

CONTACT



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Seven men ride to York

By Jack Bates

Towards the end of April, seven men in khaki boarded a train bound for York. Three days earlier they had appeared before a Medical Board, had been pronounced unfit for further service, and were now proceeding to a demobbing centre for their civvy suits.

The journey was accompanied by much speculation... true they had all read about demob centres, they had seen the photographs too, and frankly they were all impressed. But all this was surely another large load of Bul???, they had been in the Army four or five years; they were 'old soldiers' ... they KNEW the Army, and were not likely to be taken in by show pieces obviously designed for civilian consumption.

By the time York was reached, opinions seemed to have crystallised somewhat. They would be littered about indefinitely at some prison like barracks, erected a hundred years ago to house Wellington's licentious soldiery. They would occasionally be growled at by an officious depot staff, occasionally fed with bully stew, and if they were lucky, they might be home in two or three days' time.

Alighting from the train, one man noticed a station clock ... another attacked an M.P. The clock said 1pm. The MP said "Get a number 2 bus, you lucky beggars."

Forms were filled in; forms were signed at a terrific speed. They were shunted from one desk to another with an efficiency to be marvelled at. They were escorted to a large building, told to be seated on easy chairs. A Major entered bearing a tape. He inspected some documents, and suddenly cried "Come along Mister B..."

Mr B. Came, closely followed by the other six.

Odd measurements were taken, and they were let loose in a large showroom where they leisurely chose their civilian clothing. Changing cubicles were indicated and in an amazingly short time, seven new men emerged.

Khaki was handed in... they were shown to the Naafi, where a two months' supply of cigarettes, matches and chocolate could be purchased (at Naafi prices).

A Corporal said "Over there you'll find a bucket of tea... and that truck is going to the station."

Seven civvies clambered aboard the truck. They were shaken... and after five years in khaki, the Army had succeeded in shaking them! Never had they known such organisation!

Arriving at the station, one of the men noticed a clock. The clock said 3 pm.