

1931 REGIMENTAL CHRONICLE
2nd Bn OXFORDSHIRE & BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LIGHT INFANTRY

SUMMARY OF THE SECOND BATTALION DIARY, 1931

January 1.—A Proclamation Parade was held on the Regimental Parade ground, the Garrison Parade being cancelled.

January 3.—The Upper Burma Movable Column consisting of "A" Company and a pack section of machine guns entrained to carry out a march in the Shwebo district.

January 5.—"B" Company commenced Section Training.

January 7.—Eleven men of the Signallers proceeded to Wetwin Camp to take over tents and stores.

January 8.—Major W. G. Tolson, M.C, left for the United Kingdom on cross posting to the Home Establishment.

January 9.—The remainder of the Signallers proceeded to Wetwin.

January 14.—A practice mobilization of a movable column consisting of "B" Company and a section of machine guns took place. No preliminary warning was given, but the column moved off one hour and twenty minutes after the order was given.

January 15.—The Upper Burma Movable Column returned from Shwebo.

January 23.—Training. "B" Company commenced Section Training.

January 27.—Lieut. G. C. H. Wykeham and 8 Other Ranks proceeded to Bombay en route to the United Kingdom.

February 2.—Lieuts. R. H. Cooke and H. E. Montgomery attended an Equitation Course with the 7th Mountain Battery.

February 6.—N.C.O.'s Promotion Examination.

February 9.—The 4th Anti-Gas Training Cadre Course commenced.

February 10.—Regimental Teams fired the A.R.A. Competitions.

February 12.—Regimental Rifle Meeting.

February 16.—"B" Company left Maymyo on a three-days' Tactical Exercise with pack transport.

February 18.—Culmination of "B" Company's exercise, the Draught platoon, M.G. and Intelligence Section being the enemy.

"B" Company moved to Wetwin Camp to form advanced party to the Regiment.

February 20.—The Regiment (less "B" and "C" Companies and Draught Platoon, M.G.) moved to Wetwin Camp.

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February 23.—All companies commenced Platoon Training.

March 2.—All companies commenced Company Training.

March 3.—Information received that Captain J. Thorne had qualified in Subject (c) for promotion.

Information received that Lieut. L. L. Falkiner had qualified at the Small Arms School, Ahmednagar.

March 7.—Commanding Officer's Inter-Company Tactical Exercise.

March 8.— Signallers Collective Tests.

March 9.— One Section 7th (Bengal) Mountain Battery arrived at Wetwin for attachment to the Regiment.

March 10.—Company Field Firing.

March 11.—Regimental Training Exercise No. 1 (Advanced Guard).
Captain C. R. Horley, M.C., left on 4 months' combined leave ex India.
Lieut. K. Bayley left on 8 months' combined leave ex India.

March 12.—Exercise No. 2 (Outposts).

March 14.—Exercise No. 3 (Withdrawal).

March 15.—Exercise No. 4 (Jungle Warfare).

On conclusion of this the Regiment went into a perimeter camp and bivouacked for the night.

March 17.—A reconnaissance was carried out, the Regiment remaining in bivouacs.

March 18.—Exercise No. 5 (Night March and Dawn Attack), the Regiment returning to camp at 8.30 a.m.

March 19.—Exercise No. 6 (Attack and Field Firing).

March 21.—The Regiment returned to Maymyo.

Lieut. A. B. Slessor rejoined from the Small Arms School, Ahmednagar.

March 23.—Final weapon training casual party commenced firing.

March 31.—A party of 4 Officers and 72 Other Ranks of the Buffs arrived to take part in the Burma District Sports and Rifle Meetings.

April 6.—Burma District Rifle Meeting began.

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April 11.—Burma District Rifle Meeting ended, the following trophies being won by the Regiment :—

Burma District L.A. Cup.
Harcourt Butler (M.G.) Challenge Cup.
B.R.A. (M.G.) Challenge Cup.
The Coombes Cup (Individual Revolver).

April 13.—Annual turn over of machine gunners and signallers took place.

April 16.—Bugle Cords taken into wear by the Buglers.

April 17.—Burma District Sports Meeting, the Regiment winning the following events:—

220 yards, 120 yards hurdles, 3 miles, high jump, long jump and putting the weight, retaining the District Challenge Cup from the Buffs by 6 events to 4.

April 17.—Individual Training began, 1st and 2nd Weapon Training and Physical Training Cadres began.

April 24.—Warning order received for the despatch of the following troops:—
one company to Rangoon, one company to Meiktila.

April 25.—1st Weapon Training Cadre Course abandoned owing to imminent departure of "A" Company.
2nd Cadre Course continued with reduced instructors.

May 3.—Letter B Company, 5 buglers and 1 pioneer proceeded on detachment to Rangoon.

May 4.—Advanced party from "A" Company proceeded to Meiktila.

May 5.—"A" Company, 9 signallers, 5 buglers and 1 pioneer proceeded on detachment to Meiktila. This leaves at Maymyo only Headquarters and the Machine Gun Company.

May 6.—Major K. Horan and Captain A. B. Hamilton proceeded on eight months combined leave ex India.

May 7.—Lieut.-Colonel A. E. Sanderson, D.S.O., inspected the Detachment at Mandalay.

May 12.—Captain P. Booth proceeded on five months' combined leave ex India.
Lieut.-Colonel A. E. Sanderson, D.S.O., admitted to hospital.

May 13.—2nd Weapon Training Cadre Course completed.

May 14.—2nd Drill and Anti-Gas Cadre commenced.
Lieut. A. B. Slessor proceeded to Rangoon for temporary duty with the Detachment, all the Company officers being ill with dengue fever.

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May 15.—1st Military Law Paper and Tactical Exercise No. I.T./1/31 issued to all officers.

May 27.—Lieut.-Colonel A. E. Sanderson, D.S.O., discharged from hospital.

May 28.—2nd Drill and Anti-Gas Cadre ended.

May 29.—2nd Military Law Paper issued to all officers.

Lieut.-Colonel A. E. Sanderson, D.S.O., proceeded on three months' privilege leave ex India.

Major J. J. Powell assumed command of the Regiment.

Lieut. C. L. C. Ward discharged from hospital and proceeded on 30 days' leave.

May 30.—Lieut. H. E. Montgomery admitted to the B.M.H., Mingaladon.

June 5.—Information received that Lieut. P. K Metcalfe had qualified in Subject (b) for promotion.

June 8.—Information received that Lieut. E. C Richards passed the preliminary examination in Russian.

June 12.—Information received that a new machine gun company organization had been approved and would be adopted as soon as additional pack saddlery had been received.

Organization to be Company Headquarters and three platoons each of four guns on pack.
1st Imperial Military Geography Paper issued to all officers.

June 14.—"C" Company rejoined the Regiment from Mandalay on relief by the 2nd Bn. The Manchester Regiment.

June 15.—Tactical Exercise I.T./2/31 issued to all officers.

Lieut. L. L. Falkiner proceeded to Rangoon for temporary duty with the detachment.

June 17.—"A" Company, on relief by the 2nd Manchester Regiment rejoined the Regiment at Maymyo.

June 19.—The dates of the Individual Training Programme were revised consequent upon the return of two out of the three detachments.

June 22.—3rd Weapon Training and P.T. Cadre Course began.

Lieut. H. E. Montgomery admitted to hospital at Maymyo.

June 23.—Captain H. Vernon proceeded on 69 days' privilege leave ex India pending retirement, and was allotted a passage on the H.T. *Staffordshire* sailing on the 25th from Rangoon.

Information received that 2nd Lieut. R. H. Harden had passed the 2nd British Short Course at the Army School of Physical Training, Ambala.

June 26.—2nd Imperial Military Geography Paper issued to all officers.

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June 27.—2nd Lieut. C. A. R. Campbell admitted to hospital, Maymyo.

July 1.—Regimental Holiday.
Preliminary heats of the Waterloo Sports.

July 2.—Waterloo Sports.

July 4.—Lieut. J. D. Palmer and 40 other ranks carried out a train patrol between Maymyo and Gokteik with a view to intercepting rebels from the Northern Shan States reported in the vicinity. The patrol returned the following day with nothing to report.

July 6.—Orders received at 8.15 a.m. for 2 officers and 60 other ranks to proceed immediately to Nawngkhio with 5 days' rations and 1st line transport, rebels being reported as threatening the town.

At 10.15 a.m., as the platoons were moving off, the order was cancelled. The platoons were kept standing by.

Lieut. H. E. Montgomery and 2nd Lieut. C. A. R. Campbell discharged from hospital.

Lieut. P. F. Metcalfe proceeded on 31 days' privilege leave.

July 8.—Two platoons of "A" Company under the command of Captain T. J. W. Winterton proceeded to Nawngkhio on duty in aid of the civil power.

July 10.—The remainder of "A" Company proceeded to Nawngkhio.

July 12.—"A" Company proceeded to Taw-Ma searching villages en route for rebels. One suspect arrested.

Information received that Lieut. A. B. Slessor had qualified at the Small Arms School, Ahmednagar.

July 13.—2nd Lieut. C. A. R. Campbell proceeded to Rangoon to rejoin the detachment.

July 14.—2nd Lieut. R. H. Harden rejoined from the Army School of Physical Training, Kasauli.

"C" Company's T.E.W.T. (Advanced Guard).

July 15.—Lieut. L. L. Falkiner rejoined from the Detachment, Rangoon.

July 16.—"A" Company, strength 2 officers and 104 other ranks, rejoined from duty in aid of the civil power in the Northern Shan States.

July 17.—Information received that Captain D. S. Newton-King had been posted to the 2nd Battalion.

July 21.—Lieut. R. H. Cooke and 43 other ranks of "A" Company proceeded to Gokteik to take over the guard of the bridge from the 2/20th Burma Rifles.

July 28.—Lieut. H. E. Montgomery proceeded to Rangoon to rejoin the Detachment.

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August 1.—Warning order received that one company would proceed to Shwebo in the middle of August. "C" Company warned.

August 3.—3rd Weapon Training and Physical Training Cadre ended.
Captain C. R. Horley, M.C., rejoined from leave in the U.K.

August 7.—The Gokteik Detachment was relieved by "A" Company.
Advanced party from "C" Company proceeded to Shwebo, strength 1 officer, 1 medical officer, and 27 other ranks.

August 8.—"C" Company, 9 signallers, 5 buglers, 1 pioneer, strength 2 officers and 87 other ranks proceeded to Shwebo.

August 10.—The Commanding Officer and Quartermaster visited the Gokteik Detachment.

August 11.—The H.Q. Wing, T.E.W.T. (Communications).

August 18.—Exercise in the issue of telegraphic orders in the field.
Information received that Lieut. P. F. Metcalfe and Lieut. C. L. C. Ward would be cross-posted to the 1st Battalion during the next trooping season.

August 27.—One platoon, Machine Gun Company, strength 43 British other ranks, 13 Indian other ranks and 12 mules proceeded to Shwebo, Captain C. R. Horley conducting.

August 30.—Lieut. J. D. Palmer and Lieut. L. L. Falkiner proceeded to Pachmarhi for a course at the Small Arms School.

August 31.—4th Weapon Training Cadre began.

September 1.—Captain H. Vernon retired on retired pay.

September 6.—The Commanding Officer proceeded to Shwebo to inspect the Detachment.

September 15.—The Brigadier commanding the 12th Infantry Brigade inspected the Regiment on parade in mass.

The Machine Gun Company T.E.W.T. (Defence).

On account of the move of Headquarters Burma District to Rangoon, the Regiment is now under them for training and administration only, and under the 12th Infantry Brigade, Mandalay, for discipline, internal security and inspection.

September 15.—Information received by cable that Captain E. L. O. Baddeley, Lieut. G. G. Hughes and Lieut. P. C. Boileau had been killed in an aeroplane accident at Dorking.
Nos. 13 and 14 Platoons, M.G. Company, commenced their Annual Musketry Course.

September 17.—Lieut. J. A. Theobalds admitted to hospital, Maymyo.

September 20.—A Memorial Service was held in the Garrison Church in memory of the late Captain Baddeley, Lieut. Hughes and Lieut. Boileau.

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September 22.—Captain J. Thorne rejoined from a Company Commanders' Course at the Small Arms School, Ahmednagar, and was transferred to the M.G. Company.

September 26.—4th Weapon Training Cadre ended.

September 28.—"A" Company struck off for Individual Training within the Company.

September 30.—Lieut. J. A. Theobalds discharged from hospital.

October 6.—Commanding Officer's T.E.W.T. (Attack).
Captain P. Booth rejoined from leave in the U.K.

October 11.—Major J. J. Powell proceeded to Rangoon for the British Service Officers' Urdu Test.

October 13.—"A" Company's T.E.W.T. (Attack).

October 18.—A draft of 31 other ranks and 3 invalids, conducted by Lieut. A. B. Slessor left for the U.K.

Information received that an exchange had been sanctioned between Lieut.-Colonel A. E. Sanderson, D.S.O., and Lieut.-Colonel G. E. Whktall, M.C.

October 21.—Lieut. J. D. Palmer and Lieut. L. L. Falkiner rejoined from the Small Arms School, Pachmarhi.

October 22.—Lieut. J. D. Palmer and an Advanced Party of 12 other ranks proceeded to Mandalay.

October 23.—Information received that Lieut. C. L. C. Ward had qualified in Subject (*b*) for promotion.

October 25.—"A" Company proceeded to Mandalay to relieve the 2nd Bn. the Manchester Regiment ordered to Meiktila.

November 1.—The first combined Standing Orders of the 43rd and 52nd Light Infantry were taken into use.

November 2.—"B" Company, strength 3 officers and 104 other ranks, rejoined from Detachment in Rangoon.

November 6.—Information that Lieut. H. J. C. Ducat-Hamersley had qualified at the Army Signal School, Poona.
Signallers' annual Classification.

November 8.—Captain C. R. Horley, M.C., and Lieut. C. L. C. Ward left on posting to the Regimental Depot for a tour of duty.

Lieut. P. F. Metcalfe and 11 other ranks left for the U.K. on posting to the home establishment and transfer to the Army Reserve.

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November 9.—1st half H.Q. Wing commenced Annual Musketry Course.
"B" Company commenced individual training within the company.

November 12.—Lieut. K. Bayley rejoined from leave in the U.K.

November 18.—Lieut. H. J. C. Ducat-Hamersley proceeded to Meiktila to carry out the Classification of the Signallers of the 2nd Bn. the Manchester Regiment.

November 21.—A Regimental Fete and Fair in aid of the Regimental Chapel Fund was held.

November 30.—The Deputy Quartermaster General in India inspected the Regiment.
The Band and Buglers proceeded to Shwebo.
Relief of the Signallers at Shwebo carried out.
The Intelligence Section proceeded to Mandalay for training under Lieut. J. D. Palmer.
Information received that the following officers have been posted to the 2nd Battalion:—
2nd Lieut, P. J. Luard, 2nd Lieut. H. G. Temple, 2nd Lieut. A. P. Godman and 2nd Lieut. J. P. F. Miles.

December 1.—Lieut.-Colonel G. E. Whittall, M.C., arrived on cross-posting and assumed command of the Regiment.

December 8.—The Band and Buglers rejoined from Shwebo.
The Commanding Officer inspected the Detachment at Mandalay.

December 13.—A draft of 33 other ranks, 2 wives and 3 children conducted by 2nd Lieut. R. H. Harden left for the U.K.
The Commanding Officer proceeded to Shwebo to visit the Detachment.

December 16.—" B" Company completed Individual Training within the Company.
Lieut. L. L. Falkiner admitted to hospital.

December 18.—Lieut. L. L. Falkiner discharged from hospital.
Non-Commissioned Officers' Promotion Examination held.
Information received that the temporary ten per cent, cuts in pay and allowances would be applied to officers and other ranks from December 1.

December 26.—A draft of 2nd Lieut. M. Darell-Brown, and Lieut. P. J. Luard and 100 other ranks arrived from the 1st Battalion.

December 29.—Captain E. H. Whitfeld, M.C, rejoined the Regiment from the Staff College, Quetta.

December 31.—Captain D. S. Newton-King joined the Regiment on posting.

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SECOND BATTALION LETTER, 1931

DEAR EDITOR,

From the point of view of the 52nd, 1931 must be written off as a bad year, the primary cause being the rebellion in Burma which broke out in Tharrawaddy just as last year's letter was sent off, and which at the time seemed an isolated outbreak of little importance. Had sufficiently strong measures been taken in the beginning, possibly it would have been isolated, but it was not until April and May that anyone realized on what a large scale it had been planned, and that the forces in Burma were quite inadequate.

But to go back to the beginning, the last day of 1930 saw the 3/20th Burma Rifles departing at a few hours' notice for Tharrawaddy.

It had been hoped that the Regiment and Mountain Battery would have carried out a "flag march" in the Shwebo area during January, but, for various reasons, the column was eventually whittled down to "A" Company, a section of machine guns and sixteen buglers, the whole under the command of Horan. For a fortnight they toured in that neighbourhood and the effect of this was considerably greater than had been anticipated. A week after their return to Maymyo, it transpired that a rising in Shwebo had been planned to take place at the same time as that in Tharrawaddy, but the presence of the column led the local inhabitants to believe that the Government knew all about it, and arches of welcome were erected by the worst villages. Since that time, Shwebo, invariably a centre of intrigue and sedition in Burma, has been on its best behaviour.

During the absence of "A" Company, it became apparent that the call for a movable column at very short notice might come at any time. To be prepared for this, complete orders were drafted and issued while the various tents, rations, field dressings and impedimenta required were drawn and stored ready, all that was necessary to put the column into motion being the company call at the double followed by the destination a few minutes later. After giving everyone time to digest these orders a practice alarm was held one day, nobody being in the secret except the District Staff and Regimental Headquarters. In spite of the fact that the Transport had to be telephoned for and come two miles to the barracks, "B" Company and a section of machine guns were on the move ready to take the field in an hour and twenty minutes from the alarm sounding. There was much speculation as to their destination, and an equal amount of disappointment when, after inspection by the General, they marched back to barracks.

Section Training was carried out round barracks during January and February, and on February 16 "B" Company left Maymyo, with pack transport, on a three days' trek in country north of Maymyo which had hitherto been unexplored by the Regiment except for a reconnaissance by the Intelligence Section. This exercise terminated at Wetwin Camp whither the remainder of the Regiment proceeded on February 20 for platoon, company and battalion training. A full account of this appears on another page and it is only necessary to say that we formed a liaison with the local gunners which was extremely profitable when the paperchasing season began in Maymyo. The return to Maymyo took place on March 21 where the second draft had meanwhile arrived.

The next events were the Burma District Rifle Meeting and Sports. In both of these we succeeded in defeating the Buffs, but in shooting we found we were no match for George Naylor and his auxiliaries from Rangoon.

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The Maymyo "April Week" was as hectic as ever, and after it was over a rather jaded lot of officers settled down to the intensive individual training devised by Colonel Sanderson to keep us busy while he was home on leave. Little did any of us know how soon this was to be rudely interrupted. On April 24 a warning order was received bidding us prepare two rifle companies to be despatched to Rangoon and Meiktila respectively.

On May 3 "B" Company moved to Rangoon and on May 5 "A" Company to Meiktila. With "C" Company already at Mandalay, this left only the Machine Gun Company (which had just been subjected to the annual process of "turning over") and the Headquarter Wing at Maymyo, and Individual Training crashed. Efforts were made to keep cadres, etc., going, while the training of the large machine gun class was hurried on as much as possible so that they should be ready for possible operations after the rains. The adequate programme of T.E.W.T.s and lectures which had been arranged for the officers and senior non-commissioned officers had to be abandoned and a correspondence course of training substituted.

During May, Colonel Morshead, head of the Survey in Burma, was murdered in the Maymyo rides, this naturally being put down to rebel activity a bit nearer home, and resulted in several extra safety precautions having to be taken, unnecessarily, as it turned out to be an act of private vengeance on the part of a Survey employee.

Later in the month the first of the reinforcements from India, the 1/17th Dogras, arrived, and after spending a few days in Maymyo, moved off to occupy a series of posts to prevent the rebellion spreading from the affected districts up into the dry zone. They were followed early in June by the 12th Infantry Brigade complete from Secunderabad accompanied by Mule Transport Companies, Field Ambulances, General Hospitals and the usual collection of oddments and services.

We handed over the detachments at Mandalay and Meiktila to our old friends the Manchesters, and for a time hopes ran high that for the first time we should be concentrated at Maymyo, but District Headquarters obstinately refused to part with "B" Company at Rangoon. The Individual Training now took a new lease of life, but only for a very short time again, as the first few days of July found ominous rumours coming in of rebel activity in the Northern Shan States some forty miles North of Maymyo. On July 4 an armoured train (improvised) manned by "A" Company went for a trip up the line towards Lashio, returning the following morning without having gleaned any information. On July 6 we were ordered to send two platoons as quickly as we could get them away to Nawngkhio, 40 miles north of Maymyo. Just as they were moving off, the order was cancelled. Anticipating that they would be called for again we kept them standing by, and sure enough, two platoons were called for on July 8 and were followed on the 10th by the remainder of the Company. They returned on July 16 without having fired a shot, and with only the capture of one suspected rebel to their credit.

It now occurred to someone in authority that it might be a wise precaution to put a guard on the very vulnerable bridge over the Gokteik Gorge. This wonderful bit of engineering is, during the monsoon, the only link with Lashio, the road being impassable for mechanical transport after heavy rain. Accordingly on July 21, Cooke with two platoons departed to sit on the bridge, their only recreation being watching the occasional train pass by.

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Searchlights were provided to watch the gorge by night and a sentry-post placed at either end. A patrol had a cheery time at intervals during the night walking over this half-mile-long bridge with no railings and at one place a sheer drop of 800 feet down to the gorge below. This guard was taken off at the end of August as the rebellion appeared to have been completely squashed in the Shan States.

Thayetmyo district was now completely under rebel control, a concentration of troops taking place there ready to begin a drastic "cleaning up" process in September. The Manchester Company at Shwebo was moved to Yenangyaung and we were ordered to relieve them, "C" Company taking their place on August 8. Owing to their being almost immobile on account of the numbers of guards being found and the weakness of rifle companies, they asked for help to provide them with a mobile column. On August 27 they were reinforced by one machine gun platoon organized on the new basis of four guns on pack.

Thayetmyo having been dealt with, the Pegu Yomas became the next rebel stronghold, so a redistribution of troops took place. The 12th Brigade moved from Mandalay to the Prome Area, and we were again ordered to take over the Mandalay Detachment, "A" Company moving down there on October 25. This left us at Maymyo weaker than ever with only the "Wing" and two machine gun platoons. Fortunately, at this juncture, "B" Company returned from Rangoon, and since then the situation has remained unchanged. The Band and Buglers paid a visit to Shwebo at the end of November, and at the time of writing are in Mandalay combining "show the flag" marches with the Mandalay Christmas Week.

December 31 therefore finds us distributed as follows :—

At Maymyo: Headquarters, "B" Company and the Machine Gun Company (less one platoon).

At Mandalay : "A" Company, Band and Buglers;

At Shwebo: "C" Company and one machine gun platoon.

With regard to officers, the year has seen many changes. Colonel Sanderson, who had not been very fit for some time, was admitted to hospital in May. He was released at the end of the month to go on leave home, which we all hoped would put him right. But the sad news eventually came through that he had got sprue and would be unable to come out for some time. This was followed shortly afterwards by the information that he and Colonel Whittall had exchanged.

We lose Colonel Sanderson with many regrets, and believe that the regret is not entirely on our side. It is almost entirely due to him that 52nd polo is now on such a sound footing. On the other side of the balance, it is very pleasant indeed to have Colonel and Mrs. Whittall back with us again after a six years' absence from the 52nd.

Our other losses were Tolson and Wykeham to the 43rd early in the year, the retirement of Harry Vernon, for whom barrack soldiering had become too dull, the departure of Horley and Ward to the Depot and Metcalfe to the 43rd in November, and lastly, the tragical deaths of Baddeley and Hughes, each of whom is the greatest loss to the Regiment. A very impressive service was held in their memory on the Sunday after the news of the accident became known.

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On the credit side, Winterton (from the Staff College), Richards (from the Depot) and Campbell (from the 43rd) arrived in April, Newton-King, Darell Brown and Luard (all from the 43rd) and Whitfeld (from Quetta) appeared on the scene in December, while during the next three months, Doyne, Barnard, Miles, Temple and Godman are all expected. It has been a little difficult to carry on at times with seven on leave home and the usual quota of courses, as no one was expecting us to find three detachments. In addition to this very few of those holding the fort escaped a visit to hospital at some period or another. In fact, during June, all "B" Company's officers in Rangoon were down with dengue at once, and relief had to be hurriedly despatched from Maymyo on receipt of a pathetic wire from C.S.M. Wise.

Harden was away in India for six months on a P.T. Course, Hamersley went to Poona for three months to learn how to signal, Slessor and Thorne paid visits to the Machine Gun School, and Palmer and Falkiner to Pachrnarhi, all qualifying but with no "D's" to their credit.

The situation as regards men has been equally difficult. We received a draft of 67 from the 43rd in April and another of 100 on Boxing Day. The latter arrived at a time when we were nearly 200 under strength, a thing almost unheard of abroad. The innumerable men required to find the guards and employ at three stations has made the carrying out of any except rather piecemeal training almost impossible. The end of the trooping season should find us only about 50 under strength if all goes according to plan. The only collective training possible this winter is the sending of weak companies one at a time to Wetwin to carry out company training.

It is in education, however, that we have suffered most, all the more tragic in these days of low pay as so many men have not yet got their 2nd Class Certificates. The authorities put it down to our system. This worked well enough in former years, and it is undoubtedly the rebellion which must take the largest share of the blame as most of the men, instead of doing their intensive educational training, have been carrying out a Cook's tour of Burma at the Government's expense.

With regard to games, polo has been definitely in the ascendant. We have won the two principal Maymyo tournaments during the year, and entered two teams for the third. We hoped to complete the hat trick by carrying off the Harcourt Butler at Mandalay at Christmas, but no such luck.

We only failed to retain the Walter Locke Football Shield by the odd goal in the final. The "rugger" team was beaten in the semi-final after a replay by the eventual winners. Two competitors were sent to take part in the Army in India Boxing Championships in Lahore, one getting into the final of his weight, while we have taken part in several competitions in Burma.

We have not been able to have the competition for the Regimental Athletic Banner this year on account of the expense and difficulty of sending teams up from detachments.

The Waterloo Sports, although late, were held, all companies being represented, although "B" Company did not get the same chance as the others.

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It was obviously impossible to hold the Nonne Bosschen Inter-Company Sports, so a comic gymkhana was arranged instead and was probably enjoyed by the men far more than sports would have been.

I must not end without alluding to the realization of our efforts to have a Regimental Chapel. All the hard work to achieve it fell on those at home, and we can only do our bit by raising our share of the costs as quickly as possible. We are doing our best in that direction in spite of the 10 per cent, cuts in pay which came into force on December 1.

Our next letter, I fear, may be written from Rangoon. No one is looking forward to the move, and once we leave Maymyo our thoughts will be turning to our next station in India.

Yours,
52ND.

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RANGOON LETTER

It was on May 3 that "B" Company entrained for Rangoon after a fortnight of alternating hopes and fears. It had been decided that after all there was no alternative to sending a company of the Regiment thither to be available for the internal security of the city, in the absence of the majority of the Burma Military Police and the one company of Indian Infantry who, in normal times, supplement the British company in Sale Barracks.

It had been estimated originally that our services would be required for approximately three weeks; so having detrained and marched up to the old lines in Sale Barracks we came to the following conclusions, quite quickly: firstly that it was damned hot, secondly that the accommodation was dilapidated and uninviting, thirdly that it was damned hot!, fourthly that things looked like being dull, and lastly that the sooner those three weeks were up the better we should be pleased, in spite of the possibly alluring prospect of being able to listen to the dulcet tones of Hollywood's latest, in at least five theatres nightly.

We settled in and awaited developments. The first was the installation of some Punkhas, and after that it wasn't so damned hot; then we got some nice beds for the barrack room: they looked nice and they smelt nice, and they were bung full of bugs in a day or two! Then it started to rain and it went on raining. Then all the officers got fever at once, and, in response to literally feverish wires, Slessor was despatched from Maymyo to relieve the situation until the crisis should have passed. Campbell and Montgomery made a brief reappearance from hospital, looked and went back there again, eventually returning to Maymyo to recuperate. This time they sent Falkiner down. He was very strong-minded about these mosquitoes, infused some life into our rugger team and—got fever.

By the time all this had happened three weeks had elapsed and there was no prospect of our doing anything but continue to secure the innards of Rangoon. We had become passably familiar with Greta Garbo, mounted guard on Government House, boxed "B" Company of The Buffs and played a lot of rugger; but were beginning to feel that if we were to settle down to a long detachment under normal conditions we should like some more kit. This was eventually sent down to us after several more weeks of rain, guards, and monotony.

Rangoon, between the months of May and October, is not a paradise, and the rainfall this year was abnormal, consequently outdoor activity was curtailed to a great extent. However, during our stay there—which eventually dragged on for six months—we boxed, ran, played soccer and rugger, and swam against the different companies of the Buffs, which took their turn on detachment in the town. We emerged victorious in all these contests save the swimming, for which we made an outing to Mingaladon, there being no bath available in Rangoon.

Our military operations were limited to mounting guard on Government House and our own lines and to scotching the bed bugs which we boiled to death once a fortnight.

Of training we were able to do but little owing to duties. A weekly route march and a monthly shoot on the A.F.I. range were our only departures from the barrack square.

However, as October drew to a close, rumour, which had so often raised false hopes, gave place to definite news that we were to be relieved by the 2/15th Punjabis and were to return to Maymyo on November 1. Nothing loath to return to the Regiment, we bade farewell to the Buffs who had made us at home in their detachment mess through the summer, and departed in the early hours of a Sunday morning.

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MACHINE GUN COMPANY, 1931

IN the last number of the CHRONICLE "A.E.S." recorded details concerning the formation of the Machine Gun Company in India, stating that "Since its inception no alterations have been made in the new organization."

An important alteration has now been made and perhaps is worthy of record in the chronicles of the Regiment.

Rumour has it that the present Commander-in-Chief on arrival in India viewed aghast the Machine Gun Company with a six-gun platoon on pack and a six-gun platoon on cart transport. This organization had obviously been devised more for economical than for tactical reasons, in fact at the time of formation of the Machine Gun Company in 1929 there was a large surplus of A.T. Carts in India due to the reduction in establishment of Transport Companies.

It now became a question of all cart transport or all pack transport and the answer was obvious.

In the North-West Frontier and in mountainous country carts cannot leave the roads, whereas pack mules can.

Actually in Burma the Regiment had found very little difficulty in moving carts anywhere across country, and it is surprising how skilful the Indian drivers became with training: but the organization of platoons of six guns, apart from being different from England, was cumbersome and awkward of control.

The economical ingenuity displayed in re-organizing Machine Gun Companies into three pack platoons each of two sections (four guns per platoon) is praiseworthy.

A pack platoon of twenty-four mules and a draught platoon of twelve mules required transforming into three pack platoons, and this with the minimum of cost.

A pack section previously required eight mules, so that one would have expected six sections on the new organization to have required forty-eight mules, whereas only thirty-six were available. Nevertheless, thirty-six mules have been made to suffice.

The line gear mule of each pack section was abolished; instead of 5,000 rounds of ammunition per gun, 4,000 rounds per gun were to be carried; the reserve ammunition mule of each rifle company was to be handed over to the Machine Gun Company.

By this scheme, sufficient mules were forthcoming, one mule per platoon even being spare, line gear being carried on 1st Line Transport.

Extra saddlery was required for pack mules, and one extra sepoy had to be enlisted.

Against this there remained 6 A.T. carts to be returned to store, together with draught harness for twelve mules.

The organization became a reality in the Regiment at the beginning of October, although some of the new equipment had not been received.

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One platoon of the Company has been on detachment with "C" Company at Shwebo since August, being reorganized six weeks before the rest of the Company; apart from this the Company has been in Maymyo the whole year, while rifle companies have been out showing the flag and quelling rebellion.

This raises a great problem and it will be interesting to see whether any change is made in the future.

At present regulations demand an annual turn-over of 50 per cent, of the private soldiers in the Company. It is recognized at Army Schools that it takes two years to turn out a fully-trained machine gunner. The Company in other words becomes a school of instruction which a soldier leaves when he is trained.

Training in the Company in some form or other is continuous throughout the year, and if Machine Gun Sections go out on column training is interrupted, and sections going out are only partially trained.

Apart from this, is the Company spirit going to be affected? Half the Company is transferred back to rifle companies each year, and the Company (less non-commissioned officers who serve four years with the Company) is turned over every two years.

It is interesting to look ahead and from experience gained since the formation of the Machine Gun Company, it is suggested that an annual turn-over of 33 per cent, would be preferable and of more benefit to the Regiment.

A machine gunner would then remain in the Company three years and a backbone of fully trained machine gunners would always exist.

In the Machine Gun Platoon days it was different. Machine gunners, although changed over every two years, were essentially specialists. Now of necessity the Company cannot alone specialize in machine gunnery, but must be kept efficient in other branches of drill and training as well as musketry, to enable it to fit into its place and take its share of duties alongside with the Rifle Companies.

Will short service of two years in the Company allow of this ?

C.R.H.

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COLLECTIVE TRAINING, 1931.

THE Wetwyn training area, some nine miles from barracks, saw us again collected under canvas in February for a month of company and battalion training. The usual stringency, increased by the possibility of the separation of Burma from India, put any other training out of the question. However, though we had no brigade training we had a highly instructive and interesting time thanks to the presence in camp for the last fortnight of a section of the 7th (Bengal) Mountain Battery R.A.

Those of us who had been present in 1930 were busy at the start, teaching the latest arrivals the names of all the prominent topographical features in the area, names which I shrewdly suspect were invented by the Machine Gun Company, and in spite of an official ban on their use, continued and increased daily in popularity.

Our training area, the same as last year, was about four miles by three over some excellent open and undulating country, though in places the lentana had grown so thick as to make it almost impassable. The Commanding Officer, however, from the start decided that new ground must be broken, and so, early in our sojourn in camp Blaikie, our Medical Officer, with Theobalds were to be seen slinking off each morning slung about with water bottles, looking most mysterious and at the same time being very secretive as to their destination. This air of secrecy foreboded ill for the future and rumours were soon rife of original operations to be carried out when the Colonel had us all under his command. However, more of this anon.

To start the ball rolling "B" Company set off on a three-day trek through the jungle and after many vicissitudes with mules and their loads and many annoyances from their opponents, the Intelligence Section, arrived at the camp two days before the remainder of the Regiment.

The first fortnight was spent in platoon and company training, ending up with an inter-company exercise for which "A" Company bivouacked the night in paddy fields some five miles from camp and fought their way home next day driving Colvill and his company before them.

Regimental training started with a series of demonstrations by the Machine Gun Company, showing methods of coming into action by the Draught and Pack Platoons, followed by others to illustrate ways of employing and opening indirect fire. In one case some interested spectators were nearly destroyed by a shower of stones and splinters due to a slight error in elevation. In their turn these were followed by company field-firing in which the two rifle companies were each supported by overhead fire from a platoon of machine guns. Having thus, in his opinion, earned his pay for the day and a rest from his arduous duties, Horley, accompanied by Bayley, disappeared in a haze of blue smoke for Maymyo *en route* for England and leave.

Fun now started in earnest for those who remained, as the next day saw us off on an advanced guard scheme when the Regiment was opposed by a Platoon of "C" Company from Mandalay who had come up to act as enemy during training. Their skeleton strength altered from day to day as, also, did their numbers, for at times the Band was impressed to assist them. Aably commanded by Vernon, they proved themselves a most ubiquitous foe, fleet of foot and past masters in the art of surprises.

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Often when things seemed to be going a bit too much according to plan Vernon and some of his henchmen would appear from nowhere in a gallant and often most disquieting counter attack. Certainly on one memorable occasion his presence was not discovered until he was heard advancing, emitting the most ear-splitting yells and brandishing a long stick over his head.

All schemes except one during this part of the training were continuous so after the first we passed on to defence and night outposts, remaining out till about 10 p.m. when the dismiss sounded. This was a signal for a race for home across country, each choosing his own way. Many and varied were the routes and even though a plethora of electric torches sprang into existence for the benefit of the mules etc. there were several who were insistent that such and such was the best way home.

Falkiner with his headquarters held the record hotly followed by the Colonel, who, unfortunately, had to negotiate an unexpected ditch on coming out of a village. This village was the undoing of many and especially of those who professed that they knew the direction of all paths which meandered through it, many who were wiser preferred to skirt it and strike the path beyond. Clare, full of zeal, tried taking mules over mountains, Blaikie was sure he knew the way by the North star and others were equally confident that camp was in a totally opposite direction and consequently did not fetch up till after the canteen had closed and all gone to bed.

Next day we returned to our night positions and carried out a withdrawal hotly pursued by Vernon and his merry men who were here, there and everywhere. They certainly earned their pay that day, their volatility causing the commander of the Regiment many disquieting moments.

The next three days entailed a change of abode. Early Monday morning saw us tying innumerable loads on to mules and loading up A.T. and country carts for a trek through the jungle to a village some seven miles from camp, the object of the operation being to try out methods of protection in jungle warfare and to teach our many young soldiers some of the routine and duties of a perimeter camp.

The polo team, while at Myitkyina the previous autumn, had seen an interesting demonstration of the work of the Military Police in the jungle; their method of splitting up the force, the duties of the baggage guard and the system of inter-communication by whistle between flankers and those on the path were all shown in slow motion. To practise these methods and to gain a little experience of this difficult form of fighting was the principal *raison d'etre* of the exercise.

On this occasion Ward and his Intelligence Section were told off to act as enemy. Suitably disguised in pyjamas with their shirts outside, they successfully held up the column on several occasions, playing a game of tip and run with different portions of the force and creating merry hell amongst the baggage and followers. If bullets had been flying I am sure his tactics would have sobered down very considerably, especially when Lewis guns and machine guns "browned" the jungle as he skipped away from some wasplike attack.

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The pace was extraordinarily slow as loads were dragged off by the jungle and A.T. carts upset, so that the baggage guard were kept more than busy looking after their charges. We averaged not more than one and a half miles an hour, the very most and probably more than we could ever hope to do in really thick jungle.

On arrival at our camp site we found Clare busy with the camp colour party marking out the camp which shortly afterwards we surrounded; we had about a couple of hours of daylight in which to dig and settle in before dark.

Ere long an alarm was raised that Vernon and the Band had been sighted, almost at once the Mountain Battery let off their pieces, scattering all the bearers, except the redoubtable Bhostan Khan, the Colonel's bearer, and imposing caution and discretion on the attack which after a little desultory firing petered out.

Later on at "Stand to" Ward endeavoured to distract our attention by starting fires at the four corners of the camp and kicking up a hullabaloo all round; this proved too much for some who refused to allow such insults to pass unnoticed.

The next day the situation changed again, and all officers and platoon commanders were ordered out to make a reconnaissance for a night march and an attack at dawn across a stream which the Colonel had discovered. Then we understood the full significance of those previous secret reconnaissances, and why the Intelligence Officer and the Pioneer Serjeant had lately been so busy with bamboo and wire. On return to the perimeter which had disappeared during our absence orders were issued for a start at 2 a.m. the next morning.

Accordingly having seized what sleep we could we woke to pack, snatch a meal and get under way. Ward with his braves led the way, having previously blazed the trail through the lentana. In spite of a few mishaps with the carts we arrived at the position of assembly by the appointed time. From here to the forming up places the pace was very slow, thanks to the appearance of long bamboo bridges which had to be carried and whose twenty feet of length were difficult to manoeuvre down a jungle track.

"B" Company, the first to go over, as soon as the bridges were in position slithered down to the river bed, Colvill the while impressing on all the importance of silence. On arrival at the launching places he found an animated gang of pioneers, intelligence section and signallers all wanting to be the first over. Some were jumping on the bridges to test their bearing capacity, and others were loudly busy trying to get a telephone wire across. In spite of the crowd and pandemonium "B" Company crossed at zero hour as the Mountain Battery and the machine guns opened fire over their heads.

As soon as the rifle companies were over, larger bridges were thrown across capable of taking the carts, the pack mules, however, had to use the infantry bridges which they did in fine style, some though preferring to jump the stream. The attack up the opposite heights went with a will and once these were captured and consolidated the cease fire sounded and all made a bee line for camp and breakfast.

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On the following day battalion field firing took place, graced by the presence of the District Commander and several of his staff who had left their comfortable homes in Maymyo in order to hear what twelve machine guns sounded like going off together. The day ended without casualties though rumour had it that a Lewis Gun section found from the Battery, thrilled to the marrow at being able to let drive, were prepared to do so whatever, or whoever, might be in front.

On our last day the Battery gave demonstrations to illustrate the methods of getting into and out of action the old ten-pounder screw guns with which they were armed, the last battery in India and probably in the army to retain this weapon; some guns of this battery were used in Mesopotamia during the war. After this the Machine Gun Company replied for the benefit of the Battery.

Many and amusing comments were heard during the Battery's performance, the cream of which must be that of the man who proudly explained to his neighbour how the gun was carried by the section mules. "No. 1 mule he carries the gun, No. 2 the wheels, and No. 3 the spare parts!"

After this nothing remained to be done but to strike camp and return to barracks which we did on March 21.

Thus ended a most instructive and thoroughly enjoyable month when everyone keen to work did their utmost in healthy and pleasant surroundings.

The presence of the Mountain Battery was a great help, much was learnt on both sides and a distinctly happy liaison has sprung by which we benefit by the horses we are able to borrow for paper-chasing. I am sure that Woodrooffe, who commanded the section, will never forget the best position for an infantry officer when under fire in the open nor how fast we as a regiment can march.

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THE UPPER BURMA MOVABLE COLUMN JANUARY 3 – 15, 1931

Carried out by Letter "A" Company, one section (pack) M.G. Company and 16 Buglers.

Immediately after training last year (1929-30) rumour was rife that the Regiment, accompanied by one section of the 7th (Bengal) Mountain Battery, would carry out a march in the Shwebo District early this year, instead of our usual training at Wetwin Camp.

Rumour crystallized into fact, and by about September officers were beginning to think how much kit they could "wangle" past the Quartermaster and his scales, over and above the eighty pounds allowance.

Then the Practical Joke Department stepped in. It was all much too expensive. The Regiment, but not the Gunners could go. Why not send two companies only? Why send anybody at all? However, it was eventually decided that one company, with one section of Machine Gunners and sixteen Buglers, should carry out the march.

Even then there was considerable uncertainty about everything, and on looking through my files, I find that on December 30, four days before the Column started, a letter was received from District stating that "as some doubt appears to exist as to whether the Upper Burma Movable Column will go out or not, it is hereby confirmed that the Column will move out on the dates laid down."

The political situation at the time was none too good. The Tharrawaddy trouble had broken out, rioting of a serious nature had taken place in Rangoon, and the 3/20th Burma Rifles had left Maymyo for the scene of the trouble.

Shwebo was reported quiet although it was known to be a likely seat of rebellion and a hotbed of Hypongi agitation. Our little force looked none too big to tackle a rebellious district, but we sallied forth, full of hope and ignorance.

Our job was to show the flag, let the villagers see that British troops existed in Burma, and that, if left alone, we were quite harmless and ready to enjoy life.

After amassing an extraordinary quantity of paper on every conceivable subject connected with the move, we eventually entrained at 8 p.m. on the night of January 3.

The train, as is usual with troop specials, started at 2 a.m. and the day began badly for me, as, having got off to sleep, I was awakened at that ghastly hour and asked whether the train might start. I spent the rest of a cold and exceedingly jolty night trying, entirely without success, to go to sleep again.

We arrived at Amarapoora station at about 7 a.m., where we had to tranship the men on to the boat and be ferried across the Irrawaddy. Our heavy baggage and the animals had preceded us in H.B.'s, C.V.'s, and M.Y.V.'s (it took me the whole ten days to decipher the unintelligible nomenclature of the railways) and these were already on their ferry. I expected to be met on arrival with, if not a red carpet, at least someone who looked as if he expected us and could tell us where to go, where the ship was and what time it left, but not a bit of it, and it was only after delving behind some goods waggons that I found an official of sorts, who pointed vaguely towards the river and said that was the way.

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I thanked him profusely and asked him to hurry up and get the one guards-van we had on our train, loaded to the roof with Vickers and Lewis guns together with their equipment and boxes of S.A.A., moved on to the ferry with the other waggons.

And here I struck my first snag. It wasn't on his orders; we already had our complement of baggage waggons on board; he could do nothing without orders from the Competent Authority, who lived, apparently, in Rangoon. In vain I begged and threatened, pointing out to him that there was plenty of room in the baggage waggon flat and that it would take only five minutes to run the waggon on to it, while it would take me an hour to unload. But there is nothing in the world so obstinate as a junior official, who dare not take any responsibility, so, finally, I had to man-handle all the stuff on to the ferry, which, in consequence started an hour late.

It is only a quarter of an hour's run across the river, so twenty minutes later we were again employed in carrying heavy boxes, this time up the very steep banks at Sagaing Shore, into our new train. How the troops must have blessed the Serjeants for bringing that crate of folding chairs.

Here we found our cooks, who had been sent on a day ahead, all ready with breakfast, and things looked brighter after that. Nevertheless, the train started over two hours late.

The rail journey was uneventful except that I got a wire from Stansfield, the Column Supply Officer, who was already at Budalin, our railhead, stating that the motor ambulance we had on the train could not be off-loaded at that place owing to lack of suitable ramps. Consequently I had to take it off at Monywa, thirty miles from Budalin, and left a rather disconsolate R.A.S.C. serjeant to drive it on by road. He arrived nearly as soon as we did.

On arrival at Budalin we found Stansfield and Seymour, the D.C. of the Lower Chindwin District, waiting to receive us, with a vast collection of all kinds of transport. Seymour had served with the newly constituted 43rd in Mesopotamia in the attempts to relieve Kut, and he renewed his associations with the Regiment in no uncertain manner. Everything that could possibly be done for the comfort of the officers and men, from jungle fowl shoots to a constant supply of coconuts, was done by him and his staff.

We camped that night in the Police Lines at Budalin, about one mile from the station. For many of us it was a first experience of camping in the East and it was found to be very different to pitching tents by numbers on the square. However, it is sufficient to say that by the end of the third day we didn't feel we had much to learn about getting into camp and settling down quickly and without fuss. Seymour gave the officers tea and then had them all to dine with him at the Rest House that night, after which we sat round a camp fire and told stories. Here Harry Vernon came into his own.

Our party consisted of seven officers in all. Vernon, Metcalfe, Palmer and myself from the Regiment, Major Fretz, R.A.M.C., Stansfield, looking after the supplies, and Tuite, a Sapper, as the water and sanitation expert. Metcalfe acted as Transport Officer throughout.

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We had also accumulated a larger force since our arrival at Budalin, namely a small detachment of Sappers and Miners, a Veterinary detachment, and an I.A.S.C. detachment, including a Bakery Section. I hope it won't spoil the story if I explain that the Veterinary detachment consisted of one man. The bread produced by the Bakery Section out of the ovens made by them at each halt, was by far the best any of us had tasted before in Burma.

Next day we started on the march proper and we did the ten miles to our next camp at Maungdaung in good time, along a main road that gave no trouble to the transport. The last mile was through a village, whose main road, as in all these villages, was about eight feet wide and a foot thick in dust. We hated villages from now on.

Maungdaung Camp was in a large field with ample accommodation for everybody, and the officers found a large shamiana already built for them as their mess. The water question, which was an anxiety throughout, was solved here by the villagers having filled large Pegu jars, which had been chlorinated by the time we arrived. The procedure was always the same as regards water. Water bottles and pakhals of drinking water were filled first, after which water for cooking was issued, and then, not before, the canteen manager was allowed to draw water for his "char wallahs."

We had no sooner had lunch than Seymour took the officers off for a jungle fowl shoot, leaving Vernon in to hold the fort. Later, I think, we all felt that he had had the best of the bargain, as we did at least ten miles after the elusive fowl that evening, which, coupled with the morning's march, made it a hard day.

It was at this camp that Vernon learnt to open a coconut, and he and Fretz discovered that gin and coconut milk go well together. Every evening after this the two of them might have been seen surrounded by increasing piles of chopped up coconuts, if not empty gin bottles. They certainly worked hard for their drink.

Our next march was to Wetpok, which was the prettiest camping ground of any we encountered, being situated beside a large tank surrounded by trees on which sat large white cranes, like sentinels. Here the water arrangements were the same as before and two shamianas were available for the officers. These were most useful as they obviated pitching some tents, with the consequent saving of time in the early morning. Here also, we met Lieutenant-Colonel Batten, D.C., of the Shwebo District, who, like Seymour, did everything he possibly could to help us on our way. We said good-bye to Seymour that evening and next morning crossed the border between Lower Chindwin and Shwebo some four hundred yards after leaving camp.

We were now in the Hnaw country and if we were to meet any trouble it would be from now on, so perhaps it will be suitable at this juncture to explain our tactical dispositions.

On the march we had one platoon as Advanced Guard, with a local guide, a new guide being taken on at every halt. The Main Body consisted of the Buglers and two platoons, while behind came Metcalfe, with his fifty or so carts, and a platoon as baggage guard. Both District Commissioners had assured me on arrival that there was no likelihood of trouble so, consequently, I moved the Bakery Section one day ahead of the troops, with the result that fresh bread was always ready on our arrival in camp.

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I, also, sent on an advanced party daily, two hours ahead of us, consisting of the Sappers and Miners and the Camp Colour Party; thus, when we arrived the camp was marked out, water chlorinated and the pumps hard at work filling the canvas troughs for the mules. The Medical Detachment transport consisted of a brand new motor ambulance, which moved between the Advanced Guard and the Main Body, and a bullock tonga at the end of the column.

The bullock carts varied in size and quality at each halt, but on the whole were not bad. Instead of the usual ten to fifteen maunds it was found that, owing to the state of the tracks, six maunds was the maximum economical load. If more than this was put on breakdowns were inevitable. Spare carts were always taken, and were invariably used. Owing to the perpetual cloud of dust that hung over the transport on the move, they became known as "The Gold Rush," and from this Metcalfe naturally assumed the cognomen of "Klondyke Charlie."

In camp we found the usual quarter guard, the sentries being given long beats along the faces of the camp, while by night prowlers, armed with pickhelves, "prowled and prowled around!"

Just before leaving Wetzok I had a difference of opinion with the headman of the village. No guide turned up and when asked about it he said he couldn't find one. Batten had gone on ahead so I couldn't get any help from him. Through an interpreter I explained that if I had no guide I could not go and therefore would have to live on his village and crops. That did not appear to worry him in the least, so I said I would start by cutting down his toddy palms, whereupon I got my guide at once! When he did arrive he was standing in front of the Advanced Guard Platoon when the point section doubled out to get their distance, and he apparently thought they were after him, as, no sooner did he see them coming, than he picked up his skirts and ran for dear life down the road, followed by shouts of laughter from the troops and remaining villagers.

The road to Thityaaing, our next halt, was deep in dust the whole way. We had now left the main road behind and were on tracks and paddy fields for the remainder of our march. It was here that some humorist in the Buglers started singing "Riding on a camel in the desert," which became very popular whenever we were ploughing our way through dust and sand.

At Thityaaing we halted for one day, which, beside being a welcome rest, gave us a chance to show ourselves to the villagers. I had wanted to do field firing or give demonstrations with a machine gun firing ball ammunition, but Batten advised against this, as, apart from the difficulty of clearing the area, it was already reported that some villages were being evacuated as we approached and we did not want to frighten anyone more than was necessary. Consequently we confined ourselves to drill, P.T., M.G. drill and a display of acrobatics by a few experts. The audience assembled at the given time and I stood by the interpreter and explained what was happening. The drill left them cold, or, if at all impressed, they did not show it, but they thoroughly enjoyed the P.T. and the acrobats. What they obviously liked the best, however, was watching the men play "House," after parade was over.

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The next day we had a short, but very trying, march to Gungsama, through very deep dust. Dust in this country is entirely different to that at home, where there is nearly always a solid road underneath. On these tracks there was nothing but dust, and it was worse than walking through heavy sand. One's feet slipped back at every step, and great clouds of it rose up and covered the column throughout its length. What it was like in the middle of the transport column I can't imagine.

At Gungasma we got a real scare about the water supply. I rode on ahead of the troops to find the wells, from which we had expected to get water, but they were either dry or so contaminated that they were unfit even for animals. The men were just coming in, hot, thirsty and covered with dust and they would want water at once. The Sappers, however, soon found a dry river bed nearby, and digging operations started at once. Two feet below the surface we came across the best water we had had yet. It was some distance from the camp, but the quality was excellent and I breathed again.

We dined with Batten that night and afterwards sat round a camp fire. I conversed with him at some length while every other officer slumbered openly and unashamed in their chairs! Talking of sleeping mention must be made of Stansfield, our Supply Officer, who slept on every possible occasion and, consequently, was nicknamed "The Dormouse" on the first day out. I am certain he never sat through one dinner without dropping off at least once, and how we longed for an outsize in teapots! But, nevertheless, he ran an excellent show and we never wanted for anything, either in supplies or transport.

Leaving Gungsama we started on our longest march of the series to Tamadaw (14 miles), and, after a mile or two, dropped down from the hilly, wooded country we had been traversing, to the pancake lands of the paddy fields. Here our progress became almost triumphal. Villages were all beflagged and we entered and left them under imposing decorated archways, while the villagers, who always collected on both sides of the road, on the far side of the village, clapped as we marched through. It was most embarrassing, until we got blase, marching through a clapping populace, whose faces expressed nothing whatever! At Gungsama we had made friends with the headman, who was the proud possessor of a silver sword given him by Government in recognition of previous loyalty. In a weak moment we gave him some beer, and that old reprobate followed us from camp to camp for the next four days. He used to arrive at the mess just as we had settled in, squat on the ground and make signs indicating extreme thirst. After the fourth day the beer situation began to get acute, so we hardened our hearts and kicked him out.

At Tamadaw we again halted for a day and repeated our tricks to a far larger audience. Here the officers were very well housed in a shamiana hung with bunches of bananas and coconuts, and there was unlimited room for our camp. The next two days do not need any description, but the most awful thing happened on our last march but one. Just before we started I heard that we were passing through a Christian village, about two miles away, and that they were going to give us a reception. In due course we came to the now well-known archway, but this time there was a carpet down and a table and some chairs. I hastily appreciated the situation and marched the troops straight through, halting them as far away as I could with decency.

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Then I came back with all the officers to face the music. This is said literally, as, no sooner had we been introduced to the Rev. Father and a French Mother Superior, standing in front of about ten Burmese nuns, than we were invited to sit and a choir struck up an anthem, the words of which were: "Welcome, Welcome, Welcome, to the gallant Major and his brave soldiers !" This was very nearly more than I could bear and, not daring to catch Harry Vernon's eye, I stared in front of me and tried to think of something depressing. Eventually, however, it finished and there was an awful hush. At this moment I caught sight of two of the men who had crept round to the back of the crowd and were busy taking photographs! Anyway I staggered to my feet and said, on behalf of everybody I could think of, how much we appreciated the honour done to us, how we enjoyed seeing their lovely country, and how we were only doing our duty cost what it might, etc., etc. I then hastily sat down and was presented with a Christmas Card, which said on it, amongst other things, "God bless you as a matter of course." We then shook hands all round and started off again, speeded on our way by loud cheers and clapping. I can only hope that we gave them as much pleasure as they gave us.

The last four marches were over paddy fields, and when one remembers that every single "bund" on the road trace had been cut away and levelled, every nullah crossing built up and packed with straw and hay, and the road marked with flags miles from any village, it shows what a tremendous lot of work the Civil authorities had put in to help us.

Our last camp was the worst of all, very small, cramped and dirty, and we had to have all our transport parked outside the official camp area. However, we had our noses pointed for home and nothing much mattered. I motored on with Vernon, on the last day, to take over the train at Kanbya, while Palmer brought the column along. According to the instructions I expected to find the train all ready, waiting our arrival, and, when we got there, there certainly was a train in the station, but unfortunately it proved to be only the morning express, which departed as soon as we arrived. We then went to the station master and asked for our train to be supplied at once. He looked completely blank, murmured something about having been there a week, and went on tapping out messages on his buzzer. Added to this he could only talk a very little English which completely failed him in moments of stress. So there we were at this little shed of a railway station, set in the midst of miles of paddy fields, with only the single line of rails to remind us that we had returned to comparative civilization. I began to get impatient and asked someone to get me a new station master, as this one was worn out, and to my astonishment and relief some Burman went off and returned in about ten minutes with the old station master, a Sikh, who had retired the week before and had bought a rice mill nearby, and had settled down. Explanations followed and in two minutes he had assumed charge, while in another half-hour our train materialized out of nowhere in particular and we just managed to sort it out and take it over before the Column arrived. They marched in just after 11 a.m., and by 1 p.m. the train was loaded complete with animals, stores and men. As the "Gold Rush" had not turned up till nearly midday it was good going and showed our trip had made everyone more handy.

We were not due to start till the early hours of next morning, so "all that livelong day, the sweating troop train lay" with the men getting what shade they could, sitting in rows in the lee of the carriages. The motor ambulance, meanwhile, had gone on to Monwya, there to be loaded on to its special truck, and attached to our train when we came along.

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Next morning we arrived at Sagaing Shore an hour too early, and the baggage waggons were at once loaded on to their flat.

I saw the passenger ferry in as we arrived and went straight on board to find out if they were ready for us, only to be told that we were not to embark till the voyage after next! As it was then 8.30 a.m. and the voyage after next did not start until 11 a.m., it did not leave us much time to have our breakfasts and catch our train at Amarapooa at twelve noon.

After some persuasion I got them to allow me to send off the cooks, Sappers and Miners and the Medical, Veterinary and I.A.S.C. Detachments at once, and they embarked immediately. The rest of us sat and waited and admired the view.

When the steamer returned I again interviewed the captain to find out why we could not go at once. He told me this was an ordinary passenger trip and that the next one was a special one for the Military. I argued that a Company of British Infantry came before a crowd of naked Hypoongis and that, in any case, we were paying for our passage as much as they were. He was a good lad and eventually said he was going away to get some breakfast and, when he came back, he would see about it. I took the hint and hastily embarked the men, taking up as little space as we possibly could. When he returned he merely winked at our presence and we started off at about 10 a.m. feeling rather pleased with ourselves.

At Amarapooa we found breakfasts ready, and, as soon as we had loaded the train with our ammunition and automatic weapons, we got down to it. We also found that the Detachments that had gone on in advance, all of whom were bound for Mandalay, had found an earlier train than was scheduled and were already on board. They started off soon afterwards and we said a fond farewell to Tuite and Stansfield.

We left at about 1 p.m. and after a hot and somewhat slow journey arrived at Maymyo about 5 p.m., rather over an hour late.

There were many people on the station to greet us; the Colonel, Whitfield, fresh from the Staff College at Quetta, Powell, with tales of teas all ready for us in barracks, the Band and Buglers and last, but not least, a working party to shift our baggage. We were thus able to move straight off, leaving only the unfortunate Metcalfe, who had done all the loading of the various trains, to see the stuff cleared.

It was a great relief to get back and to find something ready and all the organization of the Regiment to help us.

That is the story of our doings, baldly and, I am afraid, badly told. Nothing exciting happened; we were not attacked, thank God! nor did we meet with any adventures of note, but I think we all learnt a lot and a Column of this sort, is, without any doubt, the finest training a Company can have, if only for the chief reason that you are always moving on and not returning to barracks every day.

But there is a sequel to this story; in fact, two. Not long after our return I got a letter from Batten saying, amongst other things, "The admirable discipline of the men at all times was particularly noticed and created a very good impression."

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About a fortnight later I was told that there had been going to be a rising in Shwebo. It was all arranged when the Column arrived and the rebels, thinking the Government knew all about it, a totally erroneous supposition, decided that the game was not worth the candle and called it off.

To me the former was the better news.

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THE REBELLION IN THE SHAN STATES

THE lapse of time puts events in their true perspective, and the rebellion in the Shan States now appears to have been a very small affair, though at the time it created a good deal of excitement.

Towards the end of June, 1931, a Hpongyi or Bhuddist monk, who called himself U Nyanna, but whose real name was Saya San, commenced recruiting and tattooing close to the border between the Northern and Southern Shan States. At the beginning of July he commenced operations. He divided his forces, such as they were, directing one portion on Hsipaw and the other on to the railway near Nawngkhio and thence to Maymyo. Early information of these intended movements was gained by the police, with the result that two columns of military police moved out from Lashio and one from Taungyi to deal with the rising. The rebel advance on Hsipaw was soon stopped. One of the Lashio columns, moving towards the seat of trouble, proposed to cross the Namtu river by the Nalu crossing. On reaching the crossing the column found the rebels on the opposite bank prepared to oppose them. The rebels believed themselves to be invulnerable and did not bother much about cover. The police, therefore, taking advantage of the protection afforded by the river and of the range of their own weapons as compared with those of the enemy, proceeded to shoot the rebels where they sat. They inflicted about eighty casualties. This battle, fought under such favourable conditions and with such skilful use of ground, considerably lowered the rebel morale.

Although the police operations had been in progress for several days, no news of the rising was sent to H.Q. Burma Independent District at Maymyo, only fifty miles away, until Saturday, July 4. District H.Q. who were busy with the war in Lower Burma, eventually, so it is said, received the news via Rangoon. The General Staff were justifiably annoyed and also alarmed at this appearance of the enemy at their back door, threatening the home. Immediate steps were taken to cope with the situation.

Two platoons of "A" Company left Maymyo on the evening of July 4 in an improvised armoured train. The improvisation consisted of a truck on each end of the train, housing a L.A. section amply protected by sandbags. This action was presumably taken to deal with the "thence to Maymyo" portion of Saya San's plan.

The armoured train reached Gokteik and returned to Maymyo by 8.30 a.m. on July 5. It encountered no one except the Superintendent of the Northern Shan States, who was somewhat astonished at this military interference with the war.

However, on July 6 the war did not appear to be going quite so well. A small party of Military Police who had been left to guard a camp at Nawngkhio-Gyi, were attacked by rebels on the early morning of July 6. They lost several men and their Lewis gun. The latter, however, they recaptured after a very gallant fight. On hearing the first news of this encounter, the Superintendent asked for military assistance. Two Platoons of "A" Company were on the point of departure, when the Superintendent cancelled his request, having received less alarming information. However, on July 8, when the Shan States rebellion had been all but forgotten, "A" Company less two Platoons were ordered forth again. Within two hours of receiving the order, the Company was *en route* for Nawngkhio, accompanied by the good wishes of the Staff and the assurance that they were "in for a fight." At Nawngkhio all was peace.

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No news had been heard of the rebels since the attack on July 6, but the people of Nawngkhio, whose morale could not have been very high, had all departed. One day was spent at Nawngkhio waiting for news of the rebels from the military police. None arrived, but the day was not wasted as a lot of confidence was restored in the village; a form of warfare in which "A" Company are becoming quite expert.

The following day, July 10, one platoon marched into the rebel area, but did not obtain any information except that the price of bananas was twenty-four for one anna and that A.T. carts were not much good on the bullock cart tracks, one having turned over. At about 1 p.m. a conference was held between the Superintendent, the Commander of the Military Police Column and the Company Commander. All information in possession of the police pointed to the rebel leader being still in the area Loihkaw-Taungbyauk Ferry-Pasun, that is west of the Nam-Pan-Se Gorge. At the conference it was decided that the Military Police should search that area, whilst "A" Company watched the bolt holes to the east of the Gorge. Fortunately this move had been foreseen, and the rolling stock retained in Nawngkhio station. By 4.30 p.m. the detachment was on the train and by 6 p.m. at Nawngpeng.

Some description of the Shan States may not be altogether out of place here. The Northern and Southern Shan States consist of a number of semi-independent states, each under its own Sawbwa. The states vary very much in size. Hsipaw, in which "A" Company was operating, is one of the largest. Although the collection of taxes and to a certain extent the maintenance of law and order are now functions of the central government, the Sawbwa still retains a good deal of power within his own state. Each Sawbwa is paid a fixed salary by the central government. With each group of states, Northern and Southern, there is a Superintendent, the representative of the Government of Burma. He acts as a Commissioner, advising each Sawbwa on the administration of his state, within the lines laid down by the central government. He has a number of Assistant Superintendents to help him. The Shans are an attractive people, the girls particularly so with their pink cheeks and quaint dress. As a race they are not warlike.

"A" Company arrived at Nawngpeng to find that an Assistant Superintendent, Mr. Rossiter from the Chinese frontier, had been attached to the column as political officer. With his knowledge of the language and of the laws and customs of the country, he was extremely helpful. Within a very short time he had a hundred coolies at work clearing the jungle and erecting bamboo and matting huts.

The following day, July 11, a number of local officials, who knew the country, were collected and questioned as to what villages had furnished recruits to the rebels, what the water supply was like and as to the state of the roads and tracks. It was decided to move out a column to the village of Mawma, which overlooks the Nam-Pan-Se Gorge near its junction with the Namtu. From there it would be possible to move against any rebels, reported to have crossed the Gorge from west to east. It should have been stated previously that the police "drive" west of the Gorge was to start on Sunday, July 12. During the afternoon of July 11 the detachment was joined by the remainder of "A" Company and a medical officer.

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On the morning of July 12 the column of three Platoons, strength two officers, a medical officer and eighty O.R.'s set out for Mawma. Bullock transport was used, as the carts fitted the ruts on the tracks, which were sometimes as much as two feet deep. A.T. carts would have been quite unsuitable.

The route passed through four villages, and the intention was to surround and search each of them. Now a Shan village is a very difficult thing to surround. It is very straggling and covers a considerable area. Outside the village there is usually some open ground, which has been cleared for cultivation, but the edge and inside of the village are covered with trees and low scrub, which impede the view. Without previous reconnaissance or the assistance of mounted men, it is impossible to adopt dispositions, which will prevent villagers from escaping from the far end of the village.

When surrounding the first village, several men including two Hpongyis could be seen running away. It was impossible to tell whether they were rebels or merely frightened villagers. The Company Commander decided to give them the benefit of the doubt, in spite of exhortations from the political officer to "fire over their heads." At any time fire without intent to kill is inadvisable, and particularly so in the case of Burmese or Shan rebels. These people believe that, if they are tattooed with the galon mark or have a needle or piece of silver imbedded in their flesh, they are invulnerable to bullets. If they are shot at and not hit, they have a perfect demonstration that their belief is well founded.

The first village was practically deserted, but one Hpongyi, who was found hiding in a cupboard in the Hpongyi Kyaung, had suspicious-looking marks on him and was arrested. The remaining three villages were drawn blank. As there had been no display of frightfulness at the first village, the other villagers seemed rather pleased than otherwise to see the column. They displayed the curiosity natural to those who have never seen British troops before. The headman of the third village had the male population already lined up for inspection when the column arrived.

On arrival at Mawma, camp was pitched in the compound of the Hpongyi Kyaung. Mawma had been chosen as a camping place partly on account of its water supply, but this same water was found to have a dead cow in it. However, all the local water carts were collected, they are really barrels on wheels, and water was drawn from a well about half a mile away.

During the evening visual communication was established with the police column about eight miles away on the other side of the Gorge. Unfortunately the cloudy weather prohibited the use of helio, and after dark communication was rendered difficult by mist and by the fact that the military police had only an old pattern oil lamp. Nevertheless several messages came through, but no news of the rebel leader.

About 8 p.m. there was a terrific storm. The tents were flooded and everyone's belongings covered with red mud. Permission was obtained from the chief Hpongyi for the men to sleep in the Kyaung. Most of the Hpongyi Kyaungs in Burma are one storey buildings built on piles; this one was no exception. Inside a large room occupied most of the floor space, but there were small rooms on each side.

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Jutting out from one wall was a platform, on which were grouped about thirty or forty Buddhist idols. Round this platform the men slept. The Serjeants slept in one of the small rooms, where there was another Buddha, with a light burning all night.

The plan for the following day was to leave one platoon to guard the camp and to move with the other two into the Gorge reaching the Nam-Pan-Se near the Taungbyauk Ferry and thence to march along the Gorge to the village of Tanta-Bin and back to Mawma. Unfortunately the map gave no indication of the extent of the drop into the Gorge, and local inquiry elicited the fact that the track, though steep was fit for mules.

An early start was made on July 13. It soon became evident that the march was going to be more than had been bargained for. The path got steeper, rockier and narrower; the jungle on either side was impassable. About half-way down the mules had to be sent back under escort and the Lewis guns and ammunition carried.

The descent took about two and a half hours. On reaching the Nam-Pan-Se it was found impossible to get across or down stream to the Taungbyauk Ferry.

The actual depth of the Gorge at this point is not-known, but it is estimated to be nearly 2,500 feet. After a short rest the march was resumed. It is no exaggeration to say that the remainder of the march was the most trying ever experienced by most men of the column. It consisted of over four hours climbing on a path made slippery by rain, in a very damp and sticky atmosphere. Towards the end of the march, the column was marching twenty minutes and halting ten. Movement, of course, was only possible in single file. Everyone stuck it well, but all were deeply thankful when the Hpongyi Kyaung at Mawma came in sight at last.

The results of this gruelling march were hardly commensurate with the effort expended, but the fact was definitely established that no one had crossed the Nam-Pan-Se between Taungbyauk Ferry and Tanta-Bin for some days.

On July 14 the column returned via Tanta-Bin to Nawngpeng, searching villages on the way. Unsuccessful attempts were made to get into communication with the Military Police who were moving to Loihkaw.

Before leaving Mawma a present of rice and condensed milk was made to the Hpongyis, in token of their kindness. Hpongyis are not supposed to accept money. The chief Hpongyi gave the column his blessing, which went on so long that he had to be stopped.

On the evening of the fourteenth information was received from the Superintendent that there was a rumour that the rebel leader had escaped to the north. Agents were immediately sent out to various villages to verify this information. News was also received that the Military Police were moving to Nawngkhio having completed their search of the rebel area.

Preparations were put in hand for another march into the Shan States to commence on July 17. The object of this march was to show the flag and generally to restore confidence. However, on July 15 confirmation was received of the rumour forwarded by the Superintendent the previous evening. Saya San had passed through the village of Manna, heading for Hkai-Leng on July 7, the day before "A" Company left Maymyo.

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This information was communicated to H.Q. Burma District and the Superintendent, who stated that it was no longer necessary to carry out the march into the Shan States. The column was ordered to return on July 17. Thus ended "A" Company's part in the Shan States rebellion. Their role was not a conspicuous or a particularly exciting one. There is no doubt, however, that the appearance of British troops did a great deal towards restoring the normal life of the countryside. The Shan people themselves were sorry to see the Company go and they brought a band and Shan dancers to Nawngpeng station, in order to give the Company a good send off.