17th September 1915

Dear Joan,

Thanks awfully for the cake which I received up in the trenches the other day. It was indeed an excellent one and met with universal approval. It could not have been better timed, as it arrived on the evening of my birthday, the 10th, though how you knew that it was this month I can’t make out. It had a great many adventures before it was finally consumed, and at one time I thought it had gone for good. We were proposing to have it for tea on Sunday afternoon and it had been put ready, but it was unfortunately one of those cases when the Huns do the “disposing” part. We were just going to start our meal when they landed two crumps a little bit higher up the trench. I was standing near and got buried once, but we soon rushed the men out and then watched the performance from a support trench, they saw us go and followed us with r “crumps”, and landed some a good deal too near to be pleasant burying us with earth etc time after time but fortunately no one was hurt at all seriously. Ongoing back into the trench we found the parapet blown down for yards at a time, and the Germans were sniping at the gaps so that we could not go up the trench by day. We found that one 8” coal box had landed near my dugout. All the parapet and all the other dugouts round were demolished, but, would you believe it, mine was the only one standing. I started straight away to look for your cake and found it still unharmed some yards from where I last saw it. I can tell you I was pleased. I had left my tunic on the roof of my dugout. I found it again with several other of my possessions buried under quite a foot of earth, the sleeve being ripped to bits. I lost a few other things but nothing of much value. But that is not all. The other officer who shared the trench with me and myself slept in the dugout that night, and we had had the cake brought down again at stand-to, early in the morning for something to eat before we turned in. Consequently it was still there at 12.30 when we had just finished breakfast. At that time, those ———- Huns suddenly took it into their heads to drop about a dozen whizz-bangs straight into the trench close to my dugout. I rushed out and just when I had emerged from it, one landed on the roof about 3ft behind me. Fortunately I was only hit in the ear, although a man close to me was badly wounded in the head. The officer was still inside, but no sooner had he come out than he was hit in the cheek, and had to go. I cleared the men off, and attended to the wounded man. When the stretcher bearers came up we bound him up, with whizz-bangs falling all round, and then got him away in a lull. Two or three others were wounded less badly. Once more however, your cake escaped injury, and supplied us with some tea. It would make a good story, “The Adventures of a cake at the Front”. A “whizz-bang” is a 3 to 4 inch shell fired at such close range that it bursts before you know anything about it. You can hear a big crump coming, but these give you no chance at all. When the Germans do speak to us, they usually speak in English, and that the foulest one has ever heard. They seem to be past masters in the more vulgar parts of the English tongue. I hope you and your sister will enjoy your visit to Lincolnshire. I should very much like a holiday myself. I may get home sometime in October, with any luck.

Yours very sincerely,

Basil F W Mogridge