**The Journeyings of**

**GILMOUR EWING BROWN,**

**in**

**BOLIVIA**

**COLOMBIA**

**CHINA**

**and other places (1907 – 1923)**

“Notes compiled from his letters to his brother John, who seems to have been a most faithful and valued link between the wanderer and his native land.” R.L.M.



Gilmour Ewing Brown

**Gilmour Ewing Brown** (1833-1924) was the last child of 12 children born to Robert Brown (1833 – 1920) Headmaster at Jamestown School, in the Vale of Leven, and Margaret McAlister (1840-1902).

Of their 12 children, 3 died in infancy, including twins, Robert and Margaret, and another Robert who died age 3 years.

John (1865-1944) was the third born, and the ninth child was Robina Wilson Brown (1874 – 1960), my “Granny”. (MLK)

Tenth was Dr William McAlister Brown (1879-1949) who graduated MB.BCH, Glasgow, winning one gold and two copper medals. He practised as a GP in Wolverhampton, and subsequently sold his practice to his niece Margaret Brown McLellan and her husband Robert Lindsay Mackay.

Gilmour married Jean Rankin, a remarkable woman who graduated in Medicine from Glasgow University. The story (from Robina) goes that after she graduated, a dentist relative (? who) died, and she was told that “she might as well graduate as a Dentist and take over that practice”. So she went back to University, and qualified as a Dentist, and was thereafter known as a most skilled, and well-loved practitioner of the art of Dentistry.

I believe she married Gilmour in Silver City, New Mexico in 1921.There were no children.

My cousin Rogan Gilmour McLellan writes*: It is after him that I received my second name.   He was a mining engineer of some talent (he had won the Whitworth Prize).   But, working round the world in damp mines, he contracted TB, and, after marrying Jeannie Rankin, went to California where the couple drove across the Sonora Desert in a ramshackle (by our standards) car because in those days dry heat was seen as an antidote to TB.   What the intense heat and dust did to his wracked frame I do not know.*

My mother Margaret Brown McLellan, wrote*: Gilmour was born in 1881. He was an enterprising young man, who became a prospecting engineer and travelled the world, first in Western Australia, then China, Bolivia and Peru. He came home periodically, to the joy of my brother and myself, organising expeditions up Loch Lomond and to the 1911 Exhibition at Kelvingrove, Glasgow. He developed T.B., went to Silver City, New Mexico, where improvement in health enabled him to marry Jean Rankin and settle for a short time in Los Angeles, where he died in 1924.*

My father (RLM) typed these notes from Gilmour’s diary. He wrote*: The following notes were extracted from letters home by Gilmour to his elder brother John. They were then sent around some members of the family for their information. At the moment they are on loan to me from Robert Walker, my cousin.*

*Gilmour published an article entitled “A Breaking Piece for a swinging Jaw-Rock-breaker” in January 1907 edition of the Bulletin of Mining and Metallurgy.*

***PART 1.SOUTH AMERICA****:His first letter in this collection is from* ***Abington Hotel, New York.*** *March 18th 1907….Glad to get off the steamer. We had no fewer than 470 2nd Cabin Passengers and over 900 Steerage. The 2nd Cabin passengers were mostly of the better class of Glasgow hooligans with no elementary notions of table manners. When they got their sea-legs they mostly spent their evenings a la Gallowgate on a Saturday Night…..The Anchor Line still maintains its reputation for meanness.( Then follows details about the food and the smell)*

***S.S.Victoria.*** *Slap Bang on the Line. March 31st 1907.*

*He describes a visit across the Isthmus and the area of the Panama Canal by train, and notes the evidence of the French failure on the Canal, broken locomotives, tracks and the passion of the Americans to make a job of it.*

*I got on a first Class ship built by Fairfields and en route for* ***Guayaquil,*** *the port of* ***Equador;*** *We move up the river there through clouds of mosquitos and will take a day or so to discharge some 800 tons of cargo. At any rate it will be April 30th before I reach Iquique.*

***Off Eten, north coast of Peru****, April 6th 1907. Hope the Post Office Equadorian Official did not tear up my last letter to you to get at the stamps. (Then a fine description of the fine passage up the* ***Guyas River*** *to* ***Guayquil).*** *The priests charge 6 dollars for a marriage, and as a man would have to get into debt to get married he generally does it without the ceremony so that 70% of Equadorians are illegitimate.*

***Nearing Callac****, 8th April. Have just left* ***Salaverry****. We reached* ***Pacamayo*** *yesterday. Had a case of Yellow Fever aboard, a Colonel in the Chilean Army. He has pulled round now, and the quarantine is lifted.*

***Hotel Americano. Oruro, Bolivia*** *22nd May. I spent last week at the mine. Surveying under difficulties, my feet sometimes in 18 inches of semi-fluid mud. I paid a visit to the tin reefs, and was disappointed at the Prospector. His appearance alone would be sufficient to send the shares down. Throat and neck swollen. Feverish. Kept my bed for a day. Hotel Americano the best in the town. Cost 15/- a day, but one never can be sure about the food.*

*I have been notified that I have now been elected An Associate of the Institution of Mining and Metallurgy!*

***Sevuryo. Uyuni Bolivia*** *5th August. This is the great week in Bolivia: The Celebration of Independence. All day long the miners set off small charges of dynamite, making a terrible row. Not a man is sober, and they come on all fours to beg for more dynamite.*

*Same address.10th August, all the men being drunk or recovering from fiesta. No work done for nearly a week.*

*Next morning, 4 of us came along to the mine at full tilt, keeping the mules at the gallop wherever possible. We were accompanied by 4 big Bolivian dogs which belong to the Manager’s family, the dogs en route tearing three sheep to pieces and chasing the llamas on the rocks. We called on II Cure or priest of Caroma en route to deliver a letter. We found him sitting on the ground in a doorway wringing his hands and turning his eyes towards Heaven. He was suffering from alcohol but attributed his condition to The Will of God.*

***Sevarayo. Bolivia.*** *3rd September. I am glad to hear that James had some luck in the sweepstake business. I think this month will see the end of the operations of the* ***Comunidad******Miners Agus Santa****. The engineer Hooper has come and gone. He thinks the mines no use for tin. There is however a small chance for silver, according as the assays turn out well or not. But it will be impossible for them to raise the necessary money to pay debts. I will try if possible to get away this month, my chief difficulty will be to raise money to get to the coast and there to make a try to raise money for my salary, before the Engineer’s report arrives.*

*Me meanwhile will try to get some pleasure out of life. I went out some 6 miles with the Storekeeper and shot my first vicuna. We have had nothing to eat but tinned salmon for several days, and no money to buy sheep. The Manager only spent 3 and a half days at the mine last month. He lives with his family in great style at the expense of the Company at Sevaruyo, and they never want anything. I have taken possession of a little Winchester Repeater. Owing to there being no feed for the mules it is difficult to get any letters away.*

*Same address. 27th September. The Director, Mr Outram, is here, and has been preparing samples all week, one portion being given to me, the other portions to the two best assayers in* ***Orouro.*** *I have not the slightest doubt about the result, as I can check my results by five different methods. Without doubt, this company will come to grief, and as far as I can ascertain some 8,000 to 10,000 pounds sterling will already have been lost. I will have to look after getting my “screw”. The Spaniards and Bolivians were owner of the mine in times past but did not think it worth their time working for tin, although they got their labour for nothing by forcing the Indians. There is a huge prison here that they used for keeping the refractory Indians in, the “Bad Lot” being kept in prisons IN the mine. By 8pm the cold gets so great after the hot close air of the mine that I am forced to quit….some of the levels were driven over three centuries ago and are pretty fair samples of mining work.. I am quite convinced now that the Manager, ‘tho he can talk, and as he tells me has 20 years of experience, knows nothing about mining.*

***Savaruyo. Uyani. Bolivia****. October 17th. Yours to hand. I know Willie was thinking of taking riding lessons. He wants to get hold of a pretty quiet beast before venturing into the streets. My mule favoured me with a fourth throw yesterday. About 40 miners arrived today from Potosi so that we should have all the tin ore sent out in a few months. The other lot of assay results arrived from* ***Orouro*** *and compared well with mine. The director now wears a worried look. I think we have not the tin to pay for the expensive mill he caused to be re-erected on the statements of the wonderful manager. I have been getting on to him on the subjects of working costs and have cut some of the contract prices down 60%. Tin has dropped in price to*

*142 pounds which practically kills the mine…….Both the Mine Manager and the foreman stated that the average grade of ore was over 30%. The joke from my point of view is that 4 of the samples contain no tin, with 5 more out of 12 too poor to pay.*

*Same address 26th October: Your weekly letter to hand. Also one from Ina.*

*We are pretty short of water. There is a river 1 and a half miles away, and we drink from it every day. If the mill was ready we would not be able to run it on account of scarcity of water. The Director has been cutting down expenses. If the price of tin keeps up we will be able to work a lot of low-grade ore. The Manager has had a fine showing up, and now says but little.*

*I have informed the Directors that unless I get a share in the running of the concern, as is only my due, I intend to quit in 4 to 6 month’s time. If their reply is unfavourable, and I don’t think it will be, then I will be on the road once more, “with my bundle on my back”. Last year the few Bolivians working on the mine from 1st November to 1st March drank 68 tins of 5 gallons each of raw alcohol spirit.*

*Same address 17th December. I am afraid I am pretty well “blown out” here and could do with a spell at a lower altitude. Here the atmospheric pressure is only 9 pounds to the square inch, instead of 14 and three quarters at sea level. Life in Western Australia, even with its great drawbacks, was heaven compared with existence here. No company, nobody to have a yarn with, so that on Sunday I don’t feel inclined for work, I get on my mule and go away for a solitary survey of the country, and study geology as I go along. I might go to San Francisco, Mexico or Arizona.*

***Savarayo. Bolivia.*** *4th March 1908. I note Willie was married, or should have been on February 17th and trust the ceremony passed off A.1. and that the happy couple enjoyed the trip to Scotland (The rest of the letter consists of fights between drunken Chileans and Bolivians.) Then another knock is that the mineral treated in the mill for the past month shows an extraction of tin of less than 3% tin from mineral that has cost the price of 5% for the mining alone. The Mine Manager hasn’t seen the mine for 4 months, being fooling around the mill.*

*29th March 1908. Willie will no doubt have settled down by now, so might pass his address along. The accountant left for Auga Sante today and will do his best not to return. I can form no plans yet, but I take on no more work in this country.*

*23rd August. We are getting so hard up for funds and with people leaving us that I would be glad if the place shut down for a while.*

***Hotel Nyuni, Nyuni, Bolivia.*** *16th September. You will see from this address I have left my little adobe hut and am on the trek once more. I have had just about enough of tinned salmon. I thought the food at this hotel was bad when I was on the up-track but am of a different opinion after the experience of the Savarayo diet. When I left the mine, there was no money to pay the people, and they were demanding money. There was nothing for some time for the mules to eat and eight of them died, furnishing a regular banquet for the condors. I have had two telegrams from* ***Collahusashi*** *asking whether I am coming or not, and have replied that I am, as fast as the confounded railway will take me. I will get there I hope on September 18th which is the Anniversary of Independence Day in Chile, when all the world will be drunk. One time on a trip to Oruoro, the engine driver fell out with the fireman, so they stopped the train in the pampa, got down, had their punch at one another, and then resumed their journey. It’s cold, tho it is near midsummer, the water in the washbasins being solid ice in the morning. I leave the main line at Ollagiic, the first station on the Chilean border. I expect to get on the mechanical side there, but have to see if the work and salary will suit me before giving an address.*

***Cassilas 855-856 Antofagasta. Chile***  *September 20th 1908*

*Here I am on the Mina Ponderosa at an altitude of 16000 ft. the branch line of the railway coming up having the distinction of being the highest in the world. By standing drinks for the crowd at* ***Ollagiic*** *I got my luggage past the Customs without having to open everything. At a station lower than here I found a mule waiting for me, saying that if the train crew were too drunk to take the train up the difficult bit to the mine, I would get on the mule and the guide would take me up. However, the train got up. Ollagiic is a queer place and looks like the gate to the lower regions. It is completely surrounded by volcanic cones, rising up separately from the country, two of them yet sending up a little sulphur fume. I have been out of sorts, showing that even 2,000 feet more stuck on affects me.*

*One man came out here direct from England to join the staff with his wife and two children. He came right up here, and before they could get him down again he died. The staff is fairly large, 16 in all, mostly English, Scots, Americans and Germans, and are a first class squabbling lot. Hawchurch says I can have the job of Assistant Manager, if I reckon I can manage them. They are a tough crowd, and the book-keeper N.N. Brown will be the first to give trouble. The miners are mostly Bolivians, but the company has a staff of police to keep order.*

*The country around is terrible, scarcely a bit of green whilst there are many drifts of snow about, remains of the 20 feet fall they had in July. The mine of course is copper, fairly wide reefs. I am going down to* ***Antofagasta*** *in two days time to buy lots of warm clothing and then return here. All the staff speak English, dress English, and live English style, but with breakfast at 10.30 am.*

*(Gilmour’s stay in Chile may have lasted about 12 months, but there is no evidence that he was at Ponderosa, and the next bunch of letters begins):*

***“R.N.S.P NILE”*** *22nd January 1910. Dear John, we had a rough-and-tumble passage across the channel to Cherbourg. (He and many others were sea-sick). My boss Mr Barber, I find is 58 years old and has had some 30 years’ experience in not too healthy climates in Chile, Mexico, Peru and Japan and the Dutch East Indies. He seems to me to be on the old side to venture into Columbia but is quite fit physically and looks a hardy specimen. Sharman, the head of the alluvial section of our party is over 51 years, and has 19 years’ experience of Columbia. He is not a trained mining engineer and has no knowledge outside Columbia. He is a tall bearded man in good condition, except for attacks of malaria at times. Cairns, Sharman’s assistant, is a very little chap, and has had varied experience in the Isle of Elba, Italy, Spain, Turkey, Chile and Brazil. He left Glasgow Technical College during my first year, and is several years older than me. I have had a yarn or two with some Columbians aboard, but one has to be very careful what one says to these people, as not knowing their rank or position in Colombia, one might get in trouble. The late President has, it seems, helped himself to the Republic’s cash box, and is now, after the fashion of wealthy South Americans, seeing life in Paris. One German merchant aboard who has seen many years in Columbia, says a revolution is due at election time.*

***“R.M.S.P”*** *30th January 1910. Due at Barbados tomorrow, and leave for Trinidad 2nd February. No wearing out of old clothes in this swell crowd!*

***Hotel Americano Carthagena.*** *15th February 1910. I got quite chummy with a quiet young lady on board, a Miss Bailey going out to Barbados. She told me she had done the trip several times, but I got a surprise when I found her driving a spanking pair of horses in Barbados, and nearly had a knock-out when I learned she had an income of 5,000pounds a year. Forewarned ! I might have saved myself a trip up the Magdalena.*

***We arrived at Puerto Columbia*** *on 5th inst. At the mouth of the* ***Magdalena River.***

*February 15th. The owner of the mines we hope to go to is the owner of this hotel, the Theatre, and at least 2/3 of the town, an Italian about 76 years old, but a very keen business man at that. He sent his men to meet us and helped us up to the hotel. We went round to see him, although it was Sunday morning, and he returned the visit to this, his hotel in the afternoon. In the evening we went to his box at the Theatre.*

*(Description of* ***Cartagena*** *follows) We are finding him a hard nut to crack, and it is unlikely we will go from here for a few days.*

*Mails go home from here by R.M.S.P. Co. each fortnight, and from here to* ***Medillin*** *may take 3 weeks depending on the state of the river and of the captain of the steam-wheeler.*

*Same address 24th February. 1910. We have come to some arrangement with Mainero, the owner of the mines, and will start on reporting on the* ***Bramadora Union mine****, after we have fixed up our assay, and the drawing office in Medillin. We have six months to do the job at the Bramadora. We have given up trying to fix the price that is now being arranged between the syndicate and the miners. Brandy here costs 16/-a bottle. And whisky not much less. These prices are mild from what they are in Medillin. I got my first ideas of thick tropical undergrowth by penetrating off the beaten tracks without having niggers to clear the way with machetes. My luggage insured for 150 pounds for 4pounds 6/-.*

(Here follows a very long letter from which come these extracts*):*

***Hotel Columbia, Calamar. Rio Magdalena*** *28th July 1910. We have now left the comforts of civilisation and are up against the customs of the country. We left Cartagena this morning at 7am, and according to the most recent timetable, issued March 1899, the 7 am express (the only train of the day) runs from Cartagena in connection with the steamer at Calamar. The express did the journey of 65 miles in 5 hours, and we were congratulating ourselves when the engine unkindly left us 3 miles out of Calamar and proceeded on its own sweet way. Second thoughts were evidently best (for us) and it returned 20 minutes later and took us with a bump into Calamar, as if the engine driver was annoyed.by being sent back to finish the job before breakfast. We pulled up at several stations, saw half-naked niggers in their houses of split bamboo and palm thatching, and the naked kids striving to oust the dogs and the pigs from the muddy spots…..we drew up at a station and waited 10 minutes while he train conductor tried a restive horse a friend had at the station. It soon became very warm and dusty and by 10.30 we had lost all interest in the country and could only think of a long cool drink. The hotel at Calamar is clean but the food is messy. They serve all the courses on the same plate one after the other. After breakfast we went down and presented our credentials to the Heads of the Railway Terminus, the only Britisher in the place. He said neither he nor anyone alive could tell us when the river boat would be in. If we were to ask later at the Government Telegraph Office we might learn when it left Barranquilla at the mouth of the river…..the mosquitos! !the river steamer boasted of 2 thin funnels stuck in the bow where the boiler is to get all the air going and to balance it, the engine and therefore the stern wheel are right astern! Alongside the boiler the firewood is stacked up right to the floor of the deck…(decks and passengers etc). The Captain has the whole of the upper deck to himself.*

***Vapor “Lopes Pentia****” : We left Calamar on the Ist and already some 80 miles up country. We have in all some 465 miles to do on the river boat to reach* ***Puerto Beni,*** *where we leave the boat and take the train.*

(Dear Reader: You had better read his description of “the upper reaches of the Magdalena”!):

*At first it was nice and cool and we enjoyed the breezes and the pretty tropical vegetation on the river banks. The river averages about a quarter to a half mile wide and I confess to a feeling of disappointment at such a meagre width The water is of a thick muddy colour for such an important highway. The water is of such a thick muddy colour as if it tried to make it take as much mud as it could carry. That does not imply that the river is in flood but it is the usual state of south American rivers. Regular islands of floating green stuff pass us by, also dead branches, trees, etc.so that no matter what time you see the river it always looks as though some green stuff has been sprinkled on it from some great pepper-pot. Sometimes we got close up to one bank and then we made a dart for the other and back to the centre again all in the way of dodging the sandbanks and the snags. Often we can see a gaunt branch sticking up as a warning post, or a ripple where a snag lies hid, waiting like a spider for the unwary to ship to come into its grip. Often we slow down to feel our way past these enemies, but the advantages lie with the up-steamer often sticking for days at a time. The river twists and turns, so that with the dodging and turning it would be difficult to lay a course, and even at that, when the river is high the channel varies from day to day or a huge snag makes a few hundred yards more of its journey to the sea. There are hundreds of alligators in the river and often they can be seen on the sandy points or close in against the banks in dozens at a time.*

*When the steamer moves in close to the bank they gaze at us with open jaws and then waddle into the water until only the back and snout are in view looking like a huge log in the river.*

*….the food….I thought the eggs we had were hens’ eggs but I have watched and seen many alligators’ eggs come aboard, but no hens’ eggs! ….then more about the food…, the engine…the mosquitos were big black chaps with suction pumps like bicycle tyre inflators and unlimited tank capacity….the moonlight….the forest by night and its sounds….fireflies.*

*No towels in the cabins, having nothing stealable solves many difficulties in this country. Now we have entered the huge delta of the* ***Canca*** *River which itself is 1000 miles long. Country is very flat, being made of fine silt, and is being ruined and rebuilt continually as part of the work of this mighty river.*

***March 5th 1910*** *We are still ploughing our way up river, and with good luck and no snags should be at* ***Puerto Bemi*** *by midnight…*

*Well-built people in the Department of* ***Antofogasta*** *where the population doubles itself every 27 years, and where the population dies every 12 years, and the appearance of the cemeteries justifies the “Full House” notice.*

***Hotel Magdalena, Puerto Boni.*** *6th March 1910.We arrived here last night, catching up with the mail steamer which left Calamar 3 days before us. Came ashore and made some enquiries and if Mr Barker had backed me up I could have got a coach stuck onto the Mail Train which left this am. At 6 for about 3 pounds above the ordinary fare, and so saved money for the Syndicate. The mail does not take luggage. Hence the delay This would be a decent hotel but the people and lazy and filthy in the extreme. The dining room is full of empty bottles and the landlady is on the verandah looking over her son’s hair for livestock with great success!*

***Hotel Caropa. Medellin.*** *11th March 1910. En fin. I had better continue my narrative from* ***Puerto Bemi.*** *So left there on Monday morning and had a pleasant journey up. The railway ran in very good time up steep grades and by 10 am we were in the mountains, and even had a little rain, the first since leaving home. The natives are not yet quite accustomed to foreigners, and stare all the time. We landed at the terminus at 12.30 pm and amongst some hundreds of mules. Had breakfast at a fairly clean hotel and then saw our luggage packed onto the mules, and our saddles fitted on. 3 o’clock before we got away. We rode in advance of our baggage mules, and I had a great job to keep Mr Barker to keep his mule on as he was fairly knocked up with the travelling of the last few days. We passed 2000 or perhaps 3000 mules on the way carrying coffee, chocolate skins. etc. to the railway and taking back merchandise.*

*At night they drop their goods on the road and form camp, the mules and oxen finding what food they can. We passed also some 12 men* ***carrying a piano*** *on their shoulders! With quite a long tramp of 25 miles before they would strike the coach road.*

*We had to ride over the top of the mountain before we could get into the valley of the* ***Porce*** *on which* ***Medellin*** *is built. I set the pace down the hillside and by 6pm we came to an inn where we decided to pass the night, as it was now dark, Mr Barker being quite an old man was dead tired although we had only done about 15 miles with about 50 to go and I had to help him out of his saddle…..Fleas in the night…Off next am. by 6. Rode until noon. Found a very decent inn and were glad to have finished with the very precipitous mountain trails and were on a good road again.*

*Passed many hundreds of mules on the trail and it was quite tricky at times getting past without getting a nasty knock or sent out over the side of the mountain. I asked Mr Barker to let me lead the cargo brutes out of the way and force them to take the outside edge, but he wouldn’t have it until he had to cross a narrow bridge, lost his presence of mind, let his reins go, and tried to shove his mule with his hands against a huge box on an ox. The ox would have borne him, mule and all, over the bridge if my spur he had on his left foot had not got jammed into his mule, causing it to jump forward trailing his stirrup out of the safety catch and giving his leg a twist. I had to help him down, and give him something to drink.*

*That part of the trail was over up and down the spurs of the mountain and must be pretty awful in wet weather. There were some holes in the centre of the road in which I could easily without exaggeration, have concealed both myself and my mule.*

*The streams we crossed were quite quiet, but would be raging torrents after a heavy shower.*

*After breakfast we set off again on a fair road, and I kept behind Mr Barker’s mule. whipping it up all the time as he was too tired to spin it, and by 5pm we got to* ***Guadots*** *about 15 miles from* ***Medillin****. Stayed there all night.*

*Coach next day through fertile valley, with its fields of sugar cane and maize.*

*We called on Tracey and there got your letter of 26th January. The hotel is not much good and we are looking for a house which we will rent for a year or so.*

*The mail is going out soon, so I must conclude with love to all. Gilmour. (*All his letters end thus.)

***c/o Messrs Tracey Brothers. Medellin, Columbia****. 23rd March 1910.When we move out of the mines we will be able to send a man out with mails, only once a fortnight, and that will depend on the conditions of the trails, several of them being already impassable. The Syndicate will not allow us a house so we will be forced to stick to hotel life for some time.*

*It will be another fortnight before we can take the road for the* ***Bramadora Mines****, about 4 days ride away, when the trails are good.*

***Medellin*** *is situated in a fertile but narrow valley, on the banks of the river* ***Porce****, and is shut in by very high mountains devoid of timber. Altitude 5,000 feet……It becomes overcast every afternoon, and from 3 – about 6pm we have thunderstorms and heavy showers, The people are quiet and orderly, but are religious fanatics. This hotel is next-door to the Cathedral in the plaza, and the confounded bell keeps tolling from 5am, with only short intervals, until dark.*

*Business and otherwise sane men go to Mass in the morning before going to their offices, also at breakfast time and in the evening. What surprises me is that some of the ladies go to Mass in light clothes, and garden hats, a fashion that is not tolerated elsewhere in this country, or in any other Republic that I know. The ladies have much more freedom here than elsewhere, and may be seen alone in the streets in the daytime. The men wear black clothes and bowler hats all the time. The peones or workmen wear white shirts with a short poncho overall and Panama hat. In every village a foreigner seems to draw a crowd. Some of the ladies are very decent looking, and have hair with just a touch of brown in it. There is intense hatred towards the Yankees, and all things Yankee. The bulk of the trade is in British hands, and about half of the business done here is through Schloss Brothers. Who take good care to impress upon people that we are in no way connected with irresponsible American adventurers. (Then follows a suggestion that the country is beginning to boom, people are getting tired of revolutions. One sees many one-armed, one-legged men here, relicts of the last revolution.)*

*You might send me the weekly edition of The Times and a Glasgow Herald giving the Stock Market quotations about the 20th of each month, and any journal giving information about the Bolivian railways or mines. Don’t forget to charge it all up to my account.*

*We are waiting to see the Manager of the* ***Bramadora Mines*** *who should have been here this week.*

*I have had some trouble with my eyes again, and have taken to wearing dark glasses.*

*Last Sunday was Palm Sunday and we had an extra dose of the bells and several processions of saints through the streets. It is as good as signing your death warrant to keep your hat on when one is passing.*

***c/c Messrs Bros. Medillin*** *4th April 1910*

*On Friday all the principal ladies lined the route of the processions, whilst some of the most prominent men in the town carried the waxworks. The priests are always preaching about the pernicious foreign influence, and as this is the only place of importance, even in Columbia, where they have such a grip, they naturally wish to keep such a golden goose for themselves. The ladies dress wonderfully well and in perfect taste, having quite decent figures, while the mothers look all alike, and like washerwives. A representative of a Paris house tells me that they sell many out-door dresses at 40 guineas. On Good Friday the majority of the white men turned out in tall hats and frock coats. Living here is not very cheap.*

*We have another mine to look at, about a day’s journey from The Bromadora .We have also got two big, and apparently good properties in the* ***Menzales District*** *at altitudes of 1300 ft.*

*I got an invitation to a dance last night at Mr Tracey’s house, but did not go. (Sunday.)There were, I believe, about 150 present, and all in great style, the girls in this country having to have their mammas dancing attendance.*

***Medallin 3rd July 1910.****We got back from our first trip in very good health. The mine was somewhat low-lying, with some malaria about, but beyond losing some seven pounds in weight and getting one or two insects buried in my flesh I did not suffer in any way. Some sort of fly laid an egg in my arm, and it developed into a maggot about an inch in length. I had to chloroform the brute to kill it, and then it took some squeezing to get it out.(*Then a bit about the boss who is too old at 38.)

*The roads are horrible, beyond description in this wet season. In some parts it is possible for a mule to disappear leaving only its head above the mud.*

*There are religious fanatics here who would dearly love to torture all the Protestants in this place.*

*The other brother, Tracey, arrived from England about a month ago, with his wife, nurse and three children! His wife weighs 14 stone, and coming from the railway fell off her mule and had to be carried most of the way.*

*This other brother Tracey is trouble with his liver. They have both been many years in Brazil.We were all round to dinner at their place lately, and had a splendid meal, English style. At the inns on the road there is practically nothing one can eat. They have no bread. Even decent people eat some crushed Indian corn, and the meat is either too tough or too high. Milk we can get at some places, but we have to forget the filthy hands that dealt with it. Oranges all the year round, at 4 or 5 for a half penny. In the towns are many kinds of fruits or tomatoes, sugar cane, maize, rice, cotton, are all grown here and the soil is so rich that they could have 3 crops a year. At the Bramadora mine we had a plague of locusts. In some places I could not walk without crushing 2 or 3.*

***Schloss Bros. Columbian Syndicate c/o Tracey Brothers. Medallin****.12th October 1910.I left* ***Manizales*** *at 7am, had an apology for breakfast, climbed 1000 ft during a 5-hour tramp next morning and rode back the same day to Manizales. I felt a bit fagged after a sleepless night, tortured by fleas etc .and lying on boards only. Owing to the wet season being in full swing we met awful roads, one particularly, encountered on the 3rd day, being horrible beyond description. We had to do a half day’s journey to replace a mule strained getting through the mud, and on the 5th day we were greatly delayed by 2 mules getting stuck in a deep mud hole. It took us about 2 hours to drag them out; the first, a little mule, we got turned on its side, and pulled it out, the animal moving its legs through the thick sticky mud as if it were swimming. The second was fairly bogged and the peones had to dig it out, scooping the mud with their hands.*

*Mr Barker got the regular mud scare, and did about the half journey of 120 miles on foot. The country was very pretty but very mountainous. A whole day’s ride, for example being a climb up 2000 – 3000 ft, in the morning and the same in the afternoon, nearly all the villages being on the mountain tops. It is very slow work riding with an old man (of 58).*

*We presented a very sorry appearance on arrival being ourselves, peons and mules, being encased in mud. When one enters a house in this country, the first request that your host makes is to keep your hat on until you have quite cooled down.*

***Same address*** *19th October 1910. We have finished the assays of the samples taken on the Manizales trip, and they are by no means a bright lot. In fact it appears that in Manizales we drew a blank, and that among the most talked-of mines in Columbia! There is only one property, and another adjoining it, which might do, but it is scarcely enough to open the ball with!*

*We have had a rival syndicate to contend with,* ***Werken Beit and co****. at the back of it, and they have snapped up one of the mines on our list, but whether they found anything we do not know. Their chief man, Wilkinson, who was much before the public eye on the Taqua Central or some such West African property will be out again here early next month. Another of the engineers of the opposition has gone down to where we were before, at* ***Anoru****, and as the Constance mine there is the best we have seen we will have to get busy to keep them out of it. The trouble is that of the Traceys are the agents of both syndicates! Our directors are expecting something good from Manizales, and we will present nothing. We shall have to cable home shortly asking for the next move for the health of our syndicate…our alluvial man has something good to present. There was an increase in our population this week… another Miss Tracey has arrived!*

*One of the Meyerheims is at home just now on business. He has a great deal of shares in the mines of Manizales, and as there is very little prospect of any of the mines paying dividends under the native management he will be a loser to the extent of some 15,000 pounds, and he can’t very well sell as he is the president of some of the concerns and on the boards of other. It is really wonderful the good terms which prevail in the English colony, considering they are all rivals in business. There is not one discordant note in the whole crowd and every decent Britisher is made welcome. Every Sunday afternoon we all meet at the tennis court of Badian, the British Consul here, and there are refreshments with tea. If it was at home the maids and governesses would be miserably cold-shouldered, but here we are on an equal footing.*

*The manager of the cotton mill here, an old soldier, went. home recently to Lancashire. On the night before departure we got extra ‘fou, and the police collared him, but being a well set-up and powerful man, he gave them a lively time, and they were hanging onto him like dogs around a grizzly! Badian went down during the night and fished him out of jail.*

***Same address*** *30th October 1910 Your welcome letter to hand with some tabloids from Willie with many thanks. The roads are now quagmires and traffic is at a standstill. A good road 2 months ago is now a series of mud-holes, dangerous to man and beast.*

*We are finishing our notes on Manizales and expect to be through in a few days. Then we will set out in 10 day’s time, for the famous mine, the* ***Zancudo****, which has been worked for 107 years. It is THE Mine of Columbia, and has a useful annexe in the shape of several coal mines with coke ovens. The mine is only 2 days away from here and we will be lucky if we do, especially travelling with an old man who should be in an arm chair! …. and at home.*

*After a short journey from Manzales to another mine the assays I took turn out very well and the property is the only one that may prove useful to us in the district. Our alluvial man has found something useful in the fever-stricken district of* ***Zaragosa,*** *which may help to cheer up the syndicate.*

*In this country a man has to educate himself to travelling with what luggage his saddle-bag can take, and that amounts to a toothbrush, a towel, a piece of soap and a warm waistcoat.*

*Imported tea costs 8/- a pound and excellent (?) local 6d a pound.*

*November 2nd. The visit we intend making to the big mine has not been quite arranged yet.; They wish us to make a report on the property for a nominal fee, they halving the fee with another company. Our syndicate is quite willing that we make the report for next to nothing, but that we shouldn’t tell them what we think about the prospects, but really the best methods of working the mine and treating of the ore.*

*That is the position at present and it will take some handling to get things fixed up.*

*. . . . . . . . . .*

*(RLM: The foregoing gives all we know about Gilmour’s activities up to 4th November 1910, as extracted from the letters I have on loan from Robert Walker.)*

*Gilmour was in Scotland during the summer of 1911.*

*(MBM: My brother Bill and I well remember what a great time we had with Uncle Gilmour in summer 1911. He took us to the Glasgow Exhibition, where we went on all the rides, including an aerial over the Kelvin River, when the cage got stuck half way across the river. He also took us up Loch Lomond.)*

***PART 2. Here follows Gilmour’s experiences travelling in the Far East.inc. Java, Borneo, and China.***

***Paya Mas Estate c/o James Snodgrass. Singapore.*** *18th January (? 1914)*

*Dear John, arrived here on Tuesday, and am getting settled down at last. I came up in the steamer with Mr Snodgrass getting into Malacca Town at 6am. We had breakfast at Government Rest House, and came out by mote car all the way., 30 miles to the estate, although the last 10 miles were somewhat risky and decidedly bumpy. We travelled through very flat country at times swampy, and at all times planted with rice. In the distance we could see Mt Ophir, the highest mountain in the district, and 4189 ft. above sea-level. The estate is not far from the hills, with another rubber estate intervening., and is very flat, a reclaimed swamp in fact. Around are regular swamps and with thick jungle, and all sorts of 4-legged inhabitants.*

*The name of the estate signifies “gold swamp” in the Malay language, and that is as far as I can find, the only indication that brought me here. I have ordered a boring plant to make holes to 50 ft in depth to see if there is anything beneath the thick covering of clay. Only 600 acres of the 6,000 comprising this estate are planted with rubber, but the greater portion of the remainder has been cleared, once for tapioca planting, and is now covered with? callang grass which is very difficult to exterminate. The greater part of the work in the rubber estate seems to be in keeping the grass within limits…. Only last week a herd of wild elephants came through and destroyed some trees. There are many snakes, but I wear puttees to keep them from striking through. I nearly put my foot on one yesterday, a whip snake, about 2 ft in length and less than the thickness of a lead pencil. I have seen several monkeys hopping about the swamps, and they say it is risky to leave the houses more than a quarter of a mile behind, after dark, on account of tigers which are common. Both the manager and his assistant carry revolvers when knocking about the estate. The climate appears to be good and fairly healthy., with little fever., but they say the neighbouring estate is quite unhealthy…. The food is mostly tinned, as there are no cattle for meat or milk, but there is plenty of fruit, and folk do themselves well.*

**Postcards came from Gilmour as follows:**

**25. March 1914 Sourabaya. Java**

**31 March Banjermasin. Borneo**

**27 September Martapoens . S.E. Borneo**

**19 December. Hong Kong.**

**25 December en route Seoul via Nagasaki from Shanghai**

**Ist January 1915 Tientsin. China. “travelling overland via Mukden in Manchuria.**

**2 January 1915 Shan Hai Kuan. Northern China.**

**9 January 1915 Reiki Station, Chosen. Korea.** *Here I am at last, in the land of snow and**ice, but I may as well start this letter with my departure from Shanghai. I did not go via Japan as intended* ***and am already booked by train all the way through China and Manchuria****. I spent Christmas Day in* ***Shanghai****, and was out to dinner that night at a quiet party. Next day we had tiffin at MacBain’s palace, a wonderful, costly decorated affair inside, the family all but 3 sons and I daughter being from Europe. And afterwards motored out to the hunt and waited to see the finish of it. The daughter was a young girl about 11 years old, and was confined to the house with a broken wrist, the result of a fall from her pony. They do things in great style, at least half a dozen motors and the best of ponies for the whole family.*

***We left Shanghai on 29th December 1915.*** *At 11pm, and next morning woke up in time to see The Great Wall. Around Nanking, the Southern Capital of China. We crossed the famous* ***Yangtyse*** *in a ferry boat and took train again for 2 days and 1 night. The country was bare of all timber, and very flat, the houses being very far from picturesque. A notable feature was the number of armed soldiers at every station. Several travelled on the train. Some of the soldiers drawn up on the platform had the tousiest heads of hair I’ve seen, and their uniforms were far from uniform. The guard on the train had a big 4.5 Mauser pistol on his belt, so the fear of robbers seems to be always present.*

*The first night from Nanking we travelled to* ***Tainaifu*** *where the train runs on the German line from* ***Tsingtau****, now of war fame. The following day we ran into* ***Tientsin****. Everywhere the country was flat, bare of all green stuff, being the depth of winter. We saw plenty of ice a foot thick, and some natives sledging. After the journey on steam-heated train, the journey on a jourivkisha from the station was cold indeed, with Stephen’s ink thermometers outside the shops standing at 22degrees F.*

*We went to the Balor House Hotel, the best in the town, but we found the proprietor a German and we two the only Britishers in a mob of fat scowling Germans. The following morning we had a walk through the city, but the shops were shut, being New Year’s Day. The cold was bitter indeed, and we had to guard our ears from frostbite. I got a cold and my nose has run with more constancy than one of the Company’s oil wells. Now it feels as if it had crystallised completely.*

***1916.*** *We left Tiensin at noon and travelled with Dr Morrison, the political advisor to the Chinese Government, reaching* ***Shanhaihuan*** *that night about 7pm, a seaside resort on the* ***Gulf of******Pichili,*** *and at one of the gates of the Great Wall of China. We stayed that night in a poor hotel, cold and dreary. There are 2 expresses from Shanghai to Mukden but we were not fortunate to get on them. Next day we travelled over bare and sandy country with some hills showing, and passed a camp of American Military Police on duty, guarding the railway, bringing mails and passengers from Siberia.*

*Every station had its guard of 20-30 soldiers, all drawn up along the platform with fixed bayonets. We had dinner at the Japanese Hotel, before taking the Korea train at 8.50 pm. The Japanese train had no sleeping coaches, so we had to douse as well as we could on our seats. The attendants were very smart and most spoke some English.*

*Next morning we reached Yalu River, the border between Korea (or chosen as the people prefer to call it) snow now 2-4 inches deep. On Sunday we got to our destination* ***Shin-Anshu*** *at mid-day. At the station were met by Clapham, one of the vendor syndicate, and formerly a mine boss. He is an American. He piloted our footsteps to a little Korean house, about 8 ft square and 7ft high, devoid of all furniture except mats on the floor. There all 3 of us took up our abode. We had no cook or servant, and had to cook our food over a charcoal fire in a pot, in this little room.*

*At Shanghai I was worried with a sore big toe. It festered all the way up in the train. I had to walk here with a painful limp, but it seems to be mending at last. That same afternoon we went over some of the ground, frozen hard and rough, with a few inches of snow on it. Next day we walked about 15 miles to another part of the property sand returned to our abode as cold as one could wish it. I have all sorts of clothes on, mufflers, throat protectors, sweaters etc. and not used to them piled on, and arrive back quite tired. The rivers are all frozen up, and we cross and re-cross them, several feet high by the rise and fall of the tides.*

*We have shifted our abode to* ***Reiki,*** *where we are now in a Korean house, about 14 ft wide by 8ft and 7ft high, 4 of us this time, being joined by a Japanese surveyor. We cooked our food as before over the charcoal until the fumes began to affect us as every hole is sealed up to keep out the cold. The atmosphere becomes poisonous. At Shen-Anshie there is a Japanese inn. Staying there involved leaving one’s boots outside and walking in our socks. We think the Korean house preferable.!*

*This present Korean house has three doors, which being covered with translucent rice-paper serve also as windows. All the Korean houses are made with the flue from the kitchen at the back passing in below the floor and so imparting a grateful warmth when the cooking is in progress. The want of a fire was real and for the first three nights I scarcely slept because of the cold. Scott had no bedding, so I had to divide mine with him, and make up the deficiency with overcoats and going to bed, on the floor, nearly fully dressed. The floor was fine and warm, also hard in the evening, but at 3 am it was hardly comfortable. I last took my clothes off at Tientsin on the 3rd, and it looks as if I will have a wash and a shave at Seoul, when I get there is a week’s time, also a mattress.*

*Yesterday an oil stove I had ordered from Seoul, also a mattress and a cook’s interpreter arrived. Clapham and the Jap having left we have fitted up a packing case as a table as I am tired of sitting on the floor and feeding off my cabin trunk.*

*Every day since arrival we have been trudging over frozen ice-fields, walking 10 -17 miles a day and our feet being in such poor condition it has been far from pleasant.*

*The cook is not too bad, so I have said goodbye to bacon and eggs for breakfast and eggs and bacon for dinner for good, I hope.*

*There’s nothing exciting about this oilfield, and I intend to take myself off to another field in the south near Pusan, opposite the end North of Japan. Then I go up the Yangtse for a good distance to see two prospects and should necessity arise return to Korea in a month’s time.*

(Gilmour then devotes a paragraph to the dress of Korean men and women….)*The Japs rule them firmly but are as wax in their hands. ….the temper of the people is shown by the fact that of 750 foreigners in the country 450 are missionaries, producing nothing but weakening the moral characters of the nations. This seems to be the Missionaries Paradise, and several are reported to have amassed fortunes. There is quite a little mining going on, but Korea has not brought much luck to British investors, and the people mostly interested are Americans.*

***Nippon Yusen. Kaisha. S.S. Katori Maru***  **From Nagasaki to Shanghai. 20th January (1916 ?)**

*I wrote last from* ***Shin-anshu*** *in Korea, just before finishing there. The day after writing the were 2 inches of snow on the ground, and it snowed all day. We went out at 9am and walked continuously with only a half-hour break for tiffin, until 6.30 pm, the snow then being 6 inches deep. It was indeed weary walking on the snow and we were “sore tired”. Coming back too, I got tired of our guide’s effort to get onto the ice sheet across a wide river, (like the Clyde at Dumbarton! )his actions being analogous to a hen going to roost, and in leading the way I had a narrow escape of a cold bath. And later proved the bottom to be only knee-deep. I quit for* ***Seoul,*** *the capital, next day. Scott and I left behind to do some indoor work, pending the sun’s efforts on the snow.*

*I left Seoul next night after arriving, having had one night in a comfortable bed, and slept in the train, getting out at 3am at a place called* ***Yaikyu****. Here I made my first acquaintance with a Japanese inn, and later on stayed for several days in one.*

*(*Here follows a long and good description of Japanese inns, baths, customs, heating arrangements etc.as good as in a tourist guide book.)

*I got back to the railway at 3.30 pm, and took a train for* ***Pusan*** *at 4.10 left Fusan by steamer at 8.30pm, crossing the Straits all night. Crossed by ferry, 10 minutes to* ***Moji****, and then reached Nagasaki at 5pm. Put up at the Belle View for the night, and went round to see Life (spelled with a big L. as Kipling says.)and boarded the steamer which will take me to* ***Shanghai*** *in 2 days time. I am not sorry to leave Korea.*

*I have quite a lot of work to do on the steamer writing reports. On arrival in Shanghai I expect to proceed immediately up the river to see a copper mine somewhere there.*

***January 24.*** *Will likely be going back to Japan tomorrow to see some sulphur deposits near the tops of volcanos, mostly extinct.*

***Ningyianhsien. South Hunan. China. 22nd March***

*Dear John.*

*This is now the 18th Day of my great unpleasantness, and I wish I saw myself at the end of it. Both my pairs of boots have given out and how the devil I am going to get along when the soles are quite gone, beats me. There are no boots to be had in the country, only raw-hide affairs. The coolies wear straw sandals. The better class Chinese don’t walk and only wear pumps. I left* ***Changsha*** *on the**9th in a small launch: a five hours run to* ***Siangtan*** *where we stopped the night.*

*The inn was full of soldiers and they gambled all night. I scarcely slept, they made such an infernal row. We left next morning in 3 sedan chairs with 2 coolies to each., and 6 coolies carrying the luggage. They were a vile lot and caused a delay of half an hour at each meal place or inn, arguing over the price of food and cheating the proprietor.**The Chinese way of arguing is to shout the other man down, and their voices are far from melodious. I wrote to you from* ***Henchoufu****, where I stopped the night in the house of a prominent citizen. There we got a new lot of coolies, 14 in number., 4 chairs this time, and they are a greatly improved lot.*

*They are gentlemen compared with the cut-throats I had from Siangtan. From Henchoufu, 2 full days and 2 half days chair travel brought us to* ***Kiyang*** *on the* ***River Siang Kiang*** *where again we stopped at the house of a prominent citizen, and I had a room to myself. I took the opportunity to wash some of the dirt off that night. Next day we proceeded down river in 2 junks with a guard of 4 soldiers for half a day, and then took chairs in country. This was to a silver mine, a terrible frost, and I cursed them all round for making a fool of me and threatened to return to Shanghai.*

*It is the Chinese way to show you the worst things first. When I went round the mine I was followed by a crowd of coolies. The mine, by the way, was only a limestone quarry. From that mine, 4 full days chair travel brought us to this place, the middle 2 days being through extremely mountainous country, mostly of a species of fir grown for firewood.*

*It is impossible to describe the filthy conditions under which I have slept. In addition to the vermin, the mosquitos are now in evidence and I have no net. I have long passed the last missionary, and the natives are becoming more progressively curious. Now when I enter a village it is the signal for every man, woman and child to gather around and discuss me and smile. I do not mind it so much when I am passing through a village, but when I stop to take food all my appetite away to have 50 or more dirty faces shoved under my nose.*

*In the evening there is an eye to every crack, not a moment’s privacy can I ensure. It is very trying and no mistake. I lost my temper one night and kicked one of the swine in a way that will take a life-time of missionary effort to counteract. I suppose the missionaries are to blame for the crowding around of the coolies. A few hefty miners instead would have spread a wholesome fear of the white man. However, it is a dangerous game to raise their dander as they have me quite at their mercy, and barring a few with my revolver they would down me in the end.*

*I leave again tomorrow, every night a different stopping-place, on a 2 days chair ride to a lead mine. I pick up a guard of soldiers again tomorrow night and I will try to get them to keep the crowd of spectators within limits, or the limits of my patience. In some villages en route I manage to hide myself in the chair until perhaps some curious woman or kids spots me and then the mob comes along. Now I quite appreciate what makes the lion roar and be so savage as the crowd parades before his cage at the menagerie.*

***March 26th****. “Men may come and men may go, but I go on forever.”! This is just what it feels like. I have been a month, all but 2 days, en route from* ***Shganghi*** *and havn’t reached the mine yet. The Magistrate of* ***Ningyiian*** *said he would supply me with a guard of soldiers but as the people would be very annoyed at my going there, and would do their best to kill me, he refused to accept any responsibility in the matter, and advised me, through the interpreter, of course, to give the place a wide berth.*

*The next morning we went out again on the trek further south without the guard, having taken the Magistrate’s advice and cut the lead mine out of the programme. When we stopped for tiffen, the people, though not actively hostile were decidedly unfriendly and insulting and looked like breaking into hostility every moment. It is a great trial to have to sit still and have a dirty lot of coolies make fun without being in a position to make them regret it. The position was getting unbearable and unendurable, but that night we picked up a guard of 8 soldiers who succeeded in keeping the crowd in order the following day.*

*We got into* ***Kiangwha*** *that night, and in the following morning early interviewed the Yaman and succeeded in obtaining the necessary guard. We were still pushing on further south into a mountainous region full of brigands, so the guard is now increasing to 19 men who cost me one pound a day. Coming into this village called something like Linton it took the combined efforts of all the soldiers to restrain the crowd. The head of the soldiers has just been in to say how do you do (his real motive is to satisfy his curiosity) and has set the guards for the night. I am only a short distance from the Southern boundary of the province, and could get through to Hong Kong in 10 days.*

*Tomorrow I hope to reach a lead mine. It is sure to be a frost. From there I go on to a tin mine. Last night I slept in a place which recalls the old pigsty at Jamestown. My camp bed was in the middle of 10 pigs in pens, and a dung heap blocked the entrance.*

***March 29th*** *Am writing this almost* ***at the extreme southern part of the province*** *and* ***within a few miles of the boundary with the Canton Province****. From here a 30 mile walk would take me to a river over the divide, and there I could get a sailing boat down the rapids to* ***Wunchow*** *on the railway and be in Hong Kong in a week. The lead mine was an unholy place, and I felt very bitter having been fooled and wasted 3 days going and coming there. With salary and expenses every day of my stay in this benighted country costs the Company 6 to 7 pounds.*

*Coming here over the big mountain range we had to take a long route to avoid brigands, causing more delay. It rained all the way. And my bedding was wet in places, but somehow I have got used to the damp. Although the fleas worry me in the daytime I can sleep well at night, except when I am in amongst the swine, and then I realise the truth of the saying “snores like a pig”.*

*There is a little tin coming from this place. That is at least some consolation, but whether there is enough to make a mine I very much doubt. However, tomorrow will decide. Meantime, my coolies are having a day off, a well-earned rest after continuously over 20 miles a day for 16 days. They are wonderful men to carry about 90 pounds daily as they do. If the tin mine is no good, the day after tomorrow I will commence the homeward trek and be in Shanghai with luck in 23 days.*

***4th April.*** *The tin mine turned out to be not so bad, but it is impossible to do anything in the present lawless state of the country. In order to work the mine properly it would be necessary to go several miles into the mountains to get a head of water, and these mountains are the stronghold of 600 – 700 strong bands of brigands. I feel certain, too, that the Chinese agriculturalists whose ground would be wanted would prove more obstinate than the most obstinate mule. I had only one day there and in the evening was informed that my guard was wanted back as soon as possible as the robbers had descended onto the trail behind, ousting the soldiers from the village and killing two.*

*We accordingly left next morning in pouring rain on the return journey. It has rained for 4 days since. We reached Kiangwha in 2 days and I was informed it would be impossible to return by the route I had come as the brigands were still in possession and fighting was going on. There was another and longer route and if I cared to return that way at my own risk, they would give me all the soldiers they could spare. So we set out next morning in an infernal thunder storm with an escort of 22 soldiers, and pushed on as hard as we could go to reach the shelter of a walled town before night. We covered 30 miles that day, not withstanding the wet slippery ground. I interviewed the Yamen at 9.30 pm and got the guard for the next day. The country was more settled at this place and 9 soldiers were allotted to me. About midday a rifle was fired from a low hill on our left to which my guard replied in great style. Altogether it was a disappointing affair. I had hopes of a revolver practice! We covered 28 miles that day and were very tired.*

*We are staying at the same house as on the outward trip and its owner is quite a decent Chinese. I made him a present of a filter I was carrying, and he was pleased no end. I intended*

*to set out again this morning, but the coolies had reached the limit of their endurance, and we are having an idle day. I thought I would get some washing done and luggage and bedding dried, but it is still raining. This is the first day’s rest I have had for a month, and it has been a busy day., spent mostly in writing up notes. I dare not go out on the street, or all the traffic would be stopped.*

*The soldiers now, when on the route, keep the crowd back so I have a more pleasant time. Tomorrow we go east and 3 days should bring us to another tin mine. We are making another detour on account of brigands. This time I have 9 soldiers only, of which I am glad as my money is getting low.*

***11th April. Leaving Ningyiian.*** *Downpour of rain next day. Forced to stop at 2pm. What with wet bedding and the smell of some pigs close to my head I had a rotten night. …We parted with the soldiers and pushed on for a long journey ahead. As luck would have it we stopped for tiffin in a large village on a market day with thousands of country folk around. The people would not be denied a sight of me and the crowd at the door became more and more clamorous. After 10 minutes of language slinging that the Chinese indulge in before coming to blows, a fight started between my coolies and the crowd. The situation became serious and something had to be done. So I left my chair hurriedly and charged the crowd, drawing my revolver as I rushed. The crowd fell back so quickly that the scene was like a stampede. About half a dozen got knocked into a ditch full of water while others were knocked down and trampled upon. My coolies burst into roars of laughter and I had to join in. The crowd did not show the same anxiety to enter after this incident and my coolies had their meal in peace.*

*When I left the village my fame had gone abroad and I had to open a way for my coolies through a crowd of several thousands. Thus the foolishness of travelling without an escort!*

*I am now moving towards civilisation again.*

*A day and a half’s journey brought us to the river where we paid off the coolies and entered a junk after 29 days of sedan-chair travel…a welcome change.*

*We shot one or two rapids last night, but tied up to a bank for most of the night. During the night a violent thunder storm preceded by a hurricane came down on us, and I awoke with a start as I heard some moorings snap. I believed the boatmen were sleeping ashore as we were rather crowded, and I knew if we were once adrift we would be wrecked within a few minutes. However, only our stern moorings had snapped, and the boatmen were quickly on the scene.*

*We left again early this morning and had a lively time shooting some rapids. The river is in high flood and our progress is good. The sooner we get to* ***Changsha,*** *and I can see a newspaper the better. I have written a description of the trip for the Mining Magazine which I hope the Directors will allow me to publish. About a couple of hours ago we stopped at a village and evidently something was wrong, for along came a dozen soldiers with fixed bayonets, and took possession of the boat and forced the boatmen ashore. It seems that we had in the past some Customs place higher up the river dur to my bumptious boy telling the boatmen never to mind, and we could not produce the necessary pass. I had to go ashore to the Yamen and help explain matters, when our boatmen were returned to us and we were allowed to proceed.*

***April 13.*** *Arrived here at* ***Changsha*** *at 6am after a vile night in horrid stinking launch, sleeping right over the propeller. Found here 6 of your letters and about a hundredweight of mail.*

*I am indebted to Willie for the graphics but as I cannot cope on these trips with my mail I will ask him not to send any more. I am leaving again tonight for* ***Yochow*** *on the* ***Yanggtze on a British River Boat*** *and expect a decent meal and bed, the first time for a month. Today I got some bread here, quite a change as I have been living on rice, pork and eggs, practically all the time.*

*I find in the Mutiny at Singapore two of my acquaintances have been killed. My interpreter, a Chinese youth of about 18, is behaving badly, getting drunk and gambling all night, and squandering my funds. I have been waiting for him now half a day to arrange details if the* ***Yochow*** *trip, which is only a short one, 2 days from the river to a lead mine, but he is not to be found anywhere. As he is some relation of the owner I cannot teach him manners as I would like…..p.s. Books (Oil Production Methods) and pocket book have arrived safely….Gilmour.*

***23rd April. China Navigation Company’s S.S. Leun Yi.***

*Dear John, I wrote last from* ***Changsha*** *in* ***Hunan,*** *posting and registering my letter there. People tell me that Hunan is a noted anti-foreign province, and that it is only within the last 2 or 3 years that foreigners have been allowed to reside in it. The officers and passengers seem to regard that I have been on a very risky business, venturing into the country alone. To me the Hunanese are the vilest people God ever made, why he made them God only knows.*

*They are quite different from the people around the Yangtse both in appearance and manners.*

*I proceeded one and a half days by chair beyond* ***Yochow*** *to a big lead and zinc mine. It rained for 6 days. The mine is a touch-and-go business, already inspected by some half dozen engineers, but what I intend to do in the matter will depend pretty much on the assay of my samples. At the mine, in order to take my samples at the quarry faces I had to discard my waterproof, so that I had the discomfort of wearing sodden clothes for 3 days, having only one suit with me. I am on the way back to* ***Shanghai,*** *which I should reach on 25th.*

*They have been having trouble again in our office at Shanghai, due to one of the European clerks taking an extra type-written copy of the Chairman’s speech and selling it to a broker 2 days before the A.G.M. The broker got 3 months and the clerk I month’s imprisonment.*

*R.S.F. McBain the Chairman is now in Shanghai and I expect to see him this time. Our Company is the greatest gambling concern in the East, and many are the dodges undertaken to secure information in advance. They even went the length of arranging a Dictaphone for recording conversations in the Directors’ Room, a few months ago.*

*At the hotel too, they pester me with drinks and invitations to dinner while I have to be careful in locking up all papers when I leave my room. One of the Directors is very friendly with an American Engineer named Cole (in mining) resident in Shanghai and the two of them are putting their heads together to put me out of action as far as China is concerned. It is not unlikely that I will go in for more and more oil work in the Tropics.*

***Monday 25th April.*** *Am head over heels in work as my assistants are throwing work at me also. It appears likely I will go back to Borneo in about 10 days time, and return here towards the end of the year. Trust all are well and with love to all…….Gilmour.*

***Shanghai 1st May.*** *Dear John, none of yours to hand this week. I have had a very busy week, catching up on arrears of work, hammering at a typewriter at 6am in the hotel. I am off tomorrow for a short jaunt into the Province* ***Chekiang,*** *only there for 4 days or more, then back to see some zinc-lead mines. It will be another 10 days or more, perhaps, the steamer on 17th before I can leave for Borneo. The MacBains have been very kind to me and asked me to stay at their palace, but nothing doing. I have been getting quite fat and am getting very fit again compared with my recent washed-out appearance.*

*There is a lot of ill-feeling in China over the Japanese demands, and I am glad to see that the Home Department is making up to the Japanese tricks.*

*I am taking on some coal lands not far from Shanghai that the Japanese have been after and am getting Stott to do some months drilling. The coal land is on an island frequented by motor launches and sailing boats with pleasure parties from Shanghai. I notice that the War authorities are working up an all-round enthusiasm preparatory to publishing heavy Casualty Lists. I am very well off for newspapers here, but in Borneo they may be hard to get.*

*During the mutiny in Singapore and after it …. In Borneo did not get a newspaper for a month.*

*Trusting all are well and with love to all. Gilmour.*

((Note: some of the dates 1915 and 1916 in the preceding pages are confused.)

Notes of postcards sent by Gilmour, presumably to his brother John, are listed by Robert Walker as:

1915: From May 25 Singapore, Banjermasin S.E. Borneo “en route to Japan”, Soerabaia Java, Batavia Java, Singapore, Hong Kong, Peking, Nagasaki Japan, Yokohama Japan, Tokyo Japan, Nagasaki Japan.

1916: From January: Shanghai, Peking, Nagasaki, Kobe, Tokyo, Asahigowa, Yokahama, Shanghai, Peking, Kobe, Chuzenji, Nikko, Miyanoshota, Shanghai ”en route to Singapore”, Haipong, Saigon.

1917: Changsha Hunan

October 1919: in UK.

1920: 14th October. St Charles Hotel New Orleans. “I leave here tomorrow night, have 2 nights and days on the train. Then to New Mexico.”

1921: 31st August. A marriage card with photo of The Cottages, Silver City. New Mexico.

7th December A photograph of his house at Silver City.

\* \* \* \*

He had gone to live in New Mexico as the climate was thought beneficial for his long illness, which was tuberculosis.

**RLM added this:**

Extract from “Church Notes” at the First Congregational Church, Sierra Madre, California. “Services for Sunday July 13th” Last Monday Dr Tate officiated at the funeral of Mr Gilmour Ewing Brown. Dr Brown was a graduate of the Royal School of Mines, London, and had followed his profession as a mining engineer in Australia, South America and other parts of the world.

Mrs Brown returns to Scotland, August 2nd. (no year date)

(So we have 3 different year dates of Gilmour’s death in all this correspondence!)

On RLM’s chart: *Gilmour Ewing Brown 25/8/1881-1925 m. Dr Jean Rankin no children.*