

March 1943

Crossways Ludham Norfolk

Thur 4 Mar 1943

Dear Billee

Felt rather slack today and an hour at a time in the garden was about all I fancied. 'M' went to the village this morning but could not get The Times. Thrower had a notice 'no papers until 2pm' so that meant another journey after dinner whilst 'M' was clearing away after dinner. This was I understand on account of some railway interruption during last night's raid on London.

Madge and Sally came over for Bridge this evening, we had 3 rubbers and a change of partners for each. Madge does not seem to be half as sharp as she was when we first played with them and I cannot fathom her method (if she has any) as a result she was on the losing side all the time. I was +310

They left about eleven and we sat over the fire reading for a while and discovered that it was nearly twelve O'clock so waited for the midnight news and then went to bed.

Fri 5.3.43

I undertook the village trip this morning. No papers yet and went along the Catfield Road to Osbournes, the last council house with some war savings for 'M'. They are making a fine job of widening the road and from the materials dumped by the roadside they are coming along school Lane and round to Mattocks at the Crossroads.

I called in at Mattocks to borrow their barrow to save me the heavy job of shifting the compost heap in buckets, and to have a look at my carrots in store there, they are keeping fine and I gave Sally some as their crop was very poor.

The barrow makes things easier and I was able to get in a good bit of digging, had the afternoon to myself and had tea solo as 'M' had gone to Ludham Hall for Bridge with Mutt and Jeff and Mrs Vidler who us in charge of the Girls Land Army there. 'M' had a good feed of Bridge this week 3 days in succession.

Mrs Horner (of Throwers and paper) had another spill this afternoon just outside the officer's mess and near to her last bicycle affair but she was not much hurt and was on duty again on Saturday. I went to Throwers just before having my tea and saw her lying in the road but as there were 5 officers with her, I thought it best not to interfere, apparently, she came into collision with one of the officers coming out as she was riding past on her bike.

We were entertained for a long time this evening with heavy machines going East to Essex as the papers had it the next day.

Sat 6.3.43

Nothing much to relate today. I have felt a bit brisker and have done a fine bit of digging – no papers this morning and 'M' brought it when she came home from war savings.

Your letter came this morning also from Gertie, she says that Charle's head has still some sores and I wondered if it was Eczema. He suffered with it a great deal when he was young and has been very run down lately and I have written and asked him if he thinks it is Eczema if so try sulphur ointment it cannot do any harm.

Sun 7.3.43

'M' was energetic enough to go to church at 8 am as she tells you in her letter, which you will get before this. I slept soundly all night and did not wake until just before she came back.

My eczema is very much better now or I should not have slept so soundly. We did not go to church later but I just muddled round and put the morning in, had a mind to lie in but it was such a grand morning that I did not and 'M' wrote letters which we went and posted in the afternoon and then went as far as Womack and back again round the outskirts of Ludham and came to the Catfield Road near Fitzhugh's then came home School Lane. Just a nice little potter round the outskirts of Ludham. Last night there was 6 deg. of frost and every appearance of a repeat tonight but only 3deg – the wind had changed right around from N to S. I imagine it was pretty dark at church by the time the service was due to finish i.e. 7.15 and 6.30 was too late to start. Just as well we did not go.

Mon 8.3.43

'M' went up to the village this morning and among other things she looked at my Cyclamens in Church. They are still in good condition and don't want much water in the cool temperature (despite the boiler being alight) of St Catherines.

Have been out in the garden a good deal today but found digging very tiring. 'M' has also been doing a bit this afternoon not withstanding a suggestion of sciatica but it was not too cold and the air dry and likewise the ground. We have only 0.04" of rain since the 10th of Feb nearly a month. Teds 54 at 9am was about right 55 was the highest reached on that date. The war situation seems to be very satisfactory just now. Rommel seems to be well held and Russia is still advancing and the news about the Pacific convoy is grand. I wonder when the much advertise second front will materialize. As regards the war in the air the state of affairs promised by America seems to be well in hand hope the second front will be just as good.

Tues 9.3.43

Your letter came this morning which is a lovely cloudless sample but there was a thick rime on the grass when I looked out.

My Eczema (not Exema) is considerably improved but a certain amount of irritation still prevails, kits just like a small insect crawling about under the skin.

My wireless has not arrived yet I suppose he thinks that there is no burry as he has lent me one.

Your amateur post office is not quite in order. I remember some years ago a prosecution and conviction for a similar offence against the P.O.

With regards to my birthday don't do anything at all about it. You are doing plenty. No more room so Cheerio and best love Pa.

Crossways Ludham Norfolk

Tues 9.3.43

Dear Billie

My last letter to you was posted this morning and I only very briefly replied but think I disposed of all the essentials.

Being a day of almost continuous sunshine and quite mild I was able to enjoy myself in the garden and have now come to the end of the usable material in my 'muck heap' or at least that which was rotted down sufficiently and then amused myself digging over the ground which I hope to use for runner beans. I think that this part of the garden must have been used by Halls as a general deposit for old iron etc. for I unearthed 4 dog chains an old pair of strap hinges about 2 foot long, a

bit of a syringe and sundry other tins and old iron domestic appliances a fine game and finished up by waging war on nettles and huge tufts of coarse grass, a back aching job but the appearance justifies the labour

The evening was somewhat disturbed. I heard 4 or 5 loud bangs but went to sleep about 11.30 and did not wake until the morning so conclude that nothing happened very near, although the paper and wireless indicated that the East coast was visited.

Wed 10.3.43

As 'M' has told you Annie's letter came this morning after having been on the way for a week. I expect it got hung up in the London raid. I don't think the photos of C are too good his expression on the whole is not quite natural, probably on account of the light being at the wrong angle.

The warmest day so far this year and mainly bright and sunny and I set about a job I'm not at all partial too that is weeding outside the two entrances. Everyone passing gapes and stares as if they had never seen anyone weeding and finished up the time until tea by weeding the inside paths.

'M' went over the way for a bit this evening. Madge was very anxious to see the para on the front page of the Times concerning Miss May so 'M' went over with it for a 'few minutes' The electric heater came back today after being cleaned and overhauled generally. The only fly in the ointment was the wrong spout came and we shall have to wait for the proper one. It is usable but makes a rare splash if you are not very careful.

Thurs 11.3.43

Not so nice today dull and grey and overcast but quite mild although it became cooler with a veering wind and rising barometer. Had a good turn out and clear up in the garage and can now get in and out with comfort and had an afternoon of seed sowing. My venture in early seed sowing has turned out ok so far seeds are germinating freely in the garden and one patch has passed through the propagator and a fresh lot put in today although my gamble with the weather seems to have come off – touch wood – and I don't forget the mid-March maximum temperature of 26 last year and hope we do not get a repetition this year.

Sir Archibald Sinclair has given some interesting figures in Parliament today introducing his estimates and he gave a side light on the German psychology when he said their pilots were instructed to avoid military objectives and concentrate on strafing civilians. The public don't see what damage may be done to government establishments but have access, more or less to civic damage. This has been their idea all along and was so in 1914-1919.

Several bumps this evening but official reports say N.E. so they probably may be out at sea or some battle training camp.

Fri 12.3.43

We had a letter this morning from both C and Gertie. Enclosed his in a package with a Kentish and a copy of "Frontline" which gives some statistics of bombing raids on English coast towns. Yarmouth stands at the top as regards numbers of raids but Brighton and Hove have sustained the highest number of casualties. Have you seen this official publication. When I last wrote C I suggested that his sores on his head may be eczema.

(NB additions to this letter appears missing)

Xways Ludham Norfolk

Sat 27.3.43

Dear Billee

I felt a bit on the slack side this morning possibly owing to the weather and started overheating my stock of Chrysanthemums and planting some of each sort in the garden and in the

afternoon continued the good work with more zest as the wind had veered from South to North west and the air was brisker but cooler.

'M' had her usual this afternoon and the net result was just under £16 not bad but weeks like this won't get to the £1500 mark which she hopes to reach.

Sun 28.3.43

As you already heard I had a lazy morning in bed and did not turn out till a quarter to one.

We both went to church in the evening of this last Sunday in the month when Ted was making the experiment of evening communion.

He cut the evening service short in order to finish the Communion (which he likewise shortened) before Black out time.

M and I stayed with four others one of whom was an old lady unknown to either of us and as she was unable to go up the Chancel Evans came down to the body of the Church to her first.

It was getting dark by the time we came out and I had to black out as soon as I got indoors and had the additional job of covering up the frame as the Sky had cleared and temperature was falling fast.

We had a little amusement after supper. Gerry was over and I watched the flares and then A. A. bursts from the direction of Yarmouth to nearly Norwich but could tell that Norwich was not reached although the flares and A.A. bursts were about as far away as that city. We patronized the Morrison during the time they were nearest to us and gunfire finally died out about 11p.m after an hour and in the end, we got to bed just before 12 o'clock.

Mon 29.3.43

A nice bright morning, but it did not last long. The sky clouded over and some things out on the line had a rather rough handling although they soon dried. I went up to the village and out for a short time in the garden before coming in to hear the 1pm news with the splendid announcement that we had taken the Mareth Line and Rommel was retreating but we haven't got him on the run yet. His previous experience of retreats should stand him in good stead and he should by this time be an expert in retreating.

It should not be long before the 8th army form up with the Americans, not forgetting the French and we ought to have some favourable reports from Tunisia then. Quiet night to night.

Tues 30.3.43

A good post bag this morning, library books, your letter and one from Charles.

Gertie is not much better and I'm enclosing Charles letter for you to see.

'M' has written back to him and offered to have Gertie down here for a bit when she is fit to travel.

Its sad about Freeman and I expect you are experiencing the result of her absence. The inquest makes it more distressing for her. You had quite distinguished company on the return journey from the meeting at Bradford. How is Mrs. K still full of beans?

Janet seems to be making some progress in locomotion. I should think the tricycle should help to promote a more natural method of travel. We also had a letter from Dick saying that the R.O. had agreed to recommend that 30/- per week should be accepted and that the committee would probably accept that amount.

I think I mentioned that we have had the first rain for 36 days, a quarter of an inch, not a lot but enough to go on with, as evaporation is not great these days.

'M' is busy preparing for the sweep tomorrow so I'll go up to the village and post things
Cheerio and best love

Pa

Crossways
Ludham
Mar 28th 43

My Dear Babs

Well, this is slightly different to last Sunday morning at this time when I was waiting for you to come in from Church. It's been a lovely morn: so far although it is now clouding over. I just saw a fine sight, 28 big B's going over. The most I have seen at one time. Pa is just about to rise. I did not get up till 10o/c for as I am having the sweep at 6a.m. on Wed: morn: to do both chimneys. I thought I would have a rest in advance. Was not blown out of bed this time! We had a letter from G yesterday morning. She is getting on slowly Dc. B called it seems about Wed and although he said she could get up a bit every day and will not let her think about going out till towards the end of next week and the blood transfusion he thinks had better wait for 2 or 3 weeks. He asked her what she was having to eat and when she told him Effie had provided a meal of fish and chips from the shop, he went off the deep end. Anyhow she couldn't eat it. I don't wonder. What a slovenly lot Effie is. They are both very fed up with her and I should not be surprised to hear she had gone from there I think it would be a good thing. G said the E got up on the morning after I left and she, G, got some breakfast just after ten. 9.15 Effie got up, lazy lot, you would think she could turn out a bit earlier and get on with things while Gertie is queer. I really believe if I stayed there for about a week and looked after her and got her regular meals it would have made all the difference. Still, I hope she will go on alright now. Did I tell you that Effe told me just before I came away that she thought they would like her to go I told her I did not know about that but advised her to wait till Gertie was better and then have a talk to them and find out. If she does, I hope they won't be too soft over it.

I have so far heard nothing further from Dick concerning Arthur but will probably hear in the morning. We got your P.C. on Friday. I was sorry to hear of Miss Freeman's loss but from what you said when you were here it would not be unexpected still that does not make it any easier for them. You will find it a bit stiff at school I expect if she is away for many days. I went up to the vicarage on Thursday just to thank them on Pa's a/c. it was very good of them to invite him there for dinner. It was a lovely afternoon and I found Ted in a deck chair in the porch in his shirt sleeves so you can guess how warm it was in the sun. Rene was just off to the farm they have all had some trouble this week. A sister-in-law at Romford died suddenly last Monday. M and S debated whether they should go to the funeral. I would have gone if Mrs. M would go too. But she was sensible enough to say she thought it unnecessary. Madge told me she was 66. 18 years younger than her. What does that make Madge. It was the wife of the brother that was killed in a motor smash. I expect you have heard about that. Pa has just got up 12.45 so I must carry on with dinner. Not lucky enough to have lamb today. Beef Hotpot

We are hoping as I expect everyone in the country is to have some good news from Tunisia. I saw Mrs. Cobbett on Wed last and asked her how her new wireless was going on but she told me when he went to put it together, he found that the transformer was the wrong size so I suppose that means our set is as far off as ever. And they still have no news of theirs over the way. I hear our late visitors at Ludham left the country on Mar 1st on a 3 wks journey so we should soon be hearing something of their activities somewhere. Things are much the same here, perhaps not quite so full up and everything has been fairly quiet this week. I forgot about coupons for the tweed but I think

there are only 2 needed for a 27" wide so perhaps you will let Miss Watson have them and you can use some of mine, another time. C and G sent me on my Gas Mask as soon as they discovered I had left it and tucked in the top 1/4 lb Chocs so that was good. I went off without any rations so sent them off a parcel after I got back. They seem to be pretty badly off for things up there. I saw a queue of about 50 people at one shop waiting for apples. Glad to see from the paper yesterday that flowers are cheaper. The garden looks grand in the sun this morning. Much love and a kiss.

Mama