

Poor old Brom was acting barman behind the counter. He would turn round to fulfill an order and fell but was helped to his feet and was then able to serve you.

The rest of the regiment arrived about the 16th November, but I was not there to celebrate the birthday as I had to go to Kabrit on the Suez Canal on a combined operations course. I was to find this a most interesting and instructive course.

Well, I set off on the long trek to Kabrit with a native driver batman and so was able to relax on that long monotonous tarred road. This road runs all the way to Cairo and on to the Canal, but to Cairo there is nothing but desert sand on both sides - not a blade of grass.

On the way I had to spend the night at Shepherd's Hotel and was surprised to see notices stuck up stating that an officer had to be properly dressed in Baratheia otherwise he would not be admitted to the dining room. So I had my meals served in my bedroom. Where did they expect officers from the front line to be dressed in Baratheia which had been stored in Cairo months before? I was dressed as we all were in the front - shorts and shirt. After dinner I met an old friend of mine, Major Ossie Flemmer, who was attached to the staff and he told me that there were 900 officers on the staff in Cairo. Outside Cairo were hundreds of vehicles and we were so short of transport. These trucks etc. were apparently for the large staff in Cairo to be evacuated should there be a scare of Rommel breaking through to the delta.

I pointed out to Ossie that we poor chaps in the front area had to battle to get transport to move about. We were penalised also for not having Baratheia, which was stored in Cairo, and so being penalised for only having on our front line uniform, barred from having a decent meal with others in the dining room for you blooming base wallers. When Montgomery took over months later the whole bunch were ordered to report at once to their Units up in the front. Many were sent back as malingers.

The next day I travelled on to Kabrit and here found a very well organised course and camp. Apart from myself, there were about twenty others accommodated in tents but the lectures were held in a house boat on the Canal near the bitter lakes. I was the representative from our 2nd Div. It was a most interesting, instructive and intensive course with very fine instructors or rather lecturers. For any advice or information we might require, there were representatives from the various branches of the Army, on the Staff: a Senior Naval Officer, a Brigadier, a Wing Commander, a Senior Gunner Officer and Engineer. We had a landing craft from which we staged a landing against an enemy on the Canal. I was in command of this show and when near land two of us landed in what is known as a Fo Boat, a filmsy looking canoe, which could be used in up to two feet of water. Well, we landed successfully and found the enemy, a detachment of the Gloucesters, unobserved as we were told, and so were able to report. I enjoyed the outing. We were later divided into groups of four and from information given us had to work out a landing on a Greek Island known to be occupied by the enemy. We were given four ships on paper, with their tonnage and carrying space etc. and had to work out the embarking of troops (we were given the composition of the invading force), ammunition, guns, tanks, food etc. Needless to say, it took days to work out the whole show including the landing arrangements. We were given aerial maps of the Island and as much information as possible about the enemy troops in occupation. My group wanted extra aerial maps of the Island - a phone message to Cairo and the maps were flown down within an hour. The Information Officers or rather advisers were most helpful. Having eventually worked out everything each party had to give their story, when the other groups and the information officers were able to criticise and give constructive advice.