

DUDLEY MAURICE NEWITT

(1894 – 1980)

Part 1 1894-1919

by

Malyn and Joan Newitt

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Contact the authors: malynnewitt@gmail.com



The Newitt family

In 1964, at the age of 70, Dudley Newitt completed a short autobiography. This amounted to a mere 63 typed pages to which he added three appendices detailing two overseas trips in 1968 and 1971 and a short sketch of some of the famous politicians he had met during his life. This autobiography is reproduced below in italic and is supplemented by my own researches in roman type.

Dudley began his brief account of his life by recognising the problems of the enterprise. *There are many dangers in attempting an autobiography in old age and largely from memory. I am at present seventy years of age and still reasonably active, both mentally and physically; but I am very conscious of a nostalgic view of the past and a pessimistic view of the present and future – sure indications of mental processes which can no longer adapt themselves to changing conditions.*

Any reader turning the pages of this autobiography would find the outline of a remarkable life, full of adventure, scientific achievement and public service – but relatively little of the man whose life it describes. Except for the odd and occasional phrase, there is nothing that describes the character, thoughts or feelings of the actor on the public stage. And yet we know that it is the character and the judgment of public figures which determines to a large extent how effective and influential their achievements become. Unfortunately there are only a few letters and diaries that have survived to supplement the autobiography and although the following narrative has been constructed from a wide range of sources, few of them are of a personal nature.

Dudley set out to anchor his own life in that of his forebears.

For upwards of a hundred years our ancestors had lived quietly in the heart of the Fen country at Chatteris – farming their land, taking a moderate interest in local affairs and apparently not much influenced by the repercussions of the industrial revolution and the Napoleonic wars.

Dudley's father, Edward James Dunn (always known as Dunn in the family), carried out extensive genealogical research into the family. The earliest record he found was of a John Newitt born in 1675 and buried in 1744 at Hemingford Grey in Huntingdonshire. In 1734 his son, Thomas, married a woman from Chatteris in Cambridgeshire and from that time

the family lived in that town. The family owned their farm and as freeholders had status in their small community and they appear on the roll of voters in elections. Dudley thus described them. *They lived in moderate comfort, married amongst the local families and educated their children at the local school. Nothing in the records we have indicate any wish to change their state or to take an active part in the great events which marked the Napoleonic era and the liberation of Europe. In short, they were typical farming stock, thrifty, hard working and unambitious – highly respected in Chatteris and connected by marriage with most of the old Chatteris families.*

The first break with tradition came when my great grandfather James and his brother Joseph married two sisters of the Dunn family. The Dunns were a wealthy family with brewing interests and connected with the Gardner family – the head of which was Lord of the Manor of Chatteris and Ramsey.

Jane and Anne Dunn were accomplished women not content to lead the placid life of a farmer's wife. Anne persuaded Joseph to emigrate to America whilst Jane induced James to take a more prominent part in local affairs. At the time of his death he was a Church Warden and High Constable of the Isle of Ely.

What is remarkable about this story is just how typical it must have been of the slow social climb of a family in the years of agricultural prosperity - successful farming, leading to judicious marriage into the gentry and the assumption of local office. However, the mid-nineteenth century saw the high water mark of this rural society. The second part of the century was to see agricultural depression and the ruin of many families whose lives had been rooted on the land and in the values of the farming community.

Dudley believed that this deep family history passed down strongly marked traits of character which he enumerated as *a strong sense of family solidarity and a love of the countryside and country pursuits*. There was, in fact, more to it than that. There were indeed strong family traits, clearly visible in photographs and emerging in the personalities of the males of the family. The male Newitts were short stocky men, physically very strong, who went bald early in life and wore the moustaches common at the time. Most of them had fair or sandy coloured hair (though Dudley was unusual in having dark brown hair). They were men with strong, stubborn personalities and fierce intelligence. Such qualities can produce men successful, even leaders, in their professions,

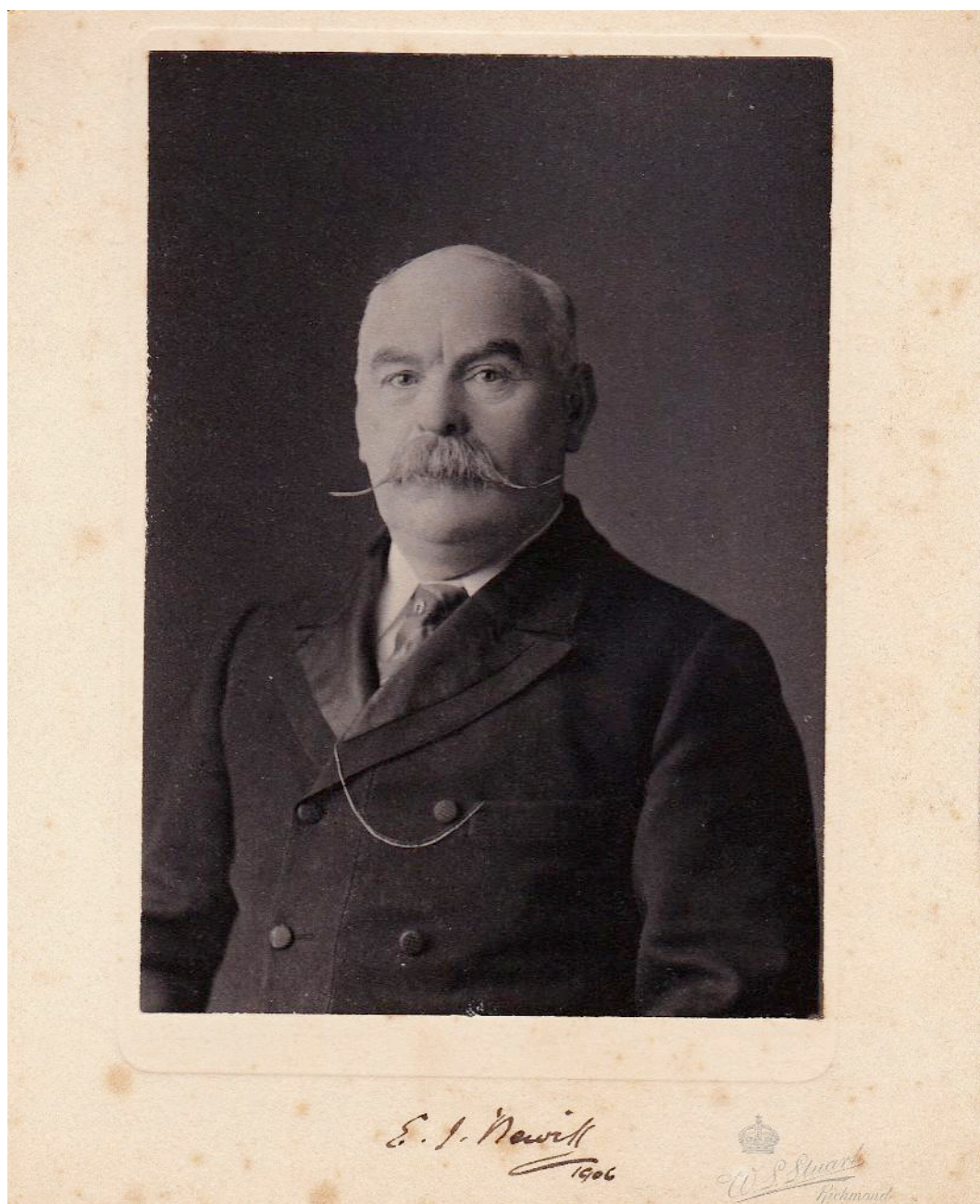
but just as often these qualities, insufficiently moderated by good judgment, resulted in impetuous and ill-judged decisions, with the attendant poor business sense and a tendency to ruffle feathers and make enemies where a little diplomacy might have smoothed a path ahead.

These traits appeared again and again in the family. As Dudley wrote in his autobiography: *[Jane and Anne Dunn's] children inherited much of the initiative and enterprise of their mother. My grandfather, [Edward James] instead of settling down on the farm persuaded his uncle William to act as bailiff whilst he went to London to seek his fortune. He was a man of very considerable ability, broad views and imaginative insight, but these qualities, which should have made for success in life, were largely neutralised by a dislike of routine work and an impatience of mediocrity. Long before anyone of his enterprises had come to fruition he was chasing another. He was by turns an estate agent, an architect, a contractor and a hotelier. He developed the Mansel estate on Wimbledon Hill, built one of the first Garden Cities at East Grinstead, constructed the Lingfield racecourse and managed a number of hotels including the famous Star and Garter at Richmond. In everything he undertook he was definitely the leader and provided the motive force; and to the very end of his life he was promoting new schemes which became increasingly speculative as his judgment waned.*

There was more. In 1891 he went out to South Africa with Lord Headley on behalf of the New Mashona Exploration Company, “ostensibly to test mining possibilities” as Dunn was later to write but in reality to try to make his fortune in the region recently opened up by the British South Africa Company which was later to become Southern Rhodesia. During this time he became involved with various speculators, including Lord Randolph Churchill, and returned with some worthless paper concessions. His career was also marked by a number of Court cases, one of them as Director of the Grosvenor Hotel being appealed as far as the House of Lords in 1903. “The costs ruined my father financially”, Dunn wrote. There were other cases involving debts and unpaid accounts. None of this, however, prevented his rise as a public figure. As a young man he had been elected to the Local Board of Health in Wimbledon and in 1860 he had led a popular revolt against the National Rifle Association's occupation of Wimbledon Common during its annual camp, a group of ‘navvies’ in his employ tearing down and burning the fences that had been erected.



**Edward James Newitt with his two youngest sons
Neville and Nigel**



Edward James Newitt aged 64

This brand of populist direct action, not the last he was to indulge in, did not prevent him rising as a figure of the establishment. He became a town councillor in Southend where his pugnacious personality and strikingly fierce appearance was a gift to the local cartoonists. The most famous cartoon had him leading a march of bathers into the sea in protest at local by-laws forbidding men walking down to the sea in their bathing suits.

He was involved with raising the Volunteer Battalion of the Royal West Surrey Regiment and became Lt Colonel of its 4th battalion. During the First World War he raised and commanded the Southend National Guard - a picture printed at the time showing him mounted and leading the march past at a parade. At that time he was 74 years old. When he died in 1919, planting asparagus in his garden, he was accorded a public funeral, as described in Dunn's memoir, with "the coffin encircled with the Union Jack, carried on a Gun carriage, a Band playing funeral marches, the Southend Corporation, the Mayor ... the Deputy Mayor, Aldermen and Councillors in their civic robes".

For a man who had begun life as an ironmonger's assistant, who had been involved in many unsuccessful and distinctly dubious business deals and who had never fired a shot in anger, to be accorded a funeral with full Military Honours was indeed remarkable – demonstrating the power of a strong character to impose on others his own view of himself against all the evidence provided by his life.

This combination of restless enterprise, strongly held opinions and public leadership – though notably not always successfully applied to business - were traits passed to his eldest son Dunn. Like his father, Dunn was a very intelligent, enterprising and rather pugnacious character. Born in 1866 he had become a self-trained engineer specialising, among other things, in furnace construction and ballistics. He pursued a career with a number of companies, often acting as company secretary and establishing contacts with wealthy landowners which he described in great detail in an autobiography which he completed in 1945.

Dunn's rise to local and even national fame was due to his prowess at rifle shooting. A skilled marksman, he accumulated a large number of prizes in national competitions culminating in being selected to represent Britain in the 1908 Olympic Games. He claimed in his autobiography that he had been instrumental in getting rifle shooting included in the schedule of the games. In 1906 he published a book *The Citizen Rifleman* with a

foreword by Lord Roberts, which was part of a campaign to prepare the British people for the war which all thinking people saw was coming. In 1911 and again in 1913 he visited the United States and in 1915 moved there with his family to work in the nascent armaments industry at Springfield, Massachusetts. He did not finally return to England until 1921.

Dunn, like his father, had all the energy, brains and enterprise of the self-made man but none of the conviviality, the spirit of the *bon viveur*, which marked his father. He became increasingly a lonely, disappointed and irascible man, who was widely respected in the narrow circle of the rifle shooting fraternity but, I suspect, was not much loved by anyone. His youngest daughter Phyllis was later to write of him “Pa was an atheist and fanatically anti-clerical,” – and stories current in the family told of him accosting a clergyman in the street with, “if you don’t believe what you preach you are a charlatan and if do believe it you are a fool”. She was also to recall how he would eat his evening meal alone in the dining room, apart from the rest of the family. Shortly after the First World War, while still in his fifties, Dunn suffered a stroke. This prevented him from working but only stoked the fires of his obsessions as he spent the final thirty years of his life, researching the family tree of the Newitts, keeping meteorological records, and writing his diary in a tiny copperplate hand, a lonely man made increasingly isolated by growing deafness. In 1950 he and his wife, Alice, celebrated their Diamond Wedding and received the traditional telegram from the King.

Dunn was not a father that Phyllis could ever love or admire but his sons were aware of the intellect and talent that Dunn had displayed in a life successful up to a point but undermined by eventual failure, disappointment and finally by illness and loss of hearing.

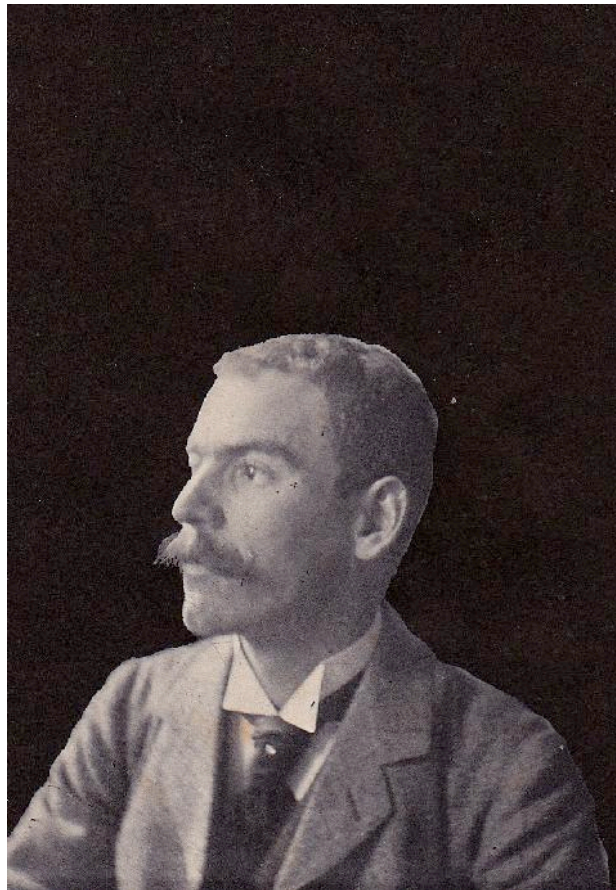


Edward James Dunn Newitt



Edward James Dunn with Alice, Bonnie and Rita c.1914

Perhaps the greatest success of Dunn's life was his choice of a bride. In 1890 he had married Alice Lewis, daughter to a coach-builder to Queen Victoria, who lived in Windsor. Alice, Dudley's mother, was a beautiful woman, whose beauty was passed down to her three daughters. Like so many women of the late Victorian era she settled to a life bringing up a large family and became the figure that held together a family that soon dispersed around the world. All her children were unconditionally devoted to her and this loyalty and love were reciprocated. When Dunn ceased to be able to support his family and became more and more difficult and unapproachable, Alice, although crippled by arthritis and confined to her one room apartment, remained the focus for family loyalty.



Edward James Dunn Newitt

Early Life

Dudley was born in 1894, the second son of Dunn and Alice – their first son Lewis (called after Alice's family name as was often the custom at the time) had been born in 1892. There were two more sons, Raymond born 1896 and Edward (always Eddie in the family) in 1898. Later there were to be three girls Bonnie, Rita and finally Phyllis born in 1913 when her eldest brother was already twenty-one and had left home.

Dudley was born when the family lived in Putney. *At that time Putney was a quiet suburb within easy reach of Wimbledon Common and Richmond Park, and my earliest recollections are of Putney Heath with its cattle pound and of the tow path leading to Hammersmith and Barnes. We lived in a succession of houses in Putney, gradually increasing in size as the family increased.*

I and my brother [Lewis] attended various dame schools, usually kept by impecunious widows with unmarried daughters. Although the standard of scholarship was not high, some of these schools had a very special character which derived from a cultured background – a fragrance of lavender and old lace pervaded the teaching. Great emphasis was placed upon 'copper plate' handwriting and clear articulation – the word 'science' was never heard.

The family moved house often but always lived in *typical suburban houses without any distinctive character* though one of them *had two large cellars in which my brother Lewis and I established a chemical laboratory and lectured to a class of neighbouring boys – teaching them how to make gunpowder, fireworks and other lethal materials.*

From the first ten years of Dudley's life there survive a few intimate snapshots. The little boys wear large grownup caps but are recognisable already as the young men who would be formed by a scientific education and the crucible of war. The album was compiled by Dunn sometime around 1909 and the pictures are not in chronological order suggesting that Dunn assembled them from twenty years or more of experiments with photography. The earliest photographs of the four boys date from 1901 when Dudley would have been seven years old. The boys are pictured in the garden, Eddie rides a rocking horse, Raymond has a little wheelbarrow, Lewis at the great age of nine stands behind them and Dudley sits in a miniature wicker chair. Another photo has just Dudley



and Lewis dressed alike in dark jackets and with Eton collars and the large adult caps. In all these pictures Dudley is the one who is most self-possessed, the most strikingly good looking with heavy dark eyebrows and a gaze that is always looking into the distance. As the boys reached their teens, the superabundance of male energy had to be burnt off. *Physical fitness was one of the ideals we aimed at in those days. Lewis and I used to go swimming every morning before breakfast, running two miles each way, to a pond on Wimbledon common. Long distance cycle rides were also a favourite form of exercise – to Brighton (54 miles), Portsmouth (64 miles) and Bath (100 miles). The bicycle was then the fastest vehicle on the road although the motor car was beginning to compete with it.* And, as Dudley later wrote, the brothers planned a future of adventure which would take them away from suburban south-west London. *The British Empire, after a succession of romantic wars, had extended its boundaries in every direction and was settling down to what was hopefully regarded as a golden age. Our elders were obsessed by the thought of ‘security’ and severely discouraged any signs of romanticism in their children. We, on the other hand, brought up on books such as ‘Deeds that Won the Empire’ and stirred by occasional glimpses of such heroic figures as Lord Roberts and Lord Kitchener, found little attraction in the prospect of a safe career of unrelieved monotony. Our colonies were calling for young emigrants and we fully intended to answer the call as soon as we were of age. We haunted the Dominion Offices of Canada, Australia and New Zealand and collected a vast mass of literature describing the attractions of lumbering, farming and cattle raising.*

William Henry Fitchett (1841-1928) was an Australian journalist and minister. *Deeds that Won the Empire* originated in a series of articles which were published in *The Argus* (Melbourne). They were collected and published in book form in Melbourne in 1896 and by Smith Elder and Company, London, in 1897. The book eventually ran into 35 editions and about 250,000 copies were sold.

Meanwhile the brothers were sent to study at the Wandsworth Technical Institute which had been founded in 1895 and offered a strongly scientific curriculum. Once again, it is photographs that fill in the story and these images of Dudley at fifteen are all set in the context of the family. One dated 1909 shows Dudley with his uncle Charles and eldest sister Bonnie. Dudley sits cross legged his head tilted slightly back in an arrogant adolescent pose, perhaps in imitation of his uncle who had returned from serving in the Boer War and sported a dashing moustache. And another of



Charles, Bonnie and Dudley



Connie, Dudley, Alice and Granny Lewis

the same year is of a family tea in a rather overgrown garden. Dudley's aunt Connie is there, Alice serving the tea and her mother 'Granny Lewis'. Dudley is looking over his shoulder at the camera, smiling and confident. *Our father encouraged us to take an interest in science – and this new interest eventually provided an alternative prospect of an exciting and rewarding career.* In a letter written in 1960 Lewis recalled that, "two gifted teachers, Alfred Greaves and Thomas Barrett... stirred in you and me an abiding interest in Science, particularly Chemistry". In 1906, aged 12, Dudley was awarded a prize for 'Attendance'. The prize was a copy of Arthur William Poyser's *Magnetism and Electricity. A manual for students in advanced classes*, and the bookplate was signed by H. Waite, the Head Master.

In Dudley's autobiography there is no mention of the tragedy that struck the family when he was still only sixteen. While Lewis and Dudley were studying science in Wandsworth, Raymond had been enrolled as a cadet on the *TS Mercury*, the training ship set up and run by the famous cricketer and athlete C.B.Fry. On 13 December 1910 Raymond had been on duty at 6am when he fell into the sea trying to use a rope to descend into a cutter. It was pitch dark but two other boys jumped into the icy water to try to save him. They were all swept away by the tide and Raymond drowned. Their father apparently went down to the training ship to see the site of the accident and had medals struck to commemorate the bravery of the two boys who had attempted the rescue. The boys were also awarded medals by the Royal Humane Society and the Boy Scouts and these were presented in February 1911 by the Lord Lieutenant of Hampshire.

Although a sad little collection of letters, press cuttings and photos were kept, the young Raymond was never mentioned by the family and, although one of his sisters called her son Raymond, with the death of his mother and father in 1951, he passed out of memory. In the school reports of *TS Mercury*, compiled in December 1910, he had come far out ahead of his class in both English and Mathematics.

Lewis and Dudley passed their Cambridge Senior Local examinations but found they were unable to progress to university. *In those days... scholarships and government grants were few and highly competitive. My father could give little help as he had three other sons and three daughters to educate. My schooldays therefore, ended at the age of 16 years and my brother Lewis and I were sent to Scotland as assistant*



chemists in the Ardeer factory of Nobels Explosive Company. There we stayed for about two years. In his own autobiography Dunn explained, “Capt. Hardcastle, whom I had known for several years, and a first class mathematician, was at that time employed by Nobel’s Explosives Co. at Ardeer, and mentioned that Nobels were employing apprentices, supplementing a subsistence salary with higher education in Glasgow University paying their expenses. I advised my boys to accept this offer and both did.”

 Dudley kept all the certificates relating to his education qualifications, all rolled up and preserved in dusty cardboard tubes. They remained unlooked at until discovered by me in an old trunk in 2014. One dated July 1910 states that at the Wandsworth centre Dudley obtained Second Class Honours in English Language & Literature (including composition). History & Geography, French, Geometry, Chemistry (Theoretical and Practical), Heat & Sound and Light, Freehand, Model, and Memory Drawing, passing with distinction in Chemistry. The following year at Kingston-on-Thames he passed six subjects English Language & Literature (including Composition), History, French, Geometry and Algebra, Theoretical & Practical Chemistry, Heat, Sound and Light, passing with distinction in History. It is not clear why he resat the examination)

The factory at Ardeer was situated amongst the sand dunes on the Ayrshire coast near the towns of Saltcoats and Ardrossan. It manufactured nitro glycerine, dynamite, cordite and various blasting explosives, and had its own sulphuric and nitric acid plants. It thus offered a wide variety of experience for an apprentice chemist, and in addition he was given opportunities for furthering his education on formal lines. I attended evening classes at the Royal Technical College, Glasgow, studying organic chemistry under Ian Heilbronn and Geology under Macnair.

 Nobel Industries Limited was founded in 1870 by Alfred Nobel (1833–1896), inventor of dynamite, and founder of the Nobel Prize. The business later diversified into the production of blasting gelatine, gelignite, ballistite, guncotton, and cordite. The Ardeer peninsula was the site of a massive dynamite manufacturing plant. Having scoured the country for a remote location to establish his explosive factory, Nobel finally acquired 100 acres from the Earl of Eglinton, and established the British Dynamite Factory in 1871 the largest explosives factory in the world. The sand and dunes on the site provided natural safety features for the plant and workers, further enhanced by the formation of blast walls and bankings, designed to direct the force of an explosion upwards and away from neighbouring facilities, rather than sideways,

which could have resulted in a chain reaction which could have spread throughout the plant. The factory had its own jetty on the River Garnock in Irvine Harbour, serving ships disposing of time expired explosives or importing materials for the works. At its peak the site employed almost 13,000 workers in a fairly remote location and had its own railway station. The station was used solely for workers and those special visitors with business in the plant, and was never a regular passenger stop. Until the mid-1960s, there were two trains per day to transport workers.

The Royal Technical College originated as the Glasgow and West of Scotland Technical College, which was formed in 1887 from the amalgamation of Anderson's College, the College of Science and Arts, Allan Glen's Institution, the Young Chair of Technical Chemistry and Atkinson's Institution. The very grand buildings of what became colloquially known as The Tech were very different from the extremely modest building that housed the Wandsworth Technical Institute. The Royal Technical College was housed in the former Anderson College building on George Street but, by the beginning of the twentieth century, a new building was required following the increase in student numbers. On 14 May 1903 King Edward VII laid the foundation stone of the new building at 138 George Street, Glasgow. The new building was finally completed in 1910. It was the largest single educational complex in Europe at the time. After seeking permission from King George V in 1912 the College changed its name to The Royal Technical College. In 1956 there was another change of name for the College and it became the Royal College of Science and Technology. Under the recommendation of the Robbins Committee, it amalgamated with the Scottish College of Commerce to form the University of Strathclyde in 1964.

Two of Dudley's textbooks from this period survive, Magnus Maclean's *Questions in Electricity and Magnetism* in which he inscribed the date October 1911 and J. Clerk Maxwell's *Manuals of Elementary Science*, dated by him February 1912 – two dates spanning a Glasgow winter. Glasgow is connected to Ardrossan by rail and the journey today is about fifty minutes so. For someone resident in Ardeer, attending classes would have involved a considerable journey time. Rather grand Certificates of Merit survive to testify that Dudley attended evening classes in Magnetism and Electricity and Geology. In his autobiography Dudley mentions two distinguished scientists, Macnair and Heilbronn, whose lectures he attended. It is always of interest to know something of the people who provided inspiration for anyone in the early days of their career and these were the two who Dudley remembered most clearly.

Peter Macnair was born in Glasgow on 12 September 1868, and was educated at Kinnoull School and Perth Academy. He was in business from 1885 until 1899 when he was appointed Curator of the Green Branch Museum, Glasgow. In 1901 he was an Assistant in the Fine Art and Historical Section, at the Glasgow International Exhibition. In 1902 he was appointed Curator of Natural History Collections in Glasgow Museums, and Professor of Zoology at Anderson's Medical College, Glasgow. He also held the positions of President of the Glasgow Geological Society and Editor of Transactions; Examiner in Geology at the University of Aberdeen, 1908-1910; Examiner in Biology to the Royal Faculty of Physicians and Surgeons, Glasgow, for the Triple Qualification of the Scottish Licensing Bodies, 1922; Tutor in Geology to the Workers' Educational Association, 1921; Consulting Geologist in questions of Mining and Civil Engineering. He died on 28 March 1929. His publications included many papers on the Geological Structure of the Highlands of Scotland, Scottish Palaeozoic Geology, and museum subjects.

Sir Ian Heilbron DSO FRS (1886–1959) was a chemist and a Fellow of the Royal Society. He was knighted in 1946. The American Chemical Society honored him with its highest prize, the Priestley Medal, in 1945. Heilbron was only 8 years older than Dudley and had been educated at the Royal Technical College where he was appointed a lecturer in 1909 at the age of 23. His career then ran almost parallel to that of Dudley. He served as an officer in the British Army between 1910 and 1920 and was awarded the DSO for operations against the Turks in Salonika. He then held chairs in Organic Chemistry at Liverpool and Manchester before being appointed to a chair at Imperial College in 1938. He was elected to the Royal Society in 1931. During the Second World War he was scientific adviser to the Department of Scientific Research in the Ministry of Supply, and after 1942 he became a scientific advisor to the Ministry of Production. He was knighted in 1946.

The assistant chemists at Ardeer were a mixed bag – some keen to advance themselves as scientists and others indifferent to their work and with no ambitions. They were badly paid – my initial salary being nineteen shillings a week. One of my friends amongst these young chemists was P.Middleton, a man of unusual intellect and amongst other things a keen geologist. Most of our weekends were spent on excursions along the great boundary fault in the old red sandstone, or exploring the interesting geological formations on the island of Arran. Another friend, Andrew Webb, and I once rowed a dinghy from Ardrossan to Arran, a distance of twenty miles each way. Dudley's brother, Lewis, recalled that, "at week-ends we often waked from our diggings in Saltcoats to Ardrossan, or cycled up the Forth of Clyde to Dunoon. Occasionally we



Scotland. Preparing for a swim. Dudley third from the right.

took the steamer from Ardrossan to Lamlash on the Isle of Arran across the Firth". These are the memories of old men recalling the time when they were young and vigorous, and the future was all before them. Many young men take a deep pleasure in pushing at the limits of their physical strength, undertaking exploits, pointless except for the daring involved and the bonding of doing these things with companions of one's own age. However, it is clear that, these expeditions apart, Scotland did not really appeal to Dudley.

There were few social attractions in Ayrshire. The natives were a dour people, drunk on Saturday evening and at the Kirk all day on the Sabbath. We Southerners were regarded as little better than atheists and quite unfit to mix with the godly. After a year or so at Ardeer, it became evident that to advance in my chosen profession I should have to obtain a qualification of some kind and I therefore set out to work for the BSc degree which could be obtained at London University by external study.

Dudley duly returned to Wandsworth Technical Institute and enrolled in the session 1912-13 to take the first year of his science degree, that year winning the prize for Physics. *I left Ardeer in 1912 and the following year*

passed the Intermediate Examination in the Faculty of Science. There now remained only the final degree examination which required a further two years of study.

In 1911 Dudley's father had made a preliminary visit to the United States where he returned in October with his wife to give demonstrations of the Negative Angle System for rifle shooting which he had patented. He made an extensive tour through the United States and Canada before returning in June 1912. In November 1913 he returned to the US and was joined by his wife who, however, returned to Britain before the outbreak of war. Dunn stayed on in the US throughout the war. The activity by his parents crossing and recrossing the Atlantic left Dudley without a home and with the need to earn a living. As he recalled, *I had, however, in addition to support myself in some occupation which would give me spare time for study. I obtained a teaching post in an elementary school at Bengoe in Hertfordshire, and later at Twyford near Henley.*

The Outbreak of the First World War

Dudley was now aged 20 years. *By the summer of 1914 I was almost ready for the final ordeal [his final examinations]. At the end of July I went to Hastings with Uncle Charles for a short holiday – and while there, the first world war broke out and all my plans were abruptly upset. There had, for some years previous to 1914, been talk of a European war but no one took the threat seriously and many experts thought that, for economic reasons, no war of long duration was possible.*

I hurried back to London, afraid that the war might end before I could join up, and at once enlisted as a private in the 5th Battalion of the East Surrey Regiment. This was a territorial battalion then commanded by Lieutenant Colonel [R.K.] Harvey, and composed mainly of recruits like myself with no previous military training and no experience of army life. We were a very mixed company including many youngsters like myself who had just left school or University, stockbrokers, lawyers and other professional types, and a disreputable minority of idlers and loafers who subsequently graduated to 'cushy' jobs in the cookhouse or as batmen or storekeepers.

At the start of the war the British armed forces were entirely made up of volunteers and the carefree spirit in which many joined up in 1914 is well documented. The East Surrey Regiment had been formed in 1881 and

had its barracks in King's Road, Kingston, which would have been close to where Dudley and his family were living. The regiment had two Territorial Battalions, the 5th and 6th, established in 1908 as part of the Haldane army reforms and it was the 5th battalion that was sent to India for garrison duties in October 1914. During the First World War numerous volunteer units were raised, often by like-minded groups of men. These were sometimes known as Pals Battalions and were seen as a way of recruiting volunteers from groups that might otherwise never have signed up. Many of them shared the attitudes towards army life that Dudley recorded in his memoir.

No one in England had any very clear idea of what was involved in a modern war waged against a powerful and well-trained enemy – nor were we anything but pleasantly excited by the early reverses in Belgium and France. Having assembled at the drill hall in Wimbledon, we were given a superficial medical examination, issued with belts, bayonets and rifles and taken to Maidstone where we were dispersed to billets in the poorer quarter of the town.

For several weeks we received instruction in infantry drill and route marching, and were eventually issued with uniforms, kit bags and other accessories. Our morale was greatly improved; we were desperately keen to master the elements of our new profession, and before many weeks had passed we had changed from an undisciplined rabble into a fairly smart unit – still ignorant of many of a soldier's duties, but anxious to learn and full of enthusiasm and esprit de corps.

Being a territorial battalion composed mainly of men well above the average in intelligence, our approach to the manual of infantry training was highly critical and our ideas of discipline, to say the least, unorthodox. 'Theirs not to reason why' was not acceptable as a fundamental doctrine. We often knew more than our officers about map reading, musketry and other branches of the military art, and did not hesitate to give our views on the conduct of manoeuvres. By a judicious mixture of bribery and corruption we soon dominated our N.C.O.s and by and large we were having a very pleasant time with plenty of leisure.

After a few weeks at Maidstone we marched to Canterbury where we were billeted in some of the smaller houses surrounding the Cathedral. Training continued on orthodox lines with musketry training, route marching, physical training and battalion exercises – but we also had a great deal of leisure time which was spent either in the local taverns or entertaining the young ladies of Canterbury in the local tea-



shops. One such used to insist on my attending services in the Cathedral and singing in the choir.

Dudley never used to sing and had no interest in music, so this story is strange, to say the least. In Dudley's papers there is a photograph of a young girl named Winifred Wellington, with nice eyes and a shock of hair neatly parted in the middle. Dudley dated the picture October 1914 and kept it in an old album of his India photographs. Winifred was 20 and in the 1911 census she is described as 'business assistant' to her father who was a publican – maybe she was a 'bar maid'. But there is another photo – this time of a distinctly glamorous young woman with 'Charlotte Vautier Canterbury' written on the back in Dudley's hand. Later he added the date '1914' and 'when I was billeted 5th Bt E. Surreys'. It is not clear which of these young women required him to sing in the choir.

It was at Canterbury that we began to make personal contacts and crystallise into small groups, the members of which had common interests and a common social background. My own group included Mitchell-Banks, a barrister, and after the war, a member of parliament of some note, A. Barker, a particular friend who later accompanied me on many excursions in India. He was killed in France in 1916; the brothers Oddie who had just left Stonyhurst and were universally liked for their irresponsibility and wit, and several others whose names I have now forgotten.

I can remember little of our stay in Canterbury. There were constant rumours that we were shortly to proceed overseas; we had a full scale inspection by King George V accompanied by Lord Kitchener. I recall Kitchener as a monolithic figure, purple in the face and with an intimidating manner.

Towards the end of 1914 we were warned for service overseas and it soon became known that we were destined for India. This news was received with mixed feelings – India was far from the great war, but on the other hand, we were strongly attracted by the prospect of travel in the East – and there was always the North West Frontier and Mesopotamia where there existed the likelihood of some fighting in the classical tradition – what used to be described as the 'butcher and bolt' policy.

It is difficult to know where Dudley got his romantic ideas of warfare in India, but his father was a close acquaintance, even friend, of Lord Roberts who had led an expedition to Kabul in 1879 and had commanded

the Indian army in the second Afghan War in 1880. Moreover, Roberts had written a preface to Dunn's book *The Citizen Rifleman*.

My father, who was in the United States at the outbreak of war, was anxious that I should take a commission and he wrote to Field Marshal Earl Roberts, an old friend of his, asking him to recommend me. Roberts wrote to our Commanding Officer who was very impressed at receiving an autographed letter from Roberts, and hastened to assure me that he would take the first opportunity of promoting me. I was not much concerned with the prospect. The carefree life of a private with no responsibilities of any kind had many attractions; judicious bribery of N.C.O.s ensured that leave could be obtained at any time, and being physically strong, a fair middle-weight boxer and a good shot, I had no difficulty in achieving a reasonable standard of efficiency.

Two surviving letters confirm that Dudley did indeed apply for a commission. The Principal of Wandsworth Technical Institute, Geoffrey Goodchild, wrote a testimonial dated 14 September 1914 – “I have known Mr D.M.Newitt for some 6 years and can testify that he is a young man of excellent and forceable character, in every way reliable and trustworthy... I consider him a highly suitable candidate for a commission”. Another letter, dated 10 October, confirms that Dudley's father had asked Lord Roberts to use his influence to get Dudley a commission. Harold Ferguson, from Lord Robert's staff, wrote to Dudley – “I am directed by Field Marshal Lord Roberts to say, in reply to your letter of the 8th instant that he will write to your Commanding Officer about you and forward to him your father's letters”. For the moment, however, this attempt to obtain a commission was unsuccessful.

A picture of Dudley taken in Canterbury shows a young man, shortish, square and muscular like most of the men in his family, few of whom exceeded more than five foot eight inches. Until late in life Dudley was immensely strong but enjoyed telling stories about men stronger than himself – one such concerned a soldier in his regiment who could not only perform the mythical feat of strength of holding a rifle by the tip of the muzzle and lifting it in the air with a straight arm but could actually do this with two rifles at the same time. Later in life one of his favourite stories concerned the man who delivered a stone sundial on a large square stone plinth to Dudley's house. Dudley had worked out an elaborate way of lowering this onto a trolley which both men could then manoeuvre into position. As he was explaining this plan, the delivery man simply picked

up the stone plinth and walked off with it into the garden. Dudley may or may not have been a good boxer but in one bout his nose was broken. It was not successfully set and the rest of his life it presented a rather squashed appearance and caused him to snore and to have breathing difficulties whenever he caught a cold.

The voyage to India

Dudley's description of his voyage out to India and his first military experiences there is written with an extraordinary memory for detail – the colour of the sea, the scents of the shore, the sight of the desert were all as fresh in his mind at the age of 70 as when he first experienced them.

We embarked for India towards the end of November 1914 on the S.S. Alaunia, a Cunard liner. This being a passenger ship our quarters were comfortable, most of us occupying four berth cabins. The voyage was, in every sense, pleasurable and to most of us a new and exciting experience. I have had occasion to repeat it several times in later years and each time I get the same thrill passing Gibraltar and cruising through the Mediterranean in sight of the African shore.

 The RMS *Alaunia* (13,400 tons) was built for Cunard in 1913 and was only a year old when Dudley traveled in it. It was requisitioned as a troop ship on the outbreak of war. In October 1916 the ship struck a mine off Hastings and sank.

Dudley kept a diary of his voyage to India in a minuscule note book. Most of it concerned the daily movement of the ship and the landmarks passed on the way. He made a little pen and ink sketch of Gibraltar as the ship passed by and he recorded the monotonous daily routine on board.

“Reveille 6.0
 Beds rolled & berths cleaned
 Breakfast 7.0
 No one allowed below from 7.0 to 12.00
 Physical drill for 1 hr
 Dinner 12.0
 Afternoon free
 Tea 4.30
 Evening nothing doing
 Lights out 0930 hrs”

Our first port of call was Port Said at the entrance to the Suez Canal. No one who has passed that way will ever forget the hot sunshine, the pervading odour of spices and the intense activity of the port. Our vessel was soon surrounded by native craft offering fruit and dubious sweetmeats for sale. Strict orders forbidding us to buy this confectionary were issued, but without effect. From every port-hole and every deck, ropes were made fast and a brisk trade carried on after the oriental fashion – with much noise, bargaining and recrimination.

Many travelers have written of journeys in the desert – the long treks on camels or mules, the discomfort of living in a cloud of dust, pestered by flies and toasted by the burning sun; very few have spoken of the passage through the canal – a thin thread of water in an illimitable plain of sand – it has a special feature in that one appears stationery whilst the desert passes as a cinema film of interminable length. Apart from a few scattered villages and dusty palm trees, the eye rests on nothing but sand; nor is there much colour in the landscape. The sky is a hot pale yellow, the sun a haze of intense heat, and the horizon an indefinite line of shimmering sand, sometimes low dunes but more often flat and featureless. Nowadays, constant dredging is necessary to remove drifting sand from the canal – and the dredgers are manned by natives who labour much as they did in the days of the Pharoahs, and for not much more money. There is a constant flow of ships in both directions and since two large ships cannot pass one another, they run in convoys – one convoy anchoring in a wider reach, whilst another passes in the opposite direction. Mid way along the canal past the town of Ismailia, Lake Timsah affords a welcome stretch of water. When later we were encamped on its banks, it was a favourite pastime to sail on the lake in the cool of the evening, free from the clouds of flies that infested the desert, and refreshed by the night breeze.

At Suez one enters the Red Sea. Although the season was early, the heat at mid-day was intense. The dull red rocky shores had a menacing look; there was nowhere any sign of life – no trees, no villages, no vegetation of any kind – but the glow of the hot rocks and the shimmering water. Nevertheless there was a fascination about the harsh scenery. I had been a great reader of Montague Doughty, Gertrude Bell and others, and this may have contributed to the attraction which I then felt and even now feel for the hot sunshine, the wide horizons and the austere environment of rock and sand. No one who has not traversed the desert on foot, day after day, can understand the miracles of cool water, of shade and of fields of growing crops.

Charles Montagu Doughty's famous book, *Travels in Arabia Deserta*, was published in 1888. It would have been a strange book for a young scientist to have come across but perhaps Dudley read it as a kind of preparation, once it was clear that the battalion was destined for the East. Gertrude Bell's *Syria: the desert and the sown* was published in 1907. These two works would certainly have been at the head of any reading list on the Middle East in 1914.

And now, as the end of our voyage approached, we were subjected to a number of well meaning lectures on life in the East. The dangers of alcohol, of drinking water, of mosquitoes, of over-ripe fruit and of exposure to the sun, seemed to justify prohibition of the most far-reaching kind. There seemed nothing one could do which did not involve the threat of frightful retribution. I do not think we were unduly impressed since a searching interrogation of our lecturers revealed that they were merely quoting from army instructions based upon the assumption that we were all half-witted.

Service in India

To approach Bombay at dawn is a memorable experience. The pearly atmosphere gives to the sea a queer opalescence; and looking shorewards the minarets and buildings seem suspended in air, light and fragile. On coming nearer shore, more colour appears in the landscape with the green of the hanging gardens and the avenues of palms.

With characteristic eastern clamour, the ship is brought alongside and there comes a whiff of spices, marigolds and jasmine. Overloaded with kit bags, great coats and rifles, we filtered slowly down the gangway and were drawn up on a dusty stretch of wasteland. Then came one of those long and frustrating periods of waiting with which we were to become so familiar in the coming months. No one seemed to know our destination; there were no orders and nothing to do but wait in the hot sunshine, drinking cups of hot tea generously topped up with condensed milk.

Eventually we entrained and began the long journey across the central plain due eastwards towards Cawnpore. Our compartments were overcrowded, the washing conditions primitive and the food mainly tinned meat, biscuits and marmalade washed down with strong tea. Once a day we were shunted into sidings and given an hour or two to stretch our legs. We reached Cawnpore in about five days and were housed in the Wheeler barracks some few miles from the town.

Cawnpore had been the scene of some of the most violent and savage events of the 'Indian Mutiny' in 1857, of which all Europeans stationed there would still in 1914 be only too aware – though none of this is mentioned by Dudley in his memoirs. The Wheeler Barracks was a grim and imposing building, its name recalling the unsuccessful defence of the barracks by Sir Hugh Wheeler during the Mutiny. The album of photographs that Dudley later compiled begins with five pictures of the Wheeler barracks – the massive four storey structures with their cavernous arches being incongruously referred to as 'Bungalows'.

At Cawnpore we settled down to a period of garrison duty – endless drilling in the mornings and nothing much to do for the rest of the day. The routine was not unpleasant during the comparatively cool winter months. A few of us hired horses and explored the countryside; others played football, boxed and took part in cross-country runs. There is a surviving photograph of the "C" Coy team for 5 mile race March 1915". The eight runners are dressed in loose white shirts and baggy cotton shorts. Dudley stands, second from the right, the shortest of the group, broad shouldered and with arms folded.



'C' Coy team for 5 mile race March 1915

The social life of a private was limited; he could wander in the native bazaar or enjoy the hospitality of a few European families – but the white civilian population regarded him much as Mrs Hawksbee regarded the ‘Soldiers Three’ and made little effort to entertain him. To me native bazaars were a source of endless interest – identifying the characters so vividly described by Kipling and slowly acquiring some knowledge of Urdu and the local dialect. My only books at this time were a copy of Tennyson’s ‘In Memoriam’ which I learned by heart and a text book on mechanics which provided numerical problems of a highly impracticable and complex character.

As our first hot weather approached, life became increasingly monotonous. We drilled early in the mornings and were then confined to barracks during the heat of the day. Tempers became frayed, we suffered the torments of prickly heat, and the boxing matches, instead of being friendly bouts, developed into bloodthirsty contests for settling imaginary grievances. Our barracks were without modern conveniences – instead of electric fans there were punkahs suspended from the ceiling and kept moving by a native pulling on a rope. There was no running water. Our beds consisted of sheets of corrugated iron on trestles, with a mattress stuffed with coconut fibre. Reveille was at dawn, and just before daylight a native barber used to come round, soap our chins and shave us while we were still asleep – an unhygienic and painful operation.

Dudley’s photograph of the soldier’s sleeping quarters shows a vast room filling two stories of the building with the punkahs forming a sort of false ceiling half way up. The beds are widely spaced in rows, with mattresses rolled up to produce a semblance of military order.

The 5th battalion of the East Surreys produced a magazine, Volume 1 No 1 appearing on 1 April 1915, and Dudley kept two numbers of it. It was edited by Frank Thorn and contained some battalion news, comic verses, topical articles and witty commentaries on army life. Meanwhile Colonel Harvey clearly kept a close eye on the welfare of the battalion. A letter



Wheeler Barracks



Wheeler Barracks. Sleeping quarters

signed by him to Dudley indicates that he had sent some of the battalion an invitation to have supper at his bungalow – rather remarkable given that he was the commanding officer and Dudley at that time only a private. A letter dated 22 December from Dudley to his aunt Connie, the only letter he wrote at this time that has survived, conveys something of his early impressions of military life in India.

“Your letter is the first one I have received from England since leaving home and I was very pleased indeed to get it.

I am afraid it would be useless for me to attempt a description of this place. The things one sees here remind me of those pieces in the 5th and 6th Standard readers which used to amaze me as a child.

There are flocks of the most gorgeously coloured birds, there are jackals, hyenas and monkeys, all quite close to the barracks. There are hundreds of hawks and vultures on the roofs of the barracks themselves. They serve as dustman and seem to eat almost any thing. The barracks consists of a large number of isolated bungalows – there being 100 men to each bungalow. We have all our meals on the veranda.

Although it is mid winter here, it is very hot in the daytime and very cold at night. I have not seen a cloud in the sky for the last month and there has been no rain here since Oct 11th.

The surrounding country is flat park land. The only tree of which I know the name is the banyan tree, so celebrated in those aforementioned readers – and which is found all over the place here.

I have met some people here who have been very good to me. They have invited me out shooting in the jungle and as soon as I can obtain furlough I am going.

I can hardly imagine it is Xmas week. They are hay making in the fields around and no one seems at all excited. They have not paid us since we have been here and so most of the men are “broke to the wide”.

We have to do plenty of drilling and shooting and that leads me to hope that we may see some active service before long.”

Just before the break of the monsoon, Barker and I obtained a few weeks leave which we spent at Nani Tal, a hill station on the banks of a picturesque lake. Here the climate was relatively cool, there were no bugle calls and no fatigue duties, and plenty of amusements – cricket, polo, sailing.

Nainital was a hill station established in 1841, which became the summer resort of the governor of the United Provinces. It was located on a lake at

around 6,500 feet in the foothills of the Himalayas. Its climate was very pleasant with May and June temperatures only in the 70s. As a result it became a favoured site for the establishment of European schools. In 1880 the town suffered a spectacular disaster when, after heavy rain, a whole side of a mountain collapsed, wiping out a section of the town, though by the time Dudley came there, the great landslide was only a memory. Nainital was largely a European town and the extensive photo archive that exists in the British Library shows grand buildings built in Raj Gothic and Raj Tudor style and bungalows scattered around the hills. Yachts can be seen, white specks on the lake and there are tennis courts and promenades.

Dudley had acquired a camera and made a record of his stay in Nainital. He took pictures of the lake, one of them from the top of Cheena mountain and one of the yacht Zephyr in full sail. But the most interesting pictures were taken of the bazaar with its wooden houses, decorated with balconies and screens with market stalls below, including a sweet stall and a silversmith's shop. Dudley also tried his hand at portraits of Indians. There are the 'coolies' carrying large baskets on their backs, the 'native hairdresser', an Indian photographer, a group of clearly upper class Indian women and a little boy dressed in finery like a prince.

There are also a number of group photos, apparently taken on a trip to Kilberry, a favourite excursion destination about eight miles from Nainital. They portray a typical Edwardian scene – the women in flowery hats, the men with solar topees. In one Dudley sits in the centre with a broad smile, in civilian clothes, sporting a wide tie and still with a head of hair. What is interesting about these pictures is that they are clearly of a mixed party. In one there is a woman of distinctly Anglo-Indian cast of feature and in another there are possibly five Indians or Anglo-Indians in the group. This is remarkable as Nainital is often described as an exclusively European town and the British in India were extremely race conscious and were usually unwilling to mix socially with Indians.

Dudley's Indian photographs also include some of the grand monuments of Delhi, Agra and Fatepur Sikri, the burning ghats at Benares and two photographs of Lucknow but it is not clear from his memoirs when he had the opportunity to visit these places.

It was customary for a large proportion of the English civil population to spend two or three months at some hill station – government officials



Children of the Raj



Nainital sweet shop



Nainital picnic. Dudley in the centre holding a topee



Nainital picnic. Dudley front row second from the right.

mainly at Simla. Receptions, garden parties, picnics and dances helped to pass the time – and since Barker and I changed into mufti, we received a satisfactory number of invitations and ended up by overstaying our leave and spending all our spare cash. By explaining that our return was delayed by flood waters, we escaped with a mild reprimand.

After the monsoon, our battalion was put through a ‘Kitchener’ test which included a twenty mile route march with full accoutrements followed by an extensive manoeuvre and mock battle – a strenuous, but by no means unpleasant experience. I was in those days strong and physically fit and made nothing of the long marches and military exercises. Camp life under canvas was pleasant and there were dangerous and exciting sports to be engaged in during leisure periods. One of these was snake hunting. A party of nine or ten would surround a large rock which, at a word of command we would, with the aid of levers, suddenly overturn. There would, not uncommonly, be one or two large snakes concealed underneath and alert to defend themselves against this unwarranted intrusion. A dangerous and bloody battle then ensued – the corpses being taken back to camp in triumphant procession.

During 1915 the war was progressing with disastrous set-backs in France, Gallipoli and Mesopotamia. Casualties were heavy, particularly amongst the British officers in Indian regiments, and it became necessary to look for replacements from other ranks. Our battalion was required to supply six candidates for the Indian Army reserve of officers, and I was one of those selected.

At the beginning of the First World War many of the British officers in the Indian army were moved to other regiments bound for active service and it was to fill the gaps thus created that Dudley received a temporary commission, dated 7 August 1915, in the Indian Army Reserve of Officers (IAOR), the appointment being officially gazetted at Simla on 20 August 1915.

I was posted to the 54th Sikhs (Frontier Force) battalion then on duty at Fort Lockhart on the north west frontier. The frontier is rugged mountainous and arid with no roads and few mountain tracks. There is little vegetation apart from a few stunted trees. A few villages perched on the summit of hills and each with its own watch tower, testifying to the warlike character of the inhabitants. Constant sporadic warfare went on between the various communities and it was always dangerous to wander far from headquarters without a strong escort.

Fort Lockhart itself was rather like an old Norman fortress with high walls and battlements enclosing an area sufficiently large to accommodate the whole battalion. Sentries constantly paced the walls and at sundown the main gate was closed and guarded. Supplies were brought up from Kohat by camel and mule convoys with strong guards.

The 54th Sikhs were composed of companies of Sikhs, Dogras and Pathans inured to mountain warfare and fine mountaineers. It was an experience to watch a picket occupy a hill top – climbing the rocky slopes at the double with full service kit.

When I joined, the battalion was short of officers, many having been seconded to units in Mesopotamia. The second in command was Major 'Dadda' Woodward, a hard living, hard drinking Irishman – but a fine soldier. The Adjutant, Dennis, was a competent, conventional officer, a good athlete, but intellectually immature. The Company Commander, Sparks, was a massive Yorkshireman with few ideas beyond shooting and fishing. Ruck was a fine linguist, resembling in looks and temperament one of the local tribesmen and Nichols and Heinig resembling heroes of one of Ethel M.Dell's romances. They were, I suppose, a typical group – all good shots, good at games and skilled in the formal parts of their profession – but not material for a higher command. When, on rare occasions, they ventured to discuss world affairs, I found their profound ignorance of the great movement towards social reform, then beginning to take shape, and their inherited prejudices, difficult to tolerate.

The 54th Sikhs was a regiment originally raised in 1846. In 1851 it became part of the Punjab Frontier Force (known as the Piffers) when it was called the 4th Regiment of Sikh Infantry. The Piffers were an elite force which only came under the direct control of the Commander in Chief in India in 1886. It specialized in mountain warfare on the north-western frontier and had fought for the British during the Mutiny. After the Indian Mutiny a large part of the Indian Army was stationed in the north while British regiments garrisoned the main towns of central India. The Sikh regiments were stationed on the North West Frontier and, like all Indian regiments, had Indian NCOs and a parallel system of Indian and British officers. After the Kitchener army reforms of 1903, the regiments were renumbered, the 4th becoming the 54th Sikhs. In 1914 it consisted of four companies of Sikhs, two of Punjab Muslims and one each of Dogras and Pathans.

The system of frontier defence had been radically reorganized after the experience of the 1897-8 Tirah frontier war when British and Indian regiments, untrained in mountain warfare, had suffered badly at the hands

of rebel tribes. Now the defence of the frontier was largely entrusted to men recruited from the mountainous regions of the north, who were specially trained in mountain warfare. Dudley always described the new tactics learned at Fort Lockhart for maintaining peace among the frontier tribes, as “butcher and bolt”, a phrase he often mischievously used when in the company of someone sensitive enough to be shocked. Fort Lockhart, built in 1891, occupied a dramatic position high on the Samana ridge. It was named after Sir William Lockhart who had been the commander in chief of imperial forces in the 1897-8 frontier war. During that war Fort Lockhart, and the neighbouring Fort Gulistan, had been under siege by thousands of tribesmen and a detachment of the 36th Sikhs, cut off in the signal station of Saragahi, had been massacred after a heroic, indeed legendary, last stand.

Dudley was now very definitely in the front line. He was also accepted as part of the close knit group of European officers who commanded the Indian regiments and among his papers he retained two official cards inviting him to dine with the regiment’s officers, one dated 15 September 1915 and the other 16 February 1916.

Of all the men whose names Dudley remembered, it was ‘Dadda Woodward’ who made the most lasting impression. In later life Dudley did not talk a great deal about his war experience but Woodward’s name was often invoked in connection with some anecdote, usually designed to be comically politically incorrect. For example, when I was a lecturer at Exeter University I taught a course which featured the famous Sudanese Mahdi. Mentioning this on one occasion, my father replied, after a few puffs on his pipe, that there had been someone on their troop ship who had claimed to be the ‘Mahdi’, so Dadda Woodward picked him up and threw him into the Red Sea – an anecdote probably entirely fictitious but containing many layers of meaning in illustration of Dudley’s world view.

After a period of training at Fort Lockhart I was transferred to the depot of the 53rd Sikhs at Jullundur. The depot was commanded by Lieutenant Watts, a young officer not yet fully indoctrinated and still prepared to discuss intelligently questions of political economy and technological advances. We had many long and lively debates when I used to dine with him and his wife. Some years after the war, they were both murdered whilst on duty on the frontier.

A few months at the depot gave me an insight into the administrative side of a battalion in active service – the training of recruits, the dispatch of reinforcements to the field and the many intricate matters concerned with supply and transport.

Jullundur was a pleasant station with a social life little affected by the war. I shared a bungalow with two other junior officers, we maintained a stable of chargers and polo ponies and a large retinue of bearers, syces, sweepers and other servants. In the late afternoons and evenings, social life centred in the club where we played tennis, polo and squash, followed after dinner by dancing. There was also a 'drag' hunt which provided excellent practice in riding over rough country and jumping stone walls and nullahs.

Dudley's posting to the 53rd Sikhs was to be his last move and he served with this regiment until the end of the war. The 53rd Sikhs had originally been the 3rd Regiment of Sikh Infantry and, like the 54th, part of the Punjab Frontier Force (the 'Piffers'). The regiment had played a distinguished part in the Tirah war of 1897-8 and it received its designation as 53rd Sikh (Frontier Force) in 1903. It was made up of companies of Dogras, Pathans, Punjab Muslims as well as Sikhs, but all wore the elaborate headdresses which were crowned with a jaunty peak and the badge which was a slung bugle. Unlike his experiences as a private at the Wheeler barracks, Dudley now experienced the good life enjoyed by the officer class and it was during this time that he learnt to speak Urdu, the language of the regiment, for officers were expected to be able to communicate in the language of the men. How well he knew Urdu is uncertain but he listed it as one of the languages of which he had a working knowledge when recruited into SOE in the Second World War.

One of the few of Dudley's letters to have survived was written to his father from Jullundur on 23 March 1916, just before he left for Mesopotamia and supplements the autobiography in a number of respects.

"My dearest Father, This will be my last letter before I leave India as I am sailing with a draft from Karachi on March 25th. I shall go from Karachi to Basra (about 5 days journey) and from there to join my regiment, another 5 days up the river. I hope to be with the force that relieves Gen Townshend at Kut el Amara. My baggage when collected is a fearsome sight. Tents, bedding, cooking utensils, camp furniture and saddlery form only part of it. I have had some interesting experiences at Jullundur. I have been prosecutor in one Court Martial and member of

another. Both were held on deserters. There is much pomp and circumstance attached to them. When I was in the Territorials my only fear was of being tried by one a fate which nearly befell me on one or two occasions....”

The two years Dudley spent in India in his early twenties made a deep impression. Although he did not return to India for nearly fifty years it remained in his mind a kind of second home, the place where he had experienced adventure, comradeship and a tough physical life at an age when he was young and fit and able to enjoy these things to the full. And his photograph album, with its pictures of the craftsmen, the bazaars, women and children, reflects the rich life of India and show how interested he was in the life of the people. When he became embedded in the Chemical Engineering Department of Imperial College he encouraged the recruitment of Indian students and maintained a close interest in the progress of Chemical Engineering in India in the post-independence period.

Mesopotamia

The 53rd Sikhs had been sent to Egypt early in the war and in December 1915 had been transferred to Mesopotamia where Dudley joined them along with other replacement officers in the summer of 1916. From the time of his arrival in Mesopotamia he began to keep papers, pamphlets, maps and notebooks and in the end these formed an interesting, if somewhat random, archive. How he managed to retain this material on campaign is a mystery. Presumably it must have accompanied him as part of his officer's baggage. This archive supplements the autobiography and because of the immediate and urgent nature of some of the content, provides a rich source for the Mesopotamian and Palestine campaigns.

In due course I was detailed to join the battalion which was then in the front line at Sanniyat in Mesopotamia. Having escorted a draft of half trained hillmen to Bombay and spent a night at the Byculla club. I, in company with a number of other officers and various detachments of O.R.'s, embarked on a comfortable P&O liner for Basra.

Escorting 'half trained recruits' was no light task and its potential hazards are depicted by Kipling in one of the tales in his *Soldiers Three*

collection. Staying in the Byculla Club, however, was remembered by Dudley as the culmination of an Indian career which had begun only two years before when he was a mere volunteer private in the East Surreys. The Byculla Club was a grand and palatial building in central Bombay built in imperial classical style. Visiting royalty, including the Prince of Wales, had stayed there, and for someone to be put up at this club was a sure sign of acceptance by the establishment of the Raj.

When Dudley reached Mesopotamia in 1916 the war had become an exhausting stalemate. The original decision to send an expeditionary force to secure the Persian oil fields had been made early in October 1914 and, after Turkey and Britain found themselves at war, Force D, as it was called, was diverted to seize control of Basra, the only Turkish port on the Gulf. This operation had been entrusted to the Indian Army and was directed by the Commander in Chief in India and the India Office. From the start the expedition was grossly mishandled and by the time Dudley arrived in 1916 a Committee of Inquiry had been set up in London to investigate the disastrous conduct of the campaign.

Basra had been captured with ease on 22 November 1914 and the Turkish garrison fled up river. The initial objective having been achieved the military planners in India began to see other objectives. Some thought that impressing the Muslim populations of the Middle East and detaching them from loyalty to the Turks was of crucial importance, while others, with their eyes on the North West Frontier in India, feared that Turkey would stir up trouble for them among the peoples of Afghanistan. Others yet again began to dream of extending the Raj into the valleys of the Tigris and Euphrates and planting Indian settlers on irrigated land along the rivers. Meanwhile in London the wider strategy of the war was taking the form of attacks on the Turks in the Dardanelles and along the Suez Canal. The war in Mesopotamia, it was hoped, would divert Turkish resources from these other fronts. All this thinking eventually became focused on the ambition to take Baghdad, the second city of Islam, lying temptingly less than 300 miles up river from Basra.

During 1915 General Nixon, the commander in Mesopotamia, assembled a force under the command of the flamboyant Charles Townshend. At the end of the rains in April 1915 Townshend advanced against the weak Turkish units along the Tigris and won a series of deceptively easy victories. His army took key strategic points, each one luring the army on to the next vantage point. Kut el Amara on a peninsula of the left bank of

he Tigris was taken with hardly a shot being fired on 1 October and Townshend, in spite of having outrun his supply lines and having only rudimentary medical services and no reserves, now pushed on towards Baghdad. In a three day battle at Ctesiphon, only 22 miles short of his objective, Townshend's army was checked and he had no option but to retire. The fateful decision was now made to fall back on Kut and to await reinforcements and supplies.

The rainy season set in and Townshend was cut off. For five months his army held out while panic stricken strategists in London and Delhi, already facing the disaster of the Gallipoli expedition, braced themselves to take vital decisions about the army trapped in Kut. Could Britain risk a second disaster at the hands of the despised Turks? What would the result be for Britain's reputation among the Arabs, Afghans and Indian Muslims? Kut had to be relieved at all costs and the imperial war machine slowly got itself into gear to send the reinforcements and war material needed.

But Kut could not wait for these. Between January and April 1916, as rain turned lower Mesopotamia into one vast lake and the Tigris overflowed its banks, three piecemeal attempts were made to relieve Kut. All failed amid mounting losses and administrative chaos. In all the attempts to relieve Kut cost 40,000 casualties. On 29 April 1916 Townshend surrendered. The Turks took ten thousand prisoners, two thirds of them Indians. The fall of Kut was a disaster for British arms greater even than Gallipoli and at that time almost without parallel in British military history. The immediate reaction was for the conduct of the war to be taken over by the General Staff in London, for a new commander, General Lake, to be appointed and for a new strategy based simply on defending Basra to be adopted.

After the failure to relieve Kut the Indian Army in Mesopotamia was in very poor shape. Morale was low and there was a dangerously high level of desertion. Many of the Indian Army units had been recruited in the north of India and had been trained in mountain warfare, which hardly fitted them for battle in the swamps and deserts around the Tigris. There was an acute shortage of officers as those with experience were lost in action or withdrawn for service in France. In Dudley's archive there is a copy of a memorandum dated 18 September 1916 issued by the HQ of the 7th Division of which the 53rd Sikhs formed a part. "It has come to knowledge that Indian soldiers have been convicted of throwing away

some of their rations with the object of rendering themselves sick, and so getting sent back to India. Officers commanding Indian units must impress on all their officers that the latter must keep a careful watch on their men and see that they eat the full ration issued to them.” Another memorandum sent to the 7th Division, dated 24 September 1916, describes another symptom of low morale. “A case has recently occurred in the Corps where a Sepoy of an Indian Battalion was tried by Court Martial for simulating scurvy by applying an irritant to his gums. The prisoner was found guilty on the clearest proof, all tendered by medical witnesses, and sentenced to 10 years rigorous imprisonment. As scurvy has been very prevalent, the exposure of this case and predisposition to scurvy which some men (who have been severely punished) strive to attain by starving themselves at once raises the suspicion that similar cases may have occurred without being detected.” The corps was urged to take “necessary measures to defeat these malingerers”.

Low morale and lack of discipline, was not, apparently, confined to the Indian troops. Another memorandum from HQ dated 14 November 1916 noted that “there is a very large number of officers in the Division, who take no notice of their seniors when passing them on the roads, and make no attempt to salute. They apparently do not know badges of rank, not even those of General Officers.” The memo goes on, “slackness in these matters is exceedingly bad for discipline.”

Meanwhile the Committee of Inquiry in London set about investigating what had gone wrong.

What had gone wrong was the appalling climate of Iraq and the administrative failure which allowed the army to advance without adequate supplies or the necessary infrastructure to maintain the campaign. As Colonel R. Evans wrote in his often reprinted book, *A Brief Outline of the Campaign in Mesopotamia*, “it was not until a large military force had been thrust far into the country that the truth of the Arab proverb: ‘When Allah had made hell he found it was not bad enough: so he made Iraq – and added flies’ was brought home.” He went on to describe the country, “one flat plain of alluvial clay.... Between the capital [Baghdad] and the sea lies a vast area of featureless desert, of which the monotony is relieved only by the great rivers and the marshes into which they ‘spill’ when they are flooded by the melting snows at their far off mountain sources.... When dry, the surface of the land is passable by all arms, excepting where deep irrigation channels hinder the

passage of wheels; but a few hours of rain turn it into a quagmire of greasy mud.... In the flood season, huge areas of desert are converted into stretches of open water or into impassable morasses.”

The climate varied from intense heat between May and October when temperatures could reach 130° in the shade to December and March when cold set in and “a biting wind drives a cold rain across the desert”. The extremes of this climate were felt with particular severity by the Indian troops. “If the climate of Iraq had little to recommend it, hygienic conditions had still less. Plague, smallpox, malaria, sandfly fever, dysentery, and Bagdad boils... were endemic; cholera, typhus, scurvy, and heat-stroke were epidemic. Sickness was spread by the insects – mosquitoes, sandflies and (until the hot weather killed them) incredible numbers of flies.”

It was into this country that the Indian army had marched, largely unawares, in the autumn of 1914. It had no modern transport and relied on animal haulage; there were no roads or railways; Basra had no port facilities; there were no warehouses and no river transport except locally made wooden sailing craft. “In the town itself, labour was scarce, the climate was bad, and sanitary conditions were deplorable.” Dudley summed this up laconically and with typical understatement when he wrote *Basra in the early days of the war had few amenities*. In his novel about the Mesopotamian campaign entitled *These Men Thy Friends*, Edward Thompson commented, “As a preparation for the Mesopotamian War, residence in Basra was admirable; everyone was unfeignedly glad to get to the Front.... There can be no higher testimony to its value as a training ground.” The government of India did a little but not nearly enough to provide an infrastructure for the army and when Townshend set off on his whirlwind campaign which took him up the Tigris almost to Baghdad there was no means adequately to supply his troops or to cope with the casualties who died in appalling conditions, untended in the swamps or on overcrowded and insanitary river boats.

Writing fifty years after the event Dudley downplayed the full horrors of this war, remembering it largely as a great adventure for a young man. *The weather was insufferably hot and the landing at Basra was like entering an oven. In this extreme heat there is little colour either on land or at sea. The sky has an ominous grey look with tints of yellow, the sea is dull grey and on land there is a shimmering mirage which blurs the horizon and prevents the eye focusing on any distant object.*

Colonel Evans described the mirage: “In the open desert, troops would appear to advance, to recede, to become invisible; a small bush would turn into a platoon of infantry; a few sheep would become a squadron of cavalry; at a distance of a thousand yards quite large bodies of troops might be invisible, while at three or four hundred yards it was not always possible to distinguish objects, or even to be sure if an object existed”.

Basra in the early days of the war had few amenities. It lay on marshy ground and we were encamped in tents erected amongst the palm groves. The swamps were a breeding ground for mosquitoes, and in the damp heat we all contracted ‘prickly heat’. The food was ill adapted to the tropics and what with fever, constant itching and mental frustration, we were a melancholy company. Here were situated the supply depots and transit camps for troops proceeding to the front or going on leave. There were numerous transports in the river whilst communications with the front were almost entirely by way of river steamers, each towing one or more barges. As there was an acute shortage of river craft, reinforcements had commonly to wait several weeks before obtaining a passage. To fill in the time I was given command of a detachment detailed to guard the only airfield in the district – a flat stretch of land on the opposite bank of the river. Here a few biplanes carried out daily reconnaissances over the desert and I could usually beg a flight when not on duty. These primitive machines had open cock pits and passengers sat amongst wires and struts fully exposed to the elements. To relieve the monotony, we often went jackal hunting, flying a few feet above the desert and discharging our revolvers at the unfortunate beasts. I cannot recall much success.

The medical officer at the air-field was a sprightly young doctor, Carey-Evans, who later married one of Lloyd-George’s daughters. In the evenings he and I used to hire a native craft and either ‘gin-crawl’ around the fleet of transports, or explore the numerous creeks which penetrated inland through the palm groves. We would occasionally land at some Arab café to drink coffee laced with a lethal arach, and watch the native dances. These excursions were not without an element of risk since the company frequently engaged in fierce brawls, and we as foreigners, were forced to take to our heels, followed by an excited crowd thirsting for blood.

Sir Thomas Carey-Evans married the prime minister David Lloyd-George’s daughter Olwen in June 1917, only a year after the meetings described by Dudley. He rose to

the rank of major and served as surgeon to the Marquis of Reading who was viceroy of India from 1921 to 1926. He was later Director of Hammersmith Hospital and died in 1947.

When Dudley arrived in 1916 there were few aircraft in operation in Mesopotamia and Turkish aircraft, often flown by German pilots, dominated the air space. It was not till the autumn of 1916 that 24 new aircraft arrived and the British established air superiority.

After a few weeks on duty I was recalled to proceed up-river with a few other officers and a quantity of stores and reinforcements. The old paddle-steamers which sailed between Basra and the front had a heavily loaded barge made fast on either side, and seldom achieved more than a few knots against a strong current. The Tigris in its upper reaches follows a tortuous course with frequent sharp bends and numerous sand banks. The surrounding country is flat and featureless, marshy in the rainy season and dusty for the rest of the year. Occasionally one sees a group of black goat's hair tents occupied by nomadic Arabs, and more rarely still, a mud built village. It was intensely hot on board and during the heat of the day we lay under awnings reading or sleeping. At night, swarms of mosquitoes came aboard and worst still, sand flies which were able to penetrate mosquito nets and make sleep almost impossible. The only remedy then available was to rub the face, neck and arms with kerosene oil.

Dudley says he proceeded up river at the beginning of the hot season which would have been in May or early June. By the time he wrote his memoirs time had clearly softened some his memories. Take for example this description of the problems facing the army from Charles Townshend's book *When God Made Hell*. "Heat was crushing, but the flies were worse. 'To describe them is to hazard one's reputation for truth'. They settled in clouds on everything: like many others, Candler found himself watching bodies of troops who appeared to be wearing chain mail. 'I had walked my horse beside them some minutes before I discovered that it was the steely blue metallic mesh of flies.' At night flies were replaced by mosquitoes and sandflies, a more insidious plague. A net fine enough to keep out sandflies was suffocating, and they 'kept one awake at night with a hose of thin acid playing on one's face.'..."



Aircraft in Mesopotamia from Dudley's album



Steamers on the Tigris from Dudley's album

Edward Thompson described the “invisible crawling feet that leave you feeling unclean, as if every line of your body had been scraped over with sand sticking to a dung-fork. They’ve red-hot wings and feet; and their claws – don’t tell me they haven’t claws – are tipped with sulphur from the everlasting fires.” The only crumb of comfort in May 1916 was that, as an old campaigner told Candler, ““they’ll die off when it gets really hot’. How hot was that? ‘Oh, about 112 degrees in one’s tent. Of course it goes up to anything – 130 degrees, or more.’”

Day followed day in a hot monotony with occasional calls at riverside depots. Sand storms added to our discomfort and we were not displeased when eventually we reached Shuk Saad, the corps headquarters and advanced base.

Private Ned Roe went up to Sheikh Saad at about the same time as Dudley and recorded “terrific heat accompanied by a Sirocco-like wind makes us feel as if we were on a floating furnace”. He recorded five funerals a day and daily sand storms.

Since the fall of Kut earlier in the year our forward troops had held a line of trenches at Sanniyat some fifteen miles from headquarters and with one flank on the left bank of the Tigris and the other on the Suwackita [Suwaikiya] marshes. Facing them a few hundred yards away was the Turkish front line strongly held with good artillery support.

The Turkish lines at Sannaiyat on the left bank of the Tigris were a formidable obstacle against which the ill-organised expeditions to relieve Kut had already been unsuccessfully launched with huge loss of life.

The morale of our fighting troops was then at its lowest ebb. The loss of Kut, the intense heat, the shortage of provisions and the prevalence of fever, scurvy, cholera and jaundice, all tended to create despondency and a feeling of inferiority. Even behind the front lines, conditions were far from comfortable. Our line of communication was constantly threatened by marauding Arabs or bombs of the Turkish Air Force, which was well equipped with Fokker planes. In these regions the hot weather extends from late April to the beginning of September. The day temperatures fluctuate from 110 to 120 degrees but are normally tempered by the hot shamal wind blowing from the north west. In 1916, however, it made no appearance till July, and there were constant dust storms which temporarily blotted out the sun and covered everything with a layer of

fine sand. Casualties due to sickness rose to an average of 11,000 a month, medical supplies were short and, due to lack of transport, the evacuation of the sick was hindered.

I reached Shuk Saad at the beginning of the hot weather. The 53rd [Sikhs] were then in the front line and were commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Grattan. They formed part of the 28th Infantry brigade (under Brigadier General C.H. Davis) in the 7th Indian Division (under Major General V.B.Fane). Davis had commanded the 53rd Sikhs and was a typical Piffer officer – a fine polo player and a delightful companion, but by no means a great military strategist. General Fane was a whiskey soaked old soldier very much the worse for wear, lazy and lacking in initiative. No one had much confidence in him, but fortunately he had some competent staff officers who kept him out of trouble.

Together with the 19th and 21st Infantry brigades, the 28th formed the 1st Army Corps which was to bear the brunt of the fighting at Sannaiyat.

According to *The Historical Records of the 3rd Sikhs 1847-1930*, Dudley officially joined the regiment on 18 August 1916. Almost at once he makes an appearance in the official record, being appointed a member of a Board of Officers “to assess the amount of compensation to be paid to Lieutenant-Colonel H.G.Melville... for the loss of his charger” and shortly afterwards he was promoted to the acting rank of Captain when he took over command of a company early in August. The following month he took up other duties.

Owing to sickness, there was a shortage of British officers in the Division and on reporting for duty I was attached to Divisional headquarters as Assistant Provost Marshal. It was not a very onerous position but it gave me a good deal of freedom, some fine horses to ride and close contact with all that was going on at Headquarters and at the front line.

In the British Army the Provost Marshal commands the Military Police and the Assistant Provost Marshals deputise for him. The duties of the Military Police consist of general police duties but on active service these may include difficult issues relating to discipline and conduct in the face of the enemy. These can involve carrying out punishments in the field. Dudley’s appointment was dated 3 September and appeared in the printed Force Routine Orders dated 20 September 1916 where he is referred to as ‘2nd-Lieutenant D.M.Hewitt [sic] IARO’. While APM he retained his temporary rank of captain.

Among the souvenirs of the campaign which Dudley kept was a cat o'nine tails. It looks brand new and unused – perhaps it was just a symbol of authority. Among his private papers are two notes – not in his hand - scrawled in pencil which clearly relate to his duties as APM. One reads - “7th Division have wired that sepoy ALLAH DITTA has been sentenced to death and I have arranged in direct communication with APM 7th Division to take over this man and place him in the custody of your regimental quarter guard and also arrange a firing party to carry out the sentence between 5am and 7am on 16 October. APM will select time and site for execution”. Dudley kept these notes – perhaps because they were the only occasion he was called on to act in this way.

It was at that time that I met Lawrence of Arabia, who then held some anomalous position in intelligence and lived on a launch on the river. He was constantly in trouble with the military pundits for bringing Arabs into our lines and was blamed for much of the thieving of arms and stores that went on. I spent many pleasant evenings in his launch and learned much from him of the habits and customs of the nomadic desert tribes which roamed the country between Arabia and the Tigris.

T.E.Lawrence had been sent from Cairo to Mesopotamia in April to try to encourage Arab resistance to the Turks during the final stages of the siege of Kut. After the fall of the town and the surrender of the British army, he stayed on to advise the government. His report emphasised that Britain could make much better use of Arab hostility towards the Turks. Lawrence was very hostile to the influence of the Indian civil servants and soldiers and his pro-Arab sentiments led him to romantic and rather unrealistic conclusions about the way of life and customs of what he considered to be the true desert Arabs. As Dudley pointed out, this caused considerable suspicion in the minds of the British authorities.



Going up the line on the narrow gauge railway



On campaign

In spite of the climate, I kept very fit and enjoyed life. From time to time I would take a body of my M.P.s for a desert ride, hoping to round up some marauding Arabs. In the evening we would go sand-grouse shooting on the river bank – and there was good fishing – the Tigris being noted for a gigantic species of barbell. I would also go up into the front line and have an enjoyable hour or so sniping or firing off trench mortars. All in all an active and exciting life.

As autumn approached, conditions slowly improved, supplies became more abundant, reinforcements were coming up in large numbers, and it was evident that preparations were afoot for some decisive action. General Maude assumed command of the army in August and at once began to build up the morale of the troops. Training was resumed, raids on Turkish outposts were carried out with increasing frequency and a number of modern planes enabled us to regain air superiority.

I used on occasion, to go up as an observer; by comparison with today, the armament of the planes was primitive, a machine gun and a basket full of small bombs or hand grenades. A favourite target used to be the Turkish transport lines. A few bombs tossed among the tethered mules and camels produced indescribable chaos. Then the Turkish fighters would appear and we had to bolt for home with a comforting feeling of work well done.

General Stanley Maude had fought on the Western Front and at Gallipoli and was appointed at the end of July to succeed General Lake in command of British forces in Mesopotamia. His highly successful campaign, which effectively secured all of Iraq for Britain, was only ended in November 1917 when he died suddenly from cholera. When Maude took over command in August 1916 a reform of the Indian Army had already begun with the supply of officers being treated as the priority. Maude, however, was told he would not get reinforcements from Britain and would have to rely on his Indian troops. Raising their morale became all important and the Indian government began now to provide the army with the much needed supplies and labour. Maude himself learned Hindustani and gave his personal attention to improving relations between the British high command and the Indian battalions. However, he did not risk a new offensive until he had built up a massive superiority in men and guns, until he had air superiority and until the railway he was building was able to supply the front line. He also assembled a large corps of motor transport in the form of Ford vans.

The capture of Baghdad

Maude's offensive that began in December 1916 was designed to force the Turkish defences on both sides of the Tigris, including the formidable Sannaiyat trenches which had been built in six lines across the narrow passage from the left bank of the river to the Suwaikiya marshes. Two assaults on the Sannaiyat lines had already failed and Maude's strategy was now to drive the Turks from their positions on the right bank and cross the Tigris by a bridge of boats upstream of Kut and in the rear of Sannaiyat. This was achieved with some confusion and considerable loss of life between the 22 to 24 February enabling the troops facing Sannaiyat, which included the 53rd Sikhs, finally to storm the lines. By the end of the 24 February the Turks had abandoned their trenches and were in full retreat, harassed by naval gunboats on the river. Kut was reoccupied by the navy without a shot being fired.

During January and early February 1917 we began a series of attacks on enemy positions on the right bank and succeeded in clearing it of all serious resistance. On the left bank, however, the Sannaiyat position still held. The weather was unsettled with heavy rain which turned the ground into a quagmire. Several raids were repulsed with heavy losses, and there was an uneasy pause whilst preparations were made for a full scale attack on the whole front line.

Edmund Candler in his book *The Long March to Baghdad* describes one of these raids. "On the night of the 8th and 9th [February] demonstrations had been made on all fronts to prevent the Turks reinforcing the garrison of Mohammed Abdul Hassan. The enemy's position on the Hai [on the right banks of the Tigris] was heavily bombarded; the cavalry were dispatched on a raid to Baghailah; while at Sannaiyat four raiding parties entered the Turkish trenches.... the action at Sannaiyat was a singularly bloody and desperate affair. Three of the raiding parties were drawn from the 28th Brigade. The Leicesters, the 53rd Sikhs and the 56th rifles; each battalion supplied two officers and thirty men...all the officers were lost, killed or missing and a large proportion of the rank and file. Whether the loss was made good in the diversion I will not presume to judge."

Presumably Dudley was not one of the officers in the raiding parties. There is, however, a description of one of these raids which Dudley copied into his field notebook from the Regimental War Diary. "Feb 17th 1st attack Sannaiyat. Rained night of 16/17 and morning of 17th but cleared

in afternoon. The ground was in a terrible condition, nearly a foot deep in sticky mud. Attack commenced in afternoon and Gurkhas and Black Watch reached enemy front line – but rifles jammed owing to the mud – the Turks regularly counter attacked and after Gurkhas had held on until evening they were ordered to retire. About 120 prisoners were sent in – some badly wounded”

On February 22nd, after a heavy bombardment, the advance began, the 53rd Sikhs occupying the Turkish first and second lines to their immediate front with only small casualties. I shall not attempt to describe the operations in detail as, in common with most battalion officers, I saw only a limited part of the main battle. By nightfall on the 23rd we had occupied the Turkish 4th line.

Candler describes the fighting on 22 February: “the 28th Brigade went in on the right under cover of a similar bombardment; they had come in for heavy artillery fire all morning, and the 51st Sikhs lost eighty men in the trenches before the advance. The remainder of the day was spent in digging in and joining up, no easy matter in this undulating, warren-like confusion of pits and mounds. Between 4 and 5pm the battalion was hard pressed, but the Leicesters and two platoons of the 53rd Sikhs came up in support, and with these reinforcements it held its own. By evening we had dug a respectable trench, and at night we put up wire across the new front”.

The scene in no-mans land and the trenches was one of great confusion. Pockets of resistance were being bombed out – the Turkish artillery was still active – and no-man’s land was a mass of twisted barbed wire with the dead lying about in all directions. There was nothing to offend the eye. The bodies covered with a thick coating of sand looked like overturned terra cotta statues – the faces without expression and the attitudes restful. The futility of war did, however, for the first time impress itself on my mind. Here were these Turkish peasants dragged from their farms to take part in a war which could in no way benefit them, knowing indeed nothing of the causes and aims of their leaders, and with no other desire than that of finishing the business and returning home in time for the harvest.

Sporadic fighting went on until the 25th when the 5th and 6th lines were occupied and it was evident that the main battle had been won and that the Turkish forces were in full retreat. It is a favourite military axiom

that a break-through should be followed by a vigorous pursuit. This in turn invokes a rapid organising of supply lines to keep pace with the advance, and adequate artillery support to overcome holding tactics by the rear guard.

The 53rd had been constantly engaged from the beginning of the battle, with little rest at night and a great deal of trench digging both night and day. It had, however, a great tradition to maintain, and almost blind with fatigue we pushed on to Shukh Saad [Sheikh Jaad] where we had to halt for a time for the supply lines to be organised. It is difficult to give a picture of the discomforts we suffered during this period. There was little water either for washing or drinking – the lack of whiskey at times threatened to halt the advancement. We were soaked with perspiration during the day and clouds of flies settled on us until our uniforms looked almost black.

Maude was determined that the army should push on to Baghdad before the Turks could be reinforced, but this involved the troops advancing with virtually no supplies, eking out an existence with handfuls of biscuit and tea, if they were lucky. The mules were so hungry they tried to eat each other's tails. Edmund Candler describes the confusion of the advance and the still greater confusion of the Turkish retreat. "The next morning we found the Turkish dead on the road. There was every sign of panic and rout – bullocks still alive and unyoked entangled in the traces of a trench motor carriage, broken wheels, cast equipment, overturned limbers, hundreds of live shells of various calibres scattered over the country for miles.... Every bend of the road told its tale of confusion and flight. Here a wrecked field post-office with Turkish money orders circling round in the wind; there a brand new Mercedes motor car held up for want of petrol; cart-loads of small arm ammunition. Grenades, a pump, well-drilling apparatus, hats, boots oil drums..."

We had lost a number of BOs [British Officers] during the battle and I now found myself commanding a company with two subalterns to assist me. One of these was A. Cummings who distinguished himself in the 1939 war, earning the VC at Singapore.

One of the most annoying features of the early days following the breakthrough was the constant orders and counter-orders which came through from Brigade, Divisional and Corps headquarters. At one moment we would be ordered to entrench ourselves – hard and irksome work in the heat and dust – and before we had finished a second order to advance a mile or so would be given. This kind of confusion persisted

throughout the campaign until we became accustomed to it and developed a philosophic approach – the other ranks expressed this by a number of ribald songs, one of which had the refrain “We won’t be buggered about” and was sung with great gusto.

The words of this soldier’s lyric were:

"We won't, we won't,

We won't be buggered about,

We absolutely bloody refuse

To be buggered about unless we choose

We won't, we won't, We won't be buggered about."

Sanniyat was the first time I had come under heavy fire, but in the heat of battle, the general confusion and rapid action, one lost sight of the hazards – the buzzing rifle bullets, the rattle of machine gun fire and the tramp of exploding shells merely orchestrated the general confusion. There was one phenomenon I always found disconcerting during an advance over open ground – one could see the flash of the Turkish guns followed a second or two later by the explosion of the shells somewhere in our vicinity, and then the sound, like that of an express train, of the shells traveling towards us. There was tendency to duck although we well knew it was far too late.

The main Turkish resistance having now broken, we began the long march on Baghdad. I suppose we averaged about ten to fifteen miles a day, clinging to the river bank and camping each night. Our only maps were signed Lieutenant H. Kitchener and were at least forty years old; they usually consisted of a blank sheet with a single wriggly line representing the river. There were no villages, no trees and no hills. Marsh Arabs lurked on our flanks, ready to cut off any stragglers or take advantage of any unguarded convoy. Now and then a Turkish rearguard would fight a delaying action but invariably decamped over-night. One night we camped in the shadow of the famous Ctesiphon arch and on one morning the army halted for half-an-hour whilst I landed an outsize barbel.

Herbert Kitchener, the future Lord Kitchener of Khartoum, was an officer in the Royal Engineers and an expert in surveying. Between 1874 and 1877 he had conducted a detailed survey of Palestine and it must have been as a by-product of this that the maps of Mesopotamia were produced, though clearly no detailed survey was carried out.

Ctesiphon, twenty-two miles downstream from Baghdad on the left bank of the Tigris, had been the Parthian capital of Mesopotamia and featured a massive ruined arch which had been part of the palace. Ctesiphon had marked the furthest of extent of Townshend's advance on Baghdad in 1915 before he turned back to Kut. In 1917 the Turks did not attempt to defend it but briefly held a line on the Diyala river until outflanked by Maude's advance. The initial breakthrough at Sannaiyat and the pursuit of the Turks up the left bank of the Tigris took place between 24 and 28 February. There was then a pause and the final march on Baghdad, described by Dudley, lasted from 5 March to the final capture of the city on 11 March.

As we converged on Baghdad the Turkish resistance stiffened and our advance slowed down. No one on the front line knew what was going on. We scratched about in the sand amidst a hail of bullets digging primitive fox holes. There was a vigorous exchange of artillery fire and an occasional vicious burst of shrapnel. About this time we were issued with 'tin' hats – far too hot to wear continuously but supposedly to be worn in action. The very first time I wore mine I was hit with a spent shrapnel bullet which knocked me flat but did no other harm.

Dudley's copy of the regimental diary describes the final advance on Baghdad. "March 10/11 Rgt sent to support 21st Bde who have orders to advance on Baghdad. Left Bde Hd Qrs about 18.00 hrs and in a blinding dust storm hunted for 21st Bde. Norry the GOC met us about 19.00 hrs and shewed us camping ground. Had dinner in storm and were shelled by enemy without any casualties. Advanced at midnight and without opposition reached Baghdad Railway Station about 11.00".

Eventually the Turks were outflanked and retired beyond Baghdad which we then occupied without further resistance. General Maude was very concerned that there should be no looting or raping of the civilian population and I was again appointed Assistant Provost Martial with the strictest orders to preserve peace in the bazaars. In the event, however,

there was little trouble. The inhabitants were pleased to see us and soon established friendly relations with the troops. My headquarters were in a fine villa on the banks of the river. It had a flat roof on which we sat in the cool of the evening watching the native craft going about their business, whilst the moon rose above groves of palms and the minarets of numerous mosques.

Safely billeted in his villa by the river, Dudley at last had time to write home. The letter, dated 18 March, was written in pencil on pages torn from a notepad.

“My dear Dad,

This is the first opportunity I have had of writing since early in February. You will have seen in the papers that we have at last reached Bagdad but they won't give you any idea of the strenuous times we have had. My regiment lost six out of seven officers on the first day at Sanniayat. I applied and was allowed to rejoin at once. Since then we have been in three engagements but have not lost very heavily. The march to Bagdad from Sanniayat was about 100 miles over an awful line of desert. On two occasions we marched all night and had to fight the whole of the next day. Fortunately the weather has been splendid, very cold at night but cool in the day time. I have enjoyed myself very much on the whole and would not have missed it for anything. I got off very lightly in the fighting getting one splinter in the knee in one show and a piece of shrapnel in the ankle in another; neither of them in the very least serious. It has been absolutely impossible to write as there no means of posting a letter. I will write much more fully late but in the meantime do not be anxious.

Give my love to all at home

Your affectionate son

Dudley”

Baghdad had indeed been occupied without any fighting, the Turkish army having withdrawn by train before any British units arrived. But looting there was and one of the first actions of the British authorities was the erection of a gallows from which to hang looters. Meanwhile, the British army commandeered Turkish buildings and revelled in the food available from the well stocked bazaars. The famous picture of British cavalry entering Baghdad, so often reproduced as an image of victory, was in fact staged for the photographers days after the real entry had taken place. The 28th Brigade had not been one of the units to enter

Baghdad and Dudley had once again been detached from his regiment for 'police' duties in the newly occupied city.

The country around Baghdad is flat and arid although the remains of old irrigation channels suggest that it was once fertile and extensively populated. My duties as APM gave me plenty of leisure and there was endless pleasure in watching life in the bazaars – the constant bargaining, the sudden fierce quarrels – drinking of coffee. Arabs fresh from the desert would be engaged in some kind of intrigue, Armenians were coining money by many nefarious forms of commerce, children their faces often covered in flies, played happily in the garbage – and the usual collection of beggars all combined to complete a picture not uncommon in the East, but most strange to anyone fresh from the West.

Ned Roe of the South Lancashires, who advanced more or less at the same time as Dudley, recorded in his diary that he had been sold two fake bottles of Black and White whiskey by some Armenians to celebrate St Patrick's Day!

Although the Turks had evacuated Baghdad, they continued to hold positions of some strength north of the city. The rail head of the line feeding Baghdad from the north was at Samarra and during their retreat, the Turks had taken all the locomotives and much of the rolling stock to this city. It was necessary, therefore, to attempt to dislodge them and occupy the railhead.

We were by no means pleased at the prospect of further fighting in the flat country leading to Samarra. The heavy casualties at Sanniyat and during the advance on Baghdad, had weakened our strength and the hot weather was approaching with its high winds and dust storms.

The 53rd had only two regular officers – the Colonel (Grattan) and Major Adams. Amongst the subalterns were Cummings, Scarfe, Blewitt and Culverwell. We had, however, a number of veteran Indian officers, inured to the hard conditions of frontier warfare, and a tower of strength in a crisis. The Indians also fared much better than the B.O.s in that their cooks seemed able to prepare tasty curries from rice and a few handfuls of herbs flavoured with red peppers. We, on the other hand, had a monotonous diet of tinned biscuits and beef washed down with strong tea.

The 28th Brigade consisted of three Indian battalions (51st, 53rd and 56th Sikhs) and one British Battalion, the 2nd Leicestershire. We had been together throughout the campaign and were a happy family, visiting

each others messes and sharing the last bottle when whisky supplies ran short. The Indians did not, however, fraternize with the tommies; and it was noticeable that on arriving at camp after a hard days march, the Indians all went down to the river to wash whilst the tommies played football or lounged in their tents.

The Capture of Balad Station

Towards the middle of April our advance along the railway line began and we were constantly under fire from advance guard of the Turkish forces. The first serious engagement was our attack and capture of Beled station. The 53rd were the spearhead of the advance and came under heavy fire from entrenched positions on either side of the railway line. E.J.Thomson, a Presbyterian padre attached to the Leicestershires and known as the 'pestilential priest', has written an account of this and other actions up to Samarra in his book 'Beyond Baghdad with the Leicestershires'.

On 28 March Dudley was able to pencil another brief note home.

"My dear Father, I have only the opportunity of writing a few lines now. I am quite fit again and am in camp many miles beyond Bagdad. I have received no letters from anyone since Feb 10th Give my love to mother and everyone at home. I will write again when I have the opportunity. Your affectionate son,
Dudley."

Baghdad had been occupied on 11 March and the capture of Balad station occurred on 8 April (Easter Day), so Dudley's tour of duty as APM had been only about three weeks before he rejoined his regiment. The 53rd Sikhs had taken a prominent part in the final battle to storm the Sannaiyat lines and in the action to capture the station at Balad their role was singled out for mention in the official history of the war.

" At 5am, on the 8th April (Easter Day), a detachment from General Fane's column, under command of General Davies, moved forward from Sumaika to occupy Balad station.... The 53rd Sikhs in advanced guard came under hostile gun fire when about 5,000 yards from Balad station, immediately south of which the enemy was holding an extended line of interrupted trenches astride the railway, his right being covered by the Dujail canal, a considerable obstacle full of water which ran roughly

parallel to the railway at an average distance from it of three quarters of a mile. On each side of the railway the country was flat and open with a few small irrigation cuts; but half a mile east of the railway and roughly parallel to it lay a strip of broken and undulating ground. After a pause for reconnaissance ... the 53rd advanced on the east of the railway, with a company on the right flank moving along the strip of broken ground.... As the 53rd ... approached the hostile trench line, the whole of the 53rd line was gradually checked by rifle and machine gun fire, the company on the right being faced by a low hill from which the enemy enfiladed the direct advance on the railway station.... The 51st [Sikhs], making skilful use of the broken ground – an advantage to which they were unaccustomed in Mesopotamia – pushed forward with the effective support of our artillery... and with the right company of the 53rd, assaulted and captured the low hill which had hitherto stopped the latter, taking twenty-six prisoners. Taking advantage of this breach in the enemy's line, the 51st and the right company of the 53rd pushed forward vigorously, with the result that the enemy began a general retirement. The troops on his left got away through the broken ground, but that portion of his line in front of the railway station, being without communication trenches, was generally held by the fire of the 53rd and Leicestershires; so that the 51st and 53rd, pressing round the enemy's flank and rear, surrounded and captured many of his men. By about 2.30pm Balad station was in our hands”.

So much for the official history where units advance, retire and manoeuvre as on the parade ground. The action as described by E.J.Thompson contains a greater flavour of the confusion of the actual fighting and something of the wasteful chaos of the war. As the brigade advanced along the railway it found that the water in the wells contained ‘natural salts’ with the result that everyone was soon suffering from diarrhoea – a complaint he noted from which Xenophon's Greeks had suffered in this country in 399 BC. News came that the enemy was holding Balad station but, he laconically comments, “the maps were no use, and distances had to be guessed. ‘The force against us,’ observed the Brigade-Major, ‘is somewhere between a hundred Turks and two guns, and four thousand Turks and thirty-two guns.’ ‘And if it's the four thousand and thirty-two guns?’ ‘Then we shall sit tight, and scream for help,’ he answered delightedly.”

The countryside was full of flowers and “the ruffling wind laid its hand on the grasses, and they became emerald waves, a green spray of blade

tossing and flashing in the full sunlight". As the brigade advanced, "every fold and dip was utilised by a scattered and numerous foe, to whom the ragged ground was like a cloak of invisibility. No artillery help could be given. We could only seize the ground's advantage and make it serve as help to the attack as well as the defence.... The two Sikh regiments, though checked and held from time to time by rifle and machine-gun fire, used the broken ground with extraordinary skill. Their experience on the Afghan frontier had trained them for just such work as this."

As the Sikh regiments advanced "the 53rd rushed the station itself, capturing eight officers and a hundred and thirty five men, with two machine guns." The 53rd Sikhs suffered 13 wounded. However, for the rest of the day the Turks continued to shell that station refusing "to recognise that the action was finished", causing fresh casualties among the captured Turks as well as the British forces.

Dudley's account of the action is contained in a letter to his father written on 11 April three days after the battle.

"I have been in another fight some fifty miles north of Bagdad. We have been pursuing the Turk who every now and then makes a stand and has to be attacked. This kind of fighting is very interesting because it is so exactly according to the little red book. We advance in artillery formation and then we extend and push on as far as possible in front while other companies go round his flanks. The fighting took place on Easter Sunday and lasted from 7 in the morning to about 3 in the afternoon. The enemy had artillery and machine guns and if his shooting had been better we should have had a bad time as we had to advance over a mile of country flat like a tennis court. I was in command of a company on the left flank; and when the Turk began to retire we caught him in the open with our machine guns at almost 500 yards. It was a grim business. We captured some 200 prisoners and two machine guns. I should love to have an accurate rifle here as there is abundant opportunity of shooting at 1000 yards and the ordinary rifle is not good enough for this. You cannot imagine what a fine life this is Dad. I would not be anywhere else now for a £1000. As we get further northward the country is gradually changing. Here we have low gravel hills instead of sand. Everywhere are the ruins of old cities; Ancient Babylon I think; old tombs, and the remains of ancient irrigation canals. It is getting very hot now, but we are all so fit that this does not make much difference. We have just heard the news

that the USA have declared war on Germany. This should hurry up the end.”

By this time Dudley was acquiring some souvenirs of the campaign and among these were sheets of unused printed railway tickets for Beled and Soumique which he says were “found” in the station.

Istabulat

Our next objective was Istabulat – a series of ruins on the right bank of the Tigris which the Turks had turned into a strong defensive position. The attack started soon after dawn, the 53rd advancing on an extended front against heavy artillery and rifle fire. We were frequently brought to a halt whilst Turkish positions were shelled – and would then advance a few hundred yards and again wait on our barrage. Losses were heavy on both sides. I saw the Earl of Suffolk, an artillery officer, killed within a few yards of me.

Colonel Grattan, Major Adams, Scarfe and Blewett were all killed, and by evening Culverwell and myself were the only surviving B.Os. It is almost incredible in retrospect, how little impact these losses made on us at the time. We had lived together for months, sharing all kinds of discomforts and dangers. Our mess was always a cheerful gathering, united in cursing the higher command, the weather, the quality of the rations, but full of high spirits. Now they had, within a few hours, been almost wiped out. Yet in our mess that evening Culverwell and I ate a hearty meal of biscuits and marmalade and then did our best to bring some order amongst our men – filling gaps by temporary promotions and combining companies.

Dudley was given the task of writing to the Blewitt family and letters from the family followed him round on campaign in Egypt until the end of the war.

In spite of these casualties the official history of the war does not give the 53rd Sikhs a major role in the fighting at Istabulat on 21 and 22 April – another battle focussed on one of the stations on the railway. All it says is that at the start of the action they were in reserve. Later in the action “Two companies of the 53rd Sikhs had been sent to the right to reinforce the Leicestershire and 51st Sikhs; and the remaining two 53rd companies, sent to support the 56th, tried unsuccessfully to reach them by moving

along the railway line.” This was the toughest battle since the capture of Baghdad and the Turkish defenders had even outnumbered their attackers. The 7th Division which included the 28th Brigade suffered a total of 2,228 casualties.

The 53rd had, in fact, been hotly engaged on the second day of the battle. Thompson records seeing Major Adams being carried in. “He had gone ahead of his battalion to the wall, where a bullet struck him in the forehead. He died within fifteen minutes, and was unconscious as he went past me. No man in the brigade was more beloved. He was always first to offer hospitality. It was he who met our mess when they first reached Sumaikhah and invited them to come to his own for lunch. I never saw him but with a smile of infinite kindness on his face, and I saw him very often.”

Edmund Candler also records that, “two companies of the 53rd Sikhs who had been in reserve lost their CO, second in command (Adams) Adjutant and Quartermaster. The 56th and 53rd lost heavily, but they and the machine gun company saved what might have been a very critical situation”.

Late that night we were called to a Brigade meeting to hear the plans for the following day. The Brigade was ordered to advance a mile over open country to attack a strongly held entrenched position. We were called the forlorn hope and it was anticipated that our losses would be heavy. I can see now the group of officers listening to the Brigade Major expounding the strategy – tired from a heavy days marching and fighting, unshaven and covered in dust. There was a grim humour in the scene and an acceptance of what looked like decimation for the whole Brigade.

For a few hours we slept soundly and then, shortly before dawn, took up our positions: the country in front was flat and without cover and we could see clearly the Turkish front line trenches. As we advanced, expecting every moment a burst of fire, there was a strange silence, and then to our intense relief it became apparent that the Turks had withdrawn during the night. Advancing rapidly in the face of some heavy artillery fire, we occupied Samarra on April 24th. Our losses during the battle were fairly heavy, the 7th Division reporting 2,000 casualties.

Samarra is a town with a long and chequered history. It was the ancient capital, and here the Roman Emperor Julian died of wounds in AD 363. There are numerous ruins which would well repay excavation. Digging trenches in the vicinity we uncovered a number of specimens of

'tear' bottles, earthenware oil lamps and many chards and decorated earthenware pots. I collected some fine specimens but only one, an oil lamp, survived and is still in my possession. There stands to this day among the ruins, the remains of an old tower with an external spiral stairway reminiscent of pictures of the tower of Babylon.

Of Samarra Edmund Candler wrote: "Samarrah has seen the making of much history, and we felt that it would see more, Julian lies buried there. He fell near by, in the retreat from Ctesiphon, and the tomb of the Emperor is visible from the walls of the city, a mound of earth encircled by a ditch, a crumbling memorial of the death of Rome's Empire in the East. The place is historic, too, in that it has witnessed the end of a spiritual sway on earth. The twelfth Imam disappeared here in some obscure cellar of the town, and will rise again – the Shiahs say - and many look to his advent on the spot."

The battle at Istabulat was the last major battle of the Mesopotamian campaign and concluded with the capture of sixteen railway engines which had been parked at Samarra station. This had been a dramatic advance from the initial moves in December 1916, with the storming of the Sannaiyat position, the capture of Baghdad and the advance up the railway. Just as the loss of Townshend's army at Kut had been an unprecedented disaster, so Maude's defeat of the Turks was the first emphatic victory for British arms in the First World War.

Dudley had been in the forefront of the campaign throughout. He had been only twenty-two at the beginning of the campaign and had celebrated his twenty-third birthday on the day that Samarra was captured. In later life his memories of the campaign, refreshed by reading E.J.Thompson's account of the actions of the 28th Brigade, give little indication how the experience of warfare had affected his ideas and his personality. There is a marked contrast between Dudley's rather matter-of-fact memoirs and the colourful and emotional reconstruction of the same campaign in Thompson's two books *Beyond Baghdad with the Leicestershires* and his novel *These Men Thy Friends*.

Thompson was a padre with the 28th Brigade and Dudley knew him well. Thompson mentions Dudley in both books and it is in these passages that one can start to understand how the war had begun to form the young man who had been caught up in it. In India Dudley had been eager for new experience but still young and untried. After the fighting at

Sannaiyat and the march on Baghdad, he had found a way of living, and even thriving, amid the hardships of the campaign. Arriving after the fight on the railway for Balad station, Thompson records that “all the great and good” had gathered at the station. “The first I saw was that genial philosopher, Captain Newitt, of the 53rd Sikhs, sitting imperturbable on a fallen wall and smoking the pipe without which he has never been seen. Not Marius amid Carthage ruins was more careless of the desolation around him. With him was Culverwell, adjutant of the same battalion. They hailed me with joyous affection, and we drank the waters and swapped the news.” When did Dudley begin his pipe smoking? There is no sign of any pipe in the early photos taken in England and India, so it was presumably during the Mesopotamian campaign that he took to smoking the pipe without which he was never seen for the rest of his life. There is no doubt that smoking a pipe adds to the philosophical air as the filling, tamping and drawing of the tobacco is a slow process that gives the impression of deep thought and deliberation, during which few words are uttered. It was also during the campaign that Dudley grew the military moustache, so common among officers at the time, and acquired the hairless head that again was so distinctive in all his later photographs. It is indicative of the formation of his personality during this period that at the end of the war he already looked very much as he looked fifty years later when, as a retired professor, he sat down to write his memoir.

In Thomson’s novel, *These Men, Thy Friends*, Dudley appears as Captain D.A.M.Newall “who had been A.P.M. ...; he was now in charge of the rearguard. Newall rejoiced in his menacing initials, and in his A.P.M. days loved to sign some ferocious order with them. They came dramatically at the end, like an expression of the reader’s annoyance, D.A.M.N.” Did Dudley really do this? No example survives but it is in keeping with his character, adding an unorthodox touch to the otherwise efficient performance of official duties – and again it is a sign of growing maturity and confidence.

Captain Newall makes another unexpected appearance. A group of officers are discussing the war in terms that barely hide their scepticism of the official propaganda that they were fed in order to maintain morale. One man comments on the fact that the Turks were using high explosive “like we do”. Fletcher, the central figure of the novel, “was developing a kind of humour, dry like everything else in these latitudes. ‘Our Government ought to report his conduct to the Geneva Convention’ he said. ‘Asiatics have no right to use anything but bows and arrows, or an

occasional musket'. 'That's what I think,' said Captain Newall, who was standing by. 'I've never been able to rid myself of the feeling that this whole Turco war is something that ought never to have been allowed to develop. It ought to have been treated as a police affair at the outset, and nipped before it grew serious. It's absurd, to have the whole British Empire being stood up to by the Sick Man of Europe' “.

Is this a real recorded conversation? Who knows? But again it is in character, picking on some light hearted throw away comment to say what so many people at the time and since have said about the Mesopotamian campaign and then to finish once more on a note of banter.

Writing his memoirs fifty years later Dudley gives little idea of what he thought, let alone felt, about the war. His comment after the storming of the Sannaiyat lines, already quoted, is the only indication. *The futility of war did, however, for the first time impress itself on my mind. Here were these Turkish peasants dragged from their farms to take part in a war which could in no way benefit them, knowing indeed nothing of the causes and aims of their leaders, and with no other desire than that of finishing the business and returning home in time for the harvest.* This echoes what others have written. Edmund Candler notes that “the Turk was an enemy against whom few of us felt any bitterness of spirit, and, as an accomplice of the Hun, a mere accident in the system we were sworn to destroy”. In the few letters to his father that have survived Dudley seems to treat the war as a great adventure – “I have enjoyed myself very much on the whole and would not have missed it for anything” and “You cannot imagine what a fine life this is Dad I would not be anywhere else now for a £1000.” These are comments written during the height of the campaign which had seen heavy casualties and in which Dudley had been slightly wounded. Perhaps these were comments he knew his father would appreciate – or perhaps these really were the genuine feelings of soldier in the thick of the fighting.

Dudley served in an Indian regiment and lived and fought side by side with Sikh and Pathan soldiers. His photographs of the campaign include many pictures of fine moustachioed Sikhs in their characteristic turbans but it is difficult to get from these images anything of what the war meant for these Indian soldiers. Thompson again has one of the characters in his novel say, “ ‘Doesn't it simply amaze you, that we have them here scrapping for us? They're mercenaries, when all's said and done. It isn't

*their empire they're fighting for; and not one of them had the remotest notion of the sheer bloody hell he was coming to.... They know now that the sahib and the Sirkar aren't the almighty wise folk they used to think them – haven't they seen us chuck lives away as if you bought men twelve a penny? Last spring we were asking their blood – and hadn't even blankets to give in return, or beds when they got cut up. Considering they *are* mercenaries, I think they're wonderful. If we'd a brain in our heads, we'd see how perfectly bewildering it is that a lot of Asiatics – chaps whose own country has been blasted out of their hands by *our* guns – should be fighting and dying for *us!*' ”*

About this time I was due for some leave, and since the Turkish resistance seemed to have been overcome permanently, I had no trouble in getting away. I returned to India and spent a very pleasant month with Lieutenant Colonel Prissick (C.O. of the 56th Sikhs) and his family at Dalhousie, a pleasant hill station providing plenty of amusement and comfortable quarters. After the heat, dust and squalor of active service, the cool temperate climate in the hill was inexpressibly welcome.

In June 1916 Colonel Richard Gardiner took over the command of the 53rd Sikhs. In a memoir of his father, entitled 'Dick Piffer' Douglas Gardiner recorded that “On May 4th 32 men proceeded to India on leave with Lieutenant (Acting Captain) D.M.Newitt ... a tough resourceful soldier of great courage”.

Dalhousie was a hill station in the Himalayas, situated in what is now the Indian province of Himachal Pradesh. Colonel Cuthbert Prissick commanded 8th Indian Infantry Brigade and died at Bannu on 14th July 1922.

On rejoining my battalion, I learned that the whole 7th Division was to be withdrawn from the front line and dispatched to Palestine via Egypt.

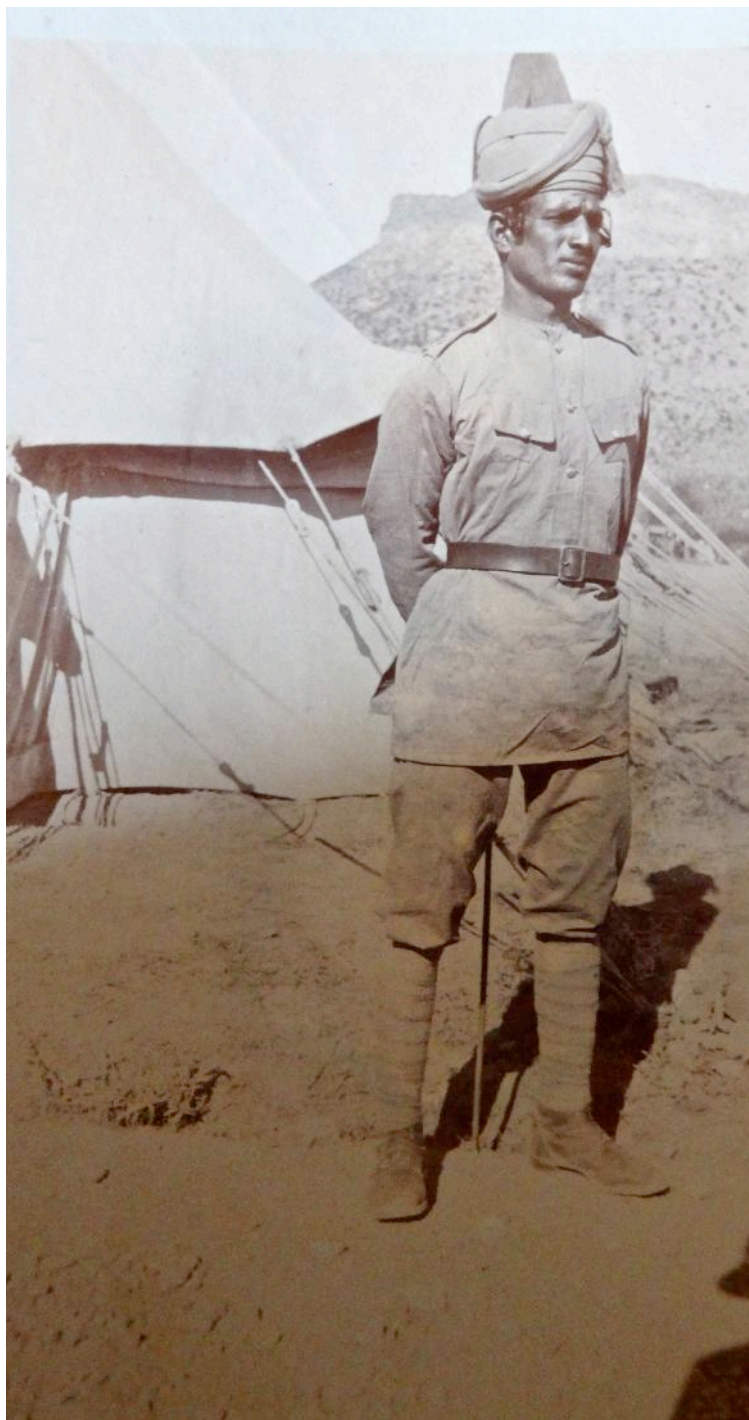
Dudley returned from leave 26 July but in his memoir omitted to mention the last battles in which he and the 53rd Sikhs were engaged while in Mesopotamia. After staying relatively inactive in Samarra during the hot season, the 28th Brigade took part in the advance on Daur and Tekrit in October. Thompson takes up the story. “At 9.10 the force met at the place of assembly. The 21st Brigade were to move up the left bank; they are

hardly in this picture. On the right bank the 28th Brigade went first, followed by the 19th and 8th Brigades. ... Part of the night I marched with my friends of the 53rd Sikhs, with Newitt and with Heathcote. Every one anticipated a very hard fight. We were up against a position which was routed to be as strong as Istabulat had been. Before dawn we found ourselves among ghostly bushes, and lay down for one shivering hour. We had marched over seventeen miles, with the usual exhausting checks and halts attendant on night marching, and we were dead beat to the wide. Yet nothing could be finer than the way the men threw weariness away, like a garment, with the first shells, and went into battle.”

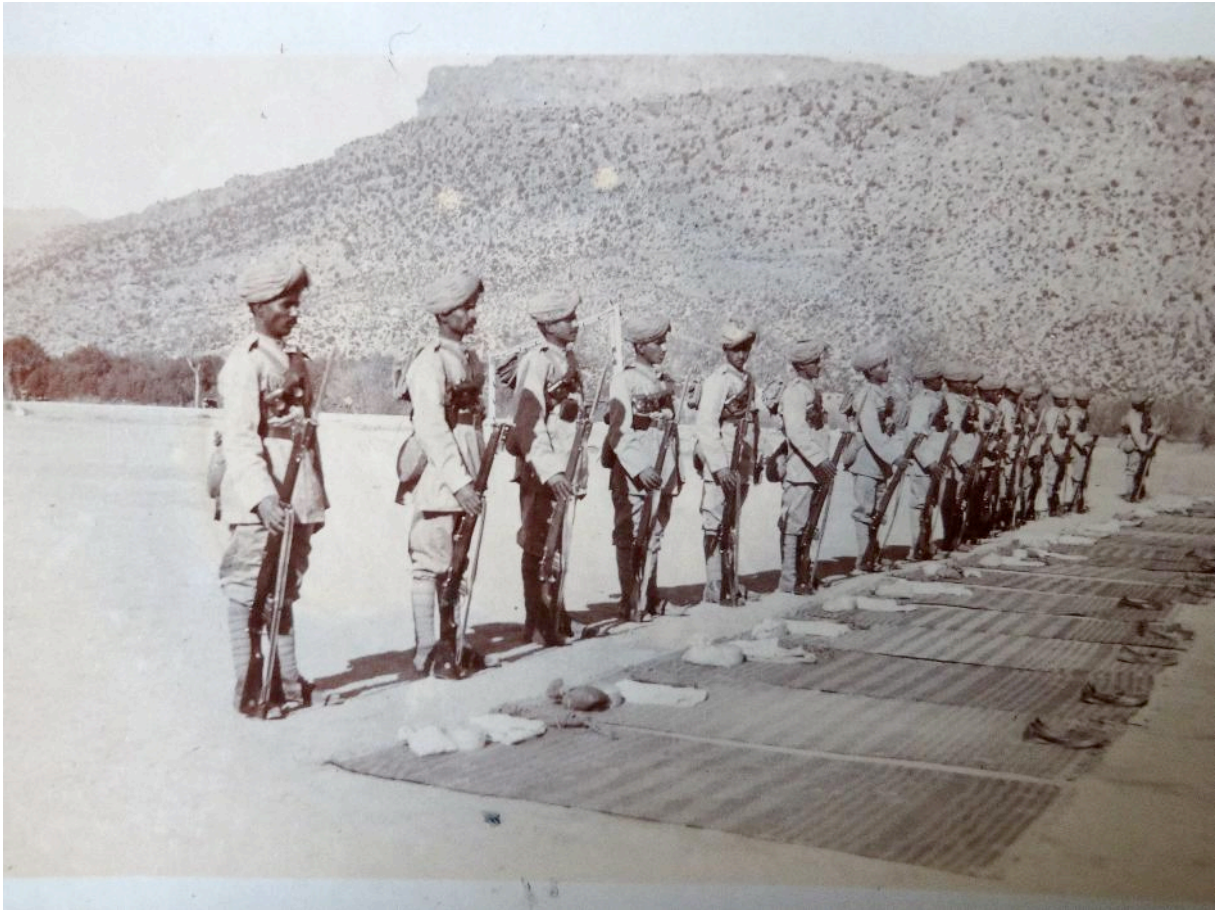
Douglas Gardiner describes how “Turks were reported advancing on 22 October but a piquet of six platoons under Newitt held them off. Next day a force of 4000-6000 Turks was observed taking up positions at Hawaislat to the north. 28th Brigade marched to outflank them with the Regiment [53rd Sikhs] as Advance Guard, the Vanguard being B Company, the Pathans, with Newitt in front. Again the sight of this round-faced burly chemical engineer and his ferocious tribesmen seems to have been too much for the enemy who departed before the attack was fully deployed”.

The Turks then withdrew to a position at Daur which they held in strength. The plan was for the cavalry to outflank the position and take them in the rear. This plan failed and the position had to be taken by frontal assault. “Soon after 6am the enemy advanced pickets were driven in.... The 56th rifles went first, advancing as if on parade... the ‘Tigers’ came next; then the 51st and 53rd Sikhs. The enemy was fairly caught by surprise.... It was not expected that march and fight would come so swiftly and together.”

The final objective of the campaign was Tekrit where the Turks had a reserve ammunition dump. The 28th Brigade were present at the action but not heavily involved. Thereafter the whole 7th Division was withdrawn from the front, first to Samarra and then down the Tigris to Baghdad where, according to Thompson, “we got our last glimpse of Fritz [the German pilot of the Turkish reconnaissance aircraft]. He was over Baghdad, and was said to have dropped a message, ‘Goodbye, 7th Division’ ”.



A Pathan soldier of the regiment



Sikh soldiers on inspection parade

It must have been as a result of one these last actions that Dudley was mentioned in a despatch of Sir William Marshall, who had succeeded Maude as commander in chief. However, the official notification is dated 15 April 1918, long after the 53rd Sikhs had left Mesopotamia for Palestine. In his memoir Dudley's farewell to Mesopotamia is as short and dry as it could be. *We embarked at Baghdad on a number of river steamers and proceeded to Basra where we transferred to one of the numerous troopships then anchored in the river."*

The Palestine Campaign

About this time I was appointed adjutant of the battalion and thus had a great deal of administrative work in connection with the embarkation. I was also responsible for writing daily battalion orders and the War Diary. On the death of Colonel Grattan, the command of the battalion



The War of 1914-1918.

Lieutenant D.M. Newitt,

I.A.R.O., Sikhs,

*was mentioned in a Despatch from
Lieutenant General W.R. Marshall, K.C.B., K.C.I.D.
dated 15th April, 1918.*

*for gallant and distinguished services in the Field.
I have it in command from the King to record His Majesty's
high appreciation of the services rendered.*

Christie S. Churchill

Secretary of State for War.

*The War Office
Whitehall, S.W.
1st March 1919.*

was taken over by Colonel R. Gardiner who up to that time had been a staff officer at Corps headquarters.

A copy of the War Diary in Dudley's handwriting has survived. The first entry is 9 January 1917, long before Dudley says he assumed responsibility for keeping it up. Many of the entries are very brief and there is a gap during his leave in India. The diary becomes more busy once he became Adjutant at the end of November 1917. The regiment left Mesopotamia on the troopship *Chakdina* on 31 December.

Our voyage to Egypt was eventful, we had propeller trouble in the Persian Gulf and had to put into Muscat to await repairs. Muscat, an old centre of the slave trade, is perhaps one of the most fascinating ports in the Gulf. It is the seat of much smuggling and every species of villainy – the mixed population of every colour from jet black to near white, earn a precarious living by fishing and trading with the interior. Caravans are constantly arriving or leaving for the desert, the travelling bazaars resound with the shouts of traders bargaining for their customers. The smell is overpowering but carries with it, romantic overtones of jasmine and frankincense. Over this mixed and lawless society there presided an old Frenchman; what his exact position was I never learned, but he lived in oriental style in a palatial building and entertained us with great courtesy and lavish hospitality.

 This building was the Bait Faransa, a palace which was given to the French government for its consulate in 1896. Today it is the site of the Omani-French Museum. Dudley's archive contains a set of old photographs of Muscat as it was at the beginning of the century.

Muscat lies at the foot of steep igneous cliffs which in places reach to the water's edge. It appears to have been the custom for troops held up in the port to pass the time by painting their regimental badges on the cliff face, and we were no exception. It was a hazardous operation involving lowering men in cradles and moving them about on the cliff face.

Temporary repairs having been made, our ship limped into Aden where it was decided to disembark the troops for a few days and exercise them on the hilly country behind the town. Route marches in intense heat, over the stony inhospitable interior, was a testing experience,

particularly for the British troops. The permanent garrison was most hospitable, however, and our evenings passed pleasantly 'gin crawling' and dining at various messes. The following morning usually demanded a pick me up in the form of a prairie oyster, consisting of raw egg flavoured with Worcester sauce.

In 1915 the Turkish army under the command of a German general had launched an attack on the Suez Canal. This had failed and the British had then built a railway and water pipe across the desert and by the end of 1916 had cleared the Turks from all their positions in Sinai. In March and April 1917 they launched two attacks on the Turkish line which ran from Gaza to Beersheba. The attacks had been concentrated against Gaza which was heavily fortified, and had failed. A line of entrenchments was then built to face the Turks who were determined to prevent a British invasion of Palestine. This was the situation which faced General Edmund Allenby who took over command of the British forces at the end of June 1917.

Allenby carried out a massive reorganization of the British army and prepared to breach the Turkish defensive line. In November, after giving the Turks the idea that a third attack on Gaza was being planned, he launched his forces against Beersheba on the extreme left of the Turkish line. The break through there enabled him to outflank the whole Turkish position and force them to abandon Gaza and fall back on Jaffa and Jerusalem. Jerusalem was captured by the British on 9 December 1917 without any fighting as both sides had agreed that there should be no siege of the holy city. Whereas Maude had entered Baghdad at the head of his cavalry, Allenby entered Jerusalem with his staff on foot. After the capture of Jerusalem new lines were drawn from Jaffa to the Jordan. Allenby now had to send some of his European divisions to France and the gaps were filled by Indian units transferred from Mesopotamia, among them the 7 Division of which the 53rd Sikhs formed a part.

From Aden we proceeded up the Red Sea and through the Suez Canal to Ismalia, where we disembarked and encamped in the desert near the town. Here we stayed for some six weeks re-fitting and training. The climate was relatively mild and it was possible to go for long rides over the desert or to hire a boat and sail on Lake Timsah. In Ismalia there was little of interest – a squalid town with just a few large houses belonging to wealthy Egyptians or officials of the Suez Canal. One had been turned into an officer's club where an evening could be spent playing cards and losing money at roulette. To pass the time I took a week's leave to Cairo, staying at the Mena House Hotel at the foot of the great pyramids. In war time there were no tourists and the pyramids and sphinx could be seen in

their natural grandeur, unspoiled by the mob of beggars, guides, and donkey boys which usually disfigure the scene. Strolling in the moonlight at the foot of these great and impressive monuments one absorbed a peace and mental detachment which placed in proper perspective the fighting, potential intrigue and treachery which permeated this theatre of war in 1917.

Ismailia, situated on the shores of Lake Timsah was founded in 1863 to be the headquarters of the Suez Canal Company. In 1915 it had been targeted by the only attempt by the Turks to capture the Canal and it subsequently became the strategic centre of the British Army defending Egypt. The Mena House Hotel was originally a hunting lodge of the Khedive Ismail. In 1889 it was opened as a luxury hotel but during the war also served as a hospital. It is still one of Egypt's grandest hotels as its official publicity makes clear. "Surrounded by 40 acres of verdant green gardens, this palatial hotel is located in the shadows of the Great Pyramids of Giza in Cairo. The royal history of the hotel is reflected in luxurious interiors that are embellished with exquisite antiques, handcrafted furniture, original work of arts ... that are rarely found in luxury hotels. Mena House has played host to kings and emperors, Heads of State and celebrities."

In his biography of Allenby, entitled *Allenby of Armageddon*, Raymond Savage describes the inspection of the newly arrived Indian regiments by the Duke of Connaught on 12 March 1918. "One never-to-be forgotten sight occurred at Moascar when the Duke inspected the 7th Indian Division [of which the 53rd Sikhs formed a part] commanded by Major-General Sir Vere Fane. The date was the anniversary of the march of the division into Baghdad in 1917 and right well was it celebrated both on parade and off. The whole division was drawn up in review order on the burning plain outside Ismailia, and was composed of many fighting regiments with whose names one could conjure. The Leicestershires, the Black Watch and Seaforth Highlanders stood side by side with Punjabis, Sikhs and Gurkhas, and side by side received hard won decorations from the hands of the Duke. But the most thrilling moment came at the end of the review when His Royal Highness stepped forward and, raising his helmet, called for three cheers for the King. Unevenly but surely they came. As far as the eye could see, one by one companies raised helmets on the point of bayonets, until the movement had the appearance of a huge brown ocean comber rolling slowly but unerringly into the far distance, whilst from near and far arose a roar of mighty human voices acclaiming the King, billowing, sweeping, crashing, until it died away in a whisper to be lost in the stillness of the desert."

Although he doesn't mention this incident, Dudley must have been present as one of the European officers in his regiment.

From Egypt we entrained in due course for Palestine where our armies had met with a number of set-backs and near disasters, and were then entrenched a short distance north of Gaza. It was another case similar to Mesopotamia early in 1916. Morale was low, transport and equipment was in short supply and the troops were 'browned off'. Our first halt was Lod (Lydd) where we camped for some days amongst orange groves and then proceeded to occupy an entrenched line a little north of Jaffa. The Turks were in some strength to our front, no man's land being two or three miles wide. F[ield].M[arshal].Allenby had recently taken over command and was beginning to infuse a better spirit among the troops. He inspected our Division on arrival and expressed in no uncertain terms his displeasure at the rather lax discipline which had been the inevitable consequence of heavy losses made up by half trained recruits in Mesopotamia.

This passage reads oddly after the triumphs of the Beersheba break through and the capture of Jerusalem. Dudley was clearly referring to the situation after the two failed attacks on Gaza, before Allenby took over and re-organised the expeditionary force. By the time the 53rd Sikhs arrived morale was high and confidence in Allenby universal throughout the army. However, at least one modern historian has suggested that the Indian regiments that had been transferred from Mesopotamia were not of the highest quality. "The replacement Indian battalions arrived on such a scattered schedule from February to August that campaign operations were dislocated. Twenty-two of the battalions had seen no service, and one third had had no riflery practice. Of the 22 battalions with service experience in India and Mesopotamia each had forfeited one veteran company to the Western Front. ... The Indian units were almost entirely devoid of signalers, Lewis gunners, hand bombers or experienced transport drivers. The junior officers, both British and Indian were inexperienced and few British officers spoke Hindustani". (David Bullock, *Allenby's War*, London, 1988, pp.113-14).

The regiment camped near the sea shore at Tel el Rekkit which Colonel Gardiner described as "a good camp site on rolling downs, covered at this season with coarse grass and wild flowers. Water is obtained from water-holes dug on the sands at the foot of the cliffs, and within 20 yards of the high tide".

Under the new management, the rather passive life in trenches was replaced by vigorous night patrols and raids. These were great fun. A party of us some twenty strong would leave our front line at nightfall armed with machine guns, hand grenades and other lethal weapons, and would approach with great caution the enemy front line where we lay in

wait for one of his patrols. The nights were warm and the air perfumed with wild thyme and other aromatic herbs. The stars had an unnatural brightness and all was silent. Then through the still air would be heard the shuffle of approaching feet and the vague shadows of a body of the enemy. At the appropriate moment, safety pins would be withdrawn from our grenades and at a given signal they would be lobbed into the approaching party. A breathless moment, a succession of violent explosions and then all hell would be let loose. Very lights would momentarily illuminate a scene of great confusion, there would be a rattle of machine gun fire and artillery would add to the general noise. Meanwhile we would endeavour to capture a few prisoners and with our own wounded would retire with a feeling that a job had been well done. It was all most satisfactory. To this day, when I smell thyme I recall vividly these magic nights.

Some of our raids were on a larger scale and the last one in which I took part (July 27th) included several hundred men and was preceded by a heavy artillery barrage. We followed close behind the barrage and, arriving at our target, rounded up a large number of the enemy before they had time to offer any resistance. In the end the Turks got into a very nervous state and would open fire on hearing the slightest rustle of wind blown grass.

This raid is described in the official history of the war. “A successful raid was carried out on the night of the 27 July by five platoons 53rd Sikhs of the 28th Indian Brigade... against the advanced Turkish trenches on Piffer Ridge, 3 miles east of the shore at El Haram. Two columns entered the enemy’s line at different points and converged, thus preventing the escape of the garrison, which was taken by surprise. Thirty-three prisoners were brought in, the Sikhs having only four casualties. The losses of the Turks from the bombardment were apparently heavy.”

Dudley’s papers include a copy of the plan for the raid and the subsequent report filed by the commander of the 53rd Sikhs, Colonel Gardiner. “At 22.50 the Raiders advanced and at 23.00 our Artillery and MG Barrage opened. The Barrage was very accurate and the Raiders were able to get up to 30 yards from the wire before the Artillery lifted off the front line. At 23.08 the Barrage lifted and the whole Raiding Party charged through the wire, and over the first Trench. As soon as they passed the fire Trench the 2 Platoons on the right under Captain Fulton immediately wheeled to their Right... The three other Platoons under Major Waller & Capt. Newitt after crossing the front trench went straight on for 100 yards and then wheeled to their left and formed up again on a 2 Platoon front facing West... At 23.17 the advance continued... All objectives were simultaneously charged with the bayonet from the rear. As the charge went in the Turks endeavored to break away to the North. Several were shot or bayoneted and 13 captured, 2 of whom died on the way back... About 50 Turks were actually shot or bayoneted by the Raiders, 5 of them

being shot by the B.Os [British Officers] with their pistols, and a considerable number of other dead were passed.... Our casualties were 1 IOR killed (carried back to camp) and 3 IOR Wounded.”



On campaign

Allenby's second major offensive began on 19 September 1918. Elaborate deceptions had been engineered to disguise the movement of his troops and to hide his strategy which was to break the Turkish line on the coast and to pour large numbers of cavalry through the gap which were to penetrate the rear of the Turkish positions and force the surrender of two of his army corps. This was a manoeuvre frequently attempted in Mesopotamia, but always the Turks had been able to withdraw to another position. In September 1918 Allenby achieved a numerical superiority of between four and five to one and was able to bring off this vast encircling movement with dramatic effect, achieving one of the most decisive victories of the First World War.

The 53rd Sikhs were part of the 7th Division which in turn was part of General Bulfin's 21st Army Corps. The 21st Corps was given the task of breaking through the Turkish defences north of Jaffa between the railway and the sea. "What happened", wrote David Bullock, "can only be viewed as a precursor to the modern *blitzkrieg*. Zero-hour came at 0430 hours in the gloom before dawn. At one gun per fifty yards average the opening 15 minutes of preparatory bombardment was the heaviest of the Palestine-Arabian campaign. Rear Admiral Jackson's destroyers *Druid* and *Forester* joined in offshore and a thousand shells per minute exploded into the Turkish lines, churning the earth into a dust clouded inferno. To the soldiers stumbling out of bivouac the unexpected bombardment followed by the surprise assault of five EEF divisions must have seemed like the crack of doom. As the thick waves of the 21st Corps infantry advanced... the battle quickly assumed the proportions of an overrun attack. In places the infantry had to pause to avoid running into its own barrage... In the first few hours 7,000 Turkish prisoners and 100 guns had fallen into 21st Corps hands."

Dudley's account is as follows. *Early in September 1918, Allenby began to concentrate troops in the coastal plain preparatory to an attack on the Turkish line and on September 19th the main operation opened. The 28th Brigade were heavily involved and the 53rd had the task of storming the village of Taibiyeh which was strongly held. As we approached, they abandoned their defences and retired to positions in the hills around Samaria. These hills were terraced with stone walls about three feet high and were thickly planted with vines and olive trees. I was given command of three companies (about 500 men) and ordered to drive them out. Hill warfare was very much the forte of frontier force troops and I can recall how our men swarmed up the steep hillside like cats, scrambling over the walls and through the vines and taking advantage of every bit of cover. Before the Turks were ready we were amongst them. Their officers immediately came up to me and surrendered but I had the greatest difficulty in restraining my men, who were wildly excited, from*

perpetrating a massacre. In fact it was only by threatening to shoot anyone who fired his rifle that I restored order. We took some 300 prisoners and many more fled into the hills and escaped. I have a memento of this fight in the form of a pair of field-glasses which were presented to me by the Turkish officer. I was also awarded the Military Cross for leading the attack. This was the last major action in which I took part during the war.

Dudley recorded what happened in the Regimental Diary written at the time. "Sept 21st From Beit Lid column followed track west of village...to metalled road, thence through Railway bridge... thence eastward along road to Messendieh occupying town and station at 0345 without opposition. At 0430 hrs Rgt was ordered to occupy Samaria Hill...The hill was believed to be unoccupied. I was given command of a Cy and ordered to piquet the Hill. As dawn was breaking I advanced up western slope of hill as quickly as possible. Remaining two platoons under Capt. Jardine following in reserve. Hill was difficult to negotiate being steep with frequent terraces & thick olive groves. At summit were remains of Temple of Herod. About half way up the slope heavy MG and rifle fire was opened on us by enemy concealed near summit of hill. We scaled the hill at a run, wheeled to the south & charged through the olive groves. This took the enemy in the flank and before they could reform we were into them with bayonet. Many were killed and remainder surrendered. Prisoners taken – 11 officers including 2 Battn Comanders; 170 other ranks; 3 heavy machine guns; 5 automatic rifles. Our casualties were nil. Remainder of the Battn then marched round the hill and occupied the town."

The main Turkish resistance was now broken and we advanced rapidly northwards picking up large numbers of prisoners and vast quantities of stores and equipment. Some of our marches at this time were phenomenal. In one instance we advanced 34 miles over very difficult rocky tracks in 48 hours, and on another occasion we covered 270 miles in 40 days.

An account of this advance was recorded by Private E.C.Powell: "We marched all day, on and on, scorched by the sun, parched with thirst, nearly dead with fatigue and want of sleep, struggling painfully through heavy sand. Camels rolled over, men were fainting, but still we pushed on". Meanwhile whole Turkish armies surrendered and Allenby was faced with the task of feeding, watering and making provision for 50,000 prisoners, a task for which the army was wholly unprepared. On 26 September Allenby circulated to all units, "I desire to convey to all ranks and all arms of the Force under my command, my admiration and thanks for their great deeds of the past week, and my appreciation of their

gallantry and determination, which have resulted in the total destruction of the VIIth and VIIIth Turkish Armies opposed to us. Such a complete victory has seldom been known in all the history of war.” (copies of this circular are contained in Dudley’s archive).

After the break through on the coast and the rout of the Turkish 7th and 8th armies, the 7th Division was directed to advance up the coast as far as Beirut which was reached on 9 October. In all the Division covered 226 miles from the beginning of the advance. During the march on Beirut British engineers leveled the so-called ‘ladder of Tyre’, an ancient mile long series of steps that took a caravan road over the mountains from Haifa to Beirut. The official history of the war records that “General Bulfin... [who] had gone forward to look at the road, was told... that extensive blasting was necessary to make the Ladder fit for wheels... and that there was a risk of the whole shelf slipping into the sea. The chances seemed in favour of a successful outcome, but success could not be guaranteed. ... General Bulfin demanded ‘time for a couple of cigarettes, in which to consider the problem; then ordered the attempt to be made. It was completely successful. The whole length of the cliff road was made practicable for wheeled transport in the course of three days”

The regimental diary that Dudley maintained records “Oct. 5th ... About 4 miles south of Ras el Ain road passage over a range of hills by Ladder of Tyre. This ladder consists in many parts of polished marble stone and a considerable amount of blasting had to be done.” Meanwhile Damascus was captured on 1 October and the campaign finally came to an end when an armistice was signed with Turkey on 31 October 1918.

After the battle of Samaria our Brigade concentrated at Haifa, a picturesque little town overlooking a sheltered bay. During a rest period, many of us visited the grove of cedars of Lebanon, the famous ruins of Baalbek and Damascus. From Haifa we pushed north along the coast, across the Ladder of Tyre, which to my regret we had to level to make a path for the artillery and mule transport, through Tyre and Ledon to Beirut which we reached after five days (October 3rd-8th) continuous marching. It was a memorable trek. As we passed through village after village, the inhabitants came out to welcome us. Fruit and vegetables were plentiful and cheap, the road winding along the coast gave glimpses of deep blue sea on the one hand and orchards and olive groves on the other. On the summit of the low hills were a string of Monasteries inhabited by Maronite monks – a bearded and docile brotherhood offering a frugal hospitality to the passing wayfarer. In one of these I discovered a wonderful Persian rug which I greatly coveted but was unable to persuade the monks to part with.

We stayed at Beirut for a week or so, our headquarters being in a large house on the waterfront. Here I spent some evenings with an old

German archaeologist who had made a unique collection of flint instruments, prehistoric earthenware pots and burial urns. Advancing from Beirut, we passed through the large townships of Homs, Hama and Jerablus (Carchemish) to Beryck on the banks of the Euphrates.

At Jerablus we met Leonard Wooley, an archaeologist who had been excavating amongst the Hittite ruins of Carchemish, and showed us his unique collection of cylindrical seals. He later carried out excavations at Ur of the Chaldean [sic] and has written several books describing his finds.

Beryck was a settlement on the banks of the river and, on our arrival, was still administered by Turkish officials who gladly handed over control to our O.C. The 53rd headquarters were located in the palace of the former Turkish Governor, a spacious building, sparsely furnished and, as the winter advanced, intensely cold. I was, for a time, put in charge of the administration of a large area inhabited by Armenians, Syrians and including some Turkish settlements.

Some well meaning American philanthropist had put at my disposal a large sum of money for the purpose of financing the Armenians and setting them up in business. This was easier said than done, as they were intent upon organizing a general massacre of the Turks before engaging in any other activity; and I was forced in the end to hold several of their prominent leaders as hostages for their good behaviour.

Berijck was a busy town overlooked by the ruins of a formidable Crusader Castle – still in a fair state of preservation. It was the centre of a number of small industries including rope making, and had an important market for food and other commodities. The Turks had abandoned a number of motor launches on the river which we immediately impounded and thereafter used for fishing excursions and military business. We also organized a pack of hounds for jackal hunting and had many good runs over the rocky countryside.

Birecik is a town on the Euphrates just inside modern Turkey. Dudley's regimental diary entry for 26 February 1919 reads, "Berijek a dusty little town, narrow bazaar but very picturesque. Run by Ramakan & Mayor (here Effendi) the latter a poisonous scoundrel. Armenian quarter on hill overlooking the town. Has 3 churches all gutted by the Turks. Fine old castle overlooking town & river. Nesting place of sacred ibis." The official regimental history confirms this impression - "Birijik is a dirty town, a maze of narrow cobbled streets and bazaars sloping up from the left bank of the Euphrates, gently at first and then steeply to the top of the ridge about a mile to the East. Population chiefly Kurds and Turks with a small Armenian community." Colonel Gardiner had been made military governor of a large part of upper Syria and later Dudley was to write that "his firm and wide administration, tempered with great humanity, did much to alleviate the sufferings of the local inhabitants long oppressed by

Turkish misrule. He did a remarkable job in settling the district and re-organising its industries.”

On October 31st an armistice with Turkey was declared and the following month Germany surrendered and all hostilities ceased. Dudley remained with his regiment in Syria until May. One of his last diary entries is for 6 May 1919 – “Promulgation of sentences on 6 deserters”. On 11 May 1919 the major commanding the 53rd Sikhs in Jerablus formally endorsed Captain D.M.Newitt MC IARO to proceed to UK for demobilization. The brief memo recorded that he had acted as Company Commander in the preceding two months, that his service had included 12 months as a private and 3 years 10 months as a commissioned officer, and that “there are no Regimental demands outstanding against this officer.” On 12 June Dudley left for Kantara to be demobilized. His private papers for this period include a number of letters congratulating him on his Military Cross – one of them from Lt. General Sir Walter Leslie commanding in Lahore District in India.

I was now anxious to return to England and resume my studies – but there was a long and tiresome interval before demobilization began. At long last I was ordered to proceed to Alexandria and take charge of a mixed bag of troops returning to England. This was a different assignment – discipline was lax, troop arrangements were chaotic and for weeks we were in transit camps awaiting embarkation orders. Finally, to my great relief, we were herded on board a P&O liner bound for Plymouth.

Plymouth is a wonderful harbour for the traveler to return to after several years in arid and tropical countries. The soft damp air, the green hills and the cloud flecked skies – even the rain, were welcome to us.

On landing, we proceeded to a rest camp where we were informed that we should be kept in quarantine for two weeks owing to a suspected case of smallpox. This proved to be the last straw; the troops openly mutinied, they turned a deaf ear to the threats and exhortations of a series of senior officers and, after some delay, they won their case. In due course we entrained for London and I delivered them at the Crystal Palace which was then a demobilization centre. This ended the war as far as I was concerned.