

*When looking to re-dedicate the war memorial at Christ Church, Watford a number of letters were discovered in the Church Archive. The letters had been typed and sent to a previous incumbent in 1999 by Arthur Whiting (Joe's Nephew (by his brother Arthur) who was, by this point, 78 years old). Arthur tells us that the copies are word for word from the original and he also included a photograph of Joe.*

*According to the 1911 census, Edwin Joseph Whiting was 22 years old, having been born in 1889. This would make him 25 years old at the outbreak of war and just 26 at his death. His Father was a carpenter and the 1901 census lists Joe's birthplace as Heath & Reach, Bedfordshire. The 1911 census lists Joe's occupation as a Railway Clerk.*

*The following is a word for word (including typing and spelling errors) copy of what was found in the archives.*

### **Christ Church Watford War Memorial**

#### **Inscription E.J. Whiting**

Edwin Joseph Whiting (Joe) was the youngest son of Edwin Ernest Whiting, a Methodist Lay Preacher, residing (at that time) at 103 Leavesden Road, North Watford.

There were five brothers; Arthur, Leonard, Ernest, Robert and Joe. Also two sisters; Minnie and Evelyn.

In 1910 Arthur, Ernest, Minnie and Evelyn emigrated to the USA.

Joe had joined the 1<sup>st</sup> Troop Herts Yeomanry, previously, when old enough to enlist.

In 1914 Arthur returned to the UK to enlist in the 2/1<sup>st</sup> Herts Yeomanry, along with his brother Leonard. Robert enlisted in the Machine Gun Corps and was discharged, wounded, in 1917.

After the war Arthur remained in England but Ernest, Minnie and Evelyn became US citizens.

Joe died in a military hospital in Valetta, Malta, on 14<sup>th</sup> November 1915. He died after a bad spell of Enteritis and Dysentery, resulting from his service in the Egyptian desert. He was buried, along with the shipmates of Lord Nelson, in a cemetery at Pieta, near Valetta, Malta.

Cpl. E. J. Whiting

NO.1 Troop "A" Sqdn  
Herts Yeomanry  
Army Of Occupation  
Cairo. Egypt.

Sunday 18/10/14

My Dear Bob and Rachel,

I know you will be anxiously awaiting to get a line from me, but doubtless you have received my PC's and have seen my letter to Dad.

We are in the New Barracks here at Abbassia, the ones Arthur Roberts was in when his Regiment was here, about four miles from Cairo on the edge of the Nubian Desert.

They are very finely fitted up with Hot Baths and showers and we are very comfortable. We sleep on the ordinary Barrack Room bedsteads and Biscuits and the latter are absolutely full of Bugs. Some of the biggest I have ever seen. Some of our fellows did nothing the first few nights but chase Bugs. They get in the joints of the bedsteads and the Mattresses must be full of them. I guess you would have a lively time if you were here.

They don't like me apparently, as I have not been troubled by them.

It's a standing Gag that they do Troop drill all over our bodies at night. They send out Scouts to all the parts, but the Fellows whom they upset the most are getting used to them now and do not trouble much.

On Wednesdays, Saturdays and Sundays we have Half-Holidays, or Boon-days, as we call them when we are free from 2pm till 10pm, but one Third of us have to stay back to look after the Horses. This is supposed to be the Summer arrangement.

Next Monday – tomorrow – we start our Winter Training and do not know if we will get the Half-days then.

At present we get up at 5am, have hot cocoa and Parade at 5.15am then mounted till 8am, or 8.30am when we retire for Breakfast.

At 10am we do our grooming and clean the saddlery till 12 Noon, then Dinner at 1pm.

The next parade at 4pm till about 6pm when we are free for the Night, till 10pm and lights out at 10.15pm.

Our Stables are nearly Half a Mile away and we have to march there three times each day. The Arab horses we are riding are absolute Devils. They bite and kick all day long, some of our chaps have been bitten and kicked.

Young 'Cripps' who lives just below us, was bitten in the neck and another Chap was kicked in the 'Person' and had to stay in bed for a few days. But, for this they are beautiful mounts.

Yesterday, I was out and we were galloping along for about two miles on the Nubian desert when the horse next to me grabbed my knee, or the flesh just above it and would not let go. We galloped for about 100yds with him gripping me and the man riding him could not pull him off, so I went to strike him and he pulled me back and flung me around my Nags head on the Off-Side. It's the nearest squeak I have had to coming off. How I regained my seat I don't know, but if I had fallen off I don't think I would be writing this letter, as our Rear rank were galloping behind us and it would have been a miracle if I had escaped un-injured from their flying hooves.

My knee has swollen and very stiff and sore but luckily it didn't tear the flesh very much and I hope to be out again Tuesday next.

The Horses are nearly all 'entire' and when they see the English Mares the other Regiments are riding, they go almost mad and rush after them, kicking and biting. We get our own back quietly tho' and they are beginning to respect us a bit now. Since we have been here we have been inoculated for the second time and we are to be vaccinated, so I guess we should be pretty well immune from Typhoid and Enteritis soon. Our grub is very good in quality. What we get, but it's the quantity

that's lacking and a good part of our day's pay is taken by purchases from the Canteen, in the way of additional food and the prices here are considerably in advance of those at home for practically all foodstuffs.

The 3rd Dragoon Guards whose places we have taken, told us that the War had not affected the prices here greatly and that they were practically normal.

Tram fares are the cheapest we can get. We go to Cairo, four miles, for two Milliennes, 1/2pence in English value. To the Pyramids we can go for about 6 pence.

We were there yesterday week and had a good ride on Camels to the Sphinx and Pyramids, they are a fine sight.

Cairo is a dirty place, taking it all round in more ways than one, but there are some most beautiful parts.

The Ladies here are of all Nationalities except English. --- French, Greeks, Italians, Spanish and Natives are in large numbers and they are fine looking Girls, some of them, but it makes one glad to see there are no Englishwomen amongst them.

At night when we are in barracks, we have some fine times, at boxing and we have a good institute where we can play billiards, read, write etc.

Some of our boxing bouts are most amusing and we generally settle any little differences that way, but taking them all round we have a most agreeable lot of Chaps in my room. One or two of them however have Blackeyes as a result of scraps with the gloves.

I have held my Own so far.

They have made me a Corporal since we got here, so, I get the benefit of a Corporal's Mess where we can lounge in comfort, but taking it all round, the Corporals take more kicks than halfpence.

Tonight I have to go on at 4:30pm as Corporal of the guard.

Heliopolis is about two miles away and is a very fine place.

They have Luna Park here, which is something like the White City, at home, although on a much smaller scale.

The weather here is now beautiful, just like a hot Summer at home.

It suits me to the ground, but Oh! The perspiration when grooming those horses. I can tell you the showers are an absolute necessity.

I went to a Store for an Ostrich feather, the other day, but could not see a decent one for my money. If possible I will get one before I leave Egypt and send it on to you, but I don't know how far the money will go?

Our Officer tells us today that they have received orders that we are to go to France in December, so if these orders are not countermanded we will be at the front by Christmas, so I guess the weather will be quite a contrast to this.

I understand another Division, probably an Indian Contingent, will come and take our places. By what I can see of it, we might as well be there as here. The Westminster Dragoons (Terriers) are here with us but I don't think they will be leaving when we go.

We have a Camel Corps (Regulars) within 200yds of us and they are very quaint when out on parade. I must now conclude, hoping that you are all well and that I shall soon hear from you.

With best wishes from  
Your loving Brother  
JOE

Cpl. E. J. Whiting

No1. Troop "A" Squadron  
Herts Yeomanry  
Abbassia  
Cairo  
Egypt

23/11/14

Dear Bob.

Many thanks for your letter, received yesterday.

The weather here is still beautiful but it gets very cold at night. It just suits me and I have put on some weight since being here. I weighed myself the other day and scaled 11st. 5lbs.

I don't think I have felt better in my life than I do now.

The photo in the Watford Illustrated was sent by one of our Fellows to his home and they apparently thought well to print it. I have sent one to Dad, but it was a poor photo. I am third from the right hand side.

Have you got some of the Civil Service Rifles with you and what Regt do those at Dad's belong to?? I guess they are sleeping in my bed.

I was reading about Grimsdell in the football News in the Watford paper and also thinking of Hammond too.

It is about time they joined something, I should say it has taken some time to make up their minds. I don't think there is any doubt about Conscription coming sooner or later. That would decide the fate of some of these half-hearted single Men ?.

Have you got it on good authority, about our Reserve Squadron coming out here ?.

We have'nt heard anything about it so far.

Do Art and Len know how to ride a horse, yet?, if not they can come out here, they are in for a stiff time learning on these Arab ponies, they are devils and fight one another like cats. They stand on their hind legs and fight and box each other just like cats.

I guess now that Turkey have started, we shall not be sent away from here as they shall want us in all probability very shortly as we understand that hoards of Turks, Bedouins are on their way to Suez and here.

We have had no scares since we were sent out after some Bedouins the other Sunday, but we should be having some fun shortly according to the news we receive.

My word, Bob, old Man if you were here, I don't know how you would sleep, the Bugs are everywhere. We are used to them now.

We chase them out of the mattresses and bedsteads, occasionally stabbing with pins as they career over the walls. Just think what we would say if we saw one at home.

As regards Ostrich feathers, I am keeping a good look out for them, some of our fellows have got hold of one or two for about 6 shillings, but a very good one can be got for 6 shillings.

They are mostly Black or White, I take it that Rachel would like a White one.

If I can get a good one I'll send it in time for Christmas, I can borrow the money and you can send it to me later.

I may not be able to get there by Xmas as next week I shall not be able to go out, as tomorrow, I start Squadron Orderly corporals duty for a week, anyhow I'll do my best.

Must close now, to catch the post, hoping you and Rach and Kiddies are all well, love to all.

from

Your loving brother  
JOE

Ps;

I enclose a photo taken in the town. I have not got one of those on the camels, to spare but if I have it taken again, will send you one.

Cpl. E. J. Whiting

No1. Troop "A" Squadron  
Herts Yeomanry  
Cairo Egypt

11/12/14

Dear Bob,

You will be pleased to hear I have at last been able to get a feather off. I have sent it by Parcel Post today, securely packed in a Tin Tube, so that you should receive it alright. I had to do a lot of bargaining for it. I think they call it a Plume, however I think no doubt Rach will know all about it.

I have a Chum here who understands something about Feathers and he says it could not be bought in England for less than 30/- at least.

At first the Old Party asked 18/- for it but after a lot of talk I knocked him down to 10/-.

It cost me 1/6 for postage so the total cost is 11/6. Let me know what you and Rach think of it and if you consider it worth the money.

I could not get a decent one for less than 16/-. And he would not reduce it one halfpenny.

There are some lovely Feathers and I should say well worth the brads. I have sent a white one as I thought it could be dyed any other colour if it did not suit.

I find you can get four thinner Feathers, uncurled which could be made up in England to Two Feathers for 16/-. For myself I should say the single feather or Plume is so much better.

If you would like one of the others, let me know in the meantime I'll continue to look around to see if I can pick up anything cheaper.

On Saturday week, we played a game of football against one of our other Troops and won 4-1 and on the evening, held a concert between the parties concerned in honour of the occasion. We have been able to hire a piano from a Party in Cairo.

We have it in our room and all pay a small share towards it. We have several fellows who can play well and they help cheer us up in the evenings when we stay in barracks.

We have since heard that the Party from whom we hired the piano has been arrested and taken to Malta for importing explosives in musical instruments. I'm sure there is no explosives in ours or it would have blown-up long ago in view of the thumping it has had to suffer. We may also be able to escape payment of the brads, unless the Old Boy has any creditors to come looking for us.

Things are very much the same with us here. There is nothing exceptional happened to record. We are still drilling incessantly at the gallop and Field Days when we have Sham fighting are getting very frequent. Swords have been ordered and are on their way here, we have a lot of practice, Charging at the gallop. It's a fine sport, the horses love it but they get so excited and the faster they go the faster they want to go, they want some holding back, several of our Chaps have bolted every time we do it.

Egypt is at present full of troops of one sort or another. There are any amount of Australians, New Zealanders, and Ceylonese encamped at the Pyramids. There are some Rough diamonds among them and some very decent fellows.

They say, that when Crossing-the-Line, they practiced inoculating their Officers with treacle and feathers, and ducked them all. The Chaplin, in trying to get away, slipped, fell on the deck and broke his neck. I guess our Officers would have had some objection to this sort of thing, but I understand most of their Officers are practically equal to the men.

Last Sunday we had a lovely day, working all day disinfecting horses, saddlery, mangers, grooming kit, everything as a result of an outbreak of Ringworm in the stables. Every mortal thing had to be washed and I can tell you we were all glad when the day was over.

The weather here, now, is very much like English weather, but more dry, and gets very cold at night, we need some warmer clothing on now.

Our Officers tell us that the GOC has heard a rumour that we are to leave Egypt for Aldershot on the 6th January to be fitted out preparatory to embarking for France. There may be some truth in it but we hear so many rumours that we do not attach much importance to anything we hear any more. Well, Old Boy, I guess it will be about Xmas when this reaches you, so I must wish you, Rach and everyone a very Merry Christmas and a Happy and prosperous New Year.

Your loving brother  
JOE

Ps; Have been inoculated today and beginning to feel the effect by way of a slight fever, otherwise have been as fit and well as ever.

Cpl. E. J. Whiting

No1. Troop "A" Squadron  
Herts Yeomanry  
Cairo, Egypt

18/1/15

Dear Bob and Rachel,

Many thanks for your letter containing PO value 11/6 for which I am very grateful. I am glad you liked the Plume, it took me a long time to get it for the price and I think you have a bargain.

The question of the new hat was one that was bounded to Crop-Up sooner or later, What? Oh! these Wimmin.

We had a very decent time at Christmas under the circumstances. A good spread was provided by the Officers, plenty of Turkey, Chickens and Plum Pudding and you can guess we did full justice to that, after our usual Bill-Of-Fare.

Plenty of Whiskey, Port and Beer, and there were plenty of Drunks and part drunks about. It was quite a comedy to see the mounting of the Guard on Christmas day. Most of them had been drinking, not wisely, but well, and they were doing right turns, for left and so on, some doing one thing and others doing another. You never saw such a mess. Fortunately I was not on guard so was able to watch the fun.

The Officer was a decent sport and they were all let off very lightly.

On Boxing day we had a big Sports day at the Khedevial sporting club which is the biggest in Cairo if not in all Egypt, but I was unable to compete because of the suffering from the effects of vaccination, although I had entered for eight events.

A few days after Christmas we were taken for a trip up the Nile, by the Officers (with money sent out to us by our old Colonel) as far as the Delta barrage, about 20 miles distant.

It was a big dam constructed to prevent the water all flowing away to sea and for regulating its distribution over the land for irrigation purposes. It was quite an instructive and interesting day out and we all enjoyed ourselves.

Since the holidays, however, they have more than made up for the soft-time by giving us about the hardest time since we have been here.

As an instance, this last week we had two Field days running, on Thursday and Friday, when we travelled about 30 miles each day and were given eight or nine hours in the saddle. I thought most of us were pretty hard, but there were plenty who were saddle sore after the two days.

I hope you will not send any of my letters or extracts for publication in the Watford Illustrated as some people are doing, it causes a great deal of comment here.

I don't think I told Dad, but I don't think he would do anything of the kind. Perhaps you would mention it to him when you see him.

On New years Eve, we had a bit of a barney, turned out of bed at 11.30pm after a Wee Doch and Doris proceeded to pull all the others out who would not get up.

Then down on the barrack square there was a real pandemonium. fellows beating Pots and pans and singing all the patriotic songs and choruses imaginable.

One of our Majors was called out by the guard and tried to quieten us, but it was out of his control.

At 12oclock, we all formed a ring, joined hand and sang the Allies patriotic songs and Anthems.

After wishing everyone a Happy new Year, we turned in about 1am.

I shan't forget this New Years Eve in a hurry.

I have had one or two nights out in Cairo with Jock Thompson. Officially we should be in barracks by 10pm, but on my birthday, Sunday 10th, we arrived back at 3.45am.

There is a way in without passing the guard, but it's not known to all.

We went to some of the Cafes where dancing goes on all night and open until daylight, we had a jolly good time.



Porter and Brightman, are in a different Squadron to me. They are in 'D' Squad who have English horses so do not have the doings with horses that we get.

George Aish tells me that poor old Ben East has gone, he died from his wounds. I'm very sorry to hear that as I went to school with him, we were good friends.

I also hear that George Baldwin is on his way out to Egypt. If that is true, I expect he will go Suez canal way. I guess there would be a merry re-union if he were to come to Cairo.

Brother Arthur tells me has been made L/Cpl. I bet that riles Len? But I have been told that Len could have been made a full Cpl. If he had taken more care.

I guess Watford must be something like it was in 1902 when the heavy floods were in, I am not sorry in a way that I missed that.

Minnie, Eva and Ernie have sent me a parcel of mince pies, chocolate etc; which have come in very useful. I have written them a long letter telling them of my experiences out here.

Our latest rumour is that we leave here in the next 10 days for Syria. Other rumours say Jaffa, Damascus, Palestine, Issmalia, and India as our final destination, but nobody knows for sure yet.

There may be something in the Syria rumour, as we are to have our bright parts of equipment painted Khaki and our bayonets sharpened.

Well I think I have told you all I can, just now, so will close. Hoping Rach and yourself and Kiddies are in good health.

Love to all

Your loving brother

JOE

Ps; I expect you know as much about the Turks movements, as we do here, they say there are about 100.000 marching on Suez. If this is so, we shall go soon, I guess.

Cpl. E. J. Whiting

No1. Troop "A" Squadron  
Herts Yeomanry  
Indian Expeditionary force  
Egypt

14th Feb. 1915

Dear Bob and Rachel

You will no doubt have heard that we have at last  
got nearer the Firing Line.

I am unable to tell you about our movements, or our intended move, due to censorship. I would like to tell you about things, in general, but must leave this till later.

All I can say, is that we are camped on the Suez Canal, which the Turks have succeeded in crossing already.

We have built Dug-outs in which we sleep and eat and at 4pm are off to an unknown destination, probably, Issmalia, where the Turks have got further than anticipated.

I think we are in more danger from appendicitis from the amount of sand we consume with our food (which is meagre) than we are likely to experience from the Turks.

Full news as soon as possible.

Will write at first opportunity, love to all.

your loving brother,  
JOE

Cpl. E. J. Whiting

No1. Troop "A" Squadron  
Herts Yeomanry  
Abbassia Barracks  
Cairo, Egypt

7/3/15

My Dear Bob and Rachel,

From the above address you will understand we have returned from the Suez canal, to barracks once more and now that our letters are not so likely to be censored, I will tell you of our experiences.

You will of course have read in the papers of the Turks advance across the the Arabian Desert in the Sinai Peninsula, which the critics said was impossible to pass, well, in fact they got to the canal and actually launched boats which they had brought all the way with them across the Desert and a few of them reached our side of the Suez.

We were rushed off at a few hours notice, up to Issmailia, the chief place of which their attack was directed and we bivouacked on the desert, close by the Canal.

We reached there on Feb, 4th and from all accounts, the Turks had been given such a rough time that they were forced to retire, before making another attack.

When we got there, they were within a few miles, but retiring into the desert.

On Friday, 5th, 14 of us were chosen from each Troop and the Generals intention was to send us out to cut them off and generally demolish them.

All preparations were made for us to leave camp at 9.30pm and carry on with the Dirty work. You can tell, we were very eager and excited at last having the prospect of coming to grips with the Turks and got as far as saying 'Ta Ta' to some of those who were not being sent when orders came to Stand-by and shortly after, we were told the GOC had decided not to attack as the aeroplane scouts had reported them too strong for us.

We were sorely disappointed at this. It may however have been just as well for us, because we heard there were about 20,000 of them, all told (some reports said as many as 100,000) but I think the former was nearer the mark. There would not have been more than 1.000 of us including all Regiments.

Our opinion, however, is that the journey across the Desert must have been a very trying ordeal, from what we saw of the Prisoners, and we could have rounded them up and given them a deuce of a time.

On the following Monday, our Brigade, consisting of the Herts Yeomanry, Duke of Lancs Yeo and the Westminster Dragoons, were sent out with the Indian Calvary Brigade, who were the Bengal and Hyderabad Lancers, for the purpose of pushing them back further into the Desert and rounding up the stragglers.

We had reveille at 2.30am and we moved off at 4.30am in full Marching Order. It was pitch dark and given orders not to Smoke or make unnecessary noise -- this was rather funny as it afterwards turned out that the Enemy were some few miles away.

We crossed the Canal by Pontoon Bridge and as mentioned, joined the Indian Calvary Brigade and a Camel Corps. Once again we were all excited at the chance of having a Scrap, but all we saw was the Enemies previous camping Grounds, littered with their old accoutrements, of all descriptions and any amount of dead camels lying all over the Desert. Poor Devils, they must have had a really rough time, with shortage of water and trudging through the loose sand.

I was told they had relays of camels, bringing water from the nearest wells they had sunk in the Desert and it took 5. Days each way. As there was some 20.000 men, you can guess what number of camels they must have used.

When we were about Ten Miles out, our aeroplanes dropped a message for the GOC --- we never actually heard what it was, but it was rumoured that the Turks were only a short distance ahead of us, but still retreating.

We continued for another ten Miles or so, but did not catch up with them as they retired as fast as we advanced. We passed any amount of dead camels, graves and trenches, but did not see any Turks, except a few Prisoners.

In places, our horses would sink into the loose sand, well above the fetlocks.

It must have been awful for poor Infantry men.

It is a pitiless Desert, but they managed to bring Big guns and galvanised Boats, or pontoons which were used to cross the Canal.

The 20 Boats now lay in the quay in Issmailia and are full of bullet and shrapnel holes.

Their guns, they succeeded in taking back with them, of course, they were not brought right up to the Canal Bank. It was a marvel how they brought these things with them. They were fitted with Runners under the boats and pulled across like sledges, by Camels, Buffaloes and Oxen. Our People on the Canal Bank said, our airmen saw them coming and decided to let them launch their boats before pouring a heavy barrage into them with the result that there were around 2.000 – 3.000 estimated casualties on their side as against an insignificant number on our's.

There were also 600 – 700 Prisoners taken who are now in Cairo.

The Turks were led by German Officers and the Army consisted of all types of People, Bedouins, and Arabs forced to accompany them. Some were apparently regulars, as they had good uniforms and equipment, but most were poorly attired and no doubt pushed into service.

The day we reached Issmailia, we could hear firing going on, but most of the shells fell in Lake Tinisah, on which Issmailia is situated. One dropped in a small plantation within 1/4 Mile of our camp but did no damage.

A few days after the engagement, I obtained leave to visit the battle Field at Toussoum Post where they attempted to fling their pontoons across close to where we were.

I went with another Cpl, across the Lake and a little way up the Canal.

There were numerous dead, loosely covered with sand, the stench was chronic.

The Indians were digging holes and burying them on the day I was there.

I have acquired sundry souvenirs, such as Time Fuzes (made in Germany) shrapnel etc;

There were dozens of old boots lying about because the Turks were told to remove them before getting into the galvanized boats, for fear of making a noise.

On the banks of the Canal, where most of the Turks were, is a Wooden Cross with the inscription '*Major Von-Denhagen, killed in action Feb. 4th 1915*'. He was one of the German Officers leading the Turks, but now has a lonely grave on the banks of the Suez Canal.

About a fortnight after the action, a Diver went down in the Canal, but immediately came up saying he could not go down there for anything, owing to the awful sight of the dead bodies down there.

They carried some 200 - 300 rounds of ammunition which kept them down. We saw several bodies washed up along the bank, as we progressed in the boat.

There are any amount of incidents that I could relate, but I must cut it short.

They tell me The Turks have retired Palestine way and concentrating at Beersheba. Whether preparing for another Bash, or given up, we don't know, but it is my opinion that any hopes of beating us will be sadly dashed to the ground if they should come again.

The defences on the Canal are marvellous, one long line of trenches and barbed wire, with Planes out scouting and observing all day. It's as good as a day out to see the flying at Hendon on a 'Big day'.

Issmailia, although a small place, is very pretty, indeed.

After things had quietened down a bit, we had some lovely swims in the Lake Tinisah through with the Suez flows. While away, we had trecks to various places along the Canal, which although at time, very tiring, were mostly of an interesting nature.

One day we trekked across the Desert to a little place called El Ferdan and saw liners go up the Canal.

The passengers gave us waves and a cheer and communicated little items of war news, they reminded us strongly of Home. Especially the Home-sick Chaps, or should I say, the Fed-up ones as we are all mostly Fed-up.

We had no tents at Issmailia, so we built Dug-outs in the sand in which we slept and had our meals. The sand blows into the food and while consuming our Stew (stew every day) in burning sun with no shade, the heat is terrific at times, while at night it is just the reverse and but for our waterproof sheets we would be wet through, most mornings.

Returning to the barracks was like coming home. Altogether it was a very enjoyable three weeks, for me at least and I would not have liked to have missed it, not withstanding the discomforts.

We lost a few Arab horses while away, two being shot, but several English horses just Pegged-out as a result of the trekking across the desert chasing the Turks.

Current rumours have it that we are for Jaffa and some say we are to accompany an Expeditionary Force to the vicinity of the Dardanelles, which I noticed, from the papers, our ships are giving them a Hot Time but no-one knows for sure, yet.

I am the Main Guard Cpl today, hence the long letter.

I must write to Dad as soon as possible. Have heard from Emma who tells me his eyes are troubling him a good deal and he is not working for a while giving them a good rest and doctoring.

While at Issmailia, we heard the 21st Lancers passed up the Suez. I'm not sure whether this was right or not, as I have not heard from Arthur Roberts recently.

As regards your enlisting, I guess it rests with you. You know your position best. So far as I'm concerned I would prefer this life to that of a civilian under the circumstances, though I'm losing all my 'Screw' over it as I don't expect a Penny from the Company when we return.

As far as the Stripes are concerned, I hear they are as cheap as dirt in the Second Battalion, or Regiment, but of course, here there are no vacancies unless some NCO's peg-out, now and again.

Old 'Billy Thompson' was, of course very surprised to hear of 'Ada A's' affair, as so was I. He did not say much about it, we still go down to Cairo together and have some good times.

As you say, it is quick work for 'Jack Owen' to be sent to the Front, so soon, but I guess he's in a Company that is quite safe enough, ie; one that is some way from the firing line for a while yet. Now dear Bob, must close now, with love to the kiddies, Rach and yourself.

from your loving brother,

JOE

Ps, Pleas excuse the scrawl and pencil, write to me again, soon.

Cpl. E. J. Whiting

No1. Troop "A" Squadron  
Herts Yeomanry  
Abbassia Barracks  
Cairo, Egypt.

25/4/1915

Dear Bob,

Many thanks for your letter, received a week ago.

Things are much the same here, still.

The weather is getting warmer and warmer each day.

On Easter Monday, it was 103 degrees in the shade and last Tuesday is reached 104.

We occasionally, however, get cold days when the wind gets up.

On Palm Sunday, we had a March-Past in Cairo, where we were inspected by General Sir Ian Hamilton.

It was quite a decent day for us, as far as such events go.

My Easter holiday was about the worse I ever remember spending.

We were allowed out of camp on Good Friday, but in consequences of a 'Rag' by the Australians and New Zealanders held in Cairo, we have been confined to barracks ever since.

It appears they had bitten off more than they can chew in some of the houses of ill-repute and took their revenge by throwing all sorts of furniture, wardrobes, chest of drawers, chairs and other items into the street below and set fire to them.

When the fire-engines arrived, they cut the hoses and aimed them at the Native Firemen who soon fled.

They also ransacked several Bars, throwing barrels into the street and bottles of wine and whiskey were flying about in scores.

The MP's were powerless and had to send to the barracks for the cavalry to clear the area. It was altogether a disgraceful affair and we have to suffer as well, being confined to barracks in case needed to quell further disturbances.

The culprits have been removed from the neighbourhood, since, thank goodness.

There are large numbers of Locusts about, they fairly darken the sky.

In the distance, they look like thick black smoke, but close to they are really quite a pretty colour, but cause considerable damage to the crops.

I have just returned from a weeks visit to the Delta Barrage about 20 miles away on the River Nile where we were swimming our horses while scouting.

But for the dust (really powdery mud left by the Nile in flood) and mosquitoes, we had a very decent week of it. There are lovely gardens there and we had some fine rides around the vicinity. Although I slept under muslin netting I got a large amount of bites from the mosquitoes. We took about 4 hours to get there and went up the east side of the river. We came back on the opposite side of the Nile and had a very good journey, the road being along the banks of the River the whole way.

Although, it was a very interesting week and I quite enjoyed the change.

We lost one or two horses by drowning, while swimming across, but they were the sick ones and should not have been sent over.

The Flies here are about our worst enemy, there are millions of them and a chronic nuisance.

I am still taking instruction in Scouting and it is a treat to get away from the Troop for a time. I'm also missing all regimental and brigade drills while with the Scouts.

There are a dozen of us from the Regiment training and eight are to be chosen as regimental Scouts. The others will be Squadron scouts. Whether I will be picked as Regimental, I don't know yet. There has been one or two cases of Small-Pox break out in the area recently and some fellow has been taken from the barracks.

The Chaps who, so far have refused vaccination have been isolated for three weeks in consequence. We still occasionally hear that we will have to go to the Dardanelles, when they need us, but fancy that we shall be kept as Garrison Cavalry here.

I understand there is a good number of new arrivals at Alexandria, who will probably be sent to the Dardanelles first as the question of providing suitable clothing for them to stay here is a deciding factor.

Now, Old Boy, I think I have exhausted my supply of news, so will close with best wishes to Rach, yourself and Kiddies, hoping that you are well.

I suppose you have not yet joined the Regiment. It's a pity you can't get in the 'APC' there are some good jobs going in that line.

I hear Brother Arthur is lucky to get full Corporal stripes, so soon, no doubt if I had stayed at home promotion would have been fairly rapid for me, but I would rather have had the experience I have had, than stopped behind for all the stripes they could offer me.

Brother Len has been putting in a bit of Overtime then. Eh?

By Gum, if he keeps on at this rate he will have a few too.

I got the papers you sent, some time back, but have not received any recent ones, but thanks for the ones received.

Watford, are actually doing fine in the Southern League and should get the championship, but I hear they were badly beaten by Swindon. Chelsea also came a cropper in the final, I understand. Must close now.

Love to all

Your loving brother,

JOE

Please excuse pencil, again.

Cpl. E. J. Whiting

No1. Troop "A" Squadron  
Herts Yeomanry  
Abbassia Barracks  
Cairo, Egypt.

2nd June 1915

Dear Bob and Rach,

Many thanks for your letter that came to hand today and as I am at present resting, thought I would answer it right away.

The reasons I am resting is because of a bad eye.

The eye was damaged when a Cpl, simulating Golf, using a walking stick and an empty Cig packet, took a swipe and hit me in the eye.

I saw stars for a while, then, all went black. It just missed my pupil, but made a bruise on the eye-ball which is very painful and bloodshot.

The Doctor has given me excused duties with instructions to bathe it regularly..

I believe I last wrote just after my return from the Delta barrage and since, we have been given orders to move off at 6.am for a place named 'Abou Zabaal where there is, under construction, the largest Wireless Station in this part of the World.

It is roughly eighteen miles from here and situated on the edge of the Desert alongside the Nile and canals which run parallel with a strip of cultivation.

We had a very fine time there, I thoroughly enjoyed it.

I went with some other Scouts and Men, totalling 46 in all and we relieved the Lancashire Fusiliers who were leaving for the Dardanelles, where the troops have been badly Cut-up.

There were no infantry here to do the Guard, hence our arrival.

We've had the time of our lives, as far as Grub was concerned, and supplemented our Army rations with Chicken, Eggs, tomatoes and Cucumbers, which we had sent up from Cairo each day.

We frequently had steak and eggs for breakfast which we never got in Barracks or are likely to get.

There were eleven Wireless Operators and very fine fellows they were. We had some Merry and bright Supper Parties with them.

There are 25 Masts and up to now are 350 Ft tall. I persuaded one of the Chief Engineers to run me to the top of one. I was pulled up by a dozen Natives, in a Bosun's Chair.

I got a tickle in my Tummy, going up, but had a wonderful view of the surrounding countryside, for miles.

The Guard consisted of a Cpl, and three men to patrol all the masts, four times each night and it was four miles right round, meaning 16 miles per Guard duty, (if done correctly)

The masts were still standing when we left, so I guess no harm was done.

One night, we had an alarm when one of the Guard said he saw a signal lamp doing Morse Code. I think he must have had a Wee Dram too much, because when we went to investigate, which took a good ride, we found it was a fixed lamp, in a little hut and the branch of a tree was blowing to and fro beside it, giving the impression of a signal.

We were there for 3 weeks and when back in barracks, felt a draught, in the grub-line.

The Lancashire Fusiliers were very badly dealt with at the Dardanelles. From a Battalion of 1.000 strong, in one night, only 350 answered roll-call the next morning.

There are any amount of wounded here, they tell us awful tales of their experiences.

They were eager to go in the first place, but are not keen to return.

They say the Turks have mutilated our wounded, gouged out eyes, cut off ears and noses and in some cases dismembered bodies.

Our chaps are not taking prisoners, as a result and making them fight to a finish.

It makes one think twice about going, but after this place, a change of any description would be agreeable now.



It is said that we shall be sent there, but unable to take horses because the Turks have poisoned all the water supply, so if we do go, it will be as Infantry.

This last week has been unbearably hot, what is called the 'Khamseer wind' has been blowing and it's like the heat from a furnace.

Last Thursday, the temperature reached 113 degrees in the shade and 144 in the sun, so you can guess what it was like.

The day was usually 108 in the shade before breakfast and we were like Limp rags.

Everything touched was so hot, it was practically impossible to get a cool drink of any description.

Water, beer, Lemonade, all luke warm.

All my spare time was spent having shower baths, trying to keep fresh.

On Sunday, last, the wind changed and now we can breathe easier.

The Natives feel it as much as we, and crawl into any shady corner they can find.

We have had our swords for some time and are doing sword drill and exercises, more than anything else, now.

Sorry to hear the bad news about young 'Harold Bentley'. It is pretty reliable as I have had it from other sources.

Yes!, Old 'Vic Ellingham' applied for a commission and I am told that he was gazetted to the 9th Leicestershires.

'George Aish' is in the 3rd Battalion Civil Service Rifles, he tells me.

I guess Brother Arthur is pretty lucky, getting his three stripes with the 2/1st Herts Yeomanry.

The Bucks Hussars are over here now and just the reverse of us. They have difficulty getting volunteers for service abroad, while we have no trouble.

Our lot all volunteered to a man, but the promotions are mostly with the 2nd Regiment and very few here,

There is a Warrant Officer Sergeant Major with the Bucks, who tells me he was only a Cpl when he arrived.

As far as your joining, it is of course up to you, but I think there would be plenty of scope for promotion in our Third Regiment.

There has been a good many of our Chaps sent home, invalided, lately.

Some will be discharged and others transferred to the 2nd Regiment.

I hear they are sending out a draft for the 2nd Regiment, to take their place.

I have a good selection of photos, of sorts, which I will keep for the time being, and will send them home later.

I sent a few souvenirs home with young 'Scrivener' (the son of the florists in Queen's road) and asked him to leave them at Dad's for me.

He left, about a fortnight ago, so should be there before this reaches you, unless he is detained at the hospital.

It makes my blood boil, reading about the Lusitania sinking and the use of poisonous gasses

Such dirty tricks the Germans get up to, but I dare say the end will come along with the reckoning, but I can't see the end in sight, yet.

I fancy I shall not be seeing much of 1916 in England, I hope I'm wrong, but miracles will have to happen, we shall see.

Now, brother, I think I have told you all there is, shall be glad to hear from you again, shortly.

With love to Rach, the Kiddies and yourself.

Your ever loving brother,

JOE

Cpl. E. J. Whiting

No1. Troop "A" Squadron  
Herts Yeomanry  
Cavalry Barracks  
Cairo, Egypt.

25/6/1915

My Dear Bob and Rachel,

The parcel duly came to hand, yesterday, many thanks for the trouble you have taken.

I suppose Dad has given you the money for the things, if not he will let you have it.

Nothing exciting has happened since I last wrote, except for a Brigade concert we had a week ago, just outside the barracks, when 'Chas Knowles' the well known baritone was the Star artist.

Last week the Scouts had a march across the Desert, at night, through some of the local Villages. We started at 4.30pm and got back around 7am next morning.

We had a few hours rest among the date palms, which are looking very fine just now, but the dates are not ripe, yet.

Most of us, that went have rather severe colds, apparently owing to getting over-heated in our full Kit and then cooling off too rapidly, but these events are enjoyable and tend to relieve the monotony, somewhat.

I manage to get in a swim almost every day, now.

There are a couple of baths about a mile away and well worth the walk.

We can certainly do with them, the temperature, since I wrote last, has reached 117 degrees in the shade and the Sun temperature was 168, so you can guess what we are like.

The hot wind blowing into your face absolutely scorches you and everything is hot.

The English Residents of Cairo, tell us it is the hottest for at least the past eight years.

I was very much surprised to see in the Watford Illustrated, for 5th June, (that four Fellows received) that my photograph was in it, under which it said 'The Herts Yeomanry Scouts on the Frontier in Egypt'

I find it was sent home to the paper by young 'Dixon' (Brother of Nora Dixon)

Also on the front page is 'General Inglefield's' photo, whom I see has been at, or near Watford.

This is the general I was Orderly to, when in England, I see he is still riding his Big black Mare.

In consequence of the heat, that recently arrived, Infantry regiments, now at Khartoum, have lost six men, so far and the rumour is that we will have to go and relieve them.

Our Regiment has the best record of any, regulars or others, so far as mortality is concerned.

We have lost one Sergeant so far. They say they can't kill us at any price.

The Sergeant contracted pneumonia and died at Alexandria, while on a rest sure.

He was a Pal of mine.

Must close now, hoping you are all fit and well. Thanks for Minnie's new address.

Love to all  
from  
Your loving brother,

JOE.