

War Affects Three Generations Charles Beauchamp (1881-1971) Date of first engagement 12/10/1899 – released August 1945. **Three special Letters**

My grandfather, Charles Beauchamp (1881-1971) served in the Royal Navy. He fought in both the 1st and 2nd World Wars. After the 1st World War he was pensioned to shore in 1921 and he enrolled into the Royal Fleet Reserve. In January 1940 (aged 59) he was mobilised for war service for the duration of the 2nd World War.

Leading up to the 2nd World War Charles and his wife Eliza (nee Reynolds), also known as Ciss (1883-1945) ran a village Post Office at Hinton St. George in Somerset. My grandfather also worked at Westlands Aircraft Factory in Yeovil, but was still able to help my grandmother with heavy lifting work at home. I was given to understand that her health was not good. Eliza sadly passed away in January 1945. They had 6 daughters – Muriel, Helena, Winifred, Margherita, Dora and Elfreda.

My maternal great grandmother – Susanna Wildern Smith was born in 1856. She married Arthur Reynolds in 1881 and she died 20th May 1940. She spent her married life in the village of Hardington Mandeville, Somerset. I believe that up until she became a widow in 1905 life had been fairly comfortable for her. She had 8 children. Eliza being one of them.

Letter 1 Susanna Reynolds – 1856-1940

My great grandmother wrote the following letter to her daughter Eliza (Ciss) Transcribed exactly as it was written – note the formal ending.

Written 20th February 1940

Dear Ciss,

I hope this will find you and the girls you have with you well...how are the others getting on? Do you know I did not realise that Charlie was away for long until today. I am sorry for you. It is so much for you to do with no help, but I suppose that Rita helps you in the post work sometimes doesn't she when she is home.

Is Charlie likely to stay in Scotland long? What a pity it is this war has broken out. I was hoping it was going to pass off without much bother. Instead it gets worse, doesn't it? I wish they would get those that are responsible for this war so that things could be put straight

again...

Where is Dot too, now she is away and Winnie? I wish you would give me Lena's address. She very kindly sent me a box of sweets for Xmas and I want to write to her sometime; I hope you will keep fairly well, it has been so cold and your house is none to warm. I think it is when the wind blows cold and you have not got Charlie coming in to help you but thank goodness you have good children – that is one good job...

Is Elfie staying in Yeovil now, or does she come home at night. If you are writing to any of them please give my love to them and tell them to keep the home fires burning if possible. I hope this bother will soon be over but I don't like the look of things at all.

Goodbye dear with heaps of love to you all.

From your loving mother

S W Reynolds

Only two daughters of Charles and Eliza were living at home at that time. The others were occupied away either in WRENS, WRAF, QAIMNS, Civil Service or the Post Office. My Grandfather was based in Scotland for the duration of war. My Grandmother had to give up running the village Post Office and went to live in Yeovil. This letter must have been one of the last letters written by my Great Grandmother because she passed away a few months later in May 1940.

My grandfather, Charles had been called up by February 1940. Firstly, to HM Boom Depot, Greenock, Clyde on HMS Orlando. He moved on to HMS Mount Ard (auxiliary trawler boom defence vessel). Then 1941-5 he served on HMS Bishopsgate another (boom gate vessel).

Letter 2 My Grandmother, Eliza, sent the following letter to my Grandfather (Charlie) the following year. The letter is dated 18th December 1941.

My Dear Charlie,

Here are a few lines for you at Christmas, as you want to be home; I shall be thinking of you, as you will be, of all of us. And we shall drink your health at midday on Christmas Day or say 1 pm in ginger brandy, so don't forget to think of us at the same time. It will be funny not to have you at home, after so many years for Christmas.

You will receive this early, as you know, all parcels etc to be packed early, in order to reach

their destination on Christmas Day. By now you will have got accustomed to your new engine and to your shipmates. I feel happier over your new appointment, for this reason, although you will be so far away, not in quite so much danger, but quite enough.

So dear, have a very happy Christmas and I hope you will have a good dinner,

All My Love, Ciss xx

P.S. Many thanks dear for your letter telling me of the possibility of shore leave. I will keep the parcel for you so that you can have it on arrival, so glad you like your ship. As to getting fat we will let you off for I prefer you fat to thin anyway.

It is very foggy here tonight, we had an “alarm” today, but the ‘all clear’ went soon after.

Also, gunfire tonight but all is quiet again now.

Love from us all, your loving wife Ciss.

Letter 3 This last letter – was posted to my aunt Muriel on 22nd February 1945. It was written by my mother Rita, to her eldest sister who was still serving in the WRENS on HMS Bambara. I think she was stationed in Ceylon. I am transcribing part of the letter (scanned attachment) – their mother Eliza, had recently passed away.

“It was very nice to read your long letter to Dot dear... We went to the cemetery after lunch, I must say it makes one feel terribly sad, and I well understood what you meant, when you said those waltzes made you sad. I heard ‘The Day thou gavest me’ on the radio... and I nearly broke down, she did love it so, and always hummed it.

Mu dear, we will have to try and look ahead, as much as possible, but its bound to take a very long time to get over the sorrow of losing her. Auntie Ann was kind and bought Elf in some eggs, apples and homemade apple jam...

