

Life was pretty quiet at Fovant; at times, mostly on guest nights, my services were needed at the Officers' Mess to wait at table. On those occasions I was dolled up in a smart white jacket and number one slacks. I fancy there was a small payment, in any case back in the kitchen, we dined well from what was in excess. Lobster and such delicacies.

I was still not long out of Hospital, an immediate operation had to be performed at Fovant Military Hospital for a very bad abscess. When I was well enough to travel I was sent to the Tisbury Cottage Hospital. Further trouble while there took place, very painful eruptions down my leg, thought to be possibly due to some shrapnel splinters still in my shoulder poisoning the blood flow. I was absent for some period. Major Wrightson who knew me well did not recognise me when I rejoined the regiment. I had altered to that extent. While at Tisbury Major Croysdale made a special visit to see me and arranged for my two sisters to travel from London to see me. My old job was waiting for me. I do not know who acted in my absence.

Early in January 1917 we moved to Paignton a rather remote place in those days, even we Post Office chaps wondered where it was. My wife still recalls our entry into the Town headed by the Band, little thinking at the time that her future husband was in the ranks. Life at Paignton was very pleasant; on arrival three or four of us servants were billeted with a Mrs Ogden at 3 Park Crescent, quite a swell house with a Maid to wait on us at meal time. This didn't last for many days, Mrs Ogden had been under the impression that she was to have officers billeted on her, not their servants, so we had to shift. Charlie Stansfield and I were told to take up residence with Mr and Mrs Cox at 2 Lisburn Terrace, Polsham Road.

I do not remember how long Charlie remained there, but do know that I continued to have a bedroom there after a room had been allotted to officers servants at Barrington House, Battalion HQ. I was made one of the family, often invited in to tea and supper on Sundays; after the War I did actually become one of the family by marrying the youngest daughter, who I am delighted to say still shares my life.

I had very little work to do, but enjoyed some pleasant days out with the officers, one was the casting of a fishing net at Goodrington; caddying for the Major at Churson Golf Links; and a spot of "beating" at a shoot in Cockington Woods. There was bags of sandwiches and drink at the "box" for us chaps before starting to beat up the game. I don't recall there resulted a very large "bag" a few starlings and a "beater" was the lot as far as I recall.

An officer named Torrence who was attached to the 8th at the time was responsible for wounding the man; it was a pure accident and I do not think very serious, but Major Torrence was very upset because of it.

My stay under these enviable conditions was short-lived because of an arrangement that came into being about Easter time whereby low category men (proper to the postal service) were to be transferred to the R.E. P.S. (†) to replace men from that unit considered fit to go overseas. I was one of the selected, packed up my kit and reported for duty at K.E.B. (*). I feel sure the HOLBORN HUSSARS did not welcome us with open arms not knowing who was for the high jump. The nickname was given on account of the riding breeches and cavalry bandoliers which they sported. As far as I could gather, but do not pretend to say if I am correct, they ranked as "pioneers and sappers" and as they all received full post office wages I suppose the lower ranks such as Postmen, Porters, or Cleaners were "pioneers" and the higher grades Clerks, Sorters etc were "sappers". There was working pay in the R.E. P.S. whether we benefitted by this I am unable to bring back to mind, but I feel pretty certain that our army pay was still deducted from our civil pay.

I was put on the "Packets" with an R.E. sorting on the N and O Road, which naturally meant we dealt with sorting the mail for all regiments with the initial letter N or O, such as Notts & Derby, Northampton etc, only the Ox & Bucks L.I., had O for their first letter. It was of course just a question of doing ordinary indoor postal work in khaki. We London chaps billeted at home, a travelling pass and subsistence allowance were also paid.