

W. H. Stevens.

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*W. H. Stevens*  
*Mem.*



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1.  
November showed signs of the  
cool weather coming along &  
how thankful everyone was. I had  
been out here just a year now &  
on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Nov. had orders from the  
S.M.O. to proceed to Abadan for  
one month as an epidemic of  
malaria had broken out and they  
wanted me to do the blood slides  
in order to get the patients diagnosed  
quicker. Anyway, I got the m.d.s  
car & collected up my apparatus &  
set off by road to Seeba where I  
got the ferry across the river to  
Abadan. Arriving at the S.S. I  
met <sup>one</sup> the boys I knew at Habbaniya  
& a cpl who was with me at  
Basta until a short time previous.  
They soon made me comfortable &

found a billet for me. The following morning the blood slides started rolling in and my work had started. I met the M.O. (F.H. Sword) who gave me an extremely kind welcome & who took me up to the A.I.O.C Hospital & introduced me to the pathologist (D. Marsh) & his chief assistant (M. Wilson). Perhaps at this stage it would be advisable to say a little about Abadan.

Abadan is an island 28 miles long & 5 miles wide & is more or less a big oil well. & The whole island is nothing else but an oil refinery & incidentally the 3<sup>rd</sup> largest in the world.

The whole place is controlled by the Englishmen at the head of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company. Everything on the island, including cars, buses, lorries, cranes, engines & every bit of machinery belongs to the A.I.O.C. Every person practically, on the island works for the A.I.O.C, & the best way to describe it is to say that Abadan is the A.I.O.C. Altogether there are about 2,000 English people on the island most of whom work for the A.I.O.C. Besides these people there are thousands of natives who also work in the oil company & the rest is, just, well, troops, troops & more troops including a large number of

Americans who think they know everything. It would be quite appropriate to say that Abadan is a "white colony in the East" although there were all these English civilian people out here who lived in beautifully air ~~cooled~~ & conditioned bungalows & in one sense of the word were not feeling the pinch of the war too greatly, or at least not half as much as the folks at home, were in no way very hospitable to the troops. They may have been at one time & possibly somebody spoilt it for the rest, & the impression I got from most of them while I was there, that we were not

wanted at all, & yet we were  
the people who were protecting  
not only their lives, but their jobs  
& the whole island & valuable  
oil from falling into the hands  
of the nazis, who would jump  
at the chance if it came their way.  
The island & the refinery were  
extremely well protected & in the event  
of an attack from the air, the whole  
place could be camouflaged by means  
of big oil business which when set  
alight, covered the whole island in a  
smokescreen. In addition to the  
other obvious defences there was quite  
a large balloon barrage surrounding  
the whole area. The refinery itself  
was a magnificent piece of  
modern machinery & the first &

had ever seen & I must say was greatly impressed. To describe it would be an impossibility, but to say the least, it covered 10 miles.

Having been introduced to Dr. Marsh, we had a long chat & then Mr. Wilson showed me the laboratory which I must say was a grand place. They gave me complete liberty & freedom there & I could use or do what I liked.

I went up there every day for the first fortnight & it was a great thrill to work in a big laboratory once again. After a while the malaria died down considerably & my next task was to blood group all the R.A.F. personnel of about 1200 & only about 200 having already

been done. This was a big case  
as all the units were split up  
and men dotted all round the  
island. During the next fortnight  
I worked like a trojan doing  
about 150 B.G. every day & then  
doing all my slides at night.  
Thanks for the loan of apparatus  
& tubes from Mr. Wilson, I was  
able to get through a good part  
of them a great deal quicker  
than would otherwise have been  
possible. Nevertheless I had to  
travel about a good bit & on  
different days went to Kassarbad,  
Kudamsha, Seeba & all round  
the balloon sites. My month  
having come to an end I was  
recalled to Basrah & very

5.

Thankful too on the whole, because the last fortnight's work was showing on me a bit & I was ready for a few days rest.

Nevertheless on the whole I enjoyed it & was a nice change, & not only that I gained some very useful knowledge from Dr March & Mr Wilson's long experience out in this part of the world.

28<sup>th</sup> Nov. I left Abadan & went to Kuramsa & caught the haval launch up to Ashat & so back to Basrah. The M.O. at Abadan thanked me for the work I had done & my own boss was pleased to see me back again. Once more I settled down in my own lab & by this time

The weather had turned quite cold & we wore blue at nights. On the 9<sup>th</sup> Dec. Mr. Davies offered me the chance to take a commission as a malarologist but I declined the offer. It meant studying Entomology & Archaeology about which I know very little & probably being w/c a party of men trying to find the breeding place of mosquitoes which did not excite me a great deal. I was glad to have had the chance but preferred to stay in my own work & carry on as before. It is very nice to have a commission but not much use if you are not interested in your work.

By this time it was getting near Christmas & we were preparing for the festivities. A show was being produced & I was asked to take part in it. For the next week or so rehearsals were ~~was~~ fairly frequent & most spare time was given to it. We had arranged to have a party in Ssd on Christmas eve & I had the job of getting most of the stuff for it. Just to crown everything on the morning of Christmas eve the M.O. told me I was posted forthwith to the M.F. This shook me somewhat as it came at a most inappropriate time, but nevertheless I was really very pleased & everyone

said how lucky I was. Anyway  
by a certain amount of influence,  
I managed to get the posting  
held up until after the show.

Christmas eve arrived & we all  
thoroughly the meal Les & I had  
got & which consisted of - cold  
salmon - Roast goose or duck  
with chip potatoes, tomatoes &  
bacon - followed by Xmas pudding  
trifle & fruit jelly - Then if anyone  
could eat anymore, there was  
biscuits, cheese & coffee & Christmas  
cake. I know quite a number  
of people would have been  
glad of a good meal like that.  
Naturally, afterwards we all  
sat round the fire with beer  
& had a sing song.

Christmas day - no body was up very early, after the previous late night. Les, Ginge & myself went for a walk about 10'oc & returned in time for the Christmas dinner in the Aidman's mess, which was quite good but not so enjoyable as the previous evening. Most of us went to bed in the afternoon & slept the dinner off. We had a quiet evening spent round a large fire & listening to the wireless. Boxing Day - Rushing around preparing for the show & then went out after lunch & saw a picture in the afternoon. Went to bed early. 27<sup>th</sup> Dec. Dress rehearsal for the show

which went very badly. Monday  
28<sup>th</sup> Dec. Rushed around all the  
morning getting clearance cert: signed.  
Prepared the stage in the afternoon  
& in the evening started to get  
ready for the show about 7:00.  
Everyone was feeling a bit nervous  
but when the time came it went  
over very well & everyone thought it  
was a good show. Tuesday  
morning started my packing, & had  
to go down to the airport in the  
afternoon to get all my kit weighed.  
Second night of the show which  
went even better than the first  
night. Said good bye to everyone  
after the show & got to bed  
about 12:00. Up at 4:00 & left  
Basrah at 4:30 by transport to the

Airport. From here onwards, I was treated as a gentleman for the rest of the day. First of all I was shown to the dining hall & had a very nice breakfast with the captain of the flying boat. 60's the party of about 20 of us left by launch for the B.O.A.C. flying boat which lay out in the river.

For the first time of flying I had the privilege of going in a Sunderland flying boat.

Punctually at 6.30 the 4 big engines roared & before you could say "Jack Robinson" we were in the air. At 9.15 we landed at Lake Habbaniya and a launch was ready to take us to the jetty where we went

into the airport hotel & had tea  
& cakes. At 9.30 we were off  
again & this time had a 4 hour  
flip to Kallai which is not  
far from Palestine. We landed here  
& were taken ashore in a little  
launch & cars were ready to take  
us to the airport hotel which  
was only a matter of 500 yds! Here  
we <sup>had</sup> a marvellous lunch & was  
grand to be treated like a real  
person again & waited on wherever  
we went. We had exactly an hour  
for lunch & then the little party  
proceeded down to the launch again  
& once <sup>more</sup> ~~again~~ we were soon in the  
air, on the last lap of our trip.  
It was a marvellous site as  
we circled over Cairo & we saw the

perfectly. For the last time  
 we made a perfect landing on  
 the Nile. <sup>(1000 miles in 11 hours)</sup> A launch drew up  
 alongside & we were taken ashore  
 at the same time all our luggage  
 was taken off on another launch  
 & placed in the Customs office.  
 We then proceeded through the  
 Customs & reminded me of the  
 time when we went through  
 the Customs at Ostende. Having  
 got that paraphernalia over I was  
 taken in a lorry to A.H.Q. Cairo  
 where they were supposed to fix  
 me up with transport to go to  
 22 P.T.C. which I found out to be  
 at Alnaza, a matter of 10 miles  
 outside Cairo & just the other side  
 of Heliopolis. On arriving at

A.H.D. I found them to be the most miserable set of lads I have come across & they would do very little to help me except get my money changed from Iraqi to Egyptian so that I could catch a train. I left that building feeling very miserable in a large city & not the foggiest idea which way to go, & ~~that~~ <sup>thought</sup> that it was a bad way in which to finish such an enjoyable day. Anyway luck was on my side. I wandered along the road a little way & met a couple of Air Force lads & asked them how to get out to Amaza. They immediately said they were going that way & a pal of theirs was just

bringing a yari around & would  
 probably take me all the way,  
 which he did. When I found  
 out how far it was, I was  
 thankful. By this time it  
 was getting on & quite dark  
 & I was feeling very hungry  
 anyway. They soon found me  
 a tent to sleep in & a good  
 feed which I thoroughly enjoyed.  
 Next morning I reported to  
 S.S.O. & was supposed to work  
 there until my official posting  
 came through. That morning,  
 the ambulance was visiting  
 the various hospitals in Helio  
 & Cairo. On the way round  
 we called in at Station Sick  
 Quarters at Heliopolis & here I

met Harry Hadding who used  
to be at Halton with me. I  
fixed up to meet him in the  
evening. So he came & I got a  
lift down into Helio. I met  
Harry. He showed me all round  
& we went & had a good feed  
which I thoroughly enjoyed &  
then went to the pictures &  
saw "That Night in Rio". Helio  
is more or less a suburb of Cairo  
where the more aristocratic people  
live. It is quite a nice little  
town & was a treat to see  
decent shops, houses, buses &  
trams etc. again.

1<sup>st</sup> January 1943. Did a few  
odd jobs in S.S.A. & then met  
Harry in the evening. First of all

We went to the Services Club in Helio which is well known by the troops here & which is probably one of the finest in the world. Afterwards we went to the pictures & saw "The Thief of Baghdad" which amused me rather being so highly fantastic & taken from the stories of the Arabian Nights.

2<sup>nd</sup> Jan. Did nothing all day, & getting a little browned off with sitting around doing odd jobs here & there. Asked the S. M. O. if I could be attached temporarily to Sd. Helio. So I could help Harry in the laboratory. Met Harry in the

Evening I went into Cairo. Trams  
run between Helio & Cairo and  
are similar to those used in  
Belgium & Holland & are supposed  
to be the fastest in the world.

Had a good look round Cairo &  
did some shopping. Some of the  
shops were really marvellous &  
as good as any in England.

Naturally enough we visited a  
restaurant & had an excellent  
meal also for the first time in  
18 months, went into a pub &  
had a drink. Decided to get back  
to camp early & caught the  
tram back to Helio. About a  
mile outside Cairo it broke down  
& we waited in the hopes of it  
being mended. In the end

We gave up in vain I started on what we thought to be a 5 mile walk back to Helio.

Anyway we got about  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile along the track & they managed to get a byc pass going. The train was absolutely packed.

9 people were riding on the top, in between the carriages & on the steps but somehow I

managed to get on. It was a perilous ride & I thought if the train was to crash or tip over, there would be very many casualties. Anyway we got back to Helio without any further hitch & then I started to walk the remaining 2 miles out to Almazo. By this time

it was getting late, it being about 12:30 but luck was with me & I got a lift in a car right up to the camp. I was really thankful as I was very tired having walked all round Cairo & then part of the way back.

3<sup>rd</sup> Jan. Sunday. Went into Cairo in the afternoon with Harry. Had some tea & went to a service at Cairo Cathedral. This cathedral is one of the most modern I have ever seen & looks comparatively small from the outside, but inside it is quite large with the main dome more or less in the centre. After service we had a spot of supper & returned to camp.

4<sup>th</sup> Jan. S.M.O. managed to get me attached to Ess. Helio so that I was able to work in the lab with Harry. wrote letters in the evening. Lady Teddie killed in crash on dome.

5<sup>th</sup> Jan. Tues. It was grand working in the lab with Harry & the S.S.Q. was just next to the 'dome' & we could see all the kites take off & land beautifully. Book seats for the metro cinema in Cairo & saw yeta yabbo in Two faced woman. This was the best cinema in Cairo & really a lovely place. As good as an in England. Thoroughly enjoyed the show & finished the evening off by a good feed & then back to camp.

6<sup>th</sup> Jan. Wed. Received a telephone message about 9.30 to report back to 22 P.T.C. I knew immediately that my posting had come through. Arrived back at the camp & reported to the movements office to find where I was going but they did not know at the time & could only tell me I was flying somewhere & that I had to take 5 blankets with me & only 40 lbs of kit & to be kitted out with battle dress straight away. I knew then, that I was going out on the desert & probably moving up the line. Anyway when I got my kit packed & weighed, I found that I could not take much stuff with me & had

to leave a lot behind, including all my treasured photos, the first part of this book & one or two other things which when I got out on the blue, I wished I had been able to bring. By this time they had found out my unit which they told me as 25 m. R.S. Naturally I was not much wiser as I did not know where they were. That evening I was allowed out of camp & went to Helio to see Harry before moving off the next day. I told him all the news but he could not help me. Anyway we decided to have the last night out in Cairo & went to the pictures & saw

An excellent film called The Invisible Agent also a War Pictorial & on it we saw pictures of the "Marble Arch". Little did I think then that the very next day I should be standing by & pass right under it. We had an enjoyable evening & I returned to Camp finding out that I had to be up by 4 o'clock the following morning.

Now comes, perhaps one of the most interesting chapters in this book to date.

We were up at 4 am Thursday.

7<sup>th</sup> Jan I had breakfast & left Almazra for the airport at 5 am. On arriving at the airport we found out for the first time somewhere near the vicinity which

We might be going, & they told  
 us we were flying to Madaba  
 Ashch by the 70's plane. Punctually  
 to time the twin engine <sup>Lockheed Hudson</sup> ~~De Havilland~~  
 took & we were in the air. I had  
 been very disappointed at not  
 going to see the pyramids while I  
 was here, but on gaining height  
 was able to see them beautifully &  
 in the early morning with the  
 sun just rising, made a perfectly  
 wonderful picture. We had the  
 pleasure of seeing Helio from the  
 air & I could pick out certain  
 landmarks quite easily. So we  
 flew on and for most of the way  
 kept near the coast. After two & half  
 hours travelling we came in to  
 land at a place called El Adam

9 for the first time I realised  
what devastation we caused when  
the big push started. On approaching  
the dome we could see for miles  
all around burnt out German &  
Italian planes, lorries & vehicles  
of all sorts. On landing we  
spoke to one of the lads there &  
he told us the place had been  
heavily mined & it was dangerous  
to wander around too far. After  
10 minutes we took off again  
with another passenger on  
board making 11 of us in all  
with a crew of 3. We crept  
out to the sea again & followed  
the coast line along. I dropped  
off to sleep & the next thing I  
remembered was coming in to land

at a place called Demusa. We had a chat with one of the boys here & told us that the Ferrys had only been pushed from here about a fortnight previously. Again we took off & I closed off again & missed seeing Tobruk & Benghazi as we must have flown over them or near them. I woke up & found that now we had come slightly inland & were following the long road which the Italians built & which must stretch the whole length of the Libyan Desert about 2000 miles. It is the only road & the only other alternative for traffic is to take desert tracks

which have been built recently,  
& from the air it was a marvellous  
sight to see the bodies in an  
unending stream going up to  
the front lines. At 12:30 we  
came in to land, & the ~~photos~~<sup>films</sup>  
I had seen the previous  
evening came to reality & sure  
enough we circled right round &  
landed just beside the Marble  
Arch, where only about 10 days  
previous a terrific battle was being  
fought. A few words on the  
Marble Arch - It was built by  
the Italians in commemoration  
of some big battle fought three  
years ago. It is just an enormous  
Arch across the road & made of  
marble with numerous inscriptions

which unfortunately I could not understand, being unable to read Italian. There is a figure on either side of a wounded man ~~as a representation~~ representing the battle. On the inside of the pillars, there is a winding staircase which leads to the top & from which a wonderful view can be seen. On one side you can look out off over Syriaica & on the other over Tripolitania, the marble arch being the dividing line between the two countries. Having viewed the arch for a few minutes we tried to find out where our unit was & how to get to it. We went to

The signals office & they told us it was about 45 miles up the road & the best way, was to hitch hike it. He did this easily enough & had a ride in the back of a South African wagon on top of a whole pile of shells which was none to comfortable. Anyway I approximated the mileage & sure enough we spotted the Red Crosses on the tents & the ambulances easily enough. We got off & thanked the S.A.'s very much for the lift & went up to the orderly room & found the 7/8pt 1/c. who took us around. He told me there was no lab or equipment for me

I took us to the theatre as the other chap I came with, was an O.R.A. Here I met a chap, <sup>who</sup> was a radiograph & was at the hospital at Hutton the same as I was.

They soon made us as comfortable as possible, & so we finally made ourselves at home with 25 M.R.S. That evening we received a case of a chap who had tripped over one of these booby traps & got his hand blown off. I watched the operation & saw his hand amputated & thought how lucky he was to get away with his life. I heard too that these mines of all descriptions had been laid all up the line & in fact everywhere where

Ferry was retreating. It shook me somewhat & I learnt my lesson there & then, not to wander away from the camp & refrain from picking up souvenirs off the ground, because these traps had been laid in all kinds of places, & most of them most innocuous. Cases have been reported of people picking up Jerry water pump cans which are most useful in the desert, & no sooner than they touched it, the whole thing blew up. Anyway, I went to bed feeling none too happy about the state of affairs. The following morning after breakfast, I was able to look around the camp & find out

Where everything was. Naturally  
 enough as one would expect  
 a mobile hospital, everything  
 was under canvas & the <sup>various</sup> ~~various~~  
 tents were, the theatre, medical  
 & Surgical wards, reception  
 room, orderly room, officers  
 mess, Spts mess, Aidman's  
 mess, cookhouse & stores,  
 comprised of most places.  
 All the ambulances & vehicles  
 were scattered about the place  
 at various disposal points.  
 The unit comprised of 6 officers,  
 6 Spts, & about 80 men. It was  
 entirely self contained & in a  
 very short while ~~was~~ were  
 known as "Cullinans Travelling  
 Circus." I found out our

position which seemed to be  
about 10 miles from Nafitia.  
W/ed. Pullman was the C.O.  
& hence the name of the travelling  
circus. met Mr. Smith who  
was to be my lab officer & he  
tried to get me a plane to  
fly to Benghazi to get some  
lab equipment, but, <sup>our</sup> luck was  
out & nothing could be arranged.  
I hung about all day feeling  
very miserable & found out  
that cigarettes, razor blades &  
any NAAFI requirements for  
that matter were very scarce  
out here & very difficult to  
obtain being so far away from  
a base NAAFI. I kicked myself  
for my foolishness in not

obtaining a fair supply while I had the chance in Cairo & also wished I had all my kit with me but that could not be helped. In the evening one of these mobile NAAFI Cinemas came round & gave us an excellent show & we saw Bradene Durbich in "The 7 Sinners". This was most enjoyable & a great success. All the boys thoroughly enjoyed it & wished they would come round more often.

Sat. 10<sup>th</sup> Jan. managed to get a waggon to take me to Benghazi <sup>a party of 5 of us</sup> & we set off about 11.45 for a 250 mile journey. The road had

been strafed very heavily & bomb holes were very numerous, so the going was pretty heavy. Anyway we made fairly good headway & got to a place called Orgelebia by night fall. Here we stayed for the night & spent quite a restless night in the back of the Gadi. Cooking the breakfast out on the desert next morning (bacon & beans), one of the few natives left in the village came up to us with eggs. She would not take money for them but tea & sugar. We found out that tea was practically unobtainable for them & if they had the money to buy it, cost 10/- a lb. After

21.

breakfast we started off again  
& the breaks ceased up on us.  
managed to get those alright  
& then the big end broke about  
60 miles from Benghazi. We  
had to give up here & sent on  
for help, so I hitchhiked in &  
arrived about 4 o'c. Found out  
there was a big captured Iti  
lab which we were using &  
met Norman House who was  
working there & who used to  
be at Halton with me. He  
showed me around this most  
wonderful laboratory which  
when working in peace time  
must have been a magnificent  
place. It consisted of 4 very  
big labs & everywhere white

tilled & beautifully finished off.  
A bomb had be dropped on  
one half of it but even so it  
was quite usable. The apparatus  
Chemicals & glassware there  
must have been unlimited &  
The library was one of the  
finest I have ever seen.

Unfortunately all the books were  
in Italian but nevertheless  
appeared to cover every type of  
science. I certainly wished I  
could have stayed there & thought  
~~was~~ what a crying shame  
that such a beautiful place  
as this should be ruined. It  
was found out from some of  
the natives, that in peace time  
this public health lab had a

Staff of about 80. 20 doctors  
& scientists & 60 technicians.

After looking round I met S/Sr  
Aitken, the pathologist whom  
I knew in England & had a  
long chat with him. He gave  
me the necessary permission  
to get fitted up with a mobile  
lab. Went round & saw the O.M.  
& handed over the vouchers.

Noonan made me at home  
& we slept in the offices of the  
lab. Shortages of everything  
appeared to be just a acute here  
& cigarettes were just unobtainable.  
I did manage to get a few  
razor blades.

The following morning I started  
sorting out lab equipment &

Saw the trails, which was  
doubtful as to whether I should  
have, but after much debating  
the W/ear decided to let me  
have it. Had supper with  
hoo-man & went to bed  
early.

Wednesday. Still getting the  
trails packed & told the D.O.  
who had come up with us  
that I would be ready to  
move off next day.

Thursday. Waited for a gazi,  
but usual bungling & it did  
not arrive. Told it would be  
sounded in the morning. Had  
a bit of a look round  
Benghazi in the afternoon,  
but could not see very much.

except a lot of shattered  
 ruins. The Cathedral was  
 a beautiful place & completely  
 untouched. From the top of  
 the lab we could get an  
 excellent view of Benghazi &  
 in peace time I should say it  
 was quite a picturesque place  
 but now it is very heavily  
 bomb scarred. In the  
 evening Teddy paid us a  
 visit & the Act Act five was  
 terrific. & reminded me of the  
 old 1940 blitzes on London.  
 Anyway it only lasted about  
 an hour & then everything  
 was quiet again.

Friday. Gasi turned up at 11.0.  
 & we started on our way

journey back to the unit, with  
the trailers, which cut our speed  
down to 20 mph all the time.

It was heavy going & we only  
managed to do 90 miles the first day,  
and picked a suitable spot & made  
camp. The following morning we  
were off fairly early, & had a  
fair days run. All the way  
up the road were notices such as  
these "Keep 100 yds apart" "Do  
not brew up on the road, get right  
off" "Don't be a bloody fool. Keep  
100 yds distant" "No overtaking"  
"If Terry straffs you, you won't  
laugh, keep 100 yds distant" & on  
an old lorry which must have been  
blown up sometime or another it  
had written on it "I was not

a 100 yds distant - Are you? <sup>7</sup>

Although all the notices were very crude, in my opinion they were extremely witty in most cases & if abided by, served their purpose admirably, as Jerry has no easier target than thousands of vehicles all nose to tail & straggling & bombing convoys seen to be a very common thing out here. Again we camped for the night & got well passed Agedabia. The next day we managed to get to Marble Arch by lunch time & went to M.T.L. R.V. to pick up a vehicle which of course they knew nothing about. So we left there with a sorry feeling & carried on to

Nufilia cross roads. We found out here that while we were away our unit had moved on 60 miles inland. We stopped here for some tiffin & the D.O. caught us up in a jeep having left Benghazi 24 hours after us. He had the gen on the vehicle we were supposed to pick up & went off in search of it. We got out onto the blue, & by this time it was packing up time as no lights are allowed after dark & so we made camp again. The next day we made Nufilia which was about 30 miles out in the desert & which at one time used to be an Italian. We stopped here for information but no one knew where our unit was. We went to

The water point I got plenty of supplies of water I got an approximate bearing as to the way we should go. We travelled on over the desert & in the afternoon got bogged in the sand up to the axels. We tried every way possible to get out but the trailer was too heavy for the lorry. Eventually I went off in the lorry with the driver to find help & we came across one of our gadis in the desert so they came & with the extra lorry on the front & a tow chain we eventually got out after 3 hours. By this time most of us were a bit irritable & tired so we decided to pack it

in for the day & try to make our destination the following day.

The next morning we seemed to get right on top of a plateau & were sailing along merrily when one of the boys saw our own water trailor coming towards us. We signalled them & stopped to find out how far we were away from camp & apparently only about 30 miles but we were going slightly in the wrong direction & had to cut inland a bit more. He said we would wait for them to come back so that they could show us the way. While we were waiting I had the bright idea of trying to get some NAATI

Which would come in useful when we got back to the unit, so the driver, another chap & myself set off on a road with an arrow pointing to the NAAFI & when we got there it was for Army personnel only as our supplies were fudged up the line. Anyway I was not going to be beaten, so asked if there was anywhere where we could get rations & the In. P. told us of a transit camp about 3 miles across the line. When we got there, I saw the Spt 1/c & told him the story of how we had to get back to Benghazi. So he immediately said "Ah, you are the very people we have been

looking for - we have 50 German  
prisoners here - will you take  
some of them back in the lorry?  
I was dumfounded & did not  
know what to say, but he changed  
his mind luckily & said it did  
not matter, & would get someone  
else. Oh boy! was I relieved.  
He gave us a chit to get rations  
& after queuing up for about an  
hour we got them eventually  
including cigarettes, so we did  
not do so badly after all. Found  
the trailer again & had tiffin.  
Shortly afterwards the others  
arrived & led the way back to  
camp, but not without an  
incident. We were about a  
mile from the camp & had to



& no move was absolutely imminent but the C.O. told us that we should be moving on as soon as the squadrons moved up. NAAFI supplies during the whole of this time were still very short & very few cigarettes could be obtained, some weeks, relying only on our issue which was 50 cigarettes a week. Up until this time bread had been non-existent but somehow some was obtained & so we had bread for a few days, after which we went back to the old biscuits once more. Fresh meat was unobtainable being so far out in the desert & naturally all our food was tinned. We were fortunate enough to find out that there was a good gazelle hunting ground

About 30 miles away from the camp 9 so parties of about 5 were organised by the C.O. 9 went out gazelle hunting. We found that we could get these quite easily 9 so kept up our fresh meat supply. I managed to go out one afternoon with one of the officers 9 a couple of other lads 9 we did quite well getting 5 between us. I got the biggest one of the lot 9 felt quite pleased with myself.

These gazelles go about in herds in the desert 9 can run faster than any other animals I've seen. They can not only run fast but keep it up for long periods at a time. We chased

one buck for fully half an hour  
& at one time he was level with  
the car & was travelling at a  
speed of nearly 50 miles an hour.  
It was good fun but really  
poor sport in a car, nevertheless  
it would be impossible to get  
near enough to shoot them on  
foot. Luckily enough the rifle I  
was using was a German which  
had been captured & was a very  
nice one too. As a result of these  
shooting parties we were able to  
have fresh meat nearly every  
day & roast gazelle is really  
lovely & some of the most tender  
meat I have ever eaten. It tastes  
very much like venison. After  
3 weeks here, we finally got the order

To move I on the day before moving,  
a mobile NAAFI came round & we  
were able to replenish our very much  
depleted stocks of cigarettes & such  
things as tinned fruit, soap, shaving  
cream & any other necessity. That  
same evening a mobile cinema  
came round & we saw George Formby  
in "Spare a Copper". The following  
morning, all tents were taken down  
& we moved off about 11 o'clock. By  
nightfall we reached the outskirts  
of Lette having travelled only 50  
miles but across some of the  
roughest desert I have yet <sup>seen.</sup> ~~crossed.~~  
The next morning we were off  
about 8:30 & got to <sup>the advance party</sup> ~~the advance party~~ by lunch  
time. After tiffin we were on the  
road again & made Tamer by

night fall. Being on the main road made a considerable difference & we were able to do 160 miles that day.

Here we made camp again. The following morning we got into the green belt & passed through some quite pretty country. On heading hisurata we passed many very well built dwelling houses & were all part of Mussolini's colonisation of Libya. Each of these houses had a certain amount of land to it, which the owner had to cultivate & sell the produce to the government. Once again we saw the palm trees & groves and at 11 o'clock we arrived at hisurata. At one time I should say it was quite a decent town, but now looks rather battle scarred

from the fighting which took place only about 3 weeks previously. We had a short stop here & then made zlitin by tiffin time. This was near the area where we had to make camp & so the C.O. set off to find a suitable spot. While we were having tiffin numerous natives came up with eggs & lemons which we were able to buy off them very cheaply or swap for biscuits.

After tiffin we moved off inland to find the spot the C.O. had chosen & expected to go about 15 or 20 miles inland instead we had to go about 40 as most of the way had been heavily mined. So we eventually arrived at a spot where the C.O. had chosen in a sandstone.

Nothing could be done that night  
owing to the wind & sand. And  
so once again we were right out in  
the desert in a part known as the  
<sup>B. S. DOFAN</sup>  
Darak area & about 100 miles from

Tripoli. Friday 12<sup>th</sup> Feb. 43. We  
tried to put up the tents but owing  
to the terrific wind & then rain, we  
had to give it up. By the afternoon  
it had died down a bit & we were  
able to get some of the tents up.

That night a terrific sandstorm  
blew up & we got absolutely smothered  
in sand. Anyway by the following  
morning it had died down  
considerably & we were able to put  
up the remainder of the tents. I  
was very thankful too when they  
were all up, as it is a very tiring

job, especially when there are big  
 madquays besides many others.

Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> Feb. brought quite a ~~restful~~  
~~day~~ & once more we settled down

to camp life & the patients had  
 already had started coming in from  
 various units surrounding us.

Desert life carried on in much

the same old way & I quite enjoyed  
 it here in spite of sandstorms.

The main thing was plenty of work  
 to do which made you feel that  
 you were not altogether wasted in  
 the desert. 3 weeks passed and

during that time we saw quite a  
 bit of the ambulance place which  
 land on a flying field we made  
 on the camp.

We were just over a 100 miles

East of Tripoli here & several people  
got the chance they have a couple  
of days leave but I did not unfortunately.  
Nevertheless 3 weeks passed very  
quickly & once more we got orders  
to pack up & move. The old game  
of packing up & taking the tents  
down started, & on Fri. March 5<sup>th</sup>  
we moved off. It was rough  
going across the desert until we  
got to Zliten once again & then  
we made good headway along  
the coastal road. By this time  
we got into what is known as  
the green belt. We passed through  
many little villages on the way to  
Tripoli & for the first time on the  
whole trip up from Cairo, it began  
to look a bit more civilized again

from the continual drab of the desert. The land appeared to be more & more fertile as we went on & we passed through very many lovely orange groves but unfortunately it was the wrong time of the year & there was no fruit on them. Eventually we reached Tripoli at 5 o'clock after a very good run of 144 miles. We drove right round the town & this was the first I had seen of it although quite a number of others had been for a couple of days. As we passed along the streets we could see where some of the bombs had fallen also the strapping & bullet holes which showed up

on the walls of many of the buildings. Some of these buildings were magnificent particularly the cathedral which is truly wonderful.

Some of the shops were open & the civilian population seems to be coming out of their hiding places, but the price of things were very high.

He spent that night with 24 M.R.S. who had the hospital in Tripoli & were just next to the race course. The following morning we were off again at 8:30 & had another very pleasant day's run. Again we passed through one or two small towns & after travelling about 60 miles

We left the coast road once  
 more & made for the desert to  
 a place called El Assa. This  
 was about 30 miles inland &  
 over some of the roughest  
 desert I have yet travelled.  
 We got stuck on several occasions  
 with the trailers & was rather  
 a long and tedious job getting  
 them out. Anyway, eventually  
 we arrived at our destination  
 & found the C.O. had really  
 picked a grand spot for us.  
 This time & was quite nice &  
 green which helps to break the  
 glare of the desert. By  
 midday the following day,  
 the tents were all up &  
 the camp complete, & so once

Again we settled down to camp. Our position was fairly far forward now & C.O.

estimated us to be about 50 miles behind the front lines.

Once again I got my laboratory set up & within a couple of days we were in full operation.

After a week or so, I had to go to Tripoli to get some serum.

Arriving in Tripoli about 6:00 I met Dave Summers & we had a chat & he found me a bed in his billet. About 9:00 the sirens sounded we knew there was going to be a big raid. Sure enough, about a quarter of an hour later the guns opened up & I saw one of the biggest barrages

I had ever seen. The beauforts were firing tracer bullets & it looked like one big fireworks display. Radio location seemed to be excellent as they were picking up the planes well & almost immediately the searchlights picked them out. I saw several picked out by the searchlights & when the guns were trained on them, you could see the bullets hitting the planes & really I did not envy the pilots & know I should not like to have been in their places. We were watching one bombed which was caught by the searchlights & which seemed to be heading in our

direction & then smoke started coming out of his tail. I said to the boys "If he drops his bombs now we've had it" but he seemed to come on down & passed right by us. At that moment there was a terrific explosion & my tin hat was blown off my head & I was thrown right across the building I was standing in & the next thing I remember was bricks & mortar falling on top of me. I got up & felt myself all over & found much to my relief that I was entirely unharmed. I immediately shouted out to the other chaps to find out if they were all right.

At that moment I could see a chap lying on the ground amongst the debris & pulled him out. It was not sufficiently light to see if he was hurt or not so another chap & myself carried him into the hospital & found that he was only suffering from severe shock. We were ordered to go down the shelter until the raid was over, & then we went to see where the bomb had dropped & what damage had been done. When we went to look, we found a huge crater big enough to put a house in just at the back of the building I was in, & another smaller one, so 2 bombs had

been dropped. The crater itself was not more than 10 yards away from where I had been standing & had blown the whole of one side of the wall in which was scattered all over the place. It seemed an absolute miracle how no one was even hurt & I thanked God for my life. It was a very close shave indeed & I never want one as bad as that again. Had the bomb dropped another 20 yds up the pathway, no doubt it would have hit the hospital & there would have been hundreds of casualties. It was estimated from the def crater that the bomb was a 500 lb

& The small crates a 25 lb.  
 After the raid was over we  
 had to move our beds out  
 of that building as it was  
 unsafe. Quite a number of  
 fellows had a job finding them  
 amongst the debris. Mine  
 was alright luckily. That  
 night I spent very restlessly  
 in the Q.M. Stores. The next  
 morning we further investigated  
 the damage & found great  
 lumps of bricks & mortar  
 thrown 25 yds away. I got  
 my serum & documents from  
 Dave and directly after Tiffin  
 made for camp as quickly  
 as possible. We made it in  
 good time and arrived back

at 6.00, & very thankful I was  
too. We heard in the morning  
that we had brought down 10  
planes from the raid which  
I thought quite a good effort.  
The day we made last & got  
back to camp again & thankful  
was, to have a good night's rest.  
Life went on in much the usual  
way & the work steadily rolled in.  
The start of the final push  
began & patients were being  
evacuated to us from the front.  
On March 26<sup>th</sup> the D.C. came  
round on a visit & inspected the  
whole camp. By this time we  
had been at L. ASSA just on a  
month & had really got settled  
in.

my turn came round for leave  
 & so once more I went to Tripoli.  
 We had a record run down  
 making it in 3½ hours & arrived  
 in time for tiffin. Afterwards  
 my pal & I walked round the  
 town & had a look at the shops, &  
 took a few photos. On the  
 whole I was very disappointed  
 with the shops & most of them  
 were much of a bunchness &  
 contained little souvenirs which were  
 very expensive & not really worth  
 buying. We walked all a long  
 the beautiful promenade amongst  
 the palm trees which was really  
 picturesque. Unfortunately I  
 could not take any photos as  
 the Redoubt was on one side & the

Chances of taking military objectives by mistake, were too great. We visited the Cathedral which really is a fine piece of architecture also the Bank of Rome & many other beautiful buildings. After a good look round we returned along the promenade & called in at the Union Club on the way, which is a fine building, which in peacetime was a civic centre or possibly the Town Hall, & now is a rest room & hearth for the troops. We had a cup of tea here & then walked back to the hospital where we were staying the following morning (Saturday). My pal & I set out after breakfast & had another walk & decided we would go & see an ENSA Show in the

afternoon. We got in easily & had  
 the front row in the upper circle.  
 It was a grand feeling to sit in  
 a real theatre once more & we  
 thoroughly enjoyed the show. He  
 played Bridge in the evening & a  
 message was received for us to  
 return to camp first thing in  
 the morning. This cut our leave  
 short by  $\frac{1}{2}$  a day & we were  
 disappointed about it because  
 we anticipated taking quite a  
 number of photos. Nevertheless  
 we <sup>never</sup> were on our way again.  
 Directly after breakfast we started  
 on our journey back. It was  
 a glorious day & the beautiful  
 smell of sandal from the  
 mimosa trees was very exhilarating.

He arrived back at camp by  
tiffin time to find everything packed  
up ready to move off. So directly  
after tiffin we were on the road  
again & had to make medicine  
by light fall. In a very short  
while after starting we saw the  
tri-colored French flag on the  
boards & soon we passed it &  
were then in Tunisia. We  
travelled on steadily over very  
bumpy roads & made medicine  
just before light fall, which  
was 90 miles. The C.O. found  
the spot where we were to pitch  
camp which was just 5 miles  
~~west~~ out of the village. I was  
very tired & thankful to get to  
bed that night having travelled

just over 200 miles that day.

The push was still going on steadily and as fast as the army were pushing on, we were following them up. Gabes had just fallen to us. Monday

5<sup>th</sup> March 43. Once again we were putting up tents, I had most of the camp up by the afternoon. We ~~are~~ were very busy here but our stay was

not long & on the 14<sup>th</sup> March we had orders to move again up to Sfax, which had only fallen to us a few days previously.

We packed up again & at 7.30 am on 15<sup>th</sup> March we were ready to move off. This was one of the worst journeys I had

oved had but nevertheless we  
made the 150 miles by nightfall.  
After an hours journey we got  
to the marsh line where such  
a big battle was fought only  
a couple of weeks previously. The  
little village of marsh was  
absolutely gutted right out & there  
was not a soul about anywhere.  
Shortly after passing this village  
we had a puncture & had to  
put the spare wheel on. Having  
done that we sailed on merrily &  
caught the others up by tiffin time.  
All the way along the road were  
mines which Jerry had left behind  
& I have never seen so many  
in all my life. The whole  
way a long the side of the

road was absolutely littered with them. The sappers had dug them up & left them on the side of the road. They are very deadly ~~things~~ & we all had to be very careful not to pull over to the side of the road as one poor chap did & was blown sky high by an anti-tank mine which must have been missed.

We were getting on well & then all of a sudden the carabretta started spluttering & our lorry just came to a standstill. The fitters did everything to put it right & managed to get her going in the end. Our luck was out that day & altogether she knocked out about 4 times. The last time the fitters

decided to draw on to the side of the road & fix on a new pump & carburetor. There were some big "tracks" about 100 yds up the road which had pulled on to a green patch & seeing them we decided to pull on there out of the way. We managed to make the gas go that distance & pulled in on a little path way which had been made. Instead of keeping to this pathway, my driver swung right round so we were level with the road again leaving the "tracks" about 20 yds away. All of a sudden I saw to of these Army hats waving frantically to us & immediately jump to the conclusion that we were on a mine field. In those few moments

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I went hot & cold all over & am  
sure my heart beat went up to  
120 per minute. With God's good  
grace we waded all the times  
& drew back on to the track  
quite safely, & oh boy was I  
thankful. When I got out &  
went & spoke to these lads they  
told us we were on a mine  
field & only ~~to~~ 2 days previously  
a lorry had blown up not 50 yds  
from where we were. Sure  
enough when we looked round  
we could see the remains of the  
lorry still lying there. By this  
time it was getting late & we  
still had about 40 miles to  
do & I was feeling really  
sick & bad after the experience

I had just been through & being the second read thing I had had seemed to react on me worse than the first. After 12 hours they got the gas going again & as we all hoped for good, our luck was still out & we had no done more than a mile & she refused to go again. This time they gave it up as a bad job & decided to tow us the rest of the way. Eventually we arrived at Gase when it was dark & we did not know where to go then because we knew that the camp would be made some miles out of the town but in what direction we did not know. Anyway we decided to go up to the

main cross roads to see if there was anyone about. Our luck was in this time as the C.O. had sent someone back to wait for us until we arrived, so he showed us the way. It was only another 10 miles & we made that without further trouble. A hot dinner was waiting for us when we arrived but I felt so bad that I went straight to bed with some aspirins. The following morning I felt a lot better for my rest & once again we started putting up the tents. We were in rather pleasant surroundings here & all amongst rows & rows of Olive trees for which Tunisia is so famous, & when I

say rows & rows & means to be  
say endless square hills of olive  
trees. <sup>The name of the place TRIASA</sup> Apparently each tree is  
valued at £10 a year when partly  
grown & £20 a year when fully  
matured. After getting the camp  
set up once again we settled  
down to work & as usual it  
was not long before patients  
started to arrive. As we were  
near Spax they started running  
parties into the town to see a  
variety show which had been  
put on by the Army. I went in  
with the first party & enjoyed  
the show very much. Afterwards  
we had time to look round the  
town which at one time I  
should imagine was a very

pleasant holiday resort but now is a bit of a shambles. Much the same as Tripoli, Spase has rather a pleasant promenade along the front lined with palm trees. Some of the magnificent mosaique buildings in the main street had been hit badly & it seemed a wicked shame that such beautiful buildings should be subjected to such damage. During the best few days we were kept very busy & had heard that this was to be our last move in this campaign but another move was a head & within 5 days we were on the way again but this time

only a matter of 45 miles  
further on to a place called  
EH HENCHA. This was an  
easy move & we took it in stages  
& did not rush it. The country  
we came to now was a bit  
more open with beautiful fields  
of poppies & many kinds of  
wild flowers. The colouring  
was really ~~beautiful~~ <sup>wonderful</sup> & one  
could almost imagine being  
on the Scottish moors in  
England. Monday 19<sup>th</sup> March.

We seemed to get the camp up  
quicker than ever & by tiffin time  
we were in full operation. We  
had not been here more than a  
week when a case of small  
pox turned up & we had to make

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a part of the camp isolated. The only way to do it was to move the majority of the camp to the other side of the road & build a fresh camp there which we did. After the quarantine time elapsed the others moved over with us. It was an extraordinary coincidence that it was in early April last year that I was in a small pose epidemic just as I was leaving Habbaniya. Life went on steadily in the same old way & we soon got settled in. We made a cricket pitch & had some good games with the surrounding units. Everybody was getting excited about the fall of Tunis which seemed

emanant any day & we knew the day before that it had fallen, but was officially announced on the wireless on May 7<sup>th</sup> that Tunis & Bizerta had fallen. A few days later the remaining Germans were captured & so the terrific battle that had been fought out here finally finished. Now that this campaign had finished we had to sit back & wait for us to move to the next theatre of war & naturally everyone is making wild guesses as to where we are going. 20<sup>th</sup> March. Up to date none of us knew. We were still at LA HENCHA & had really settled down well. Although there was a great number of moans from most of us (which is an Admiral's

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privilege). The unit had worked well & we were congratulated on the fine work which had been done on our long journey following the 8<sup>th</sup> Army all the way.

June 1<sup>st</sup>. I was granted a day's leave in Tunis & so 12 of us set off in a taxi about 1000. The road was good & we made a speedy headway & soon made El Djem. It was a 200 mile journey & we passed through one or two small towns but nothing of real interest. The country was much the same all the way & there seemed to be endless hills of olive trees. We reached the outskirts of Tunis by 4:30 & went on to Carthage where we stayed

overnight at 30 M.F.H. On the way  
to Carthage we passed the Cathedral  
& here we were waved off the road  
& told to stop. Within a minute  
or so a large convoy appeared led  
by 50 of motorcycles & armored  
cars. At once we knew it was  
some celebrity. As the cars went  
passed we were all greatly  
surprised to see as plain as  
anything - Mr. Churchill & Anthony  
Eden who waved to us as they  
went by. In the car behind them  
was General Alexander & behind  
that General Eisenhower also  
numerous other higher ranked  
whom I could not recognize.  
On arriving at the hospital  
we found out that had we

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been there about 2 hours previously  
we should have been able to  
see him speak in the Central  
Auditorium.

The lads at the hospital  
made us very welcome & we were  
glad to have a good & wash & a  
meal after our long run. As I  
was going into dinner I met the  
Flying Officer D.M. who was the  
W/O at the D.P.M. when I was  
there. I was so surprised to see  
him & we had a long chat.

Shortly after dinner I was sent  
for by y/capt. Lipscomb who was  
there at the time & who was my  
old C.O. in England. We went for  
a swim that evening in the  
Bay of Cadiz & I was very

Struck by the surroundings & one  
could imagine you were at some  
seaside resort in Devon or Cornwall.  
There were cliffs most of the  
way round the coast & to get on to  
the beach we climbed down a  
narrow pathway to a very pleasant  
alcove where on one side there  
was a refreshment house & on the  
other little bathing huts, more after  
the style of a chalais. Naturally  
the refreshment house was closed  
down, but one could well imagine  
what a lovely place it was in  
peace-time. We had a lovely  
swim & returned to the hospital  
& I decided to try & see the g/capt,  
but he was out & so I had a  
look round the lab & then went to bed.

The following morning I saw the y/capt after breakfast & he seemed very pleased to see me again. I was very thrilled to see him again & only wished I was still under his command. We had a long chat & he wanted to know everything. After I left him I made my way into Tunis as the bus had gone on before me, & got a lift with the Brigadier Commanding the 1<sup>st</sup> Armies Artillery. So I was well in <sup>with</sup> the big noises that day. I forgot to mention, that some of were up at 6 o'clock that morning & went for a dip before breakfast which was really grand. The Brigadier dropped me in Tunis & I walked up the main st. to

find some of the others. It was  
not long before I found a  
party of them coming down  
the road & joined up with them.  
Tunis being a French town,  
there were very many French  
girls walking about the town,  
& were they smart! The dresses  
& costumes they wore were some  
of the smartest I have ever  
seen & should imagine that  
they got them from Paris  
somehow. Not only that, a  
large number of these girls were  
extremely pretty, or at least I  
thought so, but probably no  
prettier than any average  
English girl. Not having seen  
a really pretty & well dressed

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girl for such a long time, I suppose it struck me more than it would normally.

Tunis itself had not been damaged much & most of the shops were open again now, (1<sup>st</sup> Aug) although there was not a great deal to buy except powder & lipstick etc. Nevertheless, I bought a few things to send home. It was nice to see

a real pub again & to be able to go in and get a drink & the wine which is made here is not at all bad & very cheap.

The French use it mainly as a cheap dinner wine. After looking all round the town, we returned to the hospital for lunch. We

were all disappointed at having to return & wish we could have had a week's leave. Nevertheless before leaving on our 200 mile journey back to camp we visited the Brewery & bought a few bottles of wine at 5 francs a bottle which was very cheap. After visiting the brewery we went for a final swim & then started back for camp about 3.30 pm. We had a very good run ~~back~~ & arrived back at 10 oc, which was very good going.

The next day we were packing up camp again ~~it~~ as we had orders to move back to Ben Gardene. We took things easily & the camp was soon

down. June <sup>49</sup> 4<sup>th</sup>. Once again we  
were on our way on another  
200 mile in convoy. We passed  
back over roads which were  
familiar to us. This time I once  
again passed over that terrible  
area by Gaxe that was so full  
of mines. Nevertheless everything  
was all quiet now I in working  
order I we went on hurriedly I  
soon made Soussse, Gaxe I  
then Gabes, I of course once  
again passed through the  
mareth line, which was as  
desolate as ever.

We reached mednine by about  
600 I drew on to our old "Sight"  
for the night. It was strange to  
see our old "Sight" again I

Everyone one went round to where  
their old tent used to be. The  
next morning we moved off about  
8:30 & made Ben Gardens by tiffin  
time. We were only a mile from  
the sea here & after the camp was  
set up, <sup>we</sup> were able to go for a swim  
nearly every afternoon. We were  
only partly operational here & were  
able to get a good rest which was  
what a great many of us needed.  
We were lucky to get one or two  
comets & cinemas in the area  
& I saw hickey Rooney in "A  
Yank at ~~the~~ Eton" one day, &  
2 days later 14<sup>th</sup> June. Ralph  
Reader & his gang show came  
round. This was a 1<sup>st</sup> class show  
& one of the bests I have seen in the  
desert.

We stayed <sup>50</sup> at Benyadine longer  
than anticipated and after a time  
most of us got very bored of  
with nothing much to do. By  
12 July we were still at the same  
site & I had the chance to go  
to Tripoli for the day with one  
of my pals & the C.O. We set out  
about 10:00 and got to Sabratha  
by Tiffin time. The C.O. had a  
few things to do here & so Reg &  
I were able to look round the  
old Roman ruins which were  
really interesting. <sup>These are</sup> ~~this is~~ some  
of the oldest Roman remains  
to be seen in this part of the  
world & the Amphitheatre is  
supposed to be dated back to  
200 B.C. We took quite a few

photos here & had a look round the old town. Most of the ruins were in good preservation & obviously had been looked after. We started out again after tiffin & made T. by dinner time. After a scout round the town in the evening we returned to the Hq & saw quite a good show given by J.H.M.P.H. The following morning we went into town again & bought a few things & then set off for Sabatha again which we made in time for tiffin a second time. We left fairly soon after tiffin & I had one of the most unpleasant journeys since being on the desert. Reg & I were riding in the back of the C.O. basket & the track was none too good - The C.O. seemed in a great hurry to get back & we

51.

We bounced all over the place.  
By the time we did arrive back at  
B.G. were covered from head to ~~toes~~  
in sand. Once again we were  
glad to be back in camp & it was  
not long now before our orders came  
through to move. With a week  
or so of camouflage painting tents setting  
out. farris, we finally got everything  
packed up & were on the road again  
by 20<sup>th</sup> July. <sup>(Society invaded 6<sup>th</sup>)</sup> This time 4 of us  
travelled in the trailer & we set  
up a record by brewing up chai  
while the convoy was actually in  
motion, so that at one place we  
stopped, our drivers came to see  
how we were getting on & was somewhat  
shaken by being given a cup of  
chai on the spot.

Eventually we arrived at Tripoli  
race course once again at 1900 hrs.  
A hot meal was already for us &  
very thankful we were. By now  
everyone knew we were going to Sicily  
& once again were following the 8<sup>th</sup>  
Army as we had done in the previous  
campaign. There was a certain  
amount of excitement shown by  
everyone & all eager to get over the  
other side. That night we saw  
a film on the race course called  
"The first of a few" which was the  
life story Mitchell who designed the  
Spitfire. It was an excellent film  
& everyone went to bed feeling  
quite contented that night.

July 21<sup>st</sup>. A frig arrived & we  
fixed it up in the trailer. Although

at first we had a little trouble  
with it, we did get it going  
eventually & proved invaluable  
to us. As I were also on the  
race course Harry was with  
them & so Harry, Dave & myself  
were altogether for the first time  
since we were at Hacton together  
just about 2 years ago.

In the afternoon I went for a  
swim with Dave. We had a  
sing song in the trailer in the  
evening.

22<sup>nd</sup> July. We were allowed in the  
town in the afternoon, so Reg & few  
others & myself set out & had a look  
round the shops & managed to  
get tickets for the Murrumbidgee  
Theatre for the 5:15 performance.

After having a few iced lemonades  
& a few sandwiches we went to  
the show & thoroughly enjoyed it.  
The show was called "Highlights".

Came back in the evening & had a  
good feed up in the trailer.

23<sup>rd</sup> / Again the ban was dropped  
& we were not allowed out owing  
to the anticipated move. Some of  
the lads were beginning to get  
browned off with waiting about  
& were anxious to get on with  
the job. As we could not go out  
of camp I went for a swim in the  
morning & had a good rest in the  
afternoon. There was a football  
match on the evening & I really  
enjoyed watching & the first one  
I had seen for a long time.

53.

24<sup>th</sup> July. Feb had all day & had  
a bad attack of diarrhoea, layed  
on my bed all day but got up in  
the evening & saw a show at 24.

25<sup>th</sup>. Went to church in the  
morning & went swimming in  
the afternoon.

26<sup>th</sup>. Our advance Surgical Section  
left, in a hurry as usual & flew  
over by plane. Played in a  
football match in the evening.

For the next 3 days we just hung  
about & began to get very fed up  
with doing nothing. Anyway,  
they signalled for me urgently &  
so I had to pack my microscope  
& stains in a box but we had to  
wait a day then for the plane.  
Anyway Mr Miles decided to

Come with me & so we had everything in readiness. That afternoon I went for a swim & a very rough sea & lost my ring coming in over the rocks. This upset me very much & for the time being seemed to take all the edge of the excitement of flying to Sicily.

30<sup>th</sup> Final arrangements were made & without further delay Sgt. Smiles & I set off for Castel Benito aerodrome where we were to catch the plane the following morning. We left T. race course at 6.00 & in 1/2 hour arrived at the 'drome. Here all final arrangements were made for the following morning. We stayed overnight in the transit camp.

54.

31<sup>st</sup> July. Up at 5:30 - Breakfast  
at 6:00 & on the 'drome at 6:30.

Here we had some considerable  
waiting about & by the time we  
were weighed in & everything  
checked it was 7:30. A paritoned  
up & took us out the kite which  
was a D.C. 3. Standing on the  
runway. Altogether there were  
12 of us plus a crew of 4 & by  
the time we got all the baggage  
etc on board it was close on  
8:00. Punctually on eight the pilot  
taxied to his position. & on  
receiving the signal we were  
airborne before you could say  
"Jack Robinson. After about  
1/2 hour we were over the sea &  
saw nothing for the next 2 hours

but water, after which time  
Matta came in sight. This was  
the first I had seen of Matta  
& we circled twice & could see  
the whole island. We were flying  
quite low & could <sup>see</sup> what a  
wonderfully fertile place it is.  
There seemed hardly a square yard  
of land which was not  
cultivated & it certainly gave  
a wonderful picture from the  
air. We landed ~~of~~ on one of  
the 4 branches (Luga), which are  
all joined together by long  
runways. Having made a  
perfect landing at 10:30 we were  
told we could get out & walk  
round for 1/2 hour. Some of us  
found a tea shop & went & had

A Cup of tea. I had just finished mine when Mr Smiles came running in & called out for me & said the plane was taking off straight away. We had to run hard & just caught it before the doors were closed.

Within a few seconds we were in the air again & out over the sea, this time flying low so that we could not be picked up by German Radio location.

In 20 minutes we got our first glimpse of Sicily & in  $\frac{1}{2}$  an hour had landed once again at ~~an~~ <sup>5 miles Syracuse</sup> ~~the~~ <sup>at</sup> ~~at~~ <sup>at</sup> Cassibile. Having flown over that short distance between Malta & Sicily it is not surprising how easily the

Germanans bombed Malta when they were in possession of Sicily. Our advance party were only a matter of 200 yds from the shore so it did not take very long before the fasci came to pick me up & once more I was with the advance party. The camp was situated in an Almond grove right in the farm lands, surrounded by some of the prettiest scenery I had seen for sometime. So far there were only 12 of us across & the rest were still in Tripoli.

I set up the few oddments I had in a tent & at the moment there was not a great deal of work to do. In the evening Reg took me for a walk all round some

56.  
vineyards which were quite  
near at hand & we picked  
grapes & ate them until we  
looked like them. Never before  
have I seen such big grape  
vineyards with almond trees  
intertwined. Our surroundings  
here were really beautiful & one  
could almost imagine oneself  
back in England again, somewhere  
in any farming district. It  
was grand to see real soil once  
more & no sand which we  
were used to by now. There was  
a farm in the next field where  
they kept horses, cows, goats &  
chicken & it was a wonderful  
sight to see the cows coming in  
in the afternoon for milking.

The Sicilian farmers here quite friendly & were very willing to do our washing for us. As in most country farms in England, this one had a well where we used to draw most of our water. And so, I went to bed that night feeling very satisfied with the situation & can honestly say that the first week here was one of the happiest I had spent on the unit. As there were so few of us & only 3 officers, there was no discipline & we were allowed to do more or less as we liked & had a comparatively free life until the main party arrived, which was nearly a fortnight from this date.

1st Aug. As I have said life was very pleasant here & everyone went about their jobs & when you finished, walked down to the sea which was only  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile away. It was lovely bathing here but no sand. Instead, there were the famous Sicilian coral rocks which <sup>we</sup> were able to dive off into about 15 feet of crystal clear water.

As time went on we began to get more busy every day & the Air Sea Rescue parties flying in the Walruses were doing some grand work in picking up our pilots who had come down in the drink. We received quite a large number

of casualties from this source  
& by the 8<sup>th</sup> Aug. we were full up  
& our little advance party had  
all its time cut out coping with  
all the patients. Malaria had  
got a hold on some people by now  
& we were receiving quite a few  
cases of it which kept me very  
busy.

10<sup>th</sup> Aug. - The majority of the  
main party arrived & it was  
not very long before our little  
camp was turned into a big  
field hospital once again.

11<sup>th</sup> Aug. The P.M.O. informed  
me that I was to go to Catania  
to pick up some equipment I  
wanted from the University.  
We set off early morning & soon

passed through Syracuse & was not long before we were up in the very high hills surrounding Lentini & Ca Lentini. The views we had on the way were some of the most wonderful I have seen for sometime & if anyone saw the hills & valleys as I did, they must realise what difficult ground our men had to fight over. All the way up it was nothing but hills & dales which were surrounded by orange, almond & lemon groves. On the way we called at Augusta & it was here that we saw where the fighting had been heavy. Most of the places all the way up

were practically unscathed  
& no one would have known  
that there had been heavy  
fighting there only a few weeks  
previously. The port at Augusta  
had been very badly damaged  
but there were still Italian  
seaplanes floating in the  
harbour which to all outward  
appearances looked untouched.  
As we carried on we got to the  
planes of Catania & passed  
over the famous bridge which  
was the Germans strong point  
in their last effort to save  
Catania. It was while taking  
this bridge that Headdy Verity the  
Yorks cricketer lost his life.  
We had been warned of the

heavy mining the Germans had done around this area & we had proof of it here alright. The sappers had done their stuff again & everywhere along the side of the road was strewn with mines which they had dug up. We had a wonderful view of Mount Etna from here which seemed to stand majestically behind Catania. Before entering the town we passed what was once a German air base, but the Americans had bombed so much that it was just one mass of bomb craters. On entering the town we had to pass through some

Of the worst areas where  
Street fighting had been worst  
& the place was in a terrible  
state, Catania having been in  
our hands only a week now.  
Soon we passed into the better  
part of the town & could see  
at a glance that in peacetime,  
was quite a nice place. We  
also learnt that the front line at  
this time was only 25 miles north  
of Catania & so as you can guess  
we were very near to the Terras.

We soon found Area HQ & told  
them we had come up for medical  
supplies. They directed us to the  
University of Catania where we  
got in without much trouble.  
This place was an eye opener to me

& The whole place had been left just as it was & by the looks of it had been evacuated in a hurry. The equipment I saw had was some of the finest I have ever seen in my life & in one lab we went into there was a photographic microscope set up already for use & must have been worth a great deal of money. It was practically a brand new place & it was wonderful to see a first class lab such as this. Anyway, our job was to pick up a balance which we did & as many other things as we could lay hands on. Time was short & we were afraid the officers might come round &

catch us piling all this equipment  
in the lorry. Anyway we got  
some very useful things & cleared  
off quickly. We stayed the  
night at M.T.L.R.U. & they had  
taken over a big Fiat works  
in the centre of the town. We  
had a good show here & something  
to eat & then went for a stroll in  
a beautiful park. We had not  
been out long before we were  
caught in a raid & had no  
option but to take shelter at  
the nearest tree. We made one  
just in time before the Strapnell  
from the beauforts came clattering  
down allround us. We stood  
hugging that tree for 1/2 hour  
which seemed like years to me.

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All the time, Shrapnell was falling all round us & was hitting the trunk of the tree just above our heads. It was a miracle how none of us were touched & for a second time I thanked God for my life. As soon as the raid was over we went back to M.T.H.R.U. & it was not long before I got down for the night & was asleep.

We started off back to camp after breakfast the following morning & had a very enjoyable run back. We stopped at a place called Florida on the way & had some very nice ice & drinks. We got back to

Camp in time for tea after a very enjoyable trip. I reorganised my lab & by now was coming into shape very nicely. The work was piling up & everybody was very busy. I myself was extra busy & for the next fortnight had very little spare time. Jerry visited us occasionally but never dropped any bombs on our camp.

18<sup>th</sup> Sept we had our orders to move to Catania & take over a big Commercial Institute which we turned into a hospital. Having done the run to Catania, it was not fresh to me, but nevertheless I enjoyed the beautiful scenery for a second time. We arrived at the new hospital at 3 pm & were

When we saw what a wonderful place it was, looked forward to getting down to some useful work. The building itself was built in a triangle & the whole of the ground floor on one side was various different experimental laboratories, lecture rooms & museums. All the upstairs rooms were at one time lecture rooms & were turned into very good wards.

The Army had got the place when we arrived & the mess it was in was indescribable & with the aid of about 30 Italians it took us 3 or 4 days to get the place anything near approaching a hospital. Anyway, in a week we were completely organised

& the whole place looked as different again. The P.M.O. came round & was amazed at the work we had done & was very pleased indeed. It was not very long before I got my lab straightened out & made a very nice little place for myself. I was very pleased with all the extra equipment I was able to get hold of & could get down to some good work now that I had an incubator. It was grand to be in a decent lab once again & a change from the trailer but the thought entered my mind, that if ever I had to set up again in the trailer, I should have a job with all the extra equipment I had.

Anyway the days rolled by & within a fortnight we were up to 300 patients. Everyone had to work very hard & with very little spare time off. I was doing 50 specimens a day in the lab which was more than I had ever dreamed of doing on a M.F.H. I really enjoyed it & felt at last that my presence was felt. Again the P.M.O. (Capt O'Malley) came round & complimented me on the good work I was doing & told me that he was doing his best to get my third.

The hospital was situated almost in the centre of Catania & so when we got time off we were able to get out to the pictures



not feel inclined to I could see  
sufficient from the grounds of  
the hotel. It was the first  
week-end in Oct that I was  
there then I snow was just  
forming on the peak. Unfortunately  
all the films I took did not  
come out very well & were  
not worth printing & I was  
very disappointed as they were  
really beautiful views.

We settled down to a good  
routine in the ~~Resort~~<sup>hotel</sup> & my  
week-end in the mountains  
refreshed me considerably & I  
enjoyed the dance immensely.  
The hotel was designed on very  
modern lines with every modern  
convenience, & water which

was icy cold came down  
off the mountains. We had  
all the civilian staff employed  
to wait on us & managed to  
get some drinks & open up  
the bar. The ballroom was  
a grand place & on the Saturday  
night got a dance band & invited  
about 30 sisters from the  
surrounding hospitals & our  
own & had a really good dance.  
I was serving the drinks  
in the officers bar & needless  
to say, did very well for  
myself. It was a grand  
evening & I think everyone  
enjoyed it.

When I returned to the hp on  
Monday, as expected I found

a whole pile of work waiting for me but soon got through it & once more straightened out the place.

Work had slackened off by now & we were able to get out into the town to have a look round & see a few shows. From this time onwards, life became more normal & NAAF's & Canteens in the town were well organised by this time & we could go out in the afternoon & have a good feed & listen to a band & then like to go to a variety show or cinema. Altogether there were 3 cinemas running & a variety show, so you could choose what shows you wanted to see & I usually to get in

If you got there about quarter of an hour before the performance started. Of course all the shows were free & you could sit where you liked. Catania being quite a large town had about 6 cinemas, 2 of which had opened up again for the civilians who had managed to get films from somewhere.

Some of the shops were not bad at all although some of them very large. Still there was quite a variety & on the whole the prices of things were quite reasonable. We were able to buy plenty of little cakes & creams which they seemed to go in for a great deal out here.

On the 11<sup>th</sup> <sup>66</sup> Oct, I was told I had  
to fly to Bari. Italy to 30 M.F.A.  
to set up a laboratory for them.  
One of our sisters came with me  
& we arrived at Catania airport  
at 6:30. We were weighed in and  
went out to the plane which  
was a D.C.3. We took off at  
8:00 & I had the best view of  
Catania I have ever had & also  
of Mt Etna, but unfortunately  
it was very cloudy & most of it  
was covered by the clouds. I  
could pick out our hospital  
quite plainly & could follow the  
road all the way along. We  
flew up the coast to Messina  
& it was not long before we  
could see the Straights & the

4 mile stretch across to Italy.  
We flew across the Straights &  
followed the <sup>East</sup> Coast line of Italy.  
We had been flying for about  
1/2 hour when we ran into a  
terrific thunder storm & the plane  
was pitched & tossed about like  
a cork in some water & many  
times I had visions of coming  
down <sup>in</sup> the sea & having to swim  
for it. Quite a number of  
people soon began to feel very  
sick, but I felt quite alright.  
We continued on a little further  
& then the pilot decided to turn  
back & said it was too risky  
to go any further, & so we landed  
at Catania again at 9.30 & were  
back where we started.

The weather was really bad now & the pilot said he would not attempt it again that day, & instead our passages were booked for the next day.

We returned to the hospital & as I was up early, went to bed in the afternoon and slept right through till dinner time.

The following morning I was up early again & this time we had a lovely day for the trip. We went through the same procedures at the airport & finally got out to the plane at 7.45. We had accumulated more passengers but this time & when we finally got sorted out had a Major General, ~~2~~<sup>2</sup> Brigadiers & an Air Commodore & many Colonels & Majors.

Altogether <sup>there were</sup> ~~we had~~ 28 of us. We took off at 806 & were soon airborne once again. This time, instead of following the coast line, we flew out to sea. It was not long before we ran into large numbers of air pockets which made the kite pitch & toss all over the place. Some people felt very ill, but I was quite alright. We landed at Taranto at 1030 & stayed for about 1/2 hour & then took off again & landed at Bari at 1130. Phoned up for transport which took us to 30 m.f.H. about 5 miles down the road. The C.O. seemed very pleased to see me & said there was plenty of work for me to do.

30 m. f. A at this time was situated in a building which used to be a school right on the sea shores of the Asiatic & about 5 miles from Bavi itself.

For the next week I had to work hard in this laboratory straightening it out & finding out what equipment they required & generally clearing up the place which was in a filthy condition. Not having a trained lab asst these made things worse as the chap who was there, had very little ~~know~~ idea of how to run a laboratory & it took hours trying to teach him different things.

During my stay here, I was

able to get out into Bari  
quite a few times & soon found  
out what a wonderful place it  
was. The It's considered it "their  
Blackpool of Italy" & I must  
say that it ~~was~~ comes up to any  
of our seaside resorts in England.  
Bari is still run entirely by the  
Italians & has not been taken  
over by the British Authorities  
like all the other places that  
have been captured - not only  
that - it was by passed by our  
troops & in consequence has  
suffered very little war damage.  
On first entering the town,  
one does not get a good impression  
but on entering the main  
St., the whole place seems to

Change & you have large buildings  
 & shops on either side of the road,  
 trolleys, buses, trams, buses &  
 everything in full swing. Unlike  
 most other places we had been  
 in, all the shops were open  
 & had plenty of stuff in them.  
 If we had had sufficient time  
 & knew the right places to go,  
 we could get things very cheaply  
 & some most obscure prices compared  
 with what they are in England.

For instance you could go into a  
 tailor's & buy a full suit for 10/6  
 or an overcoat for 15/. & trilby  
 hats were standard price at 2/6.

On passing through the main  
 street, our general impression  
 was that these people did not

know there was a war on & did not seem to feel it in any way.

The main street led right on to the promenade which was most picturesque which went round the cliffs & formed a bay, so that at one point you could look right into Bari & along the front where most of the big buildings were situated.

Food was not so hot here as one might expect & we were able to go into beautiful restaurants & have a first class meal & sit and listen to an orchestra playing, very much in the same way as you might do in any Lyons corner houses in London.

All the Italian Cinemas were open & showing quite modern American films with dialect changed into Italian. There was one theatre reserved for British & American troops which was an enormous place right on the sea front. It was here that I saw Wm. George Wood & Dolly Hadnes in a very good variety concert. That same morning I was wandering around the town & sat down in a cafe for an ice cream & he came walking along the street with Dolly Hadnes & came & sat down at the same table as us. We soon got into conversation & told us they

Had done 68 shows in the last 32 days, travelling from Cairo right through to Alps and then around Sicily & finished up here. He was most interesting & wanted to buy us drinks or anything although we had finished, but in order not to be rude we had another ice with him & then bade our leave & finished our wander round the town.

Although I was able to get in Bari fairly often & enjoy myself, I was very fed up with the unit I was on & had very little co-operation from anyone & considering I had come to help them out, thought it a very poor show.

I had been there 5 days when my C.O. turned up on his way to Foggia which was to be our next move, he came & saw me & I told him straight out that I was fed up & wanted to get back to our unit as soon as possible. He fixed it up & made arrangements for me on <sup>the</sup> Tuesday morning, which I was very pleased about as it was my birthday on the Wednesday & I knew my pals were arranging a party for me. On Tuesday morning I was up early & ready to leave by 6:30 & very thankful to see the end of that unit - Not one person gave me a word of thanks.

for the work I had done  
for them during the last week.  
I was very disgusted & told my  
C.O. about it when I returned  
who was annoyed to think that  
he had ever let me go when  
there was nothing waiting for  
me.

The kite took off from Bari  
just after 8 o'clock. We had a  
very smooth & comfortable journey  
back & landed at Catania once  
more at 11 o'clock. It did not  
take me long to fix up transport  
& I was back in the hospital  
by 1130.

The following day being  
Wed: 20th Oct, my birthday, I  
did not do a great deal of work.

Finishing at 1230, I went for a walk round the town after lunch with my pal John. Walked & bought a few things for the evening. The dinner was arranged for 9 o'clock & my other pal had fixed everything up marvelously & had arranged everything. Reg certainly made an excellent job of it - even down to the finest detail such as toast with the soup & iced coffee to finish up. The chicken itself was beautifully tender & most enjoyable. Not for many a long day have I seen such a spread as we had that night & by the time we had

finished the dinner, we all  
had to sit still for about 1/2 hr  
& let it digest. The cooks made  
me a lovely fruit cake & had  
even iced it for me which none  
of us were able to touch until  
later in the evening. Of course  
we had a few bottles of wine  
which went down very nicely  
afterwards. As usual we had  
a very good sing song & finished  
the party about midnight, everyone  
having thoroughly enjoyed themselves.

Having got over the effects  
of the party, I had to get down  
to some work which had mounted  
up, but I soon got through it  
& once more got down to normal.  
~~My~~ Work started slacking off

Considerably how I we had rumours of moving over to Loggia Italy to join our advance party which was already over there. Anyway nothing came of it at the time & it all fell through. Having a fair amount of spare time now we organised a football team & were able to get matches with other units twice a week. By this time Catania had got back to normal again & the streets were always very crowded, nevertheless we went for some very pleasant walks & got out to the pictures every week. We were able to get a good dance hall & a band & the entertainments committee got busy

& organised some food dances  
which we held once a fortnight.  
I will say that the sisters from  
the Army hospitals turned up in  
force & we always had plenty to  
dance with - not only that,  
they seemed to join in with the  
spirit of it & made some very  
pleasant evenings.

Removds were still going round  
about moving & we had been in  
Catania <sup>hardly</sup> 3 months now which is  
the longest stay we had at any  
one place. Most of us had got  
well settled down by now but  
at the same time would like to  
have another move & if we were  
going to move let's get on with  
it so that we should be settled

in our new quarters I have everything  
straight by Christmas.

November came along & we started  
rehearsing for a show which we  
hope to put on for Christmas,  
but made an early start in case  
a move came off in the meantime  
so that we could put it on  
wherever we were.

All the original arrangements  
about going to Toppin seemed to  
have been squashed on the  
head & the rumors floating  
around how poor to Naples.

During the second week in  
November we had a mild earth-  
quake which shook the building. I  
was sitting in my laboratory & quite  
expected all the windows to come

in at any moment. It was a horrible sensation & if that was only an earth tremor. Well all I can say is. I would not like to feel an Earthquake.

At last on 17<sup>th</sup> Nov: 43 we received our orders to move to a place called Torre del Greco which was about 6 miles south of Naples. Once again we packed everything up & I left with an advance party at 0900 hrs on 18<sup>th</sup> Nov. Our first day's journey was supposed to take us to Messina, which by the coast road was about 75 miles, but owing to one of the pontoon bridges being up, we had to make a long detour inland via Patti & Barcelona & the mountain passes, constituting us doing nearly

Another 100 miles. By nightfall we  
 had travelled 108 miles over very  
 hilly country & with trailers as well,  
 we considered it a very good effort.  
 We were still about 40 miles from  
 Messina on the north coast of Sicily  
 & decided to pull in & stop for the  
 night. The following morning we  
 were on the road again by 0800 hrs  
 & we had not been travelling for  
 more than half an hour when my  
 driver tried to change gear & the  
 gear lever came out in his hand!  
 We soon got this fixed & were  
 on our way again. We made  
 Messina comfortably by lunch  
 time & had a "brew up" in the car  
 park. As we drove right through  
 Messina, we could see what a real

Hammering it must have had  
from the sea. From what I could  
see as we drove through, there were  
very few buildings that were not  
battle scarred. After tiffin we  
lined up on the dock side & waited  
for a barge to take us over to the  
mainland. We had to wait about  
an hour & then got all the gas &  
trailers on. By the time we did this  
it was about 3:30 & the worst of it  
was that it absolutely poured with  
rain the whole time. We reached  
the mainland & assembled in  
Reggio at 4:30. And so for the  
second time I landed in Italy.  
We carried on for an hour or so  
& got to a place called Gioia Tauro  
by night fall & made our camp here.  
owing to the delay in crossing, we only  
did 75 miles that day.

Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> Nov. We started out about 0800 hrs & knew that the main part of the convoy would lose the 2 gais towing the trailers. So from now on, the 4 of us with the two gais & trailers formed our own little party & brought up the rear. We did not see the rest of them until we arrived at our destination. Our route was to follow the coast road for the best part of the way & it was not long before we came to famous mountain passes with the most picturesque scenery anyone could wish to see. It was heavy going for the gais up & down these steep hills & although we drove until 4:30 only managed to knock

~~at~~ miles that day. We found a suitable spot on a river bed near the Paola pass to stop for the night. Having separated from the rest of the convoy, we could more or less please ourselves now & took everything in our stride.

Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> Nov. We started out at 8.30 & made good headway until after tiffin when we ran into very bad wind & rain. I had to take things easily as it was very dangerous round the steep hills & corners. We passed one place here, where evidently the Itis' at one time were in full retreat, & the sides of the roads were still littered with burnt out guns, tanks & gear of all kinds.

We reached a place called Pdia et more by 4:30 and decided to pack up for the night as a good storm was just beginning. We found a big campsite on the beach & threw the gear on there.

Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> Nov. We started out again at 8:30 & made Sapri by lunch time. As we had to leave the coast road & go inland & in so doing, had to cross right over the mountains. The scenery seemed to get even more beautiful here & as we made a very long zig zagging climb from Sapri we were able to see the whole of the bay better at every bend. Unlike the day previous, it was beautiful & the sun shining down on the water, gave us

perhaps, one of the most picturesque  
views anyone is ever likely to see.  
To describe all the towns we passed  
would be almost impossible, ~~to~~  
but to say the least for the  
majority. They are dirty, filthy &  
shabby & almost certain to be  
lice ridden. Having seen the  
places as we did, it is quite  
understandable why there is so  
much Typhus in Italy. Having  
climbed some exceptionally long hills  
we eventually arrived at a plateau  
on the top & made good headway  
through Revello, Lauria, Lagonegro,  
& Sala Consilina where we stopped  
for the night once more.

Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> Nov. We started at  
8.0 c, & made Salerno easily by

Tiffin time. We stopped in a car park in the town & had our tiffin & found out we were only about ~~5~~<sup>35</sup> miles from our destination. We set out along the coast road after tiffin, passing through Pompeii, and reaching Torre del Greco by 4 o'clock. It did not take us long to find the large Convalescent depot, where we took over & soon made contact with the other party who had only arrived the previous day. Our total mileage was 516 miles & the longest run & I might say the most enjoyable we had done.

The Convalescent depot was a large modern place with every convenience & was still occupied by

The Italians. It took them 3 days to move out & during that time we were able to look round & take note of our surroundings. We were 6 miles from Naples & from the upstairs windows one could look out right over the bay of Naples. From the North windows you looked straight on to Mt. Vesuvius which was a wonderful sight at night time, throwing out lava & flames. The local inhabitants say that all the time it erupts they know they are safe but when it stops there is a great panic as it is liable to erupt in other places other than the normal crater. We had a look round the village of Torre del Greco but these

was very little to buy & what there was, the prices were very high. Unfortunately we had left our old desert rats who were still with the 8<sup>th</sup> Army on the other side of Italy & had come over to the 5<sup>th</sup> Army's side with the Yanks. Hence the price of everything being so high.

As soon as the Itals moved out of the hospital we were able to move in & get things straight. I had a room for my laboratory on the top floor looking out to Vesuvius, & on looking round one could see quite plainly that the Itals had certainly picked a beautiful spot for a convalescent depot as there was picturesque scenery from

all views.

For the first few days we worked hard to get the place straight & it did not take long before things were in running order again. A few days later I had a run into Naples for the first time & was not greatly impressed by it. The talk we had heard about Naples being raised to the ground, as usual, were unfounded & the main shopping centre of the town was practically untouched. Of course the area round the docks had been hit very badly & the damage was great, but Naples is a very large city & in comparison with the rest of it, to my mind it did not cover such a big area as people made out.

Here again, the yanks were in occupation & there was quite a number of things to buy in the shops but of course the prices were terrific & black market was at it's highest.

There are many beautiful buildings in Naples such as the Cathedral, the museum, opera house, one of the King's Palaces & many others. The main street called Via Roma was absolutely packed & was just like going through Oxford St. or another famous street in London during the rush hour.

We were fortunate enough to get a hospital where there was a small theatre already for us & a stage which could be

Have been better for the show  
we put on at Christmas. It  
did not take long before we  
had things arranged to our liking  
& rehearsals started in earnest.

During the next few weeks before  
Christmas the work rolled in  
steadily & we had quite a few  
ENSA Shows including Gerald's &  
of course we rehearsed nearly every  
evening for our own show.

By the time Christmas arrived we  
were practically full with patients.  
Sunday Dec 17. I took a half-day &  
visited the ruins of Pompeii which was  
only about 5 miles away. Comparing  
these old Roman ruins with those  
at Sabratha, they were far superior.  
Here we saw complete streets with the

shops on either side, the market place  
swimming pools, arenas & of course  
some of the famous house with  
the actual paintings on the walls.  
Some of them were in extremely  
good preservation & clearly indicated  
what they were suppose to represent.  
A guide took us round & explained  
all the different places of interest  
as we came to them. I was very  
glad of the opportunity to go round  
& it was very educational.

23<sup>rd</sup> Dec. All of us excited about the  
dress rehearsal of the show & ~~at~~  
Although a dress rehearsal, we had  
an audience of about 20 who  
were unable to come the following  
night. The concert hall of the  
best part of the hospital has

been decorated & it really looked grand. The show went down very well & everyone thought it would be a great success the following evening.

24<sup>th</sup> Dec. I had to work hard in the morning to get my afternoon off in order to prepare the stage. The show was due to start at 7.30 & we began making up soon after 6 o'clock. Everybody was ready at the time & our producer opened the show right on time. The whole thing went off without a hitch & everyone thoroughly enjoyed it.

After the show we had a party & started off the Christmas

celebrations in fine style. At 12 o'clock we went into the courtyard & sang Christmas carols until someone tried to tip a bucket of water over us & then decided to pack in. The next morning several patients asked why we did not continue & seemed disappointed but enjoyed the 10 minutes we gave them.

Christmas Day. Was a holiday for us all & we did our best to entertain the patients. Their dinner was at midday & we all helped to serve. Those that were able to get up went down to the dining hall while several of us stayed on the wards & looked after those bed patients.

In the afternoon we had a game of football which was very enjoyable & then returned for our own dinner which was at 5.30. I must say our cooks did it very well & the turkey & pork we had was lovely. Of course we had Anas pudding & 2 bottles of bud pet man. The places were all laid out with a little present for each man & 50 cigarettes. After the dinner we sat and ate nuts & raisins until we could not eat any more. After that we had a sing song which lasted until the early hours of the morning.

Boxing day was a normal

working day, but our little gang had our own party in the bilbo with a real good Sing song.

We kept up parties every night until we saw the N. Year in & by that time there was no more drink left & everyone had had enough for a little while.

On the 28<sup>th</sup> Dec No 1 RAF G.H arrived & took over our hospital. As we had not had orders to move we were granted 3 days rest & allowed to do what we liked. This gave people a chance to have a look round Naples & enjoy themselves. My pal & I made the most of it & had several lay ins in the mornings & went out in the

Afternoons.

On 29<sup>th</sup> & 30<sup>th</sup> I took advantage of the rest but of course we had a party & sing song in the evening.

31<sup>st</sup> my pal & I went to Naples & went to see an opera. The opera house in Naples is really a marvellous place & the biggest theatre I have ever been in.

The opera was La Boheme & as I had not seen opera before expected to be bored especially as it was all in Italian. On the contrary I was thrilled with every moment of it. Unfortunately we were a bit late & missed the overture & had to take a seat right up in the gods'

on the 6<sup>th</sup> floor. Nevertheless we could see & hear beautifully. When I first saw the orchestra of 65 players, my eyes nearly popped out of my head. They were absolutely first class & it was a real thrill to hear a good orchestra again. The company were all first class actors & singers & the woman who took the leading part of Mimi had one of the best voices I think I have ever heard. As I say it was all in Italian but the programmes were written in English with a short description of each Act. This helped to clarify things a lot & we were able to understand the story quite

well.

It was a wonderful feeling to be in a real theatre once again & to see all the plush seats. During the intervals, waiters came round with sweets & cakes, in the same way as they do any English theatre.

I enjoyed it so much that we decided to go the next afternoon and see the Scottish opera called Lily of Lamemood. This time we made sure of getting a good seat & got a box on the second floor (price 30 lire ea).

There was a different company from the day previous but I

Think they were just as good & again I enjoyed it very much. After the N. year's party the previous night which lasted till somewhere around 3 am & then seeing the opera, we all decided it was high time for an early night & not only that, we did not know what was going to happen the next day as our 3 days leave was up.

2<sup>nd</sup> Jan. There was still no news of us moving & so we were allowed to continue our life of freedom but unfortunately Napper was out of bounds so we could not go to see LA Traviata which was very disappointing. Nevertheless, trips

were arranged up Vesuvius  
& to Pompeii again.

For the next 3 days we had  
a good rest which I am sure  
did all of us a great deal of  
good.

We got out orders to move  
on the 5<sup>th</sup> & at 9 o'clock on the 6<sup>th</sup>  
we were on our way to Loggia.

We got about 20 miles  
along the road & were stopped  
by M.F. saying that we could  
get no further than Avelino  
because the roads were ice  
bound & the 5<sup>th</sup> Army Div were  
on the move & had got  
stuck.

I was not at all surprised  
at this because all the

high hills surrounding us were covered with snow & it was bitterly cold.

We made Aquelino by lunch time & drove into a park & had something to eat. The C.O. went out to find out when we might be able to move & came back with the news that we should probably not be able to move until the next day. None of us would have the prospect of sleeping in the park as it was bitterly cold & we did P.T. to keep ourselves warm.

By some luck some Canadians from a surrounding village found out we were there & offered to

Put us up for the night in  
their transit camp. So we  
piled into the gatis & followed  
them down to their place. We  
got all the vehicles parked  
in a small squares & then  
proceeded to the billets.

They made us welcome & got  
a good hot meal for us which  
was most enjoyable. Then  
they found us a billet & made  
us comfortable as possible.

The next morning they gave  
us such a big breakfast that  
the majority of us could not  
finish it. Apparently there  
was still no news & we were  
allowed to wander around the  
village, but to report every 1/2 hr.

In the afternoon we arranged a football match with the Canadians & had a good game. After the match we were informed that we were to be ready to stand by to move off at 7 o'clock that night. Once more we had all the gavis lined up ready to move off by moonlight, & shortly after 7 o'clock we were on the move again with a 100 mile journey ahead of us. Although we were all tired, the roads were clear & free from ice & we made good headway, finally reaching Joggia at 2.30 am. I don't remember anything about the last 10 miles of the ride & fell asleep in the cab.

at that time 30 m. E. had  
a large hospital & they put us  
up for what was left of the  
night. We were all hungry &  
glad of something hot to drink,  
finally getting <sup>down</sup> at ~~11~~ 11:40.  
We were up again at 7:30 & at  
9:00 moved to another part  
of Foggia to a large building  
which we were to take over.  
At the time the Americans  
had possession but by mid-day  
the following day they had  
all moved out. The same  
procedure occurred as before  
of unloading the gear &  
getting the hospital set up  
as soon as possible & the  
next day we were admitting

patients.

The building we were in ~~was~~ was at one time supposed to be an old ladies rest home & was a very big place with a limited water supply.

I had a lab on the first floor but of course no water & after one or two sifting around of rooms, finally got settled down.

The Americans took over the place from FA had, which incidentally was a proper hospital, & so moved in with us & more or less amalgamated.

Jack Holland the lab asst. from so moved in with me & it did not take

is long to have a nice  
little lab organised for outside.  
We had plenty of work to  
do but for a change it gave  
me the chance to have  
some half-days which  
previously I had little chance  
of having because I was  
by myself all the time.

Feb. came along and we  
were still at Foggia. We were  
given our Africa Stads  
which did not mean much  
out here as most people  
seemed to be wearing them  
but probably will mean  
something when we get home.  
While we were here, we were  
able to play quite a lot of

football & Ruffet & on my half days I saw some good ENSA Shows & pictures.

Foggia itself was just one mass of ruins & one day I had a walk round & as far as I could see there seemed hardly a building in the place which had not been bombed or effected by bomb blast. It was said that Naples had been raised to the ground & although Naples was a far bigger place, I considered Foggia had been hit far worse in comparison. Everything was running very smoothly at Foggia & we began to get thoroughly settled down in the same way as we did at Catania. By the end of February

we were still

we were still hard at it & there still seemed no definite news of any move, possibly due to the temporary hold up at the Ruzio bridge-head.

March arrived & showed signs of the better weather coming which was a good thing as I have never seen it rain so much as it did here in Feb. For the whole time I have been overseas. My best Pal John Walker was taken seriously ill & had to undergo a very difficult abdominal operation which afterwards proved to be very successful, but at one time it was definitely a touch & go as to whether he would live & we.

were all very worried about him. After a few days he showed signs of good improvement & we all had good hopes for him.

Then, just to crown everything I was told I was posted <sup>NO 2</sup> which quite honestly shook me badly as I never expected it, but on being told by the C.O. it was the only possible way for me to get promotion, I understood the reason why. It did not take many days for the posting to become effective & I had to pack up my lab in a hurry into the trailer leaving Jack to do all the work until my successor arrived.

Having said my farewell  
to most people of Thursday  
evening I was ready to move  
away first thing on Friday 17<sup>th</sup>  
match & it was arranged that  
I should go on the ambulance  
with the evacuations to Naples  
to 3 BPD where I had to wait  
for the boat to Alpines.

My heart was definitely in  
my mouth that morning, as  
I had made some grand  
pals on the unit & I was  
particularly sorry to leave  
while John was still very  
ill, although I was thankful  
to hear that before I left he  
was taken off the D.I. list  
was showed he was making

very good progress.

Having finally said goodbye to all my friends I set off in the ambulance for Naples, still laddy believing I was leaving 25 M.F.H. after being with ~~them~~ them for 1 yr 3 months.

We had a good run to Naples stop for tiffin about 1/2 way & while I was getting my teeth into a crust, I split one in half which annoyed me very much. Nevertheless I was fortunate the next day in being heard a Dental Centre & knowing the D.O. He had a look at it for me & said there was nothing he could do about it except to take it out, which he did in very quick time.

I arrived at the BTD about 330 & was put into a billet & told that a boat to Algiers might be in the next day, which I thought good news & as I expected too good to be true.

It did not take me long to find out that this place was much the same as other transit camps I have known. Bags of paradises & all the trimmings which go to life wads making life one continual bind. Anyway I had the good fortune to meet an old pal who was also going to Algiers & had been waiting about 5 days for the boat & was working at the sick quarters. Naturally I

fell in with him & soon got off the proceeds by offering my services as sick quarters.

On Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> March Mr Vesuvius started erupting & through out quite a bit of lava which according to the local inhabitants of Portici was the biggest eruption they had had for 15 years.

By Monday afternoon the volcano was still erupting & getting far worse. Thousands of tons of lava were being thrown down the sides & travelling at the rate of 1 yd per minute in a ~~to~~ 36' high avalanche of white hot lava. There was a small

town right in the way of the main stream of lava called San Sebastian & by nightfall the whole of this town had been destroyed but all the inhabitants were evacuated safely.

It is difficult for me to describe the sight I saw this night with the volcano in full eruption. I was standing on top of the building in which I was billeted, not more than ~~5~~<sup>5</sup> miles away from the mountain itself & it was a sight I, as many millions of people have never seen before. The whole of the mountain was lit up & all the lava by night showed up

bright red as it trickled down  
 the mountain side. For anyone  
 who has never seen a volcano  
 erupt. The only thing I can  
 say, that it is one of the  
 most spectacular things I have  
 ever seen in my life but at  
 the same time very terrifying  
 when you can see easily  
 the terrific power there must  
 be behind it. For me to  
 write more about it would  
 be senseless because I am not  
 a very apt person at describing  
 things at the best of times &  
 articles written in the papers  
 "Union Jack & Stars & Stripes"  
 describe the whole thing far  
 better than I could ever do.