

PRE-GREECE

Lance Corporal William Dexter, Corps of Military Police

From the "war-experience.org" website, as related in Noah Scott's "Dad - Military Policeman", Para 5.12 (great similarities with the Archivist's father's CMP experiences)

Coldstream Guards, 1935

When I got to Caterham the first person I met at the Depot gates was Sergeant Major Britton (Tibby Britton we used to call him - a well known character at that time). {Archivist's Note: This was in fact the infamous Ronald 'Tibby' Brittain - see below}. I spent six months at Caterham and owing to the amount of duties there I managed to get out only once; for a brief visit to Croydon.



Bill (sitting, right) and his fellow Coldstream Guard recruits squad training at Caterham - under the gentle, watchful and caring eye (and voice) of Sgt Major Brittain

After the Passing out Parade in January 1936, I was sent to the 1st Battalion of the Coldstream Guards at Windsor. A few weeks after arriving, King George the Fifth died and I was on duty at the Ceremonial Service for him in London, and at the funeral at Windsor Castle.

In September of that year, trouble flared up in Palestine and the 3rd Battalion of the Coldstream Guards was ordered there. They asked for volunteers from my Battalion to make the 3rd up to full strength and I volunteered. We landed at Haifa in October and went by train to Jerusalem.

The trouble quietened down in March 1937 and we then returned to England. I did duties at Buckingham Palace, also at St James' Palace and the Bank of England. I was on duty at the Coronation of George the Sixth; it rained most of the day.

In the Autumn of that year the 3rd Battalion was going to Egypt for a two year tour of duty so I again volunteered to go with them. I returned home in February 1939, my time with the colours was coming to an end. In May, I was transferred to the reserve and went to work at Rampton State Mental Institution as a male nurse.



“Arab Rebels” 1938

Corps of Military Police, 1939

On the 1st September 1939 I was called back to the colours and I became a member of the Military Police. In January 1940 I left for Palestine with the 1st Cavalry Division and was billeted in a house on Mount Carmel, overlooking the harbour. The Australians and other troops had started to arrive and we had to police the Port. I saw a ship which had brought Jewish refugees to Palestine, but it had not been allowed to land. I heard a bomb blast and saw the ship begin to roll on its side and sink in the harbour. Lots of refugees climbed on the upper side, but many were drowned.

When France collapsed, some of us were sent into Syria via Galilee to escort convoys of Polish and a few Free French troops out. I also escorted a convoy of Spanish troops who had fled Spain when General Franco took over.