

28 November 1940

Dear Haze & Andy,

Received your letter this morning including the one you sent to the fella, and as I have a few moments before going on duty thought I'd get this off. Sorry I was very slack before, but this one should follow closely on my last so maybe I'm forgiven. I was pleased you thought Muv was looking better though thinner – we've all been very worried about her health at this end as I know she is worrying unduly about the war and has always had more than enough worries over the house. The car should give her some relaxation certainly and I hope it helps to keep her mind less troubled for at least the time when she is motoring.

I didn't know Bill was out of work – the desire to keep him in N.P. is natural and not altogether unreasonable if he is due to be sent overseas shortly, but if he has yet a long time to wait it may be detrimental. I think I told you in my last letter that I got chucked out of the R.A.F., didn't I? – that is the flying. I'm now messing around in a job which some people describe as interesting although as yet I've not recognised that side of it other than that the system in general is so bad when it is understood interest just drops away. Maybe I'll stick it out.

Glad you have a job in the Lodge Andy which should prove to be a start of some kind for the chairs. Perhaps you'd rather wait though for more settled times before you have a go at them – a state of emergency must exist for at least 7 years which is no short time. As for myself I've not been inside a room for 6 months and it looks as though it'll be another couple of years before I do.

Clarkie certainly had made good use of his cough in getting such a nice home, but oh Hell I'll bet they're the house proud kind who would make living there a misery – I'd hate to misjudge them but those are my feelings.

Fancy Unc taking to afforestation – an excellent idea actually but one which should have been born many years ago.

I'm not surprised at Mrs Rickard having something seriously wrong with her altogether I would have guessed at T.B. instead of cancer.

You seem to beat us for dances then with your few – two since we've been over here. The Xmas cake is a helluva thoughtful, practical and good idea. Its impossible to buy stuff necessary for such here and even shop cake is awful because of shortage and prices – eggs 5d each for instance and that is typical of a general rise in prices – so once again thanks very much because I'll appreciate it all the more being in camp where food is not exactly on the Ritz menu line.

Old Jordan made a speech the other night – it was one of an Empire series and as the Canadian and Aussie efforts were quite good I lived in hopes. My Hell what a speech, what an effort – what a nothing – I'm sure I blushed but whether with shame or rage I can't say. It was the tripe that does more harm than good.

And now it is Dec 27 and I've just discovered this bloody letter. Hell I'm sorry but I've written so many letters lately that I've lost all track. Anyway as I've just returned from 4 days I'll have a little more to tell you. Actually I didn't draw Xmas, but some chaps willingly changed so I was very pleased. I didn't ride my bike down as I couldn't find a spare flying suit and it was too damn cold without one, although I must say so far the weather has been wonderful – few fogs and as yet no snow.

The fella's firm put on quite a good show, even if a little schoolish, at their Weybridge Hostel and although not as nice as being in our own flat we quite enjoyed it in spite of the fella having Xmas day only. The absence of raids was a great relief for all people and gave all a chance to both celebrate the Xmas they live for and to have a little necessary relaxation. We're expecting another invasion attempt any day of course but I feel sure it is destined to end as the last did. Maybe if they don't hurry we'll be in first.

Your parcel arrived a couple of days before Xmas but we didn't use any of it – I was able to get rations which kept us going in butter and the rest was supplied. The rest will come in very useful though, you can rest assured before this scrap is over, particularly if the fella takes a room again. Thanks very much for it and as I drink the coffee and cream when I go on duty at midnight or 4am I'll think of you people very kindly as its freezing going to work at such hours with nothing to eat or drink.

We would have liked to have seen a panto but getting to the theatre from Weybridge takes nearly 2 hours and it's a bit miserable. We spent all Xmas Eve and Xmas night in the pub in the end. I spent the day at Acton seeing the chaps at the Town Hall where I worked and I think I could get a job there again if I could get out of this outfit. I wish I'd been sure of that when I was suspended because then I was offered my discharge. A.R.P. workers are now exempt and I would prefer that work to this as one definitely does some worthwhile work and I could live a home life again, get better money and be doing a job which I loved and had done so much in before the Blitz.

As I said before I can't remember when I wrote last but in case I didn't mention it, isn't Quit a stunning looking kid – gosh the boys at camp have been very taken with her photo. Apparently our crowd had a wonderful time at camp over Xmas – plenty of beer and food and dances with the W.A.A.F.'s. These girls by the way are a very nice lot. They are nearly all independent (which is necessary in view of the little they earn) and their education had to be up to a certain standard. I was agreeably surprised as it's the first time I've met English girls in large numbers and have got to know them. They differ very much from the A.R.P. crowd.

The last 6 pay days I've drawn 10/- each time (5/- per week!) – I was overpaid apparently while on L.A.C. so now I'm paying for it – thank heaven the next pay squares me. By the way I may be able to get to some Lodge meetings shortly – I'll let you know later.

Well Haze and Andy I'll wish you both all the best for '41.

Cheerio and Love, John [handwritten].