

PREFACE

Fifteen years after my father's death in 1995 at the age of 86, I found a cardboard box in my loft containing 524 letters. I know this is a 'device' used by authors to introduce fictional characters, but in this case it's true!

They were personal letters. The larger package was letters written during World War II between my father, Alan Stevenson, and his wife, my mother Sheila. I have already published them under the title: "Love Letters From World War II".

The second smaller package of eighty two letters were written earlier in 1936 between Alan Stevenson and Sheila Steven before they were married. In 1936 they were engaged but unable to marry as their parents expected Alan to have an income sufficient to support a wife and family first.

Many of the letters written by Sheila had no dates on them. Not long before his death in 1995 (Sheila had died in 1989) Alan had sorted through them and written the months on some of those lacking it.

How much they read! I had never realised how widely read they both were.

These letters cover a year of Alan's struggle for employment in London as a penniless young doctor. I have prepared them as this separate booklet.

I have provided footnotes, introductions to the events of 1936, an epilogue and appendices, but they can be ignored - the letters stand on their own.

Where words in a letter are unclear and I could only guess at them, they are printed in *italics*. Where I cannot even guess, they are shown as [*illegible*]. Sheila frequently missed dates out completely, or wrote the day with no month or year. I have tried to work out where her undated letters fit in to the timeline, I am sure some of them are out of sequence. To show where the date, or part of the date, is my estimate, I have in the letter heading put that part of it in *italics*.

Any corrections or suggestions are most welcome.

Robert Stevenson, Lymington, Hampshire 2018

INTRODUCTION TO 1936

Alan and Sheila were war children. World War I was very close to their childhood with its awful slaughter. Sheila was five when it ended in 1918, and Alan was nine. So when Hitler came to power in 1933 and started re-arming only fifteen years later, most British people were incredulous. Surely the Germans didn't want a re-run? Had they not caused enough deaths? By 1936 it was becoming clear to many that they did.

So, only 18 years after 'the war to end all wars' Germany was determined on revenge. Unwillingly Britain started to re-arm. It was a time of economic depression. Alan with an incomplete medical degree had thought his opportunities would be better in London than in his native Glasgow. He'd met Sheila when she was only seventeen and neither of them ever seem to have looked at another. In 1933 they got engaged but he had to earn the magic £500 a year before Sheila's parents would agree to the wedding. Today, 2018, the ambition to get £500 a year seems extraordinary. But consider that, adjusted for inflation £500 then is about £32,887! The average wage was £129, or today £8,485.

Sheila's mother Mamie was very 'stiff necked' and was never happy about her only child marrying a young struggling doctor without a penny to his name and no significant inheritance.

This was still a day of chaperones for 'respectable' girls! On Sheila's visit, by train, to London to see Alan, a chaperone was required and Aunt Daisy (Margaret, Mamie's younger sister who was 54) agreed to go with Sheila. (See letter dated 30th April, though a chaperone is not mentioned). There must have been collaboration here because Aunt Daisy parted from Sheila on arrival in London and met her at the train for the return journey.

So on the few occasions in 1936 that Alan and Sheila got together it was very difficult for them to be on their own. Such occasions were remembered with relish.

The great crisis of 1936 to most people was not Hitler, who seemed to many like a comic figure with his toothbrush moustache and ranting speeches, but the abdication of King Edward VIII. Strong passions both for the king and against him were aroused. It is difficult today to relate to what a crisis it was seen as at the time.

The King- Emperor had been introduced to an American socialite, Wallace Simpson, in 1932 by his then mistress Lady Furness.



Wallace Simpson



King Edward VIII

Wallace Simpson was divorced from her first husband and pursuing the divorce of her second. It seems that Wallace Simpson became the king's mistress in 1934 although Edward denied this.

The marriage was opposed by the governments of the United Kingdom and the Dominions of the British Commonwealth. Religious, legal, political and moral objections were raised. As British monarch, Edward was the nominal head of the Church of England, which did not then allow divorced people to remarry in church if their ex-spouses were still alive. For this reason, it was widely believed that Edward could not marry Simpson and remain on the throne. Simpson was perceived to be politically and socially unsuitable as a prospective queen consort because of her two failed marriages. It was widely assumed by the Establishment that she was driven by love of money or position rather than love for the King. Despite the opposition, Edward declared that he loved Simpson and intended to marry her whether his governments approved or not. As an indication of the strength of feeling see letter 19th November from Sheila with shop girls fighting, 'the shop walker had to separate them'.

Still, in these letters there is no mention of Hitler of Germany. Alan and Sheila were totally focussed on his getting a job well enough paid for them to marry and be together. The rest they assumed would be a blissful togetherness. Fortunately; they did not know that two years after their marriage in 1937 what we now know as World War II would break out four months after the birth of their first child (me), and they would be separated for six years.

Sheila was some three and a half years younger than Alan. She had been educated at home and was an only child. We know that women mature more quickly than men and it shows in the letters. Alan constantly needs re-assurance and support and gets it. For the rest of his life he was in many ways reliant on Sheila, something which has become clearer to David, Gill and I as we look back on them.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ



Alan Stevenson at about 27

Alan Carruth Stevenson. Born 27 Jan 1909. So 27 years old in January 1936. The date of the first letter. Died in 1995. Alan was born in Glasgow and attended the Glasgow Academy. He graduated in 1933 from the University of Glasgow with a degree in medicine.

He did three housemen jobs at Glasgow Royal Infirmary.

In 1935 he moved to Highgate Hospital in London – receiving £250 P.A. plus board and lodgings. Moved to London because he recognised that to have the M.R.C.P (Membership of the Royal College of Physicians) would give him much more opportunity back in Scotland.

He got nervous about his chances of passing the M.R.C.P and took the Scottish examinations which were separate – giving several sets of initials after his name. He passed them and passed his M.R.C.P.

Worked at Bow Street and took the Diploma in Public Health as he felt that was the quickest way to earn the £500 pa required to marry Sheila.

When Alan landed the job of Assistant MOH (Medical Officer of Health) in Wakefield he was at last able to get married which he did on 25th March 1937. Alan and Sheila had got engaged in 1934 so it had been a long frustrating wait of nearly three years.

Alan well remembers the interview at the old Wakefield Town Hall where Sam Buttterworth's retort came from the end of the table. 'Ees a clever bugger this'.

Alan had to do a refraction course at this stage because of involvement with testing of children's eyes in school medical checks.

Before the war Alan was made Deputy MOH and earned and got a pay rise to £600 pa!

Annie Gordon Sheila Steven. Born 2nd Aug 1913. So 22 in January 1936. She always used the name Sheila though she was affectionally known as known to Alan early on as 'Shiney'. Sheila died 1989.

They met in 1930 when she was 17, and he 21. In 1936 they had been writing to each other for 4 years, so since 1932.

They got engaged 5th July 1934. They got married 25th March 1937.



Sheila - Annie Gordon Sheila Steven at 22



Sheila (right) with a young Larig. Mamie looks on in apparent dissapproval.



Sheila and Alan in 1937 with Dalmations Larig and Morlich. Alan's elder sister Moira is to Sheila's left

Their Parents



From Left to Right:

James Steven (Jimmy) – Sheila's Father
 Jessie Steven (Mamie) – Sheila's Mother
 Christina Stevenson – Alan's Mother
 Allan Stevenson – Alan's Father

Alan's Parent were Allan Stevenson And Christina Lawson

Allan Stevenson had been born in 1878 on Balgray Farm near Beith in Ayrshire. The small farm had been in the family for some 100 years. Allan was the 10th of eleven children and Balgray was quite unable to support a large family. Balgray was inherited by the eldest boy, William, in 1884 when his father James died. So in around 1894 at 16 Allan walked into Glasgow, completed his schooling and got a job as an apprentice draughtsman in the booming shipbuilding business. He rose to be a distinguished citizen becoming President of Institution of Engineers and Shipbuilders in Scotland. He was awarded the C.B.E. in 1946.

Two of his brother's went to Australia and the rest dispersed to Canada and elsewhere. Allan married Christina Lawson in 1902.

In 1936 they lived in modest style in 1 Kensington Gardens, Glasgow.

Christina Kennedy Lawson was born in 1878. Her father was Alexander (Sandy) Lawson an instrument maker and amateur actor known for his role as Tam o' Shanter (Robert Burns Classic poem). Her mother was Eliza Kinnon.

Sheila's Parents were James Steven and Jessie Hodge

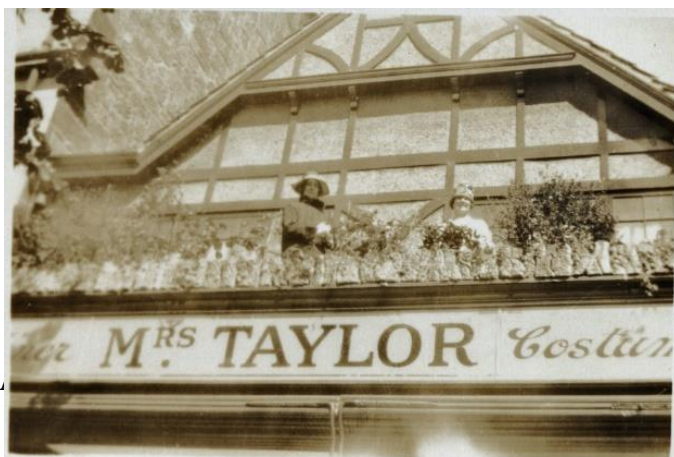
James Steven took over his father's bronze founding business, Steven & Struthers. Sheila was their only child. Jessie Hodge's father was a prosperous accountant in Glasgow.

Allardine (Dr) - M.O.H. Wakefield 1936 – Allan first met Allardine when he went for his interview for the job as Assistant Manager of Health in Wakefield in October 1936. He found him pleasant but a little boastful and did not think Allardine wanted him.

Aunt Aggie (Agnes) & Uncle Willie – Agnes Steven B 1878. Jimmy's sister. Married to Uncle Willie, William Stephens. B 1876. Note the different spelling of Stephens. Uncle Willie was not 'family'.

Aunt Bet – Bethia Campbell Hodge.

B 1869. D 1943 at 74. Sheila's Aunt. Jessie Hodge's (Mamie's) sister. She was married to Charles Jebb who died in 1909 at the age of 38. They were childless.



Aunt Daisy's Shop in St Andrews



Bethia Lille Campbell.

Aunt Daisy- Margaret Hodge

Daisy is short for Margaret as the French name for a daisy is Marguerite. She was 54 when she agreed to go with Sheila as a chaperone to London. Margaret married Alexander Crawford, a

schoolteacher, no children. Mamie was not happy about her having a shop St Andrews. Not socially acceptable to be a shopkeeper. They mover to Crawford Lodge in Ardrossan later.

Aunt Isa – This was Marion Isabella Hodge nee Robertson. She was born 1889 and married John Gordon Hodge in 1914 so she was 47 in 1936. John Gordon was the brother of Jessie Steven, and so her aunt by marriage.

Aunt Nettie – Died 21st Dec 1936 of cancer. Nettie was Janet Boyd Steven, Jimmy's sister. Married to Archibald Faulds, Uncle Archie. Her death is referred to in Alan's letter to Sheila of 28th December. I suppose 'Nettie' from the final 'net' of Janet.

Aunt Sadie – Sadie Louise Brown. Born 1929. Died 1914. Her father was George Alfred Brown Jnr. Her Grandmother was Sarah Armour Steven so she was from the Steven family. Known as 'Sadie the axe' after it was alleged she attacked her husband with an axe. This may be just hearsay as I can't find a marriage and think she died unmarried.

Aunt Sarah/Aunt S – Sarah Helen Brown, Born 1903. Married 1938. Daughter of George Alfred Brown. and sister to Sadie Louise Brown.

Bernard (Dr) or Dr B - Bernard is a shadowy figure, we never even learn his Christian name (mind you Alan thinks it's a Jewish name). After a struggle Alan gets a job with him and a flat (part of the deal?) next to Bow Street Courts. It was a struggle to dis-entangle himself from Dr Hill.

Doreen Stevenson – Doreen was Alan's younger sister. She became a doctor. She later married Dr Thomas Colver and lived in Sheffield. She had children Allan, Graham, Hilary & Christine.

Faulds – John Steven – Known as Steven. Son of Archibald Faulds (Uncle Archie). Born 1901. Married to May nee Mary Murray Morrison. A cousin of Sheila's and a friend to both Alan and Sheila.

Faulds – May – Married to Steven Faulds. Full name Mary Murray Morrison. Born 1902.

Hill (Dr) or Dr H – Alan worked for Dr Hill as an assistant, lodging in the Hill's house. His earnings were meagre and the little boy, Ian, exasperated him. He was never very good with children. Alan definitely felt himself exploited and described the position as that of a 'dogsbody'. I think this is Dr J Anderson Hill.

His address was Glenapp in the village of Mortimer, near Reading, at this time.

Moir Stevenson – Moira was Alan's elder sister and much loved by all. Her health was never good and she never married and died in 1951.

Steven – James (Jim). Jimmy (James') brother. He never married and always seemed to be unwell.



*Doreen Stevenson
Aged 20 in 1926*



*Moira Stevenson. Died 1951. Aged 33
in this picture*

Uncle Archie – Archibald Galbraith Faulds. Married to Janet Boyd Steven, Jimmy's sister.

Uncle James – James Duncan Hodge, B1875. So Sheila's uncle and Mamie's brother. He would be 61 then which is about right.

Uncle Willie – William Stephen. See under Aunt Aggie.

Weipers the Vet - William Lee Weipers, FRCVS FRSE

When Sheila knew Weipers he was a young vet of 32. No doubt he obtained valuable experience dealing with Larig.

Poor Weipers had a hard time with Larig, he was a young vet then. Larig intensely disliked him. Scenes such as appear in the letters do make you feel for him. However he went on to become a distinguished man and I thought him interesting enough to give him his own Appendix.

Addresses

Alan	
 Achiltibuie Hotel	A small crofting settlement north of Ullapool in Wester Ross. It's still there though extended. Sheila and her parents went up there regularly in the summer. All of them enjoyed trout and salmon fishing and climbing. It is interesting that in 1936 there was no electricity.
Glenapp, Mortimer Nr Reading, Berks	Variously Glenapp (the house), Mortimer (the village). Mortimer was near Reading. Now part of it. Alan had a room there but had to share Dr Hill's house with the objectionable little boy Ian.
2 Broad Court Flats Broad Court' Bow Street London W.C.2	Variously: 2 BC, BC etc. Broad court was a block of flats close to Covent Garden in London. Also in block next to Bow Street Court. He carried out autopsies nearby and worked for Dr Bernard think as assistant.
Public Health Department Town Hall Chambers, Wakefield	Alan had unspecified Lodgings. Think he was moving about so gave that address.
103 Vassal Road, Brixton	Stayed there very briefly. Don't know why.
 1 Kingsborough Gardens, Glasgow	Various KG, 1K, K1. Now divided into flats but a spacious pleasant house in 1930's. They moved there so Alan would be close to Glasgow University. They were married in Hyndland Parish Church next door on Hyndland road. It can just be seen in this picture.
 Strafford Arms Hotel, Wakefield about 1936	A hotel where Alan stayed while house hunting in Wakefield. Essentially a grim pub and known as the local boozer, but it was cheap.

Sheila	
32 Falklands Mansions, Glasgow.	Variously FM or 32 FM. Just off Hyndland Road. About ¼ miles from Alan at Kingsborough Gardens.
 70 Crown Road North, Glasgow	Variously C.R.N. Right on the edge of open land and a reservoir. Ideal for Larig
‘Winder’ Drumclog Avenue, Milngavie, Glasgow	Taken for June but also 20 th to 22 nd Dec 1936. Think now demolished.
 Black Bull Hotel, Killearn near Stirling	Quite why Sheila was there for a week on her own with Larig I don’t know. The Black Bull has recently been renamed the Killearn Hotel. It is no longer a nice place and locals advise against eating there. A request for a half of lager for Elisha in a bar with four men in it was met with a grim look and ‘we only serve pints here’.

Timeline 1936

Alan	
1 st Jan to 15 th May	Glenapp, Mortimer, Reading
15 th May to 22 nd Nov	Broad Street Flats
24 th Jul	103 Vassal Road
28 th Sep	51 Torrington Sq
14 th Dec	Wakefield, Strafford Arms

Sheila	
1 st Jan to 17 th May	70 Crown Road North
13 th Aug to 19 th Dec	Falkland Mansions
4 th Jul to 8 th Jul	Black Bull Inn
20 th Dec to 22 nd Dec	‘Winder’, Milngavie
24 th Jul to 26 th Jul	Achiltibuie
May?	‘Winder’, Milngavie

The 1936 Letters

JANUARY 1936

6th Jan 1936. Alan, Glenapp, Mortimer to Sheila

Monday 10.50 PM

My Dear,

I hope that you will get my note, posted today, tomorrow, but I doubt it.

I got here about 9.45 AM and went with Dr Hill on his rounds till lunch. Then I did some patients from 6 until 7 then had dinner and have since been unpacking.

It's lovely countryside but Oh my what a way of doing medicine. We visited everywhere from various estates to vicarages to slum cottages.

Dr & Mrs Hill seem very nice. My room is a large one but I can see that my own company is going to be chilly for there is a fireplace but it shows no signs of use in the last 20 years. I have set my alarm for the awful hour of 7.15 A.M.

Well Dear I'll tell you my opinion of practice when I know more about it. Meanwhile I'm sorry but I must get to sleep as I have not recovered from yesterday's exertions yet. I was tired this morning.

Oh Dearest I wish I was with you now. Alan

Tuesday

7.45 on a very wet morning. Good sleep and waiting for breakfast.

Give my love to your mother and father. Hope Mrs Steven¹ got some satisfaction yesterday. Alan

9th Jan 1936, Sheila, 70 Crown Road North, Glasgow to Alan

Thursday 11.30 PM

Dear One,

There is nothing really to tell you, but I just want to write and probably there won't be time tomorrow. I heard on the wireless tonight of bad, or rather more, flooding round Reading and bad storms in England. At that time the night here was very calm, but now suddenly the wind is tearing round the house and driving torrents of rain. I do hope you are in for the night, I have visions of you in the floods and a little while ago wanted terribly to phone you, but discovering it was eleven o'clock restrained myself, with the pious hope that you were in bed and asleep and a feeling that I was becoming funny.

Mother didn't feel so good tonight, and I've got Larig² on the sick list too. He became very listless and dull eyed in the evening, refusing to go out, and lying at the fire here taking no interest in the preparation of dinner downstairs, usually a time when he is most in evidence. He has been very sorry for himself all evening. But after refusing some warm milk a short while ago thought better of it and finished it when I was out of the room. He has a bit of a cough and must have caught cold somewhere. I'm remembering now funny things he did during the day, when he was rather more subdued than usual. For instance for no reason at all he turned on a border terrier, savaged it and eventually hit its head on the wall, letting it go when it screamed. It tore off with a large muddy mark on its head! There was a lady with it too, I was 'fair ashamed'.

I excuse him now, perhaps he was feeling bad and the sight of it revolted him! By the way he had a fight with a bull terrier when he went out with Dad on Saturday. Well well; this is a tale of woe. The 'pup' is in his basket now, decked in an old green jumper of mine, can you imagine what he looks like? I'll issue a further bulletin in the morning!

I was speaking to Moira³ today, she said she thought you were interested and I can't remember the exact word, but it was something like soothed, by your conversation last night and the

¹ Sheila's mother Jessie Steven know as Mamie.

² Larig is Sheila's Dalmatian dog. See 'NOTES on Larig' in Appendices..

³ Moira was Alan's elder sister. Also a Doctor.

suggestions. Poor Moira she really is giving a lot of thought to you and doing her best to be helpful. But – what do you think of the bright suggestion of writing to Gordon Holmes (is that the name?). Perhaps one of the big pots in your own locality will leave you a fortune (even a half fortune) in gratitude for the light you brought into their lives!!!

Dear old soul, I love you. These days I think I'm looking years younger and much nicer than you've ever seen me, and it seems a waste! As sure as fate when you come home my hair lies down flat and I get a spot on the end of my nose!

I didn't go to badminton tonight, dinner was late, it was horribly wet and I was lazy. I suppose that's the real truth of it.

You will have noticed by this time that every few lines my pen spits out a blob of ink. It's my poor old fountain, but it's bust and has to suffer the indignity of the ink-bottle, but seems to have a way of getting its own back.

I had a letter from Steven¹ a day or two ago in which he expressed the oft repeated hope that we would 'honour' them some weekend.

A letter from Aunt Aggie last week discloses that she sent a card at Christmas to Alan and does hope it reached him!

I must get to bed but I just want to go on blethering. Oh! my dearest that I could tell you how much – our old cry.

But 'not on the lips of men love's secret lies, remote and unrevealed his dwelling-place'², and after all we know all that needs to be known; and as to that secret of love which is fettered within us, and lacks crude expression, let us be glad to have it so, content to let it remain with each other, knowing by that which is within one inexpressibly what is struggling wordlessly to express itself in the loved one, and so understanding silently that great thing whose dwelling place, as the poet observed hundreds of years ago, is most certainly hidden.

Yes dear I think I definitely ought to go to bed, by this time I expect you will agree with me. Good night dear one.

Friday 2.40 5 PM

One thing after another. Poor old Larig's got distemper³. He wasn't any better this morning so I phoned the vet and asked him to call and see him. Weipers⁴ arrived at lunchtime and gave his verdict, after we'd wrestled with what W calls the most powerful dog he has ever come across, and this morning the most murderous looking, while he took his temperature and sounded him. Then I got his mouth tied up and he had the serum injected.

So now there's nothing to be done except keep him warm and put on a coat I've devised out of some old soft felt when he goes out, and makes him look like the pantomime horse. However his outings are of about ½ minute duration, then he crawls back to his basket and flops, as if he were sore all over. Glad he got the serum so quickly, vet says it will make a big difference.

Mother is better today, but still inclined to be headachy.

Well dear that's all the news and as I've some things to do I'll finish this and let you have a note on Monday. Always Sheila

¹ A cousin of Sheila's. Steven Faulds.

² Poem by the Divan of Hafez, a Persian poet of the 12th Century A.D. See Appendices.

³ A highly contagious and often fatal viral disease of dogs.

⁴ 'Weipers' or 'W' was a young vet who lived in fear of Larig in 1936. He became Sir William Weipers and was a most distinguished vet. See D P & appendix.

14th Jan 1936, Alan, Glenapp, Mortimer to Sheila

Tuesday

My Dear,

Thanks for your letter and for Bulletin which arrived today. Glad to hear poor old Larig is improving.

What I was going to say about your Dad was that one day he would suddenly ask me when I was going to be in a position to get married, and advise me to get on with it.

Very glad about new car. My my, won't you be posh! It ought to be really fast and nearly as fast as mine.

Mine is being decoked today and I hope to get 70 out of her then.

Fine you getting out on 27th. Jim¹ has been very decent taking you around.

I don't feel like writing about dances. It makes me blue – so I won't.

Well it's a hard life. I gather from your writings that while I would not win a beauty prize I'm your 'Old Dutch'. Thanks Dear – satisfied.

Shiney² this exile goes hard at times – tonight being one of them. Have been less busy since Dr H came back but still did 34 visits today. Have only 16 tomorrow, nominally my half day, so I'll go down and help with my car. There is little or no cylinder wear and the valve seatings are very good. In other words as I always said 'tis a grand wee bus'. I'll be sorry to part with it if I have to in my next job. I get days when I like practice.

I intend to go up to London on Sunday and see John Fergie³, Highgate and McNicols. I'm looking forward to a run in my extra-sporty going well car.

Dear I would like to have you just to talk to. To no one else can I just blether about things I see and think. In other words there is no relaxation – that's the word – here.

I'll be sorry when Mrs H & Ian come back tomorrow. He's such a noisy wee devil without being interesting.

Dear I must write home now. I have not written more than a scrawl since I was up at Christmas. Love Alan

20th Jan 1936, Alan, Glenapp, Mortimer to Sheila

Monday 11.30 AM

My Dear,

I'm sitting before the fire alone hearing at intervals the repeat of the bulletin about the King⁴. It is sad for I think he has been a good king.

Well I went up to London yesterday, first to Edgware. Great distress about *leaving* & good wishes. They have ordered a new 25 H.P. Wolseley Coupe.

Then to Highgate⁵ where I enjoyed seeing 'the boys' again & in some ways wished I was back. Then to meet John Fergie & have dinner with him and his sister. I left about 9.30 and was in at 11.30. It was a rotten journey over icy roads rapidly thawing. However I enjoyed the change yesterday and will have another day of revelry when I go up to interview Prof Frazer.

We have been very busy for the past week and a measles epidemic just started has added to our troubles, however it is making time pass quickly Dear.

And Dear you said you would not send me any more love letters. Dear please do. Please write just as you feel at the moment.

¹ This is another James Steven, Jimmy's nephew, so Sheila's cousin.

² This rather silly nickname for Sheila is not found in World War II letters!

³ John Fergie was an old friend of Alan's from University.

⁴ King George V died that day. The new king would be Edward VIII. Edward VIII appeared in a window of St James's Palace to watch the proclamation of his own succession, quite against protocol with his, still married, American mistress Wallace Simpson the following day. He was to be a destabilising and controversial figure.

⁵ Alan had moved in 1935 to Highgate Hospital – received £250 PA plus board and lodgings.

Dear, as I feel just now, I just have the need of you pervading all my being and it would be untrue to say anything else.

I long for, hope and pray for the time when we can get married Dear. For I want you selfishly all to myself.

I received your postcard today & it reminded me of your very first one to me in Ireland. And ever since Ireland I've known too often the feeling of emptiness in separation from you.

I can lie back in my chair and really feel as I did then in Dublin.

The doubts and fears of it – the longing & the shyness can even now make me tremble.

I very well knew, as I lent on the rail of the boat going down the Clyde that evening, that all the good and decent impulses in me long to put my arms gently round you.

I knew that the ideal scarcely formulated in my mind had come to life and that I was going away from the girl whom I adored if not loved, reserving love for something returned. I knew that nowhere in that coastline was that girl in whom all sweetness and fragrance was, and in whose eyes there was truth. And I knew that for me there was a vision to be cherished unsullied and that, come what may, that vision or it's memory would never be dimmed by anyone else.

And in these days in Dublin when I was tired and when I was seeing very sordid and very beautiful things, there was before me always just Sheila Steven. Always in those difficult days when I was afraid to think of the possibility of having your affection, I rigidly reaffirmed my Creed that I wanted only one thing – that Sheila Steven must be cherished and be happy.

And Dearest if my hopes have been frequent my Creed remains. From doubt to realisation of my most sacred designs took a very few months from these days in Dublin.

Since then I have been received into the fullness of your love and in intimacy have found more sweetness, more fragrance and joy surpassing.

Dear One in your love I live. About me always there is the new atmosphere of you. Dear One please tell me if ever I fail you unknowingly.

Good night Sheila and may God keep you. I am, yours always. Alan

FEBRUARY 1936

1st Feb 1936. Alan, Glenapp, Mortimer to Sheila

Saturday

My Dear,

Thank you for your letter and the enclosed drawing which is very good. I don't know *Blanfield* though.

Well I'll tell you of my doings first. I've been busy and am very pleased to have this evening to myself, the others being at the Cinema. I have been too busy to think all week but have had no work to do since lunch time today, and I have read and enjoyed 'Jeremy' by Hugh Walpole. It's a story of a little boy, and a good one. I agree that Linklater is no wonder but he has some wonderful flashes of risky humour which make me very amused.

My cold is much better and beyond being a little stuffed up am perfectly fit. Yes the hanky is a ghastly colour but a very dear hanky for all that.

Don't you worry even if you can't write long letters just now. I had very good ones last week, and after all I in turn may soon strike a meagre patch.

Poor old Larig is certainly having a rocky journey. He has been more trouble than he is worth.

I have an appointment with Prof Fraser on Wednesday at 2.p.m. so we shall see what's what.

I wonder if you were at Murrayfield¹ today. It seems a long time since International Day was such a thrill and had an atmosphere all of its own.

You are very funny about Dads offer. You just say it's kind and you hope it won't be necessary. I have not felt so sleepy for a long time as I do now.

10 minutes later.

Having just put on the wireless am feeling much more awake.

I hear that Moira is coming down a fortnight today for the weekend. It's very decent of her but I wish it was to be you.

The evenings are lengthening and sometimes I see old Spring about. The floods have been out again and I've made some very undignified visits.

But Oh dear. If you could know the sick empty feeling that comes to me at times. For almost 1½ years it has been my too frequent companion. Dear one live in my love and like me, admire me if you can for your affection maintains me now and always.

Remember me to Mrs and Mr Steven. Love, Alan

P.S. Have phoned the Dr Bernard and am seeing him at 5 P.M. The flat is just next to Bow Street Courts.

Bless you I want you in the sun today. Alan

2nd Feb 1936, Sheila, 70 Crown Road North, Glasgow to Alan

Sunday

My Dear,

I'm sorry, but not in the least surprised at your blowing up over practice and your job – but there I get stuck and don't know what to say, which is of course small wonder as there is nothing I can say, except what you already know, that I love you and understand and that's not very helpful and may even be irritating.

We were at Greenock on Friday, mother deciding to come too. Aunt S was in town and Sadie was out when mother and I arrived having dropped Dad at one of the yards, but Jim² (who was in bed)

¹ Scottish Rugby Football ground near Edinburgh.

² Jim (James) Steven was Jimmy's brother and so Sheila's 1st cousin. Born 1912 he would be only 24 in 1936. What his illness was I don't know.

was glad to see us. We had tea with him and talked till Dad and Sadie arrived almost at the same time. It is only comparatively recently I've realised how wonderful Jim's spirit is. When one grows up with a thing like that one is apt to take it as a matter of course. He chatters away as cheerfully as anyone and with knowledge about so many things. How melancholy it would be to be left often alone (as he necessarily is) with only Ronnie wandering in and out.

I had one of the nastiest drives ever going home, heavy rain, greasy roads and banks of fog. But the new car is just great.

I'm glad I didn't go to the match yesterday as it seems to have been a rotten game. I would pretty well have to have gone had it been a good day as about a fortnight ago I said I'd go with Inez. However I'm just as glad it was wet (I'm going to become a miser!). Mrs Harry treated us to tickets for The Scottish National Players at night. It was an excellent show, two Scotch plays, the best things I've seen for some time. Adeline had tea with me in the afternoon, she seems to be getting mildly grey.

My Dear what would I not give to spend even an hour with you today. The sun is shining and it seems even less right than usual that I can't be with you. Perhaps it's just the beginnings of my cursed spring restlessness happening. I remember you once, years ago, annoying me very much about that, by saying superciliously, 'of course you're a woman and so less civilised than I'.

I must have changed a bit since then because now I can chuckle when I remember it.

Larig is still giving a bit of worry being far from his old self. Vet says if he's not much better by tomorrow he'll give him a good overhaul. I think he (the Vet) hopes he'll be spared this!

About phoning. I think Thursday night would be good as Aunt Isa and Mr John are coming and family will be sitting downstairs. It's a pretty hopeless business conversing by phone anyway, but a chance call with people in the room is worse than that. I would say I'd phone you on Thursday but it's so difficult to forecast your movements. But if you'd like me to, let me know. Yours ever and love, Sheila

5th Feb 1936. Alan, Glenapp, Mortimer to Sheila

Wednesday

My Dearest,

Could you manage the old 3 days in a week idea? Even if it's only a note to say that you have no news, it's a letter. I'm alone in the morning room, Dr H being in London and there being no surgery this evening. In the afternoon I had my spring changed and was chatting to a local worthy the old carrier.

He is 79 and goes about in an incredibly old chariot. He has been carrier for about 50 years and has never been in bed. We stood and watched his old horse being shod in the smithy and he said 'I've had him 14 years and he's never had a sore or felt a whip. He gave up beer 40 years ago on the advice of the doctor at that time.

I got back about 4 and have since been lazing about not very sure what to do with myself.

I've got the blues badly and I just don't know how I'll stick out the winter. It's all right when we are busy but its foul to have spare time. But I must just sit tight and make money to save. I shall try to stop smoking. Don't laugh dear.

Awful mess in Welsh Colliers¹. They are a quarrelsome crew in South Wales.

I'm going to start reading Prescott's 'Conquest of Mexico' tonight. I read the Conquest of Peru many years ago but it was an abridged edition. I shall go to bed early and try to wake early. I don't know whether Mummy went home today or not but I rather think she will leave it till tomorrow or Friday.

I am still stuffed with that last cold and I shall try the effect of long sleeps and no smoking. What a toll of misery? I never can understand why you did not fall in love with a rich young man with a

¹ There was constant discontent over safety and conditions in the Welsh collieries.

few cars, a 'place' in the country and an Oxford accent. Life would have been simpler with such.

Bless you for having me my dear. I was going to give impressions of practice but I shall not until a month or so more. Well now for Prescott.

Thursday 7.40 AM

Was called up at 1.25 A.M. and went to Burghfield and sent a surgical case to Hospital. But although it was 3½ miles away and I had to phone the Hospital, I was back in bed by 2.20 AM.

Your thermometer in a case is coming into its own. I use it at least a dozen times a day and every time I think of Shiney¹.

By the way Dr H has a glass eye. It was injured by a tennis ball and had to be removed.

Well today I expect we shall be not too busy. I'm not sure whether that is an advantage. I'll add something if by any chance there is news in the post.

Love aye, Alan

10th Feb 1936, Alan, Glenapp, Mortimer to Sheila

Monday

Dear,

Just have a moment in Morning Surgery and keep thinking what a dear you are so thought I'd write and tell you so. Alan

10th Feb 1936, Sheila, 70 Crown Road North, Glasgow to Alan

Monday

My Dear Alan,

First I'll tell you a little of the doings of the last few days.

On Sunday afternoon after I'd finished your letter we went to Bearsden. After tea Dad and I took Larig his first decent walk since his illness, on the golf course. It was bitterly cold with an East wind which made one weep ceaselessly. In the evening I went to Trinity Church and enjoyed it very much. McC is a grand preacher. There was a riot there recently when he had, in the interests of miners and brotherhood or some such, a Hindu and a Moslem giving their points of view from the pulpit. The Scottish Protestant League were there in force, made themselves very noisy, then walked out – a protest!

Monday was busyish and in the evening I went to badminton wearing a very smart white jumper, of which in the making you impolitely inquired, 'was it an undervest'!!

Yesterday Daddy had business at Burntisland, Kircaldy and Dysart, so I went as chauffer and, as it was a lovely day, mother decided to come along too. It was a heavenly sparkling day, but dreadfully cold with ridges and piles of snow in the country where the sun had not reached it, and icicles hanging from the rocks. The car is just fine and very snug. Yesterday was the first time I'd driven her any distance. With mother aboard it was obviously impossible to see what she'd go up to but she cruises at 60 with a minimum of noise and effort.

This afternoon mother is at a matinee with Aunt Nettie and I am being very pleasantly lazy sitting at the fire with the wireless on and when I finish this letter I have lots to read. I saw an advert in the paper today 'Are you winter weary? If so take Ovaltine'. Well I am winter weary but not so far as to seek the help of Ovaltine. I'm weary of this intense cold and iron earth and yet it's only Feb and I remember a day in May last year at Tod Head when we were half frozen. It's just struck me that it's an impertinence to say this when sitting in front of a good fire, there are those less fortunate. You know I long just now for the house and garden at W.K.² But no, the place is awful now. I was very attached to Anfield³ and it was great fun having it to go to, also there was no never ending battle

¹ Alan's strange affectionate name for Sheila.

² West Kilbride.

³ It seems the family had a big house at West Kilbride once, called Anfield..

against ceaseless dust and dirt as there is here, people dropped in any time, sometimes for a weekend and were still there at the end of the week often more and it was never any trouble, it was a very elastic house, we could sleep seven at a pinch besides ourselves. Yes it would be nice to go to sleep again, hearing the sea, knowing one was not only a brief holiday maker at its side, but belonged. And when one woke to look out on the garden which was not shared by someone else. I've not done that for well over five years now, but at one time it was very much part of me. This will all sound daft to you. I can't hope you'll understand – to quote from a book – no you'll think I'm quite potty. Larig is sitting looking at me with an expression of profound melancholy. I think music depresses him.

Dear thanks for your letter which reached me on Monday after all. I will! It was good to hear your voice on Sunday night and to hear your laugh. Dear I love you so. I have tried to understand your letter, it's revolutionary isn't it? I know how you feel, is it how you're really going to feel or just a spasm. Does that sound nasty? I'm sorry but I know from experience in a lesser way, that for some obscure reason one has days when one sits on the crest of the wave, but I also know that some people seem to be able to stay there. Dear I never expected to be married to you in less than a year, it will most probably be much nearer two, so don't worry about that. Re: parents. You have a quaint idea as to their functions, they may, oddly enough, not be so keen to be quit of me as you suspect.

I think you say that you do not want to be in Glasgow. Now everyone seems to say that your best chance would be in Glasgow. It would be okay if you could live a wee bit out, but your objection is, I take it, from the work point of view. Then you say 'preferably in London'. I don't know whether that is intended, or if you've missed a 'not' out of the sentence, but I do know that last winter it was a festering place, for many reasons, and a place which you would on no account think of living in. Do you now consider settling there? I think London would be all right for some years, but that prolonged residence there would get you down.

I think I'll stop, even to my eyes the foregoing remarks aren't very bright. If only you could appear for an hour on the chair opposite me.

I've had an invitation from the Berkeley Robertsons, to a dinner dance at the Auto Club on March 13th¹. I haven't replied yet. If Doreen is able to go I'll not think twice about it, in any case it might be rather amusing. I don't know, perhaps I shall go. Oh! Why aren't you here? Were you ever at home?

Bless you dear one. Sheila

15th Feb 1936. Alan, Glenapp, Mortimer to Sheila

Saturday 3.15 PM

My Dearest,

At last I can write a decent letter. I'm sitting alone before a fire. The others are at golf and I stayed behind on pretext of fiddling with the car.

Well this practice business is curious, sometimes I like it and sometimes I hate it. It would certainly be much better to be alone in practice but it's very curious. My time (6 weeks or so) is up now so I'll give you my impressions.

I shall tabulate them for and against. Supposing it to be in the country.

For:

- 1) Lots of fresh air and a peaceful life.
- 2) An ample income can be obtained in practice after a year or two.
- 3) You get to know a large number of very decent folk.
- 4) Leisure for reading and sport can be made.
- 5) You see some cases early.
- 6) You can observe a few people over a long series of years.
- 7) It's the easiest means of a livelihood.
- 8) You get gratitude.

¹ A Friday.

Against – Mostly Professional

- 1) You see very few interesting cases and lots of rubbish.
- 2) You diagnose with certainty few cases and you lose all your interesting ones.
- 3) You talk lots of ballyhoo.
- 4) You are always in the position of ‘this is too difficult for me you must see a specialist’. When the truth is – you are a B.F.¹ and I’d like an X-Ray.
- 5) You get gratitude at the wrong times.
- 6) You are at the beck and call of everyone.

In bed just been out having seen a case. My Dear to sum up I think G.P. is as good as anything else, no worse, no better.

I’ve been thinking a lot about the future ever since I came here. It’s clear to me that we could be very happy in practice, preferably in a country district near the sea. For I dream of us alone on our fishing boat.

My Dear I love you so hard and fiercely, and yet softly and tenderly. Thank goodness I never have to doubt that you will cast up my mistakes to me. I know that if I choose wrongly you will be kind.

But Dear I miss you so much. Nothing is quite worth doing. Everything is dated by my next time to see you. I have not heard from you since Tuesday – The longest interval for 4 years². You seem very far away tonight.

Sunday 9 AM

Another very wet morning. It has been pretty wet recently.

Oh My Dear I’m longing to hear from you. I am lazy and depressed this morning. However I’ve only four visits to do and then I shall get down to my car dynamo which has been giving me no little trouble for the past four days. I do hope it’s not going to land me in for more expense as I’m not saving as much as I’d like. That £7.10 to the Medical Agency is a big blow. And running a car is expensive no matter how you take it.

I feel very much these days that I’ve wasted my time taking my M.R.C.P.³ and it weighs rather heavy on my chest.

Oh my dear if I could only see you. It’s such a long time till Christmas.

I hope your mother is improving. You have not mentioned it in the last two letters. Well I must get along and start my visits.

Bless you my Dear and Oh Dear Shiney⁴ let’s hope time passes quickly till we are together. Alan

¹ Bloody Fool

² So Alan has been writing to her since 1932!

³ Membership of the Royal College of Physicians taken in Glasgow.

⁴ Shiney! Yes this was apparently Alan’s pet name for Sheila.

MARCH 1936

5th Mar 1936, Alan, Glenapp, Mortimer to Sheila

Thursday

My Dear,

It was a very pleasant surprise to get your letter today after having one yesterday also. Yes Dear next Friday is quite close now but it seems such a long time to me.

Dear one I have a scheme I'm going to try to get off on Friday at midday¹ so that I can get the 1.30 P.M. train on the excuse of the Robertson's Automobile Club Dance invitation.

Wouldn't it be good to have a dance and a few sweet hours more with you. I could change on the train and be ready to take you for I hope (if I manage) that you would wait and come late with me. Would you please?

Dear One its ten weeks since I saw you. I can't see your face any more. I can't feel you in my arms. But I long for you with all my heart.

Letter is only page 1 of a longer letter.

19th Mar 1936, Alan, Glenapp, Mortimer to Sheila

Thursday

My Dear One,

This is just to reach you on Saturday. I'll have peace and leisure (I hope) to write at the week end as Dr & Mrs + Ian are going off to Rottingdean.

It's fine to hear of Doreen passing in Chemistry. She & Mummy are probably coming down on Monday and I hope to see them on Wednesday.

You worry me Dear by saying 'do you feel as if you can hardly remember unalloyed happiness without deliberately shutting out trouble' or words to that effect. It seems to me that I've given you almost your first taste of sorrow and that in so many ways are you less happy. I am not convinced that my appearance has compensated.

I was always a sorrowful soul but I kept it all to myself and no one realised. Now I have a 'confidant' and have unburdened myself.

I've changed tremendously in the years I've known you, I've become less easily roused to enthusiasm but I feel that I have acquired a capacity for determination and when an enthusiasm is roused I may be more constant. You see my first big disappointment (and it seemed at first the very bottom fallen away) was failing in the Final Exam. No one could have been so 'just right' as you were then. You consoled me and never mentioned any possibility of it being a delay to our hopes. You bucked me up by forcing me to do other things. I've had great faith in your wisdom since then.

But life since I met you has assumed a more vital purpose. I would have been content to slip along in Glasgow if it had not been for you.

Dear it's a week tonight since I left. May few weeks go by till I see you again. Dear you must think I have a funny way of being affectionate. But believe me even when I sit and read a paper with you about it's with a grunt of satisfaction.

I've written to Prof Turnbull and hope to hear at the beginning of the week when he can see me. I don't know whether to go even if he takes me. I don't see my way very clearly at all just now. Only I loathe practice and want to avoid that.

But only one person in a million would just put up with me dithering and I don't want to take advantage of you.

Well I'll write a decent letter at the week end. Dear dear one I love you. I wish I could kiss you goodnight. Alan

¹ Alan is determined to be with Sheila if she goes to the dance. We know the dance is on Friday 13th March, a week ahead, so that gives us the date of this letter written on a Thursday as 5th March.

APRIL 1936

4th Apr 1936, Alan, Glenapp, Mortimer to Sheila

Saturday

My Dear Sheila,

I await very eagerly your letter. I've nothing really to say just now but I feel that I must write. It somehow establishes contact that I miss so much.

I see that Ian Hart is getting married today. He is going to East Africa and his wife follows in a year.

I do wish we could get away for a while and we may manage it yet although America is out of the question as the 'Rockefeller Travelling Scholarships' have I see been abolished.

Anything more cramping, more detrimental to clear thinking, more stultifying than practice I can't conceive.

It's made me dull and more uninteresting. Now for your sake I would like to be more colourful.

Do you compare me unfavourably with such colourful people as the Everest Climbers?

Remember if you do, that opportunity is a great thing and that I am to a great extent passing through lean and grinding years just now.

We must get away from the rut when we are married and together. Even at first if it means economies we must get right away for our holidays. I do long for a boat.

The sea is so clean and there are no potholes on it trodden down, with matchboxes and beer bottles alongside in mute evidence of all pervading humanity.

Could you suggest an original way for us to spend a week in May? Think, rack your brains old girl. Think how free you will be with your short hair and what a lovely month is May. We must do something with it.

Could we go to some little seaside place with one, or both, mothers as chaperones and go sailing.

Or somewhere where we can plan and execute long walks taking a whole day. Walks when parental councils will be disregarded and waterproofs left behind. Hills there are in Wester Ross.

Oh Sheila let us climb An Stack¹. It's never been out of my mind since I saw it.

Sheila could we? Sheila that's a great suggestion. Tell me your ideas. In May there are no shooting parties, no trippers. I'll get on shorts again and be 17 with you.

Dear I'm grinning from ear to ear and I've just discovered it.

I hope you like the dog (I suppose you know it's a pyjama case).

After a good deal of wandering I found him in the embroidery department of Heals and I thought you might not have one. (I mean a dog – case not a pyjama case)

Dear one write me as often as you can till you come down. The days without letters are not worth having.

Dear if you can put something in about trusting and loving me. And if you can, forgiveness.

Dear it's a long time till Monday midday for your letter.

Well Dearest tell me all about yourself. I'll stop for just now and carry on again.

Sunday 5:30 PM

The Hills are out to tea and I sufficiently showed how much a nuisance Ian was yesterday for a maid to be detailed to look after him after tea. So peace reigns.

I feel tomorrow 2 PM when you're letter comes is so far away. I've done two blood counts, each at £1.11.6 for Dr H today. He might give me something for them, for after all he has always had to pay for them outside before. But the more he makes the more mean he is. He sent out 350 accounts this quarter. Two of them for over £100. I calculate he will pull in £900 from all sources this quarter and he admits that he has never done nearly so well in a quarter.

¹ Stac Polly

But if I was in practice I could not even ask for about ¼ of his accounts and none would be so big. So it's perhaps as well I won't be.

I ought to have been greasing my car today but it's so cold and raw that I was lazy.

I've been reading Pathology in a desultory manner and dream a lot of you between times.

I'm so wondering how annoyed or fed up you still are.

Dear this being away is very hard. All the time there is aching and sorrow and I wish it was over.

The very last week in April is 23rd to 30th. So at worst I shall see you a week on Thursday. Could you not stay at K.1.¹ for a few days before that girl comes down? When will you know?

I said after I left – I've counted only three weeks ago today – that I felt that this would be a short separation but Oh it's a long one and I've nearly as long again to wait till I see you. Two more weekends with mighty little to do and two more weeks of uncongenial work.

Dear even if I am earning nothing in London I'll count it well spent capital to come up every two months.

Oh Sheila I'm very tired I'd give such a lot to spend this evening with you as it is only right that I should.

And Dear the worry of knowing whether I'll be able to marry you soon. If even I could fix a date within narrow limits I'd be happy, as I think you know, uncertainty (for example as to your visit) always makes me wretched.

Whenever you know tell me when you are coming.

Dear I'm getting to the stage of repeating myself. I'll just stop, and think of me if you can aching for you and needing you with all the energy I possess.

Look after your Dear Self and know how precious you are. Alan

13th Apr 1936. Alan, Glenapp, Mortimer to Sheila

Monday

My Dearest Sheila,

I should like very much to phone you tonight but I feel that I should probably either miss you or will get you away from your dinner. So I think I'll leave it and wait with as good patience as I can till tomorrow night.

Well I got to Brooklands only to find the racing off because of the rain. I arranged that Dr H should leave any visits till I returned but I was back by 3:15 PM.

However the main thing is that I had a run and I enjoyed seeing the wonderful cars in the paddocks.

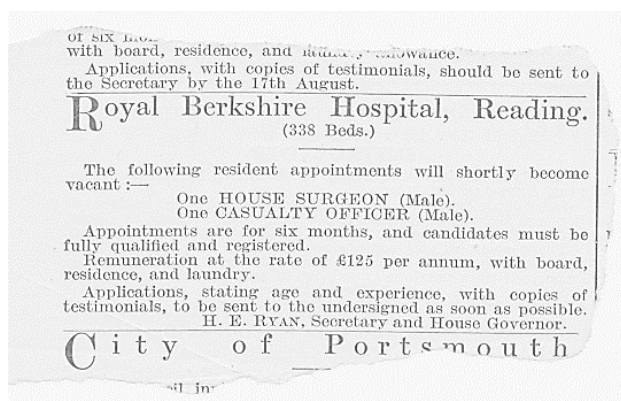
I'm only just recovering from a frightful day yesterday and believe me I shall be glad to split the list with Dr H tomorrow.

In spite of all this business the time will drag and it still seems very far away to your visit. At any rate Dear I ought to get a fair amount of time off.

Enclosed is an advertisement which I have of course answered and am anxiously awaiting a reply. It sounds pretty much what I had in mind.

I suggested that I would do both the evening surgeries and the weekends for keep and 1½ Guineas.

That would keep me and I'd feel much happier. If I got another £1.1. for an afternoon clinic I'd be happy.



¹ 1 Kingsborough Gardens, Alan's parent house.

I must take you to Brooklands some day. It's a very amusing place and I was very disappointed not to see any racing.

Well now I began to write at 6.30 and it's now 10.30 so you may see there have been some blank intervals.

We have finished the week's booking which is a relief.

I'm afraid you would not get your usual picnic lunches with this cold weather.

Are not some people lucky? Think of the Robinson's both by results in their work *petty* medicine. Yet they can afford the Ski Club and above all to see you this weekend.

Dear Shiney I love you well this week and I still get a bit of shock when I think of your hair and it completely disturbs my mental picture of you. (Which always puts me off to sleep!)

But somehow I feel that I'm loving you as you would wish. That is gladly in that you are having a change, but sadly in that I can't be with you to share the joys of the Spey country. You will not be so pleased to hear that I'm very anxious to hear you tomorrow and know that you are safe home.

Dear Shiney so many times – this afternoon for example – there are fine things to do which would be very much finer with you. I hope when we are married that we shall remember these times of anguish and be thankful. But the past has a habit of appearing rosy and we may forget.

I cannot settle to think here somehow and I've done no decent reading recently.

Even medically I've only been able to keep up with BMJ and Lancet recently.

Somehow although its lonely living alone I'll be happier.

Shiney I'm hoping for a letter tomorrow. It seems a long time since Saturday.

Well Dear I do hope nothing interferes with your visit. Dr H is going to town on Thursday to a consultation and will go to the Medical Agency to see what can be done about my successor.

Perhaps luck will have it that he gets someone early.

Tell me what does the first week in May mean. Do you know any dates? Please let me know if you do.

Well Dear there is not much else to say, this has been a long weekend but it will be a short week. The shorter the better. Agreed?

Bless you, Alan

17th Apr 1936. Alan, Glenapp, Mortimer to Sheila

Friday 9AM

My Dear,

I want you to get this on Monday so I'll get it posted tomorrow morning.

I'm having a gala day tomorrow and expect two letters, as yours posted late last night have not arrived today.

You will be dancing now and it seems very strange to think of you in the Union where I first took you to dance.

Dear I'm very jealous tonight and wish it was over. I hate to think of you so nicely dressed and attractive, dancing with lots of people I don't know.

But soon I shall have you for a short time all to myself.

Dear I shall meet you quite definitely at the train on Wednesday.¹ It's all arranged, and if by any chance we are busy, I can come down and do a few visits here in the morning.

So please tell me by what train you are travelling from Glasgow and at what time it arrives at Euston.

Please write just a note on Monday and then phone about 7.30 on Tuesday before you leave.

Great news there is a direct line Southern Railways from Weybridge to Reading. So some evenings you can come across that way to Reading and I can take you back.

Isn't that fine?

¹ That's Wednesday 22nd April.

This will make it much easier to see you almost every night.

I think we may manage every evening with lunch. Dear I'm terribly frightened in case you don't manage.

I'm really building up myself this time and a disappointment would be very hard to bear.

I'm waiting up till 11 o'clock when Mr Sainsbury's¹ Rolls Royce is coming for me. I've had one trip already today.

He blew up well and truly today and took an overdose of chloral when drunk. Fortunately it is not my prescription but one he had from Lord Horder.²

The German Concubine is in great distress. I don't think she has an assured pension!

I went into Reading and had a short haircut in preparation for your visit. Dear I want to look well in your eyes as well as beloved.

I wish the intervening days till you come would fly. It's still four days and a night off. It would fall that there is an extra hour in between with the coming of Summer Time.

However I suppose it will pass, though it seems about impossible at the moment. Dear I'm never longed for you so much. I want the peace of your presence badly and I can't think what it will be like when you go again.

By the time you get this it will be within 48 hours of reunion.

Oh Sheila my Dear Darling it will be grand to have you again.

With all that is decent and good in me I long for you. I can't write more.

I shall drop you a note to reach you on Tuesday morning.

Meanwhile I'm impatient for tomorrow's letter and your phone on Tuesday.

Remember I'll meet you definitely on Wednesday at Euston.

I'm too full of longing and tenderness to write more.

God bring you safe to me My Dear. Alan

30th Apr 1936. Alan, Glenapp, Mortimer to Sheila

Thursday 6.50 A.M.

My Dearest,

You are still on the train and I hope asleep.

I was wakened at 4.45 A.M. and caught the 5.30 to Reading and here I am back in the old room and I'm rather wondering if the last week has been true. Dear One I have not felt the blow yet. I read newspapers feverishly till I fell asleep last night in the train and again in the train this morning and it was only coming out in the car that the full enormity of my loss was apparent for the place at my side was your place and you were not there. So what would have been a bright lovely morning for wanting to go on and on in the fresh air, fell very flat.

Oh My Love it's no easier to write than to tell you of my happiness and now my loss. But if you can recall the past few days of good companionship I think you will be happy, for I felt yesterday, when you told me how happy you had been, that there was no limit to the standard of living together for us.

For us the rest of the World is a fine place with good folk in it and beauty to our seeing eyes. But it can be very private and very complete to us without the aid of other people.

I feel like Mr Micawber³ waiting for something to turn up but perhaps we shall be lucky and be able to get married before we expect. I look forward fervently to that day.

It made me very happy to hear you say that you thought that misunderstandings would go with the strain of separation. I have felt that rather nervously for a long time. But in the interval Dear Girl of Mine I shall try with all my strength to avoid the rudeness and lack of sympathy which have led to

¹ This is probably John Benjamin Sainsbury. Died 1956. Who the 'German Concubine' was I cannot say.

² Thomas Jeeves Horder, 1st Baron Horder. Born 1871. Died 1955.

A leading clinician and diagnostician of his day.

³ A Dickens character from David Copperfield who lives in hopeful expectation that 'something will turn up'.

such bickering in the past.

I don't suppose you know how much I respect your guidance and am willing, aye wanting, to be advised by you. Twice again over the past week you made me realise that. Guess when and I'll tell you if you are right.

Dear I want to write on and on for I feel near you and – Oh my Dear Love of the Bright Eyes and pink cheeks whose lips feel still on mine. Oh My Dear I can't go on now.

Dear one take very great care of yourself for I can't think of anything happening to you.

God bring me safe to you again and grant us again much happiness.¹

Alan

¹ So Sheila has been in London for the past week, arriving 22nd & leaving 29th. Alan is still based in Mortimer.

MAY 1936

5th May 1936. Alan, Glenapp, Mortimer to Sheila

11.15 in Bed Tuesday

My Dear Sheila,

I meant to write earlier tonight but had forgotten that Dr Hill wanted me to go to the Morris Film at Hewsons Garage tonight. So off we went and it was very enjoyable. It certainly makes one keen on Morris cars and therein fulfils its purpose. I had really a slack day and only did 15 visits today but had a busy afternoon clearing up the car insurance.

Apparently Tomkins did not fill in space about brokers so the Insurance Company wrote me & said they would not insure the car unless the brokers were *relieved*.

This was of course absurd as the brokers are very powerful and I cured that snatch to the left by simple adjustment.

So I got Dick Mason to give me an independent report and got another from Tomkins. Then I sauntered in and told old Tebbit what I thought of his old Insurance Company. I think it will be O.K. now.

I was very glad to get your letter on Monday and I look forward to tomorrow.

I have had word from the Doctor in W.C.1. I am to phone him tomorrow morning & make an appointment. His letter contains no details whatever. His name is Bernard which sounds Jewish.

So I may go up to see him tomorrow night. The trouble is that Dr H has no-one at present even possible. I don't want to do it but at the worst I might have to leave him before he does.

As a matter of fact he could manage alone if we don't get any business as he only did under 10 visits today.

I wish I could hear of you settled with a house. It was funny of John T to ring up.

I enclose photos of Flossie the Spaniel pup of which I spoke presented to me by her in person in an envelope. I saw a five litter of liver & whites 3 weeks old at a farm the other day.

Two separate people have told me that they are sorry I am leaving to get married! Apparently the news of your presence in my car spread like wildfire and it's been village gossip for days.

Well its fine to be coupled with you even if they don't know how lucky I am. Dear Old Shiney I'll not see you in 70 C.R.N¹. again I'm afraid.

What memories that house holds and what secrets! Shiney since seeing the Morris engined boats I've gone all nautical again. I do want a fishing boat!

Wednesday

No news this morning. I must get this posted to get the mail. Love, Alan

7th May 1936. Alan, Glenapp, Mortimer to Sheila

Thursday 9.30 AM

My Dear,

The Hills are out and I am alone before a fire in the morning room. This has been a really bad day, very dull, misty and wet. I was not busy and in the afternoon went into Reading to a breakdown yard where I purchased a reversing lamp for 2/-. It is a necessity here when out a nights as there is very little between you and deep ditches in the little lanes.

I've settled down to my chronic state when away from you which is a sort of quiet delirium in which nothing seems worth thinking about, in which no idea comes clearly. It's so very true a description of yours about those sudden moments when a 'wave of tenderness' sweeps over one and when the curious combination of tenderness and sublimity are associated with you.

I received my longed for cheque today (£30) so your (longed for) £2 will be arriving soon.

¹ Crown Road North, Glasgow.

I enjoyed the visit to Oxford enormously and am more than ever convinced of the wonders of the Morris. We were held up with Dr H's car at the Service Dept so they gave us a guide between us for the tour. I would like the 16 H.P. Coupe.

Then last night I went into Reading and saw 'Algy' Robertson who has been in a nursing home for a month following tonsillitis. He was very pleased to see me and we had an interesting time comparing practices and so on.

So I've been leading the gay life. I hope you enjoy your spot of the bright lights at the theatre on Saturday.

Well Christmas is not very far away and perhaps I'll not have such a rush as last week-end.

Oh I do so want to get married and know the bliss of being with you, living with and for you. For my dear I do love you so deeply, so tenderly and so very truly. I like you. I admire you as the dearest person I've met. I want to be so used to your presence that in the things we do together I'm hardly conscious of you but very content with my lot.

I can never think of you as younger than me for I think you are very much wiser. It all amounts to this – you are my own dear love.

Bless you and keep you. May I make you happy. For Dear I do want you to be pleased with me.

Regards to Parents. Bless you my Darling. Alan

9th May 1936 1936. Alan, Glenapp, Mortimer to Sheila

Saturday

My Dear One,

Your letter came this morning instead of midday as usual and gave me a pleasant surprise.

I'm grieved to hear of you conversing with men from your bedroom but then I always knew you were rather immoral. Look how I've been led astray.

Glad you've had some decent weather. This is our first decent day so far.

A walk to the Mull sounds great. I like your shorts no matter what anyone says.

Was at 'flicks' last night. 'Jack of all Trades'. Jack Hulbert and Robertson Hare. Very good show.

I hope to get some tennis with Percival tonight. It certainly is dry enough now.

I am going to start packing my trunk and getting it off, on Mon or Tues, by advance baggage.

Where everything will go I don't know as I brought a lot here loose in the Riley.

Dear Girl I wish it was next Tuesday. I'm very fed up and anxious to see you. Dear you must know that I feel the depth of your love. I don't know why but I don't care. I just know it and accept it thankfully.

It's not logical to love me but I don't care. I need you too much. I always knew that you were of the decent folk who love through thick and thin. And seeing that you have made me your object of affection I have never doubted it. In some ways it would have been better if I had for then I would not have dared to be so unkind to you sometimes. For always being too sure of you I have taken advantage of it. I'm sorry dear love of mine. I'll try never never to be knowingly unkind again.

I love and cherish you. I respect you. I admire you and I can see you apart from my love as all that I've ever desired of and admired in woman, and more besides in my love than I ever suspected.

Oh my Sheila what happy times lie ahead if we are spared.

I try to behave when away from you as you would like me to. I can say truly that the old childish rule of 'never doing out of mother's sight' is one which I follow in that I try to behave as if you were always present. Dear One I look forward to M with great longing.

Bless you, My own, Alan

9th May 1936. Alan, Glenapp, Mortimer to Sheila

Saturday 6.30 PM

My Dear Girl,

It was extra fine to get your letter today. I can't tell you how happy I am about the house. It sounds just what you and I would like.

And to think of you there gives me tremendous gladness. I'm only sorry that it's just for a month.

Well I woke up today very fed up with toothache which I've had on and off for 10 days now. It was rotten last night and I slept badly. So I hied me to a dentist this morning and he yanked out to brutes.

I'm now all swollen out and very glad for once that you are not here to see me.

Sheila when I'm happy I think of you and today when I'm rather under the weather I think of you.

There are three part-time jobs advertised in the BMJ this week. I'll answer them all and see if I can't pick up something. I'm rather fed up about Dr Bernard.

Re-your projected September visit. To blazes with funds. Besides remember it is my turn to stand expenses.

Oh Shiny I'll try my very utmost to get a week between jobs. I want it as badly as you. But if an opportunity presents it would be madness not to take it. I do wish Dr H would get a move on.

It's fine that Doreen is getting home for her Birthday¹. I wish I could be up to celebrate.

I'm stuck now. I can't think of anything to write but I'll add more later.

Sunday 6 PM

My predominating thought all today has been – what a grand day it would have been with you. It's sunny and warm and the Hills and Mrs Hutchins are off visiting. It's just a bore as it is. It is not so much the lack of you that I mind for the moment. It's the sinful waste of such a lovely day.

I sat and read in the garden for a bit – The Tale of Two Cities. What a grand film it was and what a great man old Thomas Dickens. I always feel that even if some of his characters are too good to be true one is almost glad to welcome them as symbols of a type. That's one of his great gifts.

It's his picking up and crystallising a type of humanity. Compounding the character out of many real people he must have met. And I always imagine him with his glance darting from person to person simply gloating over each one's eccentricities. He if anyone knew human nature. I can imagine psychologists *mocking*. Yet he has produced standard characters still quoted of physical and psychological abnormality. The fat boy in Pickwick was a case of pituitary disease. Barnaby Rudge was a wonderful example of a feeble-minded person. Sydney Carton is to me quite possible as one who has demanded psychological explanation for every happiness and who would and could not do anything until its worth was proven. But *doubting past* and 'the only way' *open* he was capable of supreme heights of effort.

The tetchiness of Oliver Twist's guardian's friend is a wonderful example of psychological fear of showing emotion. They stand out in serial ranks the Dickens characters and if his so-called cheap emotionalism is decried now-a-days, I'm not ashamed to say that it touches me.

I've never read a book by him however long that I was not sorry when I came to the end.

My face is much better today and though my jaw aches a bit I'm much more comfortable. I seem to be very resistant to cocaine² and co, for although he blocked the inferior dental nerve that had no effect. Then he anaesthetised both locally but that did not seem to me to deaden tugging much. Yes, yesterday was a bad morning. It's not the pain so much either. It's the fiddling about in one's mouth. I'll be a bit more sympathetic when hurting people in future.

I've been told several times lately that I was leaving to get married! The story goes that the wife to be stayed here for a week and was seen with me in the car!

¹ Birthday is Sunday 10th May 1915

² I double checked this but he does say 'cocaine'. I thought it might be 'codeine'.

Percival the Wimbledon expert next door has asked me to play tennis sometime. The more one protests one's incapacity the more people seem to suspect a light under a bushel!

Oh I do wish I knew when I was to get away. The only blessing is that it looks as though you would be over your removal by that time and so we might get away.

I see that Ian Fraser, Ian Anderson and Norman Burrell all came down in the membership. It makes me all the more keen to make use of mine.

I really am proud of it but it has been no use to me yet. Well here's hoping. I've a tremendous drive to get married these days. Dear I hate to repeat income in vain repetition in case you think you detect indecision, but I want you as my dear friend more than anything. If my passion seems overwhelming when I'm with you that's just because I'm a man and you are all that passionate man could desire. In the ordinary way when the sore flash of longing comes to me, is to say something or to ask you something, or even just to be with you and feel your presence.

Now for example I don't want you to crush you to my breast, but I want you boldly to go for a walk with or to play tennis with. Wasn't the tennis at Aviemore simply superb?

I often remember these games followed by a bath, dinner and then the merciful excuse of exercising the dog.

The cool evening with one's face hot with unaccustomed sun. The cool evening breeze, the still water with the occasional splash of fish. The distant noise of Larig in the undergrowth. The trust of you, the scent of you, Oh may heavens send us many such times.

Somewhere up there in the peace the world seemed just what we could see. Dear love I don't need to ask if you were happy to for I felt it.

Dear I'm glad when the mornings that bring my letters are better mornings.

I'll write an extra one above the quota now and again. I'll stop now and read some pathology.

11 PM

My Dear it was nice to hear you. I'm so glad you have all been together. I was just in bed and Dr H was still downstairs.

Calling each other dear over the telephone as I like to do reminds me of a rather sweet thing mother told me on the way to Bath recently. Apparently her father (who died when she was seven) always called her mother Lisa or Eliza Dear. So constantly did he do so (he was very devoted to her) that Mother and her Brothers on growing up thought that that was her name all in one; Liza-dear.¹

Doreen sounded very happy and I'm so glad. Yes and I can remember when she was born and I remembered the other day Moira at 12 saying to me at 6. 'You know it's very funny but when the Dr brought you Mummy was ill too and (we were staying with aunts) do you know I was away from home then too. I always remembered that as a remarkable coincidence. I remember now as a special treat now and again I used to be allowed to assist in bathing the baby. I can see her now hitting away at the water with a very favourite celluloid duck floating about on its side. And I can remember her first steps. She ran from Dad to Mummy across a rug on the ground outside the home at Machrie Bay. I was terribly proud of that baby and now she's so old that I often feel her no younger than myself.

Dear One if you could but know the infinite longing your voice has raised.

Dear Girl is it worthwhile. Would I not be better to go into the Prison Service at £550 per year plus a house then I could use my leisure to some purpose and perhaps write (don't laugh) or go all political. You know politics attracts me.

Talking of that I'm booked to address the Mortimer Conservative Club on May 26th on 'The Midwives Bill'.

I bet you would like to be there for a quiet laugh.

¹ Alan's mother was Christina Kennedy Lawson, born 1876 so her father, Alexander (Sandy) Lawson died 1883. Her mother was Elizabeth (Eliza) Kinnon.

Well dearest this is a long letter and if not very newsy it will at least lessen the gap for a while. I have a most elaborate ritual for reading your letters. Wash (I don't know why) then up to my room and after the composing myself almost as for prayer, I finally open it and read it slowly, smiling to myself and Shiney very close in the spirit.

My Muse is tired, and by this time so no doubt is My Love's. So I'll rest both. Your sweetheart – Alan

9th May 1936. Sheila, Crown Road North, to Alan

Saturday 11.PM

Dear,

I came home today to a lovely bulging letter – hang Morris cars! Alright Dear I admit there was a letter too and a very nice one, I took the flattery all in.

I had a nice evening at Greenock and nearly got the first prize! Things looked pretty formidable to start with, there were nine tables and I kicked off with the minister (I didn't know then) who owns a clever hatchet face and piercing eyes, he began by saying 'now I always like to make this clear before I start, as it saves trouble, (little did he know) that I play the point system; do you?' me - just gaped, he 'well I suppose you play Cuthbertson?' me – more gape, and a tendency to go under the table, he 'I mean do you play direct?' me – with sudden recovery 'oh yes perfectly, always', our opponents saw the joke and giggled dutifully, he permitted the vestige of a smile and we were off, and I did very well getting a game or a hand off my calling, I make this perfectly clear, because I think it's good for you to know! well after that I just sailed along and all was roses.

Jack Hutchinson was there, and here's another co-incidence, Helen Strong hadn't seen me since I became engaged and was asking about you, where you were and how and all that, I said you were in Reading and she asked if by any chance you were a doctor, because she had a cousin a doctor in Reading and the funny bit was he was Jack Hutchinson's brother-in-law's assistant! I said 'well if he's Dr Hill's assistant I'm going mad' and sat down. As you will have realized she was speaking of your pre-decessor, funny isn't it?

Well the party broke up about 1 a.m. and then we started tidying up which took quite a time, then decided sherry was the only possible beverage suited to our needs, and foregathered for the inevitable talk after a party. We got to bed shortly before 4 a.m. arrangement being, Sadie was going out at 9 to sell 'poppies' and I was getting the 10.20 train – result I was wakened at 10 a.m. by Aunt Sara, who had evidently been up for hours, and informed that Sadie and [Kay] were still in bed, but showing slight signs of life! I didn't get the 10.20.

This afternoon was very wet and I went round for the 'larigsborough' pup to amuse Larig, as I was opening the gate of the gardens, a white terrier rushed past me and stated careering about with L. I recognised it for a dog he'd played with before and whose master says 'good morning' and 'evening', just then he appeared, called for the dog who paid no attention and said to me (the man, not the dog) 'would you mind if they had a little play together? It is so good for them' me 'oh! no not at all, won't you come in' he did and there I was with three dogs, then the Dalmatian man blew along, with it in tow and showed distinct signs of wanting to join the party, but the thought of the faces of some of the Princes Terr residents and the remarks re. me and my zoo restrained me, so we had our own chat over the gate and our dogs through it.

Then my terrier man and our 3 dogs proceeded on a tour of the gardens. Larig and his dog had a great time, but *Runie* (?) kept *charging* them both and had to be carried most of the time. The terrier man kept addressing his pup in a queer jargon, then said 'sometimes I speak to my dog in Russian and sometimes in Chinese!' I registered polite and lively interest, men in my life who speak Russian and Chinese are few and far between! He apparently lived for years in Manchuria and speaks of taking his dog back to the States, so seems to be a bit of a Heinz, possibly half Russian. Larig enjoyed his romp. *Runie* is not a mixer.

This evening Moira and I set out for concert, St Andrew's Hall, couldn't get in so ended up at the

‘Brandon Thomas’ and saw a really splendid play ‘Many Waters’¹. It’s now a dense fog and as I sit here there isn’t a sound from outside, or anywhere else for that matter. This has been threatening for a few days now and has just suddenly come down. Moira and I mislaid the pavement coming home.

Dad is supposed to be going to St Abbs Head tomorrow, and I must rise at 7.30. so goodnight my dear one, I love you terribly and Oh I want you, I want you.

Sunday 10th 10.55 p.m.²

This has been a very cold day with a tendency to fog, but nothing compared to last night. Dad left early for St Abbs and got back about 6.30. Out with Larig in the morning, the frost seemed to go to his head and he went clean mad, latest devilment is to greet each passing car as a plaything and rush at it, disillusionment has not yet followed whackings.

This afternoon I spent on the sofa reading and I regret to say dozing, my pet cold has not yet departed so I shall blame the resultant heaviness for the snooze. Evening, knitting and listening to the wireless, (sounds almost too blameless to be true!) there was a programme of Verdi’s music, never realised how much I liked it before, hunted out a book and read up what I could find about him, sometime we must go to some of the Operas especially ‘Aida’.

My precious darling, in day dreams there is so much to remember. I’ve known you for a very long time now, since I was 17, it’s somehow a good slice of my life and trying to discover my state of mind before that is difficult, like another life. A moment ago I was musing as to what things would have been like if we’d never met, you say I would have been happy and I expect I would, assuming there was no special cause for sorrow, for one has to live happiness to know in the least what it feels like, and sorrows too, so if I had not found you such happiness as I have shared with you would be an abstract ideal, envied and dreamed of perhaps, but not felt and not knowing the joy, overmuch regretted. I suppose sometime there might have been, someone whom I might have loved, for altho I cannot think it possible, I suppose it is only sane to consider it likely, but, five years, and a very important five years, because a change of outlook is almost inevitable in them, as one matures, have left me with the conviction which has become my life, that you are the one person alive who could have awakened the almost frightening love within me, by which I have scaled the highest pinnacle of joy.

It isn’t possible to speak from those pinnacles for tho responsible for each other’s pinnacles, once at the top one is apart from everything except the joy of love, uncommunicable by speech, but fully understood by a responsible being. We’ve had our bad times, more so than people who love less, they I think have a smoother course, but who would envy it, they never know the exaggerated depths I’ve known when out of tune with you, but they don’t know the highs either. Tonight my mediations have almost reached the stage when I can believe it possible that meeting you was not just a chance, tonight it seems a sacrilege to think that, we are so much each other now, if you were to tell me tomorrow you did not love me, and there was some else, I wouldn’t try to keep you, but somehow you would always be mine, however life went and whatever happened. I think you will laugh at this outburst, and I won’t blame you, because it will read funnily altho it doesn’t feel that way at all.

We don’t know and can’t gauge what our future will be, I mean in love and happiness we will almost certainly fight sometimes, because our dispositions seem to be that way, and make each other thoroughly miserable, but I also know that I love you with all my heart now and for ever and that any doubts I may have lie in my own inherent shortcomings which I am too proud to lay wholly here, but which I’m afraid must show up in time.

Dear I’m like Tennyson’s brook, but sleep is stopping me. Forgive these lengthy scrawls, devoid of grammar, and perhaps of sense, at home you can stay imagining flights, hundreds of miles away you have to suffer them, however you’re bound to get some lean letters soon to make up! I trust you

¹ A 1928 play by Leon M Lion. An elderly couple reminisce about the romantic adventures of their youth.

² This date enabled me to date the letter as 9th May.

don't open these excesses of literature at table, or Dr & Mrs H will have fits and probably put me down as a maniac.

Bless you dear, how is the 'neb'? All Love, Sheila¹

P.S. My Russo – Chinese friend kept Mongol Hounds (whatever they are) in Manchuria, but they all took hydrophobia! It must be a nice peaceful life there.

12th May 1936. Alan, Glenapp, Mortimer to Sheila

Monday 9 pm

My Dear Girl,

Your letter came at midday and was very welcome. (I always seem to begin so – but it's true).

I'm glad you all had a nice time at Doreen's birthday. I'm sorry you are still gluttonous. I thought you had got over that deadly sin. I remember a time when I marvelled at such a divinity needing so much food.

I'm glad your Mother is happy about our holiday. Oh Girl I want it and I'll try. By the way Hay Fever begins in middle of June and so we should have to go to the sea for our holiday.

I shall give Dr H till Monday. He goes to London to visit the agencies tomorrow. I'm sorry you are only having a week at Achiltibuie when you like it so. Still it's nice in a way to move on.

Dr Ambrose has just phoned to answer my reply to his advertisement.

He is just at the London Hospital and offers board and lodging in exchange fortnights work (after 8 PM). I have to see him on Thursday night. I'd like some hard cash however and I'll see.

Well I've had an amusing afternoon. I went out and then rolled the tennis court. Then I marked it out and it looks fine. I'm looking forward tremendously to a game. I took my rocket out of my winter quarters and its strings are splendid.

I do wish I could get away without unpleasantness. You see a month here under such circumstances would be intolerable. But still I can't stay indefinitely.

In Bed 11 PM

- 1) I've just had a talk with Dr H about the position. I pointed out how awkward it was for me:-
- 2) I wanted to get to the London as quickly as possible
- 3) I wanted my part-time job to be fixed as I could not afford to be without one.
- 4) I wanted a holiday and that at this rate I would not be free till July!

But I could not get him to say anything such as 'Well you would arrange to go at such a time'. So I'll wait till Monday and then tell him I can't wait any longer.

You know he is very funny about some things. Dear you know from experience how I hate not knowing ahead about things so you can imagine I'm not very pleased.

The crux of the matter is of course nothing to do with the above but simply that I want to get ahead and bring nearer the time of earning a 'marrying wage'.

The Hills are away from 11 AM tomorrow and they are off from Saturday midday to Sunday midday on a Theatre jaunt to London.

So I'll save money this week. If I get better replies to my other adverts then I'll not bother seeing Dr Ambrose and I'll write him tomorrow. The present arrangement is for me to see him on Thursday night.

Dear Shiney Monday 9 PM to think that soon perhaps we shall be bathing together again. Dear

¹ Sheila does not go for short sentences. Full stops are mostly used for paragraphs. So there are incredibly long sentences broken up by commas. The commas usually followed by 'and'. So ', and ...'. This gives her letters a breathless feel, as if writing in haste but that is clearly not always the case. In many of her letters I have broken up some of the sentences with a 'Full Stop' tho being careful not to change the meaning. In this one I have transcribed exactly as she wrote as an example of what I mean. She is pretty keen on '!' as well, though they are often not followed by a capital letter.

love I want to do all the things with you which are so good that I'm completely natural and lose any grown-up manners.

Do you understand? I mean like jumping in and out water at Loch Morlich when there was no thought of past or future, no thought even of the present – just great fun.

Dear with you secure by my side I feel that no height of attainment is beyond my reach. But till then the attaining of (minimum marrying wage. Henceforth M.M.W.) seems just about my limit.

Dear this is a rambling boring scrawl. I'm going to sleep and here's hoping I meet you there.

Wednesday May 13th

Well I've only one visit to pay today! So I don't know how I'll fill in the time. I may go in to a picture house in the afternoon. I thought I might practice serves by myself in the morning. It sounds sad but I can't settle to work at pathology or anything else in my present state of uncertainty. Oh Beloved One the waste of writing time when I might be with you.

Bless you always. Regards to Mrs and Mr Steven.

13th May 1936, Sheila, 32 Falkland Mansions, Glasgow to Alan

Tuesday

My Very Dear,

In case you may have got hazy on the subject – I love you – quite daftly! But seriously I'm sure there is something out of the ordinary in our love, whether it will make us any more successful in our times together I don't know, but I'm sure it's there. Dear I'm happy here, but I ache to be married to you, we've belonged to each other so long, but I want the peace we've never had.

Dad and I were at 'Trinity' on Sunday night and heard a masterly address on 'The Christian and War'. Well it's a vexed question, but I now know McC's view to add to the other conflicting ones.

Dear it's suddenly become an awful long time since last Sunday week and it seems such an age 'till I see you again.

I've been reading very little these last few weeks as I've been sewing a lot – finishing a famous piece of tapestry which I started some years since and which looks surprisingly nice. Isn't it extra ordinary to think of living together? But very nice.

I recovered my lost umbrella today which Glasgow Central seems to have scoured England for. I was a little bit stiff after the ride, but last night's skipping about at Badminton cured it.

I'm listening to 'Scrap Book for 1908' on the wireless, it's rather amusing.

I think Mother is looking much better, I saw her yester-¹

14th May 1936. Alan, Glenapp, Mortimer to Sheila

Thursday

My Dear,

I'm still no forwarder about getting away. It's obvious from my repeated attempts to bring up the subject that Dr H would consider himself an injured party if I give notice. So there is going to be a bit of a row.

I'm very fed up with the whole business but there it is. I've decided it was not worth seeing Dr Ambrose as I want some money as well as keep. So I wrote that I would not go tonight.

Had a letter from a fellow J.B. McDonald (I think you met him at a Plaza Party of ours) who wants to know how to set about MRCP. I felt like telling him it wasn't worth it!

I was free again at midday, there is so little to do just now, but although the tennis court was ready I had no one to play with. A 'wee bit pathetic' as you would say. I should like a game with you badly. I'm very grateful for your tickling me up to playing a year or two ago. I've enjoyed it immensely.

¹ Following pages missing.

Dear never apologise for advising me. I value your opinion and want it more often than I get it Advise more often please.

I've been trying to arrange to see John Fergie in town next Wednesday. I wish I was in town for good. It's lovely here just now but it all only makes me ache for you to be here.

The old Humber trundles along very well and so far has given no trouble.¹

But I won't come north in her as to tell you the truth having a car with not really enough to run it worries me. I mean every small repair is the disaster meaning less saved in the month. I calculate that if I leave a month from now I'll have cleared £165 saved since I came here.

That will be useful later on. What I badly want now is a job in the off time in London which will enable me to leave that intact.

Dear it's astonishes even me at times to regard my financial activities. Until a year or two ago I never knew the meaning of saving. In fact I never saved sixpence for more than a week in the first 23 years of my life. That £160 is out of £240 earned. Plus £25 at Christmas all told. So I run a car and made three trips to Glasgow and kept myself on £100 or so. The car accounts for at least £50 of that.

Oh Shiney excuse all this but I know you wont mind. I don't quite know how or when to approach Dr H.

He is quite naive about what he wants. He wants either:-

- 1) A man to stay in least two years or
- 2) A married man to live out on £400 plus £50 for car.

Alternatively, and very silly indeed, a man with some capital who is quite content to stay for some time as an assistant.

Now all seems to me impossible and I must gently tell him that I rather think so and as I consider his chances remote for some time to come that I cannot wait.

The last suggestion of his is amazing. Full-time work and what amounts to subsidising Dr H out of the man's capital. Why there are lots of half-time jobs, and who with capital and to be in General Practice will stay as that dogsbody, commonly known as an assistant.

Will finish this in bed when I hope to know my fate.

10.40 5 PM

Well it's arranged. I'm just upstairs and I'll tell you exactly what happened.

I said well Dr I've been thinking it over – he cut me short and said 'I know, let me have my say'. I'm sick and tired of the worry of this business and I think the best thing is to let you go after Ian's weekend half term June 13, 14th, 15th. If I'm not suited then I'll just have to carry on myself. I merely said 'Well leave it at that then'. He appeared heated about it so I just let him have the last word. I did not get one word of explanation but I think that it would have fallen on deaf ears in any case. Isn't it a funny business?

So now – I know, thank God, and we can plan. Of course if by any chance he is suited I'll get off earlier but provisionally I travel on June 16th and I'll arrange to start work at the London on June 29th. That will mean travelling arriving on June 17th which is a Wednesday.

Then I'll travel back on Sunday 28th to start work on Monday, June 29th.²

I'll delay letting Prof Turnbull know until I hear if you approve. That will give me 12 days in Scotland.

Now where do you propose for our holiday? Remember – near the sea please, opportunities for walks and I hope some Tennis.

What about Crinan? You know it but I've never been there.

Now some bright suggestions from you please.

Well well I must to bed. As I walked out this evening merely wishing a polite 'Good Night' I

¹ This is the car that reduced Sheila to tears of laughter with her father.

² So Alan planned to go to Glasgow leaving 16th June & returning 28th June.

rather wonder what sort of function breakfast will be. It is peculiar you know and I'm sorry to have caused ill feeling.

I see his point which is that I said 'I won't promise to stay for more than a year'. I see that, if he's not slick, it may interfere with his August Holiday. But I consider that he has had good warning. That he is unreasonably exacting in his demands for a successor and that he may thus be an indefinite time before fixing.

I have given him good service through the busiest winter he has ever had.

I have had the stipulated one weekend in two months – almost. I had five days at Christmas which is surely not excessive for 8¼ months. Also I've never had more than two thirds of my days off available.

So we're at least quite even if he does think himself badly done by.

Oh Shiny when I'm sore and fed up like tonight I want you. When I'm glad and joyful at the future like tonight I still need you.

Bless you and keep you safe and don't work too hard at the removal. Love, Alan

15th May 1936. Alan, Glenapp, Mortimer to Sheila

Friday 11.15 in bed

Dear Sheila,

I have settled down in bed, Dr H and family being mercifully out.

To begin the day badly Dr Bernard phoned up at 9.30 to ask if I was coming and as Dr H showed no sign of sympathy I had to tell him that I did not know when I'd be free and so I'd have to say no. It made me rather sick for it would have meant a lot to me.

I said to Dr H well of course it suits you but am I to wait until you are fixed and then perhaps be out of work for two months. To which he made no reply. To further lower my estimation of him he was arguing over the court fees.

I got £3.3 for P.M.¹ and appearance and he got £1.11.6 for appearance. I handed him my cheque and in the evening he gave me £1.10 which is half of £2 not £3 and of course I had to tip the mortuary attendant 5/- too sew up etc. So I got 25/- and he 63/- while I did all the work including a car journey to Reading. Stewth. I don't care a hoot about the few bob but I could not be so mean.

I don't want to make a break if at all possible that if I get another opportunity of part-time work I shall tell him that I find myself impelled to preserve my own interests to give the agreed months' notice.

Sorry to be money minded again but on working it out I find I was as well off at Highgate.

He allows £60 to run a car for a year. Well if a fellow buys a new one, which I see now is the cheapest way, his year's expenses are as follows:

1) Depreciation £30	£30
2) Petrol 12,000 miles at 25 mpg	£36
3) Tax say £7	£ 7
4) Insurance £10	£10
5) Oil £4	£ 4
6) Repairs £3	<u>£ 3</u>
7) Tyres which only had 8000 miles	£90
8) The extra expenses of living in the country and journeys to and from town are at least another £10.	

Yes Dr H has had some dam hard use out of me and seems to think I'm the debtor. I'll be glad to be away.

I hoped for a quiet evening tonight but had to go to the far side of Stratfield Saye at 9 o'clock and I'm not long in.

¹ Post Mortem.

Well it's a fine morning I'll send this today to cheer you up (?) For Monday.

Don't think I'm down I'm just bad tempered. But Oh bless you dear I love you and Oh Dear I'm only bad about money because I want it to help me to be with you. I never thought of it seriously before. You see one of the joys of having a wife is having someone to grouse to. There are two new part-time jobs advertised in BMJ. I shall apply.

Love aye Alan

15th May 1936. Sheila, 70 Crown Road North, Glasgow to Alan

Tuesday

Dear Boy,

Thanks for your letter, you seem to wax desperate. It's funny Dr H being so stingy about your weekend, he seemed so generous to begin with. My mood these days is resignation at your continued absence and I don't allow myself to expect to see you in the very near future.

Today I was in town and lunched there, the first time I've been in four weeks. I have kept out, because of my economy campaign, much-needed!

Last night badminton was rather a joke as only five, counting myself, turned up and only one man! Poor lamb. However we had good fun, constant play and the 'poor lamb' made the tea! There's a tournament on Thursday, which promises to be amusing.

I am going early to the dog show tomorrow morning to pick up as many wrinkles as possible and see the judging of Dalmatians.

Saturday night's sermon, or talk, was excellent. Ancient religion and modern thought you remember? Mc C said he had always been a modern, and was certain he would be until the day he died and had no room for the old narrow religious bigotry. Yet he thought that while it was very easy to be condescending to the old martyrs and reformers who believed in devils, predestination, and that the world was flat, we might well envy them their absolutely unshakeable belief, and fear of God, which left no room for any other fear in the world. It was only the framework of the old belief that was useless and rotten, not the faith itself. He called us Fairweather Christians, contending against none of the difficulties of our forefathers, and risking nothing for our faith and deplored that modern religious thought didn't seem to be getting anyone anywhere, or moving in any particular direction, and was in fact like an army without a base. That last line strikes me as being terribly true. You know very well that I'm not what one would call a religious minded person, but I am trying hard these days to come to an understanding with myself on the faith which will take me through life. Religion is a thing one seldom find in a flash of Revelation. It's no good trying to evolve one in the times of stress and pain, which must come to us all, but I know what it must mean to have it behind one.

Wednesday

This is going to be a hasty finish for its nearly post time. I went to the dog show this A.M. Dalmatians being judged till now, when I shut my eyes, seas of spots dance up and down! Mr Blair's dog Portencross Prince' which is already a champion, was the best dog shown. Mr Blair lives in Queens Court and Larig plays with P.Prince sometimes. In many ways I'd like to have been showing Larig, only all the others had straight tails and matching eyes and he'd never let the judges handle him and wouldn't¹

¹ This is the abrupt end of page 4. So there is at least a page 5 missing. Larig had one blue eye and the other brown! Also a kink in his tail.

24th May 1936. Alan, Glenapp, Mortimer to Sheila

Sunday 11 pm

My Dear,

I've got back from London having been with Moira all afternoon. We went to hear Robertson the pianist and then to tea. Then to a news theatre – dinner – trains.

I had a perfectly foul journey out from Reading in fog and I'm very glad I did not go by car to London.

We advanced no further in our discussions and the position is exactly the same. I'm going to ask for a week end in the week and we shall see then. It was nice to see Moira and very decent of her to come.

But Dear I've got bad blues tonight and I'm missing you terribly these days. My whole being aches for you and its really a soreness.

Dear Loved One I'm very near tears when I write this and even if they are tears of self-pity they are no less salt. Oh to put my lips in your hair and rest awhile.

Dear I know you, gentle, loving kind and each of your virtues hurt me more just now. Dear love me very intensely and when I'm home don't waste a minute of time away from me. Blessed Sheila I'll pray for you tonight and I have not prayed for a long time but it's too much to bear.

Monday

My dearest I'll just send this off today as otherwise you would not have news until Wednesday. It's still very foggy and it will keep us back badly today.

I'll write more cheerfully tonight. But Dear I'm longing to be with you again. Alan

31st May 1936. Alan, Glenapp, Mortimer to Sheila

Sunday

My Dear One,

I'm afraid you have not had a very good weekend for Tod Head¹. It's pretty cold even here and T.H. seemed a blustery place to me.

I got 3 sets this afternoon before the rain came on. I was to have played with Percival again at 7.20 but it was too wet for that too. However I'm playing him at 7.30 tomorrow and we are having parties here on Tuesday and Wednesday. I played badly today. Kept netting on the forehand and *lobbing* on the backhand. Well well I'll have to improve before Machrihanish².

Oh Shiny think of Machrihanish, won't it be grand.

I've a lot to talk about with you then, and my dear one I'll kiss you a lot.

I've managed to get out of driving the Queen Mary tomorrow. I'm lending her and General Lambton's Chauffer is driving which is a great relief. The local newspaper says that 'Dr Stephenson gave a broad explanation of the Medicines Bill' at the meeting. So there! Bless you. I like to make fun of (by you) because it makes your eyes very bright and dancing.

Do you know Shiny I'll make a very good husband. I feel it in my bones. I'll be very loving of course but in addition I'm not fussy about food or anything like that. It's a good thing too no doubt.

Oh Shiny – I don't know why I write that but I like writing it. Yes little sunshine you're a Dear.

Which all sounds a bit goo goo but then I feel that way just now.

I wonder where you are and if by any chance you are writing to me and thus thinking of me. Do tell me what you were doing at 10 P.M. on Sunday.

There is no advertisement in the B.M.J this week. I'll give it one other chance and then I'll try advertising myself. It's a pity I missed that place at Bow Street.

I'm so looking forward to your first letter from Milngavie. I may phone tomorrow just to wish

¹ Tod Head lighthouse is at Inverbervie north of Montrose on the east coast. Built 1897. Engineer David A Stevenson. Once again there is, or was, a foghorn, presumably of bronze and made by Steven & Struthers as at St Abbs Head.

² Machrihanish is on the west side of the Mull of Kintyre. Very famous Golf Course.

you good day. But perhaps it will make it soon after. But then it won't be long Dear, just 16 days and I'm off.

Owing to Whit Monday¹ I'm afraid this won't reach you till Wednesday.

Oh Shiney there's nothing in this letter. But I'm just sitting loving you and musing about your niceness. So forgive the letter but remember I love you so much.

Monday 9 P.M.

Yes Dear I love you so much and Oh if I could have given a big leap from one end of the phone to the other tonight – well I'd have knocked you down Oh Sheila I'm glad I phoned.

I've a funny feeling that I sent a nice long letter to 'Magdock Avenue'. Sorry. I've looked up your letter as I did when addressing the last and it says most definitely Drumclog Avenue.

But Dear I'm glad you are all settled and not too tired. I hope loving does not *break* too much. It was good of you to have decided to phone.

Shiney forgive me but I can't write tonight I want just to sit and think of you please. Love Alan

¹ Whit Monday 1936 was 1st June.

JUNE 1936

17th Jun 1936, Sheila, Winder, Milngavie to Alan

Wednesday

Dearest,

Here's a nice state of affairs! It's just 11 a.m. there's lots to be done and here I am writing to you instead of doing it. I slept badly last night, and today I'm so restless I can't settle to do anything or think of what wants doing. It's a glorious day and I want you badly, and the open spaces! Result I wander irrationally about the house and the old mind refuses to stick to anything but you which under the circumstances is rather trying. Goodness how I love you and how thankful I am we are having some time together next month. Dear you can guess how much I'm looking forward to it, can't you?

The address in Milngavie is, 'Winder', Drumclog Avenue. As to the weekend, well it's still undecided, we will go to a hotel somewhere, as Aunt Bet is going to London, in any case it will only be from the Friday (when we leave here) till Monday. (when we go to Milngavie) I'll let you have any news as soon as I know.

10.30

Tomorrow afternoon I'm going to Bearsden to have tea with Nan Dawson, and am contemplating asking myself to supper with Nancy and Hugh and inspecting Peter! However if I feel like it tomorrow I'll phone and warn her.

Oh! My dearest being I love you, and when I try to tell you it sounds so stilted and flat.

Excuse the paper, but I'm using up scraps still, like the ink! As a matter of fact I'm very taken with my special blend of ink.

I'm wondering if I can hope for another letter tomorrow! Dear I'm terribly greedy for letters, the more as I seldom manage to send you such long ones as come my way, but if I can convey anything of the joy they are received with I think it will in some way repay your efforts.

Thursday

Dear it's nearly midnight (how the days fly on) and I'm in bed. Thanks for your letter, and the enclosed, yes it certainly gave me a laugh, I'd like to see that man anyhow he appears to have intimate knowledge of the profession since he has decided that few are gentleman! But then the poor mug must have thought you were one!!! Oh! Darling it's a huge time yet till I see you and its more than three weeks since I left you and Oh! I want you badly. It's been a glorious day and I had a nice afternoon at Bearsden, we sat out in the garden, knitting and gossiping, (mostly gossiping) in broiling sunshine.

She's a queer girl is Nan, says exactly what she thinks, and whom she likes or dislikes, a habit which was always apt to lead her into fights, but anyway you know where you are with her, and feel she acts less than most. She doesn't appear to get on very well with her fiancé's people. She remembers you very well, and thinks you very good looking, she says it, as she might remark on a wet or dry day, and would never trouble to make such a statement out of a desire to please, so you may feel flattered. Well dear that's cheered you up nicely, I know! You don't say anything about my carefully suggested places for our holiday, do you read my letters through?? Sorry you were stiff after tennis. You must be badly out of training, or was it the 'hot' game you were playing? Oh! Dear I love you and I'm sorry for everyone else who haven't the chance. I know the feeling you spoke of after being at 'Albert Dock', don't think that I say that only to please you, but for goodness sake don't start thinking all your pleasures wicked, you haven't such an overdose of them that I'm aware of.

By the way I called in (having decided not to land myself for a meal) to see 'Peter' on my way home from Dawson's, he was asleep by that time, however I saw him, and he really is very sweet,

black hair and rosy cheeks, and is nine months old.

Well dear this is only the fourth page (I can't hope to compete with ten!) but it's close writing so perhaps you'll forgive me stopping. (I refuse to consider that you might be relieved). I haven't heard anything of Uncle Willie since coming home, I really must write and enquire. I'm really sorry about the paper! There's no saying what my next will be on!

Kiss yourself from me. Sheila

Friday 1.30 PM

You're a dear to send that extra letter. I had a strange feeling when I wakened that there would be some word from you.

I'm sorry the picture you went to was so dud, but the name wasn't very hopeful was it?

Poor John Fergie, I feel very acutely for people who want to marry, and have to wait and wait, living a stilted existence and becoming bitter and losing track of the dream, to think of eight years ahead makes our few years seem nothing to make a fuss over, but then you're so much worth waiting a lifetime for, that makes it easier.

Our telephone number when at Milngavie will be 208, not that I expect you to use it. But I just like you to know.

I met your mother and father last night, your mother seems very pleased to go away with us, which reminds me you still make no comment on the places I named!

Dear one I often think of these days when I was at K.1. they're good to look back on.

Yours again, Sheila

22nd Jun 1936. Alan, 2 Broad Court Flats, London to Sheila

Tuesday 8.15 P.M.

My Own Dearest Sheila,

I've been glad, as glad as I can be away, today. For I still feel your love and feel myself caring for you so constantly. Dear it was selfish to write that I felt glad at the wrench of parting which you felt.

It hurts to feel you sad, and Dear any small morsel or token of your need for me is gladness.

That's what I meant.

Dearest Sheila I miss you every thinking minute of the day but missing you I bless you for your decency and kindness and all you mean to me. Dear One I can see you very well now in your green dress looking so very beautiful, neat and straight you are and your level brown eyes look into mine and love me. Dear you are the best person I know, the loveliest I know.

This morning when I finished off your letter I was still half asleep. I don't know where to send this. I'd send it to Steven & Struthers¹ but I don't know their address either. So unless by any chance I get a letter in the morning I'll send it to 'Winder' and let it be re-addressed.

I forgot to tell you about the colour scheme of my room too. Tangerine eiderdown, blue blankets, pink sheets and pillowcases and purple blankets and red pyjamas! Add a brown face [grey] wallpaper and mottled yellow furniture and the result is startling.

I breakfasted in Lyons today and walked down to Charing Cross. Had a quiet day mostly revising microscopy slides by myself and walked back to the bank. Then I took a tube to Leicester Square. Bought beans, butter and Vienna rolls and have just dined in state.

I enjoyed my walk through East London into the city. The Yids in Whitehall are 99% of the population. The stalls along Whitehall Road out on the edge of the pavement, with canopies like Paris, sell anything. I saw meat, cat and dog meat, amazing fruit drinks, ice cream, roasted peanuts, Hebrew papers. Anything and everything for sale. The City itself too is fascinating with its great buildings with doors big enough to take a bus, its quaint little alleys and courts with their names redolent of medieval days.

¹ This is Jimmy's bronze founding company.

I saw a main road called 'Poulting', not P. Road or street, just 'Poulting'. Cheapside, Aldgate, Long Acre, Poulting why even my old favourite Minneapolis is surpassed.

There's a lovely smell of fruit pervading this neighbourhood. I've had no hay fever today. It's now 8.50 and Dr B is still going hard poor soul. I offered to help but he would not hear of it. He has not long been in practice and he wants to be as much in personal contact with the people as possible. He has a hard life of it if he is not finished any night till after 9 P.M.

I am beginning to think of that job so to put me off it I'll stop a while and read the paper.

10.15 PM

Just had a good laugh on opening a tin of tea given me by Mother. I found a police whistle!

Enclosed is the famous Oscar Patterson who was once a divinity and Medical Student at Glasgow but got no further – son of hunchback stained glass painter – a very Adonis – chunked out of Royal for kissing nurses behind doors.

12 PM

In bed. Oh My dear girl I hope you are warm and comfortable in bed. I love you Dear.

8.30 AM Wednesday

No further news dear One. I hope you have no such trouble at this further removal if it comes off!
Bless you always, Alan

JULY 1936

4th Jul 1936. Alan, 2 Broad Court Flats, London to Sheila

Thursday 10 pm

Dear Sheila,

Thank you so much for the chocolates. I was surprised to find the parcel and your letter waiting for me when I got home. I had funnily enough been looking rather longingly at chocolates in Lyon's but decided that I'd better not.

Well old girl I'm sorry to be so foolish but I confess I'm all unsettled and worried at the thought of you travelling in the car. It's always the same when you are travelling.

By Jove I only realised how much I need you when I get thinking along these lines will stop the awful empty sick feeling I get them has no counterpart in my experience.

Had a quiet day reading and microscoping. Was very relieved to hear Prof Turnbull tell the students that a man could not know the normal even within two years of microscopic work.

Which lets me out somewhat of what I was worried about in yesterday's letter.

I've been reading away steadily at my notes tonight. It's so much quicker reading one's own notes.

I've decided to take up one question that arises in them and start an M.D. thesis on it.

Dad in a note today says that Mr Young the President of the F.B.I. who was to approach *Haglet* of the Department of Health is on holiday so we shall just have to wait till he returns. It's a pity.

I wonder when (if) I shall hear any more of this business. Even if I see you if I'm up for an hour I won't complain. Beloved you must come down in early September.

We can be alone here so very well and for so long.

I've had no hay fever and I think it's over for the year.

Just heard on the Wireless that the Academy were third in the Ashburton Shield at Burley and won the London Scotland Trophy.

That's exceedingly good work.

There's something else I wanted to tell you and I simply can't remember it.

Dear Sheila look after yourself. I'm very frightened and cowardly at the thought. My Darling please be very careful even if it's a little irksome.

My Darling all my beloved please be very careful of your precious self. Dear as you love me remember this. I can't conceive of what living would be if anything should happen to you.

Dear love I need you now, always terribly and I must have you. My own Dear I can't go on like this needing longing and aching and wanting you. God bless you and keep you. Alan

4th July 1936. Sheila, Black Bull Hotel¹, Killearn, to Alan

Saturday 11 PM

My Very Dear,

Thanks so much for your letter, which I got at lunch time today. It's good of you to write so often, but if you knew what your letters mean I think you'd consider it well spent time. I wish you could see me receiving one, or opening it! But remember what I said about not writing unless you feel inclined.

Dear I'm sore for you, very sore, & like you resentful of missing so much. I don't know if you will consider that 'soul stuff' for you accuse yourself sending me such, though I can't trace it. Anyhow I don't care, I want you very badly, & I insist that you know! Dear please don't worry to

¹ The Black Bull Hotel is still there in Killearn and I had a beer there. It was under new ownership and locals advised us not to eat there. When Elisha asked for a half of lager he glared at her and said 'We only do pints here'. Now re-named The Killearn Hotel.

struggle to make your letters cheerful when you're not feeling in the least that way. If you're feeling down, say so, tired, dispirited, worried or lonely, say so. Otherwise you're only acting a part to me & believe me it's not worth it. I know you get down in the depths at times, but I think you consider that characteristic to be more exclusively A.C. Stevenson's than it is. Then I'm not good to you at these times. I always mean to be, but it never comes off, but I do reproach myself afterwards. Wouldn't it be heaven if we could just see & know each other's souls & perfectly understand. Mine wouldn't be an impressive awe-inspiring or interesting one, an insipid soul, but I'd like just you to see it all the same. Dear I know most intensely the feeling that makes you write of the embrace of another being an undying foulness, a sin because of being untrue to you, & equally because of being untrue to myself, and unbearable loss of integrity. Dear I can still feel you near me, I can feel your hair & see your eyes & tomorrow week will have gone since you left me & that's a good bit off the time till I see you again when I warn you I'm going to be terribly sentimental

I'm very glad the hay fever isn't troubling you. I did little else but sneeze yesterday & I can't think why.

This is a very sleepy place I think, at least I'm always ready to drop off. Except walking, which I do to prevent myself growing into a cabbage I only eat & sleep. The country is lovely, there are hedges of wild roses & Honeysuckle & huge trees with red squirrels.

There is a lady staying here with two English Sheep dogs. She shows one of them & does quite well with it. She grooms them a lot but never seems to take them a decent walk.

Larig was rather nasty to one of them yesterday and removed some hair! I don't think he quite realised it was a dog. Their owner is amusing and interesting to talk to. She is divorced, her home having been in Balfour, where her husband now lives in the same house with the other woman. She is looking for a house Balloch way and is going to breed dogs.

I phoned your family tonight and they are coming out to tea tomorrow. I have asked them to take pity on me and bring something to read as I've landed here with nothing not having been able to get into Glasgow before leaving Milngavie.

About that letter you sent to 'Winder' I'll get it when the Robinsons return as the postman will have put it under the door, you see there was no point in having letters re-directed as yours were the only ones that came there, all the others being re-directed from Crown Gate to the works. However it's an extra I'll look forward to.

Well beloved I must get to sleep. Remember I'm always loving you, every minute. Sheila

Sunday July 5th 7.15 PM

Had a long walk this morning. So long (due to the fact that we got lost) that I was afraid we'd have to carry the Rosses (who are here for the weekend) home, the poor souls had to climb fences and hedges and trail through fields, in efforts to get back, and always Killearn hovered in the distance never any nearer. However there were no losses, not even of temper.

We have had a very nice afternoon with your family who have just left. I'm so glad Dad is seeing you tomorrow, but wish I could take his place.

You realise don't you, that, I won't be here after Thursday and will be in Achiltibuie on Friday.

Well dear one, I'm going over to post this now, the mail is lifted at 5 AM so you won't get this to Tuesday. All! Your a dear dear soul and I love you – much! Sheila

5th July 1936. Alan. 2 Broad Court Flats, London to Sheila

Sunday 10.30 AM

.....¹Your Dad phoned and I'm lunching with him at the City Tavern. Looking forward to seeing him.

I'm due to look in at Bow Courts at 12 to see if my case has come along yet.

¹ This is the last page of a 5 page letter. Rest missing.

Another foul day. Still in better working mood. Oh Beloved don't you hope very hard that I get through the exam? Well now I must write home.

Bless you Dear. You are very precious and please remember that.

I'm very sorry to trouble you but the watch is phut again. Is it being repaired by guarantee? Tell me truly. Otherwise it's a simple matter to have it done here. Beloved Kiss Yourself. Alan

5th Jul 1936. Alan, 2 Broad Court Flats, London to Sheila

Sunday 3.30 PM

My Dear Sheila,

I am sitting at Dr Bernard's desk in his surgery and wishing much to see you. I wonder what you are doing this afternoon. Now I remember, the Stevenson clan are setting out to see you this afternoon.

Well I got up about 8.30 and visited a parson the Rev Pennington Bickford¹ vicar of St Clements Dane.

This practice gets more and more curious and more and more extraordinary every time I pay a visit. Behind the Stoll Theatre in Kingsway is St Clements Inn; and off a tiny passage with scarce room for 2 to pass – St Clements Inn passage – is a little door with a lead bottle glass glazed door behind which trails one of these hanging bead curtains.

There is a large anchor above the door which represents the name of the vicarage – 'The Anchorage'. Whether there is any significance in the fact that the anchor is broken I don't know. Having discovered this dusty haven, and feeling that Little Nell² or Simon Tappertit³ would come round the corner at any minute, I attacked a massive rusty knocker.

After a time I saw some commotion in the hanging strings and a venerable bearded face came through a slit. The door opened and further disclosed this relic. He looked about 90, a short little old man with an untidy grizzled head and beard. He was in dusty stained black waistcoat and wrinkled trousers and sported an enormous watch chain which from reason of his stoop hung well clear and appeared to be the cause of his bent back.

He looked at me blinking in the sunlight like the old man of the *Bortrele*. He was obviously finding difficulty focusing on me for his pupils dilated and contracted several times before coming to rest. In a very quavering old voice he said, 'are you the Doctor'?

Now I was so impressed by the venerable and clerical-black outfit of my questioner that I was not sure whether or no he was the vicar. However he shuffled away and I followed across a tiny hall with several bird cages suspended from the ceiling just at the level of my eyes.

After a pause, like acclimatisation before the first assault at 25,000 feet, the old fellow went up a few steps to a half landing about 8 ft square. Another two of these efforts brought us to a little upper hall and more – birds – lovebirds, Canaries and God knows what. More stairs up, a few down and we came to a door. The old man entered and announced me.

The room I now entered was a big one with a very low ceiling. There was an enormous bed with crimson canopy; a very tousled bed. The vicar lay there.

He was a stoutish beery looking fellow with the most untidy shock of grey hair I've ever seen. Incongruous in that bed and below that head appeared a violent white and red striped jacket with the latest high buttoned pyjama jacket neck. He wore steel rimmed Prince-nez attached by a black string round his neck. I'll just complete the vicar by saying that under the jacket was a by-know-means clean vest and his skin was scratched from head to foot – why I did not enquire. He had slight bronchitis and obviously wished to be told not to conduct his service at 11 o'clock. I therefore agreed with him.

¹ Reverend William Pennington-Bickford. Rector of St Clement Danes 1910 to 1941. See Appendices.

² Little Nell, a fictional character, a frail child who is a major figure in Charles Dickens's novel *The Old Curiosity Shop*.

³ Simon Tappertit Dickens character from *Barnaby Rudge*.

He told me that his wife¹ was at Brighton with a party of 40 girls of the Parish and that 'The Anchorage' had been the vicarage of St Clements Dane when Dr Samuel Johnson was a church warden there. And then I saw it – he was my mental picture of the portly Doctor.

Stout, red-faced, scrofulous and with a chronic skin irritation. It was amazing. And his talk was as portentous and dogmatic as to delight the heart of any Boswell. I left him and halfway down the stairs the old man was with me again. I don't know where he came from, he was just there. He did not say anything but showed me out. And as I walked along out into the Strand Traffic I felt as if I'd been deep in a chair reading Dickens and living Dickens. I wish I had the power of description to convey some of the atmosphere of that curious old place to you. But I'll never forget that visit. I suppose to go again would spoil it and I hope I don't go again.

I hope this long screed has not bored you but I don't think it will.

After that I visited 'The Nags Head'² and saw my little Irish girl. The whole family were moving about that dusty barn above the pub in dressing gowns.

Then I came back here and read the paper till surgery (from 11-12). Then I read pathology till about 1.30. Then I went for lunch and made a great discovery. I got a wonderful lunch in the Brasserie under the Strand Corner House. In the Brasserie they serve only the three course lunch at 1/6, and by gosh it's good value.

Three courses, coffee, roll and butter inclusive. I had a half pint of bitter with it and thus for 1/11 had a scrumptious repast. I shall make a point of having a Sunday treat there.

I shall dine here off my bread banana and cheese and thus average out.

I got five bananas in the market for 1p each. The same as 1½p elsewhere. What does one do with farthings? I've got two now from loaves. Just got an idea – bright one too – use them for the next loaf. Brains that was!

Well I'm looking forward to seeing your Dad tomorrow. Shall I have to call him Dad when we are married?

I'm sure it would rock him to the back teeth if I did.

It's only just a week but a few hours since I left. Oh dear it seems the natural state now to be away and yearning. That's all wrong but how am I to get married soon unless this hundred-one shot comes off? Oh beloved I'll find a way but it may only be a stop gap for a few years.

I'll just wait until the other thing is settled, then start looking around for something else. I'll do anything except G.P.

You know Sheila it's much easier to do sensational things and go abroad etc. than to be here alone and anxious.

But I'm really content too for I know that in a couple of months or so I shall be able to start definitely looking for something worthwhile. Only I feel that it's such a waste not to be able at least to save a little for the hard times which are probably before us.

But Dear if I go on like this I'll depress myself and you. I think I'll read a little more Pathology. I'll soon have revised all my rusty bits.

You see I'm O.K. with Medical Pathology but my Surgical Pathology has lain dormant since my student days. But then Surgical Pathology is the smaller section. It's nice and sobering to read Pathology. We really know so very little about it.

Well Shiney my love I'll stop now.

10 PM

Mummy and Daddy have just been on the phone. I really got no news as I was bothered by Dr B's

¹ Georgia Louisa, Known as 'Louie'. See NOTES.

² I'm pretty sure this is the Nags Head in Covent Garden. Captain Patrick McEnroy was the very first landlord of the Nag's Head in 1927 alongside his wife and landlady Majorie McEnroy. The McEnroy's lived on the premises and happily ran the establishment from 1927 until just after the Blitz in 1940, when they were finally bombed out. Marjorie was I think the 'little Irish girl'.

secretary who came in tonight to get off his quarterly accounts. She is a stupid old woman who comes complete with dog and fiddles about with his papers. I had my suspicions and in the middle of the call I left the phone and suddenly opened the door to find her listening in the passage.

However I heard that they were at Killearn¹ and that you were looking well.

Well Dear I'll finish off for I want to get up early, go out and have breakfast and return to see Dr B about his visit before I go to the London.

So love, Alan

6th Jul 1936. Alan, 2 Broad Court Flats, WC2 to Sheila

Monday

My Dear Shiney,

I've just come in from being with your Dad and to crown a good evening I find your letter.

Dear One it's been wonderful to love you, to love you desperately and know that life would be empty unless you cared. In that state I was, for what then seemed, a long time. Then to find that the most desirable thing in life was attainable has made life doubly worth living for a long time now. Dear you have known me for a long time now and I've known you, and we both care more as the months and years pass. And it's no impossible dream but a logical conclusion that we shall continue to love even more fully yet. My sweet girl. No amount of nearness or distance can alter our love. It transcends all bounds. Our intimacy being in our love binds us always more closely.

Your letter makes me thankful for the wonderful blessing of having the full love and confidence of the only woman I ever wanted.

Your Dad² called here at 6 PM tonight and we went to Camden Hill for dinner. We had a very good one and I must say your Aunt and Uncle have always been more than kind to me.

We talked very dogmatic politics after dinner and then Mr Steven and I went to Leicester Square tube where he had his bag, and then we parted. I told him again to give you a kiss and be sure you get it.

When I got back here I found I'd left my key inside. So I went upstairs and after a lot of difficulty roused an Indian in mistake for the woman who cleans and has a key. I then knocked at the correct door only to find that her daughter had it and was out.

However the daughter, a violent blonde, was unearthed in a distinctly jovial condition outside a neighbouring pub and here I am.

Had a tiring day at the London but did one and saw another very interesting P.M. Mine was a condition called Amoebic Dysentery which is distinctly uncommon and it was complicated by perforation and peritonitis which is even less common.

Tomorrow is the Anniversary of our engagement. Two years – but not three before we get married. Dear it's difficult to send you flowers to Killearn. Pick some wild roses – or no they are wild and best in the own setting. But kiss one from me.

Dear it's 12.30 or so and I'll just stop now – read the Star and drop off to sleep.

Regards to Mrs Steven.

Oh my Dear if you knew how my arms ache for you and how I care. Alan

6th Jul 1936. Sheila, Black Bull Hotel, Killearn to Alan

Monday 10.45 PM

My Dear One,

I was amazed and terribly pleased to get your nice long letter this morning. It's so nice to hear of your doings and thanks for the plan of London showing 'Broad Court'. I would like to see the place, which is the center of my world just now. However I'll get information from Dad. I'm thinking of

¹ Sheila was at the Black Bull Hotel in Killearn & Stevensons were going to visit her.

She was very bored.

² Jimmy (James Steven).

you at Campden Hill tonight. A pity you had to go there as I expect you'd have preferred just to have had dinner somewhere with Dad.

Thanks for enclosed letters, as a matter of fact, your father showed me the originals yesterday. Dear you don't need to tell me not to derive extra hope from them. I know very well how difficult it is to make anything of such letters, or to place a face value on them. Don't worry about restraining me from hoping much, I understand the situation much better than you think.

Here's something that is striking me very forcibly these days. I often find myself holding forth an opinion of yours, unthinkingly, as my own, only with infinitely more conviction and assurance than if I had evolved it. The odd bit is that at the time you have uttered it I've probably flatly disagreed!

Dearest one I love you, it's all very well to say words are useless, but there is no leaving it at that, the urge to tell is strong, if inarticulate, the thing is, one wants to find new words, ones that have never been tarnished with careless use, and there one is up against a wall. But dearest at least I can tell you that I love you, knowing thankfully, that I have not used them to anyone else, and in that sense, no matter how many hundred times I may have told them to you, they are still words of meaning, never in my life carelessly thrown away.

How awful when each endearing phrase one gives one's beloved, brings back echoes of past errors, and other times when one said the same things and for the time being meant them, to another, whose image, I should imagine, one would never quite be able to eradicate

I'm still leading the lazy life. Doreen brought me out some books and I'm reading Feuchtwanger's 'The Oppermanns'.

Tuesday 10:30 AM

Dear, you're thoroughly spoiling me writing so much, but Oh! I'm enjoying it. Your description of the visit to the vicar¹ was excellent. I've taken a great longing to be in London for a few days. Wonder when on earth I'll manage it. I'll be glad to move on from here, it's a nice wee place, but listless, and a week is enough.

Your letters are so nice and newsy and I never seem to have anything to tell you.

Larig is demanding a walk in no uncertain voice so I'd better stop. He nearly caught a squirrel the other day. It feels weeks since I saw you, it's dreadful to be so dependent, but there it is.

Yours ever, Sheila

8th Jul 1936. Sheila, Black Bull Hotel, Killearn to Sheila

Wednesday 3pm

Dear Love,

Was the phone call last night real? Dear I can't believe it, to think of seeing you after having contemplated weeks yet between us – I don't want to write, just to relax and relish the thought.²

Thanks for a.m.'s letter. Dear of course my views of D.P.H. course are yours. You seem miserable at the London and I can't bear that. It doesn't sound the thing for you at all. You can understand me actively not wanting to write when I'm to see you, can't you?

This is a heavenly day. Mother was in town in the morning and I collected books, rug and Larig and went through the fields to a quiet place with huge trees and lazed the morning away, in the boiling sun without a soul to bother me. The more holidays I get the more I want, so you must give up hope for my soul.

A short time ago Larig got a butt in the pants from a young bullock and is now a sadder and wiser dog!

My darling, how am I to get through the next two days?

Oh I can't write more. Bless you. Sheila

¹ The vicar refers to Vicar of St Clement Danes in Alan's letter of 5th.

² So in 2 days from this letter Alan arrives. It must be written after 6th Jul.

10th Jul 1936. Sheila, Achiltibuie Hotel to Alan

Friday 3.30 PM.

Dear One,

It's a case of thinking hard here before it's possible to remember what day it is!

Dad and Mother are on 'Osgaig'¹ catching the first sea trout of the season, and after the first lot are caught there is an extra charge for the loch, so they are lucky to have it today when they (the trout) are on the run after the rain.

It's a glorious day and I had a grand walk this morning, climbing a young hill, after a walk over moor by the side of the sea. Got a fine view of Suilven which I don't believe is as difficult as it's cracked up to be. Picture me now lying on a comfy hillock, loch on my right, on the left the sea and the river in front. The sea and river are singing me to a lazy sleep and it's all I can do to resist. The sun is shining and the sky is full of woolly clouds which somehow don't get in the sun's way and I can smell the still smouldering peat from our lunch fire. On such a day I'm sure there can be few places more beautiful.

It's nearly 6.30 now and I've been for another walk, read for a bit and have just come up from the falls, where I saw two salmon and a trout trying to get up. There is no sign of the boat yet, I wish they'd come now, for I'm dying to get in to see if there's a letter from you.

10.15 p.m.

Got in about eight. Several good fish and two hefty sea trout. I'm nearly chocolate colour after 12 hours in the sun and wind and I'm feeling inhumanly fit.

Thanks for two letters which I received tonight.

I cannot see the creed worth having that does not hold out some idea of punishment for evil and reward for good. The idea that we are forgiven everything because we have the misfortune to be born and it's a difficult world and we all, whatever our record, welcomed sentimentally in a better land, whether our lives have been deliberately divorced from good or no, seems to me a spineless sort of thing. But I know what you're thinking, that no one is wholly good or bad, but many sins bring their own punishment on Earth, that to a certain extent character is formed before we become responsible for it, and all have not equal chances. Well, the religion which preaches omnipotence can let these things rest with omnipotence. Certainly this side of death I shall not understand them, but I am content to admit that there is much of that sort outside my ken, but because of that I don't intend to throw aside a faith, because I am too small to interpret it. There are too many home truths and too much uncomfortable wisdom in the New Testament for me to subscribe to your view of it as being trimmed and made by someone for their own purpose. I regard it as an inspiration, but certainly believe in a modern interpretation. Writing thus makes me uncomfortable. I can feel you reading pityingly and thinking – poor soul she hasn't seen life as I have and her reasoning is pure unreason. She can't even see what I feel about it – well anyhow I'm going to write no more of that. I am now going to languidly defend 'Baldwin'². I don't suppose he is wildly brilliant, but I think he is steady, and I think he has an unenviable job which every man in the street thinks he could improve on, and I think this last year must have been terribly difficult and trying and most people are apt to criticise sweepingly forgetting how little they know of behind-the-scenes and how delicate matters were. I think Baldwin would probably be glad to be out of it, but his resignation would likely mean splitting up the government. I know you'd like to hit me a crack the head, but I'm so thankful to have Baldwin and a Conservative government, after the fiasco of the last Labour one, that it's only in the thoughtless moments I threw bricks.

Now I've got to get some more of man's instinct off my chest. Since you admit the acquisitive instinct I don't see how you can be separated from attack, in spite of the 'infantile behaviour'. To put it

¹ Loch Osgaig. Coming from Ullapool the last big Loch to the left of the road approaching Achiltibuie.

² Baldwin. Prime Minister. Difficult times. - Italy invades Ethiopia and King Edward VIII abdicates to marry his mistress.

very obviously, there is a tribal raid say, for cattle, women, or land. You can't deny that 'charming' old custom and if that's not attack, then it must have another name now.

Good heavens man, what about the annexation of countries. Ask the 'Negus'¹ what he thinks about it. No, perhaps it's true that a baby won't hit you on the nose unless there's a pin sticking in it, but there would be no need for defence unless there were attack.

I sound as if I were sitting intensely over this, as a matter of fact I'm not, I want you very much, but not to argue with just now or talk of anything the least involved. I'm too full of fresh air and well-being, only my lack of you mars perfect happiness here, but all the day I'm conscious of what it would have been if you could have shared it. Dear I would – I must see you soon. It seems already so long. Thank goodness the days pass quickly here.

Don't know what you mean re- K.I. Do you intend going for a weekend? I'm sure they'd be very pleased to have you. Ever Sheila

11th Jul 1936. Alan, 2 Broad Court Flats, London to Sheila

Saturday

My Dearest Shiney,

Thanks very much indeed for your letter from Rannoch. Your letters mean an awful lot. They always make the day better.

I'm very glad you got a flat. It seems to me just what you wanted. Why by next May it won't concern you for you are going to be married my beloved.

Tell me, when you talk of putting on a skirt do you just put it on on nature so to speak? Or do you keep on your pyjama trousers giving you an early Victorian air? Or do you roll the pyjamas up? Or what?

Answer please most important.

Had a rotten day. No P.Ms² again, they really are far fewer than I expected. So I decided to take the afternoon off. I came here and left my wee attaché case and wandered out to eat with no particular plans.

I'd have liked to go to White City for the A.A.A. sports but it was wet and dismal. So after lunch I ended in Studio 2 Picture House where I saw two travel films and an amusing German Film written about England and *Richmond film*. By the way the pimples are appearing thick and fast due to your sweets.

Well here I am back in Bow Street with very sore feet with walking about so much on hard streets. I'm now going to attack my story again so am *serious*.

11 PM

The story is no further on, instead I've written a tract to you enclosed.

Just been given two tickets for the Ballet next week by Dr Bernard – complimentary from a patient. I wish you could come. I'll probably get John Fergie to come.

Well girl I love you and I need you and I'm going to have you soon somehow.

Sheila your lot must be harder for you can't do anything to hurry our union. But I can and I shall.

Give my love to An Stacked³. That's a great photograph of Larig Shiney. I must have a good sponge and get to bed. Bless your eyes. Alan

P.S. Dam Silly signing myself. As if anyone else had such writing. Or I hope writes to you so!

P.P.S. Tomorrow is Strand Corner House lunch day and Beer.

P.P.P.S. You are definitely the most lovely person I've ever seen and if you say I've not seen them all I'll be annoyed.

¹ Negus – Ruler of Ethiopia in Amharic.

² Post Mortems.

³ Usually known as Stac Polly these days. Ordnance Survey now spells it 'Stac Pollaidh'.

12th Jul 1936. Alan, 2 Broad Court Flats, London to Sheila.

Sunday

My Dear Shiney,

Here we are again writing to you. Not long back from Highgate and had a very pleasant evening there. Had a large dinner. Grapefruit, Brown Soup, Salmon, Cold Chicken and Ham, Strawberries and Cream, Savoury and Coffee.

Then we went up to Ken Wood in Tanner's car and left it while we had a walk. Tanner sniffed the breeze and declared he smelt luscious smells but I very mundane could only smell sheep dip odours. When Tanner started climbing trees I gently but firmly brought him back. He is a very amusing lad and good company.

I'm probably going to play tennis with them on Tuesday evening.

Then shortly after I got back Len Schofield phoned. He is still at Brighton in another Hospital and is coming up to see me soon. So what with one thing and another I've a few people to see. I plan to get another bath at Edgware on Friday or Saturday and I'll be seeing John Fergie at the beginning of the week.

I still can't get the idea out of my head that not to be working in on an evening is perfectly all right. I mean I still get the feeling that I'm shirking working.

I've just realised and I'm jolly well going to see a lot of my small circle of friends here.

After all I'm at it all day and whenever I'm in I spend some part of the night studying.

I enclose the BMJ¹ obituary notice about poor H.P. Nelson. I've met him and heard him speak and he really was very attracting man.

It makes one very humble to read of his achievements. My goodness though the big Hospitals down here do further the interests by guidance and influence and scholarship of their good students. I was very interested to see that he had been married from within two years of qualifying.

I was thinking of that as I went out to Highgate and it struck me how much easier it would be to struggle if one was married and had the stimulation of a good wife beside one. Engaged one struggles to get married but married one can together devise and plan. Curiously enough at Highgate I met a Doctor who succeeded me. He gets £250 plus £120 for staying out and he says he manages fine and runs a little car.

Dear some time I may ask you to do with less even than we have and start anew.

You know – or perhaps you don't, but I'd like you to understand this for it's important. I am a good plodder and can learn any amount of facts given time.

I can also understand and even expand any intricacy in medicine or its allied sciences as far as such are understood.

I also have the rather paradoxical power of getting on well with patients. But those with whom I get on well are those whom I treat not according to my knowledge of what theoretically ought to be, but as the average doctor – shoddily. I say that in no disparaging way because obviously I have had more training. I call it shoddy because I believe it is.

But I am absolutely outside the class of men like Nelson. These men have the power of concentration, not at books, but at the Post-Mortem, at the microscope and at the patient.

It always was the same with me when I get down to realities I fail. I as a student so abhorred the anatomy rooms and their contents that I did not touch a body at all in my first term and very seldom did any dissection. But seeing a little I read it in my books and did average well in the exams.

Incidentally even now I am always conscious, terribly conscious, of the person and the body I'm doing a post mortem on and it impedes me.

Most men have got over that and can concentrate on what's of interest.

It's hard to explain but best perhaps to say that they go to a body and look at, say, the liver, but if I go into a P.M. room I can't help first looking at the face first.

¹ British Medical Journal.

All this is very morbid. In the microscope it's always been the same. My eyesight is as good as anyone else's. I know what to expect and to look for as well as the next but I don't see it. The distractions of the view as a whole prevent me from spotting, or having spotted being sure of, the significance of detail. If I looked long at micro sections, instead of concentrating on the cells, I want to see, their size, position, number, degree of staining etc. I find myself marvelling at how anyone originally described the structure from scratch so to speak. Is a mazy wonder at the intricacy of it all and the marvel of its formation.

And so at either, a conscious dizzy speculative apathy comes over me and I need to wake up and start again

I know I could get on at ordinary Pathology. It's simply proactive and familiarisation with the process of [*clinical*] and as such requires only concentration. But for many the fascination of that concentration carries them on.

I keep seeing highly speculative things and not having passed through the concentration stage or simply being too lazy I can't pursue them.

I've now been through the routine microscopy of the common diseases. I've revised a standard Pathology Text Book.

I've now decided to make a test. I've sent for and today received my complete MRCP¹ notes. They are to me the most fascinating documents although I wrote them myself. For they are all medicine in my private shorthand so to speak. I've not read them for a year now and I shall be scintillating mentally when I'm finished. I remember dozens of interesting queries I have written as marginal notes and I'm going to take up one of these and struggle it out as best I can by looking up course records, remembering my own codes and then getting hold of P.M.² with the subject therein. Dear I am looking forward to reading these notes, 2500 pages of them.

Beloved you are a dear if you read all this, but I want you to know that I'll never be great but I may sometimes have sufficient love for sheer wonder at natural processes to consider asking you to sacrifice comfort.

Beloved it's 11.30 now and I'm of a sudden very sleepy. It's not much of a letter to reach you at Achiltibuie. It's long enough!

But I've no more news dear. But I love you and I need you. Alan

12th Jul 1936. Sheila, Achiltibuie Hotel to Alan

Sunday 1.30pm.

Dear,

We're not out for the day, as it looked very doubtful in the morning, but will go off somewhere in the afternoon. It's just on lunch time but I'll get a few lines written before the bell goes.

First I'll tell you of yesterdays doings. We woke to a gale of east wind and on the assumption that Loch Dornie would be sheltered went there. I climbed a hill and got a nice view, the wind on the top was so strong I could lean up against it, so to speak, and my eyelashes got blown into my eyes!!

Well I got down and the others had fished all morning and got nothing so we had lunch, then decided to go up to a hill loch, where there were reputed 'big ones'. So up we toiled over very heavy going. Dad and I fished without success and becoming disgruntled came home early, about 6 pm, and went out to see the salmon on the Garvie. There weren't any to be seen at the falls, so we went down to the sea and sat on a hill looking right down into the last pool before the sea. We certainly saw them there, the water still and clear, and we watched them swimming about and rising for flies. Bar the aquarium I've never seen anything like it, we were fascinated into forgetting the time and had to rush back to dinner.

Now after we had descended from the hill loch we discovered that Dad had left his wading boots

¹ Member Royal College Physicians.

² Post Mortem.

on top! So after dinner, it being a lovely evening, and as we intended going off for the day, or climbing Ben More tomorrow, Dad suggested going back for the boots. I said alright, he could come along with me in the car and stay put while I went up and collected the boots. However when we got there he insisted on coming up and ran the car into the side of the road rather further than he meant to. Just as we were starting off it occurred to me to suggest seeing if she'd come out alright, but we decided, it being nice and dry, it was O.K. and off we went.

10 p.m. found us in pouring rain, and gathering dusk sloshing around the hill tops looking for the boots. Before we started there was no shadow of a doubt in our minds that we knew just where to look. Besides as Dad said, there were apple skins round the stone and we couldn't miss it! But it wasn't even down at the loch and all the mounds of stones looked alike in the twilight and it was very wet rain. So we started disconsolately down, bootless. Going up a hill in daylight is a different matter from coming down in semi darkness and a deluge and it seemed a long long way. When we saw the car looming up we congratulated each other that our troubles were over. But the car refused to co-operate – we were well and truly stuck!

Buckets of rain had fallen and everything was sodden and slushy. We worked away, labouring with stones and heather. Digging away the ouse and mud from under the wheels and stuffing heather and rags, till it was quite dark, and still she sank, and the rain hissed down, very loudly in the utter quietness, and we began to look rather drowned and wild.

Then heaven took pity and a motor bike (it wasn't by any means the main road) suddenly shot out of the gloom and slithered up beside us. On it was a positive Hercules, a young gamekeeper, of whom I hope the recording angel has taken special note of last night's work!

Then ensued another period of heaving and shoving, and the melancholy certainty that the chassis was stuck on something, but with darkness and heather it was like working down a mine. Then Hercules started to show his strength. By heaving on their part I managed to reverse a little bit and stay there, and we fell to gathering stones to build a way out. That lad trotted up and down with colossal stones from the top of a wall, one in each arm as if they were pebbles. We were stone gathering too, but our efforts were quite eclipsed and we were just a shade weary!

After building a lovely causeway we actually got out. There are no words to thank a man when he has appeared so helpfully but we breathed blessings on his head and departed up the road at the best pace we could, with one headlight pointing more or less skyward in spite of persuasion. Half way back on a steep hill we suddenly met another car coming up, which turned out to be mother and a Colonel somebody, out to look for us!

There was a deal of manoeuvring to get past, then they had to go on a good bit to get turned. Meanwhile we took our dripping selves homeward as quickly as possible, to find various damsels in dressing gowns and candles waiting for the remains to be brought in and the Colonels wife hanging out her bedroom window in night attire, asking plaintively if we'd been found.

So you see if one doesn't come home before midnight here one is conspicuous.

Had two letters from you yesterday, of the 15th & 16th. I hope you get to Weybridge it would be a nice break.

I'm glad you enjoyed the opera – no ballet. I've never seen a proper one.

We had tea on the Garvie this afternoon. After which I fell asleep. Mother insists she saw Larig consuming a whole adder this afternoon, so far it's agreed with him.

Dad has just informed me that he thinks he'd like to see Glen Elf and will go there on Wed or Thursday. So I'll wire you definitely as soon as we hear about rooms. Everyone who has been there raves about it, so it would be rather nice to see for one's self altho I'm very happy here.

The Hotel, Glen Elf, Inverness-shire. We'd be leaving for home (Killearn) on the Sunday or Monday.

10 pm

Dear it's great to think of seeing you in a month, but even that's a long time away.

Dear I want you so very badly tonight. To hear you tell me you love me.

Thanks for writing so often, it's made just all the difference to my happiness and contentment up here. I really am enjoying myself but it gives such a nice feeling to the day to know I'm going back to your letter in the evening. But I wish you could post yourself instead. I kiss your letters a good deal! Love, Sheila

18th Jul 1936. Alan, 2 Broad Court Flats, London to Sheila

Saturday 7.30 am

My Dear,

I was too sleepy to write last night so I set my alarm and here I am sitting up in bed.

I'm wondering whether to send this to a Achiltibuie and I'll ask Dr Bernard to let me know if a wire comes.

Had a letter last night from Dad he says that Dr Muirhead at the Department of Health thinks it impossible owing to my age. I wish I'd never heard of the beastly job.

I'm going to change my decision and tell them out loud that I've definitely made up my mind to get some job on which I can get married.

The pathology gets more exasperating every day. It's more student job than a qualified man's job and is certainly too junior for me. But I don't seem fit for anything special and it's all very depressing.

I have you behind me I know when I refuse to consider general practice.

That's the only thing I bar, and unfortunately it's the easiest way to do well.

But I'm working my time here and saving nothing for the lean time. Beloved I'm terribly sorry.

Oh I wish I could talk to you.

Dear unless something dramatic happens I'm going to be a failure in the eyes of the world and in my own eyes too. I've tried but it seems that I've directed my steps wrongly.

I'll get something though, meanwhile and please promise to marry me. I can't do anything for the need of you.

I'll write again tonight and risk sending this to Achiltibuie. Alan

24th Jul 1936. Alan, 103 Vassall Road, Brixton to Sheila

Friday

My Dear,

Here I am at yet another address. I arrived shortly after seven and have had dinner and Dr Kusel is away. He has paid me in advance – whoopee. It's a funny old place in a poorish row of houses. I called and collected your wire and letter.

I can't thank you enough for keeping me in touch so well. I am probably ridiculous on the point but it is so much nicer to know all about you. Enclosed photograph shows my domain. Sign is that of the Hairdresser and the open window below it is the surgery.

The other enclosed is very interesting. How about it – take a D.P.H.¹ during it and be safe for a Public Health job?

It would surely satisfy parents. It's about £46 per month and we could be all right on that. I could plead lecturing ability in Rugby Club, Testimonial Meetings and the Berkshire Woman's Institute. I shall certainly apply.

I hope they don't take too long to decide. It would be quite fun and one always clears a little off travelling expenses. Besides I might make an odd guinea or two by articles. Oh Shiney it would seem I was qualified for that. My degrees are ample and I really have done a lot of lecturing at the Territorials which should help.

I shall be very glad if I can get one of these jobs. I'll tell your Dad when it's an accomplished fact.

¹ Diploma Public Health.

I've got a headache tonight. I don't know why, perhaps I been overworking. Dear one I lay and ached for you last night. I read your two letters again in bed and I ended up by dreaming of you beside me kissing me under the chin.

I don't like waking from a dream like that. Sheila I'm going to want an awful lot of caressing when we are married. You are so very lovable and is always such a surprise to see you, who are so independent in company and whose beauty is so cool and fresh, pressing to me when I kiss.

Dear Shiney I'm keen on this job. If I was lucky I could manage a D.P.H. and then drop out if prospects were not bright. There are always D.P.H. jobs and the minimum allowed scale is £550 for them. Salisbury would be a grand place but Oh dearest girl that ever loved a man, anywhere is lovely with you! I love you fiercely, covetously yet decently and admiringly. Dear love I admit that I often think of you physically.

But usually it's more spiritual than any other thought that comes to my mind. My happy times are when a vision of your sweet face, so clean cut yet not hard, your brown eyes and your dear hair rises up and gives me a lump in my throat so that I want to fling myself through space to you.

My dear I adore you. I look up to you and I feel very conscious of my sins. I give you my heart, my spirit and my body. They are yours my own sweetheart.

Talking of spirits old sweetheart there is a flagon of whisky and a siphon at my bedside, while at dinner I had a pint mug of draught set before me. Did you ever see a maid serve table without stockings? Well I did – the before

Stops on page 4 - Missing Pages

29th Jul 1936. Alan, 2 Broad Court Flats, London to Sheila

Monday 11.45 PM

My Very Beloved,

I feel as if many days have passed since I saw you but I feel your love everywhere with me. My Beloved Darling if words are useless when we are together how much more useless is the written word. And so I'll not attempt to tell you what you mean to me to be with and to leave but my own Darling surely you know.

Now to my doings. You would hear about meeting Mrs Hill at the train. Well I also met a fellow I used to know, Bobby Elder, and on going to see him after the train started ran into Max *Simmers*. I talked to them for almost an hour. Then after a restless hour (no Hay Fever) slept peacefully till 6 A.M.

I got up then washed, shaved and put on a clean shirt. We were in on time and I left my baggage in the left luggage. I went on to breakfast at the Tott Court Rd corner house which is open all night. Then I came here – saw Dr B, left my coat and went to the London¹.

There after some 'wanders' I got settled in and introduced myself to my two companions who individual both have small grants.

With one of them I did routine examinations of specimens sent over from operations such as appendices, gall bladders and so on. Then I lunched. At 12.30 I got back to the P.M.² room and was there till 6 P.M. with a few minutes off for tea. They have a great idea for tea there. It's held in the Residents Hall and anyone on the Hospital staff can go so that you get chiefs and housemen and all and sundry sitting down together. It's apparently an unwritten rule that no one must help anyone else and the big shots rush around helping themselves to tea without hindrance.

Well I got here about 7 after an excursion to Woolworths for crockery. I wanted to see Dr B and find out his methods but he did not finish till 9.30 PM so I did not get for my luggage until then. I'm now to all intents and purposes blind with sleepiness so I'll stop now and finish with a clear head in

¹ London Hospital.

² Post Mortem.

the morning.

Tuesday 8.45 AM

Just wakened from a very deep sleep. I fell asleep last night before even I put the light out.

Just nipped out to see if by any chance and – glory be I'm lucky and there is your letter. It sounds wrong and even cruel but in a way I'm glad you miss me so. But I'm sorry too for I know the pain. Don't think I don't know that you felt bad when I left and was proud and happy that you were so good about it.

It's a bright morning and just about time for me to set off to Whitechapel.

I'll write again tonight, but I must run now. Love Alan

AUGUST 1936

11th Aug 1936. Alan, 2 Broad Court Flats, London to Sheila

Tuesday

My Dear,

I've just been to Euston and there is an excursion on Friday night. Due Glasgow 7.40 a.m.

I've bought tickets so I'll be seeing you! Don't meet me – it's sure to be late and I'll just turn up at the flat. Is your name on the door yet? If not which floor?

Dear I never cease wondering at you. You have been good to me and I won't forget it.

It will be such a relief to talk to you and I'll get my nerve back. The very thought of even mentioning 'abroad' to your people is terrifying but if needs be it must be faced.

I walked to and from Euston and it's done me good. I simply can't settle down and I think I'll take another walk, come in in a lather of sweat, have a sponge and get to bed.

The return train from Glasgow on Saturday night is 11.55 PM.¹

I'm sorry to have thought it but I did expect to be ticked off tonight. You are so wonderfully patient with me. You are too patient dear.

I don't believe anyone loved a man more than you must love me. It's easy to love and be attracted but you've been so true, so patient to unchanging in your love. I'm of a different nature but believe me Sheila I love you with my whole being. A worthless being it is, but it's all dedicated to you.

Friday will be a good day for I ought to have all the answers to enquiries in by them and the B.M.J and Lancet come on Friday morning.

I'm sorry to spoil your week end but it's unavoidable. I'll discuss the matter with you in the morning and some sort of explanation of the visit can be made later.

Well dear there's naught more to say now. I'll get out and post this. I'll write again tomorrow and I'll be phoning.

Enclosed is R.A.M.C. literature. It's a duplicate, I have the same.

Dear I love you but equally I admire you for you have qualities that I'm dreamed about in my Dream Girl, but never seriously thought would be realised – aye even when I knew you quite well.
Alan

13th Aug 1936. Sheila, 32 Falkland Mansions, Glasgow to Alan

Thursday 2.30 pm

Dear Alan,

My days are busy just now, & go very quickly. I had your Sunday's letter last night & am as worried as you are. It's strange & disappointing not to hear anything of the job, perhaps your statement about not going to Salisbury prejudiced them, & in a rush of applications they had no time for one which was even mildly dictative, at least I thought that at the time.

About the RAMC² I suggested that myself at one time, & you said you wouldn't think of it, it wouldn't give the home life we wanted, & for various other reasons, which if I had time or energy, I would look up just now in your letters. Obviously you are quite at liberty to change your mind & are in no way held by past views & writings. But I am sitting here with your letter, thinking of the many different phases you have passed through, your uncertainties & lack of conviction as to your path, & am wondering if this is not just a last desperate throw born of your present hard luck & temporary disillusionment, rather than your wisdom & foresight for your future. If you truly consider the RAMC is what you want, then we must do that. But if you have been thrown back on the idea because of this job falling through & because of the immediate darkness of the future, try to realise

¹ So Alan is leaving London Friday arriving in Glasgow on Saturday 15th August at 07:40. Catches Train back 11.55 Saturday 15th.

² Royal Army Medical Corps. Alan was thinking of joining up.

that that is so. There must be surely other jobs of the type of the one that has passed to tide over till you get something good. What would be your chances retired from the Army? Would it not be more difficult to get the Department of Health class of thing then? As you say this cannot be decided thus & I shall see you in September.

Please don't speak as if you were rescuing me from an awful home. I love you & look forward to living with you, but I do not look at things in that way at all. As to unsettled atmosphere & wishing me more settled, the most unsettled atmosphere I know is the uncertainty of our future & if you refer to the wanderings of this summer remember that until just before you knew me, we had the excellent habit of being away all summer & I've enjoyed the change of being out of Glasgow very much.

It was all I could do not to phone you last night, as I wanted very badly to hear your voice. I refrained because I was afraid you'd be out & when you heard of the call, wonder what was up.

Moirra and Doreen came in for a few minutes yesterday, they seem to have enjoyed themselves, but certainly don't look as if they'd seen the sun, it was unfortunate they had such rotten weather.

The flat looks more presentable now & while a dull place in summer, will be fine in winter. I am very glad we are moved from Crown Gate. It was a wise thing to do.

This is a beautiful day & it looks as if your family were to have a spell of fine weather.

We are going to Greenock this evening.

4.30 p.m.

Dad has just phoned your wire & I'm going to phone you from Greenock tonight. I'm elated at the thought of good news & depressed at you're not knowing where I am. I thought I'd made it clear we'd left 'Gartocharn'¹ & that we were only away the weekend. Surely you knew I'd have let you know if we'd been going anywhere else & I'm almost sure I gave you the phone number here. Oh! Well I'll soon know. I wish to goodness it was time to phone. I'll have no peace till I do. I don't feel like posting this letter now, but I probably will.

Dear I love you & do honestly want to do what's best for you.

Love Sheila

16th Aug 1936. Alan, 2 Broad Court Flats, London to Sheila

Sunday

My Dear Sheila,

I'm still very much with you in spirit and thought. Yesterday was one of the happiest days I've ever spent and I'll never forget it. I am so very much better in mental health from seeing you and things are at proper value for me. I still feel uncertain about the future of course but not in that awful growing, worrying way. I've got my confidence back and it's all best expressed by saying as I did in the car – 'I feel myself again'.

I've fallen in love again too. Strongly, hungrily, with all my heart and with anticipation of wonderful times ahead I've fallen in love again. You are an extraordinary person. I'm just yours for ever for my instincts and my reasoned thought combine to make me want you in full marriage for ever. What it is most that compels me I can't say but I love you dearest 100 times more than I knew I could ever love.

You have been a good friend to me by all the tenets that friendship could meet. You are my lover and can arouse in me better feelings than I knew I had.

But apart from all that you are Sheila – My Sheila and to me that means more than words can ever tell or the World will ever be able even to guess at.

I had a good berth with just two others in the compartment. I slept very well only wakening once till 9 o'clock. We were very late just getting in at 11 A.M.

My one awakening was rather funny. I was in a lower bunk and opposite me was an elderly very

¹ A small village on the A811 near Loch Lomond.

dignified man. I was awakened by his snoring and without any delay or hesitation I leaned over and tapped him on the arm saying 'you are making an awful noise, please turn over on your side'. He said 'so sorry' and that's all I remember. In the morning it was like a dream and seemed a rather rude action but I had no hesitation in my half asleep condition.

I came here and parked the typewriter. I unearthed a little old workstand table in the Dispensary and cleared it of rubbish. Now it's in my room and will serve its purpose splendidly. Then I had a wash and a shave and went out for a combined breakfast and lunch about midday. It's now 1.45 P.M. I'm going to write various letters to Colonsay etc then I can forsee a sleep.

Following that I'll attack bacteriology again with real pleasure and then I'll go out to post this before 6 P.M. I'll have some food then and return to do some more reading.

Dear I'm sure to get something to do before Christmas and then I'll sit Part 1 in January.

Thank you dear for all your true kindness, you really are a perfect 'gentleman' in your dealings with me. It was very nice being taken to the station. Thank your Mother and your Dad for their kindness to me and give them both my regards.

As regards writing perhaps you could manage every second day. Then now and then you could give me an extra as a surprise. Don't worry at all if you've little to say. Just tell me of your doings and what you are reading and send your love.

One last word. I'm happy. I'm comfortable and don't think of me otherwise. May God bless you
My Dear Love. Alan

22nd Aug 1936. Alan, 2 Broad Court Flats, London to Sheila

Saturday

My Dear,

Please excuse typing but it really is easier just now. I've had letters from you yesterday and today. Dear don't worry about them being short. It just happens that I am in a long writing mood these days and you are in a short one. While yesterday I got in seven hours, and today four hours, making a total for the week of 27 which is quite good. It's surprisingly how much chemistry I have forgotten that is coming back. My main difficulty is simple addition and subtraction. I never was a good mathematician (nor a good speller).

Last night I worked well and finished what I had set myself to do. Being finished at 1 PM today I had visions of more swotting but on coming home I found my Journalism lesson and as it was suggested that I find a market for my last lesson. I retyped and altered it. Then I sent it to the Passing Show. Then the mood being on me I wrote another and sent it to Tit-Bits! It's now 7 PM and I've just finished that.

But I had a very interesting interruption in the afternoon. There was a matinee at the ballet and two of the dancers collided. One was the principal and she was apparently darting between the ranks of whatever they call the chorus of the ballet, when she hit one of the girls with her head. They phoned over and I went across. The stage, manager a very tall thin man who I think is De Basil¹ himself, met me and handed me to a dressing woman who took me to the principles room. She had a tidy bump on her head and was slightly concussed. However she had finished for the afternoon and I said that if she felt all right she could go on at night. The other girl was in dressing rooms backstage, full of girls crowded round her. She had a dislocated jaw! With the aid of two wands wrapped in lint I managed to reduce same. This all went on while dozens of girls flopped in and out of the small room. I was assisted by a dresser who fortunately could speak the girls language. What that was I don't know. When her jaw was back she could speak a little English!

¹ Wassily de Basil (1888 – 1951), usually referred to as Colonel W. de Basil, was a Russian ballet impresario. De Basil was born Vassily Grigorievich Voskresensky in Lithuania. He is said to have been a colonel in the Cossack army, although his claim is disputed. In 1932 he became co-director with René Blum of the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo. The Ballet would be in The Royal Opera House, Covent Garden. Alan would be mere yards away living in Broad Street Flats, Bow Street.

These ballet people are really very agreeable, they are not the loud common chorus girl type but very bright and pleasant.

After that was all over I stayed behind the scenes with the tall man for about half an hour watching from the wings. It was of course a great chance and I enjoyed myself immensely. What impresses me most was the enormous activity behind the scenery. Groups talking and laughing. Girls practising movements under severe looking ladies with books on their hands. Men playing cards at a table with girls looking over their shoulders, but all in good spirits. I'm never seen so many happy people together. On leaving I was told to let them know for which night next week I wanted seats.

Now I'm hungry and I must go out and eat. When I get back I'll do some swotting and I'll sleep in tomorrow.

Sunday 1 PM

I woke this morning at 10.30 and lay dreaming to nearly 11. I was more tired last night than I can ever remember, but Oh grand to be tired and feel it's because one has been working. I have that feeling in the last few days of mental activity and bodily fatigue which is so necessary for my well-being. I'm getting a special pleasure from Bacteriology. It's a very fascinating subject and it's fine to think that I'll get an opportunity to do some in most public health jobs. Then I'm very excited at the possibility of getting one of these articles accepted. I expect I'll get the wee printed form again, but at least it's fun speculating and I think that if not this time I certainly shall in the future and then I'll try to improve my standard and get into better class stuff.

For the exercise after this present one I shall have to write a short story and if one could only get the knack there is a big market for rubbish. Excuse typing, I'm rushing it and not bothering to rub out etc. My contributions are in better style.

With 27 hours in and a weekly average of 35 hours in the future it should only take me just under eight weeks from now to have completed the Part 1 course and then I shall have to consider my position. Meanwhile I'm not speculating too much but getting on with the job in hand leaving the future to fate.

This is a nice sunny day. I wish you were here to take out to lunch. You're a nice person to lunch with. I hope that you are away this weekend. Had word from Colonsay¹. Dad seems to have caught some very good trout and is very bucked. They are having slightly better weather and Mummy is apparently revelling in rides in the buggy.

Well Dear lunch is indicated though it seems as if I'd just had breakfast. Love Alan

¹ Colonsay is an island north of Islay and south of Mull. Alan's parents were apparently on a fishing holiday there.

SEPTEMBER 1936

4th Sep 1936. Alan, 2 Broad Court Flats, London to Sheila

Friday 4.9.36 1 AM

Dear Shiney,

The days don't seem to have a sufficient number of hours for me to get finished with my work. Each night I find it's about 11.30 before I imagine it more than 10. By tomorrow noon I'll have in 100 out of that 280 hours. I shall probably get drunk to celebrate.

There are two possible jobs in the B.M.J. this week and I've written for forms of application. One is a combined sanatorium and T.B. job in Birmingham, £400 + keep. The other is a school M.O.H. job at York £500 to live out. I'll not enlarge but for once let things placidly proceed in that a man called Jones-Davies began work at the Institute.

He followed me at Highgate and¹

10th Sep 1936. Alan, 2 Broad Court Flats, London to Sheila

Thursday

Dearest Shiney²,

I've had a bad day, but now I'm my sweet self again. Pretty lyrical letter old girl for 3.15 P.M. You are coming on. Just had a look at the old face in a mirror and decided you are right – dead right, blimey tis a wunnerful face. If I had your face here just now I'd probably bite it in my endeavour to kiss it hard enough. Glad your Mother is having a holiday. Don't get into trouble while she's away. You cad you want to read so you stop writing. Well I'm blowed for here am I thirsting for a little news. Dear you ought to take a course in letter writing. Take a tip from me and learn how to pad. You do not sound as damming as I hoped at the York job. I won't ask for the papers back in case in a weak moment I might apply. 'Sound any too wonderful'. Dearest it's PURE UNADULTERATED HELL. What do I know about partially blind, partially deaf and three part dotted infants? Dear you are going soft. If you walked into the surgery I'd order a tonic but being who you are I merely say I am saddened by your tranquillity in face of stark tragedy. After all one must think of one's fellows. Someone else may be forced to do that job. Think of the poor chap faced by a row of juvenile loonies peering at his face from all directions according to the angle of their strabiami³.

Strange noises assail his ears. The harsh voices of the partially deaf squawk pitifully. Having had a look at that bunch he proceeds to another institution timed no doubt by the spies at the County Council. Poor, poor chap.

Shiney I have not detected the little rays of sunshine in your letters recently. Cheer up you have 14 days before you see me. I've been under the weather all day but now I'm abnormally, but I hope not jarringly, cheerful.

After a long painful struggle last night I failed to finish my report. I was at it till 2.30 a.m. and by that time very bang on the typewriter was sending horrid jerks up the back of my head. I had forgotten to have an evening meal until it was too late and I had not even a sweet in the place. I don't remember going to bed but I woke feeling worse than ever. I worked till 1 feeling awful and then went to the library for some last references. I stayed too long there and by the time I got to Hackney Swimming Baths for the visit it was 3.30. By bad luck I met the people leaving and as Dr Thomson was away I did not get signed up so wasted the afternoon.

Well I came back here about 4.30 and slugged away solidly till 8 when I finished. By this time I was wondering if heads could possibly burst. I went out and posted the report and went down to Hill's in the Strand. There I went all reckless for once on the strength of the £5.5 for the report. I had

¹ Page 1 only, there must be more.

² This strange pet name for Sheila is typed so there is no mistake.

³ Strabismus reflects a lack of convergence of the visual axes. In other words, a squint.

oxtail soup, savoury omelette and cherry tart. I had four rolls and butter and ½ pint of bitter. I was too tired to read. I came back here and I've struck work for the night. But now I am feeling much better.

I was wondering whether to apply for the House Physician's job at the Hospital for Children, Great Ormond Street. I'd like to in a way but I'd probably be wiser to do a chest job if I am going to do a less well paid one. There is also a £200 a year Registrar's job at the Royal Northern which might be combined with something else to let us get married. I was hearing the other day of several lads married on £350 but then they were Australians and their wives had come over rather than be away from their fiancés for so long. Dear if neither of us had parents we should have been married a long time ago and managed somehow. It does seem a contradictory position. But then it would probably have been in practice, but really perhaps we would be better married & in practice. I wish we could just get something. Dear whenever I do get a job we shall not waste any time but get married right away. I have a great desire to be married before I complete this D.P.H. I want so much to be with you when I sit the exam.

I enclose a copy of the report which may interest you. Don't worry I have revised the punctuation spelling and typing of the original. The difficulty was to know what he wanted. The arrangement is shocking but he wanted it in such a hurry. You can understand the work involved in reading through and extracting the 'meat' from all these articles after laboriously digging them out by consulting indices.

Now Dear although it's only 10.15 I am going to bed early for once. It's no good trying to tell how I care but I'll do that when you come down.¹ Love Alan

13th Sep 1936. Sheila, Hotel Majestic to Alan

Sunday 11.30 AM, St Annes-on-the-Sea

Dear,

It's a lovely day and Dad & I are reclining in a comfortable sand dune. This seems a popular place for Dalmatians, there's a lovely one a few yards away, & while we were admiring a nice leggy puppy a short while ago, a little fat woman came tearing up, very breathless, clutched me & gasped with a very 'Eh by gum' accent 'Eh what strain is e' referring to Larig, she was almost inarticulate with excitement & before I could speak, said 'Bassinet Prince will be in him I'd know his spots anywhere, I was their kennel maid, I was' She then held forth on Larig's stud possibilities becoming more & more indecent before we drifted away!

I wonder if you were along here during your visit to Blackpool. It's really very pleasant this morning, the shore is really clean with sand coloured sand, if you know what I mean & surprisingly quiet.

There are a constant stream of riders cantering past & several different types of aircraft occasionally drone over. We had a more or less uneventful run yesterday, leaving Glasgow shortly after 2 pm. It rained all the way to Carlisle but not enough to put up the hood. We had some tea in C & phoned Steven, but he was away from home. Just outside of Carlisle there was a thunder plump², & we got half drowned in our efforts to get the hood up. About 10 mins later travelling about 50 the bally thing blew off! & we sadly surveyed in the downpour the tortured framework & rent canvass of our nice hood! After some labour it was induced to go up, & in Penrith we got some huge safety pins to hold the bad bits together,

The mist started on 'Shap', where I took Larig a good walk, & from Lancaster to Blackpool was a toilsome journey through thick fog. We got to B about 11 pm & got lost several times before finding 'Hotel Imperial' which couldn't take us in & said we wouldn't get a room in the place, so we

¹ This strange letter was typed so is exactly as transcribed. Alan appears to be very stressed and frustrated. I wonder what Sheila made of it?

² Thunder-plump - A short violent downpour of rain in connection with a thunder-storm.

proceeded along the esplanade gaping at the illuminations, hungry & sleepy, & in the end got into the above Hotel, which is a huge place & very comfortable. We had some supper & beer, took a walk, & retired to bed sometime in the wee small hours. Larig had to sleep in my room as we couldn't get a garage for the car,

It's a mercy Blackpool couldn't take us for we're infinitely better here, the place is positively peaceful. We're going along to look at B sometime today. Gosh it's a hot sun I'm going to lie back & enjoy it.

Dear it was nice to hear you on Friday night & made me feel nearer you & not as usual further away. Dear my pen falls from my hand the sun & the quiet are too much for me. I love you, Sheila

P.S. I think your 'report' a jolly good effort.

P.P.S. Larig killed a rabbit yesterday, then ate its eyes!

2.30 pm.

Just off to Blackpool to see the sights & find an omelette & coffee.

14th Sep 1936. Alan, 2 Broad Court Flats, London to Sheila

Monday 11. PM.

My Dear,

Your nice long letter this morning gave the lie to my complaints. Even Blackpool can be muted to the most attractive place on earth when you are there. I never thought I'd want to be there again.

Bad luck about the hood dear but 50 M.P.H. in pouring rain is not what you gave me to understand. I've never gone at that pace on wet in a car since I've known you. You have never had a skid or you would not do it. I know the car is stable and hate to be a kill joy, but do take care of yourself. You can do anything you like as long as we are killed together. Went to Edgware about 9 last

This is first page only. Remainder missing.

17th Sep 1936. Sheila, 32 Falkland Mansions, Glasgow, to Alan

Thursday 6 pm.

My Dearest One,

It was harder than it appeared leaving you last night, going out shutting the door & forcing oneself downstairs. I can't be enough thankful Sadye was with me. We were very fortunate in having a compartment to ourselves. I flopped on a bunk fully clothed & unwashed & slept at once & heavily until 4 AM thence more fitfully, tantalised by your seeming nervousness & knowledge of being carried away from you, till 9 AM. Came home to breakfast & a fine fire, it's very cold.

Dear I think we must have low minds! Because my activities on your behalf have not occasioned even the twitch of an eyebrow from mother & I now feeling it was the most ordinary thing to do.

There was a parcel from Liberties waiting here for me. I couldn't think what on earth it could be & on opening it found a beautiful bag & powder puff with card from Sadye! I quite overcome, people are really terribly good to me. Well dear, I'm going to 1.K.¹ To hear how you got on today. I'll write you tomorrow.

Bless you & take care of your dear self. Love Sheila

¹ 1.K. is 1 Kensington Gardens, Alan's parent's house.

17th Sep 1936. Alan, 2 Broad Court Flats, to James Steven

Thursday

Dear Mr Steven,

Thanks very much for the P.C.

It's a good thing Mrs Steven is not often away or I don't know where the pair of you (+ pup) would end up.

I strongly suspect that the business was a blind for you two to have a shot at the Big Wheel at Blackpool!

Well next week it's my turn to have the company of your sparring partner and I'm looking forward to that. Yours Alan

OCTOBER 1936

8th Oct 1936. Sheila, Falkland Mansions to Alan

Thursday 11.20 pm

Dear,

I wonder if at the moment your toes are gently scratching up & down a certain blue plush cover, or if they are stiff (but manly!) betwixt cold sheets.

It was strange to hear your voice tonight, & I know you understand my not wanting to hang on, & chip in on the family conversation. I am so glad to know that you've got today over & feeling all right.

Moir is looking more rested than I have seen her for a long time, but is of course rather *depressed* about herself.

I phoned Sadie tonight & told her you were O.K. I still can't get over what she must have spent (that seems a funny way to put it, but you'll know what I mean) in giving me such a generous gift.

Then mother has bought me a simply marvellous bedroom suite which she says if I like it enough I can take away with me. Its walnut and a reproduction of a Queen Anne antique suite. Why Oh! Why are people so good to me? – No you can't tell me because you are biased, but you see though I don't make a serious rite of it, I do the same old self-analysis & motive searching too at times & it makes me feel very small.

Poor mother had a bad time with the daily last week. The woman was cleaning the kitchen fender and somehow managed to cut her wrist open, then dashed through the house screaming and splattering blood all over the place, it's a long story, but in the end she was piloted by the next-door made to Dr Scott who stitched her up. That's the kind of thing that would happen when I was away.

Well dear one, I'm going to sleep. I feel I could do so for a week, but otherwise I'm feeling fine.

Friday

Dearest, thanks for letter. I was hoping for one. I didn't get Larig back yesterday as I felt I would be better able to cope with him today. Weipers brought him in his car to the end of Hyndland Road this morning on his way into town, & I met him there. He was sitting in the back of the car with an amazingly pained and indignant expression on his face, and when W¹ got out of the car to get him out he turned the other way & looked pointedly passed him. Then I spoke, & he made a wild dive at me, & since then the excitement has been terrific. He's only just settled down now, having whined all morning. He had resented Wiepers taking him in the car & he'd had some snaps at the poor man, so no wonder relations were strained!

I am alone & having lunch. Mother & Aunt Sadie are at the Housing & Health Exhibition. Mother & I are thinking of going to a theatre tonight. Dad will be at the James W dinner. I delivered your fathers scarf.

I regret to say I'm still sleepy. Dear I'm sorry you had to suffer a cold but these three days will always be a precious memory to me, & after Monday it was good fun. I'm going to be very weak kneed now and sleep for an hour. I know I'll go off the minute I let myself. Love always, Sheila

10th Oct 1936. Alan, 2 Broad Court Flats, London to Sheila

Saturday

Dearest,

I've received an invitation to go to Wakefield on Wednesday². This is all very difficult! Monday – County Hall, Wednesday – Wakefield.

¹ 'W' is Weipers, the unfortunate vet. He has apparently been looking after Larig of whom he is afraid.

² So Interview Wed 14th Oct

After some hard thinking I went to see Dr Rawlinson (the chief of the Institute). His advice is – Go to County Hall & take the job if offered. Then go to Wakefield and if they will come & go & allow you to take extra qualifications (U.D. etc.) there while doing the job, do everything to get it.

He knows about Wakefield & says it's a good department and jumping off ground. He thinks they encourage the juniors progress.

The country within a few miles of Wakefield he raves about & from what he says it's really a great place to live although Wakefield itself is pretty awful.

So I must just do that & I do hope I get that job. I'll buy stiff collar for the interview!

Dear I'm afraid to think too much about it for it means – marriage in April or May & country life.

I'd be able to complete my D.P.H. more or less at leisure

Shiney your letter today was a delight. Strangely when you wrote I was scratching my toes on blue flock. I miss it frightfully & have fibbed & used it both nights – dash you!

Yes we must have low minds either that or both our families are too pure in mind to live!

It was exceedingly good of Sadye to give you a present. She knows a nice person when she meets her – that's why.

Simply could not understand about 'bedroom suit' & when your mother said you could take it away I almost collapsed. Then I realised it was a suite (sorry to mention it but it made me laugh so much the thought of your mother taking back so to speak a suit – I thought it must be a dressing gown business).

It's terribly kind of her and by jove I hope you like it for it will be tremendously useful. I love walnut!

Sorry to hear of your gory daily. It's a curse when these fools get going.

It must have been fine to see Larig's delight at being reunited with you.

Yes I'm glad I was ill too. It was simply great to be looked after by you. You are a wee pet & I like you.

I got a carton of milk last night & have had supper, breakfast & lunch. It's a devil of nuisance washing-up everything, tea pots etc. It seemed easy with you around. Well now to work.

11.45

I'm in bed with HW bottle. I've just read over this letter & can hardly decipher it myself. I was on the phone to 1K & asked them to let you know about Wakefield. I imagined you would be sure to be out or away for the weekend.

I am in a queer mix up with classes with half of Monday & all Wednesday next off.

I'm just desquamating¹ all over (sorry feeling) and I have a shrewd suspicion that my little hiccup at the beginning of the week was really a mild scarlet². So if before Thursday you get a sore throat – go to bed at once.

I've cold creamed myself liberally & shall pinch a bath from Jones-Davies tomorrow to get the scales off for Monday.

Dear pray hard for the Wakefield job. I'll think of you all the time & then at my best the committee may like me. What a lot of things may happen before a year just now. Why if we get married in March little Alan may have been borne by then! If 'Slightly Premature'.

Stewth no – we want to be able to afford him. It's a pity Nancy has got a boy. We might have sold one cheap! Dear you know how I want this & I know how you want it.

We must not hope too much. 'Blessed are they that expecteth little for they shall not be disappointed'.

Quite probably I won't even know my fate after the interview on Wednesday but would have to wait a few days.

¹ To desquamate. Layers of skin come off in flakes.

² Scarlet Fever.

Sheila I feel you know my love now. During your visit we learned more of each other. Dear I could not imagine a 'fight' and it did not come. I really have improved.

I want now your intimate company without this dodging and explaining every movement. I like you. I like your face. I like your voice. I like your character.

And you have grown of course since I met you but you are still my wee Shiney.

1 PM

Just in from lunch. Woke at 11 AM and did visits for Dr B. Then had lunch and here I am.

Dismal failure of swotting efforts yesterday have made me very worried. I must do better to-day.

Dear the more I think of Wakefield the better it seems. I do hope I get it. It depends altogether on whether or no the committee like me.

I'm sure to be up against men with the D.P.H. but on the other hand they must be considering me seriously or they would not have sent for me from London and paid my expenses.

Well here's hoping. I could get a car and come up for weekends when passing the months till we were married.

Dear I want that job badly. I'll try to be very charming at the interview!

.....¹

11th Oct 1936. Sheila, 32 Falkland Mansions, Glasgow, to Alan

Sunday

My Dear,

Your mother has just phoned & told us the news of 'Wakefield'. Dear I'm glad they have the sense to want to see you, but if you get the chance of it, but feel fevers would be more use to you just now, don't let anything stupid I may have said, make any difference to you. I see things more calmly again, & know that whatever course you decide on will be for the best.

It is my turn to be laid low! On Friday I felt a slight soreness in the inside of my right nostril and by evening at the theatre (Brenda Thomas) it was really most uncomfortable, throbbing & making my right I feel as if I had a large sty. Yesterday morning it was a little better & in the afternoon Dad and I took Larig out to Bolderwood where I took him a good walk. During the walk I began to feel very sorry for myself, & on getting home retired to bed with an aching swollen nose throbbing and a splitting head.

The night was not too bad but I wakened early this morning if anything more painful & very fed up.

However Aspirin have cured my head & the old nose is less painful now (2:30 PM) but the swelling gives me a Jewish cast of countenance. I've been dozing all morning. I think the trouble must be a large spot or small boil in my nose. Thank goodness I hadn't it last week or I'm afraid I'd have been very bad tempered.

Dear one I love you, please please remember that I do understand about fevers & don't think I'm becoming impatient or attach any importance to foolish remark made when I was tired and worried at the thought of leaving you.

Excuse me not writing more just now & excuse this scrawl. My eye is too closed up to read so I'm going to lie & think of you & happiness ahead. Love Sheila

12th Oct 1936. Sheila, 32 Falkland Mansions, Glasgow, to Alan

Monday 12.30PM.

Dear,

Thanks for nice long letter. I'm still in bed but will I think get up in the afternoon. The face is still

¹ This is incomplete, got pages 1 – 7 only. Assume there is more as no signature.

swollen but not so painful, which is a mercy, as last night for a few hours, I didn't know what to do with myself. Dr A phoned to say he was back from his holiday and could I come this afternoon to get another injection. Mother explained my woes and he is coming here to give me it at 5.30. He'll want to know what kind of holiday I've had, coming back with my nose all over my face!

Dear I've chuckled over the H.W. bag¹, it's a great joy to think of you standing filling it, and probably telling yourself it's only to please me anyhow!

During my forced rest, I've been thinking over your articles a lot, and the more I think the more I like them, keep at it, when you get time.

I wakened in the train Wednesday night thinking of different things in the dark, quietly, except for train noises. It felt as if Sadye and I were shut off from the world in the compartment. I looked across of the small heap, very fast asleep and thought with amusement, now is the witching hour, that someone (Chinese for preference) should glide in and syringe her. Then it occurred what a beautifully gruesome plot it would make in a detective story if the carriage door suddenly flew open and slammed shut again as a heavy object (turning out later to be a newly murdered body) fell into the compartment. Quite, it would be easier to get rid of the body by heaving it out of the train altogether and I haven't the faintest idea what would happen afterwards, but I still think there could be a beautiful atmosphere of horror, worked up round, the darkness of the compartment, the creaking and groaning of the train, the troubled sleepers, a sudden crash of the door, a scuffle and flash of light from the empty corridor, and the simultaneous banging shut of the door, and flopping of the large shapeless mass almost on top of one, the moment of paralysed silence, the different reactions, the discovery and ensuing noise and confusion – well well you can blame my nose!

5 PM

Face very sore again, so I'm looking forward to doctors visit, will add to this afterwards. I am still in bed.

6.30 p.m.

Dr just been, peered up nose (some nose!), and is evidently some sort of boil, took temp which is slightly up. He gave an injection of Manganese Butyrate in my hip, tells me I'm going to feel as if someone had kicked me hard, and I think he's right. I'm feeling much better again and hardly would know I've a face. The worst of it is he says I'm not get to up to speak to you tonight, which is foul. I asked him, never expecting him to say no, but to avoid protest from mother when the time comes. Dear love I'll be thinking of you on Wednesday² as always. Oh! My dear you deserve something good. I'm writing this in a reclining position, so again sorry for scrawl. I'm to stay put until Dr comes back³

13th Oct 1936. Alan, 2 Broad Court Flats, London to Sheila

Tuesday 8 PM

My Dear,

I came in to find your letter. Oh Beloved I wish your nose was better. I make no remarks about treatment this time!

Good as is your train plot I am not yet competent to use it. Sounds from bleeding as if your abscess had burst and if so that ought to have relieved you. I'm glad you did not get up to speak to me.

Well now I'm very tired. I have been up the last two nights at visits and had a very heavy day today.

Had a telegram from Dad saying he is not coming tomorrow. I get the 10.19 AM to Wakefield

¹ H.W. bag is hot water bottle.

² Alan's interview in Wakefield is on Wednesday

³ Above is only pages 1 – 8.

arriving about 2.30. and when you get this about 5 tomorrow I'll be just about to go before the committee.¹ Pray for me then – pray for us.

I was medically examined this morning and I've grown too! Dear how we progress - I'm now 6 ft. But my weight is down to 11st 1 lb so I must eat up.

Well now I shall let you know what happens by wire or phone tomorrow night. I am too confused in mind to appreciate truly what tomorrow means but I know that I want that job if it's at all reasonable. Pray goodness that at least we know tomorrow one way or the other.

I've decided to wear my grey suit, white shirt and stiff collar and blue tie. I think I probably look better like that than in a blue suit.

Dear my mind is paralysed these days. I can't work and I can't even read a book
.....²

13th Oct 1936. Sheila, 32 Falkland Mansions, Glasgow, to Alan

Tues 12.30 PM

Dearest One,

I'm sitting up and during the last hour or so have taken a much more spirited outlook on the world. I had a not too bad night, for an hour or so after lights out I got steadily hotter and hotter, then quite abruptly went cool and fell asleep. Slept till 4a.m. and wakened with the most pain I've had yet in the afflicted nose. It obligingly bled a bit more, then throbbed away for the best part of an hour, by which time I was decidedly querulous and wondering how much longer before I would be quit of it. In the end mother, who had insisted on sleeping with me brought some hot water and after bathing it for a bit I got to sleep again. Wakened this morning, nose better, but hot. Faintly squeamish and with stiff sore hip. Well dear it's very nice to have someone to write and groan to, anyway you can't say you're not getting the whole uninteresting story! I'm feeling quite different now and taking an interest in the thought of lunch!

Larig is lying on his rug at the other side of the room, poor old boy he is having a stale time of it, but is most entertaining. I'm reading Maurice Walsh's 'Green Rushes' and enjoying it very much. It was bitter not being able to speak to you last night. I'm glad about 'fevers' and Oh! my dear I don't know enough to be sure that Wakefield is the wiser move, but I'm excited about it.

Dear I love you as I could never love another had I twelve lives to live. There is something strange in my need of you, transcending all wisdom and even happiness, the very centre of my being, whatever may come as long as I live.

I wish I could journey with you to W³ tomorrow. If you've got to stay the night, for my favour don't forget your H.W. bag! Oh! Dearest I love you. I think I'll stop and eat a pear and think about it (loving you I mean).

Blessings on you and good luck be with you. Ever Sheila

P.S.

Just been reading the Archbishop of Canterbury's statement on the 'right to use force in defence' and the lawfulness of Christians, at the command of the magistrates, to wear weapons and to serve in war. However he makes the nice point that it must be a 'just war' and I've been lying here trying to solve the puzzle of what a 'just war' is. One side of the quarrel may be more just than the other, defence immeasurably more just than aggression, but the final carrying out of the war by its endless repercussions and misery, breaking of souls, hearts and bodies in thousands, innocent of any wrong, cannot be much more 'just' on one side than the other, nor the hands of the soldiers on one side more clean than those of the men on the other, whoever his government calls the enemy. You know if I

¹ So heading for Wakefield for Interview. He goes before Committee on 14th Oct

² Pages missing after page 2.

³ W is Wakefield

were a man I'd rather kill another, hand-to-hand in anger, than pot him witlessly without ire, at long range. It would be nice to think of a way out of all this insanity, but evidently even his grace of Canterbury can't, and bleats with the rest of us, though he must know the express command of the doctrine he professes – thou shalt not kill: – distressing that he should talk like a politician.

Sorry to throw this at you and sorry it's such a mess, but it's nice to blether to you. S

15th Oct 1936. Alan, Institute, Wakefield to Sheila

Thursday

Dear,

I can't quite grasp yet that we are able to plan to get married. After those months and years it seems too good to be true.

I'll just tell you of my doings yesterday. I caught the 10.10 AM & arrived at 1:15 p.m.

Then after a walk around & some lunch I went to see the M.O.H. Dr Allardine.

He was very pleasant but gave me the impression that he did not want me. He also impressed me a little unfavourably by rather boastful speaking of his ability & experience.

Well then I went out & went to the cinema. Charles Chaplin in Modern Times. Came out at five & went for a coffee in a restaurant. I then put on stiff collar & went to the Town Hall.

Strange as it may seem I was the first candidate to arrive.

The other two were both aged over 30. 32 & 35 respectively¹. One was a Leeds Graduate. M.D, D.P.H. at 32. Had *midder* experience & fevers, and he had (I heard from M.O.H. afterwards) 'local influence'.

The other at 35. Been acting assistant M.O.H. Croydon. Fevers *midder*, eyes, every possible sort of experience.

Well their initials were B & M & they went in first. Then I was called.

There were about 20 on the committee. First the M.O.H. read through my degrees and application form.

Then the chairman took me over & asked a lot of questions. In turn thereafter most of the committee put me through it. Every conceivable type of question was asked from did I like children & did they like me, to what is pathology Doctor?

Well I retired & after 10 minutes the clerk came out and he called Dr Stevenson. I went in and the committee were all smiles. The chairman in a very Lancashire accent said that after due consideration of the merits of the candidates the committee had decided to appoint me & hoped I would be happy etc.

I got up and thanked them & said I should endeavour to give them good service & then we all shook hands!

The only snag is this business of being liable for anaesthetics at the Maternity Hospital. But apparently there are few night calls.

The M.O.H. said – stay two years and get experience here & you will get a very good job thereafter. I think he's right & I'm very happy about the job.

I don't go till November 22nd² so I'll be nearly finished everything here. The trouble is that I leave Broad Court Flats on November 1st & will have to be at the extra expense for three weeks.

Then I have to do *refractrics* (the prescribing of glasses) at my own expense. I'll find out today how much that will cost.

So until I leave London I'm going to be busy. I'll try to get from Friday to Sunday November 19-21st in Glasgow before I go to Wakefield. Then I must find digs in Wakefield.

Altogether it's going to be very expensive making this change & I shall be very glad of my first pay cheque.

¹ So Alan is 27 and the youngest candidate. Sheila is now 23.

² So Alan moving to Wakefield Nov 22nd 1936.

I contribute £25 per year to a superannuation fund which is one way of compulsory income tax free saving. Then the County Council contribute an equal amount.

If I leave Public Health under 11 years I get my total contributions back, above that in an ascending scale I qualify for lump sums pension.

So we won't need to worry too much about saving.

Beloved we shall be a little tight these two years but after that we ought to be comparatively affluent and to progress fairly rapidly to the £1,000 mark. I wish I could talk to you for is difficult to write.

But ask any questions that occur to you & I'll try to answer as best I can. I don't know of course when I could get time off to get married but I think I might get off in the Easter School Holidays. We shall see. I'd better leave that meanwhile.

Wakefield is not exactly a showplace. It's hilly. I did not see suburbs or surrounding country.

Well Dear I hope you are as glad about this as I am. It's a tremendous relief to me. I wish I could just see the middle of January with Part 1 D.P.H. in my pocket. Only 8 out of 20 got Part 1 this time.

I must get it in January. The family are phoning at 9.30 tonight.

I was glad to hear that your nose is more comfortable. Dear I hate to think of you uncomfortable.

Bless you Dear & keep you safe. Alan

15th Oct 1936. Sheila, 32 Falkland Mansions, Glasgow, to Alan

Thursday

Dearest,

As usual when they should be much for me to say I can find little. I wish I could see you. I don't need to tell you how pleased I am at your success & how much I hope it will turn out a good thing & pleasant work for you. You sounded very bucked last night & if I could have had five minutes with you I'd have been content. I'm longing for a letter with details of how you put it over the committee etc.! You must've had a cheery dinner last night, feeling yourself the anointed & appointed & so on.

My nose tho still swollen in the inside is practically painless today & I'm fine but disgracefully languid.

I'm going over to see Moira that afternoon & take Larig a walk, it's a long time since I haven't been out for four days (that sounds queer, make what you can of it).

Dear I am aching for a letter. You will be tired tonight after your journeys & writing will be a trial. So I'll not expect much tomorrow. I must stop now & force myself out or I'll be falling asleep at the fire here.

Congratulations on the achievement (I can hardly believe it yet) & love always. Sheila

P.S. On reading this over it seems a very dull letter for such an occasion. But dear one know how happy I am & what a tremendous relief it is that things seem to be going with you, as they should at last. More love, Sheila

16th Oct 1936. Alan, Common Room, 28 Queens Sq to Sheila

Friday. London W.C.1.

Dearest,

I was too tired to write tonight. I've been very busy & what with the tension of the appointment, the heavy preceding day, several night calls & the after effects of cold I was absolutely done.

So after 1K had phoned, I did a visit & then went to bed. I just fell asleep as I put off the light.

Today I'm myself again & I can think clearly. It's good to hear from 1K & your letter that you are better again. Oh Beloved I'm very glad.

I am pretty certain that I have done wisely in taking this job. It's going to be a hard couple of years but I see no reason why after that there should not be an excellent job waiting for me.

We ought to manage easily on £500, especially up there where living is, I am sure, much cheaper

(Maximum Cinema seat 1/6 as opposed to 2/6 in London).

I'm going to be busy until Part 1 D.P.H. exam on December 28th. And my time is going to be broken, so I shall have to study as hard as possible. I want very much indeed to get that exam.

When I get to Wakefield I'll get into the most reasonable digs I can find and start looking around for a suitable house to rent.

Meanwhile I must get in my refractories. With so much broken time for L.C.C. & Wakefield interviews I have been held up with my Part 1 hours. I've got in now (at this moment 12 noon) 235 out of 280 hours. I'll get in another 4 hours today but tomorrow morning I must go to fevers. So I'll be facing 41 hours at the beginning of the week and when I finish will depend on the refractories.

I phoned Jones-Davies last night to wish him luck for his exam today and to tell him about the job.

I felt I must tell someone. He sends you regards I also phoned Edgware & shall probably go there on Sunday.

Dear – at Wakefield, which is only 200 miles from Glasgow, we could get up comfortably for the week end leaving on Saturday midday. It would only take about six hours by car.

I won't buy car until shortly before we get married.

It's great to be in a job & Public Health job for as you see from the fate of the other two, it's much better be in young.

The trend is for big cities to appoint an M.O.H. of 40 to 45 and one must have very good experience before then.

In a way I'll be glad only to have six weeks in Wakefield before the turn of the year. For then I shall be able to look forward to you.

Dear One. I'm very happy & content I can't grouse at fate this time.

It must be a shock to you to get a non-complaining letter. Well you have been wonderfully patient & good. Oh Beloved I'm looking forward to being married. When I'm married I'll have you to kiss, to talk to, to enjoy the big and little things with and to lean on for help.

I'll try to get as long as I can before I go to Wakefield. It's going to be a bother with luggage if I send it to the hotel in Wakefield while I go to Glasgow, but I'll arrange something. I'll have to stay in the hotel for a day or two till I get digs.

Dear your letter this morning was fine. I got it & read it in bed (I also had the Lancet & B.M.J. & there are no jobs as good going).

Tell me do your Mother & Father realised that we are going to be married soon? Mrs Steven was very nice over the phone on Monday, and said she wished me good luck at Wakefield.

Won't it be fun having them to stay in Wakefield? It's within long weekend range.

Besides we could have weekends on the borders.

Well Dear all I want now is you to talk to. This is my weekend off but I can't afford the time or money to come up.

Still it won't be long now. And Dear it's easier to be patient when our marriage is near.

Bless you Dear. I love you in a good way Sheila. My love for you is the best devotion I know.
Alan

23rd Oct 1936. Alan, Strafford Arms Hotel, Wakefield to Sheila

Sunday. 5.30 P.M.

My Very Dear,

Thanks for your note which was waiting for me when I came in. Well I've started the job and it seems to me to be so good that I'm afraid it's a dream. Honestly dear I don't want to rush into saying that its O.K. after 1 day but it looks good to me.

I've been with Dr Allerdine at the Fever Hospital – Sanatorium combined in the morning, lunched with him, and had the afternoon immunizing against Diphtheria with Dr *Pickup*, the deputy.

Now as this must get the post I'll summarize the news.

- 1) I get approximately 3 weekends in 8 off.
- 2) Probably will manage often to get off the Saturday mornings with some weekends.
- 3) The Fever hospital is lovely, 40 beds, has a lab & a P.M. room unused! Oh joy!
- 4) My predecessor had a house in a private block of housing estate 4R & K + B for 15/6 week all in.
- 5) Telephone will be installed & rent paid in Toto by Corporation.

P.S. Snags are:-

- 1) Called from clinics to Hospital for ill fevers or *Middle* anaesthetics.
- 2) Called at night to ill fevers or anaesthetics.
- 3) Must let P.H. department know when not on some telephone.

But really it's not bad at all and these snags are most useful experience which I've not had. One weekend on. I do fevers and or *Midder* Hospital.

Love & More Love, Alan

24th Oct 1936, Sheila, 70 Crown Road North, Glasgow to Alan

Saturday 11 PM

My Dear Boy,

Thanks for your letter, with such news. It's very exciting this car of yours. Feels quite opulent being engaged to a man with a real live car! At breakfast Dad and I usually incline to the sober side of life and this AM we started off with the usual morning countenances. Then I started to read him about your car and when I got to the bit about it being mechanically very sound he wept with mirth and from then on our breakfast was a riot. Dad on occasions can be very funny and I was quite weak at the end of it. Sounds very silly, doesn't it.

I have had all the detail from Moira tonight after what must have been really a record telephone call of your father. I shall probably phone you tomorrow evening but we'll see. Tonight about 8.30 the phone rang and Ray came rushing to me to say it was a call from London. Well the one person exists in London for me so I flew, and after the usual 'Hold the Line' pantomime a voice said 'Hello'. Didn't sound like you and I couldn't believe my ears so certain was I that it would be. Then it remarked 'It's your Uncle James speaking'¹

Today I've been very busy but took Larig out for a run in the country between 5 & 6.30. He chased several rabbits but their sudden disappearance is still beyond his comprehension.

Daddy goes to St Abbs Hd² tomorrow. I would have gone with him only Mother isn't to get out till Mon or Tues so that's that.

Dr G was in this morning, but doesn't do much more than assure her that there's nothing much wrong and order a few more bottles. It's a shame to talk like that, for he's an old dear and I like him very much, but you know how irrationally irritated the poor ignorant public can become!

Well I must be up at 7.30 tomorrow morning. So I'll get some much needed beauty sleep now. The sunburn, such as it was, has worn off my face and left it a most interesting hue.



St Abbs Head Lighthouse and Foghorn.

¹ Presumably James Hodge. Sheila's mother's brother. Married to Violet.

² St Abbs Head Lighthouse. Berwickshire. Built by brothers David & Thomas Stevenson in 1861. The foghorn was installed in 1876 possibly made by Steven & Struthers. In 1936 it was powered by an oil fuelled engine. Jimmy's (James Steven) visit with his employees would have been linked to maintenance or problems with the foghorn.

My Dearest one I want you badly, I always seem to be saying that now, stupid, like crying for the moon. How incredible to have you now without the shadows of separation over me. Och well things maun aye be someway¹, and after all I've had I should think it a sin to complain.

Aunt Aggie is in Glasgow just now and came to see us last night. She was saying that Nancy had been meeting Alix Roxburg at the Oatlands Park Hotel swimming pool, yes it's a distinctly small world in some ways.

Sunday

This is another glorious autumn day but much colder than yesterday. Dad went off early. Jim and Mr Grey are with him. Oh! It's a bad business this being away from you. So senseless yet so necessary. I'm sitting in the gardens while the pup² exercises himself with a golf ball, which is good for I have no energy and am wondering if it were really I who a few weeks ago couldn't get enough exercise.

I have a vision just now of Aviemore reservoir in the twilight and the fish flopping about, a sheep bleating in the distance and you at my side. I loved these evening walks and always seemed very near you and at peace.

I've been sitting wasting time thinking and remembering and now I must stop. Yours ever, Sheila

27th Oct 1936. Sheila, 32 Falkland Mansions, Glasgow, to Alan

Tuesday

Dear,

Thanks for another long letter, the length of them make me curl up! (With pleasure). No I'm not in the least annoyed at your remarks re, Letters. I think you would find few who could cope with you in that respect and in any case I am too happy these days to be much annoyed about anything.

Glad Sunday went well for you and may you want to live for hundreds of years! You wandering Jew you. I agree with you about the babies, (very much in the plural I notice!) An attractive idea in many ways, but as you say they do cramp one's style!

Still you must do your duty by your country you know, – I'm afraid you will! Well anyhow we'll have a good time first, and I pray that if and when the time comes we don't feel badly trapped. I'd hate to feel like that. I have a vague idea that 'Marx' wanted the state to take care of them, perhaps that's why you went all 'Marxie'.

I'm going for another injection this afternoon. I had such a funny dream last night. Dr A was jabbing me, and the needle stuck in me, and he couldn't get it out. I writhed about in exaggerated agonies while you sat and looked on utterly impassive.

There was a great gale last night and the roads are strewn with chimney cans, strips of metal and slates Two chimney heads came down in Calman's Drive. I was at Kingsborough for a few minutes before badminton last night, and your Father was telling me that you had an idea of saving money, on my bed which could be 6 inches shorter than yours! Well well. Inez and I are going to 'Under Two Flags' tonight, so I'll probably have the wanderlust as badly as you after it.

7 PM

Thanks for note. Oh! For Saturday. Love, Sheila

¹ 'Things maun aye be someway, even if they're crookit'. From Proverbs of Scotland by Alexander Hislop I think.

² Larig.

NOVEMBER 1936

19th Nov 1936. Sheila, 32 Falkland Mansions, to Alan

Thursday 6 pm, Glasgow

My Dear,

If today's note is brief you can thank Mrs Simpson¹. I was in town in the early afternoon & excitement was terrific, one found oneself plunged in conversation with anyone and everyone. There was one furious lady at a shop counter demanding of me what on earth was she to say in France, whither she was bound next week. I see by tonight's papers that Baldwin was wildly cheered in the House today, it's hard luck him getting this on top of everything & I'm dammed sorry for him & for the King, but in a different way. If she'd any guts she'd have cleared out.²

Thanks a nice long letter, Dear it is nice to hear of your enjoying the job. Of course we talk at home about the marriage, hardly a day passes but it crops up, & after New Year it will be the topic. Yes I speak to people of it, in any case I'm invariably asked when.

I've gone all Tyrolese & you've been walking with me between huts & gasthofs in the Silvretta & so on. The huts (some of them) are evidently nothing more or less than hotels, accommodation for three or four Austrian schillings, & you get vegetable soup, wiener schnitzel, & Linzer tarts, & red wine!!! Marion has been here this afternoon and I think I told you I was going Bearsden tonight.

Oh! I forgot to tell you I was dreaming of you last night & you suddenly & disconcertingly turned into the Kaiser!

Well my mind refuses to do anything but revolve round the crisis, so I won't dither to you. I'll write again tomorrow. It's difficult to know where to go in April isn't it, all but it will be great, at the moment I've no suggestions.

Mother at the moment is tickling Larig's tummy & he is lying on his back rocking with laughter! Till tomorrow, always. Sheila

19th Nov 1936. Alan, 6 Courtfield Gardens SW5 to Sheila

Thursday. London

My Very Dear,

It was fine to get you letter yesterday. Dear I'm missing so much even for these few months in not being with you. You are so very nice a person to be with.

I was sorry to hear from your Dad about Mrs Faulds³.

Glad you enjoyed Trinity again and very sorry to hear about your trouble with the burst pipe.

Sorry to hear Nan D getting married after us. Another present!

Today I received the letter that missed me at Dr Bernard's. Oh beloved it is such a nice little letter and Dear I ache for you all the time.

Had a very pleasant lunch with your Dad and 'Uncle Willie'. Your Dad was in great form and kept telling 'Uncle Willie' and I what a gay place Wakefield is. He seems almost glad to be going to be rid of you. I wonder if that is a feeling you give people after a time! Perhaps however he would like you back some time!

Isn't it great that this has come off when your mother is more of her old self again, and that both of your parents are so decent about you getting married.

I go up to Strafford Arms, Wakefield at 7.15 P.M. tomorrow so if you are writing for Saturday that's the address.

This writing is awful but I'm sitting on my bed and it's very awkward.

¹ Wallis Simpson. The twice married American divorcee who, for love, King Edward III gave up his throne.

² On Monday November 16th King Edward VIII had advised Prime Minister Baldwin that he was abdicating in order to marry Wallis Simpson. Strong feelings were aroused.

³ Janet Faulds nee Steven. Married to Archibald Faulds. Thus Sheila's Aunt.

I'll go to the house agents at 9 A.M. on Saturday morning and see what choice we have.
I'm simply longing to get to Wakefield.

I'm feeling a little happier for the last few days about the exam but I expect I'll have many ups and downs yet.

Did I tell you I was looking at cars in Great Portland Street. What about a 12 M.G. or a Singer 9 Sports, or a Riley?

Bless you beloved I wish we could afford one for our honeymoon but I suppose that's just hopeless.

However it will be great fun choosing one together won't it?

Well next letter you get (on Monday) I'll be at Wakefield and that will be interesting.

Bless you exceedingly. Alan

26th Nov 1936. Sheila, Milngavie to Alan.

Thursday

Page 5 of 20

..... thing about such things. So I asked Dad to meet me at 'Muirhead Moffats'¹ (where we saw nice dresser) this afternoon. Well I'd always been under the impression it was a frantically expensive place but thought, for that reason, they would be good for advice. We must have been over an hour in that shop, it was simply great, they have a 6 large basement and two upper floors and a lot of stuff antique to reproductions, and the atmosphere is fascinating. What a difference from the usual furniture shop. Mr Moffat who is youngish, was most helpful, eager to show all his stuff and never pressed a thing. Well dear to get on, as a matter of interest the dresser we saw in the window was pine not oak, a real antique and rare in that it was more finely made than is usual in pine. And though it's beside the point, its price was £24.10. He said he'd several oak tables and dressers and that started us on our tour of inspection which led us to many strange pieces of furniture. There was a most lovely antique Dutch Dresser (oak) £22.10 which is the only one I'll mention and a reproduction of an early 17th cent dining table which I rather fell in love with £14.10. I looked in Muir Simpsons at ordinary oak tables and they wanted £10.10 for them, just what you'd see in any army villa or bungalow.

Then I arranged for Mr M to come out and look at the chairs which by this time I was becoming diffident about, and he came tonight at 7. He values them about £5 each and thinks them very nice, that they would do up satisfactorily and fit in easily with many types of old oak. A suggestion was to have dead white distempered walls in the dining room with the old oak, and a bright note in the curtains and so on. They say red introduced into a room like that is very effective and I've gone quite bats at the thought of 'Georgian Jensen' silver (you remember I got some of it some time ago? and am getting more).

Cypress mats I got specially made to a design I loved, a white wall, old oak, & dashes of colour one found necessary. Bear with me dear. I can't quite think whether you'd find it necessary to damp me down a bit if you here. I think not.

Now do you mind if I tell you a little about periods.

Jacobin can be taken to date from the first James, say about 1610, to the last James who died in 1701. So there are several definite periods in that time. Early Jacobin was plain showing strong traces of Elizabethan, later in the first Charles it became more ornate but with Cromwell reverted to a plainer style. With the restoration came in the exaggerated curls and carving which we dislike, actually Carolean is its name and I saw some flamboyant examples today. Well Mr M has offered to take in one of the chairs and tint it slightly darker, polish it and so on and if by any chance I wasn't satisfied would restore it to the original shade free of charge, which seems as fair as can be.

¹ Muirhead Moffat & Co, A Glasgow Antique Dealer. Still there at 182 West Regent Street.

Now dear I've only looked at things to see again the type of thing I like. I realized yesterday when window gazing with you that oak to be satisfying must be either be antique or reproduction and to tell you so froze on my lips because I know I could give no idea of prices and thought they would be terribly stiff. You said your mother thought it would be as much to get a table and sideboard without chairs as with them, but I really think that unless you get done brown that could hardly be so. I think you said something about a £100 but I'm not sure. The chairs are worth £40 and we could have a very nice old dresser and table for £37 which is just less than tonight's valuation of the chairs. I only wish I'd known about these things before now and we might have wangled to see them yesterday. Depends of course what arrangement and how strict about showing anything on a Sunday. Still I think it could have been managed. Well dear this is an outburst and I don't know how you'll take it all, but I do wish you could have been with me today. The funny thing hanging on the wall is an old convent window and is sold already. Dear wouldn't it be nice to have as little as we can just now and gradually collect old pieces not just because they were antique but those that pleased us. There's something so mellow and individualistic about them, must get a book.

Bless you dear I must stop. Its morning now and I'm always wooden headed when it gets to 7.30 AM but I couldn't sleep till I'd talked to you for a bit.

I was at Badminton between 9 & 10 tonight, enjoyed self but floundered about like a carthorse, dreadful play.

Jim phoned tonight asking me to *JBKP* dance on 26th inst. I'm asked to Marion's for bridge a week on Sat. hope you enjoy your two dances. I can't remember what nights they are.

Tuesday

Dreadful wet day. Dad heading for cold also. I've had awful bouts of sneezing today but don't think they're going to mean anything.

Thanks for your letter and dates. So it's to be March is it. The 25th would be good¹ and would give you a day at home as there will be some things to be seen to and explained. I think that we speak to Mr Lamb and after that I presume your father gets in touch with Mr Brown. Dad has gone off to a meeting in London, most annoying when there're so many things to discuss. I'd better stop now or there won't be any paper left. I'm just going to write to Noney. All love. Sheila

30th Nov 1936. Sheila, 32 Falkland Mansions, Glasgow, to Alan

Monday 6 p.m.

Dearest,

It was horrid as usual parting with you last night. I think my resistance is becoming lessened. I seem to feel worse & worse at those times. Still we've something definite to look ahead to, & surely the time won't seem long.

I hope you had a good journey. I took your watch into town today, & they say they can't give me it before Sat. as they want time to observe it. Think it must be a piece of grit.

I'm going to badminton tonight so I suppose I'd better go & change, gosh it's going to be cold getting into the shorts! Which reminds me I haven't cleaned my shoes.

Dear one I love you so very much, you can't think how much, & Oh! My Dear we'll be happy we just won't be able to help it.

I've no news of course. So I'll stop just now. I think perhaps I'm glad you can't know how much I want you. Sheila.

¹ At last Sheila has a wedding date!

DECEMBER 1936

1st Dec 1936. Sheila, 32 Falkland Mansions, Glasgow, to Alan

Tuesday 6 p.m.

Dear,

Thanks for your letter. Yesterday was a wild day, spells of bright sunshine & terrific showers. In the morning we were engaged in getting rid of layers of fog, as it now seems to have definitely gone, last week it wasn't worth while competing with. In the afternoon Larig and I took a bus to Milngavie, & a walk over the moor, we had to shelter in a quarry during one awful shower, everything got as black as ink & the wind steadily rising sounded like a bombardment, I skedaddled back with the gale behind me, clothes flapping wildly, hat tied on with the dog lead, must have looked like 'the deil in a gale of wind'. Coming from the bus, along Hyndland was a battle all the way & was often the case of standing leaning on the blast to let me go on. Came into tea & home-baked cakes at the fire, & went to badminton, later with an easy mind about the pup as I didn't want Dad (who has toothache) to take him out.

I noticed in the Sunday Times that a baby had been born to the cook at the British Embassy in Madrid, the Scottish ambulance assisting at the event, & it had been given the Scottish name of 'Duncan'!

I have just started 'Over Tyrolese Hills' by Smythe, it promises well & the photographs alone are worth a lot. Marion is coming to tea with me on Thursday afternoon & in the evening Madge Hepburn & I are going to see the Stevens at Bearsden.

Sorry I forgot to mention, things are quite normal, just prolonged! Haven't the faintest idea what Uncle Archie knows of the job, but he insists on giving me some etchings!

Dear I don't expect you up before the exam, you sound as though you had to convince me of the un wisdom of such a jaunt. It's only three weeks on Friday till Xmas¹ & time will go very quickly now for you & also for me.

I'm sorry Doreen won't be able to come south with me, but I'll get someone, but it's impossible yet to say whom. I don't know about mother, I haven't seriously discussed it yet, but never fear I'm coming. 'Fraid New Year at Harrogate is no go, don't think Dad could be so far away from the works at that time. Hang it it's ages since I've seen you, I can't think of the moment exactly how long – gracious is it only a month? Still I can't feel it will be very long till I see you dear, I do long to hear you tell me you love me again. Thanks for writing so often. Well now for the Tyrol! Love Sheila

P.S. I hear there are very good horses at Kilmacolm, any sign of gees² at W?

3rd Dec 1936. Sheila, 32 Falkland Mansions, to Alan

Thursday 6 pm, Glasgow

My Dear,

If today's note is brief you can thank Mrs Simpson³. I was in town in the early afternoon & excitement was terrific, one found oneself plunged in conversation with anyone and everyone. There was one furious lady at a shop counter demanding of me what on earth was she to say in France, whither she was bound next week. I see by tonight's papers that Baldwin was wildly cheered in the House today, it's hard luck him getting this on top of everything & I'm dammed sorry for him & for the King, but in a different way. If she'd any guts she'd have cleared out.

¹ So that's Friday 4th Dec 1936. Letter is therefore written Tuesday 1st December.

² Horses

³ Wallis Simpson. The twice married American divorcee who, for love, King Edward III gave up his throne. The 3rd Dec was the day rumours hit the popular press, with appropriate headlines. Mrs Simpson fled to France and feelings ran high.

Thanks a nice long letter, Dear it is nice to hear of your enjoying the job. Of course we talk at home about the marriage, hardly a day passes but it crops up, & after New Year it will be the topic. Yes I speak to people of it, in any case I'm invariably asked when.

I've gone all Tyrolese & you've been walking with me between huts & gasthofs in the Silvretta & so on. The huts (some of them) are evidently nothing more or less than hotels, accommodation for three or four Austrian schillings, & you get vegetable soup, wiener schnitzel, & Linzer tarts, & red wine!!! Marion has been here this afternoon and I think I told you I was going Bearsden tonight.

Oh! I forgot to tell you I was dreaming of you last night & you suddenly & disconcertingly turned into the Kaiser!

Well my mind refuses to do anything but revolve round the crisis, so I won't dither to you. I'll write again tomorrow. It's difficult to know where to go in April isn't it, all but it will be great, at the moment I've no suggestions.

Mother at the moment is tickling Larig's tummy & he is lying on his back rocking with laughter! Till tomorrow, always. Sheila

11th Dec 1936. Sheila, 32 Falkland Mansions, Glasgow, to Alan

Friday 5 pm

Dear One,

We had another Gale last night. I woke at 3 AM and lay waiting for the window to blow in & wondering how I'd protect the furniture, after what seemed ages I managed to sleep again with clothes over my head, the curtains were blowing straight out though the windows were shut. Today has been bitterly cold with two terrific hail showers.

Dear Oh! Dear, what a public washing of the Imperial linen! There is no doubt Mrs S. is a good looker. It's most unfortunate she should hail from a country with such an irresponsible, snobbish press, the continent has shown some sense of decency & dignity & even the dictators have shown restraint, but the Americans with their Kings Cutie & so forth seem distinctly despicable.

Poor old Sadie looks like being done out of her coronation trip! In Daly's today two girls (window dressers) had an argument about it, which ended in a free fight & looked like spreading, the shop walker had to separate them. Ah! Well what's the use of being a king if you can't have jam for tea.

I saw your Father and Mother for a few minutes last night when I called to borrow an umbrella on my way to Bearsden. Had a nice evening & got home before midnight – just!

Sadye has bought a new car, Talbot, grey with red leather!

Dear it's nearly 5 weeks since I last saw you, but its five weeks nearer seeing you all the time! Funny to think of that isn't it? You'll feel the exam coming along with great strides now, it will be fine to have it over. You'll have to send me a pen picture of yourself soon, or I'll be forgetting just what my future husband is like! Oh! Beloved it's nice to think of you. I'd hate to be marrying a person I didn't know so well.

8 PM

I'm just going to take L¹ for a walk. I'd much rather stay by the fire! I'll call for *Rurigl*² (???) & Take them both a run. Bless you, you're a very important person. Love Sheila

¹ Larig

² This indecipherable word is the name of another dog. The ? marks are Sheila's.

12th Dec 1936. Alan, Strafford Arms Hotel, Wakefield to Sheila

Saturday

Page 6 of a 9 page letter. Previous page missing.

..... the 9th in the Column of Houses Shops Etc. to let on Page 8 of the paper.

It's not a bad house. End of a terrace of rather shabby houses. But it's open and has a well built garage.

You will note from advertisements too that all the domestics are 'wanted'.

Dear the fact is that all I've seen of this City so far has been fog and shabby houses. This afternoon I'll take a walk out beyond Sandal and try out the land.

But if you come down to look at houses with Mrs Steven I can foresee fireworks as I'm sure Wakefield is the sort of place to give her a sick headache. Not that I blame her.

I was very cheered by coming on a beautiful clinic of the Public Health Department – quite the nicest place in Wakefield. Also I like the people so far. They certainly are a nice crowd to ask directions from.

There are innumerable shops and they seem cheap. There are lots of good class grocers and confectioners after the Maurel & Webster style (or not quite so good).

There are plenty of Picture Houses and apparently there are tennis courts in Sandal and a couple of golf courses.

Well now to fill the old belly that you want to poke – cad.

6.30 P.M.

Was out at far end of Sandal this afternoon and it really is much nicer than anywhere else I've seen. But I did not see any but large houses. Still very foggy and cold.

I'll have a look at St Johns tomorrow and then visit any other possible areas.

This is a 'bloody awful' Hotel and I'm steadily getting more depressed. I think I'll go and change a book at Boots Library. I was very glad to find that.

I'm sending a book and map of Wakefield so you ought to know all about it.

Dearest I'm just about broke. It's almost incredible but I've spent five pounds since yesterday morning on my last four days board and the journey. As usual I had to pay excess luggage!

Well beloved I'll just post this tonight to be sure to reach you on Monday morning.

Dear I need you, it's a constant pain the need of you. I'm just bursting to take you and hold you in my arms and be with you for ever. Never in all the time I've been away have you seemed quite so loveable and desirable as just this day.

Oh my Dear you are my world and I love you. Alan¹

14th Dec 1936. Alan, Public Health Department, to Sheila

Monday. Town Hall Chambers, Wakefield

My Very Dear,

It's rotten luck for you to get a cold. Remember the good advice you gave me in London about taking care.

Wouldn't I give anything to be able to see you. Oh Sheila I'm suffering from starvation.

Yes, Wakefield is probably even more dirty than Glasgow.

I simply cannot keep a cuff or collar clean in the place.

Probably it would be better if you sent me a book token for £1 if you think that is not too much.

I could get the book at Lewis' when I am in London. This sounds a very mercenary procedure! But it would save time and let me be sure that they were not on the point of issuing a new edition.

You certainly support your own sex as making ideal crowned heads. Don't agree – they are bad

¹ Another Scrap. Wakefield is obviously a grim place – but it's a job!

lot on the whole. Besides did not Elizabeth admit she had never had a bath? You will I hope coach me in Roman History when I start to work to be called to the bar – if I do.

Oh Sheila I'm not looking forward to this exam far less future ones. Now that I've so much to look forward to there is no need for me to welcome swotting as a means to occupy my mind and makes the time pass more quickly.

Wish I could come to your Badminton Party. Badminton is a great game here and tennis also. There as you will have observed three golf courses.

Well well you forgot to see the furniture. Young women are not very domesticated nowadays.

I wonder if the time will come when sexes will really be equal. They are mentally & if men are still more original it's probably from opportunity & training. But physically and when 'the race must go on' women are at a disadvantage.

I hear by the way that Doreen has done very well in Anatomy Exam.

The house I was in at Sandal¹ last night had gas and no electricity and I don't think we should put up with that. Sandal is nice but any small houses are desperately old. Oh Sheila I wish I had you to go around with.

Had a bit of luck yesterday afternoon as a bad Diphtheria came in in the afternoon & I went up by taxi and made it my evening visit.

Still awaiting the phone. It's an awful curse for I do so want to ring you.

Have you any plans about where you are going at New Year time?

I doubt whether the family will be down here as Moira will be tied & Doreen will have an exam on Jan 7th.

I am off on weekends – from Jan 2nd/3rd & Jan 9th/10th so I can always come up then. Probably in view of my four days off it would be better on 9th/10th. Also I expect you would be away on 2nd/3rd.

Tonight I give my first lecture and 6.30 is not too bad a time as I shall get back to the digs by 8 PM top.

The dig is a very nice. The food is a little rough but the place is very comfortable & they don't stint coal. It will be nice to have somewhere quiet to come and sit in front of the fire when you come down.

I think it would probably be best if your mother could come with you. After all she will see that there is no great choice. I wish we could have a car when you are down for there is a lot of ground to cover.

Well Dear I must start work. If I'm 'crotchety' at times it's because I'm missing you and aching for you so much. I want your company for myself for ever. Alan

20th Dec 1936. Sheila, 32 Falkland Mansions, Glasgow, to Alan

Sunday 2 pm

Dear,

A week today – well in some ways it doesn't seem as much, it makes a great difference to know that within reasonable limits of time we shall be together.

I was out riding yesterday afternoon, my mount was amazingly furry, which is the only explanation for his almost utter disregard for my more or less constant belabouring, for he was the most lazy animal I've ever met. At one point he stopped dead & refused to budge. It must have been a funny sight to see me sitting hammering & cajoling in turns, ultimately he returned to sudden life with a good going buck, & we continued our dignified progress.

We (Inez & I) had left Larig in the car at the stables, & took him a walk when we got back, then home for a large tea & talked till Inez departed at six when the family & I went to 'Hillhead' and saw 'Modern Times'. I enjoyed it very much.

There was also a film 'Lawrence of Arabia' with a talk by Sir Ronald Storrs, & films lent by the

¹ Sandal is a village near Wakefield.

War Museum.

It has been very wet today. I was at church in the morning.

Dear, how is your cold I hope it's not so much with you still.

We've decided there must be something wrong with Larig, he's so desperately *hungry* it's getting quite alarming!

Dearest one I want you badly, very badly – Dear pray very hard we get more than a weekend to be married in. I very badly want a little more than that, & I know you do too.

Well I think I'll make for the wide open spaces, the rain seems to be off. All love, Sheila

20th Dec 1936. Sheila, 'Winder', Milngavie, Glasgow to Alan

Sunday 10.20 pm

My Dearest,

As you say there are times when one simply can't write, but equally there are times when one cannot rest without writing, & for me tonight is one of them. I can't find words to express my feelings, in any case there are none, but parting from you has never been such a wrench as it has been tonight. So much so that looking back I wonder if I could appear outwardly calm. The whole house & all my thoughts are full of your presence, but Oh! If you could know the sick empty feeling that is all that there is of me just now. I am not writing this thoughtlessly as a wail, but deliberately because I want you to know.

You will be in the station now, it's strange to think of you still in Glasgow. After you left this evening Daddy & I went a good long walk, almost to the 'Khyber Pass' & home by the golf course. I'm in bed now, complete with (don't laugh) the hankies you left, which have suddenly become very precious. It's very still now except for a cow in the distance which seems to be having hysterics. Soon I shall be back & think of you & be very happy, for I can still feel you & see very clearly the curve of your lips.

The pen is extra nice, nothing short of magic would improve my writing, but anyhow I couldn't have a nicer pen, it's extremely comfortable to hold too.

Well dear one, as I said, I can't feel it will be long till I see you again, perhaps it's because I can't bear to, I don't know, anyhow I'm looking forward & aching for that time. I think you can guess how much. I love you desperately, & if my thoughts ever stray to life without you there comes such a blank terror that I dare not dwell on it. I'll add a few lines to this tomorrow. God bless you dear love, & keep you safe.

Monday 10 a.m.

This is a dark cold depressing day, why did you have all the hot weather when you didn't want it? I'm just going into Milngavie to get the dinner & post this. Dear one I'm missing you terribly, the moment I woke this morning & remembered the miles between I knew I was right last night when I wrote that this time it was extra hard. Yes I ought to be kicked, but I can't help it. Well, as of course there is no news I'd better stop. I'm looking forward to hearing from your people tonight. Hope you are having it cool in London. Ever Sheila

22nd Dec 1936. Sheila, 'Winder', Milngavie to Alan

In Bed. Tuesday 10.45 pm

Dearly Beloved,

Thanks for yesterday's many pages! I suggest a disordered liver which you are doubtless treating.

It's very funny that I had just settled down in a chair with the 'Light That Failed'¹ when your letter arrived saying you just read it, isn't that strange? I just been reading stories from 'Lifers Handicap' & am now on 'Wee Willie Winky'. I quite enjoyed the A.Y.F. But it's nothing to get

¹ A Rudyard Kipling story.

wildly excited about.

This has been a dull depressing & partly wet day. The servant problem is still thorny, but were getting someone else on Thurs.

Aunt Aggie & Uncle Willie are in Glasgow just now, & are coming to dinner on Thursday.

Dear my brain won't work tonight so you must excuse. I don't know whether your long letter calls for answer in detail, but I like you to blether to me. I am glad you know your fellow men, it is a most useful gift (I say 'gift' intentionally because I believe training, while helpful perhaps in certain spheres, to be merely accessory to the necessary gift which is not attainable by all) so long as one does not become a judge of them. Nowadays I see more clearly 'the reasons for many of man's actions' & though like you am become more suspicious, my compassion & understanding grows, & I hope the latter two will at least will continue to do so. I know it is unnoticeable, but believe me it is in me, & is sometimes a source of acute discomfort. There's a lot racing in my head now but I won't attempt to put it down. I wish I had you to blether to. Oh! My dear there are so many bad impulses in life, but thank God there are good ones too. If I become all oppressed by the thought of the great surge of evil, I also can think of the great force of good which is there also, the patience, & pity, & love other than passion, the kindness for no motive than the warmth it brings, & thinking on these things, it seems men may have a destiny after all.

----- denotes passing of time following the upsetting of a bottle of ink, & frantic scrubbing of the carpet with blotting paper, not very successful I'm bound to admit!

Dear, your mother had a conversation with mine on the phone yesterday in the course of which yours said she thought we ought to stay the full 10 days at M. & as I could spend the last night also at Kingsborough there would be no need for me to come back here at all. Now that is quite impossible as I would not think of leaving mother maidless (to all intents & purposes) clearing up during the last day or so when in any case you would be away, also I know you want a few days at home, & I think this would be a good idea. But I know your mother means all very kindly, & don't wish to appear in any way ungrateful, & was wondering if you had told her anything of your revised dates. But please tell me just what you think dear. When we leave here we are going to Bearsden for the 10 days before going north, as Aunt Bet is going from home & wants to have her house.

Oh! Dear one, I'm overflowing with excitement at the thought of being with you at M. You asked me to be glad with you, never fear that if you can be glad with me.

Must stop & sleepy now. I'm too lazy to read this over so forgive if there are very funny bits!
Love Sheila

P.S. It is most certain, we all are journeying to a distant place, & there is no turning back!

25th Dec 1936. Alan, Wakefield to Sheila

Friday, Public Health Department, Town Hall, King Street

Page 5 of 9.

..... is not. I simply danced with joy to read your letter this morning.

Enlighten me about 'George Jensen¹ silver again will you. I vaguely remember you saying that your mother was giving you it piece by piece but I can't remember whether it is cutlery or what.

The most remarkable thing about this house and furniture and getting married is your excitement. You are usually so little excited about things but oh I'm so glad you are leaping with joy about all this.

'Damp you down' – it's you who will have to damp me down. White wall and dark furniture yes and bright flowers and you the brightest flower of all – Dear I feel it's too wonderful.

I do not mind you telling me about periods. This clear up several blanks of mine – please tell me

¹ Georg Jensen. A famous Danish silversmith. Died in 1935. Sheila's set of beautiful Jensen silver is now with my brother David.

more as you get to know.

I shall write to Mother and tell her of your discoveries and ask her to arrange with you to get them. I think your idea of Indian carpets is fine. They are the type that seems to me to make a room, and they are removable.

I agree about 'as little as we can just now' and the collection of pleasing old pieces.

Glad you are going to dance and bridge. I suppose there is a chance of the bridge being put off if you come down here a week on Saturday.

My two dances are Thursday and Friday but I'll put them off of course if by any chance you can come down.

At any rate I won't get to Maternity Dance till 9.30 tomorrow as I have to do the T.B.¹ Dispensary in the evening. Dr A being still in bed.

Now beloved I shall arrange for decoration estimates² this week so that if you come down I shall be in a position to tell you.

Oh Sheila wont we have fun saving up to buy say a nice little table and wont we be happy.

I'll get you all measurements at the weekend.

Bless you. Must run. Alan

27th Dec 1936. Alan, Strafford Arms Hotel, Wakefield to Sheila

Sunday

My Very Dear,

I had a tremendous surprise when I got your gift this morning. Dear it was far too good of you to give me such a magnificent lighter. I never thought to possess such a fine one. Dear I can't say any more. I love you so much and it made me very happy to get your present today.

The little note on the label suggesting Barry and McConnachie made me happy too for on examination my only virtue seems to be application to work! But you seem to love me without my only virtue. So I can only conclude that you love me blindly, totally and without examination.

That is how I want to be loved for I don't stand close inspection. Oh do Sheila Dear Person I love you.

I'm waiting here for lunch preparatory to catching my train. Had a pleasant evening last night but under the circumstances the exam being so near I was a little unhappy.

Major *Robaggiocchi* came over and asked me to tea and on my protesting I had to visit the Fever Hospital said he would take me up in his car and the time saved would let me have tea with them.

They are one of these unsettled households which make me feel so jumpy and Mrs R is deaf (why I wrote death I can't imagine) and has a shatteringly loud voice. But they are decent folk and very kind.

Well Dearest it's time for lunch. A fortnight today I shall be with you. Bless you exceedingly.
Alan

28th Dec 1936. Alan, 51 Torrington Square to Sheila

Monday 10.30 P.M.

My Very Dear,

Here I am wondering how I got on today. I did a lot of foolish things in the first paper (Chemistry) although it was quite straightforward, and I felt pretty worried, but the second (Bacteriology) paper gave me a shock for the first question was the Government Process for testing sterility of cat-gut. I did not even know there was such a process. It has apparently been issued as a pamphlet recently (it's not in any book) and there had been a whole lecture on it last week at the Institute.

The other bacteriology questions I did quite well, but with one question in five blank it's hard to

¹ Tuberculosis.

² So at this stage 66 Manygates lane is secured. Must be late December 36? Imagine this was reply to 'Scrap' 1936 12.23, so guess 1936 12 25

get a pass out of 80. It was not a question that one could even 'pad', it was either that you knew it or did not.

So don't be surprised if I have sad news on Thursday. Never mind I'll bounce up again! Tomorrow I have Chemistry Practical and on Wednesday Bacteriology Practical. I have my oral on Thursday morning so I'll be finished (only too much) at midday.

Tonight I wanted to be alone so I slipped off and had a mixed grill in *Cawodies* and went to Stoll¹ and saw Shirley Temple in 'Poor little Rich Girl' and Errol Flynn in 'Captain Blood'. Both very good. You will lose my heart to Shirley yet! Had 'News of the Year 1936' and the Duke of Windsor² was frantically cheered much to my annoyance.

Had lighter filled with special Dunhill Petrol and its going marvellously. Dear it was tremendously big surprise and I can't thank you enough.

I nipped out to Edgware last night and got the visit over and I'm very glad for its horrid to see people when you are so worried about an exam.

Your fine fat letter came this morning. These books took such an awful time. I sent them, or rather the shop was to send them, on Monday last.

Glad you enjoyed dance. I thought it was tonight. I won't phone for it's in the hall and quite impossible to talk freely.

Great news about riding boots. I hope we shall be able to afford to use them!

You will be very interested in Lawrence's books and they are a lovely present too.

You omitted the cutting but I'm very sorry about your Aunt Nettie. Poor soul, she put up a gallant fight and I'm glad she did not linger too long. It's so very sobering and mystifying this living and dying.

Sorry to hear Larig misbehaved at Christmas. It must be a curse in a flat.

Well Dear I must write home, and I'll just keep this till I'm finished tomorrow and let you know how the battle is going at midday.

Oh Sheila I never want to see another exam paper as long as I live. Still Dear everything is unimportant before the thought of seeing you a week on Saturday. It will be a very short week end for I won't be in till Saturday evening at 5.40 or 9 P.M. and I'll have to leave on Sunday night. Dear we must not be a minute too long apart. Good night Dear.

Tuesday 4 P.M.

Exam straightforward and easy today. But it's necessary to pass the papers.

Thanks for your very good letter. Oh I love you Sweetheart. Alan

30th Dec 1936. Alan, Wakefield to Sheila

Wednesday. Page 4 only of a letter³.

..... his own first meals. Oh and I forgot he gets fees for attendance from passengers. Oh Boy would I look romantic in ducks and a wee hat. You always had a weakness for sailors!

Well tomorrow with all my tact I shall approach the big white chief and hear my fate. Oh Beloved lets hope he is kind.

Dr Pickup says there is very little to do and that the Doctor has a perfectly splendid time being able to join in all games and so on. Dear there are two swimming pools and deck tennis and goodness knows what. And there is Madeira. Oh think of warm sun and the bright light.

Dear this is so dizzy that you won't get it unless by some chance it comes off. If by any chance he

¹ Stoll Theatre. Now demolished. See NOTES.

² Ex King Edward VIII, now Duke of Windsor. Reviled by some (including Alan) adored by others for 'sacrificing' his throne for a woman.

³ This is just Page 4 of a scrap but obviously refers to the position of Doctor on a Cruise Ship for their honeymoon. Date a pure guess.

agrees then I shall have to phone the Liverpool office of Lampert & Holt and stake my claim before anyone else nips in. well Beloved I'll be able to charge you a fee if you are sea-sick!

Dear it would be a chance in a lifetime. We calculated you would get about half fare which would be about £14. Dear I must not ramble on and let myself think of it.

2 P.M. Thursday

Beloved I've got permission to get off and it only remains for me to phone and take the risk of the job being filled. I'm positively seething with excitement.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 - Larig the Dalmatian



1 - Sheila circa 1935 with Larig



3 - Mamie, Sheila and Larig

Larig was Sheila's dog, and by all accounts a powerful and demanding beast. Certainly the vet, Weipers, feared him. 'The most powerful dog I have come across'.

All these pictures are 1935 or 1936. Larig was often referred to as 'the pup' though by that time he was a big dog. I think in 1936 he was probably two.

Picture 1 was taken I think near Killearn when Sheila was staying at the Black Bull Hotel.

I do not know what happened to Larig though he was around when I was born in 1939. At least I think he was.



Larig about 1936

Appendix 2 - Weipers the Vet

When Sheila knew Weipers he was a young vet of about 32. No doubt he obtained valuable experience dealing with Larig.

Sir William Lee Weipers, FRCVS FRSE (1904–1990) was a Scottish veterinary surgeon and educator.[1]

Weipers was borne in Kilbirnie, Ayrshire. A son of the manse, he was educated at Whitehill Higher Grade School in Glasgow, and went on to graduate MRCVS from the Glasgow Veterinary College in 1925. He went into general practice from 1925 until 1949, apart from a period of two years (1927 to 1929) when he became a member of staff of the Royal (Dick) Veterinary College.[2] A pioneering small animal surgeon, he introduced closed circuit anaesthesia to veterinary practice and was known for small animal orthopaedics.[3]

When the private veterinary colleges were brought into the ambit of the university system, Weipers was made the first Director of Veterinary Education at the University of Glasgow (1949–1974); Professor of Veterinary Surgery from 1951 to 1974, and the Dean of the Glasgow Veterinary Faculty from 1969 until 1974. He supported the creation of a veterinary school which became renowned for teaching and research.[4] He was knighted in 1966 for his services to Veterinary Education.

Among students of Weipers were James W. Black and veterinarians such as Sir James Armour, Professor WFH Jarrett FRS, Professor RJ Roberts FRSE and Professor M Murray FRSE. All of them presented the Weipers Memorial Lecture, a biennial talk at the University of Glasgow.

On his retirement Weipers devoted time to arboriculture but also played a role in the establishment of academic aquaculture, as chairman of the management committee of the Nuffield Institute of Aquaculture, at the University of Stirling. For this work he was awarded the honorary degree of Doctor of the University in 1978. He was later awarded the honorary degree of Doctor of Veterinary Medicine and Surgery by his alma mater (1982).[5]

Weipers died in 1990 at the age of 86.



1 William Lee Weipers

Appendix 3 - Marriage



One of the few very poor quality pictures of Alan & Sheila's wedding.

LAMPART & HOLT LINE	
T.S.S. "VANDYCK"	
TO	
SOUTHAMPTON	
FROM	
MADEIRA AND LISBON	
Caplain ...	P. SYMONS
Staff Caplain ...	A. R. BIBBY
Chief Officer ...	W. C. BLAKE
Chief Engineer ...	W. A. WOOD
Senior Purser ...	W. H. WOOD
Chief Steward ...	G. S. THORPE
Surgeon ...	A. C. STEVENSON, I.R.C.P. & S. Ed. 9 Sc., M.B., Ch.B., Glas. M.R.C.P., Lon.



Sheila on her honeymoon cruise

Money being tight a nice Honeymoon was a problem. But then an acquaintance of his who had secured the position of a ships doctor was unable at the last minute to go and Alan got the job at short notice. The ship, T.S.S Vandyck, sailed to Madera and they had a dream Honeymoon long treasured. It wasn't all plain sailing though. Alan had been assured he would only have to treat seasickness and give old ladies aspirin. However the Spanish Civil

War was raging at the time. A Spanish Republican ship was torpedoed in the Bay of Biscay and they had to rescue survivors. So Alan had a lot more to do than administer aspirin!

Appendix 5 – Not on the Lips

This beautiful poem written in the 12th Century by the Persian poet the Divan of Hafez, translated by Gertrude Bell, reminds us of the culture, sophistication and beauty of Persia and indeed Afghanistan at that time.

THE bird of gardens sang unto the rose,
New blown in the clear dawn: "Bow down thy head!
As fair as thou within this garden close,
Many have bloomed and died." She laughed and said
"That I am born to fade grieves not my heart
But never was it a true lover's part
To vex with bitter words his love's repose."

The tavern step shall be thy hostelry,
For Love's diviner breath comes but to those
That suppliant on the dusty threshold lie.
And thou, if thou would'st drink the wine that flows
From Life's bejewelled goblet, ruby red,
Upon thine eyelashes thine eyes shall thread
A thousand tears for this temerity.

Last night when Irem's magic garden slept,
Stirring the hyacinth's purple tresses curled,
The wind of morning through the alleys stept.
"Where is thy cup, the mirror of the world?
Ah, where is Love, thou Throne of Djem?" I cried.
The breezes knew not; but "Alas," they sighed,
"That happiness should sleep so long!" and wept.

Not on the lips of men Love's secret lies,
Remote and unrevealed his dwelling-place.
Oh Saki, come! the idle laughter dies
When thou the feast with heavenly wine dost grace.
Patience and wisdom, Hafiz, in a sea
Of thine own tears are drowned; thy misery
They could not still nor hide from curious eyes.

Appendix 6 - William-Pennington-Bickford, Stoll Theatre & St Clement Danes

Letter 6th July 1936. The Rev William-Pennington-Bickford (1874 to 1941) would be 62 when Dad met him lying in his bed. He seems to have been well respected. Or perhaps his wife Louis did all the work! He certainly presents a sorry picture in the letter. He was Rector of St Clements from 1910 to 1941. He was the son-in-law of the Rev Septimious Pennington, Rector of St Clements from 1889 to 1910. William Bickford married Septimios' daughter Georgia Louisa, Known as 'Louie'. He took the surname Pennington-Bickford.

The Rev'd Pennington-Bickford and his wife 'Louie' became well-known for their devotion to their parish. He was reputed to be one of the most remarkable clergymen of his generation and an outstanding publicist. They cannot have been badly off for he purchased the Anchorage. Being childless they left their estate to Lord Exeter. In 1919 they restored the famous bells and later in 1920 they returned to use the carillon to the tune of the well known 'oranges and lemons' nursery rhyme.

On the 31st March 1920 they instituted annual tradition of gifts of oranges and to the local school children. Later, they established a respite home for local central London children at Portslade, Sussex.

Sadly their church received a direct hit an incendiary bomb in May 1941. William Pennington-Bickford died five weeks later at of 67 - it was said of shock and grief. His service was held, appropriately, in the ruins church

The Anchorage & St Clements

Tucked away on Clement's Inn Passage, the Anchorage was built in the early 1800s but became part of LSE's estate in 1970.

In the early twentieth century the property bought by the Reverend William Pennington-Bickford, rector of St Clement Danes Church, becoming the vicarage. The front of building bore a large cast iron anchor, the symbol of St Clement who was said to have

martyred by being thrown into the sea strapped to an anchor. Pennington-Bickford had served as curate to the previous rector John James Horatio Septimus Pennington and married his daughter, Louie. Wife and husband were very active in the parish, one of the poorest in London. In 1919 the church bells were restored and in 1920 began an annual distribution of oranges and lemons to local school children. Louie was a patron of the Covent Garden flower girls and the couple also founded a holiday home for children in the parish at Portslade near Brighton.

In May 1941, towards the end of the Blitz, St Clement Danes roof suffered a direct hit by an incendiary bomb. The wooden interior was soon alight and witnesses reported that the tower became a lantern with the flames burning inside. Although the interior was destroyed the stone walls, tower and steeple survived. Sadly the Reverend William Penning-Bickford died five weeks later – his parishioners said of shock and grief and his funeral was held in the ruins of St Clement Danes. His wife, overwhelmed by the loss and took her own life the following September.

The Pennington-Bickfords bequeathed The Anchorage to Lord Exeter as patron of the parish to use as a parish house. However, following the war there was some doubt as to whether St Clement Danes would continue as a parish. In 1953 the church was handed to the Air Council and after restoration it became the central church of the RAF and a memorial to the dead of the Allied Air



William Pennington-Bickford 1874-1941

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lemons

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only

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the

been

Forces.

LSE remained keen to acquire all the property on the east side of Houghton Street and along Clement's Inn Passage. In 1945 the School took out an initial lease of two years, later extended to an indefinite period at £300 per year. It was the first building that LSE occupied on its return to London after the Second World War and the School continued to lease the building throughout the 1950s as the Pennington-Bickford estate was settled.

In 1958 the Anchorage became the property of the London Diocesan Fund to serve as accommodation for the RAF Chaplain and the vicar of the merged parishes of St Mary Le Strand and St Clement Danes. However as the vicar did not wish to use the accommodation the Fund let the flat to the School as accommodation for the Director of LSE. In 1959 the School took out a lease for 21 years on the flat at £900 per year. By 1970 the Fund was ready to sell the property and a purchase price of £29,500 was agreed with the London Diocesan Fund. The building was redeveloped in 1974 to provide accommodation for the new Director, Ralph Dahrendorf. In recent years the Anchorage has provided accommodation for staff and meeting rooms.

In 1929 William Beveridge wrote to LSE Governor and joint managing director of London Underground, Frank Pick.

"I am quite clear, first, that the School must determine ultimately to possess the whole of the block between Clement's Inn Passage, Houghton Street, and the big office buildings beyond. On this we could make a really fine building ..."

Sitting at the top of the stairs down to the Towers on Clement's Inn, the Anchorage is one of the buildings scheduled to be demolished to make way for the new Centre Building. The Centre Building project brings to fruition Beveridge's vision for a fine LSE building on the east side of Houghton Street.



Cast iron Anchor on the front of 'The Anchorage'



The Stoll Theatre mentioned in the letter is sadly long gone. It was at 22 Kingsway, London, WC2 6NR but demolished in 1958.

From the picture it looks like one of the lost Jewels of London. It was opened as the London Opera House, a project of American impresario Oscar Hammerstein to have his own theatre in London which would be a rival to the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden. It opened on 13th November 1911 with a production of an opera new to London "Quo Vadis?" by Jean Nougues.



The magnificent Interior of the Stoll Theatre in 1911

The building was huge, the area covered 24,500 square feet of ground and cost over 200,000 pounds to build. It took up an entire block along the newly constructed Kingsway. The length of the facade was 272 feet and was treated in a French Renaissance style in Portland stone with Norwegian gray granite bases. The building was 80 feet high and had Corinthian pilasters on the upper storey. A notable feature was a centre window which was 39 feet tall. On the main cornice were twelve statues sculptured by Thomas Rudge of Clapham. At the ends of the building were groups of three figures, representing Melody and Harmony, and over the central window were seated figures representing Inspiration and Composition. Between these and the end groups were four single statues of Comedy, Tragedy, Dance and Song.

The entrance hall was flanked by white and gold fluted columns, surmounted by bas-reliefs of famous composers.

The interior matched the exterior in elegance and extravagance. It had everything an opera house of its time should have. Designed in a lavish French Renaissance style with three rows of three boxes plus two stalls boxes on each side of the proscenium (that's 22 boxes in total), three balconies and numerous painted panels on the ceiling. The seating was provided for 675 in the stalls, 40 seats in the boxes, 625 seats in the dress circle, 403 in the upper circle and 344 in the gallery. The proscenium was 44 feet wide, the stage 83 feet deep and there were 13 dressing rooms which could accommodate a total of 76 artistes.

Hammerstein was forced to close the London Opera House on 13th July 1912. He returned to America, said to be 47,000 pounds out of pocket.

The theatre remained closed until Christmas 1912 when French impresario Fernand Akoun took over with a season of variety and films. Oscar Hammerstein then disposed of his interests in the building to a new company London Opera House Ltd. They experimented with variety shows and then a revue "Come Over Here" which ran for 217 performances. Three other shows followed which were not successes and the theatre was closed more than it was open.

In 1916 Oswald Stoll took control and staged several attractions which were only minor hits. On 31st April 1917 he converted the building into a full time cinema, known as the Stoll Picture Theatre, and at last, this was a success. A Jardine tubular pneumatic orchestral organ was installed in 1927, played by Jack Courtney and it was so popular that in 1930 Jardine installed a larger theatre organ. There was a large orchestra to accompany the silent films.

The Stoll Picture Theatre, despite its 'out of the way' location was a popular family cinema and stage shows were introduced as part of the programme. It began losing out to the newer, more modern cinemas opening in London's busy West End and the Stoll Picture Theatre was closed in September 1940 with a double feature film programme and a stage show. The effects of Hitler's Blitz on London took its toll on 'family' audiences.

It re-opened on 1st September 1941, but as a live theatre presenting mainly revues and musicals. Oswald Stoll died in January 1942 and the theatre was taken over by Emile Littler, and re-named the Stoll Theatre. Shows that played during the next few years included revivals of "Rose Marie", "Lilac Time", "Show Boat" and "The Student Prince". In 1947 it became the home of a series of "Ice Spectaculars" staged by Tom Arnold on the enormous stage. A revival of "Wild Violets" was followed by a transfer from the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane of "Oklahoma". In 1951 the Festival Ballet performed for a sell-out season with Anton Dolin and Alicia Markova. This was followed by "Porgy and Bess", Ingrid Bergman in "St. Joan at the Stake" in October 1954. "Kismet" with Alfred Drake and Doretta Morrow opened in April 1955 and ran for 648 performances, the longest run at the theatre. Some Italian opera filled in until the final production at the theatre was Laurence Olivier and Vivien Leigh in "Titus Andronicus". The theatre closed to a packed house on 4th August 1957. There was talk about it being converted into a Cinerama Theatre, but the London Casino was chosen for that role.

It had been purchased by a development company to be demolished and an office block to be built on the site. Permission to demolish was given only on the proviso that a theatre would be included in

the new development.

It was demolished in 1958 and a new office block rose on the site, the new theatre was in the basement, with an entrance tucked away around the corner in Portugal Street. This opened in June 1960 as the Royalty Theatre, now known as the Peacock Theatre. Cinerama did play eventually on the site, as the Royalty became London's third Cinerama Theatre for a while.

The loss of the Stoll Theatre was one of the great tragedy's of London's West End, and if it had survived another few years, would definitely have been granted Listed building status and saved. Sadly back in 1958, the greed of commerce was king and it was 'out with the old, in with the new'.

St Clement Danes Church

St Clements Danes is one of several churches in London called St Clements and is usually identified by the 'Danes' title. It is an Anglican church situated outside the Royal Courts of Justice on the Strand. Although the first church on the site was reputedly founded in the 9th century by the Danes (hence the title), the current building was completed in 1682 by Sir Christopher Wren. Wren's building was gutted in 1941 during the Blitz and not restored until 1958, when it was adapted to its current function as the central church of the Royal Air Force.

The church is claimed to be the one featured in the nursery rhyme *Oranges and Lemons* and the bells do indeed play that tune.

*Oranges and lemons,
Say the bells of St. Clement's.*

*You owe me five farthings,
Say the bells of St. Martin's.*

*When will you pay me?
Say the bells of Old Bailey.*

*When I grow rich,
Say the bells of Shoreditch.*

*When will that be?
Say the bells of Stepney.*

*I do not know,
Says the great bell of Bow.*

*Here comes a candle to light you to bed,
And here comes a chopper to chop off your head!
Chip chop chip chop the last man is dead.*

St Clement was martyred by tying his neck to an anchor and casting him into the Sea. Hence the Anchor on 'The Anchorage'



St Clements Burns. 10th May 1941



St Clements re-built 1958