

LETTER NO 32.

Tuesday April 6th 1926:

J. O'Rourke & Co.,
G.P.O. Box 283F,
Sydney NSW.

My Dear Mother,

Many, many, happy returns of the day, to you! I send you my best wishes for your birthday & hope you have lots of presents & don't get ill through eating too many chocolates & soon. Buy yourself "some little thing about ninepence" & charge it up to me. As the soldier wrote to his mother "I am sending you a pound - but not this week."

Thank you for your nice letter received today & I am glad to see everyone is still going strong at home. I was very sorry to hear about Grandma, although really not very surprised. She was such a nice old dear, I should have liked to see her again. I hope she at least had my letter. I think she may have done. She & I used to get on pretty well & wrote to each other at Christmas.

I shall look forward to seeing "Elfordleigh" & the "A.C." I wonder if I can pick up a bargain while I'm home to bring back with me.

I hope you've had a pleasant Easter. I had a very enjoyable time camping which I'll tell you a bit about.

I went with 4 others - Geoffrey Cadden, McKenney,

Roberts & Russell. McKenney is an old friend of Geoff's. He & Roberts would be about 40 to 45, & Russell would be about my age. Geoff is about 25 or so.

I packed up Thursday evening - my oldest clothes & put on riding breeches & puttees & a nice new pair of camping boots - almost "boots" - with a wide verandah all the way round. - very dry & warm & comfortable. Geoff came up from Lindfield to fetch me about half-past-seven with his sidcar & we went & bought our groceries at Lindfield & then went to Geoff's & got his things together. I slept at Geoff's for the night & we got up about 5 am. but what with packing things on the bike etc. we didn't get away till 7 am. We picked up the others at Epping & they were only just ready too.

We had a good trip over the Blue Mountains - the other three going in McKenney's car - an old Straker-Squire - about 15 years old but a wonderful goer. We had lunch at Blackheath & an uneventful & pleasant trip to near Lithgow.

Then they decided to try the Old Bathurst Road - the one built by governor Macquarie & since superseded by a better-graded though longer route.

All went well along the old road until we came to the Cox's River - which was unbridged & had to be forded. It was about 10 or 15 yards wide but

the recent rains had made it pretty deep & it looked doubtful if we should get over. M^cKenney tried it in the car & all the things floated off the floor but he got through to bog in the sand on the farther bank: we crossed by a fallen tree & pulled him out with a rope I had fortunately borrowed from the store. The water was quite 2'6" deep where he came through, but Geoff tried a little further down & stalled in the middle but we hauled him out with the rope & up the bank. --- All went well till we came to the hill when the Straker "declined with thanks" & Geoff had to tow her up - at least to assist her up with his Harley. The unusual strain made his clutch wear & we had to adjust it before the next hill. That was about as bad & Mac. tried taking the bus up backwards without success, but ultimately succeeded in getting up frontwards with a rush.

~~e~~ We got to the place where they intended to camp but found two other tents there & went on to another spot - Honeysuckle Ford further up the river where we had a delightful spot all to ourselves. We got there about 5-30 & got the tent pitched by dark - a little after 6 p.m. We turned in by 9 o'clock. We had armfuls of gum-tips on the floor

- Eucalyptus in fact, - which smell very nice & made things softer. Over that we spread our water proof sheets & our blankets. We were up about 6 & Mac & Geoff, who are very keen trout-fishers got away for some early fishing & Roberts went shooting but they didn't get anything. After breakfast I went for a shoot with Russell & got a couple of Rabbits. Then we cleaned & put in a petrol tin with the top cut off, half-full of water, with some onions, potatoes, rice, pepper & salt & made an excellent stew. The fishers were away after the trout all day & returned with six in the evening which we had for tea fried - & very excellent they were too!

On Sunday we had very much the same sort of day - the fishers caught six fish & I shot two rabbits & made a super excellent stew with some bacon in it to give it tone. We had a thunderstorm in the morning & another shower in the evening but otherwise the weather was perfect. The fishers were glad to see the rain as it made it better for fishing, so everyone was satisfied one way or another.

Mac & Russell were not too well Sunday evening so they got to bed early & we other three sat around the fire & yarned till about half past eight.

Monday morning I took a few photographs

& the fishing maniacs did some more whipping of the stream & we struck camp & got away at noon.

We went to Tarana for petrol & had lunch at the pub. there, during which a heavy rainstorm occurred.

It rained so heavily that it shorted some connections on Geoff's bike & it took us some time to fix it: and three miles away there hadn't been a drop fallen.

On the top of the Blue Mountains we saw a curious sight. Over a wonderful panorama of range upon ranges of hills & mountains we saw a very heavy rainstorm moving along like a curtain, revealing & blotting out the hills in turn.

Geoff & I got home somewhere about 8 pm. There were literally hundreds of cars coming home in the evening along the main Western Road through Penrith & Parramatta - just a long string of lights up & down the hills ahead & behind in the dark.

I enjoyed the weekend thoroughly & feel it has done me a lot of good. Our camp was well over 3000 feet above sea level so it was an entire change. The pleurisy I had has entirely disappeared & I am feeling very fit.

I hope you all enjoyed as nice an Easter.

Now I must say "goodnight" & retire.

Best love to all,

Bertie

P.S. You shall have any
snaps that come out later.
B