

**“Fair well and Goodbye New Zealand”
1941
New Zealand to North Africa**

**An Account of Driver Harold William Latimer
Regtl. No 41959
1st Ammunition Company, Second New Zealand Expeditionary Force
From the dates of
07/04/1941 – 05/01/1942**



Compiled and completed by
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Part I "Farewell New Zealand"

7th April – 9th April



"Left Wellington Harbor on the "Mauretania" at 4:15pm"

Harold Latimer pictured above is marching in Wellington just prior to boarding the troopship "Mauretania" as part of the 5th Reinforcements along with 23 officers and 6066 other ranks. Once aboard the ship, hobnail boots are exchanged for deck shoes (black sandshoes), then they report to their messes for lunch, while they are having their lunch the ship sails. Life jackets are carried at all times and the convoy traveled in full blackout. The voyage was uneventful and uncomfortable. Rough seas early in the voyage caused much sea sickness, harassed MO's faced long queues on the daily sick parades, but had little to offer but aspirin tablets. Training aboard ship pressed on, inter-spread with boat drills, inspections, route marches around the boat, queuing for meals, beer, pay and picture shows. Off duty men read, wrote letters, played cards and other games – housie (was permitted), crown and anchor (which were not permitted) among others.

Wellington, New Zealand

Monday 7th April 1941 (In Port)

Left Wellington Harbor on the "Mauretania" at 4:15pm other ships in convoy were "HMS Achilles" "HMAS Hobart" "HMS Australia" and "Nieuw Amsterdam". The Achilles left convoy just before we reached Sydney. Caught last glimpse of wife as ship pulled out from wharf rough trip across January.

Crowd fare welling troopship Nieuw Amsterdam carrying soldiers of the 5th Reinforcements, Wellington, 7 April 1941. (Internet)



Tuesday 8th April 1941 (At sea)

Seas very rough arose at 6am spent comfortable first night on troopship began to get sick in night, meals on board Mauretania Grand. Took two snaps of "Nieuw Amsterdam" on the high seas. Glorious ship before I handed camera onto orderly room.

The Nieuw Amsterdam on April 8th 1941 day after we sailed from Wellington (H.W. Latimer)



Wednesday 9th April 1941 (At sea)

Missed two meals today on account of sea sickness. sea seems to be getting rougher gale wind blowing very cold on our quarter's promenade deck, have been half frozen most of time had life boat drill in morning.

Part II "Australia"

10th April – 19th April

Boats stop reach Sydney on the 10th April but the Mauretania doesn't let the troops go on leave so stay onboard the boat.

Troopships Queen Mary and Queen Elizabeth join the convoy carrying Australian reinforcements. In Fremantle all pubs etc are out of bounds for the troops and the bar staff have been told by the police not to serve them

Sydney, Australia

Thursday 10th April 1941 (In Port)

Arrived in Sydney Harbor at 8am saw all the other liners that were joining our convoy, the Queen Elizabeth, the Ile de France a great sight no shore leave saw the Sydney Harbor Bridge all lite up tonight. Amsterdam went into port and picked up Aussie troops half on board. Was vaccinated today nothing much.

**Queen Elizabeth 82,000 tons
(Internet)**



Friday 11th April 1941 (In port)

Left Sydney harbor at 7:30am our convoy consists of the Queen Elizabeth 82,000 tons, the Ile de France 46,000 tons, the Mauretania 35,000 and the Nieuw Amsterdam is 35,000, we picked up the Queen Mary at sea at 2.15pm also the Achilles again.

Saturday 12th April 1941 (At sea)

Passing along Australian coast passed two costal boats and oil tanker going in other direction at 9:15am, midday we past Melbourne (Victoria) and several small islands. Large home liner passed us and also coastal boat on the shipping route at 12:30pm

Sunday 13th April 1941 (At sea)

Almost a week at sea without going shore I am getting sick of looking at the sea, we are now crossing the great Australian light on route to Perth and Free Mantle seas rather rough and high winds, Ile de France got off her course in rough heavy fog waited for one hour while she caught up



Ile De France t. 46,000

Monday 14th April 1941 (At sea)

Easter Monday exactly one week at sea bright sunshine sea calm light fog came up in the afternoon drill as usual this day getting very momentous now. Not seeing land anywhere was on guard all night very little sleep between times weather slightly warmer.

Tuesday 15th April 1941 (At sea)

Nearing Fremantle Western Australia

Another day dawned on rough seas again terrific gale blowing mountainous waves and now getting sea sick this time. Very cold up on deck expect to see Fremantle WA tomorrow sometime in morning. Got paid today one Aussie pound for Shore leave

Fremantle Australia

Wednesday 16th April 1941 (In port)

Arrived a at 10:30am went on leave at 2:30pm nice place bought souvenir for wife and sent it home to NZ, toured Fremantle and later caught bus to Perth a nice city indeed. Had good time went to theater returned to ship at midday when leave expired. Very sandy country indeed many reefs on way into harbor. Went up to Kings Park and got grand view of Perth and river and got some Aussie badges "got" 5/-pence



***Bus ticket FreeMantle Perth
(H.W Latimer)***

Thursday 17th April 1941 (In port)

Got up on board troopship at 6:30am day slightly overcast in morning but cleared up later and now very warm got leave from 2pm to midnight, caught bus into Perth from Fremantle had good time in Perth just looked around then went to Aussie troop club wrote letter to wife then went back to ship.

Friday 18th April 1941 - (In port)

Time is 9.5am leaving Fremantle "Aussie" brass band plays us out from the wharf Niew Amsterdam is following close behind us, 10am we are moved to out in stream now. Boys on Aussie boat had no leave at all, boat anchored out in stream all day.

Saturday 19th April 1941 (In port)

We weighed another anchor at 9:30am left Fremantle harbor strong swell out at sea fine weather other ships in convoy following close behind us am not feeling too good effect of vaccination. Had early day beautiful sunset. On route for Colombo India or Singapore don't know which yet

Sunday 20th April 1941 (At sea)

Had church service on sports deck this morning climate beginning to get much warmer most of afternoon was awoken by ship siren thought it was an air raid but ships were only maneuvering in case of attack.

Monday 21st April 1941 (At sea)

Spent very hot night in hammock day dawned very hot we are getting into real tropical climate now. Had to watch our deck down with Dis-infection we are now well into the Indian Ocean saw schools of flying fish and the phosphorous is a wonderful sight at night. Heat steadily increasing most of us are now sleeping up on deck with no blankets listening to Maori concert was really swell.

**Meal Card from H.T. "Mauretania"
(H.W. Latimer)**



Tuesday 22nd April 1941 (At sea)

Amsterdam left at 5pm convoy at sea heat very exhausting had frequent showers today and feel like doing anything another war ship joined convoy this afternoon about 3:50pm don't know what ship it is yet have had fairly easy day we have changed positions in convoy now we are behind Queen Mary

Wednesday 23rd April 1941 (At sea)

Had heavy tropical shower and it cooled things down a bit I had a few showers today on account of the intense heat we should reach Colombo by Friday night. Started guard duty today at 1:30pm and finish the same time tomorrow and stuck down in bowls of ship where the heat is intense went to the theatre on board ship good pictures.

Thursday 24th April 1941 (At sea)

Affect of vaccination almost gone now crossed equator at 11am this morning had boxing contest on board today nice cool breeze has opening up

Friday 25th April 1941 (At sea)

We had ANZAC service this morning burglar sounded the last post at 10:25am we are now 6 and ½ hours behind NZ time .Climate now very hot, big battle ship appeared at 1:15pm and at 2:15pm escorted the Queen Mary and the Queen Elizabeth in a more easterly direction now only Mauretania and Ile de France in convoy

Part III "Ceylon" 26th April – 6th May

Convoy stays here until the 5th of May due to the defeats in Greece the authorities not actually knowing were to send the troops. News over the radio on the boats have not been good with Rommel entering North Africa and threatening Egypt, Troops are at a lost to where they will end up.

Ceylon was a dry area so once again the troops had no beers, the days were spent doing route marches in the morning (in the rain) and sitting around drinking tea in the afternoon (it was too hot and muggy to do much else).

After Ceylon the boat had stocked up on a black coloured beer and most of the soliders couldn't drink it.

Colombo, Ceylon

Saturday 26th April 1941 (In Port)

Sighted Colombo Ceylon at 10am. Anchored in Colombo harbor at 1pm lots of small native chaps came out with loads of souvenirs and goods and fruit and some of our boys bargained with them and bought some of their goods. We were issued with cigarette tobacco this afternoon, we all got leave tomorrow from 7:30am to 4pm, no night leave whatsoever

Sunday 27th April (In Port)

Went on shore in launches at 10am. Had a wonderful time today went down through native part of Colombo, was surprised at the great population they were like ants. Ceylon has total population of 7,000,000 and only 4000 whites. Spent about six Rupees on souvenirs and sent them home to wife. Returned to ship at 5:55pm.



One Rupee from Ceylon (H.W. Latimer)

Monday 28th April (In Port)

Leave again today. Went to zoo about five miles out of Colombo was impressed with the snakes and alligators there, bought set of miniature elephants on bridge and got them sent home to my wife. Went through a Ceylon police station this afternoon. Spent all my Rupees, have to fall back on my Aussie money now. Am nearly broke now until next pay

Tuesday 29th April (In Port)

Shore leave

HMS Lender came here today but left again after a couple of hours. Had drill in morning and went on route march in Colombo, heat was awful this has been our first route march since leaving NZ. Very few white people in Colombo one gets sick of seeing only natives and can they scrounge, march started at 2pm and we marched for one hour, before setting native troop band led us all the way

Wednesday 30th April (In Port)

No leave today. We only be here for sometime ship is being painted all grey by native laborers on rafts. We got paid again today for shore leave tomorrow, Lost my pay book and did not get any pay. Will not get any until I can

Thursday 1st May 1941 (In Port)

Meet a Mr. Norman Schokman who is a police comm. In Wellawatte Colombo and had wonderful day with him, he took me and my pal in his car to the Colombo zoo and then around several paddy rice fields we were shown through the police barracks, all the police men are natives some are Jumil, some are Singalore mostly small in build. We were introduced to his wife and his three little children

Friday 2nd May (In Port)

Started a two week duty as Mess Orderly it really is a hot job down below decks. No shore leave, today I looked out of portholes at those on shore leave today and wished that I could go sightseeing with the comm. again. I think that I will get leave on Sunday nothing much happened today.

Saturday 3rd May (In Port)

Nothing much happened today. No shore leave today was on fatigue all day and it was very monotonous was like hell down in the mess room all the time I was so hot. Boys who were not on fatigue went on route march and then had leave afterwards, am fed up properly with whole dam war.

*Right:
Ceylon Post Card; Wild
elephants just
captured, Ceylon
(H.W. Latimer)*



Sunday 4th May (In Port)

Went on leave again today but only had from 10:45 to 3pm went out to Norman Schokmans bungalow had real Eastern dinner today at his place food was very strange he bought us back to in his car at 3:15pm.

Monday 5th May (In Port)

"Lender" came in port here at Colombo and some of her sailors were on board and troopship Mauretania meeting some of their friends they said that they have been at sea for exactly one year and are longing to go home. On fatigues in mess room today. We have been in port for over a week. Have lots of cool showers in the shower room at the stern of the boat. Monsoon season has commenced in Ceylon and it rained very heavy tonight.

Tuesday 6th May (At sea)

We weighed anchor and left Colombo proceeded by the "Aquitania" then the "Ile de France" at 9:15am the day is very hot: HMS Lender is our escort there was also an English warship in Bolomly when we left. She was a bit lighter than the Lender. We are now a few hours at sea and well into the danger zone may come up against enemy action anytime now. I hope we don't
<Presume the warship is the cruiser Cornwall>

**Right:
Cruiser Cornwall
(Internet)**



Wednesday 7th May (At Sea)

There were machine gun practices this morning in case of aircraft attack. I have been on fatigue in mess room all day, we finish tonight. The HMAS Australia joined the convoy this morning and this afternoon the which has been with us since we left Colombo sent a message to us. Good luck and best wishes to NZEF and then she left our convoy and disappeared over the horizon. We have as well as the Aussie troops and Ile de France. The New Zealand troops on the Aquitania who came off the Niew Amsterdam when she went to Singapore. Have seen no sign of Queen Elizabeth or Queen Mary yet.



**Left: HMAS Australia (pictured in
1942)
(Internet)**

Thursday 8th May (At sea)

Woke up this morning with a chill. The chill is caused through the hot climate. I went to doc on board and he gave me some dope, I don't feel too good am excused from duty for 48 hours. The HMAS Australia had her sea plane out on flight at 6:30 this evening. Had very easy day was sleeping most of the time, clocks go back a further ½ hour . We are now 7 ½ hours behind NZ time. Our next pay will be 100 Piastres = £1-0-7 we get that on our next and final port.

Friday 9th May (At sea)

Was feeling quite ill this morning so went back to docs again, he took my temp and it read 103.4 at 1:30pm so he put me straight in hospital, I don't feel too good at all. We are not very far away from our destination now by sea. It has been very hot at night with the windows closed in the hospital cabin. We are now well into the red sea and soon should be at our destination.

Saturday 10th May (At sea)

The Queen passed us at 9:00am going back to Aussie supposedly with a load of prisoners aboard. Passed some small islands rising to some height at 4:30pm, believe them to be the rocks of Aden. Passed through "Hells Gate" at dusk am still in the ships hospital but am feeling a lot better now. I should be getting out tomorrow or Monday. Queen Elizabeth passed us at 7:00pm on way back after dropping her Aussie troops

Sunday 11th May (At Sea)

We are lucky so far we have not seen any action at all although we expect some at anytime. I am still on the sick list. Quite a number of our chaps have got the flu now. The kitbags were bought up from the hold today so it won't be long before we arrive in Egypt. I think we are going to a port called Tewfik was sitting up in bed all day. Spent very hot night, very stuffy even though fans were flat out, sweat just poured off me we are now 9 and a half hours behind NZ time.

Monday 12th May (At Sea)

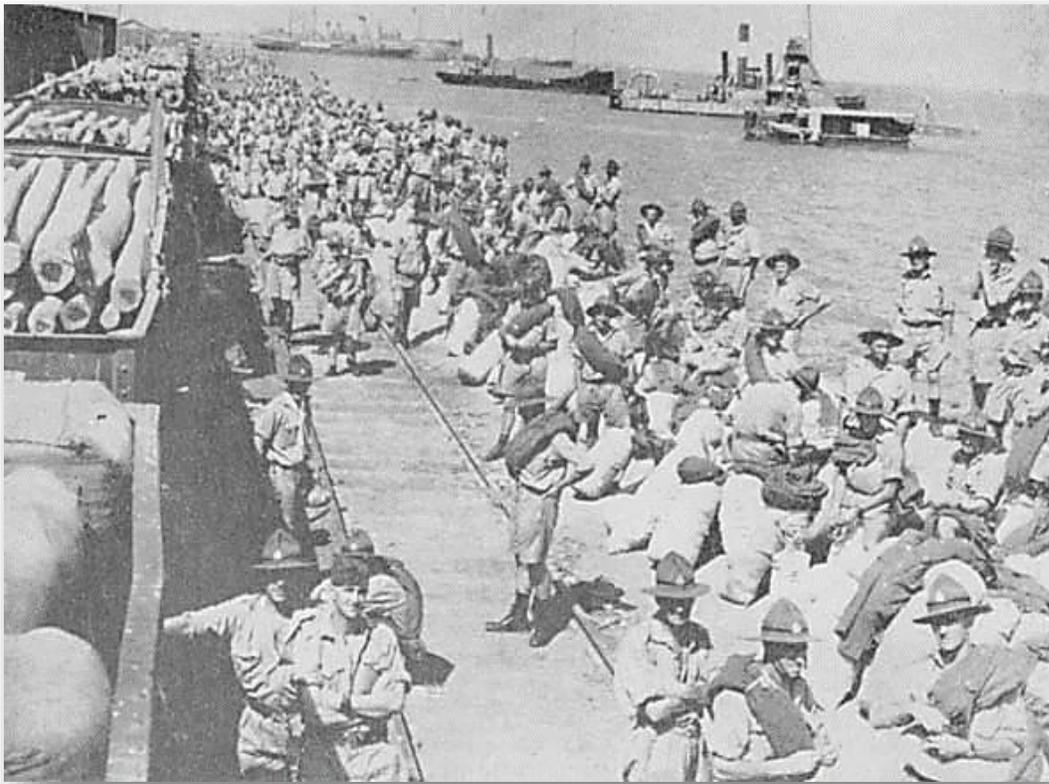
The Ile de France and the Aquitania have left us and we are on our own, they are making a dash separately for port and we are doing the same. We should get there tomorrow morning. A large armed merchant ship passed us at 6:30pm. Was discharged from the hospital at 11am this morning am feeling much better now, I laid out in sun on deck. Some chaps are very delirious from sunstroke, there is a tearing wind blowing now.

Part IV "Egypt"

13th May – 19th May

Tuesday 13th May (In Port, Tewfik)

We have at last reached our disembarkation port after nearly a month and a half of travel. We arose at 4:30am and had breakfast at 6:30am and then we sighted a great number of ships ahead of us then we entered Tewfik Harbor in Egypt at 7.30 and dropped anchor. A launch then came out to our ship it had the Egyptian flag flying from its stern. Tewfik and its surroundings are the most desolate and barren I have ever seen. Hundreds of ships of all descriptions and sizes most of them have brought soldiers from battle in Greece. We did not disembark today after all why I don't know, very hot on board Mauretania.



***The 5th Reinforcements arrive at Port Tewfik 1941
(Internet)***

Wednesday 14th May (In Port, Tewfik)

Up at 3:45, this time we really disembark. Left Mauretania in barges at 7am we got off barge at 10am then got onto Egyptian train and left for camp at 12 noon. Came 70 miles across desert and the heat was ghastly. Passed a train wreck on the way, went through Cairo at 4:15pm, a dirty looking place what we say of it. Wooden seats in train, we saw the pyramids for the first time from a great distance. Arrived in camp in desert about 17 miles from Cairo at night at 8:30pm we sleep in tents not far from Italian prisoner's camp.



Left:
Taken on the line
between Tewfik and
Cairo May 1941
(H.W. Latimer)

Thursday 15th May (In Camp Garawi)

Woke up at 6:30am after my first night in the desert, I found that we are in isolation at this quarantine camp for at least a fortnight to three weeks, not a pleasant prospect. The camp we are in is the worst hole I have ever come to, we had a sandstorm all day and we haven't got any goggles and if we go outside we get our eyes full of sand. We should be going to Maadi camp as soon as everyone is fit again. A much better place, we can see the pyramids from our tent they are about 7 miles away in a straight line, sand is annoying in our tucker.

Friday 16th May (In Camp Garawi)

Not much sand flying around today. Flies are very annoying we are really on active service conditioning now our food is rationed we don't get any returns. A rotten place for soldiers to get well I must say. I had a few great showers they cool me down and I can wash the filth of the desert off me. We are not allowed to wash the dishes with sand on account of infection.

Saturday 17th May (In camp Garawi)

We have done nothing so far, we now have the artillery and the ordnance of the Aquitania in the camp here with us they in the middle of a dust storm and they don't think much of the show. We eat a lot of sand with our meals now it fly's everywhere I hope we don't stay here longer it will drive me half mad. Received two letters from home on Thursday they bucked me up although they made me feel homesick.

Sunday 18th May (In Camp Garawi)

Went to bed last night and I felt ill all night. Went to doctors in camp this morning could hardly stagger over there. Doc put me in hospital in our camp. Hospital is made up of tents. 10 minutes after being in hospital I felt terrible pains in chest and stomach, and then they found I had pneumonia and sent me in army ambulance to 3rd Gen Hosp in Cairo 35miles away.

Part V "Hospital Helmieh, Cairo"

19th May – 15th July

Monday 19th May (In Hospital Helmieh, Cairo)

About 4 miles out of Cairo a place called Helmieh. Too ill to write this day so had to make this entry on Tuesday I thought that I would pass out the pain in my chest was so bad. Temp 104.

Tuesday 20th May (In Hospital Helmieh, Cairo)

Am able to write now, although I feel very weak I don't know how long I will be here, may be for six weeks. Have had no sleep for a few days now, I got issues of cigarettes today, don't like them much.

Wednesday 21st May (In Hospital Helmieh, Cairo)

9pm searchlights sweep sky every night around Cairo. Am much better now hope to be back on my feet soon. Egyptian barbers come into hospitals in mornings and afternoons and shave us for 1 Piastres about £2 1/2 and haircut is same price. Planes fly out into desert on patrol and pass over hospital night and day.

Thursday 22nd May (In Hospital Helmieh, Cairo)

Am much better today temp is keeping low, wrote letter to wife today will send it airmail. Hope to be out of bed soon. All the lights in hospital have got dark shades around them so that no light will be seen from outside.

Friday 23rd May (In Hospital Helmieh, Cairo)

Had all my cigarettes and matches taken from me by the nurse. Am not feeling so good today, am getting severe pains in the left side of my chest where pneumonia is centered am on light diet. Thunder of planes that pass over the hospital on desert patrol is deafening.

Saturday 24th May (In Hospital Helmieh, Cairo)

Was woken at 3:30 this morning by wailing of air raid alarms enemy planes passed over but no bombs were dropped in our vicinity. The Suez zone was raided not very far away. Pain in my side seems to be increasing hope I am not in hospital too long.

Sunday 25th May (In Hospital Helmieh, Cairo)

One week in bed

Nothing much happened today, pain in my side is still severe I laughed once today and pain my side nearly finished me. Won't laugh again in a hurry.

Monday 26th May (In Hospital Helmieh, Cairo)

Am a bit easier today, meals in hospital are very good so far but I still have no appetite.

Tuesday 27th May (In Hospital Helmieh, Cairo)

Was taken off seriously ill list today, received letter from wife and one from brother in law today. It was fourth airmail letter 6th but neither 5, 3, 2 nor 1

Wednesday 28th May (In Hospital Helmieh, Cairo)

Still in hospital have got spasmodic pains in my side when I cough, can't yawn or laugh or take a deep breath, don't know what it is but it sure hurts some.

Thursday 29th May (In Hospital Helmieh, Cairo)

Received telegram from wife today very pleased to get it was quite a surprise. Still have pains they just about drive me to the nut factory at times when I don't watch myself.

Friday 30th May (In Hospital Helmhieh, Cairo)

Still in hospital pains are increasing, feel quite good otherwise.

Saturday 31st May (In Hospital Helmhieh, Cairo)

Pain feels awful now and again I get it in states like a red hot knife, am getting nothing but chicken diet and am hearty fed up with chicken.

Sunday 1st June (In Hospital Helmhieh, Cairo)

Pain is still very severe doctor said he will have to do something about it. I hope he does too and very soon.

Monday 2nd June (In Hospital Helmhieh, Cairo)

Temp 100. Had fluid drained out of my back today by means of syringe and needle very painful process. Temp 100. Received 3 letters from wife and 1 from brother in law at 6:30 tonight.

Tuesday 3rd June (In Hospital Helmhieh, Cairo)

Temp 100 at 4pm. Am not able to sleep much on account of pain in back, very hot night.

Wednesday 4th June (In Hospital Helmhieh, Cairo)

In Hospital, temp 100. Quite a number of N.Z. wounded and sick beginning to fill up this hospital now from Crete, am beginning to pick up now that I have had fluid drained out of my back, pain has lessened.

Thursday 5th June (In Hospital Helmhieh, Cairo)

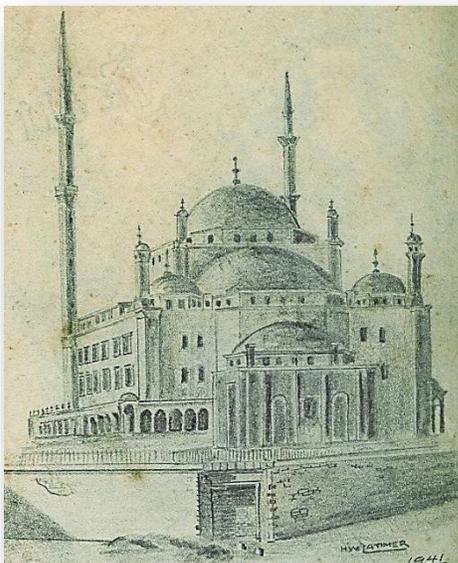
Temp Normal. Alexandria was bombed last night. Over 100 killed and a lot seriously hurt. Alexandria is 3 hours run from here in train. Only about 70 miles away may get raided here anytime.

Friday 6th June (In Hospital Helmhieh, Cairo)

Wrote letter to wife and one to mother today air mail. Am feeling a lot better now, hope to get up soon am sick of lying in bed all day.

Saturday 7th June (In Hospital Helmhieh, Cairo)

Just another day in hospital. Was paid today 50 Piastres, same routine have done quite a few drawings of different chaps so far.



Sunday 8th June (In Hospital Helmhieh, Cairo)

Alexandria was bombed again last night and casualties were high, besides serious damage to property.

*Left: Drawing of Mohamed Ali Mosque 1941
(H.W. Latimer)*

Monday 9th June (In Hospital Helmieh, Cairo)

I keep in touch with war news by the radio in our ward and the newspapers also give a guide but of news although most of it seems to be bad news so far.

Tuesday 10th June (In Hospital Helmieh, Cairo)

Nothing happened today, same old routine.

Wednesday 11th June (In Hospital Helmieh, Cairo)

Still in the hospital, large formations of planes flew very low over the hospital today, must be bound for operations in the desert.

Thursday 12th June (In Hospital Helmieh, Cairo)

Feel like I want to get up now, bed is getting on my nerves.

Friday 13th June (In Hospital Helmieh, Cairo)

Doctor said that I can get up tomorrow for a short time.



*Taken at 3rd General hospital, Helmieh Cairo 1941, Harold standing in the middle
(H.W. Latimer)*

Saturday 14th June (In Hospital Helmieh, Cairo)

Was allowed out of bed for a short time today for the first time since I became ill, I was taken outside and sat in a deck chair for about half an hour in my dressing gown and pajamas. Great to be outside.

Sunday 15th June (In Hospital Helmieh, Cairo)

Was up again today and was outside for a bit longer. Am unable to walk properly yet, my legs are very weak.

Monday 16th June (In Hospital Helmieh, Cairo)

Am still in hospital but am allowed up now for short time each day.

Tuesday 17th June (In Hospital Helmieh, Cairo)

Nothing much happened today same old routine but things are better now that I am getting up.

Wednesday 18th June (In Hospital Helmieh, Cairo)

Got into the blue uniform of the hospital today and am now an up patient. Went for a very short walk not more than a few steps because my legs are still very weak. But they are getting strong quickly and so am I

Thursday 19th June (In Hospital Helmieh, Cairo)

Went for short walk today and it knocked me a bit but no ill affects.



*Right:
3rd General hospital 1941, Harold standing on right
(H.W. Latimer)*

Friday 20th June (In Hospital Helmieh, Cairo)

Am feeling good now went to the pictures tonight in the hospital grounds and saw "He married his wife first time" and have been to show since being in Egypt pictures finished at 9:45pm

Saturday 21st June (In Hospital Helmieh, Cairo)

Woke up this morning with temp 100 again have to stay in bed, have got pains behind my eye. Temp went to 102.2 tonight.

Sunday 22nd June (In Hospital Helmieh, Cairo)

Doc came this morning and said that I have got the Sand Fly Fever, will last about three days. Have got pains in all my joints just about.

Monday 23rd June (In Hospital Helmieh, Cairo)

Am still in bed, temp is still high this dam phlebotomus has put me back quite a bit. I hope I don't stay in bed again too long.

Sandfly fever: An acute mild viral disease characterized by fever, malaise, eye pain, and headache occurring mainly during the warm weather in many parts of the world. It is caused by Phleboviruses and is transmitted by sandflies. Sandfly fever is also known as pappataci fever, phlebotomus fever, and three-day fever.

Tuesday 24th June (In Hospital Helmieh, Cairo)

Still in bed with fever, temp still up but coming down. Temp down tonight.

Wednesday 25th June (In Hospital Helmieh, Cairo)

Am ok today and hope to get up again tomorrow. There are South African nurses and Doctors in our hospital now.



Above: Helmieh Hospital Cairo, Pictured in 1940 (Internet)

Thursday 26th June (In Hospital Helmieh, Cairo)

Was allowed up again and the fever makes me very weak especially as I was just getting over effects of pneumonia.

Friday 27th June (In Hospital Helmieh, Cairo)

Am feeling stronger today had light fatigue in ward today and felt none the worse for it.

Saturday 28th June (In Hospital Helmieh, Cairo)

Still in Helmieh, am up now for good.

Sunday 29th June (In Hospital Helmieh, Cairo)

Went to church service in Helmieh this morning, very good service to, I am still feeling very weak.

Monday 30th June (In Hospital Helmieh, Cairo)

Just messed around all day today. Went to pictures this evening but went to sleep during the how.

Tuesday 1st July (In Hospital Helmieh, Cairo)

Still in hospital am feeling 100% though now am healing up fast

Wednesday 2nd July (In Hospital Helmieh, Cairo)

Still in Helmieh, days just seem to roll by. I am still receiving plenty of mail from home.

Thursday 3rd July (In Hospital Helmieh, Cairo)

Still in Helmieh

Friday 4th July (In Hospital Helmhieh, Cairo)

Still in Helmhieh am going to try and go into Cairo on leave to nose around, am getting fed up hanging around hospital camp.

Saturday 5th July (In Hospital Helmhieh, Cairo)

Went on leave in Cairo today for the first time and was very impressed. Went to Metro theatre and saw "Gone with the Wind" ,wonderful picture. Stayed for a couple of hours in Heliopolis, on way back to hospital leave expired at 10pm.

Right:
H.W. Latimer's original Gone with the wind ticket stub
(H.W. Latimer)



Sunday 6th July (In Hospital Helmhieh, Cairo)

Went to church service this morning, was very good. Trip to Cairo has made me feel very tired today.

Monday 7th July (In Hospital Helmhieh, Cairo)

Still in Helmhieh

Tuesday 8th July (In Hospital Helmhieh, Cairo)

Still in Helmhieh, Was big fire in South Africans quarters about 7:30pm, damage estimated at \$3000, X-ray equipment lost.

Wednesday 9th July (In Hospital Helmhieh, Cairo)

Still in Helmhieh, that fire yesterday through 5th column action so our officers was telling.

Thursday 10th July (In Hospital Helmhieh, Cairo)

Still in Helmhieh

Friday 11th July (In Hospital Helmhieh, Cairo)

Still in Helmhieh

Saturday 12th July (In Hospital Helmhieh, Cairo)

Still in Helmhieh

Sunday 13th July (In Hospital Helmhieh, Cairo)

Still in Helmhieh, am going to convalescence depot soon I hope hanging around hospital gets on my nerves.

Monday 14th July (In Hospital Helmhieh, Cairo)

Am going to con. Depot tomorrow. I will be glad when I go because hospital is very momentous Saw the Oklahoma Kid, at New Garden Cinema tonight.

Tuesday 15th July (Last day in hospital)

Left! 3 NZ GEN Hospital at 1:30pm and caught train for Ismailia at 3:30 in camp with 42 other chaps. All going to Moascar Con. Dep. Train trip of 90 miles very hot and uncomfortable 5 and a half hours.

Part VI "Moascar, Ismailia" 16th July – 8th August

Wednesday 16th July (In Moascar, Ismailia)

Heat was awful today. Last night was our first night at Moascar (Ismailia) Jerry came over and dropped bombs. Concussions shock our dormitory to the foundation. Hurricanes from nearby Drome took off but enemy had disappeared after dropping 7 HE bombs.

Thursday 17th July (In Moascar, Ismailia)

I can get good view of Suez canal from the place where I sleep and also memorial erected to the memory of De Lesseps .Went for first swim In Egypt in the Suez Canal, went to pictures saw Holiday.

Friday 18th July (In Moascar, Ismailia)

Sent birthday present home to wife by airmail this morning. Went out in yacht on Suez Canal today cost 25 Piastres for four of us for hire had plenty of swimming. Am really beginning to pick up now, had tea at old Italian club at Ismailia great place, and modern. Water very buoyant, Italian club is now called the Blue Kettle and is for troops only.

Saturday 19th July (In Moascar, Ismailia)

Went into Ismailia this afternoon about 6:30 and walked around met quite a number of Greek soldiers , large number of Greeks live in Ismailia had lots of drinks at various places and supper of eggs and chips.

Sunday 20th July (In Moascar, Ismailia)

Am feeling fit now and gaining weight fast. Paraded at 8:30 this morning and was marched to church parade at 9:00 at the garrison church. Moascar church is wonderful building for this place. Had another air raid tonight, bomb smashed Greek club in Ismailia visited RAF night fighter squadron today.

Monday 21st July (In Moascar, Ismailia)

Saw Dornier German bomber.

Went swimming again this afternoon, am getting brown and heavy now. Put my name down for launch trip on Wednesday. Saw crashed RAF Tomahawk plane at aerodrome today, saw all their hurricanes.

Right:
**Tomahawk fighter forced down in
the desert.**
**Harold Latimer pictured in the
pilots seat
(H.W. Latimer)**



Tuesday 22nd July (In Moascar, Ismailia)

Got fatigue in officer's mess today, hope doesn't last too long. Went into Ismailia again after swim. Went to pictures at Moascar tonight and saw The Real and Lousy with Gary Cooper grand show.

Wednesday 23rd July (In Moascar, Ismailia)

Went out on all day launch trip on Suez Canal today, had good time plenty of swimming and plenty to eat. Come back to came at 7:30pm went straight to bed after good shower.

Thursday 24th July (In Moascar, Ismailia)

Went up for medical inspection today, am now Grade A. Am really fit and have gained 6lbs in week. Young British air force chap was drowned today while we were swimming.

Friday 25th July (In Moascar, Ismailia)

Was paid again today 100 P.T. Started on fatigue in O <Officers> cookhouse not much of a job for me while convalescing had long sleep in afternoon from after pay parade.

Saturday 26th July (In Moascar, Ismailia)

Worked in cookhouse this afternoon up till 9:30pm very tired after it. I don't feel much like doing fatigue although am feeling very healthy.

Sunday 27th July (In Moascar, Ismailia)

Serve air raid last night again. Went to concert last night in depot, show given by reserve very good show. Worked in cook house all day, job is getting me down just a bit, am not as strong as I thought I was yet

Monday 28th July (In Moascar, Ismailia)

Worked in cookhouse till 10:30 went for swim in afternoon from 2pm till 3:30 then hired bike and went touring though Ismailia and had a look at bomb damage in last Saturday nights enemy raid. Only a few places hit.

Tuesday 29th July (In Moascar, Ismailia)

Sirens sounded enemy air raid about 3:30am and all clear about an hour later, only a few bombs dropped judging by the noise. Mostly over Suez a fair way away.

Wednesday 30th July (In Moascar, Ismailia)

Stayed in camp all day today. Went to pictures in evening and saw 1000000BC , poor show. Shifted from Verandah of building to hut no31 in hut comm.

Thursday 31st July (In Moascar, Ismailia)

Went for swim today I messed around camp rest of day. Went to pictures saw , and the great Gambini picture show was interrupted by air raid about 9 o clock for half an hour.



Left:
Saps at Sea 1940's movie poster
(Internet)

Friday 1st August (In Moascar, Ismailia)

Another air raid about 3:30am this morning, several bombs dropped but further off. Was paid today bought slacks, 40 P.T. knocked hole in pay.

Saturday 2nd August (In Moascar, Ismailia)

Had day in Ismailia today from 2pm to about 9pm, day was very hot so I did some swimming and well no air raids I hope

Sunday 3rd August (In Moascar, Ismailia)

Air raid alarm sounded again this morning about 3am but bombs were dropped a long way off. Had quiet day in camp today, am getting sick of alarms every night.

Monday 4th August (In Moascar, Ismailia)

Went into Ismailia today and I just walked with my friend and had a look through some of the natives bazaars and some of the higher class districts.

Tuesday 5th August (In Moascar, Ismailia)

Terrific air raid started at 3:30am this morning and Jerry bombers flew to and fro very low and great number of H.E. bombs were dropped all around us. I was lying in a slit trench just outside our hut. Concussion of exploding bombs was terrific and scream of them coming down shook us a lot. I was just scared stiff, Ismailia was just about wrecked, natives were killed everywhere. British soldiers in tent not far from us were killed 4 of them and 12 injured.

Wednesday 6th August (In Moascar, Ismailia)

There was quiet night last night. All leave from Moascar camp to Ismailia stopped for yesterday and today while squads are clearing up wreckage. Hope I don't have to go through another raid like that one. Over 300 casualties in the raid. Natives were machine gunned in the open. I am in the hospital with high fever

Thursday 7th August (In Moascar, Ismailia)

Out of hospital today feel ok now. Air raid alarm sounded in camp but bombers left us alone this time and raided the town of Tewfik (Suez). Went into Ismailia today and inspected bomb damage from last Tuesday's raid. Town is severely damaged majority of population has evacuated, very few shops open approx 300 killed as result of machine gunning and bombing. Sweet-Water Canal blocked by sunken barge. Egyptian territorials organized to clear wreckage in bombed areas. Had tea in Blue kettle soldiers club. Hope there is no raid again tonight.

Friday 8th August (In Moascar, Ismailia)

No alarm last night and had good sleep. Stayed in camp today, am leaving Moascar tomorrow and going to Maadi camp. I'll be very glad to leave this place because Jerry will be over again.

Part VII "Maadi Camp"

9th August – 12th November

Saturday 9th August (Maadi Camp)

Eight Tommie's killed in last night's bombing. My first time in Maadi camp we were up all night severe air raid again thank goodness I am on my way to base camp. I left Ismailia station at 15 mins to 10am had good train trip to Cairo then by army truck into Maadi camp, we arrived at 2:30pm. Just had look around camp. First time that I have been here.

Sunday 10th August (Maadi Camp)

I was paraded and inspected by doctor at 9:30 this morning, had a look around Maadi village in afternoon and bought cheap water for 250 P.T. (£2-4-0) had light tea in Maadi tent just out of camp bounds.

Monday 11th August (Maadi Camp)

Reveille at 5:30am, earliest I have arisen in morning for a long time. Went for dental parade, my teeth passed as ok. Met my old friend Tom Hatton and his brother George, was pleased to see them, went to pictures with them.

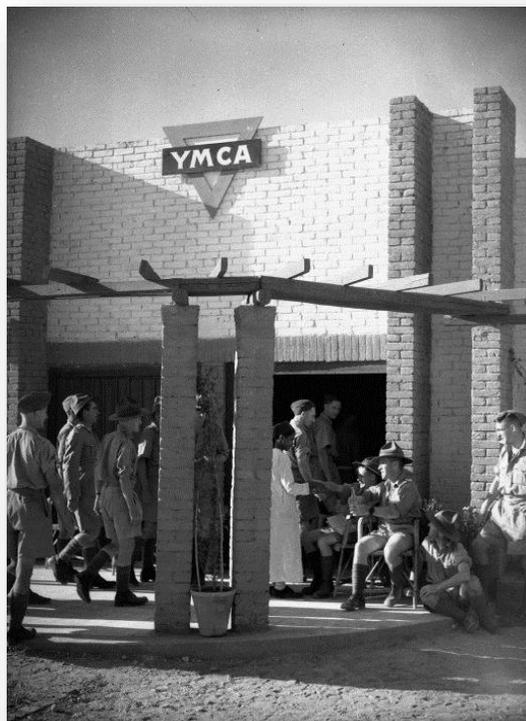
Tuesday 12th August (Maadi Camp)

Got my long lost kitbags back today, camera and tobacco and all that was in them, tobacco very welcome. Met Jack Putt today, have not seen him for over four months. Went to pictures in Maadi camp with him. No air raids here so far thank goodness.

Wednesday 13th August (Maadi Camp)

Was on fatigue digging hole, it is the first work that I have done since coming to Egypt. Went to YMCA pictures free with Jack Putt saw good show. Will go to A.S.C. base training depot tomorrow. Went for swimming at Maadi baths for first time in Egypt today.

*Right:
Maadi camp YMCA, 1941
(Internet)*



Thursday 14th August (Maadi Camp)

Had to do a lot of running around this morning getting equipment. Left base reception at 11am and marched over to this ASC training base. My friend Earl Buttciiss went up to infantry training lines.

Friday 15th August (Maadi Camp)

My first day back in training for a long time, was hut picked so I just laid in hut all day and wrote letter. Met several old friends from asle 5th reinf I don't know when I will go back to my unit, I hope its not too long.



*Left:
The
troops
bathes,
Maadi
(H.W.
Latimer)*



*Left:
Fatigue
at Maadi
camp,
myself
holding
pick
(H.W.
Latimer)*

Saturday 16th August (Maadi Camp)

Was on a fatigue party shifting sand and leveling off piles of ground between huts Maadi. Went to pictures in camp with Jack Putt last night we both went on leave into Cairo today. Jack fell in front of him at Maadi station.

Sunday 17th August (Maadi Camp)

Got photo of Rex from wife today. Jack had a lot of skin taken off him by the train but is feeling ok this morning. I bought wife pairs of silk stockings yesterday. Have to go on guard at 4pm what a life! Took film into shop to get developed, first time I have used my camera for four months.

Monday 18th August (Maadi Camp)

Was hut picked today so just lay around and had a good sleep, was very tired after guard duty. Wrote 3 letters tonight to mum and the family and to my wife and brother in law. Bombers flew over early this morning. I was watching them as bombed.

Tuesday 19th August (Maadi Camp)

Was on fatigue all morning building up sack wall, very hard work but I am feeling fit now. Am on air raid rescue squad so am unable to leave camp for a week until new P.A.D. squad takes over.

Wednesday 20th August (Maadi Camp)

Wife's birthday today wish I was with her. I am thinking of her a lot today, had drill up to 10am but sneaked off and came back to my hut and missed a few hours parade. Went on P.A.D. parade at 10 to 6 again.



Left:
Taken at British War Cemetery Cairo
Egypt 1941, Harold is standing on left
(H.W. Latimer)

Thursday 21st August (Maadi Camp)

Spent all morning doing drill , am sick of it. Spent the afternoon just laying around, then went on P.A.D. squad parade at 5:30pm

Friday 22nd August (Maadi Camp)

Went for first route march since I have been in Egypt this morning and it really was tough. Carved my name on old ruins of Napoleonic fort, saw names there of soldiers who had carved their names during last war 1916.

Saturday 23rd August (Maadi Camp)

Just messed around camp all day today, did fatigues in morning. Bought two cushion covers for wife and got film taken into photo shop. Went to pictures and saw the Vigilantes Trail.

Sunday 24th August (Maadi Camp)

Went to church service then was kept marching around parade ground for about one hour. I don't think much of Capt. Hunter he is ignorant

Right:
Waiting for the train to
Cairo, the Maadi Station
(H.W. Latimer)



Monday 25th August (Maadi Camp)

Went into Cairo this afternoon took a few photos, got parcel from wife this afternoon and one letter with her photo yesterday. Returned from leave at 9:30pm got job sign writing in A.S.C. workshops for some days.

Tuesday 26th August (Maadi Camp)

Got cable gram from wife today sent from Auckland on 23rd August. Was over in Base workshops again today.

Wednesday 27th August (Maadi Camp)

Went out to the barrage at the Nile Delta today on picnic. All the boys from A.S.C. Maadi camp went too, had fairly good time. I slept in shade of trees in the park most of the time. We passed through Cairo and a lot of native villages.

Thursday 28th August (Maadi Camp)

Have been married exactly six months today, I think my job here at Base workshops will last for sometime.

Friday 29th August (Maadi Camp)

Got paid today I drew out £2-0-0 to buy my wife a Christmas present.

Saturday 30th August (Maadi Camp)

Leave from camp stopped for today.

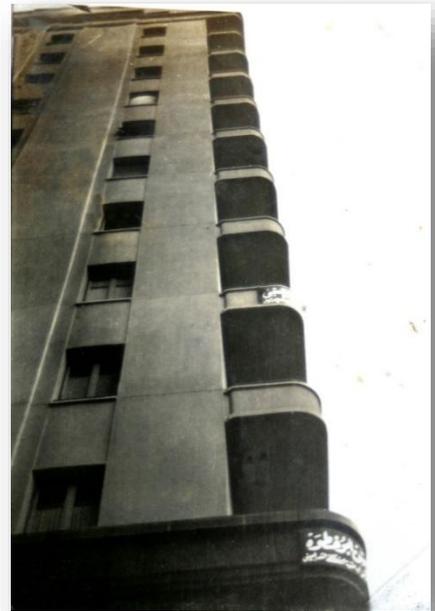
Regulations at this base camp are getting worse and worse. We was had serul our kitbags this morning

Troops has to go on a route march at 7:30pm and they returned at 10pm, missed that

Sunday 31st August (Maadi Camp)

Worked up till 12 this morning in workshops, had early afternoon. Received three letters today from Norman, Elva and Audrey.

Right:
Modern architecture in blocks of flats in Cairo City
(H.W. Latimer)



Monday September 1st (Maadi Camp)

Went up to YMCA and replied to all letters. Worked all day went to pictures in camp.

Tuesday 2nd September (Maadi Camp)

..... Doing battery work and electrical car work in workshop. I may be going out to Division soon. Received letter from Elva today dated August 13th and also parcel of choc's.

Wednesday 3rd September (Maadi Camp)

Am going strong in my new job now, really like working on the army vehicles. Have been very busy today.

Thursday 4th September (Maadi Camp)

I have not been out of camp for some days now. I am staying in and saving some money to send home some Christmas presents to mum and my wife. Worked all day in workshops.

Friday 5th September (Maadi Camp)

Had busy day today. Got one letter from wife dated 18th August. Went to pictures , the moon at full now and the air raid alarms all often sounded but no bombers have been dropping here yet.

Saturday 6th September (Maadi Camp)

Worked all morning and on duty at workshops this afternoon also. I lost my fountain pen somewhere, went to pictures in camp and saw "Nancy Steele in missing" and some shorts

Sunday 7th September (Maadi Camp)

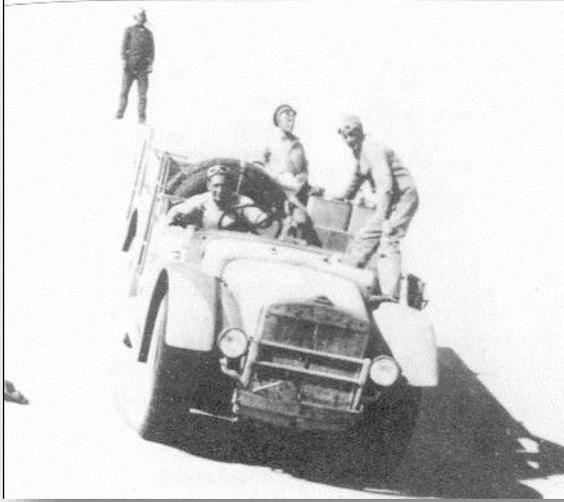
Worked this morning, went down to Maadi tent in the afternoon. Went to service in YMCA hut and saw new version of "The King of Kings" afterwards was grand motion picture.

Monday 8th September (Maadi Camp)

Went down to Maadi Village and bought new fountain pen a Conway Stuart, it cost me 75 P.T. Worked in workshop all day. Our Q.C. is Capt Thewly, a great fellow.

Tuesday 9th September (Maadi Camp)

Worked again today have got quite a few jobs on, am working on captured Fiat Italian car, has got plenty of bullet holes in it, we have to patch them up.



Left:
Captured Fiat
(Internet)

Wednesday 10th September (Maadi Camp)

Got 5 letters from home today. Had plenty of work this morning. Went on leave in Cairo today and bought some presents for home first

Thursday 11th September (Maadi Camp)

Port Suez (Tewfik) was severely damaged in air raid in early hours of this morning, glad I was not there. I have had quite enough of it.

Friday 12th September (Maadi Camp)

Was paid again today, got \$1-0-0 and went to pictures and saw a couple of good pictures. Received two newspapers from home today.

Saturday 13th September (Maadi Camp)

Replied to all my mail today. Went up to YMCA went to the pictures after pictures are about the only entertainment in this Maadi camp.

Sunday 14th September (Maadi Camp)

Went to church service this morning and went into Cairo on leave this afternoon and went to the cinema and saw two pictures. Errol Flynn in "The Perfect Specimen" and the 8

Right: Errol Flynn, Joan Blondell, Dennie Moore, & Allen Jenkins, still from the movie *The perfect Specimen*



Monday 15th September (Maadi Camp)

Have got a chap to teach the job to today he is going to help me with any job on the army vehicles. A lot of the 6th Regiment are going to Tewfik to collect some trucks to take up to the desert.

Tuesday 16th September (Maadi Camp)

Official last of Egyptian winter time today, clocks go back an hour. Last night flares were dropped over our camp by enemy raiders and they dropped bombs on Abasca Leenoks at Heliopolis.

Wednesday 17th September (Maadi Camp)

Have still got plenty of work to do, I worked late tonight.

Thursday 18th September (Maadi Camp)

Went into Cairo on leave today. Spent about 50 PT came back to camp after the pictures, good show.

Friday 19th September (Maadi Camp)

Got paid today £1-0-7, 100 Piastres, went to pictures in camp.

Saturday 20th September (Maadi Camp)

Wrote a few letters home today and worked all morning and then went up to YMCA in afternoon, and to pictures at night.

Sunday 21st September (Maadi Camp)

Went into workshop this morning and worked until 12am, then went into Cairo on leave in afternoon and went to Heliopolis to the Aussie Canteen. Went to the pictures afterwards then back to camp.

Monday 22nd September (Maadi Camp)

Plenty of work to do on captured trucks, most of them Fiats the Italian trucks.

Tuesday 23rd September (Maadi Camp)

Was working on wiring of Rolls Royce Red Cross ambulance yesterday. It's a great life in these A.J.C workshops, am having a fairly good time.

Wednesday 24th September (Maadi Camp)

Am leaving workshops as electrician to Div.Amm. The day of days I got word at lunch time to have my gear packed ready to move up to Division at the front Key 10.45 tonight. I am going up by train and truck with one cobbler only.

Thursday 25th September (Maadi Camp)

Left camp at 11am and went into Cairo by truck. Left on train from Cairo main station at 12:30am, long train trip arrived at Sidi Hanaish station at 3:30pm. We got a lift on Ordnance truck to their camp on shore of Mediterranean sea, we stayed there all night made our beds in the desert.

Friday 26th September (Maadi Camp)

Had breakfast in Ordnance camp, we left the ordnance camp at 11am in Major Bracaguides staff car right down the coast to the Div.Amm Depot where we joined up with the workshop section we

Saturday 27th September (Maadi Camp)

My birthday! Am 23 today, first birthday I have had away from home. Myself and pal finished our new dug out right on the beach on shores of Mediterranean sea, pretty desolate place but healthy.

Sunday 28th September (Maadi Camp)

Did work this morning until 10am then had rest of day off to clean up our dug out until 20 mins past four. When I went to church service, my first church service in the desert.

Monday 29th September (Maadi Camp)

There is not much work to do on cars and trucks just at present but there will be tons to do when the big push starts in the desert against Jerry. Have been swimming everyday since I have been here.

Tuesday 30th September (Maadi Camp)

Work again today, watched the boys fishing at lunch time lots of our big bombers fly over here everyday, sometimes 14 bombers at once. Ground was vibrating last night some heavy bombing was going on quite close

Wednesday 1st October (Maadi Camp)

Had good day aircraft are flying very low over our dug outs, mostly the big Blenheim bombers fairly quite night last night. Saw captured Stuka, German dive bomber.

Thursday 2nd October (Maadi Camp)

Made a harpoon and gun for fishing today, not much else to do I wish I had some books to read here at night. Got another letter from wife today have to go on ammunition guard tonight.

Friday 3rd October (Maadi Camp)

Had two hours on guard last night slept over in field workshops, I felt fairly tired today at work, captured Dornier bomber flew low over our workshop truck today it had British markings on it.

Saturday 4th October (Maadi Camp)

Started work at 8am some of the chaps went to play soccer at 10am half day today but I worked all afternoon on a job for myself

Sunday 5th October (Maadi Camp)

Holiday today we are working on our dug out making it better, finished about 5pm am feeling very tired so am off to sleep early.

Monday 6th October (Maadi Camp)

Work again today only had a few small jobs to do, we have now got a battery and have electric light in dug out so its very comfortable. Wellington bombers crashed up the beach not very far away from us, was badly smashed up.

Tuesday 7th October (Maadi Camp)

Work again today have not got very much to do again dust is running very high had been for a few days now.

Wednesday 8th October (Maadi Camp)

Not much again today was working on a little two motor compressor got out of a crashed Italian plane and making it into a battery charger for our workshop.

Thursday 9th October (Maadi Camp)

Got our cigarette issue today have gone of smoking quite a bit, now caught a snake by our workshop truck this morning I don't know whether is was poisonous or not.

Friday 10th October (Maadi Camp)

Was paid this morning I only drew 50 P.T. (10/3) am going to try work up a credit. Jerry dropped a few bombs near us last night; only one plane came over us.

Saturday 11th October (Maadi Camp)

Beach picked today have nothing to do but sit or beach all day. Plane dropped some more eggs about 5 o'clock this morning near the aerodrome, was not far from me. I watched the fire and explosions there were only three German bombers

Sunday 12th October (Maadi Camp)

Big train load of bombs and ammunition blown up and large petrol fires raised by Jerry bombers at 3am till 5am, noise was awful when ammo blew up. Explosions and fire continued for four hours.

Monday 13th October (Maadi Camp)

Water is very clear and calm went in for several swims was doing a bit on a we have made out of a ships boat that was washed ashore

Tuesday 14th October (Maadi Camp)

Everything is still about the same no further air raids yet, borrowed a primus and had a great summer from parcel received from wife.

Wednesday 15th October (Maadi Camp)

Jerry planes passed over this place in the early hours of this morning but they did not unload any eggs.

Thursday 16th October (Maadi Camp)

Sea rough again today, pretty cold went in for a few swims during lunch hour and after work

Friday 17th October (Maadi Camp)

Received letters from wife and one from mother today we had to wear our gas masks for ½ an hour this morning while we were working on the army vehicles

Saturday 18th October (Maadi Camp)

Only worked for the morning, spent afternoon washing. One of our Don Rs was killed last night in a collision with a truck which did not stop his name was Bob Ross. Some of our chaps went to his funeral today.

Sunday 19th October (Maadi Camp)

Worked all morning two RASC officers came around and inspected our workshops, I did some more washing today and had a sleep this afternoon then wrote letter tonight. I got four letters today

Monday 20th October (Maadi Camp)

Work today as usual nothing much to do today its great watching the big flights of our fighters and bomber squadrons as they fly on their way to bomb Jerry objectives

Tuesday 21st October (Maadi Camp)

One of our chaps caught another snake about 5 feet long this morning.

Wednesday 22nd October (Maadi Camp)

Work as usual, am now working on truck inspections, so many trucks come in each day until they are all finished.

Thursday 23rd October (Maadi Camp)

Work again am pretty busy just at present, just the way I like it too, big squadrons of planes passed over all day long

Friday 24th October (Maadi Camp)

Was paid again today 50 P.T. (10/3) have saved 200 P.T. pounds £2-0-0 towards my leave expenses.

Saturday 25th October (Maadi Camp)

Was beach picked today just lay on beach and read a book that I managed to scratch up.

Sunday 26th October (Maadi Camp)

Worked until 11 o'clock this morning then went over to petrol camp lines for church service, was pretty good to. Went to pictures saw banjo on my knee. Joel McGree and B Stanimore

Monday 27th October (Maadi Camp)

Work as usual today am still working on inspections, moon is getting bigger now we can expect some further raids from Jerry

Tuesday 28th October (Maadi Camp)

Got letter from Elva, Mum and Norm and Marge today. I To tonight and started replying to them.

Wednesday 29th October (Maadi Camp)

Heavy explosions shook us all today they were blowing up bombs that were damaged in a raid about two weeks ago

Thursday 30th October (Maadi Camp)

Jerry started early last night about 8 o'clock and dropped some flares, then a few bombs when he flew away, and did not bother us anymore, he will come over again tonight I suppose

Friday 31st October (Maadi Camp)

Another month gone, every month getting nearer to returning home, Jerry left us alone last night.

Saturday 1st November (Maadi Camp)

Still on inspections on our trucks at workshops we have to work from 7:30am to 5:30pm at night seven days a week due to new order by Major Coutts.

Sunday 2nd November (Maadi Camp)

Worked until 11:30 then went to church parade, back to work at 1:30pm till 5:30pm. Food is getting awful lately can hardly stomach it at all, wish I had some feeds like I used to get at home.

Monday 3rd November (Maadi Camp)

Jerry came over in the daylight today at about tea time, we all scampered for cover as he dropped bombs, first daylight raid I have been in so far there were four bombers they did not stay long thank goodness

Tuesday 4th November (Maadi Camp)

Heavy raid on Drome down the road they panted the place well and loads of incendiaries were dropped as well as high explosives air raids don't agree with me because my heart is in my mouth most of the time

Wednesday 5th November (Maadi Camp)

Guy Fawkes day Jerry should come over tonight again to supply fireworks all though I don't like is kind of fireworks work goes on just the same

Thursday 6th November (Maadi Camp)

Got cigarette issue and received another parcel from wife containing tobacco and plenty of eats have some good feeds now these parcels change from the rotten food I get from present

Friday 7th November (Maadi Camp)

Got paid today 100 ackers* for fortnight we are getting plenty of work and still jobs should slack up soon Jerry came over again last night but dropped bombs further away from us

Saturday 8th November (Maadi Camp)

Work again as usually all day today my cobbler and I have built a primus and it works great for cooking our tin stuff or making tea and coffee

Sunday 9th November (Maadi Camp)

Worked in workshop all day today no church parade we maybe moving in a few days only jubilant at rumors at present

Monday 10th November (Maadi Camp)

Got parcel from Norm and Marge today jerry was active again last night he was too close for comfort, one of our planes dropped a bomb in our area by mistake at lunch time no body was hurt, thought it was jerry again

Tuesday 11th November (Maadi Camp)

Not much work today heavy sand storm came up at 3pm and made things very uncomfortable we packed our workshops today so think we'll be moving in a couple of days

Wednesday 12th November (Maadi Camp)

I am going to be very sorry to leave our dugout we had to start work at 6am this morning very hard days work doing up some trucks we got off South Africans and we're preparing to move off

Part VIII “Maneuvers towards Battle”

13th November – 28th November

Thursday 13th November

We left our camp by the sea today at 4pm, we traveled all night until about 1am, we are towing a trailer behind our truck roads so far have been fairly good we have come about 80 miles today

Friday 14th November

We struck out into the desert this morning after breakfast at 6am, very rough in places skyline continues unbroken with nothing, barren desert everywhere. There are hundreds of Trucks in this convoy we stopped at another place at noon and stayed here till next morning.

Saturday 15th November

We left this spot at 6am this morning, stopped for a cup of tea for 10 mins. Then on again it's a wonderful sight to see the hundreds of army vehicles spread out in battle order as far as the eye can see we stayed at this barren place tonight.

Sunday 16th November

Left again at 4pm today we have come about 300 miles into the middle of the Western desert, its just like traveling across an ocean everything looks the same every day

Monday 17th November

So far we have no been molested by the Luftwaffe touch wood, why I can't understand as we are getting very near the front lines. Got bogged in soft sand

Tuesday 18th November

The day of days, our great offensive against the German and Italian forces
We are now 30 miles from Jerry lines, we arrived here about 3am we are off again now 5:30pm, we have been doing some traveling across the Western desert lately tough going in places.

Operation Crusader, The British offensive in Libya opens

Wednesday 19th November

We traveled most of last night and arrived on the Libyan border about 3am we moved on again after breakfast, but only about 2 miles into the Libyan Desert. Jerry ME-109's came over today and set fire to two of our planes on the ground.

Thursday 20th November

We are still in the same place, we have got Jerry on the run we have immense numbers of vehicles and tanks on his tail. Tomahawks and Hurricanes are flying around us continually in big squadrons.

Friday 21st November

Jerry bomber flew over our lines this afternoon our ack ack did not get him. At breakfast this morning about 8:15am saw squadron of Tomahawks returning from action, one was lagging behind with a trail of smoke behind him, suddenly he went out of control and crashed not far from us there was a great gout of flame and smoke when it hit, the pilot did not bail out. The sound of heavy artillery is continually thundering in our ears. Two planes were shot down near us 10am don't know who's they were large numbers of our tanks passed through our lines on their way to the front. We have ½ an hour to pack and move up to front lines 20 miles

Saturday 22nd November

We are off again at 9am heavy gunfire is still going to along the whole front saw two plane crashes at about 11am pilot parachuted from one. We ran into artillery fire at 11:30 it got about two of our trucks, it sure did scare us. We came across signs of action and one of our tanks burnt out dead Tommy inside not a very pleasant sight. Jerry plane came over about 8pm flashes of artillery fire light up horizon as we pounded Jerry positions

Sunday 23rd November

Big tank battle going on not far from us, I was traveling in break down truck today, we came across a German staff car and one of our armored cars riddled with bullets we pulled up for the night at 6:30pm

Monday 24th November

We got a few things from a wrecked German canteen A Mercedes some of our boys suffered casualties in a skirmish of jerry armored cars we are stopping here for a short time

Tuesday 25th November

Jerry planes came over today and dropped allot of eggs some where just up ahead of us we are very close to German mines another lot of planes dropped some more bombs this afternoon we're off at 6pm

Wednesday 26th November

We stopped here a short distance from German lines about 8pm big tank and artillery battle went on all last night thunder of guns is awful large formations of our big bombers have been flying over us all day and pasting hell out of jerry lines and positions battle stopped while our planes bombed

Thursday 27th November

Saw quite a number of our own NZ boys lying dead on the desert with rifles still clutched in there hands awful sight we are moving further at 8:30am we only went a about 3 miles enemy activity moved us about a bit, six of our own trucks were smashed up yesterday by mistake by our own air force battles still raging pretty fiercely

Friday 28th November

We are moving again about 7:30am because of another tank battle going on we arrived at our new positions at 1:30 jerry shelled us for about ½ an hour no damage done got 70 cigarettes issue we moved off again at 9:30pm rumored we are going to Tobruk

Part IX "Tobruk"

29th November - 8th December

Saturday 29th November

After traveling all night we entered Tobruk defenses at dawn under heavy shell fire from enemy Tommy and polish troops here said it was a great surprise to them our coming we will have a bit of rest from actual contact with the enemy forces

Sunday 30th November (Our second day in Tobruk)

Had narrow escape about 5:30 this morning when German shell screamed over our truck and exploded with defining crash just a few yards from us our artillery are slinging tons of shells into jerry lines all day

Monday 1st December (Our third day in Tobruk)

German planes came over and dropped a few bombs last night there are several big guns in a "Wadi" not far from us firing on enemy positions some of our chaps are overdue so now are considered prisoners of war

Tuesday 2nd December (Our fourth day in Tobruk)

Started raining here today and everywhere is becoming sea of mud jerry artillery shelled town of Tobruk last night our batteries replied and thunder of guns lasted all night

Wednesday 3rd December (Our fifth day in Tobruk)

No enemy planes came over last night and there was very little gunfire from both sides day much better today still a bit bleak gun fire resumed again on heavy scale

Thursday 4th December (Our sixth day in Tobruk)

Enemy planes came over last night and dropped a few bombs heavy ack ack barrage went up and drove them off saw dog fight at a tomahawk shot down a German plane inside the Tobruk defenses first real dog fight I have seen

Right: Chakdina, commandeered by the British in Tobruk to evacuate their wounded. It sailed from the harbor with 380 wounded soldiers on board including 97 New Zealanders. At 9 o'clock in the morning a Luftwaffe plane dropped a torpedo which struck the ship in the after hold. It took only three minutes for the Chakdina to sink giving the wounded little chance to escape. Those who were not severely wounded managed to reach the escort destroyer HMS Farndale which picked up eighteen New Zealanders from the water. All the medical staff, except one, were saved. The Farndale reached Alexandria two days later and the survivors admitted to the No. 3 New Zealand General Hospital. (Internet)



Friday 5th December (Our seventh day in Tobruk)

Jerry made an attack on our defense lines here last night the noise of gun fire and bursting shells with jerry planes bombing as well was awful it just about cracked up my nerves. Germans were beaten, off was paid today

Saturday 6th December (Our eighth day in Tobruk)

I slept in a big cave last night with a few other chaps where we were quiet safe from machine gunning and bombing there was very little activity on both sides last night saw another bomber brought down by ack ack fire

Sunday 7th December (Our ninth day in Tobruk)

Was working on petrol ship today we were dive bombed twice ack ack fire was terrific we also were shelled by jerry batteries ship carrying Italian prisoners was blown up just as it left the wharf all together it was a hell of a day

Monday 8th December

We packed up and left Tobruk at 8am five German Messerschimts flew very low over our trucks at great speed but did not fire on us have been traveling very fast across the Libyan desert all day we arrived inside the wire of Egyptian border just as dusk fell I was hungry as two horses had a good feed saw jerry planes bombing ships just of Tobruk

Part X “Onto Christmas” 9th December – 5th January

Tuesday 9th December

We heard last night that Japan had bombed American interests where will this damn war end we're still just inside the wire saw a dog fight just south of breakfast one plane came down in flames don't know who's it was to far away heard a few far off explosions nothing else much happened big squadrons of our fighters fly over us every so often.

Wednesday 10th December

We left our position inside the wire and traveled all day we did approx 70miles and are now up near our rail head dust was something awful during trip I think we are going back into the scrap again tomorrow with supplies for our troops wish I could get some mail

Thursday 11th December

We stayed in this place all of today rest of our convoy has gone out to pick up supplies to take back to our infantry we had plenty of work to do to the trucks mostly fitting springs saw another plane crash a German Messerschimts

Friday 12th December

We left about midday and traveled until dark then camped for the night had good tea came across Italian and German positions that we had taken some time ago I found a map of portion of Libya that we have done so much fighting lately

Saturday 13th December

Not many days till Xmas now wish I was home with Elva and everybody it was a bit of a shock to us the Japs sinking Prince of Wales and Repulse we left our last position about noon today and came about 60mls we came across a number of burnt out and wrecked jerry tanks and trucks

***Below:
Italian tank abandoned in desert
(H.W. Latimer)***



Sunday 14th

We traveled all day from 8:30am most of the way over battlefields saw some horrible sights saw about six planes that were lying in different places where they'd crashed we arrived near a captured drone about 10mls from Tobruk at tea time

December

Monday 15th December

This Drome and buildings have been wrecked by our air force and artillery I inspected a crash Messerschimts 109f and also a Stuka dive bomber that was in fairly good order having been left with others by the retreating Germans a great day for us all we received the first mail since the fighting started I got 12 letters and Xmas cards from home and wife also one parcel and newspapers we all just about went silly with joy

Tuesday 16th December

We stayed here by the Drome all day not much work to do so I went over to the Drome and inspected a German Stuka dive bomber the same as yesterday spent some time writing long letter to wife

Wednesday 17th December

We left our position by the captured Drome at 8this morning and traveled on the Derna road for about 15 mls just before we left one of our bombers made a forced landing 200 yards from our truck crew got out okay then plane caught fire and exploded bombs with terrific detonations we just shifted our truck away in time inspected crash Messerschimts 110 twin engine that crashed some time ago

Right:
Crashed Me-110
H.W. Latimer



Thursday 18th December

We did not move on again today had plenty of work to do a couple of prisoners had there meals with us today they were German and very young about nineteen or twenty our chaps have got the Germans and Italians in full retreat here in Libya

Friday 19th December

Position by old Arab fort still in the same place we are doing plenty of work on our vehicles war news still good Japs are a damned nuisance though big loads of prisoners past us today on there way to P.W.C had quiet night last night very cold

Saturday 20th December

We are still in the same position heavy dust storm all day made things very uncomfortable some of our chaps went out on repair jobs most of our div has now returned to Fuka we maybe going tomorrow our selves campaign is nearly finished (victory)

Sunday 21st December

Still in the position cold wind blowing today quiet a bit of work on trucks today have been making ornaments in spare time out of crashed German plane glass



**Left: Me-109 being stripped of souvenirs, desert 1941
(Internet)**

Monday 22nd December

German planes came over last night and dropped bombs but fair distance of at Tobruk heavy rain fell in showers today mud everywhere conditions are rotten

Tuesday 23rd December

We left our position by the old fort on the Derna Drome at noon we are bringing back fifth brigade with us they have been in some heavy fighting we came about 20 miles back to the captured Drome and are staying here over night

Wednesday 24th December

Xmas eve today sure is allot different from my last Xmas eve here we are stuck away in the Libyan desert a bright prospect for Xmas cold day we spent sometime throwing an exploding German hand grenades stayed here all day the boys are wild because there is no beer



**Left and below:
1941 Xmas card from Harold Latimer to
Granny Jones and family
(H.W. Latimer)**

Thursday 25th December

Makes me think of the folks at home and the good time I had with them last Xmas what a hell of a Xmas day this is bully and rice for Xmas dinner we received four packets of cigarettes one tin of grays tobacco and four cakes chocolate from patriotic SOC we started to move off at 2pm we hung around for about 3 hours then off again some of us got lost so we are stopping with the Maori battalion for the night

Friday 26th December

Had cup of tea about 7:30am then joined our own convoy we traveled all day worst trip I have ever experience, dust was so thick we could hardly make out truck in front of us. Did about 80 miles almost to our railhead we are going to stop here for the night, am dog tired

Saturday 27th December

Packed up at 8:30am came about 7 miles then stopped again. This is place called Talata cold sort of day we are eventually parking here for night, Maori battalion are near us. Large quantities of RAF gear and personal passed us all day on up to forward Dromes. We heard today that Japs had taken a couple of islands near Gilbert Islands too close to NZ for my liking, hope the whole mess ends pretty soon.

Sunday 28th December

Still in Talata area, enemy bomber flew over at lunchtime ack ack drove him away from railhead, fairly warm day. 5th I.B. <Infantry Battalion> left by rail back to base, we don't know whether we are going back to base or into the scrap again.

Monday 29th December

Mail arrived today. Got telegram from Elva and a couple of other letters and a Xmas parcel from Norm and Marge, also two patriotic parcels so its not a bad effort after all for Xmas. We are moving on tomorrow back to Fuka my cobber is going forward again to Derna, had grand sing song last night to midnight.

Tuesday 30th December

Left Talata at noon and traveled across the desert till we reached main road stayed there ½ hour for tea then carried on for about 30 miles then stopped at 11:30 for night. Big relief to travel over good road after weeks of desert travel.

Wednesday 31st December

Left roadside at Bargush and carried on at 8am rest of distance to our old positions at Fuka we dug out a dugout and have made ourselves pretty comfortable we may only be here for a few days we are going to celebrate new years eve.

Thursday 1st January

Had a great party last night, did not go to bed until 2 this morning slept in till 9. Heavy rain today makes things uncomfortable we got choc's and cigs from canteen had a sleep in afternoon nothing else to do.

Friday 2nd January

Heavy rain all last night I got flooded out blankets wet and everything bitterly cold stayed in dug out most of day and wrote letters got word tonight that I have to go back up the desert tomorrow at 8:30am with four other chaps.

Saturday 3rd January

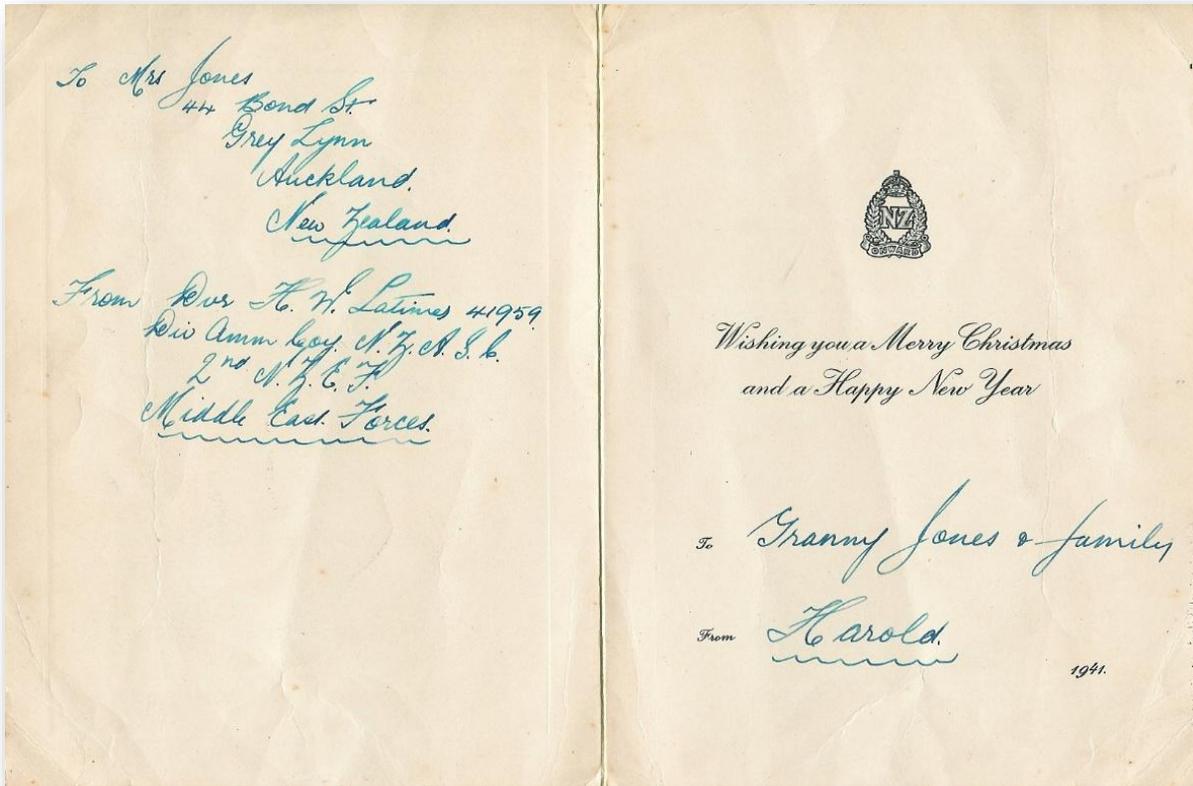
Set out from Fuka at 9am in teaming rain traveled all day over the desert had to dig the truck out of mud at least six time, rain lessened and finally stopped as we got near Talata our destination. Arrived about 8:30pm will have to sleep in open today.

Sunday 4th January

Couldn't sleep last night I was darned near frozen to death got in tent with a chap, day is quite warm and fine hope it keeps like this for awhile, met the rest of the workshop boys that I have not seen since we left Tobruk

Monday 5th January

Had grand sleep last night, was warm as toast in this tent. Got six letters from home today also money from Elva, also got four letters yesterday



Egypt 13th May – 16th July 1941



- A arrive Port Tewfik 13th May 1941
- B arrive in Camp Garawi 15th May 1941
- C arrive in Hospital Helmieh, Cairo 19th May 1941
- D arrive in Moascar, Ismailia 16th July 1941

