

Weird War II (Feb 2010 Campaign) – Volume 1

Location: Lydda (derived from the name: *St. Jorge de Lidde (Saint George)*, whom the city was named after when it was conquered in 1099 during the crusades, in honour of it being his birthplace. Population: Approx 20,000—18,500 Muslims and 1,500 Christians.



Approx 23 miles from Jerusalem (Division HQ), 42 miles from Cairo (Army HQ), 10 miles from coast
Lydda Cavalry Brigade, CO: Brig. John Scot-Morgan (Royal Engineers), 2IC: Lt.Col. Edward Livingstone
Inc. components of: Royal Scots Greys; 4th/7th Dragoon Guard; 2nd Batt W.Yorks Brigade; Royal Engineers.

The Journal of Corporal Jimmy McKie– Volume 1

Tuesday 4th April 1939

Woken by alarm bugle in early hours of the morning, the first men (including myself) onto the parade ground were volunteered for special duty and briefed by Capt. Carrington.

SITREP: British archaeologist (Benjamin) reports that his expedition (led by an American) has been attacked by a mob of heavily armed Arabs. I am to lead a small squad of men as advance guard to appraise the situation whilst a larger force is mobilised to follow us shortly. The excavation is in a valley at Beit Arye. Distance approx 11 miles as crow flies, but only 5 miles of usable road in that direction so can use lorry for first part of journey but then rest of way on foot.

Assigned Squad:

- (Command) Cpl Jimmy McKie (Me)
- (2IC) Acting Cpl Quentin Smyth (Huw)
- Pte Jim Arnold (Richard)
- Medic: Pte Adams
- Pte Owen
- Arab Legion Liaison: Pte Jarrah
- Civilian: Benjamin



Squad loads into lorry, I drive, Pte Jarrah navigates, Cpl Smyth questions Benjamin for more information. At approx 05:15 we arrive at closest the road goes and disembark. Pte Jarrah attempts to lead us towards Beit Arye, but Pte Arnold and myself have doubts about his route. Cpl Smyth figures out that Pte Jarrah is too proud to admit he has made a mistake in the route and manages to talk him around to trying a better route.

At approx 07:15 we approach the valley and hear sporadic light gunfire from ahead. I determine an advance over the high side of valley will give us better tactical advantage during approach than entering valley mouth directly, so Pte Arnold is sent to scout ahead and the rest of us follow up behind. As we approach the crest

of the high side of valley we can now hear gunfire that appears to be coming from both sides of the valley, can also hear Arabic cries of “infidel!”.

Pte Arnold comes upon an Arab native who starts throwing rocks at him. Benjamin fires back and blows the natives head off with a single shot. I issue an order to avoid killing the natives unless we are really threatened, so that we avoid causing more trouble with the natives than necessary.

Pte Arnold takes cover as the rest of us advance to his position. During this period 3 more natives attack Pte Arnold with sling shots. Squad lays down suppressing fire, 1 native dies, other two run away.

Shortly after we hear noise/voices that suggest the natives are regrouping and attempting to flank our position so that they can attack from a more advantageous position. I split our squad into 3 groups: A rear guard {Pte Owen & Civvie Benjamin}; right-wing advance {myself & Pte Jarrah}; left-wing advance {Cpl Smyth, Pte Adams & Pte Arnold}. The two wing groups advance towards the crest of the hill, then the right-wing comes under fire from 4 natives armed with rifles and Cpl Smyth suffers a minor injury. Both wings return fire and one hostile is neutralised. The remaining hostiles now split their fire between both wings and Pte Jarrah suffers a minor injury, in the return fire two more hostiles are neutralised but the surviving native shoots and seriously wounds Pte Adams. As Cpl Smyth stabilised Pte Adams injuries the last native is taken out and we secure our position.

The rear guard moves up to join us and we re-group. The new rear guard is Pte Arnold and Pte Owen, looking after the semi-conscious Pte Adams. The advance wings are now: Left {myself & Pte Jarrah}, Right {Cpl Smyth & Civvie Benjamin}.

We continue the advance on the hill crest where we see something brassy and shiny that could be a large calibre gun barrel of some type and a number of figures. Making good use of cover we try to get as close as possible unnoticed. The left wing manages to get to within 40 yards before being spotted and the machine-gun and several rifles open fire killing Pte Jarrah instantly. Our return fire is very effective and five hostiles are killed with only minor injuries on our side, the gun-pit falls silent as we see several natives running away. As we advance the last short distance we come under fire once more from a side flank by two more hostiles who are rapidly dispatched.

I reach the gun-pit first. It contains an 1890's era machine gun and one living Arab carrying an ornate sword. Under my orders he puts his sword to one side and agrees to talk to me.

Apparently the archaeologists are digging in a sacred site. The locals have tried several peaceful means to prevent the archaeologists from digging here, including a petition to the Governor-General in Jerusalem, so they took matters into their own hands. When questioned about why this site is so important that they would be willing to die to protect it, he says he cannot tell us why. The archaeologists are currently trapped in a cave in the valley, but have some very well-armed assistants and good cover so there is a stand-off.

By this time Cpl Smyth and the civvie Benjamin reach the gun-pit, so we question Benjamin about the reasons for this valley being chosen as the site for their archaeology dig. He says that the lead archaeologist, a Professor Walter Giovanni, had found a scroll written by a 3rd century roman called Marcus that suggests the ancient site of Aramathea is in this valley and not 20 miles away in Ramathaim, Ramleh or Rama as is the widespread belief.

I negotiate with the Arab to obtain a cease-fire so that I can go and talk to the archaeologists, have safe passage for them all out of the valley, and then attend negotiations about the situation in town. We bring the rear guard up to the gun-pit and station Ptes Arnold, Owen and Adams there as myself, Cpl Smyth and Benjamin go down to the cave. Inside the cave we meet Prof. Walter Geovanni and I talk him into evacuating the cave and returning with us to town.

Thursday 6th April 1939

We are called into Brigade HQ by Captain Carrington for a briefing:

SITREP: The negotiations over the archaeology dig in Beit Ayre Valley were unproductive due to the archaeologists appealing to the Governor-General, who granted them permission to continue the excavations in spite of the risk of it causing further local unrest. Further to this, our Brigade has been ordered to protect them from the natives as they continue; 9 Platoon of D Company, West Yorkshire Regiment have been assigned. The archaeologist team consists of three archaeologists {Prof Walter Geovanni (US), Dr Miely (German), Benjamin (UK)} and approximately a dozen German assistant diggers. Benjamin is currently still recovering from his injuries in hospital so will not be going out with the rest of the expedition on its next session on the 7th April.

Captain Carrington has suspicions about the archaeologists, as he has discovered that the expedition is funded by Berlin University. So he wants our squad to accompany the protection platoon and try and keep close to whatever the archaeologists dig up.

We requisition additional supplies for this mission:

- Rifle Ammo: 100 rds per man plus 1000.
- A Webbley No.6 Pistol plus 30 rds per man
- Team of donkeys plus Pte Tim Eastern as handler
- 15 Grenades
- 10 lbs TNT plus 3x Detonators
- 2 weeks rations
- 2 Tents

Assigned Squad:

- (Command) Cpl Jimmy McKie (Me)
- (2IC) Acting Cpl Quentin Smyth (Huw)
- Pte Jim Arnold (Richard)
- Medic: Pte Adams
- Pte Owen
- Pte Tim Eastern (Donkey Handler)

Myself and Cpl Smyth split up to prepare for our mission by doing some research.

Cpl Smyth goes to the local native library to try and find out more about the site. He fails to find anything useful, but outside the library has a conversation with an unidentified figure whom we believe to be the Chief Arab with the Silver Sabre from the valley. In conversation with the figure he gains the following information:

Marcus Sapius Augustus was a 3rd Century Roman historian who was interested in researching witchcraft, paganism and similar topics. He discovered things best left undiscovered and was killed by the Arabs ancestors before he was able to cause any damage, although apparently not before he wrote down something about his findings. If Prof Geovanni finds these objects and takes them back to the University where they will be studied, then a great evil will reign. These objects are books of evil magic and certain artefacts. One of these artifacts is in the valley and the Arabs have sworn to protect it. It looks like an ancient weapon of some type. If it is found we must obtain it and bring it to him.

I go and visit Benjamin in the hospital to question him about the other archaeologists. He tells me that Prof Geovanni's last excavation was of some famous cave paintings at a dig in Cairo 3 years ago. Since then he has been writing books on cave art, and whilst researching this topic in Cairo library he found the scroll.

Thinking back to when I met them in the valley, it occurs to me that Dr Miely and the assistant diggers moved and acted with a military manner, which leads me to suspect that they are soldiers and Dr Miely is probably an officer of some type.

I don't like the idea of being caught in a sticky situation with a bunch of German soldiers at my back, so when Cpl Smyth and myself meet up to compare findings I suggest finding some way to put them out of action with some 'Cairo Belly' so that they cannot go with the expedition when it returns to the valley. The diggers are staying in the Corporals Mess, so we visit the Mess Chef to try and bribe him into helping us incapacitate them. He promises that he will put the diggers out of action for at least 2 weeks in return for a bottle of Whiskey, which we obtain from Captain Carrington when we report to him in the Officers Mess.

We then go into the Corporals Mess to try and find out more about the diggers. There has been some trouble between our Corporals and the diggers, but strangely the diggers backed down and took some grief without retaliation. Cpl Smyth engages the diggers in conversation and, due to military slang/etc that they were familiar with, is convinced that they are definitely military types.

Friday 7th April 1939

In the morning the diggers are all too ill to join the expedition and Captain Carrington rapidly volunteers our squad as replacement diggers as planned.

The expedition sets off towards the valley on schedule; the journey takes the whole day and is uneventful except for passing through a crowd of local Arabs who yell and curse the expedition but take no aggressive actions. We do however recognise the Silver Sabre Arab Chief amongst the crowd.

It is evening when we arrive in the valley and set up camp. We engage Prof Geovanni in conversation during the evening and learn a bit more about him. He says he found the scroll about 18 months ago in Cairo whilst researching his book. He tried approaching the Royal Geographic Society and other organisations to sponsor an expedition to follow the clues in the scroll, however had no luck until the Hungarian Count Almacy suggests Berlin University. Berlin University agree to sponsor the expedition, even though he has not worked with them before. {This may be in conflict with what Benjamin told us, as he gave the indication that he had been with Prof Geovanni at Berlin University for 3 years}.

Saturday 8th April 1939

We start digging out the floor of the cave at 08:00, objective is to clear the dirt and debris down to the solid floor whilst looking for any evidence. The caves are made from sandstone and it is not possible to tell if they are natural or man-made. We dig all day until dusk (at about 17:30) with a short break for lunch at 13:00. Dr Miely supervises the digging, Prof Geovanni stays outside the cave in his tent all day.

Pte Arnold annoys Dr Miely during the day, Cpl Smyth gets Prof Geovanni to talk about his expectations for the dig. He says a few more days digging in this cave should determine if this is the right cave or not. If it isn't, then we will try some of the other caves in the valley.

Sunday 9th April 1939

More digging all day, after dusk we explore the cave on our own. We find that the rocks at the end of the cave are the real end (i.e. it is not a rock-fall blocking a deeper section) and there are no hidden side-passages or anything else noteworthy.

Monday 10th April 1939

More digging. Cpl Smyth takes a break from the digging to continue quizzing Prof. G. about his plans for the dig. He wants to prove all classical historians wrong about the location of Aramathea; if successful, he hopes that the fame will allow him to get a Chair in history at Harvard University. He doesn't know why the Germans might be interested in Aramathea. He choose to start with this cave as studying the scroll

suggested the first cave in the valley would have the best prospects. Dr. Miely and some of the diggers did recce some of the other caves in the valley before they started digging.

Tuesday 11th April 1939

Dawn at 06:30, we slip out of the camp quietly for a quick recce of the area. Within the valley there are several caves of different sizes in the near area. We explore one cave at random, it ends in a steep drop that seems to be about 17ft 6inches deep.

We explore a second cave and Pte Arnold falls down a 30ft deep hole. I clear around the hole and explore a little deeper down the main tunnel (finding nothing before coming back) whilst Cpl Smyth heads back to camp to get some rope. He is spotted by Dr. Miely who comes back with him. Part way back some natives in the distances take pot-shots and injure Dr. Miely. They scatter when we return fire.

Smyth and Dr. M. Make it back to the cave without further harm, although I spot some more Arabs on the far side of the valley watching us.

We lower a lantern on a rope down to Pte Arnold, he is in a bell-shaped cavern with a floor of large pebbles and some goat skeletons at the bottom. There is a small side tunnel sloping upwards that seems a little wet, it may be draining some water into the cavern but with deep pebble floor the cavern stays dry.

Pte Arnold decides to explore the tunnel, after an extended period of crawling and getting stuck he eventually finds it ends in an open-ceiling cave with a human skeleton. There are two other exits, another tunnel and a 15ft slope up to what turns out to be the main tunnel.

In the meantime Pte Arnold has taken so long in this exploration that Cpl Smyth climbs down into the bell-shaped cavern to check on him. Unfortunately he falls and cannot climb back up the rope by himself. When Pte Arnold returns by the main tunnel he helps me pull Cpl Smyth back up and we get back to the camp by 10:00 to continue digging.

Wednesday 12th April 1939

More digging in the main cave. Nothing has been found so far and we are about 80% complete. When we finish digging I prepare some poles for future exploration.

Thursday 13th April 1939

More digging and then prepare some logs suitable for securing ropes to for future exploration.

Friday 14th April 1939

At dawn we set out to explore again, taking Ptes Adams and Owens, ropes, lanterns, poles and logs with us this time. We head back to the previous cave where we found the human skeleton and search. I find a genuine roman coin (it says on it minted 50 BC!!!). I explore the continuing tunnel and find it comes out in a gully on the other side of the hill. Heading back in I get stuck, as does Pte Arnold who followed after me. I dig out both of us and we get out into the gully, rather than risk getting stuck again we head back to the cave entrance over the top of the hill. We encounter two Arab natives who threaten us and do not respond to attempts to communicate peacefully. A fire fight ensues, Pte Arnold is injured and the two Arabs are alive but unconscious. I patch up their wounds, stabilise them and make them comfortable.

In mean time Cpl Smyth has followed us through the tunnel (getting stuck briefly) and we head back to camp, collecting Ptes Adams and Owen from the cave on the way.

We get back to camp for another day of digging, just a little bit late, and send some of the protection platoon to find the two Arabs we left on the hill and get them to hospital. Dr. Miely is rather annoyed about our

explorations taking time away from digging, but I manage to placate him by reading his attitude that he thinks we are digging in the wrong cave and highlighting that if we find something in another cave we can move on faster.

Saturday 15th April 1939

We travel back to town for more supplies and to let Prof. G have a rest from living in a tent.

We report to Captain Carrington to debrief and requisition some proper flash-lights and 2x 30ft rope ladders. Captain Carrington talks to Prof. G about his plans, he intended to take the expedition back to the valley on Monday.

We take the opportunity of the break to take a couple of donkeys and head back to the valley for a day of private exploration, arriving at night-fall.

Sunday 16th April 1939

Early morning we start scouting the valley from the entrance all the way up to the head. We find a total of 7 caves on the north side and 11 caves on the south side.

North #1 is the main cave we have been excavating, North #4 and South #4 are the two caves we explored ourselves. South #9 appears to be the largest, so we explore it. It just goes in for about 40 ft and peters out.

We discuss the options for the most likely real target cave if directions on the scroll have been misread. We figure out that if Prof. G. has confused which end of the valley the scroll refers to then the correct cave could be the last cave on the south side rather than the first cave on the north side. Thus we head towards cave South #11 at the head of the valley.

The rock here is limestone and the entrance to the cave is fairly small, a tunnel about 20 inches in diameter, but after about 50 feet and a bend it opens up into a slightly larger cavern. At the far end of the cavern there is a large rock blocking the way ahead. Careful examination of the rock shows that it is definitely not natural, as it is almost perfectly circular and sits in a track that allows it to be rolled into a hole in the wall to allow passage past. The problem with rolling it back is that it is extremely heavy and is too smooth to get a firm grip on. Fortunately it has two small holes bored into it and one if these is found to contain a smooth granite rod that can be used as a wedge. There is very little space to move around the rock, which makes it tough to move, but we manage to roll it back in stages with the granite wedge to stop it rolling back closed again.

When there is enough space to squeeze through we do so, finding another 15 feet of passageway that end with a smooth-bored circular hole 5 feet in diameter going down about 20 feet. Using our pre-prepared logs to hang one of the rope ladders down the hole, we descend.

At the bottom the passageway continues with a slight curve to the left and then opening out into a cavern about 25' deep and 20' wide and no obvious other exits. The floor of the cavern is covered with debris and rubble that is about a foot deep in the places that we check. In the centre of the cavern are some smashed pots and roman legionary style armour. We search the cavern thoroughly, finding some gold and silver roman coins and determining that the pots were deliberately smashed by someone. We use poles to poke in the floor rubble and dig in a few random places but cannot find any other exits.

With no-where left to go, we give up and head back up top only to find that someone has removed the granite wedge from the door and sealed us inside. There are no holes on this side, so trying to roll it open again is out of the question. Ptes Adams and Arnold use their bayonets to try and chip some holes in the limestone rock in order to give us something we can get a grip on to open it again. In the mean time Smyth

and myself go back and re-search every single section of the tunnels and cavern for any other way out. Eventually we do spot one rock in the floor of the lower cavern that seems to have a different texture from all of the rest. It is pretty heavy, so we use one of our poles to lever it up and underneath we find another smooth-bored hole dropping down about 10 feet.

We alert Arnold and Adams and then I go down first, slipping part of the way. Arnold follows behind with significantly more grace. We both crawl through the fairly constricted tunnel we find at the bottom and after about 15' it opens up a little so that we can stand up and walk. The passageway now bears around to the right slightly and as we advance an 8' section of the floor collapses and I fall about 40' down and injure myself quite badly. Investigation reveals that there are no exits at the bottom of what appears to be a man-made pit-trap. With help from the others I manage to get up out of the pit trap and Adams patches me up a little.

Beyond the collapsed floor we see the passageway continue on to a junction, so using rope we cross the hole and continue. The junction has three ways forward, two to the left and one straight ahead, all of which appear to open out into caverns. Advancing carefully, alert for further traps, we explore the three caverns:

First Left: A 25' roughly circular cavern with debris and skeletons with roman style armour and weapons. The armour and weapons are fairly badly decayed, but one sword and two armours are intact and in reasonable condition. Strangely the two armours appear to be made from bronze, which seems strange for roman style, but explains why they haven't decayed. Attempting to move one of the armours sets off a spring-loaded dart trap that fires three small darts, one of which hits me. The second armour is similarly trapped but we trigger it safely from a distance. The armours weight around 30 to 40 lbs each but look to be valuable so we take one with us.

Second Left: At the entrance is a trip-wire that looks like it would set off a cave-in, but fortunately Pte Arnold spots it in time. The cavern is about 40' long, 10' wide and bends to the right so that we cannot see the far end from the entrance. Around the bend the passageway is choked up with a rock fall and is impassable.

Straight Ahead: A large 60' deep, 40' wide cavern. Unlike the rest of the caverns we have seen so far, the floor of this cavern is mostly clear of debris or rubble. Interesting features of this cavern are a plinth with some chests and a rack holding a spear; and a pool of water right at the far end.

We carefully examine the plinth and its contents for traps. Pte Arnold unfortunately finds one on the spear in a bad way, and triggers a cave-in which seals us inside this cavern. Searching the cavern reveals that: the chests contain silver and gold coins (several of us fill our pockets with gold coins); the rock fall is significant, but should be possible to clear if we work at it for a while; and; the pool of water is very deep and cold, and may contain a submerged tunnel.

I swim down into the water, trailing a rope with me, it is extremely cold but there is a passageway and after about 15' there is a way up into another (air-filled) passage. I use the rope to signal to the others and they come through as well. The passageway runs on for about 50' with a gentle curve, ending in a small chamber with another smooth bored vertical chimney. This one goes up for about 40' and is pretty tough to climb. For safety I suggest taking our time to cut hand/foot-holds into the sides. The others agree and we take it in turns to go up and cut holds in the walls whilst the others rest in turn. We have been down in these caves for quite a long time, so I suggest we start rationing use of the flashlights to ensure that the batteries don't run out.

Cutting the wall of the chimney takes about 8 hours, but we eventually complete it and all climb up. At the top is a 30' by 15' cavern with some more skeletons. As we start to investigate this new cavern three of the skeletons stand up and come towards us waving swords. We are all a little freaked out by this, but when the

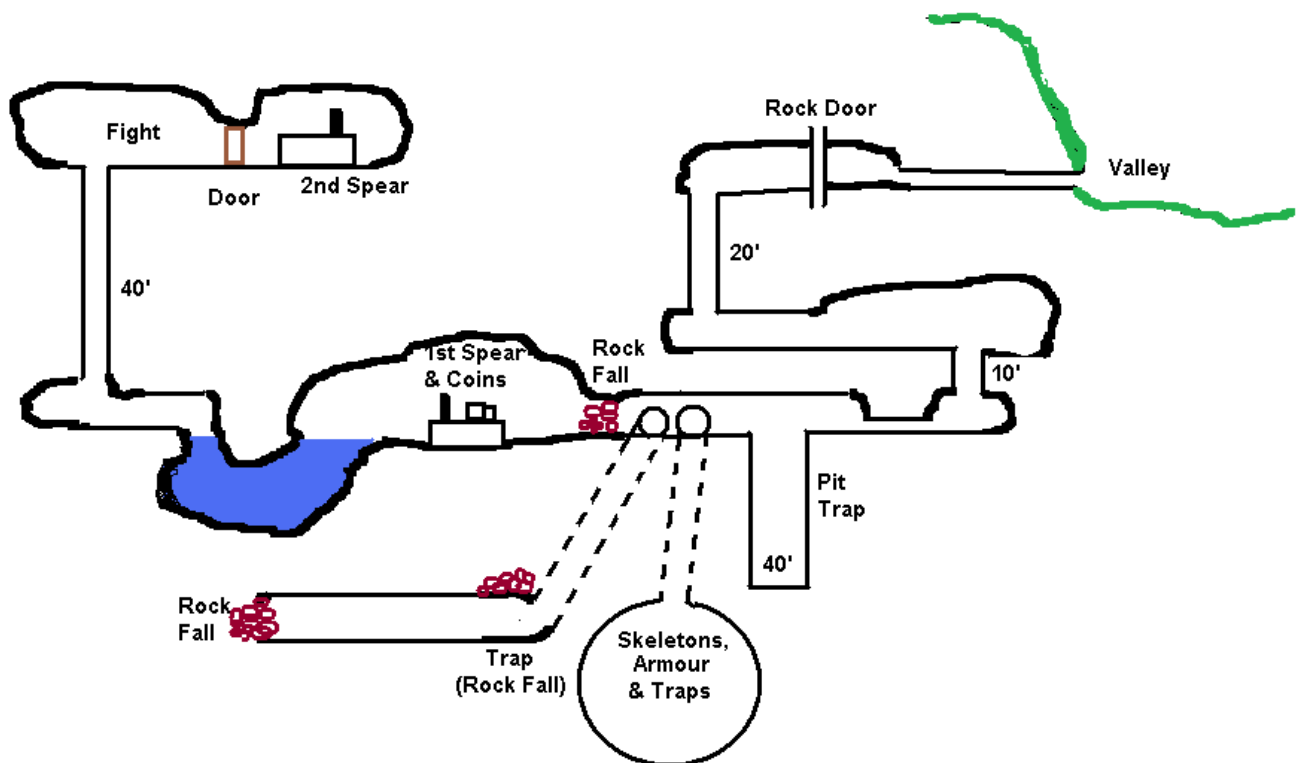
skeletons start meeleing us we snap out of it and defend ourselves. Adams, Arnold and myself use our pistols to try and destroy the skeletons skulls, 2nd Lt Smyth uses the spear we found and melees them.

The combat is fairly long, as the skeletons appear to be extremely resistant to damage from both guns and spear. During the combat Smyth is seriously wounded and knocked out temporarily, Adams is almost cut in half by a sword cut and dies. Arnold luckily manages to disarm the skeleton in melee with him, with its sword gone it is not much of a threat enabling Arnold to safely hold it at bay until his pistol-shots blow its skull apart and it collapses.

In the mean-time I fend off the two other skeletons that try to slice and dice me. I manage to kill one (eventually! They are damned tough), then Smyth recovers and comes to my assistance. Whilst he distracts the remaining skeleton I am able to place a perfect shot through the back of its skull and it collapses within seconds of the other two. We dismember the skeletons, to be certain, and patch up our wounds.

Adams is beyond help, being pretty much in two pieces, so we distribute his kit amongst us and then search the cavern. We find a door into another chamber, inside is a plinth containing another spear that is indistinguishable from the one we already found. Finding no obvious traps we take the spear and search around, finding nothing else. We take care to ensure that we don't confuse the spears with each other, but since the first one has some deep nocks in it from the fight it seems fairly easy to do.

We are all pretty tired and injured by now, so we make camp and get some proper rest and sleep before heading back the way we came, as it seems to be our only option left now.



Monday 17th April 1939

After waking up we had a quick search around to ensure we hadn't missed anything and then built a cairn over the remains of Pte Adams.

We then started our way back out by descending the 40' chimney, which unfortunately didn't go well. I fell the last 10' and suffered some cuts and bruises, Lt. Smythe falls from pretty much the top and after landing

at the bottom is alive but unconscious. I stabilize him and make him comfortable, but there is no way we can get him through the water sump without drowning. Pte Arnold shimmies down the chimney easily.

I swim into the sump and check for any additional exits we might have missed before, but don't find any. So then try to swim back through to the first spear chamber. Unfortunately, suffering from an extended time in the water now, I get stuck and start to drown. Pte Arnold manages to save me by pushing me free and dragging me up and out into the first spear chamber, I am safe but lost consciousness.

Pte Arnold starts working on clearing the rockfall that is blocking out exit. After about 2 hours hard work he has cleared a space through and I have regained consciousness. We are all in a pretty bad state now, so we rest up for an extended period whilst we recover and Lt Smythe regains consciousness; this takes 36 hours.

Wednesday 19th April 1939

We then all head back through the tunnels without any notable events to arrive back at the circular stone door. It doesn't take long to finish chipping a hole in the door with which we can get a grip in order to roll the door open. We then carefully sneak out through the tunnel, outside it is early dawn and there is no sign of the donkeys or anything else. We are scrambling for cover outside the tunnel when the Arab Chief reveals himself.

He asks us if we were successful. Lt Smythe answers non-committally and asks what happened to our companions that we left outside. He replies that they are safe, depending upon our intentions, and invites us to go somewhere safer and talk before others arrive.

We travel to just outside the valley to a small camp where the Arab has his horse. He identifies one of the spears as being the artefact; and the 1st spear as being a decoy with a minor preservation enchantment on it. He tells us that the spear is the one that was used to pierce the side of Christ; and as a result became imbued with a dark and evil power. I ask him about the decoy spear and, after ascertaining that the decoy is magical also, suggest that anyone looking for a magical spear should be fooled by the decoy spear if we let the Arab take the real spear. Everyone agrees to this plan. I then ask the Arab if we could have any way of contacting him, he says we can contact him through Capt O'Donohue, in Jerusalem.

We then travel back to our base, joining our two missing Privates en route. Arriving at about 10:30am we report to Capt Carrington for debriefing. He orders us to report to the Medical Officer, who quarantines us for observation.

Thursday 20th April 1939

At 9am we are ordered to report in #2 uniform. We are received by a Staff Major of the MPs for an 'informal chat'. Major Geilder asks us about the events of our encounter, which we recount and tell him about the contact we have for the Arab, Capt O'Donohue. He mentions that only he, Capt Carrington and the Brigadier had seen our report, and he wishes to keep it that way. Pte Adams is awarded a posthumous Distinguished Service Medal; Smythe receives a MID and Arnold the Military Medal.

We then help Smythe move his gear into the Officers Mess and take our time recovering from our adventures.