

World War 2 and My Part in It

We had just received the news. We were to return to the U. K. for leave. We had been in the Gold Coast for over eighteen months, patrolling up and down the borders of French Togoland and French Dahomey, and checking the districts for any signs of hostile activity by the Vichy French Authorities. The coastal towns were a hotbed of unrest. The main towns Cotonu, Lome, and Le Grand Popo gave us a hard time.

But now the American Army was arriving at the Port of Takoradi in large numbers, and soon they were swamping this part of the Gold Coast. But things were not quite hunky dory. The troops they were pouring in were all Spanish speaking, Mexicans, Costa Ricans, and these countries on the Bight of Benin were French. Now, it was not our worry. We got by with pigeon English and signs. And so we loaded our wagons and set off for Apapa Wharf near Lagos in Nigeria.

After three weeks travel through rough country we arrived at camp and awaited our troop ship for our journey home. After a week in camp it arrived, It was a South African ship named S. S. Johan De Wit, crewed by Afrikaans speaking members. Two days after arrival the ship set off on its journey home, calling at the Port of Freetown in Sierra Leone on its way to Gibraltar to join a convoy for the voyage home to the U.K. After much ducking and diving and zig-zagging across the ocean, we finally arrived in the Irish Sea, and made for the port of Gourock, and the entrance to the River Clyde.

Setting off upriver for The King George 5th dock in Glasgow we were all in high spirits on this our last lap, when we nearly came to a disaster. Along a road skirting the river appeared a double decker bus. Most of the men were below decks getting their kit ready for going ashore, having not seen a bus for two years the men on deck moved over to have a look, when all of a sudden a bus conductress ran down the stairs, grabbed the pole and did a twirl around. The roar that went up from the men could be heard for miles and brought the other men rushing up from below. They all went to look at the bus and its conductress, and the ship was tipping over on its side.

This ship had two propellers and now it was on its side, one propeller was out of the water and still turning. The seamen went berserk and started shouting and pushing the soldiers wanting us to spread ourselves out evenly about the ship. To think we had dodged the U-Boats on our voyage home, without a mishap and now we were about to capsize on the river Clyde, not far from Glasgow, all because of a flash of a girls leg. What would the headlines in the papers have been? Girl sinks ship on river Clyde. They had not seen a white woman for two years. The officers were not too happy about the situation but the crew had their revenge. We were supposed to be issued with sandwiches for our journey home by train. We were given a half a loaf of bread and a three inch thick lump of Corned Beef which was immediately tossed over the side in to the dock, for the fishes,

Welcome Home.!!

Cpl. G Grant.

By Gerald Grant
Local Seaside Historian

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