

Extracts from Tom's Letter of 4th November 1941

My Dear Les, Vera and all,

Just a few lines to let you know that I am still OK and quite happy. I expect by now Mam has told you I have left England. It's not too bad here in the deep sea but a bit cold at night, one thing I'm doing what no-one else in the family has yet done. It seems funny that I spent my birthday out here, miles from anywhere and nothing to see but water. We are on a pretty good ...

But I can't say any more about it or where we are, but I shall have quite a lot to tell you all when I come home again whenever that may be. I still can't seem to realize that I am so far away from you all. It does seem funny after being in England so long, but roll on the day when I come home, what a 'do' we shall all have one big party and all of you will be there I hope.

Well now to change the subject a little: how are you all? Quite well I hope and how's Les, I hope he hasn't had to join up yet.

The life on the sea is not so bad, plenty of good food etc. but I don't think I'd like to be a sailor. They say 'Join the navy and see the world' but as far as I can see all the Navy can see is sea.

I expect by the time you get this it will be past Xmas or near enough Xmas so may I take this chance of wishing you all a very happy one. I don't know where I shall spend mine but wherever it is, it will be a strange place to me.

Please send soon and don't forget the photos.

Extracts from Vera's Letter of 23rd November 1941

My Dear Tom,

As we keep anxiously waiting for news of you, and by the looks of it we shall be waiting just a while yet, I will write this letter to you hoping that wherever you are it will help to cheer you up. You have no idea how awful it is for us not knowing where you are.

We can only guess by your letter that you are above water, by now perhaps in hot lands. If you are I guess you are getting a thrill of a lifetime with such a lot of new things to see. We wonder if there is a camera owner with your little batch.

(Audrey) Trots off to school like a big girl. Judy is still her sweet little self, but does most of the things Audrey does, good and naughty. Richard is gaining alright now and is getting quite playful and is full of smiles the same as Judy was. I expect you will see a great difference in them all when you come home again.

Les has been very busy all last night and most of today. They had a communication exercise (Home Guard) from 9.30 Saturday night to 4.30 Sunday afternoon ... so tonight he looks quite pale and worn.

I expect when it's off duty for you you will be having a whale of a time.

Extracts from Vera's Letter of 27th December 1941

My Dear old Son of a Gun,

Won't it be nice when at last we hear from you to know whereabouts in this great world you are. Each time I see Mother it's 'Any news' - 'No'- and each time I think 'Oh she'll hear soon now'. Just to know where and how you are. We all keep thinking of you day by day and wishing you were at home again. I know Christmas was not good this year for Mam and Dad, we of course had to have a fairly nice time for the kiddies. My word they were excited. Particularly Audrey, she understood about Father Xmas more this year and of course Judy has to follow suit in everything she can. Before I go I must say thank you for your Xmas presents. Fancy doing a thing like that when for all we know you are over the other side of the world.

Xmas day we spent on our own, then Boxing Day, Jess and Bob came for the day and we had quite a nice time together.

Everything is very peaceful here. They are even talking of testing the sirens to see if they still blow alright. Of course all eyes are on the Far East and Middle East.

I wonder what kind of Xmas you had, Tom. Did you have a good old bust up like you had last year, plenty to eat etc.? Did you have any mail at all?

Les is going to take Cinderella to Audrey (other way round) on Tuesday, which is bound to please the said lady, as there is to be real ponies on the stage.

Extracts from Vera's Letter of 21st January 1942

My Dear Old Tom,

Well how now, or how will you be say in 6 weeks time when you get this. Doesn't it seem strange hearing news that is 6 weeks or so old, but how nice when it's from you.

I was so thrilled when I received your first letter to me which you dated 4.11.41 and I got it 29.12.41. It seems we all three had one about the same time. There was not much to go by in your letter, such a lot cut and crossed out, but we all seem to think you are somewhere in the Far East – now in the thick of it. We do keep thinking about you, Tom. Oh won't it be nice to see you again, will it be 1 year, 2 or 3 years time.

Life here goes on much the same, no sirens, no bombs – almost no war. We are living fairly well, getting perhaps a little more variety of things and on the whole we have nothing to grumble at except this beastly cold weather. Oh for the Summer!!!

I expect you will hear about Mam's accident. I went round last Saturday and thought she looked very poorly but its bound to have shook her up no end. I feel so helpless not being able to get round there & do anything for them. Les wants them both to come here & stay, so we shall see what they say. Dad has been tonight & we were so excited to have got your telegram saying you were O.K. Such a relief to know something, but not the slightest sign of where it was sent from etc. I do think it's too bad of them once you are landed somewhere. Here is the 9pm news and it sounds grim out Malaya again.

Les has gone to the Home Guard tonight. Says he's only warm when he has all his uniform on. I wonder if they censor our letters to you.