

## DOP/01/012

Hawtin Mundy  
Born February 1894

- 002 Only went over top once in battle in 5 years of war – went on few raids and listening posts. Clump of trees between front lines – one at Somme called 7 Sisters – sent people out there to listen, Germans did too and sometimes bumped into each other.
- 032 At Plugstreet, quiet night. Duties were two hours on, four off, stand on fire step at night looking around. HM was a lance-corporal. One of his section on duty, looked over top and called HM to him. Corporal I reckon there's a Jerry down ere – in barbed wire. There's a Jerry down in this barbed wire kid I said No He says I reckon there is he says, you look. HM looked – a bit of a moon cloud passed by and moon shone a little and HM could see a white face Oh hell I says You're right, there is a Jerry there. He says I know there is. He said, you listen. We listened and we heard a bit of shuffling. I thought Blimey well then I says to him I said, Go along and fetch Pinky Brown. So he went along the trench and fetched Lt. Brown. I told him, I said "I dunno", I said, I reckon there's a Jerry down there in the wire. I says see what you think of it. So we stood quiet as a grave you know, looked down and he could hear some shuffling. He said I believe there is. Then the moon came out again a little bit. It shone white, see. He said, Its right. Then he said Go over and see what it is. I said All right, so he told the chaps each side of where we was you see, about 30 or 40 yards each side of us told them. Don't do any firing, because at night you have your rifle on the parapet and every now and again you loose off a few rounds, you know just help keep yourself awake, never mind, they may hit one of them filling sandbags of theirs just the other side, so you loose off a few rounds in the night. So he went along he said don't do any firing for a little while till I tell you. so where this was, this Jerry, we went along a bit and this Pinks Brown said, he said You give me your rifle, he said, you take my revolver. I said All right So he give me a leg and slid over the parapet, sandbags and got down to the barbed wire and I crawled gently along, you know, and oh hell, I was frit, never mind anything else. I crawled gently along, thought, Oh blimey sand just afore I got there I could hear Chuck Chicuk, you know I thought Oh hell it isn't. Just as I got to it I heard a hell of a scuffle and when I got there do you know what it were? Some silly buffer had threw an empty biscuit tin over with some grub init were full of rats. Yeh and oh I didn't hear the last of that, you can just imagine what happened after that. Old Sid Carroll and old Fatty Odell, every now and again they'd say Co blimey, old Hawt bloody nearly won a V.C. with a catchin' a couple of rats. You can tell how I had to go through the hoop for that.
- 093 Had rats in packs when asleep – they were everywhere so much food laying about-almost tame. When on duty at night to keep awake – would stick piece of cheese on end of bayonet and lay it along sandbag. Would see rat nibble cheese and then we pressed the trigger.
- 106 Could fire as much as you like – no restrictions. Had boxes of ammunition alongside you. 200 rounds on packs on you. Always kept few bullets in great coat pocket as if cold or frosty they used to be a job to press down into the chambers. Would let rifle off just to relieve drowsiness.

- 132 Didn't keep voices down in trenches – even when little distance apart no instructions were given – you knew your job – to stop an attack.
- 142 In normal day casualties – Plugstreet Wood – put your head up and you'd had it. First casualty there – Bertie Song Just a bit vacant Bertie was. He was no chicken to join the Terriers. Had not been there a day had been told to keep head down but Bertie wanted to see no-mans-land.

## BATTLE OF ARRAS PART 2

- 171 Very short of shells at that time. Early there Germans never seemed short of shells. House behind German lines, sniper there – signalled back for Artillery to blow it up – couldn't do it as they'd used the day's issue of shells up – perhaps three or four only. Had orders for everybody to fire simultaneously at cottage with rapid rifle fire. Knocked half of it down with rifle fire. At Arras the shells were stacked "like little hay-ricks". – thousands and thousands of them. Germans captured prior to Arras said that a British barrage was hell- terrifying. Guns stood wheel to wheel.
- 225 After they'd gone by it was still quiet, no rifle fire, nothing. All quiet not a sound. We settled down, well there were the four officers; they sat together, like side by side on the fire step, that was a German trench of course, sat on the fire step, and this end – I'm looking at it as though I'm looking at it as we sat. Now this end, I was at the end and next to me was a kid, I don't know they was all different regiments. This kid where was in the Signal Corps – Signaller – and then there were the four officers all sitting in a row at the bottom of the German trench. Well this kid next to me, we got pally, you soon get friendly you know in a war, me and him got, you know, got talking to each other and always remember he'd got a whatsit in his bag in his pocket – tin of uh coffee au lait – Cocoa aut lait, that's it – sweet stuff like Nestles Milk made with coffee or cocoa in it. So we had that, we had it between us. He said he said, Look he said, we'll save this for later on and then we'll have the other half later on. I said All right well now it was as quiet, quiet as a grave. Ooh, it must have been I should think getting on, like as a rough guess round about 10 o' clock in the morning perhaps. And then all at once you never heard such a hell of a roar. Ooh, shells flew everywhere. Roar – well, you know how a train goes rushing through a station – grrr? Like that. One massive roar. Shells and the dirt were flying ooh hell. We got down the bottom of this German trench as far as we could get our heads right at the bottom low as we could get and uh, you could hear a big 'un above all the others, you know the ordinary shrapnel bursting in the air and then there was the high explosive shells that knock a shell hole just about as you can get in, like the one as I was in, and then there was this big one. Well, one of them big ones, where they drop you could put a tram bus; you could put a bus in. Well, you could hear this big one, see, what they call traversing see along the line, perhaps a couple of hundred yards that way, you'd hear a roar and a crash and ooh hell. And then you'd wait perhaps 20 or 30 seconds then roar, crash again. Getting nearer, see? And then you thought, "Hell, hold tight that's on top of all this other rubbish. Then, a bit further and so that kept on, you see, like traversing they were then what they call them big naval guns, garrison, naval guns, hell of a big shell. And, uh, eventually it had to happen. You hear it coming along, next one close, and then whoosh crash. Well I said after at the time, you know that's the last blooming shell

they fired and yet that dropped in amongst us". But course it wasn't the last one, I were flattened out. Well next thing, I knew, I was smothered in dirt and rubble ooh, rubble I brushed off cut me neck and off of me tin hat and I well I stretched me arms first, I thought Oh they're both on. So I got me legs and arms anyway. And uh, brushed the dirt off me head, I put me hand under me face, that were full of blood, I thought Oh blimey that made me nose bleed I expect, concussion. And me foot, that hurt. That's all that hurt really and me face was sore. And this kiddy next to me, this signaller, me and him our heads were close together. I knocked him on the arm, I said, Are you all right kid. And he never spoke never answered I said Are you all right? Never answered. I thought, Blimey so I knocked the dirt off his head he'd got a piece of shell clean through the centre, the top of his helmet and sticking out under his chin. Now then, so's he'd had it. So I crawled up and stood on me feet me foot wasn't too bad, I'd got a bit of shrapnel through the back of me shoe, and there was three officers standing there, these three officer. And everybody else were laying flat out. Now these three officers hadn't been touched. Well one of 'em, I went up to 'em naturally, I went and joined 'em. So one of 'em said well I thought he were a you know a fairly brave chap to say it he said it he said I'm going out, he said I'll give meself up and get the stretcher bearers get some German stretcher-bearers. Well now another officer, he said, All right, he says I'll come with you as well see? And the third officer he said the same. He says Oh he says Well I'll come as well. I thought, Blimey oh Riley that – I were the only one on me feet. So I course naturally I said Well I said if you all three going, I'm coming as well. I said I'm not stopping here, I said, You three are going, I'm coming. So this third officer he turned round to me in a hell of a temper he says You stay here he says, and bind these wounded up. I says I don't know anything about it. I says I don't know anything about wounded. I didn't know anything about it. He said you bind them up. I says No. I said, I said if you're all going to fetch German stretcher bearers. I said, they'll know what to do, I don't know what to do. Well, he drew his revolver out, he rubbed the muzzle along me forehead, he says, you attempt to follow me, he said and I'll blow your brains out. I thought Ooh 'ell I said, All right. So UI never done no more, I stood there. Now that first one as said he'd give himself up he went first. As soon as – course the front of the German trench had been blew in see, so it wasn't didn't have to do any climbing, he just sort of sloped up, you see, where it had been blew in. He climbed up, he walked, off he went, well, within a second or two next one got up, followed him, another second one followed him, I waited a while, I can't remember now how long ago that it is, well, as well as I can remember it might have been getting on for perhaps half a minute, I wouldn't be sure. Then I heard it go grratatatgr. I thought Oh hell so I, I waited a minute I crawled up where they'd all been knocked in, had a quick peak over the top, they all three lay dead. So I crawled back in the trench and this other officer that had been flattened out, he turned to me he says they're dead ain't they? I says Yeh I said they're all dead. I said, Well I said I don't know anything about ambulance work – you always used to carry your own field dressing they call it, in your tunic pocket – that's bandages and cotton wool. So I said I don't know I said but I'll bandage you up as well as I can. I had a look at him the officer now as far as I can remember he'd got his leg smashed and I know he'd got his wrist all smashed, that hit his leg and his wrist and he'd got a bit of shrapnel stuck in the top of his nose, that's right I remember it now and I looked at the next bloke he'd got his legs smashed, that's right, he'd got his leg busted and then the third one the other end, oh, I never seen anything like it. It had, the blast had busted his thighs, you know your thigh bone, it had busted them through so as both his legs were wrong way

round a I said to, I tried to make this officer comfortable. I said to this chap with his leg busted, I says Can I do anything for you? He said, No kid no he said I'll do it – leave it alone. He said I expect he knew I knew nothing. And this chap that with his legs twisted I said to him, I said Can I do anything for you? No he said You can't he said just make me comfortable. Well I dragged him up as well as I could, he sort of directed me how to do it then. And that's how we settled down then for the rest of the day. As the day wore on, you know, this was morning. Well in the afternoon, I you see what I done I kept lighting fags and in the afternoon I could see he were getting groggy and he said to me he called to the officer, only just a few yards away, he said Give me your revolver. And this officer he knew what he wanted it for, this officer called me and he said here you are. He says Here's this revolver he said throw it away. So I threw it over the top pouf the trench out the way cause he wanted to do himself in, I expect, this kid. And, so I kept lighting fags for him and later in the afternoon he called again, I went to him and got his old fag tin out, I put he put a fag in his mouth and he said here you are with this fag tin, he said here kid, he said you have this fag tin – you have these fags he said, I shan't want them. He said; if you ever get out of this he said tell me Mum won't you. I says Yeh I'll tell her, I'll tell her. but I couldn't I didn't know who he was, I couldn't tell, I says Yeh I'll tell her. Well within a minute or so of that I'd lit his fag it dropped out of his mouth and he said Oh God help me and that was the end of that.

- 437 Only left three alive – another barrage from British later is afternoon all that barrage they put on, I bet they didn't miss a square yard of that ground – all chaps killed and wounded in the no man's land they must have been blew to ribbons.
- 458 After that barrage none hit. got dust. Never looked out of trench all day. At dust looked out of back of him. As they got closer HM climbed out of back of trench when they were 50-60 yards away and put hands up and slowly walked towards them. Met an officer who gave him a slap across face. I knew afterwards I deserved it cos I'd got a lighted fag in me mouth. He hit me across the mouth cos I'd got a lighted fag and that burst me face, I was having a good time. Officer turned to two young Germans told them to take the prisoner back. 200-200 yards past where he'd shot the two soldiers earlier, they were ambulance blokes picking up the dead and wounded, rotten bugger I was, but there you don't know, do you? Took him back into railway cutting that ran parallel with the front line, packed with troops – how the hell could we have captured that. We was all killed getting as far as we did. Great big dugouts tunnelled into embankment. Taken to H.Q. One of the soldiers opened door is back of dugout and closed it behind him. Two dozen soldiers crowded round. One could speak a little English, said they were in the Machine Gun section. Oh I said that's funny, I'm a machine gunner too. I thought Oh what a bloody lie.
- 560 Door opened and he and other German went down corridor knocked on door and went into large carpeted room with arm chairs and long table. Officers all around. HM taken in front of senior officer. He said Spreches sie Deutsch? Turned should to him, bent down and said Oxford and Bucks Light Infantry. He hit the table with both fists shouted at two kids and they ran grabbed HM, twisted him round and bundled him out into corridor. HM grinned to himself Oh hell they're more frightened than I am. Went back and were surrounded by Germans again, HM presumes they were asking what happened and what the two guards had to do with him. HM wondered if they'd been

told to take him out and shoot him. Went out across the rails climbed up bank other side – HM thought I'm safe now Went little way then stopped and turned round.

637 Well then we turned round and looked across no-man's land well, all along no man's land there wasn't a shot being fired but it was lit up like daylight because all the time you see from their trenches and our trenches they kept firing starshells and that lights up like electric light in the sky Now and again there would be a red one go up along the line signals for the artillery I suppose. Well, when we looked across there you could see all our blokes laying dead all over the place. I was lit up as clear as that. If only an artist, a well-know artist could have only stood there with us and painted that scene as it was there, and they'd took it back and hung it in the rooms or cabinet headquarters of other countries they'd never dared declare another war if they sat and looked at that I know I'm certain, if they could have put all the colouring in, you know, the blokes, Germans in between the first and second line of theirs and our laying about they daren't have declared a war not if they'd got any sense and see that hanging up.

690 Years later when we got old, my old darling – she always used to read the Good Book before we went to sleep, and she used to read As I passed through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil. Now then, I always remembered that you see and the old dear used to read it and I used to say then I did pass through the valley of the shadow of death and I felt no evil. Those people that I killed deliberately killed, I didn't hate those chaps, I didn't know them I didn't hate them, and as I've said before I'm sorry and I'm ashamed I done it because those chaps might have been nice young chaps with a family of a couple of little kids and all that. You know, it's awful, there's nothing brave about it, heroes and cowards there's no such thing. I don't believe it.

730 Stood there, looked across and then moved off, went some distance until came to back of farmhouse. went round back and one of kids got hold of his arm, the other one stepped back. Other one led him to wall at back of house. I thought, Oh blimey not now! thought they've never took me all this way to shoot me. – didn't know what to do whether to have a go for it, decided he could do nothing. Guard put hand in pocket and fetched out packet of fags.

## Side Two

000 Offered HM a fag. Well, that's what caused it for me then because, going from one extreme to the other I started to bawl like a great baby, I couldn't help it, just for a few seconds, but it soon went off. HM put hand in pocket took his tin of Woodbines out and handed it to the solders – all three had a smoke tin of chaps who died.

016 After smoke – wandered off into night across country just like three kids going out for a drink in peace-time there was no hatred nothing between us just pally.

028 In front line of trenches Germans were young chaps like themselves, just thrown into war, Well you went there to kill each other, but you didn't go there to hate each other it was your job.

034 Wandered for some distance, went along narrow. In distance could hear singing it got louder – Tipperary a mob of English all caught together. HM wanted to join them, but

not allowed to because HM being taken for interrogation. Further down road heard rumbling getting nearer – German artillery being brought up to front. Stood on side of road to let them pass. One of leaders on horses leaned over and let fly with whip. HM ducked and it hit the other two. A good swearing match ensued.

- 074 Wandered on to a village. Went to old farmhouse. In dairy was trestle table with forms. Filled with German soldiers – all pleasant to HM. Eating black bread and fat that looked like lard – their supper. HM stood against wall, felt German catch hold of leg, HM put hand down and he gave him a piece of black bread and lard. Where can you say there's hatred there? Others couldn't see this.
- 103 That was kindness with real soldiers see fighting men, I'll put it that way, them at the front, all infantry men that were fighting, no hatred. Got hatred with older hands that had been called up, perhaps some had sons killed. they'd got hatred galore, bathes of them. Civilian population was starving especially Red brought us back from starvation to physical fitness and well clothed and well fed – the British Red X not any other country, the British. Had everything in way of food – when it arrived – but had to live until Red Cross got in touch. HM nearly six months before Red Cross reached him. Was physically fit when captured – well trained and sporting – weighed approximately 13 stone. When parcel arrived almost 6 months after being captured – weighed 8 stone 5 pounds. While waiting many died of starvation. In Dolman in Westphalia coffins lay in rows in morning. Parcels just began to arrive a Dolman when they were bundled off to East Prussia – parcels went on round Germany searching for them.
- 153 Stopped at farm only for a chat – after half an hour wandered off into night again, went long way – HM's foot was hurting – had shrapnel in it. Came to a large chateau – all marble steps to front of house. One of soldiers went inside, came out, said something to other, then all three sat in row on marble steps. HM tired (no sleep for previous two nights) – fell asleep – all kind. Had breakfast with them – bowlful of stew – horsemeat and prunes. I always used to have prunes and custard when we were at home.
- 193 Up came man on horseback – a Uhlan – similar to Household Cavalry, that's when the tide turned. From all up the front with these young fighting kids was all kindness, to me anyway, and then it started the other way round.
- 206 Previously HM had been taken into chateau. Man sat alone in room – asked questions – told him regiment and number, battalion – brigade – HM said he didn't know nor the division. Man queried it – didn't know army corps. Why, HM said he hadn't been to France before, said he didn't know anything Oh don't tell me that he spoke in better English than I can speak. But he spotted the wound stripes – HM then said he'd only just come out again to France and didn't know anybody. Then he told HM what division, brigade and corps he (HM) was in. Dismissed HM and then Uhlan came and took HM – a long way – HM on foot and other on horseback. HM passed two young lads on way back up to front. HM parched, beckoned to them for a drink. One gave HM a bottle, he took a swig and then the soldier grabbed it back – it was full of rum Oh hell, didn't that go down beautiful. Uhlan went for the two kids with his whip.
- 261 Eventually reached village – of British already there. They'd been examined. HM hid pocket wallet in putties – got away with it. They sent to village of Donail

– old French military barracks. Had to work everyday – some taken to front to work and were killed. Nobody registered as prisoners at this time. HM had to dig big pit, near explosives. If British broke through, when they got to that railway station, it would be blown up. There some time, English sent over long range shells – hit gas tanks at back of barracks. When English started shelling the Germans put prisoners in top of barracks and they went in the cellars. Nobody tried to escape – impossible – had to get up through your own lines. Had to organise escape to get into neutral country. Nowhere to go. Some escaped later into Holland.

340 When HM was in East Prussia three of them thought of escaping into Russia – didn't know that Russia had had a revolution.

348 At Donal for some time. Then moved in cattle trucks went to fort a Lille. That's when cruelty started savage cruelty. Centre of fort like barracks square, all around it were cells – about 50 in each cell. In yard a man stood on table dressed as Canadian soldier, spoke perfect English with Canadian twang. He said, you've been sent here especially for cruelty. You'll be treated here with cruelty because the German colony in East Africa the British have ill treated Germans there and we want you, if you will, you'll be all issued with a piece of paper to write on and tell your parents and relatives in England that you're going to be ill treated because the British are ill treating Germans in Africa. They came round, they dished us all with a bit of paper and we all stood there, the whole mob of us and tore the paper in bits and said Bugger you and threw the paper on the floor. Then shut in cells. Hot at times. Bowl of water and bread once a day. When hot, parched, men collapsed, no blankets just lay there on bare stone floor. Along back of each cell was a corridor along which the guards walked. Put tub in there, like a half water butt – for toilet- no paper – like animals. In morning guards would grab two or three and make them carry out tub to empty it. Little room to move in cells. Men fainted and collapsed. Dragged them along floor out into barrack ck square, threw bucket of water over them, and threw more over if necessary till they came round. Then taken back to cells. One man in his cell collapsed. They shouted through bars, dragged him out, put water over him, he never moved, more water later = he never moved. Dragged off and never seen again.

452 Germans had cookhouse at one end of yard and canteen at other. Man came past with potatoes and bloater Once HM was parched with thirst, hot day, German came along, beckoned him for a drink, away he went HM though Oh hell I think I've found a kind one at last. Came back half a bucket of cold water, stood a foot away and slowly tipped water on to burning hot pavement outside, then walked away, that's what I call cruelty.

499 Moved from Lille, in train load to registered P.O.W. camp. Before went there taken down into Lille for bath – great. Went down country lane – bushes covered with shoots of bread and cheese – used to eat them as kids in Bradwell – big hedge where they had a break – when we moved from there that hedge was as bare as if it had been eat with locusts. Further along road, one or two groggy, two or three rows in front on outside one was wobbling HM's companion (Jack) said He's got a hell of a job to get along. Suddenly he stepped out and German gave him a belt with butt of a rifle, flattened him out on side of road – then kicked him in the gutter and left him laying there. He must have been as dead a door nail. I turned to old Jack on the outside of me, I were weak enough, Jack I said change places with me, I'm going

to give that bugger for what he's done. And old Jack pushed me back he said Stop where you are he said you ain't got a cat in hell's chance he'd do the same to you.

578 Went into factory, all had to strip out. Stark naked went through door. German sat there with bucket full of fat and tackle – had scoop and as you went to him he give you a slap in the privates with one wallop, some underneath showers. Beautiful – because they were lousy and dirty, hadn't used toilet paper etc. Then the laughs started. One of us said Ooh, ah look, look, all the hairs had come off as clean as is you were a baby. Some chap sat next to me he said Blimey, kid he said when I go out I'm going to ask that old boy if he can put some in a tin for me. He said I'll take that home to the Old Dutch, save her buying it at the chemist.