

22 February 1943

My dear Hazel,

I know I should have written to you long ago, but each day I have hoped for good news to be able to cable to you, and even now I just can't realise that nothing has come through. There isn't very much to tell you really, except that John left for Gibraltar on the 19th December in a plane which has never been heard of since. Those are all the facts I was given and practically everything I know now. There were eleven in all in the plane, which would be fitted with dinghies etc. and everything had been thoroughly tested before the plane left. It reported that its W/T was working when it became airborne, and that is the last that was heard of it. The rest of the planes which left about the same time arrived safely, and have nothing to report regarding this one missing plane. Has it been attacked by an enemy plane, it should have wirelessly sent an S.O.S. and such would have been the case had it developed engine trouble, but no message of any sort was picked up, although they had several listening-in stations alert all day and night. It makes one fear very much that something very dreadful happened whereby they didn't even have time to use the W/T. and I'm more afraid of that than anything else.

It is over two months now, Haze, and there is really very little hope left now, although I can't believe that John is dead – it is impossible and I'm sure I would feel it if he were. I know that if given the slightest chance, he would pull through somehow, and I can only pray that he did get that chance. I know everything is against their still being safe, as had a passing ship picked them up, we would have heard by now, and also had they crashed or force-landed in neutral territory, we would also have heard. So far as I can gather they would not go near enemy or enemy-occupied land, so the only chance of their being prisoners and of our not having yet heard of it, is that they were picked up by an enemy craft somewhere near the Bay of Biscay. If only that were true... There isn't much chance of their being in hiding anywhere, as there wouldn't be any point in it in neutral territory, as both Portugal and Spain appear to release the internees after a short spell. It is dreadful Haze trying to imagine what had happened, and not knowing a thing definitely. If only they had wirelessly sent, they would have sent out craft to try and locate them, and would at least have some idea of what happened. It is the fact of not knowing anything at all which makes it so dreadful, and then again the worst thing of all is that nothing was heard from the 'plane which makes everyone think something very sudden happened. Someone told me a while ago that several planes have disappeared in the same way, and the only conclusion they've come to is that someone lit a cigarette before the time was up for doing so..., God I can't bear to think of that possibility. No, Haze, I feel that John is safe somewhere and I will go on believing that until I hear.

I know you must be waiting every day hoping to receive news, but I can't let you have any, and I feel for you Haze, as I know you love John. If only one day I can send you a cable saying he is safe, it will be the happiest day of my life. To me life without John would be hopeless.

Haze, Hett. has written me asking for Bill's address as I told her that he had cabled to me saying that John was sure to turn up. I told her to write c/o Base Records, Wellington, or sent it to you as I felt you would be sure to know his address. She hadn't heard from him for over a year and was afraid something had happened to him. When you do write to Bill, Haze, send him my regards and thanks for his cable which cheered me up a lot. Many thanks for yours too. I didn't like to cable you direct as I felt it would be too much of a shock, and thought by cabling the family they would be able to break it a little more gently.

I am sorry I have so little to tell you, Haze, and that is why I didn't write before. I have tried every possible source of getting information but it appears there is absolutely none. At the moment I'm endeavouring to get some idea of the route they would take, but naturally they wouldn't give us the exact details for obvious reasons, but if I had some idea it would be a help. Most people think the natural course would have been direct from Cornwall to the North of Spain in a direct line and thence hugging the coast, if they got that far. By the way, they were delayed in Cornwall for a whole week owing to weather conditions, but they were favourable when they eventually left. If only I'd known they would be there so long, I'd have gone down to stay with John...

This is all I can say just now Haze. I'm sure you will understand. I hope the babe is well and Andy. My love, Joan [signed].