

37865. SGT K. Downing. 107th A.F.A. A.I.F.

Sept 30th 1918

(48) Dear Mother -

I'm sorry it has to be another pencil scribble this time, but it's a case of "c'est la guerre", & no fault of mine. If you could see the hole I'm scribbling in you'd understand! We blew in here yesterday just on nightfall, & by the time the horses were hicketed & fed, & all things it was dark; I had already got my eye on a tiny kind of trench about 8 ft long & usual width - good enough for one passenger; I thought P & I could possibly squeeze in, & so we set to work, got some more or less punctured tin sheets, & made a roof; it was raining - & so we widened the lower part so that we can just squeeze in by lying on our sides. No good & warm anyhow & also rainproof, & we had a glorious night's sleep.

after having been without any the
previous night; we came along
for another start the evening before
& by some mischance got separated
from the main body, whom we didn't
find till about 2.30 am - 6 hours
in the saddle & mighty cold too.

Slept under a wagon, but it was
too cold wrapped in my saddle blanket,
spent most of the time stamping about.
There was a frost on the grass in the
morning - the first of the winter.

The start started at daylight, & we
were of course up well before them.

I saw Bruce the night before we
left - he had been left behind to
supervise the teams who were
taking over from his lot - who have
gone for a "spree" - bad luck for him
in a way, as he is kept hard at
it; looks very well though. He
told me it is Brian who is
traversing, as I had thought.

Had a parcel from Australia again the other night - a regular box Fortnum & Mason. Those big store people, put up - all turned stuff, very good too. One thing that seemed a little out of place was a tin of Turtle soup, the directions being to "bring to a boil & flavour with Madeira to taste". The Canteen doesn't seem to Madiso - only cigarettes these days.

I lost Armie's knife pouch again yesterday in the bustle of pulling out from where the battery had been all day, at a moments notice. Hunted every where for it, had given it up when a chap who had picked it up came along with it - so you see it has had one or two escapes. My feet are like ice - think I'll turn in now. Feeling OK, & only hope we get a full night "ice".

Your loving Son

Frank Keppel
Dale wrote properly Tomas Ross.

VALUABLE
ITEM

France

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Monday Nov 11th

Dearest Mother -

Another week has gone by, wonderful to relate, tho' it's hard to believe in a way; things have been pretty much as usual during the week since we came to a pause here, tho' the weather varies; bitterly cold at first after the rains, then yesterday a heavy frost followed by a most beautiful day, calm & sunny; today is the opposite, dull, cold wind, & looks like snow to come.

Last night for 24 hours I had the doubtful honour of being one of the guard at the prisoners of war cage, and here I am still, writing in the guard room, an ex Fritz dug out of very solid make, where his officers on the ammunition dump he used to have here, used to reside. It is a tunnel well underground walled with elephant iron (a kind of glorified corrugated stuff, very heavy) with a duck board floor, 5 wire bunks, a stove, and heaps of hay chaff!

It was perishing cold on guard, 6 hours out of the night portion, but its not so bad now its daylight

There's some chance of writing, though the candle supply is very low; last evening just as we were leaving our

K. Horowitz (Gnr)

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billets I had a great haul - three letters from you from Yo Aunt Cis, dated 30 Aug. 6 Sept & 13th Sept - the two latter, addressed to me privately, came thro' very well you see, and there are very few of such a recent date here at all as yet; it is undoubtedly the best way for letters. Also got one from father dated 6 Sept, none from Bruce who was back from Paris leave, & had sent off the cable he spoke of beforehand saying we were well - You phoned home it by now.

I was sorry to hear of Bill Hardley's death I had no idea at all, tho' it was so long ago; Eric Doddy was speaking of him when I saw him 6 weeks ago, she didn't ~~seem to~~ know either, then. I hope his son's condition is better by now; funny I haven't heard from Murray, tho' I've written to him twice now. I wonder, tho' doubt it, whether Jack Hartless will ever leave - the ~~big~~ batteries don't seem to set away so 'route de Lutte' - he's very lucky to get into the heavies, suppose influence did it. So Chas. Marsh has left at last - I wonder if he'll ever see any of the scrapping! Yrs, You're quite right in your guess re most generous

3.

very good of 'Hon' Gugley to send the
chocolate - I hope it duly arrives; they're
very kind folk, aren't they?

It must have been nice for you to have
that chap named Dunn to explain all
the snags of old Eric's - what a lot of
chaps knew him, and how well
they all speak of him! I don't think
many average Australians would spare
themselves the trouble to go and look
up people they don't know, but who
belong to an old mate, unless they thought
much more than usually well of him.

I'm glad you liked the fox furs dyed -
it was a suggestion of Heraph's, who
knew how you treasured them, and
we have arranged all about the
damage; we're fixing that up when
I get back - quite soon now!

I am so sorry the little convenors
from Asheville hadn't arrived - I hope
to hear they have done so soon, next time
perhaps.

When old B. wrote you
regarding his slightly lame was about
the time I saw him at Fouilloux, or
rather just before then, and I know
he was exceptionally wished just
then, which would account for
his 'perhaps somewhat meagre'
details of his spells: he went off

with a brother overseer, & I suppose that was responsible for his not seeing all the relatives or he otherwise might have ; I have had a slight experience of the difficulties of cramming in as many visits as possible into a short time myself, & truly it took engineering ; my only plan was to cut loose from my pals a bit, for such visits as I coned work in.

I can't make Aunt Celia out, but they nor can you, so we won't discuss her ; it's tough tho' when she comes to running boarding bills like that.

Yes, I saw Bruce's photos & liked the top boots best I think ; not very like him in a way, are they. He looks too peaked, & when I saw him last he was awfully well.

Fancy, little Bertie is entitled to meet two chevrons now ; still two won't be much to skite about worse luck - a foursome like old Bruce's and Eric's would put it right out of the running, still I'm satisfied I've seen as much of la guerre as a good many "Anzacs" who came back from

the Gallipoli stomach for the good of their health; there's a great consolation in knowing that our Brigade, and 'our' battery in particular of the Bde, is looked up to as being one of the most efficient batteries of the Aust. Corps, and for genuine work - perhaps not for "spit & polish" - but for being there, well up in front, and up to time, it has a great name. The other batteries envy us over duckum officers too!

By JOVE!!! Crikey!!!

What shall I say? Meine pist had a breathless bombardier of the Guard rush into the dug out, fall over the bed at the end, shout out some glorious news - can't repeat it, as it's strictly against orders to mention the subject, (or I could have filled a book with the last two weeks' entertaining furies) but you just note the date! Only hope this is duckum, as he swears it is!

What a godsend Xmas box for the world! There's surely something in it though. Funny how calmly they all take it though, considering the tremendous things it is - there are four of us here

HALJARTCUA

JAIROMEM RAW

3 reading & self writing; mere
all off again - The magazines couldn't
wait, nor could my letter, & it
might just have been the news
that it is raining or something
that made got. They're not an
expressive crowd, these Aussies,
I fear me.

Well, I must cease for lack of
news for the old season - can't tell
you of it, & also the candles
flickering; must wait till our
rations come, with more light.

I 'borrowed' a splendid Jaeger
wool cap, one that they issue to the
Royal Horse Art'y, being crack gent-
lemen, the other day; I'm going to
bring it home with me; it's a splendid
thing - thick, soft fleece, khaki in
colour, you can pull it down
like a Balaoalava. Heh - I have
also a beautiful truly borrowed
shooter too - hope dear set it home.
much bone - please excuse
the crudeness.

Your loving son
and friend Keith

2 Dec 25

AUSTRALIAN

WAR MEMORIAL 2