1045962 Cpl Strothert J.
H.Q. N.A.P.R. Wing,
R.A.F.
B.N.A.F.
2. 8. 43.

Dear Bill,

Although I only wrote to you a matter of about a week ago, after a certain occur-ence yesterday evening, I felt it my duty to send you another short epistle today. Whether do I manage to send it off today or not not really know, but there is one thing I will do, I will send it as soon as I can. I havn't much time to spare today but I will have a few minutes to-morrow.

You may wonder why it is that I felt it my duty to write to you; so as this will only be a short letter of approximately 5 yards of paper, I will endeavour to giv you all the facts and where-fores leading up to this event, in as brief and concise a form as is possible for a person with my mentality to give. Of course I will expect that you use your wonderful ingenuity to enlarge matters, which I must unavoidably abbreviate, to their more normal form.

To cut a long story short, here it is in a nutshell, coco-nutshell. Last night as I lay reclining, on what the Air Force calls a bed, but what I generally refer to as an ant-hill, my reverie was suddenly shattered by a friend of mine, that's what he calls himself, rushing into my tent with a letter and an Airgraph for one Cpl Strothert. That being me, I took the afore-mentioned articles, thanked him, then proceeded once more to my bed, there to devour (or some word like that) the contents. On perceiving; I'm sorry that is to big a word for me so I will commence again, On seeing that the letter was from no other than my dear brother, I thought I would read over the Autograph then peruse the letter at my heart's content.

I did, and afterwards I was thankful that my mighty friend managed to make such a strategic plan. On opening the aforesaid letter, I saw revealed to me what I thought was a normal letter, but on drawing forth the contents and unfolding same, I thought that you had sent me the front page of the 'News of the World'. However on looking again I saw that the front page of the 'News of the World' would be somewhat dwarfed when placed alongside, this most wonderful document which had come into my possession. Although I was more than pleased to receive it, and although I enjoyed immensely the contents of this letter, I must confess that I was very disappointed that a member of the Stothart clan should, in spite of his childhood training, waste paper to the extent that you have done, and with a war on my, I'm sorry, our hands.

After reading one page I naturally turned over to read the other page and to my amazement and horror, there was a whole sheet of paper without a mark on it. If that is not waste I don't know what is. No doubt you will say, He's a cheeky blighter, but before you criticise, or anything else you may intend doing, do not consider that I am wasteful try to write on the back of this with your own pen.

As I haven't much paper left, I think I had better concentrate on giving you as much news of your beloved brother as is possible. On second thoughts I will not let my bad manners come to the fore by putting myself first, so I will be a gentleman, if you think it possible, and endeavour to answer one of the most astounding pieces of penmanship that my eyes have ever scrutinised.

First of all it would be to my advantage, your advantage, & everybody else's advantage if you will please me by enlightening my feeble brain by explaining the meaning of your first two words and the hasty correction. Who is this 'Dearly Beloved' which your referred to as being elsewhere. According to all my records and on checking with various other sources, I must admit I was of the conclusion that your 'Dearly Beloved's' days were over for a short period of time at least. Of course even the best of men make mistakes, and should I have committed a similar offence I would be very much indebted to you, if you would be so kind as to help me out with the subject in question by giving me as soon as you may find it convenient the full and what is more the true facts of the case. There must be no putting off this time, so please do not try any of your old tricks, because I am wise to them all.

There is one thing, Bill, I must admit that I am very grateful to you for sending me a 'few' lines now and again. Only I would very much like it, if you thought more of my welfare the next time you write a letter and send me a cable to say that it is coming. Thus being well informed, I will near as possible endeavour to have a day off so that I may read and enjoy your most welcome letter without having to rush through it so that I can do something else. Of course you will understand that I will need a twenty-minute break at about 12 o'clock in order that I can partake of the wonderful food which our Air Force has so thoughtfully provided for its members, in other words the bully and cheese. Thus should I survive that marvellous feed I will most certainly be able to survive the rest of your letter without having any worry for my future health.

What is the idea of them catching you for all those parades? They have at last caught up with you in spite of all your wiles and wangles. What's happened, have you been slipping or is there no more salvaging to do? Any way it will do you the world of good and keep you fit. Stick it, my dear Brother, stick it, (advice from a Corporal). I'm afraid I have not been able to read any books lately, because I have had a couple of letters to write. There is one thing I definitely have not time to go to any park to watch girls play basketball. What's the idea, are you feeling bad? You want to see a doctor before its too late. I don't want to return home and find you in that sad and hopeless plight. Now cricket is a better game for you, why don't you play it more often.

I'm glad to hear you are still interested in the B.B. and I only wish I was in your position as far as that is concerned. Don't you go threatening me by saying you will teach me how to play chess. You know as well as I do that my nerves won't stand such a strenuous and exciting game. If you like you can teach me how to play snooker.

Things are not going too well for me as far as dumb blondes go, there are plenty about but I havn't come across any dumb enough to have anything to do with me. I'll have to get some leave and go to Algiers as I have plenty of friends there. I've had one or two letters from them, & believe it the teaching of old Bob and K.I.T. served me well as I managed to answer it in French. At least I think it was French and the censor hasn't returned it yet, touch wood. Another thing I actually wrote two pages only looking at the dictionary to confirm 2 words. Also believe it if you can, it was not to a madamoiselle, it was to her mother. Getting good ain't I?

As far as receiving letters go I am still as 'popular' as ever with the old folks at home although I do not seem to correspond with many people from Wood St. One of your correspondents is my best news sender as far as that part of world goes, none other than the News of the World reporter Peggy Mass. She keeps me well-informed of all the scandal news and history which is going about the old place. And of course she gives me as much as she can about the places, & people who were once resident in Dunston, but who are now living an entirely different life just because one man could not make a living as a paper-hanger. You have no cause for alarm because my last letter from the afore mentioned source only casually mentions you. My only other source of information from Wood St is from Doreen Wakefield but the letters are few and far between. Once I received plenty but if I remember rightly she was getting too friendly & I got cheesed off. Of course the size of the letters I receive are merely a patch on one I once got.

I have received one or two letters during the past few days and my present stock to answer etc. is a letter from that notorious character I have mentioned before, the Dunston wonder P.M., who has started to put the following letters on the back of the envelopes, R.P.R.L.H. Do you know what it means? I don't but I have fathomed it out to be "Run Postie Run like h---", because on one of my letters I wrote the following inscription "Postie, postie, run like he--, this is for a Dunston swell"

Next I have a postcard from a friend in Danby, & also a letter and an Airgraph from another friend there. What do you think of Elsie and Nora going down there for their holidays? I tell you Bill we are the mugs in our family, the brothers pave the way and the sisters step in and take all. We will have to get some plan of campaign up, & beat them to it. We will have to watch out Nora because ever since she gave us the telling-off regarding chaps and flats I have been wary of her. Now to get back to business, yesterday, I'm sorry, today, I have received a birthday card and an Air Mail letter from Aunty Phyllis, a birthday card from Nora, another card and a letter from mother. In that letter I also received another photo of Tom, have you seen it? It is one he had taken when he was at school, & believe me it is quite good. Next on my list is another member of the old homestead, the time none other than the person I am now sending these few words to, my own dear brother, who has been so kind as to send me an Airgraph. No doubt he ran out of news but never-the-less it was extremely welcome. Elsie is the next donor, she send me an Air Mail letter which I received a few days ago, & then comes Doreen Wakefield with another Airgraph. If the war has not finished before I finish dropping you these few lines, I will to the best of my ability endeavour to answer that mail, which is a mere handful. On top of all that I did receive another letter from a friend in Algiers, yes, it was one of the daughters this time. Since I arrived at North Africa I have written nearly 300 letters etc. to umpteen different people. Last week I wrote about 25.

Life out here as far as I am concerned isn't too bad at all, my main concern is keeping clean. No matter how I try, I always seem to be as bad a few minutes after. The trouble is that with it being too hot the ground is very dry and the wind blows dust all over the place. My tent seems full of it, and generally I have to spend most of my time dusting my equipment. When I make my bed I have to give it a good shaking to get all the dust out. To tell you the truth Bill I am lucky to have a bed because some-one stole a couple of my blankets, but an old soldier never stands short & I soon had a replacement.

Now and again I manage to go down to the beach for a bathe, & that helps to keep me a lot cleaner. It's about time I learned to swim don't you think? Some of these days I might. One of my biggest worries out here is my laundry. Generally I wash it myself but I never seem to get it properly clean even after scrubbing it for all my worth. But why lose any sleep over it? Can you tell me, Bill why everybody is laughing at your letter & this one? It just goes to show their ignorance, and their broughtings-up.

Last Sunday night we had a concert show here, the third since we came, that has been given by the same artistes. They were R.A.F blokes, about 8 of them, & they were real good. On Saturday night a party of us went to see an ENSA show called "Hello Happiness". It was about the best ENSA show I ever seen, both in England and North Africa. It was a show which had been given to the M.E.F for the past 3 years I think. I do not think it was the original cast but I enjoyed it tremendously. One of the artistes, a singer, was giving her 803rd show in 3 years. Thats some going isn't it? The boys out here appreciate anything like that, and they are thankful for any entertainment that they can get. On Thursday night we saw an English speaking French concert party, and they were good. I certainly wouldn't like to give a show to an audience whose native tongue was different.

This week we are having films every night I think. Last night and also tonight the film was "How Green was my Valley". Can you remember when we saw that together last June & you cried on my shoulder. Thats a long time ago, & little did I think then that I would be seeing it again somewhere in North Africa.

One day last week there was a football match here and little Johnny here played at centre-forward. I felt fit before we kicked off, I felt fit 5 minutes after we kicked off, but 10 minutes after we kicked off I had no wind left. Whenever I went after the ball and got it I hadn't the strength to do anything with it. We were the first to score from a penalty, then they equalised. However it wasn't long before we went ahead again but shortly afterwards they once more equalised. Never say die that's us so we kept on attacking and nearly got there from a move from the right which the goalie managed to touch over to the left. There was a scramble then another shot at goal, the goalie was there again and touched it what he thought was over the bar, but it smashed against the bar out again. Before it had time to touch the ground your Uncle Johnny was there waiting of it, and he 'woofed' it. This time it went home and that proved to be the winner Because we packed up a few minutes later. We were supposed to have another match on Friday but when we got there some-one else had beaten us, & were using the pitch.

On a Sunday I am managing to get to a church service every morning which is the first time I have been able to do so since I arrived at North Africa. I enjoy the service very much and I am glad of the chance of being able to do so. I have managed to get an RAF New Testament. They are not bad at all, about pocket size with a blue leather back with the RAF crest embossed there-on. One day I managed to get one from an American padre, but I don't like them as much as the

There are one or two Geordies about our camp, and when we get together it is like home from home. There is one thing I like best and that is to get into a tent we have called 'Geordieland' and have a chat with the inhabitants which you will guess are Geordies. There is one from Marley Hill, one from Felling, & one from Bensham, and to crown matters we have to put up with a 'Taffy'. You may wonder what he is doing in 'Geordieland' so I will enlighten your now bewildered mind on the subject of the 'stranger in the camp'. This Welshman is the most sensible one I have met. He fully realised that he could not go through this world without having someone to look after him, so he married a girl from Forest Hall. Of course that does not give him the right to become a 'Geordie' but we never-say-die Northcountrymen are always ready for any situation, and we did not need much thought before we called him a 'Welsh-Geordie'. Naturally of course, in the absence of his wife he knows where he can find someone to look after him.

You should be here when the Scotch the Welsh & the Geordies get together. The other day we had an argument re the merits and performances of different regiments, which developed into a battle between the Highland division and the "Faithful Durhams" with the Welshman trying to bring the Welsh Guards in. The funny part about it all was that after we had safely settled with the Scotch and the Welsh we started an argument amongst ourselves so we were no bett off.

Today, which is Tuesday, the day after I started writing you this short note, I together with six of our fellow countryman had our photographs taken reading the "Sunday Sun" and "Evening Chronicle". If they come out alright we intend to send them to the local paper & see if they will print it. They generally do, but keep it strictly to yourself as I am not telling any-one at home. We'll let them find out for themselves, the old way we generally work it.

Are you out of breath, yet? If you are not I am, but there is one thing I can say, my pen hasn't conked out yet. So put that in your pipe and smoke it. Tonight I received yet another 2 letters, one from my aunty Phyllis and one from a WAAF at Danby. I beg your pardon, she isn't at Danby now, She says I've got to be good. What does she mean by that, Bill? I can't just fathom it out. She must be inferring that, I am not good enough. She should know better. What do you think of my aunty being a fire watcher now? She's playing holy war because she is on every Saturday night and that is the only night Walter and her can go out together. She says she is going down to see about it. Ten to one she will get it changed. Meanwhile I will say a little prayer each night for the guy she is going to see. She sure will give him something & he will need all the p he can get.

Well, Bill, it is now Wednesday, and I still haven't finished yet. Last night there was yet another film shown here, at least it was the same one shown again "How Green was My Valley" Although I had seen it before I once more enjoyed it.

The weather today is terrible, there has been a sirocco blowing and my shirt is wet through. For your information a sirocco is a very warm wind which blows from the desert or land. Have you heard anything about your likely whereabouts after you have finished in Wales. A pal of mine, a 'Taffy' wants to know what you think of Wales. I told him what it was like because he thought we were crackers writing like this. My story was that 2 months in Wales made you write like that, & 8 months in North Africa made me go like it, so that still makes North Africa 4 times as good as Wales.

Did you ever receive my letter asking you your future plans? I hope you have & don't forget to answer the letter either or else I won't write to you again. By the way Bill, I have just remembered it is your birthday on Dec 18th so, as it will be about that time when you will get down as far as this, I will wish you many happy returns of the day. I'm getting cheesed now, I can't write a decent letter now without someone keeps looking over my shoulder & asks me how much I have written now. The trouble is that they want to see for themselves & I am fed up with unwinding this and winding it up again.

Up to date I am afraid I havn't seen any of our friends from Dunston during my travels although I have tried hard enough. Jimmy Honeyball is about somewhere but where? I'm sorry that I will have to prematurely close, as this paper is as bad as an airgraph for size, you can't get much on them, so I will just have to wait until I can get more paper to continue.

Here's hoping that these few lines find you in the best of health and still smiling. Don't forget to let me know how things are going on at home etc. especially the ole garden & greenhouse. Cheerio Bill, and all the very best, from

Your loving Brother,

Jack