



Love Letters

The Second World War Experience Centre is privileged to hold a rich and varied collection of Love Letters, chronicling the hopes and fears of families caught up in this conflict. Here we include just a small sample, including a son to his mother, a father to his young daughter and two young couples separated due to the husband's Army service, in one case overseas. Reading these letters gives a clear sense of how families tried to cope with separation, yet all the time willing for it to end. Letter-writing was an important facet of wartime life, one that is taking a lesser role in the electronic age. For those serving away from home, receiving letters from loved ones was an essential part of maintaining morale, while 'Dear John' letters could have a devastating effect. Fortunately for the two couples featured below, the husbands returned home safely. Other examples of Love Letters are displayed in the personal experience pages of [Jeanne Bullard](#) and the Key Aspects pages of El Alamein which feature extracts from the letters of [Stanley Palmer](#).

Capt Barter's substantial collection of memorabilia was kindly placed in the care of the Centre by his granddaughter Kirsty and daughter Gill Lloyd, including personal letters, a large number of photographs, elements of uniform and posters. Among the letters are a small number sent by his wife Betty, showing all the excitement of a young girl collecting for her 'bottom drawer' in readiness for marriage as well as daily life for those living and working in London during the Blitz, all the more poignant then, that her fears are for her future husband's well-being.



Capt Barter on a bathing beach near Tripoli, June 1943

My Best Beloved,

Lots to tell you, as I didn't write yesterday.

Joy of joys, I had a letter from you this morning (24.12.39). I hope your next letter will tell me what you did for Christmas. Not much, I bet.

Well, I've bought some more things for us. Yesterday I bought a fire-screen which I am working in silks. Its really very lovely (or at least, should be when finished). Also a tray cloth and tea cosy to work. And today I bought some towels and pillow cases at a sale. Very cheap and serviceable. Quite plain, of course. I want to go to the Army and Navy Stores Sale to get you a pair of those towels I promised you - Do you remember? Dark brown, very rough (and expensive!). But I'll treat you to them and in any case I bet they'll wear for ages.

Tomorrow is Mary's birthday and I bought her an apron, a table centre (lace) and a recipe card index. Hope she'll like them.

The snow is still on the ground and was still falling when I



Letter to Capt Barter from Betty dated Sat 30.12.39



went out this afternoon.

Do you know, darling, it's a year ago today that you came first to Alfriston. You'd hurt your head badly at rugger (against the Wasps). I did enjoy that holiday so very much and it's sad to think I'll never have another like it. Because I won't. Neither Mary nor I will have the money to spare anyway while we are young. But I won't mind a bit so long as I can have you.

Oh I do so long to begin our life together. We certainly should make a real success of it and I'm sure we will. No doubt we'll both have to be patient with each other because this b--- war has altered both of us, no doubt. I jolly well know I've changed in a number of ways, and I expect you've altered a few of your ideas too! Some are for bad and some good. I'm longing for your leave and there will be so much to tell each other. But it'll probably leave a little time for other things!!

I hear you've written to the Edwards. Good boy. It's a splendid idea to keep in their good books - possible cheap holidays with the family!

Well, Beloved, I must go to sleep now.

God bless you and keep you,

All my love,

Betty xxxx

Saturday 28.9.40

My Best Beloved,

What joyful news! So I really can come down next weekend. Darling, I doubt if I can come down on Friday because I'm going to ask for Monday off and it would probably mean asking for all Friday afternoon. Anyway I'll find out about trains and tell you on Monday. The point is, if there's one about 6 I could catch that, but I probably wouldn't arrive until about 11.30 as you have to allow at least an hour or more than likely 2 hours these days on journeys especially at night because of raids. Well, then we wouldn't arrive until about 12 and if you have to be up at 6, you ought to get more sleep. Anyway I'll find out about the trains and I'll tell you if you can get through on the 'phone or write on Monday.

We are likely to be fairly busy on Friday and I really don't like to ask for too much time off because they are very decent to me and it simply means poor Mr Selby has to stay late to get things done because Mr B doesn't help.

I do hope you don't have to go on parade Sunday morning, though I suppose you will on Monday. If you don't use the Friday pass, maybe I can come down in a fortnight's time, even if you only have the Saturday off. I quite agree, it's pretty good, 3 nights a month.

We had a terrific day yesterday. I saw my most exciting dog-fight. I should think there were at least 60 planes in the sky and I saw 6 shot down. Pretty good bag, wasn't it, all told yesterday? After the fight I started for the office and Victoria had been bombed in



Letter to Capt Barter from Betty dated Sat 28.9.40



The Second World War Experience Centre
Reproduction of an article from the Centre's website
<http://www.war-experience.org/history/keyaspects/loveletters/default.asp>

that raid so had to go by tram and they couldn't get any further than Stockwell. So I had to walk from there to the office. Goodness, was I tired? On the way we (I was with 2 girls) saw people running to shelters and looked up and there was a terrific fight going on, although the sirens hadn't gone. So we shot into a shelter and after the planes had vanished continued on our march. When I arrived at the office (12.30!) we had a warning bit on planes! Anyway, in the afternoon we had another terrific fight and had to scurry down to the shelter. By the way, Fleet Street got it yesterday and the damage round me at the office. Its shocking. I had no idea it was as bad, but walking through the side streets showed it all. Yet people are very cheerful and you see Union Jacks flying from nearly all the ruins.

Do you remember a policeman who used to live with the people next door? He was married the day before we were. Well, on Thursday his wife was killed in a shelter at the top of the road. It had a direct hit. Isn't it sad? And I remember envying them because they had a home and he wasn't in the army. You certainly never ought to envy people because you never know what is in store for them.

I'm sorry I didn't write yesterday but I had to walk from Mitcham so didn't get in very early. I'll post this as soon as the present raid is over. (I was in the bath when the siren went and had to shoot out quickly as the fight was on).

Only 7 days now, maybe 6. How lovely. I am so longing to see you. It's a month now since I last saw you and it seems like a year.

Mind you keep well and don't take any risks. I'll let you know as soon as possible about Friday.

All my love for ever and ever,

Your adoring wife, Betty

PS Thank you for the sand yesterday. It all went in my shirt and I wondered what it was till I read your letter!



Merrill and Edna Lundgren

The year 2000 witnessed the receipt at the Centre of a wonderful collection of letters written by Cpl Merrill Lundgren of 1st Army, VII Corps, 482nd Military Police Escort Guard Company, US Armed Forces, to his wife Edna. The initial contact was made by the Lundgren's son Pete, who put together a compilation of the letters for family members entitled 'Almost at the Front' and who wrote

Dad was the company clerk and had constant access to a typewriter, which he used almost daily during his period of duty during World War II. From just before his trip to England prior to the launching of D Day, to his safe return in January 1946, Dad's typewriter rang out with words of patriotism for his country, support for his fellow soldier, compassion for the suffering people of Europe, and most of all love for his new bride, my mother, Edna (Leibrock) Lundgren.

Pete also feels strongly that his father's generation was a wonderful example for everyone to follow.

As well as displaying two of the letters, the following extracts also reflect how much Merrill missed his wife:

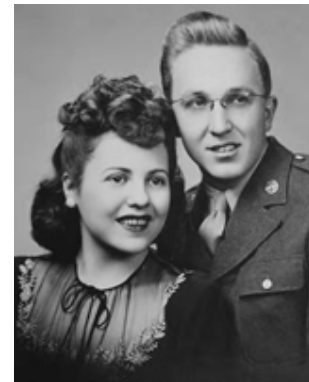
27 April 1944 'You mentioned that your Ouija board predicted that we would be blessed with four children. I will be perfectly content with half that number. Incidentally sweetheart would you mind asking that board when I will be coming home'.

3 May 1944 There has never been any doubt in my mind that our future will be as happy, if not happier, than our past. Our past has been marred by short get togethers and long departures. I'm sure that the happiest day of my life will be when all this is over and I finally come home to you to stay. I don't know if you still expect me home in a few months, but if you do, I regret to say that it will be longer than we thought. I love you with all my heart honey.

19 May 1944 Remember when I first "wolfed" you? You were with my hated rival Hank, and I devoted all my devastating personality on you. We had an hour or so together and when it threatened to backfire I left and you went back to Hank. I was fairly warmed with liquor and when I kissed you, I knew that if I didn't leave immediately you would be stuck with me the rest of the evening. That was still the nicest kiss I ever had, barring none'.



Merrill and Edna, taken at a family reunion Summer 2003



Merrill and Edna's wedding photograph. Their 60th wedding anniversary is October 2003.



The Second World War Experience Centre
Reproduction of an article from the Centre's website
<http://www.war-experience.org/history/keyaspects/loveletters/default.asp>

21 May 1944 'What is the latest dope about your job? If you do give him (Eddie Sowle) a break and accept the job, please tell him for me that it is only temporary as when I get home, all your time will be devoted to me, just as mine will be devoted to you'.

My Darling Wife:

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY SWEETHEART, although I fail to see how that can possibly be when we are three thousand miles apart. One year ago today I was the happiest GI in Uncle Sam's Army but today I am probably the unhappiest unless some other unfortunate soldier is celebrating the completion of one year of wedded bliss. The only consolation of people in our circumstances is the brightness of the future and not the miserableness of the past. So I will try to conform with this sagacious remark and cease to bemoan our past.

All during this week my thoughts have been of our very important interlude in that gay metropolis Ruston, Louisiana. Remember how we used to complain that there was nothing to do, (incidentally, a silly complaint for newlyweds) now I would gladly settle for one of the Olympian's gagging meals, complete with the black eyed peas and jelly cherry pie. By the way, Captain Lane got a letter from a party in Ruston and he was told that the immense USO sponsored by the town is going to disband due to the lack of military personnel. Now I know that is a serious blow for you honey, but grit your teeth and bear up under it. I know upon hearing this calamitous news you will instantly think of those happy hours we spent there slowly going berserk attempting to play ping-pong on those lively tables. I laughingly remember when I used to hit the ball in the vicinity of the men's comfort station and you would blushing request some kind GI, who happened to be waiting in line for comfort, to return the elusive pellet. I may have altered the story somewhat but the gist of the story is accurate. If I recall correctly, if a person would walk into that relief room without looking forward he would hit his head on the opposite wall, but then a small washroom has its merits, privacy you know. How did I get started on this? Once again Happy Anniversary honey, you made me the happiest man alive one year ago today and I have never regretted our action. I love you, Merrill.



Airgraph from Merrill Lundgren to his wife



The Second World War Experience Centre
Reproduction of an article from the Centre's website
<http://www.war-experience.org/history/keyaspects/loveletters/default.asp>

Somewhere in Belgium
12 January 1945 24

Hello beautiful:

You don't mind if I call you beautiful, do you beautiful? The world is a happy place to live in once again, everything has a roseate glow, my happiness scars unlimited. You are wondering why I am in such a joyous mood perhaps? I received two more letters from you yesterday, they were lengthy, gay, and tender epistles and they bolstered my fading morale immeasurably.

Honey, I am going to impose on our close relationship and exercise my right as a loving husband, I desire to offer a bit of constructive criticism. Your letters are always well written, intelligently expressed but occasionally you misspell a word, I realize that I undoubtedly err in the same manner but this was rather an embarrassing mistake, there is no "ass" in "asinine" sweetheart, the word is spelled with only one "S". I seem to be having a great deal of trouble with my spelling today, I wasn't sure of "misspell", I had to consult Webster, "embarrassing" may be wrong, there may be two "r's" in it.

Now for your letters; I am happy to learn that you are enjoying a restful and quiet vacation. I'm sure it will do you a world of good, don't forget what I said about taking it easy. Just because you are feeling fine, don't run yourself down again by participating in too many activities.

You don't have to worry about me reading the paper at the breakfast table, I like to reap all the benefits from my breakfast and I couldn't do that if I was sidetracked by a newspaper. I used to be quite crabby in the mornings, maybe not crabby but definitely quiet, I used to get up, say "good morning" to Mother, eat my breakfast and say "good bye" when I departed for work. A very lively conversation, eh not? Perhaps after living with me for a year or two you won't mind me hiding my face behind a newspaper.

You mentioned the boys that were trapped at Bastogne and the reply that General McAuliffe gave to the Germans that demanded he surrender, "Nuts" It was the 101st Airborne Infantry that performed so courageously there, we talked to quite a few of the boys during the early days of the battle. (August) We asked them what they did and what they think about in the planes on their way to make a crash landing in enemy territory, they all said the same thing, they all pray to God. That should provide a good argument against atheism as these boys are really rugged and cannot be considered pious. As one of their doughboys was reputed to have said when he was told they were surrounded at Bastogne "they got us surrounded, the poor bastard!"

So you finally know what army I am in, I am glad to hear that as you can follow my whereabouts with a fair degree of accuracy with that information. I don't see how Bud could surmise that I was in the 7th Army, the 7th army invaded France along the Mediterranean coast, establishing a beachhead around Marseille, this happened on August 15th. I was part of the first invading army, landing on D plus 4 & 5 on the Cherbourg peninsula.

I love you very much sweetheart, I like to hear about our growing bank account, we will really have a good start towards our future home and all that goes with it. Perhaps this is all worth it although it is the most difficult days of my life, if I weren't in the army we couldn't save any money as we would need so much to get started, of course we would have everything as long as we had each other but a

little money in the bank can make the situation a lot easier. I rather think it is a good thing for a young couple not to have things too pleasant during the early years of their marriage, it makes them all the more appreciative of their increasingly luxurious life as time goes by. I feel very happy and secure when I realize that we have everything that makes for a happy, full married life, a deep love and respect for each other, good common sense, and an understanding of each other.

I love you sweetheart,

Merrill

P.S. I sure am happy today, the birds are even singing, they must have received mail from home too.

A letter from Merrill Lundgren to his wife

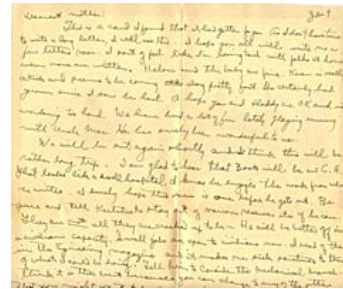


The Centre is privileged to hold a substantial collection of [Edward King](#) (Barney's) letters to his wife Helen, and his parents. Tragically Barney was killed just after VJ Day in an accidental bomb explosion:

Dearest Mother;

This is a card I found that I had gotten for you. As I don't have time to write a long letter, I will use this. I hope you all will write me a few letters soon. I sort of feel like I'm losing touch with folks at home when none are written. Helen and the baby are fine. Karen is really a kick and seems to be coming along pretty fast. She certainly had grown since I saw her last. I hope you and Daddy are OK and not working too hard. We have had a lot of fun lately playing rummy with Uncle Mac. He has surely been wonderful to us.

We will be out again shortly and I think this will be a rather long trip. I am glad to hear that Boots will be at C.H. That looks like a swell hospital. I know he enjoys the work from what he writes. I surely hope this mess is over before he gets out. Be sure and tell Keitchie to stay out of various reserves etc if he can. They are not all they are cracked up to be. He will be better off in a civilian capacity. Swell jobs are open to civilians now. I read of them in the Engineering Magazine and it makes me sick sometimes to think of what I could be doing. Tell him to consider the Mechanical branch. I think it is the best because you can change to any of the others that you might want to easier than from the other branches of the subject. Well I surely did miss you all these holidays. When Pack, and Luseale's box arrived with the book "A Christmas Carol" in it, it made me think of the many times it was read to us in the living room around Christmas. It is a good story and its associations as far as my memories go are something I will always remember. I missed you all very much this year. I certainly hope it is the last one I spend away from home. Thanks for the plaid shirt. I have worn it several times and it's very nice. I guess I'd better close now. Good bye for now. Give my love to everyone, Barney.



A letter from Barney to his mother January 9, 1944 written while on board *USS Croatan*.



A card from Barney to his mother



A card from Barney to his mother
TRANSCRIPT

No wonder I wish you such joy and such cheer,
You're so sweet and thoughtful, your ways are so dear!
You're faithful and tender, you're fine and you're true,
And that's why I love you, the way that I do!
Barney.



Shirley Cheves

During the time my father was in France he wrote many letters to my mother and me. We were not supposed to know where he was and all letters were censored. Somehow my letters slipped past the censor with, "From daddy in France" at the top and also a few French phrases such as "Ma chere petite fille" etc. He used to tell me to clean my teeth, help my mother all I could and give Clive, my brother, a big kiss from him.

In later years I prised a little information from him. He was in the Military Police and was at his post at some cross roads, directing traffic, when someone said he had better get moving and head for the beach (at Dunkirk).

My mother received a scrappy note saying he had "arrived safely in England" which someone had put in an envelope and posted, everyone tried to help each other as much as they could in those days.



Shirley's father, Robert Leslie Buttress, right hand side, front row. Military police 1939 - 45

FROM DADDY

IN FRANCE

MA CHER PETIT FILLE SHIRLEY

WELL DEAR I MUST TELL YOU THAT I HAVE EVIDENTLY BEEN SPELLING PETIT WRONG BUT I THINK I HAVE GOT IT RIGHT THIS TIME AND I HOPE YOU CAN READ IT FOR I TOLD YOU IN MY OTHER LETTER WHAT IT MEANT IN CASE YOU HAVE FORGOTTEN I WILL TELL YOU ONCE MORE IT IS "MY DEAR LITTLE DAUGHTER SHIRLEY" SO NOW YOU WON'T FORGET WILL YOU DEAR I HOPE YOU ARE GOING TO ECOLE REGULARLY NOW DEAR AND THAT YOUR COLD IS BETTER BY THE WAY DEAR CAN YOU TELL THE TIME YET YOU NEVER TELL ME IF YOU CAN WELL DARLING THIS IS ALL DADDY HAS GOT TO TELL YOU THIS TIME AND KISS PETIT GARCON FOR ME DEAR SO BON SOIR



A letter to Shirley from her father

FROM YOUR LOVING

DADDY

PETIT SHIRLEY XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

PETIT GARCON CLIVXXXXXXXXXXXX