

LETTERS FROM BESSIE

Thursday

112 Ramsden Road
Wardle

Dearest

I am writing to tell you not to meet me tonight as I am not going up Spotland. We can't get the oven to go so I am taking my baking up to Aunt Alice and doing it there. I should so much like to see you tonight dearest if you can come up. But don't come if you are too tired. If you don't come tonight come up for tea Saturday.

So goodbye

With fondest love your ever true sweetheart Bessie

November 3rd

112 Ramsden Road
Wardle

My Dearest Alex

I hope you are enjoying the very best of health as it leaves me at present. Well Alex it is just a week tonight since I wrote to you last but really dear things are just the same day after day in Wardle and there is nothing much to write about. You will see by the Ob there has been an accident at the bottom of John Street. I think you will know the girl for everybody seems to know her. Of course you may not know her to speak to but you will have seen her on the Broadway. Well dearest I have a piece of good news for you. Uncle Jim is opening a new pit tomorrow in Wardle. It will be a great thing he says and it could well last a long time so when you come home we shall have to go and have a look at it. You know Alex he has had two before in Wardle. There seems to be a great deal of coal round here. After all it seems as if Wardle is going to be important. What do you say. Well dear I was across Syke Sunday morning all is about the same over there. Saturday night Hetty and I went to the pictures in Littleborough, Daisy went to a dance. I don't think you will know Joe Gregson but we went to their house one night when you were over on leave. Well he is being married next Saturday so I have got an invitation to the wedding party. But what's the use going, I can't dance Aunty says my feet were put on the wrong way for dancing. But I have no doubt I should learn with a bit of practice but it doesn't interest me. I think I shall have to draw my letter to a close I am expecting Anne Woodhouse and her cousin this afternoon. If they don't come I may go across to Syke tonight. By the way, I haven't seen John Walton yet. Well dear it is getting near Christmas how I wish you could be home but I am afraid it is impossible. Never mind dearest roll on April then all will be well. Give my love to the famous Digger, tell him to look after his master well as there is someone waiting so patiently for his return. Perhaps he will understand, some horses are very sensible. Goodbye for the present Alex.

With fondest love your every true sweetheart Bessie

PS I am going to have my fortune told this week. I will tell you what the future holds for me. Goodbye dearest

May 7th

112 Ramsden Road
Wardle

Dearest Alex

Your kind and loving letter to hand today also the PC. It's very nice indeed it fairly makes me long to see it. It must be grand. I got both the letter and postcard together I thought I was doing well. Well dearest I've just got a bit of news to tell you. Last night I went to the Hippodrome. It was simply fine. It's the first time I've been since Daisy started being ill. I went with Nellie and a friend of hers. He's a wounded soldier from the Cottage Homes. He's a nice man. You see he comes to our chapel morning and evening so that is how she got to know him. I should think he'll be about thirty four. He looks alright. Don't ask me if he's married for I don't know; anyway he doesn't mention his wife but he speaks a lot about his mother and sisters. It was a kind of a revue "Over the Top" it was called. It gave us a very good idea of how our boys go over. The noise was deafening but it was exciting and full, talk about laugh. I wish you could have seen it dear I am sure you would have enjoyed it. Well I'll change the subject. I am writing this letter while I am waiting for dinner. It's my half day again it does seem to come quick. I am sorry to hear of that tragedy it must have been terrible. You say dearest you will always try and make me happy. It won't take much sweetheart to make me happy because when I am with you it's just heavenly and really I am not jealous because I know that you love me so nothing else matters. Well really I shall have to close as dinner is ready. I will write again tomorrow.

With love from your true Sweetheart Bessie

Friday, 6th June 1919

112 Ramsden Road
Wardle

My Dearest Alex

Your letter to hand today. Glad to hear you have landed alright. Well dearest it has been funny to receive letters from you and not be able to answer them. At last I am able to send you a few lines. Well Alex I received your letters alright, also the postcards. You must have seen some beautiful scenery on your travels, you will be able to tell some yarns when you come home again. Well I will give you the latest news of Wardle. We have two posts every day now, all but Sunday. You will be surprised to hear dear that Hetty and I take Dad out with us very often. We have had some nice walks with him and he has been to Wardle twice on Sundays. I know he enjoys himself when he is with us so we must just carry on with the good work. Well dear I do hope you have received the signet ring I sent you for your birthday. I sent it the 18th of May and you left Bedford on the 7th. I did register it so it should be safe. Dad seems to think it will be sent on to you. I sent it thinking you would receive it before you went away. I must wish you many happy returns for your birthday now although it is rather late. Well sweetheart you will be quite tanned when I see you again and much older for I don't suppose you will be home for two years at least and the time will pass dreadfully slow without you dear. But the time will come someday then we shall be quite happy. And we shall have each other's letters in the meantime. It will be alright if you have your health but I wouldn't like to think of you being ill out there dearest. We can only hope for the best but I think God will take care of you dear. We can only trust in him. I must now draw my letter to a close as it is almost past time

(last page missing)

July 1st 1919

112 Ramsden Road
Wardle

My Dearest Alex

It is almost a week since I wrote to you Alex so I thought I would write a few lines. I hope these few lines find you in the very best of health as it leaves me at present. What do you think about peace dearest. Don't you think it is great after all these years of war. It seems almost impossible to realize it. I should think many of our brave heroes will be returning. Hetty and I spent our weekend in the usual way, but we do have some good times. Well Alex I feel almost at a loss what to tell you. I can't confess my love for you in every letter or you would think I was love sick. Well sweetheart I don't think it is any use being downhearted although it would be nice if you were coming home. But still Alex it will be grand for you to see all the things we read about in the Bible. Of course dearest I am not forgetting the hardships you will have to bear but still it is worth it. And it will be such a lot to think about in the future. Won't you have some yarns to tell us dearest. Better keep all the stories till you come home, then if it is winter time we will have a lovely big fire and sit around our hero and listen to his thrilling tales. I wonder dear if you picture these things as I do, I suppose you do dearest. There is one thing I am afraid of, Aunty is looking tired and worn and I can't induce her to retire from work. I am afraid to think what will happen if she does not take my advice. I will have to draw my letter to a close as it is post time but I will write again soon.

With fondest Love

Your ever true sweetheart Bessie

July 11th 1919

112 Ramsden Road
Wardle

My Dearest Alex

Just a few lines hoping to find you in the best of health, as it leaves me at present. I hope dear you are still liking your new life or rather your old life (3 words unreadable). We are having some very nice weather here at present but worst of it is it is so beastly hot baking. **The cotton strike is now settled. They have been out 3 weeks. But they worked three days and then came out again.** Well Alex, Hetty has been staying with us this last week and we have had some good times on the hills. On Wednesday Hetty and I went over Syke moors with dad, (your dad) and we had a beautiful time. We came through Wardle and would you believe it, someone was asking me if my boy was over. What hopes. You would be surprised dearest if you saw dad he looks well with his moustache off. And he is getting quite fat again.

Aunty is about the same not altogether well but still carrying on. Everybody in Wardle is the same no change whatever. I think dearest I have told you all the news. Last Monday Edith, Hetty and I went to the pictures. We had a splendid time. It was a good picture "A Maid of Flanders" it was called. But it was only for adults. I suppose it was that, that drew our attention. Ah well we have to admit girls are rather curious. Well anyway we enjoyed it. **We are having a Peace Day in sunny Wardle next Saturday. It will be rather exciting for us.** As you know it is so dull up here well some people think of course not including myself. I think it is a wonderful little place. Well sweetheart I must now draw my letter to a close as Hetty and I are going across Syke. So goodbye for the present.

With fondest love from
Your ever true sweetheart Bessie.

July 30th 1919

112 Ramsden Road
Wardle

My Dearest Alex

Your letter to hand today Wednesday, I was surprised to have another one so soon but it seems you are just beginning to receive my letters now. Well Alex, it's beastly warm here, I don't know how hot it is your way but I am beginning to think it can't be any hotter in that place called (Heaven) than it is in our bakehouse. Well dearest I am just going to have tea so will finish this letter after I have just finished tea. I don't think I have any news but I am sorry to tell you I am not on night work now. I only did it one week but I felt bad after it and would you believe it, I went much thinner. Of course it is alright for a night or so when I want to have a day off. I work all night and then I feel tired still it is worth it for a day on the hills. What do you say dearest. I don't think I shall forget in a hurry the last time you stayed up Wardle. It always reminds me of you dear, when I stay up all night. I wonder what you are doing. But of course dear you know everything in Wardle and Syke reminds me of you. I have a bit of news which may interest you. You will remember Woodhouses up Spotland Rd. They can't get a baker and so Annie came up Wardle to see if I knew anyone who would help them. But I didn't so I promised to go Monday afternoons. Of course you will think I am killing myself but I must admit it is hard but I can please myself about it. I have been twice after tea this week and Monday afternoon and Mrs Woodhouse gave me ten shillings. I don't suppose I shall go every week but you know dear I don't let Aunty buy all my clothes now. I am getting prouder now my hair is growing. Never mind dearest wait till you get your civvie suit, won't that be great. And the beautiful moustache to say nothing of the beautiful boy behind it. No offence. Well Alex I was in the car the other night and I saw a boy who was just growing a tache, I just imagined you looking the same. I had a good laugh about it. Well Alex I don't think I told you about killing a cock. I went up to a farm house last Friday night about 2 ½ miles from our house and Mrs Ferns, that is the lady on the farm, she caught the cock, held its legs and I wrung its neck. Don't you think I am getting cruel. But you know they have to be killed. I hope you will excuse mistakes Alex as everybody is making such a noise. **You will be pleased to hear the cotton strike is settled now but there is a big coal strike on at present and the mills are having to close down for want of coal. Food stuffs are much dearer and clothes are a lot more money so that is the result of strikes. Although the war is over things seem to be in a terrible way in England.** I am sending the Observer every week but it will be a fortnight or three weeks before you receive it. But still you will know how things are going in Rochdale. Do you ever get any news of England or don't you know how things are going on. Well dearest I have no more news at present I think this is all the news. Aunty is watching me and wants to know how many more pages I am going to write. I told her I am going to have my money's worth. It saves a ½ d now as the postage is only a penny. But would rather pay the extra ½ d and have you back in good old Bedford. But still I think both you and I are making the best of a bad job. You will be home someday surely. When winter is past it will soon be April but it is now use grumbling. I don't expect my hair will be as short as it is now but it is beautifully thick. Well sweetheart my heart feels full of love for you tonight. That sounds rather funny, doesn't it, it sounds as if I only love you tonight but you know I do love you always don't you Alex. Well goodnight dearest hoping these few lines find you in the best of health as it leaves me at present.

With fondest love your ever true sweetheart Bessie
PS everybody sends their best wishes

August 18th 1919

112 Ramsden Road
Wardle

My Dearest Alex

I hope these few lines find you in the very best of health, as it leaves me at present. I suppose you will know it is Rochdale holidays this week. Nearly all Rochdale are going to Blackpool so it will be Rochdale by the sea. Nellie is going to Blackpool for a week, after the holidays so I shall be on my own. Wouldn't you like to come and help me for a week. Tell your officer you want a week off. What hopes. Well dearest Daisy and her boy are coming up tomorrow also dad so I will tell you what kind of a boy he is. Dad says he is a nice young man. Hetty is staying with us this week and is enjoying herself. We went to Oldham last Saturday. Went in the park and on the steamer on the lake. We couldn't go in a rowing boat because we couldn't row. I thought about you dear, it would have been all right with you to row us, although the lake is nowhere near as big as Hollingworth. We landed home alright. Herbert and his wife have gone to Scotland for their holidays. They went last Friday and are staying in Edinburgh till Wednesday then going on to Aberdeen till Saturday. It will be quite nice won't it dear. They went to Ireland Whitsuntide. Rather lucky, but then you know with working on the Railway he gets plenty of free passes. I have been thinking of going to Blackpool the week after Nellie comes back. Of course I have not yet decided. I should go alone if I went but I know two nice girls who live there and I should not be lonely when I landed. I have saved four pounds so I can have a nice holiday. Well dear I will let you know if I decide to go. Elsie has got a bad foot and she has got the wind up because you see she has to stay in. Peggy is still with us. Aunty has answered your letter Alex, but it took her ever such a while to write it. I have finished my dress, it looks nice. I am learning dressmaking this winter. Aunty has given me the sewing machine for my very own and I think I have told you before my ambition is to be as useful as possible. You will be surprised to hear Alex I am going ever so much thinner, of course don't worry as I am feeling quite well and I don't suppose it will do me any harm to go a wee bit less. Well sweetheart I forgot to tell you, we went to the pictures at Oldham. It was a fine picture, "Inside the Lines". It showed Egypt and a big place in Alexandria and such a lot of handsome women. Don't get fascinated (no offence). Well sweetheart I must now ring off it is getting late. I will write again soon.

With fondest Love. I still remain your ever true sweetheart Bessie

Sept 2nd 1919

112 Ramsden Road
Wardle

My Dearest Alex

I hope these few lines find you in the best of health as it leaves me at present. It is now over a week since I heard from you. Surely dearest you must be receiving my letters for I have written such a lot of letters. I hope dear you won't mind me mentioning this but you may be thinking I am not writing regularly. I suppose we shall have to put it down to the post. Well Alex I have not much news for you this time. Nellie has come home again she has had a good holiday. You remember Peggy the girl I spoke about in my letter a week or so, well she is leaving us this next week and I shall miss her such a great deal as we have been good friends. It makes it more pleasant when you have company at work. She has been with us about five weeks and Aunty has taken quite a fancy to her. She is going to Manchester to live with a sister of hers. Well Alex all is well across Syke, Peggy and I are going across tonight. Daisy and I went to the Empire last night. It was a very good picture, "The House of Silence". The picture you once told me about "The Divine Gift" has been to Rochdale. I was so disappointed I did not see it. But it may come again. It is a long while since you and I were in the pictures together in Manchester isn't it dearest. Happy days, well never mind Alex I am looking forward to the time when I shall see you once again. I often think what I will say when I see you and then when the time comes well you forget what you were going to say. Well sweetheart we will wait till the come comes then it will be perfect happiness. I had a letter from cousin John this morning and he is coming home this month and may get demobilised. I told Aunty it wasn't fair as he has not been in the Army as long as you. She told me I was very selfish and because my boy couldn't come home I didn't want anyone else to come. Of course cousin John is the apple of her eye. Well dear, have not been to Sunday School this week. I stayed in bed instead. Don't you think I am getting wicked. Well dear I hope you have received the parcel I sent a fortnight ago. I don't think I told you John Walton has been over on special leave from Germany. I saw him the day he went back. He had been down on the fair and his mother asked me to go in and see all the pots he won. He said he would be home for good before long. I told him about your moustache he didn't half smile. Well dear this is all the news at present, now don't you think this is a nice verse

Read up and down, and you will see if you love me as I love you. Naught but Death will part us two.

With fondest love your ever true sweetheart Bessie
If only these were real xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx

Sept 13th 1919

112 Ramsden Road
Wardle

My Dearest Alex

I hope you are quite well as it leaves me at present. Well Alex it is now three weeks since I heard from you. I am sure dearest if you knew how anxious I am to hear from you you would try and write to me. I don't know whether it is the mail or what it is. But dear, it does seem ages since I heard from you. I am constantly waiting at the door for the post. I wish dearest you were here but I won't make you miserable by telling you how much I want you. Well Alex everything is the same up Wardle only cousin John is home on leave. We have had a concert tonight in Aunty's. **Daisy, Hetty, Janey and I are going to a fancy dress ball, a week next Wednesday. I have been thinking of going as a sailor but I haven't decided yet. It will be quite a big affair. The Major of Rochdale will be there also Lord and Lady Rochdale.** We shall no doubt have a good time but Alex I do wish you were coming. I suppose I may as well wish for the moon. I wonder when God will answer my prayer and send you back to me. I guess he knows best. Almost all the boys in the village are demobbed now. Never mind sweetheart we will stick to our old motto, "Those who wait, Win". By the way dad asked me if I had heard from you lately, and he said he had not yet answered the last letter you sent him as he expected I told you all the news. Well sweetheart goodbye for the present. It is no use me saying I will write again soon as I am constantly writing.

With fondest love I still remain your ever true Sweetheart Bessie

Sept 16th 1919

112 Ramsden Road
Wardle

My Dearest Alex

I hope you are enjoying the very best of health as it leaves me at present. I have no news dear but I thought I would let you know I am in the land of the living. Well Alex, we have got a new parson, I am going to hear him preach tonight. I was across Syke last night. Daisy and I went to the Empire second house. It was not very good but still it passed the night. It goes dark early now and it is beastly coming up Wardle Lane. Still I don't get the wind up. I always wait at the bottom of the lane for company up and then I follow them. Well dear I have just come back from the service. It has been very interesting. I am going to a social tomorrow night at Sunday school. Don't you think I am being good. What a hope. I think it is about time I had a little bit of enjoyment now that my hair is getting longer. I am not quite as uncomfortable in company. Please dearest don't run away with the idea that it is long, or you may be

(letter incomplete)

September 20th 1919

112 Ramsden Road
Wardle

My Dearest Alex

Your letter to hand today dearest. I am so sorry to hear dear you have been ill. I thought there was something wrong somewhere for it was such a while since your last letter came. Of course dear, I shall not be vexed with you, but dearest I thought you were forgetting me. Promise me dearest you will not get downhearted again. I do hope you will keep in the best of health, for I am ever so anxious about you. I don't like the idea at all you being in Egypt, but still you have to go where they send you. I think I know the reason why you received the letter dated the 10th before the other. I gave it to someone to post in town and they forgot and posted it the day after. It was my fault though for I should not have trusted anyone with my love letters. Anyway, I'll see that it doesn't occur again. Well Alex it is only seven months to April, doesn't it seem such a long while dear but we must have patience. I shall be 19 then and you will be nearly twenty-one. Gee whiz doesn't time fly. By the way the shop is getting brisk, we always have someone to dinner now. Last Monday we had two artists to dinner. They were such swanks, they were wanting photos to enlarge, so he took one of mine and I also gave him one of you. He said they would make a fine pair of pictures. They will be very big pictures. Won't you smile when you see yourself on the wall in the sitting-room. It is the one you had taken with dad. I think that is the best photo you have had taken. The one you enclosed in your last letter doesn't favour you much, you look so thin dear. I feel so unhappy sweetheart when I think of you being so ill and not being able to be near you. Do you remember when you were ill in Wardle and I put cold water bandages on your head. Aren't those days sweet memories, but still, we are going to have some more good times someday. Well Alex, Daisy has quarrelled with her boy, but I hope they get friends again for he is a nice boy. I suppose it is just a lovers tiff. I wonder Alex if you and I will quarrel when you come home for good. I suppose we shall have to wait and see. Well dear I shall have to draw my letter a close as I have a lot of work to do. So goodnight sweetheart may God take care of you till I see you again.

With fondest love

Your ever true sweetheart Bessie

PS Aunty sends her love.

September 28th 1919

112 Ramsden Road
Wardle

My Dearest Alex

I hope you are in the very best of health, as it leaves me at present. Well dear, I have not written before this week but I have been so very busy. You will have received the letter I wrote telling you about the fancy dress ball. Well Alex we had a grand time. Daisy was dressed as an early Victorian, Janey was dressed as an Italian, Hetty as a clown and I was dressed as a Swiss girl. We were some knuts. Cousin John went, he stayed two days over his leave so he could go. We had a taxi there and back. You can just imagine what it was like. Everybody up Syke came to the door. It was twelve o'clock when we landed back then we had supper and John and I went home through Buckley fields. I suppose sweetheart you know Hetty and John are getting fond of each other. They are only young but still if they are willing to wait for each other it will be all right. Well Alex I am writing this letter across Syke. Hetty stayed up Wardle all night and we came across very early this morning. We have been in the park this morning. Daisy, Hetty, Janey and I and I picked these few forget-me-nots for you dearest then you will surely know I am thinking of you. You see Alex I don't forget you even when I am enjoying myself. I suppose there will be no flowers where you are. Never mind dear, when you come home I will get you a nice red rose for your coat from Uncle Jim's garden. Now isn't that something to look forward to? Well Alex we do have some good times with dad. He has just gone to bed for his afternoon sleep. Beauty sleep we call it. Will you have a beauty sleep dear when you come home? You won't get the chance. We wouldn't half pull you out of bed. By the way Alex it does seem a long (page 5 missing)

October

112 Ramsden Road
Wardle

My Dearest Alex

I hope these few lines find you in the very best of health as it leaves me at present. Everything in Wardle is about the same. Well dearest, as I have a few minutes to spare I thought I would write you a few lines. What do you think Alex, my dad came down a few minutes ago and asked if I would lend him sixpence for a drink. Poor old dad. I am still a faithful Rechabite but I couldn't see him looking so downhearted so he said if I would lend him sixpence he would give me eight pence for it tomorrow night. Good interest isn't it. Well dear, I was across Syke Tuesday. Everybody seems to be in the very best of health at present. It is quite dark at six o'clock but you know it is getting winter time now. Elsie is much better, she told me to tell she has been jilted but she says it is the way of the world. She is hoping to get off next season when she gets her false teeth in. Well dear I am enjoying myself very well at present considering you are so far away. But still it is so wonderful to think I am waiting for you dearest. Just think of it Alex, it will be twelve months next April since you were home. I wonder how long my hair will be by that time I shall be able to put it up by then. I may have my photo taken this weekend but you see I like to consider the photographer a little bit. You see he may not have his camera insured, then it would be hard times on him. By the way dear, we had a terrible row today Nellie and I but you know we do quarrel. You would have screamed laughing, she hit me on the face and there was nothing handy only dough so I threw a lump at her, she just caught it in her mouth. I rolled laughing, it was better than a comic picture. Well Alex I am not as soft as I used to be. At one time I would have sat down and cried my eyes out. But now I would sooner have a little bit of a fight it sort of loosens your muscles. Gee, I must be getting a big tom boy so look out Alex for a good fight. But I don't suppose I can put you on the floor but I could once but that was before the British Army took charge of you. Well dearest I think I will have to close, everybody seems to be talking at once and I have made ever such a lot of mistakes. By the way, think of me when you're eating those grapes. So goodnight dearest, best of luck.

With fondest love your true sweetheart Bessie

Oct 9th 1919

112 Ramsden Road
Wardle

My Dearest Alex

Your letter to hand this morning, I am pleased to hear you are in the best of health. My word Alex your letter was a long one and the photographs are simply great. As you say dearest I shall have quite a collection already. But you know dearest I like to see your dear face always. I treasure all your photos with care then when you come home you can see them all. I am sorry dear you have not received your parcel. I do hope you will get it. I am sending a few cigs in an envelope so you will be sure to them. I am going across Syke tonight but I shall take the dog for protection. Some hopes it is only tiny but still he is a good dog. Well dearest I am short of news this time so this will only be short and sweet. I told you in my letter about getting work at Turners but Auntie won't hear of it so I suppose I will just have to carry on with the good work. Well Alex I would like to meet that man Bradley. Perhaps someday I may have the chance. It will soon be April sweetheart how I am longing to see you again. But time seems to fly so it won't be long. I think I shall have a nice head of hair then dear. I won't half swank. Don't think I am getting vain but I am always looking at my little crop. I have finished going to the barbers now. Well Alex we have got two young men to tea so I shall draw my letter to a close. You see dearest we make teas now for strangers. With fondest love

Your ever true sweetheart Bessie

I will write again very soon.

October 13th 1919

112 Ramsden Road
Wardle

My Dearest Alex

I hope you are keeping well as it leaves me at present. I have not much news dearest. All is about the same in sunny Wardle. It is Monday night now and I have been to Mrs Woodhouse this afternoon. I gave them a help in the bakehouse. It was raining hard and I had nowhere to go. I have got tired of the pictures, although I haven't been for about six weeks. It's all right for a change but I was never struck on them. Well dear you will be surprised to hear Edith Shepherd's mother is dead. Poor Edith she does seem to have such a lot of trouble. Hetty and I are to a tea party at their Sunday School on Saturday. Last night we went to Newhey to see Herbert and Florrie. My word Alex they have a lovely home now but no little Whatmough's knocking about yet. Well dearest when you come home we will go and visit them. They seem perfectly happy. I am sorry to say Alex that Aunty is not keeping at all well. It is working though, nothing will induce her to retire, still she is going worse and worse. I am afraid before long there will be a breakdown. It's sure to come sooner or later for you know she is getting very old. But we can only hope for the best. I must now draw my letter to a close hoping to see you soon.

With fondest love your ever true Sweetheart Bessie

PS Aunty sends her love

November 16th 1919

112 Ramsden Road
Wardle

My Dearest Alex

This is the second attempt I have made tonight. I wrote one letter before this but I burned it so I will see what I can do this time. It is a week since I wrote to you dearest but you will excuse me won't you sweetheart for you know my thoughts are constantly with you even if I have not written quite as often. I have not much news dear, but I will tell you what I consider the latest news. You will not be surprised to hear Mary Ellen Schofield is getting married in a month's time. I have not seen any of your pals but they are at home now. John Walton has got a gramophone and he has got all the latest songs. Daisy went down last Sunday to hear it. I have been across Syke today as usual. They are all keeping well. Dad has got such a posh new suit, getting proud isn't he? Wait till you get your civvies, gee whizz. I am longing to see you once again in civvies and when my hair gets long. I will put it up ever so nice, but it isn't long yet. Still there are six months till next April. Well dear you will have received the Observer I sent off a fortnight ago. Well the romance of Wardle is an old chap 88 married a girl 21 and they live next door to us and their bedroom is on a level with our sitting room and we can hear them talking together every night. Well they have been living together two years now they have decided to get married and he is as ugly as sin and as deaf as can be. Their photos have been in all the papers and they are going to be screened on the Hipp. Why it's the talk of the place. Well it is just disgusting if folks know I come from Wardle they are sure to ask about the married couple. When you come home you will see for yourself what like they are. Well dearest I will change the subject. Aunty is not keeping very well and she does seem to get cross soon. I suppose it is with getting older. Nellie is still the same. Uncle Jim is quite busy with the new pit. He often asks about you dear. It seems to me he thinks ever such a lot about you really I feel quite jealous. We must keep in Uncle Jim's good opinion if we can. What do you say Alex? Elsie is getting her false teeth tomorrow, she will be a knut, but you will be surprised when you see her she has gone thin. Of course she has been ill. Herbert and Florrie are alright. I think dear you have all the news now at present so I will close.

With fondest love, I still remain your ever true sweetheart Bessie.

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PS I really think these kisses should last for a long time if you consider yourself kissed for fifty times.

November 23rd 1919

112 Ramsden Road
Wardle

My Dearest Alex,

I hope you are enjoying the very best of health, as it leaves me at present. Well dear, I have not heard from you lately. It is now three weeks since I received your last letter but I suppose it is the mail that has been delayed. I am sure dearest you are not receiving my letters for I have sent such a lot. I have been across Syke today and we have had such a good time. Dad had his new suit on. He did look nice. I gave him a whole ½d, don't you think I did well. Well dearest I have seen John Walton today for the first time since he was demobbed. He does not look bad in civvies but everybody looks a bit queer at first after khaki. Well dear we have been saying what a bust up we are going to have for Christmas. I do wish sweetheart you would be able to join us, but never mind dear you are sure to come home some day. Well Alex, I do want to wish you a Happy Christmas although I know it can't be very pleasant for you. I am sending you this parcel for Christmas. I hope dear it reaches you for then. I couldn't very well send any cake for it would only be dry by the time it landed. Aunty is sending you these two handkerchiefs, Uncle Jim and Nellie gave me a shilling each. So I thought I would tell you it is a week since I wrote to you last, but I have been waiting thinking I should have one from you. I had two teeth pulled last Monday and he didn't half put me through it. They were both decayed but it has been worse since, for he broke them and I have not been able to eat anything but bread and milk, but it is much better now. Daisy saw Ronny Clegg in the herb shop and he is not courting now. Tuesday night, I hope dear you will excuse me for not finishing the letter but Sunday I had to go to bed for my face was so bad. I was nearly crazy with toothache. Last night I went for a new blouse and so I am trying to finish it now. I saw Hetty last night, she said she had received a letter from you and she said you wouldn't be running off with a black woman. They are always teasing me about it but I don't think you will do that will you Alex? Well I think I have told you all the news. By the way Alex I want to ask you a question. What do you think of the Herb Shop? I suppose you will wonder at such a question, but I have my own reasons for asking you. I have only been in about two or three times and that was two years ago. Don't forget to answer this question. Well I will change the subject. What about that dog of yours? Do bring him home with you if you can. I have been thinking today about Mrs Hall. Do you still correspond with her and the children? For I feel sure she will be wondering how you are getting along. Cousin John is expected home any time now, in fact any day for his mother's applied to the War Office on compassionate grounds for him and after a great deal of papers being filled up they have decided to demob him at the earliest. Don't you wish they would decide the same for you. I think I shall have to apply to the War Office and tell them I can't live without you. "Some Hopes" they would tell me to die then. Well dearest I shall have to draw my letter. I think I told you about our famous cat Peter, he comes upstairs every night for me to rock him in my arms five minutes. He has just come up now and because I am writing he jumped right on then sat on the table rubbing against my arm. You wouldn't believe what a sensitive puss he is. I think such a lot about him. All the same I wish I was in your arms instead of Peter being in mine. Well goodbye for the present.

With fondest love for my true sweetheart Alex

Thursday Night (Undated)

112 Ramsden Road
Wardle

Dearest

I hope you are keeping well as it leaves me at present. Well Alex I told you not to be surprised if you received a letter from, so here goes. It's not going to be a long one you know, just to let you know I am thinking of you. It will seem such a long time till Saturday dearest but I can't see you again till then. So roll on Saturday. What do you think about the weather? Beastly stuff isn't it. I want you to come up to tea Saturday for if it is like this you may get cold waiting for me especially if you have to wait another twenty minutes, no offence. You see dear I can never tell to a few minutes what time I shall have finished. Well dearest do try and get to the football match and shout as hard as you can for Syke. As you know they will miss my nasty smile. I must now draw my letter to a close. Aunty is no better but she won't go to the doctor so I have done my best. Well goodnight dearest till I see you again.

With fondest Love you ever true sweetheart Bessie

I shall expect you from half past five to six o'clock Saturday.

(partial letter page 5)

... longing to see you once more in civilian clothes. Well Alex this is a long letter and you owe me lots and lots of letters. Don't you know dear I am always writing. I am trying to be polite but sweetheart, please write to me very soon. I will now ring off.

With fondest love you ever true sweetheart Bessie

Letter to Leo

25 September 1919

112 Ramsden Road
Wardle

My Dear Friend

Your letter to hand a fortnight ago. Excuse me not writing before but John has been over on leave for 14days. He hopes to be home for good soon. We went to a victory ball last night, Hetty, Daisy, John and myself. It was the first dance I have been to. But I wish you had been here Leo, you would have gone too. I am sure you would have enjoyed yourself. It was in the Provident Hall Rochdale. It was a private affair. A lady named Mrs Harton got it up and a professor from Manchester came to show the latest dances off. It was great. I went dressed as a Swiss girl some (unreadable word) and we had a taxi there and back. Well Leo I must now close excuse short letter.

Your true friend Bessie