

guests had gone to the basement for safety but we remained in our rooms. Shortly after this we heard a loud explosion which we learnt later was a bomb dropped in Trafalgar Square. Anyway, we had a good nights rest and after breakfast the next morning we went out to see what damage had been done. There seemed to have been very little damage excepting that there was a great big crater and one of our chaps, Cornel, when he saw the big hole said 'Well boys I guess next time there is an alarm I am for the basement. I don't mind getting knocked out in France but I don't want to be killed at home'.

We decided to have a look round and soon got to know the central part of London round about Trafalgar Square and Piccadilly and the strand. I went along to Throgmoton Street to pay my respect to Fred Dyer who was not a blood relation but had married a great Aunt of mine, Aunt Mary's Sister. That is the Aunt Mary from whom we eventually on her passing received the £120 with which we bought a washing machine. She was old Uncle George's sister.

For our midday meal we used to go to Lyons Corner House where for 1/- we got what was called Brunch. Eggs and bacon, sausage, chop, chips and a very good helping too, followed by coffee or tea.

We went to see a couple of shows - Zig Zag, a musical review, and a comedy, Choo Chin Chow, in which the great George Robey and that beautiful actress, Gladys Cooper - Mrs Buckmaster - acted. What a show! Down the centre isle there was a platform and one of the scenes was the beautiful Gladys Cooper and some of the other actresses walking down this platform armed with fishing rods. They cast the bait among the audience hoping you would catch hold of the tempting chocolate bait. One of our chaps said there is a catch in this as he caught the tempting morsel and got a very nice electric shock. The whole show was excellent and George Robey was at his best and kept us in fits.

Well after a couple of weeks the three budding airmen: Dodge, Cornel and myself went along to the airforce headquarters in the old Hotel Cecil on the Strand. That hotel has of course been demolished and in its stead stands Shell House.

There was in England at that time conscription but we being from South Africa, although a British Colony, had to attest and fill in a number of forms.

All this having been completed we were told to call back in a weeks time to receive Rail Warrants, full instructions and to advise our depot that three VIPs were due there on a certain date. Having received our papers we were advised that we should report to the camp at Blackdown where we eventually arrived late in the afternoon and as winter was approaching bitterly cold.

Having reported in, there were now ten of us Colonials, we were allotted to a hut and told to draw a supply of coal for heating. But before we could get our heater going we were called to collect spoons, knives, plates, cups, blankets etc. This took some time and by the time we got back some one had swiped out coal. We tried to get more but got no sympathy until the Quarter Master heard we were from overseas when he issued a fresh supply. He was very good as he came and very kindly showed us how to get the stove going. Then he stopped and talked for some time telling us what to expect and to look for the few pitfalls.

Having been issued with uniforms we turned out on our first parade. The new boots gave me blazes but I persevered as we were to move on the next day to Farnborough.

Here we had more comfortable quarters as we were now no longer ordinary airman but Cadets. As a distinguishing mark we wore a white band on our headgear. We had better quarters and were not so crowded. Anyway, we had to turn out to drill as many of the chaps had never drilled in their lives. We had some real good English Sgt. Majors as instructors and boy could they put you through your paces. On the second morning, as my feet were too sore from the army boots, I put on my civilian ones. What a relief! However, as I walked out

onto the parade/