what was going on, and when he was told ordered everyone back to the mess to finish their tea.

A day or so later the Captain sent for us, and the one other Englishman aboard, a lad who had joined separately from us, but with whom we all got on well, and told us there would be some bother the following morning, and asked us to patrol the mid-ship deck until the Swedish members of the crew and the Mate had sorted it out. Our job was to prevent any of the Bo'sun's mess mates going forward to help him out. He did not seem too popular with them anyway. The story goes that a group gathered with the mate under the Fo'csl and when the Bo'sun came forward the Mate asked him if he intended to carry out his orders, the Bo'sun replied that he had no intention of even listening to the orders of an old washerwoman. The Mate then leapt on him, one or two joined in to help the Mate, and eventually the Bo'sun fled in disorder threatening vengeance when we got to port. The following day was Good Friday, but the 2nd and 3rd Mates each came on watch with an automatic during the night. The Bo'sun's face appeared spectacularly bruised, and he did not appear for work for a day or two. The final result of it all was that after investigation at the end of the voyage we crew members were each fined one day's pay, sixpence each. I had the morning watch as usual on Easter Saturday, and the fore topgallant, and mizzen lower topsail both blew out of their bolt ropes so we had to change them. Easter Monday was a restful morning and we had sports after lunch, obstacle races, pillow fighting on the greasy pole, and jam eating. Tuesday and Wednesday we were all back at work, except the wind, so we lay becalmed for two days. On Thursday 28th, 103 days from Wallaroo in 26 degrees 29 minutes north 46 degrees 10 minutes west, I relinquished the Mate's watches, and returned to normal watch work, or every day slavery. On the 30th I helped move 112 bags of wheat from the fore hatch to the sail locker aft. This meant getting each sack on one's back at the hatchway on the fore deck, carrying it to the midships deckhouse, climbing the ladder onto that, carrying it aft along that and then down the next ladder on to the after welldeck, and then lowering it into the sail locker. On Sunday 1st May we were passed at 0900 by the 'Federal' steamer 'Surrey' which dipped her ensign to us, she looked very nice and clean. Between noon on Thursday May 5th and Friday 6th we made a good run of 230 miles passing well west of the Azores. On Wednesday 11th our days run was 243 miles, our one hundred and sixteenth day since leaving Wallaroo, and leaving us about 700 miles to go. The next night the northern lights were visible at 1030 making a lovely pink curtain across the northern sky. It was also very cold with a long swell running. On Friday 13th it began to blow in the middle watch and we had to take in the royals, and were still doing eleven knots. In the morning watch we were in fog so had to take in fore and mizzen topgallants, crossjack sail, and mainsail, we also had the foghorn going, and three men on lookout. We were able to reset the topgallants in the afternoon, though it was still fairly foggy. On Sunday 15th, our one hundred and twentieth day we took on a pilot off Dinginess at 1030pm, I had to go to the wheel for him, we had to anchor at 2am as the wind died. We gave all square sails a harbour stow during the night, then scrubbed decks and washed paint until a tug arrived at 2.30pm when we weighed, and with some staysails set to help progress rounded the North Foreland at 4pm. I was again at the wheel, and remained there pretty well all the time the pilot was aboard. Much better than scrubbing decks and washing paint though. We secured the ship in Millwall dock 122 days after sailing from Wallaroo in South Australia's Spencer Gulf. I did not think then that I would arrive back in South Australia to make my home thirty years later.

We all stayed by the ship for a few days. The Swedes had to sail her back to Malmo, but Jock and I were to be allowed to stay in London, so were taken to the Swedish Consulate where we were given our discharge papers. We returned to the ship to say goodbye to our various shipmates and friends. The Captain told me that one of the Swedish Cadets and I had each been awarded the Abraham Rydberg Gold Medal, and that mine would be given to me at the prize giving aboard the 'Worcester' by the Swedish Naval Attaché at the end of the summer term. The medal is inscribed with the Swedish words for 'Dutifulness/Integrity' and the word 'Sjomannadygder' untranslatable by any English term but meaning the holder is possessed of all those qualities which make up a good shipmate. The Captain also told me that he wished me to accompany him on the next voyage as his third mate. Unfortunately I eventually had to refuse, for I knew that my eyesight had become much worse, and apart from the fact that war seemed to be getting very near, I thought it time I took a course in Mining Engineering. Also I was not yet 20 and my Father, who was now in England hated the idea of me wasting my time at sea, as he called it. My brother Richard was now in his last term on Worcester, and Dean was due to start the 4 year B.Sc. course at the Royal School of Mines in London in September. The family had now taken a flat in a Mews almost opposite Paddington Station, so I moved in there.

Praed Street was not the most salubrious part of London at the time, and I was rather surprised at the number of young prostitutes walking the street. remember one occasion when I smiled at one as she passed me on the pavement, she came back and asked me whether I wished to go with her for a pound, I said no and she started to say 'why did you smile if you didn't want me then', I replied, 'well I did rather fancy you but I suddenly realised I'd left my wallet at home and don't have a penny on me'. She said some rather unladylike words, and went on her way.

After enjoying a couple of weeks holiday in London, I wrote to Camborne School of Mines in Cornwall to enquire about enrolling in the year beginning in September. The Secretary sent me back the appropriate forms, a list of the local Landladies who were willing to accept students as boarders, and the date of the entry exam, and the various other things I needed to know, including the fees per term, payable in advance. on looking through the list of Ladies who had accommodation to offer, I thought I would try one of the Mrs. Richards in Cross Street in Camborne; since it was a Cornish town there were several Mrs. Richards to chose from on the list. The one I selected was slightly more expensive than most, but offered very comfortable digs, and looked after us admirably, for not only I but a couple of other students who went to the School of Mines in 1938 also applied to her for accommodation. In the meantime I went to some London 'crammers' to polish up my mathematics for a couple of months.

The end of H.M.S. Worcester's summer term was soon upon us and I had to go down to Greenhithe to attend and collect my Swedish Gold Medal, and of course to offer some advice to one cadet who had applied to go on the coming voyage to Australia in 'Abraham Rydberg'. My brother Richard left Worcester at the same time, with two First Class Extra certificates and after a short holiday went off to join the Royal Military Academy at Woolwich, or 'The Shop' as it was better known, with the intention of being commissioned into the Royal Engineers at the end of his Cadetship. As it happened he was commissioned as second lieutenant Royal Artillery shortly after war was declared in 1939.

At about this time my Father decided to invest a little capital in a Gravel Pit in Buckinghamshire, with an acquaintance of his who ran a training stable in the area, the family consequently moved into a large old country house which was being let very cheaply. It was too large for most people and not very convenient; it was not connected to mains electricity but had its own charging plant which fed a large bank of batteries, which in turn fed the lights. The few times I stayed there I found it very pleasant, and the 1927 Rolls Royce that Father had bought for 300 pounds in 1934 or 1935 and taken back to East Africa as the car most likely to outlast the popular Fords, Chevs and Plymouths etc. in our rough conditions, looked quite at home parked in the driveway.

To return however to my own career, I went to Camborne in September that year , 1938, and having settled into my 'digs' was invited round to the house of the Geology lecturer, with a few other new students, for coffee and a chat. He was very helpful and told us not to be too worried about the next days entrance exam, and intimated it was more to find out where to start us than whether to accept us. As it turned out I found the exam a little easier in most things than I had expected, with the exception of inorganic chemistry which I had never taken, however I was accepted, and settled down to the life of a first year mining student. This year was mainly devoted to what I think one might call preliminary B.Sc. type subjects, mostly mathematics accompanied by Mechanics, Electricity, Engineering Drawing and so on. We also had to spend one day each week doing practical mining in the School's tin mine, known as King Edward Mine, at the top of a hill about 2 miles out of Camborne. A day on which our landlady usually supplied us with large and excellent Cornish Pasties for lunch.

Our 'digs' was really very comfortable, we had a large lounge and dining room downstairs with a piano in it, which one of my fellow students played quite competently, but also plenty of table space for homework, though this consisted mainly of rewriting the copious notes that we had to take on most days. I had a bedroom to myself while the other two shared a large room between them, and much of the housework was done by the elder daughters of the house. The eldest of the three had a slight impediment in her speech, but was a very good hearted and helpful young woman, who was also a member of the V.A.D. and spent some time nursing me later on when I had a bad bout of influenza, the youngest was I think about twelve and went to a local school.

Our school hours, except Monday, were from 9am until 4.30pm though on Wednesday afternoon we were free to play rugby, and practice for the matches on Saturday. On Monday we had to be at King Edward Mine by 8.30am ready to start work. About a week through the term we were informed that all new students would be expected to be at the School of Mines Club the following evening to attend the first smoking concert of the term. This would be a social get together of 1st, 2nd and 3rd year students, and a chance for us to meet with people like the captains of the rugby teams, the President of the Student's Committee and the other 'big wheels'. It turned out to be a very good evening at which large amounts of beer were drunk to the singing of a number of filthy songs, and we all got to know each other a little. There were a number of Rhodesians present, most of whom were wearing their 'plum tree' blazers from one of Rhodesia's best known schools, there were also one or two South Africans. A few years later the School of Mines had many more students from Asian countries and from Black Africa. I was asked to turn out for the 2nd XV the following week, and played for them for the rest of the year without much distinction.

As I mentioned earlier, I had been barred for three years while a Worcester cadet from getting a driving license; that had been in 1936, and as it was now 1938 I thought it might be worthwhile applying to the Court in Kent for a reduction to the full three years for which I had been suspended. I did this before going to Camborne. I was bidden to attend Court one day, and the Magistrate remembered my case, and after conferring with the Police and I suppose others, he told me that I would be informed of the Court's decision in due course. As far I remember they very kindly knocked about 6 months off, that of course meant I would only be able to apply for a learner's license and 'L' plates at that time, but it was worth something. I went and had a look round some car dealers and found a Morgan 3 wheeler, a very old model built before the ones where the cylinders protruded through the radiator, going for 5 pounds. After some discussion with one of my fellow boarders we decided to share the cost and spend fifty shillings each on it. We also rented a small lock-up garage in Camborne for a few shillings per week. I think we decided we would have the use of the vehicle on alternate weeks. I had to be pretty careful not to be caught driving, but managed to slip out some evenings, and on quiet Sunday afternoons. I had met the previous year's Beauty Queen at a dance, she had worn a long dress when elected, and also when I met her - a pretty girl when her legs were not on show! I took her out for a drive in our machine one quiet afternoon, and down a long steep hill to the tiny Cornish port of Portreath, then up the long narrow hill on the opposite side which has a hairpin bend halfway up. I had to change down to first gear to get round that corner, and I said to my girl friend 'I think this car should get round that in top gear', we only had 2 forward gears and no reverse, so back we went to the bottom of the hill, took a little more run at it and I kept my foot down a bit harder on the way up, the car sailed round the corner but being a 3 wheeler continued on two wheels, the right front wheel being about three feet off the ground until the left, or passenger side, scraped along one of Cornwall's well known stone walls for a few yards, something must have just caught the girl's stocking because it was ruined, but apart from a slight scratch she was unhurt, if a shade less friendly than she had been. With the car back on its wheels, I found it now turned easily and sharply to the left, but was very difficult to turn right. We hastened home to the lock-up garage, and twice I had to get out and lift the back to the left to make a sharp right turn, but we got it back where I could mend it.

I then bought my partner's fifty shilling share, and a new pair of stockings for Sheila. Unfortunate as that little jaunt happened to be it turned out better than that of a second year South African student. He and a couple of friends, being rather bored with Camborne one Saturday evening, piled into his sports car to go to a dance in Penzance, it turned out to be reasonably good, being a licensed dance with plenty of beer may have helped. Having enjoyed their evening they piled into the car once more, drove out of the car park and round a sharp bend and straight into one of those black Wolseys used at that time by the Cornwall County Constabulary. The driver of the sports car had done a year at London University before coming to Camborne, and belonged to the University Air Squadron, and later flew a Hurricane in the Battle of Britain, and later still was shot down in a beaufighter over Italy, but survived though badly burned.

To return though to my struggle to become a mining engineer, I very soon had my Learner's License 'L' plates, and so was legally able to drive my ancient 3 wheeler if accompanied by a qualified driver. I regret to say in those days I went more by what I considered the spirit of the law, or commonsense, rather than

the letter of the law, so I was always accompanied, but not necessarily by a qualified driver. On Mondays when we had to go up Camborne hill and on to the Mine, I would usually pick up 3 passengers, and we all fitted ourselves somehow into the little two seater, unfortunately there was a compression release lever just behind the driver's seat on the outside of the body, this was to make it easier to wind the starting handle, and when the lever was released the engine usually fired. My passengers seemed to get a lot of amusement from squeezing the lever to release compression and stop the engine on the steepest part of the hill. I found it rather annoying.

Towards the end of the first term, we had to take an exam in Engineering Drawing, fortunately I passed. A little later in the term I got a bad go of 'flu', I had planned to accompany both my brothers and a Rhodesian student and 3 girls on a few days skiing holiday in Switzerland during the Xmas holiday, and I was a bit worried that I might not be well enough to go, however when the time came I had been out of bed for three days, and decided I was well enough. Fortunately my brothers had made all the arrangements so off we went. We had to change trains in Paris, and I remember we got rather bored with waiting on a French railway platform, so we linked arms and danced the Palais Glide along it. There were quite a number of other young people also waiting for the train to Switzerland, with their skis and light luggage, and very soon there were a number of groups with their arms linked, all doing the Palais Glide up and down the platform, and of course confirming the French belief that the English were all mad. However the train backed in and we all got aboard and set off for Switzerland. Our group had booked in at an inexpensive hotel at a village called Les Diablarets. This we reached by changing from the express from Paris onto a small mountain train that I think was operated by some rack and pinion machinery which enabled it to climb into the Alps from one of the Swiss valleys.

My brothers had spent a week or so in Switzerland the previous Xmas while I was away in South Australia, so had learned to ski a bit, and their small knowledge was passed on to me and a couple of others in our group, who like me had never snow skied before. The mountain air completely cured any remnant of my 'flu' in a matter of a day or so, and we all had a most enjoyable holiday, and suddenly it was time to return to England. On the train I had noticed a young woman who appeared to be traveling alone, and after changing trains, we also had to change stations, in Paris I saw her get on the same train as ourselves, and sit by herself in the next compartment, so plucking up my courage I went and asked her if she was returning from Switzerland to England on her own. If so I said why don't you come and join our group next door? No she said, she was not going to England but home to Wales, and yes she found the journey a little miserable and would very much like to join us. I found her good company and I expect the rest of our group were glad I had someone else to talk to. The talk turned naturally to cross channel steamers, and no, she had never been seasick, though she had traveled a bit. Richard and I looked at each other, thinking people who have never been seasick tend to get a bit smug, so sitting on the same upper deck bench with her on the steamer, we began to discuss that very distressing complaint. The sea was not rough but there was a fairly big swell running, and a strong breeze, we were very unfair and very unkind, because it only took about half an hour until the poor girl had to rush away and be very sick. Anyway we made it up to her later, helped her through Customs and onto the London train, where we bought her a good meal, then I escorted her from Waterloo to Paddington Station where she caught a train to Welsh Wales. We exchanged a few letters after that, until I got one from her saying she had just got engaged.

Holidays, like so many other good things, come to an end, and in late January I found myself back in Camborne for my second term at the School of Mines. I think we were all glad to be back to get on with our studies, and to fit in some fun after work. I personally decided to get myself more physically fit this term and 4 days a week I got up early and ran the 2 miles to the North cliffs and back before breakfast, sometimes one or two others would join me, but they dropped out after a while. I expect the rain and sleet we often had damped their ardour.

This term too an Irish student of my term told me he had bought one of the four Lea Francis supercharged cars that had been built for the last of the Ulster TT races, which was in either 1927 or 28, and he had decided he would like to get rid of it. With the supercharger it would not keep down to the 30 mph speed limit in top gear. Removing the supercharger also meant changing the cylinder head and he hadn't the time for that, and anyway as it had no top he found it very uncomfortable. I offered him 20 pounds for it

as it stood, which he gratefully accepted. I got rid of the old Morgan 3 wheeler, I forget how, and moved the Lea Francis into the lock-up garage so that I could work on it after school. Another student offered to help me with it, and though not a mechanic, was very useful. He was the son of a Parson and a very pleasant young man, if a bit wild at times. We managed to get a suitable cylinder head from some L.F. agents in London, and got to work on transforming the machine into more of a sports car than a racing car. I think we made a reasonable job of it because I took it over to Truro and passed my driving test in it, and the examiner seemed to think it quite a good motorcar.

Either at the end of the previous term or early in this one I received a letter from the Government to say that as National Service had now been introduced for young men of my age I would be called for training, probably in the Royal Engineers, early in 1939. I replied that as war had not yet been declared I would like to have my call-up deferred until I had completed my course in Mining Engineering, or until a war involving Great Britain began.

They wrote back to say that they would defer my National Service, so I continued with my course until the end of the first year, when things changed a bit. In the mean time as a change from the various pleasing young women with whom I used to enjoy many a pleasant evening, and country drives, I got myself engaged somehow to a rather silly blonde. I was even sillier not to tell her to go and look for a husband elsewhere. Instead I just let things take their course, even at her insistence, going to the magistrate to get permission to get married as my parents refused their consent and I was still a minor by a number of months. She hated my beautiful open car so I had to trade it in for a Triumph saloon, but the garage man told me he could not give much for my Lea Francis as he would only be able to sell it for scrap. I took a friend for a final ride in it not far from Camborne and some elderly chap in an old saloon car put out his left turn indicator as I came up to pass him at 80 mph, but he pulled to his right before turning into the road on his left so I had to go up the bank on my right to avoid him, and shot across a large soft paddock shedding bits of gear box and other sundries as we went. The car of course remained upright but stalled and would not restart, so I had to phone the garage man and tell him where to collect his 'scrap'. He still only charged 15 pounds for the Triumph, which I later traded for a 55 pound Singer Le Mans red 2 seater sports car, but it had a canvas hood. I had not been to London by car from Camborne except once some months earlier when I got a lift from a third year student, he was in fact an old Etonian, who had an elderly Armstrong Siddely open tourer with a preselection gear box. The car would do 55 mph flat out, a speed he seemed to stick to the whole way to London, irrespective of speed limits in built up areas, and if some slower vehicle was blocking the road ahead he merely used the pavement to pass it. I remember deciding that next time I would either drive myself or go by train. However at the end of the term I drove Doris up to Buckinghamshire, and as she had a very large suitcase I had to strap it on top of the folded down hood in front of the two spare wheels. I could not then raise the hood and as it rained most of the way to London the poor girl got extremely wet, so did I, but I thought it worthwhile because she had persuaded me to get rid of my beautiful Lea Francis. Anyhow on the way back we stopped at a pleasant small hotel, a little off the main road, in Devon, for the enjoyable first night of a honeymoon, before returning to Camborne, and after renting a small house, going to the Registry Office and getting married. After a little I cheated a bit, because on some days Doris would go off to Redruth to visit her mother, and Sheila would drop in to see me, and we would generally find time for a little dalliance on the rug in front of the fire. It never went beyond some kisses and cuddles though thanks to her strong will.

In spite of all the distractions I did not neglect my studies, and continued to attend all my lectures at the School of Mines, and at the completion of the summer term managed to pass all my first year examinations. During the summer term, with no rugby to play, most of us spent a good deal of our spare time traveling around Cornwall visiting towns and villages that we had not yet seen, and of course sampling the beer in the pubs. One of the favourite pilgrimages in the summer was to Helston on the day of the annual Floral Dance, one might go on from there to the village of Mullion, and down to the tiny fishing port of Mullion Cove. This was of course before the great R.N. airbase at Culdrose had been built, which changed the scenery and the tempo of life in the area to some extent. When I returned to Cornwall for a couple of years after World War II, I lived at Mullion Cove for a time and commuted to the School of Mines on a motor cycle until I came to grief on it, and then by car until I moved to Portreath, but more of that later. When the summer term, and my first year at Camborne ended, we moved from our small rented house,

to a rather convenient flat, on the other side of Camborne, it was also a bit cheaper. I think it was about the end of August that I went up to Buckinghamshire to stay with my family for a short time, both my brothers turned up at the same time. I well remember that we three and our parents all sat listening to the Radio on Sunday morning the 3rd of September 1939 to hear Neville Chamberlain tell us that we were now at war with Germany, the air raid siren went off that afternoon, but it was a false alarm.

I remember mother taking it for granted that Dean and I would immediately join up instead of going back to our various Schools of Mines. Richard was of course already a Cadet at the Royal Military Academy, soon to be commissioned in the Royal Artillery as I mentioned earlier, and sent to the Western Desert in a light A.A. unit who spent more time engaging enemy tanks than aircraft, though of course in the early stages their targets were mainly Italian. On returning to Cornwall I informed the School of Mines that instead of accepting the deferment from National Service that I had been offered, I would be joining the Royal Navy as soon as I could. I remember writing to Admiral Evans in case he could help me to early R.N. entry in some special branch. He sent me a sympathetic reply and told me that as he was now retired there was little he could do. Eventually Doris and I and a friend of hers and his wife went to Plymouth for the day.

He had already received notification that he would be required by the army, and had to go to Plymouth for his final orders and medical check. I went to the Naval recruiting office and asked to join as an ordinary seaman. They wrote down my particulars and told me I would probably be called in about six months as there would be no training facilities available until then so back I went to Camborne.

It was customary at the School of Mines for students to spend a month or so of each summer vacation working either in a mine, or some engineering works, to gain practical experience. I had just spent a month working underground in the South Crofty tin mine, first with the timber men, and then as an assistant to one of the miners. I went back to the mine and asked the manager [South Crofty](#) if he could give me a job for about six months until my call-up papers came. He agreed that as long as I was at the shaft head ready for work by 7 am daily I could work underground, first as a 'trammer', this entailed filling the one ton ore trams under the rock chutes and pushing them to the main shaft, slightly down hill all the way, where they were pushed into a cage and whisked up to the surface, where the ore was crushed and then put through the treatment plant. For this I would receive five shillings per shift. Since all the underground levels trickled dirty brown streams of water for their whole length we were not only soaked, but very dirty by the end of each shift. In those days of course one continued to work until the end of shift whistle was blown at 3pm by the underground foreman, after that you made your way back to the shaft and waited for a chance to catch a cage to the surface, then went to the changing room, where you hung up your mining clothes hoping they would dry a little by morning, have a hot shower and put your everyday clothes on and went home. Sometimes I went to and fro by bicycle and sometimes by bus.

Just after I got the job at South Crofty I heard that my father, who had served in the Boer War as a British South African Cavalryman, and during all of World War I as a Lieutenant in the Third King's African Rifles, much of it in the Rufiji River area, where the German light cruiser Konigsberg had been forced to shelter from the ships of the Royal Navy, and two of whose crew he had taken prisoner, had just joined up as a Private in the Beds. and Hearts. Regiment. He later got a hernia while working, and the M.O. discovered that he was 56 years old and not the 45 he had claimed. He was then of course discharged, and shortly managed, with a barrister from I think Capetown, to get a job for the Admiralty delivering small craft to different ports round the coast of the British Isles. He often used to do strange things though. He had some very bright ideas at times, unfortunately not all of them worked. I remember he told us that in the early days when he was farming ostriches on the Athi plains in Kenya, he thought there was a much quicker way of getting male birds than by collecting ostrich eggs and setting them under hens and then waiting, after they hatched, for the young males to mature, so that tail feathers could be plucked to adorn the hats of fashionable young women. He decided he would get a good fast horse and some sort of lasso and ride down, and catch male ostriches, and drag them back to one of the 'Bomas' or enclosures at the farm. Ostriches have a devastating kick which can easily break a limb, they peck pretty hard as well, and apparently when lassoed they usually squat on the ground. I don't think the old man had much success

with that idea. He got his horse all right, apparently a race horse that was not quite fast enough, and was certainly unused to a rifle being fired near it.

Early one morning father took his horse out for a trial run, and as they came up to a small patch of thorn a well maned lion got to his feet facing them, father slid out of the saddle with his rifle in his right hand and the horse's reins safely hooked over his elbow, he was just raising the rifle for a shot when the horse took exception to the lion starting towards him and reared high on his hind legs, pulling right arm and rifle up with him. The lion quite nonplused by such behaviour, turned tail and ran, straight towards a long line of wildebeest that were grazing across the plains. The old man, somewhat annoyed, soothed his horse, remounted and started after the lion. The animals in the center of the grazing herd, knowing as they do on such occasions, that they were in no danger from the lion, stepped aside and let him run through their ranks, and then closed up again so that horse and man would have to ride about half a mile to get round the end of the herd. Father realised the lion would be long gone by that time and decided to call it a day and go home and practice his Kipsigis, a language in which he was becoming very fluent, in fact he spoke it much better than he did Kiswahili.

## CHAPTER 7

### Twenty-one And Off To War

To return to World War II and my temporary mining job. I was soon taken off the tramming work and became assistant to one of the miners who worked on contract in one of the stopes, and occasionally in one of the lower level drifts that had to be lengthened. When I first started with him he was engaged in cutting a new 'drift', this is a horizontal tunnel just over six feet high, following the strike or line of the ore body. This is done by setting up a pneumatic drill held in a cradle that is fastened to a bar that has a screwjack fitting at one end so that when the bar is placed upright between the floor and roof of the tunnel the screw can be turned to lengthen the bar and hold it immovably in place, the cradle is now clamped to the upright at the desired height and the drill mounted on it. The air hose, which supplies the compressed air that drives the drill, and the water hose, which forces water through a hole in the center of the drill steel to the rock face to flush out the powdered rock and stop dust being blown back into the workings, are connected up, the drill steel, these come in various lengths and diameters, fitted, some grease added, and one should be ready to start drilling, so that a further six feet of tunnel can be blasted from the rock. The equipment I have rather sketchily described is what we mainly used in 1939/40, but new types were being designed, notably at that time the 'air-leg' a type of machine for horizontal drilling where instead of having to fit a horizontal cradle on a vertical bar, basically the weight of the drill was supported on a column of compressed air inside a tubular leg. Most of the machines that we used were built by the Holmans factory in Camborne, though we had a few Climax drills etc. as well, and of course in many places Ingersoll-Rand machines were very popular. My day's work began with getting my miner's drills, which had been brought to the surface for sharpening at the end of the previous shift, to the work face ready for him to start drilling. Then of course I had to help him erect the bar and cradle, and fit the drill itself in place, the 'drifter' (drill) that we used weighed about 120lbs. We would then commence to drill the holes for the day's blast. If this was done correctly and the rock broke as it should our tunnel would be advanced six feet horizontally at the tunnel height of six feet plus, (usually the completed height of such a drift <tunnel> is just under seven feet). Of course the compressed air and water pipes have to be installed along its length as the tunnel grows and provision made for any cross cuts, or spurs, planned to be made from the main tunnel. It was all very interesting and very hard wet work, and we would take a half hour or so at noon to sit and eat our 'crouse' (lunch) of pasties or whatever. Later the miner would charge all his drill holes with explosives, and when the Foreman's whistle went we would light the fuses and hurry back around the first corner we could find and light a candle and place it in a sheltered niche as the blast always put out the carbide lamps on our helmets. Of course we had first unrigged and stowed our drilling machinery.

There was a strict rule that after blasting nobody was to go back into the newly blasted 'end' because of the danger of being overcome by gas. Since most of the actual miners worked on contract and were paid by the footage their 'end' or their stope progressed each shift, it seemed important for them to know if the

blast at the end of the shift had been successful, so they knew whether on arrival next morning they could get on with mucking out the end, and barring down loose pieces of rock, before drilling their next round of 'shots', or whether they might have to re-blast some of the previous day's work. The practice therefore, contrary to safety rules, was to turn the air hose on a bit, and holding it close to the nose, go back into the newly blasted face and check that the 'blast' had been successful. We had no casualties from this practice in my time, but they did happen now and then. Eventually I received a letter from the Navy telling me to report for a medical examination at a center in Camborne, before they sent my final joining instructions. It was now well into 1940 and the evacuation of British and allied troops from Dunkirk was about to begin. I haven't mentioned her before but another of my young lady acquaintances, Lily, had just joined the ATS, and she and I would travel to Plymouth together a few times later on, as she was stationed at Raglan Barracks, before becoming more intimate. The doctor who examined me, an old army man from the first World War, mentioned that he had seen me playing rugby a few times, so thought I must be pretty fit and was not perhaps as careful as he might have been, and did not report that my eyes were not as good as they should be, and in fact were not up to the standard required for the 'Deck' branch of the Navy. So off I went to join the brand new RN training center, H.M.S. Raleigh, just across the water from Devonport, and in fact just in Cornwall.

Here they put us into dormitories, took our particulars and gave us pay books and issued us with uniforms, and began training us to be sailors. In view I suppose of my past history I was quite soon made a C.W. (Commission Warrant) candidate. This would not be confirmed though until I had completed my initial training.

In any case at that time one had to serve for a minimum of six months as a 'lower deck' Rating before being considered for a Commission. First for a brief look at our ten weeks training in H.M.S. Raleigh.

Once we got to know each other a little my fellow recruits seemed a pretty mixed but reasonable bunch, one had been a race course tic tac man, one a fairly rough young Scot from the Gorbals in Glasgow, he had walked and hitch-hiked to Plymouth from Glasgow, as he did not know how to use the Railway Warrant that the Navy had sent him, one other had served for a short time in the Lincolnshire Regiment and I have no idea how he now came to be one of us, the remaining dozen fairly 'run of the mill, young men, and we had a very good and kindly Petty Officer as our group instructor. We went through all the normal recruit drills of square bashing, attending lectures on various subjects from elementary seamanship to the avoidance of venereal diseases, and I suppose I dozed through most of them. We also spent many hours in the strict discipline of the Gun Battery where we were taught the drills necessary for the crews of six inch and four inch guns, and how to behave in a multiple gun turret, and by the end of it I suppose that each of us had a fair idea of how to cope as a communications number, trainer, gun-layer, loader, ammunition number, gun captain etc. in fact of all those things intended to make it safer to be part of the gun's crew than it's target. We were also allowed a short week-end off I think twice a month, and once I had settled into the routine, and learned my way about Plymouth and Devonport I used to hire a car for the week-end, and drive down to Camborne on Saturday, and return in time for the morning parade on Monday, sometimes my friend Lily had the same week-end free so I would give her a lift to Camborne and back, which in turn led to us visiting a pub together now and then in the evening, which in turn led to some pretty heavy petting, but we were both young and there was a war going on in the vicinity. Anyhow I completed my training in 'Raleigh' and was posted as an Ordinary Seaman (O.D.) to H.M.S. Drake; R.N. Barracks, Devonport, to await a draft to a warship of some kind, somewhere. While we were awaiting our 'draft chits' we were kept busy on various Dockyard working parties. By this time several French warships had taken shelter in English ports, the submarine 'Surcouf' was moored alongside in the Dockyard, she was quite large and carried a seaplane, further along the battleship 'Paris' was tied to the wharf; many of the crew not too sure of their loyalties, were interned ashore near 'Raleigh' so some of us had to clean ship for them. An experience which left us thinking the ship hygiene of our allies left much to be desired. There was also a rumour that the Surcouf was preparing for sea and intended to slip out and join up with the French ships under the Vichy Government, so a boarding party was sent to put her under arrest. We were never told clearly what had happened but apparently there was some shooting on board and I think a French Officer was killed. Large barracks like Drake are of course hotbeds for rumour, 'buzzes' as they are called.

In any event it was not my concern, I thought I would be far better occupied trying to enjoy myself a little before being sent off to sea in some corvette or destroyer. I had learned my way about both Devonport and Plymouth fairly well while at Raleigh, and often had to sleep 'ashore' because the last ferry from Devonport to Cornwall and the Raleigh was at 10pm or thereabouts, so I slept at the YMCA, here one could get a bed for a shilling if one was early, or sleep under the billiard table for no charge, among the other late comers in which case you had to leave by 6am. This was fine as the first ferry was also at 6am. We tended to be rather careful in Union Street, there was a large dance hall half way along it, and this was normally crowded by French matelots from the various ships sheltering in England, and these guests of our country at this time had little to do but make up to the girls of Plymouth, for the Americans had not yet arrived, and there were a good many fights between 'Brits' and French. One other thing I have not mentioned is that during our last week or two at Raleigh our little group was formed into a sort of emergency platoon in case of a German invasion. If it happened I think we were expected to guard a portion of the cliffs along the sea front to the west of Plymouth, with our one P14 rifle, a few old hand grenades and some pickhandles, fortunately we were not called upon for that heroic duty. No matter; the war was progressing, not terribly well for England at this time, Hitler had not yet decided to bomb London, so the Luftwaffe were busy with ports like Plymouth, Portsmouth, and Chatham as well as the fighter command aerodromes, so we spent a certain amount of our time in the air raid shelters of H.M.S. Drake. I must have remained in Devonport until well into September for I was sent on annual leave from there, and went first to London where my mother was now living in a boarding house in South Kensington. I arrived about the 15th September, on what must have been one of the first nights of the Blitz on London, there was a lot of noise every night of that week, a mighty scattering of incendiary bombs, and a number of houses around us suffered direct hits. Most of us spent a good deal of the nights in the cellar of the house. Mother refused to leave her bedroom, saying that if she was going to be killed in a bombing raid it might as well be in the comfort of her own bed. Of course she survived the whole war. After my week in London I returned to Camborne and Doris for the final week of my leave, during this time a young man stopped his car near me late one evening to esquire the way to an address in Camborne, where he told me his fiancee lived. He was on leave from the R.M.C. at Sandhurst. As the address was only half a mile or so from my flat I got in his car and directed him and was briefly introduced to the lady, who I thought gave me a rather 'come hither' look. I met her again a couple of years later to our mutual satisfaction, but that comes later in the war.

On return to Devonport barracks at the end of my leave I was used as a general hand again, in common with many others awaiting 'draft' to a ship. By this time of course it had been confirmed that I was a Commission Warrant candidate, and one afternoon I was sent for and told I was to take a group of recruits out in a cutter and teach them boat pulling (rowing). I asked who they were, to which the Petty Officer replied "oh they are just a bunch of young Norwegian volunteers, most of them have been in fishing boats and trawlers". " But PO" I said, "they probably know more about boat pulling than I do". "look lad" he replied, " they have to learn to do it Navy fashion, go and teach them", and so I did, helped a bit by my smattering of Swedish which most Norwegians understand. It was apparently a successful outing which won the approval of a Training Officer, and also of my class of Norseman. Eventually I was 'piped' to the Regulating Office and there met three other ratings, and we were told that we four were drafted to H.M.S. Whitehall, an old V and W class destroyer from World War I. Actually I believe we were only told the name of the ship later in our travels. We were given railway travel warrants to the Kyle of Loch Alsh, in the far north west of Scotland; the others were an Australian ASDIC rating, another Aussie who, if I remember rightly, was a telegraphist, and a signal rating. I was told that as the only Seaman rating, albeit an O.D., I was in charge of the draft, and had better see that we all got to our destination. As it turned out I was with three pleasant young men, and the two Aussies were more co-operative than I had really expected. And after the train journey, with several changes, the length of England and Scotland, we arrived at Loch Alsh. We were all impressed by the kindness and hospitality of the lady volunteers who looked after us on Inverness Station, and who also gave us sandwiches to take us on the little train that was to take us from there across Scotland to the Kyle of Loch Alsh, just across from the Isle of Skye. We reported to the Naval base there, and an Officer told us that they knew nothing of our ship, or where she was, but they would send some signals. In the meantime we would be accommodated in the nearby Church of Scotland hut and report every morning to join the various work parties at the base. In those days sailors did not

have the suitcases with which they travel nowadays. We each traveled with our own "Bag and Hammock", in other words, a large canvas kitbag containing all our clothing, uniforms, underclothes etc. and a canvas hammock made up into a long roll containing palisade and three blankets. This was secured with seven evenly spaced turns of rope along its length. It was very pleasant to sleep in the comfort of the four beds in the Scotch hut which was, I think, nearly half a mile out of the village. Reporting as ordered the next morning we soon found ourselves humping sides of beef etc. from the railway wagons to a wharf, and passing them aboard a pair of ships that were being re- victualled. As far as I remember they were mine sweepers. It was a long hard day and I for one was glad to knock off. In the morning we again reported to the office and were told to be ready to catch the midday ferry to Stornoway on the Isle of Lewis. They seemed to think our ship might call there and we would be accommodated with a unit of the Fleet Air Arm who occupied Stornoway Castle.

Off we went on our travels again, this time to the Outer Hebrides where we reported as directed, only to be told that there was no news for us. We were given quarters and told to join up with a general duties working party in the morning. We spent quite a while scrubbing Castle steps, sweeping gravel drives and so on while the Air Arm staff were busy maintaining their four Walrus flying boats. We were also told that there was a Coastal Command unit on a flying field nearby with a few Avro Anson aircraft, mainly used we were told for submarine spotting. We stayed there a couple of weeks I think, which was quite pleasant, and heard some entertaining tales, like the one about the Walrus pilot who landed on the RAF runway but had forgotten to lower his landing wheels, made a good landing but did not realise he had split the hull until after landing on the water and turning to taxi to a cruiser off shore, when his aeroplane filled and began to sink.

Once again we were sent for, told to pack our bags and hammocks, and catch the ferry to Lochalsh where we would be supplied with rail warrants etc. which would take us to Liverpool to join our ship. She had of course been stationed there all the time that we were gallivanting around Scotland.

At Lime Street Station, Liverpool, we reported to the RTO and found that Navy had sent a van for us. This took us to a large building near the Mersey, whose roof was adorned by two large birds, yes the Liver Birds themselves. This was Navy headquarters where we were checked in and then driven beside the overhead railway until we came to Gladstone Dock, where among other V & W destroyers and corvettes was H.M.S. Whitehall. After reporting on board I was taken forward to the seamans' mess and handed over to the Leading Seaman in charge of my mess, given a locker in which to stow my gear, told which watch I was in, that my action station was communications number on 'A' gun, and so on. I was surprised to see a number of hammocks still slung in the mess deck instead of being lashed up and stowed away in the hammock 'rack'. I was not then aware that when Whitehall was at sea, water a foot deep washed in and out of the mess deck soaking anything stowed at deck level. Consequently my own hammock was unusable all through our first convoy. I soon learned that our role was to escort convoys of merchant ships out into the North Atlantic to seventeen degrees west longitude, where we would then join up as part of the escort of a homeward bound, and deeply laden, convoy heading for an English port, usually Liverpool. First however we had a few days in port with odd jobs to be done, like painting the funnels, checking ammunition and all the daily harbour routine, and of course a run ashore with the other liberty men after work. On joining the ship I was rather surprised to find that the Sub-Lieutenant R.N. had been a cadet with me in the Worcester, and about a term senior to me. He had been in the 'Navy Class' for late entry to the R.N.! I had got to know his sister at one of the Worcester dances. After a few drinks in a nearby pub as it was my birthday, we, a couple of friends and I, returned on board in good time, as we had been informed earlier that the ship was under sailing orders. We were soon clear of Gladstone Dock and slipping down the Mersey at action stations, which is normal, because when you proceed to sea you test all guns, firing circuits and communications. Of course all scuttles and dead lights had been screwed shut before leaving dock, making the atmosphere on the mess decks more than a little 'ripe', Soon all but the duty watch were stood down and sent below, and engine revolutions were increased so that we were steaming at about 26 knots, slicing straight through the big steep waves of the Irish Sea. It seems we had to rendezvous with, and join the escort of a convoy heading west from Glasgow. After my previous experience in the 'Abraham Ryberg' it never entered my head that I would be sea sick. On the other hand I had never experienced the motion of a destroyer going fast through heavy seas. Apart from the

corkscrewing and pitching, the ships sides seemed to pant each time we cut through a big sea and it felt as if ones rib cage was being squeezed and then released repeatedly. Very soon, I, like the majority of the ship's company, was extremely sick. The atmosphere in the mess deck, as well as a few birthday drinks in Liverpool probably all contributed to my discomfort. The discomfort made me feel that I wouldn't care if the ship sank if that would stop the ghastly motion. While at sea we lived with a 'Mae West' life jacket permanently around us. At midnight my Watch took over and it was a relief to get out on deck and breathe the pure, but bitterly cold, air and spray. From then the seasickness did not bother me while I was on deck, but when I was below in the mess deck it was a very different story. Fortunately it was not very long before we joined the convoy and were given our orders for station keeping etc. by the Escort Commander. As far as I remember on this occasion it was the captain of another V & W destroyer, H.M.S Watchman, and we all ploughed steadily westward, with only a couple of possible submarine contacts, which caused a flurry of high speed maneuvers by some of the escort, and the dropping of several depth charges. We eventually left the convoy and headed off in some other direction for a few hours until we met up with a convoy heading towards England, around which we disposed ourselves as its escort back to Liverpool. In spite of the huge seas that run in mid Atlantic in winter, it was more comfortable in our ship while with a convoy, as the mean speed was that of the slowest ship, often about 6 knots, so much of our time was spent idling along at the same speed. Periodically we did fast sweeps of the area we were detailed to protect. I don't think we lost a ship on that particular convoy, and eventually arrived back in the Mersey, where, as was routine, we went first alongside the oiltanker to refuel. We also collected some bags of mail for our crew as our mail had previously been sent out to the 'oiler' as a matter of routine. It was not unusual at that stage of the war for an escort vessel to be sent back to sea after refueling, indeed it happened to us more than once. On this occasion though, we went in to Gladstone Dock and secured alongside another destroyer, and as usual took on provisions and did various jobs around the ship. Non duty men were given shore leave from about 4.30pm until either 7 or 8am, so I made the most of it. To begin with I would catch a train on the overhead railway into the city, and after a beer or two go along to the Flying Angel ( The Missions to Seaman) and try to book a room for the night. The first few times I was lucky, and managed to get a small single bedroom to myself, with a bathroom next door. Later on it was always already booked when I got there. The girl who had been doing the bookings had changed jobs with someone else. After that several sailors at different times offered to share a room with me. That was not all they wished to share, until they found out that I did not indulge in games of that sort, except of course with girls. While we were in dock there were a couple of fairly heavy air raids on Liverpool, and despite the discomforts we were fairly glad to be off to sea again with another convoy. This turned out to be a fast one with ex passenger ships that had been converted to troop transports, on their way to Cape town, to I think, Egypt. There was quite a big escort which included a light cruiser and an aircraft carrier. In view of the speed of the convoy and the north Atlantic weather it was all a bit too much for our aged vessel. We had our whaleboat torn away and much of the armour plating that protected our ready ammunition, was buckled into scrap iron, and with various other damage, we were ordered back to Londonderry for repairs. We enjoyed our few days in 'Derry', went to a dance on our first shore leave, and found the local people very pleasant, friendly and helpful. Our repairs were completed far too soon to our way of thinking, and back we went to Liverpool, where we were again part of the target for German bombers, and glad to leave with our next convoy. My action station was now changed to Du Maresque operator, as the First Lieutenant told me I was supposed to be fairly intelligent. Probably something the Sub. had told him. This was a gadget, now out of date, fitted on the bridge, on which you entered the course and speed of your own ship, what you assumed was the course and speed of the enemy, from which was deduced the rate at which the range was opening or closing. All this was required by the gunnery control station to help them work out the range, bearing and elevation to pass on to the guns. The convoy runs changed but little from the first one, except on one occasion when we left the convoy in the care of a corvette and one of the old 4 funnel Lend Lease destroyers sent to us by America. We four destroyers steamed off at high speed in a different direction, apparently to help find the Bismark. After about 10 hours we hurried back to take care of our convoy. To our great relief, we were told there now sufficient real ship and carrier borne aircraft looking for the Bismark. One of the things we looked forward to on return to port was the periodic dry docking of the ship for boiler cleaning. This normally meant about 48 hours leave for each Watch in turn, and was carried out by the Birkenhead Dockyard. I think we used to do a boiler clean after about every four or five normal convoys. When we returned from one of our convoys there was a large aircraft carrier in a neighbouring dock. The enemy obviously knew

about it because they plastered the docks and much of Liverpool for several nights, and in one raid scored a direct hit on an air raid shelter, killing I believe about three hundred. I was getting a little fed up with to and fro-ing in the north Atlantic on the old 'one shot Whitehall', so called because after a very arduous day during the evacuation from Dunkirk, during which she had come under incessant bombing attacks with little chance of successful retaliation, the order was given for 'Gun Layers firing' in which case the captain of the gun can aim and fire his own gun quite independently. Y gun, who's crew had imbibed rather more than their allotted ration of rum picked an ME 110 as their target and blew it out of the sky. The other less colourful version for the name was that the twelve pounder AA gun amidships never fired more than one round before it jammed. Anyway I was fed up and decided with one of my mates to apply for a transfer to the Fleet Air Arm to be trained as Air Crew. The captain sent us over to the carrier for both a visit and an interview. We were told that apart from taking our names etc. nothing could be done until we had a medical and eyesight test. These were done later on. My eyesight of course let me down, and the doctor told me that far from becoming air crew I should not even be in a seagoing ship. He would have to make out a report and I would be informed in due course of my fate.

While ashore one day I went into Liverpool's large department store 'Lewis and Somebodies' I think it was called, and finished up dating a rather pretty shop assistant who lived across the river in Birkenhead. We met after work and went to a pub on her side of the river before adjourning for some heavy 'petting' in the park. We met a few more times, and enjoyed our evenings together. The night before we were due to sail on another convoy escort job, she told me between kisses, that she was a Roman Catholic. Oh dear I thought, how come every time I think I've just about talked a girl into bed with me, she turns out to be an R.C. with high principles unleavened by low morals? Anyway she suggested that it would be much easier for me to return to the ship in the morning, so why didn't I come and sleep the night at her house? I thought it a splendid idea, so off we went. Quite a pleasant house and Mum seemed quite nice, and told me her husband would be back from the pub later. My girl took me along and showed me the spare room where I was to sleep, and said "with you here Dad will not beat Mum up when he gets back like he usually does". So that was I was invited! I had a good night's sleep and was called early by a girl in a dressing gown carrying a cup of tea. I moved over in the bed to make room for her, but she merely looked down at me and said, "not on your life darling, I have to be at work in an hour". What could I do but drink my tea, dress myself, and return to the ship. Once back on board I found we would not be sailing for about 24 hours, so after a routine day's work I went ashore with the liberty men about 4pm. No girls for me tonight I decided, and started visiting a pub or two in Lime Street. It seemed though the Luftwaffe had not forgotten the aircraft carrier in port. The sirens went and we were soon in the middle of a very heavy air raid, which went on all night. A big bomb hit part of the Adelphi Hotel, and the overhead railway was hit several times which put it out of action, and no buses seemed to be running. In the early morning I was wondering how to get back to the ship and started to walk. Some time later a fire engine pulled up beside me, and I was invited to 'hop on' as they were going to the dock next to ours, Brocklebank Dock, where they dropped me, and after thanking them I made the short walk from there. When I reached the ship I found that the duty watch had been fire fighting all night in the warehouses on the dock alongside. The First Lieutenant happened to see me coming on board about an hour late from shore leave, and he asked me how I had got back. I told him I had cadged a ride on a fire engine, to which he said, "well done", and went on his way.

We finally sailed on what turned out to be my last convoy in H.M.S. Whitehall, for on return to port the Captain received a letter to say that in view of the doctor's report on my eyesight I was to return to barracks, and would possibly be interviewed for a Commission in the special Branch, obviously non seagoing.

[HMS Whitehall](#)

Once more I packed my bag and hammock, and after a most unexpected send-off by some of the old 'stripeys' of the mess deck, who, as usual, had managed to save much of their rum ration, and, as I was going on a commission, exhorted me to remember that when a sailor got drunk, it was funny, but if an officer got drunk it was disgusting. I managed to find my way to Lime Street Station in a euphoric haze of Navy rum and catch my train, this time to the R.N. barracks at Portsmouth, H.M.S. Victory. Having reported my arrival to the P.O. at the main gate, I was conducted first to an accommodation block, and then shown quickly around the barracks by a young sailor. I also met a couple of other C.W. candidates

R.N.O.C.T.U. near Brighton. KA as it was known, occupied the former Lancing College, one of England's prestigious public schools. We had just completed the evening meal when three bombs exploded in a row across the parade ground just outside our barrack block, a few moments later the 'tannoy' announced "air raid warning red, take cover" which meant all non duty men to the shelters. A little late, but that happened some times. It turned out that an enemy aircraft had been damaged further inland, and had jettisoned his bombs over Portsmouth as he was scooting for home. Later that day I was given a rail warrant and told I could depart in the morning on ten days Christmas leave. The interview board was not likely to meet until early January. Off I went to Camborne to renew ties with old friends, and see how dear Doris was behaving herself. She had spent a lot of time at her Mother's while I was away, but was back at the flat for my leave. This was handy to the 'Reynards Arms', known better to the locals as the 'Red Jacket'. It seemed the young lady had been spending a good deal of her marriage allowance on alcoholic stimulants, what else, she asked, was there for a grass widow to do? My leave ended all too quickly and I returned to barracks. A couple of days later it was my turn to be interviewed. Chairman of the board was a Rear Admiral, who having gone through the preliminaries, and seeming to like my answers, suddenly discovered that I had only served two months at sea in 'Whitehall' instead of the obligatory six months. He became somewhat annoyed until I managed to explain that I had been sent back because I had failed an eyesight test in Liverpool, and mentioned having done a little sea time before joining the R.N. He may have been impressed because he said "I suppose the test you took was in the dim sickbay of a destroyer". I said, "yes Sir". He picked up his phone and spoke for a short time with someone, and then told me to go and report to the Surgeon Captain at the sickbay and report back to him directly after my eyesight test. I guess the Surgeon Captain leaned a good way in favour as the test was fairly brief. Fortunately I had never been colour blind, and he told me he would ring the Admiral to let him know that I had passed. I reported back as instructed and the Admiral congratulated me on being selected for a Commission in the R.N.V.R. Two days later I was part of the group who arrived at 'King Alfred' as Officer Cadets R.N.V.R.

## **Chapter 8**

### **A Change of Lifestyle**

I must say at the start, that I was rather concerned at possibly 'letting down' the Admiral a bit, after his kindness, when later I transferred from a Cadet RNVR to become a Cadet Royal Marine. Let me explain the sequence of events.

We went through all the normal routine of joining a new ship at 'K.A.' The fact of being treated as young officers, and waited on at table by WRNS stewards was a delightful change from living on the lower deck of a V & W destroyer.

Our routine was now to consist to a great extent on lectures regarding the various shipboard duties of young officers ; naturally the professional subjects like navigation, seamanship, Watchkeeping, pay and allowances etc. In fact on all those things calculated to make us Junior Naval Officers who would be of some use to our Captains and ships. We also had to mount guard and do sentry duty at night. This was not too popular as it was a hard January with a good deal of snow. One morning we were told we were all required to muster in the main lecture room where an Officer of the Royal Marines would address us. The Major, who had come down from London, told us that his Corps were forming a new self contained unit to entirely protect a Naval base anywhere in the world. It would be known as the Mobile Naval Base Defence Organisation, (MNBDO), would consist of a coast artillery regiment, an anti aircraft regiment, an infantry battalion, landing and maintenance units and various others like signals, transport, medical, surveys, chemical warfare, camouflage and so on. He wanted the names of any volunteers before returning to London. There would he said be a great deal of scope for promotion, especially at first. At this time though, it was soon changed, a sub-lieutenant RNVR could not be promoted until he was twenty five, so I, and sixteen others, put our names down. The prospect of becoming a Captain R.M. in about a year at twenty five and twopence a day was far more attractive than remaining a sub-lieutenant at nine shillings a day for several years.

We were to go to the R.M. depot at Lymington near Exeter in Devon to begin our ten week training as Royal Marine Officer Cadets. Farewell for a while to being treated as young officers, and back to being treated more like recruits. The overriding difference was that the 'Royal' expected you to do it better, because it was harder, and they made sure that it was. I think we rather enjoyed our first couple of days, still wearing Navy uniform and marching around in fours and not threes, as was now customary in both the Army and Marines. Two of our squad decided it was not for them and returned to 'K.A.', leaving fifteen of us to soldier on. It was not long before we were fallen in and told that we had better realise our navy days were over. We were to get into our newly issued uniforms and forget about saying "aye aye sir" in response to an order. "Sir" or "yes sir" would be adequate in future. Also we could have an hour to get our boots properly shined, our gaiters, belts and other equipment green blanched, cap badges etc. polished, and report back on parade. So began ten weeks of intensive training. On free evenings we could walk the five or six miles to the pub in Exmouth and back again. All R.M. officers were trained first of all in an infantry role, specialising later. After the first couple of weeks we were told a new venue had been acquired for training R.M. officer cadets, at a requisitioned hotel rather nearer to Plymouth. We would be taken to Kingsbridge Station by train and then, wearing full marching order, march to our new quarters at the 'Thurlston Hotel'. A hilly six mile walk with all the hills seeming to go up. On arrival we assembled in what had apparently been an undercover carpark for hotel guests. Here we dumped our equipment in piles so that we could scrub out all the accommodation allocated to us. The RSM told us that when this had been done to his satisfaction we would be given a meal in the mess, formerly the hotel dining room. We finally got our tea at 10pm. The next weeks were the usual OCTU training business of parades, route marches, infantry and weapon training, bushcraft and night marches. Each of us took turns to be in charge and give the orders. We must have had a little time off because Lily came up from Plymouth to see me and spent part of the Sunday with me. We went for a longish walk, and we sat down for a rest in a pleasant copse, where she told me she thought it sordid when I began to unfasten her blouse, but a few more kisses and soft words seemed to change her mind. Eventually she had to catch her bus back to Raglan ATS barracks, and I hope she did not spend the journey wondering if a few careless moments of pleasure had got her into 'trouble'. She was a kindly sort of girl with a most attractive pair of breasts surmounted by a far more functional set of nipples than the small pink pair decorating Doris' mounds of flesh. She wrote to me in a week or two and told me I could stop worrying as everything was all right. I don't know what made her think I had time to worry, but then she was a thoughtful young woman. To return to the final stages of our course, we were visited one day by the representatives of Gentlemen's outfitters who wished to measure us up for our officer's uniforms. We felt we were getting somewhere at last! I chose Moss Bros. for mine. They looked after very well until the end of the war. In a few days we began our final exercise which lasted for 72 hours. It ended with a 70 mile march after which we given 2 hours to bathe, shave, clean our equipment, shine our boots and get on our passing out parade. We were inspected by a Brigadier and his staff as well as the C.O. of the OCTU and a few others. All went well, and we left the parade knowing we were now second lieutenants, Royal Marines. A list of our 'postings' was put on the notice board, all to MNBDO units on Hayling Island. We were then sent off on leave with orders to report to our new units in ten days. I went of course to Camborne to enjoy a week or so of married life. Here I met a few old friends again, and felt rather important on the one or two occasions that I wore my new uniform. I think it was on this leave that I heard the little story of the young couple living close to Doris' mother; she was an attractive young woman with a head of dark red hair and a figure that was all curves. Her husband was not very much older than her 17 years, and I think worked in the mine. It seems he had strained his back, so before dressing one morning asked his wife to rub it for him with liniment. While doing so her hand strayed to the front, and using that age old Cornish expression "lil dear av un, 'eem 'ansome" gave it a couple of strokes. It was only moments later that her husband was using a sponge and cold water to remove all traces of the burning liniment, and she was sitting wide legged in a tub of cold water trying to get rid of the stinging liniment as she sobbed in the bath.

I reported to the 2nd RM Coast Artillery Regiment on the due date, where having met the Adjutant, I was introduced to the Colonel and later shown my quarters and the Officers' Mess. The next few days were I suppose similar to those experienced by most young officers joining new regiments, and included meeting a number of people, finding out what one could do, and what was frowned upon, and of course in finding out about the particular job which one had been allocated. I was also given an M.O.A. ( Marine Officers Attendant), Marine Gregory, who had qualified as a marksman and wore the appropriate badge and

crossed rifles on his cuff. He'd been brought up by a fairground family, was a tall likeable young man, who was illiterate, and usually asked me to write his letters home to his wife for him. He remained with me as Batman and bodyguard until 1944.

After a couple of days I was told that I was to be Instructor of Searchlights. This was usually a Captain's posting and carried an extra two and sixpence a day. I thought later that it was an unnecessary sort of job and a waste of a good officer's time. Anyway I was brand new to it, and made my mind up to learn as much as I could, and do it to the best of my ability. I was informed that we had both four inch and six inch gun batteries sited here and there along the south coast, as well as a battery of pompoms sited to protect Falmouth from raids by 'E' boats. Each of these coast artillery batteries were equipped with searchlights to illuminate targets for the guns.

The 2 I/C told me that as I would not be fully occupied as 1 of S/L the Colonel wished me to also assist the Adjutant. In fact I spent more time helping the Camp Commandant, a delightful elderly major who must have been a Royal Marine for about 43 years, for he wore the medal of the Battle of Omduran, where he had been a young boy soldier. I learned a good deal from him.

After 3 months on Hayling Island, all of us of my group at Thurleston had been promoted to Lieutenant R.M. and I was sent on a C.A. searchlight course at the Royal Artillery school at Llandudno in N. Wales. This seemed to be all about the siting, and tactical use of searchlights as well as general care and maintenance; on our first working day, when we knocked off in the late afternoon I decided to have my hair cut. On entering the hair dressers a statuesque blonde, with the most outstanding bust I'd ever seen, came to ask how she could help, and promptly and most efficiently started to cut my hair. I am afraid I spent much of the time staring at her image in the mirror. However when she had finished I apologised for staring and asked if I could atone for my manners by taking her out for a meal when she had finished work. She said yes, that would be very nice and added, "but I have to be home early, look you". I collected her, and after a pleasant meal with conversation slightly more mundane than the menu, asked her what there was to do in the evenings. Most people, she said, just went walking and perhaps climbed the Great Orme or the Little Orme. When I asked her preference she said, "it's been a long day Hugh, let us just climb the path up the Little Orme and sit and look at the view over the bay". It was a rather steep climb, but we found a pleasant spot to sit, just below the top and screened by shrubs from other people. She had been here before. We sat for a time looking out to sea and saying a word or two before she moved closer to me. I put an arm around her and we kissed and cuddled a bit, which she didn't seem to mind, and as we lay on the grass I managed to swing her round a little for with all that top hamper if her head had stayed up hill I would have slid off and down the hill. I heard her murmur softly something about "have you got-" "of course" I said, "then make love to me bach, it's wasting time you are". So I did, and then took her home, where she had told me she had to be early!

I pleaded a lot of evening work for coming exams so we only met twice more, each a memorable evening, before I returned to Hayling Island. A daunting thought, but I wonder what that magnificent bust looks like nearly 50 years later! We did exchange a letter or two and then after a pause she wrote to say she was getting engaged. A year later I got one more saying she hadn't really been going to get engaged but had told me so because she thought we were getting too serious, and could we start again. Bit fickle I thought, and wrote back to say I had recently got married, and hoped she would assume I had done so on the re-bound. Back with my unit I decided it was time I began visiting our coastal batteries to make myself known, both to the Battery Commanders and their officers, as well as to the searchlight crews. I went to see the Colonel and told him I would like to go first to the Isle of Wight and visit the battery there. He approved and told me to see the Adjutant and make the necessary arrangements. My mother had moved from London to stay in Bournemouth for a time, but it was not very long before she moved back to London. Anyway I arranged to visit the battery at Bridport in Dorset next. This time I went on the 500cc Norton motorcycle which I was allowed to use, so took the opportunity to visit mother on my way.

On my return, Doris came up from Cornwall and we moved into one of the hotels that was still functioning further along the Island, on the side furthest from Portsmouth. Shortly after this, I think at the beginning of November, I was promoted to Captain and that twenty five shillings and twopence per day I had been hoping for. A month later of course the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbour. Just after that I got a letter from

Louise in Boston, from whom I had not heard for ages, to say how pleased they were that America had come into the war at last. Her family were of course friends of the Roosevelts, and I gather the young members hobnobbed together quite a lot. About this time our Regiment was running a fairly good soccer team by our own inter unit standards, and there was a move afoot to send it on a small tour to play against other MNBDO units. The Colonel was in favour and asked me to accompany the team and see that the team members behaved themselves, with the help of a good sergeant who was a member of the group of 12 that we were taking. I suggested that as the tour included a match against the searchlight Regiment at Camborne, where we would have to stay a couple of nights, I should go and visit our battery at Falmouth and check out their searchlights. That won the Colonel's approval. The S/L Regiment at Camborne was of course an anti aircraft unit. I did not know it at the time, but I would be joining them a little later on. Some of the sergeants had a mess close to the Camborne railway station, and I was invited in for a drink, which I enjoyed, and on my way back I happened to meet the wife, whose name I can't remember, of the young officer to whom I had shown the way earlier on in the war. She remembered me, and after greetings I carried her basket back to her lodgings for her. She insisted I come up to her room, and had barely got through the door when she closed it and embraced me. What could I do but reciprocate? She lost no time in stepping out of her panties and fumbling at my buttons. It must have been about now that I began to realise that some women were a little bit different to their sisters anatomically, in that some had the vaginal entry further forward than others, allowing the sex act to be performed quite easily with the partners standing and facing each other. Very difficult with those with whom it was placed further round between the legs. She was one of the first category and very soon was obviously lost in enjoyment. One very seldom ever saw her out and about, and she did not seem to have a job so I wondered if in fact she suffered from tuberculosis, which I also believe gave people a tendency to nymphomania. Anyway, the lads and I caught the evening train for Hayling Island, their soccer match having ended in a draw. On my return to the unit I settled in to what was to prove an extremely busy year. One thing was that we were told we would be going shortly to the Lofoten Islands; a marquee was put up in our area where stores like arctic clothing would be kept ready for issuing. Both the C.O. and the Quartermaster were going off on annual leave, so I was told to look after the stores when they arrived. I saw the camp commandant and arranged for a permanent guard to be put on the store tent, and the next day trucks began to arrive with bales of duffle coats, string vests, leather jerkins, and all sorts of cold weather gear. Most of this they just dumped in the marquee and drove off, giving us no chance to check anything. I talked to the Quartermaster's Colour Sergeant about it, and we agreed on no account would we sign any receipts unless the stores were checked in our presence. When the C.O. and Q.M. came back the Q.M. started to check things. His Colour Sergeant told him what had happened and he muttered away about it all being most irregular, and someone would have to pay.

Off he went to report to the Colonel. I was sent for, and also told the C.O. all about it, and that I had told the Colour Sergeant not to sign for any of what we had received without being able to check it. I had not signed for any of it myself, in fact I said "nothing has been signed on your behalf Sir". He gave a little smile and murmured, "well done". A day or so later trucks arrived to take it all away again as we were now not going to the Lofoten Islands, but would probably get tropical gear in the near future. A day or two later I was again sent for and informed that an R.A.F. balloon barrage squadron would be arriving on the Island shortly to be trained as an infantry unit. I was to be given 4 subalterns newly arrived from Thurlston, as my assistants, and any sergeants and corporals I might need, and was to get on with it. As the young officers were already on the island, I collected them, told them what was required, and we sat down and roughed out a program for four squads of would be infantry soldiers. We then got the N.C.O.s along, and with their help completed the program. I submitted it for approval, and got it, and the whole thing ran rather smoothly, and the airmen were quite pleased with themselves at the end of it. Apparently they were going overseas and would have to defend their aerodrome. The R.A.F. Regiment had not yet been formed, but I rather think this was how it began. I think the next thing that happened was that I was sent on a camouflage course at Farnham, where we were lodged in the Castle. We were told there would not be an exam at the end of the course, so I dare say some of us did not do as much work as we might have. The town was full of Canadian troops, and Hayling Island also had a large contingent of the "Regiment de Chaudier de Canada" stationed there. As far as I remember they nearly all left on the abortive raid on Dieppe, where there were heavy casualties, especially among the Canadian units who seemed to have borne the brunt of it. On completion of the course at Farnham I had to again visit Falmouth to see the result of a few suggestions I had made previously. While I was there the Battery Commander and I decided

to have an evening in Camborne, where he had never been. While having a drink in Tyacks Hotel, a well known watering hole among students of the School of Mines, I suggested we take a couple of young women along to my flat and continue the party there. I arranged for a taxi to pick us up at midnight and take us to Falmouth. Meanwhile having bought the drinks, I went and collected my old girlfriend Sheila, whose boyfriend was now away in the R.A.F., another young couple that I knew, and then my friend with the "nympho" tendencies, and we all settled down at the flat with full glasses and the radio going. I asked Sheila if she'd like to have a look around, and she said yes, so I took her to see the bedroom. We had a kiss and a long embrace for old times sake, after all she was my first love when I joined the School of Mines. She removed some clothing and we hopped into bed where we had a rather satisfactory few minutes. I did notice that someone had unlocked the restricting gates of her virginity since we had last been together. She decided to leave at the same time as the other couple, so the three of them walked off together. I told my mate from Falmouth to help himself to some more grog while I showed the girl from along the street around the flat. Once again she didn't waste much time once we reached the bedroom, but slid naked into bed where I joined her. The party finally ended when the taxi arrived, so we took the remaining girl home, and then went back to Falmouth.

When I got back to my unit Doris decided she ought to go back to mum, as she did not seem to see very much of me. So that was arranged, and a couple of weeks later I was told I had been posted to "N" battery 12th R.M. searchlight Regiment at Camborne as second in command. On arrival I found we were quartered in an old 'stately home' or mansion, a couple of miles out of the town. This was the Headquarters of the Regiment, commanded by a Lt. Col. whom we thought a little eccentric, and the Headquarters of both "N" and "O" batteries. Both batteries had their S/L 'troops' deployed as part of the air defence of mid Cornwall. Each troop consisted of 4 S/L units, and a battery had 4 troops, thus each had approximately 12 officers and over 400 marines and N.C.O.s. Just after I joined the Major commanding "N" battery decided to take his annual leave so I was left in command of a battery about which I really knew nothing. I was fortunate that our troop officers were all very good, they had all transferred from the Royal Artillery to the Royal Marines, at about the time my own contemporaries had transferred from the Royal Navy. I soon met them all and with their help, got by. Very shortly after the Major's return from leave our sites were handed to the army, and we left Cornwall to do some exercises near Aldershot. From here we were sent to Porthcawl in Wales to learn how operate the new radar searchlights. I think that before I tell you anything about those work up exercises, I had better confess to a small episode which concerned me in Plymouth.

A short time before we packed up to leave Camborne, I was told I was to go to Plymouth to attend a demonstration of the capabilities of things called 'swim barges', to assess, with several other officers, their use as a type of landing craft. We were still in 1942 and the later common landing craft of various types were not seen in England at that time. Off I went by train to Plymouth where I was met by an officer with a staff car, and taken to a hotel where I had been booked for a couple of days. My conducting officer told me that the weather was not suitable for our demonstration that day, but I would be contacted at 10 am next day and told 'what would happen when'. I also gathered I was the only Royal Marine and the junior officer of the group.

When he had left, as it was now past noon, I ambled into the bar for a couple. The place seemed fairly empty, but a rather pleasant young barmaid did wonders for the decor. We chatted on a bit, and I told her I was at a loose end until morning, and I wondered what there was to do in Plymouth. After telling me about films and things, she told me it was her afternoon off and she intended to bus out into the country a bit and go for a walk among the Devonshire hills. I said that sounded great, and could I come with her. She thought that would be lovely, so after lunch off we went. We had a pleasant afternoon and chatted of inconsequential matters. We stopped for her to pick some flowers, and she noticed me looking at her hair. She said, "yes, isn't it awful, it is full of dandruff which I can't get rid of". We talked of that for a time and then caught the bus back. She was on bar duty for a couple of hours in the evening, so I bought a couple and had some myself and went into dinner. Afterwards I looked in on the bar, but she had gone, I assumed home, not knowing that she lived 'in'. I had a couple of beers, read a bit, and went upstairs to bed. A little later I was surprised by a knock on my door. Oh blast, I thought, the blooming Navy has changed its mind again, I opened the door and the barmaid slipped in, and turned and locked the door

behind her. Hello I thought, my luck has changed again, I don't think she spoke, but just got undressed and slipped into my bed. She then said something like "good evening, I hope you're pleased to see me". I admitted that I was delighted as I got in beside her. We shall draw a veil over the next half hour or so, except to say she was an admirable partner on both occasions, after which I felt she should return to her own room.

Next day our group were collected and taken to some beach where a few vessels, that looked like cargo lighters, lay stranded like luckless whales on the sand. We were told that they could be used for carrying vehicles, which would be lowered through the hatches which ran the length of the vessel, or carry troops on benches in the holds. One of the senior officers, I think he was a Wing Commander, but don't really remember, looked at me and asked what I thought. I said "Sir, I think it stinks, it easy to load trucks and troops in a home port, but landing them on an enemy beach under fire from guns in fixed positions is a very different matter, and how do they get onto the beach. A tug can't tow them on, and if it pushes a group that are lashed together it would have very little control. Even these are all at different angles, two being beam on. Sir, it would be suicide". He said "Hm, you have made your point and I agree entirely", and strolled off to talk to the others. Anyway we were thanked for coming, and asked to submit written comments via our various Commanding Officers. I did so on return to Camborne the next day, and heard no more about it, neither did I see my friendly amorous bar maid again, though I got a letter from her while we were in Porthcawl to say she had joined the WAAF.

It was a rather cold winter, and we spent the whole month of November under canvas at Porthcawl, where I became great friends with an RAF sergeant's wife, who I met in a pub. Her husband was fighting the war somewhere else. We would meet in a pub that was frequented by officers of the recce corps, with their egg, green and egg lanyards, but my eyes were for her beautiful titian hair. We would drink and talk, and go for walks along the beach, have a kiss and a cuddle now and then, but nothing more. We all took our turn at learning how to work the new radar equipped searchlights, and finally entrained for Narborough in Leicestershire, to be equipped for going overseas. The Officer's Mess was an upstairs part of a local hotel, which was rather handy. My M.O.A. (batman) Marine Gregory, who as I mentioned, had been brought up on a fairground, was a very good darts player. I used to give him a pound a week out of my pay, as was our custom, and a few times when I was temporarily a bit short of cash, he would say "meet you in the bar about 9 PM sir, and we'll pick up a couple of quid on the dart board". We would have a few games with some of the locals for a pint of beer, win a few lose a few, but a little before 'closing' Gregory would say it was a bit slow, how about a game for a couple of quid? Then, near time, if we were not winning fairly easily, he would say " how about 3 in a bed for game?" This was fairly customary, and he'd finish on three double elevens, and collect the money. On other evenings I would stroll to a pub about a mile out in the country. The first time I went, there were two or three local girls having drinks, and I somehow got chatting with them. As the evening wore on I suggested to one, whom I rather liked, that I might walk her home. "You'll be quite safe" I said, "That's a pity, seems a bit pointless" she replied. Well I admit to knowing nothing about women, but can recognise a challenge when it hits me between the eyes. I escorted her to a lane that she turned into, where there was a gate she found comfortable to lean against, from then on we saw a lot of each other, and she turned out to be the sexually insatiable type. One or two of her friends from that pub ran her pretty close though. I think they all worked in a small clothing factory nearby. One evening when I was sitting there waiting for Jane to turn up, two of her friends came over to join me, and said that she was not feeling too well, and won't be along tonight, you know, tampax time, and she asked us to look after you. They were quite a nice pair of girls, so I bought them a drink or two, and we played a game of darts, and then the elder one said, "well it is time to leave and we have to see you part way home". I laughed and we went out together, strolling along with linked arms, until we came to the field where Jane and I usually dallied a while, and the elder girl said I suppose this is where you two stop for a cuddle? I said yes, and she turned to her friend and said, "you go and have a smoke over there Phil, I'm having first turn, after which you get a turn". "What is going on?" I asked. "Well" she said, "We promised to look after you and see that you had all you needed, so you see my panties are in my handbag and that gate is handy, though I'll have to lean forward to it because you'll not reach from in front. Don't look so shocked, women have needs too you know". A few minutes later her friend wandered over, as she strolled away, we had a long kiss and cuddle and I had to oblige once more, and then we all went home. Next evening the pub in which we were living put on a small show for our

entertainment. A scantily clad young woman came on with a pair of over inflated balloons on her chest, to catcalls from the audience, and the Compere said "It's all right she's just one of Captain Morgan,s fancy women", news gets around in villages. Two days later we on a train bound for Guroch on the Clyde where we boarded a dirty and smelly pre-first World War P.S.N. troopship, S.S. Orduna, which had recently arrived with a cargo of Italian prisoners of war, hence the state of the ship. In a couple of days we joined a troop convoy bound around the Cape of Good Hope for Egypt; at 12 knots we were probably the slowest ship in the convoy, and we were pleased to note that our escort for the first few days included an aircraft carrier with it's compliment of Swordfish aircraft. She finally left us and turned away towards the "Med".

We stopped for a couple of days in Capetown and had a run ashore before heading north and finally arriving at Port Tewfik, or Suez, where on a very cold day we disembarked, wearing tropical shorts and shirts when all the British troops already in the area were in battle dress. We boarded a train to go north to that miserable desert staging area Tahag Camp at Tel-el-Kebir.

## Chapter 9

### More of This and That

The nearest pleasant place for us to visit was the town of Ismalia on Lake Timsah, here there was a

United Services Club for British Officers, also a French club to which we could go; it was large and seemed a bit 'snooty', a smaller Greek club which was a good place in which to have a meal, and at the northern end of the lake, where the canal proper began again, was a swimming club. I think this was also French controlled. One could hire sailing boats at the United Services club. One of my jobs in the camp was to give some training to a dozen dispatch riders, actually there were 16 of them but as we only had 13 BSA motorcycles available for training I settled for 12 at a time. We had quite a lot of fun and they, and I, learned a good deal about desert riding in soft sand, something we did not see again when we were deployed on operations in Sicily. We were forbidden by our Brigade Commander to carry pillion passengers, however during training I usually had a short session with each rider having a man ride pillion. I got a note from the Brigade Major telling me to report to him. When I did so he said the Brigadier was displeased and they both wanted to know why my DRs were carrying pillion riders contrary to Brigade orders. "Sir" I said, "Brigade issued us with instructions for the deployment of searchlights to new sites. Those instructions stated that in the first instance the despatch rider would take the NCO second in command of the site to it on his motorcycle and leave him there to establish it, while he returned to HQ to guide the other members, with their light and generator, to the new position. I therefore consider it necessary that each DR should have some expertise in handling a machine carrying a pillion rider". That altered things a bit, and I suppose they looked up the order they had issued; a silly order anyway in my opinion. A new order came out to say no pillion riders except for searchlight personnel engaged in occupying new sites or carrying out training for so doing.

Not very much happened for a time, we continued to do a bit of training, and as always when there was not much doing we were sent off on route marches, to keep us all fit! The rumour was that we would probably be going to Crete shortly; so as someone from the Education Corps was running a series of evening courses in Italian I began going to them once a week, such was my trust in Service rumours. Some time, I think in early May, or late April, we were moved to a different transit camp further west and reasonably close to Alexandria. Again there was not a lot to do, so route marches, PT, and weapon training became the order of the day. We also had a bit more time off. I had never been to Alexandria, so a fellow officer and I decided to spend a day there. Neither of us had been to a well run brothel either. We were told that 'Alex' had a very high class establishment for use of officers, and as it had an excellent bar, one could sit and have drinks without taking advantage of the other amenities. It went by the name of Mary's House, and was entirely different to the many 'houses' in the Rue des Souers frequented by men from many ships. We decided to go along and have a look. On arrival we were shown to the bar



to their seats, clad in long semi-transparent evening gowns, unhampered by underclothes. While Frank and I sat at the bar enjoying a cold beer, I watched our fellow customers, for I thought most of them were probably regulars, and I noted that the routine seemed to be to catch the eye of the favoured lady in the mirror behind the bar, and then turn and look at her, in which case she would smile, give a little nod and get up and start towards the door as her new customer joined her. They then moved into the corridor, where a little further along the Madam was sitting with her cash box collecting a hundred piastres for each 15 minute session. After an hour or so I said to Frank "seems rather a waste sitting under a peach tree and not even tasting a nice ripe peach". He agreed with me, and looking along the bench I glanced at a fairly large and leggy looking blonde and gave her an 'interrogative' smile. She smiled back and we strolled through the door together, and I payed the fee to the Madam, plus a small amount for sexual protection as she had some packets on her table, went into the girl's room where she slipped out of her long dress and lay naked on the bed. As I was wearing a bush shirt and khaki shorts with shoes and long socks it did not take me long to join her for a rather pointless ten minutes. She hardly spoke and barely moved her body, just lay looking bored, which no doubt she was, and told me she came from Barcelona. I was quite glad to resume my clothing and go and have another cold bottle of Stella beer. We joined in the conversation that an American bomber crew were having, they seemed a bit upset that a 'Limey' convoy escort had opened fire on them as they flew nearly over them, a good many miles off course, and shot down one of their planes. They were busy drowning their sorrow. While we were talking I noticed a rather pretty, and petite, brunette with shapely legs and a well developed bust, come in and sit down. I told my mate that we would have to be back where our transport would collect us in an hours time, but I thought I would just try one more bite of fruit before leaving. I contacted the little brunette in the usual way, and out we went. As I paid the fee the girl crossed the passage to her room, and Madam said quietly, "you chose well Captain, that little enthusiast loves her work". As soon as the door was shut she told me she was a Cypriot, helped me out of my clothes and told me I did not need to wear any protection, she was careful to see her men were clean before accepting them, and was regularly checked by the doctor. Pushing me back on the bed she began kissing my nipples and working her hands over me. She also found time to ask if I had enjoyed the blonde with whom I had been with earlier, I said I thought she'd been about as lively as the Sphinx. I was invited to enter, and then wondered how she managed all the contortions while her arms and legs were tight around me. All things come to an end though, and offering me a small bowl with both clothe and disinfectant in it, thanked me prettily for my attention. I never of course had a chance to go back and on return to camp, felt a little embarrassed when, in the showers, someone asked how I had got so much lipstick on my chest.

Three days later we filed up the gangway of a troop ship on our way to Augusta in Sicily where we landed on D plus 3. We left the ships in LCIs (landing craft infantry) which landed us at a small wharf, from where we marched to our holding area a couple of miles out of town. As we marched through some vineyards we were warned not to kick any of the little red canisters lying about because they happened to be Italian hand grenades, and several men had lost a foot by giving them a passing kick. When we looked back at the harbour the ships of our convoy were all steaming away after taking only two hours to unload and clear the harbour. Later on when things seemed much safer, they would lie in harbour unloading for several days. We camped in one of the open grassy areas that night. There were, of course, vineyards and some peasant dwellings nearby, and as was expected, a number of marines got hold of, and sampled the very rough wine that the people sold them. Next day the C.O. and some troop officers went to look at sites that should be suitable for our searchlights in the area we had been allocated. They had first chosen a battery HQ some 8 or 9 miles away into which we would move that afternoon. However as one of the troops seemed to have had more vino than the rest, and were beginning to misbehave themselves, I had them fallen in, each in his 70lbs weight of full equipment, and told the troop sergeant, who of course had a number of junior NCOs to assist him, to march them to the new battery headquarters. We would be there ahead of his group, as we would be taken by truck in about an hours time. It seemed to work fairly well because we were rejoined late in the afternoon by a somewhat chastened and weary troop. By this time of course the battery commander was back with us and I had reported to him, and told him what action I had taken. We soon settled in, and our lights were deployed in a large semi circle to protect the port and surrounding hinterland from air attack.

As it was mid summer I had my camp bed erected on the flat roof of battery HQ with a bren gun on a tripod in easy reach. Marine Gregory arranged his sleeping quarters at the other end of the roof where our second bren was sited. Thus we were both in a good position to greet the flight of FW 190 fighter bombers, who having dropped their bombs over the harbour, flew almost straight over our battery HQ at exactly 0630 every morning. I like to think some of them carried some bren gun rounds with them, for after a week or so they gave us a wider berth. The Italians had also left a 20mm AA gun in an emplacement close to the building, with a fair amount of ammunition, so of course we used that too. One morning I had a mug full of cocoa shot out of my hand and I suffered a small cut from broken china. I never found out how it happened, but it was my only war wound. I do remember one day being made very ill for a time by the weekly dose of mepacrine, and as I had a temperature of 103 degrees F, they sent me to the nearest field hospital at Siracuse. Unfortunately we arrived as the Canadian staff moved out, and about half an hour before the new English staff moved in to take over, so that I and some other new patients lay out in the sun filled courtyard for a while. The matron who saw us there when she arrived was furious, and immediately had us moved inside.

Anyway nobody believed I had been made ill by mepacrine, and thought it may be malaria. A day or so later we had more mepacrine and I was again ill for a couple of hours, but I was discharged a day later, and have not taken the beastly stuff since. A doctor to whom I spoke about it later, and told that during my life in East Africa I had taken quinine regularly, thought that may have had some bearing on it. When I returned to duty I found that a unit of the London Scottish Regiment R.A. had sited a 3.7mm gun close to us, they were very good. The first night that our battery went into action I put 3 lights straight on an aircraft and the LS put a box barrage right around it. The target hastily fired a recognition signal and vanished. It was a Beaufighter far from where he should have been, for ours was a GDA (gun defended area) and out of bounds to our night fighters. Another time our lights exposed their beams on a Junkers 87 and held him dazzled until he flew into a cliff. On the whole, we had a fairly usual and boring few months of war. One or two little incidents come to mind and may be worth mentioning; for instance when our troops were to cross out of Sicily onto the Italian mainland. We sent a troop with 4 lights to Messina, where they had to set up so that their lights stayed on a fixed bearing, on each side of the 'swept' channel across the straits, of course the troop carrying vessels went to and fro between the two light beams. The usual liberty run for troops in our area was to Catania, once that town had been cleared of Germans, and we sent a truck load about once a week. I went along on two occasions, but found it rather boring. As winter approached, preceded by an autumn of heavy and frequent rain we moved off our roof top into more sheltered quarters, and a little after Christmas with the war moving up the Italian mainland, our batteries were no longer needed in Sicily, so they were brought in from their sites ready for shipping elsewhere. We all moved in to Augusta, or close to it, and rumours flew about where we would go next, meantime we enjoyed some pleasant entertainments. Gracie Fields came and sang to us one evening, a couple of groups put on some fairly good amateur theatricals, and our own Major General gave us a fairly scathing speech, but ended up by telling us we were going back to UK, and a few days later we were aboard the troop ship M.V. Orion in a convoy bound for the Clyde.

After a fairly uneventful voyage we steamed up the Firth to Greenock where we disembarked. Among my belongings was a good Baretta rifle that I had 'won', and I was not too sure about getting it ashore so I slung it over my shoulder and went down the gangway with the rest, and no one even asked about it. We were taken to a small place near Paisley, called Johnstone, where we were installed in an empty army camp to await our fate. Leave was given to all ranks in turn, and others could go into Paisley when off duty. I did manage to find myself a rather pleasant Scots Lassie for a little dalliance. She was one of those nice young women who not only had a job, which meant that any young man who might have had it was now free to go and fight for his country, but also felt she should do her bit towards keeping up the morals of the men in the forces. She had the insight to know that she could do this best on her back, having made them think they had striven long and hard for their victory. That much of her philosophy she confided to me as we lay contemplating the stars one evening, relaxing on my waterproof cape. She was not averse to a glass or two before going for a moonlight stroll.

## Back to Square two and a change of tempo

Our General and his staff soon visited with the news of our futures. As far as officers were concerned they had brought a list of postings; my name was among those chosen to go to 48 Royal Marine Commando. As we entertained the VIPs in the Mess, one of the Colonels asked me how I liked my new posting. "I think it is great, Sir" I said, "only I am a little surprised that my seagoing training and experience is not being used, with so much landing craft training going on". I then had to tell him all about my time at sea and as a Worcester cadet. He told me not to mention it yet, but he thought my posting might very well be changed after he had a chance to confer with the General.

In any case the eyesight test I had to take next day indicated to the M.O. that I was not up to the high standard required in the newly formed 48<sup>th</sup> Commando. After a short delay I was dispatched once more to Hayling Island, this time to Northney I. Landing Craft training centre to learn a new 'trade'. Here I met a few old friends, including a man who had been a school master on H.M.S. Conway and then a searchlight technician in 12 RM Searchlight Regiment. There we had tried for months to get him sent for a commission but he was too good at his job so the C.I would not recommend him. He relented eventually and the man was now a lieutenant RM.

In addition to some RM officers I knew, we had a few South African officers who had been in their 1<sup>st</sup> Division, which was now disbanded and spread among British units. We were divided into groups about 20 strong for instruction. The first of which was a daily pre-breakfast signals exercise in which we paired off, one to read, the other to write down messages in both semaphore and morse code. After a week or so of lectures and learning landing craft signals and manoeuvres, we were transported by truck to Northney II where some LCAs (landing craft assault) were kept moored on Trots.

Here we formed crews and learned both craft and group handling under RN officers. This became a daily expedition for a week or two, but generally speaking our evenings were free. I remember on one of them going to a Sergeants dance at a recreation hall about a mile from our base to which a coach load of W.A.A.F. girls had been brought from the Coastal Command air base at Thorney Island, among them a tall and striking brunette. I managed to get a dance with her, during which she told me that she had lost her husband, a squadron leader I think, a year previously. I suppose the dancing and the conversation had stirred her a little, for she was quite happy to come outside for a breath of fresh air and moved willingly into my arms to be hugged and kissed. Nor did she complain when my hand strayed beneath her french knickers, but merely moved her legs to give more access. So I suggested we find somewhere more comfortable, but she looked at her watch and was startled to see that their bus left in two minutes, "but I could meet you tomorrow and get an S.O.P." I had no idea what an S.O.P. was, and did not like to ask, so said I was afraid I was Duty Officer the following day and night, and so she departed and went out of my life. How different things might have been if she had not. First thing I did after we had waved goodbye to their coach was to ask a friend what an S.O.P. was. He looked at me pityingly when I told him why I wished to know, and said, "it is a sleeping out pass", and started to laugh his silly head off.

Next day I was invited for drinks by a major and his wife who were not of our unit, but who mixed with us. He was something to do with security I think, and she was arty and theatrical. Anyway there was a pleasant young woman there on her own whom I said I would escort home after the party. I did so, and was invited in for a drink. I gathered that she had been married but now lived alone and had recently had an operation. The conversation developed and wandered, not unusually, into the realms of sex. Later she said yes, she would like to have an experience of it with me, but because of her operation, it must not be lying down. Strange? Yes but it would not be the first time I had held a girl on my lap with her arms around my neck. Afterwards I began to wonder a bit about this operation, which in turn led to a waning of enthusiasm.

She lived in a house just inside the entrance to a housing estate which was to make things a little awkward later on, because it was almost opposite the house of a lady who, I say this not from conceit, but fact, already had me targeted for a delightful period of seduction. It came about I understand in this way. You

may remember when I was responsible for training an R.A.F. balloon barrage group as infantry, I was given various officers and NCOs to assist me. One of the sergeant instructors was her husband, and she had mentioned, or asked about me in conversation one day. It appears that he had said, "Oh yea, he is a pretty good officer, but a bastard for the women. Don't you ever let me catch you with him or I'll break your neck", or words to that effect. She used to work, by the way, at the N.A.A.F.I. canteen on the island, and just as a matter of passing interest, rode a bicycle with its saddle tipped so far back as to almost vertical. One of her workmates said to one day, "no wonder you don't worry that your husband is away so much, riding a saddle like that".

To return to the point though, my South African friend and I were having a drink one evening in a pub near the housing estate, when this young woman and her friend and neighbour came in for a drink. They kept glancing at us, and she moved closer and said, "aren't you Captain Morgan who was on the island here about 18 months ago?" I admitted it, and she said she had heard I was back, and introduced her girlfriend, and I introduced Jack G all around. After chatting for a time she, and I will call her Sally, invited us to dinner the following evening at her house, saying that she and her girlfriend would be our hostesses. We of course accepted with pleasure. Next evening, having sewn our newly issued combined operations badges onto our uniforms, we presented ourselves punctually at the door, were welcomed and after a drink sat down to a very pleasant dinner. After coffee Jack and the other girl excused themselves and went over to her house. Sally disappeared and I sat there for a while wondering when she would return. Next moment she called out, "Hugh, I am waiting for you." "Where are you?" I said. "Here in bed of course, do hurry up". I found my way through to discover her not in bed, but lying nude on top of it. She was a good lover, and after one or two encores, we had a short sleep, and after being asked how soon I could be there in the evening I returned to camp for a shower and work. The girl across the road saw me leave. I am afraid I made a habit of regular overnight visits for the next week or so, then our group were told we would be moving to a new landing craft training base at Burnham-on-Crouch in Essex.

On arrival we discovered that we were to be accommodated in newly erected wooden huts in the grounds of what seemed to be an old, large and pleasant house called, I think, Creeksea Manor, about two miles out of the town. Obviously a great many Royal Marines were to be trained as landing craft personnel, mainly one supposed for the forthcoming invasion of Europe, and later for the Far East theatre. Our group of young officers was the first to be accommodated in this new training camp. The staff, consisting of a Lt. Colonel R.M. and his adjutant and a QM and one or two others had offices by the main house, where they were accommodated. Our landing craft training was to be carried out from what was now H.M.S. St. Mathew, but was previously the Royal Burnham Yacht Club, which had also been enlarged and renovated. The Mess room could seat 300, and our meals were taken there. The "Ship" was commanded by a Captain R.N. who had a number of Naval Officers on his staff. I, and later one or two other R.M. Officers, were to take over from the navy as Landing Craft Instructors. In the meantime we had to complete our ten week course. After a little time to familiarise ourselves with LCMS, LCAs, LCVPs and various others we started to do night exercises in groups of LCAs, we had trained R.M. "stokers" to run the engines of these craft, and there were some Naval Engineer Officers, known as "plumbers", and their staff to do repairs and maintenance. Anyway on our second night exercise we were returning down river on a fast ebb tide, with a section of six craft and the Sub. Lt. R.N. Instructor, ahead of the section of six that I was leading. We dropped back a bit as I thought the leaders were too far to starboard, then I saw the leading craft plough into a brand new M.T.B. that was secured to a jetty, where she was to have her engines installed. The other five all ran into the leader. By this time I had my section all circling in midstream, so I went close in, threw tow ropes to one of the outer craft and towed it clear and got some of my other craft to escort it home. I then returned for the next one, and so on, until all were clear, but there seemed to be a certain amount of damage to the hull of the M.T.B. The R.N. Officer said he thought he might now be believed when he told the authorities that he was "night blind". In any event the night's activities did my future no harm. In a couple days time I was told to take my "Group" to Tilbury and collect a number of craft that were waiting for us there and bring them round by sea and up the Crouch to Burnham. This we achieved without too much trouble, except that an old Mark 1 LCM that was part of the group began to take on water off Foulness Island. I had a craft lashed on each side of it, and managed to get it halfway up the Crouch to Burnham before we had to beach it, but we did so in a spot where the "plumbers" could come and pump it out and bring it on up the river. One more successful operation.

There were one or two sailing dinghies available for recreation for those so inclined. I took one out one evening and it seemed a reasonable boat, so I had a good short sail and returned it to its mooring. Next day I asked one of the WRNS if she would like to come for a sail with me. She said she had never been sailing, so I suggested she try it. All went well for a while and the breeze freshened somewhat but as I started to head back the rudder broke. I picked up one of the sculls and using it as a steering oar returned to our mooring, which I picked up quite neatly with the help of my passenger. The duty motor boat came and collected us, and I took the broken rudder with me and handed it over to the Duty Officer.

Later on the Adjutant, who was a long service R.M. Officer, suggested I order myself a navy blue battle dress uniform, as worn by the R>M> staff. I also got myself a set of R.M. blues for such things as Church Parades, Guest nights etc. I was then told that I was appointed to the staff as the Instructor for craft work for all the forthcoming Officers classes. I moved into my new cabin in what used to be the Yacht Club, and was well looked after by the WRNS of whom there was a good staff of stewards, cooks, drivers, and a little later, boats" crews. My days were spent more or less between Creeksea, where most of the classroom instruction was done, and Burnham where all the craft work was done on the river. Several things happened about this time, first I got a message from my South African friend, to say the husband of the girl in Hayling Island had come home, learned all about our goings on, presumably from the lady opposite, given his wife a good hiding, and was now hoping to find me. Obviously he didn't try too hard.

## Chapter 11

### **"Quit India Sahib - Backsheesh please"**

Having arrived at my new base, I met the colonel who told me he was carrying out an inspection of the flotillas under his command. As I was newly arrived, and was to take command of No.420 LCA Training Flotilla, he would give me two weeks to settle in, and get them up to date before inspecting them. I also found that his second in command was a major who had been in command of "O" searchlight battery at Camborne in Cornwall, and then in Sicily.

He had been a barrister practicing in, I think Bristol, before the war, and he was also a keen yachtsman. The adjutant was an ex school master from one of the better west country public schools. One of the lieutenants had helped me to train the balloon barrage unit as infantry men on Hayling Island, a very keen and good, rugby player from Wales, whom I met again in South Australia, where he was once again a schoolmaster at one of the prestigious schools.

I seemed to settle in fairly well, and found the lads in my flotilla quite a good bunch, and prepared to be co-operative. I also had a pleasant and able 'plumber' who was an Engineer Lieutenant RNVR, who, with one of his colleagues, was an invaluable part of my sailing cutter's racing crew later on when the monsoon was over.

In fact we won every race in which we took part, and collected several cups. In those days we used to start work early, with a morning parade at 0700, and work a long forenoon until lunch at 1300, after which there was a recreational afternoon for all non duty personnel. Having worked my flotilla up to a reasonable degree of efficiency, and accepted as such by the colonel, I began to take a little more part in the recreational facilities. I would go into Bombay once in a while with one of my fellow flotilla commanders for a long evening, which is how I managed to run into my friend Jock who had been with me on the Worcester, and then sailed with me to South Australia and back in 'Abraham Rydberg'. He was now navigating officer of a R.I.N. sloop, and invited me to lunch the following Sunday, but more of that later on. I also started doing some sailing, both in a cutter, and sometimes in a Montagu Whaler that was available. On some 'off' days a couple of the young 'subbies' would go and collect a Wren or two from the 'Wrennery' in Bombay and bring them back for a sail. On these occasions, Sundays, I would often go and collect a cutter from the creek where they were moored, and sail it back single handed to the beach by the camp, where they would take it over. They got into trouble later, for letting the girls they brought

flaunt themselves in their bikinis while still ashore in the camp. This was unfair on the sex starved marines. Also one or two of my fellow officers who saw me sailing a cutter back on my own thought it looked simple, and tried it themselves and got into strife several times, and we had to either pull them off the mud, or help in some other way. I have to admit to a small feeling of glee when a notice was put on the mess notice board to the effect that no officers, with the exception of Captain Morgan, were to sail any of the cutters, or the whaler single handed. It was signed by the colonel.



HMS Marvel - Minesweeper

A month or so after joining H.M.S. Marvel I was told to take three landing craft, and their crews round to the R.I.N training base which was on one of the tidal creeks between Bombay and Kalyan to the north.

We could reach it by using these creeks. On arrival we were welcomed by the English training commander.

My Royal Marines were shown their quarters, then I was made a member of the Wardroom, and introduced to the various officers, about half of whom were British, the rest being Indian and Pakistani. Our job was to survey the various creeks in the area, as far inland as Kalyan, and down towards the sea. The aim was to find places suitable for training troops in disembarkation techniques

From landing craft in mangrove and similar swampy areas. It was usually necessary, in these areas, to roll out special mats from the ramps, so that troops could run up them to firm ground without sinking, sometimes waist deep, in mud.

There was a fair distance to cover all told, and of course I had to make notes about each area that I thought might be useful. I usually took two craft out each day, so that if the leader got into difficulties the other could tow it back to safety. Some of the little creeks were very narrow with fairly high banks, so turning round was often difficult. In this case the follow up boat stayed well back, so that it had room to turn and could then come closer, and tow us off stern first. We managed to make it work quite well. Normally we went out after Divisions at 0800, took some sandwiches and drinking water with us, and returned in time to 'secure' (knock off) at 1600. I remember coming in one afternoon to find the Sikh lieutenant in the next cabin to mine looking a bit upset. He asked me to check my belongings in case anything had been stolen. He said, "that damn servant of mine has run away, taking my hunting rifle, my ready money, and some clothing". On checking my trunk I found that the gold watch I had won on the Worcester was missing, together with some bits of jewelry I had bought to take back top England. He added these items to a list he had made, and took it to the local police. Fortunately he came over to me a couple of days later, saying, "salaam, and good morning Captain, I am pleased to tell you police have thoroughly caught that bloody fellow, and regained all our stolen property. You will be called to Magistrate's Court to regain your own things". I asked how it had been managed, and was told that it seemed the thief had caught a train going north from Bombay, and at one of the stops he had got a cup of tea. On the way back to his carriage he looked around and saw a pair of police constables following him. He began to walk faster and they did the same, so he started to run. They then stopped him and asked why he was running. "Because you were chasing me" he said. They then accompanied him to his seat and made him open his baggage, in which they found, not only a stolen sporting rifle, but a good deal of other stolen goods, so they took him off to jail where they had little trouble finding out from where he had recently come. I was to attend the Magistrate's Court in a small local town, where I think the 'Beak' was rather pleased, and perhaps surprised, to be addressed and treated with proper respect by a British officer.

Having gone through all the usual formalities of who and what I was, he asked me whether I could identify any of the things I had claimed were stolen. I told him my gold watch had my full name inscribed on the inside back cover, as well as the fact it had been awarded to me by P. & O. as well as why, and the date. Well, he said that seemed very conclusive, and it would be returned to me in a day or so. I said I could only identify the jewelry by sight if it matched the description I had given earlier. I thought perhaps the arresting constables might be given it as a reward for being so alert. We parted on friendly terms, and my watch was returned to me by a constable the next day.

a week's time. We had quite a good couple of exercises, and as they were done during spring tides some of the landings were a bit 'hairy', which rather pleased the G.R. colonel, who was present most of the time. The following week I took our landing craft back to H.M.S. Marve. I must confess that I forgot all about having to write a report for my colonel on the period I had been away, until one day a couple of weeks later he said to me, "I have not received your report yet, when can I expect it?" "Oh, I am sorry sir" I said, "I have it all roughed out, but my corporal clerk has been that busy typing up the various administrative details which could not be properly done while I was away that I have not yet given it to him to type. I shall do so at once." I spent some long hours getting it all ready, and having done so, and submitted it, the Japanese decided that what with atom bombs and so on, they had enough. Meantime my crew pulled our cutter up on the beach, and we gave the hull a good clean and scrape, and repainted her ready for racing.

First the Admiral from Bombay came up, and we loaned him one of our cutters. He brought his own crew, and raced his boat very well, to come second; thanks to my crew we beat him by ten minutes. I sometimes wonder if that is why my clearance to get a passage back to UK for demobilisation came through so quickly. But first one more big sailing race.

There was another R.M. training and experimental base about ten miles down the coast to the south of us. Most of their craft were amphibious types, and these included a number of track laying armoured vehicles. Like us they had a few recreational sailing cutters etc., though they were reasonably close to us by sea, the road journey was much longer. We saw very little of them, though of course our C.O. used to visit and liaise with them. One day they invited us to bring some cutters over and race with them on a sort of open regatta day. Nothing loath we took our 3 cutters and I think three LCAs as safety boats, and headed down the coast to their base. We arrived in reasonable time for the scheduled time of the start, but too late to go ashore before the race. They also had three cutters entered and we all jockeyed for position behind the start line waiting for the gun. The first mark, which had to be rounded was a buoy about 2 miles north and a mile or so to seaward. When the gun went, all the other cutters headed straight towards the distant buoy but I headed due north as close in shore as I could, and I noticed the cutter skippered by our adjutant, left the others and began to follow me. Although we had not sailed in this area, I always took the time to study the chart before a race, and take note of the currents at different states of the tide. This told me there was a strong current setting to the south in the area where the marker buoy was, which meant that close to the shore there was probably a northerly swirl, or at least no current to speak of. We were doing short tacks close to land, with the adjutant, and his crew hanging close astern of us. We could see the rest of the fleet, with a fresh wind, heading still for the marker, but well south of it, and fighting a north wind to get up to it. We were not moving quickly, but were forging slowly northward. The adjutant tacked fairly close astern of us, and it seemed to him the other boats were doing much better, so he shouted, "you are wrong this time Hugh; I'm going after the others," and off he went. When I thought we were far enough north of the marker I headed in it's direction, but steering well to the north of it. The current carried us down towards it and we rounded it neatly with a good boat's length to spare, and headed down wind for the last mark close to the finishing line. In fact we rounded the northern mark exactly an hour before the next boat round it. We soon rounded the final mark and crossed the finishing line. Luffed and saluted a 'thank you' to our hosts, and I signaled that we must go home and 'mind the shop', told my LCA to follow, and headed home the winners by 65 minutes.

It was not long before we received an order saying that the following personnel were to be released from duty and given passages back to the UK for release from the Services. There followed a long list which included me. Commanding Officers were asked to ensure that all personnel included on the list were given as much help as possible to ensure their early return to their UK headquarters.

My colonel suggested I go to Bombay and see the troop transport officers and see if I could get myself as a early booking as possible.

I was informed that my name was down tentatively for a passage on one of the P. & O. 'Strath' ships due to sail from Bombay in about a month, however the City of London would be sailing in three days, but she was fully booked. The officer I spoke to said I could go down to the ship in the docks if I wished, just

in case they had a spare bunk somewhere. Off I went, and on going aboard sought out the Purser. He confirmed that the ship was completely full, but seemed sympathetic. I said that was a pity, as I had come intending to bet him a bottle of whisky that he'd be unable to find a berth for me. He thought about things for a while, and said he might be able to fix up a passage for an officer who would be willing to help out on the staff of the O.C. troops. Every troopship carried a small and permanent staff to control the troops being transported on behalf of the ship's captain. The O.C. troops was usually a colonel who had retired, and come back to help out. I said, "please tell me more". The Purser then told me that at present they had no one to fill the role of A.P.M. (Assistant Provost Marshall), in other words, ship's policeman. I asked whether there any Royal Marines in the homeward bound draft. "Yes," he said, "about 25, including some sergeants and corporals". "Right" I said, "if I can have them as policemen to patrol the ship and see that their fellow passengers behave themselves, I'll do it". He asked me to wait a few minutes, and went to see the O.C. troops. On his return, he said my suggestion had been welcomed. I could have the third engineer's cabin which was empty, and could I join tomorrow? I hurried back to H.M.S. Marvel, said my good-byes and joined the ship next day, the only 'passenger' on board with a cabin to myself. I sent for the three R.M. sergeants and told them we had been asked to act as ship's police during the voyage home, about which they seemed quite happy. I asked them to form three watches with the junior N.C.O.s and marines available, and with each of them in charge of a watch. I had already drawn the necessary arm bands for my men to wear, and I am glad to say the thing worked very well, and our marines at least did not suffer greatly from boredom on the voyage. I warned them to be very fair and not over zealous, as all the troops on board were going home for release from the services, and we had no serious bother.



ELLERMAN'S CITY LINE S.S. 'CITY OF LONDON'

Ellerman Lines - City of London

The City of London was a beautiful old ship, but very slow, her cruising speed was about 8 knots. She was built in 1908 for Ellerman's Liverpool to Calcutta run I think, had had excellent one class passenger accommodation, and still had a beautiful panelled dining saloon, marred by poor catering, and a very indifferent chef. We sprung a plate on the water line in rough weather in the 'Med' and were unable to enter Gibraltar because of bad weather so were sent round to Casablanca for repairs. Once there we were told the repair should be completed in 24 hours, and it was decided that shore leave would be granted from about 10.30 a.m. until, I think, 8.00 that evening. I sent for my

group of Royal Marines and told them that apart from a few volunteers who I would like to remain on board, the remainder could go ashore until 6.00 p.m., when I wanted them all back without exception as they would probably have to go ashore on duty after that to round up stragglers. As a matter of fact they were all back a little early; we had experienced a few minor incidents with an officer or two returning from shore being attacked by Moors who lurked near the dock gate, hoping to attack and rob people coming back to the ship. They obviously realised that the officers would be carrying more cash than the other ranks, and it seemed the Moors were prepared, and able, to have a go at anybody. This was confirmed by the American Military Police who told us it was foolish to go about ashore in groups of less than three. At about 7.00 p.m., after an exchange of phone messages between the staff of our O.C. troops and the American Military Police, some jeeps turned up, and it was suggested our ship's police join the M.P.s on a tour of the town, to begin rounding up any of our people who looked like being late back. The M.P.s, who were armed with large revolvers and truncheons, thought it a bit of a joke when my marines came to join them wearing white web belts and white gaiters with their uniforms and police armbands, but no weapons. However they took two in each of their jeeps and went off on a round of the cheaper cafes, brothels etc. Each group also had someone from the Gendarmerie with them, which seemed fairly diplomatic. Our "Royal" found it an educational and interesting experience, which lost nothing in the telling, but I won't bore my readers with it.

We sailed from Casablanca around midnight I think, and soon arrived back in England, and I went first to the R.M. barracks at Chatham as directed. On reporting to the Brigade Major, he told me first that the R.M. office in London had demoted me to lieutenant, which they should not have done, as I had been sent home for release as a Captain. However, he went on, you have ten days leave to come first so keep your present pips up until you return from that. I went on leave in the morning, and first went up to London and collected Marj, my Wren, who had recently been released from the navy, and we booked in for a night or two at the Strand Palace hotel. I had bought a bottle of orange Curacao in Casablanca, so we

groups also having their tea. I suppose it was twenty past four when the room suddenly became quiet, as often happens at twenty minutes past the hour, when a young woman who was talking to friends at a nearby table said quite loudly, "but they only wanted mistresses". I thought it amusing amid the silence and started to laugh, and all of a sudden a number of people joined in. Just one of those things.

We went upstairs a little later to get ready to go out for the evening and found the maid getting our room ready. She was very Irish, and told us she would be off for the weekend and would be catching the early flight, known as the milk run, home to Dublin at about six in the morning. We found later that both the maid and my bottle of orange Curacao must have caught the same plane, I only hope she enjoyed it.

My mother was now living in Gloucester Road, South Kensington, where she had quite a nice room, so of course I spent some time with her. I think I went down to Cornwall for a couple of days, mainly to arrange with the School of Mines to return there for the last term of the year. I wanted to repeat the last term of the first year to get back into the swing of things before starting my second year in September. I didn't bother to tell Doris that I was back, as news gets about fast enough in Camborne. I was soon back at the R.M. barracks at Chatham, and the Brigade Major asked me to take over the duties of B company commander for a time, albeit as a lieutenant, and one of my first duties was to take command of the Church Parade on Sunday. One of the people I ran into in the mess was a friend of mine who had helped me as one of the training officers on Hayling Island in 1942. He had later lost a leg in the disastrous raid in which a number of marines were landed from a destroyer somewhere near Tobruk, and he was now ADC to the General. A day or two later he told me he had mentioned my 'demotion' to the General, who said that I should submit a request to see him on the matter. I wrote out my request, appended a summary of my reasons for it, and submitted it via the Brigade Major, one of whose jobs was dealing with officers and their problems. I presume that on receiving my request the General must have got onto somebody in the Royal Marine office in London, because he didn't send for me; but my demotion back to lieutenant was rescinded in R.M. Orders a day or so later. Having resumed my rank of Captain, I continued as a company commander. I discussed the matter with my Company Sergeant Major, who was a regular soldier, and he told me the bulk of the men at present in the company were there awaiting release, and that once we had taken 'Orderly room' at 9.00a.m., and deal with any defaulters and routine matters, there was little or nothing for me to do until next day. I had to wait for nearly two months for the official day of my release ( or demob:), so apart from the one day a week when I was duty CO, I used to catch the mid-morning train to London and meet Marj. Later on I had to go through all the pre-release rigmarole of Medical and Dental inspections etc. so that we could be pronounced 'fit' on discharge, and therefore unable to claim a disability pension later on. After being discharged Marj and I went and stayed at Egham in Surrey for a few days, where we bought a good second hand caravan in which we would live for the next couple of years. We decided for a start we would have it towed to Pentewan, near Mevagissey in Cornwall, where there was a good caravan park, and from where we could look around for a place to settle not too far from Camborne. Petrol was still rationed in England, but one morning the chap who had agreed to tow us to Cornwall, turned up in his 'A' model Ford, fitted with a producer gas, wood burning power plant, that he had built himself, and off we went. We would stop every now and then when he spotted some dead wood near the road to feed his power unit; the car by the way was also fitted with a truck gear box. It was a long and tedious drive to St Austel, and then along the narrow country road to Pentewan, but we arrived at last, installed ourselves on a site and squared up with our towing man, who went off happily back towards London.

In a few days we had made friends with some other people, notably a caravanning couple who told us they were going to move to Mullion Cove, 60 to 70 kms further to the west, and on the north west edge of the Lizard. They thought we would like it there too, and offered to tow our van down there after moving their own. So it was arranged, and they came back for us next day. We arranged for a site close to the fence of a field on a farmer's property, where there was a fresh water tap, and where we lived for about a year for a shilling a day rent.

Having walked up the hill to the village of Mullion, and found that one of the two pubs was good, and the shops could supply our needs, I told Marj I would need to borrow the 40 pounds she had been given by the navy as her service gratuity, so that I could buy a small 150cc Royal Enfield two stroke motor cycle.

This I would use to go to and from Camborne School of Mines daily, about 25 miles by road. The machine served me well until I came off it rather hard about two miles from our caravan after spending too long in one of the Camborne pubs. I spent a night in Helston hospital that time and when I came home sold the bike and bought a second hand car, a Standard ten sedan.

For the summer of 1946 I attended the various first year lectures at the school, and I think that prepared me reasonably well to embark on the second year course which would begin in the September term. This was traditionally a year where the main emphasis was on mine surveying.

The start of the school year in September saw the usual gathering of new students at Camborne, as well as those due to start either their second or third year. This time though, there was a large smattering of those of us who had been away to the war, most of whom were due to begin their second year of studies. There were also a couple who had come back to do their third year, notably 'Pat' whom I mentioned earlier as having gone from the University Air Squadron into operational Hurricanes, and then Beaufighters. Fortunately for him his burn scars hardly showed. The ex-servicemen for my year contained a couple from the R.C.A.F., one from the R.A.F., one or two from the R.E.s, at least one from the R.N.V.R. and myself from the R.M.s. We were asked to form ourselves into groups of four so that we could work together in such things as practical surveying and any practical mining we may have to do. Apparently our main task during the year would be to survey King Edward Mine, and each produce a complete plan of it and all its underground workings. Additionally of course we would be taking subjects like geology, mineralogy, chemistry, mathematics, mechanical and electrical engineering on days that we were not busy surveying the mine.

The winter of 1946/47 was bitterly cold in Cornwall, with a good deal of snow piled up in many places, but our caravan stayed warm and dry, which was just as well as our first baby boy had been born in Redruth hospital in mid October. Early in the new year we had a new neighbour. A woman, who turned out to be an R.A.F. widow, moved her caravan into the field about 30 yards down hill from us. I naturally said good morning to her when we met, and we had a short conversation now and then, about the weather and shops etc. One day she asked me to give her a lift to the village, as she had some shopping to bring back, so I readily agreed. She seemed to move over pretty close to my driving seat, so I asked her whether she would like to call at a pub about 2 miles beyond Mullion for a drink. She thought it a good idea, but we did not stay long, and on the way back she turned out to be a very hungry widow, probably about 40, and as she had practically climbed onto my lap I decided to pull up by the roadside, so she could have a kiss and a cuddle before we went on to her caravan. I left my car at the bottom of the hill and helped carry her shopping up to the van, where I was invited in, and watched her slip into something more comfortable, her bed, where I was able to help satisfy her hunger.

It was soon evident that I was expected to call frequently to help out, in spite of having a wife in a delicate state in our own caravan nearby. A solution occurred to me on my way to Camborne one morning, and I decided to invite the 'Merry Widow' to come with me to a school of mines rugby match on Saturday, where I would introduce one of my ex-service friends, who was fancy free, to her. The scheme worked well and he saw her home, and I was glad to see his Triumph sports car parked by her van on many a night after that.

Early that summer I traded my Standard ten for a Ford V8 station sedan, and took out a private hire car license for it. During the school long holiday, instead of working in a mine, I got permission to do my practical work in a local garage, and at the same time let it be known on the local grape-vine that I was prepared to have my car hired, with me as chauffeur, when required. One of my first trips was to take the wife of an army officer to visit some relative of hers at some place on the other side of Falmouth, that went off quite well, but ended with her getting rather cosy on the way back, which developed into a brief sexual interlude at the last minute, so I only charged her half fare. I became very surprised by the number of passengers who offered me sexual favours instead of cash for their fares; married ladies of course. I remember one occasion when I had been engaged to collect two fairly young women from a dance at midnight, and bring them back to our village. I heard one tell her friend she had run out of money "but I expect there's a better way I can pay". "Perhaps we both can " replied the other. She then turned to me

and said, "can you drive us down by the sand dunes before we go home?" "Certainly", I replied, and having pulled up asked who was paying. "I'll pay first if you'll come with me", said one of them getting out and walking towards some sand dunes. I followed, realising she must have done this before as she made herself comfortable on the grass. I did my duty, which was a pleasure, and it seems met with the lady's approval, and escorted her back to the car. The other girl then asked if she could come and pay off her debt, "certainly" I replied, and we strolled off a little way for a repeat performance. On regaining the car one of them asked, "well which one of us do you think was best?" Thinking it was time for a little harmless diplomacy I said, "I don't think either of you could improve on perfection", and with those words of comfort, drove them home. A little before my final year at the school was to start, we moved our caravan close to the little village of Portreath, which I mentioned earlier, and arranged for a campsite in a farmer's paddock at the top of a long hill that led down to the village from the Camborne side. Being only three miles or so from the school I thought I would cycle to my lectures when the weather was reasonable, but I also bought a little Standard 8 car. It had belonged to an R.A.F. fitter who had fitted a lubricating arrangement where all the grease points could be served from a central point. It was also very reliable and very economical. At this new caravan site I intended to spend a good many evenings at home working for my final exams. Alas the farmer had spent a number of years in Australia, working for Dalgety's on stock farms, and had a liking for grog in convivial company. He would turn up at our gate in his 1925 green Sunbeam open tourer, toot the horn and shout "come on Hughie, time to go down to the pub for a wet". I've always been easily led into something I like doing. I eventually passed my final exams, more by luck than from endeavour, and was granted the Associateship of the School of Metalliferous Mining, or to be accurate of Camborne School of Mines. That came of course at the end of my third year which I began in September 1947. At about this time I was visited in Camborne by Doris' solicitor to arrange a divorce. He was after some evidence of adultery, though I could have divorced her on the same grounds, so I took him out to the caravan and introduced him to Marj, our one and a half year old son, and his seven month old baby sister. He assured me that he now had all he required, and I took him back to Camborne. He also told me that his firm could represent me if I so wished. The divorce went through the court without trouble, and six months later the decree was made absolute.

About a month later I met Doris' elder sister, who was having a drink in a Camborne pub with a friend, and she told me that her sister, for whom she didn't seem to care greatly, had just got married again. Her new husband had apparently only spent one night with her, and she had not seen him since. I hastily contacted my solicitor and told him what I had heard. He sent me an official letter in a week or so to say that they had checked my information, which proved correct, and the Court had agreed that I was no longer required to pay alimony. He also enclosed his bill which I was happy to pay.

Early in my third year at the school, I received a letter from my father, who had returned to East Africa some time before, saying that he had been informed that the ex German owned coconut plantations on Mafia Island, roughly 90 miles south of Zanzibar, were to be sold cheaply, preferably to ex-servicemen who were interested and able to work them successfully. He suggested that both Dean and I should jointly apply with him for one of them, and that one of us might help him to work the place. He was now just over seventy. I wrote to say that I was interested, both in helping to buy the place, and in working it, but that I must first complete my course at Camborne and pass the final exam for my ACSM in June.

Meantime Marj and I borrowed a friend's MG for our wedding, having previously arranged for a baby-sitter for the afternoon. She thought going to a coconut 'Shamba' on Mafia Island was a good idea, but how long would it be before we visited England again. I told her I thought she should count on a ten year sentence, and she seemed to think that was O.K. Having sat for my leaving exams, I told the school secretary that I was leaving for Tanganyika and asked him to forward my exam results to care of my bank in Dar es Salaam. As it happened there was a dock strike in the UK and the ship on which we were booked, British India's S.S. Mantola, did not sail for three weeks, by which time I knew I had passed my exams and had a second class Associateship. We finally sailed in the Mantola (about 14,000 tons) near the end of July 1948.



British India SS Mantola

## Coir, Copra, Cashews and Catamarans

My mother had now decided that she should also return to East Africa and live with father for however long she had left of this life. It would of course make things much easier for her if she could travel with us on the Mantola, for she had a good many health problems at this time, from a lung infection to various other ills, so she too was booked with us from Tilbury to Dar es Salaam. We kept the ship's doctor fairly busy, first with mother, and then with young Richard who developed what seemed to be diphtheria just before we arrived in Mombasa, but as very small boys often do, he made a rapid recovery when we were about to land him at Mombasa hospital. It was a pretty uneventful voyage on the whole to Dar es Salaam, where father met us, and where we spent one or two hectic days sorting out our gear, finances and so on, and where I met one of the ex-servicemen from my group at Camborne. He had a job with a local china clay mining company who needed a surveyor. Unfortunately for Mike he had managed to get others to do nearly all his survey work for him at Camborne, so he lasted a very short time with his new company. Anyway all was soon ready for us to fly over to Mafia Island, mother and father went first in a small twin engined charter plane, a Miles Gemini if I remember correctly, which was to land them on a stretch of good beach by our new plantation. The pilot put them down safely, but when he returned to Dar es Salaam he told us he considered too 'dicey' to land there again, especially as the wind had become very gusty. He said he would fly us over the next day, Sunday, 3rd of September, and land us on the little airstrip at Kilindoni, the small town about 15 miles south of our plantation, which was the island's administrative center. We had perforce to agree, and on arrival found we would have to stay the night on a plantation close by which was run by the brother of a man who was also at Camborne with me but a year my junior. He owned the only motor vehicle on the island at the time, a Chev: truck, but his carpenters were fitting new floor boards to the body. However he sent it the couple of miles for us and we rode in the cab and front of the chassis to his house where we met his wife and two small boys. They made us comfortable for the night, and next day when the truck was ready, sent us off to the Utumaini Plantation, where we were re-united with my parents. For the time being we all lived in what had been the plantation manager's house in the days when the German 'Usagara' company had owned Mafia's larger plantations. It was now a rather decrepit, much neglected old building, with once whitewashed adobe walls, a thatched palm frond roof for coolness, and was built on a large three foot high concrete plinth. We were a little disconcerted one night when a large slab of ceiling, weighing I suppose about fifty kilos fell beside one of the baby's bed. Father was building a pleasant house of concrete blocks close to the beach, which was about a mile and a half from the old house that we were to inherit, and which was really the nerve center of the plantation.

Let me return to the sub-heading of this chapter for a moment, and explain one or two terms for the uninitiated. Firstly Coir, this is the fibre used to make ropes and such things as mattress fillings, and is derived from the thick husk that houses the 'nut' of the coconut. This is done by husking the coconut by stripping it on a hardened sharp wooden tipped stake, whose other end is driven into the ground so that the upper, or stripping end, is about waist high. Alternatively the whole nut can be split along its long axis with a sharp axe. Then there is the hard shell of the coconut which contains the 'meat' of the coconut, which on being dried becomes copra, from which coconut oil is made. The shell can be ground and used in plastic manufacture, but we found it more economical to use it as a fuel, as it burns very well.

Most copra on Mafia Island was sun dried, hence the splitting of the nuts. This is so that each half of the nut, in its shell, can be laid out in the sun, and as the heat of the sun dries out the moisture the kernel, now copra, shrinks in the shell and can be levered out with a small sharp spoon like implement with a short handle. Empty shells are now discarded and the copra laid out to dry for a couple more days, after which it is packed into sacks for shipment. The fronds of the palms make an excellent thatch for roofs, and are often used to make walls for dwellings; in fact a number of African huts have walls of beautifully plaited leaves from the palm fronds. Later on we also found that palm fronds were very useful for laying on the deep sand of many of the island's roads to prevent vehicles getting bogged in the sand.

Mafia Island is affected by both the northwest and southeast monsoons, and the big Arab dhows come south from the Persian Gulf to the Rufiji delta, which is due west of Mafia across about 12 miles of reef

strewn ocean, the Mafia channel, which is also a fisherman's paradise, to load cargoes of long straight mangrove poles which grow well in the thickly wooded delta using the steady northwesterlies to bring them to Mombasa and then Zanzibar, where they sell their cargo of dates and a few carpets, before going on to the Rufiji to load. They then return to the Persian Gulf with the southeast monsoon, known as the Kusi, which also brings the rain. Because Mafia's rainfall averages a hundred inches a year, the bulk of which falls in three months, the Germans had installed a copra drying factory; a simple arrangement of trays through which air, heated by passing over steam pipes, was blown by a large fan, driven by a single Zimmermann steam engine built in 1912, and which ran beautifully. We of course only used the factory during the rainy season.

Eventually the parental house by the beach was ready for them to move in and live in it, which gave us a bit more living space, and I had now taken over the day to day operation of the plantation. One of the major tasks was clearing the thick scrub that had grown up among the palm trees between 1939 and the end of 1948. Fortunately my father had managed to employ a group of natives of the Makonde tribe, much disliked by the local Swahili people because they were not Moslems, and ate such things as wild pig, of which there are many on Mafia, and monkeys, and because their women were happy to go and clear bush in the 'shamba' for wages. I found them good people to employ, the women were pretty tough, and full of good humoured back chat. It was not unusual to see one of them hacking away with her 'panga' at thick bush with a baby strapped on her back, and when the child got a bit fractious pass an elongated bosom over her shoulder for the baby. I also had a task system where, for example, a man had to collect 400 fallen coconuts, and put them in piles beside the light railway track that ran through the plantation, and along which a light truck was pushed and onto which the piles of nuts were loaded and taken to the 'factory'. Having collected his 400 nuts, which were counted by a headman, the man's daily card was marked, and he qualified for his day's pay. We also issued rations to our labour at the end of each day's work, because, as the Makonde men and women both worked, we fed their children as well.

At sunrise every morning the workers all assembled under a huge old mango tree in front of our house and waited to be detailed for their day's work, at the same time Marj would attend to those reporting sick. Of course in the early days I had to help her as she had not yet learned much Swahili. Later on if her Swahili was not quite up to some tricky bit, she would get one of our children to translate for her. I suppose that when one takes on a new job there is always going to be the smart man or group who will try one out to see how you will react. I can just picture a group of two or three Makonde men chatting around their fire one evening, and one of them saying " I wonder what the new Bwana would do if perhaps one of us refused to do what he said?" "He might just give the man the sack and tell him to go and complain to the District Commissioner if he didn't like it." "Yes, or he might just be man enough to hit you himself and then give you the sack." In the end they would probably decide to put it to the test, and one would volunteer to do it.

However it happened; one morning one of them came strolling along the path a good half hour after all the others had been given their work. I shouted to him, as he strolled over to speak to a couple of other men, that I did not employ people who turned up for work half way through the morning, and that he had better return to his hut and bring me his work card. He replied "I am not going", so I jumped down off the steps of the house and walked over and punched him on the jaw. He tried to grab me in a wrestling hold so I hit him again and we both fell over with me on top. I gave him another punch or two and heard Marj call out something like let him get up; I replied don't be stupid, he has an eight inch knife in his belt. In any case he said he had had enough so I told him to get up and go to the Headman who would give him some work to do. About a week later he came to me and asked me if I would give him a job as a Shamba Askari; these were watchmen who patrolled the plantation to try to stop the stealing of coconuts, which was a lucrative pastime of the local people. I agreed and said I would like him to take his family over and live on a headland across an estuary that separated it from the rest of the plantation, and where we had about 4000 acres of coconuts. This suited him and he took his two wives across there, where they were paid for keeping the bush cleared, while he patrolled the area and collected the fallen nuts. They served us very well until I left. I had another slight bother with one of the Plantation 'Askaris" who Father had engaged before my arrival, on the strength of his having served as an Askari in the Zanzibar Police Force

for a short while. He was a smooth talker who lived at one edge of the plantation and cultivated a rice paddy inside the boundary.

On hot and windy days of high fire danger we banned the lighting of all but cooking fires on cleared ground and this was signaled by the beating of a large drum which could be heard for miles. This bright fellow decided on one such day to burn off all the old grass and stubble from his rice paddy. Of course the fire soon spread through the coconut plantation, burning heaps of harvested nuts and doing considerable damage to many of the palms. I gave him a few days to harvest any crop he had and told him to get off my plantation. I had also discovered that he had stolen a new lugsail that I had bought for the fifteen foot sailing dingy that we had bought in England and shipped to Tanganyika, but at that time had no definite proof. Each time a new District Officer or Commissioner was sent to Mafia this chap went to see him to complain about me. Each time it happened the D.C. was informed of the whole story and sent the man packing, usually with a warning that he was lucky I had not charged him with arson at least.



The Cashew Nut Tree

Earlier on I mentioned Cashew nuts. Well, on the Eastern edge of the plantation we had a grove of 100 cashew trees which were harvested once a year. They caused me a few headaches and many of our labour force much more severe ones. Cashews are queer "animals". Once a year they produce a fruit that looks rather like a small apple, the seed of which grows outside the fruit. Attached beneath it, the kernel of this seed is actually the cashew nut. When the cashew apples are ripe they turn a reddish colour and give off a strong scent rather like that of a strawberry, but they are terribly astringent. The nuts should be picked just before the fruit drops, when the ripe fruit falls it rapidly ferments on the ground, its strong smell attracting animals from miles around which eat the fermented fruit. It is quite usual to

see monkeys falling about on the ground and donkeys somewhat unsteady on their legs. Our African labour force used to think of it as a sort of free booze holiday for they would collect the apples and take them home and make a very vicious brew. One of those that once one falls asleep from over indulgence in it, wakes one hours later with a raging thirst and a good drink of water makes one very drunk again after it. Hence our plantation labour force was usually a little under half strength for most of September every year. The nuts are collected in their green outer casing and after a little drying are bagged and shipped for treating. In our time they were sent to Cochin in Southern India for preparing. Those which we kept for our own use, and a plate of cashews goes well with an evening 'sundowner', were treated by spreading them on a small sheet of iron placed on two or three stones with a small wood fire lit underneath. After being heated for a time the nut casings would burst into a hot strong flame, rather like burning spirits. When the flame died down the nuts were tipped onto the sand and rubbed in it a little, the burned outer shell could then be easily removed and the nuts were ready to eat. Never bite the outer shell before it has been treated as its juice will burn and eat into your lip leaving painful sores. In those days a 50Kg sack of raw cashew nuts was worth about ninety shillings!

Before I arrived on Mafia Island my Father had bought an African dhow and engaged a local 'Nahodha', or captain, and crew. He had also purchased an elderly Kelvin marine engine, supposed apparently to start and run on petrol until hot, and then to be switched over to diesel. We beached the dhow on the sand of our estuary in front of the house where my parents now lived, bored a hole for the propeller shaft, fitted a stern gland, mounted the engine in the after end of the hull and fitted the 'prop'. As far as I know nobody ever got that engine to run. The dhow was of course intended to carry our copra to Dar es Salaam. I was asked to go on the dhow with the first load of copra that we shipped (I think two hundred bags) and see it safely delivered and run the engine if we could get it to start. We went first to the small island of Kwale in the Mafia channel to clear customs for Dar es Salaam. The small customs post here was a favourite with dhow crews because not only was a large amount of marijuana, known locally as bhangy, grown on the island but it seemed there were many very accommodating women living there too. The Nahodha, having completed his business with customs just before sundown, told me he would like to give his crew shore leave for the night as he reckoned the next stage of the voyage was too dangerous to attempt in the dark. Looking at the chart I had brought with me I had to agree. We lay at anchor a couple of hundred yards off shore in the lee of Kwale Island until just after dawn when the crew returned

for the Islands that guarded the entrance to Dar es Salaam harbour. Fortunately our dhow could use the shallow water between them and the port and slip into the deep water channel close to the narrow entrance of the harbour.

### **A Dhow Voyage to 'Nguja' (Zanzibar)**

Slightly heeled to leeward we forge north  
Driven by the south east monsoon  
Known to us all as 'Kusi'  
Who were weaned 'neath the African moon

Tack pulled tight to our down pointing bowsprit  
Our sail bellies below the yard's great arc  
Kept aloft by tackle that is backstay and halyard both  
It's great length of Coir rove fourfold through wooden blocks

in the hold three hundred bags of copra, tightly stowed,  
Fulminate, aroma vying with that of noisome bilges  
And dried shark, fly blown, yet favoured by the crew.  
A shade patch from the mighty sail idles across the deck

Khalifa Mahommed-Issa, our turbaned Nadodha, sits crossed legged,  
Arm across the tiller, right aft upon the poop  
Slowly chewing betel, senses attuned to wind and weather  
Mind roving the ripe charms of Fatima his bint

Two crewmen engage in baling, grimy lanyarded bucket  
Stirring the stench from foetid bilge  
As they empty it over the side  
Conversing the while in Swahili of women they hope to find  
Ashore in Zanzibar, goal of our northward glide.

We anchored towards evening in the customs inspection area where an African official came aboard and checked our papers and told us we could proceed up harbour to the dhow wharf ready for unloading the following morning. I left this to the skipper and went ashore and booked myself a room in the New Africa Hotel for a couple of days. I went to the dhow wharf next morning to see all was well and then spent the day attending to various matters of business that had to be done for the plantation, including arranging to buy a tractor from the Ford agents which would be shipped to Mafia on the next voyage of our dhow.

The sale of our bags of copra was arranged through our 'Dar' agent who was the father of the Mafia planter with whom we had spent our first night on the island and who had the southern most of the four coconut plantations then owned by Europeans. I went to the dhow wharf again to arrange for us to sail back to Mafia early the following day. The Nahodha told me that it would cost us a ten shilling note for the customs clerk at the wharf otherwise there would be all sorts of reasons why we would not be given 'clearance' to sail for a day or two. I gave him the money and we managed to sail at 5 am next morning.

As this was the season of the southeast monsoon, we would be sailing into a head wind, and this meant we must sail as close to the wind as possible to keep ourselves well off the rugged coast on our lee side, or our starboard side, pretty well all the way. The coast was all low cliffs with a fringe of seemingly unbroken coral on which the seas were breaking a hundred yards or so out from their foot. One of the crew started pointing something out to the skipper and a short conference followed. The skipper then pointed out to me a badly frayed part of the main halyard. On a dhow this arrangement of rope passing through blocks, not only hoists the large yard or gaff to which the sail is fastened, but also acts as the backstay supporting the forward leaning mast. If it broke we would be in real trouble on a lee shore. I was naturally very

concerned, but our skipper (Nahodha) who had grown up on this coast, told me he knew of a narrow channel through the coral reef close ahead, and that he had better take us through it so that we could repair the halyard before it broke. He was as good as his word, found the narrow gap and sailed us through it, into a lagoon of calm water between the coral reef and the narrow beach under the cliffs. We carried out the necessary repairs over the low tide period, during which we lay aground in the shallow water, and were able to sail out again during the period of lighter wind and calmer seas that often occur in these waters in the evening.

We then continued southward, and the skipper made his crew sail all night, much of the time with a crew member standing up in the bow using a sounding pole. I was rather pleased to sail into the little anchorage at Kilindoni around seven in the morning. We signed off at customs and took the dhow back up Mafia's western coast into our own creek at Utumaini plantation.

By this time the four major coconut plantations on Mafia had passed into the hands of British, or allied ex servicemen; Ngombeni plantation in the south, belonging to Henry, I have already mentioned, and then about as far north as us, but nearly due west, and on the westernmost edge of the island, was Ras Mbisi belonging to Nick, another ex wartime seafarer. To the southwest of us and about six miles away, was Minaki plantation belonging to Bob and his family. His father was the French captain of a schooner which traded mostly from the Seychelles Islands, where Bob in fact had been born, and where he and Mary had married. There were of course several very small plantations belonging to either Indian traders, Arabs or Africans, many of whom had perhaps a score or so palms growing near their huts. The large plantations were mostly of about 4000 acres like our own, or a bit smaller. Having settled in, we all began to bring vehicles of one sort or another to the island. Henry already had a Chev. truck. We ordered two ex army Willys Jeeps through an ex service friend in England, though in the meantime I bought an elderly motorbike from Bob, and used to load Marj on the pillion, and Richard and Sheila ( 2 and 4) on the petrol tank in front of me, and we would all go down to the beach at my parents house for a swim. Later on after Geoffrey was born in February 1949, Marj would carry him on her back as well, and the bike had a slightly overcrowded appearance! Mother also thought we should have one larger all purpose vehicle than a jeep, and ordered an elderly Dodge command car. For those who do not remember them, they were like a very large jeep, with 4 wheel drive, and an additional low ratio gear box and seated 6 comfortably, although I converted ours to a utility. Before the arrival of our various vehicles, one of the Indians had brought a small truck to the island, and was doing a very good trade carrying a number of passengers, mainly Africans, between Kilindoni in the south, and Kirongwe in the mid-north of Mafia. This little settlement, with one or two Arab and native shops, or dukhas as they are called, was about four miles from us. We were a little surprised one day to see this truck come down our drive carrying Marjorie's brother and his wife, a German lady whom he had met and married while managing the NAAFI canteens in Germany at the end of World War II. They were to stay with us for some time.

Shortly after their arrival came the 'day of the mine'. It happened that one day the house-boy came in and told me that the Jumbe (village headman) of Kirongwe was outside and wished to speak with me. I went out and invited him into my office, a small palm thatch house, that I used as a pay office and so on; it was nice and cool, and close to the house. He said he had come to tell me that there was what he thought to be some sort of a bomb caught in the young mangroves a mile or so up the estuary from our beach, and he was not sure what to do about it. I thought I had better go with him straight away and have a look. I called a couple of my men to accompany us, and told one of them to bring a decent long bit of rope. I then told Marj what was going on, went down to the Parental house which was on our way and informed them, and then set off along the path beside our estuary towards Kirongwe village.

Sure enough, about a mile along the track we came to a large and ugly mine that must have broken free from its mooring, and been drifting about the ocean until it finished up in our creek. I thought it probably Japanese. I suggested to the Africans that they remove themselves a couple of hundred yards or so while I tried to secure it in some way. They preferred to stay and watch. Being very careful to avoid the 'horns', I passed the rope through a ring bolt, which I suppose was the mine mooring bolt, and managed to fasten it between three young trees so that it could rise and fall with the tide, but not get close enough to any of the trees to bang against them. I then told the Jumbe that he should advise the local people not to use

that path until the Government had disposed of the mine, and that I would send a report to the District Commissioner at Kilindoni. My report went off, and obviously our elderly D.C. got busy on the telegraph to his superior, because next day an aircraft flew in from Mombasa with a demolition team from the navy on board, with orders to report on, and explode the mine. They turned up at our plantation in the Indian truck just after lunch; fortunately Mr. Remedios, the Goanese owner of the general store we used in Kilindoni, had the sense to send me two crates of beer on the truck. Anyhow I escorted the three navy explosives men to where the mine was still tethered, though I don't think they had expected to have to walk a mile or two in the hot sun. After a short inspection and the making of various notes, they fixed an explosive charge to the mine and attached what I considered to be a ridiculously long fuse. They told me it was a standard safety fuse, and would burn for thirty minutes before exploding the charge. I said I was very glad we had not had to wait thirty minutes between lighting fuses and blasting rock when I had been a hard-rock miner, and let them get on with it. Thirty-five minutes after lighting the fuse the senior man thought it must have gone out and decided he had better go and have a look. Fortunately he had only gone a few paces from where we were sheltering, about 300 yards away in a hollow behind some trees, when there was a tremendous explosion and a lot of shock wave, and everyone for miles around knew the mine had been disposed of. Having retrieved what was left of my rope, and looked at the crater blown by the mine, we returned to the house and polished off one of the crates of beer. There were 25 bottles in each of those crates of India Pale Ale so ably brewed by the German who had long been employed by the Dar es Salaam brewery, and after about 4 bottles each our navy guests thought it time to be getting back to Kilindoni and their waiting plane.

I was grateful to the D.C. for sending me a letter of thanks and commendation, on behalf of his Government, for my small part in the episode of 'the mine'.

I suppose our next small excitement was sending Marj across by charter plane to Dar es Salaam, to await the arrival of our third child Geoffrey. Her brother went with her as he wanted to try to get employment in Tanganyika, while his wife remained behind with me and the two children, so that she could look after them until Marj returned. Unfortunately I spent a deal of time in bed with malaria, not her. Marj arrived back about ten days later with her brand new baby, but did not really enjoy the flight from Dar. in a little Auster. Her brother had remained behind to take up a position and arrange accommodation before returning to collect his wife, which came sometime later, and as far as I remember after his company had moved him to the port of Tanga.

In the meantime we had taken delivery of the vehicles we had ordered, including the Fordson tractor that we unloaded from our dhow on our own beach, that was used at first for pulling a four wheeled trailer that I used for transporting the piles of collected coconuts, and delivering them to our factory area, where they were split for drying. I also used it to pull a disc harrow in the clearer parts of the plantation. Later it, and then its successor's, main task was to pull a brushcutting or clearing device, known as a Marden roller. This consisted of two large diameter steel drums slightly offset to each other, and with sharp steel blades bolted along the length, so that when towed by a tractor the two drums rolled along behind it dragging slightly at an angle which caused the blades to cut and slice quite thick undergrowth.

Plantation work, like all farming, continues throughout the year, and well tended coconuts should crop roughly four times a year, so in fact our leisure time was a bit limited, but the time off that we took was very much enjoyed. For example I had never had a great deal of time for fishing, and thought it rather boring until my neighbour Bob came over one day and suggested we go out fishing an hour or so before high tide the following day. Next morning we set off at about 4 a.m. in my outboard fifteen foot boat with its 3hp Seagull motor, and headed for a coral reef a couple of miles out in the Mafia channel, reaching it just before high water. We found fish feeding on anything that looked faintly like another fish, so we trolled around the edge of the coral, and an hour or so after high water, when the fish stopped feeding, we had taken roughly 400lbs of fish on our two rods. They averaged around 5lbs a fish, mainly horse mackerel, known in Australia as travelley and in East Africa as karembisi, though there were some snapper and barracuda and sundry others mixed in.

None of the fish was wasted as the labour force had to be fed a stipulated weight of fish or meat weekly as well as their daily ration of maize or manioc flour, beans and other vegetables. I also got into the habit

of driving over to Nick's plantation every second Wednesday evening for a couple of hours, and he would reciprocate on the other Wednesday evenings. At that time he had a long wheel based Landrover, later to be replaced by a Mercedes.

One other event of interest after we had been in Mafia for a couple of years, was the arrival of the D'Arcy/Shell oil exploration group, a consortium of B.P. and Shell, who proposed to drill an oil exploration well about five miles south of our plantation, and also do a fair amount of seismic prospecting on and around the island. At the same time the Tanganyika Government decided to upgrade the landing strip at Kilindoni, which up to now was grass and sand, and used by our weekly de Havilland Rapide 5 seater plane from Dar es Salaam. A service which was begun in 1949. They proposed now to lay a bitumenised runway suitable for Dakota (DC3) aircraft that were now in general use by East African Airways. The arrival of the oil drillers on the island led straight away to improved communications with the mainland. Firstly a floating jetty made of large hexagonal steel rafts along which fairly heavy trucks could drive, and a frequent cargo service from Dar es Salaam by a vessel of the large landing craft type, which could dry out on the beach at low tide without suffering damage. They also brought road building material and soon had a reasonable sand and metal road from Kilindoni to their drilling site about ten miles to the north. They also built a social club for the European employees, and made us and my fellow planters honorary members. We frequently had small groups of their members over to our house for curry lunch on Sundays, usually followed by a trip to the beach for swimming before they returned to camp. We also accommodated one of their seismic prospecting experts and his small gang on our plantation for a couple of weeks. One of his lines of sites for explosions ran across our property, across to, and over, the hundred acres or so we had across the estuary, on what I omitted to say earlier, was known as Ras Mrundo, and further out into the Mafia channel. For the seaward part of his operation he had the hire of a small dhow, and the use of my very large dug-out canoe, just over thirty feet long, with outriggers on each side, reputed to be the largest on the East African coast, which before I bought it, had belonged to some shark fisherman in Zanzibar.

Then happened an episode which seems more amusing now than it did at the time. He asked me one day if I could accompany him, to help him arrange an explosive charge to be detonated under water, in the correct position on his survey line. I said yes, I would do so. We set off in the dhow, towing the dug-out, and sailed to a point about three hundred yards north of where he wanted the explosive placed, and anchored. We then loaded a case of gelignite, with fuse wire already attached to a detonator, into the dug-out, and with the seismic expert directing us from the dhow, my two crewmen and I paddled gently three hundred yards to the southward, where we carefully lowered the box of gelignite on a line, to the seabed. Before leaving the dhow I had asked him to be very careful not to touch the firing plunger until we were back and behind his dhow. With the explosive safely on the bottom, we started back towards the dhow, and before we had covered one third of the distance he pressed the plunger, intending I suppose to give us a small fright. The result nearly frightened him out of his wits! A great 'boil' of water rose, lifting the canoe up and then hiding it from sight as it dropped again through the turmoil of the shockwave. My crew and I could not of course breathe while we were covered by the water of the wave, however we finally found ourselves afloat in a canoe up to the gunwales in dirty salt water. Our explosive comedian had lost his popularity, and was as white as a sheet when I climbed back aboard the dhow, to tell him we were returning home. We did manage to collect a number of dead fish before leaving the area. Eventually the oilmen, having found nothing worthwhile, plugged their seven thousand foot hole, and left the island, and us in peace.

## **Chapter 13**

### **More of Life on Mafia Island**

As time went by there were of course changes on our small island. For example the District Commissioners each did about a two and a half year tour of duty before being re-allocated to some other district of Tanganyika. Also Henry, whose family had many interests in Dar es Salaam, such as the shipping and forwarding of crops such as copra, cashew nuts and various other produce, the Mercedes Benz agency, and the production and sale of salt from their 'pans' at Bagamoyo, about forty miles north of the capital,

had to spend more and more time on the mainland gradually taking control of the business from his aging father. Thus his Mafia plantation, Ngombeni, was run by a series of managers.

As there was no school for children on the island, the Indigenous children were taught the Koran and its meaning by local religious leaders or 'Mwalimu'. We began sending our children to a primary school at Lushoto in the Usambara mountains, which I mentioned in an earlier chapter. Richard, the eldest, went first. This meant that either Marj or I had to accompany him, later them, to Dar es Salaam by plane, and then see him safely onto the train to Morogoro, one hundred and thirty miles inland, where they changed onto buses which were operated by the railways, which took them about one hundred and forty miles north to Korogwe, via Handeni, where they traveled west again to Mombo, from where they climbed twenty odd miles to the small town of Lushoto in the Usambara mountains. Here they boarded at the mixed school, to which European children came from all parts of Tanganyika, until going home for the holidays three months later. Somewhere about this time my brother Dean and his family came north from what was then Southern Rhodesia, and joined us on Mafia. Our mother had recently died, and we built a small bungalow by the beach for father to live in, so Dean and Joan, his wife, and family moved in to what had been our parents house. It was quite a pleasant home, with a wide verandah and large cool rooms. From here they could keep an eye on work being done at this end of the plantation, and also look after the 'old Man' and have him join them for meals. After Dean had got used to the place, and the work, Marj and I decided we would take the other children and go for a few weeks holiday to Lushoto, and see how Richard was getting on at school. He and Sheila had come with us to our Utumaini plantation as babies, a year later Geoffrey was born, followed a couple of years later by Alan, about 18 months later came Neil, and a couple of years after that Trevor was born, and he was followed by David shortly after we returned to England.

At this time we only had Sheila and Geoffrey at home with us. The four of us caught a flight over to Dar es Salaam and after staying a day or so caught a small charter flight north to Tanga where Marjorie's brother was now working, and he and his wife Barbara had quite a pleasant house there. Once there I managed to hire a Citroen light 15 for a month, and as Bill and Barbara had a few days off, we all set out for Lushoto, us in the Citroen while they followed in Barbara's Ford. We stopped for lunch at the Korogwe hotel, where Mother, Dean and I had stopped for lunch on our way to Mwanza on Lake Victoria, in 1934 or thereabouts. We then went on to Mombo where we turned right onto the well graded road that climbs 4000ft into the Usambara mountains in twenty miles. Arriving at Lushoto town we made our way just past it to the Jaegerthal hotel, where we booked accommodation, and found our little bungalow all ready for us. Marj's brother and sister-in-law had stopped at another hotel, at Soni falls, a few miles lower down the mountain, where they booked, and where Baron Von Kaufmann, the proprietor, took care to see that his guests were most excellently fed. Frau Finger at the Jaegerthal also fed us very well, and her strawberry and cream teas were very popular, especially with the younger generation. She not only grew her own strawberries, but also her own coffee, and this was freshly ground every morning for breakfast. On looking round the small town of Lushoto we soon discovered the few worthwhile shops, and of course the Lawns hotel, a more central watering place than the Jaegerthal, and much frequented by both locals and holiday makers. It also had stables with half a dozen horses that could be hired. There was also an attractive young divorcee in charge of the horses and the grooms, or 'saises' who fed and looked after them. After a day or two, I arranged with the lady to help her exercise the horses daily, instead of paying for rides. I must confess to dismounting now and then while out for rides and enjoying a kiss or two and a cuddle; it's difficult to go much beyond that if one has to contend with an armour of riding boots, jodhpurs and heavy jackets. Marj and Sheila would often go down to the school on Saturday evenings when some old film was being shown, to which parents were welcome, and Richard could come out on Sunday afternoons for tea. The time passed rapidly, and all too soon I had to return our hired car to its garage in Tanga, whence we caught a commercial flight to Dar es Salaam, where we spent a couple of business and shopping days before flying back to Mafia Island and the plantation, and of course, work. After a short time Dean and Joan went over to the mainland again, their youngest daughter who had been unwell since leaving Rhodesia, now required more medical attention, and later hospitalisation, but unfortunately did not survive. After a fairly traumatic time in Dar es Salaam they returned to Mafia where Dean could keep an eye on the plantation, and write his geological thesis for his Doctorate, while I went to a brick and tile works at a place called Pugu, about thirty miles from Dar es Salaam, to reorganise and sort out labour

problems for the owner, an old friend of my father's. It was currently being run by an Italian tile maker and brick layer, who could speak Swahili but no English, helped by a Greek engineer who could speak a bit of English and a lot of Italian but no Swahili! All this complicated the smooth and efficient running of a labour force to some extent. However when the African pay clerk that they employed, and who spoke quite good English, realised that I had no intention of sacking him, he became helpful, and between us we soon sorted out the problems. Once more I had hired a car for my own use from a firm in 'Dar' and could run into town after work now and then to see Marj and the kids, who were staying in one of the Women's Service League flats while I worked at Pugu. I think I overdid things a bit one evening, for after leaving the family I stopped to have a couple of drinks with an old Kenyan friend whose two sons I had been at school with long ago. After leaving him I found myself driving faster than I should have done, and about three miles out of town, on the last curve of a long 'S' bend I hit a tree with the right front wheel. I was instantly sober, but the car looked a good deal the worse for wear. This all happened opposite the Dar es Salaam goal, and the European warden with some helpers came and assisted me to push the car into a safer position, and then kindly offered me a bed for the night and a much needed meal. That is the closest I have come to spending a night in goal since 1943 when our Battery were quartered in the empty Augusta goal in Sicily for a few weeks. The area between 'Dar' and Pugu is not the nicest in which to have an overnight breakdown; it is fairly well endowed with lions, and every now and then there is a case of one becoming a man-eater and having to be hunted down. My time at the Pugu brick and tile works soon came to an end, but not before the Italian manager had invited me to lunch with him and his Greek assistant. I was unused to a large bowl of pasta being brought in to be eaten before the main meal, and having manfully finished it off found it hard to do justice to the next two courses, but thoroughly enjoyed the coffee cognac.

I think our return to Mafia coincided with the end of Richard's school term, so having collected him from the bus from Lushoto, we all returned to Mafia. Once back home we soon picked up the threads again. It was not long before Dean went back to Dar es Salaam, where he worked for a year or two before going 'up country' to Dodoma where he took up a post as a geologist for the Atomic Energy Commission. In the mean time we were joined by Elizabeth, a very pleasant and able Austrian lady, whose husband was Bo'sun on a merchant ship, which, being a tanker, spent a great deal of its time at sea. She was filling in time until he could find himself a shore job. She made herself very useful helping Marj with the children for her keep. She was a friend of Marj's German sister in law, Barbara, who brought her over to us, and stayed for a holiday. I suppose because her marriage was coming to a rather frustrated end, she now enjoyed accompanying me on walks around the plantation, and on trips to our Administration center and Port at Kilindoni, where we collected the mail and did any necessary shopping. Bob, Nick and I would fraternize over bottles of beer on the back verandah of Willie Remedios' shop, until the mail had been sorted by the Post Office. This was a weekly outing, and we used to enjoy watching the Dakota land on the new runway, and see who had come to visit Mafia.

One day they changed the schedule, and instead of landing at 11am, the plane would now land at 7am at Mafia airport. The first time this happened, having watched a safe landing, Bob looked at me and said, "we can hardly go and start drinking beer at this time of day, it isn't even eight o'clock yet." I said, "I don't see why not", so off we went to the shop and opened a bottle or two to keep us occupied until the mail sorting had been completed, we assumed at about 1030. However we decided to have just one more, a few times. On our way home at about dusk, Bob and I decided to have a race, he in his Ford truck, and me in the Dodge command car, round the perimeter of the airfield. I do not remember whether anybody won it, but it seems we arrived at our respective homes, and the wrath of our wives at about seven that evening. Also at about this time I was asked to be the European representative on Mafia Island's multi-racial council; not too onerous a job except that all meetings were conducted in Swahili, so that all could understand.

Meetings were chaired by the District Commissioner. One social duty required once in a while of Councilors, was attendance at a curry lunch. We all gathered at the appointed house, removed our footwear and sat cross-legged on a large carpet, roughly in a circle. Water was brought round so that we could rinse our hands, and large trays of rice, curry, and various spices were placed in the middle.

Someone said a prayer in Arabic, and we began our meal, and very good it usually was too. One had to remember to use only the right hand for eating.

On the plantation I employed an average of a hundred Africans, and found them nice people; of course they all wanted more money for less work, and to borrow against their future wages. They never seemed to tire of my saying "all you have to do is double the work you do each day, and I will double your wages." "Oh but" they would reply, " we want more for what we do now". "What!" I'd reply, "for two hours work a day, when you already get free food, pay and free housing, as well as medicine for you and yours". They would depart laughing, and repeating all I had said to their many friends.

I remember once when I had been away for a couple of days, probably to Dar es Salaam, Marj took the children down to the beach for a swim. I think she used the Standard Vanguard we had then, instead of the jeeps which were too old and decrepit. On the way back she got it stuck in soft sand about two hundred yards from the house, and its garage. So close in fact that she decided to leave it there for me to bring home, and walked back with the kids. When she looked out in the morning, one of the men was steering the car while the rest of the gang pushed it past the house and into its garage. They did not wish the Memsahib to get into trouble when I returned, for leaving the car stuck in the sand.

On another occasion when she used the little 2CV Citroen van, which was really hers, to take a load of fish up to the factory for drying, she drove too slowly for an empty vehicle in soft sand and got it bogged after all the workers had all gone home. Next morning when she looked, there it was safely in the garage where it had been pushed to keep her out trouble.

I remember an earlier occasion when I had been teaching Marj how to drive one of the vehicles, and she was having a bit of trouble getting the hang of reversing, and making a turn, so as to back into the garage shed. In this case it was an open lean-to on the side of the house, with a palm thatch roof. I remember saying "surely it is simple enough, just watch what I do". I jumped into the driving seat, and having engaged reverse drove swiftly backwards, turning the wheel just enough to bring the car into the center of the shed, but by some slight mischance the rear corner of the vehicle just clipped the outer corner post, tumbling the lean-to and cascading the palm thatch onto the vehicle. My 'better half' hardly stopped laughing for a week!

Some time earlier than this my neighbour Bob had decided to build and run a fishing club on the shore of a deep, well sheltered bay in the southeast of the island. While he was living at the site to supervise the building, he left his wife Mary to run his plantation, so once in a while Marj and I would drive over and collect her and take her the 15 miles or so to see her husband, and bring her back in the evening. It was a very hot and dusty ride in the dry season, and on one hot day the jeep's radiator ran dry half way. The can of water that was always in the jeep had sprung a small leak and was empty. I partially plugged the leak with a piece of stick and passing the can to the women, I suggested they retire behind the jeep and refill it. They did their best, and the quart or so of liquid with which I was rewarded took us to the fishing club where I was able to drain and refill the radiator!

About the middle of our stay on Mafia Island, one group of notable visitors who based themselves at the fishing club, was what I called the 'Conan Doyle' group. This consisted of Adrian, son of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, his very beautiful young Danish wife, and their photographer and friend of many years, John Mitchell-Hedges. They were here of course mostly for the big game fish, and also if my memory does not fail me, because Adrian was writing a book on the subject. Anyway they stayed for a week or two and, as was the custom, we all invited them in turn to our various plantations for meals, and to stay a night or two if they wished to do so. Later on Bob had a visitor at the fishing club who had recently spent some years in Aden, and was now at a loose end, and looking for something to do. This led to his finally deciding to buy the club from Bob, but on the understanding that he would continue to employ the Seycheloise carpenter who had been working with Bob for some time. At this time Bob owned an old wooden built M.F.V. which was suitable for carrying copra to Dar es Salaam, but not for fishing expeditions in the adjacent bay and local waters, where he used a sixteen foot outboard powered boat. This all led to a small group of us, four I think, including the new owner of the fishing club, who had already done his

homework for buying himself a suitable cruiser, flew over to Zanzibar to test, and if suitable, buy, one belonging to a scientist who had advertised it.

My job was mainly to be navigator to help take the vessel back to Mafia. Having settled ourselves in an hotel we had a look around the town, which I had not visited for many years, and then after a couple of beers someone contacted the boat owner and arranged for him to show us the vessel at 4.30 that afternoon. We went aboard the rather nice looking forty foot cruiser which had a short fore deck, and then a longish cabin with the wheel and engine controls well forward, giving the helmsmen a good view through the forward glass windows, as well as protection from both sun and bad weather. Further aft were 2 fore and aft bunks and a midship table with fold down leaves. There were cupboards with storage racks for crockery and glasses, and a small oil stove, also a fairly large diesel engine, then came a smallish open cockpit with benches with lockers under them and an alternate steering arrangement at the fore end of the cockpit. The diesel was ticking over with a healthy sound; we had run it for a few minutes at higher revs: and then stopped and restarted. That being satisfactory we went for a cruise round the anchorage; those who have visited Zanzibar will know that it is what is known as an open roadstead and not a sheltered harbour, so that the larger ships have to anchor offshore. There is some protection close in for small craft, dhows and small coasters, from breakwaters that protect the landing steps and so on. There are a number of beacons marking the deep water entrances to the anchorage. I was able to obtain an idea of the deviation of our vessel's compass by going close to a beacon and steering towards another one, noting the compass bearing of our course and comparing it with the true bearing marked on the chart. After applying the magnetic variation between our compass course, and the chart bearing, I could find the compass deviation for our boat on that particular heading. The compass deviation checked on several different headings proved to be negligible, which one might well expect in a wooden vessel with the compass well away from the metal of the engine.

Next day we cleared customs and sailed for Dar es Salaam which we decided to visit en route for Mafia. It was just as well too, for our launch had not been out in biggish seas for a long time, and the motion stirred up sediment from the bottom of the fuel tank and sent it towards the injectors, fortunately via a couple of fuel filters. These rapidly became overloaded with sediment and the engine became starved of fuel, at first, about 20 kilometers from Dar es Salaam. We wondered why our speed was dropping and the engine labouring. Eventually I suggested we stop and look at the filter at the tank outlet as the motor was barely running. We did have a box of tools with us, and on removing the filter found its gauze and the container itself choked with sediment; some would obviously have worked its way through this filter to the next one, but we hoped not much, so we tried, successfully, to restart the motor which then took us reasonably well to the outer channel buoy of the channel into Dar's well sheltered harbour.

Here having been boarded by the Customs Inspector, and having explained our plight, we were invited to use the yacht anchorage. Next day we borrowed and bought some suitable containers into which we drained our fuel through filters, removed and cleaned the fitted filters, took the injectors ashore to a diesel garage to be checked and cleaned, or replaced if necessary. We then replaced everything and again filtered the fuel into the tank, adding sufficient new fuel to completely fill it, leaving us, if I remember rightly, two full jerry cans in reserve.

At 4pm we sailed for Mafia, with our engine now purring sweetly, and sending us along at 7 knots. I took the short cut between the islands off Dar es Salaam as I knew from my previous dhow trip that there was plenty of water for us and less current. I handed the wheel over to one of the others for an hour and took a short rest. I think I took over the wheel again at about ten o'clock having passed the headland on the mainland from which we could now steer due south into the northern end of the Mafia channel, and head towards the island of Nyororo, off which a monitor had been anchored during World War I, and from where she was supposed to shell the light cruiser Konisberg, which had escaped from British ships, and hidden up the Rufiji River. Nyororo has a light on it visible for 15 miles, and at 11pm it was just blinking on the horizon, so I thought I would stir my companions up a little. I called out, that according to my calculations of our course and speed, we should be able to spot Nyororo light at any moment, and would they mind having a look ahead for any sign of it. Almost immediately one of them called out " there it is, dead ahead". I suggested that it was a lucky bit of navigation to make such a good landfall on time.

I did far worse about 9 months later in the same launch.

We came up to the island of Nyororo just over two hours later and going close in towards its clean sandy beach, dropped anchor in the clear water so that we could all have a few hours sleep. We were all up by six thirty and diving over the side for a quick refreshing swim, then 'Smithy' who was now the boat's owner started to cook breakfast, while the rest of us sluiced the decks down with water and cleaned up the cockpit and cabin, and prepared a couple of fishing lines to troll behind the boat. Having breakfasted and washed up, we got under way at 8am and headed for Kilindoni, only slowing right down a couple of times to pull in two thirty to forty pound 'karembisi' (trevally in Australia) and a large barracuda. I got off at Kilindoni, where I had left my car, to return to Marj and the kids, while the others took the boat on round to the fishing club.

Towards the end of the 1950s a great deal was being heard in Tanganyika about Uhuru, and though this really meant self government by the Africans, it was generally assumed to mean FREEDOM. Most of the people thought that when it happened all the Europeans would leave the country, leaving their wealth behind, and that they, the indigenous population, would all be rich people. Probably because of this, one of the Africans who had a small holding next to my boundary, decided to move in and plant a hundred or so coconut seedlings on our side of the boundary. This was reported to me by my Headman, Mwalim Selemani Shekhe, so I told him to inform the man he had three days to remove his seedlings from my land, and gave the Headman a letter reiterating this.

Four days later no seedlings had been removed, so I said to the Headman, take another man as a witness and go and tell that fellow that if in two days time his seedlings are still there I am coming to remove them from my property, and will probably burn them. Again, no action. I said to Selemani Shekhe, "tomorrow I will take three men, each with a hoe and a panga, and go and remove those seedlings". Next morning when I went out there were nearer to 23 men, each with a panga and hoe (jembe). I asked them where they thought they were all going. " We are coming with you Bwana to protect your 'shamba' from thieves", and they all waved their pangas and sang a little song, and off we all went. On arrival at the boundary, where the planter of the seedlings very soon appeared, I said, "now Mwalimu, (my headman's local title of respect, meaning Teacher) you were working here when the Government surveyor put in the boundary stones; do you know where they are?" "Yes Bwana", and he walked over to one, and pointed along the line of the boundary and said, " the next one is down there about five or six hundred paces, and like this one it is set in concrete".

"Right", I said to the onlookers who had now gathered, "it is as you have heard, and the further proof is here on my map, and this man has been warned many times not steal my property. Come on men (to my gang) remove all these seedlings, chop off any roots that are sprouting, and throw them all in a heap on the other side of our boundary". They turned to with a will, and very soon we were walking home to a cheery little song about the Bwana who knew the law and the customs and knew how to enforce them.

### **Lib in the Land of 'Uhuru'**

Amina my good sister, said the women in the chair,  
Have you thought as you so skillfully put long plaits in my hair  
As we always plait for hours, on each long and idle day,  
That this thing called Women's Lib could be coming here to stay?  
Now don't you talk so silly, Mbalamwezi, friend  
You know we've all discovered equality's the end  
For our men all used to shout "we're as equal as the Whites"  
In the days when jobs were paid and we could sleep at nights,  
Now they all work for each other, and there's not a cent for beer,  
And a request for higher pay brings a fist across the ear.  
Don't go talking women's 'lib' cos we've both got it made, Plaiting, chatting daily for six  
hours in the shade

Or you'll spoil what's always been we women's greatest lurk,  
Just talking and complaining, while our men do all the work.

The next episode that took me to that area of the plantation, but closer to the village of Kirongwe, was a much sadder affair. This time I was again visited by the Jumbe (village headman) of Kirongwe, and he said, "Bwana it is a worrying thing, but we cannot find one of the young women from our village. She was last seen walking with your 'Askari' from your piece of Shamba closest to Kirongwe, and he was not at his hut when we went there, and his wife said he did not return there last night". At this moment a runner arrived to say the girl's body had been found in the bush, and that she was dead. I asked the Jumbe whether he had sent word to Kilindoni to the 'Bwana Shauri' (District Commissioner); he assured me he had. Well I said we had better go and see the body and wait there for the Authorities, but no-one was to go close to it until the Police had inspected it, in fact our job was to guard it until they arrived. We had only just got to the place when the DC's car drove up, and he had brought the Police Corporal and two constables, and the African medical assistant. This man had completed a three year training course in medicine at Mkerere College in Uganda, and was quite an able man. They made an inspection of the body, the girl had been stabbed in the neck if I remember rightly; and the surrounding area, looking mainly for the weapon. I was asked to have a few words with the DC and the Corporal, and told them I had visited my 'Shamba Askari's' hut the previous day, and had so far not told anyone else this, because when I got there he was away. His wife told me that he had gone to the shops in Kirongwe, but from the way she said it I felt she thought that to be untrue. They thanked me and gave me a lift to a road fork close to our house from where I walked home. Very soon after this I heard my watchman had been arrested on suspicion of murder.

Later on I was asked by the DC, who was of course also our local Magistrate, whether when the man was brought up for trial in the Dar es Salaam Court, I would be prepared to go there and testify. I said "of course, though I don't think I have any real evidence to offer". Anyway it would be a trip to 'Dar' at the Government's expense. When I went over later on I was 'sworn' and answered various questions, and was told privately later on that it was greatly on the strength of my evidence that the man was sentenced to be hanged. The highlight though was a long evening with a rather gorgeous young Court stenographer. I forget to tell Marj about her when I went home again. In fact we spent a pretty harmless evening; I think I bought her dinner at the 'Chez Chloe' and we went for a drive in her car out to Oyster Bay, along the sea front and back. We stopped for a while by the beach at the entrance to the harbour looking out to sea past the channel marker lights and talking of this and that, until it was time to wipe off any stray lip stick, and for her to drop me at my hotel before going back to the quarters she shared with several other young typists who were also employed by the Government. Next morning I caught the 6 am flight back to Mafia, to resume the many duties of a local planter. One of my next little adventures was to once again act as Pilot on 'Smithy's' launch. He intended to go across the Mafia channel with a group of paying Indian passengers, who wished to be landed at the main mouth of the Rufiji river delta, on its north side, from where they were arranging to catch a lorry to Dar es Salaam.

It was his intention to go on up the coast in the launch to Dar es Salaam. Having dropped our passengers as arranged at about 3 PM, we headed north for a time to a spot close to Kwale Island. It was getting towards dusk and I said we could either play it safe and anchor in Kwale's lee for the night, or we could take a chance and head for Nyororo Island, taking a course to pass to the south of the notorious Dira Reef, which dried out at low spring tides, and on which a number of vessels had come to grief.

From Nyororo we could head safely for Dar es Salaam. Smithy thought it best if we crossed the channel to Nyororo and then went north. I was unhappy about getting past Dira Reef, for the currents round it were very strong, and if one went too far to the south of it, one could end up on another bank, 'Fungu Sefu'. Anyway I said we would give it a go. We had Bob's Seycheloise carpenter with us, and he sat up on the bow as look-out. I plotted a compass course that should be safe, but not having reliable information as to the speed of the northerly current for the time of year, decided we should steer 3 degrees south of the plotted course.

Again the speed of the launch was really guesswork, and we were assuming it to be 7 knots; in fact it was probably 6. After a time 'Chippie' from his look-out position thought he could see 'bad water' ahead. We slowed down and steered a little further south and after 20 minutes I reckoned we must have cleared Dira Reef, (Dira means compass) so I asked Smithy to head for the light on Nyororo Island. At that moment the keel hit something hard. I slammed the gear into neutral as it was near me, and said "hard a starboard", but in a few seconds we were well aground where we had to spend the night. Daylight showed us to be six feet in from the steep end of the reef. As soon as we were afloat, we headed for Nyororo beach, and did not appear to be taking water. Anchored in the calm clear water of the islet's lee we looked for damage, but none was obvious; the boat's good six inch timber keel seemed to have taken the brunt of the grounding. However I told Smithy it would be silly to go on to Dar es Salaam before the bottom of the boat had been properly examined out of the water, so dropping me off at Kilindoni, he and 'Chippie' took her back to the fishing club.

Towards the end of the 1950's the TANU (Tanganyika African National Union) was gaining in strength and popularity, and demands for 'Uhuru' or independence, were widespread through the land, and the President of TANU, Mr. Julius Nyerere, even came to visit Mafia on a flying visit. In fact the whole life style as well as the economy of the island seemed to be changing, so that when an Indian trader, of long standing as a Mafia resident, made me an offer for the plantation, after much discussion with Marj and my brother Dean, as well as the would-be purchaser, we decided to accept his very reasonable offer.

This of course involved a good deal of legal work, for which I had to spend some time in Dar es Salaam. A major snag was that on selling a property the bulk of the money received had to be re-invested in the country for a minimum of 5 years.

To further complicate matters, the purchaser wished to make a reasonably substantial down payment, and pay off the balance in a number of annual payments over the following 5 years. Eventually we and the lawyers agreed the matter and we handed the place, and its equipment over to the buyer; he was known among the Africans as 'Moto', a name which can either mean hot or fire.

It would appear that before coming to Mafia, some shops he had owned on the mainland, from Kilwa to the south had caught fire over the years. He honoured his agreement with me to the letter, and I think treated his own family very well. His eldest son became the Manager of Utumaini plantation, frequently helped by two other sons, until they each went overseas. His youngest son he sent to Kelly College in Devon; another son now has several businesses in Queensland, on the Gold Coast, and a daughter who he helped through her legal training, became a solicitor, and then married, and worked for a time in Adelaide, before moving to Sydney. We usually get a card from her at Christmas.

The night before we left the plantation, all our Makonde workers turned up round the house and put on one of their 'Ngomas' for our entertainment and farewell, and continued to sing and dance until we drove away for the airport in the morning.

## **Chapter 14**

### **Return to Blighty**

It was our intention to spend some time on the mainland until the childrens' school term ended, by which time we planned to be at Lushoto to collect them, and return together to Dar es Salaam where we would board the Durban Castle for England. First though we would drive westwards to Dodoma, where Dean and his wife Joan were living. Then go north to Arusha for a week or so, and perhaps spend a little while looking at the wild life on the Serengetti plains, then on to Moshi where Marj's brother and his new wife now lived, and so east and a little south to Mombo and up the hill to Lushoto, where we would stay until it was time to return to Dar es Salaam and board the ship for England.

All went fairly well according to plan, though apart from seeing numbers of giraffe crossing the road near Arusha, and a leopard streaking across in front of us under the bulk of Kilimanjaro, and some buffalo in the Ndorandoto crater, we spent very little time looking at wild animals. We spent a pleasant day or two with Dean and Joan, but the town of Dodoma was, or seemed to be swarming at night with hyenas roaming the streets, and knocking over dustbins in search of food. Arusha, close under Mt. Meru, which had a blanket of snow around its summit, was a pleasant enough short stay, with the usual escorted safaris going through it, either to photograph the animals in the famous Ngorongoro crater reserve, or headed further south towards the wilder country round Lake Manyara and Lake Eyashi.

In Moshi we stayed in the hotel and then went out to the bungalow where Marj's brother, and his wife Joyce lived, with its awe inspiring view of Kilimanjaro's slopes rising to Kibo peak, a stones throw away. From Moshi to Mombo the road runs fairly close to the Tanga/Moshi railway and was badly corrugated, and I was not sorry to reach Mombo and turn left onto the twenty odd mile climb into the Usambara mountains to Lushoto.

We now rented a house from some Swiss friends, who were starting a tea factory a few miles further from town. Here we settled down happily for the two or three weeks until the school term ended. Then with our family and belongings loaded on a double cab V.W. 'ute' we headed back to Dar and finally went aboard the M.V. Durban Castle which took us to Tilbury docks in England.

After a few days in a small London hotel, we managed to rent an old farmhouse in Somerset near the town of Wedmore. The building was roughly three hundred years old, and the house itself adjoined a long barn which was now full of 'battery' hens. Apart from the five foot high bedroom doors, and floors that now sloped in all directions, the house with its three foot thick stone walls was comfortable enough, but I spent more time at the George Inn at Wedmore than at home.

Our house was actually in the hamlet of Mudgely, a mile or so from Wedmore and overlooking Sedgemoor. We soon got the children fixed up in local schools, and then started to look around for some temporary employment for ourselves. Marj got a part time job as a waitress at the 'George' where her experience in the WRNS stood her in good stead. I, by the way, had now bought an elderly and very reliable Austin 20, around 1930 vintage, so off I went to the town of Wells to see what there was to offer there. I had a look at a local paper, and found that the Star Hotel had a vacancy for a night porter, so I went along and told the Manager/Proprietor that I was looking for a job for some months, and could probably handle the work as I had served in the navy. Anyway I got the job and would be expected to work from 7 PM to 3 am, and one of my main tasks during the night would be to give the 'Boots' a hand, an elderly man who had been there for many years. I soon settled in to the new job, and early on in the evening I would go and help the front bar maid, mainly with washing glasses; There was in addition to the proprietor, a manageress and a head barman, they worked mainly in the cocktail bar and the lounge, and after closing time had to walk across the street with the takings, which they then counted, and signed a sort of tally sheet, before locking it up in her safe. The young women had to be escorted across the street with the money, so if for some reason the head barman was not available, I usually had to accompany her. Once the bars were closed we, the old 'Boots' and I, would go round collecting shoes that were left by the doors to be polished. We always had a piece of chalk in our pockets so that we could write the room number on the soles of the shoes. People who wanted a special polish would generally put a sixpence in their shoes, we shared these out at knocking off time. I remember one evening the pub was crowded, as the West of England Public Schools Rugby Officials were meeting there, and dining in. Imagine my surprise when I found, on entering the dining room to help the waiters, that the presiding school master was the man who had been our adjutant at H.M.S. Marve, the Royal Marine landing craft training base near Bombay. He recognised me at once, and gave me a greeting, and said he never expected to meet Captain Morgan working as a waiter. I replied that I was doing some practical research in a study of sociology, and departed to my other duties. I remember another occasion, when I was tidying up some magazines and papers in the lounge, where a small group happened to be playing 'lying dice'. One of them asked me whether I knew the game. I replied that I had watched it played on board ship and so had a smattering of knowledge about it, but no skill at it. One of them asked if I would care to join them for a while. I said I would be happy to, but must return to my duties in half an hour. I sat down and we played a fairly steady game, and I learned a

little about the play of different individuals. It seemed they had not known each other previously, but had got to know each other the previous day. Not being a very trusting person where gambling is concerned, I had some doubts as to whether that was entirely true, but no matter I was only going to play for another ten minutes anyway. At the end of which I said I must return to my work, picked up the pound or so that I had won, and left them.

While I was working in Wells, Marj and I had decided we would buy ourselves a new house in nearby Glastonbury. I decided I was very bored with our landlord of the Mudgely house. The final straw was probably when he asked me one day whether I would come over to his other farm and give him and his sons some help laying an asphalt driveway. It had to be completed quickly before the hot 'bitumen' they were having delivered had time to cool. I said I would help, and went over next day. We all took shovels and worked very hard, at what was never a pleasant job. Thank goodness for the mechanical means by which the stuff is now spread. Anyway after a long hot forenoon's work, they invited me to join them in a quick cold lunch, and then, in return for my hard morning's work, offered me a tray of a dozen cracked eggs. These, being unsaleable, were normally given to the convent! In any case if one of us had not started the diesel generator that powered the lights that gave artificial daylight to the hens in his blasted batteries, at six o'clock every morning, he would not have had many eggs to sell OR give away. There were a couple of other occasions when he proved himself the meanest man I had ever met.

The building of a new housing estate in Glastonbury was going ahead fast, and the house we had chosen would be ready to move into early in 1961.

Meantime I received a copy of the 'Dog Watch' the magazine of H.M.S. Worcester. With it came a letter to all 'Old Worcesters' saying that there was a vacancy for a second officer on the staff. I assumed that without a Merchant Navy Master's certificate I would not have a chance of being accepted, but sent in an application anyway. I had an immediate reply asking me to come for an interview, so off I went to Greenhithe in the Morris Oxford I'd bought a month before. I gave the old Austin 20 to Marj; she had taken her driver's license in Mafia, and was able to drive on that in England for one year.



HMS Worcester III

On arrival at Greenhithe, I could see the ship that now replaced the old Worcester on which I had trained as a cadet, and that a new causeway had been built opposite the ship, so that the boats no longer had to tie up at the village jetty. I walked along the foreshore and arrived just as the P.T.I. was settling a class of cadets in the cutter to row back to the ship. He invited me aboard, for my tie proclaimed me to be an 'Old Worcester'.

At the gangway I was met by the Officer of the Watch, (the cadet performing that duty for the day), and taken to see the Captain, at that time 'Freddie' King. We had a long talk and he took me round part of the ship, which seemed so much more roomy, and easier to live aboard than the old 'Fredrick William' of my cadet days.

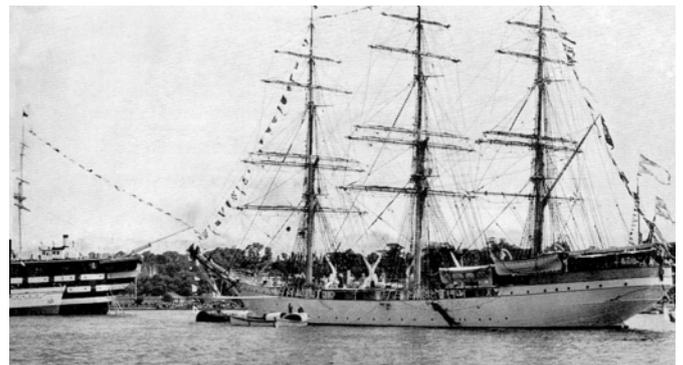
Later the Captain (acting) asked me if I could start work on Monday. I pleaded for a few days grace to buy the necessary uniform, and on leaving the ship went up to London to the shop of S.W. Silver and Co. who had long been outfitters to both staff and cadets of H.M.S. Worcester, and ordered what I needed.

I then returned to Mudgely in Somerset, where I told Marj that I had been engaged as second officer and instructor, and told her it meant being away for a fortnight at a time, with a short week-end break every second week. She did not seem too worried about it, and I told her we would try to move into the new house at Glastonbury during my leave period in the Easter holiday period. I then returned to the ship and settled into the routine of acting as a divisional officer, teaching some seamanship, and with my fellow officers, looking after the welfare and discipline of the cadets, and to some extent the maintenance of the

in the 'engine room' where there was also a diesel generator for emergency use. We also had an elderly ex Navy chief ERA, to look after things mechanical, who unfortunately died of cancer a couple years later; he was assisted by a very useful civilian mechanical 'Jack of all trades', Joe Loader, who used to visit us fairly regularly to help out. One of our regular jobs was mending the fresh water hose, a three inch plastic pipe from shore to ship, which was supposed to lie on the bottom and keep our storage tanks full of fresh water. Often a bight of this hosepipe would float on the river and be cut by the propeller of a motor boat, or break for some other reason. One other slight problem was that during the school holiday breaks, when all the cadets went home, with the possible exception of a couple who had parents living overseas, one of the ship's officers had to live on board and mind the ship, run the motorboat, answer telephones etc., so we had to divide up the holiday period between us, giving each of us about ten days onboard and a couple of weeks at home.

With a couple of exceptions the schoolmaster staff all lived ashore and had to be brought on board by our motorboat in the morning, and taken ashore again after school. During the term the necessary boat trips were run by the various boat crews of cadets, a job they handled very well. Anyway I went home to Somerset for part of the Christmas holiday and we moved from Mudgely to our new house in Glastonbury during the Easter break; in fact we moved in on Grand National day 1961. Marj was now pregnant once more with David, who would be our seventh and last, but he was not due until October.

Meantime life among the staff on board was slightly affected by the fact that the Committee of Management were known to be seeking a permanent Captain Superintendent. Freddie had held the position down well for a year or so, and of course had submitted an application for the permanency. The Committee however were concerned about the forthcoming Worcester Centenary celebrations, during which it was hoped Her Majesty and the Duke of Edinburgh would visit the ship, and that the Danish training ship 'Danmark', and the Norwegian 'Christian Radich' would at least be present, as well as a couple of destroyers, and were hoping that Senior Captain R.N. might become available and apply for the position. Luckily, Captain L.W.L. Argles CBE. DSC. Royal Navy, did so and I am sure set their collective minds at rest.



Danmark 1962

Of course Captain Argles would not be able to take command immediately, as it would be a matter of months before he could complete his retirement from the R.N. He was currently serving as Commodore of the Naval barracks at Chatham. In any case the actual Worcester Centenary would be in 1962, so in the

meantime Freddie King was to continue as acting Captain Superintendent, and on the arrival of the new Captain would revert to being Chief Officer, while I was to become First Officer. So, early in 1961 'Fred' asked me to get my extra half stripe added to my uniforms so that the promotion was a 'fait accompli' before the arrival of the new Captain.



Christian Radich

Marjorie was due to have her baby in mid October, and I was given leave from the ship so that I could be there and see that the older boys did not misbehave themselves while she was in the small local hospital.

Sheila of course took a few days off from school so that she could be helpful; she thoroughly disliked school anyway. All went well and after a few days at home, I returned to the ship

where my fellow officers had nobly carried the extra load for me, so I did my best to make it up to them by taking the most unpleasant duty time during the Christmas holiday.

On my home early in January, it began to snow quite heavily while I was crossing Salisbury Plain, near Stonehenge, and I believe mine was the last car to get through to Warminster, before the road was closed

of grounds ashore. The other flat was the Headmaster's, and a little later when he left Worcester for another appointment, Joe Brew, who was senior Master, was appointed Head and moved into the flat.

Our Centenary Celebration was arranged to coincide with Prize Giving and the end of the summer term 1962, so there was a good deal of work to be done in preparation for the great day, all of which had to be fitted in with the normal school and training routine of the ship. Most of the maintenance work, including arranging for all the rigging to be checked and shrouds and stays etc. being blacked down, ratlines tightened etc. fell to me to arrange. Some of this was done during the Easter holidays, by a couple of professional riggers, but a great deal was done by the cadets in non school time, and of course the painting of boats, gangways and so on was left until well into the summer term to look fresh on Prize day.

By this time we were informed that the Danish sail training ship Danmark would be moored close to us, as would the Norwegian sail training ship Christian Radich, and a Royal Navy frigate would be moored just a little further down river. Boats from these visiting ships would use our 'causeway' for landing shore parties. Our own cadets, from much practice, were adept at putting our boats alongside the causeway during the fast ebb tide that swept across it at right angles, the visitors were going to find it rather tricky. The Naval pinnaces were usually Cox'd by a midshipman, who passed his engine orders, like 'stop', 'go astern', 'go ahead', with blasts on a whistle. I was greatly amused, though pretending disapproval, when I noticed one of them behaving most oddly; then I spotted a Worcester cadet, half hidden by our gangway, blowing engine orders on a Naval whistle he had acquired, and flummoxing the motor boat's young cox'n who finished up with his vessel stranded across the causeway. Fortunately, it was nearly low water, so he did not have to wait long before being refloated.

Eventually the big day arrived and we got through it with no more than the expected amount of orderly confusion. Since Freddie was back on board as Chief Officer on this important day, I had little to do with arranging where the Captains of the visiting ships would stand on our quarter deck, to be introduced to Her Majesty as she walked past them on her way to the Quarters prepared for her on the poop, or greeting the Royal Barge when it came alongside. I was fully occupied with getting cadets to the right places at the right time, and greeting all the guests who had come down from Tower Bridge on the River Thames cruise ship Royal Sovereign, and who would be coming on board through a door in Worcester's side when their ship had been secured alongside, with the help of some cadets I had detailed to take their lines. The visitors then had to be directed to the upper deck, where the Duke of Edinburgh would present the prizes.

Like everything else the day finally ended, the Royal Navy left with due ceremony, and then the Prize Day visitors re-embarked, with most of the cadets, in the Thames cruise ship which then returned them all to Tower Bridge. The working party of volunteers who stayed aboard, unrigged the lines of bunting with which the ship had been dressed over all and cleared up the chairs and awnings etc. from the prize giving area on the upper deck, and Freddie and I and one or two senior cadets then went round the ship in the motorboat to make sure no stray lines had been left hanging over the side, and that all looked ship shape. In fact the ship in her fresh paint looked very well, and the Captain seemed to be satisfied that all had gone as he had hoped. Fortunately too, the weather had remained fine and sunny.

By next day we had resumed what was more or less our usual holiday routine, the R.N. ship had already sailed, and was soon followed by the Norwegian under power. We now watched the 'Danmark' preparing for sea, and it was soon obvious that her Captain intended to sail down river with the favourable southerly that was blowing. Once the Gravesend Pilot was aboard he used his engine just to drop his headrope from the mooring buoy and turn the ship down river, the engine was stopped, the canvas was spread, and they bade us goodbye, as they trimmed the yards and heeled a little to the breeze.

In the latter part of the summer holiday I went down to Somerset and returned after a couple of days at home, with Marjorie and the children, whom I was allowed to have staying on board with me for a few days. One reason for this was that the family of an Old Worcester had presented a font to the ship's chapel, and Emlyn, our Chaplain, was keen to 'Christen' it, so to speak, by having some Baptisms on board. I therefore arranged for David, our newest and youngest to be the first to use the new font, and to

Emlyn's great delight one or two other staff families asked to have their so far unchristened children done on the same day. Molly, our Matron, or Ship's Nurse, offered Marj her quarters, while she was away; our boys found empty bunks to sleep on, while Sheila shared with Marj and David. I think that 'Jan', the training officer, looked after the ship for me for a couple of days while I took the family home again, and I did a couple of days for him during his 'duty' period.

Sometime in 1963, after a conference at home, we decided it would be sensible if we sold our Glastonbury house, and bought one close to the Worcester. On making enquiries I found that there were some pleasant houses at reasonable prices available in Gravesend, so during my free time I started to view one or two. When I found what I considered would be a very suitable semi-detached house for 4000 pounds, with a 6% mortgage, I asked Molly to come and have a look at it with me, as Marj was too far away; she did, and was most helpful and approved of the house. We then bought it, and having put the house in Somerset on the market, moved in during the Christmas holidays.

The Gravesend house proved very convenient, there was bedroom space for us all, two sitting rooms as well as dining room and kitchen and a garage in the back garden. We had not been there very long when the agents informed us that they had sold the house in Glastonbury for 4000 pounds so that was very good news. The other great convenience was being able to drive to work in twenty minutes, or if necessary catch a bus to Greenhithe, and then walk the short distance down to the Worcester causeway. In the meantime routine on the ship continued as usual. We seemed to be seeing even less of Freddie now, his teaching course was keeping him pretty busy and I was therefore much occupied with maintenance of the ship, and I took seamanship classes in signals, for about an hour a day, and of course there was always the running of the ship's boats to be unobtrusively supervised.

The cadet acting as Officer of the Watch was directly responsible for the boat routine and many other things, but he needed someone to refer to when in doubt, this was the Duty Officer for the day, but as he was often busy, either taking a class, or supervising the messroom, he usually came to me, as my cabin and office adjoined the quarter deck.

One other little job that frequently came my way was taking staff ashore in the motorboat in the evening when the cadets were all doing 'prep' from 5.30 to 6.30.

I think it was in 1965 that the man who had been Headmaster since I had joined the staff, left us to take up some other appointment, and that Freddie decided to resign and become a full time teacher. After a short time the position of Headmaster was filled by the Senior Master, Joe Brew, and the Captain asked me to move, with my family, into the now empty flat in Ingress Abbey, and take over as Chief Officer; Joe would move into the other flat in the Abbey. Our eldest son, Richard, had already left home to serve for 9 years in the Royal Corps of Signals, and our daughter Sheila had married her Somerset boyfriend and gone to South Australia, where we would all meet again in a couple of years time.

It was rather pleasant, on the days I was not Duty Officer, to be able to go ashore in the evening, walk up to the Abbey and have a meal and relax for an hour or so before going back on board in time for evening prayers. After that I had time for a little work in my office, including seeing any cadet with requests, or for punishment. After which I could go ashore again, and walk home, usually via the Pier Hotel.

I have noticed though that when one finds life getting rather pleasant, something unfortunate often crops up to change things. I remember one evening I was accompanying the Captain on lower deck 'rounds'; this was an inspection of sleeping accommodation, and all the below decks work areas, during which all cadets, except the handful immediately concerned with rounds, were sent to 'slew' on the upper deck. 'Slewing' was an old custom whereby all except senior cadets had to link arms in groups of three or four, and walk round and round the deck in an anti-clockwise direction. This, of course, left all the lower deck free for inspection. The pairs of feet going round and round the upper deck made a fair amount of noise. On this evening there was a sudden hush as all the feet stopped; the Captain and I glanced at each other, and started to run for the upper deck. We were barely up the first ladder when there was a heavy thump higher up. On our arrival on deck we found that a senior cadet had fallen from aloft and landed on top of

the chartroom. He had been trying to get from the forestay, up which he had climbed, onto the platform at the top of the main lower mast, from where he could descend via the ratlines which are put in the rigging as steps for people to climb up or down. It seems his hands had slipped and he had lost his grip and fallen. The Captain had immediately left me in charge on deck while he ran down to his office and telephoned the doctor, who came at once, and our motor boat, which was already waiting for him, brought him straight aboard.

He examined the casualty where he had fallen, and pronounced him dead. The lad's body was then taken ashore to the waiting ambulance, and driven to the hospital. Then, of course, came the traumatic experience of the Coroner's inquest and related matters. We were fortunate that there were not only rules, including those about climbing the rigging, posted on the ship's noticeboard, but they were also read aloud to the assembled cadets by the Chief Officer at the beginning of every term.

A strict and busy routine is a great help in getting ship or school life back to normal, and though the event would not be forgotten we were all very soon back at work, and at least one silly custom that the foolish had tried to make tradition faded out.

We also had some quite pleasant social events during the period about which I write. I think it was the previous year that our rival H.M.S. Conway, now a shore based College in North Wales, having lost their ship in a fire at her berth in Menai Strait, brought both a rugby team and a rowing crew to Greenhithe to challenge us. They certainly beat us by a small margin at rugby, but the boat race was a very different matter, with Worcester winning the two mile race by over a quarter of a mile.

Then there was the day when the youngest daughter of my friend 'Jan', the training officer, got married, and we held the reception in one of the large ground floor rooms in Ingress Abbey. Another when a Rolls Royce car club paraded its vintage cars on our rugby fields. Then there was our personal one, when our son Richard stayed with us and celebrated his 21st birthday on leave after serving in Borneo and Malaya, before his new posting to West Germany. We had quite a party, and luckily some friends from Mafia Island turned up unexpectedly to share it. Another interesting event to take place on board, was the making of part of an Agatha Christie film, made while the cadets were away on Easter leave. We had to provide boats to and fro, and cabins for the cast. This included Margaret Rutherford, Lionel Jeffries, and William Mervyn. The latter incidentally had a son at the Nautical College at Pangbourne, so we chaffed him a bit. Being Easter it was pretty chilly in the morning, and I was grateful to the young lady playing the part of assistant matron, when she hitched up her skirt and produced a brandy flask from the top of her stocking so that the two of us could have a 'drop' to keep out the cold.

For the past couple of years or so we had been fortunate enough to have had an additional second officer on our strength, a man by the name of Evans. He had until recently been Captain of a small coaster, mainly engaged on the cross channel trade. His mother was not very well, having some long term illness, so he found life aboard Worcester, where he could go home two nights out of three after work, very convenient. He took classes in ship's business and general seamanship, and looked after the dinghy sailing club, which he had built up into a popular organisation.

In addition we were lucky enough to have a seagoing officer from a shipping company, usually either P & O or B.I.S.N. Co., loaned to us for a term or so at a time. Their experience was of considerable help to the cadets in their pre-sea days as they were currently employed Merchant Navy Officers, unlike many of us. As time rolled by and 1966 turned into 1967 rumours were circulating that the present type of pre-sea training was to change drastically. One that seemed to carry some weight was that cadets would spend about 3 months in a nautical college, then go to sea for 6 months or a year, then come back to college again for perhaps 6 months of intensive education then go back to sea again for another spell, and return to college again for a month or two before sitting for the Second Mate's Certificate of competence. A further strong rumour was that the fifty odd pre-sea training schools that existed in the British Isles would be reduced to twelve.

A believer in the saying that there is no smoke without a fire, I decided that at the age of forty nine I would do well to think about my future. After some discussion, Marj. and I decided that the sensible thing would be to speak to the captain and tell him of my thoughts, and that in view of Worcester's seemingly unsettled future, I felt I would be wise to resign. I did this, and he accepted my reasons, and said he would be sorry to lose me, as he thought we had got on well together. I told him I would like to leave at the end of the Christmas term, and that Marj. and I had decided to take the family to Australia as soon as possible after that. When I was free in the summer holidays, having already arranged for daughter Sheila and her husband to sponsor us, we went to London for an interview at Australia House to arrange matters.

In 1967 Australia still had it's 'keep Australia white' policy, and having come to London where train porters on the platforms were mainly West Indians, the bus drivers and conductors predominantly Asians, we felt this was a good idea. However on discovering that I had been born in Nairobi, Kenya, and that my mother was born in Madras, I think Australia House staff wondered how white I was. I explained that mother's father, who had been a cadet on H.M.S. Worcester in 1862, and gone to sea in the Merchant Navy, had later left the sea to take Holy Orders and become an Army Chaplain, and was serving under Lord Roberts in India when mother was born.

We had arranged for all our heavy luggage, and the 1935 Rolls that I now drove, to be sent to Adelaide by sea, and asked for a sea passage for ourselves and family. Australia House said they would do their best. During the last term of the year we had a number of small farewell parties at our flat. These were mainly for my fellow officers, and Molly the previous Matron, who had recently also left, and had been followed by another 'Matron', an Israeli I think. Anyhow she had spent time in Israel, including working in a kibbutz! Worcester had also found a replacement for me, an officer who had been mate on the 'Winston Churchill'.

## **Chapter 15**

### **"Down Under" Again**

Towards the end of January, 1968, I was rung up by someone at Australia House, who told me that there was a bit of difficulty getting a booking for our family by sea, but if we could be ready in 48 hours, they could put us on a Qantas flight, as there was one leaving with 7 spare seats. I replied, " yes, we can manage that", and so it was arranged. After a very hectic spell of packing and making arrangements, we all arrived at Heathrow Airport to be told there was a couple of hours delay in the take- off time of our Boeing 707 to Sydney because of a brake malfunction.

At last we boarded the aircraft, settled down in our allocated seats, and took off for Australia via Frankfurt, Cairo, Bahrain, and New Delhi, where an Indian opportunist was selling rugs. When one woman passenger offered to buy one, the vendor said, "but of course I must have your passport number," she said "but my passport is in a bag on the aeroplane". Oh vell" he replied, "just give me any number, any number at all vill do very vell". She left the rug and we took off again for Sydney via Bangkok and Singapore. A long and boring flight, during which Marjorie had to hold David for much of the time.

We landed in Sydney on Australia Day, and were supposed to board a connecting flight straight on to Adelaide. We were about last through Customs and were told our connecting flight had already left, but we had been rebooked on a flight to Adelaide at about 2pm.

On this one we were given seats in the 1st class as far as Melbourne, where we changed planes, and then tourist to our destination, where we landed in a temperature of 110 degrees Fahrenheit. We were met by Sheila and family, sister in law Doris, her daughter Janet and her husband Kosta - quite a gathering. We collected our luggage and were driven into the considerably cooler Adelaide Hills where we would stay for a few days with Sheila and Richard in their house at Charleston.

Within a few days we managed to find an unfurnished three bedroomed house in the town of Woodside, where we more or less camped out with borrowed odds and ends until we managed to buy a few essential

pieces of furniture, and a minimum of crockery etc. as our own was all aboard a ship somewhere between Adelaide and Tilbury Docks.

My first priority was find work, so I walked over to the pub near by, and after a few minutes asked whether there were any jobs going in the area. Someone asked what sort of work I was prepared to do. Pretty well anything that it is going I replied. Someone said he thought there was a job available as a steward at the army camp, and a corporal from there would probably come in shortly and I could ask him. It seemed he was on the camp staff. Anyway he turned up, and yes there was a job available for a steward in the Intelligence Corps mess. He said he would take me out there next morning to meet the R.S.M.

I was deemed suitable and began work as a mess steward at the basic rate of \$40.00 per week, but as we worked from 6am until a bit after 7pm, with a short break after lunch, we were paid a certain amount of overtime. While I was working up at the camp I kept my eyes open for a better job, and after about 3 months saw one advertised in Canberra, for someone with knowledge and experience of landing craft, so I applied for it. I received a telegram back asking Captain T. H. Morgan, care of the I. Corps, to come to the Dept. of Defence in Canberra for an interview and that a first class fare had been booked for me.

Off I went to the interview, and all went well except for the fact that because of the difference in English and Australian, or rather N.S.W. standards of education, I was asked to contact Adelaide University for a ruling on whether my certificates, including my tertiary education certificate as an associate of Camborne School of Mines, was up to the standard required for the Public Service. The day after I got back to Woodside I saw an advertisement for work with the National Fitness Council in Adelaide, basically as Chief Instructor for South Australia's Outward Bound Sea School. I applied straight away and was asked to attend for an interview, after which I resigned from my job as a steward at the Intelligence Corps mess, and started work as a Field Officer for the National Fitness Council, with the responsibilities of conducting Outward Bound courses, and as camps officer for the N.F.C youth camps.

In the meantime I wrote to the two kind senior officers who had talked to me in Canberra, thanking them for seeing me, and explained that because of the confusion about educational standards and the time it would take to get a ruling, I had now started work for the N.F.C. of South Australia.

After I had been working for the Fitness Council for a week or two, the Director told me that a new Outward Bound course was due to start at Clayton on Lake Alexandrina in a few days, and he wished me to go there for the duration of the course and assist the present O.B. Warden, who would be leaving at the end of the course, and who's place I would be taking. He told me to take one of the N.F.C. vehicles, and return it at the end of the course.

I packed the rough working clothes I expected to need, took a sleeping bag and a rucksack, said goodbye to Marjorie and the family and off I went. That course had 16 young men on it, and we totaled the Warden and 4 instructors including myself, who had never taught on an O.B. course before, though that was not important as my main responsibility would be sailing the 32 foot naval cutters. In addition, I had to make myself fully aware of the routine and customs if I was to take over the running of the school at the end of this 23 day course. The thing that concerned me a little was the much repeated statement that we undertook our various expeditions, irrespective of the weather conditions. This course was being run in mid-winter; not the time for sailing in some weather conditions. However I thought I would try. My first expedition was to take half the students, one watch of 8, first down a sheltered portion of the lake, to Point Sturt, where we would camp the night, and in the morning sail across the lake to the small town of Milang, distinctive because of the two water towers that stood above it on the lake shore. The morning greeted us with a 50 mph westerly gale. After a quick breakfast, we brought the cutter close in shore, where there was a little shelter, and I supervised the unrigging of the normal mainsail and foresail, and the rigging of the small storm foresail, and our triangular storm mainsail in their stead. One young man went up into the bows, and stationed himself as look-out, I took the tiller, and got a couple of hands to sit by the running backstays which might well need slackening off or hauling taut as the day progressed, but in fact with our small triangular mainsail we hardly needed to touch them, and we beat our way out into the lake, and the full force of the 40 to 50 knot westerly that was blowing. Lake Alexandrina being a large expanse of shallow

water, average depth about seven feet, the waves in a strong blow soon built up into short and steep seas. Our thirty two foot long cutter would teeter on the crests until she passed her point of balance and then would crash down into the trough, and fortunately rise again to the next wave. All our crew, except look-out and myself, were very soon seasick, and I began to wonder how long the vessel would stand the punishment of crashing into the troughs before any of her planks split. I kept her as hard up into the wind as possible, and after a long 5 hour beat on the port tack we crept into the lee of Milang town and tied up at the jetty, where we were met by a relieved O.B. Warden, with dry sleeping bags in his car for my group, who soon recovered from seasickness, had a quick meal, and set off on the walking part of their expedition.

I remained at Milang, camping out in the cutter that night, and in the morning collected the other 'watch' of students, when they hiked in during the morning. The gale had now moderated to a pleasant breeze, so we had a quiet sail back to Clayton, arriving in good time for tea.

Our normal routine, when not out on expeditions, would be to meet outside the sleeping huts at 6 a.m., have a few minutes of loosening up exercises, run down to the boat jetty, and dive in for a swim, jog back to the huts and dress. The cooking watch would set the table and get the breakfast, after which the cleaning watch would sweep up, and hose down the ablutions block, the water watch would see that the pump near the boat house was running and filling the overhead tank by the school, while the maintenance watch attended to anything else that had to be done. We then assembled for a prayer and a reading, the orders for the day followed, and the various groups went about them.

One party might be out canoeing all day, another learning knots for an hour and then perhaps off on a map reading exercise which may involve ten miles or so of walking and so on. We would all meet back at the school by 4p.m. when everyone would go for a three mile cross country run, after this came a hot shower followed by tea, and then a general clean up, and at seven we would meet in the lecture room for the evening activities. First a post-mortem on the day's events, then perhaps 2 minute lecturettes, followed by various competitive events, a hot drink by 9 p.m. and off to bed with lights out at 10 p.m.

The course on which we were engaged ended with its two longish expeditions, involving both hiking and cutter sailing in two groups covering a more or less circular route, around which one half of the students went clockwise, while the others traveled the opposite way. The groups finally got back after a few minor mishaps, like being unable to lower the drop-keel in the cutter, but nothing serious. After debriefings and farewells they all went home. The warden and his family also departed, and after going home for a night, I was back at the school, and in charge of it, to welcome the class of first year Police Cadets, who with their cook and two instructors arrived for their ten day course on the Monday.

My first job of course was to meet the instructors, and suggest a program that I had already prepared. I explained that as this was the first of the 'Police Cadet' courses, and of limited duration, we would have to be prepared to improvise and alter things as necessary. They had both been on an O.B. course in the past, and seemed to think the program I had outlined would make a very good basis on which to work. The cook who came with them was an older and experienced constable, who had apparently suffered a slight injury some time before in the 'mounted branch' and now did a number of perhaps less demanding duties. He fed us all very well. Later on we reduced the Police courses to one week each, altered the format a little, and ran ten of them a year.

Later still I managed to recruit 'John' as a permanent Chief Instructor for the Outward Bound school. He had attended one in England, done various other adventure activities, and was a keen sailor, while I worked mainly in Adelaide for the National Fitness Council, and also had the grandiose title of Executive Director Outward Bound South Australia.

Much of my time was spent visiting the various youth camps, as well as some of the youth hostels belonging to the Youth Hostels Association, whose office was next to our own, and with whom we worked fairly closely. These visits included trips to properties more distant from Adelaide which had no resident staff; like the camp near Wirrabara, the one at Woolshed Flat, a few miles from Port Augusta, and the

Y.H.A. hostel at Terka Siding near Wilmington. These expeditions usually meant taking the Toyota Landcruiser, with our large self propelled Honda lawn mower loaded in the back, together with various hand tools for doing some rough carpentry if it was required. Now and then, Terry, one of my fellow Field Officers, whose main task was to build up a network of walking tracks, and later the Heysen Trail, would accompany me. I also spent some of my time helping him with the walking tracks. In addition, there was some promotional work to do for Outward Bound; this mostly took the form of talks to Service clubs at their various meetings.

I still managed however to get down to the O.B. school at Clayton from time to time, firstly to continue to supervise the short courses that we were running for Police cadets, and later for some schools, and then to hand over to John, who as I mentioned earlier was to take over as Chief Instructor. Just before he did we ran a full Outward Bound course together. This was a course for young men, though we later ran mixed courses.

At this time while I lived at Clayton, I lived in the previous Warden's house, while John slept in one of the instructor's cabins in the main building. We used to have a certain amount of difficulty in finding a cook to help us out during standard O.B. courses. On this last one that I ran with John's help, and that of two other young instructors, I managed to get a cook through one of the women's organisations in Adelaide. She turned out to be a middle aged widow, who was a capable cook and very, very English. I think our students found her speech and mannerisms quite hilarious. I decided the easiest way to solve the accommodation problem was to give her one of the empty rooms in the fairly spacious house in which I was sleeping, so she moved in with her suitcase and bedsheets etc., rather more luxurious than my old sleeping bag on a hard bed. Gradually she became more used to us, and the sort of activities of an O.B. school. One day as she was walking over to the school, she saw John and sang out, "look at all them ducks flying about up there." He replied "those aren't ducks Mrs. B, those are pelicans." "Oh, I didn't know pelicans could fly high up like that" she said. "Oh yes" John answered, "and just watch them come and land on the lake, they look like small Sunderland flying boats coming in." "Cool, now I know you are having me on", and on she went to the kitchen.

A couple of weeks later she stopped by my open door as she came back from having a bath, and said, "I feel much better here now, when I first came I didn't know what to expect, used to lock my door at night and put a chair under the handle. I don't do that any more though I just leave it unlocked." "That", I said, "sounds almost like an invitation." "Oh well", she replied, "see you later". A little later I thought I had better go and investigate, so I rolled out of my sleeping bag and strolled to her half open door, and tapped, and she said what can I do for you? I replied that I thought I'd been invited. Yes she said, I think you were; I certainly felt very steamed up and 'raunchy' after that hot bath, come in and talk to me. A little later I said it is rather cold in here, to which she replied, "you better get into bed then and warm up." It seemed good advice, and after about an hour, as she had to get up early to do the cooking, I returned to my own bed. From then on until the course ended, and I drove her home, nightly visits became a regular habit for my pleasure and her expressed satisfaction, for as she said, it was a long time since she had lost her husband.

Once I was working in Adelaide, rumours began to circulate that the N.F.C. would be closing down, and its functions taken over by the Department of Recreation and Sport, and our staff would be employed by that body. The rumour soon became fact, and it was not long before we were tidying up the stores, and getting rid of much of the old and rather decrepit N.F.C. camping gear to various groups like Scouts and Youth hostels, though we managed to keep some of the things that Terry would find useful on his preparation of walking tracks. We soon left our offices on South Terrace and moved into the Department's new offices in Grenfell Street, in the hub of the city. I had to relinquish my job as Executive Director of Outward Bound, which was taken over by Bob who had just retired as Superintendent of Police and who had been associated with the O.B. school for many years as a member of the management committee. Sad to say his wife died of cancer a year or two later.

I now found myself looking after the various camps, including booking of them by various schools and other groups, as well as any other jobs that were pushed on to me. One of these was run a short course for a mixed group on bushcraft, based this time on our Mylor camp with extensive bush covered grounds.

I had to teach them direction finding, both by map and compass, and by observing every day items, like sun, wind, various stars and constellations; how to prepare a small tin full of made up and easily lit 'tinder', so that they could light a fire by striking a spark into it using a flint and a bit of steel, instead of using matches. Then we cooked damper and so on and I told them a bit about looking after themselves in the bush. It appeared that they quite enjoyed it, and found it useful.

Towards the end of 1978, my 60th birthday was rapidly approaching and with it my retirement, for as an ex-serviceman I was eligible to retire at that age. A little before it, three of us who worked together at the Department of Recreation and Sport took a weeks leave, and taking my caravan, went north, first to Melrose, so that my companions, who were both more than 20 years younger than me, could climb Mt. Remarkable. Next day we went on to Quorn from where it was a short run to the foot of the Devil's Peak in the Pitchie Richi pass, which they also wished to climb. I accompanied them to the foot of the final steep and rocky climb; we then went on next morning and parked our caravan in the park at Stirling North, and drove south to the Mambray Creek National Park, where we all climbed the black hill, reversing the recommended route, so that we ascended to the summit by the very steep direct route. We then made a leisurely descent along the long ridge that runs from just below the summit in a westerly direction towards Spencer Gulf, and ends close to Mambray Creek.

Next day we moved to York Peninsular, lunched at Port Broughton, and went on to camp in the caravan park at Kadina. From here we visited the various old tin mines around Moonta; I had a nostalgic look at Wallaroo, and saw a number of old photos of the Abram Ryberg in the Museum, before we returned to Adelaide next morning.

Once back in Adelaide I made arrangements, having joined the Returned Services League of Australia, for my service pension to be paid to me and Marjorie by the Department of Veterans Affairs. On my 60th birthday I retired from the Department of Recreation and sport.

I - Colin Thurlow OW have added some pictures and links (Feb 2010) by kind permission of Keith Broderick OW.

The pictures of Hugh's family in Kenya, the one of Hugh on board Worcester II and the one taken in Australia on the sofa were supplied by Keith Broderick OW

Some of the other pictures came from my Merchant Navy/Worcester/Life Web Site [Here](#)