



**STAFF SERGEANT  
H.C.P. CANNON**





**This book is about Herbert Charles Philip Cannon's time in the British Army during the Second World War when he saw active service in France, Africa, India and Burma.**

**It is compiled using his Army Service Records and personal artefacts by his son Chris in his memory.**

**2019**

# **STAFF SERGEANT H.C.P. CANNON S/59998**

Herbert Charles Philip Cannon.

Born October 10th 1915.

Birkenhead, Cheshire.

## **1936 8th May.**

Enlisted in the 2nd Cavalry Division of the Royal Army Service Corps (RASC) Territorial Army, Harroby Road Drill Hall, Birkenhead.

## **1939 18th July.**

Promoted to Corporal.

"Chamberlain declared war on Germany at 11a.m.. on the 3rd September 1939. Shortly after 11a..m. Phil walked into the house and told his mother and I he had been posted to G.H.Q at BEF near Arras, France."

Letter from Steve Cannon (brother) in 2012.



**In his dress uniform in the late 1930's**





**H. C. P. Cannon at  
Territorial Army  
Camp Pennard  
Swansea 1936.**



**1939**

**9th Sept. Posted to 'A' Supply Company.**

**12th Sept. Embarked convoy at Newport Wales for France.**

**14th Sept. Promoted to Acting Sergeant and disembarked  
in France.**

**In France as part of the British Expeditionary Force ( BEF)  
fighting alongside the the French army.**



**Cigarette case carried in his tunic pocket next to  
his heart inscribed :**

**"Sergeant H.C.P. Cannon RASC (1939) S/59998  
(image of a heart) Miss W. Robinson 29, Birch  
Road, Bebington"**





**1940 25th Feb. On leave married Winifred Lawra Robinson at St Andrews Church, Bebington.**





**Between getting married in February 1940 until discharge from the army in January 1946 they spent most of the time apart with only infrequent letters between them.**





**1940  
May 1940.  
Evacuated from  
France bringing  
home a souvenir of a  
long sword bayonet  
given to him by a  
French Officer.**

**Next to the sword is  
his machete used to  
cut a path through  
the dense jungle of  
Burma.**

**June. Posted to 'G'  
Company, Dorset  
Division, Burford,  
Wiltshire then to  
Bath.**

**25th August. Posted  
to Taunton,  
Somerset.**



**1941**

**13th Sept. Posted to Woking to await an embarkation order for overseas active service.**

**22nd Sept. Promoted to Acting Sergeant.**

**30th Sept. Embarked ship at Greenock, Scotland.**

**15th Oct. Disembarked, Freetown, West Africa.**

**21st Oct. Attached to a fortress Headquarters (HQ) as Chief Clerk, senior rank in HQ, responsible for classified documents  
(secret, top secret and confidential).**





**1942**

**20th Jan. Confirmed in the rank of War Substantive Sergeant.**

**1943**

**12th Feb. Embarked at Freetown, sailed to Lagos, Nigeria.**

**26th Feb. Disembarked UK, three weeks leave.**

**11th April Embarked UK for Africa.**

**29th April Disembarked West Africa.**



BUSH PATH.  
NATIVES TROTTING ALONG WITH KITS



ME.  
LEADING FROM KENT BEACH  
4 MILE WALK BACK TO ROAD.

**Album of photographs from his time in  
Sierra Leone.**



## Sergeant Cannon in West Africa 1941-43.











**1943**

**30th April Embarked Freetown.**

**16th May Promoted to Staff Sergeant.**

**Disembarked Lagos, Nigeria.**

**7th June Admitted to hospital for one week (reason unknown).**



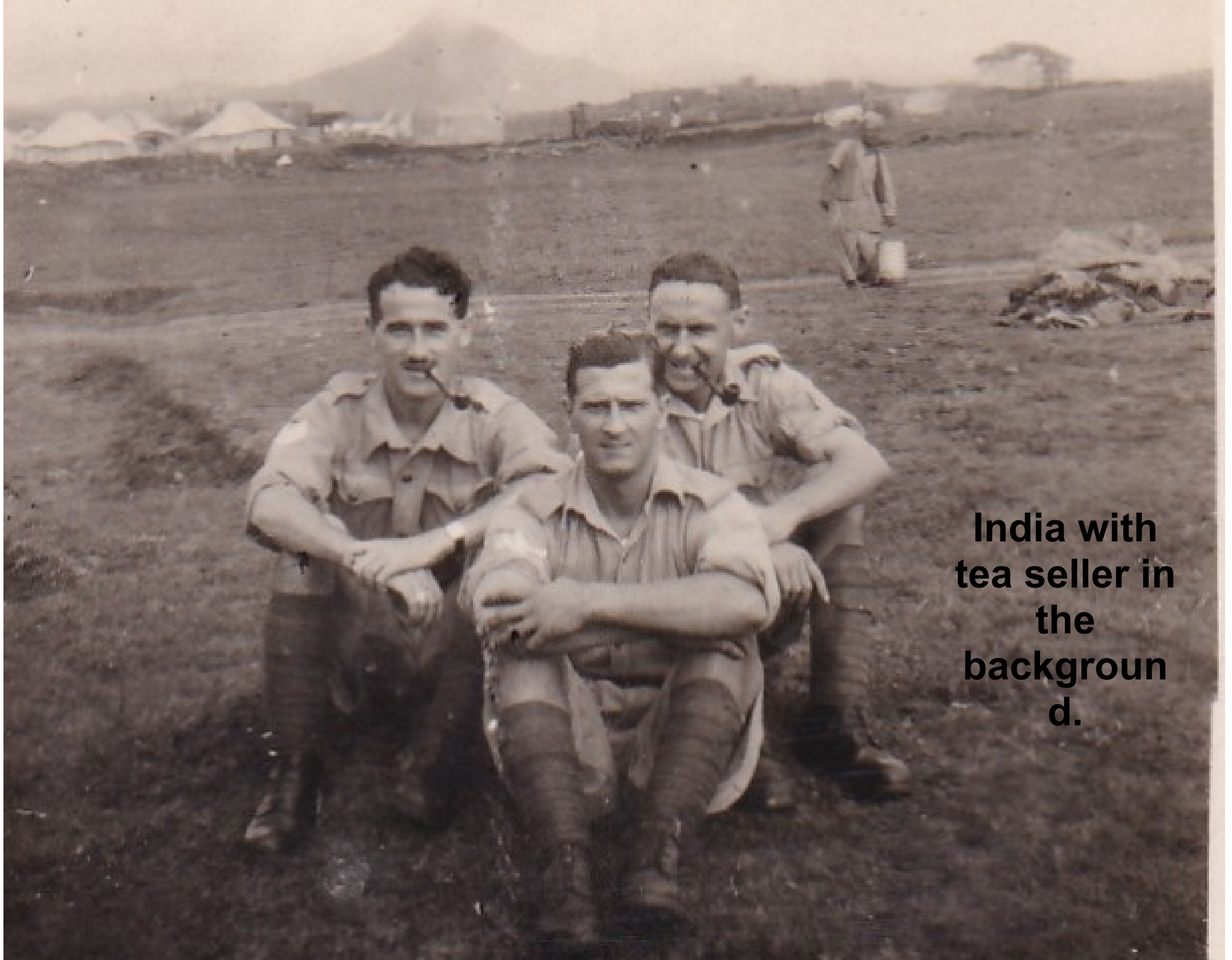


**Nigeria 1943.  
Recruited and  
trained African  
troops to fight for  
the King.  
Left  
Corporal Nuru  
Yesufu Clerk to  
H.C.P. Cannon.**

**1943**

**10th July Embarked Lagos for Bombay, India.  
Part of the 81st West African Division.**

**14th August Disembarked Bombay.**



**India with  
tea seller in  
the  
backgroun  
d.**



**From August 1943 until the end of the war in 1945 Phil Cannon saw active service in India and the Burma campaign.**

**This involved marching through jungles and monsoons, supplied from the air. The Japanese army fought fiercely to the last man.**





**Phil Cannon said he walked over a thousand miles through the jungle and mountainous terrain and said he never wanted to walk anywhere again. He admired the Indian and African soldiers bravery and was in awe of the Gurkha soldiers.**





**1944 6th June. Admitted to hospital.**

**Evacuated to hospital from active service by travelling down river in a canoe for days looked after by an African soldier.**

**14th June Awarded 1939-45 Star medal.**



**The black spider cloth badge worn by Phil Cannon is the emblem of the 81st West African Division. It was worn head down so it would appear to be going forward when you raised your arm to fire a rifle.**

**He carried the black cat seen here for luck given to him by his mother in law and sister in law May. The black cat is the badge of the Indian 17th Infantry Division he fought alongside.**







**Out of contact in Burma all supplies were dropped from the air, dangerous, as it drew the attention of the Japanese soldiers.**

**Phil's story was that he carried a tin for days thinking it was peaches for his Christmas dinner, when he opened the can it was carrots!**





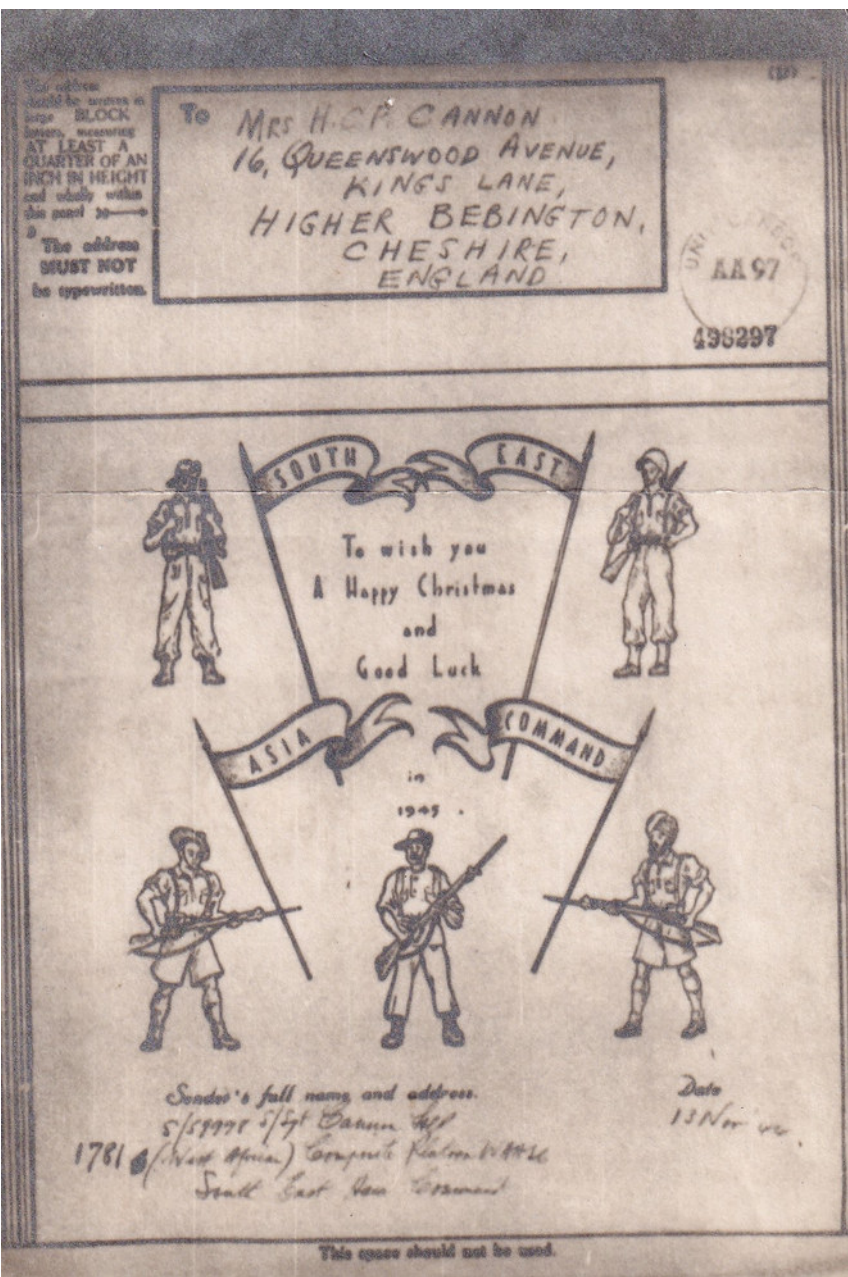


**81st West African Division soldiers in action in the  
Arakan  
area of Burma. scene of ferocious fighting.**

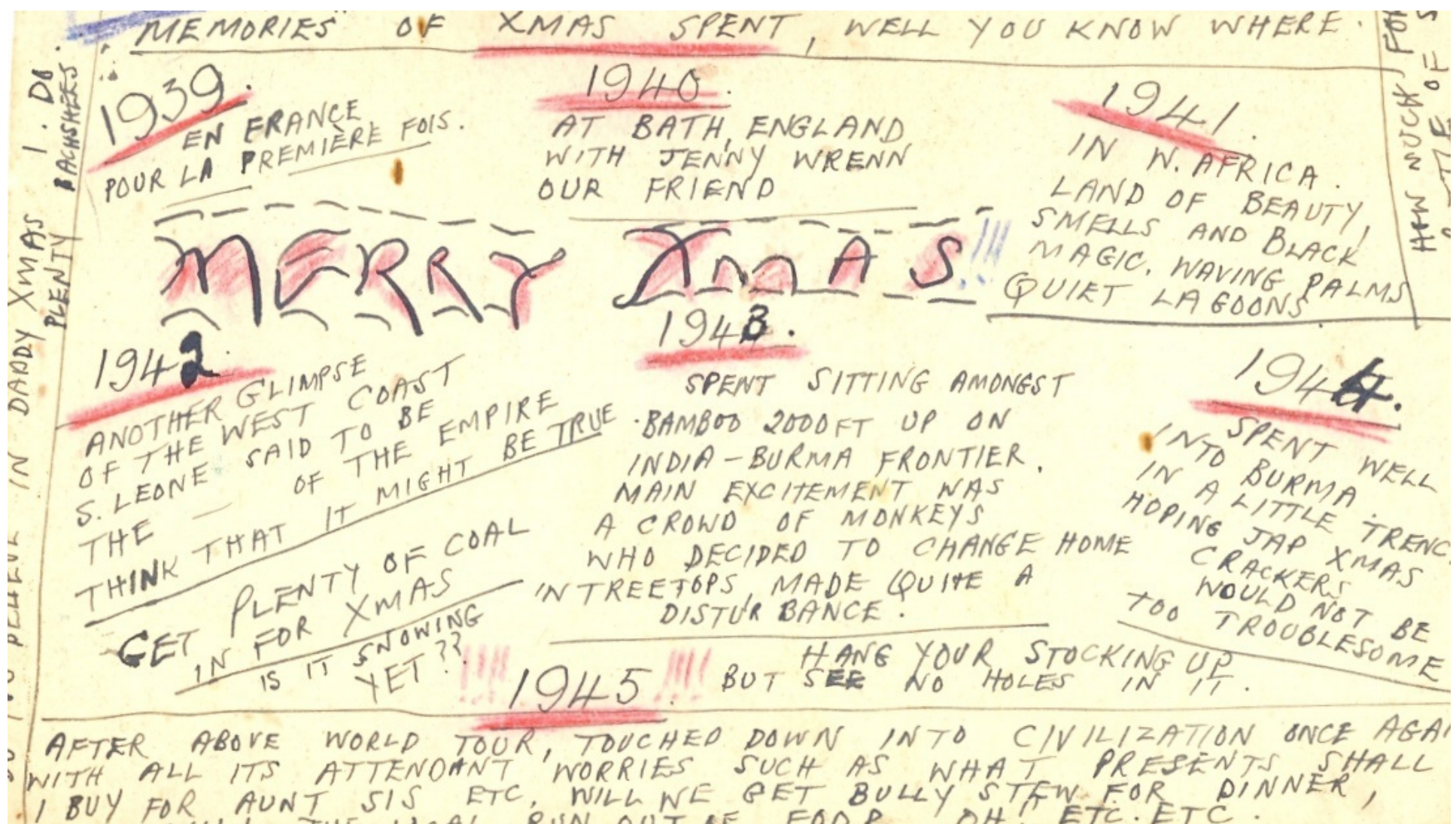












**1945**

**4th Oct. Returned to the UK from active service.**

**Taken on the strength of the Home Command in the rank of Staff Sergeant GT (SSGT) having served 6 years and 87 days war service.**

**1946**

**23rd Jan. After 50 days leave released from military service having demonstrated exemplary conduct.**



## The image shows the front cover of a small, brown cloth-bound book. The cover has a textured, slightly mottled appearance with some wear and discoloration, particularly along the edges. The title is printed in a dark, serif font, centered on the cover. The text is arranged in four lines: "ARMY BOOK 64." at the top, followed by "SOLDIER'S SERVICE.", then "AND" in a smaller font, and finally "PAY BOOK." at the bottom. The spine of the book is visible on the left side, showing a dark, possibly black, material. The overall appearance is that of an old, well-used volume.

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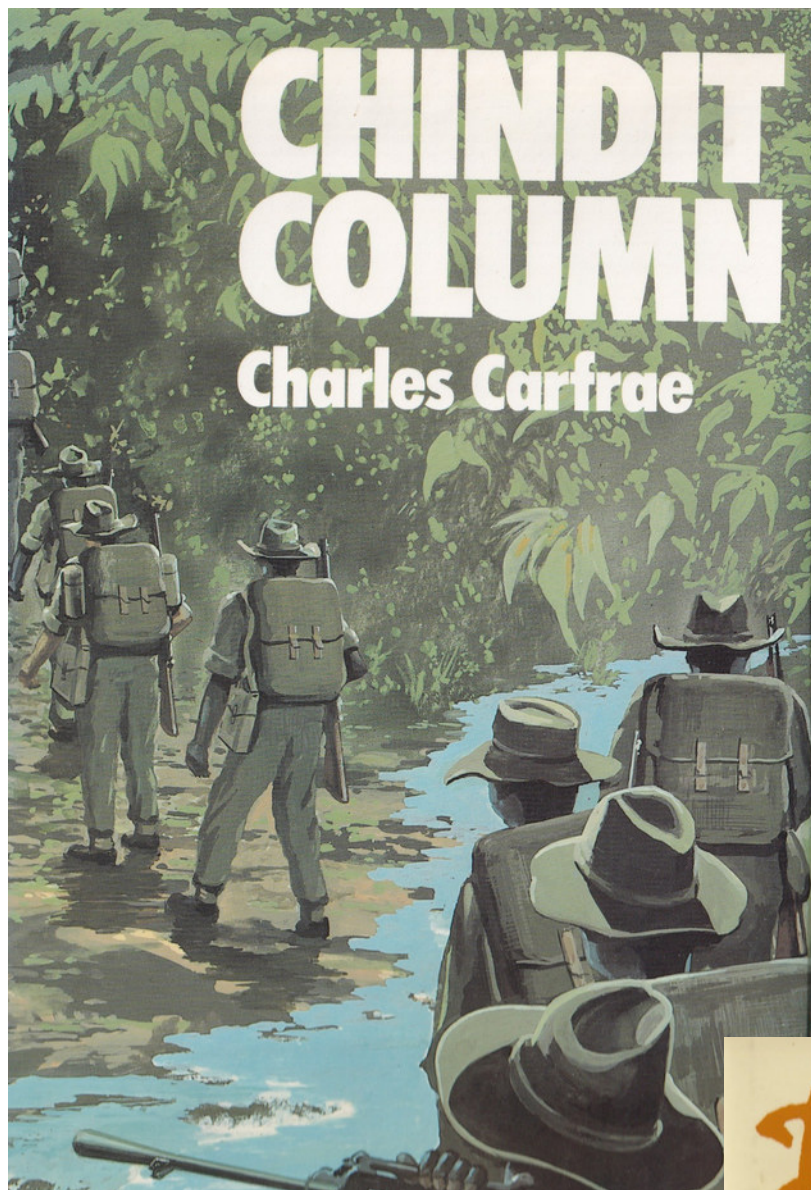
# PARTICULARS OF TRAINING.

Courses and Schools. Specialist Qualifications. Showing result.	Date.	Initials of Officer.
Embarked Newport	12/9/39	
Disembarked Plymouth	14/9/39	
Embarked France	25/5/40	
Disembarked UK	25/5/40	
Embarked Channel	30/9/41	
Disembarked Portsmouth	15/10/41	
Embarked France	12/2/43	
Disembarked UK	26/2/43	
Embarked UK	21/3/43	
Disembarked H. Officer	22/4/43	
Embarked France	25/4/43	
Disembarked Dover	16/5/43	
Embarked Sages	30/7/43	
Disembarked		
Disembarked (12/12/43) 1565		
Under way 5th IAD 1565		
Port Ofc. No 12 1565		

Royal  
1565.

Wards  
Jensen  
Munich





# CHINDIT COLUMN

Charles Carfrae

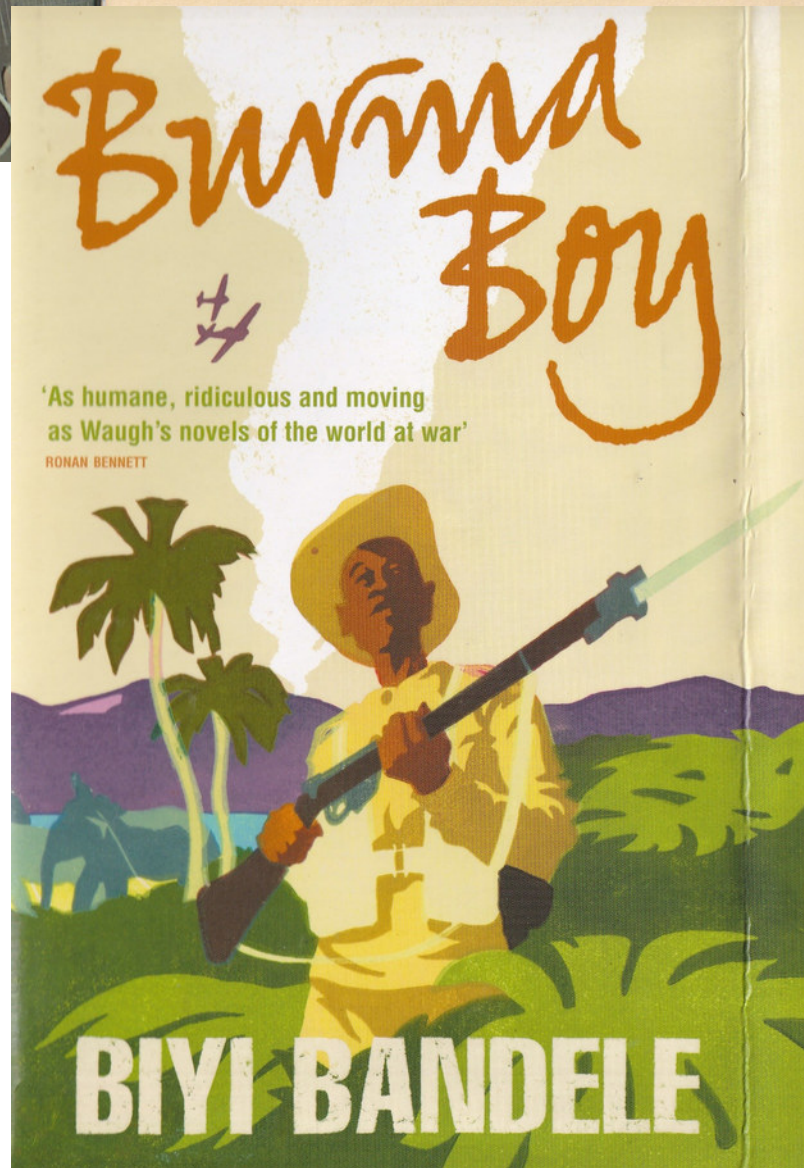
Lt. Col. C. C. A. CARFRAE  
WINTON HOUSE  
LITTLEHEMPSTON  
TOTNES, S. DEVON  
TQ9 6NA  
Tel: Staverton 633

19 October 1986

Dear Mrs Cannon,

How very kind of you to write about "Chindit Column". I am very sorry to hear that their grandfather will not be able, in person, to tell his stories of West Africans to his grandchildren. Everybody who served with the black men in Africa & Burma seems to regard them with considerable affection; obviously your late husband did also. I think the Arakan was every bit as formidable as Northern Burma, if not more so. Our lot, detailed as Chindits, probably had a lucky escape!

Yours Sincerely  
Charles Carfrae.



It's winter 1944 and the Second World War is entering its most crucial stage. A few months ago Ali Banana was apprenticed to a whip-wielding blacksmith in his rural hometown; now he's behind enemy lines, trekking through the Burmese jungle, a private in Thunder Brigade. He is fourteen years old.

Led by the scarred, charismatic Sergeant Damisa, the unit has been given orders to go behind enemy lines and wreak havoc. But the jungle is a treacherous place, riddled with Japanese snipers, ambush, infection and disease. As torrential rains turn the landscape into a mud-riven death trap, the losses mount up. Exhausted and far from home, the men of D-Section Thunder Brigade are besieged yet indomitable.

Taut and immediate, at once sombre and exhilarating, *Burma Boy* is the first novel to depict the experiences of black African soldiers in the Second World War. This is a story of real-life battles, of the men who made the legend of the Chindits, the unconventional, quick strike division of the British Army in India. Horrific and always brilliantly executed, this vividly realised account details the madness, the sacrifice and the dark humour of that war's most vicious battleground. It is also the moving story of a boy trying to live long enough to become a man.

£12.99





**1948 1st August Awarded:  
1939-45 Star.**

**The Burma Star awarded for active service in Burma.**

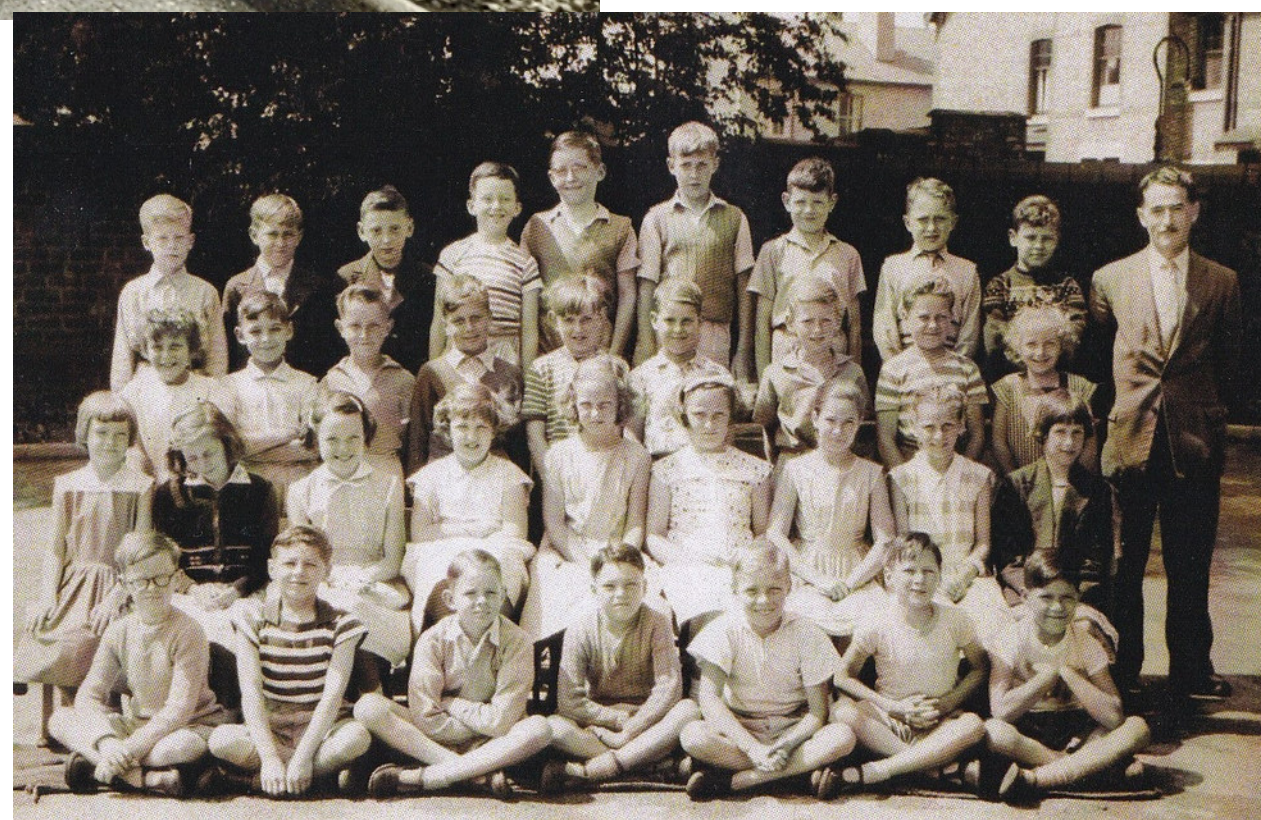
**The Defence Medal.**

**1939-45 War Medal with Oak leaf for a Mention in Despatches.  
Territorial Efficiency Medal.**





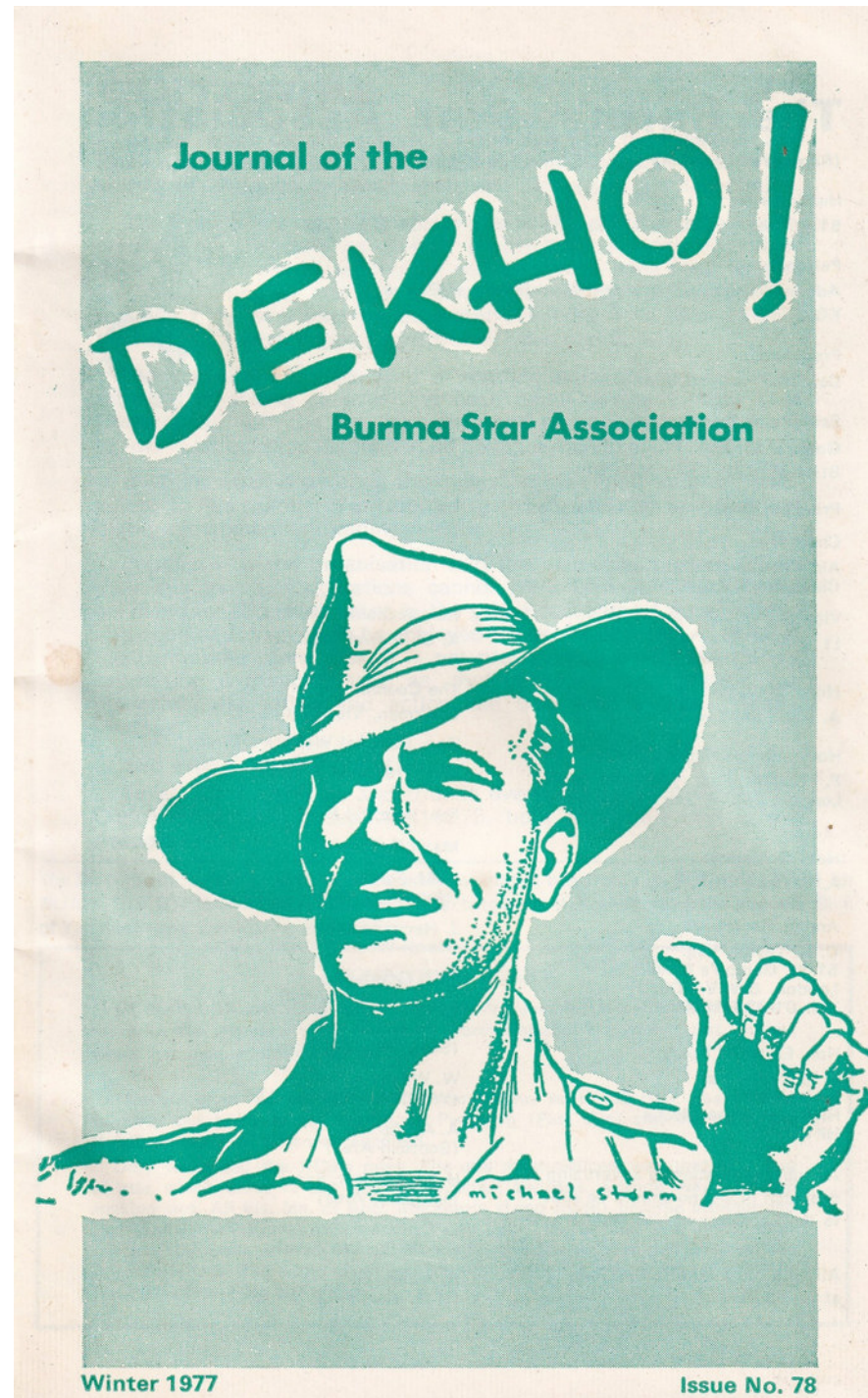
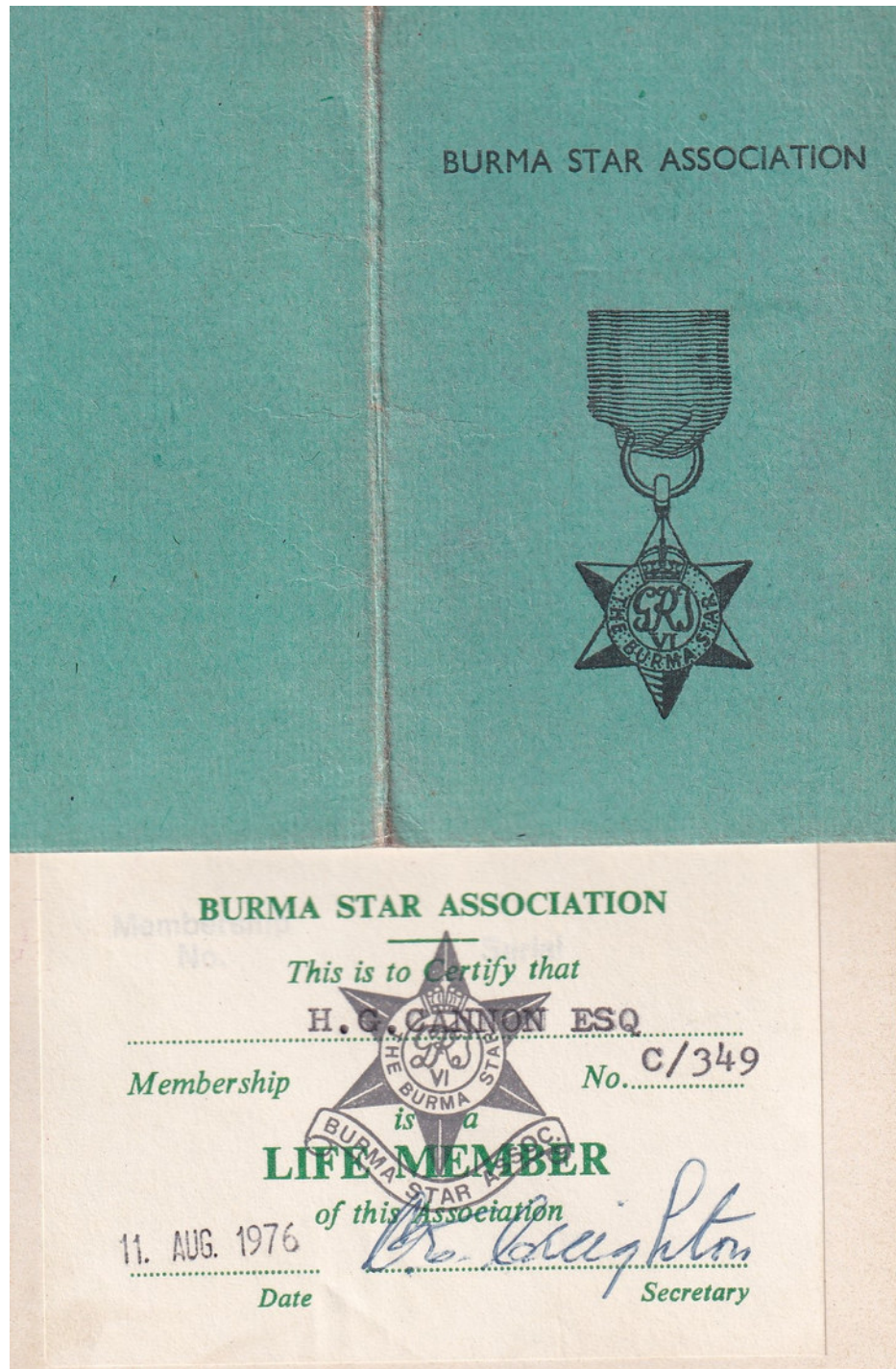
**Following his return from the war Phil Cannon is seen here with his two children Jennifer and Christopher in 1950**



**Phil retrained as a Primary School teacher. Here he is with his class at Springfield Primary School, Sale, Cheshire in 1959.**



Following demobilization from the army Phil Cannon became a member of the Burma Star Association. Taking on key roles such as Chairman at the branch in Altrincham Cheshire. He was a founder member of the branch in Bath.











## Burma Star officer dies

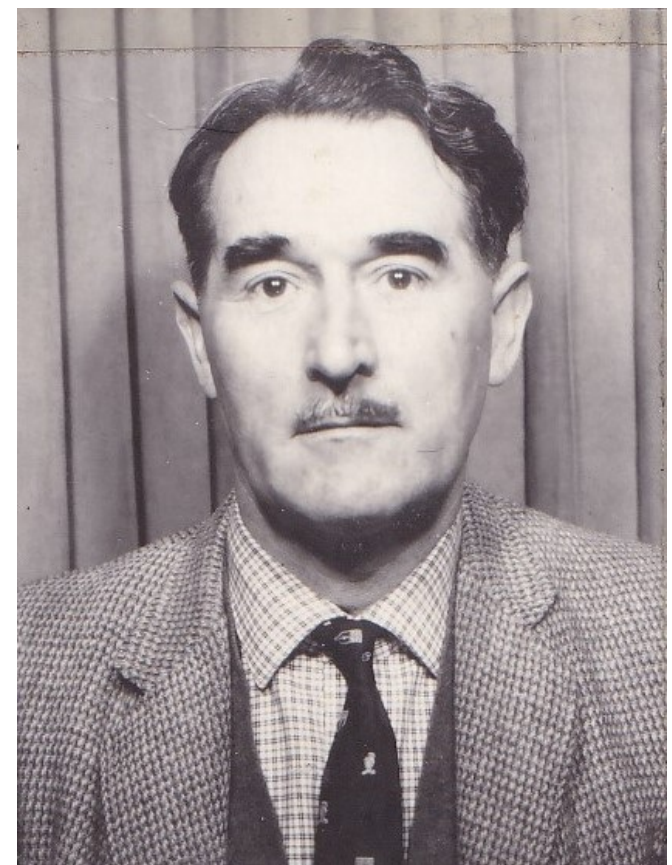
MR. H. C. P. Cannon, who taught at Chandag Junior School, Keynsham, has died in hospital.

Mr Cannon of 9 Milton Avenue, Bath, was born in Birkenhead. After teaching at Sale and Altrincham, he moved to Chandag Junior School.

During the war he served with the West African forces in Burma, where he was mentioned in despatches.

Before moving to Bath, Mr Cannon was for eight years chairman of the Altrincham branch of the Burma Star Association and was a founder member of the Bath branch, in which he held many offices. Until his death, he was welfare officer.

He is survived by his widow and family.



**H.C.P Cannon died on the 21st December 1976. The members of the Burma Star made a Guard of Honour at his funeral.**



**The Fourteenth Army in Asia was said to be the forgotten army. They are all now remembered in the**

***Kohima Epitaph***

**"When you go home  
tell them of us and say,  
For your tomorrow,  
we gave our today."**









**Phil and Win Cannon**