

GREYSTANES

Redchapel Avenue

1st July 1945

My Dear Erskine

I am grateful to you for affording me the privilege of perusing these wonderful letters. I must confess that I read them with a lump in my throat, remembering always the little boy who charmed us with his lovely voice and engaging manners not so many years ago. before the shadow of this night had fallen upon him and upon us all. During the last five years I have seen thousands of letters from men of the services and others, but I can honestly say that with one or two rare and isolated exceptions I have not come across anything to equal or surpass them. They are valuable not only for their literary quality but for their intimate revelation of the spirit of a young lad, caught up in the "horribly involved process of growing up", full of the love of living and with a humble pride in his achievements, and yet ready to lay down his life, if it should be the Will of Allah, for the ideals in which he believed, And through and behind all the exultation there runs a current of nostalgia for his homeland and for those whom he loved and had left behind...

I feel very strongly that the letters should be published and find a permanent place among the records of the RAAF and in the National Library at Canberra; a copy should certainly be placed in the Library at the Hutchins School.

If you do not care to do this yourself may I suggest that you approach the Board which administers the Commonwealth Literary Fund, who would, I am sure be prepared to undertake their publication? Mr Temby is the man to write to; his address is Care of the Prime Minister's Department at Canberra.

Yours sincerely

Wilfrid H. Hudspeth

(Ganson)

**FOREWORD**

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James Bayly Watchorn was educated at Hutchins School, Hobart in Tasmania, and had completed the first year of his law course at the - - - University of Tasmania when at the age of 19 he enlisted with the Royal Australian Air Force in December 1940.

In his letters, written during what he, "Weggie" and "Killer" used to refer to as their "Cook's Tour", he relates his experiences and gives his impressions of people whom he met and places which he visited. He, from time to time, indulges in self-analysis in the process of what he describes as "this interesting business of growing up".

This compilation of his letters follows the appreciation thereof kindly expressed by some friends who read them. Matters of interest to his home folk only and intended by him as such have been omitted.

It is believed that in this form some of his old friends and school mates will find matters of interest and perhaps inspiration herein.

-- Jim's father --

**VIVIT POST FUNERA VIRTUS**

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Cobler's End

11. 1. 47

Dear Erskine

I shall be in a rush to get off to Canberra on Monday and may not see you; so I am writing a note now to thank you for the privilege of reading Jim's letters, which I return. They make a very moving story. It was not my good fortune to know him as a boy - I can see that I should have lost my heart to him - but even without that advantage, the letters by small quiet touches build up a most attractive personality. One can't help regretting that he felt permitted to say so little about his work. A man's work and his attitude to it is generally the most important thing in life, and here the work was of peculiar interest and importance to himself and what he did permit himself to say, I found particularly absorbing and significant. The official obligation of silence seems to have grown to fantastic dimensions. It is reinforced of course, by the natural reticence of the fighting man, if he has any sensitiveness. He generally finds it impossible to write to anyone "outside", to anyone who does not know from experience all the conditions, natural and psychological of his fighting activities; even to his intimate and dearest friend. Talking is now so impossible, after the worst, to the right person in the right atmosphere. But in the last war many men going on leave from France to England found an absolute embargo fell automatically on their tongues in regard to any fighting experience. And probably the same feeling would form itself in regard to all flying in the Air Force. So I'm inclined after all to take Jim's reticence as, at least half, part of the essential man and in no way to be regretted.

Yours

L.F. Giblin

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**I N D E X**  
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- 1940** December 10th. Left Hobart for Somers, Victoria  
 (Initial Flying Training Station)
- 1941** April En route to Durban S.S. Ceramic
- April 25 Arrived Guinea Fowl Aerodrome, Gwelo,  
 Southern Rhodesia (Elementary Flying  
 Training Station)
- July )  
 to ) Thornhill Aerodrome, Gwelo (Intermediate  
 September ) Training Station) - Received wings  
 and appointed to fighters.
- September 29. Cape Town
- October At sea en route to England
- October )  
 November ) St. John, New Brunswick, Canada.
- November Arrived Liverpool, England.
- December On leave - London.
- December 10. Arrived at Operational Training Station,  
 Usworth County Durham.
- 1942.** February Completed training - went on leave.
- March At Camp near Manchester, awaiting embarkation  
 for Air Pool, Cairo.
- April En route to M.E. Disembarked Sierra Leone.  
 Re-embarked for Takoradi, Gold Coast.
- May Flew Hurricane back to Station near Free  
 Town, Sierra Leone.
- September )  
 to ) Special duty in Gambia during time of North  
 December ) African Invasion.  
 Received commission.
- 1943.** December 24 )  
 to ) Station near Free Town, Sierra Leone.  
 April )
- April )  
 May ) Left Sierra Leone and arrived Liverpool,  
 England.
- May )  
 to ) At numerous operational stations in South  
 October ) East England, principally in Kent and  
 Essex. Promoted to Flying Officer.  
 Changed from Spitfires to Typhoons.

Somers, Victoria

12/12/40

Well it's a good place here all right. We sleep in huts on beautiful spring mattresses with pillows and all. 24 in a hut. Ten of our 19 Tasmanians are in this hut. I'm sleeping next to Gerald Roberts. The rest of the chaps are from S.A. The position of this place is wonderful - quite a decent sized river 2-300 yards away and an ocean beach about 100 yards farther on.

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Somers.

1941.

I'm here for another month. I'm through all right and from Thursday will be in the Pool. I will be L.A.C. Watchorn from Thursday - will finish with an average of 80%. We have passed all the work here and they are not allowed to instruct us in any of the work we have at the next station.

There are only about 50 out of our intake of 100 going out and there are many school teachers, bank clerks, accountants &c. amongst them. Up till yesterday we had been working flat out for 15 hours a day.

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Somers.

I don't know what leave I get if I go to Rhodesia. We are dismissed from here and have to report to Embarkation Depot in Melbourne and after that we know nothing. On Tuesday I was Duty Pilot for the Station which means I was rouse-about and messenger boy. However, I did a pretty good bludge as I found my way down to the Rifle Range for one hour and played billiards for another hour and sat on my tail for the rest of the time. On Tuesday night there was a concert - a lot of people from Melbourne - not bad. On Wednesday night I went down to the Read's with Geoff Stackhouse.

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Somers, Tuesday.

Well, I'm definitely going to Rhodesia. They are short of applications to go there and I sent in mine this afternoon. I ought to be home for six days' leave.

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Somers, Tuesday.

This must be a short note as the balloon goes up in about half an hour, i.e. the Pool are going bezerk and are going on.

a wrecking expedition and so naturally won't have much time then. Have booked for Sunday afternoon by the plane. It is a good bet that I will be in Melbourne for several weeks, but the chances of getting home again are 100 to 1 against. I have written to Norma and told her I am coming.

Later - Well, it wasn't a bad show. It all finished up by the guard coming up and rescuing one of the huts as it was being hosed out or should I say hosed up - there will be a few reverberations tomorrow.

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From transport at Melbourne.

Just a note to say my cabin is a clinker - all to myself - nothing much else which I am able to tell you. Must go to sleep as I am 3/4 gone already. Lots of love - Jim.

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S.S. Ceramic  
At Sea. (undated)  
(posted from W.A.)

We have about 21 hours to post letters. The weather has been fairly good and I have not felt even the slightest hint of sickness - quite a number of the boys have been under but most have got their sea legs by now. It is getting a shade rougher - just about enough for the boat to take them green over the forepeak. We are kept to a fairly strict routine.

In our normal daily routine we arise at 6.45 a.m. From 7-7.30 we have P.T. with  $\frac{1}{2}$  hour before breakfast. After breakfast we have till 9.30 to clean up our cabins and have a walk. 9.30 parade inspection &c and lecture till 10.45 when 15 minutes smoke and then lecture again till lunch at 12. At 1.30 p.m. parade and usually sports till 5.15. Change into blues for dinner at 6. Study in cabin from 7 to 8. Lights out 10 p.m.

We have good deck space for a run - ran about 3 miles yesterday. We have sports teams organised. Only later on may we be able to speak of several other important things.

We have not yet been told where we are going to in Rhodesia, but I'm still hoping to get to Salisbury, rather than Bulawayo. I will send you a photo by which you will be able to identify any chap I mention in letters.

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S. S. Ceramic  
Written at sea.  
posted from Durban.

We visited the University (Perth) - its a wonderful place - also went round King's Park.

We have started our watches now. I did my second one this morning from 8.30 to 10.30 which meant that I could not go to Church which was a pity as it was Easter Sunday. My first watch last Thursday was from 00.30 hrs to 02.30 hrs. pretty cold but I had plenty of clothes on. There was excitement last night when we sighted a ship quite close. Personally I slept soundly through the whole incident, but I believe that the reception committee turned out. However both ships both sheered away from one another, so of course things were perfectly O.K. The weather has been fairly good, although for two or three days she was kicking her nose in the air. She shipped a couple of beauties both forward and aft. One forward washed away about 20 ft. of railing and carried away the two forward companion ways and smashed a couple of pots. One aft came aboard on the level of the main deck which is of course 15 ft or so above the well deck and flooded out foremen and some of the crew. At the moment the weather is perfect - a clear sky with a fairly fresh breeze and much warmer than it has been with a very gentle sea. We've not had many competitions in the deck games so far. Our team was beaten in deck hockey, but it was a good tear-in go. We don't get much in the way of fresh fruit but my steward scrounges some extra for me every day. Incidentally things are about square as I don't smoke and the Comforts fund are very generous in that line. There is a piano of sorts aboard which has been brought up from the children's room into the verandah cafe' place but unfortunately there is nobody who can play it much. There is really only one chap (not one of our mob) who can do anything much and he's nothing wonderful. He can sight read very well but hasn't very much expression or feeling. I believe the Director of Music in Durban is aboard but I have not met him and do not get much of a chance to unfortunately.

There is to be some sort of a concert tomorrow, I rather fancy. Have done a lot of reading lately.

There is a possibility that our boat will not connect with the train and that we may have some time to spend before our four days in the train.

Later.

We have had the concert. It was very well got up and as we have a couple of former Radio Announcers in our mob they did the lion's share of the organising and compeering. The whole show went off as a radio programme with a lot of foolery in between the items - stupid advertisements &c. Yours truly was not participating until 5 minutes after the show was scheduled to start, when they informed me I was expected to give an item - and that in front of almost 200 people. However, I managed to play The Moonlight Sonata with only one minor mistake. But goodness knows what it sounded like, as it is a simply frightful piano and what with a trifle natural nervousness and thinking I would forget the next bar all the time, I'm afraid there wasn't much expression in it. Yet it seemed to be appreciated more or less by some who must have been entirely ignorant of music, because the following night some of the passengers requested that I might be allowed to go

up into the main lounge, from which we are barred, and play a few items to them. I would have gone, although the Lord only knows what I would have played, but our O.C., Flt. Lieut. Tilley - upon whom judgment is at present reserved - stopped all worries by saying that I could not. So that was that.

In the evenings I sometimes have a game of poker with 3 or 4 other chaps. It's a terrific school. Although we are not allowed by Air Force Law to gamble, nobody in their right senses imagines that we don't. Well, as I was saying this school is a terrific affair - we play for a whole halfpenny a chip and sometimes get really rash and bet about 6 or 7 chips. But I'm sure we get more fun out of it than some of the others who play for up to 4/- 5/- or 6/- a hand. As a matter of fact, I have played 4 or 5 nights and have amazed them all by winning up to 1/9 each night. In our school, if you win or lose more than that you're really a fright.

At the present day everyone is saying " - - " - in a couple of days and there is naturally a general air of expectation and suppressed excitement about the boat.

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Gwelo. 23th April 194

We arrived yesterday night up here after 2½ days in the train. I am not at Salisbury and did not go there. We were not told where we were going or given a choice but were asked whether we wished to go in light or heavy aircraft. I said light and was posted nominally to Gwelo but we are some distance from the town which is itself very small. The other lot of our chaps were posted to Bulawayo which is quite a decent burg, from what I could see in the hour we had messing around in there yesterday. Gwelo is about 130 miles from Bulawayo and 200 odd from Salisbury, so we are pretty well isolated and we have nothing whatsoever to distract any of our attention from the business in hand - that of learning to bump them gently. We spend six weeks only here if we get through our course all right - then 5 days spell before going to the next station. On graduating from that school one gets another 5 days to have a look round before being posted to a squadron &c.

Out of 40 at Bulawayo I think 15 were scrubbed. They give you every opportunity here - in fact much better than in Australia - instead of having only about 10 hours to go solo in some have had 16 hours. One of the lads I was talking to just now told me that this is supposed to be the best flying station in Africa and not just S. Rhodesia - of course I don't know whether that is true, but I should think conditions would have to be rather favourable to make them come away out here in the back of beyond where running costs would naturally be greater instead of nearer the towns where the country would seem very suitable. Of course as it is, there are hordes of 'dromes round the towns.

When we pass out from here we shall become sergeants



or Cadet-officers with full privileges &c of the acting rank which we hold. This is different from Australia where one only changes from L.A.C. at the very end of the training.

Tomorrow we shall be interviewed by the Chief Flying Instructor and I think the Chief Ground Instructor who with some sort of a board &c will form some sort of opinion of us and make up their minds provisionally with the help of all our papers and any other information which they have about us whether we will be suitable for commissions or N.C.Os (of which of course we shall know nothing) and allot us our flying instructors. We shall be flying from 6 a.m. to 8 a.m. because of that being the best flying time. Tomorrow we shall also be given all our flying kit and will start flying on Tuesday. It will be quite a change to get some mail after 4 or 5 weeks.

We are well provided with sporting facilities - there are 6 or 7 tennis courts - a soccer oval - a rugger oval - a running track - squash courts - a billiard table - table tennis tables - all on the station. We are given picture shows in one of the hangars at times. Tonight it is Chas Laughton in "Beachcomber".

At Durban the boat was kept out in the bay from Saturday evening till Wednesday evening as because of her draught there was only one berth which could accommodate her and that was occupied. For 4 days we sat and baked and looked at Durban. When we landed we had only 4 hours' leave and that at night, so we did not see much of the place.

After 2½ days in the train I don't think even you would have recognised me. I did not know what soot was until I got on these S.A. trains - after a hot bath am now about 2 lbs lighter.

Our quarters here at Gwelo are in small sheds, divided into two separate parts - in each part there are 4 rooms branching off a central hall - each room being about 17' x 11'. Two in each room - wire beds with kapok (hard) mattresses, sheets, pillows and slippers, 3 blankets and a goat's hair bedspread. Each person has a large tin trunk 3' x 2' x 18" and a small cupboard about 3' x 15" x 21" with 3 shelves which can be locked. Even with a table - plenty of room to move about in.

Gwelo 4/5/41

In Rhodesia here we do the same course in 6 weeks as they do in Australia in 8 weeks. As to flying - its absolutely grand. I like it and what's more it likes me. I have not felt sick or windy or anything else and I've been through most of the aerobatics with my instructor - double loops, four barrel rolls in succession spins &c. Its still great. At present I have 4½ hours up and am well in sight of solo - the instructors said that I seem to have mastered the landings and take-offs which are by far the most difficult manoeuvres of the lot. One of our chaps Yelland has gone solo after 5 hours 10 minutes up. I should not be very far behind it. Actually the time in which you go off varies greatly with the instructor you have -

1200 x Elementary Flying Training School

x Guinea Fowl is E.F.T.S. near Gwelo

x Norma's home is near Salisbury in Southern Rhodesia  
for 3 years she at boarding school in Cape Town and Jim at Hutchins School were pen friends

x Initial Training Wing:

some require a minimum of 8 hours - others have the idea of getting you off as soon as possible. My first instructor F/O Shackman, an Englishman, was of first type; always made sure you had very thorough grasp of everything before going on to anything else and meticulous about the very slightest detail - and by gum he could fly and teach his pupil to fly. Unfortunately after about 3½ hours with me he was promoted and sent as instructor to Thornhill, to which I should go on.

The chap I now have is not so particular with details - both are jolly fine chaps.

My time is now 5.54 - about average for the flight and my instructor told me this afternoon I ought to be the first one to go off. This remains to be seen but it shows I can't be doing too badly. No one has yet been scrubbed, but there were 15 scrubbed in the last course.

Sometimes it is quite bumpy - of course a bump in a Tiger is quite different from a bump in a Douglas.

Tomorrow we have a test in airmanship for which we have to know the rules of the air and all the signals used in the signal area. We also have navigation, including plotting and use of instruments.

In Australia I don't think they have to do any more plotting when they go to E.F.T.S. but we do here. We have armaments which include Browning and revolver with a bit about bombs. In Morse we only have to get up to 8 words - also signal procedure airflares engines &c. Through Mr. Jones' coaching I now find I can understand engines easily enough.

I have got to know all the chaps in the contingent by this time and especially those here at Guinea Fowl. I have a great crowd in the end of my hut - Fry and Barrion, Waddell and Hibbs, two very good chaps, and Geof Waugh (Wog) and Foli Major who are really first class chaps. Wog is nearly 26 and so much older but at times you would think he was about 2. He's level-headed and yet acts the fool like the devil. Foli is also a good chap - excellent in fact. He's younger - about 18 months older than myself. I spend more time with these two than anyone really. I also spend quite a bit of time with Lloyd Fox - a very good chap.

I have spoken to Norma on the phone once. I also got a letter from her last Thursday. She lost her father the day we were in Durban and her mother is still not only suffering from shock but also malaria. He was only Norma's stepfather, but from what she says and from what I have heard from her cousin who is here in Guinea Fowl in the Senior course he might just as well have been her natural father. I have met and called several times on her cousin Doug Whyte - a good scout. Norma's brother is now at an I.T.Wing in Bullo.

We have not had a mosquito here so far and won't at this time of the year. Must get down to work for this test tomorrow.

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Guinea Fowl 16/8/41

I will talk about a few things on our trip which I

previously thought it better not to mention.

You will remember me mentioning to you in Melbourne that I had seen French sailors in town. I even hazarded a guess that they might be going with us. Well they did, and there were a fair number of Australian sailors also aboard. The French sailors were from Tahiti and New Caledonia. Some were born in France - some lived all their lives in the colonies - also natives of both Colonies - very different types. A couple of them spoke ~~spoke~~ very good English and they didn't seem to mind us trying to talk French with them - in fact my French got quite reasonably fluent by the time we reached Africa. It helped to pass the time talking with these coves.

They were the toughest looking mob I have ever seen with their half grown beards - sense the interruption but one Barrien has just entered my boudoir clad in his pyjama coat and is searching the camp for his trousers - But there were some damn fine chaps amongst them. I have one address at any rate and intend to drop him a line now and again. He is a full blooded Tahitian, Jean Grand and grand he is - about 6 ft 4 inches and at the least proportionately broad - spoke 6 languages and was a qualified mechanic in which vocation he has enlisted in the Fleet Air Arm - a tremendous chap but really gentle and unpugnacious. He and some of his pals had a guitar aboard and we used to sit out on deck at night and sing English French and Tahitian songs. I have the French words of "Parlez-moi-d'amour" and the words of a couple of Tahitian songs. Especially the last four nights spent outside Durban - there wasn't a breath of wind and it was bright moonlight (though still blackout) and we used to get up on the top of the after hatch in just shorts and shirt and sing for a couple of hours. The Tahitian songs were very like Maori. The Maori's farewell was one of the favourites sung three parts - "Song of the Islands" of course. It was great. They sang in the concert, as did a group of New Caledonians. Of course they were very very different types and the different standard of civilization showed in their music. The Tahitian harmony was O.K. but you could rarely guess where the tune was going as you can in our songs. The Frenchmen also gave an item at the concert. I was a very good friend with Georges Glover - an air-gunner (metrailleux) in the Fleet Air Arm and very interesting to talk to. We used to have long talks in both English and French. Also on board were R.A.N. ratings and men. And it does stand somewhat to the credit of all concerned that not once on the whole trip did I hear a hasty word, let alone any brawls between any of the three services and it is not as if they kept apart. They mixed just as if they belonged to the one service. If there were any evidence required as to the advisability of different services travelling together one could do worse than take the evidence of our trip. Of course when we filed aboard there were the usual comments about "glamour boys" &c., but as soon as we got stuck into a few games of deck hockey with them we managed to dispel any misconceptions they may possibly have had. Included among the passengers were some of the survivors from the "Rangitane" including the Captain (who incidentally was Senior Captain in the Merchant Service and AP.C. to the King by virtue of his position) the Chief Engineer

and other members of the crew. So, as you can imagine, we got a pretty full account of how they were caught in the centre of a square by the three raiders disguised as Japanese and a supply ship. The Captain gave us a talk on it one morning with scale drawings, photos of the raiders and all. It was quite apparent that the raiders knew the date of departure and of course of every ship leaving New Zealand and Nauru &c., for they would tell them the previous day that e.g. they would get "four boats tomorrow" and they were right every time. That information doesn't come from just ordinary laymen like you or me. Incidentally a raider had a rendezvous with our boat when it was outward bound from Perth - but the sailing of our boat was delayed 24 hours for some reason or other and the raider could not catch the British boat which happened to turn up at the right place at the right time.

We have not done much but fly since I last wrote.

I don't think I had gone solo then. Well that went off all right and I'm far enough advanced and able to throw the old kite about a bit now - naturally nothing yet near the ground other than what I am told to do. As long as you get up sufficient height in these crates you can just do what you feel like without any risk at all because at the very worst they only go into a spin and they're easy money. I spent about  $\frac{1}{2}$  hour doing solo spins the day before yesterday - just getting into spins and getting out of them again, which is as easy as falling off a log. Incidentally I believe my instructor Dennis had over 20 planes to his credit in the last war.

The weather is getting cooler now, particularly at night with cool breezes but still no clouds, which seems to be a rare phenomenon here.

Norma's mother has to come down to Gadzama, about half way from Salisbury, next Friday on business and they were going to come on down here for the week end but now they have to be at home that week-end and so unless I could manage to meet them some time on Friday, or perhaps get to Salisbury on Saturday, I don't think anything much can be done. I will ring her up about Wednesday and find out definitely.

Her mother wrote me a very nice letter thanking me for condolences sent and she apologised because they had not been entertaining me. I'm about 200 miles away. She said that if I could meet them on the Friday (at Salisbury) they would drive me out to the farm - another 50 miles - and then if there were no means of me getting back to camp they would send me down in the car with a driver - just a bare 250 miles !!!

It might interest you to know that some days I use more petrol than you did in half a month.

I'm polishing up my billiards and am getting rather proficient - well if not proficient at any rate good enough for the Old Man.

Next week we shall be flying morning night and noon - it certainly makes one very tired -  $4\frac{1}{2}$  hours last Thursday and was just dead beat - had sufficient energy to crawl into bed at 8 p.m. then out next morning 5.30 and sitting dolled up in the plane with engine started at 6.15.

Gwelo 31st. May 1941.

This week things have been very rushed. We have had tests galore and quite a lot of work to do. Thanks ever so much for the Australasians - and are the boys interested. Imagine Wogh (Geoff Waugh) surprise when in one of them he saw a photo of his brother-in-law.

I'm frightfully sorry to hear about John Moore. I don't know that it would do much good and it might be a little impertinent of me to write to his people, although perhaps I could write to Mary.

Menzies is often quoted in B.B.C. news. Australia is referred to with regard to something or other in the paper each day. Of course the new trade agreement between Rhodesia and Australia has been headlines here - it is considered a big thing here. Flying is quite up to standard. In fact I think I have made a bit quicker progress than most of the others, although of course I don't claim to be flying better.

Last Wednesday I started aerobatics - these are good fun and not terrifically hard but apart from giving you confidence in the plane and practice in the actual handling they are quite useless.

Last Saturday Dennis was away so the Flight Commander took me up. Boy! I really had some fun and turned it on for him. With flying everyone is temperamental and it just so happened that I couldn't go wrong this day. Everything right up to slow rolls, which are the most difficult manoeuvres we do here, went like clockwork. Now the last time I had taken him up was just before going solo and as you will remember I made a horrible hash of it. The result was that on Saturday he was not a little agreeably surprised, in fact so surprised that he asked me afterwards "How much flying had you had before you came into the Air Force, Watchorn". I replied "None, sir". He seemed a little incredulous just for a moment and said "None at all?" to which I replied "Only a passenger flight in a 21 seater Douglas, Sir". "Oh well, that's good then - very good" - this from Hall was something because it has to be good before he says anything. All this sounds horribly conceited but it is not really because I realise as much as anybody else that we are only at the first hurdle. Still - as you can imagine - I was tickled pink, especially as there was only one other pupil doing aerobatics on the station and I had quite a bit under the average number of hours. Even now, a week later, there are only 5 or 6 of us doing solo slow rolls. So I suppose a chap can be excused a little humble pride.

Later. Well, the big event so far as flying goes occurred for me today - the balloon went up with a vengeance - the final Chief Flying Instructor's test. Actually I had to be the man to have the first test of the whole course - I had something like 37 hours up - there were others with anything up to 45.

Well, he put me through everything - EXCEPT AEROBATICS which I kid myself I had hooked on to better than almost anyone else and which I had been practising assiduously for a week. Just my luck. Dennis later asked him how I got on in my slow rolls and he said "Oh, I didn't think he would have done them". I think Dennis went to some pains to tell him that I had been on them for a week and so perhaps I didn't lose much by it. Everything

else the C.F.I. said was satisfactory, except the approach to a field in a forced landing which you have to practice. Actually I could easily have got in the field but messed my approach. I realised this and told him so at the time. However, if he only complained of this the test must have been fairly right. Dennis told me later that I had nothing at all to worry about and that he was very pleased (We are not told by the C.F.I. anything as regards the result of our tests.)

Barrien had his test later. He has about 45 hours up. However, from what he says he made a mess of it. He was unlucky as he had worse conditions than I and this is very disconcerting. He didn't blame this, but just said he couldn't do a thing. I can understand and sympathise as I was the same on my Flight Commander's test. However, he is the Flt/C's own pupil so they know he can fly better than the show he put up today. As a matter of fact, he flies well.

The only other thing of interest in the flying line is that I have had night flying with just a line of flares to land by not really as difficult as it sounds - only an hour or so far - again next Monday night. In Australia I don't think you start night flying under sixteen weeks. We only do this dual on this station. It is wonderful up there at night - as smooth as velvet. Last Thursday night when I was on it was perfectly clear, but as it was just a new moon and that had gone down it was pretty dark. I only hope it is moonlight next time. I'm curious to know what it looks like.

You know this is a wonderful country in one respect - it never rains when it isn't supposed to. We have not seen a drop of rain - visibility here is very good - rarely any cloud at all. I believe that when it does rain it rains in earnest. Also I'm told that winter is very late this year and we should be getting frosts galore. Gwelo is the coldest spot in all Rhodesia and it is quite fresh enough at 5.30 a.m. I'm told flying starts at 5 a.m. at Thornhill.

The only bad weather at present is an occasional Gooley - this is a layer of low cloud (right on the ground) usually blown along by a S.E. wind - brings no rain but quite a thick fog and comes down dangerously suddenly. On Friday all flying was washed out because of one - the first day we have had no flying.

Re ground subjects. Airmanship and sigs will be all right - armaments all right after a bit of work. Navigation is going to be very very stiff. The percentage that failed last exam was enormous, chiefly because it was a very unreasonable paper - I only hope that the shindy that has been stirred up will have a good effect on our paper.

I know for certain I will not be recommended for a commission. This does not mean I'll never get one. Very many get a commission after they have seen 6 months service. I happen to know that my instructor recommended me but that the Flt/Comdr is not recommending anyone from our Flight. I have not been on any black lists or made any faux pas that I know of, but still there it is. Of course, the Flt/Comdr does not have the final say which rests with the C.F.I. and G.G.I. but his no would be quite sufficient. Naturally I am a little disappointed as it is an honour worth striving for. I think I am certain to get on to

fighters. Dennis asked me today what I wanted to go on and he said "Very well, I'll recommend you for fighters". This suits me . . . . . By the way only two of us get above average in our flying.

. . .

Victoria Falls Hotel  
13 June 1941.

We have had our exams. Arrangements and Morse are sodas but I'm not so sure about either Airmanship or Navigation. If I fail in Nav. I shall have to go back to Guinea Fowl for another three weeks, and would thus be back a course. Will know next Tuesday. Since last writing the only thing doing was work, except that on Saturday night there was a dance on out at the camp but we didn't want to go. As for some reason or other there was not going to be any tea that night and the canteen was not opening we - although we didn't have passes - we did a mizzle into Gwelo - cadged a lift and had a rousing good meal at one of the local pubs and then back to camp for the bioscopes (movies for the uninitiated) but as they had been on at 6 p.m. back we went to Gwelo and amused ourselves quite successfully.

On Tuesday p.m. we packed up and went over to Thornhill. Things are rather different over there -

- (1) We will now be flying not perambulators but modern aircraft.
- (2) It is more of a service station.
- (3) We are all now acting/sergts and live in the Sergts mess.

We do not receive any extra pay and are really only given this rank to enable us to live in the Sergts mess.

We are all on fighters. I believe it is usual to pass out as a Sgt/Pilot when on light a/c.

Thornhill is much closer to Gwelo. I should be there for three months. After 6 weeks I should get 10 days' leave.

I had intended to go up to Salisbury for this leave and had arranged to take Peter Waddell with me. Then I phoned South African C - Society, where Norma boards at Salisbury, and was told she was sorry she was not there but her boy friend had just arrived from Thornhill on final leave. I couldn't get hold of her before Monday night - too late for railway warrants. On Monday night I phoned her and told her I had arranged to come here as a visit from me at such a time would appear to be inopportune. She was rather surprised &c &c. I suppose it was very rude really, but at any rate I have written and apologised. I shall have much more chance of getting there for a week end from Thornhill - in fact it is quite common for an instructor to fly up with you and fly back on Sunday night. There are plenty of good dromes at Salisbury to take care of the plane and it is all instruction for us and both instructor and pupil get a break. It is not as if the planes were being used for transport. Incidentally it's much more comfortable doing the 180 miles in about 1½ hours instead of 9-10 hours in the train. There is a chance of this and quite a good chance of a lift.

We left Thornhill at about 4 p.m. Wednesday.



Went into town, tried to edge a lift down to Bulawayo but could not, so after dinner went to pictures and straight on to train at 12.30 - no sleeping material for some unknown reason, so were cold as banking on bedding we had not brought overcoats. However we lived through it and arrived at Bul'ye at 6.30 a.m. King's Birthday (holiday). Went to The Selbourne Hotel where we knew two of the boys were staying - went to their rooms, had bath and scrub up and breakfast.

In hotel foyer I noted "The Bul'ye Rotary Club holds its weekly luncheon here every Friday". So I asked the Manager who was the Secretary - he told me and asked why. I explained Dad was one of the brand and I had a letter of introduction. He then said he was a Rotarian. Unfortunately conversation was interrupted and I had to run off to another railway station at Komale outside Bul'ye.

We left Bul'ye at 2.30 p.m. and arrived at the Falls at 6.30 this morning.

Came to this super posh hotel where we stop at half rates with the result that they lose on the deal - we do eat our share. After bath and breakfast we set out for the Falls; not quite visible from hotel, being round a bend, but the bridge is only a couple of hundred yards from one end of the Falls.

The native name for the Falls "the smoke that thunders" is very apt as when in the train this morning the spray was visible for perhaps 10-15 miles back. It rises from the bottom of the gorge 400 ft to the level of the surrounding bundu and then at least another 300 feet early in the morning.

The Falls are twice as high and twice as long as Niagara and 120,000,000 gallons go over the edge every minute. We are here at the time when there is most water in the old Zambesi, but this is not the best time to see the Falls as the result is so much spray that you can't see them properly.

They are most awe inspiring and no description could give you any idea whatsoever of their size. To my mind the most remarkable thing is the way in which the water just drops into space - there are no cataracts - sorry there is one "The Devil's Cataract" but elsewhere the water drops straight through the whole 400 ft. Next - apart from the immense length  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles and the height - is the way in which it just drops into a hole. The surrounding bundu is perfectly flat and then all of a sudden the river just drops into this long hole about 100 yards wide at the most and this hole runs right along the Falls and leads the river away through a very very steep gorge - all cut out of solid rock - Several theories how it originated - volcanic &c. The only one I could believe is that of a fault when a long block of earth just dropped. I have quite a few snaps taken under difficulties because of the spray and will send them to you - also a few post cards and series.

We leave on return trip of 500 miles tomorrow at 9.30 a.m. Return ticket is £2.7.6 and 12/6d per day board not bad. Tomorrow night in train and Sunday only get to Gwelo about midnight and will have to be up at 5 a.m., but it's all worth it one hundred times.

Thornhill, 2 July 1941

Things very rushed these days - no time to ourselves e.g. yesterday P.T. at 5 a.m. lectures 5.30-8.30 Flying 9.30-12.30, swotting for a test 1.30-3 p.m. lectures 3.30-5.30, lecture 7.15-8.15. Last week I did finally get up to Salisbury and saw Norma.

Re flying - it is O.K. I got through my E.F.T.S. exams though very poorly. Flying these fast crates is not easy and of course never will be as easy as flying a moth in which you can do anything and still get away with it, but it is now getting very much easier. They are actually quite safe so long as you treat them right and keep your head and your memory screwed on. My word you go a long way in a little time and use a lot of juice. I used 100 gallons myself yesterday.

Apart from actual flying the other work is getting more interesting as it is not all theoretical and many of the instructors are actually off operations and so have something to tell you to keep the subject interesting. We had tests yesterday and Monday - not bad - only progress tests - we do our wings exams in just over 3 weeks time.

Last Saturday there were inter-station sports at Salisbury and so I used the opportunity of being a spectator to get up and see Norma. Left Owele at 7.45 on Friday night and arrived Salisbury at 6 a.m. I did not know quite whether to stay in Salisbury and phone Norma at S.A.C.S. House about 7.30 just before she went to work or whether to go on out to Belvedere with the other boys and ring her later. However, I didn't really have to make up my mind because while I was just standing on the platform somebody came up and said "I suppose you are Jim" "Yes, I suppose you are Norma", and that was that.

As it was still early Norma who had her mother's Buick ran me round Salisbury a bit and out to Belvedere and Cranbournes - two R.A.F. stations - and then back to Meikles Hotel where I met her mother. We had breakfast and then Norma went to work. I spent the morning with Mrs. Moore (Norma's mother) and George, her brother, running round town and in fact buying a car for George and Norma.

George is in the R.A.F. (Rhodesian actually) and is just about to start his E.F.T.S. and so has not much longer at home. He is 19 I think - short and a jolly good sort. Norma by the way is still not at all well as her heart is not too good and she has a wretched disease called Balhousia caught from a germ in the water - very prevalent in this country. She says she is feeling the better for injection. Well we, Mrs. Moore, another R.A.F. chap named Bryan someone and self had lunch at Meikles and soon afterwards Mrs. Moore and her two year old son Joseph and the black Nannie went round to S.A.C.S. House to collect Norma. I rode Norma's bicycle round much to some people's amusement and my own enjoyment. We then went out and picked up Mrs. Moore's uncle - a retired doctor - and set out for Monendo Farm, Mrewa i.e. home. It is

about 70 miles from Salisbury in an E N E direction and about 18 miles out in the bundu on past Mrewa. The country near Salisbury or out in this direction at any rate is very pretty and not at all like the plain flat bundu round here. There are plenty of hills and wonderful kopjes rising sheer for about 800 ft - great bare solid masses of rock often with a native village on the top of the smaller ones - these "munts" round here "build" in the most peculiar places.

We arrived at the farm just before 6 p.m. and were followed almost immediately by George, his girl friend Gracie (a real wag - young stupid and very gay and very good company), Bryan and Marie (or the Portuguese equivalent - at any rate some horribly involved name) Norma's cousin. It was just about dark when we arrived and the first thing we did was to eat. After tea we sat round the fire and then played pontoon at which Norma won 3/- and I won 2/-, all the others losing - got to bed at 11.30 after a deal of confabbing.

You know that I said before I left that I feared that the whole family might be a little too "high class" for me, too much money &c. From what I gather there is certainly no lack of that and George and Norma are probably really spoilt by their mother, but neither shows the slightest sign of it, thank goodness. The whole atmosphere of the place was just that of an ordinary family home and so you can imagine that I enjoyed myself after three months of speaking only to chaps in uniform, more or less. There was no formality and a chap didn't have to be on his best behaviour all the time - he could crack a joke without feeling that he had dropped the water jug.

Mrs. Moore is a born business woman, but one whose business is not her only interest - she's just too kind and soft towards her children - and others for that rate.

Though rather more apprehensive than nervous of meeting her, I was immediately at ease as soon as I spoke to her. Her husband having died about 4 months ago she is of course very busy - but she can take it and I should imagine cope with it too. George I also liked very much - quiet sometimes, or rather usually, but not averse to a bit of ragging.

Now I suppose you want to know what I thought of Norma - the idea of keeping you guessing appeals very much to my sense of humour. I know you are all curious. Actually, I liked her very much as I had expected to, both from her letters and phone conversations. She has a very good speaking voice and seems to have her issue of common sense. She is interested in things, other than her own pleasure, and would be very popular with everyone, as I had heard she was before I went up there and so I can well believe now. They all made me thoroughly comfortable and made me believe that they liked me - so so far as that's concerned I'm happy.

On Sunday morning 7.30 Norma, George and I went for a ride round the farm. I can thoroughly recommend chasing buck and baboons on horseback - we galloped for almost a full hour out of the 1½ hours that we were out. After breakfast we all played tennis - a good gravel court very like the courts at New Town and a damn fine surface too. What one can do with plenty of munts to do the work! Played tennis all day until we left at 4.30 p.m. George, Bryan, Marie, Gracie, Marie &c.

self in the car we bought on Saturday morning - a 29 V8 - 15000 miles - arrived in town not long before my train left. It left alright but I wasn't in it because as we were walking along the platform beside it as it pulled out they had the idea that they would run me down the line to Norton, 20 miles away, and catch the train there, which all worked out very nicely. Arrived Gwelo 5 a.m. Monday after a cold night and I missed the R.A.F. tender to camp. However I managed to get a lift and was flying by 6.15. Funnily enough that morning I went best part of the way to Salisbury - instrument flying under the hood.

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[Norma wrote on 3rd. July 1941 reporting on Jim's visit: "Jim is well and full of beans ----- We spent a glorious week end, the only pity being that it wasn't long enough - but then the saying goes that "all good things must come to an end". You can imagine how pleased Mum and I were. Its very seldom that pen pals meet and then "hit it off". Well we met and spent a lovely week end and finally we are now longer "pen pals". Mum and I quite agree that Jim is really an A.1 lad and you can be proud of him. In about 3 weeks we are expecting him up here for his five days' leave.")

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Thornhill 16 July 1941.

As regards progress in flying - I'm not quite as thrilled as I was - am still battling along alright and don't think there is much chance of being scrubbed but I have not gone ahead as quickly on these machines as I did on the Moths. I don't think it is because of the a/c but I have had 7 different instructors since flying these crates. One instructor never knows how much one has covered with the other instructors and each one gets some getting used to, not only in the way of flying but temperament as well. I think however I can manage average alright. Time will tell. We shall be having our C.F.I.'s test very soon now.

Gwelo though one of the "bigger" towns of Rhodesia is regarded even by Rhodesians with abhorrence. Some of the country round here is cleared but it is not pasture - the grass is coarse and very thick and at present a dull brown. Remember the rains don't come till Octoberish (lasting till February) and everything has to be burnt off before then. I believe the country would be a picture during and after the rains if it wasn't for the mud which is hopeless. The grass then in this district grows up to 3 feet. The soil is not really good. It turns up quite well but it is unworkable for about 9 months of the year - for 5 months (I think) it is a

quagmire and for about 4 months before the rain it is like concrete. The nights are quite cool - about 52° when we get up for P.T. some mornings - but in the daytime the sun though not being anywhere near unbearably hot is quite warm. And one doesn't have anything but blue sky. Even the uncleared country is not wooded as an Australian would understand it. The normal sized tree here is about 25-30 ft and as uninteresting as our Tea Tree. Naturally they are not all the one type - there is any amount of hay but no market of course. Mealies is grain of course but cattle would be the chief business apart from mining, which is the backbone of the country - the whole country is enormously rich. Every mineral under the sun is mined. About 10 minutes from Gwelo by plane is "One One" where is situated the richest gold mine in the country - the Globe and Phoenix - It has paid 300% in dividends in 40 years and produced 2662000 oss. of fine gold from 2744000 tons of ore milled up to 1938. Here, unlike in Australia, all the mining is done in small holdings and they are as thick as ants in an anthill - most of it is private speculation. It should be a land of great opportunity of making money quickly but one would want to clear out as soon as you had the cash as the cost of living is extortionate. Kkaki stockings, of which we have to wear a great many, 7/6d. per pair. By the way, by far the greater part of the workings are on the surface and as soon as that gives out they just move on somewhere else. I should think that the country will at some not far distant date either come a terrible cropper, when all these surface workings give out, or the industry will cease to be a field for private speculation and will become the concern of large companies.

Round Gwelo itself it is as flat as a table which makes possible corking dromes, but further out - say 20 miles - there are quite a few hills - no large mountains, i.e. not very high above the normal level of 4800 feet but there are hundreds of kopjes - just great masses of rock of all shapes.

Sheep are unheard of as the seasons are too extreme - they would all die of foot rot in the wet season. I believe the rainfall is about 30-40 inches in about 4 months and not another drip the rest of the year.

Of the fauna - there are monkeys, about 1 dozen kinds of buck, leopards in the hills all around, crocs in many of the rivers, lions, elephants, giraffe, rhinos, zebras further out, hippos, and great wild dogs. Of the birds, storks are quite common, kites (a small vulture effort) tall secretary birds standing 3' 6" high and much the shape of a fighting cock with long muscular lean legs, and white guinea fowl which live much the same and are a heavy sort of native hen. Some quail and wood pigeons. But in comparison with Australia, birds just don't exist in this country. I don't think I've heard a bird sing since I've been here.

On the political side, about all I know is that Parliament sits in Salisbury. Of the social side, as far as Gwelo is concerned, there might not be one local inhabitant. I don't mean that the people are inhospitable - as a matter of fact some of us are going out to afternoon tea tomorrow with a chap, who I think is interested in Toc H. But you must remember that the place is choc-a-bloc with R.A.F. and there are just not enough people to be hospitable.

By the way, there are Toc H hostels in Salisbury

B'wayo and Gwelo - I have been in there a couple of times for a cup of coffee. At present my financial position is rather critical so don't be surprised if about a fortnight from now you receive a wire for a few pounds. I have 2/7d (they don't have halfpennies here - shows how rich they all are) at present and am owed 2/3 which I would class as a good debt, seeing that it is my room mate Foll Major who borrowed it. Pay day is Friday, but £3.18.0 will hardly be enough to go on leave with in a fortnight's time.

Funny you should mention Gerald Roberts' last news being 3½ hours night flying in a bomber. I'm doing 2 hours myself tonight though in a fighter.

It would give you all a great deal of pleasure and more confidence (if you needed it) to hear a few of the things we manage to hear regarding the air strength and development in Britain. We've been giving Jerry merry hell over the last 3-4 weeks but it's nothing to what is coming to him. The new types &c and armaments &c are really staggering. The mere fact that there are 4 or 5 types of bombers alone kept as a surprise packet is enough without the hoardes of new fighters. A chap can feel proud that he is privileged to be part of this scheme with its organisation and gigantic proportions.

By the way, Foll Major's brother is 2 I.C. to Bruce Watchorn in Egypt. Bruce is very popular but has unfortunately been very ill. It's a small world.

Last Friday night, one of the boys comes in to me and says "Do you want a trip to Salisbury for the week end?" and I said "What do you think?" So it was arranged and I flew up with a Sergt. Arnold, now my instructor, arriving about 1 p.m. I went straight to Meikles Hotel and was told that Mrs. Moore was in Room 18. I nearly fell over as I didn't even know whether Norma would be in town as I had only been able to send a bare message that I was coming. However, it turned out that they were in town for the week end as Uncle, Aunt and cousins from the Free State were coming up for a holiday on the Sunday morning. So I had lunch with Mrs. Moore and Norma and then Norma and a girl from S.A.C.S. House went out to collect George at Mount Hampden (E.F.T.S. camp) and another R.A.F. chap. Then we all went and collected another girl with tons of baggage, bedding, provisions &c., who was going out to spend the week end with her husband, a Lieut. engaged building a bridge out in the bush. Came back to town and the three of us boys accompanied Norma to tea at S.A.C.S. House. Later we returned and collected Norma and two other girls and pushed off to a dance at the Grand Hotel. Incidentally it was a long week end. In fact the big week end as it was Rhodes' and Founder's holiday on the Monday and Tuesday. Dance went off quite well - very well in fact. All the Wing Commanders and blue blades about the place were there and it just didn't mean a thing. They got quite as much as they gave in the old fashioned waltz. Just because a fellow had three of his own instructors there it was no reason to cramp his style. And the time I got to bed is just my business - if Mum wants to know tell her "late". Incidentally we joined another party at the dance.

I spent the night with George out at his grandmother's place - you see I've got the system well taped.

Next day we went out to Benduna 60 miles N.E. of Salisbury past Mazoe dam and richest Mazoe Valley - richest in Rhodesia. Was shown over one of their gold mines and returning to Salisbury just after 4 p.m. to fly home. Just as well it takes less than an hour or we would have just about been landing in the dark. Yes, altogether I enjoyed myself.

Wings exams in 10 days and so work!!! I am going to Salisbury for five days in 10 days time.

Enclosed are verses by our Flt/Cmr who is here worshipped by almost all -

### Bundu Blues

Back at home they've got the Hun,  
With his land mines and his fun  
And his bombs that may or may not have a fuse  
And they never have a doubt what the war is all about  
And they never get the Bundu Blues.

-----  
There the Bomber Bombers bomb  
And the Fighter Fellahs fight  
And the folks sit back and listen to the news  
And they're happier by far  
Than are we in Africa  
With its bogey bogey Bundu Blues.

---  
Here you mustn't fly too low  
And you mustn't fly too high.  
You can't even do a twissel if you choose  
Or they'll run you up to Group  
And you'll find you're in the soup  
With a basin full of Bundu Blues.

-----  
The whole blessed country panders  
To --synthetic Wing Commanders  
Who have never heard a bomb drop in their lives.  
They've pinched all the finest quarters  
For their mud-complexioned daughters  
And their pompous garden-party-minded wives.

---  
So if you should have a voice  
In a free unbiassed choice.  
Well now, which do you think you'd rather choose,  
The Bombs? or the Big Brown Bellyaching  
Brassed off Blackbottomed Bundu Blues.

Monondo Farm,

30 July 1941.

Well, the exams are finished for a time at any rate. Its hard to judge how you got on. The papers were all relatively easy, but that's no indication of success so far as I am concerned. I can honestly say that I knew the work but as you

know I always manage to get about 20% of what I know on the answer papers. Will not know the result for about 5 days till we get back to the Station on Monday, although there is just a chance we may be able to find out in Salisbury from Squadron Leader Humphries, who is R.A.A.F. Liaison Officer for the Rhodesian Training Group. If I get through I shall have got my wings although I shall not be able to wear them or anything like that until I have finished my A.T.S. which means another 6 weeks. If I don't get through I shall have to sit for them again in three weeks time. Failing in one subject one can sit for that subject again but if in more than one whole lot over again.

Well, I am out here at the farm. You just can't imagine the change of the peace and quiet after the constant drone of aero engines. Incidentally the planes we fly now make a terrific row - much more than a Spitfire or even twin-engined bombers. On the Station planes are going from 4.30 a.m. till 2 a.m. and as you can imagine one gets very sick of the noise. It is not till you creep away into the Bundu for a few days that you realise the difference. At present it is 7 a.m. I have had a bath and shave and am sitting out on the front balcony listening to ducks, turkeys, fowls, love birds and an occasional bird from the Bundu. There are two fox terrier pups having a romp on the lawn in front and the Munt is cleaning the stairs, otherwise there's not a sound as no one else is up yet. It's so quiet that you can hear it.

I had arranged with Norma to bring Poll Major out here with me but when we got to Salisbury Geoff Waugh and Peter Waddell came too, so there are four of us here. Mrs. Moore had to go into town yesterday - we came here yesterday. Marie Jose' (Norma's cousin) and her mother (Mrs. Moore's sister) came out and are staying till Friday. I fancy Mrs. Moore will be back today.

Last Tuesday we left the Station at 6.15 p.m., had tea (or to go all Rhodesian "supper") in Gwelo and caught the train to Salisbury at 7.45. Take it from me that I'm all out for this new fangled bird game, seeing that by those means it takes just about 1/12 of the time to get up here. Arrived at Salisbury at 6 a.m. and Norma was there with the car. There was not much to do so she took the 4 of us - or rather the 4 of us took her - to have some coffee at a coffee place and then we drove round and showed the boys something of Salisbury. Breakfast and then the 4 of us walked with Norma to S.A.C.S. (got it at last, South African Colonisation Society) House and had breakfast there with between 25-30 girls.

After breakfast we did a few things in town - met Marie Jose' and her mother, later met Mrs. Moore and did a few more things in town and left for here about 1 o'clock, arriving here about 3.30 p.m. and had a brush up and cup of tea &c.

Geoff and Peter had a game of tennis and Norma and I fixed up the power plant with petrol, to get which we had to go in a lorry and get it from the farm store about 1/2 mile away - otherwise not much doing before tea (sorry again, "supper"). After tea we talked and had some music and got to bed about 10 p.m. I was a bit later as I had to go out and switch the motor off when all were abed. Usually they switch it off from the house but at present the switch is undergoing repairs.



I have taken some photos of the farm and the family here and will send them when I get the prints.

Everything round here is very dry at present, including the garden. In fact it is only a young garden and the trees are not by any means full grown. You would love the poinsettias - I think they grow all their own vegetables - there is a very nice vegetable garden down the road a little just burst with cabbages and cauliflowers - Oh Boy, are they any good! The orchard is very young but we have quite a bit of fruit here, though I don't know where it comes from. Have posted a "Pictorial Rhodesian" with pencil notes through it telling you where I have been &c.

Norma has just put her head out of the window and said, "Give them my love" - so you've had it folks.

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Wed. 6th August 1941

Sorry this has not been finished before but life did become a bit hectic, both out at Mondo, in Salisbury and here when we got back, as I shall go on to explain.

Last Thursday after breakfast we all went over to Rochester, a farm 4 miles away, owned by Mrs. Moore and which is the most important part of their farm actually, because it produces all the tobacco. Mondo dealing mostly with mealies and cattle. Unfortunately the tobacco crop had just been washed up and sent off to market. A very fine crop this year and prices are high. Waddell, and Wog rode over while the rest of us went in the Ford. While over there Major and Dick Upton went out to try and shoot a croc which lives nearby but he wasn't at home. Incidentally they use a Mauser 7 m.m. which with a soft nose will go through  $\frac{1}{2}$ " plate steel at 100 yards. Norma and I rode back. In the afternoon Waddell and Major went shooting with Dick but only got one rabbit, which are really rare here. The rest of us played tennis. In the evening Dick came over for "supper" and we again played pontoon, Norma and I again winning.

On Friday Marie José and her mother went back to town and Mrs. Moore arrived just before tea time. We played tennis and lazed on the lawn listening to the gramophone all day. We packed up early that night as Mrs. Moore was very tired.

On Saturday morning we again played a lot of tennis and of a very high order. Norma and I were playing against Wog and Waddell. Woggie beats me about 6-4 and Waddell and I are about a match for one another. Norma plays a very good game - if you remember she was in her school team for 2 years. It so happened we all were in form. I also took some photos. After lunch we four boys and Norma came into Salisbury and Wog and Waddell caught the train back to camp at 7.30 p.m. Major and I went to a house warming party with the mob including Gordon Lunden, Arne Arneson (a Norwegian) Andre - (a Free Frenchman) Tommy - and a few others who were in training at Habanyah(?) in Iraq when the trouble was on there. Some of them had been flying up there - against Heinkels too - and the rest were in action on the ground. Now they have been sent down here to finish up - and fine crowd of chaps. I think that all the Frenchmen that we have pinched a plane in Syria and did a mizzle into Palestine or Transjordan.

Some of them were pretty game as they had only flown Moths before and got away in a big troop carrier - or something of that sort.

Finally got to bed about 5 a.m. - stayed with Major at Meikles "that night". - Next morning I went with Marie Jose and collected Norma and returned to Meikles. The others all went out to the house which we had warmed the previous "evening". Major and I were due to catch the train at 7.20 so with Norma later went and had a mixed grill - the first meal any of us had had since 7 p.m. the previous day. When we returned to the hotel we found that Auntie Maud & Co had decided to go down to Biwayo to meet Marie Jose's sister Belle. So at 8.35 p.m. Auntie Maud, Marie, Norma, Gordon Lunden and self left. The other boys with Major had left about an hour previously. It is just on 200 miles and as we travelled slowly because the other boys were in a second-hand car, we did not arrive at camp till about 3 a.m. and we were up flying at 6 a.m.

Monday, Auntie Maud & Co decided they would meet Belle in Gwelo and so we had dinner at the Midlands in town and were back in camp at 9.30 p.m.

Tuesday, up for P.T. at 4.50 but as often happens no instructor - we take a poor view of that. Lectures and flying during the day with an hour's sleep in the afternoon. In the evening I again went into town and had dinner with them and back by 9.30. Today I have been waiting for a flip since 6.15 and it is now 8 a.m. This afternoon is sports afternoon. The mob are returning to Salisbury tonight, Belle having arrived at 2 a.m. today.

This is all very interesting of course, but what is really important is that I have passed my wings exams. How well or badly, I do not know. We have no more real exams now, only a couple of tests which it pays to get good marks in, but which would not cause a chap to be utterly damned. So I have only about 6 weeks to go here, then some more leave and then where to the Lord only knows.

Waddell and Major plugged their Navigation and so we'll be separated for a time at least. Weggie, Barnes and quite a number of the chaps are still with me. Am going to cable for some money today - I'm stoney broke in fact 10/- down and we have a week to pay day. Flying pay is out out now and so we don't get any lump sum when we finish our course as we ought to and £3.16.0 a fortnight soon goes in this place - especially if a round of drinks costs you 9/- or 10/-.

Sheerle for the present - between you and me life's not too bad !!!

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Thornhill August 17th.

About the Munts. At first I was smased at what I considered their harsh treatment. I no longer stand aghast when someone speaks to them in a very commanding tone. They are a very poor type round here - nothing like the fine types you get both North and South. They must be about the poorest of the Bantu tribe. Some show some signs of having a glimmer of

intelligence - others are just plain dumb. The fact is you get sick and tired of the sight of them and their stupidity. What's more they don't always respond to kind treatment either. They think you are soft and treat you accordingly, taking tremendous liberties. I may have become hard hearted but I must say I agree with the locals' ideas of - metaphorically speaking - carrying a big stick, even if you don't use it.

Am ever so pleased to hear about John Moore (i.e. he was safe though a prisoner of war).

About the Wings Exam. I got through with average marks for our school which was above the average for the whole Rhodesian Air Training Group.

In Navigation I got the lowest permissible mark in the theory side, but did sufficiently well in the practical part - the plotting - to get through quite easily.

Speaking of the world being a different place when this show is all over, I often think that we shall all be different. Sometimes I wonder whether I am getting coarsened by the constant camp life, but then I get some leave, mix with ordinary people leading ordinary lives again and find that I'm not really much worse than I used to be. We do manage to get into homes from time to time, but most of all I kid myself that I have chosen some jolly good friends amongst the chaps and I would relish an opportunity of bringing any one of my more intimate friends home to a meal.

Today the "Aussie" pupils have played "The Rest" pupils tennis - 4 pairs each. Aussies 1st Pair - Righetti & Yelland (both Melbourne A. Grade)  
2nd. Pair Waugh and myself  
3rd Pair Waddell & Robertson V.B.  
4th. Pair Wright L.D. & Macfarlane

It was a shame actually, we only lost one match in 15 and that was 5 - 6. Waugh and self won our first 6 - 4 2nd 6 - 1 and third 6 - 0. The total games were 84 - 26. Next week we throw down the gauntlet to the Officers.

I hope to get to Salisbury again next week.

S. Rhodesia 29 August '41.

We have finished lectures and are now getting on to interesting work e.g. gunnery and bombing, in which you can see the results of months of training. Formation flying is also wonderful fun. When I started flying and the instructors went in formation within say 2 yards, I was amazed and thought what sees they were. Now I get quite as close myself when conditions are good. It is purely a matter of practice and an average amount of nose and ability. The turns in formation need constant practice because, as you can imagine, the variation of 1° means a lot in terms of feet when travelling at speeds up to 150 m.p.h. and it will mean a lot more when the speeds are doubled. I have never concentrated but have as much as is necessary with this, but it is the most interesting work I have ever done. The Air Officer commanding the Rhodesian Training

Group is inspecting the station so as you can imagine all the spit and polish round the place has been put into use.

We have had three days of inspection. I have finished my night flying in which branch I seem to have been fairly successful. Last Monday I went up with the Flight Commander and did landing with headlights only. He seemed very agreeably surprised and especially when I managed them successfully solo. So there is a chance I may be recommended for night fighters, but have no idea yet whatsoever.

Yesterday we had our interview with O.C., A.T.S. which contributes towards allocation to types postings and recommendations for commissions.

Last week end I got up to Salisbury with 3 of the chaps who, as I mentioned before came down from Iraq. We went up in "Minnie" a £25 Chev, shortly to be sold for about £60 - a fine car. We did the 180 miles in 4 1/2 hours running time, leaving at 3.15 p.m. and arriving about 8.30. The brakes are not really wonderful, the springs are very weak and there is much too much slack in the steering for these trips. All the roads here are gravel with 2 strips of bitumen about 18" wide down the centre. The strips are very necessary in the rainy season. It was quite tiring work though driving about 90 m.p.h. in the dusk and dark. But altogether Minnie is a damned fine car.

Norma and Marie Jose met us at Molkles. We went round to the Windsor Hotel, booked rooms and then round to Auntie B's, eventually hobbling home somewhere about midnight.

Saturday morning, I spent with Norma doing her mother's shopping and business. Mrs. Moore was in hospital but is about again now and has gone to Beira in Portuguese East Africa. After shopping we went to the hospital to see her - then to lunch at a friend's home where Norma was taking care of her baby brother Joseph. In the evening we went to a party at the same place as the party which broke up at 4 a.m. a few weeks ago. This party however I quite enjoyed. Norma had to go fairly early in case Joseph woke, so we went home, had supper and I eventually got home a little before the milk. Drove myself home in the Buick in which I returned next morning when we went to see Mrs. Moore and we left soon after lunch as we had to be bombing early on Monday, so did not want to be travelling through the night. My share in petrol and a few "extras" etc came to 18/- and board only cost me 16/-, which wasn't bad.

Owelo 14 Sept. 1941

We expected to get away from here yesterday, but are being kept a little longer. I expect to see Norma on Tuesday. (Salisbury) Rhoda and Mr. Watson the following Thursday (Jo'burg) and perhaps Mr. Just (Cape Town) on the following Monday - as for after that I do not know and in any case will have to be very careful what I say.

I have been told that I was recommended for the classification for which I applied i.e. as regards fighter bombers etc., and so that is one good thing. Many of my closer friends

are recommended for the same type, although had it been otherwise it would not have worried me as much as it might have a few months ago, because now I feel more confidence in myself and my ability to make friends.

We have been doing a lot of flying so as to finish our course with sufficient hours.

Last week end the Australians challenged the Officers to a tennis match and towelled them up. One of their pairs was exceptionally good although beaten by our first pair. P/O Mackay one of the instructors, is R.A.F. champion and his partner was good. They dressed Waugh and self down to the tune of 8-5 - my backhand has improved. We won 6 matches to 3 and afterwards had afternoon tea &c with them - altogether a very pleasant afternoon.

Last Thursday night we had our pass out party - not very many passed out. Still we had quite a successful party on the whole - the complete tally was 700 bottles - not the big ones you get at home - actually only 1 pint instead of 2. It sounds as if it was just a booze party but it wasn't. It was damn good fun with everyone lit up without being absolutely pie-eyed. A wizard chap on the piano helped a good deal.

Oswelo (undated)

Cable - "Address mail care Annis Anderson" (i.e. London)

Cape Town 29 Sept.

From my cable you will have guessed I am going Home - a bigger surprise to me than it even could be for you. I'm more than pleased.

I am spending a lot of money fitting out to the full now because of course we won't be able to buy civilian clothes in England - send bags of addresses.

I did not have Mr. Peacock's letter to Mr. Just - it was in my sea kit bag. However, I bowled into Jones & Co's Cape Town office - the dingiest hole I have ever seen and a disgrace to a big company like that; the same office as was here 50 years ago.

When I enquired for Mr. Just they said he was living out at Paarl at the factory site 20 miles away. They phoned him and he sent a car for me. I spent the week end there and he sent me in in the car this morning. I found his wife was Nita Rex, so of course family history was the chief topic of conversation. If I don't know now who my father's cousin's husband's son's uncle was I will never know. Mrs. Groves (sister of Mrs. Just) came out with us yesterday afternoon and she knew far more about my family than I did. I had crust out of a salt cellar given by Auntie Mill to the Justs when they were married 28 years ago.

Paarl is a beautiful old town hemmed in by the Hottentot Holland Mountains and lined with English trees hundreds of years old. The country looks a picture after the terrific rains they have been having - everywhere is green and it is such a change after Rhodesia where the rains are just about due after

6 months without a single shower.

Yesterday afternoon Mr. Just took us out to Wimmers Heek, a little place 14 miles from Paarl where we had afternoon tea in a windmill run by a Dutchman. The food and tea were Dutch - the layout was Dutch and all the furnishings were Dutch hundreds of years old.

Of course we are all foxed with the Africanese - it is supposed to be 50/50 with English but from what I can see it is about 90 Dutch to 10 English. Cape Town people are supposed to be mainly English but all the Government positions and essential services seem to be in the hands of Afrianders.

By the way, coming down on the train one of the boys beckoned me into the dining car while I was waiting for the next sitting and when I walked up to him said "This is Watchorn" and lo and behold there was F.B. Morrisby who used to live out at Glenora. He knew many of the folks at home and was quite interested to hear what news I could give him. I saw him later in town and had a drink with him. He has made good from nothing over here and has no wish to go back to Tassie. I wonder would I ever get that way - judging by the way I now feel I don't think so.

Yesterday I looked up the Secretary of the Cape Town Rotary Club, Mr. Druiff. He contacted Mr. Brooks of Brooks Lemos Tomato sauce &c. an Australian, and he sent one of his travellers who ran two R.A.F. chaps and me round through Wynburg, past the University, across the Neck and back round via Sea Point. It was a beautiful drive and I am writing a note to thank him.

I have met two jolly decent fellows - one an Australian and the other a S. African who are in business one door to where we are billeted. I went to the pictures - sorry bioscopes - with one of them this evening. They have offered to post any parcels home for us should we not have time and also to send anything on to us in Blighty if we write and let them know - it is very hard for us to know now exactly what we ought to take with us - so their offer may be very useful.

Cape Town 4 Oct. 1941

Still here, but bound down and not allowed to wander round. One afternoon I went for a drive with Mr. Carlew (Jones & Co's representative in G.T.) We went round via Wynburg, the Southern suburb along the slope of the mountain and then farther up on to the hill, through the University and right round past the Governor General's residence, Rudyard Kipling's and Cecil Rhodes' home and down back to town.

That evening I met in the pub the Manager of a firm known as Stenotype - a firm such as Walsh & Sons. I had dinner with him and then we went to the Bioscopes.

Next evening I went with him to the home of a young chap - Graves by name - in charge of the British Wool Commission. Before we went there I went with him to "supper" i.e. dinner at his sister's home. She plays the piano beautifully and has many degrees - he is one of the best known singers in Cape Town and is

is only now taking it up seriously. He once started a tour of Europe with someone whose name I have often heard - then he was taken ill and gave it up. His sister played some Chopin preludes and ballads.

Mr. Graves has the comfiest looking flat I have ever seen out at Wynburg ~~with~~ a jolly decent wife - both of them quite young.

Next evening Harry Deeper and I had sundowners with two girls whom he knew and then I went to the bioscopes with Lennie Wright and Killer Sellick.

I don't think I told you - the Justs are very musical. The son aged 17 is doing music in his matric this year and his sister has two or three degrees at Trinity College.

From now on you must work on the idea that no news is good news. I cannot guarantee writing or safe passage but for heaven's sake do not start worrying - the chances are at least 10 to 1 that your fears would be groundless.

I have bought a few things to take to people who entertain me.

My chances of contacting John Drummond (i.e. Greenock) early are very good.

At Sea 24. Oct. 1941

I shall write this letter by dribs and drabs. After I wrote my last letter from Cape Town I don't think anything of interest happened save perhaps that I went up in the Gableway to the top of Table Mount. Unfortunately it was a little cloudy but well worth time and money.

As to conditions on the ship - they are not bad. The black-out and other wartime conditions make the cabins below decks absolutely unbearable to sleep in so we have recourse to sleeping on deck which is wisard in this warm weather. We either sling a hammock or just roll up on the deck. We sleep very well when not woken up in the middle of the night to go on submarine duty. The cabins compare badly with those on the boat on which we came over from Aussie, but we do not spend any time in them except when changing. The food is not good, but first we are able to supplement it from the canteen and secondly it will not be for long. This criticism is quite true but it only applies to this particular trip. There are rather exceptional circumstances in this case which in part explain some of the disgusting tack served up to us. The bread however is always good and we can buy jam, tinned fruit and cream, bully beef &c at the canteen.

Being now senior N.C.Os we have more privileges - a large amount of deck space at our disposal and a deck tennis court and large tiled swimming pool - of which more later. We also have the use of the 2nd class lounge where yours truly is now sitting writing his epistle. It makes such a difference having somewhere to sit at night, read, play cards and write. Of course it gets very hot in the black out but we shall have to get used to that. We have not used the deck tennis court as much as I should have liked, partly because of the interruptions caused by watches,

partly because of the heat and the attraction of the swimming pool. The swimming pool is 24' x 18' x 6' tiled and with a constant flow of salt water and plenty of room nearby in which to sunbake. We have the use of this before 7 a.m. then from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. and after 5 p.m. which is very fair indeed.

The weather has been absolutely perfect. We have not had more than a gentle breeze so far and even very little ground swell. Very hot at times of course but we have enjoyed it all. Last night I happened to be on watch 7 p.m. to 8 a.m. in the bow of the vessel and it was simply a joy to be alive. No breeze save that of the ship moving through the air, bright starlight with all the reflections of the stars in the water, a new moon just going down and much phosphorus in the sea so that the bow seemed to be pushing along a wall of diamonds the whole time. We have just had a minor thunderstorm and the air is now much less humid.

I went down to the canteen the other night and remarked on an Australian penny among my change and in reply to the chappie down there told him I was a Tasmanian. He then told me there were three other Tasmanians aboard - Cooley, the ship's butcher and two R.A.N.V.R. chaps by name Smith and Ellis. I consequently looked them up and had a chat with them. One of them had been on the boat which took Johnnie Holland to the M.E. Cooley of course comes from New Town.

The main occupation on this ship has been reading besides which we have been playing a very great amount of bridge which I regard merely as a means of wasting time and as a relaxation from reading and writing. The bridge four is usually Woggie and self against Sellick and Alan Righetti. We had a mammoth competition made up of 12 matches each match being the winner on points after three rubbers. Needless to mention that we won 12 matches to 10.

Except for a period lasting for 2 days we have seen no ships at all - it all makes one wonder at the size of this thing called the Atlantic and makes Tassie seem rather small. We have seen hoardes of flying fish of course especially a couple of days ago when we just seemed to plough through them. Saw a swordfish, huge thing, jumping wildly from the water as if fighting some huge shark or other and saw a whale a couple of days ago, but otherwise it has just been looking at the same sea all the time - metaphorically speaking of course.

I have been lucky striking very few watches so have been getting swimming and sunbaking hours up quite well. However my turn will come - while we are cruising up round the North Pole somewhere.

LATER.

I Of course we had the usual crossing the line celebration and was naturally enough initiated, though rather too efficiently for my liking as I shall later explain. The show started immediately after lunch when an enormous clamour was heard, emanating from the bowels of the ship. Eventually the perpetrators of this awful noise came forth - a fearsome crew in faith. Both the Ancient Britons and Red Indians had nothing on these boys - sorry about the punny "nothing on". At any



rate no great perspicacity or foresight was needed to see that we would fare much better in trunks so we donned ours and pursued our way to amphitheatre of the day - the swimming pool on the top deck. Shortly, lo and behold came forth the might King of the Deep, his bride and the aforesaid spectacular entourage and I may say unto you that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these! The role of Neptune was played by a Lieut. Commander R.N.R. whom I have chosen to play the part of Captain Bligh if ever the Mutiny of the Bounty should be refilmed. A typical old seadog he is about 5' 6" across the shoulders and 2' through - and what a stance! He would make a Charles Laughton look like a little lad sailing his model yacht in the lily pond!! His comely bride was a very famous Air-Commodore who being of similar proportions and efficiently made up played her part to perfection. After much blather in which Neptune was welcomed aboard in broken English by the Captain of the ship to which he replied in right royal tones, the proceedings got under way or in very truth "battle commenced".

The first to be initiated was a Wing Commander who had probably crossed the line a dozen times before but had to be douched none the less. He was followed in quick succession by a Squadron Leader 2 Army Captains a Flight Lieutenant and then O.C. troops and myself - or to be strictly correct O.C. troops after which they began on the small fry - you know the lesser breed without the law or commission (which is much the same thing) of which I happened to be the first. You know I can't make it out at all. I was standing innocently viewing the proceedings, a peaceful inoffensive soul, as is my wont, when Willy Nilly I was grabbed by about 6 brawny braves and brought before the awful throne. The initiations were just the usual and then into the Pool - the only catch was that there was not enough water in the pool, it having just been drained out and yours truly found himself balanced on his head on the bottom of the pool, the result being an egg and about 8 stitches in my forehead and a few days in hospital. However after feeling a bit giddy for a few days I am now as well as ever. The M.O. made a super job of the cut which was not really at all bad and now the stitches are out and it is healing as well as could possibly be wished. It is only a week since it happened and I spent 1 1/2 hours throwing a medicine ball about (over a 10 ft bar) followed by a very strenuous set of deck tennis in which Woggle beat me 6 to 5 so you can see that I'm O.K.

We are just beginning to hit a little of the long Atlantic swell - which is notorious - nothing much but the first of it I expect and indeed I hope because I have sufficient confidence in the stability of my stomach to hope that we hit some really rough weather before we get through.

I shall try to locate Phillip Harbottle, Michael Maxwell and Tom Simpson as soon as I get to my destination.

We have heard a little good music during the last few days. An army captain plays beautifully - Bach Chopin Beethoven. It is a real treat to hear him. He played a beautiful waltz of Chopin Op 34 No. 8 - one of those pieces which look easy but into which one can work so much expression.

He started to play both Pathétique and The Moonlight Sonata last night but unfortunately broke off as if he could not remember them. One of these days I am going to ask him to play them and also the Walsein.

Of the 5 chaps with whom I now spend most of my time 3 were Uni students (2 Melbourne 1 Adelaide).

I have bought a few things to take to anyone who entertains me in England - naturally they are all as condensed or should I say concentrated things which take up little or no room.

You must expect mails to be irregular from now on.

LATER.

I am finishing this while waiting for a waffle in a cafeteria in St. John (New Brunswick) in Canada - where I least expected to be. Wonders will never cease.

- - - -

St. John  
New Brunswick  
6 November 1941.

Well we are still here to our surprise. We are getting good food while we can because the food aboard is as often as not inedible & I don't just mean not palatable - Honest to goodness the sausages yesterday ponged in a big way. However I shall get on with the news.

St. John is one of the oldest towns in Canada - and it looks like it with only one decent building and that is The Admiral Beatty Hotel. St. John is a little smaller than Hobart but looks fearfully decrepit as all buildings are of wood. With very few exceptions all of the houses look like 3rd rate tenement houses of the most unenterprising architecture imaginable - mostly they are square boxes without even a bay window. The streets are cobbled narrow and twisting as one would expect from the age and hilly nature of the town. The town is rather scattered and not centralised round one or two blocks as in Hobart. I have seen the inside of only a couple of homes but the furnishing seems more or less the same, not very showy or anything like that.

St. John is the terminus of the Canadian Pacific Railway and C.N.R. railways and is the only port open on the Eastern Coast of Canada during the winter. St. John used to be much more important before the St. Lawrence was fully developed and from what I can gather there is a certain amount of jealousy herein the maritime provinces who feel that the richer more populous and so more powerful provinces of Ontario and Quebec have short circuited them and that they have not had a fair deal out of the Confederation of the Provinces. But though there is a certain amount of jealousy there is no movement at all towards secession.

Being on the Bay of Fundy St. John has a tide of about 30' but it is right at the head of the bay that the tide develops with the 6' tidal bore. They use this tide and a natural basin to some effect as the biggest dry dock in the British Empire is situated here. The tide is also remarkable for causing what are known as the reversing falls. When the tide is going out there is a drop of about 15' in the St. John River but when the tide comes in it builds up the water in the River and it flows the other way. Incidentally the tide coming up the bay is sufficient to cause a rise in the river up to 80 miles inland.

The land around here does not appear to be very good and yet must have what it takes because of the beautiful golf course. The woods are very thick - pines and birches with a few maples. There may be many pines actually but they are not as obvious - here at any rate. There is much wild game very close to the town - up to within 10 miles you can get deer moose and an occasional bear. Duck partridge &c are plentiful and there is also good fishing.

The climate of St. John is influenced very greatly by the water. Actually one would expect the Gulf Stream to feed the Bay of Fundy but in fact it is the water from the Cold Stream which has <sup>been</sup> forced underneath by the Gulf Stream and which eventually finds its way right round the corner of Nova Scotia and up the shelving Bay of Fundy. St. John is not as warm as Hobart in Summer 90° being very exceptional. In Winter however the temperature gets ever so much lower down to about 10°F, although the water in the Bay does not freeze. The day we arrived was the coldest they had had so far this winter. It was perishingly cold out on deck as we came into port. The water on the deck was frozen and with long trousers thick long underwear sweaters overcoats &c, I was still very cold. Since then it has been quite mild. It has rained a fair bit, drizzling rain like we get in a Sou'Wester but not really very cold.

Lumbering is the chief industry of the Province - there are a few manufactures but not many and mainly for local consumption. The chief importance of St. John is the fact that it is Canada's winter port.

Being one of the oldest towns in Canada as one would expect St. John has considerable historical interest - e.g. the old Royalist cemetery in King's Square in the centre of the town - over 300 years old. There is the old Martello Tower and other fortifications dating back to the Anglo-French struggles of the early days up to 1763. In the St. John Museum there are dozens of interesting historical objects - grants, plainly legible, by Henry IV Louis XIV XVI &c. Letters of Wolfe & Letters arms &c from Wars of Independence and Civil War.

Naturally there are cars by the hundred here, all American. I think my biggest first impression, after the comfortable wooden boxes which they call houses, was the fact of the traffic driving on the "wrong" side of the road. For days we would cross the road cautiously looking to the right only to be startled by a fierce hoot to our left - all very disconcerting and only now are we becoming accustomed to look

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the correct way. I have seen only a couple of bikes up till now and there are very few motor bikes. Rationing has not been introduced here although judging by what is being said in the papers it won't be long now. When you tell people here that the folks at home are allowed 2 gallons a month they are incredulous - although they think you mean 2 gallons per week - then when you assure them you meant 2 galls per month they are more than incredulous - they are positively disbelieving.

People here are very friendly and appear to us very American although I have no doubt that when placed alongside a pukka yankee they would appear more English. The roll of their "rs" and the American drawl sound to us quite different from an Australian drawl although we have often been told we speak a mixture of Cockney and American. People here seem very friendly towards U.S.A. naturally as they live, speak & in an American atmosphere (as well as hemisphere) but there is very little talk or thought of a union with the U.S.A.

LATER 10 Novr. 1941

The first resident I met was George Smith owner of the Modern Business College. Dead image of Roosevelt to look at, easy going and friendly, pots of money apparently because he lives at the Beatty in the winter and has a place at Rothsea 9 miles up country from St. John on the Suspagnensis (?) River - about 60, runs a Buick and has a daughter married to a Lt. Commander R.N.V.R. who is in charge of all merchant shipping for the Province but apparently no other family. His name was given to me at The Beatty when I wandered in there and seeing the Rotary Wheel on the wall enquired where I could connect with the Secretary. They did not know the Secy but said Geo Smith was a live wire. So on Saturday (the first in St. John) I wandered down to his office & presented my credentials. He was very good to me making me warmly welcome. Having an engagement that day he arranged to pick me up at the Dock next day at noon. As I afterwards learned he passed word round that I was there and somebody tried all the afternoon to contact me but communication with me was just about impossible. However next day he arrived at the Dry Dock and took me out to his summer place at Rothessay for dinner. In the car was also a young neighbour, Miss Zoe Hill, to whom he was apparently just giving a lift. We popped in at her home and then went out a bit further in the car coming back for lunch. His daughter and her husband were to have come for lunch but were unable to do so. It was an awful day but a very enjoyable visit. After lunch George tootled off in homely fashion while I amused myself reading a magazine. He then ran me back to the Dock just before tea.

As per arrangement I turned up at The Beatty for Rotary luncheon at 12.45 Monday - Geo Smith was unable to attend but took me along to local Kodak man whose name I have forgotten and he took me along. Somehow or other they had

misread Walter Sim's letter and thought that my father was Governor of 65th District. Soon made all explanations and sat down with President Alban Bates to lunch. It was a lunch in same convivial spirit as pervades lunches at home although they didn't have a Bob Morris, Eskin Watchorn &c. pulling someone's leg. The address was not really interesting - as a matter of fact it was a political talk which surprised me very much, given by a man whose KINK is Canadian history - would have been interesting if it had been a problem which anyone else took seriously - it was a moan that the Maritime Provinces were short circuited by Montreal &c.

At the luncheon a sailor in R.C.N.R. sang 3 songs in the best amateur tenor voice I have ever heard "Land of Hope & Glory" "Mother McCree". I was invited to tea at Alban Bates that evening turning up at 6 p.m. had a very interesting time. It was jolly decent meeting all these people and getting from each one another point of view on Canada &c. Spent a quiet evening at home playing cards for a short while with his juvenile family and then discussing everything in general.

Next evening I took Zoe Hill to the pictures. She was quite a decent sort of girl although very young.

The following day I went up and saw Geo Hill who was kind enough to arrange a game of golf for 4 of us out at Riverside links where he heads the players on handicap. These are the most beautiful links cared for by a millionaire who lives next door - the Canadian Open was played on them a couple of years ago. Woggie and self played Sellick and Righetti and beat them 3 & 2. I was the only non player and seeing that it is 4300 yds course & I had never been on a course before 110 for 16 holes was O.K. The other day we had another round in which I improved considerably taking just under 100 for same number of holes. It was a beautiful course with natural obstacles &c but Oh Boy was that rough rough - a wee bit of a slice and a chap was well & truly in the soup. The course was also rather difficult at the time inasmuch as a drive just hit the ground and stopped absolutely dead without running a yard.

On Friday evening I met Alan Beatley at The Beatty and he took me home to ea. He is a youngish chap (say 45) and a very bright spark, free, easy, who married a daughter of a previous District Governor down in Maine U.S.A. Wife distinctly youngish and also bright and charming - came from well to do family. Their daughter - 18 or so - is at present at a college in Boston. After dinner we went to a concert arranged by a Concert Society of which Mrs. B. was more or less the founder and given by the "Cossacks" who visited Aussieland 3 or 4 yrs ago. They were absolutely wonderful. After the show met the Leader, some of the artists and the Manager (Johnnie Evans). The Leader was very interested in Australia and regretted that he has not visited Tassie - Johnnie had as Manager for Lawrence Bibbet about 2½ yrs ago. Tell Selwyn Findlay that he remembers them and a bright picnic up on Mt. Wellington when they apparently indulged in some Cascade - "the best beer in the world" says Johnnie.

It was Sat. 8th Nov. that we went out to Riverside for our 2nd game of golf rushing round at the finish & managing to get a lift which saved us an hour's wait for the bus and \$1-25 in fares.

But it was on Friday afternoon that I had the thrill of the whole stay. I was wandering with Woggie and Selliek down Charlotte St when I'm damned if I don't walk straight into Philip Harbottle. Boy, Oh Boy!! was it good to see someone from home after 9 months or was it good!!! I can't disclose his job - Jerry knows about it but still I had better not mention it. At any rate we arranged to go over and see him on his ship on Saturday evening. So after dinner we bowled over - came over to town with him and a young naval sub-lieut to feed (they fed while we watched as we had had dinner) and then we all went back to his boat where we drank beer, sang ever song we could think of, including every one from the Uni revue and swapped yarns &c until some time between 3 & 3.30 a.m. after which we botted a lift, connected with the only tram that ran into town anywhere near that time (3 miles) wandered into a restaurant, bought chips, got a taxi & arrived home about 4 a.m. Boy! it was a good evening! Phil had lots of gen to give us and news and addresses of boys in England. Quite a chance that he'll be going back at the same time as us & so will see him in Blighty, I hope.

On Saturday morning I went to C.P.R. as requested at the Rotary luncheon the previous Monday by Thos McNabb the General Manager and arranged to meet him at his office at 12.30 Sunday. So on Sunday Woggie and I struggled out of bed at noon and met him in town whence to his home at Rothsea for lunch. He was an exceptionally interesting chap, humorous being a Scotchman who had for some years been Chief Surveyor for C.P.R. and had spent 6 years in the square of territory formed by the Coast Edmonton and up as far as Great Bear Lake. His job had been to look for a new pass for railway through the Rockies. He had knocked around - they had done it all by air and photographed and surveyed all that hitherto unmapped area. He has some mighty interesting tales to tell. Mrs. McNabb had also been up there with him on several trips. Also there for lunch was Olivia McIntyre who lived nearby and at whose home we all had tea.

In St. John we saw several pictures - the best of which was Walt Disney's "Reluctant Dragon" - it explained how all his cartoons are made.

One of our chief occupations was playing "bowls" as it is called - skittles at "Bowling Alley" - you bowl with heavy wooden balls as in lawn bowls on an alley 20 yds long made of narrow strips of wood - at the end of the alley which is about 4 ft wide are 10 skittles. You bowl 3 balls in a "box" and score the number of skittles knocked over in 3 shots, having 10 "bumps" in a "string" or game. If you knock them all over with your 1st ball you get a "strike" and add on the number you knock over with the first 2 balls of your next "box" on to that of that particular "box". If you knock them all down with 2 balls then you have a "spare" and count on the number knocked

The Christian Huygens Dutch -  
later she was to be used for  
transport of other Australian  
air trainees - from Canada -  
but then after seeing the condition  
of the ship refused to travel in  
her - Her condition was later  
the subject of a discussion in  
the House of Commons.



down with 1st ball of next box. It is quite intriguing and much more energetic than one would think. We got quite stiff from it at any rate. We caught on to the game pretty well. One evening 3 of us were bowling next to a club which had the adjoining couple of alleys and whereas they who had been bowling for years were getting 80-95 or less we were averaging just on 100 and Woggle got 120 in one string. They were all taken back

After the food on this packet which is lousy (whether you like the word or not) we naturally spent half of our very limited means on food. Take my word for it it was a change. But the catch was that we had spent almost everything in Cape Town and as we are only pd 30/- per week on a transport things were plenty tight. I became indebted to the extent of 6 dollars but can easily pay this back to Alan Righetti when fully paid.

I should have written to others but honestly the din on board was literally deafening and I just couldn't step on that ship when I could get ashore.

It was in a cove on St. John River not 100 yds from McNabb's home that the record breaking clipper "Marco Polo" was built.

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Overseas League  
St. James St.  
1 Decr. 1941

My last letter was posted in Canada. It was disappointing when I got in touch with Mrs. Anderson and found she had nothing for me but she will post anything on to me when it arrives.

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Bournemouth  
6 Decr. 1941

This letter racket is a hopeless business. I purposely stayed at home tonight to write, got undressed and into bed and was going like a steamer until my pen ran out of ink and on turning everything out found I had no reserve so had to pack up. But I'm afraid the real trouble was that my heart was not in it. Shucks, I wish some letters would arrive. Of course when they start they should come regularly.

I have been billeted directly across the road from Geoff Stackhouse and have seen him several times.

When we landed we came straight down here to the South Coast. Here I saw a great number of chaps whom I had known at Somers and at home. Stackhouse was one of the first. He had had a wizard trip across here and showed me photos &c. He told me quite a lot about boys who had been in my course at Somers &c. Have had one night with him and intend if possible to spend tomorrow night with him - my last night here. Have seen Johnnie Frankcomb several times. He is well, a Pilot Officer and I expect is posted ere this. Have also seen Bill Basey who was in 9th Flight with me at Somers and then in the Pool.

Will not be going to the same squadron as any of them because most of them are on heavies.

This afternoon I have received my posting to fighters up at Durham. I don't expect we shall be there very long but best of all our mob is not to be split up at all yet at any rate.

Last Saturday we went on leave up to London by train - arrived at Waterloo at 9 a.m. and as it was Saturday night had to spend about 2 hours before we finally got a room in a private hotel at Kensington. Next morning we went round to the Overseas League in St. James St. just up from Hampton Court and managed to get rooms there at 7/6d for bed & breakfast. I then phoned Mrs. Anderson and arranged to go out there later in the afternoon which I did. They had been to a concert and I met them outside the theatre and went round to their home. We talked till fairly late. Next morning I went in in the train when Mr. Anderson went to office. Later in the morning we toured the House of Commons conducted by Major Sir Jocelyn Lucas M.P. whom we had met at the Overseas Club. We were lucky to get round as it is of course closed to the public, although many tours of interesting places are arranged for men in the Services.

We were allowed into the House where the Law Lords presided over by the Lord Chancellor were sitting.

Then we went into the Abbey but unfortunately most of that is closed.

We saw Madame Tussauds - Some of the exhibits were destroyed but think the major part of them are intact. They certainly are a good show and well worth seeing. A chap certainly feels a bit of a simpleton when he wanders up to a wax girl with sixpence in his hand and tries to buy a programme.

Another afternoon we went round St. Pauls, Cheapside &c., Saw Fleet Street of course. I have never been so incensed in all my life as I felt as I wandered out round that way. It is a pity flat areas of up to 3 or 4 acres or even twice as much could not be transported out to Australia and put on exhibition. I guess it would stir some people up with a start. I had not imagined that such wanton and utterly useless vandalism could exist and yet wonders have been done in the matter of clearing up. These scars on the face of London are certainly ugly but I can't believe that by far the greatest part of what I have seen had done anything material towards helping the enemy. We are not supposed to discuss bomb damage but a chap just can't keep off it really and so long as damage to specific concerns is not discussed I don't see what harm can be done. Morale is the only thing but I can't imagine what I saw having any other effect than fixing the idea of exterminating the B----- H.M.

The Temple would break your heart. I went round there the other evening but could not get inside at all. It was a pity I had not gone earlier because I could have got through the Middle Temple Hall and Library which is naturally closed to the Public. I met one of the London Johns to whom I had talked on a previous occasion wandering up near The Old Bailey and he knew the fireman who was responsible for that part of the buildings. He said had I been earlier he could

have got the key and shown me round. I had told him Dad had been at The Middle Temple for 3 years. I saw Lincoln's Inn but did not get as far as Gray's Inn.

One thing I didn't see which I had made up my mind to go and that was "Peter Pan". I should get down to London again - I always remembered Dr. talking about Lyons - well we mostly fed there but it was a very different place to before the War. Food rationing has made the difference.

At the moment there are no operas or anything of that sort unfortunately. I was looking forward to seeing them most of all. I may have a chance to do so later on. The real pulchra London Orchestra were down in Bournemouth last Monday while we were in London and then last night (Saturday) they were on in London - the very night we had to come down here again. Bad luck What?

We went to see Fantasia. I was slightly disappointed but was rather tired. I had expected it to have some sort of theme instead of being just what it was - a fantasia. The music itself was beautiful of course and the idea novel - the great masses of terrifically vivid colour rather distracted my attention.

We went to see a wizard stage show "Up and Doing" which has been running for 18 mos. except for a short break when it was blitzed - Gerrol Gibbons - boy! can he tickle the ivories - Stanley Holloway, Leslie Henson (one of the best comedians I have ever seen on the films or anywhere) and some stupendous chickies. The only one snag about the show was that it was pretty high class and so cost 2/6 for a seat and my conscience does prick me when I read of Liverpool contributing £15 1/2 million in its warship week and yet now that we look like getting into it one can't help getting the complex of having a good time while one can. I should simply hate to hit the deck with a tanner in my tunic pocket.

The blackout of course puts a damper on lots of things especially now that the long Winter evenings are here. Shops closing at 4 or 4.30 p.m. "Up and Doing" started at 6.15 and all theatres cinemas &c close at 9.30. In the mornings with the blinds drawn one is frightfully sleepy and seems to remain so most of the day. Finding one's way round London is a man sized job in the day time but in the black-out it is worse. We managed all right but could not find cinemas &c in the dark. One simply walks past them along the footpath without even knowing they are there. At 4.30 there is a terrific rush of people getting home before it is dark.

Howdays of course people can't entertain if they wanted to - they have their ration and one extra makes a lot of difference. When we go on leave we are issued with ration tickets but for week ends or anything like that the position is rather difficult.

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10th, Decr. 1941

Well we are finally on a station in Durham. Since I started this letter Japan has stuck her nose in and there is the news this afternoon about the Navy which is not particularly

pleasing. However I have no doubt that the Japs will get something to go on with before long. Hitler made a pretty big flash in the pan when he went into Russia but at a rough guess he has got a headache there now.

Still no letters from you -

Am not worrying about Art because I know you'll let me know if anything happens - you must do the same for both of us.

We shall be flying on usual routine through Xmas.

Suppose there will be few holidays for anyone anywhere.

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Gloucester 17 Decr.1941

With no letters arriving it is difficult to settle down to write - also we are now on the job and even when we do get some spare time there are always bags of boys around kicking up a row. I shall be wiring you tonight for Xmas.

Once we have flown a low-winged monoplane we are supposed to be able to fly any planes of that type and so after a short flip to get my eye in again I was able to go solo in the real McCoy (if that is how you spell it). They are bonzer to fly but of course the cockpit is a bit strange yet. The most startling thing about them is their speed not in the sense of being dangerous but inasmuch as you cover the ground so quickly you are out of sight of the drome before you can get your wheels up if you are not careful and in this country it is so different from Rhodesia. You don't traverse miles of Bush and then come to some easily recognisable feature. You are just flitting from one town to the other and at the speed we move around it is difficult to get a good look at a place and identify it on the map. Any old R.A.F. shappie would say I was exaggerating most terribly and I have no doubt that we shall quickly get accustomed to it but what I mean to stress is the contrast in speed and country to our previous flying experience. Actually of course we are not flying the very latest models but Boy! they'll do me for a while.

Approaching the very end of our training we are of course necessarily given more inside information and it certainly is interesting to see how the huge machine works. I don't mean that we are made parties to all the confidential go around the place but a chap is given some information on trust and I must say that there is a lot of self satisfaction in that trust. Naturally a chap's responsibilities increase proportionately but responsibility never hurts anyone. Naturally my letters will be very reticent from now on. There is so much that I would like to tell you all which is obviously impossible. Just think - we cannot speak of weather, location, type of a/c, how many of us or who the others are. I can say that I am still with my mob. The only interesting letters from now on will be those dealing with leave.

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Gloucester - undated.

Whack of letters two days ago including one from Gerald Roberts and one from Joan Clares - also a parcel with

socks and sweets. I am over at flights waiting for a flip.

Later.

I'm back in the barracks now. Arthur must have had an interesting time going round the works at Singapore with Major Shaw - especially in view of recent developments.

I don't know whether I shall be able to see Gerald Roberts but will certainly do so if possible. Mr. & Mrs. Anderson sent me a scrumptious fruit cake for Xmas for which I wrote and thanked them.

As regards leave everything is indefinite - I may be posted overseas any time. If I don't go away I have no idea to what part I shall be going. I am at the moment flying hurricanes (The Hun has good reason to know that they exist) and the censors should pass the fact so long as I don't tell you where I am.

I had a letter from Blackwood and he said he was expecting to be called up in December. He should make a good pilot so long as he doesn't kill himself. He's been trying to do that long enough on a motor bike and it is a lot easier in these things. Hall Warlow-Davies is apparently doing exceptionally well in his flying. He should finish his training soon.

I have been playing quite a bit of badminton lately and like it but have not yet got the hang of it properly. Here tennis at this time of the year is quite out of the question. Today I had my first game of squash. I think it is going to suit me better than badminton because it is more energetic and I can see that even a chap gets the hang of using the walls to their full advantage he can easily get a good sweat up.

I have never regretted joining the Air Force. Of course there are times when one gets utterly fed up with everything especially whenever there is any red tape or anything like that around but in this Service and I suppose really after all it is the same in any of the Services there is certainly the opportunity of meeting a grand lot of chaps. But in this job a chap has just got to learn to be self-reliant. If there are drawbacks there are certainly other things to make up for them. No one could possibly call our work uninteresting and as I think I said before the trust they put in you is certainly satisfying and I don't think there is anything smug at all in that. Just thinking that every time we go up we have about £7-8000 worth to handle (nothing compared with some of the big boys) is quite enough to make one feel pleased with himself when you slide them back on the deck.

Gloucester 28 July. 1942.

Horace Strutt must have done some pretty good work to have received the promotion he has received.

We are training with Canadians and U.S.A. men and are they the boys to gamble? I go in every now and again with a couple of bob and come out when I have lost that. I've seen

enough to save me of ever going in for the game (poker or crown and anchor) in a big way. Instead I have opened a bank account in the P.O. Savings Bank and have about £17 at the moment which I can assure you will all be blown in a big way when we get some leave. Of course you couldn't guess the number of my account - 77707 and it is not as if I asked for it either. Your subtle idea of the larks and owls it is the lark alright. At one time I might have wished otherwise but now would not have it changed for anything.

As regards the awarding of commissions no one can make out how they are decided. Two of our particular chaps - Waugh and Righetti are the most suitable chaps I have yet come across but they are both with me. They are both excellent all round athletes, level headed, well educated and as universally popular as anyone could wish. And as for personality and leadership they are just as well off. Admitted that one would meet interesting people in an officers' mess I still have some damn good pals. One chap who has just joined up with us - a Canadian - is another one suitable for a commission. He is a good chap and a good athlete 23 and a B.A. (Honours) - Personally I am satisfied so long as I can stick with these chaps. I am a little proud in a quiet sort of way being one of 13 out of 50 or so who went straight through their flying training without being put back a course scrubbed or killing themselves. Incidentally only 4 out of the 13 received commissions. Also I can say I am one of the comparative few who have so far not done one pennyworth of damage to a plane during training. I am being much more loquacious about this than I usually am and I don't want you to go flashing this letter about too much. It's not prone to shooting a line and don't wish to get a reputation as such - I haven't a chance now of getting a commission unless I manage to live through about 6 months ops (operational flying on a squadron). But then I wouldn't worry much because if a Sergt/Pilot can shoot down more than a dozen Huns and only get a crown to his stripes then there's not much hope for me. To most of us a commission means absolutely nothing except that we would really like to get one for the sake of our folks at home who seem to attach something to it. It is not in what capacity a chap does a job but the job itself that matters.

How is that very fine niece of mine? See that she keeps fit so because you have no idea how much face it would cost me if anything happened to her. Waugh is very troublesome at times when he starts talking about his niece and you've no idea what a line he can shoot.

The papers have been talking about "The Russian Winter in England" and believe me it comes a bit cool to us.

Gloucester 25 January 1942.

I have only been out of camp twice or thrice in the past 4 weeks and each time to a bioscope in Town with a couple of the boys - only. We have had a lot of snow

L11/1

x Indicating Middle East

consequently we have had much spare time so we had a crack at squash. After a few games we played the Officers the other evening. It was supposed to be a course match but with one exception we were all out of our Aussie batch. Righetti and I won our matches but the others lost. Not surprising really seeing that only a couple of us had played before. Afterwards we adjourned to the Sergeants Mess where a little do-up followed. Quite a good evening on the whole - I believe there is another match coming on in a few days and perhaps then we'll do them over.

We have our passing out party in a week's time -  
 Shucks we'll paint the town red!!

Naturally we all want to get home to have a crack at the Japs but will have to go where we are sent. Three days ago one of our lads received a telegram for his birthday sent from Sydney on November 1st - almost 3 months for a telegram. It had lain at Records for weeks and then sent to the wrong address despite official communications which they must have had and also a special letter we sent giving our address - on the suggestion of our R.A.A.F. Liaison Officer.

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Gloucester 23 January 1942

This evening 3 parcels readdressed from Rhodesia arrived - also several addressed to England.

Had a letter from Arthur written just before the Japs got busy - I have written to him.

With regard to the very cold weather although we have not seen any Aussie stores since we left home we managed to swap our short overcoats for longer dyed English R.A.F. coats - nice and long and much warmer. We've got bags of warm clothes. There are about 24 of us in one hut and we have an A.C. who looks after the billets and keeps them beautifully warm with the two stoves. He is a little short chap fairly oldish and comes from this same County in which we are. Called Sharty Jack or even his proper name Jim he is worth his weight in gold. We all give him 2/- per week so he does alright. He will do any mortal thing for you. We can get our laundry done outside the camp quite reasonably and it does make a big difference being able to get plenty of clean clothes.

I am going to send you a wire this evening telling you to discontinue writing to England. It is not definite but quite probable that I shall be seeing Perkins soon.

Every day is the same and at present flying is the only interest. It is interesting but you tire of the same thing without a break - we have not had a day off for eight weeks. We don't work hard all the time but we are not free to amuse ourselves any way we please. It now appears that we shall be here slightly longer than we were to have been and I think we shall have to ask for a day's leave some time. I think they would give us a day off if flying looked pretty hopeless but you can quite understand that at this time of the year life is just one mad rush for hours.



x 3 of the 13 Australian trainees  
lost their lives crashing through  
poor visibility - Finally the  
others appealed to the O.C.s  
were immediately sent on leave

Wahga and I still have a brawl every time the word nice is mentioned but we agree on one thing i.e. that our mothers get more into a pargal than anyone else.

We have a crazy flight commander - or rather instructor at another station which we visit. He is a wizard pilot but expects us to be the same and expects us to fly when the visibility is only a couple of hundred yards. He is so bad that the operational pilots on the station call our squadron "the suicide squadron" because we fly in such awful weather. X We were discussing him in billets the other evening and one of our lads Sellick (incidentally not turned 19) said "Well I don't give a damn what anyone says he (the instructor) was either dropped on his head from a very great height when he was a baby or has had a severe attack of MELANCHOLIA" Not bad? I must bale out now.

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Gloucester 3 Feby. 1942

Our day is simply concerned with our every day routine which I am not allowed to discuss. I can say I am still with a grand bunch of chaps and enjoy flying greatly - I am flying the best of fighters and it has been great fun - to date at any rate.

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Ferensway Hall  
27th Feby 1942.

We have packed up at the station, got our clearances and inoculations and during the past five days have been on leave.

On Sunday last I tried to leave the Station at 8.30 to catch the 10.04 train from a neighbouring town. Unfortunately neither civilian nor service transport was available so I had to scrounge a lift on the P.O. bus which was going near another town (in the wrong direction but from which I thought I would be able to catch a train or bus to connect with my train). Well it wound up that I got a lift walked some distance to another road got another lift in a lorry caught a tram and then ran for it arriving at the station with 5 minutes to spare during which time I had to get my luggage - 3 kit bags 1 parachute and bag and 1 suit case - from the cloak room on to the train get my ticket etc. I skipped the ticket part and just handed in my warrant at the end of the journey. However all this action and excitement was soon made up for by the enforced resting on my posterior for about 6 hrs until I reached my immediate destination close to Liverpool. I dumped all my kit except suitcase which I was taking on leave.

On Monday morning I caught a train which took me up through Cumberland and the West Country which I was naturally very pleased to see even though it is the wrong time of the year. Up through Carlisle and then on to Glasgow where I arrived about 4 p.m. I immediately caught a bus which went down along the Clyde

X There had been no communication between  
John Drummond and Truitt's family for  
20 years.

to Greenock where I arrived at 6 p.m. Being such a time and as I had not eaten since 9 a.m. I did not think I ought to ring up the Drummonds then so I went to a Paces Carbeen had something to eat and then after a lot of fun with a phone that was out of order managed to get through to 30 South St Greenock only to be told by someone who was evidently the housekeeper that Mr. John Drummond had just left to go to a meeting and at any rate he was living down at Weyms Bay. She gave me the number so I phoned Mrs. Drummond and introduced myself. She did not know where Mr. Drummond had his meeting (it concerned a Boys' League or some similar organisation) but knew where the garage was, the proprietor of which was going to run him down after the meeting. So I hived up there, dumped my baggage and (following Mrs. Drummond's directions) told them I would be back at 9 p.m. and would be going with Mr. Drummond to Weyms Bay. I then went down the street, intending to wander round until 9 o'clock. It was a beautiful evening warm and with a bright moon and even though I was fairly tired the idea of wandering round did not appal very much. I had just reached the bottom of the street when a lady ran up behind me and said "Excuse me, are you Mr. Watchorn" I said I was and she said "You'll have to excuse me picking you up like this but I am Mrs. Tom Drummond and Mrs. John had just phoned me to tell me you were going to the garage and I thought perhaps you would like to come in and wait till 9 p.m.

Very nice too! So I went in there and sat by a cheery fire till 9 p.m. when the taxi called for me on the way to Mr. Drummond. I liked Mrs. Tom very much and she was very interested to hear all about the family. Her husband is a Surgeon Commander in Navy serving in the South of England. Her 4 daughters were there too and it so happens that I came in just in the middle of a thrilling serial on which all were very intent and so Mrs. Drummond would ask me something in a subdued voice and from a chair near the radio in which the youngest about 15 was kneeling assiduously dropping stitches in a soldier's scarf would come a "Sah Munnie". The eldest girl about 18 was learning typewriting and a very pretty girl too. The other 2 (twins) were about 15. At 9 o'clock the taxi called and we went down and waited for Mr. Drummond who was later than expected. He was very surprised when someone in uniform got out of his car and came up to him and said "I'm Jim Watchorn son of Erskine Watchorn from Tasmania and Mrs. Drummond told me to come down and go home with you". After a bit he registered and was very pleased. When we got to his home (which looks straight across to Inellan) Mrs. Drummond and the youngest son Duncan and a beautiful dog were there and so we all sat round and I gave them the gas to the best of my ability till about 12 o'clock.

Next morning after breakfast Mr. Drummond, Duncan and self went into Greenock and then Duncan and self went back to Gourcock and caught the ferry across to Kilm, thence to Dunoon and on to Inellan where we had lunch with Miss Drummond and later went to see John Drummond Sr. He is 92 and is usually quite clear in the head but was rather tired that day. He said he remembered Erskine Watchorn but I don't think it meant very much to him or that he recognized me up. He is just what I would expect a dear old Scottish gentleman to be.

In the evening (4 p.m.) we returned to Gourcock in the ferry picked up Mr. & Mrs. Drummond and they then took me down the coast to Largs Bay in the car. There was snow on all the hills and slight mist on the river and the toning of the colours from the pink of the clouds to the deep purple of the hills and green of the fields was absolutely beautiful. I think one of the most beautiful sights I have seen was the morning sun on the snow of the hills of Arran seen from their home at Weymans Bay. After dinner on Tuesday evening we sat round the fire and I learnt a few home truths about that father of mine.

Mr. Drummond seems to be a very well known citizen - was Provost of Greenock for 5 years until last year and Deputy Lord Lieutenant of the County. Their eldest boy is a Major at H.Q. in Edinburgh and was a Major at S4 so must have ability. Second son Edwin went through Dunkirk and is now in Basra - Here is his address - Dumcan the youngest has just left school and goes into the Navy in about a week's time. He is a very good chap - very English. I liked them all and I'll bet John Jr (aged about 70) was a lad in his day. They were certainly kindness itself to me I gave them a copy of "Cobbers".

On Wednesday I caught the 8.30 a.m. train to Glasgow and then straight on to Edinburgh where I had arranged to meet Woggie somewhere some time.

The journey was interesting<sup>-ing</sup> but I would very much like to have got up into the Highlands and most of all to have just wandered from place to place instead of going to one place staying a day or two and then catching a fast train to some other place - But I only had 9 days leave and I wanted to see as much and as many people as possible.

About 11 a.m. arrived in Edinburgh and then had to find Woggie whom I eventually located at a pub "The Royal Hotel" opposite Scott's memorial in Princes Street. He was not there at the time so after a bite of lunch I wandered up to the end of the Street and had a look at Nelson's Monument and took a few photos.

It was a lovely day and Arthur's seat was beautiful with snow on it - Unfortunately there was mist over the river and I couldn't see much there. Then I wandered down round through the old streets to Holyrood Palace. At one stage of my "snooping" an old woman went up to one of the caretakers and wanted him to take me into custody as a 5th Columnist. However he had previously offered to close a gate for me so that I could get a better photo and so he did not cause any bother.

I returned to town and because of a very sore throat went to an H.A.F. H.Q. and tried to get something to help it - That night we went to a dance hall but were in bed fairly early.

I spent most of next morning trying to get something for my throat and was eventually successful.

In the afternoon because it was very misty and we could not see much we all went to a show "Meet Mr. Jordan" - an extremely funny show, reminiscent of "Topper".

After a nice meal we went out to another dancing place - very like the Palace at St. Kilda. Altogether Edinburgh seemed a very nice place and I must say I liked the people.

As regards life there it seemed much gayer and more open than London from where many people have moved since the War. Princes Street with the old Castle and all open on one side was beautiful - I would have liked a week or two there.

Friday morning we caught the train South through Berwick - Woggie stepped off at Newcastle but I continued on to York and then caught the connection out to Hull where I booked in at the Ferensway and phoned Joan Clemes with whom I had dinner and spent the evening.

Next morning Joan and I wandered about saw an exhibition of war photos &c for Warship week during which the town raised £1 1/2 million.

It certainly was a change to talk with some girl who had some intelligence and was not just out for a good time and above all knew someone whom I know.

Midday Saturday I left Hull and came down through Doncaster to London - Woggie had left a note at the Regent Palace saying he couldn't get a room there and had gone out to the same private hotel "The Loftus" where we had stayed on our previous visit.

On Sunday morning I went out to Epson to see Cousin Harry.

On Monday morning Woggie and I went into R.A.A.F. H.Q. and got the addresses of a few chaps whom we knew - including Stoddhouse. Later in the morning I went breakfast and treated myself to an exposure meter. It was a mouthful but ought to give me quite a bit of fun and I thought I owed myself a birthday present. Just before lunch I wandered round to No. 9 Old Square Lincoln's Inn and found Cecil W. Fyner's chambers but he was not in and I was not able to wait. I delivered Dad's compliments to his clerk who reciprocated.

I took a few snaps and then went out to Y.M.C.A. Canteen at Cadogan Gardens behind Sloane Square to see Mrs. Clemes but somehow or other got to the wrong canteen. I just grabbed a cup of tea and a couple of buns and nicked straight into town to meet Woggie who incidentally was quite a lot late. We went to the "New Gallery" in Regent St to see "Dumbo" - it is exceptionally funny and well worth seeing. Then we went to our London eating H.Q. - Lyons in Coventry Street just along on the left from Piccadilly Circus. Incidentally sitting beside me was the girl whom I think Bernard Shaw must have used as the original for Eliza in Pygmalion. She was as cockney as Cheapside itself. You certainly do meet a cross section in Lyons. I always liked getting a table near a corner where I could just sit and watch all those who came in and out - After that we hooked up with some of the boys and had a little celebration. We ended up home about 11.30 after failing to get a taxi managed to get a lift home in a newspaper delivery van the driver of which did his good turn of the century and took us home.

Next morning we caught the 10.25 train from Euston and I didn't do badly getting back here on a L.N.E. train with a L.N.E.R. return ticket to Edinburgh via Berwick.

While in London I went into the Army Liason Office at Australia House to try and find out something about Arthur but they could not or would not give me anything at all although they

did take down my address and promised to let me know any news.

Later.

Innoculations &c have kept me busy for the time being.

By the way Dave Borthwick (one of our select 9) who comes from Geelong managed to bludge his way in on a home broadcast and I believe mentioned all our names - hope you heard it.

Ran into Herbie Nichols in London - looking very well.

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20 March 1942.

While waiting near Manchester for a boat have met these chaps who are going home - we're obviously not - so am sending by them a few snaps which are quite harmless but which the censor might not like.

- - -

21 March 1942.

We have had leave and are waiting to go overseas - Now things are so tight at home of course the boys go mad periodically about not being able to get home. And it doesn't help seeing how lethargic - although professedly sympathetic the people here are. They say "I suppose you would like to be getting home &c" and always follow up by saying "But after all this little island is the citadel and so long as we hold on to this everything will be all right in the end". Boy! do we cut up rough then!! Hell! of course this place is a citadel doubtless the most important of all but they don't seem to worry about what is going to happen between now and the end - I may not be old enough to form any sound opinion of Englishmen but to me they seem too suburban - too interested in the local darts competition or the county cricket in peace time and even now more interested in local affairs than national. I bought a paper in Hull the other day and I'll guarantee 3/4 of the whole thing was local. I sat down to dinner with Woggie and two Englishmen and we talked Australian cricket while they flew at one another's throats about Yorkshire v. Notts. They are putting up phenomenal efforts in these Warship weeks &c., but one can't help feeling that a lot of it is to beat the next door town rather than Hitler.

I must get round to the mess before it closes to drink "Bluey" Evans health - El today.

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20th April 1942.

TRANSIT CAMP NEAR FREETOWN SIERRA LEONE

I wrote a long letter like 10 pages on the boat coming out from England but then some damned man's pinched the book in which I was carrying them until I should be able to post them. I don't know exactly when they went but although they were all

L11/1  
addressed and had "On Active Service" on the front and so would not require a stamp, I am afraid that there is little likelihood of them reaching home. So here I am up on deck before seven a.m. with the idea of writing again a full account of my meeting with Beryl. Of course there is a tremendous amount of my trip to England that I won't ever forget and yet this is a mighty queer sort of life we are leading these days, very conducive to forgetfulness. We just don't consider the future one iota and the past is liable to get the same treatment.

As I have told you in a previous letter I was for some time stalled not very far from Beryl. For some little while however I could not get in to see her because we had to get quite a bit of kit and see out quite a lot of red tape. Finally on one Saturday evening I remembered that she had put her telephone number on the back of one of her letters to me and so I dug it out. I got down to a phone and after a lot of pushing and pulling of buttons and stops - it was pitch dark in the box - I managed to get through to Mrs. Fisher. Beryl was at her grandmother's at the time and so she gave me an open invitation and the number where I could get hold of Beryl. However I had to walk back to the hut for more pennies - about  $\frac{1}{2}$  of a mile, and so managed to forget it. I had to ring Mrs. Fisher again and then finally got on to Beryl and made a very loose arrangement with her about getting out to see her on the morrow, Sunday. Then on Sunday morning they told us that we could have 48 hrs. leave but I was unable to get away before about 2.30 p.m. It was raining cats and dogs and I had to wait nearly half an hour in it. About two dozen cars passed but not one seemed to consider the possibility of giving me a lift. I can understand now how English papers find it worth while talking about the idea of giving lifts to help the communications problem. And yet only twice did I even get a lift in England and on both occasions it was in a lorry going down to Chester - of which more later. However having just missed a train from Warrington I caught a bus to Liverpool. It took a long time really for the journey -  $1\frac{1}{2}$  hrs where the train takes 25 minutes and as I had to go out to Crosby, another 8 miles, I did not get there till about 5 p.m. I made all sorts of profuse apologies about impossibility of letting them know I would not be there for lunch as I had said I would try. Beryl and Mrs. Fisher were both there and after tea we produced photos, letters, papers and talked till well after midnight. Beryl had received a copy of "The Mercury Annual" and "Advocate" from Harry and I was able to explain all the photos to her. She seemed absolutely full of Tasmania and had bags of questions. A personal explanation like that must have been more satisfactory than questions and answers in letters ever could have been.

On the Monday morning I got up and went in to Liverpool in the train with Beryl, leaving her at the Bank of England with the arrangement that I would meet her about 4.30 outside.



I had heard a lot about Chester and been told by many that I ought to get down there if possible. I wanted to see the tunnel and as pedestrian traffic is banned I stood at the toll gates and begged a lift in a lorry which stopped. The tunnel certainly is a marvellous affair. I have been told for what it is worth that Jerry tried to bomb it but he certainly didn't do any obvious damage - at any rate the whole story may be up the pole. This lorry took me through Birkenhead for about 2 miles and then I stood by the roadside until another lorry stopped and gave me a lift right into Chester. I loved Chester! It conformed exactly with the conception I had formed of what an old style English town should look like. The old buildings, the old streets, the terraces of shops, everything seemed to me to breathe the air of homeliness and coziness. I had a good look at the old walls and gates and spent quite a time in the old Cathedral. Incidentally I got into a spot of bother with an Army Capt. there through taking a photo of one of the old Roman gates. Apparently he envisaged me passing the photo on to Jerry who would use it in the storming of the town during the great invasion! Of course I realise that they have to be careful with photos, but a member of the forces taking a photograph of the old Roman gate should not have excited any comment. I would not have been annoyed if it had not been for the insidious way in which he said he had "found" me taking photos in the town - as if I had been stealthily poking my camera round a corner instead of skipping round traffic from all directions on a pimple in the middle of the road! He was quite taken aback when a mere sergeant, and a colonial at that, saw fit to argue with him in front of the Lieut-Col. At any rate it all wound up by me seeing the Major of Intelligence, being told that I was quite right, and having  $\frac{1}{2}$  of an hour's peaceful chat about the relative merits of our cameras. Nice chap the Major, but even so, do you think I was glad to get out of the buildings which absolutely stank of red tape, boloney, the old school tie and just pure cussedness. I'd hate to see that type of discipline pushed in to a bunch of Aussies, or rather I should say that I would hate to have to answer for the consequences. And yet from what I have seen of Englishmen, they would probably not do anything with any other type of handling. Having been with the R.A.F. and having just finished "North West Passage" I can fully understand why England lost the American colonies. It's just that living in such totally different circumstances and atmospheres, Englishmen and colonials just can't have the same type of mind. We may have common principles and common objects but we will never have common outlooks or should I say processes of thought. Gee! aren't I garrulous? It must be age creeping on!! I caught the bus back from Chester to Liverpool and met Beryl as arranged. We had a light tea and then went to the Russian Ballet for which Beryl had been given a couple of tickets - we had walked round and collected them on our way in that morning. It was beautiful and it does a chap good to get back to that sort of thing occasionally when living all the time in barracks with men. I enjoyed it especially as I knew most of the music,

in fact to tell the truth it was probably the music that I really appreciated. I appreciate the skill of the dances and the interpretation of the music but I don't know that I know enough about dancing to go into ecstasies over it. However "Les Sylphides" of Chopin was absolutely beautiful; "Nutcracker Suite" of Tchaikovsky I knew and liked; "Comers" a new dance I believe taken from a collection of Purcell, and there was one other thing, what I've forgotten for the moment. Beryl enjoyed the whole show I think and was especially interested as she knew one of the girls dancing. Beryl has a cat's ability to see in the dark and I would have hated to have had to find my way home that night. Although when I really come to think of it I did do it a couple of nights later on the way back to camp and have done so in a good many towns in England. That's one thing flying in a plane does teach you and that is always to keep some idea of your locality and the way home. When we got home after the ballet we had something to eat and then talked till nearly 1 a.m.

Next morning I was late up and after a bit of breakfast went round to see Mrs. Brown. She had to go to a funeral and so I sat and amused myself reading "Australasians" until she returned, when we had lunch and then talked until I left to meet Beryl at the Bank. I had intended to get into town to see the Cathedral and I'm sorry that I missed it now that I have seen a few photos of it. But we did not lack for subjects of our conversation and there it is. When I met Beryl we had a spot of tea and then went out to Crosby to see a local picture. I have forgotten the name of it, at any rate it was not up to much. When we got home "Grannie" Mrs. Fisher's mother, was there spending the day because it was cold and her coal ration was insufficient. After that I had to collect my things and run for the bus. Actually I had a lot more time than I thought and as it was I caught the wrong bus, an earlier one. Consequently I just had time to shout "goodbye" in very hasty fashion. This did not worry me very much at the time because I felt sure that I would be able to get out to see them again. In this I was disappointed because we did not get any more leave and a couple of days later we moved to another station farther away and I had no later opportunity. All I could do was to write Beryl a note, wishing her adieu and thanking her for her hospitality - and thanking Mrs. Fisher - and for having given me the opportunity of meeting them.

One thing I have not mentioned and that was meeting Jimmy Nesbitt. He rolled in while we were having tea the first night. He is a great lad and I can well understand what I like him so much. He is a 1st Lieut in the Navy as you know and was just about to go to sea in a battleship, after which he was hoping very much to get his own corvette, or something after that type. He was on his way home from the christening of his young nipper. His wife and sister were with him. His sister was just about to go into the W.A.A.F.

200

x Indicating M.E

x For TAKORADI GOLD COAST

I did what I could in the way of taking along to Mrs. Fisher's half a box of sugar Mum sent me, a couple of tins of cocoa, some muscatels which I had saved for Beryl from Canada where they were presented to me (they were Aust.) and quite a few cigarettes. I also had a couple of pairs of stockings which I had purchased in Cape Town with Beryl in mind and which seemed to please very much, Beryl vowing that they were unobtainable.

At the moment of writing I am still riding the Western Ocean - for third time - but I ought to be near George or Fatty within a fortnight - or at any rate where I can find out their whereabouts. It will be great if I can see some of the boys again. Of course the chances are that Fatty is at home - they have announced that some have returned and the B.B.C. spoke of the "seasoned veterans of Greece, Crete and Tobruk" - who were likely than Fatty and Perks. I hope so at any rate, they've earned it. If I do happen to meet up with any of the lads we ought to be able to hit one or two high spots because I am very flush at the moment and already have 3 weeks pay owing to me - here's hoping.

Cheerio and keeping smiling,

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At Sea. 25 April 1942

(Elder Dempster Lines)

The time is not yet 7 a.m. and I have had my bath and am now out on deck clothed in a pair of shorts and there is a lovely cool breeze.

After a relatively short sojourn in camp ashore we have left again. Now we are at sea again in a different ship and all our fears as to what she was going to be like have been dispelled. She is a smallish ship of about  $\frac{1}{2}$  to 5000 tons and very comfortable indeed. We were lucky enough to be first on the list and so we got what were left over of the first class cabins. I am sharing one with Woggie and Killer and Kate are next door.

We've had a pleasant trip - the food is good, very good indeed. We are not eating in the first Saloon but that has its advantage inasmuch as that our small saloon is quite filled with the boys and so we turn up dressed as we like and act as we like. The cabins are good - ours is smaller than

most because most are 3 berth but we still have very comfortable beds, wardrobe and drawers and small chest of drawers, two washbasins, plenty of lights and mirrors, fresh water, thermos flask and iced water in the passage.

We have not quite as much deck space as we have been used to but then we have been absolutely spoiled up till now. At any rate we still have room to play all types of games - Deck quoits, peg quoits, bullboard "snooker" and another affair where you slide discs in through small holes at the end of a chute. The only thing we are without is a deck tennis court. We did not have that on our other boat either and so I'm thinkin I'll have to get stuck into something so soon as we get ashore.

As regards amusement "Brains Trusts" have been organised and Woggie and I are due to make fools of ourselves this afternoon, although I think either of us comes well up to the average here as regards general knowledge. We'll see - The trouble is many of the questions are chicken feed for an Englishman who is familiar with England but for us are a bit difficult.

Last night was beautifully calm and the moon is quite high - looks like the first quarter. Some of the chaps organised a concert and it was a great success. One of the boys a Dane, plays the fiddle most beautifully. He can play classical music and is a wizard on some of those peasant dances and you should hear him swing Dinah. Usually fiddles playing dance music make me sick but I could sit and listen to this chap all night. He is far the best hot fiddle I have ever heard and I don't think I have heard any amateurs up to his standard in classical music. He surely can pull out the Hungarian Rhapsody and some of Chrysler. A good violinist certainly does just seem to draw out the music.

Later.

Now that we have plenty of time on our hands we've got stuck into this bridge game once more. Only now we've started on contract. I'm writing this letter resting it on Ely Outhbertson's Self-Teacher. Woggie and I used to play Killer on Kate but I wasn't keen to make too much of a business out of it so I'm now playing with Killer. The other two have really been getting stuck into it but even so with a system which Killer and I have worked out between us we are holding our own - 5 rubbers all at the moment. No doubt our extra skill makes up for their more involved system!!!

I wonder do you know "the Warsaw Concerto" - a new piece written by a Polish fighter pilot during an air raid on

Warsaw - It's a lovely piece. One of the lads has just been playing it on his gramophone.

This extended world tour that we are having is all right, in fact it's very good, interesting and educational but you can have too much of a good thing. Of course if we have nothing to do I would rather be moving round seeing things but you sometimes wish you could settle down for a while. Most of all of course we wish we could get on with the job and see some action because until we do we stand a very small chance of getting back home which of course is the one object in life for all of us.

The Japs haven't done much past New Guinea as far as we can make out but then it may be the lull before the storm. If they leave it long enough the Americans ought to be able to get something across there.

There is one thing about the life we are leading at the moment and that is that one gets used to stopping one between the eyes and become more philosophical or should I say stoical. You know the Mahomedan who says "It is the will of Allah" has really got something. It seems to me that resignation to the past at any rate is something to be cultivated. I still have not been able to hear anything about Arthur. I will take up the matter when we get to our destination. It's rotten for you, a hell of a bang between the eyes but every time I think of it I say to myself "It is the will of Allah".

Righetti lost a brother in the Perth. Singapore was just another Crete - I never let any of this shake my confidence in the ultimate victory but they certainly don't do things the easy way. I don't think we are supposed to criticise in our letters but if we are not fighting for freedom of speech then I don't know what we are fighting for. There is plenty I could tell you and it is pretty hard to bottle it all up when I know how you would be interested.

I am at present as hot as Hades and can hear the rattle of the bottles of baby bass as they are carried from the frig. to the bar.

That is another thing towards which my attitude has changed. When at home it was quite an occasion for me to have a glass of beer although not in any way against my principles. Nowadays its neither against my principles nor against my practice. Still I stick to beer which is one thing. One suffices on most occasions, p'raps two and when it is a case of a genuine party I am lucky enough to be able to take care of myself.

On one occasion when in Manchester following the usual rules we bowled up to a p.c. and asked for a pub where we could get pleasantly inebriated - it was our last night in England before we saw bags and bags of sand. True to type he gave us a long list which we thought it our duty to put to the test finally winding up in a wisard little pub The Salisbury Arms. It is run by a retired comedian and is situated behind what is, I think, the main theatre in the City and all the stars go in there after the Show. We went in there and got on very good terms with the

proprietor. He had a brother out in Australia and people had been very good to him so he told us he would give us a treat - so out he trots and goes down to the cellar and poured us each out a brandy dated 1914 - and we were seeing quite straight. I saw the bottle covered with about  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch of dust. I heard one of the chaps at the bar offer him £10 for the rest of the bottle and he just laughed as if the chap had offered him 1/6. Later he tried about 5 taxi firms to try and get us a taxi but could not do so, so he left the pub and walked half the way to the station with us making sure we were on the right road. By the way during the evening we caused quite a bit of amusement by taking the charity boxes which you find in every bar all round each pub and making everyone put their spare cash in. We must have collected pounds during the evening.

Dave Burthwick had his hair shaved off. The Englishmen didn't know what they had struck when they saw him.

27 April.

Well you can scrub out everything I have said so far - everything is different from what I had imagined. Still I am quite pleased - very pleased in fact. You can now address R.A.A.F. G/o R.A.F. West African Command.

G/o R.A.F.  
West African Command.

All the others have managed to get a lift in a transport to a beach about 80 miles away - I have the afternoon on my own. There are only 4 Aussies left together here for the moment but we will eventually join up with the rest of our lads - the other 3 are Woggie Al Righetti and Killer (Kye) Sallick. There was only room for 3 on the transport otherwise I would have gone like a shot. We went there about 4 or 5 days ago and it was wonderful. I have never felt sea water so warm - they called it a surf beach but it couldn't be called that in Aussie. The waves were small and the run pitifully short but we stayed in for an hour and half so you can guess that we enjoyed it.

Woggie's twin younger brothers have just finished six months in Tobruk.

Righetti's eldest brother Ivo is a pilot in R.A.A.F., his second brother Lloyd is missing from the Perth. Alan is one of the best chaps I've ever met - he was doing Agricultural Science at Melbourne when he joined up. His other brother in the Navy I met in London during my last leave. He went over there on the Yachtman's Course and has received very strong recommendations for a commission but was thinking of throwing it up to be able to get back home.

Alan's father (once Mayor of Malvern) and 3 of the sons came in about the best 12 - 20 rifle shots in Victoria - Alan got 3rd in Kings Medal.

My word there is no doubt about Aussies being all over the place - we arrive here to find that the Adjutant of the Station is a chap from Melbourne and there are others as air crew here. I have not known any of them. On the boat on which we came

x 12 From England to Sierra Leone

The first part of the report deals with the general situation in Sierra Leone, and the progress of the work of the Commission. It is noted that the Commission has been working since its formation in 1960, and that it has held several public hearings and has received many suggestions from the public. The Commission has also been working to improve the legal system in Sierra Leone, and to bring about a more efficient and economical administration of justice.

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x here were some Aussie Naval officers. I think for a small population of 7 millions we do pretty well for ourselves. England is full of them. I don't think I've heard of a single R.A.F. station where there isn't at least one Australian.

I meant in the letter I lost about the heat but despite the R.A.F. it hasn't taken us long to settle down to this type of climate again. One thing you can see is that our R.A.A.F. boys are more used to sun than are the Englishmen. I don't think most of them have ever been in the sun in their lives before. In a week we had a pretty good tan up. Mind you we did start early. In fact we were the laughing stock of the boat when we turned out in shorts when it was still quite cool and when we went around without shorts when the sun still had no bite. But I don't think the boys think us quite so stupid now. Some of them would never have gone brown no matter how slowly they took it but most of them are wishing they had taken our advice and treated it with more respect. I can now wander round all day long without feeling the slightest effect.

We are very happy where we are at the moment. Naturally we are as usual fed up with hanging around and doing nothing. We've certainly done our share of that in the last 7 months. Thank heaven we are not messed around with a lot of red tape - we are left absolutely to ourselves and I can assure you that we do appreciate this. Our quarters at the moment are the best possible tents with 2 to a tent we are very comfortable. It's with Waggie. We can get quite a bit of fruit which we sadly missed in England. We have to be careful of diseases such as dysentery yellow fever malaria &c (we always sleep under nets) but with reasonable precautions there does not seem to be any danger whatsoever.

When we first settled in here the Aussies six of us really who stuck together Al Righetti Waggie Killer Dave Northwick Johnnie Hook and myself got to work on petrol bins with openers and bits of iron making Coolgardie safety showers, plates, dishes &c. which have made things much more comfortable. We started the ball rolling and for a few days boys were constantly popping in and looking with interest and very often amusement at our handiwork, especially the "Coolgardies" for which we used an old towel. But it wasn't long before our ideas spread and all through the camp you could hear the halting of bins giving signs that if they thought us dumb they at least were dumb enough to follow us. Actually the safes are a great success. All our Australian tinned fruit (K Y and I P G apricots peaches and pears) we enjoy really cool instead of lukewarm. These are obtainable at the N.A.F.I. Our ration of 1 bottle of beer per day is cool instead of undrinkably hot. By now I think we have received recognition for a little house.

In all my letters of late I seem to be expressing some sort of pride in Australians and this must of course have come through contrast with men of other nations. Since I have left home this pride has greatly increased. And I don't think there is anything wrong with pride so long as it is controlled and justifiable and above all so long as it is not constantly floated in others' faces. Naturally we meet good chaps and bad as everywhere although I must say that on the whole I have come into contact with a very fine type of chap. Arthur speaks of the people of



Singapore having very little to do with "the forward Australians". I should think that the community there was hardly representative of Englishmen everywhere, too much of the "Pomah 196" type who have lived in the colonies all their lives. Yet Aussies are everywhere regarded as forward I think. To me a better and more sympathetic word would be "frank" - or perhaps "open". Because we have developed a peccol of our own and say "ei" instead of "ay" it doesn't mean that we are altogether uneducated, have a lower standard of intelligence. We may not have the complete reserve of an Englishman but at least we have the ability to drop that reserve occasionally.

I think our little group is an eternal source of amused pity to a large majority of the chaps we are with - half the day we are pulling one another's legs, singing in the most inane fashion or belting the daylight out of each other and my! is it fun? Yet last night we sat and talked for well over 3 hours mostly on religion. Our group stick pretty much together although not, I think, too much. It is not at all a case of having nothing to do with the others. I know my tendency has always been to narrow the circle of my friends a great deal too much but although I rarely go round without one or more of our chaps that doesn't prevent me from getting to know others. If I were to come home now I think the greatest change you would notice would be that I have started to grow up. When I left home I was about 3 years at least younger than now, younger in knowledge of men and the world, younger in understanding and tolerance and appreciation of others' views. I often laugh at myself for what I was then and have no doubt that in 18 mos I shall be laughing at myself for what I am now. This business of growing up is certainly interesting and amusing.

There is so much I cannot talk about. Reticence? I didn't understand the meaning of the word before.

I think we move tomorrow on the middle stage of  
 × our journey - then for a change some work.

188 Squadron W.A.F.  
 Posted 25 May.

My last letter was written about 3 weeks ago and a lot has happened since then. Unfortunately most of it I cannot tell you about - it is certainly very interesting although not startling. Some time when all the point of it has gone I shall tell you.

I am at present on dawn duty this morning.

One never knows what is going to happen in this game. I was supposed to be going where I hoped to see some of the boys but was posted here. Where "here" is you will just have to guess  
 × but I certainly can't tell you. All I can say is that after  
 × our last sea voyage we had quite a long cross-country which was  
 very interesting but in this climate quite trying. Once again  
 we have split up. There are only 3 of us left together now



Weggie Killer and self - out of the original mob. Kate Righetti was supposed to have come with us but unfortunately got a crook tummy just before we were scheduled to leave and before we were was not fit to fly. He was soon alright again but all the wheedling and persuasion in the world would not get them to change their minds. That leaves 3 of us and of course I have to be big enough to be put in one flight and the other two in another flight. However they are all a good crowd of chaps.

Time seems a long time ago and yet the last letter I got from home was dated 19 Decr last and it will be a long time before we get mail either direct or readdressed from the first A.P.O.

Later.

The rainy season is just about due here now and we get most violent storms which just appear out of nowhere and vanish as quickly as they came. We had one last night and the lightning was marvellous and I mean to use the word in its proper sense. It only wanted the three witches and Macbeth to make the scene complete. With a rainfall of something like 350" coming mainly in 2 or 3 months you can see that we shall be wearing our Mac Wests whether we are flying or not - well more or less at any rate. By the way that reminds me of a quotation which one of the boys has penned on his Mac West - "Yet though I fly through the Valley of the Shadow of Death I will fear no evil for thou art with me". By the way a most peculiar thing happened the other day. I went over to Orderly Room to get paid when an Aussie walked in. He was in transit and I asked him where he was from and he said N.S.W. to which I replied that I was from Tassie. He then told me that there was a chap named Charlie Green with him who came from Tassie so I wandered over to see him and blow-me-down if it wasn't a chap who was in my year at the Uni - used to attend History and English lectures with me and I have often sat next to him. He was at Teachers College. He has been in the M.E.

Some of the boys have monkeys as pets. They don't appeal to me much I would much rather have a decent dog. But the queerest of all the pets the boys have is a baby crocodile belonging to one of the Canadians. It is a minute thing at the moment only about 9 or 10 inches long. I don't quite know what is going to happen when it gets bigger or how long it will be before it becomes unmanageable.

We had to send quite a bit of kit by sea and now that we have not gone where we were supposed to go I don't suppose we shall ever see it again. We have got the Air Force to send off signals and so I suppose there is a chance that it may turn up in a few months time.

In the canteen we get quite a lot of Aussie fruit. This is an absolute god-send because the other food doesn't appeal to my palate very much and there is not much native fruit here just now. However when the rains come there ought to be plenty bananas oranges paw paw and pineapples. Mangoes I do not like.

Here as everywhere where we are a mixed family - Englishmen Canadians Americans and Australians. The C.O. is an Englishman who was with No. 1 Squadron in France - read Noel Monk's book if you want to learn about that. He is very popular with everyone apparently right down to the Ems and that is a fair enough test for a C.O. The Flt/Cdr is a Canadian who has just finished 24 yrs in the M.E. So you can see we are getting some really good tuition in that part of our flying which really matters.

We get 3 picture shows a week which is really very good. It certainly does a lot to relieve the monotony - on the whole they are quite entertaining.

There is a small library on the station filled with books which are just fair. At the moment - now don't be too surprised - I am reading "England in the reign of Queen Anne" by Trevelyan - actually a reprint of the first 3 chapters of "Helenheim". Now and again I sit down and just try to think out a bit of history off the bat and have been amazed at the middle I get into but I realize that it would only require one read through of my notes or something like that for most of it to come back. I would hate to think that all that I have ever learnt was only skin deep. I am going to try and get hold of some history books. Another quite good idea would be to polish up my French - an especially good idea as one of the lads is a French Canadian by name Lapointe. His cousin who died 6 mos ago was acting Prime Minister while Mackenzie King was in England - Minister for Justice.

One friend who might be of great service and upon whom I would not hesitate to call is Harry Deeper of Cape Town. He can possibly get a lot of things for us and send them here e.g. wireless. He might also be able to send us books - I must find out how we can send money to him. Send bags of magazines if you can.

27 May 1942.

Malaria here is known amongst the boys as "hot shot" and is rampant with the rainy season with such a quantity of water about and the hot climate. We have to take very adequate precautions. Long pants long sleeves and mosquito boots are rigidly enforced from sundown to sunrise. Mosquito nets are of course over all the beds which have to be made down by 4.30 p.m. As I when asleep get into the most amazing attitudes and am always knocking the net or elbowing I have managed to get a large net and with skilful manipulation am doing alright.

Lapointe was saying that his father being in the newspaper business in Canada was asked to go out to the newspaper works at Byer and was very interested when I showed him a photo of the mills.

133 Squadron W.A.F.

2 June 1942.

I have written to Mr. McNabb (Canada) Harry

Deeper (Cape Town) Howard Just (Cape Town) Norma (Southern Rhodesia) Mrs. Anderson (England) and others. Of course I know that you will realise that my motives are in no way unnecessary and that I'm not just writing so that people will reply!! - much.

Speaking of writing to Mrs. Anderson when I started the letter I realised that the name of the Flycatcher was Anderson so I told him I was writing to Mrs. Anderson but would be just as discreet as an oyster. Unfortunately he wasn't married and his only relation in England by that name at any rate was a brother in the Swedish Army. He is a mighty fine fellow and I am very very sorry indeed that we are losing him. Still he has had 3 1/2 yrs in the desert and is just about due for a spell back in civilisation. He had the bad luck to bust up his hand rather badly and I think perhaps his injury has precipitated his departure.

Not being in the same flight as Waggie and Killar I only see them in the evenings. However we have all moved into the same billets now so I see more of them now than I did formerly. They are both above average pilots I think and seem to be doing very well in their flight. As a matter of fact Waggie must be doing exceptionally well because he was chosen from his flight to take part in an exercise in which only commissioned officers are only supposed to take part. This may mean that his commission is on the way and I would be very pleased indeed if that were so. I have often told you about him and he certainly has all the points for which they should look. Killar is a lot younger - 12 yrs younger than I am - and in some ways younger than his years. He is probably a little better pilot than Waggie but he has not a really sound sense of proportion. He is a very likeable chap and all that but does not always stop to think what he is saying. He is liable to get very prejudiced against anything he does not like and then gets very obstinate. He is going to find things a lot more difficult than any of the rest of us when, after the war, he has to work really hard and assume responsibility without everything being laid on.

We have a very humorous "boy" by the name of Joe Moor. He is very short about 5 ft or less and looks so funny when he walks along with a hundredweight or so on his head. At the moment he is managing to wash, iron, make up all the beds in the morning and make them down again at night and all the little extras for 2 or 3 of us. This is twice the usual amount of work usually expected from one of these boys - His English is just fair and some of his expressions are really funny.

One or two of the boys used to play in dance bands in Givvy Street - Lidington even had his own and as there are numerous coloured bands nearby we asked Joe where we could get instruments. He evidently has the dope and is going to find out for us. Little asked him if he had a clarinet and he made as though playing one. "The the flute play forward like bugle" says Joe. We nearly died.

Last night we had an R.E.S.A. concert by a troupe who, I think, are touring all round N.A. It was an excellent show with not a weak item. It was quite a change to see 6 alluring

females - white) - after what one is used to seeing round here; and they were all good in their parts too. They with 5 or 6 chaps put on a variety show, all music and feeling and everyone thoroughly enjoyed it. From now on I believe we are to get a show about every 3 wks which is mighty good really. E N S A is run by the N A A F I and is the best branch of it. Last night was the best 6d worth I have ever had out of the N A A F I. We quite realise how much difference the N A A F I makes to our life out here but seeing that it is more or less a sub-governmental organisation the boys sometimes grouse at the prices &c which it charges. It is claimed that all profits go back to the services but then you come across chaps who openly boast that in their capacity as managers they have made £1000 in one year. Incidentally that is not just here but when you hear this in addition to reading in the paper of £1000000 legal profit in 6 mos and £35000000 p.a. turnover it makes one very suspicious that the boys are being taken for a ride. An honorary corporal can't run a 1941 car on his legitimate wages. The discrepancies in the prices between even the local branches are swarming. I think I heard of the Govt in England holding an investigation but even if the money doesn't buy silence it seems to me that it is something like closing the stable door after the horse has gone. However perhaps that is rather unfair and they may do some good.

The only thing I drink here is pure and simple water apart from a little horrible fruit drink made of a small type of native orange by the N A A F I which we drink when we miss filling our water bottles at one or other of the 3 half hour periods at which the drinking water is available. Some of the boys keep on with their glass of beer a day but normally it is a bit potent in this climate for me, not just potent but has a fuzzy effect on the tummy. Besides too much of that doesn't mix very well with flying.

I think I have reason to be fairly pleased with my progress here. The usual thing here is for one of the new pilots to go on standby with an old pilot to lead him, but the other day one of the old pilots came up to me and told me that the Flt/Cdr was going to give me a test and if I got on O.K. I would be put on in charge of a section. We went up on this test and had a bit of a dog fight of which I was lucky enough to get the better although I quite realise that he probably didn't pull his best tricks on me and beside I really had a bit better machine. However everything must have been fairly right, he told me he was quite pleased and said that he was putting me on as leader on standby so now I'm down leading other sergeants and even a couple of the P/Os. This may sound horribly egotistical and I realise it is all about a person called ME but still I think it's only natural to talk a bit this way and to be pleased that I have so far avoided putting up any blacks.

I'm quite pleased for another reason, the increased responsibility must be a sign of a certain amount of confidence in me and so results in increased confidence in myself which I honestly think I wanted badly - you will have to pardon these letters if I get very introspective - and talk about it - but you must realise that out here we have a great deal of time in which



one is too lazy to do anything with except think. We are trying to get something educational to occupy our minds with. If I can get some French books Denise Lapointe has promised to give me some coaching.

On at dawn in the morning but hope to get to the pictures nearby tonight. The relaxation is worth while every time.

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188 Squadron W.A.F.  
28 June 1942.

We haven't had any mail yet but it certainly should not be long now. Four months mail should arrive all at once.

Later. 1 July 1942.

I hope that I may have some news for you soon, something of interest but I can't say when. With the wet season the bugs are well and truly about. I haven't been ill at all yet and with usual precautions ought to be able to dodge it.

We started a bridge tournament down in the mess but just when Killer and self had a good lead it had to be abandoned. We have got a pretty good system working between us now and I must say that I do get my share of the cards. Our first match we won by 4300 to 1800.

We have hopes of getting a greatly improved mess soon and evenings will be much more pleasant. I meet a large number of Aussies from time to time. One chap who came through some time ago was Lennie Fuller, the chap who landed two Ansons at once at Wogga - you remember?

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188 Squadron W.A.F.  
3 July 1942.

The weather today is unfit for flying. I thought that I had seen real rain but I've come to the opposite conclusion.

We saw a honey of a picture the other night, Senja Heine in "It happened one night". There was some weird ice skating in it. I nearly got down to Durham a couple of times to try and break my neck when in England. I often used to fly over there and do steep turns so that I could watch them skating but after a while they used to stop to watch us which was not at all what we wanted.

I would like to know where Jones and all the boys are now so that I can write to them.

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128 Squadron W.A.F.  
15th, July 1942.

Just a'propos of nothing I shall not of course be able to tell you if I happen to "prang" i.e. damage an aircraft at any time but there is certainly no harm in telling you that so far I have not even scratched one in my 250 hrs so far. Of course we don't build up half the hours of the bomber boys but then one can hardly make a comparison between the two. One hour in the hot cramped cockpit of a fighter is almost as tiring as 5 or 6 in a big plane where you can move round, eat, talk &c.

I had occasion to go aboard a naval vessel some time ago on duty - I wish I could say what it was all about but I can't. Wagner - Tanhauser on the wireless - wizard. At any rate I was told to expect a pinnace at a certain time. I stood round with numerous sailors waiting for their boat as I assumed I would be going out with them. Looking down I saw a pinnace and enquiring found that it was from "my" boat. A middle in charge and I walked down to try and scrounge a lift out explaining who I was and my business. He springs to attention, salutes and says he has been sent in especially for me so in I hop and sit down in a boat big enough for 20 men. "Shove off forward". Out at the ship the boat pulls up at the quarter deck gangway and up I go. The officer of the watch & co all line up and salute as I come up. Of course I returned the salute and up walks an officer with more scrambled egg than that and say "Oh come down to my cabin and we'll talk this over". I don't quite know whom he expected but I think it shook him that an N.C.O. should be doing the job. Rather embarrassing at times - especially all the saluting, still everything worked out O.K. and I had a pleasant couple of hours. Of course, without trying to criticise the navy in any way they work on entirely different relationship between officers and men. In the flights we tell anyone except the Flight Commander or C.O. to "Beetle off" "Stop shooting a line" (or words to that effect) and I'm sure that it does no harm because nobody tries to take advantage of all this good feeling; and after all we are all doing exactly the same work. A commission is not necessarily any indication of a pilot's ability. At O.T.U. we had an instructor, a Flight Sergt who had D.F.M. and bar and 15 or 14 Jerries to his credit. Incidentally he is not a Flt/Lt with 2 more planes. I am not a big enough liar to say that I would not like a commission but I am glad really that I did not get one while still training. It means a loss of seniority but it has the advantage that if I did get one from now on it would either be because I had earned it or at any rate those responsible would have had an opportunity to really get to know me. Working with a chap in a squadron seems to me the only true way of getting to know a chap.

One of the boys by name Thompson, a Canadian, is absolutely wizard with pencil or paints especially portraits. He is at the moment busy on a series to decorate the flight showing a "legend" from the laxing round the flight, the

L11/1  
phone ring to the final touch down. He is not very far advanced with it but afterwards if I can get him to do one of myself I will send it home.

I found that someone was shooting a line when they told me the rainfall was 230" p.a. - it is only about 180-190. My humble apologies. The main thing about the weather is that it may be bright blue sky one minute and within 10 minutes a tropical downpour. One has to be very careful, especially just now.

We have a decent mess now with comfortable chairs, plenty of room, plenty of light, air etc., and also much better sleeping quarters so things are on the upgrade. I do miss the music. There is a wireless in the mess but what I want is not always what the other chaps want and so I have written to Harry Dwyer to ask him to send me one. I can get the money to him through the bank - It will be a great comfort and if I do not take it with me when we leave here I shall not lose much on resale. Power is business (? spelling).

Enclosed find a snap of one G.W. Waugh, one Alan Richetti and one yours truly in a transit camp some time ago. Don't wonder at the size of my face - I was cutting a wisdom tooth and for a while it was enough to make Harry Dwyer look like a shadow of a dream.

128 Squadron W.A.F.  
18 August

Attaboy! A letter! Do you think I was pleased to receive it or was I pleased? It was No. 24 and the last one I had received from you was No. 4 so there are a few yet to arrive and they ought to pile in. Yesterday I received a letter from Mrs. Dwyer. Duncan has gone into the Navy on a midshipman's course and is enjoying it.

I have been surprised that in a place like this where sickness is Public Enemy No. 1 & boredom Public Enemy No. 2 that they have not taken better measures to ensure really 1st class food. However there is no need to get panicky, we are not really doing too badly and as for medical care it is bad to none. As an instance of this I strained my back 3 or 4 yrs ago and have been having ultra-violet radiant heat treatment and good massage. We have to take 3 grains of Quinine and Ascorbic Acid tablets to replace one of the vitamins - might be A or might be I so far as I know at any rate the one that is in green vegetables. In addition to that Aircrew and anyone else who is sick are given Halibut oil globules. So you see that we are looked after in that way alright.

I had a letter from Susan a fortnight ago and two small packages of papers - Reader Digests etc. Her brother George is in England having finished his training as a pilot.

I got the surprise of my life yesterday when one of the boys brought me a letter which he had brought for me from along the coast - a note from Charlie Bowling. Unfortunately I shall not be able to get around to see him and it is very unlikely that

he will be about here.

I shall be seeing a couple of the boys with whom we first went across to Rhodesia. We missed an opportunity to see one of them but I expect he and the other chap will be around soon. Campbell and Emery are their names. How we happened to find out about them was another Aussie came in and we started talking; I mentioned Rhodesia and he spoke of these chaps with whom he had joined up later. He also gave us news of quite a lot of chaps of whom we had had no news for 18 mos. It's a small world.

Another big coincidence happened the other day. I came in from Dusk Watch to a late tea and Waggie walked up with a Scot and said "Here's a cove who knows Norma". So after I finished eating we had quite a long chat. His name was Campbell and it turns out that he finished his training in Rhodesia a couple of months before I arrived. I remember Norma speaking of him and his two pals. He crashed and finished up as an observer. He was very interested in my photos of Maudie and in the news I had received in Norma's letter two days previously - I shall be seeing him again.

Later: Yippy! 3 cables from home today, the 1st dated 3rd May - 2 1/2 months for a cable!!! It had been to M.E. - the 2nd dated 2nd. June - the 3rd dated 15 August i.e. 3 days ago.

My letters from now on will of necessity not be interesting because life is so stagnant.

188 Squadron W.A.F.  
20 Augst. 1942.

I think I'll have to get married or something like that so that I'll have some news to give you. Of course there are quite a few difficulties to be overcome. The first thing is that there is just no one to get married to - I might be able to pick up a wag for next to nothing but then I don't know there's always the chance that I might not be good enough for her. And then on top of that I don't know that I want to get married. I think I'll become a woman-hater instead, so perhaps we might wash out the marriage idea. I could commit suicide but then that would have its disadvantages too - and then of course I wouldn't be able to tell you about it and it wouldn't be the same knowing about it from some one else would it? However if I can think of some means of both committing suicide and telling you about it I shall reconsider the question. Even writing a full account of what I intend to do wouldn't be much good because the unexpected always happens. I might do myself in a few minutes ahead or behind schedule and you know just how careful you've got to be with these things. With all these smart Alices around someone would be sure to spot the discrepancy and then I'd cop it hot - very panny, what? Apart from this I can't think of much that I can do towards making my letters more newsworthy. There is just one thing which might interest you and that is that I had a full medical

examination yesterday for reasons which you will understand in due course and had the satisfaction of knowing that I was A1/B which is the top. In addition to that my back which has been sore for about 5 weeks is now just about completely well so that all round I seem to be in pretty fair shape. I'll show 'em that Africa can't get a Watchern!

I may be doing some job on my own soon which will be a change from routine here and will be a chance to do something concretely useful and to show a little initiative.

1 Sept. 1942.

Happy Wheeler - a Queenslander - here had a letter from home dated 4th June today. He and two other Australians are all getting letters from their girl friends saying what a wonderful time they are having with the Americans and Happy even heard today from his young sister that she has even married one. No doubt some of them are jolly fine chaps but taking them as a class I wonder how long it will be before the initial glamour of something different something new wears off.

Had a glorious swim this afternoon - fresh water, diving board. The water is beautifully warm and of course the sun - yes real sun was lovely. P'raps with 41" in July and 45" in August the rain will let up a bit. I'm on watch at present but after the swim feel quite tired so shall leave off writing and relax.

Great news from New Guinea and the Solomons - hope the boys keep it up.

158 Squadron W.A.F  
10 Sept. 1942

I shall have some news for you shortly. The idea is that things are pending at the moment and there's no sense in talking about them until everything is sewn up.

The Air Force has its own jargon but it all seems to leave me when I sit down to write a letter. We don't say "I'm going up to the flight to fly" No, it is "I'm flashing up to the corall to dice" or something of that sort. A chap never "flies" round here, he "dices with death" "juggles with Jesus" or "grovels with the gremlin".

A gremlin by the way is an infamous imp who stamps on one wing when you let your air speed get too low coming in to land, who perches himself between the legs of seagulls and steers them at you up in the air, who knocks a hole in an oil pipe, drains your oil and then says "Thanks! Weather have a red cap on". Great crowds of them cluster on the runway forming a "cushion" or whatever the Romans used to call their wall of shields and they all with one accord rise mightily when a pilot is landing the morning after. When a chap is practising air firing on a dummy they organize an ingenious system of invisible and unbreakable mirrors so that the poor pilot doesn't even have a chance of hitting the target because it just isn't where he

sees it. There is just one thing to be said in their favour - they must be very abstemious creatures (you'll realise this if you consult Thorne Smith or Tepper) because they have bags of ectoplasm and never materialise for one second so you just have no hope at all of pulling a rod or turning your heaters on them. And its quite true what they say about them blowing on your trail when finishing your run after landing and when you've pranged, nicking back to the Flight one time and erasing your signature from the serviceability sheet - you've just no idea of some of the pranks they get up to.

We have not heard any more about our Cairn kit - though the Equipment Officer is doing his best to track it down. We live in hopes.

Some of us managed to get hold of a rubber ball the other day and had a few kicks with it. It would seem to offer the best chance of our getting into nick again. Life here at times is very sedentary and one is apt to get very lethargic.

Killer's letter and one of Happy Wheelers had gone to U.K., another one of Happy's went to M.E. - so it would seem as though some fool at P.O. Melbourne is to blame for all our mail going astray. I went down to the Padre about it - he was very sympathetic and promised to do what he could. He said that he would try to get A.H.Q. to send a signal to R.A.A.F. H.Q. Melbourne telling them to get mobile and kick somebody in the pants - or at any rate to send a signal.

After a while one gets to feeling a very long way away from home and everyone. With no news for such a long time one can't help thinking that we are living in two different worlds.

I have heard rumours of a new A.M.O. out to say that all Colonials (under which heading we are invariably taken in) on completion of their tour of duty overseas will be sent home by the quickest possible route; but I am not allowing my hopes to rise any yet. Besides we have up to another twelve months to do here yet so any talk of that is rather premature.

188 Squadron W.A.F.  
16 Sept. 1942.

Yippi! I was Duty Pilot yesterday and I had been on all day when the post waggon arrived at the Watch Tower and the postman said, "You're Sgt Watchmen aren't you?" "Sure thing" "Oh, there's a letter for you". Thereafter followed a period of quiet till he could find his way to the post waggon through the cloud of dust I had created. Out came a packet of about 40 or so letters and there were only 16 for me -- a mere 16. The dates ranged from 22 August 1941 to 4 Feb'y 1942. Most had been to Rhodesia, then to England while some had gone direct to England, all had gone to M.E. and then been sent round here. Smoked! do you think it was a thrill, or was it a thrill.

A letter from Mr. Beattley spoke of Mrs. B. having received a letter and snaps from you and Geo Smith having read a



letter at Rotary in which Dad evidently thanked them for what they had done for me. I still write a note every now and again taking them in turn.

Herna was very grateful for "Green Mountains" for which she wrote and thanked you.

Mrs. Ralph said she was posting me a Bulletin - it hasn't arrived yet. I always think that "The Bulletin" is the most typical Australian paper I know.

I ran out of the billets the other day, 2 days ago, going into the mess for 4 p.m. tiffin and ran into Reg Payne and Bill Watson both of our original draft to Rhodesia - Reg was the only other Taswegian in the draft apart from Col. Wright. Reg's people live in Mount Stuart Rd. Reg is on another squadron on the coast and I shall be seeing him periodically. He has only recently come out from Blighty and had news of all the other lads of our original mob. Believe me they are scattered to the four corners alright. Major is on flying boats in England. I must drop him a line. Page was in London about a month ago apparently. It was great to get all the news and we talked pretty late.

If sending a parcel of reading material at any time you might mark it as such on the outside so that in the event of my shifting the other lads here will be able to have the benefit of it.

I have your letter on the table in front of me and even I can smell the boronia-scented paper from here. The stalk itself is still wonderfully fragrant - after 18 mos. It shocks the boys the way the scent remained.

See J on page 9 and hardly any real news - that just doesn't exist in this place.

188 Squadron W.A.F.  
5 Oct, 1942.

At the moment I am not with the boys. I can't tell you any more about it and I naturally haven't got any news of the boys at all.

Letters of January February and March seem to be turning up fairly well now but still have not had any letters direct to here and the parcels don't seem to be getting here.

Later, 16 Oct, 1942.

At the moment I am writing this in hospital - I'm quite O.K. and feel as large as life - I've just had a dose of the bug - slight malaria but only felt creek for a few days. Unfortunately once you report sick here they take no chances and hang you in for quite a long course i.e. about a week and as one feels O.K. for the last 3 days or so it means that a chap is hanging around doing nothing - not that we do much here in camp but we do something occasionally and it is easier to kid yourself that you are being useful.



The words in the hospital are damned good and with comfortable beds and plenty of fresh air a chap doesn't want more. There is only one disadvantage, a chap who is quite harmless but absolutely lousy and creates hell at times. Every brand of the services is represented, Navy, Army and R.A.F. all mixed up together. Really quite a good idea because a Navy chap has always got something to say which you haven't heard before and at the same time you can always find an R.A.F. chap to talk to if you want to. I have a chap with me at the moment, Fortman, an Englishman, and a Sgt/Pilot. He's mad about music and apparently played the fiddle in one of the big orchestras in London. His girl friend in England who incidentally is the daughter of the man who was responsible for designing the Hurricane came and in the British Isles in her L.R.A.M. on the piano. I only wish that we had a decent gramophone and some good records here at the moment. Boy I would we get to town on them.

In its place I have a couple of good books "Arches of the Years" and "Waiving Matilda" - the latter by an Englishman Arnold L. Haskell is an account of Australia and Australians with their thoughts and views. It is very good and well illustrated. He does not attempt to write an historical text book but at the same time incorporates enough to explain his points. I haven't had any news of the lads for the last 3 weeks or so. They have promised to send letters on and there should be some soon. I heard the other day of 3 letters which had been given to a Flt/Lieut., an Australian ashamed as I am to admit it, but he just lost them somewhere and they just haven't turned up since. Words won't be spared next time I see him.

All the boys in these parts are Mohammedans and they celebrated their Huss (Salo as they call it in one dialect) 2 or 3 days ago. Apparently it is a lunar festival and somehow or other they hold the festival on the first night on which they can see the new moon. We were all duly grateful that it was visible on the first night this year because I believe last year the weather was bad for a few days and there were consequently no boys on the camp for about 3 days. Monday was their big day - today is Saturday. Apparently they begin on the Sunday by the head of the household conducting a prayer session in his own house in which everyone, even the youngest kids, must attend and this lasts the whole night. If any of the kids fall asleep they get a belting. The next day they apparently spend on their beds catching up on some of the pounding hours i.e. pounding on their ears. When refreshed in the evening they hold their feast - mostly rice fish bush cow and a few extras but - and note this - no beer or intoxicants of any kind for as you perhaps know the devout Mohammedan does not touch liquor. They all seem devout enough although I have not seen any Minarets or minarets etc. However the old nigger has not yet lost all his old original superstitions by any means. He still patronises his witch doctor if everything else fails. They all wear ~~beads~~ or charms round their necks. Usually they take the form of what appear to be small pieces of ebony about 1" square and  $\frac{1}{2}$ " thick with rounded corners suspended by anything

from a string of beads to an ordinary piece of string. Marmada (quite a common name) one of the boys in the mess had a sore on his leg the other day and so was sent down town to the M.O. He put a dressing on it which apparently did little good so Marmada "went bush" and disappeared for a few days. When he came back he had an ordinary piece of string tied around his leg just above the knee. He explained that he had been to the witch doctor and he had healed it for him - and apparently in this case either faith had done its job or the M.O.'s cure had at last taken effect because the sore was certainly better. However I have heard of a wog, not satisfied with a sore which the M.O. had treated and which was actually making fairly good progress despite all the filth and flies with which they consistently wrap themselves, who went bush and saw the old witch doctor. He did not think much of the Doc's work, replaced the dressing with a leaf with the result that the wog almost lost his leg. Maybe the latter wog just went along for a lark - and a holiday - That'll learn him.

I now have reason to believe that Geoff Stackhouse went to Libya.

Tonight most of the "up" patients are at the pictures and so there is relative quiet.

I was going but heard that it was "He stayed for Breakfast" with Loretta Young and Mervyn Douglas which have seen twice already so I was not keen. Perhaps if our tame maniac doesn't start raving I may have enough quiet to get some writing done. Somehow or other I almost feel in the mood tonight.

I guess it will be a queer Xmas for you folks as it will be for us. We all wish we were home as much as no doubt you wish we were with you. And yet we'll all manage to knock up some fun for ourselves. This place doesn't exactly lend itself to making merry because there is so little outside the camp but we'll have fun enough. We shall all be thinking of Artie & Co. It's gotten the Japs not making any lists available but still no doubt they will come soon.

It all seems unfair that you elder folk should have to work your hearts out and scrape and save while we in the services sit round so much of our time and splash so much. I am saving but am not making any promises as to what will happen if money is required for movement. If one was miserly in a place like this he would simply go nuts. The present rate of saving may be decreased shortly but only temporarily - the reason you should know before you get this letter.

Well they are kicking me off to bed now.

125 Squidway N.A.F.  
17 Novr, 1942.

I have been much busier than usual and have been doing something, even though it is very small. As I shall now be censoring my own letters I shall have to be even more careful than usual so that there can be no question of my abusing the

privilege I have.

I suppose you would want to know about me getting my commission - that is purely personal and so there is no reason to keep quiet about that. Well it all started way back on 23rd August last when all at once the Fit/Chief called me into his office and said "How would you like to apply for a commission?" Well you could have knocked me over with a feather. I just said a weak "Very much" and so I had to write out an application to see the C.O. about it. I found out when I got down below that Weggie, Dennis and Hilly had also been told to apply.

The offer was received with mixed feelings for one reason only and that was that Killer had missed out.

Our little trio has been split up and it is hard on him. He has a habit of getting fed up very easily and now we are no longer together the whole time it is going to be a bit stiff for him. On the other hand this commission racket is a funny business and I've seen too much of the difference it makes in a chap's opportunities not to want one. But most of all I think I owe it to you folk because I am the first to realise that it is mainly through your efforts and often almost criminal self denial in giving me and indeed all of us the best education and upbringing a chap could wish that it has been possible for both Artie and myself to get commissions. I hope that we have done what we can to earn them but by this time I'm sure enough that no matter how hard we had tried without your efforts we just wouldn't have got them. To our chances and personal comfort as it will make a big difference but amongst the boys it makes no difference at all; in a crowd of chaps and especially in our job it seems to me a chap is judged 80% on his character and disposition and 20% on his flying and rank just means less than nothing. I must say that I am glad and a little proud that the commission should have come through after a sufficiently long period on a Squadron for them to make some estimation of us - and on a Squadron chaps get to know one another if they ever will. I am also pleased that our commissions must have originated when our C.O. was one of the No. 1 Squadron (France 1939) boys. Well, a certain amount of time we had various interviews with C.O. of Squadron, then C.O. of Station then finally the A.O.C. The atmosphere which rather naturally I suppose smacked of red tape was luckily broken when, on being marched in, I saluted and nearly knocked off my top which was of a different sort with a larger brim than the one to which I was accustomed. Everyone grinned and I did manage to contain myself and the rather electric atmosphere was banished for good and all. The A.O.C. said "You're an Australian aren't you?" "Yes". "You come from Tasmania?" "Yes" "And yet you call yourself an Australian?" - to which I replied, summoning forth 100% knowledge of Aust. history, that Tassie the jewel of the Commonwealth was one of the 6 States federated into the Commonwealth of Australia in

1901 - all of which seemed to be duly impressive (I am sure you can just imagine) and this fact seemed to occupy his mind for the rest of the interview. I did feel tempted to remind him of the fact that the pick of the convicts had gone to Tassie. The routine questions came along "Where did you do your training?" "How did you like it there?" "What were you doing before you joined?" and before you could count 1, 2, 3 I was on the right side of the door again. He even spared me the necessity of very strong abstinence by not asking me what I thought of West Africa. After about a fortnight I was told by the C.O. that Woggie's and my commissions had gone through but that Donnie Lapointe and Hilly had been knocked back. After this of course everything had to go to Air Ministry and R.A.A.F. H.Q. to be O.Ked. Then 2 or 3 days ago when I walked down to the flight to go on duty at 4.30 p.m. everyone jumped up and said "Good afternoon Sir". So there we are. Now you've got all the gen. I sent a cable to you a couple of days ago.

198 Sqn. W.A.F  
26 Novr. 1942.

Thank you especially for the entirely scrumptious fruit cake which I suppose had improved during the course of its wanderings. I took it down to the flight dispersal for afternoon tea - we usually manage a brew of sorts and I assure you it was loudly acclaimed by all partakers. It was the first fruit cake, in fact cake of almost any sort, that most of us had had for about 8 mos and was very much appreciated.

Naturally the events in North Africa have their effect here, a very definite effect, but these events only make it impossible to say as much as we might have formerly.

On account of the climate in this place the tour of this command has just recently been reduced to a 12 mos maximum. With the rainy season over now things are much improved - one needs at least one blanket in the small hours of the morning. This means that each day is a fresh start and we don't now wake up in the morning feeling just as tired as when we hit the hay. Blue sky is as consistently the order of the day now as rain was recently when we had between 110" and 130" in 3 months. However I think I can say that I too will leave these parts without any reluctance. Where we go to from here I have not the foggiest notion, mysterious are the ways of the Lord and the Air Force.

I wish I could give you some of the "gen" relevant to the situation which comes our way - it does make the war a little more bearable when you know something of what is going on. We had a wee farewell party last evening -

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x Station near Freetown

x Photographic Reconnaissance

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rather to some people's annoyance (I don't know why) with the result that I'm rather weary this eve so for the present cheerio.

188 Squadron W.A.F.  
10 January 1943.

Since my last letter I have been fairly busy and travelled a good many miles. Now I'm back in the old haunt with the rest of the boys and things are very quiet again. Now that everyone is nice and friendly in this part of the World things will no doubt start getting boring again. However while it lasted we had something of interest to do and I think we acquitted ourselves alright. I'm sorry I can't tell you what our work was but you will understand that. Of my own work I can just say that perhaps Burgess Watt would be interested. Incidentally you might notice in the papers that F/Lt (Assting) R.N.G. Allen of 188 Squadron (my Flight Commander) has been awarded the D.F.C. Personally I was very lucky in having the chance, which not everyone had, of doing something useful and what is most important from my point of view, gaining some valuable experience which will stand me in good stead in times to come. The American agreement with French West Africa changed things a good deal. But things might have turned out very different and then we might have been able to really go to town.

We are in a very awkward position at the moment. If we applied to be posted back to Australia I am sure that our applications would receive very sympathetic consideration but things are not quite the same as when we asked to go about 12 mos ago. The Doughboys and Diggers have done alright for themselves in New Guinea and Nippon would almost appear to have missed the invasion bus. And then although the Far East front is very important, especially to us, it is very narrow and for every position up north there are probably ten applicants. If we came home now it would almost seem as if we were getting back under false pretences. Its 2½ years since I joined up and we haven't yet had a crack at a Jerry. It would seem like walking downhill somehow - there's a goal at the top and I've turned round at the first staging post. I'd get home and people would ask what I'd done all the time I'd been away - I'd just have to hide my head. If the Japs were on the doorstep, as they were, instead of being at the front gate; and if Uncle Samuel hadn't taken such a genuine interest in Aussieoddities; and if I was sure to be given an opportunity to do something more than wear out the seat of my pants then perhaps I would feel justified in asking to be posted home to see you all again. I'm sure none of you would want me to cross my conscience and that's what it would amount to.

Of Xmas, my third away from home in the Air Force, I caught up with the boys just in time, just, and a very

good time was had by all. As usual the officers and the N.C.O's served the airmen with chop. It was really very good for this part of the World; soup, vegs & chicken, fruit salad with a few sundries. Everything would have been wise if some of the airmen hadn't forgotten the idea of Xmas so much as to make pigs of themselves and eaten the rations of the few who missed out. Of ourselves we fed like Kings due to particular circumstances which hold only for our mess. In fact we live like Kings the whole time now which is a great change from previous conditions. The airmen's chop has improved I am pleased to say, although still pretty grim. It is unfortunate that there should be such a difference in officers' and men's food but, as I said before, that is due to particular circumstances in this camp and we can't do anything about it.

I'm afraid Xmas was not a very religious festival as far as I was concerned this year but don't think that that implies that I have grown irreligious or even careless. I suppose it is probably just a transitory stage in this horribly involved process of growing up but I've reached a stage where a church service troubles me more than helps me, troubles in the way of stirring up my mind and making me realise how little I understand about anything. At home I never felt hypocritical about attending church because I realise as much as I should what a loss it would be if the Church as an institution was unable to carry on, but what I cannot bring myself to realise is the fact that that loss would be spiritual as well as material in the way of charities &c. I think I am more Christian in my outlook than when I left home but I can't say I have any more belief. But I am convinced that it is better to be a thinking unbeliever (as opposed to disbeliever) than a thoughtless lip-servant. No doubt I'll come to with an awful start one of these days.

It gave both Woggie and self a hell of a kick to hear that you folks had been getting together at home.

I still have a very small scar on the forehead from the crossing-the-line incident but is very minute and covered by my copious golden (poetic licence) forelocks.

I may have the chance of seeing Silly Page soon and will take the first opportunity of looking him up.

I still hear from Macnabb, Howard. Just, Mr. & Mrs. Drummond and lots of others.

Norma, as I told you, is engaged to a chap who was an instructor at Thornhill. Incidentally he is up in Kenya now and they were trying to get permission for Norma to go up there to get married.

One Xmas card I received was a humorous sketch of a digger contemplating an Egyptian Mummy in one of the old tombs and saying "That reminds me I must write to Mum".

Tell \_\_\_\_\_ he'll need more than his two hands on his backhand when I get home - and if he's got a partner Woggie and I'll make them both look so silly that he'll want to go bush for another five months to get some in. It's a funny thing, you know, but \_\_\_\_\_ and Woggie are very much alike in

many ways - both seen off little bush runts about the same age and yet quite childish, both with one hell of an opinion of their own ability to play any kind of sport (yet really quite easy when it comes down to tin tacks). Both claim not only to be musical but also to play some musical instrument (\_\_\_\_\_ 's goanna and Waugh's windstick) and yet curiously enough neither appreciates the beauty of my mighty melodies and happy Harmon Isings, but then as I've said so many times before that is my great tragedy - I'm not appreciated. The old saying about a prophet is still there.

I have at last managed to find out that I am able and exactly how to write to Art and will do so forthwith.

Well cheers and all the what not for the present.

If I conserve my resources small and you're all very good (and I'm very good) perhaps I might pen another epistle to follow this considerably quicker than this the last.

Entretemps Love to all. Whew!!

128 Squadron R.A.F.  
West African Forces  
19.1.45.

..... 15 letters from all over the place, mostly from home; some dated 1st July and 3rd Aug. I think that the first had gone to the M.E. despite the fact that it was addressed "West African Command". I had another addressed the same which arrived with a dirty big blue pencil writing on the bottom - "NOT RHODESIA". I wish somebody would suggest that the postal service took a few lessons in Geography. Perhaps they don't realise that its at least 5000 miles to either place. I even got a letter from Canada with my full Sqdn, A.P.O., and "West African Forces" and some fool had carefully crossed all that out and put over the top - "M. East", so that at least another 4 months was added to the time in transit. And then they have the damned nerve to put all the propaganda over the radio saying how they realise just exactly how much home mail means to the troops. It's all rather annoying. One doesn't mind if the Hun sinks it - I mean one only gets mad with the Hun but when some stupid cled, who avoids conscription possibly through being in "an essential service" makes these damn fool mistakes I think one is entitled to take grave umbrage.

There's not much news here at the moment. One thing I don't think I have told you was New Years Eve. Woggie and I had a very funny evening. None of our boys were around so we had quite a good party with some Navy boys - good types. On towards midnight we were told that it was a custom in the Navy to ring 16 bells at 23.59 hrs on 31st Decr. So we bowled along and gaw the youngest member of the Ward Room duly carry out his duty.



Then Weggie and I bethought ourselves of our position as the youngest R.A.F. members (I mean in seniority) of our mess and so we repaired one time to station H.Q. and went to town in a big way on the station fire alarm system, causing small consternation calling out the guard and finally getting a week's Orderly Officer each next morning from the Wingco. Most amusing, and we did manage to get rid of a bit of Africaitis. As a matter of fact I think even the Wingco was laughing up his sleeve - and to be perfectly candid I don't care much if he wasn't. I must remember to do the same thing next year if I am still in Camp - and it's got such an awfully good bell!

Cheers and all the werry werry best.

128 Squadron W.A.F.  
22 January 1943.

Whizzo! 6 letters. In writing to Mrs. Anderson I have told her I have a date. By the bye should the opportunity come my way I shall make an effort to find Johnnie Limb's wife - you might send her address - i.e. if Johnnie would like it. Perhaps it might please her to see someone from Tassie

As to Nigerian Days by Hastings - Hastings being a Civil Servant would prejudice me from the start. I haven't been to Nigeria so can't speak of that but I'm sure that my opinion of peace time Civil Service in the West African Colonies of which I have seen most is deplorably low. Perhaps the Treasury in England is largely responsible for their state but that only comes down to the Civil Service being too indolent to kick up a fuss.

The West Coast tribes are the outcasts of Africa and as I heard an Army Officer say the other day "the cesspool of Africa", the country on the whole is rather poor - but as it appears to have been in Malaya I should say that it was definitely a case of exploitation rather than development. I do feel sorry for them trying to teach any of these local wogs anything but apparently they haven't tried very hard. I believe the first grant by the Imperial Government to this particular colony was £5 million in 1939. Civilian salaries are terrific - and utterly disgusting when you think of the poor corks collecting £2.10.0 per fortnight and on that some of them still manage to send an odd £5 or £10 home.

I have heard over the Radio from time to time talk of the States giving up some of their powers to the Commonwealth. I suppose I am biased and unfairly suspicious of all Australian Labour Governments, partly because of the

examples I have seen in State politics and partly because in the Federal sphere they ousted a man of Menzies's acknowledged ability but I must say that from what I have heard of Messrs. Ward Beasley & Co in the past, until they can at least become sufficiently civilised to act like gentlemen I would feel extremely dubious about giving them any more power than they have at the moment. It is going to be interesting to compare how, after the war, greater powers will, I suppose, be entrusted to the one Federal Parliament in Australia whereas in England the dictatorial powers of the Churchill regime will be broken up when the present emergency no longer makes them necessary. I only hope that no definite steps will be taken, no irrevocable laws passed until after the war when men of Menzies's calibre can come into their own again.

I am sorry indeed to hear of Howard Just losing his son who was in Libya if I remember rightly. I shall certainly write to him. Reg Payne the last remaining Tasmanian of our crowd to leave and train in Rhodesia was killed the other day not far from where I am. He was one of the best and a damned fine pilot. I had spent a whole lot of time with him and had got to know him very well. He was a very unassuming sort of chap and held in very high regard by his squadron; he was shortly to have got his commission - though still a sergeant he was 6 months overdue for his W.O. Typical of the treatment by R.A.A.F. when attached to an R.A.F. unit! I cannot say much about how he came to grief but he was killed taking off at night and the cause of the accident is unknown - there is no particular reason to suppose that it was due to pilot's error. His people live in West Hobart and you might let them know how sorry all who knew him here were when he was killed.

The news of the moment is the 8th Army at the gates of Tripoli - the Russians 70-80 miles from Rostov and his Nipe (Good?) just about out of Papua - things certainly look good just now. What we must guard against is a relapse after so much good news for such a long time so that we do not get impatient when things begin to slow again. If only we can clean up Tunisia. The wops are going to stop an awful packet and one thing is certain that is that their morale will crack before either the Jerry's or ours.

Although nobody has in the past had any bright ideas as to what we should do with our sawdust heaps at home, I have no doubt at all that plenty of suggestions will be forthcoming for the fate of our one and only Sawdust Caesar.

You will have to wait until later to hear what we have been doing of late - which has been of real interest. Talking of censorship we have an average of about 1 doz. letters each to censor each day. It is amazing how boring this seeming small job becomes. Still one expects duties as well as privileges out of promotion.

I wonder have you folks heard that silly story about Eleanor Roosevelt's beach party for 50 ostriches. She betthought herself of her position as the President's wife and decided to give a party for this mob of tourists. She asked them to bring along about \$50. Promptly at 5.30 40 of the visitors turned up, and as there was no sign of the remaining ostrich they all felt frightfully embarrassed at such a poor show of manners.

X Handed to a friend to post in USA

3.45 came along, 3.50, 3.55 and still no sign of her. Then just short of 4 o'clock with much puffing and blowing the last old dear flashed in and bounced up to the First Lady. The others just couldn't face such an embarrassing situation and so they all hid their heads in the sand. "Ouf hello Klomer darling. It's so frightfully sorry I'm late - the wretched taxi broke down - where are all the others?"

Opposite me every night an Army Lieut. and Capt. play chess. I do think we should be grateful that Drake preferred bowls don't you?

-----  
7th. Feby, 1943.

Still in same spot - disregard lack of address and strange post marks as this letter may come through unusual channels.

Woggie and I very pleased that you wrote to rat-face's mother - and I don't mean anything uncomplimentary about Mrs. Waugh - telling her of the commission business. He told me that he did not cable for some time - I was away then.

Thank you for the gen about Kate i.e. Rickety. We have only had one cable from him and did not know what he was up to at all. He's a lucky blighter getting into No.3 Squadron - wouldn't mind to have been with him during the last couple of months.

By the way saw a cutting from an English newspaper telling of how D.W.P. Barthwick - great friend of Kate's, had crawled home on his hands after being shot down and shot up and lived 2 or 3 days on the roots of plants. Pretty good effort! hope the poor old nut is on the mend by this time.

Later. 15th Feby 1943.

Time flies, money flies and blow flies! Yeah it certainly does. I happened to click the other day and managed to get a wireless from stores on loan; it isn't fully serviceable and so can't be used for other purposes but it works well for the news. It is very companionable having it here. Being the oldest members of the Squadron I think we were just about entitled to work a wangle - also having been about 12 mos in this place. By the way time in this place counts double so by that reckoning we have been 3 years overseas from Australia and 2 from England. However we don't get paid double.

Two days ago Woggie and I had a turn out of old letters and together made a pile about 18" high and 18" in radius. It surely was a hegg. I wish I could have the number of hours home leave that had been put into writing all these letters - Yes three months leave wouldn't be bad at all, at all.

Woggie recently got a letter posted in Australia to him at Embarkation Depot 23 months and 4 days previously by a civilish who has since joined up, worked his way through the ranks to a commission in the army, done 6 months fighting in

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A close friend of late Keith Gabriel  
— Liverpool, England

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the M.E., returned home and is now in New Guinea; all this quite in addition to marrying and becoming a fend father, of course. Just shows you what can be done in 2 years doesn't it?

We had a wizard chop tonight - roast pigeon. In fact we don't live badly at all these days. We are now in good billets and sleep under a messie net in a mosquito room in a mosquito proof building and so don't run half the risk of getting malaria. All the malaria here is malignant so once you have had it you always have a certain amount in your blood but with regular doses of quinine every day one ought to be able to keep it under control - and the bugs die out after a period of about 5 months I think.

I personally have been very well out here only having had malaria once and nothing else at all in the medicinal line. Unfortunately about 2 months ago the old back strain started playing up again and made me pretty useless for a time. However after a fortnight in deck and first class treatment continued out here at camp it is just about fixed. I still go every morning for radiant heat and massage by a trained masseur but it is wise now and I think I shall stop soon - I want to get it fixed once and for all this time.

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Abroad 21 Feb 1945,

Whizz! Bags of letters today. I'm still in the same spot so disregard anything peculiar about this letter.

Nothing at present to write about, but everyone has much more to interest them in the way of entertainment. The picture shows each week and lots of things by the boys themselves such as the Quiz Contest which has been running for a couple of weeks. We managed to hold our end up despite the fact that a large number of the questions were so English. My word you can learn a lot from one of the sessions though and they are very interesting. Then about a week ago the station choir or glee club put on a show which would get a good hearing in any town in England or home. Well its about time I hit the hay. Cheerio and chins up.

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No address

6 March 1945,

News has come through officially that I shall be seeing Beryl again shortly; you should understand what that means. I do not wish to disclose my location.

So glad you had a good Xmas Day. So did we with bags of sunshine, but the weather is very constant now.

Hope you will receive a letter from Art among the 15000 sent by Tokio to Geneva. Thank heavens there are still some neutrals left in this damned war; it does make it a little more humane. I know you will let me know so soon as you hear from him.

Fancy that rat Perkins, Eh? Going and doing that! Oh well Sis seemed to approve and so she must be alright. A bit of luck her being sent up to Queensland too. I wonder do I scent a piece of crafty wangling - or do I? No doubt about some people they would get away with murder. Unfortunately I know neither the lass' name nor address, so I can't write and pull her leg. I'll have to be content with Perkins - and he's too easy.

Weggie is in the pink. He's in big too! It's a hell of a nuisance, you know, him being in my room. We can mostly wear one another's clothes - that is he does - I'm just the sucker round the place. Anything of ours which are of different sizes, his is smaller and so he can wear mine but I can't wear his!! I don't know why the devil I put up with it all the time. And then to crown it all he accuses me of being the same - and both Killer and I agree that he is in a class of his own.

I believe the boys did a wizard job on a Jap convoy of troopships - somebody said something about 25 ships and quite a number of planes. With the Russian business and Tunisia and a natural disinterest in any news not of a sensational character, we here are prone to forget the war in the Pacific. I must admit that even I and even though it is so near home, that I feel that its an awful long way. I hear the news including the Pacific bulletin every day normally but I notice that most of the chaps walk out when it gets on to Burma and New Guinea. The few forceful reminders given in speeches in England are well timed and well placed to remind the average Englishman that the Japs are in this war too. The converse is also true - or so it seems to me. In the papers you sent me I was absolutely amazed that the Pacific War front should cover the whole of the front page and tucked away in a remote corner of the 2nd page was a mention that the Russians had also been fighting a bit and that the 8th Army wasn't quite idle in Libya. The over-interest in things near home to the exclusion of a wider view of the world front seems to be quite general. And just by the way don't forget the R.A.F. raids on Germany - I'll wager any money you like that when the full story is told of the havoc they are causing and the full effect it is having on the German War machine the ordinary man in the street is going to have the biggest surprise of his life.

W.A.F. 15 Feb, 1943.

I have signed sealed and have waiting to be delivered a p.c. of a wee wee Kiddie (rarely referred to in such amicable terms round here) with a letter to Jennie.

... of ... ..

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\* 22nd birthday

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I have had to chop off a small piece and black out something else which would disclose the location of my unit. Later on when away from this locality I may be able to tell you more about the place and conditions etc., but until then you'll just have to be patient and use your imagination.

Woggie and I have devised a new game. Tennis balls being unprocureable and, as we tell the Pommies "wishing to make sure that Australia keeps the Davis cups after the war" we from time to time rig up a rough net consisting of the framework of a wardrobe, out in the corridor of the billets and play long range stuff with ping pong bats and ball. Rather crude but quite amusing, and, strange as it may seem, quite energetic enough to make one think one is looking through a fish shop window in just no time at all. After about an hour's session we require one towel to rub down with and one to have a shower with.

In our keep fit campaign we also do about 15-20 minutes exercises just before a shower and bed - you can see that this showering business is quite one of the major occupations round this place; six per day. But although it is sometimes a fag even though pleasant it has at any rate prevented me from getting sweat rash the whole time I have been out here - rather unusual.

This exercise racket really started a few weeks ago by my doing exercises for my back which incidentally is pretty well O.K. now. Then Waugh, not to be outdone and in his usual show off manner, started trying to do one better and the result is that it has developed into a regular session. It is not by any means sufficient to keep one perfectly fit which is only possible with a very great deal of determination, but it does help. When our time is up here and we move off to a more temperate climate we shall have to really get stuck into it - bags of badminton and squash.

I spent my birthday in deck as I had a drop of the bug (malaria) at the time. Malaria sounds very terrible, or always used to to me, but as you can imagine the Forces have A.I. treatment and care - and then although it may bowl one out for a few days, in next to no time at all one is feeling like 10 men. I came out a week ago and have no after effects at all (as is usual) in fact I might just as well never have had it at all. With proper care and careful observance of medical instructions one should not have any relapse when returning to a respectable climate.

— Darn! Waugh has interrupted my chattering of thought. Well as I was going to say before being so rudely interrupted all my kit has turned up from the M.E. A few things had been rifled from one of my kit bags, unfortunately including my dressing gown, but in the main I did very well. All my most valuable things turned up O.K. - above all I got back my two writings folders and a lot of irreplaceable photos which I had been silly enough to put in my deep-sea kit.

Woggie was as usual unlucky and lost most of his. It is strange he always seems to miss out on those sort of things.

Managed to get a few quiet minutes on a piano today - a beauty too; they have an electric bulb in the bottom to keep it dry. I found I could get through most of the items of my very limited repertoire. I announce now once and for all that come what may, however busy I may be, I am going to go in for the old ivories in a big way when I get my bowler hat - which is R.A.F. jargon for getting out of the R.A.F., or more usually put out.

At Sea

undated.

I hope that even before now you will have heard from Mrs. Waugh that we are on our way to England. I did not have time to send a cable myself as things were a bit rushed towards the end. We are certainly glad to be getting out of the rut we've been in for the past 18 mos. It was a very enervating and boring existence and I, for one, won't be sorry if I never see that part of the world again.

When we arrive in England we shall go to some reception centre and then let us out on leave. Woggie and I shall go to London immediately to straighten out a million and one things at R.A.A.F. H.Q. Pay is the burning question of the moment as, if we had our rights, we should collect about £100 back pay. I'll lay any money you like that we don't get a sausage. Because they are so slow in promulgating promotion for which the lads are due, one often goes well over 12 mos after it is due. Killer Selliak's crown came through just before we left back dated 16 months - at 2/6 a day this is quite a packet but although we are due for the same amount I doubt if we shall ever get it.

Of course it is just too bad if a chap gets bumped off meanwhile and on the surface it looks like daylight robbery, plain and simple. The same probably applies to all those who accept commissions.

It's all very well to say that you are lucky to get a commission but by delaying promotion in non-commissioned ranks until one accepts a commission they not only do you out of back pay (I'm not quite certain whether we can get anything out of this yet) but the chief thing is that being overdue for our W.Os before being commissioned we should now be receiving slightly less than P/Lts pay. I'm not sure of the exact amount but the difference should be about 6/- per day. If we are overpaid then ~~they~~ reduce the pay or introduce taxation but let them at least give us what is our due.

We are not supposed to mean in our letters home especially about the services but I have no hesitation at all in writing like this because I feel that it is a legitimate mean.



If the powers that be take a dim view of it I'm quite willing to get a dressing down if they can show me that I'm wrong. And I'm quite certain enough of my ground to run the risk.

Don't think that I am the only one who feels this way. It may be unfair to suggest this but most of the lads feel that it is a poor reward for volunteering for overseas service if just because they are out in the blues they can't have their interests looked after just as well as those who have the opportunity to push their own claims at home. It is surely the natural reaction to think your own service the best and at times I have perhaps compared the R.A.F. in an unfavourable light but in this regard the R.A.A.F. seems to be the worst offenders.

For heavens sake don't get the idea from this that I am feeling fed up or that we let it get us down. The truth of the matter is that as I am on board ship there is not much to talk about and this was the first thing that came into my head.

I shall try and look up Arch and Tommy Simpson. I should be able to find out from Kodak House where they are.

Bess, before we left Australia we had to make our wills. At that time it was rather a farce because my assets weren't worth £5. However by this time with my allotment and the money I have already sent home and will send in the future I should be getting something worth while. I thought that you would fix everything up and I think that if anything did happen you might send along something to the Chapel Fund and to the Church. I don't know what you will do with the rest but you can please yourself.

I must get up and get a breath of fresh air now as this lounge is very smoky.

Kodak House Kintway  
9th May 1943.

Last night I received your super news that Art was prisoner in Thailand - whizzo - I posted a letter to him about 2 weeks ago and I have here with me a P.O.W. air-mail letter card which I shall send off as soon as possible. Thank you for letting me know. Mrs. Anderson sent the cable straight on to me. I must let her know the contents.

When we landed in England after a very comfortable and not very eventful trip we just booked in at a station and then went straight on leave. Then we spent the first two days very leisurely finding our way to London where we had to go to fix up about pay and uniforms &c. We spent one night in the town where on a previous visit I had a few words with an Army Captain and then went on about an hour's run in the train for the next night. Next day we went to London where we were very lucky to get rooms at all and those we got suited us fine. We stayed at the

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Mapleton Hotel in Coventry St just before you get to Leicester Square walking on the right from Piccadilly Circus. The three of us Woggie, Killer and self fitted into a 3 room suite with bathroom attached for 35/- per day. This in London is very reasonable because houses rooms are very hard to get because of the great number of troops. However we settled in there and Woggie and I went to work on our uniforms &c. An English V.R. P/O who had gone on to the M.E. asked me to bring him a trunk for him and offered me the use of one of his uniforms and his great coat which, as you may imagine, were very acceptable. I also had my battledress which I had managed to bludge from stores out there by working a big wangle. Woggie had borrowed Woodgate's uniform and so fast the time being he was a N.Z. P/O. Did he ever get into strife through this? Not many official circles of course otherwise he would just have told them to go and get their knees browned - which used to be the local synonym for "join up" or "get some service in". But, as a typical example - one afternoon we had just come out from a show and wandered into a pub for a drink. Woggie was standing at the bar and an old cove next to him in civvies said "Ah, a Kiwi at last, I've been looking for one all day and you are the first I've seen - where do you come from?" Now geography never was one of Woggie's strong points but he just blurted out "Napier" which he was afterwards relieved to find out was in N.Z. and then he had to systematically cut the poor old boy dead, as discreetly as possible of course, but it quite ruined the rest of his evening because he couldn't help feeling sorry for the old chap 12000 miles from home diligently searching for a fellow countryman only to be snubbed by the first one he saw.

It took us several days to get going on our uniforms. Luckily we came under a new scheme (by a wangle again) by which we don't receive any clothing allowance at all but have everything issued free, right down to a trunk to put it all in. And the stuff you get is quite as good as you would get elsewhere, you save up to 250 on the deal and we are saved a great amount of bother by having most of the arrangements made for us. Our uniforms were made in Saville Row and our caps and overcoats at Austin Reed's so as you can imagine we were reasonably pleased with ourselves on this score - muddings to pay.

On our pay question however things are not nearly as satisfactory. We were disgusted to find that nothing could be done about the promotion for which we had been recommended and for which we were due but about which nothing had been done. So we lose nearly £100 (stg) to which we are entitled - unfortunately we are not in a position to kick up a stink. You can imagine how it rankles when one sees chaps with their flight sergeants stripes up and they haven't been to O.T.U. yet - but they didn't happen to be out in the blue and we haven't got our first 3 months pay as P/O's credited to our accounts - they're still trying to balance up our N.C.O.'s pay with our official pay - taking 9 mos.

However these things often take a long time to clean up but usually come right in the end and apart from our desire to get everything settled up there is not really much to worry about because we are not pressed for money at all "But enough" (Macbeth?) (Good?).

Well we eventually got our uniforms &c. It seemed quite strange to be an Australian again. But this time, thank heaven, one isn't such a strange sight because by now the English people are thoroughly inured to any strange uniform they see and there seem to be millions of Aussies around. So now people don't bowl up to you and say "What good English you Norwegians speak". A whole crowd of us spent about a week doing nothing in particular. We saw shows and wandered round.

I went out to see the Olsons and they asked me to spend Easter with them as both Joan and Jack would be home on leave - Joan is still at Hull and Jack is doing an engineering course preparatory to getting a commission in the Fleet Air Arm. Joan must have been doing very well and created a very good impression because although the minimum age for Wren officers is usually accepted as something like 24-25 (I think) she has been recommended and so will probably be down here very shortly. I had a very pleasant time with them from Friday till Wednesday, very lazy and doing nothing in particular very well. As you can imagine the country looks beautiful now, entirely different from the last time we were here. The weather wasn't very kind during the holidays but the week preceding was absolutely perfect. Summer evenings rather than Spring. With the double Summer time it doesn't really get dark till 11 o'clock even now.

Weggie Killer and self have all managed to get posted to the same squadron on first class machines and not very far from London - we really are in big and are as pleased as Punch - I think old Russ, our former C.O., must have put in a very good word for us.

I'm going to sign off now. When I really get into the groove for writing letters will come forth like eeds from the Royal Mint. Last news from you was 7th January - so I'm eagerly awaiting the next. Cheers for now.

Kedak House Kingsway  
(From Grosvenor, Kent)  
1 June 1943.

I have been posted to four different stations since coming to this country and with luggage and all that that's quite a big job. With all the moving we have been doing I haven't quite been able to get everything organised and sorted out but we now seem settled - very comfortably - for a time. Write another letter to Art the other day - hope it gets to him alright. Writing to him is difficult because having no home news and quite apart from mentioning service matters I can't really tell him where I am at all. Notwithstanding I shall try and write to him a page or so regularly.

About Page, I have tried to contact him but so far haven't had any joy. I delayed a bit when I arrived and it is possible that he may have gone somewhere by now. I am sorry if it is so because it would have been great to see him. However, I hope I haven't missed Tommy Simpson D.F.M. I wrote to him when I read his name in the paper.

At the moment I'm billeted in a large country house, very old and very historical. The grounds and the whole district are really beautiful and it is great to get into a comfortable bed etc. I haven't managed to see the Glens again but they are only half an hour away and so hope to see something of them.

It is quite a business fitting into a new Squadron, getting to know the boys and their habits - but very interesting. Some take more knowing than others and then others don't turn out as they first appeared. Lots of people reckon they can size up a person on sight - personally I think that is just a lot of nonsense and the more I knock around the more I think so. Of course you can get the outstanding characteristics of some people when first you meet them but even the most stereotyped fellows have all got another side. On the whole the boys we are with seem a jolly good crowd - as has been my experience all the way through.

It would be unnatural if we saw eye to eye with everyone for a kick off but even these few exceptions will probably fall into line in our mental make up when we have done a few jobs with them and got to know them better. My word, there is nothing like flying with a chap to get you thinking along the one way. There is only one Aussie on the Squadron Vanillieum from W.A. but with our trio we are now ensuring that Australia is not forgotten. It appears as though we have a chance of some cricket, tennis and golf too, which will be fine.

We are billeted some distance from the drome and so all have bicycles on which we have great fun. They are also wizard if you want to go into any nearby town or village in the evenings. This time I really feel that we are getting to know something of the real England, the England of lanes and hedges, of fields and woods, of sun and rain all mixed up together. This probably sounds very dramatic and all that but even the most pessimist of the boys can't help exclaiming how different everything is to what we knew before. We realised then that we were seeing only one side of England and not a very pleasant one at that, but this is really more beautiful than we had hoped. I think on the whole this has been a beautiful Spring too after a mild Winter and with the good news of the moment and the hopes for the future the world seems a much happier place.

The news is certainly good at the moment, everything washed up in N. Africa, Germany and Italy both getting well knocked out of them and in a very bad state of nerves and by

no means least, perhaps most important of all, the U boats mostly much further Under-Water, than they would like. Then of course old Archie Nevell wasn't in Washington for the good of his health - or the dear old Mikado for that matter. Everything has to be paid for of course and there will be lots of heartbreaks yet but with everything on the upgrade and with the hope for better things so strong its much easier to put one's personal problems and losses in proper perspective.

Now I can give you is somewhat sketchy - I can't tell you where I am or what I'm doing. There's no harm in my saying however that on a different and more modern type of a/craft I'm as happy as a King. All I want now is work - real work - which will make me feel that I'm being of some use and doing my bit. This lassness amounting almost to impatience is quite universal amongst the boys and in fact to everyone here; and oh boy! Jerry is going to get such a sock in the nuch that he won't know what has struck him - not even when he wakes up about six generations hence. Everyone is confident and keen because Hitler got their mad up, and an Englishman in that mood just isn't a nice bloke to cross.

Everyone is just itching to get started on him because they know that the sooner he's washed up the sooner everyone can go home.

You mustn't think "Out of ink is out of mind". Home may be 18000 miles away, 30 years away, but it is still mighty close sometimes. Thank heavens I'm much busier now. Thanks a million for the very fine cake sent Feb'y 24th - The boys here haven't seen fruit cake for years, most of them. It was wis.

R.A.F. Station  
Bradwell-on-Sea, Essex  
30 June 1945.

I get leave in about a fortnight's time and I may be able to see Beryl.

I was speaking to a Group Captain in the mess a couple of days ago and he said he had been in charge of a Lancaster Squadron which was very largely composed of Australians. His own crew was 100% Australian and he was all in favour. He was wanting to know if any of us knew any of the boys on the Dam raid for instance "So and so" or "so and so" or "Jimmy Simpson" - so I said I did and from what he told me "Bumbe" had been in a hall of a lot of really first class raids by which I mean he had been doing considerable and had had first class results. He told me his commission was just about through. This groupie impressed us all very



much, speaks like one of the boys while always maintaining his position and invariably speaks of commissions and non-commissions as men doing a job not as officers and others. He was going to tell "Tommy" he has seen me and so I'm hoping to hear from him.

I have over 500 snaps in my case now and have just bought two photo albums - which are almost unobtainable these days as they are no longer allowed to be manufactured. When I have stuck in the snaps and added notes all through I shall give them to Mrs. Anderson for safe keeping.

Very glad to hear that Ray Vincent is alright - I suppose John Templeman and Cecil Brettingham-Moore are with him. Your cable has of course confirmed that Art is in Thailand, doubtless on road making. As long as they are not worked too hard I imagine that they will be much happier with something to do.

I have put on 10 stone since I got back here which is a fair enough indication of how England is starving. Of course it is much easier in camps with large numbers and regular meals than in a small household but all sorts of things are being released to the public now which haven't been seen for quite a long time. With the news of 50 U boats sunk in two months things do seem to be looking up. And then if the Spitties can knock hell out of the Japs as they did when they had a go at Darwin a few days ago then it is much easier to look happy.

I see in today's paper that a general election may be held at home. It seems such an awful waste of money but the position of the deciding vote resting with Coles all the time is most unsatisfactory. It would be much better to have a strong Government one way or the other. We don't want a de Gaulle-Giroud deadlock in Australia. Of course I can't have any idea of the way people feel at home but everything I read here conveys the impression that Labour have gained in power since the last Election. This may be utterly wrong of course and it may be that it is because every statement I read seems to be a Curtin or Evatt production. Of course U.A.F. would miss Casey.

Our life here is so completely bound up in flying that there is very little to talk about. I'm really getting into the groove with my Snatcher. Cheers for now.

Regent Palace Hotel  
Piccadilly Circus.  
12 July 1945.

From the note paper you will have guessed that I am on leave. I'm off first thing in the morning to North Wales to see Daryl. I catch the train from Ruston at 8.15 a.m. but will have to be there 1/2 hr earlier to try and get a seat.

I fancy I change at Chester for Better - Good. I believe that part of the country is very beautiful so it ought to be a pleasant trip in every respect. I know the country between here and Chester pretty well by now but past there I know nothing. I rang Mrs. Anderson this evening and if I am back in London in time on Friday I shall spend the night at her home. She has been very good indeed forwarding all my mail to me and I certainly must go out and thank her.

Believe it or not I have moved again - when I told someone that the other day they called me "Jumping Jimmy".

Today I pepped in and had a word with Sir Claude James - a very pleasant old chap. I introduced myself with the Rotary letter of introduction but he explained it didn't need a Rotary letter to introduce Erskine Wabern's son. He only quitted the Presidency of the London Club last week. He extended to me an open invitation to present myself at the luncheon rooms any Wednesday as his guest which I thought very good of him. This week would have been a very interesting session to attend as Marcel Somers or other, the President of the Paris Rotary Club, was speaking on his escape from France. I am going to try and get up at the first opportunity and attend a luncheon.

I saw an excellent play on Saturday night "Watch on the Rhine" with Canton Wallbrook the star of "Dangerous Moonlight" which you may have seen. I went with an A.T.S. Reg. Sergt Major whom I had met in London, Annie May by name.

Yesterday I went to Evensong at St. Martins-in-the-Fields and thoroughly enjoyed the whole service. It appeared to me to be a very "low" Church of England - much more simple and open hearted than these services usually appear. He even cracked a joke!! Don't know who the preacher was but he was a very fine speaker. Just managed to get a seat - upstairs. It certainly is a lovely old Church. I don't know whether you remember the ceiling and the beautiful workmanship of the pulpit and staircase leading up to it. From B-6 there was a musical recital in the Church - a regular Sunday night feature. This time it took the form of a gramophone recital. They just placed a gramophone in the middle of the Church and played Purcell, Elgar and Vaughan Williams.

Although it has not yet been notified to the unit I do know that Air Ministry notified my promotion to Flying Officer eight weeks ago and I have received my 5 months back pay - or more correctly have been paid at P/O for 5 months so that is good enough for me, and incidentally for the Unit too. This time I did get my back pay.

I suppose you will have seen the cartoon in Punch - two chaps, Englishmen, meet in Piccadilly and with great joy radiating from his fond visage one says "Mr. Smith I presume". If you asked me to digest London into one sentence that would surely be it. This was always a cosmopolitan dump, I believe, but they'll have to get a new word to describe it these days. It is simply amazing to stand on a corner and

take note of the number of different nationalities and the proportion of non-English. In this room there are 4 writing tables in a row; furthest from me is a Pole, next to him is a Canadian, then myself and then wonder of wonders an Englishman. But perhaps that may be an exaggeration, he may not be English after all, he's just got English Army uniforms on. And then again, this isn't a typical cross-section of the population because of the 4 of us two aren't Americans.

----- the jam cream and biscuits were much appreciated by all concerned one night when we came off duty about 11.30 p.m.

London is different to that of 18 mos ago. Nowadays when one walks down the street one doesn't see out of the corner of the eyes two lines of faces turning and staring. In fact an Aussie these days is just about as common as anyone else. I started talking to one the other day and in the course of conversation he told me when he left home - 2 years to the day after I did. I don't feel that I am quite the spog of all spogs nowadays - although I haven't got much to show for it.

Great news in Sicily.

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Kodak House  
Kingsway  
24 July 1945.

On Tuesday 15th I was duly welcomed soon after 6.30 a.m. and after a very quick snack I left for Hurton arriving there at 7.30 with train due to leave at 8.15. I was lucky and after ascertaining the whereabouts of the dining car had my choice of a seat. If I had been  $\frac{1}{2}$  hr later I would have been pushed for a seat. Most people these days seem to make a point of arriving  $\frac{1}{2}$  an hr for an ordinary train such as this and 45-50 mins for any train to Scotland &c. The extra 10 minutes make all the difference.

The journey was very comfortable as the train was going right through to Holyhead but as it didn't stop at Llambrae Junction I had to get off at Colwyn Bay, catch another to the Junction where an hour was spent in looking round Conwy. Eventually the train got into Bettws-y-Coed at about 4.30 p.m. The weather had not been very kind but this afternoon it was beautiful and the journey round Conwy and up the Conwy River Valley to Bettws very beautiful.

On arrival at the Station I phoned Beryl who was on duty and found that she had booked a room for me at the Gwydr Hotel.

Until she came off duty at 6 p.m. I wandered round the place just looking about the old Church and up to the Village. Beryl came to the hotel at dinner time and then we walked round by the river, across the Suspension Bridge and

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up to the Blue Bird, a former cafe now occupied as the V.A.D's quarters. Here we talked with a couple more V.A.D's and a couple of the medical orderlies from the hospital until about 12.30.

As Beryl was working next day till lunch time I went for a walk up towards Llanberris Pass, past the Swallow Falls, ~~past the Swallow Falls~~, saw "The Ugly House" &c. Unfortunately it was raining most of the time and I did get wet but that didn't worry me much as I had my mackintosh with me. Beryl came to the pub for lunch and then we went for a walk up round Lake Elsi, an artificial lake on the top of a small plateau formed for the Bettys-y-Coed water supply. As usual it was raining so we both got wet especially as we tried to return by our own route, which didn't work very well. I returned to the pub had a bath and dinner whilst Beryl worked from 5-8. At 8 p.m. I went and joined in the talk at the Blue Bird until after supper.

Next morning I came to about 9 o'clock, took one look out the window, saw it was still pouring with rain so blew breakfast off completely and went back to sleep.

I eventually arrived downstairs about 10.45 and met a Mrs. Brown. Beryl had introduced me to her the day before. Mrs. Brown was staying at the hotel as a permanent resident and Beryl had known her at home.

However this kindly old soul had "promised to look after me" - so when I arrived down on Wednesday morning Mrs. Brown came up and said "Now you haven't had any breakfast" to which I replied that considering the weather I had not thought it worth while. But nothing would satisfy her but that I accompany her into the dining room where she herself brought me my breakfast which she had asked them to keep hot for me. There's no doubt about it, I was in big there!!

Beryl was off at noon so we caught the 12.40 train down to Llanidno. Luckily the weather was beautiful and we thoroughly enjoyed ourselves walking round "the Arm", seaside drive round the cliffs and Yapping in Happy Valley. Then into Town where we did some shopping, had tea and then on to Beryl's home where I met her father and step-mother. I liked her father very much but we were only there for a very hasty meal as, in typical Welsh style, the last train left at 7.50 p.m. The journey back in the train was lovely in the sunshine when we weren't both asleep. Arriving at Bettys we immediately got Beryl's bike, commandeered one of the other girl's and went for 2 hours ride up the Ledyr Valley. Parts of this could so easily have been Tasmania! Of course the English trees have an entirely different character to our Australian bush but there is certainly a strong resemblance to parts of Tassie. Where I noticed it most was up round Lake Elsi - similar to the back of Mt. Wellington or National Park and Mt. Field. As usual I ended up that evening with supper at the Blue Bird and so back to bed.

Next day I caught the 8.15 train. Beryl had been on duty from 7-8 but came to see me off which was really very good of her. I did enjoy my few days up there. Everything was so quiet and peaceful.

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Airgraph. 5/8/45

I went round to Lincoln's Inn Fields about a week ago to try and see Mr. Turner but it was Saturday morning and he wasn't at work. Will try again next time I am in town midweek. I also went round to see Mr. Jelliffe but he was also out.

I returned to camp yesterday after a day off. I went up to London and spent the afternoon with Joan Clomes. One of the lads was motoring to town so had a wizard trip up with him. Then met Joan in Town and we spent the afternoon wandering round Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens - Saw Peter Pan - then after a spot to eat went to the ballet at the Lyric Theatre in Shaftenbury Avenue. Saw "Carnival" "Les Syphides" and a new ballet "Everyman". Thoroughly enjoyed the whole lot. Then I went back and slept at the Clomes - Returned to camp next morning.

Waggie Killer and self all in the pink.

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Airgraph. 9/8/45

Have been very busy indeed this last week. Have a week's leave coming in a fortnight and must make a point of seeing Tommy Simpson. I don't want to miss him as I missed Page.

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R.A.A.F. Base P/O London  
15 August 1945.

At last I have managed to get out to Palanham by about midday. On arrival I phoned Cousin Hattie and was told they were on holiday and would be returning next day, but I could contact her at Grammar Hall Convalescent Home. After much messing about I finally got on the phone and asked could I speak to Miss Ridge. "Speaking" was the reply. I didn't quite know what to say so just blurted out, "Well this is Jim Watchers from Tasmania speaking" - and was quite prepared to go into a long and tedious explanation but she wasn't in the least taken aback or dumbfounded - just a wee bit surprised that was all. She knew who I was and when

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I came to talk to her later she seemed to know more about me and my family than I did. She is Secretary of the Convalescent Home - in the Red Cross and so she flashed round to the Commandant and came back to say that my presence was requested at lunch. I piled into a taxi and arrived and met Margaret. I was vigorously plied with questions about the family and myself which I seemed to answer to her satisfaction. I walked the Commandant, one Lady Evelyn Jones, like the devil, a very kindly old soul. She is the daughter of Earl Gray, a former Governor-General of Canada. She had travelled very widely and was an interesting "old" soul - about 55-60. She said "I knew a Tasmanian by the name of Edwards. He was a Rhodes Scholar at Oxford". When I said I knew him and went to school with 4 of his sons we seemed to hit it off at once.

After lunch Margaret phoned her mother. They both (Cousin Hafe and the Rev) came over and collected us. We went back to their boarding house and chatted. I knew much more about my family now. I was able to give them quite a lot of recent news. I thoroughly enjoyed meeting them. They are all good fun and have a great sense of humour. I had a very delectable tea with home cooking etc. Finally I caught the train at 10 p.m.

The boarding-house keeper was a Mrs. Wigrain whose brother has a sports shop in Lanneston.

Another coincidence. I was going up to London for 48 hrs a few days ago in the train. Getting in the same compartment was a very quiet reserved looking chap about 50. I started up a conversation and it went on until we found quite a lot in common. His name is Raymond, a journalist, the English end of "The Pastoralists Review" in Australia. He lives nearby and I'm going down for a pot of beer and a game of billiards one evening. We almost managed to make ourselves relations because I mentioned that a cousin of mine was or had been at one time Manager of Dalgetys in Brisbane and he said his wife's cousin was Manager there until some years ago. He told me endless yarns of Aussies he has met when they came to England.

Another very curious coincidence - I went into the mess the other day and was very pleased to find a couple of letters from you. Another Aussie of a different Squadron came up and said "You're Watchorn aren't you? Well I saw your letter in the rack with the Hobart post mark and it set me thinking. Years ago - about 1925 or 1926 - I used to go across to Hobart for summer holidays and we rented a house at Rummynside New Town belonging to some people named Bayly and there used to be a Watchorn playing around there. I was wondering if he was possibly any relation." To which I replied that it definitely was a relation and was doubtless my elder brother, myself not being much in evidence in those days. His name was Calder - a very good chap, a good pilot

who has done some good work at odd times. It is a small world isn't it? I have filled two large albums with photos, I have two smaller ones and enough other photos to fill them several times over in my collection so far. They are all arranged in more or less chronological order and I am trying to get down to the job of annotating them. As soon as I have done with that I am going to give them to Mrs. Anderson for safe keeping. I think they are my most precious possession. They are nothing very wonderful from a scenic point of view perhaps but they mean a hell of a lot to me.

Kedah House Kingsway  
25 August 1943.

It is only about four days since I last wrote. I'm having a very quiet night in the "mess" tonight and so here goes. I'm not sure that I have anything very interesting to talk about but no doubt I'll think of something as I go along.

Had a letter from Whiggle Clennett, now at sea in a corvette, as you know. Very pleased he went to see you when on leave.

Enjoyed a game of tennis last evening against a neighbouring station team - and we won! Three of the team were Aussies and that wasn't counting either Waggie or Van E another Aussie on our Squadron. We have been talking about getting up an Australian team out of the 6 or so Aussies on the Station and putting a damn big notice up in the mess that we are quite prepared to wipe the floor with any team who dares challenge us. We shall make it as provocative as possible. Balls will be the only snag but we ought to be able to work that somehow. Where there's a will there's a way. And wherever we've gone we have usually found an Aussie team to clean up somebody or something.

Sam Calder from Melbourne of whom I have spoken, knew Kate Righetti well at school. By the way I would like Kate's address in Italy if you can give it to me.

Waggie and Miller are both well. They have just returned from 9 days leave which they spent in and round London. They were going down to Cornwall but were wrongfully informed that everything was full up. Unfortunately I couldn't manage to get my leave at the same time.

I don't know whether it is the influence of the war and people being more susceptible to emotional influences such as more serious music or whether it is just a coincidence that there has been a great increase in the popularity of classical music during the war years.

Sir Henry Wood held the final night of his Promenade season just a couple of nights ago and the enthusiasm was tremendous. It is a great black on my part that I haven't found a way to get to one of them, but there it is.

I have been to the immensely popular concerts held at 1 - 3 p.m. every week day in the National Gallery. They are organised by Myra Hess and like the form of concerts of all combinations - one day it is a string quartet, next piano and vocal, next violin and piano &c. I heard two cello concertos, one by Rachmaninoff and one by Beethoven the other day. Enjoyed the latter, but some of the former was rather above my head. I would like to hear it again and then perhaps it would mean more.

I have in front of me ready to be posted a small publication of speeches &c by Roosevelt which I thought might be of interest. I will keep my eyes open for another - a statement and explanation of the foreign policy of the U.S.A.

I have renewed Dad's subscription to the Spectator for 3 years. He can regard that as his birthday present this year. N.B. No proof reader available.

Kedok House

Kingsway 3 Sept. 1943

Well on this the fourth Anniversary of the outbreak of war I have heaps to talk about. No, I'm sorry not about what I am doing in the way of flying but as to what I have been doing during 48 hours leave in London during which I went with Sir Claude James to Rotary Luncheon. Waggie and I had had our annual inoculation and being grounded for 48 hours after it, we thought it would be a good idea if we sneaked off to a really comfortable bed for the night. Up to the big main we hid and spend a much better night than we otherwise would have done.

Seeing that it was Wednesday and Sir Claude had told me to pop in to lunch any Wednesday I was in town I put B and S together and took him at his word. I went around to his office about 12.30 and we walked round to the Command Rooms just off Kingsway.

I don't want it to be thought that I'm criticising or even being depressing, but I must say I am quite used to the more worldly atmosphere, as one would expect in London as opposed to the simple little town of Hobart.

Just one point to illustrate - everyone met for a cocktail or drink before going into lunch. However, despite this difference the atmosphere of Rotary, the spirit of friendliness was there just the same. I met many Rotarians and their guests and as usual some of them improved the shining hour by learning where Hobart was. I think there were about 100-120 Rotarians, 20 visiting Rotarians and about 10-15 other guests. I believe it was a very good gathering.

Amongst the visiting Rotarians was Marcel Franck, past president of Paris Club.



Being the guest of the past president I had to sit up at the President's table but that sort of thing doesn't worry me much these days. It was obvious to me that Sir Claude was one of the pillars of the Club. Everyone came to him for advice and he was really kept very busy.

The Speaker was an M.P. and a member of a Royal Commission on Transport - quite an authority - his subject was "Transport". He was very interesting and an exceptionally capable speaker - a very interesting man to talk to.

Going to a meeting like that is something like a visit to an art gallery - if you meet just a few people you remember them as you would just a few paintings - but when you meet a large number the images they form in the mind become confused and indistinct. So it was this time. I met many and remember few - but the impression is really the same - one of a crowd of good chaps who like you to regard them as friends and who will go out of their way to be just that to you.

I do remember one man garbed in a dark suit, a walking stick and a broad smile, offering me lunch any day I liked to go out to Hampton Court and promising to show me round. And then there was another who had been in Hobart 25+ years ago and had stayed in a pub called "the Green something" because there were only two.

The lunch took the Rotary form of course, except that there was no choir. I realise that this may be usual. The pianist had recently died and so old Sir Claude steps in as large as life and plays the accompaniment very well. The menu was of the war breed - simply unadorned and potato with coffee to follow. Not stingy of course but I think to make sure that in times of rationing such an organisation as Rotary should never be accused of overlooking the times.

Just by the way don't get the idea that England is starving - food is really quite plentiful because it is well controlled. The small household is the only one who feels any pinch and even with them it is really only a matter of being careful.

I was introduced by the President of the Club - another difference from Hobart - as the son of Robertian Brakins Watchman of Hobart. Though I suppose no one except Sir Claude knows you they all made me feel very welcome and lots just came up and said "How-do-do".

The final touch to the whole show came at the final toast from the President, and it nearly bowled me over: he proposed the toast of "World Fellowship with which we shall couple a toast to the Rotary Club of Hobart". I did feel flattered that they should have done that for my home town just because I was there. Doubtless he just picked Hobart by chance from the 20 or so other towns represented by visitors but it was a happy touch and made me feel really at home.

(Airgraph)

Kodak House London

4 Sept. 1945

My existence at present is completely bound up in

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flying & that there is very little for me to talk about and I don't really consider that a weekly bulletin on my health would be of any great interest these days without any malaria or fibrositis or anything else to make it interesting - you see I'm permanently in the pink these days - and as happy as Larry because we have something to do. So you folks have only your end of the world to worry about.

Kodak House  
4 September 1945  
(letter)

Glad to hear the Church choir has been looking up which should make a difference to the attendance. I shall start composing another letter to Art soon. I think we are allowed to write once per month *à l'est-à-pas*? Incidentally I did see in the papers where all British P.O.Ws in Malaya had been sent to Japan proper. The climate would be a bit easier on Art although it does get very cold there in winter.

I have called on Mr. Jolliffe twice but each time he has been out - also Cecil Turner thrice - I never know when I am going to be off duty.

Very pleased indeed to hear of the old school beating Saints. Most unusual affair the first quarter; so totally different from the usual story. It must have shaken them to the core.

Ran into Blackwood again in London the other day. He is now on P.R.U. Very lucky indeed as it is a very interesting job. As you know I once had a chance to do quite a bit of that in Africa. It is amazing what they can get out of photos these days and when you take the photos yourself and then see them being interpreted, it is one of the most interesting jobs around the place. I've not spoken of this before but now that it is all about 18 months old and friendly territory these days there can't be much harm.

I quite understand you wanting to know what I am doing but have to keep it well in the past tense. You were quite right in your suppositions as to where I was for 3 months but the Gambia was much the best as Sierra Leone. I don't have to tell you what the target was in those days. I coped with the job alright and as a matter of fact got a few very decent pots on the back which were certainly very encouraging. They did make one feel that one was being or rather had been of some use to the war effort. As you can well understand that feeling of impotence was an awful bugbear out there and though we sometimes feel that way now there is not really quite the same reason these days. It's back on fighters and though I am not going to say what type, believe you me they can get along and hit pretty hard - ask Jerry! he has reason to know. Things are going now even better than usual. One wonders how long Hitler can keep taking the punishment he is getting - and the Casco Conference hardly

sugars well for Mr. Moto either. Who could have believed that 18 months could make such an immense difference to our prospects. The boys are all well and I myself am really in the pink.

Kingsway London  
16 Sept. 1943.

I am very sorry I did not see Page as I did want to send photos to home with him.

Kingsway London  
20 Sept. 1943

Re the difficulty in buying books at home now. There does not seem any great difficulty over here so if there are 3 or 4 books you folk have heard of and would like to have let me have an airgraph and I shall make up a bundle - it doesn't matter about the specialis - I can take care of those these days and gladly. Cheers for the present.

Kingsway London  
25 Sept. 1943.

Did I get a shock when I arrived back in camp today after being away for about 4 days? Any mail? I asked in a nonchalant tone "Any Mail?" The whole squadron just about jumped down my throat "What's that scotch-wist?" Five beautiful parcels, five lovely letters and two wizard airgraphs.

The Wag man and Killer both on top line & both very pleased you had informed their folk of my status. Won't be long now before we are really in Winter. We ought to be a bit better this time having had quite a time to get acclimatized. Must write a line tomorrow to Art in honour of his birthday. Have heard that you can send only a limited number of words.

Oh, it's falling asleep. Cheers.

Gatton Park, Redhill  
Surrey.  
3 October 1943.

Speaking of Peter Pan - there was a paragraph in the paper the other day saying that it had been damaged by some vandal trying to punch the flute from Peter's hand. He didn't get away with it however - just bent it and no doubt it can be

L111  
restored O.K. Speaking of impressions of England and those gained on previous visits - I don't think they were false. Things were certainly grim at that time. But they were most certainly one sided. The Elections - I can't say that any of the boys were here paid any attention to them. If anything, I think that the general attitude in England of Australians and Englishmen, is that its a good thing Curbin did get back in. Of course most people don't realise how far Labour may go with their socialistic ideas but I will say this - that the opposition parties are regarded in a very poor light by all; If they can't agree when they're in opposition Lord only knows what sort of a mess they would make if they tried to run a government. And all their personal feuds are nauseating.

I'm very pleased with my snap collection I must say. My 3rd album is finished and next time I go on leave I am going to try to procure one or two more. Of course they are ever so difficult to get these days as the government stopped production of them years ago.

By the way I am going on leave in four days time and am going up to Linnell to see Tommy Simpson. Will perhaps spend a day or so round there.

Don't know what I shall do with the rest of my nine days My receiving parcels has almost become proverbial in the Squadron. I was saying in dispersal today "On Sunday today isn't it. Pity, no mail today. It's about time I got a letter from home". All this with the idea of getting a rise from Woggie. I did - from the C.O. too. He says "Yes, it's about time you go send more parcels too!"

I enjoy the bits of Mercury round the parcels; they often contain bits of news which are of interest and of which I would never hear otherwise - I do hope the School mag arrives this time. Missed the Xmas number last year but there is still time for June 43 to arrive.

A note from Bones lately.

Great to hear from some of the lads. I often think he's lucky being with a crowd of Robert's chaps - I haven't seen one for years. Not that I could have a better crowd than I have now but I really mean with a view to life at home after this is all over. That is why I like to try and keep in rough touch with some of the old boys who used to come down home for the week ends.

Of course we are wondering where all the boys who were in Italian P.O.W. camps are - Kate, John Moore & Co. Gee, I hope they got away. Most of the lads I know there are pretty resourceful and as for Righetti he'd talk his way out of Alcatraz - but don't tell his maber - she might take a dim.

Glad D.W.P.B. (Borthwick) is getting about at home. I think the three of us must write a combined letter to him.

(Note - This letter was not finished)

Kodak House, London  
13 October 1943.

Dear Mr. & Mrs. Watchorn,

Kyle and I would like you to know how deeply and sincerely we sympathise with you in your terrible loss. During the past 5 years we have been through much together and seldom have two people had the chance of the comradeship of such a wizard chap as Jim. We had our wee tiffs, naturally, but it was great to know that he was juggling along with us through our various stations and squadrons, and it made an immense difference to our overseas life. I think that of all the Australians I know who are serving in the forces Jimmy was the least altered or spoiled by the change, all the squadron boys thought the world of him.

I think our C.O. will be writing to you shortly but I am sure that you would prefer to hear in less official style.

Jim was a grand pilot and tried to the last moment to bring his aircraft down safely on the drome when his engine failed, but it was just not to be.

The authorities will return all Jim's kit and effects to you but I thought it best to keep his grand collection of photos until such time as I can have them conveyed by some one reliable. I am sure you will place a high value on them and shall guard them carefully in the meantime.

I wrote to such friends and relations as I could find in Jim's address book.

..... I found in Jim's pad the last letter (incomplete) which he wrote and shall enclose the pages with this.

..... Kyle and I both hope to be able to meet you all soon and talk over many things which cannot be put down in black and white.

Yours very sincerely,  
GEOFF.

Note. Geoff Waugh (Woggie) was himself killed also flying a Typhoon 5 weeks later.

R.A.F. Home Forces  
England  
9 October 1943.

..... May I now express the very great sympathy which all of us feel with you in your loss. I had personally known "Watchey", as we called him, only for about 6 weeks but in that time I had learned to appreciate to a great extent not only his flying capabilities and keenness but also his personal charm which made him a very popular and useful

member of the Squadron.

.....

Yours sincerely  
ERIK HOABJVERN  
(Squadron Leader commanding No. 247  
Squadron R.A.F)

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No. 124 Airfield H.Q.  
Blue Group  
Home Forces.

10 Oct. 1945.

Confidential.

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In Watchie we have all lost a friend and  
comrade in whose persistent cheerfulness and enthusiasm  
we had all come to rely. May I express the great  
sympathy which all of us feel in your sad loss.

Yours sincerely,

B.G. GARROE W.O.  
R.A.F.

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