
RUSSIAN DIARIES

Diary commencing Feb. 3rd, 1919

SYREN

North Russian Expeditionary Force

(Notebook 2)

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Feb. 3rd Dismounted guard at 8.45 am. Spent afternoon ski-ing and had even more sport than before. Ventured up to the highest point on the hills and came down on track $\frac{1}{2}$ mile long at a tremendous speed with a few interruptions. Came in really snowed up. Tonight it is snowing and I'm not joking. Only about 6" fell since dinner time. Tea of toast, sausage and tea. (Not Army issue). Wrote to Vera. Feeling properly tired out after guard.

Feb. 4th Warned for guard at 2.30 pm, to be ready packed up by 2.50 pm. 10 days rations. Train due in Kola at 3 pm. but did not crawl in till 3 am. Wed, morning.

Feb. 5th Guard room - Ruski wagon fitted with only two bunks for 11 men. Only one stove and only one Dixie can be used at a time. No cooking utensils provided. Rations include rice, fresh meat, porridge, all of which cannot be cooked. Seals of 3 wagons broken between Kola and Murmansk (vice versa). Our travelling compartment ----- daubra. Only 14 men to live and sleep in a railway wagon. Started our journey about 3 am. Feb. 5th. Train stopping for a rest about every mile and only crawling at so-called "top speed". Country - panoramic view, barren and desolate. Trees - snow, and a hut here and there. Stopped at every station. Stations in Russia are just a few huts at the side of the railway track I am not at all fond of travelling on Ruski trains. An experience, granted, but no sleep, comfort. Days without a wash and cooking our food as best we can. OC guard. Windy, which made journey much worse. Bought a pair of slippers (fur) about 30 miles from Kola. Entirely lost count of days till we arrived at Soraka today.

Sunday 9th Feb. Three wagons dumped owing to axles getting overheated and catching fire. Very nearly had a train fire. As train drew up at Omandera one wagon containing lard was well away. Contents trans-shipped, and at next station the new wagon had caught fire. Naturally, it was "dumped". People down the line are a better class than at Murmansk, but are practically starving. Practically begging for us to give them biscuits, bully and Machonochies. One woman came to the carriage door with a babe in her arms and asked us to sell her milk as the babe was dying. Our milk ration was scarce but we very soon provided her with a tin and she was that grateful she had to cry. What a life to have to beg for food. After the first day travelling, we commenced travelling at night only, generally starting about 11 pm, and stopping somewhere about 6 or 7 am, next morning. One Ruski passenger (mechanic ex Murmansk) travelled with us as far as the station before Kem. Very decent sort of chap and we treated him as one of the family and he lived with us. In return he chopped our wood and did odd jobs for us, and assisted OC guards to ----- Ridiculous prices offered at stations south of Kem for food and tobacco. Houses all the usual Ruski huts, nothing worth seeing. At the station preceding Kem I made pals with a Ruski and his wife living in a first class carriage. Had a cup of tea in "Ruski" style and taught

Ruski as much English as I could make him understand. Very delighted when I gave him cigarette papers & tobacco. Rather higher class people and wagon spotless. Ruski "Madam" delighted at Iris's photo, and remarked "daubra" "Khoroshih". [good, well] Same when I showed her my wallet. Mat Green lost at a station just outside Kem. Out

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on sentry duty but failed to catch train and was left behind. I do not envy him having to trust to the Ruski's for food till we return. Arrived at Soraka at 7 am. (Sunday morning) Carried one lady's box 2 miles from the train to her house, and, in payment offered me 10 roubles (5/-) which was refused, but I had to persist in refusing. Soraka is a big place by the White Sea which is frozen. Candles finish and I am writing this by the firelight. Have had no sleep since we started, and am really half asleep. Sentry-go now, 1 hour on and 2 off. What a lovely Sunday night. Not had a bath for a month, and no wash for two days, but not through any neglect on my part. Rations finished and 3 days to go yet. Not as cold as at Murmansk. Wind had been up all the journey. An exciting journey, 24 hours wait at one station owing to Ruski driver getting drunk. Cannot write any more as nearly asleep and light practically nil.

Mon. Feb. 10th Still on the same line. Nobody seems to know a ration train has arrived. Spent an hour in the power station with a young Ruski (same age as myself) teaching him English and conversing as best we could. Made quite a chum of him. "Engelski soldat daubra". My namesake went in hospital suffering from PUO (A fancy definition of a complaint). Told the manager of MGC Canteen a fine yarn and got cigs (100) and tobac, also chocolate (daubra). Altered the hours of sentry-go and consequently managed a full night's sleep. (Again daubra).

Feb. 11th Tuesday Rose at 9 am. quite refreshed. Sentry-go 10-12 am. Drew 7 days rations from ASC dump. B Coy commenced unloading the sugar wagon. Watched Ruski very closely. Machonochie. Pancake craze at dinner time. Some beautiful results of amateur cooking. Nevertheless, mine was daubra. Went down to the YM about 7.20 pm. to a dance, admission 50 kopeks. Serbs, Ruski's and 3 English soldats present. Only 3 ladies dancing. Some dance. Hall prettily decorated. Band which consisted of a concertina and a violin supplied the music, which was one tune repeated that many times, that I soon had to go out. More like "Alexander's Rag-Time Band." If tonight's dance is typical of the Russians, well give me an English dance. Those who were dancing made a scramble for the three feminine dancers. Visited the American YMCA. YM was a wagon which travelled up and down the line and was temporarily staying at Soraka. Spent about an hour listening to the strains of the gramophone and revelations of Utah - Salt Lake City Mormonism. OC Carter was an American from the Southern States. Very fond of "I guess", "Sure". A very decent sort. Quite a change after 6 days in a poky Russian wagon. Had a walk on the White Sea (of course it was frozen). Lovely sunny day but cold. By the time we get back to Blighty people will have forgotten there ever was a Great War. Very cheerful prospects. However, cheerio!

Wed. Feb. 12th Very cold morning. Again visited MGC Canteen and "clicked" again. RTD came at 5.30 pm. and said we should move at 6 oc. but at 10 am.

Feb. 13th we are still waiting, attached to a passenger train. Had a champion night's rest. Due in Murmansk on Sat - if we are lucky. Cannot tell to a week when we shall arrive. Oh these beautiful Ruski railways. Passengers of all

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descriptions travelling by the same train - Ruski, Finnish, English "soldats", women, children, in fact, all sorts. What a contrast between our English and Ruski "Stansia". Train due to leave at 12 oc. today - that means 12 oc, tomorrow. Pancakes craze still on. Getting quite expert cooks now (I don't think!) Started from Soraka at 12 am. and went about 200 yds and stopped for 2 hours. Travelling terribly slow though attached to a passenger train. Journey very uneventful and monotonous. On arrival at Kem, Mat turned up. Been having a fine time. Very nearly got left at Kem but Canadian CSM saw RTO and our wagon was again put on the train. Drew another 5 days rations (that's 22 days up to now). Doing well for rations. Bacon every meal and getting to hate the sight of bacon. Unable to get a wash en route. Feeling lovely. No wash since leaving Soraka. Travelling night and day but the driver "falls out" for a smoke every few yards. Met D Coy at a station a few miles south of Kola (Ropaska?). Thank God I am not in D Coy. I hate B Coy like poison but D Coy - well "nuff said". Arrived Murmansk about 5 pm. at night and very glad too. Rejoined the Coy - now in A Coy's new billets. A Coy @ Kola. Feeling DOG tired. Hardly had one decent night's rest altogether since leaving Kola. Mail dished out on arrival at billet. One from Clarence, 2 from Vera, 1 Kirkwall and some very grave news from home. Dad seriously ill and Dr. given up hope of recovery. I am dreading the next mail arriving.

Sun. Feb. 16th A very quiet day in the billet. Nearly froze in the night. Padre holds a hymn sing song at night in billet. Miniature piano borrowed from RAMC. Originally came from "Braemar Castle". Clicked for the job of pianist. I rather hated the job as I wanted to write letters and the piano was not to my liking. A work of art to play it decently.

Mon. Feb. 17th Well, today I have cursed the army more than I have ever done. ASC fatigue 8.15 am. 24 degrees below Zero. Ruski's refuse to work owing to extreme cold. RE's ditto. One tin of frost-bitten bully between two men for dinner. Not even a hot drink at dinner time. Working exposed to extreme cold carrying cases of Machonochies etc. A cursed shame. Another damnable instance of present day officers. Oh I do wish I could be a General for a day. Things would "hum". If everyone had been in the same mind as me they would have downed tools and refused to work on the half a tin of frostbitten bully. Shackleton's heat producers. Ask me to sign on! I would not sign on for £100 a minute in this army. Am as fed up as anyone could be, but still have a whistle left in me. One fellow got frostbitten on ASC fatigue today. 7 Ruski's frostbitten on the quay. Damn the army and that is using bad language! Poor old Tommy has to suffer and say nothing. Absolute slavery not soldiering. Treated as a man and not a slave I would make as good a soldier as the next, but treated worse than dogs will --- finish "soldat". I am rapidly realising the truth in the saying "You are far better off in the mush". If it were not for those at home and Vera, I would have been there ages ago.

Tues. Feb. 18th Equally as cold as yesterday but much worse owing to the keen wind. Snow enough to blind me. Eyes seem to be frozen when facing the wind.

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A real hard day's work on ASC fatigue. Working with little Mr Machonochie all day. ASC Staff Sgt. gives us each a cig, as encouragement to work. Isn't he generous. Tea was provided today but it was a weak apology for tea. I'm certain some of these army cooks could not hot a drop of water. Sarcastic that! Returned to "our" little grey home in the snow about 4.30 pm. just about beat and half froz. What a lovely country Russia is. Wrote to Mother and Vera. Did not finish Vera's letter as I could not keep my hands warm enough to write. Memories of old times. My last thoughts before committing myself to slumber were of Newbiggin - the last evening I was there - after supper.

Wed. Feb. 19th Again ASC. Not quite so cold as yesterday. Finished my epistle to Vera. Boiled a 21b Xmas Pudding tonight. Stewed kidneys, Plum Pudding and Sergt. Major's tea. Daubra. Also wrote to Clarence.

Thurs. 20th Warned for guard at Reveille but taken off half an hour afterwards and then warned for wood fatigue, but NCO I/C ----- dump said he knew nothing about us, so naturally we made ourselves scarce till dinner time. Quiet stroll around the quay. Visited Russian baths at night. Daubra. Played a fine joke with string this afternoon. Tied Fred, Mat & Tate together while asleep, and covered them with all the fur - coats I could find and a set of equipment.

Friday 21st Feb. Went to concert at the YM. Musical competition which eventually turned into a jolly fine concert. Some real dry humour from the RAMC. Selection by the cinema pianist. Many favourites sung, including "God send you back to me". Champion monologue "Ukon Trail". Everyone here got the yarn the battn. is going across the White Sea somewhere. Another case of "Wait and see". ASC orders say demobilisation does not apply to this Force as we are opposing an armed enemy. Latest. Bolsheviks have recaptured Archangel and King's Liverpools etc. are on board ship coming here. What a farce. Another says "Braemar Castle" has been mined, another says sunk. "Farmer's Boy" still has "daubra outra" on the brain. Every five minutes it is "Daubra outra". Put a fresh record on.

Sat. Feb. 22nd The end of a perfect week ? In the evening I went to a concert at the cinema by the Murmansk Concert party. A really first class show and well worth the three roubles charged for admission. Very original and many skits on SYREN force. One song "Oh what a lucky force is Syren" was especially good. Pierrots all had blue costumes and white frill collars and looked "daubra". Very fine pianoforte solo, "Poet and Peasants". 6th Battn. Yorks well represented on the party. "Wind still up" re going up the line. I will believe it when on the way, not till.

Sunday Feb. 23rd Played for Divine Service at the YM. Naval Parade from the "Glory" in the am. Fine service but very poorly attended. Kit inspection at 2 pm. There are four kinds of wind - North, South, East - and the Sergt. Major. He will blow away one of these days. Bust up with the most uncivilised person I have ever met in the Army, the QM. Was so clever he could show me a signature for

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articles I had never had issued. He's a marvel. Ask me to sign on! But not in this army, I'll try the Salvation Army next time. They are civilised there. Thank God the QM is not an Englishman. I would be ashamed to think an Englishman was as ignorant of the common rules of civilisation. Goo Goo gets breeze up when reading detail. Terribly aggravated when someone replied "Down where the Swanee river flows" in response to his query "Where does ----- sleep?" Oh what a glorious army.

Mon. Feb. 24th NACB fatigue. Rather a change from ASC. Easy day. A real blizzard today. Terrible especially when facing the wind. Very nearly froze my eyes out.

Captain "interviews" his men after tea. Gave us partics, of this Archangel Stunt. Oh we are in for a lively time. Rations to be supplied in "lumps". Travelling to Soraka by train, and from there to Archangel by horse-sleighs. Leaving "Syren" force for the "Elope" force. Packed up slippers. Spent an hour tediously stitching, A&D Coy's went up the line tonight. The people at home do not know half what is going on here. They are bluffed to a very large extent. Roll on Blighty.

Tues Feb. 25th "Umptalla" arrives. Two mails issued. Out at 11 pm. but lights put out as soon as we got letters so we may as well have waited till tomorrow for the mail.

Feb. 26 A lovely sunny day but bitterly cold. Saw a few of the higher class people while on NACB fatigue. Did not think such a class of people lived in Murmansk. Some look upon the English Tommy with scorn and ignore a "good morning" but others are just the opposite.

Feb. 27th For once I missed the fatigue. Had a very easy day, and I needed it too. Got a beautiful cold. Changed 40 roubles into a P.O. and sent them home. Strong rumours 1914-15 men and 1916 men with two wound bars are going home. Some say that Russia has declined to enter into negotiations with a view to internal peace. The Allies are evacuating and leaving the Ruski's to it.

Feb. 28th Reported sick. Spent the day in kip and for a marvel I was not troubled for fatigues etc. Feeling real "queer". Concert in billet at night - amateur, but could take very little interest in it.

March 1st Sat. Admitted into 86th Gen. Hospital, Murmansk. Two more out of B Coy.! The orderly a "tight" London kid said when making my sheet out, "I need not ask the Regiment - it's Yorks sure enough. Umpteen of the Yorks in D Ward (where I am now), including one from my own platoon. What a contrast between billet and ward. Lovely spring beds and WHITE sheets and everything OK. Milk diet rotten but I should fare little better on ordinary diet as I could not take it. Sister, a nice elderly, motherly woman came in just before dinner and had a look at her two new patients. A pleasant change to speak to an English woman.

Issued with a wool cap, mittens, pyjamas etc. Just getting "hospitalised". My first time in

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"Dock" but I can stick it for the "duration". Basin of milk for dinner. First drink of milk since draft leave. Ruski's (2) in the ward, but nearly all are Yorks. The Dr. said this morning "they must know the "Umptalla" is in. Tea - two slices of bread, butter and jam and again milk. Ruski child brought in at tea time. Temperature 103.4. Cannot find out exactly what is the matter with him. Another came in with tonsillitis. Concert in ward in evening. Some fine, and some terrible items. One fellow's voice was enough to send a man's temperature up to 106. "Charlie", Dickie and several of my chums came in to the concert from other wards. Quite a unique evening.

2nd March Wakened at 5.30 am. by the orderly with a basin of warm water - daubra. Breakfast 2 dainty pieces of bread and butter, basin milk and porridge. Everything served A1. Breakfast in bed. "Cot case". Bed made for me. Gee - this is a luxurious life. The doctor came on his tour of inspection at 10 am. and marked me "Milk diet No 1". Sister also came round and chatted with a few of us, but missed me. Feeling a little better but still a dizzy, bilious condition. Sister makes us all a present of a woollen muffler ex British Red Cross. I am in for luxuries. A real pantomime when Ruski had his dinner time wash. Everyone in the ward had to roar. Talk about a head of hair like a woman's. He's not had a shave since 1914. Looks a beauty to be sure. The orderly comes round with the medicine at 6 oc. but if you don't like it - well, you need not have it. I think he runs this ward.

Mar. 3 Nothing very exceptional happened today. The Ruski kiddy who came in turns out to be the one who figured at the Murder Trial. He got up at tea time and as per usual came cadging fags. Still on Milk Diet. Three new arrivals. 1, Ruski, 2 Tommies (one a York). Feeling a little better. Chaplain came in this afternoon seeking "Harrison". Had a nice chat with him.

Mar 4th As per usual milk diet, still I don't mind, it is infinitely better than being with the Coy. Got up from 1 to 3 pm. and during that time wrote fairly long letter to Vera. Was glad to get back to bed again. Still feel queer.

Wed. 5th March The doctor seemed in a hurry today. He forgot to sign my sheet. Up 1 to 3 and again milk diet. Spent afternoon writing letters to various people. Ellis, "Esp" etc. Very little worth mentioning today. B & C Coy's went to Archangel yesterday and on discharge from hospital we report to the "Chesma" (Russian battleship) and go from there to Archangel on an ice-breaker. If it is anything like the "Traz" it will be a "Heart-breaker". I have Iris's photo on my locker and I'm just wishing she were here. I guess she would very nearly squeeze the life out of me. Her smiling face keeps me cheerful.

Mar 6th Up 1 to 7. Wrote to Vera. My right-hand bedmate marked out and a Serbian takes his place. "Titch" reporting to the Sister on the Ruski kiddie who is seriously ill tonight, remarked "All correct and no prisoners", which caused

considerable laughter in the ward. He is a real "tight case". The Serbian gave me today a couple of badges - he is a corporal and wears two nickel stars. Seems

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a very decent chap, but it is awkward when beyond a few words neither can understand each other.

March 7th Marked up all day and changed to ordinary diet. I told the MO I was hungry. The Ruski kiddie was very ill during the night - temperature 105.2. Doctors think it is spotted fever. An operation was performed this afternoon on him, the doctor taking a sample of some liquid from his spine and also a sample of his blood. His cries during the administering of the anaesthetic put the wind up me. However, he came round all OK. Had a chat with the Dutch sailor who speaks a little English. Serbian tells us how he "skulked" at Pechenga. His watch (Ruski) cost only 880 roubles (£20) and a ring 200 roubles (£5). He has been doing it a bit thick.

Mar. 8th Marked fit to travel. Via Soraka and discharged from hospital on Mon. That's quick work. Yorks seem specially selected for discharge. Went down to see Jock on the "Chesma". Had a look round the boat but very soon had to come up on deck. Too stuffy. Was very surprised to find how weak I have got since being in "Dock". Hardly the strength of a kitten, and "fit" to travel. A quiet game of whist at night to relieve the terrible monotony. Fun with "I came from the Hunts". He fails to appreciate an innocent joke. Well, this time next week may see me in a totally different place. Orderly officer in response to complaint re potatoes which tasted of bandages, said "That's alright". I suppose it was in lieu of candles.

Mon. 9th Again visited "Chesma" and had tea there. "Jam" on it. JAM TART in Russia. Daubra. Snowing hard all afternoon and it is far from being pleasant facing it. My last night in "dock". A boat for Archangel is leaving on Tuesday. Shall we click? Wait and see.

Mar. 10th "Au Revoir" to hospital life. Left ward at 2 pm. Reported Base Com. Kit bag to "Chesma". Had tea on the "Chesma" and from there reported to Marine Barracks. Sailing tomorrow for Archangel. Reveille 5 am. No rations for us. Gee, we have clicked. Now for a lively time.

Mar 11th Well, I expected to be on the sea tonight, but owing to a "box-up", the job is cancelled. After a big argument we managed to get our kits from the "Chesma". Sorting them out down at the bottom of the ship - a hot job. Morning on fatigue. Kits etc. dumped on the quay and guard placed on them. Just the sort of day to make one fed up. Messed about till I got sick of Goo Goo. Dear face, I seem as if I cannot get away from him. Visited the cinema at night. Pretty good and relieved the monotony of this life. Lovely moonlight night. Back once again to Marine Barracks.

Mar 12th Went down to the quay on fatigue, but as there was no work to do, we came back. The ship we should have gone on went in midstream about 10 am.

Ruski celebration of the Revolution. Gen. Maynard has wind up. Orders "Stand to". Two Ruski's shot today and two down for tomorrow. Ruski processions

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with banners etc. All troops confined to quarters.

Mar 13. Set on a most annoying task in the morning - scrubbing for the Sergts, but the strains of "The Maid of the Mountains" to a certain extent drove away my wrath.

Mar. 14th Day on AOC fatigue. Daubra. Went down to the YM at night. Had a conversation with a Ruski "Middy", through an RE who spoke to him in French. He was musical, and played the piano well. Needless to say, we soon became pals. I played to him several pieces, mostly classical music, and he knew most of them. He requested an encore for "Rusticana" and also Rubinstein's "Melody in F". I was under the impression the latter was German music, but he said Rubinstein was a Polish Jew, and Chief of the College of Music, Petrograd. He liked "Salut d'Amour" and the "Indian Love Lyrics", also "La P---- d'Amour". He spoke Russian, German and French fluently (damn the candle) and also a little English. Through the interpreter he said I play well, and wondered how I played by ear. His favourite English tune was "Down by the Swanee River". He also played "Everybody's doing it". By special request he played the Imperial Russian March, which was fine. He also favoured "Prelude". Very enjoyable evening. Candle gone again.

Sun. Mar. 16th Mail arrived about 11 am. 9/10th for me, all "S. N. Harrison". 3 parcels, 7 papers, 1 letter. 2 parcels from home, 1 from Louth, 1 letter from: Vera. Good news from all "fronts". Cheered me up considerably as it seemed ages since a mail arrived. Many of the fellows seemed rather "narked" because I was so lucky. Luxuries galore today. Tinned pears, chocolate, crab, almond cake, Blighty cigs, biscuits and sausages. "Some" menu. No prospect as yet of going to Archangel. Kit bags drawn today from the quay. Periodical kit bag "turn-out" today. A proper jumble sale.

Mar. 17 Very easy day. Remainder of the Yorks from the "Chesma" came up to the Marine Barracks. Archangel seems to be off at present. Snowing in yards since dinner time. Tonight's "latest". "Revolution in England". I am wondering if it is really true, and at the same time hoping it is not true. Yet in spite of the state of affairs in England I should not be surprised if it is true. Wrote a long letter home which will not be censored.

Mar. 18 RASC fatigue. An easy morning but a very tiring walk back again to dinner. Fire in the Dining Hall at night. Clicked for the fire picket and just as I was about to get in kip had to re-dress and commence fatigue again. Ruski kiddie who came in tonight tells us that if he does not get tobac & cigs etc. at the price his father sends him for, he gets whacked. Felt extremely sorry for the kiddie but cannot extend practical sympathy. Wrote to Vera and also to Louth. Supper of sausage, Sgt. Major's tea and bread. Daubra.

Mar. 19 Morning on AOC fatigue and finished at dinner time. On arrival at barracks I was warned for a train guard for Soraka leaving 7 pm. tonight. Spent

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afternoon packing up etc. Only taking skeleton order - no pack. Left billet about 7 pm. with two sleigh loads of kit, rations etc. and got on the train about 7.30 pm. Very small train compared with my last experience. This time the guard wagon is a 2nd class compartment, but would not equal a 6th class in Blighty. However, so far, we have "clicked". Champion stove - plenty of room, utensils for cooking, washing etc. Started from Murmansk about 8.30 pm. Train contains mostly ordnance stuff. Travelling YM wagon next to ours! - Daubra, and he has WOODBINES. Same Yankee as I met at Soraka last trip. The Ruski "Middy" mentioned on Mar. 14 came in to see his chum - the RE who speaks French - just before leaving. RE is going to Archangel and "Middy" is going by sea - to a Naval College to complete his education. Quiet journey so far.

Mar 21st Found out today I am two days "out" in my diary. Cannot understand how it has come about. Everything went OK up to Kandalaksha when we had an additional six ASC wagons to take over. From Kandalaksha to Kem we were truly besieged by Ruski's etc. for articles of every description. Anything from a cig. to rum. Rather a "bust up" with Ruski's at one station where we removed contents of a case of Pork & Beans that some Ruski had broken into. Guards, conductors, drivers play havoc, and we had not a little trouble. However, a report to RTO now seems to have squared things. Arrived Kem about 5 am. Sat. morning. Very quick journey. Had many passengers of all sorts. One Ruski made himself some "chai" and it was practically water just coloured. I could not drink tea like that. Give me the good old English style.

Mar. 22nd Arrived all serene at Soraka about mid-day Sat. (yesterday). "Dumped" 6 wagons at Kem. Train handed over to RTD and we finished guard on arrival at Soraka. Visited YM and various places during afternoon. Have been searching all journey for a "madam's shapka" (cap, hat] but so far have had a fruitless search. After tea Cpl & I went to see the Russian church and went into three different "shops". Sounds very funny to talk of shops here. Various things on sale including slippers and fur hats, but they were not much good so did not buy any. One Ruski wanted 20 roubles (10/-) for a bar of English soap, and had the cheek to say they cost 4 roubles in England. No wonder skulking is going on. The Russian church was an elaborate building (wooden) with two domes and a large picture of Jesus Christ at one side. Tried to get a look round but failed. Bought lace at one shop as souvenir. Only 9d a yard, and some stuff would not be sold, even as job lots, in Blighty. Removed this morning to a goods wagon. Sick Serbian soldiers going to Murmansk in our old wagon. Breakfast at a Ruski's house. One whom I taught a little English last visit at power station. Very comfy in new billet. Staying here two or three days.

Mar. 23rd Sent down to the next station (Shuyeretskaya) to bring a wagon of flour back to Soraka. Arrived there about 11 am.

Mon. 24th Came back to Soraka about 11 am. at terrible speed. The driver must have gone mad - only two trucks and the engine, which probably accounted for the unusual speed. Had a chat with a Russian Doctor from Kem.

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He had spent two months learning English and said "pronunciation" is very different.

Mar. 25th A very cold day. Drew 7 days rations, and for tea had girdle cakes and "jam on it". Quite a treat.

Mar. 26th Very nearly frozen in the night. This wagon is like an incubator during the day and a refrigerator during the night. A real sort of grouse at night. "Dick" states his case and tells us his policy on demobilisation. Revelations of adult schools and experiences - evening spent entirely in relating experiences and listening to "Dick's" addresses on various subjects.

Mar. 27 A very quiet day. Had girdle cakes and blackberry jam for tea. Fine. RTD came and informed us we leave for Murmansk about 11 pm. tonight. Shunted about all over Soraka and had a few beautiful jerks. (These Ruski's are very considerate). Spent evening singing all the songs we could think of and being entertained by our cook-comedian visitor.

Mar. 28th After being shunted umpteen hours we eventually commenced our journey about 2 am. this morning. Arrived at Kem about 6 am, and stayed all day. Our train is composed entirely of wagons of wood so we can expect being dumped till the spirit moves the Ruski drivers. Murmansk Concert Party on the same train. Giving a show at Kem village and Popov. Plenty of inquirers after biscuits, and one young girl presumably about 12, employed on clearing the lines of snow - to whom I gave some Blighty toffee. Was exceptionally grateful. She was exceptionally bonny and I feel extremely sorry for her. Labelled the wagon door "The Bitter Ole" and it attracted the Padre from next wagon.

Mar. 29th Ruski came into our wagon this morning with apparatus for grinding cutlery. I gave him two knives, a razor and a pair of scissors, and most of the other fellows had a similar amount of cutlery done. Paid 11 roubles. He had been wounded four times and had lost one eye. Was very satisfied with his work. Went down to Kem village in the afternoon and went into the church and see the shops etc. The interior of the church was a sight worth seeing, and I was greatly surprised to see such fine handwork in metal. Bought a fine little match box in one shop. Actually struck on a chemist's shop. Was very much fascinated with the Church etc. Concert in YM by the Murmansk C.P. but it was a rotten show. Due to leave tomorrow night.

Mar. 30 Started shunting about 1 am. this morning and gee, the Ruski felt terribly vicious. He very nearly drove the buffers through the truck. Landed at Ogosma (?) about 6 am. and stayed till dinner time when we left again for Polyarni Krug arriving at the latter place about 7 pm. Plenty of customers at the latter station. One fellow bought a watch and chain for 350 roubles.

Mar. 31st Left Polyarni Krug about dinner time and arrived at Kandalaksha at 9.30pm. Drew 2 days rations at K-.

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April 1st Arrived at Omandera about 8 am. this morning attached to a passenger train and going too quick for my liking. Shall be in Murmansk tonight.

Ap. 2 Arrived Murmansk during the early hours of the morning. Shunted on ASC line. Visited Ordnance Guard. "Stephen", "Cornishman" and "Braemar Castle" have arrived during our absence. "Stephen" sailing on Sat, am. with 1100 troops. Spent day in the wagon.

April 3 Reveille 11 am. Went to the hospital to see chums who are going to Blighty and sent a letter per one of them. Disposed of 500 roubles and 30/-. Shall soon have "some" account. However, some say I shall need it all. Our mails have gone to Archangel so heaven knows when I'll get my letters. According to reports a wire was sent to stop us returning to Murmansk, but we were successful in dodging the RTO. Report Marine Barracks today. Arrived after a struggle to the Marine Barracks. Went to Ruski baths and had a vapour bath. My search for a fur hat may soon be fruitful. Came across a Laplander's billet tonight. I'm after him tomorrow.

April 4th After not a little trouble I managed to find my Laplander's home. A "madam" in the next hut (who does our washing) took me to his hut and I got a "shapka" after about a month's search. The fur hat is absolutely fine and cost me 125 roubles (£3.2.6) and my watch (an Ingersoll) and I consider I made a bargain. The question now is getting it home. Wili wait till I hear how the slippers have gone on.

April 4th General march past in afternoon. All Allied Troops. Not much of a show. British display rotten. On NACB guard tonight at 6 oc. Daubra.

April 5 Easy day on guard. Taken off guard at 6 o'clock and had to remove into next barrack. Just got settled and then warned for a week's guard at the AOC.

April 6 Took over AOC guard. Nice billet but rotten hours. Dick as cook. Jam pasties for tea. Khorhoshih. (Good). Bitterly cold night. Mail goes tomorrow.

Apl 7 Slept all am. Lovely day. Thawing fast. Had a tune at the YM for a change. Several at Marine Barracks have signed on. Order from War Office says we shall be relieved before harvest. Some hopes. They mean next year's harvest.

April 8 About 11 pm. last night about 30 rifle shots went off. The sirens on the locomotives and ships all went at full speed and to our surprise we saw the ASC shed blazing furiously. Fire Brigade turned out very smartly and all Murmansk rushed to see it. Raid on the rum. Many Ruski's "top-heavy". The flames lit up all Murmansk and it was a fine sight.

April 9 Packed up my two fur hats and got them (the parcel) censored. Spent an hour stitching - a tedious job. Very little else today.

April 10 Registered my parcel and posted it. Also wrote long epistle to Newbiggin.

April 12th Taken off guard and promoted to "Orderly" man. Corbett caught me giving information to Yankee sailors on sentry-go and this is punishment. I call it a good turn.

April 13 Sun. Busy morning. Ruski ex Lopaskia sent a boy down for me. The two hats he brought were no good so did not do any business with him. Went to Service in the YM at night. Enjoyed it immensely, especially the hymns. One very appropriate hymn was sung. "Holy Father, at thy mercy". It seems to bring miles nearer home when singing it. Cocoa served free. Mail in but as per usual none for the Yorks. I think I'll write some to myself.

April 14th The "terrible ten" play RAOC at football and won 2-0. Great excitement prevails in billet. RAOC/ Sgt. Major "took in" for 50 roubles.

April 15 Strong rumour the "SYREN" force march through London May 8th. No official foundation though the march through London is quite authentic. Wish it were true.

April 16 The "Oporto" arrived with 2000 troops on board. Khorhoshin. Changed 160 roubles. KRR Middlesex and Yorks. KRRs go to Archangel on disembarkation.

April 17 "Oporto" came alongside quay. Troops disembarked. Not allowed on the quay. I wonder what they think to Russia. KRR officer said rumour in Blighty was Archangel party "wiped out - Murmansk surrounded" (by snow only). Gave a box of chocolates for a collection of Russian views. Very large selection, mostly Archangel. RAIN.

April 19 Platoon of the Middlesex Regt. came to relieve guard, but owing to Dick we managed to stay on guard. Middlesex told they were not wanted and went back.

Sun. April 20 A nasty cold blizzard. Stayed in the billet all day.

April 21 6 bags of mail arrived. Watched all the bags opened and sorted, and to my surprise and disappointment found there were none for me. That is unusual.

April 23 Visited the hospital - went to see an East Yorks chum - Dickie Thompson, who is marked Blighty. Latest - Yorks 40 killed. May go to Blighty on the "Oporto". Hospital train containing wounded Yorks arrived about 6.30 pm. Taken on the "Braemar" on the quay, so could not see any of them. Dreamt last night that Winnie was in black and was showing me a card for Iris "In

Memoriam". It has worried me today, but as dreams generally mean the opposite,

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Notebook 2

I must not worry. The absence of any news does not make things any better.

Thurs. May 1st Rather a long time since my last entry. However, no interesting news and very little space. "Braemar Castle" went out on Mon. and Cpl. Thompson went with her also. It is thawing properly now and everywhere is mud and slosh, but the hills are still white. Quite warm weather and very strong sun. Still same routine "Orderly Buff", but it's cushy. No mail - and that's rotten. The mention of wounded Yorks Apl 23 is entirely wrong, as on visiting "Braemar" on Sunday I found only 4 Yorks and all sick - not wounded. Rumours re going home soon seem to have died a natural death just lately. Not heard one for a week now.

May 16th Yesterday after several days of hot weather it turned bitterly cold again. Received four letters from Vera (ex Archangel) which cheered me considerably. Also had a paper containing a letter from home dated Feb. 13. Wind up in England as regards Archangel. Bringing the Relief Force a wholesale swindle. Spent our spare time in renovating "our garden" and setting the Ruski's an example which I hope they follow. Ruski magazine caught fire yesterday and provided some excitement. A real blaze. The night previously the R.C. Padre's wagon caught fire and a Cpl. was burnt to death. Various rumours re going home.

May 20th Yesterday the "Tsar" came in and anchored in the stream. Today or early this am, the "Tsarina" sister-ship came on the river. Both loaded with troops of the relief forc . Parties came ashore today. All have the Arctic mark on their tunics. Both boats bound for Archangel but what they are doing there is a mystery. "Cornishman" arrived at 4 pm. Mail up. Feeling real "Fed up" or should I say depressed.

May 24 (Empire Day) "Tsar" and "Tsarina" left this am. for Archangel, also the "M-----" Salute of 21 guns fired at 12 noon.

May 28 Had 3 large mails today and yesterday including recent letters from Vera and home.

May 29 Relieved from RAOC guard and went to Marine Barracks. Living like War Lords up here. Much better than orderly buffs do.

June 2nd This last few days war has been declared on me and the only weapons are letters. There's been an offensive on, and a big advance. Am simply overwhelmed with letters, papers etc. from all quarters. No definite news of going home as yet. Rumours "straight from the horse's mouth" out every half hour.

Whit Sunday Hurriedly warned for proceeding to Archangel last night. Reveille 3 am. Came on tug to S.S. "Pretorian" (in stream about 4.30 am.) Quite a

pantomime landing, ropes break etc. Troops on board 45th Fus. are the Relief Force. One battn. and d----- Not a bad ship but the crush on board ARE "rowdy".

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Notebook 2

Ra----- all day long. Swelled headed Brig. Gen. aboard. Every man has ribbons up ranging from one to nearly a doz. Gorgeous weather. Can hardly tell boat is moving Set sail about 10 am. Plenty of floating ice to be seen and travelling in sight of land. (Murmansk coast).

Whit Monday Still the same gorgeous weather. Could stick a voyage around the world if it was always like this. Still plenty of ice. FMO etc. Landed at mouth of river Dvina about 11.15 pm. Band played "Goodbye" as we overtook another ship tonight. 5 boats travelling together.

Tuesday Arrived in Archangel about 11.30 last night. Came alongside quay early morning. Disembarked about 11 am. No-one would own us for over two hours. Viewed the sights of Archangel in the evening. Had a "tram" ride. YM here is a grand place. Free pictures etc.

Thurs. June 12 Fatigue at Archangel "Pustyna". Went by train to Bakaritz. Came back on tug about 8 miles.

June 13th Everything covered with snow this am, and bitterly cold Grand weather for June.

June 17 Troops from Yorks, RFA, Durhams went home on "Pretorian". Patience gave way this am. Shall finish up in the mush yet.

June 23rd The demobilisable men went to join the Battn. at Bakaritz today. Going home on Sunday. Gave my name in for under 20 'stunt'. Application for release on compassionate grounds returned for verification. Heat this last week has been terrible. Am covered from head to foot with mosquito bites. Too hot to eat. Too hot to work, too hot to sleep - in fact, too hot for anything. These mosquito bites nearly drive one mad. Have bites all over my neck and last night, though sleeping in a net, I had 7 fresh bites, including one on my nose. Oh, how I love Russia.

June 27 Joined the battn. at Bakaritz and by heavens I regret it.

[End of notebook. Seems to be end of diary.)

July 16 Appointed Acting Sergeant

Aug. 20 Confirmed in the rank of Sergeant

Sept. 14 Embarked S.S. 'Ulna' for UK

Dec. 14 Demobilised at York

