



Letters to Teddy

by Pippa Longley

(Adult Category)

December 1914

Dear Teddy

I know my sister Esme told you in her last letter that she doesn't intend writing to you anymore. Please don't think too badly of her. Ma says it's no excuse, but she's very young, not seventeen until April.

I thought I'd write to keep you up to date with any news back here in Wimborne. Many families have lads, some of whom you will remember, who have been sent to the front. Several families have five, some even six sons away fighting.

Your mate Bert was back for a while. I saw him in the Victoria hospital where I've been volunteering as a nursing auxiliary. He had burns to his arms and looked in a terrible bad way although thankfully he mended. But blow me down, soon as he was up they sent him right back to the front with many another lad too. The ambulance trains are constantly bringing more wounded and the wards are filled to capacity.

After I finished teaching today I met up with some friends. We are all knitting for the war effort.

We have been busy making field caps, socks and mufflers. Maybe some of these have reached your unit?

Well Ted that's all the news for now so will close with good wishes for your safety.

Beatrice

September 1916

Dear Teddy

Thank you for your letters. I received the last two together. It's good to hear from you and have your news. I know you can't tell me much about what you're doing and again there were some words that had been cut out of your letters, I think they were place names most likely.

Ma has been bottling apples today and the house is filled with a warm scent of cloves and other spices.

Even the children are helping with the war effort by collecting acorns and conkers to send to the munitions factory at Holton Heath.

One of the nurses at the Victoria told me a sad tale. Her son has just finished school, he is barely 15. Anyway he was in town a few days ago when a woman approached him and pressed a white feather into his hand. He has been wanting to join up for months and now he feels ashamed and even more desperate to enlist, poor lad. His mother's distraught and so fearful.

If only this war could end.

Yours with love,

Beatrice

May 1917

My Dearest Teddy

Good to receive your letter as always.

The Red Cross set up a hospital at Beaucroft House as there are so many wounded soldiers arriving almost daily. I'm now doing some of my voluntary nursing there.

Every available scrap of land, including Ma's little front garden, has been prepared to be planted with crops as food is in such short supply. On Sunday in church the Rector asked again by order of the king himself that we don't eat potatoes with the exception

of Sundays and that everyone donates any potatoes to the committee to be sold to parishioners for use as seed.

There are slogans of 'Lend a Hand on the Land' on gates and fences. Tea, meat and sugar are all rationed and in short supply. Flour is so scarce that Ma tried using dried ground turnips to make bread, I can still smell it now and it tasted so bitter. She won't be doing that again as it gave us all such awful stomach pains.

I've been told that prisoners of war are being held in nearby villages including Wimborne St. Giles and that secret war work is underway nearby but lots of these things are hushed up and not spoken of.

The news in the papers has been better so I pray we can see an end to this 'war of wars'.

The light is failing and I shouldn't use the oil lamp so will finish now, to save supplies.

Yours with love, keep safe my dear.

Beatrice

September 1917

My dearest Teddy,

I hope you are receiving my letters. It's been many months since I received your last letter. With no news of you I can only hope and pray that you are well; although I fear the worst. If only this awful war would end.

Everyone has been busy harvesting and preserving crops. The children were excused from school this afternoon so they could gather blackberries for jam. They gathered 73lbs!

The hospitals are still busy.

I will continue to write in the hope that you are out there somewhere. I won't, I can't give up on that hope.

Yours with love,

Beatrice

November 1918

My Dearest Teddy

Still no news of you, I pray you are well.

There has been great jubilation in Wimborne and in every town and city throughout England as you can imagine now this beastly so called 'war to end all wars' is over. I was up at Beaucroft when news came through from the postmaster at Colehill. The nurses were dancing and cheering and even matron was singing and smiling. The din of people banging on tin pans and church bells ringing was deafening.

Everyone is thankful that it has ended, but many still have loved ones they have not heard from.

Yours with love always,

Beatrice

December 1918

My Dearest Teddy

Today I was at Victoria hospital when Bert and a few other local chaps were stretchered in from the ambulance train. Several of them said they had seen you albeit briefly. They thought you had been taken to Wareham Military hospital at Worgret with another group of wounded repatriates.

I can barely hope that this is true. That you are indeed safe my love and that my prayers have been answered.

I cannot get away until Saturday or I would come to find you myself right now my dear Teddy.

Forgive this short note but I want to get it to the postmaster quickly that it may reach you without delay.

Yours with love and hope,

Beatrice