



NATIONAL PATRIOTIC FUND BOARD,
CHURCH OF ENGLAND

22/5/44

19088
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33 (N.Z.) Bn.,
2 N.Z.E.F.
M.E.F.

27 A/ March, 44

Dear Mum & Dad,

At present the worst sand storm I have seen in Base Camp is blowing & every now & again I have to rub my eyes & blow the sand off my paper. I'm orderly officer today & am writing this in my office. Yesterday afternoon was wretched too when the wind began, & I was out at Sakkara with twenty of our chaps on a sight seeing tour. The Church Army arranged a trip for this Sunday & asked me if I could get a truck load. That's no difficulty in getting



NATIONAL PATRIOTIC FUND BOARD,
CHURCH OF ENGLAND

21

chaps been on ruins & that sort of thing
— & yesterday morning, after church
parade, we left camp, with our
lunch & joining another truck load
at the Church Army hut, proceeded
to Giza, over the Nile & out to
Sakkara where the Step Pyramid is
— the oldest pyramid in Egypt, a
mere 5000 years old! I had never been
there before.

From my office here on a fine
day (which is the usual thing) I can
get a grand view across the Nile
to the desert beyond, & dotted here
& there are some ten to a dozen
pyramids, including of course, the Great
Pyramids at Giza. This Step
pyramid consists of six stages
or steps like this





NATIONAL PATRIOTIC FUND BOARD,

CHURCH OF ENGLAND

31

& for that reason it is unique. It was the first pyramid to be attempted & the architects & builders had had no previous experience in building such a tomb in stone. It consists of millions of small blocks, some two feet in length, with no cement to hold them together, & compared with the huge blocks of which the Great Pyramids are composed, these are quite small. One cannot climb to the top: it isn't safe.

Sakkhara is very near the ancient capital of Egypt - Memphis, & in ancient times, the Nile flowed quite near to the 5 step pyramid.

I can quite realize, after seeing the sand storm today, how the desert must have encroached upon the



NATIONAL PATRIOTIC FUND BOARD,

CHURCH OF ENGLAND

44/

river & pushed it further East.

Well, for our guides we had a French lady - Madame, somebody - she was very good & spoke quite good English, so that we had no use for a native guide. They are more nuisance than they are worth, half the time.

Near the 5th Pyramid is or are the tombs of 18 sacred Bulls which were worshipped by the ancient Egyptians when they die, they were embalmed & placed with great care - many in huge granite coffins, hewn out of solid rock, with huge granite lids or weighing many tons.

These 18 coffins were placed in vaults, opening off a long underground passage - & thus they are



NATIONAL PATRIOTIC FUND BOARD,

CHURCH OF ENGLAND

57

to this day. Unfortunately, at some period, robbers tunneled into the tomb, removed the heavy lids & robbed the coffins so that today they are empty. Jewels of course were buried with the balls. My word, the huge granite blocks, some 15 feet long by six high & 6 wide, were marvellously hewn out inside smooth as marble & the corners beautifully square.

We saw another underground tomb, the burial place of a king, with a fine collection of wall decorations. They depict life in ancient Egypt - servants carrying food: musicians, people at sport etc. - for they believed that they



NATIONAL PATRIOTIC FUND BOARD,
CHURCH OF ENGLAND

61

would go on living & have need of these things.

It was terribly hot out there yesterday & I rode on a donkey some of the time. The Church Army provided soft drinks for lunch. As we were returning to camp, the wind began to blow & soon the sand was flying. Lay on top of my bed last night - it was too hot to sleep. I'm hoping the wretched wind will blow itself out tonight, but these things sometimes last for days.

During the week, I went to a lecture by a Dr. Ward of Cairo - on the U.S.A. Part of the time we were out of doors & for the remainder inside, at the Church Army Hut in camp here. Dr. Ward is the



NATIONAL PATRIOTIC FUND BOARD,
CHURCH OF ENGLAND

7/

an ~~thing~~ of a very good book on the stars
— a star which you could call it.
None of our chaps had a copy when
we were in the desert, two years ago.
Yesterday I had an airgraph
from Leath Clarke (of the pier.) He
is in the Army, in Wellington.

Well, my dear, it is an effort
to write so, will close. How fit
swell & hope you are the same
in Nelson. I trust there isn't
a sand storm blowing as there is
here.

Love from your son,
Rewai
