

268 Atlantis Ave
Ottawa B.

June 8, 1966. Ontario.

Dear Tom:

In the not too distant past two legs climbed aboard a wagon and travelled at two horse power (must have been 2 H.P. on these hills) from the docks to 53 Belbue's Road.

A few weeks ago my sister Sybil was sorting belongings that had been my mother's. The photos which have been sent under separate cover, were among her possessions. We came to the conclusion that you might like them for yourself or your children or their children.

Last October my wife Mildred, and I made our first trip to the West Coast. She had never been farther West than Dastatoun and I had never been further West than the other side of Winnipeg. We stayed in Victoria eight days then went across to Vancouver on a Saturday. That night in the hotel I had a stroke. Mildred took me back to Victoria by ambulance, because her brother, our host for eight days, lived there.

To make a long story short I was taken to a rehabilitation center after three weeks in hospital. I made progress in the two and a half months of my sojourn there. My right arm and leg are still quite useless. The doctor said it might take all of two years for me to recover their use and that would be by exercise alone. I can walk with the aid of a cane of course and I exercise religiously every day.

All this is to inform you that I am using a "left-handed" and it may be a bit difficult to read.

In 1950 Mildred and I spent our holiday in Nova Scotia. We did not have a car then and spent most of our time in and around Halifax. We had rooms in Dartmouth and part of our pleasure was traveling to and fro by ferry. Living a thousand miles from the sea, which we enjoy, has its disadvantages.

We visited your mother one afternoon and had dinner on another day with Hilda and her, and spent a couple of very pleasant evenings with them. We both had great pleasure in meeting so charming a lady as your mother. One does not use that adjective very often to describe some one whom one has met. We also enjoyed Hilda's company very much indeed, and due to time and distance we gradually got out of touch. A few years ago I heard you were in Ottawa. If you are ever this way again we would be very pleased to welcome you and your wife to our home. In Saturday's Ottawa Journal of May 21 there was a very complimentary review of your latest book, Hung Man's Beach, by Dorothy Bishop. I have ~~seen~~ eight of your books now.

May we congratulate you on your play produced by TV. as well as your other varied successes. Your mother had just received your autographed copy of the "Myth and the Lamp" when we visited her. We ordered a copy of your latest book and it was delivered two days ago.

All Canadians and especially the people of Nova Scotia owe much to you, for we need writers who can make the true history of the country most interesting reading.

Please remember us to Hilda.

With best regards to you and Mrs Paddell,

Yours sincerely,

Ernest Turner.

Lionel Turner,
268 Atlantic Ave.,
Ottawa 13.

June 10, 1966

Dear Lionel:

I was delighted to hear from you after all the years. Your handwriting is very good, and I hope that your recovery will be complete.

Yes, I well remember that day in May when we left the dock and hooked (that was the word, I remember) a ride on a sloven-wagon going up Cornwallis Street, on our way to Chebucto Road. Fifty three years ago! It seems incredible.

It was very kind of you to send me the photographs of my Dad, and of the Raddall family group. As it chanced I had a copy of the one of Dad as a lieutenant, taken in 1915; I hadn't a copy of the group. What a naive little lot we look, all except Dad, who had put on his military face along with his dress uniform. I remember the day it was taken, in the Hythe photographer's studio. What a lot of things were to happen to us all in the next five years!

One of the nicest things that happened was a camping trip to McNab's Island in the summer of 1914, just before the war broke out. It was the annual militia camp, of course, (63rd Halifax Rifles) and Dad and one or two other instructors were allowed to take their boys along. I roamed all over the island with another boy named Tupper, saw the graves of the old McNabs, and heard some of the tales of them and of the hangman's beach.

Although I sailed in and out past the island many times in my seafaring days, I never set foot on it again until 1959, when Hilda and I took a picnic lunch in a basket and spent a whole day there. The notion of a novel began to stir in my mind, although I was then busy on other work. Eventually, as you see, I got around to it.

At first I contemplated a book entirely about the ~~McNabs~~ McNabs, carrying it right down to the mid-Victorian years, when the Imperial Government bought most of the island from the McNab heirs and proceeded to build three forts, rifle ranges, camp grounds, etc. (Fort McNab was built smack on the site of the old McNab house and grounds, and under an agreement with the heirs the little graveyard was not disturbed -- in fact the fort was built around it!)

However it would have required a huge book, and I gave it up for one phase of the McNab life -- during the Napoleonic Wars. Incidentally Peter McNab actually did chop down the gibbets when the chance came.

Cheers!

Ottawa 13. Oct.

Dear Sam:-

We listen to Postmark V.M. over C.B.C. radio on Sunday mornings.

On March 3 last, Sam Pollock the usual commentator of news past and present, announced that the school of Musketry, Hythe, Kent, was closing down after more than 120 years of operation.

I thought you might be interested if you hadn't already heard.

"Muskets" are obsolete as he mentioned. Sam! Sam! Where is the musket? The S of M is actually a misnomer these days. There has been so much advancement in weaponry in the last few years. He didn't mention anything about economy in the British austerity program.

Michael and I visited Hythe for a few hours one day while visiting England in 1956. The barracks we lived in were bombed out of existence in the last war.

We were very pleased to see one of your Martiners move from Halifax to Ottawa, namely Robt. Stanfield.

Recently 35000 a year ministers were busy gallivanting around the country side, instead of attending to the Nation's business. Of course that was P.M.'s fault, announcing his retirement when he did. Perhaps with a new leader things may be different!

Best regards to Mrs Raddell and Yourself,

Yours,

Gioacchino Turner.

Mr. Lionel Turner
268 Atlantic Avenue,
Ottawa, 13.

April 9, 1968

Hello Lionel:

I hadn't heard or seen anything about the final closure of the Hythe School of Musketry, but I'm not surprised. At some time between the two great wars the machine-gun wing was removed to Netheravon, near Salisbury, and with it went the headquarters staff, leaving only the rifle and pistol training staff at Hythe. Early in 1939 the Hythe wing was scheduled for removal to Netheravon as well, but apparently the outbreak of War Two brought plenty of use for both places.

My wife and I spent several days in Hythe in the spring of 1958, staying at the old White Hart Inn, on High Street. I found the School of Musketry little changed in its main buildings, although the old Married Quarters where I was born had been torn down long ago. By the time I was old enough to register anything much we were living outside the S of M, on the Dymchurch Road, although like all the kids of the staff we were allowed to roam about the premises. I well remember the annual pantomime in the Lecture Hall, in which we took part; and of course the gorgeous Christmas party for the children, which was always held in the Officers' Mess (at the officers' expense), complete with Father Christmas, a Christmas tree, and small gifts for everybody.

The canal and the ranges looked much the same. The Lecture Hall had become a chapel, and the old brick medical quarters had become a ~~small~~ museum of small arms. The old soldier in charge of the museum rummaged in a cupboard when I told him my father was on the staff from 1902 to 1913, and came up with a group photograph of the staff taken in 1908, with my Dad, looking very young, in the front row. Saint Leonard's School was unchanged, except that it had taken over the adjoining school for girls. (The Girls School had removed to an old manor house on Hythe Hill.) I discovered that the proprietor of a clothing shop in High Street was one of my contemporaries at Saint Leonard's, and while we were chatting outside his shop he pointed out a grey man in neat tweeds walking towards us. He was Gilbert Molyneux, son of the Head Master in my time. I remembered him as a handsome and intelligent boy, the type most likely to succeed; but I was told that he'd never amounted to much, and a few years before he'd suffered severe head injuries in a motor accident and lost some of his memory. I introduced myself to him, but he couldn't remember me, although he chatted a lot about his father. For many years he had been living with his mother. Apparently Molyneux Sr. left them moderately well off.

I remember Mr. Molyneux as a dark, burly man, a severe disciplinarian, and I got a hell of a caning from him more than once. My Dad stayed with the Molyneux family on one of his leaves from France in War One. I was interested to see his name on the Hythe war memorial beside the canal, although strictly speaking he was not a Hythe man.

The old pubs, the Gate, and the Red lion, looked the same outside as I remembered them. As kids we used to buy sweets from a confectioner named Keeler, who had a little shop across the canal bridge from the Red Lion. In 1958 the shop was still there, with a Keeler running it. I remembered a fishmonger named "Twiggy" Blackman pushing a two-wheel barrow about the streets and yelling "Fresh Mackerel" etc. In 1958 I saw a motor van labelled "Blackman & Co., fish wholesalers" -- descendants of "Twiggy", no doubt.

Strangely, the Germans hadn't bombed Hythe much in War Two, and the new growth of the town lies over the ridge, so that the old town is almost unchanged. I could find my way about with ease. The canal, which I remembered as a deep and wide thing, looked shrunken and choked with weed in 1958, and beyond Hythe it seemed to peter out in a mere ditch in Romney Marsh, although originally it had been dug all the way to Rye.

You'll remember that the beach at Hythe was all shingle, and the nearest stretch of sand beach was several miles away at Dymchurch. Once a year the S of M staff held a mass picnic for their families at Dymchurch, driving there in charabancs, and spending the whole day. In 1958 we went to Dymchurch on the little narrow-gauge railway (built since I left Hythe as a boy), but found the place cluttered with caravans and cheap little "villas", apparently as a miniature Coney Island.

At what is now called West Hythe (apparently everything west of Hythe Green) I found the brickwalled Reach Field, off Fort Sutherland Road, where in summer various territorial regiments used to camp on the edge of the ranges.

Most of the old Martello towers had disappeared -- they were beginning to crumble when I was a boy, chiefly by the encroachment of the sea. Strange to think that William Pitt built them (and dug the military canal) in 1804-1806, to fend off invasion by Napoleon. They were never required; nor were the elaborate entrenchments and machine-gun bunkers along all this coast in Hitler's time, when the same situation came up and passed again.

I found the Hythe Cricket Club's field as trim and green as ever, and the Ladies' Walk, lined with copper beeches, where we used to stroll in families, all dressed up, on summer Sunday afternoons.

Well, I seem to be running on and on. See what happens when you touch the memory button! Thanks for writing.

Cheers!

J.H.R.