

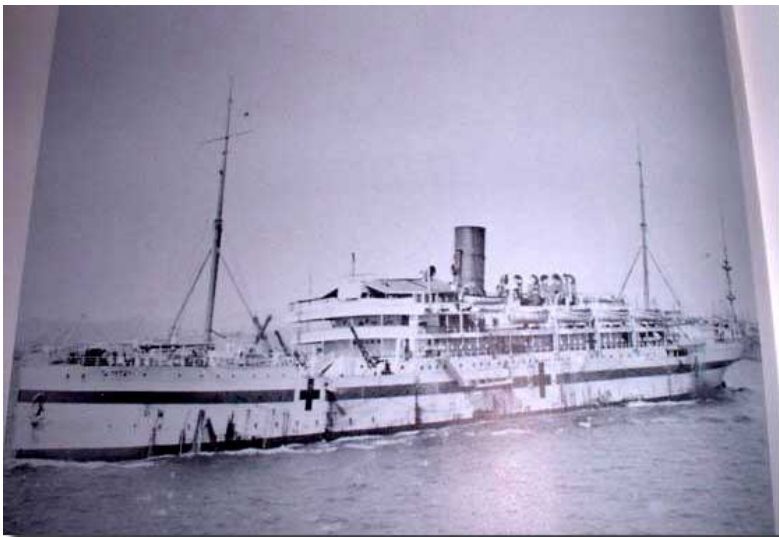
ALFRED EDWARD SYSON - PART FOUR - AFTER GALLIPOLI. 1915 TO 1952



POST MAY 1915

Evacuation and Sick Leave

Early on the 6th May, AES was wounded by a sniper, when a bullet took a clean course through the left upper arm, missing the bone. In a letter to Mabel on 9 May he reported that he had practically no pain, but the fingers had gone to sleep. He was the second last of the Company Commanders left unwounded so it must have had a fair effect on the Battalion. After being wounded between 5 and 6 am, he didn't get down to the beach till that evening. He then appears to have embarked in a Hospital Ship off the beaches. On the 12 May he arrived at Alexandria and was admitted to hospital there on the 13th. He had had a touch of fever on the passage over, apparently unconnected to the wound, but reported that he got rid of it with a combination of quinine and Aspirin. In the same letter on 14 May he referred to the hospital as being a German one, which seems a bit strange, but maybe it had been there from before the war.



Hospital Ship
DEVANAH, similar to
DELTA

On 10 May Mabel received a telegram stating that AES had been wounded. On the 17th he sent her a wire that he had received a slight wound in his left arm and that he would be back with his men in 10 days. On 1 June she received a cable from him "Coming Home" and recorded that she couldn't sleep.

On 31 May he was invalided back to UK in the Hospital Ship DELTA, arriving there perhaps on the 12 June. On the 8 June Mabel received a letter from the Admiralty that he had sailed on the 3 June in the Hospital Ship DELTA. On the 9th AES wired her from Gibraltar saying he would be arriving at Southampton on the 12th. On the 12th he wired her that he was going to Haslar and they subsequently spoke on the phone. On the 13th she went down to Haslar and they sat under the trees for 4 hours before he went back to the Hospital.

On the 14th, he was discharged from Haslar for two months unemployed (presumably sick leave) and then a further month. He arrived at home for lunch and Mabel unpacked for him.

On 19 July Mabel recorded in her diary that the Portsmouth Battalion had been "wiped out". The Royal Marine Brigade had been in reserve when the 52nd Division attacked on 12 July in the Cape Helles area of Gallipoli. After 52 Division got into trouble the RM Brigade were brought up. On 13th the Brigade attacked and received heavy casualties. Luard the CO was killed, and only one officer was not touched. The total Battalion casualties were 90 dead and 147 wounded. It is not known how AES felt about this loss, but it must have been pretty serious to have been recorded in Mabel's diary. AES described Luard as "our brave little Colonel" in his note about Gallipoli.



**AES after returning
from Alexandria, say
June 1915, looking
pretty cheerful**

For his service in Gallipoli, AES was awarded the French Croix de Guerre and was Mentioned in Despatches by the CinC Mediterranean Forces (General Hamilton). Syson's CO, Lt Col Luard, had been wounded before him. As he was subsequently killed fighting with the Battalion in the Cape Helles area, he never got a report from his CO. But on 22 March 1916, the Brigade Commander (Brigadier General Trotman) reported "Captain Syson's services at Gaba Tepe were most distinguished. He led his Company with utmost

success". The term Gaba Tepe seems to be the generic name for the area that we now refer to as the ANZAC Area.

Deal 1915 to 1916

On 6 Sept he was resurveyed and found fit for Active Service. On the 9th he was told he was going to the RM Depot at Deal. On 10 September he went to see "the General" (possibly the Adjutant General RM) and was told that he was to be put in command of 4 Companies. We are not sure what this entailed, but my guess is that he was training recruits. He joined Deal on 19 Sept. On 31 Dec 1915, he was assessed by a Brigadier General White as follows: "A sound and thorough officer in every respect. Specially keen on PT work. Gives great assistance to the Superintendent of PT. Still suffers somewhat from his arm". It is interesting that in his pre-war reports AES was categorised as "Very Good" for both General Conduct and Ability, but in this 1915 report he is "Satisfactory" for General Conduct and "Average" for Ability. Maybe they didn't care so much about the reports by then or maybe they had reassessed the definitions, but it seems unlikely, observing his future career, that he was just coasting.

It isn't clear why Syson didn't go back to Active Service. Maybe at 35 he was felt too old, but that seems a bit unlikely.

On 5 October 1915 at 9.45 pm, Alfred and Mabel's daughter Hope (actually Pamela Hope) was born with a weight of 7lb 2oz. She was born at Walmer so presumably they had set up house there. Hope remembered (or was presumably told) by her mother about frequent bombardments from across the Channel.

On 6 November Mabel recorded that AES had been awarded his Mention in Despatches.

In 1933, a Scottish Doctor called Halliday Sutherland wrote a book about his service in the First World War called "The Arches of the Years". There is a manuscript dedication to Barbara Syson (AES younger daughter) in the flyleaf of her copy "From the author who admires her father, with best wishes". In the book, Sutherland explains how in the first week of February 1916 he was transferred to the Royal Marines Depot at Deal, where he served with Syson. He describes how there was plenty of excitement with Zeppelins passing on their way to London and Taubes (a German aeroplane) on their way to and from the bombing of Dover. Unused bombs were reserved for the Depot. The Zeppelins came over at night and the only warning was when the lights went off.

The book goes on to say that this occurred on one occasion during a Guest Night, whereupon the Mess Staff immediately produced silver candlesticks so that the dinner could continue. Once the guests left, the officers went to change before ensuring that the 2,000 men in the Depot were distributed around the walls, the purpose being to minimise casualties in the event of a direct hit. An attack on Deal started 10 minutes later and Sutherland walked out onto the lawn to see what was happening. A Zeppelin had been illuminated and everyone was firing at her including warships in the Downs. Syson came up and stopped to talk to Sutherland. The doctor described him as "the coolest man I ever knew. He was in the retreat from Antwerp and led his men, not into Holland but to the French lines". Syson remarked that it wasn't much use firing at Zeppelins from the ground. A huge explosion then occurred, which Syson said was a monitor firing its 15 inch from the Downs. A bit later a piece of metal landed by them. Syson suggested that it probably came from the 15 inch shell. He then went off indicating that he had to check on the men on the North wall. It became clear that the attack was aimed at the Depot as later still the Zeppelins dropped bombs on the area

The significant part of this entry in the book is the very strong impression that Syson made on him. A few pages later, Sutherland describes coming across an elderly Sergeant who was in a real state and who said that it was far worse than in South Africa. Sutherland gave him a double brandy and sent him on his way! But he also remarked in the book that, but for Syson, he Sutherland might have been in the same state.

On 16 February 1916 Mabel recorded that Dr Sullivan had come to tea. On 21 May AES was presented with the Croix de Guerre at a parade.

1916 to 1919 – On loan to the Army

In May 1916, conscription was introduced in Great Britain, requiring a greatly enlarged Army training organisation, of which the development of physical fitness was a key part. For this reason, on 10 July 1916, AES was seconded to the Army for Physical Training Duties. According to Mabel's diary, he went to the War Office on 7 May, and Portsmouth on 11 May. Then on 31 May he was off on a Tour of the West Country with a Colonel Wright. By 5 August he appears to have gone to Salisbury as the Superintendent of Gymnasia, Southern Command. There he was closely linked with recruit training in the Salisbury area.

The family moved to the Rectory at Boscombe in August. Their second child Barbara Mary was born there on 13 November 1916. The house at Boscombe must have been very close to the one at Cholderton where Hope and her family lived in the mid 1960s, from which Jane was married and from where I first started walking out with Pamela.

On 1 March Mabel reported in her clipped way that her sister Charlie (real name Neta) was ill in France where she was working with the Army. She subsequently died on 15 April. On 18 March 1917 Barbara was christened.

On 11 April 1917, at the age of 37, AES was promoted Temporary Major and was appointed Superintendent of Gymnasia at Winchester. His work at Winchester continued to focus on recruit training, but increasingly involved rehabilitation Physical Training (PT). Presumably as more and more wounded men were returned to duty before return to France this became of increasing importance. A young Army Subaltern named Ernest Major, who later took a career in Physical Education, did a two week rehabilitation course at the Gymnasium in Winchester and had his Certificate of Completion signed by AES. From Mabel's diaries it looks as if she hadn't moved to Winchester till 3 March 1918.

Between April and November 1917, the Army re-designated "Gymnasia" as "Physical and Bayonet Training". On 4 November at the Monthly Superintendents Conference at Aldershot, AES was recorded as "Superintendent of Physical and Bayonet Training". The Bayonet addition reflected both the need for training in this area AND its benefit in general PT and to keep morale high for both recruit and rehabilitated soldiers.

**AES as a Major
in 1917,
wearing the
uniform of the
Army Physical
Training Corps**



At some stage in 1918, Syson's job moved to Aldershot possibly as Superintendent of Physical and Bayonet Training and then subsequently to the HQ staff. Hope reported that he continued to live in Winchester and commuted daily to Aldershot by motor bike.

Mabel's diary recorded the Kaiser's abdication on 10 November 1918 and the Armistice on the 11th. At 11 am she was at St Cross with the pram and some old men, listening to the bells. On the same day AES arranged a dance at the Barracks to keep the men off the streets.

By Jan 1919 AES was Assistant Inspector of Physical Training for the Army. The Inspector was Col RB Campbell. Campbell was a visionary, who saw the overall value of PT for both physical and mental alertness and as a morale booster. AES contribution was considerable and on 31 Dec 1918, he was awarded an OBE for valuable service as Assistant Director Of PT and Bayonet Training. To give a feel for the type of work that AES and his people were involved in, the Army Gymnasia Service role in WW1 included developing the physical efficiency of young recruits, the exercise of trained soldiers, restoring war worn men by PT and games, remedial treatment in hospitals and sustaining morale by bayonet training and boxing.

On 18 April 1919, AES was confirmed in the rank of Major and was demobilised from the Royal Marines. This effectively brought to an end (for the second time) his career in the Royal Marines. He had done some 18 years service, with a break in the middle of 3 years. Of those 18, the first two and a half were either training or part training (including getting his gunnery qualification). After that, he did "general" RMLI duties, and this includes the wartime service 1914 to 1916, for only four and a half years and the remaining 10 years were spent on Physical Education duties, with the Royal Navy and with the Army. There can be little doubt of his capability as an expert Physical Training, the emphasis that Grenfell later put on getting him as a Schools Inspector (see below) shows this. But as for his ability as a general RMLI officer we really have no idea. It is interesting that in 1912 he had got on well with his colleagues at Eton, but by 1919 the Selectors at the Board of Education had felt that he might be a bit reserved with colleagues. So, not surprisingly, maybe the First World War had changed him somewhat. However Halliday's comments make it clear that there was no indication of "shell shock" after Gallipoli.

In terms of decorations and awards, we have already made mention of his OBE, the Croix de Guerre and his Mention in Despatches. The first of these was for his PE work with the

Army, the other two for his performance in Gallipoli. In addition to that, he was awarded the Coronation Medal in 1911, the 1914 Star (presumably for Antwerp), the Victory Medal and the British War Medal. Finally he had been awarded the Order of the Red Eagle Fourth Class, after looking after the Kaiser's family during Queen Victoria's Funeral, but he appears not to have worn it, except in one Malta photograph.

Actually 1919 wasn't quite the end of his RMLI Service because during April 1921 there was an Emergency caused by the coal strike and AES was recalled to the Royal Marines for 20 days.

POST FIRST WORLD WAR – 1919 to 1930

After leaving the Service, AES would have liked to return to Eton, but during the war a change of Headmaster had altered the emphasis. The new Headmaster had had PT deleted from the curriculum, so if AES had returned; he would have had to be content for use of the gym in recreational time only. On 26 September 1917 Mabel had reported that AES had had an insulting letter from Eton, so this must have been them saying they didn't want him back in his previous job. On 12 Jan he wrote to Eton declining a return there. Instead therefore, in April, AES went to Harrow as the PT Master, as Coote had decided not to return.

To put AES' later career as a Schools Inspector into context it is now necessary to go back a bit. During the Summer of 1918, Captain Grenfell RN, whom we last met working for the Board of Education before the war, visited France to see the work of the Army Gymnastic staff there. Several months later on 27 November 1918, he returned to the Board as the Inspector of Physical Training. A bit later in January 1919, at a Conference, AES was advised that Captain Grenfell was looking for recruits to organise games in large industrial centres.

In 1918, HAL Fisher, the President of the Board of Education, had introduced the Fisher Education Act 1918. It stressed the links between social training and physical education and permitted local education authorities, with Board of Education Approval, to hold camps, to open centres, to provide equipment for PT, to purchase playing fields and to build school swimming baths.

Then on 8 April 1919, just 10 days before Syson left the Royal Marines, Grenfell sent a Minute to Sir George Newman, Chief Medical Officer to the Board, referring to suitable candidates for the two newly created posts of Inspectors of PT. Top of the list was Syson, even though he hadn't applied. AES was interviewed by Newman and Fisher on 12 August and was subsequently selected as one of the two new Inspectors. His assessment included the following relevant points: he was continually in PT appointments from 1903 to 1911; between 1912 and 1914 he had been PT Master at Eton, he had undergone a 6 month course at Aldershot and a 3 month course at RNSPT; after leaving the RM, he had spent a year at the Central Institute, Stockholm. It was felt that his training and experience in PT was unequalled by anyone else available in England and he possessed sound judgement and tact. The interviewers had some concern about how he would deal with his fellow men and make a good impression at first sight, though they noted that he had got on well with his fellow masters at Eton.

On 12 January 1920, AES joined the Inspectorate, shortly after a Capt SJ Parker OBE, who had joined in September 1919. Parker had wartime experience but had neither been to a College of PT nor taught in schools. Syson's time of joining had been delayed while he completed the Christmas Term at Harrow and a successor there was found.

In late 1920 or early 1921, the Syson family moved to Bromley in Kent to a house with the name Luxulian at 10 Warren Avenue. As a Regional Inspector, AES was responsible for the East side of England from the Wash to Eastbourne. The greater part of the Inspector's

time was spent on the inspection of schools. He appears to have inspected both boys and girls schools. He travelled initially in a Fiat Open Tourer but then subsequently by train.

From Mabel's diaries, it is apparent that AES continued to fence during this period. On 10 September 1924, there is reference to AES having some form of breakdown and requiring rest for several weeks. He was off till probably mid October. There are a number of further references at other times to his being unwell after the War. So he may well not have been in good shape for some time. His condition may have been aggravated by a massive amount of travelling both during his time with the Army and with the Board of Education.

Returning for a moment to Mabel's theatrical and musical career, we are aware of one performance that Mabel gave in 1924 and now a mother of two girls. She played Phyllis in Iolanthe in December 1924 for five performances at the Grand Hall Bromley in aid, once again, of the Bromley Cottage Hospital. AES was a Steward at the performances.

In September 1927 both Hope and Barbara went away as Boarders to the Royal School at Bath. Mabel's diary records that they were both pretty lonely after the girls had gone off to school. There is mention of taking Rip (one of 3 dogs they had) for a walk. There is also mention on a number of occasions of Hope being unhappy at school particularly on initially returning.

To give a brief resume of the work of the Inspectorate of Physical Training, from the beginning of the 20th Century until 1920 when AES joined,

- a. The Board of Education had produced three syllabuses to be used in schools:
 - The Model Course of 1904,
 - A new system based on the Swedish system but which was too complicated for the teachers to use
 - A simpler scheme in 1909 after the Medical Department of the Inspectorate had been set up, after Grenfell and Miss Koetter had joined as Inspectors and after the compulsory requirement for PT as an examinable subject in the Training Colleges had been introduced.
- b. From 1904 to 1914, the Inspectors conducted courses for both men and women lecturers in the general training colleges and for teachers to enable them to introduce and teach the new system in schools.

The intervention of the First World War had prevented Sir George Newman and the Inspectorate to put Boys Secondary PT on a firmer footing. However after the War, there was an expansion in the Inspectorate and of the school medical service in which AES was much involved. But by the 1920s there was considerable unemployment and a cut in government expenditure. There had been a one year course in PT at Sheffield Training College, but it closed in 1923 after just 4 years, partly as an economy measure and partly because of the small number of suitable candidates.

The Summer Courses

In the 1920s Sir George Newman (Chief Medical Officer to the Board of Education) had become frustrated at the absence of the appointments by many of the Local Authorities of "Organisers of PT". There was also a severe lack of trained men teachers in PT. As a result, in 1924, Summer Courses were set up for Men Teachers in Secondary schools. The Inspectors were required to advise Grenfell of suitable candidates. This was a move away from the previous system where PE was taught by ex military NCOs. AES and Capt Parker were given the task of class instruction. Cole was the Superintendent of the Course. The first course was at Scarborough in 1924.

Sir Stanley Rous attended the first course as a student and referred to Grenfell, AES and Parker as “The Three Musketeers”. Rous recalled AES as “slightly stern appearance with twinkling blue eyes, a kindly man”. The course was an obvious success. Rous recounted one incident that took place during the Course. Syson had explained that he would introduce “quickies” during the lessons to test the mental alertness of the students. He did this on one occasion in the playground one morning. “Out of sight, go” he ordered and they did; up the path to a café in the roadway opposite the school. They heard him whistle for 10 minutes, but they all remained out of sight until the lesson ended. It is a pity that we don’t know how AES reacted to this.

In 1925, the Course was held in August at Eastbourne for 50 Secondary schoolmasters. AES was in charge assisted by Parker and two Assistant Instructors. Despite the Geddes axe, which led to lower school salaries, the students were given maintenance allowance, indicating the importance attached to it. In AES’ report he indicated that the average age was 31.9, 24 held degrees and 43 were teaching other subjects as their main task. Most had no previous formal instruction.

The course was weighted in favour of gymnastics, with games and recreative activities also being given prominence. “Drill” in schools had developed into physical exercise and then PT based on the Swedish system. The games element had been the preserve of the Public schools till after WW1. AES ensured that the games were included. Students from a local school were used as trainees. The teachers were giving up their holidays to attend the course and many brought their families with them.

The 1926 course was also held at Eastbourne. It catered for 2 types of student: a month’s course for those who had not attended a previous course and two fortnight courses for those who had. AES ran the courses again. Mabel, Hope and Barbara accompanied him. The course ran from 28 Jul to 25 Aug. Mabel became quite involved in the Course, especially with the wives and children. She tested the men students for musical talent, met the ladies at the hostels, treated the invalids and undertook a shopping trip for the men. Recreation included cricket, football, tennis, sports, country dancing and socials.

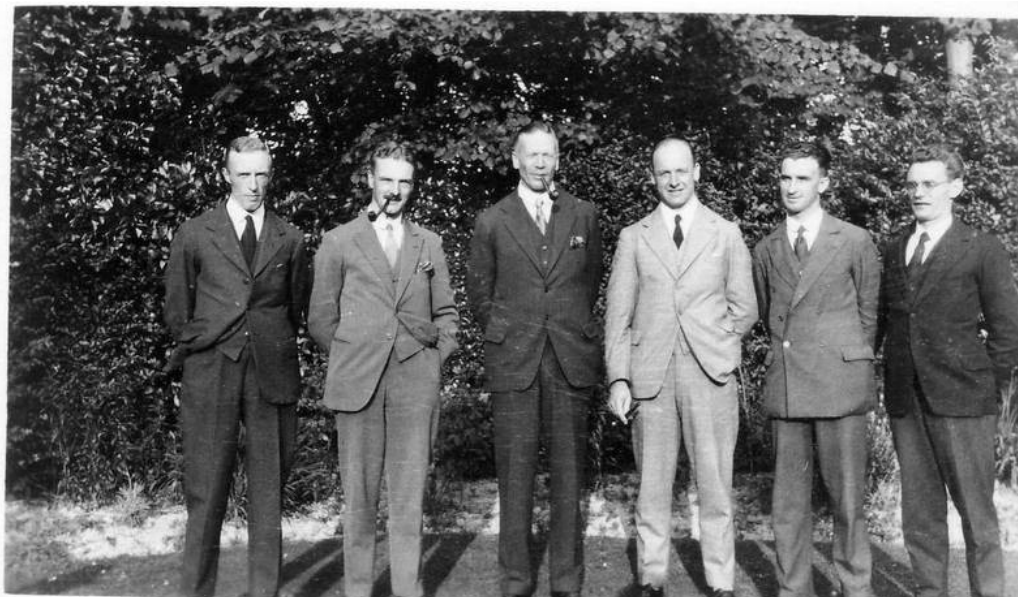
The Courses continued in 1927. On this occasion, AES and Mabel ensured that there were musical evenings. In 1928, there were 3 courses: the month’s primary, 2 weeks continuation and 2 weeks advanced. The first 2 courses were based on a book “The Reference Book for Secondary Schoolmasters Physical Education Association” which Grenfell and AES had written. The 1929 Course was AES’ sixth and last course. There was concern over AES’ health and after the 1929 Course, he sent in a letter of resignation. So from 1930, Parker ran the courses. On 1 March 1930 Mabel records “Another Eastbourne upset, both miserable”. What that refers to is not clear, maybe the way the course was run after he left it.



Part of the 1927 Eastbourne Course, with Hope and Barbara in the front row



1929 Continuation Course at Eastbourne



1929: Left to right: Not known, Captain Parker, Major Syson, Mr Lean, Captain Goddard and Mr Rees



AES at South Lynn, Eastbourne 1929

AES put a huge amount of effort into the courses that he ran. He returned to Bromley at the end of August weary, tired but partially contented. He felt, as did Grenfell and Newman, that the crying need was for a college where men could be trained. Newman accepted that the one month course was only a temporary expedient. Six years later, in Sept 1933 the Carnegie Physical Training College was opened. In 1935, Loughborough Training College opened its first PT Course. Both offered one year courses for men already trained as teachers (in contrast to the women's year courses).

After the 1924 Scarborough Vacation Course, the Secondary Schoolmasters Physical Education Association had been formed, in which Grenfell, AES, and Parker all took an active part. The first Conference was at Leamington College in June 1925.

AES, maybe in the middle 1920s



Mabel Syson, presumably at the same time



**Hope and
Barbara Syson
aged say 8 and
10**



1930 TO 1940.

In June 1930 AES went off to Stockholm for about a week. The reason is not clear, possibly a Conference on physical education.

In May 1933, Hope was made a Prefect and in September, she went to Studley College. This was an Agricultural and Horticultural College at Studley Castle in Warwickshire, home of the Countess of Warwick. In October Barbara went to Wessex Hall at Reading University.

By the 1930s, the hard work of Grenfell, AES and Parker was showing some results. Up until 1931, Parker had taken the West of England, Grenfell the centre and AES the East. In 1931, 2 new Inspectors were employed. After that Grenfell looked after the Metropolitan district, AES the East and SE, Parker moved to Preston and the two new men Leeds and Bristol. The male inspectors covered the inspection of Boy's Junior schools, Senior and Central schools (mixed or not), Secondary Schools (mixed or not) and Continuation and Technical Schools

For the period 1931 to 1933, AES with Lean (one of the new Inspectors) composed, wrote and presented the contents of the "Green Book": "Syllabus of Physical Training for Schools 1933". This syllabus was not superseded till 1952. In 1936 during the period February to July, there is reference in Mabel's diaries to AES going to London working on a book. Whether that is the same book and Owen's Thesis perhaps has the dates wrong or is another book is not clear.

In 1934, Grenfell retired and Parker took over as the Staff Inspector. Though AES was probably too old for the job, he had hoped to get it and was not happy with the situation. On 17 November, Mabel's diary records his receiving a letter saying that Parker was getting the job and mentions "the blow fallen, the worst possible, a broken contract and promise". AES tried hard to get the decision reversed and in December went to Whitehall to see Sir Henry Pelham but to no avail. On 19 December he received a letter from Parker, which Mabel quotes as "the last straw". In February AES was still very angry with Parker. In February 1936 AES went to a Conference where Parker tried to ignore him and AES was very depressed. Just how long AES anger at Parker and his appointment went on for is not clear but it was obviously pretty serious and seems slightly out of character with the man. Though if he had been even half promised the job and had set his heart on it, it must have been a fairly severe blow, particularly if he hadn't realised that he was too old or that his health wasn't up to it,

In June 1936, Hope passed her teachers exam being 5th in First Class out of 350 and in July she left Studley. At about the same time Barbara was given her athletics colours. In August Mabel recorded having "climbed Melbury Hill through Farnham Chettle and across plain where Naval Brigade had trained and the king's review". This must apply to the training area and parade in early 1915. If Hope had accompanied them on this walk, it explains why she, Hope, could describe it to me so clearly all those years later. By May 1937 Hope appears to have been working at Wisley. But in June 1938 Mabel records lunch on the DUNVEGAN CASTLE, a Union Castle steamer, before seeing Ina and Hope off to Cape Town. Ina was Mabel's sister and Hope went out as her companion. Tommy (another sister) was also at the lunch as was someone called Tony. (possibly Tommy's husband).

In 1936, at the age of 56 AES moved to the South West Region, so that he could settle prior to retirement. At the end of September, Mabel described hearing of the imminent move to the West after which they had a struggle of some months duration trying to sell their Bromley House before the family could move to Haddon Cottage, Morcombelake in Dorset, which they did on 15 March 1937. He covered the area from Cornwall to Cheshire to Bournemouth. In 1937, he Chaired a Youth and Community committee.

Mabel's diary faithfully records King Edward VIII's abdication and the Archbishop of Canterbury speaking on the radio in December 1936 and King George VI's coronation on 12 May 1937.

In January 1938, Mabel records Barbara, Shrubbs (Nancy Frazer) and Plunket, a friend from college setting up a Guest House called Battlecombe in Bridport. In March there is a record of Mabel's mother dying.

In 1939 the Sysons must have taken in refugees because she received a certificate from the Queen congratulating her on doing so.

1940 ONWARDS

Hope

On 7 Sept 1940, AES' elder daughter Hope, who was living at home with her parents, got married from the house to Lieutenant Terence Tibbits. Terence had just left HMS ECHO armed both with a duodenal ulcer and a Mention in Despatches from the Nowegian Campaign. It was memorable as a White Wedding in the depths of the second year of the war and the ceremony was conducted by the Bishop of Salisbury. They were married at the church in Whitchurch Canonorum, just north of Morcombelake. There were 94 guests and the reception was held in the garden of Haddon Cottage .. That was the day that the bells were rung all across Southern England, though not entirely to celebrate the marriage. During that period of the war, the bells were to be rung only as a general warning that the Germans had invaded. There was a false alarm that day, and they all rang out. .



AES taking Hope to her wedding – all smiles

Hope's wedding to Terence Tibbits. AES is on the far right and Mabel one from the left



After the wedding, Hope and Terence moved to Hayling Island where Terence had been posted in late 1940. They lived at Moss Rose, North Hayling Island. Hope then went back to live at Haddon Cottage Lodge, when Terence joined the cruiser CLEOPATRA in 1941. After Terence was wounded in 1942 at the Second Battle of Sirte, he was posted to the Isle of Man, Hope moved there and their first child Jane was born there. Then for Hope and Jane it was back to Dorset again when Terence went to sea for the third time, on this occasion (1944-46) as First Lieutenant of the Escort Carrier HMS EMPEROR. In 1945, Hope's second child Pamela was born in Bridport. Hope and the family continued to live in Morcombelake until 1947, when they went to Malta. Their third child Charles was born in July 1947, also in Bridport.

Barbara



AES taking Barbara to her wedding

AES' younger daughter Barbara was married to Eric Anderson on 27 April 1941. Eric's father was a retired Lieutenant Colonel, Cecil Anderson and they lived in a house called St Anthony's also in Morcombelake at the top of a very steep hill. Eric had worked with Imperial Airways (which became BOAC in 1940) before the war on the ground side. He appeared to have lived and worked in some pretty interesting places. From 1936 to 1940 he was in the Mediterranean: in Rome and Khartoum as a Traffic Officer, at Luxor and Alexandria as a Senior Traffic Officer and at Luxor as the Station Superintendent.

In October 1940 Eric had joined the RAFVR but was unable to qualify as Aircrew and so reverted to what had then become BOAC in February 1941. There are two alternative stories about why he didn't qualify: one that they discovered that he was in a reserved occupation and the other that he had trouble with his ears.

In 1941 he was a Traffic Officer at Poole, living at Homestead, Parkstone and then he and Barbara went out to live in Lisbon where he was the Station Superintendent. On 22 July Eric left by plane from Bristol to Dublin and then on by American Flying Boat to Lisbon. On 29 July Barbara left by the early plane from Poole to Lisbon, but was held up in Adair in Ireland and didn't arrive till the 30th.

Lisbon would have been a pretty key base for BOAC during the war, involving both transatlantic flights and those to South Africa and the Middle East. By 1943 though they were fed up with the place. I am not sure why, it sounds a rather nice place to be and I am sure that Eric was doing an important job. Maybe they didn't fit in or it just wasn't there type of place. Barbara had a job out there, possibly in the Embassy and it is believed that she helped escaped British aircrew to get back to UK. In April and May 1943, they had a short holiday back in England, which appeared to refresh them. Barbara's letters to Hope in 1943 show her general unhappiness with life in Portugal: Eric is working too hard, her

job is now boring having previously been very much in the centre of things and in the know. At the same time she shows great excitement at the birth of her niece Jane and the thought that she too might consider having children in the not too distant future.

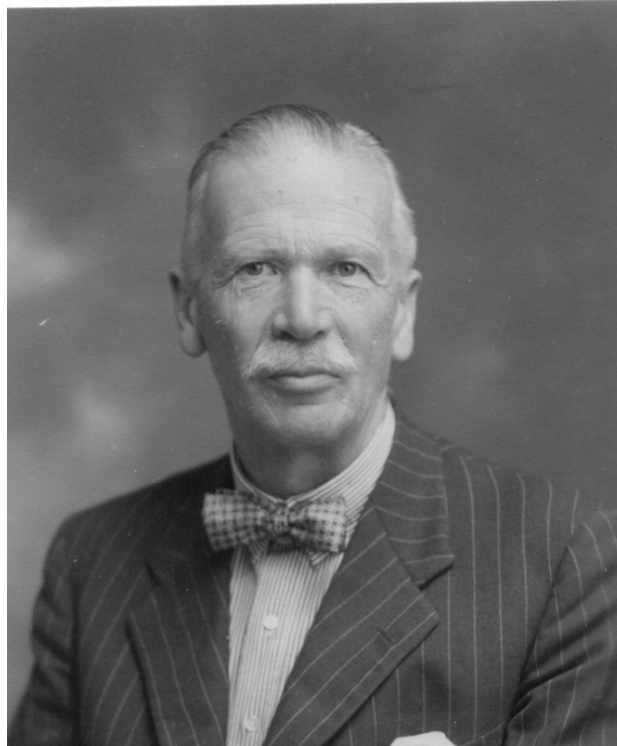
They returned to UK towards the end of 1943. On return he was Station Superintendent at Bristol and they lived in Whitchurch. He was then Senior Traffic Officer at Hurn and then Poole and then subsequently in 1947 at Southampton.

They had 2 sons: Mark was born in July 1945 and Richard in March 1948. After Whitchurch they were living in Luscombe Road Parkstone in July 1945. There are stories of Barbara pushing Mark in his pram up the steep hill to St Anthony's (which attracted Mabel's disapproval because Eric should have been doing it), but that was probably just staying rather than living there. By 1947 they were living in Purbeck Road, Parkstone and then in Lilliput in Parkstone. By March 1948 they were living, in Knolten, Brockenhurst in the New Forest, close to the ford.

Sadly Eric and Barbara separated in 1948 or so shortly after Richard was born. Apparently at the time they were living again in Parkstone near Poole, Eric said he was going out to find a job, might be some time and never returned. Apparently the trigger for the separation was when Eric wanted to go for a job in India. They were subsequently divorced in 1952. After 1949, Barbara and the children moved back in with AES and Mabel on a permanent basis. Family lore has it that Barbara wasn't really in love with Eric, but was envious of Hope's married status and followed her lead. If you look carefully at AES taking his daughters into church for their weddings, with Hope he is all smiles but with Barbara less so. Mabel certainly didn't like Eric, but she was apparently prone to be over-critical. Eric is generally felt to have been a fairly weak character. This was in sharp contrast to his brother Alan, who was a very successful RAF Pilot with two DSOs in the Second World War, who ended up as a Group Captain

After leaving Barbara, Eric did indeed work in India and Pakistan at Karachi and then Delhi and then went back to Luxor. He left BOAC in 1949 and worked in Traffic Admin till 1953. He then went out to Australia to Melbourne with Ansett Airways, with General Motors and with TAA. He was back in UK between 1956 and 1957 with Dragon Airways in Newcastle as Assistant Commercial Manager. Between 1958 and 1960 he was back in Australia in Sydney with Qantas, working in International Regulations. From 1961 to 1969 he was back in UK with a number of different companies. By 1972 he was back in Sydney as the Reservations Manager for Jet Airlines and in the same year became a resident in New Zealand where he has since remained.

AES 1940 Onwards



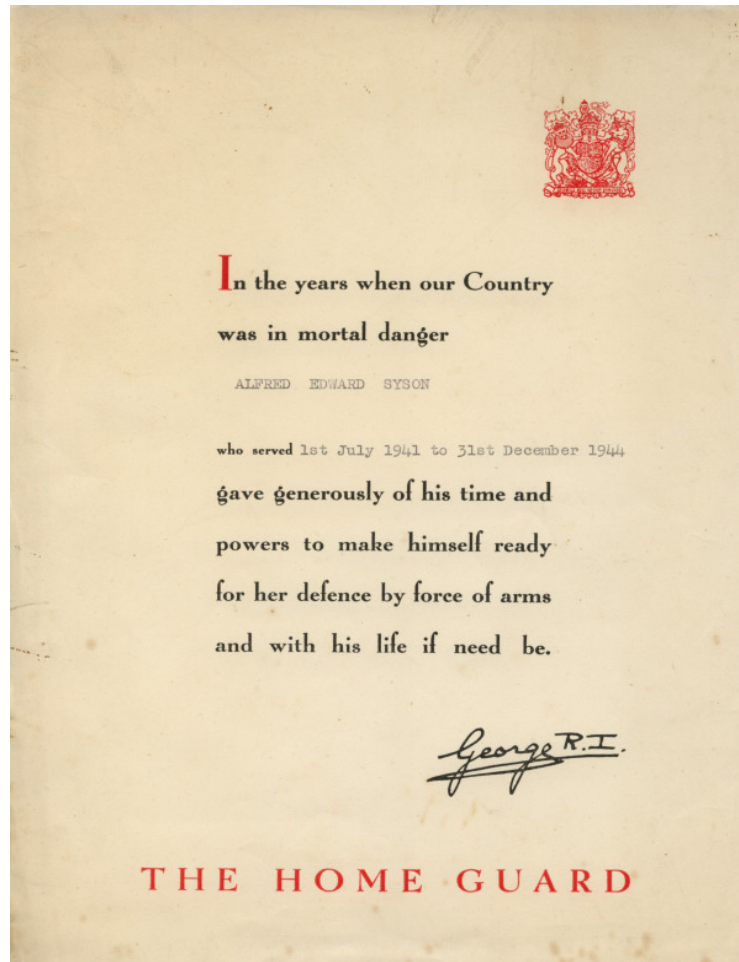
AES in 1941

RJ Owen's Thesis makes it clear that AES retired as a Schools Inspector in April 1940, when he would have been 60. However Mabel's diary says he retired on or about June 1941 when he did his last official journey to Bath and Swindon. I back Mabel's diary particularly as family myth has it that Hope talked of him getting extra petrol to do the work.

In July 1941 AES joined the Home Guard and served through to December 1944, when it was probably disbanded. From the uniform it is clear that he served as an officer but in what capacity is not known. He may well have been a Company Commander as this is implied on a 1944 photograph caption



**AES in the
Home Guard
1941**



In March 1942, Mabel's diary records the report of Terence being wounded at the Second Battle of Sirte on board HMS CLEOPATRA, followed by intense relief when a cable from Terence reports that he is in hospital in Alexandria. The following month Mabel records that Terence's brother Nigel was reported missing at St Nazaire, when serving on board HMS CAMPBELTOWN. It is significant and interesting that the diary also records that Hope decided to go to Titchfield to be with Nigel's father Admiral Tibbits.

In October 1947, Admiral Tibbits died. This time both AES and Hope hurried up to Titchfield to sort things out, leaving the Nanny to look after Hope's daughters Jane and Pamela.

The Sysons were still living in Morcombelake in 1947, when the Tibbits moved to Malta. But in September 1950, they moved to Fareham in Hampshire to Pike House in order to be closer to Hope. Terence's father had lived at Titchfield Abbey Cottage and after his death Terence had inherited the house. There is a picture of AES working in the garden of Titchfield Abbey Cottage in June 1950, presumably just after Hope and the family had got back from Malta. It is very nice to think that father and daughter were so fond of each other that he was prepared to do serious digging to help her when he was 70. It is probable that Terence didn't get back from Malta till the July.

The Sysons were certainly in Pike House Fareham by 29 Jan 1951, because AES was using that letterhead in a letter to a Mr McIntosh. The letter is interesting because he is answering some of McIntosh's questions about the development of Physical Education in this country. Apparently AES had got rid of all his library in 1942 or so, for the paper to be used for the war effort. Yet he is able to give a very clear account of what had gone on from 50 years before. So at the age of over 70 he obviously still had a clear mind and excellent recall.



AES working in his beloved daughter
Hope's garden June 1950



AES with, Mabel, Barbara, Mark and Richard
say 1951, probably shortly before he died

By July 1952 Mabel records that AES health was failing and it was thought that he had pneumonia again. On the 22nd, the doctor advised that he had had some form of heart attack and advised bed for 10 days. By this time Alfred was feeling very ill. On the 23rd though he had a better night. On the 26th the doctor had reported that his condition was very serious and that AES must stay in bed. The following day, after a bad night, AES was transferred to Haslar by ambulance. It is interesting that the ambulance driver carried Alfred downstairs on his back. Hope arrived that evening, probably from Paris. By 29 July the doctor reported that there was very little to be done. On the 30th, Barbara and the boys went in to see him briefly. On the 31st, AES was pretty upset but on 1 August he had deep ray treatment on his spine after which he was looking better. However he died the next day in Haslar Hospital on 2 August 1952 at the age of 72. He was cremated at Swaythling on 6 August.

Mabel

Mabel lived on until 1966. Because she lived on that much longer, her grandchildren (who referred to her as Geggy) have a much clearer memory of her than they do of Alfred. She is remembered as a pretty difficult and cussed woman, who was outspokenly critical and gave her daughter Barbara a pretty hard time. Barbara continued to live with her parents after she and Eric separated and was apparently dependent on them, Barbara was very much at Mabel's beck and call and had very limited facilities of her own in the house. I only remember meeting Mabel once, probably in 1965 and I recall only a little old woman. However it was reported to me that she had remarked (not to my face) that she was pretty unimpressed that any granddaughter of hers should be engaged to someone with the name of Jones.

Mabel's former son in law, Eric Anderson, who is still alive and lives in New Zealand remembers her as being interfering, bossy but civil. He felt that she was non emotional and did not come over as a warm person. She was apparently confrontational, was not like by those in Morcombelake and was prone to pass on local scandal. It has to be said though that Eric did not like Mabel and the feeling was probably mutual, which may colour Eric's recollections, nevertheless it tends to tie in with the recollections of her grandchildren.

Recollections about AES

None of AES grandchildren (who referred to him as Gar) can remember him that well. Jane the eldest remembers him really only as a presence and recalls the circumstance much more: the beech trees in Dorset in 1947, the greenhouse and the smell of tomatoes in the period 1950 to 1952.

His grandson Mark has slightly better memories, because he lived with AES from 1949 till AES died in 1952. Memories and specific anecdotes that Mark can recall include:

- "My overall impression of AES was of a warm and caring man and a man I liked. Probably because of this, I have long wished I had been older when he died in order for me to have known him better and from not really having much memory of him.
- "**Leaf collection.** We went to a section of road near Morcombelake in autumn to collect fallen leaves for the compost. MGS, Mother, Richard and I went on at least one occasion. Both AES and MGS (Mabel) were keen gardeners.
- "**Rabbit shooting.** AES would attempt to shoot rabbits in the Morcombelake garden with a 0.22 air rifle. The success rate is unknown.
- "**Destuff toy.** I recall being reprimanded by MGS with AES in the background when I destuffed a toy dog (called Soggy Dog) in my bedroom at Morcombelake. MGS was giving me the ticking off, with AES in the background, but not

participating. This was when Mother was in the Bridport nursing home giving birth to Richard. Reference to my being unsettled is made in the diary of MGS for the 27th March 1948, the day before Richard was born.

- **“Bridport nursing home.** I recall AES and MGS taking me to see Mother and Richard at the nursing home.
- **“Breakfast.** AES would regularly stand in the kitchen at Pike House eating his bowl of cereal while Mother, Richard and I sat eating our breakfast. AES took his toast into the sitting room. You cannot butter toast standing up! MGS would have been in bed upstairs with her breakfast.
- **“Haslar Hospital.** I recall visiting AES in the Haslar Hospital with Mother. He was sitting up in bed and responsive to us.
- **“Kindness.** MGS told me that AES was really liked by older people because he so considerate and kind to them.”

Eric Anderson has some recollections of his former father in law. These of course would apply to the time of the 1940s, when Alfred was in his 60s. Eric got on well with AES and described him as a person who was interesting and interested in everything. He recalled him as a being a gentleman of the old sort, unenthusiastic about criticising others and reluctant to be rude; generous, quiet, warm and non-argumentative. His major interests were gardening and his ancestors, family history and the many portraits in their house. In that context, it seems a pity that any family history documentation does not seem to have survived. He never mentioned his time in the Marines or the First World War but was very ready to talk about his time with the Education Inspectorate. It is interesting that Anderson recalls him as being healthy, in contrast to the many records in Mabel's diaries of his being ill and Eric says he never complained about his health. Eric recalled that he had a habit of smoking his pipe in bed before getting up in the morning, which irritated Mabel. For this however, one can hardly blame her.

Mabel's nephew Captain Tubby Crawford is still alive and remembers both Alfred and Mabel. He and his family used to go down to Morcombelake for Christmas before the war. He remembers AES as being delightful, fairly quiet but with a nice twinkle and always cheerful. His recollection of Mabel is of her being less easy.

Having written all this, I am still concerned that I don't really know AES' character at all. His elder daughter Hope adored him (much more we suspect than she did her mother Mabel, who certainly in later life could be pretty cussed). We assume but don't know that Syson equally adored Hope. Looking at the photograph of AES at Hope's wedding, I was first struck by his appearance as being rather stiff, but on closer inspection I can see a smile breaking through. So unless and until I can get better information, I think I must sum him up in Sir Stanley Rous' words "slightly stern appearance with twinkling blue eyes, a kindly man". Certainly Halliday Sutherland was pretty impressed both by the man and his record in 1916.

SOURCES

RJ Owen's MEd Thesis on Maj AE Syson – May 1984

Blumberg's: Sea Soldiers, the Royal Marines in the First World War

AES Service Record, Record of Active Service and Record of Wounds

AES Manuscript Description of his Gallipoli experience

AES letter to Mabel after being wounded– May 1915

Gallipoli by Michael Hickey 1995

Gallipoli by Alan Morehead 1950s

Naval Operations by Corbett

The War on Land (or equivalent title)

Map from John Keegan's First World War

Brigadier Ian Gardiner – walk up the Shrapnel valley etc route

Halliday Sutherland – The Arches of the Years – William Morrow and Company, New York, 1933

Photograph from Julian Thompson's book "The Royal Marines. From Sea Soldiers to a Special Force", showing troops from the RMA landing at Ostend.