



PRG 266/7/1-150 Letters written by Thomas Gilbert to his parents and other family members, chiefly from India where he was a civil servant, including periods as a cavalry officer and a member of the Royal Flying Corps on active service, from 6 March 1913 to 15 February 1925.

Transcribed by Lyndall Fredericks, Volunteer at the State Library of South Australia 2017

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[*Spelling and punctuation is as appears in the original.*]

With PRG 266/7

[an envelope]

On active service

Miss M Gilbert
Pewsey Vale
Lyndoch
South Australia

T Gilbert
SA
R.F.C.

[*different handwriting*]

Tom's letters to May 5th 1918

[*back of envelope*]

Tom's letters in order dates from 1913-1924 & a few earlier.
Insignia of R.F.C. with the motto PER ARDUA AD ASTRA.
Circular post mark with F.P.O. No. 114 30 APR 13

PRG 266/7/1

Camp Salara
March 6th 1913

Dear Mother

To-day being a Treasury holiday, my clerk & overseer have struck work, & I'm forced to do likewise. Having exhausted my stock of light literature, I'm reduced to attacking private correspondence several days too early.

This is the district head-quarters, but might be the middle of the desert as far as I'm concerned. All officers on tour, at least all those on whom I have any conceivable pretext to call. There are one or two army people about – this place is where the Southern India army



come, for musketry training, but there is no regiment quartered here at present. I came in yesterday, & leave to-morrow by an absurd train in the middle of the night, & 9 miles to go to the station.

Have got to raise the strength to receive several native swells, from Gardars, & Ras Bahadurs downwards: besides this I have no special object in being here except to see the country.

I enclose two photograph's, just received. Please preserve them as I have no spare copies. The trophies have been added to from Mr Sinclair's collection. The object I'm holding (in the group) is a Spaniel pup, not a trophy. – Mrs Sinclair faces the camera, Mr Anthony appears bashful.

Mar 9th Gokak.

Arrived here yesterday to join my Director. The case regarding my transfer appears more hopeful than I had anticipated, still nothing definite – can do no more than go on hoping. The Director sleeps, I've just ceased to do so, & hope he'll wake soon as I want my tea. I seem to have remarkably little to write about, – the weather is worth noting as being about 10° hotter than in Salara, quite wrong of it as the reverse should be the case – perhaps it's the strain of having to give an account of my doings to my superior officer

Your aff^{te} son

T Gilbert

PRG 266/7/2

Camp Garag.

Feb^y 20th 1914

Dear Mother

I have just come here from my last camp. Am a day late, as yesterday I had an unpleasant duty to perform – a surprise visit on a man believed to be misbehaving himself. The journey was 70 miles each way I chose to do it by road all the way rather than road & rail combined. It was a tiring day, but the journey proved itself well worth while A catastrophe happened to my tiffin, as a soda water bottle burst in the basket, & my food was mostly reduced to a state of pulp, & I was truly grateful to some men, who when I halted at the side of the road to consume such food as there was, brought me a couple of maize cobs fried in butter, & steaming hot, & some sugar cane to chew. I have never given the matter a thought before, but the innate politeness of the common classes out here is really remarkable. They are always ready to help when I'm in difficulties with the bicycle, say crossing a creek. The other day an old man after helping me across, presented me with two cucumbers, from a basket he was carrying to market. I find them like this everywhere except where they have been spoil by the sahib's baksheesh. I hope I don't suffer from the maize cob, but when it reached me it was much too hot to harbour any germs. I have rarely seen men more genuinely pleased than when I picked up the remaining cob, & some bits of sugar-cane, & put them in the tiffin basket to eat later.

Dharwa 23rd morning.



Came from Garag this morning – must get this off for to day's post. Am here for three days, & then to Gadag for about a week

Your aff^{te} son

T Gilbert

PRG 266/7/3

Camp via Dharwa.

April 3rd 1914.

Tegur

Dear Dorothy

Am here till to-morrow morning when I return Dharwa, & go to Belgarm the next day. Chief object of my visit is to see what they were doing with the ensilage – reported that cattle wouldn't touch it . – no wonder, as they were only offered the top mouldy layer – When the cattle got the proper stuff, they ate it greedily – I've seldom seen animals more keen on their food. As we've been advertising ensilage made from grass with great confidence, it was rather a shock to be told that it was no good.

Have not been long about replacing that panther you took away. On arrival here on the 1st found that the village officer had located a panther the evening before by the usual method of tying a goat for him to eat. That evening I sat up a tree from 4 – 7.30 over a live goat, tied in the same place, but panther did not appear. Being near the only water within several miles, it seemed likely that he would not move far, so decided to try my luck again the following evening – got up into the 'mochas' at 6. He appeared about 6.30, & sat out in the open looking disgustingly pleased with life – contemplated the goat from a distance for about 10 minutes, & then walked slowly forwards, glancing all round him, but never upwards – Then a spring, a struggling goat, & a dead panther. Gave him a second shot, quite unnecessarily, as the first must have been fatal, but the risk of a spoilt skin is less important \than/ that of a panther revived after the first shock. He's an inch longer than the last, but, being an ~~inch~~ in his hot weather coat, not nearly such a pretty skin.

News of another this morning within ¼ mile of the bungalow – fresh tracks made last night. Am going to tempt him with a goat, & watch results this evening – Hardly expect success without a previous kill, but it's worth the trial, as I can't wait another day.

I gather that you will hear all Dharwan gossip from Mr Gale, also a report on the state of my heall. Walked 10 miles yesterday & 6 the day before, so there's not much wrong with me, except sunburnt knees, & a blistered foot.

Received a letter from Miss de la Chervis some days back threatening to send one to be forwarded to you, but so far it has not arrived.

Your aff^{te} brother

T Gilbert



PRG 266/7/4

Dharwa.

April 24th 1914

Dear Mother

Last week Colonel Hudson was kind enough to write my home mail for me. Have returned from hospital to-day, recovered, but groggy in the legs, & with very little control over my pen. Fever, cause unknown, but of no serious nature is I think the final verdict. Mrs Hudson has been extremely kind to me, & since I've been allowed food other than milk & soda, & Benger's, has been sending new laid eggs, & jellies. I had callers practically every day, & Mrs Gale came to say farewell – she departed Sunday I think.

It has really been most annoying being seedy during Mr Keatinge's (Director of Agr^e) visit. I had been camped with him for two days at Gokak but had to leave to come in & see the Doctor. He is however still camped about here, & I hope to join him again in a few days time. A heavy but short thunderstorm the other evening – the usual antemonsoon showers are not coming as they should, – the immediate result will be a very poor mango crop.

10 days in hospital is I am afraid not productive of much news.

Your aff^{te} son

T Gilbert

PRG 266/7/5

Dharwa

June 2nd 1914

Dear Father

I am afraid that during my rush round Poona, I did not get home letters written. Have just received yours written on receipt of Colonel Hudson's letter re my fever. You ask me \what/ risks I run of catching typhoid. – the risk is I think really very small – the chief danger is water, but I only drink it in the form of tea or coffee, & am thus sure of it having been boiled. As regards food I fear nothing at the hands of my own servants, but am not quite so sure of meals obtained in state bungalows & trains. I avoid these as far as possible but by refusing milk & anything uncooked such as salads, the risk becomes very small indeed. I always carry a small stock of medicines with me. I have been inoculated against typhoid.

Regarding the possibility of shooting a panther before he gets the goat. I imagine from the little experience I have had, that it must often be possible to do so. In the last case at Tegur, the panther came out from cover at long range, & sat down in the open for several minutes. To have taken a shot at that stage would have meant shifting my position, & almost certainly exposing myself; the distance was also uncomfortably long – I might again have attempted a shot as he was walking up, but the chances being all in favour of an easy shot, I decided to wait. There was no sign of haste about his approach a slow walk, watching carefully for any danger signals – the sportsman's security from detection depends on the fact that the



panther unless attracted by undue movement, only looks for danger on the ground. His final spring on to the goat is the only quick movement. The seat in the machàn probably permits of a clear sight in several directions, but I think the two maxims 'sit still' & 'make as sure as possible of killing' are sufficient reasons for waiting for the best probable chance. Apart from this to shoot too early would mean losing the pleasure & excitement of watching the beast's movements.

Poona's rather pleasant just now – just a trifle hot for an hour in the middle of the day – I stayed with Mr Keatinge, visited the various centres of the Agri^l Departments work in Poona & round about, & assisted in the education of two Australian horses, recently imported Mr Keatinge departed on Sunday to bring his wife from Mahableshwar. I put in two dinners at the club, two or three visits to the Gymkhana, & an outing on the river, & on the whole had a very cheerful time.

Your aff^{te} son.

T Gilbert

PRG 266/7/6

Dharwa

Aug 10th 1914

Dear Father

News is scarce & indefinite, as I expect it is with you – we are particularly badly off, as floods have breached the line on both sides of us. & we never know when our mails are coming through. I doubt this letter getting through in time for the next mail from Columbo. The rain has been extraordinary – 6½ inches one day is about a record for Dharwa. Belgaum had 20 inches in 2 days. A tank burst, washed away a railway bridge about 60 miles south of here, & I believe it will be a matter of 2 or 3 weeks before through communications are established.

X We have started a signalling class here, & a small mounted troop will be formed, & probably attached to Hubli volunteers – I shall of course join if I can procure a horse. X My scheme for laying water on to the bungalow has fallen through – the estimate was too much for the landlord, & he would not come up to scratch in his undertaking to pay half. A few bright sunny days, such as to-day will do wonders for the garden – it is very warm & steamy.

Your aff^{te} son

T Gilbert

PRG 266/7/7

Dharwa

August 16th 1914

Dear Father



Railway communication is now practically normal again, though connection has not yet been established at Haveri, & trains have to transship. We get our papers, & war news, scanty though it is, regularly.

Wednesday last Williams, Irrigation Engineer got up a paper chase, the first of series, the highest score in which is to receive a prize. The first day's results are unfortunately a 'wash out'. We had a splendid gallop for about 6 miles, over fairly open country, with occasional ditches – after the first mile, my horse, a recent purchase by Lynch Blossie led the way till within about ¼ mile from home. Three of us were close together – the trail took a sharp turn to the left – so did I. The man behind charged my horse in the hind-quarters, knocked him against a tree, & upset us into a ditch. Man & horse unhurt except for a few bruises, though the horse refused to get up, & gave me an anxious quarter of an hour. It was unfortunate ending to what promised to be a really good race for home.

To-morrow is a holiday, am undecided at present whether to do a lone cross country walk after buck, or a motor-bike ride 'on duty'. The supply of petrol is uncertain, – my last order has been ignored, – & I must go steadily with my present small stock.

The garden is beginning to look quite gay, with dahlias, cannas, salvias & roses – Some new cactus dahlias from Poona are a great success. The vegetable garden leaves me entirely independent of bazaar supply – Peas are standing 7 feet higher – scarlet runner beans would be much taller if they had a trelluce to climb on. This morning I exercised with the grubbing axe – it is as pleasant work as it might be, as the grass swarms with fleas – not a very venomous kind – they nip without

P.T.O

[*letter incomplete*]

PRG 266/7/8 and 9

Sept 7th 1914

Dharwa

Dear Father

Thank you for letter written shortly after the declaration of war. I wonder if the share market has recovered here at all after the first alarm – it has done so here, at least in so far that shares are quoted. Cotton will suffer a great deal here but I imagine not to the same extent as wool with you, as a large proportion of Indian cotton is consumed internally. Orders have been issued warning the 'ryol' not to sow cotton, but by the time the warning filters through from Collector to Mamlatdar – from Mamlatdar to village officer, & from village officer to the villager, the crop will be well above ground. I met an old cultivator the other day who thought Government's warning absurd – he had vivid recollections of prices realised during the American war, & had sown every inch of his land with cotton.

XV All civil officers are expected to join volunteer corps, but none allowed to offer themselves for active service I expect that none of us will be allowed out of the country until peace is



declared – all police & military have been recalled from leave, & it is expected that civilians will also return to duty. A few of us here have enrolled with the Hubli railway volunteer corps. V A paper chase the other day resulted in a close run between four of us. I got left a short way from home as others knew the only possible way in, whereas I had to search for the track. I contemplate a journey to Mysore towards the end of this month, to see the Dasara Exhibition. We send exhibits there every year, & I have the offer, not to be despised, I think, of a trip there on duty.

Your aff^{te} son

T Gilbert

PRG 266/7/10

Dharwa

Sept 13th 1914

Dear Father

Have been spending a couple of dull days in a long chair, temporarily incapacitated by an abscess. – The doctor's knife has done its work, & I expect to be about again early this week. Friday & Saturday were holidays – Bijapur people have been over playing cricket, tennis etc. We were successful throughout – I cannot describe the events, as I was not present. Gould is staying with us on his return from an exam in Bombay, & availing a favourable opportunity of returning to Karwar – It is an ungettable place at this time of year, & he hopes to find a friendly motor going that way.

We get very scanty & often contradictory war news in spite of the Press Bureau. It is further confused by items 'ahead of the mail' from the Australian papers – I fail to understand why you get more news by telegraph than we do. The Times of India fortunately publishes very excellent leaders, distinguishing the probably true from the probably false – these articles also possess the virtue of being reservedly optimistic & are cheering to read. V Definite orders have been passed that no leave will be granted unless under exceptional circumstances. Many civil officers returned to duty last mail. V

The weather is unsettled, blowing hard, with an occasional drizzle of rain. We could do with a few bright days before the return monsoon sets in. Pests of all kinds seem to flourish unduly during cloudy, & practically rain less weather.

The flower garden keeps going well, – dahlias are practically over, but everything else is at its best. – The vegetables have lost something in looks but continue to yield well.

Your aff^{te} son

T Gilbert

[on the back of this page in different handwriting]

Tom's letters relating to the War



PRG 266/7/11

Dharwa

October 4th 1914

Dear Marjory

Thanks for letters enclosing Prof' Wood's & Bateson's speeches at the British Assocⁿ meeting. – I see the latter's is published in full in 'Nature', so it must have been in the printers' hands before it was delivered – I have not read it yet, but it should not be incomprehensible, as I have attended a course of lectures by one of his pupils.

You report a temperature of 80° on Sep 8th, but a post script notes a rainfall of 50 cents, with hopes of more.

I hear from Aunt Anna that Joe has gone, or will shortly go fighting. Is Jack's cadet corps taking part in the Australian mobilisation?

Our trip to Mysore was a great success, if rather too hurried. Arrived 6 am Sunday morning, shaved & bathed & prepared to go to the Exhibition. – We found it closed for the ladies of the palace, & could not get in till 3 pm, so drove to the zoo, a small, but very select place – animals & gardens extremely well kept. – what surprised me most was their ability to keep polar bears looking well & apparently enjoying life. A freak herd of pure white 'black-buck' was an interesting feature & I enjoyed meeting a sulphur crested cockatoo, also a pink & white one, suffering from the same complaint as your old pet. Thence a visit to the Maharajah's stables kept us occupied till mid-day. – He has a wonderful collection of horses & ponies, well over a hundred – carriage, riding & race horses imported from various parts of the world, & some bred on his own farm from a stud originally imported from Australia. The place is beautifully run. Over every stall, the horse's pedigree is written, & another card shows what ration he is to receive – every animal looks in first class condition – one falling sick, immediately goes to hospital for veterinary treatment. The collection of carriages is not to despised, though it is rather disgusting to think of the amount of money squandered on this department – state carriages 'brooms' & 'brooches' as our guide termed them. American buggies & traps of every conceivable shape & description, & yet in spite of these, & of numerous motor cars, he found it necessary to engage almost every public conveyance in Mysore to take the ladies of his house to the exhibition – I suppose he enjoys looking at his display of wealth in his coach houses, & dislikes disturbing the effect. After tiffin, a drive to the Cauvery dam, a giant water scheme which has been under construction night & day for over two years, & is not more than half-finished. It will irrigate an enormous area sometime in the future.

The exhibition amused us from 3.30 till 7.30 – about 1/3rd of it was Agricultural, & the rest industrial I could have spent another day there & enjoyed it but it would be extremely uninteresting in description. Trains so fitted in on our return journey, to allow of a visit to Seringapalam for a few hours – left Mysore after dinner, & spent the night in Seringapalam waiting room – you have probably read of the place as the scene of Tippoo's last resistance to the British – It is surrounded by a double fortification, & its storming must have been a wonderful feat with the weapons at the disposal of the attacking forces – The chief interest of



the place is in following up capture of the fortress. A remarkable place is the old summer palace, which Wellesley used as a bungalow – Every square inch of the walls inside & out is covered with paintings, battle scenes, portraits of ruling chiefs, & the purely ornamental – surrounded by a very well kept garden, it is a most attractive place. A curiosity is Hairland's arch built to show the people that bridges need not be constructed with straight pillars of stones set close together – the arch is of stone forming an arch arc about this shape [*sketch*] if one jumps on the top it sways up & down.

Halted at Ranibennur for a day on the way back – I go to Tegur to morrow morning, & Birapur on the 7th – I expect to be away about a fortnight.

Your aff^{te} brother

T Gilbert

PRG 266/7/12 and /13

Camp, Gokak Canal Farm

Oct 23rd 1914

Dear Marjory

My last letter was from Kurduwadi (Barsi Road). Since, I have received two lots of home letters: drought continues & frost had been damaging the vineyard. You had received no English or Indian mail for a fortnight. What a strange sight an emu in the Rhine paddock must be.

From Kurduwadi, I went to Poona, I spent the Divali holidays with Mr Scott. Poona is a deserted place, but will fill up again when two territorial regiments arrive to take the place of regular troops Did nothing worth mentioning – just the usual Gymkhana routine, & one outing on the river. Left Poona Tuesday night, arrived Lakari Road about 6 am, drove in a tanga to Islampur, saw the experimental plot, & returned for a late breakfast – stayed the night at Lakari, & departed 6.30 the next morning for Tasgaon Road station, biked to the Bhilawadi plot, breakfasted near the station under a mango tree, amidst a swarm of ants, tracked back one station up the line to see Kirloskars plough factory, & caught a train which landed me here at 7.30 p.m Sounds a lot if read quickly, & was rather strenuous, but I had to push on quickly, to meet Mr Keatinge here to-day.

Kirloskars works are interesting – He started life as a fitter in a bicycle shop, opened his present business about five years ago, & is now turning out iron ploughs & cart wheels by the thousand – casting & every process done on the premises: – He has built his own village, runs a co-operative store, & a sports club for his men, & allows them to invest money in the concern. Things are moving faster with him than is usual in this country.

Mr & Mrs Keatinge are in a bungalow about 4 miles – I expect he will be out here this evening. I am glad it is not necessary for us all to inhabit this little bungalow. I wonder he didn't ask me to live 4 miles away, & come here himself – would have suggested it if he had warned me that Mrs Keatinge was coming.

Your aff^{te} brother

T Gilbert



PRG 266/7/14

Camp Pandharpur
Dist. Sholapur
Feb^y 21st 1915

Dear Marjory

The journey here was a long & tiring one. After a run to Tegur & back in the morning I left Dharwar in the evening, spent about 24 hours in the worst of trains, then a night at Kurduwadi station, & on here by road in the morning. This is a place of many temples, but I shall have no time to go sight seeing, as I am only halting to give self & camp a rest, & move on to-morrow. I have a couple of demonstrations to visit, & am going to spend a few days looking at cattle. There are a few odd villages producing a particularly good breed, & the question is why they do it, or rather why other villages don't.

The nights are still cold up here, though at Dharwar, all trace of cold weather has departed. Left my boy behind in Dharwar with a bad attack of fever – cook is doing duty for both – I have two most satisfactory servants – no household worries since parting with cook whom Dorothy knew – present one has earned the reputation of being the best in Dharwar. rather awful to have to live up to.

Your aff^{te} brother
T Gilbert

PRG 266/7/15

Camp Kamatgi
March 29th 1915

Dear Father

I came here yesterday, after a few days at Bagalkot – Am doing nothing definite – just seeing some country which I have not touched before – Garratt [?] & I are doing a short tour together He has joined the officers' reserve, & will shortly leave his present work. I am seriously contemplating buying one of his horses – it hasn't got even one sound leg, but has been vetted good for 2 years work – it is a nice animal to ride, & is going cheap. It is I think good enough for the rough work I should give it.

I am now about 20 miles from Sangam, where I am due for a show on the 5th April. It is an ungetatable place, & I shall have to leave my bicycle here, & ride, or go by tanga. After the show, an end to comfortable touring – I shall have to pay flying visits to Dharwa & to Ranibennur, & then go to Belgam district by the 17th. After that I have no definite plans yet.

Your aff^{te} son
T Gilbert



PRG 266/7/16

Camp Helwak
Dist Satara
28.5.15

Dear Father

Last mail received yesterday, included a long letter from you. The doctors had been successful in relieving your neuralgia – you gave me interesting details of the conditions under which you are working – the methods of the Labour Government give the impression that they are not backed by common sense thinking.

My most recent paper mentions Italy's declaration of war. In the Mediterranean casualty list appeared one name from the Manchester regiment, so I presume that Joe is in the thick of it. I also noticed a casualty in King Edward's Horse – had not seen the regiment mentioned before, & imagined that they had been drafted into regular regiments. Curiously at Karad a few days ago, I met an old K.E.H. acquaintance – neither of us knew the other was in India, & the process of discovering each other behind our respective moustaches was rather amusing.

My present camping ground is not likely to appear on any map available with you, but probably the Koyna river which joins the Krishna at Karad will be shown. I am about 30 miles in a straight line S.W. of Satara – about 60 by road. I have been promising myself this trip for some time, & though the climate is a little disappointing, the country comes fully up to expectations. From Patan to this place the road follows the river closely – the valley is bounded on both sides by very steep, rough hills, covered with patches of scrub jungle – am afraid 'scrub jungle' might annoy the Forest department. – A curious feature of the country is the ridged hillsides with occasional cleared areas presenting a freshly turned red earth surface – these patches will soon be planted with a millet, known as nachni – it is difficult to conceive how a crop can be grown on such excessively steep slopes – the cultivated soil will all be washed away this year, & the land will be allowed to run wild for 10 or 12 years, until soil accumulates again – the scrub will then be cut, & one more crop taken. A part of the process of cultivation is embanking with stones, & hence the transverse ridges on the faces of the hill. At Patan I climbed to the top of a saddle by a well beaten path leading to a village. At one point on the saddle, a push from either side would have sent me rolling to eternity – such is the slope of these cultivated hill sides. The destruction of forest for one crop in 10 or 12 years is a sinful economic waste from more than one point of view, but I do not quite know how otherwise the people would live. A rather important fact which I nearly forgot to mention is that the annual rainfall here is 150 inches – the valleys contain a few rice fields, but generally are rough & stony & non-cultivable.

A good tile-paved bungalow adds to the pleasure of staying here – bear & panther are to be had close by, but unless one comes my way, I shall not have time to devote attention to them. Tackling a bear would be a complete novelty – it's a game I know nothing of, & I should place myself entirely in the hands of the local expert.

From here I have to return the same way as I came for about 20 miles, then turn northwards, I go onto Satara via Umbraj.



30.5.15 Since writing above, have been able to look at the cultivation more closely. The hillside work is done with a wooden pick shod with iron [*sketch of pick*] – three women were at work scratching the soil, & a man was broadcasting seed – another variety of millet will be sown in seed beds & transplanted later. The moderately steep places will be ploughed by human traction. [*sketch of plough showing the pole with the position of the wood and iron share*] The pole is tucked under the arm – a rope is passed round the body of the plough, along the pole, & round the man's forehead – a second man steers – both are scantily clothed & as the work will be done in pouring rain each wears a hood made of bambo & leaves to cover his head & back – inside the hood is a pocket containing the mid-day meal. Smouldering fires are a feature at present – seed-beds for rice & nachni in preparation – any slow burning material generally a mixture of straw leaves & manure is spread in a layer two or three inches thick. Curiously the method is very similar to one which has been evolved by science for the reclamation of 'sick' garden soils in England, but whether the same explanation can be given seems doubtful

Your aff^{te} son
T Gilbert

PRG 266/7/17

Dharwar
June 13th 1915

Dear Father

I have finished my touring for a bit now – returned from Gokak on Friday. Jacob is sharing this bungalow with me.

A couple of months back I put in an application to be allowed to join the Indian Army officers' reserve, but a letter received this morning forbids me to apply to the military authorities. They have allowed a certain number of civilians & police, mostly supernumeraries to go on military service & I hoped that my small amount of experience in King Edward's Horse might give me a chance. However the question resolved itself not into one of soldiering experience, but of administrative convenience.

Still no sign of the monsoon, though I see that the last boat from Aden encountered conditions which might have been the beginnings of a monsoon. My garden is more or less a wilderness, but a few vegetables are coming on well – roses, pruned to flower now, are making a feeble effort the flowers withering off as soon as they open.

I came in here just too late for a tennis tournament – if weather allows, we ought to have some good tennis this year – there are a number of players, & some very good.

Your aff^{te} son
T Gilbert



PRG 266/7/18

Dharwar
June 20th 1915

Dear Dorothy

The monsoon has reached us no heavy rain – just an occasional drizzle. It is good weather for gardening, & I am hard at work transplanting a lot of the existing garden, & massing things together – have imported creepers from Bangalore – the vegetable garden fence will be passion flowers, & passion fruit – some scraggy trees will be covered with Porana, & potato creeper

I go to Poona on Tuesday to spend a few days with Mr Keatinge.

Am thoroughly sick of Dharwa social season – have only dined at home 3 days since I came in – am having a bachelor party here this evening – don't mind the last, as it is not a duty dinner, but I wish I had the courage to tell people how much I prefer eating at home, to overeating at someone else's house

As for work, there is nothing much doing out of doors, but lots of office preparing material for report, annual, or special. It is interesting analysing the year's experimental result, but at times tedious – the subordinates' report is so long winded, that it is at times difficult to extract the essential parts

Your aff^{te} brother

T Gilbert

PRG 266/7/19

[*Telegram to Lyndoch 26 June 1915*]

Station from, No. of Words, and Check.

Fremantle 11 1/-

Gilbert

Lyndoch SA

Received telegram fair passage sail tonight

T Gilbert

7 15 pm 25th

9 20 am 26th

PRG 266/7/20

[*written on paper with letterhead*]

P. & O.S.N.Co.

S.S.



[at the top of the letter]

Please excuse smudges

Khyber

Monday

Dear Mother

Kitty & Emmie will have reported that I got myself & luggage safely on board. We did not sail till about 9.p.m. The Bight has treated us well, but it was very cold for two days. I like this boat – first saloon accommodation good – second poor. I'm very thankful that I was unable to change my ticket. Dining table company except for man on one side of me extremely unpleasant – am negotiating a move at Fremantle. Passengers are a mixed lot – Mrs Bisdy; travelling second knows Fergussons – Father knows who she is – haven't discovered many names – three Misses McConnell (two sisters & one cousin) are going to Egypt – at least one was educated by Nora at Cheltenham, & two know the Stirlings. If I find any other interesting people I'll report from Columbo

Edward Stokes has been rather seedy, but is now acclimatised – Mrs Reynell is not on board.

We are due in about 7 this evening – I am again done out of my promised visit to Perth.

Your aff^{te} son

T Gilbert

PRG 266/7/21

[written on paper with letterhead]

Queen's Hotel

Kandy, Ceylon

Nov 6th 1915

Dear Mother

I fear I wrote very scratchy letters from the boat. I thoroughly enjoyed the trip, but on closer acquaintance, cannot recommend the Khyber. The food, & not sea-sickness, as I thought at first was the cause of my dislike for meals. Cockroaches are fairly frequent visitors in the cabins.

We anchored in Columbo harbour at about 3.a.m Thursday 4th. A party of us, numbering eight – Mr Bisdee, Miss Huxtable, Misses McConnell – E. Stokes, a Mr DuBoisé & self breakfasted at the G.O.H, then scattered till 11.30 – drove to the Galle Face for lunch, on to Mount Lavinia for tea, & back at about dark – dinner at the G.O.H. a couple of hours in long chairs on the roof, & then farewells on the pier. I all but persuaded Edward to come with me on this trip – he was wavering when he caught the last launch out to the boat.

Did I mention a stowaway soldier who had landed from his troop ship at Fremantle, & failed to get on board again. He was found in a bath room the morning after we left Fremantle. The



unfortunate man has been sentenced to a month's hard labour by the Columbo Police court, & will probably meet further trouble if he ever reaches his regiment in Egypt – he must be one of the right sort, & it seems rough luck that he should be punished for his pluck. Friday morning I spent at the Columbo museum – it was closed to the public, but a bribe for the porter, & a call on the Curator put things right. I came on here by the afternoon train – I won't attempt a description of journey. Left here at 6.a.m today via Lady Blakes drive for Peradenia – walked the gardens for a couple of hours, then tea at the rest-house, a call on the Superintendent, more walk breakfast – Then a call on the Manager of the Experiment station. He & other officers were just starting for tennis at Kandy, so I had to content myself with a very rapid inspection of the station. Saturday & Sunday are unsatisfactory days to come to Kandy. I shall devote tomorrow to seeing the temple of the tooth & other sights, & may find time for an evening visit to the gardens. My further plans are – leave here 7.15 train Monday, arrive Anaradhpora about 1.p.m, catch Madras mail about midnight Monday, & reach Dharwar Thursday midday.

I will send you such of my photographs as are worth looking at – Shops closing for the weekend has defeated my intention of having them developed here.

[letter incomplete]

PRG 266/6/22

[letter written on paper with letterhead]

Queen's Hotel
Kandy, Ceylon
7.11.1915

Today another early start – walked Lady Hortons drive for a couple of hours, experimented with the camera & returned for a cup of tea to fortify myself for a visit to the temple of the tooth. The last is decidedly disappointing, & one sees very little of the jewelled dagoba containing the tooth – the temple was attended by numerous worshippers celebrating dark-moon day.

My guide was a useful man but tried to hurry me through much too quickly. I wonder that the non-believing visitor was allowed in at all on a day when the place was packed with devotees.

This evening I wandered more or less at random for 2 – 3 hours an occasional inspection of the map saved me from getting lost – views from the hill on the north side of the lake were beautifully clear, & well worth a climb.

[letter incomplete]

PRG 266/7/23

Dharwar
11.11.15



Dorothy's letter was here to greet me a few hours ago – the bungalow is as it was, except that a gramophone, presumably Mr Jacobs, occupies the place of the piano – I am not quite sure where I shall find the latter.

I journeyed from Kandy to Anaradhpora in company with one of the agricultural men on whom I had called at Peradeniya. Anaradhpora is, or was on Tuesday the most uncomfortably hot place I've struck – nevertheless it is well worth a visit – dagobas [*Buddhist* relics] dating back several centuries B.C. – one an enormous mass of red brick, standing 200 odd feet high, & once 400 feet – it is now overgrown with grass & trees, – the city must have been on an enormous scale; except for the religious relics, there is little left of it but stone pillars scattered through jungle.

Further doings till my arrival here were uninteresting – the customs people at Talaimannar told me that my luggage had not passed through, but they were merely exonerating themselves for not having detained it. Picked up my boy at Madras, spent a few hours shopping, & changing cash from other countries, & started the last 24 hour stage of the journey at mid-day.

Your aff^{te} son

T Gilbert

PRG 266/7/24

Camp Arbhari

11.12.15

Dear Emmie

I don't think you've been behaving yourself at all nicely – May this find you thoroughly mended. Your furniture sale was most successful, & you thought the sets overvalued @ £1-0-0 each! Home letters have arrived one after another during the week, & must have been lost somewhere. I like Kitty's latest snaps, & they'll find a place in the book shortly. Enclosed are three, one a dagoba, I forget its name – at Anaradhpora – it seems almost impossible to believe that the tree-covered mound is a solid mass of bricks – Another is a moonstone outside the Queens Palace at the same place. This is the largest of many of its kind – they find a place at the entrance to many of the old Buddhist buildings – the photo shows the design rather indefinitely, but you will be able to make out the carvings of horses, lions, & geese.

Dorothy's letter tells of much hard work – all tell of Uncle Willie's accident. Please thank Father for his & the enclosure from G. Wills & C^o.

Every day is exactly like the last here, farm inspection, & office, varied by an occasional walk in the country round – Have started working on rather a different plan – fewer camps, & a longer stay at each place – it works well, but I don't know whether I shall be able to keep it up. It is much more convenient for work, & much more comfortable than a move every 3 or 4 days. I move to-morrow morning, & reach Gadag in the evening – cook has departed this evening, & boy prepares dinner for this evening; & a cold breakfast for the journey to-morrow



– every time I eat a refreshment car meal, it is nastier than the last, & to be avoided if possible – The cold weather came, & has gone again it is pleasant at nights, but the ‘must move about to keep warm feeling’ only lasted a couple of days. I’m treated to a fire work display every evening – ‘woddas’ a people who quarry stone, & make stone grinding mills, are responsible – judging from the noise, there is much drinking of toddy – I can’t make out what the occasion is, & as far as I can understand it is simply a ‘bust’.

Your aff^{te} brother

T Gilbert

PRG 266/7/25

Camp Devihosur
December 27th 1915

Dear Father

I have just returned from an Xmas ‘shikar’ camp – could not afford to take the whole of the Xmas holidays this year. I joined a party at Koussankeri, about 24 miles from here. The Haines’ (Executive Engineer) entertained us for meals, & Jacob provided shooting ‘bandobast’. I accounted for nothing except a few duck, & a pig, but had two thoroughly entertaining days wandering in the jungle. Xmas evening I cycled out about 2 miles & nearly ran into a panther – he was making a dash across the road, but turned sharp on his tracks when he saw me – I waited for my rifle to come up, & tried to follow, but the undergrowth was too thick to go any distance. I don’t think he had gone very far, but gazing into the bushes revealed nothing – After that I found a more open bit of jungle & searched for ‘chilal’, or the ‘barking deer – I came up with a herd fairly soon – they spotted me before I saw them, but seemed in no hurry to move; they contented themselves for some time with barking in a high pitched voice, & then went off at top speed – there was no stag amongst them – at least I could not see one. Shortly afterwards I surprised a fine fat pig, & shot him, partly for the satisfaction of letting the gun off, & partly to give camp followers a feed. Sunday was a hard day – started at 5 a.m, & got into the jungle before daybreak, & sat & watched – saw nothing, walked about for a couple of hours, & then back to camp – In the afternoon I took a local guide, & searched for ‘sambher’ – walked from 3 till 6.30 at a slow creeping pace, as quietly as possible – not a single pause except to look at a ‘jungle sheep’, & this was the only sign of ‘shootable’ life we saw – there were plenty of sambher & chilal tracks, & we passed places where they had been lying, by the dozen. My guide’s opinion was that the game had fled before jungle dog – he is an awful nuisance, the red dog, & clears everything, even tiger. The jungle sheep is a pretty little animal – a small deer with pointed horns about 4 inches long. I didn’t shoot as I was after bigger things & the range was very long. Have not much to show for lots of energy expended, but have the satisfaction of knowing more about the jungle than I did. The total bag when I left this morning was a few duck, one chilal, one jungle sheet, & sundry pig.



A heavy shower of rain has cooled things down – it has been abnormally hot the last few days – not nearly cold enough to enjoy a camp fire. I find Xmas cakes, baskets of fruit & cards waiting here for me – the enclosed is a class above the ordinary from a native. I have received the bill of loading for the wine, but have not heard yet whether Grindlay's have got it through the customs.

You aff^{te} son
T Gilbert

PRG 266/7/26

Camp
Salara Road
2.1.16

Dear Mother

My camp ought to be at Koregaon, next station south of this. News of dead rats in the Korgaon bungalow frightened me away – dead rats in a plague stricken place are always to be avoided, so on arrival last evening, I had all my kit bundled back into the train, & came on seven miles. I don't quite know how I'm going to get to my demonstrations no road from here except by a very circuitous route, & trains, which would take me part of the way, all at impossible hours in the middle of the night. My tents are on a goods train somewhere between Haveri & Dharwar, so that I'm really rather tied up. The only consolation is a comfortable cool bungalow, which the other place does not possess

The climate of this place is curious – slept under 3 blankets last night, went out for a walk this morning, came in dripping, & am now as comfortably cool as I could possibly be.

Gallipoli has had to go – we have no news of the destination of the troops removed thence – the news is really rather gloomy from all quarters.

Our papers are full of reports on conferences – the National Congress which thousands attend & expound resolutions on what Government ought to do, self government, commissions for natives in the army, are some of their themes – the Maratha conference discusses the betterment of the Maratha community. The All Hindu dinner seeks to sink caste differences – many other communities have their conferences, & all choose Xmas week as the most convenient time.

Your aff^{te} son
T Gilbert

PRG 266/7/27

Badami
Birapur
23.1.16



Dear Marjory

Your last letters told of Xmas visitors. I heard from Aunt Sarah yesterday that Jack has been down with measles.

Have been spending a lazy morning in bed after a bust last night at the theatre. A large fair at Cholakgudd [*Chalakudy?*] about 3 miles away has attracted a touring company. With the help of a summary of the play in English, I followed most of what was going on, & was getting quite interested at about mid-night in the middle of the third act, but was too sleepy to stick it out. The king discovers a couple afflicted by Sheni's evil eye, & as the result of his kind acts, finds the evil eye transferred to himself. Sheni, with blue face, red eyes & gorgeous robes sells the king a horse. The king goes behind the scenes for a ride, is bucked high into the sky & lands with a crash & a bang in a forest – He decides on a life of seclusion, but Sheni sends hunters to disturb him – The king departs to a town, & meets the heroine – What I saw of act III was more or less operatic, the earlier acts decidedly melodrama – some of the acting was really very good, & it is a pity that the managers do not realise the importance of good staging, & of scene shifting without hitch. The king passes through many more troubles under the influence of the evil eye, but finally relieves himself & the world of Sheni's influence, & marries two wives.

My conscience tells me that work has been a secondary consideration during the last few days. Have attended the fair twice for ploughing demonstrations Cholakgudd possesses a temple to the goddess Beni – shankari, a large car, & a very fine old lanta.

Badami is an interesting old place, & was a scene of battle between British & Maratha 'The town lies picturesquely at the mouth of a ravine between two rocky hills.' The hills are fortified, – one contains four rock temples whose sculptures are remarkably well preserved. Two are to Vishnu, in which, amongst many other forms, he figures as the boar, who brought the world from the bottom of the sea, where it had been thrown by a demon with a very long name. In another temple the Destroyer is shown with a wife on one side, & a skeleton & a bull on the other. Pillars are variously carved with figures of humans, animals, birds, & ornamental work. The serpent, & the lotus appear in many of the sculptures.

I leave here on Tuesday, spend the night at Gadag, & go on to Dharvar on Wednesday. Shall spell in headquarters for a bit, before going to the Pusa Conference.

Your aff^{te} brother

T Gilbert

PRG 266/7/28

Dharwa

19.3.16

Dear Dorothy

I'm ashamed of myself – didn't I acknowledge the card-cases – thanks none the less sincere, though late.



Since writing last have had a couple of days' loaf in Belgaum, a bike ride from Belgaum here, & a hurried journey from here to Gadag & back on Friday. A Prof Todd, ex-lawyer, economist, & writer of a book on the World's cotton had to be shown the Gadag Farm. I hope to stay here till about the end of the month, & then do the S.W. corner of this district. Have got a job as examiner Coimbatore Agricultural College about Easter time A [fees?] expences paid, & the chance of seeing some new country has tempted me to take it on. Thursday night a war fund concert in the Singagat Hall attracted a large audience. My piano added another to its many journeys. Considering that two of the organisers of the concert owned pianos, I though it rather unfair to send me an urgent wire 'may we have your piano.' Had a hard morning's work, putting a new tyre on the bike, & taking the clutch to bits – Several bits have yet to be put together again.

Your aff^{te} brother

T Gilbert

PRG 266/7/29

Dharwar

26.3.16

Dear Father

The week has passed without event worth noting – each day more or less alike – farming in the morning, office in the middle of the day, & tennis in the evening. – Have spent a bad morning at photography – enclosed is the only product worth sending.

The following written of the 'wool stapler' or middleman 1757 will I think interest you
'Nimbly with habitual speed

They sever lock from lock, & long & short,

And soft, and rigid, pile in several heaps.

This the dusk hatter asks; another shines

Tempting the clothier; that the hosier seeks;

The long bright lock is apt for airy stuffs.'

This description, according the book from which I copy the quotation, applies to the wool-stapler two centuries earlier.

Have decided to enclose another photograph – it gives an idea of what Deccan country is like – I do not think the negative good enough to get anything better from it.

Your aff^{te} son

T Gilbert



PRG 266/7/30

Dharwar

2.4.16

Dear Mother

Last mail brought letters from most of the family. – Yours enclosed a copy of 'Parish Notes' in which appeared a description of Joe's memorial tablet. Emmie sent a painting – please convey my thanks.

I intended to go out today, having wound up the financial year, & received my pay for last month: but a telegram announcing Mr Gammie's arrival on Tuesday next has kept me. I enjoy his visits – he comes down here once a year, finds out what cotton work I'm doing, & then goes back to Poona & writes a note suggesting that it shall be done.

Enclosed a photograph of Badami, taken from the face of a similar cliff to that appearing in the picture. – The ruined fort has its counterpart opposite. – You probably remember my writing of cave temples two or three months back. They are in the face of the cliff on which I was standing. The photo of the corner of the house I think I have not sent before – the negative was in an envelope marked 'another print required', & I don't want this other print for myself.

It is unpleasantly hot here – has been so for some time, but there are signs of the April showers being very close there were heavy clouds last night, & again this evening.

My garden, except that under the verandah, or in the shade of the house, is very dead – a Quisqualis creeper has been making a bright show of pink.

Your aff^{te} son

T Gilbert

PRG 266/7/31

Dharwar

9.4.16

Dear Marjory

No mail in since my last letter. I had Mr Gammie here for a few days – we did a trip to Gadag together – He is a man who knows India better than most, but it is extraordinarily difficult to get him to impart any of his information.

Thunderstorms have started, & are cooling things down a bit. – I go out on Tuesday for a few days – a district Cooperative Conference with an agricultural side-show has to be visited. I expect to be bored.

Have been strumming away at bits of the 'Carnival' – I wish it wasn't so difficult, as it pleases more than a good deal of my stock of music. I took advantage of a holiday early in the week, & dissected the piano, tightened up every screw I could find, removed a naphthalene ball that had found its way between the iron frame & the sounding board, & now, except for slight want of tuning, the machine is in first class condition – I was so pleased with the result that I



immediately wrote the Agents asking what price they would sell it for. The naphthalene ball puzzled me for hours it caused a horrid jingle, which I had given up hope of curing.

I see Milo Cudmore's name among the list of killed in today's paper. I'm afraid I cannot be mistaken in the identity. 'Lieut M. M Cudmore Royal Artillery.'

Your aff^{te} brother

T Gilbert

PRG 266/7/32

Cotaeandund [?]

23.4.16

Dear Dorothy

Am 7000 odd feet above sea level, & am thoroughly enjoying a cool climate, & a fire as soon as the sun sets – my abode is the Fir Grove Hotel anywhere else it would be called a boarding house guests are a wounded Captain, an Engineer, about half a dozen grass-widows, & several small children. We all feed together at a long table, & behave more or less as if we were on board ship.

'Coty' abounds in similar hotels, similarly populated.

Plantations of blue-gum abound everywhere, Australian blackwood is common, & several other Australian trees flourish. I don't know why they've planted the blue gums so profusely – several varieties are doing well in the botanical gardens, & it seems that they might have multiplied one more useful for timber.

The journey up from the foot of the hills is interesting, but uncomfortable – very small carriages pushed up a rack railway at about 5 miles an hour. I wish I had railed my bike to the foot of the hills, & motored up – the machine would have been very useful up here – distances are enormous, & I can't do much on foot. Have been walking hard, & should not be sitting down writing now, only that a blister on my toe wants a rest. I shall know better next time, – I hope there will be a next time. – I eat as many meals a day as I did at home – the difficulty is to get enough breath, & a walk up a hill results in as much blowing as a boat race. My writing is rather worse than usual – Have chosen to use an arm chair rather than a rickety teapoy, & I havn't enough elbow room.

I go down to Coimbatore to-morrow afternoon & start exam work Tuesday afternoon. I hope to be through & on my way back on Saturday.

Letters from Mother & Catherine just arrived also a copy of one from Jack. Vintage had started, & Mr Girdlestone & Bill had joined the pickers. Marjory was still in town. An earlier letter from Catherine enclosed photographs for which please deliver my thanks – the plants in the borders against my bungalow wall are mostly crotons & geraniums – I shall probably fill up all other borders with cannas & dahlias this year

Your aff^{te} brother

T Gilbert



PRG 266/7/33

[written on paper with letterhead

West End Hotel

Proprietors: Spencer & Co. Ltd.

Telegrams: Westend.]

Bangalore, 30.4.16.

Dear Mother,

Finished up my exam work yesterday, & am wasting 12 hours here on my way back to Dharwar. Examining 18 students, two written papers & an oral was a bigger undertaking than I expected. If the Indian student does not know the answer to a question, he writes about something else – if he does know, he spreads himself over so many pages, & deals with so many side issues that it is difficult to judge the quality of his answers. Often he'll answer a question quite well, & then give himself away hopelessly by adding some absurd remark. Coimbatore was very hot, an unpleasant contrast to 'Coty.' Mr Wood, the principal (cousin of Prof T.B. Wood Cambridge) had three of us examiners & one other staying with him, & we filled up every corner of his house. As soon as the day's work is over, he reverts to extreme youth, & revels in pillow fights, & such childish games, with an occasional interval for a song of the Student's Song Book type.

I envy him his farm at Coimbatore there is much more of the farm & less of the experiment station than there is about my places. His dairy herd includes several Australian cattle. There is I'm told a big trade developing between Madras and Australia in dairy cattle.

As Indian hotels go, this place strikes me as being exceptionally good, but two hours' acquaintances is rather little on which to give a fair opinion.

Your last letter & copies of some of Jack's reached me at Coimbatore, barely a week's interval between the last two mails which is very unusual.

Your aff^{te} son

T Gilbert

PRG 266/7/34

Dharwar

7.5.16

Dear Marjory

Your last was from home – you must have been glad to get back. Harry was to sail on the 28th April

I arrived back on Monday, & have no news to record since. A cool change last evening broke an unpleasantly warm spell, & we are hardly likely to have any heat to complain about, except perhaps just before the monsoon breaks. Have started pruning roses this morning – am afraid it is too early but they all show signs of wanting to throw out new wood, in spite of a



reduced water supply. My mali is away collecting sand for potting I have to send about 20 miles to get coarse sand – Am going to make a collection of begonias – the ordinary kinds with a small pink flower do very well, & I see no reason why the large flowered kinds should not flourish. I saw some very fine ones in a hot house at Coty.

I go to Haveri on Wednesday to wind up the school term, thence to Gadag for cotton auctions. After that a visit to Gokak ought to see my touring through

Your aff^{te} brother

T Gilbert

PRG 266/7/35

Camp Arbhavi

16.5.16

Dear Father

Misadventures rather to the fore the last 24 hours. – First & foremost my dog disappeared this morning before I arrived, – I fear a panther as one is slated to be in the neighbourhood, but I do not think this likely, & quite expect to see the dog roll up this evening.

Last evening I left Gadag by motor bike at 5.30, – struck a mild thunderstorm, – got wet through, & pushed on to Hubli as quickly as possible – the rain stopped, but the road got greasier & greasier – about lighting up time I dropped into a hole in the middle of the road, & upset, luckily without damage to self or bicycle. Lit up & got going again – the storm had been very heavy ahead of me – I started skidding & swerving from side to side of the road & then the machine stopped – wheels & pulley clogged with sticky clay. Had a general clean up & tried to get moving again. – I have lately been reduced to having to run with the machine, as my starting gear has been removed by some mischievous person. – I ran, but my progress was similar to that reported of the ant (or mouse?) trying to climb a greasy pole – I could not move forward fast enough to start the engine – Some passers-by offered me their hospitality if I would return to their village a mile back, but would not undertake to push the bike. Later a friendly push got me going, but the machine soon clogged. Decided to give it up – thirst & emptiness tempted me to try my luck at the village, but I came to the conclusion that a 'special occasion' quart of beer & something solid to eat at the end of a 7½ mile tramp to Hubli was more tempting. Covered the 7½ miles in an hour & 45 minutes, not bad going, I think, with a head wind to add to other difficulties. The aggravating part of it was that it was absolutely unnecessary, & that I had a rail ticket from Gadag to Hubli in my pocket. I trust that the bike has escaped attention from anyone mischievously inclined, & that it is now tied in a bullock cart & on its way to Dharwar. I crept out of the train very stiff, expecting a four mile walk this morning, but a kindly disposed postman caught me within the first mile, & offered me the loan of his bicycle, which offer I gladly accepted.

I stayed at Gadag with a Mr Spooner – I think I've mentioned him before – he has spent a good deal of his life on railway construction in East Africa, & has many interesting experiences to relate, & many interesting lantern slides to show. He is now Engineer on the M & S [...], & a keen poultry farmer & gardener



Later

A handful of hair & a collar arrived at 5.p.m to show the reason of poor little Paddy's disappearance. I went to the spot where they had been found, & soon tracked the rest of his uneaten remains – sat on the ground & awaited events – a mongoose first appeared on the scenes & spotted me & bolted a few minutes later a panther was gazing at me over the top of a cactus bush, 10 yards away – Gave him one in the chest, laid him out, & put another bullet through his head, as I wasn't taking any unnecessary risks – Then gave him another through the head, the last shot I think prompted solely by ill-will. The satisfaction in slaying him was peculiar, but now that it is over, I find it poor compensation for the loss of a real companion.

Your aff^{te} son

T Gilbert

PRG 266/7/36

Dharwar

22.5.16

Dear Father

Yours of May 2nd & several other letters from home came in by this morning's post. War news does not improve, – one tries to take comfort from those – who are fairly numerous here – who profess to see little in the news that is not encouraging. – Harry had departed – my letter written to him when he was on his former trip, returned from the D.L.O a few days ago. Colonel Palin's name is well known in Poona. I have never met him. Townshend is new name to me since the war started, & I do not know what part of India he was stationed in before.

I have never come across the New Guinea butter bean, & should like to give it a trial.

It is my present intention to cease touring for a time, but there is always a chance of my having to do a trip on short notice.

A tuner has been at work on my piano all morning – a man who obviously knew his job thoroughly, & apart from screwing up the strings, knew how to diagnose & cure various minor ailments.

My bungalow mate, Jacob, is transferred to Bombay, probably only for a few weeks, but I fear that his transfer may be permanent. Am expecting Scott of the Bank of Bombay for next week end – The motor bike came back safely, & is apparently none the worse for its outing.

Your aff^{te} son

T Gilbert



PRG 266/7/37

Dharwar
28.5.16

Dear Catherine

Have just been asleep in a long chair & my thoughts still insist on wandering – I've been looking at your name written above for about 10 minutes.

It looks as if I am to have this bungalow to myself. – Mr Jacob is very doubtful about returning – he dislikes his present job in Bombay intensely, but a very considerable rise in pay ought to go a long way to compensate for other defects. – I can imagine him being very fed up wandering up & down a railway – he was so keen on the jungle. I have taken charge of his horses indefinitely one is the animal I had just before coming home on leave, the other a sickly brute that might have been a nice horse once.

Mr Scott is staying with me for the week end on his way back from a month's leave at Coty. His sleep is lasting longer than mine did. It is very nice & cool here now, so long as one sits still, but it is warm work taking exercise of any description. – As I'm reduced to writing about the weather, for want of news, I think it's time I stopped.

Your aff^{te} brother
T Gilbert

PRG 266/7/38

Dharwar
4.6.16

Dear Catherine

Mail not in yet – English mail brought a letter from Aunt Anna & her photograph – I expect she has sent you a copy. The monsoon is on us early – not much rain yet, but it has been nice & cool for the last few days – ideal weather for getting the garden started, & the malis are hard at work. Dharwar season started with a vengeance. June 1st dinner party – June 2nd, dinner party, – June 3rd Cinema show. – I slept solidly throughout the last.

We have started a rifle club, – practise every Monday morning, & a shoot for a silver spoon once a month – except for this novelty, our ordinary routine is unlikely to be disturbed.

Work is fairly light just a present I don't worry my farm more than enough, as I want them to get reports finished, so that I can start on mine.

Mr Scott left me on Tuesday – Mr Schutte I believe, arrives to-morrow – he's a nuisance he stays here because I feel it is my duty to offer him a bed; but doesn't let me know exactly what date he is coming, or how long he intends to stay.

Your aff^{te} brother
T Gilbert



PRG 266/7/39

Dharwar

11.6.16

Dear Mother

Your letters came in early during the week. I was glad to get copies of Jack's news – He seems to be doing very well. War news has been stirring – our first telegram about the naval battle was anything but cheering, & before we had more detailed & more satisfactory accounts, came the news of Kitchener's death – I wonder who is to replace him.

We had a funeral service this morning – the church packed, and the congregation included Hindus. The regular organist played hymns & National Anthem, & I came in at the end with Grieg's 'Ases Tod' –, as a copy of the Dead March was not forthcoming.

Since breakfast, I've pulled the motor bike to pieces, given it a thorough cleaning, & located the cause of loss of power that has been troubling me for some time.

Enclosed are Cotacamund downs, gardens & a group of Toda women. – The last are of a tribe, rapidly – I believe – approaching extinction whose 'origin is buried among the secrets of the past.' – They keep buffaloes & refuse all other work – An old \man/ who was told that the Prince of Wales was coming, that he was a very wealthy man, & was bringing a large retinue is stated to have replied 'Yes Yes but how many buffaloes is he bringing.' The huts are very like half a cask, laid sideways, & have only one opening, a door about 2' wide & 2'6' high.

'Coty gardens' shows a deodar cedar in the foreground

Your aff^{te} son

T Gilbert

PRG 266/7/40

Camp

Hukeri

27.2.16

Dear Mother

This is the second time I've camped in the old tomb at Hukeri. I intended to march from Chikodi by road to Belgaum, but Pokak Farm wants a visit. I shall get there Tuesday.

Chikodi is a prosperous place, in a hollow almost completely surrounded by steep hills.

'Pan' gardens are the main feature of the valley. I camped with the Assistant Judge, who was in prior possession of the bungalow, as were his servants of the kitchen, so I fed at his expense. A sugar boiling & plough demonstration at Chinchani kept me out the best part of one day – our furnace design was much appreciated, but boiling pans were not approved, & I think the people are right. I go to Gokak to test the result of combining our furnace & their pan.

My camp came here last night by a direct route, I did about a 35 mile round, through Nipani this morning. The tobacco traffic from Nipani to the railway is enourmous just now, & I was



held up by long strings of carts all along the road. About £10,000 worth of tobacco passed through the Nipani market last week, & I'm told that the trade will continue at the same rate for about 6 weeks

Of course the tobacco is all unmanufactured stuff – some of it has been fermented in pits, some simply dried, some fermented & powdered. Well over 300 tons must have exchanged hands in the last weekly market

The hot weather is coming on fast. Chikodi was uncomfortable in the middle of the day, but this tomb is a nice cool place

Your aff^{te} son

T Gilbert

PRG 266/7/41

Dharwar

18.6.16

Dear Father

I expect to go to the Indian Army Reserve of Officers fairly soon – I do not know when or where. I have only demiofficial notice, from the Director, asking me to finish my reports quickly, & from the Under Secretary to Government asking me to detail my previous volunteer service. My application has to be formally accepted by Government, & then passed on to the Military authorities, – a process which may take a few days, may take a few months. Garrison duty in India will probably be the result. A large number of junior Government servants, whose applications were refused earlier, are now being accepted, I believe. Two of us in Dharwar have been warned.

Five of us turned out for a cross country gallop this morning. – my mount was a pleasant surprise – he is a most uncomfortable animal for trotting about the roads, & for long rides I've been using the bay, which had to go to Poona yesterday. The chestnut finished fresher, and very much faster than any of the other four.

I don't think that I ever mentioned that the hock travelled and is keeping well, & is apparently much appreciated by my occasional dinner & bridge fours.

I will write you details of my probable movements & of the disposal of my few belongings as soon as orders come through.

Your aff^{te} son

T Gilbert

PRG 266/7/42

Dharwar

25.6.16

Dear Father



The following received this morning :

'I am to express the appreciation of the Governor in Council of your anxiety to serve in the Indian Army Reserve of Officers, and to inform you that you have been selected for that service. You will await further orders, but should be ready to join at very short notice'.

I shall pack up up, store all my kit, except the piano, in my office (Office of the Deputy Director of Agriculture, Southern Division – Bombay Dharwar), & probably move to the farm & await orders there. Miss Nixon, Civil Hospital Dharwar has kindly consented to look after my piano.

I have no idea where I am going, & my kit may follow me, or may be stored here indefinitely. In the latter event, I will send you a list & a rough valuation. I cannot ask any of my friends here to take charge of it, because, as you know, we are all so liable to be transferred.

The Sunday morning ride was not a success, the ground was too slippery in most parts to allow~~ing~~ moving faster than a walk. Badminton has replaced tennis for evening exercise – a single at the former is the hardest work I know

Harry & Jack were both due to arrive in Egypt – I wonder if they met, or will meet.

Mother asks if I walked at 'Coty' for pleasure or because I had to – I was there for a holiday.

Your aff^{te} son

T Gilbert

P.S. Pay in I.A.R.O. continues as at present, & I have more than enough cash in bank to meet all probable preliminary expenditure

T G

PRG 266/7/43

Dharwar

1.7.16

Dear Mother

I do not quite know what the authorities are playing at, & it looks as if I shall be in Dharwar for another month. One department of Government wrote to tell me to get ready to go at a moment's notice – another writes yesterday telling me to fill in various forms, send them to the G.O.C. Poona, await a call for an interview with him, & then probably wait 3 weeks for orders. Red tape is particularly aggravating when it affects one personally. I have applied for cavalry, & have undertaken 'to serve ... as an officer of the Indian Army Reserve of Officers until my resignation shall be accepted, and if I am called to Army service ... I will serve in any part of India, or in any other place in which any portion of His Majesty's Indian forces may be serving, and in any branch or department of the service to which I may be appointed.'

I am all packed up, & am going to live with the silent Mr Simpson to-morrow – my bungalow has been taken by a forest officer. I shall be glad to move, as an empty bungalow is rather desolate.

I dined with Miss Nixon last evening & made music till a fairly late hour – Miss Nixon said she had written to Dorothy, so I suppose you know all about Mrs Sumner & Sister Flora – the last suspects relationship with us, but I couldn't help in solving the problem.



The mania for dinner parties here is worse than ever – I overate so often last week that I had to issue a warning that I should refuse all invitations till I'd recovered – However one can't plead 'seedy' for an invitation issued a week ahead.

Sunday – Have been out riding with Mr Turner & the Nawab of Savanur – beat the last over about ¼ mile – Jacob's pony is very fast & it is a pity he is so difficult to keep fit – we had a great race on the occasion of Mrs Syles puzzle gymkhana – I was third to get the needle threaded, & 2nd home – it was a great race but much too short & turns too sharp. Other events, especially the donkey race were all amusing – my donkey upset me twice, then made a bolt for its foal – I've forgotten what won the animal race, but a duck did very well.

Your aff^{te} son

T Gilbert

PRG 266/7/45

Dharwar

8.7.16

Dear Father

I hear that I am to expect formal orders to move by the 15th inst, but still do not know where.

Home letters came in a few days ago – you had received cables from Jack & from Harry.

War telegrams bring news of victories on all fronts – I trust they may continue.

I enclose some photographs taken at Devihosur when I was there for the final examination – also enclosed are lists, one prepared by my cook in English characters, the other by my boy in Kanarese – the latter is the more intelligible of the two – I have attempted to transliterate some of the words.

Simpson is motoring me out to Tegur to-morrow morning, weather permitting – rain is holding off & we're beginning to want it badly – rice withering, & other crops cannot be sown – it has been raining hard on the coast for some days, & normally the rain should have reached here before now.

Have broken the back of my reporting work, & shall have finished in two or three days. I expect parts of my farm reports are quite unintelligible to you – one uses so many vernacular words – they also will have struck you as being very badly edited. I did not have time last year to check the copies in type before I came away on leave, & do not suppose I shall have time to do so this year.

My staff gave me a farewell pansupar the other day, rather prematurely, but I had to let them do it, as I was expecting orders any day – It was rather trying, & I shall have to face another from non official friends.

Your aff^{te} son

T Gilbert



PRG 266/7/47

Dharwar
16.7.16

Dear Father

Home letters came in, some last evening, some this morning. A second cable from Harry announced his probable departure from Egypt. I wonder if any chance will bring him to Bombay. A large number of sick are to come down from Mesopotamia shortly – the Poona Agricultural College is now a hospital, to accommodate, I believe 500. I have just been reading an official despatch, detailing operations on the N.W. Frontier since the beginning of the war – it is most interesting reading, & tribal raids have been more frequent, & on a larger scale than we knew before.

My interview with the General in Poona was brief, & I did not gather much, except that I will probably get what I've applied for – cavalry – & will train somewhere in India, attached to a regiment, or at a depot. Poona is a possibility, & if I went there I should get lots of fun out of it, as the two depots are chiefly engaged in training horses. My application has gone on to Simla, & the minimum period for orders to come through is about 10 days from the 12th inst. The local Agricultural Association took me by surprise at the close of their half-yearly meeting – farewells are very trying, & I fear there are more to come.

The monsoon is very weak, though rain has been just enough up to date – there is however no sign of more coming, & the little we had last evening came from the wrong quarter.

Your aff^{te} son
T Gilbert

PRG 266/7/48 *is missing*

PRG 266/7/49

Dharwar
23.7.16

Dear Dorothy

Am still awaiting orders – evidently nothing reached Poona yet, as I heard from them yesterday that they could not reply to some questions I had asked, until they knew to what unit I was posted.

Did a long ride this morning with Mr Williams, round Mugad tank – I forget whether you ever went there or not – the country is looking its best, – a heavy storm two days ago freshened up the rice, & has put some water in the tanks – unfortunately the rain came from the wrong direction & there is still very little sign of S.W. Monsoon. – Have spent the afternoon dozing over 'Cavalry training', & am now hoping that Mr Simpson will take me for a motor drive.



Mrs Leslie has been ill since they came in from Koppa, has been in hospital for some time & is recovering under Miss Nixon's care. I heard from Miss de La Cherois the other day – she writes a most interesting letter, though her discussion of the Irish question was rather beyond me.

The war telegram brings news of progress every day, but the cost is appalling – the Times of India casualty list occupies two or three columns every day – officers only – names of Cambridge friends & acquaintances appear frequently. The Dharwar convalescent hospital is going to be large – the railway offices will accommodate 300, & temporary accommodation for 700 is to be built elsewhere – the railway people are to move into a part of the training college, & to have a few bungalows placed at their disposal.

Your aff^{te} brother

T Gilbert

With PRG 266/7/49

List for Cooking

Cooking pats	12
Cooking pats for Coorias	12
Chopper	1
Tray pen	1
Kittol	1
Coffee Roosting	1
Feer Spoon	1
Feer Sprong	1
Pestree Boads	1
Pestry Rools	1
Cooking spoon	1
Iron Hovon	1
Brad Tin	1
Cakes molds	1
Carry Stawfed Stoan	1
Coofee Groning	1
Cooking Box	1
Pea Dish	<u>3</u>
Total	41

[two pages of lists written in Indian scrip (Hindi?)]



PRG 266/7/50

Dharwar
29.7.16

Dear Father

I have been appointed 2nd Lieutenant Indian Army Reserve of Officers, & am to report myself to the Officers commanding 27th Light Cavalry at Lucknow not later than the 7th August. I expect to leave here on the 2nd, & to waste a day in Poona, & another in Bombay en route. As regards an address, I think c/o Mess^{rs} Grindlay & Co Bombay will be most suitable. I will keep them informed of my address. It will probably be advisable to employ Grindlays as private agents, & to deposit my will & insurance policy, now with the Agent Bank of Bombay, with them. It seems to me advisable to give somebody in India power to deal with my property as instructed. I will settle the matter personally when passing through, & write you accordingly. The Bank of Bombay will not undertake private agency.

I have already given you a copy of my declaration made when applying for service. Other conditions as far as they affect me are: –

- (a) Whilst serving in India pay at civil rates ... or military pay & allowances, whichever is greater: If employed in Europe or overseas, military pay & allowances of rank plus civil furlough pay. (The military pay of a second Lieutenant in the Indian Army reserve of Officers is Rs456 –14– per mensem – Cavalry)
- (b) Service in the Indian Army reserve of Officers will count for Civil Leave & Pension whilst within India Limits – should service be rendered in Europe or overseas, absence from India will not be regarded as an interruption of duty for leave already earned, & will count for pension, but not for leave.
- (c) An officer will retain a lien on his civil appointment.
- (d) An officer on *incremental salary will count service in the Indian Army reserve of Officers towards such increments.
- (e) Grant of an outfit allowance of Rs600.
(* My salary is at present Rs550–, rising by annual increments of Rs50 to Rs1000– Increment due February 23rd in each year.)

The military Secretary to His Excellency the Commander on Chief – Army Headquarters – Simla has your name and address, entered on a regular form showing next of Kin.

My private accounts show only Bank account and a record of investments. Copies of my pay bill are recorded in my office – There will be no occasion to refer to them in future, as I shall draw all pay due before leaving.

Your aff^{te} son
T Gilbert



PRG 266/7/51

Lucknow

7.8.16

Dear Mother

I have reported myself for duty, undergone numerous introductions, & hope to lie low till evening. I was met last evening by a fellow 2nd Lieutenant, of 3 months standing – he was so busy patronising the new comer that he made a hopeless muddle of directing my kit, & it took from 8.30 till midnight to find me. However he stood me an excellent dinner at the Mahommed Bagh, & I feel more kindly disposed towards him this morning

It is my lot to share a bungalow with a Captain Jackson a regular officer of the 27th Light Cavalry – I saw him for a minute last night, but we have not met since – he was away at 6 this morning.

The bungalow is barely furnished, but probably very little kit will be necessary, as I do not suppose I shall be in it much except to sleep. The regiment have come here quite lately, & have barely settled down themselves.

More next week when I've learnt my way about a bit. All I know now is that Lucknow is beastly hot.

Your aff^{te} son

T Gilbert

PRG 266/7/52

Attached 27th L. Cavalry

Lucknow

Dear Emmie

Many home letters came in the other day. I seem not to have made it clear how it came about that I got into the I.A.R.O. Government saw fit to withdraw their standing orders forbidding civil servants to apply, & wrote informally to, I believe all civilians of less the 10 years' service, asking those who had already applied, whether their applications still held good, & others whether they were willing & anxious to serve. Some of those addressed have been accepted, others put on the waiting list. Government's move, I imagine amounts practically to compulsion for such men as they choose to select.

I think the extracts I gave you from papers connected with my appointment will have put you in just as good a position to judge of future possibilities, as I am in myself. One can foretell nothing, but it is certain that we I.A.R. people will not go on active service until we are thoroughly conversant in the language, know the machine gun, & understand something about reconnoitring.

This regiment has not got away on active service at all, but the majority of its men have gone in drafts to other regiments, & the ranks are almost entirely filled by recruits My squadron, B are all Punjabi Mussalmans. Other squadrons are Rajputs, & Madras Mussalman.



The Punjabis are generally fine men, & amongst the Native officers are some of the finest looking men I've ever seen, & thorough gentlemen they are too. The "N.O." ranks are Risaidar & Jemadar, corresponding to first & second lieutenant in British ranks. The Risaldar Major wears three stars, & ranks as a captain. The non-commissioned ranks are Koldaffedar, daffedar, & lance daffedar (Sgt Major, Corporal & Lance Cpl.)

In spite of the climate I'm feeling extraordinarily fit – lots of exercise, & at present, very little responsibility, I think does it.

I've seen two of the sights – the Residency, & the Dilkusha palace – Dorothy can no doubt tell you all about them. I can't.

Please tell Father that the result of my interview with Grindlays was to leave things as they are at present, but, in the event of going on active service, to entrust them with my property, & with the drawing of my pay. This is done simply by filling in & signing a form, & they will act according to instructions from me, or from the Executor of my will.

I am opening a current account here with the Bank of Bengal for convenience.

Your aff^{te} brother,

T Gilbert

[in pencil, in different handwriting] from Lucknow attached to 27th Cavalry

PRG 266/7/53

Lucknow

Attached 27th Light Cavalry

12.8.16

Dear Father

I don't feel quite so much like a new boy at school as I did a week ago, & have come to the conclusion that an Indian Cavalry Officer has an ideal job, though perhaps, as the native clerk put it a dangerous profession during war time. I find myself a very inferior horseman, & took two tosses this morning before I got outside the gate – then thought better of it, & got my orderly to deal with the horse until he'd finished bucking – later he gave me a splendid ride – all the horses in the regiment are untrained remounts from Australia, & have only been in hand about a fortnight – we pick as many as we like, feed them at Government expense, & later if we want to use them for pig-sticking or other such strenuous sport, pay a nominal hire fee, & contribute towards the feeding – My most urgent work is to learn to ride I hope for lots of riding school work – & to learn the language – no one speaks English up here – not even the Native Officers. The regimental Munshi, a nice old man with an ear trumpet, gives me a daily lesson, & I spend a good deal of the rest of the day at Hindustani. The usual day's work is parade 6.a.m, stables 7.30 – office 8.30 – office hitherto allotted to me takes about 3 minutes, & then one hangs about until the senior officer leaves – usually about 10.a.m. – breakfast – Hindustani, lunch, sleep, tea, & then evening parade. I'm let off the last until I get a uniform – all meals in mess



We live about 2 miles from the lines, & will continue to do so until bungalows & mess \at the lines/, are ready probably some months hence

Sunday

Took two more tosses this morning from a horse still more lively than the one that spilt me yesterday. The only thing to do is to develop some muscles in the riding school. What with riding & football, I'm so stiff I can hardly walk, but am so far unbruised. I never thought I'd take to the latter game – "sokker" is the game played – Officers, English & Native, & men all play together – Major Abbey, my squadron commander, seems to be chief organiser of games, he is an enthusiast about every form of sport, & is out to-day looking for the first signs of snipe & duck – I believe there are few places to beat Lucknow for small game shooting

I suppose a new arrival in Lucknow ought to have something to write about places of historical interest, but I haven't so much as opened a guide book yet.

A letter from Dorothy received the other day told of your trip to Victor harbour. My letter saying that I had been accepted for the Army Reserve cannot have reached you when she wrote, & must have been overdue.

We live under punkahs night & day here – I tried sleeping without one, but it was not good enough. I am getting acclimatised, but it was rather a sudden change from Dharwar's damp cold to Lucknow's damp heat.

Colonel Birdwood commands the regiment – he is a brother of the man whose name you will have seen in the papers. – the Major, & two Captains are regular officers, 4 subalterns army reserve men, & another subaltern has arrived to-day.

Your aff^{te} son

T Gilbert

PRG 266/7/54

[27 Light Cavalry insignia on note paper]

Lucknow

27.8.16

Dear Dorothy

No news from home since the letter I acknowledged last week – It is a long time since Australian mail has come at intervals of less than a fortnight.

Have settled myself in fairly comfortably with hired furniture, & a little of my camp stuff sent up from Dharwar. Captain Jackson & I don't mix, an arrangement I approve of thoroughly, though I think most men would have made some small display of hospitality to the newcomer, living in the same house. He is commander of my squadron temporarily during Major Abbey's absence on leave.

The club does not seem to be nearly so necessary here as in a small station. I've been to the Mahommed Bagh once for a drink, & to the Chattar Manzil once for dinner. Possibly in the cold weather & when one begins to know people, clubs will be more attractive. Mess affords



an opportunity of mixing with one's fellow creatures several times \a day/ & it is a very different matter from spending the day alone.

We only wear uniform for morning parade, & mess kit for dinner. Evening parade & the rest of the day in mufti. We are not allowed to put up regimental badges, or to wear the 27th L.C. mess kit. This is the result of several awful outsiders of I.A.R.O. having been attacked, & of their having absolutely disgraced the regiments' uniform. Our uniform is plain khaki, breeches & field boots, or "Jodhpur's" – exactly the same as the regiment's except that we wear I.A.R.O. on our shoulders – they wear 27th L.C. Mess kit is white, Eton jacket, tight trousers, Wellington boots & a red kammarband – the regiment's somewhat similar only trimmed with blue, & a blue kammerband.

I am due for an abbreviated Sandhurst course at Lebong for 6 weeks, starting sometime next month. I havn't yet found out how to get there, & can't find the place on the map – It is somewhere near Darjeeling, & I'm looking forward to September in the hills. – the only drawback will be no riding. Have taken no more tosses since those I reported – riding school work with & without stirrups, is gradually giving me a grip. Have taken out two horses & a pony to train – the last an inferior creature, but good enough to try polo on. When Master has to be trained at the same time as the horse, he would probably ruin a decent animal, or at any rate do it no good.

Your aff^{te} brother
T Gilbert

PRG 266/7/55

Lucknow
3.9.16

Dear Father

Thank you for your letter of Aug 9th. You had payed the amount of my interest on Commonwealth Bonds £28 – 11 – 6 into my Savings Bank a/c. I am hardly likely to want to draw the amount, but perhaps investment had better wait until I know what living here is going to cost.

Marjory's luck was out again – I trust the hospital will do more for her this time.

I wonder if Jack has got into the flying corps. An invitation for applicants for a flying corps on the N.W. Frontier came here the other day, but none of us accepted it.

It is a bright, steamy day, following a week of very heavy rainfall. We had a very wet parade yesterday – rain held off till we were ready to move off from the parade ground at 6.a.m, & then caught us properly – Once out we take no notice of the weather, but heavy rain before & during parade time constitutes an excuse for not turning up till 7.30 stables.

There are to be sports at the lines this evening – amongst other items, one, rough riders riding buck jumpers ought to be amusing – the 12 worst horses in the regiment have been picked out for their benefit.

No orders about the Lebong course yet – I hope it comes off before the cold weather starts. I have to go to Darjeeling, & it's a short road journey from there.



Your aff^{te} son
T Gilbert

PRG 266/7/56

Lucknow
13.9.16

Dear Mother

My luck is right out. Instead of being in the hills in a nice cool place doing interesting work, I'm here on the sick list. Took a toss in the riding school, & dislocated my right shoulder. Mounting without stirrups, I came up behind the saddle, & my horse, a young nervous beast, pig jumped me over his head – Luckily there was a motor on the spot, & I got straight away to a doctor, who chloroformed me, & put the shoulder right – It has given me very little pain since, – arm came out of a sling yesterday, & I can move it freely enough from the elbow downwards, to scratch a short letter. I don't suppose I shall be up to any hard work for two or three weeks.

Of attached officers, one has just received orders for active service at Aden, two are away on special courses, & two of us are sick, so that our numbers are rather reduced.

Strictly speaking, I should be confined to my room, but I go into mess for all meals except dinner, & no one objects, in fact the Adjutant drove me to the club last evening.

Your aff^{te} son
T Gilbert

PRG 266/7/57

Lucknow
17.9.16

Dear Dorothy

Your last letters brought news of Heriot's departure – I am sorry he did not get a commission. Please thank Catherine for photographs of Harry.

My last two Australian papers contain enormous casualty lists – the Australians must have been in the thick of things in France.

I'm to return to mild duty tomorrow, but riding school, & hard work for my right arm are absolutely forbidden. It is particularly annoying, as above all things, this regiment does afford an opportunity of developing a firm seat in the saddle – also I'm missing "slow chukkers" at polo, & beginners will probably have advanced enough to play a fast game, before I can put in an appearance. My arm is improving rapidly – no muscles torn, fortunately, & beyond slight rheumatically pains at night, I hardly feel it.



One attached officer went off to Aden on active service during the week he has had about 6 months' training. Two are away, & two of us on the sick list, so that sabalkens available for duty are rather scarce.

The climate has changed very much for the better, & this morning it is raining hard, & comparatively cold. I had to cover myself with a blanket at an early hour.

It is about time I began to think about a wedding present for Bill. I imagine something useful would be more acceptable than some ornamental Indian work – Can you give me some idea, & may I commission you to do the buying.

Have just starting struggling with the Urdu written character – not that it is necessary, but it is so much easier to learn to pronounce the language when one sees proper symbols representing sounds. There are many sounds which are foreign to Kanorese, – I doubt if I shall ever master a “g” which is both guttural & aspirated, – & a “k”, more cough-like than Scotch “ch” is difficult.

I don't think I mentioned that we live in Dilkusha. Possibly you can more or less locate where we are from enclosed sketch. [*between letter 68 and 69*]

[*Sketch map shows*

N direction

Mall Road – to Lucknow, chuttermumzil, & Imambara

Tombs Rd – showing position of my bungalow, mess and other officers bungalows

Position of Dilkusha Palace

Race course

Direction of 37th L.C. Lines

Your aff^{te} brother

T Gilbert

PRG 266/7/58

Lucknow

24.9.16

Dear Catherine

Have been back at work all last week – very gentle work – I shall take charge of my ride in the school on Monday, but shall not work with them for some time yet. On parade each of us attached officers has been put in charge of a recruits' “ride” – a “rough rider” usually gives commands, & we work with the recruits, falling out occasionally to practise giving commands. The morning parade is mounted, & each ride marks out its own circle, & practises riding at all paces with & without stirrups. The rides then work in extended line, & on the command “circle” or “turn”, each file circles or turns, instead of as in the previous case, the whole moving in one large circle. It is a difficult game with untrained horses & untrained men. The man has to be taught how to indicate to his horse which foot to lead with at the canter, how to make his horse pass sideways, & so on, & the horse has to learn what his rider's indications mean.



In the evening the same ride parades dismounted, & does rifle drill, & then troop or squadron drill.

We do not get nearly as much instruction regarding actual warfare as I should like, but it is asking too much to expect a few regular officers who have to run a regiment, a remount depot & a recruit training school combined, to devote much time to personal teaching. Incidentally the officers are none too pleased with not getting a chance of practising the profession they've been training for for years.

Did I mention the mess drag, [*dray?*] – we had it out last Sunday – we went along in great style, until a leader kicked over the traces, & then we had to come home in disgrace dragged by two horses. The mess also keeps a four wheeler, & a tum-tum, supported by subscription, & by nominal hire fees.

[*letter incomplete*]

PRG 266/7/59

Lucknow

1.10.16

Dear Father

I have a long letter from you dated Sept. 4th. I've never heard of insolence so great as that of the bailiff who asked you your business on your own property.

You say that on the present position, the transfer of my funds from B. Hill Debentures to War Loan shows a loss of £11 – 13 – 4 : however I much prefer under present conditions, to have my money safe, earning possibly less than I might elsewhere.

I'm moving house shortly & am going to share a bungalow with a Captain Durham. I'm sick of living in the same house with the most unsociable man I've ever met, & incidentally of paying half rent for about a quarter of the house. Durham is on sick leave from a special job in Persia, & is rejoining this regiment on light duty. I wish Jackson wasn't so much above associating with the likes of me. What he doesn't know about a horse, & horse management isn't worth knowing, & it's a treat to see him handle a difficult animal. One might learn such a lot from him if he would voluntarily impart some of his knowledge.

My shoulder progresses favourably, & I hope will be normal soon.

Your aff^{te} son

T Gilbert

Prg 266/7/60

Lucknow

8.10.16

Dear Catherine



The hot weather & rain is finished, I think – it is still warm enough to appreciate a punkah in the middle of the day, but there is a pleasant chill at 6.a.m. – Morning parade is now at 6.45. We I.A.R. people are getting more personal training since Captain Durham took over the Adjutantcy – the other man is away getting married. Our shouting commands at recruits is not not enough – we have to do our best to explain in Hindustani what the commands mean: handling revolver & sword is to be part of the daily instruction next week

My period of duty as British officer for the week expired Saturday midnight. The B.O. has to turn out the guard once by night & once by day – , inspect horse feeding & watering of the whole regiment, & see that the sick men in hospital have all they want.

My bike is in hospital for the first time in its life. Stopped dead with a clash & a bang the other day, luckily near the lines, & I was able to borrow a horse to get home on. A bearing has probably seized; as I can't understand it as the machine was full of oil, & gave no warning that anything was wrong: however I suppose with a 3 – 4 year old machine, one must expect a bearing to go occasionally.

Another I.A.R. man leaves the regiment for France in a day or two.

Your aff^{te} brother

T Gilbert

PRG 266/7/61

Lucknow

15.10.16

Dear Father

Your letter of 20.9.16 & other home letter addressed c/o Grindlay & C^o reached me safely. A rumour may reach you via Miss Nixon that I'm off to Mesopotamia – it's all wrong. I wrote to my office that I wanted some of my camp kit packed & kept in readiness to send at a moment's notice, & explained to them why. I've seen several people go off at a moment's notice very partially equipped, & I want to be ready in case of emergency – that's all.

I have adopted a new form of evening exercise – working would be gymkhana race-horses – the Major has offered me as much "work" as I like any evening. I rode an old crock in a hurdle race yesterday, just to get experience of the starting gate – the hurdles were all down in front of me after the first two, & I cantered my untrained nag quietly round, through the gaps. The rights & wrongs of racing in war-time are I know much debated, but as an enjoyable form of exercise, I know nothing to beat it.

I put down "yes" on a notice asking if we were willing to fly – I don't for a moment suppose anything will come of it. Practically everyone in the regiment applied from various motives – some because they despair of practising their profession as cavalry officers, some because they want the fun of flying.

I will try & remember to get Catherine some postcards of Lucknow next time I go into the town. My bike is still in hospital, & I haven't the time or the inclination to visit the town more often than is necessary in a slower conveyance. One of the roller bearings of the bike was



damaged – I can't replace the rollers in this country, & have to put up with a brass bearing instead.

Your aff^{te} son

T Gilbert

PRG 266/7/62

Lucknow

22.10.16

Dear Mother

I had a little excitement the other morning due to a faulty interpretation of a telegram – was told that I was due for France immediately – however in the evening it turned out that a man was wanted at Sialkot for the depot of the 6th Cavalry, a regiment now in France, & I am not to be sent there. Have received orders to attend a Lewis gun course starting Monday here in Lucknow, but as the instructor charged a cart with his motor bike, & is now in hospital covered with wounds, it seems that I shall continue my duties as 2nd Lt. Att^d 27th L.C.

The doctors before whom I appeared for a certificate to accompany my flying application declared me sound & very fit. The examination is very careful, especially that of eyesight – one has to count spots on a bit of paper held at a distance, & not only to name colours, but to match shades of colours.

My bike is out of hospital, but not in first class working order – the shop pulled various parts to pieces that they were not meant to touch; put them back wrongly adjusted, & turned the machine out in a way that would be a disgrace to the greenest amateur. I don't think there is anything permanently wrong, but I've often been warned by motor owners that once a machine goes into shops in this country, the chances are that it will never be the same again. I am not surprised, when a professed mechanic will proceed to hammer projecting bits off a hard steel washer, the bits which offended him being a special arrangement to enable one to remove the washer easily. I must hope that none of the vital parts of the engine have offended him in like manner

Your aff^{te} son

T Gilbert

PRG 266/7/63

Lucknow

29.10.16

Dear Father

A large mail came in during the week, & included a letter from you dated October 4th. Marjory had gone through an operation, successfully, & was according to her own, & to others' accounts recovering splendidly.



Jack's proposal to join the flying corps had not been given effect. I hope you will not think it undue risk for me to have applied. In the first place, I hardly think I shall be accepted, & if I am, I should personally feel much happier in an aeroplane, than in the front line with a Lewis gun. I'm doing a course with this gun at present – it is really an automatic rifle, firing bursts of 47 rounds in a few seconds – an extraordinarily neat bit of mechanism, air-cooled by a draft created by the explosion, & operated by a piston, driven by the explosion gases, passing in part through a hole beneath, & near the fore-end of the barrel. When first firing it, one is surprised to find that there is no "kick"; the difficulty is to keep the stock pressed into the shoulder.

I have read your enclosure regarding federal taxation proposals with interest. Taxes being piled on to both capital & income – it really does seem that they have exceeded what is right & fair, when they have to be paid from capital

I note that you are paying the amount due from me o/a War Levy, £20, – from my Savings bank a/c.

A telegram from Melbourne yesterday reports that conscriptionists are confident of success Am training two "lines" horses for point to point races, & have just started schooling over jumps – my orderly has keenly disappointed me, & must be exchanged for another if the horses are to learn to jump. We started together to take a series of 3 jumps – disposed of the first all right, then the orderly's horse took charge of him – he pulled it off the second jump, then pulled it from side to side to bluff shying, & fell off, presumably from sheer funk. I've never seen a more disgraceful exhibition of horsemanship, & that from a man I had believed to be a considerably better rider than myself. I never realised before I started this game, what hard work it is riding a powerful, fit, horse over jumps. One wants to be very fit for a 2½ mile course over 8 or 9 jumps.

The cold weather has really started, & the evenings for white mess kit have passed. I am going to revert to civilian clothing in the evenings – it is not worth while buying an expensive mess kit, so long as the regiment maintain their present attitude of not insisting on it. It may be rather awkward dining at other messes on guest nights, but that can't be helped.

Your aff^{te} son

T Gilbert

PRG 266/7/64

Lucknow

5.11.16

Dear Marjory

I hope to hear next mail that you're back at home again – Letters ought to be in soon.

It looks as if the Referendum re Compulsory service has gone the wrong way, but I can't understand from our telegrams what proportion of the votes are in, South Australia showed up badly

The Lewis gun course finished on Friday. I have little doubt that I passed the exam – results have not yet appeared. Did I mention that I have an invitation from the Stokes' for Xmas – I



don't know what Xmas holidays we get, but I think a week at least. Of course it is uncertain that I shall still be here, or within easy reach of Bareilly – men are being telegraphed for frequently, but latterly only for depot work in India.

Am very stiff in the back this morning after riding a big English mare round the course last evening – the owner told me at the beginning “she's got a nice mouth” – it was all, & at times, more than I could do to keep her at the prescribed canter for 2 miles. At the finish the owner remarked “she's supposed to have a nice mouth but I can't hold her” – he's Irish. I don't know whether I've mentioned him before – a Captain Hickson, Quartermaster of this regiment. He has just bought a very superior Collard & Collard piano, which I have a standing invitation to exercise. I hear from Miss Nixon frequently, & from M' Jacob occasionally – both are excessively bored with Dharwar. The latter writes “you're probably a luckier dog than you think going off. Dhawar, & I expect any other station is a poor place for a bachelor these days, & especially for a solitary one. The new padre is the only other person in the place under about 38, & all the others ... horribly oppressed with family cares.”

The climate improves every day – I sleep under two blankets & take a big coat when I go out to dinner – Dined with the C.O. last evening – I hoped for a bridge four, but found a larger party, & had to be contented with gramophone music.

Your aff^{te} brother

T Gilbert

PRG 266/7/65

Lucknow

9.11.16

Dear Harry

Many thanks for two letter. You will have gathered long before now that my arm is as fit as ever.

I wonder if your expectation to be ordered off on service will be realised – the regulations that failed you originally for a base hospital job must have been rather unreasonable. They are very lenient with people joining the I.A.R. now – one man attached here can see very little a couple of yards in front of his nose, & another is stone deaf in one ear. They want men for depot work, & I suppose defective eyesight or hearing doesn't matter much for that.

Incidentally medical examinations in this country are liable to be rather sketchy, to judge from the one I went through before joining. I appeared at the doctor's office – he remarked “I've known you for two years”, signed the form, & sent me off without looking at me.

Our routine continues here with little variation – an officer's riding class beginning to-morrow, promises to be rather amusing. Candidates range in rank from Major to subaltern, & in age from about 50 to 19.

I'm due for a field-day to-morrow, as orderley officer to the G.O.C. Haven't the least idea what my duties are, but suppose I shall find out.



It is very cold here in the mornings – one puts on a lot of clothes, & regrets having done so two hours later. I'm told by a local firm that warm underclothing is not obtainable in India – I hope & believe they are lying.

It is good to have satisfactory news of Marjory at last.

Your letter came in last evening ahead of other home letters which go to Grindlays. I expect to find other home news & shearing progress report when I go across to mess for breakfast, & to post this.

I will try & think of something suitable in the way of a note to send to Mr Wyatt for the School Magazine.

Your aff^{te} brother

T Gilbert

PRG 266/7/66

Lucknow

13.11.16

Dear Emmie

The mail brought good news of Marjory. Shearing had started, but wet sheep & shortage of men were delaying things. Your letter reminded me of an accident which I'd practically forgotten – the arm is absolutely sound – stands tent pegging, which I think is a good test. I was out on a field day on Friday as orderley officer to the General – the whole thing was a bit of a fiasco, but there was a good deal to be learnt from mistakes, & one gets an interesting view of the whole show while running messages.

The recruits' "ride" that I've been looking after have given up riding school pro tem, & are firing a course on the range. I go up & fire with them – In the first practice, 5 shots have to be grouped: – all within a four inch ring scores 25, 8 inch ring 20, 12 inch 15, larger nil. It does not matter whereabouts on the target the group is: my score was 20.

The mess is a more cheery place the last few days – three regular subalterns have just returned from a special course, & a doctor is attached & lives in the mess. Before that numbers dining had dwindled to 4 & often to two

We missed some fun the other day: went to a mounted sports meeting as sight seeing guests, & found that every event was open, & that the hosts were relying on us to fill a large part of their programme – Something had gone wrong with the circulation of advance copy programmes, & they'd never reached us.

Your aff^{te} brother

T Gilbert

PRG 266/7/67

Lucknow

20.11.16



Dear Father

Routine work was varied during the week by another field-day – I was out with a cavalry troop who reconnoitred, & then attempted a flank attack which didn't come off as no opportunity occurred. From to-day I take over Quarter Master & Accounts officer while Hickson is away getting married – it will mean an end to my holiday from office work. I had a most exciting race the other day on one of the horses I've been training. 1½ miles over/ 6 flights of hurdles. Came in a fairly easy second – the winner was a race horse, & a class above the rest of the field which were officers' chargers & troop horses. Have entered for two point to point races on Wednesday: the meeting has been got up by this regiment – profits to the Red Cross. The course is an old "chase" course with jumps reduced in size. I am wondering whether I shall be able to stand two 2½ mile races within an hour, or whether I shall have to get someone else to ride my 2nd horse

We have just moved the mess to a smaller & much more comfortable bungalow & now live in hopes that we won't be driven to occupy the barn like place that has been built near the lines. There are not enough bungalows there for all of us, & a move would mean that some would have to travel two miles for dinner, or make their own feeding arrangements.

I haven't yet seen the final figures of the Australian referendum. Roumania's prospects look none too bright, otherwise news from all fronts is good.

Your aff^{te} son

T Gilbert

PRG 266/7/68

Lucknow

26.11.16

Dear Mother

I am so sorry to hear of your accident. I know what pain you must have suffered having to wait so long for a doctor. I expect the shoulder will be rheumaticky for some time – I cured \mine/ by rubbing with "Elliman's Horse embrocation." I shall have to apply for a commission on sales of the above – introduced my orderly to it, & it has now achieved favor throughout the squadron.

Quater master's work is largely routine in office. To-day I've had to see 30 horses away by train, & to-morrow or the day after 220 are to be entrained.

Steeple chasing has been the event of the week. Wednesday I rode 4 races, 2 – 2½ miles over 10 – 12 jumps. Ran second in the Regimental race with "Wallaroo", a horse I've been training myself, nowhere with my other horse "Yakka" in the Light Weight race. Ought to have had a win with another man's pony, but lost a stirrup & missed a jump – rode third in the Heavy Weight race. The second day ~~Thursday~~ Friday I brought my own two 4th & nowhere, & rode second in the Pony Handicap – the last an excellent race, won in the gallop home after the last jump. I shall win a race with "Wallaroo" yet – he's a hard puller & loves the game, but I haven't enough experience to know when to let him make his effort – was too early the first day, & held him too long the second. Horses belonging to a Ni Atkins I.A.R, recently



transferred from here, won both the regimental cups – he will be very pleased, also surprised, as he had no idea what good class animals they are.
Am sorry to hear that shearers are not behaving themselves – what selfish brutes they are. The Director of Aeronautics comes here to morrow, & will interview applicants for flying. Will cable you if by any chance my name is accepted. I wonder if flying is as good fun as steeple chasing.
Your aff^{te} son
T Gilbert

PRG 266/7/69

Lucknow
4.12.16

Dear Father

I failed to write yesterday, as I was out the whole day with a duck shooting party. We rode out about 5 miles, sent our guns & tiffin on camels, spent the whole day shooting 3 tanks[?] & rode back by moonlight. The shooting was disgraceful; I've never seen so many bad shots collected together before. However we all enjoyed ourselves, & came home very comfortably tired.

Am rather off race riding, after breaking a horse's leg the other day in a flat race. It was a most curious accident – the horse seemed to loose control of his leg, then a loud crack, & he fell; self turning a somersault well clear. Post-mortem showed a dislocated & fractured shoulder blade, & a broken forearm. I think the shoulder must have gone while galloping, & the forearm on falling, but it is difficult to understand. He must have been a brittle boned brute, & is probably a horse well out of the way.

The Director of Aeronautics announced his intention of asking for me, & if I'm allowed to go, it will probably be in January. The Government of India have to sanction or disapprove my going, & I haven't the least idea what their present attitude is re allowing civil servants in the I.A.R out of the country.

No field day last week, as the G.O.C was away – there are to be two this week, I think, one a repetition of the last which was badly done. My job will be to command a troop & to reconnoitre. Haven't been able to do much of the firing course – mist conceals the targets in the early morning, & I generally have to leave for the Q.M's office before the air clears.

Your aff^{te} son
T Gilbert

[On the back of the above page in a different handwriting] Nov. & Dec. 1916



PRG 266/7/70

Lucknow
10.12.16

Dear Father

Yours of Nov 13th, & letters from Catherine & Marjory received yesterday. I will certainly send you a cable if I'm called for active service.

War news from Roumania is anything but good – possibly the Roumanians may pull up & make a stand; they don't seem to have done much fighting yet. I wonder what will come of the Cabinet upset.

Am afraid the days of avoiding dinner parties in Lucknow are over. Dinner & picture palace is a favorite form of entertainment. I've never yet managed keep awake during the whole show, & on the last occasion slept soundly throughout, not very polite I fear to our hostess, or to Mrs Birdwood seated on either side

Went to a very good lecture given the other day by Frederic Villiers, war-correspondent of the Illustrated London News. He had many most interesting sketches of the western front, projected on a screen & finished up with a few moving pictures given him by the French. The photographs showed the real thing, though detail was not clear – one saw bombs being thrown, & bombs landing in the trenches, a French trench full of bomb throwers obliterated by a shell. I wonder if they'll ever let us see pictures of the charge across "no man's land." One Squadron goes to Calcutta shortly. Am rather relieved that "B" who had the first choice of going or staying, have elected to stay. Calcutta is I believe a desperately expensive place to live in.

Your aff^{te} son
T Gilbert

PRG 266/7/71

Lucknow
19.12.16

Dear Dorothy

The newspapers have given us lots to think about lately – changes in Government, peace proposals, & Roumania's defeat. One wonders why the peace proposals have been made, & the Times of India, who generally has sound theories & suggestions about most matters connected with the war, confesses itself bewildered. Today's news from the French front is excellent.

I shall be relieved of Quartermaster duties some time during the week, & expect to get away to Bareilly on Saturday evening. I have 10 days leave sanctioned, & propose to spend most of it with the Stokes, & to return via Delhi & Agra.

Lucknow society behaves exactly as it would in ordinary times – two dances last week – one a fancy dress at Mohamed Bagh which I didn't attend, the other an ordinary hop at the



“Chutters”, where we dined & danced a little last evening. Fox trots, & such like strange dances make it impossible for the man who hasn't been in a ball room for years to take a very active part. Even a so called waltz is very seldom recognisable as such. As I have sent Bill down a present from here, I shall not repeat my request to you to make a purchase on my behalf.

Please thank Catherine for a calendar, & a book of excellent photos. I haven't used my Kodak at all since I came here – must buy some films & take a few, also by the way, get my own photograph taken now that I'm at last possessed of a respectable serge uniform. The regiment have suddenly woken up to the fact that they've got attached officers to train, & have arranged a series of examinations on set work. They have woken up once or twice before but gone to sleep again remarkably rapidly. I haven't remarked on this matter before but can't keep quiet about it any longer. We learn nothing but what we worry out for ourselves – it is really a disgrace, but one can't attach much blame to men who have to look after the training of 600 – 700 horses, about 400 recruits & several young officers. The officers simply have to wait till recruits are ready for work more advanced than riding school, & elementary drill.

Your aff^{te} brother

T Gilbert

PRG 266/7/72

Lucknow
30.12.16

Dear Father

I missed last mail, or rather my usual Sunday letter – I was so busy enjoying a home-like Xmas with the Stokes. Have cut my leave short, as I got a wire telling me to be ready to sail for Egypt for training in flying on or about 10th January. The early return has not been of much use to me, except to give me time to get a photograph taken. Offices are too upset by Xmas holidays to get any business done, & I can't even discover what my address will be. I shall cable as soon as any definite information is forthcoming. Grindlay & Co Bombay will still find me.

I enclose a rough valuation of my assets on Dec 31st 1916. Two items are subject to check by you. I have debitted my Savings bank a/c Adelaide £20. o/a War Levy. Re marketable property, I have not included a valuation of books. That in Dharwar I do not propose to dispose of for the present. Valuations are all on the low side, & I have excluded books, because the special market necessary for most of them might not be found. There are minor articles not included in any list, & which are not worth the trouble of recording.

I will write as soon as possible detailing arrangements made by which my Executor can if necessary, realize my property in India.

I wonder how Government's decision to buy up the wool clip will affect the grower. I have seen only a telegram stating that it is to be done, but not detailing terms.

Your aff^{te} son T Gilbert



PRG 266/7/73

Majestic Hotel
Bombay
13.1.17

Dear Father

I came down here on Monday – joining leave, and sail to-morrow 10. am by the Arcadian. My original orders were to sail to-day, but these were cancelled when I reported to the Embarkation Commandant on Friday. I hope you have received my two cables, one of about a week ago, & one sent to-day. c/o Mess^{rs} C. Evans & C^o – Alexandria will find me they are Grindlay's Agents The flying school is at Aboukir, but I think an agent's address safer. Enclosed papers will show you what I have done about belongings left in India. Mess^{rs} Grindlay & C^o would have to receive power of attorney before they could take any action. My will remains as originally drafted by you a few years ago. The receipt for the package containing my will & insurance policy bears the endorsement "Please deliver to my Executor W^m Gilbert Esq – Pewsey Vale Lyndoch South Australia, or to self, or receipt of application from him or from me."

I have about Rs400 of debts to be paid on arrival in Egypt. Sent my spare cash on, & was disappointed of an advance always given to Officers proceeding on active service, but, to my surprise, not to Officers proceeding on transfer out of India. Creditors don't mind waiting, so I prefer not to draw on my savings.

I sent a package of photographs from Lucknow. Will you distribute such as the family don't want to friends who ask for them. I have some more copies with me

Last mail I sent a detailed list of property in India. Of that shown as with me in Lucknow, some is in the cases handed to Mess^{rs} Grindlay & C^o, some goes with me to Egypt – it is not worth while troubling you with further details.

I left the 27th Cavalry with a verbal invitation to return, & a letter from Mr Keatinge fears that I shall find the change from flying to farming a dull affair, but he hopes to see me bring my machine safely back to Dharwar.

I wonder if I shall be able to get into communication with Jack – I have had no news from him direct or indirect for a long time, but I suppose no notification of change of address means no change.

Have decided that this hotel isn't in the "same street" with the Taj – either it has deteriorated very much since Dorothy & Catherine stayed here, or else our ideas of what an hotel should be, differ.

Have been to the theatre twice, one variety show, & last evening "Hobson's choice." Ada Reeve figured prominently in both & was very good.

Your aff^{te} son
T Gilbert



PRG 266/7/74

Copy of letter to Mess^{rs} Grindlay & C^o
Bombay. dated 13.1.17

Dear Sirs

Please receive the accompanying papers & articles for safe keeping and for reference or for disposal in the event of instructions being received from self or from my executor.

Accompaniments. (1) List showing marketable property & cash deposits in India

(2) List showing paper & articles handed to you on 13.1.17.

(3) Papers & articles referred to under (2) above

Also kindly acknowledge receipt of my letter of recent date, forwarding you receipts from Mess^{rs} Peake Allen & C^o Lucknow for articles left with them for sale, & please advise me when remittances are received o/a these articles

My address will be

C/o Mess^{rs} C. Evans & C^o
Alexandria Egypt

Yours faithfully

T.G

With PRG 266/7/74

Papers & articles handed to Mess^{rs} Grindlay & C^o on 13.1.17.

(1) Receipt from Bank of Bombay Poona, for one sealed package This package contains my Will, Life Insurance policy & certified copy of certificate of birth.

(2) One sealed package containing testimonials

(3) One sealed package containing my Agreement with the India Office, & G.Rs regarding the appointment under that agreement.

(4) *Six cases for storage

(5) One bundle golf clubs

(6) Two bundles keys.

* Two of these are being sent by the Mess President, 27th Light Cavalry. Lucknow

TG

13.1.17

With PRG 266/7/74

Marketable Property & cash deposits in India

Deposit in General Provident Fund Rs 1756 -7-3

“ Savings Bank of Bombay Rs 761-7-2

Poona



Property stored in the office of the Deputy Director of Agriculture Dharwar B.P.

Furniture value abt Rs 225 –

Crockery “ “ Rs 150

Books abt 115 volumes not valued

Stored with Miss Nixon Dharwar B.P.

One Blutner [*Bluthner?*] cottage piano Rs 450

Left for sale with Mess^{rs} Peake Allen, & C^o Lucknow – receipts handed to Mess^{rs} Grindlay & C^o

As per reserve prices plus such price as unreserved articles may realise.

TG

13.1.17

PRG 266/7/75

H.M.T. Arcadian

1

Dear Mother

We are to land at Suez to-morrow, & end a comfortable, but boring voyage. This boat was once a pleasure cruiser, a carrier of millionaires to Norway, & to the Mediterranean. It possesses a swimming bath & had a gymnasium & a tennis court – no cargo accommodation, & now the whole is fitted out as a transport. We are fairly empty this trip – officers about 25, mostly men going on the same job as myself, some British troops, & a few hundred Indian. I don't know where the last are bound for. One can realise a little what the discomfort must have been travelling when these transports were really crowded my cabin, in which I have just room to turn round in & to dress myself, held four officers, other normally two birth cabins, held six – the men must simply have been packed like sardines.

We've done nothing but read, play bridge, sleep & attend the daily parade. The men do physical drill at 7.a.m – we had a voluntary officers' physical drill class – it lasted for a week, but so many of us went down for a couple of days with a chill – personally I think it was flue, – that the class stopped. 10.30 am parade; men & officers beside their appointed boats: the C.O. inspects the boat & troops, & then there is nothing more to done unless the alarm sounds. Someone conceived the brilliant idea of having one alarm for ships crew, & another for troops. Of course everybody turned out when the crew's alarm went. I wonder which alarm would have been sounded if one were really necessary.

Food is first class, but tea & coffee are the poorest apologies for the real articles I've ever met. Stewards are most disobliging creatures – evidently don't take kindly to transport work, & the prospect of small tips. It took some of them a long time to decide which of us should get a “sir”, & which not.



I shall try & get into communication with Jack as soon as I get to Alexandria – I didn't write or wire him anything from India

Your aff^{te} son

T Gilbert

PRG 266/7/76

Aboukir

28.1.17

2 [*different handwriting?*]

Dear Mother

I don't quite know how I'm going to get hold of letters addressed to Mess^{rs} Evans & C^o, as there is no such firm in Alexandria. Grindlays gave their name as their agents in Alexandria, stating that they had their own branch in Port Said. Instead, I find that Evans & C^o are Port Said agents, & the National Bank of Egypt, Alexandria agents. It is aggravating & uncertain at present whether I shall get letters, & when I shall get money: my only consolation will be in writing Grindlay's what I think of them.

We arrived in Alexandria yesterday morning, waited a few hours for our kit to turn up & came on here at 4 p.m. First duty was to report to the Adjutant, 20th Reserve wing (I have no idea what this means), then to report to another Adjutant somewhere else. We were then each allotted a fourth share of a room in a wooden hut – each room is looked after by a batman – there is plenty of space & the only grouse I have is that two of the inhabitants who have been here for some time are not as tidy as they ought to be.

I don't know when we are to start work. There is a 3 weeks preliminary course to be gone through here, then we go to Heliopolis to learn to fly one type of machine, & back here again to learn others. Opinion is divided as to whether one has finally to go to England to "get wings", or whether a commission in the flying corps can be given here.

The air is thick with aeroplanes from daylight till dark. Have been wandering round sheds this morning looking at insides & outsides of engines, & watching one aeroplane after another go up, & others alight.

Please address me C/o The National Bank of Egypt Alexandria, unless you get a cable to say that I'm moving to some other part of the world.

Your aff^{te} son

T Gilbert

PRG 266/7/77

Aboukir

Address letters C/o National Bank of Egypt

Alexandria

3



4.2.17

Dear Catherine

Your letter describing the wedding followed me from Bombay – the P.O. are exercising discretion in spite of my letters being wrongly addressed, so that I haven't troubled to cable you the above. I gather from your account that the wedding was accomplished successfully, & that it cheered both parties mainly concerned, & spectators.

We new arrivals at the Flying School are in a state of uncertainty as to what is to happen to us. We arrived five days before the end of a course, & attended lectures, I suppose to keep us out of mischief. The course is finished, & we're now marking time, expecting to be sent to Abassir Cairo for our technical training course (T.T.C). The school has been on the point of moving for some time, but it seems that the move will become an accomplished fact on the 7th. Another rumour suggests that we will go through an intermediate course while the school is moving. Wherever we go, the training is divided into three parts (1) T.T.C, at Aboukir or at Abassir. (2) learning to fly Maurice Forman machines at Heliopolis (3) learning to fly two other types of machine at Aboukir. During the T.T.C one does no flying, not even joy-riding, but attends lectures & classes from 7. am. to 7. pm, with four hours off for meals – this goes on for two or three weeks, then the inevitable exam, followed by parts 2 & 3 of the training. It's going to be real hard work – keeping pace with 8 hours lectures, especially when there is a lot of fair copy drawing to be done, is no joke.

I think I told you that we are living in wooden huts, partitioned off, four men to each room. We have a good batman, which is a great comfort. Messing is rather a scramble, & food as often as not served cold. I don't object to a bit of scramble, in fact expect it, but I do object to paying 5/ a day for what is worth about 2/. I went into Alexandria Friday, found some money, a hot bath, an excellent dinner at the Savoy Hotel, & came back thoroughly contented. It has been too windy for much flying lately – to-day is perfect & machines are buzzing about by the dozen. Have been out taking some photographs: probably shall not try sending anything through the post, as the censor would probably take a fancy to photographs of the Aboukir aerodrome.

Have heard nothing from Jack yet, but trust my letter has found him. What is Elliott Murray's regiment? & are there any other Australians in Egypt whom I know?

Tell Emmie that I think her behaviour disgraceful, going to a wedding one day, & to hospital the next

Your aff^{te} brother

T Gilbert

PRG 266/7/78

Abbassieh

12.2.17

Dear Father



This place is a wonderful improvement on Aboukir. We live in mess quarters, & for the present have a furnished room apiece, though I don't suppose this will last long – 80 more officers are due here for training, & have begun to turn up today. Messing, though not as good as we got much cheaper in India, is a great improvement on that at Aboukir. There is no aerodrome here, but we see a good many aeroplanes coming over from the Heliopolis aerodrome, not far distant. We attend 8 hours lectures & practical work a day – I think I gave you an outlined timetable before.

Jack wrote the other day, saying that he hoped to join the flying corps soon. I hope my coming here hasn't influenced his decision to apply, as I know you would rather he didn't. I gather that he is very bored with his present job, & had already decided to apply for flying. Of course I know he has been thinking of it for a long time.

I spent yesterday trying to get some pay, & visiting pyramids. The pay people knew absolutely nothing about my case, but luckily I was able to produce various Gov^t. of India resolutions on the subject, & stand a good chance of receiving my dues shortly. You've no doubt read many descriptions & seen many photographs of pyramids, so I won't attempt anything further. We rode to the sphinx on camels, then back to the base of the big pyramid, dismissed our camels, & climbed about inside the pyramid, lighted by candles & magnesium flares. I haven't done such hard work for a long time. Passages are very steep, with a bare foot hold, & as a rule not high enough for a man to stand upright. I could climb up hill unassisted, but going down, held one man's hand behind & another's in front. We were a party of six – some climbed to the top of the big pyramid, & found a cup of tea up there, others tea ed more comfortably at the hotel. We came back to Cairo about 7 in the evening, dined at Shepherds & came back here thoroughly satisfied with our day.

I suppose I shall start flying about a fortnight from, given a pass in the exam.

Your aff^{te} son

T Gilbert

PRG 266/7/79

Abbasia

18.2.17

Dear Father

I have two letters from you, one addressed direct to Egypt, the other to Bombay dates Jan 8th & Jan 5th, also letters from Mother & all sisters written after receiving my 1st cable. The P.O. are very prompt sending on my wrongly addressed letters. I am very interested in your account of you racing at Alice Springs & at Meningie.

I have nothing further from Jack, & don't know when or whether to expect him. It seems that it is more difficult to get into the F.C. from Egypt than from India. In India applications to fly had to go through to the F.C. Possibly regimental commanders can hold them up here.

Am sitting out in the garden, enjoying the sun. Cold, draughty lecture rooms, & no exercise do not suit me. However, with luck, there is only another week of it. Have passed out in Morse signalling & machine gun (Vickers) – oral examinations, pass or failure; no marks. As



far as I can see, it is going to take a very long time to get through the prescribed amount of flying – there are so many of us. The technical instruction course is most interesting, & makes one look forward to putting what one has learnt, into practice. Two of the lecturers have seen a lot of service in France, & the third has had most of his experience in England & out here.

This place is not productive of news, as you might imagine – no time for anything but work, so will close

Your aff^{te} son

T Gilbert

PRG 266/7/80

1 [*in pencil, different handwriting?*]

Abbassia

27.2.17

Dear Dorothy

Three home letters arrived this morning, & one from Harry last evening. Jack writes saying that he hasn't been receiving mine – perhaps the Censor took a dislike to me. I hope the [...] car will be a great success.

Have passed the technical training course marks not published yet, but I believe I'm about 15th on a list of 50 odd – ought to have done better. We start flying soon, & \are/ moving to Heliopolis to-morrow.

We've spent the last two mornings firing machine guns, & have the afternoons free.

Have some rather nice photos of aeroplanes & will send them soon. My Kodak is just too slow to take an aeroplane getting off the ground.

Am just off to Cairo to add a few small necessaries to my camp kit.

Your aff^{te} brother

T Gilbert

PRG 266/7/81

2 [*in pencil*]

4.3.17

*I'm wrong. they were sent C/o Evans [...]

Dear Marjory

Your letter addressed direct to Egypt reached me safely here at Heliopolis, but, for some unknown reason after letters of about the same date *sent via India.

It's blowing a gale outside the air is thick with sand & dust – large lumps of it jump up & hit you in the face – our wooden hut is very airy, & everything is covered with sand.



Jack wired me yesterday that he is at Sidi Bashr near Alexandria. Unfortunately I was out at the Zoo when the telegram arrived, & couldn't reply till this morning. I can't ask for leave to meet him, & hope he will demand leave to come here, & have expressed that hope in two telegrams & two letters sent to two addresses.

Have spent 20 minutes in the air to date first time 5 minutes as a passenger in a machine that was being tested – the pilot did some very sharp turns with the plane nearly vertical – I enjoyed it, & only felt a slight tendency to the seasick feeling when we struck a bad bump, caused by a patch of air of less density than that surrounding it. The thing that strikes me most is the absence of all sensation of forward movement after leaving the ground & unless one looks at the ground. Yesterday I was up for 15 minutes in the front seat of dual control machine, & held the control levers whose movements respond exactly to those of the levers held by the instructor pilot.

We parade at ~~7.5~~ 6.55 except those who are detailed for early flying, & wait about doing odd jobs, for our turns to fly – Flying on a good day stops about noon, & between 7. & noon we get away to breakfast first opportunity. At noon machines have to be cleaned before we get away to lunch. for good days I believe we parade again at 2.p.m, but we haven't had a good afternoon yet, & a few have been detailed each afternoon to stand by in case the wind calms down.

I intended to do the Citadel & the Museum today, but weather is too beastly to venture further than the Heliopolis hotel for a bath.

Am writing G. Law Smith today – hope to hear Elliott Murray's address soon. There is a Victorian named Urquhart at the School of Military aeronautics – he seems to know of most sheep owners in S.A, & knows S.A polo players personally – possibly Father may know his family.

Your aff^{te} brother
Tom Gilbert

PRG 266/7/82

3

Heliopolis
11.3.17

Dear Mother

Jack & I fixed up a meeting all right. He came down here for three days, & stayed at the Heliopolis House Hotel, quite close to this camp. I was free every afternoon & evening, & we lunched & dined together either at Heliopolis or at Cairo. He was over here each morning to look at the flying, & was lucky enough to get a joy ride yesterday – He will no doubt give you a full account of it: the pilot did all sorts of stunts with him, & I don't think Jack knew most of the time whether he was right way up or not. We went to the R.F.C brigade office together, & Jack is to transfer to the School of Military Aeronautics on 20th inst.

I have done comparatively little flying to date one hour & 50 minutes, & haven't been up for the last three days. Am not picking it up as fast as many do, & I think my instructor is waiting for



thoroughly good weather conditions, before trying to teach me any more. I'm glad, as a long time against one's name before being fit to fly solo, looks bad, & by common consent, the beginner learns little in bumpy weather.

Had a morning's job in the workshop, helping to pull broken aeroplanes to pieces – it's not a very interesting way to ~~spend~~ spend a Sunday morning – helping to put aeroplanes together would be, but we officers under instruction are not entrusted with this – the mechanics do it & leave the dirty work to us – just as well too.

Your aff^{te} son

T Gilbert

PRG 266/7/83

Heliopolis

17.3.17

Dear Father

A long letter from you, & several others from the family received today. The news of Harry's engagement is excellent. Am glad to hear of the good wool prices. I have been wondering how the purchase by Government would affect the grower.

Flying progresses slowly – I did very little last week, partly owing to bad weather, partly to large number of pupils. My instructor now has only three, & I shall know soon whether I'm to be any good at flying or not. Five hours dual instruction is the maximum allowed before one is launched solo. I have done three, & feel quite confident of myself once in the air, but as yet uncertain about landing. Landing is a common difficulty: the machine is allowed to glide with engine shut off, at about 60 miles an hour in the case of the machine we're learning on, & the gliding angle has to be checked at the right height, & the right amount, just before touching the ground. It is the height which is difficult to judge. 60 miles an hour seems, off hand, an enormous speed at which to meet the ground, but the first principle that is drummed into us is that flying is the one game at which speed means safety.

Three fellow-passengers on the Khyber are staying at the Heliopolis hotel – Mr Davies, Miss Wilson & Miss Huxtable, the two former as residents, the latter on leave from Port Said, where she works in restaurant. Mrs Bisdee is at Luxor, & returns to Cairo early next month. I hope not to be transferred before seeing her. Mr Bisdee has been ill & is convalescing at Luxor.

I note that you have paid £28-11-6, the ½ year interest from my £1270 invested in the Commonwealth War Loan, to my credit with the Savings Bank: also that my account will be debitted £2-11 o/a duty on parcel sent to Bill.

Warm weather is coming on fast, & I'm enjoying it, except for the flies, which if they go on increasing at last few days' rate, will be much worse than anything in the insect line I've met in India.

Your aff^{te} son

T Gilbert



PRG 266/7/84

Heliopolis

17.3.17

Dear Harry

Your very good news reached me to-day. Heartiest congratulations. I gather that you're not going spend a long time in the engaged state. Will try & find a wedding gift in Cairo if my pay turns up soon; Otherwise shall have to commission one of the family to make a purchase. I have been very remiss in acknowledging your letters, one received at Xmas time, & one here in Egypt. You seem to be getting your full share of work. We are far from getting ours since we finished the technical training course. Owing mostly to bad weather I've only done 26 minutes in the air during last week – about 2½ hours altogether. I'm slow to learn but think I shall be fit for solo after 5 hours' dual the nominal limit allowed. Once in the air I feel as safe as if I were in a car on the ground, & control the "bus" without assistance, but my instructor won't trust me to take off or land independently.

Little flying doesn't mean a great deal of time to play about & go sight seeing. Hanging about waiting to fly, & cleaning sheds & machines take up the whole morning from daybreak till 12 noon. Afternoons are free except for those detailed by name to fly or for fatigue duty. I spend a good deal of the spare time playing bridge, & some of it in Cairo. I haven't employed Phillip yet, but expect to do so soon. Jack & I went to the Citadel & the bazaar together & I've done the pyramids & the museum, nothing else yet. Dinner in Cairo is a very occasionally luxury as flying & late evenings don't agree.

Your aff^{te} brother

T Gilbert

PRG 266/7/85

(1)

Heliopolis

25.3.17

Dear Mother

Very many thanks for your cable. I have sent it on to Jack, as his transfer to the R.F.C has been postponed till April 3rd.

I have not done a solo flight yet – Have been passed on to another instructor for final practice in landing the machine, & hope to be sent off alone the first calm day. Fog & wind have been holding up flying a good deal. It is boring standing by day after day & getting no or very little further.

There is remarkably little to write about here, & it is difficult to write that little, & to slay flies at the same time. I don't care for the thought of what the flies will be later on at all.

I wander across to the hotel most evenings for a before dinner drink & to watch the pictures – a cinema is going every evening – or for a bath, & spend an occasional "after dinner" evening



with Khyber friends. Mrs Bisdee returns to Cairo early next month, & I'm to dine with her on the 5th. She & Miss Huxtable work in a bun shop at Port Said – the latter was here on a few days' leave staying with a Mr Dangar with whom I dined a few evenings ago.

I could write quite a lot about our messing, but should make myself more disgusted with it than I am already. Shall become extravagant & dine out every evening as soon as new lot of pupils arrive to crowd us out. The way contractors are allowed to coin money out of us here is disgraceful.

Your aff^{te} son

T Gilbert

PRG 266/7/86

(2)

Heliopolis

1.4.17

Dear Dorothy

Home letters arrived this morning by a devious route, enclosed in a large official envelope. The P.O have started mixing me up with a Gilbert, an equipment officer at Abbassia, & I expect there will be still more mixing when Jack arrives – he by the way is still due on the 3rd. Flying for me has been at a stand-still. Am waiting for a nice smooth day, so that I shall be able to concentrate my attention on landing, & not have to worry at the same time with correcting the machine when she gets bumped about. It is four days since I was up but, weather permitting, I fly early to-morrow morning. If you can get hold of a little book called 'War Flying' it is well worth reading: it is series of letters, or extracts from letters by a man who has been "through it" with a vengeance, & thoroughly enjoyed it. I don't remember the author's name, & the book is lent at present.

Am doing orderly officer for the day, & am writing this in the C'O's office. Have finished censoring the letters, & can't find any other work to do.

The social round is becoming increasingly strenuous, & I'm enjoying it. Meeting new people & dining with people I want to see, I find a great improvement on dining with people who compete with their neighbours in making a show, & whose invitations one accepts because one can't refuse politely. I don't want to create the impression that all social events in Dharwar were like this, but a good many were. Introduced myself yesterday to a Miss Mills, a friend of Miss de la Cherois', who runs the Red Cross enquiry bureau here, & we teated at the Gezira sporting club. She's a most attractive & interesting person – it's all right, she's well on the wrong side of 40. Miss Wilson & Miss Mills each remark of the other "Isn't she a dear". I wish you could meet them both.

Am glad you approve the Lucknow photographs. I have no snaps to send this week – my Kodak has been in hospital, & Cairo has run out of films.

Your aff^{te} brother

T Gilbert



PRG 266/7/87

Heliopolis

9.4.17

Dear Father

Flying for a change, has been progressing rapidly. Have completed 3¼ hours solo to date, & have done no damage beyond breaking a tail skid, whose repair was only a 5 minutes job on the aerodrome. Yesterday I went up to 2000ft, & practised gliding down, & doing S turns on the glide – put the engine on again at 1000', went back to 2000' & tried again. This morning I intended to try a spiral glide, but at 1500' hadn't got out of the "bumps", so came down lower & practised landings: I can't get them right – just bump a bit, & as often has not have to use my engine to help me out.

With luck, another 3 or 4 days ought to see me transferred to Aboukir.

Yesterday a party of us including Jack & myself motored out to the Barrage, a dam across the Nile, second in size & importance to that at Asswan. The chief attraction of the place for the non-engineer, is the gardens: they are beautifully laid out, & I haven't struck a pleasanter spot in Egypt. We teaed there, & came back just before dark. Then an hour at Luna Park, a sort of White City: Jack managed to fall out of a boat when we were trying to bump the one in front of us, otherwise no incident of interest.

I dined with the Bisdee's the other evening. Other guests were Mrs & Miss Stangar Seathes – & you've got to say it all – After dinner we went for an hours sail on the Nile – rather a cold process, but Major Bisdee's British warm kept the draught out.

I hope that the photographs I'm sending, & have sent get through all right

Your aff^{te} son

T Gilbert

PRG 266/7/88

Aboukir

15.4.17

Dear Dorothy

Home letters arrived this morning. Many thanks for your offer to present me with a weekly paper. As my stay in Egypt is of a very indefinite period, & may be short, it is hardly worth while writing for one.

Finished my 5 hours solo at Heliopolis fairly rapidly, & without incident beyond breaking a skid. I mistook the aerodrome boundary mark, & when I realised that I was about to land on rough ground, there were too many machines immediately ahead to risk sailing away without landing. Have completed an hour here on another type of machine, with an instructor It's a very different proposition from the other – controls infinitely more delicate – the machine answers to the lightest touch on elevator, aileron or rudder rudder. Ailerons by the way are the moveable wing tips, used to put on "bank" when turning. The other machine wanted



pulling & pushing fairly forcibly, & didn't do anything unpleasant if you pushed or pulled too hard, or not hard enough. While \the machine is/ under dual control, the pupil here has no instruments; but when launched solo, has his altimeter, air & engine speed indicators to guide him.

This camp has much improved since I was here last. A "pukka" mess building has been completed, & a different contractor runs things better than his predecessor. Am living in a tent with 3 others whom I hardly know: the camp is so full, that we just have to push in where we can, & can't choose our room mates.

Your aff^{te} brother

T Gilbert

PRG 266/7/89

24.4.17

Dear Mother

I've finished 3½ hours instruction & one hour's solo on the delicately controlled machine I wrote of last week, & am now transferred to another Squadron in this camp at Aboukir for instruction on a third type. This third type is a machine which is, or has been much used for reconnaissance work, & after learning to manage it, we do cross country flying & photography on it. I have to bring my total solo flying up to 15 hours – it now amounts to 6½, & then the chances are that I shall be sent to England, though there is a possibility of being kept out here for further training.

I had a most enjoyable flight the other day. My instructor took me up through a thick layer of cloud – we came out on top at about 3000' just at sunrise, & the light on the clouds, & occasional glimpses of rock & sea were perfectly lovely. I took charge of the machine when clear of the clouds, practised turns for about a quarter of an hour, & then glided the machine down. It was rather thrilling, plunging into a dense opaque mass, & I'm glad I had my first experience in company, though there's nothing in it beyond keeping the machine straight & waiting patiently till the cloud is left behind.

Jack should be just about taking his exam now – he's apparently too busy to write.

It will be better if in future you address me C/o Mess^{rs} Grindlay & C^o – Port Said. There will then be no delay in my letters coming forward if I am not in this country.

Your aff^{te} son

T Gilbert

PRG 266/7/90

[written on paper with letterhead]

Union Club,
Alexandria,
Egypt.



Cable & telegraphic address

“Union Alexandria”

Telephone N° 1221.

29.4.17

Dear Father

Home letters came in just as I was starting in here. Yours enclosed one to Jack which I have addressed & will post immediately. You can place all confidence in the Egyptian P.O to find the addressee of letters, even if his unit is changed I believe name & rank Egypt would be quite enough.

Jack has apparently ignored two letters from me since I left Cairo, & I can give you no direct news of him, but I hear from Urquhart who arrived here yesterday that he is safely through his exam, & will be at Heliopolis shortly. I expect he's been working pretty long hours, as he fair copied all his notes in the evenings – has not had enough practice in writing notes to do it “all in once” as I was able to do, except for drawings.

Weather has been bad all the week, & I've only put in 50 minutes with an instructor on the third type of machine I mentioned last week. It is much heavier on the controls than the machine I've just finished with. it keeps itself level to a very great extent, & tends to right itself if bumped up on one side: the rudder however wants careful attention the whole time.

I have two earlier letters from you regarding my will, & should like to receive a draft putting Harry on as executor jointly with you.

In the event of my being sent to England, my address will be C/o Mess^{rs} Grindlay & C^o 54 Parliament Street London S.W.

Re my pay, Grindlay & London have authorised the Port Said Branch to cash my cheques up to £35 a month, pending receipt of Power of Attorney from me, which has been sent to them the other day. They will then present my Last Pay Certificate at the India Office & draw what is due.

Harry's wedding is an accomplished fact by now, & I suppose they will be settling down in N. Adelaide a few days from now.

I am so sorry to hear of Grannies accident.

Catherines parcel of book & chocolate had not arrived when I left camp but will probably come to-morrow. Please deliver my thanks in anticipation

Your aff^{te} son

Tom Gilbert

PRG 266/7/91

6.5.17

Dear Marjory

Flying hasn't advanced much during the week. I had two days off to recover from inoculation for typhoid, & other mornings it has been too windy to learn landings. Once launched solo, I ought to get through fairly quickly, 2 or 3 hours a day, provided our machines behave



themselves – we've only had one amongst 5 or 6 of us for some time, but will have another on Monday. Jack writes that he has done 4 hours dual at Suez, is ready to be taught to land, & will come on here when he has completed his solo on M.F.s.

To-day has been a holiday, because last month the "Wing" turned out a record number of pilots – perhaps I oughtn't to disclose the number. A friend & self went for a cross country ride on donkeys this morning, to look at the farming: there is nothing very interesting going on except a little wheat threshing – they do it in a way, very similar to that we were introducing at Gadag: a machine [2 sketches of the machine, one from above and one from the side] is driven round & round until the straw is chopped fine, & the grain collects at the bottom. A kind of clover called bersium [*berseem?*] is grown by every "fella", & this feature of a purely fodder crop coming into the rotation is one I've never met in India. Water is lifted from the canals by a wooden wheel driven through a wooden gearing by buffaloes or bullocks. Donkeys are not good animals to take across land intersected everywhere by canals, & on one occasion I turned round to see Dixon sitting on the edge, & his mount up to his hocks in sticky mud – mine had a few seconds before just managed to jump the ditch. The flying corps is a wonderful place to meet men of every sort & description – men who have knocked about in all sorts of odd corners of the world, men who would never have left their native town under ordinary circumstances, men who would if possible be skating in Switzerland etc etc. Every variety of the English language, & a good many varieties of table manners.

Must go out for a short walk, before changing into slacks for dinner.

Your aff^{te} brother

Tom Gilbert

PRG 266/7/92

14.5.17.

Dear Father

Jack arrived here a few days ago, after finishing his 5 hour' solo at Suez. I don't know how long he will be here – it depends whether he goes back to Suez or stays here to finish.

Yesterday we went into Alex:, spent the afternoon at the Nowzha [*El-Nozha*] gardens, & dined at the Savoy Hotel.

I forget whether I was doing dual or solo when I last wrote, & have not my log book handy to refer to. Have been flying the B.E alone for some days, also done two trips on a American machine. The latter is a pleasure to fly except in bumps, & whether it is the machine, or the fact of having flown a new type without any instruction on her, she has done more than any other to give me confidence in myself.

This morning I did a cross country flight & put in a reconnaissance report. Observation was very largely obscured by cloud, & bumps in the clouds were the most severe I've struck.

With any ordinary luck, I should have finished my 15 hours by now, but machines have not been behaving themselves, & I've so far accomplished 12½ hours. Photography will probably



be the order for my next flight. I took a couple with my own Kodak the other day, but have not had them developed yet.

Jack & I have shared letters which came in a couple of days ago, all to my address. A small fire at Loval[?] Hill had been got under in good time. I trust the inspection of the Rhine paddock by the Commissioner of Crown Lands yielded a satisfactory result.

My next move must remain uncertain until the last minute. I have expressed willingness to graduate out here, but whether I do or not depends on the verdict given on my skill as a pilot, & of course on where men are wanted. Will cable on the subject if the Censor permits.

Flying & weather are about the only two subjects available for discussion, & bumps, gusts & clouds claim more attention than temperature. It warms up pretty well in the middle of the day, but is always cool enough for blankets at night. On a normal day, bumps increase as the day advances, & decrease from about 3.30 pm onwards. Entering a cloud, one always knows that there is going to be a bump, but under other conditions the bump can't be seen coming, though there always are places where it is consistently rougher than round about. It may be perfectly smooth over the sandhills on the point here & quite rough over the ploughed land & passing over a village generally means a bump. The above applies only to low altitudes – above 2000' I have found it invariably smooth, except in clouds. I can't describe the effect on the machine by any word other than "bump" which disturbs balance – nose or tail may come up, one or other wing may come up – the whole may sink or rise, in which case the sensation is like being in a lift. Correction is always fairly simple, & a stable machine does most of the correction without help.

Your aff^{te} son
Tom Gilbert

PRG 266/7/93

20.5.17

Dear Mother

I write from hospital, near Alex, where I am spending a few days being dieted. Insides gone wrong as a result of Egyptian food, or water, or climate. Am feeling perfectly well, & expect to be out very soon. I spend most of my time in bed, but get up for a couple of hours every day. The ward is comfortable, fairly cool & airy.

Jack was in yesterday, & has been in for two hours this afternoon – weather has been holding up his flying for the last few days – Khamsîn again. I have almost finished my 15 hours, & one or two days will see me through as soon as I get back to work. Keeping quiet, & reading all day doesn't produce news. We have a well stocked library; books to suit all tastes.

I believe the War Office have a habit of writing to parents when sons are admitted to hospital. I thought of cabling you, in case they send a cable, but a cable from me without one from them would only make you think I was really ill, & I'm only here because I can't get soft food in camp.

Your aff^{te} son Tom Gilbert



PRG 266/7/94

28.5.17

Dear Emmie

A large mail arrived yesterday while Jack was here. You gave me a splendid detailed description of the wedding, & with the help of Ninas & Catherines photographs, we could almost imagine we had attended ourselves. It was a great idea sending Harry & Winnie home before they departed for Sydney. Photographs don't include one of them "behind the cake" which is rather an omission – I mean it would just make your account absolutely complete. Confetti is spelt with an "i" not a "y"

Re photographs I sent, the group does include me in the back row. Unfortunately the man who operated the kodak for me did not focus it properly. Names of flying machines I didn't write, as it might possibly be breaking trust with the censor, who does not open officer's letters if they are properly franked. I don't suppose it would matter a bit, but then it might. Jack has just arrived to announce that he is to go back to Suez to-morrow morning. I expect to escape back to work to-morrow or the next day. Am absolutely fit, & spend most of the day playing bridge with others whose qualifications for being in hospital are mostly in the doctor's imagination.

My pen is behaving badly. I bought some French ink because I liked the bottle, & have regretted it since.

Your aff^{te} brother

Tom Gilbert

PRG 266/7/95

~~To be returned to J.A.F~~

C/o Mess^{rs} Grindlay & C^o

Port Said

9.6.17

Dear Uncle Johnnie

Very many thanks for your letter. I am sending on to Jack to-day. This morning's paper announces a further big push, & the capture of many prisoners, & adds reason for your hope that the War may be over in July or August.

Jack is at Suez – he was here for about a fortnight, & I expect will return here to finish up. He is rapidly catching me up, as I spent a fortnight in hospital to get some soft diet, & am now convalescing, & excused all parades & flying. It is very annoying, as I have only 50 minutes more to do to complete my 15 hours Solo. To date I've flown four types of machines, three after preliminary instruction from a pilot in the back seat, & one without dual control. The last did much towards giving me confidence – I don't know whether this was because it is a



delightful machine to fly, or because I found that I could take off, fly & land a new machine without help.

Mails are erratic, both from England & from Australia, & from here to Australia excessively so. A letter of mine dated February has just been acknowledged, though several of later date had arrived earlier.

Aboukir climate in the hot weather, is to my mind excellent, though most people find it too warm. It does warm up in our wooden hut, during the day, but there is always a cool sea-breeze blowing outside, & blankets are always necessary at night. The Khamsîn, a hot desert wind, bringing up clouds of sand is very unpleasant, but it only happens occasionally & only last for a day at a time.

Please thank Aunt Sarah for a letter received last mail. The food question doesn't affect us in Egypt. There is good food & plenty of it, though unfortunately it is spoilt too often by bad cooking, & dirty serving. The mess here is quite well run now, & we have nothing to complain of.

Your aff^{te} nephew.
Tom Gilbert

PRG 266/7/96

23.6.17

Dear Mother

I have my marching orders to sail for England ~~to-morrow~~. Will try & get a cable through to-morrow morning. Finished my flying quickly once I got started again, but failed to catch Jack, who left a few days ago as you no doubt have already heard. We're both of us full blown pilots, but will probably go through a good deal more training in England.

Can't collect my thoughts to write a letter as I'm packing, getting transfer papers & doing sundry odd jobs.

My address is
C/o Mess^{rs} Grindlay, C^o
54 Parliament Street
London. W.

Am wondering how much, if any of my kit, I shall have to leave behind. We people from India have developed bad habits in the matter of economising kit.

Your aff^{te} son
Tom Gilbert

PRG 266/7/96a

[written on letterhead paper from The Frederick Hotels Limited]

Hotel Russell
Russell Square



London, W.C.1.

July 6th 1917

Dear Father

My cable reporting safe arrival has I hope gone through. We had a very tiring journey; 4 nights in the train through Italy & France, & I only managed to secure a sleeper for one night. We had a clear day in Rome, & were able to do several of the sights – the Vatican unfortunately was closed. I & two others chose our train to get a few hours the next morning in Genoa, & were able to go to an hotel for a comfortable bath & breakfast. From Turin to the French frontier, the scenery is very fine – the higher peaks of the Alps are still snow capped. We reached the frontier at about 7.30 in the evening, & Paris early the following morning. A clear day in Paris, most of which was spent putting Cox's on the track of lost luggage, & in sleeping, & London the following mid-day.

Jack is either in Paris or in London. He wired Cheltenham that he was staying in Paris to try & recover lost kit. He has not called at Cox's yet to claim letters or money. This losing of kit is most annoying. I saw mine lost on a barrow as we steamed out of Turin station. The loss of old Indian clothing is a detail, but I did hope to get my rifle, gun & camera safely through. Jack left about 3 days ahead of me – I have met people who travelled with him, & they it appears were less fortunate than ourselves in having to come from Marseilles by troop train. I escaped a minimum of 9 days troop train journey, on the strength of having been employed on the boat as ships adjutant, & came with 8 others by "rapide".

Ship's adjutant is not a soft job, & I found Labour Corps Officers, who had little notion of discipline very difficult to deal with. A Colonel refused to accept responsibility when I complained that one of his men was guilty of opening a porthole. Why are such men made Colonels!

I have 10 day's leave, & hope for an extension – my present orders are to report at the Central Flying School Upavon (Pewsey) on the 14th.

More later

Your aff^{te} son

Tom Gilbert

PRG 266/7/97

[written on letterhead paper]

Central Flying School,

Upavon, Wilts.

15.7.17.

Dear Father

Isn't it a curious coincidence that I should be sent here – Pewsey the nearest railway station. Jack is to come here too, on Tuesday I think.



Extension of leave was refused to both of us. I arrive to find myself posted to A Squadron, but not allowed to fly for the present. I hope to get a job of work of some sort, if not I shall not hesitate to point out the absurdity of refusing me both work & leave.

Our quarters here are luxurious compared with those in Egypt. Huts with bedroom furniture complete, & a comfortable mess. Food, as far as I can judge from one day's experience. plain & excellent – no more Greek cooking. thank goodness. Company I think just as mixed if not not more so than in Egypt.

Aunt Sarah had an Australian mail, one later than I had seen. What a very serious pest the mice have become. Is it the ordinary house variety, or a field mouse? I was in Cheltenham from Monday to Wednesday evening. Pearl & I spent one day afternoon with Aunt Anna at Painswick – up by public motor, & Aunt Anna stood us a car back. She & Nora have an awfully nice place to live in there, & it is a pity that they have to leave.

I spent Thursday afternoon in Cambridge. Every college is full of cadets. [...] Hall has 140, & 8 undergraduates, 6 of whom are black. I unfortunately missed Mr Shirres by a day, & all other dons were away, either on vacation or on service. Since Mr Beck died they have not appointed a Master, & do not propose to do so till after the war. I found several old friends amongst college servants. Some are on active service, & some of the older men doing hospital orderly work. I found one acquaintance at the Agricultural School – Prof Wood was away, & I failed to track down Dr Marshall & Mr McKenzie who were in Cambridge. Finally I found Mr Haynes. He is now a Captain R.A. M.C., & served in Cambridge until a few days ago, when he was sent to France. A wife & 3 small children at home – it does seem hard. The University keeps a complete list, as far as they can make it complete, of ex-members who are serving, & of casualties amongst them, & I was able to trace a good many friends, though information was not enough to enable me to get in touch with any of them.

Your aff^{te} son

Tom Gilbert

PRG 266/7/98

[*letterhead*]

Royal Flying Corps,

Yatesbury,

Wilts.

22.7.17.

Dear Mother

As you will see by the above I've been transferred. Am only about 15 miles from the Central Flying School, but it took 6 hours to get here by train. I've never struck a worse service – two changes & no attempt to run the trains in connection. It seems strange to put a big flying school in so ungettable a place, but the aerodrome is very fine. Camping is much more primitive here than at C.F.S, & living conditions are very much the same as they were in Egypt.



The reason for my transfer is I suppose that on second consideration of my performance in Egypt, they didn't like my prospects as a fighting pilot, & are putting me on to machines which are used for reconnaissance, & for cooperation with artillery. I haven't flown here yet, & am getting 10 days more leave to get thoroughly fit before starting again. I go to Aunt Anna to-morrow, but shall have to push off somewhere else after a few days, as her lease expires at the end of the month, & I believe that she has not found anywhere to live yet.

Jack had arrived at C.F.S before I left, & we had fixed up our quarters together, just a short time before my orders to move arrived. He was recovering from inoculation & hadn't started flying.

I have no doubt that the Fergussons will tell you I'm looking seedy – They do love writing about illnesses & so please don't mind about their exaggerations.

Your aff^{te} son

Tom Gilbert

PRG 266/7/99

Callowell

Stroud

31.7.17.

Dear Dorothy

Am spending my 10 days leave with Aunt Anna, & have to report in London on Aug 2nd to be passed fit for work. Aunt Anna is feeding me up so rapidly that I had to visit Stroud yesterday to get some new holes punched in my belt.

We moved here from Cotswold View on Saturday, Aunt Anna, Nora & myself. They do have a disturbed existence these days, & must be thoroughly sick of house hunting & of changing from house to house. The present change is decidedly for the worse, but all being well there will be another for the better in a short time. The landlady is the weak point here, & with less capable handling, wouldn't do a stroke of work. Baths are the main difficulty – we were expected to have a weekly bath in Stroud, but somehow Aunt Anna has achieved a daily bath for each of us in the house. The same difficulty arises in almost every lodging house in these parts – how very unwashed the Gloucester public must be! it seems that most landladies succeed in letting to people who don't want baths.

I'm sent to bed every afternoon, & spend a large portion of the rest of the day eating. Nora & I generally take our exercise after dinner. Dailight saving hours give a good 2 hours from 8.30 with enough light for country walking. Aunt Anna is still a good walker, but has been too much occupied with household affairs to come out much.

We motored down to Cheltenham the day after I arrived. The aunts went house-hunting for the winter, Pearl & self shopping, & we gathered together at 17 Park Place for tea. Another motor excursion in these hills the following day – more house-hunting for the rest of the summer. Pearl came up yesterday for a final spree before going on night duty for 3 weeks.



Must consume my mid-morning glass of milk, & wander down the town to recover a pair of boots, which were brown before this landlady got hold of them, & have I hope now been restored to their original colour.

Your aff^{te} brother
Tom Gilbert

PRG 266/7/100

[on letterhead]

Morley's Hotel
Trafalgar Square,
London. W.C.
2.8.17

[written across top R.H. corner of page]
Minnie

Dear Aunt Anna

Am reported fit for work, & go to Yatesbury to-morrow. Many thanks to you for getting me fit so quickly.

Will write more from Yatesbury. I hope the policeman doesn't fail to leave at the critical time.

Your aff^{te} nephew
Tom Gilbert

PRG 266/7/101

[letterhead]

Royal Flying Corps,
Yatesbury,
Wilts.
5.8.17

Dear Marjory

I returned here on Friday, & will start flying as soon as weather permits. It is much too wet & cloudy to fly at present – perfectly horrid summer weather I call it?

I've had no letters from home since landing. One lot must have been sunk, but I trust the last lot will [...] by the exchange in Egypt, & come through safely. You have no doubt seen that all mails from Australia Egypt etc were lost recently.

Frank Short writes, hoping to arrange a meeting. My only chance is to motor to Amesbury to-day fortnight, but it seems rather a remote chance as Frank seems to expect to be ordered to France at any time. We have alternate Sundays off, ~~but~~ & cannot get away any other day. I hope it comes off & that I am able to pick up Jack on the way. Jack writes that he has done



2½ hours solo at Upavon, & likes his machine. He is playing golf “badly”. We both bought clubs, & it is annoying to have no use for mine.

This is a muddy place, but is rapidly being improved by prisoner labour. Most people dislike the place, intensely, personally I rather like it, but I’m used to country, mud, & to camping. The only thing that seems to me wrong about the place is that we’re kept unnecessarily on the hop. I attended six roll calls yesterday, but all the work done was one hour’s machine gun, ½ a hour’s buzzing, & ¼ hour’s lecture.

Your aff^{te} brother

Tom Gilbert

PRG 266/7/102

Weybridge Park

Weybridge.

19.8.17

Dear Father

I picked up a packet containing two Australian mails forwarded from Egypt, when passing through London the other day. The letter gave me further detail of news I had seen at Cheltenham. Am glad to hear that the sale of the Rhine Paddock has come off to your satisfaction.

I have been posted here for what will probably be a fortnight’s course in Artillery Co-operation, & then expect to return to Yatesbury for further instruction in flying the latest machine used for this work.

Above is our Mess address – We are about 2 miles from Brooklands, where we walk every morning to parade at 8.45. Lunch is provided at the aerodrome, & we get away at 6.15 in the evening. The work is most interesting; the first few days are entirely taken up with lectures, signalling, & practising our work on picture targets. Electric lights & smoke puffs indicate batteries firing & shell bursts on the pictures. The picture is in relief, placed on the floor, & an exact reproduction either of a bit of the French front, or of the ground we work over here. We sit up in a gallery, & conduct the shooting, \by telegraph/ exactly as we will start doing tomorrow from an aeroplane. This work was at one time done by the observer, but now, on artillery work, the observer’s job is mainly defensive. I should like to go into further details, but could hardly do so without infringing censorship regulations.

A wire from Jack announces his arrival in London last evening, & I hope to see him here to-day. He must be on transfer for a course in aerial gunnery, as he can hardly be ready for overseas yet. I might have gone up to London to see him to-day, but wired for him to come here, as an afternoon on the river appeals to me more than a dull Sunday in London.

Weather is very unsettled, but does not stop flying here to the same extent as at most places. We are all more or less experienced pilots, & barring very strong wind or rain, or clouds lower than about 1000’, the work goes on.



Emmie asks about “Wings”, where worn etc. They are worn over the left top pocket – a double wing indicates a pilot, a single wing an observer. Graduation as a Flying Officer implies a minimum of about 20 hours solo flying, & passing various tests which I’ve already described from Egypt. This a short time ago also implied the right to wear wings, but now wings mean more, & permission to wear them depends largely on one’s squadron commander. There is, as far as I can make out, no hard & fast rule. I expect to be given mine on completion of this course. As regards dress, if a man has a regiment, he sticks to his regimental uniform & puts wings on it. The real Flying Corps tunic is a double breasted thing, the cap a forage cap. I don’t like the tunic, but have bought one in anticipation of cold weather, also an ordinary English serge tunic with R.F.C buttons & badges. I still wear my Cavalry dress for rough work, but as I was only “attached” Indian Cavalry, & will in future I suppose be listed “attached R.F.C”, am not really correctly dressed. Also shoulder chains are allowed only on Indian dress, though I see this regulation frequently infringed, & it is probably in abeyance. If so, it is very reasonable from the point of view of the man who can’t afford money, or time to replace his Indian dress when transferred from an Indian Unit.

Your aff^{te} son
Tom Gilbert

PRG 266/7/103

Netheravon
26.8.17

Dear Father

I received a large batch of home letters two days ago – yours dated 27th June, & others addressed direct to London, also letters dated about June 10th forwarded from Egypt.

I am not likely to have to call on you’re a/c with Aunt Anna for monetary assistance.

Grindlay’s, though they have not succeeded in realising all my pay, are lending me all I want, as an overdraft, free of interest. With army pay, civil furlough pay, & flying pay, I’m really quite well off.

I note that you have collected my interest for the half year ending June 15. £28-11-6. Jack’s visit to London was nothing more than 2 days’ leave. He came down to Brooklands for lunch, & I went back to town with him for the evening to meet Tom Coghlan, who stood us a dinner at the Rendezvous. As near as I can calculate, Tom Coghlan & I last saw each other 17 years ago.

Arrived here last evening, & return to Brooklands to-morrow night. They send us down here to do a couple of real shoots with a howitzer battery. We’re a party of 10, divided into two lots of five, one for morning work, one for afternoon. I’m on the afternoon shift. We’re under canvas, & it’s precious cold compared with Weybridge. This is one of the places I landed at when I did my cross country flight from Yatesbury. Upavon is 5 or 6 miles away, & I may be able to fly, or to walk over & see Jack.

It looks like “dud” weather this afternoon. A strong wind & drizzly rain have just started. It will be disappointing if we can’t get any work done here. I do want to see what a real gun flash



looks like. This is unfortunately a time limited course: they aim at giving us 10 hours in the air; 15 at Brooklands & here combined; but weather not permitting, we just have to put in extra time on the pictures.

Am sorry to hear bad news of Nina & of Uncle Ted. I gather from a letter from Aunt Jane I saw at Cheltenham, that Uncle Ted is far from strong.

I came into my tent to write, to get away from a gramophone, which started performing about 8 am. this morning, & am now being more disturbed by a drum in the next tent.

Your aff^{te} son

Tom Gilbert.

PRG 266/7/104

Netheravon

27.8.17

Dear Aunt Anna

Just a line to say that my latest letters from home are dated June 26th & 27th. If you have nothing so recent, I will send them on.

Came here last evening, & weather permitting, will do two shoots with a Howitzer battery, & in any case return to Brooklands to-morrow evening. Weybridge Park, Weybridge will find me for the next few days.

Your aff^{te} nephew

Tom Glibert.

[*different handwriting*]

We are so glad to hear that Tom is now a 1st Lt. I hope Jack will be soon. It was nice that they both met Tom Coghlan. AG

PRG 266/7/105

[*letterhead*]

Royal Flying Corps,

Yatesbury,

Wilts.

2.9.17.

Dear Catherine

You will see by the above that I'm back at Yatesbury. We had two complete holidays at Netheravon, Sunday & Monday – weather too bad to attempt flying. I walked over to Upavon on Monday morning, & found Jack after about ½ an hours searching. He hadn't done any flying since returning from leave, but was due to go up just after I left him. Our party returned to Brooklands Monday evening, & we returned from there to our squadrons Thursday. I took



up a single seater machine, which was new to me, on Friday, but a failing engine forced me to return to the aerodrome after quarter of an hour's flight. Weather was too rough yesterday for flying, & to-day is a holiday, so that I've got no forrader with "dual" on the machine I'm here specially to learn.

This wet summer is, I fear going to be very bad for the harvest. Wheat & oats round here are rotting in the ear. I only hope the present high wind will blow the rain away.

I have received notices from Egypt of two parcels waiting for me. One must contain Mother's socks, & the other a slice of Harry's wedding cake. Have put Grindlays' on their track, & may recover them.

Jack writes that he is going over to Salisbury relation hunting to-day, & is hiring a car jointly with others.

Did I mention that I've got a second pip, otherwise a second star, which means that I'm a 1st Lieut now. No credit to myself, as I.A.R are promoted automatically after one year in service.

Your aff^{te} brother

Tom Gilbert.

PRG 266/7/106

[letterhead]

Great Western Royal Hotel

Paddington,

London, W.2.

Sept 9th 1917

Dear Father

Was much surprised & pleased to find my name in orders the other day for India. I am to sail as soon as a passage can be arranged. You will receive a cable as soon as I get final orders. Am up in town on two days leave to gather & sort out kit – It is rather a difficult matter – if they send me via France, I shall travel as light as possible, if via the Cape, as heavy as they'll allow me. On arrival here I wired Yatesbury for leave pending overseas – shall probably get it, but possibly sanction will not come through before my 48 hours expires this evening.

Have finished all flying necessary to entitle me to wear wings. What a difference there is in the amount of work now required, & the amount that was required a year, or even a few months ago. Graduation & wings originally went together, on 15 – 20 hours solo flying. Now 35 – 40 hours & tests innumerable are required. Personally I've done just on 40 hours, & flown 8 different types of machine. The fighting pilot as a rule does considerably more flying – it is a treat to see to see a good scout pilot throwing his machine about – he is much more active than any bird. A spinning nose dive, a tail slide, & a loop are feats which I think no bird has ever performed. The first describes itself, the second involves putting the nose of the machine up until it stops going forwards & then slides backwards. The loop is this [sketch of a loop] I have seen one man flying up side down for several minutes, & not only flying straight in that position, but doing turns.



I've never tried any of these tricks myself because I've never been on a machine built for the job. The strain on the structure must be great, especially in a learner's hands, who is bound to make mistakes; & if the machine is not guaranteed to stand the strain of "stunting", the best plan is "don't stunt".

Slide slipping, stalling, & vertical banks are all I've done. Banking ie is tipping the machine on one side is necessary when turning, just as a car travelling at high speed round a turn requires a sloping track, otherwise it skids – The quicker the turn, the steeper the bank. Banking without turning produces a side slip. Stalling means pulling the nose up till the machine loses the speed necessary to keep it flying under control – It will then, unless a tail slide is manoeuvred for, simply puts its nose down, & get up speed again.

My last machine is a wonderfully stable affair. In calm weather it is easy to adjust her to fly herself, hands & feet off the controls. The advantage of this to the pilot whose job is to observe, read maps, work a telegraph key & a stop watch is obvious.

I fear I repeat myself a good deal when writing about flying, but better that than to write unintelligible stuff, using aeronautical terms without definition.

Shall try & get Jack up to have a dinner & theatre in town before I leave

Your aff^{te} son

Tom Gilbert

P.S. Address Grindlays Bombay TG

PRG 266/7/107

[*letterhead*]

Great Western Royal Hotel,
Paddington,
London, W.2.
17.9.17

Dear Mother

As you will see by the above, I've got away on leave again temporarily. They wouldn't extend my leave last week end, but gave me 4 days from to-day, & allowed me to get away Saturday night, & take advantage of the Sunday fortnightly holiday. [2] Jack is also on leave pending overseas, & will I presume go to France. We both got our 'wings' within a day or two of the same date, & I believe he now has his second star. A friend told me that Jack's name was in the Gazette a few days ago, but neither of us have confirmed it yet. He has gone to Cheltenham to-day – I go tomorrow.

Mary Stirling, Jack & I met yesterday & lunched together, picked up Faith & Olive afterwards, & went to Kew gardens. In the evening we picked up a naval [3] friend of Mary's, Mackie by name, & all dined at the Rendezvous – a very cheery evening. To-day am doing odd jobs preparatory to sailing, & will meet Mary for a theatre this evening.

Weather has been exceptionally good for flying, & I've been averaging about 3 hours a day. Monday I took part in a [4] formation of 7 machines



[2 sketches, one from below and one a side view, showing the positions of the planes, the leader, deputy leader and TG]

We flew to Reading, & back about 1hr³/₄ in the air.

I tried to get to Bournemouth one day, but clouds were too thick below me, & I turned homewards from Salisbury. Occasional glimpses of the ground [5] & compass guided me, & finally I found a nice big hole in the cloud, & spiralled down, just missing the sides of the hole. Got clear at 2000' from the ground after a descent of nearly 4000'. Being in a cloud is a curious sensation – one loses all flying sense, & has to depend entirely on instruments.

Your aff^{te} son

Tom Gilbert

PRG 266/7/108

Great Western Hotel.

Paddington.

23.9.17.

Dear Father

I write from Paddington a third time. Am really about to sail at last, & go down to Devonport tomorrow afternoon. I came up here yesterday on receipt of telegraphic orders Friday evening.

I went from here to Cheltenham on Tuesday, & stayed at Aunt Sarah's new house 29 Landsdown Terrace. Jack was there till Wednesday evening, & I left for Yatesbury Thursday evening. If only my orders had come through 24 hours earlier, a very unnecessary journey would have been saved. Did a little flying on Friday, just testing a couple of machines which had had some slight repairs, & were wanted for first soloists. They were threatening to turn me into an instructor if I stayed on any longer, waiting for orders.

I cabled this morning – there seems no certainty how long the cable will take to get through, but probably not long.

Jack can't get away to see me off, as he must stand by for orders for overseas. Have just rung up Faith, but she's away. Possibly I shall find Mary Stirling.

Your aff^{te} son

Tom Gilbert

PRG 266/7/109

G.W. Hotel.

Paddington.

23.9.17.

Dear Aunt Sarah



Orders have come at last, & I go to Devonport to-morrow afternoon. I was afraid that I should have to leave in the morning, & be unable to fix up Last Pay Certificate, & other necessary details.

I wired Jack to dine with me to-night, but he can't get away.

C/o Grindlay & C^o Bombay will always find me. Have cabled home & given that address. Will see about the safety waistcoat to-morrow morning.

I managed to avoid paying a second fare from Cheltenham the other day – my name & address & a shilling did the trick.

Am just going to ring up Faith, & also try & get into communication with M. Stirling.

Your aff^{te} nephew

Tom Gilbert

PRG 266/7/110

[on airforce paper]

7.10.17

Dear Aunt Anna

Am not allowed to announce where we are, or what boat we're on, so can only say we're safe, & have a large part of the voyage before us.

The boat is packed – two sittings for meals – first for civilian passengers, with vacancies filled by officers, & the second for officers only. There are ladies on board, about forty I should think, & a few small children.

The sports committee have just started getting active. A couple of afternoon dances, & a concert have happened to date. It's too hot to enjoy dancing, & the concert was a hopeless failure; & it's only saving feature was that most of the attempts to sing were ridiculous enough to provoke laughter.

A fancy dress dance is planned for our first evening in port. Of course while we're at sea, there are no lights on deck. Fancy dressing, when one possesses nothing but khaki is going to be difficult.

Reading bridge & sleeping constitute the day's work, & there's nothing to do in the evening but sit on deck & talk. A great many sit in the lounge & smoking room & play bridge all evening, but it is too stuffy indoors for most of us.

Your aff^{te} nephew

Tom Gilbert

PRG 266/7/111

At Sea

23.10.17.

Dear Mother



I wonder if you have heard anything of me since I left. I was not allowed to wire Australia from our last port of call, but wired Aunt Sarah asking her to repeat to you. If the wire didn't get through, I'm afraid you will be thinking that we've met a submarine. I expect to be able to cable you in two or three days' time.

We're on a mail boat, absolutely packed with troops, officers & passengers, the last including about 40 ladies. Have had a wonderfully calm & absolutely uneventful voyage. On the whole we're having a cheery time, but we're too crowded to really enjoy ourselves; only one side of the promenade deck, & the boat deck are available for 1st class, & most of the promenade deck is taken up by quoit pitches. Afternoon dances have been fairly frequent, & we had two evening dances while in port – of course there are no lights on deck while we're at sea.

Various competitions, sports, & bridge occupy most of the day & evening.

At our last port – I'll tell you what it was later – I ran across a Cambridge friend who is doing A D C to the Governor – it was a great surprise to see him turn up on board, amongst other guests from the shore, for a fancy dress dance.

I wrote last, I think, the day before leaving London. Faith & Mary lunched with me at the Paddington hotel on Monday, & the latter came to see me off at Waterloo. I stayed the night in the Royal Hotel, Devonport, & embarked the following day. We pulled out from the wharf the day after that, & then anchored in the harbour for 3 days, waiting for the rest of the convoy to gather themselves.

Mary Stirling is now on her way to Australia, if her plans have held. She will be able to give you latest first hand news of me.

There is a M^{rs} Trenchard (néé Miss Bisdee) on the boat who knows the Harts.– she is a cousin, I think of the Bisdees whom I have mentioned when writing from Egypt. If I started writing about other passengers, I should go on for a good many pages. They're a very mixed lot, as also are the officers. Officers are stated to be the best behaved crowd the boat has ever carried, though judging from the signs of the last few evenings, we should not maintain this reputation, if we had many more days to go before touching port.

I expect it will be at least a month before we reach India.

Your aff^{te} son

Tom Gilbert

PRG 266/7/112

[on letterhead paper]

Durban Club Natal

Telegraphic & Cable address

"Club." Durban

Nov 4th 1917

Dear Mother

I posted a letter at Capetown, which I hope has gone by one of the boats that came with us. A cable from Capetown probably showed the office of origin, so that you will have some idea where I am. You probably hardly expected me to land up here when I wired "Sailing India".



We arrived here two days ago, & I expect to go on very soon, though no re-embarkation orders have been received yet. We are living in a rest camp – a poor sort of camp compared with standing camps in England, but good enough, & only costs 2/6 a day. We're under canvas, two to a bell tent. My first night was uncomfortable, & I was rather disturbed as my suit case had gone astray: I managed to trace it yesterday after much searching. If by any chance we're to stop here more than a day or two longer, I shall apply for permission to live in an hotel. Lack of water makes Durban an uncomfortable place to live in just at present. Recent floods have damaged the water-works – supply main burst I believe. It has rained almost incessantly since we arrived, & Durban must be distinctly at its worst. I went to the races yesterday & two or three of the races were well worth watching, but rain rather spoilt the day's fun.

CapeTown I liked, & Port Elizabeth isn't a bad little place. Going ashore there is rather an undertaking. A tug comes out to the steamer, & as often as not passengers have to be unloaded in baskets. We were just able to struggle on to the tug via a hatchway, but had to call for a basket coming back. The tug goes alongside a jetty, & there one has to grab a rope & swing ashore. At both CapeTown & at Port Elizabeth we made up a motoring party, & thoroughly enjoyed ourselves. The latter place is planted thick with Australian trees – gums, wattle & sheoak. A great many of the officers from the boat went to a dance on shore, & were put up at private houses for the night: they came back very enthusiastic about it. Personally, after a very rough return journey to the boat in the afternoon, & after ruining a perfectly good suit of uniform with salt spray, I didn't feel inclined to undertake the journey a second time. The majority of civilian passengers disembarked at Capetown: a few came on here. Ladies bound for India have to find their way on somehow. They are only allowed to book as far as Durban, & now have to wait & watch for a boat here.

There is evidence that we 4 pilots are bound for Lahore. An observer writes to his mother on the boat that he & others are waiting for instruction in flying, until pilots arrive from home.

They have recently moved from the frontier to Lahore.

Your aff^{te} son

Tom Gilbert

PRG 266/7/113

20.11.17

[in different handwriting]

Rec^d 27.12.17 W.G

Dear Mother

Am writing & posting this on board, & will write again at length from Bombay. when I've seen your letters, which I expect will be waiting for me. The Officer in charge of post on board is arranging to collect letters from our agents & deliver them on board immediately on arrival. We had a cheery time in Durban, but a none too comfortable journey since. Closing everything at nights means excessive stuffiness in the lounge & smoking room. Fortunately we're allowed to open cabin windows as soon as we put our lights out.



There's no use writing what I shall repeat when I can give you fuller details without the necessity on censoring what I write

Your aff^{te} son

Tom Gilbert

[on reverse of the page in W.G's handwriting]

Wrote Tom

27.12.1917

W^m Gilbert

PRG 266/7/114

Lahore

27.11.17

Dear Father

I found a large batch of letters waiting for me in Bombay. Two mails direct from home, & two returned from England. Dates ranged from end of July to beginning of October.

You must have been wondering what had happened to me. I naturally couldn't tell you in a cable what route I was going by. It has been a slow business getting here. The convoy's first port of call was Sierra Leone. Thence I wired Aunt Sarah "Safe Please repeat Australia".

They wouldn't let me wire you direct. We got there about the time you would have been expecting me to arrive in India, hence the wire. Unfortunately it had the effect of "putting the wind up" the Aunts, & they assumed that [2] the boat had been torpedoed, & sent me deepest sympathy on loss of kit. I wired you direct from Capetown, & finally from Bombay three or four days ago.

To return to the beginning of the voyage. We spent 4 days at anchor outside Devonport, awaiting the arrival of the rest of the convoy, & set out with a large escort on Sept 28th. I suppose I still ought not to give away numbers of boats, & other details relating to the escort. The escort maintained its full strength for some days, & then left us to the care of a cruiser. Pace had to conform to that of the slowest boat, which was 10 – 12 knots an hour. Ours was the only boat carrying civilian passengers – others were purely troopers. I've already told you of dances & other festivities on board.

Freetown is about the last place on earth I should like to be stationed at. I imagine, from what I saw of it that it is a bad imitation of a small Indian [3] station, with a climate much worse than anything in India. The town is a port, & the European station is on a hill about six miles inland. It is a pretty place, vegetation moderately luxuriant, with many Indian acquaintances amongst trees & shrubs. Many African races populate the town, & languages are so numerous that no English resident attempts to master any. The Bombay Parsee has found his way there as a shopkeeper.

Capetown pleased me, & the forty mile drive is very beautiful, but "the no place on earth like it" attitude of the S African is I think, a gross exaggeration.



We left Capetown, expecting to go straight to Durban, but received instructions after leaving to call at Port Elizabeth & East London. I've already written of landing & of festivities at the former place. Typhus on shore prevented us landing at East London.

We should under normal conditions have transhipped at Durban immediately, but recent [4] floods had upset the water supply, & our boat couldn't leave; in fact it was supplementing the town's water supply for a day or two, & eventually got dirty water in exchange. We suffered for this towards the end of the voyage, when minerals, which couldn't be purchased in sufficient quantities, gave out. Filters took the mud out of the water, but not the taste.

We rest camped at Durban for 3 days, & then made a false start for the boat. All luggage entrained, & just moving out of the station, when the movement order was cancelled. I grabbed my bag & made for the Marine hotel, to await renewal of embarkation orders, which came the next morning, & were carried out. We had three most enjoyable dances at Durban. The dancing there is extraordinarily good, but perhaps it is not astonishing if the ladies practise as keenly every time a trooper comes in.

[5] About the voyage from Durban, the less said the better. One expects to be uncomfortable travelling by sea these days, but I think our 20000 ton Atlantic liner was unnecessarily so. However she was fast, & fed us passably well. We called at East Africa, & shed several doctors, & a few troops.

Grindlays proved themselves most satisfactory agents at Bombay – Their man was the first on board, & the only one who succeeded in delivering his customers' letters the day we anchored in the stream. We anchored at Bombay on the 22nd, & pulled up alongside the docks on 23rd morning. Posting orders were given us on board, & all we had to do was to report & to get railway warrants. I stayed the night at the Majestic, & started for this place the following evening.

It seems that my being posted ~~the~~ here is as permanent as such things can be in war time.

The 114th Squadron. R.F.C. Lahore is in its infancy. Sheds are building, & machines

[7] Post Offices in Egypt will not deliver parcels without a receipt for them. Jack had not received his orders to France the day I left London, but I assumed that he must have left very soon.

Many thanks for making up my Savings Bank balance of £92-4-10 to £100, & for investing same in inscribed stock.

Please thank Pauline for letter, which I'll acknowledge direct sooner or later.

Your aff^{te} son

Tom Gilbert

PRG 266/7/115

Lahore Cant:^t [*Cantonment*]

17.12.17.

Dear Mother

Your telegram. & also letters saying that Jack is missing have reached me. Have also had the news from Cheltenham. Friends here who have recently been in France, tell me that



missing in the R.F.C means either prisoner, or wounded & prisoner, in 5 cases out of 7. There are three men here who knew Jack well in Egypt.

We're doing very little flying here at present, as the men are nearly all engaged on construction. Two machines went to Hoshiarpur last week, to take part in manoeuvres. I hope it will fall to my lot to go on manoeuvres later in the season. My only flying job here to date has been to take up would be pilots for a first joy-ride.

Am living in Mess quarters, & gradually making myself comfortable. Have taken over Mess President's job. The place was a regular pigstie when we arrived, & accounts were in a hopeless muddle. It is going to be a long business getting things straightened up. Have got as far as producing clean table service & servants, & anteroom furniture will come in to-day, to replace a few broken cane chairs. Mess members will have to harden their hearts, & spend money on their mess, instead of devoting it solely to clubs & motor cars.

Your letters have been arriving in shoals, & not quite in proper order of succession. However have been able to piece a fairly complete story together. Please thank Catherine for her Calender: the photograph on it is really a work of art. Also for other photographs.

Am writing lazily in a long chair, hence my writing is worse, if possible, than usual.

Lahore Cantonment is about 6 miles out of Lahore. There is a small & inferior branch of the Gymkhana out here, an excellent club & a gymkhana in Lahore. Have hardly been in to Lahore at all since leaving Falettis hotel, & shall not go often until I've fixed up the purchase of a motor-bike, or of some other suitable conveyance.

Your aff^{te} son

Tom Gilbert

PRG 266/7/116

Lahore
23.12.17.

Dear Emmie

A letter from you & one from Dorothy turned up a couple of days ago – I imagine they belonged to a mail of a few days earlier, & had somehow got lost.

I have very little news. Have been doing a little more flying than at first. I have a B.E. 2C machine in my own keeping, to look after, & practise on when I feel inclined. Two men turned up during the week for test flights. I took them up, buzzed them round in circles, watched them to see if they looked frightened, or sea-sick, & then made my report, fit for flying, or otherwise, to the Major.

Our numbers are increasing – two pilots have turned up from Egypt, & one from Risalpur, & at this rate we shall soon be a full strength service squadron. Major Hutcheson, an Indian Army Regular commands – He & three of the Flying Officers are married, the rest of us bachelors.

The 24th afternoon, 25th & 26th are to be observed as holidays. Shall have to go to a tea-fight for the men to-morrow. It is sure to be a boring show, probably for all concerned. The invitation is to "tea & games" from a Master at the Chief's Training College.



Your aff^{te} brother
Tom Gilbert

PRG 266/7/117

Royal Flying Corps,
Lahore
1.1.18.

Dear Catherine

Your latest letters are dated Nov 22nd – 29th. Shearing was over. You enclosed two excellent photos, church bridge, & wool waggon. Have just bought a slip in Album for your photos, so please don't clip any you send in future. In reply to Marjory's questions, I never recovered the parcel of Harry's wedding cake: the parcel of socks has not turned up yet. Can do with the thickest socks here at this time of year – it is very cold in the mornings & evenings, & often frosty at nights.

Started tennis again last evening at the Cantonment club, & am playing again today.

This morning we attended a "feu de joie" & march past. Proceedings commence with gun fire, 11 guns, then a burst of rifle fire, then the National anthem; 10 more guns, rifle fire & anthem, & the same again after the 31st gun. Three of our aeroplanes led the March past. They flew fairly low, dipped to within a few feet \of the ground/ in front of the General, & then passed on – Cavalry & Infantry followed.

Christmas week programme at Lahore provides many gaities:– race-meetings, polo, cricket, dances. I went to one race-meeting & one polo match, but gave the rest a miss.

On the whole, the flying Officers here are a good crowd – there are outsiders amongst them; one of the worst, I'm thankful to say is being transferred to-morrow.

The Mess is far from comfortable as yet, but we can't do much unless & until Government makes the usual loan of capital. As P.M.C, I suppose I could get all we want on credit, but as my position here is in no way permanent, I don't feel inclined to take on any personal responsibility. Have made my own room quite comfortable – numdah rugs on the floor, & grey-blue casement cloth curtains.

We shall get down to regular work again to-morrow.

Your aff^{te} brother
Tom Gilbert

PRG 266/7/117a

Royal Flying Corps,
Lahore
6.1.18
Dear Mother



There is no Australian mail in this week, but an English mail brought several of your letters dated about the end of August. One from Aunt Annie came by the same mail, also one from Grindlay's, notifying the despatch of a parcel from Australia containing provisions: this I presume is Harry's wedding cake.

I had an interesting hour in the air the day before yesterday taking photographs. They have turned out very well, & I have copies here to arrange how to overlap them, so as to make a complete picture. Have also taken one man up for test flight, & & have been taken lessons myself in flying the Henri Farman, during the week. This machine is a "pusher", & as, with the exception of my first machine in Egypt, I've flown nothing but tractors, I thought a little instruction advisable.

Was just beginning to pick up my tennis again, but have put myself out of action for games, by "serving" my shoulder out of joint again. This is the second time it has slipped out since the original dislocation, once in Egypt, through an aeroplane engine back firing when I was swinging the propeller. I put the thing back myself without any trouble, & it hardly hurts at all, but it is thoroughly annoying. I was in charge of Church parade this morning – we had a very impressive service, & I enclose a copy.

Two of our pilots started off this morning on an 800 mile cross country trip. They are doing it in 3 stages, & take a day's rest between each stage. I hear a machine in the air now 4 pm, & rather suspect that one of the pilots has given up the journey.

Your aff^{te} son

Tom Gilbert

PRG 266/7/118

[letterhead]

Royal Flying Corps,

Lahore

13.1.18.

Dear Father

I have been doing quite a lot of flying, as flying time is considered here. It would be quite a little for England or Egypt. I spent one day taking Signal Coy N.C.Os up, to show them what our Observers have to read, when doing Contact Patrol work, & so to impress on them the necessity of very clear sending, & of sending when the machine is in a suitable position.

Personally I doubt the benefit derived, as few men flying for the first time, can appreciate the position of the machine, or think of anything but the flying:– but I suppose I should not criticise the ideas of my superior officer. Contact patrol means keeping Brigade, & Battⁿ Headquarters in touch with what is going on in the firing line during a battle, & so keeping the firing line supplied with what they want, & H.Q. supplied with necessary tactical information. I expect a job of this kind on manoeuvres during the coming week.

On Friday three of us flew machines for the benefit of the Science Congress, & had a very large audience. I was surprised on getting out of my machine to be greeted by Rao Sahib Kulkarni, the man who is doing my job in Dharwar. We naturally had much to talk about, & far



from exhausted all topics either that evening, or the following morning. I got leave to attend the Congress on Saturday morning to hear Kulkarni's paper, & others; some interesting, some so badly read in "chuchi" English, that it was impossible to follow them. Coleman from Bangalore – you may remember my having mentioned him at some remote date, was presiding over the Agricultural section, & I met two or three other acquaintances.

Nearly all our officers & men are away on manoeuvres in other divisions, & the place is so deserted that I've been the only diner in Mess for the last 3 evenings. I'm truly sorry for the man who has contracted to feed this mess. He never knows whether he'll have to cater for 10 or for 1, & only gets one day's notice of an Officer's departure. His contract is per head per day – very foolish of him not to have stipulated a minimum number. The P.M.C has a pretty thin time over it all. It is really rather absurd to attempt to run a mess at all under these conditions, & it would be much better if we lived in chummeries.

Your aff^{te} son

Tom Gilbert

PRG 266/7/118a

[letterhead]

Royal Flying Corps,

Lahore

20.1.18

Dear Father

Your letter dated 15th December has just arrived. You had received an interesting letter from Jack, telling of flying at high altitudes. Flying at 100 miles an hour & over, at a height of 17000 feet must be very cold work.

Am reading a book, "An Airman's Outings" by "Contact", sent me by Aunt Sarah. It is extraordinarily good. "The author depicts the daily life of the flying officer in France, simply, & with perfect truth".

Have flown nearly every day during the week. I had an interesting 3 hours doing contact patrol & reconnaissance for an imitation fight. Everything went off splendidly, except that I had to leave a little of the job unfinished, as my petrol pump, which feeds petrol from a bottom tank to the gravity tank, gave up work. Yesterday I flew an Observer over the same ground: he has to do a similar job to-morrow, with another pilot. Coming home we flew low over Lahore, & I dropped a message from the Observer on to a friend's house.

I have bought a motor bike, a little two-stroke. Paid an excessive price for it, but it is just the very thing I want, & all machines are commanding fancy prices now. Just now I spend my spare time in the sheds overhauling her, & hope to have her in good going order by to-morrow evening.

We are still a very small mess – one flight complete has transferred itself temporarily to Delhi. Pilots continue to arrive, one turned up from Egypt to-day, & another is due.

Am sending 2 or 3 photographs separately. I haven't got my exposure from the air quite right, but results are fair for a camera not designed for the job.



Your aff^{te} son
Tom Gilbert

PRG 266/7/119

[*letterhead*]

Royal Flying Corps,
Multan
28.1.18

Dear Mother

Am once more wandering, & inhabiting dak bungalows. Came here last evening, spent to-day looking for a landing ground, & return Lahore to-morrow, after a halt en route at Montgomery, on a similar quest. Shall have to catch a 5.15 a.m. train, & am shifting quarters to the Station Waiting room after dinner. The prospect of turning out in the dark these cold mornings is not pleasant, but that of turning out, plus tonga drive, still less pleasant. The thermometer has been well below freezing point for some nights now.

Committees & Boards do annoy me, & when I go on jobs like this I do wish for the authority I had in the Agricultural Dep^t. A large committee visits various possible sites for landing grounds, each member of the committee looking at it from a different point of view. A large report is made out embodying all points of view, & someone will decide at some future date, probably without looking at the ground, which site is to be the aerodrome. It is 100 to 1 that the R.F.C point of view wins, even if the appropriation of cavalry parade ground is involved, & why they can't empower the R.F.C representative to pick his ground, & get on with the work, beats me altogether.

I expect to do a little touring by air, as soon as I get back; start off on the 31st, land at a camp about 40 – 50 miles south of Lahore, & take part in manoeuvres there for two or three days. All this wandering is rather disturbing to one's job as P.M.C. The Mess hasn't been going long enough for the clerk & servants to run themselves.

I am suffering from a bad servant; he's going to be dismissed as soon as I get back, & never again will I employ a native Christian, other than a Goanese. I don't know why they're so unsatisfactory, but the general experience is that they are so. He calmly announced the morning I was coming away that his grandmother wouldn't let him come with me. A month's pay due, & I regret to say, a kick, persuaded him that his grandmother was in the wrong.

[*across the top of the beginning of the letter*]

I seem to have had a thorough good grouse about things in general, & am now ready for a large dinner.

Your aff^{te} son
Tom Gilbert

PRG 266/7/120



[letterhead]

Royal Flying Corps,
Lahore
3.2.18

Dear Mother

I have had a large home mail during the week – letters dated Dec 27th & earlier: enclosed was a most interesting copy of Jack's news dated 14.10.

Mary Stirling had returned after, it seems a tiring voyage: I wonder if she got my letter at Capetown – I wrote from the Durban Club, but my letter was probably too late.

You remark that you did not know that pilots flew alone into the fighting line. Many do, that is they [2] fly a solo machine, but nowadays always fly accompanied by other machines. Flying is very specialized now, & squadrons may be equipped for artillery observation, for long reconnaissance, for patrol work & for escort work, & for bombing. A squadron will of course have the machine best suited for its special job, & its pilots trained for those machines. You can imagine that in patrol work, – keeping enemy machines from crossing our lines – , i.e. in a purely fighting job, a light single seater machine can be manoeuvred in defence, or in attack by an enemy plane, much more quickly than a larger machine carrying two men.

[Pages 3 and 4 are wrongly included in PRG 266/7/123]

[5] Have just received a parcel from Aunt Annie, for which please convey my thanks in case I dont write this mail. I don't think I recorded the arrival of two of your parcels containing socks & eatables, though I thanked you on the strength of notification that theyd arrived in Bombay. The socks are a exactly the right size, & just the very thing for wearing under field boots in the cold weather.

I returned last evening from three days flying on manoeuvres at Makhu near Ferozepore. Had a most interesting time. As I've filled up most of this letter with flying shop, I won't record details.

Your aff^{te} son
Tom Gilbert

PRG 266/7/121

[letterhead]

Royal Flying Corps,
Lahore
10.2.18

Dear Dorothy

I wrote last after returning from Makhu 44th Division Camp. I left again almost immediately for Montgomery to see how the landing ground I'd previously selected was getting on – spent a full day there, & returned here expecting a few days at least in Headquarters. However I found I was detailed to fly on inter brigade manoeuvres & left Thursday morning by road for Ferozepore. We could only spare one machine for each side, but had two pilots & two



observers for each machine, & we relieved each other. Both sides had to work from one aerodrome, which of course made the position rather absurd from the start, & I had to travel 15 miles by road through the enemy lines to get orders from the Brigadier. In reconnaissance work, one ought to land & deliver the report personally. We had to do it by dropping message bags, & were able to receive some orders by prearranged code. Naturally no prearranged code could cover all contingencies in a battle in open country. We were doing reconnaissance for a side acting on the defensive. Supposing the defenders had suddenly decided to attack, information about the position of their own front line would probably have been more valuable to them than reconnaissance of enemy positions, in a case where there were not enough aeroplanes to give them both. With aerodrome situated as it was we couldn't get our orders quickly enough to change from one job to another. I suppose India will gradually come to realise that they've got to pander to aeroplanes, & will choose their manoeuvre grounds where advance aerodromes can be made. In actual warfare they'd have to make advance landing grounds, regardless of cost. I returned by air yesterday, & it seems that I'm to have a few days rest from travelling.

The sacking of John my bearer, became an accomplished fact: I think I shall be satisfactorily served by the new man.

Am becoming a real gambler at Bridge. Gymk have points here are Rs 2/8 a hundred: this has the effect of excluding the bad player, & for the player who can hold his own in most bridge company, I don't think it makes much difference in the long run whether he plays for 2/8 or one anna.

Your aff^{te} brother

Tom Gilbert

PRG 266/7/122

[letterhead]

Royal Flying Corps,
Lahore
24.2.18

Dear Catherine

I have two home mails to answer: your last really calls for a cable to Bill & Pauline, but I suppose this would be unnecessary war-time extravagance. Catherine Mary was flourishing, & reported by Bill to be "not ugly;" all was well. Am so glad to get better news of Winnie.

I hope the job on the reservoir has gone smoothly.

What an extravagant rate of wage the people are demanding now, & their method of arriving at the award seems to have been far from honest.

I sent a packet of aerial photos last week, but didn't write. Was about to do so, when I was \ordered/ to proceed to Sialkot immediately. I went by train & Batting, a fellow pilot flew a machine over the next morning. Our programme was to fly 16 cadets, & for me to fly the machine home in the evening. 5 extra men for joyrides, water in the petrol, & finally a forced landing in a field, extended the programme to three days. I left Batting to superintend slight



repairs, & to finish off the flying, & returned to Lahore to do a shoot with a battery at Kasur, about 35 miles south of this place. This was the first time I've worked with real guns, but found it no more difficult than conducting the imitation shoots at Brooklands. I took a Sgt Observer up with me, & I fear, offended his dignity; by not allowing him to do the work himself – it was just as well, as his observations, passed back to me on chits were quite inaccurate, & proved that he wants a good deal more training. Gunners out here are still inclined to resent the aeroplane taking part in their job, or to be suspicious of its value to them. They're bound to come to the other view, but it'll take time if we give them "dudd" Observers.

Am flying to-morrow to Ambala, & thence to Meerut the following day: also for a shoot Esther's photographs arrived safely, also your enlargement of the one of Jack, in Egypt. Suggested that I invite Mary & Marjory to stay with me. It's out of the question till the hot weather is over, i.e. mid October or early November. – This place enjoys a temperature of 120° & over. Then it's a case of "it all depends." You will have gathered that I'm liable to lead a fairly restless existence during the cold weather – also liable to transfer any time or any length of notice. Also bungalows are practically non-obtainable – Cantonment stations are absolutely packed, many people living in tents. If I look like achieving a settled existence, & a bungalow by next cold weather, the invitation will be forthcoming immediately.

Your aff^{te} brother
Tom Gilbert

PRG 266/7/123

[*letterhead*]
Royal Flying Corps,
Lahore
3.3.18

Dear Marjory

Your letter dated Jan 31st is the latest I have from home. Some more belonging to the same mail will probably turn up today. Very glad to hear of the arrival of niece N^o 2, & that Winnie is so much better.

I've spent the week touring Northern India by air. Left Lahore early Monday morning for Ambala: All went well for 2½ hours, then my engine suddenly refused to give so much as a kick: was 4000 feet up, & had lots of time to look for a good field to land in. Came [2] down near Khanna station (Ludhiana district). My mechanic, whom I took as a passenger, examined the engine, & reported spares from Lahore necessary. Thousands of people collected round the machine, & fortunately for us, an American missionary amongst them. He & his wife were the only white people in the place – they fed us & gave us quarters for the night. The crowd came & went till dark, & then we left the machine in charge of the local police. A bigger crowd than ever had collected by 10 o'clock the next morning to watch us start. We made Ambala about 11. a.m., filled up with petrol & oil, & went on to Meerut in [3] the evening. A pilot & observer who had gone by train, took over from me the next morning,



for work with X battery, & I went & watched the battery, & ground wireless station. The battery have just come from France, & it was a treat to watch them, especially when they ceased fire, & decided to clear off. Teams were up & galloping across country with the guns in about as little time as it takes me to write this sentence.

We put up at the Meerut club, & had a game of tennis in the evening

I started back for Lahore Thursday morning at 6.30 a.m, hoping to make Ambala, before the wind got up.

PRG 266/7/123 [?]

[These 2 pages belongs in PRG 266/7/120]

[letterhead]

Royal Flying Corps,

[3]A similar remark holds with reference to small fighting scouts escorting a two seater reconnaissance machine. The single seater has two machine guns, one of which is [*word crossed out*] supported on a rack, & aimed by hand, (a) the other (b) fixed to the machine, & aimed by pointing the machine at the target.

[drawing of a plane, showing the positions of the guns with descriptions]

(a) moveable gun, aimed by pilot seated at A.

(b) fixed gun, timed by gearing to engine to miss blades of propeller, operated by pressing handle.

(above is very much out of proportion). 4 I believe that under most recent conditions & with improvements in design, the two seater fighter is more than holding its own against the single seater.

Catherine asks some questions about design of wing badges. The ordinary tunic badge is white or light brown silk embroidered on black, something, but not much like this [*arrow pointing to a drawing of a wing badge*] worn over left pocket. (please see crest above) [*this crest is part of the letterhead*] about proper size – Shape is purely a matter of taste. Mess jacket badges are much smaller & of gilt metal. Cap badges are bronze, or brass, like the centre part of the above wings.

PRG 266/6/123

[4] However the wind beat me, & I found I couldn't reach Ambala in less than 4 hours – too long a run without a fill of oil, so came down at Sahranpur [*Saharanpur*] as it appeared to be a big enough place to provide a European meal. Before landing it was a case of examining fields from a low altitude, firing a few smoke cartridges to show me the direction of the wind, & of picking that field which gave me the longest run head into wind. I found a most hospitable family, Major Bruce, – O.P. Remount depot, wife, sister, & brother, a very pleasant garden, & lots of horses to look at. Was very much tempted [5] to stay overnight, & join a pigsticking party the following day. We flew away about 3.p.m, & made Ambala about 4.30, stayed the night there, & started for Lahore, with a prearranged halt at Jullunder 8.am Friday. Reached Jullunder safely, was entertained by the gunners, & returned to the machine at 3.p.m, to carry on: found my mechanic lying gasping & practically unconscious under the



machine, & he's been sentenced to a week in hospital. Poor fellow had been sickening with malaria for two days, & carried on till he dropped. – never said a word to me about it. Had to wire Lahore for another man & spent the night at Jullunder. Came on [6] here yesterday evening. The journey from Meerut took 8½ hours flying, the journey to Meerut had taken 4½. I was lucky enough to be in time to stop my servant & kit at every holding place. He now has standing orders to look out for me at every station, when I'm on a cross country flight. The telegram about Jack has turned up since I started writing this. "Seen to alight" means I think that he had control of his machine when landing. I can't hazard any guess as to what caused him to land, but engine failure, or engine damaged is a frequent cause. A machine without an engine, but otherwise undamaged is perfectly under control, but must come down. Your aff^{te} brother
Tom Gilbert

PRG 266/7/124

[letterhead]

Royal Flying Corps,

Sibi

Baliechistan [*Balochistan*]

18.3.18

Dear Mother,

I've been transferred here. The Hill tribes have been making a nuisance of themselves, & we've been coming up from Lahore one by one, & now have five machines & 7 officers on the job. I had one attempt to get here by air, but damaged my machine slightly landing in a sandstorm, after covering 400 miles in 2 trips of 3 hours each. I then returned to Lahore, & brought a machine by rail. A 600 mile cross country flight is a big undertaking, considering fuel consumption & wear & tear only, & much bigger when forced landings have to be allowed for. Another machine had a similar accident, & now they've decided that rail is the best means of transit

I should not be at all surprised if we do not go back to Lahore, but move on to Quetta, when this little disturbance is over. I hope so at any rate. Quetta is an out of the way spot, but has a respectable climate in the hot weather.

We are living in a bungalow & in tents close to the Residency, & are the Political Agent's Col Maconaghy's guests for meals. We start & run our own bandobast for meals to-morrow, & quite time too. Two to six R.F.C Officers have been spending most of the last two months living on other people. Other dwellers in the Residency are Mr & Mrs Acton & his sister Mrs Martin. He is Assistant Pol Agent. All have bungalows of their own, but have moved within the defended area.

I ran against a cabin mate, Capt Mr Iver I.M.S [*Indian Medical Service*] on the station yesterday. & am dining with him to morrow. His wife has joined him from home lately. He was returning from sick leave, looking as if his leave had done him no good, & still looks desperately ill. A man whom Mesopotamia fever has knocked out I'm afraid.



I havn t had a job of work to do yet in connection with the “war”, but may be called on to drop bombs at any time. Had a machine up for a climbing test last evening. We keep our machines for real work, & don’t use them for pleasure flying. The average day’s work is practically nil, except for the O’C detachment, Travis[?], & time hangs rather heavily. Am going to start tennis again – have tried a couple of times lately, & the arm behaved itself well.
Your aff^{te} son
Tom Gilbert

PRG 266/7/125

[letterhead]
Royal Flying Corps,
Sibi
25.3.18

Dear Dorothy

A mail a few days ago brought a letter from you & one from Marjory. Yours announced your return to work.

The war against the Marris continues I don’t think anyone quite understands why we are fighting. A party attacked the Political Agent & two other English Officers, it seems as a protest against being asked to provide recruits for the Indian army. The attacking party left 90 killed. They accounted for a few of our men. Since there have \been/ sundry small raids from the hills on friendly villages on the plains. Our own part in the show is badly handicapped by shortage of engines, & by other causes, which I darn’t put on paper.

This ought to be the hottest spot in India, & normally would be getting uncomfortable now.

We had a horrid 3 days sandstorm, & for some reason or other, possibly snow in the hills, it has left the place very cold at nights & cool in the day-time.

I teaed & tennised with the Actons yesterday, & am doing the same to-day also dining. I don’t mind this sort of active service a bit.

The Director of Aeronautics was here a few days ago, & Major Hutcheson, oc. from Lahore is with us now. It has just occurred to both of them that they might be able to administer things better if they came & saw what was going on.

Your aff^{te} brother
Tom Gilbert

PRG 266/7/126

[letterhead]
Royal Flying Corps,
Sibi
13.4.18



Dear Father

Your last letter is dated 25.2.18 Very many thanks for the £1000 you are going to invest in War Loan for me. I note that my Savings Bank Balance stands at £35-6-2.

Since writing last I have spent a week on the desert, salvaging a damaged machine. The aeroplane landed there owing to engine trouble after returning from a bomb raid. The pilot walked 15 miles, got a telegram through to us, & I flew over & picked him up at an advance landing ground we have near the foot of the hills I took charge of a salvage party, with Crossley tender, & new engine, with the idea of replacing the engine, & flying home. Bad weather prevented us starting for 3 days, & we finally got away with an advance party to prospect the road, & a cavalry escort with the tender. We did the first 12 miles without incident, & I then kept the tender waiting at a nasty looking ford over a nalla, until the advance party returned & reported on the road ahead. The road was reported passable. We took 3 hours to ford the nalla – had to build up a part of the crossing with brushwood, & drag the tender through, after the magnets went under water. Then 5 miles of fairly good going, followed by a series of sticky clay nalla beds: we charged the narrower ones, & bedded the wider ones down with grass, in one case robbing the thatch off a house. We finally made our destination at 8.p.m, just after dusk. We had started at daybreak. A meal of bully beef & tea, & then a good sleep, self beside tender to be near my machine gun, also driver, & remainder of party under aeroplane. The machine had been guarded since landing by a party of Pioneers sent from the advance landing ground, so we had a formidable party, should the Marris have se~~len~~/~~n~~-fit to attack us.

We breakfasted at 6 the next morning, & then discovered that the machine was quite unserviceable – she had been so badly smashed about by the storm: this in spite of the fact that the O.P. advance party had reported her-fit, & wanting only a check over of the rigging. We set to work to dismantle her, & sent out messengers to the nearest village, 7 miles away, for bullock carts & men to carry the bits. Another pilot flew over & landed beside me before the machine was completely dismantled, & I was glad of a confirmation of my opinion on the condition of the machine.

We started on the return journey, & the road had dried up enough for us to travel steadily but slowly, our pace regulated by that of the foot party, as we had to keep together under escort. About a mile short of the ford that held us up on the way out, a heavy storm broke, the foot party had to dump their loads, & I made a dash with the tender for the nalla crossing, but got ~~bæck~~ bogged after half a mile's journey. Nothing for it but to put up for the night, & we found comparatively comfortable quarters in a Thana (police post) in a village near by. More heavy rain that night & the next morning the nalla was in high flood: couldn't even get a mounted message through. Sent a letter off to Sibi the following \morning/ describing the state of the road, & asking for more rations. That evening the flood was down enough to allow us to start ford making. our old ford was completely washed out. The next morning we started off at 10 a.m, & just as we were negotiating the new ford, great was my joy to see a party of Pioneers, 50 strong, put in an appearance. They hauled us through this, & through several bad places nearer home, & we marched \in/ a muddy, & tired crew at 8.pm.

I enjoyed the outing, but hope that the next time they will send me with country carts, & not with a tender; & that they will keep their eyes open & send me empty, & not heavily loaded to no purpose.



We haven't any flying work to do just now, beyond an occasionally running up of engines, & short trip round the aerodrome. I wish my turn for a bomb raid would come.

Mother asks from what height we take photos. Official ones anything from 4000 – 10000ft They can be enlarged as required. Those I've sent taken with my Kodak are usually from about 2000 – 3000 ft.

Your aff^{te} son
Tom Gilbert

PRG 266/7/127

[Written at the top of the page in different handwriting]

I expect you have later news, but every scrap from the absent boys is precious.

[letterhead]

Royal Flying Corps,
Sibi. Baluchistan
15.4.18

Dear Aunt Sarah

A mail has just come in, bringing letters from you, Aunt Anna, & Pearl dated Jan 28th & Feb^y 15th. You had had no news from me other than my cable: my letters have been few, but one or two ought to have got through.

Am so sorry to hear that Nora has been unable to carry on with her work. Your cable re Jack reached me while I was at Multan some time ago on a cross country flight. Definite news is a long time coming through, & now there is certainly nothing to do but wait patiently.

My headquarters are still nominally Lahore, but there is not much probability of going back there for the present. We are up here, contributing towards a minor frontier war against the Marris, which I rather fancy is all over now. I've done nothing myself beyond a short reconnaissance, & looking for a machine, which did not return punctually from a bomb raid.

The pilot had been forced to land, owing to engine trouble, fortunately on the plains & in safety. Sibi is at the foot of the hills, close to where the railway begins to climb to Quetta. I took charge of a party to take out a new engine to the machine mentioned above, but found it so damaged by a storm, that it had to be dismantled & brought home on bullock carts & by hand, 24 miles. My party was on a tender, armed with rifles, & self with a machine gun, & escorted by cavalry. Forging nallas gave us a lot of difficulty, & storms so delayed us, & destroyed fords & bridges on the way home, that the job took a week, & we arrived back with the aid of party of 50 Pioneers to drag us through through flooded & muddy places. We were cut off from all communication, even by mounted messenger, for nearly 48 hours, but were lucky enough to find a Thana (police post) to live in.

We expect to move to Quetta as soon as peace is made with the Marris. We are now living in a bungalow, in the Residency compound. 4 – 5 officers here, & 3 away with two machines at Duki 60 – 70 miles N.E. The Residency is at present occupied by the Assistant Political Agent, Acton, his wife & sister in law – extremely nice people, & we often attend there for



meals & tennis. The weather has been very kind to us; mid April & the last 3 days have given us the first suspicion of hot weather, in the hottest station in India. It is not warm enough for punkahs yet, & nights are still quite cold.

Your aff^{te} nephew
Tom Gilbert

PRG 266/7/128

Royal Flying Corps
Harnai
Baluchistan
23.4.18

Dear Mother

Am at the above address, en route for Duki. We have two aeroplanes up there, & I am going up to relieve Mr Cumming, who has gone to Lahore on a week's leave. Came here last evening from Sibi in the brake van of a supply train – it was a warmish journey, I expected to get away this morning, but a wire from Captain Mc Krell, our flight commander, told me to detain the tender until his arrival this evening.

Scenery is rather fine here, but it's a desolate looking country: a few green valleys, amongst steep clay hills. The hills look absolutely bare in the distance, very like the Aden hills, but they provide a picking for a few cattle. I don't wonder that the Marris come down to the plains to raid their neighbours.

Am comfortably quartered here at the British Officers rest camp, & mess at the Dak Bungalow. Harnai is the supply base for this side of the "Marri War", & the camp is a large one.

The news from France has been far from good for some time: the last few telegrams have been so vague, that it is impossible to tell how far we've succeeded in checking the German advance.

I think I told you in my last letter that formal orders have come through for our move to Quetta, as soon as this show is over.

Your aff^{te} son
Tom Gilbert

PRG 266/7/129

[*letterhead*]
Royal Flying Corps,
Duki – Baluchistan.
29.4.18

Dear Marjory



I wrote last from Harnai, on my way here. The scenery on the journey up is really grand. I hope to have some photographs to send you, but I hadn't any idea what exposure to give, & am doubtful about results.

Am having a thoroughly pleasant holiday here: nothing to do at all: Have flown once just to see that my machine was in order, & shall have a short flight to-morrow morning again.

Spent the best part of 2 days overhauling my camera diaphragm & shutter – It was a ticklish job, & my first effort resulted in reverse action – the shutter normally open, & when the bulb was squeezed, clicking itself shut & open again.

This place is 50 odd miles from Harnai, though nothing like that by air. Mile after mile of the road is a series of hairpin bends. Supplies come up every day by Ford Van, bullock cart, & camels, & Duki forms the supply base for the column that has marched from here on Kahan, the Marri capital.

We are quartered in the Political Agent's Rest House, 3 Flying Corps, & 2 motor machine gun officers. Batting, O.C. R.F.C. here has gone this morning on a three day's tender excursion to look at landing grounds. Parkinson (Observer) & Self remain here. The only probable work in the near future is preparing for the move to Quetta.

I ought to head my letters Royal Air Force, but haven't got used to it yet. Lieut. R.A.F. doesn't sound nearly as nice as Lieut. R.F.C. Re addressing me either

Lieut. T. Gilbert.

Royal Air Force

or the ordinary civilian form is correct.

Rank must be stated in addressing letters to France, but Esq was the ordinary thing in the old army, up to the time of becoming a Captain.

Enclosed were taken by a friend at Ambola, self standing in angle of plane & fuselage in each case

Your aff^{te} brother

Tom Gilbert

PRG 266/7/130

[letterhead]

Royal Flying Corps,

Sibi. Baluchistan.

6.5.18

Dear Catherine

Last mail brought letters from you & Marjory. You & Emmie were having a bust[?] at Glenelg. You will miss old Harriett – please give her my greetings when you see her again.

Am spending a few days stewing down here, packing up, & getting a special train together to take our staff to Quetta. Cumming is with me, others have gone to Quetta, or on leave. I came through Quetta on my way back from Duki, as direct trains from Harnai – here are not running just at present. Quetta is a good spot – plane trees line the roads – orchards are scattered everywhere. We are going to live in some old barracks, & mess at the club, an



excellent arrangement for our pockets, & from the P.M.C's point of view. Quetta adopts English social habits – new comers have to wait to be called on, or to be asked to dinner before depositing “visit tickets”. Am afraid 9 generals, & the Agent to the Governor General will enforce a good deal of formality in the place

We hope, but hardly expect to get away in two day's time.

Your aff^{te} brother

Tom Gilbert

PRG 266/7/131

[letterhead]

Quetta Club.

12.5.18

Dear Father

You will see from the above, that the move to Quetta has become an accomplished fact. Cumming & self brought up a special train from Sibi on Wednesday night: we travelled in the brake van, & the men scattered themselves about over the open wagons – we preferred doing that to spending an indefinite number of days waiting for coaching stock. Sibi was getting very uncomfortably hot, & we were all thankful to see the last of our staff loaded. We live in barracks which will be very comfortable when we've had a few alterations made. The barracks are new – never been occupied before. At present I have a room to myself, but will probably share it with another pilot later on. Furniture is a difficult problem, but I've managed to rake together bare necessaries, We mess here at the club, & very well they do us.

I expect it will be a month before we fly: machines are still in their cases on rail – unloading of stores & erecting of hangars is going on. The aerodrome isn't finished yet.

Your aff^{te} son

Tom Gilbert

PRG 266/7/132

Royal Air Force

Quetta

26.5.18

Dear Mother

Your last letters are dated about April 1st[?] & March 8th. Some must have gone astray I think. One only mentioned the bush-fire: I'm afraid the damage has been great. Vintage was in full swing & reported fair, & Bill's at Wongoler big.



Am off to-morrow for about a 10 day's excursion by tender with Cap^t MacKrell. Our job is choosing & inspecting landing grounds: the road takes us through some very fine country. The aerodrome isn't ready here yet, & hardly looks like being ready for a month at least. This station is absolutely packed, & the club on band nights a gay sight – people teeing on the lawn must number hundreds. The club dined 180 last night. Tables are all out of doors, & the temperature is just right.

Have taken on a Munshi to teach me Baluchi: it is a spoken language purely, no literature at all, & for examination purposes, grammars have been compiled; & stories, told by the people themselves, written down in English characters. Am rather reluctant to take it up, as we are transferred about so much, & the latest idea seems to be to keep Flying Officers not longer than a year in the country. But I might find it very necessary in the event of a forced landing. I hurt the old Munshi's feelings the other day, by telling him that it wasn't usual to say "now my lad" to a pupil of my age. He meant to say "now my lord".

Your aff^{te} son

Tom Gilbert

Prg 266/7/133

Royal Air Force
Quetta Baluchistan
3.6.18

Dear Mother

Returned last evening from a most interesting week's trip by tender in search of landing grounds. Captain MacKrell & self, two drivers, & my bearer left Quetta Monday morning, & halted for the first night at Kahan, about half way between here & Loralai (not the Marri capital, Kahan I've mentioned before). We spent the evening catching snow trout, the best fish to eat I've struck for a long time. The next morning we halted ½ hour at Ziarat to call on the Acton's, our Sibi friends, & then went on to Smallan for lunch, & on to Loralai in the evening: we put up at the Dak Bungalow, & fed at the station mess, a common mess for two regiments stationed there. There was a landing ground to visit the next morning, & after that we made our first stage in the journey towards Sandeman, & halted a few miles off the main track at Wahar, a place reported to provide excellent Mohseer [*Mahseer*] fishing: fish there were in thousands, but the water so clear that everything worth catching took fright, & our bait was devoured by miserable little bony things almost as soon as it touched the water. After much searching we found one pool where we were able to catch a few 1/2 lb Mohseer for breakfast. The next morning we went through to Sandeman halting two hours for tiffin & visit to landing ground en route. It was 100 mile run, & punctures delayed our arrival till 8.30 pm. The 3/1rd Gurkhas gave us a late dinner after we'd washed & changed at the Dak Bungalow. Fort Sandeman gets quite excited about visitors. they see so few: & to turn up unannounced as we did is quite extraordinary. Conveyances other than motor have to be escorted through parts of the journey, & to wait for piquetting days for other parts. Travellers by motor go armed but are not bound to travel only on days when the road is piquetted. A



man named Harder, who was at school with me, & has since been in China, is now with the 3/1st Gurkhas: I couldn't place him, but we naturally had a good deal to talk about. We had about an hours work at Sandeman in the morning, & started immediately on the return journey. First nights halt Loralai – second Chotair: The last is a beautiful place near Ziarat, 8000 feet up – country very rugged, & unlike the majority of Baluchistan, covered with Juniper forest. We shot pigeons & caught snow trout for dinner, & left for Quetta at a comfortable hour yesterday morning. We stopped a Kohon bungalow for tiffin, & strafed the Khansamah, who on our way out had sold us our own soda water at 2^d each, we of course thinking that we were saving our own for places where sodawater was not available. Am sending some photos of Duki & neighbourhood by registered post. Several have been spoilt by bad developing, & some are out of focus, but they will give you an idea of the country

Your aff^{te} son
Tom Gilbert

With PRG 266/7/133

[a sketch map showing part of the railway line from Quetta to Sibi, part of the railway line from Sibi through Harnai to Kachh the road from Kachh to Fort Sandeman with side roads to Duki and Wakar]

PRG 266/7/134

Royal Air Force
Quetta
9.6.18

Dear Emmie

I havn't much news since writing last. My machine is ready for the air, but there is at least a week's work, probably more, on the landing ground.

Enclosed are some photos taken by friends. I've written what most of them are on the backs. My room mate has gone on a fortnights leave, for which I'm rather thankful. He's a thoroughly untidy person, contributes nothing towards the furnishing of the room, & spends most of his time abusing his servant, a small boy who understands very little of his masters "hukmi" [?] issued in English.

I came across the following description of Baluchistan the other day, & I think you'll appreciate it after seeing my photos "Its surface is a medley of rocky peaks, narrow passes, intricate ravines & broken ranges of barren hills, which bristle at every point with defensive positions. The people show no trace of Indian culture, & are as rugged as the land in which they dwell. ... they are fitting guardians of the inhospitable wastes which separate India from Iran."

My munshi is a nice old man, & incidental to teaching me Biluchi, tells me a great deal of interest about the people. A very useful thing to know is that once they've received a guest,



they will protect him through thick & thin. Were I to have a forced landing, & to ask for a drink of water, they would, if friendly disposed, bring me milk – once I've accepted their hospitality, my enemies are theirs as long as I stay with them. No man would break this law of hospitality even were he to discover that he'd received an active enemy as a guest. Am sending some more of my own photos by registered post.

Your aff^{te} brother
Tom Gilbert

PRG 266/7/135

Quetta
20.6.18

Dear Emmie

Australian mail has gone astray somewhere for the last few weeks. Letters from you & Marjory came in a few days ago, mentioning others that had been sent off by an earlier boat. The others have not turned up yet.

Have just moved quarters, & now live in a miniature semidetached bungalow built for a native officer. It is a comfortable little place, two rooms, with bathroom & cook house attached. The only objection to it is that the windows are about 9 ft from the ground, so placed I suppose, to prevent the public gazing in at purdah ladies.

Flying has started, & we've all been up to test machines, & I've had one photography job, & have given a joy ride to one of the gunner Majors, with whom we will work later. We're forbidden to fly over Quetta city, because the ladies are afraid we'll see them bathing on the roofs. The aerodrome is not good, in fact it is the worst I've met – surface very rough, but we hope it will settle down – the ground was embanked fields two months ago.

Two of our number, Observers, have just left for Egypt to train as pilots. The whole of the Indian Flying Corps is undergoing upheaval – changes in personell from the Director of Aeronautics downwards. We ought to have a good chance of getting more up to date now.

Your aff^{te} brother
Tom Gilbert

PRG 266/7/136

Royal Air Force
Quetta
30.6.18

Dear Catherine

Yours & Emmies letters dated Glenelg March 6th have just rolled up. They must have either been to America, or been lost in the Calcutta Censor's office, whose stamp they bear.



Am glad you were able to squash your hotel manager. Emmie reports that you had a row with him before you'd been in the place two minutes.

Yours is the fullest account I've had of the bushfire to-date – I can't think what has happened to other letters of about the same date.

We all five flew in formation yesterday morning. Captain MacKrell led for a bit, then fired a green light which was signal for me to take on leadership, as he was landing in distress. I fired a red light which means "fall in & follow me", & later a green light & then dropped \out/ to give another man practice at leading.

Am afraid my letters from here are very scrappy. Nothing much happens. I pay an occasional call, play bridge, & billiards, & go to a few club tea-parties.

My primus stove is making a beastly row cooking my bath water – shall have to try & invent a silencer for it. It lives in the cook room, just outside my front door.

[*sketch*] something like a ground plan of my "house"

Your aff^{te} brother

Tom Gilbert

PRG 266/7/137

Royal Air Force

Quetta

7.7.18

Dear Mother

A large mail dated May 18 – 21 has been drifting in, a letter or two at a time, during the week. Am sorry to hear that Father had such a bad time with his leg, but he was on the mend, & was just off on a long motor trip with Uncle Ted.

You all seem to have approved of Killick & Palin – have heard or seen no sign of them in Quetta yet. Quetta is not the desperate place they paint it, though it certainly is not one of the Earth's beauty spots. Even now, about the worst month of the year on the Sind plain, it is comfortable here sleeping out of doors under two blankets, & it is nothing like warm enough in the middle of the day to feel the need of a punkah. Curiously enough, it does not seem to be a healthy place, to judge by the size of our sick parade every morning.

Last evening I ran across a Balmoral Castle acquaintance, Mrs Wilson: her husband is Major R.I.A. They've been in the station longer than we have, & the fact that we haven't met before will give you some idea of the size of the European population here, & of the club gatherings on band nights, which we both frequent.

My last flight was bomb dropping & wireless practice. We mark out a target on the ground, & try & hit it with dummy bombs, i.e ordinary bombs with the fuses taken out. We have to learn to work here without a bomb sight, & to correct aim by observation of the last shot. This is necessary because all bomb sights depend on a knowledge of one's height above the target, & this height would rarely be known when fighting in this sort of country.



We are to be visited by the Director of Aeronautics, & the Wing Commander in a few days' time, & we shall all be glad of a chance of meeting them, especially the O.C. Flight, who naturally finds it awkward working under an unknown boss.

I wonder how Archie will like New Guinea – he'll find it rather warm I think

Your aff^{te} son

Tom Gilbert

[written at the top of the letter]

P.S. Grindlay's London have just announced the despatch of a parcel of food received from Australia! – it must be one of the parcels I missed in Egypt.

TG

PRG 266/7/138

Royal Air Force
Quetta 14.7.18

Dear Emmie

Letters from you, Catherine have just arrived: also Catherine's Xmas present, – socks, plum pudding & other food, – for which many thanks.

All the powers that be in the Indian Air Force are here: there are to be fairly big changes – this is to be squadron H.Q, with two Flights, & there will be a detached Flight at Lahore. Our Squadron Commander flew through from Lahore to Sibi one day, & on here the next – an extraordinarily stout effort, even in the cold weather, but unnecessary, & almost foolhardy \at this time of year/ in the opinion of steadier pilots: I can't understand any man flying 11 hours in one day, when it doesn't matter whether he gets there to-day, or to-morrow, or the next day. Also imagine a forced landing 20 – 30 miles from a drink in the Sind desert – temperature up to 125° & not below 100°.

My motor bike is having a much needed overhaul. One of our corporals is spending his Sunday doing the job for me – he is a man with many years' experience of motor engines, before he joined the Air Force, & the machine couldn't be in better hands. He's just been teaching me all about 20 cylinder engines, & I've been trying to look as if I understood.

There is a fairly full flying programme for next week, photography & shoots, & next month I believe we are to be fairly busy, showing gunner officers their job from our point of view. I'm going out by tender to-morrow to look at some of the country to be photographed. It saves such a lot of time, & wastage of plates if one gets a few measurements first, as of course I know just what area my camera covers from different heights.

My bearer's annoying me – he's an excellent servant in most ways, but he cannot learn to clean things without being told specifically to do so. He'll wash my tumblers, & then turn them upside down on a windowsill covered deep in dust. He cannot see when a white shirt is white no longer. He's been promised a rise in pay the very first month he can get through without having to be told to clean anything. He has failed 3 times, & I shall have to try the other plan of threatening a reduction in pay if he fails again. Unfortunately I can't afford to lose him, &



he knows it. The servant class has been absolutely spoilt by the officer of the new army, & good men are very few & far between.

Your aff^{te} brother

Tom Gilbert

PRG 266/7/139

[letterhead]

Quetta Club.

28.7.18

Dear Mother

Your last letter dated June 11th was written from the S.A. Hotel. Father had returned from his trip much fitter.

The week's work has been moderate, but we are in for a fairly strenuous time. 6 officers arrive to-day to be trained as observers, & on the 6th of next month we are to have 6 gunner officers for a course in cooperation with aircraft. They are men picked from various divisions, who will return to their various headquarters as liaison officers between artillery & air force.

Major Stoddart, I think I mentioned him last week as our new squadron commander, has given me the job of Squadron artillery liaison officer, which means that I'm responsible for arranging work with gunners. Am afraid I shall come in for a good deal of the teaching work on the course, & the thought of lecturing frightens me to death, especially a few practice lectures, which we're to deliver amongst ourselves beforehand.

Had a cheery evening dining with the Wilsons (ex. P.S. Balmoral Castle) on Wednesday, & another here on Friday – ladies night – , at our own mess table. Cap^t & Mrs Hood, formerly 27th, now 28th L. Cavalry dined, also Mr & Miss Cousens, our doctor's family.

Am sorry our mess is going to increase so much in size. We are a happy family, except for one man, a most objectionable creature, who fortunately generally dines out; & a mess of about 24 will rather put a stop to Friday's "select" gatherings.

Your aff^{te} son

Tom Gilbert

PRG 266/7/140

Quetta

4.8.18

Dear Emmie

A mail in during the week, letters dated about June 22nd, so they're coming through more quickly than they were. The long time mine take to reach you is partly accounted for by the fact that I never know when a mail is going out, & a letter posted to-day may be held up in Bombay a week or two.



We're a Mess of 16 now – the gunners who come for a course I mentioned when writing last, are going to the R.A. Mess, but we have our 6 new observers, & sundry officers on inspection duty.

Went out yesterday with Cap^t MacKrell & another by car to Kila Obdulla (Kila = fort), about 50 miles N.W., to look for a landing ground. It is a dreary bit of country, mostly as flat as a pancake, carrying a few sheep, goats & camels. There is cultivation where “Khorases” bring spring water from the hills. The Khorase is an underground channel connected by man holes & there is only one tribe who can make them, the art being in determining levels without instruments

[2 sketches showing these in Section with ground level marked and From air]

They are peculiar to this part of the country; Curiously enough there is a similar thing, masonry built, supplying a Mohammedan village that I used to go to in Belgaum district. The Baluchistan expert seems to think I'm a liar when I tell him so.

Yesterday evening we went to an excellent amateur performance of “The Private Secretary”. It wasn't over till 2.a.m. I've been having a thoroughly lazy day as a result – breakfast of tea & biscuits in bed at 10.a.m, & another good sleep after tiffin.

Friday the Cummings gave us a cheery tea picnic at Urak, a place about 15 miles out, I think I've mentioned before, & we followed it by a mixed guest night at the club.

Have neither heard or seen anything of Mess^{ts} Rillick & Palin, so expect they've been sent somewhere other than Quetta

I shall be flying in the morning, taking photographs probably about 1½ hours' job.

Your aff^{te} brother

Tom Gilbert

PRG 266/7/141

[letterhead]

Quetta Club.

Aug 25th 1918

Dear Father

I have just received your letter dated June 25th. Am glad your trip with Uncle Ted was such a success.

You say that you can't help feeling that the machines supplied us in India are not of the best: they are not of course the most up to date, but absolutely suitable for the work here & probably quite as reliable as any more modern machine. Engine failure has to be contended with occasionally, no matter how perfect the engine design; since arriving in Quetta I've only had engine trouble once, & that not serious enough to prevent getting back to aerodrome to land. During the same period we've only had one other engine give trouble, & this I think speaks remarkably well for engines, & incidentally for the fitters who work on them. An engine hardly ever cuts out completely – it practically always gives warning.



We're doing a good deal of flying, work with Artillery, training observers, photography, & instruction with our own imitation batteries. They've given me an office & a clerk, & made me responsible for artillery work, recording the result of every flight in the Squadron record book, & intelligence. The last involves study of all reconnaissance reports & photographs \& maps/ – it is really another man's job, but he happens to be away on leave.

Am riding in 1½ mile flat race in a gymkhana that's coming off on the 5th Sept. – wish it was a jump race. The horse belongs to a Captain Braund, & it has past record as a point to point winner – I know nothing of its capabilities on the flat. Unfortunately he's been eating his head off for months past, & a fortnight is too short, I'm afraid to get rid of much of his superfluous flesh. – Am suffering from excessive stiffness after a cross country ride last evening.

Went to a very cheery mixed dinner party on Friday with Major Marshall. G.S.O.2 here. He is an ex-flying Corps Observer. We had gramophone music at dinner, & a piano on the lawn after dinner, & made music & song till 2.a.m. Am dining to-night with the Wilson's R.F.A. – have mentioned them before. He was up with me for 2 hours yesterday, watching me conduct a shoot with an 18p battery: he quite enjoyed himself, but at one period had to keep saying to himself “no I won't be sick.”

You mention in your letter one of your's written on March 25th, which has never reached me. I note the following re investments for me.

- (1) £1000 in Broken Hill Debentures @6%. Interest half yearly.
- (2) War Bonds turned into inscribed stock.
- (3) Interest £60-16-6 plus Savings Bank balance to be invested as you think fit.

Have just received a letter from Mary Stirling dated Dec 28th. It wandered to Mesopotamia by mistake.

Your aff^{te} son
Tom Gilbert

PRG 266/7/142

R.A.F.
Quetta
1.9.18

Dear Mother

One overdue letter from Marjory came during the week, otherwise nothing from home. The last English mail was sunk, so I expect letters from the Fergussons have gone down – I hear from one of them most mails.

Quetta is cooling down rapidly, & the early morning shave by lamp light is quite a chilly business.

They have put me in temporary charge of the Flight – Major Stoddart is away on leave, & Capt MacKrell takes his place as squadron commander, self Capt M's place as Flight Commander. There's quite a lot to do with the Artillery office to run as well. We have a fairly full programme for next week – 4 batteries to work with, & two machines to fly to Loralai, & photography of Quetta district whenever there's a machine to spare.



The race-horse is getting on pretty well – I believe he's favourite, but I think the public are making a mistake about his fitness – he certainly won't be in good training by Thursday afternoon next, but possibly none of the others will be fitter. The race is a distance handicap, & I'm rather wondering how they're going to give a field of 12 a fair start.

The pay authorities have made an extraordinary mistake, & certified, unprovoked, that I've drawn no pay since Oct 31st last, whereas I'm fully paid to date – quite an opportunity for a swindle!

Am very glad to get consistently good news of Harry's & Bill's families: I owe both letters, & will probably write some time

Your aff^{te} son

Tom Gilbert

266/7/143

R.A.F. Quetta

8.9.18

Dear Father

The event of the week has been the race-meeting – a most successful day. I managed to bring "Spring-bok" in a winner by a head – caught the horse whose rider thought he had the race a certainty a few yards from the post. It was a distance handicap, as I think I told you before, self on 45 yds mark, 3 horses behind, & 7 up to 170 yards in front. It was a lot to get through, & I should never have done it, but for everyone, except for those placed 2nd & 3rd flying wide on the bends, & letting me through on the inside.

I value very highly the following from our Squadron Commander, a man we all admire & respect. "Dear Gilbert – I wish to congratulate you very sincerely on your excellent win yesterday. I considered it the best race of the day.

"At the same time I should like to say how pleased I am with the work which you have done for me, & the modest & efficient way you have carried out all other work for me.

"Little successes, like yours of yesterday, are good for the Air Force. Yrs" (sd D G Stodart). –

True copy. –

Enough of blowing my own trumpet. We've all been flying pretty well every day – one m/c doing photographs, & the rest training Observers. Have had dual control fitted to my m/c, & tried teaching my Observer to fly – he did very well, & only let the bus get the better of him once in 20 minutes – otherwise he had complete control, without any assistance except coaching through the telephone.

We have a colossal programme for the cold weather training season on the plains, & it promises to be most interesting & enjoyable. The programme is confidential, & I must give no details.

Am going out to-morrow morning with Dowling, the wireless officer, to watch the puff battery at work – from the ground for a change. We are going to have \a m/c/ doing a prearranged shoot, & 2 others locating flashes which we fire to represent active hostile batteries: The



observer has a squared map on which he “pin points” all the flashes he sees. The above programme will take place at 7.a.m., & be repeated at 7.30.

Your aff^{te} son

Tom Gilbert

With PRG 266/7/144

[a menu card decorated with sketch of several biplanes flying above coastline, with 4 flashes]

Menu

Lt. Gilbert

A filbert, a bit of a knut

Once rode a great race & won but –

The Tote couldn't pay

So we all came away –

Chorus

And the Fox to his lair in the morning.

PRG 266/7/144

R.A.F. Quetta

15.9.18

Dear Dorothy

I have as usual very little news. Work has been fairly strenuous. – we with one flight are averaging just over twice as much flying time as Risalpur, with two flights active, & one away on leave.

Some of us start on a gunnery course at the school here, to-morrow, & our mess is going to increase in numbers considerably with outsiders coming for this course. I don't suppose we shall learn much about shooting in a fortnight, but it will be very interesting to learn something of the theory of their job, & of how they make use of the information the aeroplane gives them by wireless, during a shoot.

The enclosed I found at my place at dinner the other evening. Fox was the name of the man who ran the totalisator, & made a mess of it. The artist is an Observer attached to us, the author of the verse Captain MacKrell Between them they turned out about a dozen such cards in a couple of hours. The occasion was a farewell party to a friend who is returning to “miles from anywhere in Persia, after a few weeks leave in Quetta.

Have entered for the open tennis tournament doubles – I'm no good these days, & my partner's worse, but we ought to get some fun out of it.

Quetta is allowed to dance, now that we're doing so well on the Western Front. I do think the General's point of view rather curious – if dancing is a legitimate amusement in war-time, why not dance to cheer ourselves up when losing, as well as dance for joy when winning.



There's to be a wedding in the Flight. shortly – Mr Brown & Miss Beattie – a most surprising arrangement to the onlookers. We're giving them a "bara Khana" next Friday.

Your aff^{te} brother

Tom Gilbert

PRG 266/7/145

R.A.F. Quetta

29.9.18

Dear Marjory

Last mail is dated about July 18th. Am sorry to hear such bad news of Nuntherungie, & hope that some of the 102 points of rain reached it.

Your interview with Lovell opens up fresh possibilities of news coming through about Jack – it is a pity that he was not more certain of his memory.

It seems from a recent notification, that I've been writing too much about our work. The censor forbids so much, that it is difficult to write shop at all, without giving away information.

The use, in fact I believe, the possession of a Camera is forbidden.

We've had a theatre company here this week, doing a different play every evening. I went to "When Knights were bold", & the Morals of Marcus", & thoroughly enjoyed both. The Garrison Gymnasium serves as theatre on these occasions.

Friday, I motored out about 30 miles, to discuss our part with the Artillery during their practice camp. The General kept me waiting 1½ hours after appointed time, & then didn't trouble to get out of bed, after his afternoon siesta, to see me. I don't like generals who treat the mere subaltern thus.

It is getting quite cold now, & I'm al~~t~~ already sleeping indoors under 3 blankets.

There is a lot of shooting to be had round here now – chikor, the mountain partridge; & snipe are just coming in. I went out last Sunday, & was going out to-day, but decided on a Sunday morning in bed, after a week of early mornings, & a few late nights.

Your aff^{te} brother

Tom Gilbert

PRG 266/7/146

Royal Air Force

Quetta

13.10.18

Dear Father

I havn't timed a letter to reach you on your Birthday, but now send wishes for many returns of yesterday in cheerier times.



I heard from Killick a day or two ago – He is posted to Poona, & can't deliver all your messages verbally. However I hope for an opportunity to call on him by air sometime soon. Have just moved quarters to the Club – shall probably only enjoy this more civilised abode for about a fortnight, but it's worth it, especially as I didn't have to do any of the dirty work of moving myself. It's a nasty cold job now turning out after dinner for a mile s bike ride. The thermometer goes down to 32° – 36° at nights, & rises to about 80° in the day-time. We had a gymkhana meeting on Thursday. I rode an Arab pony in two races, & a Waler in another, but did no good: the former was untrained, & the latter outclassed: could have claimed a foul & a third place in the last race, but the whole day's racing was so crooked, that I was glad to get clear of it. A real practical example of Hafiz's maxim N° 13.

The chief items of news last mail were the electric light installation, & Dolly's & Catherine's departure for Sydney. Emmie's description of the electric light machine "you just have to start it going, & then it stops itself", or words to that effect, doesn't sound altogether satisfactory. A wedding happens in the Flight to-morrow, & we're giving Brown a farewell to bachelor days to-night.

Work is fairly strenuous, & we're at it most days from 7.am. till 6 pm with ordinary intervals for meals – Captain MacKrell has been in bed with a damaged leg, & I've had both Flight Commander's & Artillery Officer's jobs to put through. Our C.O, Major Stodart, I discovered during a run in his car the other day, is an Australian. His grandfather went out in /38, & settled in the Western district of Victoria. – his father was a doctor & station owner – Do you know the family? I believe this man is an expert in the medical line, but he is very reserved about himself, & one just finds out little things about him occasionally. I must wander off & see to arrangements for Brown's dinner to-night.

Your aff^{te} son
Tom Gilbert

PRG 266/7/147

R.A.F. Quetta
20.10.18

Dear Catherine

A mail a few days ago brought letters from Sydney & from Blue Mountains, – nothing direct from home, so I expect your letter came round the wrong way. You seem to have been enjoying your trip thoroughly.

The war news is almost too good to be true – can we stick it long enough to punish them thoroughly? before listening to peace terms.

Our men gave a concert in barracks last evening – quite a good show considering it was their first attempt. There are two good comedians, & two or three good voices. The rest of the performers made up for shortcomings by thoroughly enjoying every minute of their time on the stage.

Machines are all ready for the road, & we're having a dress rehearsal to-morrow morning. – everything that can be put on, guns camera, wireless, bomb-racks, & sundry smaller things



are to be fitted. Have only had one morning s flying during the week teaching Observers to take oblique photographs. They're threatening me with a new job – accounts. only temporary I think – at least I hope so.

Sitting in office all day week-days & half a day Sundays doesn't provide much incident to write about

Yours aff^{te} brother
Tom Gilbert

PRG 266/7/148

Quetta Club
31.10.18

Dear Harry

At last the spirit moves me to write to you, but as usual there is precious little to write about. Spent a couple of days in bed with flue last week – its catching everybody in turn, & seems to be epidemic all over India, Other days have been in office pretty well up to dinner time – accounts is my latest job – flying suits me better, but there is only a very occasional job of work to be done in the air just now – artillery school closed, & divisional camps finished. Men of the flight are at work, or rather have been at work getting machines into thorough good order for our cross country work. We leave here on Monday morning by air – each pilot takes either a fitter or a rigger as passenger. Remainder of personnel & stores go by special train. Moving is a comparatively simple matter now that things are properly organised. Every nut & split pin has its proper place in a cupboard, & cupboards all fit on to lorries – Workshops are lorries specially fitted, & two lorries are fitted as offices, so that office work can go on without unloading.

We are going to run to a fancy dress dinner & dance on Saturday evening – just a small party of about 30. – Shall have to think of a dress soon, but if no idea comes, can always disguise myself as a jockey.

Am posting you two parcels, contents second hand hearth rugs – otherwise Mohammedan prayer carpets – I wanted to send something bigger in the Persian carpet line, but post won't take it, & am not allowed to ship parcels other than by posting them. If there is any duty to pay, will you recover it from my account which Father looks after.

Your aff^{te} brother
Tom Gilbert

PRG 266/7/149

[*letterhead*]
Poyal Air Force,
Lahore.
10.11.18



Dear Father

The Quetta Air Force has accomplished a move down here without hitch. Five machines flew down together: we left the ground at Quetta at 8 o'clock Monday morning – it was freezing hard, & engines were very difficult to start, in spite of a fill of hot oil. Our first halt was Jacobabad, where we stayed about an hour and a half to fill up machines, & to have breakfast. We then left for Reti, & landed there about 2.30. Here we decided to halt for the night, & have engines & rigging thoroughly looked over – our passengers were four fitters & one rigger. The next morning we left at 7. O'clock, & 4 of us made Multan in about 3 hours – the fifth went down at an intermediate landing ground for a small repair to his engine, & came on a hour later. Multan had breakfast waiting for us on the aerodrome, but had forgotten the petrol & oil, so we had to make an unduly long halt, while petrol was being brought up in bullock carts. We finally arrived Lahore in close formation at 5.30 pm, after one more halt to fill up. It was a tiring job, & once away from the Quetta hills, the country is very uninteresting – mostly desert, with a few patches of cultivation. The powers that be consider, & have expressed in writing that the flight of 700 odd miles without hitch, is a very creditable performance, & denotes a high state of efficiency. It is a pity we were one machine short of full strength.

Our special train left Quetta the same day, arrived about 1 pm on Wednesday, & was unloaded before dark.

There is a rumour, unconfirmed as yet, that peace has been signed – most rumours have been true lately, so this probably is. We anxiously wait to see the terms.

We stay here till the 23rd, & then wander off by air again. I don't suppose we shall be back before mid. February, & as far as I personally am concerned, I should not be surprised to get marching orders either to Egypt or to England.

Am living in a tent outside the Mess Bungalow – the climate here is just right, not too cold at nights, & pleasantly warm in the day.

Your aff^{te} son

Tom Gilbert

PRG 266/7/150

[*letterhead*]

Royal Air Force,

Lahore

28.11.18

Dear Father

You will see from the above address that they've kept me here instead of sending me on tour with B Flight. Am disappointed, but take it as a compliment that they want me here for office work. The most interesting part of the tour Jubbulpore – Poona has been cancelled owing to "peace breaking out," so am not so jealous of those who have gone to Jubbulpore, as I should otherwise have been.



Was dining at Folettis [*Faletti's*] the evening the news of armistice came through. People took it fairly quietly, though a few of the noisier spirits destroyed a few sofa cushions pillow fighting. Yesterday was devoted to Victory celebrations – sports, processions & fireworks. Lahore was brilliantly illuminated in the evening. Six of us flew over the arena at Minto Park in the morning, dropped pamphlets, & played about in the air. In the evening we flew over in formation, & then dived together over the head of the procession: afterwards we broke up, & threw the machines about a bit, for our own & for public amusement.

Have to-day put in an application for a permanent commission in the Air Force, but I suppose they'll call me back to the Agricultural service. This flying game gets a hold on most people, as does the privilege of belonging to the R.A.F. I don't suppose that many flying officers, who have got well past the learning stage, will want to give it up. Am still keen enough on the farming but keener on what I'm doing at present. Shall just have to wait & see what happens.

Your aff^{te} son

Tom Gilbert