



Eva Olive Roberts



Frank Eric Summers

Both pictured in 1940

World War 2

Letters between Cousins

INTRODUCTION

This started as a project to transcribe a few letters as part of a family history project, but has evolved beyond that into a wider WW2 history lesson for me, as I always get wildly distracted and go off piste when researching! So, it has taken longer to put together than the few 'Lockdown' days I thought originally!

Let me start, I was born and grew up in Worcester, but my grandparents, Ted & Marie Roberts lived 85 miles away in Chester. So, it was always a special occasion when they came to my home and especially when we went to visit them at 127 Appleyards Lane in the suburb of Handbridge.

I have memories of their living room, the brown leather sofa, the table in the centre of the room, a particular circular vase on the window sill, the brasses by the fireplace, a television with sliding doors to obscure the screen when not in use, (purchased for the 1960 Olympic Games - Grandad was a terrific sports fan - who read his daily paper from back to front - so I suspect it was to watch the racing too!), and on the wall above the semi-circular china cabinet two particular pictures.

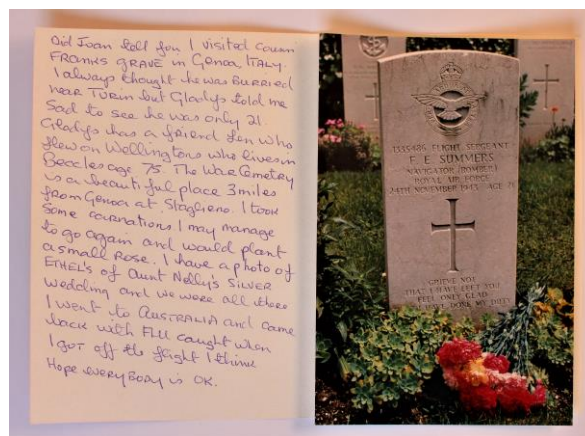
One was a large print called "And when did you last see your father?" - The son of a Cavalier being 'interviewed' by a Roundhead. I've had to look up its provenance (distracted again!). The painting is in the Walker Art Gallery in Liverpool and it was painted by William Frederick Yeames in 1878). I was never told why in particular it was liked and hung there! The other was a framed photograph, black and white of course, of an airman receiving something from another man and this was taking place in a room with what looked to have Christmas streamers up.

It was my grandma who shared family stories, so I got to know that this was Frank, her nephew, but always referred to as cousin Frank in the presence of my mother. Frank's mother and father were the Summers, Uncle Cyril and Auntie Nell who lived in London. Frank had been in the R.A.F. and had

been killed when his plane crashed in Italy during the war. Frank's brother Ian, who 'had wonderful curly hair' and had been an amateur boxer he was killed by a flying bomb while, protecting his wife and son. Another brother was my Uncle Jeff who sometimes visited us in Worcester with his wife Auntie Rene, and they now lived in Bristol.

WW2 was never far away in the late '50's and 60's and as I became aware, and the fact that I took The Victor Comic only reinforced my childhood knowledge of the conflict. So, I also learnt that the Roberts family used to shelter under the stairs during German bombing raids, across the Mersey, on Liverpool, on the recommendation of my father from his army experience. There had been slit trenches in the field opposite their terrace of Council houses, but they had filled with water and never been used. The prominent crack in the concrete, at the junction, on the wide entry at the back of the property had been caused by an incendiary bomb, which had been 'put out' by a neighbour, Fred Roberts. (no relation!)

I know Frank's memory lived on, as I recall in the mid-1990's, another cousin of my mother, Vera Boon, a British Airways Stewardess going to find his grave near Genoa, Italy, presumably when flying into the city or nearby Milan?



I seem to recall mention of a taxi ride to find it and mother and father received her photograph of his headstone, complete with her tribute bunch of carnations, with their Christmas card that year. By the late 1990's I had discovered the emerging power of the internet and in December 1999 I found details about both Frank and his brother Ian on the Commonwealth War Graves Commission website which I shared with my mother. She reminded me that on the day that Frank's mother Ellen Summers received some of his belongings back his brother had been killed by a flying bomb, and that she never got over that.

My mother Olive died in 2007 and I was tasked with clearing her house. Some ten years before, she and my father Reg had been very ruthless in disposing of paperwork, including diaries (my father and mother were inveterate diary keepers!) probably going back nearly 60 years. She had been equally ruthless in disposing of possessions in cupboards when she downsized and moved to Uttoxeter in 2002. So, it looked like the bundle of twenty five envelopes tied up with a faded pink ribbon, which I found in a box, could only be of great sentimental value. I felt a bit apprehensive reading what appeared to be a collection of personal letters, but I needn't have concerned myself as they were just innocent communications between two young cousins.

Eva Olive Roberts born in Chester in 1924 and Frank Eric Summers was born in London in 1922. Olive, as she was always known, was a tailoress and Frank was a stonemason

I'll now leave it to the letters that Olive received to tell their brief time as 'pen pals'.

Miss Olive Roberts,
127, Appleyards Lane,
Handbridge,
Chester,
Cheshire.

113. Nowel Road.
Barnes.
S.W. 13.

15th. Dec. 1940.

Dear Olive & Joan,

I have never written to you before. I suddenly thought of inconveniencing you with my boxing sword this Christmas. How's life up there? We've had the blitz pretty bad. Bombs all round us, in fact bombs almost on top of us. But we survive, so shall we all. I hope you can read this scribble, but I'm fed up with writing tonight, what with Christmas cards parcels and letters. Was thinking of joining R.A.F. but one of my friends who was volunteering with me has been told that he is exempt and so we have put it off for a few months. Great life the R.A.F. (in peacetime)

The 'all clear' is just sounding. A good night tonight. But I suppose some other poor town is getting the worst

LETTER 1

Cream Envelope Postmark Indecipherable

Cream writing paper

113 Nowel Road
Barnes
S.W. 13.
15th. Dec. 1940

Dear Olive & Joan,

I have never written to you before. I suddenly thought of inconveniencing you with my boring scrawl this Christmas. How's life up there? We've had the blitz pretty bad. Bombs all round us, in fact bombs almost on top of us. But we survive, so shall we all. I hope you can read this scribble, but I'm fed up with writing tonight, what with Christmas cards parcels and letters. Was thinking of joining R.A.F. but one of my friends who was volunteering with me has been told that he is exempt and so we have put it off for a few months. Great life the R.A.F. (In peacetime)

The "all clear" is just sounding.

A good night tonight. But I suppose some other poor town is getting the worst of it. If I could swear without using bad language I should be doing so right now. Of an ordinary time, such as

before the war. We went out to dances, to the pictures, and at least out for a walk But now what a life! My pen's nearly worn out, so is the seat of my chair. To counteract the laziness I and a few friends do weightlifting about twice a week. Kill or cure that's our motto. Are preparing for a big ding-dong (that means party) for Xmas. Lemonade will be piled in every corner of the room. We've ordered half a dozen chorus girls and a dozen and a half benches for the garden. Whoopee!!??--! How will Christmas be spent up there? Lively or lonely. Surely not the latter. Be looking forward to seeing you again after the war. Maybe I can come up there. I've got a pair of skates. Give my best wishes to Auntie Mary and Uncle Ted. Here repeating the phrase upon the card.

Good Luck!

Frank



Miss Olive Roberts.
127, Appleyards Lane,
Handbridge
Chester

113, Nowell Road.
Barnes.
S.W.13.

7th. Jan 1941

Dear Olive,

Many thanks for your letter.
I like writing and receiving letters.
I use about half a writing pad
every week. Many of my friends are
in the Forces, therefore the
necessity. What about you joining
my list of correspondents? You
know it broadens the mind, corrects
spelling, and even "grammar" likes it.

Had much snow up your girl. Her
way lately? We've had some here
that means going to work by bus
for the next few days. I only went
off nine twice this morning. Once
on a patch of ice the other when
I reached work. Well I couldn't
before.

what I write.
in the spirit of the moment.

up in one of
don't think we
by that but
sadays? Only
ve no doubt
the nineteens
he big push
eat them to it
decent sector.
but how old
een some
ick here.

ice too.
city one
he army.
our most

I don't
before.

LETTER 2

Cream Envelope Postmark HAMMERSMITH
W6. 3-PM 8 JAN 1941

Blue writing paper

113, Nowell Road.
Barnes.
S.W.13.
7th JAN 1941

Dear Olive,

Many thanks for your letter.
I like writing and receiving letters.
I use about half a writing pad
every week. Many of my friends
are in the Forces, therefore the
necessity. What about you joining
my list of correspondents? You
know it broadens the mind, corrects
spelling, and even "grammar" likes it.

Had much snow up your
way lately? We've had some here
That means going to work by 'bus
for the next few days. I only went
off mine twice this morning. Once
on a patch of ice, the other when
I reached work. Well I couldn't

2.

Stay on there all day, could I?

How do you enjoy yourself
these times. I know you said you
go to the pictures, but other than
that? I go to dances now and again.
But the trouble is there are only
a few of the large ones open
and they are always crowded. One
is pushed and buffeted about "all
over the place". Not a bad quickstep
that. Most evenings are spent in
each others houses (that means shelters
usually) playing cards. Now and again
we go out for a walk in the blitz
watching the anti-aircraft antics.
But that soon gets boring. Except
of course, a few bombs drop. Then
we go out, render as much aid
as possible. Put out incendiaries,
staying out half the night so
making ourselves tired for work
the next morning. But it all adds to
break the monotony.

3.

Other times we finish up in one of
the nearest locals. Don't think we

are bad characters by that, but
where is one to go nowadays? Only
in the forces. I have no doubt
that they will call up the nineteens
in the spring, when the big push
comes. I'll have to beat them to it
if I want to join a decent sector.
Don't mind me asking, but how old
are you? There has been some
controversy about it back here.

Geoff has got a girl. Her
name is Rene. Very nice too.
He's getting on for twenty one
lucky he's escaped the army.
We do weight lifting as our most
prominent sport nowadays. I don't
know whether I told you before,
I never remember what I write.
Its all on the spur of the moment.

4.

I've even mislaid your letter. Yes
we press 120lbs. Clean and jerk 160lbs
and snatch 110lbs. Good for the
muscles and bad for the heart. But
who cares. I don't. I've got to
ask my employers for a rise sometime in
this week. it's a devil of a job
as we haven't been doing any work
of any size for the last year. But
still I've got to live.

Wish I could send you our
photograph album, showing snaps
of us at every angle anytime
of our life and wearing practically
any garment. Even ones birthday
suits. But that is too prize a
possession to risk nowadays. I treasure
it more than all my money. (four pence
halfpenny and two two penny halfpenny
stamps). Must not break into another
sheet. Just think what the government
would say.

Best of luck.

Frank.

LETTER 3.

No Envelope

Blue writing paper

Comments Dated 1940 actually 1941!

113, Nowell Rd.
Barnes
S.W. 13.
22nd Jan 1940

Dear Olive,

I am pleased to hear that you approve of my idea to correspond. Don't excuse your-self for bad writing, you do very well. I'm no H. G. Wells. myself. Don't think from that that I am giving fatherly advice, it sounds that way to me, but I always write as I would talk. See what I mean? I'm fed up with communicating on the weather in letters, bad habit I think.

Unless of course it is something exceptional. So you'll get no news of temperature, rainfall or east winds blowing from the south. But this rain has been blinking awful Hasn't it? Every day we've had a downpour since the snow thawed.

Do you do much writing other than letters? Do you write poetry, prose or piffle. I choose the latter. Now and again I have a blitz on poetry. When I haven't anything to do at work. I wouldn't spend my own time on it. I started to write a book, have so far written three and a half

2.

chapters. I have been on it about nine months now. I wrote a short story the other day. I called it "Son in Law". I wonder what some-body with any literal sense would call it? But still we have to do something these dark and dreary evenings, even if its to disgrace our former teaching. Still do a bit of painting. Have practised oils for the last eighteen months. But maybe not enough. Done several portraits. Each time I finished up with the canvass over my head when I presented them to the very infuriated sitters. What a life!!! But the artist dealers encourage me, just think of all the canvasses I have to buy before I satisfactorily complete one.

Don't take any of my questions to be personal. I'll most likely make many in future letters that will appear that way.

I like probing into peoples desires, dislikes whims and ideas. I am going to ask a question now. I'm preparing you for it. maybe when you have read it you'll say, "is that all it is?" I don't know. Here go's. Its on the subject of liquer. London girls from the age of about fifteen, drink, and appear, many kinds of liquer, to enjoy.

3.

That last sentence sounded rather odd didn't it. As a matter of fact I forgot to include the words "to enjoy". I put them at the end rather than above. Excuse me! Getting back to the subject. Girls always act about twice their age. Of course you get exceptions, but the majority are, well how can I put it - venturous. That's it. They try to look grown up. They do.

The wireless has just been turned on. Ever tried to work against one? I expect I'll lose in the end. So watch for further develop-ments. Do you indulge in the aforesaid liquer? Do you enjoy it? Do you think that it is exciting - adventurous. I'll give you my idea. I like to have a flutter now and again. I like to feel jolly. Good-will to all men - sort of thing. We have a party on special occasions. We make whoopee. By we, I mean three fellows and three (fellows.) There you are its getting me, I meant by the way - girls. I've turned it off. The wireless I mean of course. At the joint agreement of mother and I. Now watch things! Lets change the subject. I'll try answering a few of your questions. About the rise I got it. How

4.

Crude that sentence sounded. "I got it." But still you know what I mean. I, by the way am entitled to one every year on the fourth of Jan. But I

wanted a bigger one than the sum predicted. Cost of living, that's what I put it down to. Especially when a girl costs about twice as much nowadays. Even once a week. I very sorry about the passing of our cheif. Many centuries will no doubt pass before there comes another such man.

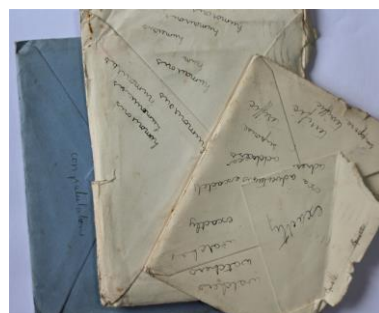
Hope you can read my writing. But still you won't miss much If you can't.

The bust survived. But I was disgusted with, "my insult to a great man," so I threw him out of the top window. I did not have to open it to do that.

Seen the great dictator, of course not. We don't get any decent pictures here till they are all worn out. I suppose they think we have enough to occupy our minds with the air raids. We do. The Great Dictator.

May be you wonder why I have
5.

written that title again. First time, I failed to apply capital letters. I just like to be right that's all. I can't say I heard the broadcast of Henry Hall from Chester. I don't think a lot of him anyway. We have Harry Leader at our local dance hall. Now he's hot! So are we by the time we have been round the hall once or twice. I always take a shoe horn to push through the crowds. Or to ease me through. Lets hear something about your, ideas on anything in future letters. Your thoughts, dreams, hopes and ideas. I'll see if I can get a few of mine



Olive practised her spelling on the back when she replied

through the censor next time. As it is I'll carry on with this disconnected scribble at the moment and try to do better next time. Maybe I'll say that next time as well. Its quite a good excuse. It looks pretty likely that I'll be in the forces before long, now that they are proposing to call up

6.

the nineteens.

I won't have so much time to write then. And you can expect worse than this. That'll take some doing. Wonder how cousin Ray is faring in the Air Force. Do you know what section and rank he is?

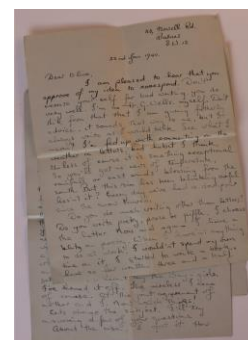
I have another letter to write tonight. One to my old scout master. He always writes me a very long letter of about six to eight pages, so I have to do the same or more in return. Its past nine now. Looks as if I shall have to be finishing. I'm getting stale anyway. My writing is becoming more putrid at every stroke, so I'll sign off. But before I go I wish to express my liking of your finish of your letters hope you don't mind me using it. A friend of mine would say, "Dig in, Have a basin.

So,

Cheerio for now

Frank

P.S. Sign my letters , F.E. Summers. please. It makes no difference but I like it.



Letter dated 22nd January 1941

Miss Olive Roberts.
11, Nowell Lane.

113, Nowell Rd.
Barnes.
S.W. 13.
9th. Feb 1941.

Dear Olive,

Your letter was received with the greatest delight. This time I am going to try and do some decent writing. It will be a struggle but here goes. (Watch it get towards the end).

best and all is well. Thanks for your information regarding thoughts and ideas. Driving a car is quite an easy thing to accomplish. After the war maybe it will be realised. Riding a horse. Well I can add that to my list. I'd better join the cavalry corps. I think the famous film stars sound alright too. Whoopie!!

Hang on to this address till I give you a forces one. I'm sending on my short story, hope you will be able to return it later. I packed several houses. But luckily

LETTER 4

Cream Envelope Postmark BARNES S.W.13.
11 FEB 9.30AM

Blue writing paper

113, Nowell Road.
Barnes
S.W.13.
9th Feb 1941

Dear Olive,

Your letter was received with the greatest delight. This time I am going to try and do some decent writing. It will be a hard struggle but here goes. (Watch it deteriorate as I get towards the end).

I have some more news, so let's have a "basinfull" of that. We've had two air raids during the day here. First of all they dropped four bombs, then two days after they dropped thirteen. They dropped so many. We use that particular word to refer to ladies and gentlemen. So I vote we use a special word for our unwelcome visitors. "Nazi" does not express our distaste enough. Why not "whelp". I believe it sounds better. Of course if you can think of a more slimy one, by all means forward. I should love to use it. Well getting back to the subject. The whelps dropped the bombs, hitting several houses. But luckily

2
causing no deaths. Just a few casualties. It doesn't seem to lower anybody's morale. But there I am only quoting the words that have resounded from the radio for the last year. But still I must confess I agree with them. I don't think they'll beat us that way, or any way come to that. And God help the poor fools when we meet them on the field again. I'm sure we'll give them a bashing.

By the way I'm sorry not offering my sympathy before now towards Uncle Ted. That is the first thing I should have mentioned. But owing to the fact that I have not your letter at hand at the present, it slipped my memory. I do feel sorry. I hope that you will convey this to him. And I hope that he will soon recover.

You have heard that the nineteen class is to be called up. I'm not going to say I told you so, for it was an expected fact. I just miss the Feb call up. But I'm not

going to be beaten to the R.A.F. by them. I'm going to sign up for, "Wireless operator - air gunner", on the 15th Feb. Next Saturday.

3
Maybe you think I'm mad. Everybody else around here seems to. But I don't think I'm quite as bad as that. I think it will be as safe up in the atmosphere as down on a ground job. In fact safer. Just think being a ground gunner, and a Nazi plane is swooping down. You have no protection and are unable to move out of the way. His guns are blazing. What have you to stop them? Only your little gun which you can reply with. But what chance have you of hitting him to his chance of hitting you? Now think of being an air gunner. You are on equal terms. He fires at you. You fire back. And every think in the garden is lovely. There is only one thing I fear in the Air Force. the parachute jumping, up in the air about ten thousand feet the engine fails. You are plunging towards the earth. You must jump. No hesitation, this is life or death. You have to jump into open space. The ground is dwarfed beneath you. You wonder if the "chute will open. As dropping at a terrific speed, clutching at your breath, feeling as if your stomach is rising above your chin, you pull the cord. Will it work? Thank heavens!

4
You are floating quickly toward the earth. You look beneath you. No ground! Just a wide expanse of sea. Rolling and thundering. With its bluey green appearance gloating up at you. Waiting! Waiting! Waiting till you drop slowly into its enveloping clutches. Heh! Heh! Got you.

But that is only one idea of fatality in the Air Force. You can always be riddled with machine-gun bullets as you float gracefully towards the nearest church steeple. But I

must not say much more, or I shall be thinking of it at the wrong times.

When we are called up. (there are three of us going) We shall most likely go to Blackpool. Therefore may give you a call one day. Hope we go to Blackpool that's all.

Were weightlifting last night. Highest clean and jerk made so far by all three of us. 165lbs. When we get in the RAF we can lift the planes up and give them a flying start. Like you would a toy one.

Re. the liquer. You like port eh! I don't, goes to your head. Give me a good glass of

5

beer and all is well. Thanks for your information regarding thoughts hopes and ideas. Driving a car is quite an easy thing to accomplish. After the war maybe it will be realised. Riding a horse. Well I can add that to my list. I'd better join the cavalry corps. I think. The famous film stars sound alright too. Whoopee!!

Hang on to this address till I give you a forces one. I'm sending on my short story, hope

you will be able to return it later.

And finishing off this scrawl of nonsense.

Cheerio for now.

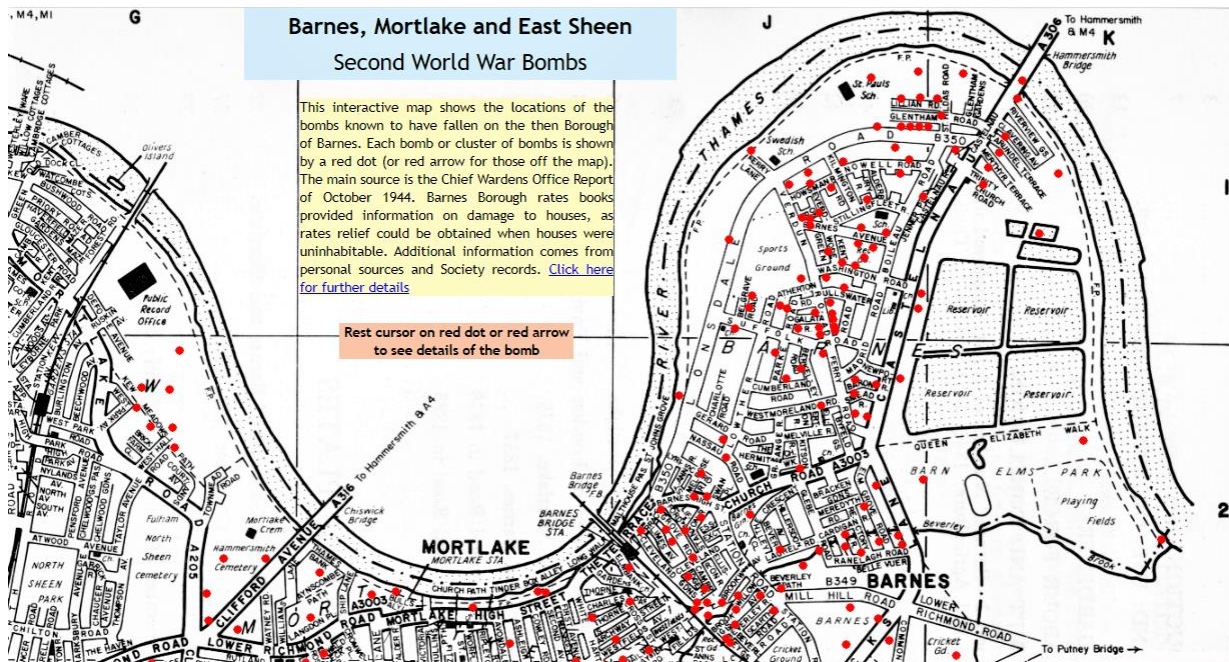
Frank



Bombs around Nowell Road in the centre of this map



113 is in a small cul-de-sac off Nowell Road, Barnes SW13 9BX



In his first letter to Olive - Frank wrote, "Bombs all round us, in fact bombs almost on top of us..."
The question is how close did they actually fall?

The map above is on the Barnes and Mortlake History Society website and is very informative it lists the house numbers in the streets and how they were damaged. There is a particular cluster that fell in November 1940 around Everdon Road, Barnes Avenue & Verdun Road. When the damage is overlaid with the current Google Street Map it appears that all the houses numbers affected backed onto the cul-de-sac off Howsman Road where No 61 of that road was situated. Practically just a garden or two away from damaged or destroyed properties.

Researcher Roy Wilcock has noted that in 1939 'Census' it was at 61 Howsman Road that the Summers family resided. I can't recall ever hearing that they had been bombed out, but had their home been damaged enough to require them to move to 113 Nowell Road in a similar small cul-de-sac?

It is just a 4-minute walk (0.2 miles) away.

If I pass through into the forces I shall not be able to write so frequently. Better make it once a month then. It will help with the writing too. I must state that subjects for discussion are becoming very scarce.

113, Nowell Rd.

Barnes.

S.W. 13.

27th Feb. 1941.

Dear Olive,

Thanks for yours of the ---, well what does it matter. Thank you anyway. I have signed for the Air Force and passed the first test. Grade 1. In fact I don't

Miss Olive Roberts.
127, Appleyards Lane
Handbridge.
Chester.
Cheshire.



John is curly that reminds his mother. Getting like No he makes love to all the girls. Local or foreign. Has to be careful now or his girl will "bat him one". Much used phrase for "slap him down" around here.

LETTER 5

Cream Envelope Postmark BARNES S.W.13
9.30AM 28th FEB 1941

Blue writing paper

113, Nowell Road.
Barnes.
S.W.13.
27th Feb 1941.

Dear Olive,

Thanks for yours of the - - -, well what does it matter. Thank you anyway. I have signed for the Air Force and passed the first medical Grade 1. In fact all three of us did. That's John, Frede and I. Hope you don't mind me introducing my friends. John is a little shorter than I. Has curly hair and flashing teeth - - - that reminds me, I haven't cleaned mine this morn. Must do it to pass the next test. Getting back to the introductions. He runs like a hair and jumps like a frog. No he wouldn't like that. He jumps better than that. Like a kangaroo. Makes love, or used to, to all the girls. Local or foreign. Has to be careful now or his girl will "bat him one". Much used phrase for "slap him down" around here. Frede stands about six foot high, wears a sky blue suit and a red tie. Speaks with a slight, if not absolutely profound accent of cockney. He runs, wrestles and also makes love. His motto. "Take me or leave me. And if you take me I'll leave you." He always has the upper hand. Nobody can reach that high. By the way we all weightlift and swim. John specialises in high diving. About ages. Frede is a day younger than I. John is five months younger than him. Now you know us. We're adventurous. Like excitement even if it means a fight. And we're

willing to offer our safety to rid the world of something that is far from delicate to our nostrils.

We hope to be called up for the flying medical round about this weekend. To go for educational test and before the selection committee. Where they try to dissuade you to join the air crew. They want to find out if you are really keen. We know all the dodges. Several of our friends have passed through.

If I pass through into the forces I shall not be able to write so frequently. Better make it once a month then. It will help with the writing too. I must state that subjects for discussion are becoming very scarce. If you can think of any particular item of interest that will take about six letters to thrash out, let me know. Anything you want to know about the mans idea of things. I'm certain there's a few things concerning the not-so-much-weaker sex I should like to know. I hope you don't mind me writing like this. I like to be broadminded. What do you think about the matter? Sounds like the gentleman on the wireless. What do you think column, or puzzle corner. But I don't want it to be like that. Not too regimented. So give me a few ideas, and perhaps by next time I'll have some interesting news.

So

Cheerio for Now.
Frank

113, Norwell Road.

Barnes

S.W. 13.

23, 3, 1941.

Dear Olive,

Well I can write from home for about another two or three months. Went up for Air Crew medical and Educational tests last Tuesday Wednesday and Thursday. Passed out as a Pilot. That means. I doubt very much if I shall go to Blackpool. Most likely Torquay. Only those few fellows the wireless operator air gunners go there. Dashed it all!

Coming back to the subject of hard work, in the air crew tests. They gave us geography and English.

Do the girls think that they are as able to look after themselves as the men in this world. Are they ever frightened of being put in to difficulties at any time?

Cheerio for now.

Frank

P.S. Answer to that general knowledge question was:- "Husband and Wife". Did you get it?

LETTER 6

Blue Envelope Postmark BARNES S.W.13
9.30am 24 MCH 1941

Blue writing paper

113, Nowell Road.
Barnes
S.W. 13.
23, 3, 1941

Dear Olive,

Well I can write from home for about another two or three months. Went up for Air Crew medical and Educational tests last Tuesday Wednesday and Thursday. Passed out as a Pilot. That means I doubt very much if I shall go to Blackpool. Most likely Torquay. Only those low fellows the wireless operator air gunners go there. Dash it all!

Coming back to the subject of hard work, in other words the air crew tests. They gave us maths, general knowledge, geography and English. "What a hope", I thought when I first looked at the papers. But I was lucky I suppose.

Full marks for maths geog. and English. About two general knowledge questions wrong.

Were set with fifteen questions to do in fifteen minutes. Again what a hope. One read:- "If two Americans were walking across a bridge. One was the father of

2.

the other one's son. What relationship existed between them?

Well?

During medical I had to have a piece of stone removed from my nose. Nearly killed me

in the process. Had formed through the dust at work continually passing through. I fainted once. No anesthetic by the way. Not even anything to numb the pain. Perspiration was pouring down my face as I clenched my fists as they fought hard to get it out. Four held me down. They needed to. I can tell you. Well after that little escapade, which made me feel quite like nothing on earth, I had to go through the rest of the gruelling tests. Eyes, ears, teeth, lungs, etc. Had to blow up a tube of mercury and hold it for sixty seconds. But the worst part of the whole course was the writing. We did about half a days work

in three days. The rest of the time was spent in waiting rooms with nothing to do and nearly always nothing to sit on. Food wasn't bad at all. But first night sleeping was horrid. Slept, or at least tried to, in a hut with no heating whatsoever, four

3.

blankets, on a mattress which felt as if it was filled with concrete.

And after all that we got three months deferred service. But still we need it to swot up for the next examination. Got any lessons you can teach us?

Frede passed out with me but John failed on his maths. Hard luck.

Fourty out of one hundred and eighty passed. My lucky day or days.

I hear that raids are getting bad up your way a few nights ago. They are not too good here. We had a bashing the other day as no doubt you have heard.

About the £100 contest on the wireless the other night. You asked if I had ever listened to them. I worked it all out but then never sent it in. I might have had that nest egg by now. Perhaps.

I saw "Strike up the Band, long long ago. That's one up on you for The Great Dictator."

About Joan's bird. Try giving it a whisky and soda.

About the questions and the two different sex's. Here's a question. Perhaps you could answer it in your next letter.

4.

Do the girls think they are as able to look after themselves as the men in this world. Are they ever frightened of being put in to difficulties at any time?

Cheerio for now.

Frank

P.S. Answer to that general knowledge question was:- "Husband and Wife."
Did you get it?

113, Howell Rd

Barnes

S.W. 13.

Wednesday.

Dear Olive.

I suppose I must start
by excusing myself for writing in
pencil. But really I have had
so many things occupying my mind
just lately that I haven't had
time to do much writing. What with
health and one thing and another.

I won't tell
and another

And save
a few bones
I should be
we have been
night. Have
of sleeping
It's a damn
mind the
on her own
I go out.
do alot of

forward, why do the girls still
expect men to do things for them,
when to day they have equal rights
and are no longer the weaker sex.

When a fellow takes a girl to
a dance he is expected to pay.
When he takes her out for a drink
he is expected to pay. Yet the girls
are shouting out for equal wages
for they say they're doing equal
work. Agreed there. In fact
nanny in London are earning
more than the men. But why

do they still expect the men to
pay? You find very few who
ever offer anything. Even as much
as paying a bus fare. They simply
expect to be taken out or somebody
else's pocket. And the men foolishly
do it. Even when they cannot afford
it. Can you give me any reasonable
explanation to this? Here's hoping

Cheerio for now.

~~Frank~~

occasionally

LETTER 7

No envelope

Grey writing paper

113 Nowell Road
Barnes
SW13
Wednesday

Dear Olive,

I suppose I must start by excusing myself for writing in pencil. But really I have had so many things occupying my mind just lately that I haven't had time to do much writing. What with maths and one thing and another. I won't tell you what the "one thing and another is.

Had some raids round here. Dropped a few bombs quite close. Too close. I should have said. And ever since we have been having a raid every night. Have been seriously thinking of sleeping in the shelter again. It's a darn nuisance though. I don't mind the bombs much, but mother is on her own every other night, if I go out. So therefore I have to do a lot of staying in.

Am going to the Hammersmith Palais tonight. I expect you have heard of the place. Sunday matinee is broadcast from there. It's a lovely floor and the band is smashing. Harry Leader and Robin Richmond. They take it in turns. But just lately the boys and I have been painting the town red. Went to a local dance last Saturday. The Palais on Sunday. Earls Court Exhibition dance on Monday and now I'm going to the Palais tonight. Then there is Chiswick Town Hall next Saturday. From then on we've made no arrangements.

Are going for a hike on Sunday. Only hope the weather keeps fine. Because if there is one thing I detest it's walking in the sodden countryside with mud up to my eyebrows. Ever done it?

Have written three more stories (short) But must give it up now to do some whole time swotting. Even the dancing must be cut down.

And by the way the clothes situation is going, I think a few more things will have to be cut down. What do you think of things out east? Doesn't look so good does it? But still you'll see the war end with an abrupt stop when Frede and I pass out as pilots. Yes, They'll say all the country are mad so what the good of taking it. I think there are a few mad ones somewhere though. First we push forward and then we're pushed back further than where we started from. What a life!

Food is getting pretty scarce too. That is one thing I object to. When your full your happy. I have not been happy for months.

Now for a question. Long long ago man was the guardian of the opposite sex. He looked after her, found her food. And did most of the manual work for her. She was there just to rear his family. Now, as time has gone forward, why do the girls still expect men to do things for them, when today they have equal rights and are no longer the weaker sex. When a fellow takes a girl to a dance he is expected to pay. When he takes her out for a drink he is expected to pay Yet the girls are shouting out for equal wages for they say their doing equal work. Agreed there. In fact many in London are earning more than the men. But why do they expect the men to pay? You find very few who ever offer anything. Even as much as paying a bus fare. They simply expect to be taken out on somebody else's pocket. And the men foolishly do it. Even when they can afford it. Can you give me any reasonable explanation to this? Here's hoping

Cheerio for now

Frank



113, Norrell Road,
Barnes
S.W. 13.

Thursday 5th June.

Dear Olive.

Sorry I have been so long answering your letter but have been very busy lately. What with birthdays, Whitsun and maths. I don't think I can make this letter very interesting. At the moment I feel just about as much like writing as an elephant with gloves on, but I'll try.

I'll start off with a moan. Why is it the R.A.F. is so long winded about calling up volunteers. I'm not all that longing to have to fight for my life, but as I've got to go I wish they'd hurry up and take me and get it over. I know the services are not like going for a holiday, but work is getting so dull. The food problem just about drives one silly, and as for rationing clothes - well I shan't express myself. For over eighteen months now we have been buying clothes as we have wanted them. Why couldn't they have made a steady rationing from the start, instead of imposing it all of a sudden so drastically? It was exactly the same with the jam. One moment we were eating about one pound a day in our house now we are

LETTER 8

Cream Envelope Postmark BARNES S.W.13
9.30am 5 JNE 1941

Blue writing paper

113 Nowell Road
Barnes
SW13

Thursday 5th June 1941

Dear Olive,

Sorry I have been so long answering your letter but have been very busy lately. What with birthdays, Whitsun and maths. I don't think I can make this letter very interesting. At the moment I feel just about as much like writing as an elephant with gloves on, but I'll try.

I'll start off with a moan. Why is it the R.A.F. is so long winded about calling up volunteers. I'm not all that longing to have to fight for my life, but as I've got to go I wish they'd hurry up and take me and get it over. I know the services are not like going for a holiday, but work is getting so dull. The food problem just about drives one silly, and as for rationing clothes – well I shan't express myself. For over eighteen months now we have been buying clothes as we have wanted them. Why couldn't they have made a steady rationing from the start, instead of imposing it all of a sudden so drastically? It was exactly the same with the jam. One moment we were eating about one pound a day in our house now we are down to two pound a month. Its not the rationing I mind, but they go from the sublime to the ridiculous.

Evacuations, evacuations that's all we seem to get. They think after the enemy has made the master move. Then they expect you to have the heart to fight. Seems to me this government is almost as bad as the French one.

But lets forget the war for a moment. I'll try a more simple subject. We had a glorious Whitsun. Never wasted a moment of the time. Went roller skating, boating, dancing, cycling, and swimming. Not forgetting a long walk. Ever done any roller skating? Its good fun. Even if you do sit down a few times. You get the laughter out of seeing other people go down. Rowing almost as funny if you have not done a lot of it. You usually spray water all over your companions in the boat. Have you done much dancing lately? Are there many held round your way?

I like the idea of pilots being trained in America. Hope I go there. That's the best I can do so

Cheerio for now

Frank

PS. Excuse writing, hope you can read it. Although you won't miss much if you can't but I'll do better next time. Cheerio!

Still at —
113, Howell Road.
Barnes
S.W.13.
28th July 1941.

Dear Olive.

Many thanks for your last letter.
So sorry I'm so lax in replying. Hoped to
be in the R.A.F. by now, but I think they
must have forgotten us. The monotony is
becoming just a little boring now, but I
suppose I'd better not hope for a quick call
up as it's not really a pleasant prospect.
Although we joined up because we thought
they needed as many men as possible, not to
hang about for months. Work is not so
interesting lately, mainly I suppose because
I can't settle down to it expecting to
be called upon at any moment. And — —
Oh let's not discuss it. Perhaps one day
they'll surprise me and I'll find the
clown papers
of the week
these last
been swimming
new dives
I was



Miss Olive Roberts.
127, Appleyards Lane
Handbridge
Chester
Cheshire.

LETTER 9

Cream Envelope Postmark BARNES S.W.13
12.45pm 29 JULY 1941

Blue writing paper

Still at –
113 Nowell Road
Barnes
S.W.13.
28th July 1941.

Dear Olive.

Many thanks for your last letter. So sorry I'm so lax in replying. Hoped to be in the R. A. F. by now, but I think they must have forgotten us. The monotony is becoming just a little boring now, but I suppose I'd better not hope for a quick call up as its not really a pleasant prospect. Although we joined up because we thought they needed as many men as possible, not to hang about for months. Work is not so interesting lately, mainly I suppose because I can't settle down to it expecting to be called up at any moment. And – Oh let's not discuss it. Perhaps one day they'll surprise me and I'll find the dam papers on the mat.

The weather has not been too bad these last few months – in spasms. I've been swimming quite a lot. Learn't a few new dives, somersaults and backdives. Ever tried them? Its kind of awkward at first when you either land flat on your back or face. Started to get brown, but now with two weeks of dull weather it seems to be wearing off. I shall have to start all over again.

When Frede and I went up for the Air Force we met a fellow named Dennis. (I don't know whether I told you before) Well we've been going out with him a lot. He's a real mad fellow. Born in Canada. Stands 6ft tall. One day we were leaving the entrance of the baths when he suddenly took a fit in his head to leap right over the top of Frede from behind. He failed. But he would have done it if Frede had known he was coming and had kept still. Consequently he finished up on his side

on the ground. He still complains of bruises. By the way the origin of the name Frede. Once upon a time we had a scout Troop and, alack! Alas! There were two Fredericks. One had to be altered So we thought. (We can) Fred Edser is Frede's name so we called him Fred. E. Eventually merging into Frede. And that's Why we call him stinker.

You said in your last letter that you had never been to a dance. I can't understand that. I remember when I was fifteen Geoff said to me after my enquiry of its importance. It's a social necessity. Since then I've seen proof of that statement.

No party, no outing or anything connected to gay hilarity can be complete without it. And keep it dark but that is the only way you can speak to a girl without a formal introduction. Or at least the only way a gentleman can. I've also had proof of that. How can one go up to a girl, (a nice girl) in the street and say, Hallo! Where do you live, etc without receiving a slap around the face. Everything can't be left to providence. Frede by the way has had as many girls in a year as there are months. Its all experience and all good fun. But perhaps you country girls wouldn't understand that. Got ya! All right I can hear you. But now I suppose I must close down. I won't have anything interesting to write till I get in the forces, so lets hope I am by the next time. For I can't ask you to put up with another basin full of this drivel

So

Cheerio for now
Frank



1335486 AC.2 SUMMERS, F.E.
B. FLIGHT. 2. SAUBORON.
No. 8. I.T.W.
R.A.F. NEWQUAY.
CORNWALL.

Sunday.

Dear Olive.

Thank you for your letter; ~~correspondence~~ correspondence is very welcome nowadays. After hard work and very little time for enjoyment a letter is quite a precious article. The only trouble is in replying which you can guess is very hurried and short having

you mentioned about Fred. last time: Yes he's still his old self. ~~There~~ was out with a W.A.A.F. last night. I was studying navigation. So sorry about this letter being so short but I cannot help that - while at home I had plenty of time to write long ones but now it's usually a matter of saying thank goodness that's done now I'll have some peace for another few days. You'll notice I have enclosed a photograph - not very good, but you asked for it so it's your own fault. Hope to get some leave in nearly a month's time before going abroad. I'll paint the town red when I get home. I'm very quietened here; it doesn't pay to sow wild oats on 2/6 a day. And by the time I'm through with drill for the day I feel just about ready for bed. Well best of love to all. Keep happy we haven't lost yet! Cherio for now. Jack

LETTER 10

NO Envelope and un-dated

Blue writing paper with RAF insignia

1335586 A.C.2 SUMMERS. F. E.
B. FLIGHT. 2. SQUADRON
No. 8. I.T.W.
R.A.F. NEWQUAY
CORNWALL
Sunday

Dear Olive.

Thank your for your letter; correspondence is very welcome nowadays. After hard work and very little time for enjoyment a letter is quite a precious article. The only trouble is in replying which you can guess is very hurried and short having so many people to write to. So far the course has suited me very satisfactorily; we've had an anti-gas and a maths exam. And when I say maths I mean maths, wholly and solely maths. For the first two weeks it drove ones head round but I believe I passed O.K. at least I hope so. For otherwise I shall find myself out of the R.A.F. or flying duties. We're doing navigation now; learning the arts of flying. In about a months time I hope to be having my first flight maybe in America or Canada or even out east. I don't mind where as long as I get my wings. When I first had the idea of joining up I was just a little afraid of what it would mean. I used to think of all the men who were killed and how short life must be in this service. Now I know all about it, I've learned how to kill, I know exactly how easy it is to lose ones life – I've heard dozens of gruesome stories from old sweats – and to tell you the truth I'm dead scared. I can't imagine myself up there standing against bullets and shells with a calm face, its unnatural. I've fired guns and there is a mighty force in even a small one. – I can tell you I was pretty glad I was on the right side of it. But I suppose in time I shall get used to it all.

3

When I'm actually engaged in a battle

I doubt whether I shall be thinking of the gruesome part. Lets hope not anyway. I chose this job – I'm not going to grumble; I still think it's as good as anything else if you've got to fight. So far the weather down here has been pretty mild much better than its ever been this time of the year in London. As a matter of fact I was in the sea yesterday. It was cold but one got hardened to that. P.T. is stiff but I've never felt so fit in all my life. Also had a few teeth stopped at the R.A.F.'s expense as far as money is concerned and my expense as far as pain is concerned. But still such is life; I wouldn't want to change it. You mentioned about Frede last time: Yes he's still his old self. He was out with a W.A.A.F. last night. I was studying navigation. I'm sorry about this letter being so short but I cannot help that – while at home I had plenty of time to write long ones but now its usually a matter of saying thank goodness that's done now I'll have some peace for another few days. You'll notice I have enclosed a photograph – not very good, but you asked for it so its your own fault. Hope to get some leave in nearly a months time before going abroad. I'll paint the town red when I get home. I'm very quietened here; it doesn't pay to sow wild oats on 2/6 a day. And by the time I'm through with drill for the day I feel just about ready for bed. Well best of love to all
Keep happy we haven't lost yet!

Cheerio for now

Frank



1335486. AC.2 SUMMERS. F. E.
B. FLIGHT. 2. SQUADRONS
S. I.T.W.
R.A.F. NEWQUAY
CORNWALL.

12. 11. Oct.

Dear Olive,

So sorry such a delay in answering your last letter but I am afraid much has happened since then and I haven't had a great amount of time. Well I've passed out the first part of my course and am now at the Initial Training Wing. We are in hotels right near the sea overlooking it in fact. The waves of the Atlantic breaking about fifty yards from my front window. The beds are better than before as we have springs and sheets. At St John's Wood London where we were first posted we had to sleep on mattresses on the floor.



Soon we shall go in the sea. The present and vacuum worn off. good and march about we used to

So I have been going to be started on Monday.

six, breakfast at seven and parade at eight to start work. We finish at 6 pm. and are allowed to go out. But the trouble is that there is so much to sort that that idea is absolutely out of the question. I was surprised

LETTER 11

Cream envelope Postmark NEWQUAY
CORNWALL
4.15PM 12 OCT 1941

Blue writing paper with RAF insignia

1335846 A.C.2 SUMMERS F.E.
B. FLIGHT. 2 SQUADRON
8. I.T.W.
R.A.F. NEW QUAY
CORNWALL
12th Oct

Dear Olive,

So sorry such a delay in answering your last letter but I am afraid much has happened since then and I haven't had a great amount of time. Well I've passed out the first part of my course and am now at the Initial Training Wing. We are in hotels right near the sea overlooking it in fact. The waves of the Atlantic breaking about fifty yards from my front window. The beds are better than before as we have springs and sheets. At St Johns Wood London where we were first posted we had to sleep on mattresses on the floor.

2

The food there wasn't so hot either. We have had maths exam and have passed out O.K. So far Frede my friend has been posted here as well so I'm lucky in that respect although the fellows are some of the best one could meet. Square training isn't so easy; ever since we have been in the corporals have drilled us – and here they have promised us even stiffer training. Aircraft recognition is the only thing that I am not looking forward to. I can't take very great interest in that. But I suppose I shall pick it up because all around the walls everywhere one goes there are models and drawings. The air here is simply marvellous – invigorating, and we are to do P.T. every morning in vest and shorts on the sand.

3

Soon we will be allowed to go in the sea for a swim but at the present the effect of inoculation and vaccination have not completely worn off. Food so far is pretty good and we don't have to march about two miles for it as we used to at the last place. So I hear the training is going to be very stern when we start on Monday. We arise at six, breakfast at seven and parade at eight to start work. We finish at 6pm. and are allowed to go out. But the trouble is that there is so much to swot that the idea is absolutely out of the question. I was surprised to find the warmth of the climate in this part of the world. When we left London the rain was pouring down but when we had reached Cornwall the sun was shining and everything in the garden was lovely. It took us about eight hours to get here but as they were all RAF in the train you can imagine the journey was far from dull. Well I cannot write a lot more for now as I have several other letters to write and very little time. That also accounts for the scrawly writing. So give my love to all at home and tell them that the war is nearly over.

Cheerio for now
Frank



P. Becks.

1335486. SUMMERS, F.E.
B. FLIGHT. 2. SQUADRON.
R.O.S. L.T.W.
R.A.F. NEWQUAY.
CORNWALL.



Dear Olive,

Sunday.

It's been along time since
I wrote to you last but I have
had a lot of writing to do for my
final exam. And I can say that
I have passed out O.K. In a week
or so I shall be promoted to LNC

and get 5/6 a day instead of 2/6.
It's worth working for, and then I
am posted to ... we get an

extra 2/ ... I always find
I can't laugh at. I always find
memories go down well in a letter.
I'll write now neat time for
I won't have a lot to do in future
Remember me to everyone.

Cherio for now.

Best of luck
Frank.

There don't
sent a
stay in
flight
they
see
out

LETTER 12

Cream Envelope Postmark NEWQUAY
CORNWALL
4.15PM 14 DEC 1941

Blue writing paper with RAF insignia

1335486. SUMMERS. F.E.
B. FLIGHT. 2. SQUADRON.
No. 8. I.T.W.
R.A.F. NEWQUAY
CORNWALL
Sunday

Dear Olive,

Its been a long time since I wrote to you last but I have had a lot of swotting to do for my final exams. And I can say that I have passed out OK. In a week or so I shall be promoted to L.A.C. and get 5/6 a day instead of 2/6. Its worth working for, and when I am posted to a C.F.T.S. we get an extra 2/- a day for danger money. There doesn't much chance of being sent away yet though so I might stay here for several weeks. One flight has just been posted abroad: they got another 12 days leave only 3 weeks after their passing out I.T.W. leave. I expect you have heard from mum about me being home last week. I certainly had a glorious time, dancing and parties, shows and pictures. Then again I had a partner to accompany me, meaning of course a young lady. The only trouble was that she lives about two miles away from me, and every time I have to walk home; for the time that I think of doing so is long after the London buses have ceased to run. But its worth it! What you say? I hadn't known her long before I was called up and I write as many times as possible to keep in touch with her. She is a very good dancer, far better than me, So I have quite a good time at the Hammersmith Palais de Danse.

3

But now I'm back again at this dreary place. While we were studying

for our exams the time went pretty quickly and we were always thinking of a weeks leave to come when we had passed. But now there is nothing much in sight to cheer us up for postings abroad are very slow. I'm just about getting over the effects of leaving home to come back here, but I'm far from happy now. I know that it nearly brought me to tears having to leave, but after a few days in the RAF all past memories seem to fade and one thinks only of the present and how to maintain the amount of kit that was issued. Its amusing the scrapes and troubles one gets into to take ones mind from thinking of home. I'll give you my exam marks:-
MATHS 74 NAVIGATION 81.5
LAW 85 AIRCRAFT RECOGNITION 72
HYGIENE 70 ANTI GAS 60
ARMAMENTS 94
Giving an average of 76.5%
Frede soared ahead of me in navigation by getting 92%, but on average he was about the same as me. We wanted to get about the same as we hope to be posted together. We have asked to be sent abroad together.

While at home Frede and I had a party that lasted well into the next morning. A grand party that will stand us in good stead until we have another which I hope will be in celebration of us getting our wings.

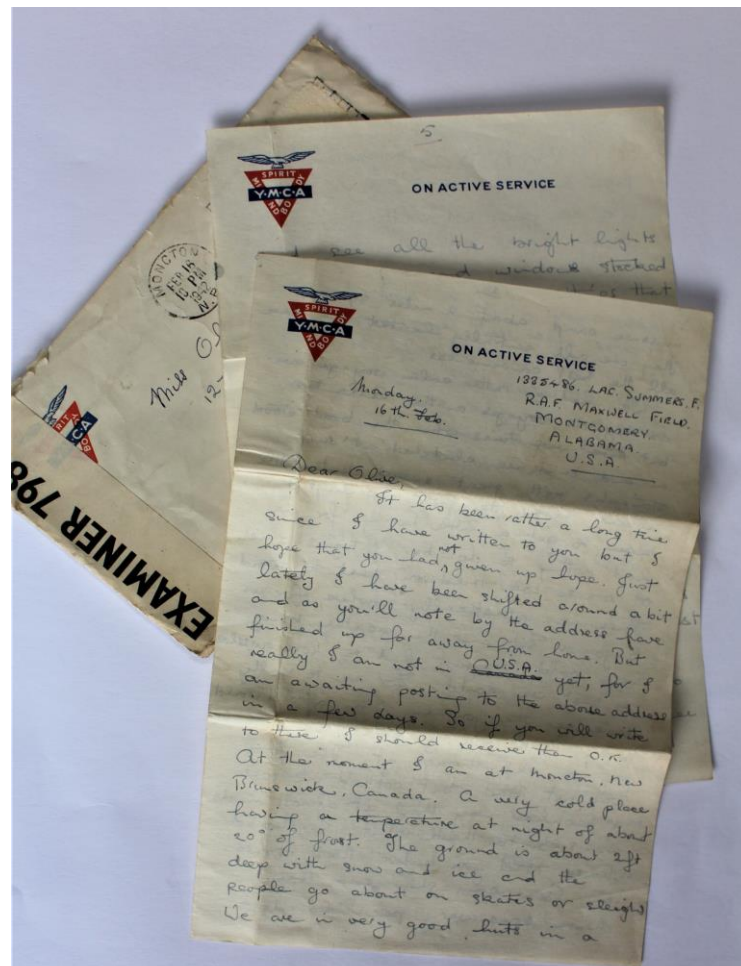
5

Then I suppose its out to fight.

Who cares! This world is in such a mess now that there is interest in nothing else and everybody else will be with me. I'm looking forward to flying a plane: I think its going to be good fun but the trouble is that none of the instruments in the plane register anything true, so all the time one has to apply corrections. I dazed dad by letting him look at my navigation book. But I must hurry this up if I'm to catch the Sunday post which goes at 3 o'clock. Its five to now. I'm interested in the fact that

you are writing to a fellow in the army. Excuse my nosiness, but you and I are both old enough to talk about anything. Do you find it hard to think of subjects to write to him? Do you wonder sometimes what to say; which he would look upon seriously and which he would laugh at. I always find memories go down well in a letter. I'll write more next time for I won't have a lot to do in future. Remember me to everyone

Cheerio for now
Best of Luck
Frank



LETTER 13

Cream envelope
Y.M.C.A Logo
Envelope Postmark MONCTON N.B.
FEB 16 10PM
1942 EXAMINER 7989

YMCA ON ACTIVE SERVICE Writing paper

1335486.
LA.C. SUMMERS. F.
R.A.F. MAXWELL FIELD.
MONTGOMERY.
ALABAMA.
U.S.A
Monday 16th Feb.

Dear Olive,

It has been rather a long time since I have written to you but I hope that that you had not given up hope. Just lately I have been shifted around a bit and as you'll note by the address have finished up far away from home. But really I am not in U.S.A. yet, for I am awaiting posting to the above address in a few days. So if you will write to there I should receive them O.K. At the moment I am at Moncton, New Brunswick, Canada. A very cold place having a temperature at night of about 20° of frost. The ground is about 2ft deep with snow and ice and the people go about on skates or sleighs. We are in very good huts in a

2
massive camp about 2 miles square. They are all centrally heated and have all the best conveniences.

We had a rather calm voyage over as regards voyages on the Atlantic, But there were times when the boat stood on end and we clutched at our stomachs with great speed but little success. After the first few days it began to get boring, for we had nothing to do bar fatigues which of course we tried our best to avoid. There was practically nowhere for us to go or sit, and the weather being very cold, we just had to lose ourselves as best we could. For me to really describe the journey would bring forth all grumbles so I shall try to skip through it. The food was not bad but cooked in such

a peculiar way that it almost made us sick to think of it. I should have told you before it was an American ship and they have some very peculiar ideas about food. Everything was coated in sugar and there were some of the most alarming mix ups that made us wonder whether the cooks were sane. We only got two meals a day when we could have eaten about four so you can guess we weren't exactly happy passengers for the Yanky sailors.

But you ought to have heard the roaring cheers when we sighted land, and the way we rushed off the ship with relish after ten days on board. All buttons had been cleaned since the first time since we left England, and there was a general smartening up to show the Canadians that we are as good as they are. For you see on board we weren't allowed to take our clothes off at all, not even for a wash. And the conditions we slept under were absolutely vile.

4
But now we are here nothing could be finer. Never is there a better place or better people. We have been treated like lords and if I tell you about all that we can get to eat etc over here I know I shall make your mouth water. I'm certain I eat about a lb of real butter every day

and as for meat we taste the best. Sausages don't know what bread looks like, and there is enough sugar to eclipse the amount of snow around here. Every morning we have eggs for breakfast with either bacon or some such delicacy and notice I said "eggs" not egg.

Chocolate and soft drinks are a part of our lives and I can tell you its really grand to walk down The Main Street

5

and see all the bright lights in the shops, and windows stocked full of all the good things that once we saw in good old England. Before long now I shall be flying and I am going on the hardest draft that is possible for a R.A.F. man to get his wings. Only about 30% get through and they have to be really good. We are

going on the Arnold scheme that trains some of the U.S. Air Corps and the American fellows are picked from all the highest Universities. But I have the ambition if not the brains, so I'm going to put all I have got into it. For at the end if I do pass is a greater glory than anything else in the forces. We are presented with the American wings – real silver as a souvenir showing all we have been through. The trouble is we are chucked out for any little thing such as leaving a bed untidy or having dirty boots. Bad show that but I shall have to be careful. Well I shall have to start finishing off as a couple of my pals are waiting for me to go out.

Take care of yourself.
Give my love to your mother
and father and also to Joan.

Cheerio for now
Frank





WW2 R.A.F. Recruitment Poster - IWM



Letter No. 2.

ON ACTIVE SERVICE

1335486. L.A.C. Summers. J.E.
No 31. P. D.

Sunday
22nd. March '42. R.A.F. Moncton
New Brunswick.
Canada.

Dear Olive,

So far I have not had any letters from England but I am endeavouring to keep writing while I have the chance. You'll notice that I have numbered the letter at the top so that if the figures don't follow you can tell that one has not reached you. Also I have given a different address to last time because I don't think that we shall be going there after all. But don't worry if you have already written to Maxwell Field, that you have laboured in vain.

LETTER 14

No envelope

YMCA ON ACTIVE SERVICE writing paper

Letter No.2.

1335486. L.A.C. Summers. F. E.

No 31. P.D.

R.A.F. Moncton.

New Brunswick.

Canada.

Sunday 22nd March '42.

Dear Olive,

So far I have not had any letters from England but I am endeavouring to keep writing while I have the chance. You'll notice that I have numbered the letter at the top so that if the figures don't follow you can tell that one has not reached you. Also I have given a different address to last time because I don't think we shall be going there after all. But don't worry if you have already written to Maxwell Field, that you have laboured in vain

2.

for I shall have the letters forwarded. I hear that we are leaving here next week to start on the course, and I can tell you I am not sorry. We'll have been here six weeks; and that is plenty enough in a place like this. We still get plenty of fatigues, and I am on guard today and tonight. This is the third one I have done since I arrived and am not at all pleased about it, especially as the snow is very deep and the wind blows right through one's body. I have already done four hours on, and I have another four to do during the night. Soon I hope I shall be clear of these guards and down in the sunny south of America. We should be

3.

going to one place for about

three weeks for a little more ground training and to climatise us to the heat before flying. Then we'll move on to somewhere else to get down to the real job. But I only hope that there aren't many people who have faith in me getting through, for I have seen so many perfectly fit and brainy chaps come back here after failing, that it isn't anything to be banked on. There are more failures than graduations so I've got to look smart or I shall go down. I want those wings more now than I did before I joined. There seems to be a force that wants to chuck me out and so it makes me all the more eager to overcome it.

4.

I don't know what I would do if I failed for I'd be afraid that people would be disappointed in me. But I suppose if flying goes against the grain there is nothing I can do about it. Perhaps next time I write I shall have more to say that will interest you, for I certainly can't tell you more than the usual routine work we do here at the moment. Well I had better close now until then when I hope to write a longer and more interesting letter.

Give my love to Aunt Marie and Uncle Ted and Joan

Cheerio for now

Frank

Letter No. 2.

TURNER FIELD
ALBANY, GEORGIAU.S. Aviation Cadet.
1335786. L.A.C. Summers, L.B.

Class. 42.J.

No. 31. P.D.

R.A.F. Moncton, N.B.
Canada.

Dear Olive,

You will see by the insignia above that I have at last arrived in U.S.A. We were fed up with Moncton and were not sorry when we were drafted to here. It is best to write to the above address so that the letters will be forwarded. We shall be moving about a bit from place to place when we start flying. We are doing none here, for this is to let us get used to the climate and food. I can tell you that we need it for the heat down here has made me quite wasted out today.

We left Moncton where there was quite a low temperature and plenty of snow on the ground. The train was not as good as expected and we had to sleep in bunks converted from seats made of wood. But the passage was quite interesting and we

EXAMINER 7982

LETTER 15

Envelope Postmark ALBANY GA.
APR 3 4.30PM 1942
EXAMINER 7982

Gold writing paper TURNER FIELD
ALBANY, GEORGIA

Letter No 3

U.K. Aviation Cadet.
1335486 L.A.C. Summers. F. E.
Class. 42.J.
No. 31. P. A.
R.A.F. Moncton. N.B.
Canada
3rd April '42

Dear Olive,

You will see by the insignia above that I have at last arrived in USA. We were fed up with Moncton and were not sorry when we were drafted to here. It is best to write to the above address so that the letters will be forwarded. We shall be moving about a bit from place to place when we start flying. We are doing none here, for this is to let us get used to the climate and food. I can tell you we need it for the heat down here has made me quite washed out today.

We left Moncton when there was quite a low temperature and plenty of snow on the ground. The train was not as good as expected and we had to sleep in bunks converted from seats made of wood. But the passage was quite interesting and we 2. passed through many of Canada's large towns – Montreal, Quebec, London, Toronto. We arrived across the river from Detroit and were ferried across over to the town that displayed many large skyscrapers. This was our first sight of the USA and it was very imposing. We changed into another train more comfortable but with no sleeping accommodation at all; but had marvellous food that easily compensated for it. We had waiters and menu cards and food that could not be outclassed in any of the worlds restaurants. We passed through Ohio, Atlantic City and many others that I cannot spell or remember and eventually arrived at Albany from where we were shunted right into the camp. We were in;- we could not back out –

we are now in the US army; - at least for a little while. The discipline is very strict and after about fourteen weeks of idleness we find it quite binding. We have to make beds as if the sheets and blankets were starched and if there is a slight crinkle we get demerits for it. They are a form of

3.

punishment that every one over three makes you walk an hour. Up and down, up and down in the hot sun. If you get any amount of them, you have to spend your whole relaxation time walking them off. And we are only allowed out of camp once every three days, and then we have to be in bed by eleven oclock. An ordinary evening you have to be in by 8.15 but you need to go to bed at that time for reveille is at 5.30 and breakfast at 6 oclock. We do plenty of PT and get athletics nearly every afternoon – really I am beginning to ache. But I am glad of the exercise for I have put on about a stone and a half since I've been in the RAF and its not all muscle. I weigh almost twelve stone now stripped.

We are to be issued with tropical kit – trousers, eight pairs of socks, shirts, eight pairs of vests and two pairs of shoes. With all the kit we have got now, I think we are the most kitted airmen in this war. We have three kitbags full of English kit, and another full of American.

4.

We shall move from here at the beginning of May and will go to a school for our

primary training. That will be the first of our flying and I'm certainly looking forward to it. I often wonder how many of our crowd will get through – whether I'll pass: for you see the slightest slip will let us out.

The day that I left Moncton I met Frede there, he had arrived from New York to do his training in Canada. We had quite a fine time before I left; and returned to camp in a very happy frame of mind. So happy in fact that we

made quite a mess of one of the rooms. He'll be finished before me – lucky dog; although I'll have two pairs of wings instead of one. We get the US Army Air Corps silver wings as well.

Its about time I went to bed if I'm to get up when that blank bugle blows in the morning. So –

Cheerio for now

Frank

Frank mentions in his early letters about writing stories and may have sent Olive one? Here is a poem by him, Olive also copied it out long hand. Whether his poetry influenced her it is too late to find out, but she was famed during her lifetime for writing quirky little personal poems for anniversaries, birthdays and the like!

When evenings silence cloaks the air
And far beyond the moonbeams glare
The myriad sparks of dancing lights
Winking from the heavens heights
My thoughts will ever homeward stray
Over the hills & far away.

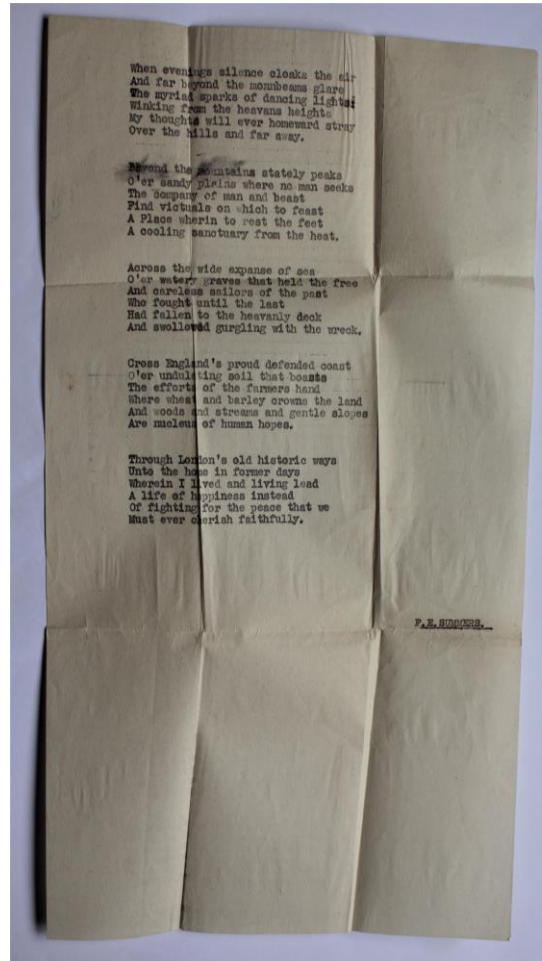
Beyond the mountains stately peaks
O'er sandy plains where no man seeks
The company of man and beast
Find victuals on which to feast
A place wherein to rest the feet
A cooling sanctuary from the heat.

Across the wide expanse of sea
O'er watery graves that hold the free
And careless sailors of the past
Who fought until the last
Had fallen to the heaving deck
And swallowed gurgling with the wreck

Cross England's proud defended coast
O'er undulating soil that boasts
The efforts of the farmers hand
Where wheat & barley crowns the land
And woods and streams and gentle slopes
Are nucleus of human hopes.

Through London's old historic ways
Unto the home in former days
Wherein I lived and living led
A life of happiness instead
Of fighting for the peace that we
Must ever cherish faithfully

F. E. Summers





3rd. May. '42.

R. A. F.



U. S. ARMY AIR CORPS
TRAINING DETACHMENT

1335486. L. A. C. Summets. F. C.
U. K. Aviation Cadet.
Class 42. J.
Lakeland Aeronautical School.
Lakeland.
Florida.
U. S. A.

Dear Olive.

Many thanks for your letter. it is
received about a week ago. I left my stomach
from you and I nearly didn't feel bad
expecting on your ear but I didn't feel bad
standing on my feet. I was rather pleased with my first days
extremely difficult. I did plenty of taxiing and turning and
behind once or twice but I didn't feel bad
and I was rather pleased with my first days
work. I thought that was the hardest even though it was
on the ground. But to see the earth so far below
me for the first time was a great thrill, and
I'm looking forward to the day when I can
look up and see it above me. Well I cannot
make my letters very long for I have plenty of
study to do.
My love you all.
Cheerio for now.
Frank

LETTER 16

Cream Envelope Postmark LAKELAND.
FLA.
MAY 4 12-M 1942

Airmail writing paper with RAF & US Army Air
Corps Training Detachment Insignia

133548. L.A.C. Summers. F. E.
U.K. Aviation Cadet.
Class 42. J.
Lakeland Aeronautical School.
Lakeland.
Florida.
U.S.A.
3rd May '42

Dear Olive,

Many thanks for your letter that I received about a week ago. It was good to hear from you again after such a long time for I expect you know that a letter means more to me than anything now. You'll see that I am at last at a flying school and actually I had my first flight this morning. I was a little nervous at the beginning, but managed to stop my teeth from chattering after a while. It is a simply marvelous place here with beautifully built barracks, lawns, palm trees, swamps with aligators and snakes. Of course the latter only add charm when one is a safe distance away from them. The weather is perfect and I'm 2. as comfortable as I have ever been. The trouble is – yes there is always some trouble somewhere – that there is a terrific lot of discipline and it is impossible to keep clear of "gigs" or demerits and so not to get hours to walk. If I haven't explained those terms before I expect that sounds rather confusing, actually it all means that you get a mark against you, and for every one over a certain number you have to walk a tour up and down between two points for an hour during the time that you should be out of camp. And as we are only allowed out once a week some fellows never see outside the gates.

Every demerit over about eight doubles the amount each time so I can tell you we have to be careful. If we get too many we are chucked out. Now going back to flying; it was a great thrill this morning especially when he took his hands off the controls and handed them over to me. Actually I did not know whether I was coming or going. 3.

I did a bit of straight and level flying and tested all the controls to see their various actions. There is so much to learn in a plane that I shall be completely off my head by the time I have finished – if I ever get that far. There are so many knobs and handles that you have to work together, and when you are standing on your ear you might say, it is extremely difficult. I nearly left my stomach behind once or twice but I didn't feel bad and was rather pleased with my first days work. I did plenty of taxiing and turning and I thought that was the hardest even though it was on the ground. But to see the earth so far below me for the first time was a great thrill, and I'm looking forward to the day when I can look up and see it above me. Well I cannot make my letters very long for I have plenty of study to do.

My love to you all
Cheerio for now
Frank

3.

Tuesday
16th June. '42



1335486. L.A.C. Summers. 73.
No. 31. P.D.
R.A.F. Moncton. N.B.
Canada.

Dear Olive,

Many thanks for your letter, it arrived here on the 5th June. You sent it to Lakeland, but I'm afraid I am not there any more - I have travelled all the way back to Canada to Trenton this time. I expect you have heard from mother that I have failed the pilot course so I don't think I shall repeat it all. I don't like to make excuses about it for I expect I just am not cut out to be a pilot. I have re-mustered as an observer so I hope with a little swotting I shall get through and perhaps return to England. You'll have to excuse the writing, for I am doing this on my knees and not in a very comfortable position.

You asked me about my height; well I'm no skyscraper - I just manage to top 5ft 8ins. Today I have done a bit of boxing - I'm going to train to fight down here for the R.A.F. It was very tough going for they certainly put you through it. I do P.T. all the morning, and

LETTER 17

Cream Envelope Postmark TRENTON. ONT.
M.P.O.303
JUN 18 1942

Brown writing paper with R.C.A.F. crest

13354868 L.A.C. Summers. F. E.
No.31. P.D.
R.A.F. Moncton. N.B.
Canada.
Tuesday 16th June '42

Dear Olive,

Many thanks for your letter, it arrived here on 5th June. You sent it to Lakeland, but I'm afraid I am not there any more – I have travelled all the way back to Canada to Trenton this time. I expect you have heard from mother that I failed the pilots course so I don't think I shall repeat it all. I don't like to make excuses about it for I expect I just am not cut out to be a pilot. I have remustered as an observer so I hope with a little swotting I shall get through and perhaps return to England. You'll have to excuse the writing for I am doing this on my knee and not in a very comfortable position.

You asked about my height; well I'm no skyscraper – I just manage to top 5ft 8ins. Today I have done a bit of boxing – I'm going to train to fight down here for the R.A.F. It was tough going for they certainly put you through it. I do P.T. all morning and 2.

then boxing training in the afternoon so I should be quite fit by the time I leave this place. I have been here three weeks now and as this is not a very lively part of the country I shall be glad when I get moving again. But really it was fortunate that I came here in one way, for I have had the chance to visit some more large towns. I have been to Toronto and Montreal, and last weekend I went to Niagara Falls. Reg and I took a steamer from Toronto across lake Ontario to the Falls, and as the day was beautifully hot we had quite a good trip. When we arrived we found there was a big celebration of some sort on (I don't know now what it was) and there was a large procession to march from the Canadian side over the bridge into the USA. Well we tried to get through the barrier to get into America but they wouldn't let us, so we decided on the idea of marching in with

the parade. First we joined in with the R.C.A.F. but we were chucked out by the W.O.

3.

Next we went with the W.A.S.P.'s (Womens Auxillary Service Police) but they seemed to be going towards the end of the procession so we moved to the old soldiers of the last war. They thought it quite a joke, but we looked rather conspicuous with them so we formed a flight of our own, found an army sergeant to be in charge and marched over as a separate unit. Nobody noticed it so we arrived in America OK. And fell out of the ranks as soon as we got there. But it was a really good show. The march lasted about five hours and there were dozens of bands and service men and women of all types. I've never seen so many different uniforms in all my life. But I'm afraid that the majority of girls who are in uniform over here only wear it for parades just to show off. Every town has a different one and I don't think they do much in the way of work. Anyway we joined in the celebrations all through the evening and when we noticed it was about 11.30pm. we though it about time we found 4.

a bed. But we visited about half a dozen hotels and everyone was full up. We walked about for quite a while but were so tired that we eventually decided to sleep in the park. The weather was pretty cold so we did not stay there very long and finished up by having breakfast about 6.30am. It poured with rain all Sunday so although we visited the falls from all angles they did not look so good as they could have done. I took some photographs but I don't know what they will turn out like because of the rain. But on the whole we had a good time and wended our way back to Trenton tired but happy.

Well I shall have to be going on parade in about five minutes so I had better close. Perhaps next time I write it will be from an observer school.

Cheerio for now.

Frank.



Miss Olive Roberts.



ON ACTIVE SERVICE

Monday.
13th July. '42

1335486 L.A.C. SUMMERS.F.
No. 31. P.D.
R.A.F. MONCTON, N.B.
CANADA.

Dear Olive,

Many thanks for your last letter that I received about a week ago. I suppose I told you all about this place in my last letter, so I won't go into the advantages and disadvantages of being at Trenton Ontario. I have travelled to most of the big towns during week-end passes, such as Montreal, Toronto, and Niagara Falls. If I have mentioned any of this before accept my apology for I am writing so many letters that I can never remember

LETTER 18

Envelope Postmark TRENTON.ONT.
M.P.O.303
JUL 13 10.30PM 1942

CANADIAN YMCA ON ACTIVE SERVICE
writing paper

1335486 L.A.C. SUMMERS . F.
No. 31. P.D.
R.A.F. MONCTON. N.B.
CANADA.
Monday 13th July '42

Dear Olive,
Many thanks for your last letter that I received about a week ago. I suppose I told you all about this place in my last letter, so I won't go into the advantages and disadvantages of being at Trenton Ontario. I have travelled to most of the big towns during week-end passes, such as Montreal, Toronto, and Niagara Falls. If I have mentioned any of this before accept my apology for I am writing so many letters that I can never remember what I have said before. We had a grand weekend at Niagara and managed to get across the border to the American side. We had to wangle it though, for we could not have got over otherwise. There was a big procession to march across the bridge to commemorate some day or other, and we just joined in. We actually tried to get in with the RCAF at first but the WO. Told us in his polite army fashion that we weren't wanted. Next we joined in with the W.A.S.P.'s but as the veterans move off first, we went in with them. It was a great day but finished up rather badly as we had to sleep in the park. No rooms in hotels vacant.

Just lately we have had rather a boring time here because they have been tightening up inspections etc. and we have been kept in many times because barracks are not good enough. I have been absolutely fed up as every other trade has had postings but the navigators. But at last I am moving I am going to Edmonton, Alberta on Wednesday, so that will take me about another 2,500 miles away from home. I am used to travelling lately for I think I have gone about 12,000 miles in the last eight months. My pal Frede is at Medicine Hat in Alberta so I should be able to see him. He has passed his E.F.T.S. and is well on with the S.F.T.S. He should be wearing his wings soon. But perhaps I shall get through as a navigator, and then get back to England by Christmas. Its going to be a tough binding course with plenty of evening study and very little time for letter writing – but I'll make it somehow.

Sorry this has to be so short but I have many to write before I leave here.

Cheerio for now
Frank



Sunday.
Aug. 16th '42.

1335486. H.A.C. Summers. 76.
Course 56.
No. 2. A.O.S.
Edmonton, Alberta.
Canada.

Dear Olive,

Many thanks for your letter.
I'm sorry that I cannot reply to
them as soon as they arrive but
I have to work on a system
 whereby I write as many as I
can whenever I can.

As you see I am now on a
course and have been swapping
navigation for the last two weeks.
I have been flying twice - in
fact I have not long come down.
I went up last Wednesday when
the weather was very bad and the
old plane rocked about terribly.
There were three of us in it



one amusement, landed in a
ditch. He arrived back at the
stables after dark. I was a
little sore, but not as much as
I thought so I shall most
probably go again soon.



Miss
124



LETTER 19

Envelope Postmark Edmonton ALTA
AUG 19 7.30PM 1942

Blue writing paper with RCAF insignia
KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS WAR SERVICES

1335486. L.A.C. Summers. F. E.
Course 56.
No. 2. A.O.S.
Edmonton, Alberta.
Canada.
Sunday Aug 16th '42

Dear Olive,

Many thanks for your letter,

I'm sorry that I cannot reply to them as soon as they arrive but I have to work on a system whereby I write as many as I can whenever I can.

As you can see I am now on a course and have been swotting navigation for the last two weeks.

I have been flying twice – in fact I have not long come down. I went up last Wednesday when the weather was very bad and the old plane rocked about terribly. There were Three of us in it
2.

doing a map reading exercise and all of us were sick. It was a very bad trip and I wished then that I had joined as ground crew. But this morning weather was pretty good and I had quite a nice trip. My pal Reg is my flying partner and he navigated to the destination while I took weather reports and drifts checking speeds and distances etc. I navigated back and brought the ship within a couple of mile of base. I really enjoyed it and hope I have such as good flight next week as I have to fly Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday. It's a very hard job to keep up with the aircraft

on the map and working out the wind and giving courses to steer,
3.

but it only adds to the satisfaction if I complete a good flight.

Since I have been at this school I have had very little time for recreation but on the two sports afternoons I have had I have been horse riding and playing golf. They are both new sports to me so we had quite a bit of fun. Three of the lads were thrown while we were riding and one, much to our amusement, landed in a ditch. We arrived back at the stables after dark. I was a little sore, but not as much as I thought so I shall most probably go again soon.
4.

The golf was hazardous – especially the start, for Reg my pal was the first to drive from the tee outside the clubhouse with many golfers looking on. He made a mighty sweep and hit the ground. The ball remained motionless but half of the club went sailing through the air. It was a crucial moment but the rest of us managed to get away OK and we had quite a good game.

Well I'm sorry that this letter cannot be very long but my time is limited.

Cheerio for now
Frank



Sept. 15th.

1335486. Lac. Summer. 78.

Course 56.

No. 2. C.O.S.

Edmonton.

Alberta. Canada.

Dear Olive,

Many thanks for your last letter.
I'm sorry that I have been so long
answering, but I have a devil of a
lot to do, and my mid term exams
are this week so I have not had
much time to write letters. Tomorrow I
have my main navigation exam and
it is by that that I am either
eliminated or kept on, so I've got to
make a good job of it. I have
already had one exam and I think
I have done OK on that. But I
have another six to take so I have
a lot to do these evenings.



I have been flying quite a bit

113.

ne your wish.
Cheers for now.
Frank.

LETTER 20

No envelope

Blue writing paper RCAF insignia
KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS WAR
SERVICES

1335486. L.A.C. Summers. F.E.
Course 56.
No.2. A.O.S.
Edmonton
Alberta. Canada
Sept 5th

Dear Olive,

Many thanks for your last letter,
I'm sorry that I have been so long
answering, but I have a devil of a
lot to do, and my mid term exams
are this week so I have not had
much time to write letters. Tomorrow I
have my main navigation exam and
its is by that that I am either
eliminated or kept on, so I've got to
make a good job of it. I have
already had one exam and I think
I have done OK on that. But I
have another six to take so I have
a lot to do these evenings.
I have been flying quite a lot
2.
and I now have over 40 hours.
We go up about three times at
least a week, and do a three
hour flight. Just lately I have not
done so well in air exercises, so I
shall have to pull my socks up
or I shall find myself back at Trenton.
We have started well and truly on
astro navigation now, and it just
about drives me barmy. There are
dozens of tables, and figures by
the thousand. That all has to be
done in the air after we have
found a certain star, identified it,
taken six shots at it and worked
out by that its altitude. Then
the plane rocks from side to side
and it's a devil to hold the
sextant still. But although I
am in every evening swotting until
about 10.30 every evening I'd rather
have it hanging about doing

3.
nothing. I've completed seven weeks
of training so I hope I shall be
able to hang on for the next nine.
The last class that went through
their mid terms had six eliminated
out of 26 and two put
back to our class. But I'm going
to try hard, and then if I fail
then that is not my fault and I
shall give up the idea of flying.
When I was in England it was
my ambition to become a pilot,
but when they gave me such
a poor chance after all the time
I had been waiting, I rather lost
heart. But I took the next
best thing and thought
perhaps I could make up for
4.
my failures. I only hope I can do it.
Well getting away from the topic
of work and elimination, I'm afraid
I haven't a lot to talk about as
I rarely go out and life
in camp is much the same, week
in and week out. I've taken quite
a number of photographs since I
arrived, and have had some good
results. The weather has been fair,
but not exceptional, and it is
breaking up now for winter. Soon
I suppose the ground will be covered
with snow once more, and the
temp will drop well below. But
by the time it gets really bad I
hope to be on my way home and
ready for a good celebration at
113. I need plenty of luck so give
me your wish.

Cheerio for now.
Frank



17th Oct.

1335486.

L.A.C. Summers. Fl.
Course 56.

No. 2 A.O.S.

Edmonton.

Alberta

Canada.

Dear Olive,

Many thanks for your letter - I am glad to hear news of England, and I hope to be returning soon with the chance of defending it. Next week I have my twelfth week exams and I am not exactly looking forward to it. Five of our course (26) were sent back to Trenton at the mid terms,

and I escaped that, so I want to keep clear once again. I have finished nearly all my flying now for I only have two more day flights and three more night. I won't be sorry when it is all over for we are constantly tried through



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hes days.

LETTER 21

Envelope Postmark EDMONTON ALTA.
OCT 17 5.30PM 1942

Blue writing paper RCAF insignia
KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS WAR
SERVICES

1335486
L.A.C. Summers. F.E.
Course 56.
No.2. A.O.S.
Edmonton.
Alberta
Canada.
17th Oct

Dear Olive,

Many thanks for your letter I am glad to hear news of England, and I hope to be returning soon with the chance of defending it. Next week I have my twelfth week exams and I am not exactly looking forward to it. Five of our course (26) were sent back to Trenton at the mid terms, and I escaped that, so I want to keep clear one again. I have finished nearly all my flying now for I only have two more day flights and three more night. I won't be sorry when it is all over for we are constantly tired through 2. all the binding work. I flew last night, and I have just got up, for we did not come down till five o'clock this morning. We were navigating entirely by astro and D.F. – if you know what that is. That is by the stars and wireless. It's a devil of a job at night because it is very hard to tell where you are by looking out of the window. There are little spots of light all around and its impossible to recognise any. I have flown about 30 hours at night and about 50 during the day. But the course is slowly drawing to a close; we have five weeks more and then I hope to get my wings. Back to Moncton and then home. It'll be grand to tread on English

soil once more. To board the old 3. familiar busses once more and to walk down the road where I live on my way home. I shall get a bit of leave and then I suppose will be sent on an operational station. Then the work will really begin – I shall have to put into practice all that I have learnt here. It won't be play then either. Last sports afternoon we played golf again and we are getting quite experts now. We only spend about four hours looking for balls instead of six. But it makes a welcome break every week and we always look forward to Tuesdays. 4. The town is quite lively, but we rarely find time to go down there. Occasionally we take time off for a dance, but I don't like their dancing over here very much so its not often. I shall miss the "cokes" and ice cream when I get back home for I always had a sweet tooth. But being home will make up for all that – so roll on the day that I step ashore on our little island once more.

My best wishes to you all.
Cheerio for now.
Frank



"For the last couple of weeks we were at Edmonton we had terrific snow storms that covered the ground to a height of exactly 19½ ins. That's a lot of snow, especially when it is blown into deep drifts. Well that stopped our wings parade and we just had to have a small affair in one of the huts. But it meant the same ..."

LETTER 22

Envelope Postmark MONCTON M.P.O.705
N.B.
PM NO 30 42

Cream writing paper KNIGHTS OF
COLUMBUS WAR SERVICES

1335486.
Sgt. F. E. Summers.
No.31. P.D.
R.A.F. Moncton.
New Brunswick.
Canada.
29th Nov. 1942

Dear Olive,

By the time that you get this
I shall no doubt be home, so do
not reply to this address. My course
is finished now and I am having a
well earned rest – and being paid
better money for it. I have been here
almost a week now, and its still the
same dingy spot with very little to do.
But I must say I am enjoying a lot
better than I did last time – for we get
no fatigues – just sleep all day. The
food isn't very good though so we get
most of our meals out. I have bought
nearly all my presents to take home
now and am just trying to save
enough to get a few pairs of stockings
for all my sister in laws, for I
know I shall be in for some trouble
if I return without any.

For the last couple of weeks we
were at Edmonton we had terrific
snow storms that covered the ground to
a height of exactly 19½ ins. That's a lot
of snow, especially when it is blown
into deep drifts. Well that stopped our
wings parade and we just had to
have a small affair in one of the huts.
But it meant the same – the finish
to a hard course, and a very welcome
one. On the way across Canada
we had a day in Ottawa and
spent some time looking around the
Parliament buildings. They are really
beautiful and a sight worth seeing.
Then we had a day in Montreal

and we stayed in the largest hotel
in the city. It's a marvellous place;
more like London than any other
town I've been in. But the population
is 2/3 French and most of them
speak likewise. In fact I'm
certain Canada is more French
3.

than English. We went to some shows
there, and generally painted the town
red.

When we arrived here at Moncton
the streets were nice and clear, with
no snow or even the slightest cold
wind. We rejoiced for we had had
enough of it over Western Canada. But
the rejoicing did not last long for
after a of couple of days we has a
terrific storm wreak its havoc on us
and it hasn't stopped yet.

Lets get back to England – give
me all the London fogs – I'd rather
have them than this weather. All the
children are out skating on the roads
even little tots about 2 years old.
I'm certain they learn to skate before
4.

they walk out in this country.

When you can open you eyes long enough
to conjure up a picture in this blizzard
the scenery is really marvellous. Everything
is deep in snow and it has all frozen
hard, on the trees, on the sides of the
houses, so it does not blow away.
Well one day soon perhaps I shall
be able to visit your part of
England – I hope so. But I'll have
to bring my rations (a bottle of beer
and a piece of bread and cheese.)
I'm looking forward to the day when
we can come down from the sky
and say damm the clouds I'll
see them from below instead of from
above in future.

Cheerio – best of luck.

Frank



1335486.

Sgt. F.B. Summers.

Sgt. Mess.

R.A.F. Station.

Upper Heyford.

Oxon.

Thos.

Dear Olive.

This is the first chance I have had to answer your letter - I'm sorry for the delay.

This is a pretty good place - not bad food and pleasant surroundings. About 3 miles from the nearest village. There there is almost nothing, and about 12 miles north of Oxford. But we are really down to the "real" work here and that keeps our minds off wanting to rush down town every five minutes. We don't fly for another three weeks yet for the

LETTER 23

No envelope & undated

Cream writing paper RCAF insignia

1335486
Sgt. F.E. Summers.
Sgts Mess.
RAF Station.
Upper Heyford.
Oxon.
Tues

Dear Olive,

This is the first chance I have had to answer your letter – I'm sorry for the delay.

This is a pretty good place – not bad food and pleasant surroundings. About 3 miles from the nearest village, where there is almost nothing, and about 12 miles north of Oxford. But we are really down to the “real” work here and that keeps our minds off wanting to rush down town every five minutes. We don't fly for another three weeks yet for the first month is all ground school. We start at 8-30 in the morning and finish at 7-45 at night. This is every day, so the only time we can get into Oxford is on Mondays because we have a sports period in the afternoon and finish fairly early. Last night I went to town and met Frede for he is stationed at Stanton Harcourt not far from here. We celebrated our birthdays and had quite a good time. But after getting to the station at this end I had to walk about 3 miles to walk to camp and I was a bit tired when I got into bed.

We get 10 days leave at the end of this course, so that is at

least something to look forward to.

But 10 weeks is a long time too, and it is filled with plenty of hard work. We fly in Wellingtons, which is quite a good a kite and I am quite pleased about it, but we go onto Lancasters after leaving here. That's a good show too.

I am sorry that I cannot give you any gen apart from the everyday facts. But as you know, everything here is secret and would not do to be canvassed around England. Therefore my letters will seem awfully dry no doubt.

But still, as long as I write and let you all know that I am happy and having a good time on the income tax that you pay – that's fair enough I think.

Well I haven't much more to say, and less time to say it in so I shall have to close.

Best wishes to all of you. Keep well and happy and don't break too many soldiers hearts Olive.

Cheerio for now.
Frank.

Thursday.
1945

1335446.

Sgt. H. Summers.

Syts Hall.

RAF Station.

Moreton in Marsh.

Gloucester.

Dear Olive,
I am sorry that I have not
written for a long time but life has
been rather full and I don't have
time to do any while I am on leave.
As you'll know by now from mother,
I am going overseas again - but
this time in the opposite direction.
As much as I hate to leave
England, I don't mind going, for I
very much want to see the end
of this war and that is a more
certain way of doing it. Not that

perhaps I'll be wishing I could
see a few weeks to pull in
during this winter.

Adios for now.

Love to Aunt and Uncle.

Frank



LETTER 24

Blue envelope postmark MORETON-IN-MARSH GLOS (Date indecipherable)

Cream writing paper no insignia

1335486.
Sgt. F. E. Summers.
Sgts Mess.
RAF. Station.
Moreton in Marsh.
Gloucester
Thursday 19th

Dear Olive,

I am sorry that I have not written for a long time but life has been rather full and I don't have time to do any while I am on leave. As you'll know by now from Mother, I am going overseas again – but this time in the opposite direction. As much as I hate to leave England, I don't mind going, for I very much want to see the end of this war and that is a more certain way of doing it. Not that

2.
it is all beer and skittles out there – far from it – but I do believe that I will have more chance.

Life is dull at this station, but I am not complaining for we are not overworked and that agrees with me immensely. The food is quite good although I have to get up at some unearthly hour of the night to get breakfast – at 6.30. I will not be here very long – soon I shall leave the coast for the last time. At least for quite a few months.

I am already dressed in khaki just like a soldier – I just want the fighting spirit that's all.

3.

I wish I could have got up to Chester while Ian and Ethel were there. They tell me they had a really marvellous time and saw all the oak beams your town likes to boast. Isn't Tony big now – he looks about six inches taller every time I go home; almost makes me feel old. Am an uncle three times now – Whoopee!

But I am going to see the world before I get tied down to a two roomed flat and a set of old china. Yes I'm going to find out about everything so that I know all the answers when

4.

I'm being nagged. What you say?

I'll try to write to you as much as possible while I am out there for I know that if I write often I get many replies and there is nothing better than a letter when I am away from home.

How's the dancing going? – can you Tango yet? And when you get into that land army uniform you'll have all the boys after you. I expect I'll be wishing I could see a few weeds to pull during this winter.

Cheerio for now

Love to Aunt and Uncle

Frank

airgraph



Write the address in large BLOCK letters in the panel below.
The address must NOT be typewritten.

TO:- MISS OLIVE ROBERTS.
127, APLEYARDS LANE.
HAYLEBRIDGE, CHESTER.
CHESHIRE, ENGLAND.



77218

Write the message very plainly below this line.

Sender's Address: J.E. SUMMERS, 152, SAUNDERS, RAE, R.N.A.F.
4/9/43.

Dear Olive,
You have heard from me from different parts of the world, but never such a place as this. I am really in the God forsaken land now. Life here is very crude and hard and I am becoming quite tough sleeping under tents on the ground beneath a mosquito net while all kinds of insects etc crawl outside. The food is very plain - mostly corned beef etc but we manage to buy grapes, peaches and milk off the Arabs to keep us going. The flies and the dust just about drive us mad but I am slowly getting used to this kind of life and am settling down to my few months' stay. I am really doing my job with a vengeance now but am living for the day when I can get home for good and cast off this uniform. Well for now, Cheerio but I'll be writing again - for sure, as you know.
My very best wishes to you all
Frank

This space should not be used.

MAKE SURE THAT THE ADDRESS IS WRITTEN IN LARGE BLOCK LETTERS IN THE PANEL ABOVE

LETTER 25 - THE LAST ONE

Brown window Airgraph envelope Postmark POSTAGE PAID 29 SEP 1943

Sender's Address: 1335486 SGT. F.E. SUMMERS. 142 SQUADRON RAF BNAF

16/9/43

Dear Olive,

You have heard from me from different parts of the world, but never from such a place as this. I am really in the God forsaken land now. Life here is very crude and hard and I am becoming quite tough sleeping under tents on the ground beneath a mosquito net while all kinds of insects etc prowl outside. The food is very plain – mostly corned beef etc but we manage to buy grapes peaches and milk off the Arabs to keep us going. The flies and the dust just about drive us mad but I am slowly getting used to this kind of life and am settling down to my few months stay. I am really doing my job with a vengeance now but I am living for the day when I can go home for good and cast off this uniform. Well for now, Cheerio but I'll be writing again from where, no one knows.

My very best wishes to you all

Frank

Frank had been posted to 142 Squadron on 10th September 1943.

He was based at Oudna Airfield in Tunisia located approximately 7 km southwest of La Mohammedia; about 14 km south-southwest of Tunis



Thanks to the **Facebook Page** devoted to **142 Squadron** the following details of his operations:-

20/21 Sept 1943 – BENEVENTO
21/22 Sept 1943 – BASTIA
24/25 Sept 1943 – LEGHORN
30 Sept/1 Oct 1943 – FORMIA
3/4 Oct 1943 – CIVITAVECCHIA
8/9 Oct 1943 – ISERNIA
12/13 Oct 1943 – CIVITAVECCHIA
14/15 Oct 1943 – TALAMONE
16/17 Oct 1943 – MILAN
22/23 Oct 1943 – BOLOGNA
24/25 Oct 1943 – PISTOIA
4/5 Nov 1943 – ORTE
12/13 Nov 1943 – PONTASSIEVE
24/25 Nov 1943 - TURIN



There is much to be found on the internet by way of background information googling British Commonwealth Air Training Plan brings up a wealth of further information.

Frank Summers was one of 130,000 personnel from the UK, Canada, Australia and New Zealand who were trained across Canada and the USA. US President Franklin Roosevelt called the scheme (which included the Arnold Scheme – another thing to google) the “Aerodrome of Democracy”

Google - RAF Wings Over Florida and it brings you to a fascinating book of recollections about war time activities in this southern American state.

A researcher, Roy Wilcox, wrote an excellent article in 2016, that is on the Aircrew Remembered web site. He describes the operation to bomb the ball bearing factory at Villar Perosa near Turin and details the disastrous losses and the fate of Wellington LN566 QT-D and its crew. The details regarding the recovery of bodies from the wreckage correlates to the family story of shepherds being involved.

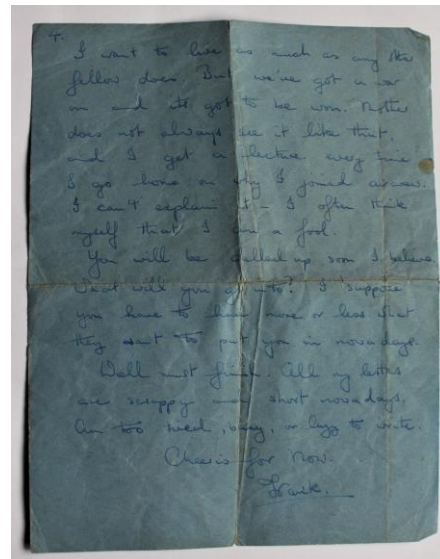
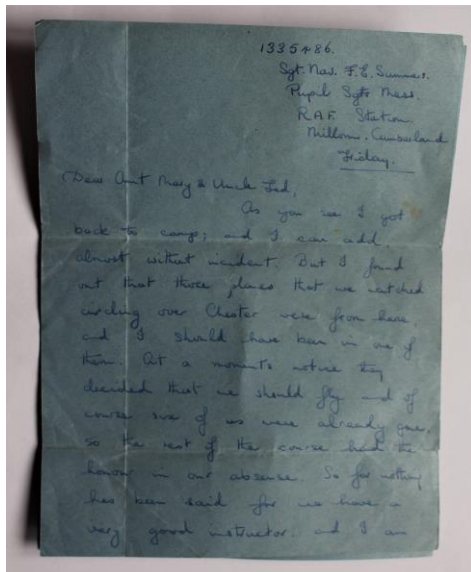
There is reference in this article to a letter from the Graves Registration Unit in Italy, *“The six members of the crew.....have now been reburied in Graves Nos 15 – 20, Row C in the Military Plot, Staglieno Civil Cemetery in Genoa, Italy. It was not possible for the Graves Registration to separately identify the members but photographs and documents belonging to the navigator Sergeant F. E. Summers of the Royal Air Force, were received from Italian civilians who had recovered them at the scene of the crash and preserved them until the recent arrival of the Graves Registration personnel.”*



STAGLIENO CEMETERY, GENOA, ITALY. Grave I. C. 15-20

AND just when I thought I had finished this story a couple of other items relating to Frank and his brother Ian were turned up amongst some other papers and pictures belonging to my Grandma and Grandad!

Firstly, a letter, (undated) but presumably early 1943? Plus, just two pages part of another letter, again undated.



1335486
Sgt. Nav. F. E. Summers.
Pupil Sgts Mess
R.A.F. Station
Millom. Cumberland.
Friday.

Dear Aunt Mary & Uncle Ted,

As you see I got back to camp; and I can add almost without incident. But I found out that those planes that we watched circling over Chester were from here, and I should have been in one of them. At a moments notice they decided that we should fly and of course six of us were already gone, so the rest of the course had the honour in our absence. So far nothing has been said for we have a very good instructor and I am 2.

hoping that there will be no further developments.

I must thank you very much for taking me in at a moments notice like that, and filling me up with such good food. I really appreciate it

and hope that one day I can do the same for you. I hope that you won't have to starve for the next week to make up for all the food that I ate; but if you do get a bit low, pop down to Millom and try some of our potato and potato pie! Shouldn't I have said pop up to Millom!

I reached Preston at 4-30 and waited until 6 oclock until my pal turned up. We caught the 6.42 train and got here about 3.

ten oclock. But the break was certainly worth the journey.

Do you know that my two days at Chester put my mind at rest on a very worrying problem. For a very long time now I have been day

dreaming and night dreaming as well
Every time I went into the mess
I thought about it. Everytime I
went into a restaurant I thought
about it. I heard the word
chicken mentioned and I almost
went into an epileptic fit. And
then I visited 127, Appleyards Lane
and I found the answer. There
before me I saw eggs – real
eggs. For the past months I had
wanted to dream about them, but
4.

The trouble was that I had forgotten
what they looked like. Thanks for
the enlightenment!

I am writing this letter in the
classroom, as the instructor was
called away. All around me the
lads are working – a hive of
industry.

In the corner there is a card
school going on full swing; I
don't know who's winning but all
four faces are looking rather tense.
Quite a few are busy in the
same respect as myself and every
now and then they yell out
"Quiet!" to several fellows having
A hectic argument about some
Technical matter.

Part Letter

3.

It doesn't rain, it pours.

In a certain way, it is good to
be navigating and flying again after
about six months with nothing in particular
to do, although on the other hand, when
you get up there and think of the
possibilities of not coming down safely
Its not so good.

That is the kind of thing that we
have to forget; and just concentrate
on the job. Somebody has to do it and
at times I become all patriotic
and say why shouldn't it be me.
There are thousands of fellows out
in North Africa who are being
wounded and losing their lives every
day. It isn't policy to say, "Well
let them do it, I'm keeping out of trouble."

5.

Others are reading and by the
look of the covers its nothing
instructional. But who cares anyway
-they wont stop our wages.

Another lot of our lads were posted
today to O.T.U. so I may go
before the end of next week.
I shall be happy to leave here
but not too happy about going
to O.T.U. I hear we get stiff
discipline and a lot of hard
work for the first two weeks,
and then flying every day in
almost any weather until the end
of the course.

Roll on the end of the war
so that I can get my socks
mended for a change. Lets have
some shirts that don't come back
from the laundry with all the
buttons off and shrunk to about
half size. I don't think I shall
ever buy a blue suit after
this.

Well I must sign off.
Thanks again for a lovely time.
Cheerio for Now
Frank

4.

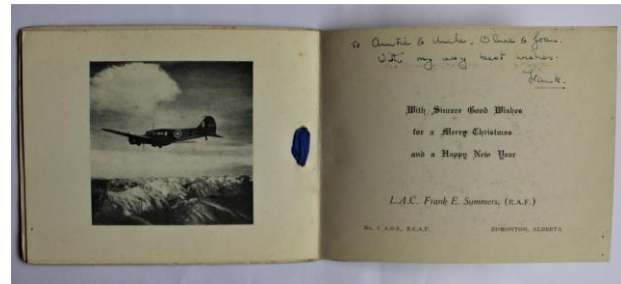
I want to live as much as any other
fellow does. But we've got a war
on and its got to be won. Mother
does not always see it like that,
and I get a lecture every time
I go home on why I joined aircrew.
I can't explain it – I often think
Myself that I am a fool.

You will be called up soon I believe
What will you go into? I suppose
you have more or less what
they want to put you in nowadays.

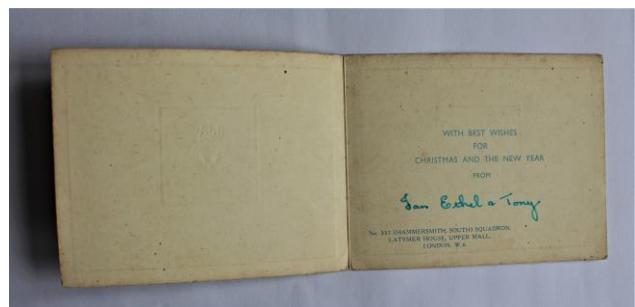
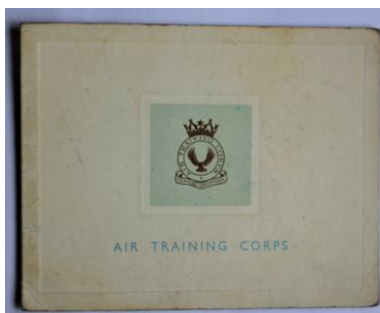
Well must finish. All my letters
Are scrappy and short nowadays.
Am too tired, busy, or lazy to write.

Cheerio for now
Frank

The next find was a Christmas Card from Canada, though perhaps Frank may have already have crossed the Atlantic on his way home?



Another Christmas card was also found, from Frank's brother Ian, his wife Ethel and son Tony. Ian Cyril Artur Summers was a W.O. in the A.T.C.



Ian Summers was killed when a Flying Bomb hit his home, at 27 Peabody Mansions, Hammersmith, London on Tuesday 22nd August 1944, He was 29 years old. His wife Ethel, who was pregnant at the time and their son Tony survived.

A picture from the Peabody archives shows the aftermath of the bomb.



Ian was a keen amateur boxer



A curl cut from his head



Ian, Tony & Ethel

Frederick John Edser

There are many references throughout Frank's letters to his pal – 'Frede'.

A bit more google searching has revealed that he too was a local Barnes lad.
Sgt. Frederick John Edser, his R.A.F. Service Number 1335488
.....just one number away from Frank Eric Summers 1335486.

The RAAF web site records that:-

At 1941 hours on the night of 5 September 1943 Halifax HR874 took off from Brighton East Yorkshire detailed to bomb Mannheim, Germany.

Nothing was heard from the aircraft after take-off and it failed to return to base.

HR874 was one of four aircraft from the squadron which failed to return from the mission.

The aircraft crashed near the village of Hochstettin, which is approximately 9 miles north of Karlsruhe, Germany.

Four of the crew members were killed and three became Prisoners of War.

The crew members of HR874 were:

Sergeant Dennis Thomas Frank Doyle (987167) (RAFVR) (Rear Gunner)

Sergeant Frederick John Edser (1335488) (RAFVR) (Pilot)

Sergeant Peter Hinson (1249131) (RAFVR) (Wireless Air Gunner)

Sergeant G Jones (1430583) (RAFVR) (Air Bomber) PoW

Flight Sergeant Arthur Nelson Moore (421995) (Wireless Air Gunner)

Sergeant H Mott (953178) (RAFVR) (Flight Engineer) PoW

Sergeant S J Muldoon (1511629) (RAFVR) (Navigator) PoW

Sergeant Mott later reported: "Flight Sergeant Moore was still alive when I baled out. He appeared unhurt and ready to bale out, but I do not know if Moore left the plane." Sergeant Jones reported "Both Muldoon and Mott baled out before me. The other four were still in the aircraft and I don't think they had time to bale out and were probably killed."

Frederick John Edser is buried in Durnbach War Cemetery 1.D.10. The Army Graves Services collected the bodies of airmen from across Germany and they were interred at this cemetery which is 48km S of Munich.

