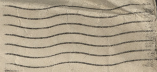


ON ACTIVE SERVICE



Miss J. Strong,

46 Barkby Road,

Leicester,

England.

15 North. W.A. 15856/15

98 Syd. 139 Wing

B.A.F.O. R.A.F.

40 B.A.O.R.

B.A.O.R.

Wed. 31st. Oct.

Dearest Joan,

I received a very pleasant surprise when I returned to the mess and found two letters from you darling; The letter marked one of the 24th. Oct and the 28th. Oct. many thanks dear.

I think it is a good idea to number them, I will do likewise in future.

I am writing this in the mess - the boys have just put on a medley of waltz tunes played by Victor Silvester - we have quite a large floor - but alas no partners not even the odd W.A.A.F.

I should be more than satisfied

if I could have one partner here
- I imagine you can guess who that
is ?

Sunday was a really glorious day
here, in the afternoon feeling rather
lonely (Oh to have spent the weekend
with you soon) and a little discontented
with life I went for a long
walk by myself through the woods
and parkland of Laken - to
meditate and dream a little of
heavenly moments of the past and
I hope diviner moments of the
future.

I also had a look at the Japanese
and Chinese Pavilions they stand
on the North of the royal castle,
both pavilions were built in their

country of origin to be displayed in the Paris Exhibition of 1909, Leopold the second removed them to their present position, both have very interesting oriental collections inside.

I also had a look at the beautiful church in Luken and the Royal Mausoleum.

The woods run along the top of a range of hills, on the edge of the trees you have a wonderful panorama of Brussels laid out before your eyes - I have seen the City thus many times from the air, but travelling fast you cannot sit back and appreciate the scene, and then you have the disconcerting roar of 1500 H.P. on either side - instead

of the stillness of the woods, broken only by a bird or the rustle of the wind in the leaves.

You do see a different kind of beauty in the air though - especially cloud flying, between towering great cumulus clouds is like gliding down a long valley with great cliffs reaching up thousands of feet on each side and the Sun casting glorious dark forboding shadows.

I hope someday dear we shall see them together.

The boys are just playing and singing "You Are My Sunshine" how true my darling.

In the evening I had dinner at the Club and spent the rest of the day reading "Those Barren Leaves" by Aldous Huxley, I noticed that

the Nation & Athenaeum comment was
 The best novel by Mr Flaxley that
 I have ever read - I should like
 to know how many he had read!
 It was certainly quite interesting
 reading, but I wasn't particularly
 impressed, as I believe you are
 Flaxley fan I should like to hear
 your opinion of same.

The Ashley and North taxi service
 have been quite busy since we
 returned to Brussels.

On Monday we took a brown type
 to a small town in N. Germany
 Bocholt or all that remains of it,
 which isn't very much I'm afraid,
 our armoured divisions made quite
 a mess of the place, the Germans
 made it a strong point so it
 was just shelled to bits.

On Tuesday we took a Dutch

underground chief down to Orleans
- returning today.

We were entertained very well indeed
by a French Squadron down there
- they just couldn't do enough for
us, I should really have liked to
have stayed a little longer.

The Colonel gave us the use of his
car and driver to go on a sight
seeing tour of the town - the place
was devastated by the Americans,
mostly bombing by Forts - the very
beautiful Gothic Cathedral where
many of the Kings of France were
crowned was utterly gutted by them,
a stick of M.C.s right across it.

It is by far the worst damage I
have ^{yet} seen in the interior of France
They were full of praise for the
bombing of military targets by the
R.A.F. but they implied the

Americans just hadn't a clue.

In the evening they gave us a marvellous dinner - the best steak I've tasted since I left Canada.

I haven't had time to collect those photographs from Brussels yet, the shop was closed on Sunday and I haven't been into Brussels since. I hope I shall be able to get them this weekend now.

I have to play a game of table tennis during - Con. insists in a rather forcible manner -

I have such a lot of things I should like to tell you, but it's so difficult to concentrate on writing with all this noise going on, this is the only place where there is any heat and it isn't too warm here, I hate to imagine what it will be like when it gets really cold.

If only I could see you more often
darling - I hope it won't be too
long before I do, I love you so
very much my dear.

All my love and kisses,

Eternally yours,

Alas xxxxxxxx