

WWII Primary Source

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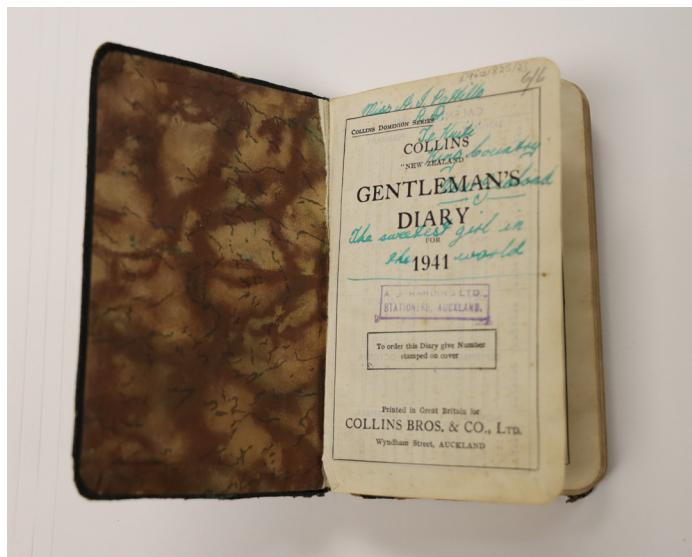
Private Victor Roy Ball

Service Number: 3216

18 (Auckland) Infantry Battalion

Served: Egypt, Crete - Bodyguard for the King of the
Hellenes

Returned to NZ



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25th February

Platoon parade and then just Snick around. Bit of drill in the morning. Getting tired of doing nothing. Had a cup of coffee in the tent and then went to bed.

26th February

Not much doing just playing around. Supposed to be going on manoeuvres but put off. Went to the pictures. No sign of my valise so far.

27th February

Packed all our gear and pulled down our tent. Hung around for a long time. Handed back our battle dress and got issued with a new topi and mosquito pants. No idea where we are going. Got a lot of reinforcements. Cliff came back to the section.

28th February

Rose at 5a.m. hung around till 8.15a.m. and then went to the train. Travelled all day like pigs in a truck no room for nothing. Rained nearly all day. Sat in the train for about an hour before we got out to stand for another hour. Marched to the camp and 33 of us slept or tried to in one tent. Mud everywhere. Amara name of place.

1st March

Woke up this morning and felt full of cramp. Camp just a sea of mud, tent leaking and a bog inside. Got issued with all our war gear and feel just like a mule. Great rumours as to where we are going. Had a rifle inspection. Not much to do but wait. Got the flu. Went to bed early.

2nd March

No church parade but the padre said a service was on if we liked to go. Nothing much today but sit around. Went to the pictures buckshee. Got through a hole. Had seen the picture before. Got a great dose of flu. Ache in every joint.

3rd March

Still raining like hell and mud everywhere. Had a rifle inspection and then just sat about. Plenty of rain inside the tent as well as outside. Hell of a cramped in the tent. Like pigs in a sty at night. Had to do an hour on piquet tonight.

4th March

Pot wholoper today. Never peeled so many spuds in all my life. Damn near all day on it. Rained like hell in the morning but cleared up in the afternoon. Nothing but stews and bully beef. Not so cold at night.

5th March

Packed all our gear ready again. Big convoy of lorries went last. Aussies burnt down the cinema and buffet. Great blaze for a while. Had a Bn parade would see us shifting.

6th March

Pulled down the tent sides and had all our gear ready to move. Had a talk from the Colonel about the smashing of the 24th canteen. Rumour says we leave tomorrow. Very early rise.

7th March

Up 4.30 had a bite to eat. Shouldered our gear and marched to the station. About 100lb on our backs. Soon got heavy. Terrible ride in the train. Boarded the Ajax about 10a.m. Very crowded. Didn't expect to ride on a battle cruiser. Great tucker. Sailed at 12 noon. Doing about 24 knots. Three cruisers H.M.S. Perth, H.M.S. Orion, H.M.S. Ajax. Very good travelling. Expect to be bombed. Have to do Ack Ack. Ship tried out their guns.

8th March

Very clear day. Berthed about 12.30a.m. at Pirasus harbour in Greece. Road in trucks to our camp. Got a great hand from the Greeks as we drove through the street. Camped in a reserve about 4 miles out of Athens. Best place we have ever been in. People very friendly. Great climate. Very hilly but good.

9th March

Talk by the Colonel, a church sermon and leave. Got paid in Greek money. A Greek note worth 18/9. Things very cheap. Nice clean place and also nice girls. Had a look at the Acropolis, the old ruins of Athens. Had a feed and it was not bad. Visited the British Service Club and had a meal. Had to be home at six to do Ack Ack. Can't send any mail yet. Hard language to pick up.

10th March

Had a good nights sleep. Terrible breakfast, full of kerosene. Had to shift our tents and dig them in and then went on leave. Had a stroll around and then had a feed. The brothel area is a lot cleaner than Cairo. A lot of the boys A.W.O.L. Spoil the leave for the rest of us. Got very drunk but got home alright.

11th March

Rifle inspection and a bit of mucking about and then went on leave. Met a chap in Athens who showed us about a bit. Finished up by him getting drunk. Had a yarn with some sailors for a while. Got home in time so that is the main thing. Had a good time but there is not much to see in Athens.

12th March

Had a talk by the 2ⁱ/c about the boys being A.W.O.L. Court Marshal offence now also for being drunk. Never seen such friendly people in all my life. Went on leave at 11a.m. but had to be in by 5p.m. Had a good feed at the British Service Club went to the pictures but did not have time to see all of it.

13th March

Up 5.30a.m. pack all our gear again ready to go by train. Went by big truck to the station where we had to wait till 1.30p.m. Terrible train journey and carriages Passed over some very mountainous country but very pretty. Very cold day and very cold night. Passed through dozens of tunnels. Rumour says we are going to Solonika.

14th March

Passed very close to the sea and went through a bit of a snow storm. Looks tough country to fight in. Got off the train at a place call Katarina about 60 miles from the Bulgarian border. Marched through the town and got a good hand of clapping. Billeted in empty houses. Had a look over the town, only a small place. Very cold, snow on the hills around, but very pretty. The climate is very much like our own.

15th March

Very cold morning but far better than Egypt ever was. Had the usual rifle inspection and mucked about for a couple of hours then four of us had to build a latrine. Took us nearly all day but the other boys went for a march to the sea side to fire the Anti tank gun and tommy gun. Did not have much time to do anything much. Had a fair feed of eggs up the town. Camp tucker very rough and not much of it.

16th March

Church parade in the Greek church of Katarina. All the Greeks hung about to hear the service. It was not bad, the boys sung well. Had a look about the village for a while and then lay on the bed for a while. Had a game of soccer in the street after tea. Hundreds of Greek kids played. They are very poor but clean.

17th March

Rifle inspection and then mucked about all day. Played soccer in the evening with the kids. Moving out tomorrow about 15 miles nearer the border. Very cold night and day.

18th March

Moved out at 8.30a.m. and left the village at 9a.m. Got a great hand from the people. Long march but much better than the desert could see some green fields. Toiled up hill for about 6 hours. Hard going. Came to a village but no room to sleep so we slept out in the open. Tied the blankets to the ground so they would not move. Looks like rain.

19th March

Woke up this morning and the bed was covered with snow. Very cold. March back a mile and a half to a Monastery where we camp. Had to repair the road this afternoon. Kept us warm.. We have 8,000 yards of front to look after. Not far from the Bulgarian Border. Germans said to be moving. Only 6 hours away.

20th March

Had to mend the road to the Monastery. Not a bad job, it kept us warm. It is a great place flowers growing on the road side. Had a bath in a tin of water and it was good. Very cold weather but it is good. Over three weeks since we had any mail and we can't write.

21st March

Mucked about doing some washing in the morning. Some of the boys did a bit of scrub cutting in the front of the place where we dig our defences. Did a bit of digging to our trenches in the afternoon. Had two reconnaissance planes over today. Will be getting bombs any day now. Can hear big guns or bombs nearly all day. We are digging in the back of a village.

22nd March

Still doing plenty of digging but it is not bad going. Very keen at times today. Could do with a bit more to eat. Always ready to go to bed but we boil the billy first.

23rd March

Had to work half a day today and I was one of the lucky ones that worked in the morning. Went for a walk in the afternoon and had a good sleep on a nice green patch of grass. Got paid later in the day.

24th March

The same old thing digging our trenches. Plenty of the boys getting drunk on stuff they call plonk. I think by the smell of it it is pain killer and meths. We shift to the village tomorrow.

25th March

Mess orderly today and it is not a bad job. Still plenty of dirt to shift. Boys don't like walking to work and carrying tools. Plenty of snow still on the hills. Was escort for four of the boys. They got plenty from the Colonel.

26th March

The mob moved today, mess orderly again. Are camping on the veranda of a church. Not a bad little place. Had a very easy time today. Bought a bit of lamb today and fried it in the divi.

27th March

Usual trench digging. Warm sort of a day. Boys not digging too hot getting sick of nothing but digging. Got a touch of the trots going well by night fall. Got a great bed of oak leaves.

Had a day off. Up all night running in and out in the cold. Had to dig a latrine for our section. Cliff has the trots with me. Visit the quack in the afternoon. Told to keep warm and drink sweet tea. Had a game of cricket at night with a pick handle and wooden ball.

29th March

Back to trench digging again today. Did a pretty fair days work. Very warm today. Trenches going ahead all right but I don't think we will ever use them. Plenty of Tortoises around the digging and quite a few snakes.

30th March

Had to work half a day today and the boys did not like it. Had a bath in the afternoon and a game of cricket. Bought some eggs at night some were cooked and some weren't. Got some mail today about time. Be bloody glad when this mucking about is over. Want some action or to be sent home. Doing buggar all just now. Greece is a nice place though.

31st March

Started building an oven in the cook house. Not a bad job. Making it out of stone from a church ruin and the people do not like us taking them. Do not work very hard. Do not hear much news about what is going on around us.

1st April

Still playing about with the oven. Sitting down drinking tea most of the day. Had to do three hours piquet at the cook house and of course we got a bit of stuff for ourselves. Dogs are pretty savage at night will go you quick. One of the boys shot one the other night.

2nd April

Just about finished the oven. Very warm sort of a day just like a N.Z. day. Greece is very much like N.Z. but the people in the country are very backward in their ways of living. Getting wood tonight with a rope and lost quite a bit of skin off the back of my hand. Will do a couple of days bludging. The army is full of them so I might just as well be one of them.

3rd April

Bill Boxy finished the oven, I did not do much. Went home at dinner time and lay on my back. Did me a lot of good at least I think it did. Hand very stiff and sore. Had a bren carrier pulling dead branches off a tree with a rope nearly all the trees are oak.

4th April

Had a day off today. Was piquet on our billets. Teaching some of the Greek kiddies to speak English. Had to go and get my hand dressed after tea. The digging seems to be going ahead alright but I don't think we will fight in them. Having corker weather in Greece.

5th April

Had the day off. Was piquet on the billet. It gets very tiring. Quite a few kids come to see us. Still digging like mad. Weather is still holding out.

6th April

Went to start digging this morning but the officer sent me home. Said I might bugger up my hand so it did not take me long to disappear. Lay in the sun most of the day. Plenty of bombing and cannon fire in the distance and enemy planes everywhere. Had to dig at our trench at night.

7th April

On digging today. Rained like hell last night and we had to sleep out. Did we get wet. Still plenty of noise going on and now we are digging like hell. Getting terrible tucker.

8th April

Still digging in. Our trench is finished but we have to help the others. Bit of rain now and then. Stopped work at 3p.m. to pack our gear we shift some time tonight. Have to stop Jerry somewhere in the hills. Slept in a church and saw a Greek christening. Great bit of work.

9th April

Left Paleostane at 2.15p.m. and marched about $8\frac{1}{2}$ miles to the R.M.T. Had a very cold ride but exciting. Went right through the mountain and what a road. Some drops 1000s of feet. Started to rain just before dark and did we get wet. Had tea at 10.15p.m. and slept in our wet clothes under a groundsheet.

10th April

Rain at night and snow this morning. March on at 8.30a.m. for about $3\frac{1}{2}$ miles where we had a sleep and then on again to the place where we fight the Hun. Sleep under a big stone and it rained quite a bit. Getting sick of rain. Very cold night and we had to dig and carry our gear up the mountain side. Very hard going and getting tired as hell. The town straight below us is called Servia.

11th April

Still digging and expecting to see the Hun any time. Quite a lot of enemy planes about and plenty of bombing and Ack Ack fire. See our bombers go out quite a lot but the Hun has more than us I think. Terrible cold on the feet of a morning.

12th April

Very cold day with a bit of rain. Still digging in and it is a hard job. Expecting action any day. Lot of enemy observation planes about and they stop us from working. Lot of artillery fire just over the range from us.

13th April

A day of expecting and we saw some. Had to deepen our trenches and what a job. Blew up the two bridges today and they seem to have made a job of it. Lot of bombing just over the next range. Germans dive bombed the village about 800 feet below us and scored a direct hit. Put the wind up us. Snowed like hell 1st night and we had to do piquet. People leaving the town with a rush. Expect to be fighting tomorrow.

14th April

Very warm sunny day. Went to the village to pinch stores for ourselves. Was coming up the hill when 24 bombers passed over. Soon dived for cover. German fighters flying up and down the valley and the enemy is just over the river from us. Our artillery did a bit of firing today.

15th April

A day of noises. Bombing and artillery fire. Do not like the dive bombers or the machine gunning from the air. It is not too good firing in a small trench but we just have to make the most of it. It seems years since I took my clothes off had a wash and some sleep. Jerry made an attack but was beaten back.

16th April

Did a bit of digging and some sentry but get very little sleep. We see some great aerial displays by the Hun. Will not move unless his air force is going flat out and he has the planes and he keeps our heads down. Some more of his infantry crossed the flat yesterday and we gave them a hot time. I only dropped one but it was a long shot. I wished I had shot the bloody lot.

17th April

Swopped shots with the Hun but no results. Am just about asleep on my feet and everything on me is wet through. Not so good this rain. Bottom of the trench a sea of mud. Can't even find a place to sit down. Jerry shelling shit out of us and it is not too comfortable.

18th April

Terrible day. More rain last night and this morning till after dinner you could not see for mist on the mountain side. Very uncanny feeling expecting attack any time. Withdrawn from the trench just at dark and had to carry everything on our back. A night I will never forget. We were followed by shell fire the whole way and it was nerve racking, no matter where we went he shelled us. Went till I could not carry things any further only kept my small pack gun and two blankets. One chap killed outright and quite a few were hit with bits of shell and stone.

19th April

Shells followed us till 3a.m. and we are all beat. Had to track through the mountains and it was a nightmare. Boarded the trucks and went like hell. The convoy dive bombed all the way. Had a days rest if you could call it one between bombs. Getting a hell of a doing. Seven of our boys missing. Hid in the scrub all day. Pretty hard on the nerves. Caught three fifth columnists in the afternoon. Got a pile of letters and it was very nice. The chap that was killed was just dropping down beside me. He did not know what hit him. He was hit in the throat. Were shelled for 7 hours continuously.

20th April

Spent the day at rest if you could say so. Planes coming over one at a time bombing and machine gunning and there was some very near misses too close for comfort.

Dug a hole to hide in and spent most of the time in it. Only 150 of the 21st so far. Things sure get on your nerve when you can't fight back. The Huns were said to be landing just opposite us so we spent the night waiting for the B-----s but nothing happened only a very cold time had by all. We are just waiting our turn and Oh Boy it is either me or the Hun. Spitfires shot down some dive bombers.

21st April

Moved 7 miles towards the enemy today and what a march. Had only three air raid warnings otherwise it was quiet. Still in the hills at the narrowest part of Greece which is only 50 miles. Enemy artillery just across the way from us. A big Dornier bomber was flying around yesterday when it saw a spitfire and it made off at full speed about 100 feet off the ground. Plenty of mosquitoes where we live now and they are giving us hell. Feet are still as sore as ever. Got into trouble for not being able to carry out a bren gun. Am on charge for discarding arms in the face of the enemy. I did my best.

22nd April

Spent the day hiding in the scrub on the hillside till 7p.m. Planes flying around bombing and machine gunning all day. A man does not feel safe at all. Moved along the road and a fighter started gunning and I thought it had been shot down but no luck. Arrived at out starting place and were then pinned to the ground by planes ground strafing. Tough on the nerves. Were attached to the 2 for a time. Moved out in trucks to go back somewhere at 9p.m. and what a ride. Terrible cramped. Travelled all night. Could get no sleep. Expected shell fire on the way out.

23rd April

Stopped at a village just at daybreak and then we all scattered and hid for the day. Hundreds of German planes flying about and we thought we were going to be bombed again. No 9 section hid under a plum tree. Three spitfires put fifteen dive bombers to flight. All collected just at nightfall and marched up the pass to take a stand to let the rest of the troops through. There were truck lights as far as the eye could see just like a huge snake. Expecting to have a fight on our hand tomorrow. Only 40 miles from Athens now. Seeing quite a bit of Greece.

24th April

Tried to sleep on the side of a mountain last night but it was too cold. Spent the day under a small pine tree in a shallow hole dug with a bayonet. Planes did a bit of bombing and machine gunning and it is not nice at all. Tough on your nerves this waiting all the time. We are the front line now. Had to walk down the mountainside for a meal, rations and a bottle of water after dark and it is a buggar of a track. Be glad when this is all over.

25th April

Still on the hillside and by God it is cold sleeping in an overcoat. Got the usual bombs and machine gunning. Some of the planes as low as 50 feet. Big convoy of trucks all last night till about 2p.m. today. Have an Aussie machine gun mob with us now and Aussie artillery. Can't get any cigarettes for love or money. Was told we had to hold out another 24 hours. Going to be hard on the nerves. Have got very little protection. Said to be 47 planes shot down around the wharf. Wish they were all shot down.

26th April

Put in the coldest night of my life couldn't sleep. The Hun was sighted at 11.20a.m. and the artillery pasted hell out of them. Lay watching and waiting all day. Aussie machine gunners shot up one patrol. Some of us pulled out at 8.30p.m. but No 9 had to wait till 9p.m. and hell it was hard on the nerves. A man wanted to shout or do something to ease the suspense. One chap could not resist firing at a plane and the result was shell fire.

27th April

Travelled by truck nearly all night and camped under some trees for about 5 hours and then had to move again Jerry hard on our hammer. Passed through a village and the people gave us wine and water. Not far out of the town 7 plane machine gunned us. Killed and wounded a lot and set most of our trucks on fire. Took

up a position near the beach and two hours later 60 tanks were in the village we passed. Taken off the beach by boats at about 1.30a.m. the next morning on the Ajax. Heaved a great sigh of relief very near too late. God was with us the only thing I can think of.

28th April

Arrived safely at Crete per Ajax and had an air alarm as we were being landed. Marched about 2 miles to a rest camp where we had a drink of tea and a piece of bread and an orange and walked about 6 miles to our camp. Had a good wash in a creek and a sleep. Feet in a terrible state. Had not had our boots off for three days and no clean socks for a week. Will never forget Greece. Saw a couple of British planes today. Never thought we had any. Crete seems a nice place. No idea where to next.

29th April

Had a day of rest. Tommy Manson and myself platoon cooks. Most of the boys went to get pay but were unlucky. Had visions of peaches and cream for tea. Spent most of the day lying down. Four of us went to get benzine tins for cooking in. Got four. Very warm day but get a very cold sleep. Air raid and two planes shot down.

30th April

Left camp area at 8a.m. to take up a position overlooking a valley. Expecting parashootists. Had one stop for about an hour and boiled the billy more than the boys expected. Lay under the trees nearly all day. Only getting $\frac{1}{4}$ rations to eat and they will not pay us as Greek currency is bugged now. Feeling pretty hungry on it. Stood too at night but nothing happened more enemy planes over today.

1st May

Stand too this morning for $1\frac{1}{2}$ hours and then went to cook the boys breakfast. Made a pretty good job of it too. Twentyfive in our lot now. The boys do a bit of raiding in garden patches. Went for a swim and it was cold but good. Had a spell in the afternoon till it was time to cook again. Rumour we move to a new position. Bit of a cow no money can't buy anything. Fairly cold sleeping last night.

2nd May

Still had a stand too. Moved about 5 miles back today. Very hot walking and pretty dusty. Hiding in the shade of olive trees again. Got pretty fair rations today so the boys got a good tea. Not much doing just sitting around and talking about the battle. Thirteen killed, forty wounded, thirty seven missing. Very good for the hiding we had. Hun casualties were said to be 76,000.

3rd May

Had a day of rest. Very nice to have things peaceful for a while. Boys pinched a swag of broad beans and they were good in the stew. M.G. Freyberg still thinks we will get parashootists here. We are waiting. Had a big bombing raid today. Seven planes were shot down. Got a bit of shrapnel where we are. Days getting very warm. Dug a slit trench to take cover in. Just in case. Wrote two letters one to Mum and to my Alice, first for a long time.

4th May

Pretty easy sort of a day. Still have to stand too night and morning. The boys very satisfied with the cooking. Went to one of the aerodromes to see if I could find Bob Moore but no luck so the chap with me went to the Maori Bn and it is quite true one platoon cut their way out. Very warm sort of a day. The only Hun planes over were just having a look around and they got a hot reception. Wrote two letters in a hurry but can't get bloody stamps.

5th May

Quiet sort of a day. Went for a swim in the morning and had a bit of a snooze in the afternoon. Only nosey planes around today. Had a rifle inspection this morning. Boys went out and pinched wood. Blew like hell early this morning and just as dark. Fairly warm at night. Still only got the overcoat to sleep in.

6th May

Things much the same as yesterday. Boys getting full now. Our officer put Snick on the mat for a bit of trouble at Servia in Greece. Cania is the name of the town we landed at in Crete. Seeing a bit of the world but I would not like to go through the Greece show again. We are mainly waiting for the parashutes now. No piquets while I am cook. Our sgt is till pretty bad, but the other boys seem alright.

7th May

Each day is just the same. Having a good spell in the shade of the trees. Wrote one letter today. They put some great loads on the donkeys. Nice place but has no amusements.

8th May

Wet dull sort of day. Spent most of the time writing a letter to sis Connie. Rocky plane shot down today. Man seems to eat plenty of chocolate on this place. Island is lousy with ants and they sure are annoying. Not much doing during the day.

9th May

Holding our same camp area. Went for a swim in the morning. Had a bit of rain not much. Very dull day. Wrote quite a bit of my letter in a road culvert and finished it while I was cooking tea. The boys made me read it out and then some of them wanted a copy of it. Run out of ink so I had to finish on the fifteenth page. Think we will get a wet bum tonight. Still the sky jumping scare on the island. No leave to Cania now, don't know the reason.

10th May

Very quiet sort of a day. Had the usual visit from our German friend but he does not get off so light now. They knock down some each day. The Ack Ack fire seems pretty poor to me. Boys still eating the tucker I manage to sling at them.

11th May

Things just the same as usual. Having quite a nice time under the trees. Had the usual swim in the Aegean Sea. Cold to get in but very nice. Feet still sore from our Greek gallop.

12th May

Very normal sort of a day. Fair amount of air activity last night. Quite a bit of Ack Ack fire and search light display. Boys got paid and then had their little game of two up. They quite enjoy their cup of tea at 8.30p.m. There was said to be parashutes dropped last night. Bit of baloney I think. Four planes shot down.

13th May

A day of fasting. Got the back door trots. Was given two days excused duty. Still the parashute alarm going. Only a ricky plane over today. Had a pretty fair sleep today. First since we have been on the place. Not allowed to cook for the two days. Big lot of mail arrived. Letters and parcels. Got about 7 letters.

14th May

Still enjoying a day off. Had a drop of bread and milk for breakfast. Got a couple more letters and parcels. Wrote a letter to Mum Pattillo. Not much news today.

15th May

Quite a bit of bombing and machine gunning over the port today. Thirty two planes came over all dive bombers. They hit two ships in the harbour. Hell of a lot of Ack Ack five went up but did not see them hit anything. Quite a banging for a while. Back on the job today. Opened a parcel from Alice today and it had a nice piece of cake in it. Did not last long. Got a lot of papers and books also.

16th May

Another visit from Herman. The boys call the Hun air force Herman now. Over the aerodromes today and the port. Hit another ship today. Can't make our air force out. Apart from the raid the day was just the same.

17th May

Another quiet sort of day. Very warm. Spend most of the time round the cook house or doing a bit of reading. Herman paid the post another visit. Twenty four planes. Don't know how many they got. Our R.A.F. are bloody quiet. Must be scared or have no planes left. Moved out at 5.20p.m. to act as guard for the King and Queen of Greece and Crown Prince Peter. The place is alive with Greek soldiers and police now. Flies something terrible where we are now. Big rubbish tip about two chain away.

18th May

Just hid all day. Boys did guard all night. Had to dig slit trenches. Big raids on the port and drome. One plane came just over our heads with his engine smoking, don't think he got far. Expecting the Blitz tomorrow. Very warm day and night. Most of the boys have seen the King. Had a great swim in a little creek.

19th May

Just sitting around in the morning. Was told to have our gear ready to move. Moved at 12.30p.m. and marched about 4 miles at top speed. Was it hot. Stopped at a house on the side of the mountains. Body Guard to the King of Greece. Nice place, King a pretty good sort. Cooked the boys a feed and then put a tin of tea in the hot box for piquet. Huns bombing hell out of our Ack Ack. Said to be the day tomorrow. Took my turn at piquet. Too much light showing around the house. They haven't been bombed.

20th May

Buggar of a day. Talk about bombing and machine gunning, parachutes dropping in 100s, Started about 8a.m. Couldn't move for Hun planes. King and party decided to move out so up the hill we went. Abused the King once for not going to ground during a raid. Didn't say anything. Climbed all day and was it hot. Lost everything this time even my razors. Stopped for the night in a village up in the hills. Were we tired and foot sore. Dry bread and cheese for dinner. Hun came in the morning just as we were having breakfast. Greeks fired at us during the day. Thought we were Huns.

21st May

Up at daylight and on the move again. Feet are bleeding underneath. Saw more Huns dropped from planes. Terrible track through the hills. Sort of granite stone cuts the boots about. Some of the boys knocked up. Kings party riding mules and donkeys. Could only get water now and again. Stopped at a shepherds hut for the night. Had tea of mutton soup, sheep milk and snow. Very cold. Well past snow level on the mountains. Eight of the boys turn back, can't make the grade. King gave them 4,000 Dracks. Did not like saying goodbye to them. No sign of our Air Force but plenty of Hun.

22nd May

Up at 5.30a.m. Had a bit of mutton soup and some snow and then on for the last leg. Feet to sore to put to ground. Up hill for an hour and the rest down hill right through a huge forge, sides about 1,500 feet high. Marvellous creek running through the bottom. Crossed it about a dozen times. Entered a village but the Greeks did not seem to trust us. Saw nine dive bombers fly over. Made the sea just before dark. Had a dip and cooked the boys a bit of a feed of meat and veg. Had to stand piquet for an hour and were my feet giving me Hell. Cliff went to sleep.

23rd May

Saw light of navy at 12.25a.m. Woke everyone up and then things started. Every bugger talking and about 50 lights going. I bet they wouldn't have done it in Greece. Was one of the last off and boarded H.M.S. Decoy at 4p.m. Slept till 8.30a.m. and then had a wash. Feet feel like a boil to walk on and are all swollen

Saw ship doc and said Hospital for me. Cliff too. King had a talk with us and said he was going to give us a medal for the endurance test and said he hoped we would wear it. Berthed at Alexandra and sent straight to Hospital. Had a drink and something to eat and then to bed.

24th May

Had a very nice sleep in a spring bed in No 8 G. Hospital. Saw the doc and am being sent to Heliopolis Hospital. Terrible ride in train from Alex. Wind would just about sizzle you. Hot as hell in Egypt. Travelled with Cliff, a sailor, Aussie and an Irishman. Had a cup of tea and two sandwiches a good shower and then to bed.

25th May

Very quiet day on the bed. Had a foot bath and then rubbed in some powder. Had a couple of games of 500. Weather terrible hot. Just sleep on the top of the bed with a pair of pyjama pants on. Very eager to know how things are going with the boys in Crete. Offered 6 ackers for 50 Dracks at the Canteen, nothing doing. Went to church in the morning.

26th May

Just a day of lying on the bed. Aerodrome just across from the hospital and can see some of our long looked for R.A.F. Had quite a few hands of 500. Tucker very light. Had a picture turnout in the hospital at night. Had seen the picture. Very hot day and night. Had a great cold shower before going to bed to try and sleep.

27th May

Just the same as yesterday. Got paid 50 ackers today. Had to sign for a razor. First shave for nearly a week. Feet feeling good now.

28th May

Getting tired of being in hospital. Got an issue of smokes. Things just the same each day. Very hot. Make good use of the showers each day.

29th May

Doc said we can go out tomorrow. Went to a party given by the Heliop Sporting Club. Was not bad. Had a good feed. Saw a fair concert and had a couple of beers but they drowned it in lemonade. Had to do a spot of spud barbering in the morning.

30th May

Left the hospital at 10.30a.m. and got a ride to Bab el Louke St. Had a cup of tea at the Naadi Tent and then a cup of tea at the Base camp. Handed in our rifle and put in No 2 hut. Went and had a talk to the other boys at the 31st Training Bn. They said the King gave them a good time. Ran into Bob Moore. He is looking very well. If I can get a job at Base I am going to take it. Had enough of living like a rabbit for months on end. Going to Cairo tomorrow to get a shaving outfit.

31st May

Got issued with most of a new outfit. Have seen a few of the old boys. Went to Cairo in the afternoon. Had some beer and a look around, then some of the mob started looking for a fight so Cliff and I came home. Did not get in much before time. Carried the water melon home we had pinched.

1st June

Took French leave today for 5½ hours. Bought some shaving gear. Got a pretty good razor but not much of a strop. Managed to get into camp alright. Getting very warm of a night now.

2nd June

Got job in the base cook house today. Will do me for a change. One of the Bn cooks in the cook house. Not much to do but very warm.

3rd June

Much the same as yesterday. Some of the boys coming through for meals now. Heard today that Jack Barnett got killed and Roy Piercy and Dal Knight are missing. Don't know how the rest of the boys got on.

4th June

Cliff went to the training Bn today. Is going to get a job up there. Have been going to the pictures pretty regular lately. Quite a change to get a bit of peace and quietness. Two of the cooks had a fight in the hut today.

5th June

Went to cook in the Sgts cook house with George Cochrane today. It well do me, home away from home. The Sgt in charge of the mess is a bit of a mug to my way of thinking. Time goes fairly well.

6th June

Fairly busy day today. Did a bit of tomorrow's cooking as George is going on leave. Got seventy men to cook for and it is a bit of a rush for one. Pay day today but did not draw any. Went to the pictures with George.

7th June

Not a bad sort of a day. The men got their meals on time although it was a rush for dinner being a hot one. Surprising the men that go on leave. Had a few games of housey and won 131 ackers. Will do for my day off.

8th June

Just another day of the week. Very warm through the day. Plenty of bed bugs in our sleeping boards but they don't worry me. Another chap started in the mens cook house today. George and I have to rise at 4.30a.m. and finish at 6.30p.m. so it is a pretty long day.

9th June

Did a bit of baking today but it did not turn out too good, but it was all eaten. Made some buns for morning tea. George made a sponge but the fire was not going too good. Went to the Maadi Tent for a change tonight.

10th June

Things are just the same each day now, but it is quite a change. Have not seen Cliff for a couple of days now. Wrote a couple of letters and took them up to Sgt Halley to censor.

11th June

Had a day in Cairo with Jim Armstrong. Had to wait for 2½ hours for my leave pass. Very hot weather now. Cairo is just the same as ever. Got two letters today, first for a long time.

12th June

Very quiet sort of a day. The mess Sgt still doing a bit of a moan about the tucker but he won't buy anything to cook.

13th June

Got paid today. Have quite a credit in my pay book now, and am going to send some presents home. Went to the pictures tonight.

14th June

Quiet sort of a day. Hot dinner today so we had a good afternoon doing a bit of writing. Got some more mail today. Pictures at night again. Don't get much chance to go anywhere else.

15th June

Same sort of a day as yesterday. Had a couple of the boys in to see me today. Bill Boyall and Jock McMillan.

14th June

Had a swim at 7a.m. and then went and devoured a weak sort of breakfast. Mucked about for a while and then we all decided to go to Beirut. Got to town about 11a.m. Spent some time looking for a shop that had Canadian beer on tap. We had been looking for it for three days and when we found it it was closed so we went back to our old cafe and had a feed and some beer about 1.30p.m. we decided to go to the races. The trams are free. It is a wag of a course. You see very little of the race on account of the trees in the centre. The horses are fairly small and the times very slow. Only had two bets but made 40 ackers. After the race the horses are led through the crowd in front of the grand stand. Only saw four races and then came back to town, and a feed and some more drinks and was told that we were leaving tomorrow for our old camp the holidays were off. The news travelled like wild fire everyone knew. Left town about 10p.m. for camp. Too hot to sleep.

15th June

Had a swim at 6.15a.m. and was packed ready by 7.30a.m. Left about 9.30a.m. The convoy got parted in Beirut and we had a drive around for a while. We were coming up one of the streets the rest of the convoy was coming down. It was really funny for a while. Very hot in an open truck. Reached camp about 2p.m. I slept most of the way. The men carriers are leaving for Maadi tomorrow so it looks like Egypt again. Had hard biscuits and tea for dinner and I broke a tooth off my plate and split it around the old crack. Played housey at night and cleared £26 Syrian. Split it with Cliff.

16th June

Up early again this morning, thought we would have a lay in but no show. Most of the day was spent just lying about and getting all our gear given to us. In every hut the question is where are we going. Some say Western Desert, England, and home. The last is the best. Nobody knows where. There was no housey tonight so four of us went to the pictures, had a lovely cold beer. Got everything packed but the bedding. It is too hot to sleep, it sort of takes your breath.

17th June

Up at 4.15a.m. this morning, woke the sergeants and then went for a wash. Did not have much breakfast did not feel like bully stew but I cut a fair sort of a lunch. Left camp sharp at 6.20a.m. It is going to be a long ride over 500 miles. Going round all towns possible, passed Baalbeck about 7.30a.m. Some very nice land the other side, lots of spuds, onions, and fruit trees. Very hot riding. Twenty minutes stop every two hours. Got red caps to direct up on all the turnoffs. Stopped 3/4 of an hour for dinner not far from the Tiverus Border. Passed a lot of new camps, they are going up every where. Passed a lake and a lot of the boys thought it was the sea of Galilee but it was some time before we passed it. It was a lovely sight coming down the mountains and running along the shore for quite some time. The roads were very good. Skirted Haifa late in the afternoon. Could see the water towers just outside advance base. Stopped for benzine at a Greek camp, about four miles further on was our own camp. Four of us went to buy some tomatoes and the wog asked us if we had just come from Syria. They are pretty wise. Had a shower at the water point and it was good we got a feed from A company. Bully and biscuits and tea. Sat around talking for a while and it was 10.15p.m. before we knew what had happened. Cliff and I bedded down together. Very hot so we only had one blanket but I was thinking we would need more. Did 210 miles today.

18th June

Got out about 2a.m. to put on more blankets it was very keen. Nearly everyone was out by 5a.m. Bully stew again and we were away at 6.20a.m. On the Haifa, Tel Aviv road for some time but we turned left of Tel Aviv and kept to the open spaces. Passed through a couple of native villages but they were of no size. The orange groves look very nice. Most of the fields have just been harvested and the place looks very bare. Terrible hot day. Had dinner out on the Siani Desert. Had a bit of a sleep in the afternoon but it was too hot. Pulled into a petrol point filled up and then spread out to stay for the night. Did 125 miles today.

Lots of the trucks got stuck. Saw Alf De Thierry again this afternoon. Two years since I saw him. Cliff and I went over and had a talk with him about old times. He was telling me that Doe Doe Mackey got stopped up the desert. Cliff and I went for a shower and then we went over to the Naafi and Cliff got five bottles of beer. We all put in a £1 Syrian and the battalion was going to get us a bottle but it only turned out half a bottle. - The boys had a game of two up with three penny bets. The late news was that we were getting up at 2.30a.m. tomorrow and moving at 3.30a.m.

19th June

Supposed to be a black out but the desert was like a glow warm cave when I got up. Our truck had the cook lorry in tow till we struck the hard road. I slept till day light. We seemed to make pretty good time up till dinner time. The road is like a scenic railway and the Siani Desert stretches as far as the eye can see both sides of the road. A very hot dry wind blowing. The boys still trying to work out where we are going. Stopped at 1.45p.m. right on the side of the Suez Canal. It was not long before we were in the water and it was lovely. Saw a big Arab dhow in a spot of trouble, the pick wouldn't hold and he was drifting towards the bridge. Had tea about 6p.m. The news for tonight was not so hot. Did 172 miles today and it sure was hot travelling.

20th June

Up at 4.30a.m. and was across the Canal into Egypt by 6a.m. I thought we were told we would not be in Egypt again. Got to make Amriya by tonight. Kept to the back streets as much as possible. Passed through part of Cairo. Some of the wogs didn't seem too pleased to see us again. One of the boys gave a wog kid an acker for a paper and he gave him an old one and beat it. They'll cheat you as much as possible. The wogs girl will wave to you while you are on the trucks but get off the truck and they beat it. Pulled in for petrol by the Pyramids and there was a great mess up with the trucks. Terrible hot wind blowing on the way across up the desert. A lot more huts and aerodromes on the way up. The desert sure is changing. Arrived at Amriya about 7.15p.m. Rushed over to a water point for a wash and then someone said a lorry was going down to the showers so five of us got aboard and went down to the Naafi. It was about 1½ miles away. I got 12 tins of beer, two tins of pineapple and a cake of soap. The beer tasted very nice, I felt like it after being dried up all day. Did 220 miles today.

21st June

Left Amriya about 6.30a.m. Once more on the go. Passed a lot of new camps and staging areas. Terrible lot of traffic on the road. First stop 9a.m. for twenty minutes. Stopped at El Darba for dinner. A lot of the boys paid a visit to the NaAFI. I spent most of the time in the truck it was cooler. Passed a lot of air fields, but also passed a lot of ours on trucks about 35. All of them were fighters. You could fry eggs in the sun it is that hot. Passed to the right of Mesa Matruh and stopped just the other side. We had just dug a slit trench and boiled the billy when words came around that we were on half an hours notice. It was just then that we got word that Tobruk had fallen. Next we were on the quarter of an hour and then word came and we were away again at 8.45p.m. Did about 16 miles and then bedded down. Did 183 miles toady.

22nd June

Up at 6a.m. and the order came that we were not moving till 9a.m. Most of us just lay about in the shade of the trucks. Had just started dinner when we were told we had to move to prepared positions and that if we hurried the trucks would take up. The place we stopped at was right by the sand in the glaring white sand and the position, well they were full of sand. Right away we set to dig and boy was it hot. We stopped at 8p.m. for stand too. We got nicely burnt. Can't find our cut and cover. It must have fallen in. We were told to expect the Hun at any time, but he is a long way away yet. They way that Tobruk has fallen that the South African armoured corp had let us down but we don't know for sure. We are very lucky we have a well just in front of us. Had a good wash about 9p.m. and some Indians were having a wash at the same time. They said that England will have to pull her finger out very shortly if she wants to win. It is no doubt we want a second front to do any good up here. Heard some bombing in the distance. Cliff and I second on piquet tonight.

23rd June

Stand too from 4.45a.m. to 5.45a.m. Some of the boys went back to bed. I did a bit of digging. Worked like hell today but could not find our cut and cover. Will have to dig one for ourselves. Quite a lot of arguing going on about it too, some want to build a sand bag one but it won't hold in the loose sand. It was well into the afternoon before we got really going, to build one of iron. There is plenty of it about. Stan and Bill went away scrounging for stuff while the rest of us went on with the work. A lot of our trench had fallen in and we had to retin the sides. It was very hot today. Sunburnt as red as a turkey. It said over the air that Tobruk was taken again but we lost it again. Can't make it out. The anti Tank chaps were taken off the two pounder to get some six pounders and that the 18th battalion were taking over their guns. Plenty of bombing going on tonight and some of it is not to far away. Couldn't sleep for sun burn. Can't lie on my side, back or belly very sore. Each man got two bottles of beer today. It was very nice. While Cliff and I were on piquet we saw a lot of bombing. At Mesa Matruch we saw a great display of coloured lights but we did not see any plane fall.

24th June

Stand too the same time but it was a bit more exciting. It was quite light and a plane came howling across, we took it for one of our own but we were very wrong. About a mile back he dropped his bombs and then beat it up the coast. Only blew a bit of some work shops in. In the afternoon we saw the Rocky plane come over. Worked with the shirt on today. Still very sore. Did quite a spot of work. Did a fair bit of our dugout. Got three of the walls up. Some of the boys drew pay. Quite a few day light raids but don't think there was much damage. Had a couple of loverly bottles of beer. Did not get a lot of sleep before we had to go on piquet but I suppose the Hun is the same way. He is said to be not so far away, but it is not worrying us any.

25th June

Received word warly this morning that we were moving at 11a.m. After all the hard work we did I had to get a new pair of boots, they are going to be lovely to go into action with. Carried all our gear down to the road, and then just lay about till 6p.m. when we moved to our previous camping ground. Three Hun planes made a raid and set a light to a petrol dump just outside Akersa Matruch. We sat at the camping place till 11p.m. before we moved again. It appears we are guard to brigade, sort of a flying coloumn. A company were lucky they are L.O.B. Very cold with no over coat on. Managed to get some sleep.

26th June

Stopped about daylight and dug in. Very hot laying out in the boiling sun. We had three bottles of beer between three men and boy was it good. Saw plenty of our planes today. They were backwards and forwards all day. They saw we have air superiority two to one. Moved about 5p.m. just before dusk about 12 Hun bombers came over and blasted hell out of the Maori area. Only saw one truck set on fire. Did we pile out of our lorry. About an hour later we got word that the Hun was two miles away and we were going straight in to them found out later on that he was 15 miles away. Stopped about 12 midnight to dig in.

27th June

Was digging till 3.30a.m. The place Cliff and I had was solid rock, we could only get down about one foot so we dug another, it was better. Up again at 4.45a.m. for stand too. It was pretty chilly. Sat around till 9a.m. and then moved to the edge of the escarpment to take up new position between the artillery and anti tank. The artillery is a nice noise in your ear. Could not dig in just had to pile the stones up. The Hun shelled us all day but did very little damage. About 4p.m. the Hun broke through the 20th with tanks - our own I tanks. They say we got 6 tanks. At that time the shells were coming from all ways and landing very close. In the afternoon the Huns came across the flat by the Maoris and they out after them with the bayonet and caught about 40. About 8.30p.m. word came we were moving at 9p.m. but it was about 12 midnight. We lost one or two trucks but nothing much. We had three wounded. General Freyberg got hit in the neck. It is said that a Hun officer drove up and said to some of the truck drivers, follow me and took four trucks with him.

28th June

About 3a.m. we tried a break out of the circle and Jerry tied into us with anti tank guns and machine guns. It was just plain hell for a few minutes. There was quite a few trucks blew up around us, but his shooting was terrible. I think he was jittery. At one time his tank gun was firing right across the front of our truck but just as we got level he stopped. it was our chance and we took it. The driver made the most of it, he swerved left and put his foot hard down. There was trucks everywhere, just like a western gold rush. The fire from the machine guns was like a fire works display. The dash went on for 25 miles before we stopped. No. 9 section truck got hit and 8 of the chaps were wounded. Our cook got killed. Early this morning we got parted from our convoy and ran all day with B Echelon. Everybody seemed to be going everywhere. We stopped about 6p.m. for the night and Jerry was bombing like hell just over to our right. Heard there was 60 casualties in the 21st the night we thought he bombed the Maoris.

29th June

Had a pretty good sleep, got up about 6.30a.m. We had a drink of coffee and some bully beef that we had on us. We sat about till 10.30a.m. We had just got to the metal road when we saw some of our trucks in another convoy so we joined up with them. We had only about seven miles to go to our area. We found our officier waiting for us, we thought he had been taken prisoner as we saw his truck get hit. Six of our boys got hit on that truck. We had a good feed of bully stew and did not feel so bad. Just lay about all day waiting for the other boys to come in. We have some nice deep trenches just behind us and we made the most of them. I had a shave and hair cut and it made the world of difference, we also had a bottle of beer. It is said we are at our last line of defence now, we will just have to hold out. Up till midnight there was dozens of Hun planes about and they dropped a few bombs in our area but hit nothing, they only kept us awake. The name of the place is Kaponga Box.

30th June

Stood too this morning and at 9a.m. we moved out to what was said to be our new area. It seemed a bit of a muck up for a start. It was terrible hot and dusty, one of the worst days I have known for thirst. It is the place to be in to find the value of water, I could drink gallons of it. About 5p.m. we started to dig in very near solid rock, we weem very unlucky that way. About 9p.m. word came to move 500 yeards and dig in again. It would have been a very sad time for the Hun had he appeared just then, we were as wild as hell, we struck rock again. We dug till midnight and then just flopped in the hole we had to sleep. Quite a spot of bombing going on around us, but we were tired and took little notice.

1st July

The usual stand too. Seems to be a pretty big battle raging over on our left, the big stuff is pounding flat out. Had to shift about 200 yards and dig in again. This dig, digging gets a bit tiresome but they say the Hun is worse off we hope so. Cliff and I put up a small tent to try and hide from the sand. There has been a sand storm blowing the last three days and it is tough on the eyes. About five o'clock word came to stand too as tanks were approaching but they turned off to the north. After stand too No. 8 section was sent out 1000 yeards as a listening post. Cliff and I were on from 11p.m. to 1a.m. it was tough keeping awake. They say we got 30 Hun tanks and lost 16. Great artillary barrage just before dark.

2nd July

Returned to our area from the listening post at stand too. Had a little sleep before breakfast. Our air force gave the Hun hell all last night. We could see the planes in the moon light. The noise from the bombing was terrific. Moved about 600 yards North into D company area. D Company are over at the 19th lines. The 19th went on a raiding party yesterday and were very successful. They had artillary and tank guns with them. Did very little digging. Can't sleep for the heat and dust. Word came about 4.30p.m. that the Hun infantry attacked the 6th but were repulsed each time, but that 40 tanks were making north to come in behind us. After tea word came from the divisional cavalry that the tank battle was in our favour. Our air force was very busy again last night. They say we are going to attack tomorrow.

3rd July

Was told at breakfast time that we were moving at 8.30a.m. but at 8a.m. we were under way back to our old possies. We had to fix our trench so that we could fire any way. Just lay about most of the day. Our chaps bought in about 100 Italians of the Areito Division and also about 200 later in the day. Followed the Y.M.C.A. trucks about for tin fruit but only managed to get one tin. At tea time we were told that we were moving out at 8.30p.m. We boarded the trucks and then we found out that we were going out to try and round up 50 Italian trucks. Everybody was as keen as mustard, cleaning the rifle and bayonet. We moved around till midnight but there was too much noise - the birds flew.

4th July

Moved around till nearly daylight to try and find the enemy but he had not waited. Had a scratch breakfast and then moved about two miles forward. Was sitting in the trucks waiting for the next move when 12 dive bombers, came over. We scattered like quail. They bombed the artillery just behind us, set a light to a couple of trucks and heard later that 11 had been killed. When we scattered and were lying on the ground a big piece of shell from one of the artillery trucks landed along side Cliff. We were annoyed all day by dive bombers, especially Divisional H.Q. The long range artillery was giving him trouble and he was out to silence it. Heard later in the day that the 5th Brigade had taken some escarpment and 500 Hun prisoners. Got a fair swag of mail just before dark and was reading a letter when 12 dive bombers had another go it was a case of dive for your hole like a rabbit. At dark the heaviest artillery barrage went up that I have ever heard. We seem to think it was the navy giving him a hurryup.

5th July

Very damp this morning, heavy fog everywhere but Jerries planes still drone about. Heard today that the Hun made an attack in one place but was driven back 10 miles by the Aussies. There is a possibility of a shift at dinner time. Put up our small tent for shade. Very hot today. Our Artillary seem to be giving him a hurry up, but late in the afternoon Jerry smacked a few big ones into the gully just in front of us. Jerry still got his dive bombers working well. Quite a bit of strapping. A lot of Pommy artillery came through us this afternoon, bug stuff too. A Pommy said that some of our chaps got 8 out of 9 dive bombers today. Moved at 8.15p.m. but it was very slow. The convoy got cut in half by an artillery convoy and some of us got lost. Finished up in the Maori lines along side a mine field. Bedded down at 12.30p.m. for the night to see what tomorrow will bring we are lost. Can't find Divisional H.Q. and we are supposed to be guarding them.

6th July

Spent a very good nights sleep or what there was. Moved about 7.30a.m. We had to disperse early, we were a lovely target all in a heap. Was just having a drink of tea when we had to move so we finished it on the way. We were quite away from Div, there was a bit of running about to find them. The first news we heard this morning was that our old Colonel Gray had been killed by bombing yesterday. Found Div about 10.30a.m. Passed through an oasis that had a metal road running from it. Today was the hottest so far. It was too hot to dig in, we were a bit jittery when the dive bombers came over. Dug a trench about 5p.m. when it was cooler. 14 dive bombers bombed just over the escarpemnt from us just at tea time. It was bad, the boys all grouped about the tucker truck. Was glad when night came, the sun would melt anyone. The artillery was said to be putting up a barrage at 6.30p.m. but it was not till later in the evening. There was some great gun flashes. The planes still drone over head even though there is no moon. Rumour is that some armoured div captured a div of Italians yesterday. A bit hard to believe.

7th July

Most of us slept in this morning. Fairly keen wind blowing. Went over to our truck this morning to fix our primus. The driver and I had a great job with it. Three of our fighters came low over us this morning but we beat it to our holes. A while later about a dozen came over. Saw part of a dog fight and the Hun panicked by Div H.Q. Jerry doing a lot of dive bombing behind and on both sides of us.

One or two big convoys passed through us. There is always a wind blowing and the sand is a fair cow, makes it harder to hear the planes. Managed to find and book and do a spot of reading. Wrote two letters. Tea ration short tonight. Moved to Company H.Q. at dark said to be moving back to our old positions at 2.30a.m. tomorrow. Had just got bedded down when we were told that enemy tanks were only three miles away and if anything happened we were to get in the trucks and beat it East. About 11.45p.m. there was a hell of a noise in front of us. Everybody was ready to fly. It was our divisional cavalry and some armoured stuff moving around us, we thought it was Jerry. There was a shot fired and one of our boys was hit. We bedded down again but with our ears cocked.

8th July

Got moving about daylight again, and finished up at our old place. No 10 and 11 tried to get our holes but they soon got out. Put up a tent and just lay down till dinner time. Tea getting a bit short now. Someone said Jerry cut our pipe line. Very little bombing in the morning but quite a few planes about. Just after dinner we moved about 200 yards and dug in again. Very good digging but very dusty, and the waddi is very hot. Put the tent up for shade again. The artillery put over one or two very strong barrages. I thought they would get an answer but no. Boiled the billy at 3p.m. and it was good. About 5p.m. Jerry did a spot of dive bombing away in front of us, but the planes seemed close it was no time before we were underground. 5.30p.m. word came we were moving at 8.30p.m. We were very watchful as it is a good time for Hun planes to appear. Moved back about 9 miles to take up a new position where our line is said to be a little weak. Stones to dig in again but we did not go too deep. Expect some shelling in the morning.

9th July

It took some time to finish digging in this morning as you pulled out big stones the sides fill in. Our artillery giving the Italians hell, putting over some good barrages. Said to be only an armoured div between us and the enemy. Terrible hot lying in an open trench, put the overcoat over for shade but it is hotter than ever, the heat is killing. Some of our fighters diving some strafing just in front of us. there is not much to do but lie down and rest or try to. Received a cable to say that Granny had died. Word came round that we can send cables away tomorrow. Rumour is that the Aussies attack tomorrow. About 5.45p.m. Hun dive bombers came over and bombed and strafed our transport and artillery but did no damage. Some say we just about got Jerry surrounded I hope so. It is heaven when night falls, things cool off a bit. A person had got to be here to realize the stinking heat.

10th July

About 3.40a.m. hell broke loose. the Aussies made an attack and rove Jerry back. The shelling was terrific. We could hear the tanks moving about and their guns blazing flat. The din kept up till about 9a.m. The Aussies had taken their objective and were digging in by 8a.m. Our artillery put up a terrible fire. The Hun sent 20 odd tanks to our front to keep us busy so that we could not attack his flank. Anti tank got four tanks for sure. Our fighters doing a lot of strafing. Had a shave and sleep while the blitz was on. The heat is something terrible. Sent cables just before dinner. Lay in the trench after dinner but it was too hot, fair stifling, Jerry is working around to our left. He put a few mortar shots a bit too close for comfort. Seems to be a dinkum go with big stuff in front of us. Watched a dogfight after tea but nothing came down, it was not long before they were out of sight. Went to sleep with the start of another tank battle ringing in my ears. We got 9 tanks today. At 10.45p.m. word came for us to move back to a new position. We passed very close to the Huns flares, they lit up the trucks, I expected some shelling.

11th July

Bedded down around the trucks at 3.45a.m. till daylight. Had just got a cup of tea going when we had to move but we drank it while the truck was on the move. Digging in on a big flat at least we are trying to. It is just one big rock. All we can do is put up a breast work of stones but that is no use against tanks. Can see the battle raging in front of us. Our fighter planes patrolling overhead, sounds very nice. This desert is hell in the summer. Could drink gallons of water but can't get it. Put up our small tent and had a bit of sleep. Was dreaming that I was drinking as much water as I could when Bill woke me up to have a drink of coffee it was good. Moved at 4.30p.m. to take on the left of our former position. Took us four hours to do 7 miles. The 4th and 5th went over the top just before dusk. The enemy put up a strong barrage. Could see the boys lined up on the skyline. Our tanks had gone forward the night before and found very little enemy. At the present time we are ready to be called upon if needed. Struck pretty tough digging. Terrible lot of parachute flares just ahead of us. Our planes doing great night work.

12th July

Fair amount of shell fire going this morning but the Hun seems pretty well back. Saw 28 of our tanks going across our front, they looked lovely. Had to deepen our hole and it was tough going. Very heavy dew this morning my coat was wet through but we can't get enough water to drink our thirst is terrible. I can't see why we should be short there are empty trucks coming up all the time. Bull Morgan arrived with a two gallon tin and we soon made tea of it. Got a lot of reinforcements today two came to our section. Lay under our tent all the afternoon but it is still hot. Had to stand too at 6p.m. as the 4th were expecting a counter attack by the Hun. Big tank battle started just at dusk and moved from N.W. to N.E. Plenty of noise. Had to stand too till 9p.m.

13th July

Very heavy fog during the night my coat is very damp from sleeping in my hole. Spent nearly all the morning getting some big stones out of my trench. Had some of D Company looking in and giving advice. Very little shell fire this morning but the air force are giving them a hurry up. Spent most of the afternoon lying under our tent and chasing canteen lorries. D Company were lucky they had them twice, most of them doubled up so when they came to our area I did the same. Got some fruit and cigs. Had to dig a C.T. connecting the second post. Boys are growling about the little water we are getting. The heat is very near unbearable. About 9p.m. our artillery put up a great barrage, it lit up the ground for some distance. Our air force dropped a terrible lot of bombs just before dusk and plenty more after dark. Tried to sleep under our tent but it was too hot, had to put my head outside.

14th July

Can't make out this heavy dew every morning and it is quite cold. Finished the trench and Cliff did some to his one. Rumour is that we get an extra water bottle to drink at night if we want it. Was lying under the tent when Hermie came over he went a long way back, turned came back and dropped his bombs just behind us, they passed over and our air force passed them returning. Rumoured we move at 3p.m. to relieve the Maories. Got some bread for dinner. Had gone about a mile when the Hun bombed and strafed around us. Had to advance under pretty heavy shell fire. Got into some trenches for about 2½ hours. Lot of tanks moved up behind and through us. Word came around that we were going in for a bayonet fight. Had a long way to walk to the starting line. Rested for about 3/4 hour and then forward about 11p.m. Walked right through a mine field and didn't know it and also walked into a trip wire. About 12 midnight we went in with a rush and a yell.

15th July

There was bullets flying everywhere we could hear our own chaps going down. The enemy took to their heels in trucks and all sorts of things. Quite a few machine gun posts stayed but we grenade them out, and some we couldn't get, they were a pest. The whole thing was frightening. We had more prisoners than we knew what to do with, in the finish we were just milling around. Then a Hun tank started to follow us around and shell us and to spot for their mortars. It was hell for a while we couldn't stop the tank. He would let us get up to him and then move on. By this time we were all mixed up and some of us started to come out with the 23rd Colonel. We walked till just about daylight and then we turned and went back in again to consolidate. It was a trap. At daylight we were machine gunned, mortared and fired at by tanks. I had a direct hit on my hole with an anti tank shell but I did not get hurt. Three tanks came in behind our boys and they had to surrender it was the only thing they could do. They got 100s of our boys, it was a pitiful sight, just because our tanks did not follow us in. We retreated to a ridge to make a stand, and got pelted from every side. It was a nightmare. There was only four of us left of the 18th we didn't know where the other boys were. All day Jerry pelted us. About 4p.m. some of our armoured stuff and an Indian division broke through to us. About 5.30p.m. 16 Hun tanks came in at our backs so we had to up and run through our own tanks amidst a hail of tank shells, it was hellish. We walked and ran, and finally got a ride on a lorry. We met our cook truck coming in with rations. We were beat, we could hardly walk our feet were so sore, I had hurt my hip to help things. We just got back to our area in time to be dive bombed twice - what a day. Cliff and I stuck together all the time. There is about forty of B company left, about one Company of the battalion. They said they were moving forward again at 8.15p.m. but it was too dangerous so we got into a lorry and went to sleep.

16th July

The Hun likes the shrapnel shells and they are wicked. You could hardly see a thing for dust and smoke and you couldn't hear anyone speak for the noise. There was a great tank battle raging at the same time. It went till well after dark. Saw a good dogfight but nothing came down.

17th July

Mornings not so cold now. Terrible day just sitting in your slit trench under the blazing sun, Jerry dropping a few big shells around us but our artillery are pounding him. The Hun bombed our artillery again but did not hit anything. Some of the boys picking up a bit of the enemies gear but I can't be bothered. Artillery P.U. hit a mine just over from us and the driver got his right arm blown off. Two Hun fighters flew low over us just at dinner time and it seemed as if one went down just behind us. Boiled the billy in the afternoon and it was good. A couple of our boys came back yesterday. Just before dusk two more planes flew low over us but did no strafing. The engineers wired the mine field off today. Just at dark word came to expect an attack by Jerry. Two Hun planes dropped flares all around our area and then did a spot of bombing. Getting fair sick of the desert five weeks without a spell. It was very good of Mr Nash.

18th July

Just sat on our behinds most of the day. No. 12 and 11 had to lift the mine field. The engineers took the primers out and we had to stack them. It was a big mine field of Gypo and British that the Hun had taken. Jerry did quite a spot of shelling both sides of us. The Hun bombed our artillery in the afternoon but only got one truck. There are tanks galore right and behind us. Terrible hot in the sun with no shade, only the Indians in front of us. Our tanks made a move out late in the afternoon but they were shelled back. At 5.30p.m. the Indians went over the top to take the ridge we were to have taken the other night, hill 63. There was 300 field pieces firing at Jerry, you never heard such a barrage, for about 2 hours, it kept up for about three hours off and on. 4.30p.m. we were told to prepare to move but it did not come off, the Maoris were taking over. It is rumoured that we go to Maadi. Our tanks moved about 5.30p.m. and 16 dive bombers bombed them but they got nothing. Getting sick of this compaign want a spell, very dirty. 68 missing in our company Jerry put some shells to close for comfort they make you hunt the bottom of your trench.

The R.A.F. did a spot of night bombing with heavy stuff, could see some fires after the bombing. Big tank battle just in front of us can see the exchange of shots. Bad place to be in.

19th July

Moved out about 6a.m. to let the Maoris take over. Moved about 10 miles back. Dug a slit trench as Jerry does quite a spot of bombing behind the lines. Saw 18 of our fighters patrolling our area. Put up a shade but it is still very hot. Our truck left us to rejoin his section, good driver, Shorty his mate Don got wounded. Got a gallon of water today to wash with it was real good. First wash since we came up the desert. Have not had a shave for a long time, look a beauty. Got a tin of tobacco two sticks of chocolate, a box of matches and a packet of papers from the Y.M.C.A. free today. Got two tins of beer and a tin of fruit this afternoon. Went to hear the news at night but it was not much. Came back and sat down along side one of the boys but soon bounded to my feet. I was stung by a scorpion and boy did it sting. I couldn't sleep for it. About midnight a great line of fire shot up across the desert, could not make out what it was.

20th July

Got our breakfast at 6.30a.m. and from then on we did very little but lie in the shade. Quite a few went to the R.A.P. to get desert sores fired, they are a bit of a pest. Very hot today. Picked over the missing boys gear and sent it all back to company H.Q. Got another two tins of beer but we don't enjoy it as much as we thought we would. Things seem very quiet. Don't know if we go right out or not, we hope we do. Went to church this morning. Got word to say we were moving up to attack tonight. Moved at 5p.m. Did about 9 miles and then Jerry started shelling us. Went forward at dusk under a machine gun barrage following the 6th. All right for a start but when we tried to take our post we were chased by tanks, there was 8 of them. They played hell with us, lost a lot of boys. Had to retire and dig in we could see the tanks just in front of us.

21st July

Shifted back about 500 yeards at 4a.m. and dug in on the edge of Jerries mine field I had a mine about three feet behind my trench. Just after daylight he started to mortar us and one landed 18 inches in front of my hole. It nearly deafened me and gave me quite a kick in the stomach. All the front of hole fell in on top of me. I had to left my head or I would have smothered. It was a near thing, too close for comfort. Every now and again he would sweep the area with machine gun fire. He had us at his mercy. Our mortars did some good work so did the Vickers. Our twenty fives were also very good. We could see the Hun hopping about just in front of us. About 3p.m. one of our tanks went forward for a look and just as he stopped three Hun tanks appeared on the ridge and started to fire at him. I could see them fire and then the shells would whine over the trench. Just at dusk we moved back about a mile and dug in. It took me all my time to walk, I had a fearful headache. I felt done. The going has been too willing. Very stoney where we had to dig in.

22nd July

Had to stand too this morning and then we did a bit more to our trenches but it is too hot to move about. Put a blanket up for shade but it makes the hole like an oven. The Hun gave us a few shells today, I don't care for them at all. Every time the cook truck comes up we get the mud, we are glad of the tea but we curse it. Get a rum ration each night, we can do with it our nerves are a bit shot up. The only thing we can do is lie in the hole and take what comes. Jerries machine guns and tanks do a lot of blind firing at night. He uses a lot of tracer so they are easier to dodge.

23rd July

Much the same as yesterday, hide sweat, and swot flies of which there are millions. Quite a few of the boys got dysentry, got a touch of it myself. This sort of game would drive one nuts.

24th July

Morning and afternoon just the same. Got two tins of beer each. Got the Q.M. to bring up a bag of paper for us, we need it. No 4 section went out on partol. My feet are very sore, they are scalded very bad.

25th July

Same as yesterday. The heat and flies something terrific. Some shells landed very close. The schrapnel has a nasty whine.

26th July

Stand too as usual. Went and had a talk with old Baldy. Boys getting a bit sick of just sitting about. A lot of rumours about that we are going to be relieved but I will believe it when we are out of the battle area. Very hot today and the flies are just about undescribable, life sure is a misery. Got our usual quota of shells and some were very close. At 9p.m. we moved back about 25 yards and dug in again. the digging is very tough, struck solid stone. Worked till midnight, had had enough of it by then.

27th July

Got more men tonight.

28th July

29th July

30th July

31st July

1st August

2nd August

3rd August

4th August

5th August

6th August

7th August

Stand too as usual and then sat in the trench and let the flies annoy me till 8.30a.m. when one from each section went back to B Echelon to get clean clothes for the other boys. Got a few shells after us, one was pretty close. I put all Cliffs personal gear in with Vals and we bought it back with us. We got off the truck about 1,000 yards behind our lines and had to walk back, the Hun was dropping some big stuff 8 inch just over on our right and it did not sound too nice. The mortar chaps said he was dropping them 25 yards in front and 50 yards behind them. I was very glad when I was back in my hole again, just got back before dinner. No show of getting any peace in the afternoons, too hot, very near unbearable. Jerry blastered hell out of us for 1½ hours tonight it is a very nice feeling. Got a M.F.C. parcel today and a letter from Aunty. There is not much chance of us getting relieved when they are sending the boys on leave. Our anti tank had a go at shooting by very light and they did very well. Our mortars give him a hurry up and then the machine gunners did and then Jerry retaliated with everything what a noise.

8th August

Usual stand too. Feel very tired after only two hours sleep. Put some more sand bags around our trench. Too much movement around our area now, think we will get some shelling. Hun doing some all around us. The flies are something wicked, they just about drive us mad. Felt very crook this afternoon but can't get any peace. Jerry started shelling us about 5.30p.m. and they were very close. Got one about five feet in front of my slit-trench shook all the dirt in on us. The new chaps name is Syd Jensen. He used to work down the King Country Ngatamahine. At tea time the officer told me I was to go back to B Echelon for a week till my feet heal up, they are very sore. Came back on the ration truck as far as the cook house where I slept for the night.

9th August

Went to the doc this morning and told him my troubles and he sent me back to the company camp at B Echelon for three or four days. Had quite a talk to Padre Dawson. Just as we left the R.A.P. Jerry dive bombed our 25 pounders with his fighter bombers but I believe he missed badly. Had a good wash and then got all my desert sores tied up and my feet done. Met Norman Jones today he had been bad with dysentery. First time I have seen him since he was living at Homai. We had a great nag over a cup of tea. Fairly quiet out here. Jerry dive bombed the artillery about 6p.m. again. Seems to be a lot of shelling going on in the distance. It is said he is going to attack somewhere very shortly. Still a scare about Para troops but I hope it does not come off. About 6 of us sat till 11p.m. just outside our tent and yawned about far away home. Few planes flying about.

10th August

Couldn't sleep much last night, nerves seem to be very much on edge and getting the old pains in the chest again. Stay in till about 7a.m. but don't feel rested. Can't seem to settle down at all. Treated my feet about 6 times but soon as they get warm they start and burn again. Went for a stroll to the R.M.T. canteen and got tobacco, matches and fruit. Flies are terrible they just about drive you nuts, and it is very hot. Get very little news as to what is happening. Was supposed to shift back 2 miles today but we go 6a.m. tomorrow. Sat and talked for some time over a cup of tea. Been going to write some letters but can't seem to settle down. Jerry must have spotted one of our patrols as there was a lot of fire from tanks for some time. More of our planes over again tonight. the new chaps say that a Hun fighter shot down one of our fighters just behind our R.A.P.

11th August

For once the army was on time we moved at 6a.m. The new area is quite good. The B Echelon food is very good. Just over to our left is the two Bombay ambulance planes that Jerry shot up, they are a mess. Just lay in the tent most of the day. Was going down to the M.D.S. to see about a new dental plate and have my chest sounded but could not get a truck, too far to walk my feet are still sore. Very hot and dusty today we have still got more than our share of flies. The latest is that Jerry is going to attack, 36 hours from last night. Another chap came in for a rest fairly late last night. Had the usual talk over our mug of tea. The night air is a bit keen tonight.

12th August

Today was much the same as yesterday. A lot of planes flying about last night. Heard quite a spot of bombing in the distance. Wrote a short letter to both Alices today, but the damn flies gave no peace. Took a stroll to the R.M.T. canteen and got biscuits for afternoon tea. Dug a slit trench for safety sake today. Fairly got dusty today. Once again we spoke among ourselves how the war could be won. Got a beer issue but it does not taste as good as a nice cup of tea. Still got a touch of dysentery.

13th August

Quite a noise going on early this morning. Heard later on that the Indians had gone forward to straighten out their line. Very warm today. The doc came down to see us today. He said my feet will be alright when we get back to Base, they can be treated every day. Sounds hopeful. He said I could go on my holidays, that the salt water would be good for them but when they leave party came out they said that Kelly Brown said it was no use me going unless I was fit so I will have to wait till next time. I am a bit disappointed as I wanted to go with Snick and Ted. The first lot of leave boys came back tonight, but they did not have much of a time, they felt crook most of the time. Got a bottle of beer between two of us. Paid a visit to our R.M.T. cook truck for some tea and sugar. The latest rumour is that the 22nd take over from us on the 20th and we go back for a spell. Our outfit is the only one that has not had a spell so far.

14th August

Got out of bed about 7a.m. had a cat wash and then waited for breakfast. Most of the boys that came back from leave do not look too good. I think we will all be glad when we have finished, very hot today. One of the boys missed the truck that was taking them back to battalion so he stayed with Peter and I and went back about 7p.m. with Joe Rooney. Joe was out to the Y.M.C.A. for stuff for the boys. The rumour is that when the Indians went forward the other night to straighten their line, the only Huns they saw was dead ones. The artillery barrage must have been terrible. Another C company chap out for a rest. Very quiet sort of a day. Bob Williamson gave me his pipe to carve, also his pocket knife to use.

15th August

Out of bed very early this morning, still got bit of dysentry. Don't feel too good, passed blood twice today but if you go to the doc and he sends you out, you can't get back to your battalion, they are putting the boys in anywhere and I don't want to go to another outfit. Steve and Joe and some of the other boys came back to B Echelon for clean clothes, they had a good wash while they were here. I carved Bobs pipe for him and made a good job of it. Two other chaps want me to do theirs but I haven't a decent knife. Told Steve I would be going back tomorrow. Very warm today but the evening was very keen. Our ack ack shot down two planes today. One chap bailed out and was taken prisoner. The boys say that the front line was quiet of shell fire.

16th August

Don't feel too good today. Had no dinner or breakfast. Still got the dysentry. Had a spot of tea but felt as if I could vomit. I think the desert is getting too tough for me, been here a long time now. Very hot today. Rumours still running riot but we take it with salt. The vest one was that the 22nd was going to relieve us but that is not so, they are coming in with us. They are wiring us in, making a box of it. the boys are getting fed up with things, too many bungles happening.

17th August

Don't feel so bad, was going to go back today but my feet started to get sore again. Had a good dog fight over our area today but saw nothing come down. Joe Rooney and Syd Howd came out fairly early for leave but they did not get away any sooner. Jerry dropped a couple of bombs near the M.D.S. and hit something but don't know what. Fairly cloudy this morning. Saw a few of our planes about in the afternoon but also some of Jerries. The boys say things are still very quiet up front. Supposed to be moving back towards Bur El Arak at 1.30p.m. tomorrow and I am going back also and I will take my leave from there Major Green said it would be alright.

18th August

Had a fair sort of a breakfast and then we pulled down the small tents and rolled them up and made the area tidy. Got a hot dinner today. Got aboard the trucks at 1.15p.m. but sat there till 4.30p.m. We made a drink of tea about 3p.m. Baldy Vincent told me that I was last on the leave list now on account of my stay at B Echelon. It is just too bad that my gear is packed away. I rode with Jew boy Smith and boy what a driver, he should be pushing a barrow. He is frightened to change gear. The convoy was very slow at the start off but when it got dark they went like hell. Quite a few Pommies and Yanks up the desert now. We camped for the night about 8 miles from our proper place. I walked all round the convoy looking for my blankets but could not find the truck so I had to borrow some.

19th August

Rained about 4a.m. quite a change to be wakened by the rain on your face. The chap sleeping next to me had a scorpion in with him. Moved out at 6a.m. Rode with Bob Williamson today, a very good driver. Got a job as offsider to the cook for the 18th B Echelon it will do me, just the job for my feet. Had a spot of bother with Hydra burner but managed it in the end. The rations are very light and we have only got benzine tins to cook in. Got 54 to cook for. Moved at 6.45p.m. about 1,000 yards. Snick, Ted and Tom cam back from leave today but they have been sick most of the time with dysentery. Told Snick to tell Captain Brown that I had a job. About 8.30p.m. the out coming leave party came in and they had my leave pass, but I told Alf Voss that I had a job and would not be going on leave. They all said I would be a fool to leave a good job. Quite late getting into bed.

20th August

5.30a.m. rise this morning and what a nightmare trying to made do with the rations. We got rations for 54 men and finished up with 80 to eat it. Cooked some Itie maccaroni for tea, just like porridge. Had to sweeten it with jam, sugar is very short and milk also. Saw 27 of our fighters pass over this morning. What a grand sight, good for sore eyes. Had a good wash today and it was lovely. The skin peeled off my feet by the yard. Supposed to be getting some hot boxes tomorrow we sure need them. Quite a lot of rumours about the 6th coming out in reserve. The boys are getting browned off a bit. There is talk that the Hun has moved back about 2000 yards in front of the 6th. Our artillery has been giving him hell just lately. The 5th artillery say give us some targets and we will fire on them, they say they are getting nothing to shoot at. I think they should be happy because Jerry will not be firing at them.

21st August

4.30a.m. rise now, the leave parties are going earlier. It is still fairly warm of a morning. Had a lovely wash and shave this morning, feel 100% after it. Very hot today, have been wearing my balaclava as a hat and my ears are all sunburnt. One chap went crook about dinner time but he was soon told the truth. Terrible lot of our fighters flying overhead, they are going all day. Managed to get a hot box at last but it is not the best, gradually getting some gear together. About 10p.m. Jerry was busy doing a spot of bombing for a while I thought I was still in the front line. About 6 dud ack ack shell fell not too far away we heard them whistle down and then into the ground. Quite a bit of it went up but did not hear anything come down. It is a strong rumour that the 18th is going back to Maadi. Bit of a job getting smakes just here.

22nd August

Slept in this morning was an hour late but managed to give the boys a feed at 7a.m. such as it was. Swags of our fighters flying backwards to the front, they must be getting a bit sick of it the old Hun. Got the back of a truck for a cook house now. Had a hygiene corporal around today, but he was quite satisfied with things, they are doing their best to keep the flies down. They are not bad just here but given half a chance and they will be. Heard one or two enemy planes, but things were very quiet up till the time I dropped off to sleep.

23rd August

The usual crowd in for early breakfast. Told Shorty Asher to bring my pack back from battalion but he came back without it. Spent most of the morning digging out the cook place. Joe Rooney came back from leave this afternoon feeling ill. He said the same old rumours are floating around down Maadi. He was saying that they are giving them plenty of drill and work at base. Talking to a Pommy tankie and he said he thought the war would be over in 6 months that this desert waslousey with troops and material. Jerry was very busy again tonight with his bombs plenty of moon. Had to go around looking for spare blankets for the leave chaps. Newspapers are hard to get up here.

24th August

5a.m. this morning, give the boys a little treat. Give them bacon, tomatoes, toast and porridge. A fair effort for an open fire and feeding 70 odd men. Today is one of the hottest I have felt for a long time. Digging in the cook house and the sweat just ran off. Finished it about 2p.m. Terrible lot of our fighter planes over today, most I have seen since I have been with B Echelon. The leave party came back about 1.30p.m. The rumour was that all leave for the 8th army had been cancelled but about an hour later they were away to Cairo. Had about 7 blankets to sleep on, they made a lovely bed. Quite a few mossies about tonight, and they are getting in with the nips. Nothing much doing tonight. Took a walk over to Baldies truck to hear the wireless. Things in Russia don't seem too good.

25th August

4.30 this morning. The burner goes well in the new place. Give them bacon, toast and porridge. The bacon ration is terrible. A man feels like a criminal giving the boys two rashers for breakfast. The bread ration was a bit better today. Give them a good stew for tea spuds and boiled apples. the stew was a bit thin but it tasted good. Arty bought my watch back today but he did not get an illuminous dial on it, not much use in the dark. Had a bottle of beer tonight. Jerry was busy again but not as busy as the mossie. Went to bed early but could not sleep for the damn mossies, the buggars just about ear a man. Pretty late of a night by the time we finish, the drivers that go to battalion keep us back. Told the sergeant of the transport if he wanted hot tea he would have to return the containers a bit quicker. Nobody from the battalion for leave tonight.

26th August

An hour late getting up this morning but things went like a charm sausages, tomatoes and fried bread for breakfast. The boys were very pleased. The sergeant of the transport came back from battalion and he said that our artillery threw everything but the guns at Jerry about 4a.m. this morning and they had nothing in reply Jerry was supposed to attack last night. The mossies are getting pretty bad, all the boys are going crook about them. The truck came back from Alex yesterday and we got fresh veg today, cabbage, carrots, sweet potatoes and marrow. Lovely meat today. Lot of our bombers over last night. Rumour is that we go out on the 29th. The trucks are to have 6 days reserve rations and petrol for 200 miles. I've seen enough of Egypt. The rumour about going home is still pretty strong.

27th August

A bit keen this morning. The usual Hun planes over during the night. Very hot today. One of the chaps that came back from leave bought me three tins of tobacco I needed it I was just about out. the boys didn't care for their dinner, dry rations today, biscuits and marg and jam, a bully stew for tea but it was good. I heard that 152 of our guns threw 7,000 shells at Jerry in 3/4 of an hour. Thats the stuff to give them. A lot of our planes about today and also a lot at night. Not much from Jerry tonight. the tea and sugar ration is very light, up here it is like gold. Using a safety razor while I am waiting for my pack to come down and it is terrible, just like a garden rake.

28th August

Very late this morning but everything went alright. Give them a bully hash and porridge. Everyone had enough so that is the main thing. Very hot today a real scorcher. Had a very nice wash and felt real good after it. Managed to finish the letter I started to my Alice today. Can't seem to get time at all. We always finish in the dark and there seems to be something to do all day. Not a very nice stew tonight but the veg are good. Jerry started in with a will early tonight. Our ack ack all around was just like a fire works display. Up till the time I went to sleep there was planes backwards and forwards. The ground fair shook at times and one or two dud ack ack shells landed out to the side of us. Things were on the move.

29th August

Up at 4.30a.m. but had to wait till 5.30a.m. before we could light the burner. Jerry planes were still bombing. Quite a lot of them were very low down we could see them easy. They seemed to be dropping quite a lot of bombs but they did not wait after it. The same big jock column came through our area again today. They had tanks and everything. Our artillery shelled for about 2 hours solid about 8p.m. last night. Have no idea what they were shooting at. No fresh meat again today but plenty of bread. Was asked if I wanted to go to Ameria today for a hot shower. Not worth it in that dirty truck.

30th August

5.30a.m. this morning no leave party for battalion. The rumour is that there was a smash up on the railway. Very hot today. Went over to the truck that has the big packs on and got a shirt and clean pair of trousers also my tin of white bait which we had for dinner. Got a blade razor a shaving mug and two or three other things. Fair sort of a tea but rations are still very rough. Plenty of our planes about today and late this evening. Put two scorpions together to how they would fight but it was pretty tame. In bed at 8.30p.m. earliest for months. Supposed to be manoeuvres for the trucks tomorrow. Still a rumour that we go out. We are supposed to spend winter where it is very cold. Syria, Irak or Iran. I wonder where.

31st August

Very exciting start for my birthday. Saw a night fighter shoot down a Junkers 88 at 3.40a.m. We thought for a start he was strafing but we saw it catch alight and crash about 500 yards away. Saw two crash. Said to be 7 shot down. Two saved out of the plane that crashed by us, the rest of the crew was scattered over the desert. About 20 minutes after it crashed another bomber dumped four lots of incendiaries, around us. We wondered what was coming down but soon found out. Very dusty this morning. Had to give one of the airmen breakfast. Quite a mob went to see the remains of the plane. They buried the remains of the two killed in a sand bag.

1st September

Got awakened at 3.20a.m. by enemy air craft. Heard our night fighters have two goes but saw nothing come down. Went to sleep again and did not get up till 6.10a.m. Percy had the breakfast well on the way. He had stayed up after the planes had woke him. Pretty hot today. Never saw so many of our planes before as what went over today. Bombers and fighters all day long. They say the Hun tanks came through at the back of the 18th but they got 60 of them. It was said to be part of the plan to let them do that. The 26th Q.M. got killed going up with rations last night. Counted 54 fighters in three lots in the afternoon. The Y.M.C.A. came round in the afternoon. I had to buy sugar so we could make a drink of tea for ourselves. First cookhouse I have had to buy rations in. Went over to hear the wireless at B Company truck. News pretty good.

2nd September

Very little air activity this morning by the enemy but they woke me up. Swags of our bombers and fighters going over all day. Padre Dawson came in this morning. He came down from Battalion last night. He said we knocked out 52 Hun tanks the day before yesterday without using any of our big stuff. He said the battalion

9th June

Usual early morning things. Got lobbed this morning for a job on the salvage, didn't take long, was at the canteen in time for morning tea. Went on leave this afternoon out to Nena to see young Jim Pattillo. Got a ride out in a staff car. Young Jim looking very well getting very brown but fed up with Egypt already, told him to wait three and a half years and then he could come home. Got a ride back into Cairo with an Indian. Had a shower, a few games of housey and then to bed, wondering what will happen. Said to be more reinforcements at Tewfik. Some of the men are supposed to have left for the boat this morning.

10th June

Got caught for a job again this morning. Supposed to be at Tura Caves but it turned out to be cotton seed cake at the Maadi siding, 90 tons of it. The first gang was good, we loaded seven lorries in no time but after that thing seemed to go haywire. It must have got too hot for them. We left at 1p.m. Came back to camp and had a feed at the Naafi, couldn't get anything at the cook house. Did a spot of washing in the afternoon. Advance party supposed to go tomorrow. Not much doing during the day. Biggest part of the boys were home in the hut, no money nowhere to go and nothing to do.

11th June

Slipped a bit this morning, twenty minutes late getting up. Had to hand in our blankets this morning and got three new ones in the afternoon. Had morning tea at the Naafi and for the rest of the day just lay in the hut and read. Had a few games of housey at night but did no good. Very hot at night.

12th June

Lobbed for fatigues again today but did very little. Jack Kirrane and I went down to the car park to help clean some of the trucks and the N.C.O.s said we were fools to be there so we didn't wait. The A.P.R.s had to put on the quarter guard. Lay on the bed and read all the afternoon. One of the boys gave me 15 ackers to play housey for him but the closest I could get was two off. Was put into our two platoons for going on the boat today. The advance guard leaves some time tomorrow. Rumour is we leave Tuesday. Been hearing a lot of nasty tales about the Yanks. Can see some trouble with the boys.

13th June

Got up at 6.20a.m. don't know what for breakfast was not till 8a.m. Had all the hut swept out before any of the boys were up. Medical inspection this morning. Very quiet sort of a day just lay in the hut and read all day. Not enough money in the hut to buy our nightly cup of tea so we had to boil up ourselves. The latest dope is Tuesday morning. Someone must guess right. The advance party leave 4a.m. tomorrow.

14th June

6.30a.m. this morning. Hut piquet today. Said on the 8.30a.m. check parade that we would get the news at the 1.30p.m. parade. Had a job picking up paper outside the orderly room. 1.30p.m. news was. Breakfast at 3.30a.m. tomorrow and leave at 5.am. Every man has to be shaved, the good old army. Getting a bit tired of just lying around. Very hot. Packed all my gear, just left my over coat out to sleep in.

15th June

Just as well one of the boys woke up this morning or we would have been left, no sergeant appeared to wake us. Boarded the trucks about 4.30a.m. and moved out at five. Arrived at the embarking point about 10a.m. Got a cup of tea, a pie and three bananas. Had to walk about 300 yards to the lighter, and boy was it hot just standing on the iron deck. Took us about 40 minutes to reach the ship, the 'New Amsterdam'. Cabin No 229, ten of us in it. Had a very light meal for dinner but a grand tea. Started to move out at 7.10p.m. Very little vibration 6,600 on board. One of the crew said unescorted she could make N.Z. in twelve days.

16th June

Boy was it hot last night, talk about sweat. Managed to get out of bed by 6a.m. Got good marks for our cabin. Very hot today. Ship ploughing along nicely. Nearly got caught for fatigue this morning. Got paid today, 10/-. Lay on the bunk after dinner and slept till 3p.m. Kidded one of the crew we had no smokes so he went away and got two packets for us. Think I land a job tomorrow. Hellish hot tonight. Too hot to sleep.

17th June

Cabin like an oven last night loosing pounds of weight. Four of us got a job this morning cleaning the latrines on A Deck. I have never sweated so much in all my life, it just poured off us. Got 200 cigaretts today cost 3/4. Boat drill at 2.30p.m. The Queen Mary was supposed to have passed us during the first night and is catching us up at Aden. Today is the hottest so far. Passed a small island about 6.30p.m. this evening. Sat on deck till 8p.m. and then had a bath but the sweat pours off worse than ever.

18th June

Couldn't face breakfast or dinner today. Started about 3a.m. this morning and was running all day, but I had to have tea. Got some awful pains in the stomach. Pulled into Aden at 11a.m. Just the same old place, barren as hell, and boy is it hot. Pulled in close about 5p.m. The wogs came out in their boats but I don't think they sold very much. Slept on deck but it was just as hot. No black out tonight. The decks are just covered with soldiers. Four of us got a job doing the latrines on A Deck and boy is it hot. The sweat just pours off you.

19th June

Woke up with the pains in the guts but it wore off. I lined up for my grub. Talk about sweat working this morning. Went on deck about 10.30a.m. and stayed till dinner. Had a bit of a sleep till some chap gave me a kick in the skull. Very little to do but sleep. Terrible hot at night can't sleep for the heat. The bedding is wet through every morning.

20th June

Usual job this morning, just like a sweat chamber. Spent the biggest part of the morning reading. Went on deck for a spell in the afternoon. Was going to the canteen but it was too far. One of the other boys was going along so I got him to do some buying for me. Played cards for a while and then a minister gave a talk on marriage and it was very good but boy was it hot.

21st June

Woke up about 1a.m. this morning and boy was it rough. The ship was everywhere at once. Terrible lot of chaps sick, very noticeable at meals. Felt very squeamish this morning so I got on the bed, but I lined up for every meal. One chap was very brave this morning laughing at the sick ones but he was crook himself later on. Went on deck for a while. Not quite so hot tonight. Supposed to run into another storm at 6p.m. but nothing happened.

22nd June

Things quietened down a bit this morning but a fair swell running. Still feel a bit queer at times but coming around. Kiwi Concert Party putting on a show in the mess room but don't think I will be there. Too hot in the mess room. Very hot at night can't get any sleep. Got a couple of packets of baccy today. Wish I had more money. I would get a swag.

23rd June

Fairly cool this morning. Missed breakfast this morning, got the trots. Some of the boys put on the mat for washing in their rooms and smoking. No smoking below decks. Practise shoot this afternoon. Not much noise but a pretty good barrage was put up. Terrible lot of gambling on the boat. Can't afford to gamble on 10/- a week. Had a plane flying around for a while yesterday. Suppose to cross the line sometime tonight. Some of the boys played cards till well after midnight.

24th June

Felt very dopey when I woke up this morning. Too hot in the cabins. After our job this morning, four of us went on deck for a game of cards. Some of the ack ack boys got a little excited when a Catalina Flying boat hoved in to view. Met Alf De Thierry for the first time today. The S.S. Bermuda left us about 4p.m. with a destroyer. We have a battle cruiser with us and are now going at a fair speed. Pretty hot tonight. Had a few games of draughts tonight. Fair sort of a tea but I could have eaten more.

25th June

A bit rough today, had to shut our port holes, quite a spot of water came in the cabin. Got a new job today, had to start mess orderly. Not bad but you have to keep going. Got paid 10/- and got 200 cigarettes but they are no good so I changed them for tobacco. Getting quite cool. Said to be in Freemantle by Tuesday.

26th June

Didn't feel like getting up at 6a.m. Pretty rough outside, felt quite sick after breakfast. Had a lie down for an hour and then had to get lunch again. Bill Bodle came in for a yarn after lunch. Didn't seem any time since we had served lunch before we had to dish up tea. Didn't feel like any tea. Got a bit of a sore throat. Getting quite cool now and the old ship is pitching and tossing like a cork. Had a great feed of biscuits later in the evening and made myself sick.

27th June

Just made it in time this morning 6.15a.m. before we got up the first sitting is 6.30a.m. The sergeants came in like sheep for their meals. If it had been privates they would be on the mat pronto. Came down to the cabin and was waiting for the other chaps to shave, and fell asleep till it was time to dish up the grub again. Slept most of the afternoon. Got relieved from mess orderly this afternoon. Got a lovely cold makes a man feel quite dopey. Quite a lot of betting as to what time we reach Aussie. In to bed early tonight. the ship still tossing about.

28th June

9a.m. before I got out of bed this morning. Felt pretty ill. Three or four of the boys didn't bother about breakfast. Latest tale is Aussie about Friday and it is likely to be Melbourne instead of Freemantle. N.Z. about next Saturday week. Very cold on deck today. Said to be getting short of food on the ship. The escort ship is the H.M.S. Surrex. Had two blankets on tonight. Got lobbed for mess orderly again today. Go on at 6a.m. tomorrow and come off at 5p.m. and then got four days free.

29th June

Could have slept till 8a.m. this morning quite easy but had damn mess orderly to do. Bit of a muck up for a while, didn't know what table to do. Mess orderly is not so bad now that it is cool. One thing you get a fair go at the grub. Quite nice on deck this morning. Got a Dutch Destroyer with us now, not much bigger than a fishing boat. Supposed to be in Freemantle today but we are still sailing. A good swell rolling today. Came up very black today, thought we were in for a rough time again. Getting a bit tired of the boat now, want to get on a bit of land again.

30th June

Too lazy to get up for breakfast this morning. Only garlic sausage to eat and it is terrible. One of the boys bought back some bread and butter and some tea. Got up just before inspection. Spent the morning on deck got a hair cut but it was pretty rough. Spent the afternoon on the bunk reading. Went to hear the Kiwi Concert Party after tea. First time I have ever heard them. Played cards while we were waiting and then had a few more games after the concert. Latest rumour is Aussie 2.30p.m. tomorrow. Weather getting quite cool now.

1st July

Didn't intend missing my grub this morning. Lay in the cabin all the morning reading. Could see land about 12.30p.m. Makes a man feel homesick. A beautiful sight coming into Freemantle to see the trees and green paddocks. Couple of tugs came out to meet us. The Dutch Destroyer escorting us is a lot bigger when you get close to her. All the boys shouting out how is the beer, and abusing the Yanks. Rumour ran around for a while that we were getting leave but I don't think so. Got paid 10/- about 4p.m. and then there was leave till 7a.m. Saturday morning. Didn't bother to go ashore, not worth it with only 10/-. It was funny to see them streaming off the boat and running up the road to the pubs. Four of us played 500 till bed time.

2nd July

No breakfast this morning. Was going ashore at 9a.m. but heard there was more pay so I stayed and collected 10/- more. Went and had a few beers and then had a good feed of fish and chips. Had a look around Freemantle for a while and then went to Perth. Was waiting for a bus when an Aussie soldier came along in a car and gave us a lift. Met old Tubby and his brother and we went for a feed. Sitting at the table and his brother had a black out. Then he was sick and oh boy what a mess, did I feel a mug. We tried to get him to the station but he didn't want to go and then he started swearing, so I took myself off to the station. Got on the boat about 6.30p.m. and went to bed.

3rd July

A bit of fun this morning. The boat sailed about 7a.m. A lot of chaps missing and a lot just made it. Some were getting in through the port holes from lighters. After a bit of a check up there was found to be about 100 missing. Two chaps killed, one under a train and one hit over the head with a bottle. Got a bit rough when we got out a bit. Felt a bit uneasy in the stomach for a while but was better off after a feed. Supposed to call at Hobart now to let the rest of the Aussies off.

4th July

A bit rough today, had to shut the port holes about 9a.m. but it was just as well as it was very cold. Some of the chaps went on deck but they were soon back they said it was raining. Got the old mess orderly job again. Not much to do during the day but read. Bill Bodle came down in the afternoon for a talk. Bit of a muck up about the mess orderlies somewhere, they were going to have a meeting but it was all called off. Some say Hobart tomorrow and some say Wednesday. Wellington is all I am worried about. Got paid 10/- today, the last till we get home.

5th July

Not much of a breakfast this morning. Salmon and it had been opened for a couple of days so I didn't fancy it. Got relieved of mess orderly at dinner time but they changed things around and I had to go on again tonight. Got a talk this morning about what to do when we get home. Took our pay books and did a spot of writing in them and gave us our ration cards. Very cold today.

6th July

Didn't feel like getting out of bed this morning. We were all late getting started. 6.30a.m. before we got up and the first sitting was 6.30a.m. Opened the port hole this morning but soon closed it by hell it was cold. The old ship did a bit of rolling in the afternoon. Missed on the bread for our supper tonight but I managed a few. Still big rumours about when we get to Hobart. Some say tomorrow night and some say Thursday morning. It is rumoured that some of the chaps that missed the boat at Aussie are on the destroyer that is escorting us.

7th July

Last day on the mess. Had some good bacon this morning. Old Brig Kippenberger came round on inspection today. Very cold but we are leaving the port holes open to air the cabins a bit. Finished mess at dinner time. Read till tea time and then went down to the mess and had two feeds. Read till about 9p.m. and then had supper. We had about seven loaves, $\frac{1}{2}$ lb butter, jam and sausages and pickles. We had scrounged it from the mess room. One of the chaps came in and he said it was like snow outside.

8th July

Things were very exciting for a while this morning. Had a sub marine after us as we went into port. The ship was zig zagging, bells were ringing and the escort was throwing depth charges in all directions and our old ship was flat out. Three of us were trying to sleep but there was too much noise we had to get up. Went up on deck hell was it cold, we had a mountain covered with snow facing us. Very pretty place Hobart. Got no leave. Tied up about 9.30a.m. and left 3.30p.m. Two or three Liberty ships in the harbour and the boys were giving the Yanks some lip. Played a game called Frazz for a while and made 23/-.

9th July

No inspection so I spent a fair amount of time on the bunk reading. Very cold on deck so I stick to the cabin. Each day brings us nearer home. Monday morning seems to be the oil. Got caught for mess orderly again. It is a bit hot. 154 men in the 24th battalion and only 60 of us doing fatigues. Had a good sort of a tea, too lazy to get up for breakfast. Had another go at Frazz tonight and lost 1/6 but at one stage I was up to £2/10/-. Had our usual supper.

10th July

Gradually getting home. Boys getting a little excited. Very cold when you put your head out the port hole. Doing the mess orderly job you don't get much chance of getting on deck in the morning. Had a lot at the two up school for a while in the afternoon and played housey but only lost 5/-. Played Frazz after tea and lost 17/6. About 9.30p.m. the alarm bells went and caused some excitement for a while. Butch got well and truly drunk. Came in and borrowed 1/- from me to have a gamble and won £16/- but never said here you can have half.

11th July

Couldn't get to sleep for a long time last night, with the result we were late getting up and so missed the first sitting. Rumour has it that the alarm was a Yank Destroyer last night and some say it was a Liberty Ship. Believe the boys had a good view of the coast this morning. Went right around Stewart Island and up the coast. The sea is beautiful and calm. Just after lunch a lovely N.Z. fog came down and boy wasn't it cold. Finish mess orderly at lunch time. Went down B Deck and had a talk to Tubby and then we had a walk on deck. Had a gamble at night but did no good.

12th July

Wellington again, the place doesn't seem changed. Didn't get up till 8.30a.m. One of the boys bought me a cup of tea. Went on deck for a look but couldn't see much raining. Chaps jumping out port holes and going down ropes. Not much of a crowd on the wharf. Had the last custard today. Not much for us to do till our turn comes to leave. Went below and had a talk with Tubby. Very dismal just looking out the port hole. About 4p.m. some of the drunks started to come aboard again. About 8p.m. we paraded with our kit bags and boy what a muck up. We couldn't find an officer to tell us where to go. It was raining like hell outside. We started off from the A.s. Two chaps had missed too drunk to find their way back. Got on the train at 9.30p.m. but didn't move till 10.50p.m. The train was crowded. Quite a spot of beer aboard.

13th July

Travelled all night, but it was not very cold, the carriage was pretty stuffy in fact. Got talking to a chap from Taranaki. He was going up to grab the wife and then beat it for home. About 1.30p.m. the guard came through and asked if any one wanted to break their journey and I said yes, let me off at Te Kuiti. It will probably cost me my life but the girl friend comes first. Had a sort of a feed at Taumarunui and pulled into Te Kuiti at 10a.m. Went across to Gardiners to ask for Phyll but no luck so I went to Aunty Nancy for the day. In the afternoon I got a truck from the army to run me out home. Arrived at home about 4.30p.m. and found everyone had gone to Auckland so I went up to see Mum P. Boy was she surprised to see me. Alice down Wellington but Mum has sent a telegram. Boy am I anxious to see her. If she doesn't want me no-one will have me.