

**ARMY LIFE AND SERVICE IN THE BATTLE OF MESOPOTAMIA –
OCTOBER 1916 – 1919.**

JUST NOW ONE OF A FORGOTTEN ARMY

INTRODUCTION

If it were not for the fact that my local Librarian and myself have been unable to find a book covering the War in Mesopotamia after the capture of General Townsend and his Troops who had no option but to surrender to the Turks at Kut El Amara in 1915, where they were imprisoned and short of food I should not be recording my account regarding the part my own Battery played on this Front.

There are books galore in happenings on other Battle Fronts but no one appears to have obliged so far as we were concerned and when I said to the Librarian that I might as well write it myself, she said "Now is your chance" and this is the result.

There are many hundreds of our comrades laid to rest out there who were killed in action or died from Sickness and although I have never attempted to write a book before it was almost forced upon me at the last Remembrance Day Service when reference was made to certain Fronts and Generals engaged in them but Mesopotamia and its Generals were never mentioned as if it was too minor a Front to be thought of. Only General Townsend, his Officers and Troops who surrendered know the agony they all had to contend with on their march from Kut to Mosul and how many of that Very Gallant Army died en route.

However if any of the Relatives of these Heroes manage to read this book, I trust it will be some consolation to them to know that at long last an account and a tribute is being paid to them by another soldier who with many others took part in the actions that eventually led up to the re-capture of not only Kut, but also to the re-capture of the Monitor HMS Firefly which ran aground trying to get food through to our surrounded Army.

THE RE-CAPTURE OF KUT IN MESOPOTAMIA – 1916 ONWARDS

As a Youth hoping in due course to qualify as a Pharmaceutical Chemist in the early part of 1914, I later joined Lord Derby's Scheme and was called up for Army Service in June, 1916, joining the Royal Garrison Artillery at the Great Yarmouth Barracks in Norfolk and being billeted with several others in a private house a few minutes walk from the Britannia Pier where we grouped together each weekday at 8 am and marched to the Barracks at the Southend End of the town, under the watchful eyes of Sergeant and Corporal Smith who were Regular Soldiers but un-related, where we did our Square Bashing.

After a few weeks 150 Recruits of which I was one were sent on a Draft to Northern Ireland, 75 going to Grey Point on the southern end of Belfast Lough whilst the remainder which included myself were taken to Kilroot on the Northern side of the Lough, a little higher up the Coast than Carrickfergus. The day following our arrival we were split up into differing groups for duties and the Sergeant Major there put me in charge of six recruits for Gardening, even after telling him I had no knowledge of gardening and only knew how to keep asphalted paths clean but he told me he was satisfied that I could do the job all right. Four weeks later we were named in a Draft for Mesopotamia with a Summer Temperature up to 130 degrees in the shade.

One recruit so named was named George Gibson who had served in East Africa as a Civil Engineer and he gave us a good idea of what we should have to face in Mesopotamia, so far as the weather was concerned. After being detailed on this Draft we went to the Orderly Office to make arrangements for Leave prior to going overseas. As new Recruits we were not aware of the tricks as were older soldiers and we were told how silly it would be to send us to England to come back to Ireland after leave and then immediately return to Gosport which was then our posting, and we swallowed this without any difficulty, but on our arrival at Gosport were quickly told that we should have had our Leave in Ireland and that in an hour's time we should be on our way to Southampton for France.

Eventually we fell in and led by an Army Band marched off to the Station to entrain for Southampton where we found the station in complete darkness and only one way out through an open door which led us to the ship which was to take us across the English Channel to Le Havre. We set off the following morning down Southampton Water and saw several small boats with wounded troops in Hospital blue Uniform from a Convalescent Home and when we shouted out "Are we downhearted No" they soon shouted back "You bloody well soon will be". On reaching Le Havre we had to march six miles to a Two Inch Trench Mortar School at Harfleur on a fourteen days course of instruction and it was from that school that we first saw gunfire and flashes. Lieut Hope was in charge of the Draft along with five other officers but as we left after completing our course we were joined by another Officer, 2nd Lt Cornwell who I shall refer to later. We were formed into six Batteries of two inch Mortars which were commonly called "Suicide Clubs" as the maximum range of these was only 500 yards and they could be seen all the way from leaving the gun until they landed hopefully amongst the enemy. We

travelled from Harfleur to Poperinghe in Belgium and then to a camp at Abbeville in France where stood standing in acres of land stood a huge house which was being used as a Casualty Hospital; a queue a mile long was bringing in Ambulances with wounded soldiers from the Battle of the Somme for attention.

The same evening we were "Fallen In" with kits and as we were leaving the Camp were addressed by a Padre who told us we were on our way to the Front, that many of us would not return and some would be wounded, an address not appreciated. However we went on a train journey and found ourselves at Marseilles in the south of France where we stayed in camp for three weeks before being marched to the Docks to board a ship for Alexandria. On board, we were given a rifle, the first we had handled and sentries were posted around the ship and told to keep a sharp look out for submarines and if we saw anything suspicious to immediately shout it out to the Bridge but fortunately we never had any trouble although the following day one of our ships was torpedoed on the route we had taken.

We camped at Alexandria for three weeks and then left for Port Said where we entrained for Port Suez where we found a ship lying alongside. An Officer then fell everyone in and said if anyone knew anything about Horses to pick up his Kit and fall in away to the right. This caused quite a commotion and 75% left the remainder and called out "Come and join a Horse Battery and get away from this Suicide Club", referring to the two inch Trench Mortar Batteries we had been trained on in Harfleur. I myself was anxious to go but my bosom pal George Gibson refused in spite of the fact that many others including our pals Wardle and Mercer along with others had left us. Gibson said I could go if I wanted but he wasn't so I stayed with him, although many of those who had left us came from the Bradford and Guiseley areas. The Officer then told us who had remained to pick up our kits and get aboard the ship lying alongside and as we passed them we were told by the "Supposed Horsemen" what a lot of silly fools we were, along with other advice.

Here again the army had shown us another Huge Trick as a train pulled up beside us and there were over a hundred mules aboard and the "Horseman" had to get the Mules (not horses) off the train and get them aboard our ship to travel with us to Basrah. The air became almost electric as did their comments but they managed to carry out their job. These mules had to be watered and fed for fourteen days until we reached the port of Basrah in the Persian gulf but fortunately none were lost and as they left the ship into the Remount Compound as soon as their feet touched the ground their hind legs flew upwards towards the sky, so pleased they were to be on land again. We all had to join in looking after these (anything but normal) animals and our Drill Clothing got into a terrible state.

Our Army Life should have commenced at five or six o'clock the next morning when we should have paraded for the Camp commandant's Inspection but everyone overlaid and we had to parade instead the following morning. We had never had to parade at that unearthly hour before and shortly after we had returned to our camp we were ordered to "Fall In" by the Orderly Officer,

Lt. Cornwall who as he inspected us had us put on Misconduct forms for being Dirty on Parade, i.e. not washed or shaved. We then had to appear before Lt. Hope, Commanding Officer, later in the day and in the circumstances we were admonished. Until then we had only been taught Infantry foot drill but Lt. Cornwall told us on parade that we should be having Mounted Drill and took over the parade for that purpose. He also told us his name and that we should all be bloody sorry we had to know him: his later conduct proved him to be true.

Quite a number of new arrivals suffered from both Diarrhoea and Dysentery and there were two Sick Parades each day, the morning visit in one Camp whilst the evening one was in another Camp. So everyone parading sick saw two different Doctors each day. The first treatment for these two most unfortunate ailments was to swallow from a glass measure an ounce of Castor Oil with a R.A.M.C. member standing and watching that you emptied the glass thoroughly. The treatment at the evening surgery was the same as the morning one so that on the first sickness day you had to swallow two ounces of Castor Oil. It was September when we reached Basrah and the Toilets were approximately sixty yards from the Camp – it was composed of Wooden Posts driven into the ground with sheets of compressed straw fastened to them, leaving an Entrance which also acted as Exits. The so called seats were three cornered pieces of steel with a horse shaped shoe affixed and the pans were empty four gallon petrol tins with the top cut off; however no one realised or didn't want to that there was no covering on top of the toilet and as the red hot sun shone down on the so called seats anyone using them was almost branded on their tender seats like cattle.

Some of the more unfortunate ones had to 'get down' before they could reach the latrine. Indian 'Sweepers' had the job of clearing up any messes and emptying the tins, which was in accordance with their low Caste. The Diarrhoea was more than sufficient for me but I cured myself by lying still and sucking milk chocolate from the N.A.A.F.I. canteen and nipping my bottom cheeks together as much as possible. We next moved to Shiek Said at the junction of the Shattel Arab and Tigris Rivers and prepared to take our place in the fighting line by re-taking Kut el Amara which was captured by the Turks in 1915 and resulting in General Townsend's surrender and losing the Monitor, HMS Firefly which ran aground in trying to get through with food for the besieged troops. The Monitor was then used by the Turks firing on our troops from the many bends in the river which shielded them effectively.

Prior to leaving Basrah we were reinforced by some Regular Troops from India, namely Corporal Willis, Bombadier Slade, Gunners Warren, Matsell, Frost and West. After leaving Basrah we soon learned that all water supplies would be from the River Tigris in spite of the fact that apart from human filth from crews on ships using the river and natives swimming and washing clothes also in the river it was customary for dead animals, horses, an occasional camel and mules to be disposed of in the river and it was not until 1917/8 that large tanks of chlorinated water were installed for drinking purposes only and this was far from being in any way, tasty as the chlorination was so strong.

We were the only trench mortar batteries in either the 13th and 14th divisions in which we belonged although the Infantry had their Stokes guns which were no where nearly as powerful as our Two Inches were, which fired a spherical bomb the size of a football and containing 60 lbs of ammonal explosive affixed to a 20 inch steel tube which the Infantry referred to them as Iron Rations. Eventually we went into action, first in front of Kut and as the Turks retreated into Dahra Bend a little to the left. As our range was limited to 500 yards we were beside the front line of Infantry and as the enemy withdrew a short distance each night we were on two occasions actually in front of the Infantry.

This nightly withdrawal made it most uncomfortable for the Infantry for whom we felt sorry as they had to dig us two gunpits on every withdrawal so that we could keep in touch with the Turks and each withdrawal took them nearer to the river until they had to cross to the other side. Our Mortar was in three parts, first the base which weighed 120 pounds, the gun weighing 80 pounds and the gun support another 40 pounds. The base had four rope handles for carrying purposes but the only way you could round the bends in the trenches was to carry it on one's back as far as possible and then change over when necessary. After an attack we had to dismantle our guns and carry them back to our dug out behind the lines to prevent the Turks coming over and capturing both us and the guns. Whilst in the Trenches in front of Kut a Youth named Harry Waites whom I new very well as he was an assistant in Boots the Chemists as I was in a shop higher up the same street in Rotherham. When we came face to face we were that thunderstruck that at seeing each other we didn't even speak to each other and it was a great relief when shortly afterwards he came back and we then had quite a little chat before he re-joined his nearby unit. Neither of us knew that the other had joined up, let alone finding us both on the same front and such a long way from our homes. Eventually a big attack on the enemy came to light and as we were wending our way in the trenches to our gun pit, we saw three soldiers lying flat in a trench and Gunner Warren who at that time was carrying the base asked them to move around so that we could pass: we got no reply and Warren told them if he trod on them he couldn't help it and that he had to do.

As we returned after the bombardment was over we found the same three still lying where we first saw them and then realised that they were dead. Later the same day I was helping at a near by first aid station when a number of Baluchistanes limped inside all shot in the left foot, self inflicted, and the remainder were withdrawn from the Front Line and replaced by British Troops. During the bombardment we never received any correction or deflection and were simply blasting away and hoping that our bombs were falling amongst the enemy as all we knew was that we were firing in the direction of the Turks. We later found out that our two Officers, Lieut. Cornwell and Barker had been laid flat on their stomachs inside the trench and never saw us fire a single shot. We later learned that the Turks had crossed the river into Kut.

On another occasion we saw four Ghurkas lying dead on the top and one had a spade in his hands so evidently it was their intention of digging a trench or pit when they were spotted by the Turks and shot. One evening Lieut.

Cornwell said he would want me to accompany Lieut Hartley to his battery after a party in the Officers' Mess which broke up just before midnight: I had no idea at all where his unit was but when we set off he pointed to different stars in the sky as a guide on my return, but these didn't interest me. On reaching his unit, Lt. Hartley left me and I was completely lost and as the Turkish trenches were only 600/700 yards away and as I didn't want to walk into them I decided to stay put until daybreak when I made my way back to my battery.

Later the same day Lt. Cornwell sent for me and wanted to know why I hadn't come straight back when Lt. Hartley reached his battery and told me he had a good mind to have me court martialled for desertion facing the enemy and have me shot, but got no further. After the re-capture of Kut Lt. Cornwell got a dinghy from somewhere and took Gunner Dean and myself to the boat and told us to take him down the river. After we had gone the better part of two miles, Dean asked him how we were going to get back as it would mean pulling against the strong current but he told him not to worry about that. shortly afterwards we sighted a 'T' boat being laden with rations and Lt. Cornwell told us to pull in behind it which we did and the officer left us to have a word with the Ship's Captain and we were told to tie up to the ship to be taken back to where we commenced.

As we were left Lt. Cornwell walked around the ship and Dean got on the back of the ship where sacks of sugar were stacked and unbeknown to him Lt Cornwell peeped at him from the opposite side of the sugar stacks and asked Dean what he was after and shortly after a sack of sugar dropped into the dinghy and Dean followed it. We covered the sack up and when we untied from the ship we rowed across to the other side of the river and secured the dinghy before taking the sugar back to camp: both Lt Cornwell and Barker had their share and nothing more was said. For several nights after the Turks had re-crossed the river dummy bridges were being erected in front of Kut to bluff the Turks into thinking we were about to cross there and they fell for this and each time the bridge was re-erected the Turks blew it up.

At the same time we were preparing to cross the river about 2 miles higher up and we fixed one gun into the bank where the crossing was to take place to cover our men if necessary, as they crossed the water. This was undertaken by men of the Norfolk Regiment in pontoons well before the enemy realised what was happening and they found themselves in a similar post as did General Townsend the year before and not a single shot was fired. The following morning a pontoon bridge had been erected and we saw the Cavalry filing across to chase the Turks back towards Baghdad.

This they did so well that they reached the Dyala river a few miles south of Baghdad without a fight and the hold up there was only temporary and they entered Baghdad on the 11th February, 1917, and apart from an odd skirmish that was the end of all Turkish Resistance. Meanwhile we were following up and went into the Garden of Eden near Amara, but the only trees we saw there were Date Palms and we were then placed on boats carrying ammunition and rations to keep the troops supplied when to our great

enjoyment we had the privilege of seeing the Monitor HMS Firefly passing down the river with the Naval Ensign flying from the mast over the Turkish Flag which made our day.

When we saw the Golden Domes and Minarets of Baghdad and Khadimain shining under a red hot sun it looked like the ending of the story but Lt. Cornwell wanted some eggs and on spotting an Arab Village near by we had to take him to get a supply. We put a bullet in the spout of our rifles and entered the village to the screaming and yelling of the women there who thought they were going to be shot. We did not at that time know the Arabic word for eggs and we got into different positions and made cackling noises as did the hens after laying but eventually they realised what we were after and we came away with a dozen eggs – in Arabic Bials.

We entered Baghdad two or three days after its fall and soon forgot our first view of the City for the stench in the streets was almost unbearable. The mopping operations began and two soldiers patrolled the streets with a horse and cart and shot all dogs running loose as the natives didn't believe in ending the animals lives. The larger Monitors HMS Moth and Gnat took turns of anchoring just below the Pontoon Bridge erected at Baghdad in case of need but fortunately they were not required and the bridge enabled both traffic and pedestrians to cross from one side to the other without having to use the round Coracle Boats as they had previously. On entering the now deserted Barracks we found two Turkish Officer's Dress Swords, one of which I took possession of and claimed it as of right but it became a rather awkward business as we moved about from place to place.

Prior to entering Baghdad we were once again sent on a boat with rations of cases of tinned jam and tinned milk for a dump higher up the line and these wooden cases containing these items were being loaded on the boat by Indian Troops as we arrived: they were carrying the cases from a dump on the river side on their heads so we helped to stack these cases on the boat deck. Eventually the Indians had spotted a case of each having been taken by our troops and they at once reported the matter to their own officer on the river bank. He came on the boat and asked to see the Officer in charge which was Lt. Cornwell to whom he gave particulars of the missing cases and then left the boat.

Before setting off we were ordered to 'Fall In' and Lt Cornwell told us what the Indian Officer had told him and said if the two cases were placed where he was standing in an hour's time, there would be no further action, but by that time the tins had been put into a few kit bags and the empty cases in the fire placed on the stern end of the vessel. Shortly after Gunner Dean told me he had some Indian Flour and thought it would be a good idea to make some Jam Roly Poly's and he asked me to get the fire going which I did. Shortly before the first Poly was ready, Lt. Cornwell put in an appearance and asked Dean what he was doing and he half turned facing the Officer and gave him a half smile and told him what he was doing and was told that he would have the first one along with two tins of the milk and a similar request to be taken to Lt. Barker, and this was done.

How the kit bags containing the tins managed to get clear of the boat without being detected one will never know. Owing to the number of twists and turns in the river, it was necessary to secure a barge on each side of the T Boats and this prevented them from running aground. We then returned to the vacant Cavalry Barracks just outside the North Gate and it was unique to see an Arab walking around the Bazaar with a sheepskin full of water and selling dishes of it to Arabs sitting around. We also saw an Arab carrying a piano on his back and another carrying five long wooden poles as used in the Builder's Trade as though there was no weight in them: they were simply held in position by a two inch width of hessian fastened round the heads of the Arabs with one end through a two inch ring and calling out in Arabic "Baalack" "Baalak" which meant "Keep out of the way" which everyone did.

First Lieut. Simmons then joined us and the next we saw of 2nd Lt. Cornwell was in Baghdad with staff tabs on his tunic and an arm band on his left arm with the letters "PM" thereon so how he managed to get that post under the reigning Provost Marshal, Colonel Victor Maclagan the American Film Star is a mystery. We then left the Barracks and did a forced march to Khan Jedida, north of Baghdad and there was speculation who would be called upon for sentry duty during our night's stay and as this was done we found that everyone single one was on sentry duty as we were almost eaten alive by sandflies and it was impossible to get a sleep. We then marched on Kizil Rhobat at the foot of the Persian Hills where we were posted to a six inch Siege Battery and eventually we returned to the Cavalry Barracks we had evacuated.

I then became a hospital patient with Sandfly Fever which necessitated fourteen days in Hospital for recovery and then re-joined my unit. When our rations were collected one day we found ourselves with a live goat for our battery's meat ration but how they expected us to cope with this just shows how very efficient and thoughtful the Army was. After a few days we decided to take the goat to a nearby Arab Village and exchange it for two dozen hen eggs which we all enjoyed for a change. Our two inch Mortars had by now been replaced with Six Inch Mortars which fired automatically as did the Stokes Mortars.

We then moved into a near by compound and commenced a school for the replaced Mortars and detachments from other batteries came for instruction on these. One day an Officer marched into the compound at the head of his detachment and when he passed I thought I had seen him before so later I contacted him and found he was at Kilroot in Northern Ireland when we were and he was awaiting his Commission so that is another case of the World seeming smaller as I had never set eyes on him after we left for Gosport on our way to Mesopotamia: he very kindly brought my Dress Sword back to England and when I contacted him on demobilization he sent the sword home to me for which I was very thankful.

When the Armistice was signed my Section fired the Royal Salute at the Celebrations which were attended by sheiks and other High Ranking

Statesmen together with members of the Public. At six o'clock one morning we gave a display of the havoc which could be caused by Six Inch Mortars with a large audience of Sheiks, their Deputies and other Officials. All went according to plan and our guests were delighted to see how effective these large Mortars were, but most unfortunately when the last shell was fired it exploded prematurely on leaving the gun Barrel and three British Officers who were standing near to the Mortar were killed instantly and we attended their interment in the British Cemetery near to the North Gate. One of the Officers was named either Connell or O'Connell and was attending the display. Most grievously at a later date we heard of the death of General Maude after giving everything humanely possible to the many troops under his command and was laid to rest in Baghdad.

The most pressing problem now was keeping up the morale of the troops who now knew the War was at an end and quite naturally wanted to get home to their wives and families: it had to be realised however that we were thousands of miles from England and shipping losses had been that heavy that it was impossible to get shipping with ease. To help however it was decided that numbers of troops would be given a month's leave of absence to visit India and applications had to be made either for approval or refusal. As the 150 of our members originally had not been given any leave since joining the Army quite a number asked to be given permission to visit India but unfortunately mine was turned down.

Later however it was arranged that Transport would be made available for troops to visit Babylon for one day and I was pleased to be able to take advantage of this offer, but no Official had thought of sending an Army Chaplain as part of the contingent. On reaching Babylon the first view was of enormous digging having taken place as if it was after hidden gold and we stood beside a statue of a lion standing over a prostrate woman which to my very great surprise I saw again on Television when Magnus Magnusson visited Babylon about two years ago. On the offside hind quarter of the lion was a cement filling about two inches in diameter and we were told that on an earlier visit one soldier who was evidently a conjurer had been showing how to get coins out of the lion so when they had left an Arab who had seen this performance got busy with hammer and chisel but drew a blank and the authorities had to cement the hole up. I cannot vouch for this story but it may be a true one.

On leaving the statue we passed through the well preserved remains of King Nebuch-adnezzar's Palace and then to what remains of the famous Hanging Gardens, one of the Seven Wonders of the world and we sat down by the side of the River Euphrates as did Christ on its way down to join the Shatt-el-Arab and Tigris Rivers on their way to Basrah and the open sea, so we had then seen two of the Seven Wonders, i.e. the Lighthouse at Alexandria and the Hanging Gardens at Babylon, and then returned to our Unit.

Another way of keeping the troops active was to return to early training and we were then joined by 2nd Lt. Moffat who had come out from England and he took charge of a riding school in the early mornings which was apparently new

to him: about the second morning we saw a mounted man on the skyline and saw that he was coming towards us: it was General Davies, nicknamed "Froggy Davis" and after a few minutes he obviously could tell the officer was new to the riding school and he took charge much to our regrets as he put us through our paces and worse still told Lt. Moffat that he would see us several more mornings and we could wish that he had never spotted us.

Whilst we were in Camp at Hinaidi a few miles south of Baghdad we saw another Wonder of the World for the first and only time – a huge black cloud low in the sky and coming slowly towards us and all at once the cloud opened and as it moved along an outsize black spout came out of the cloud and this lengthened as it moved slowly along towards Cestiphon Arch lower down the coast the spout emptied the contents of the cloud and in spite of the hard cracked ground it made a hole large enough to take a service waggon.

The heat in the Summer reached between 120 and 130 degrees in the shade and the horses standing in the lines had to have a blanket fastened over their backs to protect their spines. We all wore Pith helmets with a shade hanging down the back to protect your necks and a spine pad fastened round the body to protect our backs: normally we ought not to have been out in the sun between 8 am and 4 pm but the horses had to watered and fed so to someone it was a must. To see the sun like a fiery red ball appearing at four o'clock in the morning was a thing of majestic beauty: the opposite of it was the sandstorm of which you ate mouthfuls, not deliberately but because you couldn't always keep your mouth closed: you had to let the air out of your lungs. The Indians used to unwind part of their pugarees – Head Covering – to cover up their faces but able to see through the flimsy material from which the pugarees were made. In our marquees we lay naked on a blanket with a towel over our private parts and even a towel caused a certain amount of punishment in such terrific heat. Birds were seen daily on the Guide Ropes with their beaks wide open and their wings flapping away to get some air.

During early September of 1919 I was warned to report at Basrah to return home and no one needs telling what a wonderful feeling that was and on reaching the camp found the better part of 200 troops also returning home. Standing near by was a German Cargo Boat named the 'Swakopmund' which had been taken over and we left three days later for dear old England. As we were passing through the Red Sea a Sergeant from some other Regiment was taken ill and although he was taken to the ship's Hospital he succumbed to his illness and was buried at sea. I was one of the Pall Bearers and the four of us held one corner of a Union Jack over his body, the ship's engines were stopped and the padre taking the funeral service gave a signal at the appropriate time to push the body off the platform into the sea.

The engines were re-started and we continued our way through the Suez Canal, stopping at Port Said for a short time and then resumed our journey to Southampton and on arriving there a youth was collecting pieces of paper and money to send telegrams to relatives saying they would soon be with them. I fell for this like many others but no telegram ever reached my Mother and I feel sure she was not the only one who never got the messages. I reached

home shortly before ten o'clock at night and when I walked in after three and a half years absence my Mother nearly fainted.

We were most fortunate in that we only had one casualty in action namely, Gunner Britton who came from Ossett in Yorkshire: he was wounded in the back of one hand by shrapnel from our own guns which were falling short. In spite of all the trials and tribulations through which we passed I can still re-call many happenings and enjoy some good laughs at what took place.

I cannot say when the troops I left behind in my unit finally reached home but I know full well they would have no regrets at leaving the heat behind and reaching home to their families. Whilst I agree that operations on re-capturing Kut and bringing the battle to a most successful completion was in no way comparable to most if not all other Fronts in the 1914-1919 War the difficulties we had to face were of a totally different nature and it should be noted that the British Troops stood up to the terrific heat and conditions better than those of the Indian Army.

One special Regiment which I shall always admire was the Ghurkas who were never found wanting. Some of our members were of Jewish descent and were given special leave of absence when we were out of the line to attend their Religious Festivals: one in my own battery was named Press and he came from the Manchester Area. Although I am writing this 63 years after the first World War I can well remember quite a number whom I was privileged to be amongst and if any of them or their relatives read these memoirs I quote their ranks and names and feel sure they will enjoy reading what actions they were involved in.

Sergeants Dimmock and Grimes, Nuth, Way – Corporals Willis, Brown, and Mackay. Bombadier Slade, Gunners Dean who said he was a Constable in Hampshire, Wardle, Mercer, Warren, Frost, Hunter, West, Westby, Gibson, Letts, Black, Willison, Abbott Brothers, Matsell, Britton, Smart, McDonald, Greig, and the only one out of all of them was Matsell whom I enjoyed chatting with at Great Yarmouth in the 1950's. Westby was a native of Rotherham (my own town) but it was only with him being in my battery that I met him – most unfortunately he died shortly after we had re-captured Kut, but not through enemy action. Gunners Black and Willison died at Baghdad I believe through sunstroke. During my service I received three promotions, namely Bombadier, Corporal and Sergeant.

I would have loved to have been able to pay a visit to Mesopotamia, now known as Iraq, to see the amazing difference which now exist there with buildings and roads, schools and hospitals. In Kut alone a three million pound reservoir now takes the place of a mud shack which was the only building there during the War. One thing I have never yet been able to understand how the Sunyat Position shielded Kut from attack was such a drawback to our troops as it was commonly said a marsh which prevented any vehicle or personnel to get through. How it came to be a swamp remains a mystery as for thousands of miles the country" ground was as hard as flint with cracks in

the ground wide enough to get your fingers in the crevices without any difficulty. Finally when you can return home as fit and well as when you joined the forces, you can get quite a good laugh at some of the occurrences which took place. Long Live Mesopotamia.