

ALFRED BENDALL'S
MESOPOTAMIA DIARY

AUGUST 1917 – FEBRUARY 1918

ПРОДОВОЛЬСТВЕННОГО МАГАЗИНА



Alfred Bendall in the uniform of the Church Lads' Brigade, taken before he joined the army. He is standing outside the porch of Leckhampton Parish Hall.

Mesopotamia
 Indian Expeditionary Force.
 13 Division.
 39th Brigade.
 9th Worcester.
 Sgt A. G. Bendall. 31447.

Mrs Vincent
 Belmont
 54 Oakfield
 Ilford.

2133. A.
 Pte A. G. Bendall.
 C. C. 25th Battⁿ
 7th Infantry Brigade
 A. G. F. France.

241026.
 Pte H. Bendall.
 61st Division.
 B. E. F. H. C.
 France.

Service details of Alfred Bendall and his brothers, giving an address in Ilford. This was presumably a boarding house, run by a Mrs Vincent, and one or more of them were perhaps billeted there.

The framed original is now held by Cheltenham Art Gallery and Museum (The Wilson)

продовольственного магазина.

(2)

Выдана Кавказским Окружным Интендантским Управлением
на 191 годъ.

191 года.

По реестру №

MISC 2

Suipol to Paitak.

In the bometangs, there are thousands of slabs, which were once properly written tombstones, + showed glimpses of past greatness of Persia, but now its all one mass of bygone places, some of the walls which we passed, had stones 12 feet long, 3ft 6" thick, + the same in depth. massive stones altogether, showing signs of big castles + forts of ancient days.

"Doings" of "D" Co, Continued from Aug 7th onwards

The Persian Tour.

We left Abre-saidu camp 5^{PM}. Aug 7th '18, + entrained for Roos, at 9^{PM}, same date, arriving there, at 2 in the morning, waited till it was light, then away we went (25 in a lorry) with kit for Kan-ikhi at 4.30^{AM}. next day, arriving hungry + cramped (with being packed like sardines in a box) at 10 AM. Dinner, then off again for Seripol. Very interesting old ruins on the way.

Arrived at Seripol 5^{PM}, damned tired out with ride, Distance 75 miles

We left Seripol the following morning at 7 AM: on the 9th + after a grand ride through the Pass, stopped at Paital at 9^{AM}, leaving again 9.30^{AM} for Take-gave. A grand ride through interesting country. The cemeteries were very noticeable at the entrance to each village, + always on a large mound. It seemed as if everyone looked buried. Arrived Take-gave 5^{PM}, distance for the day 40 miles.

Paitak to Kermanshah.

In this pass, there was a large portal arch, halfways up, called the "Gate of Persia", well built, + still a fine gateway at present. This pass shows what a marvellous mind their engineers had, to have been able to complete it.

The Gothic bridges had stood the test of time, + still looked strong + although in a state of decay, had been finely built.

This stream here, legend says it is where "Moses struck the rock". Beautiful clear water too, as clear + cold I have ever drank.

2. Away we went again the following morning at 6 AM. + made for Kermanshah, a long ride, passing various views + villages, in the vale, stopping for dinner at a small village, + off again. At last Kermanshah came in sight, when we came over the hill quite like the old Biblical pictures of olden times, all the people were busy harvesting, etc., + all hard at work, By far the busiest place we passed.

Distance for the time 70 miles

We left Kermanshah on the 11th Time 7 AM, feeling very fit after a night's rest, + journeyed onwards. We passed many interesting sights, especially a very large carved piece of work in the face of the mountain. The size was about 60 feet long, + 40 feet high. On it were the figures of 12 men. Evidently an historical scene cut in the slab, underneath were twelve tablets, with writing on, + by the foot of the cliff was a grand spring, clear as crystal, + we drank + filled up here. Should say the cliff towered straight

Tun-ar-er-p. Can. Exp. Nat. N. 326 5000 13-IX-1916. r.

The Russians must have done well to ever reach as far as here.
+ the road onward to Kasvin is an hard metal one,
as fine a road in Persia, (well laid.) No mistake, we
shall find its hardness out before we even reach Engelli.

The Kunds are a deceitful race of people, will tell a lie on any yarn to get out of a scrape. + we took 7 to 8 thousand of rifles of these people.

3. up for over 2000 feet. At 7 PM we reached Khan-i-ran, where we put down for the night. We left for Hamadan at 7 AM, on the 12th, & after a trying ride, arrived at that place at 12 midnight. "What a ride". Everyone absolutely tired out, & what with walking up the pass, (which was a grand piece of work) & riding in the dark, we were all asleep straight away. One of the cars overtopped, & another at Hamadan, but no one injured.

Hamadan had fine new buildings on the high ground, but very poor style, in fact, the town itself looked starved. People must have a terrible time existing, as everywhere we saw hungry & starved people lying about. We are up again, but stiff with so much riding, & to-day are resting, but expecting to move again though.

Aug 13th, 14th, 15th, 16th, carrying on quietly, although on the 14th we did a terrible dusty march to a given place, but were recalled & all arrived back fed up with the day's work

4. + I'll guarantee this is the commencing of breaking it.
This week was a remarkable one for the 17th etc. as we marched
to Bel-har, + started disarming Russians, Kurds, Armenians, or
anyone who carried a rifle. It was a real sight of the horrors
of a retreat, as everyone seemed to be trying to escape, although
they did not know where they were going. We recruited all the
men, also took every horse we could manage to get, +
placed the women + children in a large marked out space
like a camp, + fed them. Distress is everywhere, I have never
seen so much never before. We searched all the houses, buying
all dead, + did every imaginable job going under the sun.
We picked anyone who looked like making a soldier.
The women could not understand it at all. It was interesting
rounding them up, but an unthankful job, as they think
it is the last as ever they will see of their men folk.
We could not help laughing at our lads riding horses, as
it was the first time a lot had ever ridden one. (Huff said!)

5. I went into a village one day there, Ben Bennett + a few more to bring a few more rifles in, we stopped one man, + we could not help smiling, for out of his pocket he pulled a bit out. On it was written, L/C Hartwell, Rifle No. etc, showing he had his rifle pinched by that individual, + that's how it went on all day. They evidently thought they had got a good thing on, having a receipt for a rifle. "What bluff"

Even the most hard-hearted of us felt sorry for the kids, + the plight they are in. What the winter will bring forth, we dare not hope, as there are thousands homeless, but everyone is doing his best to help them, as if the Turks only catch hold of them they will massacre the lot, + they know it too. They seem absolutely cowed for a people, but they will get bucked up a bit yet. You only want a stick, + can do anything.

On Aug 23rd, we formed a local committee, amongst those who could speak English, + these shared out the food, as meat + "vegat?" were sent from Kamadan, + things are

6. now in full swing again.

A lot of these Refugees we passed on to the Yan Shan party 7 miles off, so everyone should now get a good feed, although the Committee are looking after No 1 first. The weather keeps grand, but rumour says we shall move.

Yes, we did, on the 26th moved back to Hamadan, + started off for Kasvin, but back again to Hamadan, after doing 6 miles, + put up in a yard by G. H. & a very nice show of garden flowers here. Quite a refreshing rest of 2 days.

We left Hamadan the last day of Aug, this time in earnest, + arrived at the first marching post 7 PM. at night, + off again next day 16 miles, then down for a rest + on again for a good 16 $\frac{1}{2}$, + so on each day for 4 days. On the fifth day, got fever, + a dodgy leg, so into the H. cross was put, + remained there for 7 days. All our chaps were marching though, + I can see the swing of them + hear the tramp-tramp continually all day, nothing else.

7. everyone gets too tired out to sing. The usual routine was up by 5.30 a.m.
+ off for the day, march 16 to 19 miles then down for a night's rest,
+ so on. Sept 7th our party got split up, + half went in Ford
cars to Jellmallybad to stop the Turks, about 160 miles off, + we carried
on in the old style. I drove a cart with shells on next day, + we
arrived at Sich-de-han, rested one day, then off for Tin-yan. What
a blooming game, as now I am alternately riding + walking, +
if you ride, your seat gets sore, while marching has blistered
my left foot badly. Anyrate we eventually arrived at Tin-yan,
only to hear we had been driven out of the pass. We
scarcely wondered at that, + the few we sent were only
62, + the Turks were between 2, to 3 thousand easily.
Anyrate we met our party again 12 miles from Tin-yan,
+ started to move to the Turks to engage them, + after
travelling 17 miles, entrenched in a wood, + did pickets for
the armoured car people. What a game, making our
own food, from flour + water, + stealing sheep, grapes, etc.

Sent 2nd Sgt. John Francis + Stanley, all down with fever
+ lying in some hay for a bed in the post office,
while their nations are taken by your humble

8. We made our H.Q. in a post office, but out of 62, about 9 are left for duty, as fever is rampant. On the 28th ^{Sept}, at last we moved back to Tinzan, + arrived at Kassin on the 30th of Sept. Sickness is alarming, everyone is down with this peculiar sort of fever, + it leaves a man as weak as a kitten too, even when he gets over it. I'm thankful to say I am well. + the few that are left are on all kinds of work. We left Kassin for Mengzi in foot again + arrived there, (Windy evening) noticing all trees were blown the one way. And now we are in the passes for a bit, It is grand scenery, + we trekked on to Resht, + at last found cover in proper huts. What a welcome change, after making all your own food to find we could get bread again. We had passed old world type of cottages, green fields, woods, rivers, + Russian steamrollers, + it somehow looked like England after Messauf. On the 1st of Nov. we read in "Reuters" that the Turks had signed an armistice, so our Regt started to train the men, to fire a "Fou-de-voin", we had

Ташкент-электр. Кав. Оид. Инт-вер. № 220 асхонд 14-IX-1916.

9, an half holiday, + some of the lads were detailed off to attend the pictures, + let went, but all arrived back, + declared it a "wash out," as the films kept breaking. On the 3rd we fired the "Fendorn" Now the yarn is about we shall move to Baku, + blowed if it didn't turn out right too. We left Beshit on the 7-11-18, + arrived at Kazian on the 8th wet through to the skin, as it rained for 42 hrs. (Some rain), + it was a rare job trying to dry our clothes. in these wood sheds we were put in. At last we embarked for Baku, on the CEPTIN, + arrived Baku on the 18th 11-18. My first time on the Caspian Sea. Had very short rations on board. We marched ashore in pouring rain, + everyone was surprised to find our billets were actually first-class, panelled ceilings, floors, stoves, etc. being top hole, + started to patrol the town, to take all arms off the Bolsheviks, or anyone who sported a rifle in the streets. We had alarm pickets, + were ready for all alarms or anything else that turned up. Now we are on the

Dec 6th Ben Bennett arrived back.

"Poor old Ben. who used to be,

as strong as ever you could wish to see.

But now he's thin & very pale.

He'll have to drink some "Baker Ale"

10. see first mornings. P.T.S. Baynet Fighting, & smartening ourselves up generally, & are actually talking about LEAVE, "What hopes" For a week or two we carried on in this style, everyone doing his level best, then behold we had a pay pay, & away went a few into the "Marsh", as a bottle of this wine is a bit strong. We are trying to speak Russian, but am afraid it won't be much of a success. Christmas arrived with a local strike, & no light at all. Everyone was in readiness for a row, should one occur, but it was soon settled, & the New Year arrived with much shooting at night, & singing by the Russians, as when they get excited fire at anything or anywhere, so look out for lunatics. The weather keeps fine at present, & Jan is drawing to a close. Jan 31st, a party started to England on leave, & 5 out of our Coy, so in time to come, I might get one, for 1922, or later. I am glad to say our Football team is unbeaten, & they are a real fine team, having beaten all teams in Baku, & taking it all round we are not having such

"a bad time. Feb 1st, a fall of snow, + it is bitterly cold here, the kids are quite enjoying it, + we watch them from our window, snowballing one another. The 2nd it froze very hard, + walking is rather dangerous. On the afternoon of the 2nd I went to the aerodrome, to relieve Sgt Jones, who has to go on furlough to Blighty, + had a nice quiet fortnight there, rambling all over the old battlefield in my spare time. We had a four roomed house for the guardroom, so glazed the windows, + made a warm billet of it, returning to the Bath on the 15th of Feb. Now this week am alternately on guard at the docks, + here, so the time carries on. Baku is beginning to look up now, + the people sit in the parks all the afternoon, I don't think they like work, as they seem to dodge everything they can, + no idea, or no energy to support themselves. A large lot

We sailed from Batoum on the 10th of ~~Jan~~ at 4^{PM} & are now well in the Black Sea

12th + 13 + 14th in the Bosphorus, outside Constantinople, coaling

