

Sub Mackarness

483 (M) HAA Bty Regt

139 ...

BLA

11th Dec, 1944

Darling Mummy,

I'm sorry I haven't written before. I could have done yesterday, but felt so sleepy I hadn't the energy. We are not at our destination yet, but expect to be in about 2 days, & we are this side of the channel, if you see what I mean. We actually started the day we were meant to – last Friday, early in the morning, from Notts. (I think I told you that, & how we might have seen Mary, & flashed through Oxford. We arrived in the later afternoon, & were taken to a transit camp in a large & modern girls school. A BBC recording van came & did a recording of the girls changing their money, & a few interviews. It will be in Radio Newsreel at 3 pm some afternoon, but we don't quite know when at all, & can't find out. Forces Programme, 3 pm. You could hear the J/C speaking, & the girls cheering, & some of them speaking, but you won't hear me. But it's rather a thrill. We were issued with vomit bags (3), cigarettes, choc etc. We left there at 9 next morning, went to the docks, & got on about 12. The ship next to ours was full of Yanks, who threw the girls gum & stuff! There were a good many other troops on our boat, & I met a man who's been on a course at Weybourne with me, returning from leave. The girls all had bunks & we four slept in a little room off one of the saloons where the girls were. There were only 7 aunts for the whole lot! I missed seeing us start, as I was mucking about with rations: but it was a lovely day & as calm as anything. We had a blanket to sleep under, & of course kept our clothes on – plus lifebelts which looked most fetching. Only about 3 of the girls had been sick by the evening, & the rest of us were feeling fine. When I woke in the morning, it was heaving a good bit, but I still felt fine. Joan (one of the subs) & the J/C were beginning to go a bit green; & some of the girls were staggering to the aunt & back fairly often! Just as it was getting light we got outside the harbour, & there we stopped for 1½ hours & that was when it was so awful. I didn't feel too bad, but every time I went outside & tried to do anything I had to rush back to my Bag Vomit. I was only sick twice, & between whiles was quite alright when lying down, but standing up got me down. When we did eventually disembark, 3 of the girls were taken to hospital, one right out in a dead faint: but the rest of us marched a goodish way to this transit camp, where we are for a few days, in commandeered hotels. The shops are full of perfume, notepaper, & FOUNTAIN PENS!! Can you think of anything you want & can't get – not food of course, or clothes so much, but cooking things, or china or glass, or stationery? I must get at least one fountain pen, but I'd still like my Boots one if/when it comes. As I've said on my p.c., your Xmas presents will be late, as I'm not going to buy them all in this place without companing it with somewhere else. Things are very expensive – stockings about 30/-, pens 15/- to 25/-, etc, but fruit is cheap. This place is comfortable but a bit chilly: & where we're going is very uncomfortable, at the moment. Masses of mud, no light or water etc – great fun.

I think I'll get notepaper here, & don't bother with the typing paper. Cigarettes sometime, & the few things from the wash etc. Love to Jemima, Uncle Sid & Cuffies, & please do explain about presents being late.

Much love

Mackarness Torla[sic]