

**4/3/2026**

I have been tweaking this version long enough and am now sharing it with anyone who cares to read it, but it should still be considered a work in progress.

Please send any edits, questions or comments to me at:  
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**DENIS HEALY**  
**ON THE ROAD TO MANDALAY**  
**1883 -- 1891**

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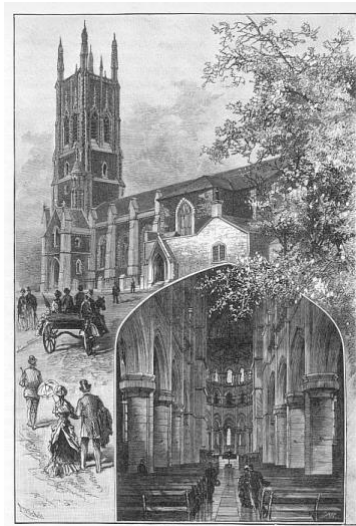
**Kipling's "On the Road..." Lyrics and vocal interpretations**

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# DENIS HEALY ON THE ROAD TO MANDALAY



Patrick Street. Cork, Ireland. From Daunts Square. Circa 1890, about the time Denis returned from Burma.



**Just a few steps from where the Healys lived at 56 Clarence St.**

St Mary and St Anne's Cathedral, (North Cathedral) Cork, Ireland, 1884

[https://www.abebooks.de/servlet/BookDetailsPL?bi=31245780587&ref\\_=vhr\\_1\\_rvi\\_v2](https://www.abebooks.de/servlet/BookDetailsPL?bi=31245780587&ref_=vhr_1_rvi_v2)



Fifty years (ca1860) before this photo the Healys lived up the road at 56 Clarence St. Twomey's Bakery and Tea Warehouse 102-103 Shandon St, in 1910 with Twomey's horse drawn delivery carts and drivers. Next door is D. J. Murphy's Pub. (photo: Fergus O'Connor Collection.) Shandon St continued as Clarence St until 1898 when Clarence St was replaced by Gerald Griffin Rd in a slum clearance/urban renewal project.. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shandon\\_Street](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shandon_Street)

## Introduction

To really understand why my Great Uncle Denis Healy “took the shilling” in Cork about 1883 and joined the British Army and began his long road to Mandalay and back and then on to America, one must first understand a little history. Not just Irish history, but French history and British history and Burmese history. With even a thin grounding of history the answers to many questions about Denis’s odyssey will become clearer.

(The practice of “taking the shilling” ended in 1879, four years before Denis enlisted. The British stopped offering the shilling perhaps because there was a ready supply of desperately idle young men who saw British military service as an improvement over their opportunities at home.)

The following narrative is based on a very few hard facts. We have documents that show that Denis was awarded the Burma Service Medal. We have a photo of Denis wearing the medal and we have the medal itself (in Portland). We have documentation of his service number: 1801. We have a written history of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, Royal Munster Fusilliers. We have US doctors’ reports detailing scars and tattoos and malaria that must have been collected while in the Fusilliers. We have a letter from Denis’s sister Elizabeth, with the inside address of Ballincollig. (Or is it Ballincolliy? I’m going with Ballincollig.) We have the often repeated verbal declarations of family: “They went barefoot in the snow,” and “We’re from County Cork.” and “You’re a Corker!” In January 2026, with the help of Mike Healy, we added birth and marriage documents that showed our Healy origin at 56 Clarence Street in Cork City. Perhaps in the future we will discover even more evidence that will help us add detail to Denis’s story.

## Napoleon and Wellington

Let's start with French history. We all know that France had a revolution which "officially" began with the storming of the Bastille on 7/14/1789 and which revolution Napoleon Bonaparte ended on 11/9/1799 with a *coup d'état* when he established himself as First Consul of France. This eventually led to a long period of "Napoleonic Wars" involving Europe, Asia and Africa which ended when Arthur Wellesley defeated Napoleon at Waterloo in Belgium on 6/18/1815. Thereafter Wellesley was known as Wellington (The Duke of...) and went on to become Prime Minister of the United Kingdom. Napoleon faded into obscurity.



Wellington by Goya (1812-1814).



Napoleon by Anne-Louis Girodet de Roussy-Trioson (Circa 1805)

## The Gunpowder Mill at Ballincollig: The Healy Connection

One upshot of this war-filled period that is important to our story was that Britain needed not just more firepower but a more reliable and secure source of what underlay that firepower: namely powder, i.e., gun powder.

So, Britain expanded its production of "black powder" by creating more powder mills, including buying an existing one in 1804 in the town of Ballincollig just south of the Lee River about six miles west of the city of Cork. That mill had been created privately in 1794 by Charles Henry Leslie, a Cork banker. The location on the Lee enabled easier sea-transport of the explosive powder and the minimization of dangerous transport in horse-drawn wagons on bumpy roads.

The Ballincollig Royal Gunpowder Mills, on over 130 acres, now ranks as Ireland's largest industrial archaeological site and is of enormous national and international importance. In its day it was the second largest gunpowder works in the whole of Britain and Ireland.

In 1805 the British Board of Ordnance bought the mill from Leslie and expanded the site but after ten years shut it down. Closed from 1815-1833, the site was sold to Thomas Tobin of Liverpool who transformed the mill into one of the most up-to-date industrial complexes in Ireland, employing over 500 people.



Charles Henry Leslie  
1767?-1841?



Thomas Tobin  
3/22/1807-1/9/1881

The mills closed in 1903 after smokeless explosives superseded black powder. Cork County Council developed the site into Ballincollig Regional Park in the 1980's. Although the "incorporating mills" area (where the components of black powder were mixed) is closed to the public, the ruins of over sixty buildings associated with gunpowder manufacture are scattered along the main arterial canal which runs the length of the complex, approximately three kilometers.

The Ballincollig powder mill was a big operation, producing 100-kilogram wooden kegs of powder (220 pounds). In the seven years from 1836 to 1842, for example, the mill produced 193,576,659 pounds of "black powder" which was used in Britain's wars, in railroad construction, in mines and in quarries.



This is the "Watch House" or "Search Room" in which entering workers were searched to make sure they were not bringing in any items that might cause an explosion. Exiting workers were also searched to prevent them from stealing any black powder or equipment



Millstones grinding sulfur

To protect this strategic operation the British established a garrison of troops in Ballincollig. The mill and the garrison provided a broad range of service jobs which supported the economic growth and prosperity of the once little town of Ballincollig throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> Century (almost) and probably enabled the town's survival during the cholera years and "Black '47."



Background: Part of the surviving 1811 barracks complex.

Foreground: 4.5 inch howitzer from the First World War on the Barracks Square.

Ballincollig continued to grow into the nineteenth century, even while, in 1847, famine raged in many parts of Ireland. About 500 men and boys were employed and a range of skills were in use in the mills: coopering (making wooden barrels), mill-wrighting, general carpentry as well as other specialist gunpowder making skills. Catholics were excluded from most of these jobs. The population of Ballincollig, in 1886, from the Postal Directory of Munster, was 1,130 (including the military).

**Right: A soldier (and a dog) guards the gate to the barracks area.**



# Timeline of British Wars 1800–1899

Below is a list of the 34 conflicts and wars Britain was involved in during the Nineteenth Century.

These conflicts required black powder and large pre- and post-war garrisons of troops in many countries, transported from the British Isles before and after the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869.

Note: These are all active links:

- [French Revolutionary Wars](#) ended 1802
- [Second Anglo-Maratha War](#) 1802–1805
- [Napoleonic Wars](#) 1802–1813
- [War of 1812](#) 1812-1815
- [Hundred Days](#) 1815 The return of Napoleon
- [Anglo-Nepalese War](#) 1813–1816
- [Third Anglo-Maratha War](#) 1817–1818
- [First Ashanti War](#) 1823–1831
- [First Anglo-Burmese War](#) 1824–1826
- [First Anglo-Afghan War](#) 1839–1842
- [First Opium War](#) 1839–1842
- [First Anglo Marri War](#) 1840
- [First Anglo-Sikh War](#) 1845–1846
- [New Zealand Wars](#) 1845–1872
- [Second Anglo-Sikh War](#) 1848–1849
- [Second Anglo-Burmese War](#) 1852–53
- [Crimean War](#) 1853–1856
- [Anglo-Persian War](#) 1856–1857
- [Second Opium War](#) 1856–1860
- [Indian Rebellion](#) 1857–1858
- [Second Ashanti War](#) 1863–1864
- [Bhutan War](#) 1864–1865
- [Third Ashanti War](#) 1873–1874
- [Second Anglo-Afghan War](#) 1878–1880
- [Anglo-Zulu War](#) 1879
- [Second Anglo Marri War](#) 1880
- [First Boer War](#) 1880–1881
- [Third Anglo-Burmese War](#) 1885
- [Mahdist War](#) 1891–1899
- [Fourth Ashanti War](#) 1894
- [Anglo-Zanzibar War](#) 1896
  - (Shortest war, lasted 38 minutes.)
- [Six-Day War](#) 1899
- [Boxer Rebellion](#) 1899–1901
- [Second Boer War](#) 1899–1902

## The Healys in Cork in 1883

The family in 1883, when, I assume, Denis enlisted at the age of 14 -- with his father's consent -- included two parents and at least eight children. Vague suggestions that there were thirteen children were sometimes mentioned by our aunts, probably based on stories they heard from their mother or from their uncles Denis or Patrick, but nothing can be pinned down and there are as yet no documents to support the suggestions. Until now. The dates below are taken from documents displayed in another file except for those with question marks.

(father) Denis Healy, Sr (died after 1892?)  
 (mother) Mary Bridget Connolley (died before 1892?)

In 1883 Denis Healy, Sr and Mary Connolley had been married for 25 years.

Their children:

<b>John b9/10/1858 Mallow</b>	<b>25 in 1883</b>	<b>34 in 1892</b>
<b>Florence?</b>		
<b>Theresa?</b>		
<b>Bartholomew/Patrick bap5/31/1862</b>	<b>21 in 1883</b>	<b>30 in 1892</b>
<b>Margaret 2/7/1864 - CK</b>	<b>19 in 1883</b>	<b>28 in 1892</b>
<b>Elizabeth 2/7/1864 - CK</b>	<b>19 in 1883</b>	<b>28 in 1892</b>
<b>Mary Bridget 4/18/1866 CK - 4/3/1940 NY</b>	<b>17 in 1883</b>	<b>26 in 1892</b>
<b>Ellen bp12/8/1867</b>	<b>16 in 1883</b>	<b>25 in 1892</b>
<b>Denis Francis 9/1/1869 CK- 6/6/1945 DC</b>	<b>14 in 1883</b>	<b>23 in 1892</b>
<b>Catherine 7/1/1871 CK - ? NY</b>	<b>12 in 1883</b>	<b>21 in 1892</b>

### Healy Descendency Chart

**Denis Healy b---d---** m **2/6/1858 CK** **Mary Connolly b -- d<1892?**

**John 9/10/1858 Mallow\* -**

**Florence?\***

**Theresa?\***

**Bartholomew/Patrick\* 5/31/1862 Bap-** m **7/4/1885** **Hannah Bohane/Bone IRL. - US**  
 no children

**Margaret 2/7/1864 - CK**

**Elizabeth 2/7/1864 - CK** m1 **7/7/1889** **Daniel Healy c1860? - 1/1897?**

**Patrick 6/9/1893 CK - 3/10/1897 CK (Scalding)**

**Elizabeth 2/7/1864 - CK - to Wales?** m2 **Martin**

**Mary Bridget 4/18/1866 CK - 4/3/1940 NY** m **Charles Jensen 1855 DK - 1926 NY**

**Catherine Florence**

**Rose Johanna**

**Mary Elizabeth**

**Harry Francis**

**Ellen 12/8/1867 Bap**

**Denis Francis 9/1/1869 CK- 6/6/1945 DC Did not marry.**

**Catherine 7/1/1871 CK - ? NY Did not marry.**

#### \*Comments:

**John:** was born only seven months after his parents' wedding, suggesting they went to Mallow for a few months to avoid the judgmental questions of their Cork neighbors. Did they know someone in Mallow?

**Patrick:** Dim childhood memories of my father talking about Denis's participation in The Boer War (too young) could arise from confusing statements by Harry about Patrick, who could have gone to South Africa at age 18 in 1880 and come back to marry Hannah in 1885. This theory is not backed by any documents that link Patrick to military service.

**Florence? Theresa?\*** Just names mentioned by Rose. No docs. They could fit between John and Patrick. There is some evidence for Florence: Charles and Mary's first child was named Catherine (Charles' sister) Florence (Mary's sister?)

## Conditions in Ireland in 1883

(This section generated by Amazon's Genisis AI, 2/19/2026, then edited by DFJ.)

"Deplorable" conditions in western Ireland. Many small farmers lived in extreme squalor, lacking basic necessities and facing recurring partial famines. This year marked the passing of the Labourers (Ireland) Act 1883, a landmark public housing initiative. It began the process of demolishing primitive one-room "mud cabins" and replacing them with solid, low-rent stone cottages for agricultural laborers. While the rate of emigration began a slight decrease, it remained a primary response to dire economic conditions. Notably, during this era, women made up more than half of all Irish emigrants. The intense agrarian unrest of the Land War had subsided following the Land Act of 1881, which established the "3 Fs": fair rent, fixity of tenure, and free sale. By 1883, the system was shifting toward owner-occupancy, allowing tenants to begin purchasing their land. Despite legislative progress, the British government maintained a hard line against Irish "sedition" and nationalism. 1883 saw the closure of the Spike Island Famine-era prison after decades of housing political prisoners in horrific, overcrowded conditions. Large numbers of women worked as servants, though this was beginning a long-term decline.

## Cork City Conditions in 1883

A place of stark contrasts, defined by a spirit of "prosperity and optimism" among the merchant class while the working poor faced severe overcrowding and squalor. Traditional industries like leather tanning and curing were beginning to decline, with the number of tanyards dropping significantly from their mid-century peak. Cork remained a major hub for the export of salted beef, pork, and butter, though the famed Cork Butter Market faced increasing international competition. For the "humbler classes," housing was often described as dilapidated hovels that were dark, filthy, and lacked basic sanitary accommodation. Large houses were frequently subdivided, with entire families cramped into single rooms. The city center suffered from poor drainage and frequent health nuisances. Domestic service was the largest occupational category for women, though it was starting to decline as minor manufacturing roles became available. For those in total destitution, the Cork Union Workhouse remained the primary source of relief. While electric trams would not arrive until 1898, the city was already well-connected by railways and improved bridge access to the growing suburbs.

## Civil Rights Conditions

In 1882, the civil rights of Irish Catholics in Cork City were in a state of transition. While the most oppressive Penal Laws had been repealed decades earlier through Catholic Emancipation in 1829, significant social, economic, and political inequalities remained. Catholics could vote and hold most public offices, but the franchise was still tied to property ownership, which disproportionately excluded the poorer Catholic majority. 1882 was a peak year for political agitation. The Irish Parliamentary Party, led by Charles Stewart Parnell, was actively campaigning for Irish self-governance (Home Rule). The Land Law (Ireland) Act 1881 had recently granted tenants some rights (the "Three Fs": Fair rent, Fixity of tenure, and Free sale), but land ownership remained largely in the hands of the Protestant minority.

## Social and Economic Conditions

Cork City had returned to being predominantly Catholic by mid-century due to migration from the countryside following the Great Famine. The Catholic Church had gained significant control over the education of Catholic children and was expanding its role in healthcare, often with the tacit approval of the British government to relieve state responsibility. Despite legal changes, Catholics often faced "informal" discrimination in professional hiring and were frequently relegated to lower-paying, unskilled labor.

# Denis Enlists in 1883 at Age 14



*A recruiting party marching through South Kerry. 2nd Battallion, Royal Munster Fusiliers, September 1903.*

Twenty years before this picture was taken Denis might have witnessed a similar party marching through Cork City.

Below are two recruiting posters from the period. Denis probably studied these posters carefully.



Beginning in 1881 the uniform was khaki with pith helmets, which are made from the very lightweight pith of a shrub which grows in India. (Also made from cork.)

The redcoat uniform was being transitioned out, especially in hot climates like India, Burma and the Sudan. Red was still worn on formal occasions.



Denis's enlistment may have taken place at a nearby police station or at an army post. Family tradition is that he walked to Tipperary and enlisted there, but that is probably just a story that grew out of the song.

Wherever it happened, once he was signed up he became a member of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, Royal Munster Fusiliers. Royal? Well, it's British, you know. Munster? That's the Province in Ireland in which the county and city of Cork are located. All the soldiers in that unit were to come from Munster. Fusiliers? Men with long guns called fusils because the barrels of those guns were rifled. Rifled? That means the barrels were deeply scored with a helical track that made the projectile spin, which made it more accurate and more deadly. Have you ever eaten fusilli?

## Brief History: The 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion Royal Munster Fusiliers 1881-1914

The Royal Munster Fusiliers traces its origins to the East India Company's Bengal European Regiment, raised in 1652, which later became the 101st Regiment of Foot (Royal Bengal Fusiliers). It was formed in 1881 by the merger of the 101st Regiment of Foot and the 104th Regiment of Foot (Bengal Fusiliers). One of eight Irish regiments raised largely in Ireland, it had its home depot in Tralee and served as the county regiment for Cork, Clare, Limerick and Kerry. At its formation the regiment comprised two regular and two militia battalions. It served in India and Burma and, in 1902, in the Second Boer War and then in the Great War. In 1922, with Irish independence, it was dissolved.

Below, the cap badge in 1881.

In 1896, after Denis had left the service, the three crowns were replaced by a standing tiger. The tiger badge was worn in South Africa and in WWI.



Also during this period Denis acquired the scars and tattoos that are later described by the U.S. Army doctors who examined him when he enlisted in the US Army at 146 Park Row in Manhattan on March 15, 1894, which he reported was his 28th birthday. Actually he was still only 24.

(It's worth noting that: 1: the Park Row location was not far from "Newspaper Row" where his future brother-in-law Charles was working for Pulitzer's *New York World*; 2: it was a Thursday, two days before St Patrick's Day; 3: he may not have known, but his birthday was 9/1/1869, making his age about 24, not 28; 4: his sister Mary would marry Charles in seven months, on 10/27/1894; 5: by this time Denis and Charles had probably met and traded stories.)

### Doctor's Reports on Enlistment

*"Personal Marks: Scar centre of forehead. Scar right side of neck. "Girl" right forearm. "F.H.C." clasped hands and shamrock ring right middle finger. forget-me-not, arrow and heart, clasped hands, rose, thistle and shamrock and girl's face left forearm. Scar back left hand. ring middle left finger. 2 scars left side of neck, one on left knee."*

The same scars and tattoos are again described and mapped six days later on March 21, 1894 by another Army surgeon at David's Island (Later Fort Slocum) near New Rochelle, New York.

*For the left forearm: "Tattoo clasped hands, heart penetrated by arrow. The words "Forget me not" and wreath below." For the right forearm: "Tattoo ballet girl." For the right wrist (forearm above): "Tattoo of clasped hands. Rose bud and letters "F.H.C."." Left wrist: "Tattoo of bracelet"*

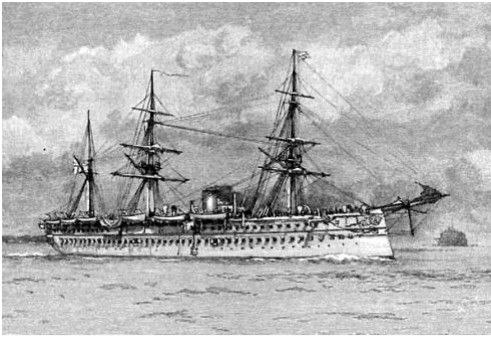
## THE JOURNEY

By air these days from Cork to Mandalay is 5,617 miles, but of course no one was flying in 1883. The Wright brothers wouldn't even make their first flight until 20 years later on December 17 1903. So Denis made his journey by steamship or actually by a number of different steamships.

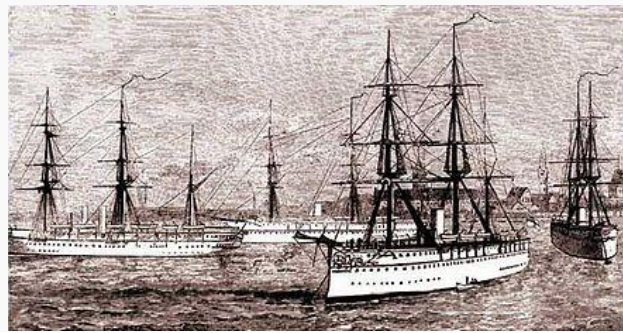
In 1866 the British Navy built five troop carrier ships which they designated as Euphrates Class. They were used primarily to transfer men to and from India. Designed with a draft suitable for passing through the Suez Canal, which was to open in 1869, they were the Jumna, the Serapis, the Euphrates, the Malabar and the Crocodile. In 1883 and again in 1892 Denis was almost certainly transported on one or more of these ships.

Designed to carry an entire [battalion](#) of infantry, the ships were magnificent barque-rigged steamers of considerable size and speed, able to reduce the duration of the voyage significantly, but perhaps more importantly, able to eliminate the uncertainty in the time needed to make the long journey round the Cape of Good Hope at the south end of Africa.

Powered by coal and sail, they were each 360 feet long and 49 feet wide and could cruise at 20 knots per hour (28 kilometers per hour or about 17.4 miles per hour).



*The Jumna*



*Jumna, Malabar and Euphrates at Bombay c.1880.*  
The vessel on the extreme left is HMS *Orontes*

## THE BAY OF BISCAY

We don't know what ship Denis left England on, but his first challenge in about 1885 would be surviving the trip south to Gibraltar, with the unpredictable weather of the Bay of Biscay. Fifteen years earlier the Crocodile had been caught in a 3 day hurricane as described below.



The Crocodile Indian Troop-Ship In A Storm, 1870.

*Illustrated London News* engraving of a sketch by Staff Commander N. G. Arguimbau, R.N., of H.M.S. Crocodile

These comments were written by the editors of The *Illustrated London News*, 1870.

"...in a heavy sea, in the Bay of Biscay, during the great storm of three days in January last. The Crocodile, under the command of Captain J. W. Watson, left Portsmouth on the morning of the 6th, having on board 57 officers, 14 ladies, 1012 men, 212 women and children -- in all, 1578 souls, including the officers and crew of the ship. At starting the weather looked threatening, with a fresh breeze from the south, which steadily increased until the morning of the 8th, about six o'clock, when the gale reached its utmost fury. At this time the sea was tremendous, and had an appearance of terrific grandeur; the waves at times seeming...as if about to overwhelm the ship. The vessel constantly rolled 44 degrees., dipping her lifeboats into the water on both sides...The ship lay-to for sixteen hours, under easy steam and storm-sails. The tempest was thus weathered, without any serious accident, and on the morning of the 9th the wind veered to come from the north, and the ship resumed her course. The weather was fine during the remainder of the voyage to Alexandria". From *Illustrated London News*, 1870.

One can imagine that everyone, men, women and children, feared for their lives and were seriously seasick as the overcrowded ship rolled and pitched for 3 days.

Complaints regarding HMS Crocodile's experience and its sister troopships were raised in Parliament concerning overcrowding and the safety of the soldiers and families being transported to India. Critics in the House of Commons argued that carrying over 1,500 people (including roughly 1,000 soldiers) on a single vessel was hazardous, especially during the volatile winter months in the Bay of Biscay. Following the Crocodile's near-disaster and the subsequent total loss of the similarly designed *HMS Captain* later in 1870, questions were raised about the high center of gravity and rolling tendencies of these iron-hulled ships. There were debates regarding whether the government's push for efficiency in troop transport was compromising the safety of military personnel and their families.

## GIBRALTAR

**Malaria Infection, Scars and Tattoos:** Once Denis reached the Mediterranean Sea he became vulnerable to contracting malaria and at some point during his years of service he did actually contract that disease. In later years malaria was usually noted by his doctors in their reports.



Gibraltar, a British territory since 1713, takes its name from Tariq ibn Ziyad who with his army crossed from North Africa in April 711 ce. Tariq's expedition led to the Islamic conquest of most of the Iberian Peninsula. His conquest left a long-lasting legacy for the rock: it was renamed the Mount of Tariq, or, in Arabic, *Jebel Tariq*, which was subsequently corrupted into *Gibraltar*. Known as "The Rock of Gibraltar," it is one of the largest monoliths in the world.

The Strait of Gibraltar is approximately 8 to 9 miles wide at its narrowest point between Point Marroquí in Spain and Point Cires in Morocco. It is about 36 miles long, connecting the Atlantic Ocean to the Mediterranean Sea.

At Gibraltar Denis's ship might have taken on fuel (coal) and food but no water. Gibraltar had no water to spare. In modern times it relies on desalinization. Some troops might have been disembarked or taken on board.

Denis's journey would then continue through the 36 mile Strait of Gibraltar into the Mediterranean Sea and across the southern coast of Spain to a left turn north to Malta.

## MALTA



Steamship at Valletta harbour, Malta, circa 1880, mobbed by many "bumboats."



Scottish Division Royal Artillery, Malta, 1884. Possibly at the Vendome Tower in Marsaxlokk Village. Denis might have run in to these lads while he was at Malta. The keg on the left reads "This is what saved us." (Sarah Lautier posted this image on FaceBook, 4/14/2024: "Just found this old photo in an old suitcase." she says.)



**Trooping the Colour.** A traditional, elaborate ceremony to honor the Queen's birthday. About 200 British Troops, with at least 3 mounted officers, assembled on St. George's Square, Valletta, in 1899, facing the *Guardia della Piazza* on the right, which was originally built as a guardhouse in 1603 by the Order of St. John, Knights Hospitaller, and remained in use after the British took over Malta in 1800. The Grandmaster's Palace is out of frame on the left. The group in the center is a band, with its Drum Major holding the mace in the "Halt" position. That position of the mace indicates that the band was silent when this picture was taken. A bass drum is also visible. (The name of the unit pictured was not identified.)

While at Malta Denis might have participated in this ceremony 13 years earlier.

Then through the Mediterranean Sea straight east for 2271 nautical miles to Port Said, Egypt, at the north end of the Suez Canal.



**Port Said 1869: The opening ceremony of the Suez Canal at Port Said in Egypt. The city of Port Said was established on the Mediterranean coast in 1859, when construction began on the new canal.**

(Photo by Otto Herschan Collection/Hulton Archive/Getty Images)

Then a right turn and south for 120 miles through the canal to Suez at the south end. (The canal was opened in 1869. In 1883 it was owned jointly by England and France.)



**Nr 95; Transport Crocodil passant le Chantier VI.  
(No. 95 Transport Crocodil passing worksite VI)**

Denis might have been a passenger on the HMS Crocodile, shown here on the Suez Canal, circa 1886. Note sunshade awnings. This ship and its four sister ships, each about 360 feet long, were built to carry about 1200 troops and their families, an additional 600 persons, plus preserved and fresh food: bullocks, cows, pigs, chickens, etc. to be slaughtered, cooked and eaten along the way. The voyage to India took about 27 - 35 days. (Add a few days for Rangoon, Burma.) Temperatures were regularly in the 90s. Bathing was done with seawater.

Photo: Zangaki. Source: Museums Victoria, Australia. Public Domain <https://collections.museumsvictoria.com.au/items/1772440>

Then south into the Gulf of Suez for 195 miles and then into the Red Sea and south again for 1400 miles to the Bab-al-Mandab Strait.

This Google Earth photo-map shows the entire Arabian Peninsula with the Bab-al-Mandab Strait (The Gate of Tears, 20 miles wide and 70 miles long) at the red pin near the bottom and Suez and the canal near the top left. (Also shown is the Strait of Hormuz on the right, which is currently (March 2026) getting a lot of attention, but was of little concern when Denis cruised by because ships and the world were still using coal and had little interest in petroleum. )



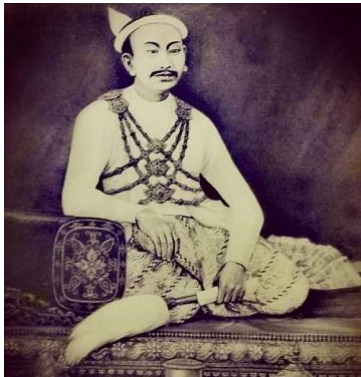
Once through Bab-al-Mandab, Denis's ship from there would take a left turn and cruise east approximately 5660 miles through the Gulf of Aden, past the Horn of Africa, into the Arabian Sea and then across the Indian Ocean to Rangoon, Burma, which since June 18 1989 is called Yangon, Myanmar.



At Rangoon the troops would be transferred from the large steamships to shallow draft paddle-wheelers for the trip up the Irrawaddy River to Mandalay. A mere 445 miles.

The British had already taken over much of the country in two earlier Burmese Wars.

From November 7<sup>th</sup> to 29<sup>th</sup> 1885, -- 22 days -- (The Third Burmese War) the British won surrender, exiled the Burmese Royal Family to India and made Burma part of British India. Then they treated the Royal Palace as a "prize" and looted it.



King Mindon Min



Queen Dowager Hsinbyumashin



King Thibaw Min

## Queen Hsinbyumashin Organizes the Murder of all the Rivals

First, on 13 February 1879, five royal relatives were killed.

Then, on 15 February 1879, Maung Maung Toke and six other confidants, accompanied by 400 soldiers, removed the royal prisoners who had been confined prior to King [Mindon Min](#)'s death..

Nineteen members of the royal family were executed that day.

On the following night, another nineteen were killed, some by having their throats crushed with bamboo poles and others by the sword. The decision to kill them by crushing their throats with bamboo poles was made to prevent royal blood from falling on the ground.

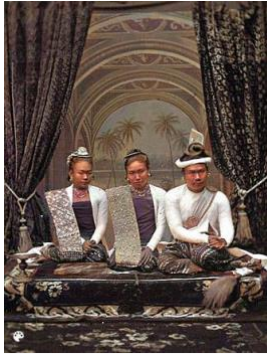
The bodies of the princes and princesses, enclosed in red velvet bags, were interred in a pit. To compact the burial ground, elephants were used to trample the earth.

During the time of the massacre, the new king and queen were watching a traditional court troupe perform a drama in the palace, and they did not notice what was happening because of the noise from the performance.

King Thibaw learned of the case from a report by his mother, [Laungshe Mibaya](#), at the royal parliament on 18 February 1879, and ordered the release of the remaining five princes.

## Burma Timeline

849 - 1297 Bagan Dynasty  
1044 - 1211 Golden Age of Burma  
1277 - 1301 Mongol Invasions  
1510 - 1752 Toungoo Dynasty  
1752 Konbaung Dynasty begins in Burma  
7/8/1808 Mindon Min born. He lives 70 years, until 1878  
1824-1826 First Anglo-Burmese War  
1852-1853 Second Anglo-Burmese War  
2/18/1853 Mindon Min, age 45, becomes king for 25 years until 1878  
1/1/1859 Prince Thibaw Min born  
8/2/1866 Palace coup fails. Prince Kanaung murdered  
1878 King Mindon Min dies. Age 70  
2/13, 15 and 17 1879 70 - 100 Thibaw rivals murdered by King Mindon's wife, the Dowager Queen  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1879\\_massacre\\_at\\_Mandalay\\_Palace#Background](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1879_massacre_at_Mandalay_Palace#Background)  
1879 Thibaw king, age 20  
1885 Third Anglo-Burmese war. End of Konbaung Dynasty. Thibaw exiled to India.  
12/16/1916 Thibaw dies in exile in India, age 57 of diabetes



**Thibaw Min** (1/1/1859 – 12/19/1916), shown here with his two wife/queens, was the last king of the Konbaung dynasty of Burma (Myanmar) and also the last in Burmese history. His reign ended when Burma was defeated by the forces of the British Empire in the Third Anglo-Burmese War, on 11/29/1885, prior to its official annexation on 1/1/1886.

After abdicating the throne, Thibaw, his wife Supayalat and two infant daughters were exiled to Ratnagiri, India, a port city off the Arabian Sea. Supayalat (12/13/1859 – 11/24/1925) was the last queen of Burma. She reigned in Mandalay from 1878 to 1885.

When an army needs to cross a river:



[http://www.old-print.com/mas\\_assets/full2/M1321885/M1321885445.jpg](http://www.old-print.com/mas_assets/full2/M1321885/M1321885445.jpg) Wayback Machine

Denis's family in Cork might have seen these front page newspaper illustrations.

Foreign Postage

283

# THE ILLUSTRATED LONDON NEWS

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No. 2419.—VOL. LXXVIII.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 16, 1886.

WITH EXTRA SUPPLEMENT SIXPENCE

## THE EXPEDITION TO UPPER BURMA



THE KING OF BURMA



MR. T. BURNARD, CHIEF COMMISSIONER OF BURMA, AND HIS SECRETARY



THE KING AND HIS SECRETARY



WAGGONS FOUND IN THE GREAT PALACE AT MADAGASCAR.



# THE GRAPHIC

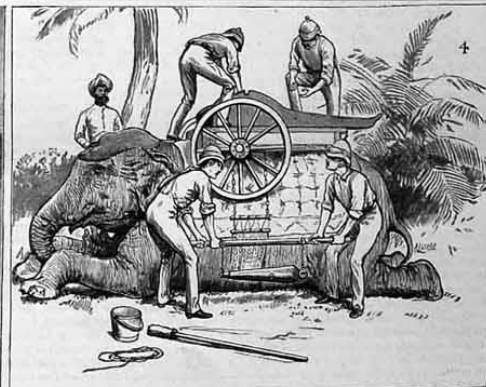
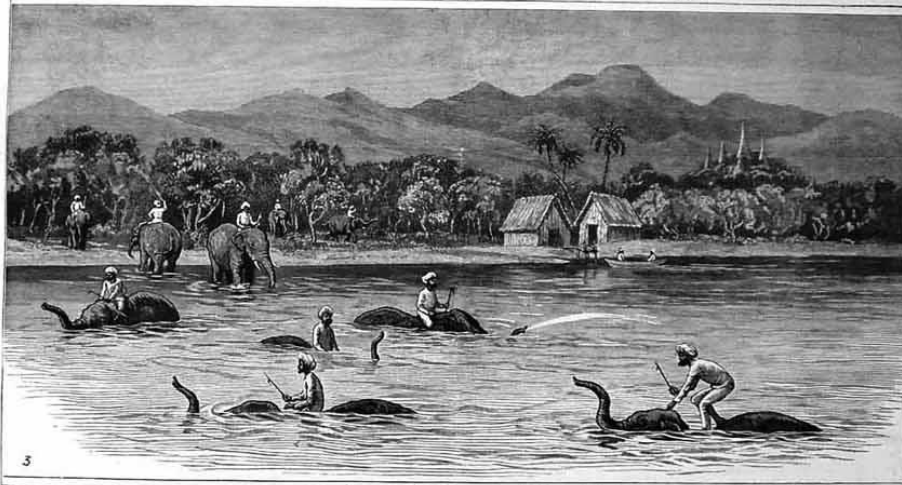
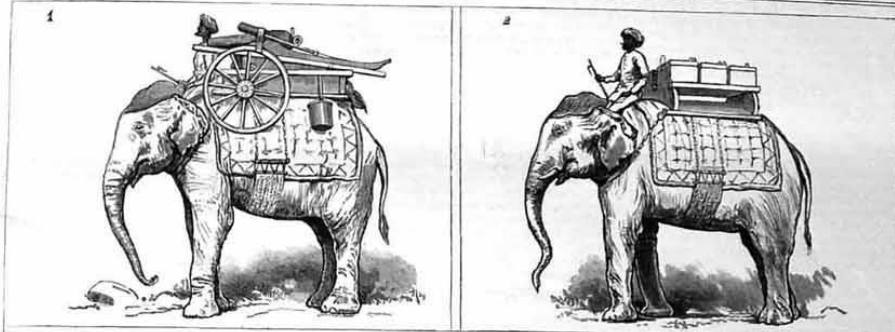
AN ILLUSTRATED WEEKLY NEWSPAPER

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SATURDAY, OCTOBER 24, 1885

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SUPPLEMENTS

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1. Gun Elephant      2. Ammunition Elephant      3. Swimming Drill      4. Mounting a Gun      5. Marching Order  
THE CRISIS IN BURMA—AN ELEPHANT BATTERY AT TONGO, EASTERN INDIA



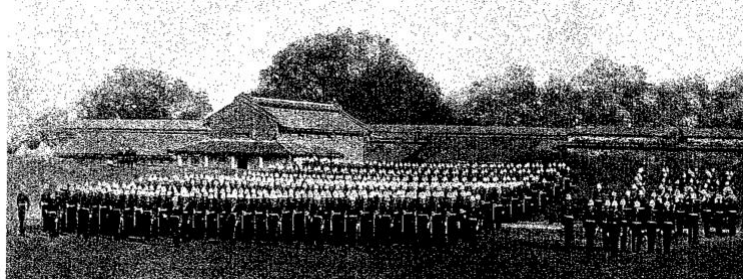
"Portrait of a Burmese woman, ca 1891, traditionally dressed in a patterned silk 'longyi' or wrap-around skirt. Her hair is worn up and she stands against a back-cloth painted with a forest scene. Leaves are scattered around her feet and she holds a 'cheroot' (a type of cigar). Original photo: sepia. Sagaing, Burma (Myanmar), c1891. (Colorized.)

The three documents and images below were obtained by Allen when he visited the National Archives in London. They all presumably relate to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Bn RMF, though some are not labeled. I have supplied the captions you see here based on that presumption.

### Sixteen Officers of the Battalion.



The Battalion drawn up for review, possibly "Trooping the Colours" at Kamptee (Camp T) in India. Note the officers and band on the right. This ceremony typically includes the battalion "passing in review," i.e. marching, with the band playing, past the assembled officers and dignitaries. Denis, a private, would have been in the large group of soldiers.



Assignment of the Burma Service Medal. This document, which is one page from a multipage document, shows Denis's name on a list of men who received the medal. The quality of the image is very poor but it does show Denis's name clearly and his service number, 1801. (Which looks like 8801, but on enlargement can be seen to be 1801.) I have found that same number, 1801, on other documents for Denis.

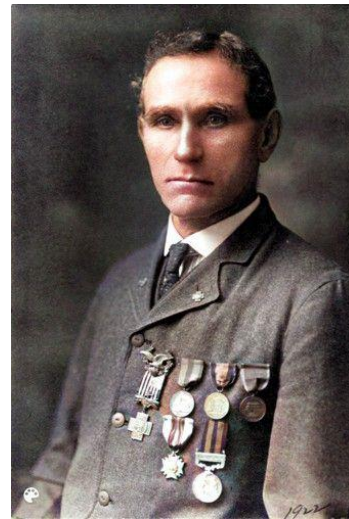
Note that there were four other Heals in the Battalion.



## The Burma Service Medal.



Denis at age 53 in 1922. The medal lowest on his chest is the Burma Service Medal. The two closeups of the medal are not of his actual medal (which is in Oregon in the care of Randy Young) but have been taken from the web. Perhaps Denis was wearing his medals that day to celebrate July 4<sup>th</sup> or Armistice Day on November 11<sup>th</sup>. (Which we now call Veterans Day.) He may also have been celebrating the establishment of the Irish Free State, which occurred in 1922. The other three round medals (brass) were issued by the U.S. for his US Navy service in Cuba, China and the Phillipines. The last two were issued by private organizations: the VFW (Veterans of Foreign Wars) and, the one with the eagle, the VSAW (Veterans of the Spanish American War).



"A History of the Battalion" (below) was included as Chapter VIII in a larger work for which we do not have the main title, the author or the date. This history was evidently drawn from official UK documents but is not exhaustive. It begins with the creation of the battalion in 1881 and ends at about 1904, after the Boer War. The battalion was later dissolved in 1922 when Ireland won its independence from the United Kingdom.

Denis, per Rudyard Kipling, was a "*ten year soldier*," a volunteer who would typically serve on active duty for four years and then six years at home in the militia, or reserves. Once home in Cork he went on to New York in 1892 with his sisters Mary and Kate.

The battalion history covering the period from 1881 to 1891 is shown below. It was transcribed from rather poor photocopies made for Allen at the National Archives in London.

## GLOSSARY

(Notes that might help one understand the words and names in this history.)

**A.D.C:** Aide de Camp (to the Queen). In this case an honorary title, though it may have carried with it a monetary award..

**Aldershot (Military Town):** a garrison town in England between Aldershot and North Camp.

**Bob Shevayan:** a notorious dacoit. His band was responsible for the death of Lieutenant Williamson, whose sword was found on the dead body of Shevayan.

**Bobbery pack:** originating in India about 1800, a collection of non-breed, mixed breed, mongrel dogs used for hunting mid-sized prey (up to wounded tigers). The term derives from an Indian phrase. The custom persists to the current day in the United Kingdom.

**Breastwork:** a temporary fortification, often an earthwork thrown up to breast height to provide protection to defenders firing over it from a standing position.

**Brevet Rank:** A commission nominally promoting an officer to a higher honorary rank without higher pay but, sometimes, with greater authority and responsibility.

**Cholera:** A highly infectious, usually fatal disease spread by contact with infected human fecal matter, often in unboiled drinking water. This history refers to 13 cholera deaths in the battalion headquarters from November 2<sup>nd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> 1886.

**Curragh:** A flat open plain of 5,000 acres of common land in Newbridge, County Kildare. There has been a permanent military presence in the curragh since 1856. It is now home to the Defence Forces Training Centre of the Irish Defence Forces.

**Dacoit:** a bandit. Dacoits sometimes acted as insurgents and "Robin Hoods," sharing their loot with the poor.

**Flats:** Shallow draft vessels with no steam engines or sails. Flats were attached to the sides of steam powered paddle boats for increased efficiency in transporting cargo.



**Fusil, Fusiliers:** Men with long guns called fusils because the barrels of those guns were rifled. Rifled? That means the barrels were deeply scored with a helical track that made the projectile spin, which made it more accurate and more deadly. Have you ever eaten fusilli?

**GCB:** The Knight Grand Cross of the Order of the Bath (GCB) is the highest rank in the Most Honourable Order of the Bath, a British order of chivalry founded in 1725. It is awarded to senior military officers and civil servants for exceptional service, often involving senior ranks like Rear Admiral, Major General, or Air Vice Marshal. Recipients are knighted if they are not already, allowing the use of "Sir" or "Dame".



**Gymkhana:** A day of informal competitions for entertaining the troops and demonstrating equestrian skills. (Think of “field days in elementary school or the annual review parties put on by the 226<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery Battalion in Brooklyn that Harry, Jim and I belonged to and the whole family attended.)

**Indian Mutiny:** (also called Sepoy Mutiny or First War of Independence) widespread but unsuccessful rebellion against British rule in India in 1857–59. Hundreds of thousands died.

**Insurgent:** a person who rises in forcible opposition to lawful authority, especially a person who engages in armed resistance to a government or to the execution of its laws; a rebel.

**SS Irrawaddy:** a famous iron paddle steamer (1873 - 1913) shown here anchored along the shore of the Irrawaddy River. It was built in Glasgow and reassembled in Rangoon.



**Kingstown:** built about 1816 as a major port for Dublin. Known as Dunleary until renamed Kingstown in honour of King [George IV](#)'s 1821 visit. In 1920 it was renamed: Laoghaire.

**Lime cutting:** a gymkhana activity in which (perhaps) horsemen ride by a swinging lime and attempt to slice it with their swords.

**Nullah:** a small steep-sided valley, overgrown with rough brushwood or small trees. During occasional heavy rains, torrents rush down the nullah and quickly disappear. There is little erosion of the sides, while the bed is lowered, and consequently these valleys are narrow and steep. Compare: dry wash, arroyo.

**Picquet:** Variant, archaic spelling of *picket*. In the military context, an outlying guard or sentry.

**Pith Helmet:** A hat made from plant materials worn for sun protection.

**Pretender:** Someone who claims to be the rightful ruler of a country although not recognized as such by the current government. Often used to suggest that a claim is not legitimate. May refer to a former monarch or a descendant of a deposed monarch.

**Ranks:** Commissioned officers (lieutenants and up). Non-commissioned officers were corporals and sergeants.

**Sepoy:** An Indian soldier in the British Indian Army. The term *sepoy* came into common use in the forces of the British East India Company in the 1700s. Initially it referred to Hindu or Muslim soldiers without regular uniforms or discipline. It later generically referred to all native soldiers in the service of the European powers in India. Close to ninety-six percent of the British East India Company's army of 300,000 men were Indians. Sepoys played a crucial role in securing the subcontinent for the company.



**Right:** An early 20th century sepoy.

**Shan States:** A group of small states in north Burma with their own minor kings. some claiming a history back as far as 58 bce, some under the influence of China. Theebaw, the name of the deposed king of Burma, was also the name of one of the Shan States.

**Sowar:** 'The one who rides' in Persian. Originally a rank during the Mughal period (1526 - 1761). Later during the British Raj it was the name in Anglo-Indian usage for a horse-soldier in the native armies of British India and the feudal states. It is also used more specifically of a mounted orderly, escort or guard. It was also the rank held by ordinary cavalry troopers, equivalent to Sepoy in the infantry. This rank has been inherited by the modern armies of India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh.

**Sutlej Campaign:** The First Anglo-Sikh War, 1845-1846

**Tent pegging:** A gymkhana activity. A [cavalry](#) sport of ancient origin, (4<sup>th</sup> Century BCE), one of only ten [equestrian](#) disciplines officially recognised by the [International Equestrian Federation](#). Narrowly, a specific mounted game with ground targets. Broadly, the entire class of games involving pointed and edged weapons (lance and sword) on horseback, for which the term "equestrian skill-at-arms" is also used.

**Turk's head:** A gymkhana activity in which (perhaps) horsemen rode past a swinging straw "*turk*" and attempted to decapitate it with their swords.

V. C. Indicates that the person to whose name these initials are attached is a recipient of the Victoria Cross, which is the highest and most prestigious award possible and is awarded for valor "in the presence of the enemy".



#### BATTALION HISTORY

The following history does not mention Denis Healy. His activities as a fusilier, or infantryman, would have been mostly marching, sitting in boats or trains or just sitting and waiting. Caring for his rifle and uniform would have been an almost constant activity. Once in a while he would have been selected as part of a group given a specific task to guard, investigate or attack something. He would not have been digging ditches, peeling potatoes or doing similar kinds of labor. Those jobs would have been performed by Indian or Burmese laborers.

## 2<sup>nd</sup> BATTALION THE ROYAL MUNSTER FUSILIERS. CHAPTER VIII

The Regiment proceeds to England---Reorganization of the Army---H.M. 201<sup>st</sup> and 204<sup>th</sup> Regiments become the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalions of the "Royal Munster Fusiliers"---The 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion proceeds to Malta, and India ---Burmese War, 1885-87---Battalion returns to India---South African War, 1899-1902---Battalion proceeds to Ireland.

On July 1st 1881 the organization of the army was very greatly altered. The following extract from G. O. 41 shows the principal changes:---

"Paragraph II. Organization.--- Infantry of the line and Militia will in future be organized in Territorial Regiments, each of 4 battalions for England, Scotland, and Wales, and of five battalions for Ireland: the 1st and 2nd of these being Line Battalions and the remainder Militia. These regiments will bear a territorial designation corresponding to their localities. . ."

Under the foregoing order the Regiment lost its numerical designation and ceased to be "The 104th Bengal Fusiliers," and the following became its title, "The 2nd Battalion the Royal Munster **Fusiliers**," with Tralee as the Regimental District Headquarters.

On September 9<sup>th</sup> 1881 the Battalion moved from the **Curragh** to Enniskillen, and on December 6<sup>th</sup> 1881 to **Kingstown**, and embarked in the *Assistance* for Portsmouth *en route* for **Aldershot**. (*HMS Assistance* was an iron screw ship launched in 1874 and sold in 1897 when it was being used as a storeship. DFJ)

In consequence of trouble in Egypt in 1882 the battalion was sent to Malta on garrison duty, arriving there on August 1<sup>st</sup> 1882. A detachment of two officers and 213 other ranks under Captain M. Short was left at Aldershot. After being attached to various corps at that station, it became part of a provisional battalion formed at Colchester.

In January, 1883, the Battalion was under orders to return to England, but these were cancelled, and on March 4<sup>th</sup>, 1884, the Battalion embarked for India, arriving at Bombay on March 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1884 and proceeded by rail to **Kamptee**, joining the Napore Force. It was warned for active service with the force detailed to proceed to Quetta in 1885, but the order was cancelled.

[During the Third Burmese War, in November 1885, Denis and the RMF were at Kamptee in India (from 3/24/1884 – 10/6/1886, two years and six months).

While Denis was in Kamptee, King Theebaw and Queen Supayalat in Mandalay were deposed and were exiled to Ratnagiri in India. Here we see them being assisted in boarding a ship at night that would take them down the Irrawaddy on the first leg to India. DFJ]



alamy stock photo

In September 1886 the RMF joined the Upper Burma Field Force, which was dealing with insurgents after the two-week war in November 1885 which had resulted in the surrender of the Burmese King and Queen and their exile to India.

This force numbered 9,034 British men, 2,810 native followers and 67 guns under Major General Sir Harry North Dalrymple Prendergast, VC, GCB (10/15/1834–7/24/1913). In 1888 the Battalion returned to India. (DFJ)



The Battalion received orders to proceed to Upper Burma on August 14<sup>th</sup>, 1886. The right half, under Lieut.-Colonel H. J. Woodward, moved from Kamptee on September 18<sup>th</sup> 1886 *en route* for Madras for embarkation. Headquarters and the left half leaving on September 19<sup>th</sup>, 1886. The battalion embarked for Rangoon in the *Venetia* on September 28<sup>th</sup>; 1886, strength---17 officers, 864 other ranks; disembarked on October 6<sup>th</sup>, 1886 and reembarked in the steamer *Irrawaddy* and two *flats*, and proceeded upstream to Myingyan; disembarked there on October 17<sup>th</sup> 1886; detachments were stationed at Natogyi, Meiktila, Mahlaing, Yetagyo. There was an outbreak of *cholera* at Headquarters from November 2<sup>nd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> 1886: 13 deaths occurred. The Battalion was inspected on November 14<sup>th</sup>, 1886 by His Excellency Sir F. Roberts, V.C.

A column under Lieut.-Colonel Woodward from Welaung, including 36 rifles from the Battalion, attacked and carried at the point of the bayonet a strong position at Myingyan; Battalion casualties, 1 killed. 1 wounded.

Early in December 1886 the Battalion furnished the following detachment: mounted infantry, 25 men under Lieutenant H. F. Williams, 30 rifles from Meiktila under Lieutenant R. C. Boyle, 30 rifles under Lieutenant A. F. Mann, to a column under Captain Rose of the 27th Punjab Infantry, which concentrated about 60 miles south of Mandalay, near Wundwin. On December 11<sup>th</sup> 1886 the column crossed the Samoon River, the Royal Munster Fusiliers forming the advanced guard, and attacked and burnt many villages, with a loss of 2 men killed, 1 officer and 26 men wounded; the Royal Munster Fusiliers had no casualties

On February 14<sup>th</sup>, 1887, the post at Welaung was attacked. Lieutenant R. Flennell was in command, with 22 rifles Royal Munster Fusiliers, 35 rifles mounted infantry. The attack commenced at 10 p.m. and continued till 2 a.m. on February 15<sup>th</sup> 1887; the enemy was beaten off, but Lieutenant Flennell was dangerously wounded in the head.

On February 21<sup>st</sup>, 1887 the celebrations in connection with the jubilee of Her Majesty Queen Victoria were carried out. The Battalion was ordered to concentrate at Myingyan and proceed to Mandalay.

Station order No. 2, dated March 19<sup>th</sup>, 1887 Myingyan, reads as follows:

The Royal Munster Fusiliers leave the 4<sup>th</sup> brigade today on transfer to Mandalay. The corps since its arrival in Burma has been scattered about in small detachments in this command and has done excellent service wherever employed. On expeditions the men have conducted themselves well and their bearing towards the natives has been good; not a complaint has been made against them. The Battalion has not had many opportunities of meeting the enemy; perhaps the Burmans consider a distant view of this splendid body of men sufficient. The Brigadier wishes Colonel Stokes, the officers, non-commissioned officers and men a hearty farewell, and hopes that good luck may attend them in their future career.

(Sd.) H. S. Anderson, Brig.-General,  
"4<sup>th</sup> Brigade, Upper Burma Fieldforce."

The Battalion left on March 19<sup>th</sup>, 1887 and arrived at Myinmu on March 20<sup>th</sup>, 1887 disembarked Lieutenant R. G. Le F. Williamson and 40 other ranks for Magyiok; arrived at Ava at 4:00 p.m. on March 21<sup>st</sup>, 1887 and disembarked Major W. L. Brereton,

Lieutenant J. O'B. Minogue and 77 other ranks for Yewun; arrived at Sagaing, disembarked Captain P. T. Chute and 43 other ranks; and arrived at Mandalay at 3 p.m. on March 23<sup>rd</sup>. 1887. The Battalion marched through the city to Mandalay Hill; detachments were sent to Yewun, Myobingie, Nyagan.

Major Brereton's detachment surprised the camp of the Sukyamin *pretender* on August 11<sup>th</sup>, 1887, eighteen miles north of Mengyi, killed the pretender's chief officer and many others (33 dead counted), took 4 standards, 9 ponies, 2 guns; casualties, 1 Royal Munster Fusilier killed.

At the end of September 1887 the Battalion casualties were 78 non-commissioned officers and men killed in action, died of disease, and drowning.

The northern Shan column was at Theebaw [one of the *Shan states*] on December 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1887; the officers attended a dance at the [Theebaw State's] King's Palace; on December 26<sup>th</sup> 1887. There was a parade and march-past for the King, [of Theebaw State] followed by a *gymkhana*, the first ever held in these parts; it excited extraordinary interest among the natives, and finished with an officer's competition. Major Yates, R.F.A., winning the lime cutting and tent pegging, and Lieutenant C. E. Spearman the Turk's head. The column was out for three and a half months, and marched over 675 miles.

On January 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1888, the battalion won a prize of 300 rupees in a rifle competition open to all troops in Burma.

On May 5<sup>th</sup> 1888 Lieutenant R. G. Le F. Williamson, with a small party, left the village he was occupying for patrol work. The report of a disaster having occurred was circulated shortly afterwards, and on May 11<sup>th</sup> 1888 a telegram was received at headquarters from Captain Knot on special duty in the Ava district, that he had proceeded with troops in search of the position where Lieutenant Williamson's

engagement was reported to have taken place. After six hours search the dacoit's camp was found in dense jungle; the bodies of all those killed were found un mutilated, and were recovered and buried on May 12<sup>th</sup> 1888. The position was found in a **nullah**, a mile from the place formerly indicated, and no breastworks were found; the officer and men were killed outright. It appeared that the small party attacked a camp of over 100 dacoits in dense jungle, driving in their outlying picquets, and getting possession of their main camp, where the bodies of Mr O'Dowda (police inspector) and two Royal Munster Fusiliers privates were found. Lieutenant Williamson's body was lying near the entrance to the camp in the nullah, and close by were the bodies of two dacoit chiefs whom he had apparently shot while retiring. The dacoits appeared to have left their camp very hurriedly.

Medals and clasps for Burma, 1885-87, were presented to the Battalion on parade by Brigadier General Sir R. Low, **K.C.B., A.D.C.**, on June 13<sup>th</sup>; 1888 and on the 19<sup>th</sup>, at a full parade of the troops in garrison. Corporal R. Hale was presented with the Royal Humane Society's medal for saving the life of a **sepoy** in the Mandalay moat.

On June 25<sup>th</sup>, 1888 Lieutenant Minogue with a detachment of the Battalion came on a body of dacoits near Lipagyin, led by the famous **Bob Sheveyan**, who were attacked at once and dispersed; they lost 10 men, including Sheveyan; the sword of the late Lieutenant Williamson was found on his body. The reward of R53,000 offered by the civil authorities for the capture of Sheveyan was paid to the officer and men of the party. Casualties-- Sergeant Farrell severely and one **sowar** slightly wounded.

About this time a very handsome side drum which had been ordered by Lieutenant Colonel Stokes on his promotion to a full colonelcy arrived, and was handed over to Drummer Pethericks, "D" Company, who was the Colonel's bugler when he commanded that company. A silver plate states: --- Presented to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion Royal Munster Fusiliers by Lieutenant Colonel M. F. Stokes, Mandalay, 1887. [??? Why 1887? Did it take a year to arrive? DFJ]

The battalion received orders to proceed to India. It was relieved by the Norfolk Regiment, who were played in on November 17<sup>th</sup> 1888 by the Royal Munster Fusiliers band, and on the 19<sup>th</sup>, in clouds of dust, was cheered on its way by the bands of the Norfolk, 16<sup>th</sup> and 32<sup>nd</sup> Madras Infantry Regiments, and was accompanied to the steamer by Major-General Sir George White, V.C., and Staff, where it was formed up; he made a farewell speech praising the manner in which all ranks had behaved during the operations in upper Burma, and hoped that he would meet the Battalion again on service.

Of the old 104<sup>th</sup> Bengal Fusiliers who had embarked with the regiment for England in November 1871, the following [14 men out of 525. DFJ] only were left to embark with it for Bengal-- Colonel M. F. Stokes, Major R Holbeche, Captain J. Liptrott, Sergeant-Major Steptoe, Colour-Serjeants W. Reilley, M. Fannin, Serjeant E. Brock, Corporals J. Wood, J. Penny, Privates J O'Laughlin, J. Taylor, W. Keys, T. Biddlecombe, and R. Richards, all that was left of 25 officers and 500 men. [511 did not return because of death, injury, disease or other reasons, or they just did not reenlist. DFJ]

The campaign in Burma was not one of great battles, but it was one that called for the best qualities of the soldier -- perseverance, endurance, and unremitting attention to duty. The work entailed in dispersing bands of dacoits was a very hard one, particularly during the rains, when a great part of the district was under water.

The battalion arrived at Rangoon on November 26<sup>th</sup> 1888, strength -- 17 officers, 40 serjeants, 687 privates. Since October 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1886, the Battalion lost Lieutenants Bennett and Williamson, and 108 men.

Calcutta was reached on December 1<sup>st</sup> 1888; the left half of the Battalion, under Major Holbeche, arrived at Sharjahanpore on December 6<sup>th</sup>, 1888 and Headquarters and the right half at Barcilly the same day.

The following year the Battalion was stationed at Chaubuttia, Bareilly, and Shahjahanpore. Whilst at these stations a bobbery pack of hounds was kept by the Battalion and gave great sport at times. Major J. Croker being the Master. In December [1888] a subscription was raised for the purpose of erecting marble obelisks at Myingyanand Mahlaing to the memory of the nun-commissioned officers and men who died at those places, and for a large memorial in the cemetery at Mandalay to all those who lost their lives during the operations in Upper Burma.

By A. O. 472 of December 1<sup>st</sup>, 1889, an extension of the Indian medal of 1854 with a clasp for Burma was granted for service from May 1<sup>st</sup>, 1887, to March 31<sup>st</sup>, 1889; those already in possession of the medal were to receive an additional clasp.

In the middle of March, 1890, the Battalion was at Chaubuttia, and was inspected there by general Sir F. S. Roberts, Bart, V. C.

At this time the battalion was commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel J. H. Barnard, C. M. G., one of the ablest and most distinguished officers who have held that post. In recognition of his services and the remarkable efficiency of the Battalion he was appointed A. D. C. to Her Majesty Queen Victoria, with brevet rank of Colonel (Gazette, April 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1890). At the end of October 1890 the Battalion Headquarters and the right half of the Battalion moved to Bareilly and were joined there on December 20<sup>th</sup>, 1890 by the left half from Shahjahanpur.

On January 1<sup>st</sup>, 1891, medals and clasps for Burma 1887-1889 were presented by Brigadier General Sir R. C. Low, K. C. B.

And at the Battalion Sports on the 13<sup>th</sup> general Sir F. S. Roberts, V. C. presented the prizes.

(Pictured: His Excellency Sir F. Roberts, V. C.  
By John Singer Sargent, 1906. (DFJ) )



*(At this point in this Battalion history Denis is at the end of his enlistment and has returned home to Cork.)*

Well, what did Denis do then? Didn't he go to New York with Mary and Katie and serve in the US Army and the US Navy?

Yes, he did dear reader, but that is another story.

## APPENDIX

### U THANT



U Thant  
1/22/1909 Pantanaw, Burma -- 11/25/1974 New York  
3rd Secretary General of the United Nations, 1961 - 1971



Shwedagon Pagoda  
(Built about 1362)  
Rangoon

### The U Thant Affair

U Thant's body arrived at Rangoon's Mingaladon Airport on December 1, 1974. General Ne Win refused to grant a state funeral, reportedly out of jealousy of Thant's popularity and his past ties to the democratic government Ne Win had overthrown in 1962. The government planned to bury Thant in an ordinary public cemetery. Student activists and monks viewed this as a "venomous insult" to a national hero and demanded a burial site befitting his status, specifically near the Shwedagon Pagoda. On December 5 thousands of students and monks seized the coffin and marched to the Rangoon Arts and Sciences University campus. For six days, students held the campus, giving anti-government speeches and building a makeshift mausoleum on the site of the former Students' Union building, which Ne Win had destroyed years earlier. The government initially relented and offered a site near the Shwedagon Pagoda, but by then, student activists had already interred the body.

In the early hours of December 11, troops and police stormed the campus using armored cars and tear gas. They recovered the body, killing students who were guarding the mausoleum. The raid sparked massive riots across Rangoon. Angry crowds attacked police stations, government offices, and movie theaters. The government declared martial law and a curfew. Troops fired on protesters. The military buried the coffin in a concrete-sealed tomb at the Kandawmin Garden Mausolea near the Shwedagon Pagoda, where it remains today.

The government claimed 9 to 18 people killed, 74 wounded, and approximately 2,800 arrested. Other reports and eyewitnesses estimated much higher numbers, with some suggesting hundreds or even over 1,000 deaths, with bodies allegedly carted away in trucks and dumped in the river. All schools and universities were closed for over six months. When they reopened, the government introduced correspondence courses to keep students dispersed and prevent further organized protests.

### DAW AUNG SAN SUU KYI



at age 78 in 2019

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, former State Counselor for Myanmar. Born on June 19 1945, she was 80 in 2025. Her father, Aung San, negotiated Burma's independence from the United Kingdom in 1947, and was assassinated by his rivals in the same year. She grew up with Khin Kyi, her mother. Suu Kyi was educated in English Catholic schools for much of her childhood in Burma.

In 1991 she was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. As of early 2026, 80-year-old Daw Aung San Suu Kyi remains detained by the Myanmar military junta, serving a 27-year prison sentence. Held incommunicado in a military prison, she has not seen lawyers or family in over two years, sparking severe health concerns and rumors, though the junta claims she is in good health.

Pronunciation approximately: *Aung* like the 'own' in 'brown' – *Sahn* – *Suh* – *Chi*. Burmese mostly don't use first and last names and all syllables form one single name. However, Western media often use 'Suu Kyi' as a last name.

The prepended honorific "Daw" is not actually part of the name but is used when respectfully addressing a woman in Burma. The title is derived from the word for 'aunt', shows respect, and is mandatory. In Burmese culture names are used without a prefix only when talking to or about little children.

Burma was annexed by the British on 1 January 1886 but an ongoing insurgency carried on until 1896. With the end of the war came the men of the Royal Engineers whose job it was to build roads, bridges and fortified posts to help pacify the country and allow easy transport not only of troops but also the vast resources so coveted by the British merchants.

### An officer with the Royal Engineers wrote on the 29th December 1886 writes:

*To say that I am worked off my legs is putting it mildly. I have just completed this post, and have three more to make at the same time, and about twenty miles of hill roads, with bridges innumerable, and I find no work goes on without my personal superintendence. I have occasionally to do twenty miles in a day and then work at the other end – and this in a country where roads are not even decent bridle-paths over rocks.*

*This morning I was up at dawn and out in the road superintending coolies, then up the hill about 900ft higher than this to see arrangements for clearing jungle and preparing a site for a post; then down again for breakfast, after which I had to pay some men, and then went out to experiment with some dynamite upon rocks – work I did not much like as I had never touched the infernal stuff before.*

*Then I had to wander about looking for timber for a bridge. After this I wrote some officials, had a bath, and out upon the road again some two miles out to see how the work was getting on, and explore a stream for a suitable place for a bridge. Then I came in and handed over some money and orders to an overseer, who had come out to assist me and make arrangements for marching out tomorrow morning for a six days trip (Not a pleasure one) to posts further out and arrange for carpenters and tools to come out with me. By that time dinner was ready, and I had a cheroot before a jolly log before sitting down to write. This is much the way I spend my days. Tomorrow I'm off to a post twelve miles further in the hills, about 1,200ft higher than this; and then on next day, or as soon as I can get the work into order, to a post further on at the end of the line.*

*I got into Mandalay on Christmas day by riding six marches in three days to bring in a report on a position, and had a good dinner at the mess, which was a relief after living on compressed beef and tinned things for a fortnight. Sometimes we can get beef out here- i.e, a calf, costing about 6s. English Money; but often, as is the case now, we can't get fresh meat for love or money. However, I like the place, and plenty of work suits me.*

*Of course I have had my goes of fever; but then I have seen two doctors carried out of the post in doolies quite unable to stand. About 300 men have gone down sick (since I have been here) into Mandalay- some to die, others to be invalided to India. We have only buried about six of them here. Many a day I have dined alone, the doctor and officer commanding both down with this blessed fever.*

*However, the bad times are over, the weather is jolly and cool and thanks to five grains of quinine a day, I keep the fever off, and feel up to any amount of work. It is a lovely view from here over Mandalay and the valley of the Irrawaddy, and the jungles are pretty in their way,*

St James Gazette February 2nd 1887



**Doolie.** A covered cot, litter or stretcher made of bamboo with legs to raise it above the floor or ground. It gave protection from sun, rain and insects. It required at least two bearers. Notice the straps across the shoulders to reduce the weight on arms and hands. Invented by Surgeon J S Login, 25 Oct 1850

**KIPLING'S MANDALAY** was written in 1890 and published 1892 in a collection titled "Barrack-Room Ballads and Other Verses." That title suggests that he modeled it after songs sung in an informal manner among men relaxing in a barracks or a pub after the day's work was done. He included a repeating chorus/refrain to be sung by the audience. Those choruses are usually skipped in solo, formal performances.

A fairly complete discussion of the poem is available on Wikipedia:  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mandalay\\_\(poem\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mandalay_(poem))

However there are still a few points not examined.

Here are links to a few different renditions of the song:

1. John Roberts' rendition, with concertina by Tony Barrand, sounds to me like what Kipling intended:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vw9cJwrktn8>



2. Speaks setting:  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ovam-\\_\\_EsyE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ovam-__EsyE). Friedrich Ludovico

3. Speaks setting with some verses in different rhythms  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2N6dvVyfLbc>  
Peter Dawson - Mandalay Scena (On the road to Mandalay)

4. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mVtVbB5nmUY>  
"On The Road To Mandalay" sung by Frank Oldfield, a baritone from Canada. 1921  
Musical setting by Ole Speaks

5. With concertina, fiddle and Speaks setting. Vocal by Dave Weber  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FKOXJ9VwWtU>

Here is an interesting comment from this YouTube entry:

One of Kipling's best known and best loved works. Bellamy's setting is by no means the first, though some previous efforts have failed to reflect -- perhaps to recognise -- the strong element of pathos and underlying bitterness. "Mandalay" was inspired by the reminiscences of participants in the Third Burmese War (1885-90), ending with the overthrow of the tyrant King Thibaw. Kipling himself visited Burma in 1889, falling deeply in love (his words) with a girl sitting on the pagoda steps just as he described. The poem has also been one of many to arouse hostility. Some claim it to be patronising; a claim that simply is not supported by the text -- perhaps an instance of critics seeing what they want or expect to see. Far from patronising the East and its people, the singer genuinely craves a return to his "cleaner, greener land". Kipling is describing a clear case of acculturation, before the term was current, but it is the English soldier who is the victim, and it is Burma and the Burmese -- or at least one Burmese -- that he considers in every way superior to England and its inhabitants.

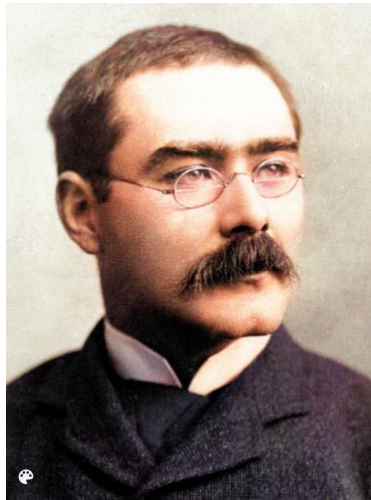
6. On the Road to Mandalay · Michael Halliwell · David Miller · Oley Speaks · No date.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yBMmQ-QcTag>

7. Peter Bellamy sings Speaks' setting with concertina. No date.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A-umbPJ9Fc>

8. Here is a video rendition of the song performed by operatic tenor Lawrence Tibbet in the film *Metropolitan* which opened at Radio City Music Hall in October 1935. It takes Speaks' formal setting and adds to it:... *acting*.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CSzXoVWjEbo>

9. And now for something completely different: a jazzy pop version from Sinatra.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jZjRy02OBPY>



Rudyard Kipling

from the biography *Rudyard Kipling* by John Palmer. 15 June 1895. Public Domain.



c1944

**ON THE ROAD TO MANDALAY**  
**Rudyard Kipling**  
**Collected in *Barrack-Room Ballads***  
**1890**

By the old Moulmein Pagoda, lookin' lazy at the sea,  
There's a Burma girl a-settin', and I know she thinks o' me;  
For the wind is in the palm-trees, and the temple-bells they say;  
"Come you back, you British soldier; come you back to Mandalay!"

Come you back to Mandalay, where the old flotilla lay;  
Can't you 'ear their paddles chunkin' from Rangoon to Mandalay?  
On the road to Mandalay, where the flyin'-fishes play,  
An' the dawn comes up like thunder outer China 'crost the bay!

'Er petticoat was yaller an' 'er little cap was green,  
An' 'er name was Supi-Yaw-Lat, jes' the same as Theebaw's Queen,  
An' I seed her first a-smokin' of a whackin' white cheroot,  
An' wastin' Christian kisses on an 'eathen idol's foot:  
Bloomin' idol made o' mud-- wot they called the Great Gawd Budd--  
**Pucky** lot she cared for idols when I kissed 'er where she stud!

On the road to Mandalay ...

When the mist was on the rice-fields an' the sun was **droppin' slow**,  
She'd git 'er little banjo an' she'd sing "Kulla-la-lo!"  
With 'er arm upon my shoulder an' 'er cheek again' my cheek  
We useter watch the steamers an' the hathis pilin' teak.  
Elephants a-piling teak in the sludgy, squdgy creek,  
Where the silence 'ung that 'eavy you was 'arf afraid to speak!

On the road to Mandalay ...

But that's all shove' be'ind me -- long ago and fur away,  
An' there ain't no 'buses runnin' from the Bank to Mandalay;  
An' I'm learnin' 'ere in London what the ten-year soldier tells:  
"If you've 'eard the East a-callin', you won't never 'eed naught else."  
No! You won't 'eed nothin' else but them spicy garlic smells,  
An' the sunshine an' the palm-trees an' the tinkly temple-bells;

On the road to Mandalay ...

I am sick 'o wastin' leather on these gritty pavin'-stones,  
An' the blasted English drizzle wakes the fever in my bones;  
Tho' I walks with fifty 'ousemaids outer Chelsea to the Strand,  
An' they talks a lot o' lovin', but wot do they understand?  
Beefy face an' grubby 'and-- Law! wot do they understand?  
I've a neater, sweeter maiden in a cleaner, greener land!

On the road to Mandalay . . .

Ship me somewheres east of Suez, where the best is like the worst,  
Where there ain't no Ten Commandments an' a man can raise a thirst;  
For the temple-bells are callin', and it's there that I would be--  
By the old Moulmein Pagoda, looking lazy at the sea;

On the road to Mandalay, Where the old Flotilla lay,  
With our sick beneath the awnings when we went to Mandalay!  
O the road to Mandalay, Where the flyin'-fishes play,  
An' the dawn comes up like thunder outer China 'crost the Bay!

---

"Lookin at the sea". One cannot see the sea from Mandalay, one can only see the Irawaddy River.

Dawn ...out of China crost the bay. But the bay is west and China and the dawn comes from the east

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saung>. (Hear the harp on this site.)  
Banjo...Burmese harp?



Wood, gold gilt, black and red lacquer, silk, cotton, mirrored glass, deer skin. Late 20th century  
Height: 33 in w/stand, Length: 31 in, Width: 6.25 in

The saung-gauk (arched harp) is the national instrument of Myanmar, and is revered as a sacred power receptacle of elegant beauty. It is played for the courts of the Burmese royalty and rituals are offered periodically to feed the believed Burmese "nats" that dwell within it. [The worship of "nats" (spirits of the trees, rivers, rocks and ancestors) preceded Buddhism in Burma, and is still practiced today, along with Buddhism.] The construction is unique with its boat-shaped resonator, traditionally made of padauk wood. The graceful, curved neck comes from the natural shape of the root (gauk) of the sha tree. Sixteen hand-twisted silk strings (the standardized number of strings in the 1960's by Alin-ga-kyaw-zwa U Ba Than) are attached with red cotton tuning cords that terminate in large tassels. The harp is decorated with gold gilt, bits of mirrored glass, and red and black lacquered paint. The top of the resonator is covered in deer skin and has four sound holes.

Resource: "Saung-gauk," Muriel C. Williamson, Gavin Douglas, John Okell, "The Grove Dictionary of Musical Instruments," 2nd ed., Vol. 4, Laurence Liben, Editor in Chief. Oxford University Press.

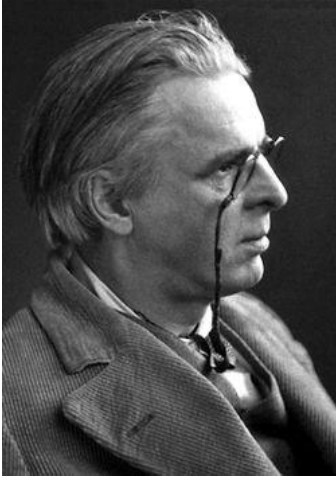
Flying fish are marine fish not riverine fish so you may see them on the way but not at Mandalay



Sick beneath awnings...oh, those glorious tropical diseases



**THANAKA:** A tree from which the white cream is made. It is used as a moisturizer and sunscreen. The coconut shell is used to catch burning ashes of rough-cut tobacco falling from the cheroot.



**William Butler Yeats**

In December 1923, Yeats was awarded the [Nobel Prize in Literature](#) "for his always inspired poetry, which in a highly artistic form gives expression to the spirit of a whole nation".<sup>[76]</sup> Politically aware, he knew the symbolic value of an Irish winner so soon after Ireland had gained independence, and highlighted the fact at each available opportunity. His reply to many of the letters of congratulations sent to him contained the words: "I consider that this honour has come to me less as an individual than as a representative of Irish literature, it is part of Europe's welcome to the Free State."<sup>[77]</sup>

## The Lake Isle of Innisfree

By William Butler Yeats. Written 1888, Published 1890.

**I will arise and go now, and go to Innisfree,  
And a small cabin build there, of clay and wattles made;  
Nine bean-rows will I have there, a hive for the honey-bee,  
And live alone in the bee-loud glade.**

**And I shall have some peace there, for peace comes dropping slow,  
Dropping from the veils of the morning to where the cricket sings;  
There midnight's all a glimmer, and noon a purple glow,  
And evening full of the linnet's wings.**

**I will arise and go now, for always night and day  
I hear lake water lapping with low sounds by the shore;  
While I stand on the roadway, or on the pavements grey,  
I hear it in the deep heart's core.**

## Sea Distance Traveled by Denis

Queenstown or Cobh (pronounced *cove*) on the southern coast of Ireland. There he boarded his first steamship, which took him probably to Southampton on the east coast of Britain, a trip of 415 nautical miles that might have taken one whole day.

to Gibraltar (a British territory since 1713) on the southern edge of Spain, a distance of 1373 nautical miles.

Then straight east for 2271 nautical miles to Port Said in Egypt at the north end of the Suez Canal. Then a right turn for 120 miles through the canal to Suez at the south end.

Then into the Gulf of Suez for 195 miles

Then into the Red Sea and south for 1400 miles to the Bab-al-Mandab Strait. From there a sharp left for approximately 5660 miles through the Gulf of Aden and the Arabian Sea and then the Indian Ocean to Rangoon, Burma, which is now called Yangon, Myanmar. At Rangoon the troops would be transferred from the large steamship to shallow draft side-wheelers for the trip up the Irrawaddy River to Mandalay. A mere 445 miles.

**415**  
**+1373=1788**  
**+2271=4059**  
**+ 120=4179**  
**+ 195=4374**  
**+1400=5774**  
**+5660=11,434**  
**+ 445=11,879nm x 1.1508sm=13,670sm**  
And then back home.

## Results of a query of UK Ministry of Defense:

FW: LAN-1773363585-Service Record Request-Army (including Territorial & Army Emergency Reserve)

Mar 17, 2026, 3:51 AM (2 days ago)

APC-Sp-ADPMRApplications-Army@mod.uk <APC-Sp-

ADPMRApplicationsArmy@mod.uk>

Dear Dennis F Jensen

Service Enquiries - First World War or Earlier

Subject: Denis Healy

Thank you for your request, I am treating your correspondence as a request for information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA).

A search for the information has now been completed within the Ministry of Defence, and I can confirm that no information in scope of your request is held.

Section 16 (Advice and assistance)

The Army Personnel Centre (APC) currently holds the British Army service records for officers whose service ended after April 1922 and soldiers who were discharged after the end of 1963 or have a date of birth after 1st of January 1939. Any earlier records are held at the National Archives (formerly known as the Public Record Office).

You can visit the National Archives to do your own research (you will have to provide some form of identification in order to obtain a reader's ticket), or the national Archives will do the research for you for a fee. Alternatively, the website has a list of independent researchers who you can employ.

National Archives

Ruskin Avenue

Kew, Richmond

Surrey TW9 4DU

Tel: 020 8876 3444

Web site - <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/contact-us/>

If you have any queries regarding the content of this letter, please contact this office in the first instance.

If you wish to complain about the handling of your request, or the content of this response, you can request an independent internal review by contacting the Information Rights Compliance team, Ground Floor, MOD Main Building, Whitehall, SW1A 2HB (e-mail [CIO-FOI-IR@mod.gov.uk](mailto:CIO-FOI-IR@mod.gov.uk)). Please note that any request for an internal review should be made within 40 working days of the date of this response.

If you remain dissatisfied following an internal review, you may raise your complaint directly to the Information Commissioner under the provisions of Section 50 of the Freedom of Information Act. Please note that the Information Commissioner will not normally investigate your case until the MOD internal review process has been completed. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at: Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF. Further details of the role and powers of the Information Commissioner can be found on the Commissioner's website at <https://ico.org.uk/>.

Yours sincerely,

Admin Team