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Letter No 17

Dear Mum & Vincent

Last night I arrived back on the Squadron after seven days leave, it was marvellous! and I had an extra good time. I travelled down to London with the rest of the crew then travelled on to Bath after spending the night at the YMCA in London. I arrived in Bath about 4.30 and had no trouble in finding Claverton Hill. Uncle or Aunt were not home so the house-keeper let me in and I sat beside the fire reading the paper until they got home from Work; Uncle got home about 6.30 and Clartie about 6 o'clock. whilst I was waiting for them the carpenters were in renovating the ceiling & Windows damaged by bomb blast some twelve months earlier.

The flat that Aunt & Uncle are living in is very nice they have a very nice sitting room where I spent a few very nice evenings sitting beside the fire talking; I did not sleep in the same house as there was no room, but put up with some very nice people a little way down the road.

Uncle & Aunt seem to be in the best of health, the children are expected home for Christmas and by that time Aunt Agnes hopes to have received a house somewhere around Bath.

The first night at Bath I spent by the fire-side talking about home and telling Aunt & Uncle all about you Paddy and Vincent. The second day I went into town to look Bath over, as usual it is an old town with plenty of narrow streets winding here & there; it is quite a big town with a population far exceeding Ballarat, but the people live in a very cramped style, I don't think the town would exceed about a fifth of the size of Burton in area. Certain parts of Bath have been badly knocked about, whole areas have been razed to the ground mainly around the residential area.

The shopping area is very nice and very busy, there seems to be plenty to buy in the shops, but the cater is coupons & points as it is at home. Bus traffic is very thick, and there is always a long queue waiting for the different buses. The thing that struck me ~~most~~ were the orderly queues waiting for buses, people just line up behind one another and take their turn or getting on the bus, when the conductor says "Bus Full" they still retain their ranks and wait for the next bus, you never see anybody shoving out of their turns.

I met Auntie ~~had~~ Agnes for lunch, and had a very nice lunch of Roast Beef & vegetables at a little cafe, there were plenty of vegetable but the meat was very scanty, ~~so~~ I am becoming quite used to that. After lunch I walked back to work with Aunt then continued on to see the sights of Bath.

The Cathedral in Bath is very interesting, I spent quite some time looking over it, it goes back to about 1590; quite a few of the graves in the floor were dated 1602 and round about that date. The inscription on some of the grave stones were funny, most of them were written in "Old time English", on one particular stone the inscription was "He dyed ye Sixth day of August 1674". Amongst some of the graves of well known people was the grave of the first American Ambassador to England somewhere around 1790.

On coming out of the Cathedral I met an Australian also down in Bath for a spot of leave he advised me to go and see a certain lady in the Baths and she would show me through the Roman Baths, this I did! and was shown through the ancient Bath that the Romans used long before the Battle of Hastings.

These Baths are well ~~set~~ below the street level and had been hidden from the public's view for many centuries before somebody accidentally discovered them, now-a-days excavations have revealed amazing discoveries. Apparently the Romans treated Bath as a Holiday Resort and built numerous swimming pools besides Hot Springs; these swimming pools are very well preserved today and are lined with tons of lead, lead pipes takes the over flow of water from the Baths down to the river. Hot Springs are very few in number & can't be compared to Rotorua N.Z.; the temperature of the water coming out of the springs is 11° about 100° cooler than Rotorua. I also saw a few examples of paving by the Romans, it was beautifully done and had some marvellous colours blended in it; here and there were columns that had been found belonging to a temple built by the Romans to a new God.

Thursday I went over to Bristol to have a look at the town, as usual it was entirely different to home, with narrow winding streets very crowded with pedestrians & buses. Bristol stopped quite a bit of Bombing, in one particular part of the city is an area the size of the "Block" in London it completely flattened, with not a single building standing, there were quite a few other badly damaged areas but that was the worst. I met Donald Ramsay for dinner and went to "Bright's Dining Hall" you might know it, it is quite a big place. After lunch I wandered around until I came to a Church in charge of the S.T.B., of course I called in there and was lucky enough to strike one of the priests with whom I had a very long chat, he did not know anybody out here at all but he gave me an address of a Jesuit College which I am going to call on when I get the opportunity. During the afternoon I travelled out on the bus to see the suspension bridge over the Avon Gorge, it was well worth seeing and quite a feat of engineering; whilst out there I also visited the Observatory.

On the way back a catastrophe over took me, my watch stopped and I reset it an hour late, the result being I was an hour behind time for the rest of the day & I missed Uncle Ramsay on the bus, thus not getting home to Bath until 7.30, when I did get back I found I was to have tea in town with Uncle & Aunt, then we were going home to meet some visitors who were coming: it must have been about 9 o'clock by the time we had finished tea & got home to find the house full of visitors. The rest of the evening was spent in talking & playing cards.

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Friday, I again met chutie again for lunch, & also met about half the admiralty. She seems to know everybody from the ~~British~~ Sea Board down. During the afternoon I took a couple of bus rides out of the town and got quite a good view of the place from the surrounding Hills. On the way back from one of these bus rides I called in on the Catholic Church in Bath and met a Priest there by the name of Father Eddie McDowell, I had quite a long chat with him and during the course of conversation I found out that he knows Father Blessey very well and wished to be remembered to him, so will you pass that message on to Father Mun ! The church in Bath is very nice but has been badly hit by bombs, the Presbyterian beside the church has been completely demolished, one Priest and the house keeper were killed in it. The school had a lucky escape from damage, the blast of the bombs only blew the windows out.

Friday Evening I went to a theatre review with chutie again and a couple of other ladies (I say ladies because they were nearer the fifty mark than the forty mark), it was a good show and a very enjoyable evening's entertainment. Uncle was on fire watching that particular evening at Bristol.

Saturday I slept in until rather late and got up in time to have lunch with chutie in town, come back pack my bag and catch a train to Reading. The journey up to Reading only took a couple of hours and I arrived just in time for tea. After tea was spent in talking and it must have been about 11.30 before I crawled into bed. chutie louie seems to be in the best of health mun ! and looked after me like a new-born Baby, in fact she made me feel I could not do a thing to help myself.

Sunday : Auntie Louie and I went into Reading to class, we had to walk about three miles in a drizzling rain ; whilst I was at Bath I had beautiful weather perfect sunshine everyday. After class we managed to get a taxi back so saved our feet. After dinner which was very good consisting of Roast Beef, roast potatoes vegetable and cherry pie, not a bad effort for a starving country.

After lunch we just sat in front of the fire and talked, we had tea about 4.30 then a big supper of cold meat etc about 9 o'clock, this four meals a day is a funny thing, I just can't get used to it. Before I went to bed Auntie Louie put the electric blanket in my bed, its worth about a dozen hot water bottles. Monday morning being the first of November, Auntie Louie & I again went into class, after class I could the 10.8 train to London, and was in the Boomerang Club by 11 o'clock. I met quite a few folks in the Club, none I had not seen since the day I left home about twelve months ago. After lunch at the Club, George Brett (my navigator) & myself went for a walk around London before catching the train from King's Cross back to Camp. There is quite a lot of difference going back to Camp after leave over here. When I use go back to Parkes after leave, I use to feel real miserable about it and I use always be looking forward to the next leave even though it was a month off : over here leave just ends and you go back to the station without any wretched thoughts, in fact you get into the habit of referring to the假期 as your home and really it is.

Since arriving back I have received a little mail, there was an aerogram from you

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Dated Sat 6th, you had just received my first two airmails.
There was also an airmail from Harry Tigar, a parcel
containing a very nice scarf for my birthday, from Dorothy
Kambert, a parcel of books from Robert & Muller
and a note from Spike here in this country.

Saturday night there is going to be
a mock Battle or, the crews of the station are going
to try to defend the station against a mob of
commandos, I am hoping these commandos are not
the conventional type, if they are I think we are in
for a bidding.

On Friday night "Richard Parker" is
singing in a musical programme which is going to be
put on in Hall, I hope to get across for it. I rang up
today to try a book a seat but was unable to, if I
go over 3 night get a seat that has been cancelled.

Last night I went to the usual
Dance on the station, it was quite a good turn, & I
really enjoyed myself. I am getting to know quite
a few of the Wrens at the dances now and have met
a few very nice girls; I still think they are a couple
of pieces behind the Australian girl for looks (or should
I say I have not met one that can prove the contrary
to me).

I have not heard from Bill Cash on this week
consequently don't know if he is still in this country or
not. Bill Pentell & Jeff Vanece are still at Brighten
but expect to be posted very shortly.

Well then that seems to be the news at
the moment so I will close down, I will send this
letter airmail let me know how long it takes, some
of the boys have been getting airmail letters very quickly.

How is everybody at home? everybody in the best
of health I hope?

Love & kisses Jim