

This July 1943 (continuation from June letter from Pa to Billee)

Thurs July 1. 43

According to plan we got off for Norwich by the 10.9 bus but went to the P.O. in order to try and get a seat and were glad to have done so as some people who got on at Crossways had to stand. The bus was a bit late; it had a producer gas unit behind and evidently was not getting the gas through properly for it conked out on the crest of Wroxham bridge and I began to wonder whether it would get us there but we were only about a quarter of an hour late,

We went and found the surgical man in St Giles Street near the Roman Catholic Church and then 'M' left me agreeing to be at the bus station at 12.40.

I got my business over, and had a walk round for about half an hour in order to see whether any further adjustment was needed and after a small adjustment strolled along leisurely and met 'M' as arranged at the bus station and so home for dinner. 'M' got off at Xways to get the dinner ready whilst I went onto Throwers for the Times.

Dinner was about 2.40 and we were both hungry after a 6 hours food fast after breakfast and during the afternoon we locked both front and back doors and had a sleep 'M' getting into bed. I did not wake until 4.30 and roused her but she had another half hour after that.

I did not feel much like gardening and after pottering about and tying up climbing roses gave it up and found 'M' preparing some Red Currants for bottling and making some jelly and gave her a hand to finish the preparations.

So far we have not had anything from You and begin to wonder what has happened. How are your hands, have you any advice. What is the trouble do you know.

The bit of stuff enclosed is that which 'M' said she enclosed in her last letter and forgot to do it.

Nearly half past ten and getting dark so I'll adjourn until tomorrow morning. Sorry the music went to Charlie, perhaps he may have written to ask you what it is for.

Fri July 2.43

Your letter arrived this morning seems to have been a long time getting here.

I should have thought you would have given Lord the cold shoulder and not been bothered with her over the weekend.

I'm not clear about the position concerning Freeman but it looks as though there is a spot of bother somewhere in the offing. It's a pity that Freeman could not adapt herself to circumstances.

Rene is now in Bradford and has been there some days now. I don't remember the exact date that she travelled.

As regards the green ink it was only a makeshift as I could not lay my hands on my own.

The music is dealt with in a Rubric by 'M'

As a result of waiting for your letter you will not get this before Monday morning but never mind and cheerio and best love from Pa

Xways Ludham Norfolk
Fri July 2 1943

Dear Billee

I don't remember how far my last letter carried me but at any rate the most important item today was the arrival of our paying guest. He turned up this evening accompanied by Mrs. Vidler and as it turns out he only wants Bed and Breakfast and as he brought all his weeks rations the catering problem is much simplified.

He is quite an unassuming young fellow and quite tall. They both stayed a while and chatted and he settled himself into your room and turned out his rations. They both departed and we heard him come in 11.20.

Sat July 3.43

We all had breakfast in state in the dining room but I think the time fixed 8.30 was a bit too early for him. He said he had been working hard and doing exams. At any rate he didn't demur when 'M' fixed the breakfast time.

The weather somewhat improved today a little more sunshine and a max of 66.

I have cleared off my first lot of peas and got the ground ready for a second attempt at carrots but the ground is terribly dry and its useless to sow seeds just at present also I dug some more potatoes and had a much better result.

Ted came and deposited a joint of mutton in anticipation of coming to dinner on Sunday. () also brought us some mutton so 'M' had the job of cooking 2 joints for Sunday dinner. She did a bit of preparation this evening in anticipation of tomorrows cooking and was shelling peas when Madge came over, wanted change of £1 note and what was more important to her to have a little chat. This upset M's programme and prevented her getting done in time for the news which did not please her at all.

Earlier in the evening 'M' took a bunch of flowers to Mrs. Hall and was rewarded with a couple of new laid eggs as a gift, very acceptable, but entirely unanticipated.

Sun 4.7.43

Our guest Green is his name evidently did not appreciate yesterday's time for breakfast and had it about 10 so we had ours earlier and he had the dinning room to himself, wanted to borrow the Sunday paper, was surprised to hear that it did not arrive till nearly two.

Ted turned up a few minutes to one and after hearing the headlines at 1o'clock we proceeded to negotiate dinner, I think he appreciated it all right and had a good tuck in of peas and batter pudding. He stayed a while but not very long, said he had to let the dog out.

It was warm enough for deck chairs on the lawn this afternoon (71) but rather threatening and a few spots of rain just about teatime.

We both went to church Sunday evening but the service did not last long and his sermon was well punctuated with 'There you are'

Mon 5.7.43

I think I must be feeling the effects of my truss for I have had a good day in the garden. Green was not early for breakfast and we had ours over and cleared away before he appeared and I went straight outdoors, took up my Shallots and also that row of Tulips across the kitchen garden. They have done fine and multiplied considerably. I dug over both spaces and am now waiting for rain to make further use of the space. Both lawns were attended to but they are so dry and going brown and only got 1 small bucket full off each. I did both comfortably and came in just after 8.30

'M' has been busy with red and black currants making jam and jelly and considerably augmented the stock of preserves. She has some more black promised for the weekend but during the evening found time to do a bit more tidying up to the Lovers Lane bank.

Tues 6.7.43

Although it was very threatening last evening the result was only a slight damping but the barometer is still falling and wind has backed from N. to S.W. so the situation is a bit hopeful.

Your letter ca me this morning. It looks as though you have had a full time, it's a pity things cannot be spread over and not so concentrated.

The music as you know was all sent to Welling by mistake, it's a pity but 'M' was not quite clear in the matter.

'M' is waiting to go to the village so will close down.

Cheerio and best love Pa

Crossways Ludham Gt Yarmouth Norfolk

Tues July 6 1943

Dear Billee

I hope the cherries which accompanied my letter reached you in good condition, they were packed up dry and not quite ripe. I find the only suggestion that they be picked, unopened and kept a day or two circumvents to a great extent the birds' activities.

I finished taking up my first row of potatoes and they were all the better for the extra time in the ground. I should say that almost doubled the crop.

'M' went down to the Church Room at 6.30 this evening to a meeting of W.V.S and coming home was caught in a sharp shower but came in and changed and took no harm and then we went over to Braeside for bridge. M and I were partners and had all the luck and were 2450 up at the finish of three rubbers. We got home soon after eleven and did not take long getting into bed.

Wed 7.7.43

Just for a change I was fired up and indulged 'M' with a cup of tea in bed or rather 2 and finished my breakfast before she appeared.

In the morning, I went over the way and scrouged a few leeks to make up my rows and also to take them some Cauliflower plants also brought back a couple of cookings of Broad Beans of which they had plenty. I had to well water the leeks as the small drop of rain made no impression on the dry surface.

Don't take any notice of the reverse of these sheets as I started o it supposing them to be blank.

We have had a little rain, with thunderstorms in SW and W but the rain was very little.

Thurs 8.7.43

I wrote to C and G this morning and 'M' sent it with a packet of cherries. We are having a fine time with the later cooking cherries.

This evening when I was watering by the frames two soldiers asked where the lane led to, I told them and they remarked on the garden and eventually came in and had a look round. It transpired they were both amateur gardeners and we had a good talk and compared notes as to dates for garden operations.

They came from the Southern part and their growing seasons were about the same as here, but a much warmer summer which favoured quick maturity, noticeable especially in the case of Tomatoes grown outdoors. Of course, the winters are much more cold – 40 at times but dryer and therefore not so noticeable. It was very interesting to talk to them but very little got done in consequence.

We have had thunder in the distance during the day but the rain seems to miss Ludham.

Fri 9.7.43

Had a good burn up this morning whilst the rubbish was dry, but during the afternoon slight rain persisted so I found indoor occupation.

'M' thinks that at last she has found a solution for her coat collar and has turned out a bit of Shackletons sink which with an application of brown dye is just the right colour. The little bit enclosed is a cutting and shows the colour.

'M' has written and I have not much ore to say and there is little for me to reply to in your letter which came this morning. I have no fault to find with my recently acquired appliance and am getting a deal of benefit from it.

I had wondered after the fuss A.W.B. made in a similar case but suppose he would not give it a fair try. My mind too is more at rest now that I have got it over. Well I'll finish up now.

Best love from Pa

PTO

Sat morning 10.7.43

So the long awaited offensive has started at last according to a brief announcement at 8a.m. Hope everything will go well Sicily Italy Albania Yugo Slavia is my idea of the way it may possibly go but with Asquith must 'wait and see'

Post just been and transformer arrived from 'Gamages' so live in hopes that I may get my own set back after 10 months. Pretty lucky to have been able to get the loan of a set to carry on work.

Pa

I've had so far 11/2 lbs of cherries.

Crossways
Ludham
July 8th '43

My Dear Babs

I've no doubt that you are thinking it is about time you heard from me, but I seem to have been so busy lately and so much to think about that the days go very quickly. These long days, somehow one keeps going and suddenly it is bedtime. I think I did write and tell you about the boyfriend who wanted accommodation. Mrs V called him a young Dr friend but I think at present that is only what he hopes to be. He was only about 21 or 22 and so would probably not have had more than half his training, still he was a very nice lad and not much trouble. Mr. V was able to have him there for meals so he only had breakfast here and after that we did not see him till the next morning when I woke him up with a cup of tea, with the usual remark after I had opened the curtains 'don't let it get cold' and the usual reply ('E -) -Alright'. On Sunday morning he had breakfast at 10.15. I woke him at 8.30 for 9o/c but he seemed more sleepy than ever so I told him he could have it later if he liked and he did. I rather blessed it in a way with Ted coming to dinner and you know he turns up about 1o/c or even before and comes to the kitchen looking round for to see how long he may have to wait. Anyhow I was ready for him and waiting to dish up at 1.15 when he arrived. He stood in the kitchen whilst I got things up and then helped take them in. I think he did very well last week and it could not have cost him much and live by all accounts for he could not have had more than ½ a dozen meals at home all week. Rene was expected back on Tuesday. I have not seen her so far. I have looked for the goat in the garden each morning since but have not seen it so I wonder if she did not come. I'm not surprised that you did not see her for I expect she was dashing about as she does here, only more so, and no time for anything, also I expect you were really too busy. You seem to be landed in for a lot of extra work lately, don't overdo it. Its easy to get into all these odd jobs but not so easy to get out 'saying one who knows' You will be pleased to know Pa's appliance is very comfortable now that he is getting used to it and he does not seem to get so tired as he did.. I was very surprised that they were able to fit him up straight away for once and Norwich was quite enough. Theres not much fun in going there and the bus was very crowded. Ludham is full up again S.C.as expected and are exceptionally nice lot they seem to be, very different to the men of our army especially the Officers. They all want to speak, but they are very polite and do not attempt to take any liberties. One young Officer told me the other morning that they are going to put on a show in the NAFI every week for the local people 'cost free' as he put it for there is not much here for us and only 2 towns so far away. Of course, I told him I thought it was very nice of him and was sure people would here would appreciate it.

Friday

Later yesterday afternoon I was picking up cones at the kitchen gate when an Off: came past, a Major, he said how nice it was just here and how fond he was of the country, thought this was a very nice part, spoke about the garden and I told him if they liked to send over, they could have some flowers for the mess. He seemed very pleased and said they were having a couple of parties for other units and would like some then so I suppose they will send over. At present we have masses of b looms and its nice for someone to get a little pleasure from them besides ourselves. He said the mess tables were usually very dreary. As you will see I am continuing this on Friday aft. And making B currant jam at the same time. Mrs Parker brought over 6lb on Tuesday and I bottled some and made about 6lb Jam. Today she brought me 3 more and I have done another bottle making 5 in all and the rest jam leaving myself just 6oz of sugar to carry on til next week. I have bottled altogether 9 of cherries sent you some sent 2lb to Welling given Madge some and there are still a lot hanging but they will be finished and am sorry to say by the time you come. I have also done 2 B of R.Currant and about 11/2 lb of R.C.jelly. Now I will have to hold off and save sugar for the plums. If only we can get some rain worth while we should have a decent few but a good may are falling, also a lot of apples are coming down. We had your letter this morning, I'm not a bit surprised about the last for when I saw the postmark I said 'Oh yes' this is Lord. Had it to post and I didn't: we wondered how it was we

had not heard. I did think of sending a wire but Pa said if there was anything wrong Miss S would have sent to us. Thanks for pattern also book. I made the sleeves and put them in and cut a collar but there was something wrong with it after I got it on and I couldn't see what. I messed about with it and altered it till now its no use at all. That costume is doomed it seems. Anyhow after studying your pattern and outing in some night work on it I realised I had put mine on upside down!! And used up the stuff so now I've got to think of something else for a collar. Still with the new cut promised in the next lot of coupons it won't matter much what we wear next winter. I sent to Scotland and got the 21/- back that will come in for something else. I still have not seen anything of Rene. The last time I saw her was the morning after you left in the distance when she waved. We saw nothing of him whilst she was away except that he came in for dinner and he called in this morning to know if I knew anything about the Church cleaning. I said no I only knew that Mrs. S was not doing it but had heard nothing of the other woman so he decided he would have to find out something about it before Sunday. I thought 'Get on with it' he has more time to chase about than I have. I suppose really, he is dashing about here and there after the new people and has no time for anything else. As usual he has found some marvellous 'pipe organists' as he calls them. He told us that last Sunday. Don't worry about Pa for there is really nothing to worry about. He finds the truss very comfortable and it was the best think to take the matter in hand. We were sorry to hear about Alic's mother. She will miss her help with the children apart from the loss. I will write to her although I hardly know what to say, one never does at such a time.

C&G seem to be looking forward to coming on the 24th the time soon comes round. I hope the weather will be decent by then and warmer for we have had nothing in the way of warm weather since you were here. We've never had a day when I have not been glad of a woolly coat sometime during the day.

Things are quiet overhead. We heard that Martham Street was m. gunned on Tuesday evening. 4 people hurt and one of the 2 were brought down. Well, the jam is nearly finished and I must pack up. I am getting on with the jumper by degrees but there are plenty of odd jobs to do in the garden We may be able to send you another lot of peas for next weekend. By the way I paid 10 for B Currants and 6 for Red, how's that.

Much love and a kiss
Mama

Crossways Ludham Norfolk
Sat 10 July 1943

Dear Billee

It's a long way to look back to and I'm afraid it will be somewhat brief and I'm sorry not to have posted to you in time to get it on Saturday.

The news today 8am was very good and the hiatus is ended and Jerry being chased again. I hope with the same success as in North Africa.

It's been a miserably cold day and we were glad of a bit of fire at teatime.

Sun 11.7.43

We both went to church at 11 am but there were only a few soldiers there, and they came voluntarily as there was an official parade, most of them were away on exercises.

Coming home from Church Madge complained of being unwell, she had been eating raw broad beans and I don't wonder that she suffered from such an interim meal.

There's nothing much to tell you about today. I went to post in the afternoon and met 'M' coming to meet me in the lane. It was much warmer and nicer than yesterday quite a real summers day.

Mon 12.7.43

Some of the yellow daisies (Camomile) have turned black probably from lack of rain as I turned some of them out and raked up a few Chrysants in pots and planted in place of them it's a

pity for they should have made a bright show but there are quite a number of clumps still doing well. Is a case of marking time in the garden and waiting for the rain to sow seeds of Turnip Carrot and onion and if rain does not come soon, I shall be short of these things this winter.

Tues 13.7.43

We have managed to secure the man who helped in the garden at Braemar to come and trim the Lovers Lane hedge and get some of the tall growths down and more level. He did all the heavy work but did not get it too level and I had to go along and put some finishing touches. Had to use a saw in places but the next trimming will only need to be a light one to get it into shape. There are some gaps that want filling and I must look round and see what I can find.

There's a lot of clearing up to be done and 'M' has been along inside but the bulk of the trimmings is outside and can be dealt with piecemeal.

Wed 14.7.43

Still continued the hedge job all day except to gather peas to send to Miss S with a few other oddments out of the garden. We kept on and came in to catch the 9.0 news.

Thursday 15.7.43

The parcel was posted in time for the morning collection and hope that it reached you on Saturday.

I started a bonfire this morning and took the precaution to have some water handy. There was a strong S.W. wind blowing and the dry stuff blazed up yards high and I was afraid for the moment that it would spread right along the hedge and burn that as well. It was lucky that I had the water at hand and I only just managed to save it. Hair on my arms got scorched but no further damage and, in an hour, I was able to leave the burnt-out heap. A slight shower this evening, St Swithens, what hopes for the next 40 days.

Fri 16.7.43

The first of the 40 days has produced no rain, so the old saw goes ()

I didn't feel too energetic this morning so spent it indoors sorting out, and replying to an accumulation of communications which took up all the morning and best part of the afternoon then found a few jobs in the garden but its heartbreaking even some of my tomatoes are standing still and they were so full of promise. 'M' has tidied up the front drive and I'm afraid I have been putting in time. I don't think that the raw raspberries on top of other fruit has agreed with me too well.

Sat 17.7.43

Had a lay in today did not get up until about half past 4, slept most of the time despite the roar of machines going East and coming back which 'M' says has been going on during the greater part of the day.

The wind has gone round to the cold northern corner and with a slowly falling glass and threatening sky looks as though the rain may come, but it has looked like that so many times lately.

'M' says that the morning was bright and warm and no wind but it different this evening as I am writing this.

Have had a letter from Gertie this morning they are both looking forward to coming down here.

It's a glorious cloudless evening but the clouds made one of the recent sunsets. It was after a shower with some breaks in the direction of the setting sun. The colouring started in the East a deep pinky purple on the edges of the clouds and the colour gradually spread overhead and the western sky became a vivid burning orange. In the South there was a dense cloud of dark steely grey colour which formed a background as we looked out of the lounge doors, The intense orange light picked out all the flowers in the border opposite. Roses, Shasta, Chamomiles and Buddleia. The orange light on the purple of the latter made a striking effect and the whole reminded one of the vivid colour photos in which contrasts are heightened. It was one of the loveliest scenes in the garden. It's a pity the colours could not be reproduced, they were almost unbelievable.

Sun 18.7.43

We didn't turn out very early this morning and in consequence did not go to Church. Its overcast with a cold N.E wind with a slight drizzle at times. I am feeling better than I did yesterday but not up to concert pitch yet.

The war news coalmines to be good I wonder where the next startling announcement will be made from. Evidently Russia is able to hold the Germans. I wonder how long it will be before we gain the Italian mainland. The Sicilian natives are evidently not going to give much trouble, but North and South Italy have different ideas and Sicily seems to be almost a separate country in their ideas.

Once again, I am sorry this is so belated but will post this afternoon perhaps 'M' will enclose a short one.

Cheerio and best love

Pa

Crossways Ludham Norfolk

July 19th 43 Monday

Dear Billee

They are showing some films in the big NAAFI recreation room in the camp and are giving two shows a night at 6 & 8 and no charge for admission.

We went there this evening at 8 and they showed 'The Coastal Command' interesting in places but the voice reproduction was vile and they were not BBC announcers, photography was good though.

We were home and finished supper (in the kitchen) by 10 o'clock. It was such a dull overcast evening that it was too dark to see much after 10.15 so we packed up and went to bed.

We have had a good burn up in the lane, started three fires and got rid of all the hedge trimmings about I should say a dozen cart loads. Had to go carefully and have water handy in order to prevent fire spreading to hedge. 'M' did a fine spot of work in helping but said she had a back ache after it.

Your letter came this morning. It doesn't seem that the present head is able to reorganise end of year jobs and spread over a bit but you always have a good long holiday in the offing, and you managed to see some pictures all the same.

The contrast between the KSLI (Kings Shropshire Light Infantry) and Canadians is most marked. The former is a red jacket old fashioned chip of the British Army as stiff as starch and more formal whilst the latter is of a reasonably free and easy kind and not like the KSLI. They mostly walk about without caps and any old suit of overalls. There are no bits of boys among them but they look a fit and seasoned lot and are fellow well met. All the same they will get there just the same notwithstanding the absence of spit and polish.

There seem to be quite a number of young wives with babies here. I suppose the marriage has taken place since they came here. They would scarcely bring them across the Atlantic.

Tuesday 19.7.43 (should be 20th)

Another dull day but still no rain and have been laboriously carting water to moisten a bit of ground to sow seeds on. In some parts potato foliage has turned yellow and I expect the crop will be a poor one but the spring green stuff is more important as potatoes are controlled plentiful generally. The poor lawns are as brown as a berry and when I cut the tennis lawn last after a 10-day interval I only got the grass box full once.

Have just been retrieving the wood ashes from yesterdays do; bright and crackling when I disturbed it but can't waste the potash.

Shall post this today I hope and must try and get another to you before Sunday.

'M' is doing a spot of washing and Ted has just wandered in and interrupted things.

Well Cheerio and best love Pa

Xways Ludham Norfolk
Wed 20.7.43 (should be 21st)

Dear Billee

I'm determined to let you have a line before Sunday although its not long since I wrote last.

Last evening Madge and Sally came over for a game of bridge. I think Madge looked a lot better than she had done lately and certainly took more interest in the game. It was a dull sunless evening but we managed to get through 3 rubbers before blackout and they got away before it was dark. Sally and I were 770 up against 'M' and Madge.

I went up to the village this morning but came back with about half I had wanted. It gets a bit monotonous to hear 'no over the counter'

Its another cold sunless day and its pitiful to walk over the brown grass and round the garden and no encouragement to do anything although one must keep pegging away with the water can to keep things going a little bit.

C&G say that they will arrive Wroxham at 2.42 and I went up to Brooks to get a car for them and whilst there I enquired about the early morning train from Potter and heard that it was 6.30am.

There was a concert party at the NAAFI this evening and as I came home along School Lane I heard some vociferous applause. One thing that mitigates the enjoyment is the backless forms except for a few chairs reserved for the officers. There was no charge for admission but a collection was to be made for a charitable purpose.

Thur 21.7.43 (should be 22nd)

Its another overcast cool day, rain seems as far away as ever. I wasn't the rain badly but I hope it isn't all being saved up for your and C's holidays.

The war news is good all round, especially in Russia but our men are having a hard fight in Catania but this afternoon report may tell us that it has fallen.

There isn't much to tell you. 'M' has gone up for milk this morning before I have finished this but I shall not close it up for a bit. There's plenty of time before 4o'clock.

Nothing more to add and I suppose you are counting the hours to Monday.

Cheerio and best love

Pa