

1929 REGIMENTAL CHRONICLE
1st Bn OXFORDSHIRE & BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LIGHT INFANTRY

SUMMARY OF FIRST BATTALION DIARY

Parkhurst.

January 3.—Draft of 27 Recruits arrived from the Regimental Depot, 2nd Lieut. T. G. Rowley proceeded to Army School of Signalling, Catterick, and qualified (Instructor's Certificate).

January 11.—Lieut. R. H. Doyne awarded "Diploma" Army School of Physical Training.

January 14.—Draft of 28 Recruits arrived from the Regimental Depot.

January 21.—2nd Lieut. J. S. R. Edmunds proceeded on Long Course at Army School of Physical Training on January 8th.

Captain W. A. R. Ames attached to Army School of Education from 13/1/29 to 26/1/29.

January 28.—2nd Lieut. P. C. Boileau to be Lieutenant (Authority, L.G. dated 15/1/29).

January 31st.—Captain W. A. R. Ames to Royal Military Academy as an Officer of a Company of Gentlemen Cadets.

February 1.—Lieut. D. S. Newton-King to Sudan Defence Force and Seconded.

February 4.—Lieut. Hon. C. B. A. Bernard on Range Finder Course at Royal Military College of Science.

February 9.—2nd Lieut. J. A. G. R. H. Harden gazetted to Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry (Authority, L.G. dated 1/2/29).

February 14.—Major-General H. H. S. Knox, C.B., D.S.O., Director of Military Training, visited the Regiment.

February 26.—Draft of 1 Sergeant, 1 Corporal, 44 Privates and 9 boys sailed from Southampton on H.T. *Nevasa* for 52nd.

March 4.—2nd Lieut. C. D. L. Pepys (Sup. Res.) attached to Regiment for four weeks.

March 5.—Lieut.-Colonel M. F. Day, M.C., on Southern Command Administrative Exercise till March 9th.

March 5.—Inter-Company Cross Country Run. Won by X Company.

March 7.—Draft of 35 Recruits arrived from the Regimental Depot,

March 9.—Draft of 2 C.Q.M.S. and 3 Sergeants all with families, sailed from Tilbury for 52nd.

March 14.—Isle of Wight Point-to-Point. Regimental race for Chargers and Government hired horses.

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April 4.—Old Berkshire Hunt Point-to-Point. Team race v. 2nd Bn. Rifle Brigade. Rifle Brigade won by 41 points to 31 and retain the Cup.

April 9.—Inspection of the Regiment by the G.O.C in-C, Southern Command, and presentation of Long Service and Good Conduct Medals to Lce.-Sgt. Hopkins, Cpl. Bone and Pte. Turner.

April 13.—Regimental Race with Pegasus Club Point-to-Point at Poppet's Hill.

April 22.—Lieut. W. G. Clarke, to S.A.S., Hythe,, on Qualifying Course and qualified (Q.I). Lieut. P. C. Boileau on six days Command Intelligence Course.

April 29.—Signallers' Classification: Result, 31 classified out of 31 put up. Average, 99.75 per cent.

Captain L. W. Giles, M.C., posted to the Regimental Depot for tour of duty vice Captain H. E. F. Smyth, M.C.

April 30.—Lieut. J. B. Jarvis on Refereeing and Judging Course, P.T. School, Aldershot.

May 7.—Captain H. E. F. Smyth, M.C., rejoins from the Regimental Depot and takes over Command of the M.G. Company.

May 13.—Colonel Day attended the 3rd Div. Staff Exercises till May 16th.

Bugle Major and 14 Buglers proceeded to Olympia to take part in Massed Bugle display at the Royal Tournament with Rifle Brigade, 60th, and Somerset Light Infantry.

May 24.—Captain H. E. F. Smyth, M.C., and Lieut. R. H. G. O. Spence to Netheravon for M.G. Course. Both qualified (Q.I).

May 25.—Regimental Team Sports.
Royal Tournament at Olyrnpia starts.

May 30.—General Election. Polling day.

June 3.—H.M. the King's Birthday parade.

June 8.—Information received that Lieut. M. T. Stephens will be cross-posted from the 52nd during the next trooping season.

June 18.—Information received that Major (Brevet Lieut.-Colonel) B. C. T. Paget, D.S.O., M.C., is posted to the Regiment on relinquishing Staff appointment.

June 22—27.—Regimental Cricket Week at Cowley Barracks. Matches played v. Colonel Wynter's XI, Colonel Ashton's XI, Gentlemen of Bucks and Sandhurst Wanderers.

June 22.—Machine Gun Company proceeded to Netheravon for concentration.

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July 6.—Information received that Captain H. S. Eagle is cross-posted from 52nd, with orders to report on January 30, 1930.

July 6.—Regiment marched out to Brook Camp for Battalion Training.

July 10.—Inspection of Barracks and Camp by Major General i/c Administration, Southern Command.

July 11—13.—Army Athletic Team Championships at Aldershot. Regiment obtained 4th place. Standards very high and over 20 Army Records broken.

July 20.—Regiment marched back to barracks on conclusion of Battalion Training.

July 20.—Army Individual Athletic Championships. The following received Army Colours : Lieut. J. P. A. Graham. Lieut. Hon. C. B. A. Bernard. Lieut. M. M. Alston-Roberts-West. Lieut. P. C. Boileau. Lieut. J. B. Jarvis. Sgt. Harcourt.

July 31.—The strength of the Regiment on this day was—28 Officers and 579 Other Ranks.

August 11.—Advance Party and "C" Company proceeded to Tidworth Pennings Camp for Congreve Cup Competition and Brigade Training.

August 17.—Congreve Cup Competition.

August 18.—Regiment proceed to Tidworth Pennings in two trains for Collective Training.

August 19—21.—Southern Command W.T. Meeting.
Regiment obtained 4th place in the aggregate.

August 21.—Southern Command Horse Show for Infantry Transport and Officers' Chargers.

August 22.—Brigade Training starts.

August 30.—2nd Lieutenants J. S. R. Edmunds and H. J. C. Ducat-Hamersley promoted Lieutenants (L.H. dated 30/8/29).

August 31.—Brigade Training ended.

September 4.—Regiment marched to Cholderton to take part in Southern Command Exercise.

September 7.—Schneider Trophy at Calshot. Won by P.O. Waghorn (Great Britain) in a Supermarine Rolls Royce S.6 at 328 m.p.h.

September 10.—Regiment marched out to Porton Area to take part in War Office Exercise No. 1.

September 12.—End of W.O. Exercise.
Regiment marched back to Fargo Camp.

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September 15.—Regiment marched to Warminster for concentration preparatory to taking part in War Office Exercise No. 2 in Imber area.

September 19.—Dispersal to peace stations.
Regiment arrived at Parkhurst 4.30 p.m.

September 24.—Draft of 46 Recruits arrived from the Regimental Depot.

September 30.—2nd Lieut. H. E. Montgomery arrives and is attached to letter "A" Company pending posting to either Battalion.

October 2.—Information received that 2nd Lieut. J. A. G. R. H. Harden will proceed to India with a draft for the 52nd Light Infantry on or about December 10, 1929.

October 4.—Lieut. H. J. C. Ducat-Hamersley proceeded to Netheravon for Machine Gun Qualifying Course and qualified Q.I.

October 8.—Lieut. R. T. Conant reports for duty on cross-posting from 52nd Light Infantry.

October 31.—Annual Inspection of the Regiment by the Brigade Commander, Brigadier G. W. Howard, C.M.G., D.S.O.

The strength of the Regiment on this day was 29 Officers and 607 Other Ranks. This includes 3 Officers posted and not yet joined.

November 1.—Captain and Brevet Major G. W. Titherington retires on retired pay 30/10/29. (Authority "London Gazette," dated 1/11/29.)

November 3.—Lieut. J. P. A. G. Graham appointed Adjutant at the Depot vice Lieut. J. A. Theobalds.

November 4.—Lieut. L. R. Randall proceeded on Officer's P.T. Course, at Army School of Physical Training, Aldershot.

November 8.—Captain C. B. Crawford retires receiving a gratuity. (Authority: London Gazette, dated 8/11/29.)

November 10.—Regiment with Band and Buglers parade in Newport (I.W.) for Armistice Day Service.

November 11.—Lieut. C. W. P. Branson proceeded on Provost Duties Course, Aldershot.

November 14.—Lieut.-Colonel M. F. Day, M.C., visits Regimental Depot.

November 18.—Deputy Military Secretary paid the Regiment a visit and interviewed Officers.

Lieut. R. T. Conant proceeded to Shorncliffe on an Educational Course.

November 21.—Draft of 28 Recruits arrived from the Regimental Depot.

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November 29.—Inspector of Remounts visited Regiment with a view to casting certain animals.

December 10.—The first draft for the 52nd Light Infantry, consisting of Lieut. J. A. Theobalds, 2nd Lieut. J. A. G. R. H. Harden and 72 Other Ranks embarked on H.M.T. *Nevasa* at Southampton bound for Bombay, and thence to Burmah.

December 12.—Major (Bt.-Lieut.-Colonel) B. C. T. Paget, D.S.O., M.C., completed his attachment at the Imperial Defence College, and is granted leave prior to joining.

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FIRST BATTALION LETTER, 1929.

DEAR EDITOR,

During the year 1929 our adventures and activities have been so singularly lacking in excitement that it will be no easy matter to produce either an amusing or instructive letter. However, we must set to work to put on record the doings of the Regiment during the year.

January saw the arrival of Q.M.S. Giles, C.S.M. Lay, C.S.M. Older, and several non-commissioned officers from the 52nd, to all of whom we extend our welcome. During the same month Newton-King left us for the Sudan, and Ames went to the "Shop" as an Officer of a Company of Gentlemen Cadets. In February, Portal arrived from the 52nd, and took over the onerous duties of second in command and President of the Regimental Institute; and shortly after this, Harden was posted to us on first Commission from Sandhurst.

Then the point-to-point season began, the chief event in which was our annual team race against our old friends the Rifle Brigade. This was won by them for the third time in five years, we having won the two remaining races. For various reasons, that of expense being chief among them, it has been mutually agreed to discontinue these team races, anyhow until the two Regiments are in closer proximity to one another.

On April 9th, we were inspected by Lieut.-General Sir Archibald Montgomery Massingberd, K.C.B., K.C.M.G., G.-O.-C.-in-C. Southern Command, who expressed himself well pleased with everything he saw.

Once again we completed our Weapon Training and Company Training by the end of June. Our Musketry Camp was in the same place as last year at Newtown. Three Companies carried out Company marches on the Island during April and May and derived considerable benefit from them.

On May 13th, the Bugle-Major and 14 Buglers (including two spare men) went up to London to practise for a bugle display at the Royal Tournament. This was the first one of its kind, and besides the Regiment, there were the Rifle Brigade, 60th and Somerset Light Infantry, each with the same number of buglers taking part. Naturally, we were all on tenterhooks lest our Buglers should prove to be below the very high standard that was bound to be set, and a lot of work was put in practising for the great day. The display was most impressive. Many people (not Light Infantrymen or Riflemen) declaring it was far and away the best thing done at Olympia. If noise has anything to do with it, it certainly was, as they made Olympia tremble till one feared for the roof. Of course, 50 massed Buglers are apt to be heard, especially in a confined space such as Olympia. Although it is impossible to single out good or bad individual performers in such a show, suffice it to say that our buglers were in no way inferior to the other three Regiments.

On June 22nd, the Machine Gun Company went to Netheravon for a fortnight's Concentration with the Machine Gun Companies of the other regiments in the Brigade. They rejoined us at Brook Camp the day before Battalion Training started. The latter was carried out under ideal conditions, and we had some very interesting days including one mountain warfare scheme and a trench to trench attack.

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At the end of Battalion Training came the Army Athletic Championships, with the Regiment collectively on its toes with excitement. We had hoped that we might defeat last year's winners, who had been transferred to Belfast since the previous meeting, as Graham had got together a really useful team, whose all-round capabilities were considerably improved. But ill luck dogged us, and largely owing to many untimely casualties we could only finish fourth.

Then followed the training break, when we were able to taste of the flesh pots of Cowes and Bembridge in the height of their seasons, and on August 18, we turned to more serious matters, once more setting sail for the desolate wastes of Salisbury Plain. First came the Command Weapon Training Meeting, followed by Brigade Training. During all this time we were back at the now familiar old Tidworth Pennings Camp. It is generally agreed that this is by far the best and most comfortable of all the camps round Tidworth (and we have sampled all bar Windmill Hill). It is not proposed here to deal with the doings of the Regiment on training, as a very complete and witty contribution has already been written (not by me, Editor!)

Some of us were lucky enough to come over to the Island on September 7 to see the race for the Schneider Trophy. This was the most awe-inspiring and thrilling spectacle we have ever witnessed, and was a complete triumph for British workmanship and skill. Mention of this contest may seem out of place here, but as it is apparently the last time that the Royal Air Force will ever compete for it (owing to the gigantic expense involved) and as all existing air speed records were broken, we feel we may be excused.

To return to our muttons, the Regiment then took part in two War Office exercises, after the first of which we established ourselves in Fargo Camp.

Can there be a more bleak and desolate place? We doubt it. However, we were not there long, and on September 19th, we packed up and returned to Parkhurst, having spent just over a month on Salisbury Plain. The weather, if a little too hot at times, behaved itself perfectly: in fact we only had one wet night in the whole month.

Once more back in the Island, we settled down to the usual winter routine, of which there is not very much to recount. We are preparing two drafts for the 52nd, one of which has already gone, and by the time the second one has departed, we shall have practically no men left in the poor rifle companies.

Conant arrived in October on cross posting from the 52nd, and about the same time Montgomery came to us on first Commission.

Having endured what looked like proving to be an endless drought from about February to October, we are now being nearly flooded out of house and home, and one wonders whether it will ever stop raining. What makes matters worse is that the roof in the Mess is not as waterproof as it might be, so that it is by no means a rare occurrence to wake up in the middle of the night to find rain water steadily dripping on to one's bed.

This bad weather has not been productive of good sport; however we have managed to have some quite amusing days out hunting, and have got a very fair lot of chargers and hired troop horses.

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Let us pray that the end of the season will not be so disastrous as last year, either in the matter of horse casualties or frost.

Yours ever,
43RD.

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COLLECTIVE TRAINING ON SALISBURY PLAIN, 1929

READERS of last year's CHRONICLE who waded through the rigmarole about Collective Training in 1928, may remember that we hopped from Parkhurst to Newtown, Newtown to Brook, Brook to Tidworth Pennings, Tidworth Pennings to Boscombe.

This year we did exactly the same thing except that at Tidworth Pennings we sliced our hop and landed at Fargo instead of at Boscombe.

This article deals only with our doings on Salisbury Plain, so we will start from August 18, on which day we installed ourselves at Tidworth Pennings.

August 19 and 20 were taken up with the Southern Command Rifle meeting, where we finished third in the aggregate of weapon training events.

On August 21 an Infantry Transport Competition was held, followed by an officers' jumping contest, In the former event we again finished third and, as regards the latter, we would rather not hear any more about it.

However, as the editor of the REGIMENTAL JOURNAL has pointed out in his November issue, the above results, coupled with our second place in the Congreve Cup competition and fourth place in the Army athletic championships, show that the Regiment is always well in the running at everything, which is what we want.

The first Brigade Exercise started on August 22 and finished on August 23.

We fought the 7th Infantry Brigade which is experimental and is composed of three Infantry battalions, all with mechanized machine guns and first line transport, plus one light tank battalion. Each side was also given its quota of field and light artillery.

By nightfall on the 22nd, we were installed in a defensive position on Silk Hill facing north, and awaiting the onslaught of our friends the enemy.

They arrived during the night like earwigs infiltrating into our position from "The Wig" and, as they came, they were "Flitted" by our forward posts and passed back as prisoners to Brigade Headquarters.

Thirty-five prisoners in all were passed through, including a souvenir officer of the 60th Rifles, but we lost one whole machine gun section in the doing of it.

At dawn on August 23 the real crash came when the enemy light tank battalion overran our position, closely followed by the 60th Rifles.

In reserve behind us, however, was a company of medium tanks and they in turn overran the enemy light tanks with a well-timed counter attack and

Confusion was confounded
When the Cease Fire sounded.

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On August 26 and 27, we carried out Brigade Exercise, No. 2, which was staged around the Experimental gas station at Porton.

The scheme was devised to study the use of gas and smoke and to test anti-gas protective measures.

The Welch Regiment acted as enemy to the rest of the 9th Infantry Brigade. They gassed us and we gassed them, and both of us gassed the partridges of the Porton shoot. The gas used, however, although unpleasant, was innocuous, and we understand that these most sporting of all game birds remained to die in the way they are used to dying.

An exercise set by the G.O.C. 3rd Division, in which we again opposed the 7th Infantry Brigade, started on August 29 and finished on the following day.

There is always an element of humour in the schemes set by the Divisional Commander, which at any rate start everyone off with a smile and the general idea in this case had the usual sparkle.

It ran as follows :—

"1. The Republic of CLEMENTINA (RED) has had a dispute with SOUTHSEA (BLUE), a Maritime State. Diplomacy, arbitration, conciliation, plebiscite, and the personal interference of the President of the United States having alike failed to settle the dispute, the contending States have, by arrangement with the League of Nations, hired the territory of Wiltshire, a peaceful but impoverished country, in which to arrive at a settlement of their quarrel by the old, though now unfashionable, method of armed force.

"2. The inhabitants in the area of operations are thus neutral but interested spectators, since all damage by the belligerents to crops, gates, fences, etc., has to be made good and paid for at League of Nations rates.

"3. The opening battle, which took place in the neighbourhood of Swindon, was indecisive; but RED has since been reinforced, and the BLUE forces are now retiring in good order and several columns towards the Wylde Valley. They got a good start and have so far not been seriously pressed by RED."

Those who know the nickname of the gallant Brigadier who commands the 7th Infantry Brigade will have no difficulty in deducing the fact that we were the Blue force.

It is difficult to describe the operations without referring to maps which readers of the CHRONICLE are not likely to have.

Actually on August 29 the 43rd took up a defensive position on Pewsey Hill, overlooking the Vale of Pewsey. Then, owing to a flanking movement by the enemy, we withdrew to Everleigh and spent most of the night repelling attacks made by the 60th Rifles who were trying to capture the village.

About an hour before dawn we were ordered to break away and retire to Coombe Hill. Then the fun began. We broke away all right, but when dawn came the whole plain was enveloped in a dense fog.

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We got out our compasses and made for our new position. We still claim that we got there, but nobody seems to believe us. One newspaper had the audacity to say that the 43rd got lost in the fog and were destroyed by enemy tanks. We did, in fact, encounter the said tanks, but if the newspaper correspondent had seen our volleys of flints, which represented the fire of our green flags, which again represented our anti-tank guns, he would have told a different story.

By this time the fog of nature, mixed with the fog of war, had produced complete opacity, and we almost felt as if we were repeating history when the cry went up "Where are the 43rd ?"

At any rate we knew where we were sufficiently well to be the first home when the "Cease Fire" sounded.

From August 31 to September 3 we rested hard, and on the morning of September 4, we marched in Brigade to Cholderton to take part in the Southern Command exercises.

Again it is impossible to describe the operations without a map, but our first objective when operations started at 3 p.m. was crossing "C" over the Avon just north of Durrington.

It may be remembered that Wednesday, September 4, was the hottest September day on record and, as the hours went by with the sun beating down on our backs, we felt like the Darkie on the road to Vicksburg, that we were just about holding our own.

We got to the Avon somehow, but not without casualties from heat stroke, and then went on outpost duty west of the river.

The following morning we continued to march west towards Tilshead and, the more we marched, the more it occurred to us that we were getting a mighty long way from home.

When operations ended, however, a pleasant surprise came to us in the form of a convoy of motor lorries into which we hopped and were back in camp in no time.

It transpired that the G.O.G-in-C. thought we had all done our bit pretty well, and had suddenly ordered out every mechanized vehicle in the Command to take us home. How we blessed him!

On September 6 we slept, and on the 7th, the lucky ones saw the Schneider Cup race on the Solent, and the less fortunate pitched our new camp at Fargo.

Then we became serious, if not awed, at the prospect of the grand finale of the War Office Exercises.

We read in the papers that the 2nd Division was marching from Aldershot towards Salisbury Plain to put us wise. Masses of Red Hats appeared on the scene, and "General Ideas" and "Instructions" were printed instead of being merely type-written.

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All the same we had a sneaking feeling that, whatever Aldershot could show us, we could show them Salisbury Plain, and on September 9 we sallied forth to our old friend the Porton area where we gassed ourselves in, and taped ourselves in, and awaited events.

The larger the operations the smaller individual units are liable to become, but it so happened that the 43rd were sent to hold the key position on the extreme right flank of the 3rd Division front at Warren Court. (Again a map is necessary.)

We held it in spite of umpires and in spite of the Guards Brigade who ignored, not only our ordinary defences, but our gas defences as well. They had not been educated up to Porton methods, apparently, and did not recognize the appalling danger of the red powder we had put down for their destruction. It smells like tooth paste and that may have given them a false sense of security.

Anyway at 4 p.m. we had been driven off the Warren Court position and had retired to Ashley's Copse. Here the C.I.G.S. himself visited the scene and decided that a condition of stalemate had been reached, so the opposing forces were unmixed and re-organised.

Later on in the evening we were ordered to withdraw to Pheasant Wood where we spent the night.

Next morning the 7th Infantry Brigade put in a light tank attack against Tower Hill, and we were following in their wake when the "Standfast" sounded, and we marched to our new camp at Fargo.

On Sunday, September 15, we marched to Warminster, where the 3rd Division, with attached troops, concentrated for War Office exercise No. 2. A long march on a hot day.

Early the next morning we advanced west through Imber, surely the most isolated village in England, and spent the early part of that night in Divisional Reserve at Warminster Bottom Farm.

At 2 a.m. we moved forward again and, after a difficult night march, we crossed the Tilshed—West Lavington road and assembled at New Copse.

At the first streak of dawn the whole Division advanced west to seize the commanding ridge north and south of Ell Barrow, and, after heavy fighting, including a spectacular tank battle, the enemy withdrew towards the Avon.

Then commenced a long and tedious pursuit. Gunner officers talk a lot about what they call the "false crest" and, the hotter we got, the more we thought that Salisbury Plain must be the home of "false crests" as we never seemed to get to the top of anything. We saw little or nothing of the 2nd Division who had apparently retired across the Avon, and we were in a state of wondering what to do next when the "Cease Fire" sounded at 7 p.m.

On September 18, we packed up and on 19 we returned to the Isle of Wight, reaching Parkhurst at 4.30 p.m.

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So ended Collective Training for 1929. We may not have learned so many "lessons" as last year, as we had not so many to learn, but we made some interesting "discoveries."

1. We discovered Imber.

The Regiment found it quite by accident buried in the waterless wastes of the Salisbury Desert.

We feel that an Ode should be written to commemorate this important event, but, as the only words that rhyme with "Imber" are "limber" and "timber" the problem presents difficulties :—

The paint on the timber Of Nobby's pet limber
Got burnt to a cinder When hunting for Imber.

This is admittedly atrocious, especially "cinder" but perhaps somebody else can do better.

2. A "tapeless " gas mask has been discovered in Letter "A" Company. The Depot Museum should acquire this valuable relic of the past.

3. Ashley's Copse is haunted. The ghost is a blond young subaltern who leads his phantom platoon through the woods at midnight shouting " Here I come."

Although his calling broke our hard-earned slumbers, the night before the battle of Warren Court, it gave us confidence to know that he was there to help us on the morrow.

4. Fargo is no better as a camping ground than Boscombe, except that it is nearer to Stonehenge and farther away from the Haunch of Venison.

The former fact was of no advantage to anyone, but the latter seriously affected those interested in old English inns.

5. Shaving before dawn is never a pleasant occupation, but, this year, we discovered the "musical shave," which we can strongly recommend. The best tunes to shave to at this unearthly hour are "The Gay Caballero" and "The Song of the Prune."

6. Our latest "discovery" is that we are not going to Salisbury Plain in 1930. This will be a relief to readers of the CHRONICLE as well as to the writer of this article.