

752/4

Western District

20/7/40.

Dear Glen,


Very pleased indeed to get your letter of June 21st last week. With only one mail arriving mails are small & thus must be a good way accumulating somewhere.

You will have heard that I am out on this western district at present, being Brigadier of a mixed outfit. I don't think it will do any harm to say that we are near Matakau, where the 1st Brigade met the Senussi in 1915 & quite close to the sea so that we bathe every day. Not the first time New Zealand troops have bathed in the Matakau! I get muddled sometimes as to which way I'm at. This afternoon there is a mild kiamoi & we are confined to shelter but mostly the weather is perfect with a delicious sea breeze & we shall be ready to go back to work in and about Pairo on internal security jobs, as we will do in another week.

Life is more interesting here too. I'll tell you what happened yesterday, which had only a little more incident than the average.

Wakened at 2am by an Owl Raid

on Malindi. Crumps very clean but going away
so stayed in bed. Up at six and had a bath.
Breakfast. Troops marched off to dig at 7.30,
went with them to decide some small points
calculated to camp at 9 just in time to get
a fine view of another raid - a beauty. ~~Just~~
Happened to be looking towards Malindi & saw
on the ridge four miles away 4 sudden fountains
of smoke & dust. Then another & another like this



There were a dozen up before the CRUMP CRUMP
old familiar sound reached us they continued
until we counted 72. One of my companies (D)
was once there so hopped into a car & went
to see how they'd fared. Nearest bomb half
a mile away, was talking with the Coy commander
when someone called out - looking up we saw
fine white bellies - Savoia 79 - coming in from
the sea 10,000 feet up. Made a quick calculation
that they'd just have made the first release &
joined enemies there in a smart & suddenly movement
to the nearest slit trench. CRUMP on the
ridge 100 yards away, next one 200 yds then
another series going away. And that's the nearest
they got to us. Very good training for enemies and
a nice gentle introduction. I went into Malindi then
to see what damage had been done & there really
wasn't any except that one poor gunner had lost
a leg. Bombing was accurate enough they'd hit

the road repeatedly but the holes were soon filled in and no harm done. Packed on the Bugadiin i/c Alabuk & had a drink with him. Returned to camp and had lunch.

Bugadiin Pulloto was waiting after lunch I went off with him to look at the old battle field of Wadi Majid, in which he took part as a By command. Harit changed of course & we had a most interesting tramp. He was able to follow the movements of his By through the whole of hours engagement. Then as it was still early went off to Ra Kuma a village 15 miles west of Alabuk. Had a delightful visit to a very nice tribe of Arabs who were thudding banley. They were a good lot, clean & handsome, glad to see us & most hospitable. We spent two hours there & found it hard to get away & everyone was the exercise of good manners & courtesy. A complete contrast to the Lurians natives.

Returned through Alabuk to camp in time for another bath before dinner & then sat in the cool evening & dined with Inghis & Piers (P.O. of Sir P. ^{also visiting} ~~was~~ ^{until} bed time. Much more of a holiday day than usual & most pleasant. To finish it off there was another raid at 2 a.m. but this time the N.A. were

Someone unfortunately told Falk I would probably get promotion. Well if that's expected then it doesn't seem to me probably so desirable. The sudden of security of the fighting unit & C.O. is being in (W) Manchester (Cot) Prices (low) but you know how many brigades there are. I wouldn't have a sudden command there for 20 years of the war over about 2 years ago.

I brought down one bomber remaining blazing to crash wallat about 2 miles away. That will probably last them for a while. 4 of the crew killed 2 wounded 1 taken. Shall go out after finishing this & inspect the works.

We took off back to Cairo in another week. I will make a delay to visit Alexandria perhaps stay the night. I was in it once last war. I wish this but have never yet had a good look around. It will be most unpleasant getting back to the stammy Nile Valley.

Cairo is a very quiet city these days, much more so than when we arrived. Most of the troops are away & we wear uniforms when we are in the city. Shepherds has been closed. I sometimes go to Gezira but most often to the Fitzgibbon if in need of recreation but am not a great socialite much happier with soldiers. The place is blighted out of course, not completely but enough to make it pretty gloomy & draining difficult. On the whole I like the desert better than Cairo.

The battalion is trained, fit & welling & fully equipped, simply bustling with arms transport. MacDuff is back from Palestine but has gone on to Levant Staff much to his annoyance. Plummer is back with the Par but goes off to a Technical Course tomorrow. Frank Davis is of course on Levant Staff, G. and has gone to a Staff Course at Haifa. Manchester was ill for a few days, back now & off to a Technical Course with Plummer. King Ball is now 2/c a Squadron in the Lev. Par. English is very fit & is Sugden, who is still an old woman. The troops are in great fettle & ready for service. I shouldn't be surprised if the Shypoons plus some Boats came along in a couple months time, in fact I think they will. I am very fit & burning blackish. Kindest regards to May & the children. Yours affectionately Howard

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 Capt.