

GPDH WAR DIARY 1944 – PART A

Saturday January 1st 1944 – INVERLAIR, COCANADA

I didn't actually see the New Year in. I was so tired after yesterday's jungle expedition that it was as much as I could do to keep my eyes open at the Club last night. The dinner was certainly good but rather too much 'alk' in the plum-pudding perhaps. Without a gulp of water every alternate mouthful one was liable to pass out intoxicated. Ruari met the Cummings again at long last and they invited him for a week-end out Rajahamundry way. There were a lot of pongos but otherwise no one of much interest. The Underwoods were in evidence and we described our experiences out near Chodavaram, with emphasis on the red ants and stewed banana-tree and the fact that we were to all intents and purposes lost for 24 hours, though Lucas would not have it thus. On the whole I was bored stiff at the party (in spite of being garlanded with marigolds by Mrs Gibson), and left about 11:00 pm.

The best thing about the New Year is the arrival yesterday of our second batch of Christmas mail – with a goodly proportion of sea-mail containing Christmas cards, calendars etc. I got a very charming 'Beautiful Britain' calendar from Mary and a rather naïve card with a 'She Loves Me' motif on the front. Mum sent two very nice cards from herself and all at Legbourne. Besides these I have heard from Pat Hussey, Diana, Roger, D, (and rather later) another letter from Unna. It's nice to know she hasn't forgotten me anyway. We had a Post Mortem out in the Field this morning – and discussed the jungle exercise. Quite a lot of useful points were brought up, amongst them Owen's remarks on being pulled...

Sunday 2nd January 1944

Ruari did a marvellous cartoon of Jennings in the Log and I practically split my sides laughing at it. We went down in the truck this evening to Church. The service at Jagganaikpur was in the Baptist Mission Church and there was quite an assembly there – mostly missionaries (there's a missionary conference going on in Cocanada). They kept getting up and singing not very melodious solos and there were male-voiced quartets and what-not. The fellow who preached was quite good – he was from Vizag [Visakhapatnam], a Canadian, and the sermon was very much in the nautical vein, apropos St Paul's voyage in a storm in the Mediterranean. I never could quite understand why they cast their anchors out of the stern [Acts 27 v 29], though can sympathise with their wishing for the day. Ruari and Lucas went round afterwards to the Quirks for a Bible meeting or something(!)

Monday 3rd January 1944

Spiers came out of hospital and Ruari said he needed a fortnight's sick leave so we sent him to Ootacamund. We all went down to the Police Range at Jagganaikpur to fire Stens – I mean Brens, and rifles. I rather fancy myself as a shot and did quite well, I think, but had forgotten the quite considerable kick of the Service Rifle. Lucas was jolly funny about the 'butt' when instructing us. I suddenly remembered the Fortnightly Progress Report which is three days overdue. I got down to it this afternoon and dated it 31st December. As usual I put in far more than I had anticipated, and the thing ran into 3 or 4 pages of typescript. Sandwiched between imposing paragraphs on training and development etc. was paragraph 17: "Christmas was celebrated in the traditional manner"! I rather like that touch. Ruari got LCP [Landing Craft Personnel] 357 back in the water this afternoon. She's had her docking but the new ignition coil hasn't been fitted yet so she's still U/S [unserviceable].

On the exercise tonight I swam in and proceeded along the beach in bright moonlight to find a scene resembling the battlefield after El Alamein, trucks at all angles sunk axle-deep in the sand. Norman had cleverly got our bogged and sent for assistance. Crafer came down in 745's truck to pull him out and got bogged himself. A pretty pickle, as the tide was rapidly coming in. Their effort at extrication were decidedly ineffectual but the RAF eventually came to the scene with a 3-tonner which they very nearly got bogged as well! (Good old Norman!)

Tuesday 4th January 1944

I finished the Progress Report today, thank God. We sent it off – 4 copies – in about a dozen envelopes to CEO Capt 8BU, COPP Depot etc. via CinCEF (8EAC), who gets a copy anyway, in the pious hope that he'd send the others on by Registered Air Mail. I got another letter from Wilmott, full of news. He's left the Depot and Nick Hastings has taken over command, with a half-stripe. Stanbury does the duties of Training Officer (I bet he's chokker). All sorts of shooting incidents at Depot – German agents etc. Wilmott strongly advised us to dig in well at Cocanada and not get swept by Hamid (?) into his Small Parties Outfit in Palk Strait. I agree heartily – much rather stay as we are. He also said that Capt 8BU was quite useless from our point of view and advised us not to get under his thumb or that of his 'agents' out here. Will do everything I can to avoid that.

This afternoon Lucas demonstrated some booby traps – some quite interesting. As usual the lecture went on much too long and Ruari was chokker.

In the evening 740 came back in ML 437 with LCP 346 and we heard the full story of their operation which I must say does not seem to have been a very inspiring one. They were defeated by surf. Apparently Ponsonby and Peacock went as close into it as they could and nearly got swamped, while Alec Colson lay off in his canoe. Geoff Richards said they could hear the thunder of the surf from the LCP lying at anchor 1½ miles out. The first night, apparently, owing to faulty navigation, they released canoes 3½ miles off-shore! Ponsonby and Peacock are now in Delhi having flown from Chittagong. Richards said there was a flat calm – imperceptible swell and a steady off-shore wind, so cannot understand why there was so much surf. One would have expected, at least, that it would have been less than that experienced by us in 'Provident'. Admittedly it was severe then but not insurmountable. Anyway, they said that as far as everything else went it was perfect – no trouble with the LCP, and everything 'laid on' beautifully.

At the pistol practice in moonlight tonight, at the Police Range, I did not do at all well, though perhaps no worse than others. You definitely need luminous sights to be any use.

Wednesday 5th January 1944

We set off in the evening for a full-scale exercise, recce and marking, which was to last till Friday morning. We had 357 with two canoes, four officers, six ratings and a week's hard tack and water. Quite a good tactical picture had been thought out, assuming that the Japs had invaded India from the north-east and were driving down the East Coast towards Ceylon. Cocanada was our most advanced post, and the Japs were held just north of Upada. We were recce-ing for an out-flanking landing in their rear at Pentakota and would mark for the assault the following night if all went well. We sent Alexander and Carpenter to Pentakota as sentries on a motorbike – return trip of 80 miles.

It was jolly rough with an on-shore wind and a 5 foot swell outside the bay, and I had very definite doubts that we would be able to land – there would obviously be a thundering surf. All the same we would go on. We were some 20 miles north of Cocanada when we broke down. Nothing would induce her to start again. As the water was too deep to anchor and we were 5 miles off-shore, and there was a southerly current, decided to drift till dawn then send Ruari off in a canoe to get assistance. The boat was rolling some and most people were feeling pretty sick. Turned in – quite cool.

Thursday 6th January 1944

Dawn found us still drifting, and I calculated drift at $\frac{1}{2}$ knot in a south-westerly direction. That put us about 5 miles north of the Bay. Ruari and Grimson got ready to go off and they were to steer due West till they reached the coast, then work South along it – possibly landing at Vakalapudi. We let go the anchor at 18 fathoms in a depth of 16 fathoms, and of course it didn't hold. Just before they shoved off I got a fix which put us well to southwards of the Bay – we had drifted 13 miles in the night – current was SSW at about 1 knot! Just as well we got that fix or Ruari would have fetched up at Sacramento, I should think. We kept in touch with him by R/T which was very successful even over 8 miles. They had a 12 mile paddle before them against quite a strong current (as far as the Godavari Point anyway), so wouldn't be home till afternoon. We tailed the grapnel with painter and stern-fast giving a length of 28 fathoms. This enabled the anchor to dig well in and she held – the current swooshing past 'at the rate of knots' – I was afraid the cable would part as the painter and stern-fast were only $2\frac{1}{2}$ inch hemp instead of $3\frac{1}{2}$ and not in very good condition at that. So I had the anchor buoyed, in case, though it was optimistic to think that should it part we would be able to weigh it from the canoe – Lucas was keen but Morrison, still looking a bit green was chokker. I prayed that the cable wouldn't part as we would be ashore in the surf at Sacramento in no time if it did, and not a ghost of a chance without our anchor. Marshall was working on the engine spasmodically – we'd come to the conclusion it was an electrical defect and I'd decided to ask Nicholson for a written report on the causes of the breakdown. At noon, to Marshall's everlasting credit (though no one was more surprised than he) the motor started! We overhauled Lucas going strong – he refused a lift – and after one or two more stoppages eventually returned to Base at 14:00, about $\frac{1}{4}$ hour after Ruari and Grimson. I take a pretty serious view of the breakdown – it might have been an operation in which case it would have been unforgivable. A boat, like an aircraft (but unlike road transport) depends for her safety upon the reliability of her engine. However, no harm done this time, fortunately.

Lucas got a letter from Eckhardt saying he was back at Depot on light duty – everything has apparently changed for the better – more parties, less work, no Wilmott and no early morning PT [Physical Training]!

Friday 7th January 1944

Ruari did a priceless sketch of Lucas – his character down to a T – he took it in good form as was to be expected. We all (Ruari, Lucas and I) got down to a conference on future training, on the assumption that we would not now be required to operate before the February dark period. We decided we would all get stale unless a complete departure from existing routine training was made. We divided the 4 remaining weeks between Naval, and Military Training, alternately – next week to be a 'Naval' week, during which we will repeat the Pentakola Exercise, the following to be an 'Army'

week, in which officers will go shooting in the open [?], while small parties (pairs) of troops will be landed as enemy agents and told to proceed to a given place and obtain certain information. We might bury some of their mail somewhere as an incentive, or be landed at some un-named place 10 miles inland and told to find their way home, no money, no warrants, hitch-hike all the way (or walk) – something of the kind anyway. Next week, 5 days camp with LCP (preferably up the Godavari), live from hand to mouth, make fires, jungle shelters, do flashing and semaphore SA training, a bit of canoeing etc. it would be a nice change and needn't interrupt normal day to day training. Following week to be an 'Army' week – another jungle expedition on much more ambitious lines, involving say a 20 mile trek through the heart of the jungle, and perhaps in cooperation with 740 as an enemy patrol bent on intercepting our progress.

Lucas and I tried to fix, then, the contents of the fugitive outfit and the list of canoe gear. Lucas still can't get out of his mind the thought of sailing 700 miles back across the Bay of Bengal, and keeps harping on fish-hooks etc. Usual arguments about salt, suppressive [?] etc. However, I think we reached a decision – for what it's worth. I'm afraid I can't muster much enthusiasm for fugitive sets – the prospect of fending for myself in enemy occupied jungle for a fortnight leaves me cold. I reckon you've 'had it' then.

Sayers' details came through at last and I wrote a pretty long-winded description of the services for which I was recommending him for the DCM (posthumous). It sounded very impressive, but I'm not sure it was the sort of thing they wanted. Probably something more concise would have been better.

Saturday 8th January 1944

Ponsonby and Peacock came back from Delhi. Ponsonby gave me a full report on the situation. Partly in the light of his recce report (adverse surf conditions) they have decided to call off that assault altogether. Since the Teheran Conference, accent is entirely on the Mediterranean and Home Waters, and apart from a drive to the south by land through Burma – Auchinlek's pet idea – nothing is going to be done in this theatre of war this year! (Heavens!) The big issue in the balance at the moment – awaiting a decision by the War Cabinet – is whether an offensive is going to be launched in this theatre eventually (1945) or whether South East Asia Command [SEAC] is to be entirely dissolved and the war against Japan prosecuted from the SW Pacific. If the former, I gather we will be used this year (740 and ourselves) on alternate dark periods to do long-term strategic recce's of numerous beaches, so that a good picture can be built up for 'der Tag' when it arrives. But there is a possibility that our party may have to go and join Townson in the Western Med. If so 735 obviously should go – that's only fair – but Ponsonby says he thinks it will be his party. Asked why, he said "Well because you were out here first and have got yourselves dug in etc." What sort of a reason is that? Heavens, I shall be livid if that happens. Goodness knows what the morale of the rest of the Party will be like. I shall certainly protect. If SEAC closes down I imagine we' all pack up, but there is ominous talk of 'training teams'. Not me. I don't feel in any way qualified to train. Only done one operation and am not yet proficient myself. When I've done ½ dozen or so, I won't mind getting up on my hind legs and telling others how to do it – but not till then. Ponsonby agrees and says he'll "see everyone in hell" before he becomes a training nucleus. My view is, if they don't need us here, we'll jolly well pack up and go somewhere where they do. What a confounded nuisance it all is – just when we've got everything going so well too. (Lord Louis [Mountbatten] of course is livid.

Race meeting at the Club tonight. Peggy asked me out tomorrow – very disappointed that I didn't go last week and asked me why. I said I wasn't asked but she said she thought I knew I didn't have to be. Peggy looking very sweet in black. The Army and RAF got hold of her for a while – like bees round a honeypot.

Sunday 9th January 1944

Troops had a bottle of beer apiece for lunch. Half of them were tight in no time. Carpenter very much the worse for wear, being supported by Nicholson (!) and Louger, swaying down the drive on his way back to the huts. I was rather surprised as he looks a 'clean living' type. Glorious weather.

Took a M/C out to Samalkot at sunset. Bath and dinner with the Weirs – all very nice as usual. Peggy very sweet and loveable and kissable. She's quite helplessly in love – I wish I could really reciprocate it, but either I'm getting old or she's too young. She's so startlingly innocent, but keen to learn. I feel it's unfair to her as she wants the world and I can't give it to her, genuinely. Thinks of nothing but me, apparently. Am I trifling with her affections? Possibly, but that isn't my intention. I can't go the whole hog and commit myself – a real affair at such close quarters would be so horribly inconvenient just now – especially with my hopes centred on Mary – not that that sounds very promising just now.

Monday 10th January 1944

Just getting away on the motorbike to a flying start at 08:00, when the clutch cable parted. Tried operating the clutch by hand but no good, so left the machine in the Weir's garden and borrowed Peggy's bicycle. Deposited that in the 1st Class Waiting Room at Samalkot Station and just managed to hop on the Diesel Car, meeting Ruari who had come from Anapartha (?) where he'd been on weekend leave with the Cummings. We rode back to Cocanada together in the driver's cab.

Three signals in the night from Delhi. Still haven't got the cyphers so they've sent them to Vizag to be recoded. Very poor show, but nothing else for it I'm afraid. Sent off a hastener to DA Bombay – it was 5 days ago that we asked for the new cyphers and haven't heard a word yet.

Relay races and water polo with 740 in the ARP. Bath before lunch. After lunch I took Colonel Oliver from the CTC out in a canoe (by request). We threw a Mills bomb as an SVE and did various evolutions amongst them 'changing horses in midstream' – which resulted in our capsizing the canoe! As neither of us were dressed for the occasion this wasn't as funny as it might have been – or was it funnier? Colonel Oliver's watch has had it, and most of my papers; and we lost the P8 compass.

Tuesday 11th January 1944

We set off in LCP 346 about sunset for the 2 day dummy operation which failed last week when 357 broke down (see January 5th and 6th). Weather was much calmer and there was a bright moon. Jennings and Alexander had gone on in the truck to Pentakota to act as sentries and were staying the night with some missionaries at Tuni. I had gone out in the forenoon on a motorbike to Uppada to carry out a preliminary recce of surf conditions there. If they were too bad at Uppada they would certainly be prohibitive at Pentakota. At Uppada surf was breaking on the average 100 yards from

the shore, sometimes as much as 120 yards – but wasn't really as heavy as I had feared. I decided it was touch and go but worth trying anyway.

Lucas and I swam in together from about 150 yards. Sudikonda (a perfect pyramid mountain) provided an excellent leading mark for finding the beach. We were a bit exhausted on landing and lay under a small cliff for a while, later parting company in the sandhills. I lay for ¼ hour taking bearings from the top of a sandhill with the two sentries (unknown to me) lying within 6 feet of me! Hardly fair play on the sentries' part and they of course nabbed me when I moved on. They had been watching with glasses and had seen the canoes, though not the swimmers. Lucas wasn't discovered till much later – he had an inquisitive hound to deal with.

The surf was certainly heavy and we had a hell of a struggle to get out again about 01:15. I reckon limiting conditions are when the surf is actually breaking out of your depth – then you just cannot, with all your gear and equipment on, force your way out through it. Well it just was breaking out of our depth this time, and we very nearly had it. Lucas drew away from me and after ¼ hour I was feeling pretty exhausted. I seemed to make no headway at all and every time I gained a few yards a jolly great comber would come and fling me back. I couldn't touch the bottom and though Ruari was making valiant efforts to come as close in as possible, balancing precariously on the tops of breaking waves, I just decided I could not make it and better swim back before I became utterly exhausted and unable even to get back. Remembering however that in an operation *anything*, almost, is preferable to not getting back to the carrier, or rather preferable to staying on an enemy beach, I decided to call for the last ounce of my strength and as Ruari was really reasonably close now I just managed it, puffing and blowing like a grampus [Risso's dolphin], and was jolly nearly all in when picked up. I decided that in a real operation, under those conditions I would not have landed. Had I failed in this case I would have had a 21 mile walk back to Uppada! We went back to Uppada, the front-line village, and anchored off it about 05:00.

Wednesday 12th January 1944

How blessed is the sun! Rarely have I been more pleased to see it than I was this morning as I was feeling very cold, and it really was heavenly to feel its first warm rays. After breakfast, with hot tea made on the primus stove, we all set to on maintenance, of which there was a considerable amount. Owen was flaked out on top of the engine-casing, unable to do anything due to seasickness. The boat was rolling a little at anchor.

There were some very interesting Masula boats etc. that cruised round us fishing and so on. Some looked very like Phoenician galleys! Well, we assumed that as a result of last night's recce we had reported by W/T to HQ at Cocanada that a landing was feasible and had been ordered to mark three beaches for an assault tonight.

By the way, we had trouble homing in the canoes last night. Gimson in the carrier had dragged his anchor about 4 miles and miles out of position. He hadn't veered anything like enough cable and the anchor never held. He didn't see our RG or our red torches and we didn't see his RG. In the end, as a final resort, we fired a 2-star red signal and he eventually homed to that (typical 'Gimson-ism').

At 19:00 we weighed and proceeded up the coast under cover of darkness; the moon rose about 20:30, and at 21:15 we released the first canoe (Ruari and Witham) 1½ miles offshore, south of Pentakota. It had to paddle close inshore near the surf and position itself on a bearing of Sudikonda N6E(M). Two miles further on we stopped and released the second canoe (Lucas and Owen). Own

was very much the worse for wear and kept being sick all over the place. We thought he might improve in the canoe as it's the motion of an LCP that gets him worst. To the accompaniment of encouraging farewells from the others, we left them to paddle in. It was a perfect night – flat calm, gentle swell, and full moon, so I don't think they could have come to much harm anyway. We went on another 2 miles and dropped the third canoe (Gimson and Kennedy). All canoes had to position themselves 2 miles apart, close in to the beaches, on bearings of Sudikonda. For the third canoe, Sudikonda wasn't very conspicuous but it wouldn't do Gimson any harm to have a little difficulty. We then cruised on another couple of miles and turned straight out to sea, running out till 22:30 when, at a distance of 4 miles offshore we turned and ran south-west parallel to the coast. I reckoned I picked up Gimson's RG transmissions at 4 miles, though this seems doubtful now.

I could see nothing of the coloured Aldis lights in the other canoes until suddenly at 23:05 I observed 2 bright red flashes in the right direction – nothing seen from there. At 23:15 when opposite the first beach, I could see nothing whatever of Ruari's light. I turned to N30W to run in closer and as I did so I saw the blue light, quite unmistakable. It was right ahead and we ran in with closed exhaust (U/W) at 1200 revs, the light growing brighter all the while. Picked up the canoe at 23:35 and ran out 2 miles, turned to port and ran on N57E parallel to the shore till opposite No 2 (Red) Beach and picked up the Red light without difficulty, recovering the canoe about 00:30.

Same procedure – ran out to 2 miles, a/c N57E and proceeded 2 miles offshore to a position 1 mile beyond the 3rd (Green) beach which was being marked by RG. No sign at all, at all. Turned round at 01:15 and ran back – still no sign. At 01:30 turned inshore and ran in approximately towards the beach, until ten minutes later we picked up the RG fine on the port bow. Gimson was recovered about 02:00.

Course was set straight for home, at 12 knots, but after an hour petrol seemed to be getting low and the engine coughing, so we reduced to 1100 revs. Nearly hit the anchor buoy about 04:45. Entered Canal at 05:15 and secured alongside at 05:30, after an exercise during which we had had little sleep for 2 nights and had covered 140 miles.

Thursday 13th January 1944

Slept till 13:00. Like a log. Disturbing stories of Nicholson's misbehaviour. What a jolly nuisance the man is. Normally he'd be disgraced for the offences listed against him – for which he apparently has no defence. As we run this place on Commando principles and have no facilities for punishing, I suppose I shall have to get rid of him ('Unsuitable for small ships').

Monday 17th January 1944

It is delightfully peaceful just now – we seem to have successfully got rid of almost everybody, temporarily at any rate. Ponsonby and Co, after several false starts due to 357 breaking down etc., eventually got away in 346 on Sunday morning. I had only just returned from the Weirs by motorbike, bringing at last the long awaited Cypher Books – I collected them from a chap on the Madras-Calcutta Mail at Samalkot Station. Peggy was her delightful self as usual, and if anything more passionate than ever. I don't know that I am being very fair to her, but we both enjoy each other's company and there doesn't seem any very good reason for not making the most of it.

Ruari and Lucas got away this morning on *shikari* [hunt] in the jungle – taking the truck with enough gear to last a month of Sundays – regular hunting expedition. Besides three rifles and MR Underwoods .475" Elephant Gun, they took the 'Pass-around-you' (their bearer) and Witham and Rose to bring the truck back. They are both full of enthusiasm re bagging the 'man-eating tiger' or the 'rogue elephant' which are believed to be at large in those parts. Good hunting! Having got rid of them I turned my hand to Owen and Alexander – sent them on an espionage mission as German agents landed from a Japanese submarine, to discover the whereabouts of, and investigate the activities of, Ponsonby et al. I said they'd got to be back by the weekend. God knows how they get on – but if they can't manage this side of the Bay they'll never be much use the other side. They took practically nothing with them – no food or shelter, just a map and a revolver apiece.

The other day I went to dine with the Brigadier and Colonel Oliver and then gave my lecture on Combined Ops – the Naval side (Navigation) which, though I say it who shouldn't, was really quite a success. I didn't know I had it in me.

Got off my fortnightly Progress Report today (No 4), in which I left CCO and Admiral Miles in no doubt whatsoever as to my views on a possible move by COPP 8 to the Med [Mediterranean], or us being reduced to a training role, or the enrolment of RHs into COPP. I expect there will be some sort of 'come-back'.

Letters from Mum by this evening's mail – said she'd been hearing some very flattering information about me from Denis MacKay, who apparently spent Christmas there. Not a word about R and his fiancée-to-be – I expect it's all fallen through as usual! Also a very welcome letter from my beloved Unna. Her mother has died and she can't get home to Reykjavik. Little Willy Spiers came back from 'Ooty' [Ootacamund] today – with a beard – at least I assume it is intended to be a beard. He seems in good form but is still Willy Spiers, spare 'and.

There was a scheme I arranged to cooperate with the Army in 'Smugglers vs Coastguards'. We had to provide an 'A-Boat', a folboat, two walky-talkies, RG gear and some personnel. In the end I decided not to take part personally but to let the other officers have a free hand. From all accounts they didn't do as well as I had expected, and very little seemed to go according to plan.

There are signs of rain today – only signs as yet. The North-east Monsoon, however, definitely seems to have 'had it'. Weather is much closer than of late.

Wednesday 19th January 1944

The big worry now is LCP 357 which seized up due to the water circulating pump failing – the FW pump, that is, which is keyed direct to one of the engine shafts. It must have sheared the key, I suppose. Chief says it'll take him at least a fortnight to complete the job himself – working on nothing else, as it will require completely stripping. I've sent off a signal in cypher to Vizag, asking if they can take the job in hand – seems the most sensible thing. The new craft arrives today (355), with its crew, I hope, so that will help us out.

News of the other party last night, in reply to a telegraphed query from Post Officer to the Light House Keeper in Sacramento – they've been seen, and are apparently still camping. Also received a wire from Alexander, sent from Amalapuram (wherever that is), which said cryptically: "Made contact. Will make observations tonight (18th). Back tomorrow." Good show!

Last night we made some very useful tests with the RG and 'walky-talkies' taking the truck down on to the beach and running her 3 nautical miles away, testing from there, then back a mile, testing from there, and so on. We got results of a sort with some of the receivers at 3 miles, but the exercise proved quite definitely that 2 miles is the limit of reliability (for the Type 310 Transmitter anyway).

The mongoose (Rikki) is really rather a delightful little pet. The more I study her the more convinced I become that she isn't really a rodent at all, but a feline. She has several quite unmistakable feline traits. I must look her up in an encyclopaedia. Wish Peggy would hurry up with the Siamese kitten. (It sounded very funny when I told some of the chaps that Peggy was expecting to present me with a Siamese kitten – "it takes time, you know", remarked one of them!)

I kept remembering that Diana has asked me to be Godfather to one of her unborn children. That is the case as far as I can make it out – she complained to Mum that I had never answered her letter, so I'd better dig it out... imagination! Rather embarrassing. Anyway, the child will be little the better for my guardianship of its morals; its religious upbringing will be entirely realistic if I have any control. Actually it is highly unlikely that I will have anything to say to it at all – will simply be expected to produce expensive silver presents on its birthday, Christening Day, Confirmation Day, Wedding Day etc. Nice if it was a girl – I rather fancy myself as the weather-beaten sailor 'Uncle Geoff', dandling a sprightly young maiden on my knee and entertaining her with stories of "what I did in the War, m' dear – ahem!"

Friday 21st January 1944

Still very peaceful. I've managed to accomplish quite a number of little things that I had been meaning to get done for some time. This week has been quite pleasant, with Ruari and Lucas safely in the jungle (much as I like them), I have been able to control the troops directly and make them do things I realised needed doing. Decentralisation is all very well, but things are inclined to get quite out of one's hands after a while.

I wish to God Delhi would hurry up and let us know something about our future; this waiting and uncertainty is annoying, though I must say at times I find it very soothing, and it gives me long days of rest and thought. The new LCP (355) did arrive OK on Wednesday, but they sent a very 'scratch' crew of three (two AB's and one SEO) instead of the one AB and one SEO that we had asked for. The craft is really 745's (should they ever return) but is loaned to 740. Ponsonby is looking after her and the crew and wants to keep them all – they've been together and want to stay together, as they were in the Sicily landings (near Cape Passero) and subsequently at Salerno. We've had to reorganise the troops' accommodation and now we have 735 in the first room, Base Staff in the second, LCP crews in the third and 740 in the fourth. We've got, or will have shortly, 25 troops in each room, and seven in the LCP room. 'Circars' have expressed some misgivings about repairing and stripping LCP's engine, and have suggested to SDASC (I) that a new engine be forwarded for fitting there. Anyway, Ponsonby has taken the matter over (officially at least), I am no longer interested, but hope they get on with it one way or the other.

The fools at Bombay sent 355 down without a canopy – isn't it typical? Ponsonby has signalled for it to be sent down by Crafer. Yesterday I tried to get a move on with the station-wagon and sent off an 'expediter' (as the Army have it) to Ordnance MT Depot Secunderabad, telling them to shake up with the half-shafts. I saw Sergeant Johnson and he said he'd try drawing the 1938 ones (that he was sent) out 7/8", thereby decreasing their diameter 1/8" in the centre; they are almost bound to go again but in that case we'll be no worse off than we are now, waiting for the 1942 ones, which anyway can be fitted as soon as they arrive. And with luck we'll have the wagon on the road by Tuesday – Yippee! Lucas is by way of recruiting a civilian driver for it.

Jolly Army – they come round and ask for the use of an 'R-Boat' for a day and night landing exercise – I arrange everything for today, and when I make final arrangements they say, "Oh, haven't you heard? I thought the Colonel had given you a ring – we don't want the boat after all." Good heavens!

Saturday 22nd January 1944

That wretched man Larive! Goodness, I could strangle him – yes and his mother and his bastard sons! Never have I met such a crown of oily, slinky, deceitful, lying skunks – the whole of of them! Went down with Gimson this morning on a motorbike to clinch matters re the radio. Very little result. The clerk in the office didn't know if Larive was in, so went to find out from the house. Two small boys returned, one an 'Anglo' and the other a very plausible innocent-faced little half-caste Chinese, who said Larive was at Rajahmundry (still?) and he didn't come back this morning and he didn't know when he would return. I told him he was lying and sent him to fetch Mrs Larive. He returned again five minutes later with news that Mrs Larive "was not feeling so well today." I told him and the clerk that I intended to see *someone* who could take charge and I didn't mind who it was – "No Sahib, no Sahib, no one in, no one here, Sahib", he replied with a sickly smile; so, much angered, I walked through into the Larives' garden and up the steps to the front door, banged lustily thereon, and was eventually rewarded by the sight of a very slatternly Anglo-Indian woman of distinctly unpleasing appearance – Mrs Larive, mother of the infamous Larive. Gimson and I gave her a bit of our minds on account of the complete callousness shown by her and her son about keeping appointments. Three times Mr Larive has failed to show up at the agreed hour, and nobody can track him down. Once someone can personally contact the man, we'll have the radio. As it is, we're not much further forward.

Rounds of the house, huts, compound and outbuildings this morning. The state of some parts left much to be desired, waste paper and cobwebs all over the place. Left Jennings in no doubt whatsoever as to his responsibilities, and said I expected better results next time. I made him write down every defect, as picked up, in a notebook. The trouble is he will rush over on to the defensive and start 'inventing' arguments to excuse the servants for their lack of diligence. With all the servants we have here I'm quite certain if they all worked hard we'd have the place permanently spick and span.

Sunday 23rd January 1944

Went to a 'cocktail' party given by the Brigadier last night. I was very glad to see the Cheesmans all there, the first time they've been out since the death of their son – it's obviously shaken them

terribly. The Underwoods were there and the Lintoffs, and the Port Officer and usual crowd of pongos. It was really given in honour of the Brigadier Skeen who was down. He is Deputy DCO(I) and very nice. He would not let me forget the incident of a couple of months ago when I told Admiral Maund that I'd land the whole party dry-shod, and then proceeded to dump them into "5 feet of water" (the depth is becoming exaggerated as the story is repeated!)

Had a few words with Colonel Oliver whom I like very much, and later on with Lt Col Stephenson (RTR), a very good type with whom I subsequently dined (sandwiched between the two Brigadiers and another Lt Col – also quite a sound fellow). I discovered that Stephenson was at Haileybury – always thought he was a cut above the others! Afterwards at the Club I had words with 'Mad Margaret' (Mrs Underwood) on the subject of the morals of the men in India. My goodness she's a hypocrite – embittered and narrow-minded, quite apart from being abominably impolite. I left her in no doubt as to my feelings, and she probably thought I was equally rude.

Monday 24th January 1944

Monday morning again – ugh! And I had a get up at 07:30 this morning, which shook me, after turning in at 03:00. We had quite a time, Peggy and I. The settee in the drawing room was so damnably uncomfortable that we decided to use my bed. Peggy was very shy and I had some trouble inducing her to take a rational view, but succeeded eventually, and we spent two very comfortable hours lying on it. She is very sweet and we both enjoy each other's proximity, and the whispered confidences and 'sweet nothings'. I never realised before that she was madly in love with Raymond Cheesman, and that until he found another girl (in Dehra Dun) it was intended that he should marry her. I think she felt his death more than she showed.

Last night we went all over the factory. It was quite interesting and reminded me of the sugar factories I'd been over in Barbados and Jamaica – the smell (sweet and sticky) was especially reminiscent. And my goodness, Mr Weir certainly is a worker; he spends all day and half the night there – they all seem awfully busy, and to be taking everything very seriously. Peggy had some magnificent Bing Crosby records that we listened to – the best were 'Moonlight Cocktails' and 'Sweetheart of Sigma Chi' (that reminded me of Mary Carlisle). Mrs Weir lent me two good books, though I haven't finished Daphne du Maurier's "Frenchman's Creek". They are 'Congo Song' and 'Until the Daybreak'.

I sent off a cypher to Delhi the other day proposing to come up on the 2nd for briefing on the assumption that we would be required to operate in the February Dark Period, and yesterday a reply to Ponsonby's signal arrived which mentioned that we probably *would* be required, but that further information would be forth coming. So I think we'll carry on with our camping programme this week, and leave on Monday 31st. I have hopes that the Station-wagon will be on the road by then. If we go off to camp on Wednesday Ruari should be back, and Phillis and Seagust should have arrived – I want to take Seagust if possible. It's inconvenient for Norman I know, having to instruct the writer in his duties overnight, but three or four days more or less will not make any difference I think. In the meantime I must try and think of somewhere to go!

Tuesday 25th January 1944

Today is a great occasion. It is three months exactly since we completed 'Provident', and today Ruari and I deciphered a signal from Delhi which read:

"Confidential Code. Naval Party 735. From Commander-in-Chief Eastern Fleet (South East Asia Command). Stop. Following received from Admiralty – begins. Stop. The King has approved Distinguished Service Cross to Temporary Lieutenant JDR McLean, RNVR, Lieutenant GPD Hall, RD. Stop. Ends. Heartiest Congratulations. Stop. 240847 2/1."

Thursday 3rd February 1944 – DELHI

Last Wednesday we went into Camp at Sacramento. It was more or less without incident – three gloriously idle and healthy days. We went down in LCP 346, just getting over the bar an hour after high water. We emerged into the open sea by an estuary further north than Sacramento and ran close inshore looking for a camp site. Landed once to recce a site amidst the casuarinas, but it wasn't quite suitable, so continued through the sandbanks to the point near which Ponsonby had camped. We pitched our tents in a very attractive setting – in a casuarina plantation, which later turned out to have been 740's latrine area!

We had originally intended to spend the time doing mild training, but just before we set off we got a cypher from Delhi saying the operation was 'off', and that there was no sign of any other one, but that Admiral Miles would like to see me in Delhi as proposed in my signal. (Presumably he wanted to discuss the whole position and future of COPP.) Anyway, we decided that as there seemed no likelihood of our being required for some time, there was no point in doing any training at all; let's have a gloriously lazy holiday. So it was, with PT in the mornings (08:00), reading, bathing, sunbathing, cooking, sleeping, walking and canoeing, with a good old 'get-together' in the evenings round the camp fire, with sing-songs and storytelling etc. One afternoon we went out to run lines of soundings from seaward in towards the Ogdens. I fixed by bearings and horizontal sextant angles – as you were, vertical sextant angles (off the masthead) – fortunately I had my pocket sextant with me. Captain Zina came out with us and I think the results rather saddened him as the depths were shallower than he had expected.

We returned to Base on Saturday 29th [January], arriving early afternoon to find a good mail awaiting us. The other LCPs were away. 355 had towed 357 to Vizag. (We jolly nearly got stuck on the way back – took a short cut and could not find the deep channel – had to lower a canoe to sound around us. We only just managed to get over a 3 foot deep bar, and this delayed us ½ hour. Also we made very slow progress coming back across Cocanada Bay, due to the colossal drag effect of the shallow water.)

We found the station-wagon was on the road again (with a 'drawn-out' half shaft), and the Chief... Crafer was back from Bombay, after a not very successful mission. The new Civilian MT Drivers have begun operations. Otherwise everything was very much as it was before. But, my goodness, a few days in the wilds certainly makes one appreciate the comforts of Base.

Saturday night Ruari and I went to the Club where several types congratulated us on our DCSs – Mrs Lintott apparently spread the buzz, though where on earth she got it from I don't know.

Sunday we made Church Parade compulsory in the forenoon, and nearly got ourselves roped in for Holy Communion. However, as the Parson rose to administer the Sacraments, Naval Party 735 rose

with one accord, turned about, and marched out of the Church. Afterwards we held an Officers' meeting so that I could have everyone's views on our future – the general idea is as follows. First and foremost we want an operation – a proper one. If this can't be, then we want an operation of a different kind – raid, sabotage, agents etc. Failing that, temporary disbandment of the Party, everyone proceeding to useful jobs till required again, or if necessary, packing up completely. The idea of training would be most unpopular with everyone, and we all feel that without further operational experience we are in no way qualified to train new parties.

The afternoon I spent writing up my fortnightly Progress Report (No 5) – only 2 pages long this time, and after tea Ponsonby and I conferred re his views on the future, with reference to my impending visit to Delhi. They are much the same as everyone else's with a bit more inclination towards getting out of COPP altogether. He is quite adamant about training, and says that under no circumstances will he do any more training. He's had 18 months of it already. After immense transport difficulties I eventually managed to get myself out to Samalkot on one of 740's motorbikes, arriving about 20:00.

I stayed the night again. Peggy was as sweet as ever. On Monday morning January 31st the station-wagon called for me, with Lucas in it, and bringing Peter Gimson to ride the motorbike back. We drove off leaving Gimson deep in conversation with Peggy and showing no inclination toward getting away! I wonder how long he stayed, and whether he persuaded Peggy to let him hear her 'Bing' records?

We reached Bezwada without incident, part from an infuriating delay of 1 hour at the Godavari Bridge; during the last half of the journey the brakes weren't working at all, which called for rather more than average care on the part of the driver. As all natives rely on their brakes entirely, the sort of journey we had may be imagined! There was no room on the train at first, as we had expected, but we left fairly punctually about 18:00; managed to transfer to an empty 2-seater Ladies Compartment at Kazipet. From there on to Delhi we travelled in the lap of luxury without any interruption, and never once had to leave the carriage. Arrived Delhi (New Delhi Station) at 10:30 Wednesday February 2nd, being met by a SEAC Staff Car. I had had no ticket or warrant throughout the journey, but it did not cause any trouble, and I wasn't even asked for it at New Delhi Station.

We went straight to Eastern Fleet HQ (SEAC) to find out about accommodation etc., but rather as we had expected it had been placed in the hands of the military, which simply meant that nothing had been arranged at all – so we took the car and went and installed ourselves at our old haunt, the Grand Hotel, in Old Delhi. All against regulations of course, but we never have any trouble putting ourselves up there, we know the manager, and everyone is very nice to us. The only trouble really is that it's so far out from GHQ – a 3-rupee *tonga*-ride lasting 40 minutes!

Sunday 6th February 1944 – DELHI

Well, the situation roughly now is this. At the Conference with El Supremo the other day, in spite of all our efforts, and in the face of a written protest, they decided to 'absorb' COPP into the new SOG (Small Operations Group), which is to be formed probably under Colonel Cornwall RM, in Ceylon sometime in April. In the meantime we are to move to Negombo, where the new Base is to be set up, but exactly when I don't know. The big problem is how to employ us in the meantime. There is a crying need for us to obtain more operational experience – much more in fact, before we can contemplate training new parties, which is what they want us to do in May. Apparently there is no

hope of us being employed on another operation before the autumn – absolutely disastrous from our point of view. The morale of our chaps can't stand up to another year of stagnation. Apparently there may be a major assault about November, but it is possible that it may be delayed till the spring of 1945! Oh my goodness! The monsoon, in the meantime, will effectively put a stop to any operations on our part between June and October, quite apart from the lack of submarines, which as far as I can make out quite definitely will not allow of COPP operations out here at present.

Tuesday 8th February 1944 – DELHI

I have seen Admiral Miles twice about our future and he has just returned from Arakan (I think) and has seen the paper which I put up to him making three alternative proposals for our future employment: (1) Temporary transfer to the SW Pacific, Mediterranean or other operational Command; (2) Employment on the Flank of the 14th Army in Arakan; (3) Return to the UK. The paper is now said to be "under consideration". In the meantime we have seen Colonel Cornwall, RM ("CO Designate" of the new SOG), and as a result have a rosier and altogether less prejudiced view of the proposed set-up. Commander Honeywell took quite an optimistic view of the proposal to return to the UK, but I don't suppose anything will come of it. However, it is a good thing to have put my views across. By the way, the decision to incorporate us in SOG was carried through by SAC in the face of bitter opposition on our part, but we are now prepared to make the most of it. Colonel Cornwall thought the Arakan idea was first-rate and was all in favour. In consequence Lucas has been doing a little lobbying with 11th Army Group, who seem well disposed toward us. During these activities he ran across GPH Pawle, who is now a major. We had him out to dinner at the Grand the other night (Sunday). The previous night we dined with Southby in the Viceroy's House, and then went on to the flicks – saw a very amusing thing called "Heaven can Wait" starring Gene Tierney and Don Ameche. Last night we had Gruff Courtney (Commando SGS Major) to dinner which was very interesting. He is a brother of Roger Courtney, which reminds me that I got Cornwall to signal Colonel Haslar that R was a likely recruit for SOG and at the same time sent off a wire to R urging him to contact Haslar. I fear that his medial category may again prevent him getting in, as apparently Roger Courtney turned him down in June on that account.

We have seen quite a lot of 2nd Officer Keen, who used to be Captain's Secretary at 'Armadillo'. She has been very nice and asked us out to drinks etc. While on the subject of Wrens, I took young Hazel out to lunch on Saturday and to the Gymkhana Club in the evening for dinner. From here we went on to the Imperial Hotel for dancing.

On Monday February 7th I had two of my front teeth removed, under gas, by an RAF dentist. The naval one hadn't any gas and I didn't want to use cocaine as the gum was inflamed – it was an abscess on the root, as I had expected. In consequence of this misfortune I feel rather shy of my appearance and am unable to pronounce quite a number of words, especially those with V's or F's in them. Poor show. I may get my replacements tomorrow.

This morning I saw Commodore Douglas-Pennant who told me he was flying home – said they had no use for him here now, but he had suddenly heard that he was wanted at home. It is incredible how one can flit about between India and the UK these days. Gruff Courtney only left London about 4 days ago! I gave a most secret paper to a typist the other day, and when she had done it I sent her back to alter it. I was slightly taken aback when informed later that she was the Viceroy's daughter, the Hon Felicity Wavell. Every time I see anyone whom I haven't seen for a fortnight or more they open the conversation with "Oh, by the way, congratulations on your DSC! Jolly good show, etc."

Southby has just taken Lucas and me all over the Viceroy's House – most interesting, and extremely impressive. He married Linlithgow's daughter when he was here as ADC to the Viceroy before the war, so had everything absolutely taped. I must say the architecture of the Palace, both inside and out, especially perhaps the layout of the grounds and superbly impressive vistas, are a masterpiece. Everything is on the grand scale, nothing skimmed for the sake of economy, and the whole effect is one of lavish splendour, executed in a beautiful simple modern style, which is eloquent of perfect good taste. I must say Southby is an excellent fellow and I like him tremendously. He has offered to put us up in [the Viceroy's House] next time we come up, which is extremely good of him. The lily ponds in the palace gardens are stocked with fish which prey on mosquito larvae, thus ensuring that whatever else my befall, the Viceroy's House will be malaria-proof!

Courtney amused me last night with his accounts of life in a submarine before Salerno, with Stanbury and Matterson. I knew I wasn't alone in my dislike of the former but did not realise my views were so widely shared. Courtney said that he couldn't bear the sight of him and the Sergeant Major Captain had threatened to shoot him! Matterson, who was nearly as unpopular, apparently claims that the success of the Salerno landing was entirely due to him. In actual fact he didn't get into the beach until the 3rd wave, as the others couldn't find him to lead them in.

I am feeling rather guilty about not letting them know anything at the base. We did send off a wire last Thursday to Ponsonby and Colson advising them to come up here as we thought their presence desirable, but nothing has transpired and we can only assume that the telegram never arrived.

Thursday 10th February 1944 – DELHI

Well things have crystallised a bit. Lord Louis [Mountbatten] is away till Monday, and it rests with him now to decide whether we are to move elsewhere or not – e.g. SW Pacific, Mediterranean. Miles is putting the case up to him personally as soon as he returns, having turned down both alternatives (Arakan and return to UK).

Yesterday I drafted and sent off a cyphered signal to Ponsonby as follows:

“Naval Party 740 FROM Naval Party 735 STOP No operation this theatre before autumn earliest STOP Temporary transfer elsewhere now awaiting decision Supreme Allied Commander STOP Suggest you join me Delhi for discussions alternative disposal STOP Move to Ceylon anticipated by April STOP COPP to join Small Operations Group STOP Expect you Sunday Confirm STOP TOO (Important MOST SECRET).”

Today a signal from Ponsonby, crossing mine, arrived, to the effect that Ponsonby was sick with jaundice and would be a further three weeks at least, in hospital at Secunderabad! In consequence COPP 8 would be unable to operate until further notice (!). Everybody is sick, dammit. Honeywell has just gone down, so has Kerr. My Hazel is sick – temporarily at any rate – Commodore Allen, Palmer, Wynard, Fullerton, and of course Richards (back at Base with piles or something). What a life! The only answer is to get married. I would if I could find the right girl.

Browsing through the COPP files in the Most Secret Room, in the company of Felicity Wavell etc. I came across all the correspondence between Miles and Somerwell (CinCEF) relating to PROVIDENT and our awards. I actually saw Milles' citation for myself and Ruari – it spoke of “courage”, “dauntlessness” etc. it was really rather a flattering report, enclosing our results. CinCEF had written a minute commencing “A very stout effort...”

I met Tersier of all people. He was in Colvin [Haileybury] – rather a brain, certainly in the Sixth. He is doing some sort of research for CinCEF (SEAC) in connection with Bicat I think, but through he claimed to be working for *us*, was not very explicit. Yesterday I went to see Stringer at ISTD about possible employment for some of our chaps. He was most enthusiastic. Menzies whom I saw later said there wasn't even enough work for *him* to do since the last 'flap' subsided and said that the FHO at Colombo was absolutely slack as well – so no good there. We fixed a date for Saturday.

Honeywell dined us at the Club on Tuesday night, with a Lt Armstrong DSC RNVR – good type, who knew Nick Hastings as well. We then went on to see the 'Constant Nymph' which I thought was poor. Last night – Hazel being sick – (I had wanted to dance with her at the Gymkhana Club), I went alone to see 'Aerial Gunner' which was good from an 'action' standpoint but typically American in its sentimentality – made me shudder nauseatingly.

Lucas has gone off to Roorkee to see some pongo friend of his and hopes to be back by Sunday. I'm going to Agra tonight I think – see if I can see the Taj Mahal by moonlight. Really I think I would be far better off in my nice warm comfortable bed, but I may not see it that way in 50 years' time!

Yesterday I got my teeth back. Really rather marvellous. I think I look rather more handsome now – or should I say a little less ugly? However, eating is no joke at all. It is causing me some concern.

Saturday 12th February 1944

I went to Agra on Thursday night, leaving Delhi by the 22:00 trains with an 8-rupee 2nd Class single ticket, arriving at 02:00 Friday. I drove out in a *tonga* to the Taj Mahal; there was a bright moon. There was no one about. I had the place to myself and I found it impressive. They let me in through a small hole in the massive old door of the 'Gate', murmuring something about 'backsheesh' while they wiped the sleep from their eyes. I was disappointed to see that the main dome was still enclosed in scaffolding. All the same, it was a wonderful sight. I had no idea the approach through the gardens from the Gate to the Taj itself was so long. The Taj is probably the most beautiful edifice on earth today. It is built entirely of white marble, decorated exquisitely with the rarest inlaid coloured marbles, most of which have been specially imported from remote corners of the world. It was built by a king as a tomb for his queen, his favourite most lovely wife who died young (in 1630 AD). It took 22 years to build, and on completion the king himself was so enthralled by its beauty that he had the architect's eyes put out so that he would never be able to design a finer building.

I was fleeced for Rs 11 altogether, by the Mohammedan priests etc. and guides. Although I had my stiletto in my stocking I was not really in a strong position to refuse to pay out – entirely alone at 03:00 on a moonlit night in the tomb of an Indian queen (!). When they tried to take me down into the vault itself I would go just so far but no further. The echo of the guide's shout resounded sonorously around the dome for 20 seconds (timed accurately by my watch).

I got back to Delhi At 10:15 without a ticket. I went to see Menzies and Stringer. I found Southby is now sick. Everyone seems to be sick. I paid my dentistry bill (Rs 90) which was rather a shock. The news form Cocanada was that Crafer is contacting Ponsonby and the result will be signalled as soon as possible. 740 seems quite incapable of acting without consulting Ponsonby. I should have thought Colson would have left at once on his own initiative – perhaps seeing Ponsonby *en route*. They seem to have little initiative.

Lt Commander Brooke DSC (& bar) RN, who is SOO, appears to have taken over Southby's duties as regards COPP, and greeted me this morning with a signal from C in CEF, to FO Ceylon... to the effect

that a survey for a SAG site in Ceylon was to be instituted forthwith and a COPP officer was to join it as early as possible. Brooke then informed me that the Admiral had decided I should be the officer (!) and that I would be expected to fly down to Colombo next week. I was introduced to Major Holmes, who is representing HCOR, and who is coming too. It is intended that Lucas shall come with me, but I rather incline towards taking Colson instead. He is apparently coming up here and is expected to arrive on Monday, according to a signal I have just received from Ponsonby at Secunderabad.

Sunday 13th February 1944

Lucas came back from Roorkee this morning. I stayed in bed late, having rather a 'hang-over' from the party with Menzies last night. (There were two glorious Siamese cats there which aroused my envy properly, and I have put myself down on the waiting list for kittens.) Lucas and I walked into Old Delhi to see the Red Fort after lunch. It was jolly hot, and we were in battle-dress which didn't help. This was due to Lucas wishing to go to church afterwards.

The Red Fort was well worth our 2 annas entrance fee. Inside there are the most beautiful gardens, full of shady trees, cypresses, cedars, and elms, with long and spacious stretches of green lawn intersected by garden paths bordered by a profusion of flowers. All very fresh and peaceful, and dotted about here and there are the marble pavilions and baths of the Moghuls, some of the buildings being superbly made of white marble decorated by inlaid work of a very high standard. We lay down in the shade of the cedars on the cool lawns and watched the American soldiers wandering around.

Yesterday as I was having tea in the garden there was a sudden rush of air and with a great swoosh a large bird swooped down and removed a piece of bread and butter from my plate, not two feet from my face. It had a wing span of quite 3 feet, and gave me quite a crack on the head with its wing as it sped past. Today exactly the same thing happened again. It came from behind, swooped in over my shoulder and before I knew what had happened had taken a large slice out of a cake I was holding in my hand, just as I was about to transfer it to my mouth. The remainder of the cake fell in crumbs on the grass and I got another smack right across the face from the bird's wing. I think it was a kit-hawk. I have been warned!

Thursday 17th February 1944

Colson arrived on Monday, as expected, and was quickly made 'au fait' with the situation. It was decided that he would accompany me to Ceylon, and not Lucas. We all went in to see Miles again; he had just been in conference with Lord Louis but had not raised the subject of us. He promised to do so on Wednesday. Meanwhile we've been buzzing around GHQ(I), EFHQ, Army Group, and SEAC, doing a good deal of lobbying of one sort or another. Today we heard that Lord Louis had definitely turned down the SW Pacific project, and had refused to release us, as far as can be gathered, on the grounds that there *may* be an operation in 2 or 3 months' time, and if so we probably would not be back in time. He had also refused to allow us to disband temporarily if that entailed any risk of losing personnel. In fact we are to keep ourselves in cotton-wool, stagnating. Miles said any idea of attaching pongos to 14th Army in Arakan was quite out of the question now, but sedentary occupations, or perhaps something of a surveying nature ("Challenger"?), or Jungle Warfare Courses

were quite alright. Meanwhile the thing to do was push the move to Ceylon as quickly as possible (*id habuimus!*) I sent off the following signal:

*Naval Party 740 from Naval Party 735 STOP Lucas arriving Samalkot 17:40 Saturday 19th
STOP Hall and Colson flying to Ceylon expected Cocanada by end of month STOP Id Habuimus
STOP 170517 z/2.*

Lucas left by the 16:15 train from Old Delhi Junction today. Well now, my social activities this week have been as follows: On Monday I took Hazel to dance at the Gymkhana Club. Heather and Gene came too. A very pleasant evening. Heather, sorry I mean Hazel (always muddling up their names – most embarrassing) – well, Hazel looked charming in a black lace dress with a sort of white and green slip on underneath. The next night, Tuesday, I went with Hazel to a dance at the RAF Station Pallam, as gusts of Gene and Heather. It was a good show but I didn't enjoy it frightfully. Hazel was as sweet as ever but I still didn't enjoy it awfully. I couldn't get enough to drink, and as I was only a guest, couldn't buy anything. The next night (last night) I made up for this. Lucas, Colson and I went along to have a drink with Margaret Keen at the Officers' Mess at the 'Wrennery'. There were some other rather good types there too and it was a very merry party, consisting of repeated anecdotes and reminiscences of 'Armadillo' and Inverary, COPP Depot and COHQ, washed down with a good supply of 'alk' of one sort or another. I drank gin and French – it's a long time since I had Vermouth. Afterwards, in great form, we went and dined at the Piccadilly. I felt on top of the world. We then went to the flicks. I saw a glorious farce 'Du Barry was a Lady'. Tonight I'm taking Hazel out again.

Saturday 19th February 1944

Well here I am in an Indian National Airways DC3 passenger plane bound from Delhi to Colombo. We took off about 08:30 and expect to alight at Bombay about 12:30. At the moment we are, I suppose, somewhere over the Baroda area. Wherever it is, it looks jolly dull – endless miles of brown scrub-country dotted with trees, with here and there a forest tract, and at intervals a sudden group of flat-topped precipitous hills. Oh so dull. The land is infinitely more attractive from ground level. I find India a hard enough country to appreciate even then but at 8,000 feet it is an impossible feat.

We got delayed a day as the aircraft was u/s [unserviceable]. We should have taken off on Friday morning but didn't do so till today (Saturday). Yesterday we went up to the Cecil, bathed and had tea. There was a tremendous thunderstorm with hail stones ½ inch in diameter. I wave liked to have taken young Hazel out again, but it really is too jolly expensive. On Thursday night I took her to 'The Corsican Brothers', and then on to the Piccadilly for dinner and dancing, and finally back to the Wrennery by 22:30. I was with her just 4 hours but it cost me Rs 32 – that's about 11/- per hour, no 12/-, and that soon makes a hole in one's pocket, especially when one has a Hotel Bill of Rs 180 to settle! Hazel is really a very attractive young woman. I think I could marry her without much difficulty, but am not certain. I'm not sure she is quite suitable, really – comes from Streatham (this is being very snobbish I must admit, but one is particular in matters of this sort). Anyway, I am banking on Mary (though she doesn't know it), and that doesn't seem very promising just now as according to her latest letter she's likely to be at Weymouth for the duration and I certainly cannot see much prospect of my getting home for ages. (This rather shocking scrawl I attribute to 'air pockets' – it's really very 'bumpy' just now and we seem to be descending a little.

Monday 21st February 1944 – COLOMBO

My goodness it's hot down here – Oh to be back in Delhi! Well, after a good deal of 'lobbying' we had the conference this afternoon – there were all sorts of odds and sods there – two Lieutenant Colonels RM, one Commander RN, one Lieutenant Commander RNVR, one Lieutenant Commander RN, one Major (HAC), one Lieutenant RN, and one Captain RE, also two Civilians. Of these the only person who really said anything worthwhile was Lieutenant Colonel Phillips RM (Presiding), who really is an odd bird, and myself; possibly Hughes made a few constructive remarks, but SEC or SCE or whoever he is, and the Land Surveyor between them made a series of quite fatuous suggestions. One wanted us to set up somewhere south of Batticaloa, and all sorts of odd places were proposed which quite manifestly didn't comply with any of our requirements. I held out stoutly for the Jaffna area and refused to be brow-beaten by SCE who kept saying there were "lots of other outfits in land up that way", and the whole place was much too crowded for us etc. I then asked Phillips what sort of priorities we had. He had the effrontery to reply, "I don't know – you should have found all that out before you left Delhi!" Good heavens, what the dickens does he think I am? I'm not running this SOG show – I'm only representing one small interest on it, and have voluntarily assumed responsibility for another – the Beach Pilotage School. I was told to come down here to represent my views and "furnish the survey with COPP requirements". Instead of that I practically find myself composing the survey. Holmes – I keep calling him Hughes – is representing HCOR's interests, but apart from him there is simply no one who will do a thing about it.

Friday 25th February 1944 – IN THE AIR, PONDICHERRY AREA

Well here we are on our way back again. We motored up to the Jaffna Area (250 miles) on Tuesday and were rather impressed by the Kayts Channel, which I had selected as being possibly a suitable area. We had a bit of a snag in the evening when one of our cars broke its track rod, fortunately when going slow to pass a bullock cart, and came to a standstill with the two front wheels pointing out in opposite directions. As we had been travelling at between 60 and 70 mph all the way I can hardly get over our good fortune in not having a most awful accident. Colson, Jubb and I spent the night in the rest house at Kayts and the Colonel and Holmes went up to see... Nobody slept at Elephant Pass.

It was really rather a lovely drive through the jungle, mile after mile of thick virgin jungle with this magnificent tarred road, quite empty, threading its way through, in long straight stretches which seemed never ending. We could see quite a lot of monkeys etc. swinging about from tree to tree and scurrying off the road as we swept past.

We were very lucky, after dinner (Jubb and I) to run into Lieutenant Commander Brown RCNR and Petty Officer Phillis (of 'Challenger', blessed memory), who were walking down the road with torches, towards Kayts pier. We were looking for their camp, but would never have found it at night. The locals said it was ½ to ¾ mile away (first-on-the-right sort of thing), but as we discovered next day it was about 2½ miles away and miles from anywhere. We went along to see Croome on Wednesday and were again frightfully lucky to meet Phillis again on the road, quite by accident, and he led us to the camp. It was a long time since I had seen Croome – he navigated us back from West Africa, and I travelled up to town with him from Sheerness after I'd finally left 'Challenger' (that I remember was just 2 years ago, after Uuna had broken off our engagement).

Well Croome was very useful and helpful, and we had a good look at his soundings and came to the conclusion that Kayts – or rather the north shore of the harbour, with Fort Hammenheil, was really very suitable. He gave us beer to drink, which pleased the Colonel no end. I learnt that ‘Challenger’ was unlikely to come in this weekend after all, and anyway I gathered from Croome that they would love to make use of some of our chaps if they were keen to come, and he personally could employ anyone we could spare, especially draughtsmen, so I left a message for ‘Challenger’ with him asking how many they could do with, giving roughly the numbers who might be available.

We had quite a good lunch at Jaffna, in the rest house. NOIC Commander Creer was really too pathetic for words. When asked to see that 5 gallons of paraffin were delivered to Croome at Kayts, he said, “Paraffin? Paraffin? How can I get paraffin without coupons?” Then when I asked him to make a signal to Trinco for Croome, he said Oh yes, he would run along to the post office and send it now, and my goodness, he did! Poor old man, what a stooge!

We hit the trail again after that and apart from one or two stops *en route* for refreshments (tea at rest-house etc.) went on till we reached Anuradhapura (or Andalusia as the Colonel preferred to call it) about 7 pm, and put up in a pretty ghastly place called the Central Hotel, some very junior naval types from Trinco having just got in ahead of us at the Grand. Before dinner we held a conference on the results of the survey to date, going through all the requirements, and considering carefully to what degree they were satisfied by the proposed site at Kayts. On the whole it looked as though we would be unlikely to find a better spot.

I got bitten to pieces by mosquitoes in the night – I’ll probably get malaria soon I should think – jolly mosquito net full of holes! We set out again on Thursday morning and reached Puttalam about 11:30, where we contacted Colonel Phillip’s friend Commander Dicky Burstall on the FAA site, and asked him about Kalpitiya. His report was most unfavourable – rather more so than necessary I thought; the Colonel wanted to act on the strength of it and wash out any further consideration of Kalpitiya, merely send in a report that Kayts was the only spot. I insisted, however, on having a look-see, and most of the others eventually agreed with me (very bumpy just now, going through the clouds!). The Colonel therefore deserted us and drove off to Colombo, leaving the rest of us in one car to do the recce of Kalpitiya. We found it really quite good – a most magnificent harbour for LC and MLs – quite the reverse of what ‘Dicky’ had said! We went out in a motor boat taking soundings, finding ample space for them to be moored close inshore with 2 fathoms and over, and first hand evidence that craft drawing 6 to 7 feet trading with India could gain access to the harbour without much difficulty. Moreover, there was a marvellous old Dutch fort which we could take over, right on the water’s edge. (we are coming down now.)

Monday 28th February 1944 – COCANADA

Well here we are settled down again and everything running very smoothly. Saturday 26th, the day we got back, was very busily occupied with conferences etc., self and Colson reporting on our activities and conferring with our respective parties, and then Ponsonby and I getting together for two separate conferences, as a result of which we drafted the following:

“CinCEF(SEAC) R CinCEF FROM Naval Party 735 & 740 STOP Reference my 241337 STOP

- (a) Fleet Royal Marine Officer report on site in Jaffna Area recommends requisitioning FORT HAMMENHEIL Lat 09° 42'6 N Long 79° 50'9 E Chart No 2197 as part of proposed site STOP*
- (b) If COPP is required to move shortly they must occupy FORT as no alternative accommodation is available till constructed STOP*
- (c) Subject to above recommendation being adopted propose small advance party examine FORT at early date to determine suitability as COPP Base for 6 teams STOP*
- (d) If suitable propose advance party prepares reception COPP 7 & 8 who should transfer thither as soon as possible STP*
- (e) Advance party would be prepared to plan entire camp area provided details of all parties' requirements are furnished and authority granted to act on behalf of SOG STOP*
- (f) Presence of officer who will eventually be on SOG administrative staff essential during planning to prepare administrative services and supervise construction STOP*
- (g) If FORT HAMMENHEIL found unsuitable for COPP Base propose advance party returns and COPP remains COCANADA pending construction of suitable quarters which could apparently take several months STOP*
- (h) In the event planning and execution would be a SOG responsibility though COPP would provide liaison officer STOP 261328 2/2*

Well it took the best part of 2 days to get that signal off – it had to be cyphered up in 4 parts. Now we are waiting for the answers, also a reply from ‘Challenger’. At Division yesterday I handed round 39 – 43 stars to those who felt they had qualified for it – or rather I gave them the ribbons and bar pins. I also harangued them on the subject of dress, which leaves a lot to be desired.

There were lots of letters waiting for me when I got back here, about 2 dozen I should think. Many were congratulations on my DSC, and Mum actually quoted the citation which apparently is “For courage and skill in command of reconnaissance party on enemy coasts in the Far East” – rather nice, but my goodness, Bang goes our security! Isn’t it amazing? We’ve been trying our hardest for over 6 months to camouflage our activities and hush up the fact that we are remotely connected with recce, and now *that* comes out in the Home Press – only a matter of days before it is out here. Oh well! Ruari has gone off to Madras on a few days’ leave. They certainly kept themselves very busy here during my absence – the more credit to Ruari. In the meanwhile Bill Lucas is up to his eyebrows in an intensive training programme, and nearly up to them in mangrove mud in consequence!

I think Mary has fallen in love with me (as I have with her). *C’est magnifique, mais ce n’est pas la guerre*. I mean, what can we do about it? We’ve never seen each other and there doesn’t seem to be any likelihood of a meeting for some time yet. I wonder if, as she suggests, distance lends enchantment, and when we meet we’ll be disappointed? Oh goodness, I hope not! I would so much like to marry her – I think meanwhile there is another complication – Peggy. (Not to mention Hazel in Delhi, and shortly to be in Ceylon). I went out last night to see Peggy. We sat and talked and drank at the ‘Club’ at Samalkot, with the Baileys and Ella Wiese, and then went in. It was 22:00 before we sat down to dinner – a very good dinner too. Peggy and I sat up – there wasn’t much sitting about it though – till 03:00 this morning whispering sweet nothings to one another and generally enjoying one another’s very close proximity. I have got to the stage of talking seriously to her – she’s madly in love with me – I tell her it is infatuation, to no avail, and wants me to marry her – or at least get engaged. I can’t, and try to tell her in the best way – it’s so very difficult. I feel a complete cad, and

horribly materialistic and cynical, and she's so young and virginal – only 18 but so very passionate. Sometimes I almost feel I'd be wise to marry her while I have the chance – she's certainly a lovely girl and would doubtless make an ideal wife. So unsophisticated. I came back on my motorbike about 08:30 this morning.

There are disturbing rumours about the CTC wanting to take over not lonely the Boathouse Enclosure and Stores, but apparently also our LCPs (and crews?). My goodness, they've got a nerve! We're going to fight this – who the dickens do they think we are?

Wednesday 1st March 1944

Great concern was caused by the arrival as jetsam of an unidentified 'suspicious object' on the coast some 13 miles south of Godavari Point. It was "10 feet long and had wings" and goodness knows what. 740 went out to try and find it but could not – they were the wrong side of the spit anyway. Eventually DSP got the thing organised to the extent of providing a special Policeman, a Constable, and a 'local' who knew where it was, and we sallied out in 346. We ran down at 1500 revs, giving 12 knots and reached the spot in about 2 hours, i.e. at 16:45. There was a strong on-shore breeze, and as a result a considerable surf, so we anchored a safe distance off and native boats came out through the surf and took off the Indians, while Grimson and I paddled in, in the canoe, and nearly got swamped in the process. A crowd of wide-eyed natives was standing round at a respectful distance and were manifestly impressed when I, recognising at once what the object was, walked up and stood on it, and then carried out a rapid but close examination, to discover that it was a British port-side Paravane, as used by merchant vessels. It was not a practical proposition, in the circumstances, to salvage it.

The boat caused some alarm and despondency on the return passage as it stopped no fewer than ten times due to impurities in the petrol. After the filters had been cleaned she ran like a bird and we eventually got home by 21:00 (last night).

Old Bill Lucas is a shocking sight this morning. Having spent the best part of 48 hours in the mangrove swamps at the head of the bay, smothered from head to foot with evil-smelling mangrove mud, tormented continuously by swarms of mosquitoes, midges, tsetse and horse-flies, tickled by crabs newts, water snakes and leeches, with little or nothing to eat or drink, he looks a perfect picture of misery. All his limbs are swollen up with insect bites. I expect henceforth that he will be less enthusiastic over mangrove swamps!

Sunday 5th March 1944

They want us to man this Fleet Tender when 740 come back off leave (they went off on Friday). We're going off into the jungle on the 9th until the 17th, after which Ruari will probably go down to take her over with some of each party. He's busy swotting up his Navigation and Seamanship – I told him to concentrate on 'handling ships'. As he is Special Branch, and hasn't got a W/K certificate I'm not really frightfully happy about sending him. On the other hand, hardly any of the others have W/K certificates either. I still haven't heard a word from 'Challenger' which is odd, especially as I sent off a signal in P/L to Griffiths asking if Wyatt had replied. However, we have heard from Miles saying that he wasn't taking any action on our long signal until he received C in CEF's comments on the

report, and the report itself. So until that happens we are as we were, and Richards (who has shaved off his beard and looks really rather handsome, though no one recognised him) is standing by more or less at a moment's notice to go down to Kayts as advance party. My goodness, things move slowly!

I had a pretty unsatisfactory session with Peggy last night. They asked me to the flicks but due to this smallpox scare I couldn't go but joined them at the Club afterwards. We had a meal and I had quite my fair share of 'alk' with one person and another, and went out to Samalkot with them in their car in the small hours of this morning, returning by the diesel train this morning.

We held Divisions at 10:00 and for once the troops really turned up trumps. They really were all looking very smart, and with medal ribbons too. I gave them something of a pep talk on the need for preventing one's mind from rusting, as well as one's body, and expressed the opinion that we had rather neglected the education of our minds out here, and that henceforth it was my intention to alter this state of affairs. We then fell out, and sprawled on the grass in the field, 'under the spreading chestnut tree', and I outlined the present and future – the general situation. I told them frankly what is in the air, what I had been up against in Delhi, and what I had said and done, all of which I think interested them. The meeting then took the form of a mutual discussion group, and I read several intelligence publications, the subject matter of which we then discussed. Perhaps the most interesting was the 'atrocities story' entitled 'Blood Carnival'.

I'm trying to write this with Rikki (the mongoose)... though a very nice little animal, very like a cat in many ways, she isn't very helpful when it comes to writing up my diary.

Church was voluntary this evening; everyone turned up! Ruari and I read the lessons. The other day Ruari and I went off and did a little surveying. We fixed the Godavari Spit beacon by sextant angles from the Church Tower and from Vakalapudi Light House. I was just about to ask Mr Honeyford, the lighthouse-keeper, how his daughter was, when Ruari started congratulating him on getting married, so I thought better of it. My goodness, that driver of the Station Wagon makes me livid. He's hopeless – a typical Indian. You'd have thought he'd never seen the sea in his life before, and the idea of driving along the beach at the water's edge completely nonplussed him, and I could not get him to go more than 20 mph. So on the way back I drove and nearly caused a disaster by splashing through a wave at about 45 mph, which completely enveloped the car in a solid curtain of water, so that I could see nix for some time. I was rather more careful after that, but I had been goaded into it by the exasperating apathy of the drivers. Oh, how I dislike these people!

Monday 6th March 1944

"It's all been changed" (motto of Combined Ops) – peculiarly applicable to ourselves. We just heard this morning that they don't want us to man this Fleet Tender after all. There was another rather stupid signal from Admiral Miles about Copper Acetate, and they've passed the baby about Inman's and KR and AI to NSO Bombay. Still no word from 'Challenger', so I sent off a hastener to C in CEF. What a life!

When I was up in Delhi I got a Christmas card from Mrs Claessen and Bjarney Samuels dated 27th November. I had heard just previously from Umma that her mother (Mrs Claessen) died on November 28th. I am going to write to Umma now.

Tuesday 7th March 1944

Richards and I went out in LCP 355 this morning to the spit and back, where I observed some angles at the Beacon and shot up the buoy and a few other objects (W/T masts etc.). I finally fixed the Beacon and the end of the spit (which has extended considerably). The boat has something wrong with her shaft or propeller and was only giving 11.3 knots at 1,500 revs, 8.0 knots at 1,200 revs.

Major Keely SBS, one of Gruff Courtney's boys, has arrived out here and has come along to us to see if we can fix him up. They have about 30 to 40 tons of stores, 38 canoes, 6 officers and 36 troops, and goodness knows what. The rest of them are at present in the middle of a desert at Poona – or near it, where they were dumped on arrival a month or so ago. It looks as though we may have to sort of 'absorb' them, and make some of our facilities available to them – perhaps have the officers living with us – let them erect a marquee in the Boathouse Enclosure, and let them use an LCP occasionally. Anyway, they are to join this SOG, but appear to know SFA [Sweet Fanny-Adams] about it. Shall we start one off here now, by pooling resources? Rations seem to be a cause of trouble at the moment. I have urged Keely to get busy asking for priority MT and LCPs etc. He's off with Norman at the moment investigating possibilities of the AMES site.

Simultaneously a bombshell in the shape of Lieutenant Colonel Harrison (CTC) who arrived in a 'smother' to say none of their outboard motors could be got going, and the Admiral (Maund DCOI) was arriving tomorrow, and they wanted to take him down the Gaderu and round to Yamman – in fact they must do so, and could they, oh please could they, borrow one of our LCPs? Well it looked like 357 which hadn't been tried out since her last mechanical overhaul, or if she couldn't make it, 355 with the dicey propeller. Sent them all off to get busy on the boats and try to get 357 'on the road' at all costs, even if it means working on her all night. In the meantime there is the little trouble of the tide. We require 4.0 feet of tide to get over the bar, and at high water tomorrow there is only 3' 3". So it looks as though Monsieur l'Admiral may have a day on the mudbanks!

I was vaccinated a few days ago (about March 3rd) – that's the second time in 3 months. There seems to be a smallpox scare here.

Thursday 9th March 1944

Well we got the Admiral away all right. The whole thing was postponed 24 hours as apparently Burrows' plane had come to grief somewhere en route, with the result that Admiral Maund had to come on by sea (from Vizag presumably) by MTB. We sent out two LCPs – 357 (with the Admiral, Brigadier and various staff officers including an American Colonel, with Geoff Richards in charge), and 355 in close support (with Ruari Mclean in charge). I gather they got over the bar OK without incident, and so, once safely over, Ruari turned back and returned to base.

I spent most of the day writing letters about the shocking 'inertia' of the Ordnance MT Depot at Secunderabad, and about the awful confusion with regard to our appointments, pay documents, allowances etc. vis-à-vis those of 740. I got pretty worked up, what with one thing and another, and really almost lost my temper when I saw the flagrant breaches of the security regulations perpetrated in Norman's office. Admittedly they were sins of omission rather than commission, but that doesn't make it very much better.

Saturday 18th March 1944

Nine days have now elapsed since I last wrote up this diary, but I did try to keep a more detailed one in the interim (but it all got spoilt with kerosene oil). Briefly, and roughly, the course of events has been thus.

Ponsonby and I, with Richards and one or two types from the MTBs which had brought Admiral Maund from Vizag (or was it Madras?) went to dine at the CTC with the Brigadier and the Admiral on the night of Thursday March 9th. It was quite a good party really, there were quite a number of officers there, but the entire brunt of the conversation was borne by the Admiral. I never knew anything so dull as these pongos. There were one or two American pongo officers, but apart from them and the Naval types, the Admiral was really the only person there who uttered a word. I got on to the subject of China with him. Ponsonby more or less remained in the background, fraternising with Keely (or is it Keighley?).

The next day, Friday, we set off into the Jungle – the whole Party except Norman and one or two of the troops who were sick. We went in the station wagon, and the truck took all the tents, provisions and equipment, proceeding on ahead and effectively smothering us in a dense cloud of dust. We eventually arrived at the end of the road about 13:30, after stopping at Benzie's en route. A caravan of bullock carts was there to meet us, and all the gear was loaded on to them while we tramped on ahead into the Jungle, in full battle-order, and in the teeth of a tropical downpour. Camp was finally pitched beneath a grove of wild tangerine trees.

We stayed there a week, and on each day (except Sunday) Bill Lucas went off hunting elephants – or rather, *the* elephant – the rogue elephant that has been terrorising the neighbourhood for the past 20 years. Actually, this was one of the objects of the expedition, and without it we would certainly not have got everything 'laid on' as we did. The Police arranged everything beautifully, and the locals were nothing if not generous, providing us with scores of eggs and chickens, not to mention as much Coolie labour as we might want. Ruari went with Bill most days, and Peter Gimson too, but the latter retired from the fight very early on, and went sick. He remained sick for the rest of our sojourn up there (too many sweets!), I went out the last two days, but it was all to no avail; they only got near the beast once, and then they frightened it so much that it ran about 12 miles.

I must say, the assortment of arms with which they intended to kill the elephant was, to say the least, amusing. It included several plastic '82' grenades (capable of blowing a hole through one-inch armour plate), a Bren MG and Mr Underwood's 0.475 inch elephant gun, not to mention several 0.303 rifles. I went sick for a day or two, starting Monday 13th, but thinking it was only 'a touch of fever' carried on after a while, and resumed the elephant chase. Meanwhile, my beard progressed daily.

We eventually trekked our way out of the jungle yesterday, met the MT about 15:00 and waited there for the bullock carts. I felt pretty grim, and more or less collapsed. Peter Gimson, who was looking like death, had ridden in one of the bullock carts – they didn't arrive till 16:30. We got back to the house about 20:00, to find the others all there. Geoff Richards had just returned from Secunderabad Hospital, and Colson and Peacock had just got back from leave at Ootacamund. I didn't feel too grand at dinner, and afterwards was violently sick on the drive – though this was actually precipitated by taking a quinine tablet. I found I had a temperature and turned in.

This morning the IAMC doctor arrived and pronounced that both Gimson and I would have to go off to hospital at Secunderabad, as we had jaundice!