

The War Years



Letters from the home front

A glimpse into the life of one family
from Bromley England during WWII.

498 Downham Way,
Bromley, Kent,
England,

A collection of letters
by Rose Sambell
reflecting life on the home
front during WWII.
The letters were transcribed
from their originals by
Mary Lois Cooper
(niece of Rose Sambell)
of London, Ontario Canada.

Annotations by Ted Sambell
(son of Rose)

Historical background,
preface to letters &
illustrations
were added by
website curator
Frank Sambells

We invite your comments.



The Sambell Family

Francis "Frank" John Charles Sambell (1899-1983)
wife Rosina "Rose" Rebecca Wilder (1898-1984)

Children:

William Leonard (Len) Sambell - b. Sept. 28, 1921
Edward (Ted) George Sambell - b. Jan. 5, 1923
Francis Benjamin (Ben) Sambell - b. June 4, 1924
Rosina (Rose) Emma Grace Sambell King - b. Feb. 3, 1926
John (John) Charles Sambell - b. Dec. 5, 1927
Patricia (Pat) Blanche Sambell Broadbent- b. June 2, 1929
Keith (Keith) Stuart Sambell - b. July 26, 1930
Henry Albert (or Hal) Louis Sambell - b. March 13, 1933
Bernard (Bernie) Frederick Joseph Sambell b. July 24, 1934
Reginald (Reg) Eric David Sambell - b. March 13, 1940



ROSE SAMBELL



Introduction by Mary Lois Cooper

London Ontario Canada

These wonderful letters from the war years were written by Rose Sambell and kept by my mother, Violet Emily Sambell Jeffery. Rose wrote them from war torn England to her sister-in-law, Violet, during 1940 to 1944 when Violet was nursing in Woodstock, Ontario, Canada. After Violet's marriage March 7, 1942 to Earl Jeffery, they were addressed to R.R.1 Mount Elgin, Ontario, Canada. All letters were written from the same address - 498 Downham Way, Bromley, Kent, England, except for two; one written by Ted and one by Rose, when they visited Yorkshire to check on the family evacuated there. Her husband Frank always urged Rose to leave London, but she refused to abandon the family home. Her son Ted Sambell recalls that she sang all day around the house. She was a wonderful letter writer, and a very special woman.



Preface to letter #1

The letters from Rose begin in April 1940, about six months after the start of the war. It was a time when fears of a seaborne German invasion were growing. This sparked further waves of official evacuation from the south and east coast of England in June of that year. The family of Rose and Frank Sambell were living in Bromley, Kent located just a few miles to the southeast of the heart of London England.

In May 1940, the Children's Overseas Reception Board (CORB) was created to organize the evacuation of children to the Dominions, primarily Canada, as well as South Africa, Australia and New Zealand. A surprising 210,000 applications were made by July when the scheme closed. It was necessary for families to submit formal statements to the CORB requesting evacuation of their children. If families could make their own arrangements for the alternative living locations for the evacuees then that information was to be submitted as well. It is apparent from this first letter that Rose and Frank Sambell had previously exchanged letters with her sister-in-law Florence Sambell McRoberts of 72 Curry St. in London Ontario in which Florence and Bill McRoberts had agreed to receive several of Rose and Frank's children.

Dear Florrie, Violet & all,

So many thanks for your express letter. I have a (Children's Overseas Reception Board) form to fill in for my 6 kiddies to come over to you folk, I am expressing my wish for you folk to have them. These are the kiddies - Rosina, John, Patty, Keith, Albert & Bernard, they are a healthy & loveable crowd, & I know you will love them all. Parents cannot accompany the kiddies (so far as the scheme has advanced) but maybe they will stretch it & let a mother go, - also Ted & Ben - seeing they are school boys still. However dears, I prefer to stay with Ted & Ben if they cannot get away & I know you will agree, maybe you will hear about these kiddies. Have you to register your desire for them at your end?

Well I must quit & thank you one & all for great generosity to my little ones, I will let you know if there is any extension to the scheme.

Baby Reg is lovely. A friend is going to take his picture, I will send you one from John to Keith. Have not seen him yet. Of course, I shall endeavour to assist you with their clothing bills. Love to all of you from here.

Frank, Rose & Boys xxx

Baby Reg xxxx

-CORB-
CANADA
AUSTRALIA

CHILDREN'S OVERSEAS RECEPTION BOARD



When the Luftwaffe began bombing Britain in 1940 the government decided to set up a Children's Overseas Reception Board (CORB) which arranged for children to be sent to USA, Canada and Australia. In the first few months over 210,000 children were registered with the scheme.

After the City of Benares was sunk by a German torpedo on 17th September, 1940, killing 73 children, the overseas evacuation programme was brought to a halt. By this time the Children's Overseas Reception Board had sent 2,664 children overseas. Most of these went to Canada.

Wealthy parents continued to send their children to safe countries. It is estimated that during the first two years of the war around 14,000 children were sent privately to USA, Canada and Australia.





Preface to Letter #2

From April to May 1940, the government announcements and newspaper articles were preparing the populace for wartime conditions by organizing local defense units and installing an array of hot air barrage balloons. At the same time it was necessary to present this flurry of information and preparations in a calm manner to the citizens.

In this letter Rose conveys the sudden changes and sights of daily life she is experiencing. She is impressed by the calming effects of King George's speech but laments that it has been six months since she has seen her young children who were sent to the countryside after the CORB program was cancelled.

Dear Florrie, Bill & Dot, [Dorothy was Flo and Bill McRobert's daughter, born 1923.]

Well, once again, we have all subsided into calm, after a great amount of excitement. Re: the last letter I sent you, we have not heard any news of evacuating abroad, but I enclose cutting from newspaper of 21st May. So that's where the rumour originated.

Did you listen to Our King's Speech? (George VI) He spoke very clear & calm, & concise too. It has made folk feel more confident than ever of 'Victory' which we hope is at a not far distant day. We heard over the air, Canada is to have a defence corps as we have of Ex Service men & many more men are joining the colours. I suppose Dad will be amongst the men joining the Defence Unit? Frank is now on 7 day a week shift, had an allowance of 6/ [shillings] this week for meals. But will get a 'chit' daily when canteen is made & opened at his station. [Frank was a member of LAAS during the war - London Auxiliary Ambulance Service; he was a qualified London taxi driver, and became an ambulance driver.]

We have heavily increased our balloon barrage. They look like big fish when ascending to the sky, which looks like a spotted dog when all are up. How is Alyce [Alice Sambell, wife of Frank's brother Sydney Sambell, lived in Detroit] Did she yet have her little one?

Reg is progressing wonderful. The boys love him, his hair is growing. He is very cute, but knows who to look for to nurse him. Len will pick him up. But Ben will hold him & fuss him too. Frank does not see much of him this week, on duty from 11.30 am to 11.30 pm & next week, Vice Versa. The girls would care for him if they were home. [Rosina and Pat had been evacuated to Wales. Later, both were in Kent, with Pat in Maidstone.]

I do miss my kiddies ever so, & wish we were all together as before. They ask to return, but Pro tem [pro tempore = for the time being] , must stop where they are. I have not seen them since Dec 9th & Frank saw them early new year. [John, Keith and Albert spent much of the war in Yorkshire.]

Well I must quit, it is getting late. Our Love to you all. Did I tell you I bought Frank a pipe for his 40th Birthday? & tobacco. He Likes the pipe but has a cigar at intervals. Len had to work the week-end, had to cancel his cycle run with the club. He is Vice Captain. He is an Arc-Welder, Electric, Heavy Construction & a good one too. Boys still at school.

Love to all at Home
From Boys, Frank & Rose xxx



THE KING'S SPEECHES



Despite German bombing raids George VI and his wife resolved to stay in London throughout the war. They officially resided at Buckingham Palace, although they usually spent nights at Windsor Castle. The first German raid on London, on 7 September 1940, killed about one thousand civilians, mostly in the East End of the city.

On 13 September, the King and Queen narrowly avoided death when two German bombs exploded in a courtyard at Buckingham Palace while they were there. In defiance, the Queen famously declared: "I am glad we have been bombed. It makes me feel we can look the East End in the face". The royal family were portrayed as sharing the same dangers and deprivations as the rest of the country. They too were subject to rationing restrictions.

During the war, the King and Queen provided morale-boosting speeches and visits throughout the United Kingdom. Their high public profile and apparently indefatigable determination secured their place as symbols of national resistance. In 1945, crowds shouted "We want the King!" in front of Buckingham Palace during the Victory in Europe Day celebrations.

Barrage Balloons over London



Preface to Letter #3

Three days later, Rose is expressing disappointment at the progress of the overseas relocation application and the various rumours circulating concerning the eligibility of applicants for relocation to Canada.

Rose is no doubt anxious to retrieve her children from Rye to which they were sent. Rye was a small town in East Sussex which stands about 2 miles from the open seas. The location provided prime viewing of aerial dogfights between the English and German air forces. Ted returned to London to finish his Piano Technician course, and Keith and Albert went to Yorkshire. In 2012 Ted recalled that he and Albert were well-placed in a kind home, but that Keith didn't fare as well.

Dear Florrie,

In our evening paper last evening, it stated, the question is to be brought before the Canadian House of Commons, for Canada to accept Refugees from Eng: there being 1000 here of Czechs, Austrian & German kiddies, who came here long before the War. Canada will put them in.

Camps for the summer & billets in Winter (it is suggested). Many folk here who have relatives & also returned from 'Over-there' are disappointed, for they thought it meant 'English folk'. But we must wait & see how things pan out. Frank is now on 7 shifts a week. His shift is 11:30 pm to 11:30 am this week. Len had to work the week end. He was disappointed, for he goes cycling every 'Sunday' to keep fit.

Well Dear, we all hope that Victory will soon arrive. Our boys are splendid. No doubt you hear the news daily from your radio. I think my three kiddies will be moved from 'Rye'. It is inland from the Sea, but they can walk three miles to one resort, which they do so. Weather is changeable, very cool at night. Gardens look nice, for all green stuff is showing fine. [in reference to the Victory Garden that Rose was tending.]

Best Love & Wishes to all.
Rose, Frank & Boys

VICTORY
GARDENS

Home Front
Poster Campaigns



Mobilizing the civilian population for the war effort was accomplished not only through radio announcements, newspaper articles but also through a variety of propaganda poster campaigns.

Victory gardens were considered a necessity in reducing the pressure on the public food supply brought on by the war effort. In addition front and back yard victory gardens were a civil morale booster. It was believed that the gardeners could feel empowered by their own contribution of labour and rewarded by the produce grown. Hence, the maintenance of victory gardens became a part of daily life of families on the home front. It was an effective method of offsetting the dietary limits created by food ration books.



Preface to Letter #4

Four months later the situation in London became quite grave. On the 7th of Sept 1940 the city of London was bombed by the German Luftwaffe. The London blitz continued for 76 consecutive nights and many towns and cities across the country also became targets. More than one million London houses were destroyed or damaged over the eleven week period, and more than 20,000 civilians were killed during the war.

The bombing did not achieve its intended goals of demoralizing the British into surrender or significantly damaging their war economy. In fact, the eight months of bombing never seriously hampered British production and the war industries continued to operate and expand.

In response, the evacuation plan, "Operation Pied Piper", continued in earnest and included teachers as group guardians. With the continued evacuation of children into the countryside schools were closed in the city. Despite government statements to the contrary, the evacuation of children did not go smoothly.

Rose, Ted and Bernie made a visit to Yorkshire to see how their children John and Keith were faring. The following two letters are written from Yorkshire by Ted and Rose. The discrepancy between rich and poor evacuees became evermore a clash between classes of society. In addition, it is clear that despite the persistent bombing the routines of life continued as best they could. Ted speaks of starting a new term at the technical school. From his young eyes Ted sees the adventure and excitement in the turmoil of life as he conveys the most recent news from the home front.

Aircraft spotter - London Blitz



From Ted Sambell

34 Priesthorpe Rd. Bingley,
Yorkshire, England

Dear Aunt Vi:

We received your letter to Len, but I doubt if he will write, because he is doing long hours at work just now & coming home to go in the air raid shelter for the night. Therefore as the next in the family, I, Ted, have decided to write.

My first topic is the decision to stop the overseas evacuation. This is making us see red because the rich can still get out, & after all, the Canadian government sent the money across for the fares; all this apart from your preparations made to receive them. I might add that our one ambition is to get the whole family over to Canada when the war is over; all we have to look forward to otherwise is unemployment & starvation.

In the meantime the world is quite an exciting place, the two kids who are still home, that is Albert (age 7) & Benny (age 16), are enjoying the war immensely. They don't go to school, & sleep every night in the air raid shelter at the top of the garden, just like camping out, then half the next day is spent in hunting for shrapnel, also there are plenty of big bangs from the guns which put up a terrific barrage. There are also a good few whistles with a big bang at the end, but very few persons are frightened by them, although they may get (hit by) the next one.

[The following incident that he recounts happened Sept. 9, 1940, when he and Ben tried to attend their courses in London]

I am not yet at work as I attend a technical school for learning piano tuning & servicing, & after the first three days of the blitz which were the beginning of a new term I started off as usual but took three hours for a forty minute journey because the transport was in a mess. I started home early but got caught in an air raid in the city, went down into a basement. Most of the other people down there were Jews & had to laugh at one old chap. He said that somewhere nearby a police station was hit & wiped out all the police; he wasn't regretful though, he just made a whistling sound through his teeth & said, "a real [?] torpedo, just like that, I don't mind, the more cops they get the better."

continued - - -

Anyway, after four hours I got home at 8.30 pm in time for the usual all night air raid. Where we live in the suburbs has had a fair share of damage, but London itself is a proper shambles.

Dad is an ambulance worker in the London A.R.P. [Air Raid Precautions] & he sees the tragic side of all this bombing, which nearly always seems to hit workers' homes. To quote only one of his "incidents", he was called out & had four casualties to take to hospital. He took them to the local hospital only to find it already overcrowded with raid victims, so he had to rush them to another hospital. On the way there he came to a red light, which means a time bomb, & while wondering whether to go through or not, a bomb went off to the right & blew half the ambulance door off, so he went through just as another went off & lifted the back of the ambulance then setting it down again. He got to the hospital to find that two of the four had died. They may have lived if they got to hospital in time. Dad got the battered ambulance back to the station to find all the air blown out of his tires by the blast.

It is a real treat to watch the R.A.F. They make rings round the German planes. They have saved us from going under when we thought we were finished. Anyway, England has got to fight harder than ever, for after experiencing their callous bombing of civilians we know that no mercy can be expected should we get beaten.

Well, Vi, we are all cheerful & well, keeping smiling thru, in spite of many shortgoings. We will make up for it when all is over & hope it will be soon though it will all take time. Dad sends his love, so do we all. Our Reg (age 6 mos.) can Jitterbug, he likes swing, but not the dug-out.

Frank Sambell
as an
ambulance worker
in his
ARP uniform

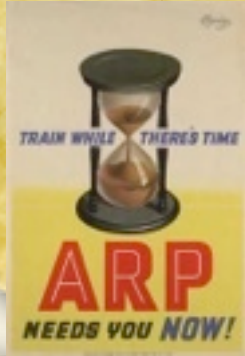


Your nephew Ted, for Len



AIR RAID PRECAUTIONS

ARP Duties



The ARP was a government organization set up as an aid to the protection of civilians from the dangers of air raids. ARP wardens had the task of patrolling the streets during blackouts to ensure that no light was visible. Trained in first-aid and fire fighting they were the first responders to a community's needs.

The ARP Ambulance drivers like Frank had to take a special driving test and were assigned to local depots. They usually worked in three shifts, 8 hours on, 8 hrs standby (ie reporting for duty when the siren went,) and 8 hrs off. Two weekend shifts allowed for the third weekend off. Because of the heavy bombing of London, Bromley was considered a high risk area and in case a major raid happened ambulances had to vacate outlying towns and drive to an assembly point for dispatch to other areas. Each shift was composed of a first aid party of four men who treated victims as they were extracted from the rubble. Then the ambulance driver took the injured back to a first aid post and on to a hospital.



Ambulances were converted from large Ford and Buick saloon/sedan vehicles by cutting off part of the back of the body work and adding a canvas cover which could be rolled up. The vehicles were kept under corrugated iron shelters in school playgrounds.

Cartoons by Saxon Brown from Frank's ARP ambulance unit.

Preface to Letter #5

Support for the families on the home front is seen in the Christmas monetary gifts and parcels from Canadian relatives. The flying German bombs continue to threaten life at home and danger alarms make it difficult for everyone to adjust to the new routines of wartime life. A year into the war sees the folks abandoning their flooded Anderson shelter. Poor drainage was a persistent problem with the shelters and eventually a different design to be used inside a house was offered by the government. However, the Sambell family never used one of the Morrison shelters. Instead they remained inside the house where the men had devised their own type of shelter.

Dear Violet

First of all, a happy New Year to you. Pray God before another winter, Victory be ours and we shall be looking towards the day when we can personally see you all. Frank forwarded your letter and \$5 sent to Ted. I thank you very much for your gift, it realized £ 1-2-4 [one pound, two shillings and 4 pence] So I'm buying Frank 2 ozs tobacco, Len (some razor blades, as there is to be a shortage & he uses the 'Safety' type) hair oil & good tooth brush. He has wonderful teeth & takes care of them. I am buying some gifts for the three boys. I shall have 7 [shillings] left & will give a small gift to rest of gang for you. I know this will please you.

Sorry to state, but your parcel for Reg. has not yet arrived, unless Frank receives it this week. And Rosina is coming & Ted also to stay for Xmass & if it has arrived, they will bring it. I shall be tickled to see my two, Rosina is a dear & we are greatly proud of our boys and two girls, but Ted outstands as a musician. He sure can play. Frank took him to his station two weeks back & he tuned a piano lent for Xmass there & Frank took his violin. A professional singer is an attendant there, so they gave a good show & Ted has been given a song (Classical) called Trees - do you know it?

Frank is hoping to come up late January, but cannot definitely promise anything due to WAR conditions. But I do hope he will be able to come along, for Pat, [Living in Maidstone, Kent] Keith & John [Living in Yorkshire] haven't seen him for 14 months & he will be surprised to see them so changed. John - 13 yrs. Dec 5th is 5'4" in height, Patty too 11 yrs last June is tall. Keith is a bonny lad. Ben will be 17 yrs next June, is 5'8" (last time I saw him) Len 19 yrs 5'7 1/2". Ted 5'7". So you see, I bid to be the Shorty of the family.

Well, Violet, it is fairly quiet here. Jerry ... skids by. [a reference to the German bombs] But we had danger alarm last week. Bombs fell on moors 4 miles away & none hurt. But Bernie was scared. Poor wee man. He thought it was London over again.

Well Dear, I must quit, but one thing before I say adieu. When your friend Alma* hits the trail in Eng., give her my address. She can see some of my gang & then maybe call on Frank, (in London) although, she'll find it awry doubtless, as it is a bachelor's home now & I believe they sleep on the floor, with barricades over them, for the shelter is flooded. However, a genuine welcome will be given her.

Yours, Rose. Frank & gang here
xxxxxx

This photo of Violet Sambell Jeffery (left) and Alma Rath Ferguson (right) was taken in 1940 before Alma left for England. She is in her Canadian Army nursing uniform.

Alma trained as a nurse with Violet, and joined the Canadian Army in late 1940. She served in England at the burn treatment hospital in Cliveden, and later in Sicily.



BOMB SHELTERS

On the Home Front - Anderson Shelter -

**AIR RAID
SHELTER**
150 PERSONS



Shelters were fun in the making & exciting play areas for children - until night time air raids cracked the black skies with thunderous noise & fireworks.

The 14 galvanized corrugated steel panels of the Anderson shelters were bolted together to form a room 6 ft high, 4 ft 6 in wide, & 6 ft 6 in long. They were buried 4 ft deep in the soil and then covered with a minimum of 15 inches of soil above the roof. The earth banks could be planted with vegetables and flowers victory gardens. They became the subject of competitions of the best-planted shelter among the neighbourhood. Anderson shelters were issued free to all householders who earned less than £250 a year, and those with a higher income were charged £7. During the war 2.1 million were erected. However, these shelters were dark and damp and tended to flood.

According to Ted Sambell, the family's Anderson shelter in the back garden was always problematic, because there was also a spring in the backyard, and the shelter flooded regularly. At some point, the family abandoned the shelter, and slept on the ground floor of the house.

In 1941 the government issued the Morrison Shelters which were made of very heavy steel and could be put up in the living room and used as a table. One wire side lifted up for people to crawl underneath. They provided sleeping space for two or three people.



Preface to letter #6

Two years into the war sees the Sambell family learning to adapt to long hours of work; rationing of cigarettes; meal times interrupted by alarms; the helpless and nervous feelings of rushing to the bomb shelter followed by the all clear signal of the Wardens Whistles when everyone goes out to help each other clean up after the bombing. Rose provides some insight as to the continued helpless fears that people have in response to the visits by "Jerry". Typically though she keeps a stiff upper lip looking forward to Christmas and enjoying the developments in her children over the year.

Hello Vi,

I am enclosing a card from Frank. He sure enjoys his smoke more so as cigs are very scarce here. One is allowed 10 cigs when stock arrives in, But sometimes none in shops for two weeks & the supply goes in one hour.

The card reads, "Dear Vi. I thank you for the tobacco. I must add that I am now addicted to Sweet Caporal and find it difficult to use other brands. I know it will interest you to know that the last time I was in action at I found time to have a smoke that you all sent me, and in consequence my thoughts were with you all. Your affectionate brother, Frank."

So you are contemplating going to S. Africa. Don't move too quickly in that direction, Vi, But persistently apply for 'Eng' & you'll sure get here in the end. Alma longs for you so, always she talks of you & naturally we too would love to greet you. [Alma Rath trained as a nurse with Violet Sambell at the Ontario Hospital in London, both graduating in 1932. They were room mates for 11 years.]

At present, Alma is on seven days leave. She stated she was going to Stratford-on-Avon then to Liverpool - but all the family here are very fond of her & she enjoys a good laugh. You can guess with my family someone causes laughter. But Reg is our most mischeivous one, one never knows what next to expect. He mixed my sugar & margarine together one day, then sauce & marg. He helps wonderful when one is busy placing tools out of reach. He is growing tall. But we notice it little, it's other folks who state this. I had to leave this note. He was across the room, up on my chair testing the pen & ink. Results - a dirty page.

continued - - -

Frank is feeling fine now. He is on 24 hrly duty. We have been fairly quiet of late, Rosina was home for last week end. [Rosina was probably evacuated to Kent, fairly close to home, at this time.] She wrote they had alerts Friday, Sat. Sun & Mon. late nights. Of course she is in a defence area & has been fairly close to War & raids.

Of course we are grateful to Russia & our boys of the R.A.F. It's those who have kept it so easy for this time last year it was dreadful, meals at any time often eaten in the shelter, & down below at 7 pm or a short while after 4 in Nov. 5pm & 6pm until 6am & 7am. Of course we know we will get visitors but trust they do not arrive so early this winter. Of course my boys are out in every raid, they show great courage. But I was not afraid, only like all other folk.

The humming of Jerry's planes continually throughout the night worried us. When alert sounds, flares dropping, ones tummy does turn over, for one feels helpless to fight back. But the feeling passes as our guns go, ambulances run by in response to Wardens Whistle & all go out to help, it's a marvelous sensation the urge to help. However, it makes one cry to see after results.

However, dear I will not depress you. But think of brighter days to come (Len is practicing on a clarinet & the dog howls marvelously & wags his tail at same time. It makes us laugh & Rags appears to enjoy it all. We talk over that great day when maybe we will return home. [Ted suspects Rose meant when all the family would be together again.]

What a crowd!! Eight boys, two girls & here's Len 20 yrs next Sunday. Reg just 1 ½ yrs. I would love you to come to Eng to be able to meet my crowd. Len full of dancing & jazz, altho he likes serious things too. Ted our Pianist (so far), Ben chess player, Rosina, full of fun, a gown maker, John lithe full of exercise, very strong, Pat. quiet, yet full of vim & loves to make dolls clothes, Keith our student, Albert, full of energy & fun & very quick, Bernie a serious laddie,. He was a smiling little boy very lovable. But war did change him in one way. His fear of bombs, (thru a child to whose house he was billeted at Rye) But I have helped him break that complex. He is in Lancashire now

Well Vi, I must not tire you. We hope you are quite O.K. and also all the folk at home. Give Dad our Love, ask him to break out & write before Xmass & its NOT far off, now only 14 wks with one day off.

Cheerio Vi & if you've a few spare minutes we too would appreciate a line from YOU. Goodnight dear

Frank, Rose, family xxx



BLITZ ROUTINES

Life on the Home Front



Throughout several letters we get a picture of the wartime routines that developed at the Sambell residence. Daytime was spent making the most of daylight hours to complete chores of washing, tending the vegetable garden, preparing innovative meals based upon ration books coupons. Evening blackouts were strictly enforced and for months on end saw the family dinner being interrupted by air raid warning sirens and the sound of bombs flying by with explosions both distant and near. Helpless to the threats, everyone scurried to the bomb shelter in the backyard.

Mornings were a time for everyone to pitch in and clean up the rubble in the street from fallen buildings and to retrieve the bodies of the dead. Despite this continued stress Rose appears to keep up a positive attitude and is the welcoming care giver to many in her extended family.



Preface to letter #7

The routines of war on the home front teach all to make the best of family get-togethers. By all accounts the 1943 New years celebrations were marked by household dancing, music and song all of which become typical escapes from reality. They even take advantage of simple things like collecting fallen chestnuts and enjoying the treat with periwinkles, celery and cake! As Rose says "We enjoy ourselves really on very little, for its War & we must make do for others are sacrificing for us." The following letter is written to Violet and Earl Jeffery who had married the year previous on March 7, 1942 and were living in the hamlet of Dereham Centre near Tillsonburg Ontario.

Dear Vi & Earl.

We had a merry week-end: for on Saturday Eve early your boy Francis (Way) came along a wee bit shy at first. But my crowd soon drifted him along. Frank (Sambell) was off duty. After tea & a chat, Frank took him over to see our local tavern (don't get a bad impression please, for Frank never enters there only when Alma comes along & should fancy a wet, for drink never bothers Frank, I never touch it, neither any of the gang). After one drink they returned - really it was to let the lad have an experience of a short walk in Our Blackout. After supper, we all retired. [Francis Way was Earl Jeffery's son-in-law. Francis spent the war in England working as a motor mechanic. He had one day off in ten, and it took 25 minutes by train from the centre of London to where he stayed at Rose's place.]

Sunday morn, Frank had to return to duty, so left our visitor to our mercy. Ted came in & as usual remarks were passed. How like you Vi. Ted is (He's 20 yrs today) however, after breakfast, Ted played & conversation buzzed, had dinner at noon, then gang took Frank [Francis Way] out to learn correct time of departure, & on for a walk, came across some chestnuts at foot of trees, we all gathered them & stuffed them into Franks pockets, home in time for tea & then the fun began. Having no alternative I supplied, WINKLES celery & cake. [periwinkles are edible black sea snails, a bit like a smaller escargot]

Frank (Way) was highly amused & interested in the former, but sure ate them with relish. He selected a few to take back to camp to display to his chums.

We opened the folding doors, pushed table against the wall, Ted played & oh boy what fun & laughter we did have, gave Frank his first lesson in Pelvic Glide. He has learnt also, Lambeth-Walk, chestnut tree, & Boomp a-daisy, dances, & to finish up, made him dance Mother Brown - then serious dancing started. English Modern Waltz, it has many intricate but pretty steps, Tango, Fox trot & quick step.

Frank said, its all new to him, But he's determined to learn them all.

Ted stated, I will take you Frank, if ever you're here on my evening studio class & you'll like it. Teddy is a very graceful dancer. He seems to glide along, has won his bronze medal, is entering for his silver, then later on, Gold. Should he win three is entitled to M.S.T.O. behind his name (music student Teacher of Dancing) But he is so very quiet over it all. He shocks folk when they discover all about him. His hands are long & slim, simply slide over the keyboard.

Len is a good dancer too. He attends his club dances. Mondays Fridays, usually goes to Greenwich Town Hall. It's a lovely huge ballroom. His girl [Lillian Drummond] of course is always with him. Frank [Francis Way] then demonstrated his Physical Training tricks, my boys in return taught him some, in meantime I roasted a couple of chestnuts for Frank. He liked them that way. After a sing song & what a noise too, for Ted played piano, Frank, [Way] his mouth organ, Len, a friends mouth organ, Pat. Rosina, John, Ben (& even Reg of course) had a comb & piece of fine paper. How we laughed.

Len then played some of his swing records & I got some eats & that brought Frank to 9.50 pm time to depart. He stated he'd had a great good time & sure means to come along in a months time. If he can let us know, Ted will book seats for those so desiring & take him to see (Babes in the Woods) a Pantomime. It will be of interest to him, for Alma says you never have such a thing home. Frank said, you are not entire strangers as folk often talk of you at home. However Vi & Earl, rest assured & tell June too (his wife) that her boy will be O.K. & we will do anything for him. He only has to ask.

We are hoping to get Tommy, Jack & Alma here for Jack & Tommy Rath [Alma's brothers] too are regular visitors & are dears. Of course Alma is a real darling. We hope Frank (Way) & her will meet here. However, I gave him her full address & instructions in full will be given him when he is about to visit her, how to get to her & she will expect him. He intends to make it very near future too, I wrote a week end before January is out. Tommy goes to Hull for his 7 dy leave at end of month, as he is 23 yrs 18th of Jan, Ted 20 yrs today, Rosina 17 yrs Feb. 3rd. We wish to celebrate (as best we can)

We enjoy ourselves really on very little, for its War & we must make do for others are sacrificing for us. But when Peace is here, well, many say this & that, I think I'll howl with Joy. No more rushing round five mins each evening before black out to lower & secure blinds etc. & each morning to draw them to see the lights of London once again, -how Reg will look, and when that gorgeous day arrives & I give him his first banana to see how he will accept it, -to go to stores for clothes & have no coupons to worry on.

My gang are broke, they've dished me (supposed loans!!!) & now await March. I make all sox for males in this house. But wool is bought on my coupons. Evelyn was a dear. [Frank's brother Albert Sambell and his wife Evelyn lived in London, Ontario] I have blue Siren Woolly Suit for Reg. green cloth, hat & coat, knitted mitts & leggings & over comes Billy's scarlet snow suit, [Bill Sambell is Albert and Evelyn's son] I had oddment of Rosina's sweater, same colour. Made it mitts & he refuses to take off his set when he returns.

Well Dear, ere I tire you, I'll quit. Just had letter from Alma. She's coming on 18th Tom's birthday. So must wire Tom & Jack or send express letters. How Lovely! [Tom & Jack Rath were Alma's brothers in the Canadian Army. This was a problem, because Alma was a nursing Lieutenant, and couldn't appear on the street with lower ranks - her own brothers!]

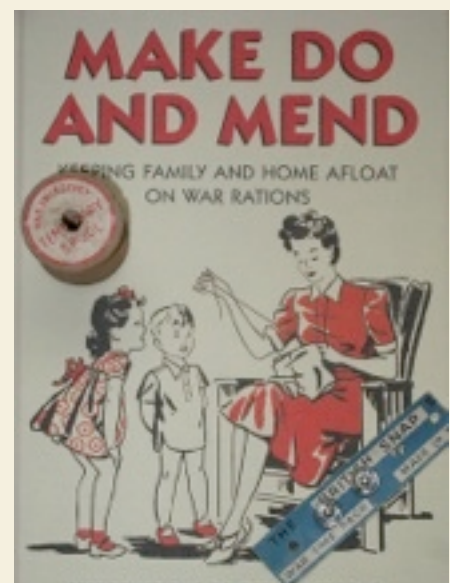
Love from all this end. Say Vi, Alma so very thrilled, she had your lovely parcel safely & letter too. Frank [Francis Way] said my crowd are a gang to get a swelled head over & he's right proud he's got a gang of nice new cousins (much laughter). Frank [Way] gave Reg some milk choc. He has a piece daily, NOT buyable here, of course gang had a taste. Write soon & Best Wishes to you Both.



Private Francis Way

Love to Sambell gang
when you see them -
Your Loving Sis & Bro
Rose. Frank & Gang

It is clear from the letters that Rose is diligently adhering to the messages of the many war poster campaigns.



Preface to letter #8

This very newsy letter by Rose, at the start of the fourth year of war, provides interesting details concerning the characteristics and relationships of members of the family. It is evident that despite the size of her family, Rose is deservedly proud of the job she has done raising her children and the values she has instilled in them. It is evident by her closing comment "news is food" -that letters from others are very comforting.

Dear Vi & Earl

Did baby's dress arrive OK? I hope it fits her. I have heard from Florrie, Evelyn & Grace, [Florence Sambell McRoberts; Evelyn Sambell, wife of Albert; Grace Sambell Astles - all Rose's sisters-in-law] How sweet your little one is, & how well she is progressing, apparently she is like the rest of the Sambells or at least as mine were when born, owners of a good mop of 'Black hair', which grows fairer. Are you calling baby Mary Lois, or Mary?

I suppose you, like us, were surprised to hear of Alma's arrival in Sicily, [Alma was there by July, 1943] I got my news from 'Francis' first [Francis Way] I was awaiting a visit from her. But came to the conclusion she had gone home for a months leave, as she was expecting to do. Then Tommy came in for seventy two hrs, & showed us her airgraph to him. Next post brought a letter from Ted [Ted would have been in Torbay, Devon, with the Civil Defence]. He too had had an airgraph, next day I had a letter from her. Vi, I hope she'll not be too long out there. I do so long to see her. We all love her so very dearly. It will be an awful wrench when she finally leaves for home, but I know she too has loved ones longing to see her at home. So will not begrudge her return.

Jack [Jack Rath] too has sent two airgraphs since his arrival in Sicily. He's a L/Cpl now. Gee I did tease him, Tommy [Tommy Rath] is here & I hope he will stay, altho he doesn't think so. He came in to see Ted who was home for 48 hrs this week-end. Tommy left at 4 pm from Camp, arrived here 6 pm had to leave at 9 pm. Vi, he's like a son to me, He calls me his 'adopted Mum,' & Rosina, his girl friend, they are a pair of teases, But sometimes are quiet, play cards with the boys etc. But I

must admit, it seems awful at times, only Rosina amongst a crowd of Boys. She treats them all as brothers, for the boys chums have grown up from young school days with them, she's not boy conscious, & is more like a boy with them, races them at the bathing Pool etc. [The indoor pool was at Durham Hill Park. There was a library there too.] But I really am amused when the soldier boys return to camp, my gang escort them to the station (if home). Saturday, my boys (except Len) went with their chums & Rosina, to take Tommy off.

But the worst tease of all is Francis [Francis Way]. He & Rosina are a pair well matched, they play havoc. I am incapable of carrying on my work for laughing, he's a real bright spot, both think they are privileged persons, being cousins-in-law. Francis was in on Friday night, brought in Douglas MacGregor a very nice boy. They went off to Salford [coincidentally, or perhaps not so coincidentally, Francis Way was from Salford, Ont.] early Sat morn for their 9 days leave, returning here during the weekend. I made Francis bring his dirty linen & all's ready for him, sox darned etc. He's a failing like Ted, pushes his big toes thru his sox. I kidded him I'd darned his red sox with white & blue wool to prove his identity.

The boys were kidding Rosina & Len respectively, on the subject of kissing. Len says he should kiss as many girls as possible to keep him in practice for Lil, whilst she's away She's in the NAAFI now, at Bedford. He visited her on Sunday. She doesn't like her new Job. [NAAFI supplied stores and canteens for the British Armed Forces and allied troops] Rosina says, one should only kiss ones fiancée, another said "Oh Rosie did you kiss Tommy". Gosh, she slapped into the boys saying, "Me! No. You all were looking, I only kiss two men, my Dad & Francis, I leave Mum to kiss Tommy." Then began an uproar, they wouldn't let me explain I kissed Tommy for Alma, Vi. I laughed till tears came down my face, for we had Bens chums in & they joined into the teasing.

But there are times when this house is quiet, all are reading or amusing themselves John at his stamp album etc. Ben sketching, Len studying Electric Welding Journals, Keith fretwork carving. Francis paid us a nice compliment. he says we are the happiest family he's ever met & considers this place his home in Eng & free to bring in his friends knowing they'll be welcome. It's not posh dear, for we're in the front line. War conditions have caused many hardships & have spoilt things that cannot be replaced yet awhile. Besides when a gang of children are small, its enough to feed & educate them to become good citizens & Vi, we have been successful, although at times our road has been very rugged. But your nephews & nieces can mix wherever they go. Sounds snobby. But no, they are good company.



Rosina Sambell

From babyhood, I've trained them, instilled into them the Sambells are honorable & clanish, & today they are moulded to each other. Oh Yes they have their own opinions etc. & often have good debates at the table. My only regret is I've only two girls, I love girls so & each arrival of a son was a blow to me. However, I said I'd have 8 daughters to come, But (so far) all state except Len they're to be batchlors (hm!) & Rosina says Alma & her & Pat too are going to have a 'Lady Batchlors' bungalow, not that I doubt they'll marry till late. But they'll wed in spite of avowels. They see & know enough of the male sex, having eight brothers. But I kid them someone's brother will love them one day. Boys kid Rosina Re: Tommy. But altho they are good pals, he only writes me.

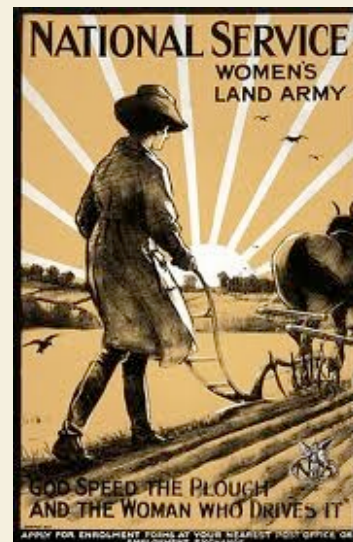
Jack, when in Eng. wrote Rosina. She writes him, & has sent an airgraph to Sicily, (I had a nice letter from Francis Mum yesterday) Well Dears. Gang O.K. John has his uniform of Home Guards & is on his first 'All night duty tonight, He's so very proud. Ted looks well & in spite of fatigues, route marches & strenuous life has gained weight & is now 141 lbs has lovely brown colour. He has always done heaps of sunbathing & is very healthy. [Ted worked with the Civil Defence in Devon, and on his time off, loved to go for long hikes.]

- Well I'd better quit & commence my chores for the day. Sun is shining & warm, my corn is coming along fine now. Waiting to get one ready for Francis & chums. I've 9 cobs. So have one for each of my Canadian boys.

- Best Wishes to you both, a kiss for our wee niece (Gee I'll be glad to get her Picture). Frank sends special regards to you & please write soon. Not heard for quite a long time. Cheerio, all's well so far. News is food.

Yr Affec'. Bro. Sis.

Frank, Rose & the family xxx



1944 picture of Rosina Sambell (King) in her Women's Land Army uniform.

Preface to letter #9

Showing signs of stress and fatigue Rose lets it be known that evening blackouts, followed by fireworks (euphemism for bombing) all contribute to intermittent sleep at night. Of course the daily challenge of preparing meals based on ration books adds to the stress of life on the home front. Nevertheless, the comings and goings of everyone keeps the family active and engaged.

Hello Vi & Earl

Gee I feel well. [sarcastic]) Can't express myself but suppose it's rest I'm needing. Seem to have had a restless time of late & firework shows are great: but tire of them at times. Ted was in & I really think my woe is thinking of him on his long journey back (250 miles) [to Torbay, Devon] & if he was caught in the raid. [At night we --] each & all disrobe, placing clothing handy. But we've only been caught twice abed this season. Otherwise it has been before 10 pm. But I retire semi dressed. But it has it's amusing moments. Last week, 'Mona' wailed, Reg put on his hat & coat, all awry. I said, where are you going. He replied, "warning. guns, bombs, planes. All Clear!" He did look so funny I just had a good laugh.

At this moment John is bursting his lungs on trying to play Frank's trumpet, the ensuing results are really horrific, I've moved him into the next room. For it's been uproar here this early Eve. Keith suddenly discovered he could play or make a noise with two pieces of wood clappers. - Len rushing around preparing for his usual Monday Eve dance. Lil is in too, dodging around. Reg got roused from a nap. So not too eager to be happy. Rosina & Ben in for tea. But tis now 8 pm & I can relax & write. Black out evenings seem long. But this all is not hardship.

Well dears, I had an air mail from Alma this Eve. She's a darling, says she often thinks of Ted & he's one grand boy. He writes her fairly often. He, like the rest of us, just love her. Here's a small picture of him. Not too bad. Hat spoils it. Now try & compare yourself & picture, Vi, & let me know the verdict, for Alma declares you are twins, born apart.

Frank is well, has been busy - Len OK. Ted, he likes his spot, [Devon or Wiltshire] but prefers home. He sure looks well now, weighs 143 lbs & has grown a little, now stands 5'7 1/2". But sure has worked hard. Alma will be surprised when she sees him - two Yorkshire Lads [Albert and Keith?] are fit must try & get their picture taken - Francis [Way] sure laughs at them. But his favourites are Ted & Rosina, she is such a tease. He says, 'Hallo all, I'm home again' when he walks in. Says it's his English home. He was tired when he came in last wk. So I sent him back to bed after dinner (12.30pm) to rest. I love to hear him laugh, shall miss him when you folk reclaim him, still Vi, it will have been nice in knowing him. Says Rosina shall be in to meet June, when she comes to Canada. He knows they'll like each other. [Frank's wife, June Jeffery Way)

Well I'll quit. Glad dress was OK. Will look around town for some small souvenir for you when I go 'up West'. We did hope Bert would come this way. [Bert Sambell, Frank's young brother, was in the Canadian Navy] Still hope one day to meet him. Our love to you happy trio, & when you can, we'd love to hear again from you. Alma stated she'd heard from you OK. Cheerio, a x for Babs

God Bless You All

Rose, Frank & All the Gang

xxx

A Merry Xmass to you all, hope by time next year comes you'll see some of my gang at the clans festive board (in Canada).

Preface to letter #10

This short amusing letter notes the gift of a small wool-pin made by Ben and the antics of young son Reg.

Dear Vi, Earl & Babes

Here is a small Wool-Pin. Ben had it made for you. I sent rest of Clan one each, so hope this reaches its destination safely. Rosina just had nice letter from Tommy Rath. States all leave passes stopped pro tem, but hopes to be along soon. Hope you're getting Alma's mail OK by now. Jack [Rath] wrote to Rosina too, a real cheery letter. He's full of fun. We'll be so glad to see them all again. May it be not too far distant.

Must close. Reg is arising. He's so funny. He strips off his night wear & strolls down in the nude - quite unconcerned. I'm still trying to break the [his] habit. In summer he'd strip & play in the garden in his bare skin outfit, Len says he's running his own one kid nudist colony.

Cheerio Dears. I hope you happy trio are OK. No letter from Francis (Way) this week. That means he'll be in to see us.

All the Best

Rose, Frank & gang xxx

P.S.

Reg has just come down, his hair well matted. Has found my vaseline & plastered his hair with it. He does get into mischief...

Preface to Letter #11

Approaching the fourth wartime Christmas Rose updates the Canadian family with another amusing letter. Husband Frank is quick witted and rises to the occasion when challenged by son Len. Other stories around the dinner table and details about the lives of others.

Hello Vi, Earl & Baby

Your letter of Nov 15th arrived 11th inst. Ever so glad to hear from you folk, & say, our wee niece seems as tho we will shortly have to erase the word 'wee'. Your statement re: her dark eyes brings back old memories. Whilst at dinner one day, Ben burst forth: "Mum, can we have a baby brother, a black one for a change, cause I'm sick & tired of seeing our new babies who come to here with blue eyes," Of course Frank replied, saying, "As black ones cost more & so were very very rare", he couldn't accede to his request. I had Len, Ted, Ben, Rosina, John & Patty who was very young. Keith arrived when she was 1 yr & 6 wks old)

Then one day, Len sat looking at Pat. She was a dainty little girl with lots of fair curls, then burst out, "Dad, where did Patty & all of us come from?". Gee Vi. I was stuck for a couple of seconds. Frank rose to the occasion quite successfully - "Well, sonny, you & the rest came from the river of Life, a basket lying still near the bank. The tree of Love, let a leaf with a seed fall in that basket all warm & it flowed to the Gates of Life. Then that seed (a wee egg of Life) grows & forms to the Mother to be likeness & when too big for the basket, is lifted out & I'll tell you more a little later on".



River of Life by Gail Lois Jaffe

But Vi, Frank's Mum had brown eyes. I believe Harry & Albert, & you had brown eyes or were yours, as like Frank's, grey? I love brown eyes, & hope Mary Lois keeps hers brown.

Francis commenced his 7 days leave Frid. Eve. I've just posted his invite to here as no travel leave is allowed at Xmass unless proof be given a soldier has a definite place to go to. I've sent Tommy Rath's too, but not too sure re: him. He's driving a Padre around. So if he is on duty Xmass day we may not get him till Boxing day. We had our first spot of snow, about 1 inch on Sat. But what a welcome it had from the kids. Reg revelled in the window at the sight of white snow. Gang sang I'm dreaming of a white Christmass.

I hope ere another one arrives, Francis will be united to his loved ones again. He's such a dear & full of fun. Yet very sensitive, it will be a wrench when we say adieu. But he has promised to introduce Rosina & Patty to his folk when they arrive, said, this is his home in Eng. It's free, easy & happy & always a welcome for any chum he brings in. You see Vi, they're all nice fellows he brings in, George is a dear too, calls me Mum & ever teasing.

Frank sure has been busy. He's carrying 'flu Victims to Local Hospital'. He looked real tired yesterday. Len still at his same job. Ben too, John included & both boys enjoying their home Guard duties. They are very interested in it. Rosina is going to apply early new yr. for entrance to L.A.A.S. [London Auxiliary Ambulance Service] as a part-timer, that is, giving her services 12 hrs. wkly. as an ambulance attendant, not at Frank's station. His is all men, & Ex service men too, a grand bunch of chaps.

Patty comes home Dec. 23rd to Jan 10th for Winter holidays. Keith, Albert & Bernie have from 23rd Dec to Jan 3rd. Two Yorkshire nuts [Keith and Albert] have still their dialect, Keith is very broad. To add fuel to fire, he has a teacher who is a native of Yorkshire & so delights in conversing with Keith in his native brogue; Reg is same as ever, fickle in appetite, & full of energy, & he's now chatting. He went all at once into sentences.

I've had no news for three weeks from Alma or Jack, altho it's Rosina who hears from Jack. Cheeky Boy, he addressed his last airgraph

Miss Rosie (S.P) Sambell, the initials mean Sugar Plum - that's his nick name for her. He too is a hunk of fun & frolic. We miss him & Alma so very very much. I write every week to her & it's my appreciative thanks to you dear for sending her along to us. We live on, hoping for the day we will meet again, all the gang adore her. Ted always speaks of her, she'll have a huge welcome on her return, altho of course we realize she'll one day return to you folk & what a joyous meeting that'll be. If it hadn't been for the invasion of Sicily, everything was set for her to visit you & her folk for about 4 wks. However, fate decided otherwise.

Well, I must quit, it's 8.30pm. No siren so far. Went 7.40 pm Frid. had an hour in the shelter, the frost was glistening. Four Jerry's shot down. Going on great eh? Well Dears, a happy New Yr to you. God Bless you with health, happiness & may it be crowned by Peace.

Cheerio. I'll write again. Love to the Sambell gang.

Rose, Frank & family xxx

London Ambulance Service in action



Preface to letter #12

Christmas parcels arrive and provide for interesting commentary. With a decrease in night time air raids and news of the loss of the German battleship the 'Scharnhorst' there are signs of hope for peace. Rose is even planning to take the children to see Cinderella at the local theatre over the Christmas season.

Dear Vi, Earl & Babs -

First of all, your two parcels of clothing arrived safely, also parcel of eats. I do thank you for your kindness to us. The heavy, mixture coat, Rosina altered to fit me, the green bolero dress fits Patty real nice - the blue dress with bows on the Basque fits Rosina & coat too - Ben says, thanks for Razor blades. I had been trying all week for some for him.

Am awaiting nice Weather before I use my film. Xmass was unusually quiet, Tommy [Rath] & Francis [Way] refused leave at last minute. However Vi, he may be in on Frid. Even. for New Yr. The 5th Jan is Teds 21st Birthday, So I've invited Francis, Bill & George [friends of Francis?] for 48 hrs. So we will keep up Xmass then. Only one thing, I did hope that Francis would have opened the two parcels from his mum to us, Vi. She sent each one here a gift, but Reg sure was lucky. Mrs. Way was very generous to him & all, not forgetting Tommy & Don [Francis 2 brothers?]. She sent the Boys a tie clip with an enamel maple leaf inscribed Woodstock [Ontario] - girls had stockings & Rosina had a Lipstick, her very first one, she is only using it at week-ends.

We've had a few quite peaceful nights (since Xmass Eve) for prior to that Jerry was a nuisance. I bet the loss of his 'Scharnhorst' [German battle ship] has made him wriggle! However, may the lights of London shine again for next winter. John gave me an earthenware T-Pot for Xmass. Rose, Ben & Pat 6 cups with handles, & six tea plates (saucers are a rarity these days) Lil, Lens girl, gave me a pair of stockings. But I expect Rosina will fall heiress to them. I haven't worn any since last April - trying to go without as long as possible.

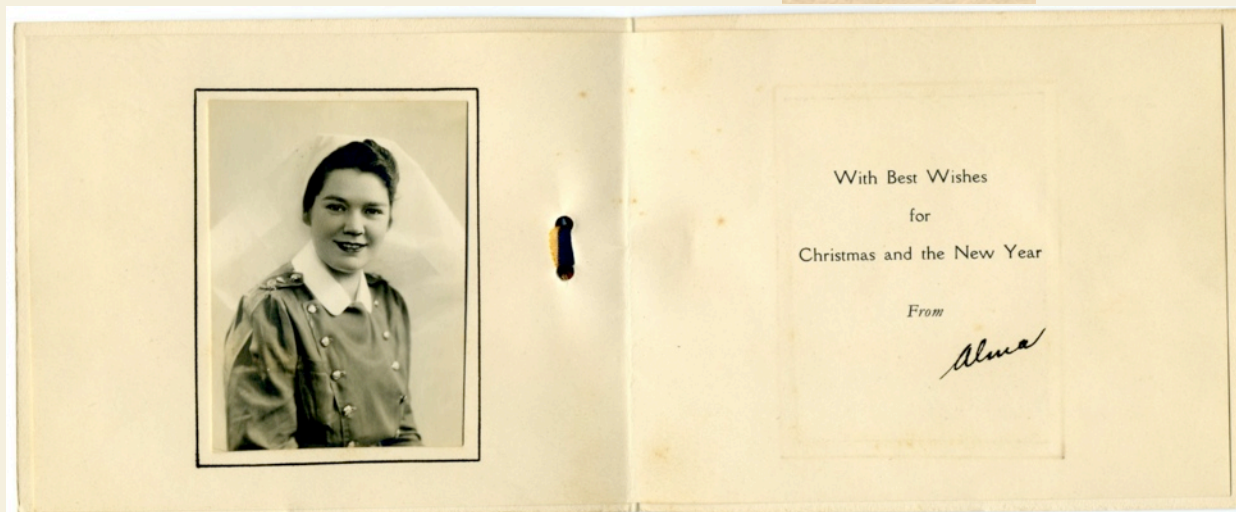
Our weather is mild, been really close for Xmass. We had living room window open all the day - bedroom windows are never closed. Toys being scarce, dear & like rubbish, kids had cash. I'm paying for them to see Local theatre Pantomime, Cinderella. Well Vi & Earl, we await your wee daughters picture.

No news for a month from Alma or Jack [All 3 Raths - Alma, Jack and Tommy, came home safely from the war.] I hope they are fit & well. I had a Card for Xmass from her. Well, I hope you both will have a happy new year with Gods richest gifts showered on you.

Good Health & happiness. Kiss Mary Lois for us all. Our fondest affection to you both & all at Home. Write again soon, its nice to hear of your doings.

Cheerio, Rose, Frank & Gang xx

A Christmas card sent by Alma Rath to her friends. The back of the envelope was marked with the stamp at right.



Preface to letter # 13

Written a month after the D-Day landing Rose comments on the maintenance of their air raid shelter. Despite installing a cement floor flooding remains a problem and the damp conditions necessitate the use of disinfectant and thorough airing of the blankets. Rose also comments about Frank's long hours of work with the ambulance service. The stress and horrors of his job seem to be getting to him.

It appears that Rose had recently completed a thorough spring cleaning of the house when the neighbourhood was visited by a German buzz bomb. One landed in the street about 100 yards behind their house. It destroyed the city block. Ted recalls going over to inspect the damage and the crater after he came home from Wiltshire. It took some time for the municipal workmen to clear away the damage and begin to repair buildings in the neighbourhood including part of the building that Rose's family was living in. In addition the threat of more bombs remains real as Rose pauses her letter and comments on the air raid warning signal that was going off - but notes "ah its gone off". Despite the persistent threat of destruction Rose maintains her optimism and ends with the salutation "So seeing its 9.45 pm I'll quit & get under for the night, putting ourselves in Gods care. So its cheerio & chins up dears."

Hello Vi, Earl & Baby,

Seems ages since I heard from you! Francis came in just over a month ago but had no news for almost three weeks from him. Very busy since D-day, I had a very interesting Air mail from 'Alma' yesterday. First news for five weeks. So you can imagine my relief & joy to know she was safe & well - I write her every week, sometimes twice wkly. Tommy hasn't written for nine wks. I write him wkly. I hope he is well! Alma hasn't heard from him also - Rosina heard from 'Jack' ten days ago. He was fit & full of his usual quips, she sends him books & periodicals. He sure is glad of them!

Well dears, I suppose your weather is ideal? Ours has been 'Vile', it has rained every day since July set in, except today. Yesterday it reminded me of the bible story of 'The Flood', - but today has been nice. I've been able to hang the blankets out all day & put pillows & beds out of the shelter for airing, every day I've piled them on a bunk which holds Rosina & so enabling me to spray the shelter with a disinfectant, & sweep out, & today have thoroughly turned it out.

I have two overlays on the (cement) floor, [The Council concreted the shelter in an attempt to deal with flooding, but to little avail] on old coats, then cushions near the entrance, which Keith lays on, Albert, Bernie & Reg, lay on the overlays. I rest at their feet. Rosina on the bunk resting on a cement siding, then the shelter is 'full'. But when Frank was off duty, & we hadn't adjusted ourselves to Buzz bombs courses, he slept out on a camp bed near shelter, But as he's been very, very busy of late I make him cosy in my 'place' & sit up to watch. I doze in between intervals. He looks tired out, but had a good four hrs last night. He is on 24 hrs duty, but often goes over that.

I've scrubbed thru downstairs & cleaned windows, I've done my spring cleaning, but its all undone. I'll go thru upstairs when workmen have been in & cleared up, I guess it'll be a couple of weeks at it, but why worry! We've our life (so far) & hope for the best.

Its been easier today & news from overseas is grand, But I'll sure welcome the last "All Clear". Frank says He's going to bed for a whole week when Peace comes. Ted is mobile, but based at Wilts. [13 miles from Swindon] He's O.K. Ben & John are still home. Rest of family are fit, kiddies are out of school, pro-tem, but I hope not for long. Reg is 'Touchy' Re his food. But he's well & keeps fit, I am O.K. myself. Rosina & I have been busy knitting, Pat leaves school end of July so she'll make a few things.

We hear the warning & a buzzbomb is near. Ah! Its gone off. So seeing its 9.45 pm I'll quit & get under for the night, putting ourselves in Gods care. So its cheerio & chins up dears.

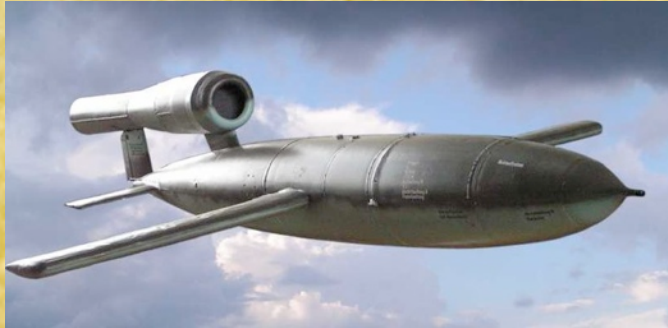
God Bless you & Baby Mary Lois. Our affection & good wishes.

Your Loving Bro Frank,

Sis Rose & family

**BUZZ
BOMBS**

Rocket attacks on the home front



The V-1 flying unmanned flying bomb, also known as the Buzz Bomb or Doodlebug.

The "doodlebug" was designed for terror bombing of London. Fired from "ski" launch sites along the French coast it was first used just after D-Day landing in June 1944. Over 1280 of these bombs fell within the area of greater London and 1241 were successfully destroyed in flight. As one American observer noted: "The robot bomb in flight is a fearful spectacle. in the daytime it is a long graceful streak of brown and by night it is a speeding dart with a flaming tail. The sound begins in the distance like a low mutter and then gets louder until it roars like an outboard motor. Vibrations shake floors and rattle windows and the nerves of everybody waiting below."

By September 1944, the V-1 threat to England was temporarily halted when the launch sites on the French coast were overrun by the advancing Allied armies. 4,261 V-1s had been destroyed by fighters, anti-aircraft fire and barrage balloons.



Preface to letter # 14

From September 1944, the evacuation process was officially halted and reversed for most areas except for London and the East coast. "Glorious news" reports of allied troop advances in Europe gave rise to the expectation of the lifting of the evening blackout and moreover the realization that peace may be at hand.

Hello Vi, Earl & Babies-

By the time this arrives maybe your new babe will make its debut. How lovely if it's a Son! [Larry Michael Jeffery was born Oct. 4/44] Please let me know as soon as poss for I have a gift to send on & await news of son or girlie. Of course you are aware of all the news if you've a radio. But it cannot convey our personal delight when next Sunday we will not jump at every knock thinking a glimmer of light may be showing & the arm of the Law is warning us. Of course we still have to have heavy type curtains.

Francis gave me a negative to get printed, so when I get prints, I'll send you one, dears. He's been here for the last 3 wk ends, & will be here next wk end, for Rosina leaves us to commence her training of Dairy farming for 8 wks. then will be employed on a farm some wheres, she's very thrilled, she joined women's Land Army when she was called up in her age group. The uniform is useful & smart too, in fact, of all the ... [words missing because the stamp was clipped] women it's the smartest.

Frank ...duties of Pre War. Buzz Bombs, ... to be doing his nursing ... evacuation Job. I must say Reg too appreciates his cot at 6 pm these last three nights he has asked to go to bed. I sure did miss my open windows still dears. I was in comparative safety in the shelter & hope that we are there using it. But one cannot be sure for we've been warned. However Vi, news is glorious & God has been good to us here. Patty will be home this week end for a few hrs [probably from Maidstone, Kent]. Francis's chum Bill is coming in & the boys chums, so we'll have a sing song as of old. Now I'll quit, space is limited. Kiss Mary Lois for us all & yr. new wee one, too & say Vi, let us be hearing soon. No news from Alma for 4 weeks. Cheerio dears. Keep smiling.

Love xx Rose, Frank & gang

BOMB SHELTERS

change this page to a new topic

AIR RAID SHELTER
150 PERSONS



Shelters were fun in the making & exciting play areas for children - until night time air raids cracked the black skies with thunderous noise & fireworks.

The 14 galvanized corrugated steel panels of the Anderson shelters were bolted together to form a room 6 ft high, 4 ft 6 in wide, & 6 ft 6 in long. They were buried 4 ft deep in the soil and then covered with a minimum of 15 inches of soil above the roof. The earth banks could be planted with vegetables and flowers victory gardens. They became the subject of competitions of the best-planted shelter among the neighbourhood. Anderson shelters were issued free to all householders who earned less than £250 a year, and those with a higher income were charged £7. During the war 2.1 million were erected. However, these shelters were dark and damp and tended to flood.

According to Ted Sambell, the family's Anderson shelter in the back garden was always problematic, because there was also a spring in the backyard, and the shelter flooded regularly. At some point, the family abandoned the shelter, and slept on the ground floor of the house.

In 1941 the government issued the Morrison Shelters which were made of very heavy steel and could be put up in the living room and used as a table. One wire side lifted up for people to crawl underneath. they provided sleeping space for two or three people.



Preface to letter # 15

Expectations that the war will end soon are recognized in this letter. Rose mentions that she "bought my first flag ready for Victory Day" and spends much of the letter expressing her feelings, admiration and appreciation for people in her life as she recaps where everyone is and what they are doing.

Dear Vi, Earl & Babies

Here I am anxiously awaiting news of your new little one & hoping you are well - Francis came in Sunday, he had been to visit an old school chum who is in a Cdn. Hosp. here. Wounded from Belgium. Francis looks really well. He has been to Devon & assured us how lovely that part of Eng. is - We haven't heard from Alma for three weeks, she then said she had applied to leave on next rotation. I'd dearly love to see her. Jack writes Rosina. Last week he stated, Alma had visited him & looked a little brighter. Rosina sends Jack, Tommy & Alma reading material. Tom hasn't written for 3 wks. But the boys in France are so very busy. We cannot expect letters very often, this also applies to those in Italy.

Rosina was home for the week-end & I must say she looks really well, has a lovely colour. She likes her job, says its interesting, but very hard & it will be harder & longer hours in the winter, for the cows have to be in the barns, all their food has to be carried in.

But the greatest consolation is the girls are so grand, no envy or spitefulness exists & every week those who come home, take back a parcel of eats, also call on the other girls folk & collect eats, for these girls have a huge appetite. When Rosina was home, her appetite was indifferent. So I'm thrilled when I see her eat - But it's the open air, the girls are out in all weathers. She's always been very healthy & a keep fit fan. Boys do not 'worry her', she sees enough at home. But its her brothers who are her companions, for altho Ted is 21 yrs, Ben 26 yrs, they are unattached, altho, these boys are good lookers & dancers, well dressed. I say, they are dodging the column. But boys say, life is too uncertain for Post War plans have yet to be experienced & one must consider all things.

Len & Lil are O.K. She expects her little one around Dec. 19th - a daughter - if after 26th a son. But I think it will definitely be a girl, I told her that her cousin would have a girl by Oct. 9th, the latest, after that date, a son, however Oct 4th her baby came, a girl. [Rose's first grandchild was Len and Lil's daughter, Hazel]

Len is at night school learning theory of advanced welding. Frank was responsible for this, when his firm learnt he was attending night tech school they paid his fees for him. Frank is fit, but has a cough which is leaving him, for I attend to it. He's not too busy, but finds enough to do. Ted too is busy & fit. Ben has not left Home Guards yet, his officer requested his men to 'Stay Put.'

John is doing well. He can now wire a car. He is tall & sturdy & good looking. He has joined a dancing club & sure can dance, for dancing here is an ART with hundreds of various fancy steps. As Francis says, one has to think all the time. The boys take him with them when he comes here. I laugh often at John, for he used to kid Len heaps Re: dancing & vow he'd never go exercising around to a Jazz band. Of course it's Len's turn to kid him. But they're a clannish bunch & never quarrel. Frank & I simply would not tolerate any arguments, that's the reason we always have visitors.

Patty is home & taken over Rosina's late job. She too is tall & very good looking. But she loves keep fit classes & sports. She is a good gown maker, has made herself 3 nice dresses & 2 blouses. Francis calls her stately lady. Alma named her Princess Pat, she is very shy. But is very easy to talk to, once she has summed one up. Isabelle's [?] friend Forrest is very fond of Pat.

Albert is progressing good at his new school, his favourite lesson being French. He's coming home for half term. He reminds me of Albert when he was young - Keith reminds me of you when you were young (he resembles Ted) very quiet & studious, but VERY outspoken if asked an opinion on a given subject. He's learning French polishing, practiced on our Radio case & it looks great. Bernard is at Reading not too far from

where 'Alma' was when in Eng. He'll return around Xmas - for we aren't yet free from D. Bombs. [probably Doodlebugs - V 1 and V 2 rockets] get sirens at night & early morn.

Reg is alone now, but he plays with his ... [?] quite a lot. Toys are rare & hard to obtain. Prices are sky high. He used to be very steady during the day, full of fun & energy, but when darkness comes he's all nerves. Warnings worry him, & bombs too. D. Bombs have taught him the meaning of DANGER, so I go very easy with him, but firm. I myself am same as ever & I do hope you all are fit & well. I realize you are a busy girl now dear, but we would appreciate news from you when you get a few odd moments to spare. I told Francis I'd be writing, so he left his 'Very Best Wishes & regards' for you, Vi,. He's a lovely boy, so clean & true, he talks ever of June [his wife] & his return home, of you & Earl, his longing to see Mary Lois & your new arrival, of his Mum & Dad, Don & Tommy [his 2 brothers]. How grand will be his return home to you, richer in many experiences & friends. [His parents gave a party for him at the Cobblestone Inn in Byron, London, Ontario] Frank & all of us are genuinely fond of him, in fact Vi, we have met some nice boys thru him, & you folk at home. I hope & wish him to meet Alma. Tim (Forrest) does too & we are hoping to meet 'Nan' [Nan McDowell, another nursing friend of Violet's & Alma's] one day, & a distant cousin of Harry's wife Grace [Frank's brother, Harry and his wife Grace Miller Sambell lived on Curry St. in London, Ont]. He is in Belgium.

I have bought my first flag ready for Victory Day (if we are spared) & Keith will cut out a maple leaf for us. What a grand thing if all our overseas boys & girls meet at once!! Well its cheerio & chins up. God Bless you all & keep you well is our earnest prayer - take care of yourselves.

Heaps of the Best
from your affectionate Sis Rose,
Babes xx Bro Frank & all xxxx