

GREETINGS

*To General Sir William Slim
and all the other stout fellows
of the Burma Campaign*



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BOVRIL**

PUTS BEEF INTO YOU

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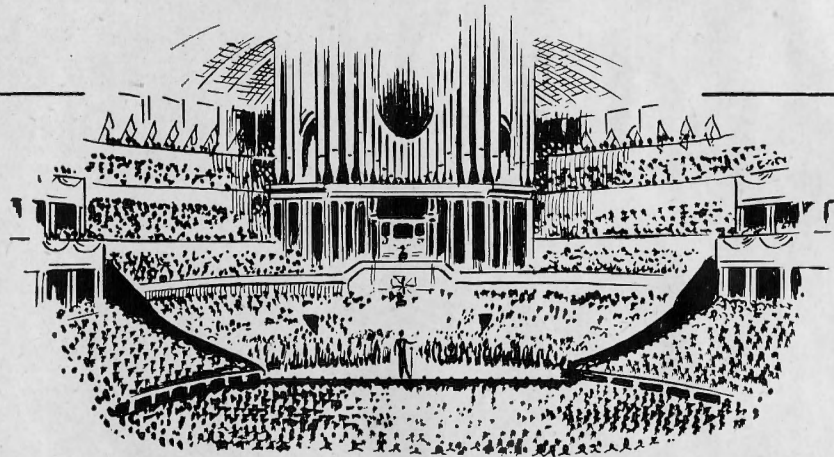


BURMA REUNION

Royal Albert Hall

JUNE 2nd

1947



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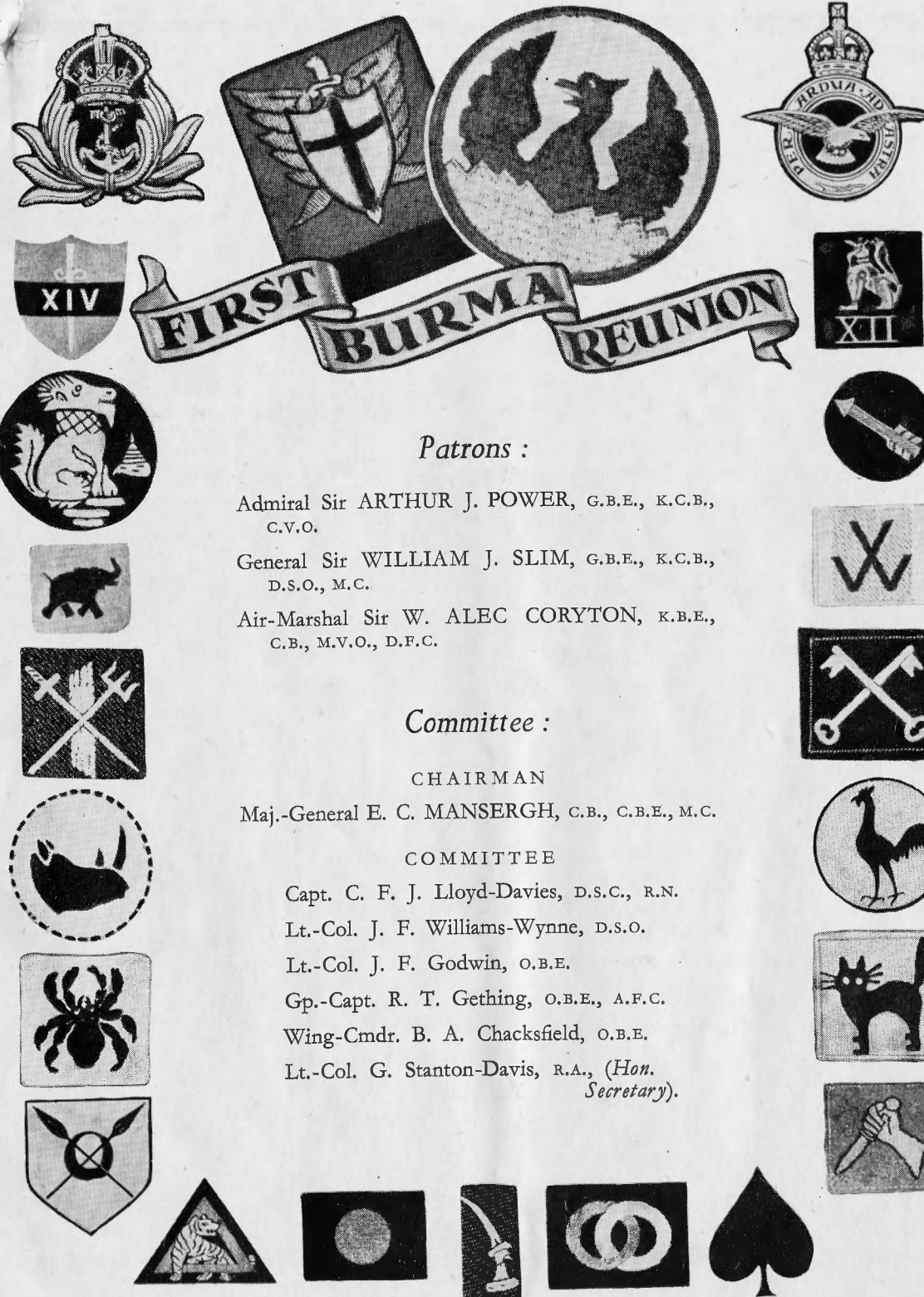
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You are on the Air

The First Burma Reunion is being broadcast by the B.B.C. in the LIGHT PROGRAMME this evening from 7.30 to 8 p.m. The broadcast is being recorded and will be repeated in the African Service and in the Radio News Reel of the Overseas Programme.



Photo by Hugh Cecil

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From General Sir William J. Slim :

A MESSAGE TO YOU

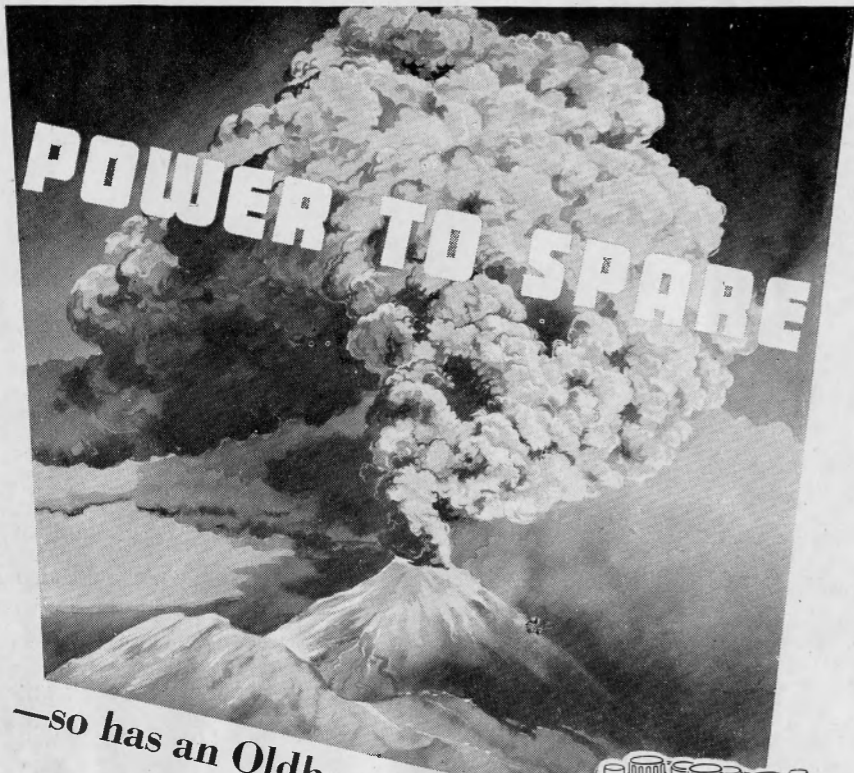
THIS is the first reunion of men of all ranks and Services who fought in Burma, and we hope it won't be the last. I only wish it were possible for all of us who were out there together to be here now, but many thousands who are not will be listening to the broadcast of our doings.

The main object of our party tonight is to meet old comrades and to renew old friendships formed in a distant land. We shall also remember some of the best of us who did not come back.

You would like to know, I think, that any money left over from the expenses of this party—and thanks to generous friends there will be quite a bit—will be devoted, through the various Service Benevolent Funds to help their dependants, and to give a hand to others of our old comrades who have not been as lucky in Civvy Street as I hope you have.

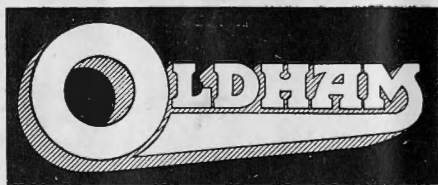
So here's good luck to you and a happy evening.

W. J. Slim



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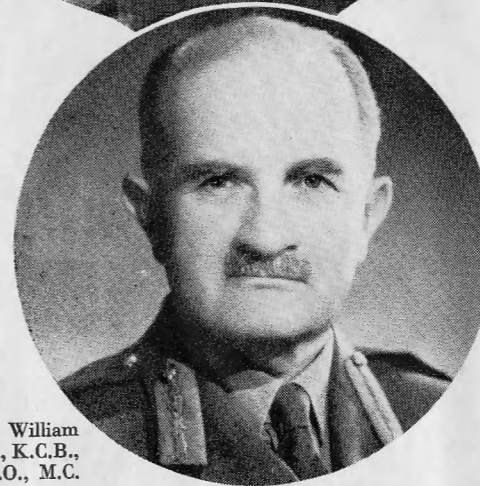
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**TO SPEAK
 TO YOU
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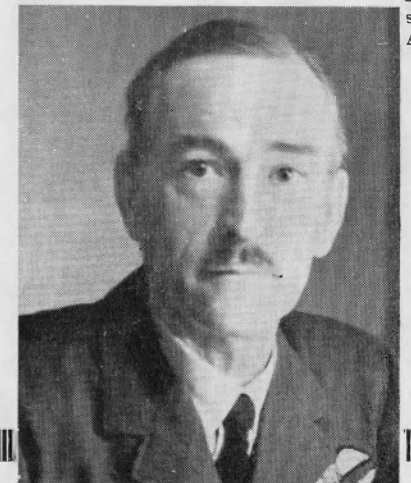


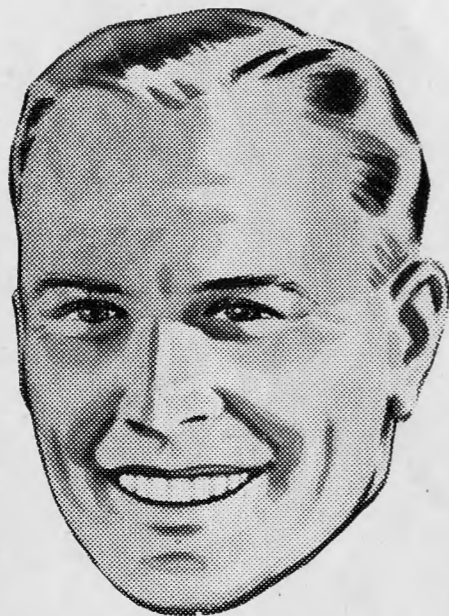
Admiral Sir Arthur J. Power, C.B.E., K.C.B., C.V.O., Lord Commissioner of the Admiralty



General Sir William Slim, C.B.E., K.C.B., C.B.E., D.S.O., M.C.

Air Marshal Sir W. A. Coryton, K.B.E., C.B., M.V.O., D.F.C.





HELLO!

ANOTHER

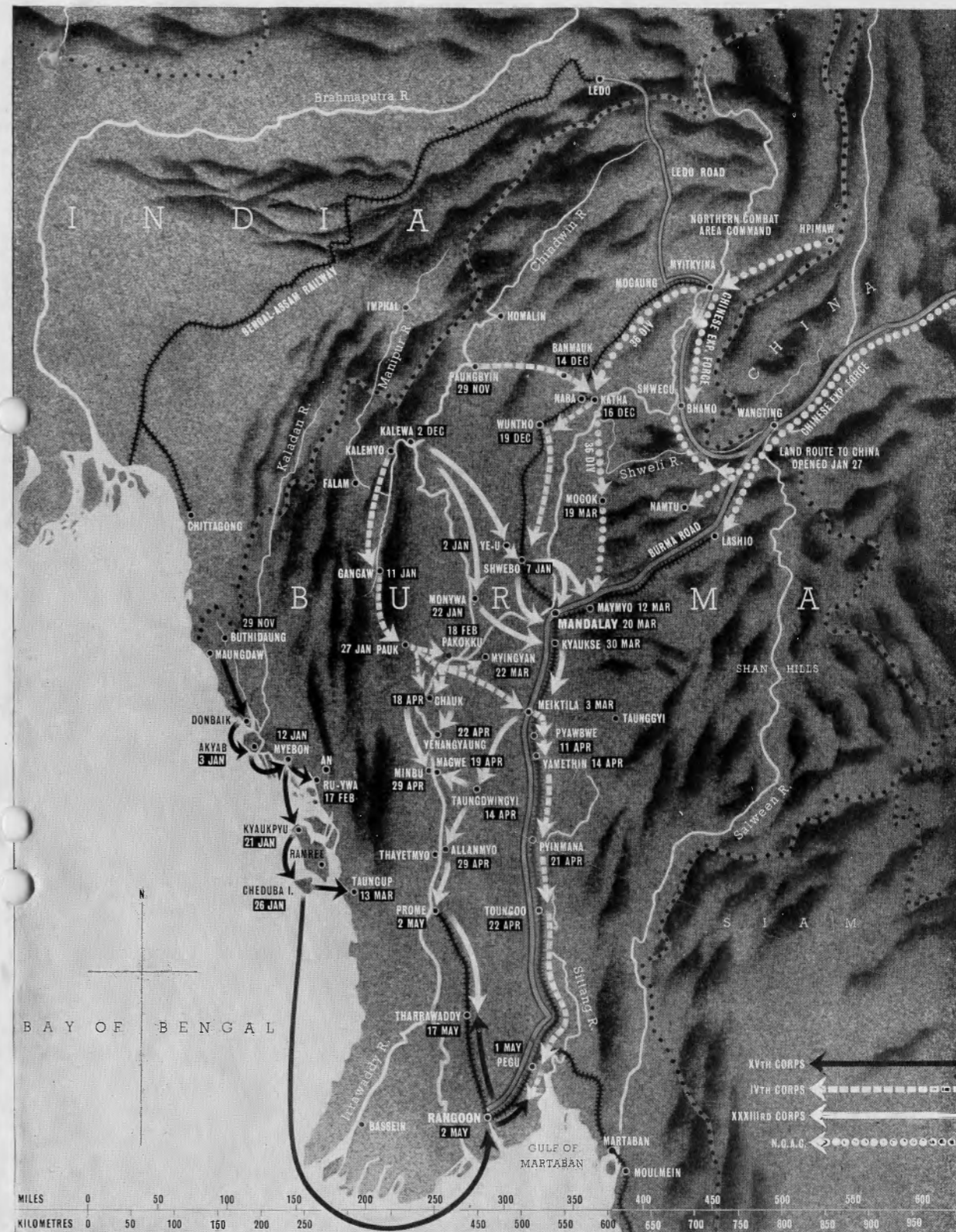
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THE RECONQUEST OF BURMA.—Showing the progress of the offensive which started in December, 1944. This map is from "The Campaign in Burma" and is reproduced by courtesy of H.M. Stationery Office.

The Will to Win...

*as expressed by the forces of
South East Asia Command*



*Western Pools take this opportunity of wishing all
present at to-night's re-union a most enjoyable evening*

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WHERE TO MEET OLD FRIENDS

ALL are welcome to use any of the ten numbered
bars, but to help you to meet your old friends we
suggest you try the one listed below for your own unit.

No. 1 (Lower Ground Floor)

17th Ind. Div.
5th Ind. Div.
202 L. of C. Area.
404 L. of C. Area.
R.A.F., 221 Group.

No. 2 (Lower Ground Floor)

23rd Ind. Div.
81 (W.A.) Div.
303 L. of C. Area.
505 L. of C. Area.
R.A.F. 224 Group.

No. 3 (Ground Floor)

20th Ind. Div.
33 S.S. Bde.
Lushai Bde.
R.A.F. 231 Group.

No. 4 (Ground Floor)

Royal Naval Eastern Fleet.
25th Ind. Div.
50 Parachute Bde.
R.A.F. 222 Group.
R.A.F. 232 Group.

No. 5 (Grand Tier)

19th Ind. Div.
36 Div.
3rd Ind. Div. (Chindits.)
254 Tank Bde.
R.A.F. 232 Group.

No. 6 (Second Tier)

26th Ind. Div.
82 (W.A.) Div.
50 Ind. Tank Bde.
R.A.F. 224 Group.

No. 7 (Balcony)

H.Q. 14th Army.
H.Q. 3 T.A.F. & E.A.C.
H.Q. 4th Ind. Corps.
H.Q. L. of C. Command.
H.Q. 221 Group.
H.Q. 232 Group.
H.Q. 230 Group.

No. 8 (Balcony)

Royal Navy Eastern Fleet.
2nd Div.
268 Bde.
255 Tank Bde.
R.A.F. 231 Group.
R.A.F. 222 Group.

No. 9 (Balcony)

H.Q. Eastern Fleet.
H.Q. 12th Army.
H.Q. 15 Ind. Corps.
H.Q. 33 Ind. Corps.
H.Q. 224 Group.
H.Q. 231 Group.
H.Q. 222 Group.

No. 10 (Gallery)

11th (E.A.) Div.
7th Ind. Div.
28th (E.A.) Bde.
R.A.F. 221 Group.
R.A.F. 230 Group.

Programme

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Michael Howard

Leslie Henson

Lind Joyce

Kenway and Young 3

Vera Lynn

Bryan Michie

Hal Stone and Nina Kay

/ Stainless Stephen

Jack Train

Douglas Tait

Tannar and Crawford

Helen Trix-Lewis

Jack Warner

6 Elsie and Doris Waters

5 Ted and Barbara Andrews
with Julie (aged 11)

2 Marie Burke and
Patricia Burke

Al Burnett

Lynne Breton

Noel Coward

Jackie Coogan

May Carter

Frances Day

Harry Green

8 Ronnie George

Paula Green

4 Tommy Handley

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Bandmaster, Royal Artillery

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The Chairman and Committee of the First Burma Reunion offer their grateful thanks to—

Mr. Arthur R. Lewis

(Winter Garden Theatre) for arranging and stage-directing the entertainment, by courtesy of Countess De La Marr and Mr. Jack Hylton.

Mr. Ralph Reader

for leading the Community Singing.

Mr. Alfred Goldstein and Mr. P. G. Thompson

for raising £2,000 from the Sportsmen of the Turf.

Mr. Frank Owen

(Editor of SEAC) for his article "The War in Burma" and other assistance.

Mr. Michael Storm

("Phlitt" the cartoonist) for his drawings for the poster and programme.

To the Artistes

who have so generously given their services for this evening.

To the Advertisers

who have so kindly taken space in this programme.

NEWS ITEMS

AN Exhibition of Pictures of Burma Battlefields, Nagas, Chins, etc., by Mr. Wyndham Robinson, was opened to-day by General Slim at India House, and will remain open for the next two weeks. All ranks and services are cordially invited free.

CHINDITS. 2nd Annual Officers' Reunion Dinner, 14th June, Claridges. Brig. M. Calvert D.S.O. will preside. Tickets £1. 5. 0. Secty. P. K. Hill, 58, Westwood Park Road, Peterborough.

17TH Indian Division ("The Black Cats"). First Annual Officers' Reunion Dinner, Simpsons-in-the-Strand, W.C.2., 20th June,

6.30 p.m. (for 7.30 p.m.). Dress: Lounge suits (or uniform for serving officers). Maj.-Gen. D. Tennant Cowan, C.B., C.B.E., D.S.O., M.C., will preside. Tickets, £1 (exclusive of drinks), obtainable from R. G. Swadling, Playfoots, Matfield, Tonbridge, Kent.

"H.Q. Eastern Army, Eastern Command, India and 21 Corps—Ye Olde Mayne Head. Reunion Dinner at Kettner's Restaurant, Soho, London, on Saturday, 27th September. Tickets, £1 1s., from Lt.-Col. W. J. Higson, M.B.E., 10, The Parade, Northampton.

THE WAR IN BURMA

by Frank Owen

THERE never has been another war in history like the Burma War.

It was fought in a jungle, 1,000 miles away from the nearest sea base of the Army. The men in the far battle line drew the bulk of their food, fuel, ammo, rum (not too much of that!) along a single track railway which wandered across two vast Indian provinces, and was twice ferried over a river wider than the Rhine.

At the foot of the great mountain barrier of Burma, this tenuous railway track died altogether. From there forward the soldiers had to make their own roads, winding up into the hills above the clouds, marching on into the most God-forsaken wilderness on earth. In this place, our men fought the Japanese, the least human of all enemies.

Over the roof of the jungle, day and night, in blinding rain and howling gales, ranged the airmen. They drove the Jap invader out of the sky above the land battle; they hammered his front and battered his rear; they built a new supply line for our troops. The airmen brought in men, guns, oxen and mules. They bore our wounded safely home across the magic bridge of the sky.

The sailors held the seas open, so that the tanks, trucks, bulldozers and the stores of war could flow from distant Britain and America in a mounting flood to the Burma front. The sailors carried the soldiers to the assault beaches of Arakan and Rangoon River, and fought alongside them there.

BLACK, BROWN, WHITE, YELLOW

Men of many different races were engaged in this high enterprise—British, Indian, American, Dominion, Gurkha, African, Chinese, Burmese. The war which ended with the atom bombs was fought also with the bow and arrow of the Naga, Kuki, Kachin and Karen.



It was fought, too, with the knife and gun of the secret forces which lay in the jungle behind the enemy front, or who dropped there in the night by parachute to organise revolt by modern methods, but by age-old prescription. Radar, the Dakota, the submarine, the jeep and the elephant all had their part in this strange war. In the end the Supreme Allied Commander, Admiral Lord Mountbatten, disposed vast air and naval fleets, immense scientific resources and a million men.

The story did not open on this grand scale. We started off, in 1942, with one division in the line (17th Indian Div.), and we nearly lost that one at the Sittang Bridge disaster. Our men lacked air support, artillery, transport, even infantry weapons. But linking up with the Burma Division, they made a magnificent fighting retreat of 800 miles to India under General Bill Slim.

LEARNING THE JAP TRICKS

Next year came General Wingate's first intruder march beyond the Chindwin, and the gallant but luckless advance in Arakan of 14 Indian Div. Though we ended up where we had begun, we learned more than the Japanese did. We found the answer to their prime tactic of "encirclement." It was air supply.

By the end of 1943 the new Fourteenth Army had grown up into a force of ten Imperial Divisions. There were 3, 5, 7, 17, 20, 23, 25 and 26 (Indian) Divs., 36 (British) Div., and 81 (West African) Div. Soon would come also 2 (British) Div., 11 (East African) Div., 19 (Indian) Div. and 82 (West African) Div., besides 50, 254, and 255 Tank Brigades and the Royal Marine Commandos.

Under American General "Vinegar Joe" Stilwell, on the Ledo front, were deployed two (later five) Chinese divisions and the American infantry brigades, Merrill's Marauders and Mars Force. But all this did not happen at once, and at least another year of hard and often desperate fighting had to take place before it became the Japanese turn to retreat.

1944 opened with a fresh Jap forward drive in Arakan. Here, in the famous "Admin Box" they encircled 7 Div., isolating it from 5 Div. All our troops held fast, supplied by air. After a month's siege the Jap front itself was broken in by 26 and 36 Divs., descending from Chittagong.

OUR JUNGLE STALINGRAD

Meanwhile, a larger Jap offensive had cut off the whole plain of Imphal, where General Geoffrey Scones IV Indian Corps were based. The enemy also swept round Kohima, and threatened to seize Manipur Road and cut Stilwell's supply line. The enemy was balked by the resolute stand of the little garrison at Kohima and by the rapid arrival of General Monty Stopford's XXXIII Indian Corps from Manipur Road. Having stormed Kohima Ridge frontally in some of the bloodiest fighting of the war, Stopford advanced on Imphal Plain with two divisions up (2 and 7) and in June relieved this Jungle Stalingrad. All along that road of glory are the terraced cemeteries of our British and Indian dead.

While all this was going on, the troops in Imphal Plain (5, 7, 20, 23 Divs.) were smashing the spine of the Japanese army in a long slogging battle. As summer

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TALES OF THE CHINDITS

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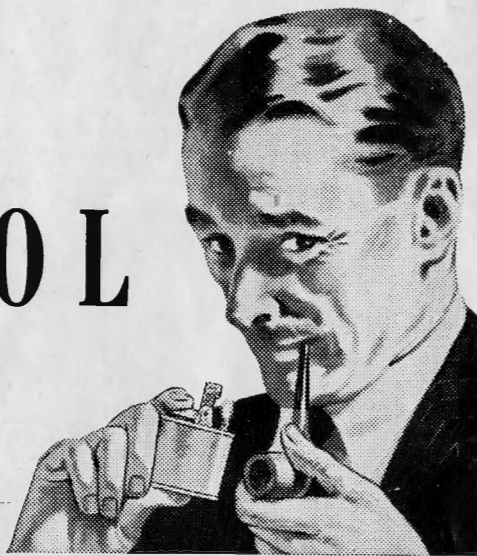
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THE WAR IN BURMA (continued)

rew to a close the Japs began to haul back and offer a stubbornly contested retreat. They were harried down the road by 5 and 11 Divs. A magnificent part in the defence of Imphal was played by 221 Group, R.A.F. The Strategic Air Force, half composed of our American comrades, played hell with the Jap retreat. In November the Fourteenth Army crossed the Chindwin, marching on Mandalay. They were accompanied on their hard march by the nurses, and by the girls of W.A.S.(B.).

These operations had been much aided by the daring airborne invasion of Central Burma led by Orde Wingate. Flying over the Jap front by night this superb guerilla leader set about destroying the enemy's rear. Wingate himself was shortly afterwards killed in an air crash, but his Chindits gave vital aid to the advance of Vinegar Joe on the Ledo front, notably at the storm of Mogaung. Early in 1945 the Road to China was re-opened, and the Chinese-American advance, strengthened by 36 (British) Div. converged upon Mandalay.

The Japanese had now drawn back behind the great loop of the Irrawaddy. Slim had already got 19 Div. on to the eastern bank north of the city, and threatened a crossing south of it with two more divisions (2 and 20).

BILL SLIM'S MASTER-STROKE

This demonstration, however, was a ruse to cover his real design, a master stroke. This was a sudden thrust against Meiktila, hub of the Japanese communications, 100 miles south of Mandalay. This manoeuvre involved a march of 300 miles by IV Corps across the rear of the riverside divisions, in order to bring them into position for the assault.

The trick came off. When 20 Div. forced a crossing just below the city, the Japanese were convinced that the main attack was going at that point. When 7 Div. crossed at Nyzungu the Japs believed that *this* was the feint. Instead, it was the REAL THING.

On February 20th (decisive day in Burma) 17 Div. passing through 7 Div.'s bridgehead, struck straight and hard at Meiktila. The Japs fought back stoutly, but all resistance was broken when 5 Div. arrived as airborne reinforcements. The fall of Meiktila decided the battle of the Mandalay Plain—and the fate of the Japanese Army in Burma.

On March 20th troops of 19 Div. descending from Mandalay Hill, entered the citadel of Mandalay itself. They were met shortly afterwards by 2 and 20 Divs. fighting their way up from below the city. The only question that now remained was—how fast could we get to Rangoon?

This problem had been posed at Mountbatten's headquarters several months before, when it was realised that as the army advanced it would become ever harder to supply it by air from its old bases. Mountbatten, therefore, ordered the seizure of new airfields along the Arakan coast.

Thus was launched the strange "War of the Chaungs" of General Christison's XV Indian Corps, which successively yielded us Akyab, Rzmree and Cheduba, all by Combined Operations. The troops employed were

25, 26, 81 and 82 Divs., with 50 Tank Brigade and 11 East African Brigade. Force W was the naval arm, and 224 Group R.A.F. were the air striking force.

The supply question being now in hand, the bold decision was taken to seize Rangoon before the monsoon should break, bogging down our marching armies in the rain.

While General Oliver Leese, therefore, as C.-in-C. Allied Land Forces ordered Slim's Fourteenth Army in the central plain to advance with all speed, a second air and seaborne assault was also mounted to take Rangoon from the South with General Christison's XV Corps.

This assault by sea was duly launched—and not contested. The Japs had pulled out of Rangoon a few hours before our landing at Elephant Point. The Jap garrison of Rangoon were heading eastwards before the jaws of the Fourteenth Army trap could snap on Pegu, the last vital junction on the escape route.

THE BEGINNING OF THE END

On May 3rd troops of 26 Div. entered Rangoon, the capital of Burma—to find it in flames, once again.

It was almost the end of the Burma Campaign, but not quite. There remained two further tasks—to round up the shattered and scattered Jap units in Central Burma, and to press after them in their retreat to the Salween River and Siam.

For these operations, a new Army, the Twelfth, was created out of the body of the Fourteenth. General Stopford was given the command, and in three months he reported 20,000 Japanese killed. Meanwhile General Dempsey took over the Fourteenth, and General Slim became C.-in-C. We prepared to assault Singapore, and liberate Malaya.

In August, the atom bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki ended the Japanese War (though not all the troubles in South East Asia!) When the Cease Fire sounded there was still a famous Indian formation fighting on the Sittang River. It was General Punch Cowan's 17 Div., tidying up what had been started in the same place, by the same people, three and a half years before.

Thus history offered her own incalculable revenge. We wish to end this brief story of the Burma War with a salute to our old comrades of all nations with whom we served in the jungle, over it, and in the seas which bounded it. And to the devoted women, 'Wosbies', nurses and all other women's services, who came with us into a cruel place, because honour called them there.





OLD COMRADES

To meet once again familiar things is the essence of every reunion. To many men the return home and the evening spent on Shermans coupon summarises all the meaning of old comradeship. Past days of good sport on the easiest of coupons are recollected and future time spent with profit and pleasure are anticipated. For Shermans coupon improves with the years. All the ingenuity and enterprise of the Sherman organisation are brought

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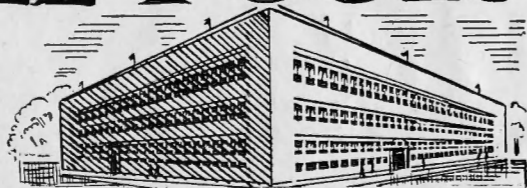
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