

V
21st Dec. 1941

19088 Pte. R. T. Street,
I. Section,
Battalion Headquarters,
26th. Battalion,
2nd. N. Z. E. F.
Middle East Forces.

Dear Mum & Dad,

Many thanks for your welcome letter which I received a day or so ago (No. 10 15th. Nov.). I haven't appreciated receiving letters from home so much as I have done since coming over to these parts. Many thanks also for your parcel which arrived yesterday afternoon. Well again I felt like a boy receiving a parcel of good things, & you can imagine how eagerly I opened your parcel & took out the various contents. The other two of my mates who share my dug-out, Frank & Ralph, sat on their bunks & looked on (as we do over here.)

Well, Mum, everything you sent will be very useful. I was almost out of shaving-soap, so the stick you sent was most opportune. So was the Gibb's Dentrifice. We laughed over the tin of aspirins; not indeed that I don't appreciate them, but the fact is, since being in the army, getting fit & leading an outdoor life, I haven't had a sign of a head-ache. Still, who knows? They will be handy in case of tooth-ache or sleeplessness. The First Aid Outfit will be very useful too. It is a nuisance having to go to the R. C. P. (Regimental Aid Post) if one needs a piece of plaster for a cut: it often means waiting in a queue & a whole lot of red-tape.

I was also the recipient of another parcel yesterday - a Xmas. cake from dearest Edna. We shall be set now, for Xmas. five days away. Now the time flies! Edna, in her last letter mentioned that the strawberries were ripe & that the cherries soon would be also. Last



year, I was often to be seen up among the branches of the cherry trees at 5 Park Lane, about this time of the year.

We hope to make the best of it here on Xmas Day. They are getting in extra things to eat so we should do very well. Headquarters have one of the best cooks in the Division & he will, I am sure, live up to his reputation. As I said in my previous letter, the cooks here do a marvellous job with very scanty facilities. Here at Headquarters, the cooking is done in the open on the side of a gentle slope. There is no shelter from the elements, with the exception of the dug-out where the rations are kept. In spite of this, the food here is much better than at Base Camp. We have for breakfast, very good porridge with the sugar & milk stored in; toast & rissoles made from Bully-beef & onions, & tea. Lunch at mid-day consists of - a slice of bread & jam, & a slice of bread



+ cheese, + tea. Hot dinner is at 5 P.M. We get real potatoes, stewed onions + stew, or hashed Bully-beef, or Shepherd's Pie; + for second course, jam tart + rice, or pears + rice, or bread pudding; + tea. In the last war, it was chiefly Bully-beef + biscuits.

Our "Mess. gear" consists of 2 mess-tins shaped like this. One is slightly



smaller than the other + the handles fold up, allowing them to fit together. We have a bag to carry them in. We have also knife, fork + spoon, but use the spoon for most things. Then there is the mug for tea. We line up in a queue for meals + sit about on the ground. Food never tasted so good before.

Now, a word or two about our dug-out. It is, of course, under the ground, which is rocky where we are. The walls + passage way are sandbagged. In the roof (corrugated iron resting

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on beams & covered with sand & rocks) are
three ventilators which also let in the light during
the day. My bunk, built up on sand-bags, is
on one side, Ralph's on the other, & Frank's
is at the end. We have wooden shelves above
our heads on which is stowed our gear &
equipment. It is amazing how comfortable
one can make a dug-out, by improvising.
We use candles at night, but hope to get a
kerosene lantern soon.

There are 6 of us in the Intelligence Section & a Lieutenant.
We have just completed our office, a dug-out about
15 ft. by 8 with a table, boxes of gear, hundreds of
maps & an easel & blackboard. During the week, we
have done map reading, a compass traverse &
had lectures on our work generally. We have a
truck & will be going about to get "the lay of the
land."

Yesterday afternoon we did our washing. We
are allowed a water-bottle of water a day, &

to do for drinking, shaving & washing.
& we don't drink any as it is quite cool
~~now~~ now, so we had been able to save water
each day which we stored up in tins. We
rigged up a fire place near our dug-out,
using stones, bits of iron & tins & boiled
some water. We did our towels first, then
our under-things & shirts & finally handker-
-chiefs & sox. We didn't have enough water
for rinsing, but that didn't matter.

Ralph's singlet came out purple & he wouldn't
have it was his. However, it had his name
on, so it was his all right. We had a good
laugh over that. We tied the things on
to our line with string, to save them from
being blown away. It does blow here at
times; worse than in Wellington. It is
usually a bitter wind blowing from the desert

7/
inland.

9.30 p.m.

Here I am again. I didn't have time to finish this morning. We had Church Parade at 9 A.M.

This afternoon I received a note from my friend Colin, with the snaps included of the Pyramids. We took them on our last visit to the Pyramids some 3 weeks ago. They are quite good snaps & I am sending them to Edna who will in turn send them on to you.

Colin is now up here in the Desert, but is in another Battalion. I will look him up some time.

You will have read or heard over the radio about the campaign in Lybia. Libya. At the moment, the enemy is on the run; in fact, his retreat has become a

route. It was a hard struggle in the early stages, against the Hun's mechanized forces, & our casualties were heavy.

Still, our boys fought magnificently & broke the enemy's resistance. The Tommies, Indians, S. Africans & Poles are carrying on the fight. There won't be much left of the enemy's forces soon, the way things are going.

So Jack is going to Fiji. Oh well, I guess he is very keen on it, & he will be seeing new sights. I'm sure he will enjoy the experience.

We had the talking pictures again this evening, from 6.30 p.m. till 8.30 p.m. The mobile unit comes round every 6 days. We lay on the slope of a hill, in our great-coats, with the open sky above, & enjoyed the film. The newsreels were very good.

9 The three of us from our dug-out, had a swim the other afternoon. The sea here is so blue; I have never before seen such a shade of blue in the sea. The desert here must have been under the sea at some remote age. I have several shells, found miles inland, several hundreds of feet up on top of a plateau. I have also a piece of petrified wood. There was a lot of it lying about.

Dad says he is sending some Weekly News. Thanks very much. I don't get any papers from Edna, but then I told her not to bother. They will certainly be much appreciated & passed on. You see, it is dark at 5.30 p.m. in our dug-out & reading will fill in the long winter evenings.

Mum, I haven't yet sent you anything from Egypt, but will do so when

¹⁰/I get leave (not for 3 months yet.)

I sent Edna just before I came up here:
a chamois hand-bag with Egyptian
-characters embossed on the leather. A
pair of silk stockings I sent her from
Colombo on the way over has reached her
safely.

Now I must close. My candle is on
its last legs, so to speak. Excuse the
rambling nature of this letter.

I hope it finds you all at home
in good health & spirits. Don't worry about
me, Mum. I'm in no danger & am fit
& well. I hope your rheumatism is O.K.
now.

Bye bye, & thank you again
for the parcel.

From your loving son,
Rewai.

X X X
