

Letters home from India

All these letters are from Cyril George Hooke to his father, George Archer and mother Ellen, along with his four sisters, Mildred, Frances, Trixie and Ella. The letters were all written in 1922 when Cyril was a single young officer in the British Army in India. Previously he had served in World War 1 during which time he had received the Military Cross for great bravery under fire. Now a Lieutenant he was stationed in Fyzabad from 1st March 1920 to 1924. All these letters were written in the year prior to his engagement to Elaine Oakden in 1923 and there is no mention of her in them.

Tughlakabad
Near Delhi
5/1/22

(Wikipedia Note:

Tughlakabad village is one of the oldest urban Village in South East District of New Delhi. The Village is named after Ghiyas-ud-din Tughlaq. The Village is located in the shadows of 700 year old Ruins of Tughlaqabad Fort.)

My dear people,
Christmas at Fyzabad was quite jolly.
We arrived there by train on 22nd early in the morning, detransit and marched to barracks.

Unfortunately - from some points of view – I have been doomed to another month in camp. So here I am near Delhi putting out targets and observing for 21st BdeR.F.A. & "K" & "C" BtysR.H.A.
Kutwa was cold early in the morning but here it is fresh most of the day and a fog this morning has delayed operations. It is the first fog I have seen in India.

The country is cultivated a good deal. The parts uncultivated show what labour it must have been to dig, for they are very hard and stony. In places one comes on large piles of rocks and going further to hills of boulders going on for miles. I have seen many chinkara (known as chink) with good heads, many nilgi (these are everywhere in India), hyaenas, pig and hares. There are no rabbits in India.

Partridge and rock pigeon are fairly common.

Wikipedia note:

*The chinkara (*Gazella bennettii*), also known as the Indian gazelle, is a gazelle species native to Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India.*



Wikipedia note:

*The nilgai (*Boselaphus tragocamelus*) literally meaning "blue cow") is the largest Asian antelope and is ubiquitous across the northern Indian subcontinent.*



Delhi is a wonderful place; here we are about twelve miles out and can see multitudinous temples and ruins. The wall of old Delhi passes this way, and there is an enormous old fort and many tombs.

A new Delhi is being made and enormous expense has been incurred. The one good thing that struck me was that the roads have all been marked out and trees planted. The roads are therefore wide and sensibly directed.

I wonder if you would send me an old Pauline cricket blazer and cap and let me know the cost. The people to go to are - 18.1.22 – I have been unable to discover, if you cannot manage it I will let you know from Fyzabad; I have the name on a blazer. However I am rather anxious to get it soon. My financial position is going to work out clear in a month or two. For some months I have had to watch every anna. I have not yet sold the pony, am trying hard.

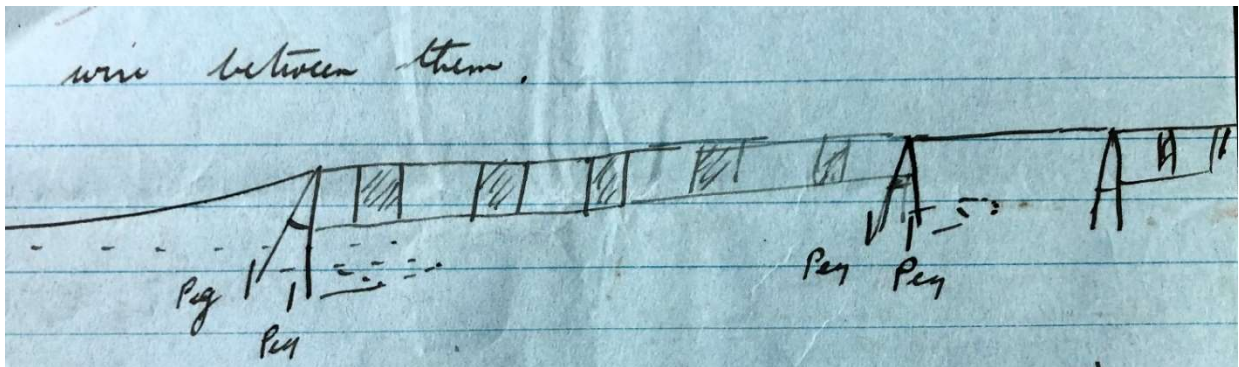
So everybody is having teeth out – I suppose dentists must live (even the one I kept waiting 6 months for his payment)

Anybody who imagines army life is a leisured one should try it for a spell. One day here I got up at 5.30am left camp 6.30am mounted with a party and arranged a few targets after getting to the range (4 miles) and then observed shooting, recorded and moved about a batteries moved. My job is to be target end and I have a screen at which a "safety officer" prevents guns from pointing.

At two-ish I had a reconnaissance and finished off by putting up targets in the dark about 7 miles from home, relying on map knowledge and sense of direction in country I had not been before. I arrived in camp 10.15pm. I had some lemonade with me but had not found time to drink it. That's your leisured officer.

Fortunately, my targets (including one for an aeroplane to see) were all visible next day.

Some targets are very interesting. "Jumpers" consist of triangular supports and rags hung on wire between them.

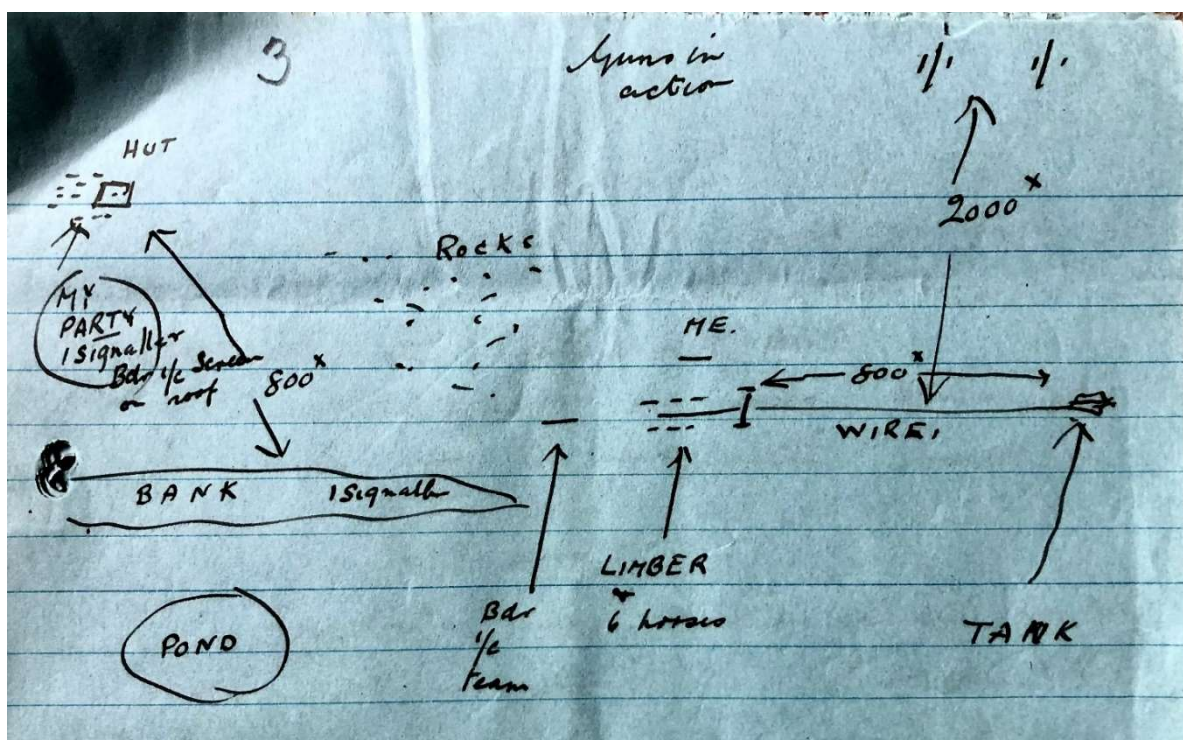


The whole lie flat (see dotted lines) and at a given time are pulled up. Now the strain is very great because it is done by cable (800 yds long) and this is heavy, hence I use a limber and 6 horses. Then of course it is easy to pull the whole target out of the ground. In addition to this, instead of cable I was given about 700 yds of much used wire, which broke time after time when I practised, but I managed to make the target appear successfully.

Wikipedia note:

A *limber* is a two-wheeled cart designed to support the trail of an artillery piece, or the stock of a field carriage such as a caisson or traveling forge, allowing it to be towed.

I use the same rotten wire to pull a tank (imitation) across country while the guns shoot at it. I always have to lower my screen and go out and mend wire.



A section of guns (2) retire, while I with my party hidden watch them. I trot out my limber hook (the wire) on it and ascertaining that the range is clear I signal (prearranged) to signaller on bank who flag ways to HUT and they put up screen.

The instructors (with the guns) seeing my screen up and the tank drawn clear of cover say to the officer with the guns "There's a Tank, get on with it", As they "drop into action" I walk on with the team and shells come crashing over at the jolly old tank.

WHITEWASH on rocks shows up for miles and is frequently used here.

Fyzabad has started ladies hockey. "Stevo" got it going. I wish Ella were here, she'd show some of 'em how to do it. Why doesn't Ella play for some English team, there are lots of first class ladies teams round Barnes. I see **Miss Colyer** the well known tennis player is also a fencer. Has Ella got to live at Nottingham? Let me hear more about the post – please



Wikipedia note:

Evelyn Lucy Colyer (later Munro, 16 August 1902 – 4 November 1930) was a female tennis player from Great Britain. With Joan Austin, sister of Bunny Austin, Colyer played doubles in the 1923 Wimbledon final against Suzanne Lenglen and Elizabeth Ryan. Colyer and Austin were known in the British press as "The Babes." At the 1924 Paris Olympics, she won a bronze medal in the women's doubles event.

From 1920 until 1929, she competed in all editions of the Wimbledon Championships. Her best singles result was reaching the fourth round in 1927 in which she was defeated by Kitty Godfree.

In 1925, she teamed with P.B.D Spence and won the mixed doubles title at the Queen's Club Covered Courts Championships.

She was part of the winning British Wightman Cup team in 1924 and 1925 as well as the team that lost in 1926.

On 13 February 1930 she married Hamish Munro, a tea planter from Assam, British India and soon afterward, the couple migrated to Assam. She died on 6 November 1930 of complications after giving birth to twins on 20 October.

In answer to Pa

Privacy – even in camp is obtainable for an officer. Get in your tent and tell anyone who comes to go to hell. – Easy.

If Mrs Laughton thinks she can ride I will give her a horse to cure her. All our horses are Australian – and can they buck. Did you know that English horses rarely buck. I mean the real head between legs – rounded back and woops where am I.

I am glad the Board of Trade task is 'overish' (I must write a glossary for you of local phrases; wherever one goes there is local "slang"; here the great word is "gaff" i.e. "what a gaff" for "how priceless") ish means about i.e. twoish about two o'clock.

The question of getting the most out of men is a difficult one. Cheerfully suggestive and no more and you are cheerfully replied to but you have not stimulated. Merely severe and you frequently put a good man's back up.

I know first hand that men like a very strict man because they want to have a good battery and know it is necessary. Providing he never remembers minor sins and is cheerful I think he gets the best out of them. I know first hand that Temple (our new captain) is liked immensely – he is the strictest officer we have had so far, and at dances when talking to sergeants I have gleaned (without them meaning to say it perhaps) exactly what they thought of every officer. There are many good rankers, but his way is more difficult in dealing with men than in dealing with officers.



Wikipedia note:

Field Marshal Sir William Robert Robertson, 1st Baronet, GCB, GCMG, GCVO, DSO (29 January 1860 – 12 February 1933) was a British Army officer who served as Chief of the Imperial General Staff (CIGS) – the professional head of the British Army – from 1916 to 1918 during the First World War. As CIGS he was committed to a Western Front strategy focusing on Germany and was against what he saw as peripheral operations on other fronts. While CIGS, Robertson had increasingly poor relations with David Lloyd George, Secretary of State for War and then Prime Minister, and threatened resignation at Lloyd George's attempt to subordinate the British forces to the French Commander-in-Chief, Robert Nivelle. In 1917 Robertson supported the continuation of the Third Battle of Ypres, at odds with Lloyd George's view that Britain's war effort ought to be focused on the other theatres until the arrival of sufficient US troops on the Western Front.

Robertson is the only soldier in the history of the British Army to have risen from an enlisted rank to its highest rank of field marshal.

I have read some of Sir W Robertson "Private to F. Marshall". He seems to have done some good work. I advise your reading French's 1914 Luddendorf 's Book, Robertson's Book. I think Fisher's Northcliffes (at the war) & Jellicoe's book not as good.

Who had most men in action on the Western Front Oct '14 the Germans or the Allies? Who had most men available near the line?

India, as you say, wants to stand on her own feet; her army would be useless without British Officers – I cannot trust an Indian even if he has been at Public School and Varsity in England. He speaks logically and politely. He may be all right.

I was very "fed up" at losing little 'Chorta' at Kutwa. He died, spite all the vet could do, of some wretched Indian fever. He was the most wonderful little dog. He was human except for speech and as I carried him around to my bungalow in Jessie Roper's hat the day after his eyes opened and I had trained him very carefully he was a great loss.

He would sit up and beg.

He would get out of a room when told to.

He would shake hands (either hand)

He would never touch his food till told to.

He had a first rate nose.

He was an excellent house dog.

(he used to create hell at Kutwa during the night – one day he woke me up and looking outside I saw a large wild sow and her youngster)

He would go to heel when walking.

He would retrieve a stick in the river.

He has retrieved birds without ever damaging.

Perhaps what made everyone in Fyzabad love him was his quaint friendly ways. All white but for a perfect little black eye he used to sit up and look beseechingly at ladies as they sat in the "scandal circle" at the club.

Ella. What about meeting me in Italy in March 1924 and spending a month or 6 weeks getting across to Calais (on the cheap)

We could buy bikes at and sell at Calais (making a profit)

I thought Italy to France (including my battlefields)

Of course anyone else (energetic!) would be welcome.

I should prefer something more comfy than a push bike. WRITE CGH

Three months is a lot of leave for one year. Remember, however, to a civilian leave is his right and comes in his contract; to a soldier he goes if he can be spared; the exigencies of the service come first.

I have seen the safety razor gadget. I believe it is useful.

Yes, I saw Dallimore. He wasn't very fit. I should be a queer case if I wasn't pretty fit. Galloping on a horse all day here and in the open all the time. The army seems a very good life at times. Away from all the petty squabbling of the masses one leads a healthy vigorous life.

Where the deuce are you going to if you leave Barnes? I don't want you to go but still it's not my pigeon. Perhaps you'd better get my permission!!!!

This is an awful scrawl. All written on my knee, sitting on my camp bed.

I heard from Major Courtman, I having Xmas carded and lettered him. It must pain you to see how careless I am with the English language. Its disgusting.

However.

Give my love to those that matter.

Yrs

Cyril G Hooke

PTO Ever so many thanks to mother and everybody for the delightful pencil, hankies and for the puddings.
CGH

Fyzabad 27.2.22

Very many thanks to you and mother for the blazer, not arrived yet.

My dear Father,

Very many happy returns. I received your letter with one from mother today. I am very grateful about the blazer. Mother's Xmas puddings came out on special occasions, the latter on a most special occasion. In the mess our guests were

Capt R H Stevens XI Rayputs
Mrs Stevens, his wife (Mrs Dick)
Mrs Stevens, his mother
Capt Roper XI Rayputs
Mrs Roper (nee Jessie Lyttle)
Kitty Lyttle
Mrs Temple, wife of Capt Temple
Mrs Cummings, her widowed sister
Then of us
Capt Temple
Danbar
Gardiner who joined the battery at camp and myself

Wikipedia Note: (Cyril calls them Rayputs)

***Rajput** (from Sanskrit *raja-putra*, "son of a king") is a large multi-component cluster of castes, kin bodies, and local groups, sharing social status and ideology of genealogical descent originating from the Indian subcontinent. The term *Rajput* covers various patrilineal clans historically associated with warriorhood: several clans claim *Rajput* status, although not all claims are universally accepted. According to modern scholars, almost all *Rajput* clans originated from peasant or pastoral communities.*

*Over time, the Rajputs emerged as a social class comprising people from a variety of ethnic and geographical backgrounds. During the 16th and 17th centuries, the membership of this class became largely hereditary, although new claims to *Rajput* status continued to be made in the later centuries. Several Rajput-ruled kingdoms played a significant role in many regions of central and northern India from seventh century onwards.*

*The Rajput population and the former *Rajput* states are found in northern, western, central and eastern India as well as southern and eastern Pakistan. These areas include Rajasthan, Haryana, Gujarat, Eastern Punjab, Western Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu, Uttarakhand, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Sindh.*

All these people have become very dear friends, but unfortunately our little world has suddenly been broken up. The Rayputs leave for Mesopotamia at 4 days notice. Steve will be going (But no wives allowed). For five years during the war he never saw his fiancée. After the Armistice she went out to him in Mesopotamia and married him. (*Mesopotamia is Mesopotamia*) Then again out in India he was separated from her and she has only been in Fyzabad 5 months. They are the most delightful couple and his mother is one of the best sorts

possible. At the moment Steve is engaged with his Rayput hockey team playing in the semi-final of all Indian Regimental hockey. The Rayput team is wonderful.

Then again not many officers are going to Mespot and "Tommy" Roper finds himself detached from XI Rayputs, who have in Fyzabad many surplus officers. It saves separation for him but he is very fond of his regiment.

We had a great fancy dress dance at the Club Friday last. Danbar arranged it – he has been a leading spirit – and it was a great show.

Mrs Temple
Mrs Cummings
Capt Sir ??? Xi Rayputs
Myself

Black and white pierrots with eyglasses

Mrs Dick volunteered the riddle "Why are pierrots called pierrots?"
Because they make the rot at the end of the pier.

Some of the wonderful costumes I never fathomed. Jessie Roper was the most wonderful shimmering pink Columbine. Danbar was the Mad Hatter. Gardiner had a priceless 18th Century top's costume. The show was a roaring success. People got so keen sometimes that if the band stops at say 2am, after 20 dances and numerous extras, someone pops off and gets a gramophone.

The threatened reduction in the Army looks bad for some of us. Regimental life does not promise to be remunerative. I could take Ordnance College and be in an office. I should have more money but I couldn't be so happy.

8/3/22

I am just recovering from Fyzabad week. To get my football team fit they turn out in the morning and do PT for half an hour. I take my place in the squad under a sergeant. I needed it after Fyzabad week. Several dances went on till 4.30am. I remember one night finishing up with "Oranges & Lemons" and "Here we come gathering nuts and may" at 4am.

The Ropers have gone to Kohut (frontier); perhaps you have read Capt Desmond VC or Desmond's daughter. I am --- --- .of this beastly mess and what a demon of a lot of work a comparatively simple show can give.

Have a great game of hockey today.

Officers of the station v W.O's s/sgts & sgts

Sgts Mess dances are rather good fun. Lots of officers and wives and friends attend. N.C.O's wives get a poor time on the whole, their only amusement in India is having babies. Their husbands frequently let them lead a hermit's life.

One sergeant – when I asked him why his wife did not turn out for a mixed hockey – said she would like to but had to look after the baby. Now I know she is a good hockey player, she played in games I organised in England (she was a WAAC) . She is getting absolutely spoilt by going nowhere and seeing nobody mainly because of baby.

The Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC) formed in 1917 to free up more men to fight in WW1.

Will mail you.
With love
Yours Cyril

I am sorry to be fearfully overdue, but as you see by the first date I was thinking of your birthday then.

R A Mess, Fyzabad
17th May 1922

My dear mother,
Just a very short letter to send my love
and to tell you I'm fit and healthy.

It's awful trying to write in the hot
weather and signing in the office is a toil.

Wikipedia Note:

*Chakrata is a cantonment town and also a sub district/tehsil, in Dehradun district^[1] in the state of Uttarakhand, India. It lies between the Tons and Yamuna rivers, at an elevation of 2118 m, 98 km from the state capital, Dehradun. **Chakrata** was originally a cantonment of the British Indian Army. To the west lies Himachal Pradesh, and to the east are **Mussoorie** (73kn) and Tehri Garhwal.*

I hope to get up to the hills of Chakrata near nowhere but on the same lot of hills as Missouri. As my address will be The Parsonage Chakrata I should be well looked after.

Padre Hare has got Chakrata for the hot months. It is small and I want to do several things.

1. Save money to pay off debts.
2. Work at books. i.e. Read military books such as Von Klucks, Len (?) Maurice's books etc. interesting to me.
3. Get away from the plains lest my blood gets too thin.

I have come in for a certain number of knocks this year, but care and experience have helped none giving much trouble.

Glad to get all the letters.

Much love
Yours Cyril.

R A Mess, Fyzabad
13th June 1922

My dear father,

I haven't written for some time. The hot weather – now at its height – has been less immoderate than usual, but its pretty stinking now. I thought that after two and a half years I would take some leave, although I couldn't afford it, this was granted but knocked on the head by the fact that Gardiner, who was to have replaced me, got typhoid followed by jaundice. I was going to "The Parsonage" Chakrata where the padre, who was here, has got the living for the hot weather.

I have only just realised – unfortunately – that owing to expenses having risen I am not entitled to normal comforts. It is rotten that we are worse off here than we should be in England. I wish I could think of a job where there was some chance of doing something. I thoroughly like life at Fyzabad and have had some of the best times of my life here, but prospects are impossible. If I am offered £800 to chuck it up I could save more as a sergeant on a duck board and have less responsibility.

To revert to the leave question I had some granted last year, but cancelled it to take troops to the hills. This was later cancelled and so I got nothing.

My battery football team is doing quite well and I am hoping to take them to Calcutta for the Indian Football Association Tournament, early in July. Calcutta is sticky and hot I believe most of the time. Please give my love all round. Later I shall have more energy for writing.

Answers

No the government don't provide passage on leave but I can get several months advance of pay. The Govt give nothing they can possibly help.

Jacob was a lucky man to be able to sacrifice the present for future gain.

Refrigeration

No action is taken here to give comforts to Europeans in the shape of electric fans or decent bungalows. The hospital here has only just got these.

Further inventions comfort would only make the contrast more uncomfortable, so hold on.

I am inclined to agree that reduction in the army should be done from the untrained, but some trained men would then have to wait years for promotion.

Under the present system officers disliked by their C.O's are the ones to go.

I don't understand what you mean by the next expression.

You asked about the Rayputs and their officers. A Rayput is the highest caste soldier though in some ways not the limit to an English way of thinking.

Officers in the Indian army are from Sandhurst and an occasional Indian.

One in XI Rayputs Indian Officers who work entirely under the B.O. They have a fine dignity and power of command, and are exceedingly smart. The B.O. is a bit of a tin god though he sometimes has a lot of work.

I intended my leave greatly for Hindustani, I am too busy here.

*British Officials with
Kings Commission
known as B.O's*

Yesterday my work was from 6am to 2.10pm with 20 mins for breakfast. That is good fun in a temperature of over 100 degrees. It consisted of one and a half hours on horse and one hour inspecting horse and stables, cycling over a mile to the bank, drawing £15 odd (Ro 2600) and paying Indian

Huvaldars, Naiks, Drivers, S/Smiths, Russie Wallers (Rope menders) Mistris (Carpenters), Bhisters, chokedars, sweepers, Lungris (cooks), makis etc etc baboos, coolies, syces

(a week passes)

I must finish this off for the mail.

I hope to go to Calcutta 2nd July with the Battery Football Team. I find now that I can't leave the army even if I want to, for only these reporters as surplus may go (with gratuity)

Much love to all

Cyril

Have had a groggy knee, just getting it fit. It has hindered my training.

R A Mess, Fyzabad

28th June 1922

Dear mother,

I seem so busy that letters are difficult to fit in

I am going to Calcutta on Sunday for the Football Tournament. There are many strong teams, mostly from units 4 times as large as us and also civilian and Indian teams. After that I hope to spend a month in the hills and come back for the commencement of the training season.

This cannot be harder work than the hot season has provided. The Battery has no Major, sunbalterns in England, 2 sick at the hills, leaving Temple (Capt) and me. Temple is the nicest fellow in Asia and about the most efficient having an unlimited capacity for work. I have been training vigorously as the Team will require plenty of stamina.

Best love to you all,

Yours

Cyril

R A Mess, Calcutta

8th July 1922

My dear people,

The first part of this letter was written on the train, but I have copied it below, written with a steadier hand and corrected by a steadier mind.

En route to Calcutta 6th July 1922

My dear people,

As I am now the proud possessor of a little time of my own I will endeavour to give you some of my past history and future prospects. I am now just past MUGHALSARAI, one of the most important of Indian junctions. All India from Fyzabad to here is flat and now very green and wet, travelling is delightfully cool, especially as I have two good fans playing on me and a cold bath available.

As it is a long time since I sent you anything but a hurried conglomeration of news I will try and get you up to date.

When we came back from camp there were in Fyzabad

3rd Batn Worcesters Col Grayam (?) VC and about 25 officers

XI Rayputs including Stevo (Capt R A Stevens)

Tommy Roper (who married Jessie Kytte) and many others with whom we were great pals.

H.Q. 25th Bat R.F.A. Col Cossart who was sick and has now gone on leave and will later go to R.H.A.

His adjutant Venning, who married a Miss Ricketts here and they have got a son (a few months old). Do you remember that Archer, Robertson and myself drove then from the church with a 6 horse team.

10th Bty R.F.A. No major

Capt Temple - who has a most charming wife and two well brought up kiddies.

Robertson - now on leave in England

Danton - now at Naimi Tal and has been suffering from dysentery for 6 months

Gardiner - who has had typhoid and jaundice and has just relieved me ta Fyzabad with hill party. and myself.

February, March & April we were very gay. Robley left for home early in Feb. We used to have great dinners with the Stevos and Temples, family dress dances etc. I never recovered from the Rayputs dance where I put my foot in it by spending 1-17 dances in the bar and was eventually fetched out by a girl to make me dance. I had decided to chuck the female sex, but found it impossible. (That's the way to get liked, ignore them [as a matter of fact I got badly choked off] and they love you). After that I danced like a good 'un for some weeks.

The Worcesters (3rd Bn) are down for the disbandment.

Unfortunately the Rayputs got pushed off to Mesopotamia and Stevo left his mother and wife here (as no women were allowed there) and to somewhere round Mosul (Iraq). Since then the two Mrs Stevens (known to us as "Auntie" and "Mrs Dick") have lived in the bungalow of a civilian named Crewe, whose wife is in England. She is a stalwart lady with a cheery smile and I used to have great fun dancing with her. I have had some splendid picnics with the Stevos, Crewe having a car we have gone out and had supper and gramophone under the silvery moon quite a number of times.

Two of the best picnics were about 12 miles out, we first went along the Lucknow road and then turned off meeting the Goyra (Fyzabad river) in a most charming spot.

First picnic. Walked along bank 1 mile and saw some small mugger and one medium sized. Crewe shot the medium sized one – had supper – after sending for boat – fetched mugger from sandbank and floated home.

Second picnic. Previously arranged large boat – Dhurries (carpets), gramophone, chicken, tongue, cucumber, whiskey, barley water. Set sail, saw some small muggers – saw two large exactly same spot as Crewe's last – put in to main bank – stalked and both shot – both failed to kill (must have hit) – I killed small mugger – walked - Crewe hit large one (12ft) walked on large sandbank – drifted home (supper and gramophone) in the moonlight. The river here is about ¾ mile across.

Lying on one's back in the moonlight is glorious, listening to the gramophone and taking care to avoid kicking it or sitting on nudles.

Colonel Atchison who has replaced Col. Cossart is one of the cheeriest fellows I have ever met. This is his first tour in India and he has not yet developed enlarged liver, speaks decently to Indian servants (a habit not too common) and is always pleasant. A bachelor (and therefore not so much to worry him, as I usually explain to the ladies – not particularly with regard to him) he is Irish and has an unending supply of interesting conversation and gets enormous fun out of simple things.

A cat had three kittens and brought them to the mess, they were just becoming friendly (at first being very frightened) and it used to amuse us intensely trying to make them tractable at tiffin they would climb up his legs (one up each)) and as he had shorts on you can imagine this action was pretty painful.

Part 2 (same time)

Well! Calcutta is football mad. The Worcesters are here and we have to face a strong team "The Black Watch" in the first round. If we are beaten we go back home.

Calcutta is itself I quite like it because it reminds me of London, and not many Indian towns do that. The roses are good, there are lots of cars and trams and the docks look just like London docks. It is delightfully cool and we are getting rain every day.

If we do some good I should like to take the team to Simla in September . I am hoping to go to Chakrata myself immediately after this and if I could get the team up to Chakrata about 1st September it would do them good to march 120 miles along the mountains to Simla. It would make them fit and get them used to the mountain air, in which they would have to play.

I want (myself) to walk to Mussoori from Chakrata (40 miles) at the former place the Stevos will be staying. There is hope that Stevo may get leave next cold weather and come to Fyzabad; his womenfolk are thinking of taking a bungalow there.

I wish I wasn't so devilish hard up I could have such a time here and at the hills, but I should only go to the dogs. "Saved by high prices" you can write on my gravestone, or "Stony of pocket but soft of heart"

Much love and many thanks for all the delightful letters.
Your Cyril

The Parsonage

Chakrata
24th July 1922

My dear mother,

I was delighted on returning from Calcutta, to read a double mail, which awaited me.

My first impressions of Calcutta were favourable but the climate is atrocious always and particularly in July. It is always damp and sticky. It made a lot of difference to my football team; that combined with the unaccustomed type of ground (soft whereas at Fyzabad it is like brick) and possibly some premature conceit at being boomed by the papers helped to cause our defeat in the second round after beating 1st Btn The Black Watch in the first.

Parts of Calcutta (the docks chiefly) are very similar to London, and the number of motor cars is surprising.

Well! Here I am in a decent cold place and we have a fire in the evening sometimes. Chakrata is in the centre of mountains, about 50 miles from Dehra Dun, and the mountains are covered with green trees through which waterfalls flow vigorously. In several spots the water, falling in very steep parts, fell quite clear of the earth for about fifty feet.

Ella would love this place; small and pretty with lots of walks. It is perched on the side of the mountain goodness knows how high (say 8,000 ft) and Mussoorie is 40 miles one side and Simla 120 miles another. Just imagine 50 miles in a car from Dehra Dun travelling like this (*drawing of a wiggly line like a snake – with comment: plan (not elevation)*) on a road 5yds across and with a steep drop in most places and not always the low flint walls to prevent going over.

Several times it was necessary to go through the swirling waters of the streams on falls, up to the axles. I am awfully glad to be up here for a change. My little room gives me a colossal view of mountains. For two months I hope to be free. The Padre (Rev Hase?) from Fyzabad (now left) lives here with his wife and kiddies (Taffy about 5 and Peggy about 2) and Capt & Mrs Hartnol (he is Supply & Transport Corps) and small daughter are staying with them.

At present we are in a cloud a certain amount of the time, as the monsoon is here, but later the weather will probably be very good. I have played tennis both days so you can see it is not really bad. The wild flowers and ferns are wonderful. Lilies of the valley are just finishing but were very numerous, in May the place is covered with large daisies, and the dahlias are still to be picked.

I am going to press some and will send a few. These are called the Simla Hills (part of the Himalayas), though being about 3 times as high as Snowdon I should have thought mountains would have been a more correct name. On a really clear day the view from here is green mountains, green mountains etc. and finally snow peaks (in summer) but in winter of course all the peaks are snowy and tobogganing must be great fun.

The club here is absurdly small consisting of 4 ash tennis courts and the club itself just like a small pavilion.

I am awfully glad to get the chance to write to everyone.

With ever so much love,
Your Cyril

3rd August 1922

My Dear Mother,

I am having a splendid time here. No worry, no responsibility, no nothing.

Over 7,000 (feet), it doesn't take long to get to nearly 10,000, that is about the highest one can get here. The roads to Simla (there are two) are very rough in parts and very steep but very 10 miles odd there are exceedingly nice forest bungalows on one road P.W.D. Rest houses on the other.

One gets permission to stay, but has nothing to pay for rent. I expect to walk to Simla (120 miles) at the end of the month and there meet my football team for the Durand Cup Tournament starting 16th Sept.

I don't know when you'll get this as of course you will be away.

I hope you'll all have an awfully jolly time. I am looking forward no end to 1924.

Lots of love

Yours

Cyril

3/8/22

My dear father,

I have your last three letters by me as I write this. They are dated 21st June, 28th June & 6th July.

I envy you your operas and shall have to try to make up for last time. I note your plans for Switz and hope you'll have a real good time, this letter will probably catch you after you get back. I recommended you "Private to F.M." by Sir Wm Robertson, after I had studied it myself. We have more work these days, but nevertheless his example was a very good one in many ways.

Entrance to Staff College is open to competition still. There are about 2 vacancies for R.A. officers yearly.

Tatties (Electric fans?) cost about Ro9 and make a wonderful difference to a room. Standing close to one in the hottest weather one gets an apparently icy blast.

I would give any machine a trial but it seems to me that if the expert chemist has failed the amateur is unlikely to succeed. Electric fans are universal in Calcutta, over the table over groups of chairs, over the bed, and they are very successful. When I was at Calcutta, if I drank under a fan I was comfortable and cool, if I drank when the fan was not working I at once broke into a perspiration. Little storage is done here (India), meat is never kept and everything is consumed or thrown away. Every compound (garden) has a well and we never run short at Fyzabad. The Bhishti (*Muslim tribe found in North India and Pakistan*) has nothing else to do except draw water.

I am interested in the strides taken by though my knowledge of it is nil. I shall be very glad to get the pamphlet when you have finished with it.

The Daily round and the common task have furnished far too much for my liking and have prevented me doing many things. I want to do Sir W. Robertson says 'Sleeping in the afternoon is bad'. I wish to avoid it but find no one who can.

In the hot weather I rise 5.30 and am down on parade nearly ½ mile away mounted at 6am. I usually canter along and it only takes 5 minutes. From 6 – 9 I am going strong. I then go to breakfast and have some work at the mess and some at my bungalow 200 yds away and get back by 10 going on till 1.15. Lunch is finished by 2pm or I say may be later, my exercise will be 5.30 to 6.30. Dinner is 8.30 and in excessive heat and a night of 6 or 7 odd hours I have found it difficult to avoid resting and once I start resting I sleep. Some people say they rest but cannot sleep and some say one should not sleep, others find it impossible to sleep (owing to the heat) before midnight. Diet is I am convinced most important – the Englishman is fool enough to try and eat the same stuff (almost) as in England. He also drinks beer, which seems to me absolutely fatal here in the hot weather. Few are foolish enough to drink in the heat.

I don't want to stay out here many more years. One's blood gets very thin and cuts won't heal. A fellow named Morgan was out here and used to play tennis occasionally with Dunbar and myself, not frequently. He was a much superior player. He went to the Riviera and made a name, beating Cochet the Frenchman, and then to Wimbledon. He was against Patterson first round but had to scratch being unwell. I believe that he found tennis at home much less fatiguing and was not worried by perspiring as much as his opponents. He lasted better I believe. Ten years out here straight off is I think bad for the Englishman; one especially notices the difference between girls who have come from home.

Written in much haste.

Love

Your Cyril

8th Aug 1922

My dear mother,

I am having a splendid time here and I am feeling awfully fit. I have taken plenty of walking exercise and the effect is wonderful.

I could not have done better than come here.

I hope you're fit and cheery.

I hope to walk to Simla at the end of the month and play football there in the Durand Cup. By the time I get to Fyzabad the weather should be very pleasant.

Lots of rain here now. My amusements have been in Tennis, watching boxing, long walks one fancy dress dance (another dance tonight), I have dined out several times.

Ever so much love

Yours

Cyril

(Wikipedia note:

The Durand Football Tournament, commonly known as Durand Cup, is an annual domestic football competition in India which was first held in 1888 in Shimla. Hosted by the Durand Football Tournament Society (DFTS) and All India Football Federation (AIFF), the tournament is the oldest existing club football tournament in Asia and third oldest in the world.