

13 November 1939

Dear Haze,

Damn me I notice it was last July that I put pen to paper for you. It is a fact I'm getting worse as a correspondent. And now it is nearly Xmas and I suppose this and the enclosed will not arrive in time for your stocking. Nevertheless the fashion should still hold good by the time it does reach you and I hope the shade is ok. If it isn't it should be – it is one which you should wear particularly with black.

In a few minutes I'm expecting Gordon Saunders here – I've got the day off and he flew over from France yesterday to take another plane back tomorrow so is spending the afternoon here.

With great reluctance I refrained from joining the Anti-Tank Unit which N.Zers have formed in London. Trevor Bellringer and Geoff Amooore went into camp a fortnight ago. I imagine it'll be about 9 months before I'm called up. Needless to say my job faded out with the declaration of war but I was fortunate in getting into the A.R.P. I work 12 hours on and 24 off which gives me a day at work and 2 off, a night on and 2 off and it is very tiring as there is nothing to do and my job is on the telephone awaiting instructions for Air Raids which as you know have been few as yet.

I meant to write you as soon as we came back from our holiday to tell you of a certain section of it and do the same to the others and let you exchange letters – however as we landed here just prior to the outbreak of war, I missed on that. You see lighting restrictions were almost impossible to commence with and we were so completely disorganised in everything that one was forced to lead an entirely different life.

The day the ultimatum was delivered to Germany we went to North Devon (about 20 miles) for a chap to collect his sister as she was a teacher on holiday and had to get back for evacuation – traffic was in a state of chaos so this chap lent me his 12hp M. G. sports – we got as far as the other side of Bristol before pitching out and went on early in the morning – meantime she had got back somehow and I was unable to advise them both because of communication difficulties and it wasn't until in the afternoon when getting gas that we learned of war. We came across Salisbury Plains which as you probably know is the main military training vicinity and there things were beginning to look interesting.

Joan's firm seems to consider its employees very well and has so far put no-one off – of course I imagine they will be busy later on. Air Raid shelters are compulsory and they are bound to have good ones as there are some 4,000 employees at the branch where Joan is – also they are closing an hour earlier as from next week to give them all a chance to get home before black out hour.

I take the car to work and it's very hard on the eyes – visibility is utterly impossible some nights when it is dark and very foggy – living is just luck – we were coming back from Kensington Saturday night

and three times I was driving on the footpath. However it is only 5 miles to where I work and I've got to know the road fairly well now so I hope I don't kill anyone.

I was very worried to learn of Muv's illness although I realised she must be very run down. I haven't feared since she entered Iona but I presume she is now in Australia – a great pity she was unable to come to England – it would have done her the world of good to have her much loved English Xmas with her sisters. This bloody war has upset everything. We've been out very little lately except to the pub which is always a good break – I think I've told you that they are open until 10 or 10:30 and drinking here is on a totally different footing from home. Everyone goes in and there are seats and tables – that is in the lounge bars and it is most unusual to see anyone tight – I can't remember the last time I did. On the Continent of course they are one up on us here by being open all day and night all the time – liquor is obtainable everywhere too including cafes – well in fact tea is not drunk, coffee being one of the main drinks while wine is the chief one in France and beer in Germany and elsewhere.

(This is now two days later Gordon came and interrupted me) A bomb exploded not far from him and the building collapsed and hurt his arm – nothing very serious apparently and he left next day for France in another Hurricane – the type of kite he is flying there.

Had a letter from Muv yesterday and she did seem to be in a better nervous condition – I certainly hope so as I was worried before. I can't recall whether I mentioned to you that Muv had said previously that money was being held back per Quita because she was a minor – well I don't know the law and I don't know what it's all about but I take it Muv is a creditor the same as the others were and she should get her full due or if the Est is bankrupt she should receive a dividend. I asked her to find out but have not heard anything. I mention this to you as you may think fit to do something about it. She says Bill is in the Air Force – I am now wondering whether he'll be coming over here – I hope so as far as seeing him is concerned but on the other hand a pilot's life is reckoned at 4 hours and I'm not keen on that, although it doesn't mean lots are not more fortunate.

We've not been around much of late because petrol rationing allows me just enough to get to work and of course winter is well on its way now. It's fairly well dark at 4 o'clock. Auntie Lizzie said you were back at the bank again so I imagine you've been very busy of late – there is little time when trying to run a house and a job too I know. However I suppose you got a kick out of being back there.

I heard from Rae too and she seems to be settling down to Akld [Auckland] life fairly well but misses you people greatly she said. I seem to have had letters from most of late which only tends to make my job of replying even bigger. Mayat too wrote – she seems very disappointed in Raumai's husband – I gather women are his weakness – still it's not a bad one.

Westie's last request was for military stars so I imagine he's now a captain although he'll probably have to remain where he is, but not if he's got any say in the matter. How he hated the Gold Coast –

the heat gets him I fancy. I mentioned some time ago didn't I that we nearly went to India for 4 years – Westie was glad the war upset it as he is dead against the East.

Well Haze I'm trying to tear off many back letters so will away, with all good wishes to you both from us both.

Love, John [handwritten].