

One Man and His War - Part 2 - In Khartoum by Eve Bendall (daughter of Colonel Bendall)

During the rest of May and June life seemed to continue much as before; he (Col Bendall) was given a 10 week old lion cub with which he had 'great fun; there were trips with the Sirdar, tennis, shooting and home riding, alternating with battalion business and exercises. There were dust storms, locusts - and an outbreak of 'cerebrospinal influenza' among the men which seems to have been dealt with by taking swabs and using temporary isolation. In one period of 10 days, 5 men died - 1 from dysentery - 1 in an accident and 3 as a result of the heat which clearly was their main problem. It is hard for us, today, to realise the situation, then, with mail - *"Your last letter was written on 26 May and got here 10 June pm"* . Marie was still much in his thoughts - *" I had a ripping photo from Marie - I find (which has never happened before) that I am as much in love as a year ago - I can only look forward to Aug 19 1916 - she will be 21 then and will let me know one way or the other."*

On 26 July he sent an angry letter - he had received orders to send 1/2 his battalion to France while the rest stayed in the Sudan.

"The Sirdar has sympathised with my natural desire to keep together a battalion for which I have been totally responsible - but it's no use - I was wild at first but one has to obey and make the best of it."

Perhaps the Sirdar had some influence because a week later *"had another wire from the War Office canceling all draft arrangements - we are pleased immensely that we are to stay together - and hope it means a move for the whole battalion shortly in which case you will have a cable"*.

Add to the code - "head worse"= Gallipoli - and "head same = Persian Gulf or Aden. On September 13th the cable was sent "head worse - tell Nafferton".

The pleasant life was ending.

The battalion was given a great send-off from the Sudan: the Khartoum Times wrote

'After a brief stay of less than 5 months in the Sudan, the 2nd Battalion, 3rd London Regiment, city of London Fusiliers left the Sudan last Wednesday, September 15th, for an unknown destination.'

On the day of their departure, His Excellency, the Sirdar and Governor General went down to Port Sudan in order to bid them farewell ...

"During the time you have been under my command in the Sudan, nothing could have been better than the behaviour of all the ranks under very trying climatic conditions. The greatest credit is due to you, Colonel Bendall, to your second-in-command Major France and to your Adjutant, your Quartermaster, the Company and other officers, as well as to the Warrant officers, no-commissioned officers and men of this Battalion who, in the short time you have been in this country have endeared yourselves to both the British and Native communities who all unite with me in wishing you Goodbye. God speed and Good luck wherever you may be".

(Richard Agius would spend his 19th birthday on 19th September in transit going back to Port Said and thence to Gallipoli).