

20, Colin Grove,
Durban,
400I,
South Africa.
24/3/8I.

Dear Colin,

Many thanks for your most interesting letter and enclosures and before I get going I would like a copy of the postwar run No.3 if you could do a photostat. When you were here we were discussing this and that and I couldn't give concentrated attention to the actual date of the first run, but I think I can now pinpoint it as far as the month is concerned, and I make it July 1939, as follows:-

Around May/June 1938 I was in Malacca with "G" who was office manager and with him ran with the Springgit Harriers there. I returned to K.L., went off on leave about late November and "G" was still in Malacca, so H³ definitely did not start in 1938.

I returned from leave late July 1939 to find "G" manager of the K.L. office and H³ in action, and have always felt that I got back in time for the 4th or 5th run. I'm sure we broke off for Xmas and the New Year and probably Easter which would make 6 misses in the two years ^{1939/40} which, back from the 100th run, would make the 1st about 1 Aug. 1939, so to fit in with the fact that it was operative when I got back at the end of July, we must assume that there were one or two additional misses and make it early July. I'm sure I am right as my leave gives me an anchor from which to work and I hope my reasoning is clear.

Subject to Xmas etc. the runs were always weekly and never abandoned for bad light or weather, although it would at times have been justified. The original idea was to have the runs on Monday to get rid of the weekend's excesses, but this was not possible as that was the evening of "A" (Machine Gun) Co. of the F.M.S.V.F. Volunteers Parade night and most of us were in "A" & "G" being 2nd in Command. Post war this problem did not arise so Monday was chosen.

As you know I did the weekly circulars and used to try to embellish them with a little ode on some incident on the previous week's run, a variant of the cartoon character "Sporting Sam" who is still going strong, or match-stick-man drawings, but by the 100th run we were all too pre-occupied with other things. Anent my remarks on this notice, Ross & Hay, two very senior Civil Servants, always prospected their runs on horseback which made it very difficult for them to judge time and distance with sometimes disastrous results. Incidentally this 100th Meet dinner was the one I told you about when Hay and Ross led us from our drinks to dining table through tables of black-tie diners unrolling toilet rolls over everyone to calls of "On, On".

When you were here we mentioned "G"'s death, it apparently occurred on Singapore Island, I was always under the impression that it was just over the causeway in Johore where I had seen him a few days earlier. An extract from a book by Col. Stewart of the Argylls, with whom "G" was serving reads "The Argylls were in a position to the East of Bukit Timah road, at 4-0 am a considerable force of Japs moved up and caught Lt. Gispert, the mortar officer and three men near Bn. H.Q." Joy and I went to Hong Kong for three weeks over the festive season, less four days over in Taiwan, and had a marvellous time, it was just 17 years since we were last there. We stayed at the Mandarin hotel and on New Year's morning whilst we were waiting in the lobby for a staff car to take us out to Army H.Q. at Fan Ling, a large group of howling dervishes came charging in the back entrance, through the main hall and out at the front with cries of "Happy New Year" and "ON, ON". I managed to waylay a stout member of the slow pack for long enough for him to say "yes" to my enquiry as to if they were the H³, but we had no time to pursue enquiries. There was one unsavoury matter which I couldn't sort out and which must have occurred whilst we were in Taiwan. I think someone must have written a letter to the paper about the H³ and signed it A.S.Gispert, which were "G"'s initials. Just as we were about to leave there were 2 angry letters

in the morning paper referring to sacrilege, etc., I tried to trace the writers in the telephone directory without success and the next day we were away.

Whilst in Hong Kong I had an introduction to the Chairman of the H.K. Club with a view to making use of the Club and we had get together with he and his wife. He was in Comm. Union in Malaya, our paths never crossed and he was never a H³, but in Ipoh he was a great pal of "The Horse" and played regular tennis with him, the Horse is a great traveller and always looks him up when passing through H.K. We spent quite a time reminiscing about the Horse who really was a character.

I am looking forward very much to receiving the magazines you are forwarding and it amazes me to think that the H³ can run to international gatherings both in 1980 and again in 1982 - "Tall oaks from little acorns grow". You are obviously frightfully busy, and I hope doing well for yourself, and whenever you can find time to pass on further snippets of news, large or small, I shall only be too pleased to receive them. Cecil Lee owes me a letter so when it comes I shall then pass on to him news items from you letter which I am sure he will lap up. As far as the Durban C.C. crayfish is concerned, any time you feel you need some more you have only got to come over, report to No. 20 and your craving shall be satisfied.

Finally, many thanks for your Christmas Card which arrived safely, we didn't send you one but to remedy that, and to show that what germinated in early issues of the H³ notices has not faded away, I enclose a copy of my amphigouric effort for 1980, this has gone on, "On & Off" as opposed to "On & On" for 17 years.

All very best wishes from Joy and myself,

Yours,

Torch