Dear Mummy ɤ Daddy

The World War letters 1940 - 1945:
training, on the Desert and later in Italy and Austria

John Percival Waterfield

Transcribed, introduced and annotated by J T Waterfield 2015-16

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Introduction

"My letters to my parents were severely self censored and record little except that I was O.K...." - *Tunisia*[1]

Preamble

Reading other people's private letters is to be frowned upon.[2] Yet these letters were composed to be circulated, at least for the most part; and the many who received a letter from John Waterfield (JPW) later will not be sorry to see some more, and, as it were, to see too the genesis of his epistolary style and habits, which were to continue for the rest of his life.

These letters will not add anything to the public history of the war, though they do shed a vivid if necessarily limited light on some aspects.[3] More importantly, they convey vividly the writer's progress from a youth fresh from sixth-form to a young man both experienced and jaundiced (literally and, to a certain extent, metaphorically); and, in their recurring themes such as the minutiae of daily needs, and communication and its difficulties, represent a body of text worthy of preservation in a form other than the original hand-written documents.

The content is eclectic, ranging widely over family, friends, acquaintances, army life, scenery and business of the table; they often present in an impressionist way as ideas and subjects are built up through repeated application of small elements. Occasionally they venture into longer sallies, but (arguably) this is with less success; but, after all, they are only letters.

At the end, as the writer sets off for Christ Church, Oxford, the first hints of what would become a career in international diplomacy have appeared in the perceptive observations made of the messy situation in Europe after the war. The formation of the type of man as others later came to know him is clear, with his ability to take the global view, his learned and applied ways of dealing with others, and (at the same time) amateur enthusiasms for good things, especially of the table.

Source and structure

The letters were bundled together, mainly in chronological order but with some jumbling as transferred from place to place.[4] They are written on a variety of paper sizes and styles, mainly in ink but sometimes, particularly in the heat of battle, in pencil. As mentioned at several points, school indoctrination was to write home on Sundays, and this routine is mainly preserved and for the most part the sequence is complete. Once posted abroad, the letters are numbered sequentially as well as dated.

Unfortunately, a section of the archive is missing, from about October 1943 to October 1944. The large envelope in which the letters finally arrived back in JPW's hands is annotated with the suggestion that his sister Jill had 'disposed of many', but it was not clear whether this thinning was a matter of reducing the pile more or less at random or represents deliberate winnowing for some reason.

Most of the letters from overseas are annotated by the recipient with the date sent and the date received, and the transcription has specifically included the latter as of interest in terms of delays involved with the post (about which so much is written).

The archive contained a few letters and documents not in the main sequence - one or two letters from others, even - which have been included. The appendices provide maps for reference and further

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[1] References to *Tunisia* are to JPW's document 'Return to Tunisia, 56 Years on, February 1999 - Retracing the route of 1KRRC, Medenine to Gromballia, 10 March to 12 May 1943'.
[2] 'we have to censor the riflemen's products which I've never done before and do not relish at all; intrusion on other people's affairs in such a way is ... unattractive' - 23.07.42.
[3] not least the blackly comic writings of Evelyn Waugh, whose fiction turns out to be almost literal.
[4] written to Guildford, they would have been transferred successively to three 'Paddocks' at Brightwell-cum-Sotwell, then to Woodbridge and later a retirement home there, inherited by JPW and kept at Somerton, and inherited by JTW, at last transferred to Oxford.

documents providing alternative views of the emerging narrative, particularly JPW's *Return to Thalenstein*, included in full, which provides a parallel to the events described from about May 1945. A similar document 'Tunisia' (as per footnote 1), referring only to a short period of 1943 and that without much extra detail, is quoted in footnotes where relevant.

The letters may be roughly grouped thus:

1	- training esp. in Yorkshire	November 1940 - June 1942
1a	- waiting for embarkation (twice)	February - March, June - July 1942
2	- on board ship/ ports en route	July - September 1942
2b	- waiting in Egypt	September - October 1942
3	- fighting across North Africa	October 1942 - May 1943
4	- aftermath in North Africa	May 1943 - c. January 1944

October 1943 - October 1944: large gaps in the archive. The sequence ends at 'no 65' 3 October 1943 and restarts from hospital with 'H1' (shown to be no 103 in the table set out in 117(d) of 11 Feb 1945) with only no. 79(c) 27.01.44, and a run from 90 15.06.44 to 94 21.07.44, in between.

5	- Italy, especially in hospital	June 1944 - May 1945
6	- Austria	May 1945 - October 1945

Transcription and editing

The letters have been transcribed as accurately as possible. Although JPW's writing is for the most part consistent and legible, it is also cursive and characterful. As always, unfamiliar proper names and abbreviations - of which there are a lot, in the Army - cause most problems. Where doubt remained, this is indicated in square brackets or a footnote.

JPW's prose is fluent and accurate and required few corrections. At one point he claims "I always re-read and amend my letters and indeed everything I write, over the breakfast egg or the post-breakfast pipe"[5] though one has to take this, like the eggs, with a pinch of salt. The few interlineations and strikeouts are shown simply in the final version and their existence neither replicated nor even indicated, with one or two exceptions. The odd errors have been transcribed as written, evidence of the writer's state of mind, and without comment for the most part; only once has the reading sense been so damaged ('[these]' on page 213) that an obvious correction has been made.[6]

Where the writing has continued after the end of the physical paper at the top of the page but the same way up as the main text, this has been typed as it appears, to convey the sometimes puzzling effect for the reader. Where the writing is upside down at the top of the page, or continues vertically along the edge - and so is obviously separate continuation text - this has simply been added at the end of the transcribed letter, with a comment as to its presentation. See both top and bottom of 13.09.43, No. 62, for example.

No attempt has been made to replicate JPW's line-lengths, which are often shorter than the typed copy, most particularly on the Air Mail/ Air Letter forms. In these, a new sentence is often started at the beginning of a line (and the previous one spaced to end at the right-hand margin); and, since new paragraphs are rarely indented, presumably to economise space on the page, not representing these as new paragraphs (subjects) by transcribing continuously may have resulted in some loss of significance.

Page numbers, usually ringed in the top-centre of each page, are shown to mark the (quite-frequent) page-turning; with the Air Letter forms, whose pages are rarely numbered, a new line is included to show the break.

All the found text is presented here, notwithstanding the obvious repetitions and domestic trivia. A shorter edition of 'best bits' is always possible later, but risks pre-judging items of interest. It would

[5] 26.02.45 - No. 119b.

[6] Inevitably a few errors will have been introduced by the transcription, for which apologies, especially as without always marking JPW's in the text, they will be indistinguishable. Reproofing in 2017 eliminated many, though.

probably fail to convey the domestic nature of the letters, and certainly lose their ebb and flow as mood and activity varies. (The brief daily bulletins while awaiting embarkation are a striking example of this variety, compared to other letters.) The summary by letter after the appendices suggests highlights for those short of time.

Linguistic style and vocabulary

Some of JPW's sentences seem odd even in the context of mid-twentieth-century prose; perhaps they are evidence of his Classical education, which included Greek composition in prose and verse as well as Latin, both almost unimaginable when thinking about pupils in 2016. Additionally, and perhaps more obviously, he will comma off the start of sub-clauses but not the end, and the rush of impression and suggestion will sometimes make the sentence hard to follow - even, occasionally, ambiguous.

Some punctuation oddities may be a result of deficient penmanship (the letters often refer to difficulties with writing implements), and whether a mark represents a full-stop, comma or dash is sometimes an arbitrary decision that had to be made in transcription. (The modern word processor's tendency to replace dashes with hyphens has been resisted as far as possible.) One clear habit, that of placing stops between the letters of abbreviations above the line - like decimal points, thus maybe O·C·TU - has not been replicated, though the inconsistencies of whether to grant a dot or not has been copied. 'And' is often but not always contracted to a 'ꝛ'.[7]

There are a lot of abbreviations, following the well-known tendency of the Forces to prefer abbreviation and acronym wherever possible. This is obviously for economy of effort, but has the effect of defining group membership - or, for the hapless reader, demonstrating exclusion from this membership. The patient will grasp the obvious without a lexicon on the basis of context, and the less obvious are probably lost in the sands of time and ceaseless reorganisation, Google being sadly deficient when it comes to such period terms.

JPW's sets out dates, of letters and otherwise, with surprising inconsistency. I have always cited them in the form d.mm.yy in this introduction and notes, but the dates in the originals will probably be shown otherwise.

Some uses sound odd to modern ears; for example, "try ꝛ" for "try to" and "on the desert". The latter sounds like Battalion-speak; the former, simply idiosyncratic English, or possibly unexpected mid-twentieth century use. Transcription with a minimum of editorial is designed to preserve both. Other oddities that catch the eye include the determination to spell Burma with an 'h', and the occasional apparent confusion of loath with loathe. Family descendants will be pleased to recognise the origin or at least early use of many favourite words and phrases.

One other oddity of style can be jarring for the reader seeing the letters addressed to JPW's mother; she is often referred to in the 3rd person as DW or DMW. This may be largely explained by the expectation - indeed, often the request - that most of the letters will be made available to all the immediate family, and sometimes to a wider circle too.

Development of character

As with a novel, character development is apparent in the progression of the letters. Initially there is a schoolboy's approach, with gawky attempts to adopt an adult point of view,[8] and boarding-school requests for home-support: "wd you send me my Army Pants, 1 pr short pants, my pyjamas I sent home ꝛ those socks I sent".[9] This persona seems to come with a self-conscious clumsiness - losing things, breaking them, spilling ink, which are all apparently 'in character'.

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[7] in modern terms, this is a 'curly ramshorn'. The cursive '+' of the letters comes in quite a variety of shapes rather too simply transcribed as 'ꝛ', but it gives the right sensation.

[8] For example: '...in short the symbol of an egalitarian petty bourgeoisie society without standards, taste or discrimination. We may well take warning for after the war!' 15.02.41, and the analysis of pleasure and efficiency in 26.04.41.

[9] 22.02.41.



1 - JPW (taken in Italy)

This school boy is largely out-grown once abroad (though there remain occasional requests to be sent items, which requests are often repeated, though one imagines this is because of the difficulties imposed, as well as the delays in the post), and is arguably replaced by what might be called 'an Englishman abroad', where foreign experiences are continually likened to things from home - even if the simile is stretched beyond tenuous, "... not unlike Dartmoor's ravines of the more stony kind. If you image a dry Dart with evergreen shrubs, and grey thorn bushes on its banks and slabs of a yellower stone, where there is a strong sweet smell of thyme ϒ wild flowers especially at night after rain, then you may be near the picture."[10]

Once approaching battle the need to censor the letters of horrific experience (as well as in the official explicit way that started on board ship, where place-names and regiments are blanked) affects his writing; what is left is terse, immediate, vivid, but often noticeably glosses over the unspeakable. At several points he comments that he would like to say more, describe things in greater detail, but in the end he has to admit defeat, "it makes me a little sad when I think of all the things now I can never discuss with anyone because there is noone alive left to whom they mean a thing".[11] This taciturnity about his war-time experiences continued for the rest of his life.

As the war winds up in Africa, and subsequently in further administration after further hard fighting in northern Italy, he discovers the virtues of 'networking' which was to be the foundation of his later diplomatic career. Thus, "All work of real importance is clinched or initiated by social contact. I always send my Orderly Room Sgt to the Bde Q.M.S, chief clerk, to have a drink in the French café 40 miles away, every Saturday afternoon. It brings great results."[12]

It turns out that the pressure of organisation and, at a higher level, bureaucracy (first as platoon commander, then as adjutant) is an acceptable substitute for the real thrill of action. Otherwise the need to be active to feel alive is a constant, and its counterpart sadly shadows it: "this is, I am afraid, a very dull ϒ dreary letter but I will try and improve next time. This is always a difficult period - waiting";[13] "idleness makes one definitely unhappy".[14] The descriptions of action often sound exhilarated, almost drunken albeit lucid, and make for the best extended sections of the letters.

Hand in hand with this hardening of professional qualities comes the gradual discovery of his "expensive tastes"[15] - often evident in terms of sums gambled (a frightening proportion of the £100 his father had suggested he try to save up) and mess bills, and explicitly acknowledged when discussing the need for gainful employment. Some of this sounds like slightly defiant bravado[16], but it indeed

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[10] 17.01.43 - No. 24.
[11] 6.05.45 - No. 128a.
[12] 20.08.43 - No. 58.
[13] 9.04.45 - No. 125.
[14] 7.07.44 - No. 92.
[15] 14.07.44 - No. 93.
[16] a letter to him from DMW, November 45 (those from the war were destroyed on active duty) says "I want to stir you out of your weary apathy which has deluded you into thinking only of yourself. This is in fact a call from me to you, ϒ a call to God..." which indicates the nature of home-life against which such soundings were made.

became a problem as he tried to adjust after the war: "...it soon became clear that my tastes, and the life outside Christ Church in which I found myself, far exceeded my ability to pay the expenses thereof. ... Of course I could have lived quietly in Christ Church and studied hard, as many others did. But five years independence and responsibility in the Army, much of it on active service abroad, had changed me, and I was caught up in a pretty intense social, and, to me, new and attractive, world. My eyes were opened, and I found it hard, if not impossible, to refuse invitations."[17]

One characteristic that lends interest to the letters is his painting. Although he hopes he might have time while training, there is no real chance then or, especially, abroad: "I never paint now of course but I've frequently felt lately that I should love to do so again. The lights on the hills across Tunisia as I go down at ten to seven in the morning to mount the gd ɤ the pleasant shadows in the orchard by the white walled balcony of our French farm house home are pleasant things and would go well on Whatman paper, hot pressed."[18] The letters are enriched by a painter's eye for colours and shapes.

Personal horror

The letters, as intimated in the epigraph, and with respect to censoring, carefully filter out most of the horror of war. Some indication of what is left out may be gleaned from the relatively forthright letters to Eric[19] and, even more so, the prose notes in appendix B.[20] On the other hand, the sheer allusiveness of some of the matter is shocking (the stink and flies from unburied dead, for example[21]) and a lot of the diurnal awfulness seeps through as well.

And, thinking about the recipients as well as the writer of such letters from the War, one can sense how thin and desperate is this thread of communication - the anxiety of waiting for the postman to bring another instalment; or, for those for whom the end of the story is abruptly announced by telegram, the pathos of continued receipt of these letters, so terribly time-lagged, weeks or even months after. JPW's almost greedy demands for letters from home (not to mention other items) shows how important it is to know simply that it is, indeed, still O.K. at the other end.

Striking attitudes

Perhaps the most jarring element of the letters (to modern-day eyes) is the abrupt divide of the classes. The riflemen are scarcely literate (he has to write to thank his mother on behalf of Rfn Deane as "he writes so badly"[22]) and have to be kept actively busy by their officers.[23] Officers and other ranks frequent different establishments, both by choice ("I did not feed in the cheap haunts of the shop girl and common run of subaltern. I don't think I'm wrong – certainly none of our officers would go to those places ɤ I don't like meeting riflemen in eating joints"[24]) and by rule ("hotels the NAAFI run for officers"[25]).

The rule is that once created "an officer" he is also made "a supposed gentleman"[26] automatically, and travels first class by train[27] and on board ship.[28] The description of the food served daily on the latter is astonishing[29]. While the hierarchical structure arguably contributes positively to many aspects of service, it also has its ugly aspects, as in the seeming slavish interest in rank and decoration, and the frequent exhortations to his father to entertain his superior officers when they are in London -

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[17] 'Memories of 1945-50'.
[18] 19.08.43 - No. 57.
[19] 20.10 and 20.11.42.
[20] Even these notes are clipped in their contained horror; for example, perhaps: "So they killed Henry Watson and two of his chaps yesterday. The trucks were blazing shapelessness, red-fire below fading into a column of smoke that climbed the sky. The Stukas flew off and the pouff-pouff of Bofors chased after them, until they were out of range."
[21] 17.05.43 - No. 44.
[22] 1.04.45 - No. 124.
[23] "Up to a point they do need their leisure, particularly their games, organized for them..." 10.01.43 - No. 23.
[24] 9.11.41.
[25] 29.03.45 - No. 123.
[26] 25.05.41.
[27] ibid: 'I saw a train ...So I got 1st. class which I'm getting used to.'
[28] 23.07.42: ' I went down to the troop deck, a confined, cribbed space in the front of the boat, where all our rfn are. I'm afraid they get all the rolls ɤ pitches there.'
[29] 23.07.42 again – p.6-7 (p.98)

"Perhaps AP will have also asked Lyon Corbet Winder (Lt.Col.M.C.) out to lunch. It is a kindness to do so ɤ entertainment ɤ sociabilities are the key to all success."[30]

The presumption is that rank is analogous with quality, much as school is. Failing to live up to either is abhorrent: "He is an absolute disgrace to Charterhouse ɤ Saunderites ɤ the 60th. and I am ashamed to say I was at school with him"[31] - perhaps the most critical comment in the whole of the letters. It is clear that pretty much everyone else lived up to what was required of them by their station.

Unfortunately the class distinction also veers with particular ugliness into racial discrimination, with "buck niggers and petty officers"[32] being unsuitable company for his sister Mary. Perhaps interestingly, however, Jews are only disparaged in reported speech, contextually distanced from the writer's view.

Generally speaking it is an almost exclusively masculine society that is portrayed and so women do not feature much. When they do, they are typically menial, or of interest only if pretty. Objectification is the norm - "the villas are full of women painfully NOT fraternizing in very little but their skin (and that a pleasant golden brown!)".[33]

More attractively, it may be seen that the presumption of rank permits one to call on social bonds that do not exist in the same way nowadays, as when he billets his trainees on the manor in Yorkshire - "I decided it was too foul to put my 40 men out in the fields ɤ so called on the squire",[34] or proposes to call on - and perhaps even stay with - a friend or maybe only acquaintance of his father's in Rome - "I've written to old Nosworthy introducing myself".[35]

Social History

The letters include numerous now-curious elements of social history such as the "brown looking bottles" that turn out to contain "the fabulous Coca-Kola, ...the mystery of every English picture-goer from 6 upwards."[36] He reads many familiar classics, but some books he refers to as popular, as with many of the films mentioned, have left little trace. The introduction of the extravagantly expensive penicillin used to save his friend Peter Wake, so long after its discovery, suddenly throws into sharp relief the wounds and infections experienced before that unexpectedly late date.[37] No doubt other interesting snippets will catch the reader's eye.

The family tree

A brief explanation of the primary characters may be helpful for future readers, especially as they are often referred to only by their initials.

'AP' is JPW's father Alexander Percival, 'Percy'; 'DW' or 'DMW' is his mother Doris. AP's parents had died over twenty years before, and his only full sibling had died in 1933; his half-siblings, from his father's first marriage, are not mentioned except indirectly in the person of 'WGW' or Aunt Winnie, who was the widow of AP's elder half-brother Edward, known as Odo[38].

DMW's father 'OS' (Otto Siepmann) is usually mentioned with the epithets of 'poor' and 'old' or similar; he was to live for a further two years after the end of the war. DMW had five brothers and sisters, of whom the brothers feature most: 'HAS' (Harry) was older than she was; 'CAS' (Charles) and 'EOS' (Eric) were younger. Eric turns up in person in the Letters. The oldest sister Edith is mentioned only once[39] - with disapprobation.

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[30] 31.08.43 - No. 60.
[31] 17.07.45 - No. 135.
[32] 15.06.44.
[33] 11.07.45 - No. 134.
[34] 20.07.41.
[35] 29.03.45 - No. 123.
[36] 15.08.42.
[37] 9.01.45 - No. 112.
[38] She was the author of 'My Yorkshire Childhood', in family archive.
[39] In 2-3.06.43 – though her mantlepiece also comes in to 31.08.41

Mary, Martin ('Bow') and Jill were JPW's siblings. Mary was two and a half-years younger than him, and there were only just over two years between the younger three; they are often referred to as a separate group, "children"[40], "bratlings"[41].

Illustrations

Some of the illustrations are copies of material sent with the letters. Most, however, come from JPW's photo-album going from the early twenties up to 1945.[42] The originals are poor quality home-snaps, even more erratically preserved than the letters[43] and often fail to record things one would like to see from the letters, but, despite their haphazard portrayal of both the theatre of war and the players, are both topical and significant and this must excuse the rather inappropriate melding of the written and pictorial archives in this document. As far as possible they are included within the text in appropriate places.

Recurring narratives

One of the pleasures (or irritations, for those out of sympathy with this admittedly large-scale project), is the recurring themes that come up like a rolling boil before subsiding again through the regular structure of the letters. These include, most obviously, the business of sending and receiving letters (numbering, dates, delays, missing items); money, and the bank account (the way the bank manager is supposed to deal directly with his pay is striking); the sending of items, particularly Horizon, other newspapers and school magazines; and progress of the younger siblings. All these provide arcs of narrative woven through the whole. That you do not always hear the answers, or get to the end, is not really an issue.

And finally, the narrative arc about what he will do after finishing with the Army becomes ever more prominent. The choice of career or chance of employment appears no less baffling then than now. His father is exhorted to pull all the strings and interest he can - somewhat ironically, as JPW knows, because AP is simultaneously restructuring the selection process for civil service through the introduction of competitive and objective exams. With the charm that those who knew him later would recognise, JPW writes: "As to worming in privately through unofficial channels into the F.O I note what you say ɤ am sure it's OK but there is no doubt that private negotiation by the ring of well-connected people who like to run these things does still play a great part in our public life. I see ɤ have mixed with (particularly in this Regt) a great deal of it and of course for those in on the swim, it's first class and makes one want to keep the circle closed and vote Tory. I prefer it that way too being a greedy, selfish person, but grumble against graft only if I seem to be out of it!"[44,45]

The letters end with him going up to Christ Church, Oxford. As has already been noted, this was too dull - and impecunious - an existence to hold him long -

Tomorrow to fresh woods, and pastures new.[46,47]

JTW
Withypool and Oxford June 2016

-oOo-

[40] 27.7.41 etc
[41] 8.04.41 etc
[42] Eventually kept by JPW at Somerton, the album was taken from there by his sister Mary in 2006 and passed back to JTW in January 2016.
[43] and only very roughly in chronological order. The letters refer quite often to difficulties in obtaining or using a camera, or of getting pictures developed.
[44] 21.06.45 - No. 132(2).
[45] though "I know Mummy does not like all this sort of thing" - 9.01.45, No. 112.
[46] Milton, Lycidas - a line JPW often quoted with favour, though usually with '...fresh fields...' rather than 'woods'.
[47] The biography continues with *Memories of 1945–50 - Christ Church, Northern Department in the Foreign Office, Poland and Moscow* in the family archive.

THE LETTERS

6464816 O/Cadet JP Waterfield
R Coy
170th M.G. O.C.T.U.
Worcestershire Brine Baths Hotel
Droitwich Spa
Worcestershire

My dear Mummy ɤ Daddy, 8.11.41[48]

I write no longer as a private but I almost regret it! Picture a rambling brick ɤ half timbered hotel stripped bare ɤ barren of everything: imagine poky hotel bedrooms with enlarged sliding tea-trays as beds, one above the other bunk fashion. I am in a room with 3 others, all from Blackpool ɤ the North. Jimmy is with a horrid Welshman, in a 2 room, just over the way. There is absolutely nowhere to put, place or hang belongings. It is all rather strange ɤ we shall settle down soon as one always does but we are a little disappointed.

The people who are cadets are quite incredibly unsuitable. They are vulgar, common ɤ dull. It is lucky that Jimmy ɤ a few other nice people are within range of each other.

The main trouble is that this is a Machine Gun OCTU ɤ we have got to do our very best to get out of it. I am writing to the 60th. Rifles ɤ as I am on the King's List I feel reasonably sure of getting out of here. This is likely to be made more feasible by our only doing 5 weeks Infantry training in this Hotel before going up to a Camp a mile away to an M.G. training Coy, so we shd not lose anything by transferring, if we can.

We had a dull journey through the rain, much like any other railway journey. The train was packed ɤ I and 2 others

②

travelled 1st class, a situation that was complicated by Jimmy meeting a Horris Hill parent of the Poona school ɤ being compelled into politeness. We had a second breakfast at Reading, the only meal that was eatable ever produced for me by that sordid ɤ nondescript place. What a surprise!

Now I am not going to write a lot now because it is nearly dinner time ɤ I want to go out to Worcester afterwards. Isn't it funny that we are, here, a shorter distance from Worcester than Michael ɤ I were at Whitbourne in the summer. I shall be able to go over ɤ see the Wrigleys ɤ others we met there.

Droitwich is a fine centre for everywhere but I doubt if weekends are easy to get.

Do you think you could send me a large suitcase to put my things in – also perhaps a map of these Midlands, my Wellington boots (most important, we are deep in mud) ɤ if you cd spare it, some jam. So far we have been fed foully ɤ stingily so we are rather fearful. We clearly get 17/6 a week but I am afraid life is going to be much more expensive.

I am so sorry to worry you for things when I know you, Mummy, are busy with a sick-house. I hope the two invalids are much, much better.

Very much love from John

This is gloomy but we have lots to be thankful for, ɤ are so.

Thank you for such an excellent goodbye
supper last Wednesday.

~ * ~

[48] clearly '41' but the narrative sequence places this in 1940.

Saturday Feb 15. 41

6464816 o/Cadet JPW
R Coy 170th. Mg OCTU
Brine Baths Hotel
Droitwich, Worcs

My dear Mummy ϒ Daddy,

And Mary too if she is still at home, but I guess it was about time she repaired back to her seminary, the old dragoness - thank her anyway for a good letter ϒ thank you too, Mummy for yours. I am so glad Daddy is better ϒ I hope he makes continued good progress. How enterprising and admirable to read Gibbon.

Well, I am writing on my tea-tray bed, lower layer after Saturday lunch ϒ Sat. lunch is far ϒ away the worst of the week; plain boiled rice, dead white ϒ juiceless was not in my line as pudding or even 'afters' so I withdrew at half time. The sun is shining as a contrast to this last week of depressing, fuggy Midlands weather ϒ I am waiting to go into Worcester, with a Carthusian I met in a pub last night - top scholar of Oriel, a year before me ϒ quite nice named Caincross - all my mates here, alas, only those I came with, (I haven't made any new ones) are on devilish duties so I wd have been stung otherwise.

It has not been a bad week, but the great thing is tht[49] I am going to get out of here. I wrote to the 60th. man who has been in touch with me before ϒ he replied very kindly, saying that he was in touch with the W.O ϒ wd get me moved. At the same time I applied from this end, as being on the Kings' List which is the only ground for getting out of here, ϒ I have been told by Major Masters, our Coy Cmdr, that my papers have gone to the W.O at Cheltenham ϒ I shall certainly be transferred. Whether I shall get to Sandhurst, the other O.C.T.U in Droitwich, or Salisbury

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plain (the last place the Deity made, apparently) does not matter. Time is obscure but Masters said that I might hope to move before the end of the month. Meanwhile I am not wasting my time, for we spend these 5 weeks in the luxury hotel without its luxury doing Infantry training.

And very hard work it is, too. We thought at the Queen's that we were hustled hard but here we are on the go from 6.30 in the morning, Reveillé, to 4.30 pm with no interval, time for rest or, if you wanted it, smoke during the whole day except 10 minutes after lunch which is spent in changing for P.T, not infrequently consisting of a run. Every 5 nights we are on guard ϒ also P.A D duties. Guard is v. tiring ϒ uncomfortable, not being able to get out of ones clothes or equipment ϒ with no time for a thorough wash in the morning but I am fortunate in being able to sleep in any position ϒ at any time. I managed, in that way to get 4-5 hours on a table in the intervals of going on guard while some people got not more than an hour.

We do drill ϒ P.T. every day - this is rare for an OCTU but the M.G. course is 6 months as against 3 for the ordinary infantry OCTU ϒ they can afford to haze us about as regular soldiers instead of Crammers pups which the 3 months limit imposes.

I think it is all very good for us though I loath the continued rush to change clothing ϒ put on equipment ϒ march down to the Lido parking ground (our drill-square ersatz) as if the devil were after us. We go at a lick, like that, to smarten us up ϒ it does, but it makes me sweat all over, dripping toast after 10 minutes ϒ like a drowned rat after half an hour without

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a break. We have a RSM with the unpoetical name of Smith but a lyrical gift of abuse. He stands 6 ft 5" ϒ comes from the Coldstream guards - we do guards drill here, different to other drills - ϒ is quite petrifying. It is very un-Socratic to say I loath this 'smartening up' at 180-190 paces to the minute (regulation ϒ normal 120, light Infantry 140) but firmly believe it is good for us in particular ϒ and that drill is good for men in general but I do so ϒ am sure I am right about the benefit part.

[49] elision at end of line.

Masters is a shrewd, very shrewd fellow in glasses looking most un-military, ϒ like a school master but he knows his stuff ϒ was very nice to me about the 60th. They are, clearly, about the most interesting regt. for work in the Army - they are picked men, all motorized rather on the model of the German Panzer Divizionen ϒ they attain a terrific standard of efficiency. I shall have to work like hell to get there but wd rather be there than in any regt in the whole Army partly because of their great efficiency ϒ tradition and partly because of the almost inevitably nice people one meets there. I am, indeed very lucky to have such an opportunity.

Our officers are a staggering contrast to the Queens - kind understanding, efficient ϒ in a real sense more gentlemanly. My faith in the Army officer has been reestablished but I shudder at the thought of some of my present colleagues being commissioned.

This is later in the evening - just before lights out at 10.15 ϒ I am in the same place having come back from Worcester

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ϒ a quite pleasant evening. We hitched in as I have done, with complete success ever since I came here, ϒ had a good tea, spurned the choice of movies as foul or already seen, wandered about ϒ chatted in that dreadfully sordid and dull town ϒ after a drink tried to find somewhere to have supper. This proved impossible, short of having an uneatable conventional hotel dinner ϒ we were reduced to going to a stuffy ϒ oppressive cinema café, which is the standard sort of place that is frequented by officers, other ranks, cadets all sorts of females, in short the symbol of an egalitarian petty bourgeoisie society without standards, taste or discrimination. We may well take warning for after the war!

Contd. Lilley Brook Hotel

Cheltenham - on Sunday. 1230pm

To Jill's great surprise I arrived outside St Helen's about an hour ago having hitched with great success the 36 odd miles from Droitwich, through Worcester ϒ Tewkesbury, which I liked the look of. Miss Waller has no chin but is a niceish dame ϒ Jilly looks very well indeed ϒ is clearly cock a hoop in St Helens: she showed me round with interest ϒ enthusiasm. Cheltenham is a filthy hole, I think, I spent nearly an hour walking about interminable white-faced ϒ fawn Victorian squares ϒ parades, contacting jaundiced ϒ drooping colonels retired ϒ faded women with automatic Anglo-Indian society smiles, none of whom had

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any idea of where St Helens or the Ladies College was! Now we are here I think we shall have a good time.

Last week I went to the Wrigleys - the people who were so kind to Michael ϒ me in the summer in their huge palace at Whitbourne. They were wonderfully nice ϒ gave me a bath, food ϒ all that I wanted including lending me a suitcase into which I cd unpack my kit bag. I hitched there ϒ came back, after missing the only bus, on the back of a bouncing motor bike, with my suitcase in my hand. This was terrifying through the rain ϒ all.

I am sending, to deal with the essentials once more, some foul washing home. I do hope you will not mind but it takes about a month to come back here ϒ they don't do pyjamas. As I am moving so soon it wd seem to be the best policy to send it home rather than risk losing the lot.

We are only being paid 15/- a week ϒ there is no doubt that I shall have to economise drastically if I am going to manage. This taking out of ones relations from school (this, the first time I have done it ϒ rather exciting) is, I can now see a terrible drain! I shall be cleaned out savings ϒ all by the end, I fear.

I must stop now to read the paper before

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lunch - I have not seen one since I arrived in Droitwich, nor heard the radio

I hope all goes well -

very much love from

John

~ * ~

22.2.41

11 Pl. 4 Coy.
162nd OCTU
Bulford
Wilts

My dear Mummy ɤ Daddy,

What a contrast to the last place I was in when I wrote! I am right in the middle of Salisbury Plain ɤ miles from anywhere. All round whalebacks and hogsbacks ɤ plain circular lumps of chalk down, interspersed with light brown cultivation ɤ crowned with silhouetted dark green copses, visible for a moment through the rain ɤ snow clouds, scowl down on this garrison town of green huts, red brick offices, ɤ straight dull roads with names like "Falkiner Parade" ɤ "Kitchen Parade" ɤ everything is the same and indistinguishable.

I came down yesterday through the sunlight ɤ frost ɤ it was a good journey. I only knew I was moving the day before at dinner time when Major Masters came up ɤ told me. He was extremely kind ɤ helpful (he has himself been in the 60th. for 15 yrs) ɤ told me to write ɤ tell him how I got on ɤ also, when I was passing out in 3 months time to write to him again, neglecting all the uniform touts ɤ military tailors, ɤ he would tell me just what I did ɤ did not need, together with helping me with the regimental tailors. All of which was extremely nice of him.

Jimmy Stow is also putting in an application for a transfer ɤ, I think, is bound to go off from Droitwich soon. I gave him a farewell dinner (a loathsome one, I am afraid, but what is not in restaurants ɤ hotels these days?) the night before I left. I smoked a cigar!

I was fairly sorry to leave the people I knew but thrilled at the idea of at last getting down to it on the road to a commission.

I had lunch in Waterloo ɤ deliberately missed my train, thus enabling me to ring you up ɤ not to starve.

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I looked rather sadly at Guildford shining in the sun across the Woking and Bagshot heaths as the train rushed along; St Martha's also stood out quite clearly. I always get this sort of nostalgic feeling when I go to a strange place by myself - it produces a heightened sense of observation ɤ detachment ɤ is well parallelled by the excitement of going home or anywhere where one anticipates happiness.

The train was hours late ɤ we got along over the Hampshire uplands ɤ then the downs began. At Salisbury I had an hour to wait ɤ I spent my last 5½d on tea ɤ a bun. Then we crept along the single line track to Bulford - the downs were grey swelling all round, bulging and barren ɤ very beautiful in the cold early spring evening sun. The huts ɤ buildings of the camp ɤ garrison town showed up dark against the sun not unlike Princetown, mingling with the moor - not hideous at all but ominous.

This place is semi-comfortable ɤ an interesting contrast with the other places I've been in. The beds are good ɤ I am in a brick hut with about 13 others - there is one fire but except just in front of it,

where I am sitting now, it is icy. It is snowing outside. We have sheets ϒ a pillow case - but these seem a dubious blessing as freezing to the toes ϒ revealing of the dirt on the body. The wash-basins are limited ϒ there is no bath.

Bulford has the reputation of being the toughest ϒ most efficient OCTU but a terribly hard life. The real disappointment is that I don't think I shall ever be able to get out of here of an afternoon. There are terrific restrictions ϒ we appear to be on duty as "anti-invasion striking force" or something like it, every other day.

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Added to that there are difficulties of transport which cannot, I fear, be overcome by hitching. There is nothing to hitch on Salisbury Plain. But we shall see.

The people here are much nicer than at Droitwich - not foully thrustful but quieter ϒ more self-possessed. They are older ϒ more experienced than me for the most part but the training is from scratch ϒ very thorough. All the same I have not yet found a friend ϒ I think it may be difficult. I feel quite content to endure anything because the end of great discomfort as peace-time soldiers is in sight ϒ general friendliness is evident.

Now a few points about necessaries.

1. I have done my best about the suitcase ϒ am awfully sorry you had the trouble of sending it for nothing. I asked them at Droitwich to look out for it ϒ to send it back to you ϒ they were rather doubtful - perhaps the best thing is for you to write to the Station Master at Dr. ϒ tell him to send it back when it arrives.

2. About my washing - I shall get it done here OK all except for pyjamas for which I shall pay extra - but wd you send me my <u>Army Pants, 1 pr short pants, my pyjamas</u> I sent <u>home ϒ those socks I sent</u>! I have also posted from Droitwich a few books - wd you just pile them into my shelves?

I don't think there is anything else. I may get away after 3 weeks for a Sunday to Calne or somewhere - do you know anyone near here. I miss being at home terribly but 3 months is only like the quarter ϒ the people are quite nice here.

Lots of love from John

~ * ~

15.3.41 5 Platoon. 2 Coy 162nd. OCTU
Bulford, Wilts

My dear Mummy ϒ Daddy,

I have not heard from you since we said good-bye on the steps of pretentiousness personified last Sunday night. I got back here comfortably enough except that the perishing bus I was in, after a series of belly groans, packed up completely just the Andover side of Tidworth ϒ we were all cast out to wait for the next one following. Otherwise you will see that I have changed my address; we have finished one quarter of our course, thank goodness, ϒ go up into the next company where we stay for the next three sections of the business. Weapon training ϒ the dullest ϒ hardest time is over. Tactics come next but I am rather vague about the exact things we do. I know that the training I had as Platoon Cmdr ϒ Coy Cmdr at Charterhouse will prove invaluable - I cannot believe that it is reasonable for men who have had some sort of experience in giving orders on military affairs to start from absolute scratch with people of the commercial traveller class, whose opinions are formed by the 'Mirror' ϒ the radio ϒ who have the jitters at the thought of exercising their intelligence or standing out in front of a squad as commanders. Officer production in this country is in a bad way.

We have had a hardish week but it has flown by. The officers here are rather disappointing ϒ our own particular one is ex-Sandhurst OCTU, (ie luxury ϒ laziness) with little knowledge ϒ less

ability to get it over. We had a night compass march 2 nights ago - that was tiring ϒ icy cold in the blackness, of the plain,

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but that was beaten by yesterday when, on a really warm sunny day, we were taken out in buses, screened from view ϒ peeping by blankets (mine were used ϒ I, as is the way of the Army, came back with four different ones, otherwise I would never have had any!) for twenty miles or so ϒ dumped in a valley ϒ told to find our position ϒ go to various map references if we wanted any dinner. We were just a few miles south of Wyle, that pleasant village with the water-meadows, down-encircled, which we pass through on the way to Exeter; we walked 12 miles or so on different bearings ϒ finally got in at 3 o'clock, dusty, sweaty, footsore ϒ famished. There was grand beer there for us (we had to buy it) ϒ a v.little food (that was, of course, supplied); we ate in a long ride of gravely wood, that was part of a Roman road, I'm not sure which one.

Tomorrow I hope to get to Calne to take Mary out. I have just come back this evening from Salisbury without a pass - I could not face hanging around all day ϒ the excellent bus service was too inviting. I saw "All this ϒ heaven too" with Bette Davis ϒ Charles Boyer; it was a goodish film, avoiding sentimentality ϒ with it was 'Dai Jones' a M. of J film which impressed me greatly. I've never, indeed, seen a bad Minnie film - this one was received with clapping which is rare. Lofoten pictures did not impress, surprisingly.

I'm as tired as usual which makes it a dull letter but I'm more cheerful ϒ comfortable. I hope Daddy is well ϒ getting better ϒ everything is going with a swing at Underdown. I wrote a roofer to that woman but I'm not above fleecing the rich! Write ϒ tell me all the dope, lots of love from John

~ * ~

Tel. Newbury 1341

22.3.41

Hill End,
Newtown,
Newbury,
Berks.

My dear Mummy ϒ Daddy,

I am writing, somewhat surprisingly from Jimmy's home at Horris Hill. I am in rather a hurry ϒ it is my fault that I shall not get you a long letter for a day or two because I was suddenly put on guard last night ϒ had no time to write.

This morning from 9.10 - 12.30 we wasted time in a Church Parade: first we formed up ϒ were inspected several times and finally arrived at the church one whole hour early! This hour we spent sitting inside ϒ talking while ATS, generals ϒ privates all rolled in punctually. The service was awful ϒ there was a sermon by a bullnecked patriotic padre who talked about the "Boche"

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and tried to prove that after each day of National Prayer something, in direct line of causation, happened extremely beneficial to the British war plan. When he got to the capitulation of France he became, naturally, rather stuck... .

Anyway, after more drill ϒ marching past we got our passes ϒ got into a bus to Andover where we had a poorish lunch. We got another bus here to arrive about three o'clock ϒ I have enjoyed myself. J. is in his element ϒ they are a happy family. I like particularly his mother - his father is rapt up in Winchester ϒ Winchester notions still ϒ they are all typical Wykehamists! More about that in a further letter.

You will have heard by now about my visit to Mary. We had glorious fun ϒ I managed to hitch back v. successfully which

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will, of course, be news to you. I came with a trouper ϒ 4 highly painted females going to give a concert at Amesbury, Boscombe Downs aerodrome. You can imagine me with two chorus girls on my

knees and one on either side of me in the back of the car from Devizes practically to Amesbury! Matt was offensive, definitely, and I was astonished to find I cd not take Mary out. You will have heard, no doubt, about the beer ɤ cider! I wrote a subtle thank you letter to Matt afterwards heaping, I hoped, hot coals onto her dragons hairs.

Work is more interesting though we had a hard week. I definitely hope to come home for our long weekend next Friday week. Don't expect too much but I guess it will be OK.

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Thank you ever so much for the cake ɤ sweater. Both are useful ɤ very welcome ɤ I will bring the old green one when I come home. You have sent no letter ɤ I am dying to know all the news so, please, write soon ɤ tell me how everyone is, all the gossip ɤ whether Daddy is back at work or how well he is, anyway.

I must stop now for politeness' sake ɤ sherry before supper. I will write on Tuesday at latest, again.

Lots of love from John

~ * ~

30.3.41

5 Pl. 2 Coy
162 OCTU
Bulford. Wilts.

My dear Mummy ɤ Daddy,

I should be full of apologies for having let the whole of the week go by without a letter or even a postcard after promising to send something in that hurried scribble I wrote from Horris Hill last Sunday night. It shows how busy we have been and how quickly the days slip by that I have fully intended to write every day and yet have never had time.

But I have good news, anyway: I shall be home next Friday around tea time ɤ shall not have to come back until Monday evening so there will be three grand nights at home, all together again - we shall have a great time. We leave here after duties on Friday which means one o'clock - don't be disappointed if I'm a little late.

I am staying in this Sunday, for practically the first time since I've been here; the reason is that I'm on guard tonight which is a horrid nuisance and means staying in my clothes and boots until Monday night. It is a comparatively easy guard here but, all the same, is a thing I loath more than anything else we do - they are packing up Bulford as an infantry OCTU and noone will follow us now so as each Company goes out every three weeks there have been fewer to do "duties". There are two now and we have been on every other day with guards every four or five, but yesterday a new motor company came in and we're hoping they will start guards night soon. With them, amazingly enough, came Johnny Greenish (at Guildford with us, though you never met him) from Droitwich and he said that Brian was now at 167 at Malvern; I expect a letter from him, too, because I wrote giving him hell to his new home near Newbury.

It has been an uneventful and very hardworking week. We have a new platoon officer who is much better than the last, efficient

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kind ɤ much more to be trusted than the last babyface, a petulant child.

I am sitting on my bed and writing and listening with one ear to the Matthew Passion on one of the fellow's wireless. I wonder if you are listening too at Underdown. I had a hard fight against popular opinion to get it on and a harder one to keep it but it is OK now and really distracts me from

letter writing. A year or two ago I would not in the least have wanted to hear it but now it gives me exquisite pleasure in spite of the counter-squawks of derision from the rest of the barrack room!

They are definitely a nicer lot than those at Droitwich but far from perfect. I, actually, get on very reasonably well with them but have found scarcely more than one, that I did not know before, with whom I should want to keep in contact after leaving here. It is surprising and indeed a fact not a theory than the new motor coy, chaps from the 60th ɤ R.B are infinitely nicer.

I had a long letter from Figgy McNeil who sounded in excellent form - he says he has never enjoyed himself so much as he has at Cambridge this last year - he has been at some London hospital recently doing dissection on air-raid victims. It was good to hear from him. Otherwise I've had no news.

I shall bring, almost certainly, a ration card with me so that will help. I can't think of anything more of interest or importance, this place is monotonously tough ɤ I have little or no time for reading - I wonder if I ever shall again in the Army. I was in Salisbury yesterday ɤ saw a baddish film, 'Seven Sinners' with Marlene Dietrich - is there anything I can bring you? I'll do my best with chocolate but it is awfully scarce. Thank you ever so much for the cake.

Looking forward hard to Friday - lots of love from John.

~ * ~

8.4.41. Dinner hour.

5 Pl. 2 Coy.
162 OCTU.
Bulford. Wilts.

Dear Mummy ɤ Daddy ɤ bratlings,

What a glorious weekend we had; I enjoyed it most terribly and it was worse than going to school in the early years to come away. Thank you for giving me such a lovely time.

The trains were not as bad as we thought because there were no later ones from Waterloo except the one following mine and that caught mine up at Basingstoke. I had a seat there already ɤ many had to stay standing up from there to Andover. It is a drab ɤ dreary journey in the greying light and worse when the blinds are drawn and we have the blue artificial which tempts the foolish to try and read ɤ is not dark enough to go comfortable to sleep under. There were a couple of RAF. men returning from boasted French leave; they were stationed at Chilboulton (or is it Cherboulton?[50]) and said it was easy at their camp to walk away for a weekend. There were also two gloomy ATS going back from, I judged, gentle and decent homes, to what they described as endless fatigues ɤ scrubbing floors.

Very lucky for us and most welcome there was a bus waiting at Andover station to collect the OCTU returning on that train. We got in about 10.15 and everyone was very sad. My bed was icy cold for some reason but gloom is being dissipated now.

We have a comparatively idle 3 weeks, doing military law, gas (which I've done thoroughly twice before) and M.T. but it was staggering to find P.T as the first thing on the programme in the morning followed by gas chamber test. In this we take off our respirators for 2 minutes after proving their efficiency.

[50] There is a 'Chilbolton' in Hampshire associated with RAF Worthy Down.

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This time the gas was D.M. a nose group gas - usually one has tear gas in a gas chamber. The characteristics of DM are various but the main one is "induces an acute feeling of depression"! So you'll appreciate ɤ sympathise with the tone of this letter.

Tea time

I must hurry up to catch the post. Jimmy ɤ everyone had a glorious time ɤ he sends his love. He got some dope, rumour still but there may be something in it, that we shall go to Winchester after here. This would be glorious of course ɤ not too far, still from Mary ɤ Jilly.

I hope you all go to the table pingers tonight ɤ really enjoy it. I am extremely envious of you, anyway.

I think Mary would do best to come as soon as poss to Salisbury to stay with her friends Tylden. I'm not certain about the racing but there's lots of other things to do. Let her get on with it.

This place does not seem so bad really nowadays ɤ it is only browning off by contrast. 7 days leave must be hell in its after-effects.

I had a nice letter from NJC all sugar after my swiftly thrust placating effort of many pages. He ɤ I are good friends and I value it but he is annoying sometimes. I also had a long letter from Angus Milne who is just leaving Babbacombe after his baby recruiting P.T. stage of the RAF. He tells me that Michael Dear is just going to get his commission as pilot officer.

It is warmer now and the downs are glowing in the evening sunlight. I don't think I shall like Salisbury plain downs again from the association point of view but sometimes I long to paint parts of them, against my will! I am lucky in our barrack room - interesting ɤ kind and nice compared with the other half of the platoon in the next room ɤ most of the specimens in this place.

[written sideways across top of first page:]

Do write + give me all the gossip, it is wonderfully cheering! Count the days of 5 weeks more. lots of love from John

~ * ~

20.4.41

c/o Avon Farm House
Stratford sub Castle
Salisbury

My dear Mummy ɤ Daddy,

I seem to spend a lot of time these days writing my Sunday letter in other people's houses; here I am today chez Tylden, alone in the sitting room except for Mary who is reading by the fire, looking out over water-meadows ɤ orchard to the great earthwork pile of Old Sarum and the gentler curving slopes of the Plain. It is sunny with frequent showers which make the lights on the hills very lovely. There is a magnificently sweeping rainbow right over Old Sarum and beyond the hail clouds mass in a black blue and purple curtain. It's all the best of the down and meadow country and divorced of the TEWTS and exercises of the OCTU ɤ Army my mind is once more reversed in its favour! I should again love to paint.

I came here yesterday afternoon latish to find Mary had already gone off to the cinema with Kitty. I had tea with the mother and married daughter

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ɤ her brats, an elegant pilot officer with his elegant young wife, the Queen's niece, both as dumb as could be, and finally an awful Colonel of RE's who looked donnish and a recluse but is apparently a divorced man with 3 daughters, once more engaged to a French girl in occupied territory. I like him not too badly but everyone else does not. He spends his time fishing.

The adjuncts to the family are PGs and, I guess, very profitable. Mary ɤ K arrived later ɤ we spent a peaceful evening with an excellent supper. Indeed the food is very good in this household ɤ obviously good things are infinitely easier to procure in Salisbury than in Guildford. As a matter of fact excessive politeness by the PGs (excluding the Colonel) make it impossible to eat one's bellyfull - this is partly due, in addition, to Mrs T's aggressive masculinity - she does not talk incessantly ɤ is quite kind but is, like all the family, hideous, massive and rather oppressive. No doubt this is the result of having to manage the household but I feel strongly that

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intelligence in women, without the addition of natural feminine graces and graciousness, is unpleasant and almost worthless.

The unhappy child is not the type ever to be Mary's great pal but is really nice and kindly though looking like a gargoyle. However she is so repressed by her female relatives that she is in a permanent intellectually reactionary flap! Mary looks prettier and nicer every time I see her ɤ is well dressed; it is a pity she is not a little taller.

I cannot stand writing with this beastly pen and on this little coarse paper but it is kind of them to let me write at all. I came over today in time for lunch. There was church parade first, an awful affair of spit and polish occurring every four weeks which I was lucky to escape by being on duty at an Ack-Ack post from 9 - 11; It rained intermittently but I sat under a ground sheet and read the New Statesmen; needless to say no German air-force appeared.

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M ɤ K saw me getting off the 'bus from the castle mound (it is about 1½ mile to the house) and met me on the road. We climbed up again ɤ looked round it all again - it was impressive although I am bored by antiquities. As a present spectacle it is marvellous but meaningless to me as a memorial.

After an excellent lunch we went for a walk through the sun ɤ hail, sheltering in farm buildings when needful. It is now 6 o'clock news time and I shall go back again after dinner.

Mary gave me most of the news; though in fact you never gather so much by talking as from a considered letter. Peter seems to have been a very definite success with her, anyway - how did you all react to him? It is a great thing to get excellent letters from Bow and Jilly and I hope their industry continues! But where is a letter from Mummy and Daddy? I should love one from both.

I gave Mary 10/- for her birthday.

⑤

I do hope you have a good day tomorrow. She tells me that she is going to town twice. Do let her go to the theatre - there are 2 good things ɤ they are matinées of course so there will be no danger. Perhaps Daddy cd go one time with her, or HAS cd take her out to lunch or is there someone else who wd go?

I am glad you agree with me about clothes expenses. I shall be able to make good economy by not having to buy boots or a hat, but I'm afraid the excess of the grant will be still at least £10. I gather from everyone else going to cheap tailors that they are having to spend £40 - 50 so clearly Welsh ɤ J are worth going to for quality.

I had a letter from Joc Lynam - a circular inviting me to continue subscription to the Draconian as I'd run out, also getting particulars of address, service etc. I thought that I really owed Dragons a great deal ɤ am now

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friendly with them again ɤ that it was a good gesture to do something about it at the rate of £1-1-0 for 5 years. So I gave him a cheque for a guinea. Would anyone like to assist me with that as it is really a family share out and we all wd like to keep in touch with Dragons.

I adored the ballet but did not go ravingly mad or lose my discrimination - I am not a b...mane.

No more news - only 4 weeks more - hurrah!

always very much love from

John

~ * ~

26.4.41

5 Pl. 2 Coy
162 OCTU
Bulford. Wilts

My dear Mummy ɤ Daddy,

It was good to get letters from you in mid-week; - tell Mary that much though I enjoy hers she must number the pages and write more legibly; it needs a great deal of love and interest to pore through any letter having to decipher every word! It's hard to realise the holidays are on and that you are all getting sad about their ending - in the Army I've lost the cycle of term hols that has been the most important thing for the last 11 years or so but I guess the rest of the family don't make so much fuss about going back to school as I did. It sounds good that the tennis is up - I can imagine it well and will see it all in 3 weeks more, hurray.

This is a Saturday letter again because I'm going home with Jimmy tomorrow. Actually he has been wonderfully lucky for Bulford ɤ has gone off for the night - leaving after last parade this morning ɤ skipping dinner which was uneatable anyhow. We had a silly kit inspection before because we have to render account of the Army clothes, "necessaries" etc that we have had, according to the authorities, "on trust", and have to pay a percentage of their cost it we are deficient. I have scarcely anything because I lost two whole washings at Guildford ɤ my kit when laid down is a laughable sight because there is hardly anything to fold ɤ flap

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to the required neatness. Since that this morning I've been lying on my bed recovering and sleeping. My bed is made up for tomorrow because I've got to be on guard tonight, 12 - 2; this is a better time than 2 - 4 or 4 - 6 but not so good as 8 - 10 and 10 - 12 - my boots will however be taken off in the bath at Horris Hill tomorrow which is more pleasant than stewing in my own sweat for 48 hours or more.

There is now no question about May 16th., I think. I shall come home in the morning in time for lunch or earlier. My plans are roughly these - will you let me know what you think of them? Be at home on Friday ɤ pack my trunk with all requirements for the following week; I shall have to take sheets, pillow cases ɤ a pillow. Then on Saturday morning go to Oxford and see as many people as I can fit in, staying the night and coming back on Sunday morning to O.S. for lunch - ɤ perhaps go to Charterhouse in the evening. Then on Monday I should like to go to Devonshire either to an hotel or Auntie Winnie, until I go to Chiseldon or wherever (we don't yet know anything definite) on Friday following. Now would Mummy come too for those four days and perhaps stay on afterwards? If that were OK you could write to WGW and get her to hire a car or something so that we could get around.

It all seems extravagant perhaps but I think it a pity to do away with all ones pleasures. I don't know

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about the theory of good increasing as the sum of the pleasure but a ration of pleasure increases ϒ helps efficiency. I disagree with the spirit of "Let us crown ourselves with roses for tomorrow we die", a falsely created sentimentalism, vulgar and enervating. But lots of enjoyment is impossible and one should make the most of what's left, particularly one's friends. "There is a cant of downfall as well as uplift" I read the other day and I think there is something in it. The drabness of routine Army life is dulling to everything personal; there is no excitement, no feeling of helping anyone and the events of the stricken world knock feebly against our news-drunk minds. All the same the defeats in Greece do dishearten one but probably much less than they do civilians.

The stupidity of so many people that teach us here ϒ greater stupidity of the learners grows more apparent. Few people have improved on acquaintance and, in spite of comparative happiness at quite frequent intervals, never have I been gladder at the prospect of getting out of a place as I shall be at going out from here a fortnight on Friday ... as we all optimistically put it. Fools clearly go into Infantry. The gunners at Larkhill seem very advanced but they have a six months course.

You never said anything about the Draconian; wd anyone like to contribute to my guinea? Joc wrote to me during the week, having just got back from Cornwall ϒ four days holiday. Do you remember Plymouth ϒ Kennedy? he asked.

Next week there is a great concert here which will be broadcast on Sunday night - Sir Henry Wood is conducting

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the Southern Command Symphony orchestra. If you are listening in you can think of me in the Garrison Theatre, Bulford, a tin and rackety shed with hard tipup seats in Sapper Street or somesuch, flanked by barrack squares and army huts, green and camouflage and all rather depressing. But I'm really quite happy in spite of my environment and we have a really nice lot of men in our barrack room; amazing luck when you see the shower than goes around the OCTU.

One other thing on money. Lloyds (Cox ϒ Kings) have written me a terrific blurb asking me to open an a/c with them. Would you ask Barclays manager in Guildford for his advice? I imagine it would be best for him to make arrangements to transfer my pay to my own account with him, otherwise I cd shift, lock, stock ϒ barrel to Lloyds - will you see what he says.

Give my love to the bratlings and all -

lots of love from

John

~ * ~

4.5.41

5.Pl. 2 Coy
162 OCTU
Bulford. Wilts

My dear Mummy ϒ Daddy,

Count the days now; ten is not too long and will disappear very soon if last week is any criterion. We worked like blazes, rushing all over the plain, on TEWTS (Tactical exercises without troops) and schemes. On the first we go off in buses, dressed in great coats, respirators ϒ tin hats slung, gas capes rolled and carrying rifles and ten rounds (which I usually forget). Then we get some narrative detailed and we work up orders and answers to questions on the ground, moving forward or back as the scheme develops in the imagination and the standard solution demands. We are divided into syndicates of 10 or 12 with an officer to each and it is all quite interesting. Scarcely any notice is taken of individual abilities and it frequently happens that a really weak creature escapes notice all the way ϒ finishes up with a good report. Often there are gross

misjudgements of capability. But it always happens that those whom one regards when a subordinate with awe and fear, hanging on their every criticism, frown, or favour, as one grows up, or reaches a higher level, turn out to be very ordinary weak and fallible mortals, sometimes rogues and sometimes conscientious but weak; they judge others because it's their job but the man who is a real judge of men is hard to find and it is to my mind, a greater qualification for a great man to pick those beneath him with insight and accuracy, than to be himself an able administrator. All judgements are relative and the test is to take the good and the bad with equanimity, neither becoming full of ὕβρις and insolent at the one, nor depressed and morbid at the other. Easy to say and rarely found in practice.

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Schemes are less pleasant than TEWTS as more energetic. We march four or five miles out in fighting order (equipment and pack, that is, as well as what I said before) do an exercise practically with one of us acting as platoon commander, others as sgt and corporals. Then we march back very quickly.

We had a bridge building scheme on Wednesday. Some go over in collapsible boats, large, holding seven ϗ 2 rowers (as they are called but they really only paddle) and small and rubbery holding 2, also on a bridge of pontoons made of Kapok which I had only met before, as I remember, when Mummy scornfully prodded my cushions in my study in Saunderites and said they were full of Kapok. It's quite good stuff, not too heavy and a safety still if a few bullets go into the pontoon - the effective reason for air being not used. This week we do it at night and if the darkness increases the likelihood of falling in, it'll be a likely risk - there were good many last time, some deliberate and a few accidental - all quite excellent fun but not the way to win the war.

But so many things we do will not help us to win the war - it's presumptuous to start criticizing. Waste is awful. The scale of pay is wrong for some families increase their income in munitions to double or thrice the pre-war standard and the Army private might well be a youngish man of 25 - 35, married with children and trying to make 17/6 a week do what £600 p.a did before. Joad writes of society existing to promote the 'good life' of the individual in the N.S ϗ N this week - this means a standard of culture, an appreciation of material pleasure, a good

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taste, an heightened sensibility, ϗ a refinement of manners, says he and he wants it for all of us. It seems to me this is Epicurean and demands a leisured class. Egalitarian culture has never been seen in the world except in Athens and they had slaves, the machines of the ancient world. Our machines need someone to run them and that precludes leisured refinement. Anyway Christianity would say, surely, that the 'good life' does not depend on or necessarily consist of culture and an appreciation of the "good things" of life, music, books, food, manners, friendship, talk.

This is the first hot day of the year, hot enough to sit outside the brick barrack room and write to you, as I am now, in the sunshine. The down stretches all round; on the grass there are sprawling men, middle-aged and younger, undignified and uncareful of appearance as they never would be at home, sprawling in braces and pants on blankets, reading the People and the News of the World. There is something in being a journalist - just the recording of observations - people are fascinating, loathsome and lovable.

Jimmy has gone home and a word on his family - they are significant of something uniquely English - but I don't think it enviable. Only a prep-school ϗ the type produces it. Kind, hearty, condemnatory of thrustfulness, conceit and intellectuals though by no means fools, absurdly self-depreciating and devoted to games and Binghamism as it affects games i.e. they are not rich enough to be huntin', shootin' in the Lord of the Manor way. Essentially a masculine family, cliqueish and sensitive

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terrified of being individual - the 3 boys bachelors from birth unless a lucky chance brings a very sympathetic female. What a pity there are no sisters as always. Gentle the old man is and loaths roughness and the war as Jimmy, essentially unambitious and all wonderfully kind. It's a poor description maybe and perhaps ungrateful. I enjoy going there and went down well, I'm told; they

have the goodness of the happy family but I always feel the sterility and unawareness of the world, the inability to triumph over education (particularly a Wykehamist education!) is out of place.

Glorious letters from both of you - letters also from IFG, Theo Zinn and Peter Butler. Go ahead with plans - when is APW's birthday? I'll not forget O.S.

No mention of what you've done with the Bank - can you get him to transfer my a/c from the Army agents without any more pother? And the Draconian I enjoyed - so no doubt did you - will you share the dough?

lots of love from

John

~ * ~

25.5.41

1st. Motor Training Bn.
60th. Rifles
Chiseldon Camp
Wilts.

My dear Mummy ɤ Daddy,

Your first letter from an officer ɤ a supposed gentleman! A great deal has happened, as always on a new place ɤ starting a new way of life, ɤ I hope I'll get some of it across. Before that thank you very much indeed for such a glorious week - we had good fun ɤ it passed all too quickly. I hope Mummy is not too tired from it and that her specialists will bring something really useful up ɤ be the beginning of getting perfectly well again.

When I arrived at No 8 Platform, Glfd (that well known place now) I saw a train pulling ɤ puffing out so I was in despair until I discovered there was another in 10 minutes - very strange I thought. So I got 1st. class which I'm getting used to ɤ arrived at Reading ɤ then to Newbury where I had a short coffee ɤ bun - then it began to drizzle ɤ rain ɤ didn't stop all day. Jimmy came down from Horris Hill ɤ we got into a train for Savernake ɤ there changed for here. We stopped eventually at the "Halt", a rackety tin hut and got out. The guard appeared ɤ asked for our tickets ɤ when asked in turn if he would get our luggage out seemed very surprised ɤ had to signal the train on a hundred yards to align the van with the tin-hut. We got it out, piles of it, and turned round to ask about it being sent up but we were deserted and the train was going faster ɤ faster down the valley. There we were with no sign of a camp, downs all round us (Berkshire shape rather than Salisbury Plain) the backs of some 60th. sgts

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after exchanging smart salutes vanishing down the road.

So we left the baggage ɤ followed ɤ after 10 minutes saw a finger-post with NEW ARRIVALS FOLLOW THIS ARROW so we followed ɤ came through hutments to the adjutant's office. He was out ɤ we came to a Mess (which we shall go to after so many weeks) to tea - we were quietly ignored by youngish men of a few weeks' experience.

Then we were shown our rooms ɤ after some wangling got ourselves put together with one other man from Bulford who is nice ɤ intelligent. In the building there is a bath-house with boiling water, 2 other rooms with 3 officers each and 2 servants for all of us. It is such a change of outlook to leave everything to them, in the way of cleaning ɤ bedmaking and personal things - one had before to be independent ɤ resourceful but it's all done for you now, ɤ I don't know that it's too good.

We went to supper in the senior officers' mess where we shall be pro-tem. Everyone goes away at weekends so there were only the oldest of boys ɤ oddities about. The food was ɤ has been excellent ɤ very luxurious ɤ the olds were nice to us.

We got up after a good sleep on a hardish bed (but what would not be after my own?) about 9.0 ϒ rolled up for breakfast at half past nor were we the last. Then form filling in ϒ idling till lunch ϒ billiards after: we hope to go into Marlborough this afternoon for tea.

We shall work very hard indeed during the week but it is a happy go lucky life out of hours ϒ I'm going to enjoy it, I think. I'll tell you more later.

lots of love from John

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1st. M.T.B
Chiseldon.
9.6.41

My dear Mummy ϒ Daddy,

This is rather late, I'm afraid, being Monday evening seven o'clock. But I was away in Oxford for the weekend ϒ this is the first free moment we've had today as we went riding motor bicycles in the rain this afternoon until quite late, (too late for tea, I'm sorry to say) thirty five miles through Marlborough ϒ on half way to Calne ϒ then after the regular teatime, being once more dry but rather tired we have had a couple of lectures, one very dull on Inspection of Vehicles and one interesting by our late Staff College major on Army Training Manual 39, which is a summary of various new ideas together with a lot of dope from Libya. Old really but quite sound.

Now it'll soon be time for dinner ϒ I shall have to continue this afterwards probably. We dine at 8 which is late for a famished man who has had no tea. I'm writing in our room at one end of the camp, on the ground floor of course, but the building is better than a wooden hut. We have 3 beds, a table, cupboards ϒ chests of drawers but not sufficient, and two nursery chairs: for this unfurnished or "field" service we get 2/- a day extra allowance! It is rather cold ϒ rain is still about. I've never known a summer like this - I've seen no sun at all since we came here and nearly every day it has poured with rain.

I went to Oxford on Saturday and arrived about

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three o'clock and put my things in my room. I was really Dundas' guest but did not sleep in his spare room as the HM of Preston Grammar school was there. I had tea with an O.C in Ch-Ch ϒ walked round Oxford doing some calls ϒ seeing people until dinner. That was very pleasant - there was one Dr J Carter who remembered you Daddy well ϒ said he looked out for you at the club but always seemed to miss you - also Prof. Jask ϒ Prof Dodds (who succeeded Gilbert Murray as prof. of Greek) Prof Lindemann (spelling I don't know[51]) who is reputed to have "enormous influence" ϒ certainly pumped me with unpleasant deliberation ϒ insight - also J.C.Masterman who was in uniform. Sir Farquahar Buzzard ϒ JJB-W were not there - old Sir F had apparently been discovering dope on me from RB but he is a dear old boy ϒ I like him - RHD apparently spent most of his time in the S.CR checking him for unconventional behaviour! Mortimer the junior censor was clerically urbane.

I talked to everyone ϒ drank quantities ϒ watched the bridge afterwards which was very good. Then I went back ϒ talked to RHD ϒ Preston G.S who was discovered in the armchair having been out all night.

I went back to my room with difficulty, I think, which was on the next staircase towards the entrance next to Keith Keiling's rooms ϒ slept like a log although in a fuggy atmosphere until 9 o'clock. I met Preston coming out as I went to

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sausage and bacon at 9.30 and Dundas came down at 10.15 as I was finishing. I then went up to N. Oxford ϒ called on the Geidts whom I found difficult and Mary Denniston who was charming as ever

[51] also doubtful for the transcriber, the 'J' of 'J Carter' and 'Jask' .

and gave good news of Gwendolen. Dear old dog Gurth had been sent to be killed by the vet a few weeks ago, after being hit slightly but decisively by a bicycle: he was fifteen and still game though grey-bearded and fat as I remember him in September. She said that he still brightened at the sight of Dragon bare knee remembering runs in Port Meadow six years ago!

We wanted to go on the river but it rained so I went ɤ had tea with Peter Butler and some others. I came back here about 9.30 ɤ shared a taxi with three others which was much more pleasant than last week when, as I don't think I told you, I scoured Swindon for a car ɤ finally bribed a drunken fish ɤ chips shop proprietor to take me for 10/-, packing in 6 poor benighted riflemen and steering myself at every lurch of the wheel - a nightmare ride because of the train being so late, 2 hrs or more, at Didcot.

We have had a goodish week ɤ are now beginning another. We are on a cadre of D ɤ M - driving ɤ maintenance ɤ drive carriers (those little swift caterpillar things) and motor bikes - we learn about the inwards of the I/C engine and the little maintenance we are required to know. It is taught

to my mind, surprisingly badly and I find it all very difficult.

Life in the mess goes on pleasantly, restrained but friendly and the food is excellent.

I hope you are both well and happy.

very much love from

John

~ * ~

Chiseldon
Monday 16.6.41

My dear Mummy ɤ Daddy,

I hope you won't be worried this week that this letter takes some time to arrive. It's really better to write after the weekend than before it and yesterday there was no time at all. Really I was amazed that you were in any degree surprised or anxious last week.

You'll probably have already got the girls' letters ɤ know that there has been a series of Waterfield family reunions all over the West Country! We had good fun both days and it was all graced by lovely weather ɤ good luck in the way of meeting and travel.

First let me, however, prepare you for a surprise. As far as it goes at present I'm coming to play cricket at Ch.[52] on Sat. next and when I put in my formal application for leave to go early on Sat. in order to get there in time the Colonel very charmingly said I could go on Friday night if I wished and that is what I'm doing. There is some nasty rumour floating around about a 24 hour scheme for all the officers next weekend and though I'd rather like to be on that for experience, it would spoil the weekend plans entirely. I think it will be O.K. So may I come home on Friday night? I am asked to stay in Saunderites on Saturday but would come back home for lunch on tea on Sunday before returning here. Perhaps, if it was a nice sunny day you could come over to Ch. on Saturday afternoon? Be prepared, as always, for cancellations of plans but otherwise I'll be seeing you on Friday evening, hurrah!

We have been doing motor bike riding all the week over the roughest and most slippery of all the Berkshire downs ɤ Salisbury Plain.

[52] Ch: Charterhouse.

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We have been along the roads and over tracks and over pure down - up precipices and across ruts, falling off left and right and sweating to lift the beastly things up again and then kicking our innards[53] out trying to start again. The Army bikes are about twice as heavy as civilian ones and that makes it a strain to lug them around. It's great fun though and I really am confident of any rough country, mud or water now. We should have been driving carriers as well but they have been lent to a unit stationed in camp here temporarily outside the gates and we shall not have had much opportunity this time though we shall learn eventually.

We have also been endeavouring to master the working of an Internal Combustion engine and this I find very difficult. I'm not a mechanic and never shall be (nor are we required to be) but I do like the finality ɤ neatness of mechanical workings when I understand them. We would have learnt much more if the teaching was better but you cannot expect sergeants and corporals, expert mechanics and fitters, (perhaps even with years of lecturing experience), to teach really effectively - they teach always as if one was perfect, i.e. never forgot anything or failed to understand at the first and last telling.

Do you know or know of an Old Westminster called Hon Philip Rea? He was in the Guards at the tail of the last war and then went up to the House to read history. He came here last week but has gone off again on some course. He

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was charming and knew us all by name very well. That other nice but much younger O.W. I told you about P (M.G?) anyway Paul Wright who is on the permanent staff here ɤ very efficient was in John Lewis's; I observed it by seeing that dreadful journal of the partnership in his pigeon-hole ɤ was told later the same day. I wonder what Spedan thinks of him.

This is later in the day ɤ it is very hot indeed - Battle dress is useless ɤ most uncomfortable but I think I'll certainly be coming on Friday now; I've seen the adjutant.

It was just a sudden flash of ideas that sent me off to Cheltenham. My train was 1½ hours late so I got no lunch ɤ just caught her, as no doubt she's told you as she was off to Figaro. She seemed wonderfully well ɤ competent ɤ self-possessed and independent. I like that school ɤ the people in it. I got no supper or dinner either because I'd have missed the last 'bus else so I ate only breakfast ɤ v. sickly but terrific tea only that day. I would have been willing to take Jill's pals to tea but they were engaged at cricket. Cheltenham was much nicer in the green coating of summer and in spite of every other house being an hotel it has a pleasant feeling so different from Swindon which is the most characterless town I've ever been in. It was sad to see a photo of David Brown - I'd have liked to meet him again. Jill will have told you about our box.

On Sunday to Calne which was more quiet ɤ

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yet somehow a little strained. So discourteous Matt is compared with Chelt. or anywhere. I had to have lunch by myself at the Landsdowne most of which I sent away, I'm afraid; it was so foul. Then Mary ɤ I went for a walk in the fields ɤ came back ɤ had an excellent picnic tea on the lime-kiln but I had to go soon after and I took 3 hours to get back to Swindon, where I met a nice farming old Rugbeian, the son of Lt/Col Beaman who wrote a long centre-page letter to the Times the other day, for dinner. He has asked me to go over to his place in Gloucestershire one weekend which will be nice. Funnily enough we had quite a good dinner at the King's Arms, the only possible hotel in Sw. Dear Mary looked well but lazy though she'd been for a long walk, to do her justice, that morning. She is, I think, quite happy ɤ and it was grand to see her in spite of that place.

I think she shd definitely go independently with a friend to a farm or somesuch and work for a few weeks during the summer. Someone has just got to make the effort to get it going and she would

[53] reads as ‘inwards’ but that doesn’t seem to make sense; ‘inwards’ on a bike is the side to which one leans (or falls).

be grateful in the end. Would it be worth my while writing to the Wrigleys to see if they know of a farm - fruit-picking is quite a possible job for them - women do a lot of it and that is lovely country.

My money affairs are OK. but I can't possibly be extravagant. Washing, shoe-mending ϒ such necessities come to 7/6 or more a week ϒ although I spend nothing at all here during the week travelling is expensive ϒ until I get paid I couldn't possibly hire a car for the weekend. Jimmy's car has arrived and it's in excellent form £55. See you on Friday - lots of love from John.

~ * ~

6.7.41 12th. KRRC D Coy. Oswaldkirk Hall nr Ampleforth Yorkshire

My dear Mummy ϒ Daddy,

It is 9 o'clock on Sunday evening ϒ I am in a deck-chair on the terrace overlooking the tennis court. I am very tired after harder work than I've done for ages but healthily and happily tired. In fact I am happier and more contented than I've been since I joined the army. It has been a hot day ϒ after church parade in the 12th. century village church and a battalion officers' conference (which was nonsensical woffling) I went out on motor bikes with Christopher Burton to do a reconnaissance for tomorrow's scheme. On the way back we stopped at Rievaulx Abbey for tea. We ate in a farmhouse garden looking through the woods and across the river to the grey elegantly biscuit-like remains of the building, cool under the bank. We had crab apple jelly in unlimited quantities for tea ϒ hot buttered buns.

But it was not such a good tea as last Thursday however when Brian Howard, who is my Company commander, ϒ I went to recce a site for my platoon to go to for 3 nights at the end of next week on bivouac. There we were given by the owners of the field we chose real honey in the comb ϒ brown bread ϒ butter. Wonderful!

It is a good life. We live by companies scattered round the villages two at a time except for us who

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are fortunate in possessing the best village ϒ the best mess and in being completely on our own.

I have a platoon of my own and have learnt quantities in every way. They are grand men and keen as anything. I have four new "White" American Scout cars - the only ones in the Bn and some of very few in England. They are terrific over rough country and weigh 5½ tons nearly twice as much as a carrier. I am learning to drive them - left hand drive with a "booster" gear as well as ordinary gears. We have been out nearly every day on big schemes and on the others I order the vehicles to be ready at such ϒ such ϒ go out by myself on section ϒ platoon training. We hare all over the country in an amazing way. Yesterday we played cricket.

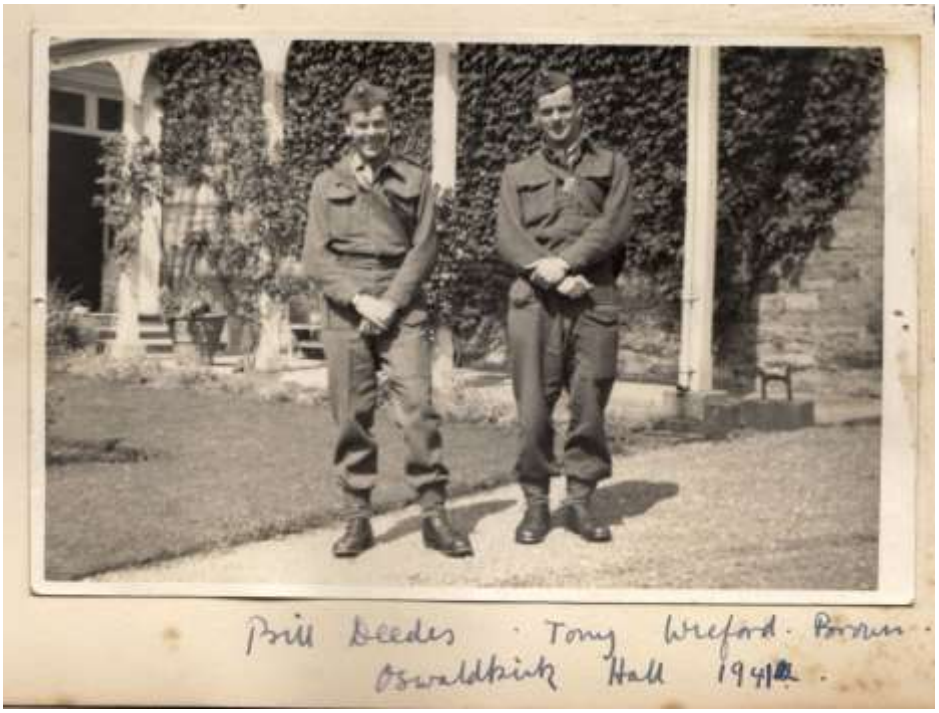
I have the nicest Coy Cmdr you could wish for. He is a regular, aged 30, an Etonian, very indolently good looking with an extremely pretty wife ϒ hideous brown baby, all here. He was one of RB's pupils at Eton[54]. He has an amazing competence and good brain yet does not fuss us at all. But he is always there to help if need be.

Christopher Burton is a charming, kind and gentle madman - 22, Lancing, always in trouble at Battalion - unselfconscious, always sees the good in people. I share a bedroom with him. Tony Wreford-Brown is in the Coy - lazy as usual ϒ is just gone on leave to Ch. Bill Deedes is 2nd. ic Coy ϒ was

[54] RB is Robert Birley, history master at Eton from 1926 before becoming headmaster of Charterhouse in 1935.

[sideways across top of first page, across date and address:]

D.Telegraph political
correspondent, I think.
Mrs Wrigley has
written + is getting
Mrs Walker to
write to Mary.
I will also
write to her.
No fruit - all
blasted.
Will you send
me 2 white
tennis shirts
+tennis socks? My
washing has arrived -
love from
John



2 - Deedes, Wreford Brown; Oswaldkirk

~ * ~

July 14 . 41

D Coy
12th. KRRC
Ampleforth

My dear Mummy ɤ Daddy,

My warning post-card will no doubt have reached you so you will not be worried at getting nothing until later in the week than usual. Your letter ɤ parcel actually turned up this morning when I was in bed recovering from my nocturnal fire-fighting but I see from the post-mark that it was sent off last Wednesday so you'll see what a time things take. Thank you very much for sending my shirts ɤ tennis socks; I wonder that there are no army collars as a matter of fact. I seem to have a good deal less than the number I paid for not so long ago. I think I'll have to have my own pair of black ammunition books though I'm afraid you won't thank me for making you do up such an inconvenient parcel. I'm sending A.P. his £3 cheque ɤ DMW £1 (which I think is correct but it may be more). The reason for this financial generosity is that my bank manager informs me that my pay for June - £16.5 or so less £2.5 or so income tax has rolled in so I'm paying back while the cash is hot. Anyway I spend next to nothing here at all beyond my 3/- a day mess-bill + drinks which will amount to about £4 a month I hope.

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It was good to get your news. Is AP's report · work a success, a sensation, a flop or a bore? This midnight stuff is not too good by the sound of it.

My spectacles bust most infuriatingly yesterday so I'll be laying out £2 or around about on new frames. At the moment I've got those hideous Army tin things on which are horribly uncomfortable.

I have heard from Laurence Stone who after blood ɤ battle ɤ hell generally for 5 months is temporarily on shore for learning (I believe) to be an officer. Michael H has written happily enough from Whitby but I don't know that I'll ever get over there. Except on training when we cover immense areas fleetingly I've not yet been outside Oswaldkirk. We are both in the 11th. Armd Div - at the sign

of the boring bull. I expect you know those divisional signs on battle-dress ɤ vehicles; rhinoceros ramp around Guildford I believe but I don't know whose division that is.

It's stuffy here and the week has passed tardily and infuriatingly on fire-fighting. In the middle of the moors there is 2 miles square of blasted heath, smouldering ɤ blazing at the slightest puff of wind, unexinguishable until the rain, and situated on an ungettable plateau with ¼ ml precipice all round. We have dug trenches ɤ

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it has leapt them lightly and now we patrol it with beaters of brush to put out blazing eruptions day in and night out. We miss our training ɤ it's foully dirty ɤ boring and uncomfortable. We get no meals and no sleep.

All the same I'm quite happy ɤ take it with a swing because I'm so busy, I suppose, with my chaps whereas at Chisledon it would have caused open mutiny to endure so much!

We have got the tennis court going and had some fine games. Brian Howard is first-class ɤ used to play in Cairo with Von Cramm, Brugnon ɤ D McNeill ɤ AJWB is not bad. We still live a happy go lucky life and it is far and away the best company to be in through we're all in bad odour with Battalion at the moment for various reasons. I ran into a farm tractor with a truck and knocked its near-side front wheel off pretty featly!

There is no sign of rain yet although we had the heaviest thunderstorm and rainburst I've known at Tollerton on the TEWT yesterday 15 mls away in the plain. Of course they had 5 minutes drizzle here.

I'm sorry about Florrie ɤ hope the house

④

is not over-hard work.

Time for dinner now. Do write a good letter ɤ tell other chaps to do so. I do my best but am appallingly busy.

lots of love from

John

~ * ~

July 20th 41

D Coy
12th KRRC
Ampleforth
York

My dear Mummy ɤ Daddy,

The smell of Sunday lunch with Yorkshire pudding comes through from the back regions, where we have established our own cook house, not disagreably as an accompaniment ɤ inducement to write my Sunday letter. They are rolling ɤ mowing the tennis court below and the valley beyond is fresh after rain. I am just this minute (at least I've bathed first) back from an independent jaunt with my platoon ɤ one section of carriers under command (you know those squat things with tractors seen so often on the road) since last Thursday morning.

On the Wednesday evening, about 8.0pm we went out with the whole battalion on a night exercise - harbouring at night and moving off in the dark. We wandered about the country in a huge convoy ɤ finally landed up in a wood which we had to defend, then we cooked suppers dug latrines etc and were supposed to go to sleep. The brigadier came ɤ inspected my position! I got an hour easily enough ɤ we were roused at 1.0 am and moved off at 2.0. We got back here at 6.15, unloaded the trucks ɤ went to sleep for an hour. By 8.30 we had to move off on our own bivouac. When I woke I found it pouring with rain so you can guess how excited we felt.

We got off punctually ɤ got to Lastingham about 10.0. You'll find it right in the moors 3 mls due East of Hutton

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le Hole (isn't that a good name?) which is N.E of us here at Oswaldkirk.

It poured all the way ɤ when we arrived I parked the vehicles and went up on the back of my Don R's bike. I decided it was too foul to put my 40 men out in the fields ɤ so called on the squire ɤ various other people to see what they could do in the way of barns ɤ such. The squire was a wonderful old boy of 90, with his wife of 75 - he was brother to Lord Knaresborough or somehow ɤ anyway they were both aristocratic. They were wonderfully kind in a huge rambling old house, with yards ɤ out hoy ɤ no beginning or end. I got all my chaps billeted in garages, lofts ɤ what ever else there was in the way of room, dry ɤ under cover ɤ the Meysey Thompsons insisted I should sleep with them, not in the guest rooms which I refused as making too much trouble, but in the servants' wing (there were no servants) in the bed which had been made up for the cook who had never come. I was as comfortable as could be and so were the men ɤ I had the guests' bathroom.

This old couple were a wonder ɤ a tragedy. They had obviously been used to great comfort ɤ a wealth of servants. Now they could get none ɤ lived in this enormous building with the garden going to wild ɤ one gardener to spend his whole time on vegetables to avoid being called up. The village is isolated ɤ the moors are beyond for ever just over the garden fence. The house is full of Victorian bric a brac and daring

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novels of the nineties, Wilde ɤ Beardsley ɤ Such, bound in fat green calf! Huge portraits of ancestors are stacked under sandbags against the blitz.

We got on wonderfully well and the old lady was extremely shrewd, intelligent ɤ witty but, of course, lamentably unpractical. Though well able to criticize the most exquisite cooking of any Cordon bleu she did not, as I saw myself, know which side of a frying pan went in first. It needs some courage to start learning at 75. The old man is very deaf but otherwise wide awake ɤ keeps bees ɤ swarms (or whatever they do) with incredible bravery, as I thought, when he took me to see them. He reminisced about Eton thousands of years, as it seemed, ago, with great vigour.

Opposite there was an old farm-house converted into a pleasant retired home for a Quaker family. I had an excellent dinner with them last night but of course no wine. He was headmaster of a big Quaker School at Great Ayton in Middlesborough and they had grown up children. What a difference was this very independent ɤ self-sufficient home, cooking simply but excellently, the old man handy about the house with his own workshop, but the whole thing rather bred of books ɤ the town come to the country ɤ the pride in ruin over the road, with noone to dust the drawing-room carpet, the wines in the cellar (brought out for me!) and the bacon

④

burning hopelessly in the pan. But everywhere I had honey in the comb ɤ as much as I wanted.

It was grand to be independent ɤ we were all sorry to come home. We did some training up there ɤ yesterday afternoon in our rest time I got our vehicles down the fields to the stream ɤ with everyone helping hauled up to the road a huge log, recently cut, a proceeding which impressed the village enormously as it saved them the cost of a tractor from the town and also a R.G. major who came up to watch and was astounded to find us working quite voluntarily ɤ with no inducement on our free Saturday afternoon. They gave me 10/- for the Prisoners of War fund - they wanted to do something so I thought that was a good idea.

Life goes on much the same. Your letter never comes until Friday. I see I forgot your cheques so I'll send them now. Otherwise I spend nothing.

I would love to have a letter from A.P ɤ hear his news. Your letter, Mummy, came most welcome, when I got back this morning. I shd be very amused to hear how Elinor Birley gets on with

you - write me all the dope. You say nothing of what you found in Leicester or how the place struck you.

I went to Scarborough the other day to see a firing demonstration on the moors beyond but we had no time to shop.

I must now write ɤ thank Reg Meyneyth[?] before lunch - lots of love from John

~ * ~

27.7.41

D.Coy
12 KRRC4
Ampleforth
York

My dear Mummy ɤ Daddy,

It was good to get long ɤ fascinating letters from both of you this week. You seem to be in good form but I'm sorry about Bartlett, both for your sake and his. If his health keeps he'll settle down to it and be as proud as can be in a month or two when he's finished with the ITC and goes to a battalion. The food is a nuisance because he's been spoilt but I guess he'll grow right out ɤ away from it. I don't like to think of him, puzzled, obstinate ɤ thick headed, living his life unhappily.

I wonder if the Birley family have decamped yet. It seemed a pretty muddle about the children but I hope you enjoyed having her, as someone to talk to, though I wonder very much how you get on together with ideas. I see no announcement yet of Daddy's appointments for the DFS but I suppose there will be a bomb-shell ɤ a half bursting shortly. No doubt he's elated about Duff-Cooper's dismissal - we saw him yesterday on the films - he looks a cross between Mr Ramsden (if he was as bad-tempered as his wife might well have made him!) and our neighbour Stan H.

The children must be near coming home - let them see my letters or hear my news because I'm afraid I haven't written to them recently though Mary heard from me about

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the time of the arrangements for her holiday task being clinched. I don't know whether it's possible but I should love to see Eric's letter ɤ Charles' too - if you posted them I would send them back by my next letter without fail.0

I hope you had a good ɤ happy birthday, Mummy, with lots of presents. I believe I gave you some Mozart records - I hope you like them - if you don't ɤ I didn't will you get some more, and tell me how much they are? Did my telegram arrive? I wrote to O.S some time ago but have had no reply - I hope he is O.K and that you are in touch with him. Irvine wrote to me ɤ seemed in goodish form.

We have had a comparatively quiet week here because we have been duty company which means we provide duty Don Rs, fatigue parties, guards ɤ what have you generally. Except for one battalion night-harbouring exercise where we slept in our single blanket under the trees we have been doing driving ɤ maintenance instruction for the backward ɤ advanced during the rest of the time. Next week however we've got some big schemes coming off - these I enjoy and certainly prefer to pottering about Oswaldkirk with nothing much to do.

We have had a good deal of tennis and invite people in for the evening to play. That I have great fun with but we cannot buy any balls in Scarborough or York or anywhere ɤ of course racquets are quite hopeless to look for.

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Christopher Burton ɤ I went to York yesterday. The last time I was in York was on my way down to stay with the Birleys at Brancaster in Norfolk and we came from Scotland in the Caravan, Chignell, Nigel Tuckwell and I. We camped outside by the river in the hot flat steaming plain with stone and red brick farm buildings, green with mildew. We went in the boiling rain yesterday and we

had to go packed in a stinking bus, that makes you embarrassed with fat ɤ ugly villagers stitching into you and sick from fumes. We had hoped to get a lift back but the car broke down and five of us came back in the same bus and a drunken labourer was sick over everyone - horrid. But it was a good day except for food which I do not believe can be bought nowadays. My high hopes are inevitably and always knocked down by pale, oily, stale boiled food that every hotel serves up. We did lots of shopping ɤ had a good hot tea and went to the cinema which is restful ɤ pleasant if only escape! We saw Kitty Foyle with Ginger Rogers - do you remember that naked book by Christopher Morley about the American White Collar girl - on yr bedroom table about a year and a half or so ago? It was

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one of the few modern novels I've read and it didn't impress frightfully. But I love to see Ginger Rogers ɤ the rotten maudlin unreality of the movie was made up by her very clever ɤ fighting skill.

Today we have a quiet day and it has suddenly occurred to me ɤ I'm sure I'm right that I must do some painting so will you please send my whole cardboard box up in my room - just see that everything is OK inside ɤ I'm not short of anything but I'm pretty sure I put everything together in there. I'm sorry to keep on asking for things but I'll easily pay for the postage if you'll tell me how much and I'm a long way off. Also I believe we may be here for a good long while now and it could be good for me. Would you also put Sergeant Bourgogne inside - I'll send him back as soon as I've read him. Are you reading Tom Jones I wonder? I've been reading De Quincey's Opium Eater ɤ find it not much thrill.

Guildford seems a long way off but we are both and all happy in our places and the family is good and well. Has there been tennis at all ɤ how are all Mummy's gossiping pals? Do the Woodheads know anyone here? love from John

~ * ~

August 3rd '41

12 KRRC
Ampleforth
York

My dear Mummy ɤ Daddy,

It is a shock to realize we are in the holiday month, the month of surf-bathing and idleness, the end of the schools year and picnics in the sun, on the moor and along Treyarnon cliffs with tin mines and buzzing insects. Relaxation was possible then but not now and although we are all so lucky to be alive and kicking and well and happy and must be grateful for it, it's much harder to enjoy the blessings of our lives than when detachment was complete. All the same how lucky we are. Here I am in a lovely late Georgian country house with interesting work ɤ really nice companions and except for the unfortunate Bow everyone else in the family is in excellent form. I'm glad to hear Jilly is gadding about the countryside and I hope Mary is going in good order and her plans are OK. I will send back all the letters you sent me which were grand to have - it keeps one in touch to see them and it is always a pity to lose contacts because they are very hard to remake.

We are just back from church where our recently appointed padre preached magnificently. He is a huntin' shootin' ɤ fishin' parson of Myttonian quality such as is rarely met, with a living in Leicestershire and talk

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of "Melton" leaping to the tongue. He is about forty five and big and goodlooking and (to my mind, for the present world we live in, anyway) a very nice and good man in spite of his "lepping" and "trout"! It was a pleasant life when after the morning service in the country with everyone of the village present one gathered to discuss the sermon and the Saturday's sport over sherry in the rectory or the squire's place. I still think it pleasant but it doesn't mean very much now. Major Gatty-Smith

our dear old host came in, and our six who are here and two families from neighbouring villages. I'm not really sociable in the proper sense but I love to see other people being so all around and prefer to play host to guest anyday.

It's hot again today after a week of rain and I'm going to play cricket for the officers against the sergeants on Ampleforth College ground this afternoon. I don't really want to play ɤ would prefer to paint but AJWB has inveigled me into it and I cannot refuse. Yesterday we had the grandest tennis party and invited all our Company NCOs who were keen. It was great fun ɤ it went with a great swing, the tennis being of a surprisingly high standard. Then in the evening there was our regular Company dance in the village hall which is famous throughout the countryside. We

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have to go along for a little while and look interested and accept a drink or two from the sergeants' mess whose entire show it is. They run it all for the Prisoners of War fund with no interference from us or meddling by battalion who tried to make one dance a success five weeks ago and flopped it badly so our sergeants in disgust tried a Company one in our hall and have done wonderfully well.

Tony has a theory that anyone who cannot play ball games a little is lacking some quickness of brain or (as I modified it) balance in their make-up that is a definite weakness. I was inclined to disagree at first but am now persuaded that though noone can be blamed for such failings, like being bad at mathematics, yet the quickness necessary can be developed (people need not play cricket which bores most but squash ɤ tennis which do supply it) and for the whole man should be developed to a great extent, ɤ exercised at intervals.

We have worked fairly hard all the week and have been out late at night on exercises. I'm learning quantities about men and soldiering and by Jove there is a lot to learn.

We have a new officer now called Donald Wright. He is much the oldest of the lot being exactly twice me but he is extremely shrewd and kind. He was chief sub-editor on the press association and then a sub-editor on the Telegraph afterwards as well as writing features for other papers. These journalists are funny - as rutted as anyone, school-

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masters or barristers or dons or civil servants in their own grooves, trading on drink and living a crazy uncertain life. The uncertainty of salary ɤ the job do not appeal to me but the restlessness of existence does! In some ways still I should love to go abroad to Egypt but I'm in a good, interesting job here, and lucky to have the experience of a platoon which is one thing the RAF for all their glory do not have. There might be something in separating the "Q" (administrative, clothes etc) side of the Army from the executive ɤ tactical side all the way up. In a motor bn the knowledge and work required for a good conscientious platoon commander is enormous - maintenance supervision, welfare, tactics ɤ Q.

You cover your lapse in sending an exiguous letter by the others but I should like to hear how Daddy is ɤ what he's doing. Eric is amazing ɤ makes me laugh! Will CAS be called up, I wonder? What about O.S? You don't tell me how he is or if he got a letter from me a few weeks ago.

Thank you so much for sending me all those things. I hope to do some painting. Now I'm thinking about having my bike here. Wd you consider it ɤ if anyone wants it badly at home tell me but if not put it on a train - I think it will get there to Ampleforth station some day. Next time you send me something perhaps you wd pack my clothes brush otherwise I'll have to spend a lot of money getting a good one. My mess bill was colossal but I'm O.K ɤ I'm buying a shaving brush.

Don't forget to write well ɤ give my love to everyone suitable - lots of love from John

~ * ~

12th. Bn. THE KING'S ROYAL RIFLE CORPS,
(QUEEN'S WESTMINSTERS.)

August 9th. '41

My dear Mummy ɤ Daddy,

Thank you for letters from everyone full of good news of holidays - only poor Bow I'm sorry for; perhaps while he is idly laid up he can find time to write me a letter! Will you tell Mary that I wrote her a longish letter about a fortnight ago but cannot at the moment remember to what address I posted it! It must be somewhere about all the same.

I have a feeling that I might get some sort of leave in September; I am actually due for it in a fortnight or less but having only recently arrived one has to tail in behind all the others with preferential claims. I had a letter from IFG during the week - he seemed listless, rather, but I expect it was thankfullness for the end of the quarter.

We have had a cold ɤ chilling

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week to open August ɤ have shivered on the moors in dampness and blustering squalls. If we are still here during the winter one can imagine what it will be like.

Training has gone on monotonously but it is interesting work ɤ needs all ones concentration and intelligence. We have interminable conferences at Bn HQ in Ampleforth which I'm afraid we loath ɤ mimic. Lt/Col Manduil[?] is quite unable to stop talking in ...mmms ɤ ...errs, ɤ "wells you see, in my view..." all put out in a rather nasal whine. In spite of that ɤ his complete inability to come to any decision or conclusion ever, he is most conscientious ɤ, though a paper-king, very thorough.

Down here in Oswaldkirk we don't like battalion ɤ its schemings, plottings ɤ goings on. There are D Coy ɤ HQ Coy (signallers, transport, Q.M etc) up there and also, of course the adjutant C.O, 2nd.i/c and all the rest of the high ɤ mighty brood. Sometimes we have to go up there ɤ the atmosphere is awful, everyone (or

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so we think) getting at everyone else. We are lucky to be here.

We had one colossal night scheme when I left my platoon about 1 in the morning and got into a carrier (those small, squat tank-like things with caterpillar tracks) to probe a wood; after driving hell for leather right through the enemy's night harbouring position, through Dannert wire and the Lord Killanin an irate major of A Coy, who were the enemy and with blank going off like at a movie show we turned on a steep slope and the track came off. So for five and a half hours, by the light of the flickering inspection lamp, we laboured, two NCOs, a rfm ɤ I, to put the wretched thing back. Normally this would take a quarter of an hour but at the bottom of a dell with the carrier half way turned over we could get at nothing ɤ arrived back well after dawn about eight

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just in time for breakfast.

Yesterday we had to give a demonstration of a motor Coy in the attack to the whole bn. They were perched on top of Sutton Bank, on the edge of the moor about Thirsk, a sheer precipice in most places ɤ no fun to climb, on foot, in a vehicle or on a motor bicycle. On a clear day you can see miles across the plain to the Pennines. Well, this demonstration was a dubious quantity. In a way it was a compliment as our tactical abilities in D coy is supposed to be hot, while everyone, including us, concedes the administration does not exist! All the same vultures about to pick a dead carcase could not rival the jealous eyes of Company commanders, subalterns ɤ NCOs ɤ riflemen, waiting to tear D coy's performance to shreds and leave nothing unsaid.

Surprisingly enough it was a success and our star is high. The Colonel gave us open praise which was a phenomenon observed last 2 yrs ago ϒ even other companies admitted their approval. Which means, we all agreed, that they must be damned bad!

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Company life is full of amusement ϒ is often a strain. Brian Howard never tells us anything until the last moment, or else he gives out orders for a most important scheme in the back of a truck on the way to cricket. Picture company office - junior subalterns all agog for dope with the adjutant panting on the phone for returns that ought to have been in four days back, noone dares to speak ϒ Brian comes in, forbidding and untidy, seizes the Daily Mirror and after five minutes - still noone has said anything - "got a match anyone?" "Yes, Brian" we all say and the morning has begun.

You learn the whole time what you ought to decide yourself ϒ what not. No pampering of platoon commanders and we are always told quite openly whether anything has been well done or badly done. One can have confidence even in the face of eccentricities.

I think it would be a good idea if you

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posted my bike by train to Gilling East station which is nearer to us than Ampleforth. If it was well padded it would be O.K ϒ it might save me a lot of time ϒ also I should be able to get out to see Michael Hoban and people: he is coming to Helmsley in a week or so, only 4 miles away. Tell me if you think it is a bad plan in your next letter. Will you also send me my clothes brush (this is important because my servant never does much ϒ a clothes brush might help him). Will you also send me my copy of Candide in English, it is a reddish orange book, about pocket size.

I hope you get a maid or Florrie reappears. It was interesting to hear about Richard North[55] - did he say what battalion he was with? What did he look like?

Write a good letter -

lots of love from John

~ * ~

12th. Bn. THE KING'S ROYAL RIFLE CORPS,
(QUEEN'S WESTMINSTERS.)

Monday August 18th.

My dear Mummy ϒ Daddy, '41

This is rather overdue but I've had no time until this evening as you'll hear. It was good to get such excellent letters from Mary ϒ Jilly who in particular produced one of the best narratives of an independent miss' adventures that I've seen, a miss one may add, of self-reliant, remarkably self-interested ways. Mary, and this means discretion needed as to public reading, I am a little worried about. She is still most appallingly introspective and effusively emotional, almost to an excess. I am sure that she only needs a little experience ϒ time to grow out of it but I'm equally sure that the experience which she will not face herself in Guildford although she longs for it, will only be got when she becomes independent or semi-

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independent at the University. Mummy wrote a brief note with a promise of something better which has not yet been fulfilled! Bow wrote too a most excellent ϒ amusing piece of dope. I'm glad he is going to Norfolk after all.

[55] this surname is illegible but presumably identical to that on page 8 of 26.10.41.

You make no mention anywhere of ① My copy of Candide in English which I asked you to send - an orange book of pocket size; ② My clothes brush which, daily, becomes more ϒ more of a necessity as the dust sits ϒ accumulates on my service dress while my batman who is by no means batmannish inclined, being naturally disposed much more to fiddling with a motor bike's carburretor or Bren gun's mechanism that to valeting me, looks on the wreck of my once smart ϒ well gathered uniform with an eye that can only be described as unfeeling; and finally ③ of my Bicycle which I now withdraw solemnly from the list because in spite of the Adjutant's extremely slippery behaviour to me

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I think there is a definite prospect of my getting the leave for which I was due two days ago, 3 months since the last, the day I left Bulford, within the next six weeks, and when I come I shall have finally decided whether it is worth while to have the bike here ϒ I shall be able, if I want it, to bring it back with me on the train without any fuss or palaver. So there you have it.

Why I have been so tardy about this letter (I hope you have not been anxious) is now about to be explained.

We had on Saturday our first Divisional exercise. Starting at 6.0 a.m we got back to Oswaldkirk about 7.30 pm having covered most of the North Riding of Yorkshire ϒ parts of Durham with particular reference to the river Tees near

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Darlington ϒ Stockton, (we nearly had to swim it but skilfully avoided), both unlovely places. Rumour was rife ϒ speculation fruitful about the reputations that would be ϒ were made or lost. We were well up in the form at Oswaldkirk because we had one of those born intriguers who got himself out of D Coy onto the Div. Staff as G.3 (with few or no qualifications) to dinner the night before, filled him up with sherry ϒ port ϒ got the lowdown. But everything became a washout in that line because the General became sick ϒ was not out on the day. Really the whole business was more boring than anything else ϒ I ϒ my platoon sat for several hours on the main LNER rly at Croft, south of Darlington, looking with nostalgic regret at the fat blue bluff locomotives pulling quantities of coaches marked Kings Cross, only seven hours away.

Sunday was spent in post-mortem conferences - first a Company one, untidy ϒ unconventional but pungent, concise ϒ very much to the

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point. There followed a very dreary, as usual, Battalion conference ϒ after lunch a Div. conference at Kirkby Moorside in which most people went to sleep.

When we got back I found Michael Hoban had come to see me in Osw. He has moved with the Westminster Dragoons to Duncombe Park, Helmsley, which is the nearest town, market merely, to us, three ϒ a half miles off over the hill.

He had tea with us ϒ then we went to the Black Swan together with Tony W-B for dinner. We had surprisingly good food ϒ consumed quantities of wine ϒ talked ϒ argued in excellent order for hours. It was good fun and I didn't have any idea of the amount of money I spent. As one doesn't, literally, spend anything here at all, it's all O.K to throw a good deal away once in a happy while. Mess Bills are larger too in an independent

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small mess like this so I allow for that.

We got back, just, in Tony's car very late so I had no time to write until this evening. All today we were out on exercises with the Lothians (ϒ Border Yeomanry) with whom we work. All these tank regts are miles behind us in training ϒ we have, honestly, not much respect for their ability at the moment ϒ we are performing like a non-stop Palladium show doing the same stooge act all this week for squadron after squadron. They are great toffs.

Otherwise last week was comparatively uneventful except for the increasing rain which you say has been plaguing you too.

You make no mention still of O.S - I hope he is OK but I have had no letter from him since I wrote about a month ago.

I have just about finished Burgogne - it is a good story of a great disaster, a little flat but very French in that baldness which has not, at the same time, the virtue of being restrained.

I must stop now to go to bed - it's 10.30. I really think I 'll be seeing you fairly soon which will be grand - lots of love from John

~ * ~

D Coy
12th. Bn. THE KING'S ROYAL RIFLE CORPS,
(QUEEN'S WESTMINSTERS.)
August 22nd '41 Ampleforth

My dear Mummy ɤ Daddy,

Before I go any further and lament the absence of letters this week, except for one delightful one from Jilly which promised a fat one full of information from Mummy, a promise that has not been fulfilled, I will produce a great surprise; so all get ready round the breakfast table and leave your porridge to listen. I have got my leave from September 8th - 15th, that is to say I shall be home on Monday fortnight, what time I don't yet know.

I wrote to the Adjutant ɤ got no answer until I bearded him ɤ he hedged with excuses it would be tedious to describe. So Brian Howard said he would write a stinker ɤ so he did and back came the

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answer in very impersonal terms. It was nice of Brian but he could not be in worse odour with Battalion than he is. I don't think they will dare to try ɤ hustle him because it is recognized that he knows more about a Motor Bn than all the other Company Commanders put together and has an extraordinary gift for leading men. The fact that he is in many ways slovenly, unbusinesslike, unscrupulous and unpunctual with returns does not matter at all. He gets more work out of his subalterns ɤ so gets them more efficient than anyone else in the battalion ɤ I'm very lucky to be with him.

We are indeed lucky here; I only learnt yesterday that apart from Bn HQ mess at Ampleforth (ɤ even there most of them sleep in tents), this mess of ours in Oswaldkirk is the only one under a built roof as distinct from a Nissen hut in the whole Brigade ɤ that

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includes four regiments of cavalry ɤ Bde HQ squadron. Those huts will be freezing in the winter, I imagine, and most unpleasant. I only wish I thought we wouldn't be here then.

This week we have spent our time on exercises with the Lothians ɤ Border Horse who are our immediate workmates in the cavalry. They are behind us in training but we learnt some good stuff ɤ it is useful to see what a tank looks like lumbering over the countryside. It's rather difficult to play because they can't knock down the stone walls on the moors or mess up the crops so that, in spite of the special "tank gates" that have been constructed for them their movements are very limited. They are a strange mixture of Debrett ɤ the stable with the first leading but very nice indeed

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ɤ probably the best cavalry in the division, certainly the smartest. I think, myself, tank tactics are slow and the monsters too inflexible for my liking I would much rather be in a Motor Battalion whose knowledge has to include three times as much, who rush about at top speed here there ɤ everywhere ɤ best of all don't stick in a groove. Tank tactics are limited but we can improvise for ever.

It has been raining every day ϒ quite November cold but today Sunday, we have hopes of it changing ϒ it has been lovely all day. Now however after tea it is clouding over and I'm afraid we're in for rain again which is disappointing. But really all I care about is that it is fine on Monday fortnight for seven days. It's a very strange August for all that.

Yesterday I played cricket in the knock-out Company competition on one of Ampleforth college grounds. It was

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a good but a cold victory ϒ primitively cheerful. Brian ϒ I were the only officers playing - all the others had gone to Thirsk races ϒ I was glad that there was a rival interest to save me from spending money although I picked two winners on paper!

Afterwards there was no food in the Mess ϒ I ϒ Brian ϒ Mrs H ϒ one Scott-Ellis of the Westminster Dragoons, the most appallingly wealthy son ϒ heir of Lord Howard de Walden, all scrounged some eggs ϒ I cooked an omelette on the Mess fire which we lit for the occasion. We opened some tongue ϒ some soup ϒ drank two bottles of port and talked until one this morning and even so were in bed before the race goers came back.

Tonight I'm going to the Black Swan at Helmsley to dine with Michael

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Hoban which will be good. I think I told you about last Sunday when he ϒ I ϒ Tony got together. I shall have to bike over and biking back will not be such fun.

I saw Michael this morning at a lecture in Kirkby Moorside which we had to attend. It was on the Eritrean Campaign, including a description of the capture of Keren ϒ Amba Alagi. It was badly put over but interesting ϒ especially revealing as showing how appallingly badly equipped our forces were - it was a remarkable triumph over difficulties.

I had a letter from Lawrence Stone a few days ago. He says he is at Lancing College ϒ I believe he is a Cadet Rating at a sort of OCTU there for the Navy. He also says he is coming to Guildford on August 30th which

⑦

will be a pity as I shall miss him but he may look into Underdown on his way.

I shall have to save up money for leave now. Actually I think I'm pretty well OK because I find I spend £4 a month on myself, including laundry, servant's wages, odd drinks ϒ dinners, stamps, writing things etc and my Mess Bill is about £6 and as I'm earning £16 a month (including 2/- a day field allowance) I'm saving about £6 a month which is not too bad. I often hear people arguing the pros ϒ cons of "eat drink ϒ be merry" but I have a rather acquisitive nature ϒ in spite of occasional gross extravagance I hoard easily! Perhaps it's easier for me because

⑧

I don't look at this as a slice of wasted life to be drowned in drink and other sensual delights - after all it's only a continuation of education for people of my age and is all the easier at that because ambition has no hopes here. I'll be a 2/lt all the war ϒ lucky to get a platoon in a Motor Bn because there is endless competition ϒ a superfluity of officers.

Well write ϒ tell me all the good ideas ϒ plans for my week - I don't know whether it wouldn't be worth hiring a car for it.

I must stop now to change to go to Hemsley. It's grand to get your letters so keep on - it's well worth it if you only knew

lots of love to all from

John

~ * ~

August 31st '41 D Coy

12 KRRC

Ampleforth

My dear Mummy & Daddy,

It is very thrilling to know there is only a week before I come home. I am wondering who will be there and what exciting plans have been laid on. Now, I have arranged for Michael Hoban to get his leave from the 7th., the day before I come - I dined with him last Sunday but have not seen him since and have only got his okay by phone because he has gone off on a week's jape in Birmingham, to see tanks being turned out in the works. The result is that I don't know whether he wants to come and stay at Underdown. I think he will, at least for part of the time so do you think you can possibly manage it? I don't want to make things inconvenient for you, considering the erratic attendance that gypsy Flo seems to put in. I'll be

②

hearing from Michael during the week and will wire you whatever is decided. I don't know whether there is much I can bring you bar socks in need of repaid but I have got onto an old short-sighted labourer who will give me all the honey you could want & am bringing you 4 lbs anyway. If you like it I could probably persuade the old boy, primitive though he is, to post it weekly to you; or does the crop run out shortly?

We have been duty Company all this week and Brian Howard has been on leave. We officers have had little to do ourselves because we don't do fatigues much. Bill Deeds, the 2nd i/c, who has just been made up to three pips (a journalist, you'll remember) has also been away on a fortnight's attachment with the 27th. Lancers who are Divisional Recce troops in armoured cars and are being taught to do their own "winkling" (a typical staff captain's phrase)

③

of minor opposition. So we were left with madman Christopher Burton in command of the Company and felt a little precarious!

One of the jobs we did have to do was to pilot the Brigade daily ration convoy to Amothaby[56] where they draw their grub (isn't that a horrid expressive word?) about twenty miles away. We went in a motor bike and it was foully wet the day I went and rushed up and down the half mile or so of 30 cwt lorries, keeping them in order and reasonably well spaced against their ration-bound wills. It was interesting to see the huge queue outside the RASC depôt and the busy automatic way they all went about it, checking invoices, chopping huge slabs and sides of meat, and throwing an endless stream of loaves into sacks.

I talked to the subaltern (RASC) in charge of the area and his wife gave me tea in their bungalow that was stuck right by the store. There was obviously a regular

④

daily party there and after cursory introductions and a little politeness I sipped my beastly 'nice cup of tea', hot but strong and sugared, in a corner and listened. These depôt specimens are a race apart - rather common, though you can't blame them for their upbringing, but preoccupied with figures and promotion and intrigue and all the petty fiddlings that make the Army and "scarlet" majors at the base so often infuriating.

Little besides happened during the week but we went out shooting one evening and shot a couple of rabbits which went down well later. Of course we have had no tennis at all and it has again

[56] presumably 'Amotherby'.

rained every day during the week except today which promises better things. But I'm not caring until next week! We played on a hard court this evening.

Yesterday I and Tim James (the biggest bluffer on earth but quite nice up to a point and I should think a very clever

⑤

business man indeed) went from the Company as Divisional Umpires on a big scheme. We got up at 4.30am and started after breakfast for Whitby over the moors on bikes. It was wonderful as we climbed over the high bare commons from Pickering onwards. The sun rising was yellow saffron and there was pink on the west sky and it was icy as we roared along at 60 which seems very fast indeed on a bike. We got to Whitby and went to the Rifle Bde HQ on the front. It was good to see the grey sea and a convoy about a mile out - they all hug the coast now I'm told - Whitby was just like I remembered, red brick houses on the steep hill and the castle on top, from a picture which stood above Cousin Edith's mantel piece at 12 Margaret's Road six years ago and, for all I know, is there still. I remembered it well as I cruised into the town and shot up the hill to the Hotels

⑥

on the Crescent.

We were with the Rifle Brigade, with one of the Motor Companies. With interminable delays we got over almost to Middlesborough, to Great Ayton, Guisborough, Stokesley, Thirsk, and finally down to the river Swale at Topcliffe where there was a river crossing ɤ all kinds of excitement with the Divisional G.O.C. (Hobart, who invented the Panzer Div. and was withdrawn from Egypt at the beginning of the war after stopping a rocket from Wavell) rushing about here there and everywhere, and all the red-tabbed specimens flapping too. We rushed about too and crossed the river in the RB assault boats (very frightened, I may say) and energetically inactive. When we finished it was too late for the Umpires Conf. ɤ we had to have it today.

At 8 we started on the 20 or so miles for home and got here in the dark after a pint in Coxwold nasty[?] beer 19 ½ hours in the saddle - we felt like Don Rs

[sideways at the top of first page:]

in the end. I'll be home on Monday - tell Guildford we are coming!

lots of love from John

~ * ~

D Coy
12th. Bn. THE KING'S ROYAL RIFLE CORPS,
(QUEEN'S WESTMINSTERS.)
Sept. 23rd 41 Ampleforth

My dear Mummy ɤ Daddy,

You will not, I hope, be anxious because I have not written this week yet. I have been in the lands, the wolds ɤ the plain this time, not the moors; there has been in fact a four day divisional exercise with the tanks ɤ all.

It is today a week ago that Bow, Jilly ɤ I went to Bow's pond for our excellent picnic ɤ then to the movie in Godge; it seems ages off but this is the first opportunity I've had of writing a letter. Leave was lovely ɤ I loved it - thank for giving me and Michael such a glorious time. I don't

②

know what it is that makes one really quite contented to sit and sleep and rest ɤ not go haring around on excursions, which are, however great fun when one has the energy to organize them. I don't think

it's the air so much as the contrast between the highly tense life we have here, with everything going all out for a few days ɤ then the rest that is inactive ɤ nothing much more than sleep again.

When I got back on Wednesday I found everything flapping in preparation for the terrific cocktail party that D Coy officers were throwing on the Friday. It was the very first party given in the Division (partly, of course, because we are the only six people in the whole lot who have any sort of a place to give one in) ɤ we

③

invited everyone, the General ɤ the Brigadier ɤ all the people whom we have met during the summer on our exercises or at tennis at one time or the other ɤ a limited number of officers from each regt (a number which was invariably exceeded) and a very limited number of our own whom we see every day anyway.

The great thing was that we did it all by ourselves quite independently of Battalion ɤ without any assistance from them. That means it's a shocker for cost ɤ we'll have to pay up to £5 each, I fear. But it is satisfying ɤ about 150 people came and it was the most colossal success so it was worth while. People stayed very late getting more ɤ more irresponsible; Michael came with his colonel and the old couple with whom I billeted at Lastingham back in hot July came ɤ everyone who could get wind of it came.

④

When we had packed the last off Henry Howard ɤ Mrs H ɤ I and four others went along to their billet the other end of the village and I cooked twenty one eggs together to quite the best scramble I have ever tasted!

A household like the Howards would make you weep. They have a baby of about seven months old and they live in one room with the most colossal chaos imaginable. There is one spoon and one fork and baby's clothes everywhere and about seven bull-terriers (although they are usually in the stables) which they almost prefer to the child. They are forgetful, messy ɤ unscrupulous with other people's property and desperately annoying to some people. Luckily I get on very well with them ɤ like them both exceedingly but although they have always been particular about paying me ɤ with my possessions I wouldn't

⑤

let them have my things for anything. But really there are very few people who are reliable in that way.

I really describe their piggery to show how people live and that however loathsome to some such a life may be yet one's own dislikes and prejudices about living ways are paralleled in others and one is apt, I feel, to think people impossible when their faults, as it were, get right on ones nerve, when actually by seeing their "faults" one can very often appreciate people better.

We went out on Saturday afternoon ɤ harboured about ten miles away in a wood on a hill. Harbouring needs organization, digging latrines, issuing rations, cooking them, posting a guard ɤ seeing to local protection with alarm posts for everyone generally.

⑥

The platoon commanders usually sleep at Coy HQ (which may be ¼ - ½ ml away) so as to get orders quickly. It gets dark earlier now with damp ground mist but I find I'm quite warm with my old private's greatcoat (which Jimmy Stow has at last sent on, though with no word or letter; anyway luck to get the coat back for 2/- !) on me and two blankets wrapped around me, lying on my ground sheet, my head on my pack.

We always have to wake up about 11 30 for orders and we sit in the vehicle with cramped limbs and sleepy eyes, wheezing and grunting ɤ trying to pick out routes on the map by flickering torches that never give the light one wants. Then we work out

⑦

code references and take down notes about times, orders or march, situation reports and intentions. Then to sleep until five when I go back to the platoon and wash ɤ shave in my mug ɤ comb my hair. Each section has its own petrol cooker and so is quite self-contained. I feed with my Pl. HQ. There are present my pl. sgt, my D.R, the mortar-man ɤ my servant, and my driver, all good men particularly the driver, Street, who has driven everything, can mend anything, does all the cooking and is eminently reliable.

We fought all Sunday - how strange it seemed to tear through villages in the Autumn sun with sights of the people going to church in their Sunday

⑧

best, and the vicar admiring the roses in the garden before Sunday lunch, ɤ peace everywhere except for us.

We had an interesting and good day though and never sat down for more than 10 minutes. You can imagine how infuriating it is to be in a position (and this happens in various ways twenty times a day always) and starting to cook when suddenly - pack up, move to attack this village - counter-attack this post - hold ɤ block that road and that road ɤ that - and away goes the cookers and tea and all and we roar off with riflemen climbing on like lightning and me trying to make a plan off the map at forty miles an hour down twisting lanes.

We send Daines[?], the D.R. off

⑨

to acquire food and we managed hot tea ɤ hot cakes and home made brown bread and breakfast sausage and a fowl and a dozen eggs - it comes expensive to me of course, but it's worth it ɤ makes life more fun ɤ pleasant.

We never got to harbour on Sunday or Monday nights until dark ɤ so cooked inside the White scout car by the light of the inspection lamp, all cosy and steaming and very good company.

We were north of Driffield on Sunday ɤ outside Northallerton last night and home this morning, weary but contented.

It gives you an idea of how tiring ɤ exhausting real fighting will be but we are unlikely to fight

⑩

ourselves consecutively for 3 days with the intensity that a divisional exercise entails - defensively perhaps but then we will never hold ground for long in defence; the support group will take over.

Anyway not a bad three days. Hope all is well at home and tidying up is not too much! You were going to send me handkerchiefs, ɤ I believe, pants but I can't really remember.

lots of love from

John

~ * ~

D Coy
12th. Bn. THE KING'S ROYAL RIFLE CORPS,
(QUEEN'S WESTMINSTERS.)
28.9.41 Ampleforth

My dear Mummy ɤ Daddy,

With that extraordinary gift for making a mess of my personal belongings I have started off this letter to you by spilling the ink all over the table and the

clinging smell will plague me for as long as I write through my blocked nose, so this letter will have to be an exercise in patience. It was one of those stupid broad inkpots with no depth to them, one broad pool with a little one adjoining it neither of which were built for dipping nibs. I can't find a good nib either these days and a fountain pen would not be a bad idea for my birthday but I don't

②

know how I could test it for I will not have anything that is not exactly right. It's the nib part that matters most too - the fount always breaks with me and anyway never produces enough ink for a fat ɤ brimming flow and the fal-lals mean nothing at all.

It's rather frightening coming up for the twenty first year of existence - "it only leaves me fifty more" but I'm too limited by contemporary events to wish for further room. Much more practically important is the sensible fact of birthday presents.

I want a knife and money and things that would be useful to me at my present job. For example a really good map case. I'm using the Army issue at present which gives a fair expanse, circa 2 ft square, which is absolutely essential but, for the

③

rest, is clumsy and useless. A good map case for us would be able to cover as large an expanse as possible without necessitating a change of map and at the same time not become unwieldy. It should have pockets capacious to put in the endless lists of code names, orders and standing instructions that otherwise get harried from pocket to pocket ɤ end up with pencils, Chinagraphs, tinned beans and egg shells at the bottom of the vehicle in inextricable entanglement. It should have a firm series of holders for chinagraphs ɤ pencils. There you have it - a good one is expensive ɤ a bad one is completely useless. The best thing is to go to a

④

reputable maker although everyone will try to oil the impecunious inexperienced subaltern ɤ I wish I was there to help. But it's no use sending me the cash because I can't get anywhere to buy one. I believe that the Maphouse, St James', is not too bad or somesuch name. Another thing would be a sleeping bag but that is expensive. Something tough ɤ light ɤ not of over-delicate wool or such inside unless washable. Of books anything strange. I'm reading that tortured man T.E. Lawrence's letters. It's interesting to see what it was like in the ranks of the RAF ɤ Tank Corps during the twenties. Not unlike depôts now, I gather. Indeed there were plenty of instances that brought back Queen's Camp to my mind,

⑤

now so sadly desecrated by A.T.S and ugliness. It seems an age of development since last year. Would be going to Horsham around now which was good practice.

The Army in TEL's time had all those who could not fit into life ɤ wanted everything arranged for them to save effort, the scum without interest. The RAF had their planes ɤ were keen. That's one great thing about us now. We have our vehicles which lifts the dullest clod out of himself ɤ "maintenance" is not the dull unending routine it might be but a job of loving care.

Everyone has gone on the Bumper Exercise above including Captains and there are only three of us left here, Christopher Burton, madman ɤ

⑥

charming, completely unselfconscious (a great gift) O.C. Coy by virtue of seniority: looks about 18 ɤ is nearly 25. Tim James, of Oxford accents the absolute quintessence: talks like this "Jolly good show, old boy, dammit, what" (verbatim I reported it over the card table), 28, tough, never has been known not to have known all the answers to everything - what a filthy nib - and a colossal bluffer - not to be trusted either but likeable for all that.

Christopher and I went to that sordid flat town of York yesterday by bus through the plain in Autumn. I loath York - the Minster seems out of place in it. There is nowhere

⑦

to eat or sit ϟ the queues for the cinema are impossible nor can you get there except by 'bus which is squashy ϟ stinking ϟ sweaty ϟ stuffy.

There were some young looking officers about who looked foolish. I don't think there should be officers under 23 in the Army unless they are great exceptions. The job of running a platoon well is too responsible for boys and they'll do well enough in the ranks.

Why did I get no letter from you last week? Thank you for the pants ϟ the handkerchiefs which are good. Mary sent me a good one.

I don't believe I told you that I moved to the 'Malt Shovel' where I have a room to myself.

⑧

There is a room facing south over the valley in this village pub ϟ I have it to myself ϟ get my meals ϟ baths up here in the mess. The Malt Shovel is ¼ ml down the road just beyond Company Office so it's quite convenient ϟ I like privacy

lots of love from

John

Are you going to Dairy Fm? - hope you enjoy it. Give my love to the Birleys.

~ * ~

D Coy
12th. Bn. THE KING'S ROYAL RIFLE CORPS,
(QUEEN'S WESTMINSTERS.)
Ampleforth
York

October 5th '41

My dear Mummy ϟ Daddy,

I should be glad if you would note and inwardly digest, with a view to future use, my address. Inconsistency causes inconvenience and in any case I do not do more than sleep at the Malt Shovel and prefer to do no more business with those creatures than is strictly necessary.

I suppose this will come to you in fat red Devon, you lucky people. I hope you have a good, happy holiday with suitable warm weather and that atmosphere of retired bonhomous colonels ϟ spinsters which is restful and detached except for the belly which is well minded. Do you get cream?

②

I would not choose Exmouth myself if I was paid with Torquay across the bay ϟ I disregard dissipations which do not move me. Anyway have a good holiday à deux, Darby ϟ Joan, or what you like!

This is my birthday and I'm feeling morbid. It's autumnal and dankly grey and getting dark. We went to church parade this morning, a hundred ϟ forty odd to pray for guidance, as Bill Deedes put it, for me, JPW, in my twenty-first year of existence. Anyway it was good to smell the smell of pews and cross ones legs with anticipation, at the sermon opening, of Sunday lunch. The matter of the sermon was, unfortunately, enough to antagonise any ignorant riflemen pretty thoroughly until the time of the next parade. But our

③

padre is ill in hospital ɤ it was the local parson who was responsible. No wonder they get these mannerisms living in an isolated village like this with no society but the dour farmers ɤ villagers ɤ the ever present inferiority complex that the Church of England seems to have got lately.

I have had no letters except from Mary who sends me a pen-knife, inevitably of the type Mummy would approve but not Bow, if you get me. How nice ɤ kind of her to take the trouble on her first arrival in Leicester when she must have been feeling homesick ɤ excitedly bewildered. She seems to have been a little dubious of her enjoyment of the time you had at Daisy Farm. I have always loved being there ɤ have probably behaved more nicely there than in most

④

places away from home. Mummy says little of it either or of any other event as usual although I know it's tough with three others to deal with too. But it was ominous to find her p.c written before going to see Jilly warning me not to expect a letter for some time ɤ me thinking of my birthday not three days off.

So I'm feeling neglected ɤ forlorn in the North Country. We have a football field made out in a meadow just below in the valley ɤ there was a game this afternoon. I have an inevitable respect for tradition (good or bad) ɤ I don't like the idea of playing on Sunday afternoon at all, preferring

⑤

a chair ɤ sleep ɤ digestion so was glad to compromise by going down to watch with the Gatty Smiths and not playing. I had a good excuse however because of a bruise: I went down to East Gilling the other day to dinner ɤ coming back late at night found myself locked out of the Shovel. I had precedent to sustain me, having climbed over a drain pipe ɤ glass-topped conservatory into the Hall after fire-fighting back in July so, although I didn't take off my shoes ɤ socks this time, I climbed stoutly up and found the blackout board impenetrable. Then with sympathetic disappointment the ivy broke ɤ I collapsed twelve feet onto the flag stones. Luckily I didn't do my Service

⑥

dress any harm. Now, Mummy, I should like to know how best to maintain and preserve a suit? Brushing, I imagine, is the most important and the next is to have two suits. What will get out stains? I don't wear mine much though except on parties like that night when I went down with Alan Young ɤ John Danwall[?]-Smith to dinner. A.Y. is a master at Bradfield ɤ they are both not untypical old Wykehamists ɤ great footballers but nice.

We have had a quiet week while HRH ɤ Bill have been away umpiring on exercise "Bumper" which will be out in the papers shortly. I expect you saw something of it on your travels over the south of England. We ourselves

⑦

have been preparing for next week's seven eight or nine day Northern Command exercise which will be a huge affair too. We shall be cold.

We marched a test March on Thursday of 9 miles in two hours five minutes in battle order up and down hill, which means going absolutely all out. Two collapsed ɤ one DR who lives on his motor bike had such short legs that he was compelled to give up. Another thing we did was to take the Company out in closed trucks and dump them with maps in a wood 12 miles over the moor as the crow flies from Oswaldkirk. Then we let them divide up

⑧

with their friends in groups of three or four and sent one half of the Coy off ¼ hour before the other, the one being escaped prisoners ɤ the other Gestapo. They had to discover their position, which was very hard, ɤ make their way across country to home. If the Gestapo captured any English the English lost status ɤ the G got ½ hour taken off their time. We gave a prize to the winning team of either party.

Three officers ϒ the MI[?MT] Sergeant patrolled the roads ϒ anyone we caught was held up for ¼ hour. We picked up some stragglers at dusk in a truck

⑨

but nearly all got back and I think it was a good day for everyone ϒ a good exercise too.

Now a few technical points. Will you please send me my football boots ϒ another pair of football socks when you get back from Exmouth? And would you ask Lankester for advice for my blocked nose which, though I now have no cold, has increased in unpleasantness lately? Can I gargle something or sniff up a disinfectant?

⑩

I don't know what the knitting wool situation is but I'd be awfully grateful for more socks size 10 or 11 to start with to allow for shrinkage or would it be better to buy them. The ones I got last year have holes in already - my batman is improving but I can't teach him darning - shall I send them to you?

Thank you Daddy for a grand letter from the train. I've been reading Roger Fry's biography by Virginia Woolf.

Love from John

I got a letter from George Coulson the other day which was good.

~ * ~



3 - The Hall, Oswaldkirk (postcard[57])

[undated postcard, orange 2d stamp, frank illegible]

Mrs AP.Waterfield
Royal Beacon Hotel
Exmouth
S. Devon

Tuesday

[57] See 26.10.41: "The colour was added afterwards and the artist had a forgetful brain because the roof is red in the photo instead of blue."

your letter ϑ APW's came today together with one fr. NGC ϑ Bow. Jill ϑ Mary wrote too ϑ M sent me a knife. Otherwise I've heard nothing fr. anyone. The map-case does surprise me by its dearness ϑ so we had better cancel that ϑ you cd either give me £1 to spend or else think of something else ϑ suggest it ϑ then I cd say yes or no - I think not books this time. You won't get a letter form me on Sunday, I'm afraid. We shall be on the Bader[?] - Lots of love from John. Enjoy your holiday

~ * ~

D Coy
October 18th. '41 12 KRRC
Ampleforth
My dear Mummy York
ϑ Daddy,

I hope you will again notice my address; anything else means delay, inconvenience to the post retail, and difficulty for me in discovering whether I even had any letters or not. And talking of that I am feeling very cut off. I had no presents at all for my birthday from the family except for Mary who sent me a knife and it's too late now to ask for anything. I was given a cheese by a frivolous female at Stonegrave Court, the next village down, who

②

is Bill Deedes girl-friend - the cheese was delicious and after proper ripening is being enjoyed now. And finally Mrs Gatty-Smith surpassed all her usual kindness and, hearing of my birthday, gave me a cake, chocolate with twenty candles! This was brought in as a complete surprise to a particularly villanous Mess tea ϑ got an uproarous reception.

It all seems a long time ago now because of Northern Command Exercise 'Percy', so named for obvious topographical reasons.

It was bitter weather, wet ϑ cold and a very hard frost one night but not bad fun. We hurtled about ϑ came back from Northumberland on Friday night, tired but cheerful.

③

The Germans would no doubt have sent us out on another 7 day exercise but we are given a Brigade Holiday.

I believe the Battalion is thought very highly of but it will, now, as it seems, be re-shuffled no end before fighting ϑ the team destroyed.

Tim James is going to India ϑ on Friday is having 7 days embarkation leave; going probably to train the Indian Army to be mechanized. I may go to the Middle East at any time ϑ changes are whispered about for the Colonel ϑ authorities.

I hope you got my p.c: I was shivering in the wind getting my Company's petrol when I wrote it. I managed, on those first couple of days to negotiate with three collieries

④

for drying rooms ϑ baths for 300 riflemen - glorious hot showers which were well appreciated.

Will you let me know whether you have written any letters lately because I've had nothing at all for just on a fortnight ϑ am puzzled by it!

I'm finishing this on Monday night, our holiday. Mrs Gatty Smith lent us, Tim ϑ me ϑ Michael Hoban, her car ϑ came with us to Scarborough ϑ we had a good day.

I can't write ϑ am still feeling the disjoined nature of the times so you'll have to put up with it. Haven't recovered from Percy ϑ got a very sore bump on the knee playing squash with Tony[?] on Sat.

Write. Love from John

~ * ~

D Coy
12th. Bn. THE KING'S ROYAL RIFLE CORPS,
(QUEEN'S WESTMINSTERS.)
26.10.41 Ampleforth
York

My dear Mummy & Daddy,

A nice long letter from you arrived yesterday together with the parcel. Thank you for them. You enclose the pamphlets from your brothers which are entertaining to read, if disquietening looked at with anything but a grin, and I would be glad, if, as you suggest, you forward them to me with your letters. It is good from purely news value.

I've had no letter from Mary which makes me vaguely uneasy. I wrote to her the other day to cheer her up. I'm sending a p.c of Oswaldkirk Hall to Jill for her to see where we live. I forget if I have sent you one but they are rather

②

scarce. The colour was added afterwards and the artist had a forgetful brain because the roof is red in the photo instead of blue. All the same it gives a good idea of what the place looked like in July.

Now the autumn is really here and I long for leisure and opportunity to paint. The dreariest part of the valley is radiant through the clouds. But it has been surprisingly late for harvest: in Northumberland there were numerous fields where the harvest has not yet been got in. I must try to go for a walk more often on Sundays to smell the country from a different angle. The difficulty lies in going far enough because we are not in walking distance of the moor except on an all-day tramp and all we can do is plod up Oswaldkirk bank and stroll through the fields and farms which lie on the ridges of cultivated land between

③

us and the moor. But the views are lovely & I shall try this afternoon. Most Sunday afternoons I find myself going to sleep all too easily and laze away somnolent if not sound until dinner with a half-hearted awakening for tea.

I shall miss the rest of the fall in the country because tomorrow I am going on a violent course of thuggery, euphemistically "Special Combat" at York. It will last a fortnight & I shall return 'quantum mutatus ab illo'. Luckily Michael Hoban is going on the same one which will make life tolerable. My address for next week will be St John's College, York - Next Sunday I'll tell you all about it & whether to write here or there for the following week.

Tim James has gone off; he

④

left on Friday with a gem at the breakfast table "Whiz the jolly old jam stuff what!" which I wrote down verbatim and inscribed in my book as a memorial. We had a colossal party the night before with champagne and quite good fun. I was the only one capable of driving the guests home! Noone knows where they are going or what for but it is presumed that they are either going to form the nucleus of an Armoured Div in India or train Indian units to become mechanized. He had a kind heart in spite of his awful affected manner of what he imagined a gent behaved like & he taught me a great deal of poker. I'm rather sorry he has gone.

We did little last week. The Winter Training Season has begun - (sounds awful that like grouse & partridges but is fact) and there was an interlude to clear up losses and get things straight after the

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gay rampaging over the Moors during the summer. We send about 20 men every day farming still, mostly, I gather, to pick potatoes. The farmers seem to pay them at their own discretion, some 5/- a day. The difficulty all through was, as an old said on the radio, that the farmers never got the same men twice.

There is no question of the Division going abroad before the spring, or even then for that matter. The tanks, being more recently formed, are not ready & must have another individual training season first. Nor do I think it remotely likely for us to be taken out of the Div. But officers may be sent away independently as they want platoon & coy cmdrs in the M.E, apparently, who have had some

⑥

experience of commanding a unit and the practice of sending them straight from Chiseldon is being discontinued at the expense of breaking up the battalions.

After the wrench I should be glad. But I have completely revised my idea about the men. In spite of mutterings that they want "to get the job over", slight discomfort in Nissen huts here, compensated by regular 11 weeks leave, and skin safety certain, has got right into their marrows. It would be an awful shock if they were told to go off tomorrow. Probably they would not show it but the security atmosphere of this winter is going to be hard to combat.

There are a lot of dances and big affairs floating around which I'm too young to go to. There was a huge dance last night and I could have gone to dinner & then on but transport is impossible and I was not so keen so I stayed here as duty officer. I

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missed a good dinner. The big houses round here are wonderful and the 'County' still exists in an antiquated creaking way. It will be so sad when that is all gone in spite of the follies and stupidities that live in the big houses.

You are right to like Mrs Gatty Smith. She is one of the kindest and nicest people I have ever met and the old boy is the same. It is a pity they only have one boy (15) and they comparatively aged and he failing Charterhouse to go to Stowe.

Tony Wreford-Brown is a foxy man and I don't trust him.

Bow wrote me a happy letter for my birthday and seems to be reading a lot & in excellent order altogether. Has he got to do Latin again for the Cert?

Lawrence Stone has got a commission

⑧

in the Navy at last and will soon be going to sea again. I had a letter from Richard North on 'Percy' which makes me realize how lucky I am. He is in Coastal Defence and speaks bitterly of an infantry subaltern's lot, in which I can well sympathize with him. Add the impossibility of the people and life is unbearable.

Tony is 29 today which is an amazer.

I went to bed early last night and read Collingsby for a little which I find an excellent book but in spite of that only arrived up here for 9.30 this morning. The Malt Shovel I have brought round from active hostility to bringing me a cup of tea & a biscuit every morning and rum & milk (all gratis) when they hear me sneeze at night!

All the same it is more convenient up

⑨

here with the bathroom by. At the Malt S there is a bathroom next door but no hot water. I shave in canned hot in the basin. There is room here now.

It is almost lunch time and I must stop. I never gathered if you really enjoyed your holiday but it was good to hear you found my initials in Eastdon Woods by Orchard Lane. Isn't Orchard Lane a tragedy though?

It is cold in here.

lots of love from John

O by the way my leave is from December 15 - 22 but I've asked for it to be after Christmas instead.

~ * ~

November 2, 41 St John's College
York

My dear Mummy ϒ Daddy,

This is a fight against odds so you will be prepared for the worst. I'm trying to write on borrowed paper with a borrowed pen. I'm sitting at a reddish table in my own light and the only good thing about this poky little room furnished like shop-front suites at £44, ugly and dentist's waiting room type, is the hot fire. All this I pay for at 2/9 a day though God knows why. Actually I'm in extraordinarily good order considering the hell they have put us through in the past week.

This place we live in, about twenty subalterns, is like an emasculated Keble ϒ that's saying a lot. I'm probably most unkind but it is a dreary quad with pseudo-gothic ornaments, honeycombed passages where endless numbers of youths with North country clap trap study to be teachers. It's all beyond me but shows what a foul snob one gets about these things. All the same provincial learning is loathsome in my view.

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We live each in his little burrow down a grey passage. Michael has the next room to me ϒ there are 18 others. I'd forgotten what young specimens were like having lived for so long with would-be experienced men of the world a good deal older than me. Very simple ϒ all quite unable to amuse themselves except with quantities of beer ϒ a hideous girl from the bar – great promiscuity of 'clickings'[?] in the North country – whom they take to some hop or other. Perhaps it's a pity I don't go footing it too but I certainly would not die if I were told that all the women in the world would disappear tomorrow nor can I put beer down endlessly because of the constitution of my stomach and prefer port ϒ a good dinner though rum is food if it wasn't so expensive.

We get up at 7.0 for 7.30 breakfast which is a foul meal as are they all – in a long-hatched dining room like Dragons where the would-be teachers sit too ϒ dreary looking dons mope uneasily at a high table.

③

Then we march in full equipment up to a gymnasium at Fulford barracks, the other end of York, 2½ mls away. There we start off for a 6 miles march to be done in an hour. Then P.T., boxing, unarmed combat, Tommy gun, pistol, rifle from the hip, ϒ swimming in equipment follow through the day with 1 ½ hrs interval for lunch when we are permitted to bus back but have to march up there again.

We feel fit. I can endure probably more than most real thugs in the way of marching ϒ climbing obstacles but am useless at horse-work ϒ such in a gym but very luckily we don't do anything of that. We do throw logs about which is hard work. The unarmed combat is useful in many ways but will only be so, as I see it, in as much as it enables a tough to beat up a lesser tough with the a maximum of effect ϒ a minimum of pains. The converse is inapplicable.

I can shoot better with a T.S.M8[?] pistol than most because I've done a lot of firing which others have never had the chance to do.

④

We finish at 5.0 ϒ have a filthy high tea at 6.30 to enable people to get out. I miss my coffee ϒ port. There is nowhere to sit ϒ I have to go out so Michael ϒ I go to the cinema ϒ then have a drink ϒ I come home ϒ he goes dancing if in the mood. I still dislike York but there are some interesting cobbled winding streets with funny names under the Minster – Davygate, Jubbergate, Shambles ϒ such. A lot of old junk shops ϒ I wish I knew more about furniture ϒ glass ϒ china to appreciate the form. There is only one 2nd hand bookseller ϒ he is useless. There is none of the brightness of the West ϒ South and the place stinks.

A great many RAF about of all nationalities – a lot of cheap shop-girls angling ϒ nowhere to dine really well.

We have seen 49th. Parallel ϒ a lot of bad films. I thought little of 49th. || as a film but there were some fine cracks. We dined at the Old George last night not badly ϒ there was a good steak.

A good many went for the weekend ϒ I thought of going to see Mary but decided

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that expense was too much ϒ I was too tired. So we slept until 10.30 ϒ then found we could get no breakfast in the town which was infuriating.

I heard from Jimmy Stow who has at last gone from Chiseldon to the 1st Bn (Queen Victoria's Rifles) at Towcester. He has arrived in time for the winter ϒ missed all the schemes after celebrating his 21st in tails at Horris Hill. I wish I'd been there – but is thankful so leave (his.[58]

I had a good letter from you last week – thankyou. Michael sends his love to you.

We go back around Saturday next so if you will write to get here Friday (which usually happens) address it again to St John's. If there is any doubt to Ampleforth.

Mary writes quite happily but I wonder about her food.

Very much love from John

~ * ~

D Coy
12th. Bn. THE KING'S ROYAL RIFLE CORPS,
(QUEEN'S WESTMINSTERS.)

November 9. '41 Ampleforth
My dear Mummy ϒ Daddy, York

I am back in Oswaldkirk ϒ writing in the Mess this frosty morning, real November ϒ rather pleasant. It is grand to come back as always. I think the pleasures of νοστος are, together with those of all anticipation, the best in the world. The fact that I am coming south, moving on, next week only increases my good humour.

I learnt that this morning when I rolled down to Coy Office ϒ happened to read it in Battalion orders, pink-printed, ϒ detached, hanging behind the door. Of course noone ever told me – they wouldn't in this Company, which is characteristic ϒ charming but often tiresome. Not that I would dream of wishing to be in any

②

other because the real alpha quality always transcends petty, infuriating also, but finally unimportant inconvenience.

[58] as written. Perhaps interrupted? The 'so' might be 'to' as well.

I'm coming to Salisbury-foul-plain again though with different eyes – to Netheravon Small Arms school for almost a month to learn about the 3″ mortar which should be interesting ϒ v. well taught. We shall probably get them in our establishment, though noone yet knows how in what vehicles, ϒ it will be good to know the form.

There are a plenty heap of rumours around about re-organization, establishment and so on and everything is in a ferment. It's really a matter of jig-sawing ϒ jack-in-the-box for we are not allowed to have any more vehicles ϒ our needs are various, though not yet crystallized, because, no motor battalion has yet been in action

③

in it's proper place with an Armoured Div except possibly in Libya which is anyway very specialized because of the country.

I've missed some good things though while in York. Winston Ch. made a rush at the Division a few days ago ϒ the brigade had a Tattoo-like field day on the moorside. I gather everything went with a swing ϒ he gave 2 whole holidays for it!!! The other thing is that the Colonel has been promoted full Col ϒ put 2nd $^{i}/_{c}$ the Division Support Gp which includes RHA, A/A, A/tk, RASC, RE, Lorried Infantry, etc etc ϒ is the third of the trio of 2 Armd Bdes ϒ Support Gp. He will probably become Brig. one day but meanwhile the intrigue, jealousy, flap, speculation, book-making, heartaches and doubts about his successor are

④

no less typical of humanity than you might expect.

I was glad to leave York - life in a town is damned expensive and you don't seem to have got much for it. They fed us at ridiculous times ϒ abominably so one had to supplement it ϒ snob-like ϒ as an amateur of quality I did not feed in the cheap haunts of the shop girl and common run of subaltern. I don't think I'm wrong - certainly none of our officers would go to those places ϒ I don't like meeting riflemen in eating joints. It wd seem sometimes to be a good idea to be a rifleman again but you can't mix the two ϒ do yr job properly, whichever it is.

The others on the course, - I told you about the oddness of finding myself with young men again – all got girls

⑤

that worked in Boots or served tea in Terrys or… I dunno but I can't make it that way. Even poor Michael got caught hard in the end and is much pre-occupied now though it will, no doubt, pass.

I'm glad we completed the course without falling out or going sick as a good many did, with 'flu, bust bones ϒ pulled muscles. The thing is to know what you can do ϒ organised physical endurance training (not 'P.T') would never have come my way except like that, for games are a different thing altogether.

The Minster grew on me especially viewed down a street in the morning with the sun on its greyness or at night silhouetted against the moon. The proportion is so imposing.

It's funny the difference it makes when the society is County and coarse

⑥

business men, farmers ϒ labourers ϒ shop keeper ϒ shop worker. The point is the absence of South of England upper bourgeoisie like us! The North is much kinder but coarser - which would you have?

I've found two letters from Angus waiting here - he is in Alabama!! David Hardie is driving Wellingtons still over the Alps and writes with dangerously nervous tension - it is awful to think of it. Flying is the thing, I know, for all the future. I wish I could have seen. It's heart breaking to think of them all lately under the eye of the Old Pink 'un in the VIth form room ϒ now each letter may be the last. But it's no use flapping because they have to take it ϒ I hope we shall too one day, ϒ dish it out too!

Now I'm due to go to Nether-

⑦

avon on Monday ɤ I'm going to ask for 48 hours leave over the weekend so I may see you. Don't write to get here later than Friday and don't promise yourself anything but I'll do my best. So have a bed.

I'm appallingly fit but look v. dissipated and yellow which I can't understand unless it's port. Everyone here has a cold ɤ 'flu is rife ɤ all at York were the same but drying facilities were negligible there.

I do hope to be home -

always lots of love from

John .

~ * ~

D Coy
24. xi. 41 12 KRRC
Ampleforth
York

My dear Mummy ɤ
Daddy,

I'm so sorry this comes to you late, it's Monday evening ɤ almost the first opportunity I've had to let you know I'm OK since Friday. Actually I'm too tired tonight to give you any more than this page ɤ though I know you'll be disappointed, yet you'll be happier to hear something now than nothing at all.

We went out from early on Saturday and spent all night on the wolds by Fimber, very bleak. We crossed the river Derwent at 2.0 am ɤ had no sleep until midnight last night. Quite a good exercise.

We have got a new Colonel but

②

I wouldn't dare make any opinion yet.

I'm going down to the Malt Shovel now with Tony who lives further down.

David Hardie was missing on the raid when we lost 37 ɤ Tony ɤ I wrote to him the night before, unknowing. It's rather awful.

Goodnight ɤ lots of love

from John

~ * ~

D Coy
30. xi. 41 12th. KRRC
Ampleforth
York .

My dear Mummy ɤ Daddy,

The last day of November brings little encouragement for us. AP wrote a good letter which was pleasant to read but sounded so sanguine about Libya that I wondered if he was in on some dope. It seems to me v. ominous. Even if we lose in the final strategy I don't suppose it matters nearly so much as war on the Continent but morally it will be an appalling blow. Our news services seem inconsistent ϒ strange but it was disturbing to find the Times talking up of our tanks, smaller ϒ less heavily armed than those of the enemy. It depends on reserves.

Mummy writes, according to the postmark, from Winchester, which puzzled me not a little. I've had no other letters this

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week nor any news of David Hardie. I shd imagine there was v little hope for him but there always is hope until the end, which is a mixed curse ϒ blessing as that morbid fellow Dostoievsky described in The Idiot.

Eric wd be with the 8th Army ϒ so is Tony Wreford-B's elder brother. Have you heard any news from EOS?

I don't know whether I shall be able to come to Underdown on my way to Netheravon. It appears the course does not start until Tuesday which is a nuisance as I can't get off for the weekend. Henry Howard is on leave this week ϒ it is not fair on Bill to ask to go off early, although I know him very well. But I might manage Monday night late and go on to Netheravon after lunch on Tuesday. Anyway I expect

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I'll get a full weekend the following week. The fares, of course, are what bother one. I've spent a lot this month, mostly because of coming home on 48 hrs ϒ I really cannot see how officers do exist at all.

I'm not at all heart-broken to see that no more meals will be served on trains. In spite of my notorious outburst with you years ago I loath train meals ϒ have never had them on the LNER after one single dinner experiment.

The idea that I retired to my bed in the Malt Shovel with the 'flu is a vile gossip spread by Mary. I had a mild touch of it on "Fish" which was combined with a streaming cold.

D Coy officers spent from 6 - 12pm last Saturday night in a flea-infested

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hen-coop somewhere on the Yorkshire wolds. Cold, chalky ϒ clammy. Owing to a recent bomb episode none of the thousand odd chickens in the neighbourhood were laying so the hitherto inevitable system of eggs for supper or breakfast which we have maintained on every long exercise in my platoon throughout the summer, broke down here.

I consumed about a half pint of rum during the evening ϒ under its mellowing influence revived for intermittent periods sufficiently to crack back in turn during the Marx Brothers-like conversation that went on. Quite crazy were we all, Howard, Bill Deedes, Tim James, Christopher Burton ϒ I. Next door through a compartment snored a Polish officer who was attached

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for the proceedings ϒ a new attached 60th. man fr. Chiseldon.

We then went twenty five miles across lanes without lights. Crossed a river in boats above Stamford Bridge (With the shades of Tostig ϒ Harald Hardraada scowling through the gloom!) forded a stream in slush ϒ quagmire to the knees ϒ burst into Stamf. Br itself at three of the morning hell for leather ϒ ready to fell to the ground any Home Guard intrepid enough to bar our approach. However we were involved in heated controversy, at least I was, with a v. drunken H.G. Colonel Umpire who attempted to capture single handed my platoon and Christopher's. This we would not stand for and after a heated exchange of names brushed him aside and fought

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with blank ɤ our fists happily enough for an odd half-hour when other umpires decided the bridge was ours. Followed a ten hour wait ɤ then home, wet, rum-less or rum-sodden ɤ frozen.

My cold has now disappeared ɤ I don't seem to have much sniff left. On Monday I ɤ our other regular pl. cmdrs umpired on m/cycles (me frightened with no lights or horn at all) one Coy each of the Green Howards who are lorried infantry in the Support Group. I found myself in unfortunate contact with the General who was always where I was not ɤ should have been or according to him shd have been. My column was 5 mls long however ɤ it was a matter of choice ɤ luck where I posted myself. That all went

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on late into the following morning about 3 or 4 am and when we arrived for the Conference of Umpires with reams of notes which we fondly imagined were rich in constructive criticism we were confronted by a doddering old Major of astonishing stupidity. After a wasted morning of dictation to this amazing misfit, with mixed pity ɤ fury in our minds ɤ our criticism in the waste paper basket we took ourselves to the Golden Fleece at Thirsk and had a most excellent luncheon which consoled us very fairly. That was Tony Tim ɤ I.

Individual training proceeds apace. Our new CO. is a Weapon Training King and we are all agog. Present verdict is that the old one was a much greater

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man than I realized and very human, kind and full of real integrity, so rare these days with each man hard on the individual make. He is now a full Colonel at Division.

Tony, Tim ɤ I have played a great deal of squash this week. We go to Hovingham Hall, a big house with a v. nice court attached, a few miles away. It is lucky to get the invitation ɤ we profit by it well.

I must stop now for tea.

I hope I'll see you soon.

lots of love from

John

~ * ~

D Coy
4. XII. 41 12th. KRRC
Ampleforth
York .

My dear Mummy ɤ
Daddy,

Here is a letter out of regular timing but it will be a short one, ɤ I am very sorry to say, contains baddish news, though nothing of great or fundamental importance. As usual the Army has changed its mind at the last minute ɤ in orders tonight I read that my Netheravon course has been cancelled. So there you are - postponement cost me £4 ɤ now cancellation costs me Christmas.

Now to something more cheering for you. The turkey is ordered ɤ laid on. As soon as I know the cost I will pay it ɤ let you know so that you can pay me back straight into my account. Moreover from my private sources this afternoon, whilst doing a road-test on a Motor bicycle, I negotiated for some honey

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for a Christmas present for you. I thought I would do it in a biggish way as it seemed safer ϒ better business ϒ have ordered 12 jars to be sent by rail for you. Now you will get this at Guildford main station in about 10 days time. I don't know how you'll know it has come but it will be cash on delivery for carriage so they will probably let you know at the station.

The reason for this last un-present-like gesture is that if they have bust or pinched any you must claim it straightaway ϒ there is more chance of getting it that way. In any case inspect the invoice first for instructions about claiming if need be but I hope it won't be needful.

Perhaps you wd like to pay part of it as it was fairly expensive - I suggest half which will come to £1. I will make the other half a present gladly.

It is only a pity that I shall not

③

be with you to share the turkey. It's lucky, however, in some ways that I am in Yorkshire from the gastronomic point of view of giving ϒ getting. I'll see about some eggs shortly.

I shall still be coming on my seven days on Jan 5th. I hope you will lay on lots of excitement but no doubt it will end in me going to sleep all day ϒ feeling too lazy to do anything!

Will you please send me the following?

(i) My squash racquet press !

I have a racket ϒ no press.

(ii) A fair supply of cash name tapes for Walker to sew onto a few things that have not got my name on them. I have bought 4 pairs of Army socks at 1/10 a pair from Charlie Quartermaster - these are the best marching socks going ϒ ⅓ as much as they would be down civvy street.

About Christmas for myself I should like practical things best.

④

A map case, I think, is well out of the running now but a glance at the Army ϒ Navy catalogue would, I am sure, indicate some sort of useful, helpful or amusing oddment that one would not be likely to buy in ordinary circumstances. My shaving brush is doing excellently. Perhaps a pocket tool-set, an effective ϒ ∴ expensive torch, a khaki scarf (this is needful), a really good tough ϒ easily packed holder for washing materials would do? If I could get a really warm woolly waistcoat-jerkin sort of thing I should be very glad - it wd make a huge difference but is probably too expensive. Mary's sweater is a centre for admiration in spite of pretended horror ϒ respectable head-shaking at first - now there is jealousy.

There is one other thing I shd like you to get me an opinion on. I don't feel at all well really. I have no cold

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or sniff, nor am I unfit. I play squash regularly ϒ go to the lavatory as regularly. I last better at squash than anyone ϒ am quicker off the mark.

But I have an apparently endless succession of small "boils" on my face and neck which are extremely painful at all times, particularly when shaving, not to mention hideous. Now I have had two styes in my left eye which are most unpleasant in succession to the one I got at York and I have very few eyelashes left!

Do you think it is anything to do with my blood? If so ϒ it is a bug perhaps there is something I could eat to kill it! Alcohol of every type has no effect!

I am so sorry to plague

⑥

you with a recital of my physical deformities so please don't worry to ask Lankester if you have no opportunity or inclination.

I believe there is now very little chance of David Hardie being alive. Sad.

I am reading 'Houseman', the new ɤ fairly authoritative ɤ certainly well-informed biography by his friend ɤ publisher Grant Richards. An interesting man - scholar ɤ gourmet ɤ still a poet. I don't yet believe it has been published but Michael[?] sent it me a few days ago, so I appear favoured.

See you not so soon after all but fairly soon.

Lots of love from John

I must hasten to congratulate APW on his emulating

[sideways at top of first page:]

me at last: it is a silly age but will turn out O.K as always. He puts it nicely.

Give my love to Elinor Birley ɤ RB if they come to lunch.

I am back in "The Hall" from tonight which is very comforting.

~ * ~

D Coy
12th. Bn. THE KING'S ROYAL RIFLE CORPS,
(~~QUEEN'S WESTMINSTERS~~.)

14.XII.41 Ampleforth

My dear Mummy ɤ Daddy,

Three good letters from you this week. You may say that it makes a difference when my letters come but certainly it makes no less difference to me when I come in from the morning's work about a quarter to one and look on the grand piano for anything in your handwriting.

Our letters are put there always as we get one post a day when they are sent down from battalion by the post corporal, which is a full-time job. Letters addressed to Oswaldkirk Hall always come at breakfast with the Gatty-Smiths who get up later than we do. I like to examine the post-

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mark and writing to see if I recognise it.

How AP manages to write as he does in the train, I don't know. It is one of the minor wonders of the world which will never be explained. I suppose you go from the Main station these days - it seems such a long time since I saw you going off to work or getting into the train.

By the way that idea of rubbing in the soap before lathering works quite well with me but I don't quite know if your old barber meant the rubbing to be done after putting it on and before actual lathering or after lathering and before the razing.

My Christmas present situation is in bad. I will try ɤ go to York with the riflemen on their shopping expedition next Friday and do what I can.

I have, rather unwillingly, got

③

two dozen Christmas cards. But I think it is a friendly duty to send them though they cost about 5½ each to send. Can you think of anyone I might forget who would be pleased or grateful? What is the address of my neglectful god-father Cox? I thought it might surprise him if I sent him a card!

Your honey should arrive fairly soon now, likewise the turkey fowl. Let me know if they all come O.K. For the honey I paid £2-0-0 and for the fowl £2-7-0 including postage.

This is Sunday morning and all is rather quiet and dull. It's an uneasy and complacent contract with the hell that is flaming over most of the rest of the world. There is nothing much to

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say about Japan ϒ America. What we are given of the facts speak clearly for themselves. Pearl Harbour must have been a frightful crack. I wonder when we shall know the truth about it.

I dined with Michael Hoban at the Black Swan in Helmsby last night. It's about four and a half miles over the hills with equal steep ups ϒ downs going and coming back. I took Bill's girl-friend's bike which seemed smaller than Mary's and not the sort one lets go of with one hand. There were no lights so I tied a couple of torches on fore and aft with no little success. The beacon was going on the fields above Oswaldkirk. The RAF bring it every so often and it twirls uneasily round and round all night for about three

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nights on end. It is visible for many miles and must guide our bombers but it is a funny feeling to ride along the road one moment in pitch blackness ϒ the next in almost daylight. It made me think of David Hardie.

We had a better dinner than usual with roast goose and stuffing - a little tough but quite good. The sad thing is that they have run out of sherry, port ϒ all wine, and liqueur brandy is expensive.

By a very roundabout route but quite possibly from a genuine origin I heard that Winston is very pleased with this Division. Mike's $2^{nd\ i}/_{c}$ squadron John Scott-Ellis, (who is charming) is the son of Lord Howard de Walden ϒ Mary

⑥

Churchill goes to their ancestral castle at Chirk for baths ϒ such from her AT camp; she told them that, when the film was shown of Winston's visit here, he got very excited and said what a fine Div. this was!

Christopher Burton is coming south on leave tomorrow and will be with his uncle at Shackleford for quite a few days. I have told him to come and see you which he may do. He is quite mad but very simple and quite nice. You wouldn't think he had been up to Oxford for three years and was 24. Be prepared for him and be nice to him. He won't need much to please him.

It is only three weeks now to my leave. It's good to look forward to it. Meanwhile I'm very comfortable here in

⑦

the Hall and my bed is wonderful. We shall have a good time at Christmas, I make no doubt. We have a battalion ball or somesuch at Newburgh Priory on Boxing day. and besides our own dinner here we are dining on Christmas night with the Gattys.

I have been doing a lot of weapon training and firing on Strensall ranges. The new C.O is weapon training mad and not in the least interested in vehicles. He is not very impressive as a man but this intensive individual training is a necessary thing for us.

We had an exercise on Friday from 5am to 9pm which meant getting up at 4.0 in the morning. It was a comparatively dull exercise and we did

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not go far from Helmsley.

My new servant Walker whom I've had since 'Percy' has gone on his ten days leave ɤ the result is that all my things are in a very poor way.

I must stop now to go down to see the riflemen's lunch in the dining hall which was once the Village Hall.

Thank you for the Cash's tapes. They are just what I want. My squash racquet press, I thought, was on my very old and useless racquet which is kept in my room but don't worry about it. I've got one for now ɤ I'll look for it when I come home.

I enclose a form for buying

⑨

clothes but I can't find out if it is in the correct phrases. Let me know if it's no good.

lots of love from

John

~ * ~

14.XII.41

D Coy
12th. Bn. THE KING'S ROYAL RIFLE CORPS,
(QUEEN'S WESTMINSTERS.)

To Austin Reed Ltd

Regent Street

I hereby certify that the
following

is
are required by me for my
essential personal needs and
requirements, to be ordered for me
by my father, AP.Waterfield Esq
C.B.

JP.Waterfield 2/lt.
D Coy
12 KRRC.

~ * ~

D Coy
12th. Bn. THE KING'S ROYAL RIFLE CORPS,
(~~QUEEN'S WESTMINSTERS~~.)

21.XII.41 Ampleforth

My dear Mummy & Daddy,

Here is to wish you a very happy Christmas. I don't know when this will reach you at all because the Post is bound to be inconsistent.

I shall not write a very long letter today because, thank goodness, it is only a fortnight before I come home - hurrah!

Meanwhile about presents. I have been quite unable to get anywhere near any shops, York or Scarborough so I'm going to be found very remiss in family duties. However I have sent Mary one guinea to be apportioned among the three bratlings

②

as they themselves like best, seven shillings each or all on one present or a beano. For you two I've got nothing at all except the food - it is a relief to hear the turkey fowl has arrived safely but you say nothing yet about the honey. If either of you have something nice bought for t'other I will willingly share in it or perhaps, I thought, you might like a photograph of me in Army clothes - it seems the fashion and if value of presents may be estimated by the enduring of agony and fright that will be worth a million! Vid. also note attached for secret consumption.

I've just been down the fields

③

at the bottom of the valley with Bill to watch a needle football game between NCO.s and riflemen. It's a grand frost and sunshine morning. One magnificent thing about a London battalion is the fertility of crack & repartee from the touchline and from the pitch.

I have sent a Christmas card to Philip Waterfield and to two dozen others including Lynams, Fernies, HAS (!) Cousin Reg, Manor House and many others who have been kindly to me at one time or another. Oh I remember one other, Mrs Ramsden!

All this week I've been doing Weapon Training as hard as I can go

④

The new C.O is mad about weapons and the pendulum has swung away from vehicles for a bit (because he knows nothing about them yet) and we are squeezing triggers, throwing grenades, firing bombs and draping smoke screens all over Farndale Moor. At the same time we are blitzing up our vehicles because the Colonel will catch us on the rebound else. One day he'll appear, having spent days in secret perusal of all the Army D & M pamphlets and forms, to cross-examine us on the state of our mechanical transport with horrible acumen, probing and prying as all new Commanding Officers are apt to do.

⑤

The Army is a disheartening life in some ways. I've always longed to go on a D & M course. I've had my leave postponed because of the Netheravon course which they cancelled and will be 6 weeks over due when I come. And yesterday there was a vacancy at the Divisional D & M school for a 4 weeks course, the same one that Wreford-Brown is now on, and Henry Howard said he wanted me to go. But of course it started on Jan 1st. I've rung up the adjutant to see if I cd come home earlier but we already have our quota away for then and I can't so I shall not be able to go.

The only consolation is that

⑥

I hope there will be another vacancy at the end of January. All the same I loath missing opportunities, especially nowadays when you never know if there will be another chance. And we might do anything in the Springtime, finish our collective training abroad or any other surprise.

I hope O.S comes to you for Xmas day. It would be lonely without anyone in that bleak Ellesmere barrack but eighty years previous Christmas days to accompany him through dinner.

Your letter did not come until Saturday this week. It seems an awful long time to wait until the weekend. I've written good letters

⑦

to Bow, Mary ɤ Gillian but have as yet had no reply. Prod them on to it - they need prodding.

Thank you for the idea of sending food but we shall, I know, do excellently here and it is much, much better for you to keep it all ɤ enjoy it while you can. Have other people got turkeys for their dinners?

I wonder if Christopher came in to see you? He comes back tomorrow, poor boy; it is always sad to end ones leave.

It is now nearly lunch-time and the papers have come so I will pack up ɤ sit before the chilly, half-hearted fire with a glass of sherry.

Have a very happy Xmas

lots of love from John

==========

DMW secret ɤ private

I will give AP Ettlarr's[?] Book if you like to buy it or any other nice thing you may have got for him but the photo still stands if you wd like it!

JPW

~~Mushrooms~~[59]

~~fish~~

~~sausages~~

~~gin~~

~~whisky~~

~~Borders~~

==========

APW secret

I will give DMW any nice present you may have got for her if you will tell me how much it is when I come home but if she wd like the photo that still stands, of course

JPW

==========

~ * ~

[59] this strange, crossed-out shopping list was on the back of the folded piece of paper.

D Coy
28.XII.41 12 KRRC
Ampleforth

My dear Mummy & Daddy,

Christmas day has come and gone with a flourish & bang. We are now sleeping it off but it's too cold to be easy. I've played squash at Hovingham Hall this afternoon and the water hasn't been hot enough for a bath so I'm shivering in my squash things and an overcoat. Somehow our fire here is ineffective at a range greater than one foot. I don't know why.

If you listen to that dubious concoction High Gang or Hi Gang or whatever you'll have heard Frank Lawton who was their guest today & was with us here at Ampleforth until a month or so ago. I'm no idolizer of screen & stage stars but it is pleasant to hear a man's voice over the air that was often heard in this mess a short while ago. He is now a Captain & Entertainments Officer in S.E. Command.

②

We had a glorious Christmas. It was second only to home, nothing else could have been so good. Actually in many ways I was glad to be with the riflemen and see them so happy & enjoying themselves.

We had the Village Hall to start with which was an advantage. It is our dining hall and above there are a number of rooms and a balcony which are used as billets and the Sergeants Mess. They always have the Hall decorated for the regular Saturday dance but everything was surpassed now.

They are wonderful improvisers and, being Cockney, need noone to organise their parties. So all we did was get lots of food and such, like beer and barrels and thirty ATs or more (Not enough quite to go round but the transport was dodgy) invited from York.

Tony W. Brown came over from Scarborough on Xmas Eve. He has

③

nearly finished his course and is getting his ten days leave on Jan 1 and Michael Hoban is getting the same. It's a pity they did me over that course or else I wd not have had my 48 hrs as that prevents me getting more than 7 days.

We worked on Xmas Eve and I paid the Company, two days early for beer reasons. Dinner was better than usual but we had no guests. We drunk a bottle of fair Claret and I smoked a cigar which I am very fond of.

We did not go to bed until one after talking to the Gattys and singing carols out of tune but at least to a good piano and then I got up an hour early by mistake. I thought that the early service was at 7.0 am and I gave my servant an absolutely free day except for bed-making so it was

④

five and a half hours sleep I had.

Bill, Christopher & I went to early Church at 8.0 (as I discovered too late was the time). It was interesting to note that there were no riflemen there at all but the gardener at the Hall, one-armed & his wife and old ladies of the village with a few odd men. I hope the Christianity of the Church of England is not bound to hold or crash with feudal systems.

I thought of you and the family in Church but the appalling vicar, a selfish a dreadful fellow with a voice like a big bass drum and ugly Methodist mannerisms, took the service at top speed with a roar and a bellowing that jumped me out of my seat every time he opened his mouth. Did you go to Ch. Church or Merrow?

Afterwards we went for a walk

⑤

up to the bank top where there was a wonderful early morning view of the moors right up to the high ground over Middlesborough in the North and the Wolds above Hull to the South. It was warm and pinkish generally unlike today which is the hardest frost we've had - a wonderful day with sunshine and a white rimed country side.

Then we looked at the riflemen's breakfasts, eggs ɤ bacon and said Happy Christmas to everyone we met and went back to our own eggs and ham actually, newly bought and pair to our present for the Gattys'.

I had scrupulously refrained from opening any parcels sent to me and had a goodly pile to meditate on until the traditional time.

Thank you all very much for the

⑥

universally magnificent presents. I'm not going to write thank-you letters to Bow, Jill ɤ Mary because I'll be seeing them so soon but thank them now for me. In addition to those you know about Phyllis sent me two pairs of socks and some (surely hardly found!) cigarettes and HAS a book of cynical short stories and a brief and unobtrusive note.

I had done well for Xmas cards and sent out about 30 to various people, and I laid off my own contemporaries so the 'olds' did well from me. I also had a letter from Figgy McN. and cards from numerous specimens. I hope O.S arrived O.K. You all sounded so horribly callow about him and seemingly quite indifferent whether he made it or not. It would have been

⑦

monstrous, in my view, to have let him alone at Ellesmere.

After church in the morning I drove up to battalion to collect some liquor so missed, fortunately, a good deal of photographing that went on in front of the Hall, but came back, just as fortunately, in time for some dry sherry the likes of which we have not seen for months, but Christmas comes only once a year and the stores are rifled. Generally speaking I've consumed a great deal of excellent and some indifferent liquor this month in one way and the next and it comes expensive.

Morning church was a funny affair. Apparently the Army does not regard Xmas day as an occasion for a Ch. Parade so, I believe, everything is left to the tastes or discretion of local commanders. We

⑧

were the only Company to ask for a service and got the padre to come. The new C.O also turned up and we gathered he is a religious man so it was a good thing in more ways than one. The Vicar had not intended to hold matins in the village!

By judicious enquiries we discovered that the riflemen would much prefer a voluntary service so we posted a notice and walked down at 11.15 with apprehension. Heaps of civilians and about 60/120 riflemen were there, hugely smart in green side-hats and service dress with their black buttons and all. It was a good service but the vicar spoilt anything he had to do with it. The padre, who is new ɤ nice ɤ kind, said exactly the right thing in exactly the right space of time and everyone has said since, directly ɤ indirectly, that they were thankful for ɤ really enjoyed

⑨

the service.

Then to the Sgts' mess for endless drinking. Everyone was in very good vein and the Hall looked perfect with walls of holly and great fires in the corners and a Christmas tree in the middle. It was our duty to drink ɤ we did not fail.

The officers served the dinner and the sergeants cut it up and helped. We poured out gallons of beer ɤ re-drew it out of barrels piled on the trestles at the entrance. Everyone had heaps to eat and was as happy as could be. The Coy Cmdr made a short speech ɤ then the Colonel ɤ $2^{i}/_{c}$ came round and the CO made the CO's annual speech very well and noone was so drunk as to be offensive.

Then we left them to sleep it off after bringing in the cooks who had done wonders, and cheering them.

⑩

We had our own dinner and after port and more cigars fell asleep. I thought the whole of the radio program for Xmas was a disgrace and found I'd missed nothing when I woke up.

Then we skipped tea as being too full and went down to the party in the Hall. The ATs arrived ɤ the conjuror and what have you in the entertaining way and they were all dancing ɤ playing musical chairs and happy. Mrs Gatty presented a cup for darts playing among the four pls and Coy HQ. She had wanted to give £5 to the Company but this was permanent and what they wanted rather than any more food or cigarettes.

We gave the Gattys a huge ham as the officers' present, and to Sandy (their boy at Stowe) a book ɤ £1

⑪

each to the three servants ɤ gardener which delighted them - and was about due. We are lucky in our privileges and must show our gratefullness sometime.

Finally back to the Hall in time for dinner - <u>the</u> dinner with the G-Smiths. There were there the bachelors among us - the married ones attended there for tea, thus avoiding all embarrassments! We had a glorious meal with chocolates ɤ crackers ɤ wine ɤ champagne ɤ port and turkey and silly hats ɤ whistles. There were two girls ɤ their mother (whose husband is at the war) so for those who were interested everything was quite complete. After my third cigar we played progressive ping-pong ɤ other idiotic games until 12.00. Bill ɤ I got up on Boxing Day at 6.0 am to take Tony back to his course in Scarborough in time to start at 8.30 at his garage.

⑫

We didn't do much more on Boxing Day except tidy up and pick up threads of organisation.

In the evening I went over to the honey woman to make sure it had been sent off and it was, labelled ɤ everything, by goods which might make it longer, ten days before Xmas. I hope it will have arrived by now.

Then we had the Battalion Ball at a place called Newburgh Priory, 7 miles from here, Elizabethan ɤ eerie with long galleries and portraits on the panelling and chill except where there was a fire. I drove a party over including Christopher ɤ his girl whom he met recently ɤ fell for grossly - she came all the way from Hull. It was a dark night ɤ with so much drinking going on everywhere I'm surprised there were no accidents with vehicles. Christopher by

⑬

the way fully intended to come ɤ see you all at Underdown but just never got the chance. He was certainly not bashful like some people are. You'd all probably have been v. attracted by him in spite of his madness. He is goodlooking I'm told by all the girls!

We got home here at 4am. I drove various people home ɤ got into my bed thankfully, only to get up again at 7.30 to go up to Battalion as Duty Officer. This I did, with a baddish grace, to relieve Christopher whose turn it was because his dame was around still. I was glad I did it because he was so heart-broken when he heard about his being on it. I'm always a sucker for a hard-luck story. I shall have to watch

⑭

it, I guess.

It was cold in the CO's office last night and, of course, the stove went out in a flurry of smoke. But I was warm in my waistcoat which you gave me for Christmas. Of course I don't undress up there. I'm luckily one of those who can, although it shocks so many people, get up and feel perfectly OK even if I haven't undressed or washed or shaved! This is as if I was badly brought up but I believe is a great advantage.

Now for next week. If you have my bed ready on Sunday I'll maybe be able to get away in time for a late night but don't expect me then. Just have things ready & wait till you hear me yell. Leave the back door open too else I'll have to climb.

Prepare all the boys. Guildford here I come - v.much love from John

~ * ~

D Coy
12th. Bn. THE KING'S ROYAL RIFLE CORPS,
(~~QUEEN'S WESTMINSTERS~~.)
18.I.42 Ampleforth
York

My dear Mummy & Daddy,

Here is my first news for you after leave. I really have been so busy since I got back that there has not been time to write you a good long letter and I have waited until today. Bow sent me what he called a "cheering-up" letter but that is all the news I've had. From it I gathered that "invalids corner" was making first-class progress and that was on Wednesday. I hope you are all well again now and that AP had a good and not over-tiring time in Cambridge and no recurrence of pains in the tummy.

I was led along the garden path by the LNER coming back here. They took off the 1.30 from Kings Cross during

②

my week of leave and when I arrived there at 12.45 they cheerfully told me that the next went at 3.50 and that the only train from London to go to York during the day which enabled me to catch the 5.30 to Ampleforth & Gilling (which is where I get out) was at 10.am.

So off I went to console myself with luncheon. This I certainly did, if it were possible, at La Cigale (Kettners quondam) in Romilly Street, where I got Scallops or as they like to call them Coquilles Saint-Jacques, partridge, a tart and coffee. They had no cheese, funnily enough.

From there I walked along to Piccadilly and went into Hatchards to try and spend my 7s/6d book token which Auntie Winnie gave me for Xmas.

I had found this impossible to do

③

in Guildford, & amazingly I found it just as difficult in London. I don't believe the 2nd hand booksellers accept book tokens.

Hatchards was full of earnest people buying the latest hit-novel like the Rains Came and such but there was nothing there to buy for keeps so I didn't buy a book for keeps and got rid of my token rapidly. I'm all for the publishers and authors crying the importance of books in war but equally all for the publication of novels being hanged, drawn, halved or quartered.

I walked back to look at some paintings at the Leicester Galleries which were interesting and pleasant to look at. Old men with bow-ties and pince-nez kept bustling in with pictures in brown paper and cigar-puffing gentlemen with sombreros eyed all the pictures from every possible angle except standing on

④

their heads. The Art industry seemed flourishing.

I got a seat on the train only just. I was between a squadron-leader, his wife, three small and mischiefous children and horrible 'Nanny'. How can people let their children be brought up by these untrained, unnatural hags? There was, of course, no food on the train. The family departed at Grantham and two WAAF sisters got in from the next coach and embarrassed me considerably by talking hard to me from there until York. I was reading The Seven Pillars and did not wish to be disturbed but they appeased me with a chocolate from a huge box, and then another and I was compelled to be agreeable and put my book aside! So we became very friendly

⑤

and as they were both astonishingly pretty I felt I was not wasting my time! They had some time to wait in York ɤ I discovered there was a 'bus for me at 9.15 so we had a drink in the Station Hotel and altogether the dreary loneliness of going back from home was mutually made less unpleasant by some people to talk to!

I don't like the 'bus because it is so stinking and crowded with riflemen and is 1½ hours unpleasantness. It was snowing by then and at Oswaldkirk I found it flaking down fiercely. So I had a bath and went to bed and forgot leave as one does with the rush of the present like a fort placed on the sucking sand at Dawlish Warren, as

⑥

soon as it is lifted, the mark disappears.

But I did love being at home and, as always, was just getting used to it all when off I go again. Thank you for a lovely time. It was sad about all the illness but we have great blessings and should be thankful for them, no permanent illness in the family ɤ no bombing casualties. And we had a fine time in London. Bow tells me that he thought they were the best Christmas holidays ever.

Meanwhile this week has rushed past at P.Ds or, amplified, Preliminary Drills, revision of all Weapon Training, gas, signalling etc etc - it is the climax of Individual Training at this time. Next week we shall do a great deal of firing on the ranges at

⑦

Strensall and up on the grenade range on the moors. It will be cold for the fingers.

On Tuesday morning we went to "zero" our rifles and Bren guns at the 30 yard range belonging to the College. This means that you get your weapons to fire straight by adjustment of the sights. The Armourer Sergeant is in attendance to make alterations. It's funny that we use both the Miniature ɤ 30^{x} ranges belonging to the college.

The snow and subsequent frost has made the roads slippery and dangerous. Particularly unpleasant is the road down off to the range, past the College, built in the same pseudo-Gothic-style as Charterhouse but later ɤ more pleasant in ways, ɤ through the Rugger

⑧

fields. I rode a motor bike down it and found I had absolutely no control at all. To touch a brake of any sort would be fatal.

Tonight we were going on a night driving Exercise but it has fortunately been cancelled.

On Wednesday we had a brilliant lecture in the College Theatre from Chris Freeman who wrote a book on the Road to Bordeaux and his escape from France. He is with the Free French ɤ sports the pansiest breeches I've ever seen but the M.I.O have got him, very wisely, for a bit and he tells civilians about Panic and what he saw on the roads of Central France. He was witty and subtle and clever and it was enough to show how

⑨

insidious Panic is in every sort and kind of Community, how there have been flittings and Martial Law in England - (phlegmatically proud country) "We can take it" but "what?" is the reply --- during the bombings ɤ how difficult it is to stay put in the invasion time, if ever. But the French grandmother packed the wagon in 1870, and mother in '14 and farmer's wife in '40 so it is in their blood, as it were.

The snow has melted a little in the sun-shine but now there is more frost and the sheep black blobs on the opposite hill. I am Company Duty Officer and must go down to talk to the Cooks before lunch.

Get all of you well soon

lots of love from John

~ * ~

[Postcard to
Mrs AP.Waterfield, Underdown, Tangier Road, Guildford, Surrey,
post marked Gloucester 10.15am 3 Feb 1942]

2.1.42.[60] 15 ITC
9.45 am. Gloucester .

I'm glad you neither of you came to see me off at Padd. I got there in none too good time but perfectly adequate for a sandwich at the hotel. Filthy draught on station ɤ huge crowd - met Tim who <u>is</u> married ɤ attendant women folk! Donald followed soon after - touching scenes bonhomously concealed. We three got a seat in a crowded carriage - 10 mins late Glos only but of course no truck to meet us. Army ways are ineluctable. Camp like Stoughton here - pleasant large mess but our accommodation filthy - all in one hut! Luckily I know how to look after myself as I observe some of us do not ɤ shall be wizardly OK in my new sleeping bag. Good dinner. We had a lovely holiday ɤ I got away comfortably without flap. Do you write to E.OS. No news about departure yet. Shall think of you tonight. Love JP

~ * ~

[Postcard to
Mrs AP.Waterfield, Underdown, Tangier Road, Guildford, Surrey,
unfranked 2d stamp]

3.2.42 15 ITC GLOS.
In the mess middle morning - cold ɤ slushy outside ɤ poor fire inside. Looks like several days stay here - maddening procrastinations ɤ means more expense of course. I shall have to pay Mess Bill here by chq. AP please note this ɤ explain to the bank if I'm overdrawn as I shall be! Also having no duties means we must amuse ourselves otherwise than just sitting in ɤ around this bleak, frozen camp! I shall try ɤ be careful ɤ shall see Jilly today or tomorrow I hope. My bed was warm ɤ sleeping bag fine - accommodation foul ɤ hard wooden bed! no giving. My cold is better but v. thick now. Food here excellent. "Force" for bkfst. I am in fairly good form. Colleagues fair to middling but Donald ɤ Tim good company. I think you can 'risk writing' here to arrive not later than Sat. put on it if of permanent importance RAWOX (M) ɤ Please Forward - if not worth while Please Return to Underdown etc = Slight change of address after leaving here but will send you final confirmation P.T.O.

[sideways on front]

187125 2/lt JPW KRRC DRAFT SERIAL MO <u>A/60</u> A.P.P 1600. Much love - John

[60] Obviously should be 2.2.42.

~ * ~

[Plain postcards but sent in envelope]

February 4th.
15th I.T.C.
Reservoir Camp
Gloucester

Once more in the frigid mess after bkfast. Waiting to go ɤ see the Lt of this I.T.C who is looking after the organization of the draft. I want to go ɤ see Jill in the afternoon ɤ have made plans accordingly with Miss W over the phone and so hope v. strongly that he won't try and put us onto any job here. Yesterday Donald went up to town; he has to come back by the 9.5 fr. Paddington this morning. I refused to think of such a thing - prolonging departure's unpleasantness by

②

repeating things is repugnant. Tim ɤ I went into Gloucester, had lunch, went to a ghastly flick (Whistling in the Dark) had tea ɤ came back here to dinner. Glos not v. impressive ɤ we could not get into the Cathedral for some reason. Choice of only two cinemas. Has the snow gone from you I wonder? There is none left here but a profusion of mud ɤ slush. We played ping-pong last night after dinner had been cleared, which was fun.

There is a chance that we may go tomorrow. I do hope so anyway but we may not until the weekend. Astonishing organization! We may go to Glasgow or

③

Liverpool from here - the concentration area is no indication of place of embarkation apparently.

Wonderfully I can't think of anything I've left behind me. For once my packing was successful. I actually forgot sponge ɤ hairbrushes when I went to Saunderites!

I'm sending in this the power of whatever it is that we drew up.

No writing paper in the Mess so forced to write on post cards which they do provide.

I'll go on writing daily until the last minute I can so you

④

will know as nearly as possible when I'm off.

I think I gave you the amended address for after embarkation. If I send no alteration to this, it can be considered final. But once more:-

187125 2/lt JPW
KRRC
Draft Serial A/60
co A.P.O 1600

very much love from

John

~ * ~

[Postcards but obviously sent in envelope]

①

5.2.42

After lunch in the Mess once more. Really excellent food here, a revelation of what can be done but rather shameful. Still no news of moving ϒ probability not before weekend which they say is a favourite time. We do get 24 hrs notice ϒ then all is hectic. This is an icy hole and unbearable were the food not so wonderful. All the same be sure I am v. comfortable indeed in bed and hotly tucked into my sleeping bag which is a great success. Washing ϒ such is impossible ϒ I don't want to unpack so that is inconvenient but the same for everyone. My cold

②

is horribly thick but not more menacing. Yesterday I went to see Jilly after lunch. Miss W sensible seemingly but I wondered when she asked if I was an officer! Full of her nephew in the APC! Restrictions on J's movements considerable, newly imposed. V. cold in Cheltenham ϒ rather grey. Jilly in great form ϒ nicely sensible, self-reliant. We had tea at Thirlestaine Court H^{ot}. past the Boys Coll. Fair to middling but quite fun. Then J showed me round Coll. (incl. corridor where she was rocketed for talking!) ϒ St Helens - both of them I knew

③

fairly well already but it is good to have known the environment ϒ feeling of the place where the others spent their lives for the most part, fr. 8.18. Contacts are easier so.[61]

Today more "flaneur" behaviour ϒ awfully dull in Glos. Went to P.O ϒ found quantities of mail. Still safe until Saturday morning to "JPW KRRC 15 ITC Glos.", I think.

I'm sending back letters from Siepmanns. Thanks for sending them. Glad to hear you are

④

writing to EOS. You can write fairly freely, I believe.

Also am enclosing my £18.3.0 bank pay for Jan which is correct ϒ a letter from PHB which provides salutations ϒ timely warning. A nice letter. Put it in the cardboard box, will you?

I'll go on writing every day. Am thinking of you both constantly ϒ imagining what you are up to. Always lots of love fr -

John

~ * ~

[Postcard to
Mrs AP.Waterfield, Underdown, Tangier Road, Guildford, Surrey,
postmarked Gloucester 2 pm 6 Feb 1942]

6.2.42

Still waiting - it is just maddening. Sunday now is definitely regarded as the day. I cd have come home tonight but decided it would be better not to - I wd hve to come back tomorrow anyway ϒ I do hope you agree with me in not having one more rushed goodbye. Meanwhile life here is cold and loafing. In Gloucester yesterday morning doing little and to Cheltenham with Donald in the afternoon. Nothing much to do there either - I did not go to see Jilly again. Back to dinner here. Once all keyed up to go I was eager for it - this procrastination is awful and saps the eagerness but I'm very cheerful ϒ except for the thickness of my cold v. well too. You don't say what the photos looked like! I fear the worst! I may go to see Jill again tomorrow. I collected all things fr. the P.O. vml John

~ * ~

[61] this rather enigmatic note is expanded in the letter of 8.2.42 p.77.

[Postcards but obviously sent in envelope]

①

7.4.42

Still here, same place, same time after bkfst. Icy mess ɤ more snow but good bkfst. Hope you've got all my p.cs ɤ letters, post seems quicker fr. you to me than me to you. Will think of you both laughing away at Noel Coward's cracks this afternoon, do really enjoy it. This is on all responsible accounts our last day; you will get this p.c., I suppose, not before Monday when I shall be on the high seas, all being well, and will be thinking of you opening it after bkfst in the kitchen. My cold v. thick still ɤ I coughed last night which prevented me going to sleep for a long while but I'm better this morning. There is a v. interesting old Home Gd here on a week's course, a type I've met few of. He is 54, hugely wealthy, a Scot, has spent thirty years ɤ more in the Far East, Borneo, Malay, Phillippines etc.. a realist ɤ fatly

②

business-man-like but kindly ɤ friendly. He has the gambler's outlook on money which is so strange after the English gent. or professional man. Tells many good stories of strange goings on all over the world.

He is going home today ɤ is going to drive me into Cheltenham where I shall try to take Jilly out once more. It seems a pity to miss doing this, don't you think? I do hope you will have agreed about me not coming back for one more night ɤ more goodbyes.

Good idea, your code. But it needs amplifying. I'll do this. Martin will stand for me ɤ Bow for Martin whatever I write ɤ whenever. But I won't put only place names after his name - any word immediately

③

after his name will signify the place I'm at and the initial letters of the place will correspond to those in the letter or cable - eg. "Martin captured" = "I am at Cape Town". If I can't find anything to make sense to go immediately after Martin I'll put the words "I'm told" after the word that shows the place, eg "Martin is getting more dull, I'm told, than ever!" = "I am at Durban". All sounds v. silly, doesn't it! Never mind it might help you.

Also I think it wd be a very good idea to number every letter you write in the top left hand

④

corner or if in a cable put it first word of the message. I'll have a different series for all written messages, airgraphs ɤ letters, than for cables. I'll start numbering fr. when I sail.

I'll be able to get you another p.c I feel pretty sure to let you know we are off.

Now goodbye - do keep well ɤ be happy.

lots of love from John.

What were those photos like?

~ * ~

[Large letter writing paper, 7 7/8" x 10", pale blue, thin; dark blue ink]

8.2.42 c/o 15 I.T.C
Gloucester

My very dear Mummy ɤ Daddy,

This grows odder and odder and seems if it will be more so. After a terrific flap last night we were put on six hours' notice from midnight last night, expecting to rush off very early this morning but, oh dear no. We have reverted to comparative

tranquillity once more after a brief flurry after breakfast when people stuck on labels and changed into battle-dress in expectation of sleeping in it for the first few days.

Now thank god for the sunshine - the first for a week and I am at the window of the mess facing west over the square, a tarmac spread where once, so lately, were fields, looking into the sun on his way down. It is warm at last.

People are chattering round the fire about the voyage, about the food and the drink and parties and more parties and other usual subjects for chatter. They are a pretty agreeable lot. You don't find awful people in the 60th. which is a blessing.

I hope you enjoyed the play yesterday and laughed a lot. I thought of you as I went to Cheltenham ɤ Jill and I wondered what you were up to. She will, no doubt, tell you all about our times together. We have had fun.

Old Martin[?] drove me in (I told you about him yesterday) and I had lunch in the Plough, being seized upon by an appalling Lieut in the Engineers who told me he lived in Glfd and had been into Cheltenham that day to lodge a complaint at the W.O about his C.O. He was an appalling fellow and typical of those you find - the type the New Statesman idolise as officers. Do they know what they are really like?

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Owing to the "Invasion of Ch." Jill was confined to her barracks, a remarkably comfortable building actually. But over the phone Miss W. (extremely efficient in spite of her shouting) asked me to come ɤ have tea with J. in her room. That worked out perfectly and we had a splendid tea by ourselves together. Then J. took me upstairs (I know my way fairly well now!) to her study, a pleasant room with a fire - how much better than Mary's life - and I sat ɤ thawed in front of the fire. She has nice friends, though they are older. She is most monitorial, in a nice way, and self-confident ɤ sensible. I hope she will be a prefect at ½ qtr.

I'm awfully glad to have seen her life. We do not in general have sufficient idea of the background brothers and sisters spend their time in. It gives you contacts and sympathy that wd otherwise be completely missing, to have seen each other in the environment where we spend most of our lives from eight to eighteen.

I am glad for all yr letters. They have made all the difference this week. You can go on, I think, putting please fwd to A/60, AP.O 1600, the address I've given you, if necessary.

I told Jill the honey-woman's address to give you. Mrs Barnes, the Apiary, South Hohne, nr Slingsby, York.

I have got a new respirator, by a wangle, free, you'll be glad to hear but of course no glasses.

Must stop now.

Thinking of you lots

ɤ much love fr

John

~ * ~

[Postcard to
Mrs AP.Waterfield, Underdown, Tangier Road, Guildford, Surrey,
postmarked Gloucester 6 pm 9 Feb 1942]

9.2.42

Now it's a week - excessively queer, ɤ no news this morning to hearten us. No sun at this time (10am) and the great gloomy mess is unheated. Most people have disappeared to Glos or Chelt or to the bath

or somewhere. It's hard to know what to do - the idlest existence, this, of my fifteen month's army life, ϒ little opportunity for using it sensibly. At the present form we may go tomorrow, next week or the week after, so will you send on any letters here with pl. fwd to the address I've given you. We shall arrange for them to do that here, in any case. Yesterday afternoon we saw an awful film in Glos, "Safari" with Fairbanks ϒ Carroll, quite one of the worst-made ϒ stupidest films I've seen. I hope you had a good, quiet ϒ happy weekend ϒ perhaps saw Bow to make you laugh. I was late for bkfst this morning ϒ only got coffee ϒ toast! No hardship for me, they didn't realize! Much love fr. John

[written sideways on address-side:]

Equanimity has succeeded impatience or is it militarily induced dumbness? Have you enough soap?

~ * ~

Tuesday 10.2.42
15 ITC
Reservoir Rd
Gloucester

After tea once more in the mess. Your post-card has just arrived. Something must be very odd with the post here. I've written every single day but you keep saying nothing from me - a letter on Sunday, ϒ a p.c. yesterday ϒ now a letter, I've sent.

No sign of movement. Donald H ϒ another dubious fellow ϒ I went to Cheltenham last night ϒ had fair fun. This morning I ϒ Tim took the whole draft for a country-march, about eight miles only, but they are in bad condition. The sun was pleasant ϒ mist lay about the hills which I suppose are the Cotswolds. I saw some lovely golden shining sandstone.

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This afternoon I begged a drive in one of the ITC carriers and had good sport. Having no master is an odd experience ϒ idleness is destructive ϒ expensive too.

My £43 came through this morning. This is the right address, don't hesitate to forward letters here still. I'll send a wire as soon as I know that we are really off so then you can stop letters ϒ send them to the other address.

I am getting apathetic, one of those whose mind the Army spoilt!

Glad the snow has gone - it is quite mild now ϒ my cold is better.

Hope you are well, both of you. It was grand to hear how you enjoyed the play but I'm disappointed about my photos, let me hear a second opinion.

Always much love from John

~ * ~

18.2.42 15 ITC. Glos.
We had a splendid long, v.long - weekend.

Back here once more after lunch. AP will tell you how we got to the Main Station in nineteen minutes and so even I had moments to spare. Then to Reading, so well-known a journey now through the flat and scrubby military lands. Fairly punctual at Rdg and time to read the paper and drink some more coffee in the GWR Hotel lounge. The main-liner was punctual too surprisingly and I found a colleague coming back in almost an empty carriage.

I lost my ticket as usual then; the collector went away to return but never did. So I found my green paper and I was sitting on it.

Rang up for a taxi at Glos; only ¼ hour late here for the first time since the war began. Arrived at the

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mess for lunch late. Fish and cold soufflé! Pink cheese ϒ coffee!

The form here is most disappointing with so many rumours floating around that it would be vain to repeat them. At least it seems clear we've missed one convoy, because of the absence of boats or because of others' priorities. I don't know.

This promises to be an awful life here now. I wish the W.O would not be vague and best of all wd sent us off where we want to go.

Everyone else is back but there seems no control or guiding instructions. I shall go ϒ see the Fieldings sometime, also the Dean when AP's letter may be judged to have reached him.

much love always John

~ * ~

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19.2.42 15 ITC
Gloucester

Since I wrote yesterday it has definitely been confirmed that "All movement orders for this draft are cancelled". This means, we presume, that the boats never turned up, or, all of a sudden, were taken off for another job and this seems the more likely to me.

Now we wait here, and wait still until something else turns up. They might send us back to our units or they might send us to Chiseldon or, perhaps. to another transit camp, Glasgow or Leeds probably. I think, and fervently hope that we shall eventually go off but the immediate possibilities of this happening have definitely disappeared. It is a grand disillusion.

For some reason my cold has got the better of me without becoming a proper cold and I'm not in brilliant order. However I've been asked to play table tennis for the whole of the officers in the camp against the NCOs ϒ men tonight so shall have to wake up for that.

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I had a bath last night, had dinner, wrote a letter or two and went to bed earlyish.

Today I made breakfast for about the second time since we've been here and then from 9.30-4.30 this afternoon we had an exercise which we organized to occupy the men. It was, I'm afraid, rather stupid, but served the purpose of getting some fresh air ϒ exercise. When we marched back to camp we found a P.A.D scheme on (Army for ARP) and had to rush into trenches and put on respirators for three quarters of an hour. Tear-gas was sprayed on us and smoke-bombs let off - very tedious.

It was odd to be on our feet for the exercise because of course we had no vehicles nor Brens, A/tk rifles or indeed any equipment at all. The tempo of life is quite different when one has to walk everywhere.

When we got in for tea there was a

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letter from Costley-White inviting me to tea or lunch, an invitation I intend to accept tomorrow.

He addresses me as Mr (!) Waterfield which looks odd but is, I suppose, all he could do ϒ speaks of "my very old friend, your father".

I hope AP had a good time in Cambridge and did not drink over-much wine.

Much love from

John

~ * ~

[Postcard to
Mrs AP.Waterfield, Underdown, Tangier Road, Guildford, Surrey,
postmarked Gloucester 6 pm 20 Feb 1942]

15 I.T.C
20.2.42 Glos.

Cold morning with more frost. Scathing letter from Bow with news of sudden access of Corps Fiendishness! No news from us or for us. Just going to ring up the Dean, but did AP give that idea of my wishing to go around the Cathedral? Nothing could come more amiss than such an ordeal.

Playing ping-pong very badly, I'm afraid, last night, but it was fun. The organization here is worse than awful. I hope something turns up this weekend.

much love fr. John

~ * ~

22.2.42 15 ITC
Gloucester

This is Sunday afternoon after a good lunch. I ɤ Donald Hartog and a pair of redcoats lie sprawled about the mess. All the others are out. The stove will not give out any heat though it is a glowing blaze of clinkers. It snowed this morning again lightly. Now the room is full of draughts. I think of you sitting in the drawing room, comfortably enough, or are you working in the garden. I doubt that somehow!

I don't know if there has been a good concert on the radio or not. I have not heard it because we have had the forces program which puts over flashy juxtapositions of Catholic Priests and Music (hot) while you work. It is good to know that someone is working this afternoon. I have not been so idle for years.

This morning I found a post card from DMW very oddly written ɤ for the most part crossed out. The post seems very bad because I've written to you

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every day since I came back here except for yesterday when I sent you nothing.

There is no more news and nothing to cheer us up. Riflemen have heard from their pals in the battalions that 100 more men from each, that is the 7th. 8th. 10th & 12th. have been settled to go on embarkation leave since we left. So I suspect that we shall wait for them now, but I don't think it's more than a guess.

Over half of us went home for the weekend but I stayed for various reasons, because it's expensive to travel, because someone had to stay ɤ I shall be able to go next time, because I was too lazy to compete in the race!

But as for expensiveness that was no good because Donald ɤ I and a man called Paul Harker went to Cheltenham and spent an awful lot of money including a taxi back early this morning. But we saw Citizen Kane which is a gloriously

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magnificent film - the first I've seen since Quai des Brumes which held my attention the whole time. Don't miss it if you can.

From Bow much abuse - from A. Winnie a letter with a promise of a pound which I'll take as the cheque you sent me, so then you will have to take it in reclamation from her. She suggests this in her letter.

I took tea with the Costley-Whites on Friday. They are both snobs and he is unctuously ineffective while she is a thruster, I guess. They were nice to me but it was an horrible tea. I did not go to lunch to spare them the food. They told me to go back again if ever I want to.

No more now - I must go to sleep again.

Much love to you from

John

~ * ~

23.2.42 15 ITC
Gloucester

Colder than ever here ɤ I'm feeling queer for some reason. Hope you are bearing well and had a good time in London on Saturday.

News has just developed this morning. We are off again on March 10th. I don't know the form actually but have seen the list of those on the draft which includes friends, Rifle Bde, A.T.S, censors and a lot of nincompoop country regts and RASC ɤ RA, ɤ finally 12 OCTU "candidates". One surmises that this might mean India but hopes desperately that it will not. In spite of the original idea that was definitely put to us, that we were going to the 1st or 2nd 60th. in Libya, the W.O is clearly unreliable and coquettish. I have no faith now in anybody's word.

I shall come home sometime ɤ will ring up or wire as soon as I know definitely.

Much love from John

~ * ~

24.2.42 15 ITC
Gloucester

I shall be coming home probably on Thursday evening but possibly not until Friday morning. The first is almost certain. We have 6 days.

Letter from Mary last night - she is probably sick but it was quite awfully typical of present nonsensical state - I find it impossible to read them.

I and a man called Ian Radclyffe went to Cheltenham yesterday to see two films (at one cinema) and we had tea ɤ dinner there. For some reason I felt very ill but we had good fun. He wants ɤ intends to stay in the Army after the war!

You'll be glad to hear I bought a v. nice pair of shoes of pre-war leather in Chelt. for 42s/-d which you'll see when I come home _ After all Mama wins - or is that two Ms in that word?

PJ Grigg is fun - I hope he

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swears at them all.

Icy blasts of wind here still.

See you soon. I can't understand why you have had no letters from me. Yr. p.c came this morning and said you'd had nothing fr here. I shall not write again unless there are new plans.

much love from

John

~ * ~

7.3.42 15 ITC
Glos

Same old address and same old desk by the window looking out on a snowy hillside and frozen cultivation between the slippery concrete paths.

Solitary journey to Rdg last evening followed by dinner of six as unappetising courses as ingenuity could devise for Hess or other objectionable person.

Then out in the cold and five minutes wait for the main liner which was punctual amazingly. Again solitary journey all the way to Swindon when five skilled workmen came in who had been building a factory nr Chippenham ɤ were going home for occasional weekend. Stories of scandalous slowing up of labour, bad feeding, inefficient management ɤ five hundred wild ɤ piggish Irishmen who work never, draw huge pay, wash in gravy ɤ clean Wellingtons in four baths (for 700 workmen!). And yet not grumbling but eager to do a good job ɤ win the war. £4 a week men ɤ wellish dressed but calloused hands.

After phoning ɤ negotiation gate crashed

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a taxi and got back here feeling homesick, poor me. Found everyone else in like fettle.

Bed was fair but stinking barracks hut. Parade ɤ run this morning. Cold as never.

No news at all officially. Numerous rumours without foundation, I guess. Nothing either to alter fact that we stand by on Tuesday at 6 hrs notice, but we might stand by for 6 months.

Made breakfast punctually ɤ ate cereal and milk. Nice long letter from Bill Deedes ɤ short one fr. Peter Needham still at BNC ɤ going to be there until June now.

Hanging about is worse than hell for all of us. I loath it. So do we all but "perfer et obdura" (without difficulties in front) is the rule. I remember doing Elegiacs from AH Clough "Be still, contain thyself ɤ wait". Appropriate.

Lovely leave. Hope AP enjoyed Cambridge ɤ is well ɤ that Mum's back is better.

Always tons of love fr. John

~ * ~

8.3.42 15 ITC
Glos.

This is Sunday morning and not a very lovely one. A tin-hut or brick hut mess is not pleasant to sit in so no wonder you see officers wandering about the streets ɤ pubs for variety's sake. Sitting around rots the humanity.

Hope you are both well and working possibly in the garden if it is not too cold. With us it is warmer but snow still prevails on the ground.

Now I'm sitting at the opposite window to write to that at which I sat yesterday. I look out onto a similar brick-and-corrugated building to this one where the permanent officers of this establishment live. There are the baths ɤ I had one after breakfast this morning; one good thing is that the water is always hot here but as our hut is five minutes walk away we have to dress to come over for our baths.

I was very nearly late for breakfast this morning and indeed was sitting down to toast and cold coffee when one of the junior APs brought in some more egg and bacon. My egg was broken which is how I like all fried eggs. But pleasant though it is to get eggs for

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breakfast I don't believe it is at all right for us who are idling, not growing and doing, no hard physical work to luxuriate in such feastings.

Chatter in the room and cigarette smoke. News of the World ɤ new editor for Observer. General funny smell and feeling you get on Sundays unless you go out into the fresh air.

General unrest in the newspapers and cries for a universal war-effort. I suspect that documentary films about Russian all-out drive and sacrifice induce a complacency into the English that the Russian bears ɤ boors are a more fitting instrument to deal with the Boche than the cultured ruins of English Imperialism ɤ have no pepping up effect at all.

Stupid Observer cries out at sacking of Reith ɤ Edward Grigg. A pity that whether they like it or not so many people cannot help believing or being strongly influenced by whatever they read in print.

No news for us yet at all. Such bad psychology and not dangerous security to keep us perpetually in the dark about the factors that affect our

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position. A bewildered mass-mind devours all rumours and gets unhealthy too soon.

I can see Donald Hartog coming from his bath, he looks fed-up. They are all working very hard up in Oswaldkirk according to Bill's letter and how I envy them.

I'm stopping now. Much love from

John

I hope your guest has made herself a pleasure and a delight to have had!

Interesting hints and skating on thin ice about morale of Army. Apparently D. Mail suggested last week that Percival shd be court-marshalled when he gets out ɤ compared him with Byng. Perhaps another shooting "pour encourager les autres" as Byng did wd wake us up!

~ * ~

9.3.42 15 ITC
Glos

My dear Mummy ɤ Daddy,

This morning we did P.T at 7.30 am before breakfast together with all the other officers below the rank of major at present in the camp. Whether it is because we are not healthy in the surroundings and sleeping accomodation of this place, or whether we have grown so unfit during this month that we cannot take it, or because it is always bad for people to do violent exercise on an empty belly, but we have all felt ghastly since then and noone ate breakfast. I am pretty well OK now again but cannot get rid of my cold ɤ for some strange reason don't feel really game like I did when I left Yorkshire.

A rfn has got diphtheria but I suppose I'm inoculated against that. Poor devils of rfn though I doubt if they are and they are living cheek by jowl there in the huts. I went over the

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obstacle course with some of them this morning - it is quite a good one but not so tough as at York.

Not so cold today - the sun is shining now at four of the afternoon. I am going to see if I can get myself Polyphotoed this evening; I never took the 1/6 you owed me or the polyphoto money either.

There are some more strange specimens come into the camp in the last few days including some R. Warwicks who all went off, so they say, to Salisbury today to be psycho-analysed! I think it's more likely they saw an Area or Command psychiatrist which is a different affair. They are all supposed to be going to India; I hope we never find ourselves there.

Rumour has it that we might, after everything, be off this week. So hold your thumbs or little fingers or whatever is correct that it may be so.

Hope you have cleared up and are all set again now ɤ that Mummy's back is not troubling her ɤ AP is v. well and flourishing. I wonder how you all behaved at the weekend. End of page here and no need to continue. v much love from John

~ * ~

D Coy
12th. Bn. THE KING'S ROYAL RIFLE CORPS,
(QUEEN'S WESTMINSTERS.)
24.3.42 Ampleforth
York

I am as happy as I have ever been, reinstated and comfortable and everyone in splendid order and just as it used to be.

Today with Brown Howard to Scarborough and beyond to the ranges - lovely sunshine and the sea.

Good journey yesterday ɤ met at the station in spite of M.T holiday.

Just to play a game with Bill, Tony ɤ Ian; will write in detail at end of the week.

Always very much love to both of you from John

~ * ~

30.3.42 D Coy
12 KRRC
In Coy office, a Nissen hut, Ampleforth

on Monday morning. Do you know I've had absolutely no comfortable leisure to write since I got back here? There is an awful lot of work to do on paper because training instructions have flowed in from every sort of higher formation and all the 'Radio procedure' and flag signals and more and more details of the same nature have been altered in the Army's erratic way. I have my own platoon again with a stooge under me to hustle and use. Maybe I'm foolish to be conscientious about getting things tidied up but I've a sort of tidy mind where administration concerns me and cannot abide a messy organization.

It is raining slightly and muggy but warm. I've just looked and see it is twenty to one so I'm going off to the Mess up the village street where I shall continue this.

Actually lunch came too quick ɤ now I've done an afternoon's office work again making up platoon rolls and training programs; now I've got up to the mess once more and it is going to be tea-time in about five minutes.

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I've been out with the pl. every day of last week until Friday afternoon when we began a three day skeleton signal exercise. I'll tell you about that in a moment.

I came up in the train last Monday, a week ago today with an odd crew; the train was not overcrowded in the 1st. Class as far as York ɤ in spite of a fair hustle from Waterloo in my taxi I had no difficulty in finding a seat. Opposite me was a solidly built ɤ wealthy looking matron who turned out to own a huge place in Braemar ɤ to believe in "heart-changing"; after desultory conversation she attempted to change my heart which is no easy task and pressed upon me numerous Buchmanite pamphlets; she had indeed come to the wrong address. With her furs and fake wistfulness she was a typical example of those self righteous harridans who ought to be stripped and turned out of their mansions to practise their heart's convolutions in less easy circumstances.

However next door to me sat an actress who turned out to be Michael Redgrave's

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wife, acting with another Company of equal status as the one we saw in town, comprising Ursula Jeans ɤ Ronald Squire; she was going to Newcastle to act and toured all round the provinces, Liverpool, where she had been in the repertory Company and knew Marjorie Fielding, Sheffield, Oxford and so on.

I meanwhile was reading Anna Karenina to make up for having been given it by Elinor B. I see that it was Mauf?de[62] who translated this edition and believe this is a pity as the best is Constance Garnett - do you remember that old bore St John Ervine saying so in the Brains' Trust?

At Grantham an elderly lady got in with her husband on a 3rd. class ticket which gave them great cause for flap. The rest of the train was packed so tight that you could not get along the corridor - and after a very short while the poor lady fainted and had to be restored by brandy from the Buchmanite hot gospel mama's flask - the faintee revived ɤ said that she was travelling "under difficult circumstances", which seemed a masterpiece of meiosis.

The sun was bright in York and after a cup of coffee and a few buns I walked about in the

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queerly named, sunshine ɤ shade blotched back streets under the Minster, looking in the 2nd. hand book shops and antique dealers, the type that would give you two great and endless pleasure.

There followed tea in Terry's which is the best place in York for tea but provides a scandalous meal.

The train from York provides a tedious journey with a change now which was not before. At Gilling I was met and drove up in state. It was glorious to be back and Bill ɤ Brian Howard ɤ Tony were in splendid form. We opened a bottle or two to celebrate.

I am sleeping in the Hall, not in my old room with Christopher but with Bill which I prefer vastly, in the room next door, between the old one and the bath-room. Swarms of new young subalterns are about.

On Tuesday I went with Brown to Scarborough and on the moors beyond to organize a field-firing range for A/tk rifle. The day was bright and warm and after lunch in Scarborough ɤ a cigarette hunt for Brown and a chocolate one for me we went up onto the Moor, Fylingdale Moor it's called, and got organized. Then we lay on the heather with the sun warming our backs and without great coats,

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watching the sea, which could be seen hazily shimmering over the hills, and doing the Times crossword puzzle. There was snow in plenty in the dips and hollows.

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[62] JPW's uncertainty, as written. 'Maude' is correct.

On Tuesday I ran the same range with the Company firing and that was another pleasant day. Wednesday, Thursday, Friday morning I was teaching the pl. stuff they knew already with my stooge to help me and we had one grand afternoon's boating over the river Rye.

Friday afternoon I dressed myself up in crash helmet, leather jerkin, knee-boots and goggles, climbed onto a 500 c.c Norton and, with my map-case strapped beside me fell in behind Brown's wireless vehicle for three days skeleton exercise.

First South to the Wolds where we spent that night at Birdsall Ho., Lord Middleton's house, I believe.

Going there the roads were dustier than you can imagine and I was grateful for my new goggles which are rather more pleasant, I've now decided, for being tinted slightly.

A cold night but we found a cottage to eat in and slept in an upstairs farmhouse loft on the floor. My sleeping bag is invaluable. Up at 1 a.m

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and riding at 10 mph, grinding in and out of 2nd. and bottom gears, stopping and starting and always seeming to check on the steepest hills.

We got up to Easingwold and then I went off with all the other Coy subalterns under my charge (We have got about 200% over-strength of subalterns now, ghastly creatures seemingly!) as battalion harbourer. I rode through Thirsk ɤ Northallerton up to Brompton-on-Swale behind the Brigadier's staff car ɤ we certainly made a better time. At Brompton we were told to harbour the bn at a village a few miles off so as it was eight o'clock I scavenged the village for bkfst. With another fellow of more enterprise than some of these fellows showed I sat down in the Post-Mistress' parlour at Middleton-Tyas to a couple of eggs scones, butter, marmalade and tea, all for two shillings for the pair of us. She wanted 1/- but it seemed too kind.

Then I got a puncture and started to mend it when the bn got into Barton where we harboured them at 12 o'clock. After half an hour they had to move so I hung around to have a

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cup of tea with a fellow there and then after mending the back-wheel puncture with the fellow's help went on. The bn were not where they said they would be so I went to Darlington for tea. Then I found a fellow with a radio on Piercebridge and got him to ring up Support Group ɤ find out where we were. This came over in code ɤ I hustled off south to get there, a little village south of the Tees, just before the column rolled in for the night, in time to harbour the Company.

A good wash in a farm-house, eggs to eat and a drink and bed on the straw under a Dutch barn. Up at 4.30 am and back after various wanderings by Stokesley and that glorious road between the moors which never fails to be beautiful even through tinted glasses, concertina-like wheeling along on a rattly bike.

Home at 3pm to mixed lunch ɤ tea. I ate fr.3.30 to 5.30. Quite fun really but from my point of view little learnt. We shall have plenty though when I shall have plenty[63] to do with a motor pl. We did about 220 mls and I was filthy and my face was sore. I wasn't too tired and my bottom was not at all sore!

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It was nice to be here again. Tim James ɤ Donald Hartog are off again! D is at home now ɤ Tim is spending his embarkation leave here and, strangest of all, they are going to Gloucester again on Thursday next!

[63] 'Plenty... plenty': as written; this and other repetitions, eg 'sore'... 'sore' in next two sentences, suggest he is more tired, or drunk, than he would like to admit here.

By the way I've written twice to Gloucester but have been unable to get my pyjamas and handkerchief back which I sent to the laundry before going to hospital. And have you got my Alexandra laundry? This includes a shirt, collar and pyjamas and I shd like them if you please.

I am in well here in Oswaldkirk and happy in my work. Brown H. has, I'm told, given me terrifically good Confidential report which I heard about truthfully but accidentally and of course when a Coy Cmdr gives a good report of his subalterns it ought to be well. But we have a loathsome C.O called Dalby, new since October, whom everyone hates but are powerless to do anything about - he loaths all of us in Osw. and particularly me so if he can get rid of me I expect he will. I'm quite disillusioned and like life as it comes now so don't care much.

If you see Elinor will you tell her to get her uncle John Davidson to fire him? Brown has written to

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his father and everyone longs to get rid of him!

I must stop now.

Hope you are all in flourishing form.

Very much love always from

John

~ * ~

D Coy
12th. Bn. THE KING'S ROYAL RIFLE CORPS,
(QUEEN'S WESTMINSTERS.)

6.4.42

All the family should be with you today so here comes my love to each one, and all suitable sentiments for Easter day although I don't really know what those are.

It is ten to eleven and I have missed going to Matins. This annoys me because I believed them to be at the normal time of eleven, but I have come down from tidying up my private possessions in our room upstairs and discovered everyone gone off at ten thirty.

So I shall put on the radio morning service in a few minutes. We have a little radio belonging to Jim Cecil; it is white but otherwise like the one at Underdown.

I thought it was going to be bright and warm. But now it is lead grey and pools of water in the meadows at the valley

②

bottom beneath the house shine silver streaks. We have had some heavy rain during the week, but the sun has been intermittently bright and almost warm.

The difficulty about writing at the moment is that Gastrell who is in charge of the mess is pottering about with his vest rolled two inches above his sleeves and slopping gym-shoes, doing nothing, as far as I can see, but disturb me. However if I suggested that he would be mortally offended.

I got my laundry which you sent me; thank you for doing so. It had been torn open by the anonymous thieving hands of the post but as far as I could judge nothing had been removed. Pants and such are not very attractive.

Your letter came on Friday, which was good to get, even if it was written in a great hurry and also seemed to impute that my last week's performance

③

was too lengthy for happiness in the home or punctuality in train-catching.

We have been duty company this week which means that all the fatigues for Charles Quartermaster and all the odd and unpleasant jobs in the camp are found by us. The result is you do scarcely any collective training and get only a very few riflemen every now and then, whom you occupy in Driving ɤ Maintenance instruction or practice, Weapon training ɤ chit-chat from yourself.

The Howards have been on leave but are spending the holiday in their quarters, the one room and a passage which they occupy at the other end of the village. They are both in splendid order and their nicest and most charming selves. When, as Bill and I were saying, you see them now and

④

remember how we have seen them in the past it is a wonderful thing to contemplate!

Tony, Bill ɤ I have been down there twice for a party this week. Alan Young (Wykehamist, Bradfield master ɤ contemporary of Tony's, 29, games and our I.O) joined us one time, walking down from Battalion.

At two of the morning we had splendid omelettes with three eggs per person. This is in my view shame-making but undeniably pleasant. The economics of it I don't understand quite but believe that with the shortness of the petrol supply these isolated farms are not enabled to contact the public market and Government control to which they are supposed to sell.

Petrol is more rigidly controlled than last year. We are going very carefully indeed on our own mileage and it is a matter

⑤

of pride to economise.

When we get on to Company ɤ Battalion exercises it will clearly not be so easy. But the unnecessary journey on some official business and the perpetual shuffle to Bde ɤ Bn HQs have both been eliminated.

Bill and I walked down the valley on Thursday night to dine at Stonegrave, a valley S.E three miles. Here is a wealthy family who entertain lavishly though now having no servants. Bill's girl-friend lives here, one of the daughters of the house, if you can call her that possibly. They dangle at each other and have been going out to dine tête à tête for as long as I can remember without much further development!

She is 26 and runs the farm there

⑥

highly competently, to her own great profit and, I imagine, with regard to the milk produced, her country's gain.

The old boy owned a shipping line ɤ is deaf. He likes to be talked to down the trumpet on liquor, lawn-tennis (at which he was an expert) and fishin' (especially dry-fly). They were all rakes in their time as so many of the country gentry here were. We walked over the fields ɤ back by the road. The port was splendid. I am gradually getting back my sense of smell but slowly.

We had a medical examination in Duncombe Park the other day, conducted by the Bde L.F.A. This as a result of the numerous officers of the Bn being found physically wanting by accident in some way or another. I lied about my nose but was passed A. I believe that is the only category now - A1 is obsolete.

⑦

Bill's legs are very thin ɤ spindly after his operation for varicose v. but I believe he was OKayed too. It was a sadly humorous event that on being asked for a sample of my urine, I, uniquely, was unable to oblige as my subconscious mind went back to Oct 10.39 and the long queue of half dressed

volunteers at Stone Buildings where I was delayed two hours and filled to capacity with beer before any result could be obtained!

Happy though I am to be here and settled with such nice friends again, yet we must not regard the future as certain. This is the position.

1) Having volunteered once I am not going to withdraw my name inasmuch as it is there only

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now in the C.O's mind.

2) While I was away the names of a pool of officers was formed at Chiseldon from all Motor Bns in this country for service overseas as reinforcements. I am not on that list.

3) Disappointingly it does not seem likely that this division will go to war this spring or summer. The policy of maintaining field-force units at strength and leaving training rgts with casuals and hangers on of every description has ceased. Charles Keighley who was our brigadier left to scour them out in his capacity of Maj. Gen $^{i}/_{c}$ Tank training. The same is happening to Motor Training Bns, eg Chiseldon ϒ Tidworth (Rifle Bde). In the event we are getting a vast influx of semi-trained soldiers making us up to almost double strength. We shall have

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to bring them up to the standard of the present W. Establishment pls. How I don't know. We haven't enough vehicles for them and the platoons are full and they are a little backward or more.

Now of the Armd Divs. the 8th are under orders to go overseas, being the most advanced.

The 6th having trained during the winter for <u>combined</u> operations are moving to Scotland to continue this.

The 9th are the only <u>Cruiser</u> div in the country i.e. they are v.m. faster than the others ϒ wd seem to be more suited as a mobile anti-invasion armd striking force.

The Guards ϒ us are left. If the Guards do not outstrip us, and they are hot, we would seem to be

⑩

the next for active foreign service.

We can discount the 42nd ϒ any others who may be in elementary stages of training.

This all presupposes that no second front in depth is opened on the sea-bord of Europe this spring or summer, ie. Norway, France or the Low Countries.

So it looks like a long wait. I am not going to stick in an oar either way. There are things to be said for both courses but the object is ϒ shd be, to <u>fight</u> where one is <u>most effective</u>.

You have not sent me the form about Rachel Hancock. We have an older fellow here at Gilling called Hancock, John, whose family hold a monopoly of being judges to the Jockey Club!

⑪

I am physically in much better form than when I left you. After last week's biking I am brown ϒ weather beaten and have no sores!

In some ways Gloucester did me good, I see now. It widens the experience to get around.

much love always

from John

~ * ~

12th. Bn. THE KING'S ROYAL RIFLE CORPS,
(QUEEN'S WESTMINSTERS.)
At Lastingham Grange
12.4.42 Lastingham

This seems now to have become an annual visit! It being 14 Platoon's turn to go out and fend for itself on a 48 hours scheme I remembered the splendid time we had here last year, when we arrived in the pouring rain quite by accident, and on Thursday evening I came out here on a motor bike to see Mrs Maisey-Thompson and discover if we could possibly come here again. As she is 87 and her husband coming up for 90 I was by no means certain if, in spite of her staggering vitality she had survived the snows and ice of the winter. She had come to our cocktail party in September but I had not seen her since.

Coming up here that evening

②

the light on the hills, as it always is at this time of year, shining through ɤ between the last of the evening's shower clouds, gave the bracken and heather moors a copper and mauve gilding and the Wolds, away to the right down the hunting vale, bulging up above Malton, were silver coloured, being chalk. They always get worse snow than the Moor for some reason.

I arrived up here, and rang the bell and found a maid to answer me; last year they couldn't get one. And the old lady who is quite remarkable, remembered every detail about us and gave me some sherry and supper and everything was arranged.

Last year, you remember, we had White Scout cars but we shall never get any more of those now since the States have come to war. My four vehicles which, with their great boost gear, pulled out a two ton log from the bottom of the meadow over the way, to such advantage

③

of the villagers that we earned 10/- for the Prisoners of War - it would have cost the village much more than that to get a tractor from Kirkby Moorside - now those vehicles have long since disappeared into Headquarters Company as the C.O's radio cars and such-like luxuries, and this weekend I've got four Fords. These are useless trucks because the crown-wheels in the differential are always getting chawed up and the factory has admitted there is a flaw in the alloy. Two of my own are off the road and I've had to borrow a couple from Christopher Burton's pl to make me up for this weekend.

I've also got the carrier ɤ truck and ten men under a Sgt of the newly formed 3" Mortar detachment which

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every Company has.

Friday was a vehicle standstill so we moved off at one minute after midnight ie on Saturday morning.

I've got a very fat and comfortable second in command nowadays as there are so many officers about - he is called Jim Cecil, 27, in the publishing trade, related to all the lords and ladies of England, whose conversation is a perpetual cocktail party exchange, flitting sociably and never getting very far in, perfect manners, hugely fat and wears queer brown pants that are neither long nor short. I am supposed to make him work! He is married to a very pretty girl which seems odd when you look at him, like a female gorilla! Perhaps Mary will explain this?

Actually he has been charming and has protested that he is enjoying

⑤

himself as never before, which is gratifying.

We got here at one in the morning and it was good practice to harbour the vehicles quickly, organize a guard, get everyone tea from the containers we had brought with us, and put everyone rapidly and quietly to bed in the outhouses and barns, where bracken instead of straw strewed the flooring, and apples smelt sweet on the shelves.

Reveillé at 7.30 ɤ bkfst 8.30. I leave all that, after giving the orders, to the NCOs ɤ rfn. They are perfect organizers where eating, washing ɤ sweeping up are concerned. We eat by sections, cooking on our petrol cookers. I'm in Platoon HQ which includes the Sgt, my servant, D.R, driver, ɤ

⑥

2" Mortarman. We eat very well too.

After I had inspected the area we went out about 9.30 high up on to the Moors to do training. We worked really hard until 3.0 in the afternoon, as organized by me, and then came back to dinner. We left one man to peel spuds, boil water ɤ get things going against our return.

This house is without end or beginning. Long and low and early Georgian with a few later additions, it extends in perfect proportion on the slope over the village to the North Side. There is a garden of roses and croci and daffodils and odd corners. All the spring flowers and violets are out now. Above the house and scattered round are the larches and firs and above them the moor ɤ sheep.

I read a parish history this morning and discovered, what I never

⑦

knew before that sheep were only on the moor since the 12th century when the monks put them there. Before that there were none.

We had tea in the drawing room with Mrs M-Th. It is full of bric-à-brac, Victorian statues ɤ photos, gilt-edged chairs in the style of Louis Quinze, tortoise-shell cigarette boxes, Burman relics, portraits-cabinets. French windows let in the sun which makes the long L-shaped room sparkle and glint and wink in reflection. It is all out of time.

The old lady talks indefatigably, reads, smokes, chain-smoking, Cyprus cigarettes from a box of 1000 a time, brings out reminiscences and tells stories in

⑧

a never-ending flow of "routs ɤ seasons ɤ balls with dear Queenie ɤ so ɤ so". Later in the evening I found her digging and planting. She says she never worries at what time of year she plants.

Being so Conservative and highly connected with the North Country hunting kings and gentry, she, surprisingly perhaps, loathes "bloody Baldwin" ɤ his "dowdy, boring wife."

In the evening to the pub. All the rfn were as happy as could be ɤ with the piano were having a Cockney sing song. The Landlord, not to be outdone, got down to the piano and sung a series of broad Yorkshire songs with choruses that noone understood but every one sung.

Then bed in my sleeping bag. A foraging party in the afternoon managed to get 3½ dozen eggs so we had about two each for breakfast ɤ ration sausage which tasted very good.

⑨

Rest, I've ordered today, and tonight about three we shall get up and do a spot of river crossing about five miles from Oswaldkirk, send the trucks home ɤ walk back to breakfast in camp.

Last year I was alone ɤ I can't help thinking now that it was a bit of a responsibility for a very young and inexperienced officer to be sent off by himself after only a few weeks in the unit.

Now I can see what an amount I've learned in a year. I have a measure of experience for such situations but go on learning all the time.

It is sunny and spring. The country is glorious. I can see the moors rising in semicircles above me, even from the garden seat where I'm sitting.

⑩

It'll soon be dinner time.

Thank you, Mummy, for a v. nice letter with all the news in it, ɤ Mary, for a sensible one full of good reading.

I hope she has gone off well and recovered from her ailments. Everyone sounds in good order.

Do send me on those letters from the strange Siepmanns. I will post them straight back after reading.

Enough now.

Very much love from

John

~ * ~

D Coy
12th. Bn. THE KING'S ROYAL RIFLE CORPS,
19 (QUEEN'S WESTMINSTERS.)
~~16~~.4.42 Ampleforth

My dear Mummy ɤ Daddy,

I'm a little muddled with the dates because here time is dateless and as I've just sat down to write you a letter and dated the top I've realized that Mary's birthday must be in a couple of day's time. But yesterday I wrote to her + made no mention of it. So now I'll send her a present of cash in this. I've had no opportunity to get into town so I can't buy her a present in kind and anyway I don't know what sort of thing she likes these days. But at least I'm not going to be as unworldly as HAS who, I believe, sent her 10/- last month! I'm still

②

pretty poor and am in fear lest I do not get paid next month either. As long as Mary spends it I don't mind giving her money.

Today seems likely to be the hottest of a series of wonderful days which started off last weekend when I wrote to you from Lastingham. There has been just enough whip in the East wind to combine with the sun and send everyone's faces early brown. In the orchard to the West of Osw. Hall the daffodils are thick and waving gently, and there are lots of grape hyacinths and other flowers I don't know the names of. Mrs G.Smith showed me a thrush's nest in the hedge with three eggs, when I walked round the garden with her yesterday after tea. I suppose the

③

Underdown garden is in bloom too.

From the really good full news-value letter I got from DMW I gathered the impression that the whole family were on full steam for gaiety, here, there and everywhere. If there are gaps or lulls from dissipation I shd be grateful for individual amplification and enlargement on these matters; the lowdown on holiday life from every angle is what I want.

As for life here, it progresses uneventfully on the whole but with every moment needing the correct answer and every event fraught with chaotic disorganization if mishandled, and resultant rocket from those higher than us.

We go down to the office and read the official correspondence changing every training directive for the last

④

month and doing this switch regularly enough. Then out on some sort of Company exercise or platoon scheme; we are still at platoon training officially for the second year and that has now been prolonged.

There are variations; yesterday we had a full Company inspection by the C.O. We wasted two full days without training in polishing boots (which is forbidden by a Northern Command order) blancoing and fitting equipment. At least we did not have to clean brasses. But we did have to wear F.S.MO which you see worn by unfortunates travelling in trains, that is big pack on the back, haversack slung on the left ɤ water bottle on the right, gas cape ɤ respirator at the alert. Probably it was a good thing to get all tidied up and put the correct things in packs which are a tight and awkward fit, but we

⑤

shall never fight in all that paraphernalia - we only wear light equipment to carry ammunition reserves and respirator slung. However the C.O. is a great redcoat ɤ a bad man and if it wasn't for him we should probably approve. Anyway a compulsory cleanout is always good.

We had the satisfaction of being told that our Company was far and away the best and that our area was also the cleanest.

During the week the C.O. came down to dine with us to watch our night operations and after dinner we gave the alarm to show off. My platoon's job is to get trucks fully loaded, packs, amn and all and drive up to a terrace in the middle of

⑥

the village, there to stand by as immediate attack force. We were on parade in six minutes and ready to move which must have astonished the CO but he showed no satisfaction at all which is typical of him. Funnily enough the Company had not been forwarned although a number had had a hunch about it. My driver was in the Malt Shovel with a pint before him when the motor horns went off. We then went off to attack the 27th Lancers, a squadron of whom were in bivouac in Hovingham High Wood. We had a good evening because the Boche were dropping flares and bombs a few miles away on one of the aerodromes in the flat York vale and also at the end of our attack we

⑦

found the most splendid hospitality from the Lancers who are men of discrimination and whisky flowed free to warm the chills of crawling. This squadron was Lord Inchcape's and we are very friendly with them because Bill knows them well. We had another battle later on in the week.

We heard later that the bombs had landed direct on a bacon factory on the road to York. I thought inevitably of Mary's old friends, Harris bros.

I have written to Bow but Jilly will have to excuse me at the moment because, I gather, she is at home and has opportunity for hearing news from me. However I will do a deal with

⑧

her and if she writes to me I'll undertake to answer it.

There is no more news about our move except that it has probably been postponed for a fortnight into May. We shall definitely not be coming South as we had hoped but the other brigade may be.

Really this letter contains little or no news but I cannot help it. Life is dull.

Much love from

John.

~ * ~

D Coy
12th. Bn. THE KING'S ROYAL RIFLE CORPS,
(QUEEN'S WESTMINSTERS.)

3.5.42

My dear Mummy & Daddy,

A fine selection of enclosures came from you on Friday, the day all letters from Underdown that I get arrive. But one thing puzzled me. I wrote a good long letter of approx 10 sides, as usual, last Sunday after tea and then on Monday I remembered the shoe-trees & sent a post-card to ask you to post them to me. However you write of my having spoken of a letter written last Sunday as though it never arrived with you. That sort of thing makes me very angry because I

②

leave my letters for Walker, my servant, that colossal warrior of indescribable idleness, to post. He certainly charged me for the postage, so I particularly want to know if it arrived. The trouble is he's got a girl in Kirby Moorside.

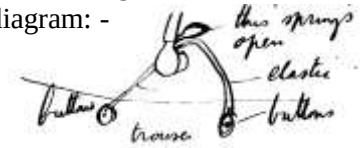
Moreover you haven't sent my shoe-trees. I suppose you are spring cleaning, or is that over by now? in any case the prawns will be taking their schoolward journeys just now and you will be busy sorting out the house. Now I want some more things if you will send them.

1) As already asked, 2 prs shoe-trees
2) My cricket boots & gloves.
(<u>no flannels</u> yet or pads or bat)
3) My three Bush shirts for shirt

③

sleeve order.

4) If APW is in Austin Reed or Jermyn St, wd he get me some braces on the clicker model that are the only wearable type. I'll draw you a diagram: -



It is a poor drawing now I contemplate it but the idea will be clear. It saves an enormous amount of time, this kind, especially for one who rushes all morning administration to be punctual at the office, like I do. Possibly you might get refill elastics only, if so buy them

④

all up. I've just undone my coat & see it's called ORIGINAL MIKADO!

I think that is all for this week Modom.

Today we've had a fine series of affairs. First Church Parade which is always nice is spite of the dreadfullnessness of the local parson. Then I went to Bn as security officer to listen to the 2nd in Command. He told us

1) That on Exercise PALM (the first one after I came back here when I was on a bike and we slept three nights out) where we harboured the first night, there was a real live German spy in the very farm we were in, complete with radio. He has since been

⑤

caught.

2) He read us a <u>translation</u> from a German intelligence summary, which was issued to every G offr, dated six weeks after the termination of BUMPER, the largest exercise ever held in the British Isles; it was held last October and we were umpires on it. This German summary contained a complete account of 1) the order of battle of the two sides, 2) the commanders and directing staff, 3) the lessons learned and the failures - successes

⑥

4) the establishment of Infantry Armd Divs at the time.

With the exception of their belief that we (II Armd Div) took part, all this was accurate!

It is enough to shake you. On the other hand we have considerable details of the German Army, their establishments and their equipment, and we make a study of it and a point of instructing the rfn on such matters every week.

After lunch we had a tense football match, officers v Sgts. We played the batmen and drew a fortnight ago; I believe that I forgot to tell you about it then.

It was a boiling hot afternoon and there was a huge audience in

⑦

summer frocks. We surprisingly beat the thuggish sgts who are all about as broad as they are long ɤ as rough as they come.

This evening the Colonels baby was christened at Oswaldkirk ɤ there was a party afterwards to celebrate. Dalby became astonishingly affable for some reason, perhaps mellowed by the bottle of sherry (which alas I missed) and the whisky ɤ gin which he provided for us to drink the brat's health in. There was also the most enormous chocolate iced cake, at least two feet across and of pre-

⑧

war richness. To my disappointment I was only offered a piece about ½ inch square which appears to be the convention in these matters. The cake was subsequently removed by the Mess Sgt, resplendent in patrols, who came from Ampleforth on purpose, ɤ its chocolate icing was still, unhappily, almost immaculately intact.

It has been a beautiful evening. It's strange to think of us dining in broad sunlight until September.

Yesterday the Gatty-Smiths took Tony ɤ me to York to tea ɤ to see Dumbo, the Disney cartoon about a small elephant.

York took a pretty fair bashing

⑨

the other night but it's amazing how many bombs can drop without really ruining a town. There were immense crowds, as usual, on the streets in summer finery. The station was badly hit but, I believe, the trains have been running normally since. The strange thing is that (this is true) the signalman ran one of the night expresses to the North into the wrong platform by mistake and the platform where it ought to have run in was directly struck and demolished.

The fat, stuffy, pretentious Station Hotel was completely missed

⑩

which in my view was a pity.

The film was sentimental and rather vulgar, I thought, in a suburban way; the fantastic beauty of Snow White was not there but a few shots rivalled the old form. However the Cinema was so hot that I fell asleep during the middle and am, therefore in no position to criticize!

Bow wrote me a good letter during the week. Will you thank him for me if he's around and assure him that I'll repay it with interest.

This time last week I was having supper at Stonegrave with

⑪

Bill and his girl-friend's family. I talk to the deaf old boy who used to be owner of a shipping line, a tennis star and a rare old dog. We walked across the fields and back along the rd. We found five or six nests, nearly all with the bird sitting and mostly thrushes.

Mrs Lunt (Willoughby's sister) wrote to me very charmingly but I could not get over to Ripon this weekend and in any case a three mile walk followed by a three hour bus ride to get only two hours, just, there and then the

⑫

whole dreary journey back is scarcely worth while ϒ until I get a chance of a lift (which will be never) I shan't be able to go.

AJWB talked about his visit to you and I'm going to read you a severe lecture both of you on yr behaviour to him although he is an awkward person to treat with ϒ I can appreciate it.

Now he's got the impression that you were lashing in a violent attack on the public schools which he felt was at least inconsiderate when Bow was still at Ch and that while he was interested in what you said he got a very strange impression from your talk. I gather you held

⑬

forth about behaviour, manners, washing, tidiness and etc which Ch has failed to teach, doubtless, to your sons! You cited Eton as a contrary example which is laughable for Henry Howard springs to mind ϒ you are going, broadly speaking, as far as Ch. is concerned, on Bow ϒ me.

The subject of the discussion is not so important now as the way it gets around. AJWB is most indiscreet, acrimonious, bitter ϒ I think (from his handwriting this is also born out with those thread

⑭

like connections) hysterical. These in addition to numerous other very charming and attractive qualities.

Now Bow has got a wide-spread name for himself ϒ is a bad advert for Ch among the prim and proper Guildfordians with this behaviour antic of unwashedness and looking like a tramp. For my own part I think he is doing admirably well in general and don't give a damn for his looks as merely a manifestation of his age as long as he is made to suffer personally by inconvenience when he doesn't put on his denims for bike maintenance and ruins his trousers.

However these stories spread

⑮

quicker than the heath-fires we shall soon be putting out, worse luck and Tony told me of one who cited to RB (unknowing or not?) "Martin Waterfield" as a bad example to Ch through his looks.

Now it seems odd to him at least that you shd rail against Ch. for not teaching him to be tidy.

This is clearly inconsistent on Tony's part ϒ I pointed it out to him but what will go back to the gossip of housemasters like Scott ϒ his cronies will be that "you can see nothing good in Ch. ϒ condemn the place for the looks of yr own

⑯

son. It is merely a matter of balance ϒ proportion ϒ values. He got you wrong but he is dangerous ϒ I thought you knew.

I have not emulated George Nathaniel Curzon who wrote letters of 100 pages to his wife from India on inconsequential matters, but nearly so!

I am here almost alone $^{i}/_{c}$ the camp until Thursday next week while the Coy are at Strensall firing. Tony will be here also running a carrier course but will be out most of the time.

Let me know about last week's letter. Very much love

from John About time AP wrote me

~ * ~

D Coy
12th. Bn. THE KING'S ROYAL RIFLE CORPS,
(QUEEN'S WESTMINSTERS.)
10.5.42 Pickering
Yorks.

My dear Mummy & Daddy,

This is the opening of a new epoch. We moved from Oswaldkirk this afternoon at 3.30 & I'm writing to you now from the rather dingy parlour, red-plush and gilt frames, of the most presentable public of Thornton-le-Dales; this is a couple of miles beyond Pickering on the Scarborough road and is supposed to be one of the most beautiful villages of Yorkshire, second only to Hutton-le-Hole. What I can

②

see of it from this long low room with windows facing the East Wind and the blowing dusts, on a level with the street, it is not unprepossessing. Of course it is heart-breaking to leave Oswaldkirk Hall where we have all been so happy and comfortable but all good things come to an end & are none the less delightful because of it.

It was rumoured that we were going to Pickering a month or so back and then the rumour was negatived, all the more vehemently, I believe, because it was engineered to lull our senses and deceive us into relaxation. We have moved here today as if to war with

③

all our trucks and carriers loaded with G.1098 stores only, that is, what we take in the event of an alarm and the remainder bundled and labled to be brought along later by the RASC three-tonners, instead of remaining under lock and key until a subsidence of the warfare.

As you know we have been at camp on Strensall ranges all last week. I was at Oswaldkirk for the first few days in charge of the camp and then went out to Strensall on Thursday morning

④

early.

It was splendid on the ranges and the Company enjoyed every bit of it. We had a couple of tents for messing and otherwise lived out; there were from three to five degrees of frost every night and the grass looked hoar and rimed when we climbed out of our blankets; however I was never cold at all. Strensall is flat and sandy with military area written all over it but with views of Sheriff Hutton Castle and the walls and York Minster contrasting rather strangely with it's suburban golf course appearance. It is in fact

⑤

exactly like West Hill golf course. We were camped on grass around a football field where we had great games in the evening in gym-shoes, platoon v platoon.

When we got back on Saturday we found the battalion gone to Pickering, as we had heard bruited abroad, and that we were about to go. So we packed up and waited sadly and said goodbyes. Then stand-to came at 8 am this morning and Bill Deedes with our advance party arrived

⑥

here only three hours before everyone even in the battalion had seen this place.

The Dw RASC were our predecessors and they are always most unattractive people to follow but we've got settled into cleaner Nissen huts than at Osw'k with a maximum of efficiency and a minimum of delay.

It's now five past seven and the day, as far as I'm concerned, has no further uses!

I'll write later ɤ let you know the form. I've had no letters from you this week nor got the things I asked for to be sent. I hope everything is O.K by you.

v much love from John

~ * ~

D Coy
12th. Bn. THE KING'S ROYAL RIFLE CORPS,
(QUEEN'S WESTMINSTERS.)

17.5.42 Pickering

My dear Mummy ɤ Daddy,

I forgot O.S' birthday and I would have forgotten AP's too if I had not been reminded by Mummy's letters on Friday. It was too late to buy a present and I could not buy one in Scarborough either because everything seemed so dull. But if a list could be sent me I might choose then and as Scarborough is still running at pre-war rates in many ways something might successfully be procured.

Your letter for which you were anxious arrived after I had written last week and the delay was only

②

caused by our move. I had entirely forgotten about the shirts but of course that is O.K by me. Let Bow take the ones you wish and you buy me some decent new ones at Simpsons or Austin Reed. As long as I don't have the trouble of doing it it'll be swell. However some coupons will be needed and if you let me know what the shop requires I'll send them. I have not used up any of mine for the period up to May 23rd. and I only hope they can be kept and are valid after that date. Thank you for the shoe-trees but you only sent one pair; I am sure that I own more than one pair but as I shall fairly soon be south

③

we can wait until then unless you discovered some more lying idle during your spring-cleaning.

I hope AP had a perfect birthday and that the garden and weather were suitable for contentment. I don't think 53 is very old - time seems to have stood fairly still since the war. I suppose Bow came over but noone else which is rather sad.

And as for your descriptions of O.S and his family party - it is truly lamentable that for an old man at over eighty you can't all get together and be agreable! The R. Jones picnic must have been a wonderful spectacle.

④

We have done nothing much but settle in this week. It is warm here but there is always a wind and I rather long for the melting spring of the south. Bill is gone to Northallerton on a Senior Umpire's course, than which nothing could have been conceived more dull, he writes. Tony (who has, I believe, written to you) ɤ Brown have gone off for two days to reconnoitre our week's march when the Company is going to be let loose over the North of England with 800 miles of potential travelling, to beat up all and sundry on the way.

We have been left in this rather sordid pub where flies buzz against the window-panes and dust is

⑤

thick on the mirrors. The room we have as mess has one large window facing onto the village cross-roads at ground level. We see everything and are similarly seen. We get the sun after mid-day which is the gloomy thing about the room. The villagers are very nice and of every type from old farming yeoman to double-gin-and-water- Boer-war colonels to the broken-down squire (mostly beer). There is a splendid pub over the way which we ought to be in. The Howards are living there until they can get into the house they've earmarked and they get cream and honey every day.

The country round here is even

⑥

more striking than round Osw'k. There are huge rifts in the hills, thickly wooded with streams running down them, sometimes trout-filled; that is not unlike the edges of Dartmoor but here there are strange bumps and sugar-loafs of hill where you find a village perched, quite isolated. They all have grey walls and mellow brick tiles and are like the people weather beaten and dour but kindly smiling. The villagers all live on buns and pastry and one can get wonderful cakes and hot tarts and shortbreads straight from the oven, with real butter and jam in the most forbidding-looking cottage.

On Monday, just a day after we

⑦

had arrived, the rain was sogging down and the wind brutal even here in the dale but we had to send a platoon up to fight the fires on the high moor.

So I went off after tea and got right up on the ridge between Farndale and Rosedale past the old railway to Rosedale mines to a point 1400 feet up where there is one solitary building High Blakey House, a pub. The fire extended for eight miles and had burnt a huge area already but was now only smoking through the rain. The wind was so strong that our tin hats were blown

⑧

off our heads and that wind made it necessary to watch the burning. At times we couldn't see more than five yds and then there would be a crack in the driving mist and there was the most terrific sight of all the dales, miles below.

The birds were roasting as they sat and I found plenty of fried eggs in pools of peat water.

There was one woman in the pub which is on the site of a Roman building and is itself in parts 350 years old. It is haunted by the dead miner pushed over the cliff by his drunken mate after the Saturday booze in the heyday

⑨

of the mines.

She had been a journalist and then married; her husband died in 6 months and she had founded a Nursery advice bureau and on babies or somesuch. This had proved lucrative until the war when she was blitzed and had come here to Blakey. She had travelled all over Europe and, I think, was a little mad after her winter in the snow when she climbed out of the skylight to feed her one cow. She bought the place from a madwoman anyway.

I slept extended in my

⑩

sleeping bag in front of the fire on the hearth stone and the riflemen slept in the hay in the barn. We worked on the fire in the morning and then came home as it seemed safe, and bounded by the railway.

I am coming to Winterbourne Gunner on the plain by Salisbury on June 8 - 19 and shall have leave after that. It is the Army gas school there and a very interesting and thorough course so it will be a good holiday. There will also be Salisbury races!

Changes and movement impend and anything may happen. I can't

⑪

tell you more really and I don't know much. The thing is not to get over-attached to anything ɤ be efficient at whatever task is yours and keep an equable mind.

I'll let you know more details of leave etc nearer the time.

What about going to Cornwall for 5 days from Winterbourne ɤ calling on WGW on the way back for a couple of nights and that would leave three nights at home?

Much love from

John PTO

[12]

Thank you for the Siepmann horrors! I return them dutifully with the hope that you continue to send them to me, in spite of it all.

Bow informs me that I am suffering the same fate which really is abominable behaviour by HAS.

~ * ~

[Postcard to
Mrs AP.Waterfield, ~~Underdown, Tangier Road~~ Mullion Cove Hotel, Mullion, S. Cornwall
postmarked Thornton le Dales Pickering York 615pm 4 Ju 42]

4.6.42

D Coy
12 KRRC.
Pickering

Missed the 8.30 as you saw ɤ had magnificent row with sta. master about porters or at least a barrow. He apologised in the end. 8.50 left me 20 minutes for Waterloo ɤ I just made it with the assistance of a magnificent porter at W'loo ɤ in spite of a female at Kings X. See Punch this week for illustration of my behaviour there - I loaded ɤ pushed ɤ gave the girl up for walking behind! Arrived here for tea ɤ got nice billet where sun comes in at morning share house with Bill. Last night Tony, Bill ɤ I walked to Ebberston ɤ sat on the pub bench outside in the evening light ɤ talked ɤ drank beer ɤ laughed until dark. Then we came rolling home. They are both v. depressed but cheered up. On Monday probably the 14 ITC, Dorchester but don't write until you hear definitely. That sounds ominous but I can't think it will be long this time. Hope you enjoy Cornwall ɤ the sun is a lovely as it is this morning.

[sideways at top:]

love fr John

~ * ~

D Coy
12th. Bn. THE KING'S ROYAL RIFLE CORPS,
(QUEEN'S WESTMINSTERS.)

7.6.42

Pickering
York

My dear Mummy ɤ Daddy,

This, rather sadly, will probably be the last letter you will get from this address and unit. It's Sunday afternoon in Thornton-le-dale and the wind has got up and cooled off the broiling heat a bit. I do hope you have been having as lovely weather in Cornwall as we have had here. The tar melts and everyone goes around in shirt-sleeves. The old boys sit at the cross-roads under

②

the shady chestnuts, just coming out, and meditate, smoking, all day long immobile. You can buy endless homemade ice-cream from a shop over the way.

But it's cooler now and all the flaps and speculations of the last few days have been cleared up. I, myself, have not been worried by them and have spent my time idling around but there is a general sort of tension, engendered inevitably by the departures of over half the Company and it will be a good thing when we are off. It's pretty secret so

③

do not publicize the fact that tomorrow we go to Dorchester, No 14 I.T.C where you will, I hope, be safe to write to me until further notice.

Only the 4 officers going from this Company are destined for there; the commander of the officers and all the rfn will be going to Tidworth. This does not of course mean that we are not going to rejoin them, either at the port of embarkation, or on the boat. But it will be pleasant to be independent. I have, naturally enough, absolutely no idea when we will be off but hope it will be at the end of the week.

It will be hugely pleasant to have no responsibilities and I

④

know my way around these ITC's well enough now to have a high old time. I'm afraid, however, that I shall have to get out my bedding which I don't have to here as I'm in furnished billets.

I've lost 1 pr of boots ɤ a groundsheet but have got everything else here that I left, including my khaki side-hat which I found on Henry Howard's head! Have you got my ground-sheet at Glfd?

We have had some splendid farewell parties, almost every night in fact and I've scarcely

⑤

been to bed since I got back here.

I expect Cornwall is glorious; write and tell me at 14 I.TC, Dorchester, what it's like.

We have an appallingly long journey tomorrow and will have to pay for our taxis which should not be!

I'll write tomorrow night probably a p.c..

v m love. fr.

John

~ * ~

love to WGW
too.

14 IT.C.
Dorchester

12th. Bn. THE KING'S ROYAL RIFLE CORPS,
(QUEEN'S WESTMINSTERS.)

10.6.42

Dear Mummy ɤ Daddy

This is Gloucester repeated, I'm afraid. There are no signs or indications of our future. Yesterday with the three I am with from the Company to Weymouth which looked lovely. We came back for dinner but will go again.

Your letter, dated Saturday has just arrived, having been sent on from Pickering. We had some sad farewells on Monday & a long journey here; we were over twelve

②

hours travelling and have claimed 23/- each as expenses which will probably land us in jug.

You may safely send letters, polyphotos etc to me here and I will make arrangements for anything which comes after I've left here to be sent back to Underdown when you can judge what to do with it.

Dorchester is a pleasant sunny quiet market town with no life at all. Who will win the Derby? The porter at the Antelope thinks he knows.

I've just read Govt's despatches in full which are here lying in the Mess. No wonder we were driven out of France; we deserved nothing else.

Enjoy your holidays - vml fr. John

~ * ~

[Postcard to
Mrs AP.Waterfield, Underdown, Tangier Road, Guildford, Surrey
postmarked Weymouth Dorset 8pm 2 Jne 1942]

12.6.42 14 ITC
DORCHESTER

Thanks for your post-card of the sea. I'm so glad you've had such a glorious holiday. Hope you got a letter sent care of WGW to arrive this (Friday) morning. I too have been by the sea, at Weymouth, which, while unattractive for a real holiday, provides a splendid view of the chalky Dorset coast. Mostly to the films to provide occupation. We four fr. D Coy are together on draft which is good & friendly though we haven't got our own rfn, worse luck. No news. After I leave here you may write every week at usual to 187125 2/lt JPW KRRC
RBAGF
c/o A.P.P 1915 until I let you know a

[sideways at top:]

fresh one. & vml John

~ * ~

14 I.T.C
Dorchester
12th. Bn. THE KING'S ROYAL RIFLE CORPS,
(QUEEN'S WESTMINSTERS.)

17.6.42

Dear Mummy & Daddy,

Thanks for the p.c sent from Exeter. Still here, you see, and no further news, worse luck. It's an exact repetition of February because, as then with the Devons, another draft of K.S.L.I. who are here with us, are leaving here tomorrow.

We have nothing else to do but keep the rfn fairly amused & fit. I've been playing some squash here & at the I.T.C. We had to brush chicken straw off the court first

②

which turned out to be in very good condition. We would play tennis now that the sun has come back if we could get any balls.

I went to explore Bournemouth yesterday and had quite fun though I could not get back until the 2.16 a.m train from Bournemouth this morning, getting into my sleeping bag at 4 o'clock. I shall go for a quiet walk in the fields this afternoon I think, or by the sea at Weymouth.

Please do not bother about my ground sheet. By wily diplomacy I have procured a brand new beauty from the Q.M here.

③

I would, however, be grateful if you wd post my Spirit of Man which you gave me. I meant to pack it but carelessly forgot.

I'm so glad your holiday was a success. Write and let me know you got on with W.GW and any news from Underdown.

We've got an ex-regular Welsh Guardsman as servant waiting to be invalided out and I've never known my belongings so clean before. Of course he is the most stupid man ever as well (this to justify rifle meth-

④

ods!) but had the astonishing luck to back the second and third of the Oaks, 'alf a dollar each way, which is more than I did. I wonder how Jock Cairns made out over the Newmarket meeting.

I must go out into the sunshine. The atmosphere and people in this mess are nauseating.

Much love from

John .

~ * ~

14 I.T.C
Dorchester
12th. Bn. THE KING'S ROYAL RIFLE CORPS,
(QUEEN'S WESTMINSTERS.)

Wednesday[64]

Dear Mummy & Daddy,

Thanks for your post-cards which come with cheering regularity. I hope you will send me those letters you promised and also my poly-photos if they have arrived. They are certainly due by now having been taken over three weeks ago.

Life here is worse than appalling. I may as well let you know the worst now. We shall not sail for at least a month,

②

and, in my view, we shall be lucky to do so then.

On Sunday I was in Weymouth in the cinema when my name was flashed on the screen to come back here (I am very proud of that bit although they got my name wrong!) and I found a colossal flap on in this place when I returned.

About 15 60th officers then left that night, less their rfn and less 4 Rifle Brigade officers who had the same draft index number. We were then told on Monday what I wrote above.

③

The whole affair and the atmosphere of this place are so depressing that I really am too sour to write any more. We are not even allowed out of the barracks without signing our names in about five

[64] 14 June 1942 was Sunday. This is probably Wednesday 17 June.

places. Movement and Control are nuts judging from the orders that come in. They never get the right number of officers and always send them wrongly.

Much love from

John

~ * ~

[Postcard to
Mrs AP.Waterfield, Underdown, Tangier Road, Guildford
postmarked Dorchester Dorset 1pm 19 Jne 1942]

19.6.42 14 ITC
Dorchester

I'm afraid you will have been rejoicing, for my sake, in the belief that I had gone off at last. But no, I've been too fed up to write.

This place is nauseating ɤ we shall be here for at least a month now with no guarantee of anything even then.

It is dumb, dull, unimaginative and far worse than Gloucester. There will be no leave.

I'll write on Sunday
vml John

[sideways at top:]

I'll send C.A.S. letter back OK. Thanks for sending it.

~ * ~

14 I.T.C
Dorchester
12th. Bn. THE KING'S ROYAL RIFLE CORPS,
(QUEEN'S WESTMINSTERS.)

21.6.42

My dear Mummy ɤ Daddy,

I will seize this opportunity after tinned ham breakfast, eaten in solitary KRRC glory because of our lateness, to tell you I'm still alive while my food is digesting. Then I've promised to play squash with Peter Cagby though it seems out of place on this gloriously glaring hot morning. He says that he wants to take the beer out of him so I shall at least perform some service.

If we can only get two more rackets and if the town is not too

②

absurdly puritanical we shall have a double at tennis this afternoon. We play on a beautiful pair of grass courts in Dorchester's public park ɤ have had some splendid singles during the week.

I'm sorry to disappoint you but I believe I may have leave again, if only to give us something to do. It won't be for over a week but I'll let you know when exactly as soon as I know. The point is that I believe I remember you saying you were going away so will you please tell me what your plans are for the next few weeks.

We have spent the last 7 days in humbug and procras-

③

tination. Humbug in that we try to kid ourselves we cannot do any proper work here and I think in some people's case that they still long to go overseas. Procrastination in that we hang about finding excuses to put off the evil day of organizing work.

Really one can't be detached but I like to think that as long as the riflemen are kept clean, ϒ healthy from exercise and are allowed reasonable freedom to go out they are satisfied and that is all that is needed for them. We

④

give them P.T (with the staff here) football, swimming, cross-country running and a ceremonial parade for the C.O here every Saturday, this last the sort of thing they haven't done for three years but a regular institution in the I.T.C.

I've found this letter again. Yesterday I went to Salisbury Races - we stood going all the way in the 'bus - arrived about 12. Had a glorious lunch, salmon sandwiches and Guinness in the members enclosure. Then racing in the sunlight and back to tea with friends we met who live in Salisbury ϒ know the Tyldens - name of Rawlins[65]

~ * ~

21.6.42 14 I.T.C
Dorchester

My dear Mummy ϒ Daddy,

I wrote you a letter this morning ϒ now I've lost it. I'll go down to the billet in a few moments ϒ see if I can find it.

There is nothing to say otherwise at all. I'm completely fed up but I'm not dead, hurt or ill and so have little or nothing to complain of.

In Weymouth last Sunday I was at tea in a nauseating hotel called the Gloucester, on a balcony overlooking the sea and the front when I met your friend

②

Mrs Nesling from Hodgsonites with a very dull O.C who is on this same business in the Rifle Brigade. I didn't recognise her at all and had to be told afterwards, but as far as I know I never saw her at Cheltenham at all.

⑤

Continued from other letter[66]

then dinner at the Officers Club where we had to pretend we were members and a hitch-hike back in four successful stages with a drink at the Crown in Blandford where we were invited to go up to

our "hitchee's" house and did.

Splendid day altogether. I'm very sad at all this. Looks as if we're being beaten in Libya.

[65] not to spoil the fun or anything, but this continues half-way down p2 of the following letter.
[66] the handwriting deteriorates markedly from here.

My leave seems likely to be from the 3rd - 12th of July. Can't say I really long for it as all these people seem to but still. I wonder what will happen to us then. Can A.P. find out from anyone in the W.O?

vml from John ..

Anyway it's

an entire waste so far as training goes. We're going BACKWARDS all the time.

~ * ~

23.6.42 14 I.TC
Dorchester

Today Mary's letter came by breakfast, intended to cheer me up which it did pretty successfully. However, she mentions 1) some photos which I've never seen or heard of. If she means the Polyphotos, I've consistently asked you to send them but have had no reply about their whereabouts. If she means the photos she took before I went away I shd like to see or have prints of any successful results of these. In any case nothing has arrived here for me

②

of that nature.

2) My painting things. No, it's a nice idea but it's absolutely no use in the Army even if one gets away as I did today.

DMW mentions a fresh letter from CAS which I'd like to see if I may. I sent back the other one which bore clear evidence, to my mind, of ego-centric insanity!

Today I and Peter Procter, with all our rfn otherwise occupied, took the day off. We started after breakfast in the haze which

③

gives promise of a glorious day, and walked along the Roman road towards the West and after about four miles got a lift to Bridport. We had morning coffee there in a rather scrubby place and also bought some biscuits to supplement our haversack ration which the damned A.T.S make for us in the Mess, so soused in sauces of the lower commercial vintages as to be inedible. Then we tried to walk towards the sea but got involved in queues of Canadians

④

with life-belts on, powering down to the coast and learned soon that the whole place was a prohibited area for the day owing to invasion exercises. So we trudged back to the Lyme road and kept moving. Soon enough we were picked up by a local G.P. and put down in Chideock, some five miles out, where in the local pub over some draft cider we learned that there was a beach for bathing ɤ a pub a mile down the road to the sea. So we went, stopping on the

⑤

way to buy the best and largest pair of milk-shakes I've seen in years. We found a pebbly beach and a deep blue sea, and got right in, out of our depth in a few strides. Away to sea there were some hundred craft from what looked like great liners, to destroyers, tugs and smaller cargo-boats and they stayed until late afternoon when they steamed away to the horizon ɤ over out of sight. How sad that we are missing all that sort of

⑥

thing. It makes me furious to think of it.

We bathed again, better if possible, and then had tea in the pub. We hitched back to a roadhouse on the high down between Bridport and Dorchester ɤ had an excellent dinner there. About

an hours walking and a couple of lifts brought us back in the evening sun to this awful place but it was a glorious day.

My leave is Wednesday July 1st for eight days.

vml from John

~ * ~

28.6.42 14 I.T.C
Dorchester

Thank you and Mary for your letters. Mary mentions a letter she sent to Pickering which contained photographs. All my mail is supposed to be forwarded to this place from Yorkshire but I have no means of telling on what date her letter was written so it's difficult to check. But I shall be sad to lose the photos. I imagine she has the negatives so let her get me fresh prints and I will pay for them. The letter is a loss but not all that much of one.

I shall come on leave on Wednesday next, either in time for

②

lunch or for tea and I think I shall not come back here until the following Friday.

Yesterday after parading about the square in the barracks for the C.O's drill parade which takes place every Saturday morning here, Peter Proctor & I went off for the day. We went to Charmouth and bathed and lay in the sun. Then we walked over the high sandy cliffs and round a chasm in the pathway caused by a landslide and over quadruple Dannert (concertina wire) erected by the military which we negotiated with care to

③

not hurt our Service dresses and down through the firs to Lyme Regis. This is a poky little hole and we were too late for tea. Nor could we get dinner in any of the dreary looking hotels. It's funny how places vary - some are overjoyed at guests and some reject them to starve. As we walked up out of the town, looking for food, we saw a Private Hotel tucked away among trees. We were bold, tried the bell and got O.K for a meal. It was a good dinner in a sort of super boarding house

④

atmosphere, old pairs of ladies and husbands & wives on leave all in a very small dining room.

We started hitching back & got to Bridport and found a drunken Army officer who took us in his W.D truck (that sort of thing would not be done in Northern Command) to Askers Road where we met some people we knew and stayed with their party but did not dance because we wanted to make certain of getting the ten miles back.

Christopher & Peter Cagbey are on leave so as I am in charge I must make out a program for next week! v ml John

~ * ~

[Envelope to
Mrs AP. Waterfield, ~~Un~~Garden House Hotel, Bellevue, Cambridge
not postmarked, unfranked 2½d stamp]
[back flap of envelope:]

if undelivered to :-
Underdown, Tangier Rd, Guildford

7.13.42 14 ITC
Dorchester

It's now five minutes to three of this sunny Monday afternoon ɤ by five I shall be in a train making for Liverpool ɤ the boat. Let's hope it really is the goods; I'm sure that it is the best thing and I'm glad to go. It's not at all any sort of unreal atmosphere and I can't work up sentimental sadness or mad excitement. I feel as placid as an old cow looks ɤ equable withal. Others are variously distressed ɤ tensed which surprises me. The rfn are gay ɤ undisciplined and mostly have very sore heads fr. the last

②

few nights' liquor.

I'm rather tired because finished up by doing umpires to a silly H.G. ɤ Brigade exercise in the countryside round which meant no sleep on Saturday night - ɤ on Friday I had a mad party in Weymouth finishing up at 3 am with some officers of a quite eccentric battalion of K.S.L.I who used their vehicles, so I gather, every night for this sort of affair. The Bn 2nd in cmnd was dead drunk in front of the truck I was in. 2 majors were humorously drunk at the back with me - the messing

③

officer was fighting drunk. I was sober but very amused indeed! We had enough evidence there to have the whole Bn court-martialled. I didn't know people did that sort of thing still in the Army - if the country knew, or the D. Mirror, they wd be lynched.

On Saturday evening the H.G. were great fun ɤ I wavered in favour of a citizen army à la Wintringham. They were so human ɤ friendly ɤ the country pub atmosphere was happy. I think too they'd account for a German

④

if needful ɤ that's all that matters. My reason is pro-Wintringham ɤ my feelings pro-professionals - probably both together are the best for a fighting country.

I've written to you at the King's Arms or something like that - on Thursday that was after I got here, dutiful as usual - but as it was the wrong address anyway I don't suppose you got it ɤ have been anxious. I'm sorry.

I shall not write to let anyone know I've gone at last but shall fade off quietly. You might let anyone know who asks. I've sent a parcel

⑤

of 3 books to Underdown 2 are to go in the shelves ɤ the blue notebook I'd be grateful if you'd put in one of my cardboard boxes.

Sorry that I'm scribbling so fast[67] but there isn't very much time really.

From now on I hope you will not write any less regularly and will encourage everyone else you know to do the same. Letters will then keep up the picture of yr life at a proper proportion of time behind the event ɤ will be much pleasanter than sporadic effusions. I shall write at every opportunity I get but don't think this code

⑥

racket is worth the flap.

It's obviously frightfully important to people abroad to get letters so do encourage anyone who turns up to write to me, poor devils! Please be strong on this.

[67] the handwriting is indeed poor, with more crossings-out and corrections than normal as well.

Address, until I let you know again, fr now on will be

187125 2/LT J.P. WATERFIELD
KRRC
RBAGF
c/o Army Post office
No 1915

so just keep coming ϒ put them in the letter box as if it was only to Yorkshire.

⑦

I hope old Feeley was glad about the stuff I gave him ϒ the Chronicle. It's worth while doing that sort of thing to cheer up the old.

We shall be all tonight in the train - tea at Andover where the Army gives us 2^{d}. per man to spend on tea! ϒ 0720 bus at Riverside Liverpool. Docks are always romantic.

I bought Moby Dick, ϒ Morte D'Arthur in Everyman to accompany me. I already have Virgil, Dante, Shakespeare, Testament of Bridges ϒ a few other odd books so am well provided. My packing has

⑧

been successful ϒ the Revelation proved amenable for once.

I enclose a couple of letters which are useful to me as relics of a moment ϒ will be amusing one day to look back at - put 'em in the cardboard box ϒ read 'em if you feel madly inquisitive like Mary.

Be glad with me about departure and enjoy our good home. It is always worth keeping. I'll think of you all plenty but cannot go strangely effusive in a letter or in person so take it for granted, always much love to you fr. John

~ * ~

JP[68].

---

address until you hear differently -

187125 2/Lt. JP. Waterfield
KRRC.
Draft Serial A/60/d
c/o A.P.O

Go to Glfd P.O ϒ get full instructions for writing letter cards ϒ airmail ϒ airgraphs.

Write always them ϒ not heavy paper - little ϒ often rather than long ϒ rarely. I will do the same. Also say how many letters you've written recently ϒ the dates of posting - keep a note of this;

Keep writing even if it seems a long way off. ϒ Keep the family ϒ friends at it too - only air-letters though. Remember EOS' comments!

[68] this undated note is inserted here at a guess.

~ * ~

[Envelope headed 'ON ACTIVE SERVICE' to Mrs AP.Waterfield, Underdown, Tangier Rd, Guildford, Surrey, ENGLAND, 'JPWaterfield' signed across lower left corner, no stamp, franked 'PASSED BY CENSOR NO. 5610']

14.7.42

I don't know what address I can put at the top of this[69] nor what I can really tell you without being hauled out for court-martial. I've just been told that you won't get this for another three weeks but I do hope that isn't so. I'm going to risk Charles censor and tell you I'm sitting in our four-bedded (not bunked although one is on top of the other) new home with an opening to the air and the breeze coming in fresh. We are fortunate to be in an outside living place, I think. There is a wash-basin and a drawer each and a cupboard and sheets. We have a steward for us, an ex-regular soldier of ribald humour ϗ gay friendliness.

We got into the train at Dorchester as you know and had a pleasant journey enough. There were only the four of us in our compartment, as we are together in this place, and I slept with my boots off ϗ collar ϗ tie on the rack curled up comfortably enough in the corner. We went past the Lewis valley at Leckford Abbas ϗ had tea, almost a fiasco because mistakenly noone had been warned, at Andover.



4 - Berthing card

It's awfully hard to find anything safe to say. I have to certify that all my correspondence

is of a private ϗ family nature. Well so far family affairs have not come in much but everything else is private!

There are a good number of my Gloucester colleagues here - who'd ever have thought we'd make it at last!

I hope you enjoyed Cambridge and Mary is having a good time in Cornwall. I thought of Jilly when I was woken up by Peter Cagby last night and told we were at her station.

I shall obviously have plenty of time for reading ϗ writing so you'll get a splendid letter from me one day.

Now do you think you cd send Hugh an air-mail to say we've really made it at last ϗ I cd then get in touch with him if we go there. Likewise an air-graph to Eric possibly.

I don't think there is much point in writing any more - the breeze is fanning my paper and dripping the ink.

Pass round the form for me, will you? I can't write any more letters.

Be happy - love fr. John

~ * ~

[69] no 1 was written 'in the middle of Liverpool river' - see 128(a).

[Envelope to Mrs AP.Waterfield, Underdown, Tangier Rd, Guildford, Surrey, no stamp, franked 'LONDON GT. BRITAIN.P' and 'OFFICIAL PAID']

At sea[70] 187125 2/LT J.P.W. KRRC
23.7.42 RBAGF
c/o A.P.O 1915

It's hard to induce in myself any enthusiasm for letter writing when all the subjects I shd like to write about are banned by Cuthbert censor. We censor our own at this point by signing our names outside.[71] The letters are then taken to the Security officer on board who may do a snap check, but I doubt it, and thereafter I can only guess what happens. At the same time we have to censor the riflemen's products which I've never done before and do not relish at all; intrusion on other people's affairs in such a way is necessary but unattractive.

I'm sitting on Peter Cagby's camp-chair in our cabin, no 132, after breakfast. I've got on my bush shirt, no tie, battle dress trousers and my Sam Browne to keep them up, no socks. The others are similarly dressed but some have got their drill shorts ɤ gym shoes on. I was too lazy to get mine out this morning. They are up on the Sun deck now, the topmost part of the boat, waiting for the Muster parade which takes place every day at 10 o'clock. Everyone except orderly officers and troop deck sergeants then parade in their draft formations about the ship until the old boy who commands the troops on board comes round to inspect them.

Our batman is sweeping up on the linoleum floor and I'm afraid I'm in his way but I must get on with this else it will not get posted at the next port of call. This batman is a splendid North countryman, strange for a rifleman who is mostly a Cockney species and funnily enough his name is Walker

②

but he is better than Gent W of Yorkshire. He is about 6 ft 5' so sleeping in a hammock is no easy matter for him although he says they are most comfortable. The troops' hammocks are almost exactly like the one in the garden at Underdown. I'm reminded of you on the tiles sitting there ɤ having coffee after Sunday lunch while someone lies in the hammock.

Interval while I went down to the troop deck, a confined, cribbed space in the front of the boat, where all our rfn are. I'm afraid they get all the rolls ɤ pitches there. Now however most people have got over it, but there is very little to worry about now and the Atlantic stretches like a great flat plate as calm as it might be at Dawlish, with scarcely a hint of undulation.

The inspection is over and I'm back in the cabin but the billet was so bad that I'm having another inspection in a few minutes time. Their excuse is that most of them were inoculated yesterday, but that's not good enough for dirtiness. Up on the Prom. deck where they paraded they have educational lectures, spelling Bees, Brains trusts and all the other concomitants of adult education dear to the hearts of Priestley ɤ Laski. We get people to talk to them on their "experiences in China", generally a rigmarole of inaccuracies ɤ personal pomposities, or else they learn French or Morse when we can get a buzzer. Of course every now and then a really good lecturer is found or just an amusing talker who can occupy ½ hour on

③

nothing at all. The lectures are pooled all over the boat.

In the afternoon they have P.T (which we do as well), in spite of the cramped spacing, or else what military training we can devise, like lectures and tactical discussions. They are now going to be allowed to sleep on deck, as are the officers who are given the sun deck for their slumbers. It's astonishingly hot in the cabins and alley ways and troop decks.

---

[70] just before entering Freetown, per letter number 128(a); this one is, as explained in 3 below, number 2.
[71] as on the previous envelope, though oddly not on the one for this letter!

More interval for second inspection and tactful dealing with Bolshevik riflemen. They have complete justification for all their unhappinesses and we can only do our best to help them with no means at our disposal. At the same time they do not cooperate and mutter together heaping worse on worse by mutual sympathy and the only way, I find, to deal with that is to have a chat, letting them talk as much as they can. This generally results in sense, useful suggestions and cheerful smiles and grins. The old Army ways of "This is dirty; orderly sergeant, take this man's name" and a rushing out with prompt notebook, followed by C.B, all that can only work in barracks with NCOs of experience and dourness. It means a very easy life for the officer ɤ an automatic one for NCOs ɤ a soulless one for the men. Now in these circumstances that is impossible, and although I am not a whole hearted "Wintringham ɤ citizen army" fan, I believe that some of that friendly spirit and mutual trust must have its place in the professional army which is as essential as a Home guard for a country waging total war. But the men are brought up to think of officers as responsible

④

for their woes whenever they are in trouble. Of course they like some of them as well but it's only after long experience together and in good as well as bad times.

I'm on the sun-deck now and the paper is flapping loose in the welcome breeze that has blown up. The sun is broiling and the sea is purple flecked with foam now for the first time in days. On the last page a misty rain squall came by and spattered us for a few seconds but it was so warm I didn't budge off this seat. It's hard work holding down all four corners of this paper.

Some hairy looking men of the crew are sweeping the deck, bearded ɤ with torn vests. Where they come from I can't guess. There are mysterious depths on this boat that I shall never fathom. Places where men come on in stinking sweat ɤ hot draughts to start work at midnight. They can never see the sea or sky.

I was officer of the guard the other day ɤ this entailed going all over the ship posting and inspecting sentries. In the dark it was entirely luck if you found anyone because the decks were pitch black and iron rails banged you over the knee if you didn't move with protective tentacles outstretched. There was a warm blustering breeze outside that night and I climbed up to the bridge. It was splendidly aloof up there with the bows of the boat silhouetted in front, butting away the blackness and leaving

⑤

a dead white creamy froth. The moon made a white streak behind us but everything was strangely dark in spite of it.

When I went below decks there was the stink of bodies and heaped shapes tossing on mess tables and in alley ways and a few hammock-loyal. It was stifling and every doorway had its own smell, Engine room, cooking of the morning's breakfast, tea and sandwiches for the guard, they all mix up and leave a staleness in your nostrils. Stokers squatted in the passages with little on but a sweat-rag ɤ played cards. The night-steward had one eye and was dripping sweat. He looked cunningly askew at me and said he'd been night steward fifteen years. Fifteen years amongst steaming beginnings of breakfast and not a breath of the sea!

In our cabin we can't keep our port-holes open at night and I sleep with a sheet alone on top of me. Mine is the upper berth on the right hand side of our four-berthed cubby hole. We have sheets, a bed light, mirrors a cupboard ɤ a smallish drawer each. It's astonishingly luxurious although the whole room is no bigger than half the dressing room at home.

I go to sleep with the swash of the seas against the side, fifteen feet below us, mixed in my ears with the drone of the fans. They must be responsible for the queer dreams I've had. I, who usually never dream or at least, pace Dunne[?], never remember my dreams, have

⑥

travelled during these last few nights to every country in Europe ɤ have met Charles in the States!

Washing is harder work because the fresh water is only turned on for ½ an in the evening and the same time in the morning. We've bought a good deal of salt-water soap but even if you lather hard a poorish slime only results and there is left a sticky feeling afterwards. When it was colder I had a few fairly successful hot baths in our bathroom next door, steaming hot they were, but now I hardly want a cold salty one.

I must tell you about the food. For breakfast, which we have at the second sitting, won after wily negotiation, at 8.45 am, we have choice of four different types of cereals, prunes, stewed raisins or stewed figs; with that we have a little jug of tinny cream, excellent for all its tinnishness. Then fish of some sort; we don't usually have a choice here for once but we've had hake, cod, mackerel, haddock, kipper, herring, shad ϟ bass at various times. There follows choice of scrambled, fried or poached egg, breakfast bacon, grilled ham, cold ham, minced beef collops and kidneys - sometimes something else. Then rolls, toast and marmalade or jam, coffee or tea. Sometimes we've had griddle cakes ϟ maple syrup to end up which I always eat with gusto and a memory of waffles in Elliston ϟ

⑦

ϟ Cavells, eaten when taken out to tea from Dragons, I suppose, nine years or so ago.

For lunch, soup, fish, rolls ϟ butter, choice of hot entrée and about 3 cold choices of meats, with salad, Sweet, cheese and coffee. For dinner much the same with goose, duck, turkey appearing from time to time with the appropriate apple, cranberry and suchlike sauces. Then desert, apples, oranges and sometimes pears and coffee. We usually have some wine which is South African and very rough but only 3/- a bottle and by no means undrinkable.

Of the other drinks gin is 2^{d}. and whisky 3^{d}., Sherry 4^{d}. Kümmel 4^{d}. cherry brandy 4^{d}. ϟ beer which is Canadian canned ϟ not nice is the most expensive thing on board being 7^{d}. or 8^{d}. There is a shop where you can buy milk chocolate (American) ad lib at less than pre-war British prices and everything else under the sun, from a face-flannel to a watch, at a similarly cheap rate.

At our next port of call I hope I may see Laurence Stone but I'm afraid we shan't be allowed on shore.

I'm not writing any more letters so I think you'll have to Siepmannize and

⑧

circulate this around.

I think there's a good chance of meeting Hugh or his friends whom he wrote to. But we can't tell and speculation is useless.

I'm afraid this letter is insufficient and vague and not very long but censorship is a hard burden to carry.

Don't know at all how long it will take to reach you but I guess the summer holidays will just be beginning. Have a gay ϟ happy time.

I bought an Everyman of Moby Dick in Dorchester, the day we left and am just finishing it. It is a magnificent book. Christopher swears he saw a whale but I've only seen porpoises.

One day we passed an empty rowing boat in the afternoon, floating quietly until our wash hit it. I wonder what boat it came from ϟ what it's story was.

The porthole is open and the sea is gold plated to the horizon in the after-lunch sunshine.

always very much love from

John

~ * ~

Number 3[72]

2/lt JPW. KRRC
10.8.42 RBAGF
c/o A.P.O 1915

I'd better get on with this or you won't get it, as letters will be collected tonight. I've put No 3 on top of this and shall continue to number anything I send you so that you can check up on the post service. Don't be alarmed that already some have been sunk because I'm counting them from the moment we arrived on the boat, straight from the train. It seems the other end of the world from here, the South Atlantic. I wrote one in a green envelope which (the green envelope, I mean) was probably taken off as I put two inside, one to Yorkshire, one to you. That was from our embarkation port, before we actually sailed. The next letter I wrote in the broiling sunshine before we got to our last port. And here is the third, written on a grey cold August morning, midwinter here, a few days before we get to South Africa.

It's possibly not a good moment to write because the sudden chill and change of weather has put me in poorish form this morning, but still I'll try and be gay at this as I am perfectly so in reality.

Not allowed to tell you whereabouts in South A. we shall go but it will be where

②

I have the address of Hugh's office. At least as far as anyone on the ship can tell that is so and noone can tell anything at all except where we are heading for now, making south into a bigger swell and a colder air. We anticipate at least two days ashore and it ought to be splendid fun in spite of the time of year. I am going to spend half a crown on one of those figure cables, where figures are equivalent to "love ɤ kisses", you know the sort of thing.[73] Now this, we are told, will be delayed at least a fortnight so I'm not really sure it's worth while but it's nice to hear anything, however little. I can picture the postwoman coming up the tiles to the front door with my cable about tea-time when everyone is in the drawing room ɤ DMW is pretending it's the beginnings of the winter. And it will be nearly September too. So must you picture me going up to the notice board ɤ trying to pick out a phrase which omits any mention

③

of the baby or the sending of money and handing it in to the Ship's Adjutant with my half crown, sometime before lunch today. Then it will be held at our port ɤ sent from there. Don't be worried if the P. Office makes out that it's to my wife because they must make mistakes with all the figures ɤ I haven't made that one!

Meanwhile it's Monday morning after muster parade which is held on the decks every day from 10 - 11 am, where every draft gets together, "looks to its front" for the old Colonel who comes round, O.C troops, and then does some sort of a lecture or training. It's very windy where we muster, on the port side, forward, on the Sun deck which is the topmost deck on the ship and all other times is reserved for officers. We had a deadly serious lecture on Foxhunting this morning from a 60th colleague whose moustaches (he assures me) have been in the family for generations, a real cutter ɤ thruster. Complete with whoopings he kept the riflemen spell bound for an hour, agape with amaze-

④

ment at the inexplicable oddity of the officers. He was very careful to explain everything and the high point was reached when he said, "in war time alas, we have to come out in, what we call, our Ratcatcher". This brought down the house. It seemed very remote from the waving crests of waves and the nothing more until they meet the sky.

That good man, at Perham Down, the Motor OCTU, could not read his map, on a point to point exercise, (one cadet ɤ a driver per truck). So seeing a notice "cars for hire", he stopped his driver, got hold of a taxi, pressed a couple of pounds into the taxi-man's hand together with the list of

[72] 'at Capetown' per 128(a).
[73] see reverse of telegram of 21 July 1944 – page 209.

places he had to go to and followed the local man around the countryside, to come in just on time, in triumph.

Well it's cold on top this morning and I got into battle dress for the first time since the fourth day after leaving England. During that time I've worn

⑤

nothing but my Bush shirts, open at the neck and shorts (which have, of course, got very dirty) and gym shorts. I've not worn socks because it was unnecessary to do so and because it saves washing, likewise no pyjamas. But until the last two nights we've been naked on top of our bedding and oozed sweat at the slightest move.

Last night I was on submarine watch between 1 and 2 in the morning and it was bitingly cold. I was glad to get right into bed when I came back. It's splendid up there on the bridge. We do one hour on in 24, and I've just got my turn at the early morning hours now. It must be a hard life for the second officers of the Merchant Navy who always, by tradition, have to do the 12 - 4 watch. The present 3rd officer on this boat told me he was for five years on tramp ships as second officer, getting his time in, and he never got used to that watch though he did it the whole time. We were tramping up and down the bridge, he ferociously but in gym shoes and I, hard put to it

⑥

to keep up with him, going almost on tip toe so as not to wake the captain just below. So fiercely did he turn that when I came off I found I'd pulled one of the muscles behind my knee as we swung round, twelve strides and swing, twelve strides and swing.

There's more swell on now though it's not rough, or maybe we've got used to the motion of it. There were many sick in the first few days out, though not I, even if I sometimes wished I were.

We're glad to sit in the cabin now instead of sun-bathing on the deck. The sun has been wonderful, for some days scorching, but scarcely ever too hot for me to prefer the shade, it being winter. We are all as fat and brown as berries and practically unrecognisable in the folds of flesh that envelope us. I run about the deck occasionally ϒ throw a medicine ball but I'm quite certain that lack of exercise on a lean

⑦

specimen like me does scarcely any harm. I feel blooming really!

I suppose I haven't been able to describe our last port to you before that last letter I wrote was from the bareness of the sea. We came in on an afternoon and saw great mountains all green and red not unlike a lusher Devonshire as our first sight of Africa. Then past white sandy beaches and thatched huts and palm trees or cocoa nut trees (they were just like the hot-house ones at Torquay!), past black men in frail canoes, who made obscene gestures continually and yelled obscene words when we came within range, ugly as sin. When some came aboard as mail party the smell was stronger than the ordinary smell in the alleys of the ship and that's saying a lot. And we dropped anchor a mile off shore and had to be content with quizzing the land through glasses for any sight or glimpse, if we might spere[?[74]] a one of the (reputed) eight white women there! Out came "niggers" as all the rfn call them, brought up on the movies and with the white man's Burden heavy on their Cockney backs, not to sell fruit which

⑧

was forbidden but to dive into our garbage with a lascivious abandon ϒ a flash of red pantaloons for "tanners". The rfn wrapped silver paper round halfpennies ϒ threw them in, when the diver bit them ϒ found them bad the air crackled with abuse. With pouring rain ϒ with their canoes full of washing water, (pipes, cotton and muck all soaking in there), they used to put up black umbrellas, an odd sight.

[74] the context suggests 'spy' or 'glimpse'. The following 'a' might also have been crossed out.

It was the rainy season ɤ the coolest month of the year. We ran round the decks in the rains in bathing dresses. It was steaming hot below and the hot season must be unbearable.

At night there were lights from shore and from the shipping. The first freedom from blackout for almost three years. It was lovely to dine and look out through the port-hole at sparkling pin-points of light all up the hillside. Afterwards on deck you could see five miles away the other shore, long

⑨

low banks of swamp, a black bar between sea and sky. As we swung in the tide morse invitations and messages flashed from ship to ship and the shore lights twinkled again and again.

All the same I was glad to leave and it's always better to be moving, as we are. Whatever we do, eat, sleep or feel, this castle of ours is getting on and wasting no time. I like the feel of that.

I've seen flying fish - not exciting things - like a shoal of birds they move together close over the water for thirty feet and then go in together, repeating the flight in a few moments. I've seen porpoises too, blubbery fat fellows, rolling about as happy as could be. Christopher says he saw a whale a way back but I'm sceptical. The sun sets early and falls very quickly down the sky. As I sit of an evening writing or reading with my legs hanging down over my bed, if I stoop down I can see the colour of the sunset through the disc of the port-hole opposite which is by Peter Cagby's bed. The waves sometimes have their crests touched up by the

⑩

last light and the foam is pink and gold. Today there will be only grey swell.

Back in the cabin again after lunch and after watching the semi-finals of the ship's boxing competition. There were some good fights, ɤ a sight of some Army champions and area Amateur champions, an amazingly high standard. It's held in the after well deck ɤ all the rfn climb up the superstructure ɤ hang in the rigging, like black crows on a bough. The ring seems tiny right below there but even so it sways almost imperceptibly with the swaying of the ship. Cracks and quips are shouted as if we were in the Blackfriars Ring and everyone is happy as can be. There have been also tugs-of-war which are funny to watch, especially when ten fat gunners all fall down. It's a pity that there are no deck quoits or ping-pong. Some foolish officers do P.T at 7.15 in the morning. I needless to say am not among them but rather get up at 8.10 for breakfast at 8.45. What little (though

⑪

it's quite enough) fresh water we get here is very soft and so shaving is a great pleasure. I make an enormous lather which is a cause of great wonder to the others. When it was so hot I used to get up in the morning and go straight away from bed into the bathroom next door ɤ have a good salt shower. I managed to get a decent soaping with the salt water stuff provided but even so it leaves one a little sticky.

The others (except Christopher, who is doing his thought reading act at the ship concert, he's a big attraction) are now having their afternoon sleep. It takes little to send me to sleep after our fat lunch, with the soothing swash of the sea to drug one up. The rfn all get bored with the sight of the sea but its variety seems inexhaustible. I'm quite content to lean over the side ɤ look at it for an half hour at a time.

I've been practising Morse on buzzer ɤ lamp and after learning the alphabet in an hour, which I was pleased with, have reached a fairly decent stage which only needs regular practice for

⑫

a pretty good speed. I also learn Arabic which is splendidly irrational. We don't learn the Arabic characters which is a pity but it would take too long, judging from the examples in the "Marlborough" manual, and anyway I doubt if our teacher who is a fat Moroccan knows anything but how to speak it. It's fun to spell anything a different way each time we meet it and our teacher cannot understand why bristling majors keep on asking him why he spelt so-ɤ-so five minutes ago this way when now.....

There they all are back at school, the good boy, the thruster, the shower off, the worse than stupid. Our fat fellow just wags his head and goes on most realistically to teach us such things as:-

Arabic		English
bulis	———————	police
tomobil		truck (to be allied minded)
cinema		movies, cinema (did you guess?)
teatro		theatre

so you can see that the sunset romance

⑬

of sheiks and the desert is an old fashioned bed-time story! I do Arabic after tea ɤ do my prep at tea over the worst meal of the day. We always have a great competition to get down first as there is usually only one biscuit worth eating for six of us.

The news gets posted up in a bulletin every day rather badly typed. We seem strangely aloof from the world here but still the Indian ɤ Russian situations look terribly worrying. The German punch seems untiring at that oil. I don't suppose I'm allowed to discuss it overmuch because one is liable to say things detrimental to the well-being of H.M. Forces which they are very keen on. Actually I doubt if this letter will be looked at - I sign it at the bottom ɤ on the envelope in the same way as I sign the riflemen's and I imagine beyond that there is only a snap check taken. From experience I can only say it's hellishly bad luck on the poor man who has had to read as far as this.

I've written a fair amount of

⑭

letter this time but in spite of our seeming idleness, time does not hang on our hands; there is always something to be done and it's just as much a physical effort to write a letter as on shore. I loath it, but don't you omit to write every week and induce all my friends and relations to do the same.

Mary, Bow ɤ Jilly will have to make do with this for a while because there are about 400 rfn's letters to deal with and other people I must myself write to so they can hear all the news from this fourteen pages which, I'm afraid, contains very little and a far from vivid picture of our life.

I'm going up to the smoke room, crowded after dinner with drinkers ɤ bridge players to have something warm before the bar closes. And to sleep in my clothes until 4 in the morning when the guard will wake me if he finds my cabin, to go up for my

⑮

hour on the bridge.

I don't think I'll have time to write to O.S this time, either, or Peter Dulton, but I did write to the Chignells (to whom I owe a good deal as I didn't go to see them before I left) and to the Birleys.

I've been reading the Anna Karenina the Birleys gave me at Gloucester for this job, and also the two volumes of Malory I bought in Everyman our last morning in Dorchester together with cherries and more cherries for the train. Dorchester I associate with sunshine and old men playing bowls, cherries, coffee and buns in the morning, lawn tennis in the public courts and fat pigs in the market. We had good fun there.

Now for the morning 12.8.42. Plenty of handing in of stores and pamphlets ɤ reading and instructions to sign, mostly, it seems, about V.D, for which elaborate and quite complacent provision is made. Everyone is very excited and looking forward to our shore leave with tremendous enthusiasm. I'll be able to tell you all about it in my next letter. I may, of course, see Hugh

⑯

if you have sent him an air-mail to say I'm coming. Anyway, we will be a conspicuous sight enough ɤ he will be ready for something when he hears we're in, so I'll go and call on his office.

It's brighter this morning, sunny with a very fresh breeze. There was a terrific buffeting of winds on watch this morning, such that if you faced them you couldn't breathe comfortably.

I've got a cheap fountain pen ɤ after wearing trial ɤ error with file and sandpaper have achieved a reasonable nib, though everyone laughs at me. Now of course the pen won't fount so I'm dipping this hard and this morning spilled ink all over Christopher's drill trousers. I'd like to send you a photo of us in our topees and drill - real men of Barney's tobacco advertisements.

Don't be too Siepmannish but I think a copy of this might be sent to the brats ɤ people like A. Winnie

⑰

(with suitable omissions for various susceptibilities unlike Harry's method), if it happens to arrive in term time.

I wonder what sort of a summer holidays you've all been having. If Mary went to the Walkers, and how Bow got on with his tractors; write ɤ tell me, it's an act of hopeful trust but it may get there in the end, it does no harm and one can always be consoled with the thought that letters took longer ɤ were more chancy during the wars of the decadence of the Roman Empire, and yet people wrote them. I wish Gibson wasn't so bulky - he's the sort of fellow to read in places like this but theres too much of him.[75]

Moby Dick is finished - he's MAGNIFICSENT. I've got a small white Virgil and that is great fun, but no Greek which is a pity. TELawrence had one volume, of Aristophanes, in Arabia - I hate Aristophanes but one might have some Aeschylus. I remember a tough ɤ soulful man called Holrulé preaching to us at Dragons and saying he'd been in the wild East for years ɤ years ɤ Aeschylus was his one consolation. He looked grim enough for it

⑱

but it's funny I should remember that out of all the other sermons at Dr. I've completely forgotten.

Well here's an end - I'm going on deck with the Bridges' collection ɤ my sunglasses, (that we bought at Harrods). They are admirable ɤ fit well over my own spectacles.

I do hope this reaches you ɤ is not wasted for all the time I've sat at it! ɤ I do hope AP is still winning plenty off Jock Cavins -

very much love to you all,

from John

JPWaterfield



this is just to show
I've read this
through - a hard
task - I hope you
weren't bored

~ * ~

[75] This is an example, one of many, of the 'half-paragraph' indentation by JPW, which indicate the start of a new thought but within the same subject; the new sentence starts half-an-indentation in on the new line; most appear to indicate just-slightly-longer pauses between sentences. They were common in the earlier letters on smaller paper, where the chance of a new sentence beginning a new line was greater. In general they have not been transcribed as new paragraphs.

MRS WATERFIELD
UNDERDOWN
TANGIER ROAD
GUILDFORD
SURREY

c/o A.P.O 1915[76] 15.8.42

This is written in port a few days after my last letter, 18 pages, which I hope will reach you all after this. We arrived at lunch time in pouring rain, tied up and were ashore for tea. I and another were taken out for dinner that night, a five mile drive over high ground into the suburbs in a great American car with the radio full on! They are a charming family and we went out with them again yesterday, and this morning are expecting to go for a long drive today. It was most amusing to see ways of family life, ideas ɤ attitudes to the things that interest us. Yesterday was a beautiful day and we saw everything ɤ went everyplace. We also sent you a parcel for distribution - no silk stockings, alas! Hugh was 900 miles away. I'm writing to him. Lunch today with Jimmy Stow whom I met on our way down off a mountain with the most glorious view I've ever seen. Night clubs are too tedious for words - the ship's company over again. The sunset from the hills last night as we drove out, on mountains forty miles away, was beautiful, gentle pink and golds. Then the lights of the town came out, a thrilling sight after England. I hope you are all well.

Much love to you all. I'm splendidly well.

John

~ * ~


Charges to pay
RECEIVED
POST OFFICE
No.
OFFICE STAMP
TELEGRAM
Prefix. Time handed in. Office of Origin and Service Instructions. Words.
76
From
To
EFM MRS WATERFIELD UNDERDOWN TANGIER ROAD GUILDFO
= ALL WELL AND SAFE ALL MY LOVE =
JOHN WATERFIELD
For free repetition of doubtful words telephone "TELEGRAMS ENQUIRY" or call, with this form at office of delivery. Other enquiries should be accompanied by this form, and, if possible, the envelope

5 - Telegram August 1942

~ * ~

Letter No 5 2/lt JPW KRRC
30.8.42 RBAGF
At sea, a somewhat AP.O 1915
shark filled sea but I don't think we shall fill their bellies now.

It's a sort of torment to write in this inferno - the paper sticks to the hand and the hand sticks to anything else it touches.[77] Five o'clock of an evening and the hard glare has died away - the sun has

[76] this is letter 'No. 4' as explained in the next one. It is an 'airgraph' and so miniaturised after being written on a one page form, which requests the sender's address before the date.

gone and the sky is pearly grey. With luck we may get a slight breeze before dark. I'm on my bunk with my legs over the side and a wooden board on my knees. I've nothing but a very sweat-soaked towel round my belly. Christopher is washing with nothing on, using up the wash-basin as quickly as he can so that we can fill it up again before they turn it off for the night. We've got a bucket luckily which does for me as I don't like to wash myself until just before dinner. Of course there's always the shower next door but even that's lukewarm and rather

②

an odd colour. It leaves a sticky feeling too. There is a bare line of waste land all along the horizon, seen just then as we rolled over a bit.

I'm very happy really and do not do at all badly in the heat. There is a great deal to write about since I wrote last but it is a hard job to get it all down in readable sequence. You'll see that I've numbered this 5. I wrote 18 pages or so which I hope have not been drowned, just before our second port of call. That was number 3. From the same place I wrote an airgraph, number 4, and when we land again in a few days I shall probably be able to get another airgraph off which will reach you a considerable time before this.

Indeed I don't picture this coming up the garden path until about my birthday time, certainly after the Oration Quarter has begun at Ch. So many happy returns to my Underdown English ghost from me. It will probably arrive in this same boat of ours and noone can tell by what devious ways will be her

③

homecoming.

The security arrangements are consistently inconsistent and it's hard to know, with the best will in the world, what we actually may write about. To make a change from last time we are not allowed to mention any place-names at all nor to include any description of what we have seen or where we have been.

However, here goes! It seems remote now and the glamour of it has faded before the prospect of working again. But soon after I wrote to you last we arrived in port, our second port. All morning we beat up under a grey sky with a big swell past mountains with white foam at their feet and now and again silvery blots of sand which many mistook for snow. We were late in and anxious lest there should be no berth for us. But we tied up and looked over the side watching

④

many-coloured stevedores scrabbling for pennies which the rfn flung to them. Then it rained ɤ we went down to tea hardly daring to expect that we should be ashore that night. But we were. We made out the passes, paid the rfn in the local currency, and ran down the gangplank with our service dress trousers drooping in the puddles and great coats buttoned high. There were barefooted black boys selling newspapers (including the one which Hugh had been on) and we bought it to see what was doing. On the long dock road there were women handing out leaflets in the rain, ɤ answering questions. Great American streamlined cars, with radio aerials ɤ enormous h.p (that's what happens where there is no tax on top of basis[78]) came gliding up the street picking chaps up and taking them off to dine.

We went over the dock rail tracks, splashing through the puddles. (Oh how strange it seems to be writing

---

[77] this extra-long letter is indeed scrawled, blotched and illegible in places. Page 11 and 12 re-assert that it is due to the heat. It gives the impression of being written when drunk!

[78] several words scribbled out here - but I think these latter words, inserted above, are complete, even if the sense isn't, quite.

⑤

about it now; - we were so excited at the time). Rain was too much so taxi with obsequious and shifty-seeming (as were they all) coloured driver to Il Gitano[79] - not the real name - "where all the officers go, sah, all officers for tea go there."

Stinking hole with fake starlit ceiling and full of tarts or, more kindly, girls there for a good time. Of course no coloured people, except as waiters. But I met Ian Radclyffe who was with me at Gloucester ɤ others of varying acquaintance. Tea ɤ chocolate biscuits and patriotic band. I tried to phone Hugh but found I'd forgotten to bring my little red diary where Mary will remember that she wrote his address for me. So out into the darkness made alive by lights, reflected in the watery pavements and sparkling up in the top floors of the miniature white ɤ yellow oblong sky-scrapers. The rfn had

⑥

green sidehats on and best battle dress, well creased by the ships crew at absurd prices. There was Brylcreem on the hair and they swaggered about the streets, quite the smartest, and excited beyond admission of it. Some came home on their feet, some on hands ɤ knees, many were carried.

We walked up _ St, a famous name, and then split up our large party of ten. Peter Proctor ɤ I were going towards the station aiming for a dance at such and such a place - suddenly a man in a trilby said, "excuse me, would you like to come and have dinner with me?" "Was it worth it?" flashed before the mind, but "thank you so much, we'd love to" was out of the mouth without a pause. ~~xxxx~~[80] towards a great Packard by the kerb. Lights went on automatically when the door was opened. "My daughter ... her friend ..." "How do you do, how do you do" Very Colonially English and hyper correct.

Out through the lighted suburbs and up along the mountain side

⑦

over the ... drive. There were sparkles of light through the mist and a semi-circular glow round the bay. Pine trees in the headlamps and a glimpse of buck in the preserve. The radio gave us dance music ɤ then the news from London. Peter ɤ I sat in the back, nudged each other and made pretty pretty small talk, finely conventional.

Reached a square clean white house with a verandah, in suburbia, comparable in situation to Cobham. We washed. The whole thing was ludicrously like advertisements in the American magazine "Life" - Try and buy one to see.

Went into the dining room to find women there already, a little disconcerting, but it always seemed to happen.

"Go on" said the good lady, like a fish wife, after any statement, saying it with that maddening rise of the voice at the end of the phrase. Old black females in mobbed caps waited. The meal was excellent - local fish, conventional chicken with rice (as always) served as a vegetable - splendid

⑧

fruit salad of local fruits; we were told many of the names but forget them but for one, guava, pinkish and pleasant. The girls spoke with attractive suggestion of accent; a little more noticeable than Margie's when she came back from B.

Expectations of wine, roused by controversy between daughter ɤ (I suspect) puritan papa, were damped by his production of brown looking bottles which he handed round with such enthusiasm that, albeit hesitatingly, we lashed into it.

---

[79] the real name scribbled out before these words.
[80] this word blotched - 'Went' or 'Led' in context.

It was the fabulous Coca-Kola, so characteristically popular, as I've just been reading in DWBrogan's splendid book on the U.SA, in the Southern States, and the mystery of every English picture-goer from 6 upwards. Iced I found it tolerable but liable to interfere with any attempts at

⑨

conversation for some time, being v. hiccupy. Talked round the fire afterwards. Terrible snobs about house-work. "Washing up - the Australians (with a ghastly sneer) do it we believe"! The AA. rode dray horses bare back and back to front down that self-same famous street at the beginning of the war. The pubs closed, quite arbitrarily, on our third night but for them they are bolted ɤ barred as the convoy steams in.

No theatre in the country since that day. Little culture. Bilingualism ɤ coloured people devilish problem. Our people rather attempted to ape the English, laughably so, sometimes, as my shins bore witness, hacked under the dinner table.

They laughed at the "new" language and did not know it well if at all. Tales of knifing in the practice blackout, and as a commonplace in "district .. ", the

⑩

coloured quarter ɤ slum. They seemed rather proud of it! Though out of bounds to the chaps some got up there ɤ into a shebeen and then they never came back of course.

At 9.30 pm tea, cakes, buns mint-flavoured, all in the dining room. This a regular custom, seemingly, and a very pleasant one.

Then uncomplainingly the father drove us back and we took the daughter's friend home, miles the other side of town - this happens every night apparently. A.P. take note!

Dropped, as we asked, on the main street we found John Lightly trying to get into a night club, very tight. So we all got into a taxi and went along the way we'd come with the Abaos to another night club. J.L kept urging the dreadful driver to go faster. We went along broadside on at 60 mph between late trolley buses and

⑪

other cars, our tyres skidding madly (as they had no tread) on the wet roads. I was properly terrified.

Dreadful club ɤ worse liquor. Taxi[81] arbitrary prices - Being out of hours had to order taxi home immediately on arrival to get liquor. But at 1. am we had the more glorious mixed grill with more than everything in it you cd wish for.

At the docks there was an officer with no trousers on. Odd.. We were the last on the boat again at 2.00 hrs dead.

An explanation is due, I feel, for this vile 'illegible scrawl' and the incoherent nature of the matter. I am contending against odds. It's the day after yesterday when I started this and is hotter. Up here on the sundeck it's quite bearable but there is a sirocco of a wind, dry and buffeting.

⑫

There is reason for some self-congratulation (ɤ do not feel any doubt that I ever strut it) that I am writing at all. My shirt is tethered to a hook or pin or something and is hanging straight out. My trousers, on me, are rapidly drying out from sweat sodden state, and that shows, more than anything else, the wind's power.

I must write now though I don't want to for in a couple of days we shall be ashore. It will seem strange.

[81] illegible, slightly conjectural; the 'arbitrary prices' might relate to the 'liquor' if that not terminated by a stop.

Back to .... - Sorry I can't write it. I sent you a parcel in the morning, ɤ cashed a cheque, not a very big one, else I'd have sent a bigger parcel. Then lunch with some other friends at a splendid restaurant. I ate Kingklip (a fish) and Springbok and drank a great deal of wine.

⑬

Then I went to call on Hugh's office, and found it a scruffy hole with cynical young men and bearded old men beneath endless portraits of Stalin and busts of Lenin. H. was not there ɤ I found his colleagues rather dubious, uncertain if an officer cd have sympathies with them. Their drooping cigarettes, their coughs and themselves I found rather tedious, I'm afraid, under the mellowing influence of luncheon ɤ went out into the sun with considerable speed. Then I met some friends (can't talk about them much because it'd be a military give away) and did THE thing to do, a glorious view, a glorious sleep and a glorious afternoon. Enlargement wd again be giving away more than I oughter. In the

⑭

evening we went out with the Abaos again, for a drive to sights first, towards the pinkish mountains forty miles away, had dinner at a country club and came back late.

It had been a glorious sunny day after our first evening's rain, and for our last day we had the same.

I "gave" Jimmy Stow lunch at the same place as the previous day. I discovered he had no money at all so the giving which I had meant to be figurative, was only too actual!

He was just like he always was and a little more so after the first bottle. We had a splendid time. Then we all met the Abaos and piled into two huge Cars the second even more huge than the first, and with a better radio. We went driving through the mountains past coves below with wrinkles of foam from the breakers and stopped high among vineyards and strange flowering shrubs for tea at a sort of country Wisley gardens on the hillside.

⑮

Somehow it made me think of the view of Exeter from the Black Forest road above Mamhead ɤ Star Cross.

Goodbye sun - the sky is covered with grey blots edged with pink. But the wind does not relent. I know it's no use going below because the stink is unbelievable and the port-hole will be shut for blackout. Yes I can hear the bugle sounding. So I'll wait until 7 when I'll go down to wash.

A fellow I know wrote a letter to himself from the highest point in that country. A good gesture which makes me laugh to think of it.

After tea that day Peter ɤ I who had brought bathing pants announced our wish to bathe, stoutly backed by James Stow (who secretly hoped to shine in an orange ɤ black hired creation) and equally stoutly ridiculed as hardy fools by the

⑮[82]

others, both of our party and our hosts. They said it was much too cold but we persisted for honours sake although a little more doubtful under their almost ferocious mockings. I could not believe it was any more cold than Treyarnon or Perran bay and of course it proved warmer. After some difficulty over cubicle work (these people frown severely on public undressing, build huge bathing pavilions) as the place was declared closed for the night we appeared under the balcony, board hunting, for these had been denied to us who were, again, too late coming, they said - (this was the only instance of sly, shrewish or unpleasant behaviour by anyone that I saw or heard of during our stay -)

[82] sic. The previous page's number looks very like a '13' so possibly this was thought to follow on from the '14' on the reverse, again.

Then there was espied a jaundiced fellow standing guard over a store of boards. He refused to let us have one so I rushed in ϒ got one away. As I made off I banged my

⑯

head against the roof (like by Dawlish station this was) and was nearly knocked out! I only just got into the sea before him. We were in for three quarters of an hour of heaven ϒ I had some glorious surfings. It was very little different from Perran except on a much larger scale.

This is now being written the following morning 1.9.42. I had to go below last night to wash ϒ drink before dinner. I had two pink glasses of heaven, a "Singapore gin sling," which costs 1/6 on board the boat against 7/6 or more in England. But all liquor makes you sweat salt solid. The boat was built for the N.Atlantic in winter - the ports have to be closed below in case of torpedoing. So the ventilation is, to say the least, poor.

This must be handed in by 2 this afternoon. Everyone is busy packing up. It's been a successful

⑰

and happy voyage - I've enjoyed it. We shall be landing as the fourth year of war opens. I wonder what strange happenings are there for us. Rather exciting to have absolutely no idea or imaginative picture of what we are going to.

Our time ashore was memorable ϒ we've written to thank the Abaos. I wrote to Hugh saying I was sorry to miss him, when on shore. His Red colleagues gave me a Box Number in Johannesberg to write to but his office wd always forward correspondence. No news of Margie from anyone though.

We were sad to leave and had uneventful passage to our 3rd port which we've recently left. Spiky, dry hills, camels and dirty pink buildings, almost baking alive in the heat were all that we saw. For Christopher's birthday (he is mad about Mt Everest ϒ lighthouses) we had built a huge lighthouse from cardboard, lavatory paper, an issue tumbler and the signallers' lamp. We painted it ϒ it was a great success on the

⑱

table winking by foot manipulations "Happy Birthday to you" in Morse.

As a decent sacrifice at this last port we threw it overboard ϒ two purple turbaned, green trousered Arabs picked it up and put it in their boat. I wonder if it is now their lucky charm?

The night we were there was beautiful. The lights were of every colour and the jetty had lamps which, hanging on poles, swayed in the hot wind, and flickered on the harbour.

I slept out on deck as usual but did not go to sleep until late watching the comings ϒ goings in the local hotel.

I've written to a good many people since we started but, I'm sorry to say, not to O.S or particularly to any of the bratlings.

⑲

As I said before if you feel like Siepmannizing perhaps it would not perhaps be a bad idea.

Of course I've had no letters from you yet nor expect any for some time. I'm sure as many of as many different types as possible, ie Airgraph, Airmail ordinary, will be necessary for any hopes of keeping in touch. Persuade everyone to write, hard ϒ unpleasant task though I know it is.

I hope to get in touch with E.O.S. but I don't know whether we shall be going anywhere within range of him.

I'm pretty brown but not as blooming as a month ago. The recent heat has been appalling except on deck ϒ now the sun-deck where

⑳

we sit ϒ sleep has been put out of bounds at night. So think of me sweltering naked in the billet. I gave up pyjamas years ago.

Been reading the Spirit of Man it is a real consolation for all moods but I cannot abide Bridges' translation from Virgil ϒ Homer. Also Anna Karenina which Elinor ϒ Robert B gave me ϒ, as I've told you, Moby Dick. And I've discovered Shakespeare which is a great discovery. Morte D'Arthur all through again too ϒ some scientific Pelicans, Haldane ϒ Eddington, ϒ Waddington.

Write often. And have a happy time. It's not so very long since we left although it seems an age and we're nearer home than

(21)

when we went ashore last!

Now for a drink before lunch

v much love from

John

JPWaterfield ⟵ This is just
to show I've read it
through - poor me!
ϒ you?

~ * ~

[AIR MAIL LETTER CARD]
Mrs A.P. WATERFIELD
UNDERDOWN
TANGIER ROAD
GUILDFORD
SURREY ENGLAND
[signed] J P Waterfield

Letter N°. 6.

2/LT J.P.WATERFIELD. KRRC
No 5 Coy
I.B.D
M.E.F.

This is probably our permanent address[83] for everything will be forwarded from the moment we leave here ϒ this is a depôt not unlike Chiseldon, Tidworth, Dorchester and all, combined. In a tent now, our mess full of 60th ϒ RB friends ϒ acquaintances. Glaring sun outside and hot broiling sand underfoot. Everyone in shorts ϒ a bush shirt. I arrived a couple of days later than the others as I was baggage officer. We were swung over the ship's side into the lighter, hanging like a swarm of bees on to the luggage net. Villainous Arabs in every sort of rag chanted in a sing-song moan as they lifted the

[83] this is the first from Egypt and written on 7 September 1942, according to 128(a).

tin trunks ɤ banged them down as hard as they could into the lighter's bottom. Then goodbye to the ship, ɤ precariously balanced on suitcases, across the bay to the lights of the port, in pitch darkness on the lighter, swinging ɤ heaving.

Midnight on the quay, fourth lighter off shore, and no-one interested in us. There was a hot musty smell and one trod on ragged bodies huddled in the sand, soft like the foreshore at Perran. Palm trees and square houses, white and built with verandahs. So we slept just as we were on the ground, a grassy path with sand between the grasses and ants as we found in the morning when we looked at our haversack rations, creeping with them. I lay in a gas cape, half covered and slept fairly well but chilly about 5 am. Woke ɤ washed again fairly well at a public tap - went along the dock road to get food fr the Q.M. Hopeless inefficiency and muddle among all these base petty officials. I suppose they only put fools there but what they do with their 3 pips or crowns beats me. Breakfast on the quay side, looking at the sun coming up over the masts ɤ funnels. Then scrambling all day to get our stuff off the lighters with an interval for a drink at the French Club. American beer 1/8 from a tin! Of course it's all in foreign currency now. The exchange was a hellish affair because all paying officers are bound to lose!

Got a lorry at last ɤ went out into the desert, through a couple of towns of dirty Arabs in coloured rags out to a vehicle depot among sandhills and rocks. No issue of food or drink. We camped by our trucks on the ground, hard, stony and bare but slept well in my sleeping bag. Then after delay in the sun on here, about 100 mls from where Eric is. I've forgotten his address so will you please send it to me.

If you write an Air Mail letter card it should not take more than a fortnight. I'm allowed one per week and they are quicker, cheaper and provide more writing space than Airgraphs. Still no letters from you or anyone here. When you next write you might put in what my account stands at in Barclays. I'm making arrangements to get my pay credited still to my Guildford a/c ɤ my allowances paid to an account I shall open here with the Ottoman Bank. At the moment I've no money at all!

It's afternoon now and I'm sitting at an Officers Club by the sea side in the grass with only bathing pants ɤ a service dress hat on. I've had to buy some new ones as mine were stolen on the boat. We've had tea and bathed in a huge party. The place is only 20 minutes walk from our Mess and our billet which is a tent on the sandy gravel. It's primitive but pleasant and everything is devilish expensive. People are bathing in the ___[84] buoyant water (pity there's no surf) drinking under little umbrellas. It gets ___ quickly and I shall soon have to __ back as we've no light yet in our ____ and we have to dress for dinner for ___ of mosquitoes. The flies are hell.

Don't omit to write and let me h___ the news ɤ Eric's address. You won't ___ previous letters from me for some time. very much love fr John

~ * ~

[AIR MAIL LETTER CARD]

MRS A.P. WATERFIELD
~~UNDERDOWN~~
~~TANGIER ROAD~~ Garden House Hotel
~~GUILDFORD~~ Cambridge
~~SURREY~~
ENGLAND
[signed] J P Waterfield [in circular stamp, 'PASSED BY CENSOR 2291']
[Annotated with arrival date in pencil: '13.X.']

[84] words lost under the gummed flap of the air mail card.

Letter N°. 7 since leaving land — 2/LT JPW K.R.RC.
5 Coy
13.9.42 Sunday morning — I.B.D
2nd. letter I've written since I arrived — M.E.F.

here. And frabjous day! I got my first letter from you this morning, an air-graph dated Aug 9th. I hope you've got at least two of my long letters, from our 1st ϒ 2nd ports of call, by now. This letter card is supposed to be the quickest method; let me know how long it takes. Your letter brought all the news I wd like to know; perfectly legible. Well done Bow - I hope Mary enjoys her catering and doesn't lose her heart! Urge everyone you know to write to me. I have written to E.O.S at G.H.Q but do not know his proper address so please let me know it as I might do well to see him. I'm sitting in an arm-chair in our Mess tent now; it's fairly cool inside and the bar has just opened so wait until I get myself a lime and ginger beer, most coolingly agreeable. However, drink, as well as everything else except leather goods is alarmingly expensive. Using a new fountain pen I bought (it's obviously an essential) in our nearest town X after some haggling (a universal and, to me, revolting, practice) two days ago. I went there after the course that I'm on had finished for the day at 2.30, hitching in and back on one of the masses of all types of yellow painted lorries that go rattling up the right hand side of our main road all day and every day. Doing a v. interesting course on mines, demolitions, explosives and booby traps at the School of Military Engineering, about fifteen miles from here.

Yesterday I, John Hallam ϒ Peter Proctor went in to this town to the U.S club, bathed ϒ then went for a glorious sail all afternoon ϒ evening, wearing our bathing shorts only and bathing again off the boat in deep water. It was only a lug-sail boat but we had a heavenly time. Back ϒ changed into drill (which we'd brought with us) for dinner and then sat about drinking expensive canned beer ϒ talking until we got a lift back with a bearded Fleet Air Arm test pilot. There was a band there and dancing but limited female numbers and anyway we all felt so tired and lazy that we couldn't have done much in that line if we'd tried or had opportunity.

It doesn't seem much like war, does it, and yet it's not so far off. Lots of people here who've been fighting and either wounded or invalided out from dysentery, and last Monday the two bns each of 60th ϒ B.Bde needed officers and a number went incl. Peter Cagby from us and many friends of mine in the B.Bde. The choice was entirely arbitrary and made by luck and at a hazard. I was horribly disappointed and dread hanging about down here, agreable in many ways though this is. Tim James, Donald Hartog and many others I know or have met are up there. My course has been interesting but I long to get to a Bn.

It's already a very little cooler here than when we arrived though hotter than the hottest ever in England by far. There are some clouds outside now. Through the net curtained gap in the tent I can see a party in topees (though there's no need to wear them) coming back from Church Pde. Beyond are yellow sandy-coloured tents, and beyond that again a great bar of rocky brown mountains where we climb as "hardening", over rubble and stony paths, just wide enough for one to walk. On the other side there are tufts of palm trees against blue water where we bathe and a pink haze of land the other side. I shall go down there after lunch and stay half in the sea and half sunning until dinner.

If there is anyone I might write to in Eric's town or else in any place where A.P.W went on his Commission, wd you let me know? I might well go there at any time. And please don't forget E.O.S's address. Only a 100 mls away and unable to get into touch with him is maddening. My watch got dropped and stopped on the boat! Some robbers here are pretending to mend it - one just hopes...

Wonder if you've got the parcel I sent or whether you ever will? I shall soon be 21, a gloomy thought. We might have had a glorious party and may do something yet though many good men are not here. Jimmy Stow is here, and others I know well, in admirable order, so something may be done.

Wind's getting up and blowing the sand around. Everything in our tent is coated with it but you get used to that. I sleep on my camp-bed under my sleeping bag and wake up when the flies tickle my bare toes as the sun rises. My zip suitcase is invaluable and all my other belongings are fortunately intact and well suited to my needs. I cd have saved a lot of money but I don't much regret it.

Writing on this part of the card[85] is a gamble. The AP.O here says it's OK and as there's no private matter, it's a risk worth taking.

Mail to me is uncertain. I can't help thinking you'd written more than one Air-graph - even before Aug 9th. Here's an end. I'll write again next week I hope.

Very much love from

John

~ * ~

[AIR MAIL LETTER CARD]

ON ACTIVE SERVICE

Mrs A.P. Waterfield
Underdown
Tangier Rd
Guildford
Surrey ENGLAND

[signed] J P Waterfield [in mauve circular stamp, 'PASSED BY CENSOR NO 1213']
[One orange 2d stamp, 2 x green 1/2d, franked "Egypt[86] 37 - 23 SE 42 POSTAGE PREPAID"]
[annotated:] Recd Ot5.

from S.A.I.T.B
23.9.42 U.D.F
6.30 pm but I.B.D
The sun is setting M.EF holds as
over the great river; I permanent.
can see white triangular sail tips above the grey-green trees as the barges go up and down. Geometrically shaped masses, slave erected, are silhouetted beyond the river. Beyond the distance fades, undulating and bare and smooth; yet, except for the sand under my camp chair and the sand all round, dirty ɤ white ɤ full of cigarette ends, I might be looking on an August evening towards the blue hills of Hampshire, in ridges one above the other, from Underdown or Pewley.

The flies win hands down as Humphrey Davey has just said to me, as he comes back from the swimming pool provided here with his bathing pants under one arm and the camp-bucket provided to officers by the Army, filled at the tap half a mile away.

I'm in my shorts on a concrete step outside my little cabin, wooden and inches deep in dust and sand. I'd rather have a tent, I guess, rather than this imitation Sam (?) Butlin holiday camp. We left I.B.D on Sunday and had a strange, dirtily coloured railway journey, through the main town of the country to this place, some 20 mls out in the sand. Porters argued and complained whatever the tip, gesticulating and squabbling like private school boys cadging for chocolate. We had a lorry out here and arrived for late tea.

It's a fortnight's mmg course and, I hope, will put us in a better position for going to a Bn when we come back. All the people here are friends of mine so we get on splendidly. We've had a good day's work, our first, instructed by an old Boer sgt, who is like a husband to his gun, dreaming of it every night, he says!

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[85] from 'are fortunately intact' the letter has reached the outside back of the Letter Card, when folded. It was the gummed sealing strip here that occluded words in the previous letter.
[86] given the care not to mention place names in the body of the letter this bit of bureaucracy is ironic.

We had a free day yesterday ɤ I went into X by train and taxi. We bathed ɤ had lunch at a country club where all games facilities could be had. The Jews were unfortunately, most unfortunately, atoning so all the banks and most of the shops were shut. The money question is a hard one ɤ I hope fervently that they will start paying us as lts from October 1st according to Cripp's promise. After lunch the others went sight-seeing and I set out to look for Eric hoping he must be some place, although I'd had no reply from him to the letter I wrote when I arrived. I tracked him down at about 5.30, sitting in his office with the name outside the door in true Civil Service style, and I told Eric that it reminded me of the Senate Ho, which annoyed him! I went back to the club, had a drink and came back to fetch Eric for dinner at 8. They work from 5 - 8. We had a splendid dinner with Giles Isham, of the 60th, who turned up later. It was good to see Eric and talk to him. He is fatter, more grey headed ɤ looks like Harry exactly. He didn't like to be told that either! I wonder what his letters will say about our meeting. Wd you forward me, by sea, typed copies of Charles' letters? They'd reach me one day, anyway. Still no more letters from you, when I left to come here.

Now I must change for dinn_. Coffee for bkfst is a blessing after the other place's tea, but oth_ the food is not too good as y_ .

I showed E.O.S the photos of _ girls and he showered them wi_ compliments so tell them both they m_ take steps to effect a similarity w_ themselves, even a vague one, to the p_ I've got. We've got some good ones t_ here with a 5/- ___.

[Written sideways on previous page:] I seem to have missed this space. In case you didn't see it because of the sticky label,

very much love from John

~ * ~

[Military Airgraph Service authorised by Egyptian Postal Administration]
MRS A.P. WATERFIELD
UNDERDOWN
TANGIER RD.
GUILDFORD
SURREY ENGLAND
[Signed 'JPWaterfield' in circular stamp, 'PASSED BY CENSOR 1213']

2/LT J.P.WATERFIELD
as from I.B.D 28.9.42
M.E.F Letter number 9.

you will be able to compare this, in speed of transit, with the air-letter-card. Eric says this is the quicker, the authorities maintain the reverse. From my course at the S.A.I.T.B I went into town at the weekend and had a series of very gay parties with E.O.S, his friends, and my friends. I slept the night at his pension. He is in splendid, scandalous, autocratic form and most excellent company. We had breakfast (omelette!) on the verandah, high above the river. It was beautifully warm and we sat in pyjamas. I showed him your air-graph (Aug 9th) which is all that I've had still! Agreed that it contained all the right sort of news. Over a John Collins before lunch we concocted a letter for you, sitting in the gardens, green and pleasant, of the Anglo-Egyptian Union, a civilized place, and free from the odiously prevalent khaki drill. Shall finish this course the day of my birthday. Now am sweating from ping-pong, sitting after lunch in my hut. The glare outside is terrific and I've bust my sun-glasses. We start again at 3 and work until 4.45. Tonight I shall go to the camp open air cinema! E.O.S says that nowadays he never writes but I should be glad of a letter now and then.

very much love to all from John

~ * ~

[AIR MAIL LETTER CARD]

ON ACTIVE SERVICE

MRS A.P. WATERFIELD
UNDERDOWN
TANGIER RD
GUILDFORD
SURREY ENGLAND

[signed] J P Waterfield [in mauve circular stamp, 'PASSED BY CENSOR NO 1213']
[Two orange 2d stamps, franks illegible]

Many happy returns JPW
⑤.10.42 Among the S.Africans
hurrah! again or still. Write to
Letter no. 10 1.B.D. ɤ do write;

on Friday two air-cards were forwarded from the I.T.B by Peter Proctor and I was thrilled to get them. They were dated Aug 13th and 19th., were full of all the news I want and all too short. Nothing else from anyone but I do hope to find something when I go back to I- on Thursday. Today is Monday and it's the evening time after tea. I suppose the most important thing is that it is my twenty first birthday but there is little to record it except this and nothing particular to be pleased about except my own little celebration. It's not even worth getting gay or drunk at a party tonight because we have an exam on "stoppages" tomorrow (I know nothing about them!) because there are only a few of my friends here, because there are no facilities for celebrations. All pretty convincing. However, not to be hopelessly dull we hope to have a party in Cairo on Wed night, before we return by the early train to dreary routine life at the I.B.D. on Thurs. A few good men are coming for the night ɤ if we go to sleep at all I shall pack them in like sardines on the floor of Eric's wife's room. This we found for her yesterday morning, she being hypochondriacally inclined, ɤ in hosp. at Alex, but returning shortly. EOS publicly laments having married her ɤ has got her a room in a block of flats three or four streets or about ½ ml away from his own!

Today we spent firing our Vickers in the desert during the morning, ɤ practising these damned stoppages during the afternoon in the lecture hut. I went to sleep immediately after lunch in the mess, and woke up only 5 mins before work time, 3 o'clock. This, I guess, was the result of the only celebration I've had so far which I needed anyway to put me right after a gay weekend. Tonight we have an extra period at 6.30 of "study" as they call it, and then perhaps I might go to the open-air cinema ɤ see "The Blonde ɤ the Cowboy" which sounds too, too thrilling. Last year Mrs Gatty gave me a birthday tea in Osw'k with 20 candles! The year has flown by. Now for the first time I feel that time has caught up on me. I'm no longer the youngest in the Bn or Coy and cannot console myself much longer with the thought that the Army is educating me.

I must get on with this because I want to get a shower before I go to "study" ɤ that means a five minute trudge across loose undulating sand slopes to the wooden hut ɤ tap which does duty as "Bath-house OFFICERS" or possibly "Ablutions, officers". I've just sealed up a letter to Mary which I wrote in Eric's flat last night. I met heaps of people I knew ɤ went from party to party on Saturday night and slept in Eric's room. It was kind of him to tolerate me but he has been exceedingly so since I met him though quite hopelessly unreliable for planning. We didn't go to bed till 4.30 am ɤ I slept on the bare mattress with the coverlet only on me as the old black servant had forgotten to make the bed. But I was plenty comfortable ɤ you can judge the temperature from that.

Later in the S.A mess, drinking coffee after dinner. We have definitely arranged a party for Wednesday. I expect you may have remembered me today so I think of you drinking to me many happy returns in tea or cocoa as I expect there is no more liquor in the country. I finished tonight some lovely smelling soap that I bought in Scarborough! People are playing ping-pong by the dim blow-

lamp; no S.Africans seem to play cards at all - they occasionally play draughts. The coffee is quite nice but not so good as in Cairo on Sat. when we dined on the roof of a large hotel with the stars on top of our heads and all the town lights over the balcony. I read a letter fr. HAS to Charles, (copied out) ϒ dated 14.9.42, amazingly recent ϒ amazing to read. I heard news of the B.Jones and O.S, all somewhat self-consciously written for circulation, but informative enough. Would you send me news of my bank-balance and also of the time these letter-cards are taking

to reach you. Persuade everyone you know to write to me. EOS never writes now, saying he has lost the habit because of M.E madness, but he was delighted with the girls' letters in spite of not replying. Write long letters by sea occasionally because they'll reach me in 8 weeks or so and the intimacies of long letters are worth the delay.

Well done Bow in the qr but I don't understand this 2nd. Div idea. Hope he enjoys his tractor driving. Eric has some terrific scandal about Jane Clark - I'll tell you in more private corresp. vml on my birthday fr. John

~ * ~

[AIR MAIL LETTER CARD]

MRS A.P. WATERFIELD
UNDERDOWN
TANGIER RD
GUILDFORD
SURREY ENGLAND

[signed] J P Waterfield [in circular stamp, 'PASSED BY CENSOR NO. 2291']
[One mauve 3d stamp, frank illegible]

11.10.42 Letter No ⑪ 5 Coy
I.B.D
When I got back here, M.EF.
after hitching with Peter Proctor in a truck from Cairo along the desert road, on Thurs, 8.10.42, in the late evening, I was thrilled to find various letters from all of you, and kind telegrams from O.S ϒ W.GW for my birthday. There were air p.c's fr. DMW dated 31.8.42 ϒ 10.9.42 and an air-graph 7.9.42 (of just about correctly sized writing) from Jill and Mary, jointly and very impersonally framed but full of good news. After all they came very close to my birthday and it was just luck that put me out of the way at Helwan on the actual day. So far letters ϒ cards by air have taken a month to 5 weeks. I keep them ϒ re-read them sucking out all the good factual news to the last drop. However I hope you will occasionally write a long letter by sea to tell me what everyone is thinking and talking about. I can't do quite so much of that because it would be censorable and prejudicial to the

②[87]

complacent well-being of some of his Majesty's forces. You see that I'm numbering my letters. Let me know how they arrive as I keep a note both of those I send ϒ receive. It's dull to be back here again although the sea is blue and beautiful; the palm trees wave quietly in the now frequent breezes; the mountains beyond the road glow russet and orange in the sun-set. But it's no consolation for not being in a Bn.

Eric refused to come to a party on Wed. as having drunk too much lately - which was quite true - but leant me his wife's room in Gezira and gave me £1 for a present to buy a book. He has indeed been charming. He thanks the girls for their letters and loved having them but Middle Eastitis has got him and he is dumb himself. I think his wife is a liability and a nuisance, socially ϒ financially,

[87] JPW labels few of his letter-card 'pages' as their sequence is obvious from the physical construction from a single sheet, but this is an exception.

unreliable ɤ full of scandal. Nothing is safe from the Siepmanns because they long to tell everyone about themselves. Has Harry told you yet? Dennis Craig told EOS that I was more like a Waterfield than a S! though the only W he knew was Gordon the reporter.

We had a dim party for my birthday because very few of my friends were accessible and owing to the Jews desire to atone all the bars in Cairo were closed. I'm afraid my 21st. birthday, emancipation day, was a flop. But Christopher gave me a torch ɤ Peter P a pair of nail scissors so I've done well. Eric's book that I chose was Pirenne's "Mohammed ɤ Charlemagne", a revolutionary theory of the beginnings of the Middle Ages out of the ruins of the Empire. Has Bow read his History of Europe, written without reference books in Thuringia during the last war? Tell Bow incidentally to write.

I've given up my Rolls-R because I can't get a new blade; so I keep it hidden away ɤ have bought a cheap bakelite affair which works well enough.

Yesterday we went sailing at Ismailia ɤ in a half-gale went aground trying to help someone who had preceded us onto the same bank. The halliards broke - the rowlocks didn't fit so we had to manhandle her, half swimming and half treading (when we cd get in shore) on spiky sharp shells ɤ stones which made our feet bleed. I can hardly walk this Sunday morning. We were in the water 2½ hours in pitch darkness. All our belongings were soaked. My watch still goes surprisingly after an hours soaking but our 5/- camera which has taken such good photos so far was drowned ɤ ruined. I will try and send you some prints if I can - it will take a time but will be worth it.

Tell everyone to keep writing. It was lovely to hear all yr nice wishes for my birthday. Thank you very much.

very much love fr.

John

will you look into the possibilities of sending the New St-

~ * ~

Letter No ⑫ Posted two

I.B.D. days later -

11.10.42 13.10.42

Having just written you a nice air-letter card I decided to send you those photos I talked about. These will get to you in winter and the fogs of November. I may be miles from here then. Nevertheless it's an act of faith to send off these things ɤ it won't matter if they never come up the garden path when you're having hot buttered toast for tea.

I've also put in some clothing coupons which I found in my wallet, Stuttafords' (of Cape Town) receipt (I wonder if you'll ever get the stuff?) and my berthing card for the "children" to see. All this was caused by the soaking of my wallet yesterday and my having taken everything out to dry it.

The photos may in some measure serve as Christmas cards. I can't send you the negatives because they don't belong to me. Now for Sunday lunch.

Love John

JPWaterfield

The photo of me was taken immediately after arrival at the I.B.D after (as I've told you) one day on the bare ground at the port ɤ one in the desert with luggage; as you see I'm in the worst possible order!

~ * ~


ON ACTIVE SERVICE.

11.X.42

Mrs A.P. Waterfield
Underdown
Tangier Rd
Guildford
Surrey
England

PASSED BY CENSOR
No. 1593

J.M. Waterfield


Clo. B1a.

SERVICES CLOTHING SHEET

Ration Period to 31 May, 1942

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Your name, rank and military identification card number will be filled in before this sheet can be used. NO indication of unit must be given.

2. You must not cut out coupons. This must be done by the shopkeeper, for whom it is illegal to accept loose coupons, except for post orders when you must cut them out and sign your name on the back of the coupons.

3. If this sheet is lost, you must apply to your Commanding Officer.

4. **This sheet may only be used by the holder, who must be wearing uniform or produce written evidence of identity.**

Name (WATERFIELD)

Rank 2/Lt J.T.

Military Identification Card No. M. 130456

Anyone finding this sheet should put it in a Post Office Letter Box.

ZA 172276

CLOTHING COUPON | CLOTHING COUPON

CLOTHING COUPON | CLOTHING COUPON | CLOTHING COUPON

CLOTHING COUPON



[enclosed in envelope: clothing coupons, passport-sized photo, on the reverse of which:]

This is my identity card photo! you can have it ɤ put it in the bonfire. Taken by an Egyptian ɤ developed in 2 mins!

[Other photos and receipt mentioned in the text no longer in the envelope; presumably the berthing card is the one on page 95.]

6 - Envelope and enclosures 11.10.42

[AIR MAIL LETTER CARD]

MRS A.P. WATERFIELD
UNDERDOWN
TANGIER RD
GUILDFORD
ENGLAND

[signed] J P Waterfield [in pink circular stamp, 'PASSED BY CENSOR NO 1906']
[One mauve 3d stamp, franked 'EGYPT']

20.10.42 No ⑬ No 2 I.T.D
M.E.P

This morning I hitch-hiked down the sand-swept main road, bounded by tented camps for mile after mile, and was delighted to come into lunch and find 3 air-graphs waiting from you, dated 21.9, fr Jill at Glos. 20.9, ɤ from Bow, 20.9: you can see they take just under a month. They are impersonal things, air-graphs (though every letter is a joy) and you only begin to realize their emptiness when a lovely long private letter arrives, full of scandal, intimacies, and self revelation (however hard one attempts to avoid it) and I don't really mind at all about speed of transit as long as I get 1) a frequent and regular supply and 2) a few quick air-letters or postcards to convey important information. N.B my new address. We have moved to a Motor-Wing (there is one truck!) down the road six miles. We, the Rifle Bde ɤ guards live in a Mess together, between the hills, again, and blue water but not so close to a bathing beach as before. Our tent is beautifully dug in which is necessary because a sand-storm flattened the newly erected camp on Friday night ɤ left only 3 tents standing. We are next to a bristling pair of guards moustasches, cloaking a major, and H.M's consular prison which is the Field Punishment centre ɤ most unpleasant. Sand filters into everything.

I think we'll find all our mail will arrive in the end. Do not despair of stuff not reaching me by sea. I can't remember whether I acknowledged Mary's splendid letter of 21.7.42 ɤ DMW's nice vivid description of Cambridge holiday, and AP's fine punting which made her surprised (!) ɤ proud. By the way I've had no letter from A.P himself yet, nor from any friends other than the family. Ginger people up a bit. Let me know how you find my news, whether these are too short and dull or what else you'd like to know about. I want everything and, so far have been delighted with letters you've sent. HAS ɤ WGW sent me wires for my birthday. So did O.S who acknowledged a letter fr. me. Yesterday a copy of "Horizon" arrived for July. I have 6 months subscription to it - would you renew it ɤ continue to send it to me? Also Jill mentions the death of one TIM CARRITT seen in the Draconian. As I pay for the D I'd be glad if you

wd forward it to me when you've all read it. I do not know TIM C - does she mean Brian C or Tim Pearce? I'm sorry in either case. You give me Eric's address - by now you'll have heard of my gay meetings with him - God knows if I'll ever see my birthday presents now - he's much too unreliable. I was given a torch by Christopher ɤ a pair of nail scissors by Peter Proctor. These things are appallingly expensive here - please let me have a statement of my Barclays a/c at various intervals. I got an Income tax relief form dated July 21st. which said replies must be in within 21 days! I've sent it back to COX ɤ KINGS Bournemouth by sea: in such fashion does the Army pay work - it is all a ramp ɤ no doubt the records will again be burned accidental done on purpose as they were at the end of the last war in Jerusalem. It is nice here to have so many friends all round ɤ to know people well but I shall be thankful to get to a Bn. I have been on a 5 day Messing Course at the M.E school of cookery 20 miles from here. We saw slaughtering, had lectures on calories, vitamins, problems of supply, cookhouses, improvised methods of cooking in

sand and desert, and did a great deal of cooking ourselves; steak, fruit pie, braised meat and omelettes we made. _ was all excellently run and really intere_ They struck me as technically more adv_ than any other department I've so far_ (in their own sphere) seen in M.E.

It is getting colder at nights now _ sweaters appear in the evenings. The days _ beautifully warm, not scorching as they wer_ month ago. The sun is bright outside as I _ in the tent this afternoon, on my camp bed _ guess the leaves are gold on Princes Ave_ and the creepers on Saunderites flaming red_ purple and football playing. I shall run _ to swim. Letter No 12 went 13.10 by sea _ _tains some photos always much love fr_

~ * ~

[AIR MAIL LETTER CARD]

MARTIN Waterfield Esq
GOWNBOYS
CHARTERHOUSE
GODALMING
SURREY
ENGLAND

[signed] J P Waterfield [in pink circular stamp, 'PASSED BY CENSOR NO 1906']
[One mauve 3d stamp, frank smudged]

20.10.42 I.T.D
NB. change M.EF
address

It's like a quiet August afternoon in England, not unpleasantly scorching but with a warm sun and slight breeze. The breeze may whirl into a miniature tornado any moment and snatch away a tent in a cloud of dust. This often happens but I'm safe here as we were well dug in by our riflemen in two hrs work on Sunday morning. On Friday night a dust storm flattened the camp and left three tents standing. There is the hum of planes, probably testing before an operational flight over Tobruk - I went up on a test the other day - and the rattle of transport on the main road that runs through the tented camps, mile after mile, between the mountains and deep blue water, travelled on by black men in turbans, tarbrushes, skull-caps night-gowns and petticoats of various colours and by endless Army trucks of all sizes and kinds. Down by the canal are stinking hovels of mud where donkeys (with red saddles), camels and goats sleep among the Egyptians, without distinction of man or beast.

I'm on my camp-bed and the 2 batmen who look after us four are pottering about making mud-pie cement to prevent wind catching loose sand, filling our canvas buckets and tidying up with Cockney back-chat in between. I've just been reading yr air-graph dated 20.9. and will re-read it as all letters are a joy to be savoured to the end of bitter regret. You mention longer letters by sea - do continue with those for air-gs are impersonal, brief things and as long as letters do come in the end I shall be thankful to hear the good gossip and interesting dope contained in a long surface mail letter. Let me know how these things please you and what, in general, you wd like to know about in my letters. Ch. must be in autumn glory now with gold on Princes' Avenue and the creepers on Saunderites ɤ Gownboy's walls purple and orange. I wonder how you'll get on this qr^{c}, and what you are reading. Well done last qr esp. yr £6 for painting. What did you buy with it? Are you a monitor I wonder ɤ how is J.F.G - tell him I've written to you ɤ AJW.B if you see him. Tell Tony, too, to write to me.

You will have seen my accounts of meetings w. Eric. He is grey, autocratic and worldly and very excellent company. When he is bored he just goes off either in person or in mind. In many ways I've little in common with him but he has been most kind and helpful in entertaining me. He never writes now but is delighted w. letters ɤ thanks all who have written. He appears to dislike his wife and drinks gallons of whisky.

I've just written to DMW - you will gather, as usual, the more factual and concrete pieces of my news from that. I hope these letters are sensibly circulated, not Siepmannized, but sent around to

those who wd be interested. Do yourself urge any of my friends you meet to write. Here we have moved down the road and have a mess composed of 60th., Rifle Bde, and Guards. There are a hundred odd, nearly all of whom I know well by their Christian names ɤ with greater or less degree of friendliness. This is very pleasant and the great advantage of the 60th but nevertheless news from friends at home is most acceptable and costs very little effort to produce, so get going and, as all the rfn say, keep the pen moving.

I suppose you play no football - Ch must seem a little lonely in the Autumn - I wonder how numbers are. Give my love to the Birleys, Chignells and anyone else who ought to have it. Ask Mrs A.B.R for B_ Russell's address - I might write to him. I must go now to the Mess ɤ have tea. After tea I shall bathe ɤ then censor letters, an odious job. I shall read Pirenne's Mohammed ɤ Charlemagne in the evening ɤ, I hope, play poker!

much love _

~ * ~

[AIR MAIL LETTER CARD]

MRS A.P. WATERFIELD
UNDERDOWN
TANGIER RD
GUILDFORD
SURREY
ENGLAND

[signed] J P Waterfield [in mauve circular stamp, 'PASSED BY CENSOR NO 1906']
[One mauve 3d stamp, frank illegible]

Letter . No ⑭ 25.x.42 (Sunday) 2 I.T.D. (Mob Tps.)
M.E.F

Today you will have heard that the battle has started. It is strange to think I've come all this way to miss it, and annoying too. But I suppose we may all go up any minute and I've got my belongings lined up and in order ready for hurried packing. Meanwhile routine idleness goes on here in our new camp; this Sunday morning finds me feeling rather off net as a result of the 1½ litres of Chianti I drank last night at dinner in the French Club, Ismailia, where we sat and ate on a stone paved terrace in the open air and I listened to Mickey Herring (who was in Yorkshire) discoursing quite intelligently about producing opera in England - a strange subject enough but rather a pleasant contrast to the usual tittle-tattle of messes. His father is Percy Herring which shd convey something to people but leaves me coldish ɤ he himself has had considerable experience of conducting. I bought myself some Parke-Davis shaving cream at a Greek drug-store in the town which was a great find, and in the "Librarie et Papeterie" on the main street I nearly bought an Oxford Homer which looked rather out of place among the promises of "pneumatic bliss" that bulge out of "Film Fun", "Movie Secrets" ɤ the like, feet deep on the book stall.

But I do not, by inclination, "travel light" like the man Fielding in "A passage to India"

which I read last week for the first time and I have to keep a grip on my acquisitive proclivities - all my small oddments increase by geometrical progression weekly and I shall soon have nowhere to put stuff. So I talked gk to the prop. and left.

On 26.x., as I think I acknowledged in No ⑬, I had air-graphs from four of you, D.W, Jill, Mary, Bow - since then I've had an air-graph for my birthday from Phyllis St. which was a delight to receive. Give her my love and tell her I will write. I've had nothing else since I last wrote. I wonder if you've received the parcel from Stuttafords or letters nos 2,3,5 written on the boat before each port of call. (No 4 was an a-graph written from C'town.) I hope they will reach you because they are of extreme length, all three, and I'd hate to think all my efforts were for nothing. These a.l.c's shd be reaching the

front door fairly regularly - I want to know if they are adequate ɤ contain the sort of news you like to hear. I left the note-book in which I keep a/c of correspondence at the school of Cookery Mess ɤ was in a frantic flap until I cd hitch-hike up the road and get it from the Jeeves-like batman there, who produced it with suspiciously raised eyebrows - I having flopped there badly for smelling his gin bottle and rejecting it as foul! All the same I got my note-book. At the moment I've been bitten plaguily by some sort of insect which gives me an appalling itch. But I've been most fortunate hitherto in not having any of the diseases

from which so many people have suffered here, dysentry, sandfly-fever, "gippo tummy" the commonest and most uncomfortable for obvious reasons. I'm almost bound to get something sooner or later.

I told Mary last week that Graham Gow, quite the same, vague and gentle, had walked into the mess, just off the boat, on Thursday last week. It seemed so natural to see him; he has always been a part of Guildford ɤ Cobham life (though I know we went to our first boarding school together) which has seemed a life of different behaviour and attitudes to the Army or Ch'house. I believe now they are linking up which is a better thing altogether.

I have been playing picquet lately. I don't know why it is such a favourite game in our mess except that probably the people you find there are trying to live a life out of its context, making belief, the last ramparts of the 18th. Century outlook, of formalized behaviour ɤ self-conscious superiority over their neighbours! We are settling in now - crockery has arrived and the food is improving as it should be with so extravagant a messing charge. The trouble is that drinks like kümmel (and excellent stuff at that) are reasonably cheap and we naturally get used to drinking our liqueur every night. But clearly in England, unless one speculates shrewdly now, it will be impossible to live w. such standards and we shall all be like fish out of water. By the way will you periodically (I've asked for this before) let me have news of my a/c in Barclays Glfd? I still have a few English cheques ɤ can cash them

in Cairo so I'd like to know now ɤ then how I stand - I fear not too good.

You all seem to have had a great many holidays and gay fun. It is hard to imagine what the Autumn and the winter coming on, feel like. Is Mary back at Leicester and how is A.P? Your news of him except of his punting excellence has been limited to his whereabouts. How are his society palls? Jill is next due for an air-graph - she writes, as usual, like a little dictator from her new house at Chelt. I think you all might try air-mail letters - They are only about 1/-.

I long to receive my birthday presents but E.O.S, you know him.... much love from John

~ * ~

[On headed paper, "La Neve Antonio - Depositi - Rappresentanze - Barce, li - Casella P stale N. 18" - soft pencil. There is also a typewritten transcript by Eric, the addressee.]

B.Coy
1st. K.RRC[88]
November 20th (?) '42
4.30 pm

Dear Eric[89],

I have woken up to the date and the time of day for the first time in four weeks. Today is practically the first opportunity I've had during that time to eat a meal uninterrupted by the

[88] according to the next letter, they are in 'Barce' at the time of writing, but this not located.
[89] some parts of this letter are repeated almost verbatim in 'Notes from the Desert War'. That document - appendix B - fills in some of the gaps between this and the previous letter, as well as providing a cross-check on the self-censorship in effect in the letters home.

blue flag (for move) or a rush for orders on some job to be done in the Company. It has been the third time I've shaved ɤ the second time I've washed. Altogether rather important. There is nothing for me to attend to at the moment so I am sitting down quietly in the kitchen here and writing to you, to keep in touch, as I said I would, and to ask you to let Underdown know that I'm alive and well. This will be a nuisance for you because it will mean that you will be breaking your silence (which I gather from family gossip has caused far-fetched speculation!) and will be generally inconvenient.[90] However I cannot write an air card or air-graph here because there are none and sea mail will not reach them before I am, possibly, sent to another continent.

So would you send them something and, possibly, enclose this, or a copy of it, in your

②

bag, so that they can get some news as well?

I shall have, I anticipate, little time for correspondence in the near future, ɤ I'd be glad for them to read the news with a personal ɤ factual angle on me rather than a general surmise "I wonder if John is there?" Naturally I've had no mail at all since I left Geneifa.[91] If you think the post is to be trusted (which I doubt) and my birthday things have reached you, would you send them on; if not ɤ if there is anything valuable, keep them for me until I can see you again.

One of my riflemen is making pastry in the kitchen here. We found some flour in the house when we got in last night. I'm only sitting here because I've got a slight chill from squelching wet blankets ɤ sleeping bag in the last five nights ɤ it's warmer here by the range, listening to the boiling of the brew can.

I hope this gets you. The normal procedure is to give this to the Colour Sgt when he brings the rations up with the échelon. We haven't seen him at very regular intervals in the last few weeks but lately, since we got onto the main road, he has been up almost daily. He will take it to the RAS.C and from there it goes through the Normal Channels of which I'm ignorant.

However I may be able to short-circuit it

③

a little by using a Public Relations fellow, (ex-RAS.C!) called Colin Morris, a writer of plays, he says, who is attached to 4th Lt Armd Bde and writes feature stories and background. Him I found eating omelette and tomato this morning ɤ chatted to for a while - he lives in luxury as all such do ɤ has no idea of living with a section of rfn, ɤ annoyed me by talking cock about the inequality of comfort enjoyed up here by officers ɤ men. He got his eggs, as have we all, by bargaining with the natives for "chaye" or "sukkas". Sometimes they give you hard boiled ones. I hope I may get my letter in with his copy.

The natives seem of two types - sleek slimy ɤ Italianized or old, wizened and blanket wrapped, perhaps sitting, topheavy, on the rump of a donkey. Some speak English a little.

We came here, winding in bottom gear, down the greasy escarpment (which had been blown by the enemy ɤ repaired with rapid skill by the REs), moving nose to tail in the murky down-sluicing of a thunder storm. Lighting flashed in the drivers eyes; - I had to hand over the wheel, as usual, because my spectacles get covered with rain; one vehicle ran away ɤ injured 12; but we reached the plain in the end. We drove through the streets yelling "Beer Company" until

④

we heard an answering yell directing us.

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[90] Eric did, however, type up this letter and the next ('Siepmannizing', however spelled) and presumably sent them on to Guildford. The typescripts are included with the originals in the archive.

[91] not identified, presumably camp near Cairo. 'El Geneifa' is about 150 miles SE of Cairo and so doesn't seem to match descriptions of pyramids, frequent visits to Cairo, sailing at Ismailia etc. The typed-up copy only has G-.

My torch wouldn't work and we found our way into a stinking rank yard, then through the window into the building. There was muck ɤ garbage, result of Wog looting, everywhere.

We found dry rooms, lit petrol fires, began to steam and dry out. People went scuffling in ɤ out, shedding clothes gradually, bumping petrol tins and rubbish in the dark, rubbing their eyes clear of smoke ɤ choking with the petrol fumes. Upstairs I found one Capt Leslie (HLI), a conducting officer, with 4 correspondents - Sedgewick, the Sydney Herald, the English Associate Press or Daily Sketch ɤ Newcastle nonsense, with an M.C., lean ɤ scraggy, and another Yank.

Nothing to do with this. I met one David Hartnell-Beaver on the way up, going to join the 1st. R.B. He says he knew you well at 8th. Army.

We have spent the day here, in this square red plastered building, cleaning ourselves up for the final phase tomorrow when we go to Benghazi. (I hope.) The Navy and all are with us.

The flat plain is striped with olive green ɤ red bands of colour - black clouds have moved past the sun at regular intervals ɤ dropped their load on us. Everything is rotting and decaying - boots, bumph, and metal litter the orchards ɤ the vegetable gardens. There are huge ugly cacti dying over the wall and I can see camels ɤ cows

⑤

side by side in the distance. No Italians are left here.

We have come through green hill country since Martuba,[92] reminding me of Newlands corner Bagshot ɤ its blue heather hills, the Lowlands of Scotland ɤ Dartmoor in rotation. White bungalows are seen by the road with ENTE COLONIZZAZIONE LIBIA above every doorway. We slept one night in a rat-infested barn at Gioanni Bata[?] but the roof leaked ɤ the place stank of garlic so we were glad to move at first light.

We have been, since we came North to go through the gap at Alamein, the foremost Bde, often the foremost Company in the Army. We listened to us being described on the news, when we could hear it on the WT earphones (it's jammed quite often now at 8) in leagues at night before getting into the blankets - we were always where the announcer described our foremost tps to be. We went up Halfaya at 8 in the morning, to Caprozzo,[93] south and round to El Adem ɤ Acroma ɤ back onto the Coast Road.[94]

We were outside Sidi Barrani, skirted it ɤ at Buq-Buq.[95]

How fortunate I've been. Luckily I'm untouched though several friends of mine have been wounded. I believe the 2nd. Bn has been badly hit ɤ Mickey Herring, that ugly red-haired fellow

⑥

whom you saw at Gezira from a distance in the bar was killed after 3 days with the Bn. He was a most able musician too. Sad.

Not much more to say. Tell Giles Isham that many remember him with all affection.

I hope I'll be able to phone you soonish ɤ I'll tell you more. Please let Underdown know.

Love John

[signed] JPWaterfield

~ * ~

---

[92] presumably all these place-names can be mentioned because they are have been broadcast on the news - or perhaps because written to E.O.S who had clearance? Identifiable ones shown on map (appendix A).
[93] ? - not identified, obviously somewhere west of Halfaya; sounds like an (Italian) military descriptive name.
[94] he is describing a route around Tobruk.
[95] these are earlier points on the push west.

[Military Airgraph Service authorised by Egyptian Postal Administration]
MRS A.P. WATERFIELD
UNDERDOWN
TANGIER ROAD
GUILDFORD
SURREY
ENGLAND
[Signed 'JPWaterfield' in circular stamp, 'PASSED ...SOR 253']
[Annotated: '[arrived] 28 Nov']

Horizon came too - a delight to have.	B Coy 1st Bn MEF	This is continued on another of same date.	22.XI.42

Received today a cluster of letters, the first since I came to the Bn. Frabjous delight! Read them in the sunlight, after a week of soaking rain, by the Mediterranean. This is the first opportunity for sitting still in a month, the 2nd time I've shaved and the first time sat under a roof, albeit bomb-holed. Thank you hugely and tons of love to all the family and anyone else - letters were:- Mary, a-graph 12.X, written in her Leicester billet: Mary, surface letter (No2) 28.VII, full of gossip about holiday events, Geoff. Whishard, Ann's expected visit etc: letter DMW 25.VIII. about her birthday incl. C.A.S birthday letter ɤ yellow H.A.S extraction undated, ɤ a letter card Laurence Stone 7.VII. Encourage others to persevere. Wrote to Eric a day ago with instructions to forward a copy by his special method, but he lacks Harry's communicative instincts! C.A.S mentions meeting Ben Thomas in N.York. I, too, have been thinking of Ben, which I would not normally be expected to do. The rest you can imagine. Have heard little news in the desert. Occasionally have been able to get our wireless ear-phones going but it's often jammed. Thrilled by Americans landing but mystified about subsequent developments for lack of information. We have been wherever the news has mentioned the daily

~ * ~

[Military Airgraph Service authorised by Egyptian Postal Administration]
MRS A.P. WATERFIELD
UNDERDOWN
TANGIER ROAD
GUILDFORD
SURREY ENGLAND
[Signed 'JPWaterfield' in circular stamp, 'PASSED BY CENS...']

Also received a-graph fr D.M.W ɤ A.P date 10.X.42	1. K.R.R.C This continues from another as I tried with my last effort - hope it's successful.	22.XI.42

foremost limit of our chaps. We have been, and are the vanward: so look up the files of the last few days to picture my whereabouts. I'm a little cleaner this morning but have been foul ɤ beavered - I find it comes off better with a long beard. I'm covered now with mosquitoe bites, otherwise dark brown (in spite of bitter, icy rain for the last week, and sopping sleeping bag) and very fit. I eat enormously, together with my chaps - meals and perpetual strong, sugar-loaded tea, are brewed on petrol[96] and sand in petrol and wood fires. Ingenuity of menu from tins is astonishing. Our stay here will be very brief so don't imagine me in town. Have met numerous War Correspondents whose "picture" stories are nonsense as far as I can see - this distinct from communiqués. My zip is a god-send; so have been

[96] 'cans' or 'tins', presumably missing here.

my goggles ɤ gloves. Do you remember buying them? I have needed all the warm clothes I possess. No news about my birthday presents but have told Eric to keep anything that arrives for the moment. Post, I think, is reliable, if slow. I think of you all often but not continually, being otherwise engaged. Do, please, circulate this. I shall have no other time or chance to write. Very happy Xmas to all of you -

much love from John

~ * ~

Same address still[97]

November 30th. 42

About 2 pm but my watch stopped a fortnight ago. We have just had our lunch brew - my food group has no tea, no sugar and no milk. They have, I admit been greedy when there was plenty but still they are 8 days rations down since the beginning of the battle and there is little likelihood of it being made up. We had for lunch coffee scrounged from an Italian truck outside Benghazi, black and gritty. I imagine it was 90% acorns and 10% endive - we had biscuit and we had each two mouthfulls of herring. This morning we had biscuit burgoo ɤ jam. This was placed to soak overnight because we have a "1st. class" cook among us.. he is also a cobbler, a truck driver and an ex-fly-Shunter which broke his nerve, he says. We have no more jam now. Tonight we shall have bully stew. And we are all in splendid form, writing letters, comparatively clean, perhaps a little wistful about Christmas and a little irritated by the regular 2 hourly Stuka raids but, in general, in good order.

We are sitting in a strong point, 90 mls from any tarmac, surrounded by the worst going on the desert. Except for Armd Car patrols 2 yrs ago in the Italian push, I gather we are in the most forward position the Army has ever attained. All round is soft white sand, mottled with grey-green scrub. Gently sloping hills ɤ wadis break the flatness. Sharp rocks crown the hills so we have a taste of all kinds of ground. We are on column, in short, which you know all about only too well.

②

I hope you got my note from Barce, ɤ possible were able to forward it home. My "mate" in my jeep, one Rfn Deane, from Virginia Waters, today produced a huge packet of letter cards so I quickly got one ready to go off to Underdown. The échelon is supposed to have left our base at 10 am this morning so with luck we shall see it tomorrow if it does not get bombed to hell and this will come back out with it.

The Stukas are a menace here. We either fire back from behind our Vickers Brens or Brownings (scrounged from derelict Honies down at Himeinat) which leaves me exhilarated or else hide, if we have no gun, in our shit-pits. This leaves one rather less happy. It is aggravating to hear, as we did the other night, in leagues grouped round the back of the CSM's three tonner, that the Luftwaffe was no longer existent in the area of North Africa.

Somehow I do not expect that I shall see you until well on in the New Year. Most of the chaps in my platoon have been eating fuckin'[98] bully ɤ pukin' biscuits on Xmas day for the last 3 years, many were with the battalion in Burmah ɤ have not seen home for 7 or 8 years. They anticipate the same meal this Christmas and they are probably right. They are tremendously good soldiers and splendid people to live with. I am very happy to be here.

The only said thing is that many of my friends have been killed just lately. Officer casualties

③

have been out of all proportion with us. Funnily I never feel so sorry for them as for their parents and families ɤ friends.

---

[97] again to Eric, who again has had a transcription made - two copies (!) of which are with the original.
[98] the manuscript has blue crayon through bits, indicating which parts were not to typed out. In these first adjectives one can hear the riflemen themselves.

I had some letters at Benghazi from home. They send you their love ϒ are glad to know you are O.K having been exercised by yr silence. DW sent an enclosure from CAS which showed him artless ϒ dissatisfied outside his family circle. I also got an Horizon which was fun to read. I sat all one afternoon ϒ read that ϒ the letters beyond the wire, beyond the Italian memorials to their troops, amongst the woods ϒ wreckage on the beach with the surf breaking by my feet. It was pleasant but in the harbour, the other side of the quay, there were corpses floating, and in the hollow houses and plaster-spattered streets there was rot and decay and squalor. I was glad to get back to the desert ϒ clean air. The RAF had done their job.

Can't write any more. I can hear the angry bee-like hum of our friends ϒ must get to my guns - Very happy Christmas to you - buy me a present ϒ I'll get you one out here!

Later - I long for some sweets or chocolate or tinned stuff all of which goes to the Common pool of my

④

chaps here. If you cd send some up I would pay you when I return - money is useless to me here. Tinned fruit, tea, sugar, any tinned luxuries such as the bloody Yanks use as we saw at Martuba aerodrome ϒ sweets and chocolate would be blessed. They cd do as an Xmas present from me.

Love John

[signed] JPWaterfield

~ * ~

[AIR MAIL LETTER CARD]

MRS A.P. WATERFIELD
UNDERDOWN
TANGIER RD
GUILDFORD
SURREY
ENGLAND

[signed] J P Waterfield [in mauve circular stamp, 'PASSED BY CENSOR NO 256']
[One mauve 3d stamp, frank partly legible, 'FIELD POST OFFICE...']

[pencil; handwriting unusually upright]

No 19 was not numbered,
so this becomes No 20[99]

Same address.
8.xii.42

This will reach you in 1943 ϒ brings all my love and good wishes for next year to you all. Hope you got my last letter from the column in time for Xmas ϒ that you all had a gloriously happy family (sounds idiotic, like these cards) time. I shall drink yr health in neat whisky (either Haig or Black ϒ White, I've a bottle of each) on Xmas day ϒ no doubt you will do the same for me in ersatz cider-cup unless DW has "mossed something up" (a desert phrase) with her usual skill ϒ foresight. You will get no presents from me but I shall try ϒ remedy that when I return to Cairo. Nor shall I have anything from you or anyone else unless Eric does what I asked him ϒ sends some tins up here for my chaps - we eat with subtlety ϒ comparative luxury but rations are meagre; bully or "M ϒ V" are monotonous ϒ tinned fruit is our peak of digestible happiness. There is no news of my birthday presents still ϒ I can only wait - surface mail to me here takes 3 - 4 months or more. Today I had a letter from W.J.Johnson charmingly expressed, inviting me to visit him. It had taken a month to reach me from Cairo ϒ I fear he will be surprised

[99] Previous numbered one was only 14, in fact - some missing from archive (see additionally letters of 24.1.43 and 8.3.43); luckily letters to Eric, and appendix C, covers the period.

at my failure to reply. I shall remedy it in the next few days.

Thank you, Mary, for a delightful a-graph, legible informative ϗ bringing the whole of your life at KSH (or whatever the initials are) most vividly to me. I hope yr party went with a swing - where were the males? This female front is not too good. Can't spare the time at the moment for separate letters but for God's sake keep writing - it saves our lives. Yr a-graph (Mary's) was dated 30.X.42.

Also I must ack. with delighted thanks surface letter fr DMW dated 18.VIII 42 enclosing letter fr Mary about doings at camp w. Eastb. coll (though no scandalous revelations yet!), also C.A.S letter 12.VII 42, ϗ July pay-p.c from Bow after arrival at Aldb. Though 4 months old, DW's letter was timeless ϗ most precious. I can picture you, as you described, sitting in the drawing room, on a hot afternoon in the drowsy quiet of the lunch hour, when suburbia sleeps, and only the flapping of the curtain on the hall door interrupts the pen scratching the family news to me in Cyrenaica.

This is inevitably scrappy. I look up every two minutes, across the flat plain, the mottled grey scrub and yellow stone of the desert, to Coy HQ lest the blue flag, signalling a move, go up λαθων με. The wind is bitter and I sit in my truck here (my jeep was destroyed on column!) warmly wrapped up in woolly waistcoat, battle dress top, khaki pullover, scarf, greatcoat, Army issue leather top-jerkin, a real 1941 production, not ersatz ϗ brought up by the Colour Sgt two days ago, most welcomingly. My other possessions are all intact ϗ well chosen. My zip holds innumerable odds ϗ ends, from medicine for my Machine Gunners ϗ Mortarmen (your knew that was my platoon, I hope) to toilet paper which threatens, alas, to give out and my small Virgil for which I have had an odd half hour

in the intervals of work.

There is so much to write about, so much work of refitting for our last battle to be done, so much to organize in the platoon that I am at all times overwhelmed with work. Therefore these letters must be circulated and visitors to the house shown them - I have no time, nor air letter-cards to write on, and I do not wish to lose touch. I suggest a number of extracts, or the entire lot, be typed out ϗ Mary, or other kind soul send a copy to friends of mine like Denys Tanner, Peter Butler, George Coulson, Laurence Stone (HMS BOREAS c/o G.P.O) Michael Hoban, O.S, W.G.W, Christopher Cox ϗ others that might be interested. You will be seeing pictures by now of our advance in Egypt - do not forget the mud ϗ rain which were our worst enemies. Parade (M.E weekly) has some excellent photos, though, if horrible in their realism. You will no doubt see them. The chaps have got some copies of magazines to read in these few days of hurried maintenance, re-organisation ϗ training. We are feeding well now and conserving against the evil day; in battle rations are short or non-existent. In our food group, my Pl. Sgt, dvr, ϗ one of my gun sections, we have an Army passed 1st. class cook - he gave us delicious apricot tart last night. However we are, to our indignation, restricted to 3 Brews a day because of the need for collecting a reserve of petrol for the battle. Water, too, has been down to ½ gall for some time. We got back fr. column ourselves none the worse for the Stuka boys ϗ now the RAF are up and in terrific form.

Now in the evening sun we have settled down ϗ the stew is in the pot ϗ the tea in the brew-can. I had my hair cut this afternoon and feel all ticklish as a result. I sat on a petrol can ϗ read "8th Army News" while it was being done.

Happy New Year ϗ very much love from John

You might consider sending

1) New Statesman, cuttings etc from the Times ϗ anything like it that might interest me.

2) Books from time to time likely to be of semi-permanent value.

Where is AP's correspondence? I've had only one a-graph from him!

[sideways up middle pages:]

Units in Armoured Divs are never allowed to be mentioned so don't worry that we are not named

~ * ~

[AIR MAIL LETTER CARD]

MRS A.P. WATERFIELD
UNDERDOWN
TANGIER RD
GUILDFORD
SURREY
ENGLAND

[signed] J P Waterfield [in mauve circular stamp, 'PASSED BY CENSOR NO 256']
[One mauve 3d stamp, frank partly legible, 'FIELD POST OFFICE...']

[hasty pencil]
[annotated -] arr. 4.2.43

It got wet in the rain

22.XII.42 Same address

No 21 Still alive

dirty but well

Only 3 days to Christmas ϑ I can only just picture the family preparations. Nofilia, by the Mediterranean, in the warm afternoon sun, is very remote from buttered toast ϑ crumpets and Christmas cake. This will be late but brings you my love for Xmas and wishes for a happy New Year. Well we are being relieved - it's just been confirmed. The general promised that we would be after the Agheila position had been taken and we've done that. No doubt you heard about the "feat of unparalleled endurance" which the radio used one night to describe the achievements of this Bde! It's laughable of course but we've had a good crack since we came through the gap at Alamein 7 weeks ago - the Bn has been on the desert since March (while others came and went) unrelieved, and has had only one other relief since the beginning of the war. And before that it was in Burmah. My pl.sgt was in the Navy, then in India ϑ Burmah with this Bn and hasn't seen home for 10 years. He has a brother who is a group-captain in the RAF. Did you hear the battle of MATRATIN described in the Radio News Reel by the N-Z - they twice let them through but the rear-gd are tough. Now the white mosque of Nofilia shines in the sun light and the sea tops the curving brown green hills with a blue horizon ϑ I'm sitting in the jeep again waiting to hand over our transport. We've come a long way and I am well - many of my friends have been killed in the battles and I'm fortunate to be whole and happy. We are ragged, dirty, get no mail, no PR.I (bought luxuries which are sent up ϑ sold) no cigarettes (this drives the rfn frantic) and will eat bully for Xmas. I am happy ϑ have been so but cd do with a bath. We envy the N.Z their canteens ϑ Battle dress - Why is the Q so absolutely hopeless in our case? It's getting cooler and soon will be dark. We are cooking our dinner now on the brew fire, probably stew.

Continue to write ϑ to send me some things to read. Did Mary enjoy her trips to London, she makes no mention of them. Thanks awfully for the enlargement of her but not of Jill - I got it in the rain just before the battle - love John

[sideways up middle:]
I hasten to ack. with many thanks Mary's letters (16.XII.42) from Lamberhurst 13.IX.42, also letter ϑ photo 17.IX.42 ϑ silly wallet.

~ * ~

[AIR MAIL LETTER CARD]

MRS A.P. WATERFIELD
UNDERDOWN
TANGIER RD
GUILDFORD
SURREY
ENGLAND

[signed] J P Waterfield [in mauve circular stamp, 'PASSED BY CENSOR NO 256']
[One mauve 3d stamp, frank partly legible, 'FIELD POST OFFICE...']

Four miles from the sea; 30.XII.42
somewhere West of Bengasi,
resting, now, at last.
On Xmas eve we had broken contact ɤ were sitting within sight of Nofilia fort, when the colour sergeant drove up with Xmas mail. It was a great thrill to get letters from Bow ɤ Jilly, his from Aldborough ɤ Ch'house, Jill's from Cheltenham. I could picture the Cheltenham Prom with Jill perambulating by the shop fronts and crumpets and cake in the Cadena. I sat on my camp chair (a great luxury) in front of the brew fire ɤ my HQ section crouched round beside me and we all held out our hands to the flames to get warm, shivered in our filthy, tattered, Khaki drill shorts ɤ shirts, and ragged greatcoats and told each other stories of previous Christmas Eves. Most of them had no cigarettes and were saved from walking round picking up fag ends only by the tardy arrival of 50 Players ɤ a bottle of beer from the P.R.I.[100] That, of course, they pay for. It was, I remember, a horrid sight, on Swan column, to see my chaps going round the slit trenches they had hidden in half a day before to pick up the cigarette stubs they had dropped from the smokes

②

which had soothed them when the Stukas came for their fun and games. I had never realized what a hold nicotine must have, as a drug. Over hot tea we warmed ɤ our blankets were spread out on the stony reddish yellow hillside and dried up when the sun defeated the heavy dew. On Christmas day we moved East, for the first time since October 23rd.. We were relieved from the Bde by Jimmy Stow's Bn, the next in number to ours. He too, wrote to me on Xmas eve from hospital in Palestine where he went with jaundice after the opening battle. Jaundice is virulent ɤ mows down the ranks of officers, noone knows why. Rfn get it, but the number of officers succumbing is out of all proportion. Indeed I am one of the longest lived subalterns in the Bn already. Of course many are away ɤ most here are considerably senior to me in the desert but as far as continual service without a break goes I am well up the list. Don't forget that I'm a Lieutenant and have been so for some time on any count! If Cripps was right I became one on Oct 1st. and I hope I'm being paid as such from that date - in any case I completed 18

months commissioned service on Nov 16th. How time flies - I remember ringing up from Woking station to say I'd be late for lunch on the day I finished with Bulford. Would you check up with the bank for me and find out if I'm being paid as a Lt ɤ from what date? And I'd be glad of a periodical note on the state of my a/c there. Funnily enough Mess Bills in the desert ɤ in battle are much more extravagant or equally so at least as in barracks or billets in back areas. God knows where the £8 per month all goes - I always have a bottle of good whisky but that only costs P.T. 75 and I never get any other results. As field allowances diminish the nearer we get to the enemy, living on allowances is impossible up here; at Geneifa it looked as if I'd be able to do so. But here I get approx 3/- as against 7/6 there.

[100] This acronym recurrs six times and might be either P.R.I or .J in every cursive case. It is perhaps 'private rations - ' (at one point it is explained as optional supplies that are paid for) but I have not been able to clarify and so determine the last letter. Consistently shown as 'P.R.I'.

The flies are plaguing but they come into this shelter, (more like a Bedouin Camp or a gipsy tent than anything else), to escape the wind. Green brown slopes, wadis, ٢ gently curving hills surround us. Bedouin try to negotiate eggs ٢ tomatoes

for tea ("chaye") and "sukkar" - there is v. little bartering effected. One of my sections (the mortars) have a boy working for them, cleaning pots ٢ pans!

The future is uncertain. I'll have more time to write, I hope, and I long for your letters. At rest here they will make all the difference. After that ridiculously phrased "unparalleled feat of endurance", it's pleasant to sit still but I doubt if we'll be idle long. I think I know where Peter Butler is - don't you? We might meet in the end. Much love from John.

~ * ~



7 - trading an egg

~ * ~

[AIR MAIL LETTER CARD]

Military Airgraph...

Martin Waterfield Esq
Gownboys
Charterhouse
Godalming
Surrey
England

Birleys, Ivor ɤ Chignells and anybody else deserving. Write again. Hope you see all my other letters love John

This is the last day of the year. On December 30th '41 30.XII.42 I was still at Oswaldkirk ɤ had not even thought seriously of the M.E. Will next year bring as many changes, I wonder? Virtue ɤ kindness brings reward ɤ this is dutiful acknowledgement, (with many thanks,) of your Xmas present to me, two letters, the most welcome gift not excluding belly fodder, that could have come. I sat in the winter sun on Christmas Eve, warming my hands over the brew fire, with the rest of my H.Q section crouching similarly beside me, when the Colour Sgt came up with Xmas mail. As we had had none of the publicized 8th Army comforts, we were thrilled, and fried bully tasted better for the reading of your surface letter from Aldborough 7.IX.42 and yr airgraph fr. Ch. 19.XI.42. Your cutting chapel ɤ its consequence made me roar - I wonder how the scholarship exams have gone. All the other news ɤ gossip was most interesting ɤ I long to hear more. Air-letter cards are now available for you. You will have read of our advance to Sirte and of the recent battles which turned him out of the Agheila line. Having finished that, with 2½ months continual advance ɤ action since the opening of the battle, we have been relieved. Now we are sitting, still in the grey-green slopes ɤ wadis of the desert, 4 miles from the sea, resting ɤ refitting. Lunch is being cooked, fish cakes of tinned herring ɤ biscuits crushed. Peace is glorious. We all build petrol tin houses against the rain which makes sodden everything we own in spite of sheets. Circulate this. Love to the [continued at top]

~ * ~

Mrs A.P. Waterfield
Underdown
Tangier Rd
Guildford
Surrey
ENGLAND

[signed] J P Waterfield [in mauve circular stamp, 'PASSED BY CENSOR NO 256']
[One mauve 3d stamp, frank partly legible, 'FIELD POST OFFICE 568']

[annotated: 'arr. 6.2.43 No.23']

10.I.43 B Coy
This is the first letter 1 KRRC No 23
of the year and somewhat I reckon so anyway
overdue at that. Rest positions mean overwhelming administrative work not to mention all the "welfare" of the rfn, the frantic organization of amusements for them (with no facilities for it at hand) lest higher commanders should suffer unduly from their perpetual fear, that the rfn will get bored. Up to a point they do need their leisure, particularly their games, organized for them but they need to be left alone much more than people realize. In their corrugated iron and tarpaulin shelters, half dug into

the damp sand, they sharpen their minds on each other with self organized brains trusts and arguments much more than those who have never lived closely with them can guess.

I have not heard from you for some time - my note book says Christmas eve, but the delay is to be expected when a unit leaves one Bde for another. All the same some beastly little clerk is probably sitting in his office over his brew, self-satisfied that 1/KRRC's mail cannot be dealt with as "noone knows where they are"! Noone did know where we were in the last few weeks we were in battle.

But scarcely any effort was made to find out.

The flowers on the green sandy slopes where our bivouacs are dug cheer one with their variety of colours and the sweetness of their smell, in spite of the dismal sweep of perpetual rainstorms across the hills. I don't know any of their names but there is a resemblance in many to the wild flowers of an English meadow in early summer and the smell is far sweeter than at home or else my nose has been made more keen by sleeping under the open sky.

That is no fun either when it rains as it has 9 out of the 14 odd days we've been here. Getting into pyjamas (I wear them again here) with extreme delicacy lest I expose too much of myself to the downpour and sliding quietly into my sleeping bag are all matters of great importance and have been reduced to a routine drill every night. Sometimes on a very dark night when I leave the Mess I get lost between here ϒ my bed which is with my platoon. It's much easier to do, without a compass or vehicles to give an indication of whereabouts.

The mess is made from two trucks with a tarpaulin stretched over them, padded with sandbags against the draught and corrugated iron door on leather hinges. John Hope (whom RB probably knows) D.C Cary[?] ϒ I are alone here at present as David Karmel ($2^{i}/_{c}$) has

gone to Cairo on business ϒ to get some leave as well having been on the desert since March. D.K is an Etonian, barrister ϒ a great friend of Walter Monkton having been in his chambers all his career. J.H. is an Etonian ϒ a solicitor; both are charming. We have people to dine most nights ϒ good, entertaining talk over whisky ϒ cigars, the latter looted from Benghazi. Last night Toby (Hereward) Wake ϒ John Hogg came. John Hogg is a great friend ϒ contemporary of O'Neill whom I remember seeing in AP's office at the M of I. He too knows RB ϒ was contemporary with Tony W.B at Oxford. Do you hear of him at all nowadays?

Hurray - letters have just arrived ϒ also the Draconian. I'm mossing them up in anticipation but will open them to acknowledge. Nothing yet addressed to 1/KRRC, the sooner this gets going the better as I see the damned post cpl at the ITD has sent some to the 2nd Bn - most irritating.

① Jill surface - 13th Aug. ② AP (most welcome to open this ϒ find his writing) No 2. Sept 14th. ③ air p.c DMW Oct 22 ④ Mrs Chig a-graph Nov 2 ⑤ DW a-graph Nov 26th ⑥ Phyllis S. Dec 2nd ⑦ Elinor Birley 17th Oct - a splendidly long letter it looks like ⑧ DW surface Aug 6th incl. copy of CAS July 5th Mary Aug. 7th No 3. I long to share all the gossip ϒ news with everyone I meet

you've no idea what a thrill it is to get letters. I do hope you are getting mine too - you'll be able to write a.l.cs now but don't stint the long surface letters - they get there in the end. No news from Eric though I wrote ϒ asked him to send me something for Xmas so that we could have a feast! The weather shows no sign of improvement. I bathed in the sea (sandy beach shelving quickly to swimming depth with lazy fat swell ϒ short sharp breakers) a few days ago ϒ it was freezing. We've now salvaged a bath on the road side (Italian relic) ϒ hope to boil up water on the cooking stove to get a soak or at least a scrub which I certainly need.

much love to all from John

[written sideways up centre of middle pages:]

For God's sake don't send anything else c/o Eric - he is unreliable, use WJ Johnson rather

~ * ~



8 - Hogg, Olivetti 1943

[AIR MAIL LETTER CARD]

Mrs A.P. Waterfield
Underdown
Tangier Rd
Guildford
Surrey
ENGLAND

[signed] J P Waterfield [in mauve circular stamp, 'PASSED BY CENSOR NO 256']
[One mauve 3d stamp, frank partly legible, '..LD POST .. ']

[annotated: arr. 6.2.43 No.24]

no letter yet to this address - I eagerly await one

17.I.43 No. 24. I wrote to W.J.Johnson Lt. JPWaterfield B Coy.
I see from my notebook 1st. Bn. 60th. Rifles
that it's a week since I wrote MEF.
last ɤ now we are at rest I've no excuse for omitting the weekly letter that all dutiful sons shd compile. The number is mounting up but it's surprising how unimposing a figure it actually is even though I left England 6 months ago. It's a change too to get back to ink,[101] mess ink which I abjure in battle. This fountain pen I bought from a French shop in Ismailia ɤ had to take back the following day as the rubber of the founting portion was completely rotted away! True to my luck with these toys the mended article failed to function ɤ I ground it into the sandy wastes by Charing X, south of Mersa Matruh, in a rage ɤ then consigned it to my innermost pocket. This is its first reappearance ɤ I'm not dipping yet, touch wood.

Since I wrote last we've had a 3 day journey which covered 300 odd miles and we are now once more established on the ground with our new Bde and Division. The country is flatter but gives the impression of great height, as a plateau or table land, because of the intersecting wadis, rocky and steep sided, and not unlike Dartmoor's ravines of the more stony kind. If you image a dry Dart with evergreen shrubs, and grey thorn bushes on its banks and slabs of a yellower stone, where there is a strong sweet smell of thyme ɤ wild flowers especially at night after rain, then you may be near the picture.

[101] letters since about October have been in pencil.

Tonight I'm writing at the oil-cloth (red ɤ green flower pattern of kitchen or maid's sitting room type) table, tilting my camp chair to catch the light of the vehicle inspection lamp, and beginning to shiver slightly as the evening chill creeps through the walls, made of blankets stitched ɤ hanging side by side. The framework of the Mess is formed by stretching a tarpaulin between the Mess 15 cwt and a thick grey thorn bush over salvaged pieces of German 3-tonner planking. Corrugated iron sheets keep the draught from our feet, and whisky on the table keeps the same draught from our bellies. There is one bright star shining to the North, clearly seen through the open doorway amid flaming streaks of light watery white clouds. Mosquitos hum and buzz and settle - then a hand reaches out ɤ bang goes the table and, with luck, the mosquitoe too. From the sergeant-major's truck there comes the syncopated twang of a dance band over the radio from London. Then the saccharine whine of a girl crooner, hideous yet beautiful to many and reminiscent of many pleasant things and always (as in the drawing room at Underdown) a soothing background to a book or letter! It's best heard from a pier, on a ship when there's a band on shore, through French windows or an open door. The desert does not make me in the least sentimental lest you shd laugh at me getting soft but it's quite a harmless indulgence! We are trying to scrounge a radio for the mess. I must pause to light a cigar and it will help to keep the insects away. I drink a good deal of whisky, unfortunately for the most part Canadian, but I still keep in my pack a bottle of White Horse ready for the snatched nocturnal nips in battle.

Your letters are coming splendidly now ɤ I'm hugely grateful to you all. I've written one of these things to each of Mary, Jill ɤ Bow lately although that does not repay their splendid efforts. You must circulate these. On 11.1.43 I got an a-graph (for Xmas) fr. Mrs Gatty-Smith, a charming gesture; she mentions Bill Deedes is married ɤ Tony W.B who sent an a-graph which arrived yesterday confirms this! They are still in Yorkshire, poor devils. Also on 11.1.43 a-graphs Jill, ɤ 3 from Mary at Leic. which I've acknowledged to her. On 16th. I got an a-mail fr. APW which more than delighted me. I had surface letter No 2 fr. him also on 10.1.43 but cannot trace No 1 (possibly still to come). Previously fr. him I've only had a-graph 4.X.42 for my birthday as far as I can remember. Do continue as you've been doing; it revives me for the rest of the day ɤ our work is now of a different type as far as exhaustion goes - I'm busy all day w. pl administration (I've got 43 in my pl now) training my Vickers gunners ɤ mortarmen ɤ w. welfare ɤ jobs of liaison ɤ arrangement I have to do as Coy sports officer. It is hard for you to realise that looking after 41 men properly is the hardest work in the world because they are few enough to have to deal with (however good at delegation) w almost every trouble, and a sufficient number to make it necessary for daily organized planning on a fairly thorough scale.

That's a diversion. I'm glad E.OS is writing - he doesn't to me nor does he send me (though I exhort him to do so frequently) goodies from Cairo, but

I suspect he suspects his character is at stake, once I get among the family with my notorious descriptive passages of avuncular falls from grace.

No Horizon since August - wd you look into that? ɤ no statement lately (or ever, accurately) of my bank a/c - I shd be most grateful for it because I may want to cable money out here.

I've seen no sign, nor heard any indication of 21st birthday presents! Were they ever contemplated? My finances are awful (Messing is v. extravagant) but I'll send you silk ɤ scent, if you'd let me know if it's likely to be agreable, from the Cairo bazaars if ever I see that city again.

I'm sorry you didn't like Armilea - I don't remember her as anything but plain but paint transforms,... even the ugliest toenails. Mary's photos came in the middle of a battle but are a charming present - what about Jill ɤ family, ... DW? My love (esp to O.S to whom I've had little time to write) to all of you - John.

~ * ~

[AIR MAIL LETTER CARD]

MRS A.P. WATERFIELD
UNDERDOWN
TANGIER RD
GUILDFORD
SURREY
ENGLAND

[mauve circular stamp, 'PASSED BY CENSOR ...', signed 'JPWaterfield' in another corner]
[One mauve 3d stamp, frank partly legible, 'FIELD POST OFFICE 392[?]']
[annotated: arr. 11.2.43]

Lt. JPWaterfield
B.Coy
1st. Bn. 60th Rifles,
MEF

At rest in the desert
24.I.43
Number (25)

have heard fr.
AJWB, Mrs Gatty & Mrs
Ramsden - v. kind of all of them

I am a little worried about my letters to you all. Today I received two delightful a-l-cards from Jill & Mary but they were still, after 3 months, addressed to the I.T.D. Now since I joined the Bn, just before the battle I've written to you, my respected parents, as follows. a.gr. No 15. 3.XI. just before we went through the gap at Alamein, also a.g. No. 16, a continuation. Nos 17 & 18, a-graph, 23.XI. written by the sea shore at Bengasi, when there was a gap in the wire & one could get down onto the sand and watch the surly grey waves churning up sea-weed on the open beach away from the mole encircled harbour. There were obvious reasons for the 3 weeks delay there, the next shd have been No 19 but I think I forgot to number it. It was an a.l.card & I wrote it, as far as I can remember, in Stuka wadi on column South of Marisa Brega, probably sitting in my jeep. By the way do you all know well by now all about jeeps? I wonder if there are Yanks in Guildford. No 20[102] was on 8.XII. & written just before we swanned off into the blue on our Agheila affair. No 21 was 22. XII. in anticipation of bully & biscuits for Xmas dinner waiting to be relieved by Jimmy How's Bn; although he wasn't there himself, being at the I.T.D with jaundice, there were a great many of my friends with them & it was nice to be able to wave and shout "good luck" as they

drove by. They were at Tripoli, I suppose, as we would have been & probably soon will be. No 22 was 30.XII. & I mistakenly thought it was the last day of the year so I moralized suitably on it all quite untimely. I wrote again from there by the sea on 10.I.43; again a week later from this new haunt, even further East but west of Tobruk, and am continuing my duty with No 25 after a week which has flashed by like lightning, we are so busy. I do hope you will get some of these.

E.O.S wrote yesterday, somewhat disheartened by marital & professional disappointments. He is applying for a separation from his wife (I don't know to whom he has transferred his affections) and failed to get a job in Beirut for which he had resigned his present appointment, thinking it was all buttoned up. Poor Eric, he was 40, he says, the other day, but he does preserve youth or childishness almost indecently.

Mary's & Jill's letters were perfect descriptions of family life & Christmas ritual. I've written to both of them, & Bow too recently & will shortly write again. Christmas afternoon sounded absolutely perfect & I'm so glad my Cape Town presents arrived in time & in order. Naturally I didn't know the form for powder etc & was led well up the path by the attractive floozie behind the counter! I did remember, however, my mother's advice to go for a well known name & bought the best I could. The fuss she used to make, that good lady, over a simple bar of chocolate or a packet of sweets. My dear, it was simply killing. How is that Doris Simpson by the way? I will take note of Mary's advice for future cosmetics

which I might possibly get in Cairo, if ever I get there again, but suppose that Jill ought to have had the powder really, or am I wrong? Congratulations to Mary on earning £5 at the P.O - did she meet anyone interesting there? She is an indefatigable correspondent; I'm really hugely grateful so keep her

[102] all those listed up to this one were indeed lost.

to it. You seemed to have missed an opportunity with yr cousin Bankes-Jones, as usual. I'm surprised ɤ pleased that he got a scholarship at Worcester (where A.JWB was!) ɤ no doubt his parents are overwhelmed. What regiment is he going to - there are a few Marlburians in the 60th. But now, though kept late in this letter it's the big thing, a WOW, a real SENSATION. CONGRATULATIONS OLD BOW! I thought he might do it - it really is splendid. We'll all go up to the House together ɤ get drunk every night to celebrate, ɤ Jill shall bring in her little friends too, if she's good. Did Keith Fielding examine or who? I will, of course, write to Bow himself soon. I suppose for that only DMW let him bring those dogs to Underdown, to trample the roses. What a fall, that a dog shd enter that sacrosanct gatden.

Today, Sunday, I was woken by my servant at 8.15 with hot water in a mess tin ɤ my cup of tea in the mug that was issued to me in the Queens. I wriggled out of my sleeping bag, out of pyjamas ɤ put on shirt, scarf, woolly waistcoat (invaluable) ɤ B.D. I live in "pl.office" now at night, built of petrol tins ɤ a tarpaulin (looted) which neatly houses my

camp bed. Then to eggs ɤ sausage bkfst at the Mess, after shaving ɤ finishing my Yardley's soap, alas ɤ alack. To church in the open. Then deck tennis in pl. competition. Lunch. Orders for next week to my N.C.Os. Football. Censoring of my pl's letters; sport ɤ welfare committee (I'm Coy sports officer) dinner ɤ then Inter-Coy brains trust knockout, a crazy affair in Bn recreation tent. Tomorrow hard at training again.

Now with whisky at elbow ɤ John ɤ David Karmel out to dinner this is first moment I've had to sit still ɤ do anything of my own affairs today. And it's P.T tomorrow at 0700 hrs. More whisky to fortify me. I can hear the "olds"' voices coming through the night ɤ must pack up. Always much love fr. John

~ * ~



9 - 1 KRRC dispersed in desert

[AIR MAIL LETTER CARD]

MRS A.P. WATERFIELD
UNDERDOWN
TANGIER RD
GUILDFORD
SURREY
ENGLAND

[signed JPWaterfield across illegible mauve circular stamp; all in pencil]
[One mauve 3d stamp, frank partly legible, 'FIELD ... 568']
[annotated: arr. 17.3.43]

[undated] No 27. Please send me my bank statement in figures ϒ say how I can transfer money out here. Lt. JP.Waterfield
1st. Bn 60th. Rifles

This is Saturday night but I shall be on the road tomorrow, driving through the Jebel, so the usual Sunday letter is a day early! You will be having dinner in the kitchen I guess, about this time 7.30 - no, we are two hours in front of you - so DMW I picture cooking up soups full of "all good things" which tastes of nothing the earth produces, ϒ AP. drowsy ϒ weekendish is probably reading an out of date Times over the drawing room fire or pretending not to enjoy the New Statesman. The children will be away, I suppose, ϒ I've written to them all lately so noone can feel neglected. Perhaps Bow, monitorial in privilege but doubtless unchanged in behaviour is flapping around pulling books from the shelves ϒ thumbing them with dirtier fingers than I ever used! I went up to a notorious coast town a few days back, driving a Dodge 15 cwt as fast as I could over the bumps ϒ potholes of the one single road of Cyrenaica, stayed a couple of days ϒ then started back after lunch today to arrive in this other red-walled centre of Italian failure in time for tea. It is astonishing to see the difference in all these places from the days when we drove in, seemingly always late at night ϒ in pouring rain, the first troops of the Army. Now one gets an opportunity to see what administration of the back areas consists of. There are endless signs ϒ staff officers, town majors, Cyrenaica political officers and the like. In the transit messes officers with smooth officers' manners ϒ little charm talk glibly of "Rear Army" ϒ "Corps" and "DADOS" and "XYZ" and "ABC" as if they were their oldest personal pals. All rather unattractive but very necessary. I did not write to you from this place, but I wrote to Eric ϒ told him to

send any letter, or a copy, on by bag. I don't suppose he has done so. Jill tells me that he informed you all that he had sent me a parcel of goodies from Cairo. Of course he never did anything of the kind ϒ is not likely to. We came into this town on the advance, frozen, tired ϒ soaked to the skin. I had to give up driving because going down the winding sheer-sided pass which the enemy rearguard had blown, my glasses became so obscured by the driving rain that we were in imminent danger of going over the cliff's edge. There were scarcely any natives about when we woke up in our billets the next morning. Now the streets are thronged with all types, from the old, wrinkled, moustasched tribesman with his fleecy blanket wrapped round head ϒ body and then white pantaloons, like narrow trousers, on his legs, to the yellow, plausible hand-washing product of Italian colonization in his master's army greatcoat, coat, cap ϒ breeches, and probably with a push-bike. All the barred ϒ bolted doors have been unlocked and behind every counter which is now revealed sit the native shopkeepers, with gawdy silks, Italian army vests, scissors ϒ combs ϒ boot polish ϒ pencils and fountain pens all of Enemy manufacture, which they sell to the stupid English soldier at exorbitant prices. Green vegetables, chickens tied together, dates ϒ sweetmeats are also there. Other old men sit in the colonnades crouched by a pillar ϒ read ancient-looking manuscripts which I take to be the Koran, unless it's the Arabic version of No Orchids for Miss Blandish. There has been opened an hotel for officers, a cold echoing, stony place where a few of the rooms have

beds ϒ the drains are blocked. We are sleeping here tonight ϒ I'm sitting in the so-called bar with a flagon of Chianti on the table ϒ trying hard to give you the picture of the place. The bar sells nothing else ϒ it needs warming, the bar ϒ the wine. There is plenty of water in it too. Wogs, of course, run the place.

Tomorrow we shall call at another coast-town of fame in Hellenistic ϒ Roman times where there are fine architectural remains. Then to see, I hope, a film at a rest camp near there, ϒ so gladly back to the Bn among the cleaner green hills of the desert. I went up to this first place - think of the first name of the taller of Martin's godfathers - to defend a couple of rfn at the courts martial centre. They were both desertion cases. I enjoyed defending. I think I may have some aptitude for it which would encourage me to read for the bar some day. I met Graham G. soon after arrival. He has not been with his bn ϒ is browned off at being sent to this transit camp administration. His bn are doing training elsewhere ϒ were not in the advance so he could not have missed anything. It made me laugh to find that his bedside photo was one of Jill Ramsden. I am of course out of the picture as far as such Guildford sentimentalities go. GG was anxious that I shd tell you where he was so that you cd pass it on - god knows why he can't do it himself. He's likely to go up to Tripoli on the same job soon. I wouldn't mind doing that!

After dinner - vegetable soup, fried potato,

tough chicken, tea in a glass ϒ goat's cheese and more Chianti; we are having a terrific discussion about post-war prospects, led by a Yank colleague ϒ friend in the regiment. You know the 60th. were once the 60th Royal Americans ϒ the liaison has been renewed by a half-dozen selected officers. Most come out with us but all have been wounded except this one ϒ none will come back, I fear. He was at Dartmouth where CAS has been to lecture. My brain is clogged ϒ serious discussion is now make-belief. I shall never think again now. Perhaps I'm foolish to have rejected the opportunity of becoming a regular soldier! always much love from John

Thanks for the tie ϒ handkerchief - most welcome ϒ kind of you.

[written vertically up centre of first two pages:] I've written to W.G.W Mrs Ramsden Mrs N.J.C, A.L.S ϒ so on..

~ * ~

[AIR MAIL LETTER CARD]

MRS A.P. WATERFIELD
UNDERDOWN
TANGIER RD
GUILDFORD
SURREY
ENGLAND

[signed JPWaterfield across mauve circular stamp, 'PASSED BY CENSOR 256']
[One mauve 3d stamp, frank partly legible, 'FIELD POST...']
[annotated: arr. 1.3.43]

February 15th. '43 No 28.

Lt. JP.Waterfield
B. Coy. 1st. Bn 60th. Rifles
MET.

Sunday morning again. I had intended to write during the week, to describe my doings last weekend on my way back from the Courts-Martial, but as always, I haven't found time ϒ the ritual of Sunday letter -writing is being adhered to. Damn, blustering winds and rain pattering on our corrugated iron walls, ϒ I had hoped to have a bath in the famous looted best enamel article. Breakfast at 9 in warm sunshine and leisurely reading of Sunday Times (dated early September) kept carefully in its wrappers until the right day! Just like the dress-for-dinner-in-the-jungle victims of Somerset Maugham's penetrating bitterness - they read the Times proper for breakfast too and that we have not got. A.P., in

one of his recent fine, interesting ϒ long letters asks if I would like N.S ϒ N or other papers - of course I would. One can only take the long view ϒ presume that they will reach me one day ϒ that I will be there to acknowledge them and enjoy them. Times Cuttings, Times Weekly ed, Listener and so on. It doesn't take long to put them in an envelope. Also the Carthusian I'd be glad to see. I told Bow that but doubt if he will act. No sign of Horizon since last Nov. when the August copy came much to my delight.

Since my return from .... last Monday I've had only one letter - an a-l-c from Mary on her sick bed. It was addressed correctly here (the 2nd. to be so) ϒ I was thrilled at that but inside she made no mention of anything from me so I'm still anxious to know if my

regular flow of correspondence is ever reaching you. But waiting in the Mess on Monday was a goodly pile. Wait a moment while I search in the zip (an invaluable possession - do you remember cheating Harrods out of a pound over it?) for the note-book of records. Ah yes - a fine bunch. A surface letter from DMW enclosing Denys Tanner's a-graph - you had written a fine letter about home life ϒ tea with kindly suburban Mrs R. on ϒ around my birthday; a-graph fr. Bill Deedes dated Nov 3rd. wh. is very bad. He has got married at last! An a-graph 24.X from A.P ϒ a splendid surface letter fr. him 30.XI, written in the train to town. I'd been most interested in a previous letter from him about new officer selection methods - thank god I escaped that; a-graph fr. Jill who is pretty industrious 30.XII ϒ an a.p.c fr. DMW 26.X. They must have held a great deal up over Xmas I think. Perhaps this will come to you via Tripoli. I'd be interested to know whether it comes quicker than an a-graph I wrote to Mary yesterday afternoon. The children will be at school now ϒ I hope Mary is having her final fling of freedom fr. HMG's clutches - interval for bath - I must rush out into the cold.

Cont. by hurricane lamp after dinner. Great social occasion, Bde athletics, this afternoon in spite of wind ϒ dust. Met great number of friends, ϒ drove back (in one of our very few remaining vehicles) to A Coy for tea. Hve wired Bum-Bailey or whatever his name is, the manager of my bank to send £50 to Ottoman's bank, Geneifa wh. at the moment I have my allowances paid by the Pay-master, Jerusalem. This in face of Mess bill of £11 last month. We feed excellently with goodies from Cairo but liquor is expensive as you can judge. Considering that in battle, unless one loots a German Q.M's vehicle, food is shortish, I don't grudge it at all.

But tell old Oakley (just remembered his name) not to worry - it's all in order... To return to last week-end, we lunched on green grass by the ruined temple pillars of Cyrene. We made our brew in the warm sunshine ϒ ate sheep's tongues (fr. our Mess) and looked down the row of golden stone columns, past the avenue of blue-black evergreens which led down the hill to the Italian ϒ Senussi village, beyond the scarp and the grey shimmering plain to the Mediterranean blue. It was lovely. I took down some inscriptions ϒ climbed about among the fountains, pavements ϒ statues, all well enough preserved. I should like to read up the history of the place in detail. Down the road in the shadow of the street old Bedouin, blanketed ϒ bearded, with guttural voices ϒ a strong smell, harangued ϒ jabbered. It was very peaceful ϒ quiet on the hill side. I felt quite a civilized being on the steps of the temple. I don't suppose we shall leave much to last as long.

Suspect that a no of my letters are not getting home but can't discuss why, nor can I discuss the war situation. I'm always v. interested, however, to hear yr views ϒ news of English reactions to Yanks etc. You can, naturally, discuss things as a civilian much more freely than I.

Cold this evening. Stars bright in wind-swept sky. After Cyrene drove along coast ϒ down a steeper escarpment to well-known sea-side town, white-shining, scarcely damaged, where Graziani had his palace by the sea, ϒ the purple flowering shrubs bloom thickly in every back garden ϒ against every gleaming white plastered wall.

Now 8th. Army rest camp. We slept on meadow

right by the sea. Lay in camp-beds, after cinema show, ϒ watched the stars. I learned quite a lot about them that night. Bought 2 sheep fleeces in the bazaar after ½ hrs haggling - now I like doing that - ϒ stood over tailor round the corner until he had lined my issue leather jerkin with them ϒ put a great high woolly collar on top. No need for a great-coat now.

Interesting that Gordon R has married again; probably a good thing. Sorry Graham G's adoration unrequited - can't see relevance of it all here! Mrs R must be thrilled. Mary must start weaving to get into Wrens, about time too. Delighted with tie & handkerchiefs - all intact. Send more of such things. Sleeping bag still going strong. Have written to O.S. What regiment is Bankes-Jones going to? H.A.S must not be allowed any more rein to circulate my letters

always much love John

~ * ~

[AIR MAIL LETTER CARD]

MRS A.P. WATERFIELD
UNDERDOWN
TANGIER RD
GUILDFORD
SURREY
ENGLAND

[signed JPWaterfield across mauve circular stamp, '..SS... ENSOR 268']
[One mauve 3d stamp, frank illegible]
[annotated: arr. '8.3.43']

How many of these Lt JPW. Do not omit to. 21.2.43
No 29. have you had B Coy. 1st. Bn 60th. Rifles forward Siepmann correspondence & other interesting letters on any subject.

Sunny summery Sunday afternoon. A lazy restful day, making the most of our peaceful existence because we have not much longer in which to enjoy it. Humphrey Davey has turned on the wireless, although it's getting on for 4 o'clock, in the hope of hearing a concert. The set is very shaky & old, having been captured from the Italians in the first campaign. There are some pink flowers in a tooth-glass on the table. Pyjamas are hung out to dry on the thorn bushes. This morning we got up late and comfortably - I was brought my early morning brew in bed - & after breakfast of tomatoes, fried bread & Australian sausage, adjourned to the Bn football pitch where the officers & sgts of the Coy defeated the rfn at football 1 - 0! I, the solitary representative from a football school, headed our goal by mistake, trying to get myself out of the way. Our sporting season is drawing to a close. We are playing the final of the Divisional hockey next week. If you stop the ball once in five attempts among the stone quarries of the pitch, you've done well. Our deck tennis, which my pl have built with improvised materials, is very popular. There, we've got England on the radio but it's tea-time music, you know, the sort that they play in the Cadenas of the West, especially the one in Cheltenham Prom. Wonder if Bow is with you, eating tea before hurtling like a thunderbolt down the Portsmouth rd to get in for chapel. Since last week I've had from you all an air-l-c (No 39) 26.1.43, alc Jill 30.1, a.lc Mary 1.2 - a-lc Mary 18.1 - airgraph Mary Leicester P.O 15.1, air-mail letter Jill 9.1 - and this morning an air-graph from DMW 21.1. with news of Eric's birthday which I missed.

Actually he wrote to me briefly suggesting that we shd open a correspondence! He mentioned that he was in the middle of marital & professional difficulties which have, apparently, prevented him forwarding the letters AP said he sent to him for me. Nor has he sent me any goodies from Cairo, & we shall be needing those, I guess. But to do him justice, it was nice of him to send my letters during the advance on to you. I cannot, however, understand why you have not heard anything else from me. This is as you see No 29 & everything else has been sent at roughly regular weekly intervals. I've written to Jill & Mary too pretty frequently & from time to time to Bow but he does not write much to me. From his high & mighty monitorial position I shd think he might condescend to put me in the Townboys picture now & then. Tea is just coming up, hot & strong & very sweet as usual. I shd be very grateful for any parcels of magazines or books - poems or contemporary biographies & such like. One

can only build for the future ɤ they always seem to arrive in the end. I think it might be another good idea, if you would get ɤ post a sleeping bag to me, not a jaeger blanket type, but the eiderdown kind that I got from Mr Walsh last January, over a year ago now. The point is that the one I've got now is splendidly longlived; it has been soused ɤ soaked ɤ muddied ɤ is still as new - but one day it will give up its efforts ɤ will tear or be blown up ɤ it would comfort me to know there is another on the way. You cannot buy that sort of thing in Cairo. Today, after football ɤ my bath in red rusty water 6 inches deep which seemed like heaven, I got on my corduroys for the first time in the desert. I have been wearing battle dress

for the last 2 months. True to style, the inefficient Q arrangements of the British Army begin to issue the last B.D when it is time to put on drill again.

The flies are returning to plague us ɤ every night we are tormented by mosquitoes. But they are much easier to kill than the elusive fly.

My sense of smell is quite strong again ɤ I have only the merest sniff now in the early morning so you can see that the dry desert air ɤ sleeping in the open is very healthy. Now the dews are not so bad but in this rest place they have built me a house in which I keep my bed ɤ private possessions, made from petrol tins filled with sand ɤ stones ɤ a tarpaulin stretched above all. My servant is one Harry Deane, one of a large family of market gardeners at Virginia Waters. He is splendid, as rich as Croesus ɤ quite illiterate. He married a Swiss girl who is now teaching at a respectable private school in Lockers Park, Herts. God knows what their little girl will be taught, he certainly doesn't. Is D.W weighing in as school-marm again as yet? I cannot say I approve of the idea but no doubt it will prove lucrative. What about Mary ɤ the Wrens. She had better get on with it ɤ stop wasting her own ɤ the lecturer's time in Leicester class rooms. After all she writes every letter to me from the back of a lecture. She even says in one that the fellow was talking about a frog's heart - how inappropriate! B-Jones, you say, has gone to York. I wonder if he is coming to the 60th. Will they have him? It will be a different life to that Bagshot vicarage but he seems to have done very well at Marlborough ɤ Oxf. Tell Bow he MUST write ɤ tell me all the gossip of Ch. I wonder if yr letters are being flown via Tripoli now. Anyway they all come much quicker now that you write to

the proper place.

Assuage Oakley over the £50. He will continue to receive my pay as before from Cox's ɤ King's ɤ it will soon moss itself up again if I stay on the desert. Already, strange to relate, I have been in the Bn, on the desert, without a break to the Delta, longer than any other offr. How fortunate I am to be so well. I've got "The Spirit of Man" in my zipper ɤ turn to it from time to time. But mostly I write letters or talk in the evenings ɤ go earlyish to bed. We have some Cyprus sherry here now. I suppose no liquor is procurable with you.

I've written to O.S, W.GW, Elinor Birley, etc. No sign yet of C.A.S' parcel. Always much love fr. John.

~ * ~

[AIR MAIL LETTER CARD]

Mrs A.P. Waterfield
Underdown
Tangier Rd
Guildford
Surrey
ENGLAND

No 30

[signed JPWaterfield, mauve circular stamp separately, 'PASSED BY CENSOR 256']
[One mauve 3d stamp, frank mainly illegible]
[annotated: arr. 17.3.43]

Getting dark & cold again now -
6. pm. My fleecy wool jerkin
28.2.43 with high collar saves my
life every evening. love fr John

Lt JPWaterfield
B Coy. 1st. Bn 60 Rifles
MET

Sunday afternoon again. Dust is blowing into the Mess and the tarpaulin which makes the roof is flapping irritatingly. At the rickety table sit David Karmel & I doing our letter writing duty. I have got a glass of Mr Wolfschmidt's Kümmel from Palestine at my elbow. I wonder if A.P. used to favour him with his patronage in that bachelor fling of his. Flies come in to shelter from the rough blustering East wind and fall into the ink pot or settle with their offensive hairy ticklishness on ones hand. They will get bad again, I suppose, in the Spring up in Tunis. During the heat we each have a round piece of petrol tin to cover our tea-mugs, a special & necessary ritual. Since I wrote last week I've had from you, air-graphs, Mary 23.I 30.I & Jill 25.I & DW 21.I . The plethora of mail coming almost daily has passed but I cannot complain. Do, especially now that we are on the move again, persuade everyone of our friends to keep at it. I shall not find it so easy myself now, naturally, but I've not done badly during these two months. The thing that worries me is that even late in Jan you have not acknowledged anything from me. No doubt some of the mail planes are shot down but sometimes you must all get letters & I've written frequently

to everyone of you. Yet you only mention the letters E.OS sent by bag. Jill, I think, says these were like Godfrey Talbot's stuff; God forbid! If you think I write too much as a reporter do say so but I do NOT wish to resemble the B.BC's brylcreem boys who occasionally inconvenience us with their inquisitive noses. I shan't write again for a while on the luxury of a table. More likely the front of a 15 cwt; I shan't get a jeep this time.

Last week into the desert on a navigational exercise, 3 subalterns & a servant and one 15 cwt. In peace the flat plate of the desert is lovely. The silence is restful; everything feels clean. To the south of here the going is good with stony patches. With a sun compass one goes on a 15 ml leg to a Bir (well), a hole in the ground crowned with stones, with incredible accuracy. I love driving in the grey morning as the sun gets up. We did the cooking, which in battle we get no chance to do, & I discovered that I was extremely handy! Cries & shouts in the scullery of "oh"; I can hear them now.

The wind now is licking in and round the corners. What a low standard of life we accept here with equanimity. Draughts are neglected; dirt and discomfort relished. Sand in everything personal and awkward positions to sit in are so usual that anything else is jeered at as too "cushy". I think of DW & her standards of cleanliness as I sit over the stew can & watch the last 7 days food brewing with todays. She wd throw her hands in the

air & say "clean that at once John" & I'd not altogether meekly, obey! Now my hands are like a toad's skin, all scaly and leathery and brown & my face is brick-red to brown. Last week I asked for a sleeping bag & I reiterate the begging. I do wish that you'd send me some good things. The handkerchiefs were splendid, but Listeners, magazine cuttings, Carthusians, Draconians New Statesmen etc I shd love. Also wd you ask Horizon why the hell I've had no copy since last August & tell them to send another of each to make up. I wd also like A.P to call on Mr Welsh at 15 Duke St & ask him to send me a green side-hat - you can't get proper ones here with a decent cherry & horn - he

shd know my size but it's about 6⅝ (or 7). If you like it better go to Mr White in Burlington Gdns ɤ he will do the same as anyway Welsh must get a White hat - don't let Welsh give you one of his own - but I don't know Mr White so well. Welsh, you'll find, is a great gossiper. I am today going to send a cheque to Groppi in Cairo ɤ order them to send you a box of chocolates as an Easter present. It may be unlucky but we must chance it. I've told Oakley to send me £50 to Ottoman's Geneifa - as my mess bill was £20 (twenty!!) last month you can see it's necessary. For goodness sake don't let him bog it, ɤ please let me know regularly what my a/c stands

at. As I have my pay sent to Glfd still it is a little difficult to keep touch. I shall save again during the next two or three months, I hope. I have, fortunately, not been on leave ɤ have now been in the desert without a break to the delta longer than anyone else in the Bn so you see the changes Time effects. Do write ɤ tell me every bit of news. I can picture yr life vividly fr. yr letters but pant for more. If A.P lunches with Walter Monkton, tell him I am with David Karmel. I wonder if Bow came over this Sunday afternoon. It seems odd, Bow with a fag. Moss (the fellow he was study fag to) I saw from a distance at Geneifa as I was leaving - he was in the Coldstream Gds. No parcel from C.A.S. I shall be glad of it. Why do y _____Harry Millett again?

No 30

~ * ~



10 - 1 KRRC leaving Tmimi March 1943

[Military Airgraph Service authorised by Egyptian Postal Administration]
MRS A.P. WATERFIELD
Underdown
Tangier Road
Guildford
Surrey
ENGLAND
[Signed 'JPWaterfield' in circular stamp, 'PASSED BY CENSOR 6489']
[Annotated along edge: 'arrived April 13']

Lt JPWaterfield 8.3.43
B Coy - 1st Bn 60th Rifles.

No 31 This corresponds to nos 15 ϒ 16, also air-graphs, written nearly five months ago in the sands by the sea not far from Alamein. Now once more among dry, brown, stony hills we've stopped soon after lunch on our long desert march ϒ everyone is cleaning the dust from their bodies - on ½ gallon per man per day - ϒ tidying ϒ maintaining their trucks. It occurs to me that you may not have had a good many of my letters during the past five months[103] and so I'm putting a list down here for you to see.

Nos	15	}	3.XI.42	airgraphs 1st. 60th	30.XII.42	Martin: alc
	16				10.I.43	Jill - alc
	17	}	23.XI.32	airgraphs	15.I	Mary - alc
	18				30.I	Martin alc
	19		(not numbered) 30.XI.	a-l-c	1.II	Mary alc
	20		8.XII.	a-l-c	4.II	Jill alc
	21		23.XII	a-l-c	14.II	Mary air-graph
	22		30.XII	a-l-c	18.II	Mary air-graph
	23		10.I.43	a-l-c	16.II	Mary alc
	24		17.I.43	a-l-c	19.II	Jill air--graph
	25		24.I	"	29.II	Mary air-graph
	26		34 1.I	"		
	27		6.II	"		
	28		16.II	"		
	29		21.II	"		
	30		29.II	"		
	31		11.III	" this one		

I have not put down letters to friends ϒ relatives. These silly, public forms are more safe, they say, because they send duplicates if necessary.

Hurrah! I've just been brought 2 letters, a marvel in this god-forsaken waste. DMW - Jan 30th. ϒ Mary Feb 3rd.(43)

~ * ~

[103] see note to 8.12.42, No. 20.

[Military Airgraph Service authorised by Egyptian Postal Administration]
MRS A.P. WATERFIELD
Underdown
Tangier Road
Guildford
Surrey
ENGLAND
[Signed 'JPWaterfield' in circular stamp, 'PASSED BY CENSOR 6489']
[Annotated along edge: 'arrived April 13']

Lt JPWaterfield 11.III.43.
No 32 B. Coy, 1st Bn 60th Rifles.
Continued from 31. I've just read the two a-graphs they've brought me, sitting in the last light of the sun in the lee of my truck. Your letters are always full of family detail, vivid and splendid to read. Mary is indefatigable. I shall not write now for some time ϒ I do not know when this will be posted. My old pl sgt is now colour sgt ϒ I shall give it to him in a moment when it's too dark to write any more. It's chill now the sun is gone. Hills are like an arid, brown Dartmoor in shape, without the tors. Occasionally great terraced scarps. Light's fading; I must hurry. I've got a cold but am well and very happy otherwise. Acutely embarrassed now to hear of Siepmanizing of my letters! I must write more carefully for circulation but am glad that they are less introspectively nauseating than the normal run of S correspondence.

Vehicles are kicking up showers of dust on the track ϒ the wind is whisking it down here. My jerkin, fleece lined, keeps me warm ϒ I'm always warm in bed though my sleeping bag is wearing thin. Deane puts my camp bed up still at this stage but I'll soon be back on the ground. Funny how used we get to driving on the right of the road. When is Mary going to the Wrens? They are busy with the brakes on my truck. No more light. Always much love John.

~ * ~

[AIR MAIL LETTER CARD]

Mrs A.P. Waterfield
Underdown
Tangier Rd
Guildford
Surrey
ENGLAND

[signed JPWaterfield, very faint mauve censor's stamp]
[One mauve 3d stamp, frank FIELD POST OFFICE XX89XX]
[annotated: 'arr. 29.3.43']
[In pencil again]

No 33 I was offered the job of Bn I.O but refused Lt JPW
14.3.43 B.Coy. 1st Bn 60th Rifles
I doubt if Mary will ever work, but I'll try ϒ tell her. MEF

Two days ago I stayed the night with Eric in an hotel on the sea front of the 8th Army's dream town. I had a bath, dined well, drank a lot of rum ϒ red wine (not mixed, as you might believe!), got up at 5 am ϒ drove in my jeep the twenty odd miles to the Bn leaguer area in time for a long, dusty march to the Westwards of 150 miles. Tonight is roughly our last night of non-alertness. By dawn tomorrow we

shall once more be at the job for which we have trained. The vehicles are scattered over a flat plain of gravel ɤ grey scrub. We are waiting.

15.3.43 Stopped ɤ interval of a day - As I was writing last night I was suddenly called for orders ɤ when I got back the land was obscured by a driving fog of blistering sand, ɤ the wind tore papers apart in my hands and there was nothing to do but huddle up and sit in the truck till midnight when we moved, fur wrapped ɤ gloved.

Two hours sleep last night -

now we sit among high, fantastically shaped crags, and Sgt Lathwell is rolling pastry out on an ammunition tin with a whisky bottle full of whisky as a rolling pin. The sun is warm. Occasionally a gun goes off in the distance. We are digging ourselves into the stones with some difficulty. With luck I shall be allowed to use some of my explosive to blast holes. Surprisingly I rather enjoy blasting. Hills here are rather like my imaginative picture of the NW frontier or Morocco. I can see a thin blue steely strip of sea from my OP position. Pouff - there goes a lazy column of smoke from a shell exploding beyond the palm trees on the plain. My bedding is spread out to air ɤ my pillow case looks filthy but on ½ gallon a man we shall not be able to do any washing. Hiss of fat frying in the pan on our petrol fire - there are no pieces of firewood here. Fritters for lunch are nearly up. A sgt from a neighbouring pl who used to be a buyer in Covent Garden has come to give advice and cadge a brew. Cockney argot whines and shrieks from one to the other. My pl sgt has 9 yrs service. Harry Deane used to drive his father's trucks from Virginia Waters to C.Garden ɤ reminisces with

the buyer amid shrieks ɤ abuse.

Two letters came yesterday - from Jill, an a-l-c, ɤ another one from AP, both dated about 21 Feb. I'm full of grateful thanks to AP - after a shaky opening, his detailed ɤ informative letters are coming regularly, full of good gossip. But you make no mention of the nos of the letters I write so I cannot check whether any have failed to reach you. These a-lcs are less certain than a-graphs though much faster. Of course we were not in a "leave ɤ transit camp": we'd never go near such a place except on business as I did to Bengasi for courts-martial defence. Nice of Graham to wire - he is admin officer of me, having been sacked by his C.O (shsh) who pursued him, poor man, out here from England. He's now in Tripoli, I guess.

We had a long discussion my rfn ɤ I on the Beveridge plan the other night in leagues on our journey across more than half a continent. It is surprising how vehemently they all argue in favour of freedom for individual enterprise ɤ opportunity for private accumulation of wealth through industry. I shd be most grateful of copies of the Times Weekly Edn, the N.S.N ɤ other periodicals which might keep me abreast of current affairs. It doesn't matter how long they take to get here.

EOS never got AP's letter sent to him

for forwarding ɤ nor did I ever receive anything for my birthday or Xmas if indeed anything was sent. I hope my £50 arrived because I've drawn a number of cheques against it! Tell Bow to write to me ɤ keep others to it. I often get letters from you all now ɤ doubt if many fail to reach me. I am quite perfectly happy ɤ contented. Probably no more letters for a while. Always much

love from John

~ * ~

[Military Airgraph Service authorised by Egyptian Postal Administration]
MRS A.P. WATERFIELD
UNDERDOWN
TANGIER ROAD
GUILDFORD
SURREY
ENGLAND
[Signed 'JPWaterfield' in circular censor's stamp, illegible]
[Annotated along edge: 'arrived April 14']

a letter fr M. B-Jones to him but it was too short a time to see C.A.S - H.A.S correspon dence. Do, please, forward them! Eric rather grey in the face but not looking his 40. No mention of his wife. Do send me some papers ɤ magazines ɤ chase Oakley about my pay from Oct I

Lt JPWaterfield 16.III.43.
No 34 B. Coy. 1st Bn 60th Rifles
8th ARMY TRIPOLI <--- NB ADDRESS

Four o'clock of a sunny afternoon ɤ nothing to do but write letters so why should I not spoil you? A fresh breeze ruffles the paper ɤ stirs up dust, otherwise it would be as warm as August is in England, yet somehow the heat is not the same; I don't feel like bathing. Yesterday came an a-lc from Mary ɤ 3 a-graphs, fr. Jill, Mary ɤ Mrs Chig. I miss AP's ɤ DW's letters which are, somehow, always the best and most vivid except when they talk, in one case, of garden gossip, ɤ in the other of garden gossip also. Mary talks of her cooking ɤ eternal concerts with Moislivitch etc; her letters are headed "Biology Lecture", so poor AP's efforts must have had small effect. I seriously wonder whether she would not be better away from L, in that stuffy provincial ɤ suburban atmosphere, ɤ you would best cut the losses! Jill tells of tea-parties and lectures, the first social and interesting, the second, interminably tedious! Bow never writes, idle fellow. But everyone else is wonderful about writing ɤ I'm most grateful. Yr party at Ch when Mary criticized reading to AP's horror, sounded agreeable. How is BB, I wonder, no news from them for some time. So sorry to hear DMW unwell ɤ do hope she's better. I did not see Graham G in Trip, he's probably at the Leave ɤ Transit. We rather laugh at his boys trying to be parade-ground mannered here; v. funny compared with the rfn in all sorts of head-gear from Hamburgs to cap-comforters ɤ brew cans clattering on the tail-board of every wagon! There are so many things to tell you that will have to keep - you must just wait. E.O.S a major ɤ rather typically political officer in manner, with hat aslant, vulgarly. I saw

~ * ~

[AIR MAIL LETTER CARD]

Mrs A.P. Waterfield
Underdown
Tangier Rd
Guildford
Surrey
ENGLAND

[signed JPWaterfield, mauve censor's stamp 'PASS... CENSOR No. 256]
[One mauve 3d stamp applied very crookedly, frank FIELD P...OFFICE ...]
[annotated: '[arr.] 5.4.43']
[In pencil]

No 17.3.43[104]

NB this by Montgomery's special dispensation

Lt. JPW B.Coy
1st Bn 60th Rifles
8th Army TRIPOLI

Tell Mary she writes the correct size on a-graphs

At lunch the other day Montgomery told Peter Wake (Sir Hereward W, the Col Commandant of this Bn, is his father) who is an old friend of mine ⁊ at present our Sig O, that all wd be over by April 23rd. So hold your toes (is that the girls' phrase) for me until Mary's birthday. This will reach you I hope in 10 days or so ⁊ you must of course write Air letter cards back, with the above on. If they are not shot down alcs are so much quicker than graphs ⁊ much more suitable. I walked down the half-tarmac half-dusty main rd just now, turned off across the sprouting Arab-sown corn ⁊ went to the CSM's truck at Coy HQ under the palm trees, ⁊ there I found the most enormous pile of letters for my pl including 5 for me. I very rarely get an opportunity to answer a letter particularly but I'll have a crack at these two from AP, dated Feb 26 ⁊ DMW of the same date. I'm so glad AP has been invited to become a member of Trinity. It is an honour which will delight him ⁊ these Cambridge men certainly seem more friendly ⁊ hospitable than Oxford. I'm sure he'd have been a bad don ⁊ I'm, myself, only called so with the corollary that in

many ways nothing more unlike one has ever been seen! The stars I study from my camp bed, lying on my back for a few minutes I have every night before I take off my glasses ⁊ put them in my desert boots under the bed and the sky becomes dimmed therefrom ⁊ I cuddle in buried ⁊ sleep sound ⁊ undisturbed in spite of bomb ⁊ shell. Mrs Ramsden, that strange product of suburbia albeit a kindly one, sends me an a-graph of the most uninteresting gossip concluding with "salaams from all", a vale as little suited to Poona as to Epsom Rd, Guildford. However she is kind at heart.

Who on earth is Peggy Bankes ⁊ who are the Hedley sisters? As you know unfortunately my temperament makes me an insatiable seeker ⁊ searcher after personalities ⁊ spurns the particularities of nature. In general when I get right away from humanity I'm as happy as at a dinner party. That's why I love the bareness ⁊ solitude of the desert ⁊ used to love Dartmoor. I'm glad ⁊ happy to know about the birds ⁊ the garden ⁊ enjoy a vicarious pleasure from your delight in such things but I don't really miss them. I love new places ⁊ new things. After all this next battle those with 6 yrs still of service abroad in the bn will go home. I make no doubt that I shall stay. I have refused as you know, the job of I.O, which wd have put me on the first rung of the Staff ladder. After a certain period, ⁊ I've reached it or shall have after this affair, one has to make

up ones mind either that one wants to go on the Staff or command a Company. The Staff, in yr eyes, is probably full of glamour. In reality it is sordid, full of pushers, of unintelligent stooges ⁊ boors. Fortunately in this Bn there will always be splendid companions. I might get 2/c of a Coy some day ⁊ am quite happy to wait. Anyway things may happen in a month or two.

[104] this letter roughly corresponds to Eric Siepmann's description of meeting JPW on 12 March (see appendix C), especially as to the thinking about army career options, but curiously omits to mention that event.

I shd like it to be known that I am very happy in the Army ϒ do not regard it or the War as an interruption of my civilian career, as so many do, but rather as a normal succession of events, an integral part of life, ϒ to be regarded as such. I suppose there have been fewer years since the first record of history without wars in the world than there have been with war. It fundamentally shakes all existence now but we must take it, make the most of it ϒ fight for peace, which is a better life admittedly than war. But both are life.

The wind is blistering and makes one bad-tempered. The sun is weak ϒ watery behind dust clouds. I'm on my camp chair in the lee of my truck in a quarried rectangular pit. Two tall craggy bluffs rise on either side of me. Beyond the pass little patches of dust from the grey-green plain indicate the movement of trucks. Everything is brown in colour. Deane is stirring the stew, in a blackened petrol tin on another petrol tin filled with sand ϒ petrol, lit with a match ϒ burning smoothly. Mrs Gatty also wrote. AJWB is instructing at the OCTU at York. I'm glad to

see you've posted me a Draconian. Do send me some more papers ϒ such like ϒ stir up Horizon - I've had nothing since August from them. From Ottoman's Bk today I had acknowledgement of £48 paid in to my a/c good. Let me know how much I've got at Glfd. The orderly room say they put me in as Lieut from Oct 1st. so, as it has probably been sunk, will you chase Oakley to find out from the Pay office. It's his job after all. Now I must stop ϒ censor the pl's letters as the c/sgt is up ϒ he must take them. Tell DW she can write here ie on this page[105] w. impunity ϒ tell Bow to write. So B-Jones is in the Rifle Bde - well done. The wind is chill ϒ I must put on my furry coat.

love _

~ * ~

[Military Airgraph Service authorised by Egyptian Postal Administration]
MRS A.P. WATERFIELD
UNDERDOWN
TANGIER ROAD
GUILDFORD
SURREY
ENGLAND
[Signed 'JPWaterfield' in illegible circular stamp]
[Annotated along edge: 'arr. 29.IV.43']

the pay-master as the casualty went in from our orderly Room. Tell me in detail about these
"charges" DW Lt JPWaterfield writes of incl Geoffrey Whiskarts[106] job 22.3.43
Don't be so vague B. Coy, 1st Bn 60th Rifles MEF No 36
Always love from John

Don't write these silly little forms to me, I beg, but rather that model of correct length, the air-letter card addressed as I told you. The Army Commander who visited us recently has apparently authorized it but it may be obliterated by the censor. These things are merely the roofer-writer's dream.[107] But this morning I'd done my rounds of the position ϒ stared at a distant hill though my glasses and now I'm back in the wadi, warmed by the sun ϒ I may as well write because we can't sit still for ever. Compare the speed of this in arrival to an alc: I imagine this is much slower. You will have heard from E.O.S, I hope, by bag. I will write to Paul Vellacott if I return to Cairo. Perhaps you might write to him if you have a chance. He might be extremely useful. The letters of you two are still the best of the family's productions. I've told Mary to work if she's going to stay there. Otherwise she shd do without an holiday ϒ go straight to the Wrens. Send me some photos. Jill's has not arrived, nor C.A.S' Xmas present. If a kind German gives me a camera I will send you some productions. Tell Oakley to write to [continued at top]

~ * ~

[105] this is the outside of the letter when folded, ie the reverse of the address side.
[106] 'Whishart' might be expected; but much of this text in amongst address and date is hard to read.
[107] this is not a transcription problem.

[AIR MAIL LETTER CARD]

Mrs A.P. Waterfield
Underdown
Tangier Rd
Guildford
Surrey
ENGLAND

[signed JPWaterfield across illegible mauve censor's stamp]
[One mauve 3d stamp, frank illegible]
[annotated: '13.4.43']
[In pencil]

Lt JPW. B. Coy - 30.3.43
No 37 1st Bn. 60th Rifles, MEF.

It might be the last day of March or the one before the last. How should I keep count when we've been driving dreamily through sand storms ɤ dusty rutted tracks for four of the last six nights,[108] and been otherwise occupied during the days? It would be spring time with you and the end of school days. This afternoon with me the sun is boiling through a slight haze onto a grey brown undulating series of slopes bordered on two sides by lg[?] sharp and ravine scarred hill ranges wrinkled with shadow. There is peace ɤ quiet and I've been lying against my front wheel reading the Bridges Spirit of Man. We have been waiting since mid-day to move. Yesterday here was danger of bombs and shells; spouted fountain bursts of exploded white dust; ɤ a bitter dry wind swept sand into our faces, food ɤ clothes till we looked like miller's mates where they used to unload at the loft by the bottom of Holloway Hill. Odd how one shd remember that. When the tanks went by the clouds were so obscure that one could not read the map.

Today I went to look for water under the hills ɤ found a series of dry birs, the Arabic for wells. Actually the plural is abiar. We found

one at last and let down a 4 gallon petrol can on a piece of signal wire, carefully weighted with stones, through a crack in the stone surfacing of the place to bring up the grey water and fill the Coy's water cans.

Tell Elinor or the Chigs that I was w. Tom Butler-Stoney when he was killed yesterday. It was hellish luck. He was in the RHA.

We've just heard that Gabes has fallen and now we know the Mareth line gun has half-disintegrated owing to our long 'swan' to the flanks.[109] I shd say that we had been generalled in masterly fashion ɤ that although our forces are superior, the principle of reinforcing success rather than failure has once more been clearly vindicated. There is still one more battle to fight of course, but this is the beginning of the end in Africa, I feel. I hazard today that he'll evacuate his own tps by air ɤ leave the Italians. I cannot as usual discuss more of our own operations or my personal adventures but it can all wait. Anyway it won't matter to you

---

[108] 'On 23 March 1943 we were with 1st Armoured Division on the famous “left hook” to El Hamma, when direct attack on the Mareth line was not successful. I cannot remember the town of Medenine then, but the movement by night of ourselves and the 4th Indian Division at the start of our march was described by John Hogg as a “mechanical nonsense,” due to poor traffic control by the staffs whose experience of this kind of thing had been largely limited to the desert minefields. I do remember appalling delays and confusion.
I will not try to gloss the detailed description of the “hook” by Giles Mills in the Annals, and General Playfair’s in the Official History. My memories are of really awful grass and hillocks, soft sand in between, considerable fatigue as we did a hundred fifty miles to gain thirty, a full blown sand storm and considerable ignorance and uncertainty, at least at platoon level. At one point in the dark we were all mixed up with German armour and at dawn, in Hogg’s words “one’s immediate impression was a mass of tanks, armoured cars, trucks and heaven knows what else crossing, recrossing and driving aimlessly around.” Action for us petered out on 27 March as the final break through to El Hamma was frustrated by the Germans who produced a strong armoured screen to cover their withdrawal from the Mareth Line.' - *Tunisia*

[109] The writing and meaning both obscure here - 'Gabes', 'Mareth', 'line gun' and 'half' all uncertain.

afterwards. Results ɤ contemporary affairs matter ɤ the particular past is an esoteric affair, a source of reminiscence over the port for the initiated ɤ experienced only.

We had apple fritters for lunch. The colour sgt brought us flour in rations last night ɤ Harry Deane is developing into a promising pastry cook. The apple comes from Italy, tinned ɤ was in the back of a Fiat... it's delicious, they are

"drumming up" now, another word on the desert for brewing. We have our afternoon tea very early because we must drive before dark else the fires attract unwelcome attention. Were it not for the extra water (which the MO chlorinates) we shd not get more than 2½ brews a day on ½ gallon. I don't suppose we shall see the échelon again for some days now so this will be delayed but I hope you get it ɤ enjoy it one afternoon when the spring sun is warming the tiles and Guildford is preening itself in suburban somnolence. In many ways I wish I was there but I'm happy now ɤ brown ɤ well ɤ dirty so you wouldn't like to see me before I've had a bath ɤ lots of bath salts!

A rfn came to me ɤ said there was a case of wine in an Iti waggon. I went over to stop them all getting madly drunk - they were carrying over brew cans ɤ petrol tins avid for a Bacchic orgy; not without some personal interest in this supposed Chianti I broached the bottles and found distilled water. The rfn was not a Cockney but a "foreigner", a "swede" or a "mangle wuzzer". These are untutored but "muck in" well now including my two wild Highlanders, from Oban ɤ from the Isle of Coll. British distilled water has acid put in it to deter thirsty rfn from drinking

up the precious stuff by burning their bellies. Pity it wasn't British! De gustibus... I've had nothing from you all since before this last operation. Don't omit to tell me of these changes in the C.S ɤ of our family personalities. Enjoy the children home for the holidays ɤ tell Bow to wake up ɤ write. We've heard no world news for a longish time - what about E.O.S' bag now?

Must now start to refold my maps, an act symbolic of success always. Always too much love from John.

~ * ~



11 - KIA grave: MacKinnon

'And now, after all those years, we stood on the exact spot in the road where poor Rifleman MacKinnon was killed on that patrol, blown up in the dark by a mine about a yard to my right. He was a converted “Jock”, having come up as a reinforcement, probably through a muddle in the infantry pool in the rear. The ground, steep up into the pass after the about three-quarters of a mile’s walk on the flat from our company position, seems entirely unchanged. Sand in the plain, harsh rock in the hills, and only the tarmac of the road an innovation. ... I have a photo of Rifleman Mackinnon’s grave, with a wooden cross. I expect it was later gathered up to a cemetery by the War Graves Commission. His death was particularly unpleasant, which I had to gloss in writing to his family, and has always left a strong impression on me. Moving though it was to be there again, on exactly the point where we were in 1943, it seemed, on this brisk, sunny day in 1999, curiously anti-climactic and hard to imagine as the scene of mine explosions, crackling small arms, thumping mortars, and coloured illuminating lights.' - *Tunisia*

~ * ~

[AIR MAIL LETTER CARD]

Mrs A.P. Waterfield
Underdown
Tangier Rd
Guildford
Surrey
ENGLAND

[signed JPWaterfield across illegible mauve censor's stamp]
[One mauve 3d stamp, frank mainly illegible, 'FIELD .. 56..']
[annotated: '13.4.43']
[In mauve pencil]

Send me some books for Xmas. 2.4.43 A v entertaining ɤ welcome a.l.c fr Jill about female features also came. No 38 What about Siepmann

Lt JPW correspondence
B Coy. 1/KRRC
8th Army - Tripoli

To us in our wadi, where yellow flowers wave in the breeze, sand-blown ɤ sand-grown, came the cry last night that the échelon was up and with it came as usual splendid mail for me. "Mr Waterfield, 'e writes to 'isself" they say, or "deadly the way the guvnor's pushers write to 'im every dye"! Construe who can. Came from DW alc 17.3 ɤ a-graph 18.2. You can see the difference. Lay off those dreadful little forms. But I feel wonderfully in touch w. you to hear of yr doings only 3 weeks ago, when we already facing the Mareth line. DW (ɤ AP when he writes) produce outstandingly the best letters, if they wd only realize it. I get bags of letters now but none outside the family. I repay when I can, letter for letter, verb sap, Bowlisaime[?]. Poor Doris Simpson; I see no easy future for her life. John M has certainly dried up ɤ missed his vocation which was the Army as GI or anywhere on the Staff. How are Ch off for pedagogues now that the younger element has evaporated? I have had no news of Tommy G. Thank you so much for going to Oakley for me but I cannot understand the situation. AP told me I had £68 credit w. Barclays Glfd so I ought to have been able to get £50 out OK. Tell him, Oakley, from me anyway a) that he said I cd overdraw within reason as much as I liked before I left ɤ that he has no crib (as the rfn say) + b) that if he was any better than useless he'd have taken steps to see that my pay was correct as a Lt from Oct 1. He will continue

to get my monthly pay from Cox's and King's as 2/Lt or Lt when it comes. I've told our Orderly Room Sgt to check the casualty return so it will come to him in the end. Iman's at Geneifa write in illegible Oriental script that I've got £E58 there but I had to pay £20 by cheque for drink the other day so it has sensibly diminished now. We are in process of changing our currency for the 3rd time, from piastres to B.M.A ɤ then to francs, Bancque d'Algérie, 200 to the £. It is a dreary process as the a/c has to be worked to the nearest 10/- as there is no note available smaller than 100f! D Coy found about £50 which the Germans left behind them but I don't know whether the notes are identical.

P.HB wrote to me, an air mail letter (not a l-c) which was posted on 17.3 ɤ an earlier one forwarded by you. That is v. important because hitherto a-m letters have taken from 6 - 9 weeks. If that, as it seems, is not now the situation they would be worth trying out before everyone gets on to the idea. I'm most grateful for yr trouble about my clothes w. Mr Welsh but you, DMW, shd not go to a man's tailor. It is for AP to go as man to man ɤ gossip with Mr Welsh in Duke St. While you are about it another pair of corduroys ɤ a flat hat would also be welcome - my flat hat got trodden down on patrol the other night ɤ has a great hole in the brim! David Karmel (Walter Monkton's friend) says that Stuttafords of Cape Town have got silk stockings again ɤ I'm thinking of sending them a fiver to post home to you whatever they can according to their restrictions. No sign of Jill's photos or CAS' parcel. I long for a parcel of goodies so tell him to send me

another. A percentage at least get here. No sign of Horizon - August was the last one. Edward Hutton sends D.K weekly Times, Tatlers ɤ Picture Posts, which are a great pleasure. I'm just going to read Nov 25th.'s Times Wkly Ed. I will read it at the rear of my wagon on my camp chair, set up by Harry

D for the occasion, with my feet up on a jerry can ϒ a spade, as one might in one's club. We've just had mid-morning tea, biscuits (issue) ϒ looted Italian jelly, rivalling Tiptree. From a series of perfect days of dry, beaming sun ϒ little more than a breeze, we've now got the makings of a sand storm again. It's getting into my zip and into my bed which is airing on the sand. Interval. Now I've gone into a little dried up water channel where the wind cannot touch me. There are also rather a lot of bangs about so I can write ϒ feel as[110] cushy at the same time. I'm rather annoyed about my desert boots, my 2nd. pair, of which the stitching has completely gone while there is still about 6 months life in the boot. I walked 16 mls the other night in them ϒ I suppose that is the cause. I wear by day corduroys, shirt, flat hat ϒ leather belt ϒ by night everything I can lay hands on, fleecy jerkin ϒ all. There is sand in my hair which has gone rather fair. In the movie Humphrey Davey brought me from Jerusalem I look, I shd say, about the same as you knew me but very sun burned. I hope to get you some photos one day but it will take a long time, both of Cyrene ϒ Derma ϒ one of Cape Town w. Jimmy Stow in it as well. I have not seen this last but know it's arrived at the I.T.B. Jimmy is still down there I think recovering from jaun-

dice but he may have come back to Sir John's boys (ask Elina to explain) who are not immediately concerned in this affair. You see that you can safely write here on this part of the card.[111] There goes a party of Bedouin with wicked looking black camels loaded with wives perched on panniers. From my hill I saw the sun climb this morning out of the sea ϒ make it a strip of molten gold, fretted with the black tracery of palms which grow on the dunes. I would love another bathe. We had one W of Nofilia on the way up, a steep swell on a sharp shelving sandy beach and a fierce back-wash. Love to you all from John.

Let AP not drink too much port at Trinity. Ps relay the gossip if he can remember it.

[written sideways up middle of inside pages] Did I tell you about the Army commander's visit before the battle?

~ * ~

[AIR MAIL LETTER CARD]

Mrs A.P. Waterfield
Underdown
Tangier Rd
Guildford
Surrey
ENGLAND

[signed JPWaterfield across faint censor's stamp, 'No 256' legible]
[One mauve 3d stamp, frank clear in part, '.OST OFFICE... ']
[annotated: [arr] '22.4.43']
[In pencil]

No 39 4.4.43 I've never yet bogged anything I set out for

Lt JPW
B Coy
1st. Bn 60th Rifles
MER

so I'm glad I can do

[continued vertically up middle of page:] anything the Army demands as well! One day I shall flop, I suppose.

It's Sunday afternoon and I feel the association of that time ϒ letter-writing, combined with this convenient opportunity to be sufficient to overcome the fact that I only wrote to you two days ago which might otherwise persuade idleness. It's easier to write too, I find, when there is shelling going

[110] ?'as' - 'us' – or just crossed out. The first looks most likely.
[111] This is on the back of the air-letter form again, as noted before on letter of 17.03.43, etc.

on. After driving, cutting rain yesterday and grey misty clouds, the sun has cleared up the wetness of our wadi and dried my sopping, clinging corduroys, and we had our lunch of luxury lambs tongues brought up from Cairo by the P.R.I, tea ɤ biscuits, in warm brightness ɤ now we're lying about on our beds enjoying comparative peace.

One of my l/cpls has just come back from a morning's expedition to ? which I can see from my hill fifteen miles away. The Germans behaved like swine there ɤ the French loath them. Food is rationed: chicken on black market, I suppose, costs £2-5 or its equivalent in francs. A leg of lamb needs £3 to get it, a small leg too.

I've just had a stupid letter from Mr. Atkin re Income Tax relief etc. it is marked in red ink "2nd call up" as if I was wanted by the Army afresh! He says he has not had a return of Income ɤ Claim for Relief in his office ɤ says my reply shd be sent to

the Army Agent ie Cox's ɤ King's, who issue my pay and, of course, he doesn't say which year he is talking about. Well I've sent one of these damned forms to the Agents by sea ɤ I sent it about 3 months ago so it's probably sunk, ɤ I sent another as they asked for it to the Paymaster in Jerusalem who does not issue my pay. I'm now sending this one to the agents in England, marked that APW has my power of attorney ɤ all communications shd be addressed to him, poor fellow! I'm too busy right now but I don't believe I can claim relief unless a) it is for private means of which I have none or b) I supported you which god forfend shd be the case for you wouldn't get much on my Army pay alone. I don't think I'm entitled to relief.

We've had a fair amount of excitement since I wrote last, in the night times. I won't bore you with more but the Colonel came round to say he was pleased so we feel good boys.

I've been reading some of Anne Bridges novels which I'd never done before. John Hope had them sent out by his mother. One was Four Part Setting ɤ the other a recent one about the Spanish War. She has an astonishing insight into the sensitive human mind, I think, and a very facile handling of dialogue, but I think the types are always the same and in the last one about Spain, the story itself a bad one, though incidents

remain vivid.

It will soon be Mary's birthday ɤ I shall write tomorrow to her if we have a quiet tomorrow. She will wait for a present. It's nearly three ɤ I must get over the hill to get the Intelligence Summary from David ɤ mark it up on my map board. Rfn Smith '70 (as against the other Rfn Smith) is cleaning out the mugs, I see. We have our own "pialas" but share and share alike the mess tins. Often there is controversy over eating instruments as they easily get lost and when anyone leaves the group he tries to take what he affirms he put into it if he can. My pl sgt went off last night, to come home, after 8 yrs abroad. He had been a taxi dvr ɤ will find London changed. Now I've got a Territorial, who has commanded a section hitherto, a great Cockney, with the M.M. It's odd how you can tell a nice man by the letters he writes to his family ɤ how nice families produce nice and good men. I used to say that at Ch. ɤ I notice it even more here. I expect you're all listening to a concert or working in the garden. They had asparagus in this place, they say, this morning ɤ I wish I was at Underdown

to eat our June crop. Already our brew is on, good; but the water curdles our milk often though there is much less shortage hereabouts. I suppose all are home from their affairs. Jill's last letter was splendid. Bow is silent. Irvine's a fool not to write direct to me. Is there any Siepmann correspondence about? Send me some more photos

love from John

[written sideways and upside down in margin on last page:]

There was no ref on the Income tax form but it was posted on the 19th March.

~ * ~

[AIR MAIL LETTER CARD]

Mrs A.P. Waterfield
Underdown
Tangier Rd
Guildford
Surrey
ENGLAND

[signed JPWaterfield, faint censor's stamp elsewhere, 'Passed by Censor No 256']
[One mauve 3d stamp, frank clear in part, '..FFICE 568']
[annotated: 'arr 13.V.43'; the annotated sent date, 28.IV.43 is not apparent in the letter itself, and is probably an (easy) misreading of the first line; it is more likely a week after no. 39, ie 11.4.43]
[In pencil]

Mary's alc 55 of 28 III 43 No. 40 Lt JPW
just come - well done B Coy 1st. Bn 60th Rifles

For lunch in the broiling Tunisian sunshine I had a glass of gin ɤ lime, escargots au désert meunière, bully Montgomery + pickles, bread, marg and treacle, ɤ tea 8th. Army. For dinner tonight we have chicken Arabi and tinned fruit Chicago, and of course tea 8th. Army. At my back is a steep sanded scarp, ringed with granite at the top and tapering down into a green grassed valley the other side where our guns ɤ such are dug in. I'm sitting against my bed and beyond into the blue haze of the horizon stretch mathematically precisioned rows of olives, ɤ orange trees and almond trees. What a pity we came at the wrong season. At the moment there is an interval in the advance and you will be able to picture the moment by considering that it was last night the Army Cmdr made his speech about "three tasks..." and yesterday morning at 0815 hrs Sfax had fallen. We have not had a very hard time although the wireless may have given a different impression but have had some long driving ɤ sleepless nights. Of the actual things that have occupied us I can speak little but will one day tell you more about it if you are not too bored - there is remarkably little enthusiasm amongst us for the great event but we take it as it comes. The rfn will feel the same when Africa is cleared as my sgt of 7 yrs service abroad the other day who, after getting madly excited and vociferous about his homecoming for the previous 8 weeks, when the news came to pack his kit, went about the handing over to his successor and the goodbyes as if he was going for a couple of days down the rd on a recce or suchlike. It is all calm with us. The Highland DW picked up mines in the Mareth line to the tune of bagpipes the cynics say. Perhaps they'll be thrilled. By Jove it's hot here now and I've had a magnificent wash in my bowl, half-full amazingly, because we found a well only a mile away. Over the wadi I can see John Hope in a magnificent straw hat bought in a French market town a few days back. I must try ɤ get a kind German to give me a camera but I'm afraid the Yanks will get all the loot as they "mop up behind the 8th. Army's spearhead" and we skirt the villages ɤ towns, jerboa-like. At six this morning I was in the next village which consists of a gendarmerie, school ɤ a couple of

farm houses by the orchards with a fringe of Arab shelters made from brushwood ɤ camel skin. I always seem to put myself in the wind ɤ the damned petrol brew fire is blowing straight into my face making me feel slightly sick. But it's too hot to move ɤ I'm too idle. In the village we got a couple of chickens ɤ eggs and cooking olive oil by the judicious mixture of French, Arabic, cigarettes ɤ Algerian francs. The population had mostly fled from the Germans ɤ their "potops"[112] which fell last night in and around their homes. I found an old man of 72 with beautiful moustaches who had come from Marseilles 48 years ago ɤ founded the farm house ɤ the orchards. We talked a great deal ɤ he facilitated the egg negotiations ɤ advised on the cooking of snails. I found my French remarkably fluent ɤ only limited by the vocabulary which would come back. My obstinate refusal when younger to speak it must have been due to an astonishing psychological resistance which it is almost impossible to analyse. I regret it but don't think it was avoidable without a transplantation En famille.

[112] Illegible - maybe in a foreign language or jargon? The handwriting in this letter is very ragged, having lost its usual steady slant.

funnily enough, it wd still, but only just, be the same: the Army's done a good deal for me ϒ in another 2 yrs all such nonsense will be gone. Three months in France ϒ I shd be be able to talk really well, I believe. Certainly I pick up Arabic quickly. The mail came up last night ϒ I only got one, a poorer ration than usual! It was an a-graph fr Mary - will you pass on to her from me that they are, though welcome always, poor useless things compared with a-l-cs, ϒ that while we are as far West as this air mail letters are the things to write too. Both DW ϒ AP

seem unaware that you can write on the 4th side of these things but Jill ϒ Mary, who do so, must watch the sticky flap which obscures the writing ϒ the "much love" at the end of which I like to be assured.

We had some good washing this morning ϒ my shirt ϒ pillow case ϒ handkerchiefs (Cairo bought) hang out to dry on the tall green grasses, on the bushes ϒ the rocks around us. Tea up ϒ I sip and pass judgement as do all the others in turn. "Good tea, Smith" to the driver who is tea-maker on this section, self-appointed. "Not a bad drop of tea, mate", "a bit of orl right" "there ain't no sugar in mine, George" and so on. How gloriously peaceful it is - insects hum in the grasses ϒ centipedes crawl unmolested. We saw a dead tortoise this morning. I hope this will reach the door in 3 wks so I feel very close to you all - I've written to Mary for her birthday, I hope you have a glorious day ϒ that the holidays will have been good. I can't write much to people these days, being otherwise occupied: when I get a chance I only write to you so circulate it. I saw an article in "World Press Review" taken from the Times on Eden's speech about Foreign Office Reform. It seemed to place the blame wrongly for present maladministration ϒ to praise inappropriately. Did AP see it. I'm so glad you've taken yr degree it has taken a long time. Bow spurns, then, Ch gossip - conceited puppy. He never writes at all. At least he might let me know about Sandhurst OCTU ϒ his visits to Oxford. I lay 5-2 against his passing

Responsions! Any takers before the results? Mary's present life I hope sincerely will soon come to a clean-cut finish. Have you been to Hascombe? There are lots of lovely flowers here ϒ funny crested hoopoo-like birds too. I hope DW is better - AP alone writes how ill she is which worries me ϒ she always writes as though she were well. Poor Doris S. I'm sorry for it all. NJC wrote me a nice a-graph. Thank him if you see him ϒ tell him I'm writing... This morning, the day after I started this, we're still here ϒ had eggs for breakfast then negotiation with Arab brought back milk, live sheep, olive oil, sultanas. The fat of the land! I long for something to read. No sign of Horizon - what are they up to?

[sideways on page]

Mail is up ϒ none for me for once - Persuade everyone to write - air mail is very quick now though expensive[113]

~ * ~

[AIR MAIL LETTER CARD]

Mrs A.P. Waterfield
Underdown
Tangier Rd
Guildford
Surrey
ENGLAND

[signed JPWaterfield, mauve censor's stamp, 'PASSED BY CENSOR No 256']
[One mauve 3d stamp applied crookedly, frank clear in part, 'FIELD POST OF... ']
[annotated: 'arr 13.V.43']
[In bright blue ink]

[113] despite his earlier comments about the need for "much love" at the end of letters, and his usual assiduous topping and tailing of letters, this one has no traces though there is room. The handwriting indicates the writer is more out of sorts than he is letting on.

No 41 EOS is some chief political officer, a
15.4.43[114] job after his own heart. Rank a major ϒ
No sign of CAS paid £1000 p.a as civilian! Lt JPW. B Coy
parcel. Deane is making up my 1st. Bn 60th. Rifles
bed in the dry Tunisian sunshine. Someone MEF
is hammering at the truck and rations are being drawn. We were ordered to hand in one of our blankets, returning to summer scale, but when all were collected, the order was countermanded!

My sgt has brought me 3 letters, alc's all of them fr. AP No 2 March 30th, Jill April 5th., ϒ Mary April 1st. Well done all of you. They bring a very vivid picture of family life. My No 31 ϒ 32 were a-graphs which I wrote in a hurry but which take much longer as they go all the way to Cairo. You must not write them! Actually air mail letters are really quick at the moment so AP might send me a real good long performance. Here comes our tortoise, on a string; he is called after the Div Cmdr. Amusing to see "8th Army Tripoli" on yr address - Jill's I think, but don't put it any more. I shan't be able to explain why not for some time but you'll be amused when you hear. Anyway the P.O in London are in possession of a complete order of battle - yr letters reach me with gratifying regularity now. You cannot realize how close to you all I feel when I get a fine bunch of family slander. AP ϒ DW still write the best but Jill puts in a pretty shrewd comment here ϒ there ϒ Mary's flow is inexhaustible ϒ a precious picture of herself. Bow spurns gossip ϒ therefore is too idle to write. Prod him someone. Out of my generosity I sent him an a-graph yesterday ϒ also wrote to NJC in reply to his a-gr. I have prodded Mary about work as you asked; perhaps she has mentioned it because I wrote in no weak terms. I'm sure that for her sake the sooner she gets into uniform ϒ earns money doing a war-job the better it will be for her mentally though she may find the physical side of life nauseating at first and hard. It's nice to have yr letters to hand ϒ leisure to reply in detail. I'm looking forward to a nice polyphoto ϒ enlargement of Jill with her hair permed - a measure I approve strongly - and any other photos you take on these warm spring days which you mention. The riding sounds fun. I envy you that. DMW I do hope is better - AP makes no mention

this time of her sickness. Mary seems to be working in the vac which is a fine achievement at Underdown ϒ the canteen w. all the old Glfd gossip sounds amusing but not really suitable for a girl of her age ϒ in her position. She shd get to know life a bit more. Of course I know Humphrey Woods DSO (for Halfaya on the advance) MC ϒ bar - he commanded our D coy ϒ I knew him very well in the delightfully informal way the 60th have of behaving like gentlemen with all officers, of any rank, without the artificial formality of the RASC who could not maintain discipline if they did not call the Major "Sir" or the Poona tradition of the Guards. We maintain discipline because people behave ϒ therefore we can afford to call everyone except the C.O by their christian name as soon as we get to know them a bit. It's odd too in a sense because we bitterly resent the vulgar familiarity of the Yanks whom we are seeing a little now. Humph W is now $2^{i}/_{c}$ of Jimmy Stow's boys ϒ I went over to see them the other day, Sunday I think but all days, even Sunday, are the same. They have caught us up ϒ gone ahead now. I saw Jimmy who had only got back from the I.T.D after his jaundice a few weeks ago. He seemed in good form but they are not nearly so congenial a lot of people, being full of

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[114] '7-13 April 1943 hold only two memories for me. The first is of seeing and engaging with our Vickers machine guns a group of German motor vehicles between us and the coast, driving north, as they were about eight hundred yards from my platoon. It is only worth mentioning because I read later in Algiers, when I was Adjutant, an Intelligence Report which included a German account that, as far as I could discern, Major Graf von Stauffenberg had been wounded and evacuated, subsequently losing one arm, on the same day and in the same area as my platoon's comparatively puny action. Anyway, it is an interesting thought that we may have been responsible for getting von Stauffenberg back to Germany so that he was able to be the protagonist in seeking to blow Hitler up in the historical but unsuccessful "July Plot." He was wounded early enough to be evacuated Germany, a mixed blessing for him. Otherwise he would have been "in the bag" in Egypt. The Official History makes it clear that it was German policy not to evacuate any personnel, high or low in rank, as they were hemmed in, thus providing us with 200,000 prisoners.
My second memory is a visit to the Great Mosque at Kairouan, which I made on my own, taking off my shoes at the entrance. I do not remember how I managed to get away for this from the Battalion. Perhaps we were halted for the night. Nor do I remember how I knew about Kairouan as the "City of the Daybreak" and one of the greatest centres of Islamic learning. Certainly we had no guidebooks, but I know I had read about the place somehow.' - *Tunisia*

hypercritical Eton schoolmasters! Tell Elinor that ɤ she'll be livid as it's Sir John's Bn but we regard them in the same light as the 1st. R.B (Geoffrey Hitchen's Bn) are regarded by their colleagues. APW was quite right in his speculation on our part in the last battle but one, as you will have guessed by now from my later letters. In his letter (forgive these non sequiturs) he talks of a parcel of good books which were sent for my birthday. This was actually the first intimation I had received of these but they must, I'm afraid, now be written off, together with long letters for Xmas ɤ my birthday sent c/o EOS. I would have loved to have the books ɤ beg you to send me more as a belated Xmas present. All the others get magazines ɤ papers ɤ books con-

tinually. Also stir up Horizon. DMW says she has paid a further subscription for them ɤ I certainly had already paid for months after August which was the last copy I received. I value it ɤ wd be glad to see it also the N.S ɤN ɤ the Times Weekly. Do send me something ɤ don't forget air mail letters are fast now. We are still sitting above the olive groves, now dark green ordered rows against the lighter coloured grasses which wave gently in the breeze, a swaying carpet beneath the trees to where the horizon ɤ sky meet in a blue haze. French farmhouse glisten white in the slanting rays of the afternoon sun, which comes sliding warmly through the clouds. Their buildings are dotted about among the olive trees and almonds. Beyond on the grassy plains, sloping up to stony ridges which in their turn are eaten away by steep river beds ɤ wadis, you can find Arab shelters, made of brushwood and camel skin, and surrounded by camels, grey compact horses, flocks of goats ɤ sheep, white barking pie[115] - dogs, hens ɤ turkeys, and all their odours. In the intense gloom sit the women in gaudy wrappings, heavily veiled at our approach; they spin, help mark the sheep ɤ make kous-kous ɤ flour cakes. We walked 16 miles yesterday through wadis and along sandy tracks past a number of these habitations ɤ were given after much shaking of hands ɤ crossing of hearts ɤ ejaculations of "Camarade" goats milk in earthenware jars ɤ perhaps a few eggs. We've actually got three hens round the truck at the moment, a veritable farmyard. We hope they'll start laying soon. If they don't, into the pot they'll go. A good story is that Sandy Goschen MC ɤ bar one of our Coy Cmdrs was approached by a blanketed Arab who with much shoulder shrugging ɤ hand-washing explained that offers had already been made for his beautiful wives ɤ asked S.G. to refrain his soldiers from offering too much lest they (the beauties) feel tempted ɤ leave the tent! I never even think of them as females at all, rather unchivalrously, I suppose. We are hoping to buy a sheep in the village. They skin them by putting a bicycle pump into its leg ɤ blowing - then they slice off the skin neatly. Mary says you met BJWB at Ch but

AP makes no mention of that visit which sounded a real family affair. No news from RB or Elinor for months. Is DMW still friendly with E - she makes no mention of her. Poor Bow ɤ his Responsions - how does he do at the House? I wish he'd let me know what Oxf. is like. I envy AP. his weekly dinner in Trinity. It really is a nice gesture on their part. I'd like to see him lecturing to all the young flappers of Oxf at L.M.H! Has AP been to see Mr Welsh yet? My flat hat has almost gone now, but it's a wonder considering the treatment it has had. This week I've been on the desert 6 months, sleeping under the stars. It's a good life. We shall be off again in a few days. Now we are nearer London than Cairo - to Berlin is closer than to London by 100 mls! Which shall we see first? Now tea, biscuits ɤ jam are up ɤ I must eat drink ɤ then take the truck ɤ negotiate w. the Arabs for a pullet. Curse HAS ɤ his exchange nonsense - BMA, francs ɤ piastres drive me mad.

[written vertically up margin of first two pages:]

Of course EOS never sent me any goodies. My love to O.S - how is he?

~ * ~

[115] ? 'pack-'

[AIR MAIL LETTER CARD]

Mrs A.P. Waterfield
Underdown
Tangier Rd
Guildford
Surrey
ENGLAND

[signed JPWaterfield, faint mauve censor's stamp 'PASSED...']
[One mauve 3d stamp, frank 'FIELD PO... 568']
[annotated: 'arr 13.v.43']
[In quite thick pencil]

May 4th 43. No 43[116] Tunisia B Coy. 1st Bn 60th Rifles
Yesterday I could have written pages but MEF
I was too tired ɤ the weather was hotly oppressive ɤ the flies were flourishing in the aftermath of battles. Now I'm not sure I can write much. It's a fortnight since No 42 was sent off. Perhaps you have already had it? I am essentially happy and perfectly well ɤ fit. On Easter day I went to communion in mid-morning among the poppies. The padre's truck-board comes down ɤ forms an altar which was decorated with huge bunches of the flowers which colour the plains here. The sun shone. Planes came over the blue surrounding hills ɤ set a truck alight. We moved off that evening ɤ I had not slept at night since then[117] until last night. Historical consciousness is a good antidote to fright. I was glad that I went to church ɤ thought of you all ɤ the others in the history of the world who had gone to communion in war ɤ felt a suspension of personal interests. The assimilation of the inevitable, not the passive acceptance in hope of better things some day, but the digestion of it in such a way that one gains from it needs courage but is the only way to look at life now, I feel.[118] We have had a busy time ɤ it is sad to know so many of my friends can not now enjoy this rest. For those who are killed themselves I do not worry but it is hard for their relatives ɤ friends ɤ those who had hopes for them. It would be nice to be remembered with affection but not to be the cause of pain ɤ sorrow. Funnily enough I was talking about my glasses with our Doctor, a fine man, who got the M.C with us at Nofilia, ɤ wondering if I would be able to get another pair only the morning before they were smashed.[119] My other pair were broken in the mud not far from Alamein. Fortunately we were relieved soon afterwards ɤ I was able to drive all day yesterday to a place[120] which provided lenses ɤ an eye specialist. Peter Wake ɤ I went together, he to see his brother, Hereward Junior, who was wounded the other night, ɤ I with a black patch over one eye, looking very sinister. We went in a jeep ɤ drove along, up ɤ round twisting mountain-roads and hair pin bends at breakneck speed. Everything was successful ɤ I got 3 prs of glasses, free. We drove home by night ɤ I went bang into a ditch

ɤ upturned the wagon, being dazzled by an ambulance's glaring headlights. We slept with a police post in a concrete floored outhouse on borrowed blankets, two each. It's very warm here at night ɤ in

---

[116] 42 seems to be missing. From *Tunisia*: 'B Company were positioned at the bottom of the ridge, in plain view from enemy-held Kournine and another sharp-pointed feature to our right front which I remembered rather more clearly than Kounine. We stayed there, in fact in the "inevitable outpost of the southern edge of Argoub" until the night attack, from the night of 26/27 April. Although we dug in as far as we could, it was highly uncomfortable, especially made so by the Germans' "Nebelwerfer" mortars, which had the novelty, to us, of a silent approach. Our company lost Pev Sanford, a very young subaltern, whose heavy moustache and old-fashioned manners belied his age, killed on a night patrol, also Jack Brister, the Battalion's remaining American officer, when a shell landed on our company H.Q., merely a trench, in fact, and also wounded, yet again, John Hope and David Karmel, 2nd in command. I distinctly remember that Jack Brister, just graduated from Dartmouth College, New England, had said to me the night before his death, "I think I must go to the American forces now. I want to pass on what I have learned in the Regiment, which has been so much." Apart from shelling and mortars we were threatened by several huge Tiger tanks with "88" guns, which, fortunately, did not extend threats to direct attack, against which we would have had little chance even with our six pounder anti-tank guns. Of our own tanks there was no sign, though after a few days one tank of the Bays put itself in view behind us but then quickly retired behind cover.'
[117] Easter 1943 was 25 April.
[118] this is a bit jumbled; so is his handwriting in this letter.
[119] 'my old ones had been knocked off and broken by an alarmingly close explosion on Argoub' - *Tunisia*
[120] Thibar per letter of 1.07.43, No. 51.

the last battle I slept with all my clothes on, my overcoat ϒ one blanket, in rain ϒ all - that is to say I could have slept because I never got more than one hour at night. John Hope ϒ David K. had to go off but DK is back, thank God. John will be longer but is in no danger. Your letters came up with the water ϒ food at night ϒ I read them with delight in the grey dawn, sitting in my shit trench! Some air mail came, posted in Jan; obviously they had come by surface mail for the greater part of the journey. Now I believe air mail will take 3 weeks or less from you to me. I.T-G wrote me one posted in April, a splendid letter. Jill wrote 10.4.43. DMW one of those damned a-graphs again 30.3, Mary 7.4. alc, air-mail from AP 30.1, airmail Mary, undated, in Jan some time. There is also an air-mail from Mary 28.2. Thank them all for me. I'm awfully glad about Mary ϒ the WRNS. She must send me a photo of herself in uniform. I do hope I shall be able to take her out as a Wren before the end of the war although I honestly doubt if it's likely unless she comes out to here. I certainly shan't come back to England until the war is almost over. After all there are rfn of 5 yrs service abroad still in the Bn - these are being sent home gradually but it would be idiotic to bring back soldiers who have only one year's service abroad.

I must stop for a moment to eat lunch in my mess tin under our tarpaulins which stretched out beside the truck give us shade. We have spam (as I believe it's called) white bread ϒ butter, tea ϒ date flour cakes, home made. How luxuriously they all live in this area compared to the desert existence. The 1st Army will never know what hardship is.

I ought to re-read some of yr letters to answer some of the things you talk about.

DW ϒ AP continue to be most vivid ϒ readable. I still don't know about those C.S changes which it would very much amuse me to know about. I'm glad you saw AJB at Ch. chapel - I suppose he's complacent as ever or did any twinge of restless conscience seem to prick him? As for Mr Welsh I cannot imagine a more fantastic arrangement than for the female Waterfields to encroach on the strictly masculine preserves of Duke St. I shd like a flat hat, some corduroys and a couple of shirts - they shd not take more than two months ϒ of course he won't worry about coupons. Bow must be back now from Aldborough - of course he never writes, but I am delighted to hear of the success ϒ happiness of his career. The garden must be lovely but I find the horticultural intimacies too much for me. I won't write to any of the others for a while, I'm afraid, because we shall again be too busy, so give them all my love ϒ my news ϒ persuade them to keep writing. I haven't seen E.OS naturally, nor heard from him since I saw him in Tripoli but I've heard of his doings from Geoffrey Keating. I've still had no sign of any books or papers ϒ no news or explanation from Horizon. As the sea voyage will only take about 3 weeks now I believe I'd be glad of something like that. Jill's calm tactical assumption that we were "reserves" is based on no evidence ϒ has had no foundation in fact since we sat at Tunisia[?[121]] in Jan! I think I told you I sent £5 to Stuttafords - I must be beginning to save a little now. The summer is

beginning ϒ it's a pleasant time of year if a little stickily hot. It is nice to be so happy - in a sense I have been as exhilarated lately as I've ever been, but it will be a relief when this is over. There goes my truck to collect the pl's rations ϒ I must send this to get the c/sgt before he goes off. Today I saw a weekly Times of Oct 28th. It was amusing to see their reserved ϒ highly qualified optimism. Winston's style I agree is terrific. I've read his post-war speech verbatim ϒ discussed it with my rfn. Write lots - Much love fr John.

~ * ~

[121] could be "Tmaine" but not located as such.

N.A.A.F.I. LETTER CARD
ON ACTIVE SERVICE

AP. Waterfield Esq C.B.
Civil Service Commission
Burlington Gardens
London W.1.

Personal

[signed JPWaterfield, mauve censor's stamp 'PASS... CENSOR ... 256']
[No stamp, franked 'FIE.. ST OFFICE 568 * 13 MY 43']
[In blue ink]

Tunisia	[written sideways] good birthday. Always	Lt. JPW
9.5.43	much love from John Excuse the haste	B Coy.
		1st. Bn 60th. Rifles

This horrid little bit of paper is MEF
a hopeful gamble on speed ϒ brings you all my love ϒ wishes for a happy birthday. Many happy returns of the day though I cannot for the life of me remember how old you are.[122] The only present I can give you is Tunis ϒ Bizerta which no doubt pleases most people in England though I can find for myself no thrill or excitement, merely an equable satisfaction in the whole proceeding. Anyway we have not finished ϒ may have a bloody battle yet. Having, by the grace of God, survived so far with merely a slight hole in the head ϒ my glasses smashed by a horrid pestilential infantry gun, I shall take good care to preserve my skin now! Our path has not all been a bed of roses ϒ losses are sad but there is nowhere in the whole British army, I feel, where you could find a more proper military spirit and a kinder more friendly fellow feeling ϒ comradeship. I have written little lately because I've been occupied but was delighted to get letters written on Easter day last night before the sun disappeared behind the rain-clouds in an ominous, livid flare. We went to Communion by the padres truck on Easter day, among the flowers ϒ thought of our homes. The blue flag, signal to move on our last march is up. We are on the uttermost map of the whole territory. Have a

[on outside, in thick pencil or perhaps chinagraph]

Sorry this had to be posted 3 days late; - one flourishes still though well occupied

JPW

~ * ~

[122] APW was born on 16 May 1888, so would have been 55. QV 14.07.43 re DMW.



12 - 'Orders': Hope, Wake, Goschen, Corbett-Winder, Hogg, ?Temple

[AIR MAIL LETTER CARD]

Mrs A.P. Waterfield
Underdown
Tangier Rd
Guildford
Surrey
ENGLAND

[signed JPWaterfield, mauve censor's stamp 'PASSED BY CENSOR No. 256]
[One mauve 3d stamp, franked FI.....CE 568]
[annotated: 'May 28']

No 44. 17.5.43 B Coy
Well it's all over now. I expect you are, in a way, more pleased 1st Bn - 60th Rifles
ɤ thrilled than we are. Now I've been interrupted to drink mid-morning coffee ɤ smoke a cigar ɤ here is Sandy Goschen who has A Coy to chat ɤ it'll be some time before I can go on. O.K now, 11.30 am and it's the first time I've had to settle down ɤ write to you all since that astonishing afternoon when after days of hell, we drove into Gromballia expecting to deal w. 90 Lt and such in the Cap Bon

peninsular and found on the dry grassy flats just beyond the village such a seething, stinking throng of field grey, sandy and grey green unshaven humanity as I've never believed could be gathered and held in one place. Nor did the barbed wire, hurriedly erected, have much restraining effect. And still they came, driving their Merc 3-ton roaring lorries, complete with trailers or towing another truck, or in Volksvagen, or staff cars or in ant-like trailing columns on foot. No sleep that night but we brewed by blazing fires in the dust of more and more wagons ɤ more ɤ more loaded footmen. They all brought huge packs, haversacks ɤ blankets. In the morning I drove into Tunis, a thrilling moment, in a captured Fiat staff car to try ɤ establish liaison with the cages there. But I found worse chaos ɤ came away. Tunis might have been gay before. Now no food, no cinema, no cafes. "Les autres ont tout pris". My 100 words is increasing ɤ the fluency ɤ speed is in no way diminished. This morning I'm sitting in our mess, a 3-ton truck's hood enjoying the shade. We are in an olive grove, grey and silver shining as the breeze turns the leaves. Cactus hedges surround and are bursting into yellow flower from prickles. The shadows dance as in an orchard in June in England and the birds cheep and twitter. There are always poppies beneath the trees and here are, too, blue ɤ white flowers as well whose name I don't know. I feel horribly the contrast here between English summer-like weather, June weather, when one sleeps out ɤ has early tea at 5.30 with the sun breaking through a faint haze and then goes onto the tiles for breakfast ɤ to the beach for the morning between that and the smell of decay from horses ɤ bodies still unburied which one passes in a truck fast, the mosquitoes ɤ the flies, the old brown dirty Arabs ɤ Berbers in their appalling squalor, the Italian-French civilians who speak Arabic ɤ French bilingually, and the yellow mixtures that are being produced as a result of "colonization". Along the west side of the cape the road winds high and narrow above fiercely blue sea swelling gently onto the rocks or here ɤ there onto a sandy cove, with huge hard-shining mountains the inland side. Then one turns a corner ɤ finds an appallingly dirty Arab village. I like talking to the Arabs ɤ I like haggling with them but it's disconcerting to find such clean beauty ɤ such squalor cheek by jowl, the one indifferent to the other. I have had a few air-letter cards since I last wrote after coming out of a sad battle. I'm afraid I wrote just one day under a fortnight ago but we've been appallingly occupied. 16.5 Came alc from Bow, ɤ also 9.5 another I'm afraid I wronged Bow a bit with recriminations about not

writing. Here were two admirable letters. I doubt, though, if I'd recognise him now. The tone of his letters is amazingly mature ɤ quite changed from the rapscallion type I used to know. Last night came alc from AP posted on 1.5; Jill sent me a first-class alc 2.5 which arrived 13.5, Mary's (64) arr. 9.5. ɤ others, Bill Deedes ɤ Tony W-B have written me splendid long letters too. Bow will soon be in statu pupillari again to Wreford-Brown! I am, as always, profoundly grateful for letters. They encourage of course ɤ fortify in the evil day but actually I find them then a distraction ɤ never read them until we are at semi-rest. But they are just as precious. These are the times when one really needs them ɤ especially books ɤ papers which dutiful families send to all but to me. I think sea-mail may well be good now, as I've said before, so I'm eagerly awaiting cuttings, Listeners, N.SɤN, Horizon (I'm getting tired of writing about them as you may well guess) Siepmanneze which is always entertaining - let me see E.OS epistle about our meeting[123] - I haven't heard of him or written to him for months but Geoffrey Keating will tell him I'm alive. I'm thankful to be able to tell you that I'm flourishingly well with new glasses and all. It's awful though to think of all those of my friends who came out with me ɤ went to one or other of the Greenjacket Battalions ɤ who have been killed or so badly wounded that they will not re-appear again ever. As you guessed the last month was hard work ɤ we had a number of casualties among officers ɤ rfn. I won't enlarge on all that because it is so morbid but when I look round to see who will come on leave with me I can think of no friend who is not dead.

Now Michael Dear, I'm told, has been killed. That doesn't leave many from Ch. now that David Hardie's death is confirmed. Do not put 8th Army, Tripoli any longer on the address - the P.O. knows the order of battle. Actually you probably have pictured us in quite a different area for the last 6 weeks or so to the actual position. We were loaned to 1st. Army - I don't think that is censorable now but I could not tell you before. In fact the final break was in great measure the work of 8th Army's armour. I don't know but there is an awful danger of the M.E force becoming one of those armies of

[123] presumably this is the letter at appendix C.

the early Roman Empire who made ϒ unmade Emperors at their whim. Those who go home want to come back; they miss the titivating (a regular rfn is worse than a girl) the wogs to do their commands, the ordered life. If ever they all come home they will become a tough, cynical, disillusioned body ready to turn to a military leader, a fascist menace in fact. The difficulty is that those at home, civilians ϒ soldiers alike, are cushy; they are unaware ϒ who is to blame them? After a

death in a family, or a scandal, speeches of due formality are made by every interested party, none of which really cloak feelings of bloody bitterness ϒ acrimony which lie beneath. However form has been observed, regularity has imposed itself on the situation ϒ no embarrassment suffered. Similarly here have speeches been made about this victory. One day I'll maybe, quickly, so as not to bore you, tell you more about it. Anyway go back to the original point which has led to this. There is an amazingly workmanlike competence in the 8th Army troops which one searches for in vain among the U.S ϒ 1st. Army men. But they are self-satisfied. They want, ϒ some expect to go home, after 3 - 4 months. A colonel said to ours "How strange to sleep under a roof after 3 months." "We haven't for 3 yrs". I have rfn in my pl who have had no leave since Mena when the Bn left for the desert in March '42. They have been on the desert as has the Bn all that time ϒ except for 2 months have been in contact with the enemy for all that time. I could never soldier again in England regimentally. A job would be a little different. This seems a gloomy letter. Oh well one feels restless in this unaccustomed peace. We were wonderfully well generalled from Alamein to here. I hope the press make much of Winston's amazingly wise long term strategic policy. I have never felt such confidence in a man's ability. 1st. Army admin ϒ rations are terrific, chocolate ϒ cigarettes in profusion ϒ all the more for us and welcome who have starved ϒ craved for a smoke so often. Tunis sordid but thronged. I have bathed along the coast here in beautiful coves, mountain-walled so as to be windless. Oh I wrote a NAAFI card to AP for his birthday. Let me know how long it took. When it was posted was the last day but one - they threw all their remaining amn at us then. Such hell to be killed by that. I shall go ϒ see Carthage. I believe there is a good deal to be examined there. If you want some money for some books for me let me know what you spend, I'll send you a cheque. A.P. may buy himself £1 of anything he wants from me. Those devilish hounds - I wept to hear of your misadventure. What a pity they were not sick afterwards. I am certain Bow ϒ you are right. He can't go abroad for a year anyway. I wrote to IFG ϒ told him so. Funny what a contradictory creature he is. Bow is wrong in thinking he's "a stupid old man" but he lacks balance ϒ real up-to-date sanity, perhaps from his illness he likes to make out everyone is weak ϒ needs mossing up. Mary must get this Inter but equally must quickly get into the WRNS ϒ avoid becoming a cook! As for Jill she too must be developed - not kept on a tight rein. Introduce her to people ϒ make her go out ϒ stay. She writes stupidly of flappers admiration for Graham Gar's boys ϒ the like! They have far from distinguished

themselves w. us! She wd do better to get herself a nice young Etonian (as most are) in the 60th or Rifle Bde to trot her out if she's so snobbish! John Hope ϒ D.K had a knock ϒ went off but will be all right. Have you, A.P, seen W.Monkton lately? You must ask him about David Karmel ϒ tell him he's in great form. Will you please send me (with books etc) some air-mail letter cards in an envelope by air-mail w. one written as a letter. Say 10 in a packet ϒ 3 or 4 packets = 40. Poor Geoffrey Fletcher ϒ much more poor family. I met a Coy Cmdr ϒ the adjt of his Bn whom I knew well in Tunis t other day. I have seen no Siepmanneze for ages - please let me have some of it! I must write to O.S - isn't it his birthday around now? I feel you are all horrid to him, poor old man. I'm glad he's seen this victory which must be regarded as the opening of the light, the top ϒ crest of the hill. Such a complete victory has not been won by the British army in this war. The army may be coming into its own right again. I miss the Times most of all. Can't you get a weekly Times laid on? What are Campbell-Stuart, Shaw ϒ Robin Barrington-Ward there for? Let me know all the London gossip ϒ the Trinity high-table talk. The news of the war gets to you all so oddly but necessarily falsely dramatized. If you do not believe a word the BBC or papers say you'll be more correct but more unhappy. In haste for post-cpl.

much love always from John

~ * ~



13 - Prisoners of War, nr Tunis April '43

[BY AIR MAIL - AIR LETTER[124]]

Mrs A.P. Waterfield
Underdown
Tangier Rd
Guildford
Surrey
ENGLAND

[signed JPWaterfield, mauve censor's stamp 'PASSED BY CENSOR No. 256]
[One mauve 3d stamp, franked "FIELD POST OF....."]
[annotated: 'arr...' (no date); blue ink, small and cramped writing]

[a previous line here on the folded flap mainly lost on opening:] ...ɤ his... as usual..
just come. Thank God she's leaving M.Halls. Saw DW to EOS in reply
No 45 HAS to CAS about his back. Mary to EOS 30.5.43 to his about seeing me
Eric is good company but real 'flaneur ɤ awful for _women - at his age decoutant

B Coy
1st. Bn. 60th Rifles
MEF

It was outside Tunis that I wrote last almost a fortnight ago ɤ I feel rather guilty especially as I've had some splendid letters from the family. I've had on 18.5 Mary (65), on 21.5. air mails of DMW 29.4 and of 5.5 ɤ of Mary (63) 23.4, + air-le Mary (66) 21.5, ɤ alc AP (5). On 27.5 came alcs of Jill 20.4 ɤ 16.5 ɤ alc of Mary 19.5, DMW 11.5. Thank you all very much. We are now to the Eastward again but stationary for a while. AP's hopes for me of a bath in Cairo will not be fulfilled. Never mind. This is only the end of the beginning and we must only think, without rest, of the next major campaign in Europe. I wonder where it will be. For a week or so we shall not be doing much. I am a few miles outside Eric's bureaucratic surroundings, still in sandy wastes but on a main road, incongruously. It seems a long time since our last drive E. after Xmas ɤ that was in wetness ɤ sleet ɤ cold windy weather. This time it was hot as hell and devilish dry and we soon left the green pleasaunces of Tunis for the desert wastes which we seem to have made our own haunts for ever. I got in to see Eric ɤ found him with his crown ɤ K.D in a rabbit-warren of offices inhabited by Italians ɤ Jews ɤ Italian women ɤ Jeweses of every age and, seemingly, every sort of linguistic ability. It was all Babel but always I could hear the well known Siempannesque ɤ autocratic tones ringing down one of the multitude of available phones. There is a most unpleasant stench about these armies of occupations ɤ the work on which they engage. But they all live wonderfully well. EOS has moved house again ɤ is now sharing w. three old boys on odd liaison jobs a nice shady house on one of the main streets not more than a few doors from his office. You go from the bright, white-plastered streets through a gay, pink-flowered mass of blossom into a shady living room with bedrooms each with its own bathroom opening off it. Eric gave me a good lunch, showed me endless letters from our relatives which I found rather boring, used my car and was generally very kind. I have been ordered to have 4 days rest in the town (a good few officers fr. each Bn are going) which will amount to no more than a bath ɤ sheets but that will be something. Eric has said, v. kindly, that I might stay with him in his place which would be all the better in that it allows another man fr. the Bn to go to the leave hotel. I've had a wonderful bathe off the mole, between it ɤ outlying rocks where great tall waves came just curling into foam all the way from Sicily ɤ Greece. The sea was a deep green and it was not unlike Cadgwith on a sunny day after a storm. This is a dreary letter I'm afraid because I'm feeling a bit dreary myself having had the edges of sand-fly fever for the last few days after seeing Eric. We were plagued by

insects all the way down. But it's all very very temporary and not material at all. I'm so sorry to hear about the pains in your back and cannot understand why they cannot be diagnosed properly. Doctors are oddly inefficient in spite of their increasing knowledge. We've got an house by a railway, a little white blockhouse of 2 rooms which we cleaned, white-washed ɤ decorated ɤ now it does as our mess.

[124] new title, same format, folded on itself in four, as previous 'air mail letter cards'.

It is beautifully cool but hard to write when people come in for persistent gin ɤ lime ɤ chatter before Sunday lunch. I suppose there was no family church this morning, merely working in the garden ɤ cutting asparagus. I haven't seen any of that here yet. In a weekly Times which kind friends send to John Hope (now back with us, well-recovered - much to our delight) I saw that Waley - Sigismond of that ilk - had at last got his pleasure of a KB something! I'm sure he is well pleased. Still no news of the C.S changes ɤ surprises you hinted at some time ago. What are they? I'm going to see Eric this afternoon to arrange my stay with him. I am finding it very hard to think of anything at all to say although I usually have more than I have room for! Never mind. I shall recover again in good time. I am fairly content with life still indeed really very happy. Influx of guests ɤ gin. Stop. Lunch of omelette ɤ spinach ɤ stewed apricots. We are already making life fairly comfortable. Humph. Woods who is a great dear came to lunch w. us. He is $2^{i}/_{c}$ the other Bn (x-10 where x is where I used to be) rather crude code but nevertheless effective. They are only a few hundred yds away from us as the ant crawls or fly flies in similar sandiness, rather more orange tinted that the desert. Tell yr admiral he (Humph) is v. well. I hope to have some photos for you all soon. Eric got ourselves taken with my camera outside the security office of .... but found afterwards that the camera was broken so we must try again. O.S wd like one, I expect, as a belated birthday present. I'm very bad not to have written for his 82nd birthday but simply had no time. Poor old man, he writes w. great difficulty ɤ most pathetically to Eric. I do hope you are nice ɤ kind to him. I shall write ɤ give him my love because I do not think I shall ever see him again. Why does Oakley not

send me a statement of a/c regularly, say every 3 months? It's his job to do so ɤ also to send in my pay slips. He might do the first by a/graph as all good men do ɤ the second by surface mail. Am I yet being paid at a Lt? And if I am has it been back-dated. If not for God's sake let me know else it will be too late. This is a gay room with mats ɤ Gauguin pictures from Lilliput on the white walls ɤ roses on the tables ɤ camp chairs. Humphrey Davey is an architect ɤ does wonders with improvised salvage like bomb-cases ɤ wine drums one of which has made us a little round table like the one at home. We are sharing with A Coy, which Sandy Goschen has, because we wanted to get together a bit ɤ Bn mess did not meet with approval on such a temporary ɤ flimsy basis. W.G.W must be odd to have to stay but I'm glad you saw her; it's a dreary outlook for Elizabeth to have to return to that awful Africa again. I cd never enjoy these outpost-of-Empire 3-yearly leaves. You all write nicely ɤ happily ɤ keep me wonderfully in touch with life. It will be good when Mary gets to the Wrens. I've had a few letters fr. Bow lately. He seems very developed ɤ changed ɤ I think I'd find it hard to recognize him. Tell the girls they must send me photos of themselves w. their new hair styles. Gossip at the canteen must be awful. I cannot abide that suburban atmosphere. I must find out if Graham is on his old job still because then he must be only a few miles off. I did not know Michael Dear had been killed. More ɤ more of the young ones are. I never read the Times casualties without knowing some name or other ɤ of course a lot of my friends in Greenjacket Bns who came out w. me were killed. Why does noone send me a Carthusian? If they'd only start I'll send them the subscription. AP talks of his fire-watching. I'm glad he heard about Tunis ɤ B on the midnight news. We were busy for a while after that but it was cheering to know. How does Trinity High Table go? What is this repeated business of

a scarf for me from Walsh? I want a green side hat above all ɤ next a sleeping bag! Do not worry for goodness sake about the corduroys if it means taking your coupons but tell Welsh to send me a hat. Did you see the picture of John Hope, David K ɤ Humphrey D in the evening press in Tunisian headgear enjoying themselves? We were nearest troops to the enemy at the time ɤ we were being shelled! They've received letters envying their 'good time'! Go over ɤ watch the cricket at Ch on green ɤ talk to the Chigs ɤ Irving ɤ Birleys. It's a nice atmosphere there. You don't say much about the Birleys these days - are they OK? We have a nice new bright patterned table-cloth from the bazaar. If it wasn't such a risk I'd send you some stuff. Well I might anyway. Can't be put to shame by Gow. Much love always from John.

~ * ~

[BY AIR MAIL - AIR LETTER]

Mrs A.P. Waterfield
Underdown
Tangier Rd
Guildford
Surrey
ENGLAND

[signed JPWaterfield across faint illegible censor's stamp]
[One mauve 3d stamp, frank smudged]
[annotated: 'arr' only - no date!]
[In blue ink, small and cramped writing again]

You complain that I don't give much away in my letters ϒ so you can't tell what I'm like,
No 46. 2 } 5 43[125] or Mary does - I think 1st Bn. 60th. Rifles
3 } in that I am changed, restraint prevails. MEF
I shall not see if any of you have written to me for four days because I am on holiday in Eric's town, by the sea. We live in a white hotel with a flat roof ϒ endless circular corridors snaking round a series of patios where purple oleanders blossom and sometimes fountains play. The dining room is built out into the harbour ϒ after dinner you can sit on the balcony which encircles it and drink ϒ smoke over the perfect black and blue glassy water which reflects all the flickering lights of the ships. It's wonderfully restful sitting at night where ships lights wink in the sea and I was reminded of our time at Freetown, soon a year ago. But there it was all very sticky and too hot and here the heat is dry ϒ bright and the sun is hard rather than sickly, soft ϒ moist. The bathing is lovely, from the Lido where (stupidly) you have to wear bathing pants, that the nursing sisters may not feel embarrassed, or off the mole which I told you about in my last letter, or (where we went yesterday) from a place by the motor racing track right away through the suburbs ϒ Arab villages and flats, palm sprouting, to a lonely stretch of coast where the water is emerald green ϒ pebbles clear on the sandy bottom in deep water and you dive off the sandstone rocks straight out of your depth. All the water is wonderfully clear and a bright green. We all go in a great party to tea at the Y.W.C.A which (don't laugh) is the one and only place for a good tea in the whole town. There are delicious cakes ϒ as it is run by women the furnishings are reasonable. There are very few women there naturally, ϒ nearly all those there are nurses. We have no dealings. I saw Eric yesterday. He is well installed and dealing with Balbo's bastard son in the building of a cinema which is supposed to be flung open today at the King's birthday celebrations

with great parade and pomp. All the base-men are in great flap as it is their great day. I think Eric will be sacked by tonight because by the way the cinema's workmen were progressing when he took me to see it in his silly little car with its Italian chauffeur yesterday I can scarcely judge that it has any chance of being ready this afternoon. I am lunching with one of Eric's co-habitants, a sweet old guards major who likes the bottle and has some dug-outs job hereabouts ϒ then going to bathe off the mole. There is very little to drink here and luckily its nothing like Cairo - no cinemas or entertainment and no restaurants. The sea is wonderful ϒ so it's a perfect rest and it's nice to sleep between sheets, though I lay on top mine all last night, so hot was it. Cairo is a cess-pool as DMW says but it's great fun. All my luggage is there too ϒ I have to buy clothes up here for a great price because I can't get hold of my belongings in the citadel of Egypt. Eric has a splendid selection of the May reviews ϒ a whole bunch of the last six months Horizons which he will not lend me as he pretends that he needs them for his official work! Considering that it is just about a year since we left England I don't think you've done much between you to get me even the papers to which I paid a subscription. I've now given up hoping that you will do anything I ask ϒ am now dealing directly with my tailor ϒ other such places. But for getting papers I can't send a cheque because I've got no more on Barclays Glfd ϒ an air-mail from here

[125] The numbering, narrative and stationery confirm that this '5' is mistaken although written clearly, the month should be 6 ie June.

takes a good time. Mary sent me a nice air-graph which got here in about 3 weeks, a quick performance. They are not nearly so quick nor so pleasant to read as these but I know the gov try to make you use them with most Dubble ɤ deceitful propaganda. Continued 3.5.43 in the sunny courtyard outside my bedroom with water spouting in the fountain ɤ stirring up the lazy goldfishes to dart ɤ dive. This morning I ɤ our Doctor who is a very fine ɤ nice man ɤ got an MC at Nofilla ɤ Peter Wake all went off ɤ bathed at the end of the mole.

We bought a kilo of strawberries ɤ ate them lying on the rocks. They were small but still the real thing. I have had about three attacks on this letter ɤ can't seem to get very far - I'm writing now in my little bedroom with the blind half-drawn against the evening sun and a luke-warm bath waiting for me next door. I called on Eric this afternoon. His cinema was a success after all ɤ he had been congratulated by this one ɤ that. He appears to be quite interested in his work but will not stay so, I think. He's too fickle for words. I read an article in an Horizon which he's got about that strange young man Richard Hillary. These intense y. people make life over-complicated ɤ their biographers and eulogists make it worse. However I'd like to see a copy of his book "The Last Enemy" ɤ any memorial volume which, I believe, is being produced for him. Eric's desk contains a fair amount of Siepmannese, copies of HAS to CAS ɤ CAS to O.S ɤ so on. I gather more ɤ more that Harry is what is known among reasonable males when they are alone by a word, Anglo-Saxon but unprintable, relating to human excreta ɤ denoting that he is an appallingly bad type. I really cannot stand him. Some of his letters about poor O.S lately have been horrible ɤ the glee w. which he ɤ Edith seem to be dividing up the old man's property, he openly with derision ɤ because it amuses him, she equally openly ɤ with acquisitive greed for her sons, appears to me quite nauseating. C.A.S seems as unable as Eric to get a suitable job but perhaps he'll do O.K in the West. At least he appears satisfactorily married. Eric never mentions his wife now. We are sending our Dick Temple who commands our D Corp ɤ got a couple of MCs at Sidi Rezegh to a job at Allied HQ in Washington. I might consider sending Charles a note by him. I don't feel so happy now as I did during the campaign. Regimental soldiering in sandy, uncomfortable surroundings ɤ regimental training are tiresome things. One misses, too, so many of ones friends now that their absence is felt. Were it not for the wonderful thing of being in the Bn with such nice people ɤ the certain fact that one cd never find a better place to soldier than the 1st. 60th. I shd feel a little bored at doing exactly the same job as I've been doing for the last two years. Is it not amazing to think that I've been commissioned now for over 2 years. Mary will soon be in the Wrens

and Bow in the 60th. Poor Jill alone will be left. But this will be the greatest ɤ biggest change in family existence since you first started boarding school holidays when I came back from Fernie's, in, was it Dec '29? You two will have to get very gay ɤ gad about ɤ entertain a bit in London. Today I bought some pyjamas at the Officer's Shop ɤ some handkerchiefs off an old Italian junk-woman. The handkerchiefs were very good quality ɤ even DW wd pass them, I thought, as I haggled in true ME fashion over the counter. Money seems of little moment to us but one gets almost too reckless. Tell Oakley to send me an air-graph of my statement quarterly ɤ a cheque book ɤ my pay slips will you? I may decide to have my pay out here soon. That canteen of yours with Mrs Ramsden sounds an dreadful place. I shd like to hear the Guildford scandal, however, ɤ the London gossip. What is everyone doing now ɤ how are our relatives - who is marrying whom?

[written sideways up middle of centre pages:]

Do write often - much love fr. John. The food here is awful but I must bath now before dinner.

~ * ~



14 - Hope, Temple

[BY AIR MAIL - AIR LETTER]

Mrs A.P. Waterfield
Underdown
Tangier Rd
Guildford
Surrey
ENGLAND

[signed JPWaterfield across partly illegible censor's stamp "PASSED BY CENS...]
[One mauve 3d stamp, frank partly illegible, "..D POST OFFICE ... 8 JU"]
[annotated: '[arr] 24.6.43']
[In blue ink]

7.6.43 No 47

But they'll learn & select & improve. It's nice to hear of yr social occasions in Cambridge. Why do you all go to I loath Laski!

B Coy
1st. Bn. 60th. Rifles
MEF

Mallett these days?

We were all standing in the rather dreary bar of the Del Mehari hotel listening to the band playing Lily Marlene in an automatic dreary way, and wondering over our dreary coffee (ersatz) what on earth to do for the rest of the evening when suddenly in burst Geoffrey Keating & yelled "just back from Algiers in Monty's Flying Fortress; two days ago I was in Claridges, and I saw your papa, John, in Welsh & J's!" What a thrilling link it was. You know he went back with M, in the Fortress M had won in a bet off Eisenhower, and met practically everyone in town. He (Geoffrey) is not in the Bn. of course, being chief photographer of the Army but he is very proud of being a 60th man and always visits us & knows everyone very well. He & his boys made Desert Victory. Well we all got out the whisky & went up to John Hogg's

(our $2^{i}/_{c}$) bed room ɤ sat ɤ gossiped there until late in the night. In the morning Geoffrey gave me a lovely parcel all nice ɤ new from Welsh containing two perfect shirts; "just the job" as the rfn say. Thank you so much for sending them. What about the green side hat? I hope that is coming. I can't discover my hat size but rather think it is 6⅝ - but that old gossiper ought to have the records. The shirts fit perfectly ɤ I put one on this Sunday morning as I'm orderly officer, in order to look smart for mounting the guard, ɤ now I'm the envy of all beholders. We talk more about our clothes, cut ɤ

prices ɤ material, than the worst lot of middleaged society women over morning coffee about the latest fashion for rejuvenating frocks! The interesting things about G.K's report on England were that 1) in general everything seemed slightly drab ɤ horribly expensive at the same time; 2) the military are none of them prepared to take any lessons from our experience here ɤ 3) that <u>all</u> Middle Easters are frantic to come back again to soldier here. As for (3) you can draw your own judgements but if (2) is not remedied there will be some awful disasters first. The components of the 1st. Army will be absolutely first-class next time; their casualties will be less ɤ their competence increased. I expect you knew the Army Cmdr was home. As it's all over now I see no harm in mentioning it. Only one plane load went. What a marvellous coincidence it was that you shd have met Geoffrey - he says he recognised you anyway because we looked so alike! I hope you will get me the hat but don't worry about the corduroys unless they are already ordered. I believe his stock is getting very low so perhaps it might be as well to get me some. But the great thing is that surface mail must be getting good as I forecast. Because yesterday when I came back from leave I found a parcel sent by Mary of a N.S ɤ N, Listener, Time ɤ Tide ɤ Picture Post all of May issue. Isn't that splendid? I really am thrilled by it. Today too came an alc from Mary No 73 ɤ with it another pile of 4 papers which I'm mossing up until I've read the first lot. The

amusing thing is that David Karmel's buddy Edward Hutton who sends out his own papers, Lilliput, World Review ɤ P.Post regularly to D.K can never get anything sent in under 5 months seemingly! Well done you amateurs! But I shd love some books - Penguins ɤ Pelicans, reportage about the war, Hillary's The Last Enemy, poems possibly, reminiscence ɤ autobiography - (this most of all) like old don's tales, odd books about people, history especially about N. Africa where we've been - I can get nothing except an ill-written inaccurate a/c issued by the Army which dismisses Belisarius w. a flip of the pen ɤ goes on to say Tripoli has no bananas. Above all NO NOVELS except detectives which I like. Letters I like too, I mean published ones though of course I adore yours too. I'm so sorry about the pain in DMW's arm ɤ do hope this pleasant holiday at the Gdn Ho. Hotel will help it to get better. I shall think of you in Cornwall soon - the water won't be as hot as off the mole where I bathed the other day, straight into 30 ft of glassygreen clear water. Bow writes maturely after a row in the House. He seems to have out-lived Ch. now, certainly Morgan ɤ Ives, though he might learn that dry factual constitutional history has its place in world making equally with who was whose mistress. Poor Mary ɤ her exams. I hope she passes. I've got DW's alc of the 22nd May fr. Cambridge. She sounds quite different, gay ɤ happy, compared with her tone at Glfd. I've also got a letter from Mrs Gatty Smith posted last October! I enjoyed my 4 days

holiday. There was a great party of us ɤ we bathed ɤ lazed ɤ slept on sheets ɤ I feel rested ɤ vigorous after it. I said goodbye to Eric who was really most kind all the time to me, but I expect I'll be seeing him quite often. Horizon must be still published because Eric has got copies sent out of Jan, Feb, Mar, April ɤ May so do see what can be done, also Spectator, N.S ɤ N Time ɤ T, 19th century etc. But thanks hugely for what I've already got. G.K showed us Desert Victory yesterday ɤ the entry to Tunis. They are finely realistic ɤ you can picture what it is like but somehow war films need more than a plain documentary series of factual shots - it's like reportage compared with Seven Pillars

[cont at top of first page; then, down middle of first two pages:]

My teeth are awful, I'm afraid. HAS comments on Desert Victory were unpleasant as usual. Lots of love from John.

~ * ~

[BY AIR MAIL - AIR LETTER]

Mrs A.P. Waterfield
Underdown
Tangier Rd
Guildford
Surrey
ENGLAND

[signed JPWaterfield across illegible censor's stamp]
[One mauve 3d stamp, frank "FIELD POST OFFICE 568 18 JU 43"]
[annotated: 'No date arr. 29.VI.43']
[In grey ink]

The flies are a menace, but die like flies. Haven't seen Eric lately, Lt JPW
No 48 but I will have a bad photo for you soon. 1st Bn 60th Rifles

Time flies ɤ it is almost a fortnight since I wrote last. At any rate I know that you cannot worry about me now if I do not write as much as I'm afraid you may do when we are in the battle. But surprisingly enough work has prevented me getting down to letter writing, that ɤ the temptation to gossip over whisky rather than to urge along the unwilling pen. But I haven't heard so very much from all of you either. I've got now in my pocket a letter from DMW just after return from Cambridge, describing the ugly feelings of anticipation that always seem to attend on a weekend visit to those pomposities Mr ɤ Mrs J. Spedan Lewis. Bow has been far ɤ away my best correspondent. Yesterday I got an enormous screed from him written before he went up for his scholarship in December. It had taken well over 6 months to reach me. He now goes to the top of the list for interest of correspondence. What a difference there is in his way of writing compared to that of even 6 months ago. He seems most horribly fearsome, tough, ɤ a veritable revolutionary in Gownboys ɤ very naughty. But withal I shd like to meet him ɤ give him luncheon ɤ his letters beat all the family's now. As for this business about his being rejected for the 60th I do not feel at all strongly about it. If he is keen

there can be no possibility of their refusing him if the proper form is observed. If he says that he has a brother who has been in the Regiment for 2 yrs, in the 1st Bn for 9 months ɤ is at present acting adjtutant[126] they can't possibly refuse him. Noone has told me who came down to interview him. But I don't really think that the regiment is so absolutely essential for Bow - he will get in anywhere ɤ tanks might do him well enough - though I don't know whether he will get into a good regiment there. He does not tell me what his wishes are but hadn't been told at the time of his letter of the rejection.

Well I'm in Bn H.O mess this dusty afternoon. The wind is shaking the canvas shelter ɤ dust pours in eddying clouds through the fly nets. It is only an awning stuck off the side of a 3-ton truck. The weather is more foul in these loose sandy wastes than ever on the desert. It is hotter too. We sit round the table at tea reading the Tatler, the New Statesman ɤ Men Only. The Colonel is there, John Hogg our $2^{i}/_{c}$, the Doctor ɤ the padre. Tea

is served in tin mugs still. The oil cloth of the table top clings stickily to my elbow where someone spilt jam at breakfast. As I said I have been adjutant for a fortnight while the actual adj was sick. I have never enjoyed myself so much ɤ think it did not go at all too badly. It was certainly a great honour to be asked for by the Colonel. It gave me a real interest in work which since the battle I had completely lost. I don't know what will happen now. Montgomery came again to shake our paws - he has a piercing inquisitive way with him ɤ many astonishing poses. You will have read that the King is in the ME now. We are making frantic preparations to receive an Important Personage - ɤ the Bn has been selected to provide a guard of honour, a terrific compliment but our due. I don't say there is any reason to suspect a connection between these facts. When next I write I shall be able to enlighten you. There is a fountain built here by the industry of Peter Wake ɤ the doctor which is the one redeeming feature of the Mess. After dinner with a cigar ɤ the wireless when the wind has gone down we sit outside round the goldfish who ooze about among the water lilies taking evasive action

[126] sic: he has probably started with the normal contraction ‘adjt’ but then expanded it; spelled correctly further down.

against the lamp that is so cruelly put in there among them to delight us.

Here comes a letter from AP post-marked Cambridge ϒ dated 4th June. I won't read it till tonight. I'm accused of being unnatural in that I moss up my letters. I hope you are all well ϒ enjoying the summer fruits of the garden especially asparagus, mention of which makes me madly jealous! The Tripoli variety is useless. But we do get the occasional orange (from Palestine) lemon (local) and peaches or apricots rarely.

Much love to you all from John

~ * ~

[BY AIR MAIL - AIR LETTER]

Mrs A.P. Waterfield
Underdown
Tangier Rd
Guildford
Surrey
ENGLAND

[signed JPWaterfield across partly illegible censor's stamp "PA... NSOR NO..."]
[One mauve 3d stamp, frank partly illegible, "..FFICE ... 317.. 43"]
[annotated: '[arr] 29.6.43']
[In erratic pencil (a “ragged note”) – clearly reflecting his state]

49 In bed under a fly net at mid-day - tented - 1st Bn 60th Rifles
This is an awful effort but I really must write. Having been so puffed MEF
with pride during my early months in the country because while all my colleagues spent their days on the lavatory seat or in bed, I alone lived immune from gippo stummick ϒ the like. I foolishly thought the same state of affairs would exist in Tripolitania, in the sand wastes, in June! And I've succumbed, mildly stricken for the first two bouts ϒ now more annoyingly knocked out flat. But I'm getting much better now obviously because yesterday I could not have written a letter for love or money. I haven't heard much from any of you for a longish time. I hope you are all well ϒ happy ϒ enjoyed your visit to the Spedan Lewis ménage. I got a letter from you enclosing one for me dated November 21st.! Surface mail in those days did take the hell of a time. Just think of all the poor riflemen who have endured it for four years of war. The King came yesterday but I was not in a position to be interested. I was saved a six mile

walk ϒ a long wait in the sun in the gutter. Eric I saw a few days back ϒ he was in an awful rage about everything, though he seemed to have some justification over the King's visit. Moyne telegraphed him "Give publicity to[?] take photos of king w. native population." Eric's office had never before been told that the king was coming, so dark had the Military security kept it when it was on the BBC. Moreover all natives were confined to their houses during the Royal visit! The Bn supplied the guard of honour for the whole of the 8th Army which was a suitable compliment. You won't see me in any photos because I was adj when we sent the gd of honour ϒ in bed for the parade but I expect you'll see the Bn because Geoffrey Keating was driving along, busily on the job, in the leading car of the procession.

I hope Mary has passed her exams ϒ Bow resolved his quarrels w. everyone. I told you what I felt about the 60th for him in my last letter. My hat size must be about 6⅞ I think. Is there any chance of Whites (via Welsh) getting me a green side hat out here.

The flat hats they make now are unwearable more like bus conductors' hats than anything else, judging from the 3 wh recently arrived. I expect AP ϒ old Welsh are great gossipers ϒ buddies now. Anyway the old boy will get all the news when Toby Wake (wounded in Tunis) gets home. The

formation of the Bn is inevitably changing as the old desert rats leave. Three years continuously on the desert with two breaks only, one of 3 weeks ɤ one of 2 months, ɤ in contact with the enemy the whole time, entitles a man to a respite if he is to be fit for 1945's campaigns. We are now sending the rfn w. 6 yrs continuous service abroad home which is only fair. Do not expect the rest of us for another two years. And yet you never know: Dick Temple who used to command our D Coy flew to Washington a fortnight ago, on a job. You must buy a 60th. Chronicle which will give you a better picture of the desert than D. Victory. Celer et Audax Club 32 Eccleston Square wd give you one. We get lemons here ɤ I've got a jug of lemonade beside me. This counter-balances the asparagus. Has that branch at the end of the garden which I broke

with the motor mower produced fruit this year? I always remember it ɤ suppose I always shall do so, silly little bough though it is.

AP seems to be going very strong at Cambridge - sorry there's no more claret there. As for O.E.TA we laugh at them so I hope he selects some good ones. Sorry for this ragged note. Much love from John.

[written sideways up centre of inside pages:]
I'll tell you lots more when I do not have to rush off to the box so often.

~ * ~

[BY AIR MAIL - AIR LETTER]

Mrs A.P. Waterfield
~~Underdown~~ Garden House Hotel
~~Tangier Rd~~ Cambridge
~~Guildford~~
~~Surrey~~
ENGLAND

[signed JPWaterfield across heavily inked (but still somewhat illegible) censor's stamp "PASSED BY CE... NO 2..."]
[One mauve 3d stamp slightly askew, frank illegible]
[fine black ink]

No 50 Celebration deserved on my half-century! 1st Bn 60th Rifles
24.6.43 MEF

"Say what for do you keep those sand-bags in the bottom of your truck"? asked the Yank. Answered the rifleman "Of course against mine-blast - all the way from Alamein too." "Say, is that sand in those bags from Alamein - here's two pounds down." They all reckon that money is the key to everything ɤ I believe Cairo is so extravagant now, thanks to them, that we simply cannot compete. It's the same all over the world, in Australia as well so an Australian captain told us last night. He is part of a military mission come over to see fighting in Tunis ɤ arrived a little late. I am much better now after my silly little illness but a bit wobbly on my legs. Malice affirms that I worked so hard in the orderly room that it was a direct cause of my succumbing. I've only had two letters from you all lately ɤ those were enclosures, one from Angus Milne, a rather poorishly typical type of sergeant pilot now (but then I'm snobbish!) dated Nov 21. '42 ɤ one from Irvine in February. There is a rumour of sacks ɤ sacks of mail up in the Bn but there always is that rumour. Usually it boils down to 3 of which 2 prove to be for Rhodesians who have gone back home. Perhaps a few letters may come for me this evening. After a year abroad only ones family writes. Friends pack in. A year too is the same as 7; once one has been away that long one feels just as out of touch as one ever feels. I couldn't be more grateful for all the family's wonderfully indefatigable letter-writing ɤ now has come another parcel from Welsh including a sleeping bag ɤ a beautiful green side hat. I am delighted to have got them - thank you so much. As a matter of interesting fact and in no way of disparagement the green hat is of nothing like such good

quality as my original one - I wonder if everything has deteriorated similarly in England. Moreover the sleeping bag in blankety which is very nice but not the kind I asked for. I suppose that, the eiderdown type is impossible to get. This sounds ungenerous but is not meant to be so. And I've suddenly remembered an awful thing - that I've forgotten Mummy's birthday. I've remembered every other one in the family ɤ now finally fallen down on this. I do hope you have a lovely day ɤ that perhaps Stuttafords will have got you something home by now to reach you as a present. In the Soukh El Turk in Tripoli where all the wonderful old bearded merchants of the Levant sit, undisturbed by war,

and gossip with their neighbours you can buy the most beautiful rolls of stuff. But now they all cost about £15 a roll which is too much. I'm too bad a judge to risk it. But there is a better than good chance now that at last we shall all go to where yr friend Johnson CMg lives ɤ then I'll get something better there possibly. Many happy returns though of two days from today. I have been asked if I would like to go round the Tunisian battlefields, while we are sitting hereabouts, ɤ escort with picturesque description the Australian ɤ a Frenchman who wants to know the form as well. I think it might be an extremely good way of getting well again ɤ rather a good picnic. I shall stay in all the best hotels ɤ life ought to be fun especially if I spend two or 3 days in Tunis! Do not therefore be surprised if you hear little from me for a fortnight. It's hard to get on with this letter - this wind has got up and is beating ɤ flapping against the walls of our little white house - it's hot ɤ dusty ɤ spots of rain are falling on the whirling little eddies of sand. Flies are being flitted clumsily by our mess man ɤ more by Sandy Goschen who spreads this page with it ɤ me too. I feel idle. We are moving down to the Coast Rd, a little nearer to the sea, on Sunday. I hope the area will be a little less dusty but we shall miss our house. When the trains go by, fussy old creaky things, we all go down ɤ cheer. The railway goes across the flat plain down to the foot of the Gebel which is the high ridge of pink flat-topped hill mass that we can see on our early morning P.T looming out of the mist. I drove down there the other day past the inevitable Arabs riding on camels leading others or padding in the sand ɤ basting a donkey on the rump, past the white powdery sand to good clean open pebbly desert ɤ to the scarp. The road up is like a corkscrew with terribly steep and severe bends. From the top there is a wonderful view across the desert which gives me always a nice feeling inside ɤ then one drives on to Garian through open park-like country with evergreen trees like cedars and pleasant undulations.

In Garian there are some odd fellows who live in caves at the bottom of a 60 ft pit.[127] It's difficult to find the way down but there is a sort of stable-smelling tunnel if one looks far enough. There we haggle for sheep ɤ eggs. There are a lot of Italians living on the farms round about there, in nice newly built houses, cultivating tobacco for the most part. They are dirty ɤ go bare-footed ɤ live on a very low standard of existence. I'm glad I waited this letter - Cpl Cooling, the Post Cpl, gave me this morning four fat letters, airmail all posted around the middle of May. There was no 6 fr AP ɤ a dreadfully dreary letter from Mary's place in Leicester (I do hope she's finished there - what a waste of money it's all been ɤ so short sighted) ɤ one on May 13 from DMW. Then at lunch over cold bully ɤ salad came an alc from DMW down with the Lewis family luxuriating among strawberries ɤ cream. The flies this afternoon are awful again ɤ I cannot write straight. It's stuffy ɤ oppressive too. Eric I've not seen for a week or more but he was in bad order when I did ɤ we had rather a row. I find as I grow older I'm less ɤ less in sympathy with the Siepmann intellectual conceit ɤ am quite content with ordinary reasonable people rather than these clever coxcombs. It wd be rather nice to be at Oxford now or lying asleep in the shade of Cairo with some iced lemonade (a little early for gin even for me) but as it is I'm here ɤ must make the most of it. The future is very uncertain. My position in the Bn is assured ɤ I'm v. happy. The Colonel (who is going, alas, back to England Lt/Col J.L. Corbett-Winder M.C if you meet him) after 11 yrs or so out here,) has told me I'd be adjt if the present adjt went off ɤ meanwhile I'm quite happy as long as John Hope stays in the Coy. commanding. The Col has been v. charming indeed to me ɤ I'm sorry to see him go - he's only 31 but has grey hair! They all want to come back from England so I suppose he'll be the same but I don't reckon he will as others have failed ɤ have to contain their moans. We are, for AP, in 1st Armd Div - we used to be in 7th Armd Div, the great

[127] the troglodytes of the area are, or were, famous. See for example an article in Chicago Tribune of 3 June 1953, 'if a caveman you would be, Libya beckons': "In the hills of the Gebel are numerous villages of troglodytes. That of Garian is world renowned."

original desert div, founded by Hobart ɤ trained by our General Strafer Gott, the greatest man the 60th has produced this war. I hear Hobo got a knighthood - remember I was in his Div in England. The rfn are delighted that the poor monarch got gippy tummy as they all do! Grigg came with him ɤ looked amazing in his blue suit ɤ black hat but, I gather was very well informed. Oh lord, a tactical discussion has started in the mess ɤ I must not be involved or I'll never finish. Thank you for the news about my money ɤ a/c at Glfd. Do not put it into the P.O because I shall

have to ask for some of it. Life is extremely extravagant in peace ɤ I cannot live on allowances ɤ advances here. I'm sorry I didn't see yr letter before I wrote a rather peremptory letter to Oakley to airgraph me my a/c ɤ statement regularly. This is a dull letter, I feel ɤ hope you'll forgive me for impersonal facts. I don't know how I can expect such good letters when I write so rarely ɤ briefly myself. Some grapes have been put on the table but are white ɤ rather acid. Squabble now over personnel ɤ excited screams over a Tatler just arrived. I think we are all mad. Pity about all the books you sent me but EOS, if he got them, is so unreliable. I must stop now. Enjoy the summer ɤ be happy. I'm going off to talk to the QM, Ben Ryan, about rations for our journey.

always much love from John

~ * ~



15 - Corbett Winder and the brew-up flag

[BY AIR MAIL - AIR LETTER]

Mrs A.P. Waterfield
Underdown
Tangier Rd
Guildford
Surrey
ENGLAND

[signed JPWaterfield across top, no censor's stamp]
[One mauve 3d stamp slightly askew, frank mainly illegible]
[annotated "arr 12.VII.43"]

[pencil]

This in post in Tunis
No 51 1.7.43 Always much love fr John 1st Bn 60th Rifles
You'd laugh to see me now, in desert boots & shorts & nothing else a few miles from the village of Mahares, between Gabes & Sfax, at 7 o'clock of a hot Tunisian evening. The sea is a few hundred yds away & we've parked our 2 fifteen cwt trucks on firm white sand as near to the blue Mediterranean as I dared go. At the moment there is an old Arab with a flat floppy straw hat on his head (you saw the type in those photos of John Hope & the others which appeared in the Evening Press in England) squatting with a dirty cloth laid out in front of him playing beg o' my neighbour w. rfn Deane & Mason: first two cigarettes appear then a few eggs - then an egg is withdrawn & quickly a cigarette matches it in disappearing fast. They've been at it for ½ an hour & finally finished with 10 eggs for a trump, a tin of bully! This job when offered me as a reward for virtue, at first appeared rather unattractive but we've had a lovely independent time so far. My Australian, the motor bus representative on this Military mission which only left Australia in the middle of March when we were getting "well stuck in" to the Mareth line, is a charming unaffected middle aged fellow from Queensland where he kept a "station" 80 mls from the nearest town. He has seen service against the Japanese in New Guinea & we've had interesting talks, comparing campaigns. I talked to him about Robbery under Arms today. He'd never read it! I always reckon it one of the very best adventure stories. I can hear discussion at the back of the truck over stew. I always insist on stew, rather than fried & cooked stuff as far the best for a hot day (& a cold one too) in the field but rfn 'Pumpkin' Deane needs a lot of moral suasion to produce it. Tonight we have fresh tomatoes in it, I hope. In Gabes market today, a covered arcade where Arabs & Frenchmen jostle in front of the scales we had a melon which provided a delicious lunch at El Hamma.

For breakfast this morning we had a type of delicious fish straight out of the sea, with soft roe. We had camped by the sea the other side of Gabes from here & some Arabs came along with donkeys & panniers, the 'patron' (they all speak French here now) riding on the rump, & with them I made a half-hearted bargain for fish, adding that I'd shoot anyone I found after dark by the trucks. Lo & behold in the morning the party returned & after judicious haggling I got three large mackerel-kind-of fish (later I've found out that they were mullet) cleaned out & washed & put in the frying pan ready for 2 packets of Vs. The fellow (so spoiled was he) had the insolence to say that that brand of cigarette, long established as official issue to the 8th Army, made him cough & he preferred "Players"! Pause for negotiation with another bearded type who has appeared out of nothing with eggs & small fish like sardines.

evening 2.7.43

120 mls or so further in, high up in the dry hills of Tunis with a twenty mile view all round us of brown scrubby sharp pointed foot hills & mountains trying to recover in the cool of the evening from the blistering hot wind which has scorched them all day. I'm reminded of Dartmoor (magnified a few times & browned off) or even of Scotland, less green than when I was there w. NJC. We have followed the route which we followed in the Bn back in April when we drove all night over a hundred

miles from Bou Madi to Le Kef[128] to join the 1st Army with our sandy coloured desert trucks all painted dark to deceive (which it did not) the German Intelligence. Yesterday we had lunch at El Hamma - I did not have energy to write about it last night but fortified now by gin ϑ fresh lemon I may get onto it this evening - where there is no vegetation except a few palm trees ϑ the heat is reflected off the gravel ϑ sand as it were to choke the inward

drawn breath. We fought there after the 'left boot' ϑ afterwards in the hills in front of the Gabes Gap where I went on some unpleasant night patrols.

Each Wog squats in his doorway at El H ϑ one feels immediately compelled to pad around on flat feet w. hands loosely hung moving as if in a dream. Salutation is made by raising the hand ϑ one has not the energy to even cry "Saida"! One cannot believe that the world will ever change there. Indeed it was at the *Limes* of the Roman Empire. I feel as sorry for the legionary 1900 yrs ago as for the French post office keeper who, with his Arab wife, is the sole representative of "l'adminstration". After 10 yrs, I thought ϑ said, you must be bored, in my fluent inaccurate French - but the reply made life so clear - "question d'habitude" ϑ I saw life there for another 1900 yrs in a flash. The Arabs, under the influence of specious German promises say they love us but are really most bitterly treacherous. Today we came through Sfax ϑ the great acres of olive groves onto Sbeitla where we passed by night before ϑ today our a.c pump broke down. One gets beautifully resigned w. desert experience. I talked to a French officer who was mending Sbeitla rly bridge because the French army has no tanks to maintain. He has been doing this since he last saw his tanks at Rheims in '40! There are fine Roman ruins here on the bare brown hillside ϑ there is a Roman praetor's swimming bath w. real water where I bathed while they mended the truck.[129]

Morning of 4.7.43 We have come by way of Le Kef - Soukh el Arba - Thibar (where among goats, monks, mountains ϑ flowers I found before a hospital to make me 3 prs of glasses[130]) Teboursouk - El Aroussa - Bou Arada - Crèteville - Gromballia to the sea coast once more, at the bottom of the Gulf of Tunis with the hiss of the waves in our

ears a few miles to the East of Hammamlif. You can see it all on the map. We came in two days revisiting the battles on a quiet sticky meandering sweat. Very odd. We have drunk quantities of vin rosé ϑ some Muscat, Vermouth ϑ iced water at 3 in the afternoon, been kissed by old drunkard French publicans (an awful experience) who were bar patriots ϑ filled a 600 litre barrel ϑ a 200 litre one with wine for ½ the price originally asked! I'd be a v. good business man. I also have the address ϑ an introduction to the owner of the only boite de nuit in Tunis now! Bow criticizes me for minding my belly so nearly ϑ writing all about it. Well, I do so ϑ it's because it is important so he'll have to endure. He wrote me a good letter again before I left

[cont at top of first page]

~ * ~

[BY AIR MAIL - AIR LETTER]

Mrs A.P. Waterfield
Underdown
Tangier Rd
Guildford
Surrey
ENGLAND

[signed JWDavy[?] across top, clear censor's stamp "PASSED BY CENSOR No. 256"]
[One mauve 3d stamp slightly askew, frank "FIELD POST OFFICE 317 - 13 JY 43"]
[annotated "arr July 19"]

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[128] these names not located. 'Kef Madi' is a peak 150 km west south west of Tunis.
[129] He is at Sufetula.
[130] see letter 4.05.43 No. 43.

[black ink; evidence of preparations for 'Siepmannising' in blue pencil strikeouts (shown as shading, and by absence from typed copy also in archive)]

soon I'll have been a year [largely torn off on opening but agreed to typed copy]
No 51[131] in the East ɤ dried up. Much love always fr John 1st Bn 60th Rifles
We came back here yesterday morning ɤ there was so much MEF
to do ɤ talk about that although it was Sunday I did not write. We had a good journey down driving hell for leather past all the convoys with our 600 litre wine barrel banging aloud in the rear truck. I was glad to see the Roman amphitheatre at El Djem. It stands high ɤ massive out of the dry downland desert dominating the Arab hovels with their modern French trimmings ɤ visible in the heat haze as a monstrous looming shape for miles ɤ miles. The trucks broke down but we were resigned ɤ, dusty ɤ dry-mouthed, staggered on every night to some lonely sea-side beach where we cd float about among the waves ɤ wash off the sweat of our travel. The last night we spent at Sabratha, one of the 3 (τρείς πολέις) original towns, of which Oea (Trip) ɤ Leptis Magna were the other two, of the Phoenician ɤ Roman world. There are some wonderful ruins there, on a rocky promontory, right over blue sea. There is a theatre, (with a unique scena), forum, turkish bath, public lavatory, ɤ innumerable private dwellings. Marble came from Assuan in Upper Egypt, Garian, (inland here) ɤ there is a sort of Cippolino from I don't know where. We slept ɤ bathed among the sandstone, carved pillars ɤ I smoked a romantic cigar on a rock by the reef where is the remains of the Phoenician mole, looking at the sickel moon caught between the theatre's gallery windows ɤ forgot the waves ɤ was soaked by a big one. When we got back here yesterday I found 13 letters from you all including one from N.J.C ɤ Elinor Birley. Hers started in March ɤ was not finished until May 23rd, an astonishing performance! Thank you all so much. It was lovely reading them all. There are parcels of periodicals ɤ books too - a couple

of very suitable Penguins. I value the books especially because I doubt if we shall have much chance of poking round the Cairo book stalls so I do hope you'll send me some more. It's wonderful to get so many letters. And here to me sitting in our petrol-tin built house is another brought me over from Coy office. I'm writing before lunch in comparative coolness with gin ɤ bitters beside me, just having finished an a-graph to Mary. They are so much easier things to write but do not you be tempted! Now I'll pause to open this from DMW to see if there is anything to answer. Why don't you write on the back? A nice letter sympathizing with my silly fever up the way when I took no interest in the King. I am well now ɤ very brown after my Tunis journeyings. My hair is quite fair ɤ except for an uncertainty of intestine I feel very well. Did I tell you that when the King asked Col Lion Corbett-Winder how long the Bn had been abroad he replied "Since 1922" So the King said "Ah, I thought I had not seen you lately." L.C-W is now with you in case APW sees him about town or in Welsh. If he'd like to see him ɤ I knew him v.well ɤ liked him A.P cd tell Welsh to tell L.CW to come round to the C.S. Commission when he calls as he's bound to do! Sounds involved ɤ chancy but you see what I mean. The sad news (but splendid in a way) is that my John Hope is going home too any day now. He'll go by boat so this will probably beat him but he has yr address in town ɤ will almost certainly come ɤ call so tell Taylor to be ready at the door when the 1st 60th comes in. He is one of the nicest ɤ finest people I've ever known ɤ the best to serve under one could ever wish for.

Another lovely parcel has come from Welsh, a pair of corduroys ɤ a scarf. I haven't unpacked yet but just sit ɤ gloat at it. It's like a long deferred birthday ɤ Xmas present. I do wonder what happened to those books, by the way. The business about coupons desolates me ɤ I didn't ever realize that it was so serious. If I wrote a note as to the board of trade explaining my purchases - wd it be any good? Of course one can get stuff at the Officers'

shops but the quality is so awful. That applies to shirts ɤ such but (a) regimental things like green hats ɤ cherries ɤ black buttons come only from England as our regimental tailor in Cairo has absolutely no more material at all ɤ (b) we are such snobs still that we must have our special shirts ɤ this ɤ that. We must get over (b) I guess but hats ɤ things are always thrice welcome. We sent our P.R.I ɤ mess sgt down to Cairo. He said the Americans have spoilt it as they spoil every place they go to ɤ it's hard to

[131] The second 'no 51', and undated. He corrects the sequence by changing the next one, 'no 52', to '53' at the end.

get anything. But he brought me some lovely Groppi (Fortnum's of Cairo) chocolates ɤ a box of good cigars. My mess bill is colossal ɤ I'm rather anxious about those £75. Unless I get better pay soon I don't think it has much chance of making itself up to the century A.P mentions! I wrote a rude air-graph to Oakley.[132] It's very hot here but worse in Tunis. In my room in the top floor of the Majestic Hotel I scarcely slept a wink. I talked a great deal of French to get into various restaurants ɤ am now practically on kiss-on-both-cheeks acquaintance with all the "patrons" of all the restaurants reserved for anyone but English offcrs. We went out to Carthage on the hill, wonderfully sited with a view towards Bizerta ɤ Cap Bon ɤ bathed at the foot of the cliff in deep blue water. We ate melons ɤ drank a lot of quite reasonable local wine ɤ had quite good fun but there is nothing to buy in the shops ɤ everything is shut after dinner. I am glad, as ever, to be back here. I love leaving places ɤ love returning too so it was good to get back here. I am back in the Coy as the adj has returned ɤ am quite content because I know everyone ɤ am well ɤ truly in so I can afford to wait. Except in this Bn I shd be higher up the scale by now but of course one cannot expect overmuch ɤ I'm very young still. I know I'd be adj if the present one left so I'm quite happy ɤ this is outstandingly the best Coy. Interval for lunch of melon ɤ bully ɤ salad ɤ muscat with water from Tunis. I'm so sorry about yr poor arm. I do hope the rain is less now ɤ will soon disappear. I suppose now you are all at Cambridge. In spite of the broiling heat

here I envy you greatly. Bow's abrupt departure from Ch. seems to have been like a kettle boiling over. He wrote me a letter about it ɤ I think it has probably saved him from great troubles ɤ is absolutely ideal for him. I hope he'll go back to leave in peace ɤ tranquil content. The 60th business, I gather, is all cleared up but noone will say how it was arranged yet. I'm glad to hear O.S is so much better. I'll write him an a-graph. Eric was out when I called in yesterday afternoon (at Garian inland) ɤ I left a note. Sicily seems to be going well. Everything is so liable to sudden change these days that one can never tell or even hazard the future. I expect you're glad that we're inactive still but we obviously cannot be so for ever. Jill leads a gay, sociable life. I look forward to hearing about your visit to her. I must now go to sleep till 5. I got up so early for the new C.O's visit that I feel dead.

~ * ~

[BY AIR MAIL - AIR LETTER]

Mrs A.P. Waterfield
Underdown
Tangier Rd
Guildford
Surrey
ENGLAND

[signed 'JPWaterfield' across top, clear censor's stamp "PASSED BY CENSOR No. 256"]
[One mauve 3d stamp, frank "..EL....FICE 317 - ..JY 43]
[annotated "[written] 12.VIII.43 [arr] 31.VIII.43" letter itself is dated July]

Do not	No 52	I go into my tent for siesta, nude	1st Bn 60th Rifles
YET address	14.7.43	always much love fr John	MEF.
as a Captain.			

My dear Mama,

I begin this especially to you because at long last I've come back to my senses ɤ realised that we are not in June but July and that on the 26th of this month a few years ago you were born in Clifton. So this brings you all my love and many happy returns of your birthday. I am developing a psychosis about getting old and am seriously troubled (like Bow with his emergency flaps) at the proximity of my twenty second birthday! Is this a "stage" like all the other things or do you feel

[132] this section is not blue-lined in the original but is omitted from the typed-up copy which is also in the archive.

troubled too at the imminence of middle age and later the dowager period? I never can remember how old you or AP are[133] but I bet you look half as much as most people of your age it you try still - do I hear AP's "hear hear"? NJC wrote me an odd enough air-graph, (typed sensibly as you get more on that way) in which he said he was 60. That really did horrify me ϟ I think of it still coming back from parties when the mess sergeants have excelled themselves in mixing liquors.

I don't think I can give you much of a birthday present except this letter ϟ my love nor are they much use. I hope anyway the

letter will reach you in time. Yours to me have been taking a little longer lately perhaps because of Sicily. That seems highly satisfactory, doesn't it? When will we be writing from Rome? Winter in Italy wd at least be warm.

I have one present besides the £5 at Stuttafords which ought to be bearing fruit soon ϟ that is that our new Colonel summoned me this morning ϟ said he wanted me to be adjutant which means a great deal of pleasure to me. To be adj of the 1st Bn of the 60th is a wonderful thing to achieve ϟ I'm very fortunate ϟ thrilled. It will give me terrific experience of handling papers ϟ generally provide scope in a wider sphere than pl cmdr. In 6 months I can go from there to the staff or back as 2i/c of a Coy with eventual hopes of a Coy however things develop.

There is a beastly "Khamseen" blowing or "Kibleh" as they call it here, a hot dry wind blowing sand everywhere and flies ϟ making a general mess of everything. I've just typically, alas, spilt the ink over the floor, the table ϟ my beautiful new corduroys. After frantic scrubbing

with nail brush ϟ soap I see it will not come off, οίμοι ταλας εγω. But they will still startle generally with elegant blue spot pattern. Last night we drove 30 mls to a gunner RHA party which was fun ϟ lasted until very late ϟ we had to get up this morning at 5 am to start on our route march at 6. I cd not see my breakfast at all! We have to work early before it gets too hot. Our new Col (Keown Boyd) is a Carthusian making the second only here ϟ we preserve a strong bulwark ϟ fort against hordes of dreadful Etonians. I think he was in Verites but am not sure.

Our John Hope (Maj J.C. Hope M.C ϟ bar) will be leaving us any day ϟ has AP's address in town. He will almost certainly call on him. He is a wonderful man ϟ one of the sweetest natured I've ever met so I hope you'll meet him but he'll have so many people to see. You must get a copy of the Chronicle. I see you do this by writing to Messrs Warren ϟ Son Ltd, Printers ϟ Publishers, Winchester. It may costs about 6/-. I've had a lot of letters lately

ϟ some excellent books ϟ papers. Thank you so much. I adore the books. What about Brogan's book on England? I'd like to send you a cheque but dare not in this lest they send it by ordinary mail. Perhaps AP, with his power of attorney, can get you out a couple of pounds from me. As soon as Stuttafords send I'll give them another order. David K says he's heard from them that they have silk stockings!

Well good afternoon ϟ goodbye now.

[cont. at top of first page; added in pencil later:]

I've got the Number wrong its 53

Thanks for a new Easter Draconian.

~ * ~

[133] DMW born 26/7/1895 - so, in 1943, 48. QV 9.5.43 re APW.



16 - Keown-Boyd

[AIR MAIL LETTER CARD[134]]

Mrs A.P. Waterfield
Underdown
Tangier Rd
Guildford
Surrey
ENGLAND

[signed 'JPWaterfield' across top, censor's stamp "PASSED BY CENSO ..."]
[One mauve 3d stamp, frank "FIELD POST OFFICE 317 - 26 JY 43]
[annotated "[arr] 4 Aug"]
[first two sides in dark blue ink, then pencil]

these days. Otherwise I sit & rest &
No 54 slip through the Spectator or Life! Capt JPW
23.7.43 always much love John 1st Bn 60th Rifles

I've written a sordid graph to old Bow & Wreford Brown, that idle civilian, already tonight & it is with a great effort that I can force myself to attack this. Most nights lately there have been these odd masculine parties with the cavalry & RHA with rum punch to lay you flat & eccentric poker to follow. Old Oakley sent me a curt airgraph t'other day showing a reasonable profit. I've never topped the century before. He must check up that I get paid as Capt & adj from 16.7! How vulgarly mercenary! After all this is probably the greatest honour that I've ever had in my life, to become adjutant of the 1st Bn of the 60th Rifles. Yet it seems strangely ordinary & matter of fact in practice. The dust blows here in the afternoon still by the Mediterranean, & the flies came out of their holes again today.

[134] old stock, obviously.

I sit in my office all day long, with telephones ϒ bell to my orderly room clerks just to rival Malet St! The C.O is charming - he sits beside me ϒ we have the odd chat about Carthusian matters in intervals from the perpetual flow of paper which always come inundating in when we sit down in a static position. I've had a splendid letter from DW who was at Cambridge after seeing Jill ϒ from poor Mary who failed her exam. I don't really give a damn but she will feel it for the rest of her life as 2 yrs grossly ϒ grievously wasted ϒ it would have pleased AP. Well let her forget it. And let Jill leave Chelt. And let them both send me a nice photo of themselves. It's getting later ϒ later. We've had Beethoven's 8th Symphony tonight on the wireless. I've pleaded work to save going out to dinner but I don't really like going to my office after dinner. The difficulty is that Bde always sends urgent stuff

very late as I'm going for my gin.

[Continued in pencil]
Well I had to go to bed last night it was too hot ϒ sticky. This evening is much the same ϒ very black outside. The fly net makes odd meshed pattern on the sand where the light from the tent shines through it. This is awful, a pencil but I've left my dipping pen in the orderly room across 400' of soft sand ϒ I'm NOT going over that again! I've missed EOS - he's in Cairo ϒ we are off, not to war though, in a few days so I'll miss him. You may address me as a Captain now. I'm told my small sisters will be delighted. I've just lost £6 betting on a future cmdr round here, thinking I was on a hot thing. Gossip, ϒ inside information, is U.S, or useless. I'll try to get it back at poker tomorrow night if I'm not overcome after a promotion conference at 9. am. We have lots of melons here now, mostly for breakfast. I expect this makes you very jealous.

The other night we gave a staff dinner[135] party w. 6 turkeys, roast pigs head (wonderful sight) ϒ 24 sheep. How is AP's work going. I shall be better at passing the responsibility for work than anyone in the C.S soon. Lots of papers are coming out now. Thank you so much. What about some book? Any news from Stuttafords? I only read in my little white tent at night by my oil lamp [cont. at top]

~ * ~

[AIR MAIL LETTER CARD]

Mrs A.P. Waterfield
Underdown
Tangier Rd
Guildford
Surrey
ENGLAND

[not signed as censored but censor's stamp "PASSED BY CENSOR No. ..."]
[One mauve 3d stamp, frank "FIELD POST ... 317 - 29 JY 43"]
[arrival date not annotated; in black ink]

I don't expect to like the Last Enemy but I want to know		JPW
55	what I'm supposed to think by the bright	1st Bn 60th Rifles
28.7.43	'uns. Always much love fr John	MEF

I've got your letter (undated as usual) in my desk written after my one from Tunis had arrived home. I'm afraid I've been fearfully idle since then ϒ scarcely written at all. Jill's letter of precosious virulence dated July 18th, only ten days ago, is lying beside yours on the Army blanket which is my desk top. It is fearfully hot ϒ dusty. I took the Colonel bathing this afternoon, a mile down to the coast to emerald green waves, out of your depth straight from the sandstone rocks. Then we drove back in the Jeep to tea with sweet biscuits in the Bn HQ mess ϒ I've just come across the baking sands to sit

[135] conjectural: the start of this sentence is on a fold and was pretty illegible to start with.

and ostensibly work until it's time to go ɤ wash for dinner. The flies buzz round the tent and I have to wag my head like an old horse. They settle everywhere. There is a dead or drowning one in my ink pot now! The Colonel has probably gone to his tent to write training directives. His desk is next door to mine ɤ the phone sits between us. I have had rather fun in arranging this office. All these arrangements are new but before we were always on the move ɤ just had a shack pulled out from the side of the 15 cwt office truck. I had

a bell arranged by the signallers and a light. I can summon any of my staff who live in a big EPJP tent next door and clatter away at the typewriter by different numbers of bell rings! We have halved petrol tins cut back as trays. The Khamseen, or Kibleh or sirocco is always awful in the afternoon. I drip ɤ soak with sweat in here ɤ fierce swirls of reddish dust eddy in all over the papers. Last night I went down to dine with B Coy who are living with their equivalent Armd Regt in the Bde by the sea a few miles down the rd. The air was black with dust and there was an ominous hot wind lashing the sea up into long sullen rollers. We bathed, John Hope ɤ I, very quickly and it was fun in but we got bashed inevitably getting out. Tell R.B that I ɤ the Colonel, I having received a most welcome Carthusian the other day to rival the Eton Chronicle which usually lies in our Mess, have discovered a goodly quorum of OC's out here. Our Brigadier is one. The General of 7th Armd Div, the greatest in fame in the Army, who is a 60th man ɤ inspected us recently as representing the Colonels

Commandant, is also one. The Colonel of the 2nd R.B, our partners in the desert for 4 yrs, is one. The deputy C.J.Gs at home ɤ Ismay are both Carthusians! I don't think the list will end there. The last time there was a Carthusian C.O ɤ adj of a 60th regular Bn was when our present Colonel was adj to the G.OC 7 A.D a/m[136] in the reformed 2nd Bn after Calais.

I hope all Bow's worries are resolved. I cannot see how the Regt can possibly fail to welcome him if only it is made clear that he has a brother who is adj of the 1st Bn. They are very keen on fraternal connections. I do hope old Bow will be in the Bn with me one of these days.

As you see, Mama, we are not in Sicily. I shd like to be at the hub of events very much ɤ don't like hanging around. But there will be plenty for us to do in good time, I make no doubt. And it is not as if we hadn't been around.

David Coppin's marriage news made me laugh! I like that sort of idle gossip although our Glfd associates do seem more ɤ more dull ɤ tawdry the more one keeps away from them.. I shd like to write you a longer ɤ better letter but you'll have to put up with rapid scribblings for the next few months. John Hope's home-coming party has not yet started. I'll

let AP know when to expect him. No letter from you, AP, for some time. I want to know all about the club gossip. Do you still belong to that vile old Oxf ɤ Cambridge? DW seems to have broken contact with Elinor B lately. Who is yr buddy? I do hope the old arm is mending. How is Taylor at the C.C.S gate? Tell him the regiment is in good order. Am I right in thinking AP has taken his degree at last or did I dream it? Do you ever stay at the House? I wonder if I'll ever go there now. I do wish you'd see Campbell-Stuart or Shaw

[continued up middle of inside pages] or Barrington Ward about a weekly Times. It is surely absurd at present.

~ * ~

[136] these abbreviations unclear. Knowing the significance would help - tentatively the first parts represents 'General Officer Commanding 7th Armoured Division'.

[AIR MAIL LETTER CARD]

Mrs A.P. Waterfield
Underdown
Tangier Rd
Guildford
Surrey
ENGLAND

[signed "JPWaterfield" over blotchy purple stamp "PASSED BY CENSOR..."]
[One mauve 3d stamp, frank mainly illegible, "FIEL... "]
[annotated "arr 23 Aug"]
[dark blue ink except for address and cover signature, black ink]

Johnson. W.J. I am very happy Capt JPW
indeed ɤ only sorry we are 1st Bn. 60th Rifles (KRRC)
9.8.43 not in Tunis. Have just written B.N.A.F
No 56 to O.S ɤ Oakley. love always from John

Please see that our address has changed a bit. Oh how I hate writing letters. I always leave my staff of learned clerks to write my letters ɤ just append my signature so I get through the hell of a lot. But I have to write long, and drearily, hardly composed letters on policy ɤ training directives too which I cannot leave to my orderly room sgt. The result is that when I leave my cool, stoneflagged office and get into my jeep ɤ drive down the tarmac drive, through the gates, along the rd ɤ up the stone track to my tent to wash ɤ change for dinner I am in no letter writing mood! I should be hugely disappointed if the present wonderful rate ɤ flow of letters from you all failed. But I don't seem to have much time for them.

The army makes you live for it ɤ, in the field, destroys all other interests. Odd that in peace one joined the army for the opportunities of leisure provided! Now I've forgotten all the Greek I ever knew ɤ most Latin. Swimming off Sabratha I tried to quote Homer on "wine dark" sea to John Hogg ɤ found myself speechless! Work saps you ɤ underpins you ɤ yet I couldn't be more happy. I still am amazed to find myself adjutant of this Bn, the 1st Bn of the 60th Rifles, the 2nd civilian to do it for ages. I don't know what happened in the last war. Mary sent me a long air-mail letter enclosing a letter from CAS from California ɤ an astonishing photo of DMW ɤ Mary in Piccadilly! It is very interesting ɤ nearly quite right. Send me more to remind me of you all. We live in a French Farm house ɤ have, as ante-room,

a long, lovely room on the 1st floor with a view to all the historic hills ɤ mountains of the Tunisian battles. These farms are dotted about at the top of rough stone tracks in a cluster of trees, surrounded by a pleasant orchard, usually ɤ a bloom of bougainvillea or oleander still. The hills, grey scarped and lowering surround a hot, sweaty basin of unharvested corn fields. The yellow, dying corn has mines too unharvested inside it ɤ noone can go off the rds. The wireless is playing Lily Marlene ɤ I'm writing in an agreable haze of pink gin, fatigue, vin rosé and bad electric light. I shall be up at 6 in the morning, in the lovely cool morning as the red ball of sun climbs these Phoenician, Roman, Arabian hills and sends long shadows over our guard mounting square. It takes me an hour to mount our 12 guards. When I've driven back in my jeep for breakfast and got back to my office

it is sweaty and hot. Luckily it is a dry heat. I wonder if Mary is in the Wrens yet or Bow in the Regiment. I am very naughty to have been so bad about writing ɤ must try ɤ do better. Though I never will read them. I miss books horribly - do send me some ɤ the weekly Times. No more chances of Cairo for us I fear, so I'll never see Vellacott or [cont at top]

~ * ~



17 - Mary, DMW London June 1943

[AIR MAIL LETTER CARD]

Mrs A.P. Waterfield
Underdown
Tangier Rd
Guildford
Surrey
ENGLAND

[signed "JPWaterfield" over censor's stamp "...SED BY CE..."]
[One mauve 3d stamp, frank mainly illegible, "FIEL...FIC... 317"]
[black ink, except for '57', in pencil, also the little table of recent numbers/ dates]

I envy Bow & Jill their riding - 19.8.43
how good is Jill & why doesn't Capt JPW
No 57 Mary do it? much love John 1st Bn 60th Rifles

Our last record was issued fr 2nd Echelon today in M.E. It is rather a sad & important moment I feel. Is it the beginning of our homeward path via Europe? The Bn has not been home since '22 as Col Lion Corbett Winder told the King "Ah," said he, "I thought I'd not seen you lately"! Col Lion is G.I at the War Off to Val Wilson ex 60th Maj.Gen Inspector of Infantry Png.[137] If AP invites him to lunch I am sure he'd be delighted - Lt.Col L.C. Corbett Winder M.C. 60th Rifles. I was fond of him & enjoyed the little while I worked closely with him in spite of the strangeness & repressions brought about by 7 yrs in the East. Grey at 31 as they all are. Tonight is Sunday & I'm writing in our salon listening to some rather pleasant evening chamber music which perhaps is coming to you too. I have just been rung up by David Karmel whose Coy (my coy) is detached in the hills - no peace for the wicked. Your letter of Aug 4th has just come with Mary's of 3rd. I am prompted to reply immediately. Hell someone has switched off the chamber music. We have properly revived the uniquely 60th habit of wearing no badges of rank in the Mess. In peace time with Mess kit this was never done & Col Bill is dead right to revive it here. It is a civilized gesture unique in the Army.

I am distressed at the narrowness of the brats' social upbringing. You must, if Mary is pretty & Jill other than hideous, which I doubt until I see photos, get them to meet nice people of their own age. If one learns a lesson in the Army more work is done over an invitation to lunch than ever through detached committee meetings. I invite all our Bde staff to as much pink gin as I can with eminently successful results. Anyway it is the duty of civilized peopled to be sociable. You, Mummy, must go into the marriage market of social invitation
1) to avoid becoming the unenviable mother of a Coppin!
2) so that the girls know how to comport themselves properly!

No 52 was 12.7
53 14.7
54 24.7

All of which will stir up profound rage I reckon. In these hot yellow & grey hills we work hard enough & sweat beneath mosquito nets. I lost £1 at picquet last night which enraged me because I lost through never having learnt to play bridge. I wish I'd had the sense to get down to it - too late now, though I've no natural head for the rational process of counting cards. As a poker player, however, I go far. Having won £15 off the Hussars the other night I lost £20 the very next one to the Lancers after dinner. I never paint now of course but I've frequently felt

lately that I should love to do so again. The lights on the hills across Tunisa as I go down at ten to seven in the morning to mount the gd & the pleasant shadows in the orchard by the white walled balcony of our French farm house home are pleasant things and would go well on Whatman paper, hot pressed. A.P. I never hear from, the lazy old man. I had a fine Siepmannized bag of nonsense fr HA.S, Roger's & Charles' productions! I enjoy getting them but find them idiotic. Mary writes scrappily but industriously as ever. She is vulgar about "3 pips", like the sort of girl that trails round with Majors who wear crowns on mackintoshes, the abyss of appalling behaviour. Bow wrote a fine letter. John Hope, I expect, has started home. Be nice to him as he has been very nice to me. Humph Woods is cmdg a Bn of ... in Sicily - not 60th. He had dinner with us the night before he flew over. AP. can tell that to his old admiral. Sorry about Stuttafords. I'll send them a chaser. I rode in a donkey race the other day, on the rump, bare backed with little Arab boys before & behind. Mine was seized with sexual desires in the middle of the race & I was forced, for shame, to dismount. But the doctor's moke, the object of his manifest affection, was also withdrawn from the race. I had a sore head the next morning.

[cont at top]

~ * ~

[137] "G" of GI, "Pn" of Png doubtful.

[AIR MAIL LETTER CARD]

Mrs A.P. Waterfield No 58 JPW
Underdown
Tangier Rd
Guildford
Surrey
England

[signed "JPWaterfield" over censor's stamp "PASSED BY CENSOR..."]
[One mauve 3d stamp, frank "...POST OFFIC..."]
[annotated "Aug 31 arr."]
[black ink, free/ flourishing]

cd be with you all! Thank you so much for parcel
August 20th of books. Always 1st Bn 60th Rifles
No [138] much love from John BNAF
Bow's letter of August 8th came this evening. I kept it and read it over my after dinner whisky. AP's long from time'-to-timer', rivalling Elinor Birley's performance came the night before. Bow was most insulting on his first page, embarrasingly revelatory on his second, and naturally full of the lauds on his third. Old AP was full of his interviewing and promised another to follow which I'm eagerly awaiting. I have not been so happy for months. We live in the whole of the farm now having turned out the bailiff. We've put a pea-green carpet on the castellated balcony. You can see Longstop Hill[139] beyond the orchard to the north, Laghrian away to the South East looking no further away than when we watched it in the evil days of April from Argoub el Megas ɤ Djebel Kournine. Every night I pack up the office at 7.30, come back to my tent (I've left my room because it was too hot) ɤ have a cold wash, standing in my bowl, all over. It's the same bowl that I bought from Mr Welsh in 41, over two years ago! Rfn Pumpkin Deane says, "after a little desert service - you want to get some sand behind your ears - sir, we must buy another bowl, sir"! I have a guest or two from one of the Armd Regts or Brigade HQ practically every night. The Brigadier, I forgot to tell you, is an Old Carthusian as well as the Colonel! It's grand to be living as a Bn again. The Colonel says, I can hear behind me, that in peace time Mr Welsh, if you got married, gave you if you owed him over £200 a beautiful black umbrella and a gold pencil. If you owed

less you got an umbrella. It's hard work by day. I feel it's such a pity I'm not working in business - I'd make my pile! - I work at great telephone pressure they say with a monstrous jocularity but I refuse to drive down to the office after dinner. I go ɤ have tea with old Ben Ryan, our QM, every afternoon. He gives me a bar of chocolate! All work of real importance is clinched or initiated by social contact. I always send my Orderly Room Sgt to the Bde Q.M.S, chief clerk, to have a drink in the French café 40 miles away, every Saturday afternoon. It brings great results. I haven't the energy to write small as Bow. When is he coming to the Regt. It's wonderful that I don't care a damn for his astonishing remarks. Naturally when he gets to the Regiment he'll understand (without being superior) why I'm so proud. I still scarcely can

believe it. Days pass so quickly. Routine of life - punctuality ɤ the regular run are conducive to the swiftness of passing days. In spite of happiness I'm sometimes sorry I never meet Carthusians when there must be some nice ones. I used to have, of course, such odd

No. 58

[138] he forgot to number the letter before sealing it up, hence the additions (in pencil) on the address- and back-page.
[139] obviously a local nickname; Argoub el Megas is on the map but Laghrian & Djebel Kournine, both ?, are not. 'We eventually came to Djebel Bon Kournine, “the bare menacing feature with its twin peaks,” easily visible from far away, less easily approached on a drivable road. It also seemed less menacing than all the histories describe, and rather more wood-covered than bare. We then spent some time trying to identify the famous Argoub el Megas ridge. The distances were hard to calculate; a number of ridges, steeper than they seemed from afar when we approached them, stretched towards the north. Nor did we ever find a native who recognized the name, or indeed who could give us any practical directions.' - *Tunisia*

critical standards. Old Bow ɤ Jill falling off their nags must have been damned funny. I wish I
what a bloody pen this is [cont at top]

[In pencil up centre of inside pages, all-but illegible:] Illustrated London News of April ɤ May is very good

~ * ~

[AIR MAIL LETTER CARD]

Mrs A.P. Waterfield
Underdown
Tangier Rd
Guildford
Surrey
ENGLAND

[signed "JPWaterfield" over censor's stamp "PASSED BY CENSOR 256"]
[One mauve 3d stamp, frank "FIELD POST OFF..."]
[annotated "59", no dates]
[mainly black ink, blotched, with continuation in pencil, the latter especially scribbly]

Will you get me a lovely pair
of woolly gloves for my birthday
against Europe's winter? Love John

Capt JPW
1st Bn
60th Rifles
BNAF

No 59 22.8.43

I missed Sunday and I ought not to be writing now because I am presenting (ex officio) at a Court martial tomorrow and I ought to be reading up the case a little. It is four weeks since I took the summary of evidence. Yesterday John Hogg (you have heard me talk of him, our $2^{i}/_{c}$, Hailsham's nephew) and I took leave of our offices ɤ went off in my jeep to Tunis. First we drove through the browned ɤ blackened hill domes, sprouting from time to time cactus-enclosed French farms, and so over the final hills past the great stretch of mud flat [ink blotch; ? 'ɤ'] salt lake up the very ultimate slope and stopped to look down on the great horn of land which encloses the blue gulf of Tunis. On the left is the hummock of Carthage with the white domes of Sidi Bon Said

shining like ivory where the morning sun glistens on the stone. In the centre the streets of Tunis with the elegant rich villas, each complete with verandah, climbing up the hill on which we sit. On the right is the great mount of Hammamlif, Bon Kournine, meaning twin-peaked. That is not the one where so many of the rfn of the Motor Bde met their end with us in April but another, past which the 6th Armd Div crashed to Cap Bon. Beyond that bulk is the curve of plain by Soluman ɤ Potinville (where there is excellent Muscat) to the lower slopes of the hilly Cap Bon peninsulas. The blue point fades into the distance opposite Carthage. Odd that the Carthaginians saw the same view.

John Hogg and I went onto the Bn rest camp at Hammamlif, a lovely house right on the beach, soft sand outside the entrance garden. The plage was covered with a strange gay mixture of elegant figured French girls, Yank soldiers, old Wogs having their 6 monthly wash and fat old French flaneurs, past their best

but still going strong on fat, round belly. We bathed. I could float on my back with my hands on my hips. It was blue heaven. Then we lay on hot towels ɤ read the Spectator until it was time for lunch which we had back in Tunis after a delicious cool beer, obtained by ogling the make-up of the "CouCou's" patronne. Lunch was fun giving that feeling of repletion which is so satisfactory on a Sunday afternoon, when having good liquor taken and with distent stomach, one lies ɤ sleeps the

afternoon through. We spent our whole afternoon in the hair dresser who had (fortunately for me) an excellent bed in his salon. Shampoo ɤ friction revived me. [cont in pencil] 24.8.43 continued

In my tent after dinner with a fine bright electric light. I'm delighted to have got a letter from Jill Tuesday 10 Aug ɤ another a-graph from N.J.C dated 2 Aug. I don't get many

letters these days. Now listen. I can get clothes, according to a BNAF order with authority to Sept 30 free of coupons from England. I will send another a-l c tomorrow giving you an authorization". I'm very bad about these things with so little time. you might check up w. Oakley[140] that I'm being paid as Capt. Adjt from July 16. Can you buy me a good badger shaving brush? [Cont. up side] Mine was eaten by a puppy. None obtainable here. [cont at top]

~ * ~

[AIR MAIL LETTER CARD]

Mrs A.P. Waterfield
Underdown
Tangier Rd
Guildford
Surrey
England

[signed "JPWaterfield" over censor's stamp "PASSED BY CENSOR 256"]
[One mauve 3d stamp, frank mainly illegible, "...OST..."]
[annotated "10 Sept. arr:"]
[black ink]

How is No 60 O.S? 31.8.43 Do write ɤ encourage others. Send me another Carthusian ɤ tell me the gossip. 1st. Bn 60th Rifles B.N.A F.

It is not so long as I thought since I wrote no 59 but I am being suitably rewarded for some sin or other in that evening after evening I come up the steps to the ante room for my pre-dinner pink gin and evening after evening with my pink gin in my hand I search the mantel piece in vain for correspondence addressed to Waterfield. Tonight I had one but that was a mess bill from the P.M.C! I must now try and give you some incentive to write. I have had my bottle of Muscat with John Hogg ɤ am back in my tent much earlier than usual. I have a nice 180 pounder if that means anything to you. It is usually given to two or even three officers but I insist on glorious isolation. On one side is my dressing table suitably garnished with old favourites like my hair-brushes which date from Melbreck days, and new adornments like some rather green hair nonsense from the nearest black market. On the left is another table with books ɤ magazines which I so rarely nowadays find time to touch. The Army claims you. When I

am not hard at work, unless I can get right, right away, I feel horribly restless. I feel I have to work and live the ordered routine life which is so easy really. I've got a 'phone in here ɤ I sometimes work over the 'phone from the tent when the line has not been burned by the continual heath ɤ corn fires which are sometimes deliberately contrived by the farmers in places where they fear mines. Now in the cooler autumn weather some of the crops are wilting brown ɤ blown, unharvested because of war. Next year the holes in the whitewashed farm house walls will be mended ɤ life, except in the gutted towns will be nearly normal again. This is a good bright lamp I've got here, run off a battery which is exchanged every few days by the signallers. It is a dreadfully insidious life for me, the Army. I am spoilt more than ever anyone has ever accused me of being. Everyone leaps to my beck ɤ call. I have a personal man to work for me all his time ɤ although the adjt is the bane of all flesh his every wish is well worth pandering to!

[140] annotated by DMW 'w.Oakley 5/9'.

My bed looks agreably inviting with a mosquito net over it. I shall read a little of the war-worn Spirit of Man before turning off the light ϟ sleeping until my morning cup of tea.

It is fun to have such responsibility but a sobering thought. It is also fun to have got to know so many people ϟ such interesting things. Some of those who were commanding Coys when I came to the desert first, almost a year ago, have been commanding red-coat regts in Sicily, including Humph W (the old admiral's family friend) ϟ he has just written from Cataina saying the bathing is marvellous.

It would be nice to fly down to the Delta for leave. Some of ours have gone down for one reason or another. I have now been with the Bn without break for eleven months, much longer than anyone else who is left. John Hope has started home. He knows AP's address. Perhaps AP will have also asked Lyon Corbet Winder (Lt.Col.M.C.) out to lunch. It is a kindness to do so ϟ entertainment ϟ sociabilities are the key to all success. AP may now be discovering so. Why do I never hear from him. He must be at

the hub of events. He made a gallant attempt at regular correspondence but Burlington Gdns or those awful women outside must have defeated him! Do get Mary outside suburban Glfd. How many more times has Jill fallen off? It seems very odd that Bow shd be in the Army. I ought to write to that old beldame Ramsden. Is Jill R still disengaged or is she engaged by proxy to Graham Gow. I never see him nowadays. [cont at top]

~ * ~

[BY AIR MAIL - AIR LETTER]

Mrs A.P. Waterfield
Underdown
Tangier Rd
Guildford
Surrey
England

[signed 'JPWaterfield' across top, clear censor's stamp "PASSED BY CENSOR No. 256"]
[One mauve 3d stamp, frank "...ICE 317 ..."]
[annotated "14 Sept arr."]
[black ink, except for 'No 61', in pencil]

No 61 I have performed my Sunday task albeit hardly. 1st Bn 60th Rifles
5.9.43 Now to my bed much love John BNAF.

I've had a splendid week-end. But again there were no letters on the mantel-piece when I got back. I wonder if the Post are finding it hard to appreciate that the 60th have come to BNAF. I closed my office, like all right minded people, at half past five yesterday and after a shower in the ruins of the neighbouring village, betook me to my jeep ϟ made off into the hills against the sun. At half past seven I found myself at the top of a rubble track which had wound its sharply twisting way up the green grey mountain to an old lead mine where the ...th Lancers have their mess. Having gone to bed at two the night before after a hot conversational session over some delicious Monk's liqueur (secretly brewed) and Cairo cigars with the Colonel, John Hogg, and one Hugh Boileau from a local Area, I was in no case to start in on another big party. However I went to bed this morning at three ϟ got gamely out, onto the most stupendously positioned ridge above the Tunis hills, at only half past eight. Incidentally Hugh Boileau who is a cousin of Dick Boileau of the 60th who was with the

Rangers in Greece ϟ Crete got a DSO ϟ was then captured and was married to ? Hoton of Dawlish - Hugh B - of the Devon Yeomanry said "are you a relation of all those beautiful Waterfield girls?"

Which remark, shamefully, raised a hoot of semi-derisive applause from the dinner table. When pinned he admitted they were more of his generation than mine - he is 37, and the only name I can remember him mentioning is Penelope who, I thought, was something to do with old Philip W. Perhaps W.G.W ought to be let in on this, a subject after her own heart!

I refused to work again this morning ɤ after staggering along to breakfast David Karmel Leslie Mackay ɤ I moved off in a couple of jeeps west rather than east in search of "divertissements". We climbed into taller ɤ taller wooded hills. I don't know what the trees were but as I drove along I kept thinking I was going up the Black Forest road above Mamhead and I became so homesick that David had to recall my attentions to the bends in the road.

We lunched at an hotel right in the cooler clouds, among thick woods, a

place where all the local French used to come in peace to spend the summer. Lunch was chiefly remarkable for a colossal omelette soufflié and bruleé, if that can convey anything to you. They had delicious brown sweets burned on the top and then poured good spirit over the whole and set it alight, a glorious spectacle. Feeling the world pleasantly pinkish we down hilled some fifteen miles through great forests, little French red-roofed Colonial villages with an odd glimpse of the sea from time to time at the end of a brown valley. We bathed to clear the luncheon head ɤ belly's plenty and drove back fast in time for Sunday's supper in our own Farm house, some hundred miles. I am now rather exhausted having driven all the way ɤ had only one bottle of Muscat with Hogg to refresh me at dinner. Tomorrow I go to dine at Brigade. No rest for the sociable. Tonight came an enormous flood of C.A.S repeats sent by Mary to MEF. I was delighted to read them although they are so out of date. Do write ɤ encourage everyone to do so. I haven't heard from Elinor Birley for ages. Will you lay on a subscription to the Carthusian or something. We have such a strong force here

ɤ I see Hogg's Eton Chronicle has come tonight ɤ made me very jealous. Where have Michael Hoban ɤ Peter Butler gone to these days? I haven't heard from them for over a year. Brown Howard is probably coming to us! Did you see, I think Mary mentioned it, that Patience H has had a daughter? Do let me know all the gossip. How is old O.S. I must write to him again. I hope Bow will get here in time. I await photos still ɤ explain in defence, that I can't possibly get any of me done here.

[cont at top]

~ * ~

[BY AIR MAIL - AIR LETTER]

Mrs A.P. Waterfield
Underdown
Tangier Rd
Guildford
Surrey
England

[signed 'JPWaterfield' across top, faint censor's stamp "...SED BY CENSOR ..."]
[One mauve 3d stamp, frank "FIELD ... 317 ..."]
[annotated "20 Sept arr."]
[black ink]

No 62 Sorry this is such a rottenly dull letter - don't let 1st Bn 60th Rifles
13.9.43 anyone kid you that we're coming home BNAF much love John
Sunday again and I'm not sure if I've got the date right.[141] I ought to be certain because in the briefest possible time that I spent in my office this morning I must have put my name to at least a dozen dated letters. But I paid little attention ɤ rushed out on my weekend rest-cure with Brown Howard in my

[141] Sunday was in fact the 12th .

jeep which has just come back fr. workshops. We didn't get back until about eight after a pleasant day. We lunched in Tunis in a French officers' restaurant, reserved for French Colonels ϒ above! It has been my experience abroad that in spite of any guards on doors and protective picquets there are no "patrons" who cannot be won by flattery ϒ blandishment ϒ no table which can resist the bluff of sitting down and ordering the meal. We had a nice lunch of pâté maison, beans, meat, omelette, coquilles St Jacques (but not made with real scallops) ice cream and coffee but in general the food ϒ standard of cooking suffer horribly from war still, and the only thing that makes meals out important is that one gets clear away from ones colleagues. Tonight I found a letter fr Mary on the mess mantel piece when I went up in search, a fruitless one, of gin before dinner. This letter was numbered 90 and dated Sep 3; she says it is her second letter from the Wrens and I was amazed to see WRNS as her address. She doesn't say where she is; is that one of the things

she's forbidden to do in these lectures about which she talks? It is splendid that she shd not have to hang around in the heat of Glfd's late summer. The mail situation here is hellish ϒ I've complained officially. The reply and a reasonable one, was that these Italian operations are occupying all the boats but although "owing to pressure of adjutantal business" which I've inscribed in my little note book, after a years success I've had to give up recording my incoming letters, it does not seem as though I ever heard from you. Mary's first Wrens letter has certainly not come. However it doesn't matter all that much. Bill Deedes wrote during the week, still commanding a Company in the 12th, ϒ Wreford-Brown wrote oddly, as usual in these days, from the OCTU. God help old Bow if he gets into his pl! I am still very happy ϒ contented. The night on which it was announced that the Italians were finished, I was playing cricket against a neighbouring cavalry regt of repute and got a fellow out l-b.w with a full-pitch, given out by an old Wellingtonian Italian officer who, very kindly, stood umpire! Who would have thought that possible a year ago in the soft sandy wastes and stony scarps by Himeimat where we were when I came to the Bn? I hope that we shall have another campaign again soon. Although we get the rfn away to the sea here ϒ they enjoy it

enormously, they miss Cairo where they could splash the credits they had mossed up on the desert, and the dreary drag of routine is excellent for us for a while but we must go back.

I am so out of touch w. you all that I cannot follow what has really happened. Bow is where? and what regiment is he in? Mary is soon to be a Wren proper I gather. Well then I shall expect that photo that I am promised. Jill, poor girl, must be fed up with being the only one left in the household or is she spoilt ϒ petted! You two old parents must feel very odd with all the small birds earning, as I suppose they do, their own living. I certainly feel horribly rich. If it were not for this coupon nonsense I shd deal with Mr Welsh in a very big way indeed. AP never writes nowadays but I'm not too good. I try never to work after dinner although I'm sometimes rung up. We have a splendid Brigade staff to work with all of whom I know very well. We played cricket against them yesterday ϒ dined in a little French restaurant kept by Madame and her very attractive (if a little past her best) daughter. We had a bit of a set to with our Carthusian, old Saunderite Brigadier who is a very able man indeed ex B.G.S to Horrocks. But then we all drowned our sorrows in vin rosé. I rather wish someone wd send me some good books or a catalogue or two - I shall never have time to read except for the odd half-hour before dropping off to sleep under my mosquito net so I don't want anything too

abstruse. I shall never be able to pretend to any academic intelligence again which is probably a good thing. I enjoy my work and am well content. I hope I may be able to get some leave but unless I fly down to the Delta there is nowhere hereabouts to stay at all. Do you ever have news of Eric now - I must send him a signal officially to plague him. It is very sticky hot again tonight, the mosquitoes are buzzing ϒ the servants have got the hell of a sing-song ϒ party going. They adore Lily Marlene as much as the Germans [cont at start]

[written sideways up centre pages:] What about HORIZON - I thought it ϒ the CARTHUSIAN were coming. I've written to STUTTAFORDS again.

~ * ~

[BY AIR MAIL - AIR LETTER]

Mrs A.P. Waterfield
~~Underdown~~
~~Tangier~~ Rd Royal Beacon Hotel
~~Guildford~~ Exmouth
~~Surrey~~ Devon
~~England~~ Devon

[signed 'JPWaterfield' across top, faint censor's stamp, second stamp below "PASSED BY CENSOR No. 256"]
[One mauve 3d stamp, frank "...ELD ... "]
[annotated "arr 30 Sept"]
[black ink (forwarding address in pencil; also in pencil, letter no)]

not after soldiering in England.
No 63 write often. I am going to the dentist at last on Tuesday 1st Bn 60th Rifles
19.9.43 ϒ am terrified - where is Powis Conway-Jones now? BNAF.
The weeks rush by and here is Sunday again. Much as I used to do in the old days from Dragons ϒ from Godalming I am writing on Sunday morning. I am in my office and it's rather hot and sticky. It's a mistake to sit here but I haven't the energy to go out, start the jeep ϒ drive up the mile of rutted track to the mess where I could write more peacefully in my tent. I've already been caught once this morning by the staff captain of Bde on his way through and one is always at the mercy of the telephone. I like to see people ϒ have a gossip as you know but it is the most tiring thing in the world ϒ I'd rather write down my opinion for the Colonel whose desk is next to mine than have the effort of gossiping and discussing every daily point!

It seems odd still to be sitting idly here. One day we shall go back to it all in a very big way. Work is hard ϒ rarely ceases because there are the problems of 3 yrs adm omissions to sort out. Until 3 months ago we were still getting letters from England in answer to pay questions, of individual rfn, which we made in '41! It's getting better now. We don't

seem to get so many letters now but in the last few days I've had a bunch of Charles' follies, (which made me livid!) a letter from Mary which, she said, was her second from WRNS, (but I've not had her first) and an a/c from Bow the day before he went to the army. I've heard too from Mrs Ramsden that fettered soul who longs to make a great splash, from Alan Young, ϒ Bill Deedes of the 12th and Tony W-B still at OCTU. Perhaps I don't really do so badly. It's rather sad that I shd be getting letters from old dodderers like Mrs R, kindly affectionate though she is. It's rather horrible to think I'm nearly 22 and I'm very worried by it. I wish there was a photographer here because you cd then have a photo of me before the sour ravages of an adjutant's life change me for ever! Now while I think of it and cease talking nonsense - will you please go to your Culpeper House of Herbs, if that is what it is called, and look me out some lovely nice-smelling shaving soap and other good things. John Hogg's mama has done this ϒ the soap is the most heavenly I've ever shaved with, better even than the last of my 4 sticks of Parke-Davis bought over a year ago in a Greek chemists in Ismailia and only just now finishing. Another disaster has beset me in that my excellent nail brush has been lost and I cannot get another here anywhere. Wd you send me one

for my birthday? I am going to ask Mr Welsh to send me another two shirts ϒ a lanyard. If I ask him directly he will, almost certainly, not demand coupons! Incidentally I must be getting very rich. I've now got about £75 in my M.E a/c w. Ottomans Bk and £55 increasing rapidly with Oakley. He wrote to me a day or so back and said he noted with pleasure that he was going to get all my pay and allowances in future. If Doris Simpson is still there, although I spend nothing here at all, I shd think it my a/c will diminish of itself. Bow's letters about his ϒ Jill's riding filled me with envy but I 'd love to see them falling off. I became very homesick with his description of the lands. The hills round here were misty instead of baked brown this morning and sometimes remind me of Autumn on Dartmoor. I am going out to lunch with John Hogg to a French farmer somewhere near - John says he does

extremely well ɤ has some splendid wine. I am getting very lazy, if I cannot, through idleness ɤ good living, get fat! Yesterday we had a Brigade rifle meeting which was great fun ɤ I was made to run 80 yrds over plough to shoot a pistol. We had a Green Jacket tent ɤ excellent cold pork for luncheon. I do miss a bookshop ɤ shops ɤ civilization. I'm afraid I shan't get any leave now for a while. It's nearly a year since I went up to the desert. Mary, dear old girl, sent me some poems of 1942 which I thought very bad. How is O.S

and do you have news of Eric because I do not. A.P is devilish idle ɤ never writes, though others describe his luncheon activities. Has he seen Col Lyon C.W or John Hope yet? John Hogg too may be coming for a while. Please send me some photos of Mary ɤ Jill. I wonder if Mary is down near Weymouth - that is the only place of which I preserve a memory in connection with Wrens. I am very well ɤ never sick ɤ am happy ɤ contented. I hope you are all the same. Still no news from Mike Hoban but Peter Butler wrote last week, queerly. But who does [cont at top]

[sideways down centre of inside pages:] always much love from John

~ * ~

[Military Airgraph Service authorised by Egyptian Postal Administration]

[signed JPWaterfield across (illegible) censor's stamp]

A.P. Waterfield Esq CB.
Civil Service Commission
Burlington Gardens
W.1

25 SEP 1943

he may send them without coupons c.o Military Forwarding officer - Newport. Do try ɤ see Lyon Corbett-Winder ɤ John Hope.

I miss bookshops. 1st Bn 60th Rifles BNAF 24.9.43 Don't worry about my finances - I am very cautious ɤ very rich!
always much love fr John

Cleared up my work this afternoon ɤ will seize a moment to answer yr good letter - the first for ages, which came the other day. First - HCJ's[?] certainly will be published ɤ relevant portions are republished through Command, Divisional, Brigade ɤ Unit orders. If you get your thing put in and I'm sure it's an excellent plan it will reach me to put my signature to in Bn orders someday. As a matter of fact Tony Moore our I.O, Rugby ɤ Kings, aged 26, was asking me at Tripoli about entry to Foreign Service after the war. I told him to write to you! --- Last night I dined high up on an historic hill over the Mediterranean in a villa with Geoffrey Keating who had just flown from Army HQ in Italy. We looked at some wonderful water colour drawings of the battle by Edward Ardizzone which will be in London in a few days. Gordon Waterfield I had news of from a Yank Reuters correspondent called David Brown. G.W is in Italy now. He quarrelled with someone in India ɤ left quickly. Life here much the same but less hard work owing to our superior having gone off temporarily. I wish we could get back to work but no doubt we'll be busy enough. Letters somehow seem very bad but the children are busy I suppose. How is WREN Mary. I have asked Welsh for 2 more shirts -

~ * ~

[BY AIR MAIL - AIR LETTER]

Mrs A.P. Waterfield

~~Underdown~~		Underdown
~~Tangier Rd~~	~~Royal Beacon Hotel~~	Tangier Rd
~~Guildford~~	~~Exmouth~~	Guildford
~~Surrey~~	~~Devon~~	Surrey

England

[signed 'JPWaterfield' across top, faint/smudged/illegible censor's stamp]
[One mauve 3d stamp, franked "FIELD POST... 317 29 SP 43"]
[annotated "Oct 9 arr."]
[black ink (first forwarding address in pencil)]

No 64 Jilly I hope will go to Oxford soon. Tell her to
26.9.43 write home. How odd for you that all the brats 1st Bn 60th Rifles
are not going off to school - how sad & how restful BNAF

Sunday letter again. The days rush by and I can hardly believe it's a week since I wrote last. Last Sunday we went out to lunch, as I may have told you with a couple of old bachelor Frenchmen who live in a big farm house not far from here. John Hogg & I went up to the door & it was sweltering hot outside - powdered white dust choked us as we drove - but inside there was complete coolness & restfulness. We went into an over-elaborately furnished room with dark plush chair covers and a table beautifully laid for lunch. The thickness of the walls & keeping the shutters closed all day keep the heat out. Our host who used to be a doctor with an appartement on the Boulevard Haussmann, was in his blue silk shirt sleeves bustling about the preparation of the wine. It was a wonderful sight to see such civilized reverence for the things of the palate and the belly. Another guest from the ?th Hussars arrived and then in came "Mon Cousin" a rare old boy with long fangs which showed when he smiled - he had worked the farm for the sophisticated doctor all these years & though obviously the complete stooge who hung agape on every word of description and glorification of Monte Carlo & Deauville that the other let fall, was now coming into his own in times of war as a shelter & shield for the refugee. He kept an enormous herd of pigs which included one "solitaire" a real wild board[142] who lived in the woods by the malarious pools all by himself. When we left the swine rushed down the hill engulfing the jeep in the

avalanche of descent. It seemed like a piece from the Odyssey somehow. We had dry Spanish wine as apéretif, then with hors d'oeuvres and poached eggs which followed, swimming in tomato sauce came Maçon - then a burgundy with sucking pig which melted in the mouth then Heidseck 26 which apparently was not a good year but quite good enough. There was also the best caramel baked-custard pudding I've ever tasted even in Underdown. Finally coffee & splendid liqueur brandy. We slept when we got home, having got up from the luncheon table about 3.45 of the afternoon. A week has gone by and we are likely soon to be on our travels again. Time flies and I am going to be 22 almost immediately after I write next. Horrid thought. There came a bunch of letters to pour coals of fire on the head of me lately reproachful. I had one from Ottoman's Bk which is now pretty well useless to me unless I get leave but which showed a credit of almost another £100 there as well. Bow wrote having just been 10 days a soldier. He seems to be having an amazing time but it's obviously a drearier and harder process than the easy-going journey I took to Chiseldon.

I dined with Geoffrey Keating high up on a famous hill above the Mediterranean last week. Think of Flaubert. He was just back from Italy where as I told you, AP. in a-graph written in mid week he had seen Gordon W. I got an airgraph weekly Times off him in which I saw Phillips of the Treasury was dead - he could not have been very old. I wrote to John Hope to remind him

[142] "boar", obviously; the pen has run on erroneously.

of seeing you - Lyon C-Winder too is ready to see you. They are both very nice people. Will Mumı let me know how she is doing over my shavingbrush (badger) and delicious shaving cream from herb house. This is being written now in my office after lunch with one hand on my phone listening for call from Bde. We are being badly chased about at the moment. At lunch in the Mess just now I found a heap of letters - these are most splendidly welcome especially coming on top of my batch last week. Later, in my tent after Sunday afternoon "kip" - the only afternoon I ever allow myself on my bed. The wind has got up ɤ I feel the grey approach of winter. I wonder where we shall go but wish we could get on with it. Work ɤ fighting are palliatives to homesickness ɤ that's partly why I never kip of an afternoon. Rfn Deane brought me my tea in here at 4.30 with bread ɤ jam ɤ I must now try to finish this before I dress for our party which we are having tonight. Enormous preparations have been made. Pigs have been slaughtered by professional German pork butchers - chickens have been put into pies, the pigs head appears whole with placid eyes on the table - there is a band ɤ a film show and everyone from the Division is coming - I have merely undertaken responsibility for the car park with my regimental police and the zabbaglione the making of which I am going down to supervise in person - an excellent fat Italian is engaged in making it but woe betide him if he fails.

Letters from you all which gave me huge delight were air letter cards 14 Sep DMW, 10 Sep DMW, 14 Sep Mary, 9 Sep Mary and 16 Sep Mary. I was delighted to hear how splendidly Mary is getting on in spite of the cramped squalor that Highgate sounds like being. There is a new note in her letters which I've never found before - an exuberant vitality ɤ appreciation of life - she must accept

HAS' invitation. No second letter from Bow. I'm so sorry about Mum's back ɤ arm being continually painful ɤ I was distressed to hear about Daddy's fainting. I do hope it was nothing serious. Did you get the phrase "gippy tummy" from me or is it common in England? I'm so glad, too, Stuttaford's parcel has arrived at last. I wrote at El Hamma! You don't mention cosmetics although I ordered them. I fear Mary will be disappointed. I see in Barclay's statement that £5 cheque was put in by Stuttaford's. I wrote to Mrs Ramsden but did not congratulate her on Miss R's re-engagement, not knowing it. Anyway congratulations might be a little premature. Mary ɤ Jill must both send me photos - you Mum ɤ AP must have yourselves photographed because I may never see you again for ages ɤ I'd like to know what you were like. [cont at top]

[added sideways between inside two pages:] this is a scrappy letter - never mind. I am happy ɤ hard working always much love from John

~ * ~

[BY AIR MAIL - AIR LETTER]

Mrs A.P. Waterfield
Underdown
Tangier Rd
Guildford
Surrey
ENGLAND

[signed 'JPWaterfield' across top, slightly smudged mauve stamp "PASSED BY CENSOR 256"]
[One mauve 3d stamp, frank "...POST ..."]
[annotated "Oct 3 Oct 15 arr"]
[black ink]

[top line, perhaps including date, entirely lost when cut open, except for some descenders]
No 65 regular as ever. Not much of a letter. 1st Bn 60th Rifles
Sunday again in cooler weather. We shan't get letters from you BNAF
for a fortnight because of adm changes for us - nothing, however, to be anxious about. The mind still turns on the stomach. We went into a sinister Spanish restaurant last night, Sandy Goschen, Peter Wake and I where the refugees from Franco Spain have made a corner for themselves among squalor

ɤ flies but with a reminiscent flash from the kitchen of dishes they used to enjoy in Madrid. We had a wonderful dinner - it does not do too well to ask where all the good things come from. There was pâté maison ɤ a sort of greasy fish which might be squid according to the experts ɤ the best chicken risotto ever ɤ delicious liver with red juicy inside as liver always should be. Then we went roaring round the town, - I wonder if you know by now what town - and Peter acquired a General's hat which he put on ɤ looked exactly like that prize old ass, his father, our Col Commandant Sir Hereward! I hope you are all better in health than your last letters seemed to show. I've written to Bow, Mary, Jill ɤ Elinor Birley this week so I reckon my duty is done and I'm entitled to a few letters full of excellent news and gossip by return. It is sad that we cannot get a Weekly Times out here and Horizon never came. Conflicting family assurances leave me bewildered of what was done. We approach now the sinister military influence of England which a year's untrammelled freedom on the desert leaves me in no spirit to endure lightly. The long

claws of the W.O. reach out to gripe at us and cut us about. What is London like now I wonder. A.P never says what he does at the club ɤ whom he sees but although I'm sad that he has to be in bed I hope I may see some results in the way of correspondence. Mary seems to have changed wholly for the best in Naval life. I should think you find this foc'sle ɤ midshipmite nonsense rammed down your throat - I wonder if it lasts? Bow writes me fiercely from York. I'm going to write to Mrs Gatty-Smith to say he's there. She'd be delighted to see him. How I envied you the account of Oxford visit. What splendid fun to go punting on the Cher and old Miss Jill performing too. I'm not so surprised as A.P. that she can do it well. Odd that old Garrod shd still be alive ɤ, apparently kicking. Did you go ɤ see Dundas? If they are thinking of getting me in there after the war they must begin to issue an operation order which indicates very inviting terms ɤ no attempts to recapture the Classics. They are lost for me and gone forever, I fear, like Clementine. But I'd love to see a book or two ɤ <u>not</u> critiques of poetry as darling little midshipmite sent me nor the boring 1937 diary of Sir Arnold Wilson deceased. Perhaps I'm too unkind an noone ever can choose books for other people! I often think of Devonshire these days ɤ must write to WGW - the hills round here remind me sometimes in the blue grey evening light or damp mornings of parts of the Moor and the earth smells more like the

good lands in this weather. I wonder how long these are taking to get home. Your alcs have been much slower than they were at Tripoli. Tell me more of what was in Stuttafords parcel. Shall I send another £5? Good heavens my birthday is on Tuesday - absit omen, μὴ γένοιτο - it's shocking to be 22 and not know whether one is really 18 or 30 in mind! Yesterday I played football and got very sore feet. One misses a squash court ɤ regular daily exercise. In mid week I went to a dance at Bde which was great fun although the French insist on bringing mama ɤ papa ɤ all the little brothers ɤ sisters. I performed most gallantly but find that I was unique in my variations of the tango! I hope those photos are going to be sent out to me soon. Yesterday I bought a mackintosh at the officers' shop, my old one having gone down the ladder to the duty of bed roll cover for some obscure rfn in B Coy. I am well equipped for clothes ɤ have acquired great property of oddments in the last year. Doubt if I'll ever see my tin trunk ɤ <u>your</u> (!) Revelation again. They are reported to be in the baggage store at Geneifa. Ma'alesh or what does it matter. El Hamdoullillah "god's will," with a roll of the eyes ɤ a jerk of the chin, "be praised". I am very happy. I hope you are all so too. I expect you meet a lot of these dreadful fellows of the old 1st Army who have come home with all the

griff about this and that. The downs are nice at this time of year ɤ the golf course too. Is the Pip William cage still up there? I know something now about cages. I cannot write a good letter. Perhaps it is sitting in my office that does it, faced with boards ɤ diagrams ɤ telephones ɤ with typewriters ɤ argumentation clicking next door. I've ordered those shirts from Welsh. I tore one with old age last night. Will you let me know about the nice shaving cream? It's begun to rain again. I suppose you are all sitting in the drawing room before Sunday lunch - or is there sadly no "all" now - just the two old fellows? [cont at top]

~ * ~

as from Pinkie House
Musselburgh
Midlothian

5.10.43.

Dear Mr Waterfield.

I was very sorry to miss you when I looked in at your offices last week. I hope you are fully recovered by now. I shall try again when next I am in London as I should like to tell you about John, of whom I had a very high opinion, when he was in my Company.

yours sincerely

John Hope .

R. < asked him to suggest choice of days for lunch.

~ * ~

[There follows a gap in the archive of about a year, with only the odd letter, and a batch from late June into July, surviving from this period]

~ * ~

[Military Airgraph Service authorised by Egyptian Postal Administration]
Mrs APWaterfield
Underdown
Tangier Road
Guildford
Surrey
ENGLAND

[Signed 'JPWaterfield' in circular stamp "PASSED BY CENSOR NO 266"]
[Also stamped, "FIELD POST OFFICE 317 * 30 JA. 44"]

No 79(c) Capt JPWaterfield 1st Bn 60th Rifles BNAF

27.1.44 You will see John Hogg or Sandy Goschen or old James Cunningham, all of whom are at home now. Be careful about tact with John Hogg because he's not coming back ɤ we've got Dick Williams who alone escaped from the 2nd Bn at Calais as $2^{i}/_{c}$ in his place.

I hope Bow pleased old Sir H.W. I hear that idle young man Mike is at Strensall. How much longer does Bow have before he's commissioned?

Life goes on much the same here. I shall NOT now be coming home on course and the S.C is more than unlikely ever now so do not expect overmuch. I am of course quite "cushy" as the rfn say ꝟ would just as soon stay abroad as come home with the Bn ꝟ wd loath to go home in any way other than with the Bn.

I liked the sermon you sent me of RB's[?]. I have meant to tell you that for some time. It's now 11.30 - early for me (!) but I feel I've had it tonight. So goodnight and always very much love to you both from John. Do not get worries over my welfare.

~ * ~

[BY AIR MAIL - AIR LETTER]

Lady Waterfield
Underdown
Tangier Rd
Guildford
Surrey
ENGLAND

[signed 'JPWaterfield' across top, two shield-shaped mauve stamps (first with double-impression and so unclear) "PASSED BY CENSOR No 5282"]
[One mauve 3d stamp, frank "FIELD POST OFFICE 317"]
[not annotated, blue-black ink]

15.6.44 1 KRRC
CMF

My dear Mummy ꝟ Daddy

This is a momentous date because it's the first occasion that I've addressed it as Lady W! It's a very satisfactory affair ꝟ I'm glad of it because all success is very pleasurable ꝟ worthwhile. My idleness in not writing since the boat except to congratulate AP is only partly excused by my wishing to wait until I knew your proper style ꝟ address. However noone has yet written to give me the accurate detail ꝟ intimate inside story that I've been longing for. So I must make amends ꝟ buckle down to it because I've had such an excellent supply of letters from everyone lately that I'm feeling very ashamed. Nor indeed have I been overwhelmed with work, though never idle. Mary writes well and indefatigably. I feel she ought to try ꝟ be an officer where she would, I think, be much better as far as work goes ꝟ (far more important) be among people of a class who know how to behave and NOT exposed to these horrible buck niggers and petty officers with whom her life seems overfull. However I think she's happy ꝟ seems to be going up in an aeroplane from time to time. Jill writes the Guildford gossip but it's rather a dull life for her and it seems a pity that she can't go into the FANys (which seems to stand up to the invasion of all comers alone of the womens services) before the war ends. However no doubt Japan will offer limitless opportunities - I cannot believe that that eccentric quality of indifference to dying which they possess will permit them to pack in as easily as people believe. We live in a forest of oak trees, stunted rather but cut about with glades and corn fields. I've got a tent for an office and sleep under my mosquito net in a bivouac. It's very hot by day ꝟ I shave with flies and grasshoppers and the warm sun beating on my back. There are very large snakes in the underbrush but I'm told they

are rarely poisonous. I hope that is so because there are only three pots of serum in Italy if you do get bitten!

Last night there came to dine a most excellent fellow, Hugh Boileau, whom I've known very well for the last year and is now going home to some Staff Course. He is about 36 and a cousin of

Dick B who was captured with the Rangers in Crete. Hugh B comes from Norfolk ϒ is always asking who "the pretty Waterfield girls with the rude father" are whom he knows there. I've not been able to enlighten him and did not feel that the phrase was applicable to those at Underdown, Guildford - don't let the ladies be insulted because only one half does NOT apply, I've no doubt although I long for pictorial evidence to establish my belief and disrupt uncertainty. Anyway he may come to see A.P so please give him a good luncheon. He's one of the best men for dinner table conversational value I know and well worth while. It is such a pity to see these young fellows coming from school ϒ OCTU and quite unable to make light (let alone intelligent) and agreable conversation at a meal. They sit in their skins and stare at the plate like "spuds in their bivvies" which is what the rfn call potatoes in their jackets - a splendid phrase. All

this is rather inconsequential but I've been drinking alleged Jugoslav gin and smoking my pipe - both calculated to make me lightheaded. However let the point be taken ϒ educate your daughters, Mama, in dancing and sociable graces of conversation ϒ your one son who is NOT already quite beyond redemption in the art of talking to anyone about nothing. It's such an effort for the Waterfields ϒ of course the Siepmanns have never learned or tried to learn - but so worth while.

[continued at top, upside down:]

I should rather like to go on with this but I ought to repay Mary, John Hogg and Bow. Please send me full cuttings of AP's elevation and encourage people to write to the lost soldiers of the 8th Army whom noone loves.

love always from

John

~ * ~

[BY AIR MAIL - AIR LETTER]

Lady Waterfield
Underdown
Tangier Rd
Guildford
Surrey
ENGLAND

[signed 'JPWaterfield' across top, faint shield-shaped mauve stamp "...SED ... OR ..5282"]
[One mauve 3d stamp, frank "FIELD POST OFFICE 317 27 JU 44"]
[annotated "July 17", black ink]

No 91 orphan but it's settled itself happily for the moment. The war seems very remote - very much love from John

25.6.44
1. KRRC

My dear Mummy and Daddy,

You would laugh to see me stop now and light my pipe! There's not a very good light in my office tonight because a blustering evening wind blew the bulb against the tent pole and bust it the other day and bulbs are very hard to replace in this odious land. All the lights in the towns have screw-in as distinct from our push-in type so all those we carefully brought over from Algeria proved useless here. I walked over to the mobile Cinema after dinner, set up on the side of a 3-tonner in B Coy's leaguer area. This was the first film I've been to out in the open since a day in December 42 before we went to the South of Agheila with the New Zealanders to the Nofilia battle. Those were great days when Christopher Consett (now a Major at Strensall) was commanding, the greatest natural soldier I've ever met. If Bow meets him he will be very fortunate. I had a letter from him (Christopher C) only a few days so. It's so sad that such virtues should be wasted, but Montgomery never forgets. The cinema tonight was so bad I packed up and came back to my office to write letters, a thing I

should ɤ would do more often if I wasn't so idle. Admittedly we've had a lot of guests lately to dinner but I never go to sleep in the afternoon like my colleagues and ought to have plenty of time for writing. There is always so much to write about and I

want to tell everyone so many excellent and amusing things. Yet they will for the most part go unrecorded and a big slice of my life I will inevitably never share with any of you as you will never be able to share with me the exact picture of your doings and thoughts and feelings in England during these past two years. It was Bette Davis in the film whom I loath. I notice all you, boys and girls, go frequently to films and write feelingly about them. I find, honestly, that it's hard to be interested in them. I've only been to two films in the last 18 months, in Algiers - one was Noel Coward in that Naval nonsense which I thought was appalling unless treated as a joke, although I was rather envious of the clean way in which the Navy fight - in their best suits, apparently, but waistcoat ɤ shirt sleeves, a very clean elegant and gentlemanly practice. The other film was Astaire ɤ Leslie in something or other, also in Algiers, in which occurred some excellent numbers incl "this will be my shining hour" which I ordered to be played at the five dances I attended following this! I've decided however that I like (a) Astaire and (b) Wild West and no others except the Citizen Kane which was terrific but if you missed Rosebud you'd missed the lot. From your letters I take it you missed!

I am wearing, because I can't be bothered to take it off, my new green beret, made by Mr Lock and sent out by Mr Welsh. It is most dashing and elegant. We have put offrs and WOs into them against the will of the War Office who refused us permission in spite of HRH's openly expressed

approval of them, given as Colonel in Chief, when he inspected one of the Bns in England. We hate the Adjutant General and like to think he hates us! But we manage although feeling hardly treated, to keep a greater measure of Regt Control over our personnel and affairs, certainly than our colleagues of the Cavalry, and probably than any other regt at all. Anyway the poor fellow has a lot to contend with. I'm afraid however that they are going about the post-war regular army commissions in an oddish way ɤ although I shall endeavour to stay in the Army as long as I can find a war, as soon as peace time soldiering becomes fixed again, I'm afraid a man of discrimination will be sunk and will be forced to double away!

I wonder how you are getting on with all your replies to congratulations and whether you are still bursting with pride. I hope so because it's quite right. Incidentally with no relevance at all... lest I be misunderstood... do you know the rhyme quoted in Storr's Orientations about a gallant public servant and his prayer to the Lord (Cromer) in Egypt - first as plain Mr... recently CMG

> "For ever with the Lord,
> Amen so let it be;
> That is the way to add a K
> To my well-earned CMG"

and later when his prayer has been answered, still unsatisfied:-

> "Most gracious Lord who gav'st to me
> My hardly earned KCMG
> Sustain me in my devious course
> With visions of a Knight Grand Cross".

Such are the soul-searching penalties of public service.

We continue to work hard though you might NOT think so and I get up at all hours of the night to flit about on lrg[?[143]]. This morning however I and John Hope were asked to breakfast at 10 am with the gallant Dog Company under Cmd Major Henry Howard to assist consumption of a newly procured ham. After breakfast beer... and later gin before lunch so for the first time for ages I had to sleep on Sunday afternoon. Rfn Deane was delighted to see it, he said. I nearly wrote to Mummy to

[143] 'IT' seems to be added in superscript above this - or two apostrophes and a stray bar - or that bar may be underlining ‘all’ in the previous line...

ask her to go down the East India Dock Rd to look at my Orderly Room Sgt's wife who has been misbehaving - (aren't women hell?) as he's an [cont at top]

[written up the middle of the inside pages - pretty much across the other writing:]

Do you not know any nice girls here? I am lost without my Algerian contacts!

~ * ~

[BY AIR MAIL - AIR LETTER]

Lady Waterfield
Underdown
Tangier Rd
Guildford
Surrey
ENGLAND

[signed 'JPWaterfield' across top, very faint shield-shaped mauve stamp]
[One mauve 3d stamp, frank "FPO No 53 7 JLY 44"]
[annotated "[arr] July 19", black ink]

No 92 7 July 44 1. KRRC CMF

My dear Mummy and Daddy,

A very hasty scribble before orders. You would laugh to see me sitting in our cmd veh, all specially fitted out with our own devices, puffing away at my pipe with two wirelesses chugging away, one fwd, one back, and people bustling about outside. I've got a very smart swivel chair of which we're extremely proud. We are in the drive, parked under the trees around the fountain of a wonderful Italian mansion on the top of a hill overlooking the scene of a well known battle, last read about by me in Livy at Dragon! The house has been placed at our disposal. It is full of paintings and prints and swords and old bound books - some of them English. It is pathetic to take down a dusty old volume and in the stiff yellowed cover find "Latterbury Hall '47 - to Emilia from her devoted friend..." The grandmother of the house was English and sits at the end of a seemingly endless series of passages and long low rooms, playing over and over again on a grand piano - "God Save the King". She is over 80. There is a beautiful bath room with green enamel furnishings, let in flush with the floor and wall as all bath rooms should be. If you remember the picture of the Saint that Ivor Gibson has got on his study mantelpiece you may picture where I have visited of late. These central Italian towns are fascinating and still Medieval in every way. However they are not so dirty as the South which was foul and the women are such that if I'm driving my head goes so fast from one side to the other than the veh swerves from curb to curb! No wonder Titian found something to paint. It's a most refreshing change from the slatterns of the South. The sun is shining and very warm. We had a long dusty drive up and we were burned brown. We saw some amazing things which I can't tell you about now but will one day.

The first night in our mansion we sat down to dinner with candles and silver on the table ɤ had roast duck and green peas. It's an odd war after the desert. Only a few miles from the enemy with one of our coys the forward tps!

I wonder how you all are. News I've had from John Hogg and others of ours now in 2nd front. Hogg is sitting in London still ɤ talks of going to the S.C!

I hope Mary's flap has passed over and she is NOT working so hard. Jill, too, I hope has got something 'interesting' to do. I wrote to Eric but had no reply. I also had a letter from Wreford-Brown showing he had not changed one bit. No letters from any of you for a long time and nothing from Charterhouse. Bow must be almost an officer now! I hope there is no difficulty about him going to a

Bn of the Regt - we are pretty well represented in France so it should be O.K. It's good to see so many old friends as we've met again up here and we are all very happy. Odd that that should be the case when you're active - idleness makes one definitely unhappy. I've still got the old zip and the Bridges Spirit of Man DMW gave me - slightly battered but O.K. I've written about shirts ɤ basin to A.P - please chase as my basin has had it! How is O.S?

I hope still alive and glad about the news which seems good all over the world. Will you send me Wavell's anthology and anything else in England to amuse me, esp photos of you all. I am always rebuked by Rfn Deane for having none for him to stick up! How is A.P ɤ his work - I shd like to hear about it all. I shd also be very grateful if he would 1) Sound Ch.Ch about the form after the War
2) Sound the world for employment for JPW -

[continued upside down at top of first page:]

He must have plenty of friends - also possibly find out what, if any, Mil qualifications will be of advantage to me looking for a good job - i.e Adjt of a Bn like 1/60th ɤ Battle Exp obviously OK but what about Staff Coll Camberly to which I could probably go eventually.

Write soon

much love from John

~ * ~

[BY AIR MAIL - AIR LETTER]

Lady Waterfield
Underdown
Tangier Rd
Guildford
Surrey
ENGLAND

[signed 'JPWaterfield' across top, shield-shaped mauve stamp "PASSED BY CENSOR 5282"]
[One mauve 3d stamp, frank "...ST O... 17.. 16 JY 44"]
[annotated "[arr] July 24", black ink]

No 93 14. Jul. 44 1. KRRC
CMF

My dear Mummy and Daddy,

It is good to be writing to you with so much to say and a little time to spare on it. After a year away from the business we've come back in a very big way and had a very good innings for the first time. It's encouraging to find that absence has in no way hampered our form. It's sad as always to see the casualties but inevitable. We are all in tremendous heart and it's, of course, wonderful for the Bn which is so happy again it's a joy to see. I'm sitting in the Cmd Veh, ingeniously fitted up with all sorts of gadgets and smart labels "JPW" ɤ "JCH" on trays and hooks by our LAD and puffing away at my pipe. The guns are plugging away hard up the road but it's restful not to be on two wireless sets at once with a telephone as well and guns firing in the dark just over ones head and a bit coming back as well! This is vastly different war to the desert and much more complicated and, I think, interesting. After all once the essential principles of existence had been learned there was not nearly so much scope there as there is here. My immediate sadness is the rapidity with which I lose pipes. I've lost two old David Karmel gave me and another someone else sent in little more than a week. Will you please get your friends who aren't immediately preoccupied to sort me out a few pipes and send them out. I find this pipe smoking is tremendously successful and makes me sit still and think a little, the first thing that ever has. I had a splendid couple of letters from A.P and tonight one from Jill, two Carthusians I guess supplied by Elinor B, and a letter from Stuttafords saying they

had received my cheque and would continue to supply you with goodies. AP and Jill wrote of your holiday at Hindhead, which sounded disappointing and of a happy day at Ch of which I am always delighted to hear. Sorry you didn't like L.Stone - doubt if I would now - certainly not his wife - I've changed my likes and dislikes a lot, I believe! But the Birleys should know now how to be better hosts. It's most unsatis that Jill finds teaparties etc a strain and she MUST be brought up more socially and learn to be a proper hostess herself! She writes Felicity B has been sent down from Oxf, without the fun of having been naughty - What on earth for? Who was the Ch. master who ran away from his wife?

Before I go any further AP's letters arrived just in time to hit what I'd sent off to you in my last alc on the hd: I should be most interested in the Foreign Service, particularly if I'm paid well ꝛ can afford to keep up my expensive tastes. Please send me further form on that ꝛ on other things as they arise or occur to you.

You forget, I fear how busy a man I am in offering me Livy although a copy might be very apposite just now. However I turned over the pages of one in the hill-town of __ the other day, the day David K. left us for S.O.E - shsh! in Jugland, a sad parting. A.P was dead right in his very long range guess. Humphrey Woods Cmd a Bn D.L.I. in Normandy has been killed - a very great loss and sadness for all of us.

[continued upside down at top:]

No recent news of Mary except a shocking story of vulgarity on the part of one of her officers. Do try ꝛ move her to another, if possible, ops sqn. It's so bad for her not to meet gentlemen at her age. This country here is heaven and the towns reek of a past history of battle, loot and lavish expenditure within castle walls. I'll try ꝛ write again before we leave here. v.m.l John

~ * ~

[BY AIR MAIL - AIR LETTER]

Lady Waterfield
Underdown
Tangier Rd
Guildford
Surrey
ENGLAND

[signed 'JPWaterfield' across top, no censor's stamp]
[One mauve 3d stamp, franked "FIELD POST OFFICE 317"]
[annotated "[arr] July 28", black ink]

No 94

KRRC
21. July 1944

My dear Mummy and Daddy,

It's just a week I see since I wrote last. I feel I must seize the opportunities of rest time to write although I feel very loth to do so this afternoon, so sticky and hot an afternoon is it. I am sitting at my improvised table in the garage of the villa of the Bishop of __, and I'm feeling very warm. I've been taking summaries of evidence all afternoon in cases of rfn who have run away - depressing job - I feel alternatively furious with them all and sorry for them. They are all either weak and hopeless or braggarts. The former I do feel sorry for; the others not at all. The silly thing is that they are sent down for varying stretches but, such is the shortage of manpower, that they are back if they don't biff anyone in the Fd Punishment Centre in what appears a very short time - on suspended sentence.

I regret to say I've been to sleep in the middle of this. Tonight I'm going up the road to dine with Tom Streatfeild Moore in the _ Grenadiers whom you will remember was in Saunderites a year

senior to me. It's odd how rarely I find a Carthusian ϒ how even more rarely I find them very impressive after 3 yrs going about the world.

Oh - before I forget, very many happy returns of the day to you Mummy. I've

sent you a telegram this p.m. I hope it reaches you but I don't know what means they use now - "Night letter mail" or something I believe. Will you please ask AP to use that power of Attorney of his to buy you a present from me for two guineas or so. I can't send you anything from here although there are silk stockings if you take a lot of trouble but very expensive and of inferior quality. I had a typed letter from Jill which seemed to me a very well executed performance in spite of her protestations of inefficiency and a very dreary letter from poor Mary who seems to be letting her sordid and unsatisfactory environment get very much the better of her. It's so sad but I'm sure if she'd only grab hold of her life instead of drifting through these feminine flurries and flaps she'd be much happier. She ought, obviously, to leave Henstridge. I've not heard from Bow for some time but wrote to him the other day about where he shd go when he is commissioned. We have two Bns in France now and may soon have another so he should not have much difficulty in getting posted. I'd like him to come here of course but there are a lot spare offrs of the Regt hanging about here and although my posn would

enable him to have priority we might not have any vacancy and nothing is more dreary than hanging about IRTD.

The sun is shining and there's a blue sky. It's quiet in Italy in the back areas. Since I wrote last we've been up to take or help take a publicized town, much battered; and decayed except for a lovely church. We played about in the valley beyond for a while and lived, Tac HQ, in the ruins of the town. This is an odd war where you get the mess up to the front line and dine off a polished table, goose and good wine, while your own Companies, a mile away are in contact and you yourselves are being shelled desultorily. The fruits are not yet ripe but exploring some back gardens I found a few plums ready ϒ a lot of pears which stewed well. It's of course a strain sitting on the wireless all day and night with perhaps two telephones to the gunners as well and a rear link wireless set to manage and I catch up on my sleep in places like this. We are sleeping in the villa with a lovely view over the vale, where Hannibal once marched, to further hills the other side. As the slight morning mist lifts ϒ I look out of the window while I shave all the palaces and towers and castles and villas begin to gleam brightly gold in the sun. It's a good country even if (<u>not</u> "as long as one doesn't") one has to fight in it. I find the general news overwhelmingly good

but missing papers and only hearing snatches of the wireless makes France and Russian seem very remote. I'm afraid one will find a lot of friends killed in France - do you know of many yet?

I think I told you Elinor Birley sent me the Carthusian which was very welcome. I should love some more books or papers - someone continues to send me a strange paper called "Message - Belgian Review" which I'm ashamed to say I now never open - I suppose it can only by Harry who would do it.

[cont upside down at top:]

Write soon - love John

[scrawled crossed the centre pages:]

Why was Felicity Berryson[?] sent down from Oxford - Jill hasn't told me! Brown Howard tells me his father was "made up" as rfn say

~ * ~

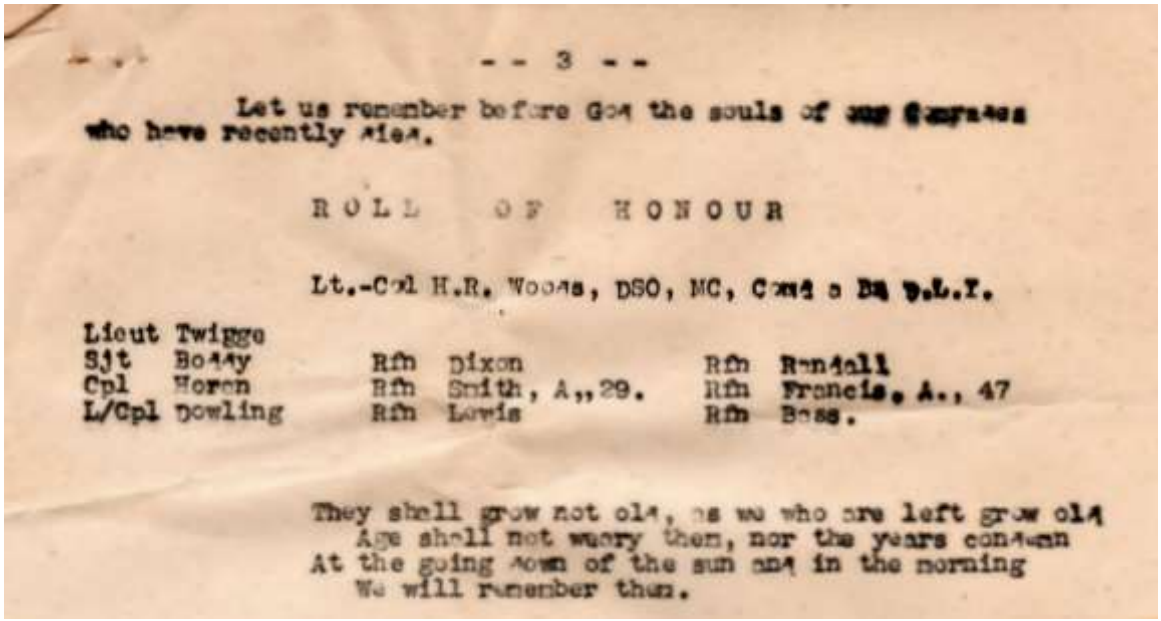
1. KRRC
CMF

Capt JPW.
21. 7. 44 .

I thought you might like to see this copy of a service we had in Italy a few days ago, for those first killed since we arrived here .

love John

~ * ~



- - 3 - -

Let us remember before God the souls of our Comrades who have recently died.

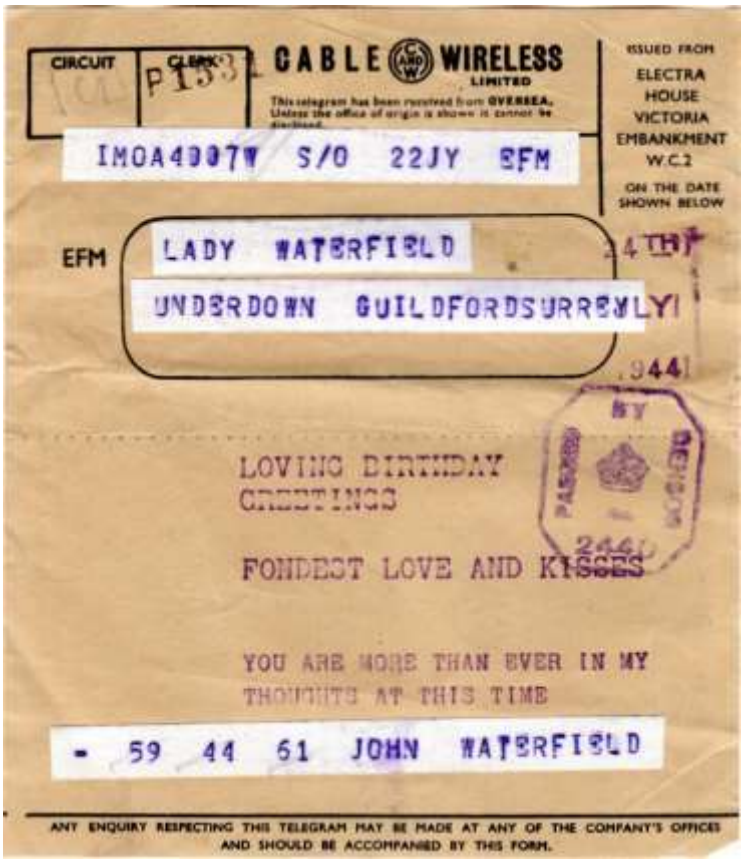
ROLL OF HONOUR

Lt.-Col H.R. Woods, DSO, MC, Comd 2 Bn D.L.I.

Lieut	Twigge				
Sjt	Bosley	Rfn	Dixon	Rfn	Randall
Cpl	Horan	Rfn	Smith, A.,29.	Rfn	Francis, A., 47
L/Cpl	Dowling	Rfn	Lewis	Rfn	Boss.

They shall grow not old, as we who are left grow old
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn
At the going down of the sun and in the morning
We will remember them.

18 - Roll of Honour from service July 1944



CIRCUIT P153 CLERK

CABLE & WIRELESS LIMITED

This telegram has been received from OVERSEA. Unless the office of origin is shown it cannot be disclosed.

ISSUED FROM ELECTRA HOUSE VICTORIA EMBANKMENT W.C.2 ON THE DATE SHOWN BELOW

IMOA4007W S/O 22JY 8FM

EFM LADY WATERFIELD 24TH

UNDERDOWN GUILDFORDSURREYLY

1944

PASSED BY CENSOR 2441

LOVING BIRTHDAY GREETINGS

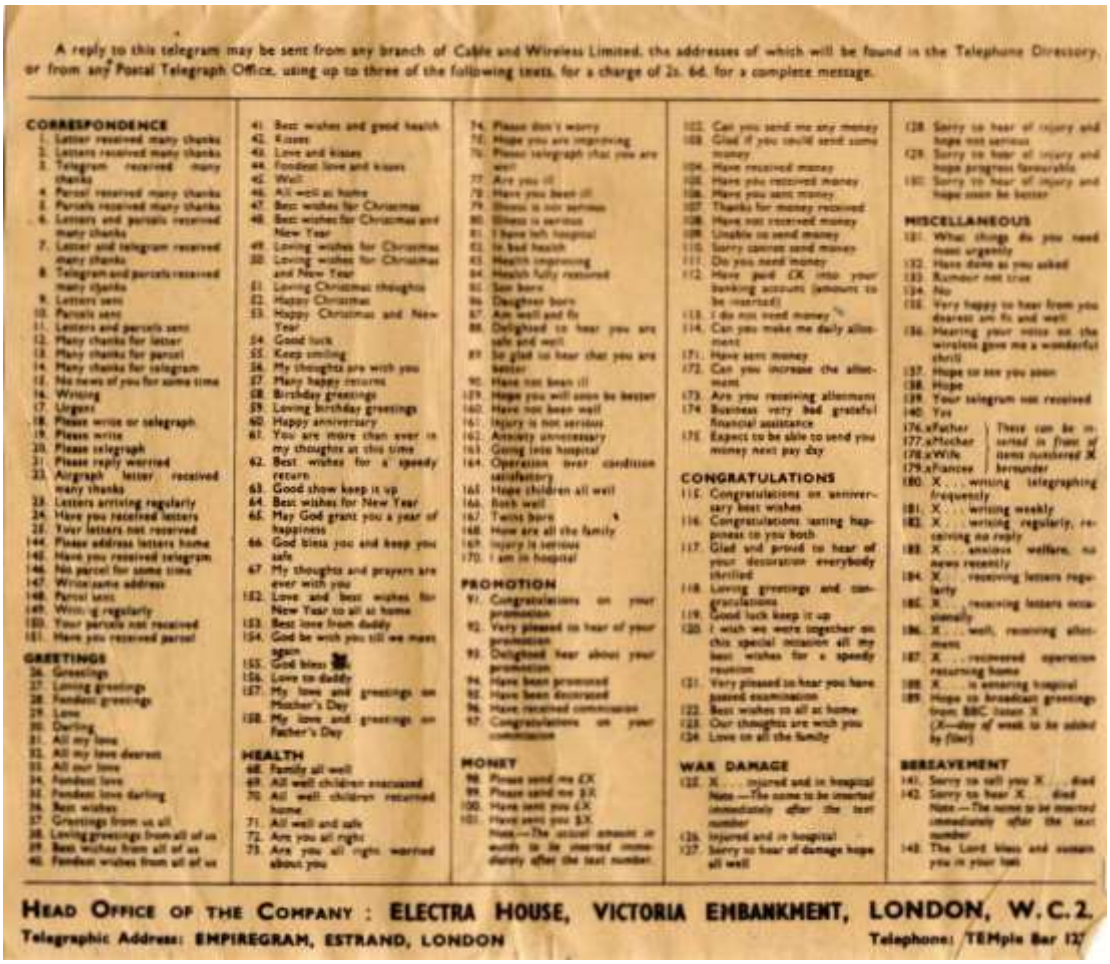
FONDEST LOVE AND KISSES

YOU ARE MORE THAN EVER IN MY THOUGHTS AT THIS TIME

- 59 44 61 JOHN WATERFIELD

ANY ENQUIRY RESPECTING THIS TELEGRAM MAY BE MADE AT ANY OF THE COMPANY'S OFFICES AND SHOULD BE ACCOMPANIED BY THIS FORM.

19 - Coded Telegram July 1944



A reply to this telegram may be sent from any branch of Cable and Wireless Limited, the addresses of which will be found in the Telephone Directory, or from any Postal Telegraph Office, using up to three of the following texts, for a charge of 2s. 6d. for a complete message.

CORRESPONDENCE

1. Letter received many thanks
2. Letters received many thanks
3. Telegram received many thanks
4. Parcel received many thanks
5. Parcels received many thanks
6. Letters and parcels received many thanks
7. Letter and telegram received many thanks
8. Telegram and parcels received many thanks
9. Letters sent
10. Parcels sent
11. Letters and parcels sent
12. Many thanks for letter
13. Many thanks for parcel
14. Many thanks for telegram
15. No news of you for some time
16. Writing
17. Urgent
18. Please write or telegraph
19. Please write
20. Please telegraph
21. Please reply wanted
22. Aerograph letter received many thanks
23. Letters arriving regularly
24. Have you received letters
25. Your letters not received
144. Please address letters home
145. Have you received telegram
146. No parcel for some time
147. Write same address
148. Parcel sent
149. Writing regularly
150. Your parcels not received
151. Have you received parcel

GREETINGS

26. Greetings
27. Loving greetings
28. Fondest greetings
29. Love
30. Darling
31. All my love
32. All my love dearest
33. All our love
34. Fondest love
35. Fondest love darling
36. Best wishes
37. Greetings from us all
38. Loving greetings from all of us
39. Best wishes from all of us
40. Fondest wishes from all of us
41. Best wishes and good health
42. Kisses
43. Love and kisses
44. Fondest love and kisses
45. Well
46. All well at home
47. Best wishes for Christmas
48. Best wishes for Christmas and New Year
49. Loving wishes for Christmas
50. Loving wishes for Christmas and New Year
51. Loving Christmas thoughts
52. Happy Christmas
53. Happy Christmas and New Year
54. Good luck
55. Keep smiling
56. My thoughts are with you
57. Many happy returns
58. Birthday greetings
59. Loving birthday greetings
60. Happy anniversary
61. You are more than ever in my thoughts at this time
62. Best wishes for a speedy return
63. Good show keep it up
64. Best wishes for New Year
65. May God grant you a year of happiness
66. God bless you and keep you safe
67. My thoughts and prayers are ever with you
152. Love and best wishes for New Year to all at home
153. Best love from daddy
154. God be with you till we meet again
155. God bless
156. Love to daddy
157. My love and greetings on Mother's Day
158. My love and greetings on Father's Day

HEALTH

68. Family all well
69. All well children evacuated
70. All well children returned home
71. All well and safe
72. Are you all right
73. Are you all right worried about you
74. Please don't worry
75. Hope you are improving
76. Please telegraph that you are well
77. Are you ill
78. Have you been ill
79. Illness is not serious
80. Illness is serious
81. I have left hospital
82. In bad health
83. Health improving
84. Health fully restored
85. Son born
86. Daughter born
87. Am well and fit
88. Delighted to hear you are safe and well
89. So glad to hear that you are better
90. Have not been ill
159. Hope you will soon be better
160. Have not been well
161. Injury is not serious
162. Anxiety unnecessary
163. Going into hospital
164. Operation over condition satisfactory
165. Hope children all well
166. Both well
167. Twins born
168. Hope are all the family
169. Injury is serious
170. I am in hospital

PROMOTION

91. Congratulations on your promotion
92. Very pleased to hear of your promotion
93. Delighted hear about your promotion
94. Have been promoted
95. Have been decorated
96. Have received commission
97. Congratulations on your commission

MONEY

98. Please send me £X
99. Please send me $X
100. Have sent you £X
101. Have sent you $X
Note.—The actual amount in words to be inserted immediately after the text number.
102. Can you send me any money
103. Glad if you could send some money
104. Have received money
105. Have you received money
106. Have you sent money
107. Thanks for money received
108. Have not received money
109. Unable to send money
110. Sorry cannot send money
111. Do you need money
112. Have paid £X into your banking account (amount to be inserted)
113. I do not need money
114. Can you make me daily allotment
171. Have sent money
172. Can you increase the allotment
173. Are you receiving allotment
174. Business very bad grateful financial assistance
175. Expect to be able to send you money next pay day

CONGRATULATIONS

115. Congratulations on anniversary best wishes
116. Congratulations lasting happiness to you both
117. Glad and proud to hear of your decoration everybody thrilled
118. Loving greetings and congratulations
119. Good luck keep it up
120. I wish we were together on this special occasion all my best wishes for a speedy reunion
121. Very pleased to hear you have passed examination
122. Best wishes to all at home
123. Our thoughts are with you
124. Love to all the family

WAR DAMAGE

125. X . . . injured and in hospital
Note.—The name to be inserted immediately after the text number
126. Injured and in hospital
127. Sorry to hear of damage hope all well
128. Sorry to hear of injury and hope not serious
129. Sorry to hear of injury and hope progress favourable
130. Sorry to hear of injury and hope soon be better

MISCELLANEOUS

131. What things do you need most urgently
132. Have done as you asked
133. Rumour not true
134. No
135. Very happy to hear from you dearest are fit and well
136. Hearing your voice on the wireless gave me a wonderful thrill
137. Hope to see you soon
138. Hope
139. Your telegram not received
140. Yes
176. xFather
177. xMother
178. xWife
179. xFiancee
These can be inserted in front of items numbered X
180. X . . . writing telegraphing frequently
181. X . . . writing weekly
182. X . . . writing regularly, receiving no reply
183. X . . . anxious welfare, no news recently
184. X . . . receiving letters regularly
185. X . . . receiving letters occasionally
186. X . . . well, receiving allotments
187. X . . . recovered operation returning home
188. X . . . is entering hospital
189. Hope to broadcast greetings from BBC listen X
(X—day of week to be added by filer)

BEREAVEMENT

141. Sorry to tell you X . . . died
142. Sorry to hear X . . . died
Note.—The name to be inserted immediately after the text number
143. The Lord bless and sustain you in your loss

HEAD OFFICE OF THE COMPANY : ELECTRA HOUSE, VICTORIA EMBANKMENT, LONDON, W.C.2.

Telegraphic Address: EMPIREGRAM, ESTRAND, LONDON Telephone: TEMple Bar 12

[BY AIR MAIL - AIR LETTER]

Lady Waterfield
Underdown
Tangier Rd
Guildford
Surrey
England

[signed 'JPWaterfield' across top, shield-shaped stamp "PASSED BY CENSOR 8035"]
[One mauve 3d stamp, franked "FIELD POST OFFIC.. 403 ..NO 44"]
[annotated "[sent] Nov.12 '1944", soft pencil, erratic writing]

12. Nov 1944 — as from 1. KRRC
No H.1 — CMF

My dear Mummy and Daddy,

Six blue cots and a great bare room are all my world at the moment. I am in ? General Hospital (Arezzo), and I have a view out of my corner bed over all the hills we fought over in July, now changing colour daily in the Autumn sun. We all have jaundice and are a hideous yellow, but you will be relieved to hear that apart from some turgid revolutions of my inside, yellowness, and an awful idleness I am very well. You may, I'm afraid, have been wondering what on earth has happened to me and indeed I cannot remember when I wrote last. A great many things happened to the Bn after I last wrote, not all of them happy. We had a very severe battle about which I can NOT talk[144] and lost a heavy proportion of our best owing to this awful weather which floods the rivers in a few hours beyond all possibility of crossing. When we came out of that we were billetted along the line of our recent advance and I went off for a couple of days down to ANCONA to chase up reinforcements. It's a flat uninteresting coast ɤ in the rain even more so... We are now in the middle of our evening meal and I have paused to eat my sliced peach and jelly, being "fat-free" - (the ordinary diet is whole peaches and tinned milk!) - and am plodding away again. Writing, stupidly, is rather an effort and although there are so many things I should like to put down, my hand will NOT keep pace with my head and I find I am putting down nonsense unless I keep my eye on it carefully. In this ward are some very average good fellows with an Indian doctor and a Canadian

farmer outstandingly the most interesting. The Canadian and I are both out of our own province of military evacuation as we were both in Florence on leave when disease overcame us. I came to Florence about four days ago with Rfn Deane and Leslie Mackay (comd our B Cy) £56[145] in my pocket and an open mind intending to have a very restful time at the Rifle Brigade villa where we keep a room. The villa is run for the three Rifle Bde Bns by a smooth fellow of unpleasant reputation but great ability at that sort of thing as a civilized house. It is a lovely place - the furniture is all there - every room has a bathroom with permanently available hot water and the butler and servants are those of peace time. On the first day we went shopping and there were so many things to buy - I ate nothing and went to bed before dinner - The next day I stayed in bed and the next day rang for an ambulance. In hospital they treat you as a brown paper parcel and you are ignored completely until they put you again

into an ambulance and slam the door. However I have no complaints when one thinks of all the people who are really sick and hurt. Do NOT cease writing, to the Bn. I will make every arrangement for the forwarding of mail but once things start being forwarded automatically doom falls. I had had so many excellent letters

[144] 119a refers to 'the Ronco (the river that rose in October)...' and 'the vineyard in Scores'.
[145] there is a small hole on the page obscuring what comes after the '5'. '6' is probable. Is £56 not a great deal (over half what his father recommended as savings? Could it be 5.6? - though that is presumably not enough. It couldn't be lira, even 500 would only be about one GBP at the time.

[continued upside down at top]

from you all before I went on leave I am put to shame for my idleness. I will however go on tomorrow. Aunt Winnie wrote very sweetly to me two long quite illegible letters - I believe mostly about her children. Very much love John

~ * ~



20 - Command White (in desert)

[BY AIR MAIL - AIR LETTER]

Lady Waterfield
Underdown
Tangier Rd
Guildford
Surrey
England

[signed 'JPWaterfield' across top, shield-shaped stamp "PASSED BY CENSOR 8035"]
[One mauve 3d stamp, franked "..IELD PO... OFFIC.. "]
[annotated "[sent] Nov.13 '1944", soft pencil]

13 Nov 1944 as from 1. KRRC CMF

H.2.

continued from yesterday. I am rather lucky in having a wireless just above my head and the ward has a nice bright light, both equally rare. The raucous twang of "Don't sweetheart me" combined with my general debility are making writing this a surprising effort. Outside the big plate glass windows and beyond the balcony - this was a civilian sanatorium - it's a bright Autumn day and the mist which earlier smothered the sun is falling back from the pine trees over the hills. We had an awful breakfast of cold porridge, cold tea, bread and hard boiled egg, but that is the dreary part of this illness - you dream of all the delicious foods and drinks you would like and then feel unable to compete with even the smallest piece that is put before you. Lying in bed these last two days has also

given me time to stop and think which I've scarcely done since before Alamein, not that I can think because everything is too confused and jumbled up but odd flashes and thoughts and memories come streaking at me as I lie dozing which I'd put away at the bottom of my Orderly Room caravan or underneath my equipment these past two years. You will know what I mean from your holidays together, no doubt, possibly from your recent one at Bude.

I found a Surrey Advertiser in the ward this morning. God knows how it got there but I read it all through and it made me laugh as I always did at it. Mary writes that you are thinking of selling Underdown and going to live in town until you retire. I wonder how seriously you are thinking of this. Socially it might be more fun for you but if and when we all get home we should, I think, regret it. I think I have not told you that Welsh has sent my woolly boots at last - they

are a perfect blessing and have been of great use to me. The quagmires some of these HQs put themselves into means that you have to step over your ankles in mud for half a mile or more to reach them and sitting about in our Cmd White with wet feet is unpleasant. I sent off a lot of the standard Xmas airgraph forms yesterday. I was rather sad to find how few people I could remember outside the family to whom such a thing would be welcome and I know that they are. I've sent 20 so far. They are of little character in themselves but they save a letter and make a gesture of remembrance. I must also try and write, when I am more coherent, to W.GW, whose 2 letters were quite illegible and anyway, from what I could decipher, about her grand children whose names I did NOT even know. I think she is marvellous to go on bustling about S. Devon in her same vigorous social way and I would dearly love to see her and Devonshire again. She is an authority on our relatives and I would like to ask her about a Frank Waterfield aged, say, 25, whom I've known as Adjt R.E in 1 Armd Div for some time and lately as G3 of a local Inf Div - we never discussed very closely our relationship, if any, but I take it there must be some. He was killed on a mine about 3 weeks ago. There are also the Florence Waterfields whom so many people know. I did not have time to go off to the villa and as we are so far away I have not pursued the idea of taking it over though I did receive a reply from the AMP authorities which, without being constructively

helpful did indicate a further line of approach. At the Rifle Bde villa, the one night I dined there, I met another fellow John Hornsby, whom I've known for about 2 yrs and always regarded as a bit of an old crank. He is Bde I.O to the R.B Bde and we were talking casually when it came out that he was Gordon Waterfield's brother in law. Do you know any Hornsbys?

There are a lot of things to buy in Florence, particularly leather, and all toilet things. Would you like me to buy you a sponge - I got myself a beauty - or that sort of thing if I can lay my hands on such things again. I have been thinking of Christmas (and am thinking now inevitably of food - we are keeping with us 3 turkeys in the mess veh so I must make haste and get back as there are officially no birds available in Italy this Christmas) and wondering what you would all like. Stuttafords have not told me that we are running out yet in credit there but I shall make it up soon. I hope a good parcel comes for Xmas. As to my ordinary presents for you - will you take £7.00 from my a/c and ensure some thing good is bought for them all on the scale of £1 each brat and £2 each of you.

The sun is shining now and the sky blue. Trees outside the ward are bare. The doctor, a Colonel, is doing his rounds but pays me slight attention. A dreary complaint this - no glamour about it. I have very little to read which is a nuisance but when I get back to the Bn I hope I shall find some of the many parcels you have all promised lately. I await news of Mary Martin ɤ Jill very eagerly they all were at testing times when I last heard. I hope Jill is well ɤ happily settled and Marys problems solved. That, I think, is enough for now. I hope you are both very well ɤ, if, working hard, working still happily.

love John

~ * ~

[BY AIR MAIL - AIR LETTER]

Lady Waterfield
Underdown
Tangier Rd
Guildford
Surrey
England

[signed 'JPWaterfield' across top, faint shield-shaped stamp "PASSED BY CENSOR No 7223"]
[One mauve 3d stamp, franked "FIELD POST OFFICE.. 22 NO 44 "]
[annotated "[arr] Nov 28", blue-black ink, writing much stronger]

No H 3 22 Nov 1944 as from 1 KRRC CMF - Military Hosp. ROME

My dear Mummy and Daddy,

Time flies by with a rigid routine of temperatures and bed making and it is over a week ago that I wrote last from Arezzo. The very next day they put me on an ambulance train in the evening, an ordinary train with stretchers tiered to the ceiling is all that is, gave me some very good cocoa and tinned fruit and told us we'd be in Rome in the morning. That we were and that I'm still here I must take on trust because all I saw was a railway station like Clapham Junc in the grey drizzling wet morning, another ambulance, "Reception" a cold slab of a room like all "Receptions" and another big airy ward. When I go to the lavatory I take a tiny stroll down some steps into the back areas where old grizzled fellows in dungarees plod about with boilers and such like and slag heaps sprout weeds. It's all much like any other institution Dragons, hospitals, offices the world over. I can see shrubberies - might be Park crescents or Cheltenham as much as Rome. But as you can tell I am much better and live on the next meal which is still "fat-free". The medical criterion of my health is, to be put it factually, whether my urine is yellow or NOT and as I do NOT dare cheat the pathetic specimens I put forward daily to the indifferent ape on his daily rounds [these] are the weakest parts of my case for getting up which otherwise I plead with brilliance. So officially I am still confined to my bed; but after tea which we have, as we have all meals, ridiculously early, at 3.30 I put on my jersey and battle dress tunic and sit at a table in the middle of the ward to write letters. Yesterday afternoon too I walked across the road to the bathhouse and was boiled pink. They will not give you towel or pyjamas in the place as officers are supposed to provide their own - God help the wounded - so I was very dirty and used the beautiful new sponge and unguents that I bought on my one and only day of shopping in Florence to the very best advantage. I also succeeded in persuading a patient more advanced than me to go out and buy me some more pyjamas so I am now resplendent in a suit of elegant blue silk! Of such trifling details is life made up. You know how it is. The plotting to get a second helping, the long term policy of making razor blades last, the ritual of reading every word of the Union Jack, the Army's daily newspaper, all assume proportions unthought of in normal life. It's always rather hard to read seriously and I've lost the inclination or the ability to

concentrate on anything much which makes me think but I have plugged away at an inordinate number of Penguin detectives (I believe there may be some scheme to send out parcels of mixed Penguins - someone told me about it - if there is will you try it because they are very suitable) a novel by L.A.G.Strong, Dewer Rides - (I've only just learned he was a master at Summer Fields) nearly all Shakespeare's Histories - Henry IV pts I & II very readable - Barchester Towers I am beginning when I'm dry of all others - I have never read Trollope - funnily enough except for his autobiography which is very honest indeed - ; I have got again by heart quite a lot of poems from Wavell's anthology - I like his human taste though there are some shockers in it. I left my Spirit of Man which DW gave me when I went first to Gloucester in Feb 42 before (as we thought) going abroad at the Bn. It is a pity because I could well have done with it here. I have also read a long book on the last war by Liddell Hart (the Real War) which makes me think, first, that the last war must have been hell, secondly that the English then were beyond all belief stupid and have, although, I suppose, still stupid in many ways, advanced great distances militarily, in particular, since then, and thirdly, that it is still not clear

how we ever won it. The causes are there but how we took advantage of them is NOT. I am now just starting St John Ervine's biography of Parnell. What a hellish

mother he had. I am lucky! They have just come round to take my temperature, and in a moment the sister will come again to take my pulse. Tomorrow morning another sister will come round and make a blob on the chart above my bed in public view - I always have a prejudice against that as I remember DW would never let us know our temperatures - ! Anyway mine is always 97.8 in the morning and 98 at night! I wonder how you all are and what you are doing. I very much hope soon to get a lot of letters from you when John Hope sends them on. Meanwhile go on writing

[continued upside down at top:]

energetically to the Bn and send me good reading and tell me all gossip. I think, though I am frantic to get back, that this enforced rest may be a godsend as I needed one rather and one must face the truth. However given time to think I find I am so frightfully ill-fitted at 23 for civilian occupation. I know nothing of politics, economics or every-day things all very worrying unless someone gives me a job much love John.

~ * ~

[BY AIR MAIL - AIR LETTER]

Lady Waterfield
Underdown
Tangier Rd
Guildford
Surrey
England

[signed 'JPWaterfield' across top, shield-shaped stamp "PASSED BY CENSOR No 7223"]
[One mauve 3d stamp, frank blurred ".... 642 2..NO 44 "]
[no arrival date noted, blue-black ink]

November 26 . 44 Captain JP.Waterfield
H. 4 as from 1 KRRC
CMF

My dear Mummy and Daddy,

Here is Sunday evening come round again and I am impelled to seize this opportunity of idleness to make up for all my omissions over the last six months. I am still in this odious hospital, waking up with a yawn to find a thermometer thrust into my mouth and cup full of salts rammed down my throat, quarrelling, daily, too with the sister over the position of my zip-bag (well-known on many a battlefield of tidiness). All very dull gossip for you. Why do these common women assume such tyrannical and unnecessarily emphatic vulgar ways when given a small amount of authority. It may be it's the way to deal with common officers ɤ that they are for the most part. I shall be allowed up tomorrow, I hope, although I am up to all intents and purposes now as I am sitting at a table in the middle of the ward. I have been talking to a fellow called Pollock who spent the first two years of the war up at Trinity Cambridge the second two as A.D.C to his uncle, a figure head of the 12th Army in Cairo, and the last year as L.O at 8 Army HQ. He is thinking of writing to his tutor to see how quickly he can get out of the Army to "continue his studies", though he has seen no war. Now it may be unreasonable self torment but I should feel a bit awkward if that was my contribution to the war and I was amused to find in the Times Anthology of their "Old and True" quotations which I picked up in the ward Dr Johnson holding forth as follows: "We talked of War. J - 'Every man thinks meanly of himself for not having been a soldier, or not having been at sea.' Boswell - Lord Mansfield does NOT.' J - 'Sir, if Lord Mansfield were in a company of General Officers and Admirals who have

been in service, he would shrink; he'd wish to creep under the table". That seems to put it very aptly. But one is torn between behaviour and not wishing to lose all opportunities after the war. If I could see quite clearly that I was NOT destined for a Japanese campaign, things would be clearer. If I was destined without doubt for that I should go unhesitatingly to the Staff College but that will NOT be clear yet. In the meanwhile, supposing I am as lucky as I have been hitherto I want to canvas around on every side for opinions ɤ suggestions, openings and offers. I am drawn to the F.S very

definitely; I shall be glad therefore of all information on the arrangements for that which you can properly give me. I am drawn, I must say, if that fails, to the bar but would probably have to embark on business instead because of this damned financial draw-back. Is there any more news about such things? What are AP's friends sons all doing?

How are you all now? This is probably, it occurs to me, a Christmas letter and brings you all my love and good wishes particularly for the family gathering on that day. I shall drink to you all, jaundice or no jaundice. The W.O have done very well because I hear news from the Bde that they have already begun to send men and offrs home on leave and the first lot will be home for Christmas as the P.M said. I think that is first-class. I have had no news of the Bn but they seem to be making slow progress but steady in our direction in appalling conditions. The news in N.Europe is most encouraging. I saw 3 weekly Times today and in each one there were three or four names of casualties whom I knew, incl Colin Fergusson. It's so difficult not seeing any proper news and of course I've not seen a Draconian or Carthusian since we've been in Italy. I have written to Bill Deedes in the 12th Bn who have had a hard time and have

mentioned Bow's posn to him, asking him to ask his Colonel for him if they wish any subalterns. I also wrote earlier to that pompous ass Kenneth Milne at Strensall asking him to send him off. These may have some effect. I am longing to get some letters but the forwarding takes ages and I dare NOT trust it for you to write here direct. I do hope Mary is better and more settled and in congenial surroundings - her contacts are the key to it, I'm sure. I have written to them all though

[continued upside down at top:]

somewhat cursorily to Bow ɤ Jill which I'll amend. I've sent Xmas cards (of a dreary standard design) lavishly to everyone ɤ am shocked at how very few people I know. Barchester Towers I have finished - it is most agreable. Love always John.

How is O.S - I hope you look to cheer him

~ * ~

[BY AIR MAIL - AIR LETTER]

Lady Waterfield
Underdown
Tangier Rd
Guildford
Surrey
England

[signed 'JPWaterfield' across top, shield-shaped stamp "PASSED BY CENSOR No 7223"]
[One mauve 3d stamp, franked "FIELD POST OFFICE 642 4 DE 44 "]
[no arrival date noted, royal blue ink]

No H. 5(a) 3 Dec 44 as from 1 KRRC
actually hospital Rome

My dear Mummy and Daddy,

There are so many things to write to you both about and many more to answer in your letters which have reached me here. These were AP's of Nov 13 (24) ϒ Nov 1 (23) and DW's of Nov 2 and Nov 6. I was sitting after tea in the ward in my bright blue silk pyjamas (bought in Florence on my only day up there) jersey and Italian made slippers, out of an old haversack belonging to the Army and local sole leather, ϒ reading Blackwood's Magazine, - it was my first day officially up, when in came Bill Channing from the Bn, beaming all over his sleek Eton ϒ Harvard face, (he is the only one of the original Americans, hand-picked by Winant, to survive intact) with his arms high-piled with parcels and letters for me. He brought me all the Bn gossip with letters from John Hope and Colonel Alick and I was glad to find that they have been doing no more than trg the rfts and are only just now back in the battle or the edge of it so I've missed nothing, luckily. There were the letters from you I've mentioned and one or more from each of the children and others from such as John Hogg at 2nd. Army HQ ϒ Bill Deedes and that fat piece of pretentiousness Kenneth Milne who continues, somehow, to be Adjt at Strensall. There was tobacco from Dunhill and a parcel of books from Truslove ϒ Hanson so I expect I have to thank A.P for those. You have no idea what a pleasure the letters all gave me and what a thrill it is to get even the smallest parcels. These books were exactly the sort of thing that is particularly readable, Pipeline to Battle ϒ Burma Surgeon. I've only read the former so far and it is a very fair honest and without being flashy, vivid picture, in a sort of indirect way, of what the desert was like. He is, (the author) a colonial ϒ therefore omits many things which are equally part of the picture but selection there must be and it's the way the impressions of the life are selected that makes a book individual and readable rather than dull reportage. I will answer some of your points, brought up in the letters, later on. Meanwhile I shall wait to hear any more from you all until I get back because it is no use having all kinds of mail chasing you all over the countryside. Post N.COs are NOT clever and are all overworked. So I shall anticipate

a greater pile of good news which will be my Xmas present from you all, waiting for me in the custody of Rfn Deane. John H mentions that a parcel labelled gloves has come too so very many thanks for that. Bill Channing went off but he called around in Rome ϒ told various people I was sick so I've had several visitors and one, Colin Popham, who used to serve with us, ϒ is now graded, and is on the Staff of 8 Army Rest Camp, has invited me to go ϒ spend my convalescence at his Mess which I know from previous visits when they were near Bari will be very luxurious ϒ comfortable. So I've accepted gratefully and hope that I shall be able to persuade my doctor, a nice fat man with a twinkling eye and glasses, called Major Telling, that that will be much better for me than the dreary Convalescent Depôt which among other terrors makes you do P.T! As to myself now - I have made great strides since I wrote last Sunday. I have been up five days today, the last three of which I've spent walking, walking, walking over Rome's hard pavements. This is, I'm certain, good for me and after a wobbly start when I scarcely trusted myself to cross the street ϒ walked twice round the Colosseum before I realized I had come to the other side of it, I became firmer and today was out to lunch and tea and walked about six miles, I should guess. I find it more convenient walking by myself because although

there are some pleasant fellows here in the Guards with whom I lunched I find that unless you know someone very very well lounging about looking at shops, antiquities ϒ people is apt to be a boring proceeding when with someone else - one has to keep on looking round to see where the other fellow has got to. I had such a good walk today and I am so devilishly unused to walking that my feet are blistered and my shins stiff; but I feel pleasantly tired and very much better for it.

cont.

~ * ~

[BY AIR MAIL - AIR LETTER]

Lady Waterfield
Underdown
Tangier Rd
Guildford
Surrey
England

[signed 'JPWaterfield' across top, shield-shaped stamp "PASSED BY CENSOR No 7223"]
[One mauve 3d stamp, franked "FIELD POST OFFICE 642 4 DE 44 "]
[no arrival date noted, royal blue ink]

Dec 3 No H. 5(c)[146] contd.

I seem to be going on happily enough. I hope you are not bored. I don't ever remember writing three alcs to you before in one session but there is now no excuse for my NOT doing so as I've written some very long ordinary letters while I've been here, there is no hurry, though the sister has made her first round and may threaten with the light soon, and I have plenty of alcs, brought in very kindly by the above-mentioned C.Popham. To go on for a little with Rome. There is really too much to see. I am reserving a whole day for St Peter's and the Vatican and I must do over the Forum properly. It's amazing how ignorant I am although I spent 13 odd years studying Roman language, literature ϒ history - I never have connected up the place and the school book ϒ class room before ϒ it is hard to do it now. I went to a splendid exhibition of paintings in the Palazzo Venezia this morning. I shall go again. It was marvellous to walk quietly through a room ϒ look at pictures. There were paintings by Rafael, Botticelli, Titian, Tintoretto, Piero di Francesca, a splendid single Giorgione - The Storm - Rubens, one outstanding Velasquez Innocent ?VII, Correggio, Hans Holbein, Caravaggio Bellini and a few others. They have been especially collected but I do not know by whom because the catalogues were sold out when I got up the stairs. There was a great crowd and I shall try ϒ go at a less popular time. That is enough I think about myself. Now to turn to some of your affairs. I wish I was not so far away. It's such a pity that I am missing contacts which would be invaluable ϒ I cannot discuss with you so many of the things we can only touch vaguely on, ϒ hint at in letters. Firstly Xmas presents. You will have my a/c and issue what is most wished for, covered by my price, to all those concerned. The list suggested by AP sounds pleasant enough. This may be my Xmas letter to you, I don't know, but in any case I send you all my love for that day ϒ I shall be thinking of you; I will even definitely raise an alcoholic glass (in spite of jaundice) to all your healths - next Xmas I WILL be back. I am delighted to hear about the flask which WGW has so kindly released. It will be a god-send for me. Bow ϒ Jill write quite cheerfully. I have had a pompous letter from Milne about Bow

(among other things) and in my reply I've put again a note about stagnating at Strensall. Mummy do NOT worry - it is NO GOOD in the end for the boys themselves though Hell for you all, I know. It's just got to be. A.P. tells me of one COWLYN, as if I knew him, but do not forget I do NOT know Martin's friends or the young officers of the Regt and I've never heard of him! What is he ϒ what does he do? Evelyn Joll I am glad to hear (I deduce this from circumstantial evidence rather than information!) is in the Regt - I remember him as a little boy at Dragons. Bow seems to have some pleasant friends but only nice people, on the whole, do get into the Regt. Meanwhile he learns a bit every day ϒ I think develops, happily and independently - I doubt if I'd know him on the street and how he's changed since I spoke to him last!

Jill writes as if tight bound by what others, (she thinks and maybe they do) expect of her - I hope you won't ride her because academics have been, in a way, overplayed, and its NOT fair on those who find it a great effort ϒ I think she does. Socially she doesn't seem to have moved around as much as I'd expected ϒ I do hope she does because it's so important. Noone but Bow can impress it on himself but it's his job to get his friends to meet Jill ϒ Mary ϒ take them out. It's essential and if there

[146] H 5(b) appears to be missing.

had been the proper type of person around Mary a lot of this distress would have been obviated - or so I believe. It's absolutely unbelievable to me that our little Jill is an undergraduette (if that doesn't offend you) - independent and, supposedly, self-sufficient. But a 2nd. term is the one that will tell I think. I hope she'll go away & stay for a bit of those horribly long breaks they have at the University. But don't let the Siepmann bogey loom over her too much - I shall have to go onto a fourth![147]

~ * ~

[BY AIR MAIL - AIR LETTER]

Lady Waterfield
Underdown
Tangier Rd
Guildford
Surrey
England

[signed 'JPWaterfield' across top, faint shield-shaped stamp "PA... C.. .. 7221"]
[One mauve 3d stamp, frank smudged]
[annotated "[arr.] Jan.13", blue-grey ink]

2 . Jan . 45 . | No | as from 1. KRRC CMF

My dear Mummy and Daddy,

As I started to write this the lights went out, about tea-time - most annoying - but now half an hour later, which I've spent sucking oranges, they are on again. I get three alc's per week & this is one of my issue brought to me, with cigarettes (which I still don't use) matches and one bar of very plain chocolate, by the orderly this morning. Since I wrote last, in a vilely administerial hospital thirty miles or so up the coast, I have settled in here. It is surprising how hospitals vary in treatment & atmosphere. There are Italian women (who seem to spend their time in the lavatories!) and men in most of them to help with stretcher-bearing & washing up. They all get the same rations. The buildings are much the same shape. Yet some, due to a benevolent & efficient administration, are many times better than others, and the worst are vile! This is pleasantly placed on the top of one of the craggy ridges, exposed and bare but crowned with church towers and villages and for the most part cultivated, or covered with vineyards, which run hereabouts at right angles to the coast. It was not far South of here that we lay hid in the summer, in late August & early September, in the Army concentration before the battle, a time when the myth of the [?[148]] "armoured swan" (ask someone in 8 Army what "swan" means[149]) was at its height &

journalists and generals alike believed, for some private cause, that tanks would sail majestically over the Po Valley to Venice, as it were before the war on Bulford plain, with a hamper of cold fowl, meringues and a bottle of Chianti for the luncheon picnic! From the lavatory window is a pleasant view of the small town whose church is alleged to have been flown from Nazareth by the angels[150], not without one or two halts on the way, and beyond of the sea, grey and white foaming now, and lashed with snow flakes driving before the wind. Ambulances climb the hill.

I am comfortable and have come under the care of Colonel Slater, James Cunningham's relative, as I told you, who is a most charming Scotsman and invites great confidence. He is reported

[147] also missing...
[148] torn at bottom of page, illegible word: [] []eat : 'great'?
[149] not actually bracketed in the original, inserted interlineally.
[150] This is Loreto, on the east coast of Italy.

to have been the best doctor in Edinburgh, so thinking to kill two birds with one stone of opportunity, I asked him to have a look at my nose and so on, which though irritated on the desert and again in the dust of last summer, has never been bad but a nuisance. He says I have "chronic rhinitis", after looking at it through an odd instrument, and a very narrow passage which we know! He says he will cure it but has not said how. I shall be glad if he will ɤ if it can be done, as appears probable, concurrently with this jaundice which makes inevitably slow progress so much the better. I told you how the oculist at 48 General Hosp in Rome when

I visited for a check, reported NO change nor any likelihood of any in my eyes.

I find I have used up too much room already on my own dreary ailments and I was thinking last night of all the many things I wanted to talk to you both about and think continually of such things all day. There seems little time or space. Meanwhile please accept a great hug of thanks for all the splendid Christmas presents which have now come, I think, Complete in number. The books I unwrapped on Christmas Eve and they have been a blessing to me in hospital. Only one, about some Chinese by Kenneth West, I have been unable to compete with! I have told Mary all this so to economize space please see her letter which I wrote two days ago - there are some important things in it. My Welsh coat is also here, sent on by John Hope from the floods where the Bn is, though not very actively, employed. It is excellent. I now look forward to the flask and perhaps some more books. I do get and read the Man Guardian and am most grateful for it but it is not the same as the Times - I want fact rather than opinion - is there still no hope of getting one for which I would bless you for ever? Please send me your wishes about Stuttafords - shall I order some stockings - Mary has the particulars. I am just about to send my periodic cheque to them on your behalf.

I have been looking through my letter file (I burn all letters!) of which I've not seen the bottom almost since I got it, in BARCE in '42, and I came across a sermon of RB's which

DW sent me - it is clearly his though with no heading, - on courage and I read it again with more than interest. It is funny, in that connection, to think that I had a letter the other day from old Theo Zinn, a Cpl in Burmah in the Intelligen.. ..[151] the only one of my Carthusian contemporaries from whom I have heard. I do not regret my contemporaries for the most part and I believe the few others are dead. Do you ever hear news of them now? I have heard nothing from or of Charterhouse for a very long time. Please get me a Carthusian ɤ write me all the gossip. You used also to send me all sorts of amusing Siepmannera - wh.. are they all about now? Damn - n..

[cont. upside down at top]

more room - I will go on another day - write plenty.

always much love John

~ * ~

[BY AIR MAIL - AIR LETTER]

Lady Waterfield
Underdown
Tangier Rd
Guildford
Surrey
England

[signed 'JPWaterfield' across top, shield-shaped stamp "PASSED BY CENSOR No 9499"]
[One mauve 3d stamp, franked "FIELD POST OFFICE 755 12 JA 45"]
[no arrival date noted, blue-grey ink]

[151] marginal letters lost in the fold here.

No 112 9 January 45 . as from 1. KRRC CMF

My dear Mummy and Daddy,

Time flies when one is sick and I see it's a week since I wrote last. I moved on in spite of all my hopes, away by ambulance on a cold-snowing morning to a ruined port, by lighter to a hospital ship, and 24 hrs later by ambulance here. The hospital ship was an Italian one, staffed by R.A.M.C and they treated us kindly enough. I was glad of my fur coat, boots ϗ gloves but my liver must have oscillated inside me to the motion of the Adriatic because I became vastly more yellow for a day or two. But I was more than delighted, as I climbed the steps of the hospital, spurning the dangerous Italian stretcher bearing talent, to find Peter Wake crouched ϗ draped round a walking stick but much better and ready to claim me into his own small ward. He has been living here for four months and has twice nearly died, being pumped full of penicillin, about £90,000 worth[152] or more, to save him. He has a room where I am writing now for three but we have to ourselves and he was quite alone before I arrived with oil stove, wireless and innumerable books. We have had great fun of course because I am very fond of him and we have soldiered together for years. He is much more able than his two elder brothers Toby (who has a Coy in 2nd. Bn) and Roger, (in the Navy) and has qualities which will take him far, I am sure. We have not stopped talking since we met here and have been in fits of laughter con-

tinuously which has done us both good, but he is off today to Naples and from there will almost certainly go home to England, because he will not be fit for active Regimental duty for at least another six months. So no more gossip, cigars or books which alone make this ghastly hospital inhabitable. For some reason the bleak Adriatic barrenness makes the hospitals less attractive in every way than those the other side. Perhaps it's not really surprising. This one has been in this white and grey town 13 months. There is a thirteenth century cathedral, a fishing fleet (though we do not see their catch) and garbage in the streets. There is nothing else. The plumbing again does not exist and the sisters are sadists. Behind the lines of the Allied Armies in Italy souls are destroyed! But I am not as gloomy as all that. Peter is now bringing up all his boxes and kit so there will be no more peace for me this morning. I will continue later.

Well we have done with packing and had a row with the popinjay of a Colonel doctor who wishes now to put me into the big ward which is like freezing ice. I suppose I must be resigned to this because I have been spoilt. Peter will certainly come and see you all as soon as he is well; in fact he says it will be the first thing he will do, so look out for him. His father's address as you know is Maj Gen Sir Hereward Wake CB CMG DSO, Courteenhall Northampton, so AP can ask him to luncheon at his club. Do you yet belong to the Athenaeum[153] Peter W has written to Toby W to ask for Bow to come to his Company in the 2nd. Bn. I know

Mummy does not like all this sort of thing, but it's better for everyone in the end, I know. Toby is probably the best Coy Comd in the 2nd Bn though he was thought rather an ass with us but in those days he was naturally the inferior of the others Humphrey Woods, Sandy Goschen ϗ John Hope. In case your Admiral asks again you may know that Humphrey Woods, a Lt.Col Comd a Bn of D.L.I[154] in 50 Div was killed after a fortnight in France, a very sad loss. I am of course hopelessly out of touch with you all and with Carthusian gossip and news. I have been fairly industrious about letter writing however and hope that when my mail comes down from the Bn there will be plenty to read and digest. I hope you will be able to send me a Carthusian and news of people. I have not heard anything from you about the Birleys, Chignells or anyone for ages. I often wonder too what has happened to Michael Hoban. I have heard nothing of him. But strangely enough I got a letter from poor old Zinn - as a Cpl in some strange unit called 2nd Spec W/T Gp (whatever that is) in India. It came via Saunderites as many of my letters do! I complain continually but I must confess that in spite of it I get quite the largest number of letters of anyone in Bn HQ Mess, though a regrettably small proportion are readable or welcome. Will you send me some of the latest Siepmann documents. I have had nothing from

[152] penicillin was but recently introduced mid-war, see eg http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4112708/.
[153] "?" probably lost off the edge.
[154] ? "D.L.J"

anyone about Eric or Charles for a year. I hope O.S is holding out against the winter. Send him my love. I wonder too about poor old Mary and hope she is herself again. I cannot still believe that such odd things happened or could happen to our Mary and I do fervently hope she will soon be well and get a suitable job as secretary to some old fellow in the Foreign Office

or M of I where all my girl friends or friend's sisters seem to idle away their time with no qualifications whatever except a pleasant sociability! It's grey and cold outside but I am lying in bed smoking a fat cigar and Peter is sitting at the bottom of the bed with another. They are the last of the box his sister sent from Cairo. I wonder when we shall get another. I am smoking my new pipe in and finding it excellent. It is a well-made pipe but smoking in bed is (by me anyway) rather untidy. They are going to turn me into the beastly big ward, I'm afraid. But I have a hide like a rhinoceros and am impervious to everything. Did I tell you Christopher Cox wrote me a pompous a-graph, spurred to it by my Xmas card. He is still

[cont. upside down at top:]

at the Colonial Office. Write soon. Always much love John

[written across the centre pages:]

P.S. and N.B. Please send me the list of New Year Honours. I NEVER see a paper.



21 – Peter Wake

~ * ~

[BY AIR MAIL - AIR LETTER]

Lady Waterfield
Underdown
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Guildford
Surrey
England

[signed 'JPWaterfield' across top, shield-shaped stamp "PASSED BY CENSOR No 9499"]
[One mauve 3d stamp, franked "FIELD POST OFFICE 755 16 JA 45"]
[no arrival date noted, blue-grey ink]

No 113 14 January 45 . as from 1. KRRC
CMF

My dear Mummy and Daddy,

It is Sunday again and as there is nothing else of importance to occupy my time, I shall write the old'uns another letter. I don't know how long it takes for an a.l.c to reach you these days but a pretty steady stream should have been arriving this last week. I have written to each one of the brats. What family procedure is nowadays I again do not know but no doubt the lawful bits of each are retailed over the breakfast table, those suitable for the young from yours and those which breathe no new-fangled scandal from theirs. Between you all, you will have got a very fair picture of my doings, limited though they are. I wish I had the same detailed picture of all your lives now. Of course I have had no letters yet, none since Christmas Eve, but I am sure it is no use giving you temporary addresses all over Italy. Post N.C.O.s are horribly unreliable and noone can be sure of his whereabouts a week ahead. Nothing is more irritating than to have letters chasing around after one in this country. It is, however, annoying that a letter posted in the Bn is considered rapid if it reaches me in 12 days here in hospital and I doubt if your letters to me average over 7 days in coming - that is when I am in the Bn. Here the normal inefficiency of hospital routine is going through its Sunday gloom. The electric light is always failing and as there is a shortage of candles we live in darkness after 5 p.m. The beds have been made this morning and the floors swept. A dapper little barber is soliciting custom; although my hair is shamingly long I cannot be bothered to let him maul me until tomorrow. We await the arrival of the doctor, who wears the rank badges of a Colonel for some reason. Yesterday I made an attack on him to let me get up but after pummelling me severely he said my liver is still large and ordered me injections of insulin! These I get twice a day and no doubt they shrink my liver somehow.

I feel much better now and have plenty to read. I have written a great many letters to all sorts of people to make up for past omissions. Peter Wake went off to Naples and is probably on ship-board by now. I finished off his box of cigars sent by his sister from Palestine two nights ago. I am now smoking in my new pipe. It will be a good one ɤ I think with grateful affection of poor A.P in the queue whenever I take it up. I feel rather lost and out of touch now with everything. Peter ɤ I could gossip but the people here, as one would expect are very dreary indeed. Most people in the Army are. That is why they all say how dull Rome is when they go from one officers club to another; in some you get bully stew and others macaroni; in some you find tarts provided as dancing partners; in others you may not take civilians; in all there is an anaemic band ɤ an atmosphere of stale sweat and false gaiety. But they, the Army officers, bring it on themselves because that is what they like. It's interesting to see how much better the Americans do the same style of thing, though it's all chromium plate and loud noises, it's clean and cheerful and gay - Turkish baths (whoever heard of the English providing such a thing - most of them have inhibitions about a manicure!) and ice-cream and hot chocolate and a loud band. "Say Captain," one came up to me, a total stranger, "was you at Medjez-el-Bab" "yes" I answered meekly, "Well (crescendo) put it there, 157 Field Regt, Captain " - as if I'd ever heard of them. If you take them as they come they are all right. I wonder what is going to happen to the battle in Italy. I will not speculate in detail because I shall find myself on dangerous ground and on the whole I have been good about censorship these past 2 years. Do you not think so? But it feels as if some

oddities or excitements are in the air. I doubt if it will much affect the 1st. Bn of the 60th. Rifles however. I think the Bn has probably got something in the New Years Honours but I cannot get hold of a copy of the General Routine Orders (GROs) to see. I shall have to wait until I get up unless, as I hope, Rose Whitaker comes to see me this afternoon. She rang up to say she would, from Bari, where she works as an A.T Captain in one of the "secret societies." She may bring her brother Tony with her who is a great friend though quite mad ɤ useless as a soldier. I rather wish to see if Alick W has got a DSO and as Rose was once one of his flames in England (before he married!) it's fair enough for her to let me know. Anyway we shall be able to have a good gossip about everyone if she does come and it will cheer me up. You might look up in the directory a Colonel Crookenden who lives at Binfield, Bracknell. He has 3 sons ɤ the eldest Henry, aged about 32, was $2^{i}/_{c}$ to Leslie Mackay in B Coy and got blown up on a mine in September. He left here for Naples 3 weeks ago, together with his younger brother Spencer, a Major in the Sappers, who by a coincidence has been in the next bed to him for 4

months. Now they can both be moved they will be on their way home. As I believe they may be put (as was the practice before France) in hospital near their homes, you might be able to go ɤ see Henry, who is a very great friend of mine and quite one of the nicest and ablest people I know. He has been terribly aged ɤ weakened by these wounds in his leg but may well get in touch with you himself. I'd like you to see him and a note or 'phone to their home would get detail. Peter Wake will assuredly look you out. I have been reading Northanger Abbey ɤ Persuasion with pleasure. I think Miss Austen comes better now than younger. I will read any Everyman Trollope you send me. I seem to have covered 3 pages without saying much. That is ever the way. There are lots of things to say which I think

of when I am half asleep and then there is no room to write them. As for AP's CSSB's, I think WOSB personnel are the most suitable to run them if they have proved themselves. There should be NO prejudice against this. I hope there will be some study of record and due considerations given to that and interview in proportion to trickery. I am not convinced of trickery's definitely right decision, not because the method is at fault but because I suspect that candidates are not convinced of it and therefore approach "tests ɤ trials" in a flippant, indifferent or obstinate frame of mind. A weakness itself in the candidate you say - maybe, but seriousness after 3 years active service needs direction. Being told to do puzzles may come naturally amiss. Tell[155]

P.S ([1]) Henry Crookenden will be in the Wingfield Oxf. ɤ may lose a leg - tell Jill to go ɤ see him. ([2]) I've had two visitors ɤ am in tremendous form! 3) Can you get me an Italian Baediker - North of Rome

[continued vertically up centre of inner pages and upside down at top:]

me how you are getting on - I have not seen any publication yet so criticism or comment is really futile. Hope the family are well. Send me the gossip. Always much love John

~ * ~

[BY AIR MAIL - AIR LETTER]

Lady Waterfield
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Surrey
England

[signed 'JPWaterfield' across top, shield-shaped stamp "PASSED BY CENSOR No 9499"]
[One mauve 3d stamp, franked "FIELD POST OFFICE 755 23 JA 45"]
[no arrival date noted, blue-grey ink]

No$_{(a)}$114 21 January 1945 as from 1. KRRC CMF .

My dear Mummy and Daddy,

This week has flown by. I have made great strides and this is now my fourth day up. I have not left this hospital either for further evacuation. I seem to have been in so many this time, but I can only go to Naples from here which would mean a graded man going to the Reallocation Centre or a sick man coming home. I am neither. My liver has behaved very well and as a result of the jabs of insulin or my own determination, my yellowness has almost entirely disappeared and my doctor could find nothing wrong with me on Thursday so, striking hard, I appealed to get up and after a short but ineffective rear-guard action, persuaded him, on condition I was gentle. As there is no traceable relationship between the treatment administered by the sisters and the treatment ordered by the

[155] the letter runs straight on to the post-scripts, while the sense darts to the text across the middle of the inner pages and upside down at the top.

"Medics" (as the Americans call them) I was in no way surprised to be ordered briskly by the sister $^{i}/_{c}$ to get up for luncheon on the following day and go downstairs for it. I insist still on remaining in bed for breakfast and refuse to wash or shave until after breakfast and after my pipe. This does not throw out any routine and I reappear spruce and nice smelling from the excellent Herbal Shaving Stick in time for the doctors rounds, having escaped the Matron's rounds, which take up a lot of energy smirking and chitter-chattering. It is rather sad to see the other people here in hospital. They all seem to have been accountants or garage proprietors (Did you know a garage used to make £10 profit on every 1000 gallons

sold and with 6 pumps in a street with 15 other garages one fellow here sold 3000 gallons a week) and they are not an impressive cross-section of the Army. The Army does NOT (except in v.good operational units) make the mean, insignificant and petty man into anything bigger. The R.A.F is different, an odd mixture of horrible groundsmen and pilots who are different beings in the air from on the ground. They have no command and responsibility ceases out of the aeroplane for them, ɤ unless they are nice by nature, they then turn impossible.

The oranges are coming along and I have two, instead of porridge, for breakfast every morning. Do you ever see an orange? I suppose these come from Palestine or Africa. The orange groves in Boufarik last year, at this time, with the sun glistening on the dew drops still on the fruit, are pleasant to remember.

You will have a detailed picture of my doings and so will the brats. I have been, I think, very fairly good about letter writing and you should make them show you the letters they get in case I forget anything which may interest you here. I have still no news or letters from you or the Bn. I wrote to John Hope on the 6th. of the month telling him to send on all my letters to date and to hold the rest. I should expect something any day now.

Peter Wake has written from the hospital he went to, in Naples, and his letter took 7 days to reach me. I am almost certain he will have sailed for home by now, as he writes that they were asking what was his

home country and putting his name on an impressive looking list. I told you in a probably illegible note on the sticky flap of the card last week that Henry Crookenden would be, by now, almost certainly in the Wingfield Hospital at Headington (I can only just remember going there - how much can you remember - I can see an impression of big glass windows ɤ brick ɤ Girdlestone I confuse in my memory with Sturrock, to look at ɤ that's all) where he may have to lose his leg. I am told he has grown horribly grey and changed after 6 months almost in hospital. Knowing now what a marvellous thing it is to have visitors I think Jill might well ring up to find out if he is there, drop him a note, and go and see him with books and things. It makes all the difference. Rose Whitaker came in last Sunday and as it's past 3 o'clock now I think she may come again today and bring her brother Tony. He is L.O now, having succeeded in getting a job at a local Commando Brigade HQ where he lives with Rugger Blues and ex-A.B.A champions (all Commandos are like that!) and was forced to play rugger with them on Xmas day with the result that he has not been out in society since - that is anyway his alleged reason for not coming to see me last Sunday. Rose brought me books and gossip and news of David Karmel being expected so I was not surprised when on Tuesday David blew in having just "come out" as he called it in a trawler which took 36 sea-sick hours. He was clothed in the

most exotic woollen and fleecy garments which I pounced on, as I do, or we all do, on anything newly originated in the sartorial line, but he said they were all American issue! He also brought news and gossip and books and offered food but, when pressed, admitted he could only produce jam. He came again on his way back "in" to report to Fitzroy Maclean, who is his boss, and brought the welcome news that he had arranged for me to stay in their Rear HQ villa, inhabited only by two Colonels and a Major, with all civilized amenities,

contd 114 (b)

~ * ~

[BY AIR MAIL - AIR LETTER]

Lady Waterfield
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[signed 'JPWaterfield' across top, shield-shaped stamp "PASSED BY CENSOR No 9499"]
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No$_{(b)}$114 21 January 45 contd.

and Rfn Barnes, David's old servant and an old friend of mine from B Coy, to look after me. This will be a very happy arrangement if I can persuade the doctors here to acquiesce to it. There may be some difficulties, especially in this hospital where 13 months in one place have make them crusty and vain, but I have infinite faith in my powers of persuasion, given a free tongue!

I see no reason why you should not have a second one of these things. I have plenty here available in my old file, saved from BARCE and still very useful, all stamped by Rfn Deane and ready tempting use. I have plenty of time and its very easy to chatter away as if I was at home, after lunch on Sunday, chatting to you both in the drawing room. Maybe I shall not be long now. The news of the Russians is astonishing and I have a sort of feeling that when the spring comes we may ourselves get on the move again. We need a good gallop badly to clear the atmosphere of grey depression and mud. I enclose for your amusement some cartoons from the local rag. They speak for themselves but I would add this much - they are the wishful-thinking self projections of those who never have and never would wear such clothes. The mimic of what has lost its freshness and originality, the misconception of rather vulgar minds who ape the fashion which is dead because they have no power of creating anything new. At the same time they are sometimes quite funny. And at the same time it is now unlaughable that after my perspicaciously intellectual (and true, for all that) outburst above I should be wearing now faded almost white corduroys and my, most irregular,

coat from Welsh - a very satisfactory ensemble, and my coat's lining keeps me very warm. But as I say we need a gallop to create the freshness and blow away the staleness of plodding through the mud. In D.W Brogan's The American Problem there is a splendid parallel drawn between Sherman's Western Army which marched "from Atlanta to the Sea" and the 8th. Army - "Nothing could have been less like the armies of Europe than that and the world was not to see a comparable sight again till the (British) 8th. Army emerged from the desert, clad as its fancy and its resources dictated, living by its own battle-learned discipline"... These "Two Types" try to patch up the past. I hear from Toby Wake that the atmosphere in the 2nd Army is quite different, "cold, sullen determination, and relentless hate". We see much the same in those who have come to battle here in Italy straight from home. It's all fair enough and to be expected. The 14th Army in Burmah has the family spirit of hell-for-leather friendliness, I should gather. It is only got from going through common hardships to a glorious goal. We plod and prick along well enough and overcome the horrible dangers of Python (an insidious plague) and other domestic troubles of shortage of eqpt and the inevitable feeling of unimportance (however untrue); all well enough. But you cannot have it all ways and we must have a big rush which I hope the Spring will give to relieve the domestic difficulties which are much harder to beat than the Germans or the weather. After all a man knowing he's due to go home in a month, with a wife and child he's not seen, however brave and honest, goes into the attack with the front platoon with a bit of his mind away from his job. The manpower problem I have never discussed with you, I think, or mentioned in

letters for fear of boring you, but since Jan 43 it has been hell. You lose the old soldiers and you do NOT get replacements. You don't only lose the Serjeant Major but the two senior Sjts as well. You lose the mess cook and the mess dishwasher who would step into the cook's place. You lose at all levels

and you have NO cadre to replace them. We are spoilt and conceited being the 1st. Bn 60th Rifles and expect a high standard, I know. Some poor infantry Bns don't even see the officers who come to them from anywhere and go the same day and get rfts (if any) from any old regt which has probably been disbanded. I'd like to have a go at Sir James Grigg or Adam - but the answer is we are spoilt and the figures are too big to include the domestic details of the riflemen!

However an end to the gloom. Rose ɤ Toby have come in and interrupted this and we have had delicious tea upstairs here in the sitting room noone uses. They brought Punches and Tatlers and New Statesmen and we had a good gossip. Far from being incapacitated, Tony was at Corfu last week - that cannot be insecure as there have been photos in the paper of our tps in Corfu - and he brought amusing stories of the patriots who all have flowing hair, having vowed NOT to cut it, until returning to Athens or somesuch. They have gone now and the sun has set red beyond the railway line and the flat grey plain dotted with a few white cottages, all reeking in their own garbage and filth one knows. but possessing at this time only a strange attractive dreariness as the sun makes the greyness pink ɤ gold. There is one faint purple silhouette of a distant tower on a hill, the only break in the level horizon, maybe the town where we were in May, 30

miles or so away. I wonder how you are and what you've all been doing and hope you are all happy and well as I am now. Whom do you see and what is the news? I long to hear. I have been reading Persuasion which is most dry and amusing and an amazing book Patchwork by Beverley Nicholls about young men at Oxford immediately after the last war. I wonder if we've changed or whether we lack something. It made me shudder. I have also read Brogan's book you sent me which I mentioned before. His writing makes history exciting. Please send me all his other books and charge them to my a/c. How is that by the way? Make certain you have your photos taken ɤ sent. Enjoy yourselves and write plenty. Always much love John.

~ * ~

[BY AIR MAIL - AIR LETTER]

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[signed 'JPWaterfield' across top, shield-shaped stamp "PASSED BY CENSOR No 9499"]
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[annotated "arr Feb 5" blue-grey ink]

No 115 26 January 45 As from 1.KRRC
CMF
still at the same hospital

My dear Mummy and Daddy,

Letters came on from the Bn three days ago, a wonderful and welcome present. There were from the family, a.l.c's from AP (Boxing Day), Mary (4 Jan) and Jill (two, 28 Dec). They were sent from the Bn on 16 Jan and reached me here after a further week. This morning I read them all again and they repaid it. I was at first reading rather distressed at there being nothing from Mummy though I know she has been not well and busy with Christmas, acquiescent at there being nothing from old Bow, and surprised a little that you do not seem to have had my letters, or at least make little mention of them. I hope you get them all - they are carefully numbered, and let people read suitable extracts! On a second reading I was fascinated with the perfect picture of family

life and am really moved again to thank God we are a big family and not a niggly warped and wistful household of three or so! Of course it's all exactly like a Jane Austen novel to hear the plots ϒ plans and family comments, some of them carping and critical (for little reason!) all of them revealing and giving me an exact picture of life. I have your letters open in front of me which I don't often do (unlike Lord Curzon who, I read in Denison Ross's autobiography took a pride in replying in his own hand to every letter he received on the day he received it) and am going to take some of the points you raise. I wonder sometimes if I don't write too much dull descriptive letters which don't mean much ϒ do not discuss family gossip enough. I try to keep the mean. You seem all to have had a gloriously happy Xmas though I am distressed again to hear of AP's fainting (minimised, I suspect, in importance by himself, exaggerated "My dear, I just can't tell you," by Jilly) and of Mum's cold. I do feel most anxiously about you both - Keep well ϒ though it is no use saying don't work too hard, take a break to go to a theatre, out to dinner or to see friends or something

you really like from time to time. I am glad A.P. goes to Oxf ϒ Cambridge now quarterly. Funny that Ch.Ch. should be so inferior intellectually to Trin though I don't see why AP says "as well they may be". I suppose Lindermann is not there much now - is he still Winston's buddy? Oddly enough, talking about Oxf, I have just been down to see my doctor, one Brinton, a locum in place of the vulgar pip-squeak of a Colonel who has gone on leave. This fellow is a civilized gentleman and asked me about Reggie W (a contemporary of his at New Coll) - who is he? and the Florence W's - I always say airily "Oh, we are all related, you know" but for the life of me can't go further! But what I mean to say if my passion for digression hadn't caught me was that he said Christopher Cox is hotly tipped for the next Warden of New Coll. Have you heard anything of this? To turn back to AP's letter - I haven't seen the book lists often but suggest anything of D.W.Brogan's other than the American Problem Kilvert's Diary, ed William Plomer, Listening for the Drums Ian Hamilton as books you might get me out of O.S's 10/-. I have written to O.S to cheer him up ϒ of course sent him an Xmas card. I hope you are looking to him lest he die unhappy but the news will cheer him of itself, I suppose. Jill says the Berrymans were pleased with my card. I am so glad - give them my love. I suppose Martin is given up as dead now or have they had news? One of Rfn Deane's brothers, taken at Singapore, got a p.c through after 2½ years! I have had a charming letter from Mrs Deane hoping I would soon get well - I sent her a Xmas present but this letter was before that - ϒ a splendid letter from Rfn D himself which I suspect was NOT written by himself as it's very neat and there are NO spelling mistakes! I have had a letter from Peter Proctor ϒ I have written to him telling him to go and see you again ϒ take the girls out to relieve the monotony of Guildford life. He came out on the same boat as I, as I expect he told you, ϒ I have not seen him for ages as he came late to the desert ϒ went to 7 R.B. Oh if I know him he told you all of it. Son of a ret Naval officer he is like a pink little pig but a person of kind heart, great sociability, curiosity in people, and very idle but I should think, a good pl. cmd. I like him. He wrote that he enjoyed himself a lot ϒ looks forward to seeing you again. I am amused to hear your adverse comments on P. Jones. I take it he is a Carthusian and has all their exceptional boorish ill-manners which if unrelieved by smacking on the head in a good Regt and a civilized home ruins you for life! I escaped or hope I have now through the two saving graces I mention. Bow has, I hope, escaped through the second and his own good nature and will soon have the first if he needs it. Kenneth Milne writes "M is going on a course soon, and should then be on his way". It's not for want of hammering by me. John Hogg is w. 12 Bn, having left Army HQ, in a stooge capacity at present. When I write to him I shall tell him to ask for Bow ϒ I think Bill Deedes may have done so. If Toby Wake does so too from 2 Bn there will be a choice. I advise Bow to go to 12 Bn if he gets a choice, but I can NOT be sure of my basis for decision, as I'm too remote ϒ they all say WE ARE THE BEST. Glad you enjoyed my Xmas presents. Hurry up ϒ let me know about Stuttafords ϒ silk stockings ϒ so on. Poor old Mary - I never knew it was so bad. Stories of her shaking ϒ crying were most distressing to hear of. I had not realized it at all. She MUST get well. She writes not mentioning visits of Peter P, or of Peggy Lagden or Nancy (?) which Jill includes in her letters. But Mary says "we've always despised "Foreign Office" girls who are rather equivalent to the FANYS before they were generalized and became, I believe, a very good crowd." I condemn all that as Underdown ϒ Henstridge heresy! I am all for exclusiveness, pulling of strings, rackets and Foreign Office girls! That sounds rather like the 'cry' of Tadpole ϒ Taper in Coningsby which I've just re-read with pleasure. But one must have a cry ϒ that's mine. How can she learn sh-hand ϒ typing at expense of M of Education? Why not start now anyway?

You all mention old Bow as being 'just the same'. A perfect description. He seems the only stable one among you. I hope Jilly's 2nd. term will be much better. She writes with no enthusiasm of it, saying she knows noone of her own age. Let her not live too much academically with dried up old spinsters ɤ wizened professors. O.K for dons ɤ boys who are amused by donnish mirth but hell for girls. So glad that AP's C.I.S.S.B. scheme is approved in principle by Try. As to installing D.W - NO! but I don't see why, if Garston Manor is a good house with a private half to it, we should NOT all move there until A.P. retires. If NOT we may as well stay at Underdown. I revise my summing up of that problem which

I sent you from Rome though my appreciation is the same ɤ the facts still stand. Will you Note my address is either KRRC or 60th Rifles - 1st. Bn of both but NOT BOTH together which for some unknown reason you all persist in. Please cease. I am going to a Red X Cm depôt in the Southern Appennines between Bari ɤ Taranto on Weds next. I will NOT bore you with the detail but owing to my row with the Colonel doctor I've had to decide on doing that, anyway to start with, and possibly go to Col John Clark's later. Peter Wake has definitely sailed for U.K. I've had letters from the Bn - patrolling ɤ such. Some casualties incl one Cussans whom I'd hardly met though I went myself ɤ selected him - apparently a friend of Roger B-Jones. He is seriously wounded but no more detail yet available. This afternoon I go to the dentist. Why for a year did you talk about Millet ɤ now revert to Conway-Jones. He is the most painful man ever. After

[continued upside down at top:]

those out here he is the end. But my teeth were well patched by him at the cost of inhibitions ɤ are now hard, mostly filling but OK ɤ in there still! Tell Jill to write legibly - also Mary. DW, CAS[156], AP ɤ I are the only two in the family who... [lost on edge]

[continued vertically up centre pages:]

always very much love from John

[post-scripts at foot of letter again, incl. edge flap, but partially torn off:]

(1) please send me some Siepmanese.

...[?]pace well on these by ...re using the outside - who cares?

(3) I cannot understand... still go to Lankester. Doe... dy W nicely?

~ * ~

[156] these first two visibly inserted later, hence the following 'only two'.

1/ KRRC

CMF.

2.2.45.

Dear Lady Waterfield.

John is so good about writing to parents when sons are in hospital, that I feel guilty, when I think you may not have heard from anyone in the Bn about John.

He is such a good letter writer himself that I'm sure that he keeps you well posted with his news. However you may like to hear what little I can tell you.

We were in a way quite glad to hear that he had succumbed to his first attack of jaundice as we knew he was certain to be made to rest!

He came back to us just before Christmas looking ɤ behaving a new man, in fact he seemed much better than he has been for a very long time. So it was very unexpected when he got ill a second time, ɤ it certainly was not from lack of care as he took all the right precautions when he did come back, including keeping off drink!

I fear he is going to be a longish time getting over this second go. I gather that he is now out of hospital ɤ condemned to a month of convalescence in a rather dreary spot. Unfortunately we are at the moment too busy ɤ too far away for anyone to get down to see him. However he writes very cheerfully to us as no doubt to you ɤ I still feel that a prolonged rest will do him no harm. I personally feel that all his troubles now are rooted in the last year of persistent over work.

Needless to say we all miss him a great deal both for his self ɤ his work. I hope you are not unduly worried about him, because I do not think you need be.

I am glad to hear that your other son is in the Regt. ɤ we wonder whether he will appear out here. Anyway I hope he is fixed up in a Bn he likes.

We are living in a very large villa at the moment which has much to reccomend it except it is quite unfurnished ɤ unwarmed. However we have managed quite well by improvising many stoves burning wood at least to keep warm. I only hope it is not as cold in England as it is here!

Please remember me to your husband

yours sincerely

John Hope.

~ * ~

[BY AIR MAIL - AIR LETTER]

Lady Waterfield
Underdown
Tangier Rd
Guildford
Surrey
England

[signed 'JPWaterfield' across top, no censor's stamp]
[One mauve 3d stamp, franked "FIELD POST OFFICE 570 ..FE 45"]
[annotated "[arr] 11 Feb", blue-grey ink]

No 116

As from 1.KRRC
4. Feb. 45

My dear Mummy and Daddy,

I have removed from hospital and am now in a Red Cross convalescent home for officers[157]. I came here sitting in the front of a draughty, quivering old ambulance last Wednesday, stopping off for lunch at the Hotel Imperiale at Bari on the way. I found at the table a Carthusian who recognized me, though I did not remember him until he told me his name. That often happens. He was not an exciting figure and had been employed as Staff Capt (Air) on one of these Special Forces for the past 3 yrs, first in Cairo and then Bari. That means sitting in an office and working out loads to be dropped by parachutists to partisans and British missions in the Balkans. Bari is full of these people; - they provide a mutually self-admiring society and consist in many cases of people whom Regimental soldiering does not agree with. A lot of my friends and acquaintances have got themselves jobs there and I listened to the moans in hospital of a fellow who was sacked from the racket because obviously he was not a gentleman! He said Fitzroy Maclean was gathering round him the Foreign Office boys of the future. This is of course nonsense but sociability is their being and they are now very much of a clique, though the operational side of it is now dead, or nearly so. That was a fine thing to do, demanding nerve and ability. I am not so sure of the politicals. A.P will have to fight hard with his regulations to keep idle incompetents out, but will need to make Government service a paying concern in cash, otherwise competition will flop. I find in one of the Manchester Guardians (which I am reading with renewed interest now I have time) a eulogy to AP which I enclose in case you have not seen it. I am delighted to read such praise. The Man. G. is very liberal in its views. Has it always been like that? I suppose it has, being originally run for the big business men who grew up in the North in the early days of last century, a sort of industrial Whiggery.

I have no letters from you to answer or deal with, but I do not expect any for a while. The hospital will send those which arrive in the next few days on from the Bn but I have told the Bn direct to send letters up to Feb 10 here and then to hold them all until I get back. I am myself very definitely much better, fully recovered from jaundice, and

without a trace of yellowness in my eyes or on my body. James Cunningham who came down to Taranto to package up the Regimental property, now there in store, saw me in hospital and visited me again here two days ago on his way back. He said, to give a dispassionate opinion, I was looking very well and he would be able to tell you that I was pink cheeked again, when he comes home at the end of the month. He has done 4½ yrs and his September wound is still troubling. He has promised to call on you in town. You will find him a big, dour but gentle Scot, educated at Eton and then in the world - a miner and engineer all over Africa. We call him Black Jack for his alleged propensity towards negresses and Wog women, as a result of this seclusion from civilization! It is somewhat annoying that I have caught a beastly cold, it must have been just before I arrived up here; and my head is thick with it. That will pass however.

[157] I have a copy of C S Lewis *The Screwtape Letters* inscribed 'John Waterfield 60th Rifles - Red Cross Convalescent Home – La Selva CMF – Feb 45'. He doesn't mention reading it though.

This home consists of a number of bungalow-type villas, set among the fir trees and olive terraces on a high spur some 7 miles from the sea. They were built by business men of the Adriatic coast of Bari and Taranto, for summer retirement to the cool of the hills. They are equivalent to the villas on the Atlas mountains at Chrea behind Algiers where we went last winter. I have a tiled room in one of these villas, in which five other officers also live. There is a good bathroom with the bath sunk below the level of the floor, a pleasing arrangement, but it is so cold at night that when I have my bath (I am alone in insisting on a bath before dinner - officers in general have one once a week, at mid-day!) the steam chokes the room and I have to grope for sponge, flannel and delicious Yardley soap you sent for Xmas; alas I can scarcely smell it with my cold! The caretaker is a Yugoslav with his wife and two children. I do not know under whose aegis they come but I believe there are a number of camps locally and they are given the opportunity of work. This life is obviously very suitable for them, with battle-dress and Army rations ɤ cigarettes. The old boy lent me his macintosh yesterday as I only have my heavy woolly coat, and rain threatened my walk; it was bought in Split in '38, of British manufacture! There are a number of these villas and a central mess and club room. The food is excellent and the supply of drink amazing. Alas I cannot touch good Scotch or Booth's gin or even beer but

allow myself a liqueur after dinner. It is too sweet and comes from Trieste but is as good as any Italian liqueur can be, which is merely moderate. There is Curaçao + Strega and a strange something called Saint Rhémy which is the best. The country is of the shape of the Cornish uplands, hogs backs and spurs, never over sharp but quite steep. The valleys are fertile for the width of two fields or so, with a dark soil which dries pink on the trouser leg. The slopes are all terraced with stone every few yards and stone walls surround the small holdings and line the roads and lanes which are themselves stream beds after snow ɤ rain as now. Olives grow on the slopes, a few fruit trees (I'm not sure what kind) on the hill tops and outside my window scrubly firs. This corner of Italy must have been colonized by the East, by Saracens or Turks or similar race. The hills are scattered with white buildings all among the terraced slopes, each a self-contained group of pyramid roofs with a verandah on top, reached by whitewashed steps beside the door. Like this:



Sometimes they are gaudily painted in blue or pink. There is a mosque too not far down the road, which I passed on my walk yesterday. I believe they used to add another pyramid with a room underneath, every time a child was added to the family to allow for expansion later. I am very stiff from my walk yesterday morning (Saturday), up and down the terraces. The snow which lay thick on Wednesday when I came, had gone and the going was heavy and the stones which pave the lanes were very slippery. I had not been walking with a stick since I was in England and all sorts of smells and sights came back to me by association of my ideas as I swung along. I was by myself which I prefer walking. Indeed I am more content to listen and draw conversation, particularly with a cold, than to contribute much, though that may seem odd in these places. There is a South African here who told me of the woes of that Union, held, as he said, in the grip of Jews ɤ financiers who monopolize all trade ɤ control interior affairs. He is a Britisher, ɤ a communist (though owning his own business) and speaks up for the Afrikaner as having a legitimate grievance in the evils of the Boer War ɤ its results. I should have thought that, almost half a century ago, might have been forgotten in the needs of the present. Real or imagined grievances die hard with them and hamper constructive effort for the future. Then I was told for ¼ hour how Lloyds were going to beat Social Security and of the development

of the Diesel engine for motor cars which was prevented by the Government tax on candle oil. There is a great deal to listen to and surprising how ready people are to talk. And how are you all I wonder? I read on p.1 of Sense ɤ Sensibility "And the cheerfulness of the children added a relish to his existence"... I hope the cheerfulness of your children add a relish to your existence! I think it a perfectly expressive phrase. Russia ɤ war seem remote from here. The papers are ridiculously optimistic but the Germans are in sight of defeat. They must be beaten everywhere. But in the excitement of victory one is more and more forced to be aware of the appalling difficulties of administration with which we will be faced all over Europe after the rejoicings. One is unpleasantly aware of them already. Crisis follows crisis in the governments of each country. Keep well and send me all

[cont. upside down at top:]

the news and gossip. I am starved of letters. Always much love from John

~ * ~

[BY AIR MAIL - AIR LETTER]

Lady Waterfield
Underdown
Tangier Rd
Guildford
Surrey
England

[signed 'JPWaterfield' across top, no censor's stamp]
[One mauve 3d stamp, unfranked - a circular stamp at the bottom reads "..TY CHIEF.."]
[annotated "[arr] 17 Feb", blue-grey ink]
[back page offers:

"*The following Certificate must be signed by the writer :-*
I certify on my honour that the contents of this envelope refer to nothing but private and family matters.
Signature }
Name only }" J.P.Waterfield]

No$_{(a)}$ 117 11 February 1945 As from 1.KRRC C.M.F.

My very dear Mummy and Daddy,

Sunday morning again but breakfast here is at such a civilized hour that what with pottering up to my villa and down again to establish myself at a table in the only room with a fire, it is almost time for mid-morning cocoa at 11 o'clock. Indeed the Italian waiters are laying out the saucers. Some people pretend to despise cocoa with a modish affectation of good taste. I remember Miss Sayers before she got religion making that precious prig Wimsey say he'll drink anything but cocoa - but I like it. But anyway here I am, new Dunhill pipe going well, sitting at a table with a vase of flowers which look like primroses and gladioli on it (later - I believe they are [full of][158] iris fibrosa!), in a room with other earnest officers writing away in front of piles of correspondence (you notice piles - they have - ?) and I have plenty of time and lots of letter cards so if noone turns on the wireless for the monotonous roar of the news I shall be O.K. It's a cold windy day but I must go for a walk this afternoon. I find it increasingly hard to force myself out and about and the intervals between meals slip by quietly and smoothly with a little pottering about in between. But I have been a fair way in the stone lanes, all much the same to see, and I rode for two hours on a pony bare-back which made me so sore that I blush to recollect it. These Italians keep ponies to drive in their carts but I found a likely looking one down in the valley and persuaded the

fellow to let me hack about the lanes for 20 cigarettes - better value than cash lire which are sniffed at. One rein was leather, one rope and the bridle and bit were rope too. I sat on an old coat of the farmers, which did NOT conceal sharp bony edges beneath. -(Here is the cocoa - quite delicious)- I found I could sit down well enough but had a strenuous time persuading this lively beast to go the way I wished. I should love to ride again but am terrified of falling off! I must have been brought up too hard by Bill Clark or whatever his name was. I also have a vague memory of coming to the end of resistance on a grey menace at the farm in Kent and falling off resignedly but very hard. I used to refuse to remember the past of Towngate and places but lately have discovered a wish to find out what happened because my memory is useless, having been firmly controlled, and long to have you tell me all about such silly doings again. You always talk about Bow's riding but I hear no details.

[158] this phrase - 'later... fibrosa' is added above the line; the square brackets are in the original text.

Where does he go and does Jill still accompany him? Can she stick on? I have heard NO details of Bow's last leave. There is a gap there in your letters and he hasn't bothered to write.

I have also been swinging a golf club, for the first time in over three years. There is a bit of rabbit netting and a patch of grass between divots to strike off. There are two sets of mashies (5 ɤ 6) made in Scotland and one ball which is

now finished because I've knocked the cover off it. But although I've blistered my hands and only knocked about I believe that I have revolutionized my play and really discovered how to hit the ball - by a fluke. I have always had a nice enough swing but the results have been erratic, as I always believed, because my hands and arms were not tough enough. However instead of over-lapping my right little finger on my left forefinger, and the inside of my right hand on my left thumb, stretched down the club shaft, I have done away with all overlapping and put each hand firmly on the shaft. Overlapping weakens the stroke, resisting smoothness. I now hit the ball with a snap and force I never believed possible! So much for that. Mary ɤ Mummy may skip that passage and we will have to wait till I get home to try it out, though there is a links outside Rome.

I had intended to start off with my elation at finding, at long last, a pile of good letters two nights ago, waiting on the table when I came down for dinner from my villa, but as usual I've drifted off. I cannot see why people insist they can never find anything to say in letters. There is no reason to stop except (1) idleness and (2) "l'art d'être ennuyeux, c'est de tout dire" which I remember is quoted by Winston in My Early Life - I don't know who said so nor did he, I guess, but it's true enough. However I haven't got the lot in this miserable form so on we go. contd.

P.P.S.[159] I hope to be going back to the Bn next Friday or weekend abouts. I have sent for Rfn Deane ɤ a trunk and only hope they arrive. That will be good - to be back again.

~ * ~

[BY AIR MAIL - AIR LETTER]

Lady Waterfield
Underdown
Tangier Rd
Guildford
Surrey
England

[signed 'JPWaterfield' across top, no censor's stamp]
[One mauve 3d stamp, unfranked - a circular stamp at the bottom reads "..DEPUTY CHIEF.."]
[annotated "[arr] 17 Feb", blue-grey ink]
[back page offers preprinted Certificate as with previous, signed as before]

... uary 1945[160]

I found a good number of letters but there were some notable omissions. Let them blush as feel they should! From the Bn was a scandalous letter from Henry Howard written in his quite amazingly fine handwriting; - it is a sort of irony that a man with so few moral principles should have such beautifully decisive firm writing. He has been a great trial to his father, old Brig Sir Charles, but I am fond of him and he has many able qualities and a great value as a companion on any enterprise, regular or irregular. There was a long one from John Hope and a typed one from my Orderly Room

[159] written on the back page, the one otherwise taken up by the Certificate. Presumably added after (b)-(d) and all were sealed.
[160] preceding text has been torn but may be inferred to be '117(b) 11 Febr'.

Sgt full of the back-stairs gossip, with always a reminder of his going home on Python with all the Rangers in April or sooner. Damn Python. I don't know what we shall do without them, this 3rd. year running, with NO replacements. I shall be back for their goodbye party, luckily. Then there was a kindly old scrawl in handwriting very like O.S's from Sir Hereward Wake and one from Peter who is still waiting at Naples for a boat. He writes with horror that the doctors there talk of his being invalided out; this would be a good thing really as he is very able, longs (unlike so many) to go up to Oxford and should be taken immediately by A.P for training in some form

of Government employ. He will [be in hosp][161] when he gets home but will call on you in town or at Guildford as soon as he can. His cockiness is not genuine though he is very obstinate. He would do nicely for Mary! sshh! I had also an alc from George Graham who was wounded in Sept, doing I.O and, therefore, under me immediately who is a great friend too. A sophisticated young man of great determination and good humour, with little brain. He is strangely enough a nephew of A.L ("Uncle-" as the newspapers or books of chatty reminiscence put it) Irvine - through his wife, of course. George has been hauled back from the Berkely hotel to Park Prewett Hospital; Basingstoke, and says he may limp another two years. He would be an education for Mary or Jill. He lives at the Chase, Woolton Hill, Newbury, not far, I suppose, from the Stows. I had a nice letter from old father Stow - did I tell you - saying Jimmy was with 2 Bn still but Sandy his younger brother was wounded v. badly in the summer & is in hosp at Chobham. It takes 10 hours for them to visit him of which they have 2 there - by train. I wonder if you could help by putting them up. They are a nice comfortable

old Wykehamist couple. Horris Hill, you know, is their home. What else did I get? Oh yes a letter dated Dec 10 from Peter Butler who has had a dreary war in that dreary pursuit, now obsolescent, Light Ack Ack. He is now on the Counter Battery Staff of 8 Corps in Holland. He says I've not lost my sense of style - !! That's hardly worth keeping if the rest has gone. He says he supposes you told me of his visit to you. Of course I don't know when as you never mentioned it. Laurence Stone sent me a Christmas card, promising to write any minute. You don't like him I know! I am getting on and it does not seem such a bad bunch, at that. Pause to refill my pipe. Next comes a fine gossipy a.l.c from Mrs Chignell, who although she cannot forget that she is a housemaster's daughter and wife and therefore calls people by their surname or Mr, and treats everyone as new boys just coming to that hard grey Saunderites (now sweetly pink!) for the first time, in spite of all that, has a real kind humanity about her, and a proper sense of social gossip. She is my one source of information on Ch. doings and dumbfounded me by the intelligence of Michael Hoban's engagement. Mrs C says to Jasmine Holmes - Mary, whose letter I read next, says to Jill. I can NOT hope to remember the

contd.

~ * ~

[BY AIR MAIL - AIR LETTER]

Lady Waterfield
Underdown
Tangier Rd
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[signed 'JPWaterfield' across top, no censor's stamp]
[One mauve 3d stamp, unfranked - a circular stamp at the bottom reads "..DEPUTY CHIEF.."]
[annotated "[arr] 17 Feb", blue-grey ink]
[back page offers preprinted Certificate as with previous, signed as before]

[161] end of top line of page lost by opening cut; [conjectural]

11 February 1945

No 117c

domestic line-up in Verites where I never visited, so in my hasty letter of congratulation to Michael omitted, (very tactfully) any mention of the lady's name. But I believe she is not yet 18. Mary who writes, I am so glad to see, with all her old vigour and verve, light-heartedly and with flippant comment and good sense again properly mixed says that Mum says it's been going on a 'long time'. How was I to know? That is just the sort of thing I like to hear about, apart from the fact that you ought to tell me so that I can at least preserve the appearance of politeness. But Mary seems much happier and attacks me stoutly for favouring Foreign Office girls! I shall reply to her in due course. Do you permit her to read my letters?

And now thank you, Lady W, for at last remembering your poor eldest son, all alone and away from his mates in Italy, so far away. About time, too, I may say, that I did get one of your letters which are never long enough and always my most enjoyable reading. Your writing preserves its firmness in spite of the evident haste of scribbling to get done and back to chores! I do hope that your neuritis and general heath are as good

as all the brats say, when they bother to write. I hope you read my letters though I sometimes wonder if you do as I rarely get any answer to particular points or indication that they are of any interest and although my vanity gets me by to plug along quite happily, acknowledgement (not to speak of flattery) works wonders. I am good tempered, more so than I used to be, in spite of my liver, and more tolerant, though old John Hogg writes from Holland to say he shudders to think what jaundice has done to my notorious urbane equanimity! Christmas has gone, as you say, and I had good letters about that but nothing yet about Bow's leave and no news of where he is now. Good God, how time flows,! the bar is opening. Luckily I cannot dare drink. I am so glad Jill has been growing up, but she needs a lot of help to teach her the world's ways in spite of defiance. I hope she will get around more in Oxford and get better socially and find friends as well as work. You say the Ramsdens offered to exchange houses. If it were not for these bombs you might have been amused but I am terrified of them and so you must take NO risks. But I never knew they lived elsewhere than in Epsom Rd. What are they doing in town ɤ when did they go? Is it an indication that old R is making more or less cash per annum? I agree with what you say about Underdown as I told you last time.

But I do wish you could get servants. There was a rhyme in Punch lately (or a year ago - all the same to me) of the bliss of doing without them, and the threat of their giving notice all the time, but it would be so nice for you to rest and see your friends and entertain. Where are all your friends and how are they? Rex ɤ the Freddy Geidts and others? I am glad to hear A.P has been getting over the weariness and hope he is well, zestful and brisk again. I am interested to hear of his getting around to Chester and the like. Is he a member of the Athenaeum yet? You are years behind of course in your business. Bobby Darwin is back with the Bn up in the marshes! But Tony Round who lives in Essex - Lt A.J. Round son of a Colonel - you could find the address - is probably there still. He was next for leave. I want the flask and it's now getting on for spring but will do for next year; I wonder where that will be. Eric is at Toulouse. What in and what at? You never tell me. "Peppery" is a fine and funny epithet for him. You should search him out. Get around and bustle. But you have no car. What does A.P plan to do with the car to catch the market. When should he sell or should we keep it? Your enclosures of Siepmannana have come too. Thank you so much. Do send more. Do you realize that you sent two copies of the same thing? contd.

~ * ~

[BY AIR MAIL - AIR LETTER]

Lady Waterfield
Underdown
Tangier Rd
Guildford
Surrey
England

[signed 'JPWaterfield' across top, large shield-shaped censor's stamp "PASS... 5700[?]", white tape around edges printed with 'Opened by Censor']
[One mauve 3d stamp, franked "FIELD POST OFFICE... 13 FE 45"]
[annotated "[arr] 17 Feb", blue-grey ink]
[back page offers preprinted Certificate as with previous, signed as before with addition of a circular mauve stamp "34"]

No 117d 11 Feb 45

They were all very old but amusing to read. Poor old Charles. He sounds as if he'll never be happy analysing himself and others so seriously. He says rather bitingly that Eric has not referred to his bank balance lately and therefore must be more balanced himself. Sorry, I did not mean to pun so indifferently. He also refers to Harry's autobiography. That should be funny reading. Can we get a copy or will he send me one if I ask? Perhaps his beloved god-child could get it. I hope he will entertain her for her 21st. birthday. You ought to have a big dinner party in town for it. I wish I could be there. Or possibly give a dance but there is noone around, you say. Only the "'D" Day Dodgers" - see later!! I cannot think why I am in such good order. I should be very dry among all these dreary Army officers, dumb as can be. Or is the relationship between M...[162] ɤ H.A.S not mentionable owing to the financial strain? I have never heard such a shocking business and although I feel that only a monstrous fellow, with whom I should NOT have dealings, would ask to be released from any such contract unless he was broke completely, instead of saying "well take the

beastly stuff" I rather agree with A.P that the thing to do is to insist on getting it. Or perhaps he is broke! Anyway I wrote him a most provocative letter to see if I got any reaction, when I was in bed and I only hope to God he doesn't publish it!! No reaction yet either.

I have realized lately that I do not subscribe to the Carthusian. Mrs Chig asked that baboon of pomposity, Bob Arrowsmith, about it and all he said was "it goes to him if he subscribes". Mrs Chig also says there is a News Sheet ɤ a H.M.'s letter. I get none of these. Will you ring up Elinor or R.B - you never mention them nowadays - and tell them to send me back copies and enroll my name as a subscriber and a member of all available societies which are essential. I remember now that I lost my cheque or forgot to give it in and found later that it was at the bottom of my zip. Please do this. I believe you have to get an O.C to witness or sponsor you. Tell RB to find one. By the way what was the scandal about someone running off with someone else's wife at Ch? You mentioned it once but told me no detail and I should like to know. Mary can tell me if you are embarrassed but I have a hunch which it would amuse me to see confirmed. J.F.G. wrote to me lately. He will soon be coming out of

Gownboys, I suppose, and I hear another pompous ass Dickens (with a youngish wife) is booked for it. What a difference that will be. I must stop for lunch and will go on later....

I have been out for a pleasant walk in the now pouring rain with two of the excellent Red x ladies who run this place and am now drying out in front of the fire. I hope you have good fires against this formidable English winter. I suppose you both ɤ Mary are sitting in the drawing room now, or perhaps working in the garden, if it's not too cold.

---

[162] some place names on the reverse have been blacked out - see table at end of letter - and the ink has obscured this name on the other side of the page. This is the only evidence of external censorship in the collection.

As to stockings. You now know what I've done about it, acting on Mary's instructions in her first letter. It is obviously wrong! Never mind. I thought, I confess, that lisle and rayon were kinds of silk. But as I've thrown away the advertisement I am not sure what I've ordered. They were better than lisle or rayon alone obviously as they were the fourth quality advertised and the most expensive! Would it be nylon? I cannot cancel it now ɤ in any case the remainder of the cheque goes to food parcels for you, if they accept it. Tell Mary NOT to fuss about payment as it's vulgar and I would not dream of her producing cheques to be paid into my account. Too shaming for me. If I come across some silk ones in Bari I will send them. I am sending you a "truleo" model. I don't know whether you will like it or not but you may find it decorative.

I also enclose, as a specimen of the sort of thing which I told you was a greater enemy than the Germans, our domestic difficulties of boredom, Python, parliamentary rantings and sensation mongering, these examples of nonsensical journalism, which must have been originated by the Germans. Noone heeds this sort of thing as anything but a joke but all the same it fosters the expatriate complex which, if the 8 Army had not been taken home in great part, for Europe, might have made it into a political machine like the armies from the Roman Empire's frontier - Emperor making. That's about all for now. Hope I've not been too boring. Write soon. Always much love from John.

[written on back page, with Certificate:]

P.S. As a check. Have you had all my letters - as you neither of you seem to mention them - I list them for infm in the last two months or so. I've not missed any numbering.

102		18.x.	[redacted]	H6.		12.xii.	Hotel. Rome
H1.		12.xi.	hosp. [redacted]	109	(a)(b)	[redacted]	22.xii.
H2.		13.xi.	" "	110		27.xii.	hosp.
H3.		21.xi.	hosp. Rome	111		2.1.45	"
H4.		26.xi.	" "	112		9.1.45	
H5.	(a)(c)	3.xii	} " "	113		19.1.45	
	(b)(d)		}	114	(a)(b)	21.1.45	
	(e)		}	115		26.1.45	
				116		4.2.45	BRCS.

~ * ~

[BY AIR MAIL - AIR LETTER]

Lady Waterfield
Underdown
Tangier Rd
Guildford
Surrey
England

[signed 'JPWaterfield' across top, shield-shaped censor's stamp "PASSED BY CEN.. 12828"]
[One mauve 3d stamp, franked "FIELD..... .... 577 20 FB 45"]
[annotated "[arr] 27 Feb", blue ink]

Sunday 18 Feb 45
On the way back.

No 118 My dear Mummy and Daddy,

Sitting waiting for lunch in the Hotel Imperiale, by the sea. A strange building of stuffed dummies, acting their over-seas part. The zoo requires specimens alive or dead and

we thought we might catch an officer and a F.A.N.Y, stuff them & send them to the secretary to go in the baboon house where their natural habits would make them more interesting even than the pink-behinded fellows. I have left the Red X place after a delightful fortnight and miss the fresh air up there. Central heating & the muggy false spring weather down here make me feel stuffy. Tony Whitaker, now with the Commandos, is staying here on leave and has a pleasant room overlooking blue sea. The window is staring straight over to Yugoslavia because white walls of the hotel blinker it off on either side and save one from the dirt of the streets and the ragged spectacle of street walkers. My room changes every night because unless you book weeks in advance you have to put yourself down on the waiting list every day and they then hold an odious sort of auction or call over at 8 oclock every night. If you claim your room then, okay, if not you've had it. So you may wake up with anyone next door, not more than 2 ft away in fact, if you have a double room. But the bath water is hot and the baths are deep. You are apt to find officers lying fully dressed on your bed and snoring hoggishly, or anyone from a Greek beauty who tries to show you what the Greek Communists did to her most important portions, to the Subasic government being shepherded vaguely along the corridors. A Greek showed me last night about one am, sitting on a stranger's bed, where

the Germans had burnt the soles of his feet. He regrets he cannot dance. I have met so many people I know that I do not regret the fact that Rfn Deane has not turned up yet, although that is a pin-prick of continual annoyance. I signalled & wrote & buttoned it up with James Cunningham when he came down and as there has been no reply saying "not possible" I assume he is coming but something has happened to him. It is inconvenient because I don't want to go off and find later that he came after all. But I cannot hang about longer and this morning went off full of brass and bravado to talk my way into an air-passage. Luckily I met Simon Whitbread who was Adjt of the Bn years ago in Burma and discovered that he allotted air passages. So all was quickly and happily arranged. I shall get my ticket tomorrow afternoon, dine with him in the evening, and go off on Tuesday. All this assuming Deane doesn't come tomorrow.

Last night we went in a party to the ballet done by some Anglo-Polish company which is the same one that I saw under the direction of Constant Lambert (now not there) at Bulford about this time four years ago. It's amazing to think that was four years back, almost the whole of my time at school. Anyway in spite of cat-calls from the gallery they performed very entertainingly, though it was rather like a better kind of cabaret than real ballet. The nicest thing they did was a gay, coloured, swinging thing called "Cracow Wedding", based on some Polish folk-tune. They were pretty to watch and must have had fun themselves in doing that. We then went on to the Officers Club which like all Officers Clubs on Saturday night was a home for hooligans. The Commandos are odd people, strangely affected with heartiness of the back-slapping and kicking kind out of hours, and equally strangely affected with fierce

discipline on parade. They are frequently Rugger blues and such. Having no traditions they are self-conscious about making some. They are frequently jeered at because they do two days fighting every 6 months; the rest is comfort and kudos. That is true with all these special forces. A friend of mine in an Airborne Bde here, a major, has had 10 days in S. France and 14 in Greece in something over three years and was then shot by a woman in Athens! Last night we had to carry several home.

I wrote to Jill and told her Mrs Whitaker who lives at Britwell House, Watlington, just outside Oxford, might on Rosemary's instigation ask Jill out for the weekend or day. I said I thought she'd be grateful. They have always been very kind to me and I like them both very well. Do you remember a shocking book by a shocking man called John Fothergill who kept a pub at Thame? Mrs Wh. is the "lady of the house" in that book who infuriated + who was doing the catering for their children's party, by "having just come in from hunting," not asking him to the drawing room for tea! Who would ask the caterer to tea? Anyway it would be good for Jill.

I think I've heard from Peter Proctor and John Hogg since I wrote last. P.P. seemed to enjoy taking Mary out & I hope will repeat it. John Hogg is being idle without a job for the 12 Bn having thankfully left Army.

Today I found a Carthusian, one Neil Cairncross, a scholar of Oriel, one year senior to me. I gave him lunch and was disappointed to find how little I had in common with him though he

improved with perseverance. He was with his Regt, the Sussex, in Persia for a long time and has just come to Italy to the very dreary job of G3 (5.D) - that means Staff Duties which deals w. equpt - of Land Forces Adriatic who do nothing except mount operations and cancel them! He had no news of anyone I'd like

to have heard about. Is Michael Dear dead? Oh - Chignell wrote a kindly letter and said he would write to you about the Carthusian for me. Everyone seems in a great whorl about this ɤ I am rather concerned at the way I've stressed you all up. Anyway would you subscribe for me or tell Arrowsmith to send me the papers. What's happened to the Birleys? I never hear now from Elinor and you never mention them. Chignell said no doubt I'd smile as he did at the Hoban - Holmes engagement. Indeed I did but I sent Michael a nice letter too.

Did I tell you about a loathsome letter Harry S sent me? It is really rather funny, hinting ɤ insinuating of the reports he has heard of me as the 60th. have wide contacts. That's all true enough. But he

[cont. upside down at top:]

is really nuts. No more now. I do hope you are all well. Always very much love from John.

~ * ~

[BY AIR MAIL - AIR LETTER]

Lady Waterfield
Underdown
Tangier Rd
Guildford
Surrey
England

[signed 'JPWaterfield' across top, red (instead of usual mauve) shield-shaped censor's stamp "PASSED BY CENSOR 5282"]
[One mauve 3d stamp, franked "FIELD..OS... .... 28 F.. 45"]
[annotated "[arr] Mar 5", blue ink]

26. 2. 45 | No 119(a) | 1 KRRC CMF

My dear Mummy and Daddy,

Home again I am. I suppose it is my home really though in the last few days I've been wondering if I would not be wise to leave it now at last. But I've always thought ɤ said that the best life is Regimental Soldiering and that the best people are Regimental Soldiers. I've learned more than I can say in the Bn and am learning all the time. Possibly from the selfish self-advancement point of view, from the post-war employment angle in particular, life in the Bn is insular and narrowing. The strain of ops and the inevitable administrative grind make it difficult to settle down to read unless one is not completely away from it all. It's the same point that Hugh Hope made to me when he said that it was really a relief when he was in the bag, as a punishment for one escape which failed, because he knew in his white-washed, white-blanketed cell that he could NOT hope to get away and it was a perfect relief to be free of the strain of perpetual planning. However one can do a good job here and being away in hospital certainly broadens the outlook and awakens the mind. We are self-conscious and self-satisfied as the 60th Rifles who can do no wrong and I find myself more tolerant (contrary to jaundice's usual results) and more sensibly fresh and alert having been away.

Not that being ill is fun and I've been a bit worried by my inside. Maybe it was from a little drinking in the Imperiale at BARI and I felt like death for a couple of days before I came back and for three days after I reached the Bn. However the pain in my gut has gone and I am full of energy and activity

again. Daily I get more into my old stride and the ugly rumour that ran round the Bn "He's got it again" has been squashed flat!

I didn't want to scare you and I promise to be careful. We shall have every opportunity now because we have come tonight to the end of another cycle of the Bn's history. I wrote to Mary the other night and told her how the staff car (Colonel Alick's) failed to arrive and how I got fed up with waiting for it and Rfn Deane and flew back to RIMINI. I got a series of hitch-hikes up to Tac HQ in its mansion, stone-walled and spacious with a long avenue leading up to the main door, in time for late brew. Odd to find chaps dining formally with mess waiters and bridge after dinner though the building was in shell range and some of us had to stay up all night for the patrols to come in and in case there was any flap. Activity might flare up at any moment along the flood banks, dykes and marshes. The flat brown plain stretched into enormous frosted vagueness all round ....[163]

from the odd mortar, the click of a sniper's bolt, and the strange cross-trees in a group of trees, used as an O.P, would show for most of the day that there was a battle on. But suddenly there wd be a flare-up and the noise would crack the ears and a flap had begun. The Bn has done magnificently in my absence and has fired in one battle more 3" mortar and Vickers amn than during all the period from Alamein to the Ronco (the river that rose in October and cost us all those chaps in the bag). There were Germans literally littered about the vineyard in Scores. Horrid to talk about. I've never written much about battles so I won't start now though it's easier to write if you're not there. There are always eggs for breakfast, sunny side up (as I believe the Americans say) and at Tac we never had less on one plate than one fried egg, two bacon rashers, a sausage and beans or tomatoes. I am stuffing myself to get fat but make little progress.

I am writing tonight in a suburban villa, in a street like Tangier Rd, or possibly more really like those roads below London Rd Station, with a chicken run at the back and a little mock garden in front. The road is dust not tarred. The town is historic, where Dante and Boethius were buried, I believe and the Byzantine towers shine pleasantly in the first spring sunlight across the brown-grey marshes. We are all out now and are going off in the next week or so to join .....[164] Peter Proctor served, composed

of two Bns of his adopted Regt, our old friends. We are at the stage when anything may happen and much that is quite new and strange is inevitable. The others have all gone to bed and the light (from a battery, though working off the normal switch) is bad. It must be late but I expect to be busy again and must not idly let slip the opportunity of writing. I'll give you another of these as they are unlimited now. I wish someone would come and let me dictate this to a short-hand typist - my dream

~ * ~

[BY AIR MAIL - AIR LETTER]

Lady Waterfield
Underdown
Tangier Rd
Guildford
Surrey
England

[signed 'JPWaterfield' across top, red shield-shaped censor's stamp "PASSED BY CENSOR 5282"]
[One mauve 3d stamp, franked "FIELD POST OFFICE 28 FB 45"]
[annotated "[arr] Mar 5", blue ink]

No 119 (b)

contd. Wait a moment till I pour myself some lemonade. I've really laid off all drink in a very big way until I feel sure my tummy is going to be okay. Can't remember now what I was talking about but

[163] half-line lost, torn off at bottom of page.
[164] same tear has lost another half-line.

am too lazy to read back. I always re-read and amend my letters and indeed everything I write, over the breakfast egg or the post-breakfast pipe. By the way now I can get Four Square I have told Dunhill to stop sending me my Mixture. I suppose he'll now send me a bill. But the stuff came too dry and smoked too hot. If you see a nice pipe do buy it for me. My new Dunhill is a beauty and the Loeuwe is a bit too light for me.

Tonight I was in on the departure of yet another Colonel. Alick Williams is going to AFHQ and John Hope has got command. It's an odd moment really. Sad and good as most things of that nature are. Unfair too in some ways but it's not worth writing about. An ability to charm naturally or affectedly is so important and how little really are we qualified to judge our superiors or inferiors. Picking and choosing of the best is an uncertain task. I'll tell you all about it one day but it will be hot gossip for all the old stagers, for Hogg and fellows like that. Anyway it's grand for John and a

great record. After five years of war our first civilian commander. Thank God NOT a Territorial!

Two long alcs came from AP today, forwarded from La Selva back to the Bn. They gave a vivid account of Underdown life - I can see how much I shall have to re-learn - but you seem happy and tranquil in the home, in spite of domestic chores. The account of the visit to Chester was also interesting and all the letter was full of facts and good hard news. I am sorry about Balls and hope no nonsenses arose from the inquest. My mind can picture AP very clearly sitting down to his arithmetic paper accompanied by Mary singing at the piano! Mary herself has sent me some splendid, firm, cheerful and happier letters lately and I am so glad about all this. I do hope she will continue to mend. I am longing for photos of you all and very angry that none have come for so long. After all I've been nearly three years away now and I can't be expected to say my sisters are good looking, my mama wonderful looking and my papa important looking without some evidence to support me. Though I say all this. As for my brother I can only hazard that he is odd looking. There is the cock crowing. I hope it's not morning yet. My watch, taken off a German at Gromballia in Tunis, as he came out of the hills, a Panzer Grenadier Warrant Officer, has now

decided to lose an hour a day but I never can catch it actually stopped. Anyway only a page to go. Both the girls write with evident enjoyment of Mary's time at LMH but I am horrified (not really but almost) at their seeming callousness and unawareness of life out[?] judging from their remarks after seeing Henry Crookenden. I am glad and thankful they went and do hope Jill will go again. I do hope that they will both (Jill and Mary) get about more and more and learn something about people and things. After all when you've been blown up on a mine on a black night on SAN SAVINO ridge and fighting for your legs for the next six months in a succession of more than dreary hospitals, nagged by the women and bullied by the doctors, it would be surprising if you did not look ghastly. Bow writes vaguely from Strensall and odd courses. Jill writes quite illegibly from LMH. Lots of other people write from all over the place. I am grateful for that. Encourage others to do so. It's the saving of ones life and after all I've another 1½ years yet to go. All the Rangers (in Greece ɤ Crete - Hoggs old Bn 9 KRRC, disbanded in summer 42) are going home any day now. I hope James Cunningham will also come in to see you. I must look from DW's last letters, so vivid and full of good thingss.[165] I wish she'd retire to

a life of leisure and write to her poor deserted son every day. How does Belle Hamilton-Gordon (85) come to be AP's relative and where does she inhabit? What does Roger Bankes-Jones do? You say he's on leave. I can't say I have much chance or hope of seeing Michael B.J. Leghorn is miles away. Martin talking of leave in 5 or 6 weeks! He spends his time on leave. I have never heard such nonsense as all this Coppin engaging. I could not be less interested.

The light has gone out. It's 1 am and I've had to go over the road to fetch a torch to finish this. A sour note to pack up on but I am not sour really at all. Always much love John.

~ * ~

[165] sic – perhaps a sign of haste after the cock-crow, not caught by the breakfast re-read.

[BY AIR MAIL - AIR LETTER]

Lady Waterfield
Underdown
Tangier Rd
Guildford
Surrey
England

[signed 'JPWaterfield' across top, red shield-shaped stamp "PASSED BY CENSOR 5282"]
[One mauve 3d stamp, franked "FIELD POST OFFICE 750 7 MR 45"]
[annotated "[arr] 10 March", blue-black ink]

3 March 45 | No 120(a) | 1. KRRC CMF

My dear Mummy and Daddy,

6 pm in my office in the ground floor of a large block of flats. There is the smell of garlic and the shrill screams of brats. The Echelon have been living here for the last 2 months on the outskirts of this historic town on the edge of the marsh and pineforests while the Bn have been fighting up the road. The rfn and the Italians live live[166] rabbits in this vast burrow and probably behave socially in the same way and I shall be glad to get out of the place tomorrow. We move at 9.30 tomorrow, Sunday, morning so there will be no late bed, church or Sunday letter this week from me. The Bn came out of the line last week and we are, as it were, staying here before going off to join some new friends (old ones really) and come under some new-old masters. But I've got an hour or so before going up to the billet ϒ the Mess to wash ϒ change before dinner, not really time enough to write all the things I want to you. I had hoped for a bath in the Mess tonight, arranged by your servant carrying up buckets of hot water from the kitchen but I am informed by Giles Mills on the 'phone that the staff are complaining about the burner and that I won't get one. Very annoying because I get dirty very quickly and love being clean! But digression must be avoided. I am well settled now and my staff have been turned away from trying to strip my

table and chair and things away to pack up on the Orderly Room Caravan. They have taken my trays and papers, however, and I have no more work on the desk until we get the other end though no doubt plenty of silly phone calls and questions to answer. It's always the way however tightly you think you've buttoned things up. I am, however, more tolerant than ever I used to be, less frantically frenzied to get this ϒ that taped (without I hope being less wise or efficient) and more understanding of problems.

I have my pipe going and it's getting darker. The lights are coming out in the flats opposite. If the brats would stop their row and the oil stove in the room were turned off I could distinguish more clearly the rumble of the guns. As it is I am just aware that they are banging away all the time. I have had so many good letters from you all and from everyone lately. Every day when I go up to tea at the Mess there is the cry "All the letters are for John as usual"! That's pretty good for you but I must say I get an amazing selection from all sorts of people. Today there was a bulk~~y~~ package of letters written by you all before Xmas and forwarded on. They have been wandering about the hospitals, marked not known sent to O_z[?[167]] E and finally trickled back here. There were two from A.P of 6 ϒ 16 Dec, one from DW 17 Dec and one from Mary on the same day. There was a cheerful and

matronly Xmas effort from Mrs Chignell and a long and spidery one from I.F.G with some interesting reflections on the Fleming Report on Schools. He believes very much in building up the standards of the Elementary schools from the bottom rather than accepting them ϒ letting 23% into the Public Schools where they don't pay. They must pay what they can afford; otherwise boys will get a false set

[166] should be 'live like', obviously, but a line-break defeated the proof-reading.
[167] Not sure what the second symbol of this is; looks like a long subscript 2, or, as guessed, z; could be 'g'? Although a 'p' as for something like 'Operation Executive' would be plausible it cannot be made out as such.

of values; one debases the currency and encourages luxuries by letting them off. I rather agree with him. He says Charterhouse is full and whether it is good is another question. Not that it's bad but, he says, they miss the fathers of boys at home and there is a streak of vulgarity. That is all true and the danger of Charterhouse. Perhaps it's a good thing to have seen it, known it and hope to avoid imitating it. But I always feel it very much when meeting a number of Carthusians. I have heard from IFG since as I believe I told you. Now to answer some points in AP's excellent letters. Interruption. Leslie Mackay has just been in, fresh back from the day at our new quarters with encouraging reports of the comfort, though the winter's occupants, mostly A.M.G, have burned all the window frames and doors so the houses are shells merely. Leslie is a most charming person and a very able commander of B Coy. On the stock exchange before the war though mostly leading the social life in town. Back to A.P. I am encouraged to read these earlier accounts of Mary and compare them with the much more cheerfully written recent letters that have arrived from her and about her.

It is easy to see what great strides she has made and I long to hear that all is perfectly well again, as I am sure it will soon be. She is too sensible to fail. You write about the Carthusian. A recent one has arrived but I believe from the post-mark, Godalming, ɤ the writing that it was sent by Elinor Birley. She never writes to me these days and I wonder what news you have of them. I have also got a recent Draconian and some Digests for all of which many thanks. Mary sent the Digests, and said no doubt they'd find the waste paper basket as well as anything else. I don't like Digests as such but shall read these gratefully cont

~ * ~

[BY AIR MAIL - AIR LETTER]

Lady Waterfield
Underdown
Tangier Rd
Guildford
Surrey
England

[signed 'JPWaterfield' across top, red shield-shaped stamp "PASSED BY CENSOR 5282"]
[One mauve 3d stamp, franked "FIELD POST OFFICE 750 7 MR 45"]
[annotated "[arr] March 10", blue-black ink]

No 120(b) 1. KRRC

Ten to seven and its quite dark now outside. They have mounted the HQ Coy guard on my doorstep and I haven't much more time. Leslie occupied a long space in gossip and I've learned that even if one hasn't time to see people one must try and appear to have plenty. It's a great art. Toby Low (60th Rifles) our local B.G.S, a Wykehamist ɤ barrister and friend of John Hogg, who got a v.g D.S.O in Crete with the Rangers and has done quite remarkably on the Staff since, being a civilian soldier is a very good example of that. He came to lunch the other day and always appears to have the world of time on his hands, though he must really be one of the busiest men in 8 Army. Listening civilly to people is another great thing. Toby told us two v. funny stories of Winston in Greece which I'll tell you if I have time later in this.

A.P talks about the F.S and says I can apply now. I definitely should like to do that. Do I apply to you, A.P, or to whom and what form of application do I make? If you'll accept this okay, if not please let me know to whom I should address my application and what form of address I should use. Do I say what my qualifications, if any, are or my War Experience? I am definitely NOT drawn to the Colonial Service at all. I am a bit anxious about my ignorance of European languages, indeed my ignorance of everything except a bit of human administration, for the F.S but am definitely drawn

towards that, rather than anything else of a Government service nature. I hanker vaguely still after the bar but it is a narrow field. Big business as such appeals to me but it has to be so very grainy and little first. But I am all agog and aware and receptive of any suggestions or ideas. The more people I can meet the better and the more I hear in the way of ideas the better. Please keep me in touch with all your progress and thoughts and suggestions on this subject. Denys Rhodes (11 Eaton Mansions Sloane Sq S.W.1) now is home, grade D, and cannot use his arm. He has a lot of social connections and is being very expensive about the West End at the moment in spite of his arm. He may come and see you about ideas. He was $2^{i}/_{c}$ to Henry Howard at the R.Ronco and was wounded in the elbow there. He has always been booked for the Diplomatic.

As to people in Rome - I am very grateful to hear of anyone there and would be glad if you would write to Nosworthy whom I am sure could put me well in, in the way of social activity and comfort, old bachelor though he may be. I plan to take leave, possibly with Howard ϒ Mackay, towards the end of the month and you've no idea how important ϒ helpful it is to have acquaintances, contacts and friends in every place. I adored Rome ϒ so I shall go there again rather than to Florence but it would be a great help even if you don't write to Nosworthy if you could let me know his style and address because then I should write and ask if I might visit him. I am sure there must be some other people about

C.M.F, Rome or this area generally whom I could do well to go and see. Do let me know if there is. Leslie's great friend is P.A (or whatever it's called) to MacMillan and we wish to tee ourselves well up before striking off into Rome. He has another friend who is something Diplomatic in the Vatican so we should be all right.

Delighted I am to hear how well all AP's projects and ideas, particularly the constructive ones, are going. Don't work too hard however. Mary says D.W's disinclination to be photographed is breaking down and says also something about AP and a Portrait Gallery which I don't fathom. In any case <u>please expedite photos of all the family</u>. And expensively done ones at that. They are the best. Mary says Jill is not pretty but wears her clothes so much better. In the old photo's (Poly) I have she is extraordinarily handsome, I think ϒ would like to hear your views ϒ to see a photo. Please, I beg, of you all, get something done about it. It's so <u>damned</u> silly not to.

John Hope, Colonel John now, has gone off to Florence on leave ϒ says he'll look at Poggi Gherardo where his sister stayed with the Aubrey W's. Howard has got $2^{i}/_{c}$ and we said goodbye to Alick yesterday who has gone sadly to AFHQ. For the last time I am moving the Bn and arranging all of this and that as Adjt because, having done it for longer than anyone else since the beginning of the war, and a great honour

it is to have ever had it, I am going to pack up at last. I am however stepping sideways ϒ upwards rather than upwards to command HQ Coy. I never dreamed of doing that but I think until I can drink gin again with impunity it is probably fair enough. After all it is the status of a Company Commander and I shall have 200 of the oldest sweats in the Bn to look after though it is not an operational command.

I have heard from one of our subalterns here who knew Peter Waterfield at school (Peter Way) how nice P. Waterfield is, particularly his manners! Jill has met Way's sister, I gather. The fellow who knew R Bankes-Jones, Tony Custane[?]

[cont upside down at top]

was badly wounded ϒ will be coming home. No more now - always much love John

[on outside flap - so upside down at bottom of last page:]

N.B. <u>Please let me have Charles Siepmann's add</u>ress.

~ * ~

[BY AIR MAIL - AIR LETTER]

Lady Waterfield
Underdown
Tangier Rd
Guildford
Surrey
England

[signed 'JPWaterfield' across top, red shield-shaped stamp "PASSED BY CENSOR 5282"]
[One mauve 3d stamp, franked "FIELD POST OFFICE 750 13 MR 45"]
[annotated "[arr] March 19", blue ink]

11 March 45 | No 121(a) | 1. KRRC CMF

My dear Mummy and Daddy,

I see this is the first letter I've written since our move out of the marshes and the battle. We drove down last Sunday. I led the Bn, probably for the last time, in a jeep. A good sunny drive down the main road, the Army axis and supply line. We are established under new masters by the sea which is blue and sometime golden in the early morning sun as I come down to mount the Quarter Guard. We have a Central officers mess in a requisitioned hotel, lately in turn the mess of Italian and German and Canadian officers and now of the 60th Rifles. I share a room, a nice one, with Giles Mills and there is a bed for each of us, wardrobes and a wash-basin which I have as the senior partner. The water runs sometimes, I have got my tin trunk and Revelation up from the Baggage Store at Taranto and am glad to dress for dinner again. All my kit which has spread and swollen into kit-bags and ammunition boxes, corduroys, woolly coats, hundreds of tobacco tins, buttons, hair cream, desert boots and books, confines my side of our room in a great wall. Giles is on leave at the moment at the Villa in Florence where I was ill after only a day last November when Leslie Mackay and I went there from Sant Archangelo, after the sad battle of the Ronco river. We have a quiet writing room in the building here and I am plugging away after dinner tonight by myself with the Diesel oil stove accompanying me with regular gurgles. These young officers all seem to go to bed very early; I don't know whether they have anything more attractive in their billets. In the ante-room we have a fine roaring fire in a fireplace built by our stone-mason and bricklayer but wood in the rearward areas is an hellish problem. The previous inhabitants of this house and all the Bn billets during the winter burned up all the doors, door-frames and window-frames so our pioneers have been fully occupied since we arrived making the shells which they left us habitable. The rfn live in bungaloid structures mixed

with semi-Gothic style mansions (a little like Dawlish's but less prim and more vulgar) down by the flat sea side, five minutes from the mess which is up on a hill.

The sea is blue and the sun has shone all the week. My office is on the road which runs next to the beach and there is a view from the window of a green hill and cliff by the sea to the south, of the castle where Paolo and Francesca were murdered to the South East, and snow covered mountains behind it. The fishing fleet puts its nose a few hundred metres outside the harbour every day but is not allowed further and fishes for the mess are therefore limited to whitebait of a small and fleshless type. I've got cramp in my fingers. I suppose because I've written so much all day so fast. We are very busy but don't yet know whether we are coming or going as far as this reorganisation is concerned. We get sent a new Establishment by every post and are fatigued vilely by writing out comparative tables of NCOs and tradesmen and vehs again and again, trying to make on paper one miserable rifleman do the work of two.

I've also been writing an account of the

Bn's activities for old Hereward Wake to put in the Chronicle or at least to put in such parts of it as are not considered libellous or censorable. This afternoon Col John (just back from 10 days at the Florence villa) and Henry Howard and I drove up in a jeep to look at our old September battlefield for

the Gothic line. We saw the brewed up tanks and our carriers still where they were hit. There was the Carrier where poor Henry Crookenden was blown up. The corn was sprouting

[continued upside down at top:]

and the villagers are back in the shattered wrecks of their homes. It was peaceful ɤ still and springlike. The smell of death had gone but there were graves still marked "unknown German". It seemed fantastic that we'd been there ɤ fought.

~ * ~



22 - a 'brew-up', Libya

[BY AIR MAIL - AIR LETTER]

Lady Waterfield
Underdown
Tangier Rd
Guildford
Surrey
England

[signed 'JPWaterfield' across top, red shield-shaped stamp "P... BY CENSOR 5282"]
[One mauve 3d stamp, franked "FIELD POST OFFICE 750 13 MR 45"]
[annotated "[arr] March 19", blue ink]

contd No 121(b) 1. KRRC
I should like to go and sit by the wood fire and smoke CMF
a pipe and read a detective but there is so much I want to write to you and I've touched none of it on the first a.l.c. I've got Mummy's last three letters out in front of me here and AP.'s are underneath somewhere. Below that I've got another pile of letters from my little brother and sisters and all my buddies and acquaintances. All of these need answering but I must say deserve to be answered because I'm getting a fine flow of letters now. When I give up Adjutant at long last I shall be able to deal with some of them in more detail. I may even be able to read. It's a funny thing that as soon as one gets back to the Bn it's impossible to read anything but detective stories or novels which don't need thought or effort. My letter to Harry has produced results however and I am even getting a weekly Times now as well. I suppose he sends it. I can't think of anyone else though Rosemary Whitaker has promised to send me on the Times and New Statesman from Bari. I am, of course, more tolerant and equable and happy and understanding than when I left England. It would be awful if I were not. But I confess I am anxious about coming home. The family letters and particularly all the anxiety described which poor little Mary's illness has caused and the necessity of relearning so much of domestic habits have worried me lately. I feel certain I will be patient with Mary and I know I understand her troubles more clearly, probably, than anyone but it will be an awful effort to be patient. I have grown through any nonsense of expecting to come home to a welcoming England. I have heard too many stories of disillusionment by people who have been home on "Python" for that, but realize that it's a very hard thing to come home from soldiering in foreign parts. Don't get me wrong. I am not being a martyr nor trying to be cynical. I am tempted to be both as everyone is who has fought in Italy

and a dry joke or two is fair enough, but I am trying to get myself adjusted to home life and the end of the Army for me. I don't think that is being disloyal to the Army where I am still very happy and expect to be employed for a long time yet. In fact I'm plenty ambitious still in the Army, but although I've no doubt I could become a Major on the Staff quite soon by using my contacts to get myself a good job, at the moment I feel that would be not an admirable action and hope to get command (probably after coming down to 2nd in command first) of a Motor Coy before I've finished.

The lights have gone out. They always do at 11.30 and it's not much good by candle light. You've therefore been spared what I wanted to say here. I have had a very good letter from Mary after her first day at work. I guess I can see her problem only too well. God knows what the remedy is, though. A gentler but firm male hand, I guess. Lots of young men in a way would be good, if gay gentlemen who did not give a damn for Mary as distinct from not quite gentlemen who seem to be too stupidly serious for words. Oh well. I hope Jill enjoys her ball. Funny old thing that she is. In spite of her tough

self-sufficiency she needs a helping knowing hand to push her along. Bow writes from Barnard Castle. Bramall is now Adjt of No. 2, I hear from Tony Wreford-Brown who has gone there as a "far from rash platoon commander"! I told Bow to write to Bramall, if he wants to go there. Daddy had better look out. Already his democratic plans are being circumscribed. Denys Rhodes, now grade D in London ɤ decorating the West End, has written that he has been offered Foreign Office employment through the Agency of his cousin Harold Nicolson. There are

[continued upside down at top:]

to my certain knowledge a number of young men who are working their way via mil channels into F.O employ. Not fair, I cry? Oh yes if I can do the same so look to it. Don't be put off by this letter always v.m.l. John

~ * ~

[BY AIR MAIL - AIR LETTER]

Lady Waterfield
Underdown
Tangier Rd
Guildford
Surrey
England

[signed 'JPWaterfield' across top, red shield-shaped stamp "PASSED BY CENSOR 5282"]
[One mauve 3d stamp, two franks (different sizes), both smudged]
[annotated "[arr] March 3", blue ink]

22 March 45 | No 122 | 1. KRRC CMF

My dear Mummy and Daddy,

I am late this week. It's Wednesday[168] after dinner and I have been pretty guilty in doing nothing about letters I owe these last few nights. However I have been pretty active and busy as usual. Tonight I handed over officially my appointment as Adjt to Giles Mills. I had all my staff in to thank them for teaching me plenty and encourage them for the future to work even harder for Giles. There are five of them who have been with me the whole time since Suani Ben Adem and of those three are going home with the Rangers on Python in the next few days. The other two are new and about half as good. I have grown fond of them all and they are good workers. The Rangers are having a goodbye party on Saturday which will be a fantastic affair I expect. This afternoon I and Henry Howard went up on the hill by the castle behind the mess and took a T.E.W.T (a well known Army phrase which Bow will interpret for you)[169] on patrols. It is surprising how much you learn teaching others and it's also equally good for inducing a pleasurable sense of superiority! We have a number of new subalterns, some Rhodesians with whom we have a particular association, as you know) and they and some senior NCOs made up the cadre which has been doing a course for the last ten days. I had to lecture them on administration and Military Law, Powers of Arrest and such like the other night in D Coy dining hall, a greasy damp ground floor room. I went on haranguing them for so long that it was dark before I realized I could not see their faces and some of those who weren't asleep had probably vanished from the back to their dinners. The sun was hot this afternoon as we sat out of the sea breeze in the lee of a green bank ɤ discussed "Routes out" ɤ "Formations" and "Passwords" and other dreary things. We drove back in John Christian's jeep which we had borrowed in time for tea. John Christian is a charming person whom I've known for some time. He was B.M of the Infantry Bde

in 1st. Armd Div last winter and the first time I really met him he lost £20 to me at cards on Christmas Eve 44 in the mess at Bonfarik. He came to us as A Company Commander, though he had been $2^{i}/_{c}$ of a Bn before, when Sandy Goschen left us after the Ronco last November. This evening between tea and dinner I took over accounts of the mess, P.R.I and HQ Imprest and only just got through in time for dinner. Tony Round came, back today and said he'd seen Mary and how well she'd looked and

[168] 22 March was in fact Thursday. Perhaps dated to the next morning? See also notes on next letter.
[169] as in fact explained in letter of 4.5.41.

how they had chattered away gaily. He did say he hadn't thought much of her boyfriend! The flask has probably gone astray because it had NOT reached the Transit Camp when he left. I cannot think why you haven't posted it. No letters lately but a splendid collection of books for which many grateful thanks. I am delighted with them. Mrs Chignell also sent me the H.M's letter and most recent Carthusian Society circular. I have been busy writing a long account for the Chronicle of the Bn's doings since Tunis which I'll try to get to Sir Hereward sometime. He really has grown very doddery though. Tomorrow is a rehearsal of a big Bn parade for the General on Sat and I have got to take it as the Colonel ɤ most of the Os C Coys will be away. This will be

my last appearance at Adjt. I am having great fun running the Central Bn Mess. I have got a good Italian cook at last, a nice pink-cheeked old boy who puts on his white cap ɤ looks quite promising. They are all ridiculously expensive, these Italians, but if you have one in the kitchen they must be given a free rein and no rfn must be allowed in there. We had zabbaglione last night which was a success. We get a lot of Marsala ɤ some indifferent sherry quite regularly from the NAAFI. Your last

[continued upside down at top:]

letters have all rather disturbed me by the accounts of general fatigue ɤ ill-health of you all. Do be careful ɤ don't work too hard. Write soon. Always much love from John

~ * ~

[BY AIR MAIL - AIR LETTER]

Lady Waterfield
Underdown
Tangier Rd
Guildford
Surrey
England

[signed 'JPWaterfield' across top, red shield-shaped stamp "PASSED BY CENSOR 5282"]
[One mauve 3d stamp, *three* franks - two normal, one small , the latter smudged, the others managing between them "FIELD POST OF..."]
[annotated "[arr] Apr 9", blue ink]

No 123 29 . 1. 45[170] 1. KRRC
CMF

My dear Mummy and Daddy,

I am long overdue with you both and indeed am so far behind now that I am almost a week behind. Today is Friday[171] and I am sitting by the fire in our Mess after dinner. As usual everyone else seems to have gone to bed. John Hope, to whom I gave your congratulations, is playing bridge, which is also normal routine, in the card room next door and the wireless is blaring out more of Montgomery's successes. The waiters have not even started to put out the night tray of drinks so it cannot be very late. I can't think where everyone else goes to. The mess is full of new faces nowadays and of course it's a scandal that the officers we get as rfts are not those we would like from the OCTU in England who have either gone to France or stagnate, as far as I can see, at Strensall. A Bn mess is fun for people who know each other and for people who know how to behave in it. But very few nowadays do. Coy Messes develop conversation and entertainment but a Bn mess freezes people who cannot learn or who have not been taught to thaw with grace and good manners.

[170] this must actually be '3', or 'March'; the '1' perhaps in anticipation of his address. Letter 126 (13 April) confirms.
[171] the 29 March 1945 was in fact Thursday. There is something a bit malformed about the '29' too, though the 9 is clear... See also the 22 March/ Wednesday confusion and note in previous letter.

The news is marvellous, I suppose. It's very hard though, I find, to appreciate it all out here and it was only today by accident, waiting for my haversack ration (Army word for picnic lunch) to be prepared before going out with Col John to watch an inf ɤ the cooperation exercise, that I saw the map as it stands with a receptive eye when I picked up the 8th. Army News in the ante-room. I expect we shall be busy again soon. Now that Kesseling has gone we may be able to get on although advances in themselves are worth little unless we encompass some Tedesci on the way. I should like to drive over the Brenner in my jeep and of course it brings me nearer home which I cannot hope to reach on L.L.A.P leave before next Christmas, I'm afraid. Our other rank vacancies have been quite good, I think. We have got about 50 away so far and two officers. We get an officer Vacancy about every three months; sometimes there is a two month gap between. Although I've been longer in the Bn than anyone

now except John Hope we've got a couple of officers lately who came out with the 2nd. Bn in Nov 41 but who did not go back with them last year as they had left earlier for employment in Mid East. In addition I feel I should stand down in favour of Leslie Mackay who has marital difficulties and a small boy just going to his private school, and another fellow who is married. So we must not build up hopes of an early return. You never know however and surprises of all kinds happen.

I have had three long letters from A.P this last week full of better news and gossip than I can remember for a long time anyone sending. John Hogg wrote tonight too but I've had beside that only one rather sad and, I thought, retrogressive letter from Mary which depressed me a lot. Nothing from Bow or Jill or anyone else. I've written to old Nosworthy introducing myself and begging leave to call on him if or when I get to Rome. Time is getting short I think and I may not get away this time, but I would rather like to. I adored Rome and there are lots of pretty girls there. Are you all sure you know nobody but Nosworthy there? But maybe he will offer to put me

[continued upside down at top of first page[172]:]

up which is so much better than the hotels the NAAFI run for officers. This has not taken long to write but there is an invasion of people back from a party with our late doctor, Oliver Green's successor. To be continued - very much love from John

~ * ~



23 - Mackay, Flattnitz 1945

[172] unusually the back outside page has not been used.

[BY AIR MAIL - AIR LETTER]

Lady Waterfield
Underdown
Tangier Rd
Guildford
Surrey
England

[signed 'JPWaterfield' across top, mauve shield-shaped stamp "PASSED BY CENSOR 5282"]
[One mauve 3d stamp, franked "FIELD POST OFFICE... 2 AP 45"]
[annotated "[arr] Apr", blue-black ink]

1 April 45 | No 124 | 1. KRRC CMF

My dear Mummy and Daddy,

Sunday evening and I must try and get straight. I wrote late in the week and said I'd continue but I hadn't an opportunity. Even if I write fast these things occupy quite a lot of time to cover with news. We had a good Easter day and lovely weather. There was first early church at 8. As we walked down the street to the beach the sea was smooth grey and gold, like molten metal and the mist was clearing as the sun warmed up. There were coloured boiled eggs for breakfast, but only pink ones, which we made by putting cochineal into the water. The yellow I believe you get by using saffron but we had none. I had great difficulty in convincing the mess staff that I was not mad when I said I wanted pink eggs. After matins we had a big party, starting 1130 for repaying all the hospitality we've had since we came to our new friends. I have learned a lot and enjoyed it getting the party prepared and am now prepared to run a mess with anyone. We had delicious egg flip which really has become a speciality of ours since North Africa. We used to get it, made with brandy, at a little restaurant in Tunis when we were at Medjez and later at Bou Sadda in the desert S. of Tunis where we stayed at the excellent hotel there and went to watch the Ouled Nail dancing girls after dinner. Much of this is recounted in the pages and pages I've written for the Chronicle which may or may not get to old Hereward in time for publication. I've sent it down to Alick Williams at A.F.H.Q for vetting ɤ I hope he'll fly it home. Even if it's not published, or if part of it only is, I'll keep it for you to see when I get home. The trouble with that sort of thing is that it must be written allusively and half the readers are bound to miss many of the points. Interval to discuss racing at Salisbury, for some reason - I think there's an article in this week's Crusader about it - with John Christian and Geoffrey Shakerley. John has A Coy now in Sandy's place. I told you about him before. He was up at Trinity, Oxford, and then joined the 2 Bn a good many years ago as a regular, served in Palestine and came to us after being B.M of an Inf Bde last winter near us in Algiers and later at Anzio. Geoffrey Shakerley is an independent gentleman who has travelled all over the world, was a first rate steeple-chase jockey and broke his spine two years before the war, I think at Sandown; he's older than most, about 38 but very fit, and was $2^{i}/_{c}$ of the 8th. Bn or two years. When they were so unfairly (but probably necessarily) disbanded after being mobilized last June, he became spare with many others and came out to Mid East and on here as a Captain! He has now got B Coy and Leslie has moved over to D. Geoffrey is a great person for all the good things of life, ɤ has done practically everything. He was

up at Ch.Church in '27 ɤ talks about it often. I like him a lot. The party was a great success. There's not much point naming everyone who came because you'd not know them, I think, but we saw many friends, old ɤ new. Then cold ham for lunch, coffee on the balcony and sleep in the deck chair, or anyway sleep for some. I settled down somewhat dazed by good living to work out my loads and drivers for the Company when we get going to war again, which can't be far off. I have fifty vehs in my Company of one kind or another and although it seems plenty, the Establishment is pretty tight for all the things I have to get on them and the juggling and rearranging that one has to make on the W.E to sort the thing out is a headache, especially as it's about the fiftieth time I've done it in some way or

other. Pause for whisky... Still no letters from any of you since I last write but the bank sent my balance as at 31 Jan £149.5.7 I see I put £112 (or you put for me) into Savings Certs last summer on 23 Jun - was that the first and only or the second lot of Certs you bought for me?

I am very well again now and feeling springlike ɤ happy indeed in my company, although it's only HQ. At least it's a command and I have 200 odd old-sweats and shysters to look after. Rfn Deane is well and looking forward to coming home in July or August on Python. He has many times told me to thank you most feelingly for the cigarettes Mummy sent at Christmas and I keep forgetting. He writes so badly that he asks forgiveness for not thanking you himself.

As a Coy Comd we get a jeep so he's got some work to do maintaining it and I hope my Coy fitters will hot it up to go. I have a Cpl Veh Mech who says he's had 15 yrs experience Motor cycle racing ɤ if I want the jeep warmed, he's the one to do it!

Do not however get anxious because the roads are so bad it's impossible to risk anything. You say, by the way, you wish I could say where I was. There is no reason why you should not be able to guess this from intelligent deductions but it does not matter much. I could easily have guessed, if I were you, to within 'a couple of miles'. I am MOST distressed that Mummy will not have

[continued upside down at top:]

a photo taken and only hope she will become more sensible and kindly disposed! Anyway I've got another 1½ years or more to do yet and so get photos of everyone else (and her if possible) as soon as you can. I heard from John Hogg today with 12 Bn in Germany. always much love from John

~ * ~

[BY AIR MAIL - AIR LETTER]

Lady Waterfield
Underdown
Tangier Rd
Guildford
Surrey
England

[signed 'JPWaterfield' across top, red shield-shaped stamp "PASSED BY CENSOR 5282"]
[No stamp (as noted in letter), franked "FIELD ... ... 17 10 AP 45", a second small round black frank, smudged]
[annotated "[arr] Ap 17", blue-black ink]

9 April 45 1. KRRC

No 125 CMF

My dear Mummy and Daddy,

Mary is my only source of information about you all lately. She says you've had no letters from me for over a fortnight but I hope you're not anxious. This is Monday again, a day behind, but I couldn't help it because we were driving and working hard all yesterday, Sunday, missing our lie in bed and other blessings of Sunday. Mary writes so much more cheerfully - it is a joy to hear about all your Easter activities. I cannot follow how that misery Bow has got home on leave again and Jill is also at home. I wish I was too! Mary says Harry has at last been made a director of the Bank which will please him, I suppose. He will surely now not require to do Mary out of her birthday sugar. I hope she will have a splendid party for her birthday. I can really not believe she is going to be 21 which is so old she might be married with lots of babies. Neither Bow nor Jill have bothered to send me any news and I find it increasingly hard to picture any of you, even Mary, as you really are. So do please help by all getting yourselves photographed. I don't know where all the

repressions about photos come from unless it's Siepmann nonsense again. I have had a letter from old Nosworthy inviting me to call ɤ possibly stay with him if and when I get to Rome but it seems very much an "IF" now. I shall not be able to get away until we've won the last battle or else are bogged down in the Po or one of the nearer river beds on the way there. I have seen nothing yet in G.R.O's about A.P's examinations but am watching expectantly. I hope you enjoy your weekend with the Spendan Lewis's ɤ although I doubt if that sort of life would appeal to me would be

grateful if you would ask him the form on employment in the Partnership or whatever he calls it after the war. I agree with A.P in all his opinions about my future except that the academic life would suit me. I can imagine nothing which would suit me less well except possibly that as a lifelong "Partner";[173] I discovered the other night that Peter Lee, now $2^{i}/_{c}$ B Coy to Geoffrey Shakerly, ɤ who is jointly with me the oldest inhabitant of the officers of the Bn, is a cousin of A.P's old buddy Kenneth Lee. Peter is a nice old thing, an Etonian who went into Hutchinsons, the publishers, which he condemns roundly, intending to go back to the well-paid cotton trade after the war. He lives at Tilford.

How do Bow and Jill get on with this riding I am always hearing about? I cannot imagine them! Mary, though, should be made to go too. Do you see that I am excused stamps on these things now - it will save a lot. I told you about my bank statement, I believe, and asked how much you had put into Savings's Certificates for me. Today among many other things I have been wrestling with problems of Insurance of all the Regimental property, trophies, furniture, silver etc of which some is stored in Cairo and some sailing for England ɤ some packed away in our baggage store. A hideous muddle!

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This is, I am afraid, a very dull ɤ dreary letter but I will try and improve next time. This is always a difficult period - waiting but I am really in cracking form. Always much love from John

~ * ~



24 - Jill, Martin, Mary; 1945

[173] looks like ';' but could be a smudged '.' with an extra dot; depends on whether there's some connection between 'partnership' and Kenneth Lee, or whether it is just another paragraph-space-saving 'non-sequitur'.

[BY AIR MAIL - AIR LETTER]

Lady Waterfield
Underdown
Tangier Rd
Guildford
Surrey
England

[signed 'JPWaterfield' across top, red shield-shaped stamp "PASSED BY CENSOR 5282"]
[No stamp, franked "FIELD POST OFFICE ... 14 AP 45"]
[annotated "[arr] Ap 17", blue-black ink]

13 April 1945 1. KRRC

No 126 CMF

My dear Mummy and Daddy,

This afternoon at tea time came two letters from Mummy dated April 1 (Easter Day) & 6 (at Leckford Abbas). You say you have had no letters from me for a fortnight but I have caught up on my weekly ration - the last ones being 122 on 22.3.45, 123 on 30.3, 124 on 1.4, 125 on 9.4 and I have written to all three of the brats since we last moved on 8 April. You do not mention any lacunae in the numbering so I take it there has been a delay in the mail merely, although I have, in my opinion, had a great deal less from you all than I deserve or send myself! Firstly a quick answer to your question of poor little Mary's 21st. birthday present. In spite of paying Mr Welsh £30 or so in the last week - (incidentally I hope he is not making you pay too for my boots, jacket etc as he did to John Hope's power of attorney!) I am more than glad to buy her a wireless if that's a good present. I have already written to say this once[174] but, as I suspect, & have said before, I believe you don't pay much attention to what I say. I must write to Mary, if possible tonight, for her birthday. I do hope so much it will be a happy one & that she will have a tremendous party for it as she deserves. I wish I were there to take part in it but send her all my love. We are still waiting on a tight rein. There is plenty to do to occupy us in preparation. We have had a surfeit of asparagus again tonight which I adore & indeed quite a good dinner altogether with a savoury of prawns stuffed with excellent mango chutney bought at the weekly N.A.A.F.I issue and wrapped in bacon. Leslie Mackay has come up the road from his farm a mile away, to dine and is now playing bridge with John Hope, Henry Howard & Douglas Rae, our Signals Officer who succeeded Peter Wake last year when he went down to A Coy to be $2^{i}/_{c}$ to Sandy Goschen. Again I rather wish I could play bridge well. Am I right in thinking that A.P used to be very keen? If so, there is a great flaw in our otherwise blameless upbringing, that we were not taught the game! But I have done so well at poker lately which comes much more naturally to my flashy, intuitive way of thinking, that I

ought to have no complaints. We have had all the Colonels & Brigadiers of the Divisions in and, I am ashamed to say, stripped them all. It's very hot here in the flat dusty plain but the flies have not started yet, the blossom still scents the night air and as I walk up to the Company to take my Company Office every morning at 8.45 it feels good to be alive - provided I have not been irritated by the serving of breakfast or the weakness of the coffee!

Pause to listen to the Colonel rating Douglas for evil play on a three card suit or something & to fill Leslie's glass. I am glad you found the Lewis's more companionable than of old. What do they want to move house for? Delighted to hear how well A.P looks in a dinner jacket, which I am told is rare to see in uncivilized England now, & I am sure that Mummy looked even more distinguished in an evening frock! I am worried a bit about my own civilian clothes because I am fairly well known for the admirable supply, well maintained by Rfn Deane, of various & entertaining military costumes in my possession and I'm sure I've grown out of all my clothes at home. Would it be a good idea to order

[174] but not to AP/DW in the letters preserved.

some cloth or something for suits now - if so, let AP go ahead ɤ get something reserved. That old funny Sir Hereward Wake wrote to me today for the second time this week saying that the account I wrote for the Chronicle has at last been sent to him by Alick Williams from A.F.H.Q ɤ this has pleased us.

Peter Wake is at Courteenhall, ɤ sometimes in

hospital still. I hope he will come ɤ see you as soon as he can move about. Stuttafords have sent me two vouchers so I hope my latest cheque has reached them. I am sorry to hear about Graham Gow and have written to his mother tonight. I never really felt that I knew him well when we met again but, useless though these things are, it is something to make the gesture. The last time I saw him was at Bengazi in Jan 43 when I went down through the High Jebel to defend a deserter at the 8 Army Court Martial Centre ɤ found him adm officer at the Transit Camp.

I did not know Martin had a motor bicycle. Where does he get the petrol for

[continued upside down at top of first pages:]

it? I wish I had been with you for your picnic at Hascombe. How does Bow ɤ even more Jilly look on a horse? Please send me the flask or flasks as soon as possible as we have a campaign in front of us still. Have you found anyone to employ me yet after the war? I am enjoying commanding a Company

[continued diagonally in corner:]

and dread unemployment. Write soon always much love from John

~ * ~

[BY AIR MAIL - AIR LETTER]

Lady Waterfield
Underdown
Tangier Rd
Guildford
Surrey
England

[signed 'JPWaterfield' across top, mauve shield-shaped stamp "PASSED BY CENSOR 5282"]
[No stamp, franked "FIELD POST OFFICE 757 5 MY 45"]
[no arrival date noted, blue-black ink (initially pale)]

30 April 1945[175]

No 127

1. KRRC
CMF

My dear Mummy and Daddy,

I must be miles and miles and days overdue with a letter but I've lost all count of time. Nights are sleepless driving and days are frantic affairs of coordination, rushing on, putting away a few prisoners and looting! This has been and is a glorious end to 8th. Army's European campaign and it is so marvellous for the riflemen until we have time to settle down and digest our problems. Now the pace of the gallop settles them all for us and we don't need to worry. We had a hard few days at the beginning and had sharp casualties though they were absurdly light considering the enormous number of the enemy we killed and captured. I have never seen such carnage as there was at some of the bridges. But all of the glory and gayness, at least not quite all because that's not really right, is marred by the fact that John Hope died in the C.C.S of wounds he

[175] some events from this date to the end of the *Letters* are also covered from a retrospective point of view in Appendix D, *'Return to Thalenstein'*.

received when he was sniped on the 23rd. whilst sitting with the tank regimental commander on the turret of his tank. It is quite the greatest blow I have ever known. He was a very great and particularly good ɤ wise person and would have been a success and influence for good in the world whatever he did. I am proud to have known him so well. Of course as a Colonel he was superb and greatly loved. It is heartbreaking that he should have been killed just at the moment of the final defeat of the German armies in the Mediterranean for which he had fought in every battle since the beginnings in Egypt and Libya. The sniper was later rounded up ɤ inexplicably came out boasting that he had just sniped an officer in a Honey tank. As only one had been sniped that day and he was wearing civilian clothes over his uniform he was shot immediately, but of course it was no

consolation or amendment for the death of John Hope. We had logical hopes that he would survive from the doctors reports but it was hardly believed that he could really die. Henry Howard, Leslie Mackay and I with his servant and driver motored in the staff car during a lull down the dusty, choking, bumpy white shining track of the Divisional axis and went straight into the C.C.S's Colonel's office. He said John had died in the night without ever fully recovering consciousness from the operation. We went away very sad and went to Toby Low (60th. Rifles ɤ now B.G.S at a famous corps) and he sent a signal for us to Hugh Hope now Brigade Major in Greece. We all miss John horribly ɤ are reminded of previous "swans" and good parties with him by all these great events in which we are now the first to be involved. Eggs are free; civilians line the streets and throw flowers and blow kisses. I have never been clapped nor am ever likely to be again as I was by the multitude in the gayest finery, waving flags and handkerchiefs and clapping their hands ɤ shouting, as I drove through the great town of P-[176] today. The loot is tremendous, but of course we shall have to hand it over. I have a magnificent German General's Mercedes-Benz but everyone has their eyes on it ɤ today I acquired a bottle of real pre-war Kümmel ɤ some good cigars. It is like Tunis over again. The files of P.W trail unshaven, grey and dirty, down the

great autostrade under the fresh green trees which are planted along the road. Some look like Chinese and are probably Turcomen. They seem all ages and types and many come in the ox-wains in which they have tried to get into Austria. We learn that they towed nearly all their vehs with oxen from the villages from the South side of the Po because they had no petrol. Some of the prisoners are cheerful; some grim and most resigned and acquiescent to defeat. I am sitting in what will be for one night my Mess dining room waiting for the vehs to come in. It

[continued upside down at top of first page:]

is 3pm and I want my lunch. We had delicious breakfast in a well equipped suburban house in P- . Last night and the two previous nights I got up at 3 am ɤ am feeling now sleepy. Mail has been bad but that is not surprising when the L of C is extended across two broad rivers the Po and ADIGE but I suspect you all neglect me now the war is almost over! Always much love from John

Andrew Angus has twice called on me but I've been out - in Grenadier Gds.

~ * ~

[176] presumably Padua.

[BY AIR MAIL - AIR LETTER]

Lady Waterfield
Underdown
Tangier Rd
Guildford
Surrey
England

[signed 'JPWaterfield' across top, mauve shield-shaped stamp "PASSED BY CENSOR 5282"]
[No stamp, franked "FI... POST OFFICE 757 7 MY 45"]
[annotated "[arr] May 15", blue-black ink]

6 May 1945 | No $128_{(a)}$ | 1. KRRC CMF

My dear Mummy and Daddy,

It is just after 9 pm and I have heard snatches of the news coming across from the yard opposite where the Company have a wireless on the Pioneers trailer - judging from what I can hear this may prove to be the last letter I shall write you during the European war. We have come a long way since I wrote the first in Liverpool river in the middle of July 42, continuing with No 2 just before entering Freetown, No 3 at Capetown and so on until the first in Egypt No 6 on the 7th September 42, then all the way across Africa, back to Tripoli and up again, over the sea a year ago to Italy finishing up under the very shadows of the Alps in No 128 after almost 3 years service. It's been good fun writing and good fun living. The experiences, I suppose, will remain with me but cannot now be shared by many as few are left. In a way one feels ashamed desperately for having so easily survived the war. The club of fighting regimental soldiers in this war, as Hugh Hope was saying to me today, is minute in size - the UNNRA colonels fresh from England (£2 500 per annum), thronging Rome & bouncing with verbose statements of how they will run Europe, & the majority of the soldiers of the British Army, have not a clue as to how the war is really won by the infantry and tanks. It doesn't matter at all and of course we are a very conceited lot in the Regt, particularly in the 1st. Bn, but it makes me a little sad when I think of all the things now I can never discuss with anyone because there is noone alive left to whom they mean a thing. We know here, of course, that the war has NOT finished. There are thousands of Chetniks on the march, obedient to their general's orders, not far from this village tonight - they have all long hair, the men, I mean, curling down their backs and trail their women along with them in the column. They want to fight Tito & the Germans but NOT us. "I am one of Mihailovitch's trusted generals" said one to me. They are still armed but so is everyone in this godforsaken land. There are too many arms in the world. Then there

are Tito and his boys who want this country for themselves and may have to be prodded off.

In the gaunt snow-covered and sinister mountains every man's hand is raised against women and the defenceless. There are Cossacks, masterless men and though "good infantrymen" according to the Germans, the Italians say they are the worst human beings they have ever seen, all of them. They are ex-Russian PW, brought down by the Germans here, given a days rations and told to make the rest, in order to keep down the Partisan guerilla activity on the German Alpine L of C. They and the S.S refuse to surrender. They have raped & murdered 2000 civilians up the valleys in the past week. The partisans bash in the brains of German P.W and only await our departure in order to fly at each others' throats, Communist v Royalist. Meanwhile they wear red neckerchiefs and loot sugar from the factories, piled high with flags, trumpet & horn blowing, onto captured 3 tonners, clanking along on their hubs owing to the shortage of tyres. It is indeed an unhappy land. Add to that the problems of the riflemen who all believe they will go home tomorrow and think they have finished soldiering properly now their lives are no longer at stake, and one sees that there is going to be hell in Europe and need for good men to put it right.

I therefore think that one must continue to soldier regimentally to sort out these problems because that is what is going to be hardest. I can feel it already in myself - the ma'alesh attitude - who cares now? - the relaxing of the tension because miraculously you've survived. All very dangerous and the discipline of the Army has got to improve to hold it down.

[Continued upside down at the top of the first page:]

Leslie Mackay is on his way home on L.I.A.P and I have asked him to look in if he can so don't be surprised to see him.

~ * ~

[BY AIR MAIL - AIR LETTER]

Lady Waterfield
Underdown
Tangier Rd
Guildford
Surrey
England

[signed 'JPWaterfield' across top, mauve shield-shaped stamp "PASSED BY CENSOR 5282"]
[No stamp, franked "FIELD POST OFFICE 757 7 MY 45"]
[annotated "[arr] May 15", blue-black ink]

6 May 1945
contd.

No $128_{(b)}$

They say it's all over but this morning I stood out on a road between the mountains, stained ɤ littered with destruction and pitted with bomb craters, ɤ watched the German General of an S.S Mountain Division clicking his heels and saluting to our general in one of their parleys, parlementaries or truces which are now making things so hard. They won't surrender. We don't want casualties. They are terrified of the Partisans (quite justifiably). There it goes on. It was at 6 o'clock in the morning that they parleyed and it was left for the C. in C South East from whom an answer could not be expected until tonight. So Hugh Hope ɤ I drove away. I trace a very definite fellow feeling, a soldiers' brotherhood, between the Germans and us. It's so very hard to know what is right and what is fact. Maybe it's because of our family ancestry but I know that at root I prefer the Germans to the Russians or French or Italians. And then I think of Buchenwald, atrocities I've seen in Italy, and of the S.S Captain whom I saw this morning, scared, black uniformed, twisted, his face a skull, and I think I loath them all. The British Army and ruling classes is still, I am certain, terrified of Russia ɤ I prophecy a big movement to bolster Germany to help us against Russia in the next war in Europe. If we shot these Germans in the belly (jumping back a bit) as we should like to do, we should really be no better than they, as Giles Mills so rightly pointed out when we were discussing it the other day, and why are we fighting after all? I don't want to appear cynical because I don't feel it but at the same time I cannot get as thrilled about the end of this hellish war as I ought to perhaps. We take it as it comes and we are still

very much operational. Hugh Hope came over from Greece yesterday. I knew he'd come. I drove up to Tac in my Mercedes and found him there ɤ we went for a walk. I am sure that if I had been killed you would have accepted it sensibly and calmly as Hugh is so certain his mother will. Nor would you want all my things sent back in dreary parcels after 3/4 months. So we sorted John's kit and put it to best use among his friends as we all have always done. I am very fond of Hugh. He has volunteered for S.E.A.C, "to justify himself for not enough battle experience" he says which is of course nonsense but if a man feels that way, there's an end.

He got a M.C in Wavell's campaign, was put in the bag at SIDI REZEGH Nov 41, has 3 months with 2 Bn in Italy when he escaped in '43, and was D.A.A.Qmg of our Bde all winter. Well, there's enough for you. I have given him Mary's The Last Enemy to provoke him ɤ he has given me a book by Christopher Hollis the name of which I cannot remember but he says there is a predecessor called "Death of a Gentleman" which I ought to read so wd you get it for me, please?

I have no room to discuss

the monstrous account which dominates the whole of D.W's long letter of 23 Apr of H.A.S's appalling boorishness. It is so very odd that unless I can see all the facts from the very beginning I feel I had better keep quiet. Of course, I shall be delighted to help as one of Mary's trustees. I wonder if Harry is mad. It worries me that in the moment of so many much more important events Harry should be so perfectly ungentleman-like and you should all be so distressed and centred on such things. Charles letter

[continued upside down at top of first page:]

is equally dreary. I do pray most desperately for a happy family life for all of us as a family ɤ later in our own independent families. Always all my love John.

I do NOT think DRAGONS a good idea at all for M...[?[177]] ɤ hope they refuse ... Morally unsuitable. Can't explain m...[178]

~ * ~

[On foolscap air letter paper, black ink[179]]

No 129

13 May 45

1. KRRC
CMF

My dear Mummy ɤ Daddy,

Thank you so much for your kindly and encouraging letter after you had seen John Hope's death announced in the Times. Three days ago too one of these new air-mail Times's arrived addressed to John himself which I opened and at the first page I turned back was the announcement in the Times' list of casualties. He is indeed the greatest loss and I have had very many letters from his friends and mine expressing their distress. But I am absolutely confident as I have never been about anyone else except Godfrey Barton, our Padre, who was killed, you remember, not far from Rimini last September, that he met death calmly ɤ confidently, without any fuss or worry for himself. In fact I doubt if he tried much to live once he had been hit. It is much more sad for his friends, Sandy Goschen particularly, ɤ his mother whose husband was killed in the last war in the Regt, than it is for him. For him as a real Christian there is no sadness at all. Today is Sunday ɤ I have not been to church. I have not yet attended or had time to attend any service of thanksgiving for the end of the war.

②

18. May 45

It is a shocking thing that I have left this for five days but it simply couldn't be helped. We have moved from the town thank God and are now on the edge of a rolling wooded vale in a little Austrian

[177] end of lines ('...') lost in tear - 'M' presumably Mary.
[178] 129 indicates that there was a 128(c) too.
[179] Appendix D provides a more smooth and polished account of this time, though, some 50 years later, lacking the immediacy of this letter. Both versions have details missing in the other.

village, set with its streams and farm houses and smiling people under black fir woods which cover the lower slopes of mountains where the snow still sits. We are allowed today to say we are in Austria. When I wrote last we were in Italy, the Northern Friuli plain, on the 6th of the Month. That was No 128(b) and (c).[180] I hope you have got it by now. AP's letter written on V.E day May 8 arrived last night and was waiting for me when I got in for dinner to our Mess, which is a lovely large house, with beautiful furniture, chamois heads on the walls, shot in the eighties mostly, and a real feudal atmosphere. They cook for fifty retainers still in the kitchens which smell of milk and hams - do you know that dairy - grocery kind of smell? - the owner of the house - the Baroness? whose husband is missing in some German Regt over in West Italy speaks good English. She has sent her children away for fear of Tito quite sensibly, I think. I am going to ride this evening, I hope, one of her horses. An old Austrian worker has just rushed into my Company office here

③

where I am writing now and offered, as far as I can judge, a "prime ox". And there he is, in the road, led on a halter. I shall give him over to the cooks and to our new butcher, a soldier who is aged 37, has been a butcher 20 years, has done 7 months soldiering and never seen a shot fired. What a way to come into the Army! The people here are all terrified of Tito, at least the Baroness says so but she would. Anything Red is anathema to the landed people of all Central and South Europe. The innumerable Counts in the Friuli plain were petrified with fear of the Red partisans, the Garibaldini. I cannot yet say that I have seen any peasant here who wants Tito. There is an air of sinister uncertainty about. Maybe it's because of the thundery weather which comes up over the high bank behind the village every night, breaks in a deluge over the company lines and vanishes in glorious morning sunshine after mist each day. But the last days have allowed us no time for rest or relaxation or ease of mind. Europe here is full of looting ɤ torture and murder - cold-blooded pistolling just for the sake of the joke - and rape. Through this village go 5-hour-long columns of marching men, men on horses, men in buses, in Vokwagens, in smart sleek staff cars, on horse-drawn waggons. There are Cossacks, with black furry round hats, Turcomen with slit-eyes, old patriarchs with long beards. They come with horse wagons or ponies. They all file past in the mist, clanking ɤ champing and plodding by for hours and hours at a time. Most of

④

them are already disarmed. Their women are interspersed along the columns in the horse wagons. There are Croats and Magyars, and Germans and Tito Partisans. The Magyars have with them always the most lovely women! My Serjeant-Major called me out yesterday to inspect some. There are always odd men to be found by the stream up in the village by our Company dining hall, washing their feet to ease the strain of walking. They may be any of Europe's races and they all have a furtive, but stolid air about them as if they accepted the worst fates now with indifference. And many of them have suffered and will suffer worse fates. I will NOT attempt to describe more to you but there really is butchery, rape and torture going on in this country. It has been hell these last years of war. The front-line soldiers respect each other because they expect to be taken prisoner and treated properly. The rfn thinks the German soldier rather a good chap ɤ wants to protect him from Tito. But the S.S and special service troops on the L. of C have no fear of being taken prisoner. They are cushy. So they have burned alive and beaten up and tortured - even British airmen prisoners and as for the partisans - it is not describable. They hanged women on the telegraph poles. All the men of this country had gone to the wars so the women acted as common informers for the Germans, telling them of doctors who gave attention to partisan wounded and other such people. The women have been the worst. The sun is shining now hot on the steaming meadows ɤ I shall walk up to lunch, 10 minutes' walk up to the big house. I will go on later.

⑤

Continued after lunch.

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[180] missing, unless strangely he means '(a) and (b)',

We are busy at verifying age and service release groups. I shall be a long time, I'm afraid! but maybe I shall get some LIA.P. Leslie Mackay who has just got a well deserved M.C for commanding B. Coy last November at Pideura is now in England, as I told you. He has written to ask if he could go ɤ see any of you ɤ I've told him you'd be delighted to see him. His parents live down at Chiddingfold somewhere. The International Sportsmen's Club, Upper Grosvenor Street, will find him - Major L.A.Mackay M.C. On the table is a letter from Sandy Goschen, in great distress from Greece at John's death, and wishing he was here and also Mary's photograph which is a delightful present. Looking at it the left hand side is much nicer than the right hand - i.e her left hand side. This Wilding woman's expectation of working hours seems mere impertinence but I confess to hoping that the Oxford arrangement falls through - I am sure that flapping after horrid little small boys of private school age is not a good thing for her. However it is no use interfering from here. I do so wish she would get well ɤ cannot understand the trouble. Staying with the Geidts too I think the height of folly but who am I to criticize! I suggest you read an admirable book called 'Fosset's Memory' given me by Hugh Hope when we were attending parleys in the mountain

⑥

passes and he came over from Greece. It is written by a fellow called Christopher Hollis, a Catholic I seem to remember and published by a firm of the same name. I think it first class and so different from that fellow Hillary's "The Last Enemy" which made me very angry. There is an earlier book called "Death of a Gentleman" by Christopher Hollis for which I should be grateful, if you could get it for me. Would you also see if you can get me another pipe? I am sorry but I have lost the one AP stood in so many queues for. It's the first pipe I've lost for 9 months so that is fair enough. If you can find me one, (never mind the price,) I like a large ɤ deep bowl and a short stem ɤ broad mouthpiece. Our pioneers have made me a splendid box to carry them about in.

I have seen nothing in G.R.O's yet about entrance into the F.S. A.P's confidential Service Guide and White Paper have reached me but I have not yet had time or opportunity to read them. I will let you know about them as soon as I can. I am glad you have got Wintershill which is, I suppose, the house you looked at and wrote about when staying with the Lewis's. Your exams seem to have been somewhat postponed. I thought it was going to be shortly after 1st. June, or was it 3 months after 1st. June or the end of the war, whichever was the earlier? What has happened to the P.M's enquiries about it all? Does he approve or what. I have heard none of his speeches, nor anyone's, at the end of the war except for five minutes towards the end on Sunday night last I think. I am at the stage when I know the date - just - but not the day of the week. Anyway there was

⑦

a passage which I think so absolutely right but which is so hard to put into the riflemen's thick heads - they who all think that now the end of the war has come their tickets are on the way. "It is the victors who must search their hearts in their hour.... and be worthy of the ? forces which they wield". I cannot remember it exactly but it is so right. It is so hard too. I am still seriously a bit troubled about my future. Now that the war is over officially I do not feel any duty or obligation to soldier because my conscience is pricking and yet I don't know. There is the thankless task of settling the rfn and keeping them occupied and amused until we get them home. There is also the hard job of keeping Europe in order. One must just do as one is told I suppose but I shall NOT volunteer for S.E.A.C. as a soldier unless I find when I get out of the Army I can get no civilian employment. The F.S is of course an excellent plan and I could love it but as your Mrs Collett (of whom I have never heard before) says you are definitely handicapped without private means. Somehow they must be made to pay high enough salaries. Denys Rhodes has got himself a job in the F.O somehow I believe by wrangling with Brown Howard's father who attacked Anthony Eden (a great 60th Rifleman) and Harold Nicolson. Would Anthony Eden get me out of the Army - do you think ? !! Get someone to ask him. He would remember dining with us at BOUFARIK ɤ the speech from the ring at the boxing arena if not me. The day he came with old Cadogan - dry as dust - and John Winant.

⑧

Our part of Austria is very lovely here. It is not a part which you mention as knowing ɤ is disturbed by this internal strain ɤ someone must have interrupted. Hundreds of people come to see me every day. Anyway I am told now it is Saturday night. I am sitting in our ante room - the charging engine which we looted is chugging away outside as the local power was blown down by the storm last night. I had a splendid ride this evening and found it is coming back to me but I shall be stiff in the morning. The horse I rode belonged to the Germans who were here - possibly a company of the Waffen S.S. I have given orders as I am Burgomaster of this village, that all the horses belong to me and that certain Poles and Cossacks shall look after them. I cannot attempt to describe the eeriness of last night. One of the French prisoners, captured at Le Mans (he says) in the 'ligne Weygand' in '40, came and told me of certain Ukrainian S.S soldiers including an officer, who were living in civilian clothes in the château. It is difficult in a large spaced out farm to know who is who and we are so simple and trusting, the English. Anyway I discovered after cross-examination, that the charming Baroness is a confirmed and ardent Nazi, that the nice young man with whom I arranged my riding is the S.S officer and that the S.S soldiers are the fellows I see on the farm. Do not forget that the S.S in this area put out the

⑨

eyes of partisan prisoners whilst they were alive, ɤ then chopped off their heads with a wood-chopper, and took 'photos while they did it. I am much too kind-hearted and bark much more than bite. Anyway we put them all into the prison cage. But what on earth can one do. There are Galicians, Cossacks, Hungarians, Ukrainians all living in the village. They have lived here, ousted by the Germans, as farm labourers, for 3 years of more. Is it a man's fault that he was in the S.S? How can one tell whom to put in the bag? All the villages to eat their daily bread had to be Nazi-minded. Yet here is the village electrician who is my informer who did 15 months in a concentration camp for listening to the British wireless when France capitulated.

And now to crown all our troubles here is a beastly Major-General who has decided to put his Dir HQ in our lovely house which we shall appreciate so much more than his ill-bred Staff officers and clerks. He was found here this morning - I attacked him - told him we'd fight and we have done and lost - Que voulez-vous? I am livid. All the more so because he is a particularly unpleasant fellow with whom we have had controversy before. And I've got a good Sjts Mess going, a canteen for the rfn, everything that one wants. If only

⑩

[last page smaller, blue]

we could be left alone. This is worse than during the war. Never mind one must be cheerful, grin and bear it for the rfns' sake. Otherwise there would be mutiny.

It was glorious riding this afternoon in the meadows. I wonder what you are all doing now.

I must write to Sandy Goschen now.

always much love

from John

I have forgotten AP's birthday, I know, but I did remember it on the morning - ɤ would like him to have a present - let Mary select anything he would like and give it to him. I will let her have a cheque .

~ * ~

[BY AIR MAIL - AIR LETTER]

Lady Waterfield
Underdown
Tangier Rd
Guildford
Surrey
England

[signed 'JPWaterfield' across top ?from habit - no need now for censor's stamp]
[No stamp, franked very faintly]
[annotated "[arr] June 4", blue-black ink]

No 130 30 May 45 1. KRRC
CMF

My dear Mummy and Daddy,

I am behind-hand with letters as usual and am now writing at what is for me a very odd time - just before tea on a Wednesday afternoon in the Mess. I have not been down to my Company Office this afternoon but have been trudging up and down the hot ɤ rather dusty evil-smelling (drains are open from bombs) streets of this town looking for someone to make me a pair of riding boots and breeches (from some old corduroys I have). But all the leather has been frozen by A.M. 8 so I cannot get anything done. I have put other irons in the fire however and hope to produce results soon. It's hot and sunny now after spring rain and all the girls to whom as Austrians we have to behave coldly but correctly are dressed up in their frilly dresses with aprons in front. Many of them are heavy and dough-faced but many are extraordinarily attractive. The sun is supposed to be hotter than in Italy and we are warned against sun-stroke. Giles Mills is very keen on getting a pair of leather nether-breeches - leder-hosen - with a strap across the chest. I think they are rather hideous but after you've worn them in for 20 years or so they are supposed to be the most comfortable things of all. Giles Mills' father is not standing in the General Election. Noone here knows anything about the Election and few care. Some have applied for ballot papers which may be I suspect too late as we only got the application forms yesterday but unless

one has been in private correspondence with people in England there is no means of telling on what issues the country is divided and who is standing in ones constituency. I applied for a ballot paper ɤ did apply to put myself on the roll of electors a year ago. Many soldiers did not then and although they were urged out of their apathy at the time the Bn is so changed that many people have now been found not qualified by reason of not having applied to be put on the electoral register last year. There is no remedy for them unless they were too young at the time.

I was very interested to hear A.P.'s account of his luncheon with Thomas ɤ the other fellow (I forget his name) who said we should be in a coalition against the Russians in a few years with Germany on our side. I am completely puzzled - I was dining with two acquaintances the other night - one of them was a rabid Fascist - a fellow called Otto Thwaites in the -th Lancers who has got 2 very good MC.s and is now frantic to fight the Russians <u>now</u>. He said the British soldiers

~ * ~

[BY AIR MAIL - AIR LETTER]

Lady Waterfield
Underdown
Tangier Rd
Guildford
Surrey
England

[signed 'JPWaterfield' across top]
[No stamp, franked very faintly]
[annotated "[arr] June 4", blue-black ink]

contd. No 130(b)

would go. I doubt this at the moment. I think they would in the Army if left alone but that they would be under-pinned by the disloyalty of all the journalists and cheap politicians in England. But Billy Ednam who was Adjt (at the same time as I) of the - Hussars said it would be wiser to wait ɤ see. Brown Howard, in talk over coffee last night, thought we held the balance of power now between America ɤ Russia. The Americans hate the Russians ɤ their Labour will have nothing to do with Communism. I don't know what is right and simply follow my nose. Instances of Russian behaviour - they refuse to take back their ex-P.W who have not been wounded thinking it dishonourable to be captured unless dead or unconscious. "Take them ɤ use them or shoot them", they say. "They are trained soldiers." We have had to hand over all the Cossacks to them. The officers will probably be shot - the troops sent to Siberia. The Russians ɤ the Germans have both raped and tortured without much discrimination. I will not describe the things they have done. But although we have NOT seen them I am sure your man is right in saying they have a fundamentally different ethic to ourselves and what pricks our conscience is merely blunted on the hide of their Eastern duplicity - or perhaps NOT duplicity but rather self-interest. If the Labourites get in this election I think we shall merely become puppets of Moscow as a nation.

Interruption ɤ break. I have had tea and been for a ride with Dick Fleming $2^{i}/_{c}$ A Coy and acting O.c Coy and Peter Lee $2^{i}/_{c}$ to Geoffrey Shakerley in B Coy. We had a good ride - now we're in the town it's a little hard to get out into the country and one has to hack through encampments and P.W cages and dumps. But once one gets beyond all that, into the meadows between the woods, the country

is beyond belief lovely. The wild flowers and the smell of freshly cut grass and the view across the thickly wooded hills to the mountains beyond is enough to make one forget all the things one has to tell the Serjeant Major and the C/Sjt and the Cook Cpl and the Sanitary L/Cpl. All of which is enough to keep me very busy except when I cut off completely. I came back, gave my horse, now named 'Vienna' though he had a German name, over to my Polish groom and came up to the mess in Julian Walter's jeep - he is our I.O now. My jeep was stolen the night I talked to Ednam ɤ Thwaites for which I would have been court-martialled a few months ago ɤ may again; I couldn't care less infuriating though it is. Rfn Deane couldn't find the key for the padlock and I said "never mind" which I shall never say again. But it's too late now!

Since I wrote last we have been in a succession of lovely houses, and been harried from pillar to post putting Titos into this place ɤ Croats into that, Cossacks into the bag, S.S over to Titos and so on without ending. We have never had such a time of strain and difficulty. One wondered for whom and for what we had been fighting.

~ * ~



25 - Smythe, 'Vienna'

[BY AIR MAIL - AIR LETTER]

Lady Waterfield
Underdown
Tangier Rd
Guildford
Surrey
England

[signed 'JPWaterfield' across top]
[No stamp, franked very faintly "FIELD ..ST OFFICE ..."]
[annotated "[arr] June 4", blue-black ink]

contd. No 130(c)

I lived for a period in a lovely schloss under the hills with the company in the village a mile away across the meadows. The house was run on a feudal basis and fed 50 in the kitchens - or have I written all this before? I think I have. Anyway it's impossible to write with everyone talking round. I have had several letters from Mary in Oxford wrapped up in all her beastly little Dragons, the red roofs and suburban cats of North Oxford. I do hope she will mix with some other people. Martin writes languidly from I don't know where, about to go on leave once more! I hope he will be able to join you in Cornwall. /Now there is no doubt whatever that I shall come home on leave (unless the world situation deteriorates) before Christmas. I am afraid I should be a bore if I turn up suddenly while you are in Cornwall or something like that so I shall NOT take the first vacancy that occurs in order to give you time to adjust. It is so difficult with these difficulties of rations etc etc and absence of servants. John Christian, our acting $2^{i}/_{c}$ is coming home on a weeks course and 3 weeks leave! I wonder if you've seen Leslie Mackay at all. I have heard from Denys Rhodes who has got engaged to a girl Rachel Gurney-Lubbock and says he has turned down the idea of going into the Foreign Office but may find it difficult to stop the wheels of his relative's machinations which are already turning. I wonder if it is really so that private interest can get past A.P's rules and regulations. Anyway the sooner I get out of the Army and onto a job the better. Will you try ɤ investigate every string ɤ rule ɤ regulation you know! I do hope you'll have a lovely time at Cadgwith. I should love to be with you. I have discovered

that quite privately Douglas Rae, Giles Mills, Julian Walters and all their young friends in the Corps HQ S and the Guards and rackets are steadfastly fixing their eyes on A.P.'s Foreign Service. I don't know that I should have much hope especially with all those damned exams. However if not I don't know what to do. Denys Rhodes says the F.O don't pay enough and of course they don't because privately they still expect gentlemen into it ɤ expect gentlemen to have means! My Company clerk tells me his brother as a Wireless Op in the Merchant Navy has been drawing £50 a month since the beginning of the war, was left £30,000 by a rich publican last year and doesn't make any allotment to his otherwise impecunious mother. My clerk, a 2/cpl on 6/- odd a day makes an allotment to her of 2/-. The anomalies of wealth!

That's enough for now. I am horrified at the account of Harry's behaviour. What a shocking fellow he is. I think he must be mad. What do they say about him in the City?

Enjoy your holiday -

Always much love from John

~ * ~

[BY AIR MAIL - AIR LETTER]

Lady Waterfield
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Tangier Rd
Guildford
Surrey
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[signed 'JPWaterfield' across top]
[No stamp, franked "FIELD POST OFFICE 757 26 JU 45"]
[no arrival date noted; black ink then blue (at change of date), fading to grey]

10.6.45 1. KRRC No 131 ①
CMF

My dear Mummy and Daddy,

I haven't written for a fortnight I am sure. I don't dare look at my note book to mark up the number until I've finished this. I don't know why except that idleness breeds idleness. And yet we are not quite idle. We have stopped chasing around with Titos and Croats ɤ Cossacks and are now in a barracks with one Company down at the lake, another on P.W duties and the third with the Support Coy and HQ Coy in barracks, doing guards ɤ normal duties. It is hot and stormy. I have ridden at six o'clock every morning this last week and it has seemed too hot by seven. I get up at 5.15! As I cannot get to bed any night before mid-night it's beginning to tell! Tonight is Sunday and about 1015 in our Victorian mess with bits and pieces of bric à brac all round the walls. We have an Austrian woman cook who makes the most delicious cakes for tea every day.

How frail we are! This is continued where you'd never guess, on the shores of Lake Garda on 20 June. I am on leave with Geoffrey Shakerley who commands B Coy, Rfn Deane who didn't want to come because he thought he'd spend all his money and L/cpl Annan who used to be the Colonel's driver, is one of the old generation of rfn and as he's had malaria will possibly benefit by a holiday. It is 1030 in the morning and we are sitting out on a terrace by the lake having peace and idleness. The sun is scorching and yesterday we were burning visibly browner ever hour as we drove down in the

open jeep. We brought a Dodge 15 cwt as well to carry our beds ɤ kit and rations and the rfn so as to do things comfortably. What we wanted was to get completely away from all military and we've succeeded. We had no idea where we were going but got passes after some difficulty, as it meant going through other peoples areas, to travel to Milan by Villach and Innsbruck, which gave us enough latitude[181]. We started after a good breakfast of eggs and coffee and honey at my mess at 8 oclock two days ago. And we drove through lovely Austrian hills, shrouded in grey and white mists which gave us some anxiety, until lunch time when we stopped at the nicest looking Gasthaus set clear of the road and ordered beer and lunch. Everything in Austria is so clean and neat and friendly and tidy. I prefer it to Italy, and the Austrians to the Italians. We had a good lunch and flogged on feeling full through now clear and dry sunshine, under the hills which still are topped with snow until evening when we were in the debatable land which belonged to Austria before the last war and is now Italian. It seemed to be a part of the world untouched by the war and very lovely. We came to BOLZANO after making up our minds to

~ * ~

[181] a look at the map shows that these three almost define a an equilateral triangle, thus covering the maximum possible area.



26 - JPW, Lake Garda, June 1945

[BY AIR MAIL - AIR LETTER]

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Surrey
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[no arrival date noted; pale black ink]

No 131. ②

go on to the lakes in Italy rather than cut north up to Innsbruck but BOLZANO was almost flat from our bombs and we went back the other way to MERANO through which we drove as it was out of bounds as a German hospital centre and up onto the hills to the North West. MERANO appeared pre-war - there was a general air of sleekness and well-being and pipes, silk stockings, scents and clothes all of perfect quality, though abominably dear, were evident in the shops. It seemed very like Torquay, with palms and roses and vines and villas and a smell mixed of women's perfumery and fresh flowers, all rather hot and unpleasant except for a brief visit.

Outside we were back in Austrian-type country and after one trial attempt we found a Gasthaus underneath the mountains, with a bedroom each for all four of us looking out onto the snows and spotless clean linen. We had the best veal cutlet I have ever tasted for dinner - it melted in the mouth and when we had coffee and cigars - a Romeo and Juliet each which I had ordered from Cairo a month ago and mossed up for a precious occasion, we felt quite perfect. We had breakfast under the roses on the balcony and drove on South. I drove and Annan drove the Dodge behind us. The roads were first class, wide, metalled and well-cambered but there were stiff bends and occasional bad patches where we had bombed targets like bridges and railways. There were no diversions though as there are on many roads through S. Europe.

Oh I forgot to mention one thing. When we started on the way the day before, on Monday, we had travelled along part of the route of the 8th. Army's Land-Leave scheme. There were great signs up on the road with the 8th Army's sign of a yellow cross on a white shield and the notice "8th Army - Alamein to Calais 1942 - 1945. Follow the Shield home" to help the drivers. It was rather stirring to read this and think how it seemed beyond the dream of possibility at Himeimat or Agheila or Tripoli or Tunis that we should ever do this. It is a great thing to have done. It is rumoured that the leave scheme's operation which entails enormous administrative difficulties is entirely due to the Army Commander's energy and determination because both the W.O and S.H.A.E.F were uncooperative and indifferent. Anyway we have just started sending men, only a trickle so far but a trickle which, one hopes, will increase into a regular flow.

So yesterday we came on under a bright blue sky and with a

fresh breeze blowing on our faces out of the green hills and châlets and snowy country, coming gradually down-hill all the way into a drier ɤ more barren ɤ hotter hill country where there were many signs of bomb-damage, the brown rocks were trellised with vines and the people immediately seemed dirtier and more slimy. After a hot drive we suddenly came out at 2 o'clock on the bluest lake I've ever seen.



27 - Rfn Deane brewing up - between Merano ɤ Sterzing

~ * ~

[BY AIR MAIL - AIR LETTER]

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Guildford
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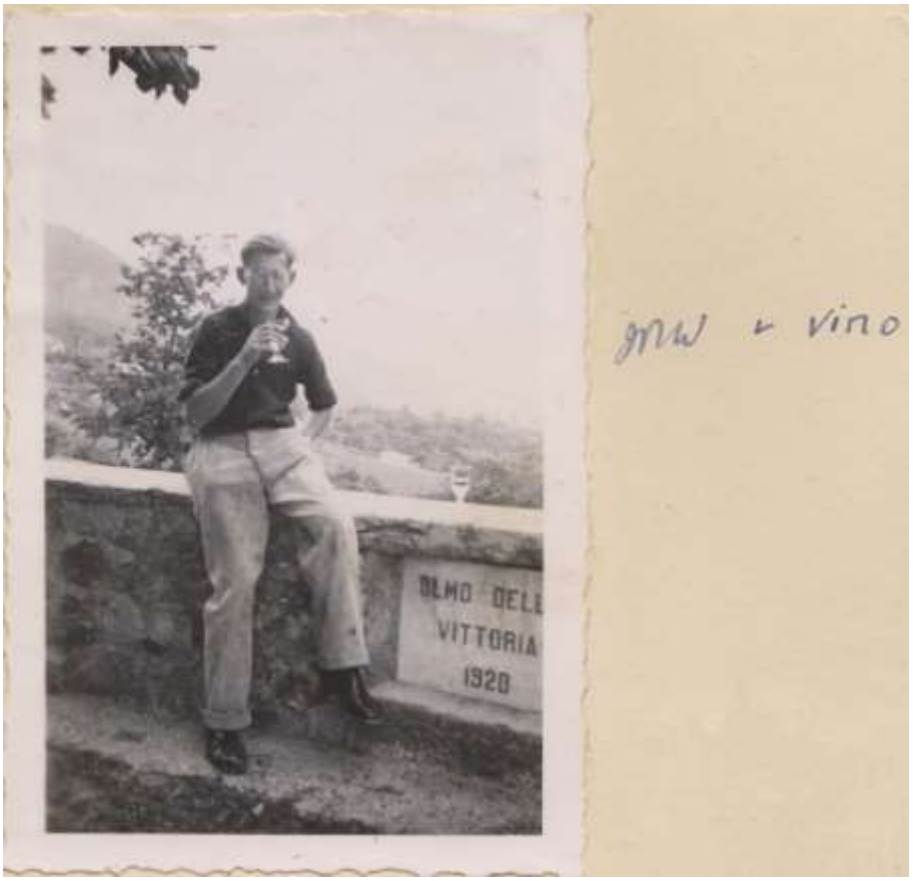
[no arrival date noted; pale black ink]



28 - JPW + vino, Italy

No 131. (3)

The whole atmosphere was changed. There was a town with hotels and villas and palms and vines set beside ultramarine water and surrounded by pinkish grey, scrub covered mountains. But all the hotels, as we'd forgotten, in Italy were out of bounds or shut so we had a picnic on the front and I found an ice-cream shop and we ate ice-creams and smoked a Turkish cigarette and decided to come on and risk it. Even discomfort was made up for by the loveliness and the peace. We saw no soldiers at all. We also had to change our money from A.M.C Austrian schillings to lire and the only hope (as we'd forgotten all about it before) was to find an American Finance Office as this is the American area. The oleanders, all shades of red and pink, and quite beautiful are out along the road which runs through tunnels along the lake side. They are more thickly flowering even than on the coast at Tripoli where I last saw them. We found some miles down the lake a rather scrubby hotel in a village[182] on the shore and below the main road where they are prepared to cook our rations and supplement with eggs and salad and salmon trout which we are having grilled for lunch today. With our own coffee and drink we shall do very well. We got our cash changed 15 miles down the lake and I got booked by an American M.P for speeding then we came back here and bathed, changed and had dinner on the terrace. There are no British or American troops in the village.

We smoked a cigar in deck chairs on the terrace as it grew darker until the lights began to come out and flicker reflected on the lake. Then we were asked by an old Italian who lives in a villa next door to go along and take a glass of Kümmel with him at the Albergo down through the village. So we walked past all the fishermen and villagers sitting out over their wine and draughts and sat down on a verandah and had a very good glass of Kümmel indeed. Then we went to bed and slept excellently until the hot morning sun woke us up. Now we are sitting in deck-chairs, Geoffrey in a vest and shorts and desert boots, I in corduroys and my old blue Charterhouse football shirt which is perfect for this sort of occasion. We have forgotten all things military and will continue to do so until next Monday. I have brought lots of Times's to read. Someone has out of a most generous and kindly

[182] from the photo album this is Limone.

spirit been moved to send me the Air Edition of the Times which reaches me in 3 or 4 days and is the very greatest blessing. If it is you I do send all my most grateful thanks. Or, is it that perverse fellow Harry? In the Birthday Honours I see that old Nosworthy has got a K.C.MG which is pleasant to see. I wish I had been able to get to Rome to see him.

~ * ~

[BY AIR MAIL - AIR LETTER]

Lady Waterfield
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Surrey
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[signed 'JPWaterfield' across top]
[No stamp, franked "FIELD POST OFFICE 757 26 JU 45"]
[no arrival date noted; pale black ink]

No 131 (4)

Geoffrey Shakerley is a pleasant person. His father was a regular soldier and was killed as $2^{i}/_{c}$ of one of our Bns in the last war. Geoffrey went to Wellington which he loathed and Christ Church and had plenty ɤ plenty of money. He travelled all over America and India and indeed most of the world except North Africa, enjoyed all sports, managed the Christ Church Boys Club in the East End and started keeping a couple of hunters with old Daddy Rowcliffe at Hall Place who was one of his trustees! Do you remember how nice the old boy was to us when we went out with the Chiddingfold. Geoffrey started very late in life taking riding seriously, went to Jack Hance's riding school for 5 months, rode work ɤ later some races for another 6 months in Ireland, then bought some horses and started in England and became absolutely tip-top. He headed the amateurs averages, I think, for 2 seasons under National Hunt Rules and also rode on the flat. I think he must have been 32 or so when he started. He finally broke his spine in two places at Cheltenham but he has ridden, though not in races, since and in spite of being 39 now wants to ride steeple chases again seriously if his wife doesn't object. He has just had a son, having already got a son and a daughter of 9 ɤ 8. He came to the Bn as a Captain at MEZZANO N of RAVENNA just about the time that I returned from BARI after jaundice, having come down to Captain in order to get abroad although he'd been $2^{i}/_{c}$ for 2 yrs and recommended for command in England. When John Hope got comd Geoffrey got B Coy and has got a very well earned M.C for the action in breaking out of the ARGENTA gap. It was worth waiting for even during 5 years of inactivity. He owns a house in Glostershire where he is on all the local councils ɤ is chairman of all the committees, giving pounds ɤ pounds to the benefit of the village and community. An odd system but a good one if one has the money. He also has started a business in the building line which from an overdraft of £35,000 was reduced to £9,000 in 3 years before the war so it should not be too bad. He will go back to his country estate and become Master of the Heythrop which will cost him £6,000 p.a. I shall most certainly go to stay with him to get a ride.

We have had some tremendous fun riding since I wrote last.

The units round about of the cavalry have organized some rare meetings and a fortnight ago we decided that at the second one we must be represented however badly we did. We were behind hand with training and have not got anywhere suitable to gallop except the Air Field and at that time we had not got permission to use it. Spencer Killick, who is

~ * ~

[BY AIR MAIL - AIR LETTER]

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[signed 'JPWaterfield' across top]
[No stamp, franked "FIELD POST OFFICE 757 26 JU 45]
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No 131. (5)

very keen and has done quite a lot at point-to-points and some others and I got together and we finally decided to send 4 horses over - two of mine and two of Spencer's. We sent them in 3 tonners, specially fitted out by the Pioneers with pads and kick-bars, the day before as it was a 100 miles to the North. It was quite one of the best days I remember. Everyone was there. The sun shone and everything was perfectly laid on in a highly professional manner with Tote and all other appurtenances. Indeed it should be as this particular cavalry regiment is full of experts, both amateur and professional. I rode my own horse, Vienna, (ɤ was very frightened indeed) in a 5 furlong flat race. It was the greatest thrill imaginable and I was absolutely amazed to find myself second and indeed in another length I would have won without any doubt at all. We were beaten by a head. Of our other 3 we got a winner ridden by a rfn professional jockey and a third so we went home more than thrilled having rather wiped the cavalry's eye. I doubt if we shall it again! However Division are going for it in a big way and are organizing a Divisional course, committee and regular fortnightly meetings. It should be first-class. We have been riding every morning at half past five and again at the same time in the evening though it is still hot then.

Sandy Goschen came to see us somehow from

Greece and it was splendid to see him though sadly I felt rather unwell for the two days he was with us. But he took me up one pouring wet afternoon to the Schloss not far from where we live which was given to his grandfather by the old Emperor when he was ambassador before the last war. I don't known whether Sandy really owns half of it or just feels it belongs to him because his elder brother Teddy, who is in the Rifle Bd and now works at Army, is the heir. Teddy is a great dear ɤ came with us to show me round. It is a most lovely place on top of the hill with a view right across the Alps. They want to make the farms into a sort of pre-release farming school for soldiers which seems an excellent idea. Sandy has volunteered to go to SE.A.C if he gets command - we have no Bns there so it would be a red-coat Bn - but also wd like a job supervising estates ɤ hunting, about which

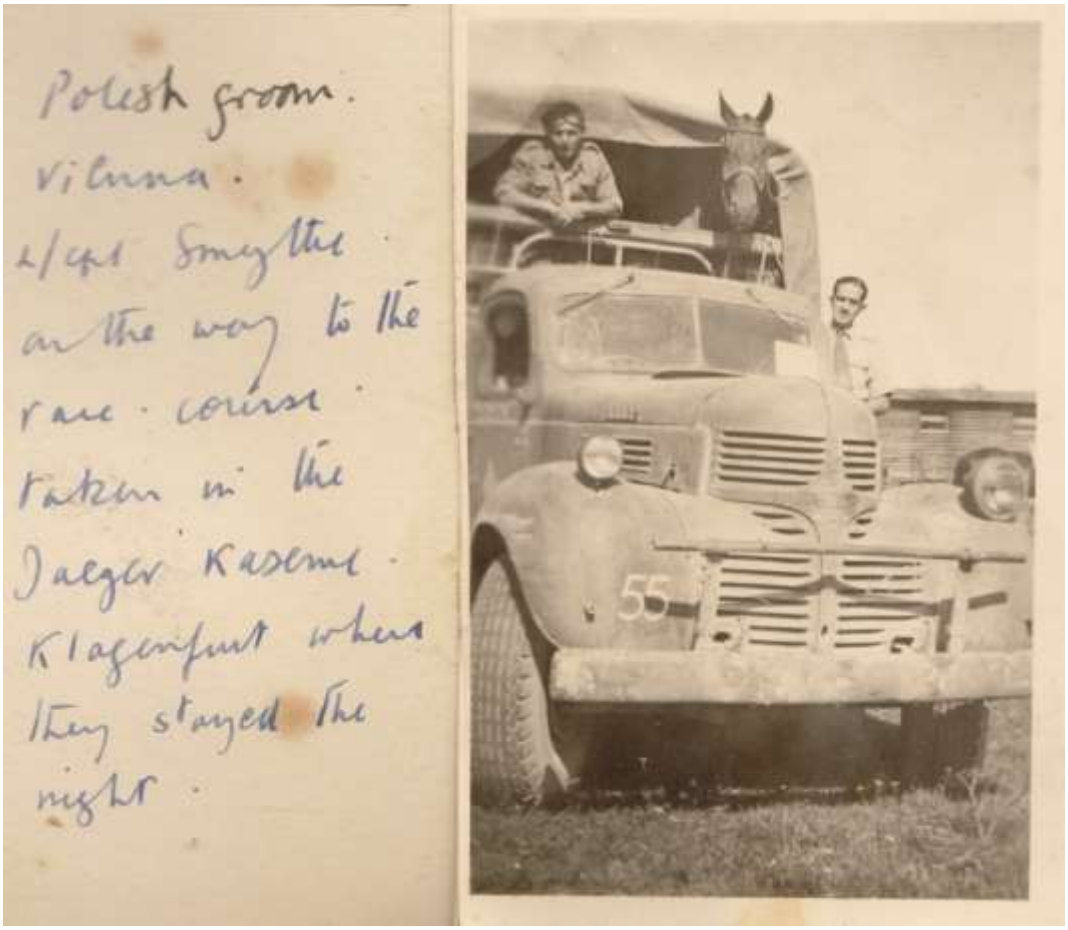
he knows everything, in Austria. I don't know what he will do in the end. I hope you are enjoying yourselves in Cornwall. It sounds fun ɤ I hope that Mary, Martin ɤ Jill all enjoy it too. What a pity they cannot bring their friends too.

A.P.'s regulations came out with amazing punctuality about every single service in the world as far as I can see. A great number of rfn in my Coy

[continued upside down at top of first page:]

have asked to read them. I haven't even looked at them yet! I seem to have been very busy. Now to bathe. Much love John

~ * ~



29 - 'Vienna' in transport

[BY AIR MAIL - AIR LETTER]

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Guildford
Surrey
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[signed 'JPWaterfield' across top]
[No stamp, franked "FIELD POST OFFICE 757 26 JU 45]
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No 132 (1) 21.6.45

Today is, I believe Thursday, that I'm writing the day after yesterday is all I know of it. We had a quiet day yesterday. Two bathes into the lake off the wall which runs by the road, a four foot dive into clear water over six foot deep at the edge though transparently blue and green where quivers of little fishes dart about and occasionally a bigger one comes prowling in. For lunch we had spaghetti followed by salmon trout, pinkly firm and grilled and after a sleep, an hour in a motor boat, a drive in the car through the tunnels to the larger town RIVA at the N. end of the lake where we ate ice-cream, we had dinner again on the terrace with the most magnificent boiled fish haricots verts and yellow ochre mayonnaise. It was very hot. Today we go up the mountain 'in the jeep' to a village which can only be reached by a jeep of all motors or on foot. We are told that up there food is plentiful, wild

strawberries grow and the girls are beautiful. So I will report! I had meant to go on with this to answer some of your letters which I have in my case and which if I didn't acknowledge, you'd all think I never read. Air-mail type of letters are coming very quickly, 3/4 days and are so much better than air-letter cards. But I'm used to letter cards and may as well finish my stock. It looks too as if I've written more. There are a lot of things too I wanted to tell you. I went to

dine with dear old Andrew Angus at the Grenadier Bn HQ Mess just before we came on leave. They had a lovely mess by our local lake (which is warm unlike GARDA here where the water is freezing) and gave me a good dinner. Andrew is a Captain ϒ their signals officer. He came out after Tunis. He is just the same as ever and a great dear. We were reminded or at least I was of so many things whose existence soldiering had put out of my head and of happenings I had completely forgotten. He remembered Mary's and Jill's names ϒ the Clint and asked if I still painted and it was good to see him.

And on Sunday came a splendid long letter from A.P.W which was a pleasure and treat as always. I have it here written on June 10 at Hillside. I do hope your holiday is being the most tremendous fun for you all. How I wish I were with you but it won't be long though I shall miss Cornwall I'm afraid. How

splendid it will be when all the brats arrive - in tremendous form. I cannot somehow picture them all grown up and independent. I hope the sun will turn you all brown. I am as brown as ever again now. I love the sun but I don't like it too hot at night because that is the only thing in the world which prevents me getting to sleep.

~ * ~

[BY AIR MAIL - AIR LETTER]

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No 132 (2)

I hope Mummy's catarrh is better ϒ that the holiday will do you both good. Indeed I envy you the lobsters. That will certainly do you good - Why is it so expensive though? The fishermen are just the same. You did NOT tell me in detail about your visit to Oxford and your stay with R.A.D or of how you found Mary ϒ Jill but you must have been very proud to take your daughters out. Did you go on the river? Or up to Bablock Hythe? - I suppose there are no cars which is such a nuisance. Are you selling the Armstrong - ? I wonder what sort of price it is now. I think all your plans about C.S regs ϒ post-war recruiting have come off splendidly. Everything seemed to come to us (in a Company, that is) simultaneously and the date must have been 1 or 2 June. As to worming in privately through unofficial channels into the F.O I note what you say ϒ am sure it's OK but there is no doubt that private negotiation by the ring of well-connected people who like to run these things does still play a great part in our public life. I see ϒ have mixed with (particularly in this Regt) a great deal of it and of course for those in on the swim, it's first class and makes one want to keep the circle closed and vote Tory. I prefer it that way too being a greedy, selfish person, but grumble against graft only if I seem to be out of it! Certainly I cannot take anything in the way of a decision until we can talk ϒ I can meet people in England. As long as I'm tied

to the Army, I'm fixed. So many people are well set and have family businesses to go to. Those who have NOT are absolutely lost and have no idea of what to do. I am drawn a little towards Kenneth Lee's business and wd certainly value ϒ be grateful for a talk with him. Keep him mossed up anyway. I love travelling and would like a job getting around.

I know what you mean about the narrow selfish rough and tumble of business. I am NOT drawn to Home Civil or Burmah or Malay employment - the Diplomatic I would like certainly. Again, if limitation to advancement is as considerable as you say in business it does need thinking about. I don't understand about low rates of earning, unless all the people I meet are idle boasters. Incompetent fools I know who swear they do better than 4 figures. I am glad you had a good press conference and would like to see cuttings. How do the journalists strike you? Has Winston done any more inquiring? We must go

out now but I will continue later.[183]

Perhaps you would share these with the children to save me writing though I wrote to Bow ϒ Jill for their birthdays from a Gasthaus where I went for the weekend with Henry Howard right up in the hills. Perhaps you've seen the letters. We had a glorious weekend there ϒ good food

~ * ~

[lined air letter paper, 'letter size' (5 1/16" x 7 1/2"); pale dark-blue ink]

No 134
11.7.45

1. KRRC
CMF

My dear Mummy and Daddy,

I feel unbelievably guilty but I've had no encouragement from any of you, nor even any chasers to prick my conscience. I haven't written to you (or anyone) except for a few picture postcards of RIVA on L.GARDA since we came back from leave, and I do not believe I've had any letters from any one of the family either. Tonight it has been pouring with rain though I just got into dinner from riding without catching it although I had no time to change.

I have come over to my room on the opposite side of the road and climbed over the electrically operated gate which will only open by means of a buzzer from the top of the outside stairs and climbed up to my own place, a modern furnished room with flowers on the table, a little desk in the corner and desk lamp, a comfortable bed and sheets, cupboards for all my clothes and books and things and its only disadvantage too small windows and too hot an atmosphere at night. I've turned on my wireless and

②

lit a pipe and turned out all the lights. I am making a most tremendous effort to write overcoming all the sultry lazy weather and the idleness that the absence of strain produces. There are the 10 o'clock news headlines, relayed from England on the KLAGENFURT wireless. Not very exciting - I keep starting with surprise to hear nothing about patrols in Italy or bombers over Hamburg. Now they are playing Night and Day, a good number sung by Fred Astaire. Beside my bed I've got the new Evelyn Waugh novel, the disreputable life of someone or other, all over Catholic and unnatural behaviour but just as amusing as ever. Geoffrey Shakerley had a copy sent - I believe it's impossible to get in England. I bought some golf clubs today - I had a terrific fuss getting a release for them ϒ paid £2 cash for 5 but the Town Major is a friend of mine and he won some money as my guest at the races on

[183] it seems he did not; despite the abrupt end to this, 132(3) never existed (per table in 135). The same table explains that 133, which *is* missing, was "a p.c of Garda".

Saturday, so I got 'em. It is well worth it I think I think they are the last probably in this town and area and are pre-war Scottish made. I haven't played yet but there is a course down

③

by the lake and Col Brown Howard opened it with Quintin Hoare (60th Rifles v AATQMG) against Adrian Gore and the General on Sunday. I swung my new clubs with Giles Mills and Leslie Mackay after tea in the garden among the raspberry bushes, churning up the rolls and honey and Austrian cream cake, but they seemed a very reasonably balanced set. I have also bought a quite good tennis racquet and played, for the first time since in Dorchester public gardens just over 3 years ago. We played Brown Howard and I, on a red hard court in a private house which the Rifle Brigade have taken over for a tennis club. It was hot and stuffy though we played 5.30 - 7 in the evening. We knocked up and then played two sets and I didn't believe I could be so exhausted. My hair came into my eyes (just as it always used to) and the sweat blocked my glasses and I groaned with the effort of serving. But it was great fun. I have never been so unfit as I have during 3 years of "active service" and I am as slow

④

on my feet as a Shire cart-horse but there is so much opportunity here that a little effort should get me well again. It's a stuffy atmosphere here and one doesn't feel frightfully well but I think that is just too much food and drink and regimental soldiering, no thinking except the settlement of routine problems, and no exercise without planning and determination.

Riding is the best thing of all. I've got 7 horses in the Company. Three really good ones and three comparative screws. Unfortunately we have had to have them all branded, that is to say, we have made them over to H.MG, but it doesn't really matter, in spite of my personal feelings for Vienna my 5 yr old bay gelding which came from the Baroness Helldorf's stable at Tallenstein where I told you we were billeted some 2 months ago. Although she gave him to me I think he would have been requisitioned anyway by someone else. Feeding is the difficulty at the moment. Oats are hard to come by and the ration scale issued is 5 lbs per day and is rarely

⑤

all oats. Moreover it's impossible to get hay except the odd load of this year's stuff. As usual personal contacts and gifts here ɤ there are the only ways of getting anything. I am lucky in having a good civilian saddle, one of the few in the Bn, because the German army ones are flesh cutters. I get up every morning at 6, shave, drink my brew which Rfn Deane gets over the gate somehow. I am fortunate in having him who, brought up to get to Covent Garden every at 5 am, doesn't in the least mind getting up at crack of dawn. Anyhow he sleeps all afternoon which is more than I do. I then dress, wait for dear old Sandy Goschen who comes round from the A.M.G hotel just round the corner, (unshaved) and stagger down to the jeep waiting outside the door. It's 5 mins drive through the streets ɤ tramlines to the barracks and the stables at the far end of barracks. We ride for an hour, usually walking ɤ trotting through the dews out into the woods but galloping

⑥

on the air field twice a week. I usually ride again in the evening before dinner.

Will you look (when you go back to Underdown) among my books and see if I still have anything left on the technical side of riding and stable management. I rather think I sold them all but there may still be something by Jack Hance or someone. If not, would you buy me the Lonsdale Library book on Horsemanship and send it to me. If there is anything on my shelves please send it. Would you also send me a German grammar (Hugo) or instruction book - we cannot get anything here and I haven't time to attend the regular German classes. With a little basic knowledge of grammar I know I shall soon go ahead very fast with conversation; although one is not allowed to fraternize still - there is a lot of need for and opportunity for talk in business and in shops etc. We must have some of O.S's books. Please send me something. I feel very sleepy as usual though it's only 10:30.

⑦

The Divisional races, the first meeting, were held last Saturday. It really was one of the best days I remember. The sun shone, the course, (built entirely by the Div) was in first class order. There was a huge Tote staffed by 80 clerks from HQ R.A who had attended a course of instruction in operating the thing for a week - the Tote turned over 13,000 (Thirteen thousand !!) pounds stg in the afternoon. Shows how the rfn bet. There were lots of gay luncheon touts and flags and real peace-time atmosphere. Everything was perfectly laid on by an expert committee all of whom have done a lot of riding in their time. Geoffrey Shakerley is our representative, and of course there is little he doesn't know. All jockeys rode in properly declared colours with correctly made jockey caps. I pinched the Bn football colours, green with red pockets ɤ collar, but I got a very smart cap made from green silk in the town, ribbons and all tied in a bow in front. Our horses didn't do so very

⑧

well but we had the most enormous lunch tent with ice-cream and champagne which was a great success - lots of old friends turned up who we'd not seen for years. I was so busy trying to get our little professional, Holmes the right weight, and so windy myself before my own race that I could enjoy no food until tea. When I got down to the start in my race, an open mile in which there was some very hot stuff indeed, old Vienna stood up on his hind legs ɤ played hell. He very nearly went over backwards ɤ I sat up there sweating ɤ exhausted, riding very short and wondering if I'd ever get him up or whether I'd fall off gracefully! When we did get away actually we went very well. Geoffrey got us off to a very good start though we were all lathered up. There were two sharp bends and we all made for the rails. It was a good course for a novice. In the end we were third this time in a very close finish though I nearly hit

⑨

Glen Illingworth, $2^{i}/_{c}$ of the $16/5^{th}$ Lancers, in the eye with my wildly waved whip. He just got up to beat me, in revenge for losing a lot of money to me at poker in the week when I went over to dine with them. If I can find anything to gallop and jump I shall try riding in the steeple chases although the cavalry are full of experienced amateur N.H and Point to Point riders. I was so exhausted I could hardly unsaddle to weigh out! But it was all great fun.

In the evening we went down to D Coy who were having a week by the lake ɤ played roulette after dinner. It is a game for which I have little patience but I'm always prepared to have a go at anything which doesn't exercise my brain ɤ won £40 in a very short time. Haven't tried again. In general I have a lot of luck at poker etc but it will turn one day. The lake was lovely, lapping in the reeds, as the sun set.

I bathed in it on Sunday when

⑩

Sandy ɤ Teddy Goschen took me up to Tentschach given to their grandfather when he was ambassador before the last war by the old Emperor, a wonderful house ɤ estate with a view from Jugoslavia to Switzerland almost, now occupied by our General as his mess but visited by the Goschens as their own home. The tenants are fantastic, digging out sporting guns and rifles from the rafters where they'd been hidden from Ribbentrop ɤ the German Foreign Office people who have used it for the odd gay weekend during the war, as they were hidden in all the wars, I suppose, for the last hundred years or more. We had lunch in the home farm pub, and then went down to the lake, bathed and had tea in the Army Commander's villa where there was noone but us ɤ one of the A.DC.S. Teddy being a sort of extra P.A. lives there when he wants. I had not bathed in the lake before though we send 2 lorry loads of riflemen from the Coy every afternoon, as I insisted it was too cold.[184] Sandy ɤ I had no

[184] 'hot' crossed out beneath, which would have seemed to make more sense; unless what is meant is that, although he sent rfn, he himself hadn't been before as it was too cold (rather than, looking after the rfn, he sent them to swim for their benefit, because it was too cold elsewhere(?) or, originally, too hot not to swim?).

⑪

pants so we had to go out in the launch ϒ dive over the side as the villas are full of women painfully NOT fraternizing in very little but their skin (and that a pleasant golden brown!). I lay on my back ϒ looked, blindly ϒ blurredly without my glasses, at the ring of dark green woods and then the mountains all behind. It was hot - the lake is warmed by hot springs I believe, though it's very deep.

After tea we went up to Tentschach again and went to shoot a buck. I went with a dear old man of 76 who had watched Ambassadors miss at 10 yrds and still preserved his dignity and was perfectly sweet with his cutaway green coat ϒ with walrus moustaches, feather ϒ badge in his cap. I was made to climb up into a seat (a hochsitz is it?) up a tree and watched in great discomfort for 2 hours without seeing a single one. I saw two does. But it was thrilling and the time flashed by. We went back to the villa to a wonderful dinner two hours late.

⑫

I've not put down half the things I want to write about but will try and go on as soon as I can. This is enough for tonight. I lose Rfn Deane on Saturday, coming home to his wife ϒ daughter at last, and how I shall get on without him I don't know. Fortunately his successor Rfn Walker (Slasher to his friends) T. (MM) is a great figure too ϒ looked after me on the boat. I think he'll last out my time.

I must stop - 11 o'clock. I shall read in bed ϒ think of you all. I hope you had a marvellous ϒ happy time in Cornwall and all feel so much better. Do write ϒ tell others to do so.

Always my love

John

~ * ~

[thick paper, slightly larger than foolscap (13 3/4" x 8 3/4"), preprinted address '1ST BATTALION 60TH RIFLES.' with the cross of the Kings Royal Royal Corps, folded in half before being written on as if an air-letter, ie 'sideways' if unfolded; blue ink. Envelope franked 18 JY 45 (no stamp) to usual address plus 'O.H.S. By Air Mail']

not soldiering in England. I enclose some amusements.[185] All the 'photos were taken when Geoffrey ϒ I were on leave. The others speak for themselves.

17 July 45 | No 135

Andy Angus may ring up

always much love from John

My dear Mummy and Daddy,

My	131	was 5 airletters.
Have they	132	" 2 -------
all come	133	" a pc of Garda
to you?	134	" a long air-mail

Two letters have come from A.P and, I think, one from Mummy since I wrote last. Bow also has sent a brief note about his posting to Bulford. I am distressed indeed at all your changes of temper since returning from holiday and do so much hope you will recover from worries and gloom, ϒ things will be happier again. It is bitter to hear of poor little Mary going odd again. I simply cannot understand any of it except that any dealings with such as the Geidts would drive me nuts certainly! As to Bow, I am equally sad that he has, to all intents and purposes, left the Regiment. Defence Platoon is a useless job at any H.Q although that

[185] No longer with envelope.

②

of the Air-Borne Division may be the best. I am puzzled that he has not been kept to go with whatever Bn we send to S.E.A.C, probably Bramall's old Bn. I am equally puzzled that he never got out of Strensall. I know Peter Wake wrote twice to Toby W when he still had cmd of a Coy in 2nd. Bn, before going as 8.2 (L) to Montgomery and asked him to have him. I am pretty certain Bill Deedes offered to have him in his Coy in No 12. Why did Bramall as Adjt never ask for him? I know however that that arch-devil Kenneth Milne ought never to have been allowed into the Regiment, let alone into the job of Adjt at Strensall where he sits like a puffed-up bull frog writing offensive letters to officers of this & other Bns who have seen action and been put in the bag (one was sent to us as an example) and I suspect interfering unwarrantably with peoples' affairs. He is an absolute disgrace to Charterhouse & Saunderites & the 60th. and I am ashamed to say I was at school with him. He promised me he'd

③

send Martin to a Bn. Anyway never mind.

Do you like this paper? I arranged for it to be printed & stamped locally; it is done by a very old woman who has to hold each one up to within an inch of her eyes to see if it is correct and only gets through about 10 an hour. They have only got brown ink.

Henry Howard went down to Udine to a WOSB as he had to report on their methods officially as Bde representative. He came back tonight. I'd hoped it was Majendies' board he went to (M is in the 60th.) but it was one of Kemp's so he did not see Hely-Hutchinson.

I saw Campbell Stuart's name at a lunch in the Times the other day. Do you ever see anything of him now? Or have you squabbled? I wondered if he was worth approaching about employment for me. I am more and more drawn to business merely because I am become so absurdly stupid

④

that it's about all I am fit for. I will, when I have time to read through the papers to find out what to do, put myself in for the Diplomatic but the prospect (even of the red-haired Ratclyffe) appals me! I could NOT face an exam. In any case I am bound to fail though I shall go down to the post as cocky as usual. All I can hope is that you will take sufficient people out to lunch to bribe them to employ me. Did I tell you Peter Wake had put himself down for Balliol and hoped he'd be boarded out in time to go up in October. How funny if I came home and found him & Jill up at Oxford together. I must go to bed and finish off Evelyn Waugh's new novel, "Brideshead Revisited", lent me (isn't it very scarce?) by Geoffrey Shakerley. Up at 0600 hrs tomorrow to ride. Have I got any breeches left? What happened to Iris Raikes? If she's still running a school I will write and ask her to send me some saddlery. Bow will be able to ride on those Bulford downs. Thank God I'm

[continued at top of first page (right side up, so incl. above); addendum upside down across top of pages 2 and 3:]

Ref photos. I enclose negatives. Will you @ have prints taken if you want (b) send negatives to Captain P. Wake Courteenhall - Northampton in case they are wanted for Chronicle

~ * ~

[thick paper, as No 135; blue ink]

No 136 Klagenfurt 23 July 45

My very dear Mummy,

This will be late but will bring you all my love and thoughts and wishes for a very happy birthday. I wish I were with you to say it all myself. If it comes by air-mail it may not be so long delayed. You will spend it at Underdown I suppose and will have A.P, Mary and Jill with you. Perhaps Bow will come roaring up from Bulford on his motor-bicycle to bring cheerfulness into the home. I cannot think what I can give you but enclose a cheque and would like it spent partly on a subscription to some frivolous paper which otherwise you would not have dreamed of having, like the Tatler or Queen. The Tatler would make you laugh and amuse you too and you can spend the rest on what you will. Today is Monday and I am writing up in my room in most oppressive stuffiness and heat after

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too heavy a dinner. I have spent a sleepy day in clearing up problems of personnel and Company administration caused by the sad losses of riflemen home on Python and home too before going to S.E.A.C. The Bn is virtually reconstituted since the battle's finish and needs a great deal of attention. As the Russians have now looted everything from Upper Austria and cannot think of anything else to do there, they are allowing us into our area and we ourselves will be moving some 40 miles N. at the end of this week. It will be more in the country, higher and fresher, and therefore more pleasant, but the bore of moving is considerable and we shall be scattered, which I do not like, about the village. But the riding will be better and I shall try to learn to fish.

Leslie Mackay and I had a grand weekend with Sandy Goschen. 6 Armd Div 2nd. Race meeting was on Saturday and it was again hot and we had a gay Bn tent for which I got some praise undeservedly as I did no work for it at all. I rode

③

Vienna again in the open mile and was pleased to find myself a good deal fitter than last time. We were =4th. on this occasion, running very much true to form. I doubt if we could have been better. It was the greatest fun, though the cavalry makes me laugh. The Army Commander, Corps Commander and everyone else was there. I must have lost my card because it is not on the table but it may have gone off to the wash with my bush shirt; so I cannot send it to you. After the meeting I drove my jeep home here, had a bath, and then went off with Leslie, some rations and lots of drink ϒ a sporting rifle Sandy has lent me, beyond Spittal and up into the hills to the North, 15 mls beyond a small village called GMUND to a sort of hunting lodge pub. There we found Sandy who had been out for the evening shoot and (much to Sandy's annoyance) a tough old Grafin and her daughter who had insisted that on the strength of old acquaintance with the Goschen family they should join the party. We had a sort of improvised dinner about 9, gossiped and then

④

went to bed to be awakened at 4 am by the keeper throwing pebbles against our window and crying out in a singsong voice. With long sticks we all plodded up the hill, trying (in my case with impatient difficulty) to keep the rhythm of the wiry old keeper who seemed like iron. It was the steepest and hardest climb I ever have done though in effect it was no more than putting one foot above the other. The sun came out on the snows of the Hock-alp, a group of mountains towards the Glockner, and we saw some chamois which are not in season before 1st Aug. We got up to a wonderful viewpoint at 9, some 6000 feet high but as I don't know from what height we started it's hard to say how high we had come. We went down a little in the sun ϒ found a hut and a herdsman and his family who gave us cream. We had brought eggs and coffee. After breakfast we slept. Then we had lunch, lazed again and went up after tea for another 1½ hours after edelweiss. It was very steep and sheer. We then came down just in front of a storm and had dinner cooked out of nothing but wonderfully by the old Grafin

and her pretty daughter who had both skipped about the hills with much less signs of tiredness than Leslie or I. Sandy is of course an old expert and fit from Greece. We had

[continued upside down above first page:]

to come down to get home ɤ scrambled down for 2½ hrs down a shorter path in the dark. Very slippery ɤ obscure. Then we found 2 punctures in the jeep and got home, driving alternately at 3.30 this morning. A grand day. No more room.

[except above this first lot of upside-down text...]

A nice letter from Mrs Chignell today otherwise no news or letters from anyone. Always my love and many happy returns of the day from John.

~ * ~



30 - Klagenfurt Race Course

[thick paper, as No 135; blue-black ink]

No 137

Villa Barbara - Neumarkt - C.M.F

3 August 1945

My very dear Mummy and Daddy,

We have moved, a week ago today it took place, some fifty miles to the North, following up the Russians, and are now in cool open hilly country with HQ Coy in Neumarkt village on the main road to Vienna and the Coys dotted in other villages around and about up to ten miles away. The people are like cows and I am not certain whether I'm getting sated with the fat, cushy Austrians or not! Some are dears but I think there is a limit to their possibilities. The Mess is on the

side of the hill above the village in a large white country house lately a convalescent home for Austrian civil servants,

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bought for that purpose from the Grafin who owned it before. She lives in a wing at the bottom of the house. There is a cook and her daughter to make cakes ɤ pastry and two pert girls as maids, all of whom I have taken on and employ with no very certain authority either over them or for doing so. But the rfn always get well in and produce results in any language. The food difficulty is acute and A.M.G have laid down limitations on all butter, eggs and local produce. Of course there is a widespread black market both in those things and oats and hay for the horses. The Army horse fodder ration is absurd, being danseed, millet, barley and bran to a total per horse per day of lbs 5 which is not enough to feed the roughest hack, let alone a race-horse. I am told by the chief Agriculture expert of A.M.G in Kärnten that so much oats ɤ hay has been consumed by first the wandering captured ɤ surrendered Central European Armies and now the black marketing British that

③

a high proportion of local cows and beasts of other kinds will have to be killed off this winter for lack of it. We still have fun with our riding though funnily enough I am the only officer in HQ who is interested - Brown Howard ɤ Giles Mills are both great fishermen and keen shots but neither will look at a horse. Leslie Mackay rides but lazily. He is acting $2^{i}/_{c}$ though completely idle at it, until John Christian comes back from his course. John C is keen though and has done a bit of steeple-chase riding. I am sending my chief groom, an old rogue called Rfn Potter, on leave to ENGLAND on Monday so I shall be glad to get John back to advise me on stable management. I hope you have looked out any of my riding books and are sending them. I fell off jumping this evening by running into the side-pole standing up at the edge of the jump but did not hurt myself. I got over the jump again when I'd picked myself up! You say Iris Raikes has been in the Tropics 10 yrs in that

④

wonderful way you have of giving out casual information as though I ought to have known all about it! What happened to her _? did she get married?

Noone will write to me and when they do I must say there is little in them to encourage me to return to England! I am really terrified of doing so now. It will need a tremendous effort. A lot of people who have gone home say how awfully disappointing it is and as my Company Serjeant Major says to me twice a day, "What can you expect, Sir, with that damned Socialist government." I am horrified at the Election results but rather annoyed that Jarvis got in. I see that Toby Low 60th Rifles, our B.G.S lately and once a Coy Cmd in the 9th. (Rangers) Bn got in for Blackpool. Our Brigadier in North Africa in 2 Armd Bde, Roger Peake, a smiling devil, failed at Wycombe. I remember his telling me at dinner once he always wanted to go into politics. The Times of July 30th leading article says the Government are releasing some 3000 Arts Students to go up to the Universities this October, qualification scholarship standard. No military infm of this has reached me. Is there any chance of finding out the rules and regulations, conditions ɤ chances. I have applied to get out on it but it

[continued upside down at top of first page:]

will NOT get far. I also tentatively volunteered to go to America to 9 months on a course of Japanese A.M.G which would bind me to the Army for another 2 years - I am really in a bad way - very happy here - getting more and more rutted and stupid and conservative ɤ

[continued sideways on page:]

unfit for employment. If I had any guts I should volunteer for Burmah. But I must get out of the Army soon to have any chance of earning my living at all. Do write sometimes. Why do Mary ɤ Jill NOT go dancing in town with Bramall - so good for them.

[continued upside down across top of pages 3 and 2:]

They will (Mary ɤ Jill) NOT get me to go around with them! If I ever get sent home on leave I shall be so poor ɤ dull that all I'll do is sit and sleep and mope I'm afraid - Love from John

~ * ~



31 - de Salis, Trudi; Flattnitz

[paper pre-printed as No 135 but on thinner paper; blue-black ink]

No 142

23. 9 .45

Lonigo near Vicenza

My very dear Mummy and Daddy,

This may be one of the last, if not the last letter in this series of those I have written to you both from getting on the boat in Liverpool River until today. It seems odd. There is so much to tell you but I have so much to do there isn't time for an over long letter. However I'll try. The thing is that a great deal of description of my life can only be put on paper and you'll never get out of me personally many of the things that I should like to tell you about. If I don't put it over now, you'll miss it forever. Not that it matters so very much. I have two long letters, one from each of you, to reply to and a much more happily written ɤ vivid letter from Mary telling me very clearly about Bow's last days in England before going off down the road in a haze of jeep dust. Did he take you out

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in the jeep? I don't know what the regulations about that sort of thing are like now in England. How I shall miss all the luxuries we have in the way of personal transport here, and have had for four years, nearly.

A.P's letter came last Sunday night a week ago. Bill Deedes had arrived the Friday before, from Hanover where 12 Bn are, to see me ɤ Leslie Mackay ɤ after the weekend we were sitting smoking a cigar over coffee on our last night at Neumarkt ɤ I pulled out A.P.'s letter ɤ started to read it. It was for the first few pages good as always to read but not particularly encouraging about me! So I put it down ɤ went on talking. I then discovered out of the corner of my eye the tiny postscript ɤ as it read "Just back from the W.O" I picked up the last sheet again. Then I let out a whoop ɤ that was how learned I was through with soldiering. There's no point on harping on sadnesses and Mummy has put it down very sympathetically in her letter. Don't

③

worry about me though. I have a head of stone and as long as I get some material comforts ɤ my friends I shall be O.K ɤ will learn gradually to curb my extravagances, which are awful, until I can make my own way again. By the way are not the advertisements in the agony column of the Times absolutely fantastic - 'First class Major - R.A. B. L.A etc etc. lawn tennis professional before the war - what offers?" Giles Mills and I thought of putting in a fake one for fun. But it got no further than thinking. Peter Wake who was put off by the bespectacled dons so much that on his discharge a few weeks ago he refused to go up to Oxford (Balliol) as he had hoped he would and has gone into the city (whatever he means by that!) writes to say he has renewed my air Times. Nice of him. But a bad omen about the unaware dons. I hope it's not like that.

We left on Monday morning last. The last time I should lead the Battalion column after doing it pretty consistently for 2 years. A hot and tiring drive - I drove my jeep

④

all the way with Giles Mills beside me; 20 m.p.h on the clock the whole time. We came by Klagenfurt where Sandy Goschen came out of his office to wave at us and Velden by the Worther Zee which looked heavenly calm in the last of the hot sunshine, Villach, Tarvisio on the border ɤ so to stinking, hot, dirty Udine in Italy and through the flats with the last sunshine shining on the Alps to the right to reach Pordenone for the night, the last hours drive being in darkness. We were given a rotten staging area on a side road with no place to get off it for sleep.

Everyone felt very sad at leaving Austria. The rfn have overcome most opposition in their time even the fears of girls for the shaving of the heads ɤ there were more tears in Neumarkt village than I remember seeing anywhere before we pulled out. To think of this time last weekend makes <u>me</u> sad enough. We took Deedes, Leslie ɤ I, up on Saturday to our particular pub in the

⑤

mountains at Flattnitz where we had a heavenly weekend. We fished in the evening (without success but it couldn't matter less) ɤ then had a splendid dinner on trout we had not caught and indifferent champagne. The people there we have got pretty well wrapped up ɤ I think it is not unfair to say they will do anything for us. We've both promised them all to go back - ɤ have written it all out in their address books. It was quite a place for skiing ɤ I would not ever mind going there again with a car, ɤ if Sandy gets Tentschach going after the war, it's only 2 hrs drive away. We sang and danced all night or until 3.30 and drank a great deal of whisky. They certainly sing most beautifully and their songs are fascinating. My German cannot

⑥

be said to be improving but my Kärnten with special reference to dialect is regarded on all sides as little short of miraculous! How I kick myself for not having learned to speak languages. I was for some reason always under the impression that I couldn't whereas I know now that I am not only quite surprisingly quick at it, but also have a very fair ear for accent. The silly thing also is that I am not in

the least shy of trying now but that, unlike the more intelligent ɤ earnest, my Army career has been spent in gossip, gambling ɤ sociabilities besides soldiering ɤ my brain has never been exercised at all! It will be a great joke when those silly old dons discover what a great imposter I have been. I am always prepared to bluff anything but they must have been stupid to think I was capable of thought or scholarship in 39! Now that we are almost certain that all

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is set up would you try ɤ find out the form from Robert Birley about cash for me from Ch'House, in particular how one can expect it and when ɤ how much is max available.

Back to Austria. We got up at 5 am - nausea vanquishing - and went out shooting. I make no excuses but I had no telescopic sight and missed, after a long delay in polishing my spectacles clouded from the awful exertion of hill climbing, at 500 - 600 yds a very good stag. Deedes lay behind me and jeered as far as his quick panting would allow. Mackay went with the old Jaeger ɤ pulled the wrong trigger, thus missing a chamois at 100'. It is a great thing not to mind in the least. We came down that evening to find the Coy all loaded up. I was quite happy to go away for the weekend after giving out my orders. And Bill left for the North ɤ we for Italy after early breakfast on Monday morning. Leslie ɤ I

⑧

had been up to Flattnitz several times before. I don't think I've told you about it in earlier letters. One great night was when they had a great "Markt" feast when people come up from all the valleys round ɤ slept in the hay ɤ danced ɤ drunk all night. There was this fantastic "schu-platz" (?spelling) which is wonderful to watch and everyone was in roaring form. We wrote a chit out for the band who had come 80 mls from the P.W cage at Spittal ɤ were supposed to pack up ɤ go home at 10pm, to say that they had broken down ɤ were unable to mend their truck till morning. As we were the only English there we felt this justified though I think the band would have stayed anyway. We bedded down at 5 and were up at 6.30 to get back for breakfast and Company office at 0830 for me. But the band were playing their last tune as we dressed and noone looked tired as we sipped our hot morning coffee with mouths like bad potatoes. In peace time they

⑨

say they do this for four days on end with intervals to go out shooting. Then they have a long sleep.

We had a lot of duck shooting our last fortnight at Neumarkt - Col Sydney - Giles, Tony Round ɤ I used to go out. I was by far the worst naturally but it was fun. There were about five good ponds up in the hills close to the village and we used to take stand on different ones, put the birds up ɤ then waited for the evening flight.

I have lost your letters so I can't remember if there was anything in particular to answer but I know that I have forgotten one big thing ɤ that is your Silver Wedding for which I send you all my most loving congratulations. I have sent you

⑩ I've sent £10 more to Stuttafords in extravagant mood! JPW 23.9

a contribution to a present from us all and hope that Mary will have got it all together as a lump sum to buy the sort of present you'd like yourselves if she's been unable to choose anything. Many happy returns indeed.

Now as to me. It seems odd that it should take so long for my call from 2nd. Echelon here if my name was sent from W.O on or about the 11th. of the month but I suppose there can be no further error. I have made a plan which Col Sydney has been more than kind about, for me ɤ Leslie Mackay, when I get my release book in my hand, to go with O'Connor, my servant ɤ a White Sc. car by way of Austria to Hanover to

⑪

visit 12 Bn K.R.R.C ɤ from there come home while poor old Leslie will return with a load of champagne until Oct 23 when he himself will come out, in release Gp 20. This is a splendid plan ɤ shd now come off. It is essential anyway that I should complete the overland tour and that we should get some idea of Germany occupied which is very, very, very different in every way from Austria occupied.

Col Sydney could NOT have been nicer about it. I really am glad to have served under him. He has gone off to a Regimental Conference for all CO.s in London which is a first-class thing ɤ may ring A.P up if he's in the telephone book.

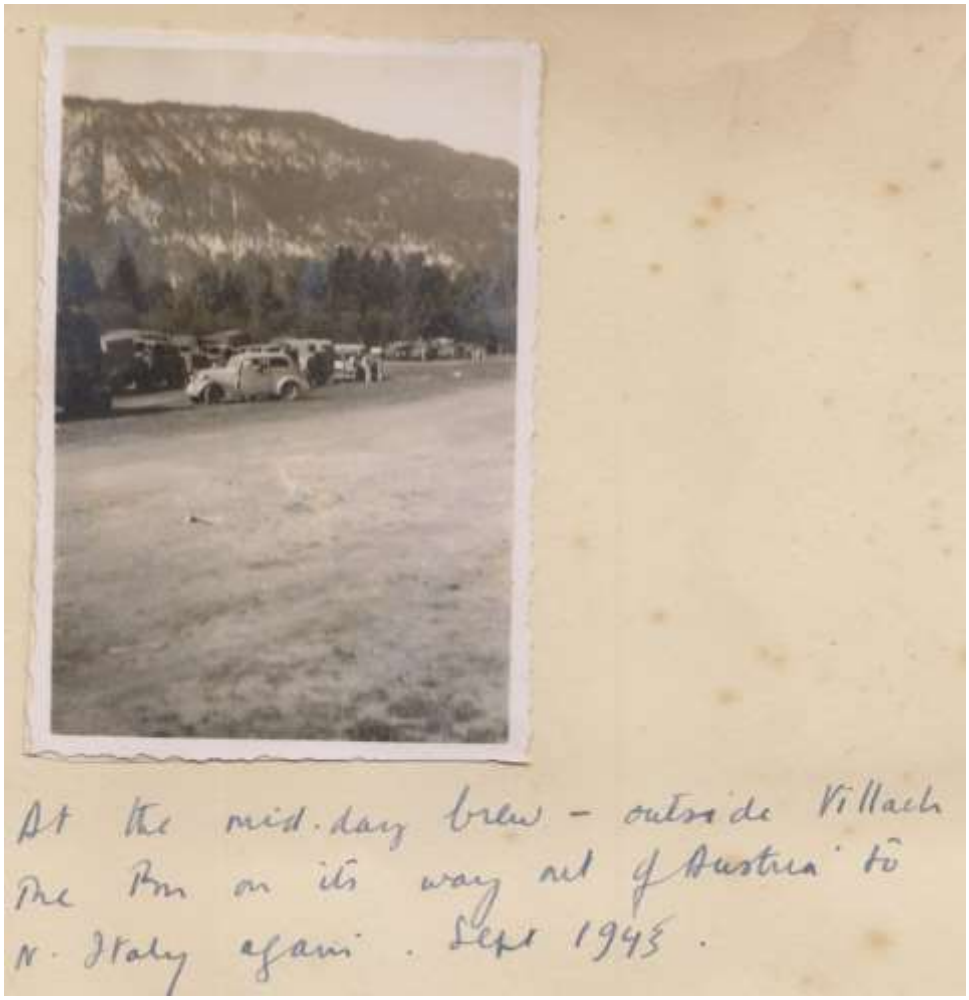
I am terribly worried about my civilian clothes, I'm afraid

⑫

after fancying that I was really rather well dressed in the Army! Have I got any clothes and will I be able to buy any? I suppose my dinner jacket etc won't fit. If it's not too much trouble can you look into the thing in my room ɤ possibly provide a second wardrobe because I have more possessions now than I like to think about. It might be worth asking that old rogue Welsh if he has any cloth as I am bound to have to have at least one suit made by someone. Not that he can cut.

Sorry I missed Bow. He has never bothered to reply to my letter about his coming back to the Regt but he's no doubt self-sufficient ɤ I shan't bother any more. I am sorry he's not with the 2nd Bn myself though the Air-Borne are good fighters.

See you someday - Very much love from John



32 - Bn en route from Austria to Italy, Sept 1945

~ * ~

[preprinted paper as 142; black ink; undated, presumably c 30 Sept 1945]

No 143 Lonigo

My dear Mummy & Daddy,

Back to lunch this Sunday with Leslie from race meeting yesterday at Aiello near Trieste where I had my last ride. I got left at the start on a cantankerous mare called Susan but caught up to the top third or so of a large field. A good last go. We dined at a fiver each with Spencer Killick, Tony Round & Bobby Darwin in Venice - not all that well - but very well - & Leslie & I stayed the night in the Grand which we discovered in the morning was out of bounds. After two

②

lightly boiled eggs we went out into the sun and took a turn in a gondola for an hour up & down the Grand Canal. It was very lovely. We had a puncture on the way back & got very dirty.

Col Sydney is in England on a Regimental conference & is expected back tomorrow or Tuesday.

Your (A.P's) good letter of 23 Sept was waiting for me. Probably the last I'll get from you this tour abroad.

I hope you've got my Silver Wedding Present. I sent you a fattish cheque for Mary to get on with. Perhaps that is why she wouldn't show you the letter but as it's past

③

the time for it I hope she won't be secretive in future. I also sent you my congratulations. Did you put yourselves in the Times? And I've sent a tenner to Stuttafords.

Glad she's gone up to Oxford happily - I do hope she'll still get around a bit. I must try to get someone to lend me a car because it's no use buying one clearly yet & it's clearly essential to have one. It will be such fun having both girls. No work by me!

You'll have had my long letter of last week by now.

My papers have now arrived. Or at least some of them have. I have been busy handing over my work all this week. I wish my fingers weren't in so many pies. Have no fear that I don't know how to pull strings & further my

④

own interests at every turn! I worked pretty hard.

I am only awaiting the final movement instrs. When they come I & Leslie will be off to Hanover by way of Sandy in Austria. I hope all goes well with this plan. As I lose so much cash & get no leave on these damned Cl.B regs I do not feel particularly angry at possibly arriving a little late at Oxford. They will have to wait. I do hope Mummy can spare a little time to see if I have any clothes. I know I've got so few & I am a <u>very well equipped</u> & <u>dressed</u> soldier!

It's sad but a tremendous thrill. I am really more than excited. We will celebrate my birthday when I come - the 4th. I've missed.

[continued sideways on first page:]

I do hope they upgrade A.P's salary. Can you not find out? All my love to you John

[added sideways between p2 & 3:]

Have we got anything to drink at Underdown for my homecoming?

~ * ~

[paper as No 142; black ink so thin it is sepia in places]

I've been writing the Chronicle a/c for next year all morning against my will!

No 144 Lonigo

2 October 1945

My dear Mummy ɤ Daddy,

Mummy's letter dated 28 Sept arrived a minute or two ago. It is infuriating to think that my final movement authority from AFHQ was dated 28 Sept too ɤ has still not arrived. I have had D.R.s waiting at Bde and at Division in Padua to seize it. The mail came in from A.F.H.Q 0230 to Div this morning ɤ it wasn't there. There is a possibility of another mail this afternoon. I know it's in the post because we signalled them to find out the form ɤ got a reply "Authy ... . already despatched to you under ref ... ..

②

on ... 28 Sept." More than maddening. Leslie ɤ I are panting at the leash. The White is all ready. There may yet be many difficulties. I have written to Russell to say I shall be late. Thank God I get all my gratuities now on Cl. B. which I had thought I lost. This will make a big difference ɤ will mean that I get paid for about 2 months after release on my release leave. Thank goodness for that.

We had hoped to start after lunch ɤ get to Klagenfurt in time to dine with Sandy but now we cannot get off before tomorrow, I fear.

Col Sydney is still not back from England. I hope you <u>will</u> make me

④[186]

a birthday cake ɤ I wouldn't mind some presents as I've missed 21. 22. 23 - all of them! I don't know what will happen to my baggage but no doubt it will all turn up one day. Glad to hear the car is going but worried that you should be going to Cambridge just about time I arrive. However it cannot be helped. I can go ɤ stay in London possibly. In any case I've <u>got</u> to get some clothes ɤ am seriously worried about the difficulties ɤ the cost! How I wish I'd been a civilian before.

I've written to Mary ɤ Bow via you. Don't you write any more letters. Why has Jill gone to Oxford? Does she begin early?

See you soon. Much love,

John

~ * ~

[186] p2 is in fact written on the 'third side' of the letter, so this 4 is correct in terms of 'sides'.

[single sheet of plain air mail paper; black ink]

No 145 10 October 1945 12 Bn KRRC

Hanover

My dear Mummy & Daddy,

I shall be home Thursday or Friday night next week[187] - I can't be quicker. This is almost definite however.

All news when I see you & there is plenty. Could you let Oxford know?

Much love

John

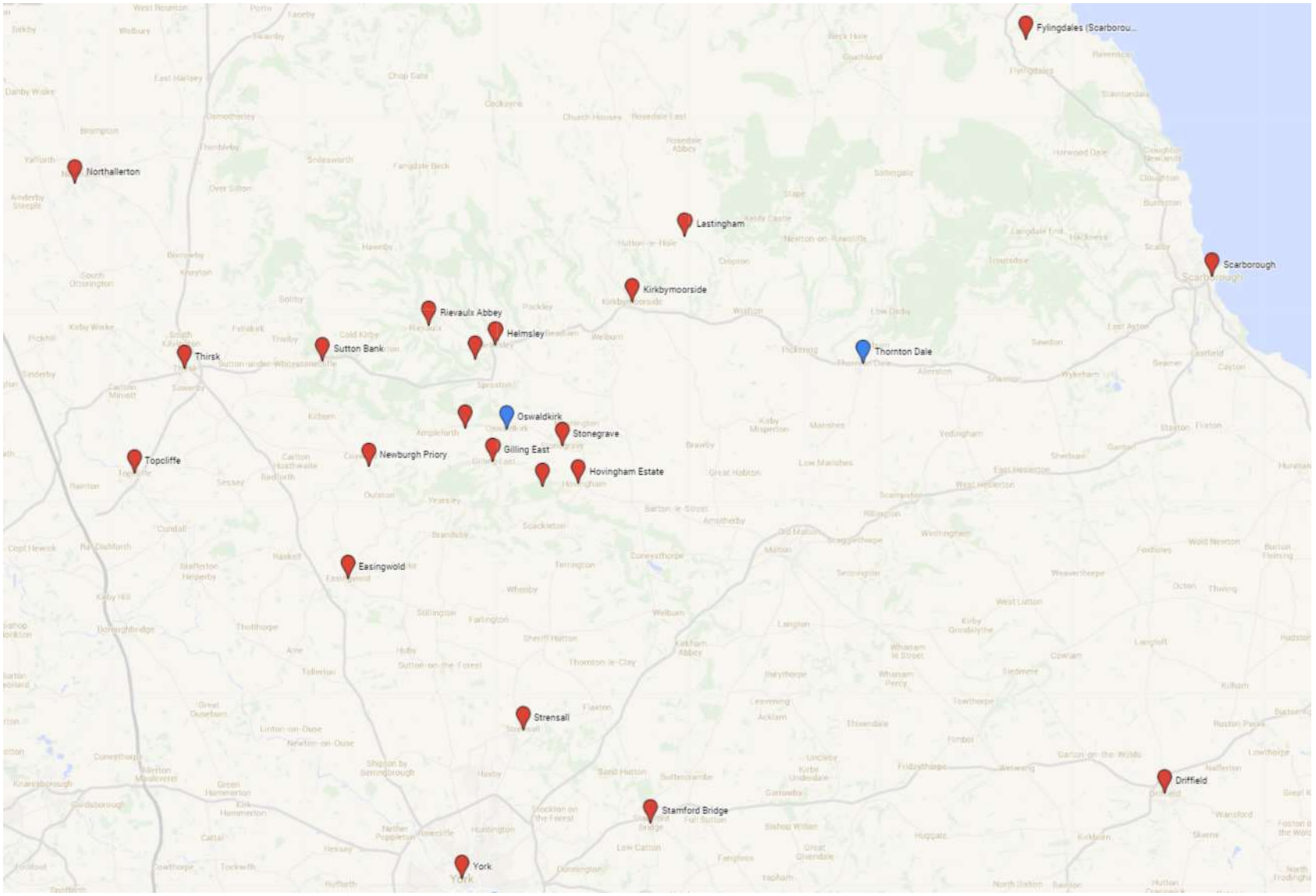
-oOo-

[187] this was written on Wednesday. He expects to be back 18 or 19 October. He has missed his birthday at home on the 5th. Oxford (full) term typically starts in the second week of October, with freshers, at least nowadays, expected in "0th week", the week before.

Appendices

Appendix A - Maps

Map 1: map of UK places mentioned (Yorkshire)



Map 2 - north-east Africa overview

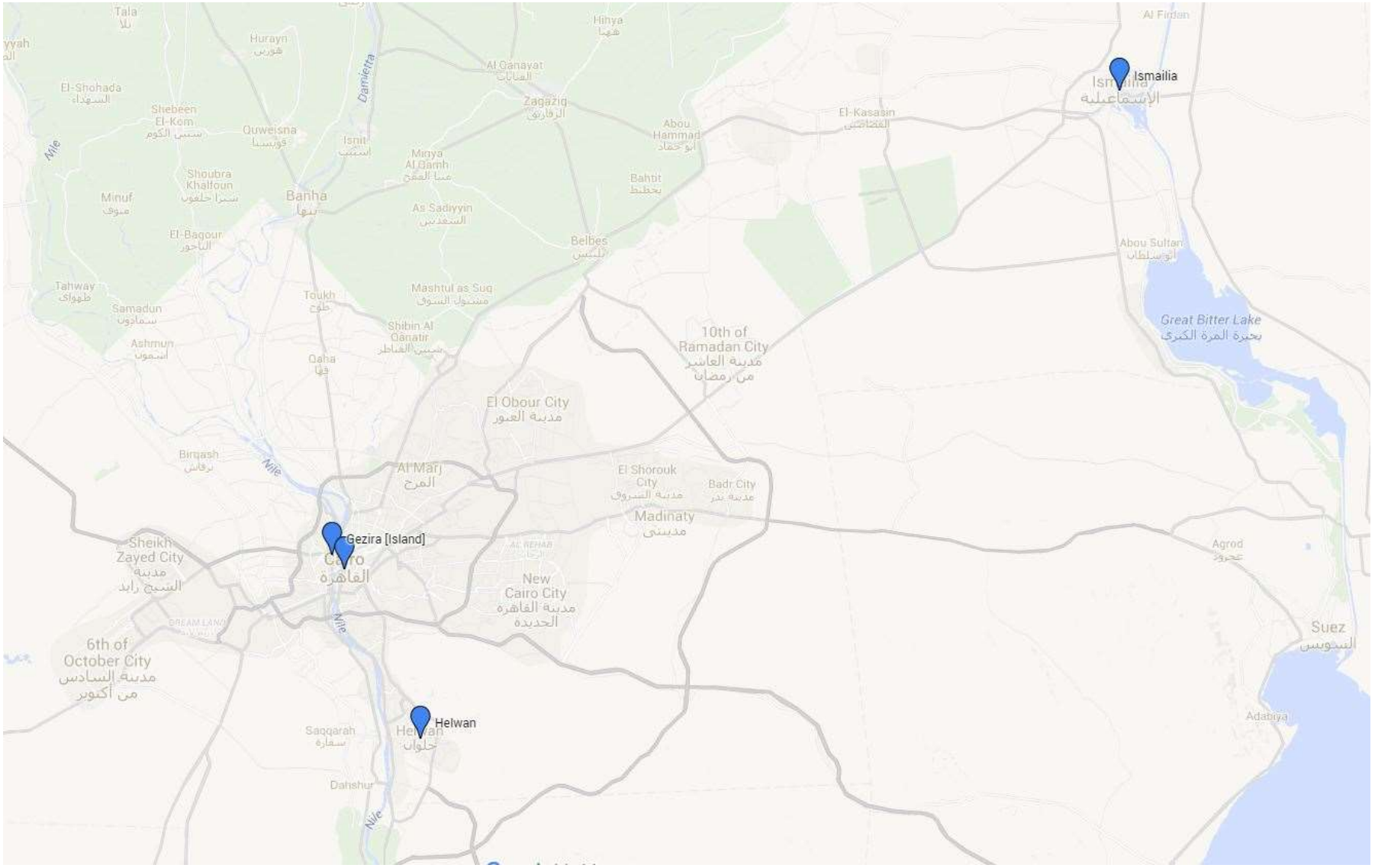
overlap with map 4

see map 3



appendices: p. ii

Map 3 - north-east Africa detail - Egypt



appendices: p. iii

Map 4 - central north Africa

see map 5



overlap with map 2

appendices: p. iv

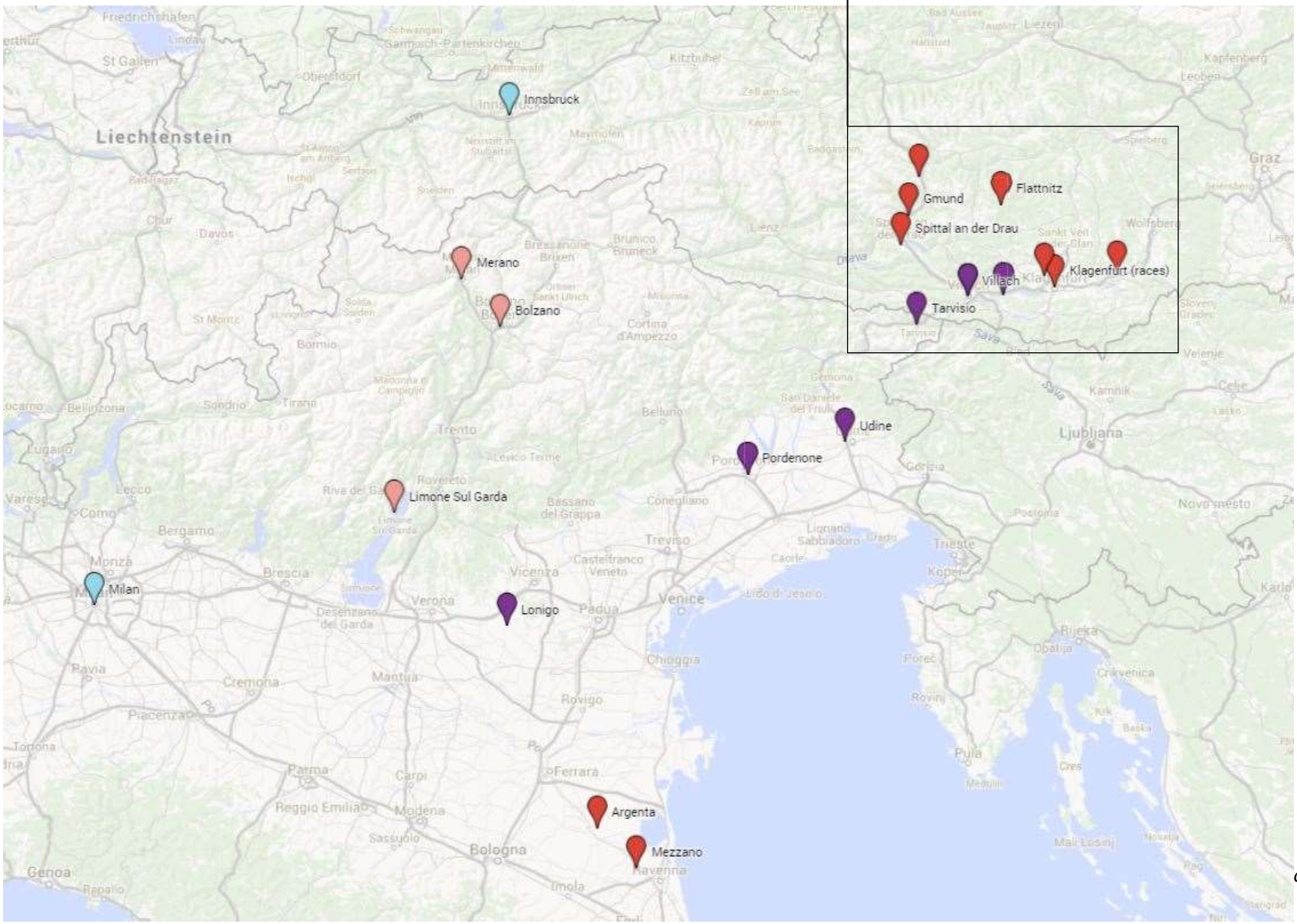
Map 5 - central north Africa detail - Tunisia



appendices: p. v

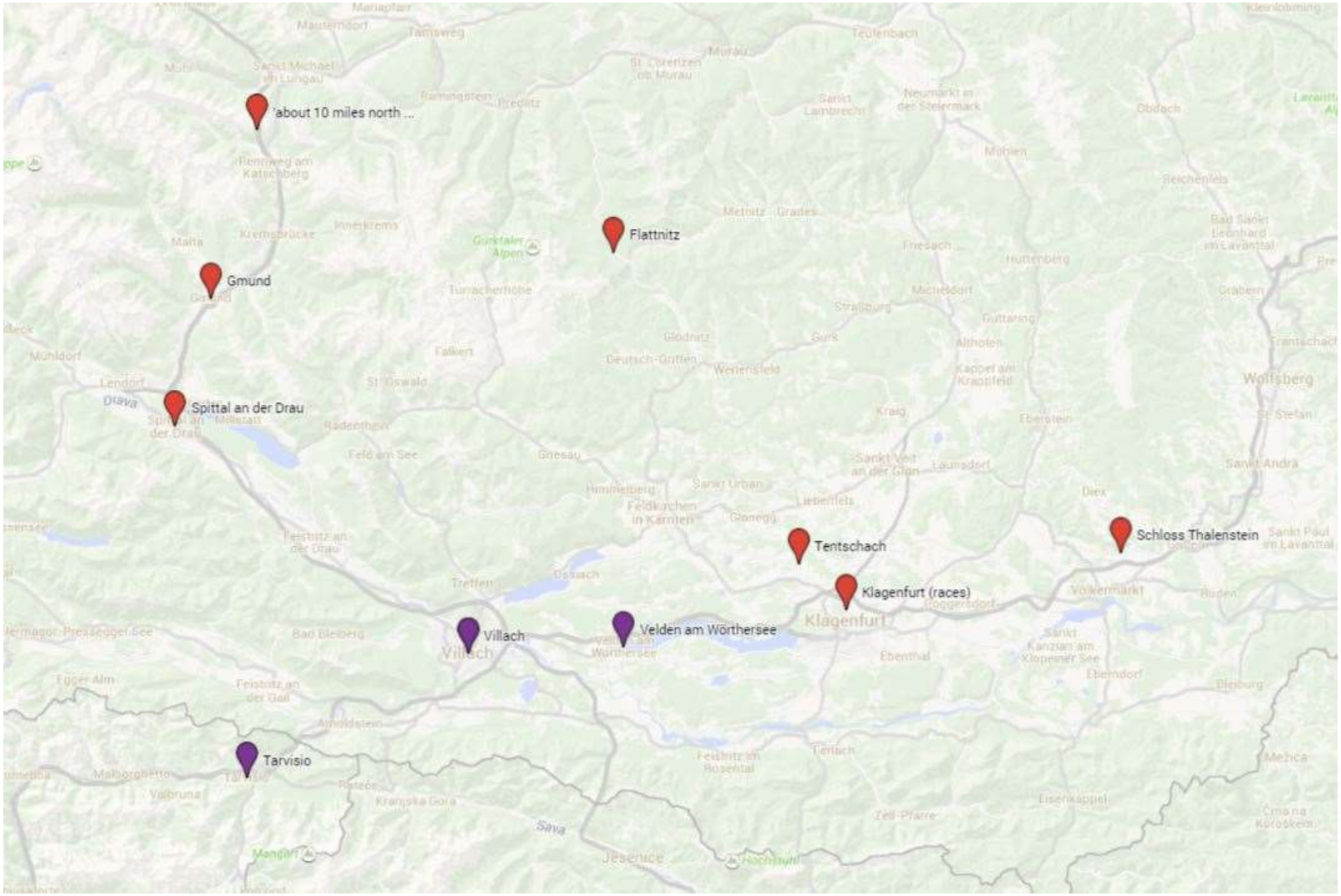
Map 6 - Italy and Austria

see map 7



appendices: p. vi

Map 7 - Austria



-oOo-

appendices: p. vii

appendices: p. viii

Appendix B - the Desert War, JPW's prose notes from Autumn 1942

(1)

Description

Some notes of the advance of the 8th Army from Alamein onwards November and December 1942. These were written on the spot on odd scraps of paper and *merely* reflect the feelings *and ideas* of a very inexperienced young soldier,[188] many of which were later modified *as experience and responsibility increased*. But they have not been altered and are *word for word* the same scraps as those that were jotted down at the time and kept *half-forgotten* at the back of a file from *N. Africa to* Mareth *and* to Tunis, *from* Algiers to Italy, Italy to Austria *and back to Italy*, and so home by Hanover and Ostend three years later. *There was never time for more. Written out at Christ Church March 46.*[189]

11 November 1942 - 2.15 p.m.

The order was one hour's halt for the Brigade in the middle of the day but it's getting on now for one and a half hours. The first opportunity, except when sitting in pitch darkness in a truck waiting for the convoy to move on, that anyone has had, for twelve days, to sit still and think, let alone do anything like washing and shaving.

I can see chaps scrubbing sand out of their ears with towels and getting out mug-fulls of water to complete a shave and wash and teeth-cleaning. They have had their brew made by pouring petrol over wood in a draught-cut petrol tin and throwing a match in. I ate in my food group with Chambers, Porter and Cpl Hawker and we did well because of the tin of cherries we got as loot yesterday, off that Iti 3-tonner laden with stuff. That was when *Buller*[190] got his 15 cwt blown up on the mine and had to be himself evacuated. I went out three times over the supposed mine field. I did see Tellers sticking up out of the sand but rescued the personal kit and the loot which they had already salvaged, unwitting, in their greed, that they were in a German mine field, though the mines were uncertainly sown. I had

(2)[191]

a hand empty the third time over and brought back (I couldn't resist it) a bottle of Chianti, sleek and fat, wrapped in straw. There were cigars too which all the drivers could be seen puffing at later in leagues.

Earlier they had been looting a 3-tonner which was hit clean by a six-pounder. I rather hope for a pair of binoculars and a good camera. I've seen a splendid pair of ten by fifty Zeiss which Cpl Unwin got off the two Itis that walked in a few evenings back when we were flogging up the sandhills by the sea not much beyond Buk-Buk. There were still sitting on the sand about a dozen of our tanks, dead hulks, 'shot out of it' in the first advance against the Italians. Old hands pointed them out. Peter Wake told me in leagues that night that the Colonel had said we were setting the pace for the whole Brigade. In that first 3-tonner, though, at the top of Halfaya, there was also a camera but a rfn got it, and a camp-bed too - "smashin' bit of officer's kit" as he said. There were two humped shapes by the truck, covered with dusty blankets, among the wreckage and the pillows and the stink of scent, wine and sweat. They shuddered ever so often and moaned. "They were two Jerries dying", the rifleman said, "one had it in the guts, and the half of his face blown away, and the other in the eyes" and "please, sir, do you think we might get them away somehow in an ambulance?" Kindness always, they never let the prisoners starve or lack at least one blanket at night.

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[188] JPW had had his 21st birthday shortly before these notes were written and was starting his third year as a soldier, coming to that straight from sixth form at Charterhouse.

[189] Found in family papers June 2015 and transcribed then by JTW. The originals are on yellowing foolscap, written by JPW longhand in blue-black ink with few corrections. The introductory paragraph shows *later additions* as italicised; analysis of the handwriting indicates that these qualifications and amplifications probably took place fairly soon after the original draft.

[190] Italicised words in the *main text* indicate uncertainty, due mainly to proper names or army jargon.

[191] page numbers are shown as per the original text. No attempt has been made to match page-content or line-length.

We got them our ambulance but the doctor said they would both die. Meanwhile we sat there and were machine-gunned from time to time by M.E. 109's and then everyone put up a Bren to his shoulders and staggered about like a drunken man letting off tracer always well behind the target. A few, in the planes' path, lie down this time with their tin hats on, less full of intense animosity. The other day as we were moving off after a hurried brew on our way

(3)

up to Sidi Barrani, as we moved along quietly but bumpily over the yellow plain, sprouting grey-green sweet smelling stuff and thistles, that supplied the camel herds and their sentinel Bedouin, sunbaked then at mid-day, dew-sodden at night, with the line of the hard stony-cropped escarpment running along our left, out of the sky came diving smoothly two planes, let go a burst and were away with all the Bn rattling after them with their automatics; action and reaction, it had seemed so smooth and inevitable. And suddenly it was over. But Bill *Darbee*, an American officer, was crippled for life with a bullet through the back of each knee, and a couple more were hit. That was all.

Still no sign of a move. I've moved out of the truck because the broiling sun (and lack of wind, unusually absent) made my nose bleed and I and the crew are sitting in the shade made by the vehicle, asleep or reading. It seems astonishing, that we should sit still like this. We've been on the go for almost a fortnight and I've only snatched a shave once and then I had to rush away for a conference with half my face lathered up. Odd how clean a raze you get when you have a few days growth on you. Some people have fine beards. Henry Watson, whom I tease at night in leagues as we lie on the ground and drink gin and lime or whisky off the Mess truck and chat, looks exactly like those portraits of D.H. Lawrence. The échelon came up yesterday, having done a hundred and sixty miles to get there. We see it about once in three days. It brought letters and P.R.I goods as well as rations. The riflemen had a bottle of beer each, issued out by the light of my torch under the hood of a vehicle. We had the radio on. There is an old set in the Serjeant Majors truck run off the vehicle batteries, and although we were five miles south of Bardia on El Aziz landing ground we heard the news blazing, and then the chaps played on mouth-organs tired though they were. Finally each man crawled into his bedroll and slept until the guard woke him with the starlight dimming in the approach of dawn, and

(4)

he crawls out, lifting off his soaking wet ground sheet; anything else that has not been well covered is also soaking wet, including his hair. He gets up to shiver in spite of great coat and scarf in the chilling-bitter wind, and climbs up and presses his starter and hopes she goes without a push this fucking morning. Wakey-Wakey and Rise and Shine, the night guard croak it on the bluey as well as the orderly fucking serjeant in the depôt barrack-room.

There's a tortoise under the shade of my vehicle, a friendly creature about five inches across the shell.

God here's the Echelon almost due South of Tobruk as we are. *This* Brigade is the foremost element of the 8th Army, spread here in the flat track-scarred sand plain, that sprouts its little bushes, dry and sun-soaked, flat as far as you can see. We've got no petrol 3-tonner, Hell! It failed to get in this morning and the *fitter* is with it.

November 12th 5.30 p.m.

The Echelon has just rumbled past, spread wide over the desert, and presided over by the huge gin palace with staff officers navigating rather lackadaisically on top, blower to lips; they are chasing the Bn, as we are, but I've decided to eat a hot meal before the sun goes down. Bugger the flies; they come and settle on the sore places on the knuckles, the vile things. I've got no proper desert sores yet. They say that they are caused by a lack of vitamin C and appear after three months. We've cooked our bully stew with veg and drunk our rather muddy looking hot sweet tea off communal plates and out of communal mugs. The sun has disappeared and there's a young crescent moon in the purple blue sky to the south. We'll go on in a minute till I can't see the compass any longer.

November 13th 8.30 - 8.0 a.m.

We came along the Westward track from ACROMA in

(5)

the early half-light, trying to log the mileage, read the non-luminous needle on the compass and watch for suitable tracks as the towing vehicle boiled whenever the going got worse.

Suddenly we saw at the flat plate's extreme limit the silhouettes of three-tonners and the more reassuring flicker of brew fires from the petrol tins where breakfast was cooking. The Battalion, we've discovered are down at Gazala somewhere, twelve miles off, but some Companies are popping off to capture an aerodrome so we may be still unlucky. All the same waiting here after sausage, tea and marmalade and biscuit is not unpleasant in spite of the bitter wind. It is nice to see the sea again on our right although it surprised me earlier this morning because I could not believe it was as far away as the map showed it to be. Tobruk was apparently not entered yesterday; 22nd Armd Bde did not bother to go in because it had already been evacuated. All the MET have got away West though I've seen no TAC.R. Some of the gentry in British *warms* who sit so comfortably in the H.C.Vs and gin palaces around here, living like kings compared with us, hazard that Jerry may try a stand at Tmimi and regret we have so little to get him out with. We are still the foremost element in the Army as we have been since Charing Cross. If only all those MET had not been able to pass off like this. Peter Wake tells me, at various degrees of hand, that Montgomery ballsed the Q side in letting 8th (?) Armd Div wait for three days at Charing Cross, sitting on their arses, doing nothing for lack of petrol. Of course the rain was awful there. Now we're dry we've almost forgotten the mud.

November 15th (?) 3.0 p.m.

Sitting in the queue at *Carmoset* el Azragh above the escarpment waiting to drive, I hope, to Benghazi. It's taken quite quietly by everyone; no emotion has been shown at all, yet it hasn't been done often before, and some time ago, at that. D Coy will go with one column

(6)

across the desert to *Agedabya*, a route, I'm told, more bloody for stone than any on the desert. I doubt whether some of the trucks will do it. We, luckily, are going by road, the Derna - Barce - Bengazi road on which half the Company started yesterday. Battalion HQ is in front of us now, likewise A Coy, sitting above that terribly steep, hairpin-bended, winding track that leads down to the coast road. It's blustering; sand and spots of rain are blowing about and the sun has been blacked out. Above the breast of the hill, the sea is plainly visible, looking about two miles away, but actually about ten. Brigade HQ have joined the queue now and trucks in front are dispersing. We shall be hours before we get down there and it will be in the dark. The maddening thing is that we were ourselves down below and fifteen miles on the road yesterday, after breakfasting up here with the Echelon. One of our 15 cwts had blown up on a mine just off the tarmac. I took the driver to the A.D.S last night. It's not safe to go off the road and risky to run along the sand and pebbles on the verge in spite of the Sappers' work. Cpl Tranter is sitting down there still, I suppose, with his crew, Vickers gun, rations and water, waiting to snatch an empty 15 cwt from some guileless fellow, so that he can get on. They always get up in the end.

We had a splendidly idle morning. We didn't get up until we wished, lying in perfect peace on the plateau top here. We ate our breakfast in full without interruption, a unique experience. We had porridge, Australian sausage (not as good as Soya-links or self-asserted Beef Sausage, in my opinion) and biscuits and marmalade. The tea was an odd grey-blue colour, this was caused by the issue water being dark-red with rust. Then I aired my bedding, shaved off my growth of beard, and had a wash almost all over, all in two mug-fulls of water. Then I changed

(7)

my socks which were filthy and felt a new man. This was the second shave I've had since the move from the South by Himeimat, the first complete wash and the second change of socks. Of course no chance to get any clothes washed. I got a bottle of beer off the Bn Mess truck which I drank for

lunch, together with McNeill and Kipling. North-Country people, especially Lancashire ones, are not my type really. They never seem satisfied, and are always grumbling to themselves about rations or somesuch. I gave these two all my P.R.I tins this morning and they were still unsatisfied. Walker, being a Tynesider, is quite different, of course. It makes so much difference when people are generous and cooperative in small ways and, of course, the riflemen up here are quite wonderful at pulling together, helping each other and other people and mucking in. They have most of them been in the desert over a year. Many of them have been with the Bn in Burma and the desert three years and more. Some have not seen England for six or seven years. They are tough but nice. The type of *N.C.O* is more experienced, adaptable and res*i*liant[192], more the old soldier, and less intelligent mentally than the English Territorial Bn N.C.O.s. The desert is all their life - what will they do when they leave it? I believe it may be very hard for them.

No letters yet, of course, though I saw the c/sjt today. I don't worry at all. I'd rather not have them as they distract from the immediate job in hand, but I'd like to feel securely that my letters have not been lost; there is no reason to suppose they have; it's just how one feels. That is the sole anxiety. I do not actually want them here. Anticipation is best. Henry Watson was saying as we lay on the ground one night in leagues between the rows of vehicles, that reading which made you think or

(8)

excited you by its literary quality was a bad *Thing* at this time as it distracted you from the immediate first necessity of doing your job with competence. At waiting moments like this, sitting in the truck with nothing to do, I think an anthology or a Virgil might come in well. Here in my own truck I think I might keep my Virgil in the front pocket. This writing occupies the time too; it's mostly nonsense but is the first thing that comes into the head, unreflected on. I keep one eye alert on the front for a blue flag. Some chaps are snatching a brew with frenzied skill. All meals are always interrupted but getting a quick brew in is an art. This permanent swigging of tea is too much for me; three cups a day are more than sufficient.

The army can't do much about these escaping Germans, I suppose. Our Southern column is only opening up the aerodrome down by Antelat, Peter Scott suggests, and he is probably right. There is absolutely no intelligence about the enemy. Benghazi may be clear or full; noone knows how far we are going down there tonight. The Yanks are using our aerodrome, the one the Bn captured just below the escarpment here. Planes were coming in and out all morning. Four officers were wounded in all. I hadn't heard all the news before. And a fellow who came up from Geneifa last night says that several I knew very well in the 2nd Bn have been killed, including Mickey Hemming who had only been there three days. It's awful to think of it. He'll never conduct the London Philharmonic or write the opera he was describing to me over dinner at the French Club in Ismailia the Saturday before I came up here.

The R.HA are going on in front of us and so are most of Bde. Hell, I hate waiting.

A few days later The next day

Last night we leaguered dispersed in marshy flats to the left of the road. The whole of Rear Bde was on the other side with their galaxies of Staff cars and gin palaces including my favourite Aunt Caroline. We got away about ten in the morning, after hanging about, and drove, getting wetter and

(9)

wetter until the whole of my buttocks and below were soaked. I pushed my Army spectacles up above my eyes onto my forehead because otherwise I could see nothing at all. I lost my ordinary glasses in the mud after the first break-through. (And I lost my next pair at *Argouli el-Magas* in April 43 when they were exploded off and smashed)[193]

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[192] the manuscript has 'reliant'.
[193] this is an obvious example of a later addition to the 'word for word' contemporaneous notes described in the introduction.

We forked left at Martouba onto the sandy bumpy track and into the hills. The lunch brew dried us up a little and we lifted our coat tails and stamped about with our asses stuck out to the fires, enviously watching the Yank Air Force who were going about in desert boots and woolly coats, presumably all issue. Bill Channing, one of our American officers, assured me that these fellows have about eight changes of clothing and wonderful rations. They certainly had no idea of road discipline and went crashing about like ignorant babies, letting off grenades at the halt, as if they were toys.

In *Del Martino* (the next day)

On the side of a hill with a six pounder in front, sitting at the driving wheel and watching all the time lest they draw on. A green valley lies on the left with a series of white, angular bungalows lined up on the opposite side of the road. They all have above their front doors cut in the white or yellow plaster ENTE COLONIZZAZIONE LIBIA. Below the houses in a slight terrace is a cultivated garden, with what looks like fruit trees growing there. There are a couple of palm trees further up by a well where there is a sign ACQUA POTABILE. A woman in a red shawl is basting three braying jackasses with a long stick up the stony slope. There are no colonists now. Paths lead into the gently curving hills which are a pleasant grey purple in the shadow. There's a biting wind still and I've left my gloves in the great seed-store where we slept last night at Giovanni Berta. This place smelt strongly of garlic and was supposed to be rat-infested. We lit huge fires in its vaulted interior and lay down among peanuts with the smell of garlic in the nostrils. The wind and

(10)

rain roared in the night but we woke warm to cook inside again, untroubled by the persistent drizzle.

? two days later - 11 a.m Nov 18th

Still raining. We spent last night in a fold in the hills on the slopes among thick scrub and evergreen bushes. It might have been the Lowlands of Scotland. The Navy is here. They joined us this morning with three vehicles uncertainly driven and pushed through the mud to crowd our already over-crowded valley as the colour-sjt was giving out rations. They are the Naval Officer designate in charge of the port of Bengazi and his satellites. He has left more behind at Tobruk to follow him. Charming in manner and typically Navy. All Naval officers seem to have the same full open clean type of face. They treat the discomfort as a picnic and a party they would not have missed for worlds! Nor would I have but I'm a stranger too. The riflemen after three years are inured to everything and stubbornly enduring but a week of sodden blankets and clothes gets tedious. I do not know the Naval *king's* rank but throw in a judiciously-placed "Sir" every now and then. They are all a little worried by road discipline, and, as everyone is to start with, are uncertain how to get their vehicles down onto the road and fitted into the column. Oh and now they've ballsed it! They are on the road already with the admiral waving his arms in fury and discomfort. They complain they have not had their usual daily tot of rum. They probably need it to keep them mentally sound in this weather. We lost some vehicles and chaps including a Grant yesterday on mines and in a shooting affray with some Boche gun, probably a 55 mm, I think. They manage their rear-guard well, but two men and a gun can delay this whole Brigade indefinitely, to say nothing of mines. We cannot get off the road

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except on foot. Mud prevents vehicles doing much even on the tracks which are rare. Now the rain has cleared a bit. On to Marava only. Bengazi seems somewhat remote, I'm afraid.

La Neve Antonio Bance, li Depositi.
Reppresentanze Casella Postale N.18.

Nov 19th 0815 a.m.

I wonder who owned this paper. We got here in a thunderstorm last night with rain falling like a waterfall and flashes of lightning every five minutes blinding the drivers' eyes. The night before at MARAVA we slept on the rocky, scrubby hill-side in pools of water listening to the perpetual patter of more rain on our ground sheets all the night through fearful lest we should wriggle in bed to relieve the bony hip, rock-pressed, and water should come sluicing in. A pool beneath me became too much, and my sleeping bag and blankets became sopping and squelchy. We got up before first light

with an economy of movement to avoid further wetting. No unnecessary feeling for boots and no gratuitous stamping about. One dresses delicately, first boots, then spectacles which are in my hat, under the vehicle (why do we always like to sleep with our heads or sides up against something? it's a definite instinct) then belt with pistol anomalously hanging from it like a Wild Westerner's, then overcoat, scarf and hat. Lacing of boots is done when the fingers are no longer numbed and the sores which never heal have thawed sufficiently from their nightly stiffness to permit joints to bend. So we had sausages for breakfast over our petrol fire which brewed away well enough in the drenching downpour, and then huddled into the vehicle, drew groundsheets about us and waited for the inevitably unpunctual start of an Armd Bde on such a morning and indeed all mornings. The Brigadier having been blown up yesterday, I expect this morning's chaos and delay is due to the uncertainty of his successor Colonel Joy, 2*nd* Bde, and late the Royals.

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We drew off through the reddish-brown slush up onto the road an hour late and dawdled through the Italian's happy colony at 5 miles per hour. We had spasms of rain followed by a fierce dry wind which flapped at our clothing and took the wetness from it in no time but left us, poor flesh, shivering. Then came the next cloudburst. The country was scrubby heath with evergreens covering the quietly curving slopes and here and there a sharp escarpment. It might have been, as one looked at it, Newlands Corner.

The road down the pass into Barce had been blown as we expected. The Sappers worked wonders and we moved on, in bottom gear, after two and a half hours. A White was overturned on the greasy hill. It lost control and hit a bank in neutral at 45 miles an hour. The Ambulances squirmed back up the hill past the lines of trucks, carrying twelve injured and a corpse. Strange luck when the enemy were far away. It was dark and lowering purple and green clouds turned black, met, flashed lightning and thundered. We wound down the hill, onto the flat, seeing nothing, and went through the town in wet darkness yelling "Beer Company" until we found one of the Bn H.Q to yell back where to go. My torch would not work and we found our way by match light into a rank, stinking yard, then through the window and into the building. There was muck and garbage everywhere. We found the dry rooms, lit petrol fires and began to steam and dry out. People went scuffling in and out shedding their clothes gradually and bumping into petrol tins and rubbish in the dark, rubbing their eyes clear of smoke and choked with fumes. Upstairs I found one Captain Leslie with four war-correspondents, just visible through the smoke. There were Sedgwick, an old boy, from the New York Times, another lean old fellow with the M.C of Associated Press, one from the Sydney Herald, and another Yank. This morning also I met

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a public-relations fellow who is a combatant officer but wanders round with a batman and a Bedford 15 cwt, which carries an enormous load of kit, and goes where and when he likes, writing up background stories. He and the film unit with us were (so they said) the first troops into Barce yesterday and themselves rounded up fifteen odd Italians left behind for some reason. The first fellow in was a jeep with this fellow Colin Morris riding on the bonnet and a troop of delighted Italianized Wogs attending their triumphal entry.

I got up after sleeping on a bed and in pyjamas about seven and walked round the area. The houses are large, solid, and with flat-roofs accessible for sunning, when there is sun. They are all plastered with this brownish-red soil, darker and more brown than red Devon earth, but with the same texture. The plain, in the early light, was striped with dark olive green and red bands. Beyond were the purple and black hills we came down yesterday. There were camels and some cows grazing in the distance. Natives, some sleek and shining, some old and wizened, wrapped in a blanket, or perched on donkeys, came splashing down the street. They sell eggs, bartering for "change" or "*subhar*". Money is not much use now. There is a green vegetable garden opposite with fruit-trees and cacti surrounded by a high red stone wall. There is rank desolation and rot everywhere. The dead cacti look evil and decayed in the rain. Boots, pieces of metal, ammo boxes and paper are littered around. In a farm-yard a little down the street is a colossal store of spare MT parts, at least twenty 3-ton lorry loads. Alas they are all for F.I.A.T and other Italian makes and my Chev still rattles villainously for

lack of a new impeller. These new parts look beautiful in their rows on the shelves, perfect for a job and finely made. All regular officers seem to have a great knowledge and instinctive grasp

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of these mechanical parts which will be an absolute essential for the military man of the future and is very necessary now.

Colin Morris, this feature writer, was saying that officers enjoy so much greater comfort than men. But all these writers have no real idea of Army life such as living on a truck with a section of riflemen, sleeping and eating with them and sharing all things. He said the chaps suffered by waiting around either in a column, or for orders, or for billets, ignorant of the situation, while the officer always had something to do, and could occupy himself. It's true up to a point but human beings are physiologically limited to speech to communicate, and no mechanic has arranged a permanent listening-in radio for every truck, so delays are inevitable in the development of events and the transmission of news. Officers are, however, no less out of the picture than the men, and as soon as they glean any news it is religiously passed on. Riflemen clamour for information and get all there is. That is because it concerns them. Exercise situations do not matter and will never get people to be interested in them.

Kipling got some flour somewhere today and is baking pastry on our range. I've got a sore throat and will keep my scarf on.

Nov 23rd 42. El Magrun 2.0 pm.

Some days since the comfort of our kitchen range and hot whisky at BARCE. They sang in anticipation from the trucks waiting for their places in the order of march outside the town, by the car dump, in eagerness for BENGHAZI. To the tune of "In Mobile" it went and it was typically riflemanlike.

There ain't nothing there to scoff,
In Tobruk
There ain't nothing good to scoff,
In Tobruk
So they toss each other off
And they stir it up with broth

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And they stir it up with broth,
In Tobruk.

So we drove out down the avenue and into heath and gravel country, brushed by the wind. The dark-red earth in the plain was being worked by camel-pulled ploughs, and natives clustered at the entrances of the villages, holding out eggs to each truck with shrill screams to all and sundry of "Mister George Captain," and the like.

The escarpment road was like the tunnels and channels we used to make in sandhills at Dawlish Warren on August Holiday mornings. We used to roll a tennis ball down and it would go round and round, circuiting and twisting before skipping out at the bottom. So the Brigade column could be seen from the top of the Tocra escarpment, some trucks going one way, some the other, disappearing and coming out again on the flat sand by the Mediterranean surf, looking like clockwork toys to those at the top. The Sappers had made a splendid job of repair on the blown portion. There was still a tricky sharp-dipping switchback but all the vehicles got down. At the bottom the coast road was deadly dull, flanked by decay and waste lands (though they looked all right for duck) until the outskirts of Benghazi. There was a cloud of smoke coming from the town which turned out to be a rubber store burning but otherwise everything seemed at peace.

Arabs slipped past in the gutter, on bicycles or on motor tricycles, loaded down always with a bunch of them in bright colours. Old blanketed men gave us "Saida" with flattened palm, downturned and raised to the eyebrows, or else signalled lewdly with "thumbs up".

There were palm-trees and slimy-looking mud flats outside the town, and scattered native villages and a series of salt pans or lakes. The sun was shining.

As we drove in the truth became more clear. Not

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one of the square white plastered buildings was whole. Walls were down, roofs had caved in; decay and rot and stink were present in every sense. The RAF had taken out the core of the city and trampled on the shell. We swung past the public gardens and on to the quay side.

The harbour was jammed with rotting flotsam and sunk halves of cargo ships. It seemed choked with gutted shipping but later I gathered the Navy were not hopelessly displeased.

Paint, rubbish and plaster littered all the buildings. We found bad billets. Company HQ is in a marble-floored café. I slept beside the dust-covered bar. I can picture this town as a splendid gay place when the people were here. It is all rather like a chocolate-box decoration, iced Fortnum + Mason cake rather than good solid liveable building. But in the sunshine it must have been pleasant. There was a corpse floating in the harbour. I wonder how he got there. There was no loot. The natives were cleared out of the houses and we picketed the streets. Two chaps we heard were shot and clubbed by unknown attackers on entering a building.

Mail came - my first in the Battalion. Biting, amazing prickle of the Navy's bubble by Laurence Stone. This an airgraph which had gone to England and come back by sea. Self-confessedly it was not a true picture. I was thrilled by the letters and gloated over them without opening them for a while. Then I climbed the barbed wire, past the Italian battery's monument and sat on the wood by the surf's edge and read them in a series of tit-bits. They were distracting in reminding me of home and intimate thoughts and doings, so inaccessible, maddening in allusion to things that demanded attention and an answer that would, in turn, be itself out of date, needing refutation. But they must not be allowed to be a distraction. Horizon came too, sent by someone. An entertainingly exact caricature of Army life by one Ross in it and Augustus John's boisterous biography.

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These natives are robbers over eggs. They want quantities of "change" and "sukbar" or two piastres per egg. There is a haggling match[194] going on now by the vehicle. This is written down at El Modrun.

Bengasi looked lovely, pearl grey and blue, in the early morning and at sunset too. There was a glorious crimson flecked sky at 7.0 this morning, like a Persian carpet of fine texture.

The market yesterday was fun. I enjoyed haggling with them for tomatoes and eggs for the Company. The stink was appalling but the bazaar was fascinating in spite of it.

This morning on the Tripoli road to El Modrun, a village on a hill 50 miles from Bengasi and half way to Agedabia. We wait uncertainly and shiver in the wind by the trucks.

28 November 42. Somewhere south of Marsa Brega.

On column waiting, waiting in the winter's warming sun. My gunners are working the Vickers' locks back and forward, spreading blankets on the sand to dry out the rain that soaked them all night and early morning. Discussion turns on where we shall be at Christmas. "Only two days left of November and we'll be eating fucking bully and biscuits this year on Christmas Day, just as we were all last year and so we shall next fucking Christmas and all." Deane says we started this swan on Friday and it was unlucky and so it was. His dad would never start at job, no matter what it was, any road on a Friday. We were sitting in the jeep, out in front of the MG three-tonners and there was a crump and roar and another and another behind us. We kept going. I accelerated a little. Then we stopped and Deane got out and lay sprawled on the ground. I sat helplessly and then got out and stood

[194] an anomalous second 'is' deleted here.

watching. The chaps behind were blazing away into the sky with the Brownings, scrounged as loot from derelict Honeys down at Himeimat. Five planes, Stukas, were wheeling away to the left, rather too high for small arms shooting. "He's as tight as a pigskin on a drum." Bird has just said, referring to Deane as he

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leans over the jeep's bonnet, meaning he's mean over birthdays and suchlike. Deane's wife's birthday is coming.

So they killed Henry Watson and two of his chaps yesterday. The trucks were blazing shapelessness, red-fire below fading into a column of smoke that climbed the sky. The Stukas flew off and the pouff-pouff of Bofors chased after them, until they were out of range. And we went on across the sand to the main road and from the south towards Marsa Brega. Henry lay under his greatcoat, by his section truck, killed while he rested in the bivvy they had there to shield them from the sand storms.

The day before at a halt on the march up from Margum I had talked with him about going up to the University after the war. He, at 21 still longed (I almost wrote 'longs') to go up to Cambridge, to Pembroke. Of course the argument of stupid people that soldiers will miss the freedom and will be galled by petty discipline like being in by such and such a time at night is all absurdity. Freedom for thinking and freedom from the day to day responsibility is what we want. Being in at night won't matter.

Strange mutterings and rumblings to the West. Can't think who can be down there. 22nd Armd Bde were having a strafe at Marsa Brega this morning. So I was told by the Column Adjt when I went there with Deane + the jeep to sleep as *L-O*. They gave me tinned peaches and gin. But this row now is too far south for that. Still we shall see. The Royals over the gin last night reminisced of kirsch on strawberries.

29 November 42

Just after we moved off from the halt where I wrote yesterday's nonsense there was a bang behind us. When I looked round I could see smoke rising in a grey-blue funnel, lazily swishing in the slight breeze. We went on as usual through the soft sandy tummocks, engaging low four-wheel drive every five minutes and revving through the yellow-grey softness of it. Later we heard that Mac

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(the Rhodesian pl. commander) had a portec blown up, on a mine or as some rumoured on an unexploded bomb. A chap had two or three of his toes blown off. Couldn’t help laughing at that, bloody mess and painful though it probably was.

We sat down in a weak strong point in the evening and I am now watching once more the red glow topped with a mushroom shaped smokiness in the sky that show that the Messerschmitts have been over in the last half hour. They got it by strafing but they dropped a load of bombs too, which did, as far as I could see, no damage. I lay by a tussock and the bullets came zipping into the sand fairly close beside me. Now the planes are chasing the Armoured Cars a mile away. I think they'll be back. They said on the Radio that the Luftwaffe were extinct in N. Africa, but we are, after all, a long way out in the blue.

I was thinking about Henry Watson and Oliver Newton and the rfn killed the other day. Oliver Newton had just come back to the Bn by plane from Rhodesia. He drove up to me as we sat waiting and said 'My name's Newton, I've brought a present for Tony Barne, who is commanding your column, from his wife in Salisbury - will you give it him?' Then he went back to the Bn HQ half a mile away and five minutes later he was dead. For Henry I felt no enormous sorrow except the natural regret for promise unfulfilled. But it seems as if he will have found contentment, whether as nothingless but a body decaying under the powdery sand or a soul in some other dimension. Sounds

crude but we have no time to mourn to no purpose. But for his family I do reserve enormous loads of sympathy. It must be hell for them to be told, so far away.

Read Bridge's Spirit of Man collection in the jeep yesterday. Poetry is a distraction but it cheered me to read. We had hot burgoo of Army biscuit, soaked overnight, with jam, and bully rissoles this morning. A splendid breakfast to a

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newcomer. My desert boots are coming adrift at the toe-cap, where it joins the upper the stitching is coming undone. Bird is going to have a crack at mending it for me.

3 December 42

We have been on a party, got a mildly bloody *prop* on the nose and are now back again among our sandy tussocks, reclining after lunch. We've been gone three days and have effected little. We got as far as the foot of "Pink Hills", being strafed and bombed regularly three times a day, and regularly we lost a vehicle or two. Once we lay sprawled on the deck with mouths gnawing the sand and fingers outstretched while explosive bullets zipped and played around us. Once I lay on my back and watched the blue above from where four dark specks seemed to be falling dead on us. "Over, under, Under, over," Major Barclay, one-eyed, black-patched, Major of Norfolk Yeo told me he said to himself. The four explosions and sand fountains encircled us but we were undamaged.

4 December 42.

The carriers can't move the 60 miles back to *Haseist* tomorrow nor can the R.H.A, so we've got another whole day to sit in the sun. Two rfn lie up on the ridge by one of the guns with glasses and the rest of us lounge around the trucks back in dead ground. Suet pudding has been punched into shape in my tin wash basin and is now steaming on the fire in a steaming kettle made of a four gallon petrol tin and in the steam of six men's washing water. We evacuated one chap up under Pink Hills with jaundice so we are one under strength for eating and ought to be "laughing for *conner*" as the rfn say.

I've been reading "A Thousand Shall Fall" by Hans Habe which Sgt Tyson lent me. Appalling revelations of the French Army's outlook, training and equipment in '39 and '40. "Sauve qui peut" was their watchword and it was continually dinned into their minds that "the enemy is stronger". Whoever heard of a good French N.CO? Possibly there are some in the Foreign Legion but probably they are not French.

Tyson is an astonishingly able man. Lean and

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leathery with that old-soldier's face, brought into a premature state of wrinkles from permanent washing and shaving in cold water, he has done nine years in all with the Bn and was before that in the Navy where he went to the States to Juan Fernandez. He has held every rank in the British Army, having been W.O. I in France at G.H.Q and at the War Office. He established food depôts in Irak and the Sinai desert after a compulsory and unwilling transfer into the *RASC*. There are suggestions of a violent disagreement over this 'and a court-martial'! He finally succeeded in getting back to the Bn. Well educated, a games-player and cynical in personal matters he is a perfect man to cooperate with, being punctual and obedient in the proper sense without obsequiousness. He tells a story of the French Army's folly. He was going along a road in France with a section of 8 men, marching in single file and spaced out. A few hundred yards behind was a similar party of Frenchmen. A German plane dived down over the road straffing them, and the Englishmen, naturally and correctly, dived into the ditch. When they got up they looked back and saw that of the Frenchmen three were dead in the middle of the road, three were wounded and three were standing, still in the middle of the road, shaking their fists at the vanishing planes.

The chaps have no cigarettes at all. Some bloody depôt fellow must have forgotten to put them on the ration unless they were straffed to hell with the échelon that came up three days ago and met grief on the way. This may be true but I doubt it is as more likely to be an excuse story to allay

our discontent. We are not too well off for water either. Heard the news in leagues last night. It's encouraging to know that four supply ships were sunk on the way to Tunisia. The A.O.C sent ... message to the column commander regretting we...[195]

(22)

by our Stuka friends in the last few days. Shows we were suffering for a good reason anyway. Barclay has a theory that Rommel might crack back at Bengasi if he found he could not evacuate from Tripoli. We shall probably forestall him now that 51 Div are up by Marsa Brega. 8th Armd Brigade are just behind and 1st Armd Div is reported at Msas. Are we going to be used for going through the gap again? They'll have to give us some vehicles first.

-oOo-

[195] the bottom of page 21 is torn here.

Additional material

appendices: p. xx

Appendix C: Eric Siepmann
- telegram Christmas 1942, and letter with alternative point of view from 7/4/43

[POST OFFICE TELEGRAM: Frank illegible + "26 DEC 1942 SURREY"]

227. C CW DCX* 5415 OVERSEA 22 .19 .
NLT WATERFIELD UNDERDOWN GULDFORD SURRY ENLGAND =

JOHN WELL AND FLOURISHING FORWARDED LETTERS BY BAG LOVE
AND HAPPY XMAS TO ALL ERIC SIEPMANN ÷

÷ C.T SIEPMANN ÷ ÷ .2

The following letter, which was kept with the main sequence in the archive, provides an alternative view of JPW, though one largely corroborating the self-portrait given in his own letters. Curiously, however, JPW omits to mention this meeting – unless possibly in the missing no.42 - , although the thinking about career options in the army (see especially letter of 17.03.43) corresponds to the discussion reported here.

Major E.O. Siepmann. R.M.
c/o D.C.C.A.O.
Tripoli. 7/4/43

My dear Doris _

On March 12, Edith's birthday, my driver brought round a 15 cwt.-truck, instead of my baby Fiat, because the roads beyond Castel Benito might be rough, and we started out at 2 p.m. with the knowledge that a certain battalion of a certain regiment was due to drive in on a certain stretch of road at that exact hour, ϒ to spend the night there - one night only - on their way up to the battle which we knew to be coming in a few days. We drove straight to it, four miles beyond the aerodrome, made one inquiry only, and turned into a wheatfield where the unit was manifestly settling in. I found John, sitting with another subaltern, in shirtsleeves on a mound of care taking instructions from a captain who was second in command of the company. I introduced myself, and waited until they had finished. John looked brown and dirty, and was as usual matter-of-fact and showed little surprise but - I am glad to say - some gratification. In fact, there was even a grudging flattery in his utterance: "Well, you get around!" This was his only spoken comment on my appearance in battledress as a Major, whereas last time we met I was a civilian and he gave me instructions how to act as a post-box far behind in Egypt. Now, here I had been ahead of him in Tripoli by about 3 weeks. I was acutely aware that I had flown over the secured Desert in eight flying hours, a journey which had cost him three or four or five months and his first experience of fighting. So I was grateful that any other comments he had to make were unspoken, and I must say that he is always indulgent towards his eccentric old uncle.

Vice versa, we were both amused - an hour or two later - to read Charles' letter saying "he wondered I preferred my job to active service"!

2.

We were sitting in my small bedroom in the Italian hotel, looking out on the harbour with the wrecked hospital ship outside my window, through the only two remaining panes of glass. I heard last night a programme on the BBC referring to our raids, which have not really been so bad although there was one snorter just outside the hotel (which is in the harbour) which set several ships on fire a few days ago. But the harbour barrage is the most shattering I

have heard, including London and Tobruk (the latter was a beauty, especially to look at) and on the lines of logic I was led to wonder at Charles' preferring Washington to Tripoli, although possibly it is quieter.

To go back - in a wheatfield they were, their vehicles standing among the green, broken wheat, their boots trampling pathways between the waist-high growth. The Italian farmer who protested, pointing out it was their food, was sent packing. The country was near to starvation. I developed doubts about the second-in-command, who - in the absence of a colonel - had organised the bivouac.

However he (the culprit) was remarkably friendly, and allowed John to get away for the night, and to use his own jeep at that. I sent my truck ahead, and John drove me with the full verve of a motorised-brigade-rifleman along the Italian road, between the light-green flowering trees, like mimosa, the orange-groves, and graceful stone walls of the Italian colonisation scheme, until we saw the sea and the barrage balloons. We both felt like a Cornwall holiday, and said so. John told me, between driving, that he had continuously and intensely

3.

enjoyed himself since I saw him last, that is since he had gone up to Alamein just in time to go forward; and that carried complete conviction. He is a man of action, in the finest unit alive (he thinks), and is a soldier even down to the careerism. He has been wondering 'whether to become I.O.'; and considering 'becoming a regular soldier', as his academic career is stilled by events! He was, in every way, in superb form.

Just to anticipate ϒ give news: four weeks have passed, ϒ I posted his letters to you (of that date) immediately. And now I can say that I am in a position to follow the unit's movements, and that all is well. They knocked up against a little resistance ϒ stopped, then presumably went forward with the rest as you heard on BBC yesterday (April 6) and are now - I surmise - "chasing" through the gap which has been formed and the next thing we ought to get is a postcard from Sfax. [N.b. CENSOR: - all this has been in BBC news.] I myself had to fly to Cairo again and back, and start an office, and I am a bad correspondent. But I had a nice letter from Mary yesterday, asking for news, so here it is, with real apologies for my badness. I shall try and pick up some positive news from someone who comes back ϒ send you a wire via Cairo, probably before you get this.

I sent him to my pub to have a bath, the first he'd had since leaving Cairo (!!) while I went to a meeting. Then I introduced him to some horrifying specimens of the men-behind-the-line (who happen to do important work exceedingly well in Malta) who made his jaw drop open by their horrifyingness, and we drank sour red wine and dined and

4.

tried to write you a joint letter ϒ failed, because he was giving me the full account of the battles over ground some of which I knew slightly, and he went to bed because he had to get up at 5 to rejoin his unit. And he is a good boy, and will be alright, ϒ ought to be a captain soon.

Please - although we all pretend to hate the system - send this letter to Harry for circulation after your family have done with it, as I find it so hard to write, and I should like Father (to whom I wrote, when I came here) and Edith and Harry and - especially - Charlie to get this news.

I love Tripoli, which is like Sonary, in the south of France, and run my own show, and live on rations, and feel well, and save money, and wear a crown which is ridiculous. Please address: c/o Minister of State, Cairo and send 'By Bag c/o F.O., London": for the quickest way. I'd be glad of letters, and books if possible? I've nothing to send John, but I gave him some reading-matter.

Lots of love to all,

from

Eric



33 - JPW, Siepmann; Tripoli 1943

-oOo-

Return to Thalenstein:

North Italy and Schloss Thalenstein, Carinthia 1945

Remembered in June 1999

JPW

North Italy and Schloss Thalenstein, Carinthia 1945

Remembered in June 1999

"On the night 26/27 April 1945", according to Major General Giles Mills's brilliantly written 'Annals' (of the Kings Royal Rifle Corps) Vol VII, "surprisingly Captain Waterfield's A 2 Echelon crossed the Po first, and it was not until the early hours of 28 April that the 1st Battalion crawled over that great river..." After recovering in hospital from jaundice, for the second time, I was commanding H.Q. Company, having handing over my previous post as Adjutant (since June 1943) to Giles Mills, later the author of the Annals. I was 23 years and 6 months old.

Coincidentally, on that same night 26/27 April 1945, as I learned in 1990 when visiting his son and family at Schloss Thalenstein in Carinthia, Austria, the then Graf Von Helldorf, serving with his regiment in North Italy, has been killed by Italian Partisans. He had been urged by his fellow officers to seek petrol from the Italian locals, as he was known to speak Italian, and never came back to Schloss Thalenstein, his family's seat for the past five hundred years. The family, said the son and present Graf in 1990, had come from East Germany when a daughter married the then heir to the estates. I presume they then built the present Schloss. The young Graf said that his father's body was never found. He was an infantryman (not a regular) and had soldiered in France, Russia and finally Italy. I told his son that his mother, on my arrival at the Schloss in May 1945, when I asked, had simply replied that her husband was "at the War". The son said it was years after the War before the family could establish how he died.

This story does not, of course, seek to emulate or gloss Giles Mills's detailed 'Annals', which covers the campaign from the 1st Battalion's point of view, with detailed accounts of all the rifle companies. I am here merely recording my own personal recollections, blinkered as the scenes were to me then, with narrow personal vision, and even more limited as they are now by the accidents of memory after fifty-four years.

When we crossed the Po on a floating Bailey Bridge, I travelled in a jeep, with my driver-servant, Rifleman Harry Deane and our bed-rolls loaded behind. I do not remember having a wireless set but my A 2 Echelon of supply trucks, who followed me, must have had a wireless located somewhere, linked to Battalion HQ and also possibly to Brigade. But I am curiously vague about this and do not remember any wireless conversations at the time, whereas my memories as Adjutant earlier, constantly on the radio to the companies forward and Brigade HQ to the rear are clear and vivid, and especially of Cpl Haddon, Battalion HQ signaller, who maintained the link, and Rfn O'Connor, who drove the Command White armoured scout car (American built) both with devotion and expertise, long serving veterans by then from the Desert and Tunisian campaigns.

In the flats across the Po I remember fields of ripe white asparagus, which I cut for myself to be boiled for supper (none of the modern *al dente* method). The Riflemen thought it was too exotic as, unsurprisingly, they had also felt about the snails I had found and daringly ate two years before in Tunisia, when I commanded a platoon in B Company under Major John Hope. The latter in 1945 was now commanding the Battalion, admired, respected and loved by all. He was the only non-regular officer to have command of a regular Battalion of the 60th in the War, and had started as a Second Lieutenant in 1940 in the early days in the Egyptian desert, and had done every job in the Battalion.

At this stage too was our first encounter with jubilant Italian villagers and peasants who, I distinctly recollect, surrounded us as we drove, cheering and waving flags, but not kissing us, or at least not me. On our long flog up the spine of Italy and the Ravenna plains, I do not

remember seeing civilians except in our very occasional billets in farm houses, and those we saw were cowed and unenthusiastic. After the Po I remember sunshine, flowers and especially the young girls! A great contrast to earlier winter frosts, mud, rains, snow and grey skies. At this later stage we now had a charming Italian liaison officer at Battalion HQ.

The next stages are confused in my mind. The Battalion was in a series of sharp actions. Italian Partisans (one lot, red sashed, were Communists, the other, green sashed anti-Communist, but equally anti-German), were a new and sometimes uncertain element to reckon with. I remember taking a rather reluctant R S M Nicholls, who travelled with my Echelon, forward on one occasion in my jeep to observe the scene of action from a "bund", or steep bank on a river. We found ourselves under hot fire and had to take cover, and beat a retreat. I think it was silly bravado on my part, though in a way I wanted to make myself feel again what it was like. Odd, looking back at it, but true.

Then came a tricky series of events which culminated in the dark in Battalion orders, which I attended, though of course the least important of those present. I can clearly visualise John Hope, on the last occasion I saw him alive, giving out his orders to Company Commanders in his usual calm, quiet but totally inspiring way. I had no idea what had happened to my Echelon 3 tonners, with rations, fuel and so on, and with our long serving regular Quartermaster, Lieutenant (then) Ben Ryan, (later Captain MBE) supposedly in charge. For all I knew they had all wandered into the hands of the enemy who were very much all around us. So at the end I ventured to say, though I knew well enough what I had to do, unattractive prospect as it seemed to be, "Colonel, I suppose I had better go off and find my vehicles." "Yes, please, John", said the Colonel, his last words to me. So I drove off into the dark (I can't remember if Rfn Deane was with me) down unpaved roads and tracks, and by a miracle, and not good judgement, I found my people and brought them back. They were well forward and completely lost. We felt we were surrounded by the enemy, though I do not think that we directly encountered any face to face, and the Germans were probably more concerned with their own dispositions and withdrawal than with engaging us. But there were strange noises in the dark and it seemed frightening. I have a hazy memory of driving through or past German vehicles, but it is only hazy.

23rd April, St George's Day, was a sad day for us all. At the west end of Casumaro, John Hope was shot through the back by a German sniper whilst conferring, as usual, with Lt Col Denys Simply, commanding 16/5th Lancers, in the latter's turretless Honey (tank) which they shared. Riflemen of his old B Company found the sniper, trying to conceal himself as a civilian, and despatched him. John Hope was finally evacuated to C.C.S Argenta where I went with acting Lt Col Henry Howard, who had taken over command, and John Hope's driver and batman, in hope that he would survive. But we were told he had died in the night. In Giles Mills's moving tribute in the 'Annals', "Lt Col J.C. Hope represented, even to the most newly joined, the 1st Battalion itself... his warm sense of fun and Christian leadership were to be badly missed in the peace after the approaching victory... it was a saddened battalion who saw him buried on 25 April 1945 in the Argenta Military Cemetery, as Rfn Ganderton sounded the Last Post." I personally missed him hugely, and still do, and feel lucky I was in his B Company from the moment I joined the 1st Battalion at Himeimat in Egypt before the Battle of Alamein. He was a continuing influence and inspiration to me, far and away the most outstanding personality of my war-time experience.

When I took over my platoon in 1942 John Hope gave me no injunctions on tactics, man-management or other military matters. He assumed I was reasonably competent until proved otherwise! But in my first few weeks and later he gave me several pieces of idiosyncratic but wise personal advice. The first was that I should learn to play bridge! He got much pleasure in playing bridge, by an electric lamp from the torch battery under a tarpaulin in the rare intervals

of comparative tranquillity in the Desert. But I failed him and have never been able to count cards. Though we played intensively with Americans and the French Ambassador in Bamako, Mali, in 1964/65, I was notoriously flashy and unreliable, a sore provocation to Mme Pelen, the French Ambassador's wife. Instead in the Battalion we played highly competitive poker, for carefully controlled but for us pretty high stakes both in the Desert and when I was Adjutant in Boufarik outside Algiers. John Hope enjoyed this too, but my other commanding officers did not, and I do not remember much poker in Italy or Austria.

The next thing John Hope encouraged me to do was smoke a pipe. He somehow got me a Maltese briar from Cairo and gave it to me as a present. By then I was Adjutant and on my first effort in my Orderly Room office in a tent, my Orderly Room Sgt (later ORQMS) Sullivan came in and found me being violently sick. I do not remember that he showed any surprise.

Then John Hope said, out of the blue, "you must join a good London Club; I will put you up for the Travellers." Robert Birley, my Charterhouse Headmaster, seconded me. Although it took time for mail to go round the Cape, it worked, and after the War I found myself proudly a member of the Travellers for many years until I was tempted off to Boodles where I was even more happy for another twenty years. "Lt Col J C Hope DSO MC" was on the Honours Board on the Talleyrand stairs of the Travellers, so I saw it after every meal, and metaphorically lifted my hat.

Finally John Hope said, when I was appointed Adjutant by Lt Col Lyon Corbett Winder at Tmimi, Cyrenaica in 1943, after Tunis: "I think you must grow a moustache!" I tried, and it lasted a few months, but it was so wispy and insignificant that I felt that the riflemen laughed at it, and so I shaved it off, and have never tried again.

When he went on "Python" leave from Boufarik, after four years overseas, John Hope typically took a lot of time to visit families of riflemen and officers who had been killed, and he also took the trouble to have lunch with my father, who was by then installed in his office in Burlington Gardens W1 (now the "Museum of Man") as First Civil Service Commissioner. I never heard if they went to the Travellers or Athenaeum, my father's club. But my father, evidently proud to hear it, wrote that he had received a good report on me.

After John Hope's death we advanced, against fierce German opposition largely from the unpleasant 24 SS Division, up into the passes to Austria, and it was after what is now called a stand-off in a gorge, which may or may not have been in front of Gemona or possible Venzone, that my next, and very vivid, memories come into play. We learned that the gorge held, apart from the still vengeful and determined SS Germans, a mass of masterless men, refugees and deserters of all kinds and nationalities. We were anxious not to incur more unnecessary casualties but exchanges designed to get the Germans to surrender were proving abortive. Although the 'Annals' do not describe it precisely, there then occurred an exchange which I have always believed was my first introduction to 'international politics'. We were, as I have often described, extremely absorbed in our immediate operations and needs, and I was, looking back on it, especially naïve about the 'big picture' of international relations.

Hugh Hope, John Hope's younger brother and a regular officer, who had returned to action after escaping from captivity in Italy (he had been put 'in the bag' at Sidi Rezegh in 1941 when commanding a company of the Battalion) had been serving for some months in Italy as DAAQMG at our Brigade HQ, and became a close friend of mine, as he continued to be in later civilian life until his premature death. He came to find me early that morning in front of the gorge and suggested we should together go forward by jeep and watch at as close quarters as possible what he already knew was to be the arrival from AFHQ of an emissary from General Alexander who would seek to convince the Germans to surrender and leave the passes free for our continued rapid advance into Austria. Hugh Hope and I managed to get within earshot. I

cannot remember who the AFHQ emissary was but I remember that Brigadier Adrian Gore, our Brigadier, was in the party. There were a lot of red hat bands. The German representative I can see in my mind's eye; he was, I think, a Colonel, dressed in smart breeches and boots. He made a lot of play with the fact that General Lohr, Balkan Army Group Commander, under whose command he was, had personally to authorize surrender, notwithstanding our belief, from hearing the BBC news, that General von Vietinghoff C in C South Western Army Group, had already surrendered. What jolted my mind was the statement by the British representative that "you must surrender now; otherwise the Russians will get to Vienna before we do." This made me think deeply. It was the first intimation I had of what was to become the Iron Curtain, and my first perception of political factors influencing our military dispositions. I soon learned that the Soviets were not our true friends.

After the War Hugh Hope remained a close friend though we did not see as much of each other as I would have liked due to Hugh's and my absence abroad. He commanded the 2nd Battalion in Tripoli and then retired, becoming Personnel (I think) Director of Whitbreads. I remember that once when we met for lunch at Whitbread's premises in the City, Hugh astonished me by saying "you ought to have come to Whitbread's as Finance Director." This flattering appraisal of my potential status and capacity continues, in retrospect, to surprise me.

Earlier when I was about to go to Moscow in November 1947, Hugh told me that his mother, Lady Hope, wanted me to have her late husband's "gentleman's travelling fur coat" which Eddie Tomkins (late Ambassador in the Hague and Paris) had been given before me. Eddie and Hugh had met at Bir Hakeim in the Desert where Eddie had been (having volunteered for active service from the Foreign Office) Liaison Officer with the Free French. I gratefully took the coat, musquash lined with astrakhan collar, a really Edwardian article, hugely warm and comfortable, though very heavy, and wore it in Moscow, in London especially in one very cold winter commuting to the Foreign Office from Sunningdale, and occasionally in New York and Somerton. It sits in a cupboard at Somerton but has not come out for years.[196] When I look at it, it always brings back warm memories! I have never seen anyone else in England wearing any similar distinctive and useful but now out-dated garment!

So we proceeded through the passes into Austria, dealing with SS and blows in the road. We heard on 7 May that VE Day was being celebrated in London, but it was clear to us, feeling that the 8th Army and our part in it were forgotten, that we had a lot to do still and that, in Giles Mills' prescient words, "only tireless and intelligent work in the absence of any political briefing would prevent the seeds of another war being sown in that area." It was on VE day that I, driving my jeep, met Tony Round, who commanded a carrier platoon in a rifle company, also in a jeep. We exchanged comical pleasantries to the effect that VE day meant little or nothing to us, and we would continue to soldier on, forgotten by all!

On 9 May the Battalion drove via Villach to Klagenfurt. I recall that, again in Giles Mills' words, "we found the town a milling mass of still-armed SS and all the races of central Europe displaced under German rule." Tito's troops too were much in evidence. My personal recollections of where I slept and what I did in the short time I was in Klagenfurt are vague. Perhaps I did not remain overnight. It was not time for rest and the whole Battalion was intensively engaged in disarming Germans, separating Germans from Yugoslavs, and, very soon, dealing with the horrific problems caused by the arrival on horseback from Yugoslavia of the XVth Cossack Cavalry Corps under their German commander General von Pannwitz (who, after staying with his men on their handover, was hanged by the Russians in captivity in 1947).

[196] I wore it a few times walking to work in Oxford, when rare snow made it cold enough and prevented bicycling - JTW.

Battalion HQ and others were on 10 May sent East to Völkermarkt, a small town, with a square, not far from the Yugoslav border. I do not remember being told what to do with my Company HQ and Echelon of supply vehicles (Riflemen were traditionally taught to use their initiative!) but I do remember leaving Battalion HQ and driving off further East towards the frontier with Yugoslavia - somewhat imprudently in retrospect as we were right among Tito's marauding Partisans - to the village of Haimbourg where, as it got dark, I installed my riflemen in good covered billets, and vehicles, told them to mount guard, and then went back about half a mile to what Maurice Turner, Technical Adjutant, had shrewdly selected as a suitable officers' billet and mess.

In the dark I could discern only that we were in a substantial Schloss, surrounded by farm buildings. Maurice Turner had installed us in the basement and all I remember is that we went rapidly to sleep on our camp beds (wooden in those days). I suppose our servants gave us something to eat first. We heard and saw no movement about us. I do not think we mounted any guard; after all the War was over! I am now rather ashamed to realize that at the time I had no perception that the country around us was so infested by Tito's Communist Partisans, well armed, and intent on annexing Carinthia with Yugoslavia, and unscrupulous about expropriating and even murdering any landowning relics who might obstruct their aims.

As it happened there was indeed such a relic holding out, alone as it proved, in Schloss Thalenstein above us that night. The next morning I was up and outside early, before any breakfast. I came to an orchard and suddenly met what appeared to be a handsome, elegant woman in black riding clothes, with a big black plumed hat, on foot and leading a tall bay horse, well over 16 hands. I could not be sure of her handsomeness because she had a black patch over one eye. In my hesitant German I saluted her. We exchanged few words. If she was surprised to see a young British officer, she did not show it. Perhaps she had already observed our vehicles. I remember that I said we were installed in her house and, not expecting any negative reply, I hoped she did not mind. I think I also asked then where her husband was and she replied briefly, as I wrote above, that he was "at the war". Curiously *insouciant* as I was, in retrospect, I did not comment on the apparent absence of any children, servants or farm workers, and the Gräfin Von Heldorf, as she proved to be, volunteered nothing. I think I asked her, before she passed on with the big horse, what happened to her eye. She said she had ridden into an apple bough!

I did not see her again for several days. We took it she was upstairs and we did not penetrate her quarters, or, indeed, search the Schloss. By this time we were really feeling the war was over and we were, hurrah, safe. In fact we were pretty idle, and not entirely safe. Until I went into Battalion HQ in Volkermarkt I did not realize what a stressful time they and the Rifle Companies were having in containing the Partisans in the surrounding area and keeping their vengeful gangs apart from their anti-Tito countrymen and, later, from the German officered Cossack cavalry who were trying to cross into Carinthia to surrender to the British Army. At Battalion HQ the acting Colonel, Henry Howard, Giles Mills, Adjutant, John Christian, acting Second in Command, and the rest showed not the slightest interest in me, except that I suppose they noted where I was located, and probably made some ribald remarks about my accommodation in Schloss Thalenstein being above my station. They were all intensely engaged in operational matters, their HQ building in the main square being faced by a Partisan Communist, and menacing, force HQ, in another building.

So I suppose I returned to Haimbourg from where we got on with the Echelon's routine business of supplying the Battalion's rations and petrol. These matters were all efficiently handled by the R.Q.M.S. Knieff; I think that Ben Ryan, our long-serving Lieutenant and Quartermaster, had by then gone home on 'Python' leave, after over four years continual service overseas. No-one from Battalion HQ, or any higher formation, came to look at me or my Schloss, which pleased us. But, as shown by later events, the existence of the Schloss, as a prime

site for higher formation HQs, was being noted on the map by the staffs. Meanwhile in the next few days there ensued three events which stand out in my mind to this day, fifty-five years on.

I walked out onto the Haimbourg-Volkermarkt road, I think probably on our second morning at Thalenstein, to see the most incredible sight. In a seemingly unending line of march an army of men, in files of two, came riding by towards Volkermarkt. The men, all armed with rifles, rode wiry ponies. Their bridles and accoutrements jingled. The men wore great coats and Russian style round fur hats. Among them were officers in peaked caps and German style uniform (they were Germans), better mounted. And at intervals were small covered wagons, each pulled by two ponies, from which peered women and, occasionally, children. In some cases the women, whom I remember, perhaps fancifully, as blonde and handsome, sat or lolled on bags in uncovered wagons. I felt I was in a dream watching a column revived from the European wars in Napoleon's reign. At the time I had no idea who they were. The column marched by for most of the day, and I just stood and gaped. In fact, as I learned later, this was indeed the XVth Cossack Corps under the German Major General Von Pannwitz. They had a harsh record fighting and tyrannizing the Balkans on the side of the Nazis. Now they were eager to surrender to the British, to escape the vengeance of Tito and the Soviet Army.

I do not intend this narrative to record in detail our Battalion's reluctant part in handing the Cossacks over, under orders, to the Russian Army, or to try to give a fresh perspective onto Lord Aldington's successful libel action against Nikolai Tolstoy for the latter's abominable accusations. I was asked to see Tolstoy long after the War, and we exchanged invitations to dinner with him and his nice wife while they were living in Somerset. But I soon found that Tolstoy was so obsessive, fanatical and quite absurd in his accusations against 5 Corps and British politicians (notably Brigadier Toby Low, later Lord Aldington, and Mr Harold MacMillan) that I cut off all contact with him. Toby Law was a very distinguished 60th officer, who after service in the 9th Battalion in Greece was shortly with the 1st Battalion in Tunisia, where I first met him, but later became the very able BGS of 5 Corps. Needless to say I rejoiced at the success of his libel action. It is perhaps worth mentioning that I think Christopher Booker's 'A Looking Glass War' gives the most balanced and fair account of the whole story of the handing over of the Cossacks and anti-Tito Yugoslavs that I have read. At the time the 1st Battalion, which was solely engaged with the Cossacks, were very unhappy about their orders. Protests were made, but were over-ruled. Some ingenious interpretations of the orders by Henry Howard allowed a certain amount of alleviation of the impact on various categories of surrendered prisoners. But the rest went into captivity in the Soviet Union and we heard that most of the officers were quickly shot.

A few days after the amazing appearance of the Cossacks, Henry Howard, acting C.O., and Giles Mills, Adjutant, decided to come out to visit me without notice. Unfortunately, what should have been an agreeable occasion, in which I would have hoped to impress them with my Schloss, started very badly. As they approached Thalenstein they caught a Ukrainian SS officer who was evidently skulking away from the house. They were therefore highly displeased with what they took to be my idle failure to have searched the house. They also, I am convinced wrongly, took their captive to have been the Gräfin's boy friend. I think it was quite possible she did not know he was there, as the house was like a rabbit warren, and she was, as far as I knew, alone in her own private quarters at the top. Anyway Henry Howard said I must 'do something' about the Gräfin, though he did not specify what steps I should take, and they went off, pleased with their capture but grumbling at me. I had to 'do something' so I went up the Gräfin and found her in her room. I told her about the escaped officer, but owing to my limited German, was unable (and perhaps did not try) to express the full extent of Lt Col Howard's displeasure, or seek to cross-question her on the circumstances. However I made it plain that it was a bad show, and told her she must keep to her room, and not go out. She took this calmly and did not

argue. In fact it was not too harsh a punishment as she had been in her quarters since we arrived, being terrified of the Partisans. I have no idea what she had to eat. There was a Polish refugee groom so the horses were attended to, though at this stage I did not bother about them.

The next episode I remember vividly took place when I was holding my "Company Office" in the wooden-built primary school at Haimbourg. Company Sergeant Major McGarry, who had not long been with us (he came from the Royal Ulster Rifles) but was reasonably effective, marched in the defaulters, one by one, and I dispensed justice, or referred them to go before the Commanding Officer, if their offences were serious. Most of those on charge had committed minor peccadilloes with which I was empowered to deal. Suddenly, in the middle of this ritual, there was a loud noise of raised voices, and in burst a short, fat woman and a thinner man, both holding weapons in each hand, which they pointed at me, sitting at my table. I am afraid I reacted in a rather feeble manner, but nevertheless with what I felt was aplomb. I distinctly remember saying to C S M McGarry, "What's all this, Sergeant Major?" All this time there was a lot of shouting from the intruders, which I did not understand, and wild waving of weapons. My people seemed hopelessly confused, and no-one made any move to apprehend the threatening pair, nor did I suggest this. My next words were "Please find an interpreter, Sergeant Major". After an interval, in which the flow of words continued and I sat still, an interpreter was brought in. "She says she is the Party Secretary and they intend to hold free elections here," she translated. I cannot remember what I said in reply; I think I said that the British Army was in charge, and elections were not in prospect. Anyway, everyone calmed down, and the two went away and did not return. I do not remember being much shaken, despite their pointed weaponry, and I think, in proper rifleman-like style, we thought the whole thing was funny. They were of course Tito's Communists, but although we heard no more about elections, their bravado showed that in different circumstances, they and their like would soon have grabbed Carinthia for Tito. I do not remember that I even bothered to report this incident to Battalion HQ.

So time passed, for me comfortably, until we got reports that 46th Infantry Division was coming from Greece to reinforce our dispositions against the threat of Tito's forces. This Division was commanded by a New Zealander, General Weir. He had the reputation of being a fire eater, and what we heard of him we did not like at all. Battalion HQ warned me that he had his eye on Thalenstein, and they laughed at my protests. Giles Mills recalls a rhyme which Battalion HQ made up:-

> General Weir,
> 'e said, "look 'ere,
> I want Thalenstein for my Main and Rear",

ie Divisional Headquarters. Under impending threats, I had to go, sadly, and I think the whole Battalion moved back to Klagenfurt briefly, until we went north to Neumarkt, a small village on the Graz road, for the remainder of our time in Austria.

Before I left the Schloss, I called on the Gräfin in her room and told her I had to give way to General Weir who would not prove as nice as we were.[*] The Gräfin quickly said to me, "You must take the horses, and the groom. I can no longer feed them." I was excited by this offer and instructed Cpl Smythe, who had extensive experience with horses, to fit up a 3-tonner as a box for two horses, remove the horses from the Schloss (in case General Weir's staff put in a claim!) and take the Pole, a cheerful round tub of a young man, on our ration strength! We called the big bay 'Vienna', because we never got there, and the small, temperamental but fast mare 'Susan', after a girl I scarcely knew but had admired secretly at tennis parties before the War. In due course other horses were acquired by the Battalion but Vienna proved the best and I

[*] Honesty compels me to record that on my return in 1990, I did not hear in the family anything but agreeable stories of General Weir and his men!

rode him with some success, and Susan, without success, in several 8th Army race meetings at Klagenfurt and later Aiello, near Venice, when we went back to North Italy. The courses were constructed by German prisoners, under the highly professional supervision of our cavalry regiments in which were serving a number of former trainers and owners, and amateur National Hunt riders. There was a well subscribed Tote; senior officers served as Stewards, our own Major Geoffrey Shakerley MC, who had been top GR in one season before the War and ridden his own horse in the Grand National, acted as Starter. He also coached us in race riding. He became a close friend, then, and after the War. I am ashamed now to have to say that I was twice summoned by the Stewards, once for "excessive use of the whip" and, on another occasion, for having "caulkins" on my horse! I did not know what caulkins were but learned that they are small metal protuberances, to give a better grip, on the heels of a horse's shoes. My team of grooms (as well as Cpl Smythe, Rfn Holmes had been a jockey pre-War) had put them on, unknown to me, and pretended innocence when we were caught. I do not think the penalty was severe, but we had, of course, to take them off. It was all great fun, though highly competitive, and I am glad I had the experience. Vienna went on with the Battalion to Germany later and continued to win races, under a better rider than I was. I had long since gone back to the UK, in October 1945, left the Army and proceeded to Christ Church, Oxford, to take up my 1939 scholarship. Scholarships, as my father pointed out to me, gave me priority in getting out of the Army.

I jump now to February/ March 1990, forty-five years later. Three of us who had become close in the Northern Ireland Office in the seventies formed the habit of having lunch three or four times a year in London, each acting as host in turn. Occasionally we had guests and it was on such an occasion, after a very good lunch, with myself as host, in Boodles, that one such guest, our senior intelligence office in Vienna, and the scourge of all terrorists there, invited us all back to Vienna! This then grew into a more protracted visit than lunch, as, when asked what I would like to do, in Austria, I suddenly thought of a return visit to Thalenstein. And so this was brilliantly arranged. I think I can best describe what happened by quoting extracts from a letter I wrote to Giles Mills on 7 March, after our return home.

"After lunch at a Gasthaus in Volkermarkt, we drove on to Haimbourg and Thalenstein... We found the Schloss but could see no entrance. The front, with entrance from the road, now has a bund blocking it to keep out the traffic pollution, as we learned later. We continued round to the rear and found the track leading up to the outbuildings and the back (now main) entrance of the house. There was the apple orchard, bare before spring. The outbuildings were bigger and more numerous than I remembered. As we got out a beautiful lady in her late thirties, I judged, wearing Austrian style breeches and waistcoat, came up with a wide smile. I said who I was and asked if she was the Gräfin Von Helldorf. To the first statement she said "I know", which took me somewhat aback, and to my question, she answered "yes". I asked if it was her mother I had known in 1945. "No", she replied, "it was my husband's mother, and here he is." As she spoke a very tall aquiline-faced man of about 50 came on foot out of the forest, dressed also in breeches. More introductions. And then we were invited in. The rooms on the ground and first floor were very large and the walls were covered with old arms and armour. It was bitterly cold, with a fierce wind from the south west. We exchanged pleasantries in English as we climbed up stairs. The Graf said he had been six years old when we first came. His mother had sent all her children and servants north into the mountains for safety. His mother told him how profoundly grateful she had been for our presence in the house as protection against the Partisans. We inspected where we had our company mess and slept on what I think was more the mezzanine than ground floor or basement. Now Estate offices, and warm, from the wood-fired stove. There was much joking about us being installed in the servants' quarters. Carefully I said nothing about the Ukrainian SS officer who ran away, but I did admit to the horses. No very marked reaction. However, on mention of Cossacks an evident cloud descended. We felt that the present Graf had

been brought up by his mother to behave that the British broke their word and betrayed the Cossacks and Yugoslav prisoners. I am afraid this was true. But the cloud lifted and we did not talk of this subject again.

"Then to tea; sunny, comfortable rooms on the second floor with splendid views to the snow covered mountains on the border with Yugoslavia. These rooms were well warmed by the boiler in the basement, burning wood. "Supply's unlimited," said the Graf, "and we renew all the time." Tea and apfel strudel, very good. Three nice countrified children home from the local school, the eldest a pretty thirteen year-old girl. The parents had never been to England, but would like to arrange an exchange for the eldest girl, Ina.

"I asked the Graf about his mother. She had died, he said, in 1971. They shared us photos of her, distinguished in looks and bearing. He said that it was a long time after the end of the War before the family had established that his father had disappeared in N. Italy on 27 April, but no traces were ever found of his body.

"In the middle of tea it dawned on me that my British friends had taken very careful soundings locally to ask if my arrival was acceptable. It seemed it was. Everyone laughed when I realized that our very warm welcome was due to elaborate inquiries and preparation. That was why, when I introduced myself, the young Gräfin had said "I know".

"It appeared from these soundings that although very grand and long established, the Von Helldorfs are regarded locally as being rather insular and eccentric. The reason soon became apparent. The young Graf farms 500 hectares arable, but owns a huge amount of forest beside. Without prompting he launched into an impassioned tirade against the atmospheric pollution from the internal combustion engine - cars, buses and trucks. He said Kärnten was in a basin, and there was no wind (this seemed belied by the howling gale outside) and Haimbourg had nine asthmatic children, where none before. Supported by his wife he lectures throughout the week at schools in Kärnten on the evil effects of the internal combustion engine. He has put notices up on all the approach roads "Kranke Wald; Kranke Kinder". He said it had been an up-hill struggle when he started about five years ago; but now he was accepted.

"As we started to take our leave, the Gräfin, with a radiant smile, invited us to stay for a few days. It would have been nice, but impossible. The magic of returning, brief as it was, had to be enough.

"To celebrate our departure the Graf took us to a high battlement which looked down on a walled enclosure, where he keeps a stag, and several hinds, which come when he calls. He blew a huge hunting horn as we left. The dogs all squealed. The stag came up, pawing the ground.

"A rewarding adventure. The landscape brown, not green, as we remembered it. But snow on the mountains.

"My companions admired your account in the 'Annals', but said it carefully eschewed emotion! I said we had no time for emotions; only regimental gossip and coarse jokes occupied our minds."

The Graf's younger sister wrote to me later. She is the Doctor in Haimbourg. She thanked me for 'protecting' her mother.

JPW: Begun at Somerton Summer 1999; finished in the American Embassy Residence in Tunis 10 January 2000

-oOo-

appendices: p. xxxv

Index of letters

A formal index of places and names was attempted and abandoned due to dissatisfaction with the results.[197] Hopefully the following brief summary of each letter will provide instead a useful outline and method of locating particular items. Use of 'search' with the electronic version of this document is advocated for those trying to find particular names (for example).

Letters or parts thereof **in bold** below represent recommendations to those without the time to read the whole sequence.

All letters are addressed to JPW's mother except where noted. Dates are as per letters here.

Page:

1	8.11.41[sic]	***Arrival at Droitwich with Jimmy [Stow]; the hotel and cadets disappointing. The wrong OCTU;hopes of transfer.***
1	Saturday Feb 15. 41	*Training at Droitwich hard work; hopes of transfer; visits to Worcester, Cheltenham and the Wrigleys.*
4	22.2.41	*At Bulford; impressions of Salisbury Plain; the train from Waterloo; some necessary admin.*
5	15.3.41	*Difficulties with the bus back to camp; training continued; production of officers deplored; a visit to Salisbury to see a film and hopes to see Mary at Calne the next day.*
6	22.3.41	*A visit to the Stow's at Horris Hill after an awful Sunday service; last weekend's visit to Mary.*
7	30.3.41	*A weekend home anticipated; guard duty; listening to Matthew Passion; another film in Salisbury.*
8	8.4.41	*The leave weekend celebrated; law and gas training; rumours of transfer; a wish to paint Salisbury downs, though by association he will not like them again.*
9	20.4.41	***Staying with the Tylden's near Old Sarum with Mary; the Tylden's and their PGs described**; the cost of clothes; a subscription to the Draconian.*
11	26.4.41	*The school holidays not noticed in the Army; on guard again, and another visit to the Stow's at Horris Hill anticipated. Plans for a visit to Oxford and then to Devonshire. A concert anticipated.*
12	4.5.41	*TEWTS and schemes described; pay scales in the Army criticised; egalitarian and Christian culture considered. The Stows described (again).*
14	25.5.41	***The 'first letter from an officer & a supposed gentleman'; first-class travel and strange arrival at Chiseldon.***
15	9.6.41	*Accommodation at Chiseldon; **the visit to Oxford**; previous difficulties getting back to camp. The I/C engine taught badly but food in the mess excellent.*
16	Monday 16.6.41	*A plan to play cricket at Charterhouse; motor bike riding on difficult terrain. The I/C continues difficult. Visits to Jill at Cheltenham and Mary at Calne. Money affairs prohibit hire of a car.*
18	6.7.41	***Hard work but happiness at Oswaldkirk; teas at Rievaulx Abbey and on recce. In charge of a platoon. Driving White Scout cars. Friends and commanding officer described.***

[197] A glance at the text will show the quantity of proper nouns included. To be useful, the index would pretty much have to qualify each occurence of frequent ones at least with context; and then there's the variations of names - 'Michael' but not always Hoban, 'Hoban' without the 'Michael' - etc... Electronic searching doesn't always give the results hoped for, for the same reason.

19	July 14 . 41	*A parcel from home received; fire-fighting duties. Tennis. An accident with a tractor.*
20	July 20th 41	***An independent night exercise, staying at Lastingham. The squire and his wife described. Helping the village.***
22	27.7.41	*DMW's birthday imagined. Duty week. A visit to York. Painting things requested.*
23	August 3rd '41	*Summer holidays.* ***The newly appointed padre's Leicestershire ways; the village meet to discuss the sermon****. Cricket and ball games in general. A new officer is old and formerly a journalist; journalism considered. Painting things received; more items requested.*
25	August 9th. '41	*The platoon's view of the battalion.* ***Loss of a caterpillar track on exercise; and a demonstration for the whole battalion. Brian Howard's style.*** *How to post a bicycle (and other items).*
26	August 18th. 41	*Jill's pleasing account; Mary worrying. Items not sent. A Divisional exercise anticipated but fails to live up to expectation. A visit from Michael Hoban: an expensive dinner justified.*
28	August 22nd '41	***Brian Howard's command described; he helps JPW obtain leave. Exercises with 'cavalry', which means tanks. Cooking, dining and lectures. Income and expenditure reviewed.***
30	August 31st '41	*Michael Howard to come on leave next week. Duty company without senior officers. Excitement on motorbike as Divisional Umpire.*
31	Sept. 23rd 41	*Leave recalled with pleasure. A Divisional Party; cooking eggs after. The Howard's domestic situation described. A busy four-day divisional exercise.*
33	Sept. 23rd 41	*Ink and mess. Birthday presents suggested. Only three not on the Bumper Exercise; their characters. A trip to York, a sordid flat town. Remove to the 'Malt Shovel'.*
35	October 5th '41	***Feeling neglected on his birthday, despite being prayed for in church.*** *A pen-knife from Mary in Leicester.* ***Not playing football, with the excuse of failing to climb back into the Shovel.*** *Exercises - a test march and 'escaped prisoners' v 'Gestapo'.*
37	Tuesday	*Postcard of Oswaldkirk Hall to Exmouth. Letters received; presents reconsidered.*
38	October 18th. '41	*No presents from home on his birthday, except from Mary, but a chocolate cake from Mrs Gatty and a cheese from Bill Deedes' girl friend. Northern Command Exercise Percy -* ***arranging hot showers for 300.***
39	26.10.41	*Autumn approaches;* ***the beauty of the moorland****. Tim James sent off with a party, maybe to India. Departure of battalion delayed; how the troops take it. Their employment on the land. The Malt S. compared to 'up here' for convenience.*
41	November 2, 41	*Accommodation and company at thuggery course in York, which 'stinks'. Activities on the course; evening entertainments in town.*
42	November 9. '41	*Back at Oswaldkirk; discovery of posting on another course on the 3" mortar, to Salisbury Plain. Further reflections on York, County and business types, North and South.*
44	24. xi. 41	*Brief mention of a night exercise and new Colonel. David Hardie missing 'on the raid when we lost 37'.*
44	30. xi. 41	*Different views about Libya. He is not in bed with 'flu.* ***All chickens in neighbourhood have stopped laying due to bombs. An exciting night exercise; the wash-up disappointing until getting to the Golden Fleece.***
46	4. XII. 41	*The 3" mortar course, previously postponed, now cancelled, at cost. Turkey and honey arranged to be sent for Christmas. Items to be sent, and suggestions for presents. Bother with spots and styes.*

48	14.XII.41	*Christmas cards. Pearl Harbour. The beacon after dinner at Helmby. Comfort at the Hall and events to be held over Christmas. Weapons training. A form for buying clothes.*
51	21.XII.41	*Further thoughts on Christmas presents (and secret ɤ private memos about these). Crack and repartee at a football game. Who has been sent Christmas cards. Weapons training. Course opportunities missed due to leave.*
53	28.XII.41	***Glorious Christmas holiday jollities in Yorkshire, at some length.***
56	18.I.42	***Difficulties with the LNER train timetable; Hatchards and Leicester Galleries visited while waiting. Company on the train, some horrible and others friendly (and astonishingly pretty). The climax of Individual Training, including a lecture on Panic in the Community.***
58	2.1.42. [sic]	*Postcard from 15 ITC Gloucester after holiday at home. No news about departure yet.*
58	3.2.42	*Postcard from 'bleak, frozen camp'. Looks like several days stay at ITC - maddening procrastinations.*
59	February 4th.	*Postcards from ITC. Visit to Gloucester - lunch and film, cathedral shut. Possible departure the next day for Glasgow or Liverpool.*
60	5.2.42	*Further postcards. Good food but an icy hole. Still no news of departure but 24 hours notice will be given. Visit to Jilly. Glos. dull.*
60	6.2.42	*Postcard. Still waiting, awful. Sunday now definitely 'the' day. Visits to Gloucester ad Cheltenham, both with nothing to do.*
61	7.4.42	*Postcards; will be on high seas before delivered. Description of a 54 year old Scot. Suggestion for a code to circumvent censors, and numbering letters.*
61	8.2.42	*After flap, reversion to waiting. The weather improves. A visit to Jill and something of her life at Cheltenham; the benefits of seeing others' environment. Dining with the Scot and an appalling Lieut in the Engineers.*
62	9.2.42	*Postcard. Still waiting, the idlest existence. An awful film in Glos.*
63	Tuesday 10.2.42	*Idleness and apathy. The snow has gone.*
63	18.2.42	*Travel back to Glos after good long weekend at home. The W.O vague.*
64	19.2.42	*All movement orders for this draft cancelled, but still waiting. Cold worse. An exercise to occupy the men, though without vehicles or weapons. An invitation to tea.*
65	20.2.42	*Postcard. No news. Was invitation to include tour of cathedral!? Ping pong fun but organization worse than awful.*
65	22.2.42	*Idleness. Forces Radio. An expensive visit to Cheltenham; Citizen Kane. A horrible tea at the deanery on Friday.*
66	23.2.42	*News of departure on March 10 to India, an unwelcome destination. The W.O unreliable and coquettish.*
66	24.2.42	*Coming home soon. A difficult letter from Mary. To Cheltenham to see two films and dinner; fun though feeling ill. Some new shoes.*
67	7.3.42	***Description of travel back to Glos., including talk with five workmen. Barracks cold and stinking.*** *No official news but many rumours; hanging around philosophically.*
67	8.3.42	*Sitting at a different window to write****. Continued idling. Bath arrangements. Comments on newspaper reports.***
68	9.3.42	*PT before breakfast makes all feel ill. A rfn has diphtheria. Some strange specimens come into camp. Maybe off this week? Hopefully not to India.*
69	24.3.42	*A short note from Ampleforth: happy again.*
69	30.3.42	*The Army's erratic changes make a lot of work.* ***More detail of the travel north, with a hot gospel matron from Braemar, an actress and an elderly couple. A visit to Scarborough and Fylingdale Moor to***

		organize an exercise. Teaching, boating on the Rye, and a three-days skeleton exercise with a 500 c.c Norton. *Laundry lost in Gloucester. A good Confidential report, but a loathsome new C.O.*
72	6.4.42	*Missing Matins. Duty week.* ***Parties at the Howards, on leave in their quarters; omelettes with three eggs each! Petrol rationing the cause; difficulties of that. A visit to Stonegrave with Bill; description of the wealthy family there.*** *A medical examination causes minor difficulties. His army options, and groups available for deployment (or not).*
75	12.4.42	***From Lastingham Grange again; similarities and changes from last year; further description of the house and occupants. Fords instead of Whites. A fat and comfortable second in command. Glorious country.***
77	19 ~~16~~.4.42	***Timeless existence at Lastingham****; in haste for Mary's birthday. The garden at the grange. A company inspection: two days wasted in preparation.* ***A night-time alarm to astonish the CO; then attacking the 27th Lancers, who were hospitable afterwards. Bombing a few miles away.***
79	3.5.42	*A missing letter. Things to be sent.* ***A German spy found in the very farm they had harboured when he had been on a bike; German intelligence accurate and up to date.*** *The Colonels baby christened, but only little squares of cake offered. A visit to York with the Gatty-Smiths to see Dumbo; results of the bombing. Another visit to Stonegrave; thrush nests found on the walk there.* ***A lecture about tact when talking to certain people about Charterhouse.***
82	10.5.42	*Removed to Thornton-le-Dales, Pickering. A good time for a few days at the Strensall ranges beforehand.*
83	17.5.42	*Birthday wishes for AP. Arrangements about clothes and coupons.* ***Description of the country around Thorton-le-Dale. Fire fighting on the moors; a solitary woman and her life experiences.***
85	4.6.42	*Postcard. Hectic travel back to Pickering. Probable departure to ITC Dorchester.*
85	7.6.42	*Secret Departure to 14 ITC, Dorchester confirmed if day of move uncertain.*
86	10.6.42	*Dorchester is Gloucester repeated. No life in the market town. Gov't's despatches about France.*
87	12.6.42	*Postcard. No news about departure. Visits to films and Weymouth to provide occupation.*
87	17.6.42	*Nothing to do. Some squash. No balls for tennis. Bournemouth quite fun. A ground sheet procured. Spirit of Man left behind.*
88	Wednesday	*Summoned from the cinema in a flap; but then orders countermanded and sailing postponed for a month at least. Depression and sourness.*
89	19.6.42	*Not gone off at last; too fed up to write. Dumb, dull, unimaginative.*
89	21.6.42	*Humbug and procrastination. Squash and some tennis contemplated. Racing at Salisbury.*
90	21.6.42	*Fed up but not dead, hurt or ill. Lost the previous letter; a trip to Weymouth. Continuing previous letter: hitching back from Salisbury. Leave coming up.*
92	28.6.42	*Photographs missing via Yorkshire. A day out at Charmouth, and dinner at a Private Hotel at Lyme Regis; hitching and parties on the way back.*
93	7.13.42	*Departing later that day for Liverpool. Previously umpiring and partying. Divided feelings about a Wintringham citizen army v professionals. How to write abroad.*
95	14.7.42	[1] *First report from on ship. Uncertainties about censorship.*
96	23.7.4295	[2] *Cuthbert Censor a worry.* ***Life on board ship: inspecting the troops, lectures. How to deal with troops. Being officer on guard; strange lives***

		in odd parts of the ship. A lot of food; *the costs of different drinks. An empty rowing boat passed.*
99	10.8.42	3 *Change to cooler weather on board ship.* ***Muster parades. A lecture on foxhunting. Memory of someone using a taxi to overcome map-reading difficulty on exercise. Submarine watch at night; second officers in the Merchant Navy always on 12 - 4 watch. Description of the last port of call - lights in port surprising after three years of blackout.*** *Back on course: the boxing competition; also tug of war. Difficulties washing. Not doing PT before breakfast! But learning morse and Arabic. Letter to be circulated. Speculation about summer holidays. Reading material - Anna Karenina, Moby Dick, Malory. Dorchester fun in retrospect. Shore leave anticipated, including with instructions about V.D.*
104	15.8.42	[4] *Airgraph from in port. Entertained by a charming family.*
104	30.8.42	5 *Back on board and very hot again.* ***A lengthy description of the last port and being entertained by a random colonial family. Curious experiences at dinner. Night-time in town thereafter. Description of Hugh's office and its dubious occupants.*** *Further entertainment by the Abaos family, including swimming and surfing. Christopher's birthday lighthouse. Spirit of Man a real consolation, and comments on other reading.*
110	[7th September 42]Letter N°. 6	6 *From a depot in [Egypt].* ***Disembarkation shambles.*** *Heat, mosquitoes and flies.*
112	13.9.42 Sunday	7 *First letter from home received. Expenses a worry. Haggling revolting. An interesting course on explosives. Longing to get to a Bn; fighting not far away. Heat, sand, and flies.*
113	23.9.42	[8] *A view of the great river and the geometrically shaped masses, slave erected, from the camp for a fortnight's mmg course. A visit to 'X' [Cairo], and seeing Eric there.*
114	28.9.42	9 *Airgraph: staying with Eric at the weekend mid- course, civilisation. Then back in camp and ping-pong. Promise of an open air cinema.*
115	⑤.10.42	10 *21st birthday; a party perhaps on Wednesday, after exam on "stoppages" tomorrow.* ***Eric's wife and her accommodation. A shower to be taken. The previous weekend and parties remembered again, including sleeping at Eric's.***
116	11.10.42	11 *Lots of letters found back at I.B.D after the course. 21st birthday was a flop owing to the Jews atoning and few friends around.* ***Eric's matrimonial state; his birthday present. Eventful sailing at Ismailia.***
117	11.10.42	12 *Some enclosures sent, including an identity card photo.*
119	20.10.42	13 *A move six miles down the road; delighted to find letters from home there. The effects of sand storms. Birthday greetings and presents received.* ***Difficulties with Income Tax. A five day Messing Course.***
120	20.10.42	*To his brother at school;* ***description of the road and those on it****, and the Egyptians in their hovels by the canal. Thoughts about Charterhouse.*
121	25.x.42 (Sunday)	14 *Continued idleness in camp, but the battle has started: annoyance at missing it. Retrieval of his notebook of correspondence from the Cookery Mess school. Descriptions of Mickey Herring and Graham Gow.* ***Picquet popular - a bastion of superior civilisation?*** *The mess improving but drinks are expensive.*
122	November 20th (?) '42	*To Eric. A lengthy report after four weeks rush of battle, with plea that it be copied home. [Content briefer but much as* ***appendix B****.]*
125	22.XI.42	17 *Airgraph: frabjous delight at receiving first letters - listed and acknowledged - since he came to the Bn. Lack of news otherwise in the desert.*

125	22.XI.42	18 *Airgraph: continuation of the previous. Has had a wash. Bitter, icy rain. Christmas wishes.*
126	November 30th. 42	*To Eric again. Further descriptions of progress in the battle. [Evidence of 'Siepmanizing' for distribution; soldiers' language unfit for home, you know.]*
127	8.xii.42	20 *Letters acknowledged with thanks; description of sitting in truck watching for a signal to move. Clothing. Food improving a bit after recent fighting but restrictions in place ahead of further battle. Wishes for the New Year.*
129	22.XII.42	21 *Christmas at home imagined.* ***A good crack since Alamein; they've come a long way to Nofilia. Relieved.*** *Lucky to whole and happy; cd do with a bath.*
130	30.XII.42	22 ***Letters received on Xmas eve while sitting round the brew fire telling stories. The rfn's need for cigarettes. Jaundice virulent. Flies in camp; barter with the Bedouin.*** *Resting after relief, but probably not for long.*
132	30.XII.42	*Airgraph to his brother. Amusing letters received. Relief after 2½ months continual advance & action. The rain makes all sodden.*
132	10.I.43	23 ***Riflemen able to entertain themselves even at rest. Flowers and rain at camp.*** *David Karmel described. Acknowledgement of letters received. Eric hopeless. A cold swim.* ***A salvaged Italian bath****.*
134	17.I.43	24 *A fountain pen assayed.* ***A three-day journey to a new position; arrangements for the mess - radio from London. Platoon administration includes training, and he is Coy sports officer too*** *- busy.*
136	24.I.43	25 *Worries about the post - a lengthy summary of what has been sent. Letters received from EOS (now 40) and Mary and Jill about Christmas. Congratulations to Bow. A typical Sunday described.*
138	[5.II.43]	27 ***A drive to Cyrenaica gives insight into administration of the back areas. Description of local life resuming. Defence of rfn at courts martial. A post-dinner discussion of post-war prospects seems to be make-belief.***
139	February 15th. '43	28 *Letters received with comments. Bde athletics a great social occasion.* ***The previous weekend continued: picnic at Cyrene. The ruins described and the Bedouin down the street. Watching stars at night. His leather jerkin lined with sheep fleeces, bought after haggling - now enjoyed.***
141	21.2.43	29 *Description of peaceful Sunday afternoon. Football earlier. The radio. Eric erratic. A sleeping bag requested.* ***Harry Deane, servant, former market-gardener, described****. Mary at Leicester. Bow to write. Bank manager to be placated.*
143	28.2.43	30 ***Letter writing with Karmel, Kümmel and flies****. Lost correspondence feared.* ***A desert exercise; pleasure of silence, cleanliness and the accuracy of navigation.*** *The low standards of life accepted of necessity. A green side-hat requested; also a transfer of £50 to Ottoman's Geneifa.*
145	8.3.43	31 *Airgraph: table of letters sent since November. Hurrah! Two received!*
146	11.III.43	32 *Airgraph: pleasure in the last two letters received. Embarrassed to hear of his letters being Siepmanized. Will not be able to write again for a while. Keeping warm in the wind.*
146	14.3.43	33 ***Leave with Eric on the sea-front: a bath, food and drink****. A long drive west; urgent orders and sudden bad weather. The new position stony; a bit of sea visible from the O.P.; shelling, bedding airing and lunch being prepared. The Beveridge plan discussed in leagues. Turns down Bn I.O job.*

148	16.III.43	34 *Airgraph from Tripoli. Letters from home, esp Jill and Mary, commented upon. EOS a major. Oakley [bank manager] to be chased about his pay [as Lieutenant] from October.*
149	17.3.43	[35] *Letters found for him amongst a pile for his pl - answering two from 26 Feb -* ***AP made member of Trinity (Cambridge). Montgomery promises all wd be over by April 23. Studying stars before sleep. Solitude of the desert (as Dartmoor) as good as a dinner party. The I.O job decision explained with possible career paths; the War as a normal succession rather than interruption. £48 received at Ottoman's Bk; notification of pay as Lieut probably sunk; Oakley should sort it out.***
150	22.3.43	36 *Airgraph: a plea not to be sent them! Also for detail. Writing back in the wadi after rounds. Missing photos and presents. Oakley to be instructed about his pay.*
151	30.3.43	37 ***Lengthy driving through sand and dust on a long 'swan', hazardous and peaceful by turn. Generalship. Finding a well. Little water for brews, let alone washing. A case of wine in an Iti waggon is disappointing. Non-Cockneys among the rfn.***
153	2.4.43	38 *Splendid mail received; Cockney comments on the volume. Comments on contents. Pay and money exchanges.* ***DMW not to visit a man's tailor****. Problems with his boots; other clothes worn. He is very sun burned. Bedouin passing; description of sunrise.*
154	4.4.43	39 *Sunday again and easier to write while shelling going on. Food rationing and the black market in a 15 miles away. More irritation about Income Tax. Reading Anne Bridges novels. Mess tins and eating instruments scarce. A change of platoon sergeant. Letters written an indication of a man.*
156	No. 40 [11.4.43]	40. *Lunch and dinner menus. An interval in the long driving and sleepless nights: orchards stretch to the horizon. A well enables a wash. A visit to a nearby village; bargaining for eggs in French; abilities as a linguist. Judgements in turn on the tea. Eden's speech on Foreign Office Reform mistaken. Bow predicted to fail Responsions! and other thoughts of home. Further bargaining for food successful.*
158	15.4.43	41 *Letters from home commented upon. The informal way of the 60th; discipline through proper behaviour. The nature of other Bns. Books sent via EOS must be written off. A description of French farmhouses and Arab shelters amongst the the olive groves. Dealing with the Arabs; chickens round the truck. An Arab asks Sandy Goschen to stop the men offering for his wives. Now closer to London than Cairo.*
160	May 4th 43	43 *Communion on Easter amidst poppies. Historical consciousness; many friends killed. Last glasses broken; replacements obtained; an accident on the way back. Repeated request for clothing. Recent exhilaration but a relief needed. A Times of Oct 28; Winston's speech read to the rfn.*
162	9.5.43	*To APW with wishes for a happy birthday - Tunis & Bizerta offered. Better comradeship and military spirit where he is than anywhere else.*
163	17.5.43	44 *'It's all over now'. Driving into Gromballia and finding a seething, stinking throng of PoW - more and more. Tunis exhilarating but chaotic. Contrast between a peaceful early summer's morning in England with the stink of unburied dead, mosquitoes and flies, Arabs and Berbers, Italian-French. Pleas for reading material amidst thanks for letters. The M.E force could make or unmake an Emperor, as in the Roman Empire. Difficulties for individuals returning home. Form to be observed. Bathing in the sea in coves. The BBC and papers report oddly and falsely.*

167	30.5.43	45 *Visiting Eric in his bureaucratic environs; his office and accommodation described. Back east again, plagued by insects, making camp comfortable - improvised arrangements. Various reports from home.*
169	2,3.5[sic].43	46 *On holiday in Eric's town. Various bathing places. Eric preparing a cinema for the King's birthday; a success! Siepmannese seen: HAS revealed as a bad type. Sense of letdown after the fighting. Home will change when Jill leaves. Buying pyjamas and handkerchiefs.*
171	7.6.43	47 *Geoffrey Keating, creator of 'Desert Victory', back just two days from London, with news of AP and England. The hat, and reading materials...*
173	[undated]	48 *A long letter of interest from Bow, though dated December. The proper way to get into the 60th. Acting adjutant for a fortnight kept him busy and interested in work. An Important Personage expected.*
174	[undated]	49 *Stricken by gippo stummick. Missed the King the day before; reports of the visit. New flat hats criticised. Changes in personnel as men are sent home.*
175	24.6.43	50 ***A Yank tries to buy sand from Alamein; US influence global. An Australian captain visits to see the fighting - too late. He is to provide a tour of the Tunisian battlefields.*** *Sleeping bag and hat received - the latter poor quality, the former not as asked for.* ***A drive to Garian, where some live in caves.*** *Some letters to him retrieved; information about his bank account, too late to stop a letter to Oakley. Apologies for 'dull' - disjointed - letter.*
178	1.7.43	**51** ***The tour of the battlefields - history being made; memories of Rome. 800 litres of wine purchased.***
180	[undated]	51 (sic) ***The last of the trip;*** *returning to find 13 letters, books, periodicals and clothes for him. Difficulties of getting clothing of proper quality. [Evidence of Siepmannising.]*
181	14.7.43	53 *Birthday wishes; thoughts about age. Promotion to adjutant, most pleasing; career options following. Spilt ink. A new Colonel.*
183	23.7.43	54 *The bank balance exceeds the century; to check he is paid as Captain and adjutant from 16.7. Description of work. Comments on letters received - Jill leaving Cheltenham; Mary failing exam. A staff dinner party with roast pigs head and more.*
184	28.7.43	55 *Further description of work as an adjutant. The Colonel a Carthusian; others discovered to be so as well. Bathing in the sea.*
186	9.8.43	56 *Letter-writing at work means that after getting back to his tent further writing is hard. The army consumes all. A description of the French farm house base and its environs.*
188	19.8.43	57 *Col Lion Corbert Winder and the King.* ***The brats' narrow social upbringing; the necessity of lunch: it is the duty of civilized people to be sociable. Piquet enraging. Poker wins and losses. A wish to paint. An embarrassing donkey race.***
189	August 20th	58 *Comments on a letter from Bow. The view from work - working 'at great telephone pressure'. Washing in his old bowl in the evening.* ***Mr Walsh's wedding gifts proportional to your account. 'All work of real importance clinched or initiated by social contact.'***
190	22.8.43	59 *Due to present to Court martial. Leave with John Hogg to Tunis and up to a view from a hill, thence to a rest camp. Clothes should be obtainable from England without coupons. Oakley to be chased again. A good badger shaving brush required.*
191	31.8.43	60 *His tent ('a nice 180 pounder') described. The harvest; renewal next year. Continuity of service and change.* ***AP to see John Hope or Lyon Corbet Winder, perhaps - 'entertainment x sociabilities are the key to all success.'***

192	5.9.43	61 *The weekend: a jeep ride to an old lead mine where the ... Lancers mess despite a late night before. The 'Waterfield girls' related?* ***Another trip the next day in two jeeps up taller wooded hills; a colossal omelette soufflié and bruleé for lunch****. A plea for a subscription to the Carthusian.*
193	13.9.43	62 *Lunch with Brown Howard in Tunis; how to get served at a restaurant. A letter from Mary in the Wrens; problems with mail otherwise: he feels hopelessly out of touch. Cricket.*
195	19.9.43	63 *Writing on Sunday as usual, in the hot and sticky office, though often disturbed; gossip wearying. A backlog of admin, going back to 1941. Nearly 22 and worried by it. A touch of homesickness with letters from Bow and Jill.*
196	24.9.43	*Airgraph to APW: he can distribute AP's information about Civil Service entry. Ardizzone watercolours of the battle at recent dinner with Geoffrey Keating, who had seen Gordon Waterfield.*
197	26.9.43	64 ***Lunch with two Frenchmen in a big farm house the previous weekend; the house and meal described. The pigs rush down the hill as they leave.*** *Sunday afternoon 'kip' the only one permitted. A heap of letters arrives, after complaint.* ***Preparations for huge party - he is in charge of car parking and zabbaglione.*** *Comments on letters received.*
198	[Oct 3]	65 ***A splendid Spanish dinner in a sinister restaurant.*** *The baleful influence of England felt. News from home; especially of a visit to Oxford;* ***doubts about fitting in there after the war****. Football and a dance - his tango unique. Left luggage.*

A note from John Hope. A gap in the archive.

200	27.1.44	79c *Airgraph. People to see at home. Not coming home on course but 'cushy' as he is. Thanks for the sermon sent. Not to worry about his welfare.*
201	15.6.44	[] *First letter to Lady Waterfield; congratulations to AP but details requested.* ***Mary exposed to unsuitable types****. The Japanese offer the chance of extended war with their eccentricity. Camp amongst oaks, heat and snakes. Hugh Boileau of good conversation to dinner en route for Staff Course.* ***Advice to cultivate social graces.***
202	25.6.44	91 ***Difficulties with light bulbs. A mobile cinema - Bette Davis, loathsome, he walks out. Two other films in the last 18 months - Noel Coward, Astaire and Leslie, the latter with 'this will be my shining hour'. A decision about preferred types of film. A new green beret worn in defiance of the W.O.*** *Working hard normally but a sleep this Sunday afternoon when booze followed breakfast.*
204	7 July 44	92 *Description of command vehicle in which he works, parked in the drive of an Italian mansion. Description of this house; smart dinner, though close to forward lines. Central Italy compared to the south.* ***Employment soundings.***
205	14. Jul. 44	93 *Back in 'business'; fighting very different from in the desert. Very busy and happier for it. Would be most interested in the Foreign Service if well paid.*
206	21. July 1944	94 *Dealing with cases of desertion. Birthday wishes to DMW. A typed letter from Jill and a dreary one from Mary.* ***The oddity of dining off a polished table while being shelled. Day and night business - snatching sleep.***
208	21. 7. 44	*A service sheet from a few days earlier for those killed in Italy [roll of shown; also coded birthday telegram]*

- end of main gap in archive

210	12. Nov 1944	H1[198] *Description of hospital, Arezzo; jaundice. Briefly in Florence before succumbing.* ***A severe battle and unhappy events before that.*** *Others in hospital.*
211	13 Nov 1944	H2 *Further descriptions of hospital; his is a dreary complaint. Woolly boots received, a great use in the HQ quagmires. Xmas airgraphs; illegible letters from WGW. A Frank Waterfield killed. Shopping opportunities in Florence.*
213	22 Nov 1944	H3 *Transfer to another hospital in Rome.* ***Reflections upon institutions. Still confined to bed despite arguments. Purchase of some pyjamas. The small plottings of life in hospital.*** *Recent reading. Civilian occupation a worry.*
214	November 26 . 44	H4 ***Still in odious hospital; quarrels with the sister. Thoughts and worries about employment after the war.*** *Xmas greetings. Little news received; trying to help Bow.*
216	3 Dec 44	H5a *Officially up in hospital. Letters, parcels and a visitor from the Bn. Progress to walking daily - in Rome.*
217	Dec 3	H5c *More about Rome - a splendid exhibition. Xmas presents. His siblings - Jill at Oxford, Bow and his friends to take her out.*
218	2 . Jan . 45 .	111 *A new vile hospital; consideration of differences, despite similarities. Not far from last Aug/Sept's battle. A new doctor will help with his nose as well as the jaundice. Thanks for Xmas presents received.*
220	9 January 45 .	112 ***Moved by ambulances and hospital ship - the latter bad for his liver. Finding Peter Wake at the new hospital; great cheer. Penicillin used on PW.*** *Pulling strings for Bow. Letters received and sent. Mary ill. PW packing to leave.*
222	14 January 45 .	113 ***The electricity fails regularly in hospital; a shortage of candles. A new doctor; insulin.*** *Why Army people find Rome dull. An American greeting remembered.* ***Henry Crookenden in Wingfield Oxf - Jill should visit.*** *Visitors hoped for - received (in ps).*
223	21 January 1945	114a *Great strides in recovery; treatment and dissention.* ***Information about the accountants and garage proprietors who are also in hospital****. Crookenden, in the Wingfield, likely to lose his leg. Rose Whitaker visited the previous Sunday and may again; David Karmel came on Tuesday with news and new clothing.*
225	21 January 45 contd.	*Arrangements to return to the Bn.* ***A new 'gallop' (battle/ front) needed to overcome the staleness of plodding through the mud.*** *Different types in the Army. The manpower problem. A visit from Rose & Toby. Sunset and the view. Recent reading incl. Persuasion.*
226	26 January 45	115 *Letters from home via the Bn. Xmas at home. Oxford v Cambridge. A new doctor (from Oxford); Waterfields all related. Progress with Bow's posting.* ***Pulling of strings advocated.*** *Revised plans post-hospital due to row with (former) Colonel-doctor.*
A letter from John Hope of 2.2.45 explaining JPW's hospitalisations.		
230	4. Feb. 45	116 *Now in Red Cross convalescent home, via Bari. Bari full of back-office people.* ***AP's regulations will have to keep out idle incompetents; praise for AP in the Guardian. The home described - a number of bungalow-type villas. A Yugoslav caretaker. The local countryside and architecture - walking on the terraced hills. Conversation with a S.African. Intimations of administrative difficulties in Europe after the war.***

[198] letter 117d 11 Feb 45 tabulates the letters from this period and shows how the hospital sequence fits with the main numbering.

232	11 February 1945	117a *Routine in the villa-home. Riding. Golf practice - a new grip. A pile of letters received.*
233	... uary 1945	[] *Comments on the letters - news from home, of friends sick and hurt, from Charterhouse.*
235	11 February 1945	117c *Further discussion of letters received - one received from DMW. Illness, houses, servants, questions...*
236	11 Feb 45	117d *Siepmannia. Finally realises he doesn't subscribe to the Carthusian; could he be? A walk in rain with two Red X ladies. Errors in the purchase of stockings.* ***Nonsensical journalism worse even than Python, boredom or the Germans****... A table of letters sent for ref. [Evidence of censoring.]*
237	Sunday 18 Feb 45	118 *On the way back from the Red X place. A hotel with peculiar room arrangements. Rfn Deane awaited. Air passage arranged as fall back. A ballet, more like cabaret. Commandos at a party; their characteristics. Jill might be asked out for a weekend at Watlington. Dinner with a Carthusian but little in common.*
239	26. 2. 45	119a *Back home - though wondering if he should leave the Bn.* ***Giving up on Deane, he flew and hitch-hiked back. A vivid description of the battleground. The Bn's activity in his absence - Germans littered about the vineyard.*** *Immediate surroundings in a suburban villa but new and strange activity may happen at any time.*
240	[26. 2. 45]	119b ***Proof-reading letters. Pipe smoking and tobacco.*** *Another change of Colonel; John Hope has got command. Two long ALCs from AP; also the girls write of Mary's visit to LMH and their joint visit to Henry Crookenden. A wish that DMW would have more leisure to write.*
242	3 March 45	120a *From the ground floor of a block of flats, a rabbit warren, where Echelon office is; guns audible in the background. Changes of arrangements in the wind. A package of pre-Xmas letters has caught up with him - discussion of same.* ***Leslie Mackay interrupts with report on new quarters; brief description of Leslie****. Other reading matter received.*
243	[3 March 45]	120b ***The art of having time to gossip, and to listen civilly.*** *Possible application to the F.S; inclinations or otherwise for other careers - the Colonial service, the bar, business... all suggestions welcome. Nosworthy or others in Rome to be contacted. AP's projects going well. Photographs wanted though family needs to get over their disinclination to have them taken.* ***His last move as Bn Adjutant; a step sideways & up to command HQ Coy - the significance of this****.*
245	11 March 45	121a *The Bn moved. His new room described; luggage retrieved - a lot of possessions!* ***Previous inhabitants burnt all door- and window-frames.*** *Busy with frequent reorganisations; also, writing for the Chronicle.* ***An evocative return to the September battlefield.***
247	[11 March 45]	121b *A pile of letters to answer - maybe time when he gives up as Adjutant.* ***Mary's illness. He has outgrown expectation of a welcome home in England; anxiety about relearning domestic habits.*** *The Army as scope for further ambition. Reports of old-fashioned entry to the F.O.*
248	22 March 45	122 ***Handing over as Adjt to Giles Mills. Teaching new staff. Taking over the mess, PRI and HQ Imprest; the mess fun to run - his Italian cook. Zabbaglione.***
249	29 . 1. 45[sic]	123 *Inadequacy of new officers and the effect on the Coy Mess. Good letters from AP. He has written to Nosworthy himself but probably won't get to Rome, despite wishes; won't be able to get home on LLAP leave, though he has now been longer in the Bn than anyone except John Hope.*
251	1 April 45	124 ***Coloured eggs for Easter****; other Easter activities. The long account for the Chronicle sent off. Description of Geoffrey Shakerley. Bank*

		account looks good - other savings. ***Rfn Deane sends thanks. DMW refuses to be photographed.***
252	9 April 45	125 *Mary writes with news of Easter, and sounds cheerful.* ***A last battle to go yet, so Rome probably off****. Employment in John Lewis of doubtful interest; academic life certainly unsuitable. Riding at home. Insurance for Regimental property a muddle.*
254	13 April 1945	126 *Mail home delayed. A wireless for Mary's 21st birthday. The Bn waiting on tight rein - a campaign to come yet. A****sparagus, prawns etc. Bridge being played - alas that he can't play well - success at poker though. Worries about civilian clothes****. Memories of Graham Gow. Questions of home; he enjoys commanding a Company and dreads unemployment.*
255	30 April 1945	127 ***Hard and frantic fighting latterly. Great loss of John Hope mars the triumph. Ecstatic reception in Italian towns. He has a German General's Mercedes; files of P.W.; their vehicles towed with oxen.***
257	6 May 1945	128a ***News heard of the end of the European war. A review of his progress since July 42. The war NOT finished though; factions still fighting, Chetniks, Tito, Cossacks, as well as residual actions by the Germans. The need to sort these out is going to be hardest.***
258	6 May 1945	128b ***Description of a parley with a German General of SS. Russia a new threat in Europe.*** *Hugh Hope from Greece; sorting out John's kit. No room to discuss HAS's appalling boorishness. Dragons a bad idea for Mary.*
259	13 May 45	129 ***John Hope's loss. Now in a little Austrian village; the mess in a lovely large house [Schloss Thalenstein]. Partisans and uncertainty; columns of displaced marching through for hours. General respect for German soldiers - but atrocities committed.*** *Leslie Mackay in England; a photo of Mary. Hope that the Dragon arrangement falls through - impertinence of the hours expected. A book by Hollis first class. Nothing yet published about F.S. entrance.* ***Further thankless tasks for the victors. Riding; the horses at the Schloss. The fellows on the farm are ex-SS. Alas, they are to be turned out of the castle by a Major-General.***
263	30 May 45	130 ***Searching the town for someone to make riding boots and breeches;*** *Giles Mills wants leder-hosen, supposed to be comfortable after 20 years wearing-in.* ***Elections in England; many disenfranchised by failure to register. Suggestions of fighting the Russians immediately.***
264	[30 May 45]	130b ***Americans v Russians; hatred of Communism. The Cossack problem; Eastern duplicity or self-interest. The country beyond the encampments on a ride. A time of strain and difficulty sorting things out.***
266	[30 May 45]	130c *Mary and her beastly Dragons and suburban Oxford.* ***Rations and absence of servants cause difficulties*** *- he won't return on first leave available to avoid being a bore. Reports of further by-passes of AP's rules and regulations; a job required! The anomalies of wealth (and the behaviour with and without it).*
267	10.6.45	131.1 *Daily riding. Continued on 20 June from shores of Lake Garda, on leave with Geoffrey Shakerley. Arrangements for leave; travel to the lake.*
268	[20.6.45]	131.2 *Description of places en route. A Gasthaus under the mountains. Signs to "Follow the Shield home" - Alamein to Calais.*
270	[20.6.45]	131.3 *Change in atmosphere on arrival at the Italian lake. Loveliness and peace. Relaxation and local encounters.*
271	[20.6.45]	131.4 ***Biography of Geoffrey Shakerley****; his family and wealth. Riding since he last wrote...*

272	[20.6.45]	131.5 ***Arrangements for a horse race; he rode Vienna to a thrilling finish. The Goschens and their Schloss.*** *AP's regulations published.*
273	21.6.45	132.1 *Bathing in the transparent lake. A trip to Riva. A trip up the mountains planned. Answering letters; APW's is written from holiday in Cornwall.*
274	[21.6.45]	132.2 *Further comments on AP's letter.* ***He notes what AP says but holds out for private back-channels (with respect to employment); while he is tied to the Army he is OK. Many are well set and have family businesses to return to, but those who have no are absolutely lost. A survey of options from his point of view.***
275	11.7.45	134 *Correspondence seems to have dried up. He returns to his room after riding. The radio; a new Evelyn Waugh novel. Golf clubs purchased and tried out; also a tennis racquet - he is unfit!* ***Riding is the best though; difficulties getting horse feed.*** *His typical early-morning routine. Horse management and German language books requested.* ***The recent Divisional horse-race one of the best days: course, Tote, flags, lunch tent &tc all laid on perfectly. His own open mile described. Roulette in the evening. Tentschach with the Goschens; swimming there and then hunting; thrilling if unsuccessful. Rfn Deane to be replaced by Rfn (Slasher) Walker.***
278	17 July 45	135 ***Reports from home after the holidays are distressing. All arrangements for Bow has come to naught. Employment in business looks more attractive because he cannot face the exam for the Diplomatic.*** *Peter Wake to go up to Balliol. Photos from holiday sent.*
280	23 July 45	136 *Wishes for DMW's birthday. His work involving personnel and admin problems caused by changes in Bn. A move to Upper Austria in prospect.* ***Another race meeting; afterwards, a hunting trip up the mountains with Leslie and Sandy****.*
281	3 August 1945	137 *Moved north to Neumarkt in cooler country.* ***His arrangements for the Mess; employing staff, with no very certain authority. Food and fodder for the horses (especially) short. Terrified of returning to England; others' disappointments in doing so. The Election results horrifying.*** *Tentatively staying with Army another 2 years - as more and more unfit for employment - though ought to get out of it.*
283	23. 9 .45	142 *From Lonigo near Vicenza; possibly one of the last in this series of letters. A tiny postscript in a letter from AP gives the news that he is through with soldiering****. Absurd advertisements in the agony column of the Times. Peter Wake put off by the dons and refuses to go up to Oxford. Sadnesses at leaving Austria; Italy again an unpleasant contrast. The last weekend in Austria with Leslie and Deedes - singing, dancing and drinking. His language skills better than previously thought, but his scholarship to Oxford probably a joke now. Back to the weekend - shooting the next day. Another 'Markt' feast in Austria recalled - the PW band kept out after their curfew.*** *Delays in his official release; plans to travel home via Hanover. His civilian clothes a worry.*
287	No 143	[c 30 Sept 45] 143 *His last race-meeting near Trieste. Most of his papers have arrived; handing over his work. Final movement instrs awaited - Oxford will have to wait.*
288	2 October 1945	144 *Movement authority sent but not yet received. Travel plans at risk. Hopes of a birthday celebration even if late, after missing so many. Serious worries about civilian clothes.*
288	2 October 1945	145 *From Hanover. He will be back next week - let Oxford know.*

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