

So that the front on which the enemy could attack was limited, and there could be no long flanking movements, known as left and right hooks.

The digging was hard work, as I have already mentioned, as we did not have all the essential tools. However, good work was done and our Pioneer section are to be praised for the tools they improvised. We left these diggings long before they were finished but the main part of planning etc., which was essential, had been completed. I think they were eventually completed with Gippo labour and contractors.

There was a stage when Farouk was creating a bit of trouble for he was of course pro-Italian. However, he was warned and one morning some of our men took part and guns were rattled up to his palace and he was told to behave himself or else. He was eventually deported and peace reigned.

We managed to carry out a lot of training in an area in which later many men were to die. The Alemain Cemetery is an impressive and well kept cemetery with its thousand of so crosses. See all those graves and one wonders, was it worth it? We fought for everlasting 'peace'. I sometimes think war is created by the nations' leaders and then left for the poor man in the street to fight. It is the same with these 'freedom fighters' as they call themselves. The men who control the show sit at home in luxury and comfort while their lackeys go out and carry on their policy. We carried manoeuvres in the vicinity of Ruwzeit Ridge - later to prove a key point for which both sides strived. This and two pimples were to prove vital. The two pimples, two prominent hills, were known to us as Sheba's teats or in classics known as Quaret el Himlemet and Dur el Munassib.

Here also fought a few of our chaps who had managed to escape from Tobruk and were drafted into various regiments: Brian Watson to the D.L.I., Nat Elliot and Boniface to the R.L.I.

The feeding at Alemain was excellent - fresh meat and bread in the front line every morning. What a difference to the 1914-18 war where we at times lived in mud, and got food now and again and then it was cold. No rats and lice in this show. One can never forget this vermin, the big lice one could squash but those little red brutes they gave us hell and they bred by the millions. Even after boiling ones clothing there were always eggs. One thing we had to be careful about of course was water which, as I have mentioned, was piped from the Nile. There was of course now and again water from Blhrs. These are sort of underground tanks hollowed out by the ancients and these are lined with the natural soapstone which prevented the water from soaking away. And apparently these Blhrs can hold water for years. They dug a small entrance and then gradually hollowed out the ground below which was lined by soapstone. Looking inside one of these Blhrs one could see the marks made by the tools used. To the small opening two rows of stones were laid to make a catchment of the water when they have their big rains. So that in crossing the desert if one saw a row of such stones you could trace the entrance to the underground tank. There were any number of these Blhrs in the desert and in Tobruk the main water supply was from several of these underground tanks. It must have taken months to hollow out a tank. In fact, in Tobruk, one of these tanks which was empty, we used as an orderly room having dug out the side of the tank which was in a bit of a mound or miniature kopje. Yes, the desert is a desolate, scorching emptiness. There is no vegetation excepting near the coast where grows a sort of stringy camel shrub. Yes, there are camels ridden by the desert Arab or Sinousi, dirty looking individuals who travel about with their camels, donkeys and goats seeking food for their animals. One thing they always had for barter were eggs, very small certainly, but eggs and yet they never seemed to have fowls with them.