



PRG 18/17/1-56 consists of 55 letters from Ross Smith to his mother Jessie Smith, and letter number 47 to his father Andrew Smith, 1914–18

Letters 1 to 30 were transcribed by Judy M Fander, and letters 31 to 56 were transcribed by Lyndall Fredericks, Volunteers at the State Library of South Australia 2013

Letters are usually written in ink and the envelopes are addressed in ink.

Pages are numbered by the writer.

On the envelope is written in pencil the PRG number added by Library archivists.

On the envelope is also written in pencil, presumably by the receiver, a running number beginning 75 and ending 126.

The envelope has a date received written in pencil, presumably by the receiver.

Envelopes have a purple stamp PASSED BY CENSOR with a number usually 3025.

The transcript for each letter starts on a new page and the spelling is as in the original.

Spellings are all as in the originals.

PRG 18/17/1

75

POST AUSTRALIA CARD dated 3/12/14 and Postmarked Port Said, bearing Australian coat of arms and a one penny red kangaroo printed stamp.

*Addressed to
Mrs. Andrew Smith.
'Aviemore'
Stephen Terrace.
Gilberton.
South Australia*

On the reverse side

At sea

I don't think I'll have time for a letter, we are just coming into our 3rd port & the mail is closing sooner than I thought. The date is 10 days before my birthday. I am very fit & well & we are having it very smooth & cool. Nothing eventful has happened lately.

Will write from next port in a few days time.

Love to all. Ross

PRG 18/17/2

76

This is an official Field Service Post Card

Printed at top left A.F.A. 2042

114/Gen.No./5248

FIELD SERVICE POST CARD bearing the British coat of arms. Stamped in a circle with 4th. AUST.INF BGDE 25-V11-15, FIELD P.O.



Written down the left hand side

The address only to be written on this side. If anything else is added, the post card will be destroyed.

Mrs. Andrew Smith
Stephen Terrace.
Gilberton.
South Australia

On the reverse side is a standard form giving the writer choices between possible alternatives.

NOTHING is to be written on this side except the date and signature of the sender. Sentences not required may be erased. If anything else is added the post card will be destroyed.

I am quite well.
~~I have been admitted into hospital~~
~~sick _____ and am going on well.~~
~~wounded _____ and hope to be discharged soon.~~
~~I am being sent down to the base.~~
I have received your

letter dated 16/6/15
telegram ' _____
parcel ' _____

Letter follows at first opportunity.
~~I have received no letter from you~~
~~lately.~~
~~for a long time.~~

Signature only. Ross Smith

Date 25th. July 1915.

[Postage must be prepaid on any letter or post card addressed to the sender of this card.]

(3500) Wt. W3497-293 1,000m. 2/15 M.R.Co.,Ltd.

PRG 18/17/3/1

1

Hospital Ship Braemar Castle

Oct 31st. 1915.

On the 8th May 1915 we were all very busy striking tents & getting our kits in order and everybody was in the best of spirits. The 'fall in' sounded at 8 P.M. & we all had to sit down on our parade ground and await the order to march off. No one was supposed to leave the parade ground but lots did & there were soon sounds of revelry from the canteen. The Second L.H. moved out of camp at 9 P.M. all singing & we cheered them as they passed. We left at 1 A.M. and marched about 3 miles to a siding &

2

there entrained for Alexandria. It was a rotten journey but we got aboard the Grantully Castle at 11 A.M. and sailed at 3 P.M. The N.Z. Mounted Rifle Brigade was aboard with us too, a fine body of men. The rest of our Brigade was on another ship. The voyage was uneventful until we



were a few miles from Cape Helles. It was then that we ~~could hear~~ \heard/ the booming of the big naval guns for the first time. Even then it didn't seem that we were so near the real thing but later we anchored off Helles for a few hours & could watch the shells bursting. We steamed on to Anzac & got there about 3 P.M. We lay a long way out but

3

even out there we could hear the rattle & roar of the musketry. Towards evening the firing grew very heavy & then it was that I really realized there was a war on. It gives one a peculiar sensation to hear the rattle of heavy rifle fire for the first time, it seemed to fascinate me & I had to keep watching the hills from where I knew the noise was coming.

We started to go ashore about 9 P.M. in destroyers & it took some time before we were all off. Not a light anywhere & it but we were all singing lustily until about a mile from shore.

It was a dark night & everything looked inky black ashore but about half a mile from the beach the little pinnacles &

4

barges were waiting for us & took us the rest of the way. There were lots of stray bullets plonking in the water coming from the ship but we got no shrapnel to welcome us.

The beach was teeming with life & work, men carrying tins of biscuits, others loading mules, & others again unloading & stacking cases & cases of every sort of thing that goes to supply an army. Those were the busy days when everything had to be done at night, Turkish Shrapnel being in command of the beach by daylight.

We were ashore anyway just 15 days after the first lot landed & things were only middling

5

then. After collecting all our men we started off in the wet and mud (it had [*illegible crossed out*] rained all day) up what was then known as Shrapnel Valley, & now Monash Valley. It is the main valley leading from the beach to our trenches & there was a rough mule track up it then.

We camped about half way up the valley & got a few hours sleep before 'stand-to-arms' at daybreak. The rifle fire was very heavy all the time & we, not knowing the positions, had not the least idea where it was all coming from. That incessant rattle & crack of rifles kept up

6

for about a fortnight after we landed & then gradually eased down to spasmodic bursts.

Sometimes one man would turn the whole line into fright & away they would all go & fire like blazes. Perhaps things would be fairly quiet & then a 'nervy' man would see an imaginary Turk crawling towards him & he would tell the next man & they would start rapid firing. The others thinking something was doing would take it up too & so on right along the whole line. Then the Turks would get scared & think we were going to attack & they would open a rapid fire to stop us. Next the machine guns would chip in & sometimes the Turks

7

would give us some shrapnel. You can imagine the noise but one very soon gets used to it. The morning after our landing we were told to 'dig in' & make dugouts on the side of a hill just near where we had slept. My squadron unluckily got the worst place. We were all digging furiously when their snipers picked us up & we had 5 men hit before we got out of it. Those were our first casualties. A lot has been written about the Turkish sniper & he certainly is a splendid shot but our snipers beat them at their own game in the end. Shrapnel Gully was a veritable death road by day & men used to get picked off like flies.

8

The only way to get along was to hug the side of the road that you thought was safe & run for your life across the open spaces. It was certainly sporting to see bullets tear up the ground under your feet almost & wonder how they didn't hit you.



I often used to wonder if I ever did my 100 yds. faster on the Adelaide Oval than some of my short sprints around corners & across that road!

Later on a sap was dug in the side of the hill for day use & the road only used at night & this sap saved hundreds of lives. A 'sap' in case you don't know is only a wide deep trench, in fact a sunken road.

9

It was ~~on~~ during/ the next 2 days that I got my first experience of fighting. B Squadron was sent up to reinforce the famous & hotly contested 'Quinn's Post.' The Turks had been making frequent attacks on it & the 13th. & 16th. Inf. were getting a bit weary after 15 day of it straight off. 'Quinn's' is just a section of our line & the trenches are on the top of a steep hill & just on the edge of the steep part with the Turks between 20 & 30 yards out in front on level or slightly higher ground. We were to be supports for the first 24 hours &

10

in the firing line the next 24. However a sgt. & 18 men were wanted for a night outpost & I got the job. It was lying out on a hill & guarding part of our line where the trench was not yet dug. We were well under fire all the time but I only had one man hit & when I got the 'hang' of the bullets we managed to get little bits of cover. But I'll never forget my first night under fire, bullets seemed to be landing everywhere & I was off to shelter as soon as the first signs of daylight appeared. I went into the trenches about 10 A.M. that morning & we were relieved about 11 next morning very tired & cramped. The trench was very narrow & shallow & to put ones head up an inch above the parapet was sudden death. There were no loop holes & it was

11

just a case of putting your rifle up quickly, firing & getting it down again. Even then they kept hitting rifles out of men's hands & some were hit in the hands & arms. One of my men had 4 rifles smashed in his hands but was not hit himself.

The Turks had loop holes so had the drop on us & our engineers were too busy making our line secure in other places to be able to put in loop holes. Getting the trenches down was the first & most important thing. The night ~~was at~~ passed quickly because there was plenty to do & lots to think about but at daylight they started with their infernal bombs. I felt something like the King of Spain for the

12

the first few but then 2 burst to just outside the parapet in front of me half burying me with dirt & sand bags. I then felt that I wanted to go home! They got too hot soon after that & we retired into the support trenches & just left a few men on watch with periscopes. The 6 ft of parapet that had been blown on top of me had to be put up so I got a man to come in with me & we set to work filling new bags from the dirt in the trench & putting them up. Of course they saw us & over came more bombs but the first lot were rotten shots & we began to feel quite joyful until one came right in. It hit the parapet

13

then the head of the man who was bending down & finally lay, a little round ball of cast iron about the size of a cricket ball, sizzling on the bottom of the trench between us. It is a time like this when a man thinks a lot & does a lot in a very short time. We both yelled 'Run!' but unfortunately the heap of bags & a shovel were in my way & I was sitting down. However I just had time to grab my overcoat (which I had taken in for the purpose) & throw it over the bomb as it went

14

off not 3 ft away from me. The fumes were awful & the row knocked me silly for a bit but I got out & let the parapet have a good rest.



We had several men wounded with bombs but a coat over them deadens them a lot & incidentally blows to coat to bits.

The first time under fire is always the worst & one gets used to it very quickly.

When we went back to our resting place in Shrapnel Gully about a dozen big 8'.2 shells welcomed us. I don't mind admitting ~~not~~ that they really scared me at first & the darned gun would follow us about. They came from some of those moveable batteries they had

15

a long way off & just before the shell got to us we would see it coming over the hill & then 'to earth.' They did make a mess & one hit our quater masters store. When we came to light again there was no store at all, only a big deep hole. They would land occasionally within a few yards of us & one poor fellow was killed by a big splinter, but after every shot everyone would get up & laugh & go & see where it lobbed. It seems an extraordinary thing that men should laugh & joke when great death dealing things like those shells are landing amongst them but I found myself enjoying the fun as much as any one. The nasty time is just before it hits & you think it has surely got your dug out.

They nearly always picked our meal

16

times for their shooting & it was awkward coming back to your dinner & finding a few lumps of dirt in it.

I had one man in my troop an ex South African who was absolutely fearless; (he's dead now poor devil) he would stand out in the middle of the road & watch these shells coming over the hill & never took cover as they burst.

The Australians position runs in the form of a semicircle & the trenches hang just on the edge of some very steep slopes,(the steep slope behind them I mean.) When we got settled our Brigade was told off to look after Pope's Hill. (Named after Col. Pope of the 16th Inf.) It was a fairly easy post & the enemy were from 80 to 200 yards away so we got very few

17

bombs. Each Regiment ~~a~~ usually did about a week in the trenches & 2 weeks in ~~the~~ reserve & doing road making & trench digging etc. It was from Popes Hill that I got an uninterrupted view of the sinking of the Triumph. I happened to be looking at her at the time of the explosion & then got my glasses. She heeled over very quickly & a destroyer rushed up & got a lot off but her starboard rail touched the water 8 minutes after the explosion & she floated bottom up for 22 minutes & then took her final

18

plunge. Then the submarine hunt started for the submarine. There were 11 destroyers in it & numerous trawlers about on the look out but they did not get it. It was a fine sight to see the destroyers going full speed & then turning quickly & off in another direction.

It was said afterwards that as soon as the submarine had fired she submerged & went & lay on the bottom under a hospital ship near by until night, & that it was the same boat that torpedoed the Majestic. It gave itself up a short time afterwards because it had no oil & when the captain surrendered they gave him back his ~~sabre~~ sword./

19

He was a jolly plucky chap & could have sunk the Majestic at night but waited till daylight to give the crew a chance.

The Triumph was stationary when she was hit & not steaming around as they usually do because the gunners boasted they could hit any torpedoe with their guns as it came towards them. Unfortunately they didn't see the one that got them. On May 24th an Armistice was arranged to bury the dead & lasted for 8 hours. 8 A.M. to 4 P.M. Parties from each side went out



& did the job & there were umpires from each side posted half way between the trench & we did our half & they did theirs. I watched part of it but it was a terrible sight & thousands were buried that day, but most of them Turks.

20

Five day later just as we were getting used to the nice fresh smell the silly Turks must needs attack Quinn's Post again & left a few hundred dead out in front of the trenches. They attacked strongly at daylight & caught some of our Infantry napping with the result that we lost part of our front trench. Only for 3 hours tho'. The recapture was very fine & I saw most of it. Two of our men crawled up nearly on top of the back of our trenches (the back sloped down the hill) & threw bombs for about 20 minutes. They were under fire all the time but the majority of the Australian Infantry don't seem to know what fear is. Soon after this I saw 6 men take off their equipment & charge over the top to clear

21

out a nest of Turks in one place. It did look fine to see just these 6 volunteers go over the top with their bayonets flashing in the sun. They did their job. June & July were quiet months with nothing much doing. One night the Turks had the Audacity to attack Popes Hill held by the 1st A.L.H. Brigade when the famous 3rd Regt. were defending it too!

2 A.M. 'Stand to Arms every man, post being attacked'! We were all out in no time & it was bright moonlight too. They came down the side of a hill & into a gully but didn't get far. The 2nd Regt. were in the

22

gully & we were on the hill. How those men laughed & swore & fired. Then we got a machine gun onto them & they bolted.

On the 1st July they shot poor old Timmy. Poor chap he was too careless & got his head up too high on a nasty corner. We buried him next night & I have a photo of his grave. I missed him awfully & July was a rotten month for me. There was nothing doing at all & it was jolly hot, & the flies awful.

We could see Achi Baaba very well from our hill & used to watch the bombardments by the big naval guns. One bombardment lasted about 2 days a \with/ almost an incessant roar. The broadsides would burst 4 shells at a time & it looked as if nothing could live

23

under such a fire but the hill is as strong as ever.

On July 22nd we expected the Turks to attack, it was their Constitutional day whatever that may be, but we all got ready & great preparations were made for their reception. We were in the trenches at the time so were very joyful. Sick men got well strangely quickly & everybody seemed polite & cheerful as is always the way when a scrap is expected after a long spell of quiet.

It was about full moon & you could see men sitting up till late putting the final bit of oil on their rifles & cleaning the ammunition & some sharpening their bayonets. We got a double issue of rum that night & were all ~~action~~ ready next morning at 'Stand to'

24

but the beggars did not come!! The next & the next morning came & still the same & our spirits sank.

Fighting is a thing that grows on one & after one gets used to it he longs for hard fights & not this silly senseless trench work where one side seldom sees the other.

The nights were long & it was only by doing a turn now & then at observing & firing at flashes that I could keep awake. Firing at flashes is good sport. Sometimes I would get at a steel loop



hole & pick up a man firing fairly constantly & get a rough sight on the place & the moment I saw his flash I would fire. After a bit

25

he would tumble to it and then to make it a square deal I might fire first a few times & he or perhaps one of the others would fire at my flash. They used to do a lot of it & get pretty close sometimes.

The Beach was the chief place of amusement and when not in the trenches we could nearly always get down for a swim every day. Just a narrow strip of stony beach about ½ mile long and 50 yds from water to the steep hills that the landing party

26

first had to tackle. Here all the stores etc. were landed in big barges & there were cases & heaps of stuff piled all along to within 10 yds. of the water.

The Turks had a few guns that could pepper the whole place with shrapnel & 2 guns were particularly nasty. The one to the South was named 'Beachy Bill' & the one to the North 'Annafarta Annie', so called because of a village in that direction.

In the hot weather hundreds of men would go down to swim at every hour of the day & the contempt they had for the shrapnel in some cases was extraordinary. They would just laugh & go on bathing but if too many shells were coming a whistle was blown & every one

27

had to come ashore & take cover until they stopped. It was very amusing to see a man hop out of the water & grab his clothes off a barge & then take cover, swearing as only an Australian can because he had been disturbed at his bath. The whole time we were at Anzac we were dependent for firewood almost entirely on what we could gather about the H hills. The whole place was under 2 miles long by about ½ mile wide & there was only low scrub on it when we got there. Its pretty bare now. An average of 10,000 men require a fair amount of wood but we managed.

The 'Stand-to-arms' was the part I was least keen on. We always performed the ceremony no matter

28

where we were. Just before the first light of day we all turned out with our gear on & waited until it was fairly light in case of an attack. Of course the time varied but for some time in the summer we used to turn out at 3A.M. and dismiss about 4. I generally then went off for a swim & the water was glorious. I was there for 4 ½ months & only missed 'Standing to' about 3 times, when I was getting ill. There was one big 8" gun of theirs we could not get & it did a lot of damage. Every evening about an hour before sunset it would start & always pounded the same trenches. We would hear the big thing coming thro' the air & then see

29

a terrific explosion. One evening I was going to the beach & as one shell burst I saw a puttee & a coat blown high in the air. Coming back I saw the man being carried down & the stretcher bearers had just stopped for a spell.

All his clothes except one boot & a puttee had been blown off & he was par burnt almost black but alive & fairly cheerful. He asked for a drink and immediately a man handed him his bottle which he had just walked 1½ miles to fill.

One gets used to such sights

30

after a time but I have never forgotten that man, a hopeless case of course, lying there without a murmur.



We all felt the loss of Col. Rowell very much. He was in command of Pope's Hill all the time he was there and was thought very highly of. He got ill & stayed on until it got worse & he was very bad when he finally went away. If we had a few more men like him we might be in Constantinople now. Towards the end of July we began to hear about the long expected attack on Hill 971 & Suvla Bay.

Look at any map in a newspaper & you will see the two positions. An ~~army~~ Army Corp of English

31

troops were to land at Suvla & get round north of 971 & the N.Z. Inf & our 4th Inf. were to go for the Big Hill, as we call it, supported by the Tommies.

We at Anzac & further south were to make a big show & keep the Turks there.

It all looks so simple on paper but that little job cost us about 25,000 men all told. We worked like niggers for the few days before the fun started & sleep seemed to be a thing of the past. I think I can safely say I had as little as any one, doing 11 days & nights with only about 2 hours sleep just before breakfast. Being in charge

32

of our bomb throwers kept me up nearly all of every night besides my ordinary work. However on the 12th day when I had decided to chuck the bomb job I was promoted to Regt. Sgt. Major. But to get back to the Big Scrap.-I won't go into details about the preparations they are too numerous, but 5 P.M. Aug. 6th was the time when the ball opened at Anzac. All our guns were going & it was sweet music to our ears to hear them after the weeks of quietness. At 5.30 P.M. 6000 Aust. Inf. attacked the Lone Pine trenches in 3 lines. The first line just jogged along with our

33

shrapnel bursting beautifully in front of them. Not many of the poor fellows got there but the second & third lines carried all before them. It was a fine scrap.

Our Regt. was the weakest in the Brigade so we were held in reserve. The first regt. were given the priveledge of charging from Pope's & the 2nd from Quinn's. Next morning Aug. 7th at daybreak out went the 1st 160 of them, God knows what for but I don't, & against about 1000 Turks. they got into their first two lines of trenches

34

but were blown out again by bombs & straggled back. They had 140 casualties.

At Quinn's an order got mixed up & some charged & some did not. Major Logan got the order to go at his part of the trench & hopped out saying 'Come on boys, its murder but we've got to do it.' He's still out there poor beggar. 28 went over the top & one got back, the others are out there still. There was literally a sheet of lead coming over the trench & lots got hit getting out & fell back. We were down at the bottom of the hill & our share was watching the wounded coming down.

35

About 6 A.M. my squadron was sent up to help the 1st on Pope's who were just coming in.

There were only a few men in the trenches & we expected a counter attack any minute. The left of our position attacked too but also with disasterous results. From a tunnel trench where I was we could see the enemy's trenches firing on to our left & we had some fine shooting at head & shoulder targets at 300 yds.

Our guns opened up again at daylight with high explosive on the trenches just in front of us & we were soon black with dust and dirt.

So much for our Anzac Scrap & we did the job we



36

had to, holding a large number of Turks there while the 971 lot went forward. All that morning we could hear their rifle fire getting further & further inland & at last the N.Z. Inf were on top of 971 after 3 miles of hard fighting in a hot sun. Their Mounted Brigade did very well too but there are only a few left and at roll call only 7 men answered out of one Squadron. All the New Zealanders did very well, remarkably well in fact considering they were as weak as cats after so long on the Peninsular. Our 4th Inf. Brigade were on their left & did well too.

37

We held 971 that night & it was next day I think that we lost it & now only hold a small bit of it that is not much use. There are many stories of the loss of the hill and as I was not there I can't \say/ what happened but I have heard from officers & men who did see it that the best traditions of the British Army were not upheld & that certain people ran like sheep. We killed hundreds of Turks in those few days & when I left they were still lying thick in some places waiting their turn to be buried.

38

Suvla Bay was further north again & I don't know much about that part but we captured a good lot of ground all along that front & had we not lost the key of the whole show, Hill 971, things might be further ahead.

To return to Anzac.— When things quietend down a bit our Regt. took over Quinn's Post, a very different Quinn's from the one I first knew. Now there are nice deep wide trenches & in places overhead cover & steel loop holes & all the way along netting is put up high in front of the trench to stop bombs coming in. It was a rotten post & no where

39

to move about except the side of a steep hill. We were shorthanded & the men had little rest & the dead out in front didn't improve matters. The men got as weak as cats and 90% of them at least were suffering from dysentery & the like diseases. But after about a month we were moved round further north to one of the new positions. I was only there a short time before coming away but we were busy preparing our winter quarters. We only had a few small positions to hold & did not get very much fire. The ground was so nice and fresh too after our cramped life at Anzac and after we had buried sundry dead Turks things began

40

to get quite comfortable.

My opinion of the Turk has risen considerably & he fights a clean & square fight and at trench work he is an adept at constructing his trenches. When it comes to hand to hand work they generally bolt & are no match for our men even if they do stay.

I don't want to take away any of the glory from the Infantry in the first landing, it was wonderful, but the fact that is overlooked by most people is that ~~their~~ the enemy's/ main force of about 20,000 was 2 miles further down the coast where they had barbed wire in the water & expected us to land & our actual landing was opposed by only about 2,000 men who were easily routed. The wonderful part of the business was how they managed to collect

41

and hold their position and dig in under such odds. The Turks pushed them in to the edge of the steep hills of the valley where we are now but then all their attacks couldn't push them the extra few yards over the edge. Thats where the old fighting blood came in, a sort of 'A Britisher with his back to the wall' but those men had nothing at their backs except in places a drop of about 100 ft. or more.

It is a pity such howling blunders were made, not so much at first as afterwards did they become noticeable.



The Suvla Bay affair was an

42

awful failure & a great disappointment to us all & cost so many lives. I left the Peninsular on Sept. 12th & things were very quiet then & from what I can hear nothing much has happened since.

But after all my 4 ½ months were quite happy ones & full of fun. The tucker certainly could have been a improved upon but then 'War is War' is'nt it & not all beer & skittles.

One soon gets used to doing with only a few hours sleep a day but I never wan't to try & do 11 days & nights on end again with only about 30 hours sleep the whole time.

As far as bullets go one treats them with contempt & never thinks of being hit. Unfortunately

43

I have never been in a bayonet charge so cannot describe the sensations but most men who have been in one or more say they don't wan't to be in another but you will always find they are they first to volunteer if there is a charge & volunteers are wanted for the job.

There are lots more little incidents I might tell you about but I'm not out to write a book at present & if I did I would'nt have anything to tell you about when I get home.

RS

PRG 18/17/3/2

[This letter is written on ship's notepaper headed UNION-CASTLE LINE and bears the flag of the company. The Union Castle Mail Steamship Co. Ltd. was formed March 1900 and the flag combines those of the founding members being the Union Steamship Co. with a white flag and a blue border bearing a red saltire on the white. The heading is marked out.]

3rd London General Hospital.

Nov. 16th. 1915.

My Dear Mother.

I have just finished writing my short account of my stay in Gallipoli.

I have tried to tell you about things as I saw them and most of the little incidents I have written about were seen by myself. In cases where I got my information second hand I have been careful to say so.

I have tried to leave myself & my own 'valiant(?) deeds' out of it as much as I could because I'm so sick of seeing soldier's letters reproduced in the papers and full of the most awful lies, and I make a \this/ stipulation before you read ~~this~~it/, that not one word of it

is communicated directly or indirectly to the press.

Of course I don't mind your reading it to the Warrens or any ~~other~~ of my \other/ friends if you feel so disposed but no newspapers. The idea makes me shudder!

The writing is atrocious but most of it was written at sea ~~while~~ during fairly rough weather & my hand has not got accustomed to writing again yet.

Another thing, after enteric one's memory is slightly effected for a time & I used to think of lots of things & then completely forget them. However it is'nt one of Ian Hamilton's despatches & I'm not an Ashmead-Bartlett so make allowances.

Lots of love.

Ross.

(Well in bed & snowing outside.)



PRG 18/17/4

Aug 19th 1916.

My dearest Ma.

It is two years to-day since I went into camp. Enclosed is an account of our scrap & I hope you will find it interesting. You may show it to any of your pals that you wish as long as none of it gets into the papers. Weather is very nice & we still continue to rest. Tomorrow I'm going to the sea (4 miles away) for a swim.

Very much love

Your loving Ruff.

I wrote you 2 letters\or 1 I'm not sure/ a few days ago.

R.S.

The Battle of Romani.

Before telling you the story of the actual fight it will be necessary to tell you something about the country it was fought in and also a few things which led up to it.

Romani is I think the name of a well but there is no village or anything of that sort as one would imagine. Our railway runs out to it and 'Railhead' is about a mile west of our camp but is being pushed on further East. Our camp is situated on some high ground which falls away steeply to the north and east into undulating sandy desert. To the South & west it falls away more gradually but everywhere there is a succession of soft sandy ridges covered with low bushes, and there are groups of date palms or Hods as they are called at frequent intervals.

The sand is very soft and loose and some of the hills are very steep which makes them very hard to climb

2

especially if one is carrying a machine gun or several belt boxes of ammunition. The whole position is an excellent one from a defensive point of view except from the South & we knew they would tackle us from there. When we moved out here at the end of May our job was to patrol the country eastwards for about 30 miles & watch for any Turks that might be about. Their forward base was at El Airish 70 miles from here & they used to patrol towards us also & we frequently had small brushes with their patrols. It was very tiring and monotonous work and we used to do the job turn about with our 2nd Brigade and these 'stunts' as we call them came about every 5 or 6 days.

Most of our travelling was done at night and on one occasion we were in the saddle for 14 hours, then had a few hours 'rest' in the boiling sun & then marched back to camp that night.

3

It is a most heart breaking feeling to have to keep awake on horseback when one is absolutely tired out. The motion of the horse seems to make it worse & the white sand plays strange tricks with ones eyes, and it appears as if the sand is really about 20ft. below you. Then you have to shake your head to get it clear again.

Of course fresh water is very scarce and one or twice we were very thirsty.

These stunts went on until about July 20th & we were all getting fed up and wondering if there really was a war on, then one day an aeroplane dropped a message saying it had seen thousands of Turks & camels marching West & that they were at Bir-el-Abd (Bir el = well of) about 20 miles from here.

We all threw our hats in the air at the news because we knew it meant a fight and an end of the long stunts for a time at least.



4

The 2nd. Brigade were sent out and got in touch with them and from then on we kept them under observation & kept worrying them. That is one of the principal duties of mounted troops, to keep constantly in touch with the enemy and try & find out his strength & plans. For 2 weeks we did not have a single night in bed and as before we worked turn about with the 2nd. Bgde. We would leave camp at night, relieve the 2nd Bgde at dawn & hang onto the Turks until relieved by the 2nd. the following dawn.

It was hard work but interesting & our artillery used to come out & pound them occasionally and that always livened things up considerably. The enemy kept coming on slowly, entrenching as he went & we kept falling back until he got to Katia, 5 miles from Romani. We knew we had not long to wait then and instead of our Bgde. going

5

to Katia on the 3rd Aug. we were rushed out to our outpost line about 6 P.M. My 2 guns were attached to the 3rd Regt. & I was glad to be back with my old pals again. I just had time to get my guns in position before it got dark & we \the Regt/ were holding a line about a mile long to the south of the position and facing due east.

It was a big front & I had to split my guns & put one in each of two gullies which ran out onto the flat country. Sgt. (now Lieut.) Harvey took my No. 2 gun & I remained with No.1 gun.

Everything was very quiet, as it always is on Outposts, until about midnight when 3 shots rang out on my right. I thought at the time it was probably only some nervous sentry & paid little heed to it but a little later there were a few more & we began to wonder.

We were not left long in doubt

6

however for at about 1 A.M. the firing started properly & we heard the Turks yelling their battle cry of Allah! Allah! Allah! as they made their first charge. It sounds most weird and I think must have sounded most disconcerting to any who had not heard it before. My horses and a troop of the Regts. horses were about 100 yds. behind us and at the first yell to my horror I heard the horses galloping. Fortunately they were all tied together & soon ran themselves into a circle & were brought back but it was an awkward moment.

The attack was delivered on my right flank from a small ridge about 200 yds. from my gun and I was unable to fire because of the danger of hitting our own men who were immediately on or my right with the Turks firing just above them.

It never gets really dark in this country and I think they must have spotted us because the bullets soon started to hit

7

the mound our gun was on so we decided to dig in.

We hung on there until the first signs of dawn and just as I was beginning to wonder what would happen when it got light, Major Lewis (Lance) ordered me to retire with his Squadron.

We retired back along the gully with the Turks hot on our tracks & took up a position on a ridge commanding the gully. It was now getting quite light and I just had time to get my gun mounted when they charged. We knocked them back easily & then had great sport at running targets at about 400 yds.

By this time the attack had developed along our whole front & was coming exactly as we had anticipated.

Sunrise still found us on the bare ridge and it was then that the see 2nd. Brigade came up and reinforced us. The Turks had captured a very important hill on my right & were pouring in a pretty hot fire.



8

Then their Machine Guns came into action & soon after them came their shrapnel. The second burst from their machine guns found the range of our ridge to perfection & they simply plastered us with lead. I was firing the gun myself & there was nothing to do but get as close to Mother sand as possible while their guns were firing and then have a go with our own while they were not firing.

It was exciting to say the least of it. 'Tis a blessing that Nature bestows the thing called 'Fighting Madness' upon us at such times. It is'nt madness at all really but is just an exalted determined-to-kill-and-not-be-killed sort of feeling and all thought of fear and danger seems to vanish. One gets worked up into it and I wish I could describe my feelings as I sat behind that gun with my thumbs on the firing button and pouring out 600 bullets to the minute into living targets. The savage satisfaction

9

too as you see them drop!

My gun soon started to boil and as I had no condenser there was a cloud of steam coming from the barrel casing. (The barrel is surrounded by water to keep it cool.) They must have seen it for soon afterwards they turned a battery of guns onto us and some of the shells seemed to burst right in our faces. How none of us got hit I can't imagine because men were being hit all around the us.

My men were wonderful and took it all as a great joke and after every few shells we gave them a burst just to let them know we were still going.

It could not last much longer though, they had made 3 charges at us & were working up too close & we were greatly outnumbered. Our troops on the right were falling back so we had to retire to another ridge further back.

Then came the 'Out of Action', no easy job with a heavy gun & tripod & boxes of ammunition to load onto pack horses

10

under bursting shells. Only one of my horses had been killed & the wounded ones were rideable. We all went together as scattered as possible in a wild gallop over 500 yds. of fire swept ground to cover behind another ridge. I found time to look around me and it was a wonderful and awful sight to see the Squadrons coming out of action to take up another position. Horses half mad with excitement, riderless horses, dead horses, wounded horses just hobbling along, yelling men, dead men, men without horses, two men on some horses, other men carrying a wounded man across his saddle – all mixed up in a mad gallop.

No hopeless confusion or panic though, far from it. It is the sort of job that has to be done quickly and no time is lost. To an onlooker it must have looked a rabble but once behind the ridge every man formed up again & was ready for more. That is the value of discipline & training and yet I have

11

heard said by some ignorant people that the Australian soldier is undisciplined. And so the fight wore on from ridge to ridge but it was part of our plan to fall back & draw them onto the Infantry redouts & we Light Horse were to slip out onto their flank.

Up to a certain point they fought well & were certainly well officered and their artillery was particularly good. At daylight their big guns started pounding Railhead & our camps & they kept it up all day but did only a little damage. Their aeroplanes were particularly active & dropped bombs on the camps for over an hour. They relied on the bombs to create confusion but no one paid any heed to them.

From midnight up till about 7 A.M. the 1st. & 2nd. L.H. Bgdes. who had been on duty every day & night for two weeks, held them. It was a very fine piece of work for tired troops against greatly superior numbers but they never once



12

had us really thinking.

The 1st Bgde. was then taken away onto the right flank which was being threatened & the Infantry & 2nd Bgde. were left to look after the left & centre of our line.

Their main attack was broken & the firing eased up from then on. Col. Fulton collected what was left of his Regt. and I went round to the Right with him & the 2nd. Reg^t.

We mounted our guns on top of a high ridge and amused ourselves with long range shooting & watching our Artillery. The latter did splendid work and pounded the enemy all day and we heard from prisoners afterwards that it was particularly effective.

At about 4 P.M. I decided to run the gauntlet back to a small Hod & water my horses which had not been watered for 24 hours. Another little trip amongst the f bullets but it was long range fire & we were not touched.

13

I got into position again about 6 P.M. & we had our first rest for 36 hours, out of which we were continuously in action for 18 hours. We were all completely done so were kept in reserve that night & had a beautiful sleep.

As soon as it was dark the rest of the Brigade slipped out onto their left flank & joined up with some Infantry & a Yeomanry Bgde. & the N.Z. Mounted Bgde./ that had come up.

Next morning white flags went up all over the place & we captured over 3000 unwounded prisoners, our Bgde. getting about 2,100.

The rest of the Turks were in full retreat so as soon as I had fed my tired horses I pushed on to rejoin the Regt. We had gone about 2 miles when we came across 3 German machine guns which had been abandoned with all their gear.

It was a great find & as we were wondering what to do with them

14

Gen. Chauvel, Commander of our Division, came up & told us to get them back to camp. We sent into camp for a wagon & returned with them & had a good meal & a wash & then started out again.

The enemy made a stand at Katia and it was there that we came up with the rest of the Brigade. I did not get into action again & we all withdrew to camp that night & left the Yeomanry & 2nd Brigade worrying them.

We needed a rest for our horses & men & we also needed reorganising somewhat.

Going out to Katia that day I had plenty of time to look over the ground we had fought on the day before. A battlefield before it has been cleaned up presents a ghastly appearance. The wounded had of course all been collected but the dead men & horses had not been touched & were lying where they had fallen.

15

Ammunition, saddlery, equipment, rifles and all manner of stuff both ours & Turkish was strewn all over the field.

We captured a great deal of war material & 2 more machine guns besides the 3 we got ourselves. Everything was German & in beautiful condition & practically new.

My casualties were 1 killed and 2 wounded and 1 man (young Hill-Smith of Yalumba) was wounded in his tent in camp. I consider that the Section was extremely lucky considering what it went through. Most of my men have lived in the saltbush country at one time or another and I am satisfied that the man from out back can beat anything when it comes to the real thing. As someone remarked a few days ago 'They don't look much on parade but by God they can fight!' One of the coolest men in the whole affair was General Chauval & I saw him riding about amongst the shells



16

and bullets as if he / were out for exercise. Col. Fulton showed to advantage as well & did excellent work with his Regt. Major Lance Lewis did very good work too with his Squadron and all the \other/ officers of the 3rd. made good. This brings me up to the morning of the 6th. We had 2 days in camp & marched out again on the 8th. The Brigade travelled all night & came upon the enemy at dawn on the 9th. about 20 miles from here & quite close to the Mediterranean coast. They welcomed us with a few 5" High Explosives & we soon took what cover there was behind the sand hills. A camel convoy was just moving over a ridge about 1800 yds from us & we loosed off all our 6 machine guns onto them and carved them up. We soon discovered they were there in force so the whole Brigade and a Battery of Horse Artillery came into action against them.

17

My position was again on a ridge but with a little more cover this time. It was just as well too for they started pelting us with shrapnel & 5" stuff rather fast. Some of the 5" burst within a few yards of us but beyond getting very dusty they did not touch our guns. A little later however one of them got one of my very best men, Radwell. He had been with me all through the fighting & I feel his loss very much. He was one of those sort of chaps who don't know what fear is and was very popular. Our men kept on advancing & got within about 1000 yds of their guns & just as we looked like having a show of capturing them they heavily counter attacked us with about 2 Batallions so of course we had to retire. We had to do it fairly quickly too & they kept pouring the shrapnel & big stuff into us and the 'Out of Action' was

18

another of those mad gallops without confusion. A shell hit the horse of a man riding close to me & blew the horse to bits but the man was unhurt & soon caught a riderless horse & got away again.

We have heard that the men who handle their guns are Austrians and to give them credit they know how to use them.

We retired back to a Hod 5 miles nearer here & were there for four days and eventually marched back to camp.

The whole of our Division was out there and I must add a word of praise for the Staff & the Supply Section. During the whole week we were out we were never short of water or rations and actually got an issue of cigarettes one day & the last 2 days we got fresh bread. That sort of thing means something and as we were coming home we passed a string of camels 3 miles long going out to

19

the advanced troops. The horse fodder alone is an enormous item. And now the 1st. L.H. Bgde. is back in camp resting & recieving its pats on the back.

General Chauval addressed the whole Brigade to-day and said all sorts of nice things. He was in charge of us before he got the Division & was immensely proud that we had the position of honour in both fights. Needless to say we are all very proud of the fact ourselves and our only sorrow is for our gallant comrades who have fallen.

I can't tell you the number of our casualties but if you multiply my age by ten it will answer about the same.

I have recommended 4 of my men but whether they will get anything or not is hard to say.

Les Ward is one of them & he did very well & kept things lively with his jokes & funny remarks.



20

Radwell, who was killed is another recommended.

The Turks have gone now and I don't think they will trouble us again for a bit. There were 13,000 of them in the attack here and the General told us we had accounted for at least half of them in casualties and prisoners.

Thirteen thousand against 2 Brigades is long odds isn't it yet we alone held them for four hours on a 3 mile front.

I have tried to tell you the story of the fight as I saw it, and it is principally about the doings of the 1st Bgde & the Machine guns but that is only natural as I am a 1st. Bgde. Machine Gunner myself.

Compared with Gallipoli it was a totally different. There we had nice deep trenches & loop holes to fire through and plenty of cover but in this affair it was quite the opposite and I have never before

21

been exposed to such a hot fire as we were on that first Ridge on Aug. 4th. The horses made a great difference too.

It is the first time the Light Horse have had a chance of doing anything as mounted troops and I am very pleased that I was in it.

Ross Smith

Romani.

Aug. 15th. 1916.

PRG 18/17/5

[This item consists of a letter and the envelope in which it was sent.]

The envelope is postmarked FIELD P.O 1ST AUST L. H. BDE., with the date 27th SE 16, stamped across the diameter of the postmark. At the top are the words 'Active Service' On the left hand edge is written in pencil 22nd, Dec 1916 Ross Smith Lt.

A red triangular stamp reads: Passed by Censor No. 3455

The letter is addressed to

Mrs Andrew Smith

'Aviemore'

Stephen Terrace

Gilberton

South Australia

Egypt.

Dec 22nd 1916.

My dearest Mother.

I have just reread of your last letter of Nov. 13th which came two days ago, the pocket diary also came & I'm very pleased to have it and was just beginning to wonder what I would do for one next year. No. 19 parcel also turned up and as usual was hailed with much delight, I always enjoy opening my parcels. The tin of powder was a bit bent and the almonds were well powdered but it rather improves them! I'm looking forward to getting 3 all at once but the mails are hung up at Kantara for a few days but will come along when things are not so busy.

A lot of comfort things have arrived also Xmas Billies but they have not been issued yet.



You ask me about my rank in this Corps. I'm still a full Lieut. but my seniority in the Flying Corps only counts from when I joined it so I am about the most junior officer in this Sqdn. A man can come in

2

as a Capt or a Major or anything else but his seniority in the Corps counts from when he joins it, hence we sometimes have 2nd Lieuts senior to Capts. It is a very fair way too but rank does not matter a bit, it is ability that counts. Muir, who by the way is easily the best & most daring Pilot in Egypt & can practically do as he likes, is only a 2nd Lt. Promotion is practically non existent but I knew that before I joined and I would far rather be a Lieut. in the Flying Corps than a Capt. in anything else.

Perhaps you have been wondering what a Flight & a Wing are? I can tell you how many machines there are in each in a round-about way. First of all there is a 'Flight' which consists of (my age ÷ 4) machines and twice as many officers & various mechanics etc. Then comes a Sqdn. which consists of Hd. Qtrs & 3 Flights & 3 times as many officers & machines as a Flight has. 3 Squadrons go to a Wing & 2 or 3 wings to a Brigade. By a little calculation you will soon get the figures. The number of machines in a Sqdn includes all sorts, fighters scouts, & reconnaissance machines.

3

I'm glad you have such a good maid Maw & hope she stops with you.

I have not heard from Colin for a few weeks but he won't have much time to write from France. He was very keen about going but how little he realized what he was going to. Anyway he has got plenty of pluck & that will carry him through allright.

Things have been happening here since I wrote last & I don't think I'll be divulging any military secrets by telling you about them. We have been pushing forward ever since Romani and had moved our line about 40 miles forward and until a few days ago were sitting down about 23 miles from el Arish and preparing to attack it. The Turks held el Arish & a position 7 miles on our side of it & also a very strong place to the South about & a little on our flank about 30 miles away, called Maghara. The latter is a natural stronghold with rocky hills about 2,000 ft high. Our railway was pushed out with the troops as well. The work of the Flying

4

Corps has been to go away beyond our lines & get information & also to keep an eye on Maghara & see that no large force congregated there which might slip in on our flank.

That was roughly our position on Dec. 19th On Dec. 20th one of our machines took an Artillery General out to see the country before el Arish which we were to attack. The Pilot flew down fairly low over their trenches & was not fired on so went down lower & finally down to about 100 ft. & lo & behold! there was not a Turk to be seen in the trenches or in el Arish.

They had all vanished in a night, just 12 months after we had played them a similar trick at Anzac.

That afternoon I was sent out to Maghara. As soon as I got there I knew they had gone, their camp was deserted & we came down to 500 ft. & made sure there was nothing left. Their camp was in a valley with about ½ mile wide, with hills rising almost straight up in places for about 1000 ft. We circled round at first

5

& then dropped to 2000 ft. & circled again incase there were still some guns left. Nothing happened so we went to 1000 & then to 500. It was quite strange flitting about over their old camp in the narrow valley with the high hills on either side. We picked up their track & went on and came upon their rear party about half an hour later.

The el Arish 'all clear' report & my Maghara 'all clear' report upset all the elaborate plans of attack & the Light Horse were pushed forward that night.



We were all very busy next day (yesterday) & Wackett & I left at daylight & went up the coast as far as Rafa (you will see it on almost any map) to see if we could find where they had gone to. As we passed over el Arish the L.H. were just going through & the inhabitants seemed quite pleased to see them. It is quite a small native town of about 2-300 houses & of course the inevitable Mosque.

We did not see much of military importance on our track but had one very unique experience. As we approached

6

a small town we noticed a man waving a white flag. We spiraled down & found all the inhabitants standing in the street with their hands up & an old man, evidently the Omdah or headman, waving a large white flag on a pole. He climbed up a little hill near the town & planted his flag & then stood beside it. Our capture was complete & we waved our ~~han~~ handkerchiefs in acknowledgement. I wonder if ever before a town has surrendered to an aeroplane! We circled over their heads quite low a few times & then went on, and are now having quite a lot of fun about our capture!

The country out that way gets better than it is round here & a lot of it is under cultivation. It was quite like a picture from the Bible. Lots of Bedouin camps with their flocks of goats and some men ploughing, one chap had 2 camels in his plough, tandem. Others were sowing grain but not the way we do it, they just had a dish & were throwing the grain out with their hands. I have not done much to-day except listen to exciting adventures.

7

Another machine located the enemy yesterday & we dropped over a Ton of bombs on them to-day. It has been 'a pilots day' because observers don't usually go when bombs are taken because of the weight.

Early this morning 5 fast fighting machines set out for Beersheba loaded with huge bombs. They had a glorious time & 3 enemy machines were waiting for them over Beersheba. Two of them were shot down & the other driven off. Muir got a Fokker & then chased another away over to the other side of the Dead Sea & when he turned to come back the Hun was still going his hardest.

I've just been talking to Muir & after a lot of persuasion got him to tell me about the one he shot down. He was up about 9000 & spotted the Fokker at about 8000 & dived at him. The Fokker put his nose down & Muir went after him firing all the while. The both did a vertical nose dive for 6000 ft. with engines full on & at 2000 ft, Muir pulled his machine out of it, but the Fokker went on down!! Muir was doing about 200 miles an hour for a few seconds!

8

This afternoon's stunt met with no opposition. Twelve machines went out loaded with bombs & blew half of Sinai away to say nothing of Turks. They looked very pretty all going off together. There is no doubt ~~our~~ about our air superiority, we have got the Huns as well licked here as they have in France. The new machines that we got a little while ago can beat them all ways but the real secret of it lies in our Pilots. Our men go out looking for fight whereas their airmen always avoid it if they possibly can. Their aerodrome is at Beersheba & if they had not been in the air to-day when our machines got there, Muir was unofficially going to drop them a message 'Come up you —s'!!

I was much amused at some of the messages our mechanics painted on the bombs before they went out. They do it in case the bombs do not explode but if they do explode the message of course is well split up. We only get a few that misfire so most of the messages are never recieved.

Such phrases as 'A Merry Xmas', 'Carlton Ale', 'Iron Rations' 'A present for Fritz & Johnny', 'Backshesh for Huns' are some



9

that were adorning our bombs to-day.

Saturday 23rd \9 P.M. / To-day has been another interesting and exciting day. The Light Horse attacked the enemy's position soon after daylight. The Turks are still going further back and are trying to get all their gear and stores away with them. It is rather a difficult job as they have no railway to help them. They evidently did not expect us to push on after them so soon and we tackled them this morning before they had cleared their camp. The result was that they were left the option of abandoning their stores ~~or star~~ and getting away, or of risking a fight and a rearguard action and so delay our advance which would give them the necessary time to get their stores clear. As they held a position protected by 4 strong redoubts they chose the latter method and decided to fight.

It was rather a tame little scrap with not much noise and I have not heard for certain yet how the day went but we appeared to be in an excellent position when I left there about 3 P.M. this afternoon.

I was lucky enough to be sent out about 11 with orders to machine gun the enemy who were retiring eastwards. That practically meant

10

a roving commission with lots of chance of some fun and a good view of the scrap.

We soon picked up the position & then went off eastwards along the enemy's road and the fun commenced. It was really most thrilling and I have never quite experienced anything quite like it before and I nearly fell out from laughing once or twice. We would spot a string of camels and dive straight at them with me kneeling up in my seat and my gun firing as hard as it could. Camels are peculiar looking creatures at any time but get them suddenly surprised and catherine wheels are not in it. The way they twist & scatter is too funny & their drivers bolt as soon as the first shot goes off.

The result is a wide scattering and hence a delay to the enemy to whom time means so much. We did this little stunt lots of times and some parties of men were almost as funny as the camels. It must be frightfully demoralising to be swooped on by a 'plane firing a machine gun and we came down pretty low onto them.

A bit further out we found a light railway with a string of trucks on it drawn by mules. It was an excellent target and we soon got busy. The poor old mules got horribly excited & 3 of them tried to bolt at right angles to the

11

track with result that they derailed their trucks and we left things in a lovely mess! We came back then to the fight and landed near some of the L.H. They were the 10th Regt. & we had a look at things and then flew on and landed at Anzac Div. H.Q. We saw Gen. Chauvel and told him how things were and then watched operations from a fairly safe hill. It was quite like old times to hear the guns and rifles going again but I must say that the air is a better place to fight from. I did my job and saw all the fun and was back here having afternoon tea an hour later while the poor old L.H. were still going hard and wondering if their bully beef would be up in time for tea.

We had our machines over there all day & were never once worried by a Hun which goes to prove that we have their airmen well scared.

I must tell you of an amusing little incident that happened during one of our bomb raids yesterday. A pilot went down low and dropped a huge bomb beside a railway culvet. The bomb had a delayed action fuse and as soon as it dropped & did not go off

12

two men ran to have a look at it!!!

They timed their run beautifully & were only about 10 yards off it when there was a terrific explosion. I don't think they have come down yet!!



Next day, Xmas Eve. — This is a letter of many parts but I have written it when I could & there have been many interruptions. The L.H. took that place yesterday & must have bagged a number of prisoners but they had to retire again during the night to water their horses as the Turks had blown the wells in.

Your parcel No. 21 has just been given to me and it is a very much appreciated Xmas present, there are still bags of parcels coming so perhaps I will get your cake presently.

This is a most perfect day and we are not doing much and the old Turks have only had a few bombs just to remind them that we are still here. The wee monk is sitting on my shoulder at present and is trying to see down the back of my shirt. He's an amusing little chap. I'm smoking a Cornell cigarette & he just got some smoke in his eyes & put up both his hands & tried to pull it out!

I must get this posted & then go & do some work. It is awkward not knowing when the mail goes and I hope I won't miss any. Goodbye Mother dear & I'll be thinking of you to-morrow & hope you have a happy time.

Very much love from your loving Ruff.

PRG 18/17/6

Envelope post marks, one round black, one triangle red, largely illegible. Date 26th December. In ink next to postmarks is written Ross Smith Down either side of the envelope is written in pencil 1st Jan 1917

*The letter is addressed to
Mrs. Andrew Smith.
Stephen Terrace. Gilberton.
South Australia*

Egypt.
New Years Night.
1917

My dearest Mother.

This is my first letter this year and it is only right that it should be to you. I wished you a Happy New Year soon after 12 this morning & do so again now & I sincerely hope that we shall all be together again before this year is over.

To-day has been a vile day, a regular sand storm but it has eased off a bit now. It rained nearly all last week & the aerodrome was like a duck pond but a high wind came up early this morning & soon dried the sand & started to lift it. I've lain in my tent all day with my goggles on & only got up occasionally to dig myself out! But still war is war & a little of the old life occasionally helps me to remember that I have not lived in the comfort of the Flying Corps always.

You should have heard the noise at 12 o'clock last night, our old custom of firing the big gun at Mutooroo was nothing to the noise last

2

night. Machine guns were rattling, some were firing revolvers & rifles & others coloured flares & bullets were zipping all over the place. It was quite like a 'demonstration' on Gallipoli. Added to all this was the noise of 'Auld Lang Syne', motor horns & petrol tins being whacked with sticks. I have had a great time in the way of parcels in the last few days & have never had so many before. Your two nos. 20 & 22 came on Xmas Eve just after I had got no. 21 & to-day I got 3 from Mrs. King & a large cake from Mrs. Bayley. Very many thanks for yours Maw, I always like getting yours best, you know what I like so well but I really don't require so many soups & that sort of thing now. The Horlicks malted milk is a good scheme & I would be glad of a bottle about once a month, they are fine to suck when flying in the early morning.



I have still another parcel to come from Miss Hornabrook so I will be well supplied for some time. It is jolly good of people to send me things & Mrs. King's parcels contained a big cake, 2 puddings & lots of tinned stuff. I got a 'billy' as well from a lady in Victoria, I'm sorry I did not get yours. Our Xmas dinner went off very well & we had plenty to eat.— Soup, stewed steak, roast turkey, chicken, asparagus, plum pudding, oranges & nuts etc. There was a large quantity of champagne as well so we were all very happy & thoroughly enjoyed

3

ourselves. There was a mail yesterday and I got your letter of Nov. 27 and the papers & to-day your 23rd & 24th parcels came to-day/ so I have had them all up to date. It has been nice getting 3 on Xmas Eve & then 2 more on New Years Day. I will write & thank Mrs. Chapman for the knitted thing, it was jolly nice of her to send it. I loved your own Cake Maw & it was beautifully fresh & good and quite like the old Mutooroo ones.

I'm glad you got that little gong I thought I told you that I had sent it.

Our O.C's name is Major Rutledge, an old Geelong Grammar School boy & he's in England at present on short leave.

We get plenty of warm things issued to us for this job & I think I have enough socks to see the war through so don't bother about anything please Maw, I've got a most complet kit. I have got all the negatives of the photos I've sent & have kept them because others like to get prints of them sometimes & I've thought that if I go to England again I'll get a set of them printed properly.

I'm glad young Hill-Smith is getting better, he was a nice boy & would have got on well.

4

We have not been doing very much since I wrote last except eat!! The Light Horse took that place (Magdhaba) that I told you about in my last letter & got 1300 prisoners as well but since then nothing much has happened. Muir had a great fight this morning. The Huns have not been near us for over a week but to-day 3 of them came. Muir was waiting a bit further out & went up after them & by himself drove off the 3 of them. He is a wonderful man & peppered one of them well but unfortunately did not bring him down. They turned & went for home as soon as he was near them & he chased them away to their own aerodrome at Beersheba. They started off from here at 14,000 ft. & were at 3,000 ft over

Beersheba, that was because the Huns put their noses down to gain speed. They had this strong wind behind them & Muir says they were all doing about 200 miles an hour all the time. Some pace! They are a cowardly lot of swine, fancy one man driving 3 2-seater machines right down to their own aerodrome. They were good machines too & all nearly as fast as Muir & well armed. The Turks must feel very proud of their German airmen.

Wachett's new machine has got dual controls in it, that is to say that I can work it from

5

my seat the same as he can. It's a great scheme & he is teaching me to fly it & I'm doing famously.

The wind is coming up again & I think we are in for a dirty night and the old tent pole is rocking about in a most alarming manner.

We have quite decided that the capture of Jericho is going to be a simple matter & we are going to work old Joshua's stunt on it. Seven machines are going out for 7 days & will each fly round it 7 times ~~each~~ for 7 days & on the 7th day each machine (which will be equipped with a Claxton horn) will blow a long blast & the place will be ours!

I think I told you that this is the Philistine's country we are in now & we have been looking round for the jaw bone that old Samson got busy with but it seems to have disappeared completely.

Goodnight Mother dear, bed is the best place on a night like this & I'm just going there. I've got the carpet slippers on you sent, they are fine & will be most useful.

Very much love from your loving



Ruff.

PRG 18/17/7

Envelope postmarked with black circle and red triangle. The red triangle is the censor's stamp, and reads Passed by censor No 3025. A crown is printed in the centre of the triangle. The illegible circular black postmark has written over part of it the words Ross Smith. Down the left hand side, in pencil, is written 7th Jan 1917. The back of the envelope has a black circle post marked ERVILLE –AUSTR. In the centre of the circle can be seen E17

Included in the envelope is an article from the newspaper Egyptian Mail, headed THE BATTLE OF MAGHDABA. subheading A BRILLIANT VICTORY. Handwritten in ink at the top of the article is Mrs. Andrew Smith, Stephen TCE, Gilberton.

The envelope is addressed to
Mrs. Andrew Smith.
Stephen Terrace.
Gilberton.
South Australia

Egypt.
Jan 7th 1917

My Dearest Mother.

I am writing you a few lines to-day because there is another little job on to-morrow & I have to go out at daylight so there won't be much time for letters for a few days. The weather has now cleared up & it is beautiful to-day & drying things up fast. We had a pretty rotten fortnight of heavy rain & high wind and could not do much. I have just had a piece of your last cake Maw, its jolly good & I didn't know it was one of your own until I opened the tin. I'm enclosing a cutting about the Magdhaba show which is fairly accurate altho' very flattering.

There is no news Maw but I may have some in a few days.

Very much love to you all from

Your loving Ruff.

A captured Turkish officer stated that their men live in terror of our aeroplanes & during the Magdhaba fight they could not get their men to fire at the advancing troops while our 'planes were anywhere near them.

PRG/18/17/8

Envelope illegible black postmark overprinted with red triangle of the censor's stamp. Down the left hand side is written Ross Smith 12/1/17 Mafa fight

Addressed to
Mrs. Andrew Smith
Stephen Terrace.
Gilberton.
South Australia

Egypt.
Jan 12th 1916-7
My dearest Mother.



It is awfully nice getting your letters only a month after they have been written, yours of Dec. 12th came last night much to my joy.

My last letter to you was rather short I think and I'll tell you all about our last fight presently. Things are waking up a bit over here & we are kept rather busy. I remember fixing Kelly up when he was hit, it was in the Bir-el-Abd scrap & he was most unconcerned about it & did not want to leave 'the fun'. He is a jolly nice fellow. You seem to be doing no end of war work Maw & I admire you very much for all of it & you seem to take such a sensible view of things too which pleases me, it is much better to take things as they come than to worry about them like some people do, is'nt it?

I saw in the Cables that Col. Weir has got some new job, he used to be my C.O. in the old 10th A.I.R. when you used to clean my buttons for parade, do you remember at a 1/- a week was'nt it?!!

2

About those photos of mine I had taken in London, Speight Ltd, Bond St. I think it was who did the job but I have'nt the least idea what size they are. I think if you took one in to Hammers they could probably tell you what to ask for. I think the one looking straight ahead was the one I got most of so that would be a guide to them & they are sure to have a record of the transaction. They are jolly expensive, about 4½ gns. a doz for the small ones & about 8 gns. for the big uns. I have got a skin coat Maw & am well off for warm gear & it will soon be getting warm again now.

The weather has been quite decent since I wrote last & I've done a lot of flying. I really think I've struck the job I'm cut out for at last & feel that I am doing something worth while now. Observing has naturally come quite easily to me with my early bush life & altho' I say it myself I've done pretty well at it. Before this last Rafa fight I was out a good bit & the artillery used some of my sketches of their positions. It's a jolly responsible job & some fellows don't realize quite that men's lives often depend on their reports. 3 days before the scrap I was sent out to confirm one chaps report of something & found he was quite wrong & the

3

result was that the whole plan of attack was altered.

You will probably have read something about the fight at Rafa and how we mopped them right up & captured 1600 prisoners. Rafa is a Frontier Police Post on the Turco-Egyptian frontier & is on the Mediterranean coast & marks the boundry of the 2 countries. After their defeat at Maghaba a Turkish force of about 2000 men & 4 guns was sent to Rafa to try & stop our further advance. They at once started to dig in & soon had a very strong system of Redoubts & trenches. Our aeroplanes were out every day taking photos & sketching etc. & when the attack took place the Staff was in possession of a complete & accurate plan of the whole of their defences. It was decided to attack on Jan. 9th. with a mounted force consisting of the ever ready Anzac Mounted Division, the Camel Corps & 5th. Mounted Bgde of Yeomanry, supported by Royal Horse Artillery, the whole force under the command of Gen. Chetwood.

It was a march of 30 miles & they moved out on the 8th. & were in touch with the enemy at dawn of the 9th. My job was to co-operate by wireless with the artillery & to watch the general situation & report the progress of events to the Staff. I think I can safely say that I saw more of the battle of Rafa than anyone else. I started at 6.15 A.M.

4

in the morning & finished at 5.30 in the evening and did 9 hours in the air that day. It is the longest one days flying I have heard of in these parts & I was naturally a bit tired at the finish. I had 2 different pilots & we only landed 3 times to fill up. A battle from the seen from the air is a truly wonderful & beautiful sight & I'm never likely to forget it. The enemy were holding a position covering roughly about 3 sq. miles on some rising ground & they had sited their trenches with their usual skill & forethought & had a very strong position. Our artillery opened up



at 9 A.M. & the troops at once started to move forward. The plan was for the Yeomanry & Camel Corps to attack from the West & South respectively & the Anzac Div. were to come round on the East & so cut them off. By 10 o'clock they were completely surrounded & the smashing process had started in earnest. I saw the Yeomanry Brigade come into action & never in all my life have I seen such a beautiful & inspiring sight. The country out there is all green from the recent rains & is just hard enough to suit a galloping horse, & the day too was perfect. The Brigade formed up about 4 miles from the trenches and then away they went at full gallop for 2 miles with their Horse Artillery following

5

and the Turkish shrapnel bursting overhead. It is the sort of scene that one can't describe, words won't do it, they came on in Squadrons in line in extended order and all the time they were galloping for cover our guns were pouring their shrapnel onto the Turkish trenches to keep their fire down. For the first time since I have been in the Flying Corps I wished that I could have been with that Brigade just for that one wild gallop. I am still quite sure that a man never tastes the full joys of real life until he goes mad with a mad horse under him in one of those wild mad gallops under fire.

As the day wore on our men advanced steadily by rushes but there was little cover to be had and the Turkish fire became rather hot as their range decreased.

At about 3.30 P.M. I got in touch with 2 Batteries and directed their fire onto the enemy's main position. There were 8 guns firing as hard as they could and it gave me a great amount of satisfaction to watch our shrapnel bursting along the trenches and tearing up the ground.

Meanwhile our men were pouring in a hot rifle and machine gun fire and there were little spurts of earth flying

6

up all round the enemy's parapets. I had to leave soon after 4 P.M. to get home before dark so did not see the end. The Turks were expecting strong reinforcements from the East but they did not arrive in time and at about 4.45 P.M. the white flag went up and the fight was over. The whole affair was a great success and is a striking example of what British troops can do in this sort of warfare. We had to march 30 miles over new country, attack the enemy in a strong & well prepared position and return with our prisoners and wounded to our base. It was a great performance.

I only saw 2 enemy aeroplanes during the whole day & they were both very high and only stayed a few minutes. One came over & dropped his bombs (which did no damage) & then circled round our machine a few times but he was evidently too scared to come down as low as we were so turned & went for home.

We have moved our camp again and are about 20 miles further out now and its quite a decent spot & fairly near the sea.

7

I don't know when I will be able to get away & learn to be a Pilot, they want me to be a permanent Observer but I'm not too keen on the idea. Observing is really the more important job but Piloting is more fun & I want to be able to fly a machine after the war if I get a chance. I have flown the machine with dual control a few times and it is really quite easy but required a good lot of practice.

We are rather busy to-day getting our new camp in order & its time I did some work.

Very much love Maw from your loving Son

Ruff



PRG 18/17/9

Envelope has black postmark dated 18 Jan 1917 Field Post Office B MDT 1 and the red triangle of the censor's stamp.

*Down the left hand side is written Ross Smith 15 Jan 1917
Post mark on the back is illegible.*

*Addressed to
Mrs. Andrew Smith
Stephen Tce.
Gilberton.
South Australia*

15-1-17

Mother dearest, Just a line before the mail goes, I'm just off to Beersheba to see whats there, it's a big strafe as well, 8 machines are going. We anticipate some fun as their aerodrome is there. Only 2 observers are going & I'm one of the chosen ones.
Goodbye dear & lots of love
Ross.

PRG 18/17/10

*Envelope has black postmark dated 22 Jan 1917 Field Post Office A MDT 1 and the red triangle of the censor's stamp. Over the top of the censor's stamp is hand written Ross Smith
Down the left hand side is written Ross Smith 17 Jan 1917*

*Addressed to
Mrs. Andrew Smith
Stephen Terrace.
Gilberton.
South Australia*

Egypt
Jan 17th 1917.

Mother dearest.

Another short note just to tell you I got back safely from Beersheba & had a fine time, I went out there 2 days running.

To-morrow I start on the longest job that we have ever tackled, away to Jerusalem, & Jericho & all that country. No one has ever flown there before so I'll have the honour of being one of the first British airmen to go there. I'm the only observer going & have been picked out for the job, 2 other single seater Scouts are going for our protection if we strike trouble & I am going in my fast machine & will give any Hun more than he wants if he comes looking for it.

It is a fairly risky job Maw but my usual good luck will carry me through I hope.

Very much love dear
Your loving Ruff.

PRG 18/17/11

Envelope has black postmark dated 22 Jan 1917 and the red triangle of the censor's stamp overwritten with Ross Smith in ink. Down the left hand side is written 20/1/17



Addressed to
Mrs. Andrew Smith
Stephen Terrace.
Gilberton.
South Australia

Egypt.
Jan 20th. 1917.
My dearest Mother.

I wrote to you 2 days ago telling you I was off to Jerusalem but we did not go until yesterday on account of the weather.

It was the finest trip I've done yet and all very interesting going through the Holy Land. We left here yesterday morning at 8.30 A.M. and it took us 4 hours for the 220 miles. It's the longest recco. that has been done here & we were the first British airmen to fly over that country. I feel rather proud of the fact & I was the only observer who went. We had 2 single seaters with us but they kept behind us & we were the first 2 of over Jerusalem. I took 2 photos & hope they come out well. After leaving here we travelled over the Philistine country & saw Gath & Askalon *Ashkelon* & those places & then headed for Jerusalem. It is a fine town & divided roughly into 2 parts, the old & the modern. The Western is the more modern part & has some fine buildings most of

2

which have red galv. iron roofs.

The old part is still enclosed by a high wall just like the old Bible pictures. All the people seemed very interested in us & came out into the streets to watch us. From there we went on to Jericho which is just North of the Dead Sea and quite near the Jordan. It is quite a small place & only has a few modern houses in it & there are no signs of the old walls that Joshua got his D.S.O. for, for knocking over. The Jordan is only a muddy creek with not much water in it. We could see the Sea of Gallilee in the distance & the whole of the Dead Sea as well as the Mediterranean at the same time. The Dead Sea is as you probably ~~is~~ know/ about 1200 ft below the level of the Mediterranean & is surrounded by high mountains which fall away very steeply down to the water. It seemed quite strange to be seeing all these old places & in the distance we could see the mountain that Moses viewed the promised land from. Personally I don't think much of it & all round

3

Jerusalem & away south to Beersheba the country is very rocky & mountainous. We turned round at Jericho & came back over Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Hebron & Beersheba. Bethlehem is a few miles South of Jerusalem & is quite a decent little place with some modern houses. Hebron is not much but Beersheba is a fair sized town just where the flat country starts. We flew at about 10,000 ft all the way & it was such a beautiful day that I could see everything quite plainly. It was mighty cold away up there but I had plenty of clothes on & a big leather coat as well. We did not see an enemy machine all the time & did not get 'archied' any where. [*archie is WWI slang for an anti-aircraft shell or gun*]

I was at Beersheba twice before yesterday & we gave them over a ton of bombs in the two raids. I was out in our fast machine as an escort to the slower ones & we had some great sport coming home, with the Scouts diving round each other. We were doing 110 miles an hour once. The Huns have now move their aerodrome away from Beersheba & have gone away further back & we have only seen one



4

of their machines in the last 4 days.

Your parcel No. 25 came to-day Maw & the cake is fine & I've got a pipe of Lucy Hinton alight now. I am now a Qualified Observer & will send you a wing as soon as I can get some.

The mail is just on closing so I must finish, they told us when this one was going for a change. Very much love Maw from your loving son Ruff.

PRG 18/17/12

Envelope has black postmark dated FE 1 1917 and the red triangle of the censor's stamp overwritten with Ross Smith in ink.

Down the left hand side is written 28/1/17

Back of envelope has a black postmark dated 2.15^P 10MAR17. Around the edge WALKERVILLE - STH -AUSTR

Addressed to

Mrs. Andrew Smith
Stephen Terrace.
Gilberton.
South Australia

[Written at an angle at the top of the page]

The other photos are in a separate envelope as I could not get them all in in this.

Egypt.

Jan 28th. 1917.

Mother my dearest.

The enclosed are a few photos which may be interesting. The one of Jerusalem is a print of the first one ever taken of it from the air unless the Germans have taken some, anyhow it's the first British one. I took it with one of the other fellows camera. The one of the 4 of us is rather good too & we are standing by the wing of one of the machines that went.

If you put the one of Jerusalem beside the key to it & flat on a table about a foot away from you, you will see the place much as I saw it. It was taken from 10,000 ft. but as the town stands at about 2,000 ft. we were only 8,000 above it.

To-day is Sunday & its been mail day as well & your letter of Xmas day came about 3 hours ago also the Australasian. I'm glad you were going to Larg's Maw

2

the change would do you & Paw lots of good. We are quite close to the sea here & the air is grand & I can listen to the breakers at night.

Thanks muchly for pcl. No 25 which came a few days ago, those little finger bowl flowers are jolly pretty, I could'nt make out what they were at first. I always take some butter scotch & Griffith chocolate up in the air with me & its jolly nice to have on a long trip. How about drawing me in a plane eating Griffith choc? Griffith Bros. would be very pleased, would'nt they? You know the sort of thing, a big advt. with a picture of me in a plane holding up a big lump of chocolate & underneath is written.-

Read what our airmen say etc.!!

I went out to see the Regt. & my old Section a few days ago & it was nice to see them all again. They are about 8 miles away & I rode out. Tango & Two Step look very well & have been in the last 2 scraps & come through allright. I think I was more pleased to see my horses than any of the officers.



3

I like the wee diary calender you sent Maw, its going into my pocket book. I wonder if you noticed the little verse inside it about confiding in Providence, I suppose you did & I think its jolly good.

I did another long flight yesterday over new country & we went up nearly as far as Jaffa this time. It is jolly nice to get all these good jobs & again I was the only observer who went. We did not get as far as we wanted to owing to a storm. It was a beautiful sight. We could see this great bank of clouds ahead of us & thought we might be able to get beyond them & see what we wanted to. We were up at about 9000 when we met them & they were about 500 ft below us & quite shut out the earth & we 3 machines were just floating about in another world as it were. It was a beautiful sight because the sun was shining brightly up where we were but it gives one a lonely sort of feeling to loose sight of

4

old mother earth. The clouds stretched ahead of us for miles & then we ran into a higher bank & couldnt see a thing for a few minutes so we dived down through them all to about 4,000 & then turned & tried to get under them but ran into a rain storm & had to turn home. The first part of the rain storm was below us & we could see the rain pelting down on to the earth from apparently no where & we were quite dry & just above it. However we ran into a higher storm a few minutes later & the rain did sting. I am due to go to the flying school to be trained as a Pilot in a few days but am not going for a bit. The C.O. has asked me to wait until this next scrap is over because I know the country so well around where its going to be & its going to be some scrap too.

I had intended to wait for it anyway because I have'nt missed a fight in Egypt yet except the first Canal

5

show of 1915.

I've just been told I'm to go on another long trip to-morrow up Jaffa way to look for the Hun's aerodrome. We bombed them out of Beersheba a bit ago & have gone further back & we have to find them. That is really why we went to Jerusalem & this trip yesterday.

I hope its not cloudy to-morrow because we are pretty sure to find them if its fine & there may be the chance of a scrap if they screw up enough courage for it. I have'nt had a fight in the air yet & am very keen to try that kind of warfare. 3 machines are going, 2 single seater Scouts & my 2 seater. Its very nice being given all the big jobs & I've had every one lately.

I must to bed now as it's a long trip to-morrow. Goodnight Mother dear & my very best love
Your loving Ruff.

PRG 18/17/13

Envelope has black postmark dated FE 9 1917 and the red triangle of the censor's stamp overwritten with Ross Smith in ink.

Down the left hand side is written 8/2/17

*Addressed to
Mrs. Andrew Smith
Stephen Terrace.
Gilberton.
South Australia*

*Egypt.
Feb. 8th. 1917*



Mother my dearest.

I have just come in from kicking a football about & the run round has made me feel fine. We are playing a match on Sunday against the 8th. L.H. & I am trying to get into some sort of form. One gets very soft at this sort of job and the only work we do is all done sitting in the machine. We very seldom have a parade, in fact I've only done one since I joined this Corps. If I don't have to fly during the day I can do exactly as I want to and I usually spend those mornings around the hangars. If I have a recco to do in the morning it usually takes all day to finish the report. If we go out at 8 in the morning & do a fairly big recco & get in about 12 there is just time to have a wash & lunch & then do the report in the afternoon. It is surprising how much one sees that is of military importance when one gets used to flying.

An observer usually gets rather oily &

2

sooty because he has his head out most of the time looking at things & consequently collects a good lot of oil from the engine & soot from the exhaust.

I am very comfy in this tent by myself now & have got things nice & very tidy. I invested in a Primus stove last week & it's a great scheme for making suppers. Being so long without all the comforts makes me appreciate them all the more now.

It was full moon 2 nights ago & I have been out on two moonlight raids. Observers don't usually go on such stunts but I was keen on it & they let me go to machine gun. It was glorious flying in the moonlight & its quite easy to find the way about if one knows the country.

It was rather amusing one night at a place we went to. They suddenly turned a small searchlight onto us & I jumped about a foot out of my seat. I thought we were right up against the thing & blazed off about 50 rounds at it till it

3

switched round & then I found we were at least 5 miles away from it!! It was only a weak light & they probably never saw us and it looked just like 'an evil eye' flashing round the sky.

I have not been out on any very long trips lately, we have just been doing the ordinary ones.

When you are sending along another parcel Maw I would like one or two of those face washers. They are jolly handy & I have one now but they get lost occasionally. The thin sort like you sent last time are the best.

Do you remember me speaking of Lt. Brooks, he was my first troop officer when I went into Morphetville camp? He is a Major now & got his D.S.O. a few days ago. Capt. Viney has also got a D.S.O. & he is now in France. Viney was always jolly decent to me & helped me on a lot. Jack Howard has been trying to get into this Corps & I have been doing what I can but we have not been able to arrange it so far. I think he is doing too well where he is for them to let him go. Its rather a pity because it would

4

be nice if we could be together. I have never had any very particular pal since poor old Timmy but I like all these chaps here & would go anywhere with some of them. It is rather interesting studying people & sort of sizing them up and I've done quite a lot of it since I've been away. I am just going to have a hot bath & then to bed, I sleep like a top this weather. Goodnight Maw & my very best love Your loving Ruff.

I forgot to tell you we 'held up' a train a few days ago. It was great sport; we found one steaming merrily along their line & when it saw us it tried to get away but didn't have a hope. We came down quite low & I had a fine target as we flew along it. The old train eventually pulled up & everyone including the driver & fireman fell out & ran for their lives. I nearly fell out myself laughing, 3 silly old Turks hopped out while the train was going & rolled away down the embankment, they are probably feeling a bit sore. You can't imagine how funny it all looked (for us) to see those people hopping about, & falling ~~bet~~ over each other & diving behind bushes & so forth.



PRG 18/17/14

*Envelope has black postmark dated FE 26 1917 and two red triangles of the censor's stamp, one overwritten with Ross Smith in pencil
Down the left hand side is written 20th Feb 1917, and on the right, 20/2/17*

*Addressed to
Mrs. Andrew Smith
Stephen Terrace.
Gilberton.
South Australia*

Feb. 16th. 1917.

Mother my dearest.

I am writing this up in the air while coming in from a recco. We have got a strong wind blowing right against us & it has taken us a long time to get this far.

I am camped at Ishmalia for a few days & came down 2 days ago. We are doing a little job down here which I may be able to tell you about later on. The places I've been flying over in the last few days are nearer to you than I have been since Dec 1914.

Page 2

We will be going back to the Sqdn. again next week I think. This is quite a decent little stunt but the only drawback is that I will have to wait for your letter which is probably at the Sqdn. for me now.

We are just going through a big cloud & its raining hard & it stings like the dickens if it \hits/ ones face. This is a nice machine I'm in & does'nt vibrate much hence my writing is fairly readable I hope. We are nearly home but its too dark to write any more now.

Egypt.

Feb 20th. 1917

My dearest Mother.

I've been away for a week & found your letter waiting for me when I got home yesterday. Three of our machines went down to Ishmalia & we worked with 2 columns that went out to attack Nekhl which is about 80 miles East of Suez. It was quite a decent little trip and we had lots of fun but not much excitement. We camped at the Ishmalia aerodrome & our job was to watch the fronts of the two columns & to keep touch between them. The weather on the whole was pretty rotten for flying and we had rain clouds & high wind nearly every day which made it long & tiring work. The night before the attack (Saturday night) we landed & camped on the desert about 60 miles out & it seemed quite like old times again. We started at dawn next morning but unfortunately there was no scrap as the bally Turks had all cleared out & our troops only got about 6!! We searched all the country away South but they had just disappeared in the mountains, the country down there is appalling, nothing but rocky mountains with hardly a bush growing. We landed at

2

Nekhl later on & found the L.H. busy collecting what loot they could. I scored an old cannon ball & some of the others got some old rifles & things. Its only a small town & was very dirty. The thing I enjoyed most was a cup of chicken broth that had been made from a chicken that didn't have the luck to get away. The bit of pencilled letter is one I started in my plane going back to Ishmalia one day.

You have'nt gone wrong in the numbering of your parcels Maw, I've had them all & the numbers have followed in their right order. I wanted to write to you this afternoon but 2 men came to see me & I've only just managed to get rid of them. This has been a perfect day & quite a change



from the bad weather we had at Ishmalia. The account in the papers you sent of the el Arish fight nearly made me ill. You have no idea how things are dished up to you poor people at home. I was most annoyed to as it said the aeroplanes came in at the 'final stages' etc. We were there long before any of the other troops & were there all day too. Also the Infantry were never within 20 miles of the fight.

I do remember that moonlight cactus & wish

3

I could come along & see it flowering too, I've never heard of one of that sort before. The old duck shows up very well at nights now & I always have a look at that & the North Star every night.

It must be strange with the new daylight saving business. Mrs. King was very amusing when it came in in England & she said she didn't mind being late for 9 o'clock breakfast so much now because it was really only 8 o'clock! I've just had a big bundle of papers from her, but no letters for some time so they must evidently have been sunk. A lot of boats have been caught in the Mediterranean lately. I forgot to tell you that I had a letter from Mr. Gardiner at Moffat a few weeks ago. I wrote to him just before Xmas & he seemed very pleased to hear from me & wished to be remembered to you & Paw & Keith. Warriston is evidently flourishing & there were about 80 boys there when he wrote. We have been lucky kids Maw thanks to you & Paw and I'm old enough to realize it now and I don't think I've got a single unhappy or unpleasant memory of my childhood or boyhood to look back upon. Those 2 years I had in England, & especially the time at Warriston made all the difference

4

in the world to me in every way.

I'm going up to Cairo to-morrow for a few days. Three of us are going & we are flying up. I want a few things & also Mills the chap who used to be in my tent & got hit wants to see me. He is pretty bad poor chap and I know him better than any of the others. I don't know whether I'm a particularly sympathetic sort of a bird but its extraordinary how many people tell me their troubles.

I'll probably see the Rofès too while I'm there. They were still in deep mourning for their Father when I saw them last November.

I think I'll get a larger camera too as the one I have now is a bit small & good photos will be jolly interesting to look back on in a few years time. The photos enclosed are some of the 4 ~~captured~~ captured mountain guns \captured/ at Rafa. My old M.G. Sqdn. brought them in & some of the officers are standing by the guns.

It is just dinner time Maw & I must wash. We have a new cook now who has been a chef & we're living very well and get plenty to eat.

Very much love Mother dearest from

Your loving son

Ruff.

PRG 18/17/15

Envelope has black postmark dated MA 4 1917 and one red triangle of the censor's stamp, overwritten with Ross Smith in ink

Down the left hand side is written 1st March 1917, and on the right, 1/3/17



Addressed to
Mrs. Andrew Smith
Stephen Terrace.
Gilberton.
South Australia.

Egypt.
March 1st. 1917.
Mother my dearest.

I got back to camp the day before yesterday after having 4 days in Cairo & found your letter, 2 pcls & several papers waiting for me. Thanks Maw for everything, I always enjoy mail days more than any others. I suppose Keith will just about be leaving for England. I think he is doing quite the right thing and I hope I'll be able to get down to Port Said and see him. I'm sorry for you though Maw, it will be lonely by yourself & I've always been glad that Keith has been at home to be with you & fix things up. Your news about Colin being ill again was the first I had heard about it. I've had no letters from him since before he went to France & wondered what had happened. So many boats have been sunk lately that perhaps his letters have not reached me. What bad luck for the poor kid but its really a good thing he is missing the winter which is pretty bad in those parts. My little jaunt up to Cairo has freshened me up a lot. It doesn't do to stay too long flying without a break & I had been doing a lot just before I went. We can get leave about every 2 months if we want it but I won't need to go away again for some time

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now. Three of us went up, Capt. Ellis, Capt. Murray Jones & myself. They are both jolly nice fellows from Victoria & are the 2 I like best in this Sqdn. I flew up with Ellis and we took an old machine up to the Aircraft Park. We were going on Wednesday morning but the old thing would'nt go & we did'nt get away until after 4. It was getting dark when we got to the Canal so we decided to put into Ishmalia & camp for the night. We left for Cairo next morning but it was a rotten day & very bumpy. We had a strong wind against us too which made it harder to get along. We stayed at the Continental Hotel & I thoroughly enjoyed being in civilization once more. Some of our fellows are up there in hospital consequently we met some nurses. One afternoon we all went out to the Pyramids & then had dinner at Mena House. I had'nt been there since the time I went with Timmy before Gallipoli. It's a grand drive out there & there is one straight bit of road about 5 miles long. I went for another tour round with some more nurses on Sunday afternoon. It was rather amusing, we wanted to go & see the Dead City which is an old dug up place. Our driver couldn't speak English very well & evidently misunderstood us as he drove us to a cemetery & pulled up at

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the gate & wondered why we did'nt get out! I also saw the Somme pictures one night which were very interesting & another night I saw some more of the French front & big guns firing. There were races on Saturday so we went & they were quite exciting. It's a pretty little course & they were some jolly pretty & well dressed women there. I finished up about square, all the racing is done by Arabs & their times are much slower than ours. I went to see the Rofès on Friday but they were out so I only saw them the day I left. They have got an awfully nice flat with a big gum tree growing just outside the drawing room window. I had to come back by train as there was no new 2 seater machine ready for us, the other 2 flew back in single seaters. It's a long & slow journey from this side of the Canal and the whole trip took me 9 hours. Its nice to be back here again & 4 days is quite long enough for Cairo. The night before last we had a very heavy storm & it rained nearly all night. My tent stood up to it well but several of the others' came down much to their occupants disgust. One man had dug about 2 feet out of the floor of his tent to make more room for moving about & consequently he had 2 ft. of water under his bed in the morning! Its been quite decent to-day



4

and the flies are getting thick again so the summer will soon be along. I've just had a brainy idea, I'll try & meet Keith at Suez & go ashore & we'll both run up to Cairo & he can catch the boat again at Port Said. It would be a fine stunt & I could show him round Cairo well. I saw Frank Trealor up in hospital in Cairo & his arm is getting better but he expects to go back to Australia with it until it gets properly right again. Major Lance Lewis is pretty bad & they were doubtful if he will get over it. He got one right through the head & the doctors can't understand why he wasn't killed outright. Our man Mills who was hit by a piece of Archie is getting on very well but his arm is almost sure to be left a bit stiff. There is not much news this week as things are fairly quiet but I'll have another despatch for you perhaps in a week or two. I'm feeling rather sad that you are being left by yourself Maw & I hope you won't be too lonely. Just keep on smiling & try not to worry & we'll all be home together some day. Goodnight Maw dear & very much love & many kisses from your loving Ruff. I didn't forget you in Cairo but couldn't find anything nice to send you. I'm trying to get 2 ink pots to have made into an inkstand out of a piece of a propeller blade but the ink pots are hard to get, & I couldn't get the right sort in Cairo.

PRG 18/17/16

*Envelope has black postmark dated MA 12 1917 and a red triangle of the censor's stamp, overwritten with Ross Smith in pencil
Down the left hand side is written March 11th. 1917*

*Addressed to
Mrs. Andrew Smith
Stephen Terrace.
Gilberton.
South Australia*

*Egypt.
March 11th. 1917.
Mother my dearest.*

To-day is Sunday & very windy & stormy. I was supposed to go out this morning but it's much too windy for any flying at all. Instead I've been in my tent all the morning having a field day amongst my old letters. I do that about once a month & read them all again & then tear them up, except the unanswered ones which I'm sorry to say are rather many at present. There has not been much happening since I wrote to you last & we have had no more mail but I hear there is one about somewhere for us. I hinted to you some time ago that there would probably be a big fight here shortly but the Turks have retired again & left their big position.

After the Rafa fight the Turks started to dig in about 10 miles further east & soon had a very strong position composed of about 50 big redoubts & a large number of guns. We used to reconnoiter it every day & it was rather a pet place of mine & I think I 'did it' more than anyone else. I made the first detailed sketch of it soon after it started & strange to say I made the last reconnaissance of it.

I was sent out on the 5th. to go to some places near the Sheikh Nuran position as we called it, & wandered over to have a look how the big place was getting on.

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It was not part of my recco. to go there but it's just as well I did. As we got closer to it I noticed there were no tents about so became suspicious & decided to have a better look. Their 'Archie's' used to be pretty good there so we circled round about a mile away & climbed up a bit. There were heavy clouds at about 4000 ft. so we went into them & then over the position & I had a



look through the breaks in the clouds. They had all gone except for a few cavalry so we came down quite low & had a good look at all the trenches. They were evidently short of barbed wire because there was none in front of the redoubts but instead they had rows & rows of round holes about 3ft. wide & 6 ft. deep dug out in front to stop infantry charging them.

It was rather an important discovery to find the place evacuated & I was jolly pleased to be the one who found it first as the news went straight through to the War Office & I suppose it will have appeared in your cables by this.

We had a small bit of excitement a few days ago. The hostile aircraft alarm went & as usual we all turned out to watch our Archies. The Hun flew straight on through them & came right for our aerodrome, & we made sure he was going to bomb us. When he got over us he shut off his engine & started to glide down & we were all expecting to see his bombs go any minute. Instead of that

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he fires a Verys light & came down to about 4000ft. & dropped a message bag & then went off again. As soon as he fired the light we knew he was'nt out for strafe & the Archies stopped firing. The message bag contained letters from 2 of our fellows who were shot down a few weeks ago, asking for clothes & some other things & the old Hun was sportsman enough to risk our archies to come & deliver the letters.

Next day we sent a machine over their aerodrome & dropped the things & a letter saying we were sorry to have misunderstood their intention etc. & thanked them for what they had done. It was jolly sporting of them don't you think & our captured fellows said they were having a really good time & being well looked after. The Germans in their Flying Corps seem to be a much more decent crowd than their other soldiers. Sometimes in France when one of our men get shot down, the Germans bring his things over & drop them to our aerodromes & sometimes if one of our well known pilots gets killed they bring a wreath for his grave. Their greatest airman was Immlenman whom we killed sometime ago behind his own lines. Our fellows took up a big wreath & tied it to a parachute & dropped it for his grave. War is a strange game is'nt it Maw but I must say that the feeling between the rival flying Corps is better than that between any other branches of the services.

I think I told you in my last letter that I would be

4

going to the flying School shortly. There is some difficulty about it at present as a new order has come out which says that no more Australian pilots are to be trained in Egypt. The Major is trying to fix up that I should go because he kept me back for the fight that did not come off. It may mean that I won't be able to go at all or that I'll be sent to England to learn to fly, I'm not sure which but will probably know in a week or two. I'm enclosing some photos Maw & most of them are either of the Canal or of the Nekhl stunt. The ones by themselves are of Sgt. J. Ranford's \3.L.H./ grave. He was killed at Romani last Aug. & I took the photo of his grave soon after. I think his people live at Woodville & if you can find out will you please send the photos to them as I'm sure they would like to have them. I meant to send them before but have always forgotten.

I'll cable you if I go to the school soon & wherever I go but don't send any more parcels after this Maw as the might go astray when I am dodging about. If I do go to the school in Egypt I have to go to Cairo, Alex & probably Ishmalia too to do everything.

Goodbye Mother dear & the very best of love from
Your loving Ruff.



PRG 18/17/17

Envelope has illegible black postmark overprinted with a red triangle of the censor's stamp, overwritten with Ross Smith in ink

Down the left hand side is written March 17th. 1917

*Addressed to
Mrs. Andrew Smith
Stephen Terrace.
Gilberton.
South Australia*

*Egypt.
Mar. 17th. 1917.*

My dearest Mother.

'Tis St. Patricks day but as I'm not an Irishman (praise be to Allah) the fact does not interest me in the least. I'm in shorts & cotton things to-day for the first time this year, its quite warm but it will be some time yet before it gets properly hot. Your letter of Feb. 5th. came 2 days ago & I'm expecting the parcels & papers in a few days time. I'm glad Keith was so much improved when you saw him last & hope he has quite got over it by now, I'm looking forward to seeing him very much when he comes through.

We have had a week of high wind & very little flying so there is not much news to tell you. I've been doing a bit of work getting ready for when I go to the school & then at about 5 when the wind usually drops I've been going for walks along the beach. I love being near the sea, don't you think its got some strange fascination for people & it always gives me a dreamy sort of feeling & makes me think a lot?

I think I told you once before that there is a subteranean coal mine away out somewhere from this coast & bits of coal get washed up on the shore & in places the sand is quite black with coal dust. There are lots of wee crabs on the shore & we have great sport chasing them, they are quick

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little beggars & dive away down into holes in the sand. We really don't get much unpleasantness in this job Maw & there are not many things that happen that I don't tell you about because I think you'd worry. Of course we do get 'awkward moments' nearly every time we go out but that's only to be expected & no one ever worries about them. They are fairly good with their archies at times & it rather makes one wonder what is going to happen when the machine gets hit. You can feel it quite plainly if its only a bullet that hits a spar or something & if an archie bursts at all near the disturbance always bumps the machine about. It is extraordinary though how few vital parts in a machine to be hit & its very seldom they are hit & even then we usually manage to get along. I was out over a camp a few days ago & down fairly low & the cheeky beggars fired a howitzer at us, only one shot but it was a beauty & fairly peppered us. Two of our main flying wires (there are only 4) on one plane were shot away among other things & it certainly did look rather like a trip to Constantinople for a few minutes but thanks to the skilful flying of Capt. Williams we got home quite safely on our 2 remaining wires. I am beginning to understand the feeling a bird must have when its being shot at but like everything else one gets used to it. The archies are really rather pretty & for all the world like big powder puffs.

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I have'nt got nearly as much horror now of being taken prisoner as I used to have because we know that they treat our men & especially flying men jolly well. All the same if the occasion ever does arise I shall give them a good run for their money first unless its hopeless.



If you are going to be by yourself Maw don't worry about the garden too much, I mean don't go doing things that will knock you up. Also don't think you are not doing anything about the war, you do do lots I know & besides you have provided 3 sons, 2 of whom are soldiers & the other soon will be.

I must try & write to Dr. Lendon some day but writing to someone you don't know very well is rather difficult don't you think?

Yesterday was the first Anniversary of this Sqdn's leaving Australia & we had a very swell dinner last night in celebration thereof. (I might mention that I'm one of the 2 of the original lot in this outfit & am very proud of the fact, Peter Drummond is the other.) Some time ago we got hold of a rattling good cook from the Light Horse. He was once a chef at Menzies consequently we are doing very well in the tucker line & that reminds me that a few mornings ago I had a chop for breakfast for the first time for ages. We got an issue of jolly good mutton instead of the usual old cow-that's-run-all-over-Queensland. The chop almost made me think I was back at Dismal again.

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But to continue, we decorated the mess tent with palm leaves & bunting & message bags & it looked very well. The message bags are what we drop letters or notes in from the air & have 2 red, blue & yellow tails so they came in most useful. The Colonel (our Wing commander came over too so we had quite a large gathering & much drinking of toasts etc. The Colonels table looked very pretty & one side of it had a box of flowers & green stuff with wee electric lights amongst the flowers. I went out for a ride yesterday afternoon & got the flowers such as they were. They were yellow mostly & growing near some palm trees.

18th Sunday.- It's a most perfect day Maw & I've just heard that I'm to go to the school starting on Apl. 3rd. The first 3 weeks is spent on a technical course & there is rather a hard exam at the end of it & then on to flying. It is rather unfortunate me going there when Keith will be going through & I'll probably have some difficulty in getting leave. However I'm jolly glad to be going & in about another 3 months I should be a pilot. I think I'll most likely be sent back to this Sqdn. too which will be much better than going to one of the new Australian Sqdns. in England. My address will still be the same unless I cable you differently & my letters will be sent on from here, & I think I told you last week not to send parcels for a bit.

Goodbye Maw & the very best of love from
Your loving Son Ruff.

PRG 18/17/18

*Envelope has MR 28 1917 inside the black postmark with Ross Smith in ink on upper right. The envelope is also postmarked on the back date 7 AP
Down the left hand side is written March 26th 1917*

*Addressed to
Mrs. Andrew Smith
Stephen, Terrace.
Gilberton.
South Australia*

*Egypt
March 26th 1917.
Mother my dearest.*

I'm very tired & very busy, flying all day, there's a hell of a fight on out here. I've been given a Military Cross for that landing stunt the other day, lot of rot of course & I told 'em so but they



seem to think otherwise. I'm jolly pleased tho' for your sake. We are out 30 miles for further than when I last wrote. Please excuse the shortness dear but more later on when thing get quieter. Very much love from
Your loving Ruff.

PRG 18/17/19

Envelope has illegible black postmark overprinted with a purple triangle of the censor's stamp, with Ross Smith in ink written at top right

Down the left hand side is written ~~May~~ \March/29th March 1917

The reverse side bears two post marks, one bearing the date 7 AP 17. The other mark reads 7.15A 24MY17,WALKERVILLE-STH AUSTR

Addressed to

Mrs. Andrew Smith

Stephen Terrace.

Gilberton.

South Australia

A note added in pencil to the head of this letter, at right-angles to the main body of the letter, reads

When you address my letters for the Lord's sake don't put M.C. after my name. Perhaps you won't think of it but in case you do, I'm just reminding you not to. I really mean this Maw & don't want you to do it & please don't let anyone else do it.

Egypt Mar. 29th. 1917.

My dearest Mother.

I wrote you a few short & snappy lines two days ago when I was a bit tired but the scrap has eased up now & we are not so busy. Also we had a mail yesterday which did a lot of buck me up. As I told you in my last note we are further out now & our aerodrome is just on the border between Egypt & Syria. Its all very green about here with lots of crops going to waste but that is the ways of war. Strangely enough our camp is on part of the ground where the last fight happened that I told you about & the old trenches are only about 200 yds. away.

It seems an awful lot of rot me getting the Military Cross for that little show but its evidently considered something out of the ordinary. It just shows how easy those things are to get if one only has the luck to be noticed. They have all been very nice about it & I've had dozens of congratulations already. The other little show I told you I was going out to do has unfortunately been cancelled & they won't let us do it. I'll tell you about it later when it does'nt matter if the Turks do know about it too. The fight that's going on now is the biggest we have had in these parts.

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It started 3 days ago by our attacking Gaza, one of the old Philistine towns, on the coast. We haven't got Gaza yet but the situation is satisfactory & we have got a number of prisoners. Naturally it has given the flying Corps a tremendous amount of work & our Squadron has done most of it. Most of my work has been co-operating with & spotting for the big guns. Its a job I'm very fond of & I've had great success this time & knocked out one gun & goodness only knows how many men. We tell the guns by wireless where to put their shots & its great to see your shells go crashing right into the very places where they are most needed. Its horrible to sit here now & think of the poor devils who have been blown to bits but thank goodness one does'nt think of that sort of thing at all during the bombardment, its quite the opposite, the better the shell, the greater the joy. One morning I saw the Turks leave their trenches for an attack. We let



them come on for about a mile & then 3 batteries opened a terrific fire on them with shrapnel at close range & plastered what was left of them right back into their trenches again. I also got 2 of my big guns onto them just as they were getting to their trenches & could see the big shrapnel tearing up about an acre at a time. Thank the Lord they have't got any Archies at Gaza so we don't have such a bad

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time up aloft. The Hun machines worry us a bit & we have to keep a good look out. One dived on me the day before yesterday but for a few seconds I thought it was only a machine gun from the ground & he was gone again before I could get a g shot at him. The chap I was going to the school with was shot down yesterday but is getting on pretty well. Its mighty hot too & must be awful for the wounded of whom there are about \10 times/ as many as you are miles away from Paw by rail. We fly in just a pair of shorts & a shirt now & its not all beer & skittles sitting behind a red hot engine for a few hours & swallowing exhaust gas & oil. I did 8 hours in the air the day before yesterday & had just started to sizzle when I finished. However its all very good sport & I would'nt miss it for anything & we still fight among ourselves to get the longest jobs. To-day is the 29th & Keith is due at Port Said in 5 days & I don't know if I'll be able to see him. The School starts on the 3rd also but that can wait for a few days & I think I'll be able to see Keith. If it was'nt for the fact of wanting to fly Mr. Waite about after the war I would'nt worry about becoming a pilot at all because I know I'm much better at observing than I ever will be as a pilot but later on I hope to fly a single seater & be able to strafe Huns properly. The Huns usually

4

fly at about 10,000 ft. but I always did have lofty ambitions did'nt I.

Thanks muchly Maw for your letter & letter card & all the papers, I was glad to get them. I had a letter from Colin yesterday & he seemed well enough but I don't know what job he was on. I hope Keith will be able to see him. I'm glad Mr. Halcombe knows these parts because he can tell you about things. I was over Beersheba again yesterday (& incidentally they were rude enough to archie us) & have seen all of Southern Palestine. You remember the recco I did to Jerusalem & Jericho & those places, someone has written a very amusing skit on my report & it is in our Brigade paper, 'The Gnome.'

I'm afraid your ink stand will have to wait a bit Maw, I can't get any \ink/ bottles & all the men are too busy to do that sort of thing just now.

I think I told you Muir has gone to a Sqdn. in France, also the wee monkey, so I ate the nuts myself! Wackett has also left us & is experimenting with machines in Cairo. It is the best job for him too because he is a very clever chap & I'm very much in favour of all our clever men being put to the best use instead of perhaps being put out by a miserable stray bullet. Muir got the M.C. a little while ago for his work here.

I think all those Mounted Cadets I went away with have enlisted except poor little Cusack. Adams, who

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if I remember, is standing next to me in that photo, was in this Sqdn., but was killed a few weeks ago in a bad crash. MacLeod was in the Artillery & I saw him once in London. Joe Hardy was in something too but I've never seen him. Brown came away with some Y.M.C.A. thing but I don't know where he is now.

I'm glad you went to that lunch for Buden, he did jolly good work here & I saw him one at Romani.

Your 2 pcls. have just come Maw so I stopped to open them & have sampled the contents. I was pleased to get them as there are no cigarettes in the camp, I wanted a new pipe, & the shirt will be most useful as all mine are dirty & water is too scarce to wash them at present. The cake has'nt been opened yet but smells jolly good. I also had a parcel of socks & a few other things from Elaine so with all these new supplies in I don't mind if I have to fly every day for a week!



I hope you can read all this Maw, my writing's a bit worse than usual & my pen won't always go where it should. The last few days have been a bit strenuous but after to-days rest I'll be ready for anything again.

Very much love Mother dearest from your loving Ruff.

I'm just going to smoke your new pipe.

PRG 18/17/20

Envelope has black postmark 11th April, 1917 and a purple triangle of the censor's stamp. Down the left hand side is written Ross Smith in ink and 8th April 1917 on both sides of the front of the envelope

On back of envelope are two postmarks ARMY POST OFFICE 13AP 17 over stamped with 7.15A 22MY17 WALKERVILLE STH AUSTR

Addressed to

Mrs. Andrew Smith

Stephen Terrace.

Gilberton.

South Australia

Egypt.

April 8th 1917.

My dearest Mother.

Your congratulatory (some word, is'nt it?) cable has just come and many thanks for it Maw. It was jolly bad luck not being able to see Keith after going so far. He told me his ship was due at Port Said on the 3rd but it has evidently been held up somewhere. I waited there until the 5th. & then had to come back here. Its very hard to find out when boats are due at Port Said & the agents simply won't tell even the Military Embarkation officers. The Sardinia came in the day before I left & I found out from them that Keith's boat was about 5 days behind them but of course I could'nt wait & can't very well ask to go down there again at such a busy time.

Port Said is a rotten place to be in & I was glad to get back here, there is absolutely nothing to do there & no where to go.

I went to see a friend of Major Rutledge's, a Commander Trelawney, a naval chap & a fine old fellow too. He is the 'Captain of the

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Port' & lives near the big lighthouse. He's got a pretty little garden too & it was nice to wander about among roses & other flowers again. I went down from here by train & the journey took me 14 hours, whereas I came back by air & it only took 2 hours. There is a 'sleeping car' on the night train now & it is fairly comfortable, there are cushions all along each side & another row on top. I had one & had a good sleep all night. Some of us went out for a picnic a few days ago & it was good fun. We took 2 cars & billy cans etc. & went about 10 miles & then made our tea among the Bedouin people. They are a strange lot & live a very simple life & always seem scared of us.

The last few days have been fairly quiet but we will be busy again in a few days after which I hope to get away to the Flying School. I'm afraid this letter is rather short but there is no news.

Very much love Maw from

Your loving Ruff.



PRG 18/17/21

Envelope has black postmark 20th April, 1917 and a purple triangle of the censor's stamp. Down the left hand side is written Ross Smith in ink and 16th April 1917 on both sides of the front of the envelope

Syria

Apl. 16th 1917

My dearest Mother.

I'm out at an advanced landing ground a few miles behind the lines & we are getting ready for our Second attack on Gaza. The next few days are going to be very busy ones. We get bombed regularly & shelled with big stuff here & it quite reminds me of being at a war again. At our camp, a bit further back, we were bombed twice in one morning before I came up here. The first one was just at dawn & caught us well in bed. The first machine had a go at the hangars, (there were 3 machines bombing) so we were all wide awake when the second tried for our camp. It was amusing to see everyone scattering & diving into funk holes in their pyjamas. I didn't have a funk hole (unfortunately) so I got busy with a machine gun as it seemed the next best thing to do. The second raid was at 9 A.M. but its not so bad in daylight because you can see them coming. They did no damage

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to our machines or hangars but got a few poor devils of men.

Did I tell you they have got a lot more machines of the latest type? They are much more active than they were & scraps are quite numerous now. Murray Jones tackled 5 of them a few days ago by himself. He put up a great fight & drove off 2 of them but the other 3 shot his machine up so much that he had to land, but it was in our own lines so we didn't lose him or the machine. I was out with Capt. Williams yesterday in one of our oldest machines over Gaza. We went out as 'Archie fodder' which means that you fly round & let them archie you & try & spot where the Archie is & then turn a battery onto it. Hence it follows that ~~see~~ the longer you are in finding the archie, the longer the archie can have practice at you. A most interesting game! As if the archies were not enough, an old Hun must come along & challenge our right to the air as well. He was one of their latest, a Halberstadt, & about 40 miles an hour faster than us with 2 guns

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to our one. It was my first real fight in the air & I must confess that I'm eagerly looking for more. As far as our machines went we were easily outclassed but Capt. Williams is a very fine pilot & although we were much slower he easily outclassed the Hun pilot & got our machine into positions where I could blaze away at him & he couldn't fire a shot at us. Its the proper way to fight & just comes down to a man to man affair which is much more like the 'Knights of Old' than anything else I've tried. We scrapped him ~~of~~ for about 15 minutes & he made 3 dives at us but only got one shot through our tail plane & then finally made off. It was just as well though because I'd fired away all my ammunition. It must be great to fly in a fast Scout machine which is equal in speed to them because speed counts an awful lot in a fight.

I got your last letter ~~\(the one Keith had)/~~ papers & 2 parcels just before I came out here. Thanks for all of them Maw & I do enjoy your cakes. I've got the last one out here & the

4

chocolate too, to eat in the machine during the scrap, I'm on artillery work again. I also got the cake of chocolate that Keith sent from Port Said so am well supplied. I don't like the idea of you being all by yourself Maw a bit, especially now that Auntie is going away, you should get someone to stay with you because I'm sure you'll be lonely all by yourself. You said that Wade in his letter home had mentioned someone coming down to 100ft. at Magdhala. It was'nt Muir but happened to be Roberts & myself &, although I didn't know it at the time, we flew just over



the heads of my Brigade who were near the redoubt. I went to see the Regt. a few days ago & saw them all. The Colonel looks very well & I had a long talk to him & all the others. Keith wrote me a long letter from Pt. Said & told me all the news. I missed him by 3 days & was very disappointed but it appears his ship was hung up at Colombo & I could get no information whatever at Port Said as to when the boat was due. We didn't get any of

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those chocolate boxes this Xmas but they may come along later as they are nearly always a few months late.

We haven't got much kit out here & will probably go back again in a few days when the show is over.

I must to bed now as I have to be up & busy early. Very much love Maw
from your loving son Ruff.

PRG 18/17/22

Envelope has black postmark 24th April, 1917 and a purple triangle of the censor's stamp overwritten in ink Ross Smith. Down the left hand side is written 23^h. April 1917 on both sides of the front of the envelope. Postmarked South Australia, date illegible, on the back.

Syria.

Apl 23rd. 1917.

Mother my dearest.

There is a temporary lull in the battle for Gaza which started a week ago. We have been attacking on a 16 mile front & it has been very hard fighting against a well entrenched enemy. Up in the air we have had a lively time too. There have been lots of fights and we have had to contend with a fairly hot archie fire every time we have had to cross the lines which is roughly about every 5 minutes when on artillery work. I've been spotting for the artillery every day so have had a good proportion of archies but have also seen nearly all the battle. We had 'tanks' to help us too & they are amusing things to watch. On the first morning I saw ~~of~~ our 2 first tanks go out together. They cleared the Turks advanced trenches but then a battery was directed onto one of them & shells were falling all round it for about 10 minutes. It

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still went on until one shell finally got a direct hit onto it & it then caught fire. The other old Tank still waddled along & did its job & then came back & crawled into a small creek & hid. It was heavily shelled all the time it was out in the open & I thought it could never possibly get back to safety but it managed to. A little later it went out again to see its pal that had been hit but as it couldn't do anything for it, it came back again. Another one on the left flank (I was on the right) had a thrilling time. The Turks swarmed all over it & tried to pull its guns out & were shooting into it through the loop holes. The Navy helped us in the bombardment & their big shells made a huge mess when they hit. It reminded me somewhat of the 12" guns shelling Achi Baba on Gallipoli. We were unfortunate in the weather as the first day was very cloudy. The clouds were only at 1,000 ft. so we had to work below them which is rather a dangerous height to work at both because

3

of our own shells & the enemy's machine guns. The noise was terrific & our machines were bumped about a lot from the explosions disturbing the air.

As things have eased off a bit now I've applied to go to the Flying School & am leaving for Cairo to-night. I'm sorry in a way to be going because I've had a most successful time as an Observer



& have done nearly 200 hours in the air, which is a good lot & it is just 6 months to-morrow since I joined this Sqdn.

I'm afraid I have forgotten to wish you 'many happy returns' of your birthday Maw but I do so now, & I didn't really forget it but forgot to mention it in my previous letters, May 5th is'nt it.?

Colin's friend Capt. Toller [...] is on H.Q. Staff out here, I saw him for about 5 minutes once about some work but didn't have time to speak to him about Colin. I had a letter from Colin this morning & he says he is very fit again.

Very much love Maw & my next letter will probably be from Cairo.

Your loving son Ruff.

My address will be as usual.

PRG 18/17/23

The envelope and paper are stationery obtained from the Shepheard's Hotel Cairo. The Hotel Crest is printed on the envelope, with the motto quis aquam nili bibit aerum bibet below. There are two postage stamps showing 5 as the value, and a picture of the Sphinx. The stamps are each overprinted with the postmark of the Hotel post office, and dated 28 1V.17.9.30 PM.

Another hotel post office postmark is printed on an otherwise unmarked portion of the envelope. All the postmarks, which are identical carry writing in Arabic script in the bottom third of the mark. Written down either side of the envelope, in pencil, is 27 April 1917. There is another Egyptian postmark on the reverse marked CAIRO E 10.30 PM.

April 27th 1917.

Shepheard's Hotel

Cairo

My dearest Mother.

I've been up here for 3 days & am having a few days holiday before starting at the Flying School. After all the hard work at the Gaza scrap this little jaunt round is very welcome & I'm having a good spell & getting a few clothes. There are 2 other fellows from No.14 Sqdn (the \Eng./ Sqdn. that works with us) who are going to the school with me & we all came down together by train. It took us 18 hours to get here & we slept(?) one night on the train in a big open truck but we had our valises so it was not so bad.

Several of our other fellows are down

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here on leave for a few days so I am not short of friends. I've been to see the Rofès twice & they are all very fit except the 6 year old whom they think has a mild attack of scarletina but she is isolated from the others so there is no danger of infection. The Hospitals are all pretty full & I've been out to the 14th A.G.H to see fellows that I know. My old Brigade had very few casualties as they had a quiet part of the line. Major Lance Lewis is up & about again but is still very thin. He has made a wonderful recovery & no one thought he would live at one time.

To-day is Friday & we do not have to report at the School until Monday. The first 3 weeks is all technical stuff & we will be kept busy but after that we get onto flying which is much easier work in comparison.

The day we got here was rather warm

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& the thermometer showed 115° in the shade but to-day is much cooler. I am waiting for your letters to be sent on & I suppose I'll have to put up with a good many delays while I'm moving about like this. I'm writing this with a ~~self~~ steel pen as my fountain pen is up-stairs, hence the scratchiness. I had a letter from Keith from Malta just before I left Rafa & he was getting on well with his journey.



Very much love Maw from your
loving Ruff.

Written in pencil

The bit of ribbon is the Military Cross ribbon.

PRG/18/17/24

The envelope is postmarked Field Post Office B, and over stamped with the censor's stamp. The date May 4, 1917 is written in pencil down either side of the envelope. This letter has been readdressed for Mutooroo Stn, Cockburn

No. 3 School of Military Aeronautics.
Abbasia.

Cairo 4-5-17

My dearest Mother.

Many happy returns of to-morrow Maw. I sent you a cable to that effect to-day. I'm at this place doing a 3 weeks technical course all about engines & aeroplanes & so forth. At the end there is an exam, which if I pass, I then go on to one of the aerodromes & learn to fly a machine. We are kept pretty busy here, from 6.30 A.M. to 7 P.M. & have 7 lectures a day & have to write up the notes at night. I'm finding the work fairly easy because I know most of it already but the notes take a lot of time to write up. We have got jolly fine quarters & live in big stone barracks which are well fitted up. I'm in a fine big room with 2 others & spring beds are provided, & as I got some sheets in Cairo I'm very comfortable.

My mail is being forwarded on & I got your letter & parcels 37 & 38 yesterday. Thanks muchly Maw for all of them. One man the Turks got

2

was a fellow called Heathcote from Victoria but he didn't have an Observer with him. He was coming back from a bomb raid & was shot down near Gaza & captured.

I've got a caricature of myself that a chap in Cairo did & am posting it to you with 2 other photos. The caricature is supposed to be exactly like me, especially my stand, at least some of my very candid friends have told me so. The poor old Fizzer, I am sorry to heard hes dead, he was such a skittish old fellow. Last Sunday, before I came out here, I spent with Mr. & Mrs. Dale at Heliopolis. They are English & jolly nice & have a fine Sunbeam car, & we went for a hurl out to Helouan in the afternoon. I only met them this time through one of our fellows & I'm going to see them again when I have time, perhaps on Sunday. We had a voting day on 2nd & as I'm the only Australian here I had to go over to the 14th A G H to vote. I voted for the Ministerialists, whoever they may be & hope it was the right crowd.

I must away to bed Maw, there is no news.

Very much love from your loving son.

Ruff.

PRG 18/17/25

The envelope is postmarked Field Post Office, and over stamped with the censor's stamp. The date 9 May, 1917 is written in pencil down one side of and also across, the envelope. 41 photos is also written in pencil across the envelope. Readdressed to Mutooroo Stn, Cockburn

Abbasia.

May 9th 1917.



Mother dearest.

Enclosed are a few photos some of which you have but most are new ones. The ones of the guns etc. firing at Gaza, I took one day when I went out on a horse to see some of the gunners. The ones of bombs are nearly all of machines that went on the raid the day before Magdhaba. Lots of love Maw, I've just written a separate letter to this
Your loving son
Ruff.

PRG 18/17/26

Post marked Field Post Office 11 My 17, and the censor's stamp. Signed in ink Ross Smith. Dated in pencil down the left hand side May 9th, 1917. Readdressed to Mutooroo Stn, Cockburn

Abbasia.

Cairo May 9th 1917.

My dearest Mother.

The enclosed stuff is some hot air stuff I've recieved on 2 occasions. The old one is Col. Fultons letter after the Romani scrap & the other is copies of 2 wires recieved after picking up that fellow. The enclosed 10/- note is one I've had for ages & the black writing on it is Turkish. They were issued to us just before Gallipoli, the idea being that they could be cashed in Constantinople!! I'm getting on famously here & quite enjoying it. Did I tell you we have a nice flower garden & its just under my window? I played in a cricket match to-day, the first for years & made 8 & got 1 wicket. There is a fine ground here & some of us have net practice in the morning from 6 to 7.30 instead of physical exercises. There is no work on Sundays so last Sunday I had a day out & started by going out to Heliopolis House Hotel to see Ellis & Peter Drummond who were down on leave. We went into Cairo & called

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on the Rofès about 12 & then all had lunch at Shepherds. After lunch I went out to tea at the Dales at Heliopolis & they took me for a tour in their Sunbeam. We went out along the Mena Road & pulled up & watched the people driving past. It is a very popular Road on Sunday afternoons & we saw lots of strange sights. I met Ellis & Drummond again about 7 & we all adjourned to Luna Park. Our party had been reinforced somewhat by Madame Bluncheley & her 2 flapper daughters. The kids are dears, about 14 & 15, & they are Belgians who've had their home pinched. Madame is quite young & very sportive & is a Baroness in her spare time in Belgium, the old boy being a Baron.

Luna Park is Earls Court on a small scale so you can quite imagine we had great fun on the various attractions. I went back to Heliopolis house for dinner with Ellis & Drummond & after dinner we went to the Bluncheleys house & generally acted the goat until I came back here again. It was a most interesting day & I enjoyed it very much. It is such

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a relief to get away from here on even one day in the week.

I'm going out to dinner at the Rofès on Friday night & to the Dales again on Sunday. It does make a difference having a few nice people to go & see. We are being remarkably lucky with our weather as it has not started to get properly hot yet so perhaps we are in for a short summer, I hope so.

I'm sorry you were feeling a bit off when you wrote last Maw & it was nice of you to send me a cake at all. I love getting your cake & things of course, but I'd hate to think you had to go into town to send them when you were not well so please don't Maw & I'll understand.

I've got a few photos which I'll send along in a separate envelope as this one will be rather full.



Goodnight Mother my dear & very much love
from your loving Son.
Ruff.

PRG 18/17/27

Envelope has black postmark 17th May, 1917 and a purple triangle of the censor's stamp. On the left hand side is written Ross Smith in ink and 17th May 1917 on both sides of the front of the envelope. Back of envelope is postmarked WALKERVILLE-STH AUSTR, dated 2.15 P 26 JL17.

*Addressed to
Mrs. Andrew Smith
Stephen Terrace.
Gilberton.
South Australia
Abbasia
Cairo. May 17th. 1917
My dearest Mother.*

I'm thankful to say that we have only a few more days of this course before the exam. & after that I hope to get onto flying. Your letter of Apl 3rd. came a few days ago together with the papers & 2 parcels. The cake is fine Maw & the tussore things are very nice, I'm keeping them till I get back onto the desert before I wear them as it has not got really hot here yet. I think I told you some time ago not to send any more parcels till I get settled down again because I don't

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need things here a bit & there is always the chance of parcels getting lost if they have to wander about. So far all yours have turned up safely & in very good order though occasionally a tin has a 'dunt' in it.

The Major has been down on leave with some of the others & I've had dinner with them at various times but they've all gone back now. Cole (from the Sqdn.) & I went to dinner at the Rofès last Friday & had a very nice evening. The 2 eldest girls paly beautifully & they played all those things Bobbie used to play to us. I wonder if you could get something and send to the Rofès Maw because

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they've been jolly good to me & I've been there a lot. Something like a pair of small silver kangaroos or something Australian like that. You'll know what I mean better than I do & I'm sure they'd appreciate it very much. They were very pleased to get your letter when you wrote to them before & in case you have forgotten their address it is 17 Rue el Seba, Cairo. There will be some changes in our Sqdn. soon & I think its going to be called the Aust . Flying Corps again & the A.I.F. are going to run all of it instead of the R.F.C. & we are not going to have any R.F.C people in it at all. Major Rutledge & Peter Drummond are both R.F.C

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& came to our Sqdn when it was formed so they now have to go back to the R.F.C. & will be leaving for England shortly. I'm sorry they are going as they are both very nice chaps & I'm very fond of Peter. Have I ~~even~~ ever mentioned Tunbridge to you, he is one of our pilots & was up here with me on leave before I started this course?

Last week he was out near Beersheba & tackled a Hun machine & got one of his control wires shot away at 8,500 ft. Of course his machine got out of control & started rolling over & down. The Hun followed him down firing at him all the time & at 3000 ft he got a bullet into



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one of Tunbridges Very's Light cartridges. (they are coloured lights we fire for signals) The cartridge exploded & set fire to his clothes & he was soon a mass of flame all over, so he put his nose down & with engine full on went for the ground & as the machine was out of control he crashed badly & was thrown out & just managed to pull his clothes off in time. I might also add that the Hun still continued to machine gun him on the ground (its quite legitimate) until a patrol of the 1st L.H. drove him off with rifle fire. I saw Tunbridge in the 14th A G H yesterday & he is in a bit of a mess but getting on very well.

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It will probably take him some time to get right again though because the shock of anything like that is rather severe. Getting shot down from 8000 is usually enough to kill most men let alone catching fire as well.

I went out to Nazareh hospital on Sunday to see one of my Scotch friends who lost a leg at Gaza. He's an awfully nice little chap, a Capt, & is one of the fellows I met in Alexandria last year. He is so extraordinarily cheerful about it too, which by the way is a thing that one invariably notices in men who have been badly

7

smashed up. All the hospitals here are full as the result of our 'victory' at Gaza but most of them men have got over the worst stages of their wounds by now. They are mostly all young fellows & its horrible to think of such a wastage of human beings, yet there are some damn fools who want peace now & consequently want the same thing all over again in a few years time. There has been no fresh move out Gaza way since I was there except skirmishes & artillery duels. We are dug in about 500 to 1000 yds. away from them & the Turk still holds Gaza.

8

The Huns have been very active with their bombs & 10 machines raided our aerodrome at Rafa. one night but did no damage to speak of.

I went to the Dales again on Sunday & we toured round in the afternoon & had tea at Shepherds & then I went back to dinner with them at Heliopolis. I weighed my self a few days ago & am 11 st. 12 lbs which is 6 lbs. heavier than when I left Adelaide so you see I'm not a bit thin, & I've got a good margin to sweat off in the summer. I had a parcel a few days ago from Mrs. King but have had no letter from her for

9

some time but perhaps it has been sunk.

It is nearly time to start our afternoon's work so I must stop. I hope your teeth are better Maw & that you are getting on alright by yourself.

Very much love from

Your loving son

Ruff.

PRG 18/17/28

Envelope has black postmark 24th May, 1917 and a purple triangle of the censor's stamp. On the left hand side is written Ross Smith in ink 23rd May 1917 on both sides of the front of the envelope

Addressed to

Mrs. Andrew Smith

Stephen Terrace.



Gilberton.
South Australia

Abbasia.
Cairo May 23rd. 1917.
My dearest Mother.

Thank the Lord I've finished this part of my course, we did our exams. on Monday & the results came out to-day & I passed easily enough. Two days ago a wire came saying I was 'to hold myself in readiness to proceed on special duty for about 10 days at short notice.' I'm off to Ishmalia in the morning & my job is observing for another stunt out where I was working before when I was at Ishmalia about 2 months ago. It is rather a compliment to me to be sent on it but I'd sooner be getting on with my own flying. There is a school at Ishmalia & I think I'll be instructed there when I'm not observing so things will be alright. I would sooner have gone to Heliopolis because I know more people up here but these little things can't be helped. It may please you to know Maw (but don't tell anyone I said so) that Major Rutledge told some of them at the Sqdn that I was the best observer he had ever seen. What a

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smart family we must be !! I went to the Dales again on Sunday & we toured in the Sunbeam & then went to the hospital to see the boys who are all much better. Murray-Jones was shot down last week & got a few splinters of his petrol tank in the leg but can get about & will be out of hospital again soon. I've just had a great hunt after a big moth & successfully crashed him after he'd nose dived at me several times. It reminded me of the times Keith used to chase moths in the dining room. I had a letter from Keith yesterday & he said Colin had at last had a taste of the real thing & found it was'nt all it was cracked up to be, he had been 'over the top' too so the kid will have great things to tell us later on. What bad luck Keith losing all his kit. Peter Drummond & Cole have just got the Military Cross & my Flight Commander, Capt. Williams, the D.S.O., all for good work done lately. Is'nt it good news & I'm very pleased about it. That makes 7 M.C s, 1 D.S.O & Macnamara recommended for the V.C. in our Sqdn. & all in the last 5 months too. It's a record to be jolly proud

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of don't you think & I'm glad that H.Q. have recognised the good work that the Squadron has done. In the first Gaza fight about March 26th we did all the ~~aerial~~ aerial work, 14th Sqdn. did'nt have a single servicable machine & we had 15. Of course we've had casualties but that is only to be expected, 1 a prisoner, 1 missing (Steele an awfully nice fellow) 2 nerves, & 4 wounded, & the rest of us like Johnnie Walker & ready for more. I must get to bed now as I have to be up bright & early & pack. Its been very comfortable here with our nice rooms & beds & hot baths etc. but I'm more contented on the desert when I'm helping to kill Turks & Bosches. Goodnight Maw dear & very much love from your loving son Ruff. Most of the crowd down in the mess are delightfully tight. The ones who have passed are celebrating the fact & the ones who have'nt passed & have to do the course again are celebrating their bad luck so everyone is very happy & the war is temporarily forgotten.

PRG 18/17/29

Envelope has black postmark 21st June, 1917 and a purple triangle of the censor's stamp. On the left hand side is written Ross Smith in ink and 1917 June 21st. Recd. Aug 23rd. The back of the envelope is postmarked twice WALKERVILLE-STH AUSTR 22 JU



Addressed to
Mrs. Andrew Smith
Stephen Terrace.
Gilberton.
South Australia

Aboukir.
Egypt.
June 21st 1917.
Mother my dearest.

I have'nt written for about 10 days for we are kept rather busy here with flying in the morning & afternoon & a few lectures as well to say nothing of cleaning the machines. I'm getting on famously & have finished Aeros and am now flying Bristol Scouts. The are nasty things to clean & take a lot of time, they use castor oil & it gets thrown over everything & has to be washed off with hot soapy water. They are beautiful machines to fly tho', & are so light & quick. To-day is dusty with a strong wind blowing so flying is off until to-morrow, we nearly always have a good sea breeze blowing here from the N & its usually cool but when the wind shifts round to the South its much hotter & clouds of skeeters & other insects get blown up with it too. Fortunately we don't often get a South Wind.

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We had a regatta & sports meeting in the Bay last week & it went off quite well. A good lot of people came out from Alex. & there was just the usual swimming races with a tea fight thrown in. The best part of it was some flying by 3 of the instructors on Bristols & they did some fine stunts which seemed to please the ladies immensely. I've only been into Alex twice & the last time I went out to the gardens with Jack & we had dinner to-gether afterwards. The bathing is quite good here & I had a fine swim yesterday, it was fairly rough and at one spot there is some good surf. On Sunday some of us went for a sail in a feluca out to a wreck on a reef a few miles out. It was about a 2,000 ton steamer & went on the rocks in broard daylight so the crew must have been either very tight or else all asleep. There is no fresh news from Gaza way, I suppose you have seen that Gen. Murray is going home & we are getting Gen. Allenby out here as our G.O.C. It will be interesting to

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see what the change of command will bring forth. I've had letters from both Keith & Colin this week & they both seem to be getting on well. Keith told me he has sent you a good map of Palestine, I'm going to ask him to send me one & then I can tell you about things better. Keith seems very keen on getting into the Flying Corps & if he could stand the work I'm sure he'd do well at it and I think its always best for a fellow to go into what he's most keen on. I am always so thankful that I made a break & took this job on.

I'm sorry this is so short but I've really no news, we do nothing & talk nothing but flying all day long & I often dream I'm doing wonderful stunts at night. Good bye Maw & very much love & I hope you are keeping fit.

Your loving son
Ruff.

PRG 18/17/30

Envelope has black postmark 30th June, 1917 and a purple triangle of the censor's stamp. On the left hand side is written Ross Smith in ink and 1917 June 30th. Recd. Aug 23rd. Military Cross. The reverse is stamped twice with an army post office mark, the first stamp being



illegible, the second one clear. BASE ARMY POSTOFFICE –Z. Date 30 JU 17. The third mark is WALKERVILLE-STH AUSTR 2.15P23AU17

Addressed to
Mrs. Andrew Smith
Stephen Terrace.
Gilberton.
South Australia

Aboukir.
Egypt.
June 30th. 1917.
My dearest Mother.

I'm going along famously with the flying and am nearly finished the flying part of it & then only have aerial gunnery to do before I complete my course. We have to do 20 hours flying to get our tickets and it is split up in 5 hours each on 4 different types of machines. I have finished Bristols & am now on the B.E machines. The B.E's are the ones that appear in most of the photos I sent you from the Sqdn. & are quite easy to fly after Bristols. I have'nt had any mail for about 3 weeks but have just had a letter from Alma Speed congratulating me on the M.C. Was'nt it nice of her to write. Her letter was addressed to R.FC. Cairo so I am expecting yours in a day or two now as they would have to go up to the Sqdn. first.

I don't know if I told you in my last letter about that chap Franklin from Gawler

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who was here. You mentioned seeing someone in Adelaide one day with wings & 2 gold bars & it was probably him as he had just been on leave to Australia after being wounded. He was here for a week & then went to Suez to instruct & was killed in a crash a few days ago. It does seem hard luck that he should get through several months in France & then get killed on an aerodrome in a rotten place like Suez, does'nt it?

The world is a small place! Do you remember me telling you that when I left Gallipoli I went on board a trawler & they isolated me up in the life boat that was on board? The other occupants of the life boat were a man (an Australian) & a pig in a bag which squealed all the time. Just a few minutes ago the other man, Sutherland, who was in that boat walked into my hut. He is doing an observer's course here & is going out to my Sqdn. when he is through. We have just been talking about our last meeting & I hope the pig won't wander in, I never heard a pig squeal like that one before, but no doubt he was made into army bacon long ago.

3

An awfully funny incident happened a few days ago – One of the pupils had been up & landed & then started taxi-ing his machine towards the hangar. (Taxi-ing is running the machine along on the ground.) He was taxi-ing far too fast & the thing got out of control & hit a telegraph post & wiped 2 of its planes off. The man then got a bit rattled & instead of shutting of his engine he opened it up a bit more & the old machine went gaily on, this time straight for the hangar & right into it. There was another machine in the hangar & an instructor was sitting in it ~~tel~~ testing the controls. He looked up when he saw the runaway coming & made one dive to get out of the way but he jumped a bit short & one leg went right through the fabric of the plane of his machine & he stuck there & had to be cut out!! It looked just like one of those absurd cinematograph pictures & every one was in fits of laughter.

Another day a Canadian chap went up & crashed on landing and several fellows



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ran out to him. As they got there the worthy Son of Maple Land emerged from the wreckage & was heard to murmur (very much through his skinned nose) 'Any gordam fool can fly but it takes a wise man to stay on the ground!'

I've been doing a good deal of bathing this week, it has been fairly windy & the surf has been jolly good. None of the fellows here had ever done any surfing before & I have been 'learning' some of them how to do it. Its really more like a holiday being here than anything else, all the work we do is more a form of sport than fatigue. I'm feeling particularly well too & I suppose its due to the natural sort of life we lead here, we get up about 4 A.M. take plenty of exercise & go to bed about 9. I have just finished the last piece of your last cake & it was very nice. Don't worry about not being able to send any pcls. Maw, of course I'll miss them but I can get plenty of cigarettes & Havelock tobacco in Cairo & that is nearly as good as Lucy Hinton. Goodby Maw & very much love from your loving Ruff.

PRG 18/17/31

[In pencil on envelope 7' June 1917 June 7th Rec^d Aug 23rd] On the left hand side is written Ross Smith in ink. Stamped in purple ink PASSED BY CENSOR No 3454

*Addressed to
Mrs. Andrew Smith.
Gilberton.
South Australia.*

*Aboukir.
July 7th 1917
Mother my dearest.*

I've had two particularly nice letters from you as well as the usual papers. I love the photos too, especially the one of you in the smoking room & I'm so glad you are in it. Everything has come out so clearly & I can almost imagine I'm in the room myself when I look at it. The new shelves look very nice. The one of the house is jolly good too & I see the big crack is still there & I think I'll have to get

2

*the roof painted again when I get home.
Now I'm going to strafe you – about that hot air you put in the paper about me. I really do hate that sort of thing Maw & it always reminds me of a sort of advertisement & most of all I disliked reading my letter, or a bit of it, in the cutting. Don't for a moment think I'm annoyed with you Maw because I'm not a bit & you only did what everyone else does. I suppose its only a silly idea of mine but I don't like that sort of thing.
I have finished my flying and am doing aerial gunnery*

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*now & have nearly finished that so I should be off back to my Sqdn. in a few days.
The last machine I did was a B.E., quite easy to fly & I had to do my tests on that. The tests are – take 6 photographs, go up to 10,000 ft, do bomb dropping (dummies) Artillery co-operation & a cross country flight. They make us go up to 10,000 to see if we can stand the thinner air up there but I've flown at that height before over Jerusalem.
I also looped the loop so I consider myself quite an airman now. Its very easy, in fact its one of the easiest stunts I've*



4

tried , the last time I looped was on a switchback at Coney Island!

On this gunnery course I'm doing now we go over both the Lewis & Vickers guns again & learn how to work the latest sights etc. There is also some air work too & we go up in Maurice Jarmans & practice at targets with our guns.

I had a tooth pulled out 4 days ago & my jaw has been rather sore but is much better to-night. It was a wisdom tooth that would'nt come up properly & I've been having trouble with it for about a year. A sort of

5

abscess would form under it every now & then which was rather awkward so out the old tooth came last Tuesday. It took about a minute to shift it too, in which time I sat tight & wanted to yell but could'nt because I wear a uniform & a little bit of a riband.

We did'nt get any chocolate boxes from the Queen last Xmas, at least none have come to this country. I've got 2 old Roman coins that I found in the ruins of Canopus just near here & I'll send them along when I clean them up a bit. We hear that a

6

big mail going to Australia was sunk near Colombo last week. If its true I'm afraid you'll be short of some of my letters & wont know all of what I've been doing.

How nice of M. Waite to give you the pictures & its sounds a very nice one too.

About stuff for the 3rd L.H. Comforts. Col. Fulton is in charge of A.I.F. H.Q. in Cairo now & Major Bell ^{OSO} has temporary command of the Reg^t. I think its jolly bad form of them not to acknowledge the receipt of the Comforts & I'll tell Bell about it (but in a different sort of way.)

The hot

7

weather is just starting out there now & the flies are bad. Here is a list of some things that would be very acceptable. –

1. Fly Nets. For hats.

2 Pieces of mosquito net or cheese cloth about 3 or 4 ft square. These are for the men to sleep under during the day & keep the flies off their heads.

3 KEATINGS POWDER (For lice, which at present are very bad out there) Be sure its 'Keatings' if you can as nothing else seems to lay them out. Insectibane & Insecticide & so forth only stir 'em up.

4. Tinned Fruit (as much as you can send)

5. Tomato Sauce (for Bully Beef & you can't send too much of it)

6. Pickles (Also helps Bully Beef no end)

7. L & P Sauce (Small bottles)

8

8. 'Swallow & Aeriels' Tinned Veggies.

9. Lime Juice Cordial

10. Ideal Milk.

11. Writing material, & a few pencils (no pens)

12. Leather boot Laces.

13. Shaving Soap & ord. soap.

14. Quart Pots & Water Bags.

At present all the L.H. are camped ready to move at any moment & have very little kit with them & can't carry much so there are a few things which need not be sent, such as. –

Bivouac Cocoa (they don't seem to like it)

Playing Cards (a few are allright now & then.)

Chocolate (usually melts)



Clothing & socks \(\send to France)/ (there are always plenty of these & if there are too many they only get wasted.)

9

I think that will give you a fair idea of what to send & I'm sure, from my experience, that it will please the majority of the men. The main thing to think of is that they wan't things they can carry easily in their haversacks or saddle wallets. A tin of fruit after a hard hot day is the finest thing imaginable. I wish you'd tell Miss Hussey & her hard working committee that ~~ev~~ if their comforts have not been acknowledged it is not because they are not appreciated by the men. They are always looking forward to the next lot and they think an awful lot of you all

10

for sending them. We all feel very proud of & most grateful to the Australian women for what they have done for us in this war & I've often heard \the/ men say that too. The Anzac Mounted Division has been formed up again much to everyones delight & the Yeomanry are in a Division of their own now. The Anzac Div. is composed of the 1st & 2nd Aust. L.H. Bgdes & the N.Z. Mtd. Rifle Bgde which is as it was before. The Australian \Mounted/ Division (which has just been so named) consists of the 3rd, 4th, & 5th Aust. L.H. Bgdes. The 5th Bgde is just being formed up now. It is a much better arrangement than having our men split up with the Yeomanry & our fellows will work much better.

11

I think that must have been a mistake about Ernie Luxmore being killed. He was in the 9th L.H. & I saw him a little while before the Gaza fight but perhaps he has been hit since. Sunday 8th – This is a bonnie day Maw & I think I'll go out for a sail this afternoon. We only do about an hours work on Sundays before breakfast & have the rest of the day to ourselves. I'm going to the dentist again to-morrow & then I should be in good repair for a few more months. I had a short letter from Reg Bailleau's mother last mail,

12

it was jolly nice of her to write & she signed herself 'Reg's Mother.' I think that is right about the Mongolia being sunk near Colombo & she had 3 weeks of our mail on board too, so thats another little score I'll have to wipe off on the first available Hun. Did you hear that little story about 2 of our L.H. & a sentry just after the Romani fight. I think it afterwards appeared in the Bulletin but you may not have seen it. It did actually happen too. After we had followed the Turks out to Katia both men & horses were quite done & a few had to fall out on the way home. Next day 2 Light

13

Horsemen appeared before the Romani outpost line leading their dead beat horses & pretty tired themselves. A Tommy sentry promptly challenged them 'Halt! who goes there.' No reply & the weary ones still came on. Twice again the challenge was repeated and at last one of the Anzac's yelled out – 'Burke & — Wills!'
32Goodbye for now Maw & very much love from your loving son
Ruff.

PRG 18/17/32

[*On envelope O.A.S in ink and in pencil in different handwriting 106 July 20, 1917 In Lendon Book p63]*

[*On the left hand side is written Ross Smith in ink]*
Purple stamp PASSED BY CENSOR No 3025



Addressed to
Mrs. Andrew Smith.
Stephen Terrace
Gilberton
South Australia

[letter]
[in pencil,]
In Lendon letter book p63

[in ink]
Palestine
July 20th 1917

My dearest Mother.

I have had a most interesting and rather exciting time since I wrote to you on July 7th but before I say anything about that I want to tell you how very pleased I am to have your photo. It came yesterday & I was very surprised to get it as you had said nothing about it in your letters. I do love having it Maw & you do look such a dear. It took a good while to get here as you posted it in April and I got it just 4 months later. I have also had your letters of May 14th & 19th and Apl. 22nd, the latter came in a parcel. There was also a nice cake, 2 pcls from Crawfords & a whole lot of papers, so I had quite a large mail. All your parcels & papers always turn up safely Maw and are much enjoyed.

Just after I wrote to you last things got rather slow so Kirk & I thought we would have to liven things up a bit.

On the 9th we had to do a long reco

2

which included the Hun's main aerodrome at Jenin, about 40 miles behind their lines. Paul came with me in the other machine & we arrived over Jenin at 10,000 ft. There was one Scout on the aerodrome so we came down to 2,000 ft & Kirk took some very good photos of their hangars etc. We then floated round for a bit & Kirk started shooting up the hangars to stir them up a bit. The Huns then ran out 6 more Scouts and 4 of them ~~ran~~ started up their engines and we had hopes of getting a good scrap. While they were getting their machines into position to take off Paul & I came down lower & our observers did some fine shooting into the Scouts. The Huns then evidently changed their minds because they stopped their engines & would not come up. We flew round for a bit more & did some more shooting & everyone on the aerodrome was running all over the place, & then we started home again. We were over their aerodrome for about

3

20 mins. so they had no excuse for staying on the ground & it's a large aerodrome with about 30 hangars on it.

The whole show was great fun & we were congratulated by the Bgde. Commander for our 'very fine performance.'

We always go out in pairs and I nearly always take Paul with me. He's a jolly fine pilot & I'm never afraid of him letting me down & he also is very keen on 'shooting up' places & doing things like that. His observer is Weir who is also an excellent chap & does'nt care a damn for anything. I always have Kirk with me so we go out in this way. Myself & Kirk in one machine & Paul & Weir in the other & Paul follows me & does whatever I do.

On the 11th Paul & I did a patrol. It was very uninteresting & nothing came along to argue with us. At the end of the patrol Kirk suggested that we should go & shoot up something so I turned



North & went up to a small Hun aerodrome near Nablus. We then came down to 1,500 ft & strafed the aerodrome & lots

4

of camps round about & turned back for the lines flying low along a main ~~rea~~ road while Kirk shot up everything he could see. Just near the lines we saw 2 horsemen so chased them along a track & finally saw them leave the track & go down a steep hill.

Nothing much happened then for a few days except the ordinary jobs. On the 17th, 3 days ago, I did the early patrol. Paul was'nt with me this time, Lukis was in the other machine. We were out Jericho way when I spotted 4 Hun Scouts coming towards the lines. Two of them evidently saw us & turned for home but the other 2 came on. They finally saw us just after I had cut them off and they turned at once & dived for their lives. We were all at 11,000 ft. & the Huns went down in one straight dive down to 2,000 ft. I followed & the pace was terrific. The 2 Huns then flattened out & started to fly along about 20 to 50 ft above the ground. It is very hilly country there & we were

5

going along the valleys & zooming over hills etc. I then got right onto one fellows tail & fired a burst with my front gun & down he went & crashed & turned over onto his back. The other chap was \then/ just ahead of me so I went after him & crashed him about 3 mins. later. He was a fine pilot & fought a good losing fight but I never let him get his guns onto me. Finally I sat right on his tail & fired a burst from about 30 yds. range & he fell like a stone & crashed & turned onto his back. The last chap had several black bands around his fuselage which is usually a distinctive mark of the Hun's for their best pilots. I am fairly sure I killed the last chap but the first one may have only been wounded, any way both machines were crashed so thats the main thing. All this happened well behind the lines & we were under rifle fire most of the time because we were so low. Kirk then took photos of both crashes & we returned to our patrol. Half an hour later I saw

6

a Hun 2 seater being archied over Jericho. He was well above me so I gave chase & he turned North for his lines. When we were about 15 miles behind the lines the Hun observer opened fire & Kirk replied firing over my top plane at about 500 yds. range. Then suddenly my engine began to lose power & I smelt paint burning! You cant imagine my next 10 mins. There was I 15 miles behind the lines at 10,000 ft & knew that in a very few minutes my engine would sieze & I would have to land. It was as good as a picture show & I saw Damascus & Constantinople & Heathcoate & Austin & all our other prisoners!! However by ~~mar~~ my great good fortune which has always stood by me and by nursing my rapidly siezing engine I managed to make the lines with a few thousand feet to spare. Then there were clouds of smoke & a horrible grinding noise inside the poor old engine & my propeller stopped dead. Looking down it seemed almost impossible to find a

7

spot to land on as I was over the most rugged part of the Judean Hills. However at the last moment I saw a piece of ground about twice the size of a tennis court which looked fairly good so I side-slipped ~~ovr~~ over a hill onto it & landed safely & only broke my tail skid. I think I would have howled if I had crashed my dear old machine. It was a very anxious few minutes and I was thankful when I got out of the machine and onto earth once more. I found my radiator had burst near the bottom and so let all the water out so it was no wonder my engine objected. It is a most unusual thing & very seldom happens. I had landed near the main road running North from Jerusalem so I got onto a passing lorry & went up to a place called ~~Biet~~ Bireh and rang up the Squadron from there. It took me some time to get through and they all thought I had 'gone west' because I was over due about 2 hours and no one knew anything about me. I got



8

separated from Lukis in the first scrap so he did not know what had happened. Bireh is quite a pretty little place & at the Military Governors house where I went to ring up there were several wattle & gum trees in flower. It was very nice to see the old gum blossoms again. When I got back to my machine the C.O. of an Indian Regt. that was camped near by rode over & asked Kirk & I up to their mess. We put a guard on the machine & went & they could'n't do enough for us & we camped with them that night & had all our meals with them. A spare engine was sent out to me & we put that in & I flew the machine home next afternoon. The ground where I landed was very rocky & uneven so I wheeled the machine onto the road to take off & got the men to hang onto my wings until I got the engine going fast then they all let go together & I went almost straight up without having to run far along the road.

9

There have been more congratulations from the Bgde. & Gen. Salmond also sent Kirk & I a wire.

Gen. Salmond was up here about 10 days ago and he had the whole Sqdn. on parade & complimented ~~ever~~ all ranks on 'our splendid work.' He also said that this Sqdn. \by its work/ did more towards the capture of Jerusalem than any other unit in on the Front. After his inspection I flew him over to another aerodrome in my machine & then brought him back here again.

I am going to cable you as soon as I know about my leave. It should not be long now but I have to wait until some new pilots arrive. If I do get it I will be sent home for a rest & will have to be admitted to hospital & medically boarded. The latter is only a formality so if you hear I'm in hospital with 'nerves' or anything like that don't take any notice of it because I will really be quite alright and only waiting for a ship to take me home. My nerves are better now than they ever were.

10

There was an attack in the Jordan Valley about a week ago & you will probably have read that the L.H. took about 500 Turks & 300 Germans prisoners, & killed a lot more. The 1st Bgde. got most of the prisoners & the scrapping as it was their bit of line that was attacked. The attack was very sudden & our men had to fall back & leave their camps & stuff but they regained everything in a counter attack & took the prisoners as well. The 3rd Regt. had just got in a big supply of beer & they lost it all! The Huns had most of it inside them when they were captured!! It is a great joke & the poor old 3rd are getting a bad time about loosing their beer! However they don't mind & they tell everyone that they got their beer back again altho' it was inside the Huns! You said in one of your letters Maw that you were going for the papers about not putting in what I got my Bar for. As a matter of fact I have'nt heard yet what it was for myself and I hope you

11

did'nt put anything about me in the papers. I want you to remember Maw that no matter if I win a V.C. or anything I don't want anything in the newspapers about me. I don't care 2^d if people don't know about my doings. I always tell you what I do & my C.O. & the rest of the Sqdn. know so that is all that concerns me. As long as you & Paw & the men I work with know what I do I'm quite satisfied and I'd far sooner not have my name put before a criticising miserable public who can't fight their own war. Besides any one whose name & 'exploits' appear in the papers is immediately branded as a 'hot air merchant' & thats the last thing I want.

I know you won't forget that Maw and you must not let my name get into any paper or curio collection unless it is a purely official statement from the Defence Dept. I was pleased to get the small photos of Keith & Colin & what a fine big man Colin looks in it, the poor kiddie. Vengeance is only poor consolation & however many Huns & Turks I can kill won't make up for his



12

loss but at the same time I think I have killed a good many since he went and it helps to square things off somewhat.

Things are much better in France now & we are really winning the war now. The Yanks are doing very well & our coming air programme is something astounding. Garnett was lost behind the lines a few days ago. He was shot down by Archies on a bomb raid but managed to burn his machine before being taken prisoner. Your cigarettes & Lucy Hinton came just in time. I had just filled my pipe with the very last of the previous tobacco when your last parcels were brought # \in/. It was very nicely timed Maw. You asked me if I knew a Capt. Toomey who is engaged to Ellie Stewart. I do know one in the 12th L.H. slightly & I'm told he is one of the biggest rotters in the A.I.F. & from what little I've seen of him I should think so too so I hope he is not the one you refer to. (This quite between ourselves.) I am glad Keith has sent you those books about flying. 'An airman's outing' is particularly good. 'Contact', the author

13

is a Lieut. Bott. He was out here a few months ago with 111 Sqdn. but was shot down behind the lines on a Nieuport Scout¹ & is now a prisoner in Turkey. Its a great pity because he wrote very good stuff & he also wrote for Blackwood's magazine. I don't think I'll send a message bag to you by post Maw but I'll bring one when I come out & it will be more sure of getting there. It's just 3 o'clock in the afternoon & I must go and see how things are going over in my hangar. Goodbye for now Maw & very much love from your loving son.
Ross.

[In pencil] The ribbon is some that was on our table last Xmas.

PRG 18/17/33

[On envelope in pencil] 106 1917

Purple stamp PASSED BY CENSOR No 3025.

Aug 25th

recd Oct 30th

Addressed to
Mrs. Andrew Smith.
Stephen Terrace.
Gilberton
South Australia.

In ink Ross Smith

[letter]

Syria.

Aug 25th 1917.

My dearest Mother.

We have just been told that there is a mail going direct to Australia in a few days so there must be a transport or something like that going. I have'nt written to you since the 12th principally because there is very little news and I've been fairly busy. If we get a job to do the actual flying

¹ [Wikipedia: The Nieuport 11, often nicknamed the Bébé, was a French World War I single seat [fighter aircraft](#), designed by Gustave Delage. It is famous as one of the aircraft that ended the '[Fokker Scourge](#)' in 1916]



only takes about 2 hours but there are lots of arrangements to be made beforehand & then we always talk over it afterwards. I usually spend the mornings at the hangars among the machines and have a good look over my own machine every day. I've got 2 jolly good men looking after my Martinsyde² & they have got it looking very nice & all the brass work is polished. I was on a bomb raid out to the camps at Beersheba yesterday. The Huns bombed our Yeomanry in the

2

morning so Bowd, Potts & I were sent out to pay them back. We dropped 32 – 20 lb bombs among the camps with good results & Turks were running in all directions.

The enclosed cutting was sent me by Mrs. King in a bundle of papers but I have'nt heard from her what the Frenche decoration is yet. I suppose it is a Legion of Honour. Has'nt Commander King done well & I'm jolly pleased. I had a letter from Colin a few days ago but have'nt heard from Keith for a few weeks. Matt said in a letter which came yesterday that Keith had got into the R.F.C. & was going to Farnborough in a few days.

Your letter from Mutooroo came a few days ago as well as the 3 parcels. Thanks for all of them Maw but you are quite overwhelming me with things to eat. I always enjoy your cakes & the tobacco is always eagerly looked forward to. While speaking of tobacco will you please send plain tipped cigarettes

3

instead of gold tipped ones as I have got to like plain ones more than the others now. I don't need soups or coffee or raisins now Maw because we always get lots to eat in the mess and seldom miss a meal like I used to in the Light Horse.

How nice it must have been at Mutooroo again. I wish I had been there too. I'll have no less than 6 chops as soon as I get to Dismal. What a difference motor cars have made to that country. Dismal to Mutooroo in 2 hours is vastly different from the old days of 5 hours in a buggy. The much abused Ford is really a very useful car and they have done & are still doing wonderful work out here. They are formed into 'Light Car Patrols' of a few cars in each & are armed with machine guns & can go almost any where and do far more work than the big armoured Rolls-Royce cars.

All your papers came too. Did you see that Cobra advertisement in one of the

4

Bullies about Chunder being a good 'Observer' & hes up a tree in France spotting for the guns. Turner, who is 'Chunder' is in hospital so I cut it out & sent it to him with a few \appropriate/ additions.

The 1st Brigade are camped on the beach about 2 miles from us & are having a rest. Several of the 3rd fellows have been over to see me & I took Major Brooks up for a fly a few days ago. The photos are some taken with my new camera which is working very well. The monoplane belongs to one of the other Squadrons. We are sending Mrs. Bickford photos of her machine. The photo of the inside of the machine you will be able to follow from the sketch. We have a few Egyptian Labour Corps niggers working about here & last week one went 'magnoon'. He was jolly funny & I saw him as he went away. He had a shirt on & a pair of socks & no pants & an old pair of puttees wound round his head with a

5

chocolate wrapper stuck in the side for a cockade. To finish off he had made a beautiful wide collar out of some wire netting & it was tied round his neck with a bit of string.

We have got our piano up from Kantara & have some fine old concerts with it. Another luxury we indulge in is ice, it comes up in the truck that brings the frozen meat.

² [Wikipedia: Martinsyde was a British aircraft and motorcycle manufacturer between 1908 and 1922, when they were forced into liquidation by a factory fire]



Theres no more news Maw so I must bid you adieu. Very much love from
Your loving son Ruff.

I don't belong to the First L.H. Bgde any more now. I have been transferred to the Australian
Flying Corps.

PRG 18/17/34

[On envelope in pencil 12.III.18 In Lendon Book p 281 [or 287]

[in ink]

Addressed to

Mrs. Andrew Smith.

Stephen Terrace.

Gilberton.

South Australia.

May 3rd 1918

Purple stamp PASSED BY CENSOR No 3025. [In ink] Ross Smith

[letter]

Palestine.

Mar 12th 1918

My dearest Mother.

Your letters of Jan 1st & 8th came a few days ago together with several papers. I do look forward
to your letters Maw & love hearing your news.

We are advancing again so there is lots of work to be done. To-day was very cloudy & another
man & I were the only ones out but by means of dodging in & out of the clouds we managed to
get a good report of the enemy's movements & see what they were doing. Aeroplanes have
made a wonderful difference to war & almost any big move that the Turks make is sure to be
seen by us.

It is not nearly so cold up aloft now as it was a month or two ago & the days ~~aye~~ are getting
longer. I don't think it will be so hot this summer now that we are off the desert & in decent
country.

2

I went to Jerusalem a few days ago. I had to go up on business so flew a machine & put in a
few hours of sight seeing, & saw all I wanted to. Its a filthy place & full of smells & holy places. I
did all the sights as quickly as possible & really only went to see them so that I could say that I
had. Our landing ground \at Jerusalem/ is on what is supposed to be the field of Judas Iscariot.
Next night, Mar 13th I went to bed after I had written that much last night as I was a bit tired,
having spent about 5 hours of yesterday in the air. We fly much higher now than we used to &
its very tiring if one is up long. One day I was up very high, about 19,000 ft., & of course almost
froze. Breathing is difficult up there & ones ears ache & so forth. My fingers got very cold & I
started slapping them on my knees to get them warm & after I stopped I was quite puffed from
the exertion of just doing that! My machine is going beautifully & never gives me any 'anxious
moments' over the lines. I always

3

fly it myself & never let anyone else fly it if I can help it, consequently I know my engine very
well & we get on famously together. Aeroplanes are like horses in some respects and if I fly a
machine much I always get very attached to it. I was very fond of the old machine that I crashed



some time ago when I hurt my leg. It was a B.E.12.a. & the one I brought back from Alex when I returned from hospital last year. I flew it all through the big stunt in November & it never once let me down until I crashed and then it made a proper job of itself & will never be flown again. My present Bristol Fighter is so nice looking too, he's painted dark brown & his engine sticks away out in front like a big dog's nose that is sniffing around for trouble. My luck has been right out lately and I have'nt scrapped a Hun for ages. They much prefer to run these days & I have'nt even seen a Hun in the air when I've been out for about 2 months. I've been out escorting bomb raids on Hun aerodromes & have

4

flown round & round on top of them but they never come up & scrap. Lately, Mustard & I have amused ourselves by taking out a bomb or two with us when we go on a job. Mustard carries them in his cockpit & when we see a decent target he leans out with the bomb & I tell him when to drop it. Its great sport & causes much scuttling about of the old Turk. We got a direct hit onto Amman railway station (on the Hejaz railway) a few days ago with a bomb we took out. Of course we do that quite unofficially & never say anything about it in our reports but its most amusing to see the Turks ducking for cover as we come along. There is one thing Maw, if the Turks ever do get me it will have cost them a good lot to do it because I can claim a lot of them, which is'nt a very nice thing to say, is it. We are taught to believe that vengeance belongs to the Lord I know, but ever since Colin went I've felt like killing every Turk I see. Thats also why I want to meet a few Huns. You'll think me very bloodthirsty Maw but I can't help it, it must be some

5

of your Highland blood I think.

Another mail came to-day with your letter of Jan 21st & some papers. I was very interested to hear about Winter-Irving's marriage but I thought that would probably happen. He's a very fine chap & did good work here with us. I was glad to hear more news of our Kiddies end and its very kind of those people to have written to you but its too sad for a fine boy's life to end like that.

I remember him so well that day at the Outer Harbour when I left & I can see him now persuading the man on the gangway to let him aboard the ship. 5-9^s are high explosive shells 5¾ inches in diameter. The Huns use an awful lot of them and it is supposed to be their 'best' gun. By the way, it was a 5-9 that killed Radwell at Bir-el-Abd that time & ~~an~~ incidentally one very nearly did me in that day too. 9-5^s are much larger, 9½ inches in diameter but are the same type of shell.

Thanks very much for your Congratulations Maw, I knew you'd be pleased about my Bar & Captancy. When I first went into camp at

[P6 appears to be missing]

7

if they happened to get into the papers. By the way, what was in the papers about my Bar, I have'nt seen it, is no hot air I hope!! I had a very nice letter from Mrs. Wigg by the last mail. Ron has gone to England, he went with some others who have gone over to some of our other Squadrons.

We are now known as No. 1 Squadron A.F.C instead of 67. Our other Squadrons (7 of 'em) are in England & France. General Salmond, G.O.C of the R.F.C. in the Middle East, inspected us last week. He's always been very keen on this Sqdn. & he told us that our work has 'been magnificent in every way & thats not hot air to try & please you either', he said. He also said that your/ No. 2 Squadron (Major Watt) in France have done wonders & have the name over there of being one of, if not the best Sqdn. that has ever been in France. No 2 Sqdn. are a Scout Sqdn & only do fighting & patrols. It is very gratifying to hear these things more especially as it came from Gen. Salmond because he is one of the very heads of all the R.F.C.



Tunbridge did get the M.C.& they have given one

8

to Major (now Lt. Col.) Rutledge as well.

I'm sorry you were having such hot weather Maw & you shouldn't worry about watering the garden when you are tired. Having done that little job myself on a few occasions I know how tiring it gets. Thanks for the socks and cigarettes too Maw, they are fine. There is another small advance on at present which means lots of work but I never mind it at times like this because our reports often save the lives of lots of poor fellows who can't see whats ahead of them. Do you remember Jimmy Garnett who was at Warriston with us? He has just come up to a Squadron near us & we knew each other as soon as we met. He was very sorry to hear about Colin, we had a great yarn together. There was a concert party here last week & they gave us 2 very fine shows, they are mostly professionals & were very good indeed.

I must tell you of a funny little incident that happened to-day. One of my machines had a forced landing with engine trouble about 20 miles from here & up near Jaffa. I flew out to him & took a mechanic & we landed

9

beside the other machine. It was near an Indian Regt's camp & one of their English officers came over to see if he could do anything. He was very obliging & wanted to lend us an Indian whom he said, was a good blacksmith & a generally handy man with tools. I was very polite & explained that we only had a little job to do but the officer seemed so keen on helping us that I told him to send his man along. He went away & presently along came 2 Indians with a very large hammer, a crow bar, 2 big pairs of tongs, a chisel & a rasp & several other things. They said they had 'come to mend the aeroplane'!! We nearly died with suppressed laughter but so as not to offend them we let them hold our spanners & the nuts & things as we unscrewed them! People are always particularly good to us if we ever do have to land outside the aerodrome, they all seem to regard us a different people to themselves & do everything they can to help us. I must away to bed now Maw. I hope you are keeping well & not too lonely.

Very much love dear from your loving son

Ruff.

PRG 18/17/35

[*On envelope*

[*in pencil* 107 29-III-18]

[*in ink*] rec. May 18th 1918

Addressed to

Mrs. Andrew Smith.

Aviemore.

Stephen Terrace.

Gilberton.

South Australia.

Purple stamp PASSED BY CENSOR No 3025. [*In ink*] Ross Smith

[*letter*]

Palestine

Mar 29th 1918



My dearest Mother.

Only a few lines to tell you I'm well & very busy. We are doing another stunt, attacking Amman & everything is going very well. The enclosed photos are some Capt. Hurley took, don't let any newspaper people see them! My machine is going very nicely, I did a late job yesterday & had to land in the dark. Away behind the lines I met 15 Huns (I was on my own) but they did not attack & I thought they were a few too many for me so we all went our various ways peacefully. Nothing much has been happening. We have lost Austin & think he is a prisoner but we have not heard yet. I hope you are keeping fit Maw. Sorry this is so short but I'll try & write again soon.

With my best love to you & Paw from
Your loving son Ross.

PRG 18/17/36

[*On envelope*]

[*in pencil*]

108

[*in ink*]

rec May 13th 1918

Addressed to

Mrs. Andrew Smith.

Stephen Terrace

Gilberton.

South Australia

Purple stamp PASSED BY CENSOR No 3025. [*In ink*] Ross Smith

[*letter*]

Palestine.

Mar 31st 1918.

Mother dearest.

Your letters always seem to arrive when I want them most. Yours to-day was of Feb. 4th and Sutherland handed it to me as I got out of my machine after coming back from a job. I was feeling a bit fed up too because I'd had a rotten trip. I was doing a patrol over our troops who were coming back from Amman and the weather was pretty rotten. The clouds reached from 4,000 ft. up to 16,000 ft. and there were only a few lanes in them in which I could get along in places. However it was fairly clear over the troops so I was able to keep a good eye on them & watch for any Huns coming along to bomb them. My old Brigade & Regt. were down below me somewhere and I felt rather thrilled when I thought that I was sitting up above them & looking after them. It was jolly cold at 12,000 ft. & my thrills did'nt last very long. Patrolling is not

2

the best of jobs. You are sent out to patrol over a certain area & once you get your height you just tootle back & forwards & slowly freeze. All the time too you've got to watch the air above & below for hostile machines and after a bit you begin to see black specks all over the place. I saw some wonderful cloud effects to-day, at times I would be going along & perhaps just strike the top of a rain cloud and then pull the machine's nose up & get into the clear sky & look down & see it raining hard just below me. Coming home across the Judean Hills, where the clouds are always highest & thickest, I did'nt see the ground for half an hour once, then I spotted the ground through a gap so shut off & spiralled down & came home the rest of the way under the clouds. I had to go through several rain & hail storms & the hail made rather a mess of my



propeller. To-day, by the way, is Easter Sunday & even if I was'nt in Jerusalem I flew over it. It was rather funny,

3

I thought about it being Easter Sunday when I was on patrol, & then I thought I'd better sing a hymn! so I sang 'Nearer my God to Thee' as being the most appropriate. Unfortunately I could only remember about 4 lines but I sang them over several times to make up. After that I sang some rag-time, I often do, the engine is a fine accompaniment & quite drowns all the noise I make. I don't think the stunt out to Amman came off too well but we managed to destroy 5 miles of their railway so that's something.

We lost another machine a week or so ago. Austin (a Flt. Commander) & Lee, his observer were in it & we have heard in a very vague way that they are prisoners, but we expect to hear more from the Huns any day. Austin's people cabled to me to ask for news but I had to reply that we knew nothing for certain. Anyway being a prisoner is much better than being done in altogether. If by any chance I'm ever reported as missing Maw you send a reply paid cable to

4

Lt. Sutherland of this Squadron & ask him for news. Sutherland is one of my best pals here & a very fine fellow. I think I told you that we left Gallipoli together in a life boat, together with a pig in a bag! However I sincerely hope there will never be any necessity for you to cable him but one never knows ones luck.

A few days ago we had a very heavy rain storm & the whole country side was almost under water. Two huge water spouts came up from the sea but they fortunately burst some distance away from us, it was the first time I'd ever seen a waterspout.

Your 2 packets containing cigarettes, socks & a hankie also came to-day as well as the papers. Thanks very much for them Maw, you asked if I wanted clothes but I think I have enough to see me on for a good while yet. I'm glad you recieved all the photos I sent & I hope you get the ones of Mustard & I in our machine, that I sent 2 days ago (on the 29th)

5

I have no 'after effects' from my crash except & fine scar on my leg & one on my right cheek. I'm entitled to a gold bar for that as an aeroplane crash counts as wounded but I don't think I'll wear it. I've never worn anything like that because I don't think its necessary while on service but I'll wear every thing I'm entitled to when I go back to Australia. We are also supposed to wear service stripes too, a red one for 1914 & a blue one for each succeeding year, they are worn just above the right cuff & shaped like this [a sketch of 4 λ in a vertical line]. If the war lasts very much longer you'll see me coming home looking like a game of snakes & ladders, what with wound stripes & service stripes & M.C's etc. I don't think I am likely to be sent to England & I'm not too keen on going now. This is not such a bad country & we can get a good square meal here without any fuss which seems to be rather a hard thing to get in England at present.

6

Apl. 1st (Easter Monday) We have had a great day, it was too cloudy for flying so we were all able to go to our race meeting that the Wing got up. It was quite a small affair but very good sport. I rode in 3 races, came 4th in the first one, won the next one, & ran second in the steeplechase, after a good race. I'm enclosing the 'race card'. I rode for the Wing and our colours were a message bag tied round our shoulders & waist. The tails onto the message bag are red, yellow & blue so it looked quite well. I don't know if I told you that we have a very decent little golf course here. I play whenever I get time & have had some fine games, Sutherland & I usually play together & we are about equal as regards play.

I can't promise anything about the photo of Tom Hogarths grave but I will certainly try and get one if I have an opportunity. I have done 320 hours flying now as a pilot since last July & adding on my 200 hours as an observer makes my total time in the air over 500 hours.



7

I had a long letter from Mrs. King a few days ago. She told me something about their food shortages & things must be a bit awkward in the tucker line in England. Keith told me that he had found where Colins grave is, I'm so glad to know and I'm sure it will be a great comfort to you and Paw also. My only hope is that the damned Huns don't retake that bit of ground. Things seem to be very lively in France & the Huns have certainly made a very big push. Every night they send out their wireless news to the world from Berlin. Its called the 'Transocean Press' and it is sent out in English & we pick it up on our station. It is very interesting to read it as it gives us their side of the question too and I must say that most of their claims are fairly modest & correct & they don't hot air about things much.

A few nights ago we had a concert given by our own fellows. We have got a small orchestra going too & the whole show went off very well.

8

Our big hangars are very handy for that sort of thing and we rigged up a proper stage out of plane cases & had electric footlights, a curtain & everything. It was quite like a real Pierrot show in fact, the orchestra came in & played & then an electric bell went & the lights went out except on the stage & the show started.

This is a very healthy country & the air is just beautiful at this time of the year, I'm feeling very fit and never even get a head ache to worry me. We also get ~~pleanty~~ plenty to eat and have a good bed to sleep on & have lots of fun so things all round are not half bad. You will see by the 2 menus I'm enclosing that we dine very well sometimes. Goodnight Maw dear & very much love from your loving son
Ruff.

PRG 18/17/37

[envelope]

[in ink] O.A.S.

[in pencil] 109

recd July 24th 1918

Addressed to

Mrs. Andrew Smith.

Stephen Terrace.

Gilberton.

South Australia.

Purple stamp PASSED BY CENSOR No 3025.

[In ink] Ross Smith.

[letter]

Palestine.

May 17th 1918.

My dearest Mother.

I have not much news and things have been fairly quiet over here the last fortnight. The weather is getting a bit warmer but so far we have had no really hot days and its quite a decent country to live in. I think I was complaining in my last letter that I had not seen a Hun for some time. A Week ago Tonkin on another machine and I went up to a Hun aerodrome to drop some kit for Austin who is a prisoner. When nearing the aerodrome we met a Hun two seater Albatross at 11,000 ft. We at once attacked & chased him down to 2,000 ft & crashed him just outside his own aerodrome. Tonkin & I took turns at diving on him & it was very satisfactory to see him



crash. I had Mustard with me & he took a photo of the crashed machine (which I enclose) & just after we took the photo the machine caught fire. I felt rather sorry for the pilot & passenger because they were almost sure to

2

be burnt too & I could'n't wish my worst enemy such an awful fate as that.

We then flew over their aerodrome at 1500 ft. & Mustard took some more photos & as we were so low they are very clear & valuable. This was about 40 miles behind the lines & when we were about half way home two Hun Scouts came along. I got above one & was right on his tail but my gun only fired one round & then jammed and I could not clear the jam. Tonkin meanwhile shot down both Scouts so it was quite a good day's sport. It was rotten luck my gun jamming because I had that Scout absolutely 'cold' & would certainly have got him.

The next afternoon we sent 16 machines out to bomb that aerodrome & did good work. I had been out on another job in the morning & the Major would'nt let me go again in the afternoon so I was rather disappointed at missing the show. I hate being out of any of those big affairs. I don't know if I told you that we lost 2 more machines on May 1st. One was shot down & the other landed to pick the pilot & observer up.

3

They all got onto one machine (Haig's) but crashed taking off & were \all/ taken prisoners.

Curiously enough Haig landed to pick up Rutherford & Rutherford was the man that Macnamara rescued when he won his V.C. We had letters from the 4 of them yesterday & they all said they were being treated exceptionally well. We are going to drop them their kits in a few days time. One chap wrote a post card from Haifa. Some of the Huns had taken him over there for a swim & he had tea there & went back to the aerodrome later. He also said that the Huns had a truck on the railway with an engine out of an aeroplane in the truck. The engine had an ordinary aeroplane propeller on it & it pulled the truck along. They just used it for joy riding & going over to the coast for a swim. Rather a good idea. Our prisoners are eventually sent up into Asia Minor & we know from our 'agents' who have seen them that they get good treatment & are well fed. There must be quite a crowd of our fellows together there now. 111 Sqdn. have got a D5A Albatross Scout.

4

It was shot down almost undamaged some time ago & they have painted our red, white & blue circles over the black crosses & use it for joy riding on our side of the lines. I had a scrap with \it with/ one of 111 Sqdn's pilots in it 2 mornings ago & I could run rings round it in my machine & he never got his sights on to me once while I could have shot him down several times. The D5A Albatross is one of the Huns best Scouts too!

I had a special job to ~~day~~ do yesterday. I took a man away out into the desert east of the Dead Sea & landed him there & brought him back after he had done what he went for. I like that sort of job & its more interesting than going over the same old places all the time. I hope you are keeping fit Maw, I have never felt better than I do now & my 'nerves' are even better now ~~that~~ than they were when I first started flying. Very much love Mother dearest from your loving son Ruff.

you will see the photo of the crashed Hun better if you look at it through a magnifying glass.

PRG 18/17/38

[envelope]

[in pencil] Recd July 24th 1918

[in ink] R.M. Smith Capt.

A.F.C.



Addressed to
Mrs Andrew Smith.
Stephen Terrace.
Gilberton.
South Australia.

[letter written on paper from 'The George Nungovich Egyptian Hotels Co, The Grand Continental Hotel, Cairo]

29th May 1918.

My dearest Mother.

I came up here yesterday and am having 10 days leave. Sutherland and Addison are with me too so we are a happy little party. It is rather hot and we are all moving on to Alexandria tomorrow to get some bathing. I have been

2.

doing some shopping & the price of things is simply enormous. I'm getting a nice suit made of thin stuff (coat & slacks only) and its costing £7/10/- !! You can't get them for less now. A pair of shoes cost me £2/15/- and to-day I bought a pair of triplex goggles & had to pay £2/5/- for them. A pair of collar badges (Rising Suns) cost 7/- a pair & stars 3/- a pair. It's a good thing I'm drawing Captain's pay, isn't it?

I got your cable just before I left the Sqdn. Maw & was

3.

very pleased to hear you & Paw were well. I'll send you one from Alex. at the end of the week. There was a mail in too but very little S.A. † mail had come so I'll have to wait for your letter till I get back.

I got one from Paw a few hours before I left.

I got another Hun Scout a few days ago. I was out with another machine (Kenny in it) & we met 2 Scouts. They were above us & went for home but we climbed & caught them. The chap I went for was an awful ass & got

4

rattled & didn't fire a shot at me. I finally got right underneath his tail & my observer (Kirk) put 100 rounds into him at about 50 yds range. As the Hun fell I gave him a good burst with my front gun & he went down in a wide spin through the clouds which were only about 1,000 ft. above the ground. Kenny drove his man down too but I don't think he crashed him.

One of 111 Sqdn's pilots shot down a Hun 2 seater the next day

5

quite close to our aerodrome. The Huns burnt their machine & we took them both prisoners. They are quite decent chaps, we had them at our mess one night. In talking to the pilot I found that he was one of the 3 Scouts who shot me down in 6th November.

6

I think I told you that on that day Austin & I went out to take photos on old machines & we met 3 Scouts & had to spin down 6,000 ft. to save ourselves. When I told this Hun that I was one of the pilots he wouldn't believe it & said he was sure he had finished Austin & me. I don't think he believes it yet either! However I'm still very much alive & I've had my revenge for that day. The Huns wouldn't tell us much, they are too cute, but they have an unholy dread of our British Fighters. My flight has got 44 \12/ machines in the



7

last few weeks which is not bad going considering that Huns are so scarce & so very shy these days.

I was quite sorry to leave my machine, it is going so beautifully.

I had a very nice letter from Mrs. King & one from Mrs. Bayley a few days ago. They had both got the pictures you sent them & were delighted with them & had written to you. They had also just got the photos I sent which I had taken last time I was in Cairo, & liked them very much. I hope you got the ones I sent to you safely. I saw Col. Fulton this morning, he looks very fit. Mrs. Fulton

8

has got some job at the Royal Air Force Hd. Qtrs.

I'm wearing my service stripes (one red & 3 blues) & my 2 wound stripes and with my wings & M.C. & bar I look rather like a game of snakes & ladders! Every one here is wearing that sort of thing so I thought I might as well too. Keith's last letter was from Gosport where he was doing a special instructors course & he said he was liking it very much. I'm very pleased he's getting on so well but its only what I expected.

I don't want to raise your hopes too high Maw but I'm going to try & get leave to Australia soon. I was speaking

9.

to Col. Fulton about it this morning & he says that it is a very hard business at present, & has to be done throught the Defence Dept. Melbourne. I put in my application here & state my reasons & A.I.F. here cable to Melbourne & see if I am urgently required at home. If I'm not I don't get the leave.

10.

There is another way I would be most likely to get the leave, – to say I wanted leave to go home & get married! However I don't want to get married so cannot work that stunt.

I'm going to ask Paw to try & get Mr. Waite or someone to see the Defence Dept. about it. I'm going to apply for leave about the end of July so by that time Paw may have been able to do something. I mean that I'm going to put in my application about the end of July.

I just want you to forget that I've told you all this Maw

11.

because if I don't get leave then you won't be so disappointed!

I'd give anything to get home & see you & Paw again, if only for a few weeks.

I'm just going to have some tea & then round to the tailors. We are all going to a show at the Khursal to-night.

Goodbye Maw & very much love from your loving son

Ruff.

PRG 18/17/39

[envelope]

[in ink]

O.A.S.

15.VI.18

June 15th

rec. Aug 21st 1918

Ross Smith



[in pencil]
111

Addressed to
Mrs. Andrew Smith.
Stephen Terrace.
Gilberton.
South Australia.

[letter]
Palestine.
June 15th 1918.

My dearest Mother.

I got back from my leave on the 7th and since then have had 3 letters from you, also papers & all the parcels you have sent. It was very nice getting your letters just as I came back and as usual the parcels were much enjoyed. The small cake you made Maw was very nice & I'm glad to have the emu feathers from home.

I wrote to you from Cairo one afternoon. I went on leave with Addison & Sutherland and we only had 2 days in Cairo & then went on to Alex. It was very nice in Alex and much cooler than in Cairo. We stayed at the Stan Stefano Hotel, it is right on the coast and has its own swimming baths. I spent most of my time in swimming in the mornings & playing golf in the afternoons. We used to get up before breakfast & have a swim & then again at about 11 o'clock at Stanley Bay. I played golf at the

2

Sporting Club. It's a nice little course and I got on quite well at the game.

There were 2 dances at the Hotel but I watched them and thought of other days. I was going to fly a machine back from Alex but at the last moment they decided to keep it there in reserve as we are up to our strength in machines and so I had to come back by train.

I had a good holiday Maw & feel much better for it and ready to carry on for a few more months. The day after I got back I did a 'Furtherst North' trip. We went up to Haifa (on the coast). It is quite a decent little place just on the side of Mt. Carmel & we could see miles up North too. Nazareth, Acre, Mt. Hermon & the Sea of Galilee were all clearly visible. I had Kirk with me as my observer (he flies with me now Mustard is away) & we got some very good & useful photos of the new country we went over. I had a fine chase

3

after a Hun a few days ago. He was one of their latest 2 seater 'Rumplers' with a 260 H.P. Mercedes engine & was fairly fast but not quite fast enough. Another machine (Lt. Stooke) & I were going out on the 4 A.M patrol & just after we took off we saw the Hun being archied about 4,000 ft. above us. I opened full out & started to climb & headed round the back of him to cut him off. He saw me when I was about 2,000 ft. below ~~me~~ him/ & turned for home. He evidently thought he could lose us because he kept his height & didn't put his nose down. It was a fine chase & I chased him for 30 miles behind his own lines before I caught him. I gradually crept up to him & then got under his tail & Kirk opened fire with his double guns. The Hun dived & went down in a steep spiral & I got a good burst in with my front gun as he went. Stooke then dived on him & the Hun finally landed in a field near

4

a village & the pilot & observer got out & ran for cover. We both went down & shot up the machine on the ground & then came back & continued our patrol. It was a pity we didn't have the satisfaction of crashing him after chasing him so far but I guess we gave him a nasty shock.



It's a great sensation to feel that your own machine can lick anything in the sky. In my Flight I've got better machines than the other 2 Flights, They are all the same sort but mine are 250 H.P. & the others only have 190 H.P. engines. The 250 H.P. ones are naturally faster & better & so we get all the big jobs to do and any job where there is likely to be any 'stoush'. I am very proud that I got the best machines (they are the best on the Front) and the Major lets me have what pilots & observers/ I want so I've got most of the best fellows in the Squadron. They are a fine lot of fellows & have done very well & so far we have accounted for about 15 or 16 Huns.

5

That perhaps does not sound many but it is a lot for out here where 'birds' are so scarce. The other 2 Flights have got a few Huns too. My mechanics are a splendid lot of men too & they were also very bucked at getting the best machines to look after and we very seldom have a machine unserviceable unless it has been shot up or something similar. So altogether Maw you see that I have very little to complain of as regards machines & my men. The only thing I want is the war to end & let me get home again.

I was very pleased with the photos you sent me of my goggles, they are very clear and show just what I want. I'm sorry about the 'bleed' not being on the cap but it really had to be washed as it was soaked right through with a blood & all clotted in the fur part. I'm glad you saw Dr. Mainwaring, he's a fine old chap & was very good to me on lots of occasions. We have a Doctor with us now, Dr. Harris from near Melbourne. He is about 60 & rather old

6

but he's a good old chap & we all think a lot of him for coming away at his age. I enjoyed the MTO almonds very much & the socks (10th Btn colours) are fine. We have heard that the 4th Aus. Div. did wonderful work in the big March offensive in France. It appears that they were rushed up when the 5th Army were withdrawing & practically saved the whole situation by the way they hung onto the line. You know I suppose that they only use our fellows over there now for any big job that's to be done.

Do you remember me saying I had a funny letter from a girl in Paris asking me to write to her? I did but my letter was returned to me by the Post office so I don't know who the dear lady was. You said you had a horror of me being taken prisoner Maw. Don't worry about it a bit, of course its possible that I might be but if I am it won't worry me much, in fact I think it would be rather an experience.

7

We had letters from some of our prisoners a few days ago & they are having quite a decent time apparently.

I am very glad you have been seeing some people who knew Colin & have heard more news, I often think of the Boy & its hard to think hes gone but its all chalked up somewhere & we can't dodge our fates. You will most likely find some things missing from his kit but I hope most of it will be there. Things get lost & pinched & of course some things go astray because when there is a big fight on like there was at that time everything gets mixed up & put down anywhere. I think I told you that I didn't get my cross from the Duke of Connaught. We were to get them but the day was too wet so the show had to be put off, and now hes gone away. I'm on the early patrol in the morning so I think I'll to bed as I have to be up at 3 A.M. Goodnight Maw and very much love from your loving son Ruff.

PRG 18/17/40

[envelope]

[in pencil]

112



June 25th

[*in ink*]

O.A.S.

~~July 25th~~ June 25th

recd Aug 21st 1918

Addressed to

Mrs. Andrew Smith.

Stephen Terrace.

Gilberton.

South Australia.

[*letter*]

Palestine.

June 25th 1918.

My dearest Mother

We played a very strenuous cricket match this afternoon amongst ourselves and I feel very fit after the exercise & making 8 runs. We have quite a good wicket and usually have a game each evening after tea if there is nothing else to do. I also watched a glorious sunset this evening. We are only about a mile from Ramleh and there are several spires of churches & mosques in the town & the sun sets right behind the town and is always very beautiful. I often stand and look at it and think how you would admire it too. I may be able to watch a sunset with you in a few months if things turn out as I hope. There is a chance of Wackett coming back here from England as a Flight Commander and if he does there will be one Flt Commander too many. I have just been speaking to the Major about it and he says that if Wackett does come out I'll have a chance of getting to Australia for a rest & Wackett will take my place here. Won't it be glorious? I'm very

2

excited about it already. Anyhow even if Wackett does not come I think I'm almost sure to get a rest in Australia before the end of the year so cheero Maw, I hope to see you soon. I'm having a fine time at present and doing a fair bit of flying. A week ago I had the best scrap I've ever had. I heard from our archie batteries that a Hun 2 seater was coming over Jericho every morning about 6 o'clock. Kirk (my observer) & I went out the next morning & waited for him at 16,000 ft. At 5 past 6 along came the Hun but as soon as he saw me he bolted for his lines. I caught him just on his side of the lines & the fun started. I had expected him to put his nose down & try to land somewhere but this fellow was a real sportsman & put up a fine fight. In fighting a 2 seater you have to remember that he has guns in his observer's cockpit which can fire almost anywhere as well as his fixed gun firing forward. To dive on his tail is to run into a hail of lead and its very risky on their side of the lines because even one bullet

3

in your engine or radiator may mean the rest of the war in Turkey. Hence it is necessary to get in some position where his guns can't get onto you. This chap had 2 guns in his cockpit so I decided to fight him from under his tail. It is quite an easy stunt with a mug pilot but with a good pilot against you its very hard to keep under his tail and not expose your own machine. This chap was a real artist at handling his machine and had me thinking very hard at times. I started by diving under him & then pulling up & getting under his tail while Kirk used his guns over our top plane. The Hun immediately did a very steep turn & tried to get round & ~~do~~ dive on my tail & use his front gun. I also turned & kept my position. The Hun then tried again and again but each time I beat him. Kirk was firing whenever he could but we were manoeuvring so fast that



accurate shooting was difficult. The Hun observer also fired a lot but during the whole scrap which lasted about 5 mins. he never hit my machine once. He was only a little chap & kept having stoppages with his

4

guns & would have to stop firing & clear the stoppage. I thought he had me once – I was about 50 ft beneath him when the pilot skidded his tail round & uncovered me. The Observer's guns came over the side but before he could fire I had also skidded back under him. All this time we were going round in a circle but Kirk then apparently hit the observer because he stopped firing & disappeared into his cockpit. The Hun pilot then straightened out & started to fly straight. That gave me the chance I'd been waiting for & I fired about 50 rounds right into him from close range \with my front gun./ The Hun put his nose down & started to spiral down. I got in 2 good bursts as he went by diving onto his tail. In my last dive I was doing well over 200 miles an hour when I pulled out. The Hun eventually landed in some rough ground & knocked his undercarriage off. We went down low & shot up the machine & only one man ran away from it so I guess the observer was pretty sick.

I had another good stunt a few days ago. Paul & Weir & Kirk & I went out on a job in 2 machines & we had a message to drop to the

5

Huns at their aerodrome at Jenin. We came down to 3,000 ft. over their 'drome & dropped the message & then waited for a bit for them to come up. They were not having any so we started home. On the way we saw a train pull up at a station & a lot of troops get out. It was too good to miss so down we went to 1,000 ft over them & pased them with lead. The train then started again so we chased it and dived \on it/ & flew along side of it shooting all the time until we were fed up. We then climbed over a hill & dropped into the next valley where there were 2 more stations. We shot up the first one & then flew low along the road sl to the next one shooting at everything we saw. The last station was the best target, there was a big camp there too, & a motor transport park & all sorts of other things. We gave them a fine old picnic & Kirk & I nearly fell overboard with laughter. You never saw such a mess, there were men, horses & carts & other things going in all directions. It was great fun twisting about among the hills & along the valleys. We just did it for the sport of the thing but the Col. of the Bgde. wrote a very nice letter to our

6

Wing Commander about it. (Copy enclosed.)

I did an aerodrome patrol last Saturday to try & catch an old Hun who had been coming over about lunch time. He did'nt come that day so to pass away the time I pulled my machine up as far as she'd go. We got up to 21,000 ft. & could'nt get any higher. I did'nt stay up there very long because its not a bit nice up so high & is hard to breathe.

21,00 ft is about 4 miles!

We do most of our jobs in the early morning. I often go out on the early patrol & leave the ground as before sunrise when it is just light enough to see. It means getting up at a quarter to 3 but once up it is very night \nice/. A few mornings ago there was a thick bank of clouds at 3,000 ft. After I had pushed through them the sun rose and it was one of the most beautiful sights I have ever seen. Our machines climb rapidly & on an early job we get up into the sunlight before the sun has touched the earth & then look down & see the earth still in shadow while up top everything is very bright. I'm still very keen on flying & never cease to wonder at the mavel of it when flying along & looking down in perfect safety at the world a few miles below.

7

Lt. Sutherland will be going to Melbourne soon I think. He has applied for leave to go home & get married & will probably get leave. If he does he will have some curios for you & I'm going to



give him your address & phone number and if he calls at Adelaide he will look you up. He says that if he does call at Adelaide he will send you a wire, perhaps from Fremantle & you could meet him at the ship, so if you do get a wire signed 'Sutherland' you'll know who its from. He is one of my best pals here & a very fine fellow too, with æ a D.C.M. & M.C.

Did I tell you that we sometimes take a run over to Jaffa for a swim? It is very nice over there & we have tea at the Jerusalem Hotel afterwards. All the civil population are still there & there are some fine looking Jewish girls among them.

I must stop now, I'm having a day off flying to-morrow so will have a good lie in bed in the morning. Goodnight Maw & very much love from your loving son
Ruff.

[8]

(Copy)

Hd. Qtrs.

Palestine Bgde.

R.A.F.

To. C.O.

40th Wing. R.A.F.

Yesterday's report from you shows an exceptionally fine piece of work on the part of Capt. Smith, Lts. Kirk, Paul & Weir.

Individual action of this description reflects the the greatest credit on those concerned & the demoralisation of the enemy in attacks of this nature, will I am sure be felt.

(Sgd.) C.A. Burnett Lt. Col.
Commanding Palestine Bgde.
R.A.F.

In the field
22-6-18

PRG 18/17/41

[envelope]

[in pencil]

113

[in ink]

O.A.S.

July 7th

rec Aug 21st 1918

Ross Smith

Addressed to
Mrs. Andrew Smith.
Stephen Terrace.
Gilberton.
South Australia.

[letter]

Palestine.

July 7th 1918



My dearest Mother.

We had to send someone down to Beersheba a few days ago so I sent my camera down and got 2 photos of Hogarth's grave. I am enclosing one negative & will send the other in another letter in case one should go astray. The initials are 'G.R.' but I suppose that is right as there was no other cross with Hogarth on it there.

The graves are well cared for & the cemetery is fenced in & there are young gums growing inside it.

We have had no mail since I wrote last but one should be here any day now. I'm still feeling very fit and enjoying myself. There is lots of work on & I have been flying nearly every day but have had several trips down to the beach & tea afterwards at Jaffa. We had some surf boards down there a few days ago and had great sport with them. Major Williams is

2

at present running the Wing and Addison is our O.C. for the time. The Colonel of our Wing has gone on leave to England so Williams has taken over his job until the Col. comes back. We have got a Hun machine here now. It's a DSA Albatross Scout and is one that one of the 111 Sqn's pilots shot down on our side of the lines some time ago. It was not damaged much so we are flying it. So far I've only flown it once but 111 Sqn. gave it to us a few days ago so I'll be able to fly it more often now. We only use it for joy riding & its not nearly so good or so nice as a Bristol Fighter. I have't had any more scraps, and its very slow and monotonous work patrolling these days. We are sent out to patrol a certain part of the line & just have to fly up & down that part for about 3 hours. Its alright for the first hour but after that the clock won't go nearly fast enough.

3

We have just erected a monument to all our fellows we lost last year behind the Turks lines last year when we were in front of Gaza. It was the time when the Huns had the better of the deal by virtue of their better machines & they got a good lot of our machines. One machine was shot down by 'Archies' at a place called Hariera which is about half way between Gaza & Beersheba. The Turks buried the pilot (who we think was Lt. \B/ Steele) & made a big T over the grave in the shape of an aeroplane. It was made out of mud bricks & painted white. After our advance we found this & have since had a marble slab made with the names of all the men we lost about that time put on it and have rebuilt the T thing & built the marble slab into a concrete pillar & fenced the whole lot in. I have a photo of it but its too large for an envelope so I'll have to send it another time.

We played another cricket match to-day,

4

against G.H.Q on their ground. It was a fine game & they just beat us by 10. I only made 1!! They had a jolly good team including Lord Dalmeny, the ex Surrey captain, & several other well known men. I saw Col. Fulton in Jaffa a few days ago. He has left his job in Cairo & is now organising some big agricultural scheme for growing wheat & things in this country, at least he is reporting on the prospects of doing it I think. If it does come off he is going to run the show. I had 2 cards & a letter/ from Keith last week & he said he was very fit and seemed quite happy, he has done jolly well. Sorry I have no more news Maw but will try & write more next time. With very much love from your loving son Ruff.

PRG18/17/42

[envelope]

[in pencil]



114

[*in ink*]

O.A.S.

Ross Smith.

July 30th 1918

rec Sep 12th “

Addressed to

Mrs. Andrew Smith.

Stephen Tce.

Gilberton.

South Australia.

[*letter*]

Palestine.

July 30th 1918.

My dearest Mother.

Just a wee letter. The Doctor, Capt. Harris has written a lot of hot air to you about those 2 Huns I shot down & he tells me he has told you to publish it. I don't want you to do that Maw and it must not be published in any paper nor come before the public in any way at all. I know you wont publish it Maw but if you want to show it to a few of our friends I of course have no objection provided outsiders don't get hold of it.

The old Doc. told me he wanted to tell his wife about the show so I gave him a few particulars but on the condition that it did not appear in print. I read what he wrote & he evidently thinks I'm something of a wonder but that sort of thing happens every day and I did not get my D.F.C. for that show only. D.F.C.'s are not won so easily by a long way & plenty of men have shot down 4, 5 & even 6 Huns in one day.

2

The Doc. is rather an old man and is a good old sort & has done a bit of writing at various times and as a matter of fact he has \not/ only written what did occur but has put in a lot of 'eye wash' as well. If that thing did appear in a paper I would loose every bit of respect of the fellows here that I have got, in fact I don't think I could stay in the Sqdn. It would take me too long to explain why but I'll tell you when I see you but in the meantime you must see Maw that absolutely nothing about any of my doings appears in the papers. That means more to me than almost \almost/ anything else, & I want you to remember that Maw in case any miserable reporter wants to know any thing about me.

There is no further news but things are going very well in France so that's the main thing. My workshop & office tent caught fire to-day but we managed to get nearly everything out but the tent made a fine blaze.

I must get this posted now so goodnight Maw & very much love & I know you won't forget what I've asked you. Your loving son Ruff.

I really mean this Maw & I wont be happy until I hear that you have got this letter.

PRG 18/17/43

[*envelope*]

[*in pencil*]

115

[*in ink*]

O.A.S.



Aug 11th , 1918
Sep 24th “
Ross Smith

Addressed to
Mrs. Andrew Smith.
Stephen Terrace.
Gilberton.
South Australia.

[*letter*]
Palestine.
Aug. 11th 1918.

My dearest Mother.

Since I wrote to you last on July 28th I have had 3 days leave and got back yesterday and found your 3 letters waiting for me.

I went down to Cairo for a dinner to Gen. Borton who arrived from England on the 8th by air. Gen. Borton is in command of our Bgde & used to be C.O. of our Wing some time ago so I have known him for some time. He went on leave \to England/ about 3 months ago & flew back to Egypt on one of the big Hanley Page bombing machines. He landed at several places on the way & carried a crew of 5 on the machine & they broke the world's record as regards a long distance flight & had no trouble at all on the way. It was decided to give the General a dinner on his arrival and Major Addison & I were asked from this Sqdn.

2

Several other fellows went from up here & there were about 20 from Palestine altogether & the rest from the Training Bgde etc. in Egypt. We were all out at Heliopolis to see the General land & I was very interested in the big machine with its 2 Rolls engines.

The dinner was a great success & a crowd of us formed a 'rough end' at the end of one table & we were mostly all the General's oldest flying officers. There were the usual toasts & speeches & then the General came down to have a drink with the 'rough end', as he put it. Of course we were very delighted & I made a short speech & we then lifted him & his chair up in the air & sang 'For he's a jolly good fellow.' He's a very fine chap & we are all jolly glad to see him back. We had to come back next day but I was to fly a new machine up from Kantara so instead of staying

3

that night in Kantara I went on to Port Said with Clogstorm (of the Bgde. Staff) & we caught a train back to Kantara next day & came on here by air in the afternoon.

There are a lot of nice people staying in Pt. Said for the summer & most of the Australian people are there. I know several of them & I'm contemplating spending my next leave down there and having & quiet & lazy time

I saw Mrs. Fulton at Heliopolis the day the Hanley Page landed & she wished to be remembered to you. I had a long talk to her and she said she had written to someone & told them to tell you what a 'wonderful' (?) person I am. She wanted me to dine with them but I could not, as I only had the one night in Cairo.

It was very nice getting a mail when I got home, your letters were June 15th & 20th and there were some papers & 2 pcls from you & 2 of yours from Crawfords. Very many thank Maw, Sutherland & I had some of



4

the cake this morning & it is very good, as usual. I was very pleased to get the photo of Colin, its an awfully good one of the Boy.

Thanks also Maw for your cable of congratulations which reached me 3 days after you sent it. I knew you would be pleased about my D.F.C. By the way, that is tacked onto my name now so I'm Smith M.C. D.F.C. which sounds very swanky, doesn't it.

I posted you a small parcel a few days ago containing some curios & things & I put a list inside explaining them all, the pcl. is sewn up in aeroplane fabric that the wings are covered with.

I'm sorry you still have those bad headaches Maw & they must make you feel pretty rotten.

I did laugh about your description of your own photo Maw. You said that like the house, you needed a good coat of paint! I'm sure you don't & I think you look particularly nice. I'm having a frame made for it out the propeller of my

5

machine that I won my D.F.C.on. I had to take this propeller off a few days ago & put a new one on because my old one was pretty well shot about & was starting to crack. I've still got my old machine & it is as good as ever and I have done about 200 hours in her now. It is a presentation machine given by the MacIntyres, of Kayuga Estate. N.S.W. We have just got another of Mrs. Bickford's machines but it is not in my flight.

I'm sending you an old tunic in a pcl. It is the one in which I was shot down in twice & in which I won the Bar to my M.C. I also had it on that day I crashed & there is still some bleed from my face about the collar & front of it. I was nearly going to wash it but I remembered about my cap so I'm sending it as I wore it.

The tunic I wear now is an old cloth one that I got in England & it is nearly covered with oil now. It is my D.F.C. tunic & I'll bring it out to show you when I come home.

6

The pilots who were supposed to be coming here are not coming now so I don't know when I'll get away. We have cabled England asking for pilots to be sent out and I should know more when the reply to that cable arrives.

I have done just over 500 hours as a pilot now so altogether I have spent nearly a month in the air.

I'm still very fit and keen on my job, we have made a tennis court & I play fairly often & derive much benefit from the exercise.

We had a fine concert here last night by our own company in one of the big hangars. We have got a good orchestra too & have a real stage & scenery & lights etc. Some of the men are awfully good & the second half last night was a sort of revue which went off very well. Our concert party is kept fairly busy & every one wants them to give shows at various places. They gave a show at G.H.Q last week which was a great success. Gen. Salmond was

7

there & he wants the party to go to Cairo & give a performance there. There are 7 of my men in it & it's a bit awkward when they are away because the work has to go on just the same.

A lot of comforts have arrived from Mrs. Wigg & are very much appreciated. You can tell her that all the men think the world of her & what she & her committee have done for the Sqdn.

Kenny & Sutherland & another machine with them met 4 Hun 2 seaters about 60 miles behind the lines last week. Kenny attacked & he & Sutherland ~~chased~~ /crashed/ one, ~~drew~~ shot one down out of control & drove another down while the 4th one got away. It was a very fine show & right over a Hun aerodrome. Kenny & Sutherland are both in my Flight so 'C' Flight are still keeping up their reputation. We are easily the best Flight & have got more decorations, more Huns, & flown more hours than either of the other 2 Flights, a fact of which I am naturally very proud.



8

I saw Peter Drummond in Cairo. He has got a \new/ Sqdn. (R.A.F.) now of fighting machines & will be bringing it up here shortly. I had a letter from Keith yesterday & he seems to be doing very well & keeping fit.

The news from France the last few days has been very good & I think we are really beginning to win now & I hope next year will see peace again. I spend most of my time these days in thinking of my coming leave home & wondering when I will be able to get away, I wish it was to-morrow.

Goodnight Maw & very much love from

Your loving son Ruff.

I'm enclosing the other photo of Hogarth's grave.

PRG 18/17/44

[envelope]

[in pencil]

116

[in ink]

On Active Service

Ross Smith

Aug 22nd 1918

rec Sep 30th 1918

Addressed to

Mrs. Andrew Smith.

Stephen Terrace.

Gilberton.

South Australia.

[letter on notepaper from Shepheard's Hotel, Cairo]

Aug 22nd 1918.

My Dearest Mother.

By the above you will see that I am in Cairo again and I have many things to tell you. Firstly I must say that I'm afraid my proposed trip to Australia is not at all likely to come off for some time. I know you will be horribly disappointed and I am too, but when I tell you why I can't come I'm sure you will be very proud of me.

You remember me telling you in my last letter about a big machine I came down to see the General land in.

2.

That is my machine now & that's what I'm in Cairo about.

I think it is the greatest honour I've ever had to be selected from all the other pilots in Egypt & Palestine to fly this machine, and Gen. Salmond told me the day I got here that I was the 'selected pilot for the machine.' I'm more proud of that than I've ever been of any of my decorations & its also very nice to think that an Australian has got the job before all the other people.

So you see Maw I can't possibly get away for some time now.

3

For one thing they won't let me go and even if they would I'm sure you'll think that I should stay for a time at least and try & justify the confidence that has been placed in me.



That's the penalty you get Maw for having a son who has collared a few decorations and who is supposed to be a fairly good pilot.

I'm very disappointed that I can't go home & see you & Paw but it only means a little longer to wait. I'm still perfectly fit, in fact I never felt better, & I have not even had

4

as much as a headache for the last 2 years, & I can go on flying for years yet if necessary. I had to come to Cairo to take over the machine & be shown how everything works. Major Mac Laren is the man who came out with the General & he has been teaching me about it. He is a very fine fellow too.

I have been up several times & its quite simple but I have to fly again to-night before my final instruction is finished. We were up last night, it was

5

full moon & you can't imagine anything more beautiful & wonderful than/ Cairo & the Nile by moonlight from 5,000 ft.! It is such a huge machine too, but you have ~~not~~ no doubt seen pictures of them.

It is wonderfully safe too and with this machine I'll have a comparatively safe job with no fear of forced landings behind the enemy's lines. I'm going to have a lovely time with it, poor old Turks! I wish I could tell you more about it but of course I can't

6

but you know what sort of machine it is & you may be able to find out a few particulars from books or perhaps an odd pilot or two if you happen to see any.

I'm having a fine time in Cairo & every one is being particularly decent to me & Mac Laren & I swank round in a big Crossley touring car which is supplied by the Brigade people.

I have managed to get one small piece of my new ribbon, a chap in 14 Sqdn. got some sent out from

7

England, & it looks very nice along side my M.C. with a bar. Its rather embarrassing though because as its new & uncommon everyone stares at it & several people have wanted to know what it is.

Its quite hot in Cairo & this afternoon I'm writing this in my room ~~wh~~ with the shutters closed & a small electric lamp on my table. I don't think I'll be going back to the Sqdn. for about 5 days so I'm having a nice

8

change & a good rest as well. Mrs. Southern is still here & I have seen her several times, she is very interesting to talk to~~e~~ and decent sensible women are rather hard to find in this country.

One of our fellows, Lt. Braine, is being invalided to Australia shortly, I hope to see him to-day & if I do I'll give him a letter to post to you.

No more news now Maw but I'll write again soon. Don't think I don't want to come home because I do very much but I know you'll understand just how I'm situated, it seems that the more decorations one gets, the more one has to live up to. Very much love Mother dearest from Ruff.

PRG 18/17/45

[envelope]

[in pencil]

117



Aug 22nd 1918
rec Oct 22nd 1918

[*in ink*]

Per favour
Lt. S. Braine
Addressed to
Mrs. Andrew Smith.
Áviemore.
Stephen Terrace.
Gilberton.
South Australia.

[*letter on notepaper from Shepherds Hotel, Cairo*]

Aug 22nd 1918.

My dearest Mother.

I'm giving this to Lt. Braine who is going to Australia soon & he will post it to you when he arrives. I have just written you a long letter telling you about my new machine. It is the big Hanley Page that Gen. Borton flew out from England, & I'm very proud of the fact that I've been selected to fly it. I am only going to do bombing with it and all at night too so there will be no danger & being shot down by

2

Huns or archies. It is a really wonderful machine & weighs about 3½ tons!! There is practically no danger of being let down on it as it has 2 Rolls Royce engines each of 350 Horse Power & I will carry a crew of 3 men who will be gunners. I can also carry 16 – 112 lb. bombs (nearly a Ton!) so the old Turk is in for a rotten time. It is just like a small ship inside & a person can walk about comfortably & the span of its wings is over 100 ft.

3

The pilot's seat is in a sort of cabin built away out in front & a gunner sits near me & 2 more gunners some distance back & behind the engines. My seat is in front of the engines & that's what makes it so nice to fly, because there is no hot air or oily smell blowing back on me all the time.

There are all sorts of little things too such as wireless, electric light, navigation lights for night flying like

4

a ship has, electric things for warming my clothing & dozens of other things as well. It is a most wonderful machine & its quite easy to fly too and I'm awfully happy its going to be mine. I'm feeling very well & am enjoying my change down here and as the hangar will not be ready at our aerodrome at Ramleh for a few days I'm going to have a good loaf. Don't worry about me Maw, this will be the safest job I've ever had, (really.) Very much love from your loving son Ruff.

PRG 18/17/46

[*envelope*]

[*in pencil*]

118

[*in ink*]

O.A.S.

Ross Smith



Sep 20th
rec Nov 19th 1918

Addressed to
Mrs. Andrew Smith.
Stephen Terrace.
Gilberton.
South Australia.

[*letter*]
Palestine
Sept. 20th 1918.

My dearest Mother

We are in the midst of another advance so we are all very busy. Things are going very well and our mounted troops have gone miles and are nearly up to Nazareth and Haifa. It started yesterday morning and I had the honour of opening our attack just before dawn by bombing a big railway junction in my big machine. It was good bombing too & we did a lot of damage. Last night I went out twice and bombed the Hun aerodrome at Jenin both times. Jenin is the place that I have 'sat over' so often so I know it very well. Mustard is flying with me again & drops the bombs & between us we made an awful mess of the place. Out of the 32 big bombs we dropped, we got 27 direct hits among the hangars & on the railway station! The fellows who went out there this morning say that

2

the place is like a scrap heap & there are lots of wings & other bits of machines about & hangars blown up etc. It was a great nights work & I am very pleased with the result. I have got a very good bomb sight and can do very accurate work with it.

I love this night flying stunt on the big H.P. machine, it is glorious up there at night. Last night was cloudy but they were decent clouds with gaps between them & I went along the lanes because they were too high to climb over. The moon was very bright too and everything below looked so helpless and absolutely at our mercy.

I'm not going out to-night, there is nothing much left to break up. All available machines have been going out all day long with bombs & machine guns & dropping their bombs & shooting up the retreating enemy & then coming back & going straight out again with another load. This show has been (& is still) a great triumph for the Flying Corps,

3

not a single Hun machine has been in the air. All day yesterday while our main attack was on we had Scouts over Jenin all the time & they would not let anything get off & then as soon as it was dark I started off & proceeded to break them up with my 112 lb. bombs. This Sqdn. alone dropped 5 tons of bombs & fired 20,000 rounds at the enemy yesterday.

Our last reco out to-day reported Jenin in flames. Our troops are nearly there and the Huns are burning everything to prevent us getting it. At another aerodrome we captured 4 machines intact & all the mechanics. Just after we took the place a Hun machine landed there from Damascus, & didn't know we had taken the place & was very fed up when confronted with the muzzle of a rifle. It is a wonderful show & we have taken thousands of prisoners, & tons of material. I'll tell you more about it later on. I'm very fit & enjoying myself but they still wont let me fly my Bristol in the day time

4

which is rather annoying as I'm missing a lot of fun. However I've done great execution so I should not complain. Your cable of 'mums the word' came 2 days ago & I'm glad you were well.



I think you were referring to that thing the Doc. wrote & I asked you not to publish it as you \he/ suggested. I am much relieved.

Goodnight Maw & very much love from your loving son. Ruff.

The 2 photos are of 'Tiny'. You see her wings fold back when she is in the hangar & we spread them outside. The sharp thing right in front is the bomb sight. Note the size of a man beside the machine. The other one is of Cameron & I taken in the air in 'Tiny'. Cameron is sitting beside me. Just above Cameron's head is 'Marmaduke', our mascot. He is a fine little chap & the General put him on the machine before he left England and has now given him to me for luck. Mustard (the boy with the nice face!) took the photos.

PRG 18/17/47

[envelope]

[in pencil]

119

About – Arab King

[in ink]

On Active Service

Ross Smith

Addressed to
Andrew Smith Esq
Mutooroo Station.
Cockburn.
South Australia.

[letter]

Palestine.

Sept. 24th 1918.

My dear Paw.

I have had 2 letters from you to-day and very many thanks for your congratulations on my D.F.C. I knew you would be pleased about it and its quite a nice thing to have.

You will have read of our great victory and our work is just beginning to ease off and we are not at all sorry because we are all tired of the killing. It has been one of the most sensational victories in warfare & we have captured almost all the Turkish army & what is left we should have in a day or two. In 3 days we captured over 2,000 sq. miles of country and over 30,000 prisoners, besides great quantities of transport and material. The success of the whole show has been largely due to the Air Service and not a Hun machine appeared over our troops during the whole of the fighting. The attack started on the 19th & I had the honour of beginning

2

it by bombing a railway junction at about 3 A.M. with my big machine. The Infantry then attacked at dawn & captured the whole of the Turks front line on the coast & the Cavalry went through the gap & away up round the back of them. It was childs play after that & we broke up all their telegraph & telephone offices with bombs so none of the enemy knew what had happened & as they retired they walked right into our cavalry who collared them. At dawn on the 19th also, our Scout machines went out & sat over the Hun's main aerodrome at Jenin all day & not a Hun machine could get off. Then as soon as it was dark I started off & unloaded my 16 112 lb. bombs on Jenin & repeated the dose a few hours later. It was exceptionally good bombing too &



next morning the place resembled a scrap heap. Some of the Huns got away from there but they burnt 11 machines & all their hangars & stores etc. before they went. I flew up there next day & saw the damage my big bombs had done and it was an awful mess.

3

All our Bristols in the Sqdn. were out most of the day bombing & machine gunning & the slaughter was appalling. In places we caught large bodies of the enemy in narrow passes where they could not get away.

The day before yesterday (22nd) I had to go out in my Bristol to the Hedjaz army away east of the Jordan. Some Huns had been bombing the Sherrif of Meccas army & by good luck 3 came along while I was there. I took off & shot one down & my observer (Mustard) set fire to him on the ground with machine gun fire. The other 2 got away. All the Arabs saw the scrap & when I landed I got a great reception. One old Sheikh puled out his revolver & fired its 6 round off as fast as he could. Soon after landing 3 more machines came along & I took off again but the swine, altho' 3 to 1, would not fight & 2 went down & landed with me well on their tails. The other chap made for his aerodrome but had a good start & managed to land just as I was

4

getting into range. However I fired while he was landing & he p bumped badly & I followed him down to 10 ft. & then did a climbing turn over their hangars & came back to the Arabs. They were greatly bucked at the show and it did a lot of good because those Huns had been bombing them for several days & they were too far away for us to reach them from here.

That same afternoon I took the big machine over there with a load of petrol & landed. You never saw such excitement as there was & the machine made the greatest impression. The son of the King of the Hejaz was there to see us & I was presented to him with great honours.

Last night I was out that way again & bombed a big station & the Hun aerodrome with good results. Today the Huns have all cleared out from there too & burnt some machines that they could not get away.

It is great sport flying at night & there has been a fine moon & my big machine has been going very well.

5

I am glad shearing is going off well Paw & Mutooroo should pay a good dividend this year. I have increased my pay allotment to 10/- per day from 4th Oct. 1918 & have made it payable to Maw so it will be easier to collect in future.

During all this attack our casulties have been very small. The Infantry had a few in the frontal attack but the Australians have not had more than about 40 to 50 casulties altogether. I am feeling very fit but a bit tired but I'm not going out to-night so I'll have a good night's sleep. Goodbye for now Paw & very much love from your loving son Ross.

PRG 18/17/48

[envelope]

[in pencil]

120

[in ink]

O.A.S.

Sep 27th

rec Nov 19th 1918

Ross Smith



[Addressed to]
Mrs. Andrew Smith.
Stephen Terrace.
Gilberton.
South Australia.

[letter – in pencil]
Palestine.
Sept. 27th 1918.

Mother dearest.

I'm so sorry I havent been able to write for some days but I've been too busy for words & I only have a few minutes now. You will have heard of our great victory, it has been an altogether wonderful show & the last count of prisoners I heard was over 42,000. The Infantry broke thro' the front line & then the LH & cavalry got through & right round the back of the old Turks & cut them off. I had some great fun bombing at night with my big machine & obtained some very good results with the big 112 lb. bombs. Mustard (who is flying with me again) & I started the attack by bombing a railway junction at 3 AM on the first morning. Next night we bombed Jenin aerodrome twice & did an awful lot of damage. We got 27 direct hits on hangars & things & the place looked like a scrap heap next morning. All day long our Bristols & all the other Sqdns. were out bombing & machine gunning the retreating Turks. Not a single Hun machine

2

left the ground the first day, our Scouts sat over Jenin all day & then at night Mustard & I broke them. The Huns burnt 11 machines & all their stores there before they cleared out. The King of the Hedjaz's army is away out East of the Jordan & I went over there & landed one morning because some Huns out that way were bombing them. Soon after I got there 3 Huns came along so I took off & Mustard shot one down & then set fire to him on the ground with M.G. fire. Later on we drove down 3 more but did not crash 'em unfortunately. One chap we chased to within 10 ft of his own aerodrome. That same afternoon I took the big machine out there & landed with a load of petrol. You never saw such excitement as there was among the Arabs & they regarded me as something wonderful & came & touched me & felt me. I am just off up to Haifa. My flight is moving up there so I'm very busy. Our troops are now away up North of the Sea of Galilee & we have captured the whole of the Turkish army in these parts. I got 3 letters from you 2 days

3

ago Maw & they bucked me up a lot as they came when I was tired & had been flying all the previous night. I am very fit & quite happy.
Goodbye Maw & very much love from
Your loving son Ruff.

PRG 18/17/49

[envelope]
[in pencil]
121
[in ink]
Oct \7th/ 15th 1918
rec Dec^r 6th 1918
Ross Smith.



[Addressed to]
Mrs. Andrew Smith.
Stephen Terrace
Gilberton.
South Australia.

[letter]
Palestine.
Oct 7th 1918.

Mother my dearest.

I have firstly some more good news for you, namely that I have been given a Bar to my D.F.C. I never expected this one because its only 2 months since I got my first D.F.C. My total is gradually increasing & this makes 4 decorations I've got now & they have all been ~~ime~~ immediate awards for some special job or jobs. What a smart son you have Maw !! I think this one must be for the bombing in the Hanley & also for breaking up those Huns that day. Mustard has also got a D.F.C. for which I am very pleased because he has always done jolly fine work. We got 5 D.F.C.'s in the Sqdn. for this stunt and they have all come to men in my Flight, a fact of which I am naturally very proud. That makes 16 D.F.C.'s THE Sqdn. has been awarded & all since the end of July.

I think I told you in my last letter

2

that I was getting ready to move. We have since moved & the whole Sqdn. is here now. The aerodrome is quite good & our camp is pitched on the lower slopes of Mount Carmel. It is an awfully pretty place and the tents are among olive trees and from my door I look out across the Bay to Acre & can see the Mountains of Lebanon & Mt. Hermon away in the distance. We are quite close to the sea too & the swimming is very good. Yesterday a hospital ship came in and it was quite like Gallipoli over again to see all her lights out in the Bay last night. Our troops have long since taken Damascus & I am going to fly over there to-morrow & land & wait in case any stray Hun comes along. None of us have seen a hun machine for about 2 weeks & things are very slow in our line.

My big machine ~~h~~ is not up here and I don't know what is going to happen to it now. I'm flying my dear old Bristol again. She is still as good as ever and I have done well over

3

200 hours flying in her. I have still got the same 2 mechanics on her too. I think it would be very nice if you sent them each a parcel occasionally if you have the time. They are both very nice boys & take a wonderful pride in their machine and after all my life depends to a large extent upon their work. My engineman is Corp. A.H. Luxton & my rigger is 1st A/M J.C. Bull & their address is the same as mine. If you put a little note inside them & told them who you were I'm sure they would be very bucked.

Two other pilots were flying the machine during the stunt when I was on the Hanley & they both have been given the D.F.C. so Luxton & Bull claim 6 D.F.C.'s for their machine now. Lts. Kirk, Mustard, Tonkin, Maughan & my 2.

I wonder if you could find out who the people are who presented the machine. Its number is B 1229 & it is called 'The New South Wales No. 11', 'The Macintyre', 'Kayuga Estate.' I think someone called Macintyre presented it and Kayuga Estate /N.S.W.\



4

is evidently the name of their place. I want to write to the people & tell them about their machine. 1229 has so far accounted for 4 Hun machines destroyed, & at least 5 more driven down & 1 driven down out of control.

I am going to send you a cable ~~out~~ about my new Bar as soon as I can but I can't find anyone who is going down to Cairo just at present. Would'nt our poor Kiddie have been pleased? I know Keith will be pleased too and you & Paw too.

I am applying for leave on the 18th of this month and hope to go to Cairo if it is granted. We have taken over 80,000 prisoners since Sept 19th & have completely captured 2 Army Corps. Our casualties have been remarkably light too & the Light Horse have had very few. There is a lot of talk about 1914 men getting leave home & we understand that some from France are already on the way. So far we have heard nothing official about us out here but I think something

5

is being arranged so I may have a chance with that lot. I hope so anyway. Your parcels & papers all came just before I left Ramleh & I have been enjoying the parcels very much as we are on bully & biscuits up here.

I think I told you once that the D.F.C. was about equivalent to a D.S.O. It is not but is about the same as a M.C. but the D.F.C. can only be won for flying against the enemy. I am making up 3 parcels for you & will send them off when I can. One is a tin tube containing a Hun \black/ cross off a Hun Scout. Another contains \4/ photo frames made out of propeller tips & the other the ink stand I told you about & a few other small things. I hope they get through safely but I may not be able to send them until the postal people get more established up this way.

It is getting quite wintery & we have had some rain here already.

Goodnight Maw & very much love from your loving son Ruff.

PRG 18/17/50

[*envelope*]

[*in pencil*]

122

[*in ink*]

On active Service.

Oct 24th 1918

rec Dec^r 6th 1918

Ross Smith

[*Addressed to*]

Mrs. Andrew Smith.

Stephen Terrace.

Gilberton.

South Australia.

[*letter*]

Palestine

Oct 24th 1918.

My dearest Mother.

Wonders will never cease! Do you know I've just been told I got a second Bar to my D.F.C.!! It is so much of a surprise that I thought I'd write and tell you about it straight away. The getting of it



was all so simple too and for once I know what this Bar is for, without having to wait a few months until they publish something in the London Gazette.

It happened thus. – A few days ago, the 19th to be exact, I went out accompanied by Headlam in another machine to do a reco of Aleppo. We had to land for petrol at Homs and just after we had filled up & were ready to take off again a Hun 2 seater came over us very high up. We both took off after him but I did not sight him for about half an hour & he was then still well above us. He continued to climb & we finally got within range when we got up to 18,000 ft. It was't much of a scrap because the Hun made straight for earth & went down in a steep

2

spiral & it is almost impossible to hit a machine when it is spiralling. The Hun landed safely in open country about 25 miles S.W. of Aleppo, which was then about 30 miles behind his own lines. Both pilot & observer got out & ran about 300 yds. away. I then went down low & my observer, McCann, shot up the machine several times but altho' it was obviously well holed it would'nt catch fire & burn up. I eventually got fed up & was siezed with the brilliant idea of landing & burning the machine & capturing the pilot & observer & bringing them home with me, so down I went & landed. We signalled to the Huns & McCann covered them with his guns while they stood about 30 yds from us doing the 'Kamerad' stunt. However, we had landed on rather soft ground & I decided that it would be very unwise to attempt to get my machine off again with 2 extra on board so I was very reluctantly forced to leave them there but before we took off McCann fired a Very's Light into the machine & it burned up in fine style. If you could only have seen the look on the 2 Huns! I nearly died with

3

laughter at their expressions as they saw their machine go up in smoke & its quite the funniest thing I've ever seen! I am only sorry I could'nt bring them home & complete the capture but under the circumstances I would probably have [*word crossed out*] \crashed/ myself if I'd tried to take off with the extra load. We have heard since tho' that our armoured cars have found the 2 Huns lying wounded in a village up that way so they are ours after all & we may have wounded them slightly in the scrap or perhaps the Bedouins dealt with them.

It was a very simple little stunt but they seem to think it was something rather more, hence the new Bar. McCann got a D.F.C. too, so that is 2 more for the Squadron & makes a total of 6 7 D.F.C.'s won on my machine B1229. Gen. Salmond sent ~~me~~ \us/ a very nice telegram congratulating us on our 'unique performance'. So you see Maw I'll be more like the 'Snakes & ladders' game than ever now but I never dreamt of getting 2 decorations in 3 weeks or 3 in 3 months. I do wish they'd give me another ribbon instead of Bars because ribbons

4

look so much nicer than those little rosettes. I sent you a cable about my other new Bar by Sutherland who went to Cairo last week to go to the Flying School. I'm going down to Cairo my self to-morrow for 10 days leave & I'll send you another cable about this one.

The day after our little show Gen. Boston brought an artist chap up to see me & I had to give him details about it and he is going to draw it for a collection of 'Incidents of the Campaign'. It will be 'some' picture too from what I saw of the rough sketch. I'll try & get a copy if I can and send you one.

Our jobs are very long now & to do a reco \from here/ means flying nearly all day. Yesterday I was in the air over 7 hours & over 8 the day before so I'm having a spell to-day. Yesterday I went up about 20 miles north of Aleppo so if you look at your map you will see that is a good way from where I started from.

I have got a new scheme now for getting leave out to see you but I don't know if



5

it will work. It is very unlikely at present but I want to fly all the way if I can! I can't say anymore about it & I don't want you to speak about it but I'm pretty ~~to~~ sure to fly about half way in any case, that is if the present arrangement holds good & I think it will. I'll tell you more in my next letter and you can put two & two together. With luck I ~~shou~~ should start in about a month but that also is uncertain. I'm quite excited about it already.

Your cable \dated Oct 7th/ saying you were well came a few days ago, what nice things cables are, are'nt they? I have also had all your parcels & papers too Maw and they are all very much appreciated as usual. Kenny has just come in & we are eating some of your cake now & we have both been groping round for the shilling which you said was in it but so far it has not – (yes it has. Kenny has just found it only it is a 2/- piece so I'm 2 bob richer now. The cake is excellent Maw & Kenny says I'm to tell you so. To-day is quite wintery & we have had

6

a little rain & its very cloudy.

Four letters came from you a few days ago, all August ones and you had just got my cable saying I could not get leave then. You will understand now why I could'nt get away at that time and as things have turned out I've been able to help in smashing the Turk & have incidentally collected 2 D.F.C.'s for the family in the process. What a pity we have'nt got a family tree like some people have Maw!! I could look up & see if my several-times-great-grandfather ever got any decorations if we had!!

All the same I hope you were not too disappointed and I hope to be with you again before many months now. One of your letters especially made me feel very homesick & I'm wondering whether I should'nt have said I could'nt fly any longer & just gone home. At the same time I don't think you would have liked me to do that and it would have made me feel very uncomfortable if I had missed this big stunt which I knew was coming. Do you know I have not been out of one single stunt in the whole of this

7

campaign & I think I am perhaps the only one who can say that. The house must look very nice nows its all done up and I am pleased to hear the good news about your Elder's shares.

It is 2 years to-day since I joined the Sqdn. at Kantara & I have now done 800 hours flying, 200 observing & 600 as a pilot. Contrary to the general rule I still feel as fit as ever & could easily do another 800 hrs. if necessary but I want to get home more than anything now. Anyway its very safe flying thesea days & there is not much to worry about in the shape of Huns or archies & as for getting captured, well the war will be over soon so whats the odds. I was very sorry to hear about poor Douglas & I've written a note to Auntie. He was such a fine boy too & looked so well when I saw him at Suez.

I must stop now & pack my bag ready for the morning. I'm going down by rail & its quite a journey now. Goodnight Maw & very much love from your loving son Ruff. /P.T.O.\

8

If people want to know what I got this bar for don't tell them it was for that little show because I'm not really sure it was but I suppose that had something to do with it. It will all come out in the Gazette in due course. R.S.

Enclosed is some hot air about the Bar to my M.C. The photography referred to is a job I did one day with Austin taking some new defences. The bridge head was a bridge over the Jordan & I bombed it from below the level of the Mediterranean. The rest of it refers to my work during the Beersheba to Jerusalem stunt & I used to take photos of the defences which we were attacking, every day.



PRG 18/17/51

[*envelope from Shepherd's Hotel, Cairo*]

[*in pencil*]

123

Nov 13th 1918

rec Jan 1st 1919

[*in ink*]

]Addressed to]

Mrs. Andrew Smith.

Stephen Terrace.

Gilberton.

South Australia.

[*letter on Shepherd's Hotel notepaper*]

Nov. 12th 1918.

My dearest Mother.

It is quite hard to realise that peace has come at last & that there is no more war. We got the news here yesterday afternoon and of course there were great rejoicings & goings on. This hotel presented a wild & woolly appearance at about 12 last night, there were tug-of-wars with carpets going on, pillow fights & football scrums & the big lounge was the principal stadium.

2

To-night will probably be worse as everyone is in great spirits & there are bands of school children etc. parading the streets with flags of all sorts. I came down 10 days ago on leave & should have gone back to the Sqdn. on Sunday but I have been detained here on Special Duty. There is a new Hanley Page just arrived & I have taken it over & am standing by to fly it to Salonika and bring Gen. Salmond back here or wherever he wants to go. I will probably do that any day now & it

3

should be a very interesting trip. I go to Alex. first & then across to Crete & land there & then on to Salonika. After that have another fine job. Gen. Borton [*Amyas Eden Borton*] & I are going to fly my own Hanley Page to India & when we get there we do a tour of India and are then going to try and fly on to Australia!! Does'nt it sound thrilling! I think we will be able to manage the job but it will take time. After we have seen India the General proposes to charter a small steamer and

4

sail down the Malay Peninsular & the Islands & pick out suitable landing grounds & arrange for petrol & oil to be there when we require them. Our route roughly is as follows – Cairo to Damascus, Damascus to Baghdad, then to Basra & down the Persian Gulf to Bombay, then Calcutta & across the North end of the Bay of Bengall & down to Singapore. From there I'm not sure of the route yet but we will hit the North part of Australia somehow.

5

I am very keen on the scheme & hope it all comes off. Gen Borton will be here to-night & I will most likely hear more then.

In view of this I am not coming home just yet but I'm sure you won't mind as all the war is over & there is no danger attached to the scheme. I think I could have got home on the next 1914 leave boat but I did not want to miss the chance of such a wonderful & unique trip. Anyway if the



6

scheme does fall thro' I can easily get home & even if it does happen I hope to be in Australia by March or April. I hope you won't be very disappointed at my not coming home right away Maw but this job would be such a fine wind-up to all my varied experiences. I am having a good time in Cairo & enjoying the relaxation. My collection of decorations cause a lot of comment & people will stare at them so. It certainly is very unusual

7

to have 3 Bars on 2 ribbons.

I sent you a cable as soon as I arrived here telling you about being awarded a second Bar to my D.F.C. & it looks very nice but the 2 Bars almost hide the ribbon. I've had my photo taken & will send them to you as soon as they are done which will not be for about a week. My little stunt of landing beside that Hun & burning him caused quite a stir in these parts & I have had many congratulations, it was such a simple little affair too.

8

Some of our prisoners are back from Turkey, Heathcoate & Rutherford among them. I have not seen them but I think they are off to Australia in a few days.

I'm so glad we have licked those damned Huns & the only pity is that we can't go on killing them. Nov. 13th I have not heard anything more about my trip yet but I hope to see the General to-day. I am going round to see Jack Howard presently and will give him this letter & I'm sure he will tell you I'm looking very fit and well.

9

Quite a lot of Cairo was broken up last night & numerous shops cleared out. I'm jolly glad they were too because the shops have done nothing but rob us for the last 4 years. Had I been a private I would have been well in the looting myself.

If you see Dora Horwood will you tell her that I fixed Bill Bowd's grave up and had flowers put on it on Oct 25th That was the day Bill was killed & Dora wrote & asked me to put some flowers on his grave on the day.

I am cancelling my allotment of pay from Dec 1st because if I

10

do this India trip it will probably be fairly expensive & I don't want to have to cable for money unless I have to. Everything is still frightfully expensive here & living costs an awful lot.

We had about half a Batallion guarding this hotel last night because the troops were going to wreck it. Nothing much happened though & they all cleared off to other scenes of action. It would have been rather fun.

I'm sorry this is such filthy writing Maw but I have'nt got my fountain pen with me & this pen is awful.

11

I have not had any mail since I left the Sqdn. & its nearly time we had some Australian letters. My address will still be the same unless I cable you another but don't send any more parcels Maw. I must take this round to Jack now so goodbye Maw. I will see you again soon & we will have an awful lot to talk about. It is quite wonderful to have come through all these years & still be alive. My best love to Paw & I will write to him later.

With very much love from your loving son
Ross.



PRG 18/17/52

[envelope]

[in pencil]

124

O.A.S.

[Addressed to]

Mrs. Andrew Smith

Stephen Terrace

Gilberton.

South Australia.

Ross Smith.

[in ink]

Nov 28th 1918

rec Jan 29th 1919

Ross' last letter

from Cairo, Egypt.

[letter]

Shepherds Hotel

Cairo.

28 Nov 1918

My dearest Mother

I have just got your birthday cable Maw & many thanks for it.

I'm leaving for Baghdad in the morning & taking Gens Salmond & Borton with me in my Hanley Page. We go as far as Damascus to-morrow & then on to Baghdad on the next day. After that I bring Gen. Salmond back here again in a few days & then fly over to Baghdad again, pick up Gen Borton & we then go on to India, all by Hanley Page. After about 2 months in India we are going to try & fly on to Australia but we will have to find landing grounds somewhere first round Singapore way. This will be the first aerial trip to Baghdad & there is great excitement about it. I've been having a fine time here & lots of dances & things. I've been to one tonight given by a Russian

2

Grand Duke, the chap who killed Rasputin, & it was a nice little show but as I'm flying tomorrow I had to leave early.

The Commander in Chief entered the city a few days ago & rode thro' the streets. There was a big crowd & I flew over him all the time in my Hanley & acted as aerial escort.

I sent you a cable to-day saying I was going to Baghdad.

I must pack now & then to bed as its very late. My best love to Paw. Goodnight Maw & very much love from your loving

Ruff.

3

I'll post this at Ramleh tomorrow.



PRG 18/17/53

[envelope]
[in pencil]
rec June 26th 1918

[in ink]
O.A.S.
Addressed to
Mrs. Andrew Smith.
Stephen Terrace.
Gilberton.
South Australia.

Ross Smith.

[letter written on paper from Hotel Maude, Zia & Fransu, Baghdad]

Dec 2nd 1918

[written vertically above the letter]
Dec 3rd We did not go to-day but are off to-morrow the 4th, my birthday R.S.

Mother dearest

By the above you will see that I am in Baghdad. We had our breakfast in Cairo last Friday morning & were here for lunch next day! If you look at your map you will realise it is good going. Gen. Salmond & Gen. Borton are with me & we are all in a Hanley Page & carry 2 mechanics with us as well. We had a fine trip over with no trouble at all. We left Cairo & flew up to Ramleh & picked up Gen. Borton & then on to Damascus that day & on here the next day. It was jolly cold & Mt. Hermon was snow capped. This is quite a decent town for its sort & I am having a good time. As we are the first to do the trip we are regarded with great curiosity. Tomorrow we start for India & fly through \along the/ Persia \Gulf/ via Tehran etc & then down to Quetta \Kerachi/, landing at several places on the way. It is all very interesting & once in India Gen. Borton & I are going

2

to start & plan out our route to Australia.

I had a fine time in Cairo with lots of dances & dinner parties etc. & I was quite sorry to leave all my old pals but its nice to be on the way home. I got 5 letters from you at Ramleh Maw, Aug & Sept. ones & I don't suppose I'll get any more for some time, I don't know what my address will be but I'll have to cable you. It was very nice to get your letters & hear all the news. We will probably be in India about 2 months & if you write to c/o Royal Air Force H.Q. Delhi, India & mark them to await arrival, I think I'll get them.

It is a very strenuous life at present with not much time for anything. There is no danger in it & I will turn up at home one of these fine days & then we will have a great old time. We will be the first people to fly to India.

My best love to Paw & very much for yourself Maw from your loving son
Ruff.



PRG 18/17/54

[*letter*]

Charbar
Persian Gulf.
Dec 10th 1918

Mother dearest

Everything is going very well with our journey & we will arrive in India to-morrow afternoon. I sent you a cable from Baghdad telling you my address in India. We left Baghdad & our next stop was Basra [*Iraq*] & then Bushire, [*Bushehr, Iran*] Bundar Abbas [*Bandar Abbas, Iran*] & here. To-morrow we go to Karachi [*Pakistan*] & 2 days later should be in Delhi. It's a fine trip and very interesting & we are having a fine time, everyone is being very good to us and entertaining us royally. At Bushire I stayed at the Residency and was let in for a garden party in my nice greasy clothes! The machine is going wonderfully & the Rolls engines just purr away by the hour. 7 hours is our longest trip so far, from Damascus to Baghdad. It was all in Reuters cables a few days ago so perhaps you have seen about us. Gens. Salmond & Borton are

2

both remarkably fine fellows so I am very fortunate. The Persian People have never seen an aeroplane before & think we are 'evil spirits', they get very scared when we fly over 'em. I'm going to have a fine old time in India as General Borton is very well known there & I have a letter of introduction to the Viceroy's secretary. All my kit is still in Palestine so I don't suppose I'll see much of it again. I have got 2 of my own mechanics with me & they are doing jolly well. I'll post this to-morrow and will write again from Delhi. This letter has been carried from Baghdad by air post. Goodbye Maw & Paw & very much love to you both from your loving son
Ross.

PRG 18/17/55

[*in pencil*]

125

[*letter on letterheaded paper*]

Government House,
Calcutta.
Dec 29th 1918.

My dearest Mother.

I think I wrote to you last from Delhi and since then I have been having a most enjoyable time and doing quite a lot of things.

I think I told you that I was handed your cable as soon as I got out of the machine at Delhi. I was so pleased to get it in time to welcome me just as I had completed my long journey. Yesterday your

2

cable came saying that you had remitted me £100 and I will see Cox & Coy about it. I am having an awfully good time but a very expensive one. Everyone has made a great fuss of us all over India and as I am living with the best in the land it costs a lot to do it.

I have not told you much about our journey so far so I think I'll start at the beginning now. –



I left the Squadron at Haifa on the day that Turkey signed the Armistice, Oct. 31st, & went to Cairo for 10 days leave

3

A few days later I received orders to stand by to take a Handley Page across to Salonika [*Thessaloniki, Greece*] & bring Gen. Salmond back to Egypt. We then had 2 Handleys in the country, my own up in Palestine & another one in Cairo which had just come out from England & I was going to take the Cairo one to Salonika. However the weather was too bad in the Mediterranean for me to go so Gen. Salmond came back to Egypt by boat. It was then

4

decided that we should start for Baghdad & India about the middle of December on my own machine. The engines needed overhauling so I went back to Palestine & brought the machine to Cairo & commenced overhauling the engines and generally getting things ready for the trip. On Nov. 26th we suddenly received a cable from the Air Ministry saying that another Handley Page was leaving England shortly for India! It was rather a surprise to us & we had visions of

5

the other machine which is faster & larger beating us to India. My own machine was not ready so we decided to start at once on the Cairo machine. I had a very strenuous 2 days as there was lots to do to the new machine. However my mechanics did wonders & Gen. Salmond & I left Heliopolis at 7.30 A.M. on Nov. 29th My Squadron had in the meantime moved back to our old aerodrome at Ramleh [*Ramla, Israel*] so we landed there

6

and picked up Gen. Borton who had returned to Palestine a few days before. The idea was then that we should go to Baghdad where Gen. Salmond had some inspecting to do and then I was to fly Salmond back to Cairo & get my own machine, which was to be ready by then, and after that to go back to Baghdad, pick up Gen. Borton & push on to India. However that was all altered later.

We stayed 3 hours at Ramleh and then went on to Damascus in the afternoon & stayed

7

there for the night.

We made an early start next morning on our 500 mile flight across the desert to Baghdad. It was bitterly cold, Mt. Hermon was snow capped & the ground was hard with frost & we had some difficulty in starting up because the petrol in the carburettors had frozen in the night.

Fortunately we had a 20 mile an hour wind helping us across the desert so it did not take as long as we

8

had anticipated. We had to fly solely by compass across the desert because there are no landmarks anywhere but by means of an instrument known as a 'drift indicator' we were able to tell how many degrees we were being blown out of our course. ~~and make~~ We then altered our course to compensate for the drift & we found that we struck the Euphrates just where we had planned to. After we came to the river it was just a case

9

of following it until we arrived at Baghdad. There are 2 R.A.F. Squadrons there so we landed on their aerodrome after a flight of 6 hrs. 50 mins. and had lunch. It seemed strange to be lunching in Baghdad when only the morning before I had had my breakfast at Shepherd's in Cairo.

We spent 3 days at Baghdad while Gen. Salmond inspected the various flying units. I stayed with Col. Bradley, the Wing Commander,



10

and lived in a real old Eastern house whose garden ran right on to the River Tigris. It was one of those quaint houses with carved shutters and a courtyard & fountain of its own, and was altogether a most attractive place.

There was only one bridge across the river but most people had motor launches for crossing. Col. Bradley had a very fine one & I had several nice trips on the river.

Baghdad, for a native town, is quite clean but I think that is only due to our Army of occupation. Our

11

troops have certainly done wonders there in the way of improving the place.

Instead of General Salmond returning to Egypt he decided to go on to India with us, so that meant ~~that~~ we would be able to push on at once. We had the choice of 2 routes. The northern route would take us through Persia, via Kirminshah [*Kerminshah, Iran*] Tehran & Meshed [*Mashhad, Iran*] to Quetta [*Pakistan*] and the Southern route was along the Persian Gulf to Kerachi [*Karachi, Pakistan*]. However

12

on going in to the matter we found that the Northern route was impossible for some time because the petrol & oil had not arrived at some places and we were also told that most of that country would probably be under snow. That only left us the Persian Gulf route but here again we were told that ~~not~~ none of the aerodromes were yet fit to land on. However we knew that our petrol & oil had arrived where we wanted it so General. Salmond decided to go on and chance our

13

luck in getting down safely. We were really spurred on by the knowledge that the other big machine was somewhere behind us and we knew that once he caught up to us our chances of being the first to fly to India were practically nil. Also we were afraid of the weather breaking as the Persian Gulf is subjected to very severe storms in December.

And so on Dec 4th (my birthday) we set off for Basra, a

14

distance of only 275 miles. Unfortunately we encountered a strong head wind and it took us over 5 hours to get there. Except when passing over places like Kut-el-Amara [*Iraq*] & the Garden of Eden it was a most dreary flight and I can thoroughly appreciate the difficulties our troops must have had & how very fed up they must have got of the never ending flat country. We followed the Tigris most of the way & the river twists & turns about in the most extraordinary way

15

The old battlefields of Kut and Cestiphon [*Ctesiphon, Iraq*] were very interesting and we could see the trenches quite well.

We only stayed at Basra one night & left for Bushire next morning, 220 miles away. On landing we found the aerodrome quite good and not a bit like the reports we had received of it.

Bushire is only a small town with a British post as well. There are about

16

1000 troops there and there was a small war in progress against some troublesome Persians. I was taken off to stay with Mr. Bill, the British Resident & arrived at the house in the middle of a small garden party. As I was in my greasy clothes I did not feel very comfortable but no one seemed to mind much. Everyone turned out to meet us on our arrival & I was very surprised to see 5 Australian Sisters there who were attached to the local hospital. The weather looked



17

very black that night but we were able to get an early start next morning for Bunder Abbas (400 miles)

The sunrise that morning was perfect. Bushire is right on the coast and a great range of \snow capped/ mountains run parallel to the coast and these with the early sun on them looked wonderful.

We kept along the coast all the way and I have never seen more desolate or rugged country. It was the same

18

all the way to Kerachi with just occasional flat strips near the coast.

At Bunder Abbas we met our first trouble. Gen. Borton landed the machine and the aerodrome was rather rough & we damaged our undercarriage which held us up for 3 days.

Fortunately the damage was not very serious and we were able to repair it in the local workshops. Our mechanics, Bennett & Shiers, worked very hard & it was largely due to their efforts that we were able to continue our journey. I shall never forget my feelings

19

when I looked over the side of the machine & saw what had happened. At first it looked much worse than it really was and I had visions of seeing the other machine float by us an easy winner while we sat there waiting for a new part to come from Egypt.

Bunder Abbas is a rotten place, there is a small town and \it is/ just another of those lonely British posts that no one ever hears about. All about the

20

Camp it is soft sand and I have never met a collection of men who were so thoroughly fed up of a place as those fellows were. It is no wonder either because it's a most unhealthy spot & there is no where to go & no one ever goes there.

Ours was the first machine the local Persians had ever seen & they would stand round in dozens & just gaze at it by the hour. They were much impressed but thought we were evil spirits!

The Commandant was very good to us & made us very

21

comfortable and I met some very interesting men there. The Navy had very kindly arranged to help us in the event of engine trouble all the way along the Gulf. They had ships standing by at various places & if we did not arrive at our appointed place to time they were to come out & look for us. Fortunately we had no occasion to call upon them but it gave one a sense of additional security to

22

know that we would not be left long to the tender mercies of the Persians.

We had lunch on board one of the ships, the H.M.S. Lawrence, at Bunder Abbas. They were a very cheery crowd but rather fed up of the Persian Gulf after 2 years of it.

We set off again on Dec. 9th and arrived at Charbar, a distance of 300 miles, at noon. After our experience at Bunder Abbas we were rather afraid of our landing but the aerodrome turned out to be perfect & we then knew that unless

23

something very unforeseen happened we were sure to land in India the next day.

We were still thinking of the other machine & the possibility of its catching us up but as a matter of fact the machine had not even left England then, altho' we did not know at the time as we had



got a bit out of touch with the world. Even now that machine has only got as far as Egypt so we had all our worries for nothing.
There is only a cable station

24

and a small post at Charbar and we took off early on Dec 10th for Kerachi. We were favoured with a good following wind and did our 400 miles in 4¾ hours. I think the whole of Kerachi must have turned out to meet us, there had never been an aeroplane in that part of India before & there were thousands \of people/ there when we landed. I stayed with the Staff Captain that night and we left for Naisirabad [*Nasirabad*] (485 miles) the next day. It was an uninteresting

25

trip as that part of India is mostly desert. We left ~~early~~ late/ next morning, Dec. 12th for Delhi (220 miles) and arrived there at 3.30 P.M. Gen. Borton landed safely & we all solemnly shook hands before we got out of the machine. It was a great relief to know that we had done what we set out to do. There was a great crowd to meet us including the C. in C. and Lady Munro. We landed a few miles out of

26

Delhi and after the machine had been put away we all went off to our various houses Gens. Salmond & Borton stayed with the C. in C. & I stayed at Maiden's Hotel with Col. Tennant, the Director of Aeronautics in India. I had been asked to stay with Gen. & Lady Kirkpatrick but they lived some distance out & I would have been rather far away from the Generals. Gen. Kirkpatrick is Chief of the General Staff in India & was Inspector General in Australia a few years ago. I had lunch

27

with them one day. As usual we were made a great fuss of and asked everywhere. One night I dined with the C in C. You remember he was in charge of Gallipoli towards the end & he & I were discussing it, he from the C in C's point of view & me from mine. He is an awfully nice old chap and very well liked over here. Our actual flying time from Cairo to Delhi was 47 hrs. 21 mins & a distance of 3233 miles.

28

We could really have done it in less time but on lots of occasions we left our course to go & look at something interesting or circle over a town. We thought we would be some time in Delhi but the Viceroy asked us to come to Calcutta for the Xmas week which is a very gay time. We left Delhi again of Dec. 16th and flew to Allahabad & stayed there that night. On the way we passed over Agra & saw the famous Taj Mahal. It looks very

29

well from the air & we took photos of it which is the first time it has ever been photographed from the air. We all stayed at with the Bishop at Allahabad and left next morning for Calcutta. We were due to arrive here at 2.30 P.M. & when we came over the city at about 2 we could see thousands of people streaming out to the racecourse where we were to land. I have never

30

such a crowd in my life, there were between 2 and 3 hundred thousand people present including the Viceroy & the Governor of Bengal. We had bad luck just after we landed, the



aerodrome is rather small & in turning Gen. Borton hit one wing against a tree & damaged part of the wood work. It is not very serious & is being repaired now.

It was a 470 mile trip from Allahabad & we had been in the air nearly 7 hours so I did not feel much like meeting Viceroy's & such people

31

but it had to be gone through with the accompaniment of about 6 cinema cameras.

I am enclosing a cutting from a local paper so you can read what they say about us. Our total flying time from Cairo to Calcutta was 59 hrs. 11 mins. for a distance of 4,088 miles. During all that time we did not have any engine trouble at all & both our Rolls engines went perfectly.

Shires & Bennett did very fine work and had a hard time

32

to keep us going. As soon as we landed at a place they would start right away on the engines & go over them & clean them up etc. & then fill up with petrol & oil. We usually used over 200 gals of petrol in a flight so the filling up alone took a lot of time.

Before leaving Cairo we took the bomb racks out of the machine to give us more room & so that we could crawl from the front part to the back compartment. The Generals & I travelled in front & Shires & Bennett at the back. In the air

33

we took it in turns to pilot the machine, Gen. Salmond, Gen. Borton & I did shifts of about an hour each but Gen. Borton & I took it in turns to do the landings.

For long flights we always took sandwiches & had our lunch on board. Gen. Borton always prepared it & he would hand sandwiches and whiskey & water up to Gen. Salmond & me.

We were a very happy little party & when the country was uninteresting we also took it

34

in turns to sleep. There was just enough room in the front part to spread a valise & lie down.

We brought a suit case & a valise each so I have not much kit with me. The rest of it is with the Squadron & I'm hoping it will be looked after. I did not have time to get anything at Ramleh & was going to get some things when I went back from Baghdad. It is rather unfortunate as all my photos & things like that are left behind.

We carried a small mail bag

35

from Cairo to ~~Caleu~~ Delhi and had a special stamp made at Delhi to stamp the letters. I sent you a letter by ~~that~~ \it/ and you should get it with the stamp mark on.

I must tell you the story of our 2 rats which came aboard at Charbar. Gen. Salmond saw one just before we took off & at ~~Kerachi~~ |Charbar/ we heard one chewing the woodwork up in the top plane. We could not catch them & were afraid they might eat through our petrol pipe or

36

something similar so we decided to try & freeze them! Accordingly when we left Kerachi we climbed to 8,000 ft. where it was very cold. It was too much for ~~one~~ \the/ rat in the top plane, he tried to climb down a strut but the wind caught him as soon as he came out of the plane & away he went into space! The other one we found dead in between 2 cylinders of the starboard engine when we got to Delhi & we think he must have touched a sparking plug & been electrocuted!!

That is about all ~~of~~ \about/ our actual flight & it would take me a

37

week to tell you of all I've been doing since.



Every one considered us tremendous heroes (why, I don't know) & we were promptly elected members of all the best clubs & so forth.

The Governor of Bengal invited us all to stay here & Gen. Salmond & I accepted. Gen. Borton is staying with friends.

It is most awfully nice here and being made a fuss of is not half a bad experience. Our first night we all dined with the Viceroy & I have been there several

38

times since. There are also dinner parties here quite often.

Gen. Salmond could only stay one day as he had to go back to Egypt at once. I was very sorry to see him go as he is one of the finest fellows I've ever had the pleasure of serving under. I hope that if there is ever another war in my time I will be in his command.

The racing season is in full swing here and there are usually 2 meetings a week. I have been to all of them and its very good racing and I have managed to make a little money.

39

Jan 3rd

I am continuing this lengthy epistle after the New Year celebrations. There have been more dinners and races etc. and I am getting thoroughly spoilt.

Many thanks for your cable about my money & Cox & Coy have received it, only unfortunately I lose about £20 on the exchange of pounds into rupees.

There are quite a lot of Australian people in Calcutta & I have met a number of them. We still do not know if we are going to continue of our journey and

40

our damaged wing is not yet finished so I'm staying on here. An Australian mail arrived yesterday, dated Nov. 27th, so I am hoping to have letters from you by the next one. The stories of the carryings-on in Sydney at peace time nearly made me ill.

Calcutta is a fine town and well laid out. I've had a 2 seater Rolls Royce car to go about in, it's a 40 H.P. & can do about 70 so it does not take long to get from one place to another.

Goodbye for now Maw & very much love to you & Paw from your loving son.

Ross.

PRG 18/17/56

[in pencil]

126

[letter]

R.I.M.S. MINTO

At Sea.

15th March 1919.

My dearest Mother.

We left Calcutta three days ago and are now steaming down the Burma coast and expect to reach Rangoon to-morrow.

I'm feeling very happy and at peace with the world to-day, its nice and cool, the sea is smooth and our ship is very comfortable.

The Minto is only about 1,000 tons and the R.I.M.S. in front of her name stands for – Royal Indian Marine Ship. All the officers are Naval fellows and a good crowd and the crew are Indians. We carry 4 guns, quickfirers, so if we get at all bored with our journey the General and I have decided to start a small war somewhere! There is quite a lot of deck space and I have got



a nice cabin and in appearance the ship looks just like one of those pretty steam yachts we used to see around the coast of Scotland, except that of course the Minto is painted grey instead of white. We made our first stop yesterday, at Akyab. [*Sittwe, Burma*]

2

The General and I went ashore about 9 A.M. and were met by the Commissioner, Mr. Fraser, who is an uncle of the Miss Fraser I met in Delhi.

We were very fortunate and found a piece of open ground that can be made into an excellent aerodrome with a certain amount of work.

We lunched with Fraser and sailed again about 5 P.M. yesterday afternoon.

It is very pleasant to be sailing along like this in a ship of our own with nothing to worry about at all. We can go practically wherever we want to as long as we find the necessary landing grounds. Our aim is to get landing places about every 350 to 400 miles all the way from Calcutta to Timor. From Timor we will have 280 miles of open sea to cross before we land at Port Darwin. I don't think I told you very much about the burning of the old Sphinx or my shoot up at Cooch Behar, so now that I've got lots of time I'll write you more fully. I'm also going to write down anything that occurs to me so you must not mind if my letter is somewhat mixed up.

3

In spite of all my lost kit etc. and the narrowness of my escape on the Sphinx the whole business was really an amusing show. That may sound strange but it is a fact that most of the time we were fighting the fire the General and I were howling with laughter. I think I told you that we abandoned ship at first and then returned to her later. At first the General and the Skipper and I were the only ones on board the Sphinx working the hoses but later some of the others came back too. A fire hose with a good pressure of water in it is a strong thing to handle and it jumps about in the most alarming way.

I caught the General square in the middle of his back once with the stream of water from my hose and he went over in a heap of spluttering profanity! Another time one of the crew was caught under the chin at close range & you never saw a more comical expression. We all got sopping wet and almost black with smoke. Neither the General or I had our hats so we tied handkerchiefs over our heads. During the afternoon when we had got the fire under the General and the Skipper & I were talking together

4

when the Skipper of the fire boat along side came up & said, 'What have you done with this here General you had on board'?

When Gen. Borton was pointed out to him he exclaimed 'Good Gawd! I thought you was a Spanish Brigard'!

I have thought of a way whereby I can rewrite a part, at least, of my lost log book. Nearly all the latter part of my flying was done on 2 seaters and I always had either Kirk, Mustard or Sutherland with me so what I intend doing is to write to them when I get home and get copies from their log books of any flights I made with them.

It is not much fun having to buy a complete new outfit. I landed in Calcutta with a shirt, flannel trousers, shoes & socks of my own so had to borrow a suit of clothes before I could go out. It takes quite a long time to get everything together too and now I possess a suit of uniform, a suit of mufti and a dinner suit as well as a tweed coat & flannels for messing about in. I don't think I told you that I did save a few articles on the Sphinx. I had a tin box with papers & things in it. After the fire was out I saw my box on the steel deck

5

where my cabin used to be so I pulled it out of the water & found a sticky mess of photos & papers in one corner. They must have got wet early in the fire & some of them were only singed at the edges.



I had been given some letters in Egypt to fly out to Australia by the first aerial mail and most of these are saved altho' somewhat stained from the water.

Also I had 44 15 sovereigns tied up in a handkerchief in my suit case. I was scraping about in the water and charcoal on the deck when I found something solid which I knew had been on my suit case, it was the lock. That discovery gave me great hope and after about half an hour I had recovered 14 out of my 15 soverigns none the worse for their experience.

I have not told you very much about the shoot at Cooch Behar. We all went up to Cooch Behar station by train & then got into cars and drove 23 miles out into the jungle to the camp. We all lived in tents but 2 bamboo & brick buildings had been put up as well. It was miles away from anywhere and about 30 miles north of us were the great Himilayas rising straight out of

6

the plains. It was misty the day we arrived at camp & we could not see the hills. I got up \early/ next morning when it was beautifully clear and only once before have I seen such a sight. (The Rockies.) At first glance I could not believe they were hills, they seemed to reach away to Heaven and I thought they must be clouds. There is something about high mountains that impresses me tremendously, I don't know what it is, but I just stood and gazed and gazed. Presently as I watched, the sun rose & caught the snow capped peaks. I have never seen anything more magnificent and its quite impossible for me to describe it.

I did want you there to share it with me, and then suddenly & without warning down came the mists and hid all the tops of the mountains.

That was the one and only good complete view I ever got of those Hills but I shall never forget it. Always after that their tops were clouded and at this time of year it is very seldom that the tops are seen at all. The party at Cooch Behar consisted of 2 of the Cooch Behar men & one of the girls ~~They~~ and about 10 more of us, 4 women & 6 men.

7

Cooch Behar is an independent native state ruled by a Mahrajah but we have a British Resident there to advise him in various matters. It is one of the best and loyalest states & both boys were in France during the war. The Mahrajah was away but we were the guests of Prince Victor, Prince Hitty & Princess Baby. Those are not their real names but they are a# always know as such because their proper names are much too long & unpronouncable. They are all very nice and were educated in England and except for their colour they might be English people. The Resident, Milligan, is a very good sort too. I have never met more perfect hosts and even the smallest thing was thought out and prepared for.

We went out shooting every day, had our lunch in the jungle, and came back to camp in time for dinner.

Each morning the cars would come along about 9.30 A.M. & we would drive out to wherever the elephants where & then get up into our howdars and go off to where the beat was to be. There were 'chickaries' or game keepers all over the country & they would bring in any news of tigers or

8

or leopards and where their lair was. We would then go out and take up a position on our howdar elephants while about 30 to 40 other elephants formed a line and beat the jungle towards us. It was most exciting when there was anything in the beat, waiting and wondering where it would come out. We always knew if there was anything because the elephants made an awful row to let us know. Altogether we got 2 tigers & 8 leopards. The tiger beats were the most ~~thrill~~ thrilling the second one especially. We knew he was in a patch of jungle & took up our position accordingly. When the beating elephants were about 100 yds from us there was a terrific roar & he charged our line of howdars & got through. Those who were near enough put a real barrage around him & Gen. Borton hit him slightly in the back but not enough to stop him. As he had got through we had to go further on with our howdars & let the beaters come on



towards us again. This time the tiger came out right in front of me. There was some long grass in front of me which I was

9

watching carefully & presently I saw a little bit move & then out he came & stood looking at the next elephant to me. I fired at once and over he went and I thought he was done. Just as I was sending my elephant forward he jumped up & charged Gen. Borton's elephant, who was next to me. It was most thrilling, the tiger made a terrific spring but the General shot him dead in the air & he fell like a log. The extraordinary part was that the elephants never moved, they are so well trained. All our beats were somewhat similar, except sometimes it was a leopard & often we did not get anything at all.

All manner of animals used to come out in front of the beat, wild pigs, cats, deer, wild buffalo, porcupine & hundreds of other things.

Our lunch was always a splendid affair. It was taken out on 2 elephants and used to appear the moment we decided to have it. There were always iced drinks and all that sort of thing & then we would start off again. Going back to the cars to go home if it was not too late we used to form

10

a 'general line'. That meant all the elephants in one long line, about half a mile, & there were usually 3 beating elephants between the howdar elephants. It was great sport because we could shoot anything we saw. One minute I would have a gun in my hand shooting at a partridge or pea fowl & the next a rifle shooting at a pig or something else.

There were 2 distinct types of jungle, one trees and thick undergrowth & the other tall grass, and then there was lots of open country as well. It was most interesting to watch the elephants in the tree jungle. They are wonderfully intelligent animals and do exactly what the mahout (driver) tells them too. If a small tree is in the way they just push it down & trample on it or put up their trunk & break off a branch. Howdars are not very comfortable things to ride in but one gets use to the swaying and jolting about after a time. After we got back to camp and had bathed there we cooking competitions for dinner and many and wonderful were the curries made. Then when dinner was over we went into one of the bamboo huts and

11

and danced to a gramophone till bed time. It really was a splendid time and I was very sorry to have to come away. I have some photos of the elephants etc. which I'm sending you.

We are due at Rangoon to-morrow so I'll continue this when we leave there.

March 27th

We are steaming along now through the Mergui Archipelago [*Myanmar*] and there are small Islands all round us. We stayed in Rangoon a week and while there went up to a place called Thyatmyo [*Thyetmyo, Myanmar*], it is about 200 miles north of Rangoon on the Irrawaddy River and we had to select an aerodrome there also. It was a very hot trip up there, part of it by train and part by river steamer and I was glad to get back to Rangoon again. The latter town is quite a large place & well laid out and the natives, Burmans, are quite different to the Indians. The Burman is more a mixture of a Chinaman & Indian than anything else. After Rangoon we sailed down to Mergui and left there this morning. All this coast is a mass of dense jungle or cultivation and its a hard job to find the sort of ground we want. Gen. Borton and

12

I spent the day before yesterday walking through swamp and thick jungle and I've never felt such heat in all my life. There was no wind and they get a very damp sort of heat in this part of the world which is much more trying than our Australian heat. However we managed to find a suitable site and we are off to Penang now.



Apart from selecting sites for permanent aerodromes along this route to Australia we also have to find somewhere at each place where we can land ourselves when we come through in our machine. At present there are only a few possible places that we have marked down for our job but the permanent aerodromes will take months to prepare. We cant possibly leave India for Australia before next November because of the weather. The rainy season stats along this coast in June & continues until October and during that time all the low lying country is under water. At Akyab [*Sittwe, Myanmar*] they had 323 inches [*8.20 metres*] of rain last year and it all fell in about 5 months! I am becoming rather afraid that by that time the Air Ministry may have a new type of machine out and may want it to do the Australian

13

flight. If that is so they would send it from England with a crew of its own and I might not get the job. However gen. Borton and I will be the only 2 pilots who know the aerodromes so that will help. I think Gen. Borton will go straight off to England when we get back to India and fix things up. If he does there is just a chance that I may go too if he brings out another machine or failing that I suppose I'll stay in India until he comes out again.

I would like to do the whole trip from England to Australia by air.

Sgts. Bennett & Shiers are on board with us this trip and they look after the motor boat. It's a fine little boat and has been most useful. As we were passing a small island this morning we thought the ground looked fairly good so we stopped and got out the motor boat & went ashore in it. The ground turned out no good so we wandered about for a bit & brought back some cocoa nuts. Some of the wild flowers in these jungles are very fine. There are all sorts and colours and lots of orchids. I sent you a cable from Rangoon thanking you for the money you sent by Elder.

14

I only received the cable a few hours before I left Calcutta but I wrote to Kitewell & Bollen [*Kidwell? & Bolen?*] and told them I would call on them when I returned. Thanks very much for sending it Maw but I don't think I will need it now.

Mergui is a great pearling place and I got two little mother of pearl dishes for you. I hope you receive all the photos I sent from Calcutta, there were 2 registered letters, & 1 registered cardboard round thing.

I wonder who this fellow Lloyd is that you sent me the cuttings about. I cant find out anything about him and I think he must be working for some private company. He can't have been sent out by the Air Ministry because we have heard nothing about him from them. I don't know who is running that company you spoke of for carrying mails from Australia to England by air. They apparently have'nt the remotest idea of what a big thing it is and any private company would need an enormous amount of capital to start the job. Besides the Air Ministry have not announced their policy in regard to such matters yet & to get to England from Australia a machine has to

15

fly over a lot of Dutch territory & all those questions have not been settled yet. The general opinion at home is that Government will have to open up the route & run it for a bit & perhaps let contracts to private companies later on. The cost of making some of the aerodromes along this coast alone is going to be very large & besides a private company could not get the land for it so I don't know what Mr. Lloyd's game is. I hope we meet him somewhere.

I think most of your letters had reached me by the time I left India but I'm sure some are missing. These are the dates I have had – Oct. 29th, Nov. 1st Dec. 4th, 12th & 17th, Jan. 17th & 22nd. Your laughing jack calender also reached me & is now hanging up in my cabin. I've also received one parcel (from Crawford) & some papers. Our mascot 'Marmaduke' is not a dog, hes a little aluminium fellow with a china head which turns round & he sits up just behind us on the



machine. The dog I spoke of was 'Tiny' & belongs to Major Maclaren who flew out to India in the second Handley Page.

I wonder who put that piece in the Bulletin about me getting some cigarettes dropped by a Hun. It is all rot and never happened that I know of.

16

Besides no Hun ever dared to hover over our aerodrome in 1918, those few that did venture over us lost no time in getting back to their own lines again. I do like reading your letters Maw and above all I love the way you hate all Germans and anything German. I quite agree with you that the war finished too soon, we should have smashed them right back to Berlin even if we had lost a lot more men ourselves. Of course the Hun is licked and down and out and will be for years to come but he is not smashed half as much as he should be. My greatest grievance against the armistice is that had the Huns not signed it that day I would have been bombing Berlin within a week! That perhaps needs a little explaining. As you know Austria had made peace before Germany and as soon as that happened Gen. Salmond went over to Salonika from Cairo to make arrangements for pushing 22 Squadrons of our machines up into Austria to bomb Germany. On the day of the Armistice we had priority shipping standing by in Port Said and Alexandria and if the Huns had not signed all our Palestine machines & machines in Egypt were to be taked to pieces & shipped

17

to Salonika & then rebuilt & flown up into Austria. I was to fly over in my Handley Page. In one of my letters I think I told you that when I was in Cairo after the Turkish armistice I was ordered to stand by to fly a Handley Page over to Salonika to bring Gen. Salmond back to Egypt. I have since learned that I was not going to bring Gen. Salmond back at all but if I had gone it would have been just to land at Salonika & fill up with petrol & bombs & then land up in Austria & get more petrol & then off to Berlin! Can you wonder at my at my intense disappointment. I would have been one of the first over Berlin and it would have given me the greatest satisfaction to drop my 16 cwt. of bombs on the head quarters of frightfulness. In England we had 2 Giant Handley Pages all ready for Berlin on Armistice night but they were also disappointed.

The night before we arrived at Rangoon I saw the Southern Cross for the first time since November 1914. I sat up until after 12 to see it and it was nice to see the dear old thing again, I see it every night now. There were a lot of rubber plantations at Mergui & I saw them drawing off the raw rubber from the trees. They just cut the bark

18

and catch the rubber \in a cup/ as it runs out. It looks just like milk at first but after a few hours it solidifies.

April 5th I am continuing this & will have to finish to-day because I want to post it at Singapore when we arrive there to-morrow. On March 28th, the day after leaving Mergui we called at Victoria Point which is the most Southern point of Burma. Its only a very small station & we could only get push bikes to go round on & look for aerodromes.

It was very hilly & at the end of the day & about a 15 mile ride I was beginning to wonder if I really was in the Flying Corps! However we found a good spot which was what we went there for. Our ship could only get within 8 miles of the town so we had to go off in the motor boat and as a breeze had sprung up while we were ashore we had a fairly rough trip back to the ship that night.

We reached Penang on the 31st and left again yesterday. The town is on an island & is one of the prettiest places I have ever seen. Its very well laid out & the streets are lined with trees. Nearly all the trees are in



19

flower now & look beautiful. Hills rise almost abruptly to 2,500 ft. behind the town and there is a beautiful road round the Island which climbs these hills in places. We drove round the island one morning early & at times & where there were not many palm trees the country reminded me very much of Scotland. We slept on the ship but had our meals ashore & the people were very good to us. I have never seen so much phosphorous in the water as at Penang. Going back to the ship at nights the whole sea would be a mass of light & we could follow the tracks of fish swimming about in the water.

While the General looked at the country around Penang I went inland for about 90 miles. I was away for 2 days and stayed a night at a place called Alor Star with the Commissioner. I motored about & found a good site for an aerodrome & once crossed the border of our territory into Siam. When I got back to the ship I found that the ships officers were having a dance on board so I danced away until the early hours. It was great fun & there were quite a lot of people on board.

20

I am enclosing some photos of the Cooch Behar shoot which will give you a good idea of what it was like. I'm also enclosing 2 notes from my bearer, a 'certificate' I gained myself and some stamps from a native state, also a cutting from a Penang paper. The latter was taken from a Dutch paper in Sumatra & refers to Gen. Borton & me & our machine. I don't know where they got their information but they could not have mixed things up more if they had tried. There have been lots of pieces in the papers about us wherever we go but they are all mostly the same.

I am hoping to get some letters at Singapore to-morrow because we are having our mail sent on there from India.

I hope you are keeping fit Maw, I wish I could come on and see you now that I have got so far.

Very much love dear, from

Your loving son Ross.