Cecil Thomas Autobiography
First World War chapters:

1914-1917

[37] We planned a punt camping holiday of the laziest we could devise, sending the punt to Oxford by rail towards the end of July and intending to drift home to our bungalow at Chertsey, sketching on the way. The punt was so long it wanted a very special truck. The last week in July urgent telegrams from the Rail company ordered us to remove our punt at once from the rail truck at Oxford – it was wanted for urgent purposes. We started on the 2nd August and the peace of the last 100 years engulfed us so that the memory of Abingdon Bridge with its ancient town and the sweet calm of that eternal river flowing in the sparkling sunshine remains for ever in my mind. I know of no pleasure to equal the upper reaches of the Thames; a punt you can manage and a summer day; our content was complete as we waited for the Oxford steamer to come out of the lock to get upstream – for us to enter to go down. There was dear old Becket, curator of the Central School, leaning over the rail. "Hullo! Hullo!" – as he passed six feet away – "Have you heard? We've declared war [sic] on Germany" and he was gone. As I write it is 47 years ago and we seem to have talked of little else since that moment.

I have already dealt with our impression of this momentous moment in history; we decided to get the members of the Junior Guild to join the Artists Rifles in a body and we duly turned up at H/Q. They all got in but, alas, I was refused on account of wearing glasses. Oswald Milne [1885-1968?], an old member of the Guild, was a Captain, so I asked him to get me in. He did his best and got them to consider

[38] me again, but no use; they told me I would be useless if I lost my glasses. I then tried the Fusiliers in the City but got the same treatment, so feeling a bit shattered, I joined the Architects' Voluntary Training Corps so as to prepare for the unknown ordeal which to some of us seemed grim and unpredictable, though most of us thought it would be over by Christmas. I then thought I would try a little influence, and so wrote to Sir Francis Lloyd [1853-1926] of my difficulty. He wrote that it was ridiculous to refuse me – that my sight was marvellous from the work I did; and that every man would be wanted before the war was through – and to come and see him.

At the interview he said he would write to the Adjutant of the University of London Officers Training Corps, who would no doubt give me an appointment. He did, and told me my qualifications were not adequate but in view of the recommendation he would give me training, and it would depend on the result of my work there. It was great fun in camp at Perivale [West London, Ealing] – not far from the little wooden Church where we had picnicked as children; and all so easy compared with what I had hitherto done – maps and construction work I loved; night 'ops' with the compass was a cup of tea; and it came as a surprise to me to find so many had difficulty in reading an ordnance map under even easy conditions. I got an Adjutant's recommendations and so found myself a 2nd Lieut. in the 15th Middlesex and posted to Queen's College Cambridge for a course of training. What joy! A dream come true – and as I entered the bump your head lodging in the old quad, up the twisty stairs and sat at the writing table looking

[39] through the lattice windows, or lay in bed in the next room, still able to look across the quadrangle – why did the mediaeval builders put their rooms on one floor on different levels? – I thought of the good fortune of those who could spend 2 or 3 years of their lives so; and resolved if ever I had sons they should go to a University; indeed these resolves had hardened out of my own grievance – that I had been deprived of my right to even a proper art education – to say that I would not marry or be responsible for

bringing children into the world until I was in a position to give them the advantages I had longed for but been denied.

They had put the dons in uniform and provided some efficient square bashers to teach us drill and discipline. I again got a good recommendation to my unit, which stood me in good stead; for on arrival I found large numbers supernumerary to the establishment attending young officers training parades. I attended the first morning a most appalling parade under indifferent N.C.Os., and decided somehow or other to get on to the establishment before I got demoralised. So I called on the Adjutant to say that in my view of my report from the Cambridge O.T.C., I hoped I could be taken on the establishment. It so happened he was dealing with another young officer who was complaining about being on this parade; his approach was wooden and tactless and the Adjutant dealt roughly with him, asked the name of his school which embarrassed the 2nd Lieut. Who said his father had been in the army and he had been at school all over the place. The Adjutant was merciless with him – "What do you mean – 'all over the place? – Did you not go to school?" Silence – "The young Officer parade is just what you want; you had better

[40] take full advantage of the opportunity".

I thought I was in for similar treatment when my turn came, and having made my request, he had asked me in rather the same manner what school I had been to. My school fortunately bore a name – Westville – that might mean anything – and no old school tie in the Adjutant's position would risk being caught out as being ignorant of a school that might for all he knew have turned out Lord Blank, or even beaten his own school at Rugger [Rugby}; so to my relief his voice quietened and he said he had not yet time to read all the reports; picked mine out of his tray and said simply "I will appoint you to A Company; report to Capt. Usher – it will appear in orders".

Usher was a tall handsome broad shouldered young man just down from the University and had been Asst. Editor to the Westminster Gazette. Very superior in manner, he never forgave me for an unfortunate incident within the first week of my appointment. A route march was the morning's work. A. Coy advance guard; No.1 platoon point Capt. Usher gives me orders as to route, being a pencil marked ordnance map. I come to a turning to the right which I take as it is pencilled so on the map. I have not gone more than 70 yds. When the Captain thunders up on his horse – wants to know why in thunder we have taken the wrong road. I reply that it is the one ordered on the map. I am told not to argue but to double my men to the point position on the route; which we do, and settle down to march time again when a party come galloping up – this time the Adjutant, his Orderly and Capt. Usher. This time the Adjutant thundered "Why had I taken the wrong route?" "But Sir, I turned to the right and was ordered back

[41] on to this route". Pity he didn't leave it at that, but he was angry and said "Who ordered it?" I paused and looked at Capt. Usher; he was to my amazement, silent; something caught fire inside me and I replied "Capt. Usher". There were murmurs [sic] in the Mess when we got back that I should have a Mess Courts Martial. The new officers as they arrived were held in great contempt by those who were on the establishment, but it did not last long. Immense casualty lists, the grimness of the menace welded us all together, and an overriding purpose made us quickly forget each others shortcomings. Here I met Capt. Mark, then 2nd Lieut. in A. Coy; and Croyden, the Musketry Officer, so keen, so efficient, but all by talking; in civic street a schoolmaster. To my practical 'do it'

approach – 'don't talk about it'; his methods seemed wholly wrong and as I became his assistant we had some good arguments.

One of my days off I went sketching and was arrested by a Lieut. I was much amused and thought it was not genuine – my first experience of spy fever – however I was summoned to the Adjutant next morning, having already been asked to send in my sketch book. He was very nice about it and complimentary; agreed that the security officer, for that was his job – was in order and advised me to get a permit in future. Incidentally [sic] my stock went up.

The Battalion had been turned into a draft finding unit, and officers and men came and went like pictures on a screen. My Capt. became an old Sgt. Major of the 1st Middx who had been given a commission. After a few months of the intense pressure he went to hospital and I carried on alone. Just at this time they had combed

[42] out the Army Service Corps to provide reinforcements with some Army training so urgently needed to replace the massacred infantry. This Sgt. Major Capt. had been filling the Guard Room with these fellows in his attempt to impose 1st Regular Battn discipline on the kind of man that had been combed out by the Officers of the A.S.C. – (they must have been glad to have seen the last of them) My! They were tough. The Company had a wonderful Sgt. Maj. who had not much use for the amateur soldier like myself; however service regulations and tradition looked after that, and I started my first parade with a get together talk on our and the country's problems; tried to open their eyes to what could happen and tried to be natural with them on and off parade. It must have successful because I only put one man under arrest during their 3 months stay; the only one in 10 years service, and we worked hard. From Colchester we went to Shoreham and training became more intensive still; Croyden got a distinguished at Hythe [Kent]; I later got a first to my disappointment. 3000 men in the unit, training down to 13 weeks; it seemed impossible to plan. The C.O. issued officers on the training staff with the War Office demands and asked for schemes; mine was adopted and worked well. Croyden and I were responsible for training in musketry, which included the only field training they were to get before they took their place in the trenches. The C.O. asked me to paint Germans firing from trenches and cover points all over the camp and on the huts, so that the men got used to the idea. They at least gave us aiming marks for our squads, for with 600 men always on parade and 90 N.C.Os. we two officers were kept busy.

[43] I felt very much embarrassed by these drawings but "orders is orders". Croyden despite my arguments loved to lecture them. I sweated on the miniature range and the rifle range. Occasionally I was at one of his lectures; he was keen and good, but what a lot of men went to sleep. At the end of a period there was an Eastern Command high up inspection. In due course the report came; our musketry received the lowest marks in the Eastern Command. We were told to pull our socks up. Croyden was sent overseas and I was put in command of Musketry Training.

I don't think I ever worked so hard; I changed the whole system from lounge to listen – to 'do it and do it again' – and continually got in some open order musketry training with small squads; for it seemed to me awful that these men were going out as 'trained soldiers' with only one day's field training in open order, all there was time for. But they made a marvellous show, and to see these men leapfrogging across country at 15 paces under their squad N.C.Os. like a parade, in advance and retire, without having

had a proper time allowance for Training, warmed me, and made me feel I had done my best for them.

Anyway, at the next inspection we came out top in the Eastern Command training units for Musketry, and I had a message from the same inspecting General conveyed to me. I had justified those arguments I had had with Croyden; a little practice is worth a devil of a lot of theory.

Recruits were drying up after the Derby group were exhausted. Training units were rolled together. The 15th Middlesex was joined

[44] to the 13th; I was told by my C.O. that they would have liked me to have the joint job as Musketry Officer, as I had done so well, but the Musketry Officer of the 13th was a Capt. – I was still a 2nd Lieut. – and distinguished at Hythe – curse that first – and so, instead, he was going to recommend me as the Brigade Gas Officer. I was at the time acting in the Orderly Room as Adjutant, as the Adjutant was on leave; in a Regular Battn I gathered the Musketry Officer was always Asst. Adjutant. In a Training Unit like the 15th I had of course done practically no work in the Orderly Room.

When the C.O. shuttered this out to me – he had an impediment – I made what I suppose some would think was the greatest blunder of my life. It so happened we had a grand chap named Burles, Capt. of A Coy., a B.Sc. chemist in Civic [sic] St., in Sth America, from whence he had come to do his bit. He was about 40 or 50. So, instead of falling on the fat old Colonel's neck and kissing him for telling me he was recommending me as a Staff Officer for a job with a Captain's rank, and I could wear pretty green tabs in my cap, and all the girls would fall for me; I turned in my chair and said "Thank you, Sir, but I know nothing about Chemistry, and Capt. Burles is a Chemist and a Bachelor of Science; would it not be better to recommend him?" I saw the colour mount in his face and his eyes bulge and glint as he stuttered out "I did not ask your advice; if you don't want the job you can go to France" – and so I did. I met Capt. Burles in the Portland Stone Quarry after the War. He did not get the job. I never regretted my decision for I hated Chemical Warfare more than I hated all warfare.

[45] 1915 and 1916 were two full years of work, fun and good friends. Mark and I got on well and sailed an under one cater within the narrow limits of Shoreham and regulations. I was much too fond of asking any officer I got on well with to join me sailing when I had an afternoon off, for I was a self-taught amateur of little practice. One day a chum, 2nd Lt. Hill joined me and I took out the sailing punt, a light centre-board shallow draft craft that was fun to sail in with a nice or light breeze. To my surprise when I got out it was blowing half a gale and my crew was not slick enough in changing over.

"Haven't you been in a sailing boat before?" "No" "Great Scott, can you swim?" "No!" "Good God! I'm going home" – and at that moment, mercifully rotten, the main split from top to bottom. I turned her before the wind with a following tide, and the frail craft gave a pretty good exhibition of trying to dive head first as she plunged nose down through the rollers, with the boom pointing up to the sky and the split sail billowing out as I had never seen before except in pictures. As we lunged back at a fast speed, I saw the boat owner pulling past us, and he yelled as we passed "You oughtn't to have taken her out and she won't stand this". As I had more than once had her flat through asking too much I felt thankful I had managed to keep her upright with my unskilled passenger aboard. I used to think the longshoremen kept their eye on me when I went a-sailing, so

as to earn the tip for the tow home, for she floated on her side; in fact one day two raced towards me and I swore at my rescuers for nearly stoving in the bottom of the frail craft in their anxiety to reach me first.

[46] On another occasion I asked a Canadian to join me sailing. He was Asst. Adjutant, a charming fellow, who gave a terrific exhibition of riding a horse that only Major Hunter-Muskett could ride. He won in the end but it was a grim and ugly tussle and very revealing how the Major calmed the furious trembling horse. This time I took the bigger boat, which I had done many times before, but on this occasion as soon as I got out from the shore I began to lose weigh and control, and to drift upstream. As the bridge was only 50 to 100 yards away and my mast towered above the road way, there was only one thing to do – let the sails down with a run, and I seized one of the two 14 ft boat hooks aboard – my 10 years punting experience helped me to swing her quickly end on and try to hold her – fortunately we were only in 6 ft water but with the bridge now 20 ft away and lined from end to end with soldiers waiting to see the fun of how we went under; but I got in about 3 more holds each time a bit nearer shore and a moored dinghy, the Canadian helping before we touched the bridge – then having persuaded those up above to leave go of the mast, we managed to push a bit nearer shore and off the bridge. Then as I held her with the pole, the Canadian hooked the moored boat and we tied up. As the crowd of soldiers on the bridge was two or three deep by this time I said "Let's sit down and have a cigarette" and it was magical to see that line of soldiers melt in a moment.

I got another wigging from my boatman and agreed not to take the boats out again without making sure that conditions were possible, as wind and tide, with the moorings 100 yds below a bridge could make sailing impossible.

[47] One curious coincidence occurred during this training period – my brother Alfred who was in the London University O.T.C. and in camp when the war broke out, had at that time been commissioned in the 8th London, the P.O. Rifles. He had been very unhappy in training in England as he shared a tent with 3 Eton men who sent him to Coventry, presumably as being London University, so no class. However before they went overseas two of them got bunnies jobs in Whitehall and the one left became his Captain and a great friend. Alfred went into the line at Festubert [15-25 May 1915] and did so well he got the M.C. As he was coming out of the line with the Battalion – they were being relieved by King Edward's Horse (turned Infantry) the operation being carried in the time honoured leapfrogging by short rushes; a man coming forward who dropped down beside him was his brother Frank. Odd coincidences were not unheard of in war. They met again.

Alfred next distinguished himself at Loos where he was with Battn H/Q as grenade Officer when a report came in that the Huns were driving us off the Double Crossier which was in the P.O. Rifles' section, and that if they succeeded the British right would be outflanked. The Major who was in command ordered him to go and restore the situation. There seemed to be a mix-up of men of different units coming away; he managed to get some of them to follow him and collect hand grenades, and having seen where the enemy were getting a hold at the top, started lobbing the grenades over the crest himself, and presently was able to get the thing organised, and cleared the Crossier (this was a giant slag heap common in all mining districts).

[48] He got a mention and a bar to his M.C., and in Conan Doyle's history of the war, one learns that in the battle of Loos the British right was saved by the recovery of

the Double Crossier; and that's how it was done. This detail of the event must be quite unknown, as though he told me one evening in 1917 when we dined together at Skindle's in Poperinghe, it is unlikely he talked of it.

But to go back to 1916 at Shoreham – I had heard Alfred was on leave after 18 months in France and as I could not spare time or was not due for time off, I thought he might come to Shoreham and give us a lecture on grenade bombing at the front. We were always keen on any chance of listening to those who had had first hand experience against the enemy. The Colonel and officers were keen on it, so that it was fixed. Alfred at the time was Commandant of the Brigade Bombing School in France, having been given the job as a rest from the line, and because the post was vacant through a tragic grenade mishap, in which the Commandant was wounded. A day or two before my brother was due to arrive, Capt. Usher turned up, posted to us for light duty after convalescence from an accident in a bomb training school in France; and I'm blest if he wasn't the Commandant of the school Alfred now commanded. I felt sorry that he had to listen to his successor, under such circumstance he must have voted the Thomas family a ruddy nuisance. Alfred continued to do good work, was given the sticky job of containing the Hohenzollern redoubt, one of the bastions of the Hindenburgh Line; altogether he was slightly wounded five times.

My brother Frank got a commission later and came through -

[49] my youngest brother Clemmie who joined the 7th London under age and did not go out until 1918 was killed in the March retreat of that year at 18 years old. His grave was never discovered. My brother Percy who wanted to stay and look after the family business was given exemption as long as possible. I always remember the committee that refused further exemption. One of my pleas for him was that the craft he practised was dying out, and that there were only a handful left in the country. "What nonsense!" said one member of the Committee "Why my friend Mr Spooner can do all that sort of thing and has a class [sic., ?]" "I know Mr Spooner very well" I replied, "but he is a furniture designer and cannot do or teach the work of which I am speaking". That finished it. Instantly the Chairman said "Exemption refused". "Agreed" said the others, and that was that. Never beard a lion in his den. On my brother's behalf I wrote to Sir Francis Lloyd and to my astonishment his introduction got Percy a commission. He had the unpleasant experience of Paschendale, followed by the less harrowing Italian front.

Another interesting arrival at Shoreham was Victor MacLagan, a giant of 6ft 7", of immense strength, famous in Australia for being able to split a sheep's carcass with a sword whilst at full gallop. I forget how many he could split in one gallop. He had taught the Australian and New Zealand Forces bayonet fighting, and I gathered, the Japanese art of Kats Kow [defeat/break]; and had come over to demonstrate the value of this to the War Office.

I enjoyed his company, and when I had time off, went long walks over the downs and listened to his amazing exploits, which all stemmed from his great strength, his skill in Ju Jitsu, his acceptance

[50] into the inner mysteries of Japan, and his desire to teach the British Army his bayonet fighting, and the Japanese art so useful in putting an enemy to sleep, or in reviving a shell shocked friend. He told me how the Japanese with a nerve pressure could put one to sleep which could become permanent; and revive one again with a certain

technique which anyone could do and which could be used to great advantage in cases of explosion shock that appeared dead. One day the summons came for him to go to Aldershot, where a Major and a Captain would investigate the matter and report. They were inclined to treat the matter lightly and as of no consequence, but MacLagan insisted on proper investigation and that a demonstration was necessary. The Captain consequently had to submit. But when the giant just touched the vital nerve and the Captain went limp and collapsed, the Major went off the deep end and panicked and threatened. MacLagan took no notice, continuing as though at a lecture; sat the victim up; pushed his thumb down behind the collar bone, wriggled it up and down; gave him a biff in the middle of his back with his leg, and at the same time shouted in his ear. Instantly the victim revived. He then gave him a little swig of brandy from a flask he carried for the purpose, and in a few minutes the shocked and angry Major and the bemused Captain left, the former threatening courts martial and everything else for this shocking assault. This is how MacLagan related it to me. He was much amused by the incident but this meeting with the official mind puzzled and worried him, for he realised he was at a dead end so far as his scheme was concerned.

[51] His stock went up in the Mess out of general sympathy, and one evening in a general discussion with him, he offered to demonstrate to us if anyone would volunteer. Waterer, our Transport Officer, himself 6ft 3", was willing, and I held up a greatcoat between them and the rest, as MacLagan said it was not a method to spread. Unfortunately after I had been holding up the shield for a matter of seconds, MacLagan said "All right", and I lowered the coat, so that we all saw how it was done. But the word had been one of encouragement to Waterer, and not to me to lower; there was a shocked stillness in the Mess at seeing the powerful Waterer collapse and lie inanimate on the floor. Speaking quite calmly MacLagan said it was not good to leave the patient too long and that the sooner one could apply the restoring drill the better. He said "Sit the patient up" suiting the action to the words, and "Push your thumb down behind the collar bone, and wriggle it up and down. This, he said, was to stimulate the heart action. "At the same time you must give him a bang on the middle of the spine with the front of your leg. This stimulates the nerve that controls the heart where it leaves the spine; and you must shout in his ear, because the auditory nerve is one of the most sensitive we possess". He then did these three things and Waterer came to with a start; almost like a jerk into life. He looked a bit bemused as the giant picked him up like a baby, and sat him in an easy chair, blinking his eyes and obviously wondering about himself. The Mess waiter handed him a whisky and soda [sic] and in a few minutes he seemed normal, except quiet; and shall we say introspectively thoughtful.

[52] We all thought the whole business a bit unhealthy and grim. Victor Maclagan became a great film star; he died in 1959.

There were many occasions when one or more officers would report on my parade for duty; they were in transit waiting orders, and our unit being draft finding, was a suitable resting place; but unfortunately there was an Army Order that they were to be temporarily employed; how most of them hated it. Some made a bit of a show at it; some openly showed their contempt of a 2nd Lieut., who had seen no war service, teaching anybody anything. One I remembered, a tall quiet black haired fellow who had got a commission in the rapidly growing Royal Flying Corps and was waiting his posting, had been a 2nd Lieut. in the Infantry and was an exception. He was with me a week or two and did everything according to the book, and I wished he could stay and help me, for I was much overworked, or rather, my maximum was not enough for the job. However I

was not to see him again until 1920 when I met him in a tube train, very sorry for himself, for he had just had the misfortune to lose his young wife. He was in such a lonely and depressed condition that I introduced him to a jolly artists club which helped to take him out of himself. I also learnt that he was a cashier in the Westminster Bank opposite the studio house I was shortly going to occupy. Remembering how highly I thought of him, I was not surprised to learn bit by bit that he had led his own squadron successfully against the Germans. He took things in a very matter of fact way, almost nonchalantly, which was well illustrated in the way he handled those situations where the faster German planes got on to the tail of the slower British and shot them down. The method was to

[53] turn in a circle, which would be smaller than that made by the faster German, so the latter could never get his gun in line on the target.

We became great friends; he helped me build my garden, and he did well in his bank; his imperturbable nature and acumen helping to capture two lots of Bank rogues; and as another illustration – one night he awoke to find a burglar in his room; he jumped out of bed; the man fled slamming the bedroom door; after him he went – the street door in turn being slammed – out into the street – the intruder 50 yds ahead making for the Gloucester Road. In his bare feet he started to run him down, and when he had narrowed the distance shouted "Stop thief!" To his surprise the man stopped and put up his hands. The silent determination of his pursuer had completely unnerved him. In the Second World War he was given the Dover branch of his bank to manage and afterwards, I expect as a reward, one of the nicest branches. Just as he played the game on my small stage for a week or two, so he did all through, and I like to think he had his reward.

There are so many descriptions of the trench warfare of the 1914-18 war and so many of my generation experienced the wretched conditions that ensued and the tragedies that were our daily lot, that another that can only reiterate these stories is unnecessary. They bring mankind to shame for his stupidity and at the same time show the grandeur of his nature, his selfishness and his unselfishness, his bravery and his fear, and no one could spend a day in the forward areas without realizing that our system filtered the best of

[54] our race into the most dangerous areas, and allowed loopholes for the fearful into safer places. Thus we must have lost the great leaders who would have guided the nation during the critical times of the next 50 years; and have had a superabundance of the rabbits, as we called them, to fill the empty chairs.

I no sooner reported in the line as a reinforcement than I was greeted by an old friend, a second Lieut. who yelled into a hole in the ground to Binney that a pal had come to join us. Binney, who crawled out of the hole was Capt. of A. Coy., holding that bit of the line, and was the most charming actor fellow imaginable who didn't give a damn for anybody. He greeted me warmly and said "Let's go and have some tea", and led the way along the trench saying "Keep your head down. Snipers!" A sharp crack as steel hit steel; as we moved forward he turned "Are you alright?" As he looked at me his eyes seemed to look beyond me, so I turned too – there was my old friend – still – in death – with two clean holes showing in his shrapnel helmet – shot clean through the head at 100 yds range – the first officer casualty on that section for some time. Gay and handsome boy, Negretti (a son of the famous firm for optical instruments), I don't forget my tragic introduction to the line.

I suppose most remember the first bombardment, it seems comical after the years. It was known as a rumjar bombardment; large canisters about the size of big circular dust bins were filled by the Germans with any old iron, stones etc, and explosive, and projected from mortars to a range of 3 or 4 hundred yards; they went about 100 – 150 ft into the air. They wobbled about as they sailed through the air, and the thing to do was to guess whether it was coming to your spot. The wobbling

[55] made this uncertain. When one decided it was really going to land on you, it was astonishing how quickly one dived into the next bay of the trench, the bay it hit being closed up. After a couple of hours of this and another 100 or so big holes in the tortured ground, I heard of no casualties and only two closings of the trenches in our sector. This sort of thing, with the occasional artillery bombardment and the regular sweeping of the ground with machine gun fire was the daily lot of both sides when the front was quiet, and it was surprising what a lot of explosive was necessary to get one casualty. One method the Germans used did get results. It made an impression on me because I was one of 3 officers, each with 50 men, repairing trenches, and we were housed in rat-infested dug-outs in the bank of a small stream, known as the Diependalbeek near Vermozeel [Voormezele]. They had a sheet of corrugated iron and about a foot of earth as roof, and we were only proof against the lightest shrapnel. Half a mile behind the line, we felt as comfy as if at home and spent the evening playing cards and yarning. The day had been difficult, as no rations had got through owing to heavy shelling, and I wrote the following doggerel verse on the dinner our batman dished up.

At 11-30 one of us three named Solomon, grandson of the first Prime Minister of Cape Colony, S.A., went to his dug-out next door while Durham and I, after a few revolver shots at the rats – all misses – went fast asleep, I with a blind cat cushioned against the

[56] top of my head. One night he was on my chest. The next I remember was waking in sunny daylight with Solomon looking through the entrance saying "What a night! My God, what a night!" Durham said "Why? What's the matter? I've had a lovely night. What about your Tommy?" "Slept like a top. What's happened?"

"It started at 12 o'clock; I came in but you were both fast asleep and I hadn't the heart to wake you. Come and have a look at what they have done". It appeared that the Hun had ordered one of his square bombardments, when every gun that could reach a particular map square, was to fire all out for so many hours; in this case – four. The area was about a mile square and we were just on the corner and had been missed and our men still further away were also untouched, but they caused about 600 casualties, so we were told, and severely damaged the area. Solomon who was dazed with his experience, said the noise was terrific; and the earth seemed to go up and down under the pounding. He could not understand how we had slept through it. Neither can I except that we were young men without a care in the world.

I did a relief portrait of Solomon and Durham in that dug-out by candlelight; the former I eventually painted and also carved a cameo from it as exhibits for the R.M.S. shows in the nineteen twenties. Solomon, who seemed to anticipate death, was killed about two weeks after this experience.

(In 1969, 52 years after, I visited Cape Town and investigating some art history at the museum told the story of Lieut. Solomon to the lady consultant and asked if any members of this famous family existed. "Why yes my colleague here at present on

holiday, is a grand daughter of the wartime family and I am sure would like to meet you. Her grandmother is still alive but very old and bad… ". I wrote and offered the model to the family, and in due course received this letters of thanks and appreciation. I hope it hangs somewhere where it can commemorate a soldier from Africa who was commissioned in the King's Royal Rifle Corps and sacrificed his life for Freedom and Honour.)

Near this dug-out was a very secret entrance to a fantastic form of underground warfare that had developed on this static front, in which each side tunnelled to get under his opponents' important points, and at awkward moments blew a mine. A charming Canadian officer who

[57] was digging to get under or near the St Eloi crater, explained in many talks we had with him in that dug-out, how they listened to each other attempting to get behind to blow their tunnel and entomb them. This mine was one of the nine that were blown to commence the famous battle of Messines Ridge, of which more presently.

We had in our section an isolated bit of trench known as the mud patch, about 300 yards long, within 100 yards of the enemy trench; a gap of 200 or more yards each side and no communication in daytime with the support line half a mile back. I had the pleasure of holding this spot for 3 weeks with 50 men; we all wore thigh boots as there was 2 or 3 feet of water in much of the trench. We really formed an outpost to prevent a surprise sortie through so large a gap as was caused by this wet patch of ground. We were expected to put up the best resistance possible but could not expect much help if attacked, except from the artillery who would lay a barrage if they got the warning. At night we had our listening posts out in No Man's Land, so playing a sort of blind man's buff with the enemy, each trying to strengthen his barbed wire without being machine gunned, at the same time doing his best to machine gun the other chap if he got a direction clue. By day we kept quiet and watched, for we were below the hun who was up at the top of the slope, and any movement invited accurate sniping at 100 yards. One of my boys put up his hand to adjust his periscope mirror, and lost a finger – good shooting – and I had many narrow escapes at night because I was too vain to put sacking over my helmet, and it would glint in the moonlight and make a lovely target, once inviting machine gun attention. Fortunately

[58] they were not all good marksmen any more than we were, with our thirteen weeks training to make a soldier. My greatest headache was to prevent dam fool patrols from our neighbouring units from being slaughtered as they wandered about between us and the enemy 100 yards away.

Generally we were warned but not always; and one night as we trained a machine gun on a party, I decided to fire a Very light just over their heads so that it would flare on the enemy, and blind them while silhouetting the party. It worked – as the light trail whizzed over them we saw they were British as they went to ground, and when the flare came not a soul appeared in No Man's Land.

I got all my posts informed as quickly as possible and had some rude things to say to that fool Sergt. in charge, a little later. A previous officer in this bit of mud had let a German patrol escape – his name was like the trench.

Not so lucky was a nice youngster named Smith, who came one night to study the position which he was going to take over, when our tour was over. Having told him all I knew, I gave him permission to go to our most advanced listening post on condition that he came in before dawn, as it was not possible after. I could tell he thought me an old woman full of fears. I was doing my dawn patrol when a runner came and reported Lt. Smith was wounded. Hurrying to the spot, I was only in time to see him die. The Corporal in the listening post begged him to come in at the proper time – he allowed his batman to come in, but would stay out a bit longer so as to get as better view of the lie of the trenches. At 50 yards or so, it was not long
[59] before he was spotted and as he made for our trench over the open ground he was brought down. His batman at once jumped out of the trench – ran the 15 to 20 yards and half carried, half dragged him in. Brave boys – both of them. The batman deserved his M.M.

To end a tour of duty in an unpleasant waterlogged section was like being released, I imagine, from prison for a holiday. I know I felt tired but buoyant when I handed over to my successor and left, alone, for my rendezvous near Vermoizeel at 1.a.m. where a guide with a spare horse was to steer me to a camp about 15 miles away. The men had all left early in the evening. One had to follow the duckboard track as the shell-pitted ground was full of water, and this track was regularly swept with accurate machine gun fire; as one dived into a shell hole or the ditch as the bullets pinged by one, one felt sorry for those who had nightly to bring up the provisions. However the hun is good at obeying precise orders such as a one-minute burst every x minutes, so with a little luck one survived.

Having crossed and recrossed the frontier between Belgium and France about four times, the guide hopelessly lost, I persuaded a camp guard to give us a shakedown for the few hours of darkness left, as no one knew of the camp I was looking for, only to find after a bath and breakfast that it was on the opposite side of the lane to the camp that had housed us. There was a drunken Colonel in charge of the training course camp, where, as far as I remember we did nothing and learnt nothing but had a rest and played about, which I suppose served some purpose.

[60] The winter and early spring of 1917 was spent in the usual round of tours in the line, short courses and trench repair work until about March when we went for a rest somewhere near Hazebrook [Hazebrouck] to train for the battle of Messines Ridge which earned for Gen. Plumer the distinction of being the best organised military operation of the Western Front to date. Mark and I were billeted in a delightful farm house, with the platoon in a barn – very comfy. I hardly knew the men, and they were little more than schoolboys, but I thought them a nice lot so we started the first morning with the maps to talk about our part in the forthcoming battle. They were so keen and were trying so hard to visualise the lie of the land and what they had to do, that it was a little while before I realised they did not know a the first thing about map reading, and neither could they follow the aeroplane photography which were not very good. Of a sudden I said “We will knock off now and have the talk tomorrow morning and I’ll make you a model which will help you to see what we have to do”. I told Mark; he was full of enthusiasm. “What will you make it of?” “Oh – clay if we can find some”. So to find some clay. The buxom housewife of the farm said there was some in a field over there. Off we went with a couple of buckets and sure enough some very good dark brown clay – quite good enough for the purpose – was there in plenty.

A flat board, a squared grid drawn on to a decent size – then the contours drawn on, and with a wire bent to measure the height of each contour – they were quickly modelled, the grid lines being marked on the edge of the board, were easily marked on the clay

[61] when the contours were finished and checked. Then the trench systems were pressed into the surface – trees and ruins made with bits of twigs and moss and bits of brick, barbed wire, with wire and thread, the various coloured guide tapes, objectives and adjoining units shown; for I showed far more than my battalion front. In all this, there was one feature, a straight line embankment which puzzled me; known as the Dam Strasse it was to loom large – then it just surprised me because of the exaggeration necessary in the vertical scale necessary in map relief modelling; I mean the exaggeration of the vertical scale in relation to the horizontal one. This embankment crossed a tiny stream, the Diependal Beek, in a district valley, until it became a cutting in a plateau on which stood the ruins of the White Chateau.

Drawn with a ruler across the map, this embankment had some sort of track on it and was obviously a drive from the Ypres Comines Road to the big house and was about a mile long. The question was how high was it across the valley; how deep in the cutting? It looked astonishing in the model; anyway my platoon's bit happened to be where it changed from embankment to cutting; the route to the ruined farm which we had to take. Mark and I got it finished in the small hours, and the men were really thrilled to see so exactly what they had to do and from their questioning and talk it was obvious they knew where they had to go and what they were in for. Major Johnson of A. Coy was doing his rounds, and listened to part of the talk – told the C.O. of it, and I was told to show it to all the officers and talk about it at Btn H/Q that evening. The Brigadier doing his rounds,

[62] saw it and took it away in his car. I had a message sent to him that it must be kept damp or it would shrink and crack and fall to pieces; and that was the last I saw of it. A day or so later we had the first of the Division exercises over open country in open order when I found my platoon No.1 of A. Coy was the left of our Division, the 41st, and we made the liaison with the 47th Division in which my brother Alfred, was Divisional Bombing Officer (hand grenades then).

It was very enjoyable lying in the sun with thousands of men stretched out in lines at 5 paces intervals, seemingly for miles across the pleasant country, and to our left, not a soul. A hare was raised in the midst, and raced round frantically, only to find men lying everywhere; they were getting a lot of fun heading it off. Then a distinguished looking staff officer gallops up and calls "Lieut. Thomas!" I jump up, salute and say "Yes Sir". "You made a model map for your battalion?" "Yes Sir". "The officer commanding the Division wishes you to make one for his office showing the whole divisional front. You will report to Major Raphael at Reningschelst and ask him for what you want to enable you to make it". "Yes Sir". "You will proceed there as soon as possible", and he galloped off. I was so stunned by this change in my job that I have now forgotten what happened between then and finding myself interviewing Major Raphael who found me an attic room up a steep stairway of a tall house that was mainly being used as a hand laundry working under pressure for the troops. I protested I should never be able to get the model out and down the stairs, unless I made a small one or did it in two pieces which I considered unsatisfactory. I was somewhat bluntly, I thought, given

[63] to understand that that was all there was. The skylight was 3ftx1ft 6". I got on with the job. About a week later the men marched back, and I had the rueful experience of standing on the side walk and seeing Platoon No.1 of A. Coy led by another. I felt awful – it seemed so cowardly. The Divisional General asked about me and the model and gave instructions I was to come and have a tea at the Mess.

Major Raphael came up to the garret and wanted to know if everything was all right for me. "Oh, yes, I'll manage, but I don't think the General, Sidney Lawford, "Swanky Sid" he was known as; asked me a lot of questions and said some sharp things to Major Raphael for not showing more understanding of his orders; ordered him to provide me with a proper workshop to which he could go to see the map, and quarters in the town to save me a two mile walk each way to the huts; and I was to feed at Divisional Mess until it was fixed up. The Major certainly made amends, for he turned out the Artillery Brigade from their nice front room – 20'x20' – which they were using as an officers mess, gave me a room in a nice house opposite and messing in Div. C. Mess at the estaminet next door. So exit Major Raphael, the Town Major. Why do I dislike Majors? I suppose it is because they are not good enough to become Colonels who always seem such decent fellows – rather like the Corporals who have plagued the world – never good enough to be sergeants.

It was all to the good. I could see to do my work properly, and it saved a lot of time. At the estaminet there was a cultured woman of middle age as waitress. I asked her some questions about the country

[64] and found she knew it like the back of her hand. For 15 years she had been governess to the children at the White Chateau, and daily had been driven from her house near the Comines Road along the Damm Strasse, that puzzling embankment and cutting. She was curious about my knowledge of the road, but I was much more curious about hers, for I learnt that the millionaire owner of the White Chateau had had this road built about 1900 and wanted it exactly level from the Ypres Comines Road to the house; this necessitated building an embankment over the Diependal Beek, and making a cutting. "How deep was the cutting?" "Not very deep but you could hardly see out of it from the trap we drove in, for some part of it". "And how high was the embankment?" "Oh, very high". "As high as this house?" "Much higher. You see it had to be built high to get it level". And so it turned out; when I put a level from the road to the house on the scale model the embankment was 60 feet at the crossing of the river or brook which had a big tunnel to run through with a track large enough to take farm wagons, and it looked as fantastic and formidable on this more perfect map than on the quick sketch model I had made for my platoon. It was nearly finished when I had a message to expect the Divisional C.O. He came with Field Marshal General Plumer commanding the 10th Corps – responsible for the forthcoming operations. With their entourage they nicely filled the room. It was not long before the F.M. put his finger on the Damm Strasse and said "What is this? Is it as high as this? How do you know?" They listened very quietly to the unanswerable evidence, and then to the Div. C.O. "How are you dealing with this?" I held my breath when he said "The 23rd Middlesex

[65] are attacking up the valley!!" My imagination had played round this road ever since I knew my platoon job was at its left end. Had I known what I learnt later of what the through going Germans could do with a feature like this, it would have run away with me. But I shall never forget the thrills that coursed up and down my spine as Plumer said, "No, don't do that! Fill the valley with smoke and send them half one side and half the

other!" After a little more talk on the operation the conversation flagged. The Div. C.O. said "Very useful things – these models!" "Oh yes, we have them made at Corps H.Q." The Div. C.O., not to be outdone, said "Yes – very useful – Thomas is making a large one to train the troops on!" So they departed and I had a feeling of being useful, and wondered why he said I was making a large model to train troops on. I knew nothing about it. My mind must have started thinking of such a problem, for it was less than an hour after G.S.O.I. came in and asked me what and where was this large model the General said I was making. I knew nothing about it. "Well", he said, "It has to be made. What do you want?" "A suitable field, preferably with an embankment, sand, gravel, timber, and men". He was a fine example of a senior officer – 6ft 2" – handsome, easy to talk to, and immediate in his decisions. He at once took me to the perfect site; there was actually a sand pit within 100 yards of where I selected to build the model; a salvage dump near by, and the C.I.E. also a nice fellow, was ordered to put his workshop and material at my disposal; all fixed up in about half an hour – and men would report for duty. Knowing I was going to have odd bodies of men to handle,

[66] I went up to the support line and saw my C.O., Col. Haig Brown, a wonderful soldier and a schoolmaster from Lancing, son of a famous head of Chaterhouse. He lent me a lance corporal who could draw a bit, for which I was very grateful; and we enjoyed ourselves with my batman Kitchener, a clumsy fellow, who would do anything to escape the drudgery of the private soldier's guard duties. He did not want to be a soldier and regretted he had joined a strike at the munitions factory where he was protected and earning £12 a week, and found himself drafted into the army. These two were my staff, and though at first I believe they thought I had a screw loose, they worked well, and when the work took intelligible shape – became enthusiastic.

On the first morning 60 men were sent me; they had been taken out of the line for a day or two's rest – shattered by a heavy bombardment. Within a few hours my site had piles of sand, gravel, cement, timber, and heaps of old buckets and latrine tubs, and looked an unsavoury mess.

It was whilst it was in this rather disgusting state after about three days at work, that Sidney Lawford with his staff and his orderly who carried a lance with a gay little burgee, for the General was a Lancer; came cantering by, and halting, the General said, "Good God! Thomas what's all this?" "The model, Sir" "And where's Whycheate?" "There Sir". – and with a laugh which sounded full of amused contempt they galloped off.

With the site marked out in 2ft tape squares the contours drawn on the ground in ½" coloured tapes, then each lifted to its correct

[67] height on 1" or ½" timbers, filling in with the old buckets and tubs upside down, and modelling in with the earth, sand and gravel; finishing the last 3", square by square, in mortar, in which I drew and drew and pressed and modelled the German trench system, putting in the details of woods, roads, buildings etc.; we made it in two weeks, large enough to get 500 men round it in three or four tiers, on raised banks, the one running along the embanked side of the field taking five ranks of men.

As no clue could be given as to dates of forthcoming operations, I had been ordered to work fast, and to make this in less than two weeks meant full steam ahead, all daylight hours, and night work on details; so I was disappointed after reporting – "model finished" – that no interest was taken except that some of the junior divisional staff officers completed my work by putting toy models of birds in the trees, with nests and

eggs. The General officer commanding the Brigade of Artillery sent for me and I made a small model – contours only – of the enemy area, which he said would help him in planning his bombardment. He wanted to be able to carry it in his car, so I did it in plaster backed with canvas.

The following Saturday there were to be some divisional sports, said to be held to mislead the Germans that we were still playing about in preference to waging war. Seeing the General there, I determined to approach him about the model, for I felt certain he had had dismissed the matter after seeing the mess, and I also felt I had had to make it because he had swanked to General Plumer, and he really had no idea of what I had made. So I tackled him. Yes he was

[68] going back to the Mess for tea presently, we would go that way. As we walked round the neat raised embankments and looked down on this miniature of the scene of his operations, he was obviously astonished and impressed; but his first words "Why didn't I bring the Prince to see this? He would have liked this". Implied that the swank of it appealed to him before its military value, The popular Prince of Wales had just paid one of his visits to the line, and our Division had entertained him and shown him round. The officers concerned were jolly glad when it was safely over, for both sides were throwing a lot of stuff about. I told the General the model had been finished a week ago and he asked what use was being made of it. I told him – absolutely none. "We'll put that right" he said, "Every man in the Division must see it. You tell them about it. I'll get it laid on". He certainly did. From the next day, groups from half a dozen officers to 500 men came on a regular time table; adjoining divisions, tank corps, Artillery – all in their turn, and, to my delight – A Coy of my own Battalion, the 23rd Middlesex who were going to do a sortie for prisoners, came and worked out their operation on the model, cutting the wire, laying the tapes. The enthusiasm with which some used the model was very heartening – nearly all were interested and the only critical ones were the Artillery officers, who were confused by the vertical scale exaggeration, and wanted to know if observations on the ground would be the same as on the model, and would stretch tapes to see where observation was possible; and the Tank officers who wanted to know where good and

[69] bad tank ground was. My own Battalion saw its own objectives the Damm Strasse after the St Eloi craters and knew exactly what they would see from the description I gave them. I formed the idea that over 10,000 officers and men studied the model, and on the day before the battle I was ordered to be liaison officer between the 41st and the 47th divisions; and to report at the latter's H/Q that evening; a curious change from commanding the liaison platoon on the left of the division that linked with the platoon on the right of the 47th to the staff room controlling that it of this important battle. Zero hour was 3 a.m. when 21 mines over a mile front were to explode simultaneously, and the biggest barrage in War history was to open with a quarter million men advancing in strict sequences with limited objectives – all planned to go like clockwork – and it did.

Lloyd George, the Prime Minister, was waiting up at Walton Heath for the moment, saw the flash and felt the tremor as the earth responded. We were all waiting on the high ground where the 47th H/Q overlooked the front. Not a sound could be heard as we watched.

During the last 10 minutes no one even spoke – and – as the illuminated second hands on our calibrated watches touched the hour, the darkness was split on the horizon from right to left, and left to right, with ragged streaks of fire, as though the earth had

opened, as indeed it had – and exposed a flaming inferno. At the same moment came the roar of the guns, for many were near, and the whole front danced with the myriad flashes of the barrage that started to creep forward; the heavies that pounded the enemy starting from 10 miles behind us kept

[70] rumbling overhead like distant trains.

In that moment thousands of Germans expiated the sins of their stupid nation for its love of might is right, and the honour of one's word of no consequence.

There was little to do at first but to watch the Bulletin board and wait for the reports to come in of the progress of the battle, and my job was to keep my own division informed of the situation on the 47th front; an officer was doing the same at Remingshelst for the 47th (? 41st), so I was able to watch even the progress of my own battalion through his reports. All along the line all objectives were reached on time, except at the White Chateau, which as you may have gathered was on the 47th right. I knew what the building had been like and that it had fine vaults for the wine, but as reports came in that the 47th were held there and that M.G. resistance was fierce, I was astonished; because it had received a most tremendous artillery pasting. During the morning a conference was held, and though I felt a bit worried that a pocket within 500 yards and behind my own Battalion and platoon should be so active; the General Officer commanding took it very calmly, said it was to be contained, passed by, men were to be withdrawn to a certain distance, and the position to be dealt with by the artillery. Later in the day we learnt that the garrison had surrendered. I had found it difficult to get my mind away from my own Battalion. As there were a number of reports on this local situation, and I felt they should all appear on the 41st Battalion bulletin board, I kept my motor-

[71] cyclist runners busy, and was somewhat surprised when one of them complained of having too much to do, and that he was getting exhausted. "But it's only 7 miles!" "Yes, but they have been shelling the roads all day and it's a hell of a job to get along them".

I was able to reassure him that his job was nearly over. I remember one report dropped by the aeroplane on our dropping ground, stated that thousands of Germans were detraining at a place just behind their line and were formed up as on a parade ground. The Artillery Officer at once arranged a maximum bombardment with a zero hour and observation, and the next report posted was that trains and everything had been destroyed, so that no counter attack developed on that section, and I believe the same applied all along the front of that best yet organised battle of the Messines Ridge.

The next day was a strange lull. I filled my pockets with chocolates and cigarettes to visit the 23rd who I knew would near the Damm Strasse. I went via the route I knew best to St Eloi, to see the old and the new mine craters. I was amazed – my first experience of German thoroughness. The new crater linked the old ones together, and on the walls of these immense pits nearest the British, they were lined with dug-outs connected with wooden galleries, one above the other; all connected with ladders as the walls were very steep and the craters over 70 ft deep. I realized what a large force of Germans could have been lodged all the winter within a hundred yards of our rough trenches and gandful [sic] of men. I learnt that our men raced down these gangways throwing hand grenades into the dug-outs, and the Germans surrendered wholesale. I had a greater surprise

[72] when I saw the Damm Strasse. From our approach side it seemed very much a part of the battle scarred ground, but when I saw the German side, it was a revelation. Though I knew so much about it, I was surprised to see the wooden galleries or gangways, connecting the large number of dug-outs, the same as I had seen in the craters at St Eloi, all untouched by our terrific bombardment because of the steepness and height – over 50 ft. The same tactics, the creeping bombardment and pure [sic] men racing down the gangway lobbing in hand grenades, before the Germans knew the barrage had gone a jump beyond 600 prisoners came from those dug-outs to our battalion, without a casualty to our men. The dug-outs were deserted now, and I looked round for our men. They were in Ravine Wood, or what remained of it, and were in grand fettle. Col. Haig Brown, with his uniform tattered and torn with the wire, as were many others, was pleased to see me, said marvellous things about the model – how they knew their way and recognised everything. I said I wanted to come back to the Battalion and that G.S.O.3 said I could, as I kept worrying him. The Colonel said it was a waste; that I was too valuable doing models and that he would go and see the Brigadier. Telling his Major to take over – he would be back in an hour – off he stalked. He told me the Brigadier had just lost his Intelligence Officer and would appoint me to that post, and to report at once. My feelings were mixed but mostly surprised and gratified. I had already seen enough of service life in war to realize we could be blown hither and thither like a feather

[73] in a breeze, and subaltern were not alone in joking about the authorities power over us, often in coarse and [sic] vulgar terms, as to what they could and could not do to us.

I soon found the job was very much to my liking and in my first interview with Brigadier General Gordon, realized I was under a fine officer, tall and handsome, calm and quiet, easy of address, and clear and gentle in what he said. We met outside the H/Q dug-outs. The enemy was paying particular attention to the area and shells were bursting 2 or 3 at a time near by. It was not the time or place for a friendly chat. As he quietly told me what I had to do, I could not help admiring his complete unconcern. I had the strongest desire to dive into the shelters a few yards away, but strove within to show a comparable unconcern except for what he said. But I was relieved when he said we had stood there long enough – “You get under shelter – we will talk again tomorrow”, and off he went.

The extraordinary thing in war is to find yourself in a responsible position without any training for the particular job, and with men’s lives depending on your efficiency. It was just the job for me on my own, with maps, and only a few to command. I had a Sergeant observer, a wonderful chap, who had been doing it for some time; I visited his posts most cunningly selected; had the pleasure of imitating a clod of earth whilst a German plane, which we had watched sailing over our forward line about 50 ft up, came immediately overhead. This O.P. was outside a German concrete pill box with walls 4 ft thick.

[74] Our heavies had lifted this pill box and dropped it out of alignment all sideways and cracked but still sound; another example of the thoroughness of the German defences. I found a Bar and Stroud range finder in the stores; the Sergt was game to use it for we had a 20 mile view of the German held territory, and could see the flashes of the German batteries. The enemy was rapidly recovering from the shattering blow of the Messines Ridge battle; our best squadrons had been moved whilst Richtofen’s famous circus was

enjoying itself shooting down our balloons, and other minor exploits. The infantry were beginning to complain of accurate shelling of their positions – such information had to go into my daily report. Divisional report was full of similar records and requests for the positions of offending batteries. These requests went down to Battn. level but it seemed to me a challenge, for the artillery complained they were given no information by the infantry – only complaints. A battery in the point of a coppice had been regularly firing at us. From our O.Pip we could, through our Bar and Stroud, almost see the whiskers on the face of the fellow who regularly wheeled a hand truck laden with shells or empties, to and from a narrow guage [sic] track which we could plainly see; the flashes of the guns showed the exact location. The whole countryside was spread out like a map, and the exact locations could be seen on our maps. The Bar and Stroud accurately confirmed the range at some 500 yds. I put the information in the next report and received a visit from a junior artillery officer, expecting to be thanked and told the battery had gone sky high; but no – he had been sent to verify the information, which meant I had to give up my morning to conduct him

[75] to our O.Pip. for he was not satisfied with my explanation on the map; implied they had no confidence in the infantry in such matters.

Well, he saw it; reported, and came the next day to say the artillery had allotted a howitzer battery to deal with it. Would I arrange for a signals line to the O.Pip by x hours. I got this laid on, and felt happy at the time that I knew the job was being done. I was writing my daily report when the junior artillery officer came in, and I cheerfully hoped that they had finished them off. "No", he said, "they couldn't reach them – the range of our howitzers was only up to 3500 yds". "But I don't understand. I told you it was 5000 yrds; you saw it on the map, and with the Bar and Stroud". He just shrugged his shoulders and walked out. It seemed unbelievable. I could only record further heavy shelling from this battery of our forward positions in the next report, and carry on with the many other jobs that pressed. The Brigadier asked me to locate and report the exact positions of units holding our front line and their liaison with the neighbouring units, and to put the information in the next report. I started about 3 a.m. from our Northern O.Pip where my redoubtable Sergeant kept his vigilant eye on our front line which we could see about 500 yds away below us, running S.E. All was in order and quiet, and I passed along the trenches held by my own Battalion and came to where Capt. Livingstone lay asleep sunk into the mud of the front wall of the trench, his long legs resting against the back wall. He woke up and gave me a warm welcome. We hauled him out with a squelching sound. We had been together in the Divisional D. Mess and got on fine. He was 6 ft 4" and had been trained at the Military Staff College, and was attached to

[76] the 41st awaiting appointment. As I went on my tour I thought of the odd chance in the army; he was doing my job, and I, without training was doing his.

I found too wide a gap to the next Battn; indeed they did not know where they were, and there had been no liaison; they also had no knowledge of where the enemy were. It was now daylight and a lovely summer morning; my general direction through woodland very little damaged was the first bit of idyllis scenery I had seen in the line. The war seemed to have passed it by; it had of course been well behind the German line for most of the war.

I started off in what I thought the most hopeful direction with my batman in tow – Kitchener was the proud name he bore. We had gone about 200 yds when concealed in

the undergrowth about 100 yds away I saw a German pill box. I said "There is just a chance we might bump into the Hun, though I expect it is our possession. You had better fix your bayonet", and I drew my revolver. He said he hadn't got his rifle! "What have you done with it? You started with it". "It was so difficult carrying it through the trenches, I left it with my pal to collect on our way back". "You idiot! We don't go back that way".

We approached cautiously and were soon close enough to hear snoring coming from the pill box. I looked in and saw the prettiest sight – 8 cherubic pink faced boys of about 18 – British – fast asleep in piles of clean straw, as peaceful and unconcerned as boys on holiday. I have to confess we went quietly away without waking them and I soon found my next Battalion of which the pill box was the advance post.

[77] I suppose I must be a poor soldier for I did not even think of taking action for either the court martial offence of abandoning arms, or of sleeping at your post. My job was collecting information.

My next job was to accompany the intelligence officer of the Brigade on our left to reconnoitre the Brigade front; this we were taking over on our next tour of the line, and from which we should start to advance in our next battle – July 31st – of the ghastly Paschendale series.

He was a nice fellow wearing green tabs, and we started from Spoil Bank, crossed to a railway embankment which made a large enclosed triangle converging to a point in enemy hands by Hollebeke where they had good observation of the whole triangle. Then on to Hill 60. Walking over the open as we were, and numbering five in our party, we were met by one of the most irate 2nd Lieuts I have ever met. We had no right to walk about like that. Did we know that we were under full observation of the enemy, and that any activity invited continuous shelling? It was all right for us – we could get out of it, but they had to stick it. Hill 60 was notoriously a hot spot and we decided our friend was due for a rest and a spot of leave. Anyway during our excursion, though they followed us about with inaccurate shell fire, I am glad no major straff was put on the cross Lieutenant because of us.

I got some useful information and rough sketches for the next model, of this section of the front. The Brigadier had asked me to make one when we went out of the line to rest and train for the next advance. I was thrilled about it and excitedly looking forward to the

[78] task.

So in this way my very small experience of war was ending, for the next chapter was to bring a major change, far too common to far too many in war, the common lot. The experience, though so trifling, compared with the many stories of heroism, suffering and tragedy, seems to me presumptious and unworthy of record, but it has its place in my own affairs, and as such reveals the odd chances that fate plays with us, in peace as well as in war, from which we build and construct our lives, and I hope, should this ever be read, I shall not be judged too harshly for seeming to model a mountain out of a mole hill.

The Dammstrasse – A story of 1917

[1] In the spring of 1917, the 41st Division, under Gen. Sir Sidney Lawford, was withdrawn from the line to rest; and go into training for the battle of the Messines Ridge. Field Marshall Lord Plumer was planning this battle, which was an outstanding success on June 7th 1917; when the most extensive artillery bombardment of the enemy in the history of war, till then, was organised. The historic explosion of 21 mines at 3 a.m. heralded the commencement of the battle. Lloyd George stood on Walton Heath at that moment and heard it start.

The 41st Division with the 47th on their left, were to attack from the lines they had been holding during the previous winter, the liaison between the two divisional objectives being Ruined Farm the left of the 41st and The White Chateau the right of the 47th. The 23rd Middlesex commanded by Col. Haig-Brown a master at Lancing College, son of Haig-Brown the famous Head of Charterhouse, formed the liaison Battalion, with the Ruined Farm and the Damstrasse as their first objectives.

The Damstrasse was understood to be a raised road or lane across the valley of the small stream, the Diependalbeek. The road connected the White Chateau in a straight line with the Ypres Comines Road, shown on the French maps as an open embanked or

[2] raised road, which changed to a cutting as it reached the high ground. The length of the raised part being yards and from there to the Chateau about yards. Ruined Farm being in the land beyond on the left. The capture of Ruined Farm was the job of A company of the 23rd Middlesex, in which I was a Lieutenant.

When the Division reached its rest and training ground somewhere behind Le Catau, No.1 platoon were allotted out-buildings where the men slept, whilst I and my great chum Capt. E. Mark, The Pioneer Officer, were accommodated in the house. Brief – to see the men knew exactly where they had to go, what they had to do, and have a rest. So gathered in sections round maps, this was explained. Then questions invited, from which I soon discovered they had not the remotest idea of map reading. As a reinforcement officer I had not trained them and hardly knew the men. Being a sculptor it naturally occurs to make a 3 dimensional model in any difficulty. So I told them we would pack up now and repeat the talk tomorrow, that I would make a relief map which would answer all their questions. There was some clay a few fields away, good enough. I decided to model the area from the White Chateau on the left, and cross the valley to the Ypres Comines Road. So that the raised and sunk road could be a guide. Mark helped, and we had it finished by 3 a.m. next morning. I was quite staggered by the response of the men, no more groping, but purposeful questions. Whilst this was in progress, Major Johnson doing his rounds stayed and

[3] listened; fetched the Col., who took the model away in his car, ordering me to come to H/Q at 6 o'clock and explain the lay of the land to all the Btn. Officers. Next day I learnt the Brigadier had visited our H/Q, seen the model, and taken it to his Brigade H/Q. The following day the whole division in its battle formation, had a full dress exercise advancing over gently rising ground to a crest, very like that which we had to attack in the battle. From my position extreme left front, I had a grand view, seeing thousands of men spaced accurately as far as I could see, whilst on my left not a soul in sight. Suddenly an officer with an orderly came riding through the prone men. Halts, and calls

Lieut. Thomas. Of course I spring to attention. You are to report to Major Raphael, Town Major of Reningshaldt, to provide you with accommodation to make a relief map of the whole divisional front for the General's office! Very good Sir, When do I go? Now! And he gallops away. My feelings were mixed; but sadness at leaving these men so soon dominated that lone journey back to the line.

Major Raphael did not show any enthusiasm for his task, and allotted me an attic in the laundry with a top light about 2'6"x1'6"; took no notice of my telling him officers would probably be coming to see the model, also that the model should not have to be held on edge to get down the narrow stairs of a high building. I had made good progress by the time the Division returned. Apparently the General remembered, asked Raphael

[4] about me, that he wanted to see me at tea at the Mess. He asked a lot of questions on my personal comfort, when he found I was fishing for myself, gave the Major a proper wigging. Next day I was put into D mess, also an Artillery Bgde. H/Q were turned out of their nice shop, and I was installed with my model. D mess was in the Estaminet Commercio, where three comely daughters and an older woman waited on us. The older woman spoke perfect English, so I asked her if she knew the Damstrasse. Yes, I drove up and down it for years. I was the Governess at the White Chateau. My employer built it; he wanted a perfectly straight and level road from the Chateau to the Ypres Comines Road. I lived at Ypres and came every day. Why, it must have been high. Oh very high, it had a tunnel through were the river was, and a road. The tunnel was high enough to take full laden hay wagons. French ordnance maps based on the Napoleonic survey were very incorrect, and this raised road had no contour line to show its height, this heaven sent information when incorporated in the model revealed a most astonishing earth work. My thoughts went to the rest of my battalion who were to make a frontal attack on it. Field Marshall Lord Plumer was visiting the Division. They came, filling the 20'x20' room with brass hats. Looking at the model, pointing to the raised road, said, "What's that?" I explained. "How do you know it's that height?" I told him the Governess's story. So a level road from point to point makes

[5] it that height over the valley. It is correct to the scale of relief of the model. He turned to the Div. General and said, "Fill the valley with smoke, send half the men one side and half the other and take it from the back". This closing the visit. By way of conversation, the Div. General said, useful things these models. Yes said Lord Plumer, we have them made at H/Q. Not to be outdone, Lawford said, Thomas is making a large one to train the men on. With that they departed. I still feel the exultant thankfulness that the Battalion would not make that frontal attack. But this large model, my brain was going all round the subject, just the kind of challenge it enjoys.

It was only 20 minutes before G.S.O.1. returned. "What's this about a large model? First I have heard of it Sir. What will you want? My brain had worked it all out. I'll do it big enough to get 500 men at a time around it, so a field, preferably with a 4 or 5 foot bank, to tuck the Wycheate Ridge into – to save time. A sand pit, a salvage dump, some timber, wheel barrows, buckets, spades, 20 men, for 2 or 3 days, and a workshop where I can get tools. Why, there is a field not far behind Div. H/Q that might do all that. It did, even to the sand pit. Now let's go and see C.I.E. or O.C.E., a kindly little man the essence of co-operation. That night I made a scale drawing of the ground plan of the contours of the area I was going to model to a size of 30' by 20' by about 4'6" high at Wycheate. Based on the grid squares of the map it had all the

[6] relevant information, pinned to a handy size board, it became the working drawing of the model. Next morning 60 men turned up, they had been taken out of the line for a rest after heavy bombardment and looked as if they needed it. Best of all, thoughtful Col. Haig-Brown had ordered a young small Lance Corporal to report to me; he could draw a bit, he was an immense help.

The salvage dump was full of damaged iron urine tubs, which with their differing sizes made marvellous packing for the hills and saved tons of carrying.

The site with its forest of contour sticks, tapes, etc., looked a frightful muddle, with its piles of urines tubs, earth, sand, cement bags, etc. But everything was where it should be. At this moment the General with his orderly galloped up on their horses, the orderly carrying a lance with pennant fluttering. The General had been a Lancer. He was affectionately known to us all as Swanky Sid. "Good God, Thomas, what's all this?" "The model Sir". They galloped off without a word. I could tell he was out of his depth and wondering if he had made a mistake.

In two weeks I reported to G.S.0.3., the Divisional Intelligence Officer, that it was finished, but nothing happened except some of the younger officers at H/Q completed the model by putting little birds and nests in the trees, I think bought in the sweet shop. The Prince of Wales came and went.

The Division was having sports on Saturday, as a blind to

[7] the Germans that we were still playing about, doing nothing serious. So I hung about till the General turned up. Approached him and said the model has been finished for a week but no use has been made of it. "I'll come and see it when I go to tea". I could see he was staggered to see his Divisional front like a 3 dimensional picture – with the trenches, ruined buildings, shattered woods, barbed wire, and all the details of the land, in one eyeful. His first comment was – "Why did I not bring the Prince to see this". I could not say anything, but knew that the piles of old urine tubs had set him wondering. All that can be spared in the division must see this. I'll lay it on – you tell them about it. They came in their hundreds, their officers laid tapes on the model, showing their left and right flanks, whilst I stood by to explain details of the map if required. When a group of artillery officers got enthusiastic about sight lines, I assured them what worked on the model would work on the ground for visibility, but the exaggeration of the vertical scale must be remembered, especially for trajectories. A kindly, gentle little man came one day. F.M. Lord I much enjoyed our talk. He was not the stuff we picture great soldiers are made of – perhaps that is why so much of the blame for the March 18 retreat was heaped on him. I was glad when he was exonerated.

I was ordered to be liaison officer to the H/Qs. of the 47th Division during the battle, with 3 or 4 motor cyclists to

[8] carry messages to the H/Q. of my own, the 41st Division. On a hill top about 5 miles behind the line we all stood silently before dawn on that quiet night of the 7th June, with our eyes on our synchronised watches. – Then – at 3 a.m. precisely, a fiery serpent streaked back and forth along the whole horizon. The greatest bombardment in human history had started with the explosion of 21 mines. Behind it one knew the 10th Army Corps were advancing as if on parade.

All objectives in the purview of the two divisions, I was concerned with were in our hands on time, except the White Chateaux, the cellars of which were a fortress and held out till the afternoon. The organisation of a Divisional H/Q for such a battle interested me. Bulletins of the progress of the battle were pinned on a great baize covered board, the liaison officers at once sent copies to their own units if it affected them, and pinned up bulletins they received. Thus I early learnt that the Damstrasse was in our hands, and that the enemy manning the White Chateaux surrendered.

One incident is worth recalling:- One of our reconnaissance planes dropped a message at our marked field outside that of a German rail head on our front, train loads of reinforcements were disembarking. A little while after I heard the Artillery Brigadier report to the Div. Gen. We synchronised a bombardment on that rail head, caught them lined up in the station yard and bottled them out.

[9] As soon as I could get permission I went up to the line to rejoin my unit. I found them beyond the Damstrasse near Ruined Farm. They gave me a warm welcome. Col. Haig-Brown said, "We all knew our way about because of your model", one was hardly conscious of the Damstrasse approaching from the front it had been so well camouflaged into the valley. But, from the back view there was the vast earth work stretching across the valley; pigeon-holed with dugouts, all connected with strong timber galleries and steps; it looked vaster and more formidable than I had imagined. I was told our boys raced along these galleries throwing in a Mills grenade into each dug-out as they passed. They came out and surrendered in hundreds.

Nearly forty years after I and my wife visited Poperinghe, to see the Toc H, H/Q and visit the Damstrasse and front I knew. As we motored from Wytcheate down the Ypres Comines Road, I was bewildered not to see the vast embankment. We stopped at the point where I reckoned the road started, and asked at the nearby farm house, but the young woman there did not seem to know what we were talking about. Lower in the valley some milking was in progress, so we drove down the hill, and I walked across the field to the group of cows. As I got near, suddenly a most lovely girl in the most immaculate national costume stood up among the cows; all smiles, white starch and colour, she looked as though she had just stepped off the stage of a Drury Lane Pantomine. To my question, "What's happened to the Damstrasse?"

[10] she laughed gaily, said in perfect English, "I have heard of it – my father knows all about it, look there he is, if you walk up the valley you will meet him". We did, and over the fence he said, "The Damstrasse! Oh, it was a cemetery! It was sealed up for years, they could not do anything about it, it was so full of dead bodies. Eventually it was blown up and bull dozed into the valley. I helped to build it. I was a boy working at the White Chateaux at the time about 1900. It was a big job. Yes, I remember the Governess".

So, the Damstrasse ended as a German cemetery and the poppies that grow in the valley do not spring from the blood of the boys of the 23rd Battalion of the Middlesex Regiment.

A Common Lot, 1917-18

[1] The Brigade had left the line, full of excitement at the prospect, and with a vague idea they were going into training for something; as B.I.O. I knew and had spent some of the recent dawns strolling and crawling about the ground between Spoil Bank and Hill 60, which was the 'tasty bit' we were to take over, and fight over, in the next battle which we were out to train for. My sketch book was full of sketches and notes, and my mind was full, particularly of two M.G. nests that completely dominated one situation. One I can't forget, for the awful consequences that were later revealed to me.

It stood at the junction of the railway embankment and the high embankment of the canal just north of Hollebeke, the space between forming a large triangle with mile-long sides, in the centre of which lay the remains of a crashed British aircraft. The ground looked overgrown and innocent enough, but one morning I thought I would see what it was like. I was soon up to my knees in soft ground and realised the whole area was waterlogged and impassable. The two embankments radiating from the north of Hollebeke allowed no drainage and the slightly higher ground north which included Hill 60, fed it, so the triangle, about a mile on each side, had become a lake of mud.

I told the Brigadier at breakfast, and he said "Right, Tommy, put it in the model and we'll do something about it".

Only the Brigadier and myself with a sergeant and two O.R. were left at Brigade Headquarters. My job was to hand over all information to the incoming B.I.O, finish up and send off my last B.I. report; see that the mess gear was dispatched with the Sergeant and the two O.R.; wait for the new officer to take my place, and I was free to go. I had handed over all the dope to a quiet taciturn Lieutenant who said he'd go and have some grub and come back in an hour or two.

I settled down to finish writing when a soldier entered the dug-out – "Sir, is this 123 Brigade?" "Yes". – "I'm the driver of the transport to take the Mess stuff, and they're all dead drunk in the Mess". I want to get away quick – there's a lot of stuff dropping about". "Oh, damn". – I buried out across the open, into that part of Spoil Bank where we had our Mess. There

[2] was the Sergeant, a little man, just able to hold on to one of the pit props and gibber; the other two were heaps on the floor. To complete the picture – the cause of it all – the rum bottles.

I felt a mixture of annoyance, surprise and sorrow for the sergeant, and said "We'll have to see about this tomorrow". He rolled his eyes in a miserable abject sort of way, slobbered something, and slid a little further down the pole. It was a matter of moments to get some help, bundle the whole lot, bodies and all, on to the transport, and hurry back to finish the report. There was a knot of men gathered at the entrance to the H.Q., dug-out, who made way for me to enter, and as I bent down to get under the low entrance – bang – a Naval shell burst overhead. In the involuntary duck, I thought someone had given me a blow on the back. I turned and said "What was that? I thought I was hit". One of the lads, who could see the jagged hole, said "I am afraid you are. Sir – let me give you a hand". "No, I'm all right, thanks" and proceeded in, but before I had gone a dozen yards I was glad of his assistance. An M.O. came and at once started cutting off my uniform with a pair of scissors. I felt overwhelmed with disappointment as

I said “What! Am I out of action?” for I was proud of my job, and had already seen what a lot of help I could give. “Yes. You must keep quite still, and we’ll get you to the C.C.S. as quickly as we can”. Presently the Brigadier came in, his tall calm quiet figure standing like a sentinel beside me. In my weakness I felt so apologetic at thus letting him down and said – “I am so sorry, Sir”. He took my hand and pressed it “I am sorry to lose your help”. – “The model, Sir”. – “Yes, I am very sorry. They’ll look after you – Good luck” and he was gone.

Shortly after I was told the ambulance had arrived, but could not get nearer than half a mile away, as they were shelling, but that stretcher bearers would carry me. I was too doped to care much about anything, but glad when I was borne into the open which seemed strangely grim and deserted – once during the trip a few shells dropped around. Some soldiers sheltering in Spoil Bank 50 yards away, called to the bearers to come and take shelter, so they put the stretcher on the ground and ran and joined them. I can see that group of

[3] five men even now, peering at me, and I can feel the loneliness and feeble anger as I tried vainly to order them back. However all was soon quiet and we were soon on the way – I too far gone to protest. The driver swore at them for keeping him so long in this God damned place, and the ambulance bumped over the railway sleeper track in a way that seemed calculated to complete any damage the Hun had failed to do. What a nice comfy feeling I had when put on one of the racks in the C.C.S. and all was still, and a dear fellow with a kind round face, and a white coat, pumped some more dope in, said some cheering words and “I’ll get you to hospital tonight”.

I believe I was in Bailleau for some time, mostly in a twilight condition, but two incidents stand out; one – when my friend, Mark, with Hyams, visited me, and as they left, said one to the other – “poor old Tommy, he’s finished!” Mark told me this years [sic] later. The other was being roused to consciousness by an air raid warning, and a very young orderly coming and holding my pulse. I wondered what the devil he was doing it for at such an odd time; then the bombs began to drop – one, two, three, straight for the hospital – the poor boy began to shake – four – just in front – five – beyond our heads! We were clear, but I heard in the morning that that raid cost a lot.

Then to a bright little room high up over Boulogne Harbour, with another bed beside mine, occupied by a mountain of white pillows, in which lay a white emaciated figure, with grey death fighting for him. I was told I was off the danger list, as I had improved, and that I would be sent to England quite soon. What luxury to lie in comfort and weakness and watch the busy harbour. What a revelation the nurses, so swift, so silent, so gentle.

I knew nothing of women; having never got beyond idealistic dreams, and refusing to tie myself to the girls who seemed quite ready to take me or Tom, Dick or Harry – whichever was the easiest – a prospect that appalled; so my opinion thus formed, and added to by the appalling drug taking models of the Café Royal, and the boasted prowess of certain men I knew – left me casual and indifferent towards them. But these devoted women at Boulogne made an impression

[4] which was deepened as time went on and a true sense of values took some of the place of the cautious and suspicious elements that had been so long built up by what I had heard and seen.

One morning when everything was sparkling and dancing in the sunshine, two lanky loose-jointed Australians came with a stretcher, and took me on board a hospital ship, all fresh air and light, tidiness and excitement – Blighty! – thousands of young men passed fit to travel, were going home; thousands of stories of suffering of which mine was the merest trifle, lay behind them. How cheerful were the officers and orderlies as they rapidly did their checking. Presently I was informed that I was going to a hospital in Scotland. "Scotland!" I said in anger. "Why Scotland? I'm a Londoner. Can't you send me near London? I've got a business in London". And I began to get worked up into a real paddy. I had evidently got some special information written on a tablet, for the officer glanced at it and became very concerned and gentle. "Don't get yourself worked up – take it easy – I'll see if I can do something for you". But even the sight of the lovely sea dancing all round me, with the spirited destroyer screen adding its sparkling spume to the sunlight, failed to keep me quiet, and I determined somehow I'd get that changed. Presently the Officer returned – "Cheer up. I've managed to make an exchange, and have got you into a hospital in Cadogan Square". "Oh, that's grand. Thank you" and the dear fellow went on to make some others feel better. Ah, you met some grand chaps in War. They far outnumber the rotters, and I am glad to say I have found it so all through life.

Shall I ever forget the excitement of arriving at Victoria that night? What an orderly pandemonium it was! In a moment I was shot into the most luxuriously appointed private Pullman Ambulance I had ever seen, with a nice looking fellow on the other stretcher, and the most ravishingly beautiful girl in charge. We vied with each other in getting her attentions. "Nurse, please make my pillow comfy" and so on, arriving at Cadogan Square in a state of hilarity, with the lovely creature keeping so dignified and purposeful and gently reproving. There, as the doors of the ambulance were flung open, in the light from the hall, stood a group of smiling nurses. Our farewells and

[5] messages and excitements was so great at leaving the first lovely British girl we had seen for so long that our merriment was infectious, and the smiling Sister in charge said "Sh! Sh! You mustn't make all this noise. You'll wake the patients". It was a happy homecoming.

Can I never forget or be grateful enough, for all the comfort and charm of that hospital, in which I was destined to spend a great part of the next two years; from where sprung lifelong friendships – events that altered and shaped my career; strange that the effort of a nice fellow on a boat doing so simple a thing could rearrange the pattern of a life, open avenues to immortality that might ever have been closed; seeming to control the hand of destiny; perhaps it's the other way round.

The Gerstley-Hoare Hospital, as it was called, had 28 beds in 3 wards. Mrs Gerstley with her husband provided the hospital, I believe, and Miss Hoare, the Commandant of one of the Westminster Groups of the V.A.Ds., the staff.

It was about 11 o'clock on the first morning, when a most graceful, slim Jewess, in a becoming grey and beautifully fitted nurse's outfit, with a just right nurse's headdress, came and sat on my bed and talked to me. She was all long lines, long nose, long face, long arms, fingers and nails beautifully manicured; long sloping shoulders with the long lines of her dress – she sat there like an exquisite symphony, a picture I shall never forget. Miss Hoare was tall, angular and honey; looked harassed, and had nothing to do with the patients, but her staff thought well of her, and what a staff! With professional nurses to do the dirty work i.e. the Sisters – one or more always on duty – the V.A.Ds.

devoted themselves to our comfort and wellbeing. They cooked in the kitchen, and no meals could be more dainty and tempting; played games with us in the off hours, or talked with interest on our subjects. Without knowing it I was learning a new outlook on life, and realising a woman's worth.

One day, among the arrivals was Lt. Col. Pennell. It was reported to me that an officer who knew my battalion was upstairs; so I got permission to

[6] go and see him, as I was now allowed to move about a little. I knew Pennell had commanded one of the Battalions of the 123 Brigade, though I had never seen him. In the luxury and comfort of hospital life the War seemed remote, and though I often wondered what had happened with the events I had expected to take an important part in, I had no means of knowing, and seemed completely divorced from the War. There must have been about 6 weeks to 2 months after being hit, during which I lay in a comatose condition, mostly asleep, or in a twilight; I have no memory of pain or discomfort or feeding or function, during that period. I certainly had no consciousness of the War or my part in it.

I think I must have been heavily doped the whole time, for it was only just before leaving Boulogne that I talked for the first time to the living death in the opposite bed. Since being in London I had an uneasy idea from the papers that things had not been too good, so I entered French Ward with anticipation and misgiving, to see a little honey faced man in a hospital dressing gown that enveloped him, sitting with a group. He received me civilly enough, but with a lack of something that surprised me in a Lt. Colonel. I did not know then that he had gone out as a regular sergeant in the K.R.R.s; that his immediate officer had been Lieut. Jack Forster, who had been killed, and that he had come to this hospital to be near Mr and Mrs Harry Forster, who lived in Hans Place, and were devoted to their eldest boy's sergeant who had served so well. After the usual civilities, I asked about the battle; he was very reticent; apparently he had commanded the Brigade; I gathered Brigadier General Gordon and his Brigade Major had received a direct hit on their car as they were going out of the line; he had taken over – a fear gripped me as I listened – that waterlogged triangle – "But what of the 23rd?" "Oh, they were badly hit – they got bogged – that model was no good". "Model! Was a model made?" "Yes, but it was no good. I thought you made it?" "No, I was wounded in June – I made the one at Reningschelst for the battle of the Messines Ridge, and was going to make one for the next battle". "Yes, I remember the one at Reningschelst" said the Colonel "it was very good". It was obvious that Pennell did not want to talk of the matter further, and clear that something very wrong had happened to my Battalion. I was not to know until sometime later, when my constant friend

[7] Capt. Mark, being on leave, came to see me; I gathered that their job on the 31st July had been to attack across that waterlogged triangle to Hollebeke. They had sunk to their middles, had been mown down by those Machine Gun Posts and the Battalion had had to be withdrawn. The appalling waste of the lives of those men, some of whom I had known since the beginning, saddened me; and I somehow felt guilty that I had been unable to do anything to prevent it. I also learned that someone had been asked to make a model map, but that nobody seemed to think much of it, and evidently no reconnaissance. I cannot imagine anything more suicidal than an incorrectly modelled map to guide a life and death infantry battle. Better none, and just use your native wit.

It made me think that one day I would like to visit the place of this tragedy. It was 43 years after that I and my wife spent 4 days at Skindles in Poperinghe and motored round the area. We came towards Ypres from Comines in the train, and as we left Hollebeke on the embankment, 15 feet above the broken ground, we saw the beginning of the deadly triangle, or point, where the German strong point had been. Now the ground, to our surprise, was still broken with holes full of water, and covered with trees; and it was obvious that we were looking at ground untouched since 1917, with the scars of war clothed in undergrowth and small trees. So we found it when we got to Hill 60, and motored across to Spoil Bank under the guidance of the Warden of Hill 60, who knew the whole area like the back of his hand. The area to Hollebeke seemed to be as impassable as it had been in 1917. The canal had never been reconstructed not the ground reclaimed.

We visited St Eloi, where three of the craters could be seen – one in the garden of an old soldier, who spoke English perfectly, and enjoyed telling me the history of the craters; for he knew the village before 1914. The one in his garden was full of water about 50ft across, in which he enjoyed his own private fishing. It was wonderful to go over the ground I knew so well from having made a model of it, but had never seen properly except from a front line trench, with that one visit to the Battalion which lasted so short a time. I felt surprised to find it all there, just as I had pictured it. But where was the DammStrasse – that mighty embankment the Germans had turned into a fortress, but left the back door open. I could not see it from the Warneton Road as we

[8] approached St Eloi in the position I knew it was. The local Police officer knew nothing of it; neither did any of the locals questioned. This was beyond the area, the Hill 60 Warden, who was with us, knew; but he was a wonderful chap, and after going down towards the foot of St Eloi hill, we got out and started off across the fields towards a herd of cows – I following. When we got there, a marvellous radiant vision of a dairymaid rose from her task; she might have just stepped off the light opera stage of the Dairymaids – it didn't look real – but it was; there was the herd, the milk, the pails, the mud and mess. An animated conversation in Flemish revealed that Father – up there – with the harvesters, knew all about it. We found ourselves walking along a small ditch-like stream, the Diependal Beek, and could soon see the ruins of a culvert. The Damm Strasse had been levelled, and now was only an unnatural disturbance of the surface of the valley.

The old farmer, who spoke English perfectly, when he knew our quest, was full of it. Did he know the Damm Strasse? "Why! I helped to build it. Little more than a lad at the time – about 1902, I should say. Yes, I worked at the White Chateau at the time – he wanted a straight and level road from his house to the main road – it was a big job – we built a tunnel-like bridge over the brook big enough to drive our farm carts through". "Then it was high?" "Oh, yes – the Germans had rows of dug-outs in it, one above the other". "May we walk along it?" "Well, my land ends here; you had better ask at that farm house", pointing to the one on the main road, where there was still evidence that the embankment had joined it.

The friendly busy young family at the farm readily gave permission. We were astonished to find how particular the Belgians were about trespassing on each other's land. So we walked to the point where I had last seen Col Haig Brown, and those others of the 23rd Middlesex, whose names are in the War cemetery near the deadly triangle. Sentimental? Yes. But this little bit was all I know of real war, and war had ruined and governed the lives of my generation.

On our way back, a farm worker, boy and dog, joined us. Yes, he was a boy during the war – knew the Damm Strasse well, with its dug-outs – no, nobody

[9] went into them – said to be full of dead Germans! "What happened to it?" "Oh, it had been partly destroyed after the war and was like that for a long time; then about 1930 it was blown up and levelled like this!"

So – we had seen what I wanted – and our little pilgrimage was ended, and as we returned to Ypres where the great square was empty – surrounded by brilliantly lit restaurants – all empty – and went to the Menin Gate – where fifteen people had gathered – to hear the Last Post; we realised that during the last fort years pilgrims had streamed in their millions to these pathetic historic spots – to pay tribute; but that soon – passing into history – only the student and the tourist will come and gaze – it will all be one with Thermopolae.

We went to Reninghelst, where I had made the model, to have our refreshment at the Commercio Estaminet I knew so well. The quiet town seemed to be asleep, still resting from its harrowing experience; all tidied up – I hardly knew it. Only the garage had a sign of life, and we stopped. "Do you know the Commercio Estaminet?" None of the men had ever heard of it. "Oh, well. I know where it is – let's have a walk; straight down – turn left at the Church and there you are – on the right. But no – no estaminet. But there was a decrepit old man with a muck barrow working in the road. Pointing to a charming house in the row, I asked "Was that house the Commercio Estaminet?" The old boy's eyes boggled at me – "That was a long time ago". "Yes – the first world war – I lived there." "Oh, I knew it before that – Mrs , the daughter, still lives there – go and see her – she would like to see you." Good enough. We were charmingly received by a neat little lady of about 60, who declared she remembered me; that she was the elder of three daughters who waited on us. I had to be gallant but honestly it was the first time I knew that I had been waited on by three charming girls. As a young man, if I had a job to do, I was absolutely blind to feminine charms. The governess of the White Chateau had only recently died, she remembered her well. The Estaminet was closed when their father died, and they made it into their private residence. Most charming too – a strange contrast to the free beer house atmosphere of 40 years before. Many relatives of the Middlesex Regt. had come to stay with her, for the Middlesex were often quartered in the town. One lady – sister of one who was in the British cemetery

[10] opposite, had come every year for twenty eight years.

Well, it had all given us a lot of food for thought, and before I go back to the hospital, to the routine of a record, I'll sum these up in this doggerel:

The Damm Strasse

The Dam Street, the road of frustration of Life
will yield to the effort of man or his wife
or even a soldier bent on his task
may find that the end may not be the last
but just the beginning of a new street or road
not dammed or damned but open and broad

where we all may travel, straight and true
with plenty of room for me and you
whether you are black or brown, yellow or white
But remember
Leave your guns behind.

At the end of 1917 I was getting well enough to go out a bit, and about this time I was very flattered to have a request to visit General Sir Sidney Lawford DSO., who had come over to be knighted. He received me in his rooms in Jermyn Street with Lady Lawford, on his return from the Palace, and told me the Division was going to Italy, and I would like to come too and model the Italian mountains? I was thrilled at the prospect. He asked my position. "Still in hospital – but I feel fit enough to come at once". "It's not so easy as that" he said, "If you can get overseas, I can claim you. Get overseas – and go to the first R.T.O. to inform me by telegram, and it's done". I thanked him and said I would do my

[11] best. He looked as handsome and dashing as ever, and dolled up for his Palace visit; the stage could not have produced a more perfect example of a gallant general. As he shook hands, he said "Well, I'd like to have you, Thomas. Your models were useful. Goodbye and good luck".

How could it be done? I thought it would be nice to write to Sir Francis Lloyd and tell him of the General's wish – it would give me an opportunity of telling him that his interest in getting them to take me in the service had been of some use. Also he might be able to pull strings again. I received a short note from one of his staff, that the General would see me at the Horse Guards. At the precise moment, I was ushered in and announced. The General walked over to the swing window, opened it a little more, as though he did not intend to be contaminated by this common fellow, turned a fierce eye on me, and with a military staccato said "Well, what is it?" I realised he did not know me. "Lieut. Cecil Thomas, Sir. I engraved your seal". The change was magical – the eye softened – the fierceness disappeared. He came forward and shook me by the hand; we walked slowly towards his desk and we sat down. "Oh yes, I have heard of you. My Chief of Staff was G.S.O.I. of the 41st and has told me of your model. What fools they were to keep you out because of your glasses. What a struggle we had with them! Well, what can I do for you?" So I explained Sir Sidney Lawford's wish. He thought a moment and said "You could see my friend the C.R.E. at the War Office – I'll give you a note" – dashing one off.

"My job's London District – I can't interfere. Glad to have seen you – goodbye and good luck". And my interview with the dressiest and smartest officer in the British Army, was over. He looked the part despite his grey hair – more spick and snappy than any subaltern. The order came to attend the C.R.E. at the War

[12] office, and when the old boy came into the small office, sat in his chair and glared disapprovingly at me – my heart sank. He seemed then and has seemed more so since, the typical general of the cartoonist – white walrus moustache – bald head – baggy cheeks, a mixture of white and pale purple. The conversation was confused, and I failed to make myself understood; the only clear impression I had when I got outside, was, that he thought I was a plasterer; that they had plenty of plasterers, and what the devil was I wasting his time for; and he gave a clear indication he'd seen enough of me, and I felt

and took his summary dismissal. I could do no more, and inquiries of the Medical Officer at the hospital made it clear I was in their hands, and nobody could do a thing without a Medical Board; and that I must abandon the idea. Italy – perhaps Ravenna and the mosaics – or Florence – what a pity!

Transfer to Convalescent Hospital at Birchington, where a large number of semi-fit men were bored to distraction, with nothing to do except sit in a small sweet shop and eat pastries – one sight of it was enough for me – what should I do? I hurriedly took a train to Margate, called at the Art School, and asked for facilities to model from life. They were readily granted if I produced and paid for my models. So I went in search of a good old salt, and found one who would come for a modest fee; and I enjoyed myself for the next week or so, modelling his miserable face; moulding it and casting it. Each day I travelled back on the train with some of the young hopefuls – all girls – that formed the class; and made some studies of one of them.

One evening in that first week I was enjoying a large book on Brangwyn, when another officer joined me and we had a marvellous discussion on the great Master's work; tracing how he achieved his amazing compositions – leading the eye wherever he wished, and discovering the subtlety with which every colour seemed to have its complementary with it. I asked him if he would share a studio with me if I could find one. The estate agent, Bayley & Co. said his sister was an artist and had a studio; I had better see her. She was charming and cooperative; every afternoon – we could have our friends – gave us a kettle and some tea things – and she'd leave us alone. Hamilton and I amused ourselves with our drawing and modelling; the art students came in and made tea for us – I did an appalling

[13] sentimental thing which was to be my masterpiece; and quite a good posthumous portrait head of an actor as St. George; a small commission now in the National Gallery of Wales. I always remember that studio as a trifling happy interlude, but I shudder when I think of the 'masterpiece' – an over modelled child sitting on a shrapnel helmet, with a bullet hole in it, playing with a disjointed toy soldier. And I thought I loathed sentimental art!

The spring and summer of 1918 found me at Borden on light duty, back with the remains of the old training Battalion, with Hyams as Adjutant. It had been turned into a most interesting experimental unit for the raising of low category men to a higher category, by physical training, games, etc. It was producing most astonishing results.

A large Medical Staff kept control, and I quite enjoyed nursing the weaklings when I saw what was being produced. Some were quite hopeless; one dear little boy who looked about twelve, was brought by a beautiful sister – their father was a general. This had made no difference – the C.3s. had been called up, and we raised 75% of them to B.1. category, and over, in three months. I had no difficulty in promising the pretty sister I would look after her brother as she confided in me that he was very delicate. I put him next to my nicest N.C.O. and took the first opportunity of finding if we could do anything with him. It was impossible. Nature had been cruel and forgotten to give him his manhood, and he was back with his family in a few days.

Another case was very different – a doting mother brought her boy, who seemed a normal size, and with tears in her eyes said that he'd been an invalid all his life and it was cruel to make him a soldier. I comforted her and assured her we would take great

care of him and I would keep my eye on him. All the N.C.Os. knew their job, and with one exception, were considerate and patient. The playing fields were half a mile from the camp, and the Companies marched it in various stages of equipment, according to their progress; the new recruits carrying nothing.

[14] On the first march of this recruit, he fainted after going 200 yards. A corporal was left to look after him, and he was told not to worry but to come on in his own time. It happened again; but in a week we had him enjoying one of the more childish games. He had never played with other boys before, but had always been kept in bed as an invalid by his doting mother. He made rapid strides, and was category A.1. in three months, doing a 4 mile march with full pack and rifle – taking on his own size with the gloves. Then we sent him home on leave, and a letter came from his astonished and grateful mother – she was amazed – we wondered if she realised what her dam fool doting had done.

I learnt many strange things from the M.Os. about our odd collection of humanity, and was surprised to find what a large sex maladjustment played in their troubles; that Hermaphrodites existed; and that all kinds of fantastic conditions of the sex organs seemed possible. Most of such cases were impossible to do anything with and were sent home.

It was fun organising all sorts of concerts and theatricals which I was keen on doing. One morning the Adjutant told me the Commanding Officer of the W.A.A.Cs. wanted to see me. There had been some difficulty in getting the W.A.A.Cs. co-operation in our theatricals. It was evident I was on the carpet. One of the scenes of the play we were rehearsing involved a pretty W.A.A.C. sitting on a Sergeant's knee and being kissed. Apparently the rehearsals, at which I had not been present, had been too enthusiastic for the Commandant. I never knew how she discovered – perhaps one of the other W.A.A.Cs. was jealous and wanted the part. Anyway the dignified young Commandant was very severe with me, and I had to bite my tongue hard to keep down the ripples of laughter that would keep surging up and wanted to send me into fits; the most tremendous effort of self-control I have ever experienced. The orders were – an officer to be present at all rehearsals,

[15] or the W.A.A.Cs. would be withdrawn. The sergeants wouldn't stand for it, but I got over the difficulty somehow, for we took the play out to a village one day, as well as the camp performances.

I made friends with a mother and daughter and was frequently their guest at musical evenings which were enjoyable.

That terrible scourge of 1918, the Spanish Flue was sweeping the camps; I seemed to have become camp funeral officer. Every day we all passed though tents filled with a mist of antiseptics, and special huts had to be set aside for the hundreds of patients. I determined I wouldn't get it.

It was Sunday morning and I felt not too good, and lazy; called the batman to borrow Taylor's thermometer – 100 – "Good! Run over to the M.O. and say temperature 100; can I stay in bed?" The reply was to the point: "Don't you dare get up. I'm coming over". He stripped off the sheets, plied blankets on me; dosed me; and said "Keep covered up".

The fever mounted; the sweat poured out; the temperature went to fantastic heights; it was like a consuming flame; and then it died away, as though there was nothing more to consume. It left a two to three inch boil on my back where the shrapnel, which was insisted in my diaphragm, had entered. It meant hospital – Cadogan Square was possible again.

There were glad to see me and unsuccessful attempts were made to remove the shrapnel, but the wound area was a mass of suppurating channels which evidently went down to the foreign body in the ever moving diaphragm. It showed such a muddle on the X-rays that they could never locate it, so they hoped it would insist again as the resection operation was considered too dangerous.

[16] I went up and down with the poisoning, painted many miniatures and one oil portrait, of the staff; one of my brothers came in for a few weeks, with a flesh wound – his fifth.

Then to Fowey in Cornwall to convalescence. With a sailing boat, good friends and sketching, the autumn passed, and the Armistice came – A Medical Board at Plymouth. A brusque Medical Officer – "What are you carrying this bit of shrapnel about for? You will come into hospital and we'll have it out!" "But Sir, Mr Laming Evans says it is too dangerous to take out, and he is a very eminent surgeon". "Yes, I know, but you'll come to hospital and we'll deal with it". "Yes, but I don't wish it unless he agrees – he knows the case". "Now look here", he said angrily, "You can't go through life with that in you; go outside and cool down, and when you have come to your senses, come back and we'll fix it up". I was very troubled; it sounded too casual, and the sort of man who'll have a go at anything; very different to the cautious approach of Laming Evans, who had the reputation of being a courageous surgeon, even earning the name of Bloody Laming Evans. A little corporal orderly, had shown me in and out and saw my distress – "Glad you stood up to him, Sir; he wants a bit of that; there's an A.M.O. 1234. which says you can claim to go back to your original surgeon". "Is there really? Good boy". Presently I was ushered in again. "Well, have you thought better of it?" "Yes, Sir" – jauntily! – "I claim under A.M.O. 1234. to be sent back to my original surgeon". If looks could kill! I hope the gallant corporal didn't catch it, but that December I was again back at Cadogan Square. Still the same charming atmosphere, but the War was over and there was an easiness of mind replacing the anxiety caused by the appalling casualty lists. Here I met the handsome youth whose tragic death inspired my first important work of sculpture – Alfred Forster – only 21, from Winchester, through Sandhurst to the Greys – a blighty wound in the leg – not serious – and now making

[17] recovery in this hospital, near his parents' London home. Never have I enjoyed talks on Life and Art so much; though I was 12 years older, there was no subject on which he was not better informed than myself. I was amazed that one could know so much at such an age; his was the richest mind I had met, and now looking back, I see how war deprived the generation I have lived through, of men like Alfred, who from his quality and opportunity, would have made a marked influence on the events of his time. Alas! We were both to have our operations within a week of each other; his just a little clearing up operation to hasten recovery, so that he could go to the seaside and convalesce. Mine – a grim resection of the ribs, collapse of the lung, in an endeavour to locate and remove the foreign body under the heart. If it could not be removed without piercing the diaphragm, in which it was insisted, then I was to be sewn up again, nursed back to health, and another attempt from the abdomen side would be made.

The surgeon who was to have helped Laming Evans, died suddenly the day before the date. A young C.C.S. surgeon, on leave, took his place.

I felt so cheerful as I lay on the operation table; it was going to be ended one way or other; and I felt full of confidence. The serious faces of the nurses, so purposeful in their preparations; and then, casting my eyes up, I realised Dr Hedley who was the Anaesthetist at St Thomas's; and the Physician in charge of our little hospital was on his knees. I woke up feeling very hungry, said I would like a steak pudding, and was it out? Yes, it was out and I was to keep quiet and go to sleep. But I felt fine – what had happened? In good time I learnt that Laming Evans had asked the young C.C.S. surgeon, who had a reputation for kill or cure operations and desperate cases at the C.C.S., to come and help him; that this young surgeon was appalled when he realised I was to be cut up to get at the foreign body, and had asked to have a go with the probes first. For twenty minutes he persevered and then the bell rang; and in a matter of moments it was out, and the hospital was amazed to hear a cheer from the closed operating room; the end of 18 months trouble so simply won.

In a fortnight I was up and about; we were all worried that Wag Forster did not make the progress expected from his little clearing up operation. Something was going wrong; a special ward, special nurses, specialists coming and going, delirium. I was allowed to see him, as he became quiet and normal when I first saw him. We talked for a little. Alas, septicaemia had set in and he died. I felt

[18] a great sadness, and sorrow for his family, who had already lost their eldest son. They had been so kind to me, asking me to a dinner party at their house solely because their boy spoke of me as his friend. How well I remember the occasion with its charm and kindness, and the lovely sister Ray, newly married to Pitt-Rivers [fascist], present; later to become the well-known actress, Mary Hinton [Emily Rachel Pitt-Rivers, 1896-1979]; probably the most beautiful and charming girl of her generation.

The morning after the death of Wag Forster is vivid in my memory. The mother came to my bedside saying "Wag told us you were an artist; could you make a sketch of him, as we would like to have a memorial. Asking what kind of a memorial they were thinking of, and learning that it was to be a recumbent figure, I said a model would be more useful to the sculptor, and would they mind if I made a model. So I secured plasticene and a small board, and persuaded the Matron to let me work in his room that night. It had to be done secretly, and I could go up at 11 o'clock, when all was quiet and I should not be noticed as absent from the ward.

It was a sad and poignant experience to model the body of one's friend. I worked for three hours and found it difficult to control my emotions. At one time I was quite certain there was someone else in the tiny room. I fought down the desire to look round, telling myself not to be silly. The room was dimly lit by the one bedside lamp that shone on the dead face, and on my model close beside it. Finally I could resist the impulse no longer, looked round – and nearly jumped out of my skin, at a figure in white – the night sister – who had stood behind me for ten minutes – having entered without a sound. She came in quietly so as not to disturb me!! By 3 a.m. I had modelled to scale, down to the waist, a portrait of this handsome and finely drawn figure, with its sensitive face and hands. But my model was of a dead man and it hurt one to look at it. After showing it once to Wag's parents who were obviously moved by it, I never showed it again. They seemed so content that I should make this memorial because Wag had spoken of me,

and because they were impressed by the fact that I had been able to produce such a model under such circumstances. I too was impressed that without having seen my work, they should have such confidence in me, and deep were my thoughts on the strangeness of destiny, that should enable me to live, when I should have died, and he who should have lived, thus to pass away. A youth who at 21 has a mind so all

[19] embracing that he could hold his own with me on my own subjects, to which I had given 15 years thought and practice. He knew the horseshoe case in the old Geological Museum as well as I did, and on social questions had a mind so broadly attuned to the conditions that were to dominate the next 80 years of the world's history, that, had he lived, he would, with the advantages of his family and traditions, have occupied one of the greatest positions in our country's affairs. With such thoughts I determined with God's help, I would make him live in death, that the qualities of greatness that belonged to him, might go sown the ages, and perhaps help to show mankind the uncounted cost of their foolishness. Perhaps bring consolation to the many who are bereaved; by trying to convey in bronze the immortality of the soul.

I had five years in which to do the work, for his parents went to Australia in 1920, as Lord Forster [1866-1936] was appointed Governor General, and with my mind very full of a great task, and a great responsibility, I settled down to work.

But before this many difficulties had to be overcome; one, the finding of a studio, in which I ask I enrolled all the nurses and the matron, as searchers; applied to numerous agents, and read the advertisements; for, alas, dancing and good time girls had rented all the artists' studios, vacated by the artists on War service.

I have heard many stories of the hospital of the First World War, but I feel none could have left on the minds of their patients such a sense of enchantment and devotion to their work and its purpose, than the Gerstley House Hospital in Cadogan Square. My tribute is that the picture of these gracious women, their quiet efficiency, the smile of their encouragement never left me, and friends I made there lasted my life through. Admittedly I was popular, though I did not know it; for lying in bed month after month, my nimble fingers poured out portraits in wax, portrait miniatures, and oil paintings and carvings. One little joke stands out – a little elderly spinster, 5 feet nothing of devotion to us all – we all adored her and teased her unmercifully; I modelled an ear – I love modelling ears and hands – painted it as though it had been torn off and bleeding, and laid it on the floor of the ward, after we had all settled down for after lunch sleep, knowing she would come in very quietly on tiptoe about 3 o'clock. We all lay asleep with one eye open to watch the effect. It was quite dramatic – she seemed to clutch herself all over at once; gave a horror stricken shriek and fled –

[20] coming back with Sister Murphy – both looking extremely grave. But Sister Murphy's Irish wit and her surgical experience, made light of picking up a bloody ear, and with a laugh she looked towards my silent bed. So amidst all the pain and suffering, and the sadness of losing Wag, many happy memories remain.

I have always had a fresh air complex. When at Shoredam I got all the officers sleeping out in their camp beds and thinking it was lovely – as indeed it was – until one night a thunderstorm burst on us while we were asleep – it certainly damped our enthusiasm – for I don't remember doing it again voluntarily. But whilst in Cadogan Square, I begged that I might be allowed to sleep in the bed on the veranda [sic]. It was

used for patients in the day time in the fine weather – there was a waterproof canopy over it and I argued with Matron that it was the best thing possible for my chest wound. "Well, if I could get the Doctor's permission – yes". Dr Hedley was a good scout – a hard headed Yorkshireman – not brilliant but very thorough and we all owed him a lot. He agreed, and during that day, such a coming and going to the veranda bed as never was. Finally I was put in and tucked up – such a tucking up I had never had before – with a bell, and strict instructions to ring if I felt cold. Cold! Within ten minutes I was boiling and threw out, half a dozen hot water bottles – still I boiled, and after some persuasion managed to reduce the quantity of blankets to a reasonable proportion.

I spent many restful weeks or months – I forget – on that balcony, and still remember waking up cosy and warm one morning with an inch of snow on the water-proof counterpane. Facing me on the south side of the square were some tall houses with what looked like studios at the top, and from one of them, most afternoons, very enjoyable singing and piano playing delighted me, so that I would put down my book or my work, for the sheer joy of listening. I often thought I would see if I could get one of the studios there – a nice central position, and it seemed there might be some on the ground floor. So, when I had recovered, and was in the throes of finding a studio – one of the first things I did was to measure the paces from these studios, of wish I could only see the back, to Sloane Street. Then measure the same paces along Cadogan Gardens, and ring the bell. This I did, and a big, pretty girl answered the door, but when I said "Please forgive me, but I believe there are some studios here and as I am looking for one, I thought –",

[21] she seemed to explode with some inner mirth, and rushed from the door, leaving me standing. A most courteous elderly gentleman came and asked if he could help me. I explained, and he asked me to come in; one by one, five charming girls came in and were introduced, including the one who had exploded. There was an air of amusement, and I was given tea, and I voted them grand sports, and the old gentleman, ripping – the term in those days. This started a happy friendship lasting for years – gradually separating with deaths and marriages, but as I write this 38 years after I have just had tea with the happy family of one of those girls. It was many years after, that I was to learn something that touched me very much. I was reminiscing of the days on the balcony in Cadogan Square, and telling my friends of the pleasure I had in listening to some delightful music, that came from one of the houses near where they lived then. I often put my book down because I preferred the music. "We know you did!" "You know I did? How?" She put her hands up like opera glasses and smiled. "Why – could you see me?" "Oh, yes. We watched you a lot – that is why we played and sang to you". Well – well – isn't that wonderful? And so I have thought ever since.

As the hospital closed down, patients and nurses dispersed, the battalions demobilised, and we uneasily got back into our civilian occupations. I could not help feeling humbly thankful for my preservation, and for the strangeness of the way my love of art and of making things, had seemed to influence and direct the outcome of it all. For I had many commitments and other activities to look forward to.

The foreign body so simply removed from my diaphragm, had healed and would never worry me again. I had at least ten commissions to paint portrait miniatures, from various friends of the staff, who had liked those I had presented to those who attended me. The Callard family, my first clients from my first exhibit in the R.A. in 1905, were

waiting for me to get back to work, so that I could design the memorial to Ralph Callard, who died in 1917; a wish that heartened me.

I had been asked to serve on the council of the Royal Society of Miniature Painters because the President, Alyn Williams, wanted to widen the activities of the Society, to include the miniature crafts, and having seen my exhibits in 1913, thought I could help. The idea interested me so I had accepted. The tiny family business

[22] wanted rejuvenating like everything else. It was reduced to my father, the clerk, and the bright little apprentice who had grown up into a physical and mental wreck – I gathered, from moral demoralisation.

One incident remains to be related. The staff of the hospital wanted to give their gracious chiefs presents as souvenirs of the five years they had worked so splendidly together. There was a feeling of disappointment among staff and patients alike, that Mrs Gerstley had only received an M.B.E. in the recent honours list. It seemed to us a very little reward for all she had done in providing and managing this hospital. I was asked by Florence Davis, the theatre nurse, to advise about the presents. I told her of the craftsmen silversmiths, Ramsden and Carr, for whom I had so often worked. We went to see them, and Capt. Alwyn Carr [1872-1940], who had just return from abroad, received us. He certainly showed us some silver, but he did not seem able to talk about silver. His mind was full of other things. He had come back to his lovely home, to which he had been looking forward, to be told by his old friend and partner, Ramsden, that he was not wanted, and that he must go elsewhere, as Mr and Mrs Downes-Butcher and their children were coming to live there , and there was no room for him. “We have got to go to law over it”, he said dismally. “I would not have believed my friend could have done this to me – we have done everything together; built our reputation in the crafts, and built this lovely home. When we arranged that one of us should join the forces, I had no idea such a thing as this could happen” he spoke with great bitterness and was near to tears. We hurried away; I found it shattering. I told Miss Davis of how they were my first clients in the art world; of what an inspiration they had been to me by their approval of my work, and by employing me. How I envied such a friendship as theirs and wished I had been equally lucky.

Though it had been the common lot of those who had served, to go to hospital, and be nursed back to health by devoted women, and the nation, in consequence, had become more conscious of women’s value in national life, many had returned like Carr to find homes broken by human frailty, that same human frailty that had precipated our entrance into war sacrificing others for our greed and need. On the whole I had found the war an ennobling [sic] experience, far outweighing the destruction of the human body and spirit that was inseparable from it. I had had no emotional ties, so felt as free as could be, to enter into what turned out to be four interesting years of hard work, and play.

[23] Not all my experiences in the hospital were charming; one I could have done without, for it left a stain. A rather coarse, bulldog like lieutenant was put in the next bed to me. A German shell had exploded quite close to him; it had gone into the soft ground before bursting; he had gone up into the air with the debris but was quite uninjured. The shock had done something to his insensitive nerves which demanded a few weeks rest in hospital. He had certainly come to the right place for it. There was nobody on the other side of him, so if he didn’t talk to me, he would have to be silent. I tried all my subjects, but he didn’t know anything about art and ‘all that rot! He was bursting to talk about one

subject – women – and his prowess with them. One cannot go through life without meeting many blackguards; you meet them here and there on the fringe of the art world – very rarely in the middle. In most assemblies of men that get thrown together by circumstance, as in War, a more or less colourful example of this type of cad will appear. But this example was remarkable to me, for the lengths he went to achieve his ends. Two stories of his achievements, as he related them, will suffice. Marching into a home town with the Battalion, who were to be quartered there, many folk standing at their windows watching; he saw a comely wench who was just his cup of tea. "So I tipped her a good big wink – she smiled at' the tribute' and wincked back", so he noted the number of the house. As soon as the men were disposed of, and he was free, he walked round to the house, rang the bell – and when she answered the door, said he was the billeting officer, and wanted to see the occupier of the house – her husband was out – could she tell him anything? "When can I see him?" "Oh, he won't come home from work until this evening". "I knew she was my cup of tea all right, so I said "Well, I want to make some notes about the accommodation. Can I see it?" "Oh, yes" with a giggle. When we got to the bedroom I just said "Well, what about it?" She was an easy one.

His next story was even more devastating and diabolical. We had a summer hut in the square, and on sunny days the patients would be taken over by the nurses in wheel chairs, or on their crutches, and wicker couches and tables produced from the hut. The staff would play tennis; tea was produced and the idylls of an English garden party did us a lot of good. This rascal knew all this, so as soon as he was allowed out, he borrowed the keys of the square hut one day, to go and read in the garden, and had copies of the keys made at a locksmiths. Henceforth this quiet well treed square and hut was his. He told me this one

[24] evening on returning from one of his adventures. I was astonished at the ease with which he secured his victims; especially as he put it, he always picked up a lady; none of your prostitutes for him; and furthermore they had to be married or he left them alone. When I asked why this preferment? "Well, you see, if they're single, after it's over, they want to follow you up; whereas if they're married, all they want to do is to get away; well, that suits me – they are all in tears and making a fuss about if their husbands knew. I was glad when the blighter was put out on the balcony, and soon left us. So I believe was everybody else.

The type is difficult to avoid, especially when they impinge through being related to some friend. One such, a handsome boy, developed the practice before he left school. We used to carry walking sticks in those days; I think the habit was the last survival of carrying a dandy cane. This boy's stick had a long row of notches; he was very proud of them; each one represented a girl he had had connection with. He became a very gross looking man later in life; fortunately he was not difficult to avoid.

One day Matron said she had seen from the top of a bus, a lovely house that looked empty; she felt sure it was a studio. On this slender information, I first saw the house I have since owned and worked in. It was empty, in its lower half. The neighbour could give no information, so I decided to bring a large table knife the next day, force back the catch of a basement window, get in and see if there was a studio. What a surprise I got – not the ideal lofty studio sculptors prefer, but 45 ft. long with 40' by 15' of glass, adequate for my work, and with handsome reception rooms. I determined to have it. But who owned it? Why was it empty, with the prevailing clamour for houses? And no advertisement 'To let'. So I called at the nearest agent – Willets – where a charming man –

God bless him – put me on the track – said he thought – Blanks – the solicitor, had the matter in hand. A call on Blanks, where I obviously was asking awkward questions, for they produced nothing more than that – I had better go to the House Agent in charge, which I promptly did, only to learn that the property was not available, and that they had not yet received instructions and that I had better call later on. I said "No. I gather from you the house will be available – it is just what I wanted", and that I would rent it on lease, and would they pass on my offer to their client with my references and bankers address. They did not seem enthusiastic, but I realised

[25] that my officer's uniform with the blue hospital armlet and the gold wound stripe, was having an effect, for we were in the first six months after the armistice, and the whole country was still in an emotional state, welcoming the soldiers home. A week passed, excitedly waiting the reply of acceptance. I had to go and have another admiring look at the outside, and called on the Agent. Yes, he had heard from his client, and regretted I was not acceptable to him. I blew up – not acceptable – why not – on what ground etc etc,? The Agent was suave and polite. "I am sorry. I can do nothing – that is the answer". I returned disconsolate and walked up and down opposite the house thinking – what shall I do? I thought it had been handed me on a plate and now snatched away – somehow I must get it – it seemed to be my home – and as I looked I saw the date it was built – the year I was born or at least, conceived; which was better still. I'll have another go at the neighbours – no result – and never an answer from the next house, which it seemed was occupied, and in the same building. I must wait – sure enough a man approached next door and produced his key to enter. A foreigner with a kindly way – he was sorry he was only a lodger and knew nothing of the empty house. Did he know who his landlady paid her rent to – well, he wasn't sure, but a firm named Farrer in Lincoln's Inn had something to do with the house. "Good. Thanks. I'll try them". First a telephone booth – Farrer – Ah, here they are – solicitors – good – I won't ask for an appointment – sail right in and ask for Mr Farrer.

When I entered the quiet dignity of the lovely Lincoln's Inn home of the house of Farrer's, I had a feeling of calm come over my concentrated mind – the spacious lofty Georgian Hall with its mellow panelling and carving made me feel small and unimportant. The beautiful broad staircase with the carved balustrade' swept slowly to realms where all the histories of all the families of England seemed to dwell; small and insignificant though it made me feel, it gave me a feeling of immense confidence and trust, and I handed in my card with the request that I could see Mr Farrer respecting the house at 7, Gloucester Terrace, Sth Kensington [?], and waited at the foot of the handsome stair. As I write this 38 years after, I can still see the tall man in the morning coat, slowly descend holding my card and with an enquiring look on his face. I had a definite enquiry that had been seething in my brain for two hours – why was I not acceptable? I must know the reason – so

[26] the question quickly formulated itself. "Good morning. I have made an application to rent this property, and have been told that I am not acceptable to the landlord, and would be glad if I could know why". "Did you expect to be accepted?" "Certainly. I know of no reason why not". "Well we do not attach undue importance to a banking account, but we expect applicants to have an account at the bank they name". The answer stunned me for a split second – it was so unexpected. "I have no account at my bank. That is soon settled. I'll go to my bank now and get a letter from the Manager saying how long I have been a customer, and what they hold of mine. Will that be sufficient?" "Certainly. We shall be interested to see that". "Right Sir, I'll get it now". I took a taxi – an extravagance – and

was soon unfolding my tale to the Manager. He was very sympathetic, but regretted he could not give me a letter. The inquiry must be dealt with in the usual way. I blew up and argued the unusual circumstances, but no. It was irregular, and he could not do it. I said a great deal then, quietly, but with a grim earnestness that evidently convinced him, for he wrote the letter, and I was again waiting at the foot of the handsome staircase and handing the letter to the dignified one. He read it slowly and said – "I see – I see –"What he saw, I don't know but this next words also cleared a fog from me. "You need not worry any more, Mr Thomas. We will inform the Agent that we accept you as the tenant. You will not be able to take up the tenancy as far as we are concerned until next March (ten months ahead) as the property will not revert to the ground landlords, our clients, until then. Perhaps you can arrange with the subtenants in the meantime. I was enthusiastic – how splendid – our family business wants pulling together, after the War, and it will just give me time to do that. My solicitor attended to the preliminaries – I just sat on the fence and did nothing more.

The First Four Years, 1920-24

[1] In March 1920 I was able to enter the lovely house in South Kensington, as a tenant for 6 1/4 years. I took my Field service camping kit, and camped in the empty studio, starting to plan the difficult problem of furnishing and equipping such a grand place, with very little money.

I had not camped there more than ten days, when I collapsed in the West End, and was taken to the Charing Cross Hospital, where an emergency operation was performed for a perforated stomach, from duodenal ulceration. I was to have a further operation as soon as I recovered from the first, to have the duodenum removed, and a new exit made at the bottom of the stomach. The surgeon said that the further operation was necessary, as he had closed the hole, but it was too small to do the work of digestion. I asked Dr Hedley's advice. He said the operation was a very recent surgical development, its long term prospects were unknown; and he thought it better to live on fish and slops than risk it.

Charing Cross Hospital is a grim memory of terribly overworked nurses.

After I came round from the anaesthetic, as everyone knows who has had a stomach operation, or probably any other, the thirst is intense; and after my long sojourn in the Gerstley Hoare Hospital where devoted V.A.Ds. were always at hand for such needs, I naturally expected a drink. There seemed to be one nurse; it was about 3 a.m., and every time she passed I hissed as loud as I dared – "Nurse – Nurse".

[2] After about six times I got desperate, and, with a 'please, quick, nurse', she came – a most beautiful girl – and in response to my frantic demand for a drink, said 'she was not allowed to give me a drink after a stomach operation', that 'she was alone on night duty, with 40 men in the ward, and 30 women in the next ward, of whom, two were expected to die', that 'I was not going to die and I must be quiet'. I could only say how sorry I was to bother her; but ever since I have seen the swift silent rush of that ~~tired~~ figure from patient to patient, as she desperately tried to cope with her impossible problem. The two patients died that night. In the morning I asked for a private ward, (and a private nurse) from the Almoner, but both were impossible. After a week I felt well enough to agitate to be allowed to go to a Bournemouth private hospital, and the Surgeon said he would take the stitches out on the 10th day, and if I went in a private ambulance at my own risk, with a nurse in charge, he would let me go. All fixed up, I waited in the ambulance for the nurse, only to be told quietly by a friend of hers, that the girl had changed her mind and did not want to go. I told the driver to get cracking before I was put back to bed. I hope patients and nurses have a better time of it now; but by God, the nurses did a heroic job in that hospital in those days.

After Bournemouth, I stayed at Lepe House on the Solent, with Mr and Mrs Forster, to convalesce, and whilst there made some studies for the recumbent effigy, and got to know the most wonderful people I had ever met, and who were to prove my most devoted friends and patrons through a long career. In such an atmosphere of understanding

[3] where my friendship with their beloved son, gave me their affection, my artistic impulses dulled by trade and war, were quickened, and it was in great heart, though still a bit weak, that I returned to my still empty studio, already looking very nice with its grey

poplin curtains to the vast windows, grey carpets, and blinds in the 40 ft. of glass in the studio roof. I had a few pieces of useful studio furniture from my pre-war studio in Camden Town; my brother also had some furniture he was buying against getting married in a year or so; it was a convenience to both that I should use it till he wanted it. An odd piece or two from my parents, and three visits to the Caledonian Market, each time returning with a taxi-load of useful bits and pieces, bought at very small cost.

The marvellous curtain material 40" wide which a great firm brought up from a secret store, and let me have at 7/6 a yard, later to prove alive with moth – hence the price. The clever Lyndhurst told me to spray it with formaldehyde which brought it under control, otherwise the infestation would have been serious. Even then the place looked very sparse. I spread what models I had to their full extent, and advertised for a married couple. I had about 250 applications for my unfurnished flat and £1 a week, in return for looking after me had a bachelor tenant, I intended to get for my surplus first floor.

Out of the 250, Heaven must have helped me to select Mr and Mrs Morton – he a disabled soldier undergoing training for a civilian job, and she a remarkable even among women, in her ability to run a house, but also remarkable for the correctness, modesty and quiet dignity of her demeanour.

[4] She dressed like a housekeeper, and with her husband, who was a quiet, steady fellow, and useful with the odd work a studio demands, they ran my dinner and other parties, perfectly; gave tone to my lovely house – for I was always being complimented on my courteous married couple – and made life so smooth, that I thought of nothing but my work, and had never been so happy and contended. If I had known their rarity, I would have made an effort to keep them when after 6 years, they thought they would like a change, and to have their own house; and I certainly would have left no stone unturned to take them back when, after a year, they came and asked me to do so, as they found running a house on their own too expensive. Alas! I had a fairly good couple whom I did feel I could turn out – (they had to give up six month later). So the opportunity passed, but had they come back, and eventually met, and worked for the lady I one day married, I believe they would have remained life long friends in our service, so perfectly would they have appreciated each other, and suited my wife.

I then set about getting a tenant for my first floor, A Times advertisement brought me Mr B., an elderly accountant – just the kind of tenant I wanted – quiet and simple in his ways. A fortnightly dinner party with bridge, being his only extra; this being superbly managed by the housekeeper. I occasionally joined him in the evening, listening to the music in Hyde Park, and learnt his tragedy. He and his wife had been keen workers in a great religious movement. They had a son now grown up; but a year ago Mr B. said

[5] his wife deserted him and gone to live with another officer of this religious body. It had evidently made a deep impression on him; it certainly made a lasting impression on my romantic and imaginative mind.

Having arranged all these details of getting my house going, I decided to have an exhibition, and invite everyone I knew to come and see my studio and my work. It meant spreading a very little to fill a large space, but I was agreeably surprised at the result, and the way my friends rallied round, brought or sent others. One friend introduced the Royal Philatelic Society who wanted three portrait medals, of well known Philatelists. One, Lord Crawford, with his finely drawn features and flowing hair and beard made an

ideal subject for a medal design. I had been writing to inquire when I saw anything in the Press that looked like a job. The Hospital and Home for Incurables had received a Charter and wanted a seal. A Governor came to see me. He liked the seal, brought his wealthy friend, Clarke Thornhill with his 74 quarterings to his Coat of Arms – everyone an heiress. I designed three bookplates, made a seal set with precious stones from his collection, and engraved with his arms, but of course only the pronominal coats – the sort of thing I had done for Fabergé before the war. This luxury retailers business had died a natural death in the Russian Revolution.

The seal was an elaborate exercise in the style of the one I had made for Sir Francis Lloyd in 1913, which had gained me his friendship, and influenced my getting into the army.

[6] Clarke Thornhill had been in Peking in the Embassy during the Boxer rebellion, when they besieged the city. The British knew that if the rebels broke through, they would all be slaughtered, and the women outraged; and he, being a bachelor, had promised his friend, Captain D., that he would shoot his wife, if Dash were killed and unable to do so himself – an arrangement all were agreeing to. Clarke Thornhill had inherited many properties including the vast Elizabethan mansion of Rushton. One by one he had been getting rid of these responsibilities, retiring from all activities.

I had a telephone message one day from the Royal Mint, asking if I would call and see the Deputy Master, Col. Sir Robert Johnson, and bring examples of my work. I had a most informative interview, the first of a great many that I had in that room overlooking Tower Hill, where Benvenuto Pirsrucci, the Roman gem engraver, who carved the St. George and the Dragon of our Sovereign Piece, on a jasper, when he was chief engraver to the Mint, had often sat. Also where the great Wyons of coinage fame, forerunners of my friend, Allan Wyon, the sculptor medallist, sometime Hon. Secretary of the Art Workers' Guild, had been. The Deputy Master told me that he had been told of me by a junior member of his staff, and was surprised to see what I did, for he had been assured by Sir George Hill, that there were no hand engravers of seals and medals left in this country. I expressed my surprise, as Sir George Hill was familiar with my work, and was an Hon. Member of the Art Workers' Guild. Also I had shown him my work before the war.

[7] Sir Robert explained that as a soldier, he knew nothing of this sort of work, and as there was to be a great number of medals struck in connection with the war, he had asked that a Committee should be formed to advise him on the knotty problems. One of the things that they wanted done was a copy of the very lovely mediaeval seal of Winchester College; they had a number of impressions, but the matrix had been lost a great time ago. Sir George Hill who was the keeper of Coins and Medals at the British Museum, and was also President of the Royal Numismatic Society, was his chief adviser on these matters, and had told him that such work could not be done today.

I laughed at this; said I was prepared to make an exact copy of the Winchester Seal for X pounds; to guarantee that it would be exact; that if it were not, they could destroy it and I would not charge for it. He was obviously gloating over the prospect of pulling the leg of the eminent museum piece – that he, just a soldier, should find an engraver so quickly after being told they did not exist. Alas! A few days later I had a letter from Sir George Hill asking for the loan of examples of my work for him to show to an

important Committee. I had to ring him up and tell him that my case of specimens was at the Royal Mint, as the Deputy Master had asked for them.

This advisory Committee at its second meeting, having been told at its first that there were no hand engravers, and having my proposition about the Winchester seal put before them, had placed Sir George in a dilemma. He got out of it by suggesting that George Friend, whose work he produced at the Committee, and Cecil Thomas, should each be

[8] asked to engrave a portion of the seal; that the Committee should compare them, and give the commission to the one most faithful to the original. George Friend was a great personal friend of mine, for whom I had a profound liking and admiration. He was good enough to carry out all my line and surface engraving, i.e. two dimensional designs for bookplates and similar work, which he did with great skill and sympathy. The only engraving I did was three dimensional. In fact he mostly relied on other artists for his work to live by; as he was not bale at that time to get enough direct from the client. This was a great pity, for he was a brilliant creative designer, as the series of bookplates he has done for Cartier, the Bond Street jeweller, proves. The outcome of the Mint meeting was a letter saying that Sir George had recommended and the Committee advised as above. I was shocked at the suggestion, turned it down flat, told the Deputy Master that on no account would I compete with George Friend or anybody else, to prove who could copy an antique; either of us could do it quite well, and I repeated my offer.

I never discussed it with George Friend, but many years after he told me that it was the first communication he had ever had from the Royal Mint, that he was shocked at the ignorance it displayed; that he had informed them that either of us could do the work of copying – that on no account would he compete with me, and that they must decide on our own work. I was delighted our answers had been so much alike without any conference between us.

I had a letter from Sir George insisting that the assignment

[9] of the work be kept secret [letter of January 23rd, 1923], and hoping I would change my mind about refusing the work. This museum chief was always bewailing the loss of the craftsmen, particularly in the numismatic world of which he was head. Robert Johnson naturally had to turn to him when forming the advisory committee – George Friend and myself were the only two numismatic craftsmen in England, who had some claim to being creative artists as well. Hill knew us both quite well, and had a grand opportunity of putting his preaching into practice – the result was that George Friend was never employed by the Royal Mint and I had to find my place in the Mint after many years by winning anonymous competitions. I expect Robert Johnson, who was a crude type of soldier, roasted the Museum know-all, at that first meeting, and he never forgave us for being the cause, and for not backing his damn fool idea. He did however support Carter-Preston of Liverpool, a superb relief modeller, whose classic style was just what he liked.

This Committee has continued through the years, and on the whole has had a beneficial effect on the medal art of this country. That it has not had a greater effect is due, from my long close-up view, to the fact that the British are very ignorant and unresponsive to the art, and are little worse than barbarians where the third dimension is concerned. I shall have much to say of the Royal Mint and its work later on.

Altogether I secured £650 worth of commissions from that first exhibition in my studio, and established myself with so many friends who knew and

[10] liked what I did that I got over the initial difficulties of establishing myself, and from then on the work flowed in an unending stream.

One valuable client I secured before taking up residence in the studio. It was whilst I was pulling the family business together, in a quaint old world shop in Gt. Pulteney Street, that a young American officer came in on an impulse, and asked if I could make him a pair of links. As carved stones were popular at that time for such purpose, he was quite excited by what I made – a piece of white onyx, cushion shape – carved cross-hatch, set in a narrow frame of black onyx polished with a sapphire set in white gold in the centre. This kind of thing was the vogue at the time, with white onyx carved like linen, so I had already had some experience. He was so pleased he brought his friend Mr Simpson, a city financier, who had bought some of the Hope gemstones and wanted them mounted as presents for his wife. The work went on until after I went to South Kensington, and from time to time he would visit me there and give me a commission. He was fond of punting, my favourite recreation, and had at one time made a lovely garden up a backwater beyond Staines at Egham, where the Colne Brook joins the Thames, and where once I trespassed in my punt in order to see the garden. Now he was living at Compton acres at Canford Cliffs where he had laid out an English, French, Japanese, Desert and Wild garden, which had become internationally famous.

Then my pre-war client, Samuel Smith turned up again. His manager in Siam, Mr Margrett, who had found my portraits of Chula Long com so helpful with the Court, wanted a rock crystal Buddha carved as a

[11] gift from Prince Purachatra to the Emerald Temple in the Palace of Bangkok. He was brother or half-brother to the King and was head of the Siamese railways.

The Buddha had to be strictly according to the Siamese pattern and tradition so I had no freedom in design. I mounted it on an exquisite piece of pink jade got from my friend Gregory, the mineralogist. I undertook to do the work for £250 and worked out a scheme to put into practice my theories about the methods used by the ancient Egyptians in carving the giant and other statues in Diorite and other stones, with the tube drill. This, as I have written earlier had intrigued Sir Flinders Petrie so that now in 1921 at the London University Museum, I saw a magnificent collection of the drill, cores, part-drilled specimens etc. that made the whole story plain. Also, as I did not care to spend the time copying a traditional figure, I decided to make a copying machine and get a girl to operate it and so reduce my operating time. My friend, Col. Cecil Sylvestre Evans, commanding the Territorial Engineers, helped me, and we spent some jolly evenings together engineering. He often was glad to stay the night for he seemed to be involved in the Irish troubles – it was the time of the Black and Tans, and there were questions as to his safety.

Well, it all worked very well, except the consumption of drills was greater than I expected, and I spent too much time feeding the machine with tools. I photographed the figure in its various stages, and they served as admirable illustrations for a lecture to the

[12] Art Workers' Guild on Hard Stone Carving, especially in relation to Egyptian work. Mr Smith and his son visited the Studio during its progress, and were highly amused at the

home-made copying machine – slowly drilling – or grinding away the crystal, comparing it, with laughter to their batteries of machines at Cricklewood. The Buddha was mounted by Mr Margrett in a jelled shrine in Bangkok.

Before sending it I thought I would like all my friends to see it, so I arranged a Sunday afternoon party to exhibit it. I had a bachelor friend, Capt. Lovibond who had been in the Government service out East and had quite a good Oriental collection. He urged me to have a dramatic ceremony with lighting and smoke and unveiling, and started to scheme something, using his oriental costumes. It never happened; it seemed as though everyone connected with his poppy show died or became ill. Carrying on with my work and arranging this and that about the party, as I had done on numerous occasions, it seemed as though a stronger force than mine was countermanding and frustrating Capt. Lovibond's and my arrangements and the idea; at any rate there was no party. Looking back over the years with added experience, I feel certain that to make fun of the central figure of a great religion with countless millions of believers here and passed over, is to invite their opposition to such an idea, and that if as Christians, we worship the central figure of our faith, so must we honour all leaders of great religious movements, for the same reason for the Spirit is universal and eternal.

Most of my Sundays in summer I spent on the river in my punt;

[13] this lovely craft had suffered. I had left it at a boathouse at Kingston in August 1914, saying I would come and collect it after the war and would they store it for me. They agreed; there was nothing in writing; and when after five years, I turned up and claimed it they were obviously embarrassed, for they admitted they did not know whose it was or why they had it. They would not charge for the storage and made up the equipment on my word. It was quite obvious that the punt was much the worse for wear, and they admitted that not knowing who it belonged to, it had sometimes been hired out. However, I had about four years more enjoyment pushing its long and graceful shape on our lovely Thames. Finally the bottom became so rotten between wind and water that I foolishly allowed it to be shortened as the only way to save it. To me it became a grotesque punt, so I sold it, and gave up the most enjoyable open air exercise I know. Capt. Mark joined me camping on a memorable holiday at Whitsun when we spent one whole day in a deluge of rain; the only craft in sight; perfectly dry under our high canopy, and absorbed in reading.

For an unforgettable experience, camp under Cliveden Woods at Cookham at Whitsun; you will half wake at dawn and wonder where you are; it must be the angels singing and you have gone to Heaven; but the volume increases and you wake to a dawn chorus that seems from a million birds.

The Studio Club which had been formed just before the war in a basement in Lower Regent Street, had received many recruits from the defunct Arts and Dramatic Club which had completely collapsed after the founder committed suicide. It seemed to be run by two business

[14] men – friends of different character – one, a silent bachelor, a director of a great steel company (and other companies) with a golden voice; I never saw him dance: reputed to be very wealthy though he showed no signs – an enigma. But he must have had his heart in the right place – for, one evening at a large dinner, a girl sang to us with the most beautiful contralto voice I have ever heard. I asked about her from the brother

who introduced her, to learn that she was just a village maiden looking after her mother in the New Forest and sang a bit locally.

I asked him to invite her to sing to us again, and advise me so that I could invite a friend to hear her. So the enigma dined with us, and must have been impressed for he arranged to train this singer, got her a job in London, arranged everything and permitted a little concert singing. Lady Astor heard her and must have overwhelmed the girl with her enthusiasm for music, and her singing; for the girl abandoned the silent and gruff enigma, and threw herself into the arms of this new and wonderful patron. Those arms were, I expect, already overfull with good works, and the only result was the offer of a job in the Hippodrome Chorus. The gruff one merely remarked "That'll ruin her". More than a year must have passed when one evening she appeared again at our Lodge dinner, and sang to us. I went to the artiste's room and had a talk with her; nothing seemed right; she was back in the village looking after mother; "no, the gruff enigma had never written – no – Lady Astor hadn't done anything".

[15] I was having one of my Sunday tea-parties the next day, and the gruff one was coming, so I told her this, and invited her and told her she must train that beautiful voice so that she might become famous, and that people might have the enjoyment of hearing her. Well, there was a great reconciliation and the training started again under the enigma's control; but it did not last, and I think we lost one of the most beautiful voices of our generation, for I never saw or heard of her again.

The other director of this curious little club, P.....n, was a small quick man, particularly in his wits. He had a shrewd money making nature, and evidently made a lot, for he had a lovely house on the river, a large garden, gardeners and a launch. Why these two men gave their time to run this club is a puzzle – I think it was because they both wanted somewhere to go in the evenings, one because he was lonely and tired of his somewhat boorish self, and the other because his lovely home bored him – there were no children and his wife sat listlessly listening without ability to converse. I spent a weekend with them once, dull beyond description. I can only remember his great anxiety that I should take part in some betting transaction that was going to bring all sorts of wealth to those who took shares – "SO-and-SO had £20 in it and So-and-So £10 – how much did I want?" I did not bet and said so. He was so grieved that I should miss such a chance; I found it quite embarrassing. "What was the smallest share I could take?" 30/-- so I gave him that. Of course it went down the drain. Very unusual – grass was wet or some such nonsense – you must try again. Coming to town on the Monday morning he confided that his wife was very lonely and wished I would help him by taking her out sometimes. My dreamy eyed romantic nature revolted at the idea of such intrusion. The power I have always had of dismissing from my life or mind anything that did not accord with my ideas or code had saved me from many a pitfall;

[16] this was an easy one; but often the deep trust, confidence and affection that the young give to some other creature receives shocks difficult to treat in such a ruthless way; but though it often hurt, it was my inevitable way with that which offended me. It tended to make me lonely which I did not notice; so many friends were of a light, and even casual kind.

Most of the habitués of this club were lonely people or those who wanted amusement that did not cost much; two categories that fitted me. For they danced every evening to the marvellous piano playing of Stanford; and a well-cooked dinner only cost

about 1/6d. The directors must have used careful discretion in admitting members, for I never met a questionable man or woman there; and many interesting artists, writers, theatrical people and other professional people were members and found the complete absence of class consciousness, the easy casual friendship, the unpretentious set-up, deal tables etc., very much like an average studio furnishing, very satisfying. Regularly the Suffolk Street Gallery was taken for a fancy dress dance, called the Cheerios; they were great fun, and I generally knocked up some sort of dress in which to enjoy myself: the most amusing being in the form of a square bathing tent, the corner in front, opening so that I could throw the sides of the red and white striped tent over the shoulders to hang down the back. The tent roof rigid with four split canes to form the square suspended from the centre cane with a flag above. Two split canes attached to each side of my leather belt joined together over my head to support the contraption, and a 9inch deep string net below the scalloped eaves enabled one to see out and dance round with the partner inside. It was a great joke but devilish hot, and as so many girls are short and could not see through the net, I soon had to throw the hanging part over my shoulders.

[17] I met many there who frequently came to my Sunday afternoon parties at the Studio – the club being closed on Sundays. Many pretty girls joined the club and it was never very long before they were married. I introduced my old bungalow friend Hector to the club – he was married in a month and never seen there again.

One pretty Australian girl, a writer, golden hair, big blue eyes, pink face, dressed in primrose and sky blue on a summer afternoon on the river, was a picture that wanted all one's strength of mind to resist. She had literally fled from Australia because her mother – her mother – had run away with her sweetheart and was living with him. I was sorry for her, but such a frightening background ruled me out of any closer association. She married a Rhodes Scholar, a nice boy, dull and tame; they lived in New York for few years before they parted. Whilst in England she had written a serial novel for one of the popular newspapers, using my studio and its life as a background. I never read it but was told it was tripe.

Another pretty girl, whose dance programme was always full, attracted me very much. I took her to dinner and the theatre and learnt that her home life was very unhappy. Her parents living in the same house had not spoken to each other for years. I was taking her on the river on Sunday, so went to a backwater near the home of a very nice shy ex-Naval officer who doted on her and carried a handkerchief of hers that he had picked up. Sure enough he came out for a row in his dinghy, saw us, and I invited him to have tea with us. The following week I learnt at the club that they were engaged. I got some of the congratulations as many thought I was the lucky one. The businesslike speed of the lady shook and amused me, but I believe they lived happily ever after – at least I hope so.

Being so absorbed in my work, I seldom visited this club more than once a week, i.e. Saturdays evenings, my housekeepers being always free after lunch on

[18] Saturdays, and because of my absorbing work and the comfort of my home I had little difficulty in keeping out of entanglements with the pretty girls I met and danced with there. One girl got exasperated with me and in general conversation round the tables after dinner, said with contempt. "Oh! C.T. – he wants an angel from Heaven!" I retorted "And why not?" In a few weeks after, she married a quiet struggling artist, and shortly after appeared on the scene again, minus husband – cruelty was rumoured.

Though I had made many jolly friends among the members like Col. Tribe, a bachelor who had given up the House Physician's job at the Cairo Hospital to become the companion medico to Pierpont Morgan, and for years travelled the world with him; a most likeable man who like most of us busy but lonely men, found this inexpensive club, a Mecca for the lonely hour. Another nice friend was Brian Nash, one of the Professors of Music at the College, and later, an examiner. He gave delightful music parties at his studio which like the dances at mine, you were sure to meet nice people. I remember being introduced at the club to a charming young music critic who was already making a name. I invited him to my tea dance on the next day, a Sunday. In the morning he rang up to ask if he could bring a Mrs So-and-So. As she had recently been divorced I said I was sorry but I did not extend an invitation to her. "What nonsense! It's only a Studio party". I repeated I did not invite the lady, and if he did not like it he could stay away, and he did. I was looked upon as a prig, no doubt, but I have kept clear of a lot of ugliness in life. By 1924 other activities were filling my life, and so I dropped out of a jolly crowd many of whom I had known since I joined the Arts and Dramatic Club in 1908.

In 1922 I was burgled. It was a custom for us all to go out on Saturday evening and the house was left in darkness. The pub, The Denmark at the nearby corner was then a thieves kitchen, and various unsavoury rascals could always be seen hanging

[19] about. So many of the fraternity must have known our habits, and as I had no difficulty in "breaking in" with a table knife when I wanted to inspect the premises in 1919, so the thieves found it equally easy. They took my carved gem exhibits, mainly I think, for the gilded brass in which they were mounted, for they looked precious. As I locked nothing up, they did not damage to my furniture, but my tenant locked everything, so all his furniture with locks was forced open. My claim was for £250. The principal loss however, was that I had lost years of work that formed the basis of my exhibits, or samples, that brought me work. I had a lucky escape from a very serious loss, for I was due to send a winter exhibit to the Royal Academy, and had collected from my clients about £1200 worth of exhibits. They had all sent them earlier than the date required, from when I was insuring them. I was puzzled to know what to do with them, for I had no safe, and decided to hide them, so they escaped. It was in a way a life changing episode, for without my exhibition samples I tended more and more to the larger sculpture which finally was to my advantage. It also sent me to Col. Richardson, the breeder of Airedale dogs, and an unforgettable experience. I had enjoyed the friendship of my mongrel dog given me by my schoolfellow Frank Crookes in 1907, until leaving home to live in my studio, and work by day at the business workshop, whilst Vick remained with my parents. Now I certainly should have a dog again, a companion, a guard for my housekeepers who were a bit shaken by the burglary experience, and a protection generally. In the kennels were a large number of Airedales with an astonishing variety of expressions and appearances. One, a most noble animal with a light tawny coat of crisp short curls, larger than normal. I said "What a lovely dog". How much is it?" "£100". He was a champion something or other. I was flabbergasted. I was expecting to buy a nice dog for £5. Then I saw a dog I liked better, for the noble dog had rather looked down on me – I couldn't say he actually turned up his nose when I examined him, but the next thing to it.

[20] But this other one came to the full length of his chain towards me, leant on his chain, twisted his head sideways as though trying to see what I looked like upside down, and said as plain as anything – "I like you – please take me". – "How much is this one?" "£30" – "Oh dear! Can't you take less?" "Not a penny. There are plenty here at £10 and £15". So I

chose one at £15, and walked it into his garden, and waited whilst the Col. Made out the bill. The dog was dull – took not the slightest notice of me or anything. I went to the French window and said I could not take this dog – would he let me have the other for £25? Right; and in a moment we were back, and never have I seen a dog so excited as he saw us returning – the contrast to when he saw us go – and as we walked back and again I waited at the French window, his welcome and exuberance were overwhelming and touching. As we went home in the train full of men returning from work, they commented on what a good pal I had, for they took no notice of their caresses, but put his head on my knee and gazed with his soul in his eyes straight into mine. One could say it was some ham sandwiches I had brought to share with my new dog, were it not that for years that was his favourite position. I had often read of the remarkable friendships that have existed between animals and human beings but beyond that which had existed between my well trained mongrel and myself as friend and master, for he never needed correction; I had no experience. But this Airedale and I fell in love. It was impossible to receive such devotion to the exclusion of all others and not be moved by it. So we got to the stage that he went with me everywhere, sometimes to the great embarrassment of my friends; but

[21] so understanding was he that it never was embarrassing. My nice housekeepers were also very devoted to him and fed him, but it never seemed to cause a change in his affections; but as he got older it enabled me to leave him with them, when he got used to knowing that I always returned. He never barked unnecessarily, and as an instance of his sagacity, one day he sat up bristling on the stool in the studio – I had provided this to keep him from lying behind my feet whilst I was working, as I sometimes stepped back absent-mindedly with unhappy results. Then he started a low fierce growl, got off his stool and walked to the studio door – still with an attentive murmuring. Then the street door bell rang and he increased his quiet growling. The housekeeper came up to answer the door.

I was interested in his behaviour, for beyond alertness and listening when anyone came to the door, I had never known him to bark or go racing to the door as most dogs do; and had actually thought he would not be much use as a guard dog – he was just too nice, well behaved and gentle for anything so out of order. But suddenly he raced to the street door 40 feet away, with the most ferocious barking. As my housekeeper returned to her quarters, she looked into the studio and said "What a good thing Bob came to the door like that – that was a nasty man – he put his foot in the door and threatened me".

I thought the behaviour of Bob very remarkable that he should have sensed this rascal at least half a minute or more before he rang that bell, whereas hundreds of people had rung that bell and hundreds of times the housekeeper had to come up to answer it, but never once had he barked, though he always pricked his ears and often lifted

[22] his head; I never again thought he would fail as a guard. Alas, he became ill with felicular mange. For months I struggled with this treatment and that; three vets treated him and advised; one said that he should be put down; another, that London was no place for a dog; another that he was inbred and nothing could be done. If only I had met my wife before I lost Bob, I really believe he could have been saved, for she has a wonderful understanding of animals, and one of the simplest and surest of cures is proper food. My mongrel had eaten anything, and being in a family of eight there was

more than enough and he never cost a penny. Bob had regular supplies of raw meat, but not one vet had shown the slightest interest in how he was fed. Looking back I am sure that had my ignorance, the result of that long experience, been corrected, and strict correct feeding been the result, I would not have lost that remarkable dog friend.

In 1921 I was asked to design and make a portrait medal of the popular Prince of Wales, in connection with his state visit to India. So many artists have come a cropper over Royal portraits that I made a determined effort with the aid of photographs, to succeed; but after making 14 separate relief studies, I decided that if I could not get a sitting, I would abandon it. Sir Godfrey Thomas was his Secretary, a most charming man; he seemed to understand the problem for he got me a half-hour sitting at St. James Palace. I took the best of my wax models, and though my half-hour was reduced to 20 minutes, I got sufficient notes to give reality to the portrait and accuracy with a touch of exaggeration to make the portrait acceptable. He was a wonderful sitter – I was doing a profile model

[23] in relief; he asked me where he should look, and never took his eyes off the mark, though we talked the whole time, mostly of how he never had five minutes peace to himself, and of a few mutual war friends of his I knew in my Division. As most sitters turn their heads towards the artists as they address them, I came to the conclusion that the Prince had an instinctive or inherited understanding of how to sit for his portrait.

It was considered a successful portrait; exhibited in a Bond Street gallery, the Evening News secured a photograph and used it to head their welcome home Leader, without reference to the artist. This has been a common fault of the Press all through my life; to steal an artist's work and use it to illustrate news items. The charming voice that apologises on the telephone; the promise to correct it in the next issue; the search next day to find it; locating it eventually in an obscure column in a bottom inside corner of the small lunch sporting edition instead of, as one expected, in the leading position on the front page, where it had appeared originally, is the usual routine. Press ethics have been very low, and I have tended to ignore the Press, and not surprisingly, have been ignored in turn.

The Prince had a natural charm which had endeared him to all, but his petulance, and a lack of quiet manliness that one must have in a leader, was noticeably to me. A few years later I was asked by the Government to do a bust of the Prince to go in the entrance of the Buenos Ayres Exhibition in South America, which he was to open.

[24] I was asked because I had had a sitting and had produced a successful portrait, and the Prince had flat out refused to give any more sittings to artists. I think Sir Godfrey Thomas had put the authorities on to me as he knew I had produced a portrait and had only taken up twenty minutes of the Prince's time. I said I would undertake it if he would give me one more sitting, so that I could study the front view. But, no, he refused. I chased him to public occasions with my sketch book, but hardly got a line, so reluctantly, with a feeling of unfair treatment by the Prince, I refused the commission and the 500 guineas I badly needed, and all the publicity these royal portraits gave artists. However I still consider it better to keep one's reputation than lose it as some artists have done, on a royal portrait that has been modelled, drawn or painted without reference to the original face. That same twenty minutes study enabled me to do the models for the Coronation medal when the Prince became Edward VIII, but it never reached the die stage at the Mint. When one considers the importance of these

permanent records of historic persons that will survive when paper, paint and all such perishable materials have gone, it seems a pity that the success of such records should be imperilled, or the reputation of an artist ruined, through the petulant impatience with his job, of a spoilt boy.

I introduced Sir Nevile Wilkinson to the Art Workers Guild and he read a paper, raising a storm when it was published in the Times as having been read to the Guild. Many of the older members were furious and spoke darkly of expulsion under the Rules. However

[25] it blew over and he continued to ornament the meetings with his 6 ft 5 ins of soldier artist. Despite his size he did minute work in painting a mosaic in water colour, one of which was accepted in the R.A exhibition. This must have fired his artist enthusiasm for he started painting from life, highly coloured ladies with rich dresses, and colourful birds and flowers. They were quite well done but had no success at the R.A. so he tried them on the Miniature Painters Society. They tried to pass the buck to the Crafts Advisory Committee, but I refused saying they were paintings and nothing but paintings, and must be judged by painters. They were refused. I fear he thought I ought to have done something about it.

The Royal Mint had a number of problems for new seals and medals and though Sir Reginald Hill was not helping, Sir Robert Johnson asked me to do the seals for the mandated territories of Tanganyika and Palestine, and invited me to compete for the new Great Seal of England, I believe on the suggestion of Sir George Shuster prompted by Jack Baddeley. The King was very dissatisfied with Gilbert Bayes' Great Seal as I related when Lady Kathleen Scott had been asked to design one in 1911, and had been advised by her friend Darcy Braddell, the architect, to consult me. Now in 1923 they had a competition among six artists including Jack Baddeley and Metcalf – we were each paid £25 and given a letter drawing attention to the Jacobean character of the Purse or bag it was kept in. I, like a fool, allowed this to influence me, so was right out of the picture. Metcalf was given the commission and produced a very stylised seated figure of the King, which H.M. hated

[26] more than he disliked Gilbert Bayes' seal, which had been a rehash of the famous Bretigny Seal. Mine was another case of an artist allowing himself to be unduly influenced by ill advice. The Deputy Master asked me to come round and see him and suggested that I touched up Metcalf's work and made it conform more to the normal. I had begun to learn to count ten before blowing up at the suggestions from the ignorant, so after listening to the preposterous idea, I asked a little time to think over what I could do, and wrote him that I would be pleased to help if Metcalf and I could discuss the matter and I could work with him. I knew he would not risk the storm that would have descended on his head if he had approached that tough sculptor with such a request. Sir Nevile designed the Seal of Northern Ireland and I was asked to carry it out. It was a poor drawing and I had no difficulty in getting Sir Nevile's agreement to a number of variations and additions; a redrawing of the horse and of the rider so that the result was quite different; and as I changed everything and added a background to the Shamrock, I never looked upon the Seal as designed by Sir Nevile, but as being my design, and when I exhibited it in the R.A. I omitted his name. As an artist he naturally liked to see his work and name in the R.A. exhibition and was very cross with me for sending it in without reference to him. I agree I had been ungenerous to a very good friend. Later I engraved the Great Seal of the Irish Free State, designed by a Dublin Museum official who put

together a couple of photographs – one – that of the ancient harp – the other the detail decoration on the Ardagh Chalice, forming a border to surround the harp; and the Irish inscriptions outside that. It wasn't

[27] much of a design, but as it relied on sharp definition for its interest, I decided to engrave it by hand which meant hammer and chisel work for it was very bold. I think it must be the last Great Seal in these Islands to be cut by hand. It makes a good impression but is artistically dull, as most rehashes in design.

It was during this first four years that whilst I was having a number of my jewellery designs mounted for Thomas Simpson by Rinardo and Blank, I showed them some of Lyndhurst Pocock's decorated Chalcedonies that he has produced in 1913 in response to my request for the know how of the Tibetan stones Sir Leonard Woolley had brought back from his researches there. One of Rinaldo's customers, Chaumery of Bond Street, liked the idea and said he would spend £400 on a number of such gems which Rinaldo was to mount in diamonds and other precious stones, and he thought he would hit the fashion for six, and do an exclusive trade with a secret art. We thought so too, so I equipped a small room with a muffle and tools and Pocock worked on a fifty fifty basis with me, and the resulting chalcedonies with their cupids and other light decoration, were very attractive and made beautiful jewels; but not one sold, and though they kept them on show as long as they dared, they finally had to break them up and use the diamonds more profitably. Pocock said it was the only invention of his – and he was a great inventor – from which he had made so large a sum as £200.

[28] These decorated chalcedonies had been produced before in Europe, for there are one or two examples in the Geological Museum. In case any Craftsman would like to develop it again, he must first select suitable stones, and before attempting to decorate them, try them out in the enamelling muffle – a certain type will crack, but another kind will stand the heat; after practise it is possible to recognise the kind required. Then make a composition of the following:-

and make it into a paste or paint. With a fine miniature painter's brush, sketch a design on the stone with this material, and if necessary, with a needle point refine or detail the drawing; place it in a heat resisting tray, and cover the stone with a powder of

After baking the stone to a heat of cent in the muffle for mins, turn off the muffle and allow to cool in its own time before opening the door. I found a very fine engraved knife line round the drawing helped. I think they failed because no one could understand or explain them, and no suitable name or title of the work had been thought out.

My brother Frank who had married a dress designer, and had started a blouse manufacturer's business which was making good progress, had become ill. They had a little girl whom I used as a model for my unsuccessful design for the Wembley Exhibition medal. I was paid £25 to compete, and learnt later that my design was liked best, but that Sir Cecil Harcourt Smith, late of the B.M. and Victoria and Albert Museum, and Art advisor to Queen Mary, had turned it down flat because he said my head of Britannia was Negroid. This child, Beryl, became my responsibility when my brother died shortly after, as he left £800 in

[29] trust for her. The mother was consumptive and went to South Africa, and agreed to leave Beryl with her family; I agreeing to pay the income to whoever looked after her. The mother agitated to have her S.A., so I collected money from the family and sent her out in charge of a stewardess. After she had been there a year or so, I had a curious experience. I received a letter from spinster cousins who lived with their aged mother at Richmond, Surrey. I had been a frequent visitor at their then nearby musical home, up to about 1905, but had not seen them for the 20 intervening years as our paths and location had diverged. The letter said "Don't laugh; but we play about with planchette; we've never had any sense out of it, but suddenly last Saturday, it wrote "Tell Cecil that Beryl is in danger. Frank." I visited them with my friend Charles brown, but the spook board did nothing more, but I saw the squiggly writing which was easily legible, and was mystified and still am, at the process. I wrote to my sister-in-law for information but before it could have reached her, I received a letter from a Roman Catholic Convent in S.A. to say they had rescued a child from a bad family – that the mother of the child had been taken to a consumption hospital where the child could not go – and that she had referred them to me for maintenance. Mother and child returned to England later, always the mother fighting me to surrender the £800 to her, or to pay for the journeys to and from South Africa. But though I never agreed to become the child's guardian, the job had been thrust on me. I determined she should have the money intact when 21, and so it happened – a dreary dismal story, only relieved by the curious message, and the

[30] kindness of my sister Ethel and her husband, Ben Stuart, who brought the ungrateful and tiresome Beryl up with their family of boys and girls in Folkestone.

In 1924 I exhibited the recumbent figure of Wag Forster in the R.A. and it was placed under the dome in the octagon room – the only time I occupied this coveted place. I can still feel the tingles down my spine when I first saw it there. Many nice things were said to me, but the Press and critics ignored the work and no commissions came. But the family and their friends were thrilled with what I had done of my friend, and a great many letters reached the parents, Lord and Lady Forster of Lepe, Governor General of Australia, and gave them great satisfaction. I felt very disappointed that no result came from so important an exhibit in such a place, for I had been led to believe by many, particularly by the friendly Burton of Thames Ditton, the bronze founder, that one only had to get an important work in the R.A. and your fortune was made.

During these four years I had worked hard on the Council of the Royal Society of Miniatures Painters, Sculptors and Gravers – the last two arts having been added to the title and work of the Society. Serving regularly on the Council, I had got to know the breezy, jovial President, Alyn Williams, well, and when in the summer, he and his Virginian wife came to England, and occupied their charming cottage at Plumpton in Sussex, I was frequently their guest, and there his ideas of including all kinds of miniature art in the annual exhibition

[31] were developed, and I became Chairman of a Crafts Advisory Committee to the Council, to help develop the 'Academy in Little' as he put it. The response from the Crafts was good and it made the annual show more interesting and added to the attendance, but sales and commissions were very poor, so that after paying the £3.3.0 subscription for a year or two, many dropped out. I kept pegging away with invitations to exhibit, and maintained a fairly good standard, but found it heavy going. Alyn was very popular with everyone, being a warm hearted man, and took great interest in what I did. He persuaded me that I would make a great success in America. "Why not come over next

spring when I am having my show of miniatures at the National Gallery in Washington? Bring some work and share the Exhibition. The gallery will be lent in the interests of Art, so there will only be the catalogue and the cost of transit. The Director Mr Holmes is anxious to show the work of other Nationals and I feel sure would welcome you." Though I had done fairly well in these four years, I had not done enough to satisfy my ambitions. I also wanted to see the world, and I thought I was in love with an American girl. Despite the tribute paid by the Hanging Committee of the R.A., the autumn came – the exhibit was back in the studio – not a single Press comment. It seemed I had to do much much more if I was to be successful as a sculptor, and so I must seize on every chance of widening my experience, so I agreed to go in March 1925 just for the fun of it all; to discover if the little romance had any foundation, and to find out if a new country would give me a better chance than this old country. It had been a strong contention of mine that the war

[32] had exhausted us, that we had lost too many of our finest men, that the U.S.A. must take the place of leadership in the world; that the future lay with the Americans more than with the British.

I had advanced this view to a medical man sitting next me at dinner one evening at the Chelsea Arts Club, who strongly opposed my contention, informing me that he had served as advisor on training in the U.S. during the War in connection with Military Medical matters. He supported his objection by quoting an article in the Lancet of about 1920-1921, which detailed a remarkable inquiry the Americans instituted when they examined 4 million men for enlistment in the armed services. They decided to category them according to their racial origins in relation to a number of tests and questions which would reveal the standard of character, quality and fitness of varying races, a true American being those whose parents were in the U.S.A. The authorities who conceived this, fully believed that the result would prove the great superiority of true born Americans over all other races. The result was surprising, and shocked the Americans; for the British were in the first category; the Scandinavian and Dutch followed, then the French with the true American seventh on the list. The outcome of this was the Bill known as the McKinley quota governing racial percentages for future immigration, and the words 'Nordic peoples' came into general circulation to define those who received the biggest allowance in this late attempt to prevent the further deterioration of the true American. The Doctor said in his

[33] opinion it would take two thousand years for the Americans to assimilate the blood of the lower grade races that had already reduced the American to 7th grade in the category of nations; that a nation with such a low grade could not lead the world because character of a very high grade was absolutely essential for such a task; that the Nordic peoples had this and would automatically find that leadership was their task.

To prove his point he said that the Lancet article reported that the Southern Italian was in the lowest category in the European list in this examination, and in his opinion they held this position because the Romans of Classic times became decadent through cross breeding with their negro slaves; not only losing their Empire as a result, but two thousand years after still being at the bottom of the list of European races that so largely help to make up the character of the American people. It sounded very convincing to me, and the emigration law was a recent fact in support of it.

Well, it would be interesting to go and see for myself.

"Tubby", 1924-60

[1] In 1924 the Revd. Philip B. Clayton, Vicar of All Hallows by the Tower, came to see me. He said he had been impressed by the recumbent figure of Lord Forster's son which he had seen in the Royal Academy, and had asked Lord Forster if he might have a copy of it for his church. Lord Forster had referred him to me and now he begged me to agree, and let him know the cost. He conveyed a great sense of urgency and purpose, and seemed very earnest, and when I said "No! This work was specially designed for a certain site in a chapel designed for it by Oldrid Scott, and I could not have it placed in any other setting" – I proceeded to lecture him on how sculpture could be ruined by a wrong placing. The compelling way he said "Don't say that until you have seen where I want to put it; come to my church and see" – made me feel the force of what he said and I agreed, and till then nursed an obstinate determination to resist this flattering request and not allow a work that was sacred to Wag's family and to my memory of him, to be used and placed I knew not how; for on such problems my imagination would rush about in all directions. But as I looked at the site and my imagination saw the work in such a lovely setting, just such a one as Oldrid Scott had designed at Exbury – only now on the grand scale of a great Church – my heart got up into my throat – all my dreams of the last four years came true – of how I would like to see this work stand before the altar of sacrifice with its candles lit, not

[2] only in memory of this handsome boy who had so impressed me with his wide knowledge; his all-embracing understanding and his rare charm – if all came true, the noble spirit would do its work through the centuries to come – lying captured in bronze in the historic heart of the greatest city in the world, and God's purpose would be served in showing the loss and cost of war and the evils that make it necessary – the background of my inspiration.

Whether we knew each other's thoughts on that momentous occasion I cannot say – to me it was the fulfilment of a dream – to the Vicar a phase in the great work he had made the purpose of his life – service and sacrifice for God's purpose, and everybody and everything that crossed his path – nay – came within any distance of him – was nailed to the work and the purpose he served – willing slaves – as I became from that moment.

Though the Vicar was short and rounded in form, the nickname "Tubby" did not seem appropriate to me, and I thought, disrespectful to a clergyman; but I found he had such a friendly way of drawing all to him; of disarming formality; and of treating all classes with the same cheering spirit that my puritanical reserve gave way and I was soon addressing him as "Tubby" with the rest; and the many letters I have had are so signed.

So the work progressed; though it was recognised as the Forster bronze, and so spoken of by Tubby, for Lord Forster had become Chairman of Toc. H. The monument was shorn of all identity, to become a symbol of all who had been sacrificed; an unknown soldier – referred to as the memorial of the Elder Brethren in the movement of Toc. H.

[3] This needed the changing of the Royal Scots Greys badge for a shield on which I modelled the crosses of the Union Jack as the most all – embracing symbol; and used the motto "Pro Regne pro Patria" on the riband of the crest – I even made the buttons plain and on the 3 ton Portland Stone base Tubby asked me to carve the lovely

verse from Laurence Binyon's moving poem "They shall not grow old…". This poem, I understood, was used by Toc. H. in their ceremony of light so that it never occurred to me to approach Binyon for permission to use it on the monument. But many years after, I stood next to him at the buffet at the Art Workers Guild of which he was an Honorary Member, and said how much I appreciated having those lovely lines on my work in All Hallows Church. I received a stony stare and in a cold voice as he turned away from me he said that I had used them without permission. Never have I felt such a feeling of shame and mortification that through such carelessness I had committed just that selfish error against which I had always taken so strong a stand; and sorrow that something had happened in connection with Wag's memorial which was not possible where young Forster was concerned. Whether we were victims of Tubby's ruthless demand that everyone should give everything, as he did himself, without question; without demur, or ceremony, for God's purpose and the work he was doing for Him, I shall never know – but here were two men each willing to give all, at loggerheads for the lack of a common courtesy, which I should have thought of.

In due time the unveiling of the monument by the Prince of Wales was staged to coincide with other alterations and improvements the

[4] Vicar was making to the ancient Church. I arranged a magical tent that was to disappear at the Prince's pull on the gold tassel with the help of Barkis (Barclay Baron, a remarkable man of whom I have much to say) and his colleagues.

On the panelled North wall of the Church forming the background to the monument were hung a large number of photographs of men connected with the late war, with newspaper prints and cuttings about them, mostly in odd frames, a most untidy collection. I presumed that they were there temporarily, as I had never seen a Church used in that way before, and knew it was irregular to hand anything on the walls of a Church without a faculty, and faculties were not granted for photographs and prints. I therefore asked Tubby if they could be taken down, as they spoilt the background of the monument. I was unprepared for the broadside he fired at me – that each and every one of these photographs was a sacred memory, and that I could take my monument out of the Church rather than one of those photographs should be taken down. To say I became angry at this ungracious reply would be to put it mildly. I boiled; and if I could have picked up the 4 tons of bronze and stone and marched out with it, I would have done so; but Barkis, wise man, who was helping me to prepare the Church, soothed me down, said the Vicar was like that but did not mean it; that these were all personal friends of his that had been killed, and their memory meant as much to him as Wag did to me, and that photographs could be no more than a temporary memorial whereas bronze and stone were there for ever. The reality of what he said calmed me down and

[5] the incident blew away like a storm cloud; but for all our good intentions and good purposes it illustrates how easily we go to war.

So this is how I got to know one of the most remarkable men in my generation; the only one, in my view, who made a practical spiritual profit for humanity from the war; who strived from the wrack and sacrifice to build a new world by reminding ourselves of those who died, by ourselves making some sacrifice to help others. They had given everything to preserve our way of life; let us remember them and give and help others in memory. It may seem a simple message but it takes a genius to apply it successfully; to

build the complex detail that will play the right notes in the minds of the young men he was out to capture for God's work.

Everything and everybody was meat for his mill. Artists must give of their best – poets, musicians, writers, all roped in – wealthy men made to disgorge; Society organising itself to help; Royalty at his command; poor men giving their bit; and all glad to do what they could. None worked or gave so much as he did – far into the night he worked, and was obliged to have secretaries in relays. I pictured a fresh secretary leaping into the vacant typewriting seat as the other retired exhausted. He had the clearest possible vision of what he wanted for the world, and the practical sense to apply it in such a way that it worked. Not a dreamer whose dreams came true but a practical visionary who by sheer determination and will power made his visions com true. Tower Hill became the

[6] capital of his empire; what better one could be found – the very centre of our history of Sacrifice. A miserable and sordid place he found it, but it had the glorious Tower of history and the ancient Church that had overlooked all until an abomination known as the Mazzawattee tea warehouse had risen high above the Church in Victoria's reign and almost concealed it from view. Here was a great work to do, and that he was the man to do it we have only to look round and see, for it is nearly all done, and Tower Hill is fast becoming worthy of its honourable self, one of the most attractive as well as the most interesting, places in London. Yes! The War made some of the improvements necessary – traffic growth others – but long before either, his schemes were taking shape.

Whilst I was modelling a portrait bust of him in 1931, he enthused me to write a story which would result in the disappearance of this abomination, the tea warehouse, and send it to Barkis for the Toc. H. journal of which he was the editor. This was the sort of thing he was always doing – enthusing all sorts of people to do all sorts of things they knew nothing about, and placing others in the awkward predicament of refusing the work or the proposal, often after a great effort and sacrifice on the part of the giver. Of course I felt so flattered – everyone thinks he can write – that I at once wrote a marvellous and romantic story of the uprising of the white shirts led by a woman scientist with ideals and a secret

[7] ray weapon which in desperation had to be used against the Government troops in the tea warehouse so that it disappeared in smoke. The Editor got over his problem by keeping the manuscript many years, and until we knew the Tower Hill Improvement Trust would get the property – when it was returned.

The Vicarage at 42, Trinity Square, must be the strangest in the world; it grew and grew, embracing everything that adjoined until it became club, restaurant, hotel, boardroom, offices, skittle alley, billiard hall, showplace, H.Q. and the home of Tubby.

At his table for 6 or 8 you would meet everybody; all would come to listen, entranced, to Tubby unfolding his schemes or telling his stories, gradually finding themselves the centre of interest from a romantic and highly imaginative introduction from Tubby – of some minor incident in their own past which they were forthwith commanded to narrate; a most embarrassing situation, for Tubby naturally considered his introduction the whole truth and nothing but the truth. It was a great privilege to be a guest at that table; I always accepted if I possibly could, and I look back with pleasure on the numerous occasions.

If I went with a fixed purpose to get some important point decided, it required a tremendous effort to deflect him from his immediate purpose to consider something else, for his power of concentration on the task in hand was so strong that it was rather like taking a bone away from a bulldog so that you could give it a piece of bread.

[8] The favourite stories he would demand from me on these occasions were the making of the model for the battle of Messines, and the way I came to make the recumbent effigy of Wag Forster.

The former, because he was, as Padre at the Old House in Poperinghe, very close to the Messines battle, and many connected with it were his friends, particularly F.M. Lord Plumer who directed the battle, and Colonel Pennell of the 41st Division, who had been Sgt in the Company of the K.R.R. which John Forster, Wag's elder brother had commanded.

The battle eased the pressure on the Ypres Salient and gave a welcome relief from the strain of nearly 3 years Tubby had spent at Poperinghe. The battle gained the reputation for being the best organised in military history. The 41st Division after a long spell of holding the line was sent out to rest and recuperate and train for this battle. I was billeted in a farm house and my men had a good barn allotted to them; the first morning with the aid of maps I tried to explain the country we had to fight over. It became obvious to me that they had not the remotest idea of how to read a map. I said we would repeat the lecture next day, and in the meantime I would make a model or relief map from which they would be able to see the details of our objectives. Tubby says I got some Flanders mud and made a map – actually it was quite a good dark clay, of which there was a pocket in a nearby field. It meant working most of the night; my friend Capt. Mark billeted with me, helped me and the intense interest and complete understanding of the men was very rewarding. The Battalion Major

[9] on his round, listened, and told the Colonel who took it away, and I lectured all the Battalion officers. The Brigadier saw it and also took it away in his car. The Divisional General saw it and ordered me to make one for the whole divisional front for his office.

Whilst the work was in progress Lord Plumer and his staff came to see it with the Divisional General Sir Sidney Lawford.

On the model was an unusual embankment road about a mile long connecting the Ypres Wameton Road with the ruins of a millionaire's house, which I discovered had the German name Dam Straase. It crossed the valley of a small stream, the Diependalbeek, and was parallel to our advance about 1000 yds behind the German front line. I was extremely puzzled by this embankment road, as no height is shown on maps of embankments – but I had the good fortune to be waited on at the mess by a middle-aged woman who had been governess to the millionaire's children and who had been driven along that embankment every day for years. It had been built about 1902 and was absolutely level and straight from the road to the house. It was very high where it passed over the stream, higher that a house, she said; an archway over the stream allowed the passage of farm carts and the stream. When Lord Plumer saw it – "What's this?" he exclaimed. I told him; and how the contour levels made that height necessary. "But how do you know it is that height?" – He must have been impressed with the story for he turned to Sir Sidney Lawford and said – "Fill that valley with smoke, and the men

will go up the German communication trenches each side". This they did and as expected, found the back of this formidable fortress honeycombed

[10] with dug-outs, with wooden galleries outside connecting them like tiers of flats. It would have been the lot of my Battalion to have advanced up that valley against scores of machine guns – nothing could have lived. Instead, by racing along the galleries lobbing a hand-grenade into the openings, 600 Germans came out with their hands up and the 23rd Middlesex did not have a casualty. With Tubby it was the Flanders mud that stuck in this story – it had stuck to him during the five years of Poperinghe – that it could be used in this odd way to save lives was the kind of story he liked, for he had seen the suffering of the men who had lived half sunk in Flanders' mud for years. This high embankment with its honeycomb of concrete dug-outs could be seen like this though much ruined, until about 1930 when it was blown up and spread, and now is fast becoming obliterated.

It was not long after the recumbent figure was unveiled that I began to hear touching and moving stories relating to the work. Many times flowers were found in the hand resting on the chest; children seemed moved by it; and perhaps what pleased me more than anything else was that among those who came and prayed beside the figure or to sit in contemplation, was Mrs Holman Hunt, widow of the great artist who had been a great inspiration to me – indeed I liked to feel I belonged to his order of mind and work, for was not his favourite pupil E.R. Hughes who finished the Light of the World in St Paul's Cathedral when the Master was going blind, my favourite master – one of the most sympathetic and gentle of all

[11] the teachers I worked under.

Did someone say "sentimental slush" when I mentioned that picture? Yes – sentiment then had an undue place in art. Critics in this unsentimental age would have supported them, just as they support less worthy forms of slush that happen now to be the vogue.

I always regret I did not meet Mrs Holman Hunt for I was given to understand she came because she loved to contemplate the spiritual peace of the bronze.

As I came to know Tubby better, I realized he possessed a quality rare among Englishmen of being aware of sculpture, sensing its purpose and knowing how to use it; even liking sculpture for its own sake. When he had seen the figure the first time, he could not have known the design of the mounting, which to me plays an important part in my conception of the sacrifice. Symbols grow in the inherited traditions of people, and the burning of candles in ceremony strikes cords in our deepest memory – of such ancient use that it may have become instinctive. Though I knew of no precedent and I am glad to find after many years there is no precedent that I am aware of, I was conscious at the time that Tubby accepted and liked the mounting.

In the setting at Exbury for which I designed it before the setting had gone beyond an idea, the conception came easily and spontaneously, and I mostly thought of the candles lit on special anniversaries or services in a church then relying on oil lamps for illumination, and the light of the candles being the only

[12] direct light on the bronze; this in such case would add to the sense of quiet, and promote contemplation. I could not possibly know then that the sensitive and far-seeing understanding of this one man who saluted my work for a shrine to help focus the thought in the brotherhood he had created, would have so marked an influence on my life and work; but I owe it to him to acknowledge the blessing he thus conferred upon me. Only those who know the struggle and sacrifice that is necessary in order to achieve success in sculpture in this country, can realize what it means to have a major work placed in such a position.

That Lord Forster should have become the first President of Toc.H., that Lady Forster was President of the newly formed Women's section, that the handsome boy who lay in bronze seemed to epitomise all that was finest in the million dead we had known and loved – all this meeting together under the guiding hand of one man enables me to see the guiding mind of God; that I, the engraver of gems and seals, the would-be sculptor, who, destined to undergo a dangerous operation, should be miraculously saved on the operating table by the intervention of a genius, whilst three weeks later a minor operation should result in the death of young Forster, seemed to me a strange twist of destiny. Continually during the four years the work was in progress my thoughts were centred on the strangeness that I should be called to commemorate him, and resolved that I would with God's help make his character and sacrifice so live in the bronze that he would at least do some of the great work he

[13] would undoubtedly have done had he lived, for he inherited from his parents all those qualities that had made them so valued in their generation. One of the most moving tributes was a poem written by his sister, Ray, who was a talented actress.

I like to recall the first tribute ever paid to my work; it was whilst it was in progress in the clay. I was having some alterations made in the house and a plumber had been at work for about a week, frequently passing through the studio to get from one part of the building to another in his mysterious manipulation of the water-works. He always wore a little bowler hat which had got a little lop-sided and seemed to belong to and be part of his head; whether working, having his lunch or walking round the house. I even wondered if he slept in it, for I never saw him without it. I had not worked on the figure whilst he was there, so the man had only seen the long box-like cover which helped to keep the clay permanently wet; but one day it was uncovered and I was working on it when I heard the plumber coming towards and entering the studio. He was evidently astonished to see a figure lying there instead of a box as usual, and stopped dead in his tracks and stared. Then he did something that astonished and thrilled me – he slowly and rather sheepishly raised his hand and removed his bowler hat. It was my first criticism and just the one I wanted to encourage me. Not the comment of the articulate, the cultured, of those associated with the family; but the spontaneous, almost subconscious gesture of respect, reverence, awe – (what was it?) of the inarticulate.

[14] The work undoubtedly gave Tubby an exalted idea of the value of my opinion for one of my first assignments to help was to visit the studio of a stained glass artist at the same time as the client, to inspect the cartoon for an important window which was to embellish the Church. I presumed the purpose of asking me to inspect the design was for the protection of the Church against something unworthy or unsuitable. I said nothing in front of the cartoon, and the client, other than it was a fine subject well conceived and in my opinion would make a fine window, but as I always look for ways of doing something better, I wrote to Tubby and enclosed a coloured illustration from a 14th

century missal, of the same subject, which I suggested might inspire the artists to make the design less secular and more devotional, as I thought it an extremely fine design but more suitable for a restaurant then for a church. This must have been forwarded for I made an enemy of that stained glass artist who from an ordinary friendship could never again bear to meet me or have my name mentioned.

I had several assignments to help which landed me in predicaments like this, before I learnt the simple lesson that though Tubby really wanted the best for his Church, and as far as he could steered the right course to get it, at the same time nothing was to be turned down or turned away from the service of the Church for there was room for everything, and what he also wanted was the authority of experts to back up everything he proposed or thought of. I gradually learned to be extremely tactful, but fear I never made the perfect yes-man.

[15] He loved travelling; as I never accompanied him I don't know why – but it was obvious to me that a parish was not big enough to hold him; that one of his greatest ideas was to make Toc. H. a worldwide movement, and in making his brave efforts to establish branches everywhere – he travelled. The loss and suffering of the First World War had been widely spread, the desolation that accompanies such loss so keenly felt, to remember them through a simple ceremony, with all the fundamental goodness of purpose of our behaviour to be linked up with what they died for, was the creation of a genius, the only spiritual victory of that murderous war.

Those who remember the early meetings at Town Halls or Mission Rooms all over the country recall the packed halls of young people cheering till they were hoarse the moment Tubby appeared, and enthusiastically enjoying any amusing sally. A form of hero worship – yes – but much more – they wanted a lead away from war; in our hearts we know there is a better way – Tubby showed us that way and young men and women warmed to him and made Toc. H. their own.

The story of the success and failure of Toc. H. is outside my province, for though I automatically was considered a member of the H.Q. branch and so continued and was always ready to do anything I was asked to do, I already had too many activities in the art world to add social service to my list; also I know too well I am not of a friendly enough nature to be able to help in that direction.

It was on a Toc.H. pilgrimage I got engaged, and at All Hallows we were married, with Tubby assisting Canon Perkins of Westminster

[16] Abbey who had brought us together. Tubby was at his best on that occasion – the Church was full – and he gave an interesting talk on the Church we were in whilst waiting for the bride; and as we walked down the aisle afterwards, he met us at the end and asked us to come to the South door for a minute, asking the others to wait. There were faced a complete semi-circle of press cameras which Tubby has laid on – just the characteristic sort of thing he would do – if he thought it would help us – help Toc. H. – help anybody or anything for good – he would think out a way. Some jolly pictures of us three appeared in Monday's papers, and a happy memory of Tubby.

In due time our son Anthony was christened there with Tubby as his Godfather, and so my links with the Vicar and his Church became very solid and very precious as the years went by.

The first of many commissions I carried out for him was the portrait in bronze of his great friend, admirer and benefactor, Lord Wakefield, to go on Wakefield House. The nondescript front of the building presented a terrible difficulty to a sculptor who wants everything to be designed together for a purpose, and cannot tolerate bits and pieces added here and there as is the general lot of sculptors in our country. However, everything is a challenge to me and I like the battle with one's wits – the site – the client – the committees – the authorities – the know-alls – the fools, - for among them are the friends – the understanding and the wise ones, and Tubby was of these last, for he instinctively knew how to use sculpture. One day he heard of a life size bronze statue of a Roman

[17] soldier, that a scrap-metal merchant in Southampton would sell for £200. He obtained photographs and set his heart on getting it to put in the garden adjacent to the Roman wall. He sent me photographs and asked me to report on the work and its value so that he could get the Tower Hill Improvement Trust to buy it. The scrap-metal price of bronze was £10 a cwt. – on the assumption that it weighed 15 cwt. It made it worth £150. From the photographs it seemed well done and wore the decorated armour of a Roman Emperor. I could not tell from photographs whether it was cast from one of the Dutch sculptors' works of the 17th or 18th centuries, or whether it was a Roman work or a reproduction. At such a price it did not matter – the lesser of these alternatives was cheap at £200; so as the work looked well done I supported the project. It was purchased and delivered at Trinity Square where I at once went to see it. It was a 19th century casting of an antique work by a bronze founder in Rome, the sort of casting the Italians have been exporting for 200 years in bronze, lead and marble. The cast work has the merit of being an exact replica of the antique and truly conveys the character of the work, whereas the copies in marble are carved and are generally feeble works.

In order to discover whom it represented I took the photographs to the British Museum, saying who had cast the work. I was unprepared for what the officer of the Sculpture Dept. said – that this was the fifth time he had been asked to report on this work from copies of these photographs, and that he had written to the Rev. Philip Clayton a long report and told him it was listed in the catalogue of the firm

[18] of Italian bronze founders as a bronze of the Emperor Claudius, a copy of a marble in the Naples Museum, but that the original marble had been headless when discovered and that the Museum authorities of those days had put a stray head of Claudius on to make a complete figure, and it was in that "restored" condition that the firm of founders had been copying the work. He further said that the present Naples Museum authorities had removed the work from the Gallery to make a re-restoration which means that when the work reappears again it will be headless.

What is interesting is that the persistence of Tubby has secured at small cost an excellent casting of the head of Claudius that was carved in the first century, at the time he was conquering Britain, on a figure of a Roman Emperor of the same period, and as they fit very well they make a most fitting and interesting sculpture for Tower Hill to go near the inscription tablet from the memorial to Pilate's sister-in-law which was dug up there a few years ago; the kind of history-story association and art that appeals to Tubby's imagination, and as he knows, to the countless visitors to Tower Hill.

The British Museum official was coldly unenthusiastic about a modern commercial copy of a doctored antique sculpture, and naturally a little contemptuous of

such intense interest in what a conscientious museum official antiquarian looked upon as a worthless forgery. He had evidently not come under Tubby's spell or command, or he would have known why Tubby asked so many people to do the same thing, thus insuring in a world of many failures that at least one effort would succeed. The bulldog got his bone and I think the statue is a great

[19] asset to Tower Hill.

On one of his travel establishing Toc. H. he went through Africa and evidently came in close contact with the terrible scourge of leprosy. Like most of us, he could not have previously realised the fearful suffering it inflicted on its victims or the extent of the prevalence of the disease, or perhaps like most of us he thought the organisations concerned with this scourge were doing all that could be done or was required. Evidently they were not – for he returned aflame with a burning passion to move Heaven and Earth to deal adequately with this terrible problem, a task to test the movement he had created. How he worked to achieve this – he stung those whose job it was to deal with this affliction into new life; raised funds and volunteers and made the Press back his efforts.

It was a wonderful example of what the will and determination of one man could do. I was not close enough to the movement to know any details of how he fought this battle for the relief of lepers, but it coincided with advancing methods of dealing with the scourge and I am left with the impression that in a few years a great victory over suffering has been won, and that Tubby played a great part in this.

I believe the second war against the Germans must have been a devastating disappointment to him after his 20 years effort to make men understand, and then the total destruction of his Church by enemy action. He had a supreme faith it would not be damaged and this must have been a great trial to survive. Whether it could have been saved by a similar effort to that which saved St Paul's

[20] Cathedral one cannot say. The St Paul's watch can tell one of the remarkable stories of the war for the Cathedral would have been destroyed many times but for their efforts. That every historic building should have had such a watch was quite impossible when man and woman power was stretched beyond its limits. From one letter I received from Tubby during that war, I formed the opinion that out of the destruction of all his hopes he was planning the great rebuilding of life and of his parish on Tower Hill. Much of the Church was wrecked and the Elder Brethren bronze damaged in the first bombing of the Church, but the fire which gutted the Church later seemed to have completely destroyed the bronze for with the candlesticks broken and bent, the great 3 ½ ton stone cracked in all directions and the figure covered with a thick porridge of molten lead from the roof, it looked a most desperate case. Tubby wanted me to come to London to advise on it, but one could do nothing but protect it from further damage, so it was sandbagged and a thick layer of concrete plastered all over it so that it looked like a mound. Under the guidance of the architect all the bits and pieces of the monuments (not all of them) were collected and placed in the crypt; the debris of the ruined Church was spread evenly over the Church floor to a depth of four feet and then covered with earth concrete and macadam so that a new floor with a well round the mound of the bronze enabled the Church to continue its historic work.

It was an impressive and unforgettable moment to me when the war was ended and I was able to attend a service in the roofless ruin and feel the determination of Tubby that it should all rise again; better than before.

[21] I was soon roped in and one of the first requests was what to do about the recumbent bronze. So the concrete cover was broken away, and the sandbags removed on a memorable occasion; Tubby was a past-master in the art of making occasions memorable. Like most geniuses he could have been most things successfully; he would have made a great showman. When I had heard the bronze was covered with molten lead I had written to Tubby to say that it all depended on the temperature of the bronze – whether the lead would ruin it. Lead when melted will amalgamate very easily with another metal if that metal is raised to a dull red heat. So everything depended on how hot the bronze got in the furnace of the burning Church. If the lead was incorporated then it could not be separated and what looked like a figure covered with thick porridge could never look anything else. Tubby's imagination raised a picturesque story of the base lead and the noble bronze and the power of the latter to resist the evil of such amalgamation; to me it was a matter of temperature. So quite a number of interested spectators were assembled round the well in which the ruined bronze looked a pathetic sight.

Tubby let himself go on these occasions and could be seen at his best with an almost boyish enthusiasm – he introduces the great master who is to prove with his hammer and chisel that you cannot contaminate fine things – or words to that effect – and true enough, choosing an easy place to clear the edge on a corner, I inserted a chisel and started hammering the wedge of the tool between the

[22] lead and the bronze – the metal parted – by prizing I soon had a small piece lifting and broken off, and from the fact that very small areas of lead had torn away and still remained attached to the bronze proved that the work had had a very narrow escape, but that it was possible to strip the lead; and this was ultimately done. An important factor must have contributed to this during the intense heat of the fire, and that is the large windows, the glass of which had been blown out in the bombing of the Church, let in such a volume of cool air that though this blew the fire to a cauldron, the Lytcott monument on the North wall between two great windows, was kept so tempered that the marble was not disintegrated. This happened with one or two others that were subject to such draughts and it is for that reason it later became possible to repair them. The repair of the bronze monument which of course was done by the workmen of a bronze foundry, certainly did not require the skill of an artist as many of the shattered and burnt memorials of the Church needed, but it gave me a terrific reputation as a restorer of destroyed monuments; and I listened with amusement when Tubby fascinating his huge audiences at special Toc. H. meetings with his stories, would embellish the renaissance of the bronze. As soon as he realised that these burnt and shattered stones were not lost but could live again, he responded with enthusiasm. The possibility struck a special chord in his nature – to rebuild from the broken past; and he begged me to save the memorial to his dear old friend and helper, the Rev. Ellison. He said it wasn't much damaged – only burnt – and had changed its colour from light to dark. It was a small tablet of about 20 ins.

[23] of a commercial character in what had been light Hoptonwoodstone. Fixed to the wall below the belfry it had been subjected to intense heat and warped to a curve instead of being flat; also I saw it was covered with a crazy pattern of cracks. I had not the

slightest knowledge or experience of burnt stone or marble, and my assistant, Joe, if possible, had less. We lifted it gingerly and Joe nursing it like a baby, carried it on edge in his arms in a taxi to the studio where we laid it carefully on a flat bench with its curve arching up like a low bridge. We gazed at it and wondered whatever we could do with it, and even as we gazed we saw it suddenly collapse and lie flat on the bench, and realized with dismay that the stone was now in a thousand or more tiny pieces each in their place but all separate, like a minute jig-saw puzzle complete; and that if once moved it could never be put together again. With great care we stuck a lining over the surface making sure, by walling it in, that nothing could move and then that every part of the surface was stuck to the lining; this was reinforced until rigid and we could turn it upside down and show the back with its thousands of cracks. Now it was easy to pour in a glue, and when set, to fix it to a slate back and polish the front, regild and colour the lettering and it looked like a miracle of restoration. So Tubby thought – for he had it displayed at a special meeting he was handling at the Mansion House, and making it an "occasion".

This was the first of many adventures in learning the art of restoring the All Hallows monuments, but why that stone held together during that taxi drive – in Joe's arms – only to disintegrate

[24] three minutes after it was laid down, is anybody's guess.

Tubby had formed a Restoration Committee to advise and help him rebuild the Church. He was fortunate in his choice of architects in Lord Mottistone and Paul Paget, for they proved indefatigable in their pursuit of a building perfect in all its parts. I was asked to be consultant on matters connected with sculpture, monuments and craftworks matters which the architects were very keen to have properly designed and executed.

He collected a weighty Committee who appointed an Assessor to draw up a claim on the War damage. A most commendable volume was produced by the Photostat process to which I contributed the information and costs of restoring the monuments. It was wonderful to watch Tubby steering the forces he collected together so as to get what he wanted. During the years he had never lacked wealthy helpers who would dip deep into their pockets to help his schemes – but now when the need was so much greater this support on a grand scale had almost dried up. The first monument to go back was the Lytcott, which had had the benefit of a cool draught of air from the large windows and so was not disintegrated with heat; and then came the Croke tomb which had an important place in Tubby's affections as it held the Toc. H. shrine containing the Prince's lamp. The lovely canopy roof vault was in 153 pieces, the back stones were beyond repair. It became imperative to get Purbeck marble of the right type and which I knew had not been quarried for years as it was exhausted. Tubby had what amounted to an S.O.S. distributed to the Dorset groups of Toc. H., and in a few weeks a member there located a huge stone in a

[25] garden where it had lain forgotten for years. It was the perfect marble; it did everything required with some over; a triumph for Toc. H. and what Tubby could do with it. My clever assistant, Joe Smith, though not in favour of restoring sculpture damaged as badly as the monuments at All Hallows, was very willing – I do little of the actual work – but I spent endless hours in experimenting on various materials that were necessary, and had endless and wonderful discussions with Joe on how best to solve this or that problem. He was very proud and amazed when he saw the monuments go back on the walls looking as though they were undamaged, and could hardly believe he had done

them; for he was always so very pessimistic about some of them and thought it a pity to waste money on such work instead of creating something new. He was not the only one to think like that, for one evening we were visiting Sir Charles and Lady Wheeler and mentioned that I had restored some war-damaged memorials for a Church I was interested in, and they expressed horror at the idea and thought it the most ghastly work a sculptor could be reduced to do. This certainly was not Tubby's view. He revelled in the past, was an extremely good antiquarian and, I believe – would have liked to have had everything back as it was. His Committee however were a group of very competent men and women and his plans were sometimes frustrated. In due time the carving of the sculpture on the new building had to be done and it gave me great pleasure when I was asked to do this, and was a great compensation for the unpleasant task of restoration.

The first design by the architects for the new Church had the Crucifixion on the right ridge over the East window, and I looked for-

[26] ward to doing this, not only for the deep symbolism it had in our own fight against the Germans and the evil forces they represented, but also that it overlooked the site on Tower Hill where so many had lost their lives in martyrdom for great causes. Though I did not come into the discussions on the suitability of my work, they were long and difficult; High and Low Church questions predominating. To me this was tragic, and so too I think Tubby must have felt it. For despite the way he had taught us through the years to sink our differences in the worship of God, there are always a number of Die-hards who will not budge a quarter of an inch if they even suspected Rome and its influence. So the non-committal design – the Toc. H. lamp with its attendant youth, formed a safe decision and was adopted.

The close association of the ancient Church with Tubby's creation Toc. H. certainly afforded the next best motive for symbolic representation. A great opportunity lost of placing in that centre of history a reminder to the care-free crowds below of the Supreme Sacrifice.

As the building of the Church progressed towards its final beauty, we learned that Brian Thomas, the brilliant mural painter, was to paint the Last Supper as a Reredos. Tubby wanted the patera in the stone framing of the reredos to represent the emblems of the Passion, which I was to carve. There were nineteen patera, each to have a different emblem, the last one being the Holy Grail! I feebly asked where I should find that… He looked at me with withering scorn and said "What (implying – you ignoramus) you don't know the Holy Grail – why it was all published years ago – ask Huelin". So, like Sir Percival I too went in Quest. The Rev. Huelin had never heard of it,

[27] so he went to the British Museum Library, where he found there was an obscure reference in a small magazine, but the magazine was in the British Museum store at Watford. It contained no information and no picture. Somehow I believed Tubby, although I could find no one who had ever heard of its discovery, until one day when I decided to telephone all the ecclesiastical shops and art guilds in London, one of them, a most intelligent sounding girl was on the line – was helpful. Most of those I spoke to seemed to deal with me as though I needed humouring or soothing down lest I rose up and bit them – as though I was an escaped lunatic – but this girl said that some years ago a customer referred to a chalice in the Metropolitan Museum, New York, as being the Holy Grail, and that they had a picture postcard of it which they had preserved and could show it to me. As a result I had the good fortune to get a sub-editress of the Reader's

Digest interested, and who offered, if I paid for them, to get their New York department to photograph this work. I was thrilled with what was sent me and the story behind the Treasure which was housed in what is known as the Chapel in the Museum. The photographs were superb and the quality and nature of the work so impressive that I had no difficulty in accepting the Chalice as an authentic work of the first or second centuries, and of such a construction that the metal cup incorporated in the Chalice could reasonably be the Holy Grail.

The story behind this remarkable treasure is that some workmen cleaning out an ancient well in Antioch fished up a number of Christian religious objects of which the Chalice was one; it was

[28] about 1896, and from then its passage into the hands of a great Paris dealer in antiques can be traced; the immense importance of the discovery seems to have been realised early enough for responsible authorities to have been concerned about it and fine photographs of it were taken, copies of which were sent to me. Some restoration work was necessary and the photographs of its present condition compared show that this was done with reticence, care and skill.

Pierepont Morgan who was then forming his remarkable collection was interested in it and bought it, and that is how it eventually came to the Chapel of the Metropolitan Museum in New York. The odd thing is that I have lived through the period since 1896 and never heard of it, nor have I met anyone except Tubby Clayton who knew of its existence.

Let me describe the perforated scroll design which contains representations of each of the twelve apostles in a turn of the scroll, which has a Romanesque quality in style, containing each image with Our Lord forming a focus point; between the interstices of the silver design one can see that the silver scroll work partly covers over a metal cup devoid of ornament. The silver work is by a supreme master of the craft of silversmithing and chasing, and an artist of exceptional ability. Why did this talented artist build this beautiful silver cup round and over a plain metal cup of domestic use found in any house of good standing in the first century? There must have been something of very special importance attached to that cup and the possibility that it was the actual cup used by Jesus at the Last Supper in Mark's Mother's house seems not only reasonable

[29] but most probable. We can all picture the scene and the tragic events of that first Friday; would the cup from which He had drunk saying those momentous words, have gone back on the dresser and be forgotten, or would it have found such significance in the eyes of Mark's household that it would have found a special place. I think the latter, especially after the week-end and Our Lord's resurrection. It would become very precious in their minds and would be preserved as a sacred trust; that it should eventually have this lovely casing made to hold it is quite consistent with what one would expect to happen to a plain domestic cup that had suddenly come to hold such a significant place in human history.

The Museum makes no claim that it is the Holy Grail; to them it is a 3rd century silver Chalice in Greeco-Roman style built round a metal cup. But I claim that there is no obvious reason why the work should not be described first or second century, and I am further content to believe that it really is the Holy Grail.

Having worked as an artist in all materials and having made many religious objects I like to think I know something about the way an artist thinks and works, and so, I repeat I see no reason to place the work as late as the third century, and that it could equally well be claimed as the work of the first or second. Its committal to the well may have been the last desperate effort to save the precious relic from destruction before they, the custodians, were destroyed in the Christian martyrdom, and only faint rumours of the continued existence somewhere of the Holy Grail would reach those interested to start quest through the ages of Knight

[30] Errantry and Romance and Religious Crusades.

So Tubby had the Holy Grail on the last of the patera on the stone frame of the lovely mural. It cannot be more than a faint echo of the shape of the Chalice, for it is very small and it would be quite impossible to carve a miniature of the ornamented Chalice made in silver, in the comparatively coarse grain of Portland stone. It was an odd thing to me but during the quest I was making I became aware of a sensational film being advertised as the Silver Chalice with horrific posters – I went to see it – a commonplace American film of absolutely no merit; the only things I can remember about it were the coarse posters and the disgust and boredom and the vulgarity of it all. It was supposed to be based on the novel, "The Silver Chalice" by a popular American writer. I read it – the film cold be dismissed and I hope forgotten; the novel – well it makes a good exciting yarn for young people, but I could have wept when I realised that these two efforts to discover the Holy Grail to the people, failed, and the only comfort is that the precious relic is there safely housed waiting for the genius who will one day capture the magic of its existence – in words – and reveal it to all.

Though there are many churches that have the Last Supper as the central feature of the reredos, that at All Hallows must surely be unique in Christendom – the painting extends the full width of the chancel and of such height that the table in the painting seems an extension of the altar in the Church and the figures appear on each side. When the clergy are celebrating the whole scene merges into one with Our Lord presiding. I did not realize the impressive majesty

[31] of this conception until I found myself in the front row at a service, when I seemed to be looking into the upper room on that first occasion. Whether this fine conception came from the fertile brain of Tubby – from the distinguished architects or from the painter, or from them all three I do not know, but it is an experience never to be forgotten to attend a celebration of Holy Communion in All Hallows by the Tower and an object lesson to see the great purposes art can serve when it is directed by such imagination and skill.

My wife and I had one difficult task with Tubby which we did not enjoy at the time, though we have laughed over it since. There had been for some time a television programme run by the inimitable Eamon Andrews called – "This is your life". One day Tosher Elliot came to see us and confided that it was proposed that Tubby should the subject or victim – I don't know which it is, and that the hierarchy of Toc. H. were keen on it and would be glad if the B.B.C. did it, as they thought it would help the movement. The snag was that the subject had to be got to the Television Theatre without having the slightest idea that he was the show. Tosher told us that the slightest awareness by the subject meant that the show would be cancelled. The officers of Toc. H. who had to organise this stunt with the B.B.C. thought that if we would cooperate in the conspiracy it

could be done. The conspiracy was that as we were halfway to the theatre, we were to give a dinner party and invite Tubby, and in order to lure him to the party, for we told

[32] him that Tubby would not go out of his way to dine with us – a very old and valued friend of Tubby's who was a big noise in the B.B.C. and who had been abroad for some time, was to be invited, and that it would be his business to say that he had an appointment at the B.B.C. to see something, and invite us all to join him, and that because of this we had timed the dinner to finish at an certain hour so that our guests could keep their appointment. He had the big B.B.C. Daimler calling for him and his wife, and could take so many and I offered to take the rest – this is how we planned it. Tubby point blank refused the invitation to dinner – he had a heavy cold – did not feel well and had a lot of work to do. Tosher Elliot went up specially to see him, told him it was rather an important dinner party as he was to meet people who would be a great help, and he begged him to accept. On the morning of the day, Tubby phoned me asking to be excused as he felt so unwell he must go to bed; again Tosher got on to him – how he managed it I don't know, but I turned up at Trinity Square on time – whisked him to the Studio – all warmed up – bright and cosy – with dear pals of his bubbling with excitement – got a stiff drink into him, and we saw him recover. The dinner was the best we could do and was pretty good. Hints had already been dropped about getting on with the feast because of the car coming for our two guests, so it did not come as a surprise to Tubby that we should be asked if we had ever seen the works in a Television Theatre, that they were going to see a good show, and they could easily take us to the theatre if we cared about it. I had done something on Television and so I enthused about it and offered

[33] the car. As everyone was in the conspiracy except Tubby, he hadn't a chance, though it was obvious he was enjoying the party and the warmth and comfort of the house full of his pals, so our enthusiasm for the visit won easily. We had to time it to the minute so as to get seated as the curtain went up. Tubby became grim and quiet as we sat in the centre of the old Shepherds Bush Empire with 1000 in the audience I should think. I realised he had begun to suspect something he had not prepared for; his face looked grim and a bit angry, but I did not think he knew the programme, which later we found was so. When he was led to the platform by Eamon Andrews I thought for a moment it was going to be a flop; he had a temperature and did not look at all well, and obviously disliked the trick we had all played on him. However, friends count a lot with Tubby, and old friends especially have a place in his heart. And here, one after another they came at Andrews' call, or spoke to Tubby from far away on the television screen – and as one amazing contact and story was told, to be followed by another and yet another, with the marvellous organisation of the B.B.C., piercing it together, Tubby again recovered his old self, and at the reception with buffet that the B.B.C. arranged afterwards, he had one of the memorable evenings of his life. Certainly the bound book "This is your life" must be one of the best reference books to go to for more intimate details of the most remarkable man I have known – Parson and Pioneer – Poet and Practical Visionary – Priest and Publicist – Creator – Organiser – Author. He gave everything he could in memory of those who gave everything they had. But he said relating to that evening that he

[34] would never again be able to say the Te Deum – Let me never be confounded – and we hope we shall never again be asked to join a conspiracy to confound anybody.

The War Goose Steps Again, 1939-40

[1] In June 1939 we all went to our new found country cottage. We took with us our redoubtable Nanny and a boy companion for Anthony, in the shape of a two year old son of some musicians who were always on tour with an orchestral company.

The prospect of working in the country after my town life thrilled me. I decided to model the recumbent bronze of Admiral Nelson-Ward there. I had built an attractive cedar-wood garage with a roof light for a studio. It was all great fun – especially the laying out and making the garden with a little terrace and planning all the planting.

Particularly happy in that glorious summer were the two boys; I had erected a large Willesden canvas garden summer house out of the woodwork and canvas used in the New York World Fair job. It closed up easily at night, like a parcel. When open, with the front strutted up like a shop blind, the sides brought forward and stayed, it made a 12'x12' room open to the south view over the hills, where all could meal and rest.

In this tranquil scene from this highest point in Hertfordshire, our garden gently sloping away and

[2] into the landscape without a building in sight, other than a picturesque White Water Tower two miles away, we rested and planned.

We had turned the sow' ear of the village into a pleasant home, we now wanted to improve it so that it was fit for a choosy artist and his wife to live in.

Though life seemed so beautiful and peaceful on our hill top, we were all the time conscious of the German menace.

True, Chamberlain had returned from Munich last Autumn, waving the scrap of paper from the aeroplane steps – Peace in our time – which had lulled us all into a false sense of security. I had always held a strong belief, emphasised from experience that, like the leopards, individuals, breeds, or nations, did not, indeed could not change their spots. Attacking a nation they had signed a treaty to protect; introducing poison gas when they were held, had proved the Germans had no scruples in the 14-18 war. The vast military parade goose stepping across our cinema and television screens were disturbing symptoms of intentions.

We felt glad we had a retreat so opportunely found the previous year, where we might find more safety from

[3] the Guernica type of warfare that would inevitably accompany the Germans, than if we lived in a target area. Many recall the dramatic moment that war declared at 11 o'clock on Sunday morning in September 1939. In Flamstead as in every town and village in the country, the Church had a larger congregation than usual. The Church bells stopped as the Vicar mounted the pulpit. An expectant hush at this unusual procedure which became dramatic as he solemnly announced that at this moment, 11 o'clock the British Government had declared a state of War with Germany. As if to leave no question about it, almost at once the air raid siren mounted on a nearby building wailed its fearful alarm.

We were transfixed by the drama of the moment, nobody moved as the Vicar calmly explained, it was safer nearer to the walls, and would the children and those who wished to, move to the sides, that it was best to remain under cover and we would carry on with the service. With some calm and suitable comments, his manner and quiet assurance gave great comfort to the people and that morning he moved nearer to the hearts of the villagers.

I had joined the Army Officers emergency reserve when it was formed in 1937, and had fruitlessly tried to get some training via friends in the territorials, a pathetic experience, I received a letter from the War

[4] Office inviting me to apply for appointment, or to have my calling up deferred for twelve months. I chose the latter, for I had the clay model of the recumbent Admiral Nelson-Ward in progress, and it had to be finished and cast into the permanent plaster or else destroyed, and the work wasted. As the nerve failure of my left leg had given me a dropped left foot I feared I might not now be acceptable, so I concentrated on the model to get it done as quickly as possible.

All through that winter I worked with the snow at one time in a great circular drift 8 ft high surrounding the corner where the studio stood by a well-lopped elm tree. When I dug into the terrific drift, to my surprise there was the studio inside it with a clear space all round swept by the wind, making it appear like a jewel in a casket of snow, which banked against the tree and hedge and piled into the tree itself, completely buried the little building. It was on the highest point in Hertfordshire and that corner had trapped the lot. But for this freak clearing by the circular sweep of the wind in this corner, I would have been truly buried. Protected by the great bank of snow I worked comfortably there till it went. Cut off for a week, our plumbing, electric heating and stores including of course condensed milk triumphed, in fact the last was our only sacrifice. As enjoyable as Switzerland.

[5] Mrs. Nelson-Ward and her brother in law made the devious journey from Bath, to see the finished clay model in the spring, and were full of satisfaction with the accuracy of the portrait. She was perturbed at the possibility of my being called up, and the work on her husband's memorial having to wait until the war was over; for it was the one thing she lived for. Even said, that, as a service man's widow, she ought not to try and dissuade me from serving, but did I think I had done enough, and now over service age, could leave war to younger men.

My view was that if the Germans were allowed to goose step over the world, life would not be worth living, and so far as I was concerned, I should help if wanted. We were touched by her devotion to her husband's memory. She loved recalling how they fell in love at first sight, and their happy life, of the way he worked to improve the conditions at sea of those in the merchant service. Of the difficulties overcome.

As a client, I found her very understanding, and her stand against the prejudices of the Vicar of Boxgrove helped me to help her. He rightly considered himself the guardian of the lovely building; he had already seen what well meaning people, even architects, could do to it, and was in great fear of what I, with this major memorial would do to the lovely fabric.

[6] The problem was a challenge to me, and I did not, indeed could not, allow any question as to whether it was right for so major an addition to be made. The romance of the subject bearing the name of Nelson, and being of his blood, and features. The fact that he was an Admiral made me feel the memorial should be created. I believe the Vicar tried hard to stop it, but the design and application went the normal course, with approval from everyone. He took no interest in the work at any time in the eight years before it was unveiled. During which time the war was fought and won and the work completed. It is, however pleasing to recall that when he saw the work for the first time in 1947, installed, he was impressed, his whole manner towards me changed, he seemed full of humility, whereas he had always seemed so uncivil. He said he had not been able to visualise it would look like that, he said it apologetically; he was sure I understood what a great responsibility it was to safeguard so lovely a building, and would appreciate his difficulties. From then on he could not have been kinder, he tried on every occasion to get me to do something about the Richmond and Gordon Memorial on the west wall, which was apparently the cause of the Vicar's dis-temper with artists. The Duchess of Richmond and Gordon also tried hard to get me to do something to it, but a known architect had designed it, and I explained I could not interfere with another artist's work, or even express an opinion about it.

[7] They should approach the artist themselves if they did not like it, and ask for his reconsideration. They had no doubt approved the design which must have had the consideration of the Art Advisory Committee of the Diocese, before a faculty was granted.

I had no such compunction, indeed felt it my duty, when the Vicar commissioned me to make an addition to the first World War Memorial in order that it should incorporate the names of those in the parish who fell in the Second War, to carry out the work. The work was evidently a commercial production, unsigned, efficiently carved with crowded ornament. I made such modifications as allowed me to add a pendant to it in a simpler style; the Vicar was grateful, for the result did not disturb him as it had previously. It is a dreadful thing for an artist to have to mess about with other people's blunders and lack of taste, but this lovely Priory Church must be protected.

I have already explained the difficulties I had in the inception of the Nelson-Ward memorial, but as this is the only major work of mine that is in the Gothic tradition, I should explain that my first design, which had a plain base with simple ornament, had a contemporary look. But when the Architect in charge of the fabric – Walter Godfrey – a great authority on our mediaeval buildings, saw it, he told me he could not permit a modern style in such a precious

[8] Gothic building, and advised me to adjust the style to harmonise with the building. Hence the Gothic heraldry and side niches and moulding of arch. Most of this had grown out of the facts of the brief on which I built the design, which had to be recessed into the wall on such a site, and so had to carry the wall. Though it is so designed as to be able to do this, actually there is a brick arch and niche built in capable of doing this and serving the purpose of insulating the work from the ever damp walls of mediaeval buildings.

Some years before this commission I had erected a small wall tablet near the lectern in this Priory Church which more nearly approaches the kind of design I have usually made to meet the problem of memorials in such buildings. At the same time, remaining true to ones own idea of style.

Courageous Mrs. Nelson-Ward came to a tragic end when in 1942, the Regency Hotel in Bath received a direct hit from a German bomb which destroyed it. She was last seen in the lounge, comforting a distraught girl member of the staff.

[9] It did not take us long to get accepted in the village of Flamstead, probably the war made them more tolerant of "foreigners" as anybody born outside the village community was considered. Dorries' sympathetic way with people, and their families and troubles, soon won all hearts, and she found herself pushed into running the Mother's Union, Poppy Day collection, and anything else they could tag on. This was encouraged by the Vicar's wife being a very reserved type, shy, and distant with the villagers, but a charming hostess in her own home. Here we met those who organised the Village life outside the two frowsty pubs. There we met Davies and the wife he had just married; and gathered they had a modern villa or house on River Hill. We dined with them, thought little about them, though the Vicar had claimed great virtues for him as a financier and accountant, and told how he did all the Church accounts so well and how highly he thought of him, he was one of his Church wardens. Then we heard he had been to the Nuremberg Fascist Rally and had returned with his car pasted over with Nazi and Fascist slogans – then – that he had bought College Farm adjoining our land, and extending southward over the high flat plateau; where, so the story went, a German aeroplane had landed before the war. There was much putting of heads together, whispering, and furtive looks – talks of spies, and so on. We definitely disliked the man without knowing why. He was always courteous,

10] would give us a lift to London if he saw us waiting for the bus. I was sure I did not trust him, but felt if he had Fascist sympathies, I am anti that sort of thing, the more I knew of him in wartime the better. So I kept on as good terms as I could.

The phoney war that for six months had rested on the famous Maginot Line had brought some sense of security, though one realised it was the lull before the storm. Like a game of chess the pieces had been moved into position, and at some point they would have to move and act.

The clay model of the Admiral was finished. The plaster moulder was booked to come and stay with me to cast it, the family to go to Weston-super-Mare for a change. We thought we would give a party to show the model on a Saturday in May. All arranged two weeks ahead. When the goose stepped!, round the end of the magical Maginot Line, raping Belgium once again, tearing up all the ethical values of treaties, promises, or fair behaviour to neutrals. Trying to prove they were masters of everything by the completely wrong methods. How long will it take these geese to learn that the people of the world will see them in hell before they will allow them to get away with it and will combine against them [sic, ?]. Whereas if they used Christ's methods all those of Good will would align themselves with them.

[11] Our party took place, the brilliant sunshine contrasting with the grim mood induced by the news from Dunkirk where the amazing evacuation of the British Army in France was taking place so splendidly assisted by the volunteers with their small craft.

For so grim a moment in British history when the British Army was ceasing to exist as such, there was a curious buoyancy among this average crowd of an English village. The glint of steel in the eyes of our guests, the grim humour, the firmness of the hand grips, betokening we were together in this dilemma. Twenty-three years after I can still sense the emotion that gripped the nation then.

The model of the Admiral in the soft perishable clay came in for but passing attention. More as a symbol of the dominating subject – war – than as work of art, for but few of our guests had understanding on this.

As a musketry training officer of the First World War, my thoughts had been considering how I could best do something to help in the war effort. I had already designed an anti-aircraft missile, made careful working drawings, had them considered by the inventors boards, and received their thanks and regrets. I now thought I would start a miniature rifle shooting club in the Village, there

[12] was an ideal site at Jack's Dell, and teach all how to handle a rifle and shoot straight. I made it my subject of conversation at the party, we arranged a meeting at 7 o'clock the following Friday evening at the School when, with Colonel Clark in the Chair, I armed with all the dope from the National Rifle Shooting Association, we would launch the scheme.

On Monday the family went to London for Weston-super-Mare, I for the Rifle Club place, whilst the little boats were making history at Dunkirk. Tuesday the House of Commons formed the Home Guard, Wednesday the Village Police asked me to take command of the Flamstead Platoon, Thursday I planned its organisation and work. Friday Captain Green of Caddington Hall, commanding the Markyate platoon, drove me to Hertford, where we stacked 24 rifles, bandoliers, arm bands and ammunition, into the car, half for Markyate, half for Flamstead, and arrived back at the School at 7 p.m. precisely, just as Colonel Clark took the chair for the Rifle Club meeting advertised in the two pubs and the shop.

Briefly, the Colonel explained, fifty men of the village had enlisted in the Home Guard, that Lieut. Cecil Thomas of the Middlesex Regiment had been appointed commander, and would take over. I read out the list of the sections, their leaders and stations, ordered Section 1

[13] to draw their Rifles and equipment and proceed on duty, and the section with their three rifles moved off at 20 minutes past seven. Only three days after of the act was passed in Parliament, it gave the villagers a sense of purpose and responsibility, which acted like a challenge to me, causing me to enter with great gusto the job of organising the meagre force of 50 men with 12 rifles spread over 9 square miles of agricultural country.

I had one short interview with an elderly officer concerned with a larger area command; but he was too bogged down with the equipment side and general overall defence by patrols, firing points and obstructions, to consider special problems. But I did outline what I thought was Flamstead's special risk, of having, in a high commanding position, a proved aircraft landing area and dropping ground ¾ of a mile from a trunk communication road, between London and the Midlands, where one of the reserve supply petrol stations was sited with seventy thousand gallons. He noted it and would report what I thought. I theorised that this would be the objective, and we must do what we could to stop them reaching it. The village being half way between the airfield and the target, made it convenient to make concealed control firing points, covering the connecting roads; with fascine obstruction. Nobody disagreed, and they all entered into the spirit of building, making and digging as soon

[14] as we finished our daily work.

My plaster moulder arrived and completed the plaster cast of the Admiral in about two weeks, Dorrie came back to look after me. I biked all over the parish, the largest in Herts, and tried to link up with neighbouring platoons, a hopeless task at this stage. We were able to work out effective patrols, communications and a warning system in addition to our firing points, and Church Tower observation, for ringing the warning bells.

I had conferences with the Section Commanders, and was not surprised to learn they were all suspicious of Mr. Davis of College Farm. He was being specially watched by two of the Section Leaders and it was agreed that in the event of a German invasion he was to be shot immediately. Whether we should thus have eliminated an enemy or perhaps an important member of our information service is anybody's guess, but in those dangerous spy fever days his survival is a tribute to the forbearance of the average Britisher. His car with the Fascist slogans was remembered, his purchased in the phoney war period of College Farm, with its open plateau landing ground on which a German plane made a landing, round which he at once erected an unnecessary number of very large white notice boards on the North side each about 30"x20" bearing the words in black 'Trespassers will be prosecuted'. They could be seen

[15] for miles, and were unusual in the district where with only 600 people in nine square miles, people knew how to respect agricultural land, and such notices were seldom if ever seen.

Then I had a report that he had a second car garaged in a lane not far away from his house (high powered_ in a locked shed, full of petrol with a wireless transmitter set with batteries fitted.

I examined and confirmed the report by entering another door in an adjoining shed with an available key, and climbing over a partition through a small space and dropping down. As a car so fitted was contrary to law, I decided the Home Guard was less fitted to deal with this problem than the Police, that it warranted a special messenger to take a letter to Scotland Yard; this Dorrie did before lunch time. I was interested to learn, when the patrol came on duty at about 5 p.m. that same day the car had disappeared! Coincidence! Maybe. Not long after we had a Section Leaders Conference on the lawn at our house, Lord Farrer, Captain Green, Mr. Herbert and Mr. Dillon. Each made a report, they had all kept an eye on Mr. Davis, it seems he must have been continually shadowed by armed men. After I had reported the circumstances of the car and my action, one of the Section Leaders said he was glad to know that, as he thought I was a particular

[16] friend of Davis, and he had instructed a patrol to watch me as well and in the event of trouble and I was caught collaborating with Davis I was to be shot out of hand as well. I don't think this implied we were any more jittery than the rest of the country in which there was a mild epidemic of spy fever, rather that there was no confidence in the village, in collaborators with Nazism [sic], and each member had decided for himself that in the event of a German invasion, no chances could be taken.

The fifty men worked with determination, the firing points I sited were concealed, made bullet proof, and with fields of fire under 100 yds, with obstructions, was all we could do. There were no obvious points from which a machine gun could immediately smother any point manned by our concealed men, but how long 12 rifles and fifty

rounds would have held the heavily armed German paratroopers in 9 square miles, is anybody's guess. One unsatisfactory member grumbled at going on duty at one of our covering points, saying his house was just as good to fire from. His mentality was a low one, he joined to get a rifle, so that he could defend England from his doorstep. I gave him the opportunity of doing what he was ordered, or handing in his resignation and his rifle; he chose the former. The paper began to flow after about 3 weeks, and I found I had a full time job; for I took my share of night watching; how cold it was on that Church tower. Then an invitation came to me from the Air Ministry to take a

[17] commission in the R.A.F. for the defence of airfields. The War Office had given the Air Ministry the list of those officers of the First World War who had joined the Army Officers Emergency Reserve and whose service had been deferred and now the National Emergency needed them.

I had just turned 55 years; the age limit, but the dropped foot and nerve failure was only an inconvenience. The model of the Admiral was in permanent plaster, I just felt I could not work any more at sculpture whilst the country was in such danger, so I had a crate made for the Admiral, got my friends at Caddington Hall to store it in their massive mediaeval brick wine vaults. It was most impressive lowering the long coffin like crate into the ground and sliding it deep into the arched crypt. It only wanted the Dead March to make it a funeral. I felt very happy about its safety miles from anywhere in a park. My resignation from the Home Guard after only about a month seemed like deserting, but I wanted to do much more and felt rather futile with 12 rifles and 50 scattered men in 9 square miles. It had sunk into the Air Ministry mind that aircraft with their highly trained personnel, were sitting ducks to parachute dropped infantry, and something had got to be done about it quickly. The medical test seemed exacting, but as he didn't ask me to hop me to hop round on my left foot, I passed, having said nowt, and was soon being interviewed by Air Marshal De Crespigny at Chester, who gave me the choice of

[18] three aircraft stations. I chose West Freugh near Stranraer, to which I proceeded at once, and was the second Defence Officer to arrive. We were all started off as Pilot Officers, and wore Air Force uniform; though our job was military. We took precedence in the order of our arrival. The Pilot Officer in front of me was Major Buller, a nephew of General Sir Redvers Buller of Ladysmith fame – naturally he was proud of his military background. A cheery bloke, who took everything very casually and easily, drank hard, and had a way of getting the work done with very little effort on his part, thereby proving what a good officer he was – more time for the thinking part – and drinking – eh what! But there were no men to command. Then came 30 rifles and 100 iron tubes with bayonets fixed in them – pikes – our defensive armament, after about two weeks 150 raw recruits of low category – no N.C.Os. I think the one time Major, long India Army service, was so shattered by his nondescript force, and no N.C.Os – the very background of a soldier's life, that he just retired to his hut, told me to make some N.C.Os, organise them, and teach them how to handle a rifle, so that they didn't shoot each other accidentally. Such was one example, repeated all over the country, of the first day of what became the R.A.F. Regiment.

West Freugh was a training school for bombing, established before the war, so in full swing, with a decent timber built officers mess, the whole lay out relying on

[19] timber built hutments. Group Captain Oppehaw in command, insured a happy camp. He and his staff had organised their own defence when the Germans proved they

could wipe off an aerodrome with a handful of men with a few machine guns. A real hard headed engineer from a Clyde Shipbuilding works, was the Squadron Leader in charge of Aircraft Repair. He at once got hold of a couple of heavy duty lorries, ran them up to the Clyde, clad them most completely in armour plate, mounted aircraft machine guns in them with a crew, and stationed them on the tarmac ready to take action against any hostile aircraft landing on the runways. We highly approved of these armour clad boxes on wheels, and regularly manned them the whole time I was there. Crete proved you could not hold an aerodrome by this means, or any other, if the commanding points in the surrounding country were not also held and used as defence positions against hostile landings; more particularly to deny such positions to the enemy, from where they could control the airfield and its use.

For a time we were left to our own ideas of how to defend our airfields, but there must have been much squabbling about priorities, and jealously as to whether Army, or Air Force, should command the defence of airfields. As usual a compromise was reached, an army defence commander responsible to the War Office was appointed to each airfield; as they had no disciplinary authority in the R.A.F. yet like many of the Major

[20] and Captain ranks, loved to chuck their weight about; they were not popular with the R.A.F. defence personnel. Their attempts to get elderly subalterns of the First World War, and the B. & C. category men who had been sifted into this R.A.F. defence force, to behave like guardsmen, were pathetic. I found the men willing to learn, and they did their job as well as lack of training and weapons permitted. At one station a Captain with some territorial experience, would come in to my orderly room where he at once became Senior Officer, and start shouting his orders at everyone using the barrack square bully N.C.O. manner with raw recruits, showing bad temper, if the man commanded didn't jump to it. I stood it for a week or two, but when my orderly room clerk, who was a school master, asked to be transferred to other duties, I waited for a particularly bad performance, cleared the office and gave him a lecture on commanding the kind of men we had to deal with, and that I wanted no more bullying in my office. As I was only a flying officer he was infuriated and started bullying me, at which I think I gave him more than I got. He was going to report me, have me courts martialled, etc., I told him to get on with it, the evidence would be heavy against him, and he would go to a more suitable job. Treat the men right, they are volunteers, they only want to co-operate – they were not barrack square trained soldiers. He must have taken my lesson to heart for we had no more noisy authority. He was quite a pleasant fellow normally; I think he must have had no experience as an officer and imagined that was how they

[21] behaved, as they did on the stage and in novels.

He had another occasion to be upset with me which was very amusing. As a civilian he was quite an amiable fellow, so in effort to get on better co-op terms, I invited him to bring his wife and family to tea at the charming house we had at Ardwell. His Lady turned up in a frightful yellow dress. Next day he was furious with me, asked what the devil I wanted to ask them to tea for, did I know that his wife had insisted on buying a new dress for the occasion, that it had cost him 12 gns which he could not afford; that she had brought that frightful yellow thing which he had got to live with, and they had quarrelled. The idea of spending 12 gns to come and have a tea with me was fantastic, and to hell with me and my tea parties.

The little house we occupied was the factor's house on the estate of Sir Ian MacTaggart Stewart. We were lucky to get it, for such an unfurnished house was extremely rare in a country district. We had been advertising and searching for months, and on one day off duty, we were returning at 10 o'clock at night after a fruitless day searching, and decided, despite the lateness, we would call on the farmer we had been told was the one to see. He proved to be Mr. Whyte, who had a lovely house and fine farm, and was the factor to Sir MacTaggart Stewart. He was a quiet nice man, he seemed to like us, said Sir Mac was prejudiced against the Air Force and had

[22] refused every application from West Freugh, but if we would come with him they were having the annual estate dance in the big barn at Ardwell, and it was a good opportunity to catch them, but that he was a very difficult man to please. He left us in his car whilst he went and spoke about us, and then he came and fetched Dorrie, and presently Sir Mac came over to the car and scrutinised me and asked searching questions. I did everything I could to give him confidence, and just before midnight said we could have it. It was a triumph, for many of the senior officers at West Freugh had clamoured for it, and he had kept it empty for months because he did not like the R.A.F. When they found I had got it they just could not understand why.

The house fascinated me. The approach in the lane among the farm buildings was so unpretentious that one hardly expected more than the humblest cottage. Instead the rooms were handsome in proportion, with windows all round the drawing room, a modern extension, and the two old rooms each side of the hall, had the original Georgian flavour; one the dining room, the other my study, in brown polished wood, with bookcases; my desk and easel, deep chairs and shaded lights, in the absolute quiet of the night, study and work seemed a nocturne, by day, we looked out over a narrow strip of garden, a low wall, then a gently undulating pasture, with superb Galloway cattle, with the sea of Luce Bay beyond. One of the most simple, gracious and enchanting homes I have lived in.

[23] At the end of the garden a little triangular coppice about 150 by 50 yards, rather unkempt. I discovered a new joy, that one of the greatest delights, to me, was to wander idly round with a sickle and a rake or hoe, and prune and tidy into heaps, collect and burn, gradually the little coppice became a place of paths and clearings enchanting to walk in.

A little way down the coast was a water mill on the water's edge, the ancient wheel turned by a small stream that started from a spring, and was trapped in a wooden conduit to make its exit to the sea via the water wheel. Inside the building which was 50' by 30' was the most beautiful carpentered timber framework and wheel, to which was geared to the tools required by the craftsman boat builder. Two hundred years old, the mill had evolved and grown to answer various purposes that required the ever revolving wheel, turning in the trapped waters of the spring stream. I could easily have foregone all the ambitions that stem from a swell studio in South Kensington, for the peaceful efficiency of that ancient workshop, with that lovely bay to bathe and sail in, the soft climate of Galloway to live in, where palms flourish through the winter. There the morning mists and evening glow make a paradise for the painter, and an inspiration for the poet. This tongue of land, the Mull, only 2 ½ miles wide juts into the warm gulf stream which so embraces it that in that terrific blizzard of 1942, it was hardly affected, though my car got buried a mile from the camp, and a train

[24] was buried for a fortnight 20 miles N.E. of this. If on that occasion I could have gone another mile, and turned the corner at Sandhead I could have got through, for though up to there the country was snowbound, down the leg of the Mull, the land and sea were so warm, only a flutter of snow lay, within a few miles of ten and twenty foot drifts. The memory of the Mull of Galloway haunts me still.

Before we got to Ardwell we had stayed for a year at a farm house in Glen Luce, where a farmer and his sister lived. A large gloomy ugly cold house, it had seemed ideal in the summer time, when I first came to West Freugh. But the sister was an old maid, intolerant of children with their continuous noisy play. Her temperament and don'ts were having a bad effect on Anthony, so we were using desperate efforts to find another home. To us it was like an answer to prayer to find such a haven as this Factor's house. Never were we so happy. With a girl to help, the furniture brought up from London, a bedroom for each. Two beaches one on each side of the Mull 2 ½ miles apart, where we could picnic, choosing the one most sheltered in the prevailing wind. At Camp, Buller left the work more and more to me. I felt the whole thing was a poor show. One Saturday off day I was summoned to the camp, Air Marshal de Crespigny was visiting West Freugh, and the Group Captain wanted me to take over Gas Officer duty there. We only had an establishment for a Corporal for this duty, and I knew I should not have agreed to the request or order. But

[25] the Air Marshal took a very serious view of the gas risk, and though I hated having anything to do with Chemical Warfare, about which I felt ignorant, I found it difficult to refuse Group Captain Oppenhaw, for we got on famously together. My mistake was forced home when all ground defence officers were promoted, including myself, but when two or three months after, Air Ministry discovered I was doing a job which did not exist i.e. Gas Officer, the promotion was cancelled, and the increased pay had to be returned. Another officer in another station under the same Gas Officer's duty, he refused, was court martialled; the Air Ministry upheld his objection, he was posted to another station, and promoted to Squadron Leader.

We had a charming actor officer named Wyndham Goldie, who enthused some of the men to produce a play. A great evening was arranged, we invited Mrs. Goldie to dine with us, and drove her to the camp for the show, for she had come up from London for a week end to spend with her husband, at the local hotel. It was a pitch black night, we managed to crawl to the camp in the complete blackout, and were just parking by the air raid siren mast, when the damn thing went off just over our heads. The first and only time I ever heard the siren at West Freugh. Nothing for it. I had to race on duty, but I managed to get a man to conduct the ladies to the Officers Air Raid Shelter. I had not been at my post for

[26] more than 5 mins, when a report of an accident came through. An officer had been crushed between two lorries. Flying Officer Goldie had been organising his play actors for the performance, due to start in 15 mins, when the siren wailed. Being in charge of the armour clad lorries, he had to get them in position on the tarmac, so also raced on duty, and was guiding one out with his torch when he backed into a stationary petrol bowser [sic], and before he could jump clear his 15 ton lorry crushed him. It was a pathetic end to a much looked forward to relaxation evening, to see him lying with a pantaloons costume on, under his great coat, wrecked for life, and to have to break this news to his wife, waiting in a very dismal damp underground shelter for the All Clear,

which came within minutes, for the raider passed over for their objective, Belfast: where they did considerably more damage.

Goldie made a good recovery, and had a successful career as an actor, especially on television, despite the lameness from this misfortune. He was greatly supported by his wife, who became well known as an organiser to the B.B.C.

The growth of the R.A.F. Regiment from these beginnings of low category men, no N.C.Os, no equipment or weapons, with old officers, many of them failures, is a part of regimental history. The beginnings were pathetic, it is just as well we were not put to the test. The difference between the selected men, fit to perfection, being trained

[27] to man the bombers of the Air Force – and the motley weeds gathered to protect them and their airfields, was marked in the extreme. Their vigour and enthusiasm in contrast to the feeble efforts of the defence force was apparent; but gradually we improved, and eventually weeded out the old, relegated them to minor jobs, in this way a fine regiment was built up that could really deal with an attack on an airfield.

I added to my experiences, one young lazy lad who worked his way through Buller into the company orderly room, where he could smoke his pipe and do damn all. He made it known he was for the ministry. Buller had evidently [sic] been impressed, no guns for clergymen. He did not attend the one service a week nor the one Christmas communion, though every facility was given him and all the others. I had a letter from a Bishop shortly afterwards asking for a confidential report on this man, as he was applying for ordination. I put him on routine duty, as the best training for an obvious escapist. There are always a number who will do anything to get into a soft job, or escape from the boring guard duties.

Group Captain Burns was a much liked Commandant, and was persuaded to have a debate one evening for a bit of fun. The subject "That the Artist could run the world better than the business man", Flying Officer myself to be the protagonist for the artist. Well organised by the Toc. H. group in the camp, it was taken quite seriously as well as in

[28] good humour, owing to the presence of the C.O. as leading advocate. He was in big business in private life. It was a lively debate with about 50 present. My knowledge of the way successful artists organise, run committee meetings, Societies, etc, and sell what nobody wants; as requiring much more able men, than is required of those who sell what everyone daily demands i.e. vegetables etc. was a main argument; but the comparison of Churchill and Hitler, both picture painters, with Churchill much more sensitive with more initiative in his works and a far superior artist, made good points and must have influenced the voting. The result was a decisive vote for the artist, and a look of incredulity on the C.O's face, that a F.O. could beat him in his own camp, on such an argument. He was a great sport and like so many who reach that rank, very fair minded. The fact that he would join in such an evening showed the niceness of his nature and his wide understanding. He was greatly liked and respected.

During the time I served under him I experienced many examples of his consideration for all points of view and of all ranks. One night on duty a man in our little defence force of 150 asked if he could talk to me of his difficulties. It appeared he was disappointed I had passed him over, when trying to discover men suitable as N.C.Os. He

had a brother, younger than himself who now held commissioned rank; he also had a young wife who was very dissatisfied with him for not making progress in the army, for she could not manage on the

[29] pay allowance. Also other women were talking big and pitying her. He had held a foreman's job in a small printers works with 30 men under him – he was apparently a skilled printer, and felt he could do a better job and be more valuable than he was at present. I liked his straight forward approach, explained he was such a little fellow, about 5'5", that that was the reason I had not selected him, when he in company with others, had taken two paces forward when the 150 men paraded for the purpose of finding men suitable. All I could offer him was a corporal's rank in the gas warfare centre, which I was then forming much to my regret. I could promise him nothing more and it was possible he would get stuck there for ever and be forgotten. The advantages that he would be on his own, avoid guard duties, regular hours, no night op's and at least one step on the ladder decided him to take it. He was splendid [sic], took most of the job off my shoulders, for I had every other defence duty to do, as this gas business had no establishment beyond one corporal in this camp. I got to know him well and highly approved of his conscientious work and his integrity. I invited him to our house to find out more about him. I knew the need for more and more officers would be pressing, and sure enough within a year an urgent order came that suitable men to take commissioned rank were to be recommended on form XYZ and sent for interview if so required. I spoke to Group Captain Burns about this Corporal, he interviewed him and then put searching questions to me about him. He went for interview and passed and I had to

[30] find another Corporal.

Later on when the R.A.F. Regiment was established as a real fighting force, I attended a rally to witness an exercise attack and defence by them of an airfield in Essex; a large number of Officers of the Regiment had been flown in to see the show. Among whom I was delighted to meet my former Corporal of the gas section at West Freugh. Now a very dapper flying officer with his uniform still looking very smart and new, obviously very pleased with life, and his job, he expressed his gratitude for the part I took in getting him recognised, I am sure he did good service, I wish he had looked me up after the war as a few others did, I only hope he came through.

Group Captain Burns sent me to an Aircraft Recognition Course somewhere in the Midlands. Too many of our fighters and machine gunners in the air were bringing down our own planes through faulty recognition, so a special course to make further instructors throughout the service was instituted. As gently as I could I tried to get out of it, for I considered I was the worlds worst at the game, as my hearing and sight were not equipped in that way, but I was given to understand the purpose of the course was not to make observers, but instructors. It was a tedious journey in War Time by train about 30 hours with many changes, one at Wigan arriving there at midnight with my train leaving at 8.30 a.m.

[31] The only place I could go to, a service rest house opposite the Station where after ham and eggs, a rest on a wooden chair with my feet on the fender. I found I was looking at a very remarkable cast iron fireplace, beautifully designed and modelled in renaissance style. Not particularly large or swell. The house looked nondescript with its canteen bar and men snoring on the bare boarded floor but it was mid-Victorian in style and I felt certain I was looking at a fireplace designed by Alfred Stevens and modelled by

him or one of the clever modellers he had assisting him when he worked for the brief period for Mr. Hoole of Sheffield in preparing for the Great Exhibition of 1851. At 6 o'clock in the morning fed up with the wooden chair, I interviewed the ticket collector again to know if the swimming baths opened early. He thought they did, and as he was just going off duty and lived that way, he would take me there. On the way he told me the old house where I had the ham and eggs had been booked for demolition before the war, so was only in temporary use as a serviceman's rest house. I told him of the fireplace and gave him a pound and my address in London to let me know after the war, the name of the agent in charge, so that I could write for information to see if I could buy it. He was pleased with the pound but I believe he thought I was crazy. The baths did not open till nine, so I wended my way through the silent blacked out town with a faint dawn just appearing. The town looked strangely beautiful in the faint

[32] light with one yellow gleam coming from the open Church door, shining across the Church green, helping the dark silhouette of the trees and Church against the faintly dawning sky. A glimmering movement in the shadows on the far side of the green reached the beam of light, and turned out to be a crocodile of Nuns who curving towards the door with the light bobbing on their white hoods made the picture of quiet peace as they went into the Church. I filed in to early service after them and thought Wigan a beautiful place quite undeserving of the story of the old Wigan couple, who having passed this life, applied at the Gate of St. Peter for entrance into heaven; they were informed their names were not on the list, and so they had better apply to the other place. Sorrowfully they wended their way down, and applied, but the devil in charge of the door after scrutinising his books, said their name was not there, so they could not come in, at which they started to cry. "What are you crying for", the doorkeeper said. "They won't take us in t'other place, and you won't take us here, we've got to go back to Wigan!".

I suppose the aircraft recognition course was a good one, I thought it was a cockeyed course. I got a first class pass because I could give a lecture and sketch a shape on the blackboard. Whereas a young farmer of the Royal Observer Corps, who from boyhood up had made aircraft recognition his hobby, and had the most uncanny skill – failed.

[33] The following story is typical of him – a group of us were discussing the problem of aircraft recognition, when the farmer said – listen, there's a (naming the aircraft) about 7 miles away, over there, about 1500 ft. up. Surely, you can't see it! No, but I can hear it! Surely you are guessing, it's a . No their engines have that peculiar sound, listen. I could hear nothing, but some of the group agreed they could hear an aeroplane. Yes said the wizard, its coming this way. How can you tell the height when you can't see it? Because it's below the cloud belt! Sure enough about 2000 ft. There it is, he said, it is a (mentioning the name) it will pass overhead. They could all see and hear it now, except me. Even when overhead I had to admit, to myself, that I would not back my opinion with a shilling as to what it was. And this wizard had failed. Another test pleased me more, we had limited instruction on how to use machine gun fire from the ground against hostile aircraft. We were all given a few minutes practice with the film camera machine gun against an aeroplane mock attacking the post. When the film was shown and our names were called out as our film shots came on, most were received with roars of laughter. The aeroplane dancing on and off and across the screen as the gun vainly tried to follow it. I was pleased when I saw the aeroplane still on the screen and move slowly across

[34] through my belt of fire. I got a favourable comment. My musketry training in the first world war must have taught me elementary principles, that takes more than a limited instruction to enable the average man to grasp.

The early days of amateur movies often involved looking at a relative's movie of their holiday, when Venice or Paris would whirl round you. Already the amateur has learnt to keep the camera still. So must you keep the gun. When I returned to camp with my good report, Group Captain Burns sent me to the Wing Commander Head of the School to make use of me. I realised he would have none of it, and he was not going to have his R.A.F. officer-instructors instructed by an old infantry dug out. However it nettled them and within a month or so they had the whole place festooned with named models of our planes and the enemies', which I am sure later paid dividends.

The risk of Gas Warfare never left the Air Ministry's mind, and we now had a very well equipped gas centre built on the outskirts of the camp in the safest wind quarter.

Group Captain Burns ordered all officers to assemble there not only to inspect the whole set up, but to listen to a lecture by me on Gas Warfare and defence procedure. I thought I would improve the occasion by speculating on how I thought such an attack would be planned and why, and I realised the senior officers did not approve, and the junior officers

[35] thought it was a cheek. Even the Group Captain in his kindly way thought I would have been better to have stuck to the gas technique.

I look back with some anger on the two years I acted as Gas Officer in a station which only had an establishment of one Corporal to handle the problem. It prevented my getting promotion though I was doing all the duties of a defence officer with the gas job thrown in. I hated the very idea of gas warfare. The people of the world as well as myself can be thankful the Germans dared not risk it on us. I tried to make our defence against poison gas effective, at West Freugh. I inspected the laundries to co-ordinate their preparations, got in touch with local authorities and neighbouring units, all of no use. If we had been attacked with gas, it would have been grim. The general idea was, they dare not use it, they know what they will get back. This is certainly borne out by the ghastly German record of their gas chambers; there they were safe from retaliation. So no compunction. That we were prepared to retaliate and made extensive preparations for the contingency, I knew, from having to report on experimental gas bombing of a huge dummy factory. In S.W. Scotland, covering 2 or 3 acres it was a shell or skeleton. An imitation liquid for mustard gas bombing was used delivered from low level roof top height flights, aiming to get the bomb through the windows or openings blasted first. Then the mustard gas bomb would

[36] burst scattering the dangerous liquid over machinery and workers. My job was to measure the area of contamination, picking my way over and round the mess. Make reports of this and the accuracy of the entrance of the bomb into the building, which of course we observed from outside. I formed the opinion, it would have been unpleasantly effective. On another occasion, I went on a most secret mission to a station at the very Northernmost top of the Mull of Galloway. There I found a lot of strange masts. I had to wait whilst everything was covered up, before I could go into the large timber and galvanised iron building about 70'x35'. It was full of rows of what appeared to be 4'x2'

chest on stands, each covered over with a dust sheet. I had to advise how to protect this building so effectively against gas attack that it would continue to operate. It was not until the war was over, that I learned about Radar, and realised that I had evidently been in one of our most secret radar stations. It is a sad reflection that only the fear of retaliation will stop the German from using the most vile methods to prove his 'superiority'.

During my time at this camp I had one more legal incident, which if I did not exactly enjoy, gave me a lot of interest. I received a request from the orderly room to know whether I would act as prisoner's friend in a forthcoming Courts Martial on two men, who had driven and removed an army vehicle without authority, overturned and

[37] damaged it and were absent without leave for a few hours. As it looked like an escapade, with nothing offensive, I agreed and visited the detention rooms to interview them and prepare their defence. One was a wiley young rascal, the other a simpleton – easily led. They had a pass out of camp until midnight; had taken a small army truck, left unattended, gone to Port Patrick, where they drank a little more than was wise, had run the van into a ditch in the blackout on the way to Stranraer, the simpleton being a bit hurt. They had been helped and given first aid by a Colonel and his chauffeur and taken to the Colonel's Camp, where on the car stopping, the wiley one disappeared in the darkness and got into camp through the wire. The simpleton was duly delivered to camp in the morning. The two men were charged accordingly.

I went to my room and studied King's Regulations. Now there was no shadow of doubt that the two were responsible for the escapade, also that the one captured did not and could not drive the vehicle, so could not be convicted of being more than an accessory. I learnt from my study what terrific importance the law places on identification, and studying the weather conditions at the time of the occurrence I doubted whether the prosecution could establish identity, owing to the darkness of the night, and to the packed condition of the Pub in which they had been drinking. I advised them to be tried separately and to call no witnesses. As

[38] Courts Martial at West Freugh were extremely rare occurrences, a large number of officers had orders to attend for instruction, so we had quite an audience. The occasion was attended by a Judge Advocate, who is a Barrister, accredited to the Air Ministry for the purpose of advising the President of the Court on matters of law. In this case a Wing Commander supported by two Squadron Leaders.

The Prosecution relied first on evidence from the Pub at Port Patrick; viz: that the vehicle was outside, and the two men inside. As prisoners friend, I had the duty of questioning their evidence – which crumpled up – as the bar tender could not be sure in such a crowd. The witnesses admitted that there was nothing specific to pick out the truck, that there were plenty in the district and they had not read or remembered the number. It was a very dark night. Then came the Colonel who pulled up, go out of his car and with his chauffeur helped the slightly injured man into a back seat with his companion. He sat in the front himself, on arriving at camp one of the men disappeared. A few questions elicited what I expected, no visibility, no headlights. The Colonel had not seen the face of the man who ran away, no, he could not go beyond saying it was an airman of the size of the accused. The chauffeur followed, and as he had seen the face of the man could not say positively he was the accused. At this point I submitted to the President that the accused had no case to answer as

[39] the prosecution had failed to identify him, and I asked for his discharge. This seemed to astonish many of my brother officers as we all trooped out whilst the Court considered the plea. When we all trooped back and the President said, “The plea that the prosecution have not identified the accused in connection with this charge is accepted and the prisoner is discharged”. He was dumbfounded, but was quickly brought to his senses, by the Court Sergeant, with the staccato orders: “Attention! Salute! About turn! Quick march!”

Having pointed out that the ‘simpleton’ could not drive a motor car, and therefore could not take the truck away, he was not guilty of stealing or even driving the truck. This was the best I could do, except to appeal to the courts clemency for a boy who had been led astray evidently by someone more to blame than himself. He got quite a stiff sentence, apparently the two had often been in trouble together. When we all went back to the mess for tea, much earlier than was expected, several of the junior officers openly said that I ought to be courts martialled for using a trick like that, to get that rascal off. Two days later walking through the camp I saw the man approaching towards me, he stopped, saluted, excuse me Sir, I would like to thank you for getting me off. Don’t thank me, I growled, I would have liked to have got you 6 months, you do your duty in future.

We had got to know our landlords, after a while

[40] and occasionally visited them. Sir James MacTaggart Stewart was the kind of Scott one reads about in novels and plays. I had never met one like him in real life. He washed his own shirt and collar, spoke of it with some ~~relish~~ pride. From its appearance he did not do it too often or very well. He made a woman collecting fallen branches for firewood from the road surrender her spoil, saying it was his property having fallen from trees on his estate. I thought his champion act was writing to the Mess Secretary at the Freugh to ask if he could supply the mess with fresh vegetables fruit etc., as Flying Officer Thomas went backwards and forwards in his car every day, it could easily be arranged with him to collect and deliver and return the empties. We did not want to get into their bad graces, for we loved being in the delightful factor’s house, so I felt I must agree, but I firmly refused to have anything to do with the business side. If my tour of duty time enabled me to call in the morning, his gardener could load up the back of the car, and the mess orderly could unload it. I could do nothing more.

It lasted less than a week, on the second day he sent boxes of peaches at 2/6 d each. The Mess Secretary complained to me. I begged him to write and regret that he was unable to authorise the purchase of such expensive fruits, so had asked Flying Officer Thomas not to collect

[41] anything more.

The routine of camp life can be very dull especially in one so remote from any cultural life as West Trough, for Stranraer, the nearest town, had not a flicker of amusement. Living in a delightful house with my family four miles away, made all the difference. I could not ask for more at such a time. Then of course things happened to relieve the monotony, and we all worked so hard at our various job that no thought was given to the present – only to getting the war finished our way. I did a turn as Orderly

Officer fairly regularly, a job the training staff had to include in their duties before the defence officers turned up.

One pleasant quiet night I was on duty, strolling like a policeman on his beat; visiting guards, defence posts, with a sharp eye for anything unusual. Nothing had ever happened except air raid warnings when the enemy raided N. Ireland or Glasgow. About 1 a.m. I reached the centre of the camp where I could see in most directions. The N.A.A.F.I. opposite the Cook House 170 yards down a main path. There was a very slight pleasant smell of burning wood, I sniffed and moved about a bit, and came to the conclusion that some of the wisps of smoke coming from the chimneys must be from banking the fires up with firewood. I visited the cook house, all right there, and a welcome

[42] cup of coffee. I moved down to the huts where the defence force were quartered, and stood looking back the 200 yards to the centre in the absolute quiet and peace of a camp asleep.

Suddenly, it seemed as if a flaming hand tore down the black-out blinds on the building behind the N.A.A.F.I. and I was looking into a flaming cauldron of fire. I dashed into the nearest hut, roared “fire” and shook two men violently shining my torch in their faces – I wanted them to collect fire extinguishers – their snoring continued, it was impossible to wake them. I must get to the fire – the Sergeants – their quarters were 50 yds on the way.

I dashed into the first hut, shook the occupant, said “fire” – “get as many men as you can with extinguishers”. Instantly he sprang out of bed – “Right, Sir” – I now raced towards the fire and had the satisfaction of hearing the Guard room fire bell. I had collected an extinguisher, and looking back was delighted to see a procession of about 20 men racing towards the fire, I just managed to be first to squirt but soon had a most efficient team of N.C.O’s at work, with a group playing at the junction of the building with the N.A.A.F.I. which was holding stores for a thousand men. Then the hoses came. I ran one round the back, where I had already got extinguishers. The Group Captain turned up. I saw a jet of water catch him full in the face.

[43] In a short time, such a combined attack put it out. Not before every timber was alight and the short corridor to the N.A.A.F.I. had been a sheet of flame. It was the Corporal’s Club, the fire had started in the furniture in the middle of the room, where it had built up into a fierce blaze before reaching the windows and the blackouts on the windows.

The fire assessors were very complimentary, said they had not before seen a building so completely alight, so promptly extinguished. I said it was entirely due to the Flight Sergeant who roused that team who were on to it so quickly. The whole N.A.A.F.I. would have gone in a few minutes if I had wasted those minutes to get action from my low category men. The training N.C.O’s of this bomber training station, were probably a cross section of the most efficient and first class men in our country.

The outstanding differences in the behaviour of men of the higher and lower categories of fitness to serve in the armed forces had often been demonstrated. Never so marked as when for some special task of one hundred trainees volunteered to help the defence force. We had not sufficient men to do the job. These trainees were the

specially selected men who bombed Germany. They were wonderful to command. Like the fighter pilots and all those who have to contact the enemy, they get decimated in war. The lower

[44] category men survive. The appalling loss of the best in France and Britain in the two great wars, may provide the answer to what has bedevilled the standard of ethics, morality, and judgement in high places in recent times.

By 1942, a marked change was apparent in the strength and equipment of the fighting services and airfield defence was being given a new look and adequate equipment. The Royal Air Force Regiment was formed out of the fittest and youngest of the scratch force armed with pikes, with which airfields had hurriedly been provided when invasion was imminent. The inspecting officers were sorry, but my age, 57, forbade them passing me for one of the fighting battalions which were to be trained to commando level. They recognised my keenness, but said it was not possible. Nevertheless I became a member of the regiment and after a course at the Isle of Man on the Browning machine gun, the standard weapon for the ground defence force, I was sent to Benson Airfield with another officer of the same age and rank of Flt. Lieut. Some of the Officers of the Benson Mess made quite an effort to turn the occasion into a celebration, with drinks galore and were terribly disappointed when it fizzled out because one did not drink because of his health and the other, myself, found two glasses all he needed for refreshment.

We were evidently voted washouts, and not worth

[45] a damn and no further notice was taken of us.

Benson was the airfield from which the photographic reconnaissance planes flew, and had a pre-war brick designed Mess and quarters which were very comfortable. As throughout the services there were plenty of splendid fellows as well as the usual bar supporters. I soon got to know a few.

One hundred and fifty men had arrived at camp at the same time as ourselves, they were a home service category, and seemed completely untrained, though they had various lengths of service. My Flight Lieut partner proved a broken reed as he was mostly under the Doctor and I saw little of him. I was provided with one Sergeant, a nice quiet, very inefficient N.C.O. who had no ability to train men, but we rubbed along.

It meant 7.30 inspection parade and square bashing for thirty minutes every morning, then my orderly room at 9 o'clock, the sergeant taking the men, then somehow the days had to be filled according to schedules of training which included assault courses, organised games, drill, lectures, map reading, field and weapon training and night operations. It was impossible to do the work properly single handed, and as I held strongly that the Officer should do all that the men were expected to do, I for the first time in my life, got overworked and so exhausted by 1 o'clock a.m. after returning from night ops that I would fall asleep

[46] as soon as I could get my boots off.

One of the R.A.F. Officers I got to know lived not far from the camp; I dined with him and his parents one evening in a charming country house. They took an interest in

art and had some nice pictures. Learning I was a sculptor, he told me there was a top secret station attached to Benson where they would be interested in me and my profession. He could not tell me more, but advised me to ring up the Camp Commandant, tell him who I was, and what I did, and ask if he would like to see me. I did this, and received a call back saying he would like to see me.

If I would report at the guardroom at the main entrance to Medmenham Camp, ask the Flt. Sergeant to report my name to the Adjutant, an escort would be sent to conduct me to the Group Captain commanding.

Despite my experience in the First World War, I had not got a clue as to why the R.A.F. should take an interest in sculptors.

Group Capt. Stewart proved a charming man, we had an enjoyable conversation mainly directed to getting me to tell of my experience in the two wars. He then rang someone on the telephone, asked if he knew a sculptor named F.O. Cecil Thomas. To my surprise he did know of me. He asked him to come over to the Orderly Room, and interview me. It appeared he and some members of his unit knew me

[47] as Hon. Secretary of the Art Workers' Guild. The G.C. then told him to show me the works and report back to him afterwards. I was delighted when I entered the large studio to find about fifty engaged in making relief maps. The utmost secrecy was necessary because these were the maps for the next operations on the various fronts or of places to be bombed.

The Squadron Leader was interested to learn I had made relief maps for my own division in the First World War and said he would be glad to have my help. I welcomed the opportunity, for I found the job of Defence Officer with no efficient assistance too strenuous.

The Group Captain informed me that he had a prior claim on any qualified serving officer or man in any of the services who was willing to come into the unit. A training course with an examination was necessary. One point he said: The artists who had developed the unit in the last two years had only received their commissions, long promised. He could not give me a senior position because of my seniority of service without being unfair to them. I accepted this, as I felt I could be of more use doing this work, than as a defence officer. Whilst waiting for my posting, working at great pressure, I developed the distressing illness called shingles. I spent a week in bed in August 1942 and was given two weeks convalescent and

[48] posting leave.

During the four months I was at Benson, the magnitude of our war effort was continually being brought home to me. Airfield defence now concentrated on holding all the commanding points round the airfield as well as the airfield itself. It became necessary to enlarge the airfield to allow for longer runways for the ever more powerful and faster aircraft. An army of bulldozers appeared; within an incredibly short time, the undulating country side became flat. Hedges, trees, woods and lanes disappeared, a public house vanished almost overnight. A vast area, devoid of cover, could be dominated by machine guns, or from the surrounding hills on which strong points had been established with trenches and barbed wire.

Again I did not get on well with the Major who was the Army Defence Officer, so was very glad to be leaving a section of the forces, necessary to have, but now extremely unlikely over to be used in Britain, for the German had lost his chance. He had learnt his lesson in the Battle of Britain.

Map Making 1942-45

[1] This important section of the war effort had evolved from the camouflage section of the services, largely as the result of the efforts of a few who evidently knew the value of relief maps and what is important, knew that the sculptor craftsman was the ideal type to handle the problem. They had the good sense to propose that Prix de Rome scholars be approached, got it accepted, so with a nucleus of N.C.O.s from the Camouflage section which had grown from experience in the first war, this new war activity stepped off on the right foot. The camouflage N.C.O.s and men selected were first class chaps, trained in service organisation and got on well with the artists who had been invited to help form the section, on the promise that they would be given commissions. The value of the work they had already done, had resulted in their having a prior call on the service of any man or woman in the service they wanted. More than a year had passed since formation when I joined the group. Five of the artists had just received their commissions and felt satisfied after some months of grievance over the delay. Senior N.C.O. rank had been given to the regulars from the Camouflage section.

So an independent relief map making unit had been formed, grafted on to the Photographic reconnaissance unit of the R.A.F.,

[2] without which modern type war could not be maintained.

This map making section was commanded by the Squadron Leader who had shown me the works and said he knew of me. I believe he had been promoted from Camouflage. He was reported on leave when I joined so I was received by Pilot Officer Deely recently commissioned, a Prix de Rome sculpture scholar who had the appointment of Head of the Polytechnic Sculpture school. He said he had made a number of the small scale models of guns and other implements of war which were show pieces. They were most beautifully made, as indeed was everything that came from the unit in the 2 ½ years I spent with them, though I never again have seen a work of sculpture by Deely in the 25 years that have now passed except a chair he made for himself when the European war finished and we were all marking time, beautifully made. But for a Prix de Rome sculptor not to produce any sculpture is a tragedy I cannot understand. I learnt from the Squadron leader whom I met cycling in civvy clothes during my first week with the unit, that he had been suspended on leave on security grounds. He was extremely angry and talked of bringing a law action against those responsible. It appears he had been reported as seen in a drunken condition at the Station Hotel talking to strangers, so had been immediately suspended as a security risk. I never saw or heard of him again.

Of course there was a security officer in the station which

[3] had some four thousand all ranks. He had taken no interest in me, though of course all my records had been before him. The first time I appeared at the mid-night mess of the night shift I was looked at most suspiciously, and they—about a dozen—started talking in whispers. Being shy and reticent myself I did not enjoy those meals held in the

men's mess, during the few months I had to endure them – badly cooked, with a hostile atmosphere. I learnt later that I had been looked on as a spy, which surprised me, for all the personnel on this unique station had to be above normal intelligence to get there. It was the hub of the intelligence of the operations of all the services. Being so we had knowledge of great value to the enemy. If the Germans put two and two together he must have known such a unit existed and the knowledge we had from his own work of the same kind which, like their maps, were not so sensible as ours, but overdone and too elaborate. The security question is best illustrated by one of my early jobs in the unit in the autumn of 1942- 2 ½ years before the day of the opening of the Second Front. Stalin was at the time making a great fuss about it and our inaction in Europe, as Russia was bearing the brunt. I was handed a large pile of maps issued to our section of the area where the British and Americans were to land in France on D. Day. My job was to blank out all place names from these maps so that as we worked from them we should not be continually reminded of where they were. I resisted the mild curiosity to look at a map

[4] of France to locate the beaches, feeling the less I knew on this the better. You do not have to have that kind of knowledge to model a relief map. This for the benefit of those not in the know is done with the aid of stereoscopic photographs taken vertically from a height of 25,000 feet in series, most people have looked through a stereoscope at some time or other, those we used accentuated the vertical projection. We also did the same in our modelling, to a strict scale, in order to get a correct visual effect in our completed work. This had one drawback that when modelling the Alps, it did not help the effect, the highest peaks looking somewhat ludicrous, if the scale of exaggeration used for the small scale models we made of Italy was used. It was six times that of the horizontal. I begged Deely to bring the scale down to 3 or 4 but he seemed to have his orders to produce models that gave a quick general over-all effect for over-all decisions.

Despite what I have written on security, it is a great tribute to our countrymen and women that evidently no word of those beaches ever reached the enemy during those 2 ½ years. When leave applications came before us to go to Dublin where the families of several of our members lived, no special warning was given that round the German Embassy there a host of German agents operated. They were trusted by the authorities and it was no business of ours, their immediate officers, to mistrust them. I remember one clever girl was Miss Gogarty,

[5] daughter of the well known Irish writer. One can picture the home of this distinguished man in Dublin and the German pressure he would be subjected to. Yet, such is the overall character of the people of these islands, we can be thankful that treachery, particularly for gain, is or at least was rare. The dismissal of the Squadron Leader referred to coincided with the aftermath of the Dieppe Raid, with its tragic consequences to the brave Canadians who failed in their effort. All kinds of gossip floated round of the idle chatter of women at cocktail parties, attended by men in the know. A general tightening up of security was noticeable by posters and other propaganda. The dismissal of our O.C. made sufficient effect on us if we needed it. I do not know if we made models for the Dieppe Raid as it was before I joined the unit. But I

think not. From the searching examination devoted to the causes of failure of the raid I understand lack of experience of the requirements of such a venture was the main cause. In that sense we learnt a great deal from the attempt.

The post of O.C. being vacant, the new Pilot Officers were naturally anxious about the successor. My advent with seven years experience and seniority as an officer worried them. They did not know that Group Captain Stewart had told me that he was under an obligation to the men who had built the section, under the promise of advancement, and that he would be unable to consider my experience and seniority in promotion. I readily

[6] agreed, for I said I was really too old for the strenuous life of an infantry officer in war time, and that this map making was where I could be most valuable. I think now this was a mistake and would not advise any man of seniority of experience who knew his capabilities to so humbly take a back seat. Deely was accepted as boss, and took his place with an easy but pompous air of superiority. I was appointed leader of one of the three sections in which the unit was divided, each doing 8 hours on 16 off, so that the 24 hour non-stop production could go on night and day, as it did until the Germans surrendered. It became obvious my presence in the unit with seniority was not liked by the four officers who formed the core of the unit. Bill Man, a brilliant water colourist, who had designed furniture and was a R.C.A. student, Pimlott, also a fine water colour painter, who mainly had designed advertisements and Harold Dow, a sculptor. Quiet, taciturn and anti-everything that belonged to the accepted, he had a sort of research job in the unit, in which he worked on improving the technique of relief map making. It suited him admirably. He was also in charge of the casting processes carried out by the brilliant sculptor's assistant Bill Smith. He and his brother Joe were sons of the studio hand not only of Sir Hamo Thorneycroft but of the latter's father, Thomas, before him. In the Thorneycroft studio from whence so many of London's bronze sculpture have come; from the Boadicea by Thomas on Westminster Bridge, to the Cromwell near by Hamo; had also

[7] come these three men who had helped in the ever important structural part of all these works. I knew of Bill and his reputation as a moulder and had met his brother Joe, famed as a pointer, and general assistant. He called on me when the Sculptor Wyon, for whom he worked for 15 years, joined the Church and gave up his studio. Alas, I had an assistant I must be loyal to and had not enough work to employ two. I did not know then that after another war I was to employ him for 15 years until he died, and write an obituary of this remarkable man and family, which the Times were good enough to print—to my great pleasure (see appendix). But more of Joe later.

Bill and I got on fine, we both loved punting, and it was a pity the exigencies of the service, i.e. off duty at the same time, never permitted it. He was devoted to the Australian Sculptor Lambert, R.A., for whom he worked and went back to after the war, characteristic of the loyalty of this fine family.

A training school for would-be relief map makers had been established in Court where the other branches of the Photographic Reconnaissance unit were also trained. All new-comers had to go through this month's course and pass an examination. Map making was under the direct instruction of Flt. Lt. …….. a skilled architectural model maker in civvy street, but there were many things we had to pass in—especially those of commissioned rank—allied to mathematics, geometry,

[8] scale work, knowledge of materials and accurate technique in precision work. Remembering my experience in the First World War on the Guards Course, I made a superhuman effort to make up my deficiencies in Mathematics and Geometry and apparently succeeded. My weakest point, surprisingly, was the accuracy of miniature precision work, at which I had made a great reputation with my miniature carved portraits in semi precious, which had brought me work from many parts of the world. We had to file a steel cube accurate to 1/5000 of an inch to get full marks. Eric Peskett, sculptor, who was on the course did it quite easily. Miss Debenham, daughter of the famous Store family, could not do it. Mine disappointed me, especially as a watchmaker working next me made no bones about it. The great test piece of the course was a relief map of the German held island of Pancellaria in the Mediterranean. I can always work at great speed when pushed to it. I did the only complete model in the one day allowed, and reckoned I had knocked them all for six. However, Deely came over to help judge and I learnt criticised the accuracy of some parts of my work. However there might have been a bit of a row if he had managed to turn me down, as I felt he would have liked to. He obviously resented my presence in his private bit of the R.A.F. – never asked me into any of the discussions on the problems, seemed to form a clique with Pimlott and Mann with Dow as a silent hanger-on, and they successfully made me and outsider so far as the management of the

[9] work was concerned.

I sometimes wondered during this time why during that 1938-1939 winter when I had been obliged to postpone my service because of a nerve failure in my left foot, and the Nelson-Ward commission—when I was designing an anti-aircraft missile—why I did not write to the authorities on the importance of forming a relief map making unit. It occurred to me more than once but I vainly presumed they must have a file of that sort of thing at the War Office and that I could not influence them. A valuable year passed before they were persuaded of the necessity of such maps and as I shall relate some of the problems they helped to solve and could not have been done without them.

The problem of an Officer Commanding was satisfactorily solved by the appointment of a very ordinary harmless and colourless Sq.Ld., who knew nothing of art or maps or as far as I could gather anything else. The clique were pleased. He was easy to get on with, could not possibly interfere with the work, and carried out the administration of the unit without fuss or bother, which left the artist officers complete freedom to carry out the work they were so competent to do. I was sorry he was not a more educated man of the leader type, who could have given our tiny mess some

distinction and character. Deely was incapable of this, and seemed to me the nearest approach to a “twirp” I had met among officers.

With the ever changing shifts—8 to 4, 4 to 12, 12 to 8,

[10] in regular succession, making one night shift every 3rd week, meant that as a unit we seldom got together. As I lived out in the house at Marlow, cycling the three miles to Medmenham, I saw even less of them, and just got on with my job, thankful that I was no longer dealing with the dugouts, the old army majors. One result of my experience in the service is that just as the world has suffered from Corporals not fit to be Sergeants, i.e. Napoleon, Mussolini, and Hitler, so junior officers suffer from Majors not fit to be Colonels. It is quite astonishing what a difference of behaviour lies behind that little truism.

We became aware that in the great build up of our war potential that had taken place during 1942 that those in control had become very relief map minded, that Churchill used them at his early morning breakfast conferences, Montgomery demanded them, the Imperial War Council used them. We were suddenly packed and left the cramped wine vaults of Holloway’s folly, i.e. Medmenham, for Phyllis Court at Henley—a most pleasant change. The famous Club House gave us some fine working space and mess rooms and pleasant surroundings. It was only possible to house a limited number, so coached took us from Medmenham and back.

Our new domain raised a security problem, for although an intruder might get very little information of use to the enemy, we could take no risk. We were instructed to organise the defence of the station in case of emergency and I was given the

[11] job of doing this in view of my infantry experience. As this must be done with a minimum of interference with our work of relief map making, we were issued with a dozen rifles for the purpose. As we already had to find men for routine camp duties from our skilled artist ranks, we found this awkward. However, I found out all those who could handle a rifle and shoot straight from their own account, and selected those who I felt would rise to an emergency. Then the local commanders, Home Guard, etc. were interviewed, with nil results, of co-operation of any ordered understanding. The Group Captain said he would visit Phyllis Court to see what we were able to do. I met him and we walked and were confronted with armed men at all the likely approaches. He complimented us on what we were able to do. Without wasting too much time on the matter, we kept it up till the new studios were ready at Medmenham, when we returned there.

We were all very happy that lovely spring and summer of 1943 at Phyllis Court; left to ourselves we had the conditions under which artists work best. Whilst there Americans joined us, about 100 under a little Major. I got on fine with him until he discovered I was kept out of the inner circle, when I was amused to note his change of manner. His swarthy complexion and crisp curly hair denoted a cross somewhere in his

ancestry. There were a good bunch of fellows drawn from the Engineer Corps. of the U.S. Army. In general they were much behind the standard

[12] we demanded. As they only had the one officer a few were tacked on to each section—I think I had about 10—and the rest worked on model making for illustrating capacity loading of the landing craft. Naturally not being artists their sense of proportion was lacking in some, one rough fellow whose tool kit I promptly searched when I missed a tool on a job which I left to do my regular walk round. It was in his box. He was quite unabashed. One day when about five of us were doing the hedging on a model of farming land in N. France covered with very small fields mostly about 300 ft. wide all separated by hedges. Our method of making hedges was to paint a fine line of varnish with a small fine pointed paint brush as used by miniature painters, and before the varnish lost its stickiness, to sprinkle fine sawdust stained green, then blow off the surplus. This left a fine green line about a 1/32", admittedly this represented about 10 feet, rather thick for an agricultural hedge but not misleading. The American engineer was unable to paint a thinner line than about 1/8" to 5/16" wide, which when sprinkled gave a quarter inch line of hedge. As this represented a 100' thick hedge the long narrow fields became narrower than their hedges and the models looked badly done. As this was one of the easiest things to do such a member became difficult to employ. I decided to evolve a tool that would make a fine line of varnish without special skill being necessary. A tube of plastic similar to a fountain pen with a rubber teat as used for a baby's comforter to hold

[13] the varnish provided the clue to the problem, a hollow pointed stopper drilled with a fine hold to keep the varnish in was the next step. Then to fit this into the tube for secure holding and quick removal was simple, the rubber teat where it bulged coming opposite to two open spaces in the tube where the finger and thumb hold a pen or pencil when drawing. It was successful, as I expected, at my first trial. The slight pressure on the bulb caused the fluid to exude however fast one drew, in fact the test was to scribble your signature as fast as possible and sprinkle it with sawdust, resulting in a a1/64" line, i.e. a 6' hedge, giving a correct and permissible average exaggeration of the real thing. It so happened all the officers concerned were present one sunny day, including the chief of the school, and Johnny Pimlott, the most decent chap in the gang who sometimes helped at the school. I told him what a muck of a job we were making of the models with the ham fisted Americans (some were very good and clever, one had to be super tactful with them, they were not under us British Officers, yet we were responsible for what they were doing. I never saw or heard of any friction or difficulty, for like ourselves they were handpicked men for this special job). The Americans left us while we were at Phyllis Court, and eventually established themselves in Paris when the advance made this possible, occupying the premises of the great weekly illustrated journal "L'Illustration". There they not only provided their U.S. forces with everything

[14] necessary but when the campaign ended produced a fine illustrated album of photographs of the work they had produced which included those produced at

Medmenham whilst they were with us learning our technique. They were good enough to send us each a copy of the album at the end of the war, which I still treasure.

I got Johnnie Pimlott to try the pen with his signature. He was impressed, we at once took it to the other officers who tried it and approved of the idea. Within a week air compressors arrived with long tubes and special varnish pens evolved at the school and the whole operation was speeded up, made efficient and easy to do.

During those months traveling to and fro from Madmenham to Henley in the bus, I always sat at the back, as the only officer present, it gave me an opportunity to know Leslie Durbin the silversmith, he was not in my section, but a certain complicated bit of organization, to fit in leave, and days off, by some overlapping threw us together. Leslie had been trained at the Central School like myself, and through the Goldsmiths Company's interest had joined the Ramsden workshop. He was very miserable, he had recently married, and Mrs. Ramsden had been very helpful in passing commissions and customers from the valuable clientel Ramsden had built in Fulham the nineties. Leslie had been called up an aircraftsman's pay was not adequate for his needs, also he was being deprived of this

[15] opportunity of providing for his and his family's future. I said everything I could to comfort him and held out a rosy future for a craftsman like him: I had had a great deal to do with his master, Ramsden, for 40 years. I enjoyed those 20 minute talks and we became fast friends, which will continue to the end. I couldn't not then foresee how quickly his wheel of fortune would turn. But the Stalingred triumph for the Russians electrified us all. A fine sword of honour must be made and presented to Marshall Stalin. The For Comp of Goldsmiths were asked to organise it for the Government. Professor Gledhowe the brilliant designer of silverwork, who was on the staff of Winchester College was asked to design it, and we received a request to release Leslie Durbin the silversmith to make it. Many other craftsmen were also engage, such as Bull Diamond, to shape the rock crystal handle, George Friend to do the engraving, Wilkinsons to make the blade… the leather work and so on. We all liked Leslie and he departed for his new job with all our good wishes, and when he returned it was as a sergeant with the M.V.O which had at least put his economy on a better foundation. The making of the sword and its presentation is not a part of the map making story, but it is worth recording, for the sword is a magnificent piece of craftsmanship. The dramatic moment when it was handed to Stalin and he promptly dropped it is momentous, if only because the rock crystal handle did not break as it well might, for though much

[16] harder and stronger than glass it is not proof against such treatment.

I have already said that Montgomery used the relief maps. He must have demanded that there should be a section for this added to his Photographic Reconnaissance unit. We had to organise and send one out, the question of which officer caused some speculation. I think they would have liked to send me, but I was above age for overseas service. I would have welcomed the post as I could be so much more valuable on my own and in charge. Although I make a good servant I have always held a

masters position and am never satisfied but forever trying to improve on established custom and methods and this is a galling nuisance to those in control, who by their own nature are satisfied and don't want the bother of change. I should have been sorry to leave the comfortable set up we had made in the district. The choice fell on Reynolds Stone, an artist who had a reputation as a calligrapher and designer. A strange quiet fellow more unsociable even than myself, also kept out of the inner hierarchy. He did not want to go, went sick and obtained release on health grounds. As he was a country member of the Art Workers Guild I tried to make progress with him, but though he was a man of some distinction, he made no response, and has shown no gregarious tendencies ever since.

The American major and his efficient lieut. must have felt the need to keep their end up among these competent British,

[17] among whom they found themselves. They evolved a do-it-yourself simple way of making a small relief map, which claimed could be made on the field of battle by any competent man. We smiled indulgently at them, but though the chances of them never being made, used, or required as very remote, and greatly doubted their usefulness; even thought they could be a danger.

Remembering the need so tragically learnt in the First World War of giving those who had to make decisions some correct information as to the kind of terrain, they were going to encounter when they reached the area of their operations especially at night I saw these crude reliefs might be better than nothing, but not much. Out technique was very simple and easily learnt. We started with the ordnance map of the country concerned, blown up to the scale required. Then marked the contours at the intervals decided so that they could be easily followed, each contour layer, starting from sea level, being cut out of hardboard of a certain thickness that gave the vertical scale vis. this being the best exaggeration over the horizontal scale of which was the scale established for all our work. You can judge the correctness of this by looking at the numerous examples to be seen in the Imperial War Museum. Those contours having been glued down one above the other the stepped effect of the contours was modeled away with a filling or modeling material made up of papier mache and plaster. Care was taken at this stage to conform to the character of the

[18] typography so that rivers did not run uphill or railways have to do ridiculous things. Then the aeroplane photographs the prints of which were made to the correct scale were stuck over this modelled surface. Here stretching and contracting was required to make a flat picture fit its undulating original. Now the reality skilled part of the work commenced. With the aid of the stereoscopes every part of the surface was examined and the minor features were carved and modelled, water courses, roads, canals, railways taking their proper place and form. Bridges, villages and towns constructed. Much of this work was most beautifully done; it is worth taking a magnifying glass to examine the best of the maps in the museum. They were not all of the same standard, for we were not all of one standard – this is where trouble started.

The modelling had been based on contours established from ordnance surveys. We were astonished to find that our photographic reconnaissance did not fit the French maps, particularly in hilly, mountainous or more remote regions. We are brought up to expect such a high degree of accuracy from our British ordnance survey that we could not understand the appalling discrepancies disclosed. It appears that the French maps were still being based on the survey carried out by Napoleon Bonaparte in parts of the country that had not been resurveyed since then. The air survey was correct, so with mallet and chisel the modelling was adjusted so that rivers

[19] could run down their valleys in the proper places, sometimes miles from their mapped position. I remember seeing Bill Mann grimly tackling a richly modelled mountainous relief map with a gouge and mallet, making terrific alterations. I am not sure whether he approved of my passing comment, "that's a fine job for a sculptor!". It was, of course, a very important job and probably urgent. This awful waste of time was endured by our leaders, though a simple adjustment of procedure of contouring the air survey before cutting the layered contours would have obviated the difficulty. But I was never asked to 'vet' one, as I should have insisted on if I had been in charge. To complete the short technical resume, the maps were finally painted with flat oil colours, which were all specially prepared for us by…… a charming man well known as a historian and writer. He extracted the surplus oil from the paint, which would have given our work a vulgar shiny look, we diluted our paint with petrol. Hardboard lids were made for them and they were ready for dispatch.

I knew nothing of the latter matter until ordered one night to take evidently an extra important model to St. Pauls School – used as Monty's H/Q, and to carry my revolver fully loaded as an officer guard was required. A charming young major of Monty's staff took it over and had a long chat about the work we were doing and my part in it. When he found I had first world war experience of relief map making he asked if we might

[20] talk off the record, as they were most interested in these maps – found them so valuable – but that the time taken to produce them was excessive for their purpose, and they were wondering if something of the kind the Americans were doing was not the right answer. As I had had field experience of this what did I think – I did not mince matters – but condemned the rudimentary American idea as useless and dangerous. I agreed there were other ways of speeding production, particularly in dealing with the faulty French survey, but that our maps were 100% reliable and that to change boats now we were in the stream, up to the neck, might be ill advised. If I steered them off that silly American idea it was something. I told him of Col. Pennells experience of the faulty Passehendale map which he had been under the impression I had made.

Latex moulding was being developed in industry about this time and the need for easily transportable relief maps was so urgent that large ovens were obtained and the skilled Bill Smith took on an increasing part of the work by making moulds and producing latex casts which could be rolled up, like rolling up a large opened copy of the Times. You

could throw it across the studio and it would land unrolled and undamaged. A very large number of such maps were cast.

In the Photographic Interpretation section they had developed a machine – costly I believe – for contouring from stereoscopic photographs, required when an area had not been

[21] surveyed and contoured. It would not be possible to contour by eye and hand from such photographs with any degree of accuracy, unless a very large number of triangulation points could first be established.

All through 1943 the models of the invasion beaches poured out of our studios. Some of them depicted problems that to me as an infantry officer were most alarming. During this time there were many other problems we were confronted with, particularly the beginnings of the Flying Bomb phase. The discovery of Reenamunde was due to one of the women members of the Interpretation section. We were promptly ordered to make a model of the discovery which showed the ramps and general set up quite clearly. That they were directional ramps for shooting something up a guiding rail was as far as we got. Their story is well told in the book but from then on till the final surrender every stage of the enemy's installations – their development, destruction, reconstruction, destruction again, at an appalling cost of young airmen's life until they were finally beyond repair, or surrender came. The most amazing of these constructions was Watten N.E. of Paris. I believe our model of it was very helpful to Bomber Command. We used to get it continually returned after destructive bombardments to adjust to show High Command the immediate condition. One can imagine how we discussed the problem among ourselves as we worked on it, with our special

[22] knowledge of what the place represented in sheer size and bulk of material. The immense railway supply system that entered the huge underground assembly factory and fort protected by the high vertical cliffs defeated our vertical bombing. The shattering of the lines always repaired so quickly hardly delayed them. Finally horizontal bombing of the cliff faces with ten ton block busters poured such enormous quantities of the cliff faces on to the railway network that the Germans were obliged to abandon the project. The model had shown clearly during the progression of the attack that this was the most obvious answer. Perhaps one of the most interesting of the operations of the war in which our model gave most valuable help was in the sinking of the German battleship Turpitz in the Norwegian Fiord where it can still be seen bottom up. It will be remembered how it took shelter there for repairs and the risk of the attacks it could make on our Russia bound convoys was so great that desperate attempts had already made to destroy or delay its use. We made a very accurate model of the fiord and surrounding country showing the Turpitz in position. The difficulty of bombing the Turpitz had been that the bomb had to be released from the aircraft some 15 miles from the target. With such broken country, they had been unable to work out a route for the trajectory of the bomb that make a bulls eye hit possible; something was always in the way. Of course we could see this problem and I must say to me it seemed asking the

[23] impossible as you looked at the little ship deep down at the bottom of the fiord. I shall never forget the day when the Norwegian Sq.Ld. who was in command of the strike came to see the model. He was obviously impressed, for he suddenly said "Why there's my house—and my garden, those trees I planted"—He turned to us puzzled—you know my house—you have been there! We all smiled nicely and he looked at his home on the stereophotos and saw how it was done. It was not our job to work out the trajectory and route of the bomb, if it had been, we should probably have done it, by making an exact model of the trajectory with a piece of wire from a precision drawing, stuck the delivery end on to the little model of the battleship in such a position that gave the piece of wire, i.e. the trajectory 15 miles long the most unimpeded approach and showed the release point. However it was worked out, it was done, and a grave war menace removed. A brilliant performance, for how they fixed that split second moment of release miles above the earth—15 miles from the target—and got a bulls' eye with a tolerance of 50 feet, which, for all I know may represent one thousand of a second in distance travel is too much for a mere map maker to say. If the model helped this remarkable achievement—what a triumph!

The build up of the British and American forces was beginning to put a strangle hold on the very stupid and very wicked Germans, who were learning that the philosophy of force

[24] on which they had been nurtured from their cradle days at the time of Nietzsche was a very two edged sword with a terribly sharp reverse blade. The slave minded discipline with which they obeyed the brutes and blackguards who led them, prevented any of the feeble attempts of those who had the sense to see what was coming to them being successful. Our unit had been built up to cope with demand, so beside the invasion beaches we not only made a large number of special models for strikes such as the Bombing of the Moehne Dam—the distant Ploesti oil installation, but began the models for the conquest of Italy via Syracuse. During this period the Americans left us, having learnt all that was necessary. I was orderly officer the day they left, the office of the N.C.O. who had been in charge of administration—sort of adjutants office—was a litter of discarded paper—lying among it was a water colour by Bill Mann, which I had often seen hanging on the wall of this office, a very clever work which I intensely admired. The American sergeant had also expressed his liking and Bill had presented it to him. I took it to Bill and gave him a lecture on giving his work away, particularly to Americans to whom value is the number of almighty dollars you pay for it. You value it at nothing, so he has done the same and throws it away with the waste paper. If he had given you five dollars for it, he would have packed it carefully in his kit. I like it very much as I have told you before, and would like to buy it. I consider it

[25] is worth at the least £20. What is your price? He would not take money, insisted on giving it me. I asked what could I give him in exchange. I suggested a child's swing for his baby boy, and got a magnificent one for £5 from the Army and Navy Stores, so felt we were quits. I still enjoy and value the drawing. He did another of the troops in the rain

under the Medmenham trees which is masterly. What a lot of clever water colour painters our country produces. He is outstanding but I have not heard of him since.

I could tell many stories of the mistake of giving work away. I have given very little, but I did give my old friend Tubby Clayton, a very good bust which had been in the R.A. in recognition of the great help he had been to my career because of his understanding of the use of sculpture. It occupied a place in the Wakefield conference room for many years where Mason's portrait of him with his favourite dog Smuts (badly drawn) hung. Mason R.A. had been paid £500 to paint it. Then I missed the bust, when after a year or two I saw it on top of a high cupboard face to the wall with other oddments. I borrowed it for an exhibition and kept it for years until after Tubby retired, they thought they should have it and provided a proper place and bracket for it. So my friends, value your work at its correct price, you are more likely to survive if you do.

Unfortunately our little boy Anthony who was allergic to asthma was finding it increasingly difficult to keep well. The

[26] low lying river valley atmosphere was too difficult for him. We became desperate again to find a domain more suitable for him on high ground. There was the residential village of Bovingdon Green 100 ft. up just behind Marlow which we thought ideal. Somehow our inquiries revealed there was a couple living in a nice house who found they were too far from London for the daily journey and would gladly like to leave it if it was possible to get a place nearer. Anyone who knows of the conditions prevailing then will remember how impossible this was. One artist member of my section named Lofting, an illustrator, was a member of the A.W.G. I often talked to him when examining the work; he was not very clever as a craftsman and found shaping the minute houses out of fine grained cork, 1/6" (?) of an inch representing 50 feet, very difficult. Also he seemed very worried about his domestic background. One day Dorrie arranged to visit Mill Hill to have lunch with her old friend Bertha. Changing from tube to bus at Golders Green, passing the large estate agent there, she thought she might try for a house for these people and Bovingdon Green. Yes they had had one at Mill Hill, but it had been withdrawn this morning, before they could send any of the many of the applications they had to see it. You might like to call and see if you can get it as we know nothing of the reason for withdrawing it. Dorrie called, but the woman there said she had changed her mind about letting as tenant's so spoilt one's home. Dorrie explained how

[27] we lived at Marlow on low lying ground and the effect it was having on our son's health, that we could have this house high up if we could find the tenants who were an awfully nice couple a house nearer London where their business was carried on. The woman said did you say your name was Thomas—yes—not Cecil Thomas came the astonishing reply. Why! How! My husband is an artist and works in the R.A.F. at Marlow and his officer is Cecil Thomas. Well—it was fixed up and we lived in the pleasant house and garden at Bovingdon Green until V.E. day. Our boy recovered, indeed his health improved. Looking back we think the change probably saved his life. I have told this simple story at some length because so many incidents in life are unaccountable, and

seem to be governed by God by thought transference—not only on the earthly plane—but on the astral as well. No doubt coincidence will be sufficient answer for most.

We had brought our delightful mongrel poodle cum everything with us from Scotland as well as our very superior cat Timoshenko. They had been brought up together in the same sleeping basket as puppy and kitten, were great pals and great fun and a continual joy to Anthony, especially since his companion Roy had had to leave us. The tall narrow house in West St. too expensive for our means made a tenant necessary, so a woman employed at a near by air field rented one room. Roy—our delightful mongrel, was very unhappy. He could not understand the restrictions of space

[28] - he was too long to turn round in the passage and had to learn to walk backwards; he missed the open house and fields of Ardwell, for he was not traffic trained, so could not roam. As they were agitating for intelligent dogs for the air field guard duties, we decided to let him go for that. He passed and was trained and then returned as not required. We were upset at this, but presented him to a disabled girl who needed just such a dog. Alas, the first night in the dark this gentle dog seized the postman by the write without hurting him and held on until he was satisfied he could be freed. The poor girl was frightened and our too well trained Roy was not wanted. One of the saddest episodes of our life was to take him to the vet and say goodbye. We were offered a dear little fluffy puppy for 10/- as we wanted a pal for Anthony. I rather prided myself on my ability to train dogs, for mine had always been remarkable. But this little ball of fluff seemed incapable of learning. After moving to Bovingdon Green this seemingly unbalanced dog became such a nuisance to the local farmer that he had to be put down. We were then fortunate, a mongrel litter was born to a good quality fox terrier and Judy, the delight of our family for the next 12 years was presented to Anthony. She will appear in the pages to come so frequently that suffice it to say that was all one could wish for in such a companion. In moving to Bovingdon Green I took the precaution of again getting the distinguished surveyors to survey the premises which

[29] had suffered nothing in the 12 months so careful had we been. The landlord was now out of prison and had celebrated the occasion with a party. As I had heard one had to pay up for any dilapidation my precautions, which his agent knew all about, cleared us of any trouble. The garden at Bovingdon Green was big enough for the open end to be wired off for chickens and I wrote to my friend Newton Thomas, who made a feature of special breeds super selected for laying or table, in both fields having achieved a very successful reputation. He sent us six Rhode Island Reds due to start laying, which gave us the astonishing number of in the 12 months that followed. Nothing like it was known in the district and one realised how easy it was to build up a great reputation if you go the right way about the job, as my poultry farmer friend did.

The West Street house had been unfurnished but the Bovingdon Green house being furnished, we took our furniture back to London and furnished the upper part of our London House viz. No.110 the lease of the tenant having expired and we needed the extra rent for our economy. The place being spotless, as it had only been lived in for 6 months of the four years lease, looked absolutely lovely with our curtains, carpets and

furniture and Dorrie and I did a terrific job of work getting it ready. The last day of my two weeks leave came and we had not let it, so went to the local agent who had someone from the Belgian Embassy, his lady being a member of their Royal Family. They rented it and used

[30] it to house all sorts of refugees from their war stricken country. Madame was not domesticated, being much too grand, so a sorry mess was made of what looked a beautiful home. All this got completely when a flying bomb landed 100 yards away in the Gloucester Road, the air blast playing some funny tricks with our building by sucking all our lovely large leaded light windows in so that they lay on the floor much damaged, crushing in the roof of the studio so that it sagged, smashed all the glass, made holes even through interior walls, etc. It was 1945, that last despairing effort that you can read of in the Mare's Nest, that they still hoped their secret weapon would pull them out of the fire. The Germans' faith in terrorism is pathetic.

[31] The usefulness of the relief map making unit began to wane as the successful British and American armies swept across France to the Rhine. We could not produce models fast enough for the day to day movement of the troops. Our skills began to appear in other ways. Sgt. Harrison, a brilliant still life artist, who earnt handsome fees in civil life designing and painting the astonishingly realistic still life advertisements that appeared in the posters, on the hoardings, the handsome catalogues of Harrods and other distinguished firms. He painted a remarkable wall decoration for the Corporals mess of still life, representing a most sumptuous table loaded with all the delightful foods etc. we all dreamed about after our long was shortage and rationing; about 30' long and 2' high; incredibly accurate, and at an incredible speed about 3'0" each 8 hours he came on duty. The surfaces of the various fruits, meats, wines, objects of silver, glass, wood, all beautifully massed together in luxurious profusion, were so real as to amaze us all. He did it all out of his head without models. I asked him what was the secret of such realism of surface. He said it was the position and shape of the high light, that a study is necessary of the way the high light is reflected on a strawberry, an apple, a peach or a cigar which will give the character of the material. That it could be done by hand and eye and memory at racehorse speed, such skill must be rare in mankind. His was

[32] apparently in continuous demand. He must have been content, though his name never appeared in the world of art of in the exhibitions. Sgt. Harrison and I were agreed on the same method of improving the technique of relief map making, we had independently thought out during the progress of the work of the unit. With much support, I decided to record the method and send it when demobilized as a parting gift to the unit, in the hope it might be developed, which I did. I believe the unit became a permanent part of the R.A.F. establishment.

Another young artist did some murals of great beauty at the other end of the scale. All dreams and fantasy, nothing realistic or that represented anything, yet full of unknown longings for something that never was, only dreamt of. A most attractive personality who I predicted had a great future. I did a medal for the unit with a lynx head, our badge, and made a round the world race game for Anthon, using various balanced

routes changing from rail to steamboat or aeroplane with models. On the beautiful United Nations map of the world, painted and designed by my friend and one time fellow student, Macdonald Gill, brother of the Gill the sculptor—we played with this till Anthony became too grown up for children's games, some ten years or more, and it may have contributed to his remarkable sense of geographical knowledge which enabled him to say at once the location of places in the world.

The Interpretation section organised a play, in which

[33] Sarah Churchill actress daughter of Sir Winston starred; she had been a member of the unit for a long time. The unit had many such well known names among its members. The occasion was used for members living out to bring their wives to the strange holy of holies, that had been kept so secret from them for so long. We were still at War, and with Japan then unbeaten; so the relaxation was very slight but it certainly gave the ladies a thrill, especially to see Sarah Churchill act.

We had one more tragic model to make, perhaps one that moved us more than any other—Walcherin—the failure at Arnheim to cut the German life line to the water ways to the sea; necessitated the more frontal attack, imperative for rapid supplies for the crossing of the Rhine and invasion of Germany. The principal island controlling the German defence system was Walcherin, very heavily defended. In bombing and bombarding these islands naturally the dykes were broken, and there was tremendous flooding. The model was returned many times for adjusting as the attack proceeded. Churchill was very concerned about this flooding, and we had to show exactly where it had reached every day. We all felt very sad as villages and hamlets disappeared under the encroaching waters—and though now quite useless to them, the Germans held on stubbornly, making it imperative to drown them out. I understand this was done with the full acceptance of the local authorities, in view of the vital importance of clearing this important supply route. A

[34] brave decision of the people of Walcherin which moved us map makers as we blotted out more of their fair country below sea level, with the cruel but helpful floods. After the war this beautiful island with its ancient buildings was fully restored, the dramatic and difficult moment of the final closing of the breech in the dam being fully documented in the world press. We used to hear that the soil was ruined for a great length of time, but later I learnt that the addition of chemicals reduced this to some three years. Also that the Dutch, despite the inevitable error of judgment and accident of war, bore no grudge against the British for the terrible damage, such as Walcherin, but accepted it as a necessity and the price of freedom. As a Dutch Doctor said to me "if you are occupied by the Germans you learn to sacrifice everything to end such a situation". This was the last model of our European war.

We started in a much more leisurely way on one for the proposed Gatwick air-port. From which they were able to calculate with a nice accuracy the earth moving problem involved. It seemed immense, almost out of the question, but I believe it was built.

In the spring of 1945 our Nanny went to Broadstairs to visit a friend with instructions to find us a house to live in till September in the hope the sea would help Anthony to combat the asthma which still dominated his health. She was successful and we rented a clean nicely furnished four bedroomed house

[35] belonging to a retired policeman who had now lost his wife. It was possible for us in the unit, with our special information, to predict happenings so with two months to go I rented the house from May to September 25. The first day turned out to be V.E. day, so we started preparing for the rebuilding of our lives again on the very first day.

I was now 60, the scheme of demobilization was to be the oldest first, so I and the Adjutant, the only two of that age, in our camp of 4,000, looked forward to release from service on June the 18th, the first day of demobilization.

The demobilization was so remarkably well done that it is worth recording in case such a commonplace thing gets so dismissed that it is lost. Organised by one of the labour ministers of the Coalition War Cabinet, it was designed to obviate some of the worst anomalies of the first world war, it made the job a very gradual process, starting with two on our station of 4,000. The youngest who of course waited longest groused a good deal, but it worked admirably.

The more sportive members of course thought it an occasion for a ceremony and a booze. We two staid old soldiers demurred; but were told it had all been arranged and we were not going to be let off. Two vulgar type bowler hats seem to loom large and lots of beer, which neither of us drunk. Our effort to slip out of the service quietly was not appreciated, but we managed it and left them to celebrate our departure. We went to Uxbridge

[36] demob station, designed in the brightest colours, with comfortable chairs, tables, waiting rooms, refreshments, etc. and a scheme of Filing from desk to desk to compile our clearance papers and record. Then to the clothing department where we were dealt with as in a great clothing store of which we were valued customers. Each of us being fully fitted out with a complete civvy outfit of reasonable quality. I learnt I had been an insured person on our National Health service, as my dues had been automatically paid by the Air Ministry, though I had never been a subscriber. I refused to continue, which was a mistake from the pension aspect.

It was a strange and memorable experience taking the family from Marlow to Paddington and then to Charing Cross en route for Broadstairs on V.E. day. It reminded me of the sensations I had as a child, after lingering between life and death in a darkened room for 6 weeks. I was carried downstairs and holding hands with my nice big cousin Aggie, walked out into the sunlit garden and saw and felt the loveliness of creation. It was early and London was taking its first free day for 5 years with a calm and relaxed and happy air. One felt it pervading everything and everybody. It seemed so quiet and easy going for its vast traffic had got reduced to a minimum. I saw the family

off with the knowledge that I would join them the first day of demobilization, as soon as it was announced, and returned to Medmenham to live in camp.

[37] Mr. Batting of the furniture shop in Marlow, a quiet old bachelor whom I had gotten to know well since he had stored our furniture when we went to Bovingdon Green, lent me his front room over the shop and there I installed my drawing board and started designing the memorial to Lord Ormonds in Alabaster for Church, designing a seal for the new Bishop of and winding up our tenancy at Bovingdon Green, also planning the completion of the Nelson-Ward Recumbent, still safe in its underground vault in Caddington Hall near Markyate.

The luck of being first out gave me many advantages, and was a most wise and sensible move, because it meant that the older men more likely to be the senior members of firms and men in executive positions, were able to get into the saddle and readjust affairs to prepare for the employment of the millions to be demobilized. I at once got Stephen Stanton to act as Architect, for the reconstruction and repair of my damaged house and studio. Again I was lucky, only £500 could be spent on any one dwelling, and none on business premises, my studio was the latter, but so integral a part of the two dwelling houses that one could not be repaired without the other. Holloway Bros. estimated £1,040 to do the two houses, i.e. the one building, and by persistence at the War Damage Office where hundreds of very harassed clerks were trying to deal with thousands of applications. One felt they would never

[38] escape from the chaos that seemed to reign, but mine so nicely fitted the requirements that the official was glad to be able to pass it quickly and feel two houses were being made habitable. With the exception of the sub-contract for the glass for the high studio roof which went to the firm of B in Fulham Rd, the work was well done, under a very competent Builders Carpenter who laboriously copied the detail of the Georgian carpentry of the windows. B managed to palm off on me roofing glasses he had in stock on the grounds that it might mean months delay to get them cut. They were too short, but he would overlap some short lengths at the top which would be just as good. Was Col. B the principal Director did not say, was that they were too narrow by ¾", this camouflaged with putty gave way in time, gave me immense trouble, started wood rot, and cost me quite a lot before cured. Needless to say, a firm with a boss like that went out of business in a few years. Strange how a man considered competent enough to be a Colonel, could not understand so elementary a principle in business.

Whilst this work was going on we lived in the basement or housekeepers quarters; the only weather proof part; the rest being covered with the immense tarpaulins that the temporary repair squads fastened over the wrecked houses. I could remember how pleased I had been when the Government introduced the War damage insurance scheme at the beginning of the war, and was impressed now with the way the whole calamity was handled on

[39] such a national basis. Many things could not be included within the allowance of £500 each, but our houses were made weather-proof and habitable, also presentable,

and we had no difficulty in March 1946 selling a 10 year lease of No.110 to Mrs. Nicholson, for her husband Christopher Nicholson, son of Sir William Nicholson the painter of Beggarstaf Brothers fame, to carry on his profession of Architecture, with his colleague Hugh Casson. Curiously enough we had become friendly at Marlow with Mrs. Nicholson's parents, the distinguished writer who wrote the classic they lived at the strange high walled house just off the High St. going to Bovingdon Green. A fascinating mind that gave one great pleasure to talk to.

It was only a few years before Christopher Nicholson came to a tragic end. He had begun to make a name as an architect in the design of airports and such like establishments. He loved gliding at which I gathered he was very skilled. Gliding in Switzerland, where apparently the air currents in the Alps are marvelously exciting—a blizzard came on—anyone who has experienced this can guess the tragedy that ensued. From sunshine with everything sharply clear, to an enveloping mist with horizontal driving sleet—nothing visible except the sleet of the fierce driving howling wind which seemed to come in the twinkling of an eye, or almost certainly no time for the happy glider soaring silently in the sunlight to make his landing on such impossible slopes before he was hurled to destruction.

[40] Mrs. Nicholson with her three children lived on there for 20 years. Hugh Casson carried on the practice, and rose to his well known position in the profession. What they would have contributed to architecture had Christopher lived has to be imagined, for Christopher had his full share of the talent that belongs to this distinguished family.

Our well organised interregnum period between war and peace which we had spent in sunny leisure at Broadstairs struggling against Anthony's scourge of asthma, at one stage wheeling him to the sea front in what reminded me of a stretcher on wheels, was approaching its end. As I must have a theory for everything, to help trace root causes, on the assumption that everything in nature has a cause, a root, and growth, so I had come to the conclusion that these mysterious so called nervous complaints like asthma, had their roots in some nervous disturbance which really means mental, mind, or thought disturbance; which can spring from many causes, some deep in inheritance, others induced by minor weaknesses in mental health or behaviour, especially those induced by fear of consequences. The fact that so many of these cases are self cured as the patient grows and the mind gets more controlled points to this. All my own observation and reading of the power of the mind over matter, especially in the recent years when the use of hypnotism and mind conditioning has received the interests of not only the medical profession, but the scientists, statesmen, big

[41] business, and the political manipulators, supports the theory. The more I think and learn of the behaviour of growth in relation to thought, leads me to the conclusion that thought, which cannot be isolated by the scientist, and so is seemingly ignored in their calculations, is perhaps the dominant force in creation, as seemed to be hinted at or even visualized in all religious philosophies. To make this idea, theory, or belief into a demonstrable scientific fact, would be discovery of far reaching importance to the future

progress of mankind, that it surprises me that it does not take as prominent a place in scientific research as so many other important studies.

My belief in the power of thought led me to read and buy Prentice's "Thoughts are things" an inexpensive little book in the 1920 ties of which I gave several copies to friends, who seemed troubled or unhappy. I feel sure that everyone who searches the incidents of their lives will find numerous incidents of this, and the dullest brain can see the thought conditioning that forms so large a part of our daily life. In advertising—"Beecham's pills are worth a guinea a box" made a millionaire of a pedlar in 1900. In Fashion—teenagers, following the Beat made 4 boys millionaires in a year in 1960. In the same decade staid municipal councilors and committee members made abstract sculpture the only acceptable form on which to spend public money. This was after 50 years of gradual mind conditioning by dealers and the press.

[42] This is only the 'economic force' angle of the subject, a common place. At the other end are the spiritualists, who carrying the process beyond what the average mind can accept, bring disrepute to the advocates and the study. It is in religion one should find the most valuable field for a study of thought, what it is, and how it works, what it can do. Though as yet it has no scientific base, it's power, especially in the Roman Church, is fully exploited, as in business.

I find through nature one discovers the most stimulating examples of the way thought has shaped and controlled matter, and this might prove the best field for study to discover the basis of why the artist shaped his material this way or that. That the Chameleon should be able to change his colour at will implies a conscious thought, and a mechanism built up from the beginning to operate this thought which can reason. My imagination pictures the leopard before he developed his spots when out hunting for his hungry whelps, thinking hard, as time after time, he failed to catch the sharp eyed prey, that had developed its eyes and ears to beat his skill. As he saw the shadows of the leaves of his shelter dancing over his plain hides did he reason the benefit of an imitation of this?

Though the beginnings are much further back or deeper down than this, the stimulus seems consistent throughout. Teard de Chardin who wrote a book in 1964 in search of the divinity of thought could not do more than end in hope and an assumption. It still remains for the future to discover how mind and matter

[43] are interwoven, from the beginning, what that beginning is, and where mind having developed matter to the level of the human brain, will lead it in the future, and so locate the place the creative brains of the artist occupies in the picture.

Bronze Equestrian Memorial at Chedizoy – Somerset

[1] Sydney Mason Collins, a soldier interested and expert in Heraldry, Genealogy and History, was one of the team of advisers as to Anthony Wagner at the College of Heralds when he organised the heraldic decoration of the British Pavilion of the New York World Fair of 1939 & 1940.

He got to know me through his visits to the studio to see the work in progress, and was intrigued by my being able to engrave intaglios, and got me to engrave and sign two gems from a drawing of flying birds he made for the purpose. I enjoyed engraving the gems for not only were the drawings skilled and sensitive, but they showed an appreciation of the gems of the best Greek period, which consequently they approach in quality, for my craftsmanship is near the Greek, but it is art that gives the quality and that was provided by Collins' drawings.

He is the only Englishman, in the 38 years I had been able to engrave gems, who had asked me to engrave and sign and intaglio gem solely for the love of possessing such a work. Such was the fashion in Europe in the 18th century and early 19th., lingering on feebly when my father was apprenticed to Bean about 1874, but completely dead when my turn to be apprenticed came in 1901.

In the Renaissance in Italy, connoisseurs loved to

[2] commission and possess such works, as they did in the ancient world. When the second world war ended and I was able to return to the studio, I learnt that he had left instructions in his will that I was to be asked if I would model an equestrian figure in bronze, to be erected in Chedizoy and presented to the villagers in memory of his family who had lived there for generations, and of which he was the last. Added to this was the bequest of the residue of his estate, after the expiry of life interests, in trust to the inhabitants of the village. The instructions were that he was to be shown wearing the uniform of a Territorial Army officer of 1914, of the Signals branch of the Royal Engineers, and the inscriptions were to be in old French and Anglo Saxon, the latter forming a rebus on the family name Collins, meaning that a col line or snap line makes a clear mark. The uninitiated might like to know that if you chalk a long length of string, stretch it between two points close above the ground or object to be marked; then if the string is lifted and suddenly released, it will strike the ground or object, and leave a clear mark of chalk. An ancient device much used in art and industry.

I was fortunate to get a horse of fine breed from the local heck stable. His lovely coat had been damaged

[3] in a war blitz, and his high value reduced. He stood quietly in my garden, but being a high metalled horse he had to have someone he knew, with him.

The uniform had to be correct to the 1914 pattern, even though one of the first enactments of the war was to abolish the territorial pattern tunic, to bring the whole army into line. Collins wanted the pattern preserved on historical grounds, in the bronze.

I was also fortunate in finding Col. , Sergeant at Arms in the House of Lords, who had commanded Collins unit of the Royal Engineers and knew him well. He said Collins refused to change his uniform when the order came out—he was so keen on preserving the past against change. Such photographs of him riding showed he had a bad seat and Col. Who was good enough to wear the uniform and sit on the horse in my garden, confirmed that he was not a good horseman. I have always regretted my passion for accuracy in portraiture led me to represent him as having a poor seat; too stiff; but I doubt whether I could model a horse any better. The plaster moulders at the V. and A. Museum where it was allowed to be cast, had a jump of ½ an inch in the mould on the horses back. I compromised the modeling. It is enough to ruin a work of sculpture.