

Leonard Francis Cuthbert Knight RAPC



L.F.C. Knight RAPC

The years from the end of the 1st World War on the 11th hour of the 11th day of the eleventh month in 1918 until 3 September 1939 were those of recovery by our country and its inhabitants both mentally and physically. The recovery had not been totally completed before the maelstrom of 1939-45 overtook the countries of the world. We still had memories of the horrors endured which had left an attitude of peace at any price, exemplified in the policy of Neville Chamberlain, Prime Minister in those days at the crucial time.

Unfortunately this attitude was a fact known to our future adversaries and as history relates led to incident after incident leading up to the point of the far and no further. Many in the country had attempted to form Anglo-German friendships in their sincere hope that relationships would improve. Pacifists abounded but to no avail.

So once more we accepted the challenge and the years which followed were the demarcation between former ways of life and those of today. Morally standards have changed and materialism has become an end sought by the majority.

I had reached the age of 27 when hostilities commenced, a clerk at the Birmingham Electric Supply Department. The future in the expanding business looked good but prospects were denied over the war period, which lasted until demobilisation in 1946, at my age of 33. A fresh start had to be made.

Many of our staff were members of the Territorial Army. These were immediately posted to the Forces. Although a no volunteering rule was imposed several left for the R.A.F. Official requests for R.A.O.C personnel resulted in several departing for that branch of the forces. With myself working on civilian pay duties the R.A.P.C. became my destination.

From the 5th Nov 1940 for over five years I was a member of the Armed Forces. Shrewsbury was the first depot, where a detachment of the R.A.P.C. was stationed. It was real November weather, bleak and dreary, with the town almost surrounded by floods from the swollen River Severn. In keeping with the weather it was personally a dreary time with several inoculations and vaccination which did not help.

We were billeted with civilian families, myself with a household near to the Abbey Church, containing husband, wife and young children. His trade was that of a farm wagon maker. The skill of his craft was displayed by an example on his premises. Farm wagons have ever since gone up in my estimation for I learnt of the skill which went into their construction. For a while acclimatization to the new conditions became the main concern. I remember our first assembly in civilian clothes, a motley crowd with cardboard boxes containing our gas masks.

We sat at long tables for our first meal, the majority wearing spectacles, one humorist remarking that we looked more like an opticians re-union than an Army intake. Those responsible seemed to be at a loss to know what to do with us and found all sorts of odds and ends to occupy our time. We went around clearing up litter and marched around suburbs to fill in time. Visits to stores were made, where civilian clothes were replaced by Army Uniform. Little did we know this was to be our everyday wear for many years. Very little Pay Office work was done in those first weeks. Lectures and so on were attended. After duty we had opportunity to get to know Shrewsbury, a fascinating small provincial town. After about six weeks we were considered fit and attuned for more serious and useful duties. We were then dispersed to those Pay Offices rapidly expanding and needing more personnel.

I was posted to Ilfracombe and it became a winter and spring by the sea-side but very much different conditions in peace-time. Initiation into the mysteries of Pay Office work began.

Many fellow workers were from Birmingham and had learnt how to cope with the situation. Birmingham was a long way off seemingly unattainable, but ways and means were found for unofficial visits. In Ilfracombe no taxis were available at week-ends as several would combine and hire them for the long trip to their home town or to the nearest main line station at Exeter.

All hotels in the town had been commandeered. Three of the most prominent, The Ilfracombe, The Imperial and The Dulkusha were used as Pay Offices, and others for the Pioneer Corps who were also stationed in the town. Some of the better placed and higher classed hotels were used for officers quarters. We were billeted in the smaller places, cafes and small guest houses and so on. Wives could live with their husbands and several including myself enjoyed this occasion. Our honeymoon, the 17th Jan 1941 was at Ilfracombe whilst a member of the RAPC. We travelled down from Birmingham in complete pitch dark conditions by rail and on arriving at Ilfracombe were greeted by the sight of the monster fires from enemy air raids across the Bristol channel in South Wales. I was at first billeted with about fifteen others in a terraced house off High Street which in peace time was a smaller type of guest house. Newcomers were always allocated to the front bedroom down. I thought this excellent until I found it was an arrangement to answer the front door to let in others any time up to well after midnight.

Amongst the duties were fire-watching and guard duties. For fire-watching we were allowed to remain in our billets but on the sounding of the sirens were to proceed in all haste to our place of duty. This theory did not work for reasons of sleep interfering with hearing and eventually the plan was abandoned.

Guard duties were performed, all dressed up, at the hotels we used as offices. Mine was on the sea front and the two hour stretches were spent whatever the weather patrolling the terraces facing the sea, and thinking how these same terraces would have contained the holiday makers of former days enjoying summer sunshine and sea breezes. It was no wonder

we always said that we never wanted to see Ilfracombe again. There would be snow on the surrounding hills but none came at sea level only the cold and damp conditions.

In the hotels used as Pay Offices the former smallish bedrooms were used as offices each having a small fire-place for heating. It was so cold no scruples were made in using anything burnable. There was a coal store in the basement and a newcomers job was to keep the coal bucket full. The coal had become no more than leavings of dust. Our fire had become no more than smouldering heaps of dust. Our section of three was in the top storey room of the Ilfracombe Hotel.



Outside day-time duties attempts were made in activities of varying sorts. Welshmen were amongst our company and a choir of sorts was formed which I joined. We practised various items, well known to them, and were asked to sing at a local National Savings effort in a local church and after sitting on the stage whilst local dignitaries spoke were not even asked to sing. Obviously we were there for effect, ornaments on the stage.

As better weather conditions approached on off duty occasions we enjoyed a Spring time in Devon, walking many miles in the surrounding valleys and exploring the sea coast, together with my wife who had joined me in Ilfracombe lodgings.



Royal Warwickshire Regiment 15 February 1940

Her brother was with the R. Warws Regt and had a mortar course on Braunton Dunes near Barnstaple. He was able to visit us and ourselves to visit him, making a welcome interlude from our Army duties.



Weekend in Barnstaple

Our stay in Ilfracombe came to an end after about six months when I was transferred to the Reading Pay Office, and where was found a more serious aspect. By now I had become a more knowledgeable and useful member of the Royal Army Pay Corps.

At Reading conditions were very different. It is difficult to define what we were. We were soldiers combined with civilians, home guard with women's A.T.S. In addition to office work we were also trained as infantry, thereby became jack of all trades.



RAPC Reading 1942

There were the usual guard duties, fire watching, week end camps, range practice on the Berkshire Downs, physical training with cross country runs, swimming and lectures. Never a dull moment. It was much of an occasion to have any free time. Night duties were performed at short intervals of three to four days. We were in a vital area. Rifles or Sten guns we carried at all times. The area was vital and raiders and flying bombs were around, and on one occasion a lone raider made our main office at Balmore his target. Very different indeed from Ilfracombe.

To make things more difficult our offices were scattered around the town. At the centre was Friar Street and the Corn Exchange. We had offices at Huntley and Palmers and school buildings. The main office was at Balmore a large house with single storey places erected in



its grounds, where I remember the walnut tree and the luxury of fresh walnuts and the hedgehogs we watched on night time guard duty. My wife was able to again join me and we had rooms at Tilehurst. She was conscripted for work at Gascoignes milking machine makers and then at Goodenoughs corn merchants. Her brother was stationed in the South of the country. When taking his Bren gun carrier to Oxford he broke his journey at Reading, staying the night and leaving his too obvious armoured vehicle in the road outside. He and his wife were married in Handsworth in the 16th Oct 1943. We all travelled back to Reading where they spent a short honeymoon with us.

It was at Reading that I became a minor casualty. An iron radiator fell across my foot breaking a couple of bones. For two or three weeks I was in hospital a converted school. My leg was encased in plaster. It took several

months to heal properly but did not excuse me from Army duties.

The day came when I found my name on the list of those to be posted overseas. After embarkation leave, London became the assembly place conveniently for us near to Paddington Station. Many would slip through the red-caps (Military Policemen) to enjoy a last weekend at home. The kit was issued necessary for the climate at our unknown destination. Guesses were made from the shorts and denim type slacks with which we were supplied. One clue which greatly intrigued our small group was the inclusion of a tin opener exclusive to us. Not one of us guessed Malta where such gadgets were a 'must'. We only knew for sure when we were well on the way.

London to Greenock

We remained in London from the 27 Oct until 1 Nov 1944. London and its tense atmosphere from flying bombs and the rigours of the war-time city was left behind when we boarded the packed troop train for the twelve hour night time journey. Due to the cramped condition the occupants of our carriage (the tin opener squad) took it in turns to rest in the luggage rack which surprisingly was reasonably comfortable.

There was quite a variety of troops on the train. Naval men and WRNS, marines, a mixture of members of varying Army Regiments, Maltese, a mixture of all sorts bound for all sorts of foreign destinations. In the early hours of the morning I remember looking out somewhere over the damp misty moors of the Southern Uplands and seeing in the mist a shepherd standing immobile against the background of heather. His was a different life to that of thousands of us.

At about midday we reached Greenock and straightaway were put on the tender awaiting to take us out to the transport ship anchored off-shore. The tender to me appeared so large I almost wondered if we were to be taken to some other port, but it turned out to be only the short journey to the “Highland Monarch” an ex-refrigeration boat converted for troop carrying. It had been one of a fleet used on the S. American trade for meat imports. We were anchored for three days and one of the nights a storm blew up. Then there was the noise of the wind, the crew shouting, the rattling of chains. All this made us apprehensive of possible storms at sea with the rolling of the ship and the commotion taking place when we were only anchored in a reasonably sheltered place.



HMS Birmingham

But we were to learn next morning that our boat had dragged its anchors and almost went aground off Dunoon. There might have been awkward consequences.

It was a sobering sight at Greenock to see long files of Navy lads who had been rounded up after their revels in port. All young lads handcuffed together singing, laughing, joking and larking about not at all dejected. Who could blame them for their respite from the strict discipline and rigours of life at sea. We had to keep in mind that it was due to them that the life of the country itself was assured. In spite of their onshore abandonment's they were looked upon with pride. Many would not return and to make the most of these free occasions could be understood.

During our three days off Greenock, a more serious aspect was brought home to us by the issue of survival rations, a red battery operated light and an inflatable life belt. There were always to be carried or immediately available. It was quite a time before we found our way around the boat. Staircases and corridors everywhere. The Army personnel were allocated three tier bunks. The navy had hammocks. My place was at the bottom of a staircase which I at first thought good but turned out different as the nearby ventilation fan was always working making sleep difficult. The smell of diesel oil pervaded throughout. In my ramblings I found what I thought was a quiet place but was again thwarted on being told my quiet corner was outside the ships mortuary. We were closely quartered but comfortable. Food rations were good with bread baked on board. Luxuries from the ship's shop were available, cigarettes (100 for 1/6 - one shilling and sixpence) sweets, pipes, fountain pens and so on. Cleaning up was done each day with the captain and colonel's inspection. Rifles deposited in the armoury were cleaned by those on that duty rosta. No letters could be despatched until our destination was reached. More detailed memories are given in the following pages in Leonard Knight's Diary Extracts.



HMS Ark Royal

Diary Extracts – Greenock

Saturday 4 Nov 1944: Still in harbour, very rough, cold wind, rain and choppy sea. More shipping collecting together. Final inspection and checking up. Ship's library open 3-4 pm. Newspapers whilst in harbour. Boat drill with preservers and water bottles. Radio inter-com, throughout boat. Ship about 14,000 tons and top speed 14 knots.

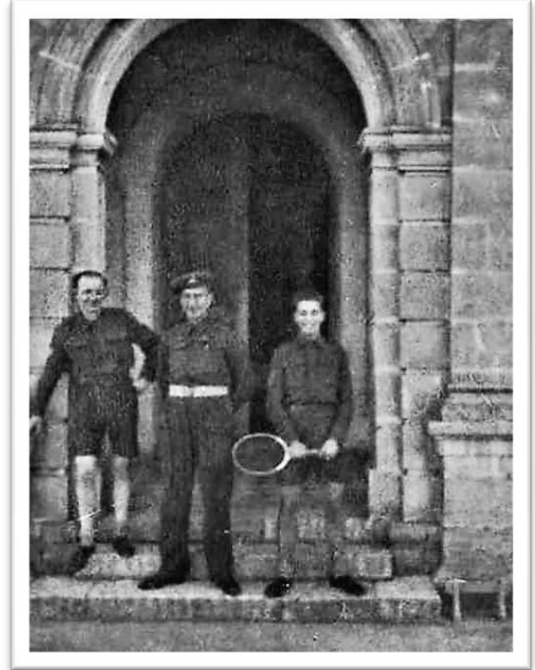
Sunday 5 Nov 1944: Three days aboard. View of mountains with snow. Ben Lomond, Loch Long, Dunoon. Many troops and navy at sea for first time. Four years today in Army completed. Rat and cockroaches reported to be in lower parts. Book from Library "The Hideous Dummy" by Gerald Kersh. Spoke to a Medical Corps orderly who had been a repatriated prisoner with service Matla, Trepoli, Cairo, Haifa, Heros. Captured at Leros, intercepted by Navy, taken to Brindisc and repatriated to England. Now going out again after volunteering.

Monday 6 Nov 1944: Still in harbour. The "Stirling Castle" lying astern. Exercise on boat deck. One loaf each day and butter. Apple yesterday, bacon, egg, porridge for breakfast, Shipping agent put ashore. Most troops in bed in afternoon. Cup of tea at 4.00 pm. Safety lights on rafts come on when raft is in water. No port holes on our deck, very stuffy.

Tuesday 7 Nov 1944: 6th day on boat. No date for sailing. Popular tune being hummed or whistled "All day and far away". On mess orderly duty. Wait with Jixies for meals, take and dish out and wash up. Fresh and salt water on board. Fresh water limited to certain times, salt water any time. Steam pipes in mess for heating water. Still more snow on mountains. F.F.I. inspection. Queues for everything, library, barber, shop, soft drinks, cards in evening. Difficult to get sight of a newspaper.

Wednesday 8 Nov 1944: 7th day on boat. Wintry weather. Three meals a day and bed. All sorts of tales as to where we are going. Haircut after ½ hour in queue. Sea much calmer. One week since coming on board.

Thursday 9 November 1944: On the way, starting at 5.20 am. Passed Alsai Crag a magnificent rock, straight up out of the sea. Shape of a triangle to a great height. Then down St. Georges Channel opposite Belfast. Sea rough, snow on mountains of Ireland. Picked up more ships for the convoy in St. George's channel. Passed the Isle of Man and then off N. Wales coast 6.30pm. Some sea sick, myself escaped. Ship rolled at times but sea much less rough. Hints to avoid sea sickness, eat plenty of bread, fresh air, not much to drink. Concert in afternoon. Good for what it was. Singers, comedian, trumpet player, sailors dressed as Wrens. Ship shudder from its engines, horrible continual noise from ventilating fans. Strange to be part of a convoy such as we have only formerly seen on pictures. Joke: *Anybody seen Chalky? Chalky who Chalky White who comes from Dover and has a brother "Cliff"*.



Sgt West and Sgt Thomson

Friday 10 November 1944: Sailed past Scilly Isles about 4.00 pm Sea slight but with a big swell. Small birds flying alongside. Saw a Sunderland flying boat in the morning. The "Capetown Castle" in front of us and a sister ship "Highland Princess" opposite. Temperature up 8 degrees since yesterday. Sweets and tobacco today. Issue us a pear each. Some cigars available. Pipe tobacco issued to Navy but not to Army troops, but could buy it from those who did not want it. Warmer and clear. Ships look like black monsters. Foam as ship cuts through waves reflecting diamond sparkles. Many with headaches and dizzy feelings of sorts. Many Navy men out on a 2 ½ year draft.

Saturday 11 November 1944: Open sea all day, warm sunshine and calm sea. Felt rather unsteady. Small birds still with us. They say we covered 249 miles in 24 hours. "Tombola" played at certain times. Sat on 'D' deck in sunshine in afternoon. Gun and fire practise by crew. Now three days at sea.

Sunday 12 November 1944: Beautiful day, not a cloud in the sky. Saw a lighthouse in the distance, possibly Cape St. Vincent. Small birds still with us. Same ships and escort still with us all steadily gliding along. Not dark until 6.45 pm. Free meals, beautiful weather, cheap cigarettes, comfortable beds, but horrible ventilation fans and smell of diesel oil.

Monday 13 November 1944: Change of course now due east. One ship dropped off for Lisbon. Another cloudless day with brilliant sunshine. One or two birds still with us. Packed away pullover and gloves. Library Book "The Case of the Missing Nursemaid" by Philip Macdonald. A lance-corporal, a regular soldier batman to G.O.C. Malta, travelling out to join his boss who had flown out five weeks ago. Cases of theft cropping up. Questions of altering clocks. Oranges for tea. Bugle sounds Reveille at 6.30 am but no-one take any notice. Breakfast 7.30 - 8.00, dinner 12.00, supper 6.00 pm. Sea still calm. Sighted land in dim distance at about 4.00 pm, the North African Coast. The sea journey might be out into the Atlantic and then back to avoid possible mines off-shore, and other ways for attack.

Tuesday 14 November 1944: Passed through Straights of Gibraltar about 3.00 am. Did not see the Rock. Convoy in single file through the narrows. Reformed off the coast of Morocco visible in the distance and the Atlas mountains. Gun practice in morning ante-aircraft and firing at a smoke target in the sea. Due to disembark on Friday. Mediterranean Sea like a lake much less rough than the Atlantic. Late afternoon quite close to N. African shore past Algiers. Navy changed into white tops i.e. white coverings to hats and white singlets. Hot sunshine today. Listened to 6.00 pm news. Slow progress on nearly all fronts.

Wednesday 15 November 1944: Sailed past Tunis and Bizzierta close to coast. Could see hills and houses plainly. Sea less calm with the ship rolling a bit. Cool at night very hot by day. Reformed into single file. Talked to Maltese. They had been on a course in England and had visited many towns and works. Fifteen weeks in England visiting G. Heath Ltd, Austin and Morris Lucas's etc.

Thursday 16th November 1944: Passed close to the island – Pantellaris. Very rugged, many houses, white blobs and visible from a great distance, handed in safety lights, life belts, emergency rations. Rifles with drawn from armoury. Beautiful day, cool wind. Wrote letters. More activity on board. Airman's empty rubber dingy floated past.

Arrived at Malta – First few weeks

Friday 17th November 1944: Entered Grand Harbour, Valetta after dropping off the convoy. Pilot came on board at 7.30 am. Massive walls and buttresses. Everything a light yellow colour. No rivers or lakes very desert like. Glare from sunshine very bad. Off boat at 10.00 am. No trees but some shrubs. Curious gondolas for water travel and small horse taxis with bells. Air raid damage everywhere. Fruit on sale locally grown lemons, pomegranates, green bananas and oranges. Steep streets up from the harbour driven through the rock in places. Many locals bare-footed. Pretty children black hair, dark eyes and complexion. Stone buildings with balconies. Cultivated plots between the stone walls. Goats in the scrub. No green grass, some tough yellowish growth resembling it. Pay office and barracks at St. George's Bay. Signing forms and so on. Sent cable back. Went down to Sliema in evening to pictures. Supper and back for 11.30 pm. No blackout.



Grand Harbour Malta

Saturday 18th Nov 1944: A little pay office work. Maltese and English money, same value. Sliema and back. Garrison Hall to cinema. Spencer Tacy and Heddy Lamar in “I take this woman”

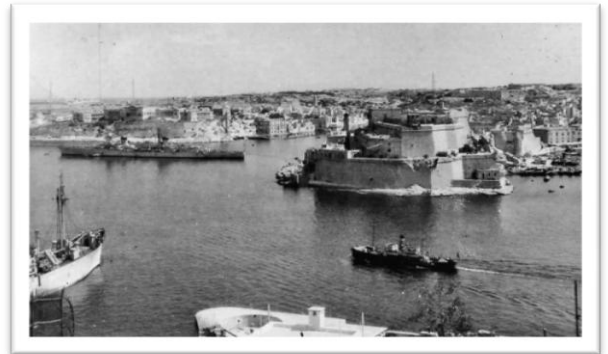
Sunday 19th Nov 1944: Tennis am, cleaning personal equipment in afternoon. Garrison pictures “Time to kill” with Ralph Byrd etc.

Monday 20 Nov 1944: Pay Office until 4.30 pm. Usual pay office work. Letters in evening.



Command Pay Office St George's Barracks

Tuesday 21 Nov 1944: Usual pay work. Heavy soaking dew at night caused by the “Sirocco Wind”. A hot dry wind from the deserts of Africa crossed the sea and becomes laden with moisture condensing when it meets land. Maltese Army personnel, civilians and ourselves work together on the accounts of the Royal Maltese Artillery mostly. Only Victorian pennies are used on the island. Pictures in evening Mickey Rooney in “Girl Crazy”. Arguments about length of stay. Willing to bet it would be Xmas 1945. Note: it turned out to be Jan 1946



Grand Harbour Malta

Wed 22 Nov 1944: Work, Inoculation against typhus. Visited Toc H at Sliema. Back 8.15 pm. Table tennis, reading, writing. A Maltese corporal who described conditions in peace time which were much more strict. Shops all lit up, and harbour fronts gay with lights and music.

Thur 23 Nov 1944: Toc H Sliema, whist drive. A tall five storied house with palm trees in the court. Tea available first thing am. Turns to go to the canteen to fetch it also turns to put out lights at 11pm

Fri 24 Nov 1944: Work. Asked to set out a Xmas card for use on an air mail paper. Short notice but managed two.

Sat 25 Nov 1944: Received first air letter in reply to cable. Stencil of Xmas card pm. Valetta impressive with all its lights.

Sun 26 Nov 1944: St. George's Bay pm. Clear blue water with fish, no sea gulls, Letters, reading etc.

Mon 27 Nov 1944: Work boring, very, very damp air. Roads soaked but no fog. Smells of all sorts due to damp.

Tues 28 Nov 1944: Kit checked. Propaganda film pm Island bells started 4.00 am finished at 7am for special mass. Saw a robin yesterday. A shop called "The Birmingham Stores" in Sliema. Donald Duck cartoon "Billposters". First rain since arriving.



Inside Barrack Block

Wed 29 Nov 1944: Letters and Xmas cards sent.

30 Nov 1944: Toc H Music on records. Beethoven, Grieg etc. (Note Routine letters, pay work omitted from here. Items of interest only included.)

Fri 1 Dec 1944: Sampled local wine "Ham, tut". Very strong and rough.

Sat 2 Dec 1944: Visit to Valetta, massive rock forts, many creeks and inlets with Naval Vessels. HQ of navy signals deep down in underground offices near to the Castille manned by WRNS. Old man and young boy, guitar and violin played on the ferry boat. A large variety of wines and spirits in the shops. Anisette, cherry brandy, rum, whisky, Marsala, French brandy, Cyprus brandy and so on.

Sun 3 Dec 1944: Best day so far. Changed into shorts and walked about 16 miles. Started at 9am with seven of eight others. Food collected from canteen and went places named below:-

St. Andrews, Birkirkara, Balza, Lia, Altara, St. Anton Gdns (the governors palace) Boschetto gardens and Rabat. Back via Verdala Palace.



Valletta

Houses like large pill boxes, small square windows very simply constructed. At the centre of each village dominated by very large R.C. churches, cathedral like in proportion. Houses lit by oil and candles. Roads all yellowy white in colour, stone walls with prickly pear hedges at times. Quarries on the hill near the barracks. Deep and shallow, the shallow cultivated. Soil only about 2 ft deep.

Centre of villages one or two decent places. Outskirts very dirty and smelly. Plain and very simple, built to give maximum protection from the sun. Flat roofs on which massive gourds/melons are ripened. Coffee in a bar at Birkirkara. Flies everywhere.

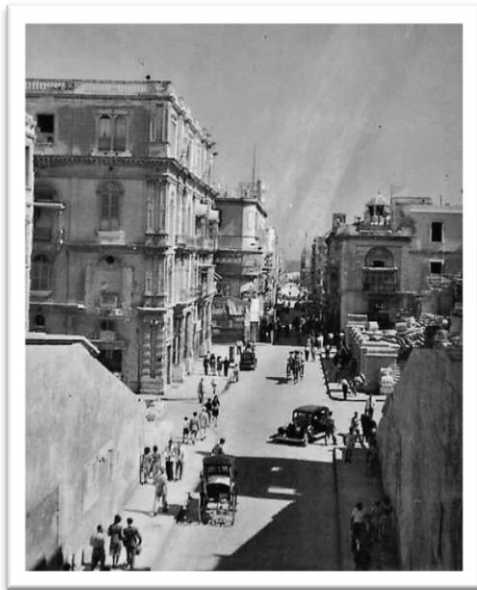


Rabat

On to Rabat for our sandwiches eaten in a bar with appropriate drinks. Rabat is near the sea on a hill top. Was the old fortified capital. Usual massive walls, narrow streets very medieval in appearance. Went in St. Antons gardens en route. Marvellous gardens with oriental fruits, shrubs, trees, flowers. Saw the first sight of oranges, lemons, grapefruit growing on the small trees. Other trees palms, figs, pomegranates. Bougonvilleas in flower with their wonderful scent. No grass. Wonderful gardens to find in an almost desert like island. On the walk melons/gourds were so big only one could be put on their donkey carts. Herds of goats following their owners. Donkey and pony cart. Saw a trotting contest. Ponies small and decorated. Broccoli a speciality in the small fields. Sampled a prickly pear. Juicy and red with woody seeds. Passed Verdala Palace. Orange glades in Boschetto gardens. Natives poor in. English mostly using their own Maltese language based it is said on the ancient Phoenician. Children drink the local wine which is very strong. Sunday with locals standing and strolling about their evening relaxations.



Sliema



Kingsway Valletta

Sun 10 Dec 1944: Another walk. Collected food from cookhouse, bread and marge, spam tomatoes and tin of pears. To Inya via Mosta a village with an immense cathedral round in shape. The 3rd largest in Europe by repute. Rocky country with fertile plains with fields of broccoli and vines.

Tues 5 Dec 1944: System of leave after 3 years was 28 clear days. Two only from those eligible approx 2 only out of 36. Other leave as usual.

Sat 9 Dec 1944: Down to Valetta, walk and bus from Balluta Bay. To Command Hall for show at 8pm. The Command Hall a very solidly built place was the Hospital of the Knights of St. John with alcoves where the beds for the invalids used to be placed. Palm Courts etc. inside. It looked a museum piece and had fortunately escaped destruction.



Mosta

Passed Victoria lines old trenches built in Victorian times right across the island as precaution against French invasion. In a small town with a beautiful church large and domed. Some rain. Sandwiches in a local bar with tea and a little wine “ham-tut” peanuts and almonds. Saw ruins of ancient temple 5-6000 years old Rain again got a lift to Birkara. Back for 5.30 pm Quite cool. Lit a fire in recreation room. Jessies bar at 7pm for chips and tomatoes. A varied day, rain and wind but dry morning.

Tues 12 Dec 1944: To Sliema in evening. Lift down and walked back. Haircut by a boy of about 12 years old. Toc H and walked back. Very dark, not too pleasant. Read some John Donnes poems. “For love, all other sights control. And makes one little room as everywhere”.



Ptes Knight & Moseley on Barracks Roof

Wed 13 Dec 1944: December and January is the Maltese winter, and nearly all its rain falls in these months. The weather becomes less warm and quite chilly at times. We light fires in the evening mostly from driftwood collected from nearby beaches.

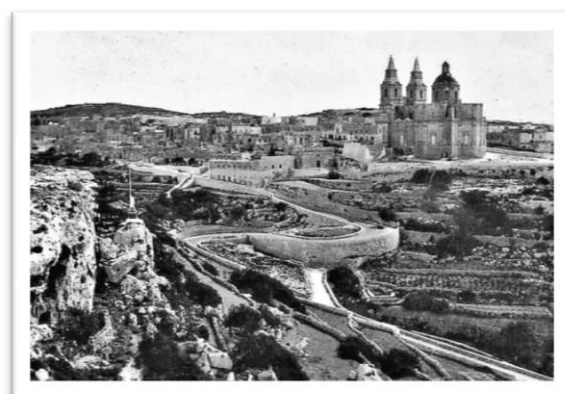


Pte Knight on Barracks Roof

Thurs 14 Dec 1944: Stayed in by fire. Supper at cookhouse. Cheaper and an alternative to the NAAFI the other side of the immense parade ground.

Sat 16 Dec 1944: Down to Valetta after having had a hot shower. Went to Magistral Hall with its tapestries. For tea, fish and chips at the colonial restaurant. Back by ferry and walk back to St. Georges.

Sun 17 Dec 1944: A long walk to Shain-luffia via St. Pauls Bay. A coast walk. St. Paul's Bay very attractive. A narrow neck of fertile island. Diverse crops. Banana trees and irrigation systems. Tanks filled by water wheels, lifting tower by horses at the turn tables. Shain-luffia another pleasant spot. Then over the ridge to Mellieha, with church in an imposing position above hair pin bends in the road. Very many children playing in the dirty streets.



Mellieha

The hooded dress of women going to church “The Faldelta”. A good view of the islands Comino and Gozo. Red clover in the fields. Dates are still small and unripe. Back via Birkirkara. There were nasty rubbish dumps at intervals, tin cans mostly. No wonder we were issued with a tin opener.

Note Usual entries, visits to Sliema and Toc H, reading, writing, wireless and so on and of course Pay Office work.

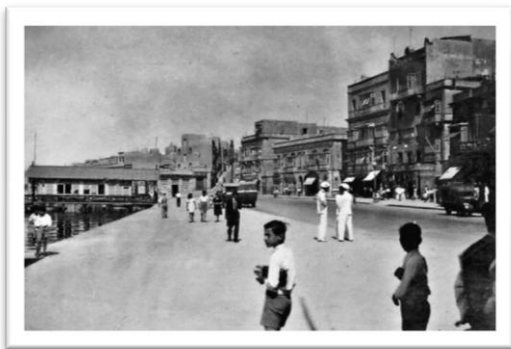
Mon 25 Dec 1944: Xmas day. On guard duty which consisted of merely being present in the office building. Very quiet day, reading, writing etc.

Tues 26 Dec 1944: Post contained newspapers, table tennis balls and tobacco.

Thurs 28 Dec 1944: Day off – wind and rain. Letter from my wife in which she states signs of forthcoming event are already beginning to show.

Fri 29 Dec 1944: Leave for a few selected long-serving soldiers could be taken in Sicily. We learnt the boat was sunk in a storm. One of our Sergeants was saved but many others were drowned. It was a small boat, very poor ship, of Jugo Slav origin.

Sat 20 Dec 1944: Collected photographs from Sliema. Bill Harris a Birmingham chap had seen service on the RAPC in Syria, Palestine and Egypt and showed his pictures.



Sliema Front

Sun 31 Dec 1944: Letters etc. Duke of Gloucester on the island on his way to Australia. Orders that no mention was to be made in letters.

Tues 2 Jan 1945: One of our lot beaten up in Sliema, possibly his own fault from over celebration on New Years Eve.

Wed 3 Jan: Weather chilly and wet. Rumours of local gangs operating for robbery. Advice to go out several together.

Sat 6 Jan: Five kitbags full of drift wood for firing. To Command Hall at Valetta. Missed lorry back, had to walk. Back at 12.30



HMS Bicester

Mon 8 Jan: H.M.S. Bicester in harbour, the adopted ship of the RAPC. Ship's crew usually entertained but lack of funds prevented this.

Thurs 11 Jan: Fed up with hanging around barracks. Went down to Sliema crossed by ferry to Valetta. Looked around shops. To Vernon Services Club. To Command Hall. Variety Show, comedians, dances, sketches, accordionist, baritones and sopranos. Back by shousa, a ferry boat and army lorry. Very dark and eerie in back streets of Valetta no street lamps all sorts of shadows amongst the very, very many bombed buildings.

Joke: Tripped over a ration book and hurt badly by falling on the points.

Sun 14 Jan: Started a walk at 9.45 am to Birkara, Segovia and Zuriack to the Blue Grotto a deep ravine leading down to the sea. Very rocky with high cliffs, wild and dangerous. Back to Zuriack to catch 4pm bus back to Valetta and then by usual ferry to Sliema. Supper at St. Andrews café egg and chips. Back by 7pm.

Mon 15 Jan: One more on U.K. leave after over 4 years overseas service. Work pushed, two civilians have left and two on U.K. leave. Demobilisation start but very few far between. Tombola. Included in Sundays walk were the occasions of seeing groups of villagers playing tombola. We thought it primitive.

Note: Nowadays they call it Bingo (very similar) but no different in set up.

Sat 20 Jan: To Command Hall "The Gang show" R.A.F. very good all male cast. Jokes: *Definition of a chiffonier – a tall thing with drawers. If your husband is backward, sent it forward. Never put the pansies in a bed with the Sweet Williams. A quick growing hollyhock plant it and jump back. Going down a street and fell over two sand bags. One turned over and said "you will take me back home with you won't you darling!"*

Sun 21 Jan: Up early for breakfast and then another walk. To Chadwick Lakes. These are in a Wadi. Three of four of them in a string used as reservoirs. Only a limited use as they become dry in later months. Lunch at Rabat. Back down valley at Mosta. Return by 4.15pm

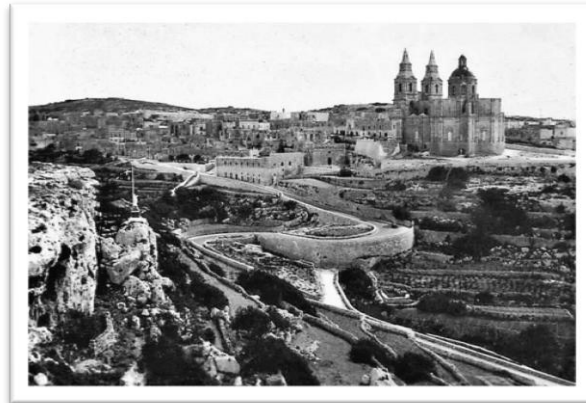
Mon 22 Jan: Good news from Russian front. Went to the Education block to look at maps and a browse around books and pamphlets. Windy and wet.

Thurs 25 Jan: Rumour that Roosevelt Churchill and Stalin will meet on the island.

Fri 26 Jan: Rumour correct. Preparations for the meeting of the big Three in hand, large ship and destroyers congregating in the harbour. Leave stopped. No letters, no outward mail.

Sat 27 Jan: Local leave allowed. One week. Tennis. Hot shower changed clothes. At 5pm to Valetta. Collected films. To Command Hall. Snooker and show. Winning plays of the weeks 1. Dr B Toole with the Irish Players 2. The Bear with H.M.S. St. Angela. (Tchekov) 3. The Distant Drum with the Service Players. H.M.S St. Angelo won. Back in lorry for 11.15pm The prizes were presented by Lady Schreiber in the presence of the Governor.

Sun 28 Jan: A days walk to Mellieha (with one or two lifts). Passed Marfo Ridge Back to Mellieha and bus to Birkara. St. Georges for 4.30 pm.



Mellieha

Some points of Interest.

The Faldetta. (Spanish and Italian for petticoat). This is the black hood worn by many women attending church. A traditional custom.



Faldetta

2. Keys of doors left in lock on the outside in many country houses. Maybe to show trust in others or an invitation to the unexpected guest of the ever open door.
3. Curious seaweed. Round balls of shape of horse manure and also a flaky type.
4. Dogs on flat roofs of houses, bark furiously but can't get down for attack.
5. Bits of ground scratched out wherever there is any sign of soil.
6. The wonderful colouring of the sea.
7. Bill Harris ex RAPC in Egypt gave me my name in Arabic (K)night Jack.
8. Trotting contest at Birkara.
9. Almond blossom out.

Two weeks leave with walks and work in between

Leave: Monday to Friday 29th Jan to 4th Feb

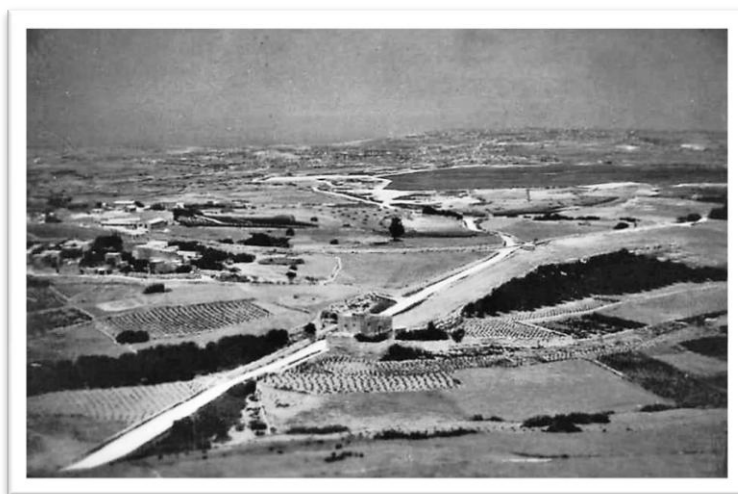
Monday: To Valetta, tennis, snooker, letters etc. Rain and wind.

Tuesday: Cleaned out locker. Nothing special personally. More air activity. Reported arrival of the Big Three with Eisenhower, Montgomery and Cunningham. Cycle borrowed from stores with ride around district. Cold and draughty barracks.

Wednesday: Out on bike to Valetta. Big crowds outside the Castille. Waited but saw no top people. Plenty of high rank Army, Navy and Air Force. Back for 12.30 Books and writing as it turned out wet.

Thursday: To St. Paul's Bay, Mellicha, Shein Tufieha, Mosta and back in cycle.

Friday: To Valetta, two American cruisers entered harbour. Cycle to San Anton gardens. Back for dinner. Explored rocks on seashore. Sea eggs very nasty spiny creatures to tread on when bathing.



St Paul's Bay

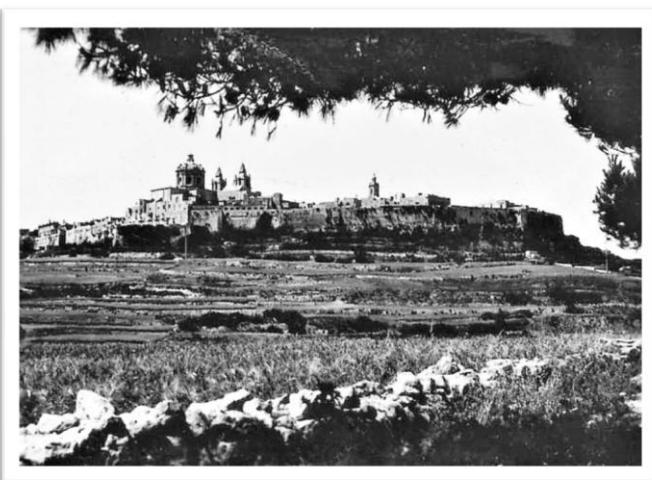
Sun 4 Feb: Sunday walk through dock area. Bomb damage terrific. On to Zabbar and Marsascala. A puppy chasing goats ripping their wool etc. Tea and Sandwiches at Marsascala. Then round St. Thomas Bay to Marsa-sirocco. High cliffs path dangerously near the edge. Horseshoe shaped bays with crystal clear blue water. Passed Delamara Point to Bir Zabbug. Large bay used as a sea-plane base where the Devonshire was sunk with only part of the hull still showing. Two old Englishmen at Bir-Zebbug. One was 73 had served his time and remained on the island. He had been a dockyard policemen. The other has also worked in the dockyard and was hoping to return to England. After 30 years of marriage his wife has been killed in an air raid. Back to Valetta for lorry to St. George in time for tea.

Wed 7 Feb: A meeting at Australia Hall. Talk by G.O.C. Malta to troops on everything and nothing. Just a general chat, censorship of mail, leave systems, length of overseas service, pastimes, studies, boredom, post war re-construction and re-organistaion. His speech was good humoured. Anecdotes of chiefs of staff who had visited the island e.g. the American five star general named Marshall who could not be called Marshall Marshall so was referred to as General of the Army Marshall. The story of the ship after attempts at tying up was given the signal "good" to which was added a little later "and gracious" and how Stalin was supposed to have stayed at San Anton Palace, the coolest part of the island.

Thurs 8 Feb: Work at office. Lt Skene in charge, not saying a word all day. Very miserable. To Valetta, musical evening at Toc H. Bach and Grieg. Back for 8.45pm.

Sun 11 Feb: Walk Mosta, Rabat to Dingle Heights. Found pre-historic cave dwellings. Down Wadi and up to Zeebug. Back for 7.30 pm A good long walk about 20 miles in fine weather.

Mon 12 Feb: News on radio of the meeting of the Big Three in the Crimea Malta mentioned as a stopping place en route.



Rabat

Leave one week 17th February

Saturday: Feast of St. Paul's shipwreck. Carnival dances at beginning of week which finishes on Shrove Tuesday. Fancy Dress worn on occasions by local people.

Monday: Tennis am. Tried fishing pm. Locals catch very small octopus considered a delicacy.

Tuesday: Sliema very rough sea.

Wednesday: Letters and pictures at Barracks cinema

Thursday: Valetta. Books at educational centre back for 12.30 Gramophone concert at Educational block, Brahms, Sibelius, Brusch.

Friday: Ramble on nearby sea coast rocks Toc H snooker and so ended a weeks leave!

Wed 28 Feb: Four big ships in harbour Highland Monarch our ship from the convoy included.

Fri 2 Mar: Two of our R.A.P.C. returned from leave in England. Besieged by questioners. How did they get on? How did they find things? And similar questions.

Sun 11 Mar: Walk around rocks at Rifle range, not used now due to complaints from local fishermen who had been subject to near misses.

Sat 17 Mar: Swim in afternoon St. Georges Bay. Everyone learning to swim and making it across the wide bay given a signed certificate from our Colonel.

Note All above in between days usual reading, letters, pictures, games and so forth.

Sat 31 Mar, Sun 1 Apr: Examining rock pools and collecting flowers for pressing. Swimming, wallowing in the sea at intervals but care needed because of sewerage pollution.

Tues 3 Apr: Cricket pm match v Sergeants of Pembroke Area. Scored 29 not out. (Other cricket matches were played during the spring and summer).

Wed 11 Apr: To Valetta. By bus to Rabat. Allied Malta Industries Ltd. Saw home-spun fabrics, lace etc. No purchase made. Back by bus to Valetta.

Tues 17 Apr: Cricket match. No grass Coconut matting for pitch with concrete ground usually a parade ground except Officer's ground where real grass is to be found.

Sat 21 Apr: Watched shipping including air craft carrier "Venerable".

Sun 23 Apr: To Anglican Cathedral in Valetta where Dr Garbett Archbishop of York preached a very ordinary sermon. The local R.C.s were celebrating the Feast of St. Publicus with procession in the streets. Went to St. Johns Co. Cathedral.

Fri 4 May: Battleships "Anson" and "Duke of York" in the Harbour.

Sat 5 May: To San Anton Gdns. A flower show in progress.

Monday 7 May VE Day



Court of Magistrates



Palace square



St Julian's



Sat 12 May: Usual swimming, walks, tennis etc. Demob. Groups 1-4 on way back.

Wed 16 May: To Command Education Centre to hear Boyd Neill in talk on stringed instruments.

Fri 18 May: Bugs found in one of the mosquito nets. All iron frames of beds gone over with paraffin.

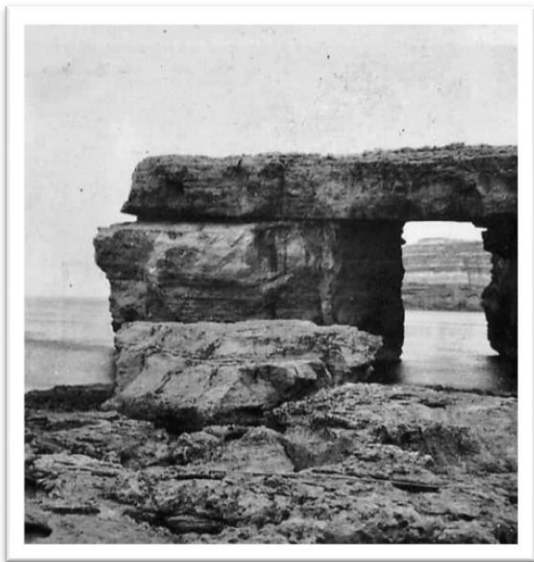
Sat 19 May: Leave on the Island of Gozo. To Valetta, bus to Marfa and ferry boat “Franco” across to Mgarr. Passed small islands of Comino and Cominatto between Malta and Gozo. Stayed at the Victoria Hotel Rabat. Like its name very down at heel with Victorian pictures, old furniture.



Gozo



Mgarr



Window Rock



Rock Formations

Fungus Rock



Comino and Cominato

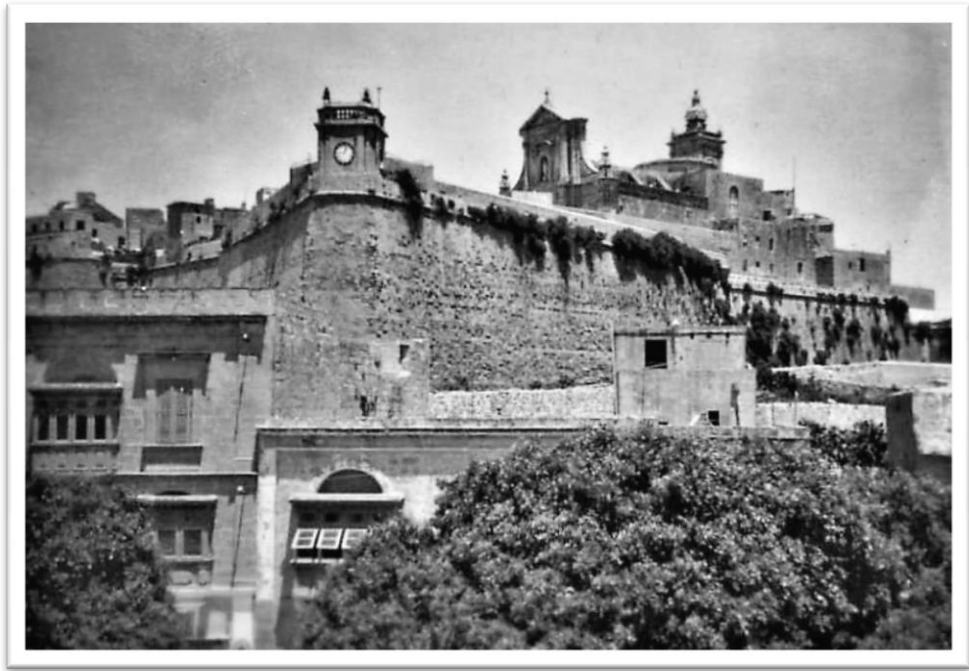
Sun 20 May: To Divina Bay, Gozo. Excellent scenery with fields of barley growing for Simonds brewery.



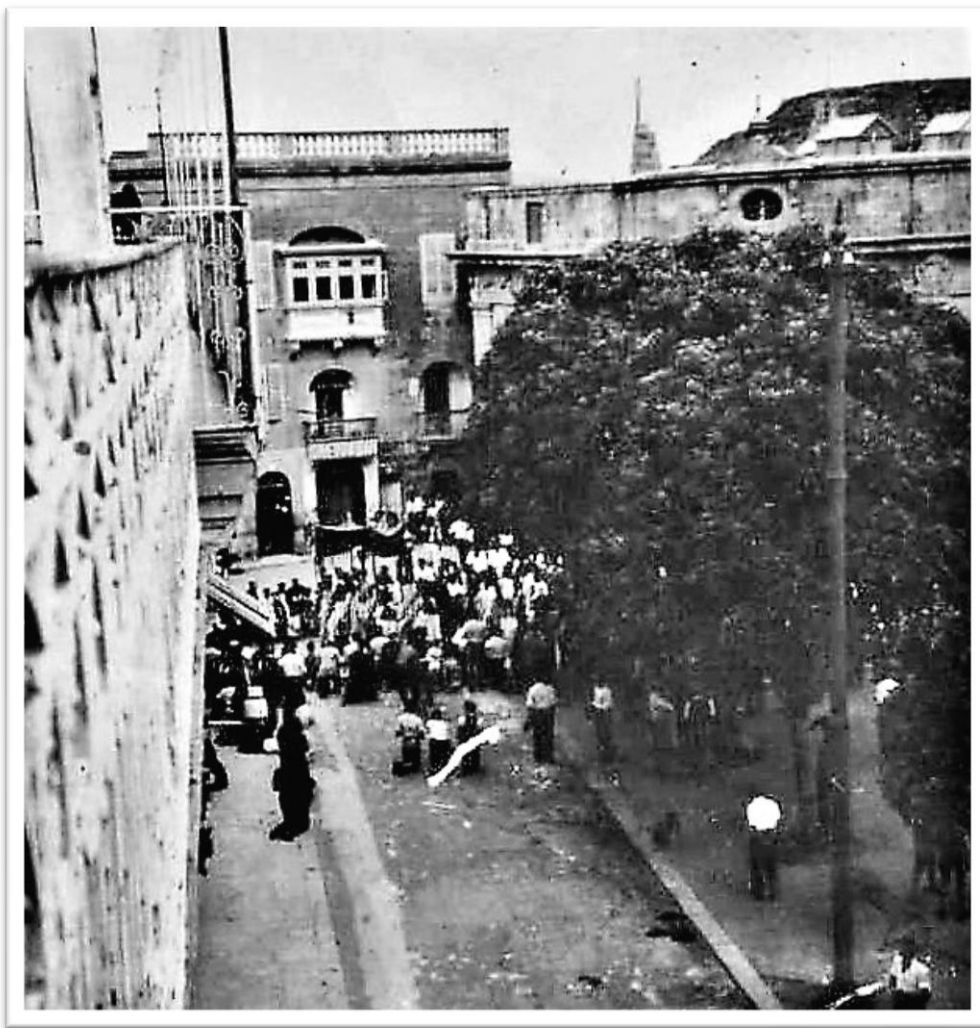
Gozo



Ta Pina Church Gozo



Gozo The Citadel



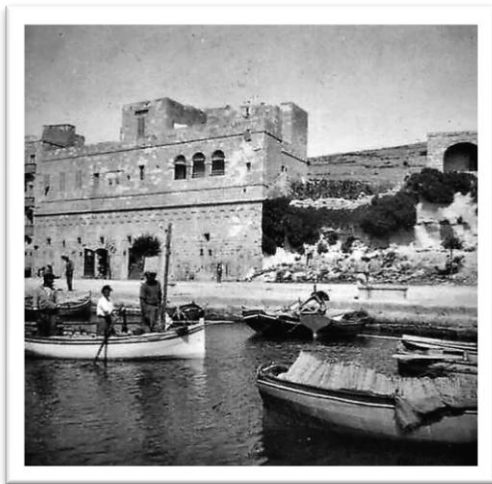
Rabat



Countryside Near Gozo



Wied leading down to Xlendi



Xlendi harbour front



Mending nets



Mgarr



Xlendi

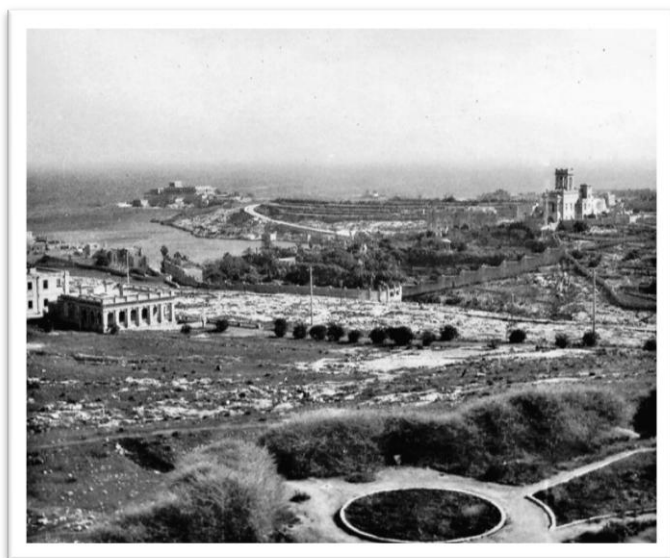
Up at 5am. Bus to Mgarr. Ferry to Marfa. Bus to Birkara. Walk to St. Georges. Back 8.15 am
Swim in evening. Malta buses different colours for differing routes as most local villages cannot read

Summer in Malta

Sun 3 June: Trip to Armier Bay Swimming and lounge. Getting too hot for comfort. Almost burning sands. Back 6pm.

Tues 5 June: Lecture by Ministry of Labour official on re-settlement.

Sun 10 Jun: After two days back ache admitted to Command Rest Centre (C.R.S.) and fly fever. Effects like a dose of the 'flu, caused by infection from minute flies, able to penetrate mesh of mosquito nets. Very prevalent complaint. 3 days in C.R.S.



Overlooking St George's Bay

Wed 13 June: Out of C.R.S. Shopping in Valetta, shoes and sheets and then to Command Hall.

Thurs 14 June: King's birthday celebration. Day off. German/Austrian prisoners in nearby compound. Austrians very clean and musical. Given jobs in canteen, a change from the rather careless and dirty Maltese cooks and servers.

Sat 16 June: To Valetta "Arundel Castle" in harbour. Demob Groups 4 -7 sailed off to England.

Fri 29 June: Office party for those being demobbed. Our office now very depleted of British personnel, who are less and less with more Maltese officers taking over.



Road up to the Pay Office

Sat 7 July: To Valetta watched changing of the Guard. Regiments take it in turns to perform this duty. Even our humble RAPC take their turn. Looked around Magisterial Palace. ENSA show in evening.



Changing the guard Palace Square

Mon 9 July: Eclipse of the sun

Fri 13 July: Twelve privates three staff sergeants there last night in barracks before demob.

Tues 17 Jul: Watched water polo match at St. George's Bay. Pitch marked out in the water. Fast returning to peace time activities.

Sun 29 Jul: Lido at St. George's Bay officially opened. Boating for an hour. St St. Julian to see a fiesta walked down. Vines, prickly pear now in fruit also fields of tomatoes. Crowds at St. Julian's church and sea front decorated. Burning brazier on roof of church. Statue of the Saint Julian carried in procession. People cheering and clapping as it passed by. Letting off fireworks on the roof of the church as it entered. Two bands playing alternately. Sweets and ice cream on sale. Every one in best frocks, clean shirts etc. No side stalls. Back for 10.30 pm.



St George's Barracks Tennis Court

Wed 8 Aug: To Valetta. Saw a French boat go out bound for Toulon, carrying leave personnel.

Sat 11 Aug: Received letters from Char with news of confinement and birth of daughter. Fainted for the first time and hoped for the last time ever. Rested pm.

Mon 13 Aug: Very hot. Temperature 101 degrees. News of VJ Day.

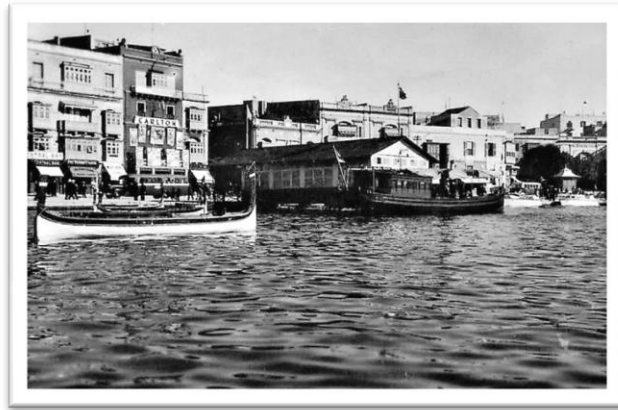
Wed 15 Aug: To Valetta Flags everywhere. Ships decorated with bunting. Listened to Deputy Governors speech from Palace balcony. (Dalrymple Hamilton) Command Hall for show. Fireworks and illuminations after the show. Back 11 pm.

Sat 18 Aug: Bought items of Maltese Lace.

Sun 26 Aug: Ptes Foden and Edwards on leave to U.K. Promise to call on wife and daughter and report back – and they did.

Tues 11 Sep: A Sgt Major and two staff sergeants promoted to officers. Groups 17/18 in embarkation for demobilisation.

Fishing Methods on Malta



Sliema

They fish for rainbow fish, Jew fish, mullet, lampaki, bream, octopus, shooting them sometimes with a harpoon gun whilst swimming. Attachment for breathing whilst under water. Also floating squares of cork with line hanging from the underside. The fish swims off unwinds the line, the cork remains afloat, the fisherman rows up to the cork. Fishing with long locally grown bamboo rods. For sea eggs they examine the sea floor with a bottomless bucket, spear the sea egg for transfer to the boat. For the small size octopus, a grappling weight with hooks is use. Fish used as bait. Walk along over under the water rocks and pull in when the octopus fastens on to the prey. Lampaki and Mullet caught in nets.

Autumn in Malta

Sat 22 September: Groups 19/20 in demobilization camp.

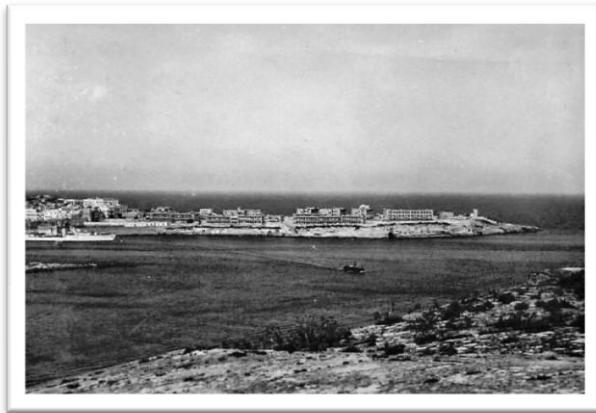
Mon 24 September: Only eight of us now remain.

Note: usual walks, tennis, swimming, letters etc. mixed in, volunteer job helping with Tote, selling tickets, bookies, runner etc. at Mara races. Payment to us for this volunteer job.



Valletta Bomb Damage

Tues 16 Oct: Notice of move from St. George's Barracks down to Valetta Office to be in flats opposite the Castille. Quarters in the Castille itself.



St George's Barracks from Spinola

Fri 19 Oct: Kit etc. collected together for tomorrows move.

Sat 20 Oct: Started move at 7.30 am on all day. No place for us in the Castille. Slip up in arrangements. Parked ourselves in the Conference Room. Moved boxes, tables, chairs etc. etc. up flights of stairs nearly all day.

Sun 21 Oct: Completed the office move. Ourselves allocated to the top floor of the Castille.

Mon 23 Oct: Settled in for usual Pay Office work and routine.

Wed 24 Oct: Chess came into our off duty games, one with D Foden lasting 3 hours.

Thurs 25 Oct: Watched the "Durnottar Castle" leave harbour with group 21 on board.

Wed 31 Oct: Stores pm for issue of shirts with collars and ties which we now are allowed to wear.

Thurs 1 Nov: Able to go down through Lascari's Ditch and into tunnels the War time HQ where important control rooms were located.



Balluta Bay St George's

Mon 5 Nov: Battleship "Nelson" in harbour. Visited Rabat and saw the very ancient catacombs.

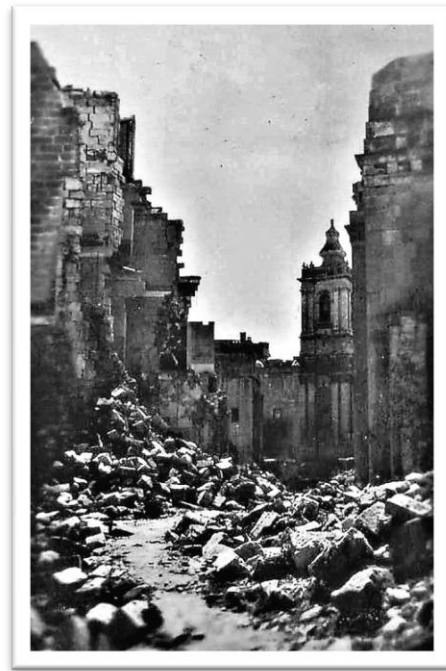
Sat 10 Nov: Command Hall, a hypnotist being the main attraction with his demonstrations on members selected from the audience.

Tues 13 Nov: Counting Poppy Day Collection. The Pay Office on orders and in conjunction with the Governor had a duty of paying members of the Navy who had entered port. Unfortunately I was never selected for this experience.

Mon 19 Nov: Round Senglea looking at dockyard bomb damage. Cruiser "Ajax" in dry dock.

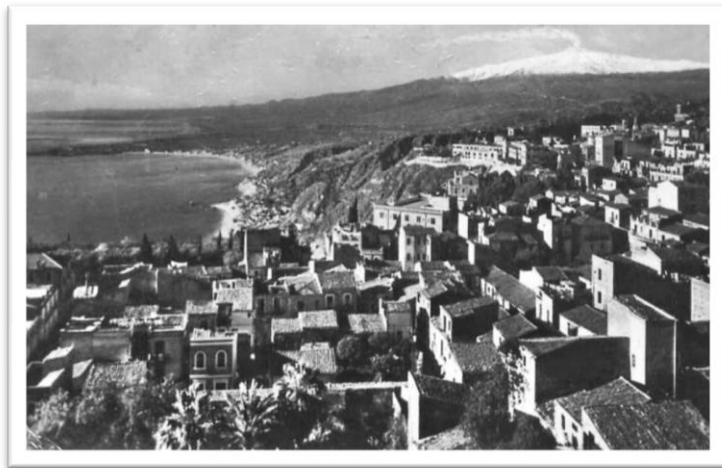
Thurs 22 Nov: To Rabat and a wedding reception of one of our Sergeants to Miss Vasollo a Maltese lady. Reception held at a hotel in Rabat, not much of a place. Toilets were shocking, outside across the courtyard, swimming with filth. Reception in an upstairs room where bride and bridegroom sat at one end on a raised dais. Guests filed around to shake hands with them. Music and drinks served.

Sun 25 Nov: Round dockyards pm. Bomb damage, Senglea, Cospicua, and Vitoriosa.



Cospicua

Sicily



Towards the end of November 1945 the opportunity came to take a period of leave in Sicily, which is situated around 90 miles north west of Malta. We were taken from Valetta to Catania on an Italian destroyer then under the command of the Royal Navy. It was a ship that could be described as a greyhound of the seas, constructed for speed with perforated deck plating only

about 1/4 inch thick. It was a sight to see the ship cutting through the water at speed throwing back great columns of water on each side of the knife edge prow. Our party eight of us managed to get a good vantage place well up on one of the gun turrets.

A “rest” hostel had been established just outside Catania. It was one of several large villas in a guest street where in peace time the well to do resided. The rear backed on to the rocks of the sea shore where its owners in former days had built a natural swimming pool. Although called a “rest” hostel it was far from that. All amenities were laid on for us visitors. It was in charge of an officer and a corporal, both carrying arms and also with an armed Italian soldier always to be found patrolling the street.

Hostilities had left the area for many months past and on the whole the Italians gladly accepted the new authority. The street soldier, quite against rules, became the medium for the extensive barter which financially formed an important part of our leave.

Before starting our leave we had stocked our kit bags full of goods for disposal in exchange for lira. Cigarettes, boots, blanket, underclothes in fact any sort of article then unobtainable and in great demand at that time. The street soldier found for us our beneath the surface customer. Discipline was almost non-existent. The corporal who looked after the hostel had become an alcoholic. He would succumb to attacks of D.T. and become insane from its effects, climb around the outside of the building looking for intruders and waving his pistol about. Very frightening indeed although in reality he was good natured and harmless, an unsung casualty of war time conditions.



During the day and evenings up to midnight very few of the visitors were around in the hostel. Facilities for meals were provided but no one bothered when the alternatives in the big town its sights, sounds and smells were at hand, things so long denied to many of them. There was so much to attract attention in Catania, with its wide streets, big stores, hotels, shops, commercial buildings and manufactories with its inhabitants truly Latin excitable types.

We also had the advantage to partake in outings which in peace time would be labelled first class tourist attractions.

Mount Etna and Taormina were not very far away. With the help of an Italian driver and a large lorry we were taken to these places. Italian driving is something to be experienced. Fast, excitable and seemingly careless, an advantage in itself.



We arrived at Taormina all in one piece. This is a small town perched on top of a hill, gloriously situated overlooking the sea and with a view landwards of Mount Etna gently puffing out wisps of steaming clouds. It reminded me of a giant power station with its cooling towers. Taormina was maybe 200 or more years ago still there. The Greeks had found it just as delectable a spot

and it became for them a very desirable and sophisticated place with its Greek temples, theatres, villas and so on. Truly a place high up in priority for its attractiveness in leisure and pleasure.

We explored the small town but generally could not afford the high prices for silks and satins very much in evidence in the shops. There were a few of us who made purchases for their loved ones at home, inspite of uncertainties of sizes and fits. Mostly we played safe our mementoes being mostly the secret boxes made of beech wood and quite artistic and cleverly made. The road along the coast took us through plantations of various sorts including groves of oranges and lemons. It was harvest time for the oranges and large stacks of them were seen at various points, Donkey carts were much in evidence.

Another excursion took us on a visit to Mount Etna, as far up its slopes as the road went. We crossed the level plain of Catalania which was highly cultivated. Then on rising ground where vines were grown. Further up we crossed lava fields with wisps of smoke here and there from the cracks in the ground. It was interesting to see where streams of molten lava had flowed down and the abrupt termination in an end to the stream 8 to 15 ft in height. We were within reasonable distance of the summit where we easily and plainly see the monster quietly puffing away with his pipe. A sulphurous smell pervaded the air. Eruptions in the past ages were so immense that the lava flows had even reached the coastline round about Catania. Even now minor eruptions will cause much damage to surrounding plantations and even villages on the nearby slopes. All in all this days' excursion proved of great interest.

Another excursion much more sobering was that to nearby fields of battle. Our route followed that taken by the advance of the 51st Highland Division along the coast. It gave cause for thought to see the rows of small white crosses in war cemeteries particularly those near to where severe casualties has occurred in conflict for the control of important river crossings.

We do not deny present day holiday makers their pleasure in foreign holidays but thought should ever be present of these happenings only 40 or so years ago which made their present enjoyment possible.

In the evenings entertainment was sought in Catania itself. Before leaving Malta, others who has enjoyed leave in Sicily gave us an address where if we called the family would give us a homely welcome, in contrast to the sordid welcome of the loose women in the bars of the town. We called. It was a middle aged man and his wife and two daughters and true enough we were welcomed and made to feel at home. They had entertained numerous members of the Forces in this way and being of the Roman Catholic faith had given a small cross and pendant to each one. I still have mine a small pendant of St. Christopher patron saint of travellers, which is fastened to my watch chain worn every day. Others preferred to roam the town and its bars falling by the wayside into temptation and paying later for their sins.



It was an experience to walk back to the hostel in pitch darkness just two of us. Dangerous too as it had been enemy territory not so long before. All in all leave in Sicily was quite a change from the small world of Malta where many had been in isolation in some cases for many years.

Return Home

Fri 4 Jan: To St. Andrews for medical inspection in readiness for embarkation to U.K.

Sat 5 Jan: All Maltese on one day strike. Preparations made in case of trouble but fortunately not necessary. All troops confined to barracks. Stayed at office until 9.30 pm when we were told all clear.



Parade Ground St George's/St Andrew's

Sun 6 Jan: Started packing kit. Command Hall pm.

Mon 7 Jan: To St. Andrews stores to draw winter underwear.

Tues 8 Jan: The Way Back. Moved into demob camp. Another beautiful day – in more ways than one. Changed money into francs. F.F.I. inspection.

Wed 9 Jan: Up at 6am. No one overslept! To harbour for 9.15 to board Italian ship ss Grandidea at 10.15. Fairly big ship, very clean and beautifully fitted out. Off coast of Sicily at 2.00 pm. Through Straits of Messina on way to Naples. Boat had come from Port Said and already nearly full up Air force, Navy and Army all going home.

Thurs 10 Jan: At Naples for 1 pm. View of Capri and Italian coast. Very mountainous right to sea coast. Vesuvius, two cones one higher than the other. Trouble when an Italian sea man was caught stealing tins of jam, milk etc. He was raving so had to be put in the cells. Naples harbour, much damage and wrecks. Anchor raised for sailing at 9pm, destination Toulon 1839 personnel on board.

Fri 11 Jan: Sea rough. Passed through Straits between Sardinia and Corsica. Very rugged. Snow on mountains.

Sat 12 Jan: Entered Toulon harbour. Many sunken ships. Sea plane base. Disembarked and to transit camp in tents.

Sun 18 Jan: Walk to Segne a suburb of Toulon am and Toulon pm. Air full of scent from cosmetic manufacture. Sunshine. Bomb and shell damage all way along walk back to Transit camp.

Mon 14 Jan: Poor conditions at Transit camp. Very rough, windy and cold at night. On train at 8pm. Crossed Rhone and on through Central France, ice and frost. Through Limoges, Orleans. Each station besieged by inhabitants hoping to barter for possible luxuries, soap particularly.

Tues 15 Jan: All day in train. Stops for meals. Night in carriage Heated in evening.

Wed 16 Jan: Many bridges wrecked and repaired with temporary framework. Train crossed them at walking pace. At Dieppe at 6.45 am. Transit camp near town, very good conditions with everything laid on. Very cold weather.

Thurs 17 Jan: Crossed Channel and so to Aldershot. Civilian clothes issued, railway voucher and that was that after 5 years 2 months 11 days.

Pay Office Section Staff Malta 1943 – 1946



Pte's Pace, Knight, Holland, Edwards, Jones

Sgt West, Lt Skene, SSgt Bartlett

Pte's Fry, Aquilina, Murphy

This document has been created from the original material published [here](#) by his daughter – Jean Bruce, who also supplied this additional photo of CPO Malta Staff;

