

Prologue

Thanks to my son-in-law Riley - what started off as my thoughts on my family has been turned into this well prepared document.

Family background and history are well worth recalling. When my parents were born there were no motorcars, radios, aircraft and lots of things we take for granted today. In years to come you too will look back to the year 2000 and wonder at how old fashioned it looks. As my family expands this history should be brought up to date. I said in 1988 that I wrote it for my grandchildren, the passing years have born great grandchildren and to them I pass this history.

Guy Bearne
Dec 1st 2000

Introduction

I have been asked to put on paper what I know of the Bearne's history with particular reference to my Father, Lieutenant Colonel Lewis Collinwood Bearne, D.S.O., A.M., late of the Royal Indian Army Service Corps.

So far as my father's history is concerned, I am greatly indebted to my mother who, from the time of her engagement kept a scrap book in which she entered everything of importance that happened to her family. When the 1st World War broke out in 1914, she started a separate record of her husband, where he was and what happened to him I have taken from her records.

I have consulted a firm of Genealogists to trace the family back, but unfortunately they have not been able to go further back with any degree of certainty than 1669, for two reasons:-

- The Exeter Record Office, where all the documents relating to births, deaths etc were kept, was destroyed by enemy bombs in 1941.
- The 18th and early 19th century Bearnese were non-conformists and it is doubtful whether they always registered births.

I have limited my research to my generation. I submit it and it is up to the next generation to write their own histories should they wish to do so.

Guy Bearne

Hill Deverill
1988



Guy Bearne 1998 aged 90



Aileen Bearne with Grandson Andrew 1968

Origin of the Name

There are two schools of thought regarding the origin of the name, one put forward by the Genealogists and the other, the family belief that the first BEARNES were Huguenot refugees.

In support of their case the Genealogists submitted the following:

- The surname BEARNE is derived from more than one source. One of these is Old Norse barn "child" which is used in Domesday Book as a byname of mean of the upper class and may also have had the meaning "young man of a prominent family" (cf. The use of the Old English cild "child"). A second source is the Scandinavian personal name of Biorn or the Old English Beorn "warrior", whilst a third possibility is Old English bere-aern (literally) "barley-place".
- Once everyone was known by a single name. As the population increased people travelled and mixed, found others of the same name and overcame the confusion by taking an extra name to identify themselves. These were adopted in accordance with fairly general principles. Thus, a man named John who was a youngest child, a minor at the time of his parents' death or a young man of an important family might be known as "John (the) Barn" in Christian name; while William whose father was Beorn might be dubbed "William (son of) Beorn"; and Henry who lived near or worked at a barn, "Henry (of or at the) Barn". In the course of time the additional appellation became hereditary as a surname, ceasing to have any reference to the bearer's personal characteristics, immediate ancestry or place of residence or employment.
- Early records mention Thirne Beorn who appears in a Yorkshire charter circa 1050; Siuuard Bearn, in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle in 1071; Siuuard Barn, in the Warwickshire Domesday Book of 1086; Tomas filius Bern', in Staffordshire Pipe Rolls in 1177; William Bern, in Worcestershire Pipe Rolls in 1190; Eilwin de la Berne, of Surrey in Curia Regis Rolls of 1211; William le Berne, of Lincolnshire, in Patent Rolls of 1232; and Peter del Barne, in Yorkshire Manor Court Rolls in 1316.
- A George BARNE was Mayor of Tavistock in the 16th Century and another Sir George BARNE, possibly his son, was Lord Mayor of London in 1587.

While it is noteworthy that none of the names mentioned above spell the name BEARNE. It should be remembered that until Dr Samuel Johnson started his Dictionary in 1747 there was no recognised method of spelling.

The first instance the Genealogists found of the correct spelling was in 1642 when Eliza, daughter of Peter Bearne was married.

Notwithstanding all the forgoing, there is still a possibility that the family are of Huguenot ancestry since the name is found in France and the Bearnese were non-conformists in the 18th century; however a search of the denization records and the listings of Huguenot families known in South Devon has, so far, failed to establish any link. It is, of course, possible some Bearnese came over from France before the Huguenots refugees.

What do you want to be? Of old English stock, or of French origin? Personally I think the Genealogists have made the better case.

Notes:

Pipe Roll:

In this was recorded the accounts of the revenue collected by the County Sheriff. The first known dates from the 12th century.

Curia Regis:

The king's council established at the Norman Conquest.

Family Tree

| | |
|---|---|
| 16 th – 17 th Century | Bearnes found in Bovey Tracy. |
| 18 th – 19 th Century | Bearnes found round Newton Abbot. |
| 1642 | Elizabeth Bearne, daughter of Peter Bearne married. |
| 1669 | Peter Bearne born, married Elizabeth Bradford in 1727. Could have been parents of – |
| 1747 | Andrew Bearne born, married Mary Jesset in 1769. Parents of – |
| 1787 | Andrew Bearne born, married Catherine. Parents of – |
| 1828 | Lewis Bearne born, married Frances Eleanora Holmes, 1848. Parents of – |
| 1853 | Lewis Edward Bearne born, married Ada Louise Symons. Parents of – |
| 1878 | Lewis Collinwood Bearne born, married Violet Hetty Rogers Gibbs, 1905. Parents of – |
| 1906 | Sydney Bearne born. Died, 1979. |
| 1907 | Colin Bearne born. Died 1991 |
| 1908 | Guy Bearne born. |
| 1910 | Lewis Bearne born. Died, 1910. |
| 1914 | Winifred Jayne Bearne born. Died, 1978. |



THALL AND SINGULAR *To whom these Poems
shall come I Commit Marshall John Fane Esquire Commandant of the Royal Garrison-Ship's Quarter
Resident King of St. Paul's Abbey. Whereas GUY BEARNE of Hall Place on the Parish of*

[illegible]

Conrad Sumner - Ganten

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CHAPTER 1

The Bearnese

The Bearnese are a Devonshire family and our branch lived near Newton Abbot.

My knowledge goes no further back than my Great Grandfather, Lewis Bearne, a Banker by profession and one of the original partners in the clay mining company of Watts, Blake, Bearne. One of his sons, Lewis Edward Bearne, my Grandfather, in his turn became a partner in the company. As the result of a visit to France to see his sister-in-law, who had married a Frenchman, he decided he wanted to be known as "Grand-pere". He died in 1912 at the early age of 59. From all accounts he was quite a character with a great sense of humour, much in demand as an after dinner speaker and raconteur with an amazing repertoire of "Devonshire Stores"; these stores, for the benefit of those who have never hear one, were usually long, told in broad Devon dialect and more often than not concerned some local worthy and/or his wife.



Lewis Edward Bearne 1853 – 1912

I hear from one of the Watts who was a contemporary of my father that Grand-pere was responsible for designing many of the mechanical contrivances used in the mines and some of which were still in use in the 1960s. He was fascinated by the Railways and had a yearly 1st class season ticket on the Great Western Railway from Newton Abbot to London; so, when he felt he wanted to get away from his family or the office, he would take a train to London, have a good meal on board and on arrival catch the next train back. I have found a Great Western Railway Menu for lunch on the 5th January 1908, when for the princely sum of 12 ½ new pence you could have a five-course meal.

He had a large collection of chiming clocks in his house and spent many hours trying to get them all to chime at the same time. Despite his interest in things mechanical, he did not hold with "Horseless Carriages", as motor cars were sometimes called in those days.

He joined the "Volunteers" who were the forerunners of the Territorial Army and rose to command the 1st Volunteer Battalion. I very much regret not having known him, as he sounded lots of fun and just the sort of grandfather I would have liked to have.

His wife, Ada Louise, who outlived him by many years, was known as "White-Haired Granny" on account of having gone white at an early age. After Grand Pere died she moved to Westward Ho! Before her marriage she as a Miss Symons, a local family. One of her brothers, a Doctor, met an untimely end when he overturned his pony and trap. She had one sister who, as mentioned above, married a Frenchman by the name of Thiffoine; another sister married a man either from or who emigrated to South Africa.

At the age of 86 and in the late 1930s White Haired Granny decided to visit this sister whom she had not seen for over 50 years and wanted to fly out, in those days it took about a week in a flying boat to reach Cape Town. The family said a very firm "NO" so she went by sea to Cape Town and then by train up country. Her first letter home complained of the heat and she added that her sister "Had aged terribly!"; after 50 years what did she expect? They both wanted to talk about their respective grandchildren.



Ada Louise Bearne
(The White Haired Granny)

Granny had not been out there long before her sister died in her sleep and Granny followed her a few days later. To go back a bit in time, we were all rather frightened of the old dear, her mind was needle sharp and she did not mince words when she felt it necessary to rebuke one. She loved motoring and in 1920 bought an open two-seater Calcot in which her daughter Winnie drove her all over the place. When well in her 80s she thought nothing of being driven, wrapped up in a rug, in this open car, from Westward Ho right down to see my parents in Kent, a distance of about 450km!

She was one of those people who could get by on a minimum of sleep and it was her custom to sit up in bed in the early morning and write her letters. When she was staying with my parents she expected my mother – who was not an early riser – to produce a pot

of tea at anytime from about 5 o'clock onwards.

So much for Grand Pere and White Haired Granny, now for some thoughts on their five children; Cuthbert the eldest, followed by Edie, Lewis Collinwood, Winnie and Hilda. From all accounts the children seem to have lived a very carefree existence. The family had a cottage up on Dartmoor and they used to ride up there for all their holidays.

Cuthbert, as the eldest son, joined the company in a junior capacity with a view eventually of taking over the Bearne partnership when Grand Pere retired. Unfortunately, Cuthbert was a bit of a lad; on one occasion he crashed his pony and trap, breaking his knee and as result he had a stiff leg for the rest of his life. As a further result of the accident he was charged with Being "Drunk in charge of a pony and trap". On another occasion he was detailed to take out the wages for the employees at an outlying mine, unfortunately Newton Abbot Races were on that day and as he was much addicted to betting on horses, he stopped off on his way to the mine but had a run of bad luck, finishing up by losing all the wage money. This resulted in his dismissal from the Company. I always had a very soft spot for him, and for a time in 1929, when I was unemployed, I stayed with him and helped with his Chinchilla Rabbit Farm.

His wife, Aunt Maude was a bit of a mystery to the family, her past was not fully known but I was told she had been married before and had a family but no one had ever met them. Her past did not interest me, she was kindness itself to me and I was very fond of her.

The eldest daughter, Edie, married a brother officer of my fathers, one Reggie Cutbill who, incidentally, was best man at my parents wedding. They spent many years in India before the 1st World War. They had one daughter, Isobel, known as Betty. In 1920, when my father was serving in Germany in the British Army of the Rhine, Reggie was his C.O.; having your brother-in-law as your boss was not a good thing.

Reggie had had a most interesting career, as a young man he went out to South Africa and joined the Mounted Police. He was one of the Early Settlers who went into Southern Rhodesia with Cecil Rhodes. Like all the other Early Settlers he was given a grant of land by Rhodes but being young and footloose, he had no intention of settling down to become a farmer so he sold his land and remained in the Police. He fought in the Matabele and the South African Wars and afterwards took a commission in the British Army.

He retired as a Colonel about 1934 and became a Knight of Windsor and lived in the Castle. On giving up that appointment they moved to Country Fermanagh in Northern Ireland, where I gather he spend most of his time fishing. After they had moved to Ireland, Betty married Mike Moody, a retired Lieutenant Colonel; they adopted a son, Peter. After Edie died Reggie married again; I never met his second wife.

Winnie was a very fine all round sportswoman, excelling at hockey and golf, at both of which she represented Devon County; she also played in the English Ladies Golf Championships. To my shame I found she played a mean game of squash, playing her when I was 19 and she must have been in her late 40s and she surely beat me. She married George Watts, an officer in the Devon Regiment. I gather this was against the wishes of her family. They had a son George Miles. The marriage did not last long and Winnie went to live with and keep house for her mother.

During the 1st World War she joined the Womens Army Corps and commanded a Company. Probably as a result of her army service, she developed a taste for wearing a shirt and tie with a tweed skirt. All her life she smoked cigarettes until, in her late 70s, she decided either she gave it up or sold her car, as she could not afford both, so she threw her last packet of cigarettes out of the window and kept the car. The story has it, that in her youth she was asked to leave a London Theatre for smoking – in those days Ladies did not smoke in public!

She outlived all her brothers and sisters but unfortunately at the end she suffered from Senile Dementia. Her son Miles, 6ft 5in tall and very good looking, was destined to go into the army and was at the Royal Military College, Sandhurst with my eldest brother Sydney. Unfortunately, Miles had a motorcycle accident and damaged a knee. Spending some time in hospital he missed a lot of his lectures and failed his Passing Out Exams; it was then found that he had TB and that put paid to his army career. He recovered enough to take a job and became an Agent for the Conservative Party, a job he did very well but he died at the age of 32.

Hilda too was a fine sportswoman and played hockey for Devon and The Western Counties. Regretfully she died aged 25. My mother said Hilda was by far the nicest of the sisters.



Family Camping In Wales 1898?

Lewis Edward; Cuthbert; Edie; Lewis Collinwood
Winnie; Ada Louise; Hilda

CHAPTER 2

Lewis Collinwood Bearne
1878 - 1940

W *e now come to my father, Lewis Collinwood. Born 5 April 1878, died 16 November 1940, at the age of 63.*

I do not know the significance of the name Collinwood but I see from his birth certificate his parents at that time live in a house called Collinwood. In the family, he was always known as Colin. Educated at Newton College, his ambition was to go into the army; however his parents had other ideas and he was shipped off at the age of 18 to work on an uncle's Coffee Estate in Southern India. From all accounts he lived in style, with his own Bungalow, a large staff of servants, a mixed pack of dogs and several horses. He said he had some of the best Snipe shooting in all India. I think the highlight of his time there was when he shot a Man Eating Tiger. I remember as a small boy we had the skin, complete with stuffed head and open snarling jaws as a rug on the drawing room floor.

After he had been in India for a few years, the Boer War broke out in Southern Africa and a Colonel Lumsden, who lived in India, decided to raise a Mounted Infantry Regiment, to be called "Lumsdens Horse". He called for volunteers, stipulating that only gentlemen who could ride, shoot and look after their horses would be considered. Seeing his chance to become a soldier at last, he volunteered and became Trooper LC Bearne. Lumsdens

Horses moved to South Africa and took part in a number of engagements, Clasps on his South African Medals show he fought at Johannesburg, Orange Free State and Cape Colony.

I understand they were also used as scouts, to reconnoitre and find the Boer dispositions. He was on one such reconnaissance with two other troopers, when they came under fire from some Boers hiding up on a Kopie, their horses were shot from under them; they were taken prisoner and moved to a Prison Camp outside Pretoria. He and some other adventurous prisoners worked out an escape plan; they intended getting out through the latrine block, make for the railway and hide up in the goods waggons of a train going to the coast. Before they put the plan into action, Winston Churchill arrived in the camp, having been captured when the Armoured Train in which he was travelling was ambushed by the Boers.

Knowing his reputation for action they asked him if he was interested in joining in their escape plan which, of course, he was. However, the night before the escape was to take place, Winston, using their plan, went on his own. Presumably he had decided that it was an excellent plan for one man on his own but for a party of escapees it would be a disaster. Winston's escape has been fully documented and even made into a film. He always strongly denied taking advantage of anybody else's plan but I personally, prefer to believe my father's version of what happened.

To hold large numbers of prisoners was an embarrassment to the Boers and I understand they offered to release a number providing they gave their Parole not to take any further active part in the war. Having given his Parole together with many others he was released and had a long walk back to the British Lines. He was sent down to Cape Town and employed as a clerk in the Military HQ. While there he saw a letter from the War Office, London, saying there was vacancies in the Army Service Corps for commissioned officers with a sound knowledge of horses. He decided to apply only to find the offer was restricted to those already holding commission in the British Army.

Nothing daunted; he applied for and was granted a commission in the Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry. Thereafter he submitted an application, under the terms of the War Office letter, for transfer to the Army Service Corps and was accepted.

Colin reminded me of a story father told of a disobedient dog he had in South Africa which refused to come to heel when called but was cured when father threw the top of a pineapple at it and scored a direct hit!

My father always said the worst aspect of the Boer War was the frightful Rationing, many days they were without any food and when it arrived all they usually got was some flour, sugar and tea and perhaps a share in a tin of meat. The flour, which they put in one tunic pocket they used to make dough cakes and the tea and sugar they kept in another pocket and used to brew tea.

Before returning to England he must have taken leave in Africa, as I remember him saying he went up country big game hunting; I also remember, when I was very young, we had a lot of souvenirs in the form of assegis, pots, headrests and bead ornaments which he must have collected after the war ended.

Shortly after returning to England I presume he was transferred from the Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry to the Army Service Corps and posted to their Depot as Aldershot. Between the time he arrived back in England and the start of the Great War in 1914, I am not sure where he was all the time. I know he was in Aldershot in 1903 when he became engaged to Violet Hetty Rogers Gibbs, daughter of the late SC Gibbs, a solicitor, and Mrs Mabel Edye and Step-daughter of Major JS Edye, a doctor in the Royal Army Medical Corps.

In those days in military stations like Aldershot, there was a very social and sporting life. In addition to a succession of Regimental Balls every winter, which I know my mother enjoyed as I remember her telling me all sorts of tales about young officers vying for her favours. Every opportunity existed for sporting activities; of which, from all accounts; my father took full advantage. One of the many activities in which he participated as Push Ball, a game for strong men. The ball was like an oversized football being about 2 metres in diameter and teams mounted on horseback had to get the ball over their opponents' goal line. I remember seeing photos of him playing it. Gymkhanas were another mounted activity in which he participated and at which he showed considerable ability, winning many prizes, in particular at "Tent Pegging".

Notwithstanding the fact that his knowledge of horses was the reason he was given a commission in the A.S.C., "The Powers That Be" decided in their infinite wisdom, he should attend two courses, one on Steam Engines and the other on Internal Combustion Engines. I do not know where or when he did the Internal Combustion Course but I know he did the Steam Engine one at Thetford in 1909-11. From a career point of view these courses were no bad thing as he had a natural mechanical ability and these courses developed.

He was married on 5 September 1905 at All Saints Garrison Church, Aldershot. The following is an extract from the local newspaper:-

There was a large gathering at All Saints Garrison Church, Wellington Lines, Aldershot, on Tuesday for the wedding of Lieut. Lewis Collinwood Bearne, Army Service Corps, son of Lieut.Col. and Mrs LE Bearne, of Briarstowe, Kingsteignton, and Miss Violet Gibbs, daughter of the late Mr James Gibbs and Mrs Edye, and step daughter of Major JS Edye (Royal Army Medical Corps), who served in the Southern African War 1899-1900, of Aldershot. ON the eve of the wedding a dinner party was held at Grosvenor House, Aldershot, the residence of Mrs Huntley, where the bride and her parents have been staying for nearly a year. The guests included the bride and groom, Mrs Edye (mother of the Bride), Mr Sydney Gibbs (brother), Col and Mrs Bearne, of Kingsteignton; the Misses Bearne (sisters), Madame and Mdlle Thiffoine, Mr and Mrs Hamilton, Mrs Bury Wells, and Capt. R Cutbill A.S.C., the latter of whom officiated as "best man".

Owing to the absence of Major Edye in India, the bride was given away by her brother, Mr Sydney Gibbs, of the Transvaal Civil Service. There were many picturesque incidents in connection with the ceremony. Tattered colours that had been in many campaigns hung above the spot where the bride and bridegroom stood during the service, and all the officers present were in uniform. Officers of the bridegroom's corps lined the nave and crossed their

swords overhead as the bride and groom passed down the church after the ceremony, while the band of the Army Service Corps, who filled the choir stalls, provided the nuptial music to organ accompaniment.

The bride wore a gown of ivory white duchesse satin, with long plain train over a satin petticoat, with lace flounces, caught up with the same, empire wreaths of orange blossom, myrtle and white heather. The corsage of white satin was draped with lace, fastened by an empire wreath of orange blossoms, completing the tout ensemble. She was attended by seven bridesmaids – Miss Muriel Gibbs and Miss Margorie Edye (her cousins), Miss Bearne and Miss H Bearne (sisters of the bridegroom), Miss Winifred Chimmo, Miss Irwin, and Miss Gordon, who wore dresses of white muslin and lace, with waist-belts in shades of mauve and purple, and white hats trimmed with mauve, they carried fans formed of asparagus fern and Palma violets, the bride's name flower. The bridegroom's presents were enamelled "violet" brooches.

After the ceremony a reception was held at Normanton, which was kindly lent for the occasion by Surgeon-General and Mrs Macnamara. Later in the day Mr and Mrs Bearne left for London, en route for the Channel Islands where the honeymoon will be spent. The going away gown was of royal blue faced cloth, braided with back, and a white felt hat, with White wings and black velvet rosettes. The numerous presents included a silver bowl from the officers of the A.S.C. with the subscribers names inscribed.

After their marriage they continued to live in the Aldershot area, where on 19 June 1906, their first son, Sydney, was born and their second son, Colin arrived on 11 October 1907.

It was about the time he was married that my father became a keen motorist. In those days cars and motorcycles were far from reliable and I well remember him telling me that when driving from his house to the barracks, a distance of about 2km, he rarely made the journey without the vehicle breaking down at least once.

Between October 1907 and November 1908 the family moved to Borden Camp, not far from Aldershot. On 5 November 1908, I appeared on the scene and about a fortnight later we all moved to Thetford for my father to attend the Steam Traction Engine Course. At that time he owned a three-wheel motorcycle with a wickerwork passenger seat in front of the cycle and it was on this contraption that we moved from Borden to Thetford. While at Thetford their fourth son, Lewis, was born on 28 March 1910 and unfortunately, died the same day.

He was promoted Captain on 1 January 1911 and given command of No. 76 M.T. Company A.S.C., Chatham. My earliest clear recollections are of our time at Chatham.

On 19 February 1914 their only daughter Winifred Jayne was born.

WEDDING OF LEWIS COLLINWOOD & VIOLET HETTY

12th September 1905

Ada Lousie Bearne Lewis Collinwood Bearne Mabel Eyde
 (White Haired Granny) (Bridegroom) (Brides Mother)



Sydney Gibbs
 (Brother of Bride)

Violet Hetty Gibbs
 (Bride)

Lewis Edward Bearne
 (Father of Groom)



The Bride: Violet Hetty Gibbs



Birth of Sydney Bearne 1906

With Granny Mabel Eyde & Mother Violet Bearne

CHAPTER 3

The Great War

France: 1914 - 15

Before 1914, Great Britain had a treaty with France, Germany and Belgium which, inter-alia, guaranteed the neutrality of Belgium; so when Germany showed signs of invading that country with the intention of attacking France, Great Britain issued an ultimatum to Germany "withdraw or we will consider ourselves at war"; they did not withdraw but went ahead and invaded Belgium, so on 4th August of that year, Great Britain declared war on Germany. Plans to move the British Expeditionary Force to France had been drawn up in advance. In fact on the 29th of July my father received the following signal:-

"Precautionary period has been ordered. Adopt precautionary measures detailed in Defence Scheme. Please acknowledge."

No.76 M.T. Company formed the Supply Column for No. 4 Division of the B.E.F. They moved to Avonmouth on 11th August and embarked for France on the 15th, arriving there on the 16th.

It might be as well here to explain the function of the Army Service Corps, and I do not think I can do better than quote from an article published in some newspaper, which dealt with the Senior Officer of the Corps in particular and the corps' function in general:-

"The Army Service Corps"

No one has yet sung the praises of the Army Service Corps – probably no one will – but there is a deal of credit due to that somewhat prosaic branch of the Army, and to Major General F.W.B. Landon, Director of Transport and Movements, whose life in the past few weeks must have been the busiest of any man alive.

A busy life

General Landon's work only begins with the transporting of the Expeditionary Force to France. From now till blessed news of peace declared brings relief to a harassed world, upon him and his corps will depend the safety and efficiency of our Army. Even British soldiers must have food, as they must have ammunition and a dozen other necessities of campaigning. It is the Army Service Corps' job to see that they get it all and in good time."

Other Armies Not So Well Equipped

This corps, by the way, is, I believe, unique. In no other army is so efficient and complete transport Organisation. In its present form the corps only dates from 1888; previous the transport and commissariat departments had been a more or less jumble mix up of various organisations, mostly disbanded in times of peace. I don't think that even the German Army has an efficient corps able not only to undertake all transport work, but to defend its convoys as well, like the A.S.C.'

On the subject of defending themselves, there was an occasion when my father, leading his transport column from the rear area to the front line, met a troop of German Uhlans

(Lancers) on a reconnaissance behind the British lines and captured them. Later he handed them over to the Railhead Commandant, Neville, who signed the following receipt:-

**"Received from O.C. IV Div. Supply Column
Twenty nine German Prisoners - all tame and fat.
(sgd) R.W.Longfield Captain
Railhead Commandant
Neville 2pm 21/10"**

This could be a good moment to quote another letter concerning the A.S.C. In December 1914 the War office wrote to the General responsible for the A.S.C. in the B.E.F. as follows:-

**War Office, London, S.W.
8th December 1914.**

*"My dear General,
Lord Kitchener on his return from seeing the King yesterday afternoon sent for the Quartermaster-General and told him that the greater part of the King's conversation on his return from the Front was devoted to praise of the Army Service Corps and their wonderful work in the Supply and Transport of the Army. His Majesty kept on recurring to it the whole time of the conversation with the Secretary of State (i.e. Lord Kitchener). Lord Kitchener told the Quartermaster-General to let me know and to write privately across to the Director of Supplies and the Director of Transport and to suggest that they should send a private line to officers Commanding Trains, etc., etc. to say how much His Majesty has appreciated the work of the Corps, so that the men might know; he did not wish an actual order to be published on the subject."*

*Yours ever,
Sgd. S.S.Long.*

The well known playwright and writer of detective stories, Edgar Wallace, is the author of the following poem:-

THE ARMY SERVICE CORPS

*The tin nellies ride by His Majesties side, The guns take the right o' the line The
Cavalry too have plenty to do When the Army is cutting a shine.
And its 'Highlander this" and "Rifleman that," Oh, the public has got all the
perishers pat. But nobody tells any picturesque lies
About the poor bloke who brings up the supplies.
Those heroes of war,
The Army Service Corps.*

*Hi! Hi. Out-o' the road, ye Cavalry cub; Hi. Hi. Wait for the wagon that brings up
the grub.*

*YOU can't go to war without eatin'.
You can't live on love in a war, The fighters an' singers,
They can't live on "stingers".
Make way for the gallopin' bully-beef bringers,
The Army Service Corps.*

*The airmen that scout go nosin' about, A-watching the enemies guns;
They may venture and dare but they cant live on air
Nor live on an omelette of ' uns.
Oh, the Royal Engineers couldn't work under fire
I f they didn't get hold of the food they require;
And the General Staff couldn't study their maps I f it wasn't for us Army Service
Corps chaps, The feeders of war
The Army Service Corps.*

*Hi. Hi. I am the feller you welcome, I am;
Hi, Hi. I drive the wagons that bring up the jam.
Good beef is a backing for bayonets. And duff helps a duffer to score A bull or an
inner,
Hi. here comes the winner,
Make way for the heroes that carry your dinner,
The Army Service Corps.*

To go back to the arrival of the British Expeditionary Force (B.E.F) n France. No sooner had they disembarked than they were rushed to the front to support the French and took up positions at Mons on the left on the 5th French Army on 22nd August, the day on which that 5th Army started to retreat. This left a gap on the B.E.F's flank and they too had to fall back in order to maintain a continuous front. Needless to say this placed additional stress on the Divisional Supply Column of the 4th Division but my father managed to salvage all his vehicles and continue to supply the much needed rations etc..

The following letters give some indication of the sort of work 4 Division was doing:-

ORDER OF THE DAY:

The G.O.C. 4th Division has great pleasure in publishing for information of all ranks by express command of Field marshal Sir John French C-in-C British Expeditionary Force, the words used by Sir John French to General Snow (G.O.C.4Div.) in conversation this afternoon.

"I have been wanting to meet you, your Brigadiers and Commanding Officers to enable me to tell them how much I appreciate the splendid work of all ranks of 4th Division during the retirement of the past 10 days. I consider you saved the situation and I look upon it as ranking as one of the finest bits of work ever done by the British Army."

'Hotel des Bois

Jooarre,(sic)
Sept 8th 1914

sgd.A.S.Montgomery
Lt.Col. G.S.

A letter from HQ.2nd Army. Reporting on my fathers Supply Column :

**"Officer Commanding
4th Divisional Supply Column. (Thro A.A. & Q.M.G. 4th Div)**

On the 30th inst. I carried out an inspection of the Column under your Command, with satisfactory results.

Although no previous notice had been given it was gratifying that great attention has been paid to the vehicles, and their condition indicates that no pains have been spared to maintain them in a state of efficiency.

The appearance of the men was also very satisfactory.

This state of affairs reflects great credit on all ranks, and I should be glad if you will convey to them the appreciation of their efforts which have produced such good results.

Head Quarters

1st April 1915.

E.R.O.Ludlow 2nd Army.

Colonel

D.D.OF S. & T.2nd Army"

To which letter was added the following pencil note:-

.C.Supply Column

A very satisfactory report - I have shown it to the G.O.C.

(signed)

2/4/15 A.A. & Q.M.G. 4 Div"

(Note: D.D.OF S. & T. stands for Deputy Director of Supplies and Transport, the senior A.S.C.Staff officer in 2nd Army; while A.A. & Q.M.G. is Assistant Adjutant and Quartermaster General.)

Having suffered from an inefficient supply service in the Boer War, I know it was my fathers firm intention that so far as it was humanly possible, he would ensure his supply column kept the troops in the trenches well fed and properly clothed. This extract from a newspaper refers to an innovation he made for the benefit of the men in 4 Div.

"NEW OUTFIT AFTER BATH.

Nevertheless, the wet and cold has greatly added to the hardships of the troops in the trenches, and the problem of how to enable them to keep their feet reasonably dry and warm is now engaging serious attention.

At one place, owing to the kindness of the proprietor, certain works have recently been placed at our disposal as a wholesale bath-house and repair shop. In the works are a number of vats, large enough to contain several men at a time, and they serve most excellently for the provision of hot baths for the men on relief from the trenches.

Whilst they are enjoying a bath their clothes are taken away. The underclothing is washed or burnt and replaced by a new set, whilst the uniform is fumigated, cleaned and repaired, and buttons are sewn on and repairs done by a gang of women who are employed for the purpose.

At this installation some 1,500 men are catered for each day. As they troop up to the bath they are, to say the least, unprepossessing in appearance. Weary, unshorn and haggard, they are coated with mud, a good deal of which has crusted on them, and some are splashed with the blood of their comrades or the enemy.

When they come out clean, refreshed and reclothed, they are different beings. The men are in good condition. Food in abundance has reached them regularly, except in a few cases incidental to trench warfare."

The following is yet another extract this time from a Chatham newspaper:-

"The only local man among the wounded in the hospital is Company Sergeant Major Grubb, who is a member of a well known Chatham family He was with the 4th Divisional Supply Column, of which Capt.L.C.Bearne of Collingwood, Maidstone Rd Chatham, was in charge. C.S.M.Grubb speaks in high terms of the splendid work which is being done by Capt.Bearne, who, he says, was still going strong when he last saw him a fortnight ago."

He was promoted to Major on 1st October 1914 and on the 18th October he was Mentioned in Despatches. On the 19th February 1915, he was awarded the **Distinguished Service Order** and, when he was home on leave later that year, he attended an Investiture at Buckingham Palace to receive his decoration from King George V on 5th August 1915. On September 12th he was again Mentioned in Despatches.

CHAPTER 4

The Great War

Salonika 1916 - 1918

On 28 November 1915 my father came back from France to join a new Unit being assembled to go as part of a Joint British French Force to support the Serbian Army. On 31st December his Unit sailed from Southampton to Le Havre and thence overland to Brindisi on the Adriatic Coast of Italy. On 6 January 1916 he, with his Company of 150 men, sailed in the Italian ship "Citta de Palermo".

Not long after they sailed, the ship struck a mine and sank. Despite his efforts to get all his troops safely off the sinking ship, he lost 52 men; he, himself, actually went down with the ship but managed to surface. They were carrying, as deck cargo, a quantity of telegraph poles and these broke loose at the ship went down and shot to the surface adding to the confusion and casualties. He received severe wounds to his wrists, possibly from a telegraph pole. After being pulled out of the water by the crew of a British Destroyer, he was taken to the ship's sick-bay where the doctor wanted to amputate his hands. Fortunately he was sufficiently alert to stop this drastic action and demanded to have the wounds stitched up. They were landed back in Brindisi where he went into hospital and had his wrists properly treated.

The following is an extract from the "Evening News" of 7 April 1916:-

"BRITISH VICTIMS ON SUNK TRANSPORT

Discipline in the face of Death.

"An Evening News correspondent says:-

"The parents of British soldiers who went down in the ill fated Citta de Palermo, which sank in the Adriatic early in January, have now received the following communication from Colonel Fitzwilliam, Officer Commanding the British Adriatic Mission, forwarded from the headquarters at Rome:

"Your son was among a party of 300 men belonging to the British Adriatic Mission who proceeded from Aldershot to Brindisi, where they arrived on January 6. Some 150 of these men (your son being among them) embarked on the steamship Citta De Palermo, en route to Valona. Two hours after their departure from Brindisi Harbour it is surmised that the ship struck a mine and capsized.

"The force of the explosion undoubtedly stunned a good number of the men, and from the moment of the striking and the sinking of the vessel it was no more than ten minutes. Every effort was made by the officer commanding the troops on board to rescue all men, and he and another man, although in danger of their lives, made a tour of the ship to see if anyone else was living, but failed to elicit any response to their repeated calls.

"The trawlers which came to the rescue lowered their boats, but two of these also unfortunately struck mines and sank. The remainder manoeuvred so

as to save as many lives as possible. Some of H.M. ships forming part of the escort also steamed to the scene, and a good few of the survivors were taken on board and cared for. I regret your son was not among them.

"The Discipline maintained by the whole of the British troops on board added still further laurels to the courageous behaviour of British soldiers and sailors when in danger."

(Footnote to the above article.)

It was announced in Rome on January 12 that the Citta de Palermo, 1050 tons, had struck a mine and sunk in the lower Adriatic. On February 11 the names of fifty-eight members of the Army Service Corps "missing believed drowned" were published.

He remained in Brendisi until 23 January 1916 when he was posted to the island of Corfu.

On the 25th January he was mentioned in Despatches for the third time. On the 4th July he was awarded the Serbian decoration of "The Order of The White Eagle with Crossed Swords 4th Class".

He was promoted to Temporary Lieutenant Colonel on the 25th July "while specially employed", and posted to Salonika.

During his time there he was detached for two months to the island of Cyprus with the object of buying mules to be used as pack animals in the more rugged terrain in Serbia. The mechanical transport in Salonika consisted, in the main, of Model T Fords. While these vehicles were very adequate on the flat or up fairly gradual slopes, they stalled on very steep hills because petrol which was gravity fed from a tank under the front seat to the carburettor would not flow when the tank was below the carburettor as on a very steep incline; if you turned the Ford round it would go up in reverse but who wanted to carry out this cumbersome manoeuvre every time one met a steep incline.

On the 22 October 1916, a French Army lorry containing High Explosives caught fire while passing through the lines, he with one of his soldiers grabbed fire extinguishers and climbing under the lorry, put out the fire.

The following is an extract from The Times newspaper of 2 January 1918:-

*The King has been pleased to award the **Decoration of the Albert Medal** to the under mentioned Officers, Non-Com. Officers and a Private of his Majesty's Forces, serving in France and elsewhere in recognition of their gallantry in saving life:*

"Maj. L.C. Bearne, D.S.O., and Pte. A.E. Usher, both of the Army Service Corps.

On October 22, 1916, a French motor lorry loaded with 3000lb of aeroplane bombs, caught fire in the middle of a camp of the Serbian Army. Efforts to deal with the flames with earth proved ineffectual, and after the fire had been

burning for seven or eight minutes, and the bomb cases were already involved, Major Bearne and Usher ran up with extinguishers. Both men immediately crawled underneath the lorry and eventually succeeded in extinguishing the flames, thus averting a serious disaster at the risk of their own lives. Major Bearne was severely burnt about the hands and arms....."

The General Commanding the French Army wanted to award him the Croix de Guerre and Legion of Honour but the British General said he could have the French awards or the Albert Medal. So he elected to receive the latter. At the same time the Crown Prince of Serbia put his name forward for the Serbian V.C., but nothing came of this submission, for what reason I know not.

On the subject of our Allies the French, according to a story my father related, they showed typical French logic in providing official brothels for their troops as they realised men will seek the company of women and by providing these brothels they kept the incidence of venereal disease to a minimum. The British on the other hand, being imbued with strong Victorian standards of moral behaviour, did not and in consequence the incidence of venereal disease among British troops was very high. When the French General heard that the British had no official brothels, he wrote to this British opposite number offering the use of his brothels one day a week; this was curtly refused. The French General said to himself, I haven't been generous enough so he wrote again offering their use on two days a week. A Staff Officer was sent to the French to explain that in the British Army official brothels were not allowed. I imagine the French thought the British quite mad!

While in Salonika he contracted a ghastly skin infection called Lupus. How he caught it is not certain but the effect on him was most disfiguring, his whole face and parts of his head looked as though he had been badly burnt. For the rest of his life he had to attend the Military Hospital at Millbank, London to have periodic treatment which consisted of gold injections. To my mind, there is no doubt that this facial disfigurement affected his mental state; no man who had been very good looking, not to say handsome, would relish going through life with a badly scared face which was due to some disease. Had he suffered facial burns in putting out the fire in the French lorry, I am sure he would have borne that as an honourable scar of war.

On 31 January 1917 his living quarters were burnt to the ground and he lost all his kit for the second time in two years; the previous occasion being when his ship was sunk. While in Salonika he sent us a small turtle in moist sand in a cigarette tin, it survived the journey but regretfully did not live for long.

On the 3 August 1918, after two and a half years with the Serbian Army, he arrived back in the UK, and at the same time relinquishing the Temporary rank of Lieut. Col.

On the 11 November 1918 the Armistice was signed and the war came to an end.

ALBERT MEDAL

CITATION FOR GALLANTRY

grenade with the intention of throwing it over the parapet. Unfortunately the bomb exploded before he could reach it and inflicted fatal injuries. By his coolness and self-sacrifice he probably saved the lives of three other men.

The King has been pleased to award the Decoration of the Albert Medal to the undermentioned Officers and Non-Com. Officers and a Private of his Majesty's Forces serving in France or elsewhere in recognition of their gallantry in saving life:—

Maj. L. C. BEARNE, D.S.O., and Pte. A. E. USHER, both of the A.S.C.

On October 22, 1916, a French motor lorry, loaded with 3,000lb. of aeroplane bombs, caught fire in the middle of a camp of the Serbian Army. Efforts to beat out the flames with earth proved ineffectual, and after the fire had been burning for seven or eight minutes, and the bomb cases were already involved, Maj. Bearne and Usher ran up with extinguishers. Both immediately crawled underneath the lorry, and eventually succeeded in extinguishing the flames, thus averting a serious disaster at the risk of their own lives. Maj. Bearne was severely burnt about the hands and arms.

Capt. the Hon. T. C. FITZHERBERT, Lanc. Huss.

On July 10, 1916, an instructional party was throwing small bombs from separate pits. A volley was ordered. All the bombs were thrown successfully except one, which hit the parapet, stuck in the mud. For three or four seconds the accident was unnoticed, as everyone was watching the bombs in the air. The party then lightened to call out.

THE TIMES OF LONDON

2ND JANUARY 1918

(Note: The Albert Medal was instigated by Queen Victoria as the civilian equivalent of the Victoria Cross. It was for great gallantry in saving life. The Armed Forces awarded it for acts of gallantry in saving lives but in actions not under enemy fire. In the 1970's it was decreed that holders of the Albert Medal could exchange their Albert Medals for the George Cross – the highest civilian award for gallantry. The Imperial War Museum in London displays the very few Albert Medals in existence with the special displays of the Victoria Cross and George Cross. L.C. Bearne's medal is on display at the Royal Logistics Corp Museum in Aldershot, England. [RCB July 2000])



Lewis Collinwood Bearne: 1915 after the award of the
Distinguished Service Order (DSO)

CHAPTER 5

The Family

1914 - 1921

While writing the previous two chapters, my mind continually returned to thoughts of my Mother and how she coped; first of all as a young bride who had never been allowed in a kitchen in her life and did not even know how to boil potatoes let alone cook a whole meal. Aided and abetted by her husband, she became an excellent cook and could make an appetizing meal from practically nothing. Having regard to the very strict rationing scheme in the Great War and the fact that she had to feed four active and healthy children, I think she did a marvellous job. When unexpected guests arrived, we used the code:-

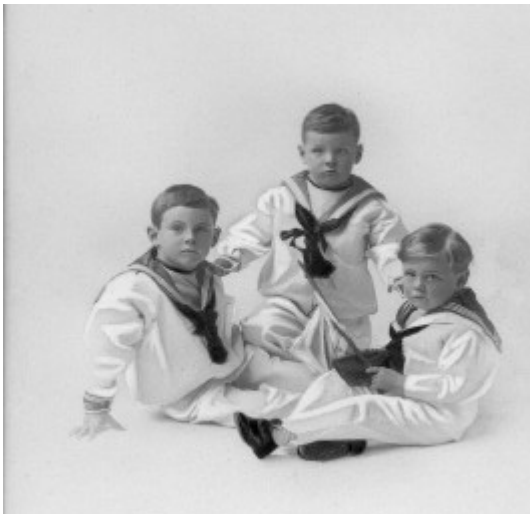
MIK = More in kitchen

FHB = Family hold back

BTA = Back teeth awash

In September 1914, Sydney went to boarding school at Pilgrims, which was situated on the Downs near the town of Westerham in Kent.

About a year after the war started, the family moved to Frinton-on-Sea in Essex. We occupied a rented house very near the seafront and had to be particularly careful about blacking out all windows at night. I remember our neighbour who was some sort of air raid



Sydney, Colin, Guy – (1911)

warden, knocking on the front door and being very rude to Mother because he could see a chink of light in some window. On one occasion when he knocked, Father was home on leave, Mother answered the door and the neighbour started to berate her for some chink of light, Father hearing the man being very rude came to the door and to this day I can still recall the verbal lashing he gave the poor man; when roused my Father had a violent temper and he certainly told this man where he could go and finished up by asking why, since he was able bodied and of military age, wasn't he in uniform. Our neighbour never worried us again.

As if running a home and looking after her family wasn't enough, Mother volunteered to work in the Y.M.C. A. This caused another incident when Father was again on leave and went round to the canteen to see her and found her on her hands and knees washing the Managers office floor. Father blew his top and asked the manager who the blankety blank he thought he was to have an Officers wife scrub his floor and why didn't he get off his backside and scrub it himself. Thereafter, I believe my mother scrubbed no more floors!

Mother met and became a great and lifelong friend of a very charming couple, Mr and Mrs Goody He was a Solicitor and as I remember well, the owner of a motorcar; I can see to this day, a bright yellow open tourer. In, I think, 1916 a Zeppelin was shot down and

crashed not too far from Frinton and Mr Goody took us all in his car to see the burnt out wreckage. I recall the huge size of the thing. We had previously seen Zeppelins flying over on their way to London and one Sunday afternoon a whole lot of German aircraft flew over; I think they were Gothas.

In January 1916, Colin joined Sydney at Pilgrims and during term time I was sent to a Kindergarten in Walton-on-Naze. In the winter I went by train but in the summer I walked along the cliff from Frinton to Walton. During the school holidays we had a wonderful time, in the summer swimming in the sea, playing on the beach and later on, when the army built a lot of trenches along the cliffs, we played in them. The army also built a mortar range between Frinton and Walton and we used to go and watch the soldiers firing their mortars. As a number of the mortar bombs failed to explode, that part of the beach was closed off which restricted our wandering along the foreshore to Walton.

In 1917, I joined my brothers at Pilgrims. It got its name from the fact that the school was built on the site of an old Rest House used by Pilgrims walking along the Downs towards Canterbury. Looking back I can see that the Headmaster, Mr Hamilton, a Scot, was a very enlightened teacher. One almost unique feature of the school was its nine-hole golf course which he, being a scratch golfer, had laid out on the side of the Downs. The whole school played golf as the organised game in the Easter Term. I remember the only club I had was a brass-headed putter. Golf balls, which were "pick ups", we could buy with our pocket money through the school. Colin had a natural ability to play the game and he won the junior school championship. His prize was a golf club; called a mid-iron, in today's parlance it would be a No. 4 iron. We played Soccer in the Winter Term and of course, Cricket in the Summer.

As methods of encouragement and discouragement the school had a system of Stars and Stripes; one was awarded from a quarter to a whole Star for doing well in any lesson or test and one was given a half or whole Stripe for poor work or some misdemeanour. If your stripes exceeded your stars by, I think 7, in any one week you were caned by the Head. If, at the end of the term, your stars exceeded your stripes by, I think again - 13, you got a prize. I seem to remember Colin received several weekly canings. During my time at Pilgrims the Head caned me twice - painful experiences.

I discovered later that as his contribution to the war effort, the Headmaster allowed sons of serving officers to attend the school at reduced fees. When the Armistice was signed on 11 November 1918, he withdrew this concession and while Sydney stayed on, Colin and I had to leave. For a few months we were given private tuition and then, later in 1919 we went to Newton College. The change from the rather restricted life at a Preparatory School where we were not allowed outside the school bounds and were in bed by 7 in the evening; to a school where we could wander far afield on Sundays and didn't go to bed till 9.30 was quite a shock albeit a very pleasant one. The College played rugby in the Winter Term, hockey in the Easter and cricket in the Summer. There was also an open-air swimming pool which was very popular in the Summer.

All new boys in the junior school were made probationary choir boys and attended choir practice taken by the Headmaster's wife in the college chapel one evening a week. She soon realised I had no voice but instead of sending me back to the junior common room she said I could pump the organ for choir practice. Now the boy who had the job of organ

pumper for chapel services didn't have to form up and march into chapel in strict order of juniority - he walked in after the Prefects and disappeared behind the organ! I could see myself inheriting that plum job and in the meantime I was happy just to pump for choir practice.

One evening when I was watching, the plumb bob which indicated the amount of air in the bellows gradually sunk and just as I was about to start pumping again, the organist pulled out lots of stops and pressed lots of keys and before I had built up the pressure, the organ gave a nasty groan and died. I was sacked. Ah me! Another of life's little disappointments.

Father was given a long period of sick leave on returning from Salonika and the family moved into rented accommodation at Westward Ho where White Haired Granny and Aunt Winnie lived. We boys were given bicycles - second-hand ones - and with our cousin Miles and some of his friends we ranged far and wide, up and down hill which was fairly scary as our brakes weren't all that good. I think it slightly ironic that, while none of us had an accident, our sister Jayne gently rode her tricycle over the curb and fractured her collarbone.

In 1919, Father was posted to Cork in Southern Ireland. We all moved there and lived in a house at the top of the hill not far from the barracks.

At that time "The Troubles" were at their height, with the Sinn Fein and the I.R.A. demanding Independence for Ireland. We had an armed guard in our house every night; many officers and other ranks were being gunned down by the fanatical Irish. Notwithstanding all this mayhem we enjoyed ourselves. One summer Mother took us all to stay in an Hotel at Youghal on the coast, where we had the most fantastic fishing; thousands of sprats swarmed in round the rocks and mackerel, which looked upon sprats as an excellent meal, followed them in and after the mackerel came the pollack - a much larger fish - who fancied mackerel as a tasty dish. The drill was to scoop out a handful of sprats and use them as bait for the mackerel and pollack. Quite honestly one could have caught them with a piece of string and a bent pin.

Colin and I had an adventurous journey back to Cork the first time we did the trip from Newton College. Father had arranged for his Company Quarter Master Sergeant, who was returning from leave in England, to meet us at Bath Railway Station and escort us via Fishguard and on the boat to Cork. Well, the train we caught from Newton Abbot didn't stop at Bath so we got off at Bristol and from there caught another train to Bath; where we were picked up by the Station Authorities for travelling to Bath without the proper tickets. After we had explained our predicament and failing to meet the C.Q.M.S., proceeded on our own and eventually got to Cork only to find that on the way we had lost our trunks containing all our school clothes. These eventually arrived about three days before we were due to go back to school; our poor mother had quite a job sorting everything out and getting the dirty washing done in time.

There was an interesting sequel to our failure to meet the C.Q.M.S. at Bath. In 1943, I had travelled up to London, by train and was crossing the concourse at Kings Cross Station when I was stopped by a man wearing a very smart chauffeurs uniform, who said "Excuse me, Sir, but are you a son of a Colonel Bearne?" When I said "yes",

he replied, "I thought I recognised your walk. It is just like the Colonel's and then I saw your name on your suitcase I decided to stop you". He was the Ex-C.Q.M.S. who should have met us at Bath all those years before. Having left the army he was working as chauffeur for some city big-wig.

In the summer of 1920 Colin had Typhoid Fever. It was said at the time that the I.R.A. had introduced the bacteria into the milk supply. In consequence of this he had to miss a term of school. It so happened Sydney was joining us at Newton College that term. Our Father, in writing to the Headmaster asking him to accept Sydney failed to mention he was the eldest son, so when we arrived at the college we found Sydney had been allotted a bed in the "Little Boys" dormitory where the beds were child size, while he was just on 6 foot tall. They hastily found him a bed in one of the senior's dormitories. It was while Colin was at home recovering from his typhoid that the I.R.A. set fire to and burnt down the main street of Cork. As our house was up on the hill overlooking the town, he had a clear view of the conflagration. When Sydney and I returned from College we saw the burnt out shops.

Both Sydney and Colin did well at games, winning athletic prizes and in the case of Sydney, playing for the 1st XV. For myself, I just basked in their reflected glory.

One of the favourite activities for Sunday afternoons was to go caving. There was one halfway up the face of a disused quarry about two miles from the college. We took our rugby shirts and shorts to put on before descending down a rope to the bottom of the cave which was full of bats. One day we caught one and took it back to one of the Day Boys who hand an aviary into which we put the creature. Next morning the boy found the bat had killed all his other birds and then eaten its way out of the aviary.

I cannot close this Chapter on our stay in Ireland without mentioning the fabulous Christmas of 1919. One of father's officers lived as a paying guest in a large country house outside Cork in the village of Ballymure; the owners of this house kindly invited us out for Christmas Day. There were lots of family and other guests beside ourselves and we had great fun playing in the extensive grounds in the morning, until called in for dinner. At either end of the long dining table there was placed a large roast turkey. This was followed by huge Christmas Puddings. After more wild running around the grounds, a memorable tea and games indoors, we eventually sat down to another gargantuan meal with two more turkeys to be eaten. As an 11 year old, feasts like this stick in the memory. Sadly the IRA came one day to the house and told the owners that as they had given shelter to a British Officer, they would have to burn the house down and this they proceeded to do.



Violet Bearne 1910

CHAPTER 6

Germany

1921-1924

In 1921, Father was posted to Cologne in Germany, to command a M.T. Company in the British Army on the Rhine. His Unit was accommodated in what had been a Brewery. Originally we were billeted in a large house owned by a wealthy German, who was rumoured to have made a fortune during the war by cornering the potato market. He certainly had a luxurious place which stood in a large garden. We occupied the best part of the house. After about a year we moved into an official officers married quarter; while it was well appointed, it was a bit of a come down after the potato barons palace.

Father had bought an elderly Renault, built in about 1913. It was a remarkably unreliable car and had a habit of breaking down at the most inappropriate moments. When we boys arrived at Cologne by train from the U.K. early in the morning, he met us in the car and it broke down on the way home. Later on he also bought a small two-seater electric car called a Hawa; its seats were in tandem and it had a top speed of about 20mph. We all learnt to drive on it.

Father, in his wisdom, decided he couldn't afford to keep us at Newton College and after arriving in Germany he made arrangements for us to receive private tuition from a retired German professor. This arrangement continued for some months and then it was decided that, while Sydney continued with the professor, Colin and I were to go, as boarders, to a German school. The Evangelischer Patagogium (I hope I've got the spelling right) at a small town called Herchen am Sieg. We were placed in the Lower Third Form; all the subjects were new to us except the Maths, where we found we were repeating what we had learnt at Newton college.

The School was divided into houses; there were two other English boys and to stop us speaking English to each other they placed us all in different houses. I was in the Headmasters House where I shared a dormitory with two German boys, one was a Jew and the other, called Hans, a bombastic bully, fortunately he was also a coward so I was able to restrict his anti-semantic activities. I am certain Hans would have become an avid supporter of Adolf Hitler. Generally speaking the rest of the boys were very friendly. There was a craze for building tree houses in the wood behind the school and a lot of pocket money went on nails and timber.

Regarding the Staff, the Head was a most friendly man and had an excellent rapport with the students. His son, called Von Hugo had a distinguished war record and was much admired by all. Colin's Housemaster was a nasty piece of work who obviously hated the English and took it out on Colin.

I can't say we learnt an awful lot at this school, but we enjoyed it, becoming fairly fluent in the spoken word, even to the extent of being able to pass ourselves off as German boys. The food left a lot to be desired. We had awful dark brown coarse bread, which I could only swallow with copious draughts of coffee. Boiled potatoes in their jackets, tinned meat

and gravy figured large in the menu. It must be remembered that Germany had been blockaded during the war and their food situation had become desperate. Then their currency went haywire and they had terrible inflation, so it wasn't surprising that they were still short of good food in 1922.

Prior to going to this school, we three boys had joined the Boy Scouts Troop which had been formed for the children of members of the British Army of the Rhine. The Scout Master was Rex Gibson, the Sub-Manager of the local branch of Lloyds Bank. It might not be an inappropriate moment to write about him; he had served in the Royal Artillery in the war and had been awarded a Military Cross. He was a fitness fanatic and enjoyed winter sports and mountaineering in Switzerland. When he retired from the Bank in about 1925 he bought a farm in Alberta, where in the winter months he could enjoy his passion for mountaineering in the Rockies. He eventually met his death in a climbing accident. I must confess he had a great influence on me and I think, on many other members of his Troop.

The married quarter, right opposite ours was occupied by Captain Richards, the Quarter Master for the Kings Royal Rifle Corps. He had a son, George, who became a great friend of ours. George was also very friendly with Vivian Dunn the son of the K.R.R.C.s Band Master; and that was how we got to know Vivian who, incidentally, also joined the Scouts. We used to go to camp twice a year, the first one was at Easter when we went into the Eifel Mountains. While in midsummer we went to a site not far from Siegburg. Our troop owned what was called a Trek-cart and one year when we were preparing to leave the camp near Siegburg, intending to trek the 30km, back to Cologne with the cart, it ran away going down the hill from the camp site. Colin who was holding the shaft slipped and a wheel went over his left arm, breaking it. We made him as comfortable as possible and then went to the nearest village to phone home; Father came out with a doctor and after fixing a splint, took Colin home. We left the cart at the farm by the camp site and sometime later when Colin's arm had mended we returned and did our 30km walk back to Cologne pulling the cart; I don't think I have ever walked so far in a day since.

On one occasion six of us were asked to set up camp for the Girl Guides. After drawing the tentage and other equipment from Army Stores we proceeded by lorry to the selected site. First we pitched our bivouac. Next day when the Guides arrived we set off for a week's trek making for the Seven Mountains, we covered about 20km a day, finally we got back to the Guides camp, pitching our Bivouac well away from their tents. They entertained us to supper and a sing song round the campfire. Next morning we were up well before them, had a good fire going and a large dixie of porridge and another of well-sweetened tea. Once the Guides left it started to rain and we had a miserable time striking camp; we eventually got all the gear back to the Store. Our efforts were appreciated by the officer in charge, as he took us down to the troops canteen and gave us a jolly good meal.

As I mentioned in an earlier Chapter, Reggie Cutbill was Colonel Commanding all the R.A.S.C. Units in the British Army on the Rhine. He bought a Ford Saloon and had his family crest on one door and the Bearne crest on the other with the result that the car was known as "the car on the crests".

Father spent a lot of his spare time playing golf, we were allowed to play too and Colin won the Boys Championship one-year. Father also belonged to a Shoot and had some fishing

rights. Sydney joined him on the river and became a keen fly fisher. On one occasion I went out with them and Sydney asked if I would like to try casting a fly; he handed me his rod, explained what to do, on my first cast I snagged a bush and broke the top joint of his precious rod. Younger brothers can be a sore trial to their elders!

We boys were given air rifles and from the attic window, I regret to say we gave the local birds a bad time. On one occasion when a flock of racing pigeons from some local loft settled on the roof, I shot one and it fell into the garden at Father's feet; he was most incensed at this and said under no circumstances were we to shoot "tame" birds. Well, not long after this the pigeons returned and regretfully I shot another. Mother saw it but never let on, instead she went to market to buy some more and cooked them for lunch. Father, who served them out, kept the largest for himself, this happened to be the one I'd shot; when he went to eat it, it was as tough as old boots!

We had bikes and Sydney had a small two stroke engine mounted over his back wheel; eventually he got a small motorbike and Colin and I inherited his old engine. We purloined Jayne's go-cart and mounted the engine on it; we had to make a pulley wheel out of meccano on one of the back wheels to take the drive belt from the engine. This homemade car we drove round the Married Quarters. Eventually the meccano pulley wheel collapsed but it was great fun while it lasted!

In Germany, the chimney sweeps swept their chimneys from the top and one saw them walking along the roof ridge between the chimney pots. This inspired us to emulate them so we climbed out of the attic window and up to the ridge where we were seen by Mrs Richards who lived opposite, she phoned Mother in an awful panic as she was sure we would fall. Once again we incurred the wrath of Father.

At Cologne the river Rhine is about 400 meters wide and very fast flowing. One day Colin and Rex Gibson, the Scout Master, decided to swim across it, wisely accompanied by a man in a rowing boat. Having got across safely they decided to swim back again. When father heard about it, he blew his top!

We had a lovable old German pointer bitch called Flora, she had a large litter of pups and we built a run for them in the garden. Flora would take her bones into the run for her pups to play with while she licked them and fed them. Eventually all the pups were sold. At the same time, the rabbits Colin and I owned produced young; when they were old enough we put them out in the run built for the pups and surprise, surprise, Flora hopped in with her bones and proceeded to lick the baby rabbits, as she had licked her own pups and she was a trained gun dog!

One day in 1922, I was going to catch the tram at the end of our road and ride into town to meet some of my friends. Just as the tram pulled up and I stepped off the pavement, a car driven by a British Officer came round the corner on the wrong side of the road and hit me, knocking me into the gutter. The next thing I remembered was sitting up and wondering how I got there? The officer stopped, helped me to my feet and walked me home where it was discovered I had a bad cut under my right eye and a broken nose. They carted me off to hospital where a German surgeon stitched up the cut. He made a good job of it as eventually the scar disappeared.

At the end of 1924, Father was posted to command a M.T. Company at Aldershot. He went ahead on his own and when he had found suitable accommodation we followed early in the New Year.

CHAPTER 7

Aldershot

1925-1929

In those days, Aldershot was the main home of the British Army. There were two full Divisions complete with Cavalry, Artillery, Tanks, Engineers, Signals, Medical facilities and of course, the Royal Army Service Corps to provide transport and supply. Incidentally, the R.A.S.C. Depot, housed in Buller Barracks was also at Aldershot. Father's appointment was to command one the M.T. Companies.

We started off by living in rented accommodation in Farnborough. Eventually we moved into an officers married quarter, also in Farnborough.

No sooner had we arrived back in the U.K. than it was decided Sydney would go into the army and in order to ensure he passed the entrance exam to the Royal Military College, Sandhurst he was sent to a Crammers where he was given special coaching. In the event this paid off, as he passed into the College 40th out of nearly 200. He did very well on the eighteen month course; becoming a cadet sergeant carrying the Kings Colours on his Passing Out Parade. He represented the College at Boxing, being the Heavy Weight champion and at Athletics. On completion of his training, he was commissioned into the Royal Tank Corps and posted to serve with the Battalion stationed at Lydd in Kent.

Colin had always wanted to go into the Navy but didn't have a hope of passing the entrance exam instead he was sent to H.M.S. Conway, a training ship for Merchant Navy Officers. The Conway, an old wooden man of war from the Napoleonic Era, was moored in the Mersey off Birkenhead. From all accounts life was fairly spartan for the cadets, they slept in hammocks and had to do everything at the double. Sport played a big part in their life and this suited Colin and he was able to enjoy the facilities to the full. Eventually captaining both the Cricket and Rugby Teams, winning the Victor Laudorum at Athletics and being Heavy Weight Boxing Champion. It was thought he would get a school boys international cap at Rugby when tragedy struck; he became sick and eventually they diagnosed Ostiomyelitis in his right arm. He went into hospital and had the first of many operations. This illness put paid to any idea he had of going to sea!

Having had to dig fairly deeply into his pocket to pay for Sydney to go through Sandhurst and Colin to H.M.S. Conway, father sent me, as a day boy, to the Salesian College in Farnborough to complete my education.

The K.R.R.C. moved to Aldershot about the same time as we did so we were able to continue our friendship with George Richards and Vivian Dunn. Vivian and I joined the Aldershot Scouts where we were made Joint Troop Leaders. It wasn't the same as scouting in Cologne, nothing like as interesting and active so after about a year we left the Troop. Vivian in the meantime had become a student at the Royal Academy of Music as he intended making music his career. In the event, how well he succeeded!

On leaving the Academy he became 1st violinist to Sir Henry Woods Orchestra at the Queens Hall, London. In 1931, he applied for and was accepted as Director of Music, Royal Marines, Portsmouth Division. This Band accompanied the Royal Family on Board the Royal

Yacht or whenever they went on an overseas tour, which, in those days they did in a ship of the Royal Navy. He eventually became the Senior Director of Music, Royal Marines and on retiring as a Lieutenant Colonel in 1968; Her Majesty made him a Knight Commander of the Royal Victorian Order.

George in the meantime was doing a secretarial course at Clerks College, Guildford. At about this time Colin, George, Vivian and I became interested in politics and joined the Junior Imperial League, which today is the Young Conservatives. George told us he had met a very nice girl at his college called Betty Randall, who lived in Blackwater and that he had been invited there to play tennis. Shortly after this the local Conservative Party held a Garden Fete and he invited Betty and her elder sister. After this we were all invited over to play tennis. There was another girl, Nora Smith, at Clerks College whose father was also in the army and had been in Cologne when we were there and she became a member of our group. We all had a great time, going to the cinema on Saturday evenings, playing tennis on Sundays and going to dances, some of which we organised ourselves. In the summer driving down to the coast for the day.

Mr Randall had two cars, the second of which was a very elderly Darracq, an open tourer with an awful lot of room in the back. This was the car we young ones used. As the only boy with a driving licence, I did the driving. On one occasion we were all going down to Hayling Island for the day. Mr Randall was leading in his Chrysler, with Mrs Randall and their two younger children, Doreen and Hal. We were all following in the Darracq and while going up a fairly steep hill the throttle linkage broke and stuck in the fully open position, we fairly charged up that hill, round the bends almost on two wheels. I thought of what to do eventually, switching off the engine. In the meantime, Mr Randall had stopped at the top waiting for us to appear, when we failed to do so he came back to find out what had happened. I won't go into the technicalities of the solution, sufficient to say we effected a running repair, which allowed us to reach the nearest garage.

On another occasion Colin, Vivian and I went on holiday with the Randall family to Swanage. It was driving down to Swanage that the Darracq finally gave up and had to be sold. Actually, I was driving the Chrysler down – why I can't remember – but what I do remember was driving through a village when a lot of small children suddenly ran across the road and just as they got across, a very small toddler followed them and although I jammed on the brakes, I hit and actually stopped right over her. I got out of the car expecting to find a mangled corpse, but the child crawled out, crying fit to burst, none the worse for the collision. I had hit her with the front bumper and she had fallen between the wheels. From thereon, into Swanage I drove with the utmost circumspection.

During one school holiday, father arranged for us to learn to ride at the R.A.S.C. Riding School, where we were put through it by the Riding Instructor. I can't say I enjoyed the experience, I felt it was very much a "Make or Break" affair. The do say one can never become a good horseman until one has fallen off a number of times, if that was so then I would be an Ace Rider as I must have taken at least 20 tumbles, including on very painful occasion when the horse threw me in onto the wall of the riding school.



Guy Bearne 1926 aged 18

I was very keen on going to the Royal Air Force College to become a Pilot but Father vetoed the idea, primarily on the grounds that he didn't altogether approve of the R.A.F. and partly on the grounds that he didn't want to find the fees for the College. He raised no objection to my applying to join the Royal Marines as, in those days, that was the only Service where one was granted a Permanent Commission – albeit on probation – right away and so drew pay and thus cost ones parent nothing for the training. In the event, my school mislaid my application to sit the Entrance Exam and that was that. Father found me a job with the Triplex Safety Glass Company, it seems he knew the Chairman of the Board and fixed it for me to go to their new factory

at Kings Norton, Birmingham. The idea was that I should be put through the factory and

learn all about safety glass making, with a view to becoming a factory manager. In the event it didn't work out that way, I was employed as a glorified office boy for about six months and then given the sack, as the Manager didn't think I had any aptitude of office work.

Mr Randall had kindly found Colin a post with the Pirelli Cable Company as an Assistant Engineer. They sent him to work on a contract erecting overhead power lines for the Gloucester Electricity Company.

Father was offered a chance to transfer to the Indian Army and be promoted to Lieutenant Colonel; he had been a Substantive Major for 14 years and saw no chance of promotion in the British Army. His memories of India as he knew it in the 1890s and the size of the salary he would be paid coloured his decision to transfer. What he didn't appreciate was the increased cost of living in India since the turn of the century. He, Mother and Jayne sailed for India and proceeded to Peshwar where Father was appointed Officer Commanding the Heavy Repair Workshops.

This job did not over tax his abilities and they had plenty of spare time in which to enjoy life. They went up the Kyber Pass and spend the "Hot Season" in Kashmir at Gulmerg. It was the custom for all wives and families to go up to the hills in the hot weather and the husbands joined them for their Leave. There was a golf course, which Father enjoyed, ponies to ride and lost of picnics and other organised amusements.

Unfortunately, Father's health deteriorated and he had to retire from the Army. They returned to the U.K. in June 1929 and settled in Kent in the village of Langley just outside Maidstone, buying a small cottage with a large garden and Father decided to keep Chickens, Geese and Goats. Unfortunately, this didn't work out very well and he lost a lot of money. In the meantime, Jayne had started training as a Nurse.

Returning to my own circumstances, after getting the sack, I looked around in Birmingham but couldn't find any suitable work and as my money was running out, Colin kindly arranged for me to be taken on by his Boss as a labourer, to work on the erection of the power lines. We joined forces with another Assistant Engineer called Jock Linton and took lodgings at Queens Farm, Churcham, owned by Mr. and Mrs. Vining. They had three daughters; Colin fell in love and eventually married the youngest one, Betty, in 1935. I was made a Leading Hand and put in charge of a gang of 3 men, our task was to "Make Good and Repair" all fences and hedges damaged by the gangs erecting the pylons and running the cables. There was some 26 miles of line as it was all across the country, there were an awful lot of hedges and fences to repair. We worked an average of 60 hours a week and I was paid 1 shilling an hour. When the Gloucester contract finished, Jock was sent up to Workington in Cumbria to lay underground cables through the town streets; he offered me a job as his assistant, which I gladly accepted. Colin in the meantime was sent to work on another contract at Watchet.

Jock and I had digs in a small terrace cottage run by a widow lady. She looked after us very well. At that time there was great poverty in the industrial towns of which Workington was one. The Company instructed us to employ those labourers who had been out of work longest.

When they reported for work, I was horrified at their pale emaciated appearance; whatever they had been given as unemployment pay or public assistance had certainly not been enough. After the first day digging trenches in the pavements they all had the most horrible burst blisters on their hands but not withstanding, they all reported for work next morning with their hands wrapped in all sorts of dirty rags. We had a first aid kit in the office and this was put to good use, in fact we had to buy lots more bandages.

Cumbria and the Lake District is noted for its high rainfall, so there were many days when we couldn't get on with the job of digging and had to stand off our workers. Eventually, all that remained to be done was to check the cable by connecting it to the electrical sub-station; all the lights in the whole town went out. It was immediately thought that we had short-circuited the system and so blown the main fuses. Actually what had happened was a strange coincidence, just as we did our coupling, the Engineer at the local Power Station switched from one Generator to another and the second Generator failed to start. For a moment there, Jock was a very worried man.

When the contract was finished, Jock went to the Company's Depot at Southampton and I arranged to stay with Uncle Cuthbert while I sorted out another job. Soon after arriving at his place outside Exeter, I applied for a Short service (5-year) Commission in the R.A.F. Unfortunately, I failed my Medical Examination the first time. They gave me an E.C.G. and found some small tremor in my heartbeat so they told me to come back in two months time. In the meantime, I helped Uncle with his Chinchilla Rabbit Farm and became expert in killing and skinning rabbits; which ability has stood me in good stead on many occasions since.

Having succeeded, on the second occasion, in passing my Medical, I was instructed to report to the R.A.F. Depot, Uxbridge on 28 June 1929. My time in the R.A.F. is fully

covered in my Memoirs "Air to Chair" so from here on, I will concentrate on the rest of my family.

CHAPTER 8

Sydney Bearne

As I have already mentioned, Sydney was commissioned into the Royal Tank Corps in 1926 and posted to the Battalion at Lydd in Kent. I know he was a very keen young officer; he also took an active part in most sporting activities, representing his Unit at Boxing, at which sport he was known as "One Blow Bearne" on account of his vicious right cross. He also took to hunting with the Ashford Valley Hunt, where he met his future wife, Freda Mary Frankish.

In 1929, he was posted to India; to the Armoured Car Company stationed at Razmak on the NorthWest Frontier. As a matter of interest, he was met on arrival in India by our parents old Bearer; how and when he knew Sydney was arriving in India I don't know but there he was on the quayside to greet him. After 18 months on the Frontier he was posted to Cawnpore. While he was there. Mary Frankish joined him and they were married on 24 December 1931. They subsequently moved to Peshawar. While in India he learnt to fly light aircraft but couldn't afford to keep it up.

They returned to the U.K. in 1935 and were posted to the Tank Battalion at Aldershot. 1935 saw the Silver Jubilee of King George V and to mark the occasion there was a Royal Review of the Aldershot Command, held in the Rushmoor Arena. Sydney kindly invited Aileen and I to accompany Mary and their small son, David to watch the Review. We went in their car, with me driving and after the ceremony, as we were leaving the arena, I had occasion to pull on the handbrake and horror of horrors it came away in my hand. There we were right in the middle of the track with the handbrake fully on, unable to move; we all got out and a passing squad of soldiers lifted the car bodily off the track, where, with the aid of a screwdriver; I managed to disengage the brake ratchet and we drove on back to their quarters without further incident.

In 1938, he was appointed Adjutant of the East Riding Yeomanry (Yorkshire Hussars), a Territorial Army Unit which had been converted from its traditional role of Cavalry to Armoured Cars. He proceeded to France with this Unit in 1939 when we went to war with Germany. They took up positions on the French-Belgian Frontier; Belgium, intent on maintaining her strict neutrality, would not agree to French or British troops entering their country to take up strategic positions on the German Frontier. When, in May 1940, Germany attacked through Belgium and Holland with the intention of outflanking the French fortifications known as the Maginot Line, Belgium called for active support from the Allies. The British Army, of which the East Riding Yeomanry formed part, advanced rapidly through Belgium and engaged the German Panzer divisions. Despite knocking out a number of enemy tanks, the Regiment was eventually over run and most of them became Prisoners of War. For his part in the action against the Panzers, Sydney was Mentioned in Despatches. Their capture was before the British Army had retreated to Dunkirk. His family received a telegram from the War Office on 8th June reporting Sydney "Missing". It wasn't till the 29th August that they heard he was a POW. Despite several attempts to escape, he remained a POW till the end of the War in Europe. At one time he was, together with some other prisoners, handcuffed; this was, according to their captors, in retaliation for action taken by the Allies on Germans captured during the Raid on Dieppe.

He was promoted to Major in 1942.

I have met several officers who were in the same prison camp as Sydney and they all spoke very highly of him. One told me that, while Sydney gave German lessons to other prisoners, he never let on to the Germans that he spoke their language fluently.

After the war and on returning to the U.K., he was told that as he had no up-to-date Battle Experience he could not expect to be promoted or given an operation command. His contemporaries, who had survived the war, were either commanding Battalions or Brigades. What a way to treat a first class officer; this was in complete contrast with the treatment given R.A.F. Regular Officers who had been captured. Irrespective of how long they had been prisoners they were all given a Flying Refresher Course and providing they passed they were treated exactly the same as those who had not been captured.

His first posting after the war was back to Germany. While there he took up sailing as a hobby and qualified to skipper one of the yachts taken from the Germans. He also rode again and did a lot of Show Jumping.

After Germany, he was posted to Gosport and in 1947 when I was at the Joint Services Staff College and attending an Army Demonstration on Salisbury Plain, who should I meet in the Mess tent having a cup of tea after the Demonstration but brother Sydney. He was then doing a course at the Senior Officers School. His next posting was to the Army Vehicle Experimental Establishment at Chobham. From there he was posted to command a Company at the Army Apprentice School, Harrogate in Yorkshire.

During the Suez Crisis in 1956 he was posted to Cyprus as part of the Back-up Force in support of the Units actually in the assault on Egypt.

He retired from the Army in 1957 and became an Army Careers Officer, responsible for recruiting men and boys into the army. To show how well he performed this task, the following is an extract from a local newspaper reporting on his retirement:-

Army Careers Officer Retires:

Retiring as Head of the Army Careers Office at Tally Ho! Corner, North Finchley, is Major Sydney Bearne, who in his nine years as a recruiting officer has passed 2,315 men and 357 boys into the Army – equal to about three battalions.

He came to Finchley in 1958 and took over a staff of seven N.C.O.s and a civilian.

He joined the Army as a career soldier graduating from Sandhurst into the Royal Tank Corps – now the Royal Tank Regiment.

Dunkirk:

During the Second World War he was captured at Dunkirk and although he was involved in escape attempts, he never got out and spent the rest of the war as a POW.

Before the War served in India and afterwards in different parts of the world. He retired from active service in 1957 and went into recruitment at Kentish Town.

Maj. Bearne, who lives in New Barnet, followed his father into the army, but the line of soldiers will stop with his retirement. His children have gone into other jobs.

Good Choice:

An extremely good choice for recruitment officer, Maj. Bearne has thoroughly enjoyed his own life in the army and is a cheerful and charming man who can ship up enthusiasm for the life.

He says "I've enjoyed myself. It's an excellent life, plenty of comradeship and a feeling of being in it together and there's a lot of travelling around."

His job has also appealed to him because he has been dealing with people. "It's not exactly a desk job, there is a lot of getting out and meeting people."

Handyman:

When he retires he thinks he will probably become a handyman, dig his garden and help his wife with her hobby, breeding wire-haired dachshunds.

Before he officially leaves 18 of his men at the Careers Office, with whom he was very popular, will give him a farewell party.

After this retirement he became heavily involved in helping Mary with her dog breeding as they following extract from a Dog Breeders Journal shows:-

Major S. Bearne:

Educated at Newton College and the Royal Military College, Sandhurst, commissioned into the Royal Tank Regiment in 1926. On the outbreak of war was serving as Adjutant of the East Riding Yeomanry and was cut off at Dunkirk. Served abroad in India, Germany and Cyprus, retired in 1957. He has always had a dog. His wife acquired her first Dachshund in 1939. Since retirement has been able to devote more time to dogs, in particular Wirehaired and Miniature Wirehaired Dachshund. Was Chairman and is now President of the Eastern Counties Dachshund Association and has been Secretary of the Wirehaired Dachshund Club since 1963. Is a Championship Show Judge of the breed.

He died in 1979, at the age of 73 and I am sure his premature death was brought on as the result of the conditions he had had to endure as a POW.

Many people told Mary they remembered him best for his great kindness and courtesy and the twinkle in his eye. I always had the greatest admiration and respect for him and I still feel utter resentment for the way the army treated him after the war.

CHAPTER 9

The Family 1929-1939

Once I had joined the R.A.F. I only saw my family during short periods of leave and as I never kept a diary and it is all very long ago, what follows is very sketchy and rather disjointed.

Colin's career in the electrical contracting business was interrupted by the scar left from the operation on his arm which kept breaking out in great boils, resulting in him having to leave work and suffer further operations, after which he would have to go home to recuperate. On one occasion he kept himself busy building on an extension to the kitchen. On another when I went home on leave, he was there, working on his car, a two seater Austin 7 with a fabric body. He had stripped it right down with the object of lowering the body and thus giving the car a more rakish appearance. Now, on an Austin 7, the prop shaft joined the back axle at the top of the differential housing and in order to lower the body he proposed to turn the back axle upside down so that the prop shaft entered at the bottom of the differential. When I queried whether this would reverse the drive to the back wheels, he assured me had taken advice from the local garage owner all would be well. To cut the story short, we reassembled the car and found it had three reverse gears and one forward. While the forward speed was limited it surely could go fast backwards. We had to dismantle the car again and turn the back axle the right way up.

Jayne in the meantime had given up nursing and was helping the two Miss Bignals, Margie and Lulie, who lived at Sparks Hall. While Margie ran the house, Lulie ran a goat farm. They always seemed to have lots of young staying and I well remember attending a most enjoyable party there one Christmas.

Father's efforts to run a poultry farm were not successful; after a couple of years he had to sell up. They then rented a farmhouse in the village of Court at Street near Lympe, still in Kent. While it was a stone built house of great age and character, its appointments were strictly limited. They had no electricity, their water supply came from a pump in the kitchen and the loo was down the garden path. The first thing they did was convert one room into a bathroom and loo. The hot water for the bath came from an oil fired boiler. Oil lamps were the only means of lighting the place. Having said all that, the house was very cosy and everyone felt at home there. A dark passage connecting the front rooms to those at the back and halfway along there was a very low beam, so low that all the family hit their heads on it. Father put a pad of sorbo rubber each side and these softened the blows.

There was a large apple orchard and, not unnaturally, Father decided to turn the surplus apples into cider. Despite all his efforts the resulting liquid was quite undrinkable. In order to improve the crop, Colin built a beehive and for which they acquired some bees. Mother, having some Irish blood and therefore being superstitious, insisted on always telling the bees a piece of family news.

In 1933, Aileen and I got married. Notwithstanding their totally different backgrounds, we were delighted that our respective parents got on so well together. The Randalls

always invited my parents to stay for Christmas. One year on Christmas Eve when we were waiting for them to arrive, the drive gate opened and three gypsies came down the drive pushing a dilapidated pram on which they had a gramophone playing some awful tune; Mr Randall, in great agitation reached into his pocket, took out half a crown and said "get rid of those frightful people before the Bearne's arrive". It was at that moment we saw it was the Bearne's themselves, dressed in the oldest clothes they could find. They had parked their car just down the road, where they dressed up and assembled the pram and gramophone: they certainly got a rise out of everyone.

How well I remember those Christmases at Blackwater; the Randalls were the greatest when it came to hospitality. There never seemed to be less than 15 people in the house. Among the regular visitors were Hubert and Effie Tannar; he was the Head Master of the Royal School in Windsor Great Park for the children of all the Park employees. The King and Queen took a personal interest in the school, visiting it regularly and at Christmas, giving the children presents. As a matter of interest, during the war Hubert produced the Pantomimes in which the two Princesses (our present Queen Elizabeth and Princess Margaret) acted. We played lots of family games at Christmas, most of which involved dressing up; I think the favourite was "Rhubarb Rhubarb", where one team acted out some well known incident saying only the word rhubarb; the other team had to guess what was being performed, which wasn't difficult:

then the other team did their act. The ingenuity and dressing was the main aim. I can still see Hal with a towel as a nappie playing the part of Moses in the Bull Rushe and Hubert on another occasion dressed up as a Fairy.

One Easter we all stayed with my parents at Court at Street, my two Australian friends Ronnie Rae and Al Bowman were also invited. Aileen and I accompanied by Ronnie and Al arrived the evening before the rest of the guests. Father had got in a barrel of beer for the weekend and he suggested we should sample it that evening. The next day when the others arrived, it was discovered the barrel was empty – it was good while it lasted! We had to rush off and restock; this time with bottled beer. I don't know how well we all fitted into the house, suffice to say it was a memorable Easter.

On 19 June 1935, Colin and Betty were married at Churcham in Gloucestershire. Aileen, Jayne and I drove down from Blackwater. On the way down the cable from the hand brake to the back wheels came off its pulley but I wasn't unduly worried as the foot brake was – I thought – in good nick! After the service and the Reception at the Vinings Farm, we set off to return to Blackwater. Halfway between Streatly and Pangbourne while going down a slight hill, the foot brake failed. There was a lot of traffic going our way and even more coming towards us. After passing a couple of cars, I changed down to first gear, let in the clutch but at the speed we were travelling, the sudden strain on the differential broke its casing and then we had no means of stopping. At the bottom of the hill I turned sharp right up the lane to Yattenden but we were going too fast to make it and the car rolled over. Aileen who was 4 months pregnant, strained her leg muscles pushing on the floor boards and had to spend a couple of weeks in bed, Jayne, sitting in the back of the car drove her elbow through the quarter light and had a nasty graze; I was OK, the car was a mess but the Insurance Company paid up.

Colin and Betty settled in Gloucester, he had to give up his electrical engineering on account of his arm. Eventually he set himself up in business repairing antique furniture and making handicraft items. They subsequently moved to Newnham.

When the family moved to Court at Street, Jayne went to London as a Student at the St Helenas Club. She had become engaged in 1933 to Henry Lucy, a Rubber Planter from Malaya. Their plans were for him to return to Malaya and when he had organised his bungalow, Jayne would follow. In the event he met another girl on the ship going out and broke the engagement to Jayne.

Mother's brother, Sydney Gibbs retired from his post with the South African Customs Service in (I think) 1936 and returned to the UK, staying at the farm. He found the climate too cold so he decided to sail round the world visiting Australia, New Zealand and the West Indies looking for somewhere warmer to retire to. He very kindly took Jayne with him and she had the holiday of a lifetime. After all that he finally decided to retire to South Africa! Where, of course, he had all his friends and enjoyed the lifestyle of the country. Going ahead some years, he was knocked down by a motorcar in the early years of the War and received severe head injuries which left him with impaired vision, he returned to the UK and lived with my Mother, who by that time was a widow living on her own. He died in 1946.

On one occasion, when staying at the farm and when our parents had gone shopping, Colin and I took Father's powerful air rifle and went rabbit shooting. In those days there were many large rabbit burrows on every farm. We settled ourselves down in a dry ditch not too far from one such burrow and in the course of 30 minutes killed 6 rabbits. Using the skills acquired when helping Uncle Cuthbert with his rabbit business, we skinned and prepared the carcasses and put them on a large platter in the pantry. When Mum came home we told her we had brought them from a gypsy for six pence each; as she would not believe us at first as they were so professionally prepared.

Going back a bit to about 1927, Mother had a cocker spaniel called Beauty, when they went to India they gave her to Sydney and he gave her back when they returned home in 1929. Beauty was a lovely dog, most intelligent and we taught her every trick we could think of; the only thing she couldn't do was sit up and beg, I think it was because her back wouldn't support her. When she eventually died, Mother bought Father a smooth haired terrier pup, he called it Tinker and it became his constant companion. Tinker had two great assets – the first was his ability to kill the rats around the farm and the second was a quite remarkable trick he taught himself, he would nosy around the farm building where there were a number of hens and when he found one of their nests he would steal an egg, carry it in his mouth without breaking it and hand it over to Mother. As the hens belonged to the farmer and not to the family this was a trick to be encouraged!

In 1937, I was posted to Iraq; Aileen joined me a year later and we returned to the UK in March 1939. Our time out there is fully covered in my memoirs "Air to Chair".



9th August 1933



Aileen: August 9th 1933

Mr. and Mrs. H. J. Randall
request the pleasure of

Company at the Marriage of their daughter

Aileen

to

Mr. Guy Bearne,
at Holy Trinity Church, Hawley,
on Wednesday, August 9th, at 12 noon,
and afterwards at

Park View,
Hawley, Blackwater,
Hants.

R. F. V. P.



The Bridesmaids

Christine, Betty, Jayne, Doreen



Granny Randall



Great Granny Randall



Grandpa & Granny Randall



Randalls & Bearnese at our wedding August 1933



Aileen & Betty 1908



Betty, Aileen, & Christine 1911

CHAPTER 10

The Second World War 1939 - 1945

Chapter 8 covers Sydney's war activities. Colin, because of his disability was unfit for Military service; this must have been a bitter pill for him to swallow. Jayne, in September 1939 joined the First Aid Nursing Yeomanry – which was part of the Auxiliary Territorial Service, as a Driver. After induction she was posted to the M.T. Section of the Dover Garrison. On February 26th, just after her 26th Birthday she was promoted to Corporal. Less than a month later she had the honour and distinction of driving His Majesty King George VI when he visited the Dover Garrison. For security reason she had been told she would be driving a "Mr Jones".

Historically she was the first woman member of the armed forces to have had that distinction. In October 1940, when Father became terminally ill, she resigned from the army and went home to help mother. Later she rejoined the F.A.N.Y. and was commissioned in 1942. While at Dover she had met Captain Arthur Shaw, A Temporary Officer in the Royal Engineers. After postings to Aldermaston, Edinburgh and Salisbury, they were married in London on 14 November 1942 at the Marylebone Registry Office. At that time I had just taken over command of a Gunnery School on the island of Anglesey in North Wales but managed to get away to attend the wedding. The wedding luncheon was held at Claridges Hotel – dear Jayne liked the best. After the newly weds set off on their honeymoon, the rest of us went to Gunters for tea. Alas Gunters, which was just off Hyde Park, is no more, it was THE place for afternoon tea, and their cakes were out of this world.

Jayne had to resign from the A.T.S. after she became pregnant. Their son, Nigel Bearne Shaw was born on 21 September 1944.

To go back to my parents, at the outbreak of war, Father applied to rejoin the army but was refused, probably on account of age; instead he became Chief Air Raid Warden for the area round Lymington. This kept him busy, setting up his headquarters and recruiting the other Wardens. However, within a year his health took a turn for the worse and as I mentioned above, Jayne came home to help Mother. He died on the 16 November 1940 at the comparatively early age of 63. Regretfully this was brought about by an excessive consumption of alcohol during his army service. There was a time, when we were living in Farnborough, that he was drinking over a bottle of whiskey a day. I managed to get down for the funeral, at which Arthur had arranged for an army bugler to sound The Last Post. There was subsequently a bit of an argument with the local priest as Mother wanted the Headstone to be fashioned like a bird bath since Father had always been keen on feeding wild birds; needless to say the priest won as legally he had the say-so on Tombstones.

Elham R.D.C.

COUNCIL VACANCIES IN TWO PARISHES

Death of Lieut.-Col. L. C. Bearné

At Wednesday's meeting of the Elham Rural District Council, held at the Council Offices, Lynnhurst, the Council declared vacancies for the parish of Lynnhurst and the united parishes of Newington and Paddlesworth.

The vacancy at Lynnhurst has been caused by the death recently of Lieut.-Col. L. C. Bearné, D.S.O., A.M., of Upper Park, Lynnhurst.

The Chairman (Mr. J. Cross), referring to the death of Col. Bearné, said they had lost a very valuable Councillor. Col. Bearné had not been on the Council a long time, continued the Chairman, but during the period he had represented Lynnhurst he had shown himself to be a very zealous Councillor. He joined the Council in May, 1938.

INDIFFERENT HEALTH

In spite of indifferent health he had carried on his duties and he was sure they all would wish to extend to Mrs. Bearné and family their sympathy.

He had received a letter from Mrs. Bearné thanking the members of the Council for their wreath.

The Chairman said that he had also received a letter from Col. Bearné about a week before his death and in that he said that he was looking forward to the time when he would be with them again.

The Council decided to send a letter of condolence to the family, and stood in silence for a few moments.

The Clerk (Mr. Douglas S. Harrison) said Councillor Hall, Mr. Puttock and himself represented the Council at the funeral.

People who lived in Kent were very much in the Front Line since the Battle of Britain was largely fought over that county and those who lived and worked in Dover also were fired at by long range German guns mounted on the French coast.

After Father died, Mother moved to Sutton Valence into a small bungalow, where she remained for some years after the war.

During the time when the Germans were firing their pilotless aircraft - nicknamed Doodle Bugs - towards London. A large number were shot down over Kent and as they were full of high explosives, they caused considerable damage when they hit the ground. One fell not far from Mother's bungalow causing slight structural damage to the property.

As a small aside and to strike a happier note, her Landlord was a well known bottler of country wines and when I went down to help Mother move in, he gave us two bottles of sparkling wine, one was plum and the other rhubarb and both excellent drinking.

he Drove H.M. "Mr. Jones"



SUB-LEADER Jayne Bearne, who drove the King at Dover on Thursday, was told beforehand that her passenger was to be a Mr. Jones. It was only a short time before the King arrived that she learned who "Mr. Jones" was. Jayne, 26, is the daughter of Lt.-Col. L. C. Bearne, of Lympne. She is the first Army girl to drive the King. Afterwards she had passed on to her the King's congratulations on her driving.

WHO DROVE M. "Mr. JONES"



SHE THOUGHT she was going to drive "Mr. Jones," at Dover, but it turned out to be the King. Sub-Leader Jayne Bearne was agreeably surprised at being the first Army girl to receive the honour.

Local Press Cuttings of Jayne's Drive of King George VI



Jayne & Nigel Bearne 1952

CHAPTER 11

Post 1945

When the War in Europe was drawing to a close, the Government made plans to send two of Bomber Commands Groups out to Okinawa to join with the United States in the strategic bombing of Japan. No. 5 Group, in which I was serving, was one of those selected; as a matter of interest the other was the Canadian Group. We were all vaccinated and inoculated and in fact, the Advance Parties were already on the high seas on their way when the Atom Bombs were dropped and Japan capitulated.

Instead of going to Okinawa, 5 Group was disbanded and many of us were posted overseas to replace officers who had been abroad for many years. I went to Singapore, where I stayed for just over a year before being recalled to the U.K. to attend the newly formed Joint Services Staff College. This forestalled Aileen and the family joining me, much to their understandable annoyance. After the Course, a stint of two years at the Air Ministry followed by another two years as Commandant of the Central Gunnery School in Yorkshire and then two and a half years in Southern Rhodesia. My recollections of what the Family were doing and where they were living during this period is extremely hazy.



Violet Bearne 1950

Mother stayed on in her bungalow in Sutton Valence till the early fifties. Arthur Shaw, at the end of the war, was posted to Tilbury Docks, where he was responsible for building an Army Transit Camp. His labour force consisted of German prisoners of war. For their personal accommodation he and Jayne rented a barn from the Lucy family who live at Langley Lodge in Sutton Valence and with the aid of his P.O.W.'s he converted it into a cottage. However, shortly after he was demobilised, they decided to immigrate to Australia in 1948, sailing on the P&O liner ORCADES on her maiden voyage.

I was serving in the Air Ministry at the time and can well remember going to the Cumberland Hotel, Marble Arch, for a farewell meal with them before

they sailed. They settled in Sydney for about a year while Arthur set up business making batteries;

I believe he had a concession to manufacture a special unspillable type. Unfortunately their marriage didn't work out, it had been in difficulties before they left England but we all hoped that in a new land things might improve but they didn't.

Jayne and Nigel returned to England and for the next few years lived with Mother. In the meantime Jayne divorced Arthur and he married again. Sometime in the early 50's they moved to Sparks Farm where they lived in a Romany caravan Jayne had bought from a Gypsy for fifty pound. Life in this caravan was pretty basic and after about six months Jayne was given Aunt Winnie's caravan, one she used to keep up on Dartmoor and where

she and her great friend with whom she was living, Elsie Bulkley, spent many a happy holiday.

In 1952, Jayne became House Matron at Croft House School in Shillingstone, Dorset. The Head Mistress, Mrs "Caesar" Torkington was either a friend of, or related to the Cutbills. After 4 years she moved back to Sutton Valence where she rented "Warmlake Pines", originally it was Sutton Valence School's sanatorium; the owner was an eccentric geologist who lived in the Middle East. Mother in the meantime had moved into a small flat in Bornemouth, but she left that to go and live with Jayne, who had got herself a temporary and fairly menial job in Maidstone Hospital, this didn't last for long and she became the cook for a small Prep School in Chart Sutton, the school provided her with a flat. In about 1959 she left that job and rented, in conjunction with Colin, a house in Sutton Valence called Norton Court. Fortunately, the house was large enough to accommodate both families and Mother. Jayne attended Night School to learn Shorthand and Typing, thereafter taking a job as Secretary to the Wealden Woodlands based at Lenham, not far from Sutton Valence.

It was about this time that Aunt Winnie started to suffer from Senile Dementia and Elsie Bulkley could no longer cope with her. I was granted a Power of Attorney and arranged for her to enter a Nursing Home; this didn't last long as she kept walking out on them and we were asked to remove her. Next we tried a Home specialising in the care of mentally disturbed patients, this proved a failure and Jayne stepped in with an offer to look after Winnie, fortunately Winnie had sufficient funds to allow me to make suitable financial arrangements with Jayne. Eventually Winnie became so ill and bedridden that she had to be placed in a Nursing Home in Maidstone. Here she eventually died.

In about 1965, Jayne made what turned out to be her penultimate move, this time back to Sparks Farm to look after her very old and dear friend Margery Bignold who died in 1967. Jayne then received one of her rewards in this world when Margery left her the farm in her Will, a very generous but also just act. Sadly, as is so often the case, this brought out the worst in Margery's relatives, who felt they should have been left everything. However, as they never did a thing for Margery, it was only just and proper that Jayne should have been rewarded for all she had done for her over the years.

Colin had got himself a job with Cheesmans, the big store in Maidstone and when Jayne moved to Sparks Hall he bought a house in Maidstone.

Jayne enjoyed five very happy years at Sparks Farm and carried out a number of improvements to the property. However, she eventually decided that a fairly large house, many out buildings and 25 acres of land was too much to look after. She sold up in 1971 for 24,000 pound and bought Loretto, a smaller house in Sutton Valence, ironically very near the cottage she and Arthur had rented from the Lucy's.

In 1975 she started to lose weight and was obviously far from well. The Doctors diagnosed Hodgkins Disease, a form of Cancer. Despite the pain and unpleasant treatment she underwent, she remained remarkably cheerful and always made little of her illness. She died peacefully, with her Faith stronger than ever in June 1977, at the age of 63. For her Funeral service the Church was absolutely packed with all her many friends. Jayne was a remarkable person, who gave unstintingly of her service to others and I feel it was a

great tragedy that she didn't live long enough to enjoy the fruits of her labour and the company of her loving family.



Guy, Colin, Jayne, Sydney 1968



Colin Bearne 1989 Aged 82



Jayne Bearne Aged 33?

The Bearne Family August 1983



Left to Right Rear:

Sebastian Bell; Norman & Claire French; Jenny & Richard Bearne; Anne Bearne/Bell & Riley Bell.

Middle Row:

John & Doreen Peddie; Guy & Aileen Bearne; Colin Bearne; Jill Bearne/Bell

Front Row:

Joe the Dog; Jessica Bell; Hilary Bell; Christopher Bell; Fred the Dog.

The Bells November 2000



Back Row:

Riley Bell ; Andrew Bell: John & Aidan Carroll; Timothy Donaldson

Middle Row:

Connie Bell; Anne Bell; Guy Bearne; Nicky & Liam Carroll; Hilary & Samuel Donaldson;

Front Row:

Victoria Bell; Catherine Bell