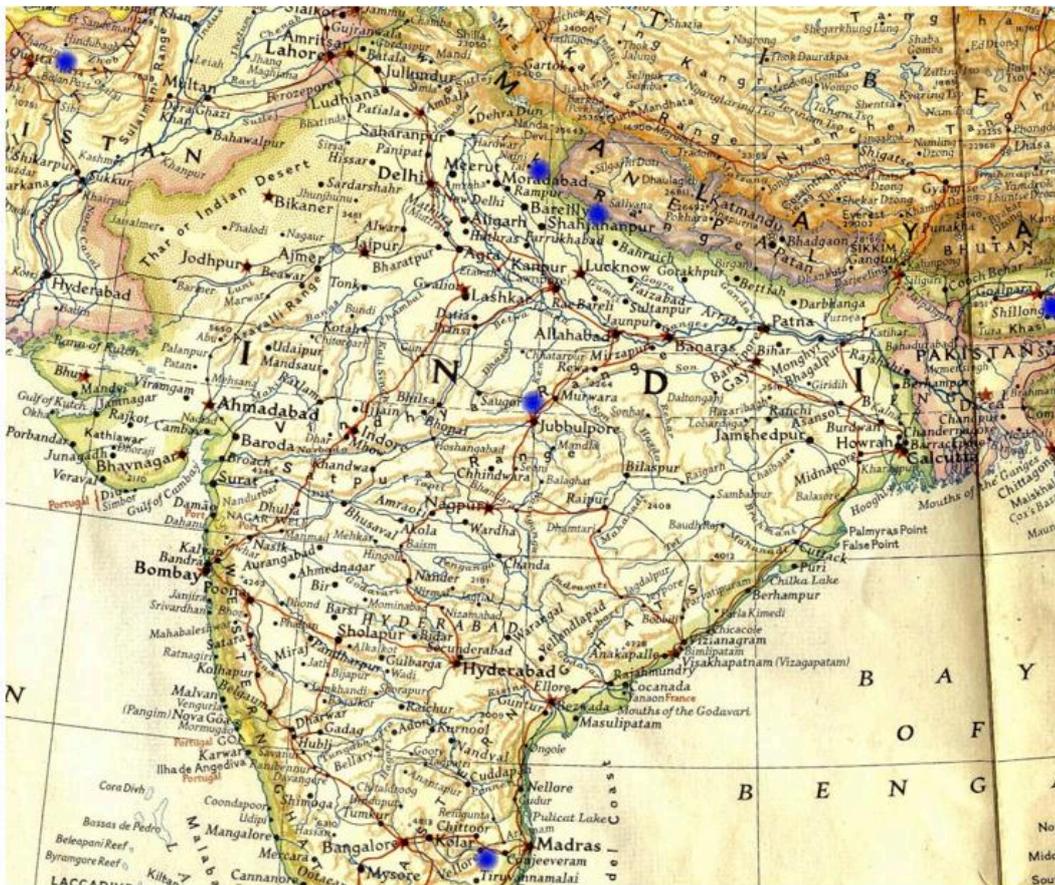


India

Beginnings and Endings



Alan Macfarlane

Preface

This is a book of homage to my parents, Donald Macfarlane (Mac) and Iris (Rhodes James). It is a chronological account of their relationship during the years of the Second World War. It is a collaborative work. My parents did almost all of the work in the writings described below. I ordered the material and transcribed many of my parents' letters. Sarah Harrison, my wife, edited the work carefully and added many footnotes. Pam Turbett, a relative of my grandfather by marriage, kindly transcribed many of Iris' diaries and some of the letters.

Iris had returned to India in April 1939 at the age of sixteen, with her mother Violet. It was a return because she had been born in Quetta, India (now Pakistan) in 1922 and then been sent home to school in England. Iris kept a diary when she returned to India until she became engaged to my father in December 1940. Thereafter, for the next two years, there are many of their letters to each other.

Mac and Iris were separated for most of the period after their marriage (March 1941) because my father was in the Assam Regiment. During the year 1943 only a few of my father's letters survive and none of my mother's. From 1944 until they returned to England in March 1947 there are only a very few letters, written by Iris to her mother.

The diary and letters were used by my mother to write an account of four generations of the female line of her family who had gone to India. Written in 2000 and first published in 2006 as *Daughters of the Empire*, the book contains three chapters on Iris herself as the fourth generation.

My mother's account fills in much of the background to the letters below. Other background is provided in the detailed footnotes. Those concerning unrelated individuals who are mentioned in the diaries and letters have been compiled by Sarah. Those on the wider background of the War in Asia were written by me.

Sarah's research on the Indian Army lists has revealed that many of the individuals who are often referred to by a single name or nick-name in the diaries were senior officers in the British army, often twenty or thirty years older than Iris. As the daughter of a Colonel, Iris socialized with the top military personnel of Eastern Command. Gradually, over the first year of the war, the people she met became younger as new regiments came from the UK.

The war had started with the British army in India largely unprepared and understaffed. Particularly from December 1941, when the Japanese suddenly advanced into south-east Asia and troops were sent out to the doomed Singapore and the army in Burma collapsed in retreat in early 1942, the army changed hugely in numbers and organization. By the end of the war it was the largest volunteer army in history.

As well as these sources, there are a few others. There are poems she wrote. There are references to my progress (born December 1941) and my sister Fiona (born April 1944) in two 'Babies Books' filled in by my mother. There are some brief diaries kept by her parents, William and Violet. There are a few letters from her brothers, Billy and Richard, who both joined Gurkha regiments in India.

There are a number of collections of letters between husband and wife during the Second World War still in existence. One or two of these have been published. Yet I believe that two things, in particular, make the book unusual and encouraged Sarah and I to edit it. One is the character of my parents and particularly the intelligence and writing skills, combined with courage and honesty, of Iris. This comes out also in other books which she was later to write. The fact that there are detailed diaries as well as letters also differentiates this account from most others.

The second is that this volume is part of a much larger story. We can watch Iris and Mac's lives over a long span. Mention has been made of the prelude of Iris' education until 1939. After 1945 the story is carried on in a series of works, some completed and some in preparation. These exist in parallel with books about my own life.

The account of Iris and Mac's life, mainly based on my mother's letters to me over the period 1945 to 1965 from various tea gardens in Assam (as a Tea Garden Manager's wife), is being prepared for publication, possibly in two volumes. Alongside these, there are accounts of my parents, with many of my mother's letters, in a series of books I have written covering the period 1947-1977. *Dorset Days* (2013) and *Becoming a Dragon* (2013) cover 1947-1955; *Sedbergh Schooldays*

(2017) and *Lakeland Life* (2017) cover 1955-1960, *Oxford Undergraduate* (2019) and *Oxford Postgraduate* (2019) cover the period 1960-1966. The final volume, *Nepal: becoming an anthropologist* (2019) covers the period 1966-1977, which is also covered in Iris's *And we in Dreams* (2018).

This first volume is almost entirely about my parents. I am a very marginal actor as a baby and young child. Yet, though I can hardly remember anything from this first five years in India, I know that it has deeply coloured the rest of my life. To recover the fragments of that first stage is an essential part of my attempt to understand who I am and what I became. Thanks to my parents, I am able to do this in a considerable measure.

Although I gradually developed as an independent person, becoming markedly so from about 1958, my last two years at Sedbergh School, my mother remains a central figure. We can see her there, alongside my father, as well as in her quasi-autobiographical children's books.

After my mother died on 12th February 2007 (my father died tragically early in February 1977), and I started to write my own autobiographical memoirs from 2008, I was hesitant about delving into these letters. Yet what we have found has deeply impressed us.

Their letters to each other are an extraordinarily vivid reflection of the way in which two personalities came together to form a whole. Two young people who were, in some ways, damaged by their childhoods, found solace in each other. They overcame loneliness and self-doubt and I was one of the products of their passionate happiness when they found their 'other one'. I helped, along with my sisters, to give them an extra reason for hope and a strengthening of their mutual support through the grim years ahead.

Two young people, my mother eighteen, my father twenty-four, married in the midst of a devastating war. Soon the war would sweep towards them from Japan. The Japanese invaded and conquered Malaya and Singapore, and then invaded Burma in the month of my birth. We were in Shillong as all this happened, on the border of Burma, close to some of the future fateful battles of the war.

For much of the war Iris and Mac were apart. My mother had two children, my father was very seriously ill twice. They both lived in fear and anxiety, obviously pinning all their dreams and hopes on each other. They gathered strength from exchanging letters and very occasional meetings. It is a passionate and painful correspondence which takes us into one side of that tragic war.

Of course, such letters and diaries only give us a tiny glimpse of what was happening. So much of the general suffering was unmentioned, or just referred to, particularly the terrible events of the war and the suffering of millions of Indians during the Bengal Famine of 1943. Yet this account has, I believe, a value not just as a way of learning about my parents, but more generally. I hope you will find it as affecting as Sarah and I have done.

The early life of Iris Macfarlane

The following book is largely based on the diaries and letters of my mother. The account starts with her return to India aged sixteen. Already by that date she had been largely shaped by her early experiences and especially her school life. This is an important background to what she writes and it is worth briefly considering those first sixteen years. She wrote a chapter on them in her book *Daughters of the Empire* (2006), written many years later. It is best to let her tell parts of what she remembered based on that account. Iris was born on 22nd July 1922 in Quetta, then north-west India (now in Pakistan). Eight months after her birth the family set off home by boat.

Half way through the voyage I was "a bit seedy" said my mother, and my right leg appeared "sort of shrivelled". Not a lot was made of this however, and on our arrival we went into a hotel in London and my mother departed from there for a week in hospital to be "tidied up" after my birth. A letter from my father to her describes me as being adorable and in the care of a nursemaid. The whole thing seems initially to have been treated very light-heartedly, strangely so since infantile paralysis or polio was a well-known ailment, with possibly devastating effects.

We all went back to India at the end of that leave, and presumably during the next four years the truth became apparent as my right leg failed to fill out and was a couple of inches shorter than the other. The subject was never discussed in the family; a sort of embarrassment hung over it. My mother hated disfigurement of any kind, and it must have been a sore trial, perhaps even a Curse, that her only daughter was disabled. Treatment of polio then meant leg irons even in bed, and, a little later on, surgical boots. Half of my growing up was filled with the assurance that my leg would get better, "When I'm about thirteen," I told my friends with complete confidence. What was going to happen at that magical age to allow me to take off my splinted boots and watch the muscles return to lift the dropped foot I don't know. I just knew that a miracle would occur, that a sort of drawbridge would be let down over which I would walk without a limp into the second half of my growing up. The rather unpleasant treatment, when rubber bands were buttoned round my calf and electric currents passed through, helped towards this happy moment, and would also end at thirteen. [It never did.]



The James family in Sidmouth, summer 1923, from left, Billy, Violet, Iris (on knee), Richard, Will's father (also William), and standing on right, Will, between his elder sister and his mother, and younger sister on the far right

The family then returned to India for three years, and came back to England as second time in 1927 when Iris was aged five.



Iris aged five and brother Monty (who died soon after)

The main purpose of the return was to settle us in school. My father departed back to India, and I only saw him twice more during my childhood; a passing stranger for whom my feelings were completely neutral. My mother stayed at home, and we rented a house in Berkhamstead. It was very small but we had a cook general and her daughter as a daily to help run it.

I went to my first school in Berkhamstead, and a letter written by my mother sent the comforting assurance to my father that he needn't worry about my education. She had been told by my headmistress that I was the brightest child she had ever had under her roof; a small one admittedly. Instead of pondering how to best train their little prodigy they heaved sighs of relief that she would need only a passing pat on the head as she went on her clever little way. In fact it became their ultimate care to damp down my fires of intellect and to steer me away from becoming a "blue stocking". I was sixty before my mother told me that my last school had been confident that I would get a scholarship to Oxford, but she had taken me out to India instead.

When my mother went back to India my brothers went as boarders to Berkhamstead School, and I to a school in Watford. I was six, and I remember on the first evening sitting by the window of the Common Room with the laurels in the rain outside tapping against the glass, night and aloneness of a kind so desolating that all other separations take me back to it; coldness against my cheek, and the night wind shaking the wetness from the leaves in the huge blackness of the world. I remember the tune that was running through my head; "Massas in the cold, cold ground". I still hum it in times of trouble.

After another holiday with her mother in Littlehampton, Iris was left at a boarding school, Furzedown in Littlehampton.



Iris aged eight in 1930

Real life took place at school, which was called Furzedown and was run on P.N.E.U. lines with a brilliant if eccentric headmistress who taught me nearly everything I ever learnt. Nothing could have been less like Miss Norris than the artistic, emotional and exotically pious Miss Fidler. She was an inspired teacher, which was just as well since she taught us everything except Maths and Netball, for which a Miss Thom was brought in whose bulbous calves are the only thing I remember about her. There was a gentle music teacher too who took us for Eurythmics when we dressed in green silk tunics and stretched our arms up to the sun pretending to be daffodils or fields of corn.

One or two holidays I spent with my godfather, a schoolmaster who had once been in the army in Burma where he had met my mother. He was a devout Christian in the nicest possible way my Uncle Ernest, straight of back and ruddy of skin, who ran round the streets of Bromsgrove every morning and then jumped into a cold bath to keep in the “good fettle” of his army days. Twice he took me to Cornwall, and as we walked along the cliffs talked of “box wallahs” and “tamashas” and “badmarshes” beside the Irrawaddy. Nothing exciting had ever happened to him since then, but I couldn’t give full attention to his stories because I was panting to keep up with him, who marched along as if in pursuit of bandits up a Burmese mountain.

When I asked my mother how she could have sent me to spend so many holidays with her sister Margery, she vowed there was no alternative. I was saved from going mad and being sent to Rampton by several interventions from my maternal grandmother. My grandmother’s flat smelt of sandalwood and mothballs and a leathery, woody, dusty aroma arising from her bookcases, lacquer chests, brocade sofas and old albums. A dark corridor ran the length of the flat, only just passable because of the clutter of cabinets, ending in the sitting room and bedroom. It had a small kitchen, a tiny bathroom and another

poky bedroom; cramped, five stories up, without a garden, absolutely wrong for a child, absolute heaven to me.

For two summer holidays my grandmother took my brother Richard and I to Seaford, where we spent our days with the Children's Special Service Mission. Each morning would find the three of us on the beach building a pebbly altar, round which we wrote "God is Love" in seaweed, and beside it a sandcastle onto which sprang young men and women in blazers to lead us in choruses and shout that we must open our hearts to the Lord Jesus, now, this very morning, this very moment. The wooden door of my heart, with the patient figure knocking on it while his horse was nearby on the forest's ferny floor, was rapturously ajar.

In the afternoons we went for treasure hunts, the clues of which were texts from the Bible, and in the evenings there were sausage suppers round a camp fire, when we sang mournful choruses; "Break Thou the Bread of Life" we intoned, quite different from "I'm H A P P Y cos I'm S A V E D" of the morning. Under the stars the balloon filled again, with love for Jesus and for one of the young men in blazers. My daydreams were of the pair of us going together to Burma as missionaries, he in his navy blazer, me with my flaring nostrils and deep set eyes, floating up the Irrawaddy to where my grandmother, ageless, would be waiting for us.



Iris aged eleven, with her brother Robert, New Milton, 1932

In 1934-5, aged twelve to thirteen, Iris was taken away from Furzedown and sent to Wadhurst College.

Wadhurst College was a beautiful house, set in rolling fields with woods which we could wander at will. It had as its headmistress Miss Mulliner, who had made her name at Cheltenham Ladies College and brought with her ideas about freedom, good food, warmth and fun, and the minimum of rules. She provided teachers as relaxed as herself. The Science mistress wore boucle two pieces threadbare under

the arms from the constant clutching of her hands across her chest, when with cries of “Ladies, Ladies” she admonished us for turning the lab once more into smoky confusion. Matron was ancient and her bright brown wig was held down by a white cap. It was the aim of our lives to dislodge it, but this only happened once when her cap got screwed down into a bottle of Radio Malt. She shuffled very slowly round the dormitories on her vest-smelling routines, and was provided with an Under Matron to do the real work.

Everything about that year was charged with electric delight. I had friends, good food, warmth, laughter and teaching that stretched my mind. I had a close relationship with two trees outside my dormitory window, and a passionate involvement with the woods through which I was allowed to wander when the others went for walks. The One World Soul flowed through me every time I sat with my face pressed to the bark of a tree, taking the place of Jesus who had let me down once too often. When my mother came home and took me away from Wadhurst I accepted it like everything else incomprehensible but foredoomed in my life. She sent me to my penultimate school near Guildford, which was as different from Wadhurst as it was possible to be, and its headmistress as unlike Miss Mulliner.



Iris aged thirteen with her brother Billy in 1935

Iris' penultimate school was St Catharine's, at Bramley, near Guildford, where she spent the years from fifteen to fifteen (1935-8).

St Catherine's was a Church School and its austerities perhaps considered good for our souls. The dormitories were absolutely arctic with a wind from Siberia blowing the cubicle curtains about. My chilblained leg lay on the snow-cold sheets like a half cooked sausage, red and pulsating. It was of course forbidden to use a hot bottle or to climb into another's bed for warmth. Even to enter a friend's cubicle was wicked, and prefects were posted strategically down the long central aisle ready to Report on us for talking, especially After Lights Out, or creeping through a curtain to giggle with a friend.

The whole structure of the school was based on the premise that unwatched we would be immoral at worst, at best comfortable and happy, not Christian conditions. Sundays were unspeakably dreary, thin fatty slabs of cold pork and beetroot for lunch, letter writing and mending in the evenings, and in

between a long walk which I was excused. I sat alone in the Common Room, the grey light fading outside, my tongue exploring the roof of my mouth for fragments of pork fat. I tried to write a novel, but my hands were too cold, and it was risky because all writing including letters could be confiscated and read, and if found subversive could lead to expulsion.

Yet as the years passed we grew rebellious my friends and I and refused to play lacrosse, or if we did dropped the ball on purpose so as to get Sent Off, and had permanent Periods to get off gym. My best friend and I planned to be famous authors and wrote endless plays modelled on Noel Coward which we hid under our gym tunics so that we crackled as we walked. Miss Symes hated me for my "critical attitude" though grudgingly told my mother I was the cleverest girl in the school, and vouchsafed me the scholarship I was never allowed to take. I have frequently relived the life I would have had if I had been allowed to go to Oxford instead of being taken out to India.

Iris was finally sent to a kind of finishing school in 1938, having taken her school exams very young and consequently only done moderately in them.

I left St Catherine's just after my fifteenth birthday when my mother came home for the last time and took a maisonette in Earls Court over a greengrocer's shop, and sent me to my last school. I remember the name of the headmistress, Miss Spalding, but nothing else about her at all. I presume my mother thought my own chances would be enhanced by an establishment in Queens Gate to which there was some talk of Princess Elizabeth being sent.

We learnt interior decoration and flower arrangement, ladies from Fortnum and Mason and Constance Spry coming to the school to demonstrate. We learnt how to write cheques and use make-up. Most of all, we learnt of our role in the world: to be elegant, submissive, feminine, and thus a credit to our sex. All the other girls, who were called Lavender and Priscilla and Charmian, went along happily with this programme. They talked a lot about Coming Out, and were swept away in chauffeur driven limousines while I climbed onto the bus and headed back for the greengrocer's. I dreaded one of them suggesting visiting me at home.

It was a waste of time and money because the next thing on my agenda was India and having a man to write my cheques for me, and servants to do the flowers. The winter of 1938 was spent collecting clothes, for the boat, and for the club when we got to India. A dressmaker in Dorking pinned evening gowns round my short, stout figure: a chintz one like a chair cover; white net covered with green moons; royal blue organdy with a frilly collar; black taffeta with silver spots and a bolero to disguise a hefty bust; white lace to wear at Government House. As we rumbled back from Surrey in the winter mists, I leant my head against the window of the carriage and imagined myself floating under tropical palms in my carefully darted dresses, while men like Noel Coward made staccato love to me. Curates had long gone the way of all my holy crushes, even Jesus had turned to stone in the cold airs of St Catherine's chapel.

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Iris came from a family which had been in India for several centuries, and also had roots in other parts of the British Empire. It is worth briefly describing her parents and brothers, all of whom feature in this account.

Iris's father, William Rhodes James, was born on 28th August 1886 at Coonor in the Nilgiri Hills, India, the son of a coffee planter. He was sent home to boarding school from 1895-1903. He went to Sandhurst and became a professional soldier, receiving his Commission in 1905 and being posted to the 89th Punjabis in Mandalay in 1907. He was awarded a Military Cross in Mesopotamia in the First World War. Will married Violet Swinhoe, on July 10th 1918 in Mandalay. He became a Lt Colonel and on 8th November 1938, by special appointment (as he was beyond retirement age), he became Deputy Director Military Lands and Cantonments (under the Defence Department) in Eastern Command at their headquarters in Naini Tal. He remained in India until 1945.

Violet Rhodes James (née Swinhoe), was born in Mandalay, Burma, in 1896, the daughter of the first British lawyer in Upper Burma, Rodway Swinhoe, and his wife Annie (née Juxon-Jones). Violet was taken home for school and left in England at the age of eight. She was a talented artist and later was a student at the Royal Academy Schools until it was closed in 1916 due to the war. She then went back to Burma where she met Captain William Rhodes James, an Intelligence Officer in the

89th Punjabis. She had five children, William, Richard, Iris, Monty (who died young) and Robert. Apart from various leaves, she remained in India until 1944.

Iris's oldest brother, William Rhodes James (Billy), was born on 25th April in Mandalay, Burma. He went to Stratton Park, Sedbergh School in Yorkshire and then to Sandhurst, after which he joined the 6th Gurkha Rifles. He is first mentioned as visiting the family in November 1939. He fought in Burma and Malaya. He returned to England after retirement and became a schoolmaster. He died in 2005.

Her next brother, Richard John Rodway Rhodes James, was born on 12 January 1921 in Mandalay, Burma. He was sent home to school and joined his brother at Stratton Park, then at Sedbergh School. He read history at Queen's College, Oxford, but the course was interrupted by the war and he enlisted in the Gurkhas. He is first mentioned by Iris as arriving with his brother Billy at the family home in July 1942. He went on to fight with Wingate's Raiders behind the enemy lines in 1944. He wrote about the experience in his books *Chindits* (1980) and *The Road from Mandalay* (2007). He also wrote about his early life and schooling in *The Years Between* (1993). He returned to England in 1946 to finish his degree and then became a master at Haileybury College. He died in 2012.

Robert Vidal James, Iris' younger brother, was born at Rawalpindi, India on 10 April 1933. He was taken home when very young and when Iris and her mother left for India in 1939, Robert remained at St Christopher's School, Great Missenden, Bucks. Some doubts about his future education and the worsening state of the war in Europe encouraged his parents to bring him out to India. He travelled with a Mrs Clare Batchelor and her children on the 'Modasa' bound for Madras on 29th June 1940. His mother travelled to Madras to meet him. A letter from Richard in Oxford noted 'It is very fortunate that he could get away so soon, as time is very precious now that France has capitulated. His only chance was to go immediately...'

Robert returned to England in his early teens and was also educated at Sedbergh School and then at Worcester College, Oxford. He became a clerk in the House of Commons and later the Member of Parliament for Cambridge. He wrote a number of political biographies and other works and was for a time a Fellow of All Soul's College, Oxford and worked for the United Nations. He was knighted in 1991. He died in 1999.

PASSAGE TO INDIA

Account from 'Daughters of the Empire'

So on an April day in 1939 we walked up the gangway of the boat that was to Take Me Out, as my mother had been taken twenty years before, as my own daughters would be taken twenty years ahead. All those headmistresses and aunts had led to this moment, as inevitable as it was frightening. For I remember being very frightened indeed at the prospect of having to play tennis and go to Tea Dances. I had got over some of the self-consciousness over my leg, but not all. I was sixteen and a half, and I thought it would be a long time, if ever, before an old, isolated I.C.S. man would have me.

We travelled Tourist Class which was odd, since my father was a Colonel by now and tourists were usually Tommies and Anglo Indians and very young Box Wallahs on their first tours. I hated the gangway from the First Class deck which brought down every evening a very pretty girl to dance with Roy, a medical student who made do with me till she arrived. Leaving them waltzing round the potted palms, I went out on deck and quoted Matthew Arnold: "Weary of myself and sick of asking, What I am and what I ought to be, At the vessels prow I stand which bears me Forward, forward over the restless sea." I wore a different dress nearly every night, but whether in chintz or green moons Roy dropped me like a hot coal as soon as Deirdre from First Class appeared.

Apart from Roy my only contact with a man was with a tea planter called Graham who showed me pictures of his estate, of monkeys and little bears, or so he told me because it was hard to tell from the underdeveloped prints. Little did I know that my life was to be spent in such a place, caring for similar creatures. My mother said Graham was dark and couldn't I find someone better to be friends with. She spent the voyage playing bridge, but sent me out every evening to dance and have fun. I didn't tell her that I spent most of the throbbing seductive hours with my chin on the ship's rail waiting for a non-appearing Roy.

Arriving in India then and always was dazzling and familiar. The smell of burnt gram and open drains, of sweat and spices, was carried in a warm breeze. The noise was deafening, the crowds jostled and shrieked, but in the days of Empire we white women had paths cleared for us and my mother's dalmatians. By that time she was a keen dog breeder and took out good specimens; hard for the dogs who slithered round the decks trying to find somewhere to relieve themselves; not particularly helpful in a country with millions of half-starved strays already.

We took a train up India for two days and nights. Of course we had a carriage to ourselves, and in the evenings unrolled our "bisters", canvas sausages that held our bedding, with pockets at each end for towels and a chamber pot. The dust rolled in clouds through the open windows and the studded leather seats grew slimy under our sweating thighs. At stations men handed in trays with teapots, and plates of bread covered with rancid butter, and little green bananas. Sunrises and sunsets were spectacular, and in my sticky corner I watched pass the country so long awaited, and wished never to arrive at the destination with dances and tennis courts.

The last stretch up into the Himalayas was in a taxi, round hairpin bends with dramatic dizzying drops, the air becoming cooler at each turn. My father met us in Naini Tal, at the hotel where we were to stay. My small brother, Robert, had been left in England at five years old; Billy was in the army and Richard heading for university. It was good to have a hot bath after the journey, in a tin tub filled from canisters carried by men on their shoulders. I soaked by lamplight, apprehension temporarily suspended in physical pleasure. Now I was to find out how my parents had been spending all those years while I was at my seven schools...

The first thing I discovered was that there was to be no settled home in India like the bungalow beside the Irrawaddy to which my mother had gone. The Raj were posted like mail-order parcels hither and thither from plains to hills, so that we never stayed anywhere longer than six months. During the two years before my marriage we lived in a hotel, two different bungalows and some rather superior tents. My mother was constantly packing, unfussed and in full song. "I dreamt I dwelt in mar-harble halls" echoed happily from the depths of tea chests as she stashed away the china and linen and the packets of letters from Harold and Arnold. Ant-like processions of coolies carried them up and down the hillsides on their backs, bent double, with straps round their sweating foreheads. When they stopped for a rest they laughed a lot and spat "pan" over the precipices. I later found out that they were sickly and short-lived.

Our departure from the maisonette in Earls Court had been hasty, almost furtive. It seemed we had been very short of the rent and had had to get away before an uncomfortable interview with the landlord. Now suddenly our fortunes were restored. We were staying in the best hotel in Naini Tal, the Royal, run by an elderly English couple and of course exclusively for Europeans. We had a chalet in the grounds with our own sitting room and went over to the hotel for meals, which were eaten to the accompaniment of a three piece band; two kinds of soup, fish, chicken, duck or pork with potatoes moulded into different shapes, souffles, ice creams or gateaux, cheese and biscuits. A lot of the supplies must have been carried up by coolies who themselves lived on a handful

of rice a day. Thoughts like that didn't occur to me until I had been in India for several years.

Naini Tal was very beautiful, its wooded hillsides rising steeply from a pear-shaped lake. For a few months I went to school, riding along the lakeside with the dalmatians streaming behind me. I still thought there was a chance that I would return home after a year, and maybe get to university. All Saints College had the necessary curriculum and was a friendly place. The other girls were either Indian or Anglo Indian, and my mother felt the same anxiety that Maria had felt as to whether I would pick up the accent, like some unpleasant disease. I wasn't allowed to join my schoolmates for curry lunches, but sat on the hillside eating hotel sandwiches. The idea of taking any of my friends to the hotel was unthinkable. I accepted this, like everything else, as a law of nature, fixed in the interests of us all.

There were twice weekly dances in the hotel, and I grew to dread Tuesdays and Thursdays because my mother couldn't bear to hear the band playing waltzes and fox-trots for other people to dance to, particularly for men who weren't dancing with me. Sometimes in desperation she would gather together the middle-aged grass widowers from surrounding tables, and get together a party for a dance. Nobody went without being in a party, and you had to stick with your own set for the evening. Both the Colonels and I found it hard work tramping round the wooden floor, from which the lounge carpets had been lifted for the evening. My silver slippers had high heels on which I could hardly balance, let alone dance.

The big social event was the Matelots Ball, run by the racing fraternity. My mother wangled a ticket for me, but when I arrived I found everyone else was in a party. My dance card dangled from my wrist embarrassingly bare. In the end one of the grass widowers took me over, and late on in the evening I got my first kiss in a cubicle under the boathouse. I was surprised but encouraged. He was only about forty and made me feel I could set my sights higher than district commissioners ready for retirement.

In September the war broke out, but this affected us very little. My small brother Robert was sent out, we all moved down to the plains, and in the Spring up to the hills again. The war brought a lot of young men in uniform on leave, and because I had thinned down a bit and girls were scarce, I started to have the good time that the East was famous for providing. My mother was pleased, but also jealous. There were barneys and long silent days. In the summer of the Battle of Britain I went to the YWCA to learn shorthand in the hopes of getting a job and leaving home.

IS'S DIARY

BEGINNING OF A NEW LIFE
Sunday 9th April

I am now sitting on deck, the wind howling round and a heavy blue-green white-flecked sea waving. The sea is heavenly. It reminds me of that poem of Kipling's - "Thus and no otherwise do the hillmen desire their hills" something about contemptuous lugs. I wish I could remember it. My hands are so cold I can hardly write, but I don't want to go into the saloon because it makes me feel sick. I have got violent dysentery which is awkward & unpleasant, & this afternoon I felt so miserably ill I could have cried. I went to sleep instead. I was prepared for Dr. Morrison & I've got it good & hearty.

No romantic young men, at least not running after me. The boat consists mainly of Tommie's plus crowds of duty little children, and old Colonels who wander round in duty white tennis shoes & emerge for boat drill at the wrong time. Mommy has picked up three female friends who obviously consider me of no significance whatever.

This is several days later and there is a definite change for the better. I am enjoying life quite a lot now, and have made friends with an extremely nice medical student called Roy.

BEGINNING OF A NEW LIFE

Early April 1939 Sunday¹

I am now sitting on deck, the wind howling round and a heavy blue-green white-flecked sea waving. The sea is heavenly. It reminds me of that poem of Kipling's "Thus and no otherwise do the hillmen

desire their hills'. Something about contemptuous surges. I wish I could remember it. My hands are so cold I can hardly write, but I don't want to go into the saloon because it makes me feel sick. I have got violent diarrhoea which is awkward and unpleasant and this afternoon I felt so miserably ill I could have cried. I was prepared for disillusion and I've got it good and hearty.

No romantic young men. At least not running after me. The boat consists mainly of tommies plus crowds of dirty little children, and old Colonels who wander round in duty white tennis shoes and emerge for boat drill at the wrong time. Mummy has picked up three female friends who obviously consider me of no significance whatsoever.

This is several days later and there is a definite change for the better. I am enjoying life quite a lot now, and have made friends with an extremely nice medical student called Roy Bodenham. Unfortunately he has another and much more ravishing lady friend in the 1st class deck who he obviously adores and when she arrives I have to disappear. But still he does spend a good deal of his time with me. And we are really quite matey. He's told me all about his school and University career and I've done the same with mine. I didn't feel in the slightest bit romantic about him till last night. I had dressed up and gone into watch the dancing and he was there with a rather hideous girl who dances very well. He had put on a dark blue suit and was looking definitely nice and came and sat next to me and asked me to dance. Of course I tried to refuse but he almost dragged me onto the floor and was perfectly adorable – very encouraging and rather tender and protective. My heart missed several beats, or rather I had a horribly lovely feeling in the pit of my stomach. Of course his girlfriend came down for him eventually and I had to fade away. I disliked it, but I am sensible enough to see that at 16 I am quite incapable of competing with a lovely girl of about 20. There are new complications because there is a youth of 14 called Robin who has developed a frightful pash for me. I have had to promise to play ping-pong with him. He is an intelligent infant but only an infant.

There is also a dark and peculiar young man who beams brightly at me every time we meet and quite often says "Hullo" though I've never spoken to him. I started by being coldly distant but gave it up as a bad job and now grin quite unashamedly whenever we meet. According to R. he is 25 but I must say doesn't look it. I don't know if I can have any attraction at all. I think I must have just a little, because I definitely have attracted a few people. I am gradually assuming self-confidence. It is a slow and rather painful process, but signs that I may be attractive have given me self-respect. There is another young man of about 25 who has shown a desire to be friendly. He is always on the deck in the morning and I got into conversation with him. He is a tea-planter (I think) in Assam and is mad about animals. He keeps deer, two bears and various other oddments. He has lent me a book called "My friend Toto" which I adored it is by Cherry Kearton – about an amazing chimp he had. Beautifully written of course. I hardly ever see this individual. I don't know what he does with himself all day – plays ping pong most of the time I should imagine. He's going to Bombay which is one blessing. I have various other friends. Or rather acquaintances on board ship. One is a ghastly looking platinum blond who I like because she is the only person to whom I can talk complete bilge. She practically never opens her mouth herself which is still more encouraging.

Then there is a very sweet and very good looking sailor, who often talks to me. He has a brownish pink complexion, blue eyes with very white whites, and very long dark curly lashes. He is Scotch. Also a girl who has been a beauty specialist for 5 years with whom I play ping pong, coits etc: She is nice but a little spineless. But the one whom I really adore is the baggage steward. He is tall and walks with a slight stoop, blue eyes, brown hair and a beautiful Oxford accent. We had trouble about our baggage at the beginning of the voyage and he always found me when I was alone, so I managed to say quite a lot to him. Now whenever we meet in the passage we grin sheepishly. He has an adorable way of smiling with his eyes alone. Oh I do worship him but he obviously doesn't care two hoots about me. It's wretched. Still life has a thrill, just the hope of meeting him round the corner. Every turn in the passage is fraught with expectation. My day consists of the following. Rise 7.15, dress in trousers and blazer and emerge on deck to take the dogs for a run. Breakfast at nine when I have grapes and some toast. After breakfast trail down to my cabin, tidy and collect books, rugs etc. for the deck. Then I go up and lie on my tummy on the deck, spending the rest of the morning reading, knitting, talking and playing games. Lunch at 1.30 which isn't usually over till

two thirty, when we go down to the baggage room (me ostensibly to Collect some article of clothing but really to see the B.S.). Then we rest till 4, rise, play more games, write letters and mooch around till supper. This lasts till 9, after which we go to a film or play card games. I usually tramp vaguely round the deck before going to bed. It is so lovely with the dark, white foaming water swirling by in the moonlight and the phosphoresce darting in and out of the black gleaming mass. All petty worries and silly unnecessary grievances are swept away and tossed by the wind into the face of heaven where God laughs and throws them back, purified and relieved.

Now to get onto real news. I find it almost impossible to write as there is so much to occupy my attention. But I will try to get everything off my chest, so that I can write this regularly from now on.

Well on Wednesday we got to Tangier and to Gibraltar. The things I saw and the things I felt are quite beyond description. I rose at quarter to 6, and by 6 was standing on the deck as we slowly came to rest in Tangier harbour. It was unbelievably lovely. On the left was Africa, dark hills with a sunset glow spreading right along them. On the right lay Tangier, a bay with a hill rising out of the glassy blue sea on whose gentle slope was a mass of white buildings, mosques etc. There was a sheen of golden, warmly windy light, and as the sun rose over the hills of Africa the white buildings went a shade whiter and then windows lit up and sparkled. The sea was a brilliant blue and almost from nowhere about a dozen rowing boats appeared, in which brown men in colourful costumes – orange cloaks, white hoods etc: were sitting, selling lovely things – carpets, felts, hats, poofs. And all of them the brightest colours. We bought a lovely hat and basket. After breakfast I climbed into coat and skirt and pranced ashore in a tender. It was very hot and on landing I said goodbye to Roy. He seemed pleased to get rid of me, poor dear. Never mind I'll get over it. Quicker than I expect. Gibraltar was lovely. It was hot and sleepy and beautiful brown eyed, glossy hued children played about in the streets. We went up as far as we could in a taxi and there was a heavenly view over the harbour, the reed-roofed houses nestling in the slope and the boats and battleships looking as if they were on glass and could be unstuck. Afterwards we went down, down and down through narrow streets in sun and shadow where thin cats lay in the shade and brown legged youths played football; where donkeys stood patiently drawing carts of fruit and vegetables. And girls sold bunches of freesias and irises for ridiculously cheap prices. We eventually went back to the ship completely dead.

Friday. Got up in rather a bad temper and remained in it most of day. It was an unusual day and I don't like unusual days. Also it was wet and generally miserable.

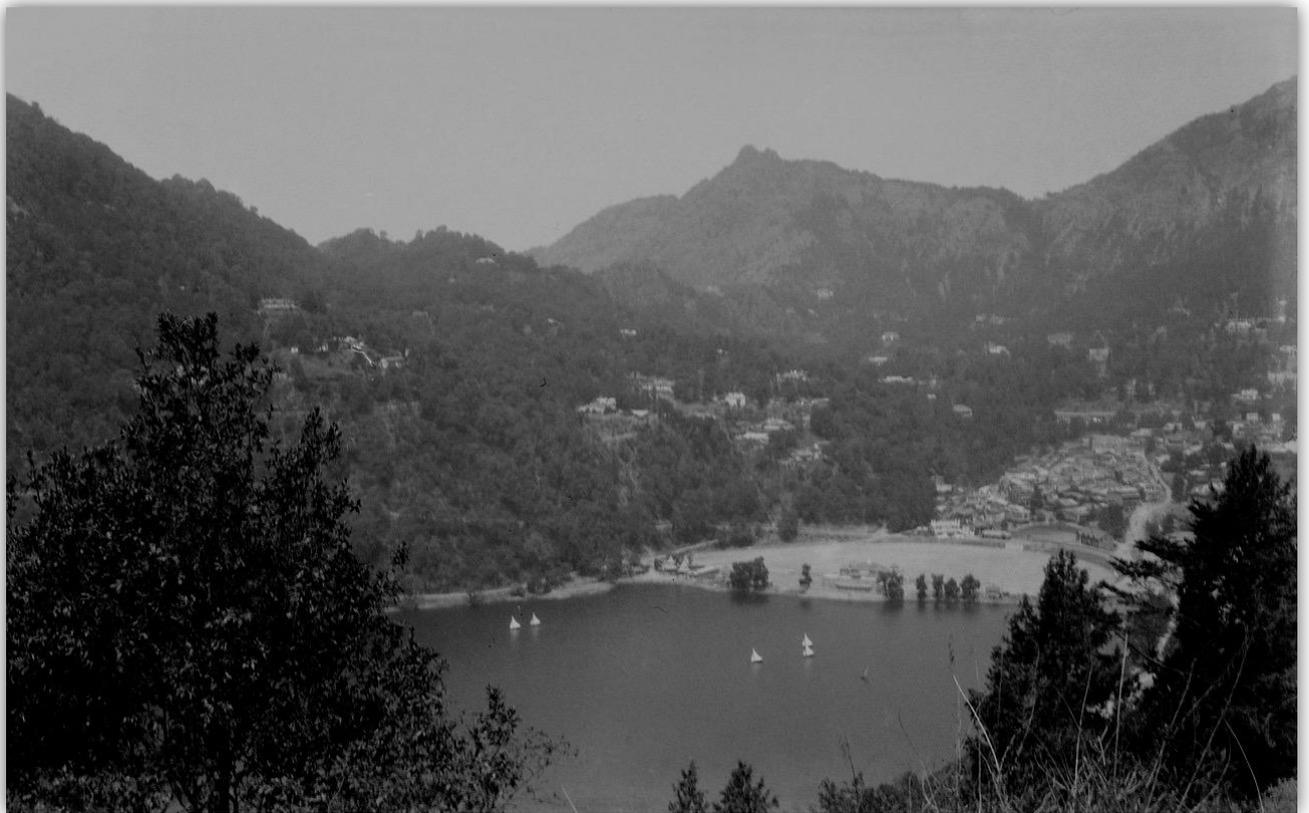
We took Solly ashore and first of all went up to Notre Dame de la Garde. It was on a very steep hill overlooking the town and the view over the houses and sea was divine. I loved the church, especially the white chapel, where I was very moved by a sculpture of Our Lord. It seemed almost alive. The rest of the day was spent trailing round, shopping and searching for non-existent taxis. Had an enormous and very good lunch. My hair is beginning to get straggly which is so infuriating. Am feeling decidedly cross tonight as I haven't seen anybody all day. Oh hell!

Saturday. A pretty lousy day on the whole. I spend my time being hurled from elation to dejection. I didn't meet Gordon (think that's his name) at all. Oh hell!



Iris on the boat to India in 1939, aged sixteen

NAINI TAL



Photos of Iris and her parents during her first months in Naini Tal







Saturday 22nd April [1939]

What an utter B.F. [Bloody Fool] I am not to have kept an account of the voyage day by day. Now from the hills of Naini² I look back with a slightly hazy homesickness, remembering impressions but not details, valuing so much more what I took for granted.

The lovely feeling to open my eyes in the morning and feel the gentle motion of the ship and the stewardess coming in with the fruit. To slide off my bunk, wash and climb into trousers and emerge onto deck. And feel the fresh sea-breeze blowing my hair.

To walk round with the dogs, chew an apple and talk to Robert knowing that he relishes every word, or listen to Gordon. Then breakfast, grapenuts and an orange, and down to my cabin to collect my things. The rest of the morning on deck, reading or playing games, till lunch. The blueness of the sea, the sun, the feel of the lug, Roy in his flannels, and later Gordon in his white shirt and shorts. Lunch and afterwards baggage room and a sleep in the warm darkness of the cabin. Waking up, tea, and then more games in the coolness of the evening, usually a talk and a drink before changing. Dinner and afterwards the cool starlit water and the strains of the dance band and then bed and heavy dreamless sleep. What a lovely carefree life. How little I appreciated it too. Only one more voyage in my life I suppose. Oh hell!

Port Said. I was up early and on deck watching them load cargo. It was fascinating. All the little brown, bare-footed men padding about, laughing and shouting. So different from the stolid, English workman! After breakfast I got 2 letters and watched a conjuror saying “No snakes, only cheekens, gully-gully”. Then we went ashore. It was glamorous, not too hot, but with a sort of sleepy tenseness in the air. We were followed by persistent men with trays selling things of 1/6 which they proudly declared came from their agents Woolworths! I got a bracelet for Betty³, one for myself, and was *given* a ring by the Todds. I must say the East does fascinate me. It is the atmosphere – the queer (*very* queer!) smells of strange herbs, dusty smoke, dirty people and peculiar food. And oh, the glorious jewelry and clothes and oddments at Semedu Arts. After leaving Port Said we steamed gently down the Suez Canal. It is really only a little trickle through a perfectly flat desert, but in the evening light, when we got to lakes, it was very lively with the dunes a burnished gold with purple shadows. I was very happy there making friends with Marjery, talking and playing tennis with Gordon and watching the loveliness of the moon on moving water at night, with lights bobbing about on the water. It was about this time too that I started bathing. I was very touched because one day I mentioned vaguely to Gordon that I was going to bathe at 6 the next morning and then forgot entirely about it. But I found the next day that the poor dear had actually got up himself at that unearthly hour. Sweet of him. The bath is 2 ft square about, but great fun. I don’t look at all bad in my costume which is sort of green rubber, and holds one firmly in. I’ve come to the conclusion that I did attract Gordon – but him being engaged and so forth. Its all most complicated. I suppose even when engaged ones not immune, but it rather alters the outlook so to speak – cramping undoubtedly.

Aden. We only had three quarters of an hour here and went ashore with Mr Yewnie and Rosamund Tyndale-Biscoe⁴ to buy underclothes. I’ve never seen such hideous men – gigantically tall but like sticks with round shiny heads. Saw a camel cart. Two people got left ashore and the boat had to be stopped. Met a Col. Vivian – 1st – who had a drink with us. A rather attractive man.

The rest of the journey I cannot describe in detail. The same sort of routine went on, I got more friendly with Gordon and Margery and so it goes on. I’m sure the Baggage Steward was faintly attracted – he showed it in lots of little ways. And on the last day he talked to me. I hated leaving him.

Bombay. After tender farewells to all and sundry and a gruelling time with the Customs (during which I held two restless dogs, hats coats and God knows what else in the boiling sun amidst a seething mass of coolies heaving trunks about) we returned to a hotel and lay in the coolness all the afternoon. Had a bath and tea. And then went for a drive with the Todds. It was a lovely evening, cool and sunny, and I adored my first smell of India. Everything, the clothes, the flowers, the trees, looked so lovely in the golden light. We ended up by having ices at the Taj. We boarded the train at 7.30.

Journey. This was outstanding only for dust and heat. I sat in my bra and pants covered in sweat and dust and trying, but failing to read. The meals were lovely. We had baths and dinner at Muttra⁵ and got to Kathcodahn early next morning, were met by Daddy, and drove up to Naini.

At which point, I suppose I ought to give my “impressions”. But I wont – in fact can’t. There are no romantic young men, no young men at all as far as I can make out, but everyone is very amiable. I ride up to college in the morning, sleep in the afternoon and write or work in the evening. I also sail occasionally, Mah Jong occasionally, dance (*very* occasionally) and talk quite a lot. The food is lovely and I’m very happy on the whole. I wish I had some companions of my own age but no doubt they’ll come later.

Saturday 11th May [1939]

Sailed with John Walker in the morning. Not too successful as the wind was all wrong, so we didn’t stay out long. While we were drinking afterwards General McRae⁶ and Col. Jameson⁷ came along. I felt a bit awkward being the only girl so after a bit I left them to it. I think Jamesons sweet. We have

been invited to government House to dinner. I'm feeling decidedly nervous, but apparently I shall have the A.D.C's. If it is the one I met the other night – oh boys, whoopee! Tut, tut, decidedly juvenile. We've also been asked to a show at Sherwood College⁸, starting with Holy Communion and ending with a little "hop"!

Wednesday 15th May [1939]

Had a long talk with Hodgen⁹ in the evening. He is really too sweet and much the most sensible person here. We talked mostly about me, and I told him about my ambition to write. And he said, "Fight. Life's one long fight, and you've got to make up your mind not to be upset by the knocks. If you want a thing go right ahead and try to get it, and don't be upset by set-backs. You're bound to be disillusioned and life won't be anything like you thought but fight all the same." He apparently hates the life, and has given up trying to make friends because everyone is so flippant and casual. He never wanted to come into the army and has never been happy in it, and that's why he always advises people *not* to get into a rut into which they don't fit. It makes me feel so bucked up to talk to someone like that, whose entire conversation is not centred on what happened in Sweeatipore in 1902, and who really thinks and feels and is intelligent. He's so young somehow, in spite of the fact that he must be 42 at least, and though he's about 6ft 5, he always makes me feel protective!

Thursday 16th May [1939]

Went to see "I see Ice"¹⁰ with Daddy and laughed uproariously all the way through. In the evening after dinner we went into the music room and played and sang. The devastating young man plays superbly, but I wasn't allowed to stay and hear him long. Mummy is so possessive somehow. Directly I'm enjoying myself, she comes along and says it's time to go. I've noticed that before several times, and it makes me wild. I can't argue in front of everybody, but I seethe inwardly.

Friday 17th May [1939]

Had my hair done, and then went to a drinks party at Curtoise's¹¹ house. It was great fun. I'm falling desperately for Rayner¹². I can't stop myself, as it's too silly because he's obviously in love with Swedish Match¹³. Also talked to Wally Kelly¹⁴ who said I was the most intelligent person he'd talked to in 4 drink parties! This under the influence of much whisky and soda, but still quite gratifying.

Saturday 18th May [1939]

College¹⁵ in morning. In the evening Rayner came and fetched me to skull, and although it looked very threatening I couldn't resist the temptation to go with him. The Swedish Match was there and Curtoise, and luckily we didn't go out, because a terrific storm started, with slashing rain, thunder and lightning. We played darts till nearly seven and then I went off to Mullens in a dandy¹⁶ where I found my parents. I'm learning quite a lot about Life and Men.

- a) That large men make me feel protective, ie. Hodgen
- b) That the knowledge that a man is unhappy with his wife and is consequently carrying on with another woman, makes me fall in love with him. ie. Rayner.

Sunday 19th May [1939]

Went for a solitary ride in the morning for 2 hours which I loved. Drinks were in progress when I came back (Question – when aren't they?) At which were congregated the Dogoods and W.K's¹⁷. I didn't make such a good impression on him this time – in fact on anybody. Hell!

Monday 20th May [1939]

Dinner at Government House¹⁸. I was rather nervous before going and definitely in a blue funk when I got there. I met Barbara Horton¹⁹, who is a sweet kid and rather attractive, and at dinner I sat next to Freeman²⁰. This was all very agreeable and I enjoyed dinner until the end, when champagne and overeating had the unpleasant effect of making me feel very ill. After dinner the feeling became more and more acute and I eventually had to retire into the garden and be very sick.

I managed to get back in time to say goodbye, and got home alright, but that night was complete hell, what with biliousness and diorhea [sic], and I spent the next two days in bed.

Wednesday 22nd May [1939]

Got up in the evening and actually danced! At least I danced with John Walker and Mrs B.W. John dances beautifully and gives me complete heart failures, but is very sweet nevertheless. In the evening sauntered down to get a present for Mummy (pair of stockings and a picture frame) and afterwards went to the boat club to have a row. Here I ran into Stuart and Malcolm who asked me to cox for them which I did very unsuccessfully and showing a large expanse of knicker if not more. I like Malcolm a lot – he must be about 30 and so attractive and blue eyed.

Thursday 23rd [May1939]

An uneventful day. In the afternoon Mummy had a tennis party, and I watched and was rather bored.

Friday 24th [May1939]

The fateful Matelots dance – and was it fateful! Of course I had fearful collywobbles all day and when the time came to go down I was inwardly panicking, though outwardly beautifully calm. When I got there I found Nan and she dragged me round introducing me to various people who of course had to give me a dance. All frightfully embarrassing. The nicest person was a young policeman called Bune²¹ with whom I had a rum punch. The excitement of the evening was Hodgen who turned out to be a “grande amour”. He had one dance and demanded another and after this second one rushed me away to a dark corner under the boathouse and there followed an intensely arduous love scene, which embarrassed and shocked me into mute surrender. I can’t understand why, but his embraces woke not the smallest response. And I only had a slight feeling of revulsion. And a queer consciousness that I was somewhere else looking on. I think it is my old dread of scenes that fills me with a hatred of emotional rolls in the hay. I wonder if I shall ever like being kissed. I suppose if it’s the right person it’ll be alright. I wonder what Hodgen really feels about me. It’s so complicated him having a wife and daughter. Got home at 2.30.

Saturday 27th May [1939]

Went to the Garden Party in the afternoon and it was pretty deadly. I saw Freeman but didn’t get a chance to talk to him. Also saw Bune but ditto. Met Barbara Horton and the Godwin²² girl, both of whom I like a lot. I don’t care for Mavis S-S much. In the evening we went out to dinner with the Humms, and afterwards we played Vingt et Un and the others bridge. It was rather fun and we went on till 12.

Sunday June 4th [1939]

Did nothing particular, except after dinner went to a rehearsal and read Gwen’s part. It was pretty desperate – I was dead tired and everybody was vague and Mummy most of all. I hope to god she doesn’t have to take it on....

Monday June 5th [1939]

Can’t remember. Went up to college and sank into a dreary depression. I have missed out a week during which:-

- (a) We had a dance at the Royal in which I fell desperately for Rayner – or rather slipped down the last slope.
- (b) A dance at government House which I *didn’t* enjoy – we arrived late which was fatal. I had to sit out several dances and felt ghastly.
- (c) Dinner and dance with the Pughs²³. Quite enjoyable, with Richard Simon²⁴ as an escort – only I drank too many gimlets and could hardly stand up straight.
- (d) Regatta which was rather fun – we (Richard S and I) splashed about in canoes not very successfully and I coxed ditto.

Tuesday June 6th [1939]

College in morning. In the evening joined Malcolm's party for dinner and dance. I enjoyed dinner very much and the dancing quite. Met rather a nice young man called Sidney Wood. Doubt if anything will come of it though. He may buy Bashful.

Wednesday 7th [June 1939]

Revolting day which I spent in being agonisingly sick.

Thursday 8th [June 1939]

In bed all day.

Friday 9th [June 1939]

Got up in morning. Talked to Rayner for a bit about Hodgen who proves to be as coquettish as ever. Rode up to see the snows in the evening but they were not visible.

Tuesday June 13th [1939]

Joined General McReas party for dinner and dance in the hotel. Enjoyed myself a lot – in fact really enjoyed myself. Rest of the party consisted of – Women – Jane, Barbara Horton, Sheila Falkner²⁵, Maureen Baird²⁶, Mrs Pugh, Mrs Moore (?), Me. Men – Neil²⁷, Boon²⁸, Sidney, Falkner, Hugh Rance²⁹, John Freeman, Grant, Pugh, General,? (Jack Buchanan). At dinner I sat between Sidney and Falkner and eat nothing but enjoyed it awfully. Falkner and I had a deep and a trifle indecent conversation re convents – ie should one shut oneself off from opposite sex. Both agreed no with reservations. Said if one did what one thought was right it was, at which he replied “Murder included”. This stumped me but turned hastily to discuss dysentery with Sidney. The dancing was fun, I enjoyed the company of Neil best, with Sidney and Jack Buchanan running up. Neil I think likes me, though not passionately. We sat out one and danced one. Sidney is v. intelligent – we discussed books – he is a “Turnip tops”³⁰ fan. In a moment of heat and excitement said I'd show him my play. But will not – definitely.

Wednesday 14th [June 1939]

Went up to College in the morning but regretted it frantically as had violent pain, and could hardly get back in time. Spent the rest of the day in bed, but after a stiff brandy got up and went to the party. Enjoyed it quite but not so much as yesterday. Include: Miss Gilbert, Falkners, Heffenders, Hodgen, Man, Nicholson, and later Mrs. B.W. and Jameson, Dick. Met Neil who asked me for a dance but couldn't give it. Blow.

Thursday 15th [June 1939]

In bed in morning with violent gripes and diorhea [sic]. Eventually turned to blood and mucous and was carted off to hospital. It was lovely and clean and airy but strange and the atmosphere a bit frightening. Was perfectly alright for rest of day!

Friday (16th-22nd) to Thursday [June 1939]

Spent in hospital. The diagnosis showed definite bacillary dysentery, though I was practically alright the whole time. Mrs Tizell was next door and afforded comic relief. We both went into long and gory descriptions of our various symptoms, neither listening to what the other was talking about. Neil and Yvonne de Hamel³¹ came to see me, also Cotton³², but otherwise only parents. Read, did a highly complicated jig saw, wrote an interminable letter to Betty, played Patience and day-dreamed. Was starved for 3 days and nearly passed out – only relief being Horlicks and revolting salts two hourly.

Friday 23rd [June 1939]

Got up in morning and talked to John Hodgen. We sat on the sofa and held hands and it was quite pleasant.

Saturday 24th [June 1939]

Rode in morning and got caught in violent rain. Bazaar in evening to buy material for coat and skirt.

Sunday 25th [June 1939]

Went to lunch with Vivians. Very enjoyable and high class society – All commissioners. Also Baird's Secretary. Rather nice. I wonder what Neil really feels about me. He always seems very pleased to see me. In the evening went to see “3 Smart Girls Grown up”³³. Was utterly adorable. Deanna grows sweeter each picture and her figure – its ravishing!

Monday 26th [June 1939]

The fateful cocktail party. There were about 60 people for drinks. I was in a perfect stew at first, but soon got into a group and enjoyed myself thoroughly. I talked to Maxwell³⁴ at the end who was very amiable and not at all stuck up. Result of several potent cocktails, one of which nearly knocked me flat. When the general rabble had gone the rest of us – about 20 – stayed on for bacon and eggs. I sat next to Dick and a nice youth called Michael Littlewood. As the evening wore on he came more and more amorous. And after scrabbling about in the dark playing sardines for some time we relapsed onto a sofa and, in a pally embrace – discussed Birth Control and whether there was a God or not. Odd but enjoyable. I fear I neglected Dick utterly but he *is* so stodgy. I have never seen anything like it – every one was sitting about on everybody else's knees, kissing etc: Dick arranged to take me to to-morrows dance but I don't want to go.

RANIKET

Monday July 10th [1939] Wedding anniversary of M & D

I am sitting in a gas-lit room in a bungalow in Ranikhet³⁵, and the dark hills are vivid with lightning. It is weeks since I wrote this but nothing of much interest has happened. I have got quite friendly with Yvonne but all the picnics etc we arranged haven't come off. I have been to no dances since Dick went down and doubt if I shall go to any more for months if ever. This is the loveliest place imaginable but I am too weary to write more to-night so will leave descriptions of scenery etc: till to-morrow.

Tuesday July 11th [1939]

We came over here on Sunday and the journey was pretty good hell. The driver and Daddy in front with Mummy and I and two dogs at the back and coats food etc. It was stinkingly hot without a breath of air and road was a continual series of hairpin bends which made for giddiness not to mention buzzing in head and ears. We got out at Bowhali for tea and it was breathless – I literally oozed and felt as if I couldn't breathe. In we packed again and ground up and up and to add to the enjoyment the car boiled and after stopping several times we had to get out and sit by the side of the road for 10 mins till whatever it was cooled down. When the Sun went down however it was blissful – the blueness of these hills is amazing and all the sunset clouds were frothing over them. We arrived at about 7.30. This bungalow has a heavenly situation – it looks over trees to range upon range of blue hills and then a great bank of clouds. There are masses of vivid flowers all round the porch and compound. When we arrived the sky was vivid tangerine fading to primrose and salt green and the air was full of pine wood smoke, all covered in the faint misty haze of Indian twilight. It was lovely bathing and changing and eating a four course dinner. Then sitting under the stars with bumping moths and the heady flower scents. And so to bed.



Yesterday and to-day have been very peaceful and enjoyable. After breakfast lull (brilliant!) we drove to the bazaar and after various purchases on to the golf-links. Here it was most pleasant with grass and pines and after walking a little way we collapsed into the shade, ate chocolate and took photos. Then we dropped in at the club and had drinks with the Secretary, Brown, who asked us to stay on for a dance on Wednesday which we shall. You never know, it may be fate! What a hope. After lunch I slept and after tea drew, wrote to Betty and went for a stroll.

To-day has been quieter still. I painted all morning and then tore up my work. I always *feel* I could do it and when the time comes just fail. I drew what I considered a good likeness of myself but it was received coldly. Went for long walk in evening. Two sahibs arrived – seem quite amiable.

To-day I finished “The Worst Journey in the World”³⁶. It is really a beautiful book, one of the kind that in their simplicity and blunt recording of facts stir up your emotion in an inexplicable way. The courage, perseverance and loyalty, the friendship and unselfishness of those men makes me blush for shame. To me it is one of the most wonderful things in the world that men could endure and fight all alone, facing death every day, every hour practically. All for knowledge. It is this spirit, the spirit that prompted Columbus and the spirit that prompts the Everest expeditions and the solo flights, that makes one believe in mankind. With so much strife and hypocrisy, with hatred preached as a creed, and Fear as a God, it is good to think that the spirit of Adventure is not dead. As long as men risk their happiness for others there is hope for all. The end of the book is very touching I think and one that fills me with my old ache – for what? “And I tell you, if you have the desire for knowledge, and the power to give it physical expression, go out and explore. If you are a brave man you will do nothing: if you are fearful you may do much, for none but cowards have need to prove their bravery. Some will tell you that you are mad, and nearly all will say "What is the use?" For we are a nation of shopkeepers and no shopkeeper will look at research which does not promise him a financial return within a year. And so you will sledge nearly alone, but those with whom you sledge will not be shopkeepers: that is worth a good deal. If you march your Winter Journeys you will [have] your reward, so long as all you want is a penguins egg.”

May I remember that in the Winter Journeys of my life.

Wednesday July 12th [1939]

In the morning Mummy and I drove to Ooput³⁷, and walked a little way but it was too hot for much, so we came back. Changed for lunch and had to rush down as Daddy was late. Lunch with General Nicolson³⁸ was quite pleasant. I sat next to the A.D.C. who was rather a wet I thought. Left at 2.30 about. In the evening called on the Niblets.³⁹ A nice man, but rather a dark, junk-filled bungalow smelling of sax and floor polish. Rushed back and changed for the cocktail dance. It was fun definitely, but I met nobody of any interest. Bidolph⁴⁰, one of the M.E.S.⁴¹ occupants, turned out a dear and we got on v. well. He has a daughter of 16 and is hesitating whether to bring her out. I said yes definitely. Got back quite early 11 ish.

NAINI TAL

Tuesday 13th [July 1939]

Up early and uneventful journey back in good time. Arrived to find a damp and chilly Naini, but two letters – from Jill and Elizabeth⁴² – both v. welcome and sweet. Its funny how friendship is utterly different with each person. You give them a different bit of you to suit them and so its really impossible to compare degrees of affection. Betty, Jill and Elizabeth for instance and Jack. My method of approach to each is not in the slightest the same.

Friday 14th [July 1939]

Up to College, but did practically nothing. Thought of seeing Yvonne but felt too weary.

Saturday August 12th [1939]

A month has gone by – an eventful month in some ways. At least I seem to have had a lot to do and yet not done much. I've been happier in this month than at any time in Naini – happier than any time in my life since I became self-conscious. Not particularly for anything I've been doing, but because it has been a happy, quiet routine, with no fear of continual criticism, no agonising shyness, continual necessity of being on my best behaviour with Strangers. On thinking over my life it seems to have been pretty good hell on the whole – eternal goodbyes, always in other peoples houses, gauche and unwanted. Well that parts over now. Oh God I'm glad its over.

My 17th birthday was *not* a success, owing to the fact that Mummy wanted me to have a party and I didn't want to and so she was in a white hot temper all day. However I went out to tea and they to dinner so we didn't see too much of each other.

Yvonne and I have become rather friendly she's odd – she seems to attract men, and yet has never been kissed or even had her hand held. Granted I haven't had much experience, but then I haven't had the chance. I wonder if it's a greater compliment in a way for men to treat you as a friend – probably. My golf is rather wretched but I'm getting clubs of my own.

Niall has returned plus a moustache and is causing me a few heart-throbs. Quite unwarranted I know, but it cant be helped. We went to dinner there on Monday and there was just us, the Bairds and Yvonne. I sat next to Niall at dinner and got on quite well and afterwards he and I and Yvonne played records while D.Baird showed the parents Curios. The records were heavenly and I enjoyed it all thoroughly. Niall lent me two books and the next day I got a note saying we were definitely going to Bareilly, but declaring this to be a frightful secret, not to be extracted on pain of death. Felt frightfully important and excited only to get another note that day to say it wasn't at all and I could tell anyone. Felt very foolish – bother him. Still he's nice.

[One and a half pages of detailed technical notes on Photography by Iris - omitted]

Tuesday August 15th [1939]

Disillusionment – Niall doesn't like me in the slightest. I thought he did. Not more than like but I did think that. I'm feeling rather depressed, still I suppose it doesn't really matter. I think I must have annoyed him rather badly. He's obviously keen on Yvonne and I don't blame him. I have no proof for these ideas but I just know it is so. Oh they're playing Highland Swing – Oh I'm an ass!

Wednesday 16th [August 1939]

A wet day. Depression wearing off. I can't think how or why I offended Niall if I did – he probably won't even send me those pictures now. Oh drat! I think Yvonne must have told him unpleasant things about me!

Thursday 17th [August 1939]

A definite improvement – Yvonne came to lunch and afterwards I went up there to listen to records. She showed me a letter Niall wrote her and I don't think it's as nice as what he wrote me and he sent me his love. So perhaps I didn't offend him after all! Anyway we shall see. The records were

absolute bliss – Noel and Paul Robeson and Hutch. And we haven't heard any of the classical ones yet. Niall returns on the 28th – 11 days – Oh lord! I am dreading the week and season and so forth starting again. I know I won't get asked to any dances at all and I shall have the usual frightful qualms too about dances. Damn!

Sunday, August 21 [1939]

The last 10 days seem to have whisked by – I don't know what I've been doing I'm sure, but I seem to have been pretty full up. Yvonne has been crashing round with me to a certain extent and my golf has got steadily worse – too desperately depressing and I can't do anything about it. Still I always go on hoping each time I go to the golf course that this time I'll get the knack. If only someone would tell me something definite to do or not to do. I think I shall go every day after College. I would like to be able to play at least tolerably – enough to go round with anyone.

I've finished "The Rains Came"⁴³ and enjoyed it awfully. I think a lot of its really good stuff – vivid and true – but there's a certain amount of exaggerated sentimentality. For instance there are continual phrases such as: "Suddenly, as he swept the gutter, he knew that he was sweeping away the old India with its prejudices and superstitions etc". This is pure nonsense and as it is constantly repeated it becomes a trifle annoying. People don't "know" things suddenly – "He was walking along and suddenly he knew she would die" – it isn't human or natural. But it gives a clear picture of India in many ways, and it makes one feel that Indians are human beings, which one is inclined to forget sometimes. Its surprising how little English people try to understand them, how little interest they take in anything outside polo and parties. Women particularly –

To-day has been enjoyable – This morning we took the entire pack for a tremendous ride around Naini. After a short sleep we (Mummy and I) went up to Dwaikistan, and while they played tennis I listened to the gramophone. Then we had tea during which John Freeman and Peter Haig⁴⁴ arrived. Peter is a dear, coltish but not shy. After which we all ambled down to the Cinema to see "The Great Waltz"⁴⁵. Lovely music – Strauss.

August 30th [1939]

Got the photos from Niall. So perhaps all's well. Met him later looking unspeakable in a tweed cap of enormous size also Maureen. He'll probably be off to Egypt.

September 1st 1939 WAR

A day that will probably be remembered for ever in the world's history. Hitler has attacked Poland and war is now inevitable and probably started by now. At the moment I can't believe it – that it's happening to me, to us – it's the sort of thing one talks about and reads about but never imagines will happen to one personally. At the moment I don't know what part I shall play but I do want to do something definite – nurse or something. I couldn't just dance and go on with the season knowing that thousands were being maimed and killed – possibly friends and relations. Or could I? Anyhow it's all wrong to take it from a personal point of view, though it's a great temptation. I wish I could be of some use.

September 3rd [1939]

England is now at war with Germany. It had to be, of course. And now that it's here there is no shock in fact rather a sense of relief. The uncertainty is so nerve-wracking and continual crises would have arisen if this had not happened. And I do think that we are in a better position now than we have ever been. Of course it's all vile and unspeakable. And I shall probably never see Richard again or Betty – or Oxford. Still it had to be, that's all one can say about it. As time goes on we shall see how much it's going to cost us and the world to fight for our principles. Evil cannot win therefore Hitler cant.

September 16th [1939]

The war has been going on for a fortnight and Poland has lasted out wonderfully, but in another week I should imagine it will have to give way. It seems ghastly that we can't do anything definite to

help. Several ships have been mined with consequent loss of life, but there have been no raids over France or England. As yet.

As for my own life – it has been rather fuller than usual. A sweet girl called Margot Boyd⁴⁶ has come to the hotel and we are most pally. She is 23 and attractive, though too fat, so has had plenty of experience (sinister word!) and we discuss the deeper issues of life at much length. She is much more my type than Yvonne really and has an infinitely sweeter nature. I have also played a little tennis and am much improved so perhaps with practice I'll be O.K. Niall has faded out more or less though I'm wild about him.

Sunday September 17th [1939]

Yesterday I started my blue-bird⁴⁷ efforts – rather successfully! I went to tea with Peggy first. And we walked to Wellesley⁴⁸ where we were soon surrounded by about 20 untidy and rowdy infants. I was left with half of them and hadn't the vaguest idea what to do with them, but eventually made them sing which they seemed to enjoy. It think it will be rather fun once we get going.

In the evening Margot and I were going to go to the flicks alone, but were eventually carried off by General McRea and Colonel Berridge⁴⁹ and on to the boat house. They were both on terrific form and we all shrieked hilariously but felt rather lost and submerged. Saw Niall who was so-so.

To-day (Sunday) we or rather I went to church in the morning with the Boyds. Met Yvonne, the Haigs etc. And after a lot of chitter chatter returned home. In the afternoon the Nicolson⁵⁰ girls came over to tennis – they're rather a nice couple, and one wouldn't know they were coloured. It makes me sick the way Daddy goes on continually about colour – arrant snobbery of course and absolutely typical. What does it matter its not as if I was in danger of falling for a coloured man. It's the pettiness that annoys me so – why should we consider ourselves superior because our skin is a slightly lighter shade. It's incredible. I feel as if could lead people – I want to lead people. I want to show them how mean and narrow they are.

Thursday September 21 [1939]

Last night I went to a party at the Falkners and enjoyed myself very much. I had internal tremors when I got there to find who it consisted of: - Jean and Roger, Bennets⁵¹, Lancasters, Pughs, General McRea and Maureen. All the people in the station who terrify me! At first I felt lost and wretched but I talked to Maureen and got more confident and enjoyed my evening a lot. After supper we played roulette at which I won the tremendous sum of 12 annas! Maureen is really rather nice, though I hardly had a chance of talking to her. She mentioned something about going to lunch sometime which I hope comes off. Everybody seemed to treat me reasonably last night. Odd.

Mummy and Daddy were knocked out of the tennis tournament yesterday but Daddy and Gen. McRea are still in and Mummy and Mrs Hallett.

Friday September 22nd [1939]

Betty Harris⁵² called in the morning to know if I'd like to go for a ride and flicks with her. We set off at about 3 and went at a ferocious speed, eventually coming to rest at a lovely spot with grass and pines. It reminded me strongly of Surrey. I shall never get as fond of India as England, though it has a definite fascination I admit. We had tea at the Boat Club and went on to see "Lightning Conductor"⁵³ with Gordon Harker which was very amusing. Betty is a dear, but very young for her age. Her extreme plainness doesn't seem to matter at all – in fact one doesn't notice it really. But somehow I can never get really intimate with her, and our conversation when together is very general. I am trying lots of ways of writing because mine seems to be getting worse. I used it like at one time but now ----!

Saturday 23rd [September 1939]

The day – "Mystery at Greenfinger"⁵⁴ was born. They had a matinée which went off quite well and afterwards I went and had dinner there with the cast and stayed behind the scenes. It was great fun and Barbara (Horton) and I got on very well. She is rather a sweet kid and in some ways I like her better than Yvonne. Yvonne isn't really my type at all, being sporty, hearty, completely insensitive

and mad on company and amusement. I've never found anyone who is really like me – each person has a bit of me in them, but nobody really experiences my “black moods” or is so frantically sensitive. Of course that is to my leg. Jill is the nearest to that and Betty is like me in lots of ways too. The play went very well –

Sunday 24th [September 1939]

Stayed in bed very late. Went up to tea at Inglis⁵⁵ at which were assembled – Bertie Seawood, Peggy, Maureen, Capt: Wilde (Strange and silent individual with spectacles) and Peter Haig. Yvonne seems very keen on Peter. She is a peculiar kid really – has absolutely no nerves and shows her liking for people ostentatiously. Bertie seems rather a dear but nothing to get hot and cold about. Barbara came after tea – The film was “The Gangs all Here”⁵⁶ and was v. good, Jack⁵⁷ of course being angelic. I don't fall for him as much now but like him the same.

Monday [25th September 1939]

Have just returned from show. It was a great success – Mummy will be furious I didn't stay on to dance but I don't care. Feel rather depressed at present.

Tuesday 26th [September 1939]

The Likemans⁵⁸ gave a drink party in the evening which was rather fun. I do love Lauder⁵⁹ - an angelic creature. Barbara was there and was very amiable. Berridge asked us to dine at his table – he's sweet too and has the most heavenly sense of humour. He and Mummy get on like anything.

Wednesday 27th [September 1939]

Maharajah of Balrampur's ⁶⁰At Home. We watched tennis and nearly froze, so Barbara and I did a bolt about half way through and sat and gossiped in front of the fire.

Thursday Sept. 28th [1939]

Played tennis at Hawksdale⁶¹ in the afternoon. Was feeling extremely jittery owing to

(a) my tennis

(b) My leg –

However when I got there I found it was quite a friendly affair. Niall was amiable, nobody was watching and my tennis was quite good. So all went well. I think all my qualms about Niall are unfounded. I hope so. Others present were Wakeley,⁶² Falkners and Maxwell. I was rather speechless on the whole which was annoying, but perhaps it didn't matter.

Friday Sept. 29th [1939]

Regatta in afternoon with Nicolsons – rather boring and very badly run.

In the evening we had dinner with the Hatfields. I was not looking forward to it, but as always in such cases I enjoyed myself a lot. Others present were the Lauders and Yvonne's boy-friend – Lovell-Smith. He was rather sweet and Lauder of course was a pet. Mrs Lauder too was awfully nice. I'm so glad they'll be at Bareilly – it really ought to be rather a hoot and I only hope comes up to expectations. Mrs Hatfield, though undoubtedly not top-drawer is very kind-hearted and thoroughly pleasant to everyone. I much prefer her to Mrs W.K for instance. Maureen asked me to go to lunch there to-morrow – hope it's a success.

Saturday Sept. 30th [1939]

After a chaotic morning spent packing myself and the parents off, I went up to lunch with Maureen. I was feeling a little nervous – not knowing her and so on – and lunch was a little sticky, but afterwards we took chairs and gramophones into the garden and enjoyed ourselves a lot. Maureen is a dear and I hope we get on good terms as I think we have a lot in common. At 3.15 I started off for Peggy's and arrived late of course. We trundled off to Bluebirds and I got a large blister, which didn't help matters. I didn't enjoy it quite so much this time – novelty wearing off I suppose. Afterwards I got taxi to Mrs Humms, felt horribly homesick and miserable, and recovered

eventually and played Mah Jong to 1 pm.

Sunday Oct. 1 [1939]

Had my breakfast in bed and rose (rather painfully) about 10. Result was that there was a frightful skirmish to get off in anything like time. However we eventually rode off in high spirits and good weather – only to be damped literally and figuratively by terrific rain-storm. However we rode on and on in the rain to Bowali⁶³ where we eat an enormous lunch at Mrs Cottons⁶⁴ and rode back into more rain and hail. In spite of the dismal conditions we extracted a certain amount of girlish amusement from it all and I think all enjoyed ourselves.

Monday Oct 2nd [1939]

Got up early and left Mrs Humms. Thank goodness. She's dear but I do hate being in other people's houses after sixteen years of it! Mummy arrived back in the afternoon or rather morning. And I got a note from Bill Berridge asking me to go to the flicks with him that afternoon. We went to the Roxy and saw "Bad Man of Brimstone⁶⁵" with Wallace Beery. It was rather fun and Bill. B. is so sweet. I think he's the nicest man in command. Much too good for her – I don't know how he puts up with her. I shall be getting all romantic about him soon which is too ridiculous. Mummy brought back encouraging news of Bareilly – Youth and Beauty!

Tuesday Oct 3rd [1939]

Got a note from Maureen asking me to lunch and tea on Thursday so it looks as if we might have clicked. In the afternoon went to tea with Peggy and Bluebirds. Getting more and more bored with them and am thanking my lucky stars its so near the end. Peggy is very nice but I always feel so small and insignificant beside her which makes me tongue-tied and rather futile.

Wednesday 4th [October 1939]

Went with Cpt. Nehru⁶⁶ to see "For Love or Money⁶⁷" at the Roxy. It was better than I expected, but I contracted some sort of visiting parasite whose short stay was nevertheless eventful!

Thursday 5th [October 1939]

Went up to College and did a fearful test which I got all wrong from start to finish. Came back here and at 12.30 rode up to lunch with Maureen. We looked at snapshots after lunch. God I do envy that girl. She's got the most terribly nice family. Cousins etc. lovely houses to live in, the best everywhere she goes and Niall for a brother! I suppose everyone has some compensations and everyone some drawbacks. Still I'd give lot to be her – independent and adored by father and brother. She was very attractive as a child – more so than now I think, and Niall was sweet of course. We went in the evening to see "Having a Wonderful Time⁶⁸" which was odd, but I enjoyed it.

Friday October 6th [1939]

I did absolutely nothing all day except work _____

Saturday 7th [October 1939]

Jean Cookson's wedding to Roger Nicholson. It wasn't a particularly thrilling wedding and Jean was terribly nervous about it all and so looked a trifle grim. Niall was there in his kilt in which he looked absolutely ravishing, but at the cocktail party afterwards neither he or Maureen talked to me for more than 3 minutes so today I'm depressed. Especially as I had the chance of being in a party with them tomorrow. Mummy drank too much and was sick.

Sunday 8th [October 1939]

As Mummy was going out with Mrs Blue-James - I asked Peggy Dowling to go for a ride and on to the flicks. She is small, dark and rather attractive, very talkative and lively and can be quite amusing. She is nearly 23 though she looks less. On the ride we pulled everyone to pieces and so

thoroughly enjoyed ourselves. After tea Bill Berridge took us to the flicks and was in terrific form. I like him better every day but I'm sure his opinion of me decreases hourly. I often wonder - have I got a sense of humour? I have when I'm with contemporaries but it fades quietly out when its most needed. I can think of a thing as funny in thought - rather obvious - but words come half a second too late. We drank at the boat club and then tottered up hill.

Monday 9th [October 1939]

We played tennis with the Hatfields in the afternoon which was very enjoyable - others present being Lauders and Lovell-Smith - latter is extremely good and we had great fun. I do dislike that expression. Rushed home and changed and then hurtled up the hill to have dinner with the Pughs and play Mah Jong. It was v. cosy and friendly and peacefully enjoyable. We had dinner in front of the fire and then continued till about 12.30. Fraser, their infant, is a sweet child and they both seem devoted to him. It was the Cabaret Dance at the Club - but I don't think we missed much. Cotton is a singularly unpleasant specimen.

Thursday 12th [October 1939]

In the morning Mummy had Lala⁶⁹ Pugh, Mrs Lauder and Mrs Donaldson⁷⁰ to play Mah Jong. I played at the end and it was fun. I am writing on my knee hence peculiarity of script. In the afternoon we went with Nehru to see "Berkeley Square⁷¹" with Lesley Howard. It was a superb picture I thought and particularly so for me. It dealt with the "time theory". I still think and always will that there is no time - it seems so obvious that I can't get any arguments for it! Got an airmail from Betty in which she is frightfully depressed and miserable and announces her "semi-engagement" to Ernst - odd!

Friday 13th [October 1939]

Went to tea with Barbara. They've got a lovely house and an adorable Spaniel puppy. After tea we rode along to Lands End. She got frightfully intimate and she told me all the nasty details of her affair with Freddy Stockwell⁷² and we gurgled and giggled and were in every way typical. But it was great fun (ugh)! and I think we both enjoyed ourselves a lot. Barbara is a funny kid as I don't know whether she's got a lot in her or nothing. A little of both I think! She's very keen on George Boon, and thinks he is on her, but I couldn't agree very heartily with her.

Saturday 14th [October 1939]

A deadly day - had my hair done at Nancy Jacksons and then on to Bluebirds. Arrived v. late. Peggy really hasn't much idea how to cope with them.

Sunday 15th [October 1939]

One of my blackout days. At least the first part was alright - we went for a long ride round by Snow View. In the afternoon we were going to flicks with Bill Berridge but he didn't turn up and we went by ourselves. "Adventures of Tom Sawyer⁷³" darn good. For no reason I got depressed and hurt and so didn't go up to dinner but wallowed in self-pity downstairs and wrote incoherent poetry.

Monday 16th [October 1939]

In the evening we went to see "Yellow Jack"⁷⁴ with Bill Berridge. It was a wonderful film, one of the best I've seen for a long time. All about the fight against Yellow Fever and the attempt to find out what caused it. There was something terribly sincere and moving about it, and all the characters were so very real. The acting was superb - especially Robert Montgomery. I used to dislike him but now I think he's one of the best. Oh I would love to do research - I wish I was scientifically minded. Cancer research. Afterwards we had drinks with Bill at the Boat Club and stayed talking for about an hour. I do love him but am always very tongue-tied in his presence.

Nothing of the war seems to have been mentioned in this diary. But as a matter of fact, though no doubt history is being made and all that, it touches us very little here. Letters are so few, and news

so scanty, that one would hardly know there is a war. Juliet wrote the other day, and seemed terribly upset poor darling. Haven't heard from Liza or Jill - I wonder how I shall like it in Bareilly - I wonder if I shall have any real affairs or have any proposals. I do so want to get on really good terms with a man of my age (about 23 for him) I do so want to feel perfectly at ease with someone like that. I don't want to get married or get violent or anything.

Thursday October 19th [1939]

The Lauders and the Bairds came to tennis. Niall had been ill so he watched and Godwin⁷⁵ played instead. The tennis was good and Niall was very nice, but he looked desperately ill poor dear. Aroused the old protective instincts and so forth! He brought his camera, which is lovely but took no photos. The tea was simply frightful and we none of us could eat anything. Desperately awkward for everyone concerned. Bill came and watched - I do love him so. I think he's the nicest person I've ever met and the nearest to perfection. I wish Mrs B. wasn't coming out - too silly of me but she's rather a blot really.

Friday October 20th [1939]

Barbara came to tea and we went on for a ride together - joined later by Yvonne. I discovered in the course of conversation with B. that she doesn't really like Yvonne much and considers her conceited etc. Its funny, I feel rather like that about her too. There are times when she annoys me more than any other person I have yet met (except Betty being mulish) because she's so cocksure. And in front of men she goes quite bats and childish and shows off like a 6 year old. Also the way she talks about her family is rather nasty. The trouble is I like her, and because I like her I hate her being so silly. But I've come to the conclusion I like Barbara a great deal more, and that she's got a lot in her after all!

Saturday 21st. [October 1939]

Tennis at the Metropole - Gillespies⁷⁶, Col. Daw⁷⁷, Glad Hobson⁷⁸ (!), Lovell-Smith, Capt. Best⁷⁹, Miss Kinks⁸⁰ - + us. I only played once and then rottenly. We had a tremendous tea and it was all mildly enjoyable. After dinner Mummy and I tore down to meet Nehru and saw a rather mediocre film called "Comet over Broadway⁸¹". Afterwards we met Bill Berridge, the Pughs, Ian Pitcairn-Campbell⁸² and Capt. Best at the Boat Club. There was no dance so we just sat there for about an hour. Capt. Best is a strange individual - very ugly with the reddest nose I've ever seen and spectacles. Very quiet in company like me but otherwise not too bad. Ian P.C. is rather a weak looking specimen.

Sunday 22nd October 1939

We rose at about 7.30 and by 8.30 and by 8.30 were on our way to Cheena⁸³. We being Mummy, Barbara, Bill, Lala Pugh, Yvonne, Ian P-Campbell, Capt. Best and I. We got there at about 10 and had a terrific but chaotic breakfast at an angle of 45°. Bill cooked and distributed sausages and we girls smashed eggs with enthusiasm but not much accuracy. We took a good deal of photos which I hope come out, and spent the rest of the day lying on our backs and singing in a rather tuneless fashion "In the Cracks" as Bill aptly remarked. After packing we started down the hill and met Niall coming up. Poor dear, he had just missed us, but walked down with Barbara and I and took us down the most frightful places. I could hardly walk at the bottom. Yvonne's nose was a little out of joint.

Monday October 23rd [1939]

Got news in the morning that we were going down to Bareilly on Thursday which I'm very pleased about. I know I shall be disappointed about the place and the people, but it can't be helped. Also got a note from Niall saying why he didn't come yesterday and asking me to go tomorrow. I just can't make up my mind whether he likes me or not and if he does how much. I don't think Maureen likes me much after all. What a blasted muddle life is. I can't even decide how much I

like him which is even more involved. He's so intelligent but I do like him best when he's serious and he never is these days. I think about him so much and yet when I'm with him I don't care.

Tuesday October 24th [1939]

Dropped in at Hawksdale in the morning but it was rather a blob. Niall went on working, Maureen was aloof and neither of them really appreciated the historic picture I took of Peter and Yvonne up Cheena. In fact Niall said it looked as if they were standing beside a muddy puddle in Kensington Gardens. Brute! In the afternoon I trundled off by myself to take the Bluebirds. They were absolutely sweet and I got on much better by myself, than with Peggy. They all kissed me goodbye and were too too touchingly devoted and upset at my going. I think perhaps I have got the quality of leadership to a mild degree at any rate. Photos returned and 2 of mine v. good.⁸⁴

Wednesday 25th [October 1939]

My last day at College - rather chaotic on the whole. I forgot everything and crept off in the midst of silent farewells. I didn't like saying goodbye to them at all - my usual complex about "this is the last time". I wonder what they'll make of their lives - rather drab outlook for them poor dears. In the afternoon I went to the flicks with Yvonne and thought again how in a way she's a pathetic specimen. Her attitude to her family is a pity but understandable. We talked a lot - our attitudes have subtly changed and I think I'm now the superior where I was definitely inferior. At least that's what I feel. I don't know if she does. The film "Line Engaged"⁸⁵ was excellent.

BAREILLY



Thursday 26th [October 1939]

We came down, had a hectic morning packing and before lunch had drinks with Bill, who lunched with us. Afterwards we packed ourselves and dogs into the car and rattled down the hill, feeling most peculiar before long but not outwardly. We left at 3 and got there at 6 - a rather tiresome journey but this is India. Bareilly is absolutely flat, dusty and full of the Army. It's mightily hot too - I think, but apparently cool to what it has been. The tents will be quite snug I think but at the moment are distinctly primitive. Especially bathroom arrangements which are highly embarrassing for all. It is hot here at mid-day - it comes out of you in waves.

Friday and Saturday. [October 27 and 28th 1939]

Spent in unpacking, arranging tents etc. Met Michael Mull Holland(?)⁸⁶. Strange youth who came to Naini and he seemed rather amiable, and said "One can do a lot in a month! in an ominous way. They are leaving then. So Yvonne won't get a chance of getting off with him - am I glad? I don't really know - perhaps! I don't know how one gets to know people here, it really is complicated. But still I can't expect anything for a week or two. If only I hadn't been led to expect so much! I wonder what I shall do with Yvonne if I don't know anyone by then.

Sunday. [October 29th 1939]

Moved in. What a morning and what heat. I nearly expired and my temper was definitely frayed by the end of the morning. The tents really will look rather nice I think and it is a terrific help being

so near the Club. In the evening Daddy and I went out to take in some films and ran into Ian Lauder 1st of all, and afterwards into the Smythies and Mavis who's car had broken down. We took them to the Club and afterwards I joined them there where we met Mummy, Bill and a Capt. Kennedy who I sat next to and like a lot. Michael M.H. joined us afterwards and as he was hanging about we asked him to dinner and went on to see "Pygmalion"⁸⁷. The cinema was crowded with young hopefuls!

[Monday October 30th 1939]

Boring morning in which I did precisely nothing. I must find something definite to do with at least some mornings. Its awful waking up with nothing to do all day. In the afternoon we all three set off to play golf, but after one shot Mummy retired storming and Daddy and I went on round. It was quite enjoyable and the course is dead flat so not tiring. My golf is as putrid as ever but on we plod.

Tuesday [October 30th 1939]

Simply nothing - the future looks awfully blank - I suppose we shall get to know people eventually though there are of course the Lauders and Pughs. I wish I could bump into some of the beautiful young men floating about. It would be rather a hoot if I got engaged, though I don't want to get married yet.

Wednesday [1st Nov. 1939]

We asked the Nicholson girls to play tennis. Mavis couldn't come and Mummy was laid low, so Daddy played instead. I was feeling like a piece of wet cement and couldn't move or hit a ball. Daddy ditto. Afterwards, just as we were going to get ready for our party, the Likemans came in, causing fearful confusion everywhere and we eventually hustled them off rather rudely. There followed half an hour of complete chaos but we were miraculously in time. The party was a little sticky. Brig. Henderson⁸⁸ is a perfect pet, rather quiet but oozing charm, and has a heavenly voice. Bill asked Lauder and I and Anderson girl to play golf on Sunday. Boyds came late.

Thursday [2nd Nov. 1939]

Bicycled round Bareilly with the dogs in the morning - most successful as they get exercised but I don't get tired. Afterwards we met Mavis and Berry Osmaston⁸⁹ and we bathed together. He on second acquaintance is not the slightest bit attractive. I fancied him to be rather polished and witty, but he is actually neither. Met the Measures⁹⁰ - she is brown, thin and very blue-eyed. She is a perfect dear - most friendly and sweet. He too seemed amiable. Don't suppose I shall see either of them again. In the afternoon Mummy and I played tennis with Bill and Col. Williams⁹¹. This individual is more or less mute and what he says is completely ordinary. Very nervy and shy and definitely pathetic.

Friday 3rd. November [1939]

Tennis off - Thank God. In the evening we went to drinks with the Darrell-Browns⁹². They are a charming couple - she has perfectly lovely skin, eyes and voice and is sweet. He isn't much to look at, but nice. I met there a nurse of some description who is rather beautiful in a queer way and charming. Also two young oddments from the 52nd⁹³ who seemed amiable but I didn't fall for either. Young men are so fatuous for the most part - and they bore me. It really is tiresome of me as they're the only people who are likely to take the slightest notice of me. Of course there are exceptions - I wonder if the Chief Exception really cares two hoots. I'm in the throes of a new love - its quite ridiculous!

Saturday 4th. November [1939]

Bicycled round Bareilly in the morning and fell into the swimming pool. In the afternoon Mavis and Captain Kennedy came to tennis. It wasn't bad tho' I played as hopelessly as ever. I get so limp and depressed. They came to have drinks. Capt. K. is nice but quiet. Mavis is really rather brilliant at tennis. Its awful - I've been thinking over what I can do and I can't do a thing. I can't

play any games well or any instrument, or swim or dance - what a life! In the evening went with Gen. McCrea to see "Wuthering Heights"⁹⁴. Bill is an angel - the film was good but I couldn't concentrate.

Sunday 5th November [1939]

Usual morning of dust and water. In the afternoon Bill picked me up and we went off to play tennis I mean golf with Lauder and Maureen Anderson. This latter is a bird Bill simply raved about. She is thin and quiet and just a little common. how I hate that word. I don't know if I shall get to like her but I hope so. The golf was quite fun tho' I played lousily as usual. Afterwards we came back and had tea with Bill and Gen. McCrea came in and the 3 men told "drunk" stories for 1½ hours. I do wish I had stories to tell - I should love to do so, but I'm always too nervous. Maureen and I sat mum and felt foolish. She had asked Bill and Gen. McCrea and Lauder to a cheerio so I felt frightfully out of it. Also feeling churned up, so went to bed.

Monday 6th [November 1939]

Spent all the morning bundling in and out of shops, etc. Landed up at Halletts⁹⁵ for drinks and Mrs Wakely was also there. She's a dear - comfortable and placid and very kindly. Her voice tickles me and I want to giggle not because I want to but because its ticklish. Glad Hallett is an amazing creature - she seems dead set on Daw, and her own husband only dead 6 months⁹⁶. I must remember the joke about "Hobson's Choice". In the afternoon Bill picked me up again - this time the Pughs made up the four. I enjoyed it more today because they were worse, and I was better. Bills an angel - oh an angel. He obviously adores that limp and languorous wife of his!

Tuesday 7th [November 1939]

I thought I had nothing to do all day, but at lunch Bill informed me I was playing tennis with the Andersons. Maureen is supposed to be an infant prodigy, but is actually rather poor. She is a funny kid. I don't see how anyone could get really intimate with her. Afterwards we had tea with him and were joined by Mrs. A. and later Gen. McCrea. At which point I hopped it. I don't know why I can never feel at ease with him - I think it's because I sense he's thinking how silly and insignificant I am. He's such a lonely little man and yet has more friends really than most people. A complex personality, interesting.

Wednesday 8th [November 1939]

A day of contrasts - the first half perfectly miserable, the second rather blissful. It was the cocktail dance and Michael hadn't answered, and I didn't think we'd get a party and felt sick and morbid and depressed. However, the party was augmented from all sides, and everyone was sweet to me and lots of ravishing young men rolled up and I was really rather thrilled. Two young men in particular were sweet - Hornsby Wright⁹⁷ and Dick Bartlett⁹⁸. I wish this regiment⁹⁹ wasn't going away. I shan't see either of them again I don't expect. Michael was oozing with flatteries, but left me completely cold. "Love the unloving" - as always.

Thursday 9th [November 1939]

Got a note from Mrs Gregory to play tennis. M. and D. played with Bill and Mrs Lauder. We got hitched up with a ravishing young man called Murphy¹⁰⁰. He has a divine voice and a perfect figure and plays tennis superbly. The whole lot came back to tea and drifted off in batches. Bill stayed longest. My feelings for him are muddled and queer but I think very strong. In this case I think I am attracted not by any thing physical, but purely by his qualities. There are so many, many different ways of loving someone, but for me, in my brief experience, this is the most satisfactory. For love of love or from hearts loneliness. In the evening we rushed off to see "The Challenge"¹⁰¹. It was a superb film - about climbing the Matterhorn. I loved every moment of him - it. Psychology! Met Michael who annoys me.

Saturday 11th. [November 1939]

Played Mah-Jong in the morning with Lala Pugh and Maureen Anderson. Fun, and I won, only playing for love! In the afternoon had tea with an Indian, which was too fearfully boring, but they really are very nice. Then went out to see the Likemans. She was lying prone in bed looking frightful. What a sordid, suburban life - and shes only 30!

~~Sunday 12th~~

In the evening we went to the flicks and Bill, Gen. McCrea, Lala and a young man called Murphy. The film was "The Man in the Iron Mask"¹⁰² and rather glamour-ous. I sat next to Murphy who is a dear with a delightful voice. Afterwards we went back to the Club and sat back and talked desultorily. I was half asleep as usual.

Sunday [12th November 1939]

Bathed in morning with a crowd - girlish fun. After lunch played golf with Bill and Pughs - everything rather terse and tense at first but alright afterwards. In the evening we did a sort of Ouijah Charm and it spelt out "I, James will marry Niall Baird in April" !! Too fatuous - and they thought it was wish-fulfillment!

Monday 13th [November 1939]

Played tennis with Bill and the Andersons. I played appallingly and got depressed, in fact anguished. Had tea afterwards, joined by the Lauders and sat gassing as usual. Maureen Anderson is really rather insipid and annoys me intensely on the whole. She sits there with her hair flopping about and says nothing, but giggles feebly all the time. I cannot see what Bill sees in her. Yvonne is coming to stay on the 4th and the lord only knows what we shall do with the child. But she has got something in her.

Tuesday 14th [November 1939]

Got a note from Miss Lilly asking me to play golf tomorrow morning. Had a vague morning during which Maureen Baird came to see me. She is rather a dear, and I hope she likes me because it will help with Niall. As a matter of fact I'm rather forgetting about him at present but doubtless that will alter in the afternoon. She and Mummy and Capt. Kennedy and strange young man called Mitchell played tennis while I entertained Michael to tea. He is the sort of person one listens to without hearing and finds at the end of a long peroration - one is none the wiser.

Wednesday 15th [November 1939]

Rose at some unearthly hour and scrambled off to play golf. I played very well for me, but was not appreciated. Miss Lilly had Mrs Dempsey¹⁰³ with her and they were frightfully matey and "Well I said to him dear, I said "Why ask us if thats the way you're going on, I said, there's no need to have asked us I said," and d'you know what he said - - Etc. etc. I felt rather left out of this racy conversation but quite enjoyed it, though it was fiendishly hot. Went back there to cakes and tea and on my way back lost my way and ground my way round Bareilly for 1½ hours before coming to earth.

We stayed for the Cocktail Dance - I wasn't too keen but I hoped to meet Robert H.W. Actually I knew that I'd be disappointed, and I was. We danced quite amiably with everyone completely uninteresting and R.H.W. looked in and smiled and then went away again. I couldn't do anything about it but perhaps it was just as well like that. Funny how people I've hardly seen or spoken to impress me so maddeningly. Maureen Baird was there - the Lauders do suck up to her. Murphy also only he didn't dance with me.

[New Diary headed: 15 NOVEMBER 1939, DIARY Belonging to: -
Iris Stirling Rhodes-James, Number 4., Cawnpore, 11.42. 6pm, Bareilly]

SHAJAHANPUR, LUCKNOW & CAWNPORE

Thursday Nov. 16th [1939]

Last night we set off from Bareilly and drove through the night to Shajahanpur 50 miles away. We spent about an hour driving through the dark town looking for the place and arrived at 2am. This is a pretty desperate hole - very dusty and deserted with 2½ Europeans. We went over the clothing factory¹⁰⁴ in the afternoon which was very interesting. Afterwards we went to tea with Corahams. She is ordinary and nice but I didn't care for him much. Met Mrs Webster¹⁰⁵ and went to see her daughter Elaine¹⁰⁶ who was at College. A very attractive kid.

Friday November 17th [1939]

After a visit to a rather charming Mutiny church we set off for Lucknow with a picnic lunch. We arrived at about 4pm in a really sweet bungalow with roses twining round the door most romantically. We were invaded by scores of Indians and got a wire from Billy to say he is arriving this evening. I wonder if he will have changed much or find me so. I wish - oh well its no good wishing. This is a lovely place to look at - very dignified with sedate and glistening white buildings, broad roads and green trees.

Saturday November 18th [1939]

Billy¹⁰⁷ arrived last night. He is exactly the same only plus a moustache which I don't like. We got up and played golf at 9am. I played excruciatingly. Afterwards went on to see the Boyds. Margo is engaged to a creature called Ronnie Machonochie¹⁰⁸ - aged 28. I do envy her, it seems so funny to think of her getting married after all the conversations we've had about love and sex. She'll make a lovely wife and I do hope he makes her happy. In the afternoon I went to tea with Barbara. She is a great friend of Pam Pearson's! She doesn't seem to be having a frightfully thrilling time. Went to flick on Mayfair afterwards - quite fun.



Iris and her brother Billy

Sunday Nov. 19th [1939]

We were taken round the Residency in the morning and though it was very hot it was fascinating. It is strange to think of them treading that very ground and the bullet holes being the actual ones. We had a priceless guide who had obviously learnt everything from a highly romantic guide-book. He kept up a flow of picturesque language and one felt like applauding his more purple passages. There was one particularly flowery one about "the flower of English womanhood" and "the little things only a woman can understand". Went to lunch with Boyds which was quite enjoyable and afterwards slept and read.

Monday Nov. 20th [1939]

We were taken around the Lamartiniere¹⁰⁹ College in the morning. A rather impressive building with beautiful ceiling and wall work. In the evening we went to dinner with an Indian at which there were about 15 Indians of both sexes. I rather enjoyed it in a way. Some of these Indians are so very intelligent and authoritative. We let ourselves in for a flight on Wednesday which will probably nearly kill me if not quite. I fear I'm not a good example of courageous modern youth - clear-eyed and fearless. I have a strange sort of sullen courage somewhere.

Tuesday Nov. 21st [1939]

I've just finished a book which has engrossed me and impressed me for days - "Dangerous Ages" by Rose Macaulay. There is something horribly pathetic about the whole thing - the private misery and frustration of all the characters at their various ages and stages. Its cruel to think of all the beastly unhappiness thats in store. But there is - there must be - a balance of contentment and even moments of pure bliss. I wish how I wish I was a placid person. I would give up the heights if I could give up the depths too. Oh I want to write and I want to be of some use, but most of all I want to be wanted. I could be of some use to someone who would let me.

Everywhere I go I'm jarring against personalities - loving them perhaps or hating them - but never fitting in with them. Always trying to express the inexpressible, fight invisible foes, expose personalities that are not in me. "For we are, I know not how, double in ourselves ----" how true, oh God how true. If there were a God, if there were something definite that one could forget about most of the time but turn to when one needed steadying. If there were only some dark corner for everyone - somewhere to hide in in black moments. But does everyone have their black moments? How little we all of us know of each other and in our heart of hearts care.

I am at this moment trying to put into words a queer aching frustration that won't be explained. Theres nobody I can turn to - for that matter has there ever been, not, really. I want to get away from my family and live my own life free of criticism and pity. I shall insist on going home next year. I must be free or I shall stifle. Oh I want to grow up, I'm sick to death of being impotent and helpless, and being pushed and dragged and bullied and watched. The people out here are not my type and I can't be interested in them or, I dare say, they in me. Reading about the other type worries and hurts and makes me long for that sort of life. Work and interest in social things and plays and books and discussions on life and Morals - thats what I want.

From "Dangerous Years[sic]"

Neville brooding cynically over her private vision, to which Free Love had lead her, saw the sleep roads of the world running back and back and back - on or back it made no difference, since the world was round - to this. Saw too a thousand stuffy homes wherein sat couples linked by a legal formula so rigid, so lasting, so indelible, that not all their tears could wash out one word of it. Free love - love in chains. How absurd it all was. One might react back to the remaining choice - no love at all - and that was absurder still since man was made to love. Looking at all her young, she was stabbed by a sharp pang of fear and hope for them: fear lest on some fleeting impulse they might founder into the sentimental triviality of short-lived contacts, or into the tedium of bonds which must outlive desire: hope that by some fortunate chance they might achieve some relation which should be both durable and enduring.

Has Barry squandered and spilt his love about as I have mine? Likely enough - likely enough not. Who cares?

Perhaps we shall tell one another all about it one day. Perhaps again, we shan't. What matter? One loves and passes and loves again. One's heart cracks and mends; one cracks the heart of others and those mend too. That is - inter alia - what life is for. If one day you want the tale of my life, Barry, you shall have it; though that is not what life is for - to make a tale about. So thrilling in the living, so flat and stale in the telling. Oh lets get on and live some more of it, lots and lots more, and let the dread past bury its dead.

Wednesday 22nd [November 1939]

I took wings for the first time - and Gosh did I loathe it! I felt sick and miserable and very frightened and came down after 4 minutes feeling very cowardly. So I made myself say I'd go up again tomorrow tho' the thought of it makes me feel so ill that I go cold all over. But I feel I must make up for my lack of nerve - ugh how vile it was! Got 3 letters from Jill, Betty and Liza. Former has fallen madly for her uncle and he for her - mad! Liza is going as a nurse or something impossible - the child is adorably vague. Barbara came to tea and we discussed Birth Control at great length and the other usual absorbing subjects.

Thursday 23rd [November 1939]

The flying was off but is on tomorrow instead. I was infinitely relieved. We spent a vague day shopping and generally lounging around. In the evening we went to dinner with Sondhi - a large, mostly Indian dinner party, with one or two common English people who were nice. Of course I'm in my element on these occasions, feeling patronising. If I feel at ease and respected I can talk quite intelligently and at times even humorously. The amount we had to eat was overwhelming and it made it worse to think of the poor starved old ladies who lie awake out of pure hunger. How I'd love to do something.

Friday 24th [November 1939]

As Daddy had come back we decided to go to Cawnpore today. Spent the morning sight-seeing. Saw Imanbara¹¹⁰ - rather beautiful Mosque. But much more impressive was the Residency Churchyard. Something humble and pathetically resigned about all the tombstones. Especially Lawrence who "tried to do his duty". Afterwards we went on to Boyds and got back very late for lunch. Had a skirmish to get off. The road was dusty and crowded. But there was something strangely fascinating about this bare, flat, pitiless country. Specially at evening when the pools flame and the smoke and dust is mistily purple and intoxicating. Very late here. Billy came to dinner.

Saturday 25th [November 1939]

Got up fairly early and after breakfast at the Club went off to watch the parade of the South Wales Borderers by Baird. I felt rather sick with anticipation at the thought of seeing Niall so obviously I haven't got over that little heart-throb yet. He looks absolutely angelic in his kilt - his figure's perfect. Mummy made herself obvious as usual and Daddy more so. Afterwards when we got back here, Nicholson's A.D.C. came and drank here and after a little went away and brought back Niall. Oh Lord, what a fool I am - he doesn't care for me, he was off-hand and cool and my feelings stifled me and made me dumb and nervous.

Oh Niall.

In the evening Billy brought a lad called Frank Allen¹¹¹ to dinner. He is shy and nice-looking and has very dark blue eyes. More coincidence - he knew us in Bordigera. Afterwards we joined up with Betty Harris for the dance. But because there was a big dinner we were the sole occupants. John¹¹², her brother is a funny little unattractive man with a terrific sense of humour. Others of the party were a queer couple - he looks like a red-Indian and she is slightly skew-eyed - v. nice. Also a policeman by the name of Plew¹¹³. It was quite fun only would have been more so with a little more of the human element.

Sunday 26th [November 1939]

We spent the morning sight-seeing with Capt. Shah Bas Khan. Went round all the massacre places which were fascinating. He is an attractive intelligent Indian and very sure of himself. Afterwards we met Rollo Price¹¹⁴ at the swimming pool plus Sneezey. Latter was most affectionate and sweet. Rollo stayed to lunch and is a dear. Tall and dark and vaguely foreign-looking. In the evening went to lunch [sic] with Shah Bas and met a Col. Lockner¹¹⁵ and Major Richardson¹¹⁶. Latter extremely nice - talkative and interesting and humorous.

Monday 27th [November 1939]

Betty came and spent the morning with us and we gossiped. I don't think I should like Barbara's or her life as much as ours. They go out more in the evenings, but the days must drag interminably. In the afternoon we took our tea with the Khans to an artificial lake near here. It was rather fascinating and we arranged a picnic for tomorrow. Moonlight - chilly but romantic. In the evening, at dinner, Major Richardson came and joined us. He really is sweet. His sudden and charming smile for no particular reason and his sincerity and the way he talks about non-army subjects - relief is striking!

Tuesday 28th [November 1939]

I've finished "Peking Picnic"¹¹⁷. It is a gorgeous book and if there was a little more about people and a little less about scenery it would have been perfect. Unfortunately I couldn't get up any enthusiasm about the leading character who is supposed to be so devastating. The language is beautiful "Can one stop people being hurt and had one better?" In her experience all the richest and most valuable things were mixed up, somehow or other, with being hurt as well: love affairs hurt (like the devil), marriage hurt, children hurt. And directly from being hurt, it seemed to her, sprang all qualities she valued most in others or in herself - courage, a measure of insight, and self-knowledge, and the secret sense of strength, of the indestructibility of the human spirit in the face of disasters, which is the most precious possession of all. All these things could only be had at a price, and cash in advance at that - the price of being hurt again and again, and sometimes almost to the point of extinction. Happiness was the fascinating honeyed flower of the soul, but the root was pain and the twin fruits, knowledge and strength. If pain were not so indissolubly bound up with all the joys he pursues who would seek it or reap its fruits?

We went to lunch with the Chapmans¹¹⁸ which was quite entertaining. John is really rather nice and I think a little bit attracted to me. I wonder - one imagines such an awful lot. Betty is looking so thin and pinched - I wonder if she's happy. She is so sweet and would make somebody a wonderful wife instead of all these empty creatures that get the men. In the evening we (family, Harrises, Sydney Plew, Victor Whitehouse¹¹⁹, Frank Allen, Charles Trestrail¹²⁰ and the Pearces) went for a moonlight picnic to an artificial lake. Rather fun. John definitely is attracted but in what way I don't know or how much. All very involved.

Wednesday 29th [November 1939]

Went round Elgin Mills¹²¹ taken round by Herbert Hill¹²² of Naini. V. interesting only we'd seen some others yesterday. The Shah Bay Khans and Mrs Chapman came to tea. He is really rather comic. I think he feels his colour and tries to be drastically off-hand. In the evening we went to a cocktail dance at the Club. It was John's party and 2 of the men wouldn't join in so he got very cross. He told me lots of reasons why he liked me - strange. I'm in a muddle. I like him but nothing more? I don't know. He isn't in love with Yvonne.

Thursday 30th [November 1939]

We spent a thoroughly uneventful day before leaving. Billy came to tea and was rather quiet and sullen. It annoys me the way he's worshipped because he doesn't say anything worth saying and never attempts to go out of his way to be pleasant. Strange words to come from me but I'm sick of all this favouritism and they can't even talk about things that interest me. Oh well I shall get away from it all sometime and into the world that is waiting for me. Sounds positively futuristic and

kingdom of Heavenish. Got into the train at 8 and had a v. restless night. Were 3 hours late at Bareilly and met by Nehru. Quite chilly here but its good to be back really. Feeling queer - mentally.

BAREILLY

Friday 1st December [1939]

A vacant day in the morning unpacked and played my gramophone. Peggy Chatwin came in to see us, looking frightfully attractive and radiant. She's one of these people one reads about but seldom meets who radiate sweetness and happiness. What a very lovely wife she'd make for someone. In the evening Mummy and I went to see Bing Crosby in "The Star Maker"¹²³. The film was futile but he himself rather perfect. He sang a charming song called "A Man and his Dream". There was a girl of about 14 in it with an amazing but not attractive voice, and a positively hideous face.

Saturday 2nd December [1939]

Usual quiet morning in which I finished a book which moved me intensely called "Frost in May"¹²⁴. It was about a convent and reminded me so vividly of my own early childhood at Hazeldown. The intense religious atmosphere, ecstasies and doubts and oppressive sentimentality. And the desperate unjustness of perverted female natures. Mummy played tennis with the Bairds and Bill and they came back to tea. Niall was very sweet but terribly ill and depressed. He does need a mother so - We went along to a dance in the evening where he was and we sat and talked a lot. I like him much better in a serious mood - maternal instincts!

Sunday 3rd December [1939]

From "Peking Picnic"

"He saw at last in its true perspective, or so he thought, his long-cherished attitude of aloof avoidance of sex and emotion - no longer as from something wise and lofty but as a thing in itself crippling and deforming. Saw at last that the secret of life is to abandon all our inner pretensions to superiority. Man cannot be a god; he must accept the normal human lot, with all the humiliations it imposes, the ardours, the pangs, the butterfly joys, and the long cold sorrows the small things with the great."

Mavis spent the morning with me and we gossiped - she is rather nice only I don't really know her very well. Attractive, silent and gay, shy and composed all at once. A queer mixture but aren't we all? Went to meet Yvonne at the station at 1. She looks the same as ever but is in a state of deep depression for reasons unknown. She seems to have changed a good deal - to be more composed and older somehow, not always reaching for the moon - I like her better like this. We discussed Niall and John Harris etc. at length - we definitely are susceptible to the same influences only I keep my feelings to myself.

Monday 4th December [1939]

Mavis spent the morning with me again and we discussed and picked to pieces everyone and everything - dreadful habit. Maureen and Niall popped in. Awful lot of self-consciousness from female occupants but they didn't stay long. In the afternoon we went to their place for Croquet. The Croquet itself was awful - I felt beastly about my leg and so on. Niall was very nice to me and Yvonne but I don't know who he likes best - He won't show and it matters so. I was rather rude to Dolly Baird¹²⁵ so he probably loathes me. Maureen is a dear and they're so devoted its adorable to watch.

Tuesday 5th December [1939]

Yvonne is queer - most queer. I think she's most terribly nice and yet oddly horrid. It isn't exactly horrid its pure unthinkingness and her lack of self-control. A funny childish streak that is difficult to point out but is such a pity. We played golf in the afternoon and I know she was looking at my leg all the time. Oh God will anything ever relieve me of that burning pain - I'm feeling on the edge of

an abyss of extreme depression and this hovering about is pretty drastic. Dreadful are the growing pains experienced at Sweet 17. The ineffectual and incoherent speech is the worst burden.

Wednesday 6th Dec [1939]

Went round to see Lala Pugh and arrange tennis. Afterwards we both got sentimental and wrote love poetry at length. Y. is quite convinced that Niall loves me better and I'm inclined to agree but that isn't saying awfully much. His first 2 letters are so charming but after that - ! In the afternoon we played poor but nice tennis with Mrs Gregory and a strange blonde female of exotic appearance but not much brains. In the evening went to a dismal cocktail dance in which our party was completely dead and most of the men wandered off to others. Felt miserable - Bill obviously is keen on Aileen¹²⁶ Lauder.

Thursday 7th Dec [1939]

Wandered off to Lala's in the morning where was congregated Mrs Dempsey. We discussed clothes as if the future of the world depended on them. They went off to some sort of meeting and while they were away we got word of a book on sex manuals. It opened up a whole new world and I was very upset and shocked though I thought I knew everything. Spent lunch and tea with Maureen which was enjoyable. She seems to have come out a lot and to be really taking an interest in things and is infinitely more human. Arranged a party for Saturday. Went to Marco Polo in evening.

Friday December 8th [1939]

We got up at some unearthly hour - 8 to be exact and after a hasty breakfast drove out to Isatnugger¹²⁷ to ride. I got the most frantically fresh pony which was almost impossible to hold in and I eventually got off and rode another. The country round there is lovely and perfect for riding. Came back at 12 and lounged about till lunch. Afterwards Yvonne went off to play golf with General McRea and I slept till tea. Maureen and Peggy both dropped in at intervals and talked. Peggy is feeling rather blue, poor love I don't blame her. Leaving ones whole life and possibly ones heart behind.

I'm absolutely certain now that I'm in love with Niall. But the thought of getting married yet is so absurd that I feel rather, in fact very doubtful if it will ever come to anything. I don't know what it is I like in him, his voice and his eye brows and his laugh. And the rather touching seriousness under all his flippancy. The fact perhaps that I feel his equal and his superior, and yet very much his inferior - all at the same time. What is it about people anyway that counts. I don't feel completely hopeless about him but not frightfully hopeful either - ?

Saturday December 9th [1939]

I'm writing this up from later so don't feel very sure of what happened. Mummy sang in the morning and we lounged about reading papers. After lunch Yvonne played golf and I slept till tea when there was the usual horde of people. We (Y. and I) went off to a party with Maureen at which were congregated Peggy, Ronnie Mitchell¹²⁸, Clive (!) Murphy, Paul Greenwood¹²⁹, and Alec Hallelay¹³⁰. Ronnie was in terrific form and Peggy obviously fell rather heavily. But he didn't and that's her tragedy - trying to make people fall who aren't inclined to. We went to see "Love Affair"¹³¹ which I enjoyed and afterwards went on to the Club and sat about, dancing to a rather desultory gramophone. I think the lovely Clive has fallen for Maureen - they'd suit each other perfectly. Paul Greenwood in spite of the name is disillusioning tho' very good-looking. Completely dumb and drinks disgustingly. Alec Hallelay is nice but not thrilling - fair hair, blue rather pop-eyes, round plump face and very cleft chin. Bill Berridge is obviously very keen on Aileen Lauder and tho' I hate it I can't blame him because his better half doesn't give him enough love to light a candle with which is a mixed metaphor or something.

Sunday December 10th [1939]

Had lunch with Maureen which was quite pleasant. I never feel completely at ease with her I don't know why, she takes such an awful long time to get to know. Sometimes I feel in a groping sort of

way that I'm getting near her and then find that I'm further away than ever. I wonder if there's a lot in her - or nothing - They're a funny family - Niall puzzles me too in the same way that I feel near and far away and - well lost. People put up a barrier round themselves and one never knows if the self underneath is worth finding.

Monday December 11th [1939]

A vague morning. In the afternoon we played tennis with "Blondie" (real name unknown) and Mrs Gregory. I played abominably, or even more so than usual. There were the usual crowd in to tea. In bed Y. and I had a long talk on religion - she's terribly sure of things. I wonder if I ever will be and if it signifies a stage further or behind, or perhaps everyone doesn't go through "stages" - perhaps some people never feel doubts. "You would not seek me if you had not found me already - "Who knows!

Tuesday 12th [December 1939]

Maureen and Y. played golf and then we sat on the verandah and read. Afterwards they shopped and we parted. In the afternoon we played feeble tennis with Maureen Anderson - she is an impossible child and so brainless - I can't think why people like her. I think they treat her as a child. Hamish Souter¹³² and Eric Rayner¹³³ came to dinner - former is very sweet. I feel terribly sorry for Eric because he creates unnecessary hells for himself and I'm sure imagines things that aren't true and is so weak and easily hurt. Saw frightful film.

Wednesday December 13th [1939]

Niall and Maureen came round in the morning and we arranged to play golf in the afternoon. When the time came I didn't get a chance to play with them so wandered round on my own. Went back to tea plus Sanderson¹³⁴ and nice spectacled youth called Thornhill¹³⁵. Had tea, played Croquet and listened to gramophone. Felt vaguely dissatisfied afterwards. I don't think I made quite as good an impression as I might. "Was it something said - - "The scale of love is so finely adjusted that a look or a tone means the world - or nothing. Went to a cocktail dance which was quite enjoyable. Clive most amiable, also beautiful Teddy Humphries¹³⁶. The one I like best is Desmond Badham Thornhill. Had a strange conversation with minute object who said he was disillusioned about love and he liked women with pasts - all in one breath! Also dashing Major who told me he was looking for a wife but had nearly given up the unequal contest. Saw Yvonne off at the Station - regretfully because I like her but vaguely thankfully.

Thursday December 14th [1939]

Maureen and I played tennis with the Marker in the morning and afterwards played some records. Alec Hallelay came round and sat for some time. He's a dear though not attractive and might be useful. Quite a strong sense of humour too and likes me. Had my hair done in the evening and missed Maureen who came to tea - I'm now sitting in front of the fire contemplating a peaceful supper in the warmth - "One wandering thought pollutes the day - "
What it is to be young and in love!

If you should some day turn and read my thought
The Secret of my life - the love of you -
Catch me as I have wanted to be caught
Watching you, ~~half alert~~) proudly, wildly, for some clue
Of your heart's message. If you should turn and see
~~Written in the~~
The bitter longing underneath my eyes
The chains that bind me and yet leave you free
The dreams, the short-lived joys, the sick surmise.
If you should see all these and seeing know
For ~~just a second~~ what this burden means

Would you relent a little. Would you grow
Gentle and lover-like. And would the scenes
Of past encounters stir you with the pain
Of things desired and lost and hoped for still.
Would you be changed. Or would you just remain
Aloof, impersonal, perhaps more chill
With faint disgust at what my soul had shown
Its best for both of us I see
The pity, half contempt and I am thrown
Lucifer-like into my blackest well.
What would you do my darling
If you knew?

Oh God, if you have anything to teach
Teach me
If you can reach me
How to breach
The gaps in speech

Friday Dec. 15th [1939]

A lovely lovely day and one that I will never forget as long as I live. Maureen came in the morning to practice tennis and asked me to play golf in the afternoon with Niall and Williams. However we changed it to tennis and Niall and I took them on and got one set off them. It was grand fun and Niall was so sweet and I felt at home somehow. I went back to tea there and afterwards we played the gramophone and talked. General Baird terrifies me and I lose all control of myself in his presence. He's a cruel man in some ways. I wonder if its in Niall too but could be controlled and be made only amusing. At 6.30 Maureen and I went off to sing carols and Niall went round the messes and returned very talkative and angry and childish and old and helpless and assured - all at once. We got our car and went off to the cinema and it was bliss being so near him, particularly in his rather priceless mood of being very sleepy and confidential and repentant and suddenly angry about nothing. I felt so happy and comfortable with them and then I suppose it'll be nothing!

Saturday Dec. 16th [1939]

One wandering thought pollutes the day - the thought in this case being that we weren't in a party for the dance. I spent a lazy day doing precisely nothing - Mummy got into the tennis final and rather an attractive boy came to tea - surname Maud. When evening came it was toss and go whether we should dance or not, but I felt that it only needed courage and will, and I did it. The first part was agony, but we soon got going and Desmond B- Thornhill is a dear - ditto Alec Halliley. I hope we play.

Sunday Dec. 17th [1939]

Got up very late and did nothing till lunch. In the afternoon played paralytic golf with Daddy and then went to watch the tournament. Mummy won but tore a ligament and had to retire afterwards. Will be in bed a week - Niall was watching and came back to tea. He is a dear - very considerate and unselfish but a tiny bit conscious of his own piercing beauty. But who wouldn't be. Its amazing how much happier some people are than others.

Monday Dec. 18th [1939]

I'm feeling dead tired, rather depressed and very much in love. I wonder what it is in loving that is important and if one can make anyone else be in love with you. Wanting somebody terribly badly is such a blurring sensation and seems to shut one off from other people. It even shuts one off from the one person - I wonder how much I would be hurt if Niall went away and never wrote or if he fell for somebody else. Terribly for a bit but I imagine it would wear off. I wonder if I should show him

a little how I feel. I wonder if in everything that's worthwhile he sees me as I him. I know him hardly at all and yet he is everything that I have ever known or wanted and more than that. He's weak in some ways and casual and quick-tempered - he's selfish too I think and moody, very. He could be beastly but he would repent afterwards and he's very susceptible. His capacity for affection is terribly deep but to solid things, family things. I think in love he'd be possessive without knowing it but heart-rendingly devoted and jealous in a quiet, unobtrusive way. We haven't very much in common really, and our backgrounds are hopelessly different. That's the material - and the answer? God only knows. But whatever happens I will not be bitter or blame anyone or thing and I must realise it's right.

Maureen came round in the morning to see Mummy. In the afternoon played tennis with Thornhill and strange youth and I couldn't hit it at all. Thornhill is nice and attractive somehow. Nehru came to (play tennis!) say goodbye. Wonder what McLeans are like.

Tuesday Dec. 19th [1939]

Shopping in the morning - In the afternoon I played tennis with Clive, Mrs Murphy and youth called Alexander. Clive is really perfect bodily - I played slightly better. Alexander is nice but has bad teeth and one of these "Midnight" Scotch accents. Early dinner in front of fire - pleasant.

Wednesday Dec. 20th [1939]

Played golf with Maureen in the morning. I enjoyed it because she is hopeless and the climate at that time is lovely - cool, and hazily sunny. After we had played about six holes we collapsed behind a rose bush (in the fond hopes of being hidden!) to watch a parade. The troops marched vaguely round but without any particular purpose but we didn't see Dolly Baird at all. We talked quite a lot about various things - she is funny and sometimes, when I'm being cruelly truthful, I ask myself if I'd like her if she wasn't anything to do with Niall. I think I'd like her but I wouldn't be so desperately anxious for her to like me. Rode in the afternoon with Desmond Badham-Thornhill who is angelic - he has produced an awfully nice horse which I am going to ride tomorrow. He is a quaint boy, and one I feel very much at home with.

Thursday 21st [December 1939]

This is weeks later and I really can't remember what happened. Oh yes I was bitterly disappointed because I had thought I'd see Niall. He came round last night and saw Mummy (?!) and said I was to go round this morning. But Maureen came round and didn't suggest it so I tried not to hint. Its queer how he makes up my whole life and how a day is spoilt or made according to his appearance.

Friday 22nd [December 1939]

McLeans¹³⁷ arrived. The girl is 20, not very attractive but passable and seems v. nice. Just what I wanted in fact. Mother is nondescript and very bossy, father ditto and silent. Both pretty useless. In the evening we went to a drinks party at the Marshalls¹³⁸. I got more or less wedged into a corner and had to be long-suffering with certain bluff and brainless specimens. Not particularly pleasant. McLeans came to dinner and all talked at once. Afterwards I went to a flick with Desmond. I am glad to say he didn't paw me about as Alec did the other night. Funny - I hate any forms of love-making and I often wonder if Niall tried any I should like it. Alec is queer - I'd never have suspected him of that sort of thing but I suppose its his age. I'm writing this flat on my back hence queerness.

Saturday 23rd [December 1939]

Alec asked me to play golf but I refused. I think he really is a little taken with me, probably out of sheer desperation. He came in to tea and stayed for some time. McLeans and him came to dinner and afterwards we went to the dance. At first it was pretty awful but after a bit I really got going and enjoyed it all terrifically. Met an adorable young man called Whittingham¹³⁹ who danced with me several times and seemed taken but it was probably "under the influence". I do forget about Niall at times but only for lack of encouragement. Alec is, for the moment, taken by storm.

Sunday 24th [December 1939]

Got up with difficulty at 8 and rode with Desmond. Highly enjoyable. I like him more every time and quite platonically, which is restful. Betty and Frank arrived and after breakfast we set off for camp. The journey was shattering - clouds of dust and spine-tearing humps. Arrived at 3 to an enormous lunch and lovely decorated camp. Other members of party include:-

Tony Brett¹⁴⁰ - smallish, rather attractive, very humorous, nice smile and eyes, all for Nicholson girls.

Philip Coke¹⁴¹ (Cocoa) - tall, lovely figure, queer but attractive face, quiet, sense of humour, only keen on shooting.

Capt. North¹⁴² - tall, burly, blue-eyed, very nervous with peculiar twitch, terrific sense of humour - a pet.

Capt. Cooper¹⁴³ - small, grizzled, beautiful Oxford accent, quiet but the life and soul of party on occasion.

Billy, Frankie, Aileen, Nicholsons¹⁴⁴, parents etc.

The journey there was terrible and took us about 4 hours through sand and ruts and ghastly atmosphere. When we got there the camp was very decorated and pleasant and all beautifully organised. We had a vast lunch and then the others set off for the geals.¹⁴⁵ Noreen, Aileen and I went off on an elephant - it was grand and quite comfortable. I think this life is just perfect for a bit - a month would be heaven. Came back to an enormous tea and afterwards went off for baths.

Aileen is a queer girl. I don't think there is a lot in her and she (to me) is quite lacking in any sort of attraction. Dinner was fun. Tony Brett is really rather a priceless cove and Capt. North angelic. Afterwards we played Consequences but I was terribly sleepy. Alec is too ridiculously blatant. It annoys me and faintly disgusts me too. Coke attracts me most at present.

After dinner we played Consequences again. Dinner was a pretty riotous meal. I sat next to Tony Brett and afterwards he came and sat next to me. I don't think there's anything in it but he seemed rather quieter than usual. I went to bed fairly early.

I've forgotten the fact that it was Christmas. It didn't feel like it, but it was the happiest I've spent for a long time. I don't think I thought a religious thought all day. How life, and oneself and one's ideas alters.





Shooting party with 'bag', Billy far left, father William middle (back)



Billy on right

Tuesday 26th [December 1939]

I didn't attempt to shoot but Cynthia, Aileen and I went down with the others and I slept all morning. The grass was lovely and the sky very blue and the sun very warm. They got a good bag - Alec I think is turning off me but Tony turning on - in the morning noticed little things - the way he always came and stood next to me, was slightly shy in my presence, watched me when I wasn't looking - oh just things that might have been all imagination but were noticeable. After lunch the others went off shooting again. We slept and at 5 we went off on the elephant. It was another dizzily lovely evening with a full harvest moon and the rushes black against the evening sky. Came back to large tea and afterwards had our baths and eventually dinner. At dinner I sat next to Billy and Captain Cooper. Latter was rather quiet and we had an interesting but serious conversation about books. He's really rather delightful. After dinner we had a treasure hunt and I went with Cocoa (P. Coke) I was singularly unintelligent but he was brilliant. This was followed by Murder in which I attacked him but was immediately caught. We then settled down to hysterical Charades - our side contained the 3 wits of the party (Tony, Cooper and North) Cynthia and I. We did the same scenes over and over again to different words and became weakly hilarious. We finished this at about 2.30. Mummy became restless and annoyed and wanted me to go to bed, but I refused. We four girls congregated in our tents and were soon attacked from all sides and from above by the rest of the camp. They were on our tent so the obvious thing which we did was to bombard them with boots, fish, etc. However, this soon palled and we climbed the tents ourselves and got firmly installed. It was here Tony became obvious. I found (?) myself next to him and he immediately started to (absent-mindedly of course!) play with my hands. I found that I liked this and so, apparently, did he because we settled down quite happily firmly clasped. I was lovely up there, his hand stroking mine, the moon shining, full, through the leaves, half-listening to everyone else's conversations, half just not bothering to do anything but feel. Definitely one of the heights .

This blissful interlude was interrupted by Mummy coming up in a flaming temper and hurling bricks at me. I tried to avoid her but she was furiously and I had to go. It made me seethingly, hotly, resignedly unhappy. Why is it that she can't see me enjoying myself without wanting to frustrate me. I think it was because she wasn't the centre of everything and so she didn't want me to be happy. Luckily I've had time to cool down but otherwise my language would be unprintable. I can't understand my feelings about Tony - I don't think I need take him seriously because he was a little tight. A queer, intensely happy, strangely miserable day.

Wednesday 27th [December 1939]

As beastly as yesterday was heavenly. The others went off shooting in the morning, while Aileen, Noreen and I lay about sleeping and talking. Tony was silent and wistful and unhappy so perhaps he did mean something. How is one to know and if one does - what then? At lunch I 'm sure he expected me to give a sign, he looked rather like a lost spaniel and I could have helped but I only laughed and avoided him and felt sick inside because it was all over. Afterwards I took photos and eventually goodbyes came and oh my God, I never even looked at him. Something inside me panicked and I completely ignored him.

The journey back was dull and dusty and I felt exhausted mentally and physically. I just couldn't be bothered to work out my feelings till after and only knew that I wanted more than anything to see him again. Dinner was frightful and I went off to bed while the others went into the bar, Felt infinitely, sickly unhappy and when Mummy came back she said he'd been at the bar! I could have cried my heart out but felt too tired and hurt - inside. What has happened to me - I'm in love with Niall and yet I've gone and cracked my heart because someone held my hand for 10 minutes on top of a tent. Lord I'm crackers.

Thursday and Friday [December 28th and 29th 1939]

Dead days in which I recovered, by degrees, my balance, and slept most of the time. Alec seems to have turned to Aileen absolutely, which just shows his mentality and outlook are so not mine. Being really honest I must admit that it did jab me a bit at first, but it was entirely my fault and anyway he doesn't attract me in the very slightest. Quite a lot of people here I wouldn't mind flirting with in spite of Niall, but not Alec. The funny thing is I feel he's going all out on Aileen purely to show me he doesn't care how I treat him, and that under it all he prefers me. This is probably my own conceit and justification for my lack of attraction.

Saturday Dec. 30th [1939]

Nothing happened till the evening and then quite a lot happened. The Nicholson girls arrived at about 6 and we clambered off and climbed into our (shoes!) clothes later. I looked rather nice, but so did everybody. The party was terrific and dinner a riot. I sat next to Niall on one side, who seemed depressed, and I don't think somehow he liked my gaiety overmuch. He seemed dazed and wanted to be serious all the time, but what could one do, though I wanted to too, sweet darling. I danced with him about 4 times and I know now that he isn't in love with me - he's unable to hurt badly yet, but when he goes away - ! Alec danced all evening with Aileen and North seemed rather taken with Cynthia. Noreen was popular all round and I had Desmond. The next night we went out to the Institute and Alec danced all evening with Eileen¹⁴⁶ and not once with me. In fact I was miserable most of the time because of being very much out of demand and Noreen the centre of everything. Alec is peculiar as there's most frightful tension between us entirely of his own making and I don't quite know what about.

So, the year drew to its close - and what a year. The most full, happy, tragic, important year of my life. What have I done with this year - its pretty ghastly to think what I haven't. Of course I've met Niall and I've lost most of my shyness and I've got quite a lot of new friends. And I've started golf. And I've lost a grandmother¹⁴⁷. And all this has led me - where? So much for all my high ideals and noble vows at the end of last year. Poor, frail, pathetic human endeavour! Where shall I be - we all be - this time next year?

1940

January 1st. Monday [1940]

We stumbled off, bleary-eyed to see the parade. It was very enjoyable and Niall looked lovely and rode beautifully. These things always give me chokes which is weak but only human. Afterwards we went back and drank in company with Desmond, Brian North and various other oddments. Getting a bit sick of this continual debauchery and longing to get back to England and normal. I'm perfectly happy but just restless because of the futility of the whole racquet

January 2nd - Tuesday [1940]

Rode with Desmond in the afternoon. He is a pet and has a terrific sense of humour. If only he didn't have to wear glasses he'd be darned attractive. In the evening we went to drinks with the Measures. As drinks go it was rather an enjoyable party. I got off with old Measures who asked me to ride tomorrow and is going to give me a saddle. Mair Jones¹⁴⁸ of Naini was there and proved very sweet and is going to ride with me. Funny how I seem to have grown so much older even since I've been in Bareilly - I'm accepted by people.

January 3rd - Wednesday [1940]

Rode with Measures - quite pleasant only a bit strained - intelligent conversation about birds and plants and the weather. In the morning Maureen came to see us. Also Clive plus a tiny hare he found. Its desperately cold these days. In the evening Sam Kennedy asked us to a party - when we arrived there were the most ghastly lot of haggard individuals congregated. I eventually left it and joined Desmond, Alec, Cocoa etc. Latter is so blasted attractive but completely unmoved by my fatal fascination. Finished riotously at 1p.m.[sic]

January 4th - Thursday [1940]

Rather perfect day in some ways. Rode with Mair Jones in the morning which was nice. She is quaint. I wonder if she had an unfortunate love affair or just never found the one and only. Played Mahjong with Mrs Whiteside¹⁴⁹ which was mediocre. Found Alec had been round - it seems to be alright between us now. I told him I knew about Eileen and he blushed furiously and looked relieved. Played tennis with Alan Coombes¹⁵⁰, Niall and Maureen afterwards. Didn't enjoy the tennis but afterwards went to the flicks and sat on the edge of bliss and the centre of a sofa with Niall. He is quite poetic and oddly apt. He showed me some modern poetry of his, written to Joan Davis. Quaint idiot. Went to dinner with Col. Williams - he is quite the most pathetic thing I've met for ages. So self-conscious that ones pity just has to turn to annoyance, and yet he can't help it so one must only pity. I can't see why he can't go to a psycho-analyst and make his life a little brighter. He played the loveliest records but I saw in them only the escape for a frightened, frustrated soul, and so they became infinitely pathetic.

January 5th - Friday [1940]

A lovely morning which cheered me up for the rest of a rather unhappy day. I played golf with Maureen in the morning before breakfast, which was rather perfect and I didn't play at all badly. She asked me to go round after and have tea. I felt a little nervous but happy. When I got there we drank tea and ate cakes and Niall came along in terrific form. He's so sweet when he's excited and bumptious - almost as sweet as when he's utterly depressed. Later Gen. Baird came along and frightened me but was v. nice. We played croquet and laughed a lot. In the afternoon I slept and felt ferocious when I woke up. Eileen played tennis with Cocoa so he obviously likes her better. I can't see what people see in her, she never says anything that isn't a repetition of ones last remark. Hopeless child. Got a note from Desmond and went to the flicks with him. Even he isn't really fond of me its merely a last resort. I've never been really loved - the sole centre of anyone's adoration. How am I ever to get married - oh lord, supposing I never do, never get the chance or have children - oh God no.

Saturday 6th Saturday [January 1940]

Maureen, Mair Jones and Clive came at various stages of the morning. I gave Maureen a poem I'd written to Niall, rather guiltily as I thought it might be considered too feeble. The answer came in the afternoon - he didn't say it was good or funny or anything so I was a little hurt. He wrote one himself however which was rather brilliant - darling angel, he's so bally brainy. In the evening there was a terrific party at the Club given by the Dogras¹⁵¹. I was nervous at first, but actually enjoyed it more than most. Alec, though he adores Eileen is now quite at home with me - knowing I know and laugh at him! Brian North is as hysterical as ever and very attractive under, or over, it all. Dick was nice but danced with Noreen all night, and Desmond sweet - and danced with me. Also Gerald Hoogwerf¹⁵² of Naini turned up and was charming - great improvement here. Coko was, however, the heart-throb of the evening simply because he's so maddeningly unresponsive. Sometimes I think "Oh that shows something" and then he goes and does the same to someone else.

Life - !!

AGRA

Sunday January 7th [1940]

After a chaotic morning trying to pack we got off at 11.30. The journey to Agra was dusty and dismal and we got here at 5 or so. The Taj Mahal was rising mistily pink out of a haze, looking ethereal and very lovely. We went and took a closer view and it was perfect - a pearl, a sea-shell, massive and yet airy, brooding; immeasurably calm. In the evening our baggage failed to arrive so we had dinner in front of the fire and I retired to bed in a ferocious temper and Maj. Ridley's¹⁵³ pyjamas!

Monday January 8th [1940]

I really must do something about my writing - its getting excruciating and going backwards. Horrible light on my untruthful self. We did a lot of sight-seeing which I can't cope with now. Is this writing any better. No worse. Oh lord.

Well - in the morning we went round the ~~Taj~~Fort. It was exquisite and quite beyond description. There was a brooding, sun-filled calm about the whole place as if gentle and romantic memories were clinging to everything - infinitely gracious. The little white mosques dreamed in the sunshine and through every gap the Taj Mahal shimmered like a pearl. A really beautiful honey-like calm streamed round and through it all, and the ghosts of dead loves and hates and intrigues seemed to hang about, benign with the years. In the evening we went to see the Taj which was floating in an opal mist, poised, so it seemed for flight. Its the atmosphere of the place that hits one - as if the thoughts of countless worshippers of beauty have felt on seeing it were still hovering round and instilling into it a new intangible beauty.

In the evening we went to a cocktail dance at the Club. There were quite a lot of young men but Yvonne's John Davis is completely unattractive in my opinion and doesn't seem to care for her too much. I wasn't enjoying myself too much until a creature called Tony Beck¹⁵⁴ blew up or in, and seemed to take rather a fancy to me. Anyway, danced all evening, and asked us to go to the flicks tomorrow. He is dark and slim, quite attractive, quite mad and not really my type at all. Still it is faintly amusing to be taken round and appreciated and causes much female giggles and I think jealousy. Desmond, Dick and Peter Campbell¹⁵⁵ came till 2a.m.

Tuesday January 9th [1940]

At about 11.30 we ambled off to Fatepur Sikri plus Yvonne. The journey was very pleasant and we got there in about an hour. It is a lovely place - Kiplings deserted city, with crumbling red walls and dim vaulted corridors and big sunny courtyards. Full, as everything there is, of ghosts. We wandered round for about an hour and then had lunch in a shady courtyard overlooking hot, wide plains. There is a sombre serenity about these places that acts as a drug to ones senses, but at the same time a tenseness that exists. After lunch we started off again but I got suddenly cross and weary so didn't appreciate the beauties of the place. We saw a whole lot of little boys jumping miles

into fetid green slime which was faintly disgusting but necessary. Got home at about 4 and after tea went to have our hair done. The female is Eurasian and has had smallpox and a husband who deserted her. Got home to find Tony had been ringing up almost incessantly and arranged a flick - Yvonne and Cowan¹⁵⁶ boy were added to the party.

After complications and delay we got off to the flicks. Tony and I sat at a respectable distance and I enjoyed Jack Buchanan but realised I don't adore him no[sic] longer. Afterwards I sat with Tony in the front of the car and he held my hands and became goofy. We paddled off to see the Taj, and though there was no moon it was rather a gem, a huge shadowy mass under the stars. Tony and I sat down on a marble ledge and he kissed me fervently several times. Funny - I still don't get any thrill from kisses - much more from hands. I always wonder if I'm making myself cheap on these occasions but I don't think it matters as long as its all frightfully light, and one kisses with laughter. After all it doesn't hurt one and it is giving someone a little pleasure. Pleasure is so difficult to achieve in this world that it seems wrong to deny it to someone for the sake of a few "morals" - whatever they are! There's so much false prudery about and most of it is only cowardice in disguise - running away from facts under the pretence that facts are dangerous and immoral.

Wednesday January 10th [1940]

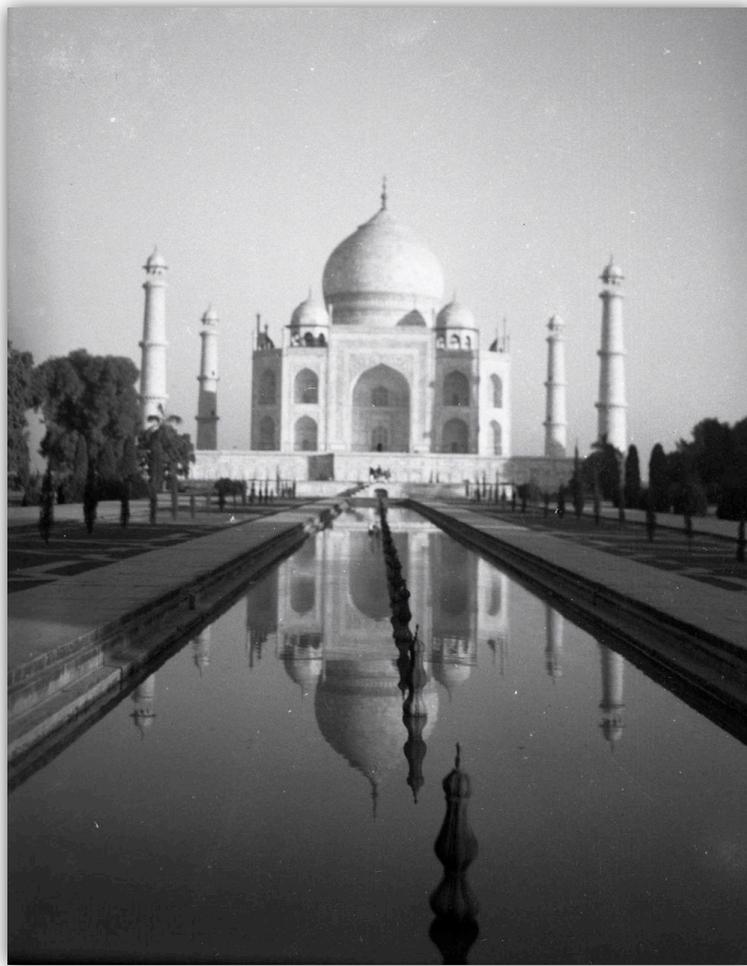
We went off in the morning to see Idamandullah's¹⁵⁷(?) tomb. It was a little gem of workmanship especially the top story[sic] which is in latticed white-marble. We sat in the grounds for some time and it was very peaceful. After lunch Eileen and I slept and got up at 4.30 to watch the Inglis clan riding. Quite amusing but it always makes me want to laugh as being rather futile and so intense. In the evening went to tea with E.O.'s wife, a fat, sweet Indian woman. Revolting tea. Went down to station and saw Alec looking rather smart. Eileen is quaintly possessive with him now - perhaps they have some private understanding.

Thursday January 11th [1940]

Went off to Secundera¹⁵⁸ in the morning. Akbar's tomb - lovely surroundings and the tomb itself is moving for its simplicity - white marble with a black velvet shroud, reached by long dim corridors. There is a beautiful old lamp above it, and the roof is 70 ft. One of the best places is the little Archaological[sic] bungalow in the grounds - pure white with a thatched roof and scarlet flowers all round. Lovely for a honeymoon. In the evening we met Tony who insisted on us going for a farewell dinner at the Cecil. Others present were Pat Thompson¹⁵⁹, Yvonne, Peter (?), Blimey O'Reilly and a Countess, half Irish and half Greek, called Doris. This latter had marmalade hair and green eyelashes and was sweetly and stickily affectionate. Tony and I of course were paired, Eileen and Pat, and Yvonne and Peter. Peter was a dear, v. attractive and kept sober. Tony called me darling all the time and kissed me twice. I suppose its alright. Pat was a little tight and also tried to kiss me but without success. Yvonne was terribly prudish and didn't enter into it all and will probably complain to her aunt.¹⁶⁰ She is a funny kid - It was all quite fun but stupid and pointless and something I wouldn't care to repeat.

Friday January 12th [1940]

Richard's¹⁶¹ birthday. We left at about 9.30 having got up at 6.15 to see the Taj at sunrise. It was very cold and lovely but a little disappointing. I felt faintly religious which was odd. The drive to Muttra¹⁶² was quite pleasant. When we got there Eileen and I slept on the sofa, and I felt defiant and cross and dirty. After lunch we set off for Delhi and arrived at about 5. It is a lovely clean spacious place, most beautifully planned. The hotel is nice and the centre of shops which are beastly enticing. My hair is the most hectic mess. At dinner we saw the Duguids¹⁶³. Can't think why I'm in this foul temper.



Taj Mahal



Fatepur Sikri

DELHI

Saturday January 13th [1940]

Went off to see the fort¹⁶⁴ in the morning. It is exquisite, much more polished than Agra, and with a quite different appeal - exquisitely kept up. I enjoyed the Museum most, with Nicholson's¹⁶⁵ coat and other Mutiny relics. In the afternoon went to the hairdresser and after a scurry to tea at Davicos¹⁶⁶ with some Indians. Quite enjoyable. In the evening Colonel Patterson¹⁶⁷ came round. He is a genial old bird, a little on the heavy side but nice nevertheless. Went to "Q Planes"¹⁶⁸ in the evening and adored it. Ralph Richardson is a pet and an amazingly good actor. Met Charles Trestrail of Cawnpore who seemed more at ease and v. nice.

Sunday January 14th [1940]

A fearfully hectic day - I got crosser as it went on but it was all necessary and instructive. Col. Patterson took us flying round all over Delhi and E. and I climbed right to the top of the Qutab¹⁶⁹ a 235ft building. A perfectly horrible experience. We had lunch in there and met two other females both amiable and one pretty. In the afternoon a sweet girl called Joan Horan-Brown¹⁷⁰ came round and we chattered for quite a time. V. attractive and intelligent. Bobby is so stupidly mute, and doesn't make any effort except where her boy friends are concerned. Pretty but dumb. More sightseeing, dinner with Pats. games and bed at 12

Monday January 15th [1940]

A pleasantly quiet morning. Wandered round the Assembly which is very clean and pretty, then went out to cantonments to see Indian woman. Has 2 adorable children and looked so happy and maternal but I suppose after 8 she won't be so charming. After lunch I wandered down and chose some records at 4 annas each! At 4.30 we went off with Col. Pat. to see Mutiny relics. These, strangely enough fascinate me more than Mogul tombs. Quite wrong and shows an undignified lack of imagination.

In the evening I went or rather we went to dinner with the Horan-Browns. Joan is a dear kid, but tiring as she talks without stopping and mostly about herself. Pretty and lively and infinitely preferable to Bobby. Went to see "Thunder Afloat"¹⁷¹ afterwards. Joined by three youths from the Duke of Wellingtons. One was sheepish with long flapping hair, another tall and nice-looking ~~with~~ but unbearably blasé, and the third small and amiable but common. A ghastly crew, fearfully spoilt. I could have shoved them into a cold pond - spoilt and very young.

BAREILLY

Tuesday January 16th [1940]

We finished a very pleasant tour - not too pleasantly. The journey was quite alright. I slept in a sticky and dusty haze most of the time and we got back at 5.20. But when we arrived everything was filthy and Mummy's nerves frayed. So it was rather a mess. At dinner we were joined by Coko who is in great form these days and seems to have lost most of his reserve. I was trying to discover where most of his attraction lay but apart from his smile there is nothing definite. Just a sleepy sort of charm that eludes definition.

Wednesday January 17th [1940]

An utterly miserable day for the most part. Eileen came round in the morning and we arranged to play tennis. At 3.30 she arrived, plus a note from Coko asking her to the dance this evening. I tried to make all sorts of excuses but its obvious he likes her a good deal more than me at any rate. All the time we were playing tennis I was feeling sick and miserable. Why does he like her - she isn't attractive or even intelligent. I felt murderous and consequently wrote feverishly while they went and danced. There seemed something in it but I haven't anything to say.

Thursday January 18th [1940]

It started to pour early in the morning. It was strangely soothing and friendly to wake up to rain beating on the roof. Homesickness is a silly and unnecessary complaint but I get it badly at times and feel suicidal. Went to lunch with Maureen. She was terribly sweet and friendly and we seem to get on awfully well. Pam Rogers was there and is a dear and definitely my type. We had fun playing the gramophone and I felt I mattered and at home. Oh I'm glad about Maureen - its important she should like me. My feelings for Niall have altered an awful lot within the last month or two. I no longer feel sick at the thought of meeting him. When I'm with him, too, I feel placid and at ease whereas I used to be a ghastly mass of nerves. I wonder why. I don't think it's a slacking off of love - merely an advanced stage. Its queer, marriage doesn't seem to come into it much. The physical side is really rather irrelevant when I think of him. Probably because he has never showed any signs of being attracted physically. Angel!

Friday January 19th [1940]

Had a fortune-teller in the morning who told me the following.

- i. I was going to be married within nine months to someone with money - possibly a Colonel!
- ii. A Lieut. was always thinking about me, but that I only thought of him on and off.
- iii. I would get a letter and a photo in one month and 2 days (Feb. 21st) which would make me very happy.
- iv. I would go home in 11 months and live till I was 81 and die working.
- v. My marriage wouldn't be very happy.
- vi. I would be great and have money
- vii. My good luck would start in 23 days (Feb. 11th)
- viii. I would have one bad illness and after that no more.
- ix. A small fat bald man would bring me money
- x. A small young man was very fond of me but I not of him (John Harris?)

That I was very lucky.

Its rather queer - I wonder if anything will come of it. I don't want to marry a Colonel, is Niall the Lieut. and will I really be great. I wish my marriage would be a success.

In the afternoon I went out for a ride on Augustus. It was lovely at first - we ambled down lanes and through villages and I felt contented. What did it matter about Coko or anyone else when one had solitude and sunshine and day-dreams, However, when we got on to the polo the horse got bolshie and threw me. It was darn painful at first - I thought my back was broken - visions of life in a wheel chair rushed before me in the ten seconds I was prostrate! Eventually rescued and put to bed and felt fairly alright.

Saturday January 20th [1940]

An utterly miserable day. For the most part I'm in one of my black spells at present. I've got no boy-friends, or friends of any kind - at least they don't write to me. I can't enjoy any games, I can't enjoy dancing, Eileen gets on my nerves and the whole worlds wrong. Also I'm feeling very much in love with Niall and he isn't here and won't be for weeks. Its a cursed life. But I'm reading a book called "Precious Bane"¹⁷² which is absolute bliss and one I must get. Funny, its the second I've read about deformity. Both point out that deformity throws you in on yourself and makes you discover hidden riches by introspection. It warps but often in a good direction, making you doubly sensitive to mockery and casual glances and very proud and touchy and moody and miserable. Is it worth it to be different, even if that difference makes one superior. If only someone could assure me it was worth it - but its so difficult absolutely by myself.

Sunday January 21st [1940]

Got up and went to church but felt no spiritual benefit. I just can't get back into that first fine careless rapture - what it is I had that I've lost - except childhood. Afterwards went to see the McLeans - Coko was there and amiable, but seems taken frightfully with Eileen. Wonder why - he never showed signs of it before. Mummy is obviously furious and grumbles away all the time and

makes me feel so furious and unhappy. Why can't she leave things alone - its only agravating[sic] to us all. Talked to a Maj. Mallison¹⁷³ - nice.

Monday January 22nd [1940]

Played Mah-Jong with Mrs Anderson in morning. She is a tall attractive Swedish woman who could be very lovely if she took more trouble with her appearance. Also with Mrs Whiteside who I consider unattractive and uninteresting but harmless. In the afternoon I walked over to Eileen and felt better for it. Mummy is in a furious temper these days and I'm in the depths of a sickening depression. She goes on and on about Eileen and Coko as if they were both horrible and silly, and tormenting herself and me with obvious professional jealousy.

Tuesday January 23rd [1940]

Another empty day. Maureen came to see me in the morning. Every time I meet her I find more in common and like her more. Quite apart from Niall I have become awfully fond of her and this is a great relief because I always felt a little guilty in this friendship. Now its alright; went for a ride in the afternoon which v. enjoyable and Augustus behaved more or less. Eileen spent his last evening with Coko and Mummy made the usual sarcastic and spiteful comments. I must say I can't see her attraction because the poor child has no brains.

Wednesday January 24th [1940]

Went for a bicycle ride in the morning plus dogs. Afterwards just messed round, writing out poetry etc. Definitely my favourite occupation. A peace descends on me when I'm working that I never get otherwise, and shuts me off from every miserableness and regret. For the time. Went to cocktail dance in the evening - at first it was desperate as Coko only wanted to dance with Eileen and I had nobody. But eventually I picked up young Sapper called Maude¹⁷⁴ who is very nice but not at all thrilling. Coko is obviously in love with Aileen[sic]. Said goodbye to him.

Thursday January 25th [1940]

Spent the usual uninspiring morning. At 12 went off to lunch with Maureen. We chattered until Lilian Smith and Ivy (her companion) arrived. Lilian is an enormous female, old and red-faced and very sweet. Talks a lot and is echoed in a piping chee-chee voice by Ivy. At lunch she burst into a song she had made up for the 52nd - "have you been thinking of me, boys". Maureen and I were almost under the table, tears pouring down my cheeks. I hared home to play tennis with Bubbles Mainstrom(?) and two of the South Lancs - Richard Horne¹⁷⁵ and Freddie Hipwood¹⁷⁶. These last are peculiar specimens but quite nice. Tennis was enjoyable but I played excruciatingly. Afterwards changed and went to tea - Ronnie Mitchell and Mrs Anderson were there - latter is a dear but Ronnie always frightens me. Richard asked me to go to a concert with him on Sunday - don't know if it'll come off. Really rather a sense of humour. Went to a flick and dinner with Eileen. Apparently Coko changed completely yesterday and never made any advances but seemed rather off her. Most queer. He is queer, I think and probably has had some frightening experience with a woman.

Friday January 26th [1940]

Woke up feeling heavy and liverish and in rather nasty temper. Got a letter from Betty Harris about Cawnpore. Poor dear she's suffering from a hopeless passion - so difficult at her age to have one that isn't. I shall be able to find out if Johns feeling for me is the same as for Yvonne - or something deeper. Spent the day sleeping mostly - it rained in the evening and I felt so happy and comfortable. I adore the rain. It fills me with a strange yearning - for what - - !

Saturday January 27th [1940]

Rain all over today - lovely and fresh. Still feeling liverish. Maureen came in the morning to have her fortune told. The man was a rotter and humbug and so I felt rather guilty her having to spend. Shes really quite an intimate friend now, and as this intimacy has taken so long to reach its worth so

much more. In the afternoon Eileen and I played golf and I went round in the brilliant score of 85! However, quite enjoyable. In the evening had small party - Bruce (!) Maude, Capt. Severin¹⁷⁷ and Eileen. Saw "Sweethearts"¹⁷⁸ which was fun and then went on and danced. Bruce is a dear and likes me but no more. Severin nice too.

January 28th Sunday [1940]

Maureen came in the morning - bursting with news. Ronnie is apparently adoring, thinks her the only girl in the world and in fact wants to marry her. At least that is what I gather - she although she likes him doesn't feel anything more. It was a great shock - it just shows how men like the quiet, simple sort of girl for wives - even if they themselves are the reverse. She would make a lovely wife. but is love being in love - that's what's so complicated. She'll have to solve it for herself but poor Ronnie - he's so young and so desperately enthusiastic and serious - it'll make him very unhappy. To someone as gay and flippant as he is, seriousness hurts so much more - if unrewarded. Apparently he writes poetry and thinks beautiful thoughts - a hidden gold mine in fact! Most queer

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In the afternoon I rode and met Bruce Maude. He is awfully nice but queer in a way - anyway I like him. He said he was going to send me a chit and have a party - will he? Augustus behaved rottenly and I had to get off eventually - it is a nuisance. He's rather a hopeless animal really - I think I'll give him back.

In the evening I dined with Richard and Freddie - it was a bit tense and difficult, but Richard nobly told long if somewhat pointless stories and so there were no awkward pauses. Freddie annoys me though, he just sits and giggles and is fearfully forward and all over one. Went on to the concert - it was very entertaining. Saw Bruce Maude there and he ignored me. Went on to eggs and bacon at the Mess - quite fun. Eileen annoys me intensely she's so pointless and lily-like. I could slap her. Ronnie looking sheepish - poor love. Richard I definitely like, but Freddie I don't - his type annoys me.

Monday 29th [January 1940]

Played Mah Jong with usual crowd. I won as usual. Afterwards tore off to lunch with Maureen. We talked all through lunch about Ronnie and after she showed me some letters he had written to her - I wanted to bury my face in a cushion and cry, they were so lovely. He writes poetry for her - beautiful though not good, and tells her the loveliest thoughts about herself, and there's something at the same time, humble and protective. Oh if only someone felt like that about me - he's so darling underneath, and reads and writes and is exactly in mind to what I like. Though of course otherwise not. Maureen talked to me about all sorts of things and we really are soul mates. We walked over here and had tea and afterwards messed around until 6.30, when Ronnie and Skipper¹⁷⁹ came. Discussed a cabaret we hope to have here. Of course these things fill me with horror and dread but I won't be asked in any case. Oh I'm glad Nialls coming back soon, but of course it'll mean Maureen won't be so free for me. It is fun having her, I should go mad if I had to have Eileen all the time. She is looking so pretty - "L'amour s'embellit" etc. Oh help I'm jealous, not of him but of love.

Tuesday 30th [January 1940]

Folly had seven puppies in the night. - Eileen and I went for a smelly walk in the morning and I felt peevisish. In the evening we went for a drink party at Nobby Clarkes. It was quite enjoyable - the usual rather pointless chatter and imbecilic witticisms. Mummy came away in a ferocious temper as she hadn't been the centre of everything. Makes me furious but impotent. I got home so late I couldn't eat any dinner - buzzed straight off to fetch Maureen. Ronnie came too, most awkward, I felt dreadful and tried to be tactful but didn't succeed. He's pathetically, ferociously serious - !

Wednesday 31st [January 1940]

He returns today. Joy oh bliss. I wonder how I can ever live the time when he's away. Oh blast my writing. Why won't it go forwards for a change. I'm absolutely fed up. In the morning I got a note

from Maureen asking me to play Croquet and go to tea. However I refused latter as I was playing golf with Eileen. It was quite amusing. I played rather well on the whole and did the water hole in bogey. Met Niall and Dolly Baird¹⁸⁰ on the course and they both shouted rude remarks to me about my reputation in Agra. I hope Niall doesn't really hear anything - I should hate him to know. Eileen came back to tea and afterwards Maureen and Niall came round. E. annoys me intensely. She comes up with that silly assurance of hers and just throws her weight about in endless pointlessness. I know she's got her eye on Niall - oh no! He was sweet, but he hopes to be in France in 4 months and I shall die of misery. Its too ghastly - he doesn't care. Went to Cocktail Dance on Bruce's party. Quite fun. Northgate¹⁸¹ was there and rather nice. Bruce is an angel and I feel I know him - !.

Thursday Feb.1st [1940]

Played golf at 9a.m. with Maureen. She played superlatively and I atrociously. We chattered amiably and afterwards she came back and spent the morning on the verandah, knitting and chatting. The Ronnie affair is progressing rather spasmodically and one-sidedly. She encourages him too much and yet - well it gives him pleasure. Muddle - . Played tennis in afternoon with Bill Berridge, Lauder and Maureen Anderson. It was quite fun and I played better. I have a feeling Lauder is taken with Maureen, but I don't see how it can be true. They all seem to have tied each other into knots - highly involved and awkward. Bill has changed so. An awful pity.

Feb. 2nd Friday [1940]

The rain started in the night. It was lovely - gorgeous. I lay in bed with a wet wind blowing in my face and the rain on the roofs and a full feeling of utter contentment. However this was spoilt by having to leap out of bed and cart baths about. It rained solidly all day. I got a note from Niall and a poem, a perfectly lovely one. Oh if only I knew he was being serious but its just pose and flippancy, He and Maureen came along after tea but it was rather unsatisfactory. She talked to Ronnie, and he picked up a friend - oh angel.

Niall
~~Without a thought~~
~~For dreams~~
~~And gone~~
~~Desolate and disillusioned~~
 Disillusioned and desolate
 With only
 A dream. Striving
 (If fate Endlessly
 Is kind To discover
 to a lonely) the secret
 Of what?
 A. Out of the days living?
 B. That have passed. Or not
 C. Have you learnt Caring
 At last In an
 eternal wave
 of despairing
 And rising again

Striving endlessly
 To discover
 The secret
 of living

What
Out of this chaos
Has got
Point.

Now there is nothing to
do but wait
But after
There'll be laughter
And jokes
Singing
And pain
(Springing)
And there'll be a point
A hope
And dreams
Perhaps
If you've not done with dreams
And scope -
What for - ?
Ah so many have
asked
Before
What for?
What are the stars
(Venus and Mars -
And perhaps you'll be
satisfied
Or perhaps
Dreams will have died
Somewhere out in
the cold'
Funny to think
But it
Standing on the brink
of things
That you'll be old
And springs
(Specially Paris ones)
Won't stir
Whatever they do
Who
knows?
I know that at
some time
~~In this stirring prose~~
(~~Poetry but it had~~
~~to rhyme~~)
~~I must mention Life~~
~~with a capital L~~
~~Which all shows~~
That
Dramatic

Significant

Dramatic and significant
Pause.
That 'pause' ought to rhyme
With 'knows'
But it quite obviously doesn't
Bother,

Restless and dissatisfied
You stand
Seeking
To understand
What men have died
To find -
And dying
Left mankind
No evidence of their
Trying.

- A Purpose, a reason
and above all a goal,
Why your
(Presumably)
Immortal soul
is here
At all -
Why home is dear
And why this land
~~So-ish~~ so drear
Wanting, striving
Living
For something you
haven't got.
But what?
And why you sleep
And wake, and waking
Do not keep
Faith with your dreams
Forsaking
~~What you were taught~~
Them and forgetting living
In your endless striving
For something you haven't
Got
But what ?

These have I loved - the dusty
scent of evening
When ~~smoke and pipes and ---~~ is are
purple mists are ~~ending~~
settling over all.

And somewhere throbs a drum
an urgent call
To darkness and to magic.

These have I loved - the haunted
air of twilight
~~With woodsmoke cutting into purple mists~~
With wood-smoke heady and
insistent blown
Into a purple mist. A shadow
thrown

~~Gaunt~~
Across an arid sun-split plain -
one tree
Stark and alone, and gaunt, but
infinitely
Brave to be challenging the urgent
heat
With that ~~stern shadow~~ stern symbol of itself.
The steady beat
Of drums across a misty
mornings haze
And the shrill wail of pipes. The
long wet days
When water roars and drips
and gushes by
A swirling world and a
despondent sky
Stars in the lake - a ~~sudden gl~~ word
the sudden thrilling glow
At finding someone you can
really know
A friend among a herd
whose ~~glances~~ glance and love
~~Are heard by all, but~~
~~meant for you alone~~
Are for the world, but meant for you alone.

When Adam looked on Eve and
saw
~~What his ribs had been~~
~~by God melted for~~
What his ribs had been
tampered with for
The world is very beautiful
And it is hard to see
Why, out of all these lovely
things
He should have noticed
me.
Why me!

~~When every~~
There's so much to be loved
 so much
To want to do and be
Why should he only want to live
 With me, indefinitely
 Why me.

Its funny that ~~this love~~
 ~~of his~~
~~Should leave me~~
 the love which
 holds

and Chains Him leaves me free
 All I can do is sit and
 ask
 With "sweet simplicity"
 Why me?

February 3rd Saturday [1940]

Another wet day in the morning. Mummy and I went all over the place in a car. Met McLean who asked me to go there so I presume I'll have to - gosh! This is all wrong. I spent last night with the McLeans. He was in a dreadful mood and dinner was a nightmare. In the morning I played golf with Maureen and we came back here and talked. Had lunch with McLeans and Alec came to tea. He is a queer cove - wonder what his feelings for Eileen are! Went to flicks with him and Denis Dunlop¹⁸² in evening. Felt peevish and in rotten form.

February 4th Sunday [1940]

Got away from McLeans to find that the parents had ~~asked~~ gone to Naini for the day. Hastily asked Maureen to lunch. Drank in the Club in the morning but was definitely bored. Lunch was quite fun and afterwards we sat and knitted. Niall blew in with another poem he'd concocted. Terribly sweet - all about India. He's really got a gift in that direction tho' some of his stuff's beautifully bad. Darling - In the evening went to church and enjoyed myself a lot - quiet and serene. Had pyjama party with parents who've not absolutely decided on a bungalow.

February 5th Monday [1940]

Mondays always a lovely day and this was no exception - funny its connected always with him. In the morning wrote some poetry for the Baird menage. I don't know if it'll be well received but doubt it. Eileen came along and seemed a bit depressed - she has got something in her I suppose. Got a note from Bubbles and played golf with her in the afternoon. It was fun - she being as bad as I am. Felt well exercised and content. After dinner went to a concert with Maureen, Niall and Ronnie. It was rather a priceless show - terribly vulgar but somehow that didn't matter. It didn't to me at any rate. I wanted it to go on forever - just sitting there and being happy. Ronnie I imagine felt the same but kept admirably controlled. Afterwards there was a dance. Niall and I retired to the fire for the most part and talked sleepily and a little disconnectedly. It was heavenly only they went rather early. There's a new freedom between us now - can't think where it sprung from but we definitely feel easier together now and words are only "the lappings of content". Very lovely feeling. Maureen is looking sweet these days - radiant with the satisfaction of being loved. And I've reached the heights for the present.

February 6th Tuesday [1940]

I can't understand how two days in succession could be lovely but they were. On this one it poured with rain most of the morning, but after lunch was beautiful and we went off to play golf with the Bairds. Mummy and him went off first ~~but~~ and we hacked along in the rear. I played excruciatingly but loved every moment. It was a beautiful day, windy and warm, and Niall was adorable. Afterwards we went along to tea and played Croquet. Then Niall showed me photos and I felt that he was liking me and not being so absent-minded.

February 7th Wednesday [1940]

A third lovely day. This can't last. In the afternoon Maureen and Eileen played tennis with the Nicholsons and came back to tea. In the evening we had a Cocktail Dance Party. The usual crowd, but only one mattered to me. Desmond in great form and Ronnie devoted. Alan I think is suffering from an infatuation for Mrs Anderson, and the atmosphere was a little tense between them. Most awkward. Niall was adorable and we got closer than ever before I think. He asked me to go to the flicks on Saturday - oh I'm so happy and it can't last.

February 8th Thursday [1940]

It couldn't last and it hasn't. I was looking forward to this so much but it was awful. In the morning took the dogs out and then drank in the Club with Nicholsons. After lunch it started to rain and looked bleak, but we played tennis and I played with Niall and we were quite beaten and he noticed my leg -. I know it. Oh God, its cruel, but he had to know some day. At tea he didn't speak to me once. In the evening had a sticky dinner party and went on to see "St. Martin's Lane"¹⁸³ - v. good. I loathed the whole evening.

February 9th Friday [1940]

Spent the morning with Eileen and was consequently mildly but pleasantly bored. After lunch it looked thunderous but eventually Bubbles braved it to play golf. However it was impossible and after a short walk we came back here to tea. She told me rather peculiar things about Ronnie which upset me for Maureen's sake. I hope he isn't flippant and a complete rotter - he was apparently keen on Bubbles too. I can't tell M. though I suppose I ought to. Went to drinks with Bruce - the others except Eileen turned up. He is nice but strange.

February 10th Saturday [1940]

Woke up feeling intensely happy. Maureen, Eileen and I did the flowers in the morning and in the afternoon played golf with E. At 6 I trundled along to the cinema, and Ronnie, the Bairds and I went in together. The film "The Spy in Black"¹⁸⁴ was lovely and of course perfect rapture under the conditions. Went back and had supper with Bairds in front of the fire. Afterwards played the gramophone and talked and felt intensely happy. Going to bed in that house was pure bliss "Tenderly the day that I have loved - - "

February 11th Sunday [1940]

My luck begins - quite true. Woke up gloriously aware of being happy. In the morning trundled down to the Club on Maureen's carrier. We returned for lunch and Gen. McRea came. He was most jovial. Afterwards M and I lay out in the garden talking, went for a sunny stroll by the river, and returned to a homely verandah tea from whence we collapsed onto chairs again. All this filled by pleasant and easy, if not intimate conversation. Maureen is a dear but so hard to get at. Went to church in the evening and enjoyed it a lot. On returning from church both of them were in peculiar moods, flying for each other and otherwise being obstinately silent. And yet they were neither of them really in a bad temper. Very awkward. However Ronnie and Alan appeared and the tension was relieved by returning to the kitchen and cooking eggs. Evening ended hilariously in cushion-throwing. Niall seemed terribly sweet but - oh gosh I don't know. Hes like her, far and near at the same time. He's so difficult with other people of his own age, and though I like that difference - yet -

February 12th Monday [1940]

One more day before we go back to normal - god, what'll I do when he's gone and there's no hope from one day's end to another - no chance of meeting him round a corner or getting one of those adorable red-crested envelopes. I get waves of adoration, and one is going strong at the moment. Went to Mah Jong in the morning. After went off to the cinema and sat on a sofa with him. He never attempts to hold my hand, but sometimes I'm almost suffocated because his knee touches mine and rests for half a glorious moment. Went on to drinks at the Lauders and met Brian, in great form.

February 13th Tuesday [1940]

Dick came round in the morning in great form - he seems to have taken a sudden fancy to me, I don't know why. Told me a lot about his past, present and future. Spent a lazy afternoon, took the dogs out on a bicycle. Maureen came into the club but didn't see him all day which depressed me to the extreme. Frightful to be dependent for one's happiness on one person but I wouldn't be without love's penalties and pangs for anything. Desmond came round in the evening and we chattered - why can't I want him who is willing.

February 14th Wednesday [1940]

Got an air-mail from Betty in the morning. She has changed a lot she says - grown up and switched up her ideas. Basil is still a beautiful ideal and they love each other, but she says she's not brave enough to give up her life and country and become an exile to marry him. I think she's got to be careful not to dramatise her feelings, war atmosphere and so on. But perhaps she really is in a muddle and intensely serious. Someone is passionately in love with her and she has lots of boy friends. Funny I can't inspire love like that.

In the afternoon played golf with Eileen, Desmond and Bruce. Quite enjoyable - they came back to tea. Desmond is looking white and miserable these days and dying to go home. Poor lamb - he has almost permanent fever. In the evening went to Cocktail Dance with Measures v. enjoyable. Danced chiefly with Gerald and Dick - latter is so sweet and I feel I know him much better now. Desmond was in a peculiar mood - we went on to the flicks - "The Drum"¹⁸⁵ which was quite amusing only desperately cut. Dick sat next to Eileen and though I like Desmond I do think Dick is more attractive. I'm never satisfied with what I've got - except in one case and I never get the chance.

Thursday 15th [February 1940]

Spent the morning writing to Betty. Felt vaguely miserable - don't know why, except I haven't seen him for days now. After lunch played golf with Lauder, Bill Berridge and Maureen Anderson. Lauder is definitely in love with latter or something equivalent:- can't understand it. Had tea in the Club and talked to Ronnie for a bit. There's something about him I don't like and I don't want M. to marry him. In the evening Brian came round and stayed for such hours that we asked him to supper. Was very talkative and amusing - golly he's attractive, due chiefly to his age.

Friday February 16th [1940]

A vague morning with Eileen. Saw Maureen for a bit and Niall was supposed to be coming but of course never turned up. In the afternoon Eileen and I went out on our bikes to watch polo, which never started. We climbed up a tree for a bit and it brought back lovely memories of youth. Played golf with Guineau¹⁸⁶, Lauder and Maureen A. Deadly boring and I played excruciatingly and felt murderous. God they are a fatuous crowd. Heard the Nicholsons are coming out and what can I do with them.

Saturday February 17th [1940]

A day of miserable failures and bad organisation. Got Desmond and friend to play tennis but N's didn't turn up till 4.15 and left after tea. Desmond, Warry¹⁸⁷, Mummy and I went on to see "Young

Man's Fancy"¹⁸⁸ which was rather nice. Desmond seems to be changing in some way and becoming a little intense - or perhaps its just imagination. Queer lad - I can't make him out. Went to lunch with Maureen which was enjoyable. I'm glad I'm going to Cawnpore later. I'll be at Ronnie's party and he'll be there, oh the angels will sing.

Sunday February 18th [1940]

Went out to Budaun¹⁸⁹ for the day. Desmond, Denis Warry Eileen and I arrived in time for lunch which was a hilarious meal. Afterwards we chugged off for tennis and were surprised to see Dick and Frank Mason¹⁹⁰ bursting through the undergrowth, beer-bottles in hand - car-collapse, The others played tennis while we watched and the gramophone pounded away. God my writing gives me fits. The atmosphere at the Nicholson place is amazing - one is kept at a hysterical pitch all the time. Desmond seemed to be watching me an awful lot - I wonder. Its so hopeless if he starts getting serious. Dick is off Noreen absolutely and on to Eileen it appears. He is very vague and seems to get fits of attachment to various people. There is something intensely lovable about him apart from attraction - I think its a vaguely protective instinct he inspires. We left after dinner and had quite an eventful journey back owing to punctures and Worey falling into a bog. Desmond behaved a little queerly as usual but I shan't be sure unless he tells me - I'm dreading it in a way I can't cope with scenes.

Monday February 19th [1940]

Maureen came round in the morning and we had our usual gossip about nothing. What is it about her that keeps one at a distance even in ones most intimate moments. Some days we can't find anything to say to one another and yet I like her terribly and there's so much to talk about. Got a sweet letter from Jill - she is an amazing kid - very old - very young - and a mass of character. Funny in our friendship Shes always been boss. She'll break a lot of hearts before shes finished. Had my hair done in the evening.

Tuesday Feb. 20th [1940]

Played golf with Maureen at 9.30. Discussed the usual Ronnie question in small circles as usual - and afterwards went to Flagstaff House to pick up magazine. Niall gave me two handkerchiefs - v. touching! Desmond wrote asking to play tennis - signed "ever yours" - does that mean anything. I'm so young and how does one find out these things - instinct isn't enough. In the afternoon Eileen and I played golf and she came back to tea. Felt happy and excited. After an early dinner went off to fetch Niall and Maureen and Ronnie. Saw "The Underpup"¹⁹¹ which I enjoyed but the others didn't. He's an angel but -

Wednesday Feb. 21st [1940]

A dreaded day in a way. Went to lunch with Bairds - its always a bit embarrassing, they quarrel most of the time. Maureen sometimes is a little fractious. Looking at them I occasionally see myself in her place - nagging and being annoyed by his mannerisms. Probably stayed with them till 4 and went home to tea. Went to Ronnie's party in the evening - it was more fun than I expected. I got on very well with Teddy M. Edwards¹⁹² who is engaged to a girl at home - he is a pet with loads of character.. Ronnie was very love-sick and knows that I know. He doesn't frighten me any more - I think love weakens a person, makes them helpless and humble - and yet tremendously strong and obstinate. If Maureen, who is so gentle and silent appeals to him - well the rest follows. Niall is a complex question - last night he didn't really attract me at all or I, I think, him. But sometimes we're electrically near to each other. What's worrying me is - will he write when he goes away. If he once started I know I could make him go on. He's almost better on paper and I know I am. I'm sometimes so sublimely sure of my love for him and at others I feel that isn't strong enough and he isn't the "dear acquaintance" I'm looking for.

CAWNPORE

Thursday Feb. 22nd [1940]

Got up at 6 and caught 7.30 train. First part of the journey was uneventful but at Lucknow an amiable youth from South Wales B's got in and cheered up the rest of the journey with lively and intermittent small talk. Knows Billy and Rollo Price. Got to Cawnpore over an hour late and was met by John¹⁹³. He really is completely unattractive more so than practically anybody I've met. And yet his mind is burning and vital and very lovable. The rest of the day was utterly miserable. Yvonne annoys me so much I could scream but only retire completely into my shell. She shouted and roared at the two young men here and showed off like a schoolgirl on a half-holiday. I said practically nothing and felt miserably self-conscious. Oh why did I come - just think what I could be doing - with him. Oh God, why did you let me come. I shall be a wallflower and a flop and there's no need for it. I'm dreading that party more than I can say. But on Sunday this dreadful time will be over and I shall be back among my own people again. I haven't felt so utterly miserable or "out of it" for years - each second is an hour and each hour an eternity.

Maureen

O, you plant the pain in my heart
with your wistful eyes
Girl of my choice, Maureen!
Will you drive me mad for the
kisses your shy sweet mouth
denies
Maureen?

Like a walking ghost I am, and
no words to woo
White rose of the West Maureen
For its pale you are, and the fear
That's on you is over me too
Maureen!
Sure its one complaint that's on us
As those this day
Bride of my dreams, Maureen.
The smart of the bee that stung us
His honey must cure, they say
Maureen

I'll coax the light to your eyes and
the rose to your face
Mavoureen, my own Maureen!
When I feel the warmth of your
breast, and your nest is my arms embrace
Maureen!

Oh where was the King of the
world that day - only me?
My own true love, Maureen
And you the Queen with me
there, and your throne in my
heart, Machree,
Maureen!

Not unto me O Lord
Not unto me the rapture of the day
the peace of night or loves divine surprise
High heart, high speech, high deeds
mid honouring eyes
For at thy word
All these are taken away.

Not unto ~~us~~ me O Lord
To ~~us~~ me thou givest the scorn the
scourge, the scar
The ache of life, the loneliness
of death
The insufferable sufficiency of breath
And with thy sword
Thou piercest very far

Friday Feb. 23rd [1940]

Another dreary and miserable day. I'm in such a state that I hate going into a room and mope about doing unnecessary things in privacy. I haven't felt like this for ages and I don't know what brought it on. In the morning we did a sort of Ouijah fortune-telling which informed me I was going to marry a certain David Caine in five years time - meeting him out here. Don't know if these things have any basic probability but "there are more things -". Went for a walk in the evening and Victor¹⁹⁴ arrived - I don't like him and never will.

Saturday Feb. 24th [1940]

The day I've been dreading all along - as it turned out it wasn't as bad as I'd feared. But pretty good torture all things considered. Spent the morning arranging furniture etc and afternoon sleeping. After tea Betty showed me a few of her faintly amorous letters. There is something very platonic in her love affairs although they seem quite real. She inspires a protective passion and not a possessive one I suppose. Had our baths early and Margaret Sloane¹⁹⁵ arrived first - she is one of the plainest things I've seen for a long time and yet apparently irresistible to the opposite sex. An intelligent girl, very pleasant to talk to but just a shade too sure of herself and conceited. However I enjoyed her conversations enormously because she has a mind that works along the same grooves, and I felt almost for the first time since I left home that there was no need to struggle to get at a person - it all came out naturally and understandably. Dinner was fun. I sat next to John and Freddie Stockwell¹⁹⁶ - latter is a repulsive specimen engaged to Veronica Rice¹⁹⁷. Veronica is pretty and sweet but not very clever and I know she'll be miserably unhappy if she ever gets as far as marrying him. She said Tony Brett sent his love which pleased me ridiculously. Funny how that affair won't die a natural death. Half way through the dance I got panicky and nearly burst into tears, but I was rescued from complete ruin by a young I.C.S. man who seemed to take a fancy to me. Quite pleasant but not my type. On the whole I can't say I enjoyed it much although it had its moments. John was a dismal failure from the beginning. What I thought I'd found in him just wasn't there.

BAREILLY

Sunday Feb. 25th [1940]

Never have I been so glad to get away from a place as I did this morning. All the same I don't regret any of it a bit. The first part of the journey was grand fun as Hugh Fowler¹⁹⁸ and Rollo Price were in the carriage and both were sweet, particularly Hugh. He is rather devastating to look at with v. blue eyes and brown slim, and is terribly enthusiastic and companionable. I rather fell - mildly. Slept second part of the journey and arrived 6pm. Niall and Maureen came in and went to a flick after dinner with Desmond Eileen and Worry[sic]. Back to the old lovely life in one.

Monday Feb. 26th [1940]

Played Mah Jong with Mrs Anderson and Lauder. Quite fun - Picked up Maureen and took her back to lunch. Got a chit from Alec asking me to join them for the flicks. After a lot of persuasion I agreed to go. Wonder why he wants us to go - he must have taken Eileen before, after dinner. Maureen has quite decided that Ronnie is not the person in her life who is going to matter. Poor Ronnie, but I know that shes right. The flick was "Marie Walewska"¹⁹⁹ and very lovely though I've seen it before. Desmond got rather intense and clutched my hand feverishly. He's so very young - no technique. But thats what I like.

Tuesday Feb. 27th [1940]

An absolutely blank day - one seems to get out of things so quickly. I don't really mind but sometimes - oh I don't know. What does it matter anyhow. Its more interesting being plain because you've just got to simply fight for your popularity, and out of nine complete failures theres usually one success thats worth the struggle. Everythings tinged with unreality at present - I feel I'm living in a dream and something is going to jolt me pretty soon into a different life. Just dramatic license -? Alan and Eileen came in.

Wednesday Feb. 28th [1940]

It is steamily hot now - wonder what it'll be like later. Went to see the McLeans - it was all rather chaotic - she got sheets of chits. I don't know what it is about her that attracts people - extreme simplicity and seeming unspoilt ingenuity. Played golf with her , Desmond and Alec - quite amusing though I was excruciating. Felt sunny and on top of the world - spells bad for future. Had tea in the Club and dinner in our tents.- plus Bill Bowden²⁰⁰. He is a fairly attractive and quite nice individual - not much one way or the other. Got into my pink and gold frock that I haven't worn before - nice but a little indecent.

Went over to the club at about 9.45. Rest of the party consisted of Hughes (cousins), Greenways, Desmond, Alec, Eileen, Alan and Peter. At first it²⁰¹ was back to front but soon changed this. Niall was absolutely sweet all evening. We had long discussions about love and marriage. Funny how one always wants to discuss sex with the object of ones affection. He was infinitely more considerate and kept asking if I was happy out here etc. He's so absolutely unsensual and yet underneath he must be human and feel all the natural stirrings. I don't know how my feelings towards him stand. I have a feeling I'm like Scarlett and Ashley²⁰², clinging to something that was only a figment of my imagination. In the first place I can't really be in love with him when the long affair can stir me so. He asked me to write to him - so I shall take the chance with both hands. Try to put into print what I've never been able to say in words. Alan seems keen on Eileen and Brian on Cynthia. The evening ended drearily - I felt sleepy and miserable. Desmond, I've come to the conclusion, doesn't mean anything I didn't want him to and yet - oh God what a complex and obstinate machine is the human heart. Elastic, and thank the Lord - tough.

Thursday Feb. 29th [1940]

Feeling rather depressed owing to having nothing to do. Eileen is always being asked to play tennis and I never am. I don't know whether its my tennis or myself - both I suppose. I do so hate the game and yet I could love it. Such fun this life isn't it - oh Golly. We went out for a walk en famille

- it was a stormy, yellow day of swirling leaves and made me desperately homesick. In the evening Desmond and Denis came in and stayed to dinner and afterwards we played rummy, rather badly. Can't understand either of them - Desmond particularly. Don't believe he really knows himself.

Friday March 1st [1940]

The day was brought in with a flourish of trumpets by getting a long chit from Niall. He asked me to write to him if I ever felt depressed because he faintly understood me and wouldn't be cynical or bored because he liked me too much. What does that mean - I don't understand him or any men tho' I think I'm so frightfully clever and see through everyone. I thought I was gaining confidence but it seems to be evaporating rapidly. Went to see Eileen in the morning and she firmly denied all rumours and was exceedingly cross, (re her suspected engagement) Went to see "Rains Came"²⁰³ with Eric Raynor and Desmond. V. good.

Saturday March 2nd [1940]

Played golf with Maureen at 9. We collapsed after a few holes and talked desultorily lying on our tummies. Came back to the Club and found Niall there - is a bit sheepish. A note from him arrived later which was definitely sweet and poetic as usual - he has a knack in that direction altho' its definitely stilted. I've got to admit it now - I've got to be honest with myself. I'm not in love with Niall now. God knows when it ended, that 1st fine careless rapture - but its gone. Its left something dear and comforting behind - but love, the physical yearning for somebody - is no more. In the afternoon Maureen and I walked round with Ronnie and Niall and afterwards went round and played the gramophone there. Ronnie now annoys me and treats me as slightly necessary dirt but dirt just the same. He's even condescending where Maureen is concerned. And frightfully dramatic. Arranged the picnic for tomorrow. Its really rather funny to think how in Naini I used to feel lovely inside if I saw him at a distance once a month and now I'm blasé about seeing him every day and getting chits every other. It'll be funny if hes falling now - I shall laugh myself sick if that happens. To stop myself from crying. How God, or Fate must enjoy playing these tantalizing tricks on us.

Sunday March 3rd [1940]

Felt my cold increasing and was streaming by half way through the morning. Desmond came in and took photos and chatted for some time. Funny how terribly at ease I felt with him and how our sense of humour works alongside the same lines. Don't believe he's the slightest in love with me - wonder if he'll write. Called for Maureen and we trundled off to Isatnugger. Met Niall and Ronnie and had substantial picnic lunch. Afterwards we slept - it was rather bliss - the physical isn't absolutely dead for me - at least I felt joyous lying there with his arm touching mine. I was feeling perfectly frightful all day but enjoyed it as much as possible in the circumstances. Ronnie was mugra²⁰⁴ until he won the golf competition - I think I like him less and less on acquaintance. He's a dual personality - the outer side is maudlin (nice word that - wonder what it means) but the inner faintly sincere and anyhow pleasant. Niall is so much nicer on paper - he's so fiendishly interested in golf - and manly things like the Army - nice in a way but my jealous female instincts don't care for it. Anyhow feeling like this saves me from the ghastly wrench that would have been -

Monday March 4th [1940]

A blank - In bed feeling like nothing on earth. Maureen and Niall came in the morning and we - arranged various things - The rest of the day I felt frightful and miserable.

Tuesday March 5th [1940]

Margo²⁰⁵ came in the morning (I completely recovered) and we talked about her engagement. A most upsetting business - she really is an angel and I can talk to her about anything and feel she respects me and doesn't think of me as an infant. Wrote a poem for Niall and a letter - hope he'll appreciate same. He writes practically every day now - purely platonic.

Wednesday March 6th [1940]

~~Maureen looked in~~ Played Mah Jong in morning with Mrs Anderson and Lauder. Got a chit from Niall in the middle which was the longest and loveliest I've yet had. All about his ideas about religion etc - coloured by Flauberts "Confession of St. Anthony" or whatever it is. Hes so keenly intelligent and his intellect is so completely different to mine - very cut and dried and masculine and mathematical. I respect it so much because my own reasoning is typically feminine and instinctive and emotional. I wish I had a precise, clear brain that wasn't muddled by moods and the effect of other peoples personality. I haven't one thought that is really mine.

Played golf in the afternoon with Ronnie and Bairds. Niall and I were badly beaten because of my excruciating play. I get awfully cross - I wonder if he minds - it probably revolts him. But its me and I don't intend to pretend to him - if I do to everyone else. Discussed religion violently between every stroke - he has the idea that religion is entirely selfish and that each person has got to fix up for himself. I agree in a way yet - no its not all selfish. Only in loving someone else to the exclusion of self do we find God. Went to Cocktail Dance and disliked it all very much - had two dances with Bowden who is amiable but uninspiring.

Thursday March 7th [1940]

One of those days where little things put one out all the time. In the morning took Margo round the place and landed up at the Club - met Bruce and talked to him for some time. He's a queer cove but different from the set type so I like talking to him. Definitely a lady's man - went and listened to some of his records in the evening which I enjoyed. He's got one particular and very ravishing girl friend - he definitely is all for looks. Went back to Club and changed and had dinner in Club with Bairds, Ronnie, Eileen and A.D.C. Gerald Bray²⁰⁶. Latter is a dear - completely unspoilt and chatty. I felt at odds with Niall all evening so wasn't too happy.

Friday March 8th [1940]

Niall and Maureen came round in the morning - all serene. Last night I felt madly jealous when he talked to Eileen all through supper - so perhaps it is love! Merely feminine possessiveness I fear. Played golf with Eileen - enjoyable. Afterwards we went on to see "Mr Smith goes to Washington"²⁰⁷ which I loved. It really was terribly good. I incurred the divine wrath by making rather a mess of some parties I'd arranged with Desmond and Worry. I really didn't mean to be rude or cool or casual but I suppose it was a bit unusual.

Saturday March 9th [1940]

Played six holes of golf with Maureen in morning. Shes starting a cold poor lamb. Niall came and fetched her away early. Mrs Gregory came round and we discussed her coming offspring with relish - maternity garments, morning sickness etc. - really rather fun. Afterwards went round to see Eileen for a while and returned hot and hungry at about 2. Did nothing in the evening except bicycle round to Bill Bowden with a chit. Went to cinema + Bairds and Ronnie - "Bachelor Girl"²⁰⁸ - great fun. Sat in a row which spoilt it rather. Went home afterwards and had bilious attack.

Sunday March 10th [1940]

A wet and chilly day - wrote to Niall in morning and actually sent it off. Always dread his reactions. Met Desmond in the Club in the morning and he's still furious about the parties. After lunch sat about and read. Reminded me very much of Sundays at home - frowsting over the fire with a book and no prospect of getting out and yet a faint urge to do so. After tea Desmond and Worry arrived and we sauntered a short distance in the car and eventually decided on a Cinema - Fetched Eileen and saw "Angels Wash Their Faces"²⁰⁹ which was rather good. I keep D. severely at a distance.

Monday March 11th [1940]

Another wet day - put off tennis which was a great relief. Margo came round in morning and we buzzed round a bit - discussed and pulled to pieces everyone within range. A good game played slowly. In the afternoon it poured so we had tea first and then went out and played a threesome. It

was the most glorious day I've had here - sun and wind and whirling leaves and an intoxicating tang in the air which was ruin to my golf, but filled me with ecstasies of youthful abandon. Went round to see Maureen afterwards who went to bed. Niall was there for a bit and we all got on awfully well.

Tuesday March 12th [1940]

Went round to see Eileen in the morning. We played the glass game and it told her she was going to marry someone called ~~Da~~ Kenneth Holland this year - also repeated my information about David V. Most extraordinary. Clive was here when I got back and asked me to play tennis but I said I'd play golf with Maureen A. instead. A lovely stormy day with thunder and lightening and a black bloodshot sky. My golf suffered accordingly[sic] but I felt hilarious and happy in spite of the fact that Niall was a little cool -

At 7.5 I was picked up by Desmond and Worry in E's car and taken to Mrs Masons' party. There was a terrific crowd there and I enjoyed it a lot. Got on well with Kenneth Malcolm and Boo-Boo and met a new and ravishing young man who I think fell for Margo. She is a lovable creature and I could never feel jealous of her conquests. Afterwards we, plus Nicholsons and attendant swarms had supper in the Club - Cynthia and Noreen both rather quiet. We went off to see a flick which was ghastly - Worry slightly tight and very affectionate - went out of the flick halfway.

Wednesday March 13th [1940]

A busy morning - everyone I know in skirts came round to see me. Maureen first with the information that Niall had just left - felt rather hurt that he hadn't come to see me. But why is he always coming to read papers at the Club these days - can it be because of me? I don't think so because he never comes to see me. But perhaps hes too shy and just hopes. Lovely how we interpret things to suit ourselves! Margo came along afterwards looking lovely and I said goodbye with regret. Also Nicholsons and Eileen. Noreen is a bit subdued these days - I wonder if for the first time they are realising their colour - but it can't be for the first time.

Played golf at 4.15 + Bruce, Desmond and Eileen. I played excruciatingly but enjoyed it. At 7.15 went over to the Club and started the most hectic evening and in some ways most miserable for a long time. I was meant to be in Maureens party but Eileen installed herself and stayed there the whole evening. I was furious about it as she completely cut me out and left me to float about at a loose end all evening - and at the end came and apologised. God she is a foul creature in some ways - I was at the point of tears but Peter Cambell[sic]²¹⁰ - who is pure gold - saved me. Also Boo-boo turned up and I danced with him a fair amount.

Thursday March 14th [1940]

I'm in a fearfully confused state of mind - I've fallen absolutely hectically for Boo-boo. It seems to have happened overnight - perhaps its just the wake of a dream - oh I don't know. I keep thinking of his embraces - I suppose he attracts me purely physically; he has from the moment I saw him at that concert they gave. I feel absolutely silly about him - in the evening I was riding about in Richard and Freddie's company and I saw him and nearly fell off in my excitement. But he ignored me completely - oh darling - why have I gone absolutely bats. He came to the Club in the evening but I didn't get back in time. A bit depressed.

Friday March 15th [1940]

Rather a doubtful day - I am still affected by this urgent physical yearning and longed to meet him all day. It went all night in a restless half sleep in which I could control my dreams. Consequently these dreams were very lovely and because I was asleep really, very real. Wouldn't he hoot if he knew - sweet! I don't think I've ever met anyone who attracted me so much all of a bang - its the little boy in him that does it - hidden under the husky exterior so that I feel at the same time weak and protective. I'm gibbering in true Daily Mirror style now - I'd marry him if I could and yet I know nothing about him - so much for glib theories.

Saturday March 16th [1940]

Spent a hectic morning arranging flowers - in a fluster and sweat by the time I went off to lunch with Maureen, arriving late. Yvonne was there - I can't get really enthusiastic about her any more - her exaggerated stories of conquests get me down and she's sublimely selfish. Maureen and I went off to a jumble sale and I bought one or two things including a divine yellow hat. Ronnie came back to tea and we played croquet after. We had a dinner party which was frightfully sticky I thought - and went on to "Goodbye Mr. Chips"²¹¹ This started very well but broke down half way through - felt rather depressed about whole thing.

Sunday March 17th [1940]

Nicholson crew came in the morning - had the usual party + usual crew. Brian was looking divine - but is Cynthia's own. Noreen was rather deserted - Eileen is making a bee-line for Dick. In the afternoon - after a late and hysterical lunch, and more hysteria afterwards, we played golf. Cynthia and Brian, Eileen and I with Dick and Desmond and Noreen walking round. I loathed every moment as my head was bursting and I was furious with Eileen for monopolizing Dick - she is an annoying creature on occasions. However met Boo-boo afterwards and I think he likes me - angel. Supper with Maureen - v. pleasant.

Monday March 18th [1940]

Played Mah Jong in the morning and lost steadily so didn't enjoy it as much as I could. Shows a nasty tendency that - still. Did nothing in the afternoon and enjoyed doing it quite a lot. Went down the bazaar and met ~~the Nicholsons~~ with Bubbles. Must arrange something with her I'm getting so darned slack these days. My whole mind is suffused with a suffocating springy, miserable happiness. I'm almost certain he likes me but to what extent I can't imagine and I don't see how one can know - crikey I feel 15 again.

Tuesday March 19th [1940]

Can't remember anything at all about this - I haven't written it for days because I feel there's so much to say and so little. In the evening went to a flick with Desmond and Worry. Feel rather repulsed by Desmond now and infinitely glad he's going. Fickle little beast that I am. I know I'm being hard and casual and horrible generally but I've got so much to put up with myself that I can't help causing other people a little hurt occasionally. If there was only someone I could talk to about everything - my leg and so on - instead of continually having to hide it and bottle myself up.

Wednesday March 20th [1940]

Played Mah Jong with Mrs Whiteside and Mrs Gardiner. She is a large, bold, downright woman who frightens the life out of me and definitely wears the trousers in that household. Quite enjoyable. Maureen and I went down to watch the polo at 4.30 and I enjoyed it, the South Lancs wives were there and seemed rather nice. Afterwards went to the Club and met Brian and Booboo (x) Went to dinner with Gillespies - others present were Bairds, Dixon and Burg-Morris²¹². Dinner was fun, and the party started off gloriously but Booboo went home and I felt so miserable I couldn't enjoy it any more. He does like me. I know it. Desmond was tiresome and I was horrible to him.

Thursday March 21st [1940]

Mrs Marshalls knitting party - actually yesterday. Rather fun - we all told hilarious stories about our underclothes and the embarrassing activities of same. Mrs Likeman particularly - did nothing in the afternoon - it's awful not being able to play any games. Met Booboo in the Club in the evening. It was full moon and Eileen and I sat on the steps and talked for ages - she is terribly easy to talk to as she is obviously terribly impressed by what I have to say. She and I are more or less the same as Maureen and I. Went into the Club and met Booboo and arranged to play golf. Dick asked Eileen to go to the Cinema in front of me - luckily I've got it so badly I didn't mind.

Friday March 22nd [1940]

Niall and M. came round for a bit. Mummy in bed with mild dysentery. Went to Eileen's for a bit - forgot I had arranged to go to Lillian. Wrote to Bubbles suggesting golf, - but she said she'd got Richard for tennis. However saw him playing golf. So have my suspicions. Played with Daddy and did not appreciate it - my golf gets steadily more appalling. Have told Maureen about Booboo now - I think she's a little supercilious. But no matter. I have a feeling my correspondence with her will be much easier to cope with than our friendship. Its an exhausting relationship - for me anyhow.

Saturday March 24th [error 23rd]

Haven't written this for weeks. Spent the morning domestically - arranging flowers etc. Felt pretty feeble and limp. Eileen and I went along for a golf lesson at 4.30 and she got on quite well but I was infinitely worse. Have no ability in any direction where games are concerned. Went beforehand to listen to Bruce's records and we get on awfully well in taste etc, tho' romantically he doesn't appeal to me at all. We arranged to go to a flick and after tea went off. Booboo turned up at the Club and I had to go off and leave him which just oh broke my heart. Also Thistleton-Dyer²¹³ who seems rather nice - I feel I could get to like him a lot if I was given the chance. Film "Zorina(?)" or something was a bit disappointing but I enjoyed it - Bruce also writes.

Sunday March 25th [error 24th]

Got up at 7 and went off to early service. It was a bit frightening as there were crowds of people and I had to walk the length of the aisle by myself. These things just sear me, and make me feel I'm at school again. Had a cheerful breakfast with N. and afterwards went on to service. Frightful energy but knew he'd be there. He took the parade afterwards. Went along to the Club and talked to Eileen for a bit. At 4.30 had a heavenly golf match with Booboo²¹⁴ and another South Lancs. He was adorable to me and I know has fallen a little bit. E. and I had supper with him and Richard and 2 others in the Club and went on to see the Marx Bros - all absolute heaven. A lovely Easter. Sailed exactly a year ago - Coo-ee!

Monday and Tuesday 25th and 26th [March 1940]

Rather hot, restless empty days. Played golf with M. but walked it and gave up after a bit. Had a drink with Ronnie Eileen etc. Did damn all the rest of the day except feel hot and long for him. Tuesday morning - oh I don't remember any of this. In the evening I know I went to supper with Maureen. It was an awful feeling that it was the last time - something in Maureen makes her so terribly lovable, even seeing her faults and drawbacks as I do. Our friendship is different to any I've experienced before. Ronnie came in after supper and we played the glass game - which I'm losing faith in.

Wednesday 27th [March 1940]

Played Mahjong in morning with Mrs Sumner²¹⁵, Mrs Lauder Oldfield and a Miss Mitchell who has come out to marry someone out here. She is a large, good-looking, quiet natural girl - very much a type of big-boned British femininity(sic). Looks a dear. He must be years older. Lost all time. Met Eric Raynor and arranged to go to the dance with him. In the late afternoon Mummy and I went to play croquet with Dolly Baird - all rather a fiasco as he was hours late - I walked it all. Went to dance in evening which was all quite enjoyable in a vague way. I simply haven't got anyone now. I wonder what it is that puts people off and if I'm so startlingly plain.

Thursday March 28th [1940]

Played Mah Jong with same crowd again and lost steadily all morning - horrible game. Got back to the Club to find Nicholson gang installed + boy friends - do dislike that Middleton guy. Maureen had been round with Broad²¹⁶ girl who is short, squat, red-faced, beetle-browed, tough and shy. Sounds awful but shes probably quite striking. In the afternoon M. called for me and we walked round the golf course with Ronnie and Niall. I rubbed both feet raw just to stop myself from enjoying it. Niall was looking very sweet and behaving it too - something is still left of that, some

faintly flickering ember that occasionally leaps into flame.

Up to there the day was lovely but onwards - desperate. Arrived at the Club to find that Niall wasn't coming to the cinema. His last night - the last time he'll see me - so much for my little dream. Oh Niall - maybe you haven't got my heart darling but you've got a large chunk of my mind and it hurts to have it squeezed dry and then thrown away like lemon rind! Didn't want to go but did - Ronnie, M. and I sat in one seat and I felt miserable and out of it. Didn't even enjoy the film - why is life one long goodbye and wrenching apart of ones dormant feelings to make one realise how dreadfully strong and enduring they are. My goodbye to Niall was short and firmly disinterested.

Friday March 29th [1940]

A day of packing and as such horrible. Went down to the Station with Mummy and Eileen and waited a long time on the Station feeling very hot and depressed. They eventually arrived - Maureen very lost and nervous and on the verge of tears. Niall with a forced tired smile on his face. Maureen nearly collapsed so we left and wound our hot and cheerless way home. "Packing is such sweet sorrow" - but where oh where is the sweetness? A wrenching away of something dear and necessary - something that no other person or thing can replace - that's how I felt it. That's what all partings are - the price one has to pay for knowing a person is the price of giving away part of oneself and being left with only an empty ache. I felt Niall's going more than I thought - he was my first real love, although that love didn't last. But it left a tenderness behind that nothing can mar. Maureen and her sweetness of course, are irreplaceable. In the evening Booboo came to dinner and afterwards we plus Mummy and Eileen and I ~~came~~ went to a concert given by the South Lincs. Booboo was very sweet and took no notice of Eileen which pleased me no end. He does like me, he likes me a lot, but in a funny sort of protective way. I think he's frightened of getting too mixed up in himself. Concert was quite good -

~~Friday~~ Saturday March 30th [1940]

Feeling the Bairds' departure badly. It's getting definitely hot now. The afternoons are sulky and horrible - wears one's temper and nerves. The Nicholsons came in the evening and had dinner with us - afterwards we joined a large Dogra party - at first I was terrified but it wasn't too bad - Brian was very drunk and very devoted to me - he is so darned attractive. I occasionally feel a stab of jealousy for Cynthia. But I never feel at ease with him - one has to keep up a swift flow of repartee and never relax and be serious and natural because my natural self is serious.

Sunday ~~March 30th~~ March 31st [1940]

A large drink party at Club given by Fullerton²¹⁷ - Cynthia told me her life history and proposals. Tony Brett was one of them - I felt a faintly ridiculous stab of jealousy. Hugh Lane²¹⁸ was another - most peculiar - don't think much of him. Tony is obviously the type to fall badly at first acquaintance and mean nothing.

Monday [April 1st. 1940]

Went to see Lilian in the morning. Most peculiar to walk into a Victorian house in India - v. pathetic old bird. Wonder what her past is. Must bring her and Ivy into a play. Played golf with Bubbles - great improvement in my game. Went to drinks with Bruce afterwards - it was quite enjoyable - Booboo was there but he went early and we came late so I hardly saw him. Somehow everything's changed since Niall left. Booboo doesn't mean as much. Can't see the connection but perhaps psychologically there is one. Arranged with Bruce to go tea tomorrow - he doesn't attract me at all - and yet I can see that he is attractive. I think it's because he is too much a woman's man - slightly self-conscious and knows too many of the answers.

Tuesday April 2nd [1940]

Played Mah Jong with Mrs Sumner - lost furiously as usual - get so utterly fed up which is bad. At lunch time Betty Broad ~~came round~~ rang up and so I had to put off Bruce in order to be in for her this evening. They came round at about 5. She is short and broad with lovely eyes - large and

grey with long black lashes and heavy brows. But is not really attractive. She looks too prim and schoolmarmish and does her hair in a bun and has no pretty mannerisms, everything about her is too cut and dried. A.D.C.²¹⁹ is a nice youth - not very attractive, has nothing much to say but says it at great length. Compared to the twins - oh well, oh hell! Bruce came round and met Booboo, Richard etc. in the Club. Richard is attractive in agey way - much too facile though - told me about his past affairs - sordid!

Wednesday April 3rd [1940]

Played golf with Bubbles. Eileen in bed so will probably have to put off tomorrow's golf - blast. Why tomorrows! Went out to drinks with Mrs Sumner, Dick, Jake, Mary Ann (Q.A.²²⁰) and Thistleton-Dyer were the others present. Latter was very agreeable but a little disappointing - anyway we went on to a flick and danced a bit and I arranged to play golf - he likes me but more from "heart's loneliness" than anything else I fancy. Dick was all over the nursing sister. Got rather a sweet letter from Niall, saying absolutely nothing - but a comforting thought that he wanted to write at all. Ended by "India decays many things. Don't let it destroy your sweetness." Which just exactly typifies his attitude to me!

Thursday April 4th [1940]

Mah Jong - Mrs Malmstrom²²¹. Eight females, none of whom could play golf, so I had to put it off - and died a mild death. Actually it isn't as bad as I imagined - anything like. Went to see Eileen who is in bed - went to drinks with the Lauries - but only stayed five minutes before rushing on to Bruce. He played me his gramophone and we discussed a lot of things. What is it about him I don't like - his rather slimy attitude towards women, as merely bodies for his pleasure. Perhaps - or perhaps his frankness where I'm concerned amounting to rudeness! He held my hand in the flick - "Stars Look Down"²²² - v. good.

Friday April 5th [1940]

Miss not having Maureen like anything. Specially in the mornings. Wrote to Thistleton-Dyer saying I would play golf, but felt horribly nervous. Packing feverishly for Naini - ugh! Still it's frantically hot. My golf started off stupendously but tailed off to nothing. He is a dear - very young and shy and lonely but has a nice sense of humour. Went back to the Club for drinks and there met Betty Broad - Teddy Humphries²²³ etc. Latter is devastatingly attractive - no end of poise etc. and seems more partial to me than previously. Richard was very cool and offhand - wonder why?

Saturday April 6th [1940]

A chaotic and upsetting day. Our tents were pulled down in the morning and spent the rest of the day in the Club. I'd arranged for Broad menage to play tennis with Bubbles and Richard and they turned up $\frac{3}{4}$ hour late. Bruce came round at about 5. I went home in Bubbles car to the Dak Bungalow, which is much cooler. After dinner Bruce came and picked me up in an old taxi and we trundled off to see "The Man they Couldn't Hang"²²⁴. Very gruesome but good film. He became quite romantic - kissed me goodbye, but even that failed to stir the slightest quiver. Our chemicals, not fusing properly perhaps!

Sunday April 7th [1940]

Was picked up by McLeans in the morning and taken to the Club. There to my extreme joy met Booboo and Brian (not so much joy over latter!) Booboo was looking divine in a blue shirt. However we didn't stay very long. In the evening I walked over to the Club and to my more extreme joy met Booboo again looking divine again in a white tussore²²⁵ coat. Sat with him and Pop Pearson, and later joined by Teddy, Richard and Mac. Teddy monopolised the whole conversation. He's almost too beautiful and stirs me not at all. Rode back through the dark lamplit star-filled night on Booboo's handlebars - bliss.

Monday April 8th [1940]

Mah Jong - Mrs Sumner. V. pleasant today as I won. Got a letter from Maureen - the second. Writes quite well but not outstandingly. They must be sailing in a day or two if they haven't gone already. Played golf with Bubbles. Actually only started but it was too steamily hot so we decided to bathe. Met Booboo outside and eventually went in with him and a crowd of others. I was the last, so was he (accident?) and we decided to go to the late Cinema. He drove me there after dinner and we saw lovely thing called "Fast and Furious"²²⁶. He's so difficult to get at and round and into. And I'm not as bad as I was.

Tuesday April 9th [1940]

Played Mah Jong with Mrs Bradbury. V. enjoyable Mrs Anderson and Crowle were others. The heat is indescribable - about 104° now. Went down to the swimming pool with Eileen. Hoped to see him but anyway enjoyed my swim. Spent the most awful night, didn't sleep till 4 or 5. Must write a short story called "Mosquitoes" - a night of heat and heartache with an eternal stream of mosquitoes until one watches the holes in the net with nervous horror and that funny buzzing close to ones ear symbolises all Torment and Horror.

Wednesday April 10th [1940]

Packing and muching[sic] around all morning. Terribly hot - had my hair done in evening which nearly killed me. Met various people at the Club, Brian among them. Had to rush off to change for the dance - didn't want to go but actually enjoyed it more than usual. We had a party which was quite a success for a change. Dick was terribly sweet - he talked to me a lot and quite sensibly - said he regarded me as a friend and could always talk to me about anything. Funny - men usually can - and so they don't want to be romantic. Booboo turned up, was adorable and danced only with me, and the way he says "Poor leetle Iris" - well! Wonder if he'll ever ~~right~~ write - don't believe he will somehow. Its his difference I like - I wonder if I've chased him!

NAINI TAL



Blyth cottage, Naini Tal

Thursday April 11th [1940]

A ghastly day - felt pretty lousy on the journey and nearly collapsed when I got here - at 3pm for lunch! It is a very sweet little house - but up a fierce hill. It will be lovely to have somewhere where one can sit and look into the sky's blue and the green tree-filled hill-tops and want no more. I do hope I enjoy this season. I'm dreading it but I think it will be better, because its a different crowd and they treat me as a grown-up in the most amazingly changed way. I do hope Dick, Brian etc. will take a little notice of me. I wish Tony Brett would come up - I've always had a feeling he might mean [few shorthand symbols] quite a good disguising.

Friday April 12th [1940]

A day of unpacking and rearranging. Mavis arrived in the evening - she is much thinner and really v. attractive. What love can do to one!

Saturday [April 13th 1940]

Had a long talk with Mavis in the afternoon - showed me all her letters some of which are very sweet. Berrie Osmaston writes her extraordinary letters - their relationship is peculiar but rather nice. She was terribly in love with him at one time - a mutual attraction. But he is tied to an awful woman - I wonder how many tragedies of that sort there are. "Whom God joineth together - ". What a farce. Mavis has reawakened my dormant feelings for Tony.

Sunday April 14th [1940]

Mavis and I wandered about - went to Chaillon Lodge and met John Buss²²⁷ - her flame. I think he's completely unattractive but probably v. nice. A peculiar voice which makes him sound superior. I've been hearing all sorts of peculiar things about Ronnie, and I've come to the conclusion that I dislike him intensely. He's a snaky, sexy, slimy specimen - so conceited it makes me utterly sick. His feelings for Maureen may have been real but they were probably only a vile sort of possessive animalness - inspired by her ingenuous, timid shrinking desirableness. Passion of the malest and muckiest type. Drink party at McCleans - Landers v. nice Ronnie there!

Monday April 15th [1940]

Started my shorthand [at YWCA - Young Women's Christian Association] - quite amusing but rather a strain getting there. The others are a rakish-looking collection of Anglo-Indians, but, as always, v. pleasant. Yvonne also frequents the place but is miles ahead of any of us.

Thursday April 25th [1940]

It is ten days since I wrote this - due to Naini atmosphere and loss of my fountain pen. I have been leading a pleasantly vague existence - playing golf and flicking with girl friends mostly and struggling with my shorthand. Have got to know Elaine Webster and Pat Bailey²²⁸ fairly well, both above the average in intelligence. My first party is at Chaillon Lodge this evening and I will duly record any matters of interest. Think it'll be deadly - Ronnie and Co.

Well, this Cocktail party, which I was in some faint way looking forward to, was only average and disappointing. The whole of the population of Naini was present, the rather frightening "Bright Young Married's" population. I don't know why, I just can't seem to connect with that type. They all despise me a bit and knowing that I get despicable. John Buss rather saved my life but I do think he's a silly affected little man. He talks such bilge and is over-affectionate, cuddling Mavis in public which is definitely bad form. Something about him is - well second rate. Drank half a cocktail and felt frightfully fuddled - kept a tight forced smile on my face while a row of shining masks blethered at me

Friday April 26th - Tuesday May 14th [1940]

A long, long time has elapsed since I last struggled with this journal. Nothing very much has happened that could be called definite, but inside I'm a seething mass of conflicting desires and hopes and disappointments. It all started on Tuesday last - exactly a week ago. We were in a party

with the McLeans and in the same party was Gerald Bray. He took absolutely no notice of me until $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way through the dance but eventually came up rather tentatively and asked me to dance. And then suddenly he decided he liked me, and we spent the rest of the evening in a huddle. He talked to me in the most marvellous way about everything. He discussed my sex-complex with me and I told him about John Hodgen - in fact I told him about practically everything because he knew it all already. I've never felt so strangely understood - the "dear acquaintance" one strives to find. He said he could fall in love with me - but of course he won't because he didn't mean it and there isn't a chance. He reminds me faintly of Peter Wimsey²²⁹ - an awful ass in many ways, but clever and polished and serious and comes out with many little French endearments. By the end of the evening I was in a complete state of commotion. He was so gentle and sweet and treated me like a child and yet at the same time very grown up.

He reminds me in some ways of Max de Winter²³⁰. But I'm not going to go confusing the issue and imagining I'm in love because somebody is sweet and attractive. What I feel for him is "the devotion to something afar from the sphere of our sorrow". He'll never have a chance to make love to me - I think if he did I should be carried right out into the middle of the storm and that would mean hell when it all collapsed. But anyhow its a wonderful experience to have known a mind like that and to have drawn a little of it into my own. I've only seen him once since that evening and he was just friendly but there was understanding behind his eyes. Why he should even like me I can't fathom - everyone simply chases him.

Billy is here now and seems to be enjoying life - sailing a lot. But he is still hopeless in company and fiercely critical of the "fun" and horseplay one indulges in at parties. However we ourselves get on much better and can discuss people freely and without restraint. But I wish he'd grow up and take an intelligent view of life and be gayer. I'm so much older than him in every way. Elaine Webster and I are very friendly just now - Eileen has Audrey Hungerford Jackson²³¹ to stay who is attractive. Alec is here also so they're all fixed up. George Boon also likes Eileen and Pat Bailey. Tony Brett has departed over-seas - I felt an awful shock but I knew it would happen.

Tuesday May 14th [1940]

We played rather feeble tennis in the afternoon - our own party at the Club. I played one set, but it was all rather feeble. John Henderson and Betty Broad were there, also Mrs Sumner, Ian Lauder and a Major Nicholson²³² - a very sweet person. Afterwards we toiled up the hill to drinks with the Farleys²³³ - arrived terribly late, but quite amusing. Mavis was there and various other bits and pieces including Maxwell. Didn't go to the dance - felt terribly keen to do so because of Gerald. We haven't been asked to do anything at Government House and everyone else has - I can't understand it - surely they're not going to leave us out altogether, The McLeans are so jolly smug about being asked - Eileen and Audrey in particular.

Oh Gerald - isn't this ever going to get any further - "its such a lovely start, I'm aching in my heart, What now?" He doesn't seem to want to go any further. I wonder in my blackest moments whether he meant what he said on that never-to-be-forgotten night. Perhaps he's one of those people who has to get everyone grovelling around his feet and doesn't mind what means he uses. At one party the other night he danced all evening at the Boat Club with a tall grey-haired female but he was looking at me and talked to me and I was watching his every movement. We've got a sort of understanding between us that nobody can mar or even touch. But perhaps I'm only being young and silly and he hasn't given me another thought.

To tell Maureen - Gerald Bray - Broads - Richard etc.

Wednesday 15th [May 1940]

A very ordinary day. Did my shorthand in the morning. I get on very well with the girls and I think they like me. They're so simple and natural. In the afternoon went to a dreary Guide tea at Mrs Cottons. Talked long and pointlessly to a nice girl on my right and ate nothing. Got away early and went for a short stagger with Mummy. Billy and Pat went sailing - I think he rather likes her and shes certainly very sweet. In the evening Mrs Sumner came to dinner and we played Mah Jong. It wasn't very thrilling - she was yawning most of the time and so were we all.

Relieved to get an invitation to the Matelots.

Thursday May 16th [1940]

Went for a picnic to the top of Lyria Kanta²³⁴. Rode up for a very late lunch and a lovely one. Lay in a heavy coma all afternoon, disturbed by Guy talking bilge. Eventually Mavis and I charged down the hill in front of everyone else and had tea at the Boat Club. We had a terrific discussion about love, marriage, ideals etc, She is terribly attractive physically - I think any attraction I have is entirely mental. Alan Coombes is up here - but he doesn't like me very much. He never has I fear - led on probably by Ronnie. Well that sort of thing doesn't disturb me overmuch. Dinner with Betty Broad.

Friday May 17th [1940]

Did my shorthand as usual. We are now on embracing terms which is highly encouraging. The progress of my shorthand is not so I've been asked to apply for a job which I have done but I am doubtful of results. I'd do anything to be independent and feel I was being more than just a burden. But perhaps this is being morbidly introspective. Gerald is more or less a beautiful memory - I see him occasionally looking devastatingly attractive, but I can't believe that I've even talked to him. He's taken me in, as I dare say he has scores of others. But somehow I can't give up hope - yet. Not until he goes to the plains again. Why is life so full of promise and so empty of fulfillment - my life anyhow.

Saturday May 18th [1940]

Had the most streaming cold and felt like murder. Pat, Margo and later Guy, came in the course of the morning. I didn't get a chance to even talk to Margo - not really talk. She seems a bit lost I don't know why. Pat is terribly sweet - she's like Betty in lots of ways - We laugh at the same things and she makes me want to laugh an awful lot. Guy asked me to sail and eventually stayed to lunch. He is really rather a pet - I enjoyed the sail immensely - tho' I got horribly tangled up and spent most of time scrambling out in perilous angles to unravel bits of rope. Guy is an extremely attractive young man - lots of poise and suavity. Lots of money too I should think but not spoilt by it.

Went out in the evening to the Cottons who had a private dance in their house. There were quite a lot of people - I wasn't very popular - but I got hold of one particular youth who was very attentive - by name Raymond Stanley. He is a rather ugly, silent but nice policeman. Six of us went on to the Boat Club. But this wasn't as much fun as I expected. Raymond seemed to be exhausted by that time, and Alec and Arthur Chitty²³⁵ weren't at all interested. Alec is jolly rude but in a sort of teasing way that one has to laugh at although one is seething inside. Arthur Chitty isn't at all my type - people who like me have got to be "deep" - ?!

Sunday May 19th [1940]

Felt absolutely hellish with a foul cold but stumbled down to the Boat House and knitted in company with various other females. Lala Pugh was there talking bilge as usual and vulgar bilge at that. Eileen was there - very smug. Oh I am a cad but I'm highly annoyed, because Alec has asked Billy to dine and dance at the Royal, not me, which I think is absolute incredible rudeness. I felt furiously angry but somehow not humiliated - he is a vile and revolting specimen - but darned talented with it all. Billy and I went sailing in the evening which was fun. Mavis and Pat came and played Mah-Jong - fun.

Monday May 20th [1940]

There was a terrific storm in the night, thunder crashing, lightening, and roaring rain. It was most impressive and very snug. My cold was greatly improved in the morning but still evident. Didn't go to my typing - played Mah Jong instead - Norah Crowdie²³⁶, Alice Bennets and Mrs Sumner. I enjoyed it and won Rs. 1.11. In the afternoon went to tea and tennis at Baileys. I actually didn't play in the end, nor did Pat. It was rather chilly but enjoyable. Stayed to dinner and went on to see

"Hunchback of Notre Dame"²³⁷. I simply loved it - very gruesome in parts. I like Pat more each time I see her.

Tuesday 21st [May 1940]

Went up to take the Wellesley Bluebirds in the afternoon - I've got about 50, very sweet but too much of a handful. They seem keen and enthusiastic and I love wielding authority over them. They seem to be swayed awfully easily, soft and pliable and over-affectionate. Got back and fell into a heap, watched Billy go off to the dance with absolutely no pangs and enjoyed an early and pyjama-clad dinner. I'd much rather do that than go to any dance - but for the hope of seeing him and also for the rather patronising scorn that other people pour on you if you're not seen about.

Wednesday May 22nd [1940]

Put off my golf with Maureen Anderson and was glad afterwards as Billy, Pat and I went sailing I adore being out on that lake with the sun in my eyes and the wind in my hair - like a bird "winging wildly over white orchards and dark green fields - On, on and out of sight - - - " My heart sings and so, rather less tunefully, do my lips. All petty worries blow off and there is nothing in life but a singing wind and a tugging rope, and the steady swish of cut water. In the evening we went to the Chalet in Guy's party - it was much better than I expected, and I enjoyed it better than any dance so far. Got on well with Edward Walker, Sam Kennedy came.

Thursday May 23rd [1940]

Rushed back from work to play Mah-Jong with Mrs Sumner and Eileen Lauder - quite fun but I lost heavily. After lunch slept the sleep of the dead. I didn't wake till 4.30. Always feel thoroughly fretful on these occasions. At about 6.30 went and changed for the moonlight picnic. Pat and Mavis joined me and we walked up the hill together - it was a stiff climb but lovely in the starlit coolness. Some chaos at the top about food, but eventually settled down to a lovely supper. Gorgeous sitting round a fire, with the fairy lights on the lake below and a full moon lolling about above.

Saturday June 1st [1940]

I really cannot be bothered to write up all these weeks - anyhow, nothing very much has happened. I've been rushing around with various girl friends and going to a few dances and being nearly a wallflower but not quite. I've seen Gerald at some of these dances and he's always been sweet but offhand. Last Wednesday I met him just as I was going away, and he put his arms round me and called me darling. But Margaret Sloane was there and he danced with her all evening and she was so darned possessive. I felt wild with a sort of hopeless jealousy - but he's given me a crumb of his great kindness. "And I took the crumb and behold it was the Lord's Supper". I have the most wonderful day-dreams about him - his presence is so comforting and at the same time so exciting - in my day-dreams! He has wakened in me something so lovely that I feel it can never have any expression or any fulfillment. All my latent devotion has just rushed out to greet him - but I don't think he wants it. My whole life is centred round him for the moment. Oh why aren't I tall and beautiful and desirable like him, so that he could love him. me. Perhaps he wouldn't anyhow - I could give him everything and be happy and not expect anything in return. So I have said about many others before him -

Apart from this internal upheaval I've made great friends with Pat Bailey and do practically everything with her. She is more my type than anyone I've met out here I think - we giggle at the same things and talk about poetry and religion, almost like Betty and I used to do. In fact shes more like Betty than anyone here - and she likes me too. Three girls, Pat Clyde²³⁸, Pat and I, rode out to Bowali²³⁹ the other day, and on to Sal-Tal to bathe. It was terribly hot but rather fun. Pat Clyde is quite nice but v. silent. The G.H.²⁴⁰ garden party was today - Gerald looking heavenly - he came up and said a few words to me. But he doesn't seem quite as fond as he used "Was it something said, something done" - - - talked to Margo - v. sweet.

Sunday June 2nd [1940]

A very empty and rather pointless day. I went to see Mrs Sumner in the morning plus her bag, but didn't stay very long. Then wandered down to the Boat Club and got all mixed up with a Forest and yachting crowd and so felt out of it. Eventually disentangled myself and sat with Eileen, Sam, Jean and Alan and met a fairly presentable young man whose name I don't even know. In the evening staggered up to church but got no benefit and had politics preached at me which was annoying but typical. Went in to see Likemans and then wandered back. Everything in a sort of waking dream of him - !

Monday June 3rd [1940]

Went to typing in the morning or rather shorthand - thank the Lord the original female has reappeared and we may learn something. Was prepared to do nothing all day but got a note from Pat asking me to tea so tottered along at 4.15. There was another and strange male there who took absolutely no notice of me so I didn't take to him too violently. Afterwards Pat and I wandered to the bazaar and ordered various things including a hat for me. Probably will turn out unspeakable. Went down to Boat Club after dinner and played Mah Jong. It was a bit boring and I'm always too tired to really concentrate. Eileen, Audrey and Jean (Cookson) Nicholson were 4.

Tuesday June 4th [1940]

Pouring with rain - it looks as if the monsoon had broken. Got a note from Gerald answering mine - felt sick with fright but Lady Hallett²⁴¹ will come. Perfectly ordinary letter, except ended "Lots of love" which I clung to like the proverbial straw. Oh hell - I know he doesn't care and yet he pretends to in a way, he loves keeping me chained and himself free. Didn't go to Guides, but sat sewing all afternoon instead. Also didn't go to the dance - the thought of missing Gerald hurt but otherwise I was quite relieved. I never really enjoy myself, my happiest moment is when they play "The King".

Wednesday June 5th [1940]

Staggered down to the knitting party as usual. It was pleasantly boring, and quite useless. Brig Vickers²⁴², Col Fullerton²⁴³ and Mrs Boyd came to lunch. It was ditto. Col Fullerton is very unhappy poor man - its awfully tragic his life, everyone seems to have some terrible burden to bear. Brig Vickers wife was drowned last year and Mrs Boyd lost her only son. It poured all afternoon but I went to the VAD²⁴⁴ lecture and tried to be efficient. My life is a bit futile - I never play any games, just go to classes and flicks and talk scandal. I'm not going to the dance tonight either - and this is the week. Not that I mind at all as I don't think he'll go.

Saturday June 29th [1940]

Weeks and weeks have gone by - weeks during which this diary has lain behind a box getting bent and battered and the world has got into a most awful mess. France has given way and now we're fighting the whole world and at fearful odds. Oh God, it'll be alright but I feel the dear familiar England of childhood has gone for ever and with it something dearer than one imagined. Air raids have nothing to do with it - its not material - but a beautiful untouched serenity that looked confidently and calmly forward to a world of dreams turned to reality. We're living through stirring, agonising times, but none of it touches us really here. And so none of it gets into this diary. I feel continually oppressed but not anything you could hold onto and pin down. I heard from Niall the other day - funny to think he could be anything important.

Gerald is now definitely a misinterpretation. He is absolutely taken up with various married women of low repute and takes no notice of me whatsoever. I can't help being wistfully adoring, but my dreams of him have died. I had a boy friend for a few days - John Radford - very sweet, but one of Mavis's cast-offs! We did a lot together and he gave me rather a half-hearted kiss - half-hearted on my part! But I haven't heard from him since he left and I don't think he really cared at all, and I never felt at all thrilled by his caresses, either in words or physically. I think it was because he was too sudden and not nearly reserved enough with other girls! I think if I'd really tried I could have

got him worked up to quite a pitch - an intelligent young man and very clever. Apart from this I have had no particular conquest - not much chance really. I have been to a fair amount of parties - in the last one I met a peculiar individual named Joey Fordham - apparently a gloriously immoral reputation and certainly a peculiarly persistent flirt. An ugly, comic clever little man, terrific clown, lively, intelligent and peculiar in every way - a "character". I've also got to know Berry Osmaston - rather a dear and also odd, very nervy and temperamental and moody and flirtatious physically. I'm worried about Mavis - I don't think shes in love with John. Isabel Fraser is now Mrs. Kewley²⁴⁵ - her wedding was nice, she looked sweet and he adorable. Pat and I are inseparable - she has woken up my whole life and I like her better than anyone I've met out here - even Margo who is sweet. We gave a Comic Dog Show which was I think a success. Apart from this - what? Just a lazy, fairly happy, restless life - waiting for Something I think - -

Sunday June 30th [1940]

I washed my hair in the morning but it as a damp misty day so I set off for Dwarhaston with it still wet. Went to Boat Club where I met two peculiar youths and on to lunch at Ingles²⁴⁶ This was fair, food bad as usual. Afterwards sat and discussed everyone. She manages to put my back up on every occasion. Then I walked to Boat House and after tea went to "First Love"²⁴⁷ - it was quite sweet but not as good as usual. Met the Websters and went back to dinner. Met a very sweet youth there - Richard McLinley²⁴⁸. He struck me rather particularly hard - can't think why. Actually I think he quite liked me - although I was looking hideous. He wasn't outstanding in any way - but sweet.

Sunday July 21st 1940

Another month nearly - but no matter. It is of the times that I suppose I ought to write - the most important in our history. But others will write of them and anyway I'm so out of it here that they hardly affect me. At the moment we are sitting waiting for Hitler's "Invasion of Britain". 360 people have been killed in Air Raids so far but over 200 of their planes downed.

My birthday to-morrow - And so for a little while reminiscing into my diary, I can relive a year. Looking back to this time last year, I seem to be seeing a different person altogether. Its funny, I've changed absolutely, and yet I've no idea where the change took place. Somewhere about Christmas I think, somewhere about the time I met John Harris. Or was it Tony who effected the change - darling Tony. I still think of him often and feel he could and perhaps will mean an awful lot. My friendships have been full and I've developed the knack for friendship which I used to lack badly. Cynthia, Eileen, Yvonne, Maureen, Mavis and of course Pat - All count me as their friends, as deep friends in some cases. Maureen is an entirely new venture in friendship - and Niall too in a way - purely platonic but real too. John Harris is quite an affinity - but I've had no love letters from anyone. Perhaps that'll come in time. Now that I'm going to be 18 - I won't be able to make excuses of youth to myself. All the contacts, all the conversations, the compliments, the caresses - where have they left me - the essential "me" that is alone in being different? Quite honestly I don't know. To outward view, I've improved 100%. But inside - yes inside too I think, because I'm not so introverted, and bitter. I'm a lot cleverer in the way I deal with people - I usually get round them. Oh I don't know - I don't know if I'm a nice person or nasty or characterless or popular or dull - but I do know that just at this moment I'm happy. And I also know that Time will take this moment from me and give me others of pain and others of more intense pleasure. And that, perhaps Shelley was right in saying "Naught will remain but Mutability". And now there is a fierce storm raging and a terrific beating of rain on the roves and livid purple lightning. And now 17 is at its last gasp. I'm sorry really. I'm so young for my age and so proud of being so old. This thunder rouses strange, inexplicable longings in me - half religious and sweet and yet sad. What is it that moves one, that tightens ones throat and quickens ones pulse in the fierce moods of seas and skies? It is a lovely night to say "Good bye" to 17, the most momentous year of my life. I'll send it out into the raging darkness from whence it came and where part of me will follow never to return - while rest snuggles into a warm bed.

Sunday July 28th [1940]

Patricia's birthday – 19th She was meant to be in Almora²⁴⁹, but went down with a temperature poor love. So is still here. The last week has been an age of experience and heart-ache. My birthday wasn't as happy as it might have been – I seem fated not to enjoy myself at birthdays. Spent a quiet very wet day until the evening when Pat Bailey, Cynthia and Pat, and the 2 Christophers came to dinner. Christopher Vesey²⁵⁰ was very nice to me at first but in the Cinema he suddenly turned away absolutely and spent the rest of the evening hanging round Pat, playing with her blatantly and ignoring me so utterly that I was sick and miserable inside and got duller and dumber as a result. I can't understand it "Something said, something done -?" Because I know before that he liked me best. At the end of the evening he slightly compensated by walking up arm in arm – but even then he was dying to push me into a dandy. I felt very cut up about the whole thing for several days – hoping to hear from him and dreading to hear Pat had. But I'm slowly recovering, slightly incredulous and sore still, but alright. I've quite got over Gerald, and don't mind at all if he comes up again or not. I took my Home Nursing Exam the other day and passed, but did very badly, which stung my pride a bit. I think I've made a slight hit with Michael Littlewood. Anyhow I'm dining with him to-morrow and will report progress.

August 1st Thursday [1940]

Monday I went out to dinner with Michael as arranged & enjoyed it a lot. We started off by discussing religion at great length – he is an intelligent youth & interesting. Why is it then – oh why – that I would rather talk rubbish to Christopher for five minutes? During dinner he told me masses of stories that I knew the end of & had to laugh gaily as if they were new & exciting to me! We went on to see "Honeymoon in Bali"²⁵¹ which was quite good. Michael practically broke down the Cinema, but didn't attempt to hold my hand or anything, which I appreciated. He is a dear, Michael & I think he likes me although not wildly. We got on well & feel comfortable together. But why - - -

Tuesday Pat came to lunch & we did some vague revision afterwards, but mostly talked bilge about men. I like talking to her more than anyone since Betty. We went down to the Boat House after tea & met the Ingles & Michael. The film was v. good, & afterwards Michael asked me to go to the Royal. I went, & haven't enjoyed myself so much for years. Everything went right, everyone was nice to me & I met lots of young men. The surprise of the evening was Wallace Rawlins who I met the other night. He asked me to dance at the end of the evening & then became frightfully intense & wanted to kiss me & was altogether peculiar. I think he must have been tight actually. I'm glad I didn't let him do anything.

Wednesday Spent the whole morning doing my 1st Aid. Took my Exam & got on quite well. Afterwards met Elaine & walked along with her to Boat House. Had tea with Marshalls, both very nice, & saw lots of young men wandering about. Went & had drinks with Sumners & two young men from Lincolns. Both nice & I enjoyed it.

Thursday Went to flick with Ingles & Michael – but it wasn't a very good film. Got a Sea Mail & a sweet letter from Niall. I think he likes me a lot in his platonic, manly, & comforting way. Dear Niall - - - Also letter & picture from Richard who got a distinction. I got one two for my 1st Aid – 91%.

Saturday August 3rd [1940]

Woke up with usual pleasant feeling of having nothing to do. Spent the morning playing Mah Jong with Sumner, Lauder & Mrs Tenoldale²⁵² – this latter is tallish looking female but nice. Cynthia came to lunch & we talked a lot of rubbish but I always enjoy it with her. We went for a stroll after tea, landing up at the Boat House for tea. Hoped to see "My" young men from the Lincolns but they weren't there. I think they quite like me really – in fact I actually think that Dick Griffin²⁵³ has fallen mildly. But then he'll probably turn off me onto Elaine or Pat before the weeks out. It always happens like that. In the evening masses of us went to the cinema & I enjoyed it like nohow. I was in terrific form & quite popular with everyone. Dick was sweet to me & I think really does like me – he

seemed to be looking at me most of the evening, although I only had one dance with him. But I also think t'other one was struck. This is probably all conceit & they are both unmoved but anyway I like to feel it! Elaine didn't win them over either which delighted me. I am getting more attractive I think. I'm going through a very happy time just now – what with Michael & these two. I'm dreading the reaction that's going to follow. Sinking into the abyss I fear. Pat & Christopher Burne²⁵⁴ are going the pace no end. I think he started it off as a mild flirtation but that he's been carried off into the midst of everything. Pat is pleased but penitent – Audrey's boy friend has gone.

Sunday August 4th [1940]

It poured most of the morning, but eventually Cynthia & I staggered down to the Boat House for the odd half hour. They weren't there so it was rather wasted. Athertons²⁵⁵, Mrs Hamilton & Gen: McRea came to lunch – quite cheerful, tho' I'm never really happy at these shows. Slept heavily after it till 5, when I got a rude awakening from Pat & we trailed off to church. I enjoyed it “the dim, religious light” always moves me in the evening & even Arch: Cotton's drear sermon didn't put me off. Went to dinner with Cynthia & usual crowd. Dick does love me – but so does “Tubby” & I like Dick. Saw “Golden Boy”²⁵⁶ & liked it a lot. Went onto Boat Club & had row with Mummy after.

Monday August 5th [1940]

I sailed with Michael in the afternoon & enjoyed it tho' I was very relieved to be in safely. He let me sail & we tore round doing hectic things. Michael bounding about like an elephant while I shouted hysterically that I didn't know what to do next. In the end we beat John Henry Sykes²⁵⁷ & so I was quite pleased with life. Michael was very sweet – I do like him awfully in a comfortable, friendly fashion that asks nothing & expects nothing. I think he feels much the same about me. I don't know what his sentiments about Yvonne are but – not romantic I'm sure. Saw Dick & Tubby but didn't speak to either – am going with with them to-morrow.

Tuesday August 6th [1940]

Toiled up to Bluebirds in the afternoon and quite enjoyed it. On the way back looked in on Mrs Webster. We had quite a long chat about people, and she's nice and intelligent and sympathetic. I do wish things were easier where these things were concerned. Mummy makes it so difficult. Why is there class and colour and snobbishness. Went to dinner with Dick and Tubby at Royal. Cynthia was there, also strange & silent Tarzan-like object who I had peculiar & difficult conversations with intermittently through the evening. Dick was a little bit disappointing & likewise Tubby. But I did enjoy it on the whole, specially snuggling with Tarzan. He rather fell for Yvonne. Most involved.

Wednesday August 7th [1940]

A wet day – I was feeling dead so slept for an hour in the afternoon before wending our way up to Sherwood College for one of Binns²⁵⁸ Binges. They're always terribly suburban shows & I feel vastly superior & young & charming – ridiculous! Pam Rogers was there – I don't like her so much as I did at first by any means. I feel she only cares if there's some man about who she can allure. Her technique is quite good – sort of elusive & temperamental. The show was quite good – mostly singing. When I got back I felt too tired to go to the flick with Dick & Tubby & wrote to them, getting a nice reply from Dick. I wanted to go – only ---

Thursday August 8th [1940]

Went to my Shorthand as usual, but Mrs Doran was taken ill so heaven alone knows how we shall get on without her. In the afternoon I sailed with Dick – having previously had lunch with Baileys. Mavis is back, looking happier I think and anyhow perfectly resigned. When I think of the heights to which marriage can and should take you – and how little she will reach them – it seems a shame. But unavoidable. I adored my sail with Dick, but I was a little bit hurt that he hadn't asked me to the dance to-day. Learnt later that Lala had asked them so felt better. But I do like him – not as much as Christopher – but I do like him.

Friday August 9th [1940]

It was pouring, so I missed my typing & asked Pat & Mavis to lunch. Spent a useless morning & they didn't arrive till one. Mavis is terribly vague & funny – but I do like her all the same. Pat stayed on & we went for a walk in the afternoon. It was lovely – cool & misty & fresh – and we talked about all sorts of things in our usual way – just like the walks Betty & I used to go at school. She's so like me that it's almost distressing but terribly comforting. It's heaven having somebody like that around. Went up to Binn's again for a debate which was quite amusing – felt patronising as ever!

Saturday August 10th [1940]

Played Mah Jong at Mrs Sumners & won. Felt a little bit upset again about the dance to-night but learnt that Yvonne had asked Dick – she is a cad, I'm sure she was determined to wrench him away & spoil my last evening. Anyhow It'll come back on her own head one of these days. It poured in the afternoon but I was determined not to miss our last sail. Tubby wasn't feeling well – I don't think he likes me very much on the whole. I think he's annoyed with me. The sail was absolute heaven – a roaring gale, drenching rain & bitterly cold but we won easily & afterwards drank rum in front of a fire & felt contented. Dick begged me to go to the dance but my pride held me back.

Sunday August 11th [1940]

A lovely clean sunny day – I went down to the Boat House & chattered to all the girls in Naini. Said good-bye to Dick & Tubby who didn't seem sorry to see me go. Damn - - - Went to lunch at Dwarhaston with Yvonne & Eileen. Got very annoyed at intervals – but it was pleasant on the whole. They're so bally cock-sure & smug & so soul-less. Stayed for tea & went along afterwards to Mrs Tenoldale to play Mah Jong. She's impossible looking but very witty & nice. Fourth was gaunt, bud-like female – also nice. Her husband is a pale, insignificant young man, terribly polite & correct in every way. Most peculiar couple.

Monday August 12th [1940]

It was another rather muggy wet day. Wrote a chit to Elaine asking her to tea & she eventually accepted. After tea we wandered down to the club to play badminton but she suddenly felt terribly shy & so we heat a hasty retreat. Tubby took her to the dance last night which was faintly annoying, tho' I was glad to hear that Dick sat & pined for me – at least gave a few signs of doing so. Eventually Elaine & I took a boat round the lake & enjoyed ourselves a lot more than we would have done scrambling for men! She's one of the most unusual people I've met – an unusual upbringing probably.

Tuesday August 13th [1940]

Maureen Anderson came to beef steak & kidney lunch. She's improved no end & talks quite a lot, tho what she actually says I don't know, because it never seems terribly constructive. We went off to our Bluebuds – I'm getting to dislike them more & more – not personally, but the effort of hailing up there & trying to be officious. Went into the Websters on way back & met Pamela Moss who is adorably pretty but rather too "sweet": & young. Funny – I used to hate being thought young, this time last year but I feel horribly superior now. Went to dinner with Stubb's & enjoyed it. They're such a contented couple with two sweet children – who wouldn't give up all the world for love.

Wednesday August 14th [1940]

Asked Pat to lunch and she came. But we were feeling difficult and don't think hit it off quite as well as usual. We sometimes feel so kindred its chattering – and then some sort of barrier comes up and one gropes and finds no entrance. She stayed to tea and we spent the afternoon discussing books, plays, etc – eventually relapsing into the usual "well he said to me", "Yes, aren't men funny". There's so much to talk about and yet, so terribly, pathetically little. Tony Lynch-Staunton²⁵⁹ came & fetched me to play badminton with Elaine & Maggey Moll²⁶⁰ & Pam Moss. Was a bit out of it I think.

Thursday August 15th [1940]

Promised to go to tea at Y.W.C.A. as it was Lena's birthday. She is a dear kid in every way & intelligent. Went back & eat tea in a sticky silence – At least I was chattering gaily but there was a terrifyingly polite atmosphere about. Afterwards watched a cinema show for a bit. Went to the Chalet in the evening – our party but Dutch²⁶¹ so a trifle embarrassing. I thoroughly enjoyed it – I thought Maggie Moll rather liked me but its probably a delusion as he also liked Pam Moss. Breaks²⁶² definitely likes me, but in a paternal way. Ended up in more or less of a drunken riot. Bit I was confident & happy.

Friday August 16th [1940]

Mrs Hamilton to lunch – amusing as usual – a dear but touchy I got the curse²⁶³ in the night so felt pretty rotten. But went down to sail with Breaks. At first he wouldn't take me out as it looked rough but soon gave in. We had a nice sail up the lake but coming back were completely becalmed & it started to drizzle. So we retired & drank rum. He is rather sweet, & likes me but only as a kid to be protected & teased. That's how I like it to be too. Went to watch the badminton for a bit but didn't feel up to competing for the attentions of Maggie Moll so left.

Saturday August 17th [1940]

Woke up with a cold and headache but played Mah Jong all morning. Felt pretty lousy Learnt that Breaks is married – got quite a shock & felt a little bit upset but very sorry for him. He must be unhappy – I wonder if they're separated or anything. Poor Sweet, no wonder he's a bit peculiar. Ian²⁶⁴ came to keep Eileen Lauder & Mrs Sumner company for lunch. I do adore him. Afterwards, feeling mouldy – I went to have my picture taken. Then fell into a hot deep sleep till 5. In the evening went to a party with Gen McRea & Bill B. Quite fun – All old men tho'. Maggie was there but not in our party – also Breaks. It was just a little bit dull.

Sunday August 18th [1940]

Sailed with John Stubbs²⁶⁵ in the morning. It was a dreary day – dead calm & drizzling. But I enjoyed it as we talked a lot and didn't worry much about being last. In the Boat House afterwards met a ravishing young man but hardly had time to say anything to him. I didn't go to drinks with Lauders, but lunch with the Baileys instead. Spent a lazy & liverish afternoon talking and knitting & feeling runny & miserable. After tea dragged Pat out for a walk. We wandered along in the mist, talking desultorily, singing & gradually feeling better & happy. It was dark by the time we got back but we both felt pleased with life.

Monday August 19th [1940]

A horrid day. I spent the whole of it indoors with a cold & got frowsier & frowsier. My pictures came and one is quite sweet – better than I expected anyhow.



Tuesday August 20th – Tuesday Sept 3rd [1940]

What a long, long time and how very eventful. I don't know why I couldn't pluck up courage to write before – now its almost overwhelming and I don't feel capable of coping. It's the people who've been up here who are so amazing and nice and annoying and amusing and altogether upsetting. The two chief ones were Bosun²⁶⁶ and Maggie Moll, and I've also fallen desperately in love with a married man by the name of Parbery.²⁶⁷ This latter has really engrossed me more than anything else – so like my Gerald affair that I becomes pathetic. All based on physical attraction and one moment of Semi-Coma. It was like this – Pat & I went to a Chalet dance with Maggie & Bosun & they forced champagne on us which was my undoing. Pat was getting more attention, I felt drowsy & odd, & Parbery was sweet to me. That's all there was to it – but the stars shouted & chased each other around the sky & there was no end or beginning to things. We sat on a step together & he stroked my hand & kissed me, gently, & then we went back to where everyone was staring & smiling. And he probably forgot everything – but I had a new bursting feeling inside that not even the effects of champagne could smother. Why must I respond so passionately to the wrong people – its maddening and inevitable. He's started the same flow in me and it'll run miserably for a bit and end up somewhere as a trickle of hopelessness and despair. He goes down to-day – oh damn. Oh darling!

Otherwise its been All Bosun and Maggie. Bosun is odd – sometimes I think he likes me best and then he turns off completely onto Pat and so it goes on. He's rather crude & peculiar – Maggie is definitely nice, but has no particular feelings for me, tho' we lay on some stairs for ages one night. I've been behaving rather oddly latterly, whether I've been gay and daring and modern or just cheap and shoddy I'm not sure. Its very difficult. I think drink has been my downfall and will always be. Most trying – but Pat is even worse than me. For the last fortnight I've been staying with the

Baileys and loving every moment. The house is full of beds to lie on & chuck about lots of confidences. When we're not doing anything else we play golf in the evening & come back for coffee & a talk in the front of the fire. From there to steaming baths & dinner – and so to bed. A happy routine & a friendly one. Pat & I had long conversations about nothing in particular & went out to all the dances. I think she eventually wrenched all my boy friends from me – Bosun in particular. I don't know where I go wrong – but I can't keep my grip at all. Pamela Moss, the loveliest girl of us all, doesn't seem to be so devastatingly infallible after all which is a slight compensation.

I think the reaction for all this gaiety is swift approaching – I'm not going to enjoy the September season at all probably. And then Bareilly and similar agonies down there – Oh hell why aren't I lovely or an idiot or buried in Scotland. I heard from Maureen & she seems to be living a pretty lonely life – but I'd do anything to join her in the drizel[sic] of Elgin I think absence has made Nialls heart grow fonder.

At the moment my day dreams are back where they started from – Michael H.²⁶⁸ I always feel, at the back of my mind, that he is what I want and the others are only to pass the time. Its peculiar tho' how only one day with him has lasted nearly 2 years and how I always run back to him when I am sick and tired of shallow pretences. Something at the back of my mind tells me that he is the real thing and that we will find each other. But the next thing I shall hear is that he is married and so it goes on! Oh Michael darling wait for me – Mummy and Robert²⁶⁹ have arrived – R. is as peculiar looking as ever but very sweet and good – will be nice to have about.

Thursday Sept 12th [1940]

Went to my Shorthand. According to the dame we are now doing 100 words per min: but I cant say I believe her. In the late morning Pat came along & eventually stayed to lunch. It looked murky so we didn't play tennis with Mosses as arranged, but Mah Jong instead. The room was very hot & there was a lot of singing & shouting & my head nearly burst by the end. However all quite amusing in a childish way.

Friday 13th [September 1940]

A dull but pleasant day – I went out in the afternoon & weighed myself – it was a nasty moment. So I went to the Websters to take some of it off.

Saturday Sept. 14th [1940]

I washed my hair in the morning & sat in the shady sunshine to get it dry – the hours & procession of clouds through which an indignant sun burst at intervals. I am now reading the "Thinking Reed" by Rebecca West. It is very good style but I am a little disappointed – her short stories are better. In the afternoon Pat, Pam & I went to tea with Cynthia & afterwards played tennis at the Club. I was in much better form & really not playing badly. I feel there's a lot of potential talent in me, but it never becomes real talent. Went to bed early & felt relieved to do so.

Sunday Sept 15th [1940]

Oh glory, its all started again – and with somebody I don't want. I met him at the Boat House this morning for about two minutes and he took my address – a blonde Tibetan Cave Man, short and flirtatious. I went back to lunch with the Baileys & after a pleasant innocuous afternoon I came back to domestic comfort at home. This was rudely disturbed, however, by aforementioned Tarzan who asked me to dinner and the Cinema. He behaved extraordinarily in the Cinema, on a Sofa – quite revolting in fact. And on the way back told me horrid lurid stories about all the women he'd slept with and the pros and cons of the whole subject. I wouldn't let him kiss me – nasty man!

Monday Sept 16th [1940]

Wrote to Cynthia to come & see me in the morning – duly recounted my last night's adventures to her & she was duly impressed! Went up to fetch Robert in the afternoon & spent the evening wandering round shopping with Cynthia. Eventually landed up at Audreys & McLeans – Eileen is looking pale & interesting.

Tuesday Sept 17th [1940]

Pat, Polly Moss & Mrs Maloney came to lunch & we were girlish & hysterical for some time & then went off to Bluebirds. Here we laboured heavily with folk Dancing for some time. I went to the dance with Audrey and her boy friends, both very sweet. My one was very ugly but amusing & fairly sophisticated. Enjoyed it. Tuppence was getting off with the Tibetan – I wish her joy.

Wednesday Sept 18th [1940]

Cynthia came to lunch and we spent several hours discussing nothing in particular. She seems very much in love – it's a childish simple sort of love that only asks for companionship. But I suppose that's as good as any. I wonder if I shall have to be content with that or if I shall get my "Precious Bane".

Thursday Sept. 19th [1940]

Trekked up to see Cherry Vincent in the morning – a vast, terrifying, sophisticated girl who is rather an outcast here. I like her in a way – I only wish I knew how much of what she said was true. She talks better than any other girl. She is the essence of emotionalism – can't decide. I wish I was a better judge of character. I wish I could say – "that's a worthwhile person" directly I met them – and keep to it. I see every side so clearly and consequently dither until the emotional side decides whether affection is going to be poured out or withheld. The party for the evening was put off. I went to lunch with Baileys & messed about there all afternoon. Then tottered down shopping with Cynthia & drank coffee in a pitch dark Boat H with the rain pouring down outside & a dim, magical sense of security all round. She is just beginning to realise the full significance of marriage – and feeling a little bit overawed and nervous. I would have thought of that from the very first, but her mind is so much simpler, purer. I don't think she'll be a very passionate wife but perhaps Pat wont mind that. Oh I want so much from marriage, I know I'll be bitterly disappointed.

Wednesday Sept 25th [1940]

I am lying in bed in a blouse & vest, propping this diary against scarlet-blanketed knees, & feeling like death. The wireless is blaring discordantly in the next room & Soley is heavy on my legs. My head & tummy are revolving slowly & monotonously & the future looks grim & blank & pointless. A lot has happened since I last wrote this which I will try to summon sufficient strength to describe. But just for now, just until my bath is ready & my pillows straightened, just while all hell is expressed in an aching elbow & crumbs under my neck, I shall not attempt anything so strenuous. "Gussel tai, Miss Sahib"²⁷⁰.

I feel ever so much better now! I had a bath & ate an egg & some baked custard & can face the future & the past, with fortitude.

Last week end Sept.20 General Macrae drove me down to Lucknow for Margo Boyds wedding. We started at 9 in the morning & arrived at 5.30. A thoroughly tedious journey but he was very sweet. We went to the Boyds first, & were introduced to Bridegroom²⁷¹ & Bestman. Former is very sweet, tall & fair & good-looking – rather shy & simple. Latter small & dark & ordinary – anyway engaged. I was driven to Bishop's house – a vast place, like a Mogul Palace, but they themselves tiny & homely²⁷². They're like a couple of apples, she a rather pathetic withered little crab-apple, he a smooth, round rosy pippin! I had a long tepid bath which was very refreshing & then changed. I dripped profusely meanwhile & felt lost & nervous. The Boyds had a dinner party which I didn't enjoy terribly – I was clouded with heat & fatigue Margo was definitely cold & all over Sarah which made me miserable. She has a stupefying effect on me, though I adore her. Probably because she just caught me at a bad age.

The next morning I potted round looking at zoos & making polite conversation & in the afternoon read a book about a plain Victorian girl who finds her heart's desire in the clerical profession. Fairly alright.

The wedding was lovely – the fans whining, the church full of flowers & everything softly lamp-lit. A quiet, stirring, scented atmosphere, & Margo was looking beautiful. The reception afterwards was hellishly hot & the fans receding as you approached them. I hardly had a chance to talk to

Margo but she looked radiant & I'm very confident about her future. Sarah Macqueen gave a vast party that night – rather frightening, as they were oldish married people, all terribly nice, but Civil. The next day we motored back – terribly tiring & I felt like death.

Tuesday 24th [September 1940]

Mavis's wedding day.²⁷³ The Birthday of her life – I wonder. Spent the morning at Aidwell, trying to be Useful, most of my efforts falling rather flat! After a bouffet[sic] lunch we went up to change, my tummy revolving slowly. I hope to god I don't limp or trip or otherwise exhibit myself. The dresses looked adorable really only were embarrassingly long. We minced up the aisle in fairly good form, but there was confusion on the altar steps and we all railed off much too soon. Consequently there was nobody to give the wretched girl away & the Best Man only rushed back to hurl the ring at the last moment! Everyone was very complimentary, & Pat certainly did look sweet though I'm not so sure about myself! Mavis was fairly calm – I don't know what she was feeling, happiness or fright or just nothingness. She looked very sweet. After the whole thing was over I was so tired I could hardly think – but had to go out with the Best Man. This is Bill Howson²⁷⁴, a small, dark, hairy object, brilliant at games but not very likeable. Dances beautifully, but is rather silly, conceited empty & rude. Pat didn't come owing to confusion & I left early. With a little... [nothing more]

Monday 30th September [1940]

The Ramsay²⁷⁵ Ball. A rather dreaded day in a way. Went to Shorthand in the morning and afterwards took Robert for a ride. In the afternoon Pat & I went to see a matinee of Louis Pasteur²⁷⁶. We joined Mrs Clark, Ivan & Pam Moss. This is the latest family who have burst in on our horizon. Absolutely marvellous. Mrs C is a rather battered looking female, young to have grown up sons, vague but amusing. She writes & does wonderful treks & thinks about things and I adore her altogether. Ivan, her son, I'm also mad about. He's rather good looking, charming, voice and the most beautiful manners & friendly good-will with everyone. Unfortunately he's very much in love with P. Moss. I could fall so badly, but I'm not letting myself. Oh why is she so dreamily lovely – it isn't fair. I have as much right to be, more really. Perhaps I shall be glad I'm just me one day. The Ramsay Ball was actually fine – and I held my own quite well, though of course Ivan danced nearly every one with Pam. I do adore him so, he was sweet to me all evening, as to everyone. Brian got tight very quickly & took on Pat & me in turn. Michael & Elaine had a quarrel of some sort. I rather like him, but he gets on her nerves apparently. Geoffrey Haig²⁷⁷ swam in & out of our party & danced with most of us in turn. He's very sweet. After the dance was over we tottered off & raided the Bailey house for food. Eventually concocted strange & indigestible meal. By this time I was dead to the world & wanting Ivan terribly. But there's no hope there so blot out his name then, record one lost soul more! His mother asked me to stay in Jubbulpore²⁷⁸ so I shall always be able to keep in touch.

Thursday October 3rd [1940]

I'm feeling utterly and absolutely miserable – a deep, choking sort of unhappiness that has arisen out of nothing and will go back there leaving one more tiny scar that will make up the general wound. Why must it flood over me in sickening waves, this unknown terrifying sorrow that is a part of everything, yesterdays griefs and to-morrow's loneliness and the illimitable unending misery that is sweeping homeless round the world seeking a resting-place. Perhaps it's the unanswered prayers, the unfulfilled dreams, of countless generations that are doomed to wander and torment us – this is getting incredibly whimsical and Barryish²⁷⁹. Oh but I am feeling unhappy. I came in from the cinema and laid my head down and cried. There is absolutely nothing to look forward to and nothing to look back on. Just nothing all round. Pat is a bit disappointing just for the present. Bosun was up to-day but doesn't care a bit for me, which doesn't worry me.

Sunday October 5th [6th 1940]

The angels are singing again and the stars are bright and there's a new Moon. The cause of this is a

strong silent man from the frontier, who entered my life yesterday. Bosun brought him up for the night and we dined and had a party and danced at the Chalet afterwards. His name is Donald Macfarlane²⁸⁰ – young and brown with dusty fair hair and very silent and sweet. He laughs easily and draws well and dances adorably. That’s all I know about him so far, but he did like me, in spite of P. Moss being there and he was so boyish and keen. He took me home and that hill has never seemed so short with my arm through his and the sky bursting with stars. It was a lovely evening altogether as everyone was nice to me, including Bosun.

Monday October 6th [7th 1940]

Felt lousy after yesterday – this diary seems to have got one day behind. Yesterday we took breakfast up Cheena, had a huge lunch with General Macrae at the Boat House, slept there on sofas and then went to a flick. Breakfast was rather a dream – the snows crystal clear. Susan Marshall came too and I’ve taken a great fancy to her. I hope she likes me. We only got back just in time and M and D were both very late for the lunch. M was guest of honour too! I sat between John Henry²⁸¹ and Richardson – it wasn’t bad. Felt too sleepy to think afterwards so put off tennis and Elaine and P.Moss came to tea. We’re a very happy little group – I’m awfully happy. The flick was mediocre. To-day I’ve got a head - - [unfinished]

Friday October 18th [1940]

Posterity will be deprived of that last interesting sentence and of several weeks in between since it was written. A pity I can’t be more consistent in writing this but there is an awful lot of waste days lying about. There “are” I think I should say but no matter. Since I last wrote this nothing of any importance has happened. I haven’t been feeling well on and off, and I’ve been spending most of my time doing shorthand. Perhaps I’ll pass but its going to be touch and go. Pat and I rode to Bowali for breakfast the other day, and spent a long lovely day lying in the sun eating chocolate and talking airily about life. Such days are precious and rare, but they do come and leave a fragrance behind. Sometimes, at these times, one reaches the “cloud-capped towers” and roams round the “gorgeous palaces” and the memory of it is sweet and lasting. I’ve seen the film “Rebecca”²⁸² and simply adored it – it is almost but not quite as good as the book. Laurence Olivier as Maxim with pale grey hair was devastating and made me long, as so often before for a man older than me and terribly terribly understanding. Yesterday morning John Gielgud gave a talk which was very thrilling – all about his theatre work in war-time and bunging in bits out of speeches. It took me back more than anything else has done and started the old flow of feeling! Bother, I’m working myself up into a temper and I don’t want to. Its so seldom now that we have those miserable rows in the family that used to tear the heart out of me, but just now, in the last 5 minutes, Mummy has been getting on my nerves and I feel blood-thirsty. I expect she reads this diary regularly and I hope this pleases her. I am a foul character I really am, its being borne in upon me more and more and I really cant see how people even put up with me, let alone like me. I sulk and grumble and mope all day and get hurt and uppish so easily and above all I’m supremely selfish. Nothing matters except my happiness – that’s true.

This bilge is all written to use a new and fascinating pen.

Monday 21st October [1940]

The desolation has crept in on me again and flooded out everything but an endless misery. This black and bottomless pit is becoming quite familiar. I don’t know what caused it except weariness and liver but I cried with throat-aching tears and am just beginning to recover. If only, for one blessed moment, I could be real and utterly myself instead of acting a continual part and getting outside myself as an interested spectator. I wonder if I’ve got any real feelings or beliefs – even in these tormenting moods I see myself as being “unusual” artistic temperament etc. I’m beginning to wonder if I shall be able to love whole heartedly – what does it matter anyhow.



Donald Macfarlane (Mac) in the uniform of the 4th Bombay Grenadiers

BAREILLY



Monday 28th October [1940]

Just a week – who knows how the world can open up in a week to shower riches on a bent head? Terribly dramatic, but that’s how I feel. We came down here on Saturday – thoroughly hot and difficult day altogether. We all squashed up in a lorry in hot, sore-throated huddle and didn’t arrive till about 5. The bungalow is a palatial place with a separate sitting room for me – rather heaven. The world lit up by getting a note from Pat asking me to go to a picnic to-morrow evening with Donald Macfarlane etc. he’s still rather dear though its difficult to really remember every little thing.

Sunday. Bailey’s came round in the morning and Joan Davis who said on entering “You don’t think these dogs will nip me in the bud, do you?” !! Apparently Donald M. hasn’t got off with P. Moss or anyone and is fairly faithful. I slept disjointedly in the afternoon and during tea Yvonne turned up and seemed a bit disgruntled with life in general. However I had to go off to the picnic and left her standing. From then on it was pure bliss, unalloyed and perfect. I had looked forward to it so much that I thought I was bound to be disappointed – but it was lovely beyond belief. We went off in two Cars – Bosun and Pat in one, Macfarlane, P. Moss and a rather sweet little man called Bottle. Polly insisted on sitting in front with Mac but I didn’t mind because I felt he was more mine than anyone’s. We settled down by the river, lying in front of the fire and listening to the gramophones, the stars flickering out one by one. It was lovely. Then we had dinner and afterwards we lay on our tummies and the night with its glamour closed in and flowed through us. Mac put his arm round me and I lay with my head on his shoulder and he kissed me – “Enough for Enchantment” – too much I fear. It was so beautiful, apart from anything I’ve felt before – different and sweet.

Monday. Rather a disappointing day. Pat spent most of the day with me. We talked a lot about Mac which has filled me with a longing for him. We saw him too, and I was suddenly overcome and was rather rude and abrupt. But he was shy too and I now feel rather miserable, afraid that I may have spoilt everything. Oh damn – God, don’t let me spoil everything now please. I’m falling, I feel – Oh I don’t want to – and yet - - - Its so silly to fall at the slightest encouragement with heart-break to follow. But I liked his kisses and I felt so utterly contented and peaceful with him last night. Was it only enchantment, or the drawing aside of the veil?

Tuesday 29th [October 1940]

Another empty day of waiting and wanting. Pat and I went for a ride early in the morning – it was rather fun, only I was a bit nervous at first because they bolted with us across the maidan and I was sure I was going to fall off. However I didn't and it was rather fun, specially the healthy hearty feeling I had after. Went to breakfast with Baileys and Pat and read poetry for an hour before going shopping. In the afternoon Pat, Polly and I went to play tennis with Yvonne who never turned up, so we played with Bill Berridge and I loved it. Very hot and rather dark. Afterwards sat in the Club for hours, and he was there and I felt unhappy and happy and generally in a turmoil.

Wednesday 30th [October 1940]

The waiting and wanting a little bit fulfilled. I can't believe its true that this things happening to me – perhaps it isn't. "This strange love, full of dread, beyond recall" – is it going to sweep over My land and sea? And do I want it to? Oh it's a hideous problem but a rather lovely one. In the evening we went to the cocktail Dance and "he" was there and danced a lot with me. Bosun says he's in love with me, which upset me – I don't know if it's true – but it was wrong of him to tell me anyhow, because it isn't fair on Mac. I wish there didn't always come a time when one had to choose – and hurt somebody. I hope it won't come yet for me, perhaps it won't ever. But this is different to anything I've experienced before. Chiefly, I think, because words don't come into it at all – there's an electric current between us, so I know that he's feeling what I'm feeling, sort of radiating those feelings to me. When we talk its all trifling and unimportant – "Words are but the trappings of content." But we have a sort of language I think. I'm not going to think Myself into being in love, that's definite. If its going to come it will, in its own time. And it'll be lovelier for waiting. He drove me home after the dance. And though I made all sorts of resolutions I couldn't keep any of them and I did love his kisses.

Friday November 1st [1940]

Yesterday we went to Budann for the day. It was hot and sticky but pleasant. Started at 9 and spent an hour on the road-side with Joanie Davis. She is most amusing and really not at all vacant – in fact extremely intelligent and arty and amazingly witty. A very odd character. We had a nice lunch at Budann with the Nicholsons and sat about afterwards in a hot coma, appalled by the suggestion made by Mrs N. that we would shoot partridges! Got back to the Bailey's for tea and then strolled across the Maidan to our house. Rubbed my feet raw. To-day has been pleasantly empty – met Mac this morning which was rather overpowering. Baileys and Bill Berridge came to dinner and it was pleasant.

Saturday Nov. 2nd [1940]

Rode as usual at 7. It's perfectly blissful then, everything wrapped in a smoky warmth and sweetness that soon wears off. Spent the morning, after breakfast with Baileys, messing about reading, writing and cooking things for Mummy. After lunch I slept the sleep of the dead and after tea went round to see the Macleans and Yvonne. Both she and Eileen are so futile really. Pat's completely spoilt me for anyone else. Mac and Bosun and she came round after dinner and took me to the dance. It was all fun and Bosun particularly was nice. And not at all drunk. He and Pat retired to the car while Mac and I wandered vaguely round the club grounds hand in hand. It was lovely – only something lacking.

Sunday Nov. 3rd [1940]

Slept late and at 12 Mac and Bosun came round to fetch me, Eileen and Yvonne. We all went to the club and drank and arranged to go to a flick. Mac looked adorable in a grey shirt. He is so incredibly nice looking – all brown and gold like honey – with a smile that tears the heart out of me. "We all want our ration of flowery passion. But that isn't marriage My Child" – so true! Went to quite funny flick in the evening and trailed back to dinner with Baileys. Bosun was nice again. And Mac very shy. I got out of the car quickly so he couldn't kiss me – don't know why.

Letter from Mac, dated Nov. 5th 1940, from Tenth Battalion

Dear Tottie,

Many thanks indeed for your chit. Bosun and I should love to come – Only one snag. Bosun has had his marching orders but is not quite certain when he is going. Anyway he will come if he can. I shall be there anyway.

Re the car, really Tottie, you know me better than that. I would drive you there back and there again if you wanted to!! So forget all about that.

I noticed you didn't go chasing paper this morning. Bad little girl. You should have gone. Good fun.

Shall probably see you some time this week and we can arrange about Sunday. If you can come down to the club this evening about 6 pm or before I can always take you back. We could make arrangements.

Yours. Mac

P.S. Played polo yesterday and can hardly walk today.

Tuesday Nov. 12th [1940]

As usual events have rushed ahead and there are no words. The last week or ten days has been beautifully peaceful and yet quite full. I spend long happy messing-about mornings and sleep till tea-time. Then I usually go out to tea or have someone here or go for a walk or something. And nearly always have an early and sleep-filled night. Of course it varies – I see Bosun and Mac quite a lot and they sometimes take me out in the car and I go out to one or two dances. But on the whole it hasn't been hectic at all and I'm glad.

I haven't got much further about Mac. He fills my thoughts and feelings most of [the] day, but is that only wishful thinking? Last week-end he and Bosun and I went out to shoot with the Nicholsons. It wasn't much of a success really, but lovely for Mac and me in parts. The first evening after dinner we went for a walk along sandy, moon-washed paths with the rushes tall and black on either side. We talked a fair amount and seemed to get a bit nearer, tho' words don't come easily to him. I'm glad really – he said more with his kisses and everything in me ran out to meet and greet him. No past, no future – just Now.

Friday Nov. 15th [1940]

Still haven't got any further – except that he's told me he loves me. But I only said "No" feebly and haven't referred to it again. But we can't keep at this stage for long. Yesterday was an important day. We rode in the morning and stayed out quite late. Then he had breakfast here and afterwards came and listened to the gramophone. It was so lovely and peaceful and homely and at the same time there was electricity in the air. If only I could get him to talk a little more about himself and his feelings, then I could decide if our interests were in common. He loves poetry and painting and that's really all I have to go on. On Wednesday we had a party for the Cocktail Dance and I was wildly jealous because he danced twice running with Bubbles. But I don't think he minds much who I dance with. The night before we also had a binge, dinner here and a flick. It is blissful agony sitting on a sofa with him, he holds my hand very tight and – oh well its no good explaining these things "Thus hand in hand and toe to toe Reel after reel we sat, You are not old enough to know the ecstasy of that"!! I want to marry him because physically I know we could reach the heights. But that isn't enough and the other side does matter and oh oh OH what am I to do?

Tuesday Nov. 19th [1940]

I'm completely exhausted by all the emotional crises and heart-to-heart talks I've been through in the last few days. I enjoy it all but long sometimes to lie for a long time by a stream in England and hear the rooks and feel moss and smell clover. On Saturday I went to a party with the Leonards which was lovely but involved. All the young Jats were there, and Sidney Plew and Ian Alexander²⁸³, P. Moss, Gunnings²⁸⁴, Dempseys and a few other bits. The Gunnings are a quaint couple, she is very young, rather attractive, but never stops talking for one moment, and most of its repetition. She told me her whole life history during supper. He is large, and bald though only 33 or

something. But I liked him, we talked about history etc.

It was Bosun's last night and I felt miserable. He's never been so nice, and completely sober. We sat at the bar and discussed religion and the next world and love and Mac quite a lot. I could really explain the situation fully and not be afraid he'd laugh at me. And then suddenly we started talking about my leg and I wanted to cry and damn nearly did. But he was terribly sweet – he said he didn't know till he was told – and that it didn't matter at all. But how can he, or anyone else, understand that it's made me what I am – sensitive to the point of lunacy and moody and sullen. He said Mac wouldn't mind – darling Mac. He is sweet, and when I dance with him everything swims in a lovely happy haze, but is this love? I've drove out in the car and he explained how he felt and asked me to think. Oh darling.

Letter from Mac to Iris on 4 BOMBAY GRENADIERS, IX JAT REGIMENT, TENTH BATTALION notepaper:

27 November 1940

My dear,

I meant to ask you yesterday but would you and Susan like to go to the cocktail Dance this evening.

I shall call round any time. By the way would your Mother like to come. Ask her will you please.

All my love, Mac

Thursday Nov 28th [1940]

Only a week and I feel as if I've gone through a lifetime of experience. I got in a ghastly muddle at the beginning of the week. One night when we were both very worked up Mac and I got unofficially engaged. And then next day I had complete panic and went back on my word again. It isn't that I feel any the less.

Letter from Mac to Iris

29 November 1940

Dearest,

Of course if you feel doubtful about it I'll wait. But dear please tell your mother today and let me know because really I am feeling simply awful.

I am glad you meant it all. It is difficult but still I love you too much to wait much longer.

Of course I shall see you tonight. Just say what we shall do and what time you would like me to call for you.

ANYTHING.

I can't get off the subject dear of how much I love you, it might seem a "soppy" letter, but I am not accustomed to it. I do. I do. I do.

You must not get panicky. It must turn out right in the end. It can't go on like this for long. Anyway you do love me and we are to ourselves engaged aren't we?

Let me know about this evening.

All my love. "Mac"

There are a number of undated short notes from Mac to Iris, mostly arranging meetings, which I have omitted. However, a short entry in her mother's diary for 12th December reads: "Iris's engagement - our drink party".

Letter from Mac to Iris Tenth Battalion. No date

My darling,

I don't know really what to write about. I have thousands of things really but I am so happy that I am practically speechless.

I hope you are happy my sweet. Everybody is saying how lucky I am, and I am, you are absolutely terrific darling. Gosh I am happy.

May I come round this evening for a few minutes as I was to see you and I have had a letter from Mapen & Webb²⁸⁵ saying that it wouldn't be a bad idea to send what size of ring you would like!!! Being in such a flat spin I never thought of it.

*Well sweetheart see you later I hope.
All my love darling,
Mac*

Letter from Mac to Iris Tenth Battalion. No date c. 14th December 1940

My dearest,

I am afraid I simply cannot make the Wedding²⁸⁶ this morning. My Company Commander is away and just have to stay.

Will you please apologise for me dear. I [am] not writing direct because they will be feeling pretty excited.

Give them my best wishes will you please.

See you later darling,

All my love, Mac

December 20th [1940]

But perhaps its just as well I didn't go into long explanations of how I felt and why, because everything's alright now, and Mac and I are happily engaged. So happily that I am miserable half the time having to be away from him. It is so wonderful to think that all that beauty of mind and body is mine for as long as I want it – which will be for ever. I mean to make a success of my marriage by using my brains. That sounds rather prosaic and down to earth. But I believe that it needs brains to turn “the earthly gift to an end divine” as well as love and instinct and pure emotion. I want nothing more of life than that Mac should want only me. I'm so terrified of disappointing him – physically, mentally, anyhow. I've never felt so young and insufficient and unworthy as I do now. But I shall grow up and be able to be more worthy of him and give him more to repay for what he has given me – the world. I don't want fame any more or comfort or even England very much. Its horrible at the moment as everyone regards us as a sort of “exhibit” and asks us to parties all the time and we never see each other except to snatch a few hurried blissful moments together. But I suppose it has to be this way and we will have our moments later and our peace. Pat is staying at the moment and I'm afraid hasn't been having too bright a time really as there is nobody much for her. But we've talked incessantly and had a lot of fun. I've been a bit difficult and fractious because of Mac – one lives so entirely on ones nerves when ones in love. We're being married in April I think but I don't know what happens after that. As long as he doesn't have to go away – darling, darling.

(This, the very last entry in Iris's diary is by coincidence the date of Alan's birth exactly one year later. To find out more about Donald Macfarlane's life before he met Iris there is a short sketch at the end of the book. After their engagement and until the wedding there is very little surviving contemporary material, just a few letters between them.)

Letter from Iris to Mac

[No date c. Jan. 1941]

1 Butler Road, Lucknow

[torn] is your regiment 4th, 9th, 10th - Jats or not? I cant think how to address it

Darling,

This is devotion if you like. I've hardly arrived at this horrible place (horrible because I'm such miles away from you).

I've just had lunch and unpacked and that's all. Lunch was rather terrifying with some awful pauses and a slug in the lettuce and I feel a bit lost. I'm sitting on my bed (hence frightful writing) in a room with a stone floor & pink furniture. I share it with Yvonne, [torn] rabbit. The later is [damaged] with pink eyes that [damaged] on occasions! Oh darling, anything that reminds me of you is lovely. I hate this place and I want to be back – damn, damn, damn! Everyones being awfully kind really.

The journey was rather amusing. All those beautiful men thrilled me of course – I could hardly wait till the next station to fall out of the carriage making eyes at them – so what?! No, actually it was the female in the carriage who

amused me – she never stopped talking from half past 7 till 11.30 except for about ½ an hour when I pretended to be asleep out of desperation. She told me her life history – she’s been engaged 5 years Mac – isn’t it an [torn] thought? And she’s going to wait another before before getting [torn] She said she liked keeping her man on edge and gave her ring back at intervals to this end. Would you like to be kept on edge a bit more sweetie?! I don’t know much [torn] about “tactics” I’m afraid, but I’ll hurl rings all over the place if you think it would be a Good Thing! There are so many different ways of loving, like a quotation I read to you once about “She [torn] track on the Mountain”. Only you weren’t listening as usual! Ours is the best though, isn’t it? I can’t imagine anything better. Someday perhaps I shall be able to tell you how I feel. But now there are no words. I can think more clearly when I’m away from you, and I can see how silly and selfish I am all the time [torn] try to be sensible but its no good [torn] & the beginning all delight”. Sorry to be always quoting but other people invariably say things so much better.

Patty came down to the station – full of talk as usual! I’m going shopping with them this evening & to “Gone with the Wind”²⁸⁷ to-morrow. I’m thrilled its here. Yvonne is a bit annoyed because I wont talk to her & have lain all afternoon on my bed – writing this & wandering off into a day-dream between each sentence. When I arrived here I poured myself a lemon squash & blithely filled it with gin – so typical. It made me light from a radius of about 3 ft.

I must stop now & be amiable. Will write again to-morrow. Please [torn].

Lots & lots of love. Think about you all the time. [torn] possession I bear

Xxxx Totty xxxx P.S. In case I forgot – I love you!

from 1 Butler Road, Lucknow, Saturday [c. 11th January 1941]

Sweetest,

This is the next day – aren’t I being good [torn]? Only three more whole days now before I get back. I hope you’re behaving – I should be ready with all your excuses in plenty of time and provide masses of alibis as to your whereabouts after the dance to-night! I shall be bursting with questions about your movements for every hour of every day!

[torn] you can’t see me now. [torn] out shopping all morning & haven’t a vestige of glamour left. The rabbit is sitting at my feet in the middle of a huge cabbage leaf. It looks like a powder puff & about the same size. I forgot to tell you – we have long baths here with running water & pulleys. Its perfect heaven & I spend most of my spare time in the bathroom dabbling about in ecstasy. D’you have long baths in Assam by any chance? I do want to go there, Mac. I should be awfully dull though. I shouldn’t even want to go out to anybody else. I don’t think I shall anyway once we’re married and you’ll be champing round getting madly bored while I vegetate and eventually become part of the furniture – if we have any! I’ve been looking round vaguely for chair covers & things, but its [torn] a snag not knowing what [torn]. Have you & Mummy [torn] of our wedding yet? You might let me know when you decide! I’m so excited, darling, but the old spoon gets going sometimes & I suppose will get worse & worse. Silly really.

This is after lunch & what a lunch. They’ve got a terribly Important man staying here now, the head of all the C.I.D. in India, & he terrifies me. I go all dumb & dithering when he comes near & say the most futile things which isn’t [torn] anyway. I’m just off to see “Gone with the Wind” with the Baileys which will soothe me.

I’m longing to hear from you – I hope you’ve written me a long letter. These ones I write are pretty dull & useless. But if I started saying everything that was in my head I shouldn’t get any shopping done! [torn] much done in any case. I got [torn] pink flannel this morning. [torn] There are some heavenly shops here & I shall try & come in again once we’ve got this bungalow question more settled. Except that it means going away from you and I don’t think I could bear it. You are a brute Mac, reducing me to this pulp-like condition. I’m sure you don’t feel so idiotic over me. Yvonne is pining after someone who doesn’t care for her & pours out all her little heart aches to me. But I can only feel sorry for her in an impersonal way, & dreadfully superior. Nothing matters now and nobody [torn] to hurt, except you. If you ever take it into your head to make use of that power you’ll have me cowering pretty quick – just where you want me and when! What rubbish I made you read. If only you were here there would be no need to say anything.

There’ll be time [torn]

All my love and [torn] Totty

Letter from Mac to Iris

Tenth Battalion

12 January 1941

My darling,

I have just received your letter and am replying at once. So sorry dearest that I did not write before but there is absolutely nothing to write about this place.

I have been leading a quiet life as usual!! Played tennis yesterday with your Mother and Father and Betty Broad. Dash good fun.

They had a beat up in the club last night but I am damned if I shall attend without you.

You must tell me someday soon how you feel darling. You know I have tried to define our love but as you say it is difficult. I know how I feel when you are away. My love for you is so deep that sometimes I wonder that I am not being selfish and if I can make you happy. Honestly Tottie it will be one of the objects of my life to give you all and make you the happiest little thing alive. I will too.

Do you mind if I really get deep or at least as deep as I can. When two people such as you and I are in love one seems to sense that it something different, something sacred as perhaps God meant it to be and I do hold our love as sacred which could not be undone no matter what happens.

So there you know how I feel at least that's what I have written and it has come straight from my heart.

Actually on reading it over I don't think that is nearly deep enough yet but still one day we shall define it together.

Well darling regards to all I know and my love to you all,

Mac

Tenth Battalion Bombay Grenadiers

25 January 1941

My darling,

I am writing this just about the time I think they will be taking your little tonsils out.

How are you feeling? Perfectly miserable I suppose. Still it won't be for long sweetheart before you are alright.

Let me know when I may see you because I want to sometime soon.

No news about anything yet. I shall write again tomorrow and let you have some.

Keep your chin up darling,

All my love xxx Mac

Letter from Iris to Mac undated [noted in Iris's hand 'Tonsillitis op.']

A White Bed with a Red Eiderdown

Darling Mac,

Here I am – in bed at 6 o'clock – horrible! A nice room, with a fire crackling away and lights & all my glamour is laid in a row [torn] which is Comforting! I've just had [torn] close of Cascara²⁸⁸ so shall probably h[torn] night with no time to think about to-mo[torn] worrying really much, honestly [torn] experience & one of my mottos has always been try everything once. I don't think you will be be [torn] me to-morrow so I'll get Mummy to give [torn] instead. I expect you're eating oysters & brown bread now. Its lovely thinking about you – [torn] thinking on & on & round & round – & of the [torn] me – oh darling what a life we'll have, with [torn]ies in every tree – with all this it doesn't matter if we don't have heaven too! You musn't mind if I write gibberish, it's the Cascara probably. It will be heaven at any rate, quite beyond my wildest dreams, I know that.

"How do I love thee? Let me count the ways.

I love thee to the breadth & depth & height

My soul can reach, when feeling out of sight.

Of the ends of being & Ideal Grace.

I love thee to the level of every days

Most quiet need, by sun & candlelight.-

Other peoples words as usual & probably misquoted at that! I'll write you a poem now.

*The World is dark & full of fear
for some*

*But stars & winds to us are dear
[torn]me,
Throw on thy veil, oh night,
That you & I
May tread our secret paths
Up to the sky.*

Not very good. Perhaps it would be better if I wrote Modern Poetry

“To-morrow is another world.

A day of days

Praise.

The pigs (who [torn]) have got

To highclass poetry. Not

That it matters now.

Now –

Ever (this is getting knotty)

To-morrow the world sees the Tonsils of Totty.

That's such a good line I think I'll stop there my sweet, I am slightly mad – that big forehead I showed you! I've just had supper – soup & baked custard – and the [torn] in to see me. She says no visitors with probably a week in hospital [torn] a long letter. I don't have to have [torn] in my mouth apparently so I shan't [torn]

I think they're going to turn my light [torn] or something.

So goodnight my darling –

All my love & kisses xxxxx Totty

WEDDING AND HONEYMOON

In *Daughters of the Empire*, Iris wrote:

My mother sent to convents in South India for beautifully embroidered underwear and the dharzi sat on the verandah from dawn till dusk running up my trousseau, including my wedding dress, a foaming net and organdy affair which cost twenty rupees. My wedding in March was exactly like my mother's, an archway of crossed swords outside the church, rose petals thrown by little girls in satin dresses. Bareilly had an English church and an Archdeacon to marry us, though he wouldn't have been my first choice. He was lean and mean and worldly; you could set your watch by his afternoon walk to the cinema. He married us in his socks as he had an ingrowing toenail, and asked for his fee while we were signing the register.

Our honeymoon in Jaipur was like my mother's too: very hot and five days into it I got my period and that was the last one until my son was born. Jaipur was beautiful, its wide streets tramped down by camels, with peacocks as common as sparrows, and its people tall and graceful in brilliant floating garments. Its buildings of red sandstone were full of history, but neither of us knew any Indian history so we couldn't appreciate them. We were as happy as two people could be who had lived rootless lives. Mac's parents had left him at school at the age of twelve and returned to Mexico to work, and he had been sent out to plant tea at nineteen. Now he was twenty-three, I was eighteen and we both felt needed, loved, settled. It was like opening the door of my grandmother's flat and smelling the comfortable, safe smell of sandalwood and mothballs.....

Letter from Mac to Iris [later annotation in Iris's hand 'Wedding day, 1.3.1941]

Darling,

Well here it is the 1st of March. I am feeling wonderful now. I got away last night and had a good sleep. How are you my sweet. I am just dying to see you walking down the isle to me. I can't wait. Seems an awful long time yet.

Write and tell me how you are.

All the love in the world to you

Xxxxx Mac xxxxxxxxx

Letter from Iris to Mac [later annotation in Iris's hand 'Just before wedding']

4 Cantonments

Darling,

It was lovely getting your note when I got up. I'm looking forward too – not a bit frightened and just longing to see you. I don't care a damn about the people. I shall only be seeing you. Darling I'm so happy. Tell me you are [too]. Everyone's pouring medicine down me madly. I slept beautifully.

I love you, Totty

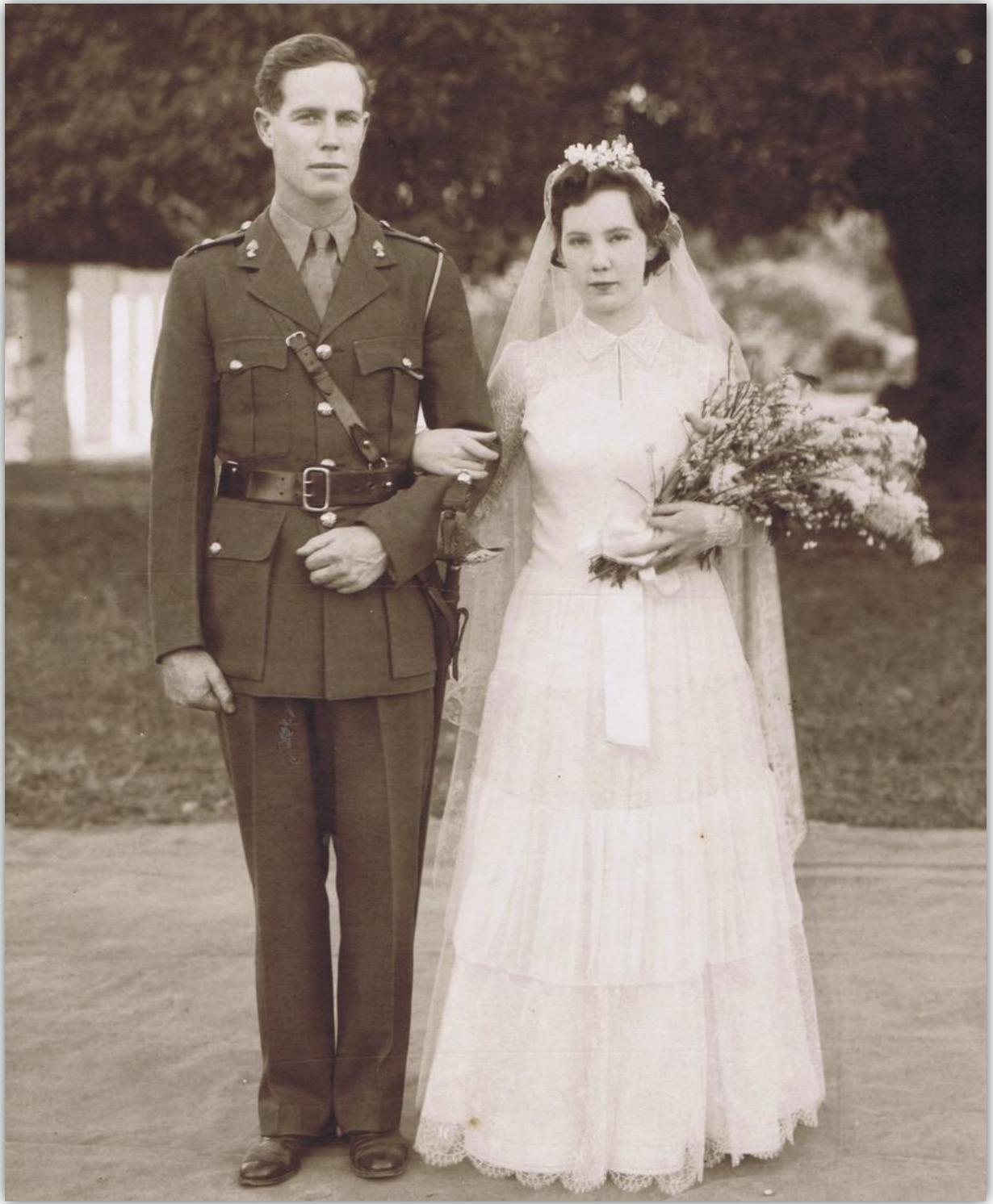
P.S. Please write again.







Back Row, L to R. "Jimmy" Bason, Patricia Travers Smith, Donald, Iris, Venerable Cotton, Patricia Bailey, Billy
 Front Row. "Topsy" Bailey, Lt Col R-J (father), Mrs R.J. (mother), General Macrae



March 6th. P.P.s. Will you please
send the enclosed to
Mrs Montagu?
Jaipur.
P.S. Thank you for
your letter Mummy, &
the cheque. So.

Darling Mummy & Daddy,

Well, here we are, in the sweetest
little house surrounded by a positive larnyard
of animals and loving it all. There are 8 horses,
geese, a pigeon house, a cow with three legs
and masses of dogs. Most of these are locked
away but the 2 which are visible are vast.

I should love Macgregor to meet Monarch -
he'd be one large squirming gin - Monarch
is a mastiff weighing 14 stone and the
largest thing I've ever seen. He's very shy &
gentle and adores Mac, but completely ignores
me!

However I'll start from the beginning &
tell you about Delhi. We got there at about 5
on Sunday, very hot & dusty. The ceil is a

March 6th Jaipur

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Well, here we are, in the sweetest little house surrounded by a positive farmyard of animals and loving it all. There are 8 horses, geese, a pigeon house, a cow with three legs and masses of dogs. Most of these are locked away but the 2 which are visible are vast. I should love Macgregor to meet Monarch – he'd be one large squirming grin – Monarch is a mastiff weighing 14 stone and the largest thing I've ever seen. He's very shy & gentle and adores Mac, but completely ignores me!

However I'll start from the beginning & tell you about Delhi. We got there at about 5 on Sunday, very hot & dusty. The Cecil is a wonderful place with a brilliant garden, bright blue swimming pool and the oddest people staying there. They really were very queer most of them! The food was a dream and there were lots of cool verandahs to sit about and drink iced chinks on – its much hotter than Bareilly. After dinner on Sunday we took a taxi to New Delhi & saw "Pinnocchio"²⁸⁹, an adorable film, as good as Snow White I think.

On Monday morning we did some shopping – some but not a great deal! We didn't get near glass or china shops but concentrated on glamour & gramophone records! In the afternoon we trailed along to see Cynthia & Pat – both in great form. Their hut is surprisingly cool which is encouraging as it is out in the open. They contemplate staying in it all the hot weather so perhaps we could do the same with a few fans around. Anyway we can see when we get back. Pat came over for a drink before dinner looking sweet and seemed to have enjoyed everything a lot. I must say she & Patty were a terrific help in keeping me calm. By the way, Mac bought me a camera in Delhi. I enclose the first picture we took – not a success any of them but I hope the next lot will be better.

We started for Jaipur at 3 on Tuesday & it wasn't a very successful journey – we eventually sat down to dinner here at quarter to 1! The first part was hot & horrid but at about 6 we were going through queer hilly country, most attractive & eerie in the fading light with lots of twisted trees and curling smoke from fires. As it got really dark we saw a few animals, jackals mostly & deer and a sort of wild bison but nothing really startling. This went on for hours & hours & Mac kept getting out to look at signposts which made me hysterical! When we did arrive it took us over an hour to find the place, and we were piled high with enthusiastic but unhelpful chowkidars which we had collected from every gate!

Jaipur is a fascinating place with wide streets and red houses and a beautiful park with a palace & zoo in it. We haven't done any of the sights yet – we went to drinks with the Hoeyes²⁹⁰ yesterday who were charming & are giving us passes for everything. We're just going out riding now – the horses look pretty cow-like, but ---!!

Mac is busy drawing a beautiful undressed lady with lions & bunches of grapes all round her! He is writing. Bye bye for now. My love to Robbie & the dogs & Mrs Murray.

Lots of love, Iris

Letter from Mac to Violet

Jaipur 7.3.41

Dear Mother,

I am very sorry that I have not written before but one thing and another seems to crop up and I just couldn't get down to it.

We have had a marvellous time up till now and the place is simply wonderful. Quiet, small and nothing to disturb one. Everything has been laid on. Iris has probably told you all about the occupants. I mean the dogs, geese horses etc.

Lovely riding country. Unnecessary to shod the horses because it is all sand and no hard ground. Iris, at least Tottie, loves it. The horses are as quiet as possible. She has no fear of them at all (at least she hasn't shown it).

We went to visit a place called the Amber Palace today. An amazing place. Rather like the "Taj Mahal" but far more interesting. Tottie was very interested in the Maharani's bathtub. An immense place. Could bath a whole Regiment I should think. She even had, the Maharani, a tonga sort of affair to bring her to bath!!! You can imagine what it was like. Took some rather good photos of the palace. Shall show them to you when we get back.

Had a very hurried letter from "Bottle" today saying that he was getting married on the 23rd or thereabouts. Blaming it all on me because I posted some letter of his. He probably told you about it. We sent him the following wire. WHOOPEE. WELL DONE. WELL WORTH IT.

What I really want to write about is this. Thank you ever so much for the wonderful wedding you gave us. Really it was simply grand. Believe me. I am afraid I did nothing all the time. I was in a complete spin most of the time. Thank you both again and again.

I am having a grand time with Totties trousseau. I have shown her mine. I did in the first day. One shirt, one new pair of pyjamas and a new collar stud!!! But Tottie, I spend most of my time delving into her bag and pulling out things. She wears about three different dresses in an hour or so!!

I must end now as Tottie is dying to have her dinner. I thought I ate a lot but Tottie says, "Fatty" or no Fatty I am going to eat." I encourage her too believe me.

Give my love and best wishes to all,

Yours, Mac

LIFE AFTER MARRIAGE

In *Daughters of the Empire*, Iris wrote:

Nothing in fact could have been less settled than the future, and I shudder at our effrontery at facing it so confidently; the thought of Mac being almost immediately killed had never entered into my calculations as to whether I would marry him. He had joined up as soon as he could and was with a brigade getting ready to go to Singapore to fight the Japanese. Then he heard a regiment was to be raised in Assam, where he planted tea, and applied to join it. The hill peoples who would form the regiment were the Mongolian tribes of the wooded mountains circling the Brahmaputra Valley, and renowned for their skill in jungle warfare, and for their intelligent and cheerful natures. They would make wonderful soldiers and had the advantage of looking quite like the Japanese in dark jungle.

BAREILLY AND NAINI TAL

Letters from Iris to her mother in Naini Tal. Her parents had returned to Blyth Cottage on 31st March while Iris and Mac had stayed in Bareilly until Mac was posted elsewhere.

No 10 Hut [no date].

Darling Mummy,

Herewith 2 squares²⁹¹. I'm sorry there aren't more, but I'll try & get one more done by Wednesday. I'm feeling rather frantic just now as Mac went pigsticking yesterday & was due back at 2 to-day and its now quarter to 5. I have awful visions of him being gored or stamped on or something, but hope its only a puncture. I feel completely helpless and nerve-wracked!

Thrilling news – I think Nicholas is definitely on the way! Its about 10 days late now and I shall be horribly disappointed if it comes now that I've got used to the idea! Please don't tell anyone – definitely not Topsy! As I want it to myself as long as possible. Mac is thrilled but determined it shall be a girl. All these "its" are a bit confusing. I hope you've got them sorted out! I want a boy naturally so one of us is bound to be pleased. I don't know if there's anything I ought to do, I don't suppose there is for sometime yet. It'll be perfect if we're in Shillong – in fact I'm frightfully pleased & excited and glad those pills didn't work!

I saw Whiteside²⁹² yesterday and he said (a) He'd had no official information about the thatching (b) it would take sometime to get the reeds etc & would be a great expense & (c) he didn't think it would make any difference. Not very encouraging – but he said if he heard from Daw²⁹³ he would be able to carry it through. What do you think? If we're going away in May it hardly seems worth it and yet I think it would make quite a lot of difference. If you consider its worth it do tell Daw to give Whiteside his blessing & perhaps he won't be able to think of any more excuses!

My diving is spectacular – I go off the top, or have I told you? Its not too awfully hot, and we sleep out now & the sitting-room remains very cool considering. I play quite a lot of rather hair-raising Mah Jong – hair-raising because tempers are on edge and everyone inclined to get acid! Swimming is our real joy though.

Oh dear Mac still not back and its 6. What a life. I'll finish this when he arrives.

Well he's arrived at last and I've bathed him and scraped off layers of grime. Needless to say there's no sign of a pig although they saw masses and rode for 7 hours, all through the middle of the day. Not my idea of pleasure!

Glad Dinah has settled down, fickle old thing! We will try & get up for 25th week-end if we can get a lift. Heavens I'd like a breath of fresh air.

Must stop & post the squares (in name only!)

Lots of love to all,

Iris

No. 10 Hut, Bareilly [no date]

Darling Mummy,

I'm afraid there isn't much hope of us getting up this week-end, but I'm determined to manage the one after even if we have to come by train. I'm in the throes of arranging our first drink party – and last I hope! I seem to have asked everyone in the station and can't think where to put them.

I'm not feeling too bright at present, I don't know whether its Nicholas or the heat or what. I get waves of sickness,

usually in the evening or early morning and feel generally useless. I hope it will pass. If it wasn't for that I should be bearing up well. I nearly broke my nose in the baths yesterday by colliding with Mac under water – so have had plenty to grouse about lately!

I've just got your letters about Dinah, what a frightful experience, I'm so sorry! I feel it was our fault for leaving her, as a panther would be bound to choose a dog that wasn't yours. Anyway thank you for all you've done & I do hope poor old fatty is better. I think she's fairly tough. I opened your second letter first and thought she'd been set on by mad dogs, a panther never entered my head. Mac's only reaction was an urge to dash up to Naini with his rifle! You must let us know how much all this treatment comes to and her keep. I'm glad it was you on the scene – Daddy would have unbolted the door slowly and with great precision & it would probably have got away with her! Talking of nasty animals, the bearer has just presented me with a wicked-looking little snake that he found under our beds as he was bringing them in. Its only about a foot long & thin & I feel sure is a krite but he says it's a Nagur. He has just given me a pop-eyed account of the seething colony of Cobras that undoubtedly live in the long grass round the Compound so I think I'd better tell the Cantonment mali²⁹⁴ to cut it all down.

The drink party went off very well last night and people simply had to be sociable as they were jammed up against each other & couldn't avoid contact anyhow! We slushed the floor beforehand & came in later to find it steaming like a greenhouse & it took hours to cool it down again – not very helpful!

I've been feeling better since I started this letter so perhaps it was only a chill. We've had some Cuss-Cuss²⁹⁵ made which helps in the way of heat – nights are still nice.

We thought of coming up by train next week-end & getting a lift back – arriving Saturday morning.

Hope Dinah isn't too much of a nuisance – I think it was very good to have saved her at all,

Lots of love to all,

Iris

Iris stayed up in the cool of Naini Tal during early pregnancy while Mac had to return to Bareilli – the first of many separations during their life in India. The advantage for me was that I have their letters and can follow them, albeit sporadically, and then my own early life.

Iris to Mac in Bareilli

Blyth Cottage [no date]

Sweetest –

I'm sitting waiting for the postman to come with, I hope, a letter from you. It is a lovely morning, but I think there'll be rain later. It was heavenly yesterday darling – just what we dreamed about. I got into bed, and the sky darkened (this was after lunch) and there was thunder and a deluge of rain, lovely and snug under blankets. I wished you were there & was praying you would be getting it too. I see Bareilly temperatures dropped yesterday but Delhi is 114 degrees! – poor Cynthia, I believe David and Noreen landed on them so they must be having some party.

We had quite a commotion last night – I had gone to bed & Mummy & Daddy were just going when there was a terrific sort of roaring wail, rather like an Air Raid warning. I woke up with a frightful start thinking the thing was in my room, and Dinah got up and started prowling round nervously. It was a panther & must have been just outside as honestly it was a deafening sound. We all got jittery & crept round bolting doors and I lay awake for hours trembling when anything creaked – why weren't you there?! By the way, don't bother to bring up your gun as the Baileys have one you can borrow. You're bound to get it – you'll only have to lean out of a window.

The post has come and no letter. You horrible man. Too busy with the blokes darling?!

Mummy & I are having a marvellous time tying up quantities of blue & yellow wool and knitting tiny bootees and blankets & mittens. We have to sit on them hastily if anyone approaches! I'm so excited and can really believe its going to happen now, oh darling think of it. I'm not going to have another for at least 2 years, then we can concentrate absolute on Nicholas (please note!) Are you as pleased as I am – I hope so. I've been feeling practically alright since I came up.

I saw Patty yesterday and told her in strictest confidence. She isn't looking very well. Also met Toinon²⁹⁶ & Re[torn] which was a nice change!

Must stop as P. is coming. Longing to see you on Saturday sweetheart – hope it isn't too depressing down below.

Bye-bye my porky boy,

All love, xxx Totty

Blyth Cottage [no date]

My darling,

I've just heard the thrilling news about the Assam Regt & have been trying to get you on the phone all morning in case you hadn't heard. We got it straight from Eastern Comd. Hqrs isn't it marvellous – I'm so pleased darling and will mean you getting out of that foul place. I gather you have to join this month, so there'll be a lot to do. Mummy says Moonoo is a good packer so we can send him down to do all glass & china etc. and they'll do your things which only leaves me. Shall I come with you and do it, next week-end? You can put curtains, cushions etc in one coffin and china in the other and will have to get a wooden crate for glass and a box like a hat-box for lamp shades. Books of course go straight back where they came from. I don't think it ought to be difficult, but I had better come down & supervise. Directly you hear where we're going do wire about accommodation. I'd like to keep the Cook & bearer on if they'd come. I hear Bottle is off and Jean goes back to Bombay – I bet she's pleased! We can discuss it all when you come.

I played tennis yesterday in a green cotton dress & Mummy's shoes & was quite unable to make any contact with the ball! It was agony. Then I went up to see Susan who is laid low with flu, and got caught in a thunderstorm coming home. Luckily Mrs M. was too keen to get her dinner to worry unduly about the climate.

The bearer is waiting to take this to the post so I'd better stop. Come up early on Friday my sweet – just dying to see you. My love & farewells to Bottle.

And all my love and kisses to you treasure xxxxx Totty xxxxx

Mac to Iris in Naini Tal

No 10. 5.5.1941

Darling heart,

Found your letter waiting for me after an uneventful trip down weather etc alright etc. etc.

Went to office this morning and think what? Word has come through that I am to go to Assam. This I may say I am very pleased about. No definite date but very likely about the 3rd week of this month darling. Not so good is it. Now you are not to get flustered. I am coming up next week end for a long week end and we shall discuss things then.

I shall put forward my suggestions though and see what you think of them.

I shall manage the bungalow easily myself. There is really, looking round, nothing much to do.

Then I want you to stay in Naini until I get to my new station. (Don't know where yet.) and get settled in and then you come down and I shall meet you in Calcutta. How's that. Darling please don't say that you must be at my side etc for packing. I can manage quite well. Anyway, we shall discuss things as I say on Friday next.

I can hardly wait to see you again. Never seem to see my "Fatty" at all these days.

Darling I am just off to Bde H.Q. to see it I can palm P.A.O.²⁹⁷ off to some other fellow so bye bye just now. Write soon. Darling xxxxx All my love and hugs xxxxxx Mac

No. 10 Hut 6.5.41

Darling heart,

No letter from you today sweet and I am feeling so miserable. I have not quite got over this thing. We shall not make any arrangements until I come up this week end. I have however decided that I want you to come with me darling if you want to. It is much to[o] miserable being without you. I have been cycling round and round. Went swimming at about 5 o'clock and was alone there for about an hour. Everybody seems to have packed up and retired. Never see anyone except at office.

Monoo²⁹⁸ has arrived but there is nothing immediate for him to do. Will you please write a list of the things you want me to bring up this week end so as I can get them ready.

I am sending up those photo's I took last week end. All of them I think are rather good. Bit out of focus but otherwise good. The one of you inside has come out well.

Darling will you ask your mother how much she needs to pay her mali as I must pay this man. I have discharged him from the 1st of the Month.

Also enclosing a cheque of Mavis Buss which you gave me.

I wish you with me now darling. Sitting opposite me on the couch. All I can do is to imagine you are there. Not a good substitute. Write soon darling girl.

All the love in the world darling xxxxxxxxxxxxxx Mac

Iris to Mac in Bareilly

Thursday [15th May] Blyth Cottage

P.S. I cut most of my hair off this morning – heres a bit!

Darling,

You are horrible – you said you'd write “to-morrow” and I haven't heard for 2 days. You probably missed the post but please write soon 'cos I wait for every post and nothing ever comes!

I have just washed my hair and am sitting on the step outside the drawing room drying it. I got up to-day for the first time and feel better. There's no news since yesterday at all except I'm getting on with a little yellow coat for Fiona²⁹⁹, and I've read a book called “Letters to my Son” by a mother expecting her first baby. Its rather adorable and says a lot of the things I feel. Robert is back from hospital – did you know he'd had measles – And is spending a few days here convalescing. He was in a room with a boy with whooping cough who later got pneumonia – typical!

Darling none of this can interest you in the least but what there to say except how lonely I am & that doesn't help you or me! Kinks is touring to Shillong in June & will probably bring me if it's convenient. By that time I will be quite well and fat as butter!

This is a horrid letter sweet – if I really let myself go I'll only start again saying how I miss you. I'll write a proper one to-morrow but must get this posted before three.

Write soon precious,

All my love & kisses, Totty xxx

[No date] Blyth Cottage

My sweet,

I don't know if you'll be out eating curry & rice with the troops now – I hope not. I think this will be the last letter to reach you judging by the paralytic postal system.

It was lovely hearing your voice the other night darling – though it didn't sound much like you! I hope you're not finding the packing too difficult, I feel very lazy and helpless. But I don't think I would be much of an advantage in my present rather feeble state. I'm quite well only not feeling absolutely my best.

Listen honey-bunch – what are you doing about Amelia & Skilly³⁰⁰? Mummy suggests you send them up here in charge of that old syce Razul Bur & she could probably find a proper job for him here. That is if the Rayners don't want them. Can't you take 10 days leave now, as I tried to bellow down the phone? Its your only chance. I suppose you're right about going on alone darling – tho' I'd much rather come with you. And Fiona will be furious at being left behind!

Oh darling won't it be fun? You'll have all your planter pals near & we'll be settled for a bit – Dinah will love it too. She's feeling very grieved that you've disappeared so suddenly. I won't want much this week-end – a couple of cotton frocks and my hair shampoo and a large bottle of pink liquid. I do want to hear your views about it all so write directly sweetest.

No news from here – nothing important ever happens without you! I just sit and wait for you to come back to me. Its like being broken in half when you go – we are one person, you & I, and nothing will ever separate us, nothing.

“All other things to their destruction draw

Only our love hath no decay.

This no to-morrow hath, nor yesterday

Running it never runs from us away

But truly keeps its first, last, everlasting day.”

Fiona is being very good only she gets hiccoughs occasionally which makes me gurgle horribly. She sends her love and says she hates to disappoint you but she's sure she's Nicholas!

Well darling heart, bye-bye for now. I'll write to-morrow. Hear the heat-wave has reached you poor sweet.

Kisses and cuddles & lots of love xxxx Totty

Iris to Mac in Shillong

May 21st Blyth Cottage

My own darling,

At last a letter from you – I suppose you couldn't have written sooner really but it is just a week since you went and seems a lifetime. I'm glad you've settled in safely – I hope you've got rather more than less of the baggage darling! I expect you are out of money. I arrived here with As 8 – I shall be glad of a refill. Actually haven't needed any money as

Alastair forbade me to do anything even play Mah Jong, so you can imagine my life!

I'm dying to come to you and am depressed beyond words to think I may not be able to for ages and ages. Honestly darling I can't bear it. I have nothing to do but sit & wonder how much longer it'll be till we're together again & it makes me quite hysterical. But I shouldn't quibble with a comfortable home & Mummy & Daddy. There are some people in Shillong called Storrs-Fox³⁰¹ – he is in charge of the I.M.H. [Indian Missionary Hostel] I think – & they're wanting P.G's. [Paying Guests] Could you get into touch with them & find out terms etc? Mrs Cotton has already written & warned them so they're expecting you. They're very sweet and homely and it might be a solution till we find our perfect little [torn] as we will won't we my honey? Do write and tell me more about the journey and Shillong itself as I want to picture your surroundings. How funny you should be in 4 Cantts, it seems to be haunting you but I hope this one won't be as dangerous as the last! Tell me if you meet any S.B's and mind you only meet them once – I shall probably creep up to Shillong in disguise if I suspect you darling.

There is very little news from your saggy wife – I knit and read and for a change read and knit and go for gentle potters of an evening. And all the time I miss you and want you and love you and love you and can't get at you! Don't be silly – forget all about that last evening – it wasn't your fault anyway. I only felt so miserable leaving you feeling ill I cried for ages, the woman in the carriage thought I was mental I'm sure!

Everyone here says how thin I've got so I'm deceiving them nicely. Fiona has been rather naughty for the last few days and hurled everything I've given her to eat back at me. So I'm in bed at present, hence very peculiar writing. Don't be worried darling – its all quite natural and will pass before long and won't I be relieved! The first baby of the season was born on Sunday – boy – how I wish it was ours.

It will be a wonderful child ours, won't it, the fulfilment of our love and a promise for our future happiness. I want it to have everything, remembering our own childhoods and what we missed and seeing that it doesn't miss them too. But however much I love it will only because of my love for you and wont approach or touch that love. Do you feel like that darling? I feel terribly responsible sometimes about the whole thing, and incapable of dealing with anything so important as a child's upbringing. I want it above all to be happy and have no fears or complexes or loneliness. Never feel unwanted. And I want it to appreciate the important things and the beautiful things – in books or art or nature or people. We do I think, though I don't always live up to them! You mustn't mind me rambling like this, but I naturally think about the subject a good deal and want to talk to you about it and this is the next best thing. Its funny, when I'm with you there seems little need for words – just being together is enough and complete in itself – but when you go away I remember all the things I never say. Horrible aren't I my sweet? But I expect you understand.

There has been quite a row about this play and everyone is seething & Mummy isn't in it any more! The producer was frightfully rude to her and gave somebody else her part to read without telling her or having tried her and then told lies all round, so she's walked out. Patty is in it. Oh yes – a thrill I met 3 young men a few days ago! They were awfully hairy and slightly Cockney & I was very demure & flashed my wedding [ring] round nicely. I also met a youth who I knew quite well last year – quite a boy-friend in fact – but he treated me with great respect & is taking out Elaine now. Are you relieved darling – I really am very good. There are 32 young men here on courses so perhaps it's just as well I'm in bed (don't misunderstand that last remark!!)

Well, I could go on for ever but must get this posted. I'm glad Dinah has found a boy-friend – you must look round for a husband for her. Don't forget the Storrs Foxes. I'm sorry if I've grumbled a lot sweetheart – it's only I miss you so. Anyway Alastair says I ought to get a little fitter before I travel. I'll write every day – please do too.

Hugs and kisses darling heart xxx Totty

Sunday 25th [May 1941] Blyth Cottage, Naini Tal

My darling –

Another letter just arrived, 5 days³ after the 1st! I was getting so cross & made up my mind not to write again till I heard! And now that it has come its made me so depressed I feel murderous. I wont wait 4 months – I won't even wait [torn]. I shall just turn up one day and they'll have to put me somewhere isn't there anyone to P.G. with or who could give us a tent in the garden? I don't expect a bungalow yet. But I'm fussing stupidly and you sound quite contented without me darling & enjoying your freedom with the "blokes"! Poor sweet why shouldn't you anyhow. I'm so selfish and possessive and never see your point of view. I will try and be patient and won't grumble any more in future. Only here there is nothing to do with all the girls working or going out with spotty youths on courses & I'm sinking into a sort of stupor. There! That's that.

Actually I've been very gay to-day & went for a picnic with Grahame³⁰², Susan & another youth. We climbed a terrifically steep hill and meant to sketch but had left all our pencils etc behind so merely sat. It was quite pleasant and

the first time I've been out or seen anyone for ages. Grahame is up for the week-end and says Bareilly is stinking again. Moti is up on a months leave and having a rare time with the S.B's no doubt but havn't actually seen him.

I told Mummy about the various people you mentioned and she only knows Mrs Whitworth³⁰³ the Brigadiers wife. Apparently a very domineering woman so heaven preserve me from her! There are hundreds of people here I don't know and lots of pretty girls – aren't I glad I'm out of the scramble! I don't see much of Patty as she's rehearsing such a lot and has taken up Shorthand not to mention sailing. Must go & read to Robert in bed so will be back darling.

Fiona is behaving a little better. I have to take lots of strange medicines – iodine and stuff – and eat like a horse. My poor waist line! I'm going to send for some money soon so I hope you've really sent it! Its Mummy's birthday tomorrow and various debts have mounted up. Hope you're surviving, sweet, as I believe Shillong is impossibly expensive. You've no idea all the little coats and bibs & cots & prams I've got to get for Her Excellency, not to mention a few garments to make myself look less revolting in the final stages. You will still love me then won't you darling? Please tell me you love me in your letters, I get terrified that you'll find you prefer your bachelors life after all. You mustn't judge me by what I was like in Bareilly.

Well my treasure it must be "good-night" (that hateful word again!). Write often please – just to say you miss me. Love to Dinah and heaps of it for yourself.

Your growing but very loving Totty XXX

[27th May] Blyth Cottage

My own sweet,

Just a scribble to catch the post. I didn't realise letters took so long – yours was written on the 19th & I got it on the 25th.³⁰⁴ But I don't think it was actually posted till 22nd which makes a difference!

How are you darling? Working hard I expect [torn] empty bungalow you're living [torn] but that's life [torn] be able to move now till the rains in any case – Bareilly is 110 now. Mrs Wimberley³⁰⁵ told me that the temperatures were recorded in Mr Kerr's bungalow which is the coolest in Bareilly and they were actually several degrees higher always than in the papers. Its very hot here now, though for the first week we had torrential rain the whole time. Lovely – it makes me homesick though.

It was Mummys birthday yesterday & in the evening we went to see a marvellous but terribly tragic film called "Pastor Hall"³⁰⁶. All about concentration camps and all true. We were harrowed & I wept buckets!

Darling – how much money have you sent to my bank? 'Cos I don't want to overdraw. I'm going to have some minute nightgowns made with blue & pink ribbons. Mummy has finished 3 blankets and we're going [torn] Am just off to see what I can find.

Please send me some photos honey. It all sounds too heavenly and will be more so in the rains when we can go for walks & get soaked and come back to tea & toast. Is there any water for Dinah – bless the old fat thing.

Longing for another letter – don't carry it round in your pocket too long!

Bye-bye beloved – Tons & tons of love xxxx Totty

Mac to Iris in Naini Tal

30.5.41 Bishops House, Kench's Trace Shillong³⁰⁷

Darling Heart,

Really darling I am awfully sorry about my letters not arriving but yours have been just the same to me, my darling thing so long as I hear from you and I am so glad that you are better.

Darling I have rather a lot of news for you. First place I want you to come here within the next two weeks. I have found I hope, never know what will happen in this place tomorrow, accommodation. We shall have to share a bungalow with another couple called Davis³⁰⁸. Young fellow in the Regt who has been married about the same time as ourselves. Still it is better than nothing and I must have you here my darling. I can't do anything without you. I feel lost and helpless. I am not just saying this I mean every word dear heart.

Secondly I have been made Adjutant which is where I wanted to get. How I managed I don't know. Suppose I must have been thinking of you and the C.O. must have thought I was puzzling out some Regt problem. But there it is and I want to make the most of it.

I am absolutely tied up with work from 7 A.M to 5 p.m. hard at it. Of course it is interesting but darling, I suppose you are fed up with me harping on the same subject, I want you here to help me. I want someone to go home to and talk to, oh darling I love you so, nobody has ever done this to me before believe me.

I met at a party a lot of S.B. including Ursula Pendlebury's sister Sheila³⁰⁹. But I just don't seem to be able to talk or do anything except mumble to everybody in general that my darling wife is miles away and am feeling awful.

Talking of walks darling there is the most wonderful walks. Just like Scotland. Sort of marsh places with moss and little springs. Lovely little burns running about, with the winds softly swaying the pines trees back and forwards. Marvellous. I went out last Sunday for a walk and just sat for a few minutes. Everything was quiet as so peaceful and yet so lonely. If you could only have been there, what a difference.

A little poem my sweet if I remember it properly. It goes something like this:-

*There is a land full of quaint phantasy,
Careless, obscure, remote, a land of rest,
Where there are found no slaves by toil oppressed
No fretful nation yearning to be free;
But golden rivers gliding to the sea
And sunlight sleeping on earth's warm breast;
Where the loud tramp of armed battalions yields
To voices singing in the harvest-fields,
Where, neath the whispering palm-tree's shade we lie
Content to watch the warring world go by,
Who with those Western lands can this compare,
Fairer by lack of all that they hold fair?*

It is, darling lovely up here.

Well sweet heart I must stop and have a bath as it is getting late. Diana sends a big lick and a few googy looks from her eye.

Love to all and to my sweet girl all the love I have xxxxxx Mac

P.T.O.

Re money. I am sending money to your account about the 3rd of the month as the fools have sent my Last Pay Certificate here and it meant it has to go back to Bareilly for Cashing. Also I shall send money for the journey etc. Let me know if you can travel please darling.

15.6.41 Bishop's House, Shillong

Darling,

Herewith the bearer. I am afraid he will be rather late to help you but I did not get your telegram until late last night.

I am so thrilled that you are coming darling heart I can hardly wait until you do. I shall kiss you all day and night sweet.

Have just been up to government house and we have finished our parade and afterwards we had some beer with the Governor. All very pleasant indeed and no mistakes!

I shall meet you sweet at the Commercial Carrying Company's Station on Thursday about 12 o'clock on 17th. The furniture should be up sometime today or tomorrow so I shall somehow make the bungalow presentable.

Well darling until Tuesday and take care of yourself sweet.

All my love and kisses xxxxxx Mac

P.S. The bearer has more money if you want any more.

SHILLONG

In *Daughters of the Empire*, Iris wrote:

Everyone said how lucky I was to be going to Shillong in northeast India which was just like Scotland, they said, pine forests and heather and sparkling brooks. The journey to reach it was five days long, and I did it alone with a Siamese kitten as Mac had gone ahead to make arrangements for our accommodation. As I sat in the train feeling sick in my early stages of pregnancy, I was delighted with the country that rolled past the windows, but after two years I was still a tourist. I knew nothing, absolutely nothing about either its past or present. I had seen the Taj Mahal, and the Himalayan snows under sunset and moonlight. I had ridden in the early morning through villages round Bareilly and watched women slapping chapattis on stones, or bending, graceful as birds, to fill their water pots. Now from the train I watched men plodding over enormous landscapes behind bullocks, and at stations sighed over the huddled homeless, the pinched children and mangy dogs. Poor creatures, so dreadfully poor, but better off in some unexplained way for having us the British there.....

Iris to her mother in Naini Tal

18.6.1941 21 Cantts. Shillong

Darling Mummy,

Here I am at last, sitting in the garden of our own bungalow with pine trees all round and everything peaceful. Before I start romanticising about the surroundings though I'll tell you about the journey. It was all terribly easy in spite of various stupidities on the part of railway officials which I suppose one must expect. When I got to Kathgodam I found they had booked my seat in the Mens as they thought I was Mr Macfarlane, so I had to get into another carriage and change at 9 that night – not difficult but tiresome as it was hot & there were no coolies at the station where I changed. However between us (Grahames & John Henderson were there) we carted baggage & howling kitten along.

Lucknow was very sticky so I stayed in the waiting room under the fan while the G's went sight-seeing and Belinda & I made up for our lack of sleep the night before. When the train did arrive I found to my horror that my carriage already contained 3 Indian women and about 6 children all eating revolting messes and seething over the whole place. I couldn't get any sense out of anybody about it, so eventually hurled my luggage in on top of them and stalked off in a fury to the Restaurant Car where I had to sit till 4.30 when they got off at Benares. This was the worst part of the whole journey as it was pretty steamy and we were held up by a train smash in front. However just as I was feeling desperate somebody who called himself the Manager offered me his bunk in a room just off the Carriage which I gratefully accepted – rather a comic situation really and I suppose slightly indecent – me lying on his bed while he did sums at his desk – but I was too hot & weary to care! Once I got into my carriage all was well, and the Grahames bearer looked after me beautifully. I said good-bye to them at Howrah³¹⁰ as they were going to breakfast with someone, had an enormous meal myself and drove to Scaldah³¹¹.

Calcutta was extraordinarily cool though[t] it wasn't actually raining – by the way not a sign of those wonderful waiting-rooms you talked about – only the usual dreary affair & not as nice as Lucknow. But I had it to myself so got out my bister³¹² and slept like a log till quarter to 1! When I woke my train had come in, Nathu had arrived and from then on everything just happened. The marvel of the whole journey was that I felt so well in spite of heat & confusion – I ate quantities and drank things from bottles and didn't feel sick once. I didn't go near my medicines needless to say!

From Calcutta onwards it rained a lot – the flooding was pathetic & in some places the whole country was under water with a few isolated houses on islands and the water practically up to the railway line. Everything in Assam is so green and cheerful – you never get that bare, flat U.P. landscape. The ferry was great fun & I was enjoying it so much I didn't notice everyone getting off and had to scuttle off myself in an undignified hurry! I got the front seat in a car with a charming Calcutta man at the back who gave me tea & bread & honey at a café half way up but I regret to say I gave it back to him not long after! It's a beastly journey and curlier than Naini & it was raining so I couldn't really admire the view.

Mac met me in a lovely Australian hat and brought me to the bungalow – about the most depressing sight I have ever seen. Large & hideous bits of furniture were piled in dusty corners, not a curtain or carpet anywhere and everything filthy. The rain added to the general gloom and Mac had to dash back to work almost immediately and I really wondered why I had come.

To-day though everything is brighter & I think the bungalow will really be very nice in time. It is a large, rambling

affair with wooden floors & white beamed walls and there's masses of room for us & the Davises. They're a quaint couple but nice & I think we'll get on amiably. Our heavy luggage arrives to-day & I'm expecting the worst & hoping for the best! Nathu has been a brick & is still working hard cleaning up. I'm not sending for the Cook as we've decided to share this one & there's only one Cookhouse.

I think we ought to live cheaply as the servants are cheaper and food doesn't seem exorbitant & of course sharing everything is a blessing. We move out to Elephant Falls in about November and are having huts like Bareilly which is perfect. We went round to the Howmans³¹³ to drinks last night – C.O & wife – & they are so nice. Both young & friendly – you'd love him as he is full of stories of Burma & remembers having danced with you & A[unt]. Margery & knew your father. He just missed your wedding by being on a course!

Excuse queer writing but the kitten is asleep on my lap. She is terribly well & utterly adorable – tell Kinks she thoroughly enjoyed the journey & spent the time steeplechasing round the carriage and then falling fast asleep on my shoulder. Dinah merely looks pained & dignified about it but Belinda is definitely hostile, & takes every opportunity of spitting furiously. Thank you very much for her as she really is a birthday present – she's the joy of my life at present & keeps us all amused for hours. I hardly see Mac as they go off directly after breakfast & apart from a short break for lunch don't stop till 5.30 or 6. Its going to be worse when they go into camp as then they only get evenings & 3 nights a week. Still it might be a lot worse.

I haven't seen much of Shillong yet, but the view from our garden is of a sort of park belonging to the next bungalow and the hills beyond & the garden itself is sweet – we sport a peach tree with peaches on! I haven't seen a sign of the famous fruit & vegetables but if I do I'll send some. Which reminds me – I've never thanked you for having me for so long & putting up with my various complaints. I'm afraid I was a trying person to have about! It was lovely being so spoilt – I don't get nearly so much attention here! When I can get Mac to myself I'll talk over the money question & send you the rest of what I owe.

My love to everyone – and thank you very much Mummy for what you did for me. Lots of love, Iris

June 27th 1941 21 Cantts. Shillong

My darling Mummy,

I'm afraid there has been rather a lapse between letters but unpacking and straightening out has taken rather a time and even now we aren't really set. The place looks a bit cleaner which is the main thing and we have some electric-blue and terrifying looking chair covers in the drawing-room to match our jail mats and a few nondescript curtains. Unpacking our luggage was a heartrending business as about half the china is broken – no one set is now complete and our vases chipped too. We have 4 of the 8 soup bowls left but Gen Macraes present absolutely gone. It was all beautifully packed too – most sick-making but we're luckier than some as a major in the regiment had two of his boxes broken into and everything pinched. Shall be glad when we move into Elephant falls and can use our curtains etc and have all our own lamps out (these by the way are intact to my great surprise).

I'm afraid it will be rather a squash for you in one of those huts when you come, but at any rate we shall be independent. The Davises who have the other half of this mansion (which has a much more romantic name, Halcyon House), are very was easy to get on with, but it isn't the same thing, specially as we find the only way to divide the place is to share a drawing room and dining room. She is a large female, slightly of the country I think, and he is a trifle cockney! We only see our respective husbands a few hours in the day, as they never get back before 6 in the evening even on Sundays. Its really a very queer life – we spend our time waiting for them, pour food down their throats and pack them off again and sit back and wait for them again. When they do get back for good they're too tired to do anything but drink and stare into space. I suppose things will calm down eventually. The others in the regiment are very nice – all rather funny little men. Mac is one of the youngest so its quite clever of him to be Adjutant I think.

We've been out hardly at all and have met only a few people. We went to the Club one dance night and watched a Cabaret – the place was absolutely crammed and apparently is every night of the week. Naini is sober compared to it. One day too Mac got back early and took me for a walk into the country – its absolutely perfect with pines and grassy tracks and running brooks, very like Surrey, you almost expected to find primroses. The grass and trees by the roads are emerald green and the soil is bright red. The only big snag is transport as bicycling is useless and it means taxis all the time. Luckily we're central here, only two minutes from shops and cinema and about 5 from the club. The shops by the way are more or less paralytic, but I've spotted a cradle thing and one of these days will pluck up enough courage to go in and buy it! The only reasonable place is what is known as the Assam Industries which has lovely Kalimpong work and lovely prices attached, being a sort of charity affair. We went down yesterday and helped serve coffee there which was quite amusing as it meant eating a lot of biscuits in the background and looking round the shop.

I have been better on the whole but was in bed for two days with the inevitable tummy – Shillong brand and the most unpleasant I have yet encountered. I don't think I've ever felt so ill in all my life as the first day and was dreadfully sick without respite from morning to night. I got the doctor and he put me right at once but I'm being more careful now. Storrs Fox has been recalled to his depot in Quetta which is rotten luck for her – the present Staff Surgeon is a bouncy little man I don't like at all – not at all sympathetic and always in a tearing hurry. Apparently there is a man called Roberts³¹⁴ here who is one of the best surgeons in the world and is in charge of the Mission Hospital. He only draws Rs. 300 a month pay for himself and treats all Indians free – other people pay as much as they can afford. It sounds a wonderful place and I'd like to go there as there is no B.M.H.³¹⁵ here. My figure is still more or less intact though I'm blossoming into Concealing Clothes which probably are so obviously concealing they only draw attention! The doctor seemed doubtful that I had gone three months but I was very firm with him.

Thank you very much for your letter. I couldn't quite follow about Mumford and the Cypher business but I hope the Brig. isn't being tiresome and you've been absolved. I found out afterwards that the man I travelled up with was the chaplain of the Calcutta cathedral. I wouldn't have been sick so happily or made him look after Belinda in such a careless way if I'd known. She is full of beans and getting very fat and spoilt. She loathes being by herself and I have to have her in my bed at night – alright until 6 in the morning when Mac has a chota hazri and she becomes horribly wide-awake and playful. Kinks would be horrified by the way we fling her about but she seems to thrive on it and is terribly affectionate. People are booking kittens already poor little mite – there doesn't seem to be a husband for her even.

Must catch the post. Please will you let me know how much I owe for the photos and also any bills that come in for me this month? The Rs. 50 will only cover glasses and odd things like medicines. Mac fancies himself no end in your macintosh and goes prancing off to office in it! Its wet here but muggy – we haven't had a fire yet and are in cotton dresses.

Lots of love to Daddy and Robert and the spots³¹⁶, and lots to yourself.

Iris

P.S. Tell Patty I will write & give her my address please!

July 8th 1941 21 Cantonments, Shillong

My darling Mummy,

Thank you very much for your letter & the cheque – which I don't feel I deserve but is gratefully received all the same! I am glad to hear Fiona's trousseau is getting on so well – there's not much progress this end as yet but I shall not be so busy this month & will try to get down to it. I've been doing a lot of typing for Mac lately & have just written an essay for him on "Esprit de Corps" which anyone could tell he didn't write, it being extremely flowery & off the point. I refrained from telling your vulgar story though I'm sure the C.O. would have appreciated it! Rather a tragedy in the regiment – the Howman's beautiful golden retriever Bose – Dinah's boy friend – died this morning. He had gastric enteritis whatever that involves & was only ill a couple of days – it is contracted through eating out of rubbish bins. They adored him & are heartbroken.

By the way Howman is the name & he was in the Burma Rifles. He was interested to hear you were coming & you'll be able to dig up your pasts together! It is annoying that you will have to stay in a Boarding House but I don't know the size of the huts & if we could fit 3 in. It would be worth a slight squeeze, as Elephant Falls is so inaccessible unless one has a car. We could easily fit you all in here but having the Davises on top of us wouldn't be pleasant either – anyway there's plenty of time to arrange it. Her name is Joan by the way! It ought to be lovely in the winter – just now the climate is too muggy to be really pleasant. When the sun is out you steam, & I have worn cotton dresses all the time – no fires even.

Last Sunday they got a holiday, so we hired a taxi & drove out to Cherrapungi – a place about 30 miles away which gets the highest rainfall in the world I believe. However it decided, very thoughtfully, to stop for us & it was a divine day – boiling hot in fact & as none of us had taken hats we arrived back with splitting heads & looking like a row of lobsters. The scenery on the way out is amazing – great gorges with waterfalls and hills rising sheer to about 1,000 ft from tiny threads of streams. All this mountain county comes to an abrupt end with a cliff, & you can see the whole of the plains stretched in front of you. We crept into the only bit of available shade under a rock on the hillside, & stayed there.

Mac was asked to lunch at Government House³¹⁷ the other day but as I hadn't called I wasn't included (just as well, not being able to fit into any presentable outfit!) He sat next to Lady Reid³¹⁸ & swore they never mentioned the weather once but I have my doubts! The only entertaining their Ex's do is give informal lunches – they are apparently charming & completely simple & unaffected. Yesterday we got through our ordeal at the Whitworths – a Charity

Concert & supper at their house afterwards. The Concert was very good, chiefly featuring the Lewis - Mortimer clan – they are talented I must admit. The party consisted of about 15 people, among them Mrs Vernon, but I didn't speak to her. Mrs W. wafted up to me once in the evening & said she knew you, but was too busy organising us to be interested in us personally. I didn't care for her much – her manner is sweet & very condescending. He is a genial old bird, rather debonair like Stewart. Apparently Mrs W. suffers from a mixture of anaemia & high blood pressure (sounds odd!) with a bit of Bright's Disease thrown in, so I suppose one ought to make allowances.

This morning we went down to the Work Party & tacked shirts – even I could manage it. They work every day here till 7 in the evenings & on a much more sensible scheme – only tacking is done by hand & then everything is machined. One group of people do pyjamas every week, one shirts & so on, so that one can really get expert at a particular thing. I'm going to try & go every other day as my conscience pricks me about the amount of War Work I've achieved so far! I bought a Kashmiri shawl yesterday for Rs 9 – hope that's reasonable. We are all staging a revolt in this household as Mac & Davis are made to feed at the Mess & pay Rs 3 a day which is rubbish & means a bill of Rs 100 a month for each of them whereas we feed all four of us for about 40! Mac has just returned very pleased with himself because he had written at the end of his essay on esprit de corps "Excellent. Show to all British Officers"! The C.O. must have appreciated my pointless purple passages, but it pains me to have to conceal my identity!

Have a slight tummy upset to-day & consequent sickness, but have been very fit otherwise. Hope your troubles are over & Daddy's periodical attack of Wirellessitis!

With lots of love to you all, from us both, Iris

[No date] 21 Cantonments, Shillong Iris to Violet

Darling Mummy,

I've just read the awful news of Billy Bailey's death³¹⁹ & its given me a horrible shock. Do tell me how it happened. I suppose it was heart as it must have been very sudden. It really is cruel coming just now with the wedding arrangements on. I wonder what they will do. Unfortunately I've just posted a letter to Pat, written before I knew and sounding terribly heartless now. Poor Topsy – I feel desperately sorry for her. I don't think there's any point in writing though – she'll be getting so many letters & have such masses to worry about. She will feel absolutely lost I imagine, specially as the house will have to be handed over to – W.T? – anyway the whole situation's perfectly tragic. I will be writing to Pat. This is only a hasty scribble – my proper letter will follow tomorrow. Only I feel so unhappy about them all & helpless to help.

Please don't go sending me any birthday present – Belinda is more than my share! And I think all my allowances had better stay with you now to help pay wool etc.

Will write to-morrow. Lots of love, Iris

July 23 1941 21 Cantts.

P.S. I've forgotten Pat T.S's³²⁰ address, could you please forward this letter!

My darling Mummy (& Daddy of course!),

Your lovely parcel arrived yesterday, and letters and wire – thank you very much for them all – I felt very spoilt. The contents of the parcel were all adorable, and the dressing jacket so sweet. Who made that little dress? I should love a couple more like it if you could have them made & let me know cost afterwards? I expect it was Mrs Marshall's durzi – there's nobody to touch him here as far as I can find out. In a burst of birthday extravagance I went and bought up stacks of baby wool as the shopman told me no more was procurable – I can always keep it. I have about 6 little coats now – d'you think that's sufficient? I think I ought to start a bit bigger sized things now. Please keep an account of all that you're spending for me – Mac has a mass of pips now and we shall be fabulously wealthy when various transactions have taken place – we shall be getting Rs 900 nearly! I want to put aside a lump sum for hospitals etc and then see where we stand. Perhaps a car might be contemplated a little later.

I had a lovely birthday, as Mac took the afternoon off & we drove to Elephant Falls for tea – we had it perched on the edge of the Falls themselves & Dinah adored it of course. There are a series of waterfalls and you climb down steps beside them – it's most impressive. In the evening we dined at Pinewood Hotel³²¹ with some planter friends of Macs – lovely food, but the place full of dusty antiques, people & furniture, & very depressing to live in I should think. Prices there are scandalous, drinks etc being twice as much as the club – I wouldn't put my foot inside the place unless I was being treated!

The morning wasn't so thrilling as I went for an examination by Dr Brown – the lady doctor. She's in charge of the Ganesh Das Hospital³²² & is quite young & very nice – quiet & sympathetic. She prodded and punctured me &

seemed quite satisfied, except that she said I was rather anaemic and must take those new pills, which I've been rather slack about. According to her the baby is due on Dec. 15th so with any luck we'll all have Christmas together in the bungalow.

The bungalow question is still typically unsettled, but if the regiment moves up in September we wives are going to refuse to be left behind and shall install ourselves in tents till the huts are ready. I'm sure we could put you & Daddy up for any time, but Robert would be rather a problem – chiefly because of his extreme boredom – with no companionship. Mac & I have worked it out like this (taking for granted that the huts are the same pattern as Bareilly). The front room, which we used as an office, should be the nursery (a) because it has a fireplace & (b) is full of windows. If Daddy & you wouldn't mind squeezing into the dressing-room and using that as a dressing room before it's born, then afterwards you & I could share the big front room & Mac sleep in the dressing-room, with bathroom attached. That is presuming Daddy & infant wouldn't be in the house together. In any case Mac could always move out into a tent. This sounds very cramped & complicated but I don't think would be really – it would only mean servants etc. not using that front place as a passage but going via verandah. We wouldn't suffer, but it would be a bit of a squash for you. Anyway see how your plans work. I should hate you to go into a boarding house if it could be helped. There is no need to come and move me – I shall merely sit put and direct operations! Mrs Howman has lent me a book called “Mothercraft Manual” which I pore over quite a lot but still feel rather impersonal about it all!

My letters are all dreadfully domesticated I'm afraid, but life moves slowly here, for us at any rate. To-morrow we're going to a large drink party given by one of the governors advisors or secretary's or somebody at which H.E. will be present – and I suppose I shall have to appear in my bathrobe as usual – it's the most depressing garment with a drooping sash which manages to tie in just the wrong place! I was sitting stitching shirts dutifully this morning (I can make a shirt in 2 mornings now!) when Bundook Malmstrom shook me by the shoulders with the usual Swedish rapture at meeting people they hardly know or care about! They have taken a house here till September – I must say its quite a thrill seeing a homely U.P. face again. I miss my girlish clusters, but I suppose I must put away childish things and Settle Down someday!

The coolie picture sounds lovely – you must both bring your paints here as there is masses of material – the women are so attractive in their hoods & capes.

I do apologise to Daddy for the Radiant Motherhood in my letters – he must find it tiresome & dull, but it's the only subject I give much consecutive thought to these days!

Thank you again for the lovely things.

With lots of love – Iris

August 1st 1941 21 Cantts

Darling Mummy,

I do apologise for landing all my girl friends' letters on you to forward, but I can't find or remember any of the addresses.

We have been quite gay lately – for us – and last week went out 4 nights running which is a record and will take weeks of recovering from! The only memorable night was a huge drinks party at the Dennehy's³²³ (governors Secretary) at which their Ex's were present. Mac, with quite a lot of drinks inside him, spent the evening telling the Prime Minister³²⁴ how Assam should be run, but the old boy took it very well & said he would communicate his views to Gen. Wavell³²⁵ when he saw him! I had a few words with Lady Reid – she is quite beautiful and very retiring. I met a lot of people in a vague way but never gathered any of their names, though some of them helpfully suggested going round to see them. Another night we had a binge at the Mess, and an I.C.S. chap came and talked to us about head-hunting – very gruesome as there are quite a number of men with those tendencies in the regiment I gather! We have shows at the mess every Saturday which is beginning to bore us, as we have to cough up for them and it isn't really so thrilling when one meets those same people every week-day as well. The C.O. is charming in his way but loves the sound of his own voice and launches ad nauseam into long stories beginning “When I was in Waziristan” which aren't particularly appetizing on a Saturday night.

I've just spent the morning with a girl whose having a baby in October, & she's given me a complete list of all the things I want with addresses. So don't get anything in the way of sheets, nappies, mattresses, towels etc. as I have minute directions about them all. She knows a place where you get nappies 2/8 a dozen – sounds pretty good don't you think? I'm getting 4 vests from Commonwealth Trust so don't have any done. The only thing that seems impossible to find is a rubber apron, so if you run into one could you please get it? She says 4 nightgowns, 4 viyella petticoats, 4 lawn dresses (22” long) are enough, plus matinee coats etc. Could you let me know sometime if we have these or if I'm

to get anything in that line ready? I'm sure actually that there's plenty done. Sudden panic has arisen because yesterday Fiona kicked for the first time, and I suddenly realised that all this was personal and not so remote! It made me laugh like anything when I felt her (this "her" business is only to humour Mac!) although I believe some people do dramatic faints. She won't perform to order though & Mac is sceptical still. Ayahs seem an awful price – Rs 40 for sleeping in – but I'm poking round and getting spies out so hope to be able to find something cheaper.

Belinda & Bubbles (the puppy) are now terrific friends and amuse each other for hours. Bubbles unfortunately seems untrainable and plays havoc with our rugs but what can one do? Sharing a house is beginning to be a bit trying as petty things crop up that get on my (extremely raw, I admit!) nerves. However.

Eileen sent me one of those ghastly Good Luck of Flanders things which made me speechless with fury – no doubt its object!³²⁶ Mac says they can be reported if passed round military circles, so Daddy might inform Rex that he'll be having his dear little daughter court-martialled soon!

Must catch post

Lots of love to all, Iris

August 3rd 1941 21 Cantonments, Shillong

My darling Mummy,

Your lovely parcel arrived yesterday and we were thrilled with everything. She will have masses of dresses and the nighties will be quite alright. Thank you very much for them all. I really feel lots happier now. I will keep the vests and send back my own to you as soon as I can. Please – in future don't continue my allowance. Now Mac is a Captain it's just spoiling us, as we can manage quite well without! I'm glad you agree about the pram & I won't have to have a mattress etc made. I would certainly like you to come in November & Mac says the sooner the better as the responsibility of coping alone is frightening him! – the only trouble is accommodation which is unpredictable still. I should think the move into our own bungalows would take place in November but you might have to live for a bit in a Bachelor's Quarter – squalid I'm afraid. If you were here you could help me arrange the nursery, paint bunny rabbits on everything within reach & generally get things ready. Another snag – we don't know if we're to be provided with any furniture of any description and one can't hire here – cheery prospect having beds & drawing-room suites made, but we're waiting for definite news before we start really raising our voices.

Mac goes to-morrow and I shall slowly start organising the packing – merely directing operations at a safe distance – I'm keeping Nathu with me. I have comic dreams about the infant's arrival – last night I dreamt I went along to the hospital on the scheduled day, feeling very well, & was laid on the floor as the bed was being kept for the baby. The Dr then said "One, two, three GO!" At which the nurse hit my tummy a colossal crack with a hammer. Nothing happened & he said crossly that I wasn't having a baby at all – I'd eaten too many potatoes! When I insisted he produced a Dhow (the war weapon of Assamese tribes, like a kukri) & said Very Well he'd see. At this point I woke so the argument was never settled.

I had a terrific screech from Suzanne³²⁷ yesterday full of Naini gossip & she is thrilled they're to stay on another year. I wonder if Daddy is as pleased! She says Mrs Webster tells Deborah confidentially at ever Work Party that it was a bad mistake but they have no idea to what she is referring. Poor old dear – I'm sorry you aren't "wishing" each other in the street any more! Suzanne says Daddie's only comment on her artistic efforts was they "showed enthusiasm" which depressed her somewhat!

The Comdr. Allison you wrote about is here now & lectured to the regiment yesterday & to the women at the club this evening. Mac was very impressed by him and says all the girls will fall for him & his nautical charm. I want to go this evening but it is Mac's last day so am forfeiting my share of heart-throbs. It's a pity it was to-day as I believe he's very interesting apart from his flashing smile.

Belinda insists on going to sleep on my pad which is trying of her. She is a ravishing animal & in lovely condition – she follows me round everywhere and screams if she's left alone too long – very dog-like. How tiresome of Solly to produce such a huge daughterful family but I'm glad they're all well. If you still have any left to bring with you we would like to buy one – Mac has a sneaking liking for them in spite of the fact that they "cant do anything" – ie retrieve.

Dinah is fatter & sleeker and more dismal looking than ever – poor old dear, she hates the frivolous youngsters all round her. Their puppy is a terror and messes our nice green rugs every day – they're a sorry sight and it is merely told it is a naughty-little-thing isn't it – so I don't see much chance of improvement.

Yesterday we had a tea-party to meet the wife and endless sisters of one of the Indian Officers – a Gurkha. They were so pretty & spoke no known language so we filled our faces and smiled brightly at each other for an hour or two!

I've just got Daddy's parcel of pills – thank you very much & I'll take the hint! I've been lots better the last few days & put down the sickness to that fresh lime juice I was lapping up so conscientiously & have now stopped. We also have a new cook which no doubt has something to do with it.

Must stop – hope the babies are still flourishing.

Lots of love, Iris

August 12th 1941 21 Cantts

Darling Mummy,

Thank you for your letter of the 6th – the trousseau sounds marvellous and I'm sure there's enough of the dresses side now. The knitting doesn't progress very fast I fear but there's plenty of time yet. Fiona is being very energetic, and I'm still getting slight sickness for no apparent reason. However we've just had a row with our cook here & I think I'll send for ours, though it is rather an expense. He keeps writing chatty letters hoping we enjoy the climate here and asking tactfully when we shall be getting our own bungalow. I try not to economise over food. Only this place runs away with money in an incredible way and we simply must save! The idiotic part is that Shillong is bursting with fruit & vegetables and fat cows & practically everything one needs, but they get better prices from Calcutta so it's all sent straight down without giving us a look in – a typically topsy-turvy arrangement which means we pay huge sums for things that grow in our back garden practically!

By the way, while we're on the gruesome subject, I believe Nathu wrote to you about his pay being raised. I'm sorry you should be bothered, but he seemed to think you'd take his side and I couldn't convince him. However I do think Rs 40 is too much for us to pay him, even as a Captain, don't you? It's certainly expensive for him here, and lonely too, but all the same I can't believe he should have to get 5 or 10 Rs. more than other peoples bearers. If you do answer him, don't be cross, but please point out that Captain's bearers never get 40 – do they? If you like to enclose a chit in my letter jut to satisfy him – I hate you being bothered with our affairs but the old boy seems to think you're quite a divine oracle and is always sending his love to “Marmy” as he calls you!

Mac & I were sleeping off our curry on Sunday when the bearer came in to tell us a sahib from Bareilly had arrived. Mac staggered along shoeless & with hair on end to find, luckily, it was nobody more impressive than Grahame. He's up on a week's leave from Chittagong, full of self-importance as he is to be Adjutant of a new Battallion being raised in Bareilly. We dined with him last night at Pinewood & he informed us loftily that he had got to get through Rs 1000 on his leave – result being we ate & drank ourselves to a standstill trying to help him & felt very sick. Dear Grahame – he is looking so pink & young & trying to wear a harassed responsible expression befitting his Position!

The Bottles are now in Rhanikhet I gather disposing of his boils before he rejoins his Battallion. Little Mottram³²⁸, Raynor³²⁹ & co have gone to Pindi. In fact Bareilly is quite changed and I'm glad we're not there as it was such fun last winter and will be a very poor imitation now. Poor Mrs Moss – I do hope her baby isn't dotty as a result of hurling herself about like this – she's such a pathetic little thing and I'm sure it would make a lot of difference if she could get through this safely. Belinda insists on going to sleep on my arm which makes writing practically impossible.

Mac has gone down to Digboi³³⁰ on a 5-day scheme to stop imaginary parachutists landing – he left to-day & I'm feeling rather high & dry. While he's away I shall try and visit one or two people who've asked me to “come in anytime” and probably won't even recognize me!

Last Saturday at the Mess we had a v. interesting talk by a man called Jakes on Scotland Yard & the C.I.D. especially - its amazing how intricate the whole system is and how simple the average criminal.

I haven't had an acknowledgement from Bobby of our wedding present (a tea-cloth of ours that was probably familiar to her!). Billy wrote from hospital poor dear, & Richard very sweetly sent me a birthday wire. You can tell Lady B³³¹. Maureen is flourishing but if anything drastic happens to her I'll let her know immediately!

Everyone in Shillong except me seems to have been down with flu, throats etc & in spite of being snuffled over in and outside the house I remain untouched (its alright I'm leaning heavily on wood!). this is probably due to my living off liver & spinach – I'm sure Daddy will agree.

Must stop for now.

Lots of love to you both, Iris

August 19th 1941 21 Cantonments

My darling Mummy,

Thank you very much for your letter. What rotten luck for Daddy, but I hope he's quite recovered now. I'm really not worried about the trousseaux. Only get strange urges at intervals to discover How I Stand which involves taking out and listing everything I've got and putting it back again in a different order! At present I'm knitting some pilches – I'm not sure what they're for but they look the right sort of thing to have. I shall also make a couple of pairs of leggings I think, as I have a feeling it will need them to sleep in. The basket is very small, with the idea of putting it into cars & trains, and I'm having a few qualms about whether mattresses, baby etc will fit in!

Mac came back from Digboi on Sunday very thrilled with the place and people and full of patent water-tight schemes as to how to become a Brigadier in 6 months – very encouraging as a topic of conversation! He travelled with a Gen. Heywood³³² who has been in all the "shows" of the war – Dunkirk, Greece & Crete – and was full of interesting reminiscences. Among other things he said that a case of a German parachutist wearing one of our uniforms had never been known – it was all press propaganda. He took the King of Greece out of the country.

Moving in such high circles has gone to Mac's head & he is thinking of applying for Staff College when the regiment is settled. Actually there's more in it than that only I can't speak of it in fairness to the regiment – only there is a lot of unrest and bitterness among the officers concerning the Colonel & his methods and the atmosphere at present is far from healthy. Please don't pass this on. You will see what's what when you come here. And why we don't want to stay with this bunch longer than it's Mac's duty. But we'll be here with luck, another 6 months & then who knows?

The Cummings³³³ drink party was fun until somebody gave me a long orange drink filled with gin which I swigged down in one, turned orange myself & remained in a sticky haze for the rest of the evening. Most distressing. The next night the lads of the regiment gave a rowdy party to which I went minus Mac but surprisingly enjoyed. We have a lot of musical talent in the regiment (among the men) & they perform at all parties. Must fly now as I'm off to see Dr Brown, but will finish this later & miss the post I fear.

Later. Dr B. seemed quite satisfied with me but told me to keep off fats in all forms, including cream & butter which is dreary. There were cues [sic] of women waiting with me, each slightly more bulbous than the last, and we sat and knitted tiny garments and discussed our "conditions" & the general horrors of "expecting" in a cosy way. A female rolled up at the end who informed us she was due to have the baby to-day which made everyone edge away nervously. It was really a comic performance.

Mrs Howman & I went up to Elephant Falls the other day – it's too lovely up there, the air crystal clear and so green and sunny. The regiment moves up on September 15th, but there is confusion about us as our huts aren't ready till December 1st. I think the solution is that we move into bachelor's quarters till then, so that the best time for you to arrive would be about 5th December. I hope you won't be bored to a standstill after your hectic life in Naini – there is little to do except watch the beans growing I should imagine!

Grahame said that with petrol rationing everybody in Naini would be wanting tum-tums so you should be able to dispose of the circus. It has come into force here and already there are abandoned cars strewn the roads having run dry.

The dog has just chewed up my knitting so I'm feeling far from charitable!

Must catch the post.

Lots of love to all – Iris

25 August 1941 21 Cantonments

My darling Mummy,

Rather a long gap between letters I'm afraid but I find posting before 11 in the morning rather a strain when my natural tendency, as you know, is to stay in bed till about 10! The Chilprufe vests sound lovely – of course they are the best for hot & cold weather, but I balked at the price. I will send my rather inferior ones along when they arrive – I hope they're nice enough to be a fair exchange but I doubt it! Much as I love smocks, don't let the dhurzi go too wild over them will you – I want to try & keep expenses down as much as possible.

I've been giving serious thought to this pram question and have come to the conclusion I shan't really need one at Elephant falls. I can carry the cot out in the day-time and when they're wee they don't have to be wheeled about surely? It also seems a bad thing to keep switching a baby about in the extreme cold. What do you think honestly? I feel we shan't be there more than a few months and it would be just a waste carting a pram up. But I want to do the right thing. The cot basket is ready and is rather sweet – v. simple – I'm having a couple of mattresses made to fit. Does one get plain rubber for the rubber sheeting? And what sort of bath-towels are best? Every expectant mother here has

different ideas and I'm completely flummoxed. I'm making face towels out of nappy material. The difficulty here, & at Elephant Falls, is having nowhere to put things & I'm dying to paint everything vivid blue & See Where I stand!

As I expect Daddy told you, Mac is off on a month's course, which gives me a sinking feeling but must be made the best of. The real trouble is that he is the only person who spoils me or in fact notices my Condition – quite apart from the fact that we can & do prattle endlessly about the subject which is, in some strange way, of no interest to outsiders! He has just done rather a good portrait of me – at least Nathu & I are much impressed but he has an artists usual dissatisfaction. You must give us some lessons in oils – Mac I know could be really good at portraits & I would like to dabble. You sound fearfully successful – will you paint Mac for me when you come. I'm sure he's got a very distinguished face in a rugged way!

It pours almost incessantly here, but still stays hot – we've only had a fire once & that was really just defiance. Life moves on at a leisurely but absorbing pace – we have resigned the club so only entertainment now is Cinema and occasional drinks parties. I have had a flowing chiffon robe made for the evening which has bows and pleats being ostentatiously tactful & makes me feel past all hope!

We went to drinks with Bundook & husband the other day and she asked me to play golf which was definitely encouraging & took 10 years off the age I feel now!

I suppose you heard Churchill's speech yesterday. As Mac says he tells us nothing we didn't know before, but makes us feel enormously confident as if he had revealed some infallible plan for winning the war at once. This Iran business is also a Good thing and we seem to have come to our senses at last³³⁴. It brings the war close to think operations are to be directed from India.

11 o'clock I'm afraid – and I do want to catch this post. Thank you for Nathu's letter, it has done the trick I think.

My love to Toinon & anyone else who'd appreciate it.

And lots to you all at Blyth Cottage, spots included.

Iris

29 August 1941 21 Cantonments

Darling Mummy,

I met Bundook yesterday, & she said her mother (Mrs Malmstrom) had bought a Tum-Tum in Bareilly & wanted a pony for it. What about Amelia? I don't know if you want to keep her as a riding pony for Robert, but I thought I'd let you know. I should demand a fairly fat price as they're rolling and mean as anything – even if it is War Profiteering! Her address is 27A Cannetts.

It rains and rains and rains. They have gone on a route march to Elephant Falls to-day poor sweets and will probably be washed back. To-morrow there is to be Sports at the camp in which Mac is throwing bits of lead about to the common danger. And we're all going to jeer. It will be pretty cheerless if we're expected to stand knee deep in sodden grass and be dripped on which seems a likely prospect just now.

Personally I like the rain and so do the few beans we planted when we arrived and which we're eating regularly now. Onions died a natural death without putting up any fight, and there are some tough and scorching radishes which we enjoy with tortured smiles and which gave me dreadful heartburn. I'm hoping our efforts at Elephant Falls will be more successful as we're sending to Suttons for seeds. I haven't sent for our cook as we're not going to be independent till December – up till then we have to feed in the Mess – and it's such an added expense having him around. But the horror we have now is going the day after to-morrow – he was producing flies as a vegetable almost and served revolting & indistinguishable messes till we could bear it no longer. My little jewel is willing to wait till December. By the way, is it true that Ala Din is ill & going to stop work? Nathu came pop-eyed with vivid demonstrations of his hacking cough &, of course, a brother of his own in the offing. I expect it's all some yarn though.

I have had a little more sickness – always at lunch-time, so I'm trying Bovril at 11 to see if that does the trick. Unfortunately Mac has a passion for it & I always discover him drinking sly cupfuls! My concealing day dresses make me look almost girlish – I hope my comparative slimness doesn't mean a girl which seems the general idea.

I went out to tea the other day with a girl who lost her husband in Eritrea at the beginning of the year – very pathetic as she is only 20 and has a year old baby – Justice is the name.

Just been sick – wot a life! – wish I could feel the really radiant health everyone talks about, but perhaps I'm to be unlucky. Anyway I think I'll stop now and lie down for a bit. Fiona is very much alive which is the main thing!

Lots of love – Iris

Iris to Mac [who had gone for training at the Small Arms School, Saugor, Central Provinces]

21 Cantonments, September 5th [1941]

Mac darling,

I've started well anyway haven't I? Don't damp my enthusiasm by not writing for weeks – as a matter of fact I hope you're doing so now in the train – on Bromo³³⁵ if that's all you can afford! Poor wee thing. I can imagine you sitting miserably in the carriage with your terribly compact luggage all round you & Gow's³³⁶ pimples as company. Actually by the time you get this it will all be over and you'll be steaming gently & studying hard (I hope!).

I'm sitting on my little verandah chewing Honicose³³⁷ (a black one) and wondering how I'm going to get through a whole month without you. I was terribly lonely yesterday darling and felt as if I would never see you again – the evenings are so long without somebody to tell me how fat and ugly I am. I seem to need you more than ever before now & when you're away the need becomes an ache that nothing will soothe. The trouble is I take you for granted and its only your absence that makes me realise how much a part of me you are. Darling I love you so & want you – its awful to be so tied to a person & makes parting unbearable. But you mustn't worry about me because I'm not moping and will find plenty to do. Fiona is a great comfort & when I feel her punching me in the ribs I don't feel lonely.

Dinah & I consoled ourselves yesterday by walking to those waterfalls past the cricket-ground & she had a grand time fetching fir-cones. We didn't get back till half past 6, and after a grim struggle with the wireless I managed to get good programmes till dinner-time. The Davises went to the club and who d'you think made a stately appearance – the Howmans! Apparently they sat in solitary splendour on the platform until H.E. was due to arrive, when he strolled nonchalantly across to the entrance & bumped, quite by mistake, into the royal party. Leslie & Munroe³³⁸ have just turned up after the usual little jaunt to Elephant Falls – they bicycled back! The C.O. couldn't even manage the journey up this time.

They're having the Sports to-morrow – Sandy³³⁹ is throwing your piece of lead & will probably go with it. We took Bubbles to the vet this morning to have her abcess lanced – she had to be pinned down by 6 strong men and is now bloody & subdued, thank God! Belinda regards her with grave suspicion, giving tentative dabs at her cheek & then retreating in a series of coy somersaults. Naughty little cat – she spent the whole night pounding up my bed and trying to sleep on my head & Dinah was giving her celebrated Impersonation of an Earthquake so I didn't get much sleep. This morning we've been paying bills and it broke my heart to see the piles of money vanish but I still have some left & am going to be gay & get myself some biscuits this evening. For Fiona's screen I'm going to get plain white material & stick pink & blue rabbits & things on it – will that be nice do you think?

I wonder if you've met anyone you know – write & tell me all about it sweet, and what you do every day. And if you want anything sent let me know. It's a lovely afternoon, the garden is green and gold & full of butterflies. Perhaps I'll start my book to-day – what do you think?! Anyway I'll stop this now. Please answer soon.

All my love, sweetheart – work hard and think about me. Hugs & kisses xx Totty xx

Your pay for last month & back pay is only Rs 965. I don't understand it – do you wonder I don't trust our advance calculations!

The bearer wants to know if you got the keys of your suitcase alright which he gave to a lorry driver following you.

21 Cantonments Sunday 6th [7th] September [1941]

My darling,

This is the next day and I'm again sitting on the verandah chewing Honicose (a yellow one). No letter from you as yet but I'll give you another day before I let fly! I wonder if you've arrived yet – I expect you have and your nose is already to the grindstone (?). It seems ages since you left darling – I can't believe its only 2 days and I've got to get through another 30. I shall have to start ticking the hours off like we did at school – it makes them go quicker!

The Sports were held yesterday & it was Frightfully Jolly – it poured all afternoon and we sat in soggy huddles getting colder & wetter, being shifted after each event to the other end of the camp, wading dismally through damp grass and subsiding again into pools of water with a bit of chair underneath. The I.G.P.³⁴⁰ was there of course, plus Mrs & a friend (who comes from Johort & has met you but I don't know her name!). These two were in high heels & silk stockings & wore brave fixed smiles on their faces which took nobody in except the C.O. He was in great form – being fatherly with the men and showing how popular he was till we were nearly sick.

When Mrs I.G.P. asked, by way of showing intelligent interest, how heavy the weight was, he stopped the proceedings & made them bring one for her to feel & we all had to say "Fancy that now" & titter when he pretended it was too heavy for him to carry – honestly it was chronic! The bright spot of the proceedings was tea when it was all

over – you should have seen me tucking in darling, but I was chilled to the bone by that time, and everything about me wringing wet. Collinson³⁴¹ drooped round all afternoon with red nose saying he had pneumonia but impressed nobody – actually I thought he was looking rather ill.

The Sports themselves were quite good and won by the B.O's³⁴² – due mostly to Munroe who won the 100 yds spring and helped a lot in the relay which they won. Sandy was third or 4th in both the events he went in for, and Leslie a good last in the half mile – he & Corporal Jacklin came chugging when we were just giving them up & thinking they'd gone off for a quick one! The ground was too slippery for the jumping really. Since we had the guts not to go to last week's party everybody cried off last night so I hope the Howman's & Browns³⁴³ had a rousing time!

The C.O. is frightfully pleased with life as Frederick – an old friend of mine – Major Gen. Grogblossom you know – is coming to stay with him next week. What a party it will be on Thursday with H.E. & Frederick – an old-friend-of-mine eating sausage & mash together to the strains of “Ikla Moor” rendered by Askew³⁴⁴. I shall go just for a good laugh.

Mrs Howman has asked me to tea to-morrow, to “keep an eye on me” I suppose, you old horror! Darling prepare yourself for a shock – I'm going to church this evening. It's a special service of some sort. That is if I can scrounge some clothes. The Davises are entertaining the lads to-night & I shall watch their whisky disappear with a great deal of enjoyment!

I think I've missed the post – bother. The bearer is packing our silver at present and Bubbles has been screaming solidly for an hour as they've gone out. I wish you were here – oh darling I do! Never mind, we'll make up for this horrid time won't we?

Write soon my sweet. Dinah & Belinda send their love & so do we – lots & lots. Xxxx Totty
xxx Fiona xxxx

Mac to Iris in Shillong

7.9.41 Saugor C.P. India

Darling,

Well here I am in Saugor. I hope that you got my wire alright. It is quite a nice spot but pretty HOT! The journey down was simply terrible, really. We travelled down four in a carriage and from Calcutta there was five of us. Most awful arrangement at a little place called Katni where although there was an ice factory within fifteen miles you could under no threat of at least Murder get a cold drink of any sort. However my travelling companions were very nice lads (one of them being the redoubtable “Percy”). Really quite a nice lad drinks to much and won Rs 1/8 off me at cards the other evening.

Calcutta was very sticky indeed. Had lunch in Firpo's³⁴⁵ and then passed out. The lunch I may say consisted of Ham steak dressed crab and a rather peculiar quivering jelly.

Rather extraordinary, Reggie Lowe³⁴⁶ and Graham Sell³⁴⁷ are here attending a course of some description. I haven't met Reggie yet but Graham was saying that he was getting to be very poisonous. I have met no one else I know well. Lot of faces etc I used to see at Belgaum³⁴⁸ and places but that is all.

Bye the Bye darling all the boys except me are champing their teeth because there are no women or at least girls here. I say everyone except me and possibly some of the married people!! So it does seem rather funny having such a lovely club (I have been told they have) etc and yet no one to give the place a kick. C.O's wife is a real tarter, makes all the lads lose their hers and they shys off.

Darling heart I have written this on my arrival so I want a reply soon as poss.

I am missing you terribly already and shall really be glad when I am back. I don't know darling but I always miss you so badly and am really never happy unless you are about. Shall write again tomorrow.

Xxx All my love and kisses xxxx Donald

Iris to Mac

21 Cantonments, Monday [no date. 8th September 1941]

What is your mothers address – the number?

Darling heart,

Still no letter to answer but I'll contain myself for one more day – then heaven help you! This can't be a very long one as the post goes in no time.

We all trotted off to church yesterday on the loveliest evening for weeks – the sky a riot of salmon & gold, it seemed wicked to be in. It was grim, as when we arrived the church was absolutely packed and we were led self-consciously right to the very front row – in front of the Governor & Brigadier & the Colonel. The latter was just behind & completely overcome by sitting next to Mrs Brig – I only heard a few muffled murmurs from him during the service and I wouldn't be surprised if he wasn't finding her places for her!

We went straight back from church to debauching with the lads – Munroe, Askew and Cooksey³⁴⁹ with Ethel & Bubbles as bait. The party started at 8 and went on till quarter to 12 – I was nearly dead with hunger & sleep & we only finally got rid of them by open threats. Askew & Munroe kept up an unintelligible stream of backchat & Cooksey sat close to Bubbles & got redder & redder – actually it was amusing for about 2 hours but after that a struggle to keep awake. Anyway I don't enjoy anything without you darling – honestly!

I have been quite fit since you left – no sickness or anything – the worst part of it now is feeling so heavy and inert. By the way what did you do with your mess bill?

Must catch the post sweetheart. I'll write at more length to-morrow. Bless you –

All my love, Totty

21 Cantts. Tuesday 9th September [1941]

Darling,

I got your wire yesterday to say you had arrived, and I presume I shall not get a letter from Calcutta – wretch! Not that I really had very high hopes. Anyway I'm glad you're safely there darling, and I hope the bearer bunderbust³⁵⁰ is working alright. What sort of rooms have you? And is it unbearably hot – I think September is beastly with the rains stopping but it'll be glorious here when you get back. To-day is perfect – blue skies & white cotton wool clouds. I'm in the garden, eating as usual, this time a banana. Dinah is stretched out panting beside me, & I feel very contented & well.

I went to tea with Mrs Howman yesterday & who do you think was there – quite right – Monica! Also a friend of hers. It was quite peaceful & nice and we all sat & knitted little garments & discussed our Conditions. We were interrupted by the arrival of the Colonel & Bruno³⁵¹ & from then on the conversation consisted of a monologue from the Colonel of what I said to the governor and what the Governor said to me and how amused the I.G.P. was when I told him. Spasmodic gurgles from Bruno of course – completely nauseating and it was all I could do not to show my disgust. He also spent the whole of tea telling us how greedy Bruno was & poor little B. couldn't take a sandwich off a plate without some fatuous remark about eating more than his share – it was the sort of humour one expects from the 4th Form at school and so typical – not to mention extremely rude. Honestly darling I think that man's mental and the less I see of him at Elephant Falls the better.

They won't sanction furniture officially but we may get it by roundabout ways. God knows where I'm going to put Mummy or myself as even Bachelor's Quarters apparently aren't progressing. These mucky marks are Belinda – she has been stalking round in the grass doing a bit of shikar after a butterfly, and is now trying herself in knots round my neck!

What news is there for you sweet – my life isn't exactly bursting with incident. Joan is thinking of going into hospital for 3 or 4 days next week to have her insides stretched or something – she's worried about not having a baby tho' there is hardly cause yet. I shall be alone then as L. will have gone – it will be a relief actually but I wish you could be here & we could have a few days undisturbed peace.

By the way, to turn to sordid subjects, the Chinaman has given me his bill & it is an awful lot – that box he made for you 5/8 & the Bearer said he could have got it for 4 annas! Shall I pay it or wait for you to argue it out? Everything is ready now except the basket.

Mummy sent me another parcel yesterday but mostly for myself – vast nighties etc. It seems to be getting quite near now & I'm pleased, but sometimes I feel a bit nervous – last night I had a horrid dream about it and woke up scared stiff. I don't think it will really hurt an awful lot, will it?

Darling I'm already ½ hour late for the post but might be lucky & catch it. Anyway its worth trying so I'll stop now. Hope you're well on your way to a D & not being too extravagant!

Lots & lots of love my pet –

Think of me – I do of you all the time xxxx Totty xxxx

Iris to mother

Tuesday 9th September 21 Cantonments

My darling Mummy,

It is a lovely day of blue skies & breezes and I'm sitting in the garden chewing Digestive Biscuits & feeling very well & contented. Belinda is doing a spot of shikar after a butterfly & Dinah is asleep on her back with all 4 feet sticking straight up in the air. As long as one doesn't have to be energetic these sunny days are marvellous.

Thank you very much for the parcel which I got yesterday – the dress of yours will be very useful and I shan't get anything else made till the smock stage. The soap was a brain-wave as it is the only thing I couldn't find here – I think I have everything in the way of pins & powders & bottles now – except Bath Towels, which I'm vague about. The Chinaman has made me a screen, bath table and legs for the cot, but all out of the best wood & about 3 thicknesses of it so they weigh a ton & costs a fortune – not too bright! However, I've decided to have everything white, with a bright screen & curtains – quite what I don't know, but I visualise pink & blue rabbits on a white ground & wondered if I could stick them on myself – d'you think it sounds feasible? There is still a depressing lack of information re our bungalows but I'll let you know as soon as I have any definite news. I believe the foundations of one have gone down!

Thank you Daddy for getting onto Belletti³⁵². I met him the other day and he explained about the mesh not being obtainable. I was only annoyed about it all, because he got the Colonels house cleared up in a week, but I gather now that it is more the landlord's bunderbust. We're supposed to be getting the Shillong Allowance but I can't follow the pay system here – they seem to cut Rs 150 off our pay straight away & it never approaches what we expected! We've concluded that E.C.Os³⁵³ don't get full regular army pay. What breaks us every month is the Mess Bill as they're made to mess in so much – at Rs 3 a day – & subscriptions come to 40. However one can't argue & we survive!

My life isn't bursting with incident but I find plenty to occupy myself and watch my swelling figure with placid enjoyment. I eat without stopping, brush my hair a lot & go out to occasional tea fights – I really have no desire to do anything but potter. There are some waterfalls about a mile or two away which makes a nice loitering walk for Dinah and I and she adores the water of course. One of the lads has lent me his accordion which amuses me but nobody else – Dinah howls mournfully. They (the lads) are really awfully nice and ask me round a lot to console me. They aren't much to look at & sport a weird variety of accents but are a good lot nevertheless. Daddy was right about planters – I've met very few one could call exactly "pukka" but they're kind-hearted & jovial & not as snobbish as the Army. Whether I shall spend my life among them or want to, is another matter.

By the way Mummy, thank you for the magazine – according to them our marriage should be a dismal disillusionment for Mac as I always shine in the mornings and do my hair unashamedly in front of him which are apparently the first steps on the downward path!

I think I have enough little coats now as I know several people are giving me them – if you are thinking of knitting anything those pilches or small-sized leggings would be best I think as its going to be so bitter.

Must try & struggle up to the Work Party – I haven't been for ages. Have you done any more pictures?

Lots of love to you all – Iris

P.S. I thought I saw Hayes at the club last night. Is he here?

Mac to Iris

Saugor, C.P. [No date]

Darling Heart,

Have just received your nice letter [5th] sweet. No I shan't let you down and I am going to write to you every few days as I promised. I am so sorry sweetheart that you are lonely and believe me I am just as bad. Its an awful feeling and the only thing about it is that I have plenty to do to keep my mind occupied, but you haven't unless of course you are beating up the chef or whatever else one can beat up.

I have settled down more or less have got down to serious work. They don't give one much time for anything else here. Work all day and lectures in the evening. I wouldn't mind that so much but one must also deliver lectures and be able to teach a squad on any weapon under the sun! I shall come back, of course, an expert orator, and shall pit my powers against the Colonel. Warn any of the lads to be prepared for the worst. Actually it is all most frightfully interesting and I am enjoying it very much. If only you were here it would just make the difference darling. I have a lovely room, I mean plenty for you and I, of course Dina[sic] and Belinda could fit in.

I have met quite a no. of people I know as I mentioned in my last letter. All quite a good crowd. I haven't had a beat up yet myself and at the moment I am sure I don't feel like one? I have not as yet spent all my money. As a matter of fact darling I won Rs 21/-/- at cards on the train coming up. I don't play cards usually and I suppose it was

beginner's luck. Anyway nothing would induce me to play again that day and I have hung on since (By the Bye the game was bridge)!!!

I went and saw a picture last night called "The Middle Watch"³⁵⁴ Jack Buchanan. You have probably read the book. Ian Hay wrote it, I believe. It was most amusing. Lovely American damsels getting taken out to sea in a warship and the usual complications arose. Good fun.

I am afraid I made an awful mistake in not bringing my gun down here as there is the most wonderful shooting around here. I wish someone had warned me. I could have sent you some snipe or possibly a nice big piece of tiger leg. It is not worth sending down the gun now anyway.

Darling you know what I am going to do, play a game of rugger for the school or something. I feel in most terrible training and shall probably be lame with stiffness for weeks. However lets hope with aid of a few long rest in the touch line and some "sucky" lemons I shall survive the game.

I have got the keys Nathu sent and also his brother is here. A very good bearer by the way. Younger than ours but very good quiet and clean. Recommend him to anyone.

I have written a letter to the Unit Accountant about that Rs 965/-. It is scandalous and something will be done. I don't know how the racket in the army works at all.

Bye the bye the messing here is Rs 3/-/- a day and the most frightful stuff too. Committee has been installed to do something about it amongst them myself being one of the bigger complainants.

Darling I was so pleased to get your letter and was most amused. Actually I was reading it amongst a crowd (not out aloud to them), and laughing to myself. I think they must have thought I was 'bats' but I didn't care! Please send lots more like it darling.

All my love in the world darling. Keep good care and go to the doctor and let me know the result.

More and more love sweet xxx Donald xxx

Saugor, C.P. [no date]

My darling,

I did not choose this small paper, it's the only paper I have in front of me. Darling your wonderful. I have received two letters from you now, at least I received three altogether and two yesterday telling me, and it dealt me a severe blow, that you had been to church!! I nearly went to my room and did solitary confinement just to insure that I would not go 'bats' on the spot. Anyway good show. Keep the family tradition up. It needs someone to do it and set 'Fiona' an example. Have had my nose to the grindstone and work has really been quite difficult. You must have before you come on this course, pre course training otherwise you haven't got a hope. Like me! I think I can manage to stay here without getting pitched out but that is all. It is really good fun and it makes one quite fit. Bayonet training is a bit of a hard nut to crack especially after breakfast or lunch.

Half the squad is Indian and the cracks they come out [with] are simply wonderful. The Instructors to are grand blokes.

I have just been chosen to play for the school Rugger team and only hope I shan't die with palpitation of the heart. I played yesterday and took things easily only flinging myself about when I was certain I wouldn't land on a heap of stones or a nest of red ants.

I wish you were here darling heart. I am so lonely in the evenings and someone to talk to. I get really miserable sometimes thinking of you so far away with that horrible crowd up there. I realize now what a bunch they really are. It won't be long though I hope before I am back and I am going to press for this Staff Course as soon as possible.

Darling I am sorry for this scrappy letter and I am going to write tomorrow and tell you how much I love you. You must be getting fed up with me doing so but still I am going to.

Just imagine me tonight whispering into your ear. "I love you sweetheart".

All my love, Donald

Please take [care] of yourself, and let me know when you want some more money

Iris to Mac

21 Cantts, Friday 12th [September 1941]

Darling heart,

Thank you for your letter [of 7th] which you apparently wrote on arrival, so I've been maligning you. I'm sorry the journey was so foul – I didn't think it would be so hot now. I don't like the sound of the C.O.'s wife darling – please

keep off!! Fancy Reggie being there & dear Graham – the latter still weighed down with Hard Work & Responsibility I suppose. I'm glad you'll "be pleased to get back really" – not very enthusiastic!

At the moment I'm reclining gracefully in bed with the mother & father of all colds – feeling like murder & sudden death. I'm burning hot & aching, my head like a lump of lead & my nose running furiously. I don't know where or how I got it, & I hope I'm not spraying germs over you by writing. It's so hot – my pillow is on fire. I hope Fiona won't catch it, but she seems fairly lively still. I wish you were here darling – I would adore someone to brush my hair and sponge my face – but it's just as well you're not as I look particularly repulsive with my nose polished bright red & my eyes gummy & oozing! I expect by to-morrow I shall be alright.

The party last night was the usual riot of gaiety. We had to arrive quarter of an hour early and were lined up like dummies to greet them – the panic before they arrived was terrific & futile. Bruno was almost worse than the Colonel – he kept telling me where to stand at which I promptly sat down at the opposite end of the room! The rest of the evening he fussed round like a broody hen trying to "arrange" people – quite impossible as the Colonel had already arranged that he & Frederick (real name Col. Lewis – only a Col after all that!) should share their Ex's exclusively. I managed to get next to Lady Reid for supper, quite by mistake I feel sure, and spent the time tactlessly drawing attention to the crockery knowing it was the one subject I must avoid! Glory be, what an evening – of course I was snivelling & sneezing & wheezing over everybody just to add to the jollifications. Must stop & eat some lunch now darling – quite an event in my bed-sick life (sick of it I mean.)

This is after dinner – I have been lying in a clammy lump all day & not capable of writing. Now having bathed (in mustard!) & fed I feel better. No letter to-day – I hope because of work, not the C.O's wife! Belinda is flying about in her usual bed-time manner. By the way there was quite a big earthquake here the other day – all the windows rattled.

I can't think of anything to say except I wish you were here & I spend my time saying that. I'd like to scratch your head and see that goofy, droopy expression you always have after dinner. Oh darling –

I suppose I'd better try & sleep, helped by whisky & lemon.

Good-night my love,

Hugs & kisses xxx Totty xx

Please answer about Chinaman – he haunts the place!

Iris to mother

21 Cantts. 13th September [1941]

P.S. What is wrong with Mrs Humm?

Darling Mummy,

A very speedy reply to your letter which I only got this afternoon. Reason being I'm in bed & craving for a little conversation. I have one of my really juicy colds which I didn't catch in time and is running its full course – very depressing, specially with nobody to fuss over me & talk to. My head aches too much to read or knit much so I lie in a clammy lump most of the day. Actually to-day I was silly & got up for lunch as I couldn't stick my crumby bed any longer, but felt so grim I hastily retired again. I drink hot lemon & chew aspirin and feel beautifully martyred – I expect it will have cleared off by to-morrow. This is an unhealthy time of the year apparently as there have been several cases of typhoid & a lot of flu. We're not well situated as a formidable drain runs along the bottom of the garden – however here's hoping we shan't be here much longer. We've got to buy all the furniture for our huts, and Govt. may pay us back – I have visions of being landed with beds, baths etc & am feeling bolshie. There is no electricity at E.F. so all our lamps, iron, toaster, coffee pot etc will be useless & we shall have to get masses of butties to add to the expense.

These grouses are due to my melancholy outlook just at the present moment – actually everything will turn out for the best and it will all be enormous fun I know. You must come prepared for the Arctic as it is bitter – well below freezing I believe! It's like Heaven to Mac & I to think of having a little house of our own again & a nursery completes the picture – we get gorgeously sentimental over Toast for Tea & Firelight on the Wall! I've only had one letter from him since reaching Saugor the wretch. Graham is there as well as dear Reggie and it is very hot. He also says everybody else (!) is worried by the lack of female society, trying not to make it sound personal so sweetly. It sounds the right sort of place for him to have gone. Excuse scrawl but this bed has no back to it and after five minutes I find myself prone with the paper out of sight & a hoisting process has to take place.

A few nights back we entertained the Governor & Lady Reid at the Mess, why I don't know but the C.O. always

likes to have some big noise about. (He is one of those people whose conversation is full of Major-Generals & Brigadiers, always referred to as "George-a-great-friend-of-mine-you-know"). They were made to eat sausage & mash off enamel plates & drink coffee out of enormous ditto cups that were very suggestive! I sat next to her at supper & spent the time drawing attention to these – horrid fascination for the one subject I knew I must avoid. She is so lovely with a marvellous skin & shining white curls & charming to talk to. Joan's party sounds typical, I went to one once & was in agony all evening! What a joy it'll be to get into my nice evening dresses & go & dance again. We occasionally go to the Club and I feel very matronly sitting in my concealing clothes watching the young things enjoying themselves. Most of them being twice my age & rather battered. I've even got to the stage of telling Mac kindly to run along & enjoy himself & not bother about me – advice which I'm thankful to say he doesn't take! He is very sweet & staunchly says I look quite normal but I'm beginning to swell rapidly now and even feel heavy. I start my 7th month on Monday so there isn't much longer to wait. The smock etc sound perfect & I shall be needing them as my 2 present dresses will have given out. I shall have to get a couple of warm smocks & have my big coat made up – I had a letter from Niall a few days back. Dolly is honorary Colonel of the South Lancs³⁵⁵ which N. says is a "great honour" – I wonder! He met Whalley-Kelley³⁵⁶ the other day who is commanding a bit of his famous regiment. I have been reading a fascinating book called "The Bride"³⁵⁷ & a sequel to "The Proud Servant", about Montrose's second love.

Have just had a mustard bath & feel lots better.

Lots & lots of love to all – Iris

Mac to Iris

Saugor, C.P. [no date]

Darling heart,

I am very disturbed by your letter saying you haven't received one from me. Honestly sweet heart, I wrote on the Sunday after arriving and it was posted Monday morning so by the time you wrote on Thursday it should have arrived. Anyway by the time you get this you will have realised I did write and have been writing regularly.

I am also worried about this accommodation. I have written to the C.O. and have put the case to him, and asked him exactly what he thinks we can do. I mean it is ridiculous if no arrangement is made. The dash C.O. is so full of his own ends that nothing else seems to matter. It could have been got over quite easily if we had waited a bit longer anyway.

Anyway darling don't you worry please because I feel so awful all this way a way and you worrying darling. I wish I was back with you sweetheart.

Had a letter from my sister³⁵⁸. She has just got engaged to a Lieut. in the American Navy. I am not needless to say pleased. I was always against her marrying an American. But what can do!

The family according to her letter are not pleased at least my Father isn't. She has turned into exactly what I warned her not to. American to the core. Simply awful letter full of Americanisms etc. Still she sends her love to you and says that from your photograph you must be a sweet Kid!! A 'Killer diller'³⁵⁹ in fact, what ever that may mean. Isn't it awful. I was awfully fond of Sheila and she has done the one thing I did not want her to do. Still I suppose one must resign to things happening against ones wishes sometimes.

Also had a letter from Pat Emerson³⁶⁰. He seems full of beans and is doing Adj of the 10/4th. He say Bottle and Jean are back in Bareilly and Bottle is again P.T. merchant. Bad luck on him. Also mentioned 'Bosun' who he says is Adj of his Bn. I must write to Bosun sometime. I feel awful for not doing it before.

The course here is still interesting and I hope I can qualify. It is most difficult but still, darling, I actually put in some private study. I can see you say "I hope so". But the private life of an individual here is very limited I can assure you.

That wonderful game of rugger I was to play was cancelled for some unknown reason to me. Something about the ground being to hard. Anyway I played hockey instead which made me equally stiff the next morning. Which reminds we have here an excellent cure for stiffness. I don't know if you have guessed what it is. Long BATHS. Absolutely superb. Yes, I must say the rooms are nice but the feeding is really awful. There is also a lovely swimming bath here. It is very nice all round. If only darling you were here I should love it.

Iris to Mac

21 Cantonments, Sunday [No date 14th September 1941]

Darling,

I'm feeling so miserable as I haven't heard from you for three days. I've been trying to console myself by reading your old letters, but its made me feel worse because then you used to want to write every day even if you had seen me. Oh Mac its made me feel terribly unhappy to read those letters because I know you don't feel like that now and it must be my fault. Perhaps I'm imagining things because its late at night and raining – but I feel frightened and depressed & unsure of you. I couldn't do anything without you now and if I knew you cared less for me I should just lose heart. The wind is howling & I'm lonely and want to be reassured you love me as much as you used to – and to have you close to comfort me. Do you remember one night before we were married we walked along a sandy lane and talked about black pits of depression. I'm falling into one now because I have lost something of you – oh Mac don't laugh at me because I couldn't bear it. I want you, I want you – now, to-night, to tell me its not true what I feel. Everything seems black & I know I'm writing rot but I must write it. To-morrow I shall be alright. I can't explain this feeling – I only know I want to have your shoulder & cry my heart out. You musn't mind me – I'm quite stupid sometimes – I always have been but it passes. If I have disappointed you as I know I have try & remember that there are bits of me, underneath, that are more worth-while & perhaps you will find them one day.

It is such a miserable night and I must go to bed. My cold is nearly better.

Good-night dear one - ignore what rubbish I've written here.

Totty.

21 Cantonments. Tuesday [No date. 16th September 1941]

Darling heart,

Two letters from you to-day so I feel better as I hadn't heard for 4 days and was feeling utterly deserted. In a fit of extreme misery I wrote you an incoherent letter which you probably couldn't make head or tail of but I was in an awful state at the time & had to do something about it. You haven't written that letter yet saying you love me and oddly enough I'm not tired of hearing it, so please do darling! I look forward to the post the whole day so when you're missing me in the evenings sit down & tell me so on paper – please.

I'm sorry about the gun, I didn't think the shooting season had started yet in any case. Perhaps it's just as well though with cartridges such a price – I found out to-day that we had the staggering sum of Rs 420 in the bank at present & at the end of the month that will probably be gone – so much for these months of saving & our inspiring calculations! I expect you're getting cross already and thinking “There she is at it again – nag, nag, nag about money” but darling I loathe it as much as you and would love never to have to have sordid discussions – which usually end in scenes. But we must try & save the next two months so try & not be too abandoned in cashing cheques – I see you have cashed about 5 already. Don't be angry with me for bringing up the horrible subject – I know it's not your fault that we can't save but the fact remains.

Darling, darling, say you love me quick and kiss me and don't lets quarrel about anything so unimportant. How did the rigger go – I hope you managed to avoid ant-heaps and emerged with all your limbs intact. It must be a bit hot work & very bad for you I'm sure but I expect it brings back the Old School Tie & your Murky Past generally?!

Tick-cha came back from his course to-day with weird stories of going to cinemas in Calcutta which you never mentioned – strange! He went to see Mummy in Naini and she landed him with a vast parcel to bring me, full of eiderdowns and tiny pillow cases with ducks on them – poor little Tick-cha was quite overcome when I opened them in front of him. He was feeling a bit shy and I couldn't gather much of his impressions of Naini, but from his murmurs I gather Blyth Cottage was typical pandemonium of dogs and Mummy trying to sort out pictures for an Art Exhibition & Daddy probably trying, ineffectually, to get the news! He is coming to Saugor on the 6th but you will be about leaving then won't you – when exactly does your course end?

Fearful commotion here as The Move is in progress & lorryfuls of giggling Assamese have been depositing themselves on the doorstep all day collecting Leslie's furniture. The dear “Les” & bearer have also departed & peace reigns again. I dread to think of the chaos up there & they'll probably all develop pneumonia as the evenings here are quite chilly & must be bitter there. My cold lasted three days which I spent in bed, & is alright again now. Apart from that nothing has happened at all that I can think of. This morning I went to see Dr Brown and she seemed quite satisfied & said my blood was better. It seems funny to think I shall only go there twice more before Fiona's debut – can you really believe it – I can't sometimes. I'm beginning to feel she is a person now with a character of her own. Its

rather queer. Do you think of it much and feel excited? I hope you aren't sorry we started families so soon – it has spoilt our first months in a way I know, but we can make up for it afterwards can't we sweet? We've got a good start on most people and much longer to be happier in.

I'm writing this after dinner and feeling full & sleepy & sentimental. It's the time when I want you most, but Fiona's kicking like mad and I don't feel so alone. I've just read a book called "The Bride" about Montrose, full of the bonnie Highland heather & bits from Burns nobody could possibly understand. I've also – prepare for a shock – started a book of my own. It is drivel & irritates me intensely, but I'll labour on & hope for inspiration.

Must stop & fall into bed –

All my love dearest heart – Totty

Mac to Iris

Saugor, C.P [no date]

My darling sweetheart,

I have just got your letter darling saying you are so depressed and you were in a big depression. Darling little thing you musn't. I wish I was there. I don't know how you can ever doubt that I love you darling. I love you as no one could ever do. You know perfectly well I could not do without you. It is only thanks to you darling that I am what I am now. That is honestly true. Before I met you I was rapidly going to the dogs drinking and spending far too much. You pulled me out of that. Look at the times we are together, I am always happy when I am with you. Now you are going to give me a little boy or girl, O! sweetie. What else could I ask for. Perhaps I have been very selfish to you and not told you I love you enough. You ask anyone on this course who I know and they will tell you that they are fed up with the hear[sic] of you. You have no idea how proud I am when the blokes are talking of marriage etc and I say "Ah but you ought to marry a girl like mine. I not only love her but she is the best friend I have in the world". That is absolutely true. It is not only that I love you deeply Totty but I do and always will regard you as all I have or want. It is only for you I am working and trying to do anything in this blasted world. Perhaps I take you for granted but that is only I assure you because I love you my darling girl and it is only when I am away that I realize how much I do. So my little girl you must never doubt me, never, never. When you are in the black pits and the spoon is churning away inside you must always say to yourself, well there is one person in this world who would do anything in the world for me. You may think the little finger as a jest at times but it is absolutely true and any time you do lift it in earnest you should know by now what will happen.

Sweetheart wait till you and I are at home I mean Scotland or England. Think of the lovely time we shall have. Looking not too far forward of the time we shall have at Elephant Falls in our own little bungalow with our own things all round us and Fiona making little gurgling noises to us. Trying I should think to tell us what [a] lovely time she is having. Just think of it sweet and forget this awful moments that comes to two people when they are so much in love with each other.

Well life here is still hard and one has hardly a minute to spare. I played rigger for the school yesterday in one of the few spare hours and got knocked about a bit. Nothing to worry about. I always seem to get my head in the way. Wonder all the sawdust has not fallen out yet.

Write soon darling and tell me that you love me as I do you and that you won't doubt me ever, please.

All my love and more darling girl xxxxxxx Donald

x Fiona

Iris to Mac

21 Cantonments, Monday 22nd [September 1941]

My darling,

I'm now in sole possession of the house as Joan went off to hospital this afternoon. It's pouring with rain and if only you were here it would be lovely – it's so peaceful without Bubbles careering round, just Belinda & I & Botavia. The wireless hasn't been very good by the way but seems to have reformed to-night. Actually I'm not going to be myself long as Mrs Howman has asked me to go there for the few days J. is away & I'm going to-morrow. It's very nice of her, though I wouldn't have minded being alone. I suppose it's better not in any case just now as I might have got ill in the night or something & there wouldn't have been anyone for miles. I hope the C.O & Bruno don't turn up too often – they're now proud possessors of motor bikes and fly daringly round at a good 15 m.p.h, the Colonel a suitable 30 yards

in front & both looking petrified but persistent. Apparently there is quite a ceremony launching them at Elephant Falls and fierce betting takes place as to which will get out of sight first!

Joan went out there yesterday & says the Bachelor's Quarters are quite nice & nearly ready. I hope the Colonel won't be angry darling at your writing to him about the houses. J. says there are a few logs in the compound of his bungalow but otherwise no sign of life. We have got to buy all furniture ourselves & may be paid back – d'you think its worth sending for your stuff? I shall only get the very minimum and anybody who comes in will have to sit on the floor. I'm having the rugs cleaned at terrific cost – I hopefully told Joan about the staggering sum they were asking thinking her conscience might prick her as it was mostly Bubbles' mess, but got no rise!

Darling nothing has happened at all since I last wrote, literally nothing. Yesterday they were out all day & I was sick after lunch and after tea walked to Pinewood to see the Flux's³⁶¹, but they had left the day before. The days just drift by, all the same, and I feel this is a period of waiting. Life seems to have stopped for a bit. I'm happy in a cowl-like way but longing for the time to pass.

By the way don't let my groans about finance make you send for more money 'cos I won't touch another penny, darling, of your father's money, & that's flat. We can manage & we're going to. You must get to Staff College – have you had any reply from Colonel Porter³⁶² yet? Perhaps this time next year we'll be living in John-and-Monica's house & have the Colonel oozing round us watching us entertain the Brigadier. What a hope but it makes a pleasant picture. Well my love – no more for now. Please write often, & let me know when you're coming back. Not very long now & I shall cry for days I know I shall feel so weak & happy. Love & kisses sweet.

Totty.

Iris to Mother

September 24th [1941] 21 Cantonments, Shillong.

Darling Mummy,

No letter from you for ages, but I believe the railway has broken down or something so I hope there is something for me held up. Thank you very much for the huge parcel which little Bola Singh³⁶³ came staggering in with on his return. He was quite overcome when I opened it in front of him and showered out tiny pillow cases! I'm glad he came to see you in Naini – he's rather sweet. All I could gather from him was that the dogs were fierce and the house full of pictures which you were attempting to sort.

The smock and skirt are very nice, the sight of my tummy sticking out of that comic hole in the skirt convulses me. I'm getting a couple of warm smocks, but really aren't worrying too much about the cold as Fiona is a bottle to me. I get purple & panting in the feeblest sunshine, and can hardly sit through a cinema, its most queer. I went for my monthly visit to Dr Brown the other day and she said my blood had improved. She extracts gallons out of my thumb & winds rubber tubes round my arm – I hate it. She also puts megaphones to my tummy and thumps it alarmingly.

Mrs Storrs Fox has been having a rotten time & she is producing too and was suddenly ushered off to hospital the other day as they thought she was miscarrying. They managed to avert it, but still don't know if the baby's alive or dead & whether she'll keep it. She's so keen to have it now he's gone & I do hope it'll be alright.

I went there the other day and we had a terrific gossip, talking solidly from 5.30 to 9 p.m. Apparently she always has some trouble with babies, in which she produces too much water and drowns them – it sounds gruesome. She told me some amazing facts about the Hatfields who she P.G'd with last year – they were extracting over Rs. 800 from P.G's and treated them very badly. Mrs H. used to follow her round the house complaining of the way she was treated, how nobody asked them out etc. And had a permanent wail on about imagined slights, Topsy being the chief culprit! Morgan³⁶⁴, she says, soaks solidly.

26th. I've just got your letter which must have been held up several days – thank you very much for it. I'm glad your picture was such a success – your painting ought to be quite a profitable affair if you go on at this rate and help towards that ravishing Country Cottage.

Had a letter from Patty & she seemed very pleased with it (the picture). Its rather sad that the wedding reception³⁶⁵ has to be in someone else's house. Topsy must feel that horribly.

What rotten luck for Mrs Humm. There is a slight typhoid scare here as there have been quite a lot of cases, the latest being a girl who had a baby with it on her & is very ill – luckily the baby didn't get it. Do you remember when I was last injected?

My cold has quite gone & everything's ticking over quite normally. I'm rubbing my tummy with Olive Oil as I remember Topsy telling me in piercing tones at a dinner party it was a good thing and one doesn't get creased afterwards. Don't know if its just an old wives tale.

I'm now staying with the Howman's as my house-mate went off to hospital for a few days and Mrs H. didn't think I ought to be alone in the house. It's a nice change – our bungalow is most depressing really, always dark and bleak & surrounded by drains. The Colonel unfortunately too with a cold – a definitely trying man, though I thought him charming at first. He's not popular in Shillong & I don't wonder – it's hard on her though 'Cos she's very sweet. I'm amazed she doesn't see through him, but she's always openly adoring & panders to his incredible selfishness at every turn. Does Mrs Marshall know him – do ask what she thinks of him, only my opinion is private & confidential please!

Did you see John Hodgen³⁶⁶ had had a son & is now Maj-General! Mac writes cheerfully from Saugor – he played rigger for the school & got a bit battered I gather as the ground is more or less concrete. The chief interest of the place seems to be the long baths! He comes back about the 5th but will have to go straight out to Elephant Falls so it makes little difference to me. I'm quite speechless & frantic about developments there & don't think our house will be ready in time for the baby – the Bachelor's Quarters are pitch dark & sordid. There is someone living about a mile away who could take you in if the situation is desperate – but its no use making plans yet. What a Country!

I have Dinah purdah now & this morning left her tied in the garden for 5 minutes & when I came back found a particularly repulsive pi-dog in attendance so hope the worst hasn't happened! She looks so intensely miserable shut away all day but I must be firm.

Must stop & write my daily dutiful letter!

Lots & lots of love to you all – Iris

Iris to Mac

at 4 Cantts, September 27th [1941]

My own darling,

I haven't written for several days as the railway line has been up and no letters have been coming in till to-day so presume none have been going out either. I've just got your letter in answer to a very depressed one I wrote, and it made me awfully happy. I don't really doubt you darling, only I sometimes doubt my power to keep your love, or anyway keep it as strong. I'm terribly possessive I'm afraid and its agony to me to think that even a part of you might slip away. Other people seem to be able to portion their love out sensibly & evenly, but you & I, I think, aren't like that – we have to have each other or nothing. Only with you darling am I really myself, with other people I'm always acting. And so want you to be proud of me, but I feel that with my leg & everything you never could be. I know you're sweet & say it doesn't matter but I feel it does and want to make it up to you in other ways. Our baby will wont it – it will be perfect in every way and we'll be so proud of it and make its life happy always, and remember our own childhoods and the things that used to upset us so we can avoid them. As long as we have each other and our children (!) nothing else matters does it? Success doesn't matter, or money (very much!) as long as we can keep young and in love. Which we will for ever. You musn't [sic] take my moods & depressions too seriously sweetheart. I always have them & they don't mean anything really only I do want your shoulder when they're on!

As you see I'm living with the Howmans & having a jolly time. As luck would have it the Colonel arrived the same day as me, thinking he was on his deathbed with some minor complaint of his nose, and has been here ever since. He sits humped up in a chair most of the day making revolting noises in his throat and complaining of draughts – all the doors and windows being sealed as usual! Meals are melancholy affairs in which we all sit in an admiring silence listening to dear Ross expounding on Albert or George, great friends of his & inevitably Major-Generals, and champng loudly with his mouth open. His manners are incredible – he thinks nothing of reading a paper at lunch. But honestly I'm amazed at Mrs Howman – she sits in open-mouthed admiration listening to his futile blatherings and roaring with laughter at his childish efforts at wit. I don't wonder he's so spoilt & conceited because she panders to him at every turn and says “Yes Ross” & “Of course Ross” & “There, there Ross” until I feel positively sick. Mrs Brown is just as bad and Bruno impossible. The whole house grovels round his highness and I just sit and register contempt which nobody notices but gives me certain satisfaction.

We drove out to Elephant Falls the other day but I'll refrain from comment & anyway my language couldn't be strong enough. I'll save it all up till you come back. I shan't see much of you when you do, sweetie, as you'll have to go straight off and I don't know when I can join you. The Bachelor's Quarters are pitch dark, but I don't really care, & shall come as soon as they're ready. The climate out there now is perfect, & you have a lovely big office with a roaring fire & your bed in one corner. Anyway I'm not thinking too much about the vexed question.

I heard from Mummy & her portrait of Pat nearly got awarded first prize in the Art Exhibitions which was rather

good. She's coming about the 11th of November I think. I've seen quite a lot of Ruth Justice³⁶⁷ lately & she's very nice and dreadfully pathetic I feel with no interest in life except her baby. She says Ross was just as unpopular in Delhi as he is here.

Don't batter yourself too much playing violent games darling. And please tell me when to expect you back. Must stop & get this posted.

Bye-bye darling heart

All love & kisses, All love & kisses xxx Totty xxx xo Fiona xo

21 Cantonments Monday 29th [September 1941]

My darling,

Two letters from you after a long gap due to railway hitches. You must take care of yourself darling and not get poisoned arms & things. Have you seen a good doctor & are you fomenting it every day – the bearer could do it for you. Don't be careless about it, cos these things develop so quickly. Don't play rigger if you always get battered about it isn't worth it. I believe Tickcha is coming to Saugor soon & I'll send along some ointment with him.

Was horrified to hear to-day that your course doesn't finish till Sept [sic] 18th – did you realise it was going to be so long? I suppose theres nothing to do about it but I feel very depressed to think of another 3 weeks without you. Have you any chance of being chosen as an instructor? I wouldn't mind being settled anywhere for 2 years but not if it's a horrid job. You're quite right to decide to stay on in the army (not that you asked my opinion!) – it has much more scope and interest really. Do you seriously think theres a chance of Staff College & the C.O. will agree to you going? It would be simply wonderful & I know you could do it, only I'm a bit uncertain as to Ross's reactions.

The bungalow situation is quite hopeless – they're making them one by one & say ours will probably be ready by the New Year! Its Mummy & Daddy I'm worried about as they won't be allowed Bachelors Quarters & for them to live in Shillong is footling with the taxi fare Rs 12 to Elephant Falls. Deary deary me, life is indeed complicated. I'm quite resigned to bringing Fiona back to Bachelors Quarters – everyone is out for themselves & not worrying about other peoples babies. Don't fret yourself anyway as theres nothing to be done but wait & see.

Darling don't listen to a word that beanstalk Bates tell you – he's an awful youth & quite ignorant of my past which you know is extremely pure! He once picked me out of the dust when I'd fallen off Mrs Murray³⁶⁸ but otherwise I can't think of anything in his favour & his dancing was punishment enough for anyones murky pasts – mine naturally not included in that specification! You might write to Chalumdry & ask him if he'd like to be a god-father – what is Bosun's address – I'd have written ages ago if I knew.

I'm still feeling rather poorly as a result of watching revolting Pooja ceremonies at Elephant Falls this morning – hacking up poor little goats, masses of them. We were given seats of honour within a few yards of the charming performance but when they brought the first goat on Joan & I beat a hasty retreat & sat on top of a nearby hill where we couldn't see too much gory detail. Even so it was beastly – the little things struggled & cried & afterwards they dragged the bodies round & round shouting. We tried to drink cups of tea but felt too ill to get very far, & all the way back in the car we met headless hulks being dragged along the road. Altogether a pleasant morning.

The Colonel is still fearfully ill – did I tell you his temperature went up to 99.4 every night – you must remember him in your prayers darling! Mrs Howman used to stagger out with this information & there would be an appalled silence & I felt like asking if she had any hopes of him lasting till morning. He took at least 6 different kinds of medicine & occasionally tottered dramatically out in a sort of home-made gas-mask, very very impressive indeed. Do you know he went to see the I.G.P. every morning I was there!

Mummy wrote to say Skipper Likeman is coming here, & I heard from Kinks she was too. She asked if I had had much trouble with Belinda when she was on heat but as far as I know she hasn't been – I'm expecting the worst anyway & watching her figure with almost as much interest as my own! Dinah is locked away & attracting every repulsive pi-dog in Shillong, they even keep me awake by scratching & whining all night.

With which savoury subject I'll close! Write often sweetheart & take care of yourself. I shall be wanting more money if you're away so long, but not immediately.

All my love, lovely one

xx Totty x

Mac to Iris

Saugor C.P. [No date – c. 4th October 1941]

My darling sweet,

I am afraid darling that I have not written to you for a few days as I have been immersed in work and exams. Thank goodness they are all over now and I think I have done quite well. Enough anyway to get a Q1 which is all I want.

Well darling I am afraid you are right they have decided not to let us up until the 18th of this month. That is just over two weeks from now.

It will soon be over now anyway and darling I [am] just dying to talk to you and hold you in my arms and bite your little ears, that is of course if I am allowed to do these things nowadays. Won't it all be grand fun again. How is the little one. I am afraid I am getting tremendously excited and can hardly control myself. I babble all day about it to "Pop eye" and "Passionate Percy". They both just passed me and send their love etc although they haven't met you.

Bates was very amused when I told him you had called him a beanstalk. Still darling I will believe you. If you were going to like anybody else I should think they would be better specimens than Him.

I am awfully annoyed about these bungalows etc. Why the dickens the arrangements in the blasted army could not be better I just don't know. Absolutely typical of course.

Darling I am sorry about not asking you if I could not stay in the army but actually it was your suggestion really. S.C.³⁶⁹, there is a chance. I am pulling every string to get there and funnily enough so far I have managed to get more or less all I wanted! Darling now don't take me wrong because I am in one of those moods when I want to tease you and ruffle your hair.

I am going out to play bridge this evening with some Major or other, actually his wife invited me. Wrote me a chit and signed it Yrs, Peggy. Never even met her Still?!?!?

Well sweetheart I am going to write again tomorrow Sunday and let you have a better letter.

All the love in the world sweet girl xxxxxx Donald

Iris to Mother

21 Cantonments, Saturday 4th [October 1941]

Darling Mummy,

Thank you for your letter telling me of Skipper's visit. I played Mah Jong with Mrs Storrs Fox the next day, and she is going to ask me along to tea or dinner with him when she can get in touch. I'll give him a minute packet of vests to take you – they're not nearly as nice as yours I'm afraid & they've been ages sending them. I got the parcel from the Neyoor Convent³⁷⁰ with three sweet dresses & a couple of pillow cases beautifully embroidered – they're really lovely. I have everything now, except the flannelette blankets which I'll get this month – I've been trying to space out the expenses!

The latest cheering news about the houses is that they won't be ready till the New Year, at least ours wont as the Colonels etc are being built first! I have made tentative enquiries about a couple who live quite near the camp & I believe take P.G's, for you & Daddy. Isn't the whole things typical & infuriating – I am so longing to settle in & get things ready but am resigned to pigging it, & baby in Bachelors Quarters. The ayah question is also knotty as they are against coming anywhere so lonely & ask Rs 40 & 50 for sleeping in, tra la, what a life, but I suppose something will turn up and smooth out the chaos.

Mac doesn't return till 20th or so blast him! Poor sweet, he seems to be getting very battered playing rigger for the school, & last time I heard had a poisoned arm which I expect he's neglecting hopelessly. The mails are still held up and letters irregular. The big Puja ceremonies are on here & the other day we watched some revolting sacrifices – masses of little goats having their heads cut off amongst much shouting and joviality. I removed myself as far as possible but a horrid fascination made me watch and I felt poorly for a long time. A very silly sort of amusement.

I'm looking forward to hearing about the Gymkhana – didn't Mrs Murray get hoity toity at having to mix with the other horses - or merely coy? I'm having a merry time with my family as Belinda is also on heat & it's a whole time job keeping her shut in. She isn't particularly noisy, but wanders pathetically round making little cooing noises to herself & practising abandoned attitudes for future reference!

I had a letter from Kinks (please thank her) saying Bidy was so tiresome she gave in & let her go to her husband – perhaps Belinda is still too young to mind much.

By the way, I was sorry to hear you had been seedy & hope you're alright now? You've probably been doing too much. I'm quite fit except for annoying heartburn nearly all the time which I expect is a phase. I can't believe I shall be starting my eighth month soon – the time flies in spite of doing very little. I'm trying, without visible success, to grow vegetables in boxes but am not really surprised at their diffidence in making an appearance as they are regularly dug up by the Davis's darling little pi-dog. Which reminds me, she says she will give you Rs 30 for a puppy if you haven't sold them all when you come – don't know if that's an insult, but I said I'd tell you! They sound sweet & I should like one, like old Fatty, only don't save a good one – we shall probably never show it.

Could you please tell me, Daddy, where you got your paints etc from as I want to get some nice blocks, brushes & so on for Mac for his birthday – as a gentle hint. We have decided that if they condescend to ask us, we shall stay on in the Army after the war. It's a big "if" but doesn't stop us making airy plans about when Mac's a Brigadier. We shall never have any money in the army, but I think it has much more scope & the planters I've met here have very little interest in life beyond drink as far as I can see. Two of Mac's friends are taking their leave in Naini I believe – one of them Mrs Pontin's brother.

Don't forget to take in every detail of Pat's wedding³⁷¹ as I'll be dying to hear about it all. What are Topsy's plans?

I hope this catches the post & doesn't get held up too long.

With lots & lots of love to you all, Iris

P.S. did you see Jackie Dorman-Smiths³⁷² wedding in the papers?

Iris comments on the festival puja and animal sacrifices in her *Daughters of the Empire*.

In the Autumn, the big festival of Dasseera was an occasion for invited guests at an outside entertainment, seated on a row of chairs behind a trestle table on the sports ground. Mac was away on a course when the invitation arrived - it was more a command - to attend the Dasseera celebrations. I think he would have forbidden me to go and told the colonel of the likelihood that I would go into premature labour at what I would have to witness. As it was, ignorant and still conditioned to do what a good army wife should, I sat all afternoon watching goats and bullocks being dragged into an arena to have their heads cut off, and their bleeding corpses lugged round to loud cheers. I became violently agitated and wanted to leave, but the colonel in the front row, flanked by his important friends, shook his head and flapped his hand, ordering me back to my seat. I put my head in my hands and wondered for the first time if the army was really right about everything.

At the next mess night I was taken aside and reprimanded for my behaviour, which might have caused offence, the colonel said, to the wielders of the bloody axes. Cementing the Regimental Spirit was an important part of his task, and this meant respecting the troops and their customs. I didn't say that as far as I was concerned they were entitled to their customs, but I saw no reason why I should have to take part in them. I hung my head dutifully and blamed my condition for my nauseated reaction. He was patronisingly kind, and handed me over to his wife, a gentle and subservient woman who had sat through years of bloody rituals on his behalf, and she told me I would get used to such things, which were part of army life. It was at that point that the army, the provider of splendid careers for my family, began to be revealed to me as a lot of stupid rather vain men, working a system based on sycophancy, snobbery, ambition and bullying.

Iris to Mac

21 Cantonments, Tuesday 7th [October 1941]

Darling,

I'm really being very noble writing to you now as it's 9.30 & I've had an enormous dinner & feeling terribly sleepy. But I feel I shan't catch the post to-morrow unless I do – and also – have you remembered? This time last year you were sitting beside me in the Cinema for the first time. I don't expect you even remember the film – ah well, such is marriage! We would have been surprised if we could have looked forward a year and seen ourselves married and practically parents, and I expect would be just as surprised to see ourselves a year hence. It's a surprising life in fact, but I hope, darling, you don't regret the carefree days before you met me, when you didn't have to bother about money & nagging wives. I expect you found the company of the "blokes" much more restful. (a big piece of bait on that line!)

We're having terrific fun & games over furniture at present & I wish you were here to help. I'm getting the bare minimum & expecting you to knock some pieces of wood together to fill in gaps! Life is such a muddle – don't know what to do about putting up Mummy. The houses are slowly going up, but apparently there is no glass for windows

though the C.O. was careful to inform us he had written to G.H.Q. about it.

We went to a very good film this evening – “Foreign Correspondent”³⁷³ – grand except the cinema kept breaking down.

Darling darling – come back to me soon – my pillow is getting worn out with all the love I lavish on it. Am too sleepy to write more – hope to hear from you one of these days – the post I suppose.

Hugs sweetheart –

Totty

Mac to Iris

8.10.41 Infantry School, Saugor, C.P.

Darling girl,

I am afraid I have been very bad just lately but I have not been feeling to well. I have broken out all over with small sores and the least scratch goes sceptic. I don't know what it is and have [been] drinking and taking a Tonic. It probably is that I am run down a bit. Don't worry though darling I shall be alright by the time I come back and that won't be long now.

The course has come really to [a] stop as far as physical work is concerned and we have one written examination to pass next week and then finished and then darling if I could fly back I would.

Did you see in the papers that Mrs Moss had a son after all! I am rather glad for both of them really. They seemed such a miserable couple one way and another. I am writing a chit to Major Moss³⁷⁴ Congratulating him.

Yes I think sending Pat that thing was a good idea. I shan't try and spell it as I should get tied up in knots and I haven't got your letter at hand.

Darling you must think my writing is awful but I am trying to write holding it between my thumb and small finger as the others are indisposed.

There may be a slight chance of getting back here, not I may say because I have passed my previous examinations well but because of my instructional ability. I wouldn't really mind now. The cold weather would be rather good fun and very interesting.

I played my bridge darling and won Rs 4/12/- sweet heart. Swelling the old bank balance!

Another thing that amazed me was that I received a Registered letter from Meerut. I thought that must be something awful when I looked on the front of the envelope as it was from the income tax office. On opening it I found that His Majesties Government owed us Rs 4/8/-. I nearly fell down with excitement. Shall we have a holiday in the Indies on that!

I enclose Rs 200/- (cheque) as you asked for. I shall be back by the end of next month if you want more.

Well darling all my love and excuse the scrappy letter.

All the love in the world xxxxx Donald

Iris to Mother

21 Cantonments, 9.10.1941

My darling Mummy,

Masses of things to thank you for & a letter from you just arrived. First the two parcels – the net robe is the loveliest thing I've seen and perfect for a christening robe. I opened it in front of Phyllis Storrs Fox³⁷⁵ & her friend who are both producing & they were fearfully envious – it really is exquisite thank you so much. The other robes are lovely too – I'll be able to put her on a new one every day. I'll return them to you, eventually to keep for the next grandchild & hope they won't be drifting back in my direction too soon! The parcel of maternity dresses arrived this morning & of course I had to wrench off my clothes on the spot & try them on – found it a bit difficult to decide what went where but eventually manoeuvred them right – & they both fit beautifully, length & all. They are much prettier than what I have at present. I will enclose a note for Mrs Ou thanking her for the pretty pillow case. This trousseau is going to my head, and I turn over everything giddily at least 3 times a day – hardly improves their colour but gives me a lot of satisfaction.

Skipper arrived yesterday, plus friend, and asked Mrs S.F. if she would put them both up – of course she couldn't but routed round & got them some rooms in a hotel. I went round to the Storrs Foxes in the evening and saw him for about half an hour. He was full of beans & boyishly pleased about his promotion³⁷⁶ – quite a different person from the querulous old man of a few months back. We all felt quite weak, in fact, at such an exhibition of chest-slapping vigour & nearly demanded if he'd been at Our Enos. Dear old Skipper, it's nice to see him young again I hope he reports me

looking well – this letter is due to return with him. You have a treat in store for you next June as he & Eileen are giving a combined entertainment – the first half of the programme a piano recital by her, followed by a Mystical Play written by him. He explained this latter to us at some length but the impressive climax was somewhat spoilt by Phyllis saying innocently “It’s lovely. Now tell us the mystery”! Her husband is back again on more short leave prior to departing – these continual partings & meetings & partings again must be very trying. I like him awfully what I’ve seen of him. I stayed to dinner after Skipper left and we played Mah Jong plus the other occupant of the house who is having a baby in about a fortnight. They say Shillong is one of the most fertile places in India & it certainly seems so judging by the queer shaped women wandering about it.

About the houses – we’re a little more optimistic now, and if they can get glass for windows I think they might be ready by the middle of December. Pinewood Hotel I’m afraid is beyond us as its Rs 12 a day & I doubt if the old hag who runs it would reduce. However I’ve written to a Mrs Woodford who lives about a mile from Elephant Falls, suggesting she should P.G. you. I believe she’s v. nice – her husband runs the Gov. Experimental Farm up there & she has lots of dogs & plays bridge so you ought to get on! If it comes off I think it’ll be the best thing & I could spend most of my time there & get out of the Bachelor’s Quarter. We will arrange something anyway – don’t worry.

At present we’re having a merry time getting furniture for the bungalows and in the interests of economy are going to live in on or under packing cases! Bathroom furniture & dining room stuff is what hurts most – also hot cases, doolies etc. If you could bring two easy chairs it would ease things considerably – I’m hoping to borrow or steal beds, bath etc for you & Daddy – oh & could you bring a mirror for yourself – I shall try & rig up a dressing table out of the inevitable packing cases!

Mac writes cheerfully & seems to think he has done alright in the exams – to-day’s letter informs me he has been asked out to bridge (!) with somebody who signs herself “Yrs, Peggy” & he professes not to know who it is – just as well he is coming back soon I think! I did contemplate having Dinah mated but (a) Couldn’t hear of a good dog & (b) felt unequal to coping with puppies when everything was so uncertain & I didn’t know where we’d be living. I’m sure she won’t have pi-puppies – I only left her a few moments & she is a very refined old lady! Belinda & she are both normal again – Belinda more adorable than ever as she grows up.

We went to a grand film the other day “Foreign Correspondent” – you must see it if you have the chance as its amusing & exciting. Hope Robert enjoyed “Thief of Bagdad”³⁷⁷ & wasn’t frightened by some of the “effects”. Please thank him for his letter which I’ll answer. I was a bit dismayed to hear he had “licked” John Whites mad dog but presume he meant “liked” it!

I have made 6 Bath Towels & am starting on the Face Towels. I have all the necessary knitted things now I think – mostly contributed by you & other people but still. It is pouring here & has been all day. I hope it keeps fine for Patty’s wedding which will be on about now. Our present, of course, will be late, but Kalimpong is so hopeless.

Must stop & go to bed – lots & lots of love – Iris

Iris to Mac

21 Cantonments, Friday 10th [October 1941]

Darling heart,

I was just getting quite inarticulate with rage at not hearing from you for a week when I got your letter saying you had been having exams – so you’re forgiven but don’t let it occur again! Hope you’ve done well darling – I’m sure you have. Only 8 days before you start back – you will leave on the 18th won’t you? I’m afraid I won’t see much of you when you do come but at least I’ll know you’re within reach.

Bachelor’s Quarters are ready but no glass is available – we shall probably still be here when Mummy arrives & that’ll be a deadlock if you like. I’ve written to Mrs Woodford of the Gov. Farm to ask if she would P.G. her from 15th & if she can it’ll be a load off my mind. Darling can we borrow beds & a bath from the regiment while she’s here as I can’t go buying an extra lot, they cost the earth. Life is one large Problem at the moment.

Darling I don’t like the sound of your goings on at all – accepting invitations from strange women – I best she’s a Snarer of innocent young Subalterns & I hope you were firm about the wife & family (nearly!) you left behind you. Has Percy found anything to get passionate over in Saugor. The gay old girls of Shillong are neglected as Paddy is also away on a course.

It pours & pours here – hasn’t stopped since day before yesterday & the spiders are weaving cobwebs round my corner of the sofa as I practically haven’t stirred from the fire. I shall go mad if I can’t get out soon.

Day before yesterday Skipper Likeman was here and I went over to the Storrs Foxes to meet him. He is a different

person altogether – frightfully hearty and boyish, almost painfully so, like an advertisement of “Who’s been at my Enos?” He had first been inspecting Elephant Falls but I didn’t like to ask his impressions of our venerable Colonel. I stayed to dinner after he left & played Mah Jong – Storrs Fox is back on more “leave prior to departing” & so she is very happy – though I should think these continual partings are a strain. He is stationed in Bareilly.

Oh before I forget will you please write to Baird or whoever’s responsible & ask for the Railway Receipt for our luggage as the baboo here says he can’t make enquires without it. Please do it at once darling.

If you’re not going back to Tea, couldn’t you ask for your Provident Fund now – otherwise they mightn’t give it to you at all! I’m hanging on to 2½d so I hope you’ve remembered that money I asked for.

Fiona is flourishing and growing huge – you won’t be able to get within 3 feet of me, I warn you darling. Mummy has sent her the most ravishing robe which she can be christened in & Mrs Vivian a little coat, & she’s also sending us a picture (she’s the one who painted all the pictures in our house.)

Mummy is taking Robert away from school as he is always ill there, & sending him back to Bunny – she took him to a party at G.H. with Skitty as usual alongside, & Skitty careered all over the royal lawns thinking she had come to heaven! Robert asked her to pull his socks off the other day saying “they’re so damnably tight – I don’t like using that word, but that’s what they are”!!

Well my sweet – au revoir and be good for the short space of freedom you still have!

Love & hugs & kisses always –

Totty

Shortly before my birth on December 20th 1941, the whole situation changed with the bombing of Pearl Harbour and the rapid advance of the Japanese through South-East Asia. This is the largely unmentioned background to the rest of the book and it is worth noting the start of the events.

The outbreak of war with Japan was on 8 December 1941. British forces in the Singapore region were reinforced by the battleship HMS Prince of Wales and battlecruiser HMS Repulse in December 1941. On 10 December 1941 these two ships were sunk by Japanese aircraft. The Japanese Army attacked Hong Kong on 8 December 1941, less than eight hours after their attack on Pearl Harbour. The largely Indian garrison held out for 18 days before being forced to surrender.

Japanese forces attacked the Malayan peninsula and captured Malaya (31 January 1942), Singapore (31 January attacked, surrendered 15 February 1942 with 80,000 garrison) and the Dutch East Indies, forcing the remaining British warships to withdraw to Trincomalee, Ceylon, and in February 1942 they were reconstituted into the British Eastern Fleet. The main Japanese carrier force made its one and only foray into the Indian Ocean in April 1942. During these attacks, two British heavy cruisers, HMS Dorsetshire and HMS Cornwall, and the aircraft carrier HMS Hermes were sunk.

The Japanese attacked Burma in January 1942, but they started to make real progress after the fall of Malaya and Singapore. The first Japanese attacks were aimed at taking Rangoon. By the start of March, Rangoon was evacuated and the evacuation of Burma became inevitable. There was disorganization in the command structure, with the war being commanded from Java. The Chinese army of Chiang Kai-shek was also under poor command.

A small force known as Burcorps was formed under Lt General Sir William Slim... Burcorps retreated almost constantly, and suffered several disastrous losses, but it eventually managed to reach India in May 1942, just before the monsoon broke. Had it still been in Burma during the monsoon, it would have been cut off, and would almost certainly have been destroyed by the Japanese.

Christopher Bayly describes how, in 1942, 'British and Indian troops were struggling back from Burma through Arakan and Assam, demoralised and disordered. Huge numbers of wounded soldiers were left without adequate medical facilities in foetid camps around Gauhati in Assam. British prestige had suffered a near knockout blow as perhaps 140,000 refugees struggled through the mud and high passes back to India. Of these, at the lowest reckoning, perhaps 50,000 perished of malnutrition and disease and the figure may have approached 100,000.' (Bayly, Raleigh, 267)

The events recorded in the following letters need to be set within the context of Donald Macfarlane's time in the army. Here is a summary of the first part of his military activities. The second part will be found in early 1943.

When the war broke out, Donald Macfarlane received an Emergency Commission as a 2nd Lt. on 25th April 1940 with the 4th Bombay Grenadiers. The Grenadiers is an infantry regiment of the Indian Army, formerly part of the Bombay Army and later the pre-independence British Indian Army.

Donald Macfarlane transferred to the Assam Regiment in 1941.

Peter Steyn, in his book *The History of the Assam Regiment*, volume one (1959), describes the raising of the first battalion of the Assam Regiment as follows:

'On 30 January 1941 the Governor of Assam was officially informed that a battalion was to be raised. Major R.C. Howman, O.B.E. was made commandant. The battalion, when raised, was to be located in new lines then under construction at Elephant Falls, some six miles away from Shillong, Major W. F. Brown, 8 Punjab Regiment was the Second-in-Command-elect.

A number of officers had arrived and they included tea planters D. K. Macfarlane, L. S. Davis and A. D. Cleland, who knew the country. Another was the first Indian Commissioned Officer, M. L. Barua. The inauguration ceremony was held at Government House, Shillong on 15 June 1941.'

ALAN'S BIRTH

In *Daughters of the Empire*, Iris wrote:

Soon after Dasseera we moved into the wooden house built a few miles outside Shillong in a beautiful, unspoilt situation aptly named Happy Valley. The houses were scattered amongst pine trees and smelt of newly split wood, a great improvement on the open drains. The soil around them was bright red, and they backed onto moors covered in lentana bushes which in Autumn were laden with red and gold berries. I didn't tell Mac about my doubts about the army, which he never shared, and for the moment was indeed delighted with what it was offering me. I wheeled my second-hand pram up and down the wooden verandah, hardly noticing the bombing of Pearl Harbour.

On a night of thick mist five days before Christmas I started my pains, and Mac tried without success to start the hired car that was to take me the seven miles into hospital. Eventually he roused some of his men to push, and while they laughed and heaved I sat in a ditch groaning. I had no idea what to expect, having attended no ante-natal clinics; the spacing of pains meant nothing and when we finally reached hospital I was put into a room alone with the cheerful information that it was going to get a lot worse before it got better.

An hour later when someone popped in to see me there was panic, a lot of noise, shouts to go and get the doctor, banging of enamel bowls, creaking of trolleys as I was wheeled helter-skelter to the operating theatre. The lady doctor, a European in this largely Indian-women-only hospital, rushed in rather tousled and put a pad of chloroform over my face. My son, Alan, was born rather blue with forceps marks on his forehead and because I was unconscious I still didn't know exactly what had happened.

Compared to my mother's stories, my own about this first delivery was quite tame. I had a room to myself, specially reserved for paying white patients, the hospital was clean, the Khasi nurses gentle and cheerful. And yet I was left alone for an agonising and frightening hour during my first confinement. Nobody gave me advice or encouragement, and afterwards the baby was dumped with me to feed and removed again to a strictly timed routine. I had stitches and breast abscesses and didn't put a foot to the ground for ten days. It was not at all what I expected; it was a messy, uncomfortable experience, vaguely degrading. I worried about my little bluish baby who wouldn't take the vast amount of milk I had to offer.

However, I didn't get post puerperal depression, nor was I more than passingly depressed by the news. I only vaguely responded to the disastrous events further east: the fall of Singapore, the sinking of the Prince of the Prince of Wales and the Reliant. For me, it was mustard coloured stools that mattered, and whether Alan had put on the required four to six ounces a week. I had a book called "Modern Methods of Feeding in Infancy and Early Childhood" which I treated like Holy Writ, and lay awake listening to my starving baby's screams at night because of the page where it said, underlined in black, "on no account give night feeds".

I think of those four months in Happy Valley as an oasis in the long, arid stretch of war that was the first four years of my marriage. Our wooden floors were uncarpeted, and the little furniture we could afford we rented from a Chinaman. The month Alan was born our entire pay packet went on hospital fees, and no month was easy. Yet to run our four-roomed house we had a cook, bearer, sweeper, water carrier, ayah and gardener, the absolute minimum of servants on which one was expected to manage. My part in the running of the house was to sit in front of my desk in the morning, writing in my Mem Sahib's Account Book. Here in the appropriate columns went the daily cost of sugar, flour, chickens and Vim powder; the latter must have been used for some esoteric rites because we got through several tins a week.

My Ayah was one of the hooded Khasi women; she pattered about on bare brown feet, gentle and spotless, and hung nappies up between the pine tree branches. My book had said that I must get a screen and a table for the bath so a Chinaman made these for me, and I sat and fed Alan for long hours behind the screen, inexpertly so that he had too much or too little and was restless. He grew a little, but not as fast as the book said he should, and my heart sank at every weighing. The advance of the Japanese armies towards our borders

worried me less than what the scales would reveal".

[Mac arrived back from Saugor in the middle of October and they moved into a small house in Happy Valley. Violet was also with Iris during the period of the birth and stayed for the month following. It was she who took the first photographs and Alan and his parents.]





BABY'S FOOD

Baby was brought up on the following diet:

- Firstly. Breast, fed until $4\frac{1}{2}$ months, when a little Oseemilla introduced.
- Secondly. At $6\frac{1}{2}$ months 2 tablespoons. Sp. up. at 2 p.m., & 1 teaspoon porridge at 10 a.m. Weaned at 7 months.
- Thirdly. At 8 months vegetables. At 10 months fish, chicken, puddings.
- Subsequently. Breakfast. Porridge, an egg lunch. Fish, liver, meat etc. Milk puddings, fruit, jam etc. Tea. Sponge cake, biscuits etc. Supper. Pudding, Farrow or fruit. 1lb of milk daily, with Vivot during cold weather. Hair oil. At 12 months a tomato juice & Benger.

From the Babees Book

Iris to Mother [Back in Naini Tal since the end of January]

Happy Valley, Shillong. [no date, c. 25th February 1942]

Darling Mummy,

Thank you very much for your letter — ours seem to be crossing. I'm afraid I don't write as often as I'd like but I find I feed Alan most of the day and in between have to try and exercise myself and vaguely run the house — its 12 now

and I've sat down for the first time. Heaven help the mother of twins! Alan is thrilled with all Uncle Robert's letters and laughed for ages over the Card – please thank him very much. He put on 8½ ozs last week (my weighing so perhaps not strictly accurate, but near enough) and is looking very fat and lively. He sleeps almost too well now and its often 6.30 before any of us stir which rather puts us out in our schedule but no doubt the extra sleep does him good and definitely does us! His tummy is still erratic – his last effort was after nearly five days and I was getting frantic and contemplating enemas but it was quite normal eventually – so what? He is very good and so chatty and full of fun – quite a different baby to the one you knew and I'm getting more thrilled with him every day. He's been promoted to the big bath and looks like a little shrimp and takes it terribly seriously.

We're on top of the world as we've heard we'll have to stay on here instead of moving to Elephant Falls – result is we're gardening madly and planning impossible hedges and terraces etc in our zeal. The 7th³⁷⁸ are far from pleased as we shall take over their mess which they've embroidered with all their own regimental riff-raff & also the range which they're using. It's a tremendous relief to us though.

Colonel Williams³⁷⁹ is off – very sad & she is naturally upset after having spent so much time & money on the house – we shall miss them awfully. The Morrisses³⁸⁰ are also going next month, he overseas – Mrs Lindsay Smith³⁸¹ has gone to join her husband prior to his leaving & Mrs Deane's in hospital (she had a daughter³⁸² day before yesterday) so we're high & dry again for the moment. Someone called Macleod³⁸³ is coming to command the 2nd – we know nothing about him but I believe he's an A.H.Q – wallah like dear Ross – there the resemblance ends I hope! Mac is not putting up for Staff College this time – I don't think he wants to miss any chance of active service which might come his way in this part of the world and in any case is interested in the thought of raising a new Bn. Also he's working for his Higher Urdu which he wants to pass before he dares ask for S.C.! The June course would be rather a trial in the way of travelling. Personally I'm glad of the thought of a hot-weather here and continuing this settled existence of ours. I feel so fit & happy. Of course one doesn't feel over settled with the news as it is and there is a lot of depressing defeatist talk going about which doesn't help and will lead to panicking if anything does happen – it is mostly from useless abandoned women who ought to be getting down to helping instead of discussing when we shall get our first Air Raid – it really makes me tired. Naini sounds far more enterprising and prepared. The latest and most brilliant theory is that the Japs won't bomb Shillong as they'll use it as a health resort when they're in Calcutta! Our wireless has been out of order for the past fortnight & they simply won't find out what's wrong – infuriating just now.

We're still having a beat-up every Saturday night and get later and later coming back but Alan never worries. Last time the Gurkhas had given a farewell cum binge to Williams and were all feeling on top of the world – one of them went up to a very super white-haired General (Macdonald)³⁸⁴ & told him he was an old playboy – the General was too astonished to answer even! He steered an uneven course round the floor with Mrs Williams and then confided in Williams (his C.O.) that he'd said he'd get her & he had! He eventually retired to the reading room and was last seen reading Punch upside down – the next day he remembered nothing at all! Your friend Johnson was there & liked him a lot & he told me at intervals throughout the evening he'd enjoyed his bridge with you.

Just got your letter – thank you so much. I have been cutting A's feed times down a bit since I wrote and he doesn't appear to mind – he spills quite a lot but I don't think you'd call it sickness. Have also been massaging his tummy. Mrs Dinkeldein's³⁸⁵ baby sounds as if its being overfed – did you suggest the Castor Oil remedy? How strange Naini will be without Command or Civil – just a mass of women. I hope you don't get moved as I'm afraid I'm relying on you in an emergency but we can fit into a tiny space. I shall stay until the last possible moment, but I suppose for Alan's sake I should have to go if things get really hot.

I wonder if you'd be annoyed if I handed Ling over to the Meinhardtts³⁸⁶? I feel that if the worst happens I couldn't cope with so many animals etc on a journey & they're very keen to have her & adore animals – she'd be so close that it wont be a real separation. She has to be tied up so much here as she spends her time pulling the baby's clothes off the line and strewing them round the garden and Ayah's getting a bit frantic! I really think she'd get more freedom there and though she's a sweet little thing she is rather a handful with a baby about. I was terribly upset about Solly – poor little thing, I hope it was over quickly. Anyway I'm glad it wasn't my old Fatty.

We had quite a full-blown earthquake the other morning – I was feeding Alan and when the house began to rock leapt up and started to dash outside but was restrained by Mac who has apparently been in Mexican ones and knows – when it and I had eventually calmed down I found Alan still sucking placidly having clung on bravely throughout the turmoil. You'd have been half-way to Shillong I should think, it was quite sick-making.

Our lettuces have started to flower & have never been really edible – they tasted like grass. We're going to try them cooked. Peas are forming pods & carrots-cum-larkyspurs also doing nicely. The loony Mali is working for the Mess now & probably supplying them with a lot of our seedlings!

Well I must stop for now & feed myself before I start on him again!

Heaps of love to you all from us all – Iris xx

P.S. Haven't forgotten your knitting bag but so far haven't been able to get in. Am going this week I think.

No 1 Hut, Happy Valley [c.3 March 1942]

Darling Mummy,

Thank you very much for your letter & the enlargement – it is awfully sweet. When you've finished with the negative might I borrow it for a bit? It doesn't feel as if we've been married a whole year – and yet I can hardly remember not having a husband! We celebrated on Saturday by having supper at the club & Mac has given me the most adorable set for our writing desk (very superior baize-topped affair pinched from his M.I. room). It's a Kalimpong one in the same green as our trays etc. You wouldn't recognise our drawing room now – we've had a final re-organisation & made it look charming. The garden too is pretty marvellous. All flattened out with a row of circular beds and the sweet-pea are continued all round. We've had arty little stone walls built & employed another mali, about as mud-unto-mud as the other but more energetic.

I've suddenly become super enthusiastic & spend most of my morning grovelling. The cabbages which were eaten seem to be making an attempt to grow again & the peas are forming pods in all directions.

You'll be surprised to hear I played Bridge last evening – the Meinhardts are keen & quite good & we took them on – I made some pretty dreadful blobs but wasn't quite as paralytic as I'd feared. I had miserable cards – one hand I had 7 clubs to the Jack & 6 diamonds to the Queen & Mac went soaring up in no trumps! They're a nice couple – young & agreeable – & it's a blessing having them now that everyone else has gone. Our C.O. in due to arrive any moment – there are rumours that he came from the 6th Gurkhas but I think they originated with Barua³⁸⁷. I've no idea where he'll stay.

Alan is bouncing with health and spirits and is very good on the whole – this morning is an exception for some reason, I don't think he can find his thumb! He put on 6 ozs last week and 4 this and is getting very long in the leg. Chilumchi has sent him a sweet silver mug. I'm having trouble with the Ayah who according to the other servants pinches my sugar and tea and spends her time cadging in the cook house – if I speak to her she flies off the handle and sulks for the rest of the day and I'm getting a bit fed up. She's good with him but I can't cope with her touchiness. In fact I'm in the thick of Servant Trouble.

Nathu's family keep wining that they're all dangerously ill & will probably wear him down in the end, & the Chokras³⁸⁸ all want to go to their homes – its all panic of course but most tedious. They really are a spineless collection & I shall sack the whole lot & wash my own dishes if I have much more trouble! The news is hardly cheering but I don't think there's any need to contemplate flight yet. We're fed up with Thel Singh as he won't put our wireless right & charges us 5/- a time to change batteries & then never does it properly so we have to have it done every few days. What a country – I think the domestic chaos has upset my milk as he's been very fretful to-day and doesn't seem to get much though I know its there. However it'll all blow over no doubt! We're having peculiar weather of fierce torrential rain & thunder & hail – I feel perhaps it might be an Act of God to flood the countryside for the Japs but it certainly isn't helpful for our poor little seedlings. We were supposed to be walking into Shillong to-day & I was going to try & get your knitting bag & a film for the camera – don't lose heart though – it will arrive eventually! I was very glad Margo³⁸⁹ had a son as she wanted one so badly – he ought to have been a 9 pounder at least. We had a letter from Mac's brother³⁹⁰ the other day, he's trying for the Navy. Did Desmond³⁹¹ ever get in by the way?

We have some lads from Rangoon in Shillong & they're apparently in a pitiful state of nerves due to dive-bombing literally all of a tremble. To crown everything we haven't had a paper for 3 days so our news has to be second-hand & distorted – this letter seems full of grumbles, probably liver from having to be in all day – “it never rains but it pours!” Couldn't you tell me in code where Command has gone?! Mac doesn't know but suggests where Cynthia & Pat went on their honeymoon but I said that wouldn't be any more helpful. Do hope you won't have to move.

Heaps of love from us all to you both & Uncle Robert – Iris

P.S. Have got some suppositories. Do you put the whole thing up or just a bit like a Soap stick?'

No 1 Hut, Happy Valley, [no date c.15th March 1942]

Darling Mummy,

Thank you very much for your two letters and wire. I didn't mean to worry you so much about Alan. I must have written on the 4th day and been growing hysterical as I usually do – quite needlessly as it always turns out. I will try the Magnesia but doubt if it will be strong enough – three good doses of Paraffin is all that affects him and he's getting

very cute about medicine and simply spits it out – ditto water which I simply can't get down now. What beats me is that his motions aren't constipated and passed perfectly easily and are very large. I think he'll only get right when he can start taking more exercise. Mrs Deane's baby suffers the same way and she's ringing up the Welsh Mission matron about it so I'll see what her verdict is. Don't you worry though – he's very fit, skin lovely and putting on a regular 5 ozs a week (he's 9lbs 9½ ozs now) so there can't be much wrong. He takes a violent interest in everything that's going on, watches everybody's movements intently and can almost reach out for things – he's full of talk and laughter and is really adorable. Mrs Deane's infant is sweet and the image of him, but looks younger at 3 weeks than Alan did at birth and is bright red and puckered. She is supplementary feeding her, at all hours as far as I can see, not well-trained like mine! He doesn't murmur till 6 but as often as not I find him aware when I go through which is a testimony to your Early Training if you like! I've cut his feeds down to about half an hour and he's just as happy but still spills a lot. I'll go on feeding him for 7 or 8 months if I can and wean him slowly, patent foods are getting more and more scarce apart from anything else and I'm terrified of tummy here. Ayah has settled down a bit and I'm keeping her until I have any more trouble, it's a rotten bunderbust really as the time when I really want her – in the afternoon when I'm resting – she has to have off. Nathu has departed to settle his affairs, swearing he'll return but I wonder – actually I think he was in rather a mess and as he didn't ask for his fare I couldn't stop him going. Our masalchi³⁹² is doing bearer and managing very well. As for evacuating myself – I shan't do that until we see which way the Japs are going to turn next. I only hope if I have to come, it won't be the middle of the hot weather.

We still have no wireless. Is Patty coming to you as well as Suzanne? She told me she suspected a baby, I'm so glad. Topsy of course will go quite hay-wire – Naini will be full of gay young Grannies playing bridge together!

Talking of bridge, I've played 3 times now & am beginning to see light & not trump my partners Aces too frequently. Mac & I have beaten the Meinhartts every time. He & Mac were going shooting this week-end but he sprained his ankle walking home from our house last night so it's off. I thought of carting Alan off and going too but the weather is too uncertain to risk fire-less and probably leaking tents. To-day is another wild & stormy one – I knew this would happen directly I packed my thick clothes.

We had a Kuki³⁹³ Pija here last Saturday which was great fun. I enclose the programme in case it amuses you. It started by a long & comic speech from a petrified recruit (he said the Kukis were longing to fight the Japanese as they had been very rude to us!) & the rest was dancing & singing & eating of revolting concoctions with forced smiles, wondering how Alan would like a diluted version! The wretched Kukis presented us with chickens, eggs, cream, vegetables etc & refused to take them back saying we were their father & mother etc. All most embarrassing but we got round it by giving them a whack of rum – which kept them singing for days! The raising date of the 2nd Bn is the 15th & as Mac will probably be Adjutant I shan't see him for dust & am wishing our privacy needn't be disturbed yet awhile. We're planning great things for our garden & the mali is an adept at pinching other people's seedlings. We've eaten some peas & the carrots are nearly ready – if only this incessant gale would stop.

Didn't I tell you I had a wire of congratulations from Granny? It was about a month ago. We had a parcel from Mac's people too including his little knife and fork set. Alan has really grown out of his cot and I must get him another. I've taken him out of very long dresses and petticoats and am going to make him some vests out of that wool-acitex I got myself. The cook's getting a film to-morrow in Shillong so I hope to have some snaps for my next letter. I heard from Billy the other day but no indication of where he is. Also Richard who was still uncertain of getting a commission. I wonder when he'll arrive. Thank you for your hint re E.C – most subtle! I've dropped my pen & bent the nib so excuse scrawl.

Please don't worry about Alan – I won't let him go too far. Will get that stuff you mentioned.

I've just had another invitation to a binge in the lines. I've asked everybody several times how many children they've got so will be quite devoid of conversation henceforth!

Heaps of love from us all to the family – Iris



Darling Mummy,

Its ages since I heard from you but I expect you've been very busy & letters are taking about 5 weeks to reach here from Calcutta alone so can't imagine how long from Naini. I hope the parcel arrived safely. I enclose some snaps of Alan – not very good still and rottenly developed but they will give you an idea of his size – it's a pity my face has to be so prominent always. We're trying an enlargement of him smiling and I'll send it along if its good. He looks like a little picanninny in one doesn't he? They don't do him proper justice because you cant see his lovely skin and blue eyes and his hair is a goldy brown like Macs. He's getting very wicked these days and wants to be awake all day and played with and can be a little fiend! He can roll over from his tummy to his back and nearly right over again and is intrigued with the world that is beginning to unfold itself – in his bath he grabs his knee and digs his nails into it and then looks hurt and surprised! His tummy is a little better so perhaps the olive oil is the solution. I am a little worried about his food as he seems to dry me up in about 10 minutes – I got him some "Ostermilk" but he wont take it, in fact thinks a bottle is a form of amusement and smiles politely but won't suck and spits out what he does. I'm not worrying while he continues to put on weight but don't know what to wean him onto eventually.

There's nothing of violent interest to report from here – we have planes going over every day and lots of sirens afterwards, but I imagine they're carrying evacuees³⁹⁴ mostly. Mac is working all day till 5 and then plays some violent game and by the end of it all is too tired to move or think. He loves it of course but I sometimes long for those lazy days of the "T" Coy! The lads we have here are awfully nice, and are all qualified in strange subjects like Birds & Modern Languages & Plant Life – they go off for long treks & bring back vast quantities of bugs & butterflies & of course find this country absolute heaven. I have even got quite keen & crawl through the undergrowth after hairy caterpillars for them – Mac frustrates me usually by letting them loose from match boxes & cigarette tins & the bungalow is seething with them. We've been having the queerest weather – a week of howling winds, then 4 days tropical heat & now it's cold & wet & I've got to unpack my warm clothes for the umpteenth time. The place is full of cuckoos, isn't it odd? It makes me homesick. Our garden is beginning to look like one. All the larkspur are out & the cauliflowers & snapdragons just starting. The second lot of peas we planted are huge but no beans as yet. We have put turf round all the beds & the effect is definitely artistic.

27th Have just got your letter – it took 7 days. I'm glad you agree about me staying – actually it was only a momentary spasm that made me think of coming, when Barua³⁹⁵ told us about the small gauge. It is not bombs I'm afraid of – I don't feel they'll waste many on Shillong somehow – but the awful chaos there might be if we are evacuated. However as you say things seem a little brighter and my moment of panic has quite passed. How awful for that Mrs McAllum³⁹⁶, Burma has produced frightful tragedies everywhere – there are people here who left absolutely all except what they stood up in & sometimes their husbands. I see Brian North got an M.C. but it didn't say posthumously³⁹⁷? Briggs too has done well hasn't he?

My brat, bless him, has now gone to the other extreme and got a slight tummy upset. Its probably "Ostermilk", or me eating too much rhubarb! You seem to be getting on very fast with shorthand – I don't remember putting words together for ages. "Iris" is downward "v" don't forget. I had a letter from Mrs Howman the other day – Ross has been very ill with autrim[sic] and Malaria. Oh. Very important. I called & made a slam at bridge the other day! Lady Reid has asked me to be on the Committee of the Lady Hardinge Linen League³⁹⁸ – have no idea what it implies but suspect I have to supply Assam poor with pillow-cases or something.

Bye-bye & all love from the three of us – Iris

Happy Valley, 6.5.42

Darling Mummy,

What a day – Alan has had prickly heat, Belinda kittens and we our marching orders and I've been running round madly trying to pack and soothe the crying baby and midwife the cat all at once my head is going round and round. Just to finish it all off it is our Bridge Night to-night and I shall be utterly unable to concentrate or count trumps or any of the other things I find it hard enough to do at the best of times. However!

We're going to Elephant Falls after all – such fun, one can't even get taxis there and its permanently raining, not to mention unstained floors and the other joys of hut life which you know too well! It breaks our hearts to leave our garden now, which is getting so pretty and our vegetables all on the verge of being eatable – besides I love this place and we've been so happy here. But we're lucky to be together at all and in a cool spot so I mustn't grouse too much. Also it has forced me to really get down to packing which I've been dabbling at very ineffectively for the past fortnight. I'm packing

away all but the bare essentials and not going to open the boxes again. I think if I come I'll bring a box of linen and silver as I've a horrid feeling I shan't see again what I leave in Shillong. Mrs Deane is staying till she thinks its hopeless so I can travel with her. She was thrilled to hear of accommodation in Naini as her mother-in-law is an evacuee here and they had despaired of a hill station. You'll probably hear from her. Nathu of course is not returning & my temporary bearer has gone too so I'm without – its quite easy ordinarily but packing the house up too is a bit of a burden. Very good for me I tell myself at intervals & think hard about what Some People are Going Through. Actually, I have about a week to do it in so its not so bad...

Belinda has produced 3 kittens (the 4th, an enormous one, was dead) in Macs bed of all places! She started at lunch time & I spread a clean towel under her which offended her so she took herself off into Macs bed. Not one of them is Siamese – one black & white, black white & brown & just black. Very disappointing. Mac swore he would drown them but when it came to the point said don't be so silly how could he kill an animal so they're still alive! I'm sure someone will take them.

Herewith the enlargement I promised – very badly done but rather sweet. Poor lamb, he has had prickly heat all over his back though it isn't terrifically hot. I'm having to give a little supplementary at most feeds now and the "Ostermilk" seems to suit him and has regulated his insides. He is absolutely adorable and trying very hard to sit up – once propped up he can stay there by himself for several minutes before gracefully toppling over to one side. We took more snaps to-day. This is the next day and I walked into Shillong this morning and am feeling a trifle part-worn – it was sizzling and we went a much longer way landing up the other end of Shillong and having to walk miles to the shops. My feet are in ribbons. Forgot Topsy's Revlon too - will try and remember next time.

Your letter to Mac has just arrived with the cheques – really you shouldn't have sent them as things are just as expensive for you, but thank you very much – we will keep them until we see what's what but whether I have to use them to travel or not we will pay them back just as soon as we can. It was sweet of you to send them and will help us out if there's an emergency. Squadrons of planes go over daily – American I think. Apparently they might land paratroops here but will get a warmish welcome.

Must stop & do the million things I have to – Belinda broke most of the crockery I left out this morning so I've got to unpack my yesterdays handiwork to replace it. The joys of home life!

Heaps of love from all, - Iris





SHILLONG TO NAINI TAL

In *Daughters of the Empire*, Iris wrote:

The April day [in fact about 18 May] we chose to leave Assam was the same one decided on by about a third of its population. I was travelling with Alan in one basket, and a Siamese cat with four kittens in another, clothes, tins of Ostermilk, and nobody to help me. This seems extraordinary when I think of it now. I was nineteen years old and had a five day journey ahead of me and yet no servant or orderly could be spared to come with me even as far as Calcutta. I suppose we relied on the usual obsequious station master to clear the way for me, lead me to a first class carriage, dust down the seats and lock the door against intruders. That was the usual procedure, but these were unusual events and normality was abandoned. I was just one of thousands fighting my way out of a beleaguered position.

Mac didn't even come with me to the boat, where I crossed the Brahmaputra to reach the railhead. I had to fight my way up the gangway, and then stand jammed to the rails, unable to move for the crowds. A servant passed carrying a tray above his head, and as he fought his way through the press of people I was able to remove the fish from the plate and drop it into the cat's basket. There was no question of feeding Alan, it was all I could do to stop him being trampled underfoot. Off the boat, we were ten deep on the platform waiting for the train. When it pulled in, its doors remained firmly shut. It was already crowded and was obviously going to pull out again quite quickly without taking on any more passengers.

And then a miracle occurred. A white arm, a hand with scarlet glistening nails attached to it, beckoned me from a crack in a window. Somehow I got myself over to the door, and it opened, and I was back in the world I knew: a first class compartment with only one other passenger, a Memsahib with her bister and her case of soda water bottles and her bearer crouching in the lavatory door. I gave no thought to the crowds abandoned on the platform as we slid out. They were used to being treated like this. Like the working classes of my grandmother's time, they would feel perfectly at home on station platforms, refused entry to the last train out.

I was speechless with gratitude to the lady who had let us in, and the cat and I both settled down to feed our offspring. She carrying hers between her teeth under the seat and managing better than I did. In all the heat and stress I had little milk, but this wouldn't be a serious problem as I could get boiling water from the engine to make up a bottle. For the moment Alan was pacified and we sat in a clammy, contented heap in the corner of the carriage and listened while our companion declared what an impossible place India was, and now it talked of Independence, as if it could run itself when it couldn't even run its trains in a civilised manner.

She took a spray from her pigskin vanity case and freshened her face with Eau de Cologne, and then while she ate peaches, peeling them with a silver-handled knife, told me that her husband was a prominent member of Calcutta's business community and would see to it that someone would be hauled over the coals for this disgraceful shambles. When the train pulled in at stations, she pulled down the blinds and closed her eyes wearily at the noise of hammering fists and cries of supplication.

I lifted a corner of the blind at the third station, and then went to let in an English family while she was sighing behind her lowered lids. She was so angry at the presence of two more adults and a child that she withdrew into her corner with her soda water, and refused to share a drop of it with any of us, though she gave a bottle to her bearer. We had to step over him to use the lavatory, which we did as little as possible as it was filthy and waterless.

The couple I had let in allowed me to share their provisions since I had relied on the trays coming through the window. These never appeared, nor was there anyone to go up and get boiling water for bottles and my milk became a tiny trickle. Alan moaned and sweated, but when we reached Calcutta the following evening it was I who was in a state of heat exhaustion, staggering and retching. My companions said I was in no state to travel on as I had intended, and led me and my baskets to a car and drove us all to their flat. Our haughty fellow traveller was met by a liveried chauffeur and stepped into an enormous limousine, leaving her bearer to find his own way with the crate of soda water.

Alan was given a bottle of milk, I was given iced lime juice and the cat a plate of fish. Then I was laid to rest in an air-conditioned room, and when I woke, I showered and ate steamed chicken and slept again. I can still remember the exquisite sense of relief, physical and mental, and by the morning my milk was back and I was ready to continue my journey. For the next day and night I was provided with a paraffin stove to boil water, which I could do alone in my first class carriage since all the other evacuees had ended their journeys at Calcutta. I never saw the family again but their care of me might well have saved my life.

I thought of that first half of my trip as something exceptional, fearful and unrepeatable. It didn't occur to me that Indians always travelled like that, except that they would be packed solid in their carriages, seven a side on slatted benches. So very long it took me to shake off my Jones assumptions, that the lower classes and the

coloured races didn't "feel" things the same way, having simple nervous systems like lobsters.

I went back to my mother in Naini Tal, thinking it would be a short stay, but after I left, Shillong became a closed area to all but military personnel.

Mac to Iris from Shillong

Office 2nd Bn. A Regt, 21.5.42

My darling,

By the time you get this you will be in Naini and more or less settled down. I hope sweet that everything went alright and there were no hitches.

It has been simply terrible here, I simply mope around our little house. It is extraordinary the memories it brings back. Alan's room and our little room all bleak and bare. Still our 'Leslie' has moved in next door and seems quite happy and getting frightfully confidential. Funny, other evening was playing "Ave Maria" and our 'Leslie' came rushing in and asked what beautiful hymn Deanna Durbin was singing? I don't know when I shall simply blow up and scream the place down.

I am gradually getting things packed up. I am afraid I am not being as tidy and neat as you would darling. I just got the tin box in and just put anything in that came to hand.

The 'Aya' and 'chokra' according to the cook ransacked the house before they left and before I got back. I have not found anything missing as yet but shall have no hesitation in informing the police if I do. Not easy to check up actually.

Mess life is not to bad but darling I have to dress. I cant have any nice evenings by the fire. It makes me wild to think that those little "Yellow Skunks" can do this. It is just one more score I have to settle with them when I can [get] near them.

I am writing this in the office between intervals hence the splodges etc. Andy³⁹⁹ has just been in to say he would like to give a lecture on the 2nd Phase of his life!! And challenged me to a game of billiards on Saturday. Shall I go sweetheart or would you be very annoyed. Believe it does take my mind off the fact that you are away because I get frightfully morbid if I am alone and thinking about you and "Fatty Boy." Anyway I must get out of this blasted mess sometimes.

I have thought of a wonderful scheme about my leave. As I told you I was going to take some in a few months time. Well actually I am not going to tell you when I am coming. One day I shall just walk in the door and then! So you can really expect me every day.

Sweetheart I have just returned from another interruption and I have just realised that I have not told you I love you or anything.

You do believe when I do say it don't you darling. I know you think I don't sometimes. It is just my way sweetheart because I am never really happy unless you are near me. You have no idea how proud I am of you and Alan.

There comes the C.O. and so to work. I must shut down. I shall be writing again shortly. I have written to your mother thanking her for the money. Will you please thank her again and say that we shall repay it shortly.

All the love in the world sweetheart and to my little "Fatty Boy".

Remember the phone call week Friday. That is 29th May.

Xxxxxx Mac

My love to the family and tell Robert the Alan will act as my 2nd if he wants a scrap!

23.5.42

My darling,

Just received your wire from Calcutta. I am afraid I was getting rather worried. What actually happened that made you stay in Calcutta. I suppose the beastly train was late. Darling I am so sorry that you had all that trouble. I think now that I should have definitely come with you as far as Calcutta anyway. Who were the friends you stayed with and what happened to Meinhardts? Here I am asking all sorts of questions and I haven't said a word about you. How is Alan? Little Fatty. It is really awful these days I have no one to put my arms round, no fat cheeks to kiss or flappy ears to chew! Really awful state of affairs. You wait, when I come on leave, both Alan and you better hide for a while.

Nothing much happening here. The Mess is still a bit quiet. Last night, although I know you won't believe a word of this, I was making conversation left right and centre and not a soul would back me up. I kept saying something and laughing like a hyena, at my own jokes. May be that was what put them off. The C.O. has got in tow with some woman and I think he thinks about her a lot because all he does nowadays is to sit in the corner and mumble "Gin".

I have a new stunt with the gramophone now, (I don't know why I am jumping from subject to subject for), I put it on a mohrer⁴⁰⁰ and carry it from room to room, even into the bathroom where I spend most of my time wallowing

madly in a large tub by myself. Extraordinary really. I did not know that bath was quite as large as it is!

I haven't got rid of the bearer as yet but I am looking for one. Very difficult getting one just now as people are flocking away from Shillong. Bazar[sic] has practically closed down. I don't know what we shall do shortly. Go on to Field Rations I suppose.

I am going to the flicks this evening to see "Western Union"⁴⁰¹ with the lads and then play Andy at billiards afterwards. I wish you were here darling. You haven't any idea how much I liked taking you to the club and showing you to everybody. Anyway it won't be long we shall be dancing together again in Naini. Keep your little chin up sweetheart and give my little Fatty a kiss (big one). Please send me some photos of you both.

My love to the family and all the love & kisses in the world to you my darling xxxx Mac

PS. Please see the Naini Imperial Bank about my letter. I shall send a reminder.

[No date – c.25th May 1942]

My darling,

No word of you yet. I hope darling everything went O.K. I am expecting a letter from you any time now. I am being very good aren't I darling. This is the third in less than a week. To think you have been away for a whole week. It seems absolutely months sweetheart and the more it is the more I want you back sweetheart. You have no idea how lonely and moody I am getting. Awful livers in the morning. I think that most of blokes wish you were back.

What a beginning. Very depressing but there you are darling that is the way I feel.

I went to the Club on Saturday and beat 'Andy' at billiards much to his disgust and he attributes the fact to the 2nd Phase of his life. 'Pop Eye' was at the club and was most disappointed you were not there and that he did not see you. His hair is shorter than ever now. Real Gurkha. All the women have left practically. Mrs Deane is still here and is leaving when that lot all leave, if you see what I mean. Somebody walked up to me in the club and said that he heard you and I had both left Shillong. Just shows what gets round.

We played the 7 G.R.C. at Football yesterday. By we I mean BO's only. I had a frightful experience. Another fellow called Kelly⁴⁰² of the 7 GRC and myself both ran for the ball at the same time and both kicked at the same time. Our shin bones connected and I am afraid Kelly broke his leg. He was very good about [it] and I am going into hospital this evening to see him. I am afraid I was very cut up about it. But of course it might have happened to anybody really. Thank goodness it wasn't me. Only don't worry darling as I said nothing could ever happen to me. Touch wood!

We continued the game ~~however~~ and won 2-0. Afterwards we invited them to the mess and had a jolly evening on Tea and biscuits. We have not got a single drink in the mess, (alcoholic I mean)! They are a grand set of blokes the 7th. Twenty times better than the 10th GRC. Funny thing too is that the 7th hate the 10th.

Terrible scribble all this darling but I want to catch the post. Honestly the orderly is waiting outside.

Write to me sweetheart. Nice long letter like you usually do and tell me all about your journey etc.

My love to the family and one huge kiss and hug for my 'Fatty Boy'.

All the love in the world to you my sweetheart. And remember Friday night if this gets there before then. I love you I love you I love you xxxxxx Mac

Don't forget the bank.

I have practically finished his registration.

27.5.42

Darling,

I have received the bank forms enclosed herewith. Will you take them to the bank as soon as possible and put your name in the place I have marked. I will let this letter go two or three days ahead and then transfer Rs 300/- to Naini Bank for you cash when you want to. From 1st July I am sending Rs 450/- a month from my pay and increase that once we get all square.

I have not heard a word from you yet darling. Whether you have arrived in Naini or not I mean. Sweetheart nothing went wrong did it. How did "Fatty Boy" behave. I bet he is getting frightfully spoilt just now with all the S.B's. Lucky Boy.

Whoopie just received a wire to say that you had both arrived in Naini. It has taken four days by express. I am so pleased you have arrived alright darling because I was getting rather worried. Do write and tell me all about it. I am looking forward to Friday. I hope I can get through to you alright. I have already written down what I am going to say. I have timed it for 1½ minutes and then I am going to make you speak. Remember I want to here[sic] Alan if you

don't bring him this time then speak him squeak the next.

Things here all quiet and you could still have been here without anything happening although nearly all women have left as I told you before. (Blast the C.O. keeps wandering in and out of the office can't get any peace at all.) Here He comes again.

Sorry darling things are bit quieter now. I have just heard a lecture from a fellow who used to be a Commando and he described a raid on the French coast. They must be tough blokes with absolutely no scruples at all. Kill Germans as if they were flies.

Andy has fixed some bundobust for me and Charles Stonor⁴⁰³ and himself of course to go out to dinner and have some haggis. One of his Scotch pals. It should be quite good. I love a haggis as you know.

No I cannot get peace to write this so I must leave you darling and I will write tomorrow in a far better frame of mind.

All my love sweetheart and to my little boy.

Xxxxxxx Mac

I love you, I love you, I love you 'Fatty'

30.5.42

My darling,

Trying to phone up last night was a failure. I started phoning at about 9.15 and at 11.00 the phone operator told me that owing to the huge amount of calls being made I should have to wait all night. Darling I was so looking forward to speaking to you. What we shall do next time is that early in the morning I shall book the call and then maybe sometime in the afternoon I shall get through. If this letter gets through in time I shall try that next Friday. I do hope I can speak to you darling. I am getting frightfully depressed these days. I am missing you terribly, and things here are getting worse and worse really. Nothing to do except sit in and do some office work. No excitement at all.

To keep the mess going at night Andy and I have silly arguments about nothing at all but you ought to see the way people grab at them to relieve the monotony. They simply won't talk. The old C.O. loves talking about anything. Andy & I have got to the stage where we pull his leg about his "Club Doings". He simply loves it too.

I have [got] rid of the old cook who was doing bearer and got another. I am afraid he will have to go soon if he does not improve. Very difficult to get servants these days. I have Lima Ao⁴⁰⁴ as my orderly. He is a grand little fellow. Plays the piano all day and whats more important makes a grand job of my boots.

How is 'Fatty Boy' darling. Please send me some photos of yourself and him. Remember darling I want one of you. A big one I mean. I shall get one done of myself if you get one of yourself. It should be easy in Naini. You must though. I have no big one of you.

I have not received a letter from you yet so I don't know sweetheart how you fared on the journey or who you must have stayed with. I meant to ask you that last night. I am not going out tonight Saturday but am going to the Golf Club house tomorrow to have a battle royal with the blokes. Andy and myself against Barua and Cooksey.

Well darling I am feeling depressed and I want you here sweetheart to help me. Somebody's ear I can chew. It is funny how much one person can effect another. It makes me happy yet depressed because I must walk back to the bungalow and not find you there asleep or Fatty Gurgling. Someday though there will only be you and I and Fatty in a little white cottage somewhere near the sea. We will have porridge and herrings for breakfast and each have a huge glass of milk. Someday. All the love in the world darling. Keep thinking of me. Küss Alan for me. Love to all

Donald

Got a letter from Mother dated Feb 2. Taken nearly 4 months to get here. Am forwarding it to you. D.

June

Mac to Iris

[No date. June 1942]

My darling girl,

Haven't had a letter for three days now. You must be going back to your old ways!! No darling I am not worrying very much because as you say the mail is perfectly frightful these days and they may go anywhere.

At last I have a decent bearer. Think who has come back. Gulab turned up spick and span and I took him at once. He is very smart and picks things up quickly so I think that he should do me for a long while if his Mother and Father

don't die to often.

Had a very sad case in the battalion. One of our best footballers Tarun Chandra died very suddenly of poison. That old M.I. Room orderly evidently gave him the wrong medicine. This has not been proved yet but if it is the case theres going to be trouble. I don't know if you remember Tarun. Young with pleasant smile. Most of them are so I don't expect you will. These I.M.H.⁴⁰⁵ people are the limit though. Speaking of Hospitals I paid Dr Brown Rs 10/-/- for some examination or other that you had. That is alright isn't it? (My club bill for last month was 10/8/-!) this included our treat to the Meinhardts.

Yesterday the Maharaja of Tripura⁴⁰⁶ visited us. He is an enormous man and drinks like a fish. He walked from our office up to the mess and was completely exhausted. Dripping with perspiration. Barua told us afterwards that his club bill during peace time in the Shillong Club was about Rs 5000/-. I am not doing so badly after all am I sweetheart.

I was very amused darling to hear that you were considered a child. My little Fatty is more than a child. Aren't you darling! Big girl now. Poor wee thing. Anyway this tall wasp hipped man loves little Fatty girl and Fatty Boy.

Haven't had much opportunity of getting out these days as it rains every day. I wanted to go out riding everyday if possible but as I say the rain makes the ground treacherous. I must say though it is not nearly as hot as I expected it. In Shillong one is lower down and it does get stuffy. Our garden is fading out now with nobody to look after it. I have eaten all I could out of the veg. garden except the pumpkins which are huge now. That blasted dog "Skipper" ploughs up and down our nice flower beds. I very nearly killed him the other day. I threw a stone at him and hit him on the head. He spun round in circles for a few minutes and then fell down. I ran as fast as I could and hoped for the worst but found him trampling on the Mess garden ten minutes later!

By the way our old cook has left looking an absolute wreck. I told him to have a good holiday and then look you up when he is alright. You might get a post some where for him. He is so darn good and honest. The cook we have now of course has gone back to practically 1st Bn standard. Anyway I believe shortly we will be going onto Field Service rations which means no mess bill? (Except one or two drinks?).

Darling you must excuse this mixed up letter but I am all jumpy just now. Don't know why. I do actually because you and Boy aren't with me. I can't sit quiet for a minute these days. Awful. Still one day, I always look forward to that one day when we shall be together again never to part for hours or minutes.

Give my love to all and huge kisses a hug for my Boy.

All the love in world to yourself darling and keep fit.

Yours always. Donald

P.S. Has the money arrived or do you need any more.

[missing first page but appears to relate to the death of Tarun Chandra]

...Frightful time yesterday. We got word twelve hours before the funeral was due to start that there was to be (a) a funeral (b) Firing Party, Escort, bearers and Buglers supplied by Assam Regt. I rushed round in small circles. Spent half the night remembering a small page of words of command (I wish I had had your memory then). I must say the men played up very well. One or two incidents. At one stage we must fire volleys of blank cartridges over the coffin. Well I got to load, Present and Fire. Of course I never realised that standing in front of 30 rifles going off at the same time would make quite a bad noise. It made me leap a few feet in the air. This I may say was nothing. In each blank cartridge there was a wad of paper. These shot up in the air and naturally had to come down. I was where they came down! Solidly peppered by ones own Firing Party was not funny!

By the way I have just been stroking my toothbrush (the mousche) and latest developments have been good. Description may be as follows. Sandy coloured, side view good. Front view visability difficult at anything over 2ft 6". General behaviour at the sight of S.B's, Promising. Darling are you going to tell me to shave it off. I will before I come on leave (maybe).

Well darling I don't know when I shall be able to come, but soon I hope. Maybe with a little luck and pull at the end of July. I wish I could be with you always and always. Just you and I and nobody to worry us (Fatty of course). It will be wonderful when we get settled down if ever. I am determined to do so anyway.

Give my love to all and my dearest love to you both.

Yours for ever & ever,

Donald

[No date - June 1942]

Darling heart,

I have been naughty. I haven't written for about thirty six hours darling. I am just beginning to see why you like to get letters. If one day goes by with out me getting one I get awfully angry. I have had three letters since you have been away! Mind you they have been lovely letters sweetheart and I love them. Do you think I am any better at writing. I mean they are a bit longer aren't they?

Well this week end went off very quietly. I went to the club on Saturday evening. We had, Andy and myself, supper here and jumped into one of our own cars. Lovely great Chev.⁴⁰⁷ Arrived at Club and met Flux⁴⁰⁸ and Mrs, Holroyd⁴⁰⁹ & Mrs, and Tom Darby⁴¹⁰. Still, got clear eventually and met 'Rats' as we call him. (The C.O.). Muttered to me that his car had broken down somewhere in Shillong, handed me the keys and asked me if I could do anything about it. Andy and I equipped with such precise knowledge of its whereabouts etc set off. Contacted C.O.'s car about an hour later near Roberts Hospital. Got it going but it had no head lights. However Andy and I managed by following one another in two cars to bring it to earth at the Club. Charged in and told the C.O. triumphantly that his car was back and he could drive it back. However he must of smelt a rat because he asked us all about it and eventually extracted from us that the lights did not work. Said without a blush that he was taking three or four women home would we mind frightfully if he took our car with lights. Anyway to cut this long preamble short we got home with no lights. The M.T.⁴¹¹ squad were working vigorously on the C.O.'s car at 0700 hrs Sunday morning straightening out mud guards etc. And he blamed the LIGHTS.

Sunday Andy, Cooksey and myself again equipped with lines M.T. went into golf. I wish we could only have thought about golf earlier. It is a lovely place darling. Just like home in some parts. I am getting quite good at golf now. Andy is damn amusing. He actually hit a ball over his back yesterday and then of [course] denied strongly that he had anything to do with it. I wish you could come down with us. I know you would love it.

Here I am just burbling about myself and never asking how my darlings little cold is. I am frightfully sorry sweetheart it happened. I warned you though with these fans and hot and cold climate you have to be very carefully indeed. How is my Fatty boy. You have no idea how proud of you I am. I only wish I could just see you some times. Fatty gurgling and kicking. I'll bet he is an awful little rascal.

Maybe the day is not far away when I will see you now. Only don't get filled with hopes yet. It would be far to hot for you to come down to Calcutta darling just now. May be when it cools off a bit we shall manage. I shall look forward to it whenever it is. I must see you both.

Please excuse this hasty scribble darling but again I am writing this in office with people rushing in and out.

Let me know if you want any more money. We have a credit of about Rs 12/- now. That is without the wireless and money from home. Of course I have to pay Chowdry⁴¹² out of that. We are getting on though.

My love to all.

My fondest and dearest love to you and Fatty.

Yours ever and ever, Donald

[No date. June 1942]

Darling,

I got a letter from you sweetheart yesterday after 7 days without. I am not blaming you as the fault lay with the railway which has broken down. Something like three bridges have fallen in and nobody has had any letter or papers for ages. However when they do come through I should get lots of lovely letters.

Darling you are naughty I feel just the same about you darling this separation at times just about kills me and I go into fearful frets and moods. I wish I could be with you so as we could see each other every day and hour and you could lay your little head on my shoulder sweetheart and believe me it wont be much longer. I am still trying to get leave and things look a bit more promising. Just four more weeks and I have every hope of being with you both. You know I love you darling more than anything or anybody in the world and I shall always be the same. Nothing could ever change me and when you can't sleep think of how much I love you and how someday that little white cottage is going to be and Alan running up and down with his Macfarlane kilt and no (TROUSE) on. I always do this and I go peacefully to sleep imagining all kinds of things we shall do. I honestly don't think it will be much longer before the time comes when we are on the boat homeward bound and saying "hell" to this war.

I was very amused at your story of Mrs Webster's party. It must have been terrific fun!! I don't like the sound of the after show party or back stage goings on. These startled troubled youths are worth watching and I shall hack him to pieces if I ever catch him coming the soft stuff on you again. I hope darling that you told him that you were married to a

slim youth who could knock stars out of him. Anyway I could waggle my ginger 'mouche' at him and that would give him a fright.

I am sure Fatty Boy would still kiss his Daddy even though he has got a 'mouche' (and so would his mother).

Things very quiet up here. No life at all except Sunday Golf. Andy, Cooksey and myself played 36 holes the other day (Sunday) and I didn't take a hat. Is my face red. I shall peel for the next month I should think. Anyway it was grand fun although I played simply foul golf. I seem to get worse instead of better at the game. I wish you were here so as to teach me the finer parts of the game. Barua was playing with some beautiful Rani girl which he has got hold of. I don't think he played much golf.

By the way darling, just to make you furious. I was accosted Saturday before last in the Club by a young S.B. I was dancing with Dora and was tapped on the shoulder and hailed with "Hullo Mac". I turned round expecting to see nothing less than one of the blokes or my own wife. It was a woman, I discovered this later, called Dorothy Ball whom I had met years ago. Needless to say I turned Cherry Red and stammered something about the Club being full and got away pretty quickly. I haven't been back since in case she gets hold of me again. I never know what to say to these old acquaintance. I wish you were here to deal with them.

Now darling haven't I been good in telling you all about it. It is the first woman barring Dora and Betty that I have talked to.

Well sweetheart promise me not to cry any more until I come and then you can cry all you want on my shoulder and tell me all about it.

My love to all,

All the love in the world to you and Fatty. I love you, I love you.

Yours for ever xxxxxx Donald

10.6.42

My darling girl,

I haven't had a letter from you for two days now and I am sure that you have been getting my [letters] more regularly than that. I hope so anyway. One thing though I have the whole day today looking forward to the letter that must arrive tonight.

Talking of letters I enclose two from my Mother which although addressed to you I opened. I thought I should like to have a peep at how they are getting on. You will notice that they have just heard about the Boy and the letter took practically five months to come. I have sent another wire which I hope will cheer them up a bit. Also enclose a chit from Richard. I presume it is Richard and not some hand writing in disguise!! I suppose you took care of that and wired saying. Send love and letters to old address! Did you darling?

I am getting very restless up here. I want to go and see you and I want to get out of Shillong. I don't know what it is in my blood that makes me feel like that. I see now that General Rich⁴¹³ has put out an order that no leave will be granted unless for medical reasons. However I shall prostrate myself on the office table and blow bubbles and you never know what might happen (I know if you were here you would insert a nasty jab into the conversation) but what I mean is that they might let me go to Naini.

Andy and myself have decided we are not going to the club tonight but stay at home and get the bearers to make some curry for us. Far better I must say darling and I hope you will agree that I am not beating it up. Of course you can only judge by what I tell you. But still I am telling you all my doings. Actually Club is nearly dead now. Hardly a ~~sole~~ soul. You probably know the reason.

Darling I loved your poem but as to writing another verse. Actually I am trying and maybe by next letter you will get it. I shall enlist Andy to help me. He by the way was thrilled about his wives and their naughtiness. He said that he thought he had them well trained.

I have been doing quite a lot of riding just lately. Do you get a chance of doing any. I am rather beginning to like it for riding sake although I am sure I should love it if you were here! Someday we shall take Fatty out and watch him bounce about shaking, I should imagine that he would love it really. It will be fun teaching him all these things. Specially when we go down to the sea shore for the first time. Darling what does he laugh like. Does he smile a[t] everyone the same or does he smile really nice for my Fatty Girl. Do you think that he would remember me now? I don't suppose so but still if you say he does then I will believe you.

Darling you are naughty saying that I am happier without you. I know you are just teasing me. You mustn't though because it takes me such a long time [to] get in any retort.

Raining "Cats and Dogs" outside and has been for the last two days making it frightfully cold of course. I have,

without shame, I say it put on a 'vesty'. Of course you can't see it so I don't blush or anything.

Well my darling heart if I get a letter tonight I shall write tomorrow again. Give my salaams to everybody and love to the family.

All the love in the world to you darling and my 'Fatty Boy'.

Yours ever & ever, Donald

P.S. Let me know when you run short of Cash.

18.6.42

Darling,

Two letters from you sweetheart and such nice ones. It cheered me up no end. Specially about the position after the war. As you point out there will be hundreds of people like us and they must do something about it.

I got a long ticking off letter from my Uncle Jim⁴¹⁴ with Rs 100/-/- for a wedding present. I have just written an airgraph to him and thanked him for us both. Poor old man I think he is beginning to feel the strain of things by the letter. We have made it up anyway. Oh yes I will quote a paragraph he wrote. "You appear to have been extraordinarily lucky in your marriage. We were charmed with the appearance of your bride when we saw her photograph and are sure that she is as good and sensible as she is bonny. If you go by her advice you will be alright." Naturally I claim objection rights on the last sentence as there is only one man in the house & next to me comes my wife (ahem!) Still it was very good of him to send the money. Evidently he has lost a lot in Burma but has hopes of regaining it eventually. I believe but am not sure that some of our money is there too!

Still we won't talk of money matters. Loathsome subject. Although according to calculations and carefully worked cash a/c we would have just Rs 1500/- in the bank. That of course does not count what Chowdri is going to take off it!! Still we shall be over the top soon darling and then we shall save for our home leave. (Reading thro' this there seems to be an awful lot of STILLS). I am so sorry that Patty has turned so funny. As you say she will probably be alright after she has had a baby. But nobody could be so nice as my Fatty Baby could there darling. I seem to be saying all the right things morning sweetheart. Maybe some of your lessons are beginning to sink in.

I saw the most amusing 'Flick' last night. If you get a chance to and see it called. "Philadelphea (?) Story"⁴¹⁵, Gary Cooper, James Stewart, Katherine Hepburn. Really is good. Tough isn't the word for it.

You know what? Of course you don't. We are going to E. Falls after all. To my mind they are so blasted busy forming Corps, Divs, Brigades etc that they can't make up their minds. To much RED TAPE.

We shall probably be detailed to go [next page missing]

18. 6. 42

Darling, Two letters from you sweetest and such nice ones. It cheered me up no end. Specially about the position after the war. As you point out there will be hundreds of people like us and they must do something about it.

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Example of Mac's letters

VACCINATION.

Baby was first vaccinated on the 14th day
of June at Blyth Cottage, Naini tal
By Doctor P. Rosser.



He behaved very nicely, did not even
flinch. The doctor drew blood, but the
vaccination did not bave. He was
vaccinated again at 11 months & this time
it took and he was free of the fever
at once.

Iris to Mac

[first page missing]

..... I played Bridge all day yesterday & felt very wuzzy as a result. I am improving though darling & occasionally make my contract. I called a slam once, but we didn't make it. I had all hearts & diamonds & my partner all clubs & spades with the result that I couldn't get into her hand even. There are quite a lot of averagely bad people here so I'm getting rid of my ghastly inferiority complex & actually enjoy playing a hand now. It's quite an amusing way of passing an evening, but won't play in the morning again. I was thumping my partners aces all night.

Fatty's big grown up cot has arrived and is very smart – the mattress will be ready in a few days and he'll be so smart. He is nearly 6 months old – isn't it amazing. His laugh, darling, is the loveliest thing I've ever heard – peals and peals of giggles that make me howl myself. His vaccination hasn't taken yet but I expect it will in a few days.

Poor Belinda – her last kitten went yesterday & she is desolate & bursting with milk – I can sympathise fully, but don't know what to do about it! This afternoon we're going to tea with someone who has Siamese cats so will all tell each other wonderfully improbable stories about what our animals do that no other cats have ever been known to.

Had a terrific gaggle at the Work Party this morning, darling! Patty & I advising all the girls how to catch husbands & keep them! There are lots of lovelies here this year, thank goodness I'm out of the running & can look on in a vague, motherly way with Alan's knitting under one arm!

Later. The post has come & still no letter so I'm swelling furiously. I'm feeling exhausted, having rushed about all day in the heat & dust & just got Alan off to sleep after a lot of trouble. And I've got my usual Evening Depression – I rush about all day & can't think but in the evening comes the reaction – oh hell take everything. Billy is getting leave I believe, so why can't you? I don't follow.

Anyway I'll spare you further moans & groans for now. I met both the Porters to-day who asked after you. Just the same as ever.

Don't give up writing often darlinest.

We both send our love and kisses & are always thinking about you.

Hugs darling – Totty

P.S. You have never written to Mummy. Do try remember to – thanking her for the money.

Mac to Iris

22.6.42

My darling, I have been awfully naughty darling and have not written for two whole days. The reason sweetheart, and there is on[e] is that I have been fairly busy with this move of ours. We are as I told you going to E.F. and it takes some working out before hand. But darling what makes me feel bad is that I got three letters from you in one mail. Thanks so much sweetheart. You have no idea how much I long for your letters. Darling don't take to heart what I said about not getting letters. I understand, I am only greedy and want one every hour if it could be so. Sweetheart I am so sorry that you are feeling lonely etc. I am just the same believe me and I hate it more but sweet I don't think it worth coming just now. I will tell you immediately when I think everything is O.K. One or two things developing if you see what I mean.

I am trying my damnest to get leave at the end of next month. I have no idea whether it will come off or not but I am going to try. I mentioned leave for Officers casually to the C.O. and he was in perfect agreement in giving leave. So as far as the C.O. is concerned I need not worry and I shall say that I want leave on compassionate grounds or the like. Send me a wire like Nathu used to get!

Things generally very quiet up here. I went out riding the other day with Dick Daly⁴¹⁶ and we rode right down to the golf course and back thro' Shillong. About 15 miles. I was and am still feeling a bit sore about the nether region. Still did me a lot of good. Got rid of an awful liver I had. I am getting most frightful livers these days. Cursing and shouting at everybody. Some of them need it too. Also had a round of golf at which I am, though I say so myself, getting quite good. I play with Cooksey who says not a word and smites the ball everytime. He is very good indeed. He went round in 85 and myself in 96. Not bad was it darling.

By the way sweetheart many happy returns of the day⁴¹⁷. Big girl now darling. I wish I could kiss you, your eyes, your little ears and your sweet mouth. Oh darling sometimes I feel that if I don't see you soon I shall go mad really. It is about a month ago that you left and it seems years and years. Why must it be like this, why must we be apart with only letters to keep us in touch with one another. I hate it all. I do not want money or anything just let us be together and no one to interfere. And we will one day. Just think of it. You Alan and myself. I can hardly wait. I dream of it. I think of it. Do you sweetheart. Anyway sweet heart don't let me depress you and don't you get depressed. We shall be together soon.

Had another letter from my mother in which she says she has not heard from us yet. She must have had my two wires by now anyway which is very quick that way I believe. I enclose the letter.

Darling do send me a photo of yourself and Alan. I must have it. I am having one done of my self shortly and will send it soon. How is my Fatty after his vaccination. Hope alright poor little thing. I am so glad darling that he is the best looking baby of the bunch. Can you wonder! I wish I could seeim [sic] now.

Well darling heart I have not more to tell and I will not miss two days before writing again.

*Let me know if you need any more money. Rolling in wealth now darling rolling!?
Give my love to all and every bit of love to you my little girl and big kiss for Fatty.
Yours ever & ever, Donald.*

Iris to Mac

[No date]

Darling, At last a letter – I hadn't heard for 5 days & was speechless with fury & planning a really crushing wire when I got one which I had to pay 1 As for – but it was Worth it. Don't ever put me through such torture again darling!

So glad the C.O. is agreeable about leave – but only a month would be worth while wouldn't it? If you couldn't get that I could come to Calcutta or somewhere. I still think the course idea is best if you could wangle it. Darling my birthday is July 22nd – that's why I particularly want you then. Richard arrives on 21st and I'd like the christening on my birthday so work like mad and prey on everyone's finer feelings. As a matter of fact I'm on the verge of a nervous breakdown – will definitely collapse completely unless you save me. Tell the C.O. so with my love. I'm backing everything on you coming.

Actually I have been feeling mouldy to-day – woke up feeling sick & dizzy & spent the morning in bed, but I feel better again now. Suzanne is in bed with an unknown disease – in fact a lot of people are. I think it's the queer weather we're having. I went up for a second examination⁴¹⁸ and took Fatty to the hospital to be weighed, yesterday. He is 14lbs 1 oz – not heavy really, but shows a steady gain. I know all the mothers with huge babies continually complain of tummy upsets. By the way darling he has authoritatively been stated, on 2 different occasions, to have said "Mum-mum" Gentcha! And I've been drumming "Da-da" into him too. Most odd! Of course if you send a picture of yourself it would be a lot easier, in fact I think it would solve everything. Hurry please darling. [rest missing]

Mac to Iris

[No date] Thursday

My darling girl,

I did not write yesterday after all because things turned up one after another & I did not get much time to write the rest of my fan mail!

I am doing my damnest to get this leave business thro but so far have met with no success. It is purely a 'fad' of General Rich's because everybody else has been getting leave quite easily. Still darling heart you expect me at the end of next month. How I am looking forward to seeing you and Alan. You just have no idea darling. I am going [to] kiss you and kiss you all day until you really are fed up with me. Your little ears won't be there at all by the time I am finished. Fatty Boy of course will be thrown about, he must be tough darling. Tell me all about him sweetheart. How he laughs how he looks and how he tries to talk which I am sure he does by now.

I went to the Club, darling, and broke my record of not drinking all week. However it was not badly broken. I had the whole of the Assam Regt and some R.A.F. round me and I was telling them that they should all get married. They all agreed when I had finished telling them my experiences. There was a mad rush for the three females which the club boasts of these days but I heard of no engagements or the like.

I saw but did not meet Brig. Farley⁴¹⁹ doing his stuff with that Verdun woman. The lads are off again. A lot of exceedingly beautiful damsels have just come out from home for the Q.A.I.M.S.⁴²⁰ (Nursing). This is I may say what I hear. I have not seen one yet. I don't think that there is any chance at the rapid pace at which the officers of the Assam Regt get off with girls. I have never seen such a frightened lot. I also noticed the Glass girl here again. I did not speak to her but I thought she went to Naini Tal. The Club is absolutely dead really. Thousands of men and honestly about 2 ½ women. Poisonous hags too, which would not be looked at once never mind twice in the ordinary state of affairs, but now, they are having the time of their lives.

By the way darling I still have my "mouche" which has grown considerably. I haven't yet heard what you actually think about it. The state of affairs is now that during the day it looks like a dirty smudge but at night being fair it catches the light and twinkles. Ah, Ah, then with my eye lashes flapping and my mouche twinkling I go into action. Sounds alright but when I go into action everybody spoiled it by saying "Are you growing a "mouche", (can't spell moustache), Rather pulls me up when you think darling I have [been] trying for over 11 days 6 hrs 3 mins. Still when I come up I shall try it out on you and sweet heart don't spoil it will you?

I have never seen such rain as we are having now. It swamped the office last night. I can hear the C.O's paddling about next door playing, I am sure, with a paper boat. Still it is something for him to do which keeps him out of mischief.

Darling have you ever read a book called "Rogue Harries and Judith Paris". Marvellous. If you haven't I shall send it to you. I know you would like it. It is on the same style as "Gone with the Wind". Written, by the way, by Hugh Walpole.

Well darling heart I must stop the burble and get some work done. REALLY. Not mind you that there is all that work to be done.

My love to all sweet and to your dear little self all the love in the world. I love you

July

Iris to Mac

[No date July 1942]

Darlingest – I suppose you're very busy moving to Elephant Falls as I haven't heard for 3 days again. I won't complain anyway says she in a madly martyred voice. You wait till I lay my hands on you though! I hope to hear in this letter that leave has been granted and you'll be here in 3 weeks time. Tell the C.O. about Alan's Christening etc. and he's sure to weaken. I really must have it the end of this month as Daddy has got special leave.

It pours & pours here & I valiantly wade round to keep myself exercised & my liver from getting the better of me. I'm longing for my squash racquet, so don't be long darling & bring yours. Yesterday Patty spent most of the day here and we gaggled ourselves to a standstill. Its funny – where we used to discuss what he said to me and what I said back we now talk entirely about babies and the price of butter! Pat is wild with jealousy over Alan and I don't wonder – he is enchanting now and darling he quite plainly said "Da-da" this morning and has been saying "Alan" to himself all afternoon.

*Suzanne is feeling lots better now her rash is out it is only sickening for her being cooped up for 3 weeks. I'm just off to tea with your friend Mrs Cargle & will finish this when I get back
A fiasco, as I thought Mrs. C. lived somewhere she didn't & never got to where she did. However I have a letter from you darling. I'm sorry you can't definitely say about leave yet but I'm still hoping & banking on this month.*

Darling your moustache sounds horribly dashing & gigolo-ish – fancy its glittering – honestly I don't trust it an inch. Does it do tricks? You ought to train it to stand up for "God save the King" or something interesting. You can keep it till I see you & if it has a devastating effect on me you'll have it off at once in view of other women having similar reactions!

Yes, I read 'Rogue Herries' & 'Judith Parris' ages ago & love them only being about 12 at the time I was rather shocked at parts. Are they shocking? I don't expect so! "Vanessa" & "The Fortress" are continuations about the same family so you must read those too. I've just read "The Patriot" by Pearl Buck – very good – all about Japan & China at the beginning of this war, Chiang Kai Shek etc.

I can't get the photographer to finish my photos in spite of using all the language you've taught me. I hope the other one arrived safely.

Sorry for a dull letter but I really have done nothing since I last wrote darling.

I love you & so does Fatty & we're both longing to see you sweetheart –

Hugs & kisses – Totty

Mac to Iris

[No date July]

My sweet, I was so glad to get your letter to say that you were sleeping better and generally feeling better. I have had a letter from you for the last three days now. I hope you are getting mine. I suppose this rail show must have delayed some because they are still bringing letters up the Sylhet way.

Darling I am just dying to get the photo of you and Fatty. I am waiting until my mouche has grown to full proportions and then I shall send you one and see whether I must shave it off or not. It is quite good now and clearly visable at anything under four feet. Fatty must be an absolute darling these days and I so do wish I could see him. I have just sent a reminder down re leave question. I hope Rich has lifted the ban and we can go. I shall be there before

you know what has happened. I shall peep my mouche round the door and woe betide any young snake which may be there, of course I won't mind how many S.B.s are there!

You know darling I was just looking at our little garden. It is wonderful now, at least it would be if someone was here to look after it. Gladiola (sp) and most beautiful yellow carnations. I wish to God you could see it all, absolutely lovely. I am doing quite a bit of painting these days so maybe you might get an idea if I can manage!

We are a very depleted lot nowadays what with two companies at E.F. and ourselves here. There are actually only seven officers in the mess. All of them as decent as Cooksey. I sit there and, honestly darling, yatter away about absolutely nothing. For instance the other night I told them all of three suicides. I thought this must surely waken somebody up. The C.O. did his damnest but not a word out of any body else. The C.O. and I have actually reduced it to a competition. It is the only thing we could do. Not counting ourselves we [have] taken bets on who will say the most. I beg him a peg last night and I backed Cooksey to say three words more than anybody else. I lost, only said two!! Still it is all rather amusing.

I am going to try and play tennis on Saturday with Cooksey, Davis and Barua. They are all frightfully snappy but still I shall have a crack at it anyway. It is simply heavenly weather up here just now. Not too hot and not too cold.

Darling you have been frightfully good over the money business honestly. Please sweetheart do not stint yourself in anyway will you. Get everything you want and hang the rest. I feel as if we are on top of the world. If this company business does come off then it will be to easy. If we get the back pay for the last two years it means something like Rs 5000/- Still I am not building any sand castles yet. Flux did seem optimistic about it though. Please don't pay your mother back yet awhile until I see how things are this month.

I have sold the hot case and or the 'Petromax'. Both fetched in Rs 48/-/- not to bad what?

Well darling I am off to do an awful job and I bet you don't know what it is. "Pay the servants.?"! Still I just chuck the money at Gulab and make him work it out.

Please excuse the hurried chit but I shall write again tomorrow.

All the love in the world darling heart to you and to Fatty.

Xxxxx Donald

[No date July]

My darling,

Got two letters yesterday saying that you had not heard from me, maybe by now you will understand the reason. Sweetheart only once have I missed writing every other day.

Yes sweetheart I shall try frightfully hard to get leave but at the moment I simply can't see it. There is a definite order and no matter what the C.O. does we simply cannot get passed it. I have, as I said before, every hopes of that order being cancelled but so far nothing has happened. You know darling that there would be nothing that I could wish more for than be at the christening of Alan and your birthday and I may still do it but please don't get cross with me sweetheart if I cannot. I mean as an example one of our Gurkha officer's wife was seriously ill and he applied but could only get a week which was the time he would take to go and come back from where his wife was. Of course if anything like that happened with me I am afraid I should go for Court Martial and risk it. No darling please don't fret and I promise you I shall pull every string I can to get away in time.

I am so pleased Alan can say "Da-da". Are you sure it isn't "Ma-ma" and you are only saying t'other to make me feel good. He must simply be wonderful and I am so glad that everybody is jealous. You know that the no. of people who have told me that Alan looks exactly like you and he does. Actually nothing extraordinary about it but as I say darling he is beautiful and I burst of pride when I think of you both. I don't know but when I see anybody I know I always tell them about how you are and what Alan does. He does some of the most extraordinary things, things I make him do, he sits up and talks and climbs out of his cradle. Do tell me all he does sweetheart.

I actually had a game of tennis yesterday and played with all these supposedly marvellous tennis players but found that after all this talk they were no better than I was. Barua is good but our "Les" and "Cooksey" were not. Stayed on at the club and played billiards with Andy and then went out to dinner at the Myres²²¹ bungalow. Quite a pleasant evening but I did miss [you]. I go into a trance sometime just thinking that you are there and then wake up with a jump and find I am just dreaming. Sweetheart I seem to love and miss you more and more every day. I really get quite desperate at times still I must not make you fed up as well. I shall see you soon darling and I am going kiss you and eat your little ears until you won't want to see me any more.

It is marvellous though, don't you think, how two persons like ourselves can be so attached to each other, for there to be such misery in our hearts when we are apart. Aching pains sometimes.

Here we are, having known each other just over a year of our lives and yet it seems that we have known each other since childhood. I am sure in some way we have and that we, just you and I, were meant for each other. But why so many unhappy marriages etc when people are meant for each other or are we just lucky. Darling do you know, my reasoning not at its best but I have frightfully strong feelings as you well know and I can never get over this love of ours. Sometimes I seem to understand and put it down to something or other then again its quite beyond me and set up as if I wasn't supposed to understand. Sorry sweetheart if I am boring you just throw all this in the fire will you. I have told you all this before but darling I must tell you I love you because I do so much and you must always love me because I just wouldn't care any more and I know I would just go to the dogs and break myself

I shall send or may bring your raquet when I come! Send me the book and the photo soon sweetheart. I am just dying to see it.

Well darling I must do some work. Give my love to all and darling please don't despair or get cross with me. I shall try really hard and get leave.

[No date July]

My darling girl, What a lovely picture of Fatty. Just like you. I have showed most people in the Regt and they all say how extraordinarily like you it is. He is sweet though darling isn't he. Things are looking brighter and brighter here. General Rich is going to revise the leave rules which he put on only to get the Burma people through. So darling you can expect me any time. What fun we are going to have. Just the three of us. I can hardly wait. No darling I think it would be silly just a[t] present coming here because nobody knows what the Japs are doing and until we start pushing them back I should stay put darling. Not that I don't want you but I should hate it if any thing should happen.

I played 36 holes of golf yesterday. Went to the Golf Club at about nine played eighteen holes had sandwiches and beer (they have some now) and then played another eighteen. Felt dog tired. I took Diana round with me and she simply loved it all. I went to the Club Sunday evening with the C.O. He is getting frightfully fed up with things in general and we still are getting nothing and seem to be getting nowhere.

General Rich came out and inspected the whole Bn on Saturday. I had to roar out orders, march half the length of the parade ground and report to him the nos. on parade. By the time I got to him I was breathless and quite hoarse so God knows what he thought of my croaking and panting. He actually is very nice and said he thought we had a fine lot. (Not much use as I have said if there is no means with which to really be good. However I hope the censor does not grab this).

Well I am giving my 'mouche' another week and then off it comes unless things improve a lot. The situation is critical! MORE hairs one side than t'other.

At the end of this week I want to have a photo taken and send it to you. Darling you must send me one of yourself. I want that badly. I have put Fattys at my bedside table and see him and think of you before I go to sleep. He has grown hasn't he.

By the way I hope by now that you are getting my letters and have understood the reason. The floods in Assam have been the highest ever recorded and bits of the road are three feet under water. I believe the Sylket journey is absolutely foul. It takes something like four days to get down to Calcutta. Still I shall go that way if I come. I shall try and get a months leave and that will give me a lot more time.

Darling I am so glad you are enjoying your bride. I am afraid I used to be horrid with you didn't I. Always saying 'You should have done that'. Poor wee thing and little little tears used to appear and we would feel so miserable. I am afraid the Meinhardts were a bit to much for me. They used to take it so seriously themselves.

The Deanes' have left so there is now no women out here. Mrs Brown is still out at E.F. where we are going. Seems extraordinary that she should not go off somewhere where she has friends. She gets two gallons of petrol to run that huge car which requires that in a run from E.F. to Shillong & back.

When I come darling shall I bring you anything. I mean clothes or boxes. It would be a good opportunity to bring some things out but I hate travelling with to many things so the fewer the better. Anyway let me know if there is anything you want.

My love to all sweet and my dearest love to you and Fatty. Be seeing you soon. Your love

Donald

Have heard nothing from Assam Company but have great hopes. Cross your fingers

Iris to Mac

[No date July]

My dearest love – I'm writing in bed feeling very tired & sentimental and lonely for you. But still, it won't be long before you'll be here to kiss me to sleep. I want you so much its almost a pain in me. Do you feel that or don't you think I should say so anyway? I expect this will sound rot in the morning, but now I want to write exactly what I feel. When we are close there is no need for words but when we're apart we must say all we feel & think – you mustn't keep any thoughts secret from me, will you darling? When I turn off the lights in a few moments I shall snuggle down & have a lovely imagination that you are here & I'll talk to you for ages – much longer than if you were here wanting to go to sleep. I think I'll stop for now before I tell you any more you shouldn't know! Good night my heart!

This is the next day. What an idiot I am last thing at night aren't I darling! It is still raining – honestly it hasn't stopped for about a week and Alan is losing his lovely colour for lack of sunshine. He has a tummy upset but I think it must be teeth coming as he's very fit in himself. He can roll over and try to crawl but he's very lazy and doesn't try often! I don't mind actually – I'd rather he did things slowly, it always pays in the end.

Mummy has suddenly shot off to Agra for 5 days to try & arrange a bungalow for the winter, so I'm in sole charge. Robert has all his little friends for the day every day & they scream round the house being bombs & battleships without ceasing. Its getting a trifle exhausting. He is at present torpedoing a small boy with pine cones but the little boy won't die in spite of having been killed several times according to Robert!

Do you know who's up here now, Eileen McLean?! She's just rung me up & we both said how were we for 10 minutes & that was that. Dear Eileen. I had a letter from Niall yesterday! He's in Poona & his letter took nearly two months to get here. Not at all enthusiastic about being out here & only expressing a wish to see Alan. So don't panic as Andy would say.

I'm in the middle of writing a play which is rather engrossing me. About India & everyone's terribly debauched & there's masses of scandal & beautiful women & snaky Majors with Past – it's great fun. Suzanne is writing on a similar theme & we get hysterical comparing notes. I feel I can write & then it suddenly strikes me as being simply sickening & I haven't the heart to go on. I'll try to finish this one so that you can read it. I wish I could write something really marvellous & make wads of money – it would be lovely to make money doing something you really liked. Quite apart from that I'd like to write Mac. Ever since I was tiny I've wanted to. Then I was miserable but now just for the pleasure of letting off steam. You musn't let your painting go either. I feel its important to keep ones artistic instincts flourishing – whatever they are. It keeps a sense of proportion which ones apt to lose out here. We might combine one day – you illustrate one of my masterpieces!

The Congress business has quite calmed down – it never was much. I should think it would fizzle out everywhere soon.

Well my darling – lunch time & the post to catch which is a pretty strong combination of excuses!

Hope to get a letter to-day. Mummy got one yesterday which was very irritating!

All love from us both,

Your bad-tempered but very loving Totty

Iris's mention of 'the Congress business' refers to what became the 'Quit India Movement' which convulsed India later that summer. It was to have a serious effect on my father's war because, as a result of the threats of sabotage, the Second Battalion was sent in 1943 to guard rail communications in Southern India. The cause can be briefly described as follows.

With the Fall of Singapore in February 1942, about 40,000 Indian soldiers were captured. They were given a choice by their Japanese captors, and as a result about 30,000 joined the Indian National Army led by Subhash Chandra Bose, which subsequently fought with the Japanese in Burma and elsewhere.. Those who refused became POWs and were mostly shipped to New Guinea.

The All Congress Committee initiated the Quit India Movement August 7-8, calling on the British to "Quit India" and allow Indians to negotiate with the Japanese. Government police and demonstrators clashed in Bengal August 10-17, resulting in the deaths of 39 people.

Bayly gives the following summary of subsequent events:

'Plains eastern India was still sullen following the suppression of the Quit India movement of August-September 1942 and a further outbreak of internal disorder might well have been disastrous... The systematic campaign of Congress radicals against lines of communication essential to the war effort in August and September 1942 bore out these fears. The CID noted that there had been strenuous attempts to sabotage the telegraph and railway lines in South-Eastern India. These were critical communications with Ceylon, which was believed to be under imminent danger of a sea-borne assault from the Japanese... The repression was extremely successful in the short run. About 66,000 people were detained or convicted and about a quarter, including most Congress leaders, were still in jail in 1944. Up to 2,500 demonstrators had been shot. The army and the Indian police had not wavered in their allegiance... Resistance had been driven into the Bihar hinterland and distant north Bengal villages where it merged with persistent agrarian conflict.' (Bayly, 268-271)

[No date July]

Darling a miracle – 2 letters from you in one day. And one from Mummy by the same mail! What's happened? Not the inspiration of beautiful nursing sisters I trust.

I understand the difficulties of getting leave and I wont groan any more but just hope you won't be too long. I'm going to have Alan christened on my birthday so try and make that your mark but of course I realise you can't leave the C.O. stranded. When you do come I shall do my damdest to get you to take me back to Shillong – use all my womanly wiles and ooze glamour all over you so be prepared darling. And Alan will say "Da-da" so enchantingly you just won't have the heart to leave him behind. He says it all the time now, its too sweet. I'm starting him on veal jelly tomorrow – you boil veal bones for 8 hours will you get the absolute essence and then let it jelly. I wonder what he'll think of it! After about a week of that I shall give him a little porridge, and then some soup and vegetables. He'll be growing up so fast these next few months – you cant miss him darling. I do hope his picture arrived safely – you haven't mentioned it yet.

I've done nothing these last few days – my wild social whirl being rather hampered by Suzanne's chicken-pox. Not sarcasm of that sentence – the social whirl in question being parochial hen-parties for the sake of discussing Baby Welfare. Actually I like a peaceful life, being as you know incredibly lazy. But I do walk everywhere darling, the only dandy I've taken being for Alan to be photographed. I've put on weight since I arrived so when I stop feeding Alan I'm going to SLIM – seriously. At present I tell myself that I must eat for two which is very comforting. Our little cook has arrived & has got a marvellous job at Topsy's Evacuee Hostel – at least he said he wanted 60/- pay so I hope he has got it after all. I suppose he was browned off after the Mess episode. Will you tell Jenks⁴²² to give him a chit & a good one too! If it isn't good you can write another one yourself. How is jabbeling Jacobs⁴²³? He didn't by any happy chance die under the anaesthetic did he? I suppose his sole topic of conversation now is My Operation – what fun for you all! You don't tell me anything about the blokes – which of the new lot you like best & why. I really am interested darling!

Billy arrives on leave next Wednesday for about 10 days & Richard on 21st & Daddy somewhere in between so we'll be some party. If you're here with Richard you'll have to restrain your language as according to Billy he is very strict with himself & even thinks the Cinema leads to "moral degradation"! Rather terrifying isn't it? I suppose it's the effect of Oxford but I shouldn't think it'll survive India long. We're all over-awed at having to live up to him!

I'm having a lovely evening by the fire, with dinner on a tray. If only you were here it would be perfect. Suzanne has some lovely gramophone records we could play & I long for you to make love to me when I put them on. I shall be able to play with your moustache as well as your hair now. Darling, I've almost forgotten what you look like & completely what your voice is like. What fun we'll have when you come. Theres a very low dance hall I want you to take me to,

will you? The Royal for dinner too, don't forget, & a lollipop at the Cinema. It'll be like another honeymoon won't it? I'm so excited, but I keep telling myself not to get worked up. If you don't get leave I'm definitely coming to you - you know that don't you? Truly!

I've started rather a nice book called "Occupied Territory"⁴²⁴. If you ever get a chance you must read "Don't Mr Disraeli"⁴²⁵ which I've heard is marvellous.

Well, dearest heart, no more for now. I think of you every night - I hope you do too.
All the love I have and Alan sends lots of dribbly kisses. Hugs darling. Totty.

THE DATE

of
Baby's Short-coating
way

the day of



Now I can kick as I please
I feel so much more at my ease -
I wear shoes and socks
And - as for my frocks -
They only come down to my knees!!

Remarks He first saw Alone on July 29th
He saw in his basket a picked flowers
from a rose a stuffed them into his mouth
He looked over onto his tummy Alone on July
19th he was as surprised as the rest of us
at the achievement



Mac to Iris

[No date July]

Darling,

I am just writing this because I want to think of you and be with you. I am so fed up with things. This leave is still on the verge and no order has yet come out although people say that it is coming. I am simply pray[ing] every night that it won't be long. Anyway sweetheart don't let me get you downhearted. Your Assam Regt broach is arriving today and I shall forward it to you. It is as I said before for your birthday darling and I am so sorry that I could not give you something nicer. By the way sweet I opened a letter of yours by mistake. I enclose it herewith. It was addressed to Mrs Donald Macfarlane. I naturally thought it was for myself. You don't mind though do you sweet.

Yesterday there was an Urdu exam for the lads into which 'our Les' went. He has not done very well I fear. I had to listen to him speaking and it was pretty painful. I hope he's passed actually because it will be hard luck if he doesn't. Cooksey was in it and did quite well. The C.O. was taking it and the old man was there for the whole day and was absolutely worn out. The result of course was that I had to keep up a merry prattle in Mess last night. Most frightful. I got down to my pet stories of snakes swallowing whole goats and things like that. It put people off their dinner but did keep the place alive. By the bye did you know that we had adopted 'Field Service Scale of Rations'. This means that messing is only Rs 1/-/- a day now so I should save on that. My Mess bill last month came to Rs 134/-/- altogether darling which when you think Rs 90/- is food and the balance booze and subs. Do you think I am being good. I payed back Chowdri some money this morning. He is the only fly in the ointment now and I shall soon clear him up. We have between us in the bank about Rs 1000/-, oh yes, minus my mess bill cheque. Not bad, but not good enough. Always back on this subject. Mustn't mention it again though I thought you might want to know how we stood. I am expecting a reply from the Assam Company any time. I hope it is good news.

I am expecting the book and the other photograph today sweetheart. I hope that will arrive. It is one of you isn't it.

Well darling heart please excuse the short letter but the C.O. wants me to go out to Elephant Falls and if I leave this till after it will not catch the post.

My love to all.

Darling I shall see you soon so keep bright and don't cry my love. I love you. Love to Fatty, Donald.

10.7.42

My darling girl,

Just a note to say that I have sent you your birthday present from Alan and myself. I hope that you will like it sweet heart. It takes all my love to you my sweet. Nothing has come thro' about my leave. I am getting quite desperate nowadays and I need a holiday badly. All jumpy and cannot concentrate on anything. By the way sweet if I cannot get away in time for your birthday and Alan christening will you please get something nice for Alan from me. Anything you think would be nice. God I wish I could get away. Really I am just sitting doing nothing. Ideal time for getting away because later we shall be busy once things start coming in.

No news expect[sic] that 5 officers of the 1st Bn are down with fever which I suppose means that we shall have to provide for them sooner or later. I saw Mortimer the other night and he said that he was going up to Naini to bring his wife back. I think darling that if nothing does happen soon that you should come back too. I can't bear this much longer and I think we might risk it. Anyway think about it and let me know what you think about it.

I got a very nice letter from the General Manager, Assam Company yesterday and I have today written down to the Accountant asking him to send my dues, whatever they are, to me as soon as possible. It will mean that we shall be absolutely clear once it does arrive. Won't it be wonderful and all because of you sweetheart. I know I could never have done it is you hadn't taken a good hold of me.

Excuse the back of this sheet of paper but someone has been doing a sword dance on it by the look of it.

Well sweetheart I shall write again tomorrow. I am being good sweetheart. I have written four times in the last five days. You must be getting up with all my letters.

My love to all

*My dearest love to you and Alan and pray that I might see you sweetheart because I do every night at 0930 hrs.
xxxxx Donald*

[top of page]

The Assam Regiment, Shillong, Assam. 16.7.1942

Most extraordinary just had a chit from a chap who was my fag at school. Funny how people meet. He is in the Rajputs.

My darling,

I am sitting in the mess by myself with the wireless going playing some ghastly music and darling I am feeling very lonely and very lovesick. Do you mind the way I carry on but I am getting worse instead of better. I wish you were at No 4 and I was at the Jat Mess. I could come and see you, anything, anything. Darling write and tell me you love me, love me very much. The C.O. has just told me he wants to get some leave but what can we do. Impossible situation. I did not get a letter this evening. Haven't for a while now. I hope you are getting mine. I do so love yours and the way you write. What am I like. I suppose I am frightful. Like everything I seem just to miss the boat somehow. The only good thing I ever did was to have you as my little wife and Alan as my son. I never realised that I should ever get really as bad as this and only hope that we shall have years and years together always loving each other and understanding each other. I am nearly happy but only because I believe that you love me and that maybe I do make you happy. Do I darling? I mustn't go on I shall only break down all together and do something desperate. I shall finish this off tomorrow.

Darling I am afraid I missed out a day because I have been rather busy. There was a row in the bazaar and some people got knocked about. Some of our Naga on the rampage. I have been trying to get to the bottom of the story but have not yet managed. Darling heart don't be annoyed with what I wrote above. I was feeling miserable at the time. Just like you feel sometimes. I am sure.

Yesterday we tried to play nine holes of golf in the evening but it came down in buckets and although Diana loved it we were thoroughly soaked. Nothing came through about leave yet but I have been [different type of paper] thinking seriously of getting you back here. I really don't see any harm but of course it's the travelling for you. I could come down to Calcutta and meet you quite easily. Anyway I asked you in my last letter to think about it. Let me know your views. I don't think your Mother would agree with you, do you? Last night you know I was so fed up that I had my bath and went straight to bed and had Gulab bring my dinner over from the mess. Strictly against all laws but it did remind me of the days when we used to do that. Wasn't it wonderful. I had the photo of Fatty boy on the table beside me and the snaps of you and tried hard to pretend.

I see by the way that you are addressing my letters to E.F. We have not gone over and I shall not do so for quite a while yet so just keep sending them here. I do wish I could see Fatty starting to eat. He must be simply wonderful. Darling do you ever think he will say "Da Da" really. I know he will love his Mother so much I just won't have a look in. Do you love him sweet heart? Gosh I wish I could see him. See you both.

I have not yet had [a]reply from the company as to how much they are going to give me. It will work out at something like Rs 600/- back pay anyway whether the half pay or not I just don't know. Anyway we are going to get something. Well darling write and tell me about yourself and Alan. Love to all.

Hugs and kisses to you both.

Donald.

[No date July]

My sweetheart,

I am terribly sorry about that last effort of mine but I was feeling so miserable. Lot better now in fact bubbling over. I asked the C.O. to have another go at General Goddard about families and he did. Imagine what the General said he would shut an eye to wives coming up. So darling you can come back. Of course there are one or two stipulations. One is that you must wait until this Congress business dies down and all is well for travelling. I shall endeavour to get to Calcutta and meet and bring you up this way as it is a new way and you cannot go through Pandu⁴²⁶ etc this time. But darling please please wait until I or you hear that travelling is O.K. I would simply hate anything to happen. What I suggest as a programme is that you leave Alan with your Mother, which, she very kindly said ~~that~~ she would look after ~~him~~. You come here and then in about two months I get my leave and we can both toddle back and see Alan and with any luck bring him back with us. I do not think it worth while bringing him just now darling because?..? Anyway sweetheart what do you think of it all and what does your mother really think of keeping "Fatty". This time I hope nothing will get in the way and nothing shall stop us seeing each other. I am looking forward to it and my life has cheered up no end. We shall only have two rooms and a bathroom which I think should be ample for the time being. It will be nice and cosy and especially in the cold weather we shall want a nice cosy room. How does one spell cozy? not right. Never mind you know what I mean. You remember Parker, he has come up to

Shillong on sick leave. He has invited Andy & myself to dinner at Pinewoods tonight which will be a change from the ration stuff we get in the Mess. You will find things very expensive up here now. At least I think they are. I don't care what they are we have plenty of money now. By the way darling talking of money. I sent Rs 300/- last month sometime and I am sending another Rs 500/- soon. This I think is going to start our little nest egg. We shall start saving in earnest now that things are clearer and see how much we can collect for going home after the war. We must have enough to buy a car and clothes and toys for Fatty and all kinds of things for my darling little girl. We want to have all the fun in world with no worries. We shall won't we darling.

Well write soon. I have [not] had a letter for about 10 days now. I suppose as I said in my last letter it was due to your thinking I was going to arrive.

Let me know all about when you should come etc and what you think of it all.

Love to all,

All the love in the world to you and Fatty,

Yours always, Donald xxxx

Iris to Mac

[No date July]

Darling, No letter for 4 days but it must be the breakdown in the railway. You can always blame it on that anyway! Your next letter must say you have got leave and I'm getting terribly excited. I met Mrs Mortimer to-day & she is going back to Shillong almost immediately. Which has decided me definitely. After all darling the Japs won't come in the rains, & it goes on raining till November in Assam. So it is worth it. We could picnic without unpacking anything and live in half a bungalow if need be. If you really think it is risky I could leave Alan for a couple of months (though I should hate it). It would be worth it – for me – to come for a month only if need be. However we can discuss it when you come.

Billy has arrived, looking very thin and brown but otherwise the same. He says he liked Macleod but he was very lazy & had a stinging tongue & said things about you behind your back! She apparently is someone to keep clear of. Billy says, which I thought would interest you, that there is a course in Gorilla [sic] Warfare in Sangor. It would be grand if you could come on here after that but it's too late now I suppose. Or perhaps you could go to it after your leave & I could come too. I think it would be very useful don't you – specially for your regiment. Rather fun too. By the way, is your friend Werner in the 4th Gurkhas? Because if so he is missing. I hope it's not the same one.

[rest missing]

[No date July]

My dearest,

I'm giving this book to Mrs Mortimer to give you. I was keeping it here for you but perhaps you'd like it for the train journey.

It makes me very jealous to think of her on her way back to Shillong. I wish I'd made up my mind to go too. Never mind, if you don't get leave, may I come at the end of August and spend a month or two with you? Unless something drastic happens I shall have to leave again before the cold weather so I don't think its fair to bring Alan. Specially now that his food is getting complicated and he can't just "muck in". But you say darling.

Awful shock for you darling – Niall is out here again!! At Poona! And Maureens husband⁴²⁷. Rotten luck for her.

Excuse mess but I've just been eating a very gooey cream cake.

Will write to-day as well.

Bless you my sweet – Totty

Mac to Iris

The Assam Regiment, Shillong, Assam

23.7.1942

Darling heart,

Just received the photo. Darling it is lovely. Really you have no idea how I am bursting with pride. Both of you little Fatties and how I do love you. I think Fatty has grown terrifically and his hair looks simply wonderful. You have no idea how much that photo made me want leave. I shall get it eventually if I continue worrying everybody concerned as I am doing. We have not as yet shifted out to Elephant Falls so until we do I cannot press but as soon as we do I

really am going to insist on getting leave as it is affecting my work and my outlook on everything. I just feel that a really good rest with you and Alan would make the world of different and I could get some work done. I feel so listless these days and with you not here I get frightfully bored and restless. Sorry darling to worry you with all these details but I am simply dying to get on leave. Just received your letter where you refused to go out to a dance. Funny thing darling I feel exactly the same as you do. I don't feel as if I want to entertain anybody and I don't want to talk to anybody because I can never talk about things that I am interested in and be sure that someone is listening even though it might be a lot of rubbish. Nothing is the same. No darling I will make it yet. LEAVE or BURST. You will come to dances etc with me sweetheart won't you. Or maybe you don't want the boys to see your poor husband!!

I am sitting my Higher Urdu examination in two months time. I have sent my name in and I sincerely hope that I pass it. I think I will actually. Cooksey has just passed his Elementary but 'Les' has failed!! Goodness knows what happens to him now. "Pharoah" as they call it has not arrived yet which seems a bit late. Of course I wouldn't be knowing but 'Les' seems to be a bit worried.

You know I always harp on this leave business but last night I was dreaming I had arrived in Naini and that you and I were running down the main street with Alan singing and laughing and throwing flowers from baskets. Don't quite get the connection (the flowers I mean) still I suppose it is the thought which running through my mind most of having a good time while I am on leave.

Well darling I will write again. Give my love to all.

Love, kisses & hugs to you and Alan,

Always yours, Donald

Alan was christened on 25th July at St John in the Wilderness, Naini Tal



Richard, Violet, Alan, Will, Iris and Robert outside the church



Alan and his Godmother, Suzanne Marshall



Alan and his Grandmother



Alan and Iris

Mac to Iris

The Assam Regiment, Shillong, Assam 28.7.1942

My darling,

I am afraid I did not write yesterday as I intended because I was so busy! Darling of course come on the 15th⁴²⁸ but the trouble is I have been making such a row about leave that now the order is on its way I am afraid the C.O. will make me take it. With any luck at all I should be able to leave in about two weeks time from now. I shall then ask the C.O. if [he] does not mind me bringing you back. Believe it or not there is still an order about bringing wives into Shillong although everybody including the General seems to be disobeying it as fast as they can. I have written to the bankers today and asked them to send over some money to you. We have got tons nowadays darling. Don't know quite what to do with it all. We shall have a good leave anyway. Darling you are rude saying that you want to laugh at my 'mouche'. It is a lovely one now and beginning to curl up at the ends. I know you would like it. Shant we have a battle royal about it. People say it makes me look very old. Quite possibly but I must look the part of Adj. even if I don't act like one.

I have been concentrating very hard on my Urdu which I must pass. I have met an awfully nice fellow here. He is actually the B. Major and was in Billys Bn. Name of James Robinson [Robertson]⁴²⁹. Awfully nice. He was telling me all about Staff College and what one has to do. I should love to go just for the experience. He said the C.O. should give me a chance having now done Adjutant for over a year. But darling I would like to see a bit of active service first. I know I would be alright and then come back to S.C. and then get a staff job somewhere. Never know I may have some luck soon.

I agree entirely with what Billy says about the CO. He is extremely lazy I have found out and has a very biting tongue. He has never used it on me and he has never spoken behind my back as far as I know because I am very frank with him and I would go up in the air if he tried anything on me. I am tough darling?!

Darling so pleased Alan is following Daddy's and Mummy's footsteps 18" round the chest!!! No, it is very good sweetheart. I should love to see him gurgling his food down. I shall anyway very soon. I wonder if he will remember me. When does Richard arrive? He should have done by now.

Of course I don't object darling at putting James in the name. What was his Christening like. Did anyone take any photos of it. Please let me know all about it wont you darling.

Well sweetheart no news. I shall send you a wire either tomorrow or day after to say that I am getting my leave and then I shall see you again. I can hardly wait.

All my love to all,

Kisses & hugs to you & Fatty (Dumbo),

Yours always, Donald

The Assam Regiment, Shillong, Assam 31.7 1942

Darling heart,

I am just waiting for the C.O. to come down and ask him about leave. The order has a[t] last come thro' and I am coming now if I bust. By the way I got your letter saying that you were coming here at the beginning of the month. I asked the C.O. and he said he was very sorry but it was against orders. Now as you know darling this is true and I know what you are going to say that Mrs Mortimer came up and all kinds of wives have come up. The C.O. also realises this but he says he will not go against the order. His wife has evidently asked to come up but he won't let her. I don't know if this is because he is having a good time without or not but he will not budge and all he said was the A.Q.⁴³⁰ would be up and he would put the matter up to him so when he does I shall personally see him. You have no idea how much this disappointed me but I cannot help it. I have sworn and cursed but what good does it do. I think everything is impossible and I don't know where to turn. I know this place might be dangerous later on but just now there seems to be no reason at all for you not coming. Anyway if you do I agree about leaving Fatty. It would be better considering that he does have to have all that attention etc and I think the journey again would be too much for you. We have not yet moved out to E.F. but hope to do so in the near future. We shall absolutely be stuck there because we are not allowed the staff cars any more and taxis will not come out there. You know what Mr Sherifs is charging these days. Rs 10/- each way if you please and nobody will stop him.

Still if you come up we shant want to go anywhere. C.O. has just arrived and here I go darling. Pray for me. By God if I don't get it. . . . Have seen him and it is O.K. sweetheart. Better than nothing anyway. He wants me to wait until Andy comes back from his course which is about the 20th of August and then he is going to take over my job for the time being and I shall leave as soon as possible after that. Darling don't be disappointed. I am coming now definitely and maybe by that time I shall be trying to bring you back with me for a while. Actually I can hardly believe I am going. I am just dying for the day I drive up to Naini in the car and see you waiting, I hope, at the end of the Lake sweetheart. You won't blush if I kiss you a lot will you. I bet you won't come down now that I have said that.

Really I think it would be better all round, though, me coming there then, because I can see Fatty and we can fix up what we are going to do this winter and darling all kinds of things. I can hardly wait and all the letters I send from now on will be full of it.

I have just sent you a wire saying that I would be coming just in case you suddenly decide to depart.

Well sweetheart thing just another few weeks. Do you think that we can wait. I think so. So much to look forward to.

My love to all. Fondest and dearest love to you & Fatty.

Hugs & kisses,

Donald

P.S. Will write and ask your mother if she can put me up.

August

Mac to Iris

[No date – August 1942]

My darling,

I have simply been rushed off my feet lately and have had no time to write for a few days, really. I am not making any excuses but we have started for E.F. and the work for a change is colossal. I hope by now anyway that you have received my wire darling. I think honestly darling that it is better idea that I should come and then the order will probably be finished and I shall be able to bring you back with me. I can then see you and Fatty and get a bit of a holiday, which you may not think, I badly need. I am getting frightfully stale these days and don't seem inclined to do anything. It means anyway sweetheart that I shall see you about three weeks after you get this which will be wonderful. Darling I shall make love to you all day too. You just wait. You have no idea. I shall feel a bit of a stranger myself. It is years ago since I saw you I know darling Fatty is wonderful and it is all because of you really. I don't admit these things very often but there it is. I think I can safely hand it to you as you are not within sight and I can't see your head swelling. I only hope that he recognises me. Do you think he will.

Excuse this frightful writing but I am taking an Urdu Exam at least I am supervising an exam and one or two youths are puzzling their heads and looking quite lost. Just like me I suppose when I took it. Its rather fun. I often wondered what my school masters used to think when they were taking an exam. Actually I don't know whether I should stand up or sit down or walk about twiddling my "mouche". I decided as you no doubt see to write to you. I have three hours to do it in so I hope you won't be tired with this rigmarole. How do you spell "rigmarole".

By the way I got that book from Mrs Mortimer the other day and so far as I have got I love it. It is very original don't you think? I am taking it very slowly as it is very hard to get any reading material up here now. Thank you very much indeed darling it was very good of you.

By the way about this leave of mine. What do you want me to bring you. Give me a list and I shall bring it along. Not too much darling as you know my little fad about parcels, cats and railways!

I have got everything packed now but somehow or other we seem to have piles of packing cases left over. I don't know what was in them all? Anyway let me know what you want and I shall get the things out. You gave me one list I know but I am afraid I couldn't have been a very complete one??

Bruno has just arrived up here on leave and seems very fit and full of beans. I believe I told you before that he has made quite a name for himself and the Bn. Rather good show although I did not think that Bruno had it in him. Funny you know I saw Mrs Bruno yesterday and she didn't even know that Bruno was coming and he arrived up here and went straight passed Elephant Falls where as you know Mrs Brown is and hasn't gone back yet still running about his work etc. What would you do if I was to do that! I have, actually, quite a good idea.

Darling I have missed the post and have brought the letter back to my room to finish off. I am just going to get down to a spot of Urdu. I cannot concentrate on it but I shall try hard If you were only here you could help me I know. I am just looking at the photos of you and I can hardly believe that I shall be seeing you both soon. Wonderful. As I said before I shall harp on this subject until you get quite bored with me. These parties by the way sound terrific. Are you trying to get off with some one. Oh yes is that man out here. Honestly sweet I am frightfully jealous as you know and shall be frightfully rude, a la Bosun if I smelt him and he tries to have any of his long chats with you about the world and whats wrong with it. Reading that over it sounds rather nasty but it is not really meant to be but you must tell me that you love me more than him and will always. Darling heart if you ever made even the slightest suggestion like that it would hit me very hard and very deep too. You have just no idea how much I love you and how much I covet you and all that belongs to you my sweet. Enough you are probably saying "Don't be silly Mac" and also you may be annoyed at my suggesting such a thing. I shall kiss you all the more, so there! Serenade, Yes I have the gramophone going, whisky peg in my hand and I am very much in love.

By the way Joan Davis has had a son⁴³¹ and 'Les' is running round in small circles. Actually I hope them the best as we have such a nice Fatty I should hate to wish any one anything else. He bought me a whisky soda on the strength of it. I don't feel kind him just for that though!

Well my sweet I have written a lot of rubbish. I hope you don't mind.

My love to all and my dearest love to you and Fatty and expect me soon.

Yrs always & always. Donald.



Iris to Mac

August 1942

My darling, I've sent off the fateful wire to-day & I'm hoping this'll be one of the last letters I have to write. If you say "no" I can't come I shall send more & more pathetic wires – and I shall go into the most colossal sulks you ever imagined. Darling we mustn't waste any more time – it is so precious these days – it doesn't matter if you're in the middle of moving, I can sleep or eat anywhere or not at all. Please please let me come. If you're taking your Higher Urdu it would be just as well for you not to get leave now & I can help you & then if nothing happens you can get leave then. I shall really think you don't want me if you don't let me come now!

Herewith the snaps of the christening and some others – rather sweet aren't they? I'm having some enlargements. Darling he can sit up by himself now! He looks so adorable sitting up in his basket and peering over the frills and is terribly proud of himself, my new Ayah is a perfect gem and so hard-working. Alan loves her. He has lovely pink cheeks and his legs and arms are getting beautifully fat and dimpled. I adore him so.

Nothing to report since I last wrote except that I have a tummy upset & am having Epsom Salts poured down me which is depressing. Mrs Cargle⁴³² came to tea & she thinks of coming back to Shillong too but is under the impression that September is cooler than August to travel. I have disillusioned her & she might come with me.

My sweetheart, soon we'll be together again & I feel quite sick with excitement about it. I will try to be nice to you

and not lose my temper & make it worth the expense of having me back. Truly I will.

I'm dead tired so forgive this uninteresting scrawl.

Kisses from your grown-up son –

And all my love till we meet, dearest heart xx Totty xx

[in pencil] I had a horrible dream about you last night – when I came back I found you didn't care for me any more!

[No date – 7th Aug Violet diary - Mahjong here]

Darling – it is 1 in the morning & I'm having another of my sleepless nights – I seem to have so many now & pour Asprin etc down myself without effect & get so miserable. My mind just won't stop functioning for one moment – about coming back to Shillong & whether or not to bring Alan and all the other millions of problems that loom large when one can't sleep. It is very silly I know but I'm made that way as you know. If only for the umpteenth time, you were here to comfort me & sort it all out for me. It seems an awfully long time to the end of the month just at the moment.

Do I annoy you very much the way I go on? I expect I do, like in lots of other ways. Darling keep on loving me if you can & I may improve with any luck. You & Alan make me want to terribly but nothing much seems to happen. Oh how I long to be back in our little house amongst the pine trees – the 3 of us & your “T” Coy & the motor bike. One never really appreciates anything till after I suppose.

I wonder if you can read any of that written at the dead of night. [in pencil]

It soothes me to write to you & tell you I can't sleep as I can't dig you in the ribs as I would if you were there & stop you getting any!

I haven't had a letter for 3 days so am waiting on tenterhooks to know if you've definitely heard about leave. There's a marvellous film – “Major Barbara”⁴³³ – on the 28th & we've booked your seats so you must be here willy nilly. Mummy has Mah Jong party – All laughing & shrieking making it quite impossible to write sense. People do talk rubbish playing Mah Jong.

“4 Crachy-wachys”

“One little South Wind, tra-la. The South Wind doth blow & we shall have snow-snow-snow.”

“Who wants a garden, a garden a ga-arden – We'll do the keel row, tra la la la la la!”

“Better and better. I'm clean. Clean as the driven snow.”

“What are rings around the fingers, with rings beneath the eyes”.

“Hell screamed the duchess as she waved her wooden leg”.

“The dog's eating my toes. Nobody knows tiddly pom, how cold my toes, tiddley pom, are growing.”

“I've got a pong, you've got a pong, all God's children go-hot pongs.”

“Mah Jong! Ha! Ha! Hee! Hee! Clever clever clever little me!”

One wouldn't really credit grown-up women with such drivel. I should love to write a play bringing in a Mah Jong party.

Mrs Cargill⁴³⁴ brought Alexander to tea with Alan to-day – Alan was a dreadfully bad host and just lay and stared at him with his mouth wide open and refused to smile or move. He used to be so sociable and now he just stares and stares at people and I do hope he shows off all his clever tricks to you. I expect he will once he's used to you and your moustache. He sits up so beautifully now and I put him into rompers to-day for the first time and he looked angelic. His hair is terribly soft and one can't do anything with it except by spitting on it profusely which is a little degrading.

The party is getting wilder & wilder & I honestly can't think. Mrs Marshall & Mrs Thompson⁴³⁵ are here and they are all talking hard & fast without a breath. We must play some bridge when you come mustn't we darling?

I can hardly wait – I bet you aren't nearly as excited. Thank goodness some of the pretty girls are going – the behaviour in Naini this year is so shocking they're thinking of closing the Boat Club! Don't look at me darling!

All my love to you dearest heart,

Yours only,

Totty

[No date c.10th August 1942]

My darling,

Another letter from you and I am really rather upset my sweet over your health. When I come up you and I are going to see a doctor and get you put right. I wonder what it is that makes you feel like that. Anyway we must get you right and you must promise that you will go and see a doctor now or when I come. The photos were sweet and really I love Fatty's expressions. He is going to be a Tartar isn't he. Oh darling you have no idea how much I am looking forward to seeing you both. Only fifteen days from today and I start off. I have already started to get things ready and am feeling a lot better now that I know I am going to get away from it all for a while. We are naturally still very busy with our change over. There never seen such a crush in all my life. Men all over the place.

I went into the Club on Saturday in the back of a truck with the C.O. On the way back something went wrong with the petrol just outside the Club and we pushed and swore heartily for hours. We eventually got back about 2 o'clock feeling dead. I think I shall resign again from the Club. We cannot get in and I am damned if I will pay Rs 20 for a taxi. That is what they are charging nowadays. By the way I played billiards all evening and I didn't dance once. Very good aren't I darling. I don't know I just hate dancing with anybody else these days. I am just dying to take you out to dances again sweetheart. Won't it be lovely. Darling tell me where you will be waiting for me when I come up. I want to see you just as I get over the rise of the hill at Naini. You will be frightfully shy if I kiss you darling lots of times wont you but I am going to do it. This is terrible writing but people keep bursting in wanting to know this and that. Les Davis has gone into hospital with some horrible illness. He keeps swelling up all over the place and nobody quite knows why. C.O. puts it down to excitement over the newly born. I didn't do anything like that did I darling. Farmer⁴³⁶ is also in Hospital. We have now got three BOs in. If it wasn't for my leave I should do the same. I am not feeling at all well these days and definitely need a holiday. Darling I am sorry I must be boring but I am feeling awful and am just living for the day when we are together. I hope you are right about Russia and that you will come back here. You have no idea how much I do.

I love you sweetheart and honestly hope that you are better by the time this letter reaches you. I feel almost like sending you a wire but it will only worry you.

My love to all and excuse this short note but there is really nothing going on but hard work just now.

All the love in the world dearest to you two.

Xxx Donald xxx

Iris to Mac

[No date. August 1942]

My sweet – A letter to-day thank goodness. I was beginning to think this Congress business was affecting mails. So glad to hear your leave is definite darling – am I thrilled! You mustn't let yourself be delayed – I shall expect you on the 29th when we shall go to see "Major Barbara" if you aren't too weary. Darling will you bring these things with you.

My white evening coat

My black velvet evening coat.

My bright blue taffeta evening dress.

That tin thing with rubber attached & black tubes.

What about the box of books & the linen? If you think anything will happen in Shillong this winter you'd better bring those too. You can book them right to Naini from Pandu – small guage – so you needn't bother about them again. Will you bring the photo album too, so we can stick in the largest snaps (bring them too). If you have any time in Calcutta & can get to Thachers, would you please buy me "Feeding and Management in Infancy and Childhood" by Pattison and Smyth. I think that's all. I'll tell you if I think of anything else.

Things have calmed down a bit here due to Martial Law having been declared, & shops are beginning to open again gingerly. We braved the madding crowd & went to the Cinema yesterday – actually nothing at all interesting happened & the hundreds of police guarding us looked rather foolish. Somebody went up to a little boy yesterday and said "You're very naughty to be causing all this trouble" & he said "Well Memsahib they give me As 8 a day for it. If you give me As 10 I'll stop"! They hold up pieces of cardboard with "We want our freedom" in drunken capitols over them & expect us to be impressed!

Mrs Marshall is still up here & has to stay till this is over. She is extraordinary – she never stops buying clothes & never stops telling us how posh she is – Suzanne is the same & is always borrowing bits of money without dreaming of

returning it! Mummy was going to Agra to-morrow, but has decided not to as Kathgodam is in rather a turmoil.

I haven't been feeling too bright to-day & have spent it painting everything a sickly blue & washing all my stockings. Very peaceful. Yesterday we went to "The Prime Minister"⁴³⁷ – my old flame John Gielgud looking hideous as Disraeli but acting awfully well. I'm just doing nothing but wait for you now. Darling, you mustn't be hurt if Alan doesn't recognise you at first – he was very wee then and he'll soon remember. He has such lovely rosy cheeks now – I hope they survive this rain which never stops. A true Scotsman, he adores his porridge.

We call him Himpy because of the ridiculous tuft of hair on top – on The Onion! I can't tell you how sweet he is.

Only a little longer dearest – "Bide a wee & dinna weary" as they say in some places.

Love for always & longest

Mac to Iris

[No date – c.17th August 1942]

My darling, things are getting better and better and I shall see you definitely in less than two weeks time. Today I got the confirmation of my leave from Area H.Q. and everything is set except that I have about a week to go before I can move out of this. I did what you would think a dreadful thing this morning. The C.O. asked me if I wanted to go to Staff College and that he would put my name up. I refused darling. Now wait a minute before you say anything. Unless I can get some practical experience this Staff College Course is no good at all to anybody. I have been told that by a lot of people. I rather have some experience than go to Staff College. There is plenty of time for it anyway. Anyway if you think I am awfully naughty I shall ask for the next one that comes which is only three months later. I am very sorry to hear about Fatty not being his usual self sweetheart. There is nothing wrong with him is there. Both of you seem to be in the wars. Darling of course I don't mind you writing exactly what you feel like. That is what I am here for and soon I shall be with you and you can tell me all about it. I am worse than you are by a long way you know but we shall make up for it and we shall [have] an absolutely terrific time together. We shall go for walks and play with Fatty and go to pictures and dances and have a really good time. We have plenty of money I can tell you oodles and oodles so we need not worry about that at all. While I go through Calcutta I will buy you something darling but I don't know quite what you would like and by the time to reply to this I am afraid I shall be with you. Anyway I will see what I can get for you all. I feel terrific. Sweetheart won't you come out to a dance with me. Just think of it. I shall be asking that soon and darling you mustn't refuse!

Well I must get this off. My letters are getting shorter & shorter but it is all excitement really.

Love to all and please take care of yourself sweet and don't worry and have really good sleeps.

Always always yours xxx Donald xxx

21.8.42

My darling,

What can I do! Four more days and I should have left that is on the 25th and what should happen but all leave has to be stopped. Darling isn't it awful I nearly broke down when I heard. The order is that all leave in the Eastern Army has been stopped until further notice. I can't compete. The railways are all down and nobody can get through. No mail is coming through and I haven't had a letter for a week which I know must be the railways. Darling I feel so helpless and fed up. I can't put my mind to anything and I just go for long walks and 'mope' the whole time. I had everything ready and sanction had been accorded by District, and everything was lovely. I did not send a wire because I knew you would have been so upset and I think its better to explain like this. The only consolation is that as soon as it is open again, leave I mean I can get away the same day as the leave I have been sanctioned lasts for three months. Jacobs rang up yesterday, he is A.D.C. to General Goddard and said that the General didn't think it would last for more than a few days. I hope to God that he is right. I'll come soon darling as soon as I can. Please don't be too depressed because it only makes me feel very bad myself and God only knows what I am like just now. The C.O. thank goodness is trying to do something about it in the way of getting first hand information as to when leave does open and I have told Jacobs that he must wire as soon as he hears and he will probably know before a lot of people. Of course I might be able to leave on the 25th yet. Anyway I hope so. I shall bring you up from Bareilly. If you hear the phone going about 7 o'clock in the evening you will know it is me and darling I do hope its soon. Gosh I have got a fit of the blues. I must cheer up and just think that I am going on leave very shortly.

I am sorry about this moan darling and I shall try and stop. I have been working fairly hard these days as the C.O. seems to get lazier and lazier. Billy was right he is the laziest man I have ever met. He stops work at 12.30 everyday

and then you don't see him any more. I got a nasty crack at him the other day he said "Mac you are taking and making to many decisions, which I should do, in this Bn." I told him that when there was a hasty decision to be made he was never there. Rather shook him and he stayed till one o'clock the next day but has now gone back to his old habits. He was sleeping evidently! I have been very quiet these days and haven't been out of the lines except for walks and riding. I have set my heart on passing this Urdu examination and I am going to do it willy nilly. I only wish you were here to help me. I was only thinking last night how much I needed you darling and what a mess I would make of myself if I ever were for some reason to lose you. Why these terrible thoughts I don't know. I love you so much that at times I seem to feel you near me and sometimes I say aloud 'Iris' or 'Totty' just to see what it sounds like and to see what happens. I suppose darling you should & are thinking me crackers but I cannot help it and it is all your fault really and you cannot blame me. How is my boy darling. Write and tell me all about him and yourself and what you do when you play with him which you must do nowadays.

Well darling heart I leave you much depressed but hoping that all will be well soon. My love to all,
Yours always, always, always xxxx Donald xxxx

27.8.42

Darling,

Still no news about leave opening but I believe things are a lot quieter and that I shall be along any day now. I hope sweetheart that that you are not too disappointed and just think that I shall be with you soon. Actually if all had gone according to plan I should have left Calcutta this morning for Bareilly. Still everybody in Eastern Army are suffering the same plight so I really cannot grumble to much and anyway whats the good of grumbling. I shall get away eventually I know. I am just looking forward to the day.

Things very quiet here and I am working about three hours a day at my Urdu which I must pass. Every time I do any I feel that it is more and more impossible and difficult. The C.O. these days is not really well and does not work as a consequence and I have to I shoulder rather a lot not that I really mind it but it does get a bit much sometimes. Especially if you are not here to look after me darling. I haven't been in the Club now for weeks and have no intention of doing so. I hate the place now and without you to dance with I just give it up and play, if I do go, billiards all night. One of Andy's girl friends is up just now and he is running round like a hen on hot bricks. This is wife no 4 I believe. Anyway he is feeling extremely sorry for himself this morning as he had far to much to drink. I found him hidden in a wood this morning trying to get rid of that awful feeling!

Had a long letter from 'Pop' Parker and he seems very well. Bit fed up with the job although he is getting double pay for doing it!! Some people have all the luck. It is our turn soon! Wonder what it will be.

Shillong is getting really lovely now darling and I am going to get going with my paints soon. Some of the sunsets and landscapes are really beautiful. I can never get down to it though. You will have to be here I think before I will do it.

Well my sweet I have really nothing else to tell you except that I love you so much and I really miss you so much. I really feel quite ill thinking about it. However there are happy times to come.

My love to all,

Fondest and dearest love to Alan and yourself

Xxxxx Donald

Noted in Violet's diary 29th August: 6 Seats Major Barbara. Iris went to Hospital.

Iris to Mac

29.8.42

Oh Mac darling, It can't be true that you're not coming. I was just expecting you to walk in any moment when I got your letter & it has broken my heart. Now I feel you'll never get leave & the future looks unutterably black. Mac, if you really cant get leave you must let me come back. Just for a little. You must. I wish to God I'd come when I'd first thought of it – why I ever left I don't know. There are lads here who come up on leave every month.

Darling I don't want to make you depressed, but I'm so unhappy I can't help it. Please come soon.

I'm in bed at present with appendicitis and feeling pretty low. Now that you're not coming I may decide to have them out, the doctor says I ought to but I was going to wait till you'd gone. I don't know what to do. I should have to go over to Ranikhet as the hospital here is so expensive – tell me what to do. I dread the thought. I seem to have spent

most of this year in bed or hospital don't I?! If there's a chance of your coming I'll leave it for now.

I can't think of anything to tell you as I've done nothing lately. I'll write a proper letter to-morrow when I feel better about everything. I'm right at the bottom of the black pit just now.

Alan is very well & looking lovely.

xxxx Goodbye my darling – Always yours – Iris.

Darling – Am going to hospital this evening to see if I must have my appendix out. Don't worry – I'll wire if I'm having them and get your leave after that if possible. Don't fret about me darling – it's only a little thing – really.

Must get ready to go. I'll be fit again by the time you get this.

All love, sweet – Totty

September

Mac to Iris

[No date. After 3.Sept. 1942 at Elephant Falls]

Sweetheart,

You will have got at least I hope so the letters saying I could not get away and also asking you to come here. I hope you are getting my letters. I got your one with my mothers letter included posted on the 20th August. It arrived here on the 3rd Sept. Fourteen days. Darling you say you will be frightfully disappointed. Please don't be too much. I am feeling awful myself but look on the bright side and it will all soon work out. Remember that before you come you must let me know and you must abide by my decision as to whether it is alright to travel or not. Things have not quietened down yet. Isn't Fatty wonderful I wish I could only see his little face when he gets angry. He must have quite a lot of character by now and really begin to show moods of sorts.

Things very quiet here except that I am getting an exceptionally livery Adjutant and everybody in my way just now gets a thick ear. That's what you do to me you see sweet. I know they are praying for you to come back as they think it might improve me. Actually I am beginning to quite like Elephant Falls now. It is not half as bad as I thought. There are really some lovely walks and the scenery is really good. Soon I shall show you them all. We shall also do some riding as the horses are up here and they are really tame!

I have had Gulab working hard on clearing up all our clothes etc. I never realised we had so much stuff. If I came before you came darling I shall bring as much as possible but I cannot guarantee that I can bring Alans table etc. Anyway I shall see.

Les Davis has going to Digboi to sit for his Elementary Urdu which he must pass this time otherwise he drops his rank poor fellow. It will be rather a pity but the trouble seems that he cannot spell at all. Anyway we shall see. The C.O. has got very pally these days and taken me into his confidence and tells me all kinds of things about nothing. I cannot quite get the idea yet but probably there is a motive. I believe his wife is an absolute 'bitch' of a woman. She lead some young man up the garden path and then let him go with a bang. The lad landed up in front of the Brigadier. I hope she doesn't come here or there will be trouble in the ranks. I don't think that it is likely that she will. Anyway. We have an extraordinary fellow just posted to us. He is a Bengalee "Oh.my!" He hears other people calling me 'Mac' so he thinks that it is my proper name. I get addressed something like this every morning. "Good morning, Capt Mac, Sir, It is a very good morning Sir; Yes? I have usually to turn away before I burst into undignified laughter. It is all done so seriously.

Well darling no excuse except that there is really nothing else to say. I love you darling heart and I wish I could tell that now.

All my love and kisses,

Always yours, Donald.

Ramsey Hospital.
September 1942

Darling one -
Two letters from you which cheered me up no end. I'm still very disappointed about your leave but it seems my jolly old appendix have got to come out willy-nilly. So it's perhaps just as well you aren't here now to see me go through another nasty phase.

Listen darling - you must postpone leave till after the operation unless you think there is any doubt of getting it later. I'm sending you a wire today to tell you this in case you suddenly decide to come. I'll send you another after the operation a possibly another like saying I'm going to be operated on in case you can get compassionate leave! So don't get flustered - it won't mean two operations. Do you follow? If you think that leave will be stopped later then take it now - otherwise wait.

Example of Iris's letters to Mac

[No date - c.4th September (before operation)] Ramsey Hospital

Darling one -

Two letters from you which cheered me up no end. I'm still very disappointed about your leave but it seems my jolly old appendix have got to come out willy-nilly. So it's perhaps just as well you aren't here now to see me go through another nasty phase.

Listen darling - you must postpone leave till after the operation unless you think there is any doubt of getting it

later. I'm sending you a wire to-day to tell you this in case you suddenly decide to come – I'll send you another after the operation & possibly another still saying I'm going to be operated on in case you can get compassionate leave! So don't get flustered – it won't mean two operations. Do you follow? If you think that leave will be stopped later then take it now – otherwise wait till I'm fit again. I'm not enthusiastic about this business, but resigned. It is lucky I've got someone to leave Alan with. I miss him so much. The days in hospital are bearable, but the nights are so long as I can't sleep and lie awake hour after hour feeling so miserable and wanting you so terribly. I can almost feel you sometimes – perhaps at the same time you are wanting me too & imagining I am in your arms. Do you ever imagine that? Every night I talk to you before I go to sleep, & lately when I haven't slept I have stayed with you all night. But you're not as close as I wish you were darling. If anything happened to you I think I would die.

Time passes slowly here, slower than when I've been in hospital before. I read & write alternatively and make my scanty meals last as long as possible. The matron cheered me a lot by saying "I don't think you realizes how ill you've been" which made me feel highly interesting and raised my condition from "Oh just a bit of an appendix you know" to "Acute appendicitis my dear". Actually I haven't been nearly as bad as they all seem to think.

I've just finished my lunch (fish cream & baked custard!) & am wondering whether to sleep now or not. It is such a long time to tea & visiting time – if I have any visitors. I think I'll go on writing my play while I'm here except I feel lazy & brainless. It is very naughty of you Mac to read my things when I wasn't looking – very naughty. I shall keep everything locked away in future, you see!

Oh darling I feel so depressed – I can't help it. Write to me often now I'm in bed. I can't think of anything to tell you but I will to-morrow. Just now everything has come to an end.

All love dearest one – xxx Totty

[No date - c.10th September (4th day since operation)]

My darling one – I've just got your letter saying I can come back and am so excited I must write a line, although I still feel queerly weak. Darling how simply wonderful. When the Congress trouble is over I would surely be fit enough to travel and then I can come. Couldn't I bring Alan though? It will be rather a nuisance for Mummy (though of course she will do it) as she will be moving into tents in Agra. It would be rather a tight fit for all 3 of us, but I don't think that would matter. Anyway I'm coming whatever happens.

Well this is the 4th day since My Operation & I'm just beginning to think perhaps life is livable after all! As you probably know my appendix Suddenly flared up again & they operated in about ½ an hour. It was awful, I nearly died of fright before & when I came round – phew! I'd rather have a baby! Mummy was wonderful & held my hand the first two days which were so ghastly I can't think about them. Mine was a very special appendix (naturally!) & had gone septic so they had to leave the wound open & drain the poison out by a tube & that was why it hurt so. They took the tube out to-day finally & I feel better. The doctor dresses me every day – an intriguing performance in which he pulls the coverings off my wound (they always stick) pulls out the tube, squeezes firmly to see if there is anything septic, & then shoves another tube in. Do I hit the ceiling! I watch him do it all & it is amazing to think that they can just carve you up & then clip you together again! He is a very clever doctor & the nurses are so kind, which helps a lot. But no getting away with "Oh she had a very Easy Time" this time, darling! He says my appendix has signs of several earlier attacks on it, so probably that accounts for all my troubles. To-day I've had my first food (soup & bread & butter) & I slept for the first time last night so life is cheering up. My only trouble now is wind or flatulence as they politely call it here which rushes round the tender place without a pause. Anyway I expect you've had enough of my troubles. I hope you weren't worried by the wires & things – it was all so sudden that was the trouble. When you think of the old days where nothing was clean & they cut you from top to toe!

It is difficult to know when to say I can come as travelling still seems risky & anyway I don't expect I'll be allowed to for a week or so after I leave hospital. If you get a chance of leave darling, do take it, & then you could take me back. Otherwise I'll come at the very first opportunity & wire if necessary. I'm in here for another week about (I hope!) & I will talk over the question of Alan with Mummy & we'll come to some decision. How lovely it will be darling – safe in your arms again without worries or pains or loneliness.

I am very tired so no more for now. I'm coming as soon as I possibly can but take your leave if you can get it darling.

All love for always my sweet, Totty

11.9.42 Hospital

My poor darling! - So you've had this beastly thing done to you too. I got your wire this morning and couldn't believe my eyes as your operation must have been about the same time as mine, isn't it terribly odd? I feel that it is because we are so close to each other in every way - a sort of telepathy. We even know what each others insides are doing! It must be that, don't you think? Darling, I hope you didn't have a bad time & that you are quite fit again. We can fully sympathize with each other anyway! It helps me, when I'm in pain now, to think that you have been through it all with me. I should have been worried to death if I'd known before about you & I'm anxiously waiting for more news. I'm not sending you a wire as they are rather frightening. Anyhow you are sure to get sick leave after this, when you are strong enough to travel. Don't exert yourself in any way after you get out, you will be feeling very run down. Do take great care of yourself darling.

I'm still feeling not-so-good cos of my silly tube - while that is in my wound can't heal, but they must "drain" me properly, and you should see all the stuff that they get out of me every day. Its intriguing. I'm not allowed visitors except Mummy & I don't feel strong enough to read so my life has just become a waiting to be washed & dressed & fed & washed & dressed again. I've been in a fortnight now! Are they kind to you in hospital? I hope so, & I hope people come & see you. How did you like the chloroform? We shall be able to compare notes & say how much worse I was than you, to each other!

I will try to write every day - yesterday I felt abysmal as they put me onto M & B again.⁴³⁸ At last I refused flatly to take any more & they all rushed round in small circles & gave me morphia to keep me quiet & haven't mentioned M & B again! So I feel better. But oh my! The "flatulence"!

Patty is up again - their dog was run over & in trying to save it she got one hand badly bitten so she is a bit of an invalid too.

Am very weary so no more dearest. Get better quickly & I'll try to too - & take care of yourself my sweet. I'm so sorry this had to happen to you. Poor old Porky!

All love - I'm thinking of you day & night.

For ever - Totty

Mac to Violet

12.9.42

Welsh Mission Hospital, Shillong.

Excuse this vile paper and my writing. The Orderly is to blame for the paper.

Dear Mother,

What a time and especially what a trying time it must have been for you. I am really grateful and am sorry that you have been put to so much trouble and worry. It was all a most remarkable coincidence wasn't it? You have probably heard of it all from Iris. I felt perfectly alright but a bit depressed when I got Iris's letter saying that she had appendicitis and was feeling pretty miserable. Next day I had terrible pain inside and stayed in bed. This had no effect and the pain got worse. I decided myself to go to hospital and the doctor decided to do the operation right away. I am afraid I had no time in letting you know and I asked one of my friends to send a wire once the operation was over. I hope it arrived and you were able to sort out the puzzle. I have fixed up with the doctor that I get a months sick leave and I hope I shall be up in Naini about the 1st week in October. I get a month and instead of ten days which is one consolation. How about Iris. I hope she has fully recovered and did not have too bad a time. She is very brave and I have no doubt it did not trouble her very much. Don't tell her that she will be furious. I shall have to think up all kinds of things to say about "My OP" although she will probably crush me in the end. I am so glad Alan is so fit. I am just dying to see him and his antics. In fact I am dying to see you all and it won't be long now. My bearer has arrived and I shall give him this to post. Thanks for the trouble you have taken.

All my love, Donald

Iris to Mac

[No date - c13th September 1942]

Dearest One - I wonder how you are - quite fit again I hope. I wish we could get in touch quicker, it is very worrying isn't it? I expect you are out of hospital by now, but do remember to go very slow darling - operations take it out of you.

It is exactly a week since I was "done" & to-day I have felt consciously better for the first time which is a great

relief. I was beginning to think I would never feel well again! I still have my tube but they took the clips out yesterday & with luck they'll remove it in a day or two. Once it is out I shall feel a different person. If you're leave hadn't been stopped we'd probably both have been corpses now as you'd have had your attack in the train and I wouldn't have gone into hospital and that apparently would have been the end of me. So it wasn't quite such a disaster really! After this if you can get leave you must take me back – I think it will be alright to take Alan don't you? Otherwise I will come and then we can come back for Christmas leave and collect him. He is looking very sweet but is not putting on weight and is very underweight – he seems to get enough to eat and is So Contented, I can't think what it is. He gets bread and butter now which he loves apparently. He has stood up by himself too – at least pulled himself to his feet and swayed about for a couple of minutes, hanging onto his pen!

I had a letter from Niall the other day, written on board ship, which annoyed me intensely – he is getting very conceited it strikes me. He said “I have given up Adjutant, but I feel guilty as I'm afraid the Bn. will suffer.”! I will graciously allow you to kick him in the pants (or trews) if you meet & I know you will enjoy that darling!

I had such a lovely dream about us last night – I nearly burst into tears when I found it was only a dream. I wish I could dream of you every night. I wish you would send me a photo of you – please darling – I haven't a single one & you have lots of me. I would like it more than anything in the world. A swap would do. Oh how I long to feel you again & scratch your silly old head and curl up into a chair with you all round me. I grow more in love every hour I'm away from you. We are silly to have let ourselves get as bad as this aren't we darling?!

Excuse paper, its all I have.

God bless you, my sweet – Always xxxx Totty xx

Mac to Iris

Hospital 14.9.42

My darling,

Well another day and another day closer to you. I have not heard from you since you had your operation and sent the wire. I hope that all is well and I have sent one or two wires saying I am alright. I hope to have the stitches taken out in a day or two and I shall be allowed to get up. I shall feel thankful. Ones back gets so sore and I am just like you I lie awake at night and cannot sleep properly. I was always restless but this takes the biscuit and one does get so tired.

Another fellow has come in the room with me. A large Red headed Irishman. Good fellow. Absolutely wild of course and has been all over the world. Hong Kong escaped from Singapore in a boat. Now he wants to join the 'V' Force⁴³⁹. He is in here with the most extraordinary thing. While he was motorcycling along the road he passed some coolies. As a bullock cart was coming from the other direction he did not have much room and brushed up against the coolies. As he did so he felt a prick on his leg but thought nothing of it. When he got off his bike he couldn't stand. He had his leg Ex Rayed and they found a fish bone about three inches long in the middle of his leg. He remembered afterwards that the coolies were carrying dried fish to the market and a bit must have accidentally lodged itself in it. Fancy being all through the wars he has and a thing like that happening. I enclose a short letter from Alan to us. He seems very happy with his new job. Had some lovely flowers sent down from Government House yesterday. Getting quite pally with Lady Cloy⁴⁴⁰.

Well darling there is no more news and again I am just living for the day when we are together again. My how much I do.

My love to you darling and Alan Macfarlane Yours always & always, Donald

Hospital 15.9.1942

My darling,

Sweetheart you are naughty imagining things the way you do. You know you have no foundation at all for them and you just work yourself up for nothing. You know I love you and nothing ever in this world will change me. You must never doubt my love for you darling because it hurts me and I feel as if I have neglected you. Maybe that is true and I do not realise it? Love, my love, may be not very showing but it is there very profound and deep and you my sweet are the cause. Please never say that I say “I love you” just because I should because besides being against my nature, I don't usually, unless the circumstances press say or do a thing because I should. Now then naughty little thing just wait till I come up to Naini shortly and I will show you.

Life in here is very dull and monotonous and I feel like screaming on occasions. Never mind I am having my stitches out either today or tomorrow and shall be able to try my legs. I am sure I shall hardly be able to walk although I feel as

if I could. You I imagine will be a little later as you were operated on after me. I haven't actually had a letter from you since your 'op' but I am expecting one today.

Darling Alan is wearing 'pants' is he? I'll bet he doesn't like them and when nobody is looking takes them off and hides them in his cot. If he was anything like me he certainly would have done so by now. Being like his Mummy, well?? Extraordinary Alan is nine months old now. How time has flown. We must give him a bumper 1st birthday. I should think that he will be especially keen on the feasting part of the proceedings.

I have forgotten all about the Bn these [days] and stopped worrying. I am afraid I used to worry unnecessarily about small things. Still that is what happens when one gets into a rut as I was steadily going into with the C.O. Anyway as I say I have forgotten about it all and just resting and looking forward to my leave and being with you.

Well my sweetheart I have nothing else to write about. I am writing every day now so you should get letters every day.

Give my love to all and my love to you, all my love darling.

Yours always, Donald

Hospital, 16.9.42

My own darling,

Well darling you seem to have been through the mill good and proper. I received a form yesterday saying you were dangerously ill. I am afraid I got rather worried and sent a hasty wire which now I think is or was unnecessary because on enquiry I found that it was merely a matter of form which I sincerely hope it was. They seemed to have waited to long with you. Why? I wish I could be with you now. Anyway only a few weeks and all will be well. I am feeling perfectly fit and am waiting for the nurse to come and cut my stitches and then I am allowed to try and regain my equilibrium. No mean task I am afraid. Still every day brings me closer to my objective.

Andy and Doug Cooksey came into to see me yesterday and feel very fed up with things generally. Everybody seems the same.

I have been reading an awful lot since I have been in hospital. More I think that[n] ever in my life. They have quite a good library and it is full of travel books. Had a very good about Everest and one of Lawrence's books which I hadn't read before.

Well darling I am just dying for a letter written after your OP. I do want to know what is happening. I hope it has not been to hard on you sweetheart.

I love you darling and I [am] sick at heart at not being able to see you and hold you in my arms. Be brave little girl I will be with you soon.

All my love for always,

Donald

Iris to Mac

[No date] Hospital

Darling – I'm afraid I didn't write yesterday because I really felt deathly, but have perked up & feel quite human again to-day. It wasn't the pain but M & B two-hourly day & night & nothing else. To-day I have been promoted to cauliflower soup & baked custard for lunch & a dry biscuit with one cup of tea – they tasted like caviarre to me (whatever that does taste like!). The doctor here is a moody little man called Sheridan⁴⁴¹ – he was in a frightful temper yesterday that I hadn't come in earlier & stood & shouted at me till I could have screamed & slapped his face. He said I should have come in when the pain started & I was lucky not to have died of Peritonitis & from his tone implied he wished I had just to serve me right! I was feeling so ill at the time I couldn't think of anything to say, but afterwards thought of lots of biting remarks I wished I'd made. I wonder why doctors can be so rude & get away with it. He was quite amiable again to-day. This is a nice hospital, very clean & sunny & the sisters are sweet. They are most of them slightly "of the country" but so much pleasanter than the average superior English trained nurses. No ayahs messing around you either. I'm on a special bed they wind up either end so I'm continually propped up – it's alright till you want to sleep – this afternoon I wriggled down flat & slept solidly & dreamt you'd got your leave after all & was furious when a brisk bright nurse came & pulled me up & washed me vigorously, making gay conversation about how lovely the day had turned out after all. The night nurse is a darling & we have lovely juicy conversations about having babies & gory operations – she is one of 7 sisters all of whom appear to have had unique & terrible times with their insides!

Mummy and Suzanne come every day and yesterday they brought Himpy too – he should have been sleeping poor sweet and kept burying his head in my shoulder, the corners of his mouth going down and down. Also a Rumanian girl (the one who asked me to the “teeny tiny party” brought me lots of flowers & told me the horrors of having your appendix out. I’m reading an amusing book just now called “Warning to Wantons”⁴⁴² & yesterday finished one about a snake farm which made me feel sicker than ever!

No letter from you for 2 days. Please write often to make up for not being here, darling.

All love & I’m still hoping. If you really can’t get leave, would you be allowed a week-end in Calcutta?

Hugs & kisses my dearest –

Yours only – Totty

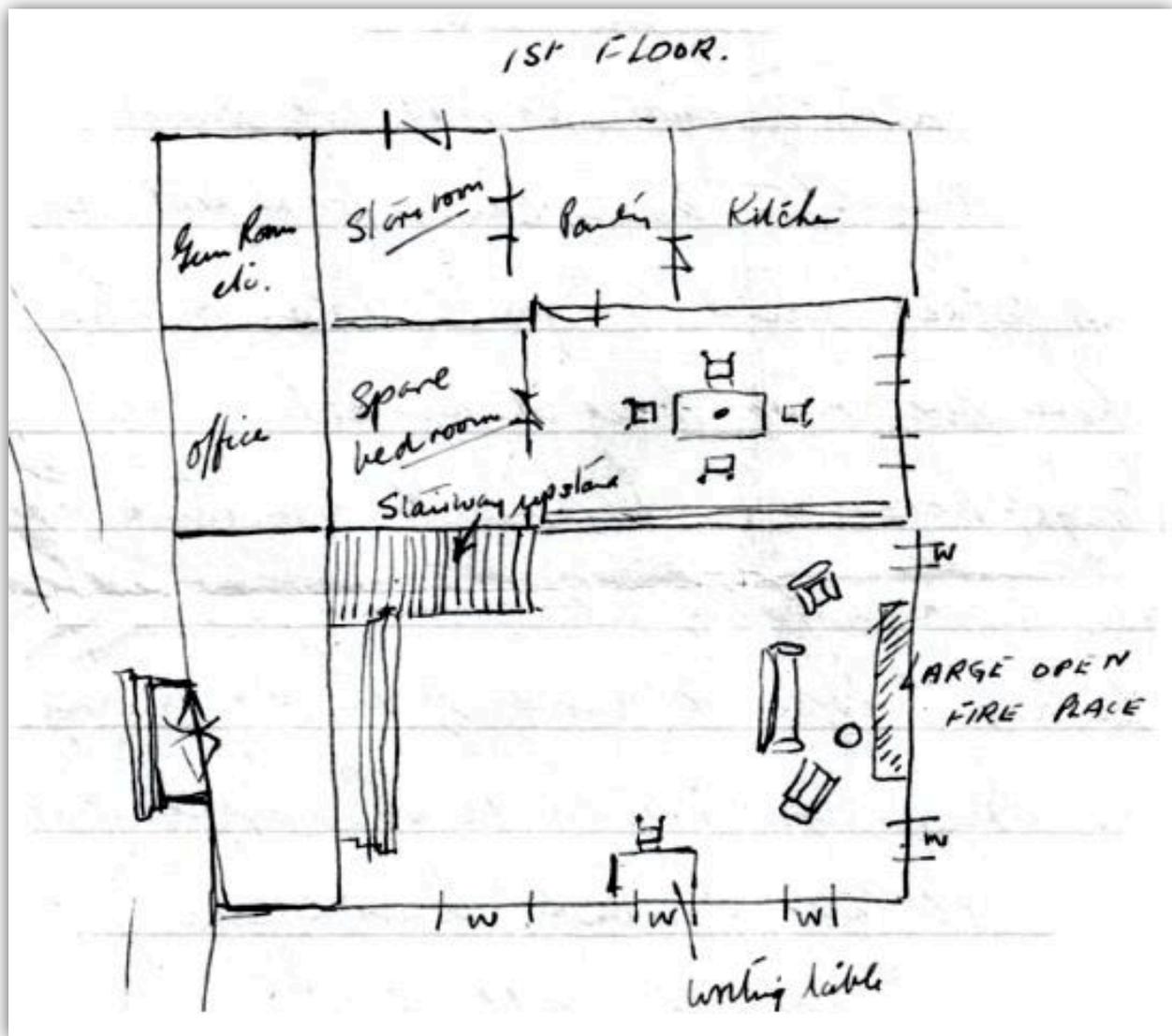
Mac to Iris

[No date September 1942]

My darling,

Got a letter from you yesterday and you seemed quite happy. By now you will have practically recovered and we shall be together very soon. By the way darling I am very annoyed about this man Sherridan. He has no right to be rude to you and if I had been there I should have told him so in more than one way. What does he think he is anyway. Little Pup I could strangle him quite easily just now. Don’t you stand any more lip from him and tell him that he will have to answer to me if he does. I am furious. Well sweetheart I am O.K. now and it is just a question of time. The wound which is bigger than yours!?! has healed up as far as I can see and the Doctor seems very pleased with it. The coincidence of you and I both have our operations for the same things is the topic of hospital. You get very good treatment here I must say. The food is very good, rather sloppy but I don’t mind baby food so I am alright. I was very amused at the way you described Alan, alias Fatty alias HIMPY eating his meal. I am glad he enjoys his food and he will be a great strong boy soon. Give him all the things he requires by the bucketful if necessary. As a boy I always ate my head off. Not so much of the boy, says you, what about now. Well darling I don’t do too badly I will admit.

Last night after I went to sleep and in my dreams I went to you darling and think what we did. We planned a house. It is still in my mind so I am drawing it on a sheet and see what you think of it. I have it all taped and there is only one thing required? Anyway I always think that if you dream and plan a thing long enough we shall eventually get our wish. Here is the plan of our little estate.



Now the sitting room and the dining room would have no partition only step leading up to the dining room. The whole house would be made of old oak beams and the rooms about 10 ft high. Upstairs naturally we would have our own bedroom and the nursery for all the children?? Beside this I should like 100 acres of rough shooting and a small burn running through. We would have a specially made station wagon so that we could go away anywhere and camp for a few days. This place must be fairly near a town where we could beat it up when we thought necessary. Darling do you think that I am mad writing and thinking of things like that. I spend most of the day doing so. I know you would be so happy and that is all that I want. I have a feeling that someday we will have all these things and so we might as well plan them now. You let me have your version of things and then we shall get some real plans out and wish and wish. There is really nothing more to say darling so bye bye until tomorrow. All my love and I hope all is well. I love you. I love you

Xxxx Yours ever and ever xxxx Donald

Iris to Mac

[No date c.19th September 1942]

My darling sweet - This is the first evening I haven't had visitors & I'm feeling rather cross, but I've been in 3 weeks to-day so I've been spoilt really! My eyes are dropping out of my head knitting & reading all day & my behind is getting very tired of being interminably sat on! But I have high hopes of getting up for a bit to-morrow & then a day or two later I'll be out. I hope you'll be starting soon - I still feel something awful will happen to put you off coming & I shan't be happy till I can feel you with my hands & know you're here. The rains are still on here, but they must have

stopped by the time you come and we'll be able to go on picnics and rides. Can you sail a boat? Anyway we'll have a lovely lovely time and Himpy will adore having a Daddy again. He came to see me yesterday and was in terrifically high spirits, rolling about the bed and shrieking with laughter – we couldn't do a thing with him. His latest idea is to laugh in the most idiotic affected way at anything he feels we're doing to amuse him – sort of "Her-her-her" all down the scale – it makes me quite hysterical! He has put on 5 ozs this week which is as much as he did in the last month and we're very pleased. I am knitting him a sweater and leggings in pale yellow for the winter – he has several suits now in all colours and looks so grown up in his little trousers.

I had some visitors after all – a couple called Crowdie⁴⁴³ in the Dogias – or were. They've just come from Shillong – she was working in the Cypher Office – very sweet looking with the bluest eyes – he was at Happy Valley. They had no trouble on the journey apparently. I knew them here 2 years ago, or was it 3, anyway I didn't know who they were at first. They had a baby⁴⁴⁴ & lost it at 7 months I believe. She says she saw you once in Shillong & remembers you because you were wearing battle-dress. Its funny all the people I'm bumping into this year who I haven't seen for ages & ages.

The old man next door is still alive & I'm praying he'll pull through – though why God should take any notice of me I can't imagine, as I never pray except when I want something! I'm also praying very hard you'll be here at the end of this month so you must see to that even if God doesn't! I've just taken a peep at my wound & there's still a hole there – I wish it would hurry & heal. I was apparently lucky not to have got abscesses & things which is mild consolation.

Well darling darling – no more for to-night. I love you so much.

Hugs and kisses from us both & keep well. Always. Totty.

[No date c. 21st September]

Darling,

Mummy didn't come to-day so I couldn't post this – I will add a bit more. I've got a letter from you, enclosing Alan's. You didn't sound quite so cheerful, I expect you were a bit fed up – I don't blame you, I've been in this place 3 weeks & 2 days now! Anyway by this time all will be well & everything comes to an end. I'm very encouraged to hear the journey from Shillong is quite simple & you'll probably only take the usual 4 days. I'm definitely coming back with you, so we can know that it won't be just a month with another separation hanging over us. Everybody is returning to Shillong & there are lots of women there I hear. So your affair with Lady Clow Will have to come to a swift end darling!

I got up for the 1st time to-day & staggered a few steps, my legs feeling very cotton-wooly. They will probably let me out on Thursday – to-day being Monday – so life is brightening. I'm sorry you can't sleep sweet – it is vile isn't it – but we shall both be alright when we're together again. My scar is about 3½" long. I bet it beats yours. Hurry & come to me darling, I want you so much. Xxx

Bless you! Xx

22.9.42

My sweetheart,

Two letters to-day – they always come in pairs. I'm sorry they sent you that silly thing about being dangerously ill – its something to do with "the military" (as they refer to us here, rather scornfully!) & it must have been a bit of a worry. Actually I think they were afraid of worse complications than actually took place & I was a bit ill for a few days but not as bad as all that. I did delay too long coming in – partially my fault & partly Staff Surgeons. He is a mental specialist & quite blank about anything else. His attitude was "It would be quite a good thing to have it out now, but you can wait if you like" so, as I was expecting you, I naturally decided to wait. When I got your letter & the pain hadn't subsided after two days, I though I'd come in here. By that time they'd decided not to operate till I'd got over this attack, & after 5 or 6 days I was on normal diet when my temperature suddenly started to mount & the pain crept back & that was that!

To-day has been lovely – I was allowed to lie on a couch, basking in the sun & there was a lovely romping breeze that ruffled the lake & sent all the little yachts skudding about like scraps of white paper. It is high on a hill, this place, looking right over the lake & the air is wonderful. The rains seem to have stopped at last and there is a clear, crisp feeling about everything & the sunshine is soft & creamy. You are going to be here at the loveliest time of the year.

Darling your letter was written in reply to one I had written in a dejected mood. I don't really doubt your love, you know that, but I can't find anything about myself that could possibly be lovable & when I'm depressed I want to be reassured over & over again, that you can find something. It is so wonderful to me to feel wanted that I'm in a

continual dread it may all suddenly come to an end. You must bear with me darling, & realise that I'm not quite accustomed to being really happy & wonder sometimes if it's all a dream. Specially as I have been such a rotten wife to you up to now & deserve anything I get! I feel you understand me, though and my silly moods. What we feel goes so much much deeper.

I'm reading a terribly depressing book called "Hatter's Castle" – by Cronin⁴⁴⁵ & very good but things are going from bad to worse & the chief character is too odious for words. So far one daughter has had an illegitimate baby in a cow-shed, the son has turned out a rotter & spent all his mother's money who has just died of cancer, & I'm wondering what awful thing will happen to the other daughter. The father is a drunken bully & the cause of it all.

The old boy next door is a little better & I think will live. I'm so glad.

This may be the last letter you get, but I'll go on wiring till I hear you're coming. Mummy leaves at the end of October so hurry darling! All love precious for ever xxx Totty xxx

24.9.42 Blyth Cottage

My darling –

I'm hoping you will have left by now but I'm still writing in case not. I'm out! Isn't it marvellous? I came out this morning & am feeling distinctly shaky, but it's lovely to be home again. I have to go up for dressings every day as I've still got a little hole & the plaster they put on has made me come out in septic blisters round the wound, but I shall soon have those clear & by the time you arrive will be bouncing about all over the place.

I'm sitting on the verandah outside the drawing room, revelling in the evening sunshine with Alan. He is so utterly sweet, and very pleased to see me. He can all but crawl – he gets right onto his hands and knees and pushes violently with his legs, landing heavily on his face with his arms pinned under him! If you stand him at the side of his pen he clings on with both hands and his mouth and absolutely refuses to sit down again! He is always so cheerful which is such a relief, and amuses himself in his pram for hours on end without complaining. You will love him darling – at least I hope so – but not more than me please!

Reggie Lowe is up, & Toionon is in hospital trying to have the baby brought on. Reggie is full of beans & hoping to see you before he goes.

Darling, my tummy has swelled horribly since this operation – I shall have to do something about it when I get better. I was so lovely & thin before, it is sickening! I still don't feel I can "unbend" properly but that is probably imagination. We will be a couple of crocks, won't we! Patty's husband is up too, & perhaps you'll meet him. He terrifies me, but you can get together about fishing & shooting & will probably survive.

I had a letter from Pat Travers Smith⁴⁴⁶ & she's sending Alan a book & some cuff-links for his christening – so you're doing well out of it, what with those & his gold tie-pin!

Belinda's kittens are sweet but 2 of them have funny tails so I don't know if I'll get much for them.

Well my sweet – I'm expecting a wire any day now & terrible excited. Don't delay a minute.

Packets of love & kisses from us both,

Always yours – Totty xxx

Mac to Iris

Hospital 24.9.42

Darling heart,

Feeling much better now and all those nasty pains etc in my tummy have gone. I feel much stronger too. Please darling I hope I have not worried you much. It has not been really much and I shall be up I hope at the end of this week. Extraordinary luck we are having though isn't it. If it isn't one thing it's another. All going well and to plan I hope to leave here on Monday week or maybe sooner. That will land me up in Naini sometime about the 10th or 11th Oct. Can you wait that long sweetheart? The Doc says I will almost certainly get a months leave and I shall need it too. I feel as weak as a chick just now anyway. What are you doing. You must be up by now and out of hospital shortly. The things I have planned we are going to do when I come. I was thinking yesterday evening with the sun setting on the hill opposite and everything was quiet and beautiful. Then a fellow next door turned on the wireless and it was one of my favourite Waltz tunes. Darling I was awfully soft but tears came to my eyes and I was so happy just thinking of you and me. Do you think that I am soft for doing that and that I should suppress such feelings. I shouldn't be worried about Fatty. If he is looking well and eating well you cannot expect much more. He has plenty of time to get fat like Mummy!! No really darling I should not worry.

Gosh the doctor has just been in and prodded my stomach all over the place asking if it was sore. Naturally is sore if one is prodded in the stomach like that. Anyway he said 'good' as he went so he must have been satisfied. The doctor that has been attending me had very bad luck yesterday. He was cycling to hospital and was passing a man with a long pole on his shoulder. The man swung round at the wrong moment and caught Doc Russel⁴⁴⁷ in the stomach. He had to have an operation but I believe he has more or less recovered and he will be alright. Bad luck though.

Well darling I shall be able to write every day again and I shall do until I am with you. Goodbye my love. Love to your Mother,

Love all my love always

Donald

Kiss Fatty for me.

Iris to Mac

[No date c.27th September 1942]

Darling one –

My cold has reached its climax so I'm having dinner in bed and a fire in my bedroom! It is lovely. I only hope I haven't given Alan my cold. He has been so cheerful to-day, but simply refuses to wear a hat, I don't know what we're going to do with him. Judging by the enclosed letter you were the same – you must have been a little sweetening, darling, how I'd love to have seen you in your wee tantrums! Alan's temper is the sweetest thing I've ever seen and when he flings himself on his back, gets crimson in the face and waves his clenched fists at me I laugh so much that he had to join in. I'm so terribly glad we had a baby so soon, although in some ways it spoilt our first year, Aren't you? It gives me a sense of security in this uncertain world, and a deep content, too, that I have at last achieved something perfect, done something really worthwhile. I shall never do anything well, but I have produced a son which is much more important than all the other things. Of course you did help, darling, but I insist on taking the credit for sons, I'll grant you the girls!

I got a letter to-day saying you were better & hoped to be here on the 10th – please take care of yourself till then darling! Only 10 days and they'll fly I know. Perhaps Himpy will have a tooth by then – he dribbles so much his chin is perpetually sore and he looks very like a slum child poor pet!

Patty spent the morning here to-day – she is still painfully thin but is trying for another baby – not very wise I think but still. Suzanne leaves I think on Sunday. She is going straight to a job where she gets Rs 125, though she isn't really fully trained. Pretty good! Her boss is Oxford Groupy⁴⁴⁸ – his wife is credited to have said to a young Subaltern at a dinner party – “Do you know God?” to which he answered apologetically “No I'm afraid I don't. What regiment's he in?” Suzanne ought to enjoy herself!

Well darling heart I'm very tired & snively. I hope these letters are reaching you quicker – this is probably the last you'll get. I hope so.

Kisses from Fatty –

All my love my sweet – Totty

Mac to Iris

Hospital, 27.9.42

My darling heart,

Still in bed I am afraid although I am feeling all right. Very weak and have gone so thin. You have no idea darling. You will probably laugh at your skinny husband. I have made up my mind to ask the doctor how much all this is going on for as I feel they are using me as a sort of an experiment. Still I have high hopes and am really alright. You will be up by now I suppose. You are NOT to worry about me and send wires etc darling I shall be starting my journey to you by the time you get this missle. I am afraid I am not in love with the hospital or any body in it except the Head Nurse who really is good to me. The rest just scream round the place and try and make it as unbearable as possible. My room seems to be situated opposite the Kitchen which is worse than any ships kitchen in a storm.

I must say the lads have been very good about coming in. They usually come in every Wednesday and Saturday and cheer me up. We have a bunch of new officers now which I haven't met yet but whom I understand to be quite nice lads. All very young.

I cannot understand darling Andys letter only taking 4 days and you not receiving any of mine yet. I wrote to you

four days after the 'ops' until I developed jaundice and then I am afraid I did not write for a long while which darling I hope you will understand.

I have just had Gulab air all our things which I think they badly needed. I hope none of the stuff was mil-dewed or moth-eaten (how does one spell these things)

Well darling you must excuse me until tomorrow as I am a bit tired. Goodbye my love. I love you I love you, Yours always & always Donald Kiss Fatty for me.

Hospital, 28.9.42

My darling,

No really vast change from yesterday. I feel about the same. I don't know but I believe it is a very gradual recovery one makes. I feel weak naturally and am dying to get out of bed. I slept quite well last night after demanding a sleeping draught.

Andy came in yesterday and was very pleased at getting your letter. He is always coming in these days which is extremely good. Was cut short by doctors arrival to tell me I had to undergo another op. This I may add I am writing four days after the op. It was successful and I needed it. I have a tube in me darling and they are draining stuff out of me. They say it won't take long but darling I am afraid that I shall not manage to get out of hospital before the 15th Oct 42. I know you are going to suggest that you come here but sweetheart I must get away for a rest more than any thing. I am completely tired out and my nerves are very jumpy. What we are going I don't know because your Mother will be shutting shop at the end of the month as you say. Can we not make some arrangement in Naini. Take a house for a month or something. I am afraid I shall have to leave suggestions to you but do anything you would really like to do too because I want you to have a good time as well.

I have had quite a few letters from you and one just before they took me up to the operating room which was so cheering.

Well darling I shall write again tomorrow.

Please, please, don't worry.

With all my love,

Yours always and always

xxxx Donald xxxx

Iris to Mac

Blyth Cottage, 28.9.42

My own darling –

I was terribly upset to hear last night about your jaundice. It was beastly rotten luck and I know it's a foul disease and very depressing. You poor sweet, I wish I could be with you to hold your hand – I feel so helpless here. I couldn't sleep for worrying last night, but asked about jaundice at the hospital to-day & they said that after the first week you would probably be allowed up & then it would only be a question of dieting. Darling you don't know how miserable I feel when I know you're ill – I almost ache myself and long above everything to be near you to comfort you. You must always remember that I'm thinking of you – that every night before I got to sleep I talk to you & imagine your arms round me – I do you know, even though it sounds silly. I know you so well that I know what your answers would be & I get very close to you. When you're feeling low, darling, remember how much a part of each other we are & feel my closeness, as I do yours – feel that you have me, or a bit of me, with you, and then you will almost feel my actual presence. At least that's what I find I & can wish myself into a trance that is like a dream & very satisfying.

I am much better & my hole has nearly closed. & I will only have to have one or two more dressings. I'm not walking much only ambling gently round the garden & spend the rest of the day sitting in the sun doing absolutely nothing. Alan is playing in his pen beside me – he is just starting to crawl and I love to watch his antics and his purple face as he tries to pull himself up by the bars. He has a lovely colour and I'm not going to worry about his weight as everything else is right and he is so happy. He's got a huge sense of humour and goes off into peels of laughter at the slightest provocation. He still has hardly any hair but it will presumably grow. Speaking quite without prejudice he is the prettiest baby I've seen – I almost wish he was a girl! But of course Fiona will be just as beautiful. Had a letter from Joan Davis to-day – her baby weighted 9 lbs 6 ozs!! She was 3 days having him & then had forceps so I haven't anything to say! They're calling him Lewis of all things – it reminds me of the coal-black barman of the Royal Hotel who is also Lewis.

I'm going to send this Air Mail to Calcutta to see if it gets you any quicker. I'll write every day till I hear you're coming. We'll go for picnics & lie in the sun & get quite better & quite forget all about this horrible time. I've had a note from the bank saying they've received Rs 800 which will see us through our leave (I hope!). thank you darling.

Get strong quickly my sweet & don't do anything else silly will you? Mummy sends love & Alan lots of wet kisses.

All my dearest love to you – for ever & longer, Iris

Blyth Cottage, 29.9.42

My sweet,

How are you I wonder – getting strong quickly I hope. Take a tonic & rest absolutely. You'll soon be fit I'm sure & then nothing can stop us being together. I'm getting stronger every minute & eating vastly so I shall be huge by the time you arrive – won't that be a change darling.

To-day I made my first excursion – to the Cinema to see "International Lady"⁴⁴⁹. It was very good & I didn't suffer in any way. Of course I spend a fortune on dandies these days but it can't be helped.

Alan has been a bit cross to-day, it may be teeth or colds which we've all got. I've been trying to buy him a hat but I think I'll have to resort to an enormous solar topee! He hates anything on his head and always wrenches it off. The present Ayah is awful. She drives us all crazy and is completely unreliable. I've got my eye on a good one so hope I won't have this one much longer. They're all so filthy dirty and slapdash & if you turn your back for a minute they slip off to talk to the servants and leave the baby to look after himself. I think I'm a bit over-fussy but its so terribly easy to infect a baby fatally. I'm going to put Alan onto Cow's Milk very soon which will be a bit more trouble but much cheaper.

The Thompsons came to lunch to-day but otherwise nothing has happened. I'm reading a nice book called "Return of the Soldier"⁴⁵⁰ – about a man who comes back from the war with shell-shock, having forgotten the last 15 years of his life.

Darling there is nothing to tell you except I'm longing to see you & praying it won't be long. Every day I hope for a telegram to tell me you've started. I shall probably burst into tears all over you when you do arrive out of sheer relief & happiness! Hurry, hurry, hurry darling.

Suzanne leaves in a couple of days so you'll miss your elevating talks on the weather with her! Patty will be here though.

Well good-night my dearest – keep cheerful & keep fit whatever you do.

For always I love you. Totty

SHILLONG

In *Daughters of the Empire*, Iris wrote:

I went back to my mother in Naini Tal, thinking it would be a short stay, but after I left, Shillong became a closed area to all but military personnel. However, when Mac became dangerously ill after two operations - we had both got appendicitis on the same day at opposite ends of India but I recovered more quickly - I made the journey back to see him without being challenged. This time I left Alan and the cat behind, and though only recently out of hospital, there were no crowds and there were men with trays and I was comfortable and segregated in the way I expected. I was worried sick though, as during those four days I had no idea what was happening to Mac. The telegram that had reached me simply said that he had been put on the danger list after his operation.

He was alive when I reached the Mission Hospital, but unrecognisable, gaunt like an old man. In the relief at seeing me, the abscess that was still keeping him feverish burst, and he started to heal. All round him, wall to wall in the rooms and all down the corridors, were sick and wounded from the Burma campaign. His appendix couldn't have chosen a worse moment to erupt, to turn septic, and then lead to jaundice. The two mission doctors were working round the clock; one of them had himself recently walked out of Burma, but they were always calm and cheerful. Later, one of them was to deliver my second daughter.

I had to find somewhere to live near the hospital, and was told of an American lady, a Mrs Nicholls Roy, who let rooms. When I went to see her I discovered that her husband was a Khasi, and called himself Reverend, since they had founded between them a fundamental type church: The One True Only Church of God. As far as I could judge they were the Two True Only Members, along with their hump-backed servant girl and their three sons. The Reverend and his sons ran a soft drinks business, but its profits, if any, didn't come into the

house. Mrs Nicholls Roy and I lived on pigeons' legs perched on a few grains of rice, which I supplemented with corn cobs bought off the Khasi stalls.

Mrs Nicholls Roy lived in a fantasy world, driven there by her husband's neglect. He only made rare visits to the house, so was replaced in her affection and thoughts by her Daddy-God. In the evening she took off her red wig and let down her thin, greying hair and sang me the hymns that Daddy had dictated to her during the day. "Beautiful, beautiful are the children of the true church, beautiful beautiful are their lips, their hands, their eyes, their feet," she wailed softly in the light of the flickering paraffin lamp. I listened drowsily and explored my teeth for fragments of pigeon. Meals were not only scant, but often interrupted by sudden messages from on high, which would make Mrs Nicholls Roy leap to her feet and speak in tongues. These coded dialogues with God surprised me at first, but soon became part of high tea.

When the Reverend did appear, we were both silent in his presence, she because she was frightened of him, I because I didn't know how to deal with his soft, insulting banter. "Such an honour," he would drawl, "to have an English lady at our table. You English are fighters for our freedom isn't it?" How lucky Indians were, he mused, to be fighting their masters wars, driving their railway trains, running their sewage farms. He himself had an uncle who had been sent home to England and shown forty seven sewage farms, fortunate man.

Now I can sympathise with his feelings, and the probable insults his half-caste sons had had to endure, but at the time I found him unpleasant, and harboured suspicions that he might be a spy. During our lamplit gossips his wife often warned me about the lusts of married men, and how wives should always keep the key of the bedroom strapped to their bodies. The Reverend never shot a remotely lustful look in either of our directions.

My days were peacefully routine: a morning walk across a meadow to the hospital; an afternoon sleep to the thud of rain on the tin roof; another evening saunter to see Mac, the moistened air filled with the smell of burnt corn. Mac improved rapidly; and I didn't mention a slight problem of my own, the fact that my wound had opened and was oozing pus. I covered it with cotton wool, and only occasionally felt real discomfort. One afternoon I woke from my sleep to a great sense of peace all over, no itching or aching from my side. I looked down to see an inch of pink rubber tube protruding from my scar, part of the tube that had drained me and had been overlooked. After its removal I had no more trouble. I don't suppose it was the first piece of software to go missing in a British Military Hospital.

A few days before we left, Mac was able to walk very slowly across the field to the house and visit my room. We lay together on the bed, too weak to make love, but close in a way that had to last a long time. The war was out there, but here on Mrs Nicholls Roy's lumpy mattress we hoped so terribly for the best. We had no money, no home, an uncertain future, a very short shared past; but happiness was the circle of arms and the rain on the roof; if Alan had been with us, we would have hoped to stay like that forever.

Violet's diary shows when Iris left for Shillong, and notes carefully my weight as I grew under my grandmother's careful regime.

*3rd October Iris went to Shillong
10th October 16lb 3 and a half oz
17th October 16 lb 10 and a half oz
24th October 17lb 5 half oz
7th November 17 lb 11 and a half oz.*

October

Iris to Mother

*c/o Mrs Nichols-Roy Mountain View, Shillong, 8.10.42
PS. Hope Robert is better
Darling Mummy,*

Well here I am, with a roof over my head and a bed to sleep on and its all quite surprising! I arrived here yesterday at 4 p.m. and went straight to the hospital to see Mac. The matron of the hospital told me of this place which is ten minutes walk away. So I'm very lucky and comfortable and please don't worry about me.

I was shocked to the core at Mac's condition – I've never seen anyone so changed and it made me feel quite faint to think how ill he must have been to have reached such a condition. His eyes are sunk into his head and his cheeks just aren't – nothing but skin stretched over bone and his arms and legs so thin and white. It is pathetic and I could hardly bear to look at him at first. However there is nothing to do but slowly build him up and be thankful he has got through

at all. He was normal for the first time yesterday so lets hope my arrival has started the good work! Poor darling, he is terribly depressed and I'm very thankful I came because just now he needs encouragement more than anything. He has a tube of course and is getting bowel washes in case there is another small abscess they did not find. I must say I was a little surprised at the hospital, but Mac tells me they are rushed of their feet and anyway I suppose one can't expect everywhere to be as good as the Ramsey. He's in a room smaller than mine with 2 other beds in it and everything a little vague and carefree. He tells me he has never been on a diet for his jaundice and orders his own meals! But there is no doubt that the Dr is good and that after all is the main thing. I went in search of Minadex⁴⁵¹ this afternoon but could only find Malt and Cod Liver Oil. However I think I have ½ my old Metatone⁴⁵² bottle at Elephant Falls.

I feel rather guilty rushing off so suddenly and leaving you to cope with Alan alone – I do hope you can manage and can get a decent Ayah. Let me know your plans for Agra so I can make ours to suit. I can never thank you enough, Mummy, for being such a haven to me – I don't know what I should have done otherwise. Perhaps we'll be able to do the same for you one day! I really am terribly grateful.

Am very tired so I'll write again in the morning to tell you about the journey etc.

All love to you and my Alan. Iris

Mac and Iris were together from October until December when they went to Agra. Alan was with Violet until at least 7th November and she recorded his weight in her diary. There are no surviving letters between Iris and her mother during this period which suggests that she and Mac left Shillong for convalescence in Naini Tal.





AGRA

December

Iris to Mac

19 December 1942

My sweet,

I'm rather worried as I've had no note of your safe arrival but hope it's your infallible memory to blame. I presume you'd have wired if you hadn't arrived safely. Had a letter from Patty to say she can't have me till the end of January as they go out camping. So I'm relying on coming either to you or someone on the Tea Garden. I don't want to stay here⁴⁵³, besides being so expensive. Please let me know as soon as you can darling.

I've been a fool & left your present a bit late to post – it was a holiday this morning and it can't go till Monday. Anyway its coming, darling & all our love with it. Think of all the Christmases we're going to have together, when you open it. All the little trees with Alan and Fiona dancing round them and the paper chains and bulging stockings (one for me too please!) And one day we'll have our grandchildren toddling round a Christmas tree too – I'm dying to be a grandmother I'll think of you hard on Christmas day darling - Come and see me and kiss me good morning!

Fatty is 1 year old to-morrow – isn't it incredible! He is having 8 children to tea and a proper cake and I hope will be a good host and not grab everyone's food away from them. I've got him a couple of small presents. He's being very good and isn't so much a "Mummy's boy" now. Ratan's getting into the swing of things.

No news at all from here as you know. Billy & Daddy are due to arrive to-morrow. I don't know what Billy will do here as there are apparently no girls. I've got a single room now upstairs in the block at right-angles. I put Alan and all his paraphernalia into the bathroom and its quite comfortable. I'm never in it anyway.

I feel terribly far away from you now, as if we'd been apart from for years. Write as often as you can just to tell me you're fit & happy (not too happy of course).

Hugs & kisses, darling, & blessings & a Happy Xmas -

Always yours – Totty

P.S. I'm sorry my letters are so dull but there is nothing to say unless I minutely describe the process of nappy-washing!

First birthday (December 1942)

Fat hands, pink cheeks, blue eyes,
Filled with surprise
At the strange ways of the world.
Fair tendrils of hair that lie curled
On a damp brow.
You are so terribly, touchingly, innocent, now
Will it all turn to dust
This lovely trust?
Can we build a land of dreams come true
Out of this chaos, my son, for you?

All is for you. All that we did in the war
And more.
Fears in parting. Fears of being afraid.
Long loneliness. The wireless that played
His tunes and mine. Letters that didn't come
No home -
No hope. Telegrams that we didn't dare
To open. No-one with whom to share
The gift of youth and the high song we should have sung
Together while we were young.

This was our gift to you, our sacrifice
To keep that light in your eyes.
That you might live freely, that you might ride and run
And sit with your knees in the sun.
That you should have time
To discover the earth and the mountains therein to climb
That you and your wife
Would gaze into your fire and plan your life.

If we can give you that which we have lost,
It has been worth the cost
And worth the weary sameness of our days.
If we can raise
An ultimate, unchallenged faith for you
Something to make you of the chosen few
And lead you, conqueror of every breath
Unwearying to death.
If we can frame the clouds for your delight
And make each night
A wider conquest for your urgent soul
Then we have reached our goal
And know that all our suffering was meant
And know ourselves Content.

21 December 1942

Darling I'm afraid I didn't post this as you see. I'm very worried at not having heard a word from you & am wiring to-morrow. Please wire me occasionally if letters don't get through. Now that they've bombed Calcutta I feel more cut off than ever. If I can't come back please get on a course in January or February. But you must let me come

back if anyone else is there. I opened Andy's letter to you & he seemed to think the C.O's wife was coming in which case I shall be there at once.

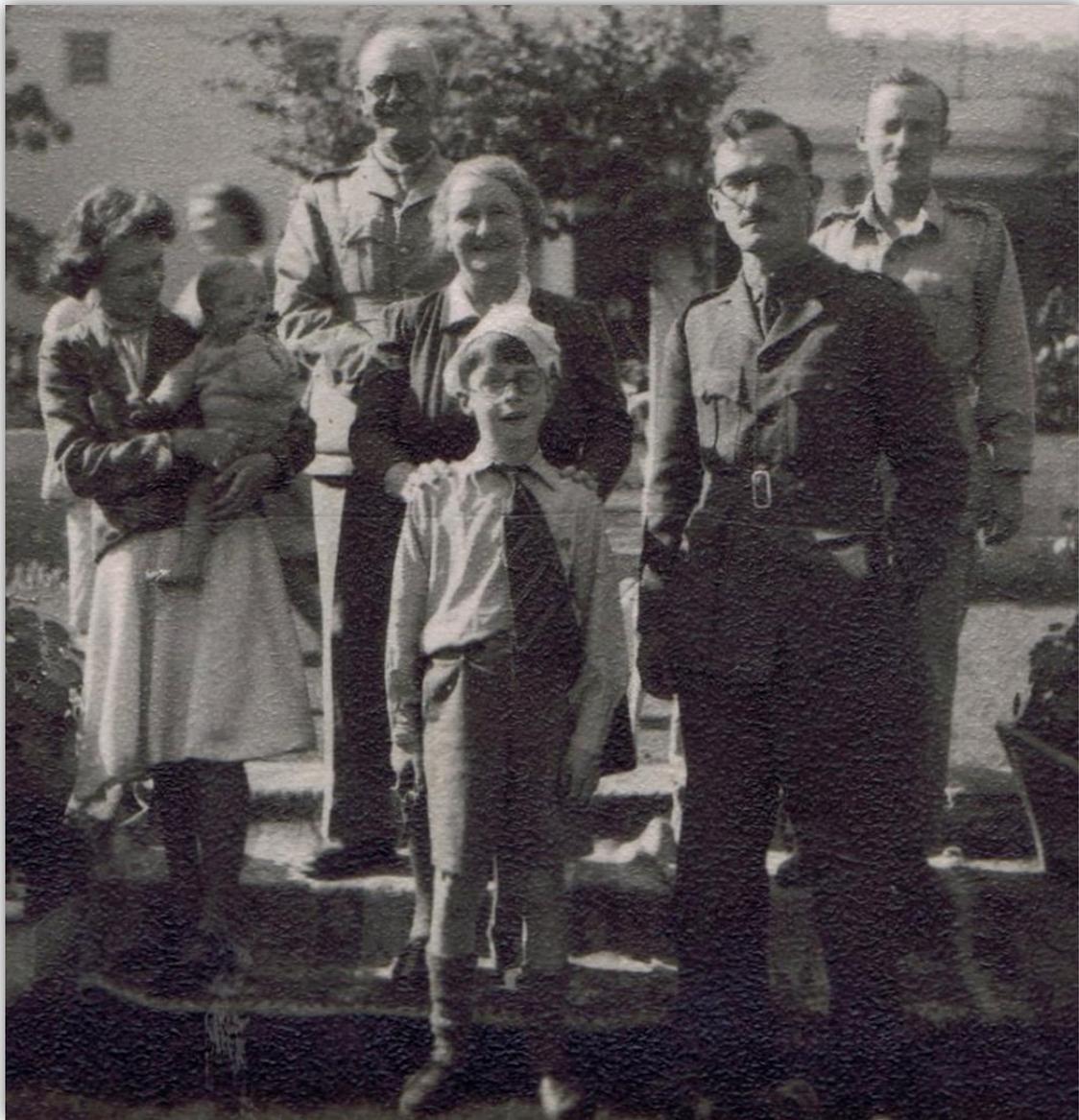
Alan was 1 year old yesterday and had a lovely party of toddlers who took themselves off to separate corners of the garden and amused themselves quite contentedly without taking the slightest notice of each other! Alan, the perfect host, scuttled like a crab to the nearest flower-bed and sieved mud through his fingers. He had a pink cake with chocolate centre and ate a vast tea, mostly off other peoples plates. He has no fear of other children now.

I'm feeling rather foul to-day – glands & throat & general wuzziness. I shall probably do the hat-trick with my 3rd Xmas in bed! Billy has been participating in the big "scheme" down South & arrives on 23rd.

Dearest sweet – I wish I could hear something but I feel you're near me & try not to let myself get too depressed. I think I can P.G. with someone here for January & then will probably go to Patty's. I'm so glad I've got Alan, I do love him so and he reminds me of you in many ways.

Have a happy Xmas my darling & write to me.

All our love.



Iris, Alan, Will, Violet, Robert, Richard, Billy



Christmas at Agra



Richard, Iris, Alan, Violet and Will

The bombing of Calcutta, mentioned in the previous letter, is believed to be the start of the food crisis which led into the terrible Bengal Famine. I have therefore placed a short account of that famine, a largely invisible background to the next two years of my parents' lives, here.

The preamble to the famine was fall of Rangoon in March 1942 which cut off the export of Burmese rice into India. Fearing a Japanese invasion, boats used to bring up seed grain for planting in the Brahmaputra river areas were destroyed so there was a deficient harvest. The civil unrest of August with the Quit India movement added to the difficulties. In late 1942 Bengal was affected by natural disasters. The winter rice was afflicted by fungal brown spot disease and a cyclone and storm hit the coast.

The Bengal Famine of 1943-4 was a deeply tragic failure on the part of the British Government. It is estimated that up to three million people died in these years as a result of starvation and disease. The Government of India dated the beginning of the Bengal food crisis from the air raids on Calcutta in December 1942, the acceleration to full-scale famine by May 1943 being a consequence of price decontrol. Mortality had peaked by November 1943. Thereafter disease accounted for the majority of deaths, especially from malaria. There was also a 'cloth famine' because the British military needed all the textiles it could get. A turning point in news coverage was when Ian Stephens of *The Statesman* solicited and published a series of graphic photos of the famine.

Hotel Cecil, 30.12.42

Darling sweet,

Another letter to-day which was lovely. I'm so glad there's a chance of leaving the Bn. Would you still be in Shillong though? I'm praying I can come back and tell them I'm a super stenographer and will be invaluable to the Brigade. I could leave Alan a little later when Mummy's in Naini. Darling I do hate this separation and find life pretty depressing here as I have no friends and don't feel like making any among the people here. I'm sorry about Dewey, I know you were right in going back & I was selfish in wanting you to stay. You must always ignore me when I get possessive.

Alan is being very trying, I think it must be teeth this time. He screams for his bottle and spits it out when I give it to him and screams more – I don't now what's the matter! We both have tummy upsets so are feeling generally disorganised.

I had a rambling & quite inane letter from Mrs Nichols-Roy to-day & she wants Rs. 6.12 for taxis – would you get it to her darling? I do think she's perfectly potty.

Mummy & I have been busy making marmalade and are both feeling blistered about the fingers & very noble – it's for War Funds. She is still insisting on getting up parties which I loathe – but she gets so angry if I refuse to go. That's how I get mixed up with Americans – gertcha, I wish I could be left in peace. Uncle Roy⁴⁵⁴ is back for New Year & Billy's gone to Delhi.

Darling, I'm feeling very tired & full of grumbles so I won't go on to-night.

I wish you were here & I could cry on your shoulder.

This is the next day and I've got another letter from you. It would be fun if I could come and work for you and help you write all your important letters – we'd do great things between us. Could I bring Alan or wouldn't there be any place for him? I do hope it comes off. Will you be very liverish in the office? I hope so darling & I can cheek you back.

Thank you for the money which I'll send for. I'm spending very little outside my hotel bill. Billy has saved Rs 5,000 – doesn't it make you weep? He never spends a sou if he can help it & has left most of his bills here unpaid! Oh well, he hasn't got a couple of portly boys to hug & kiss so he doesn't know what it means to be happy.

I hope my parcel to you has arrived – let me know if it hasn't as it was registered.

Good-bye darling –

Love from your naughty fatty boy –

And all mine for ever –

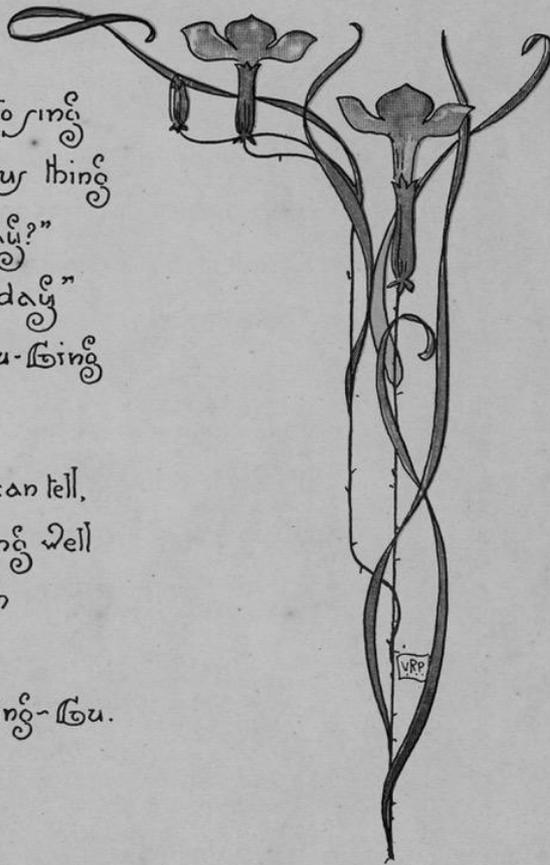
Totty

BABY'S FIRST WORD

Baby first spoke on the day of Aged 1 year.
the remark being "Caw-caw" - then "Coo" "Ta" "Coh"
"Mum-mum" "Da-da" "Car."

Cu-Cu-Cing. How I learnt to sing
Cu-Cu-Cing. It was a wondrous thing
Daddie asked "What does it say?"
Mummie said "It's clear as day"
Cu-Cu-Cing- Cing- Cu-Cu-Cing

Cing-Cing-Cu. Mother's love can tell,
Cing-Cing-Cu, baby's meaning well
Whispering Angels softly teach
Tiny weeny babies' speech
Cing-Cing-Cu-Cu-Cing-Cing-Cu.



SHILLONG

Mac to Iris

Shillong, 31.12.42

My darling,

No letter from you for a whole week. I only hope that mine are getting thro'. Evidently another block in Calcutta. I am looking forward to getting thousands of letters one of these days or will it be like last time, a nice excuse for not writing??

I have had an early bath and am missing dinner and soaking myself with medicine in one final effort to get rid of this blasted cold. Thank goodness I have got rid of the pains in my chest but have acquired an aching cough.

You will notice it's the 31st and tomorrow is the Scots big show. Well I have missed it. Andy and I were celebrating with dinner at Pinewoods but I am afraid that he had to go off alone. Still I should just feel miserable if I had gone.

Please let me know your plans for the next month or so.

I may go and see Bosun. He is somewhere near Bombay you know. Keep your fingers crossed.

Write and tell me how all is getting along. I suppose that he [Alan] will start walking soon. I hope we shall be together then. Does he still swear at his Daddy. I don't suppose he will remember me at all. I was just beginning to get to know him, at least, he was one.

Well darling you must excuse the short note but am very busy!!?! (really)

All my love sweet,

Yrs Donald

Kiss my Fatty.

1943

According to her father's diary, Iris went to Delhi on 1st January with her mother, Robert and Uncle Roy, and when her mother and Robert returned to Agra on the 3rd January she went to stay with the Hyde Frosts. The diary does not note that Alan was with her but one must assume that he was.

January

Mac to Iris

Shillong, 6.1.43

My darling,

Just got a letter of yours. They are taking ages to get through aren't they. It was the letter in which you had the episode with the American. Furious of course I am furious but what is the use. I can't do much when I am miles and miles away. That is up to you although I sincerely hope darling that you do not do it too often. No sweetheart telling me that made me feel all queer and really I felt that the world had come to an end and that you didn't love me and that I haven't given you enough happiness. There are people who could give you more I know darling but I [am] trying hard to get more & more for you. But you do love me don't you? What did this bloody American do. I hope he didn't kiss you, although I suppose he must. It makes me sick, I am sorry darling but the very idea of you in any body else's arms just would kill me.

I am afraid that I am not feeling too well just now and the doctor says I have overdone things. I hope it is not true. I am going down for another examination today. I hope it does not mean any more hospital etc. I don't think so. I shall just have to take things easy.

The C.O. is supposed to come back today although I have my doubts as the trains are running late still.

Darling I can't get this bloody American off my head. I am awful I know. Please promise me you won't do it again. I have no right to ask you to promise me but darling I am a funny person and I love you so desperately that if I thought you were getting keen on one of those Americans that I should ----- Anyway darling you must tell me always about these things as I will and we both have been doing.

I only wish to God that we were together. Life is absolutely hell up here and I am moody and in a continual temper. I am getting worse and I am not feeling the way I should. I need you terribly and being apart is tearing my insides apart.

Well my little girl please excuse this letter. Keep your little chin up. I wish I could kiss you now. Love to Alan and all the love in the world to you Iris.

Yours ever & ever, Donald

Shillong, 9.1.43

My darling,

I received your letter dated the 23rd Dec yesterday. I really don't know what happens to mail. It is horrible. I think I shall send a wire to you on principal every week. Anyway it will bring us a bit closer together. I am afraid I wrote such a horrible letter last time. I am sorry darling but it is the way I am made.

I am frightfully busy these days but not feeling too well I don't suppose it is much to worry about but I hate being continually on the verge of being alright and all wrong.

The C.O. has come back minus wife much to his disgust. He is just the same old dodderer. Makes me wild all the time. I really am beginning to hate him as everybody does in the Bn. I think, except our 'Les' who loves him. Birds of a feather I think really. 'Les' of course now that he has been let off taking the Urdu exam is a marvellous man.

I thought Alan would have cut his teeth by now. I am expecting to see [him] with teeth and talking which won't be long now. By the way you haven't told me the details of your new abode. Are you leaving the Hotel or what? Darling please look after yourself and don't stint yourself in anyway. You can have all the money you want so please have good food etc. It is not worth it out in this beastly country.

Thanks very much for sending the wire to my mother. It will please her no end. I am afraid I was popping in and out of bed most of Christmas and New Year. So missed things and you tremendously. I did not kiss anybody under any tree at New Year. I was kissing you in my dreams darling and am missing you. All my love to yourself and Alan,

Yrs always & always, Donald

Welsh Mission Hosp, Shillong [no date]

My darling,

I sent you a wire yesterday cause mail does not seem to be getting through and I thought it just as well to let you know that I am still alive and kicking. Really I am as fit as a fiddle and feel better now than I have ever felt. Evidently at the same time as they did the hernia operation they took out a little pus from the previous operation that had been left behind and also one or two more stitches. Dr Hughes⁴⁵⁵ is quite mystified about it all but guaranteed that I should have no more trouble in that direction. I shall be having my stitches out in a day or two and hope to be back on the job in 10 or 14 days time. Sweetheart I hope all this has not worried you too much and I thought I would not tell you before about it as it would only have worried you more. Now that it is all successfully finished there is nothing left but for me to tell you about my 3rd 'op' which I shall be doing soon.

I have been reading quite a lot just lately. Reading all about shooting etc. That book which I got in Calcutta has been grand and I have been picking arguments just to show off my superior knowledge about birds & beasts. Rather fun.

I hope sweetie that you are having a good time and that you went to Delhi⁴⁵⁶. I shall be sending more money soon. Let me know if you want any immediately as I am paying off Chowdry in large lumps so there won't be much left. Who cares? I don't, as long as I have you and Alan.

The news these days is pretty good isn't it. Russia doing pretty big stuff. I don't think that the end can be very far distant now and we shall go home even if we have to pinch a rowing boat.

Oh by the way I hope 'Pinkie' was nice to you and didn't hold your hand too long. These young blokes you got to watch. Up to all kind of tricks.

I have the wireless on just now and Bing Crosby has just sung a song. He's good darling, quite good.

Well sweetheart I must go to sleep as I am feeling tired. I am going to sleep thinking of you as I always do. Kiss me my darling.

Donald.

Welsh Mission, 18.1.1943

My sweet,

Just received three letters from you in one day one dated the 26th Dec! Here I have been blaming you for not writing although I know perfectly well you had. Another letter was written while you were on the train to Delhi. Darling I deserved it all. I am terrible. I know you love me Iris and it hurt to hear you say that anything could ever poison our relationship. It was all my fault and my not feeling well. I realized after I had written that letter how 'caddish' and low I had been. Nothing Iris will ever come between us. I love you so much. Please please forgive me. If I could only see you now I could cry quite openly on your shoulder darling. I am writing this letter very late but am just feeling so lonely and in love that I could go on for weeks. You must get incredibly lonely and my little sweet must not cry. Oh darling darling how I long for you. In one of your letters, quite by accident I am sure you left a strand or two of your hair. I have them now and am kissing them imagining that it is you and you are close to me. I am nearly asleep and will finish this tomorrow. Goodnight sweet my love. I have sent you a kiss. Bless you.

Next morning. The doctor has just been in and said that my stitches can come out so I shall be up by the end of the week with any luck. I am feeling really wonderfully fit and have no qualms at all. The doctor says I must take things easily for a while after. Something like three months. I think that I can manage that alright.

Lady Linlithgow⁴⁵⁷ was round the hospital yesterday. There was quite a flap on, everybody running round in small circles. She didn't go into every ward however and I did not see her although she naturally asked about me! She must be getting fed up at the sight of me in Delhi???

Legru⁴⁵⁸ left hospital yesterday. He was a bit sorry about it all. He has been here for six months now and the place was like a home to him. All the little nurses wept profusely.

Well sweetheart take care of yourself. I hope to see you about the middle of next month. Keep your fingers crossed. I cannot say more and I cannot promise anything else.

Again, I hope you had a good time in Delhi.

All my love to you and Alan,

Yrs always, Donald

Welsh Mission, 22.1.43

Darling,

A wire and two letters in one day to thank you for. I am so glad that you went to Delhi. It probably did you the world of good. It must be very tiring indeed looking after Alan all the time and he must be getting quite a handful nowadays. I wish I could have been with you in Delhi. I would have loved going round the shops, really I would darling. I hope you got just what you wanted. I hope to get your clothes which are here to you soon.

I am feeling on top of the world still. My stitches are out and everything has gone according to the book this time. No complications. I shall be in here another week or so as the doctor wants me to give this wound a complete rest. I agree and as there is nothing much doing with the Bn it will do me good. The food is twenty times better than our mess. I do nothing but eat sleep and eat much to the disgust of the nurses whom I am sure have a nickname for me which hints at eating large quantities. I am afraid that I am putting on weight at a disgusting rate. Talk about 'Fatty Boy'.

How did you find Alan when you got back. I suppose he is looking wonderful with his teeth. Has he said anything yet. It is about time he said a word or two isn't it?

The C.O. has been ill in bed ever since he came back and I have not seen him for ages. Not that it worries me much mind you. Andy has left the hospital and another fellow called Elwell⁴⁵⁹ whom you did not meet has taken his place. The Assam Regt always has a[t] least two people in the hospital. I can't see how they can avoid it with all those officers.

Since I have been in hospital I have got very keen on 'Crosswords' and yesterday I did all but four words which was pretty good for me. Its funny how one gets into the way of doing them. You could do them in about ten minutes, I know, but it is good for me isn't it darling.

With any luck darling you will not have to go to Naini this year. Can't tell you why just you pray and keep those fingers crossed.

Well darling heart I must go to sleep as my head is buzzing with words ending in 'ing' etc.

I love you my sweet. Take care of yourself and Alan. Bless you both.

Xxx Always yours xxxx Donald

Sorry for such a sketchy letter but there is really no news.

Welsh Mission, 22.1.43

My darling,

I have just written or at least sent you a letter today but somehow, I want to talk to you and as I cannot, do you mind if I just blather to you in this letter and write anything that comes into my mind. Have had a crack at today's crossword and have not been very successful despite the purchase of a book called "Everybody's complete Encyclopedia." Actually I have given up the Crossword and broadening my mind reading this book. Quite good fun. Fellow next door has just had an operation and is groaning away. I hope I did not sound quite as bad as that. Yes there is the other fellow just come down from the operating theatre after two hours. Couldn't find out what was wrong with him. He is also letting out horrible groans. This place sounds almost like a hospital really. I hope it does not go on all night. They are in the next room to me.

Darling heart I hope you don't mind all this drivel but I rather like just jotting down what I am thinking and what is going on in the vicinity. You don't mind do you. It is just about tea time now. I wish you were here to have a cup 'a' tea with me like you used to. Legru left me a huge tin of golden syrup which I gorge myself on. ----- Better make up our minds where and on what (very important) we are going home.

The war seems to have taken at last a definite turn for the better and with any luck should be over by the end of this year. I hope so. I really honestly don't see what I am going to do. Two courses are open, stay in the army or go back to tea until something else turns up. What do you honestly think darling. I think we might as well sort of have an idea of what we will be doing, some plan or other. I must have something to keep you and Alan. Lets go to the South Sea Islands and make our own home and wear grass skirts and swim all day.

I must stop all this drivel darling. I shall write some sense tomorrow. No news yet but hope soon. I love you sweet more and more and hope that we shall be together very soon.

Always yours,
Donald

Welsh Mission, 25.1.43

My own darling,

Well two weeks ago today since I had my operation and I feel on top of the world. I have every hope of being out of hospital at the end of this week. That is Dr Hughes's opinion so I have as I say every hope. Please don't worry darling because as I say I am absolutely a new man now.

Hospital is rather boring just now although I have the Crossword and plenty to read. I have just read a marvellous book called Athenian Memories by Compton Mackenzie. Absolutely terrific. I wish darling, if you can manage it, get me any other books of his under the following titles, Greek Memories or Athenian Memories Books 1 & 3 (it was the 2 book I read). I don't think I have liked a book so much since I read Lawrences works.

Yes darling I am so sorry the way I upset you with my letters. I deserve to be spanked. On[e] thing I don't deserve is to have you the way I treat you darling. I am awful really but you must put up with me please sweet and pay no attention to my silly ness. Iris you know I should never do anything to hurt you intentionally and I know to that you love me. I am just a bloody fool at times. It shook me badly last time I left you more so than you know, because I realise now that my whole life just revolves round you and you again. Believe me darling girl and please forgive me.

Funny thing I discovered here the other day. One of the sisters (staff) told me. She said that last time I was here Dr Hughes was very worried about me and my condition and attributes my coming round again to your arrival. He had said that up to the time you arrived my condition had become serious and that I was running far to high temperatures for his liking. I did not realize what he was driving at when he kept asking me this time whether you were here or not. Just shows darling what an effect you have on me. When you arrived something just seemed to snap into place again. This time however it was such a minor affair that the thought of you and being able to see you soon was and has been enough.

Well after talking all about myself how is the family and my fat urchin. All the nurses here have fallen in love with him from vivid descriptions and the few photos I have of him. Priss was frightfully disappointed that you and Alan did not come back with me. Do let me know what you and Alan are doing. You know a thought has struck me and my hair is standing on end with guilt. I never wrote your Mother and thanked her for what she did for us while on leave. Please apologise and say that I am doing so and my excuse is poor, not feeling too bright and lots of work.

By the way I received your telegram asking me to wire my condition which I will do tomorrow but please darling do not worry because I am feeling grand honestly.

Well darling heart I must shut up now as it is late and my companion wants to go to sleep so I shall have to put

out the light.

All the love and kisses in the world darling. I wish I could have you in my arms.

Yours always,

Donald

Welsh Mission 27.1.43

My darling,

Two lovely long letters from you, one with Andy's letter enclosed. I have written pretty often so you should be getting pretty regular bulletins of my health. I still feel grand and I hope I shall be back, as you say, "to the grindstone" pretty soon. I am definitely going to take things easy. (Excuse my butting in but the wireless has just now announced that Bing Crosby is to sing, "If I had my way". He is, I admit darling, making quite a good job of it). No Andy has not left yet so I shall give him your chit the next time he comes in. He has been very good about coming in and seeing me. He is a good bloke. I am so glad Alan is so full of beans. I should have been very annoyed if he had not recognized his Mummy when you came back from Delhi.

I am so sorry to hear about your Mother⁴⁶⁰. What dog was it that caused all the damage. I hope it isn't still flying round. Keep a good look out. I don't want either you or Alan to be caught.

Diana and Jenny are grand and Jenny has grown huge. She is still limping slightly but I think it won't be long now before she will be O.K.

Letter from the Company which I enclose. The second piece of ----- I have had from them since I left nearly three years ago. Still if we are stuck I can always have something to fall back on.

Hamilton came in this evening. He has lost sight in that eye and says there is no hope for it. He sent his regards. I feel awfully sorry for him. Still he seems very cheerful about it all.

Darling please do not worry about me. I am absolutely alright now and apart from the fact that I have to take things easily for a while I am in far better health than I have been for a long while. Touch wood. I miss you terribly and I [am] sure the tables will turn shortly. At least I am more or less certain. Well my little honeybunch you must excuse the short note but really I have no news at all. I shall try and think of adding some more to this tomorrow morning. Goodnight darling xxxx

Nothing to add my sweet. The Doc was very pleased with my progress this morning.

Take care of yourself darling heart. Tons of love,

Yours always, Donald

Welsh Mission 29.1.43

My darling,

I am getting your letters quite regularly now and how I love them. You have no idea how much I love them. It is getting rather boring in hospital now and I have plenty of time to think. When I do it is inevitably about you and Alan. I think of all kinds of things. I build castles in the air; I know darling but I love doing it. I think about your next birthday and what I will get you and one thing leads to another and I find that nothing could be good enough. Crash, down comes my little castle and I say, "Well maybe I can't get all those things but what I do get doesn't really matter it's the thought behind it." Then I think about next Christmas and what we shall do. All three of us shall have stockings and we shall have a Christmas tree with countless lights and a roaring fire with Alan scooting about making happy little noises. We shall be together, we must be. Darling wouldn't it just be heavenly. Am I raving sweetheart? Our little house at home naturally has taken up a permanent place in my thoughts. I always say that I must get it without you knowing and suddenly one day I will whisk you off and land you at the front gate. A funny little gate that always swings shut and squeaks slightly, yes darling I go into the minutest detail and go on and on brick upon brick and I really imagine at times that we are there. Do you think darling we shall ever have all these things? I hope to God that we do.

Its raining outside and I feel nice and cozy but missing you terribly. However it won't be long now. Is it warming up in Agra now. I suppose it will be. I don't suppose you know anybody down in the Nilgiris do you?

I am still as fit as a fiddle and the doctor said I can get up so I shall be back to work in a few days. I am going to take it easy this time. No darling I have had no nice girls which I would like to hold hands with though mind you one or two have been to see me. Dora for one. She sent me some lovely flowers from Government house. Very good of her. General Rankin⁴⁶¹ came in and had a chat: jolly little fellow and was quite sorry to hear about my mishaps.

Well my darling little girl I must finish off this. I am sorry that is so short but there is really no news. I found out

by the way that Iris means Rainbow in some language, Greek, I think. So my little Rainbow goodnight and kiss my little weeny Rainbow for me xxxx

Always Always yours,
Donald

February

Welsh Mission, 2.2.43

My darling,

Just received another letter from you and darling before we go any further you must get a decent ayah or nurse for Alan. You are just tiring yourself out. Put an adv. In the paper and get a good ayah please. What does it matter what you pay her. I don't mind and I think that we can afford it. I know you sweetheart you will just say "Oh but I would rather look after Alan myself." Please darling promise me that you will get an ayah. I was very sorry to hear that Alan had tummy upset and hope it is nothing bad. I am glad that you are finding time for your book. You have no idea how I am looking forward to it Iris. Not because of the money but because I would like to see [you] fulfil an ambition which I am convinced you are capable of.

Well I am up now and feeling grand. I have been up and walking (gently) about the place and hope to get back to work at the end of this week. I must say that I was surprised how strong I felt this time when I got up. I am not overdoing it though.

The C.O. is now in the hospital. Run down generally. I had a long talk with him this evening about the Bn and things in general. I think the old man was quite surprised and got an eye opener. I am afraid I got quite hot under the collar. He said after agreeing with most things I said "Mac you musn't take things so seriously. They will sort themselves out". I ask you, what can one do? It does get me down really and I feel quite depressed and feel that I am shirking my duty in this show. However I will not involve myself in a grumble, I always have you which makes up for all things.

Lady Cloy[Clow] came in this morning and had a chat. She is the most amusing little thing. I rather like her. Very unassuming and pleasant.

Andy has left now and I shall have no one who I really like left in the Bn. Actually I shouldn't make such a sweeping statement. Some of the fellows are grand. You must meet Harry Langworthy⁴⁶² some time. Young but frightfully jolly and full of heart. There is also a fellow called Bond⁴⁶³ who is rather a good bloke.

The young fellow in with me just now has just been telling me about his 'fiasco'. They were engaged just before he came out. He is very young and so is she by the looks of things they both are head over heels with each other. One thing leads to another and it just reminds me that we shall have been married two years in a week or two. I don't think there is a happier man than me in having made my choice of you. I think that we have accomplished the perfect and the way God meant it to be. Do you feel that as well darling.

I have immersed myself in a book of Pat Slade's⁴⁶⁴ called the "Truth about Russia". Very well written and interesting. I always have a secret desire to go to Russia but know that really I never shall somehow. Excuse my vagueness. I have decided (you must not laugh at me darling) that having neglected my studies when younger that something must be done now so I read big books with long words and a Dictionary perched on a table nearby. I shall catch up on you one day. The worst of it is that I have not got the memory you have. I should be far happier putting rings on a piston of a steam engine. However I don't think anybody has died by trying to learn out of books.

I have read through this letter and find I have written some pretty average 'bilge'. But I like rambling.

Well my darling I must leave you and make a non-stop flight to the bathroom. Lots of love and please take care of yourself and Alan and do as I suggest. I won't be long now.

Bless you sweet,
Xxxx Donald xxxx

Welsh Mission 3.2.1943

My sweet,

Another letter from you. We are being good now and I am getting so I reckon your letters by the hour and not by days. No I am still in hospital and shall be for a few more days. They are taking no chances with my bursting enthusiasm at getting back to work! Talking of bursting things I nearly burst with pride at cracking the Statesman Crossword in 3 hours today. Pretty good what! Your thin husband is getting on.

I think that I am steadily going bats actually, because I have gone completely nuts on Russia. I have written down

to the Pelman⁴⁶⁵ place in Calcutta and ask them to teach me Russian just like that! So ifsky you metiki me againski please do notski be surprised at the way I talk. Russians as you know have thousands of dialects so I have left the entire problem of the most popular dialect to Mr Pelman. Hope he can oblige me. What about learning it with me. You know "enter Vodka, down with beer" sort of thing. This evening I have been amusing myself by listening to a fellow in the R.I.A.S.C. who prides himself by the amount of bribes he takes. Not only that but he sees how much more he can squeeze out [of] these fat Bania's⁴⁶⁶ No 'bloody' shame at all. I won't enter what I thought or said, it would only make me blush to know that I had accumulated such a vulgar verbosity.

I am so glad [Alan] is being good. I wonder how long it will be before he knows how to be naughty and be like a bag of monkeys. I trust darling you are concealing your little ways or are you teaching him so that Daddy will have two naughty fat things to contend with.

I am afraid I cannot think of any more news. One doesn't get much in the hospital. Of course I could go on for quite a while telling you how much I missed you and how much I loved you. You know that though don't you Totty. Next time I will tell you it will be with you next [to] me.

All my love sweetest girl,
Yours ever Donald

Welsh Mission, 8.2.43

My darling,

I think that the mails have gone to pieces again because I have not had a letter from you for a few days. However darling I am not complaining. You have been nearly as good as I have! I have just seen the doctor and I am leaving here on Wednesday this being Monday. Just as well really because it is very nice here and such things as long baths and excellent food cannot just be thrown away.

I went out yesterday by myself for a walk through the wood down to the Bishop & Beadon Falls which supply the Electric Current for Shillong. They are a wonderful sight I must admit. Terrific drop.

My bedmate has had his operation and has made a very quick recovery with no complications as I had. Some people are lucky. Yesterday afternoon I went out to tea with the Russel's (Dr). They are a grand couple. They lost all in Burma and he only gets about Rs 450 a month. It does seem a shame. He could quite easily be a Lt/Col in the I.M.S. if he wanted but seems devoted to this work. They have all those children too which must really be a terrific burden. Still it shows it can be done and there is hopes for us yet darling! Mrs Russel⁴⁶⁷ asked after you and Alan. She even remembered his name and she asked me if I had any photos of him. I have sent some over today so she can have a look.

I am still bats about Russia and learning the language. I think it will be rather interesting don't you? What about learning it with me sweetheart. We could go about being very swank by the occasional 'eki' to our words. I am sending Rs 400 this month darling. If you want more please let me know because I have it here.

Well sweetheart excuse this rather sketchy letter but there is really no news.

Things are developing alright and I may see you very soon now.

All my love,
Yours always, Donald

Elephant Falls, 10.2.1943

My sweetheart,

Back to the yoke and feeling pretty good. Just received one of your letters which was delayed by a pretty little girl carrying it round in her pocket. Have just received another letter in which you were in an awful temper sweet. Please go back to the hotel if the food is not good enough for Alan. Rather that than for him to get really ill. I am sorry for you darling, it must be an awful amount of work but I hope by now that you have a decent Aya. You must not work yourself up. You know darling that I feel just the same. I hate the mess and only wish that you and I could have our own little bungalow with everything the way we want and we can do just as we want to do.

The[y] battalion generally I think is still bad and I have made a resolution to find the root of the trouble. I think that it lies with the B.O's and senior Indian Officers. I am going to tell the C.O. this and make one or two suggestions to improve it even if it means getting into hot water. I think that the C.O. will listen to me. I sincerely hope so anyway because I have great faith in the man.

I found Dina and Jenny in excellent condition and Jenny has grown out of recognition although I am afraid the

little thing is a bit wild. I am afraid I have not got much time to get down to training here as we are frightfully busy just now.

By all means I shall send the money. Darling you are frightfully good about spending. I feel as if you are not getting or taking a proper share in things. Please have what you want.

I am so sorry this is so short and sketchy but the mail is going now so I must close. I shall write tonight and see if I cannot make things a bit better.

All my love and take care of yourself and Alan,

Yours ever & ever,

Xxxx Donald xxx

RANIPET, MADRAS

The background to the rest of the account is Donald Macfarlane's transfer from Shillong to military service in southern India. This meant that Mac and Iris hardly met again during the war. A few details of this change are given in Peter Steyn's *History of the Assam Regiment*, from which I have quoted:

'The raising of a second battalion for the regiment started in 1942. Major I. N. Macleod was commandant with him went Captain Macfarlane and several other more recently posted officers. By 14 April, there were collected some seven officers and 450 men to take the field on the following day under Lieutenant-Colonel I. N. Macleod at a parade attended by many high military and civil officials in Shillong. The new unit got down to basic training. Captain D. K. Macfarlane, the Adjutant, and Lieutenants Davis and Manilal Barua had learnt the hard way of trial and error with the 1st Battalion.

Early in 1943, hopes were high that the 2nd Battalion Assam Regiment might soon be allowed to join the 1st Battalion on the Chindwin front, but in March these hopes were dashed with the arrival of orders for the unit to move at once to Ranipet in South India. It was a hard blow for the officers and men, who had trained so eagerly, to be moving away from the fighting front instead of towards it. However, India was then going through a difficult period in her internal security and the 2nd Battalion's task was to be a vital one. The 2nd Battalion Assam Regiment was ordered to move from Shillong to Madras to carry out railway protection duties. It moved south in March 1943.

'Ranipet is a small railway terminal on a branch line from Wallajahpat Road Station on the main Madras-Cochin route, some seventy-five miles away from Madras city by road. The camp area, which the 2nd Battalion Assam Regiment now occupied, was one mile outside the town and on the bank of the Palar River, facing the historic Arcct-Fort on the opposite side. The greater part of the camp lay within a large toddy palm grove, the remainder was on the sandy bank of the Palar a position which was found to be a burial ground. Although the accommodation was in tents and huts, the foliage of the palms overhead provided some relief from the burning rays of the sun during the hottest weather. Companies were sent out for months at a stretch to patrol the railway lines towards Madras, Bangalore and Bombay from fixed bases. While some platoons set out on foot from platoon and section posts alongside the railway lines, others would travel by train.

On the night of 28 June and, in the early hours of the following morning, they awoke to find their worst fears confirmed. Many had the unpleasant experience of seeing by the dim light of dawn their kits slowly rising from the floor and beginning to float away. D Company, under Captain Stonor, was the worst hit for they occupied slightly lower lying ground than did the rest of the 2nd Battalion. The company area was soon flooded to a depth of more than a foot by the swirling muddy water.

Complete boredom was the cause of many men getting into trouble and some came into conflict with local civilians and authorities. It was, therefore, a great relief when 2nd Battalion Assam Regiment handed over its irksome duties to the 3rd Battalion (The Nizam's Own) Hyderabad State Infantry in November, and moved nearer Bangalore to join 150th Indian Infantry Brigade at Bethmangala near the Kolar gold mines. The enthusiasm was so great that the Battalion marched under a gruelling sun, some two hundred miles from Ranipet in full marching order without a single man falling out of the column.'

In July 1945, the 2nd Battalion left South India, and, under a new Commanding Officer, Lieutenant-Colonel J. F. R. Woodhouse moved up to the Gauhati area, where it went into camp on the banks of the Brahmaputra River.

[Noted in Will's diary that Iris was in Meerut from the latter part of February 1943. She motored back from Meerut to Agra 27th March and left for Naini Tal with her mother and Robert 29th March.]

Not dated or addressed

My dearest,

I got a letter yesterday addressed to the new address. I am glad you are not going to tick me off darling because I should have felt so miserable. By the way talking of letters if I remember by the time I finish this I have an airgraph from your Uncle Ernest⁴⁶⁸ which came to me somehow or other. I hope darling that you have got your money. I am awfully sorry about it all because it is not a question this time of not having it. It is there and plenty more only the blasted bank isn't simply playing. I have had no reply to my last two attempts. If we weren't going back to S[hillong]. I should shift my account altogether. I am glad you have a good Aya and that you are finding things easier. You are very naughty to attempt doing the whole thing just tiring yourself out for no reason. It must be getting hot in Meerut now it certainly is here. One thing about this place is that you can get a cool night and a good sleep and if you get that then one can work thro' any heat I say.

Not much news here. The C.O. has returned from a little jaunt in Bangalore and seems highly pleased with himself.

I have still to find out where all the birds, game birds to in this place. The Local policeman assures me that there are all kinds of things but perhaps that's just to keep on the right side of me. Anyway darling, I don't want to sound to happy about this cause you might think I don't love you, and am not missing you, on Saturday or Sunday I am going duck shooting. First time for a long time. I hope I shall get something. I am alas very interested to see what kind of duck there is about these parts. Very different I believe from up north. Anyway as you and Alan are both keen fishermen, I won't disturb your waters. Of course I shall take a hand and scream fantastically when either of you are doing the wrong thing. It would I admit be fun to do some fishing. I like fishing very much, next to shooting I think. I know you will like it. One day I will row you in a boat in between the islands of Loch Morar⁴⁶⁹. Its lovely there darling. You seem to think that you own each little island and nothing in the world could touch you there. I used to stand with heather up to my waist and think that I was king over all the islands and God help anyone who tried to set foot on my kingdom. Silly thoughts you may say darling but wait, I always say wait, wait, don't I, but some day you are coming home with me, and you are coming into my real home.

Well my sweet I am just rambling on because I must talk to someone and I am love sick as the devil. I read through this and there does not seem to be ryme nor reason. Still you don't mind do you Iris,

All my love girlie to you and Alan,

Ever yours, Donald

March

14 Adv. Base P.O. 6.3.43

My darling girl,

I feel awful just now and need you terribly. Not a very good beginning to a letter but I am beginning to hate everything and everybody in this damn place. To me everybody seems so short sighted and smug. The C.O. is a useless old man and our wonderful 'Les' trails him round like a dog. I have never seen a person suck up so much as he does. They both sit back and talk a lot and everybody else does the work. Honestly I am sick of it and if it wasn't for you I should go flat out and have a row and get out of it. Its criminal the whole outfit. The men themselves are grand, you couldn't have a better lot. I think I might bear it if you were here or I could see you darling girl. You really are everything. I simply don't know how I am going to go on being parted. I think of you all day now. You are never out of my mind. Its your fault and my only wish is that you love me as much Iris. You do don't you sweet. Say you do, say you miss me say you can never stop loving me. As far as I can see the earliest possible time that I have of seeing you is going to be July. God knows Iris how I am going to stick things as long as that. Still [for] your sake and for mine I shall try. Remembering you and the times we have been together makes me gloriously happy for a time and only when I am brought with [a] jolt to the ground do I realise how silly this all is and wonder why we shouldn't always be together and happy. We will one day won't we sweet. You do love me a lot don't you. I am absolutely frantically in love with you and you must know that. Well sweetheart it is next morning and I feel a lot better for having written the above although I am quite sure you will think I am mad. The mail is just about due in so I am waiting in the office doing odd jobs until I see if there is anything in it. I don't suppose you would have written after my effort but I live in hopes. NO letter darling still you have been very good and I have been the naughty one.

I must get this into the post today so bye bye just now.

Always yours darling, Donald

Kiss my boy for me.

My darling girl,

I apologise for my miserable effort this morning. I seem to do a lot of apologising. I am naughty at times I suppose but it's not done with any intention. I am sitting outside my tent and it has cooled down considerably, thank goodness. It gets pretty warm down here at times. I am dying to hear from you soon and get those indignant letters which will make me feel frightful for a time but I hope that they will improve. Also I am dying to hear whether you love me as much as you used to. You always used to say in your letters how much you missed me but now I suppose you are getting used to me. The time however isn't far now when I see you again and then we shall put things right.

There is no actual news. Dina, Jenny and myself lead a pretty secluded life and I am getting frightfully "jungli" again. Eat my food with both hands etc. You have to train me all over again when I come back to you. I still have a lot of work on hand and beside doing my Adjutants work I am doing unofficial S.S.O.⁴⁷⁰ of the station. I see nothing but paper all day long. My day usually extends from 7 in the morning until 9 or 10 a night. Still I like having plenty to do and should get fidgety (how do you spell the word anyway) if I had to sit round all day. I am looking forward very much to this new job of Training Bn. Commander. You shall definitely have to help me sweet. This time you will have to come in to my office and I shall give you office hours and maybe some nice uniform. Of course the main thing is that we shall be together and have our nice little bungalow all over again. This time I have great hopes of it remaining as such for a long time. I shall try also to get some really good and decent blokes for officers. I am allowed six at least. Two of them Captains. I might be able to wangle Andy as one. I hope so. Reading through this the writing is awful and I am drivelling a lot but I like it as I said before. Especially when I have you to do it to.

I have had a lot of trouble with one of my ears the last two weeks. No pain but just deaf in one. I have had it cleaned out but up till now it has made no difference. Rather annoying but I hope it will not get worse. Otherwise I am feeling fit as a fiddle. I take long walks in the evening as exercise and feel that I might try something more energetic soon. I wont however overdo it darling I promise you that. I am going to leave this now and have a bath and shall write the balance in bed after dinner. You don't need to read it if you don't want to but I was just going to tell you how much I love you. This time I really shall try. You must get very fed up with my efforts.

No luck, the 2nd in Command turned up and we were having conferences to God knows what time darling so I am afraid I just flopped into bed and slept like a log. I am just awaiting the post now to see if there is any news. I hope so because I haven't had a letter for a few days now.

I have had a terrific row with our 'Les' and told him just what I thought of him and as usual of course I said something which I didn't mean to say later on. I called him a 'Slum Rat' and he broke down. Pretty unfair of me and I feel awful about it but still I got off my chest a thing which I had meant to for a long while.

Well darling I must leave you as there is NO news of you in the post. Still I mustn't complain.

All my love dearest heart and my love to family and my precious boy.

Kiss, Donald

April

14 Advance B.P.O. Assam Regt. 2.4.43

My darling,

I apologise for my effort this morning. I was just suddenly lugged away. These things happen without ones knowing. By the way who is the new victim – Hugh Something. You are mothering all over India with I must see if I can't try that too. I mean by getting some of Madras girl friends to motor me about a bit. I must say I never thought of that dodge before!! Blast Hugh and all my Madras girl friends, there aren't any anyway. I wish I could drive you about. The only blasted person who has a right to can't! Anyway we must not grumble I might be in the middle East or some other part of the world for all I know, thousands of miles away and would be horrible wouldn't it? Never mind no fear of that yet. I wonder darling could you let me know if you could look after Diana & Jenny for a while. I am afraid that it is very hot here and the poor things feel it very badly. I could send them up with Gulab and your brown trunk if you like. Let me know soon please sweet.

I have been most unfair about this letter. This is the third time I have been whisked off and I am afraid I didn't get down to writing again all yesterday. Very naughty of me I know darling. Your letters are getting through but the[y] wait and collect one or two and then send them on which is very annoying. [rest of the letter missing]

2 Assam Regt. 14 Adv. B.P.O 27.4.43

My own darling, Arrived back at Camp for a day or two and found your lovely letters. Really nice ones and it made

me feel so happy and contented. You have no idea how much I worry about how you and Alan are getting along and when I get lovely letters like those last few it makes me feel, as I say, contented. Alan seems to have quite recovered and I thought the snaps very good. He has grown hasn't he. I must see him soon. I will actually. I shall be up on leave soon darling and soon as I can believe. We shall have some fun then too. I am glad you are having a gay time but feel awfully jealous of all these men hanging round you. Still darling I think you love me enough not to kill me by falling for someone else??!

I came back as I say with an awful liver and have been chewing everybody's head off since I have been here. I think I need some leave and if I don't get some I shall go 'pots'. If I don't get out of this rut I shall go crackers too. The officers men etc are alright and you could not wish for better there is one snag that is the C.O. I hate him now and have got to the state of arguing heatedly about anything he says at table or anywhere. I think he is gradually seeing through it all and I hope we have the inevitable 'show down' soon. I can't go on with this hidden grouse and contempt inside me much longer. If only the Censor wouldn't read this I could let or would like to let you know a lot more. Shall soon. By the way just before I forget. When I come up on leave want plenty of picnics with you Alan and your Mummy. You know how your Mummy makes up the tiffin basket, well like that. I could do with one like that now. Another thing darling which is an extremely urgent and serious affair is my not yet writing your Mummy. I feel awful about it and really I deserve a thick ear. Shall let her clout me but not too hard!

I am really very sorry and I will write honestly within a day or two. I enclose by the bye another letter from Mummy. She seems quite happy about things in general. Missing my father a bit.

By the way I arrived back and found Gulab still with poor Jenny and Dinah. Says he didn't have enough money after having given him Rs 100/-. Just trying to pull a fast one. Shall send him off soon.

Well my love must have a bath. An event which shocks some of my woolliest Nagas and I have no screen to protect my birthday suit and they can't see why I should bath at all. I must feel & smell pretty foul just now because coming down on the train I noticed one or two people edging off in other directions. I pretended it wasn't me & kept looking at the next person. Awful situation for one so self conscious!!?

Look after yourself Iris and my little boy.

I love you I love you,

Yours always & always, Donald

Noted in Violet's diary that Mac arrived in Naini Tal for a month's leave on 19th June 1943 and left 13th July. Iris wrote this poem, probably when Mac left at the end of his leave.

I am so proud...

I am so proud when you left my side
You did the things we both had planned for you
And climbed into our dreams, and there astride
Rode recklessly as I had known you'd do.
For while there is an evil to be fought
We move together, I am not cowed.
I cannot harbour any fearful thought
I am so proud.

I will not sigh because the life we planned
Must not be lived, our time will surely come.
I will be patient, it is your command
Until the day when I can lead you home.
And should you find a better way to go
At the least the love we have can never die.
Whatever happens I would have you know
I will not sigh.

I have no fear, although I know you lead
A perilous path, through blood and sweat and tears.

Because of you, I can lift up my head
And see beyond these anguished-breeding years.
There in the future, we shall surely find
Reality for all that we hold dear.
So looking always forward not behind
I have no fear.

July 1943 I.M.

There is very little material, apart from photographs, for the rest of the war, so I am relying on Iris's later reflections to tell the rest of their story of the war years.

In *Daughters of the Empire*, Iris wrote:

In fact I only saw Mac once a year for the rest of the war; a couple of sweet, unreal weeks when we talked of "after the war" as of an almost impossible dream. We would go home and live in the country on some unspecified income. Mac had an uncle whose death he thought was going to release large sums of money, so "when Uncle Robert dies" became the first verse of our own, new ballad. We knew we would never subject our children to the separations we had suffered. Mac had spent his holidays as a boy with relations in Edinburgh in whose icy house Everyone quarrelled and lectured and saved string.

I travelled to Quetta to have my daughter, Fiona, repeating my mother's journey across the Sind desert in the fifth month of pregnancy. My father was stationed in Quetta and there was a chance that Mac would get on a Staff College course, so I set off on another of the three day train journeys that were an everyday part of life in India. This time, being pregnant, I hired a servant to help me, a man of whom I knew nothing except what his references told me, but we all knew that references were written by professionals according to standard rules and not to be relied.

*

Quetta was in Baluchistan, on the edge of India, high and cold and bare except that when watered and warmed by the spring and autumn sun it burst into amazing flower and fruit; apricots and grapes, dahlias and daffodils, walnuts and wallflowers, everything grew in Quetta between being frozen by the kajak winds of winter and being boiled by the summer sun. Its people were tall and hawk-like, men and women of the high passes, as different as they could be from the golden-skinned, slant-eyed Khasis. I don't know why it had been chosen by the British for their staff college, being remote at the end of a long, desert train journey; perhaps its emptiness made it right for route marches and firing off guns. In the war when I was there, it was a fairground. Every night was party night; non-stop we danced and drank and celebrated, though with small reason. Famine in Bengal could be brushed aside, but the war not.

*

Quetta was totally army, everyone was in uniform, even a lot of the women. After a few months I got a letter from one of the top brass saying I wasn't pulling my weight in the war effort, that I should leave my children with the ayah as did other wives, and work in the Bomber Shop. This was a craft shop whose proceeds went towards winning the war, and was always over-staffed. I wrote back and said my children were more important than the war, and that I considered it sufficient that my husband was likely to lose his life in the Cause. Perhaps this cheeky missive stopped Mac getting posted to Quetta, because that was the way the army worked. A friend who was beautiful and sophisticated and spent a busy year entertaining the right people was rewarded by having her husband posted to Brigade Major, Quetta.

*

There was always something to celebrate in Quetta, you would have thought we were in the middle of a peace time boom instead of half way through a tricky war. We climbed into fancy dress for any reason at all: a birthday, the bombing of Dresden, a second front opened, and at last, two years after I had fled Shillong, the defeat of the Japanese at Kohima. There was an all night binge when these fantastic new bombs were dropped on Hiroshima, and the peace that followed called for streamers all over the club for a week under which parties continued without a pause.

My sister Fiona was born on 1st April 1944 at the British Military Hospital in Quetta. Mac was still in the the in South India at the time of the birth and only saw her some months later.





Alan, Iris, Mac, Violet, Fiona, Richard, Robert, Will summer 1944

At the end of 1944 Violet and Robert left India for England after spending Christmas in Quetta, arriving at Liverpool 6th January 1945. They went to Oxford to stay with Violet's sister Margery at 25 St Margaret Road where the first job was to find a school for Robert as he was nearly twelve, and needed to be prepared to follow his brothers to Sedbergh School in Yorkshire at thirteen. A place was found for him at Seaford College Junior School at Worthing, Sussex.

Iris remained in Quetta with her father and the children until September 1945 when she returned to Shillong. William finally retired and returned to England in December 1945.

In *Daughters of the Empire*, Iris wrote:

So at last it was over, and I was in another train going back to Shillong, across the Sind desert, a stop in Calcutta, and then up through Bengal and over the Brahmaputra along with two children and a Labrador puppy my mother had given me as a parting present. She had gone home, and my father was to follow a year later, their long commitment to India over. After my marriage my relationship with my mother was easier, I could busy myself with the children during the day and go partying at night without in any way disturbing her life; in fact, for the first time I was measuring up to the standards expected of me. She provided me with a home and solid support when I was ill; I nearly died of jaundice in Quetta and during that time she was a rock of comfort and practical help; she was always at her best when things became difficult.

Unexpectedly, I found myself an obsessive mother, and every waking moment of my children's day was spent amusing them. Alan had developed what was then known as acidosis and was frequently sick, and had two bouts of dysentery, so was a constant worry. Without my mother's help I don't know how I would have coped. I think I took all this for granted, saying thank you seems to have come hard for me all my life.

Back in a wooden hut in Happy Valley, I was soon pregnant again but no matter, the war was over, the dream had unbelievably come true. Mac was stationed in the plains but managed to get up for odd weekends. He had had a frustrating war from his point of view: the first battalion he raised went off to distinguish themselves at Kohima and he was left behind to raise another, but by that time the Japanese were in retreat and he only lingered on the fringes of action. He never spoke of the war afterwards, I think he felt faintly ashamed of his lack of having anything exciting to say.

Mac brought up a little pony for the children, and we sauntered across the parade ground in long domestic trails; children, horse, dog, ayah and my swelling self, choosing if possible a time when the colonel would be inspecting his men. Once we managed to do it when General Auchinleck was up on a visit, a masterpiece of timing. This effort at embarrassing the colonel was to repay him for putting my bungalow out of bounds to his officers, this being the holy misogynist who apparently saw me, bulbous as I was, as a biblical harlot. Fortunately, one of them ignored his orders and helped me get coal and gave me lifts into the shops in one of the fleet of army jeeps. Happy Valley was miles from anywhere and there were no buses.

My second daughter, Anne, was born in the hospital to which I had walked every afternoon across the field full of the smell of burnt corn; I never went back to visit my old landlady for reasons I now forget. Uncle Robert was still alive, so there was nothing to do but to go back to planting tea. We still talked about chucking it all in and getting that rose-covered cottage, but it was a bit like getting to be thirteen and finding my leg cured. Gradually, imperceptibly the dream thinned, faded and was gone. Instead there were to be twenty years of tea planting, and a repetition of all the long separations of our childhoods.

Mac returned to Assam before Iris but not to Happy Valley as he was still on active service. Peter Steyn relates in his book on the Assam Regiment:

' In July 1945, the 2nd Battalion had left South India, and, under a new Commanding Officer, Lieutenant-Colonel J. F. R. Woodhouse, from the 10th Baluch Regiment, had moved up to the Gauhati area, where it went into camp on the bank of the Brahmaputra River. It had originally been intended that the 2nd Battalion Assam Regiment should move right up to the Burma border and be available for active service with one of the divisions, had the fighting continued in that theatre. The unit was again, however, fated not to join the active front and all hope of doing so was finally killed when the Japanese capitulated in the following August. But this situation could be now better borne since the Battalion was back in its own province and the men did not feel so utterly cut off from their homes and families.'



Second Battalion Assam Regiment back in Assam, with Mac seated in the centre.

SHILLONG

Iris to Violet

Sept 27 [1945], c/o Assam Regt, Happy Valley

Darling Mummy,

Thank you for your Air Letter which arrived yesterday. I expect you've got my airmail telling you of the journey. We're really almost organised now, though a lot of small things need doing, and the whole place could do with a coat of paint and some floor polish. But we aren't quite sure if we shall be staying on here or moving into our old hut, so I'm restraining myself. Our curtains have nearly all been eaten but are serviceable until anything else presents itself. Our entire dinner set was smashed alas, and we're eating off an extraordinary collection of crockery – I'm hoping

Gwalior⁴⁷¹ will start producing for general use again soon. But all round we have been lucky to have salvaged as much as we have. The luggage I brought with me from Quetta arrived intact, but on opening the box of children's books I was faced with a glutinous mass – we had packed a bottle of malt in with them and it had broken – a most depressing spectacle, but after a bit of sponging down the books emerged more or less intact.

This is really a very nice little hut, and Mac has fixed one of our lamps in the drawing room and another in my bedroom so that we're almost civilised. The end bedroom which Mac and I used to have is the children's and I sleep in the little middle room with the front one as a dressing room. The chief snag is the bathrooms or rather commodes which are filthy and as far as I can see irreplaceable. The children's potty is beginning to leak too and I can't get another so it's all rather slummy. They themselves are simply blooming and fatten as you look at them, and are very cheerful. We have a little pony for Alan which was brought out of Kohima with the battalion. It is a dear little thing and very quiet although quite untrained, Fiona loves it and has to be forcibly pulled from its back though Alan is a bit blasé and merely uses it as a conveyance. I'm hoping to collect a few chickens too, eggs being a major problem. Housekeeping is wildly expensive but one can get most things – except fresh butter, we eat tinned margarine and like it. I think things will improve when the Yanks clear out. I will send you some rice and marmalade each month, but I'm afraid sugar is still strictly rationed – we get 6lbs a month which goes nowhere and can't buy tins here either. I will send some Golden Syrup which we eat on porridge etc. if it isn't too heavy.

I will also send you some warm material for a dress and an odd tea cosy of ours – I'll send them to Daddy rather to take home. The few decent warm things I possessed were burnt when the Modern Cleaners caught fire just before I left Quetta so I haven't a stitch to wear this winter myself. I put Fiona's new white sweater on the other day as the Iliffs⁴⁷² were coming to tea and when I turned round to dress Alan she got hold of my lipstick and was inches deep in it by the time I saw her – disastrous for the sweater, and we can't get it off though it doesn't stay on my face two minutes. My so-called Ayah doesn't appear very often, her baby always seems to be ill or something so I find myself pretty busy.

Mac got up last week-end⁴⁷³ and we took the kids for a picnic which reminded me of ones at home – food gulped down and stowed away quickly with one eye on huge black clouds overhead. It's still raining a lot and I'm still enjoying it. The Iliffs are off in a week back to tea. They are a quaint couple, they live on absolutely nothing and must have amassed a quiet fortune. Both the children are hanging over me and making dives at the keys so I shall have to close down for a bit.

Shillong is full of traffic and uniforms but otherwise the same. Not nearly so many things in the shops as in Quetta though. We went to the club on Saturday and saw some of the same faces, including Dora – do you remember her? We are all allowed to go round in military trucks which is nice, and Mac hopes to be able to bring up a Jeep next time he comes.

I got a wedding invitation from Aileen which peevd me rather as now I suppose I shall have to send her a present. Also heard from Patricia Pettigrew telling of Teddy Stewards⁴⁷⁴ death, right at the end of the war – very sad. Patricia seems comfortable and has acquired a nurse from somewhere. I saw the arrival of a daughter for Sheila Kitson⁴⁷⁵ to-day. Noreen's infant thrives and she is being very successful with its feeding this time. I think I shall probably have a crack at another during this hiatus in our hectic lives, so if you see the odd tin of Groats it will probably come in useful. Alan demands a brother.⁴⁷⁶ I have sacked my whole staff to-day and Abrar and I are going to cope, for the time being anyway. He is doing very well at the moment. I must write a line to Mac before the children wake for some of his bn. to take down to him this evening.

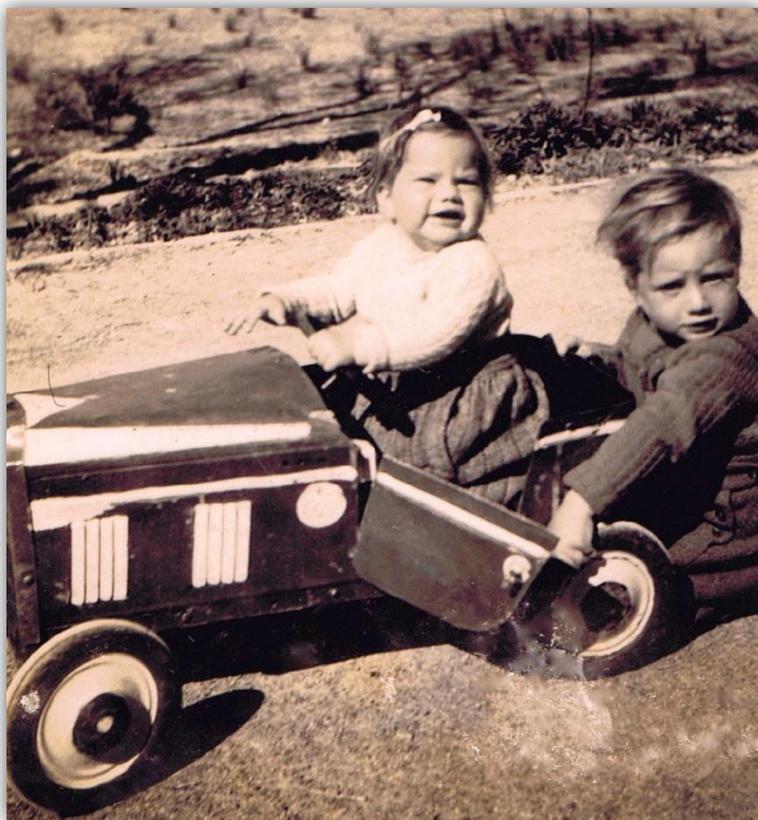
Lots of love from us all,
Iris

Happy Valley, Oct. 16th [1945]

Darling Mummy,

Another Air Letter to thank you for – I hope you've got my Air Mail by now. Glad to hear A.M.'s [Aunt Margery] operation was a success. Life at home sounds very drab, and I'll try to send some food – am completely paralysed at the moment by not being able to get into Shillong or leave the children – it's a helpless feeling. I find being abandoned here very difficult, as nobody cares a damn about me and I can get no rations etc. We have no coke or coal in the house to-day, and as far as I can see will have to starve to-morrow! To add to my difficulty I've had Rs 140 pinched from my bag, but can't get hold of the police – not having a husband in this place, seems to cut one off completely. Actually it's rather thoughtless of the Bn. here, but they seem a paralytic crowd all round.

In spite of all this we're all well, the children particularly, though Fiona is cross with more teeth cutting. Some tommies I met have made them a beautiful painted cart they can sit in, and various other small toys so they're pretty well amused. We took some snaps the other day which I hope come out, as it's our last reel.



Alan is a very handsome little boy and at the stage of asking endless questions. He wanted to know where his food went to when he eat it, and when I told him demanded a looking glass to see it all happening! Fiona is sweet, but her hair still disappointingly straight.

You probably won't be surprised to hear I have started another infant. Almost on the dot of deciding as far as I can make out! It isn't due till the beginning of June (a reasonable time for a birthday, at last!) and we are both very pleased about it. I shall have it in the Welsh Mission as the Ganesh Das is in the charge of an Indian Lady Doctor now and nobody seems to go there - a pity, I should have liked to have it there. It all fits in quite well as I shall take the whole caboodle down to Tea in October. I've engaged a super super Ayah (at a super wage, Rs 70 plus rations!). She has been to England 3 times and has superlative chits, I feel she'll probably be too grand altogether, but am beginning to weary already of looking after both and will have to get one eventually. I haven't thought about a trousseau, but if you have any baby wool, I'd love a couple of little coats like the ones you knitted Fiona. He will need very few warm clothes until he's over a year, so I don't think there's much to do. I've got all the dresses, blankets etc. from the other two, and also discovered the Maternity dresses I wore for Alan, so with luck he'll be an economical baby. I hope so as this place is ruinous. Alan is enchanted at the thought of a baby, and frequently says in a preoccupied way "Now I must do my knitting" - he sits down with a piece of stick and some wool, making "socks for the baby in your tummy".

Mac hasn't been up much in the last three weeks, odd day, but I hope will get this week-end. He always brings toys or sweets, and is looked on as a sort of Father Christmas by the kids. I get completely ignored while he's here. The Iliffs have gone but there are still two children left who will be off very soon too. I am playing bridge this evening with some of the A.L.F.S.E.A.⁴⁷⁷ lads next door. I went last week in fear and trembling but ended by winning off the Colonel, so am more confident this time! Do hope you'll get your cottage soon, thing ought to be a lot easier in the country. Much love from us all, Iris.

December 3rd [1945]

Darling Mummy,

Thank you for your Air Letters of the 10th. I'm glad to hear you've got some help in the house at last and hope it lasts. I'd be most grateful for a couple of little coats and two sweaters of about 9 month size - I only have about 8 ozs baby wool which I was going to knit into jerseys for coming home for whichever needed them most - Fiona and the infant I think as Alan is still well set up by you! I spend all my time on socks now and never seem to have enough. It has suddenly turned cold and as usual I find myself with no warm clothes and unable to get into the ones I have but I shall hold out somehow as prices are still shocking. I've sent the material for you to Daddy and he seems hopeful of getting a boat at last so perhaps you'll get it for Christmas⁴⁷⁸. Would you buy a book for Robert for me - there is nothing out here. I owe Daddy some money and will add Rs 10 for that. We went into Shillong this morning to get presents for the children but its all very make-shift and expensive. Mac hopes to get 10 days leave but what with Gandhis visit⁴⁷⁹ and the I.N.A.⁴⁸⁰ trials they're expecting trouble just at the wrong time and he may not make it. We shall be terribly disappointed as we've planned this Christmas in the certainty of spending it together. Mac has just been up for the week-end and brought a goose he had shot. I'm still feeling pretty sick and rather tired of it but should be over by Christmas and the Ayah is coping marvellously. The kids still thrive, Fiona is huge and growing more attractive daily - she reminds me distinctly of Belinda - the same black-fringed turned up blue eyes exactly! The snaps are disappointing but I'll send a couple of them Air Mail and write more fully then. My love to Billy if he's with you - I'll be writing again before Xmas so will save my greetings. Saw Mrs Macartney in the shops this morning!

Much love from us all, Iris

My mother left Shillong with three children (Anne had been born on June 3rd) on July 26th 1946 to go to Mohokutie Tea Estate to join my father. The subsequent events of twenty years in tea will be told in a later volume. However, before I end this part of the story I must go back to the beginning and write what I know of my father's life before he met Iris.

Donald Macfarlane before he met Iris

I have to piece together my father's life from fragments. Unlike my mother, he did not write down memories of his early life, or, if he did, they are lost. But from various sources it is possible to build up some picture of the man who, more than any other, influenced my later life – though in rather indirect ways.

Donald Kennedy Macfarlane was born on 31st October 1916 in El Paso, Texas, son of a mining engineer, Archibald Kennedy Macfarlane of Argyllshire, Scotland. He spent his first eleven years in Mexico and Texas, and had a happy childhood with a lot of freedom with his younger brother and sister.



He came to Scotland for the first time on the 'Andania', via Montreal, Quebec, arriving in England on 1st December 1928, soon after his twelfth birthday. He came with his mother, Florence, who was leaving him in the care of Archibald's sister and brother-in-law, James Elliot in Edinburgh, to be sent to boarding school, Dollar Academy, Clackmannanshire. He clearly had a strong American accent which would have marked him out from the other boys and was nicknamed "Texas" from the start.

I shall give the brief account of his life from his younger brother Alan's *Reminiscences*.

Donald, my brother – 2 years older than me.

He was brought to Dollar Academy in 1928 aged 12 and surprisingly was very home-sick for nearly a year. I think this affected his whole school life for though intelligent enough he took no interest in school work, so that by 1933 I would have been in the same class as him if he had not left to become an apprentice engineer with John Browns Shipping and Engineering works [on the Clyde]. He was an all-round athlete – winning the mile. In the cross country race for what was called the Butchers shield he and a boy called Harvey kept changing places for the lead – however about 200 yds from the finish, without a word spoken to each other, they stopped racing and walked in "first equal". However they were both

disqualified for not trying after an almighty row. This also affected Donald so all in all his school days were not happy. On finishing his apprenticeship Uncle Jim used his influence and got Donald a job in the Assam Tea Company round about 1936/7.'

Alan described how Donald was not only an excellent athlete but could have been a Scottish International rugby player if he had gone to university. As a rugby player he was very obstinate and determined.

Alan joined him at Dollar two year later. Donald warned him that there were some bullies in their house and they tried to make you cry. Another boy did cry and was bullied for a couple of years – but Alan took Donald's advice and the bullies soon gave up. Donald stopped the bullying when he went up to a senior house. He was well liked as a boy.

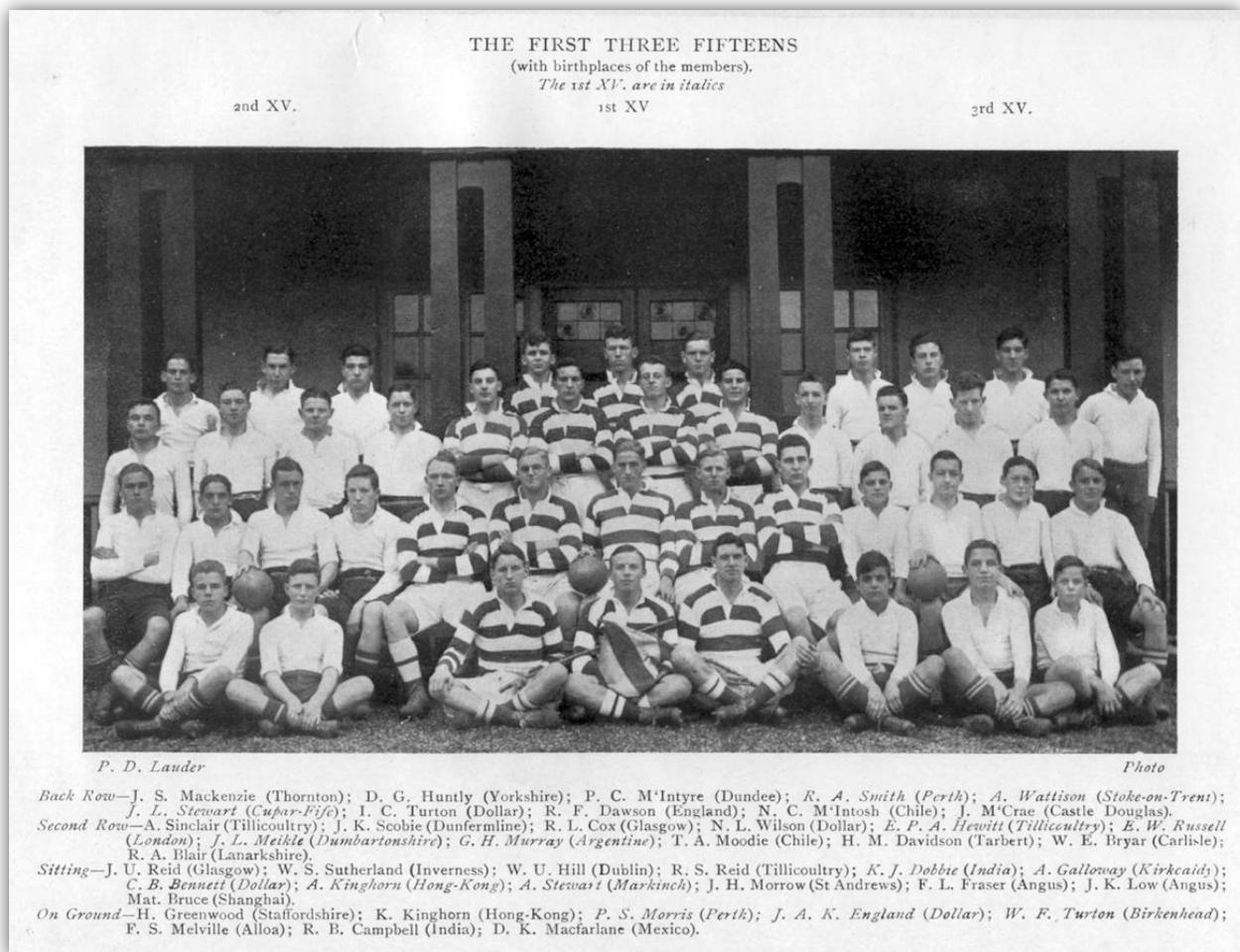


Donald in the school uniform that his mother bought just before she left to return to America

Another shock for me is what the photos reveal about my father's physical development. Because he ended up well over six foot, I had imagined that his tough physical background in Mexico meant that he at least came to the school tall and tough. This does not seem to have been the case.

Donald's first full rugger season would have been in 1929-30, so the first photograph, of the team in 1930-1 was in his second full year, when he was about fourteen. It may have been unusual for a second year boy to get into the team, reflecting his ability and determination, but the fact that he is

still so small (he is the smallest boy in the photograph), suggests that he had not put on much weight and height during those first two, reputedly miserable, years. The other shock is how much like me he looked at that stage.



1930 – Donald – bottom right



My father aged seventeen or eighteen, with his sister Sheila, brother Alan and father at Morar

My uncle Alan ascribes my father's failure to succeed academically not to his lack of talent, but rather to the fact that he hardly tried at school. It is clear from Alan's account that the two boys came with a heavy academic disadvantage, little knowledge of English history, bad spelling etc. and that Alan only overcame this by working twice as hard as others, which he could do because he was relatively happy (partly with an older brother to advise and protect him). My father seems to have despaired and given up academic work.

It is clear, as Alan says, that he was an intelligent man who later became a very proficient engineer. Yet he remained intellectually insecure, especially in comparison to his younger brother (and sister) who both went to university. This insecurity was no doubt exacerbated by marrying a naturally highly intelligent and intellectually ambitious wife, Iris, and having two children who went to university and taught in universities. This academic capitulation would affect all our lives. I never found it difficult to talk to him, or found him in the slightest bit anti-intellectual or dismissive of intellectual things. As I grew more engrossed in things of the mind, rather than my earlier enthusiasm for sport and fishing, we found less to talk about and share.

I have mentioned my uncle's account of my father's rugby and running and his great potential. He was later to put energy into rugby, polo and other sports in India and we always had a bond through games. I suspect that much of my intense concentration on games and reckless daring in rugger came out of a desire to please him – alongside a recognition that sporting prowess gave one status.

My father appears to have stayed on at Dollar, but not long enough to take his 'Highers'. Certainly there seems to have been no question of going to university and no discernible sign of a move into the Church, to follow his uncle and grandfather, both named Donald. Uncle Jim Elliot had been a tea planter in Assam and it may have been his knowledge that engineers were in demand on Indian tea plantations, which led to my father to become an apprentice at the Glasgow engineering firm of John Brown on the Clyde. I never asked him why, but I do know that he was advised to go into tea by his uncle.

My father left for Assam aboard the 'Modasa' travelling first class, the day after he was formally recruited into the Assam Tea Company on 7th November 1936, aged just twenty. He went out as an engineer and assistant manager.

I know nothing about his time in Assam between his arrival aged about twenty in 1936 and when he met my mother in October 1940. The only photographic records I have are for polo.



Mac in a polo team at Nazira in 1938 (far left)



Nazira Club Polo Team: 1939 L to R - A.G. Morris, H.D. Starkings, C.D. Hollroyd, D.K. Macfarlane

With the outbreak of the Second World War and the need to augment the army in India, and with the agreement of the Assam Tea Company, Donald, like many tea planters, took an Emergency Commission as a 2nd Lt. on 25th April 1940 with the 4th Bombay Grenadiers. It was as a soldier that he first met Iris, and the rest is my history too.

A Chronology of 1939-1945

[Personal materials are in lower case. Larger events of the War are in Capitals.]

1939

15 March HITLER INVADES CZECHOSLOVAKIA
25 March Iris and Violet set sail for India
April Iris and Violet arrive in India
1st September HITLER INVADES POLAND
3rd September BRITAIN AND FRANCE DECLARE WAR ON GERMANY

1940

25 April 1940 Mac received an Emergency Commission as 2nd Lt with 4th Bombay Grenadiers.
26 May DUNKIRK EVACUATION
11 June ITALY JOINS GERMANY IN WAR
22 June FRANCE SIGNS ARMISTICE WITH GERMANY
10 July - 31 October BATTLE OF BRITAIN (Air bombing)
Saturday October 4th 1940 Iris and Mac meet in Bareilly
December 1940 Iris and Mac engaged

1941

March 1st Iris and Mac married
March - two weeks honeymoon in Delhi (Cecil Hotel) then Jaipur
No 10 Hut, first home Bareilly, parents went to Naini 31st March and Iris probably went up end of April
Mac heard about Assam 5 May, to move in c. 3 weeks to Shillong
Blythe Cottage, Naini Tal, from May 14
30th May Mac made adjutant in Assam Regiment – getting a bungalow in Shillong
15 June 1st Battalion of Assam Regiment formally inaugurated, Mac gets his commission to the Regiment
22 June HITLER ATTACKS RUSSIA
June to Halcyon House, then to Shillong, 21 Cantonments
Mac – Course at Sangar - September
September 27th Assam Regiment. Happy Valley, Assam
7 December PEARL HARBOUR, JAPAN BOMBING
8 December BRITAIN AND US DECLARE WAR ON JAPAN
8 December JAPAN ATTACKS HONG KONG
December 20 – Alan born

1942

January JAPANESE INVADE BURMA
31 January JAPANESE TAKE MALAYA
15 February SINGAPORE SURRENDERED
April-May BRITISH EVACUATE BURMA
14 April 2nd Battalion Assam Regiment inaugurated, Mac made adjutant
May 5 Happy Valley, Shillong, order to leave
May, c.10 Iris to Naini Tal, via Calcutta with Alan

Alan christened July 25th in Naini Tal
August-September QUIT INDIA MOVEMENT ACTIVE
6th September. Iris operation
Mac Welsh Mission Hospital, September
October, Iris leaves Alan with Granny and goes to Shillong, Mac in hospital recovering.
Sept. and October . Iris and Mac very ill with appendicitis
29th September - Iris to Shillong
23 October. BATTLE OF EL ALAMEIN
November 1942 BATTLE OF STALINGRAD
Christmas, Richard and Billy also at Agra for Christmas

1943

Mac another operation, Shillong, c. 11 Jan.
March Orders for 2nd Battalion Assam Regiment, with Mac, to move to Ranipet near Madras
12 May AXIS SURRENDER IN AFRICA
3 September ITALY SURRENDERS

1944

January LENINGRAD RELIEVED
April 1st Fiona born (in Quetta)
March to July BATTLES OF IMPHAL AND KOHIMA
6 June D-DAY NORMANDY LANDING
25 AUGUST - PARIS LIBERATED

1945

8 May VICTORY EUROPE DAY
May RANGOON RETAKEN BY BRITISH
8 May GERMANY SURRENDERS, VE DAY
6 August ATOMIC BOMB DROPPED ON HIROSHIMA
10 August JAPAN SURRENDERS, VJ DAY

1946

June 3rd Anne born
16th August. to Mohokutie T.E., Assam. – arrived c. end July 1946.
Left for England in March 1947

ENDNOTES

Particularly valuable sources for both the text and notes are the following.

Peter Steyn, *The History of the Assam Regiment*, vol. 1(1959)

Christopher Bayly, 'The Nation Within': British India at War 1939-1947, *Raleigh Lecture* at the British Academy, 2003.

The Indian Army Lists (1940-5), as well as other materials, can be found at:
www.britishmilitaryhistory.co.uk

¹Iris, aged sixteen, and her mother (with two dogs) left London on the "Strathaird" for Bombay on 25th March 1939.

²Naini Tal in the Kumaon hills of Uttarakhand was a British hill station, the summer headquarters of Eastern Command of the Indian Army. Iris's father, Lt.-Col. William Rhodes James, was from November 1938 Deputy Director Military Lands and Cantonments and was based there in Summer and at Bareilly in the plains in Winter. At this time Iris and her parents were staying at a lodge at the Royal Hotel.

Pre-war, India Command was divided into four commands, each headed by a General or Lieutenant General, namely: Northern, Southern, Eastern and Western. Eastern Command covered the north-central, and north-eastern provinces of British India, and several Princely states. It was a Lieutenant General or General's appointment, with a full staff of personnel at Command Headquarters, which were located at Naini Tal. Later, as the Japanese Army advanced up through Burma, it was necessary to change the status of the command to an operational command tasked with defending the eastern frontier of India, therefore, it was re-designated as the Eastern Army on the 13 April 1942, with its headquarters located at Ranchi.

³A school friend in England.

⁴Rosamond Mary Tyndale-Biscoe was born 1912 at Broxford, England. She was the daughter of Lt.-Col. Arthur Annesley Tyndale-Biscoe and Emily Beatrice Duff. She married Lt.-Col. Reginald John Felix Milanese, son of Juan Henke Milanese, on 17 April 1940 at Peshawar.

⁵Rail junction before Delhi where the branch line went up to Katcodahn.

⁶Major-General Ian Macpherson Macrae, (1882-1956) C.I.E., O.B.E., M.B., Indian Medical Service, Honorary Physician to The King, Deputy Director of Medical Services, Eastern Command.

⁷Lt.-Col. G.D. Jameson, Royal Army Medical Corps, Asst. Dir. of Hygiene and Pathology, Eastern Command.

⁸Boys' boarding school established 1869.

⁹Lt.-Col. Gordon West Hodgen (1894-1968) Royal Indian Army Service Corps, on the Unattached list.

¹⁰British film (1938) starring George Formby.

¹¹Major John Ralph Willoughby Curtois (1897-1970). As Acting Lt.-Col he was appointed to command the 103rd Heavy Anti-Aircraft Regiment, Royal Artillery on 4 July 1940.

¹²Lt.-Col. Charles Sydney William Rayner bn. 1890, Dep. Judge Advocates General A. Hdqrs. Circuit.

¹³Maj-Britt Malmstrom, born 1919. Her father, David, was an engineer according to the ship manifests in which are recorded several sailings to and from England to India. The family were all recorded as Swedish.

¹⁴Major J.H. Whalley-Kelly, South Lancs. Regt., Eastern Command, Dep. Asst. Adjt.-Gen. from, 1.1.39.

¹⁵All Saints' College, Naini Tal, founded in 1869 as the Diocesan Girls' High School. In 1892 All Saints' Sisters', an Anglican religious order took charge of the school and its name was changed.

¹⁶A type of palanquin.

¹⁷Whalley-Kelly

¹⁸Government House was built in 1899 as the residence of the Governor of North West Province. The Golf Course was built in 1936. It also had a garden and swimming pool. Sir Harry Graham Haig KCSI CIE (1881-1956) was Governor from 1934- 7th December 1939.

¹⁹Barbara Horton, born 15th April 1922, daughter of Ralph Albert Horton, Esq., C.I.E., Inspector-General of Police, Uttar Pradesh and his wife Mabel.

²⁰Capt. John E.B. Freeman, Aide de Camp to the Governor, Sir Harry Graham Haig.

²¹See later 'Boon'

²²Possibly Martha Helen Godwin who was the only daughter of Lt.-Col. G.W. Godwin. She was born in Murree, Punjab, in 1912.

²³Capt. Alexander Morrison Pugh (1912-1968), M.B., Royal Army Medical Corps, based at Naini Tal. 1st Comm. and present rank 25-4-35. He married Isabella Smith Fraser (Lala) Hay (1914-1986) in London in November 1935.

²⁴Lt. Richard Cleave Simon bn. 1916, joined 5.4.1938 17 Dogra R. On the Unattached List July 1940. Died 25th June 1942 in Iraq. Buried in the Basra War Cemetery.

²⁵May be an error for Santa Faulkner, nee Lillicrop who married Major Gilbert Faulkner Faulkner in Bombay in 1936.

- Major Faulkner was born in 1897 and was in the 8th Punjab Regiment. He was in the unattached list in July 1940 but noted as 2nd in command of the regiment 22 January 1940.
- ²⁶Maureen Baird, daughter of of Gen. Sir H.B. Douglas Baird, General Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Eastern Command, twin sister of Niall.
- ²⁷2nd. Lt. Niall Caldecott Baird, Aide-de-Camp to his father, General Baird.
- ²⁸George Alan James Boon, bn. 1912. Indian Police. Joined the service in U.P. in November 1933. Aide de Camp to Sir Maurice Hallett, when he became Governor of U.P. 7th December 1939..
- ²⁹Hugh Dunstan Holwell Rance, bn. 1912. 1st Commission 1932 1st Gurkha Rifles. July 1940, Indian Political Service.
- ³⁰Book written by Lady Ethel Mary Boileau published in 1932.
- ³¹Yvonne de Hamel bn. 1921 daughter of Felix Curzon de Hamel and Miriam Ella Stewart Blane (the daughter of Captain Gilbert Gordon Blane and Mabel Augusta Stewart). She went to Sydney, Australia, with her mother in 1934 (both domiciled in Scotland) and to India in October 1938, alone.
- ³²The Venerable Henry Wilmot Stapleton Cotton (1894-1979), Senior Chaplain, Archdeacon of Lucknow, Naini Tal.
- ³³American musical starring Deanna Durbin (1939).
- ³⁴Major Lawrence Edward Lockhart Maxwell (1901-1975). Hodson's Horse, General Staff Officer, Eastern Command.
- ³⁵A hill station north of Naini Tal, headquarters of the Kumaon Regiment since 1869.
- ³⁶Apsley Cherry-Garrard's memoir of Scott's Antarctic expedition.
- ³⁷Upat, a viewing point 5km from Ranikhet.
- ³⁸Major-General Francis Lothian Nicholson (1884-1953) 17th Dogra Regt.
- ³⁹There were four Niblett brothers, all born in India, three were in the Army in India Reserve of Officers in July 1940, all with the rank of Captain. The fourth brother was listed in the H.Q. of the Army in India, Adjutant General's Branch without army rank. Not only were they all born in India but so was their father and grandfather.
- ⁴⁰Col. F.J. Biddulph, M.C., British Service., Royal Engineer, (Ty. Col). (In list of officers of and above the rank of Colonel). Indian Army list July 1942.
- ⁴¹Military Engineer Services.
- ⁴²School friends
- ⁴³American author Louis Bromfield, published 1937
- ⁴⁴Peter Graham Haig son of Sir Harry Graham Haig, born at Benares in 1920, died in New Zealand 2008
- ⁴⁵American film 1938
- ⁴⁶Margaret 'Margot' Evelyn Crawford Boyd was born 2nd August 1916, daughter of Thomas Crawford Boyd (1886-1967) and Dora neé Godsall. Her father was a Colonel in the Indian Medical Service where he was first listed in 1908. He married in 1915 and he and his wife were in India until their final return to England in May 1945.
- ⁴⁷Bluebirds were the equivalent in India to Brownies as the junior branch of the Girl Guide movement.
- ⁴⁸Girls' school founded in 1882. Moved to Smugglers Rock Estate and reconstructed in 1887.
- ⁴⁹Harold Henry Berridge, Eastern Command, Ordnance , C.O.M.E. since 1-4-39. Married Elizabeth A. Rogers in 1922. His wife had travelled back to India in January 1939.
- ⁵⁰Cynthia and Noreen daughters of John Patrick Nicholson and Maria Angeliki Diamantopoulos. Cythia was born in 1912 and Noreen in 1916. Their father was born in India as was his father. He was a Magistrate according to the manifest when they all returned to India from London 23-12-38. According to the Registers of Employees of the East India Company and India Office: Nicholson, John Patrick, United Provs., (Mag. and Collr.) bn. 14th Jan. 1888 - joined the service 22nd June 1907; dep. collr. Apr. 1911; offg. mag. and collr., May, 1931; confd. 1934.
- ⁵¹Major A. Bennetts, bn. 1900, Eastern Command, Staff Officer, Royal Engineers, 3rd grade.
- ⁵²Elizabeth H. Harris, daughter of Rev. John Philip Sydney Harris and Laetitia neé Symington, of Clenchwarton, Norfolk. Born 1918.
- ⁵³British film 1938
- ⁵⁴Play by J.B. Priestley published 1938.
- ⁵⁵Hugh Arbuthnot Inglis (1890-1948), Indian Police Superintendent. He married Sylvia Stewart Blane in 1922. She was younger sister of Yvonne de Hamel's mother.
- ⁵⁶British film 1939
- ⁵⁷Buchanan
- ⁵⁸Major William Charles Likeman (1883-1960) and wife Eileen neé Pike (1909-1976). Major Likeman, Special Appointment, Eastern Command, as Education Officer from 14-4-1939.
- ⁵⁹Capt. Ian Connail Anthos Lauder, Eastern Command, General Staff Officer, 3rd Grade since 17-7-39. 5 Mahratta L.I. Bn 1904, married Ethel Eileen Hickman Barnes at Coonoor, Madras, 8th February 1932. He died in Jamaica, West Indies in 1962
- ⁶⁰Maharaja Bahadur Pateshwari Prasad Singh (1914-1964). In 1932 he married Maharani Rajya Laxmi Kumari Devi (1918-1999), daughter of HH Maharaja Chandra Shumsher Jung Bahadur Rana of Nepal. Balrampur House was built in the 1890s as the summer palace of the former Maharajas of Balrampur. In 1930, the property was rebuilt by Mr. Mortimer, a popular European Architect. He redesigned the property in the style of a French Chateau.
- ⁶¹Blairs' home.
- ⁶²Temporary Brigadier Arthur Victor Trocke Wakely, (1886-1959). R.E., Eastern Command General Staff from 6-2-1938. In 1913 he married Ruby Clone Jellett, daughter of Judge John Wakely and in 1919 changed his name by Deed Poll to Wakely from Robinson.

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- ⁶³Bhowali, 11km. from Naini Tal where there was a T.B. Sanatorium established in 1912.
- ⁶⁴Rev. Henry Wilmot Stapleton Cotton married Elaine Christine Isabel Iredale in 1923.
- ⁶⁵American film 1937
- ⁶⁶Hony. Capt. A.K, Nehru, Military Estates Officer, Cantonment Dept. from 23-212-39 Benares Cantonment.
- ⁶⁷American film 1939
- ⁶⁸American film 1938
- ⁶⁹Stella's nickname.
- ⁷⁰Mrs Barbara Donaldson. Born in United Provinces c1910; married John Coote Donaldson, I.C.S. who served in U.P. 1920-46 and was Secretary to Governor 1939
- ⁷¹Berkeley Square, American film 1933
- ⁷²Frederick Randolph Stockwell, Indian Police. Assistant Superintendent U.P. from November 1936. bn. c1915.
- ⁷³American film 1938
- ⁷⁴American film 1938
- ⁷⁵Lt.-Col. George William Godwin (1886-1960) Assistant Director of Veterinary Services, R.A.V.C., Eastern Command, from 3rd February 1936. His successor, Lt.-Col. F.B. Hayes took over from him 3rd February 1940.
- ⁷⁶Maj. H.M. Gillespie, Deputy Assistant Adjutant-General, Eastern Command, from 1st August 1939.
- ⁷⁷Lt.-Col. Harold Henry Daw, (1885-1959). Staff Officer, Royal Engineers, 1st grade, from 14th November 1938. He married Amelia Gertrude Jane Hitching in October 1908 in Thanet, Kent. He then married Joan Frances Cecil Northcott nee Muntz on 3 December 1942 in Westminster, Middlesex. Her first husband died 1937.
- ⁷⁸Possibly G.B. Hobson The Welch Regiment, Territorial Army, 2nd Lt., first commission 13th July 1938.
- ⁷⁹Capt. Austen Maxwell Best, M.R.C.S., bn. 1912, first commission 1st January 1939, I.M.H., Lansdowne
- ⁸⁰Kinhead, Miss I.E. A.R.R.C. Queen Alexandra's Imperial Military Nursing Service. Principal Matron:Date of present rank 30-8-38 Date of compln. of Indian tour or age of retmt. 13-5-42. Naini Tal.
- ⁸¹American film 1938
- ⁸²2nd-Lt. Ian William Pitcairn-Campbell (1918-1978), Royal Welch Fusiliers. [arrived in India 4th December 1938, from Sudan] First commission 25th August 1938.
- ⁸³The highest peak near Naini Tal.
- ⁸⁴Not possible to identify any of these photos
- ⁸⁵British film 1935
- ⁸⁶Lt. Michael H. Mullholland, Oxfordshire and Buckingham Light Infantry (arrive in India March 1922) First Commission 30-1-36, date of rank 3-10-39.
- ⁸⁷British film 1938
- ⁸⁸Brig. George Burton Henderson, bn. 6-7-90. Comdr. 8th Indian Inf. Bde. Ty. Brig., 7 Sep. 1939. Unattd. [Unattached to a specific regiment at first.] List July 1940. Married Muriel Edmiston 23rd June 1915 from whom he was divorced. He was then a Lt. 16th Sikhs. He died 1st August 1940 at Bareilly leaving a widow, Mary Barbara Regine Henderson. Their daughter, Barbara Mary married Lt. George Frederic Walker, Westminster Dragoons, at Camberley 1st February 1941.
- ⁸⁹Bertram Hutchinson Ormaston, Forest Officer, bn. in India in 1895. Married Ethel Hall in Oxford in 1920 and joined the Indian Forest Service in December 1920. They went to India together in 1921.
- ⁹⁰Philip Herbert Joseph Measures, C.B.E. (1893-1961) Superintendent of Police. Joined the service in 1913. He died in the Isle of Man. Administration to his widow, Lady Muriel Clarice Measures.
- ⁹¹Bt. Col. Frederick Paston James Williams, bn. 1888, R.A. Eastern Command, Asst. Dir. of Ordnance Services. 1-4-39 Contr. of Army Clothing Supplies, Army Hdqrs.
- ⁹²Capt. M. Darell-Brown, Adj. Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry. First Commission 28-8-30, date of rank 28-8-38.
- ⁹³52nd Sikhs - 12th Frontier Force?
- ⁹⁴American film 1939
- ⁹⁵Major Bertram Edwin Hallett (1896-1959), Eastern Command, Deputy Adjutant Quartermaster General's Staff from 5-5-39. He married Lillian Taylor Jefferson in 1926. She was born 1897. They left Liverpool for India 8 Apr 1939. She returned alone Jan 1948.
- ⁹⁶This passage about Glad Hallett makes no sense.
- ⁹⁷2nd Lt. Robert Hornsby-Wright. 1st Commission 21-1-37. Lt. (acting Capt.) 28-1-40. Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry.
- ⁹⁸2nd Lt. R.J.N. Bartlett. 1st Commission and date of rank 3-7-39. Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry.
- ⁹⁹The Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry.
- ¹⁰⁰Unattd. Lt. Raymond Clive Murphy, bn. 4-5-12, Appt. Indian Army 4-11-33. 10 Baluch Rgt. (Noted as an Interpreter, higher standard Pashto.)
- ¹⁰¹British film 1938
- ¹⁰²American film 1939
- ¹⁰³Capt. Austin Bernard Dempsey, (1911-1975) F.R.C.S. Royal Army Medical Corp, 1st Com. 28-10-35, July 1940 Ranikhet, Jan. 1941 Bareilli.. 19-9-46, Col. (actg) Mentioned in recognition of gallant and distinguished service in Burma. Promoted from Major to Lt.-Col. 13-12-49. No marriage found.
- ¹⁰⁴Ordnance Clothing Factory Shahjahanpur has a very old historical background. In the year 1879, Sir Ashley Eden,

- Lt. Governor of Bengal founded 3 clothing factories in Bombay, Alipur and Madras for stitching of garments. In the year 1914, a part of the Alipur factory was shifted to Shahjahanpur on an experimental basis for 1 year and named as Army Clothing Factory Shahjahanpur. In the year 1925 the entire Alipur Factory was closed and work was permanently transferred to Shahjahanpur.
- ¹⁰⁵ Edyth Webster wife of Cyril Heathcock Webster bn. 9-4-90. Army of India Reserve Officer. Two ships' manifests described him as an opium officer.
- ¹⁰⁶ Elaine Webster born c1921 made several crossings between Britain and India with her parents. She returned to England alone in 1947, occupation 'Teacher'.
- ¹⁰⁷ Unattd. List William Rhodes James, bn. 25-4-19 Transfer to Ind. Estt. 22-3-39. 6th Gurhka Rifles.
- ¹⁰⁸ Unattd. list Capt. Ronald Allen McConaghey bn. 21-5-12. 1st Comm. 28-1-32. 8 Punjab Regiment. 5-6-37 Ind.Poll. Serv.
- ¹⁰⁹ La Martiniere College established 1845.
- ¹¹⁰ Imambara, Lucknow.
- ¹¹¹ Unattd. List Cecil Frank Allen, bn. 28-11-18. Transfer to Ind. Estt. 22-3-39. 5th Royal Gurhka Rifles.
- ¹¹² John Frederick Willoughby Harris, Indian Police (bn. in India 19-6-12). Joined the service as proby. asst.supt., United Prov., 1-11-31; Assist. Superintendent in 1937. Died in New Zealand in 1995 and in the burial record noted as native of Darjeeling, India. "ex Indian Police Officer born 19 June 1912 died 13 November 1995. Loving husband of Ruth Lydia H. born 2 October 1906 - died 30 March 1998. Loved parents of Elizabeth and Patrick". Had left England for Sydney, Australia to settle with wife and 2 children 5-4-1949. Granted New Zealand citizenship in 1979.
- ¹¹³ Sidney Ferdinand Plew (1917-1983) listed under Indian Police, Assist. Superintendent in 1937.
- ¹¹⁴ Lt. Rollo Edward Cruwys Price (1916-1995). South Wales Borderers. 1st Commn. 30-1-36. Rank 30-1-39.
- ¹¹⁵ Lt.-Col. R.G. Lochner, M.C. South Wales Borderers. 1st commn. 5-10-10. Rank 18-3-38.
- ¹¹⁶ Maj. Roland Richardson, M.C. bn. 25-3-96. 1-7-38 & 1-4-40 Dep. Dir. of Staff Duties, Army HQ.
- ¹¹⁷ Author Ann Bridge (1932).
- ¹¹⁸ Edward Frederic Gilbert Chapman, Indian Police, (1895-1958). Joined service 1921. Superintendent, United Provinces. He married Mary S. Ferrier (aged 20) in September 1927.
- ¹¹⁹ Victor Whitehouse, Indian Police, bn. 31 May 1915, Apptd. Asst. supt., United Provs. on probation, 1st Nov. 1935. 29, 4, St. George Sq., Worcester, Indian Police, travelled from Bombay to Liverpool Aug. 1944
- ¹²⁰ Unattd. 2nd Lt. Simon Anthony Cunningham Trestrail, bn. 30-9-17. 1st Commn. 26-1-39 (Had been in the ranks 3 yrs and 12 days). 11th Sikh Regt., 4th Batt. 12-1-40. He died 16-5-1945 at Coriano Ridge, Mount Cassino, Italy.
- ¹²¹ Founded in 1862 as a result of the high demand for army and police clothing after the Mutiny. Gradually Cawnpore became the most important textile centre in Colonial India, reaching its peak during World War II. Iris wrote about this visit in her book *The Black Hole or the Makings of a Legend* (1975), p. 17. 'At the age of 16, new to India but with a family background of Indian connections stretching back to 1785, I was taken into a cotton mill in Cawnpore. Thirty years later the experience has not faded. I can remember the inferno of that room, the infernal heat, the infernal noise, the bits of cotton waste floating about to choke the men who had to sit there hour after hour in an atmosphere that we could hardly bear for five minutes. I remember going back for drinks on the shady verandah of the owners of the mill, and being told how lucky were the workers employed by them in that hellish place. To employ a man in such conditions seemed cruel enough, to call him lucky as you lounged in the beautiful house built from the sweat of his toil, gave me a pain in the pit of my stomach, a pain which rarely left me for the next twenty-five years.'
- ¹²² Possibly Herbert Hill, noted as a mercantile assistant on Bombay-bound ship's manifest July 1938. He continued to travel between England and India (later with wife and sons) by ship until the end of the 1950. Described as Co. Director.
- ¹²³ American film 1939
- ¹²⁴ Antonia White (1933)
- ¹²⁵ General H.B. Douglas Baird's nickname.
- ¹²⁶ Eileen.
- ¹²⁷ 5 miles north of the city.
- ¹²⁸ Unattd 2nd Lt. Peter Ronald Barnes Mitchell, bn. 20-2-18. Appt. to Indian Arm 13-9-39. 10th Baluch Regt.
- ¹²⁹ Unattd. Lt. Thomas Paul Greenwood bn. 13-4-15. 1st Comm. 30-1-36. Appt. to Indian Army 17-3-37. 10th Baluch Regt.
- ¹³⁰ Unattd. Lt. Alec Addison Hallilay, bn. 19-1-12. 1st Comm. 27-8-36. Appt. to Indian Army 1-11-37. 18 Royal Garhwal Rifles.
- ¹³¹ American film 1939
- ¹³² Maj. James Henry Souter, bn. 2-3-95, Rank 14-7-34. 10th Baluch Regt.
- ¹³³ Eric Walter Raynor B.A., Indian Forest Service bn. 20-9-96. Joined service as Asst. Consvr. 12-12-1923. Still listed 1937. Travelled to India with wife, Mona Dorcas (aged 32) and daughter Pauline Sylvia aged 5 in October 1930. He and Mona (aged 28!) travelled out again in October 1937 with another daughter, Daphne aged 5. Mona Dorcas Raynor and Pauline Sylvia were in the electoral roll, living in Farnham together in 1949. Mona Dorcas Raynor of Green Lane Hospital, Farnham, single woman, died 27 Feb 1956. Probate to Daphne Jill Raynor, spinster. Her age at death was given as 57. Eric died in Hindhead, Surrey, 1988. Pauline S.R. married Basil J.E. Veale in 1949.

- Daphne J. married Bernard Hamilton at East Dereham, Norfolk in 1956.
- ¹³⁴ Unattd. Capt. Charles Hubert Sanderson, bn. 27-3-11. Appt. to Indian Army 31-3-37. Indian Army Ordnance Corps, Ag. Capt. to 25-12-39. Ty. Capt 26-12-39.
- ¹³⁵ Unattd. 2nd Lt. Desmond George Barry Badham-Thornhill, bn. 16-11-17. Appt. to Indian Army 25-10-39. 2nd Punjab Regt.
- ¹³⁶ Unattd. Lt. Edward Rowan Knyvet Humphries, bn. 6-9-16. Appt. Indian Army 1-11-37. 17th Dogra Regt.
- ¹³⁷ Lt. Col. Robert Reginald Balfour McLean (1892-1964) (supy. list). Dy. Asst. Director, Mily. Lands & Cantts. (under Defence Dept.) Special appointment from 22-10-39. bn. 5-11-92. Karachi to Liverpool arr. 24-2-1938 with wife Ida Mary and daughter Eileen Mary (aged 18). Eileen married Thomas Richard Wegulin 27-9-1945 at Secunderabad, India.
- ¹³⁸ Maj.-Gen. John Stuart Marshall. Eastern Command. Dep. Adjutant and Quarter-Master-General 17-3-38. bn. 24-2-83. 1st com. 3-12-04 I.R.R.O. Married 23-3-1920 at Lucknow, Alice Deborah Cree. He and wife (aged 21) arrived in London from Bombay 13-12-1920. He died in Delhi 5-5-1944. His widow married Major Arthur John Dring, Indian Political Service, at Simla 20-3-1946.
- ¹³⁹ Unattd. Lt. Arthur John Whittingham, bn. 17-5-16. Appt. to Indian Army 19-3-37. 2nd Punjab Regt.
- ¹⁴⁰ Unattd. Capt. John Raymond Louis Denis Brett bn. 2-4-10. Appt. Indian Army 24-11-35. Royal Garhwal Rifles. [He reached the rank of Lt. Col. and after the war joined the Colonial Service in Nigeria. He died in Humberside in 1993.]
- ¹⁴¹ Unattd. Capt. Phillip Geoffrey William Miller Coke bn. 8-8-11. 1st com 27-8-31. Appt. Indian Army 25-10-32. 18 Royal Garhwal Rifles.
- ¹⁴² Unattd. Oliver Brian Masters North bn. 20-8-09. Appt Indian Army 1-11-30. 17 Dogra Regt. (M.C., Capt, Ag. Maj. 18-4-43)
- ¹⁴³ Unattd. William Saffery Cooper bn. 17-1-03. Appt Indian Army 15-10-24. Poona Horse.
- ¹⁴⁴ John and Maria, parents of Noreen and Cynthia.
- ¹⁴⁵ Jheel - a sheet of water or lake replenished by monsoon rain.
- ¹⁴⁶ McLean
- ¹⁴⁷ Paternal grandmother May neé Herklots died at Guildford, Surrey 21st May 1939.
- ¹⁴⁸ Possibly Mair E. Jones, 27, beauty specialist, left Liverpool for Bombay 18-10-36.
- ¹⁴⁹ Possibly the wife of Maj. Alan Whiteside, bn. 12-3-97. 2nd Punjab Reg. 26-10-39 transferred as Dep. Assist. Adjt. Gen. Northern Command.
- ¹⁵⁰ Unattd. Lt. George Allen Coombe bn. 7-6-17. Appt. Indian Army 6-10-38. 10th Baluch Regt.
- ¹⁵¹ Maj. Jaswant Rai Dogra, M.D. bn. 9-6-08 1st Com. 15-11-30 Indian Medical Service; date of rank 25-8-39. May-40 M.H. Secunderbad.
- ¹⁵² Mr. Gerald. James Hoodwerf, bn. 8-10-18. Indian Police, travelled from Liverpool to Bombay 5th Nov. 1938. Died Dec. 2002 at Tunbridge Wells. [Letter from him in the St. Joseph's, North Point, Darjeeling, school magazine for 1940 (p. 32) which indicates that he was at the school in 1930. It also confirmed that he was an Asst. Superintendent of Police, stationed at Jhansi, U.P.]
- ¹⁵³ Unattd. Maj. Ernest Rupert Ridley bn. 22-5-97. 6th Rajputana Rifles, 2nd Batt. 2nd-in-Comd. 17-1-38.
- ¹⁵⁴ Unattd. 2nd Lt. Anthony Francis Vernon bn. 5-4-19. 1st Comn. 1-7-39 12th Frontier Force Regt., 1st Batt.
- ¹⁵⁵ Unattd. Lt. Peter Evans Campbell bn. 7-4-17. Appt. Indian Army 28-4-39. 10th Baluch Regt.
- ¹⁵⁶ Unattd. 2nd Lt. Michael Andrew Innes Cowan bn. 18-4-20 1st Comn. 3-7-39. 12th Frontier Force Regt., 1st Batt.
- ¹⁵⁷ The tomb of Mirzā Ghiyās Beg, given the title of I'timād-ud-Daulah (pillar of the state), is often regarded as a draft of the Taj Mahal.
- ¹⁵⁸ Sikandra.
- ¹⁵⁹ Unattd. 2nd Lt. Patrick Lloyd Ker Thompson bn. 5-1-18 1st Comn. 3-8-39. Appt. to Indian Army 29-1-40 11th Sikh Regt., 2nd Royal Batt.
- ¹⁶⁰ Her mother's younger sister, Sylvia Stewart Blane, was married to Hugh Arbuthnot Inglis, a Superintendent in the Indian Police.
- ¹⁶¹ Her brother Richard then at Oxford.
- ¹⁶² H.Q. of Muttra District in the Agra Division of the United Provinces.
- ¹⁶³ Maj. Thomas Coutts Duguid (1890-1968), previously attd. Burma Rifles, and wife Margaret nee Dewar (1891-1980). Margaret returned alone from Bombay to Liverpool with wives and children, arriving 5th June 1944.
- ¹⁶⁴ Red Fort
- ¹⁶⁵ Brig. John Nicholson who planned and lead the storming of Delhi during the Indian Mutiny, dying as a result of his wounds.
- ¹⁶⁶ A restaurant near Connaught Plaza.
- ¹⁶⁷ Lt. Col. (local Col.) George Frederick Joseph Paterson, (1885-1949), Director of Military Lands and Cantonments, Defence Dept. from 2-7-35. Married Janet Ada neé Beavor, father of Xenia born 1919.
- ¹⁶⁸ British film 1939
- ¹⁶⁹ Minaret
- ¹⁷⁰ Joan Horan-Brown bn. 1921, daughter of Lt. Col. Hubert Horan-Brown, M.B. Directorate of Medical Services (1886-1976) and his wife, Doris.
- ¹⁷¹ American film 1939

- 172 Mary Webb (1924).
- 173 Maj. Ernest Henry Powell Mallinson, bn. 14-6-98, 1st Comn. 31-1-18; date of rank 1-8-38; from Special Unemployed list - 17th Dogra Regt.
- 174 Lt. Bruce A.E. Maude, R.E., 1st Comn. 30-1-36 King George V's Own Bengal Sappers and Miners. Present Appt. 1-9-39 6A. Tps. Coy.
- 175 Lt. Richard W. Horne 1st Comn. 1-2-35, rank 1-2-38. South Lancashire Regt. (The Prince of Wales's Volunteers).
- 176 Lt Frederick C.S. Hipwood 1st Comn. 2-2-33, rank 2-2-36. South Lancashire Regt. (The Prince of Wales's Volunteers).
- 177 Capt. I. St. Q., 1st Comn. 30-8-26 R. Signals. date of rank 30-8-37. Indian State Forces.
- 178 American film 1938
- 179 Likeman
- 180 General Baird
- 181 Lt. A.H.S. Northcote, 1st Comn. 27-8-36, date of rank 27-8-39. South Lancashire Regt. (The Prince of Wales's Volunteers).
- 182 Unattch. 2nd Lt. Dennis Douglas Wallace Dunlop. bn. 23-1-19. 1st Comn. 26-1-39. Appt. Indian Army 2-1-40. 18th Royal Garhwal Rifles.
- 183 British film 1938
- 184 British film 1939
- 185 British film 1938
- 186 Maj. James Aloyius Guinee, bn. 27-10-95, 1st Comn. 28-8-17; 21-12-35 D.A.D.T., Meerut Dist. Royal Indian Army Service Corps. Formerly Royal Sikhs Regt.
- 187 Unattch. Denys Ford Wharry, bn. 3-11-19, Appt. Indian Army 29-1-40 2nd Punjab Regt., 1st Batt.
- 188 British film 1939
- 189 Budaun is a town about 49km from Bareilly
- 190 Unattch. 2nd Lt. Frank William Mason bn. 21-9-16. Appt. Indian Army 29-1-40 2nd Punjab Regt., 1st Batt.
- 191 American film 1939
- 192 Lt. Edward March, 1st Comn 20-3-32, Qr.-Mr., 1-1-39. 18th Royal Garhwal Rifles, 11th Batt.
- 193 Harris
- 194 Whitehouse
- 195 Margaret, daughter of Tennant and Gladys Hope Sloan. [Tennant Sloan, Esq., C.S.I., C.I.E., Indian Civil Service, Adviser to His Excellency the Governor of the United Provinces. Knight Commander of the Order of the Indian Empire (KCIE). 1942 New Year Honours]. Apart from a number of earlier arrivals in India as a young child, the most recent was in October 1937 when she was aged 18 and travelling alone.
- 196 Frederick Randolph Stockwell, (1914-1999), Assist. Superintendent, Indian Police from c1934.
- 197 Veronica Devonport Rice possibly daughter of Lt. Col. Henry James Rice bn. 20-10-94, Dep. Assist. Dir. Med. Services, Southern Command.
- 198 Unattch. Maj. Hugh Oliver Wilson Fowler, bn. 13-3-99' 1st Comn. 27-10-17, Trans. to Indian Estate 27-10-35. 18th King Edward VII's Own Cavalry.
- 199 American film 1937
- 200 Capt. James William Bowden, M.B, bn. 16-11-02, 1st Comn. 20-10-32, Rank 1-5-34 Civil Surgeon, Ganjam, Orissa. Indian Medical Service.
- 201 Presumably dress.
- 202 Characters in 'Gone with the Wind'.
- 203 American film 1939
- 204 Punjabi word for the common raddish.
- 205 Engaged to David Jardine Paterson
- 206 2nd Lt. Gerald Noel Morton Bray, supernumerary, United Provinces Horse (Southern Regt.), 3-1-40 A.D.C. to Governor of United Provinces.
- 207 American film 1939
- 208 American film 1935
- 209 American film 1939
- 210 Unattch. Lt. Peter Evans Campbell bn. 7-4-17, 1st Comn. 28-1-37, Trans. Indian Army 28-4-39 10th Baluch Rgt.
- 211 British film 1939
- 212 Maj. Arthur De Burgh Morris (bn. 11-12-02), 1st Comn. 31-8-22, Trans. Indian Est. 22-2-36, date of rank 31-8-39 8th Gurhka Rifles. Staff Capt. A. & T. Forces. Eastern Command.
- 213 Unattch. 2nd Lt. John Hooker Thistleton-Dyer, bn. 26-5-20, 1st Comn. 3-7-39 10th Baluch Regt.
- 214 No name looks likely in the South Lancashire Regt. list for July 1940.
- 215 Eleanor [Clarissa Percy, bn. 1905] wife of Capt. Eric Lawton Sumner, bn. 15-8-01, Army in Indian Reserve of Officers, called to Army Service 20-11-39. Indian Signal Corps.
- 216 Betty, daughter of Lt. Gen. C.N.F. Broad who was taking over from Baird as the head of Eastern Command from 1-4-40.
- 217 Unattch. Lt. Gen. John Parke Fullerton, bn. 8-9-94, 1st Comn. 14-1-14, Trans. to Indian Estt. 5-3-14, date of rank 6-12-27. Apptd. Commandant 21-10-38, 17th Dogra Regt., 3rd Batt.

- 218 Unattch. Lt. William Hugh Macdonald Lane, bn. 25-8-16, 1st Comn. 27-8-36, Appt. to Indian Army 1-11-37 10th Baluch Regt.
- 219 2nd Lt. J.K. Henderson, R.A., date of rank 24-8-39. A.D.C. to G.O.C.in C, Eastern Command.
- 220 Queen Alexandra's Imperial Military Nursing Service.
- 221 Emy Elizabeth, bn. 22-6-89 in Sweden. Wife of David F. bn. 14-8-86 in Sweden, noted variously as mechanic, engineer and manager.
- 222 British film 1940
- 223 Unattch. Lt. Edward Rowan Knyvet Humphries, bn. 6-9-16, 1st Comn. 27-8-36, Trans. Indian Army 10-10-36, rank 27-11-38 17th Dogra Regt. 3rd Batt.
- 224 American film 1939
- 225 Coarse silk.
- 226 American film 1939.
- 227 Unattach. Lt John Arthur Gregory Buss, bn. 10-10-14, 1st Comn. 2-2-34, Appt. Indian Army 11-3-35, rank 3-5-36 3rd Gurkha Rifles - Indian Poll. Service.
- 228 Patricia Joan Bailey was born on 28 July 1921 in Naini Tal, Uttaranchal, India, to Gertrude (Topsy) Stuttard, age 31, and William Alfred Bailey, age 33. Her father was in the Indian Forest Service.
- 229 Lord Peter Wimsey was the sleuth in a series of detective stories by Dorothy L, Sayers.
- 230 Character in the novel 'Rebecca' by Daphne du Maurier.
- 231 Daughter of Lt. Col. Cecil Hungerford Jackson, Recruiting Officer at Rawalpindi. She was born c1920.
- 232 Capt. (ag. Maj.) R.A.G. Nicholson, R.E. Attached to staff, Eastern Command from 21-4-40..
- 233 Col. (temp. Brigadier) Edward Lionel Farley. Chief Engineer, Eastern Command from 23-12-39
- 234 To the east of the lake.
- 235 Unattch. Capt. Arthur Grant Chitty, bn. 16-4-08, 1st Comn 2-2-28, date of rank 2-2-37 10th Baluch Regt.
- 236 Wife of Capt. Rupert Crowdy (1910-2017) of the 17th Dogra Regt. They had married in Ceylon in November 1939. Norah (c1915-2006).
- 237 American film 1939.
- 238 Margaret P., daughter of Capt William Thomas Clyde bn. 28-3-95, 1st comn 10-4-15, married Phyllis Amy Booker 19-6-1920 in India. Retd. list 31-7-33 to 2-9-39. (bt. Maj. 3-9-39 Indian Regular Reserve of Officers, inf.). His wife and two daughters, Margaret 18 and Anne 10, came out to India from Southampton 28-11-1939.
- 239 Bhowali, 11km from Naini Tal.
- 240 Government House.
- 241 Gladys Constance Mabel neé Veasey, wife of Sir Maurice Hallett, Governor of United Provinces.
- 242 Unattch. Brig. Wilmot Gordon Hilton Vickers, bn. 8-6-90, 1st comn. 29-1-10, com. Allahabad Area 1-7-34, ty. Brig 5-7-39. He married Mary Catherine Nuttall in India in 1923. She apparently died in Cheltenham in August 1938.
- 243 Lt. Col. John Parke Fullerton, bn. 8-9-94, trans. Indian Army 6-12-37 17th Dogra Regt., appt. Commandant 21-10-38.
- 244 Voluntary Aid Detachment
- 245 Capt. Leonard Joseph Kewley (1908-1995) 8th Punjab Regt. married Isabella Macdonald Fraser (1907-1989) 26th June in Naini Tal.
- 246 Hugh Arbuthnot Inglis, Superintendent, Indian Police. His wife, Sylvia, was Yvonne de Hamel's aunt.
- 247 American film 1939.
- 248 Unattch. 2nd Lt. Richard Lawrence McKinley, bn. 6-12-18, 1st comn. 26-1-39, 3-1-40 16th Punjab Regt.
- 249 Another hill station, c63km N.E. of Naini Tal.
- 250 Lt. Christopher T. Vesey, R.A. 1st comn. 27-8-36, date of rank 27-8-39, 83rd F. Bty.
- 251 American film 1939
- 252 Possibly error for Dinkeldein. (John K.) Suptd. Survr. of works, Eastern Command from 1-4-40.
- 253 2nd Lt. J.R. Griffin, 1st comn. 27-8-38. Lincolnshire Regt. [Regt. arrived in India, 19th January 1936, from Hong Kong.]
- 254 Lt. C.J.S. Burne, 1st comn. 30-1-36, R.A., rank 30-1-39, present appt. Subaltern. 5-2-39 11th (Dehra Dun) Mountain Battery.
- 255 Unattch. Major Thomas George Atherton, bn. 31-7-00, 1st comn. 17-12-19, rank 17-12-37, Royal Deccan Horse. With 7 Lt. Cav. General Staff Officer, 3rd grade, Eastern Command. His wife was Olga Margaret bn. 1911, died in Portugal in 1961.
- 256 American film 1939
- 257 Lt. Col. John Henry Sykes, bn. 15-10-96, 1st comn. 16-12-14, Eastern Command, Supplies and Transport, 1-12-37.
- 258 Rev. Alwyn Alfred Edwin Binns. Headmaster of Sherwood College 1932-1947.
- 259 2nd Lt. A. C. Lynch-Staunton, 1st comn. 27-1-39, Queen's Royal Regt. (West Surrey) which arrived in India, Dec. 1934 from China.
- 260 Lt. Col William Rudolph Moll, bn. 22-1-94, 1st Comn. 4-1-14, rank 14-1-40, 16th Punjab Regt. 4th Batt.
- 261 Each pays own bill.
- 262 Unattch. Lt. Kenneth Gough Breaks, bn. 21-12-09, 1st comn. 30-8-34, rank 30-11-36, 9th Jat Regt
- 263 Period
- 264 Lauder

- 265 Lt. Col. J.W.C. Stubbs, 1st comn. 30-1-14, rank 26-9-35, date completed tour 16-9-40, Royal Army Med. Corps.
- 266 E.C. (Emergency Commission) 2nd Lt. Miles Milward Bason, bn. 27-6-06, comn. & rank 25-6-40, 4th Bombay Grenadiers.
- 267 Capt. Charles Graham Parbury, bn. 4-2-05, 1st comn. 29-8-29, Trans. Indian Est. 10-2-36, rank 1-8-38 13th Duke of Connaught's own Lancers, 26-3-40 Indian Cavalry Training Centre, Light Tank Wing officer. Married Frances Josephine Parker in Spring 1939.
- 268 Michael Hadrill [John Michael Wallace-Hadrill (1916-1985)] whom she first met at Oxford 27th April 1938. This reference in her diary reads: "...We had a nice drive to Oxford arriving about 4. We dropped Mr.C. and went off to have tea with Michael Hadrill. In spite of all my resolutions I was as shy and tongue-tied as ever, but he is awfully nice. My tongue loosened a bit afterwards and he really is a dear." The link is Bromesgrove School where Wallace-Hadrill's father was a master and so was Ernest Mashiter, a close family friend. 4th May 1938 they were again in Oxford.... "We met Mummy and Richard at the Martyrs' Memorial after going over Keble and a few other colleges. They were all charming. We saw "Light of World" original. Michael Hadrill came to tea. He and Mummy got on very well together. I wonder if he likes me. I like him awfully. He's so completely un-snobbish. I hope I go to Bromsgrove when he's there sometime...".
- 269 Youngest brother, Robert Vidal, as described in the early life of Iris, above.
- 270 Bath ready [Urdu]
- 271 David Jardine-Paterson noted in manifest of "Strathnaver" leaving Southampton for India 26th July 1940, aged 26. of Balgray, Lockerbie, Merc. Asst. He was born 3-5-1914 and died in 1971.
- 272 Bishop of Lucknow, Rt. Rev. Sydney Alfred Bill (1884-1964). He went to India as a probationary Chaplain in 1911 in the same year as he married Margaret Alice Ford (1886-1955).
- 273 She married John Buss.
- 274 Unattd. Lt. William Roxburgh Howson, bn. 3-6-14, 1st comn. 30-8-34, rank 30-11-36. 6th Gurkha Rifles - Indian Police Service, (Ag. Capt to 1-2-40, ty. Capt 2-2-40).
- 275 Named after Sir Henry Ramsay (1816-1893), Commissioner of Kumaon.
- 276 American film 1936
- 277 Geoffrey Alexander Haig, (1909-1986) son of Sir Harry Graham Haig and Violet May, baptised at Mussoori. I.C.S. Served in U.P. from 1931; Secretary, U.P. Dept. of Food and Civil Supplies 1946. He died in Oxted, Surrey.
- 278 Central Provinces. The town was the meeting point in 1871 for the Great Indian Peninsula Railway (616 miles from Bombay) and the East Indian Railway (220 miles from Allahabad), and the completion of the first Bombay-Calcutta trunk railway line. Had large railway workshops and the oldest Ordnance factory in Central India.
- 279 J.M. Barry, author of 'Peter Pan'.
- 280 E.C. 2nd Lt. Donald Kennedy Macfarlane, bn. 31-10-16, 1st comn. & rank 25-6-40. 4th Bombay Grenadiers.
- 281 Unattach. Lt Col. John Rochfort Armstrong Henry, bn. 20-11-90, 1st comn. 1-1-14, rank 1-10-40. Indian Inf. 4th/9th Regts. [from 27-12-40 Recruiting Officer in Delhi]
- 282 American film 1940
- 283 Ian Urquart Alexander, bn. 13-6-15, noted as civil servant in ship manifest 1948
- 284 Unattach. Capt. Jack Hamilton Gunning, bn. 5-2-07, 1st comn. 30-2-26, rank 30-8-35, appt. Indian Army 20-12-27, 4th Bombay Grenadiers. He married Judith Clowes Castle in July 1938 and they travelled together to India in October of the same year. She was ten years younger than her husband.
- 285 Mappin & Webb, the London jewellers had a branch in Bombay since the 1890s.
- 286 Cynthia Nicholson married Hugh Patrick Hearn 14th December 1940. He was Unattach. Lt. Hugh Patrick Hearn, bn. 17-3-12, 1st comn. 27-8-36, rank 27-11-38, appt. Indian Army 3-11-37 13th Frontier Force Rifles. (Ag. Capt to 8-5-40, Ty Capt, 9-5-40.)
- 287 American film 1939
- 288 A purgative.
- 289 American film 1940
- 290 George McCausland Hoey (1885-1960) was State Engineer for Jaipur. He had been resident as an engineer in India since 1907.
- 291 Generally six-inch knitted squares which could be sewn together into blankets.
- 292 E.C. 2nd Lt. James Drake Leggatt Whiteside, bn. 23-3-09, 1st comn. & rank 3-10-40. Indian Army Ordnance Corps, Ordnance Services.
- 293 Conductor. Edward Richard Daw, bn. 8-6-98, rank 21-12-38, Indian Army Ordnance Corps.
- 294 Gardener
- 295 Grassroot screen [Hobson-Jobson].
- 296 Wife of Reggie Lowe
- 297 Possibly a servant.
- 298 A servant from Blyth Cottage.
- 299 Name given to potential daughter
- 300 Ponies
- 301 Senior Chaplain, Rev Edwin Aubrey Storrs Fox (1888-1975), Indian Ecclesiastical Establishment from 1916. Married Winifred Charlotte Ida Goold in 1919.
- 302 Capt. (Dept. Commissary) James Grahame, bn. 30-8-90, 1st comn. 17-5-36, rank 21-11-38, Royal Indian Army

-
- Service Corps. Supply and Transport.
- ³⁰³ Unattch Col. Dysart Edward Whitworth, bn. 13-7-90, 1st comn. 29-1-10, Ty. Brig. 7-5-40. Married Helena Margherita Powell in London in 1916.
- ³⁰⁴ None of Mac's letters survive at this time.
- ³⁰⁵ Maj. Richard Arabin Armine Wimberley, bn. 10-5-97, 1st. comn. 9-9-15, trans Indian Est. 14-1-19, rank 28-5-34 4th Bombay Grenadiers. Married Isabel Alison Urwick in 1927.
- ³⁰⁶ British film 1940
- ³⁰⁷ A hill station established by the British as the civil station of the Khasi and Jaintia Hills in 1864. On the formation of Assam as the Chief Commissioner's Province in 1874, it was chosen as the headquarters of the new administration because of its location between the Brahmaputra River and the Surma valley, and particularly because the cool climate. Kench'e Trace was part of Laban village which was absorbed into Shillong in 1878. Hubert Kench was a British engineer who designed the narrow gauge mountain railway with the ultimate ambition of connecting Shillong to Calcutta. It was destroyed by earthquake in 1897 and never repaired.
- ³⁰⁸ E.C. 2nd Lt. Leslie Strangways Davis, bn. 7-6-12, 1st comn. & rank 15-2-41 6th Rajputana Rifles then transferred to the Assam Regt. Like Mac, was a tea planter, but not with the Assam Tea Co. Wife Joan Elizabeth bn. c1921. Leslie died in Worthing, Sussex, in 2005 and Joan, in 2008.
- ³⁰⁹ Ursula (born 1917), Sheila (born 1923). Their father was a planter in Assam.
- ³¹⁰ Railway station
- ³¹¹ Railway station.
- ³¹² Urdu word for bedding.
- ³¹³ Unattch. Maj. Ross Cosens Howman, bn. 17-7-99 (died 1976), 1st comn. 31-1-18, rank 31-1-36 8th Punjab Regt. Acting Lt. Col of newly raised Assam Regiment 5-5-41 to 13-7-41, ty. Lt Col 14-7-41. Married to Cecil Isobel Elles (1905-2004).
- ³¹⁴ Dr. H.Gordon Roberts was the founder of the hospital. He arrived in Shillong in 1913 and started work with a small dispensary at Mission Compound near the KJP Girls' High School. He started the construction of the building of the hospital in 1915 with the permission given by the government of Assam. The work was started on the edge of the town, in the part called Jaiaw where it stands to this date. The hospital was officially opened on the 25 March 1922 by the then Governor of Assam, Sir William Marris, as a 90 bed hospital and was known as the Khasi Hills Welsh Mission Hospital. Roberts was the founder and the first chief medical officer of the hospital which is still known as "Dr. Roberts Hospital" by many people.
- ³¹⁵ British Military Hospital
- ³¹⁶ Dalmatian dogs.
- ³¹⁷ Sir Robert Neil Reid, Governor of Assam 1937-42.
- ³¹⁸ Amy Helen bn. 1888, daughter of George William Disney, married Robert Neil Reid at Muzaffarpur, Bengal, 17th November 1909.
- ³¹⁹ Died 14th July at Naini Tal.
- ³²⁰ Travers Smith
- ³²¹ Pinewood Hotel was one of the oldest buildings in Shillong built by a Swiss couple during the late 19th century. It is still run as a hotel.
- ³²² The foundation stone of the 32-bed hospital was laid by Lady Keane, the then wife of the governor of composite Assam, in 1933. It was completed in 1935. Named after Ganesh Das Goenka and paid for by his family.
- ³²³ Harold George Dennehy Esq., C:S.L., C.I.E., Indian Civil Service, Chief Secretary to the Government of Assam. He married Constance Isolda Alexander in 1932.
- ³²⁴ Sir Syed Muhammad Saadulla. In post 17th November 1939 until 25th December 1941.
- ³²⁵ Archibald Percival Wavell served as Commander-in-Chief, India, from July 1941 until June 1943 and then served as Viceroy of India until his retirement in February 1947.
- ³²⁶ A chain letter claiming to raise money.
- ³²⁷ Daughter of Maj. Gen. J.S. Marshall, Adjutant-General & Quartermaster-General's Staff, Eastern Command, Naini Tal, October 1941. She was later to be Alan's godmother.
- ³²⁸ Capt. James Mottram, bn. 21-4-13, 1st comn. 2-2-35, rank 31-8-41 4th Bombay Grenadiers
- ³²⁹ E.C. 2nd Lt. James Bryan Fitzgerald Rayner, bn. 29-1-14, 1st. comn. & rank 15-11-39 (W.S. Lt. 1-6-41, Ag. Cpt to 31-5-41, Ty. Capt. 1-6-41) 4th Bombay Grenadiers
- ³³⁰ Assam oil wells.
- ³³¹ General Baird's wife died in London in 1935 so unclear who this is.
- ³³² Maj. Gen. Thomas George Gordon Heywood (1886-1943) [32-36 Military Attaché to France, 36-39 Brigadier Royal Artillery Aldershot Command, 39 Army Representative on British Military Mission to Soviets, Jun 39-40 General Officer Commanding 7th Anti-Aircraft Division, 40 Head of British Military Mission to Netherlands, Nov 40-41 Head of the British Military Mission to Greece, 15th Sep 1941 to 19th Mar 1942 District Officer Commanding Presidency & Assam District, India, Mar 42-Jun 43. He died in a plane crash on the way from Delhi to Calcutta 27th Aug 1943.]
- ³³³ Roualeyn Charles Rossiter Cumming (1891-1981), Indian Police. 1-1-41 Appointed Inspector-General of Police and Joint Sec. of the Home Dept., Govn. of Assam. Married Pauline Grace Parry c.1915.
- ³³⁴ The Anglo-Soviet invasion of Iran, also known as the Anglo-Soviet invasion of Persia, was the joint invasion

of Iran in 1941 during the Second World War by the British Commonwealth and the Soviet Union. The invasion lasted from 25 August to 17 September 1941 and was codenamed Operation Countenance.

³³⁵ Brand of toilet paper

³³⁶ E.C. 2nd Lt. Melville John Eaton Gow, bn. 28-12-20, service for promotion from 5-7-41. Assam Regt.

³³⁷ Glucose sweet

³³⁸ E.C. 2nd Lt. Andrew Lindsay Munro, bn. 7-1-10, service for promotion from 19-7-41 Assam Regt.esprit

³³⁹ E.C.2nd Lt Alexander David Cleland, bn. 30-2-18, service for promotion from 26-10-40 Assam Regt.

³⁴⁰ Inspector General of Police

³⁴¹ Capt. Lewis St. John Daly Collinson, bn. 24-8-08, service from 2-2-28 (Gloster. Regt), rank from 2-2-37 (19th Hyderabad Regt). Assam Regt.

³⁴² British Officers

³⁴³ Maj. William Felix Brown, bn. 29-1-99, 1st comn. 31-8-18, rank 31-8-36 (8th Punjab Regt.) Assam Regt. Married Isabel Eileen. [Their daughter Elizabeth Mary Boyce Brown was born in India 4-7-36]. He was killed in Burma 4th January 1945. Buried Taukkyan War Cemetery, Rangoon.

³⁴⁴ E.C. 2nd Lt. James Askew, bn. 6-10-16, 1st comn. 15-2-41 11th Sikh Regt., now Assam Regt.

³⁴⁵ Famous Italian restaurant, Chowringhee Rd. 1917-1960.

³⁴⁶ Unattch. Maj. Reginald Higgerson Lowe, bn. 1-10-01, 1st comn. 14-7-21, rank 1-8-38 9th Jat Regt., later Assam Regt. Married Marie-Antoinette Jeanne Renee Ghislaine Douxchamps in August 1937 in Belfast when she was 20. She was known as Toinon

³⁴⁷ Unattch. Capt. Graham Ross Sell, bn. 1-11-20, 1st comn. 22-10-39, rank 22-4-41 9th Jat Regt. (Ag. Capt 30-4-41, Ty Capt. 1-5-41)

³⁴⁸ Bombay Presidency, Karnatika. Officer Training Schools which closed Sept. 1939 at the outbreak of war.

³⁴⁹ E.C. 2nd Lt. Ronald Douglas Cooksey, bn. 30-5-16, service from 5-7-41 Assam Regt.

³⁵⁰ Arrangement

³⁵¹ Major Brown.

³⁵² In the St. Joseph's College at North Point, Darjeeling, school magazine for 1940, Frank Belletti of 6 Cantonments, Shillong, He was at the school in 1929.

³⁵³ Emergency Commission Officers

³⁵⁴ British film 1940

³⁵⁵ Regimental Colonel 1940–1948: Gen. Sir Harry Beauchamp Douglas Baird, KCB, CMG, CIE, DSO. The South Lancashire Regiment (The Prince of Wales's Volunteers)

³⁵⁶ Major Joseph Henry Whalley-Kelly, South Lancs. Regt.

³⁵⁷ Margaret Irwin pub. 1939

³⁵⁸ Sheila Macfarlane (1920-1991) was, like Mac, born in El Paso, Texas. She too was sent back to Scotland for school but before leaving Britain in July 1938 she had signed naturalization papers in London to become a citizen of the United States. Clearly Mac did not support her decision, nor her engagement to an American. In fact she did not marry until after 1946.

³⁵⁹ American slang: sensational.

³⁶⁰ Unattch Lt. John Halifax Patrick Sloan Emerson, bn. 28-8-18, 1st comn. 25-8-38, rank 25-11-40 4th Bombay Grenadiers (Ag. Capt. to 22-1-41, Ty. Capt 23-1-41).

³⁶¹ Cecil James Flux (1897-1969), Assam Tea Company 1918-1949. He married Marion Elizabeth Grove (1898-1976) in 1925.

³⁶² Maj. Albert George Porter, bn. 19-94, 1st Comn. 27-5-15, rank 3-2-34, 4th/9th Regts. (Ag. lc. to 1-1-40, Ty. lc. 2-1-40)

³⁶³ E.C. 2nd Lt. Bholu Sing Lama, bn. 26-7-07, Service for promotion & rank from 15-6-41 (W.S. Lt.) Assam Regt.

³⁶⁴ Morgan Besley Hatfield (1893-1967) was an engineer. He married Kathleen Everson in Bombay in 1932.

³⁶⁵ The wedding was to be in Naini Tal on 14th October. CHECK

³⁶⁶ He was promoted to Major General 23-6-41.

³⁶⁷ Elizabeth Ruth Bannatyne (1921-2012) married Ian Charles Justice R.A. in 1939 in India. They had a son born in August 1940 in Lucknow. Ian Charles Justice killed in action in Eritrea 13-2-1941 aged 24. His widow married Maj. Philip Burridge in Delhi in December 1943.

³⁶⁸ Horse

³⁶⁹ Staff College

³⁷⁰ Madras

³⁷¹ Patricia Joan Bailey married Alan Christopher Cowan (1915-1992) I.C.S. (appointed October 1938), at Naini Tal on 14th October.

³⁷² Jacqueline daughter of Sir Reginald Hugh Dorman-Smith (1899-1977) who left Liverpool for Bombay in February 1941 with his wife and two daughters, Governor Designate of Burma. The elder daughter ("J" in the manifest) was 19. She married Capt. E.T. Cook on 27th September 1941 at All Saints' Church, Maymyo, Burma.

³⁷³ American film 1940

³⁷⁴ Unattch. Major Gerald Crompton de Vere Moss, bn. 21-6-03, 1st comn. 30-8-23, date of rank 30-8-40 4th Bombay Grenadiers.

³⁷⁵ Phyllis Edna neé Yates, wife of Capt. Peter Storrs Fox, M.R.C.S., L.R.C.P. bn. 27-4-09, Date appt. & rank 3-2-41,

- E.C., Indian Medical Service, Land Forces. He was son of Noel Storrs Fox so a relative. They married in 1936 and went to India in October of the same year. Their son, Jonathan, was born 26-3-42.
- 376 Acting Lt-Col., Eastern Army.
- 377 American film 1940
- 378 Gurkha Rifles.
- 379 Lt. Col. William Reginald Bridgwater, bn. 1-4-96, date rank 15-7-40 7th Gurkha Rifles. Regimental Centre, Shillong. Married Eveline Agnes Image in 1919. He died in 1973.
- 380 Capt. John Truman Harford Morris bn. 6-8-06, rank 1-9-36 7th Gurkha Rifles. He died in 1965.
- 381 Major John Lindsay Smith, bn. 7-3-04, rank 26-8-41 7th Gurkha Rifles.
- 382 E.C. 2nd Lt. Montague Roy Deane, bn. 14-10-11 (W.S. Lt. Ag. Capt to 25-1-41, Ty. Capt. 26-11-41) 7th Gurkha Rifles. He married Janet Elizabeth Paine in 1939. Their daughter, Margaret Jane Deane, was born on 23rd February 1942.
- 383 Maj. Ian Norman Macleod, bn. 17-1-94, 1st Comn. 29-3-18, rank 20-12-36 6th Gurkha Rifles. [This was Billy's Regiment.]
- 384 Possibly Maj-Gen. Harry Macdonald (1886-1976) from 1939-40, Army H.Q., 25-1-40 to 15-1-43 District Officer commanding Meerut District.
- 385 E.C. 2nd Lt John Karl Dinkeldein bn. 1905, rank. 1-4-40. Attached to the Staff H.Q., Naini Tal. Married Vera Mabel Russell in 1934. He died in 1977.
- 386 E.C. 2nd Lt. Stanley Victor Meinhardt bn. 30-12-14, 1st comn. 1-11-41, 7th Gurkha Rifles, Regimental Centre. He married Kathleen Mary Ramsey Hughes-Hallet in 1940.
- 387 E.C. 2nd Lt. Manilal Barua, service from 15-2-41 Assam Regt.
- 388 Servants
- 389 Michael John Jardine Paterson born in Lucknow 24-2-42.
- 390 John Alan Macfarlane, bn. 20-7-18. Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve, Temporary Surgeon Lieutenants. J.A.M. M.B., Ch.B. (proby). 27-3-42.
- 391 Desmond Joliffe Tufnell Turbett bn. 10-11-23, Iris's cousin, Naval Cadet - Special Entry 1-9-42. Midshipman.
- 392 Kitchen helper
- 393 One of the hill tribes of Manipur, some of whom were recruited into the British forces, but others who hated the British Raj contacted the Indo-Japanese forces before the invasion, and later helped them.
- 394 From Burma
- 395 The Assam Railway and Trading Company laid the 65-km-long metre-gauge line between Dibrugarh and Makum collieries in Margherita to start a railway operation in 1881 for transporting tea and coal from the region to other places through the Brahmaputra Waterway.
- 396 Mr D.L. McCallum I.C.S. died at Sagaing, Burma, in early February 1942. Assistant Commissioner, Burma, 1937
- 397 Still with the 17th Dogra Regiment 18-4-43.
- 398 For benefit of Indian hospitals, members were required to supply two or more articles of linen before the middle of September each year..
- 399 Munro
- 400 Stool
- 401 American film 1941
- 402 2nd Lt. G.W. Kelley Brit. Serv.-Attd., Regtl. Centre (Service for promotion from 22-8-41) 7th Gurka Rifles.
- 403 Lt. Charles Robert Stonor, (1912-1982) Brit. Ser.-Attd. (Service for promotion from 22-6-40). Assam Regt..
- 404 Naga
- 405 Indian Military Hospital.
- 406 Bir Bikram Kishore Debbarman Manikya Bahadur GBE KCSI (1908-1947) Maharaja) of Tripura State, (also known as Hill Tipperah), south of Sylhet, west of the Lushai Hills.
- 407 Chevrolet
- 408 Cecil James. Flux (1897-1969) with Assam Tea Company 1918-1949, married Marion E. Grove 1925.
- 409 Colin David Holroyd, (1892-1948)' with Assam Tea Company 1915-1946, went to Assam as an engineer in 1915 but returned to England in 1921 as a tea planter. Returned in 1946 with wife Ruth Jane nee Wrightson (born 1912, whom he married in 1927), and daughter, Anne.
- 410 Thomas Ralston Darby, bn. 8-9-10, tea planter with Assam Tea Company since 1934, his wife was Alice Elizabeth. He was listed as a 2nd. Lt. Emergency Commission 16-3-41 but does not appear in the July 42 list.
- 411 Mechanical Transport
- 412 Probably a money lender.
- 413 Unattach. Gen. Henry Hampton Rich, bn. 30-3-91, Divisional Comdr., (Ag. Maj. Gen. 22-3-41)
- 414 James Stenhouse Elliot (1870-1953), Mac's guardian while he was at school in Scotland.
- 415 American film 1940
- 416 Lt. Denis William Daly, bn. 1895 Ireland,, married Ireland 1932 Mael Virginia Lennon. When they sailed to Toulon in 1934 he was an army captain but was not in service. Brit. Ser.-Attd. (Service for promotion from 17-8-40) Assam Regt.
- 417 In fact a month later.
- 418 Violet's diary records first visit to "Ramsay" was 1st June. On the same day she noted that Robert had chicken-pox.

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- ⁴¹⁹ Col. Edward Lionel Farley, bn. 27-7-89, 1st comn. 23-12-09, R.E., Chief Engineer. Eastern Army (Ty. Brig). Died in Devon in 1968.
- ⁴²⁰ Queen Alexandra Imperial Military Nursing Service.
- ⁴²¹ EC 2nd Lt. Peter Osmond Myers, serv. from 11-12-41 8th Gurkha Riles (Regt. Centre, Shillong)
- ⁴²² EC 2nd Lt. Richard Edgar Jenks 20-11-41 Assam Regt.
- ⁴²³ 2nd Lt. Gerald Sydney Lionel Jacobs (1920-1998) Brit. Army (The York and Lancaster Regt.) 22-2-41 Assam Regt.
- ⁴²⁴ Alice Ritchie (1930)
- ⁴²⁵ Caryl Brahms & S.J. Simon (1940)
- ⁴²⁶ Pundu port on the banks of the Brahmaputra river serving Gauhati.
- ⁴²⁷ Maureen married Colin Douglas Hunter (1914-1997) at Oxford early in 1942. He was also in The Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders and listed in the Indian Army list until October 1945.
- ⁴²⁸ No letter from Iris survives with this date.
- ⁴²⁹ Unattd list. James Alexander Rowland Robertson (S.C.) bn. 23-3-10, 1st comn. 28-8-30 6G.R. Ag. Maj. 9-9-40, Ty. Maj. 20-9-40 to 7-7-41. In Oct 1943 Army List - Captain, 6th Gurkha Rifles.
- ⁴³⁰ Assistant Quartermaster
- ⁴³¹ Lewis Strangways Davis
- ⁴³² Cargill see later ref.
- ⁴³³ British film 1941
- ⁴³⁴ Wife of William T.S. Cargill bn. 27-7-1901 in Scotland. He was a tea planter at Duflating T.E., Titabar, Jorhat. A birth notice for Alexander dates the event as 30-1-1942.
- ⁴³⁵ Phyllis Margery neé Pritchard wife of Maj. Chadwick Eckersley Thompson, bn. 15-5-00. 1st comn. 30-8-22, from 12-3-42 Deputy Judge Advocates General, Eastern Army (Naini Tal)
- ⁴³⁶ 2nd Lt. S.R. Farmer only appears in the Army List under Assam Regt. from April 1943 as Brit. Service attd. His service dates from 21-12-40. He may have come from the Gloucestershire Regt.
- ⁴³⁷ British film 1941
- ⁴³⁸ Sulfapyridine antibacterial tablets, made by May and Baker.
- ⁴³⁹ If the Japanese had invaded India after the monsoon season ended late in 1942, V Force was to harass their lines of communications with ambushes and sabotage, and to provide intelligence from behind enemy lines.
- ⁴⁴⁰ Error for Clow - Ariadne Mavis Dunderdale (1888-1968) married Andrew Gourlay Clow in 1925. He was Governor of Assam from 4th May 1942 until 4th May 1947.
- ⁴⁴¹ Lt. Col. Arthur Manus Sheridan (1901-1954) M.B. F.R.C.S. Jointed the Indian Medical Service in 1929 and was by this time civil surgeon at Naini Tal. "Being in 'residual' posts on and after the outbreak of the late war, he was frustrated in his ambition of active service and allotted the harder task of keeping the civil medical service going, which meant always double and sometimes treble the amount of work normally entailed in the positions he held....only those close to him knew with what envy he regarded his more fortunate juniors when they were recalled to military service which was denied to him" (British Medical Journal obituary)
- ⁴⁴² Mary Mitchell (1934)
- ⁴⁴³ Unattd. Capt. Rupert Crowdy Crowdy (1910-2017) 17th Dogra Regt. Served with the 1st Burma Division which was relocated to Shillong where Norah [Gwynne neé Jones], his wife, was employed in intelligence work.
- ⁴⁴⁴ Michael Anthony Crowdy Crowdy died 11th April 1942.
- ⁴⁴⁵ A.J.
- ⁴⁴⁶ Working in Delhi
- ⁴⁴⁷ Dr Stanley Farrant Russell (1903-2001) had been a medical missionary in Burma and after the Japanese invasion, in May 1942, lead a party of 24 over the Pangsha in the Naga Hills into Assam. Reunited with his wife and children in Shillong, he joined the Welsh Mission Hospital where he remained throughout the war.
- ⁴⁴⁸ The Oxford Group was an evangelical Christian organization founded by the American missionary Frank Buchman
- ⁴⁴⁹ American film 1941
- ⁴⁵⁰ Rebecca West (1918)
- ⁴⁵¹ Appetite restorative.
- ⁴⁵² Tonic of vitamins and minerals to restore health after illness.
- ⁴⁵³ Cecil Hotel
- ⁴⁵⁴ Violet's brother in law. H.Q. of the Army in India (Delhi). General Staff Officer, 1st Grade. Lt. Col. R.L. Lemon, I.R.R.O. from 2-5-42. He had retired from the army and was living in Oxford until, in November 1941, he got orders from the India Office that he was to return to duty in India.
- ⁴⁵⁵ Dr Robert Arthur Hughes (1910-1996), a well qualified surgeon with additional training in tropical medicine, came to Shillong in March 1939 and he became senior medical officer in 1942 on the retirement of the medical missionary Reverend Doctor Hugh Gordon Roberts (1885-1961), the founder of the hospital. He achieved miracles in that period, from 1942 to 1945, treating thousands of Indian, British and American wounded officers and men, who had retreated from Burma. Hughes was assisted by Khasi doctors and started the first blood bank in Shillong and introduced the latest anaesthetic machine and other facilities. Hughes raised the standards of midwifery and succeeded to a remarkable extent in eradicating malaria, and set up a travelling dispensary which later became the beginning of the Rural Health Centre movement.

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- ⁴⁵⁶ According to Violet's diary, Iris went to Delhi on 10th January to see Pat Travers-Smith, leaving Alan with Violet.
- ⁴⁵⁷ Wife of the Governor General and Viceroy of India, 1936-1943.
- ⁴⁵⁸ Possibly Lt. Harold Leonard Legry, Temporary Sub-Conductor, Indian Army Service Corps., bn. 12-7-17, date of rank 1-10-41.
- ⁴⁵⁹ EC 2nd Lt. Donald Seymour Elwell, bn. 21-6-11. 1st comn. 15-11-42 Assam Regt.
- ⁴⁶⁰ Violet's diary. 16.1 On the way to Thrift Shop was badly bitten in thigh by dog - 3 stitches.
- ⁴⁶¹ Col. H.C.D. Rankin, M.B. 1st comn. 25-7-13 Royal Army Medical Corps. (Ty. Brigr. 14-11-41). D.D.M.S., G.H.Q.
- ⁴⁶² EC 2nd Lt. Harry Vincent Douglas Langworthy, 1st comn. 4-4-42 Assam Regt.
- ⁴⁶³ EC 2nd Lt. Patrick George Bond, 1st comn. 4-4-42 Assam Regt. (W.S. Lt. 4-10-42).
- ⁴⁶⁴ Lt. Philip Ridd Helyar Slade, M.B., Royal Army Medical Corps. bn. 31-5-16, 1st comn. 1-8-40 (W.S. Capt. 1-8-41)
- ⁴⁶⁵ Pelman Inst., Clive St., Calcutta advertised "speedy language learning by the Pelman method".
- ⁴⁶⁶ Baniar = rich trader [Hobson-Jobson]
- ⁴⁶⁷ Muriel neé Selwyn, had been a missionary nurse in Burma when they married in 1934. She had been flown out of Burma with their four children in 1942.
- ⁴⁶⁸ Ernest Mashiter
- ⁴⁶⁹ In Scotland where Mac spent several holidays.
- ⁴⁷⁰ Special Service Officer
- ⁴⁷¹ Gwalior Potteries, Lashkar.
- ⁴⁷² EC 2nd Lt. Hubert Durnford Iliff, bn. 9.6.13, 6th Gurkha Rifles. With the Indian Tea Association Labour October 1945.
- ⁴⁷³ Gauhati. Mac was in a camp on the banks of the Brahmaputra. It was originally intended that they move right up to the Burma border but the Japanese capitulated in August.
- ⁴⁷⁴ Col. Edward Knyvet Steward, Royal Corps of Signals. Died in Burma 24th July 1945
- ⁴⁷⁵ Wife of Major. John.Alexander Kitson. bn. 30-5-08, 2nd King Edward VII's Own Gurkha Rifles
- ⁴⁷⁶ Anne was born 3rd June 1946.
- ⁴⁷⁷ Allied Land Force South East Asia
- ⁴⁷⁸ He arrived at Liverpool 25th December 1945.
- ⁴⁷⁹ 8th -14th January 1946
- ⁴⁸⁰ Indian National Army