

2 March 1942.

Dear Haze,

Your letter dated the 26th November arrived the other day – the 26th February to be exact, so that means it took three months to arrive! Anyhow the main thing is that it arrived, and I hope this does the same.

I am sorry it has been so long since you received a letter – I felt sure that John had written since last May.

I should think your infant is just about due, and I hope you have your wish and it turns out to be a Robert John. I can imagine the whole family being delighted – will it be the first grandson in the Anderson family? You mentioned in your last letter to John – which by the way arrived safely a few weeks back – that Andy would cable John when the babe arrived, and so as no such cable has made an appearance, I guess the baby hasn't either. The position at home must be very difficult as regards getting baby clothes, and buying the right clothing etc. as I can imagine how short such things are at home. When I hear whether you have a boy or a girl, I will try and knit you something and hope it will arrive, as there is still plenty of wool over here, and I think I can still send parcels over, excepting food of course.

John is down with me at present, and has been for the past four days – he has a week's sick leave, but isn't very sick! How he manages to get away with everything he does, I haven't the vaguest idea. He had a slight touché of the 'flu and was bunged in hospital for eight days, and was discharged as fit to resume duty, but somehow he got them to agree to 7 days sick leave, and so is down with me having a gloriously lazy time while I work! Anyhow he is busy finishing a rug which he started to make about a year ago. He got so bored doing nothing when he first started in the R.A.F. – or rather after he had finished flying – that he decided he must have something to do, and bought the wool for this rug. It is a beauty too, the pile being a couple of inches thick, but it has been a long job, and he hasn't touched it for about six months, but now he has got enthusiastic again and wants to finish it to leave with me in case he is moved, and also in case I move into a flat and want it. He has also occupied himself with trying to get back his ability to play the cornet. He has decided to buy one that has been hanging around the Mess for some while, and so is getting all keen again, and today I've had to buy him a spot of music – The Lost Chord, Holy City etc. – so he will be making some peculiar noises tomorrow down at the school. Luckily the music room is right at the top of the house, so the noise is kept away from the lounges. He has grabbed a fellow (who also is home on sick leave) to accompany him on the piano, and so I can imagine the two of them having a 'rare do' tomorrow.

We're still in the midst of winter, even though it is the beginning of March, but although we've had such a hard winter, perhaps it will mean a good summer, and in that case I don't mind so much. I see

in your letter you sympathise with us as regards the weather, and believe me we need sympathy! For the past three months, if we haven't had snow, we've had ice, and the icy weather is much worse, and the wind has been so piercing that at times one doesn't know whether one own hands or feet, they get so numb with the cold. We have a long drive – often 1½ hours – up to town and if we start off cold, we're just lumps of ice by the time we arrive at the office. Never in my life have I felt so cold as I have done this winter. I think John feels the same, but he would express it in richer terms I feel sure!

I'm sorry you didn't receive a snap of John – we'll see what we can do for you, as there are new snaps due any day now. I don't suppose you'll be able to let the proud uncle have a snap of the new arrival as films I believe are an impossibility to obtain in N.Z.

Like you, we haven't heard back from Westie for quite a while, although a Xmas card arrived a month or so back, but without any address. It had been taken in Abyssinia by an Italian I think – I mean a photo of Westie which was enclosed with the card – so he had seen a spot of fighting. It would be grand if he could get six months leave over here now, as he deserves it after being in Africa for 2½ years. He appears to have grown a miserable line of moustache and I don't like it a scrap – makes him look altogether different. John's really suits him, but I can't say the same of Westie.

This is quite a little while later, as I haven't had much chance of finishing this and getting it posted. In the meantime John has written to you so I will send both letters together.

Which brings me back to Westie. We have heard from him since I wrote the above, but his letter was written last October and took over four months to reach us. It was posted in Brit. Somaliland, and on the back was a second post-mark of Bombay. So Heaven knows where Westie is now as he said he hoped to be away from Somaliland by February as he couldn't stand a summer there. He was in hospital with dysentery when he wrote to us. John has written to him too but if I address it to Somaliland, it will just have to follow him to where he is, and will probably arrive in six months time. Still, it is the only thing to do.

I think I've mentioned before that all your cakes arrived safely, Haze, for which our combined thanks. You mention in your last letter that we have been getting too many cakes – well by now you'll know you can't send any food at all from N.Z. so we'll be jolly grateful for what we have received in that line. I should think you'll all have enough to eat at home, but you'll need all you can grow and produce, as from what I can see you'll have to be self-supporting in almost everything to save the shipping.

I realise how difficult it must be getting clothes at home, Haze, and I have every sympathy. At least you're not rationed, but can get them if the shops are stocked. I knew the price of nappies had gone up here, but to only 10/- or so. Prams here are very difficult to obtain, and are standard types without any springing, or very little, and not the beautiful works of art we used to see about.

We have been wondering quite a lot about Bill Ellis, as have had heard conflicting reports of where he is, the last news being that he was on his way overseas.

I am very glad that Andy is really liking the furniture business – it was such a complete break from chemistry. I'm wondering how you are getting on for the timber necessary for furniture making. I should imagine there are no houses being built, and I should think that would also apply to furniture-making. Here furniture – even second-hand stuff – is very difficult and expensive to buy, and lots of places say there is no more being made.

Thanks for the news about stockings and the price thereof. What a blow to have to pay 12/3d. a pair – I'd rather go without! Anyhow, you'll have no choice now I suppose, and with winter approaching you'll all be going around in slacks or knitting yourselves stockings, although I hear that wool is very scarce indeed. We had a letter from Mrs. Westwood, the other day, and she said that Lloyd had asked her to make John a pair of socks, but she had had to wait quite a while for suitable wool. I feel so sorry, as she must have had a lot of trouble over them, whereas wool is still comparatively plentiful although rationed. The socks haven't arrived yet though.

Glad Rae did receive my letter. She doesn't care for letter-writing much I know, and has very poor ideas of her ability as a letter-writer. I think Rae has most wrong ideas as regards her ability as a conversationalist and writer – she wants to pat herself on the back a bit and then she will be alright. If she keeps on telling people she can't write, she'll make them believe she can't, when she has a good style. Don't tell her that though! I think John has also written to Rae in his last big effort at letter-writing.

I hope Eric's brother in Libya is still alright. It is very worrying to have a member of the family so far away, without much news coming through. I think all the N.Z.ers and Aussies abroad are wishing they were back home in case a need arises to defend their own homes. I can imagine the thrill the pilots in Australia are getting at being about to have a crack at the Jap. invasion fleets, and so far they seem to be pretty successful.

I am soon leaving Levers to go to N.Z. House to work. I have felt for a long time that I have been doing absolutely damn-all towards the war effort sitting here trying to look busy when I'm not, and so I am going to N.Z. House to do some important war work, or so I hope. I am ready for a change, and quite prepared to work hard if it is worthwhile work. It is rather a blow leaving the School at Weybridge, as on the whole I have been happy there, and have had nothing to worry me as regards rationing, heat etc. and it is in a lovely neighbourhood. Still I'd rather be doing something useful and having less comfort, although I'd like both!

Cherio for now. Joan [signed with a handwritten note] PS, will send snaps in next letter.