

## DOP/01/011

Hawtin Mundy  
Born February 1894

- 003 Asked about mass wedding at Chelmsford – no recollections of it.
- 018 Shipload of recruits with just a few older men, came from Catterick. Got to Le Havre and taken to big camp. Trained again there. Had large training ground. Doesn't know why it was done – perhaps so that you'd be glad to get away from it to get up to front. HM and pal keen to get back to own mates. On parade ground you were spread out, lots of "yellow-bellies" wore yellow armbands – were instructors. Old brigadier went round on horse visiting different parts of parade ground. In small groups of a dozen a Lance Corporal would drill you; put through paces all had done it before – no point in it therefore. Settled them down, in his group HM only veteran – LC started telling the tale, he said "What you've got to do when you get up to the front", he says ""You've got nothing to be frightened of, oh no", he said "You'll be safe" he said "the Germans you know" he said "they can't shoot like you can., they're not so good as you". And it got my back up so much I said "You said they can't shoot?" – "No not like you people" he said. I said "I've been up there twice, they've hit me both times" I said. "I reckon they can shoot all right". "Oh" he said. I said "Have you ever been up there?" "Oh no, oh no" he said. I said "You talk like a bloody fool", I said, "You don't know what you're talking about". Well, course, that caused it, he called me – oh hell – he called me all the bastards he could lay his tongue to everything. I daren't do nothing. So at the finish when we sort of ready to march off parade I said to him, I said, "look", I said "Shall you and me take a little walk somewhere". "Oh yes" he said. I thought "Oh hell". We did, we walked back to the camp, and as we come in the camp I said "Would you leave your tunic in your, where's it, in your barrack room". They were all huts. "Oh yes he said. I thought "Oh blimey" I were top of the world. Any road it wasn't far. Went a few more yards, he turned round, opened the door in the hut, walked in there, there was an officer sat the other side of the desk. Oh hell. "Yes Corporal? "Oh this man's been swearing and insulting me". "Ten days in C.B. out you go".
- 089 During the ten days CB unloaded ships at the docks. Met chap with one wound stripe – a gold bar for each wound. Paired up – other chap had told yellow belly what to do too "Oh" I said, "this is the going price for the job".
- 105 Later all the recruits were put on parade and detailed in batches to different regiments. HM asked to go back to old regiment – not allowed to told to line up with the rest. HM sent to Oxford and Bucks Light Infantry – thought it Ok as he might fine some local chaps. Given new regimental number and Oxford and Bucks Bugle Badge.
- 130 Loaded late on to train taken to back of Arras as near as you could get by rail. Knew battle was coming. Their group brought regiments up to full strength. Kept with new mate (cannot remember his name) who had a wound stripe. Did more training behind the lines, rehearsing the battle – attacking across fields, range firing. About 4 – 5 miles behind the front line. Joined 5<sup>th</sup> battalion. Six divisions (120,000) there. One person only he knew Arthur Parker (RK –AP claims it was his brother Stan, but HM could be correct) – officer's servant. Remembers him well because friend was a gambler (Fatty

Odell was a good card player too) – friend “was a masterpiece with cards”. Neither had money – Arthur lent them a few francs. Game was Brag – describes way to play game. In barn there was a gambling school going on. He said to HM to wait to enter until it was his turn to be dealer next time – told HM where to sit. His friend dealt him three Queens “ a pile of Queens” HM bet all he had and his friends’ – big pool at finish he “covered the pool” as he was broke (put hat over it) and then any bragging done afterwards is separate. At show down he had pile of Queens and other block had been dealt a pile of Jacks – so it made him keep going! His friend could put a card anywhere. Had champagne egg and chips – “Oh hell we had a hell of a night”. A penny a time normally – but could be more – 3d, 6d, a shilling. When a crowd played brag, 2 or 3 solo. Cards was “the only pastime there was”. At Wycombe would light candle intent and play after lights out. Along would come MP would bang on tent with stick, and the candle would be blown out.

- 291 When out to rest 5 or 6 miles back to village – had to make own entertainment – sing songs with lantern in barn, gambling and egg and chips and champagne at restaurants. Behind arras for about a month. Several days in Arras in cellar. “Packed like a beehive!” before the battle, 2 or 3 days before battle sent along front.
- 318 Before battle “you’re really excited you know, you know its coming and all it is is “well I will it be tonight we go up, or will it be tomorrow night”, you know you was expecting and you knew you was within a day or two. And, well, all you done was sit and lay about. You done no training, nothing whatever”.
- 343 When got to Arras relieved (perhaps) Northumberland Fusiliers. HM said to one of them “What sort of a show up there, our Company’s just come back and there’s only 57 of us come back, we’ve been up there digging slit trenches” (200 in company). The main line of trenches were strong, deep and wide and had been there for some time. Before battle had dug slit trenches in front (called assembly trenches) – about 3ft. deep and narrow a bout 12ft long – held 8-10 then a space and another slit trench. Idea was whilst English barrage was on to move up to assembly trenches. That was the drill – but it never happened. Oh hell no. When it did actually happen, blimey soon as we went, they put a barrage on us as well as us on them and there was us copping it as well as we were”. HM with his “old mate” – I hadn’t gone from here to these slit trenches I jumped in blimey, afore I knew where I was there was a officer just behind, come behind he says come on get out straight on and that was all there was to it, and away you went.
- 395 Went up at dusk – filled main trench, packed in like sardines, officers walked to and fro to see if you were O.K. In groups shoulder to shoulder. Ever so quiet, in early hours of morning given mug of hot tea half filled with rum I’m sure of it was rum, but oh you know it made you feel beautiful. Officer came along telling them it wouldn’t be long. Came up to HM and pal, saw their wound stripes, knew they were old soldiers. I want you two on the machine gun. I said, I don’t know nothing about a machine gun. He said Don’t matter a bout knowing anything. I’m putting you two with ‘em. He said, I want you two to carry the ammunition. Carried pane of ammunition in a welding case.
- 423 Hadn’t gone far when mate went down. Moved up to person carrying tripod Well blimey down he went. Went further and couldn’t see anybody else I thought Oh hell,

here goes, so I threw my pan away and kept on. All within 50 yards of where they'd started from. Couldn't see much – it was just getting light.

541 Got to their frontlines – nobody there – jumped over that – steadily walked you were like is a dream. Wandered on – never saw soul until reached 2<sup>nd</sup> line. I could hear their shells bursting as he walked.

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Battle of Arras – Part 1.

571 May 3<sup>rd</sup> 1917. “When I got to that second line, a German stood up, now what I can never understand is, he hadn't got a rifle, but he'd got a shovel. H threw it at me and as he threw it, I sort of tried to jump out of the way and I fired straight at him like that. Now this is what beats me, and I've said so many times, how the hell it happens. I fired at him, not half a dozen yards away, and I was a first class shot and I missed him”. What do you think of that? As close as that and I missed him. And now he jumped up, soon as I fired, he threw the shovel, turned round, jumped out the back of the trench and I'd missed him, course I took it steady then. I simply quickly slammed another round in, took a steady aim and I shot him straight through the middle of the back, because he went straight down and just as I fired that there was one of our officers came along see what I'd done because he said “Good shot” and then he went straight on behind me somewhere along the line, further along the line, instead of going forward, he went straight along by me. I know I thought at the time I thought “Blimey if you'd have seen the first one I aimed at him you'd have thought it wasn't a good shot”. But always remember that chap. I've been sorry ever since, bloody wicked game. When I walked by him, cos had to walk by him to keep straight on, he got both his arms straight out and his legs spread out and lay flat on his face as I walked, just as I walked by he done a shiver and lay still. Yeh, I can't see anything hellishly proud about that, not today. Now if that bloke had put his hands up I'm certain I couldn't have shot the block. But no, he threw a shovel at me and turned round and bolted. Well I'd got to do it. Well, you'd have done it anyway, you don't think what you're doing. No, I'm sure you don't. I went straight on then and dropped in a shell-hole. Soon as I'd shot him, within a minute or so it went as quiet as a grave everywhere, and the smoke from bursting shells, and that cleared. I bet I hadn't gone, ooh, not from here to the corner, from their second line, cos I could tell when I ran back later on, it come up, it was as clear – the sun shone and I dived straight into a shell-hole, soon as I could, shell-holes was everywhere, like pepper-box as the saying is, shell-holes everywhere. I dropped in one of them and I lay still. Didn't move, it was quiet, nothing happened, not a sound anywhere, and I told you, I turned round and looked back across no-man's land and oh hell, well, I told you before it was a massacre, they laid there all over the place, they'd been mowed down, I laid there, and, in the first place I looked straight in front and there were nothing there only all lovely open country, green open fields, you know big fields straight in front, and, nothing. Then behind in no-man's land it was a massacre. Yeh, I laid there for some time and, I told you, I see a bloke walking about. I bet that wasn't a couple of hundred yards away walking about. Oh course, I couldn't resist that, I took a steady aim and down he went. I waited, I pulled my rifle back in the shell-hole again, I lay still for a long time, I had another look and blowed if there wasn't another one just the same walking about and I thought Oh Lord you know, it was easy, being a good shot and all no trouble whatever. I took a steady aim and down he went but oh blimey, I'd hardly

began to pull me rifle back in the shell-hole when oh hell the dirt flew all over. They'd been waiting to see where the firing came from you see and I reckon that were the sun shining on my bayonet, see, glistened and they spotted me pulling that bayonet back in. Oh they, still, I daren't move. No no they riddled that scrat the dirt at the bottom of the shell-hole and chucked it up in front of me, you know, cos you were just low enough to be below the level of the ground then. Oh hell, I didn't half chuck some dirt up. Then, well, following that, I heard somebody shout and it were one of our chaps, he was, he come running across. I looked up I said, I was just saying "There's no room in here kid", but no good, they'd got that machine gun trained on that shell hole where I was and it was "Zraut" and down he went and as I said his head, he was outside and his head hung over on my shoulder and teemed of blood, I don't know where it hit him in the head or where I couldn't tell you but it –was soaking my sleeve and shoulder and I, I tell you what I done. I dragged him in the shell-hole, pulled him in to me, and I said before, dirty trick, I shoved him up in front of me. I lay there, oh hell of a while "fore I dare look out anywhere and then when I did look out, there they was a-coming to relieve the Germans and they was in a long line, like a long line, formation, not running, just slowly walking, just slowly walking gradually along there as if it was a Sunday parade, and there wasn't a shot fired from our lines, there wasn't a shell from our artillery fired at 'em just let 'em walk, yeh; course its obvious there were nobody left in our trenches to fire at 'em. They were all empty, all dead empty, nobody in 'em whatever, all where we'd left come from. The reserves they'd be right perhaps a mile or a couple of miles behind, but there were nobody in them trenches there. No, and when I see them I thought "Oh hell" I got up and ran like hell. They tell you they shouted, I heard somebody shout "Come in here, come in here". So I you know, where the shouting come from I made a dive straight for it, jumped in, that was the German second line trenches. Well, when I jumped in that trench I looked round and there were four British Officers and three privates, and I made four, made eight all told. How they stood in a bunch these four officers and, these other three chaps close by, you know, sort of a heap and the Germans couldn't have been 200 yards away, not much more than in the longline, and one of these officers was saying "What shall we do? See, he was asking them whether to put up a fight or pack in, that was it that was the gist of the talk. And nobody answered at all. Well I did, I was a silly bugger. But nobody knows, you can't tell. But I don't know why but I couldn't help it. I said Well before we went over the top our Colonel told us his last words was "Don't stop till you get to Berlin and do not take prisoners". I said "that was his words before we cam over, that was our Colonel". I said and if he's told, if they've been told the same as us, well we might as well go one way as another. Well, this officer that had been asking the questions, I reckon were the senior officer, he must have been and he said Ah that's all I want, that's all I want to know", and so we did then, we all fired straight in front of us at this long line coming along we all fired direct at em, straight in front of us and they parted, just parted away and come straight by us, each side, and they never blooming well stopped to look at us, walked straight by us and filled their front lines up, and left us in their second line. course, they didn't bother, they knew very well we could never get back, they knew we should be picked up. They knew we couldn't get back, and that's what happened.

## Side Two

- 070 First Battalion – Territorials – marched to Dunstable, Portsmouth then to Chelmsford. First volunteers went on train to Oxford, then to Cowley Barracks to join Oxford and Bucks Light Infantry HM didn't join Territorials – did sport instead. Many of Territorials had been in Boys Scouts. Built Drill Hall just before War broke out. Boys joined as had week's holiday free – for works holiday you had no money. When they went to camp had 1 shilling a day
- 109 Manoeuvres 1913 – very interesting. Let youth go into canteen for drink in evening, object to get them to join army – quite a few did before war.
- 127 Youth interested in Athletics and Saturday night dances, fishing and bathing in river, weekends Joe Scragg and he walked to Woolstone, went fishing and had night at Wharf Inn – B & B only a few pence. Got up and fished again and came back Sunday afternoon. Always training for athletics. In summer, there was a sports meeting everywhere – could go to one every Saturday – Bletchley, Aylesbury, Leighton Buzzard, Watford, Northampton, Bedford – were advertised in "Athletics News". Was in Wolverton AAC. In later years on committee, formed tug of war team after 2<sup>nd</sup> War.
- 166 In 1913 – troops put on boxing show in Park. Army seemed great, a marvellous life – glamorous in "You fancy as a young chap, seeing a bunch of cavalry giving exhibition of "pegging", well that was a hell of an attraction for us young chaps. Then on top of that you see the smashing uniforms they used to have. All gold braid and all that and the spurs. I was hellishly fascinating".
- 195 Can't remember any Bradwell girls marring any of the troops. No jealousy by local lads – mucked in – made welcome by them – allowed to wander about camp as you liked. In canteen with Sid Carroll talking to chaps and they (HM & SC) were saying how nice it was in Army and they'd like to join. One turned to them "You keep out the bloody show. Keep out of it." A tough life. If you got in t rouble, first thing you did to get away was join army. Happened in Bradwell on at least two occasions – chaps put girls in family way, did bunk into army If you couldn't get a job joined the army. Outside Engineers pub used to be large board with coloured uniformed soldiers – fascinating. Army then was mainly "old scruffs" – today they tell me you've got to have a degree to get in. If you want to court in those days they sent you to the Army if you liked it or not.
- 245 Can't remember special entertainments for troops, Picture Palace had just opened in 1911. Soldiers invited to people's houses for tea. When troops were marching in column – not allowed to break column and cross road. When whistle blew had to be in Works before it finished blowing. could be late if brigade came along (4000 men) to keep you back. Would be locked out for quarter of hour from Works then if late.
- 300 People used to come out and watch them.
- 312 Bunch of soldiers came back from Stratford on train, drunk on Saturday night. Climbed on roof, going under overhanging trees they were swept off on to road.

- 370 Night before went up for attack had proper tea – meat and bread instead of biscuits etc. and mug of tea with rum. Then told to get kitbag and put all clothes in it. – Greatcoat etc, - leaving only battledress. Then told to write letter home “tell them what you want to tell them, except that you’re going over the top. Sent letter to mother – just ordinary – in any case I shouldn’t have wrote and said I’m going in a battle tomorrow morning. That’s natural when you write to your mother you don’t want to upset her. It’s the sort of affair. Well, I’m getting on very well, and I’ve met so and so, Arthur Parker and we’re doing very well and I’m having plenty of food and nice and comfy. You write a letter home then, I should say 90% did, you try and write a cheerful letter home, you don’t say “Oh hell I’m going into battle tomorrow, and I’m frightened to death”. You wouldn’t dream of that – or shouldn’t do. No you try and write, cheer ‘em up at home. How’s so and so getting on write back let me know” that type of letter. That’s the letter you wrote home.
- 415 Wrote religion and next of kin in paybook. wrote letter in afternoon. Wasn’t drunk when went over top – sure nobody was all you had, you had a warm glow, I’ll put it that way, I should say that the proper word to use would you had a glow of confidence, I think that would sum the lot up.
- 443 Had no superstitions – only a belief in what will be will be – I had that belief just before I got wounded the first time and that give me so much confidence that I seemed to have no fear after that.
- 463 Lights 3<sup>rd</sup> fag off match a joke – not a superstition.
- 471 Lots of humour.
- 494 Had parcel from home which he shared out with Joe Scragg, Fatty Odell and Sid Carroll. Two woollen khaki balaclava helmets in there too. Parcel brought up to trenches. When anyone got parcel share out between four of them. Cut cake up, between them, mentioned helmets. Asked if anyone wanted one. Fatty said he did – sold it for five shillings. Later HM read letter from Mother and she said I hope you’ll enjoy the parcels and the balaclava helmets will keep you and Sid warm because Sid’s Mum and me have put together and made a big parcel, so he’d flogged Sid’s helmet. Fatty had to give it back – given to Sid. Both wore balaclavas with tin hats on top. Said to Sid when old (Captain) Birchall comes along he’ll be as jealous as hell “. In early hours of morning, cold, Birchall came along and said take that bloody thing off your head. Said Why? Take it off. You’ve got that on, a German can put his head over the trench and tap you on the shoulder and you wouldn’t know he’s there. Take it off, take it off. HM Oh =hell. Never did wear it again. Sent it home – years later found it.
- 568 Capt. Birchall – about 35 – 40. Millionaire family. After war Birchall’s sister sent Joe Scragg cheque for £100 – worth £10,000 today as the saying is. Invited him to see them – but he never went. Joe was his batman. In England had band – bandsmen and bugle band – when on active service packed away – split up as batman and stretcher bearer. Joe was a bugler. Batmen looked after officer “in every way” – cleaned shoes buttons, got shaving water, cleaned clothes. Birchall told HM at court martial it don’t matter if it’s your brother, you’re not supposed to bother em. There are stretcher bearers to look after wounded. That’s not your job. Your job is to fight never

mind about them, if your brother falls let him stop, you mustn't interfere; it's your job to keep on fighting. But when they went over top at Somme, Birchall got hit, Joe picked him up and carried him back to trench – if Joe had done as Birchall told HM he'd have left B there – but Joe got DCM. Birchall got DSO. B died of wounds. A very brave man. Sid hated sight of him because B gave him and HM CB. Through acting the fool. But he amused HM. B was a Regular Territorial Officer – in before war. HM had seen him do brave things – went over to look in no –mans land where trenches only 100 yards apart. Lieutenants were all civilians "Pinky" Brown very nice lived through war – believed to have become Colonel. Carried HM in when wounded.