

Bill Ridley

Parcels

I got mail call come up when we were in the Gazala box. "Lance-Corporal Ridley?" "Sir." "Mail." And I was presented with a circular parcel about twelve or eighteen inches across, perfect circle in brown paper, and in a Hessian sack - sewn. I knew instantly that it had come from my Mam simply because my Mam used to send everything. She used to put my tobacco in a Burdalls gravy salt tin. Any sweets was also in the gravy salt tin. Both of them were soldered and other things in and what have you in the tin. Harp biscuit tin, she used to pack them into the Harp biscuit tin. She used to solder the lid on the biscuit tin and then she used to wrap it in linen. Now I'm not too sure whether she put the hessian in, I think she put the hessian next to the tin and then she used to sew linen round and she had my name, and rank and what have you printed properly, you know, from a printing place. And that was my Mother's parcel. It used to take six weeks to get to us and it used to take us three months to open the bloody thing. We couldn't get this solder off. Anyway when I saw the hessian thing I thought "It's from my Mam. What the hell is she up to now"? And the lads would say "What have you got there, Marty?" "I don't know, you know wait until I get it open", I said. And when I opened it, it was a stotty loaf, a stotty cake, rock of ages cleft for me. Been on the way six months my mother had sent us that stotty cake done marvellous for the, the lads. It was like a breath of fresh air and I think it went round the battalion to be quite honest. It was rock hard and she had sent this. Oh she was a queer one, the old lady.