

(39) Salisbury,

25-7-42.

Dear Mum,

All records for mail since I left home have been broken by the arrival this week of your air-mail letter, no. 34, dated June 17. Only five weeks on the way - why, it was practically written yesterday by comparison with some of the mail that turns up. My letter evidently made good time on the way home, too. There was also a surface-mail letter from Joan, dated May 26.

I have been hoeing in properly at the contents of my parcels, and right at this moment am reflecting that I really shouldn't have had such an over-size slice of fruit-cake. The cake, by the way, has arrived as fresh as the day it left home. You would have laughed to see three of us in this room last night. There was my New Zealand room-mate and an Aussie we invited in; disgusted at prunes for dessert for the umpteenth night in succession, we came upstairs, did some smart work on the tin of peaches, and took it in turns to dig in with a borrowed spoon. To cap all, we wound up with the oysters - quite a combination, but none of us slept any the worse!

The lemon-and-larby stuff you sent makes a very nice drink, which is very simple to get

since water is not rationed. Also, I observe, you remembered the old fancy for walnuts and dates.

This week we had our 36-hour leave, and I managed to carry out my original intention of going to Basingstoke. I eventually found Auntie Ethel's brother at work; he is foreman in a big factory there, and was able to show me round as much of the place as the Defence Regulations would permit. It was very interesting. Both he and his wife are very nice people, and asked me back any time I want to go. One of the Westermans called on them just before war broke out; Don, I think they said.

The second day on leave I started off with bundles of good intentions about shopping I was going to do, but the time sort of slipped by and I didn't accomplish anything very useful. However, I did manage to get a new watch-strap — the second since I left home. I am keeping a very careful eye upon my watch these days as I hate being without it, and it is very difficult to get repairs done in anything under a matter of weeks.

That's the funny part about living in England these days; the little things that go wrong are the most annoying. One doesn't mind a major item like food-rationing, but it is exasperating to wear a hole in a pair of

shoes and then find you can't get them repaired in under a week, or maybe a fortnight. It will seem funny to be able to get things like that done at once again. Laundry, too, always takes a week as compared with two days in Canada.

Talking about Canada — I had a letter from there yesterday, from a chap called Arthur Eden who was at Berlin when Tom and I started there a year ago. He is an deserter now; he was at Prince Albert while we were at Saskatoon, and I managed to see him for a short time just before we left. Their training is somewhat longer than ours so he is still over there, or was at the time of writing. He may be in a bunch that will get sent back home when they finish their Canadian training.

Had a note from Tom, too, from which it appears that he stands a good chance of getting some leave at the same time as I expect ~~to~~, which will be very satisfactory, as we can then arrange something.

By the way, I see bad news in the latest issue of "New Zealand News," a newspaper issued in London every so often for New Zealand forces overseas. It reports Sergeant - Gunner R. J. Boag as "missing on operations," which is very bad luck; my sympathy to Mrs Boag and his wife, if

it is true, as unfortunately seems to be the case. I dropped him a line a while ago and got no reply, for all too good a reason. However, there is hope yet that he is a prisoner of war.

You know, like Ray, I can't share Tom's enthusiasm for this England; it has a lot to recommend it - fine old cathedrals and so on - but even making allowance for three years of war, after Canada and America the people here are not the same. There are good folk amongst them, of course, but in the mass it's a nation of oysters as far as meeting a stranger is concerned. Also, I do not admire the climate, which is unreliable. But that is not grousing; it's summing up the situation in the proverbial nutshell. However, I get along O.K. here, though the national fondness for beer gets me down. I think that's one thing they would never attempt to ration. In the words of non-drinking Jimmy Whyte, in a letter to me a while ago, "What do you do with your spare time if you don't drink, Chris? All the amusement round here seems to centre in the local pubs....." Well, I get along, just the same.

And that's the lot for this time, Mum.

Love from

Andrea J.