

Next we were shown into the dining room for our evening meal and what a meal of bare necessities and when we asked if we could have something more interesting we were told that that was the ration. If we cared to pay we could have extras. "Well", said Guy, "get the food. We have not been living in luxury as you chaps have. Never mind the cost". In no time extra, appetising food was brought in, probably from their mess.

It was a disgraceful show. The New Zealanders, for their chaps, took over a hotel boots and all. Anyway this state did not last long for when the next batch arrived next day some of the senior officers took over the running and got things in better shape.

Some of these officers who had been over some time "Organising" had rented comfortable flats on the sea front. That was soon stopped. We were told that there was a ship leaving for South Africa in a few days and that there would be room for twelve of us. I and eleven others immediately put our names down. Many of the others who had never been to England and not likely to ever come over decided that they would not mind waiting a month or so or weeks. I had had several trips and was anxious to get home.

Next morning a number decided to get out of this dump and so I drew a fair sum of money. I then phoned Lorna's Aunt Edith at Salford Priors, near Stratford-on-Avon to say I was leaving by the first available train to spend a few days with her. I left my address in case I was wanted, also the telephone number so that as soon as word came through about the ship I could be contacted.

One thing they had on sale at the Brighton depot was tins of fruit, and chocolates and tinned meats. There was no limit on my purchase so I got an extra kit bag and filled it with goodies to take to Edith Goods they could not buy locally without limited coupons.

I then advised Edith of the time of my arrival at Evesham their nearest station and on arrival she was there to meet me with a friend and his car.

When we got to Salford I handed over to Edith the Kit Bag and watched as she opened it. Her eyes nearly popped out "Geoff what are you going to do with all these wonderful things". "They are yours, Edith, to do with whatever you wish". Just a small present.

Well, we talked well into the night Edith sampling the tinned fruit and Chocolates. After a nice hot bath I settled down in a comfortable bed, the first for nearly three years. No wonder I slept late next morning. Next day Edith went off to work and I said I would meet her for lunch at the hotel. Here we had a sherry and lunch which was very good.

I should here mention that the officer at our billet in Brighton tried to make amends by producing a bottle of Gin and was rather disappointed when the chaps showed no enthusiasm. "Don't you chaps like Gin", he said but was told that we had not touched liquor for three years and so were not interested in whether we had it or not. "Rather give us some nice tasty food".

Unfortunately, our scheme for lunching together at the hotel was not to be. The idea was that I would remain there until I was advised of the ship's sailing date.

The next evening Edith and I were sitting talking when the phone rang. Edith answered it and came back to say I was wanted on the phone. Who on earth could it be. It was Brighton ringing to say our ship was leaving in two days time and I was to report to Brighton to take charge of a draft which was to embark for South Africa. I pointed out that there was no necessity for me to travel to Brighton to take over the draft - but the next senior man in charge for the short train journey from Brighton to London and I would meet them at Victoria station where there would be someone to see us to the Marleybone Hotel where we were to spend two days. This was agreed to.

Edith, when I told her /