

④ Stratford-on-Avon,

10-8-42.

Dear Mum,

Here we are, on leave, as you will guess from the address, and doing pretty well for ourselves, too. So far everything has worked out very nicely, as I met Tom according to plan in London, and after four days there we have moved on to "Shakespeare land," as they call the country round here.

Once again there was a peculiar co-incidence or two while we were in London. We met Dick Peers, a chap from the "Tribune" who was in night class at the same time as us, and who came to England over a year ago to join the Fleet Air Arm, and also met Gery Roper, whom you will remember from Parkvale days. While we were in the A.P.Z. Forces Club one night we came across a couple of sergeant-pilots who have just recently arrived from home; one was at Kapier High at the same time as I was, and the other, whose name I didn't get, was from Ferguson Street, of all places, and knew quite a number of the folks we know. So it's certainly a small world!

We were out of luck in one respect, as Ray Tellop was passing through London and we just missed seeing him. However, we left a note for him to let him know we had been around, and it reached him O.K.

Of course, we called in at the Base Post Office, and I was in luck as there was a letter from you with a note in it from Hazel, and two from Joan, as well as one from Brenda. They told me that some more mail for me had gone on to Old Sarum before my change of address notice reached them, so it will follow me up to my squadron. I don't know what it was, but there may have been a parcel or something like that in it. I was pleased to hear that you and Joan have both had a letter or two from Bournemouth, since that means a bit more of my pen-pushing that has not been wasted.

Our last night in London before coming here we spent at "The Doctor's Dilemma," which is, if you please, a George Bernard Shaw play, and which we both enjoyed. Vivien Leigh has the leading role, and since she is just as good an actress on the stage as on the screen she was well worth watching.

We reached Stratford, after an interesting train journey, yesterday afternoon, and will have time to see a couple of Shakespeare plays before we go. We had very interesting company for quite a bit of the way in the shape of a Danish man who has been living in England for a good number of years, but who still keeps up-to-date on Denmark. He was able to tell me quite a bit about Randers, as he knows the town quite well. It appears that some time ago

there were a few bombs on Randers, but no one much was hurt so Dad's folk should still be all right. From all accounts life there is not too bad, in spite of the occupation.

By the way, we saw a new Bing Crosby picture in London: "Holiday Inn." It's very good, and I really think you would like it if it ever came your way. We went out to famous Kew Gardens one day, too, but didn't see them under very favourable conditions as we had not been there for long before it started to rain and eventually set us scurrying back to London. However, it must be a very nice place on a fine day.

There are some nice little spots around Stratford, with a river for boating and all that sort of thing. We have just visited the Holy Trinity church here, where Shakespeare and his wife are buried; it is an old place, part of which dates back to 1210. Shakespeare is buried inside the church, and on his tombstone is this curious inscription (the spelling is on the original): "Good friend for Jesus sake forbear To digg the dust enclosed heare Blest be ye man yt spares the stones And curst be he yt moves my bones." Don't know whether the old boy wrote it himself or not, but evidently he didn't want to be dug up again.

This afternoon we looked in at Anne Hathaway's cottage, which they claim to be still pretty much the same as it was when Shakespeare came a-courting there. It was very interesting, and exactly like all

the pictures you've ever seen of an old-world English cottage and garden. It's over 450 years old, and there were people living in it until about 30 years ago, so they certainly knew how to build them. Hope one or two of my photos come out so that you can see what it is like. There were still a couple of the old four-poster beds inside.

Well, I've finished with my O.T.U. course now, and when leave is up I have to report to my new squadron. I have been very fortunate in being posted to just about the best Army Co-op. squadron in England. It is quite close to London, which is useful in the event of a week-end off. There was an officer posted to Old Sarum a week or so before I left, and as he had previously been on operations with this squadron for some months he was able to tell me a good deal about it. The place sounds very attractive. I understand I will be the only New Zealander there, as the other three from our course were posted elsewhere. However, two of the English chaps from the same course are going to a different squadron on the same station so I am not entirely isolated.

Well, that's all for now, so until next week, love from
Arnold