

**JANUARY 1944**

Crossways Ludham Norfolk  
 Mon 10<sup>th</sup> Jan 44

Dear Billie

'M' got back here about half past one after seeing you start on the first part of your journey. Nothing special to report except some floods over the marshes. and I'm not surprised at that because there was three quarters of an inch of rain overnight and I soon found out what it was like when I tried to be digging in the garden after dinner just like playing mud pies, so you may guess that that attempt did not last long. We went to bed about 11 and 'M' remarked that you would be settled in at 23 but was not long before she shouted to me to come and look what she had found in her bed. Thank you muchly and I suppose its no good saying that you should not have done so. The bread for me was a welcome change as I had been using some which Gertie brought but I prefer my own bread.

Tues 11. 1. 44

A dull dismal day almost like Sunday but not quite so much rain and I was glad to give up the idea of a whist drive this evening but so much better satisfied to stay in the dry instead of going out in the rain. I tried a bit of digging again but soon had had enough it was so wet. Have you been looking at the leek etc seed that I had saved but found the seed difficult to get clean out of the husk. I want to test these seeds for germination early so as not to be let down at sowing-time. The leeks are two in a pod and very difficult to get clean perhaps they are not dry enough yet but they have been hanging up over the boiler in the kitchen some time now.

I wet to the village in the afternoon to get the things 'M' had ordered at Throwers and to post the books back to Smiths. Mrs Thrower told me that some men had been dropped from a plane but I suppose I was out of sight of them for I saw nothing of them. I also managed to buy a pound of sausages at the P.O. and then came on home with my load.

After I got indoors and looked at the basket I realised that the sausages and 2 ratio books were missing from the top of the goods. I immediately went out to see if I could rescue them and was relieved to find them just inside the kitchen gate. I must have shot them off as I turned to shut the gate as there was no wind and I was watching some machines overhead at the time. The sausages were unharmed and the wrapping in place so alls well that ends well.

After I came back I sowed some of the seeds I wanted to test and they are now in the propagator which is installed beside the dining room fire on 'M's being about the best place for the trial.

Finished off the day by completing my seed list and started on a fresh book – a crime club - The Seventeenth Stair seems quite a good yarn, by E C B Lorac – listened to the Brains Trust. They simply floundered over a question about the times of earliest sunset and latest sunrise not occurring on the same day this winter.

By the way did you hear the "Train to York" on Monday evening at 10.5. Another specimen of the BBC bedtime stories.

Wed 12. 1.44

M had a lay in this morning until about 12 o'clock so I was left to my own devices most of the morning and had just finished the odd jobs and began to think about dinner when she appeared. She has not appeared at all well today but seems to be better this evening.

The two diaries came by post this morning. M says that they do not look quite the same as yours. The binding is perhaps not so good but I suppose we must be thankful for small mercies. 'M also had a letter from Annie and Dick and is writing to the former this evening.

Have been having a change round of pot plants and once again the window in your room is decorated and elsewhere plants arranged so as to get better light. Well I haven't any more to say so Ludham still quiet.

Cheerio and Best love from Pa

Crossways  
Ludham  
Gt Yarmouth  
13. 1. 44

My dear Babs

Herewith the music etc, also 3 papers. And the belt which you left on the window sill in the dining room. So far we have not heard from you, but will do so no doubt in the morning. I will send the other papers later on as it was only by a great effort that I managed to do these yesterday. As Pa tells you I did not get up till 12 o/c for I have been feeling very rough since Monday aft: but I'm glad to say I feel a bit better this morning. Went up for milk etc and to get the towel for Miss Sunderland, Hope she will approve. I saw Miss Brown; she told me Rene had got all the stuff. There are only about 40 Advance Guard here at present. I saw a Scrap Merchant collecting all the tank traps in the village!! The men are Duke of Wellingtons. Miss Parsons told me that the proceeds of this W.D. was £21.15.0I went to pay her for our tickets so made it up to £22. Will you get me a box of those GUINS I saw here last week; I do not know what they are called or I would write to Boots for some. Let me know the cost and also what you have to pay for the diaries. They are Collins "Diamond" Series 2 days to a page but they will do very well and we are lucky to get them. Thank Mr B for taking the trouble. Gertie wrote that C was back on the crane and she was glad in a way although he will get less money. Still its his own job and the one he was doing before the war and should make a difference to him if there is a clear out after Lill and Mabel have gone. There is no other news at present so now I will get this packed up. Much love and a kiss Mama

Thanks very much for the cigs in bed. I did think of you at 11 o/c

Crossways Ludham Norfolk  
Fri Jan 14 `944

Dear Billie

We had your letter this morning. What a journey you had but I suppose you must feel highly honoured at having a special train put on to connect with Keighley. Its better than having to stop in the station all night as I have heard of a case lately. I should imagine that you found congenial company for at least part of the time and that makes a deal of difference. You do not say whether it was fog that made the trains late, there has been a lot here at night and it has lasted more or less during the day.

It looks as if you are doing your own work and half of Miss Evans as well and it looks as though the only way to get rid of it is to do the same as Nell Hacon did. I am enclosing the advt from the Times in case you think of doing anything about it. If you had a job like this you might be able to pass things on as Miss E does. Guildford is a nice place and with some nice country round about.

We are very sorry to hear about Sleer, it looks pretty bad on the face of it. Strange that she should be in the room you occupied. School must have a lieu on it.

We are not so quiet here as we have been but I haven't heard much local accent yet and Cockney ones are not unknown.

We do not know anything more yet about a new man and Broom said she had a letter from him saying that they would be quite comfortable when they settle down. I gather that the last man there took away all the shelves and did a lot of damage to the lighting points before he left and Ted was waiting for his tools to arrive to be able to get on with things – have heard since that the 3<sup>rd</sup> instalment has duly arrived.

Fri Jan 14 1944

Thrower did the necessary about the Radio Times and has got one this week. I found a paper a/c in the Penguin mathematics book which you left here. It is pretty ancient but you may as well have it. The book is rather interesting and less ..... should be able to understand a bit more about the subject after studying it.

Dale and Skillern turned up this morning to patch up the ceilings and paint the ceilings that Ritchie left. Wasn't very long. Arrived at about 9 and left before 12. 'M' wasn't feeling too good this morning and got up just in time to run into the workmen in her dressing gown.

Although it was bright and sunny I had no time for the garden this morning and very little this afternoon for in order to save M going out I went up to Halls about the weekend joint (?) Mrs Cubitt brought back the alarm clock and my watch. The former seems to go alright but my watch stops at odd times and the second hand has come off and I have had to take it out in order that it shall not get mixed up with the other hands. Did a bit of weeding this afternoon but the ground is still very wet.

Sat 15.1. 44

It's been a dull foggy day and not at all suitable for 'M' to go out so I got up first this morning so that she could lay in a bit longer and of course had to toddle to the village for milk etc. The weather and opportunity have been quite unfavourable for any gardening today but 'M' did manage to have her usual war savings meeting in afternoon.

Sun 16. 1. 44

After a very restless night 'M' stayed in bed today until about 3. 30 so I didn't have much time to spare this morning and cooked my own breakfast and dinner but 'M' declined anything more than a cup of coffee and a biscuit or two about mid day.

The weather keeps very cold still and the usual fog again today. The Ideal boiler was very welcome and warmed the house a bit but I wish it would warm our bedroom.

Mon Jan 17. 1. 44

'M' seems to be having some very bad nights just lately but I do not seem to hear her coughing probably because it does not wake me because I am used to that sound. I quote this phenomenon with recollections of the "Radio Doctor" recently, anyway she is usually pretty much played out in the morning lately.

Another foggy day and have done nothing outdoors today.

Tues 18. 1. 44

We rather expected your usual weekend letter but nothing came except a note from C.

It's been considerably milder today but with a light fog or mist which turned to drizzle. We did not wake till 9.40 this morning so you may guess that it was a short morning for us. I went to Throwers with the usual list and suddenly realised I had not got ration books but was able to bring the goods home with the big basket in one hand and a basket with three pints of milk in the other. I suppose the total weight was about 20lbs or more.

We had a visitor this afternoon Mrs Mattocks from the farm who came to have a yarn with 'M' and incidentally brought about 12 lbs of nice ripe apples and 8 new laid eggs – what a windfall, the eggs especially as it wasn't long before we sampled one each for tea. We also according to your orders finished up the last of cake to celebrate the occasion. My seed testing outfit has proved a

success and today after a week the first seeds – some leeks have germinated so my own effort of seed sowing has been successful and it looks as though the three remaining lots will turn out all right. Shall wait now and see if anything comes from you Wednesday morning.

Wed. 19. 1. 44

Your letter came this morning. I'm sorry that you did not get the registered parcel and our two letters before Sunday. I thought that I had given them plenty of time. Most of the questions set in yours in Sun have been dealt with and M is writing a bit to go with this,

You have apparently had bad fogs as we have had here but a country fog is generally less objectionable than an Industrial town one. I expect your Bradford fog was a near approach to a London sample after reading about the extra work dumped on you. I think more than ever that its time you made an effort to get out of it and also that Miss. C. weeded out her staff and got rid of some of the passengers. Hough seems to be a find and you ought to get some nice times together and get out of school atmosphere to say nothing of having a companion on your travels.

Today and yesterday have been considerably milder and 'M' seems a little better but had some bad coughing in the night. Well that's all now so cheerio and best love

Crossways Ludham Norfolk  
Thura 20. 1. 44

Dear Billee

I'm glad to say that 'M' is progressing favourably. But I was allowed (ahem) to be first one up this morning, but although the alarm clock operates properly it does not wake us always, and to keep it out a bit I have stood it on a tin lid which certainly makes it echo somewhat.

I took up to the post this morning a fine big parcel of "merchant navy" stuff, over eight pounds before wrapping, tucked it up under my arm as best I could with basket and milk containers etc in the other hand, was glad to unburden myself at the Post office.

It has been a dull misty day but 'M' washed a few things out but they didn't dry all day outside.

It was not particularly cold and a calm air so I was able to clear away a patch of weeds which had been an eyesore and after that did some digging, certainly a warmer job. The longer daylight is now easily discernable and I get in about half an hour extra now before tea.

Fri 21. 1. 44

"M" has had her first out today. She went to a Womens Inst meeting, when the speaker was a person who had been repatriated from Germany in the recent batch of prisoners of war. 'M' said it was a very good talk but plenty of gruesome details.

Incidentally we did not get a paper until she brought it home. I thought that I would leave it to Mrs Alibone and she evidently did it to her .... morning job.

Its been a brighter and more genial day today and I was able to get on digging although the ground is wet and heavy.

My seed testing stunt is proving very successful and seeds are coming up freely and Im quite pleased with the results obtained.

Sat 22. 1. 44

M did not get up very early this morning and what with one thing and another I did nothing outdoors. It certainly was not too inviting overcast with flying scud and a piercing wind. quite unpleasant.

I went to the village in the morning and after 'M' had finished her war savings M and I took our gasmasks to the Manor ARP depot for inspection and found that they were all OK All the gasmasks in the village were given the chance of overhaul or replacement between 2 and 6pm,

about 900 of them but we simply walked in and out again with no one in front of us and only two more came in as we were coming away. I should say that a lot of people were either too negligent or did not know about it although 4 or 5 notices were displayed in the village.

Sun 23. 1. 44

Made a good job of it this morning and did not get up until about half past 12. "M" is a great deal better and go going about 10. We both went to Church this afternoon an easy passage down the hill with wind behind us but a different story coming back and this evening the rain is beating on the dining room windows almost like hail. The wind is so strong and from a westerly direction. The curtains are moving in the draught which comes in the shut up window and I can even feel the cool air coming against my left side of head and neck. This flat country is almost as bad as the sea for strong winds.

Mon 24. 1. 44

Your letter arrived this morning. Things are looking pretty bad concerning Steer. It is to be hoped that she will soon pull through and it is a good thing that she is cheerful.

Rather nice of Miss E to warn you about Wilson. Forewarned is forearmed. Glad to hear that you and Hough hit it off over music, it must be more interesting than solo 'cello music always.

What a long time the parcel was on its journey. Glad to hear that it had not been ripped to pieces as when your parcel came here. I think we can say that 'M' is nearly normal. She went for the milk and got the weeks rations this morning. The weather was kind to her but the barometer has been hovering lightning stunts up and down and tonight there is a gale from the south and rain started in the afternoon so I did little outdoors except for a short while this morning.

This afternoon I made a nest box for the tits but not in accordance exactly with the details given by the Zoo man this afternoon but I expect that it will do. Shall hang it on a fir tree in sight of the kitchen window.

You have had better luck, with Igloo for the night, than we have, although it goes down on our list. It was reviewed very highly in the Observer £50,000 is a tall order. Hope you get it but it will mean work for someone (You sez I)

I don't know whether you will be interested in the Times cuttings that I am enclosing, and perhaps you may have noticed them.

M is deep in a real express thriller. The Show House I've finished and the companion book this time Glory Hill Farm is a very different yarn of an amateur farmer and his trials and troubles of the first year of occupation, very interesting though and instructive.

That's about all I have to say at present. So cheerio

And best love from Pa

Xways Ludham Norfolk

Tues 25. 1. 44

Dear Billee

Am writing this or am starting to do so on Friday evening and its some time ago so can't recollect much that is outstanding and as you have had a budget from "M" all I can say is stale news, but I do know that the weather has been such as to preclude outdoor activities.

We listened to the brains trust. It seems to me that the chairman should exercise a little more authority at times for some of them get right off the question put. Do you ever listen to it. it is very amusing after all.

Wed 26. 1. 44

As yesterday the weather has been too bad to do any gardening but we did quite a spot of listening in during the evening.

Thur 28. 1. 44

A very different sort of day with a westerly wind and temperature outdoors of 57. A west wind can be very kind at times but very harsh at others and I was able to do quite a bit of digging and so on in the garden.

"M" has been trying to make up for lost time on the house but Mrs Brown and Mrs Phillippo interrupted the good work in the afternoon

Thur 27. 1. 44

Mrs B about Rona's certificates and Mrs P to get some wool to start another two knitters for the Merchant navy. Then 'M' had a look round Braemar. There was a gorgeous sunset but it foreboded wind. Nevertheless it was grand with vivid orange and yellows.

This evening was not too good although as it turned out there was nothing to be alarmed about. We had the wireless switched on but I managed to detect some distant heavy reports and on looking out saw a lot of searchlights feeling their way about on the clouds in the distant S.W (Norwich direction) As I watched they gradually crept more nearly overhead with various planes going to and fro. So we decided to patronise the shelter for a bit, took our books and made ourselves as comfortable as we could for half an hour by which time the air was quiet and the searchlights turned off.

The local troops had a shoot on as well which didn't add to the tranquillity of the situation. They warned the local A.R.P. but we heard nothing of such warning. The irony of it all was a BBC announcement that no enemy machines were over this Country during the night.

Fri 28. 1. 44

Another nice mild breezy day and I got in my full quota in the garden digging and weeding and planting and I was surprised that the ground did not feel cold. But after all we have not had much frost here so far this winter.

We've had a letter from Gertie, a good old grouse and I am enclosing it for you to see. They must have had a rough time on Friday a week ago. One consolation is that a good number were brought down. It seemed as though every .... BBC news bulletin added one to the score and they must have come down on some very remote places.

Sat 29. 1. 44

How different today is compared with yesterday, a good 10 degrees lower and the wind is keen and cutting.

We had your letter this morning and as you say letters seem to take longer and longer in reaching here.

I made the nest box as I thought would do and the zoo man didn't give me much cause to alter it and it is now fixed up in a fir tree and I await events.

Nothing yet has transpired about the clock. 'M' saw the Corp'n van in Ludham and asked the man to call. He came but said the Corp'n do not undertake private work but concentrate on their own maintenance service. I wanted him to take the clock and make enquiries as to whether the Corp'n would deal with it but he was very particular (he was a new man) and said he would rather ask about it first. He was very reserved about the last man when I asked after him. This new man is quite a decent sort but not nearly the personality of the last one, who seemed to try to please the customers whereas the new one seemed in mortal dread of his employers.

Early this morning about 1pm I woke up and didn't get to sleep immediately and heard about 3 bursts of very distant barrage but nothing more happened and I got to sleep again.

During the evening the air seemed alive with machines and another big do over Berlin, accounts for that.

Shall post this during the afternoon and hope that you will get it Monday morning.

Cheerio and best love

Pa

Crossways

Ludham

Gt Yarmouth

26. 1. 44

My dear Babs.

Thanks for pastilles which came on Tuesday morning and your letter today. I will send on the 1/8 with the amount for the diaries when we know what that is - meanwhile herewith the remaining knickers and cello stand. It seems to be a pretty bad business about Miss Steen (?), I seem to think from what you have said that she was a smoker, perhaps it has affected her heart, such things do happen.

We are very sorry to know that you have another cold. You do seem to find them; I am glad to say I am getting on alright now but don't yet feel fit for much washing. Still it will keep.

I am enclosing a letter we had from Charlie. They had a pretty bad time last Friday. We were afraid they had but he does not say that there were any fatal casualties. The barrage must have been terrific. Gertie wrote last week and told us that little Jean was dead, you remember the little girl with heart trouble. We have heard today that Peggy Grounds father has been killed. He is in the M. navy And was cleaning out a boiler on board ship when something went wrong. You will not think much about a post at Beckenl..... ... North London after reading Charlies letter.

I went round to their farm yesterday afternoon and took Mrs Mattocks one of the cyclamen. She was delighted with it. I brought back 6 more not cyclamen but more acceptable to us. She told me a little tale of the Workington Wedding. The youngest son, Tom was delighted to get a taxi to take Aunt Sally to the Church (he was best man) but the taxi with Tom turned up at the house 45 minutes and by the time they got to the Church, the Wedding Party was leaving. The small son aged 13 had been roped in as best man. Mrs Mattocks opinion of it is that Tom was "getting merry" and forgot the time!

We had a very interesting afternoon at the W.I. when Mr G..... gave an account of some of his companions as Prisoners of War in Germany for 3½ years. He originally weighed 13 stone and is now just over 6. The next meeting there is to be a film and a talk on Poland by a Polish lady.

A terrible thing is happening to the Ludham W.I. for it is now being run by foreigners and evacuees!! This was said to me in all seriousness by Mrs Phillippo. I was rather surprised. I have met Mrs Bird; she seems a go-a-head person about 38 I should think and she tells me that they were evacuated with their school to Swaffham from Gidea Park just after Xmas 1940. She knows Balgores Lane very well, they lived not far from there and left about the time Herberts place was demolished. But think of it; a foreigner running the school! What is Ludham coming to.

I found 6 aconites out on the bank today. I want to explore the .... garden We have a nice lot of bloom indoors and Primulas and the cyclamen. And still some yellow Jasmine. Still no news of an incumbent. I have written to Rene this evening. The jumper is getting on, the sleeves will be half Brown and half Apricot – This is all now, hope the cold has been warded off.

Much love from Mama.

Xways Ludham Norfolk

Sun 30. 1. 44

Dear Billee,

A glorious morning bright and clear, a state duly taken advantage of. Hundreds of 'planes going and coming almost a continuous hum during the morning. There was no service again this morning but we went at 3 p.m. quite a large congregation and it looks as though the temporary person is quite popular for at any rate the numbers are increasing. 8 in choir including Skillern. We did not hang about after the service but I came straight in to have a bath and black out before sitting down to tea.

Some unusual noises during the evening but apparently nothing to trouble about

Mon 31. 1. 44

Dear Billee

Quite a change to yesterday overcast all day and a cold wind making it unpleasant out doors so I improved the shining? hour and with a little help from "M" in the way of holding up I finished the repair of the door knocker only to find that I had assembled it upside down and tweeted it up. So let it go at that, I don't suppose it will be noticed and then filled in with some odd jobs in the garage and knocked off fairly early as we were due at Miss Parsons at 6.30 for bridge. Miss P and I were partners and we were 670 down on 2 Rubbers. She is a bit venturesome and we came a cropper now and again. We got home just before eleven, the fire had kept in and we stayed to hear the midnight news.

Late hours after bridge must agree with us for we both slept well all night and did not awaken till 9.40.

Tues 1. Feb 44

Another cold dreary overcast day but the temperature gradually rose up to 5 p.m. when I took the reading. Your letter and enclosures reached me quite safely this morning. Thank you very much. M says she will probably write to you tomorrow (Wednesday) and send you a box of spring flowers out of the garden. There are plenty of Aubretia, some snowdrops, a few Aconites and marigolds have been developing all the winter so far. One or two late (or early) roses and indoor cyclamen and primulas in pots give a lot of colour to the dining room window boards.

What a shame about your car, One would have thought that Angus could have spared a little time, perhaps coming out to do the job made a difference.

Very kind of the ARP to save you the trouble of handing your uniform in.

Judging from your remark about "being on top of things" I should say that you are feeling fit again.

Don't blame you a bit for keeping out of the Gift fund treasureship.

News about Steer is a lot more heartening and to have something definite about it is also cheering.

There has been nothing very exciting around here lately and good thing too.

So far – touch wood – M's microbes have left me alone, or perhaps I have had sufficient reserve relating to combat them, but one never knows.

Any other points in your letter that I have not touched upon I will leave for 'M'

Cheerio and best love

Pa.

And now for the "Brains Trust