

... ON ACTIVE SERVICE.

P.O. Whitshire G/Lt. 33687.

S 112699

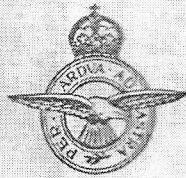
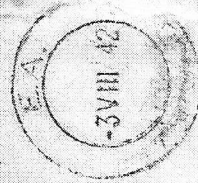
Sergeant Martin Harbiley

No. 8 M.B.U.

E.A.A.S.C.

C/o A.P. Co

EAST AFRICA COMPANY



45 Air School.

Wadtsboorn.

South Africa.

Thursday

July 2.

Dear Martin,

Well my old friend how are you. I am also employed in this vast continent, although some distance from you unfortunately. I do not seem to have seen you for years. I was sent out here to complete my training as a navigator cum wireless operator cum bomb aimer cum air gunner. Unfortunately the theory of navigation proved too difficult to absorb in the limited time available & I failed in my final examination. We

I am now trying to get straight to an elementary flying school to take a pilots course as I think I will be accepted in this country & as I have now quite a little flying experience.

There is very little fun in flying in wartime as I have already discovered, particularly in that part of the world where we are surrounded by high mountains &

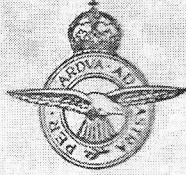


45 Air School.
Oudtshoorn.
South Africa.

on occasions run into colossal air currents which make flying dangerous. I will tell you of one experience I had.

I was first navigator some 6 miles ago on a 3 hour skeleton map exercise. I cannot give you any details of the exercise but briefly the idea is, the pilot endeavours to lose you & after a period of some 2½ hours requests his position & a course to base. The trip started quite uneventfully except that the met. forecast stated that at 8000 feet the wind was approaching 60 mph & conditions were likely to be bumpy. For the first hour things went quite happy except for slight humpiness. Then gradually conditions got worse & we were pitching about all over the place. Just before I was due to give the pilot a course for home WHMPH!! & myself the 2nd navigator went shot right through the plywood roof, the next thing I knew I was practically sitting on top of the plane, then I fell back smack on top of the pilot. Well I will say this we had with us the first pilot on the camp, & we needed him, he was not even shaken & he fought with that plane like you see cowboys fighting with bucking broncho's. We got back O.K. although we were all out about the fall a bit. I discovered afterwards we had dropped 1500 feet which is nearly but not quite the station's record.

Whenever these conditions are fairly rare (known



45 Air School.

Oudtshoorn.

South Africa.

as though mind conditions) & for the most part flying is not too bad.

I have heard all sorts of new music here as we have formed a musical circle & go to quite a number of private houses. This last weekend I spent with one, Mrs Bridgeman, her husband has a speaker much like Billie's which he made himself. For two whole days I feasted myself on Elgar's 2nd Symphony, Brahms Variations, Caesar Franck's Symphony, Elgar's Dream of Gerontius, Mozart's G Major Symphony & light music, Schubert's 'Reverent Song', & some lovely little odds & ends like Debussy's Summer Garden, Tosti's Curcio, & Schumann's Submerged Cathedral. One could almost weep at these poignant little reminders of what has gone & wonder at the futility of the whole war.

A friend of mine here is a chap called Kenneth, organist from Truro Cathedral & also a brilliant pianist, I am afraid they won't make an observer of him either.

Well must go now.

Keep the old chin up, you've always been my best friend you know, keep down,

Love you all the best.

Stephen H.

991606 L.A.C SMITH.

NO 45 AIR SCHOOL

OUTDSHOORN

CAPE PROVINCE

S. AFRICA.