

14th A. G. H.

Dear Louie

Port Laid

I'm getting on well 16/11/18

here. They have given up trying to put me to bed and I'm getting full diet. I've been out in the sunshine as much as possible and walked about a mile down the breakwater yesterday.

I had a mail today but none from you much to my disgust. There was one from Mother dated July 13th & one from Aunt Jane Sept. 25th. They had been up to the Regt. & back to the Base P.O. so I ought to get a lot more soon now that they know my address at the Base.

At last I'm going to try & describe our share in the last big stunt.

It seems a year ago since we saddled up on the 18th Sept. with orders to travel as light as possible. We moved out of our camp at Ludd at 6.45 & rode at

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a ^{very} beastly slow trot to Jaffa which we reached at 9.15. Camped for the night. At 4.30 next morning the artillery about 9 miles off opened the ball with a heavy bombardment of Jacko's lines. The infantry were out in front of the guns waiting to break through as soon as the guns opened up. We had breakfast and moved at 9 am, halting for an hour to water horses & get a bit of dinner. On the road we passed a tremendous quantity of our transport wagons & camels and by some F. Amb. cars I saw Capt. Fregear. I only had time to drop out of the line for a minute & shake hands. He enquired after you all & then I had to hurry on & get back to my place in the column. We kept going till 9 pm when we stopped & watered horses. It took

a long time as we had to draw it up, in our canvas buckets & they were very thirsty. We started to boil up but they made us put our fires out as we were already through Jacko's lines. At 10 pm we were told we could sleep till 12 so we got about 1½ hrs sleep each man holding his own horse. At midnight we were off again & rode on till 9 am passing a railway station where there was a crowd of prisoners and abandoned transport & dead mules all along the road. We camped at 9 am near good water. Many prisoners coming in all day a good proportion of Germans among them. Some badly wounded by Indian lancers who were on ahead of us. That night I and another signaller went out with an outpost some

distance from camp. We had to keep
in touch with H.Q. all night by lamp
At 5 am. we were ordered to come in
& found the Regt. had gone on to Jenin
to bring in 7000 prisoners captured
by the 10th. They were a ragtime lot
& had been on the run all the previous
day, and a lot of them were pretty
well exhausted & all were thirsty
They would give us anything for water
& I emptied my two bottles before we
got them to the first wells on the road
Several would have died if I had
not given them a drop of water &
got them on their feet again. When
we got to the well we had a fear-
ful job to hold them. They were just
like a mob of thirsty sheep & we had
to keep riding round them & beating
them back with the flat of our swords

We let them go in small batches
* others had to keep them from rushing
the wells. It took 5 or 6 hrs. to water them
* the wells were almost dry * the
water muddy * striking, but they
drank it like champagne. We got
them back to camp just at dark.
Had a scratch tea * rolled up in
our blankets. Had a bath next
morning, drew rations * moved at
2 pm across a big plain. Road strewn
with dead horses * equipment.
Passed village El Afule where we
had captured railway rolling stock
, airdromes, workshops dumps * a
lot of transport. About dark we
returned to village, drew more rations
* started to eat up. "Get mounted"
came in the middle of our meal *
on we went for a few miles, when

we stopped to water horses. Then my Sqdn. went on & arrived at Kayarah at 1.30. It was a bright moon - light night & we passed dozens of big German motor wagons, left on the road. We made camp in the town & then some went off to patrol the town. The sigs. turned in & had a sleep. Next day we had to go & help Co. 2. sig & had a busy time that day & night & next day. Next night at 10 pm we were sent back to B. Sqdn. & next morning we moved to a big monastery on hill overlooking the town. From there we were in touch with Bde. back in the plains & A. Sqdn. which was advancing on Liberias. Kayarah is a fair sized town high up among rocky hills. There are some good buildings & the Germans had made

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it a base. They had blown up the wireless plant but we captured a lot of stores & transport. Gen. Seiman Yon Sanders is said to have only left a few hrs. before the Yeomanry who took the town, entered it. The artillery caught up with us that day & that night we moved on at dark, rode all night reaching Lake Liberias about 5 am. Lay down for a nap & 2 hrs later B. Sqdn. had to go out on patrol. Went a few miles round the coast & took up position on high hill & got in touch with Bde. No. 2. Bde. camped near edge of lake & men went in with their horses all day. Managed to sneak down to lake for a dip during afternoon. Kept in touch by lamp all night. In morning we got all the grain we could carry from a

village near by and Bde. moved on at 8 am. Rode till 3 pm, stopped & fed horses & had some dinner. Soon after the guns came up at full trot & opened fire on enemy position across ford on Jordan. They had blown the bridge up so we had to get the ford. The Kotts put in some great shooting & then we advanced to the attack! There was some pretty lively machine gun fire for awhile, but it didn't last long & we were over the river by dark with only a few casualties. We formed up on other side & then rode on till we came to a steep hill up which we had to walk & lead our horses. It was a fearful climb over boulders up to 2 ft high & in the dark. How we ever got up that hill without a lot of

broken legs is a mystery. We were
dead beat by the time we got on to
a road & could mount again. We
pushed on, but were able to sleep
in the saddle once we got on the
road. At 3.30 we stopped & slept till
5.30, then off saddled, fed up boiled
up had breakfast, a wash & shave
(the first for 4 days). At 9.30 we pushed on
after having a scare by two jacks
planes after breakfast. We opened up
on them with rifles & h. lps. but they
didn't lay any eggs fortunately for
us. B. Sqdn. was advance guard
& we threw out a screen for a mile
or so each side of road. At 2 villages
the natives came out with white flags
& in the second one we found a lot
of sick & wounded Turks & a lot of
ammunition for field guns.

We stopped during afternoon to water
* feed horses * had a hurried meal
Then on till dark when we turned
back. Put down horse lines * rolled
up in our blankets without waiting
for a feed. Our transport * guns came
up early next morning * we drew
rations. Moved on at 2.30 * got in
touch with Jacko about sundown. He
had two or three guns * a strong b.f.
position. We captured it * 10 b.f. by
11 pm but 3 men were killed * 8 of the
9th rode right into some jacko's in the
dark * were captured. We recaptured
them later * most of the Germans who
got away in the dark were over-
taken by 9 am next day. We pushed
on at daylight * stopped for about
an hr. at good water near an
Arab village with a high stone wall

which was evidently of Roman origin. There were traces of the hurried retreat of the enemy all along the roads and we found some of our chaps in an abandoned field amb. We pushed on all morning at a fast pace over very rough rocky country several horses getting broken legs & had to be destroyed. At midday we got in touch with enemy rearguard & the Koks battery opened up & blasted the hill they were holding with shrapnel & high explosive. Then a regt. charged with drawn swords but most of the Turks had scattered & were retiring on Damascus. While waiting for orders to advance we had dinner off biscuits & jam & water. We were out of horse feed & rations & the horses were pretty well exhausted & some of the men too. From here we saw two German wireless plants blown up & numerous dumps

From here we moved to S. W. of Damascus to cut the road to Beirut. It was a cruel ride over steep rocky hills & I was very sorry for the horses. It was after dark before we reached our position & then some went on post while the rest held horses & lay down in their greatcoats & got a bit of sleep. There were huge explosions all night as the dumps blew up. It was very cold up in the hills & we could not get off saddle to get our sleeping blankets. At daybreak we came in to rejoin the Regt. but could not find them. Watered horses at a lovely village in a forest of poplars & other trees filled our water bottles & made a breakfast of grapes which we found in the gardens. A French cav. regt. had a big mob of prisoners here, many of whom were being all over the track too exhausted to travel. Then we rode on into the town through

the worst shambles most of us had ever seen. A crowd of Turks & Germans were attempting to escape down a narrow road with the Beirut railway & a steep hill on one side & a forest on the other. One of our regts had caught them here & simply mown them down with m.g. & rifle fire. The road was blocked with dead & wounded men dead horses mules donkeys cattle & a flock of about 30 sheep & goats which had got into the line of fire. There was motor transport, one wagon with the driver dead at the wheel, horse transport, ghanj's, one with a woman dead in it who had evidently been escaping with the troops, guns, m.g. and equipment & stores strewn all over the road & on the line a train on which we captured a large sum in gold & silver. Every house & lane off the road was full of dead & wounded. I managed to get a feed of

barley for my horse & a few loaves of coarse brown bread for myself among the debris. As we entered the town there were bursts of A.G. fire all over the town & in the villages round where other regts. were rounding up the stragglers, but we met with no opposition & the people lined the streets clapping & cheering as we rode through. This was Oct. 1st & we had come from Jaffa & cleared out all the Turks between since the 19th Sept. We pushed on through the town & halted for an hr. to eat whatever we had & feed up if we had any feed, then on again till dark when we were recalled a few miles & camped for night and off saddled for the first time in 55 hrs. In the morning we got rations & horse feed & thought we would have a day's rest, but at 8 am got orders to saddle up at the 'higgery' and

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rode out at a hard trot for some miles. Met about 3000 prisoners coming in. They had held up the 10th but had surrendered before we arrived in response to a call from the 10th. We turned back then & camped in an orchard near a good stream. Had a good dinner, after off saddling & fixing up the horses, then a bath shave & clean sox (had no other shirt to change into) At 3pm we were saddled up & off again on outpost some miles further out. Everyone did a shift including the Major & Capt. & medical orderly. Came in at dawn after scouring the country for a few miles out. At 11 pm we went out again & took up the same outpost. Heard Bulgaria chucked it in & that Turkey was wobbling so were all feeling pretty gay. On arrival at No. 2. next morning I received your cable for my birthday next day. On the 11th Oct. we

were relieved at 11 am. I left ahead of the Regt. to help Dick Scott, one of our sips., in to the F. Amb. He was one of the first to go down with malaria & the poor fellow died in a Damascus hospital not long after. Had a good stew at the Amb, the first since 18th Sept., picked up regt. & went on with them back through Damascus, riding for hrs. in a choking cloud of dust. At 8 pm camped for night. Too tired to eat so turned in at once. Up at 4.30 had breakfast & saddled up in a hurry & then waited 2 hrs. to move. Moved a few miles further from town & made camp in a bare plain away from shade or water. After dinner went foraging with Bill Woods, one of our sips. from Birchip. We turned the horses loose in a lovely patch of feed at a village had a bath, did some washing, cut poles for bivvies, got all our nosebags full of tiffin at the village & a load of firewood

The firewood consisted of a door, at the entrance to a native garden. Wood is more precious than rubies in these parts & we promptly broke it up & packed it on our saddles. Of course in a day or two's time there were orders out about looting, but we had a week's supply of wood; used carefully. Next day Oct. 6th was Sunday & we had Ch. parade in am. and Cholera inoculation in afternoon.

Next morning we went to guard a big prisoners of war compound with about 40,000 Japs in it. They were pretty well fed, but were dying at the rate of 50 or 60 a day. Next day I was down with Spanish Flu. or Malaria, I don't know which, with a temp. of 103° & though I got rid of the fever I never got strong & eventually went to Hosp. on the 19th Oct. From then I think I've told you all my movements. And now it's all over & all we are thinking of is when shall we get home.

Just got a notice that there are two parcels at P.O. for me * at 2 o'clock I'm going to get them. Hope there are some eatables as I'm just about broke, although I've about £8 in my paybooks, but we only get 10/- a fortnight in Hosp. * there has not been a pay day since I arrived.

Isn't it cruel that after such a walk over on the stunt we should lose so many men with sickness. One regt. has lost 50 men, * before they all get back to Egypt I'm afraid it's going to be a very costly victory.

Heard a rumour today that our regt. is to be sent to Eng. before going home. Don't know if there's anything in it. 21st Today's rumour is that married men with families will go home first, so

you had better start packing my suitcase. Three parcels arrived, one from you with papers, books, tob. * cigs. etc. One from Bidda for Xmas * another Xmas one from Mother I think, so I've been living high lately.

24th I kept this back to make a copy as it was too much work to write it all

again from notes. At last my mail has come & I was so excited I could hardly eat my dinner. They arrived just before dinner. Twelve all told, four from you 43 to 46, up to Sept. 9th. You probably know how I had been longing for a letter from you. They seem to be the only connecting link & I felt as if I was getting further & further away as each day passed & I got no mail. Now I'm quite contented & I'm finishing this off to post tonight as I'm to have a slight operation on the nose tomorrow & may not feel like writing for a day or two. So glad to hear you have got rooms at Portland for Christmas & hope you can stay a month. I got a note from Chas. from a Hosp. in France, evidently written with the left hand. He was in an attack with the Inf. & got a bullet in the right elbow which fractured the ends of two of the arm bones, but he thinks it can be "fully repaired in time" I do hope so.

P.S. This grew so big 20
that I'm putting it in
two envelopes

It's curious that we should both get to
Hosp. at the same time & right at the finish
after keeping out of it so long. I will
probably be the first to get home as they are
going to send married men first, if they
have families & work to go to.

The weary waiting is nearly over dear
& won't it be lovely to have our home
all to ourselves & the kiddies. I wonder
where we shall settle down when we
leave Warrack. The land is the only place
for me but I want to get somewhere where
you can have comforts & conveniences &
friends, & the youngsters proper schooling
Still there is plenty of time to think about
that. I think there will be a big demand
for land when we all get back. I wonder
if Ruth & Ida will see anything of each
other at the University. I must send Chas.
a card so good-night little wife. Kiss the
bairns for me Best love to you all
From yr. loving husband Harv.

A. F. W. 5073.
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J. D. & Co.

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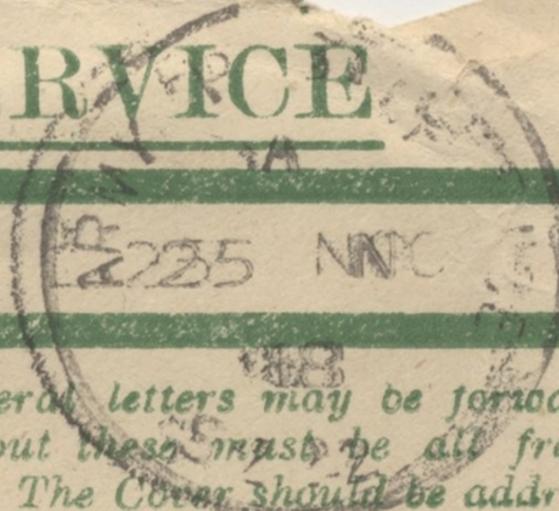
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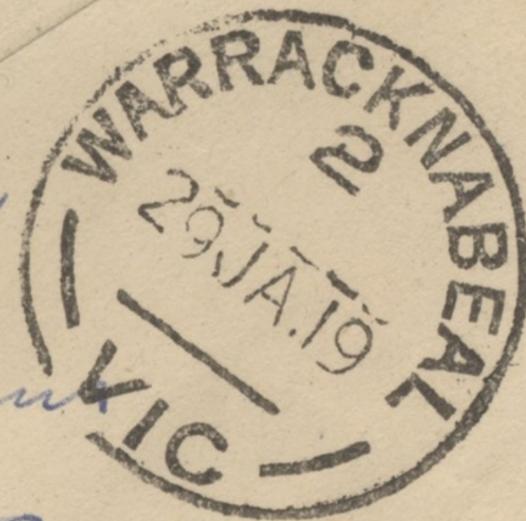
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The last big push
from Jaffa to Damascus
in Sept. Oct. 1918



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NO 4/17.
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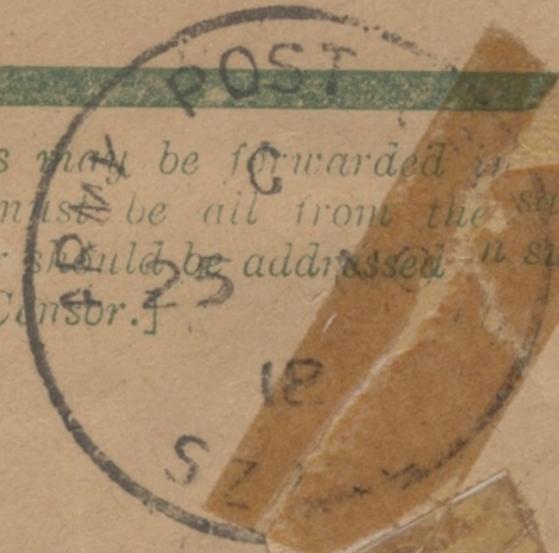
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