

## Letters from Alex Honeyman

July 1<sup>st</sup> 1917

48<sup>th</sup> Reg TRB  
Prees Heath  
Whitchurch, Salop

Dear Bessie

I am in the best of health as I hope this finds you. I am enjoying this life all right. It is rather rough but I am not going to grumble I take everything as it comes. It is very hot here and when it rains we get simply washed out. We are under canvas at present and sun is so hot that the skin is peeling off my nose and ears and it doesn't half smart. We got full equipment on Saturday and had to put everything on for inspection. I had that much stuff on my back that I felt more like a donkey. The food is quite all right, but they forget to give us too much. We have been on parade this morning and they are very strict on inspections and I pal up with Harvey Halkwood and Granville Marcroft of Wardle. We only put in about 8 hours drill but they don't half double us round the square but it will not do us any harm. I hope to see you up at our house when I come home. I don't know how long that will be we can only hope for the best. You can let your sister and Aunt know how I'm getting on. Give them both my best respects. I have been vaccinated in four places and my arm is just beginning to ache. I hope ??? finds all in good health.

I remain your sincere friend Alex

Feb 2<sup>nd</sup> 1918

C/o Mrs Gamble  
25 Albert Street  
Bletchley, Bucks.

Dear Bessie

Just a few lines in answer to your letter which I received some time ago. I am very sorry to hear you are so downhearted. I do hope you will be in much better spirits when you get this letter you see I have now made another move. I left Bedford yesterday at 3.00 and got here just after four. I was sent to a private billet but the lady said she had not room for me so another kind woman rather than have me sleeping out all night took me in for the night but I have now got settled down in a good billet. It is quite a change sleeping on a feather bed and the landlady seems very good. I never thought I would come back to Ferry? again but here I am and I expect to be here for a month. I have had a letter from John Walton and he tells me he has been home again and had a good time. I hope you saw him. Well Bessie you ask me to cheer you up a bit, well truth to tell I will have a job for I have felt very ill from last Tuesday but I am a lot better now. I have had a very bad throat and sore chest and last Wednesday I had to go sick in billet but nobody came to attend to me, they don't care whether you live or die in the army. The next time I come home it will be for ten days and very likely the last leave for a long, long time but you can bet I'll still have a rattling good time. I am sorry I didn't kiss you on the station but really I would like to have done but I was too shy for I am getting a big boy now and big boys shouldn't be shy. But anyway I'll see if I can't pluck up courage to do it when I come home. Clifford Brierley is a chap I respected very much when I worked at Petrie's and I think him a most suitable boy for Daisy, as for Frank I thought you had given him the push long since. I didn't think he had gone as far as to give you a ring, he maybe gave you that so he could learn which finger to put it on and what to say when putting it on. Well Bessie I have always liked and respected you but could never think I loved you, mind you I have often tried to. In fact we haven't been out often enough together to know one another's minds so what do you say if we have a little cuddle and squeeze when I come home again and see how we get along together. But remember mum's the word don't say anything not even to Daisy. I will now draw to a close hoping this finds you in the best of health. Write by return and let me know what you think.

I remain yours affectionately Alex  
PS note new address

27.2.1918 Postcard from Alex

Dear Bessie

Your letter to hand yesterday, Tuesday. Sorry to say I can't answer it at present. I am writing this in a wireless reception room and I don't finish until 9 o'clock but I will write to you as soon as possible. I have heard we are on till 10 o'clock tomorrow night but I will try and get you a letter through if possible. Tell your aunt I found the stamps with my eyes shut.

Alex

28.3.1918

3 Coy. B Depot  
RE Sigs. Bedford

Dearest Bessie

Your most kind and welcome letter to hand today at noon. I must say I have been very lucky since I came back for I have been taken off the Draft and they have gone to France today. You might tell Nellie that the two chaps I met on the station who went back with me will be in France by Saturday. Poor beggars they did look downhearted this morning. As for me I think they have forgotten I am here for I have not heard my name called for anything yet not even on Parades so you see I could still be at home yet without any trouble but of course they will wake up some time. Well Dear I arrived back at 9.28 and gave in my pass at 10.00 so I was in good time. I found my bed and kit just as I had left them and I felt far from happy but I have got over that now. I had a letter from Dad yesterday he says he is feeling better but he isn't improving as fast as he would like to but I am very thankful that he is not in this lot that's going on in France. Well let's forget it. I am glad that your Aunty is please with the photo and tell Nellie I enjoyed the pie on the way back, one of them other chaps had one as well and we had a good tuck in between us in fact we had a very pleasant journey back. We are having the day off tomorrow and working all day on Saturday. I hope you all have a good time at Easter. I am on mess fatigues today and I finished at two till 4.15 so it is time I was getting back. I received Nellie and Elsie's card all right. Hope you received the P.C. I sent you the other night. Well dearest I must draw to a close or the boys won't get any tea and then there would be a Bust up. So cheer up. Best love to all. Will send you a longer letter when I am not so busy and tell you all about the wish.

I remain your  
Ever loving sweetheart  
Alex

1.4.1918

3 Coy. B Depot  
RE Sigs. Bedford

Dearest Bessie

Your most kind and loving letter to hand yesterday 31<sup>st</sup>. I am sorry you have had to work so hard but I think by this time you will be feeling better after your short holiday. I had all day Friday off, on all day Saturday and we have got half a day today. On Friday I was on the river for 3 hours and we had some great sport. I was on for an hour Sunday morning and I had a very enjoyable time, in fact I have had a very good Easter holiday but I am sure Dear it would have been much better if you could have shared the pleasures with me. I am almost sure I won't have to go out till the end of May so I shall very likely get another Draft Leave stuff to go Ge En. All my pals are now in France. It is just like being at Blackpool here this weekend, there are hundreds of holiday makers here and a lot of our chaps have got their wives and sweethearts down here. I will try and send you some views of Bedford if I can. I was at chapel last night and got an invitation to go on a picnic to visit John Bunyon's Place but I refused as I would rather send you a few cheery lines. But do cheer up Dear and try to be brave for if you worry so much you will be making yourself ill. I know you must think of me sometimes but you know I love you Dear with all my heart and soul and I am looking forward to the time we two can live without wars and trouble to part us. That was my last wish the one I did not tell you about. My dad's address is Dvr. G. Honeyman 096678, No. 1 Stationary Hospital, Rouen, France. Well Dearest I must draw to a close as my chum is waiting for me. I will write you a longer letter later on. Excuse pencil as pen not available. Remember me to Aunty, Nellie and Elsie. May you be in God's safe keeping till I come home.

I remain your ever true sweetheart Alex  
PS I liked the card you sent.

9.4.1918

3 Coy. B Depot  
RE Signals, Bedford

Dearest Bessie

Just a few lines to let you know I am still in the land of the living and I am now in the best of health as I hope this finds you. I am sorry to say that there are only two of us left out of about 30 pals and it does feel dreary now they have all gone. But still they have gone for a good cause and I only wish I could have gone with them. I know Dearest, people say stay in England as long as you can but when my time comes I will go with a willing heart for someone's got to help to keep the Germans off your doorsteps and it's no use being in the army if you don't play the game. Although I don't expect going yet but I never know when it will be for they are continually wiring it might come. We are now having to "stand to" for more drafts, another 108 men went today. I have not heard from Dad yet. Let me know if you have had any word from him. I have had a busy time since Saturday with mess fatigue, kit inspection and boot inspections. We have now to parade at 5.30 in the mornings and have an hour's drill before breakfast. Well Dearest I got all your letters last week quite a Red Letter week. I should have liked to have answered them all but had not the time to spare. I was at the pictures yesterday afternoon and they were very good indeed. I was thinking of you Dear how disappointed you would be at not getting a letter before now but I will write you as often as I can for I am never tired of writing to you Bessie and could go on reading yours for ages. Well Bessie I must draw to a close now as it is getting late. I am looking forward to that photo coming any day. The weather here is splendid at present. Best respects to Auntie, Nellie and Elsie and my best love to you. So good night sweetheart and God Bless you.

Your ever loving sweetheart Alex

21.4.1918

3 Coy. B Depot  
RE Sigs. Bedford

Dearest Bessie

Just a few lines in answer to your kind and loving letter which I received this dinnertime. The weather here is terrible. I have not been properly dry for a whole week, it is simply pouring down now. I hope the weather is a little better in Rochdale for I hope to be there soon. I have had a bit of bad luck today. I took mother's letter and Certificate to the Company Office this morning; my case was put before the CC and he granted me leave to see Daisy but it was not a Free Warrant. He said I should have to pay half fare so that spoiled my hopes altogether of giving you all a surprise tonight. But the leave is granted and I can have it as soon as I have the money. I had a terrible row with the Sergeant Major over it but it did not alter the case any. He only threatened to have me put in the Guard Room for insolence to a superior officer but he thought better of it. Well dearest I must not trouble you with my army troubles but it just lets you see what rotters you have to be ruled by. But before I'll be beat I'll take French Leave for I am worrying above a bit about Daisy. I am sorry to hear you have burned your fingers. Dear you must be careful as I know the least burn is very painful. I have not much news for you sweetheart but I wrote you a nice long letter while I was on guard on Thursday night I suppose you have received it by now. I am sorry to say some of my letters must have gone west for I have not let a whole week pass without writing to you Dear. I have also got the Observer today thanks for the same. I must draw to a close now as must write to ma. Best respects to Nellie, Elsie and Aunty.

I remain your ever true sweetheart Alex

PS I return the compliment to your chum Annie

Sunday Morning

3 Coy. B Depot  
RE Sigs. Bedford

Dearest Bessie

Just a few lines to let you know I arrived here quite safe at 4.20 am. I don't know how I caught my connection at Central but I did only with the skin of my teeth. It was twenty to twelve when I got to Victoria and I made a dash across Manchester and had only just got in the train when it moved off, in fact I was the last one to board the train. I slept part of the way coming, in fact I was fast asleep when I got in Bedford Station. I just wakened up when the train stopped. So you see I had very little trouble in getting here. I was very disappointed this morning though to see my name on Orders for Guard tonight. I am on the Regimental Armed Guard quite a good start. Nearly all the chaps who were on leave are on some sort of duty tonight, that's the kind of sympathy one gets from the army. That's no sleep till Monday night but it's no use me grumbling for that won't mend matters. Well sweetheart I hope you and Henrietta got home quite safe. It was heart-breaking to part that night but let us hope for the best. Dearest we can but trust in God and by His Good Grace may we find comfort and protection in his hands. It makes one wonder why we should be finished like this but I suppose we must bear it with a brave heart and keep on living in hope. All my pals are on leave at present, quite a disappointment but I shall settle down to things in a day or two. Cheer up Bessie and don't worry. I know it's hard but try and think of the brightest side of things. I have been on Church Parade this morning. I am sorry to say I never heard a word the preacher said for all my thoughts were with you. That must be a sin but all the same I couldn't help it. Well I must draw to a close now Dearest. Hoping these few lines find you all in the best of health as it leaves me at present.

With my fondest love  
Your ever true sweetheart Alex

Love to Aunty and Nellie. Best respect to all. Cheer up.

30.4.1918

3 Coy. B Depot  
RE Signals, Bedford

Dearest Bessie

Your most kind and loving letter to hand today. I am sure if I have read it once I have read it a dozen times. I expect you would receive mine the same time as I got yours for seemingly you wrote the same time as I did. So you see dearest you must be thinking of me sometimes when I am thinking of you. I am writing this letter in a lonely canteen at the far end of Bedford. It belongs to one of the biggest churches in Bedford. It's a nice quiet spot for very few soldiers come here and those that do come are people who are trying to put their trust in God. We have a short service every night and sometimes the Chaplain comes to speak to us. I am now going through a refresher course. Really it is the old stuff we are doing over again just to freshen our minds up and I believe we are going on schemes twice a week that means about 10 miles ride out in the country. I only started this today, I thought they called my name out for draft but it was for this. I am glad dearest you say you will be a good girl and that you will always be true to me. You must remember that although I will always love you no matter what happens I would like always to come home and find you the same as I left you. But I will trust you to that. I am now looking forward to the day you will take me through nut woods and the new walk you have found. Oh but just to have a few more hours like the one we had on Saturday morning. I should not be surprised if you were writing another letter to me as I am writing this one. Well dearest I must draw to a close. It might be sudden and cause a little pain but it must be done. It would suit me to keep on all night but sorry to say I have not the time. Best respects to Nellie and tell her to cultivate the cat a bit. Glad to hear Daisy is still improving. I hope she keeps it up. Best respects to Auntie and Elsie.

With fondest love from your own true love  
Your ever loving sweetheart Alex



15.5.1918

3 Coy. B Depot  
RE Signals, Bedford

Dearest Bessie

Just a few lines in acknowledgement to your card which I received today. I don't think you could have chosen a nicer card. When I first read the words it just seemed as though they came from your own lips. I also got a card from Harry. Well Dearest I told you they wouldn't be long in booking me for Draft. I was up for medical inspection this morning and was passed fit for abroad so I may go any time now but of course we shall be sent to another place before embarking for to go through the gas chamber and to be issued with all new clothing and equipment but I shall let you know as soon as I hear I am going. I have now lost that cushy job I had as Billet Orderly so I now have to go on Parades as usual. It seems your letter did not accompany the card all the way for I have not received it but I dare say I shall get it tomorrow. I was at the pictures for the first time since I was with you (the other night) and I was thinking of you dear. How happy we both were then. But there is no saying we may be having a few more hours of Bliss and happiness soon. I could not get to sleep last night somehow perhaps because it was so close. But I was contented for I was thinking of you and trying to picture what it would be like when I get home for good again with you always near to me. Well Dearest I reckon I shall soon be a young man, well anyone over the age of 18 is classed a man in the army. But I would rather be out of the army and classed a boy. Well I haven't much more to say at present so I shall draw to a close. Hoping this finds you in the Best of Health as it leaves me. So Goodnight and God bless you. Fondest love.

Your ever loving Sweetheart Alex

PS. Best respects to Auntie and Nellie and Elsie

15.5.1918

3 Coy. B Depot  
RE Signals, Bedford

Dearest Bessie

Your letters to hand today dated 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup>. As soon as I saw them I thought there was bad news. But Dearest you must not get so depressed. I know it will be a very trying time for both you and Nellie but just make up your mind dearest that you will brave it out and do all you can for poor old Auntie. A better old woman I never met before and I sincerely hope she may pull through all right. It beats me how she has kept up her work so long. Of course it may just be a breakdown with the strain of working but for your sake sweetheart I hope she will soon be well again for you know you are too young to face the world alone for it's a hard task even at my age. Only yesterday I got lost and went miles and miles out of my way but I would not give in. I kept on and used all the wit I possessed till I found my station. I was missing from 8.15am until 1.00pm and to make things worse my station could not open communication with Headquarters because I had a telescope and Heliograph strapped on my back so that they had not the stuff to signal with. But they managed to find a dispatch rider to Brigade to report that I was missing so then they sent out 4 men on cycles to look for me also an officer on a motor cycle. But not one of them saw any signs of me till by a bit of sheer luck I got a glimpse of a Heliograph flashing miles away which made my hearts beat with leaps and bounds. I then made for a hill and from there I studied the country and made a route diagram to where I had seen the flash. I reached there after very hard riding only find it was a station 5 miles from my own. But all the same I could easily find my own place from their map. You see I hadn't a map nor compass so I was at a loss. I was thoroughly cross-examined by the Officer when I got back and I told him all about it and how I came to lose the other chaps on the station and he finally decided that it was due to misfortune on my part and so the case was admonished. Otherwise I should have had to go before the Colonel and then I might have got a few days in clink. On my travels I passed some German prisoners working in a wood and they all gave me some terrible looks as I passed but that didn't frighten me at all. I was just wishing I had the chance to let one or two feel the weight of my fist and truth to tell I was not in a very good humour at the time. Well sweetheart we'll forget all about them for the present. I am so pleased to hear Daisy is getting back her health. You should see me now you'd think someone had been painting me brown. The sun down here has been almost unbearable for the last week. We are having a half day tomorrow. A new order has come out about leave. Every 8 weeks in training a man is entitled to a long weekend and every 3 months 7 days leave that will be all right for them that are just joining up but we poor bounds will have no hopes. I don't wonder at you dearest needing my love these hard times. I only wish I was near to lighten your burden. You need never doubt my love dearest for I love you with all my heart and soul which someday I shall prove to you. Trust me always dearest for I love you as no other can. But there is one thing I have not warned you of and that is deceit. I hate it for I have had some. Keep nothing from me and I shall tell you all my troubles and I shall always be loyal to you the girl I love. I must draw to a close now darling as it is getting late. I had not time to go to St Cuthbert's tonight so I have missed the service but I was on Church Parade this morning. Well goodnight sweetheart and do cheer up or you will make me feel like taking French Leave and that won't do.

Your ever true sweetheart Alex  
Best respects to Nellie love to Daisy and Auntie.

Tuesday night

C/o MrsHall  
17 Gloucester Road  
Trowbridge, Wilts.

My Dearest Bessie

Just a few lines to let you know I moved to this place yesterday Monday. I am now 12 miles from Chippenham so that now makes me 22 miles from my old pal Jack. Well dearest we are having quite a busy time of it here. Today we have been out in the rain from 8 am till 5 pm. I was rather wet but I am glad to say I had a complete change when I got back to my billet. I am in a good billet again. I'll bet you think I am having a high time of it. Well I'll admit we are having a good look round at the Government's expense but at the same time we are getting plenty of work to do so it isn't much of a holiday but from what I hear I think we shall be paid extra for it so that will be all right. It makes one very uncomfortable to keep moving about and changing billets like this. This is the third billet I've had in less than a week but I think we shall stay here for a week or two so you can write to me here without worry. Hope you received my last letter all right. Well sweetheart I must draw to a close now will write you soon again. It is getting late so good night and God Bless you. With fondest love.

Your ever true sweetheart Alex  
Love to Aunty

Sunday night

17 Gloucester Road  
Trowbridge, Wilts.

My Dearest Bessie

Now here goes for a nice long letter. We have had rather a rough week of it last week what with rain and wind and one doesn't half feel it when working on top of a pole about 60ft high. On these big poles in the town two of us generally go up together, you see there are only two of us working with this Civic Gang and it's much better than being with a gang of Res for you see it's more like being out of the army when working with civilians and we have plenty of fun among ourselves. Next week our work will be a bit heavier as we are putting up some big poles in the town. I hope the weather keeps better as it doesn't do me much good getting wet. Well sweetheart you ask me if I have altered at all. I couldn't really say but I feel much stronger and bigger if anything. Mrs Hall gave me her opinion today. She says I am certainly looking much better than when I first came. Anyway I hope you will be able to see for yourself very soon though of course I can't really say when I shall be home. I often long for you dearest and wonder when we shall have those happy times together again. Really it's a long wait but happy thoughts and dreams of you help the time to pass more quickly. The chaps I work with tell me I am getting fatter. Well I could do to get a bit bigger as I may have a better chance of filling up my clothes. I don't wonder at getting fat for I am always buying cakes and chocolate between meals. Oh and another thing I must tell you my hair has got very curly all over. I have got a very nice head of hair now. I am sure you would tease me about it Monday night. I had to leave off writing rather abrupt last night as supper was ready and I did not get a chance after. I have just received your most loving letter dearest today. Glad you are keeping well. Tell Elsie I hope she will have every success now and feeling happy with her new boy. Well dearest I did not exactly remember the date of our first walk but I do certainly remember that day, it was I am sure the happiest day of my life. That was the night I took you near Turner's Mill though I am looking forward to still happier days with you sweetheart. I still dream and fancy nice things and feel very ashamed when someone speaks to me and wakens me up out of my day dreams. I wish I could dream at night. I am sure it must be nice to be able to. Well I must change the subject Bessie as I must be drawing to a close soon. Willie is much better now though he has not started school yet. Ethel started school today first time since she had the flu. Mr and Mrs Hall, Ethel and Willie all send their love to you. I never went out at all this weekend, only for half an hour Saturday night and I brought back 5/- worth of chocolate and apples. We all had quite a treat. I only wish you could have been here to join with us. Then I had breakfast in bed Sunday morning my usual Sunday treat and just got up in time to peel the potatoes for dinner, my usual Sunday job. One Sunday when Mother Hall had been to bible class I had the table set and tea ready when she came back. I get plenty to do when I have a few minutes to spare. Well Dearest it's 9.55 pm and I have to wash yet. So goodnight my Sweetheart and God Bless You.

With fondest love your ever true lover Alex

PS Love to Aunty. Best respects to Nellie, Elsie and Uncle Jim

Incomplete Letter  
24.5.1918

3 Coy, B Depot  
Re Signals, Bedford

Dearest Bessie

Your most kind and loving letter to hand yesterday. I am sorry to hear you had not much of a holiday. We were on duty all day last Saturday so we could have the half day on Monday. I was on the other side of the river most of the time listening to the band and it was very good. We have had some terrible thunder storms down here this last day or two. Twelve of us were brought off parade this morning to reconstruct some air line which had been struck by lightning. We have been about 34 miles out on a motor wagon stopping at various places where the line was down and we finally established communication between Fenny Stratford and Headquarters at Bedford which was just what was wanted so we returned home at 3.30 this afternoon and we got a good feed when we got back which I felt badly in need of. Well sweetheart I have not much news this time. I thought we were going to have a good summer but it looks as though winter had some again for it was rather cold this morning when we set out and last night we had a storm of hail which came down thick and heavy. I am sorry to hear you and Daisy got wet out on the hills but He will keep sending it down. You are quite right Dearest in saying it's me you want to take you home and I am sure I want you just as much. I don't know (the rest is missing)

Partial letter undated

I am still on the old job and doing a few more hours now as it gets lighter. I have no chum here at all dearest so I must stay in at nights and have lots of fun with my little sister and brother here. Ethel and I go to the pictures every Monday night and mother says she is my second best girl so don't you think I am very fortunate. Hope you won't be jealous. I shall be sorry when I have to leave here for they treat me just like one of their own children, fancy being adopted at my age. I am glad to hear all the village boys are getting home. It must be nice to see them increasing in number every day. Well I must draw to a close now dearest. Mrs Hall sends her best respects and Willie and Ethel send you their love.

Good night sweetheart and God Bless you. With fondest love your ever true  
sweetheart Alex. Love to Aunty

Incomplete letter pages 3 and 4

be just grand if you could share all these half days with me. I was on the river again last night and there are two gentlemen waiting for me now to go on the river. I am getting quite an expert oarsman in fact I can now do some fancy strokes and can also feather my oars like they do in the races. I shall have to take you on Hollingworth Lake the next time I am home that is if you are not too nervous but I don't suppose you will mind as long as you are in my care. Well dearest I am glad you enjoyed the performance at the Hipp. I will write you again soon. I am sorry I did not send the last one with a loving kiss but I had not time for I should have missed the post. Well I must really draw to a close. I am so pleased to hear you really think you are getting fatter. Give my best respects to Nellie and Auntie and Elsie. With best love from your ever loving sweetheart Alex.  
PS Excuse scribble

7.7.1918

Town Hall Hospital  
Torquay

Dearest Bessie

Just a few lines hoping they find you in the best of health and of spirits. Well sweetheart (unreadable line) yet though I can tell you you nearly lost me this time but thank God I am here still to tell the tale. But I now think I have got the worse over although I am still very ill. I am in a very weak state in fact quite helpless but I do feel a little better today. I think I shall soon be improving now and have got settled down in a nice comfortable hospital same as I have told ma was never better treated before. But although have landed in such a lovely spot I reckon they might have sent me a bit nearer home and then you could have paid me a visit. I was booked for Lancashire and they go and send m down here miles away from anyone I know. But never mind it's just my luck. I was disappointed at first but I got over it all right. I suppose you would be terribly surprised to learn I was in Blighty. Well I was in France nearly 3 weeks. I had just 7 days in good health in France and I can tell you I saw more than ever I want to see again. It fairly put the wind up me I can tell you. Well dearest I have not heard from you yet. I suppose all your letter have gone west in France somewhere so be sure and write by return. Hope you got the card all right. Hope Aunty is keeping well. With fondest love.

Your ever true sweetheart Alex  
Best respects to Nellie

8.8.1918 Postcard

RE SignalsDepot  
Hitchin, Herts

Bessie have arrived here safe and sound. Ma will be able to give you some information about me. I am good health and spirits as I hope this finds you. Will write to you later. Alex

15.8.1918

Prv. A Honeyman  
K Division Tent 56  
Derriford Convalescent  
Camp, Plymouth, Devon

Dearest Bessie

Just a few lines to let you know I arrived here safe and sound late in the afternoon Tuesday. We left Barnstaple just after 10 in the morning. I have not been down to Plymouth yet so I can't say much about it but as soon as I have some money I shall go there and see what there is to see. I am stationed in a very big camp right at the top of a hill and 5 miles to the nearest tramcar. But there's one good thing we are allowed out of camp from 2.30 till 9.30 pm so that if you wish to go in town you can stay in for tea and get back for 9.30. I would rather be here than in hospital as we are very comfortable, 8 beds in a marquee tent. But of course we have to rough it a bit more now. Well dearest you see I have had to put my pride in my pocket and send you a soldier's letter. Well I would rather do that than disappoint you with not writing. I hope you will forgive me for not writing as I promised to before I left Barnstaple. But I had a very busy time getting a concert ready for the night before we left which was got up between ourselves and some of the nurses. We had a large audience of the outside people and I am glad to say it was a great success. I was to take part in it but we had only 4 days to do it in and I had not time to learn my piece in. But they managed all right without me and the matron had a surprise for us when it was all over for we had a bust up of a supper. Well sweetheart I can't say how long it will be before I get home. It all depends on my health. I am feeling much better but the doctor here has put me on medicine again. Excuse this bad writing but I don't think you'll mind as long as you get the letter. I will now draw to a close dearest hoping this finds you in the Best of Health and spirits and hoping to hear from you soon.

With fondest love

Your ever true sweetheart Alex

PS Love to Aunty.

Best respects to Nellie and Elsie.

How would a nice cuddle or squeeze and a few kisses be now.

27<sup>th</sup> August, Tuesday

My Dearest Bessie

Your ever loving letter to hand tonight dated 25<sup>th</sup> I also received your other letter dated 22<sup>nd</sup> on Sunday. I hope you will excuse me not replying to it but I have not been well for the last week. Last Friday I had to go and have a tooth pulled and I have not been the same since the cocaine got in all my gums even in my jaw bone which swelled my face up like 10 and for two days after I couldn't put my own finger between my teeth. My jaw is still a bit stiff but I am feeling all right now. I shall not be troubled with teeth for many years to come but what upset me most I had to report sick on Saturday morning for as well as having a swelled face I had a bad cold and of course it has upset all my plans. But never mind dearest it will only mean me coming home a week later than I said that is if I get marked out next Saturday I shall be home on the 12<sup>th</sup> September. I can tell you I was very much disappointed. Well cheer up sweetheart everything comes to them that wait. You might tell ma not to expect me when I told her I was coming home next Wednesday. I should not have told you and you would not have got disappointed. We are having some very miserable weather just now and it isn't doing me much good. They call this sunny Devon but I bet you don't get as much rain in sunny Wardle. Well sweetheart what do you think of the war news. The majority of people are saying it will finish this year. Well I can't believe that but I certainly do think it will be over in the next 12 months and when it does come it will be with a great surprise. I went to Plymouth last Saturday and it is a grand place. I saw sea planes, Dreadnoughts, submarines and Destroyers galore in the harbour and the place is crowded with sailors and thousands of American sailors. I will try and get you some Post Cards of the place before I leave. Well Bessie dear I am glad that you are leaving for I am sure if they had you working from 4 in the morning till 8 at night much oftener they would very soon have you dead. Well in fact if it was me I would jolly soon throw up the sponge. I see by your letter Daisy has clicked. Well I wish them the best of luck but I expect she will be breaking her heart again if he chucks her. I don't blame Aunty and Nellie saying we were not old enough to know each other's minds since they do not know how strong our love is for each other. I was studying your photo for half an hour tonight and I was thinking hard all the time and I finished up in full confidence that you are the only girl in all the world for me and I am only too pleased to say you could never wish for a truer lover for I have been true to you since the day I told you of my love for you. And again Bessie dear I tell you I love you with my whole heart and soul and willingly will I put down my life for you if need by. I shall always be true and my love will always be the same for you and believe me when I thought I would not live to see you again when I was in France. I cried for hours and prayed of God to take you in his hands and take care of you always. The nurse asked me my trouble and when I told her she assured me that I wasn't going to die that I was coming back to Blighty to see you all. I will admit I was a bit delirious at the time. Well sweetheart I will draw to a close.

With fondest love

Your ever loving sweetheart Alex

P.S. Hope Aunty and Nellie are getting better



14.9.1918

My Dearest Bessie

Just a few lines to let you know I am in the best of health and (rest of page completely unreadable). .....and of course I have never seen anything like it in my life before and I was full of excitement. I saw 3 very good fights, 1 was 4 rounds, one 6 round fight and a 15 round fight and I fairly enjoyed it. There has been another big ship sunk but it has not been in the papers yet. But you will be able to read about it in a day or two. It left Portsmouth for Canada with disabled Canadian soldiers and their wives and there was a big loss of life for some of them were helpless as they had lost their limbs fighting. The survivors arrived here yesterday. Well dearest I don't think you need write again all being well I shall be home either late on Wednesday night or early morning Thursday. You see I will leave here 10 am and if I get a good train I may be able to get a connection at Manchester. If not well I shall have to stay all night in Manchester but I shall do my best to get home Wednesday night. I must say these days are more like weeks to me they seem to drag on and I expect they are the same with you. Well Bessie I have not (2 words unreadable) but we are winning the war and that's one good thing. Hope you will excuse scribble as I don't feel like writing at all today. I am enclosing a photo I hope you will like it I must wind up now so cheerio.

With fondest love your ever true Sweetheart Alex  
Love to Aunty, Best wishes to Nellie and Elsie.

29.9.1918

Prv. A. Honeyman  
A4 Ward, Clyne House  
Military Hospital  
Old Trafford, Manchester

My dearest Bessie

Just a few lines to let you know everything is going well with me. If you had stayed a bit longer you would have seen me taken off in the ambulance. While I was waiting to see the Doctor I got out but you were gone. I came out 3 times in the hope of seeing you. The orderly at the door noticed me and told me if I had friends outside to bring them in so you see you could have stayed had we known. I thought I saw you both while in the car just near Lewis's. Well sweetheart I hope you both got home safe. I have been worrying about you all day, fancy not even a parting kiss Bessie. I was rather disappointed, still I would have felt worse if I had been sent on to Bedford. By 9 o'clock last I had a bath, some hot milk and a nice warm bed. I have eaten nothing yet and I am feeling about the same. If it will not be too much trouble dearest I should like to see you tomorrow for you see I may not be here long. If you care to come I will help out the expense. I remember you saying you had half day at Mondays. If you come get a car for Old Trafford and anyone will direct you. Have the address with you and you will manage all right in a great hurry.

Your ever loving sweetheart Alex  
Best respects to Nellie Love to Charley  
Cheerio

1.10.1918

A4 Ward  
Clyne How Military Hospital  
Stretford, Manchester

Dearest Bessie

Just a few lines to let you know I am no better and my illness still carrying on. There was 4 of us left here last night, we could not see the concert so we had to be content to lie and look at each other but sister gave us some black grapes and a bit of toffee so we had to be good children after that. Well sweetheart I hope you and Nellie got home safe last night. I also hope you entertained the wounded well this afternoon. I will be walking in Wardle disguised as a wounded Tommie one of these days but I hope to see you again before then. I am not greedy am I dearest. Well you know Bessie I am never so happy as when I am with you and I know you feel the same about it. I am still in bed and being a good little boy. The nurse asked me was you my sweetheart and I told her to give over being soft. Well I certainly give the only answers I could and told her you was my sweetheart. My old pal dad is still carrying on barking and gasping for wind. I had a parson with me for a while this morning but he did not preach tome we only had a quiet chat together. I have not wrote a letter to ma yet, well you must explain that I have no paper. I have had to cadge this again. Do you know dearest I was inclined to feel jealous this afternoon at the thought of you having company but it's a feeling one can't help because I love you so much. I must close now.

With fondest love your ever loving sweetheart Alex  
Love to Aunty, Nellie and Elsie

5.10.1918

Clyne House  
Stretford, Manchester

My dearest Bessie

Just a few lines in answer to your most welcome letter I received yesterday. I ask your forgiveness dearest if I insulted you but really dear it was not my intention (2 lines unreadable) ... vexed as for saying we had not enjoyed ourselves. I must say I was very happy while with you but you must remember I wasn't well really all the time in fact I was ill sometimes when I did not tell you for I did not want to make you feel miserable. Truly speaking I am always very very happy when with you dearest. I have just received your parcel tonight and it must have been delayed somewhere perhaps because I made a slight mistake in the address so in future put Stretford, Manchester and not Old Trafford. The cakes are broken but they are none the worse for that. I have given Dad some and he highly appreciated your baking. I started writing this this morning

(letter incomplete)

7.10.1918

Clyne House  
Stretford, Manchester

My dearest Bessie

Just a few lines hoping you all arrived safe home last night. It is now 4.00 pm and ma has not come yet. I am now allowed out in fact I have been out since 1.30 but I have been waiting at the gate all the time. I don't suppose ma will come now so I will go in town tonight just to pass the time on for it is very miserable in here when all the chaps are out. Well sweetheart I expect you want to know why I was smiling at your yesterday. Well it was because you looked so nice I felt very proud of you. But it would be better if that little curl in the front was natural no offence. My word but you looked some treat if you was to go in town like that some other fellow will be falling in love with you. But it's quite certain he wouldn't get much encouragement from you. What do you say dearest? It was just as well that you went when you did yesterday for when I got back the matron was in and she was getting vexed because the other people had not gone. She said the time for visitors was 2 till 4. Grumpy old beggar her and that nurse make me lose all I have at the very sight of them. But our own sister she is very nice. In fact we are good pals. When the doctor comes round she doesn't half tell him the tale about me because you see I am always doing little jobs for her looking after the patients when she is busy and washing up the pots and then she gives me an egg for my tea or a few grapes on the QT. I have written to dad again today for you see I am eager to get a reply from him to see what he thinks about you and I. I am expecting a letter from him any time now. Well dearest I must draw to a close now but I do wish I was with you now. I expect you will just be docking the milk cakes now or weighing up. I was very thankful indeed for the Woodbines.

With fondest love your ever loving Sweetheart Alex  
PS Love to Aunty. Best respects to Nellie, Elsie and Uncle Jim

15.10.1918

Ward Park Hall Camp  
Military Hospital  
Oswestry, Shropshire

My Dearest Bessie

Your most kind and loving letters to hand today. I received the letter you wrote on Sunday this morning also the Observer and the letter you wrote Monday I received at 4 pm post this afternoon and I was a bit surprised them coming in so fast. But I am glad to say they are all welcome. I am very pleased indeed to hear that your hair is growing again and I don't think it will be quite as long as you think to grow on again. This is Sunday's letter I am answering so I will owe you one, don't forget. I will answer the other one later. Well while I have been in this dreary hole I have pictured you time and time again sitting in the big armchair and only wish I was there with you now. I have another surprise for you sweetheart. I was marked out today and I have to go to Bedford tomorrow Wednesday. I could have stayed longer but this is no place for me. I am not better but I have kept telling the doctors every day that I was all right. I expect I will soon be down again when I get back for I have got gastritis and it will be some time before I get rid of it. In future write to Rest Camp RE Signals, 65 Ashburton Road, Bedford. Well darling I must close. Excuse short letter but I want you to get it by tomorrow Wednesday. Cheerio

With fondest love  
your ever loving sweetheart Alex

Love to Aunty. Best respects to Nellie and Elsie and Uncle Jim

19.10.1918

RE Signals Rest Camp  
Bedford

My Dearest Bessie

I have been before the Commanding Officer today and I have got off all right. I was not even charged. He only asked me what hospitals I had been in and what day I went in and then he dismissed me. I can tell you I was rather surprised. From what I have learned today I could have stayed as long as I liked and I could have got off just the same for the people at Oswestry had not informed them, they don't know but what I left there yesterday. Don't you think I have been very lucky Dearest for I do. Coming back as cheeky as a brass monkey 2 days late and never heard a word about it. I have heard 2 lots of letters called out today but there was none for me. I shall enquire about it tomorrow. I sent you a short note last night, with a bit of luck you would have got it this morning. I met that Rochdale lad last night in the YMCA and he is bringing another Rochdale lad with him tonight and we are going to the ?? together. So you see I am not ?? falls this time. I shall only be here a week at the longest. I am expecting to be moved to B Depot anytime next week. I have not forget you were going to tell me something just after we had passed Buckley Mill and you said you would tell me when you wrote so don't forget. Well Darling I have not much news at present as there has been nothing really exciting, it is nearly teatime so I must draw to a close will perhaps have more to say next time I write which won't be very long. With my everlasting love. Hoping these few lines find you in the best of health and spirits.

Your ever loving Sweetheart Alex

Love to Aunty Best Respects to Nellie and Elsie and Uncle

26.10.1918

C Coy. A Depot RE  
Kempstone, Bedford

My Dearest Bessie

Your ever loving letter to hand today Saturday. I was very surprised indeed at what you say dearest I thought you wasn't going to take any notice of what other people say and think and I would much rather you had told me while I was with you for it would not have spoiled my pleasure. I would just have treated that statement with contempt. I never heed what ma has got to say for I already know her ideas are quite different to mine and if I wanted (what people) call freedom I should certainly have it. But as I hold such a great love for you in m heart I have no particular wish to be one of those that go parading about the street every night fancying a chance with every girl that passed. No Bessie, you are the only girl in this world for me for I love you from the bottom of my heart and will always love you with a true and untiring heart no matter what happens. I went to the chapel last Sunday night and I was sat all alone just as you pictured me. My pals only laughed at the idea of going to chapel on a Sunday night. What amused me most was the text of the service which was The Prodigal Son. I think he must have chosen that for the occasion if the preacher had previously learned that I was back in Bedford but I don't think he knew. Well dearest I had not been a Rechabite on Thursday night. I was only a Rechabite when I received your promise not to go on the land that was this morning. You were almost sure t notice that on Thursday night although I was quite in my right senses for I had very little to drink hoping you will forgive me. Well dearest I thought there was something wrong when I never received any letter from you but I know now it was no fault of yours. But it has taken you letter 6 days to reach me. I could not write to you at all till now for I moved the from the Rest Camp on Wednesday and I am fairly going through it now. I have rifle and full equipment to clean every night now. Also wash my knees every night as we have to wear shorts from 6 am till 6p pm and we are on the Barrack Square all day doing Physical Training, bayonet and rifle drill and we are almost stripped all the day over. But they don't give you much chance to get cold as we have to jump high fences and ditches and over trenches. This is what they call a hardening course, it's jolly rough but I must do it or die in the attempt. There is one good thing about it we get a leave when we pass out for 4 days and I think by that time dearest you won't know me I will be as hard as nails and some nut to for I have got a new riding outfit. Of course I don't think I will come home in my little trousers for I feel a big soft lad as it is walking through the streets of Bedford no matter what sort of weather it is we have to wear that. This is enough to break any one's heart but I don't think they will break mine. All the same I am aching all over after my hard time on the square this morning. I have still got a very bad cold but it's no use going sick here you have to collapse altogether before they will do anything for you. But I don't care I shall be with you again soon dearest and that is something to look forward to. This hardening course leave is given by the OC here so of course it has nothing at all to do with service leave so I shall be entitled to service leave as soon as I get back to B Depot am very glad indeed to hear you are going to keep up Sunday school. I am sure you will feel much happier and not quite so lonely. I have not had any other letter yet I suppose your letter and dad's must be lost. I must draw to a close now dearest. I will write you again perhaps tomorrow I can't promise as I have not even wrote home since I moved but I will try for I may not have much chance to write during the week. Well good night love and God Bless you.

With fondest love your ever true sweetheart Alex.

Love to Aunty, best respects to Nellie and Elsie



10.11.1918

C Coy. A Depot RE  
Kempstone Road  
Bedford

My Dearest Bessie

Your most kind and loving letter to hand last Tuesday. I am very sorry I could not answer your letter sooner but I have had a heavy week of it and to make things worse the weather has been bad causing me much more cleaning up but I am glad to say I am in the best of health and I feel as big as a house end. I am sure you will see a difference in me when I come home which will be on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of this month, perhaps sooner if things keep on like this. It looks as though we are going to be rewarded very soon for our long waiting. I think the news this morning is simply great and we are all eagerly looking forward to what tomorrow's news will bring us. I can tell you we are fairly enjoying ourselves at present. I expect it will be the same at home. It seems to good to be true dearest that we shall be together never to be separated by war again still it is true and I feel very very happy and I hope you are the same. We were all singing at the top of our voices at 5 am. this morning. I have just been dismissed of Church Parade so I am now free for the day and expect we shall all down ars tomorrow if the news is what we expect it to be. They have sent 40 military police last night to keep the troops in order but I can see some of them poor bounders having a rough time of it. Who could expect us to be like lambs after all this time of war, some hopes. I am pleased to hear you enjoyed the Concert and had such an enjoyable evening with your friends I only wish I had been with you. I had started to write you several times during the week but had to give up for to do some job or other. I was rather vexed over it myself for I know you will have been looking anxiously for a reply to your letter. Never mind sweetheart better late than never. With reference to your mother I think dearest you will be quite right in visiting your mother in her illness though if you mention it to Aunty I expect that she would be very vexed. So I suppose the only thing for you to do is to do it unknown to anyone. It is a rather a fix to be in but it is the only way I can think of though I should not be surprised if you didn't get tired of waiting for my reply and visited your mother already. I hope by this time both your father and mother are keeping better. But of course you must understand dearest it will be wrong not to tell Aunty but we have to do wrong sometimes to do good for someone else. I suppose Rochdale will have been holding great rejoicings this last week. I know I would rather be there than here when this lot winds up. We still have to wear short pants through the day and it gets colder every day though I have got quite used to having my knees bare. I have not got dad's new address yet so I can't write to him. I have not been able to write to him for 3 weeks now so you might let me have his address dearest as soon as you get it for I am very anxious to hear from him. Well I have no striking news for you just now Bessie so I think I will close but I will write to you again soon. Hoping this finds you in the best of health and spirits.

Your ever true sweetheart Alex

Tell Aunty I send my love and will write her next time I write you. Best respects to  
Nellie and Elsie.

30.12.1918 A. Coy Hut 29

Haynes Park Depot  
Nr. Bedford

My Dearest Bessie

Your ever welcome letter to hand today Monday. I am very pleased indeed to hear you had such a good time dearest. I thought and wondered many a time what you would be doing last week. Of course I thought you and Daisy would be enjoying yourselves wherever you were. I am glad Leo is home but he has been long in coming, I should have liked to have seen him. Well dearest I haven't any fresh news for you. We went for a joy ride again this morning, two horses again. But I never had a better ride in all my life plenty of excitement in it. We went galloping at a mad rate over fences and fields through woods in which there were some Germans working and they stood staring at us as if they thought we had gone mad. There were 30 of us and one officer, that was 62 horses we had and it was simply great. We left Haynes at 9 am and got back at 10.30. I wouldn't mind but I got here last Monday afternoon and I started riding Tuesday morning and from what they say we are to have 6 weeks riding course. It is just 14 months since I was here before and everything is just about the same. I am in the same hut and the same stables as before. Since the minute I got in here I haven't had any time to spare at all. We have to get up at 5.30 am on parade at 6.15 and we are grooming till 7.30. We then go for breakfast and get back to the stables at 8.15 and turn out saddled up and mounted by 8.30 am and I can tell you we have to get a move on to do it in the time. I will finish this tonight as it is now 3.30 and I have to groom, water and feed two horses and then have my own tea at a quarter to five. I think I shall then be free for the night. I have now finished duty for the day thank the Lord for small mercies. Nearly every night this week I have been on some job or other and I can tell you I am just about sick of it all, and talk about mud. I have to scrape it off my puttees every night with a knife. I would far rather do a hard days work than stick this. But it's little use grumbling for it won't alter the case at all. They are now asking us to extend service for two, three or four years but I am afraid they won't get me to do any more soldiering when I am demobilised. If I had taken the offer of going in for PT9 certificates as an instructor at Kempstone I would have been kept for another 4 years in the army so of course I refused it for my ambition is not on the military side at all. I want to get where some money can be made. I am sure I shall never be well off while I am in this lot. Well dear I am getting very impatient waiting for the time when we shall be together again. I often wish I was back to the time when you first came to our house just to start over again from then. One often sees mistakes made when it's too late. Never mind though all's well that ends well. I won't mind if this lot ends well. I was just thinking over the difference today between this life and civvie life. You see today for instance I have done 6 days labour and yet I have had 4 hours in the stables and Church Parade as well. Of course you know what a civvie does after his 6 days work. So you can bet I have fully made up my mind which to do. Well sweetheart I must be drawing to a close as I want to get a few things ready for morning. I expect you will be very much disappointed at me not coming this weekend again but I can assure you I did my very best to get home but it was no use. But I have not finished trying yet. Although I shall make sure I am coming before I tell you again. I am glad to hear your dad is getting better and I hope you will soon be well again. I am in the very best of health.

With fondest love your ever true sweetheart Alex

Love to Aunty. Best respects to Nellie and Elsie. Cheer up.

12.1.1919

c/o Mrs Guest  
38 Hawthorn Road  
Chippenham, Wilts

My Dearest Bessie

Just a few lines to let you know we arrived here late yesterday afternoon. It was rather a long journey and I must say it is a big job we have in hand for they have terrible storms round here. All the telegraph wires are down in the roads and on the tops of the houses and poles are down also some of them broken in half. Our Headquarters are at the Police Station as they have never had troops here before and we were sent to any house for a billet. But I was very fortunate in that respect, there are 4 of us here and a very good landlady. If it was not for her we should have had nothing to eat at all so far. In fact yesterday we had nothing to eat from 7 am till 6 pm and then we had to buy what we wanted. You see arrangements had not been made for our accommodation and food and I can tell you we are in a nice fix. But the officer who came with us is going to pay us 2/- per day for rations but when I don't know. I think the sooner the better for I don't like taking food from strange people without knowing how things are going to be arranged but I must say we could not wish for a better billet. We commenced work at 8 this morning Sunday and finished at 4pm. Our work today was mostly getting all the lines cleared away but there is a lot to do and how long I shall be here I don't know. There were 80 of us sent here and it is a very nice little place. You will be surprised to know that I am only 10 miles from John Walton's place, in fact we passed through Wootton Bassett in the train. I fully intended getting a train down to his place this dinner time and come back by a late train but worse luck we had to work all day. I meant to give him a surprise visit. But I wrote him tonight saying I might get to see him tomorrow night. Won't that be grand if I see him but he may be on leave or something. I was taken off the Sheffield lot on Friday and left Biggleswade Saturday morning on this draft. Will write you again soon Dearest and will tell you more about it. Hoping to hear from you soon. With fondest love

Your ever true Sweetheart Alex

PS Love to Aunty. Best respects to Nellie, Elsie and Uncle Jim

21.1.1919

c/o Mrs Hall  
17 Gloucester Road  
Trowbridge, Wilts

My Dearest Bessie

I have received all your letters I even got the one from Haynes Park. You see that now I am working for the GPO they see that I get all my letters. Well dearest I am in the best of health as I hope this finds you. I have been wet through several times lately but I always seem to get off with it. I hope you will excuse me not writing sooner sweetheart but really I have had a very busy time of it and I always feel very tired at night when I get back to billet. You see we have to walk out about 3 miles in the morning and work our way out on the wires. Last Saturday I finished at 2 pm till 8 am on Monday so by 3.45 pm I was all cleaned up and on the train off to Wootton Bassett for the weekend. I arrived there at 6.30 pm and found my way to John's farm and we had a most delightful meeting and we had a very enjoyable time together. We slept together on Saturday night but John had to get up at 6 am so I slept on till 8.30 and John finished at 10 am and in the afternoon she showed me round the farm and I watched them milking the cows and had a try at it myself. But I wasn't such a good hand at the job and he is stopping with very nice people. I had the very best of food and they would not take anything from me and have given me the invitation to go when I like. The fare only cost me 5s 7d so I shall be able to see him fairly often but I must get a pass next time I go. I had no pass last Saturday but I got through all right. I left Wootton Bassett at 7 pm on Sunday night and got back here at 8.30 so that was all right. I am pleased to hear Nellie has adopted another stray waif I hope I make good friends with him when I get home again. Well Dearest I hope you have got over the accident you had with the crochet needle it was rather unfortunate. It is getting very late now so I must draw to a close. I will write to you as soon as possible for I have plenty to tell you about my new job and all my new surroundings. So goodnight sweetheart and God Bless You.

With fondest love

Your ever loving true sweetheart Alex

Love to Aunty. Best respects to Nellie, Elsie and Uncle Jim

25.2.1919

C/o Mrs Hall  
17 Gloucester Road  
Trowbridge, Wilts

My Dearest Bessie

Your most loving letter to hand tonight. So sorry to see by it you have got a cold in your eye. Dear I do hope it will be all right again soon. You must be very careful dearest for as I dare say you know the flu is getting about bad again. Every night before I go to bed Mrs Hall makes me gargle my throat with Condy's Fluid to keep it away. Really one can't be too careful these days. It must be very annoying your glasses breaking again. I hope you will get them back shortly. I suppose you have been jumping on them. I expect I would have got the blame if I had been at home no offence. All the same I only wish I was home with you dearest to be up to some mischief or other. I was rather amused when I got your letter, fancy calling for me in your sleep. I am only too sorry I couldn't answer your call. You will have to be careful or you might be telling Aunty something that's only good for my hearing. I wonder how often I have been placed under your pillow. You know sweetheart that tells a tale. I'll bet Aunty didn't half get a laugh about it. John came here last weekend and we had a grand time together though very quiet. We were out scrapping in the garden on Sunday morning and it fairly amused Mrs Hall to see us enjoying ourselves. We could not stay in bed because the sun was shining on us.

Thursday 27.2.19. I received your ever welcome letter last night dear also one from home quite a Red Letter day. Glad to hear you all went to the Hipp together. Last Monday I took Mrs Hall and Ethel and Willie to the pictures and they enjoyed it very much. I do wish you were here dearest we would have such a good time. Mrs Hall is always saying she would like you to be here with us. I am to be sure and bring you to see them some day. Willie has been in bed ill these last two days so I have just been out to buy him some Comic Cuts and also went for his medicine. I think he will be all right again soon. You must excuse scribble dearest for really the nights fly very quickly and I get very little time for anything. It is now 8 pm and I have not had a wash yet. I am now working in Trowbridge again and it seems ever so much nicer to come home at dinner time. My word you mustn't get going to the Spiritualists too often or you may always be having the creeps. I wouldn't much care to go in one of those places myself. Well sweetheart I haven't any fresh news so I think I will draw to a close as I have another letter to write. I am very glad to hear Ronald is home. Remember me to him if you see him at all. Well good night Dearest and God Bless you.

Your ever true sweetheart Alex

Give my love to Aunty. Tell her I am keeping in good health and hope she is the same and I am longing to be with you all again in dear old Wardle. Best respect to Nellie, Elsie and Uncle Jim. Also Herbert and Mrs Whatmough when you see them again.

1.4.1919

No. 10 Platoon  
B Coy. B Depot  
RE Signals, Bedford

My Dearest Bessie

Just a few lines to let you know I am in the best of health as I hope this finds you. I have neglected you with letters very much lately sweetheart. I know I have not written to you for 2 weeks. Well you see Dearest I have been very unsettled nearly every day for the last two weeks. I have been expecting going away somewhere but now I think I shall be here for some time. I have also been doing Guards every other night. I am on a 24 hour Guard tomorrow night. I shall very likely be able to write you a longer letter then. I am sure you must be wearying for another glimpse of me sweetheart for I myself am feeling very lonely and no prospects of getting home for some time. Well Darling it's no use making you miserable with my letter I will let you know all about what I have been doing during the last

(letter not complete)

5.4.1919

3 Coy. B Depot  
RE Sigs. Bedford

Dearest Bessie

Your most kind and loving letter to hand today. I hope dear you will excuse me not writing before but I am sorry to say I have been ill through inoculation. It was done last Wednesday but owing to a mistake made by the doctor I got an overdose. You see there were four of us, I was for reinnoculation and three, myself included for first dose 25%, instead of that he gave us all 95% and the effect on me were anything but pleasant. We got 48 hours excused duty which expired at 2 pm this afternoon but I am alright again now. My arm is still a bit swollen please do not worry about me little sweetheart. Although I don't feel much in form for writing tonight I promise you I will send you a nice long letter this weekend. The chaps who are now in France are the elderly man with the ginger moustache and the young fellow who had his girl on the platform with him. I got the Observer all right, thanks for the same. I shall be very pleased to have a photo of you dear. I am sure I shall spend a few hours gazing at it and thinking I can see you in reality. Well dearest I must draw to a close as I am nearly going to sleep over this letter. Best love to all. Good night sweetheart and God bless you.

Your ever loving sweetheart Alex  
Excuse pencil and scribble

2.5.1919

14 G/S Draft  
A Depot, RE Signals

My Dearest Bessie

Your most welcome letter to hand today. Glad you are keeping in good health, your letter has reached me very quick I think. I am sorry to hear Uncle Jim has had trouble at work. But I don't suppose he will mind for he is getting on and I don't suppose he will mind having a rest. I received your last letter Monday night and you must look after dad and try and make him happy for I know he is very unhappy but I hope he will get back his good health soon. I paid Mrs Kirby a visit on Wednesday night and she was very pleased indeed to know I was one of the Honeyman family and how curious I have known Mrs Kirby for quite a long time as she serves in the Bunyon Canteen. I am writing this letter here now as Mrs Kirby wants to see me about inviting my friend and I to tea this weekend if we don't go away. She has served me with supper here many a time. She is here now looking after the boys. Well dearest I have no fresh news. I think we are both hard up for news. I do wish something exciting would happen then I would have something to tell you. We are still carrying on as usual. We have heard nothing more about draft yet. I have become a member of the Royal Engineers Old Comrades Association. It is like an army union. We pay 2 shillings per year and they help us when in trouble and do all they can to help a member when back in Civy life. They have got lots of vacancies open now to members on returning to civilian occupation and all the jobs are over £3 per week. We got dismissed at 1.30 this afternoon after some good work on the Drill Square. I and 3 more chums went in town, one of them bought a camera so you will get plenty of photos of me now. Another got some blood mixture and I got some cough mixture and we had tea in town, two eggs on toast two times that's the stuff to give the troops. Well dearest I must draw to a close now. Hoping this finds you in good health as it leaves me at present. Good night and God Bless you.

I remain your ever true sweetheart Alex.

PS Love to Aunty and Nellie. Remember me to all in Wardle



146 Draft A Coy  
A Depot RE Signals  
Bedford

My dearest Bessie

Just a few lines to let you know I moved here this morning and as you will see by the address I am on the draft for Egypt. I will do all in my power not to go but I don't think there is much hopes. Today I had to hand in all my kit except what I stand up in and tomorrow morning I am to be issued with a suit of khaki drill, sun hat and full equipment and we have had orders today to leave particulars on our beds every time we go out explaining where we can be found if any unexpected order comes through. What hopes, it would be asking for trouble to tell them where you were. Well dearest I must draw to a close as I feel very tired. Good night sweetheart and God Bless You.

With fondest love your ever true sweetheart Alex

Incomplete letter from Alex

and we are now at a British Rest Camp half way through Italy. This place is called Faenza. We have about 3 more day's journey on this train and then we ship to Egypt. We have seen some beautiful scenery especially crossing through the Italian Alps. I have had plenty of conversation with Italian people or at least tried to. They will give things for cigs. Yesterday I got a big bunch of flowers and two oranges from a little ....

15<sup>th</sup> May 1919

Taranto, Italy

My Dearest Bessie

Just a few lines to let you know I am in the best of health and spirits as I hope this finds you. We arrived here at 6 pm last night after a week's journey on the train. This is another rest camp we are in. We expect to sail tomorrow sometime. If you have a map at all of Italy you will find this place is right on the heel of Italy. It seems a fine place but we are not allowed in town so I don't suppose I shall see much of it. From the time we left Faenza to getting here we had rather a rough time for the people in South Italy are of a rough class. We were forbidden to take fruit from the people because of fever and because we would not exchange cigarettes for their fruit they starting piling us with stones and at one stop we had in the night at a big station there were several bands of men attacked our train with the intention of robbing what they could. We had a strong guard on at the time of Italian soldiers and there was a nice little scrap took place. Several of the robbers got wounded. I saw one chap get shot through the jaw and another stopped one in his leg and then when they were driven away they hid behind walls and let fly at us with big stones but no-one was hurt. There was a terrible accident to one of our chaps at the station before we got to Faenza. The train was just starting and he was jumping up into one of the trucks and he slipped. One foot went under the wheel. His foot was taken off just above the ankle. He was taken in hospital at Faenza. I think he comes from Manchester too. Last Tuesday we stopped at a seaside place called Castellamare. We were all marched down to the sea and had an hour's bathing in the sea. It was the Adriatic Sea and I got a few mouthfuls of it but it was a nice treat and we all enjoyed it. Well I think that is about all the news at present Dearest. Only one thing more and that I did not find out till nearly dinnertime today. I am 20 today. I shall be a man before mother yet that's what an officer told in Bedford just before I left. I didn't dispute it at all. I suppose I shall spend my 21<sup>st</sup> birthday somewhere in Egypt. Doesn't that sound cheerful. Well it's no use grumbling I am having a good time just now. I call this a nice summer holiday I don't mind if it doesn't get too hot. Well cheerio sweetheart. Hope you received my last letter.

With fondest love

Your ever true sweetheart Alex

Love to Auntie and Nellie. Best respects to all. Give all the news to ma and dad and give them my love as I have not had much time to write.

Partial letter undated

... at all anxious to see a photo with me on it just let me know and the first time I get near civilisation I will have my photo taken. We moved from Beirut last Thursday 28 miles we came and my horse carried me all the way up the mountains. We are now in the Lebanon Mountains and 3,000 ft above the sea level and instead of looking up at the clouds like you would do we look down on them. Sometimes it's find to look over the top of the clouds and it's just like a rough sea. I am enclosing a photo of our happy home at Beirut. Note the happy smile on every face the smile that defies everything and won't wear off. It is much cooler up here though it gets very hot in the day and cold at night. We have jackals come prowling round the tents at night a kind of wild dog and we don't forget to let a few spare rounds at them. We have also to be careful about wandering around the hills alone .....

July 1<sup>st</sup> 1919

7<sup>th</sup> Indian Divisional  
RE Signal Corp  
Egypt

My Dearest Bessie

Just a few lines to let you know I have received your parcel tonight. Just fancy it has followed me all these thousands of miles. I could hardly realize it was for me. I am overjoyed at hearing from you dearest and the present is lovely and it fits me a treat. I am not half flashing it about. You could not have chosen a nicer jersey and I thank you very much indeed. I also thank Aunty very much for the purse. It is a very nice present and the first purse I have ever had in my life. I will write to Aunty later as it is getting late now. I am so glad to hear dad is keeping better and I hope he did visit Wardle and enjoyed himself. I am glad it was not too serious a case you getting on fire. It's a good job you did not get burnt. Well Bessie I will now carry on with the news. I left Alexandria on the 25<sup>th</sup> of May early morning and got to a place on the Suez Canal called Kantara at night. We left there the next morning and trained it to Port Said and we sailed from there on the 26<sup>th</sup> at night and had another 3 days sea voyage to Beirut and when we got there they would not let us land. They left us in the ship for another two days as there was an outbreak of yellow fever at Port Said. When we did land they took us 10 miles over the desert and kept us isolated from everyone for fear of the fever breaking out amongst us but nothing happened. We eventually arrived here last night. We are just about a mile out of Beirut now, our camp is right by the sea. We suffered some terrible hardships from the time we left Port Said to arriving at this Indian Division last night but I am saying nothing about that. I am quite happy now and in the best of health as I hope you are and Aunty and all at home. Tell mother I got her letter and my bank book at Alexandria. Will write home tomorrow. Must close now will tell you more later. Good night and God Bless you dear.

With fondest love  
Your ever true sweetheart Alex

Love to Aunty and Nellie. Best respects to all in Wardle. Love to all at home.

23.7.1919

7<sup>th</sup> Indian Divisional  
Signal Coy. REEEF

My Dearest Bessie

Your most welcome letter to hand today. Glad you are keeping in Good Health. Hoping this finds you still enjoying the best of health as I am at present though I have had just over a fortnight of both fever and dysentery. The fever only lasted 3 days as I had 50 grains quinine each day. But I had that when I started with Dysentery which lasted 12 days. I did not tell you nor anyone else at home as I did not want to start you worrying. I think it was brought on either with the bad food or the water as a good many of the chaps were ill at the same time. But I am more than pleased to know I have got quite clear of it now. I wrote home only yesterday and sent two photos, one of them is for you. I was fairly rough the day I had them taken though I did force a smile. But I needn't have troubled as you can hardly see my features at all. I think you will just about manage to tell it is me. Well sweetheart as you say it is great to think that peace has come at last. It will be good for us too according to the rumours that are about concerning our Demob which I don't think will be very long. You may be much surprised but with a bit of good luck I hope to spend my Christmas Dinner at home. The authorities say we shall be home in a few months if the transport facilities are at all promising. But that "if" might mean a mighty lot. There is going to be some trouble too here shortly as we are getting very badly treated both with food and pay. We are only getting £2 per month, and we should be getting £4.10s. a month. It isn't to be wondered at that there is so much ill health among the troops when they have to eat food that I wouldn't give to a dog in Civic life. Still we have to carry on just the same. I wouldn't care if I was leaving this country tomorrow. What I want is to get back to home and you Dearest, a good square meal and a decent bed. I have formed the same opinion as my chums and that is that I shall never leave England again, there isn't a country to touch it in every way. I will have some yarns to tell you Bessie right enough. But I think for the best part of my life I shall want to forget this place. I'll bet you think I am talking like some hero now. I very often picture the time when I shall be back among you all and that you will think of the things I tell you about this country. I believe it's all right in Palestine, but Syria is no place for White men. Mind you we make things ?? among ourselves in the tent. But really Bessie as you say it is something to get the same chance as we have of seeing around the world, but this is different to having plenty of money and waited on hand and foot. But when we are travelling it means no bath for weeks and an empty tummy many a time ah well it's all in the run of life. It's a good job there are some warm lads in this happy home of ours. It's taking me all my time to write this letter for they are making a fearful row. One minute it's a love song the next minute somebody has been badly bitten with a flea or a bug and some nice Yorkshire comes out then. Well Dearest I am going to write Auntie a few lines just to give her a little cheer. I was with you all the other night in a dream quite a good time I was having till I was woke up rather sudden as our dog walked over my face. Oh I forgot to tell you we have a dog in our tent. An Indian gave him to me before he went back to India as a souvenir. His name was Gaganda Singh. Well Bessie love I must draw to a close as it is getting rather late. So Good night Dear and may God Bless You with fondest love.

Your ever loving sweetheart Alex

Cheerio

September 22<sup>nd</sup> 1919

7<sup>th</sup> Indian Divisional Signal Coy  
Beirut, Syria

My Dearest Bessie

Just a few lines to let you know I received your parcel on Saturday the 20<sup>th</sup>. It just took a month and 4 days to come and I thank you very much sweetheart. I was quite delighted to have a few things from home. The Birthday cake I did eat some but I am sorry to say it was not quite so good as I expected it would be when you first made it but what bit I have not eaten I am keeping. The chocolates and sweets were very good indeed they are not finished yet by a long way. I am making these last out as we cannot get such good stuff out here. The chocolate and stuff we get in our canteens I cannot touch as they do not taste at all good. We can buy some fruit cake which comes from Australia in 1lb tins, airtight of course but they are very dear 21 piastres per tin which is 4s 2 ½ d in English money so I don't indulge in many of them. It seems funny but Bradley the Rochdale lad who is only in the next tent to me got a parcel also on Saturday posted in Rochdale the same day as yours. I was out on a visual signalling stunt again this morning. Some more grapes I got some beautiful bunches this time and I can tell you they didn't last very long. Bradley and myself are going on leave in a week or two to Jerusalem for 7 days. So I will have plenty to tell you about the Holy City when I get back. He is taking his camera with him so he should get plenty of good photographs of much interest in a place like that. Well dearest we are expecting some big moves anytime now as you may have seen by the papers at home. All British and Indian troops have to evacuate Syria and the French have to take possession pending the Conference to ?? who shall have the place. So I daresay we shall go into Palestine or somewhere like that but I think we shall stay in Beirut for a few weeks before the big move and they are now making ready for us to go to Beirut in a few weeks. It will e as well Dearest for you to put your address on the back of the letters and then they won't get lost for we might be always on the move for weeks it all depends on where we have to go. It is so cold here now in the morning and at night that we have to wear our serge tunics and cardigans and at midday the heat is very great we wear as little clothing as possible then. The Syrian people are quite upset be we have clear our as they do not like the French at all.

(Rest of letter missing)

October 23<sup>rd</sup>

7<sup>th</sup> Indian Divisional  
Signal Coy. RE. EEF

My Dearest Bessie

You will be thinking my promises are like pie crusts. As you know I promised to write before but I have had plenty of work to do taking tents down and packing lots of stuff to be sent away to the base. We are handing all canvas tents in as we are going on a trek of about 200 miles into Egypt. We don't know for sure when we are going but we are expecting it soon. There are only 4 British on the horse lines and we are going on in advance as we are visual signallers and as there won't be any line communication we shall have to keep up communication by visual. The kind of tents we shall use are Bivi tents which only hold one man and is carried on the saddle. We shall have our blankets and overcoat strapped to the saddle also rifle and signalling flag. You would be surprised if you was to see the stuff we carry on the saddle. The last time we moved from Beirut to here it took me all my time to get into the saddle as I had so much stuff packed on. I do think myself lucky Bessie, fancy if I wasn't with the horses I would have to do all that distance on foot. When we are on the move we generally do 20 miles each day. Of course these sort of stunts mean us living on bully and biscuits every day. It will be a change though and we will be seeing fresh places every day. But of course we won't know where we are going till we get there. Well I have been telling you about us moving I think for the last two months. But there is no mistaking it this time we are moving and very soon. I shouldn't be surprised if we don't finish up somewhere on the desert in Egypt. As for Demob well we shall have to forget that for a while. I have just received two Observers for which I thank you. But I must say dearest things seem to be going from bad to worse at home. It seems to be a kind of fever to me for they have caught it out here. All the railways are on strike here and we have a hard job to get either food or mail. Yesterday is a day which I will remember all the days of my life. We left here at 10.30 am 4 of us visual signallers and the Sergeant Major on horses and we went out on a stunt. When we reached the foot of the mountain which we had to signal from it was 1 o'clock. We left our horses in the charge of some Indians we had taken with us then we started to climb. I may say that the other station which we had to communicate with is 48 miles from this camp and they got a wire from here stating that we would be on this particular mountain at 1 o'clock. But they were unlucky for we didn't reach the top of that slight rise in the land till 3.30 and it's a good job none of our people at home could have seen us. Beat to the wide world, we were all creased and crumpled up and I may say the poor old SM was the worse of the lot for he is getting on in years. All the way up he kept saying how he wished there was some beer at the top as if it would be worth trying for. When we did reach the top we were absolutely disgusted to find that the station was nowhere to be found for many a mile round us, so after trying to them for 15 minutes we packed up and started to wend our way back again. We had only climbed 6,650 ft. The other station had packed up at 3 o'clock as they couldn't find us. When we reached the place where we left our horses it was 4.30 and we had 12 miles to trek back to the camp. It was after 7 pm when we got back and we just arrived in time as they were going to send out a search party for they thought we had come to grief with the Arabs. The Sergeant Major had promised to be back by 3.30 pm. When we were about 1 mile from the camp one of the Indians riding in rear of the party gave us warning that a motor was coming so we got well in to the side of the road. I happened to be near the edge of the road and as the car passed us the horse at the side of me took fright and pushed both me and the horse over the edge. But lucky for us both the horse let with his hind legs on a ledge of rock sticking out about 4 ft from

the level of the road while his front feet were still on the edge of the road. If it hadn't been for that bit of rock we would both have gone down about 50 ft. I just gave him a dig with my spurs and he leapt up on to the road again. Mind up it was dark and I fairly had the wind up for a few minutes. I had a letter from Henrietta today and she gave me some striking news about your cousin John. Truth to tell it's making me feel quite old. I can see either Daisy

(letter unfinished)

August 14<sup>th</sup> 1919

7<sup>th</sup> Indian Divisional  
Signal Coy. RE. EEF

My Dearest Bessie

Your most loving letter to hand yesterday. I was very much surprised to hear Daisy is home again. Glad to hear you and Henrietta are still enjoying yourselves. I am very sorry for Nellie in her bereavement. I said Jack McGregor would not last much longer. Still he met a terrible death.

August 24<sup>th</sup> 1919

My Dearest Bessie

I had to stop writing that top letter as I felt very ill and went straight to the Doctors and as you see it is now the 24<sup>th</sup> and I am just resuming writing. I feel very much better now. It was brought on with being on picquet as I have said before it gets very cold at night and after being about all day in the hot sun and they being out all night in the cold it got on my chest and I thought for sure I was going to have pneumonia again. But thank God I (page 2 missing)

the party and about the girl who was staying with you. But I got the other letter today dated the 7<sup>th</sup> which explains everything but this one I notice has Smithy Bridge post mark perhaps it was posted there hence the delay. I am very pleased dear that the party turned out a success. As you say it does make me long when you tell me of all these good times but at the same time it pleases me to know you are enjoying yourself dearest. You are very sensible in looking forward to April and not Xmas for you are avoiding probable disappointment but really I don't think it will be any later than April. As you say everyone catches some disease out here it is the hardest job of all trying to avoid it. Every fly or insect there is carrying some disease or other. You needn't have the slightest fear of me signing on dearest. This (page 4 missing)

boy is an American ..... (2 lines unreadable) the Turks took his father prisoner and killed his mother. We have adopted him and he is quite happy now. He thought his father was dead till about a month ago when he got news that his father was a prisoner in the hands of the Turks. He says he is going back to his dad when he gets released. His name is Tony Salana? My brown boots are still going strong though I very seldom wear them as there are so many stones up here and I don't want to spoil them. The spurs I sold to a corporal when I was hard up once. I have .... (line unreadable) but I won't sell them after carting them all this way. I expect you will have a job to read these pencil written letters. I haven't had hold of a pen since I left England, I get fed up with always using a pencil. But I think I know where I can get one for now we have a canteen here I'll ask tonight. Will you ever forgive me Dearest for not writing sooner. I have been so downhearted I could not settle down to write. Let me see, I think this letter has to answer for about 4 or 5 of yours but there ...

(End of letter missing)



December 15<sup>th</sup> 1919

7<sup>th</sup> Indian Divisional  
Signal Coy. RE. EEF  
Egypt

My Dearest Bessie

Your loving letter to hand last night but I also received a parcel from home. I must give you all my heartiest thanks. Thank Aunty for me for the handkerchiefs, also Uncle Jim and Nellie. Well dearest I have got part of my journey home over. I am at the British Advance Base, Kantara, Egypt. We sailed from Beirut last Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> on the Baron B? and arrived at Port Said last Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> then we came in open trucks from Port Said to here. We had a terrible rough journey. I got layed down on a table and only got off it for about 5 minutes at a time for I always began to feel sick if I got to my feet for long. You see it wasn't a very big boat and we were quartered right up in the front end and gee didn't it heave and roll. Poor little John he didn't know what to do. He stayed on the table with me nearly all the time and when he did get to his feet he was very sick. I had to give him tea and break with a little tea spoon as I had a hard job to get him to eat at all. But he came through it all right and he is dashing about as lively as a cricket now. I shall do my very best to bring him home with me. (1 line unreadable) to take him with me it would cost me at least £20 it sounds rather ridiculous but it's true enough. In that case I shall try and get him through unofficially. I had no trouble at all in getting him here. I just carried him under my arm when I was getting on and off the boat and nobody asked any questions at all about but. But when I start for home I shall have to camouflage him somehow. Put him in my kit bag till I get on board then same when I am getting off the ship and once I get him on the ground at Dover I shall be well away. Well dearest I think I have said enough about the dog so I will change the subject. I expect I shall be on the sea at Xmas so you can bet I will have a merry Xmas. You may chance answering this letter but don't write anymore after that. Although I expect to be on my way home in 2 weeks time at the latest. So that's good news. Officially I should be away from here in a weeks time but they have a bad habit of altering things at the last minute. We didn't half have a tuck in last night. 5 of us in the tent had Xmas parcels and we had not had a decent feed for a week but we had a right do last night. I don't suppose I shall need to buy any more cigs now till I get home. I hope by the time you get this letter dearest you will have forgot all about your toothache. What a nasty thing to be troubled with and you have my sympathy for I know what

(end of letter missing)

Friday 16<sup>th</sup> January 1920

Forward Demob Camp  
Don't Know Where

My Dearest Bessie

Just a few lines to let you know I am still (unreadable line) bad luck we had all the same I've arrived here just after midnight. We left Plymouth at 4 pm. If we had arrived here before midnight I would have been on my way home but at 12 last night the old scheme of Demob finished and seemingly this new way has 3 or 4 ways. Of course we didn't like it and there is likely to be trouble in camp over it but in any case don't expect me till Monday or Tuesday then you will be on the safe side. I am very sorry dearest to have caused you this disappointment but you see I sent the telegrams as soon as I got off the ship as I thought you might have read in the papers about the ship *Afriquet*? which sank in the Bay of Biscay for we were just entering the Bay at the time. You may see it in the papers about the passage we had for a newspaper reporter came up to me on the Quay at Devonport and asked all the details about our voyage. I will tell you all about it when I get home. But we have God to thank that we have all landed safe. I didn't want you to have any doubt as to my safety otherwise I would not have wired you till I had been through the Demob Camp. I wired you again at noon today so I expect they will tell as soon as they get. Never mind sweetheart it's only a few days longer wait and a grand old time we'll have. What do you say all the Lancashire Section have got clumped in this forsaken place. I only know it's umpteen miles from anywhere and somewhere in Devonshire. Still it's Blighty and that's something to be thankful for I must draw to a close now dearest hoping these few lines find you in the best of health and spirits.

With fondest love your ever true sweetheart Alex  
Cheer up

Incomplete letter from Alex starting on page 3

... all if we had that every day instead of going in the School Hall. I must say Elsie is fairly going the pace and I am sure she will gain nothing by it though of course it is not my business so I can't speak about it. I would have liked to have punched that big lad's big nose if I had been at Wardle Chip Shop same as I did with Frank Whatmough's big nose. He must have a big nose if he's a big chap. You should have hit him in the eye with a lump of fried fish or something. Now that you can't join the Land Army why not be content with being in the Lover's Union. I am full of fedupness Bessie and take it from me once I leave the army I will never look behind me. I am sure I shall run all the way to the station for fear they will call me back some day. Well dear I must draw to a close. Wish you a happy and prosperous New Year hoping to spend the next New Year's Day with you. Good night dearest and God Bless you.

Your ever loving true sweetheart Alex

Incomplete letter from Alex starting on page 3

St Cuthbert's Recreation Room  
York Street, Bedford

what's wrong with me tonight but I feel awfully in the dumps. I think I will go to bed early and see if the dawn of tomorrow finds me any better. But I have been worrying about Dad a lot lately for I have not had a word from him since February and I am sure I would just about go mad if anything happened to him. Well dearest I am looking the black side this time but you can't help but do sometimes. But I must tell you Dearest I want you so much just now but I suppose I must carry on with the good but truth to tell I am not doing it with a cheerful heart just now. But I must stop this kind of talk or I will be making you miserable. All the same dearest you know I love you dearly. I can't write any more at present. Good night and God Bless you.

With fondest love  
Your ever loving sweetheart Alex

PS Hope Aunty is improving. Best respects to Nellie and Elsie. Best love to Daisy

Incomplete letter from Alex starting on page 3

St Cuthbert's Recreation Room  
York Street, Bedford

... come next. As you say it's no use building on the idea that I will get another leave for I don't know the minute I will be called upon but be of Good Cheer sweetheart for with God's help I hope to have a safe and speedy return home as I hope all the rest of the boys have. But if they don't send me away before I am 19 I shall be entitled to at least 48 hours leave. I should just like to see you in your new clothes. I am glad you are pleased with them. I am sure what pleases you will please me. I am enclosing these postcards just to let you see what Bedford is like. You might think it a nice place but let me have dear old home with all its smoky chimneys. Well Bessie dearest it is now 5 to 9 and I must catch the 9.0 post. So good night and God Bless you.

With fondest love your ever true sweetheart Alex

55 Lyndene  
Westfield Road  
South Shore, Blackpool

Dear sister and all of you

I received your welcome letter and Postal Order on Saturday and Doreen says she is all right and does not want to come back. Bessie and me, Doreen and John and Baby went up town Saturday and came back on the bus and we have all been out this afternoon as it has been a nice day and I hope Bessie is getting on all right also Baby. I am glad she has got it over. Doreen says she is glad it is a little girl and she will nurse it when she comes home and she says she will be glad to see her Auntie as it is a long time since she saw her. Tell Alec to drop us a line and let us know how Betty is getting on and the baby and Olive. What does she say about the new baby and let us know how they are all at Wardle. Hoping our Alice is better and if you are coming this week end for Doreen. I think you will find her much better. I must close now as it is getting our bed time. You see I go with Doreen as she does not want to go by herself. Hoping you are all keeping well as it leaves us all at present.

Doreen sends these kisses to you all

Mama xxxx

Dada xxxx

Olive xxxx

Auntie xxxxxxxxxxxx

for the new baby xxxxxxxx