

Crossways
Ludham
Wed Dec 1, 1943

Dear Billee

More cold wintry weather the wind is keen and cutting and you want "em all on" when in the garden. Have been attending to Dahlias to make sure and keep up my stock and putting them in the garage for the time being but it's a job to find a place where they will not get wet as the roof is leaking so much. It seems worse too just lately for we have had about double the amount of average rain in November.

We had our weekly do at bridge this evening when the Mattocks came over about 7 and departed about eleven.

Thur 2.12.43

Too bad outdoors, but I had a job indoors. 'M' found up an old ornamental cover and I provided new innards with a list of all the subscribers to Evans' £50 cheque. This took up best part of my time today, wanted careful setting out and carefully writing in but I did not quite finish it today.

We had a lovely dinner today 'M' cooked the Partridge Madge brought over last Saturday. Had it in the casserole and it was good. People who are lucky enough to find these now and again can afford to despise the meat ration.

Fri 3.12.43

I mailed off the list for Evans in the morning ready to be presented this evening. It is another wet miserable day & I had just settled down after dinner to read a bit more news when Miss Broom came about some Was Savings business and cut my reading short. She's a good old shocker and plenty of idle gossip about nothing elevating enlightening so I cleared off and found something to do outside.

We went to the Sunday school concert this evening at the church room The place was packed we got there early to get a front seat and I managed to save a couple of chairs for Madge and Cathy who came in just before the start.

The blackout at the hall is very unsatisfactory the curtains hang loose and the side gangways very narrow so that the curtains were brushed aside whenever anyone came past.

Dr. Brown arrived about 8.30 and with a short speech handed over the cheque to Mr. & Mrs. Evans together with my list of subscribers. He didn't take long and we came away shortly after.

They had an extra turn in the way of some accordion solos, a blaring blasting performance, it quite got on my nerves so we decided to go home.

There was some good stuff in the programme but it had not been sufficiently rehearsed, the prompters voice coming in at close intervals. We got home about 9.15, just too late for the news.

The 6PM news interested me very much as the announcement was made that something was to be done for retired state or semi state servants. It was done through an amendment to the Kings speech reply but the amendment was withdrawn after the government promised to bring in a bill for it shortly, that's good isn't it. Shall wait now and see if they think my pension is worth much supplementary.

Saturday 4.12.43

A much better day, still cold but bright and dry. Rene wanted a root of Camomile to take to Devonshire so I got one up and took it to the Vicarage and laid it in until she was ready to take it. In return I got up a couple of roots of Raspberry of which there are a lot in the Vicarage grounds. I made 20 and laid them in until I can put them in permanently where the runner beans were so will have to get the posts and wire down, a job I did not finish before having to come in.

We had a quiet evening, library books did not turn up for the weekend and we were just going to bed when I heard the sound of a machine that I did not like, so looked out and saw a crowd of search lights converging over in the east but nothing happened and we carried on and went to bed and heard no more. We neither of us got off to sleep till after 12 o'clock. I can't make out what it is that is affecting our stomachs just lately.

Sun 5.12.43

We had a letter from C & G on Saturday morning they are sorry that we shall not be going to Welling at Xmas and suggested that they come to Ludham provided that I can get leave to make it worthwhile.

I'm very glad that they have suggested this but I didn't want to leave this place for a week with Braeside empty as well and then the Evans' are going so could not get either of them to come in and look round.

We both went to church this morning. It was an effort as we did not get up until after nine which did not leave us much time. There were very few there and the service was over before 12. Madge and Sally were there but stayed to Communion, so we came home alone.

'M' has gone to lie down this afternoon and gave instructions that I was not to disturb her until I came in to blackout. Her stomach is very disturbed today.

Will keep this open in case anything comes from you that requires an answer.

Cheerio & best love, Pa.

Your letter of Thur 2nd reached here this morning. Monday 12th we got the registered parcel ok, there's not much else to reply to, Poor Ronnie.

Xways
Ludham, Norfolk
Wed 8.12.43

Dear Billee

My last letter to you was very hurriedly rushed of. We are very sorry to hear about your rash. Doctor will give you any diagnosis. Perhaps the best thing for you to do when you come home is to have some more of Browns lotion. That is of course if it is not gone. Don't think for a moment that I am pessimistic but have suggested this in case and there's a good time yet before come home. It may be better by then at least I hope it is.

To change the subject the "big three" seem to have put out a very optimistic demand. I wonder how much is intended as propaganda or the "war of nerves" just as present progress seems to be a bit slower both in Russia and Italy, it really looks as though an effort in another direction needing less shipping must be made for the defeat of Germany.

Both Sweden and Turkey seem to be much more cheeky now, I wonder.

Thank you for the enclosures, safely received. I noted that you dispensed with registration.

I'm hoping that the civil service pensions act will do something for me, there are lots of bigger pensions than mine.

We didn't get up very early on Tuesday morning 'M' went to the village and when she came back, I went up to the Vicarage for a picture frame for the Wings for Victory certificate for the village. It would do by reducing the margin a bit. They were in a fine muddle. Rene had washing put out to air on every available spot in the study and he was fretting himself about how much wood he could put on the fire. Mrs Broom was there dusting books which are being packed up in containers ready for removal. I remarked that this was no time for visitors to which they both tacitly agreed and came on off home with the picture frame.

Although it was very damp and mucky in the garden, I managed to clear away the runner beans and dug over the ground.

We went over to Mattocks in the evening but Sally had all the luck and Madge very little.

Today Wednesday I rolled up the bean wire ready for another year except for clearing off the vine a nine tedious job but shall be able to do it when it gets dry and brittle.

After Tuesday evenings drizzle the garden was wet and sticky but I managed to plant the Raspberry canes that I got from the Vicarage. 20 roots so they should give us some berries in '45 but not much next year I'm afraid. I wonder whether we shall get the benefit of them in 1945.

We have both been doing some clearing up in the garden. 'M' waged war on dead leaves of which there were plenty.

On Tuesday Ted rolled just at tea time and settled down till a quarter to nine didn't want sweet stuff at all but begged a crust of bread and butter said he was very fond of it and got rid of our crusts for us.

Rene says she is coming in before they go. I expect that when they get to Marris after the furniture has gone they will have some breathing time. It is foolish to pack up like they have done when they are paying Pickfords to do it. Ah well!

Cheerio & best love Pa.

Xways
Ludham, Norfolk
Thur 9.12.43

Dear Billee

It seems to be the predominating topic of conversation just now about going away, temporarily in the case of Mattocks and for good in Evans case. Madge and Sally can think of nothing else and she has been over today to make sure of some wool for merchant navy comforts. Evans has given "In" a key of the notice case on the churchyard wall by the post office. I wonder whether someone will find fault with that.

Its not been too bad in the garden today but Mr Mole is busy and I scattered half a dozen heaps today he seemed to have run right down the border just off the grass. I suppose that they find something to their liking in such situations. The majority of mole hills occur in such situations.

Fri 10.12.43

Sally has been after Kathy today and I had a request for the loan of a pair of steps as theirs had gone to the farm and lent her the pair Burton uses as they were higher than mine but I gather that they were scarcely tall enough, any how she brought us a nice bunch with some nice red berries.

The Evans came in just as we were starting tea, they had had tea at the farm and called on the way home. He looked tired and warned Rene not to occupy the big easy chair which was facing the fire, and plonked himself there as if he were going to stay a month. They have got 2 containers away today but another is needed to finish the job. I wonder when they will get the lot to their new home. Possibly not till after Xmas.

Ted reckons to start away about 8am Monday and get as far as Avebury which is not far west of Marlborough and to finish the journey the next day but I doubt about the 8am for they are having a round of goodbyes and their bikes have gone and there doesn't appear to be much petrol to spare so they have to walk for instance from Marris' where they are staying. How Hill is a good walk and he isn't walking fit as he rides everywhere. I should say that Rene would walk better than he.

We had a spot of liveliness this evening, according to published reports four were brought down. I heard some distant gun fire about 7.30 and looked out of the lounge doors. There were a lot of distant search lights in the south and in a SSW direction. I saw a small orange red speck appear fading somewhat as it fell. It was a long way off, probably over 30 miles and I could not distinguish much, but it seemed most likely this was what an airman described in Saturdays 9 o'clock news.

My main job today was harvesting carrots parsnip & beet the latter yielding very little as they were eaten away with just a stalk and leaves remaining.

Sat 11.12.43

A bitterly cold day with wind from the east, bright in the morning but some snow flurries in the afternoon while 'M' was raking in the shekels for war savings. I stowed away the roots I took up yesterday, a job inside the garage, but it was too unpleasant to stay outdoors. We hear from C that his Xmas leave is approved and that they will travel down on Friday and go back on Tuesday after Xmas, travelling down by the 8.10 from Liverpool St and getting the 1.0 bus from Norwich.

Crossways, Ludham
6.45 – 12.12.43

Dear Babs

Well so ends that chapter. The Evans have just gone. They came to tea from the service this afternoon and they hope to be off soon after 8 in the morning. There were not many at church this afternoon although a good many more than the usual Sunday aft: and the comment Madge made about his address was that it was the best he had ever given since he first came, and why couldn't he have done that every week. They have made a few personal calls, Boardmans, the farm, Browns, Hayhurst and I expect over the way, but I have not heard of that so far, and for the rest it was left to say goodbye to the people who turned up at church this afternoon.

We seem to have been specially favoured this week for he came in for a bit on Wednesday and they both came for an hour on Friday evening and though I asked them for tea today I never expected them to come, as they are staying at Marris' but they said at once that they would like to so "there you are". They both left their love for you and were sorry you were not here, so were we. Now it looks as if unless someone makes a move, we shall be without church for a bit for Richie asked me this afternoon if I had heard anything and followed it up by saying he expected we should be without anyone for a month or so. Well, we shall see. Mr Evans has told me what I can do toward sit and he has also asked Mr. Wake if he can come over, and he said he could, but of course someone here has to make the arrangements.

Miss Grimes came along after church this morning and said she wondered if we could get up a carol service for the Sunday after Xmas, the 26th. I said you would be at home and I was sure you would help. Also, that Charlie would be here. She wondered about your cello and was very pleased when I told her that you had one here, also hoped you would be able to manage a solo, but then I don't expect you will mind my having let you in for that. She went off very hopeful about what might be managed. When I go to Miss Parsons Xmas party on Wednesday next (W.I.) I am going to speak about it and ask for help in the way of singers so between us we ought to manage something. I am letting you know as you may want to bring or send something in the way of music.

It looks as if Ted and Rene will be without a home all through the Xmas as some of their stuff does not go till Tuesday and now someone down there has offered to put them up for a bit, but of course Rene would rather be in here own place. She thinks he ought to have waited till after Xmas to go and given themselves more time to get comfortably settled, but I expect he was thinking about working in a good time at Xmas.

I am sure you will be relieved to know that Charlie and Gertie are coming here. IO am afraid it will be rather rough travelling on the 24th but if they come as they intended, they should be here soon after 2 o'clock. By the way, Miss Grimes wants to have a practice on that afternoon at 3 o'clock in the church. As we understand you are coming on Wednesday let us know definitely so that we can arrange with Joyce to meet you. We do hope that by this time Dr Hill has been able to do some something to clear up the rash, perhaps he is right about the medicine that may get the root of the trouble. Ted says if you haven't got rid of it when you come you must stay till you do.

Things are very quiet here at present but he says the Yanks are coming in a day or two now. So in that case we may be full up for Xmas. We've had a fire in the lounge today for the first time since you were here and had tea round the fire.

Pa has written to you as well and I don't think there is much more to say now. I am going to write to Charlie and Gertie and let C know the carol service.

Much love and a kiss, Mama

P.S. When they left, they said they will be seeing us again sometime down there.
Sun 12.12.43

We had a lazy lay in this morning but it did not matter as we had made up our minds not to go to church as we wanted to go and hear Ted's farewell address. M is writing to you today so there is not much for me to tell you and you get it first hand. The address he gave was certainly very good but I don't know that I can second Madges verdict that it was the best he has given. He did not show much emotion but then he never does. I think he felt it though when he said it was strange to think that he was not likely to see anyone in Ludham again and the rest of today. Carol service, finding someone to take the services and so on I am leaving for the "Church Council Secretary" to tell you.

We hope to get this off by early post I suppose that for a fortnight now the post will be more irregular

Cheerio and best love, Pa.

Crossways, Ludham
Mon Dec 13, 1943

Dear Billee

Stirring times in Ludham today. It was a dull morning but, in the afternoon, became bright and sunny with a good deal of flying. I was having my afternoon siesta when M came into the dining room to bring to my notice a huge pile of black smoke rising up in the line of Halls chimneys. It seemed to me that it was from the southern part of the ground, but later on Dale told M that it was a solo machine that had come down in the narrow opening between Throwers and England's shops. M went up to have a look at it but I did not go at once. Sally brought back a pair of steps she had borrowed and gave me more details so I thought I would go to.

I met M coming back and carried on. There was a mess in the street, burnt out parts had been taken off Thrower's roof and a fine collection of mangled metal nearly across the road with the usual collection of children and other sightseers and a cordon of Air Force men to keep off unauthorised people from getting mixed up with the wreckage. Both walls were steaming and some of England's sheds had been burned and the fire had spread to the inside of Throwers. The latter has lost some valuables from the bedroom, someone thought they had a good right to them. The machine carried away a bit of a corrugated roof of England's and apparently struck Thrower's flank wall. Fortunately, no one was hurt except the pilot who was slightly hurt on the side of the head and ribs. The tale is that he was coming back from Kiel and had only 3 gallons of juice left. All I can say is that judging from the amount of smoke we saw it was probably more. Will come on Xmas. Best love, Pa.

Mon Dec 13 ' 43

The 3 gallons must have been a fairy tale.

England does seem to be unlucky over his sheds. The first one is not finished yet and now there's another lot to be rebuilt. Mrs. England didn't stand up to it very well. Judging by what she told M at the W.I. meeting said she got absolutely dithered.

Tue Dec 14 43

Yesterday was a good drying day but today is not. M had other fish had M to fry on Monday and made today the washing (and grumblng) day. And at the end of the day, things were nearly as wet as when put out.

I went up to the village in the morning, the wreckage was still lying about in the street.

Mr Mole has been busy again today, some of the heaps more than fill a bucket and I had several to clear away again today and did some more tidying up. Madge and Sally came over in the afternoon to say goodbye. They were going to the farm and starting from there at 6 o'clock in the morning to catch a train from Norwich.

Listened to The Brains Trust this evening, some questions and answers were quite good but it doesn't seem quite as good as it was formally.

Wed 14.12.43

Your letter came this morning and M is going to reply to some of the points you raised, but quite a lot was replied to in advance by our joint effort of Sunday.

Its been a fairly dry day, not much wind and not too bad out in the garden and I have been barrowing (with Mattocks barrow) some of the compost heap and putting it on the kitchen garden.

(This letter does not sign off, so there may be text missing).

Crossways
13. 12.43

My dear Babs

This is just a short note about the rations.

I shall be very glad for Mrs S to get some fruit. Will come off your points and about the meat, if it does not run her too short, I shall be glad to have yours, for Gertie will be bringing sugar etc for the weekend and as she will have to buy her meat on Thursday and pack it partly cooked, I have told her not to bother. Hall does not seem to be very hopeful about surplus supplies and although I have tried there is no chance of poultry. Mrs S may be able to get something in that line for herself.

Sorry you cannot get here till the late train but we will fix up with Joyce to meet you. Thanks for nets, I am making a pair of red velvet moccasins for Annie and trimming them with the rabbit skin with embroidered fronts, they look very posh. Sorry I cannot keep them till you come. The book for () can follow on. Well, I hope the 3 weeks rest will put you right, what a good thing we are staying quietly? in Ludham.

Much love and a kiss, Mama.

Crossways, Ludham
Norfolk
Sun Dec 19, 43

Dear Billee

Just short note although I don't think you will get it before you leave. Theres nothing very exciting to relate after the excitement in the street, all traces of which have been cleared away, except for the signs of great heat on Throwers and England's premises.

At present the residue of Evans's challets are still at the Vicarage and Mrs Broom is afraid to go out of sight of the Vicarage for fear of not seeing the third conveyance when it comes. I expect they bitterly regret that they did not leave it till after Xmas. It looks as though they will be lucky if they get the goods this year.

There have been 2 services at church today, one at 9am (Holy Communion) and Evensong at 3. Mr Wake from Catfield took the services and M went to both. It was raining in the morning and I had a day in till half past twelve.

Brooks are not at all keen on meeting your train at Potter but Joyce promised to go unless fog intervenes, and in that case, I will walk over and come back with you, but sincerely hope that that contingency will not prevail.

M has been having the usual clean up for Xmas and I was fortunate in being able to get her vacuum cleaner to work again for it only proved to be a connection being displaced.

On Saturday immediately after breakfast I went to post some parcels, got there soon after 9 and found about a dozen people there on the same errand. Most of the parcels were being registered which didn't improve the congestion. Hope Miss G gets hers in good time. Also got a new battery for my torch in case I might want it if I have to tramp to Potter and back just over 4 miles but expect to have a rest at the station as the train is sure to be a bit late.

Gertie's cake has arrived quite safely, icing and fancy bits all complete. I made a secure job of packing it in a round tin, they registered it for safety.

As I have said, early morning was wet but best part of the day was considerable blue sky, but at sunset thick cloud spread in from the S.W. and it looks as though we might have a renewal of Saturday nights gale.

Have been able to get into the garden most days lately except Saturday afternoon when a drizzle set in previous to the half inch of rain we had during the night. Have made the best use of Mattocks barrow although I expect it will be nearer a couple of months before Madge and Sally get home again. Hope you have a good journey here.

Cheerio and best love, Pa.