

PRIVATE

TRESPASSERS WILL BE PROSECUTED

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THE
“ALL BRITISH”
DESK DIARY
. . . for . . .
1945

THREE DAYS TO A PAGE

Introduction

Monica Richardson kept a diary regularly for the first half of 1945 and for parts of the remainder of the year. She was 20 at the start of the year, living in Chelmsford and working at the Marconi factory, a job she hated but could not leave. The pages tell the unfolding story of the final months of the Second World War from her unique but not untypical perspective. It is a testament of the mundane and the extraordinary – dodging doodlebugs, splurging coupons to buy clothes to wear to dances, walking Chum, the family dog, seeing countless films, going to church several times a week or even several times a day (she was a Catholic), working towards her Matriculation exam, digging rather half-heartedly for victory (or at least for a nice floral border) in the back garden, celebrating with the crowds in Chelmsford’s Tindal Square on VE Day. A few months later she noted with horror the use of atom bombs against Japan that ended the war.

The diary is also a record of Monica’s opinions, often scathing, on the people and incidents that she came across. Hairdressers were uniformly incompetent; teachers were usually dull or worthless, but occasionally interesting; the films were always rated, and sometimes found wanting, but, surprisingly, more often not; even the priest who said mass occasionally got a critical sideswipe; and the weather in

June earned a characteristically poor notice, one that she would inevitably dust off at some time during that month in every subsequent year until her death – “Flaming June”, said with heavy irony.

She witnessed one of the most significant political events of the war years, the by-election victory of left-wing candidate Ernest Millington in the previously safe Tory seat of Chelmsford, a result that gave notice of the great social upheaval that had taken place during the years of conflict and that was to sweep the reforming Labour government of Clement Attlee to power a couple of months later. Monica, a Conservative to her dying day, dismissed the event as evidence that the whole country was turning Communist.

Her large family are always passing through the pages of the diary – her mother Edith and younger sisters Gerry, Zita, Tessy and Mary, who lived with her in Chelmsford; her elder sister Frances, who worked as a nurse at a London hospital; her brothers Tony and Hugh, who were servicemen; her uncle Willie, who lived in Ipswich but owned TWO houseboats in Mersea. Various friends, almost all of whom had passed out of her circle long before her death (and about whom little is consequently known, other than what appears here) shared her wartime experiences, performing voluntary work at the hospital (though there was never enough gore, even in wartime), going with her to the “flicks”, and, in the case of one unfortunate girl, losing an eye to conjunctivitis. If anyone can identify any of these people – for example the oddly-named Cyril Worrall, and his wife, who was “a Talker!” – please step forward.

At times Monica and the others go to stay with Aunt Elizabeth (known as B) at her house in Coleherne Road, Earls Court, which had been the whole family’s home when they were growing up. The regime at B’s was, one feels, much more relaxed than at Lady Lane; they almost always got up late and did very little all day. At home, it was a different story. The fact that Monica considered it an event worthy of noting in her diary when on one occasion her mother did NOT tell her off for getting up late might explain her aversion to early rising in later life.

In transcribing the entries I have corrected some, but not all, mistakes of spelling and punctuation (there are surprisingly few, considering that most of the entries seem to have been scribbled in haste), leaving mistakes in when they give an insight of some kind. In a few places I have tried to give background information to explain circumstances that are obscure because of the passage of time or the need for local knowledge.

RK, July 2010

§

Monica was engaged in essential war work, in a clerical capacity, at the Marconi factory in Chelmsford. She hated the work and the environment, but was not allowed to resign. Her boss was known to her and her coworkers as ‘Tom-Tom’.

Monday 1 January 1945

Nothing very exciting to begin the New Year. Went to 1 o’c Mass. Tom-Tom’s not in to-day. Ill, I think. B came back from London. Must try to get something for Mother’s birthday on the 4th. Nothing worth getting nowadays. Unless you’ve got coupons & I haven’t. Feel tired. Heard “Pippa Passes” on the wireless – good.

Tuesday 2 January

Still feel tired. Can't seem to get to bed early. Had another letter from Peter. He's still at Leigh. John F[isher] came from Ipswich for a day or two. He took Mary to the pictures! Nothing good on here this week. Don't think I'll go. *Must* do some studying.

Wednesday 3 January

Quite a bang in the night. Rocket near Beehive Lane. Worked till 7. The warning went at about 5 to 7. The first we've had for ages. Anita & I were cycling up Moulsham Street when the doodle passed overhead. Phew! Luckily it didn't stop! Another warning later & another doodle.

Thursday 4 January

Mother's birthday.

Rumpus at work to-day. Just because we wanted to stick a picture on the blackout! Old crabs! It's just like a school. Didn't do very much. Am reading a book called "The 5th Army Fell Back". Good. About the last war. We haven't heard from Clive yet. Rude man!

Friday 5 January

Went to London with B for the weekend. I want to get an Arithmetic book. We caught the 7.44 train & arrived at about 9 at Liverpool St. I phoned Frances. She's coming to Coleherne Rd to-morrow night.

Saturday 6 January

Went to 9 o'clock Mass at the Brompton Oratory. Then we had breakfast at Lyons & then went to Foyles & got my Arithmetic book. Went to flicks in afternoon. Saw "Dark Waters." F[ranchot] Tone, M[erle] Oberon very good. Went again with little Kathleen in evening. Saw "Old Acquaintance" very good indeed. Also "7 Doors to Death" not bad.

Before and after the war, the rail trip from Chelmsford to London would have taken about 45-60 minutes. During the war the blackout, troop movements etc. clearly slowed things down.

Sunday 7 January

We didn't wake up till 9 so went to the 10 o'clock Mass. Didn't do much until we left at about 4.45. Caught the 6.8 got to Chelmsford at 8.10! Barbara [Fisher] was at home. Went round to Mary S's with her. We had some wedding cake.

Monday 8 January

Auntie Norah's birthday. Tom-Tom came back to-day. We asked him if we could come in every other Saturday instead of 2 on & 2 off as we do now. What a row! Anyone would think we'd asked for the moon! He doesn't think we really want it! Worked till 8. Had a letter from Peter. He's in Devon.

Tuesday 9 January

Joyce & Anita want a transfer. Tom-Tom says he can't stop them! Yet he stopped me. I'm biding my time till they get transferred then the sparks will fly! We're having every other Saturday off. He apologised for making a row yesterday! What a boss. Went to History. She certainly makes it interesting.

Wednesday 10 January

Quite a near rocket this afternoon. About ½ mile away. Everyone made a dive – after it all happened! No casualties. Went to the Ritz. Saw “The Hitler Gang.” Quite good. About Hitler's rise to power. Interesting. Also “I Met Him in Paris.” Good. Claudette Colbert, Melvyn Douglas, & Robert Young.

Thursday 11 January

Went to English. Good. I enjoy it. Probably because I'm quite good at it. About the only subject I am good at. Uncle Willie was at home. He's staying the night. He asked me to lunch with him at the Lion & Lamb. Barbara & Mr Hawkes will be there too.

Friday 12 January

Didn't feel terribly well so didn't go to Maths lesson. Zita went to London to-day. She's going to a dance at the nurses home at Highgate. I had lunch with Uncle Willie, Barbara Mr Hawkes & another Wren called Joy. Quite a nice “do”. Mother's going to London to-morrow.

On Saturday nights Monica did volunteer duty in the casualty department at the local hospital.

Saturday 13 January

Frances's birthday.

Mother went to London. I went shopping in the morning. Saw Mother off. Did some washing in the afternoon. Went to the hospital in the evening. Nothing very much doing. Only one stitching. A man who'd had an accident. He was a bit lightheaded. Very truculent.

Sunday 14 January

Went to 9.30 Mass. Warning & doodles in the night. Nothing near. Didn't do very much. Went to Church in evening. Mother & Zita were there when I got back. Neither Tom nor Owen were there (at Highgate).

Monica left school at the age of 14 following her father's death in 1937 in order to work and support the family. She left before completing her final qualifications. The matriculation (matric) examination, for which it was necessary to pass a variety of subjects to obtain a single qualification, was the passport to further education or a better career, and she attended night school in order to work up to

the exam. Although she had probably already given up on her early ambition to become a doctor, she clearly wanted a career of some sort, but her application to the task in hand was variable ...

Monday 15 January

Tom-Tom's away again to-day. I think he came back too soon. Went to French. Difficult. Doesn't seem to be much hope of my being ready for Matric. Wish I had some more time to study. Listened to a play on the wireless "Mr Barbage in the Parlour" I think. Quite good.

Tuesday 16 January

Went to History. Boer War. Good. Apparently you can take Matric so that if you fail in that you stand a good chance of getting the Oxford. So I think I'll take it this June after all. It will be good practice anyway. And who knows, I *might* get it. The electricity failed at about 8.45. Came on again at about 10.30. Nuisance.

Wednesday 17 January

Left work at 5 & went to the Pavilion with Jean Lowe, saw "None Shall Escape". Very good film although it was a war film. Alexander Knox & Marsha Hunt. Also "Tropicana". Mae West! Awful! She's completely out of date. Rotten acting anyway.

Monica's sister Frances was working at Highgate Hospital in London.

Thursday 18 January

Went to English. Had a letter from Frances. She says there's a dance at the hospital on 26th. To-morrow week. Hope to go. But will have to come back Saturday as I don't want to miss going to the hospital here, I've missed too much already. B's going on Saturday (she says).

Friday 19 January

A terrific gale was blowing last night! Woke me up so it must have been bad. Uncle Willie came to dinner. Went to Maths. The master's no good. Not much anyway. Wish I could find someone to give me extra coaching. The wind's dropped & we've had a bit of snow.

Saturday 20 January

Worked in morning. Did some housework in afternoon. Quite a heavy fall of snow in the late afternoon. It was quite thick when I went to the hospital. Nothing exciting there. No casualties. Think I've got another cold coming. Hope not.

Sunday 21 January

Went to 9.30 Mass. Freezing cold day. Washed my hair in afternoon. I'm going to have a Maria haircut. It looks nice (on Mary Robinson anyway). Went to church in evening then did some studying.

Monday 22 January

Tom-Tom's an old crab. I'd like to kick his teeth in! Made an appointment for tonight to have a Liberty cut. Had it done at 5.30. Don't feel as if I've got any hair left! Went to French. It was so freezing cold there (they turn the heat off in the evening) that we all went home at about 7.40.

Tuesday 23 January

Should have gone to History but didn't. Aren't I awful? Went to flicks instead. Saw "Pride & Prejudice" again. Jolly good film. One of its best features is the nice English spoken. Quite a pleasant change from the modern slang. The second film was "Harvest Days". Quite good.

Wednesday 24 January

Tom-Tom gets worse & worse. I've never known such an office for pettiness. Worked till 7 o'clock. Then went with Mother, Zita, Mr & Mrs Fuller to the Annual Dinner-Dance of the Knights of St Columba. Quite good. The usual long-winded speech-making of course. The dance livened up just as everyone had to go equally of course. Didn't get to bed till 1.15.

Thursday 25 January

Went to English. Quite good. It wasn't so cold there as the heating was on. There were two SAS men there. Hope to go to London to-morrow to the Dance at Highgate. Hope Tom and Owen are there. I don't suppose the journey will be too good. It's so jolly freezing. The frost stays on the trees & things all day. Very pretty, but Brrr! it's cold!

Friday 26 January

Left work at 5 again to-day and caught the 5.20 to Liverpool St. It was a slow train so I didn't get to Highgate till 8 o'clock. Neither Tom nor Owen turned up. There's probably a good reason because they said they were coming. I met a nice Czech there. He's a Pathologist. Tall, dark & handsome! Had a jolly good time altogether.

Saturday 27 January

Out. F[rances] had the day off so we went out together. We tried to find a decent film to see as we hadn't time for anything else. (I wanted to catch an early train back.) We couldn't see anything alluring so we didn't go. I caught the 3.48 home. Went to the hospital in the evening. Nothing much to do there.

Sunday 28 January

I'm terribly tired to-day. Too many late nights! Didn't do much all day. Prepared my French. Wrote a couple of letters. Went to bed quite early.

Monday 29 January

Anita's gone to hospital with conjunctivitis. She's pretty bad apparently. Went to COM supper social. Not bad. Quite a decent supper & the games & things were quite good afterwards for a change. Saw Mary S there & we had a chin-wag. Haven't seen her for quite a while. We must go for another of our walks.

Tuesday 30 January

Must try for a transfer again. Joyce has just got hers so I'm going to have a good shot at it. Can't stick it here much longer. It gets me down. Went to History. Joe Chamberlain. We've got to move from the library. The new principal doesn't approve of having classes there! Nuisance.

Wednesday 31 January

Worked till 7. Don't think I'll do any more overtime. Other people get away with it so I don't see why I should be a mug. Went the Pavilion after. Saw "Rose Marie" a reissue. Not bad, also "Secret Motive" not bad either though a bit senseless.

The Richardsons had formed a light entertainment group called The Whynots. The Brains Trust was a popular radio programme in which a panel of intellectuals debated a variety of puzzling issues.

Thursday 1 February

Had a letter from Tom. Went to English. Came home to a Whynot Meeting. The first for ages. Zita's still skipper. We're doing a Brains Trust sketch which she wrote. It's good. Frances produced it at Christmas at the concert at Highgate and it went down very well. I'm supposed to be Dame Hyra Mess (a contraction of Myra Hess).

Friday 2 February

Went to Maths. Found the room in darkness and "Gorn 'Ome" written on the blackboard. Winley said the teacher wasn't there last week. He's probably ill. There was no point in staying so we went home. Did some studying at home. At least as much as I could with the wireless blaring away.

Saturday 3 February

Met Lily in town. She's going to-morrow (to join her husband at Herne Bay). Did a bit of washing in the afternoon but couldn't do much as we've still not had our pipes mended. The man was supposed to come to-day. Went to hospital. Saw Anita there. She's better. Hopes to get up soon.

Sunday 4 February

Should have gone to 8 o'clock Mass. Forgot it is 1st Sunday. Didn't do anything exciting. The weather's improved enormously. Very nice today, though windy.

Monday 5 February

Haven't heard a word from Frances since I came back. Very rude of her not to answer my letter. She's supposed to be coming home this weekend! Went to French. I've got a lovely puncture in my bike. Was halfway to work this afternoon when it happened.

Tuesday 6 February

Went to History. We've been turned out of the library by the new Principal who says it shouldn't be used as a classroom. The Blighter! Went to the Ritz after & saw "The Climax". It was quite good though far fetched. Nice colours. Boris Karloff, Susannah Foster & Turhan Bey.

Wednesday 7 February

It's awful at work now. Neither Joyce nor Lily is there now & Anita's away still. She's not too good apparently. Left work at 5. Wanted to mend my puncture but found we haven't any materials to mend it with. They've disappeared. Didn't do much. Went to church.

Thursday 8 February

Still haven't heard from Frances. Suppose she'll come tomorrow. Went to English. The lights failed at about 8.10 so we all went home. The lights at home were alright however. Mended the puncture. The bike needs a new tyre, there's a slit in the old one & it's very worn. Rotten tyres nowadays (wartime grade).

Friday 9 February

Went to Maths. Must concentrate on this subject more in my "leisure hours". Frances didn't turn up. I could crown her! We haven't heard a word from her for ages. One begins to wonder if she's alright. Heard "These You Have Loved". Not a bad programme this week.

Saturday 10 February

"Worked" in the morning. Went to Netball in the afternoon for a match but the other team wired to say they couldn't come. That's the third time this match has been put off. Went to the Hospital. Nothing doing there, though we expected to be called out as a rocket fell quite near (Hylands Park.) No casualties though. Went to confession.

Sunday 11 February

Went to 9.30 Mass. Rotten day. Rainy. Went to see Anita in afternoon. She's much better though she still can't see out of her right eye. Went to church in evening. Procession. (Immaculate Conception.)

Monday 19 February

We had a letter from Frances. She says there is a dance at Highgate next Friday. Zita & I hope to go. Went to French. Uncle Willie came to stay the night as he went to a meeting in town. We didn't go to bed till nearly 12 o'clock. Talking about the war. What a tragedy the Big Three conference report is. It makes us worse than the Germans.

The Yalta Conference between Churchill, Roosevelt and Stalin – the “Big Three” – took place from 4 – 11 February. The tragedy was probably the failure to guarantee Poland, whose invasion by the Germans had sparked the war in the first place, autonomous status or freedom from Soviet interference under the planned postwar settlement.

Tuesday 20 February

The weather is now mild and Springlike. Hope it stays like it. Went to History. Didn't do much else although there are dozens of things that need doing. Wrote to Peter. I expect he's given me up for lost. Don't know what to wear on Friday. Haven't got anything special anyway.

Wednesday 21 February

Worked till 8. Didn't do much at home. Some needlework that's all. I shall miss the Maths class on Friday. It's a pity because I need all the tuition I can get in that direction. Wish I could find someone to give me extra lessons in it.

Thursday 22 February

We had a letter from Frances. She says we can't go on Friday! She asked for permission for us to stay there & they said they couldn't put us up – or something. Are we mad! We're going to London anyway. Went to English. Précis to-night.

Friday 23 February

Zita & I caught the 5.20 and arrived at B's at about 7.45. We're going to do some shopping to-morrow morning. Hope to go to a show in the afternoon. Perhaps only a film. Frances is coming home on Sunday. She's on a T.B. ward. Doesn't like it.

Saturday 24 February

We went shopping. Zita got a dress & a jacket & I got a dress & a blouse. Just about blew our coupons! Couldn't get into anything we liked (showy). Caught the 6.22 back to go to the hospital. What a rush! Only one casualty there, an old boy with a broken femur.

Sunday 25 February

Didn't do very much (as usual). Zita & Frances came in evening. Frances explained further about the dance. She said it wasn't any good anyway & the Pathologist (whose name is Welch) wasn't there.

Monday 26 February

My Birthday. I've got the Key of the Door, never been 21 before! Lovely weather. Wish I'd had the day off. Went to flicks in evening with Mother and Frances. Saw "Everything Happens at Night". Quite good. Also "Rembrandt". Quite good too. Had quite a few presents. Mostly money.

Tuesday 27 February

Had a present from Tom. Another compact! That makes three I've got! Still it's a very nice one. Went to History. Only 3 of us there. Mrs Newport certainly makes it interesting. Uncle Willie came to stay the night. Churchill made speech trying to gloss over the Yalta decisions. I think he succeeded quite well too.

Wednesday 28 February

Had to work till 8. I think (& hope) it's the last night we'll have to do overtime. Hope we don't go back to 6 o'clock working. Mrs Fuller said there was a lecture at the hospital to-night. I went along but no-one was there. She must have made a mistake. Wrote to Tom & Aunty Norah. Heard "These You Have Loved". Good programme tonight.

Thursday 1 March

Went to English. Didn't do much else. Wrote three letters. We haven't heard from Tony for quite a while. Not since we had the photos in fact. The weather's quite nice though it's turned a bit colder. Still Spring's on the way thank goodness.

Friday 2 March

Went to Maths. The usual teacher was ill again. Mr Millington took us. It's awful because one tells you one way to do a thing & another tells you entirely different. Didn't do much else. Boiled my apron & cap & starched them. Chum's not very well, she keeps being sick.

Saturday 3 March

Work in the morning. Played netball in afternoon against East Hanningfield Youth Club at Rettendon. We won 15-3. Quite a good game. We had the first warning for ages last night. They've started sending doodles again & ordinary planes. And our C.D. [*Civil Defence warden*] has been demobbed! 2 Warnings this afternoon. Saw 2 doodles. Went to hospital.

Sunday 4 March

Went to 9.30 Mass. Did what I usually do on Sunday – practically nothing. Mother's got a nice cold. Rained a bit this afternoon. Heard "Music for All". Quite good.

Monday 5 March

Didn't go to work to-day. Stayed in bed in morning. Plumber came in afternoon to mend our pipes, at last. Didn't go to French. Have been reading several "Nursing Mirror's". Interesting. *Must* get through Matric *soon*.

Tuesday 6 March

Stayed at home again to-day. Will probably go to work to-morrow. Dull weather but no rain. Had a bath in afternoon, did some studying. Didn't go to Tech. Must keep studying Maths or I shan't get through.

Wednesday 7 March

Back at work. Felt alright till I got there! Then I suffered a relapse! Went to see Anita at the hospital. She thinks she's got to have her eye out. Anyway she says they've given up hope of getting her sight back. Went to church after. Didn't do much else.

Thursday 8 March

Went to English. Zita stayed away from work to-day. She went to the Dr to-night who said she must go into hospital for observation. She might have a gastric ulcer. I think she goes in on Sunday. Warnings have not been so frequent lately (touch wood!)

Friday 9 March

Took Tessy to the Dr's. She's got a bad knee. Pimples all over it. Saw Pimpily Percy on way home. He asked if I was going to the dance to-morrow, but I can't. Saw Anita also. She's out of hospital for the time being. Is going to see a specialist in London on Tuesday.

Saturday 10 March

Tom turned up! He only stayed for a few hours. Played netball in afternoon against the Priory. We lost 10-9. A close game though. Good. Went to the station afterwards to see Tom off. He caught the 4.5. Went to the hospital. Quite busy at first, but everything was practically over when I got there. Zita went into St Johns today.

Sunday 11 March

Went to 9.30 Mass though I was woken up at about 7.30 as I slept in the eye clinic. Was just too late for the 8. Didn't do anything exciting. Washed my hair.

Monday 12 March

Tom-Tom wasn't at work. He's been bombed out. Went to French. It's getting difficulter and difficulter. Nice weather lately. Hope we're not having our summer now. Anita came to work in the afternoon. Walked home with her.

Tuesday 13 March

Gerry's Birthday. Gave her a couple of drawing blocks. Went to History. Mrs Newport was ill again so we had to put up with the same man we had before. What a bore! He talks for hours about absolutely nothing. Wrote & told Mrs Alford I shan't be at the hospital on Sat. (St Patrick's dance.)

Wednesday 14 March

Tessy's Birthday. Went to the flicks with Mother. Saw "Waterloo Road", Stewart Granger, John Mills, Alastair Sim. Quite good. Also "My Pal Wolf". Good too. No one I knew in it. Zita will probably be coming out to-morrow if she's alright.

Thursday 15 March

Zita came out this evening. She doesn't know the results of the x-ray's etc. yet but I don't suppose they'd let her out if they thought she was very bad. Went to English. A sort of test. Two essays, half an hour each. It's not really long enough (for me at any rate) but that's how they do it in the exam apparently.

Friday 16 March

A new man came to work on Monday. His name is Richardson. He's taking Piggy's place. Piggy's going. Wish I was! Went to Maths. Thank goodness it wasn't Millington. Didn't do much else. Intended to write to Frances and forgot. Hope the dance is good to-morrow. Don't suppose it will be.

Saturday 17 March

At work in the morning. Did some shopping in the afternoon. Tried to get a pair of stockings. Cant get a pair of silk ones in town. Ended up with a Lisle pair. Not *too* bad. Quite fine. Went to St Patrick's dance at Shire Hall. Not bad. Didin't feel too good. Have a lovely cold coming. It was too crowded for decent dancing.

Sunday 18 March

Felt rotten to-day. *Lovely* cold. Went to bed in the afternoon. Dozed a bit which made me feel worse I think. Saw a little twerp at the dance last night called David. He oges to the Tech. Talk about fast!

Monday 19 March

Didn't go to work to-day. Spent the day in bed. Slept all the afternoon. Don't feel at all well. Didn't go to French of course. Didn't want to miss. I've missed too much already. Still couldn't be helped. Lovely weather. Really Springlike.

Tuesday 20 March

Stayed in again to-day. Got up at lunch time. Didn't do very much. Don't feel like studying though I ought to really. Tessy & Mary are at home with Impetigo. Crocky family! Tessy's face is an awful mess. She been to the Dr. & is treating it but it's taking a long time to get better. Mary's not so bad.

Wednesday 21 March

Got up earlier this morning. About 10. Tessy, Mary, Chum & I went for a walk in Baddow meads. Lovely day. Mild & sunny. First day of Spring! Went to a lecture in the evening at the Nurses training school. Dr Kerr. Anaesthetics. Jolly good. Theory this week, practical next. Interesting.

Thursday 22 March

Went to English. Made an appointment to have my hair trimmed at Bonds tomorrow at 5. Didn't do much after night school. I'm impatient to get Matric. The more I think of it the more remote it seems.

Friday 23 March

Went to Bonds. They said they couldn't do it as I was 10 mins late! Anyone would think it to[ok] hours to do a trim. Anyway made an appointment for to-morrow for a shampoo & set as well as a trim. Went to Maths. Not too bad. He condescended to explain some trig. to me! Piggy left.

Saturday 24 March

Housework in the morning. Went to hairdressers in afternoon. Don't like the way she did it. She seems to have cut my hair all wrong. Shan't go there again. Went to hospital in evening. More interesting than usual. A stitching & a plaster. The weather's been lovely to-day. Like Summer.

Sunday 25 March

Didn't wake up till late so went to 10.30 Mass. The Palms are quite plain this year. Not in the shape of a cross. Pity. Frances came at about 5.30. She goes back to-morrow.

Monday 26 March

Frances got a telegram saying she was going on night duty & needn't be back till Wednesday midday. Went to French. Am getting quite friendly with a girl there called Grace Hatton. She's quite nice. Rotten weather to-day. Raining all the time, much to the dismay of my hair!

Tuesday 27 March

Went to History. Tech breaks up to-day. No more lessons, no more French, no more sitting on a hard old bench! Went to flicks after. Saw "Western Approaches". Very good. In technicolour. About the M.N. [Merchant Navy] Also "My Ain Folk". Not *bad* for a Butcher film. [What does she mean? It was

written by Kathleen Butler – who had written the screen plays for dozens of films, including *Busman's Holiday* and *Old Mother Riley Joins Up* since 1934 – so perhaps she meant a Butler film.] Very Scottish. Quite nice singing & scenery. Anita had her eye out today.

Wednesday 28 March

Frances went back this morning. Went to the lecture at the hospital. Very good. Anaesthetics again. Frances says I may be able to get a job as Lab. assistant at Archway Hosp. She's going to enquire. Hope I can get there, though one probably has to have Matric. Still she'll find out.

Thursday 29 March (Maundy Thursday)

We left work at 4 this afternoon. Or rather we were told at 4 that we could go home. Went to church. Listened to "The Man Born to be King" at 9.30. Lovely play. Life of Our Lord in modern language by Dorothy L. Sayers. We have had it 3 or 4 times on the wireless but you never get tired of it.

Friday 30 March (Good Friday)

Dad's birthday. [Her father, Maul Richardson, had died in 1937.] Went to the Mass of the Presanctified in the morning. Thank goodness we didn't have to work this year. Went to church in the afternoon & again in the evening. Strange day. But then, Good Friday always is, to me at least.

Saturday 31 March

Barbara & Betty came this afternoon. They are staying till Tuesday. They went to the flicks with Zita in the late afternoon. Mother bought a new costume. A sort of puce colour with a squared pattern. Quite nice. It suits her. Went to the hospital. There's a new Dr. there called Dr. Allam. I don't care much for him. Didn't like the way he treated a little baby. Scared it.

Sunday 1 April (Easter Day)

Went to 8 o'clock Mass. Crowds of people. Mother had to go home. She didn't feel well. Didn't do much all day. B & B came with us to church in evening.

Monday 2 April (Easter Monday—Bank Holiday)

Went for a walk with B, B, H & M in the morning. Quite nice. We went out Springfield way & came back on the arterial road. Went to flicks in afternoon. Saw "Frenchman's Creek". I wasn't terribly struck, but the others said they liked it. The other film was "Horse Sense", a documentary about horses.

Tuesday 3 April

Work again! Don't feel so bad after 4 days off. We should have Easter hols. every week! Barbara & Betty went back this morning. Didn't do much. Went to church then did some studying. We had some foul sentences to translate into French. Did some of them.

Wednesday 4 April

We had a letter from Frances. She says she hasn't been able to find out anything about my job yet! Wish she'd hurry up! Went to a lecture at the hospital. Resuscitation. Very good. About shock, its causes & treatments. Pity I shan't be able to go next week. It's about the mental state of people nowadays (war strain etc.) should be good.

Thursday 5 April

Got some chocolate biscuits & took them to Anita. She's up & seems quite cheerful. We chinwagged for a solid hour! We had a Whynot meeting to-night to discuss the Whynot social. It's in a fortnight. Should be quite good as we've got some original games. Quite a good programme (if it comes off!)

Friday 6 April

Didn't do much. Went to church. It's at 7.30 now and doesn't give you much time for anything. Rainy day. I'm on holiday next week. Hope this isn't a sample of the weather we're going to have. Am going down to Mersea on the houseboat.

Saturday 7 April

We were having a good clearout when Frances turned up. She's staying till Tuesday. She went to see "Frenchman's Creek" with Hugh & didn't think much of it. I've got one supporter anyway! Went to the hospital. Nothing doing. Saw Anita.

Monica's uncle Willie – he was her uncle by marriage to her mother's sister Norah – was also her cousin, because he was the son of Monica's father's sister, Mary Lucy "Lala" Fisher, the Australian poet. At the time the Fishers were living in Ipswich. They seem to have owned two houseboats at Mersea, presumably among those sited on the mudflats along Coast Road, where houseboats have been moored, or beached, for at least a century. At the time of Monica's diary entries it appears that one of them, the Chiquita, was habitable, while the other, the Peggoty, was undergoing substantial refitting. She had probably been bought by Willie the previous year, when she came up for sale as part of the disposal of an estate. See http://seax.essexcc.gov.uk/result_details.asp?DocID=413383, Essex Record Office reference D/DMb/E33/72.

Sunday 8 April

Went to 9.30 Mass. Caught the 1.3 train & arrived at Mersea at 3.15 [There was no station at Mersea, so Monica presumably caught the train into Colchester and took a bus from there.] Only Maurice [Fisher] & Tony Borges (his friend) were there. The others turned up later on. (Uncle Willie, A. Norah & John [Fisher])

Monday 9 April

We didn't wake up till about 10 o'clock! Had breakfast at 11.30! We started work on Peggotty. there's a

terrific lot to do on her. Doesn't seem as if she'll ever be straight. Brian Borges is coming to-morrow. It will be rather a squash on Chiquita then.

Tuesday 10 April

Did some shopping in the morning. They've got a good many things here that we can't get at home. Brian came. He's not so nice as Tony though he's not bad. The weather has turned glorious. Sunny & fine though a bit windy.

Wednesday 11 April

Aunty Norah went back to Ipswich for a day or two as she had to get some things for Maurice who's going to Beulah Hill to school on Monday [probably St Joseph's College, a private school run by the De La Salle Brothers]. I had to cook the dinner, but I didn't give them enough. They eat as though they were starved at home! It's the air down here. Maurice, Tony, Brian, John & I went to the flicks to-night at the British Legion Hall. They have Pictures here twice a week! We saw "If I Had My Way". Bing. Quite good & also "Marshal of Gunsmoke".

Thursday 12 April

Stayed on Chiquita most of to-day as I had to do the chores. My cooking hasn't killed them, anyway (yet!) Peggotty is gradually beginning to look a bit more like a houseboat and less like a junk shop. We've started painting the deck & scraping & varnishing the hatches & companionway. Aunty Norah came back at tea time.

Friday 13 April

We're painting the saloon on Peggotty now. A lot of work has been done this week, but we've had fun too, paddling in the mud, & collecting winkles. There have been some high tides here & Peggotty is now about as upright as she'll ever be.

Saturday 14 April

Aunty Norah left early as she had to catch the Ipswich shops. The boys helped a couple of officers to get their boat out to sea during high tide (it was moored near Chiquita & had to be extricated) but they took too long & the tide went down leaving them stuck. I went back to Ipswich with Uncle Willie & John. The Borges' live in Colchester & cycled there with Maurice.

Sunday 15 April

Aunty Riley was at Ipswich & Fr. Clare came. Did some bee-ing with Uncle Willie. Caught the 6.30 train & arrived home at 8 o'clock. Saw Bernard.

"Aunty Riley" could have been either Gertrude (Ga-Ga) or Edith (Ee-Ee) Riley, who were Norah's mother's unmarried sisters. Gertrude would have been about 84 in 1945. Edith, who would have been

a mere 77 or so, is possibly a safer bet.

Monday 16 April

Can't settle down to work at all. All last week the weather was glorious. Just like summer & it promises to be the same this week. Went to French and after to the Pav. [The Pavilion Cinema, in Rainsford Road, which closed in 1987.] Met Mother there & saw "Lady Let's Dance". Quite good & "My Best Gal" Not much good. Rowdy musical.

Tuesday 17 April

Still can't work! Boy, I'll go mad when (if ever) I get out of this place. Hope to go to Kew next Sunday with Mother & Frances. Went to History. Only three of us there. I've applied for an entry form for the June Matric. but don't suppose I'll take it then. Wish I could.

Wednesday 18 April

Met Mary at the Ritz & we saw "Wilson". Quite good though very political. Good acting & in technicolour. Still lovely weather. Doesn't seem as if it can last much longer. We'll probably have a long rainy summer. Pessimist!

Thursday 19 April

Didn't go to English. Went to the flicks instead! Naughty girl! Saw "Constant Nymph". Quite a good film. Charles Boyer & Joan Fontaine. A bit sad at the end, but only then, so I didn't mind. With it was "Jungle Rhapsody". Not bad of its kind, though we see too many documentaries about the jungle. John Cochran was home when we got there.

Friday 20 April

Went to Maths. Arrived there rather late. Not many there. All the classes are declining. Had to do my French prep when I got home as Mother & I will probably go to Kew on Sunday, if it's fine. Hope it will be, though it's getting cooler every day.

Saturday 21 April

We took down our shelter to-day. Had an argument with Tom-Tom this morning about politics. I supported the conservative in the coming election & he was all for socialism etc. The old buffer! Went to the hospital. Saw Dr Kristich for the first time. Dr Allen incised a breast abscess. Rotten thing. Dr Bazett's gone, I think.

Sunday 22 April

Mother & I caught the 9.35 train which was slow. We went to Highgate 1st & saw Frances for a minute. Also saw Dr Welch though I don't know whether he saw us. Went to Mass at St Joseph's then to Kew. Lovely there though too many people.

Monday 23 April

Was rather tired to-day after yesterday. We travelled a lot, walked a lot and queued a lot. Went to French. Not bad. Zita went to the Knights dance at the County Hotel. I didn't bother going. Haven't enjoyed the last few dances I've been to. Wrote to Peter. (About time too!)

Tuesday 24 April

Went to History. We shan't have Mrs Newport any more as her husband who was a prisoner has been repatriated. Rotten luck for us as we're having the same silly ass we had before. Never seem to be able to keep decent people long.

On 26 April 1945 a by-election for the parliamentary seat of Chelmsford was held following the death on active service of the sitting MP. Previously a safe Conservative seat, Chelmsford was not contested by the Labour or Liberal parties owing to the suspension of competition between the three main parties for the duration of the war. However, other parties and independent candidates were free to compete and Wing Commander Ernest Millington DFC was standing under the banner of Common Wealth, a socialist political movement that had been founded by, among others, J. B. Priestley. It is not known whether Millington, who was only 29 in 1945, was related to the "Mr Millington" who had been the subject of Monica's scorn as a maths teacher (see 2 March, 16 March).

Wednesday 25 April

Hugh's birthday. Went to Cook's election meeting. He's the Conservative candidate. Good meeting. The speaker was Sir David Maxwell Fyffe K.C. The Solicitor General. Good speech. Hope Cook gets in, he's nice. Millington is an old Red. Went to lecture at hospital then went to flicks. Saw "Captain Caution". Not much good.

Thursday 26 April

Mother went to vote. I can't because the register is only up to January 1st. Went to the Neighbours with my material. Mrs Neighbour is making me a pinafore dress. Went to the Dr's. after, as I've got a septic finger. Had a blister which spread. She cut off the dead skin. It will be OK now.

Friday 27 April

Got soaked going home & it's very cold so I couldn't summon up enough energy (or courage?) to go out again. Very reprehensible of me, of course. Wrote to Lucy. No one can go to the Convention (Grail) [See also 1 May] on Sunday. I can't because I'm broke till Monday (Pay day). Millington won the election. This country is turning Communist.

Ernest Millington's victory in the Chelmsford by-election was indeed seen as a harbinger of political change in the UK. Opinion polling was in its infancy and hard evidence of public opinion in the form of actual election results had not been available since the last general election, as long ago as 1935. The Chelmsford result and two others like it, also involving Common Wealth, were the clearest warnings the Conservative Party had of its impending heavy defeat in the general election that would

be held in July. Millington alone of the three Common Wealth MPs retained his seat at the July election – the others went to Labour. He continued to serve until unseated by the beginnings of a Conservative revival in 1950, after which he rejoined the RAF. Monica would have taken some satisfaction had she known that he would later be courtmartialled and then cashiered over the matter of £25 2s 3d which had gone missing from the a dance fund for which he had been responsible. She would have seen it, no doubt, as evidence of his Communist credentials showing through. She would probably have been equally unimpressed, but unsurprised, by the fact that he later became a teacher. Millington died on 9 May 2009.

Saturday 28 April

Stayed in all day. I have a lovely cold. Went to hospital in the evening. We don't have to go any more but can if we want to. We are all staying on to-gether but only going on alternate Saturdays. We don't sleep there, anyway, now.

Sunday 29 April

Rotten day. Freezing cold. Went to 9.30 Mass. Didn't go out again. Wanted to wash my hair but couldn't because of my cold. Kathleen Murphy is coming to-morrow for a few days.

Monday 30 April

Kathleen came. She fell down a coal hole the other week and had to have her knee stitched, but it's better now, nearly alright. Had to go back to the Dr to-day so couldn't go to French worse luck. Went to flicks with K. Saw "And Now Tomorrow" good. Also "I'll Remember April". Good too.

Tuesday 1 May

Went to History. The teacher gets onto one theme & talks about that nearly all the evening. This time it was elections & MPs (shades of the current bye-election!) Quite interesting but not very useful for the exam. Went to see Theresa Duckett after, about Grail Publications, then wrote a couple of letters.

Grail Publications (also, apparently, referred to on 27 April), which until recently (c. 2017) was still in existence, is part of an organization known as the Grail Society, which supports the Grail Community. This women's community was founded in the mid-1930s, was originally located in Pinner, and moved to Winchester in 2011. It is a Catholic religious group. The publications 'are recognised world-wide for simplified versions of important documents in the Roman Catholic Church', according to the society's website. There are more details here: <https://www.grailsociety.org.uk> and here: <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/this-britain/grail-community-life-inside-a-gently-crumbling-retreat-2099614.html>.

Wednesday 2 May

Dad's Anniversary Day. Just got to Mass by the skin of my teeth! Went to lecture at the hospital on Midwifery. Quite good. Didn't do much else. Am having to walk to work as I can't get the parts to mend my bike. Rotten nuisance.

Thursday 3 May

Went to English. It poured with rain when I came out & as I had to walk home, I was quite wet by the time I got there. Wish Frances would hurry up and find out about that job. I think she's coming home at the weekend. Cyril, his wife & boy are coming on Sat.

Friday 4 May

Went to Maths. Didn't get on so badly. If it wasn't a question of time I'd be alright. Caught a bus home. Mother & Gerry went to the flicks. They didn't get home till nearly 11 with the result that we went to bed late. I never seem to be able to get fairly into bed before 12 these days.

Saturday 5 May

Worked in the morning. Tried to rehabilitate our old table as we've taken down our shelter. Cyril, his wife & Tony came in the afternoon. Went to Hospital in the evening. Nothing very much doing there. I still don't think much of Dr. Allen as a humanitarian. Poor little children don't get much consideration from him however much they cry.

Sunday 6 May

Went to 8 o'clock Mass. Spent most of the rest of the day mending my bike. Think it's alright at last. Procession in evening. Cyril's alright but his wife's a *Talker*.

Monday 7 May

Great speculation as to when VE day will be. Everyone thought it would be this afternoon. Went with Cyril & Mrs. to the Ritz. Saw "Can't Help Singing". Deanna Durbin. Quite good, though not very storified. During the show the manager said VE day will be to-morrow. Zita, Gerry & I went down to Tindal Square at about 12. Crowd there. Sing-songs etc. General Jollification.

Tuesday 8 May

Went to 8 o'clock Mass & also 11 o'clock. Didn't do much during the day. The Worralls left. Hugh came home. We went down to Tindal Sq. again. More crowds. Dancing there. Drunks etc. Quite fun. Danced quite a bit with a soldier. Got home at 2 a.m. It went on till 4.

Wednesday 9 May

Didn't get up till 11.30. Went to flicks in afternoon. Saw "Arsenic & Old Lace". Good. Went to Tindal Sq. again but it started to rain at about 11.30. So they packed up. I'd like to have been in London for the celebrations. Must be good.

Thursday 10 May

Went to 8 o'clock Mass & took my breakfast to work. Went to English. Did some washing when I got home as Zita & I are going to London to-morrow to a dance at Archway. There's also a gramophone recital there so it should be good especially as it's so near VE Day.

Friday 11 May

Zita & I caught the 5.20. We had hoped to catch the 4.58 which is a fast train if it was late, but of course it was on time. We arrived at Highgate at about 7.30. We were blazing hot, stifling weather. There wasn't a proper dance, only a concert (gramophone). Quite nice music. They had dancing after but no men to speak of!

Saturday 12 May

Went down to B's with Frances. Got there at about 12.30. We all went to the flicks. Saw "Here Come the Waves". Quite good Bing Crosby no second film. Only a documentary about the invasion of France by Yanks.

Sunday 13 May

We overslept! Went to 12 o'clock Mass. Disgusting. Went to flicks in afternoon. More disgusting still. Saw "Action in Arabia". Good. George Sanders. Also "Time Flies" Q-G. [*quite good, presumably!*] Got home about 10.15.

Monday 14 May

Nothing worthy of note occurred. Went to French. Did some ironing. Wrote to Sr Phillips. Didn't get to bed till 12 o'clock. Intended to write to the L.C.C. about that laboratory assistant's job but didn't have time.

Tuesday 15 May

Went to History much against my inclination, but was glad I did go as there was a different teacher there, a woman. She was very good. There were only two of us there. Didn't do much else. Read a bit. Had a bath & went to bed.

Wednesday 16 May

Went to the flicks. Saw "Guest in the House". Quite good. Better than I expected. Also "She Gets Her Man". Balmy, crazy, dotty & mad. Funny though. Joan Davis and Leon Errol.

Thursday 17 May

Went to English but didn't stay. It was a lovely evening and there were only 3 of us there so we decided not to stay. I didn't do much. Did some study at home. We leave off work at 4 to-morrow, thank

goodness. The sooner I get out of this joint the better I'll like it.

Friday 18 May

Went to Maths. The weather is very changeable now. One minute it is warm & sunny & the next it is dull & cold, if not raining. Frances came to-day. She & Mother went to the flicks. She's staying till Wednesday.

Saturday 19 May

Didn't get up in a hurry this morning & for once Mother didn't object – verbally. Went shopping in the afternoon. Did the usual chores. I've been feeling much better lately. Not so grumpy. Must be that tonic I had.

Sunday 20 May

Went to 9.30 Mass as usual. Rotten day. It poured with rain in the afternoon. I'll be able to dig the garden ready for the tomatoes anyway. Procession at church.

Monday 21 May

Another rotten day. It started off nicely, but got colder & chill [?] & poured with rain again in the afternoon. Went to the flicks. Saw "Janie". Quite good. Also "End of the Road" good Edward Norris. Started embroidering my pinafore dress.

Tuesday 22 May

Didn't do much. Studied a bit. Finished embroidering my p.d. It doesn't look bad, though I say it as shouldn't. Did some gardening! Started to dig up the prospective tomato bed. It's nearly time for planting, if not quite.

Wednesday 23 May

Frances caught the 7.13 this morning. Hugh went back this evening. It rained on and off all day. I went with Hugh to the station and got drenched. Didn't do much else except study. Couldn't carry on with the gardening.

Thursday 24 May

Went to church. Then went to the hospital to collect my sub. allowance. The last one. Did some more gardening. Am getting on slowly. It's hard work! (Doesn't suit me.) Haven't heard from Tom or Peter for ages. Must be slipping!

Friday 25 May

Got the cheap edition of “An Anthology of Modern Verse” at Ward’s. Bit of luck. The only one they had. Went to the Pav. with Mother. Saw “Abroad With Two Yanks” Very funny. William Bendix, Dennis O’Keefe & John Loder. Also “International Lady”. Good too. A decent programme for a change.

Saturday 26 May

Went to work in the morning. Had my hair trimmed in the afternoon. She cut it too short! It’s hardly long enough to curl. Still I expect it will grow pretty quickly. Listened to “Pride & Prejudice” on the wireless. Quite good though rather changed from the original.

Sunday 27 May

Went to 9.30 Mass. Took Chum for a walk in the afternoon. Cyril came at about 5. He’s stationed at Ongar now. Procession at church.

Monday 28 May

Uncle Willie comes home to dinner every day now, says he wants the exercise! Went to French. Didn’t do much else. The weather is still cold and showery. Miserable! Perhaps it will be better later on. Let’s hope so.

Tuesday 29 May

Went to history. The mistress shows you just how much you don’t know. I don’t seem to know anything! Was going to do some more digging, but couldn’t be bothered when it came to the point!

Wednesday 30 May

Went to the flicks. Saw “The Thin Man Goes Home”. Quite good, though I can’t stand William Powell. Also saw “Johnny Doesn’t Live Here Any More”. Quite good too. Rather balmy. I shall have to change my book token soon as the 6 months allowed are nearly up.

Thursday 31 May

Went to 7 o’c Mass. Went to Benediction in the evening then went with Z[ita] and G[erry] to see “Jamaica Inn”. Had already seen it once. It seemed a bit silly on a second showing. Saw also “For the Love of You” ancient, about 1920 I should think. Gave us a laugh anyway. [No idea what film this is – it is not immediately traceable on the internet, and the authoritative Leslie Halliwell’s Film Guide (1987 edition, of course) does not list it.]

Friday 1 June

Saw Mother off to Ipswich for the weekend. She caught the 6 o’c train and went with Uncle Willie. I went to Maths. Didn’t do much else. The weather is rotten. Cold and wet in spots with a bit of sun here

& there.

Saturday 2 June

Went shopping in the morning. Managed to get some soap flakes and some real starch, both at Woolworth's. Went to the hospital in the evening. Nothing doing there worst luck. We just sat and folded gauze.

Sunday 3 June

Went to 8 o'clock Mass (1st Sunday). Procession in the afternoon. Outdoor. Corpus Christi. Quite well organized for a change. Josie came to tea. It poured in the evening.

Monday 4 June

Went to French. It is very difficult now. Or, seems to be to me. Went to the Pav. after. Saw "Mr Emmanuel". Quite good. Felix Aylemer. Also, "South of the Border". I'd seen it before. It wasn't bad. Gene Autry, who's rather stodgy.

Tuesday 5 June

Went to History. It was Mr Armstrong again. As usual he ran on about things which, though quite interesting, are no earthly use to us in the exam. Didn't do much else. Mother saw "The Unseen". She said it was quite good. Tessy's found out there are over 75 "Horns" in Switzerland! (She's mad on mountaineering since she saw "The Challenge".)

A General Election had been called for 15 July. The defeated Conservative candidate in the by-election, Brian Cook, was not in the running this time.

Wednesday 6 June

Went to a Conservative meeting at the Corn Exchange. Hubert Ashton is the candidate. He's not bad, but he was a cricketer and keeps talking about "sticky wickets" etc. That sort of thing bores me stiff. I wish Cook was standing again.

Thursday 7 June

Went to church at 6.30. Then went with Mother to see "A Song to Remember". Good. Lovely music. The life of Chopin but not very accurate as to facts. Still, it was worth seeing just for the music. Jose Iturbi played. Cornel Wilde was Chopin. He was quite good but not much like Chopin to look at.

Friday 8 June

Went to Maths. The office gets worse and worse. Rotten lot! I'm getting desprit! [Although this spelling is now common on message boards, usually followed by "lol" etc., here it must be a deliberate

misspelling, probably an allusion to some long-forgotten joke.] Can't stand it much longer. I think I'll have to advertise for a Maths teacher. Don't get far with the Tech one. Beastly weather still, on and off.

Saturday 9 June

Tom-Tom, Percy, Joan & I were the only ones at work this morning. We had a discussion about various things, such as there being no such thing as time or space. Tom-Tom was very profound. Went to dance at the Tech. Quite good. Nice lot there though mostly youths!

Sunday 10 June

Went to 9.30 Mass. Didn't do much of note. Have nearly finished one sandal now. (Rope soled). Went to church in evening. It rained hard later on. Flaming June!

Monday 11 June

The office is just like a prison. They want our time sheets every day now, presumably to try to make us work harder. They won't succeed that way, not with me anyway! Went to French. I don't think there will be many more classes at the Tech.

Tuesday 12 June

Went to History but no-one else turned up. Had Mr. Armstrong to myself! He said I could study on my own so I left at about 7.15 & went to the pictures! Saw "Hotel Berlin". Good. Helmut Dantine, Peter Lorre, Raymond Massey.

Wednesday 13 June

It gets worse & worse at the office. I will go off my head soon! Went to church, then took Chum for a walk with Tessy. Lovely evening. Looks as if the weather is changing for the better.

Thursday 14 June

The weather hasn't decided whether to be fine or not. Went to church at 6.30. Spent the rest of the evening studying history etc. Saw Mary at church and arranged to go for a walk along the river on Saturday if it's fine. (This isn't a Red Letter day! I just happen to be using a red ink pen.)

Friday 15 June

Went to Maths. Didn't do much else. Wish I could find someone to give me Maths lessons. I'll have to advertise. Should write some letters but just haven't got the energy. I'll be glad when September's over & I can relax, or can I?

Saturday 16 June

Frances came at about 11.30. Got up early. Did some housework, then met Mary at about 11.45 and we cycled to Little Baddow, left our bikes there & walked along the towpath as far as Alting [*sic: she means Ulting*]. Lovely there. Quiet. Hardly a soul in sight at all. Dull day though. Went to hospital in evening. Quite interesting. Still don't like Dr. Allen.

Sunday 17 June

Went to 9.30 Mass. Mary Weston asked me to tea to-day. I got there at about 3 o'clock. (She lives in Rectory Lane. It's very quiet there.) Nice day. Had a nice time. Frances & Mother cycled to Billericay this P.M.

Monday 18 June

Think I've got a puncture. It may be the valve rubber though. Went to French. Not many there. Probably because the weather is so nice to-day. 5 of them are going in for an R.S.A. exam next Monday.

Tuesday 19 June

It is a puncture I've got. Managed to pump it enough to get to work & back. The worst of it is that the puncture is near the valve, if not on it so I'll probably have to have a new inner tube. Went with Mother to the Liberal Meeting. Not Bad. Hilda Buckmaster (the candidate) is quite nice.

Wednesday 20 June

Had a big tea then went to Mrs Alford's "At Home" & found a large spread there! Couldn't eat all I wanted to. Had quite a nice time. Better than I expected. There were a lot of people I didn't know there though. (All from the hospital First Aid Post.)

Thursday 21 June

Went with Mother to Ashton's meeting in the Corn Exchange. Douglas Jerrold [a right wing author and publisher, a Catholic and an associate of Graham Greene] spoke. He was very good. Pretty good meeting altogether. Best I've been to. We went after to the Pav. & saw "Love Story" Stewart Granger & Margaret Lockwood. Quite good.

Friday 22 June

Mary Symonds & Barbara [Fisher]'s Birthdays. Went to a sale of ARP equipment in the casualty clearing station. Had to queue for ½ an hour, then didn't get anything! They let people have as much as they liked so there was nothing left, & we were near the front of the queue. (Jean L. & I.)

Saturday 23 June

It was the Crusade of Rescue [a charity set up to provide homes for Catholic children] day to-day &

Gerry and I sold flags in the afternoon. Rotten job! It was blazing hot too. Don't think I did badly, all the same.

Sunday 24 June

Didn't do much. Went to 9.30 Mass. Mended my bike again but don't suppose it's any good. The puncture is on the valv. Went to church at 6.30. The Canon *didn't* preach.

Monday 25 June

Went to French but no-one turned up, not even the mistress, so I went with Gerry to see "The Keys of the Kingdom" (Cronin wrote the book) Very good. Gregory Peck was Fr Chisholm & was just right for the part.

Tuesday 26 June

Went to History. No one there! Nice lot. I expect they've given up. I shall have to study on my own now. Don't fancy taking Matric in September really, but must all the same. Didn't do much.

Wednesday 27 June

Aunty Riley came. Took Chum for a walk with Tessy & Mary. We went to the "Matterhorn" again. Didn't do much else. Jawed wit Mother & Aunty Riley. Don't do much studying I am afraid. Must pull my socks up.

Thursday 28 June

Went to church then went with Gerry to see "Music for Millions" with Margaret O'Brien (child prodigy). Didn't think much of it (or her). Was rather bored. Gerry too. Quite nice music though classical.

Friday 29 June

Went to Mass (Sts. Peter & Paul). Went to Maths in evening. Last lesson of that. Must advertise for someone to teach me or I'll never pass Matric. Haven't much time either, shall be glad when it's all over.

Saturday 30 June

Went for a walk with Mary in the afternoon, over the fields to Baddow, then back by the river. Went to the hospital. Quite busy. Several patients in. Added to that they were taking an inventory & all the equipment was laid out all over the place. Didn't get home till 11.20!

Sunday 1 July

Went to 10.30. Mass with Joyce Martin. (She's marrying a catholic Yank & wants to become a catholic.) Went for a ramble in the afternoon with the Chelmsford Pathfinders. Mary Weston is one of them. Jolly good. Walked miles.

The Chelmsford Pathfinders was founded in 1934 and, under the name Chelmsford Rambling Club, is still going strong.

Monday 2 July

Didn't go to French. I expect they've packed up. Went to the flicks with Barbara F. who's staying the night. She's home on sick leave. Had an accident & broke a bone in her hand, cut it also. We saw "A Medal for Benny". Quite good, also "Alibi", good.

Tuesday 3 July

Didn't do much this evening. Don't think it's much good going to the Tech any more. The election is drawing near but this town isn't getting very excited. Do they ever, about anything? Hope Millington doesn't get in again. The old Red!

Wednesday 4 July

Went to the ARP sale at work & got a suit of oilskins for Uncle Willie. They had some firemen's axes but I didn't get one, wish I had now. Zita & Gerry had a sort of celebration in the "Club room" as it's American Independence day. We all went up & had some eats etc. Not bad.

Thursday 5 July

Polling day. We shan't hear the results until 26th July when all the Service votes will be in. Played tennis on the Marconi sports ground. Quite good. It's turned warm & sunny, hope it stays like that.

Friday 6 July

Mother went to Mrs Fuller's this evening. I didn't do very much. Have done very little studying since classes stopped. *Must* pull my socks up. Uncle Willie says there is no more matric, only schools cert. *Must* find out.

Saturday 7 July

At work in the morning. Did some shopping and housework in the afternoon. Finished my sandals (rope soled) in the evening. They don't look bad. Gerry & I are cycling to Mersea to the boat tomorrow.

Sunday 8 July

We started at about 10.30. Arrived at Mersea at 2 o'clock! Had to mend a puncture on the way. Had a swim,

lazed & started back at 9.30. Boy, is my face red!

Monday 9 July

My arms are badly sunburnt. They burn like blazes. I don't like the new girl now. She's too conceited. Thinks every boy she sees makes eyes at her! Poor thing! didn't do very much this evening. Mother has started full-time work again so we have our dinners out.

Tuesday 10 July

Went to the Ritz with Mother. Saw "Salty O'Rourke", Alan Ladd & Gail Russell. Quite good, also George Formby in "[rest of line left blank]". Not bad. I'd seen it before. Anita is back at work now. She only comes in the mornings though.

Wednesday 11 July

Went to the ARP sale again. Got another suit of oilskins for Joan [Fisher, her cousin]. Just what she wants in the Land Army. Cyril was at home when I got there. They also *gave away* a 2lb tin of paint to anyone who wanted one at the sale. It's anti-gas paint but quite nice. Pale green.

Thursday 12 July

Mother & I went to the Pav. & saw "Since You Went Away". Quite good, though rather slushy in parts. Jennifer Jones, Joseph Cotton, Shirley Temple, Robert Walker, & Claudette Colbert were in it. No other film in the programme. Am going up to London to-morrow.

Friday 13 July

Managed to catch the 4.58 which was late so arrived at B's at about 7. We went to the pictures and saw "The Right to Live" which was quite good & had a medical flavour. Also "The Town Went Wild" Freddy Bartholomew. Quite good.

Saturday 14 July

Went shopping in the morning. Tried to get an inner tube & couldn't. Went to the Cathedral Hall in the afternoon where Sr. Margaret received a presentation. She is retiring. The school is closing down too. Saw Bette Davis in "Marked Woman" old, but good. Can't remember the name of the second film. It wasn't bad.

The cathedral in question is surely Westminster Cathedral. Monica attended a convent school in the vicinity of the cathedral, so presumably Sr Margaret was a teacher or at least one of the nuns. The school in question may have been Virgo Fidelis convent school, in Kensington, or another one, closer to the cathedral. Does anyone know?

Sunday 15 July

Had a lazy day as is usual at B's. Would have liked to do a concert but couldn't find out what was on. Arrived home at about 9.45.

Monday 16 July

Went to the Ritz with Mother. Saw "Tomorrow the World". Quite good. Fredric March & Betty Field also "Murder, He Says" Absolutely balmy but quite funny in spots. Fred McMurray. Cyril has been doing some gardening at home. It (the garden) is beginning to look quite respectable!

Tuesday 17 July

Had some salad for supper last night which must have been bad. Woke in the night feeling awful. Never felt worse in my life. Stayed at home to-day. We will be on holiday in a fortnight's time, thank goodness.

Wednesday 18 July

Went to Church at 6.30. Mother & Zita went to the flicks. I went home. Didn't do much there. Hugh comes home to-morrow. I must make some alterations to my "espadrills" as Tessy calls them.

Thursday 19 July

Anita & I have been discussing the possibility of having a camping holiday. We're very much inclined to try it! Should be fun. U[n]c[n]le W[illie] says we can borrow his tent. Went to the Regent. Saw "He Snoops to Conquer". George Formby. Quite good. Also "They Live in Fear". Not bad.

Friday 20 July

We have been drawing up lists of requirements for our camping holiday & find it will be quite a business. Still, we don't mind that. Saw Mother off. She's gone to London for the weekend. She's just acquired a second hand bike. It's quite good. A sports model.

Saturday 21 July

At work in the morning. Did some housework in the afternoon. Went to confession & the library in the evening. The weather is not so good now. Hope it is alright for the week after next (Holiday).

Sunday 22 July

Didn't do much of note. Zita & Tessy went to the flicks. (Naughty girls!) I mended my bike. Put in a second-hand inner tube I had managed to get. Mother came back.

[23 July – 7 August: blank. Sadly we don't get to hear how the camping trip went.]

Wednesday 8 August

Work again! Can't grumble I suppose. Took Chum for a walk. Nothing much else. Tom-Tom said I could have my transfer or release as Mr. Mathews has been demobbed & started work to-day. I'm trying for my release.

Thursday 9 August

Have filled in a [sic] application form for my release. Hope I can get it & go to London for a job. Mother is going to Ipswich to-morrow. Didn't do anything of note.

Friday 10 August

Saw Mother off to Ipswich. Zita, Gerry & I went with Gwen (Gerry's friend) to see "Captain Blood". Had seen it before. Not bad. Also "Goodnight Sweetheart" with Robert Livingstone. Not bad either.

Atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima on 6 August and Nagasaki on 9 August.

Saturday 11 August

Worked in the morning. The end of the Jap war is in sight. We have used atomic bombs. Inhuman things. They wipe out whole cities. We ought to be ashamed of ourselves for using them. Went to hospital. Nothing much.

Sunday 12 August

Went to 9.30 Mass. A Dominican said it. Quite nice. Pleasant change in the sermon anyway. Took Chum for a walk. We are expecting VJ day any day now.

[13 August – 26 August: blank]

Monday 27 August

Didn't do much. Rotten weather. My hair has all become out because of yesterday's washing & the dampness today. Took Chum for a walk. Frances & the others are coming home on Thursday I think.

Tuesday 28 August

Wanted Zita to come to the Corn Exchange to-night but she wouldn't, so I went by myself. Saw M'Garry there. It wasn't bad, though there weren't a great many there. The kids aren't coming till Sunday.

Wednesday 29 August

Went with Mother to the Ritz. Saw "The Suspect". Quite good. Charles Laughton was quite good for a change. Also Ella Raines. Also saw "Ghost Catchers". Olsen & Johnson, & Gloria Jean, Kirby Grant,

Martha O'Driscoll. Utter nonsense.

Thursday 30 August

Pay day! We are having a Victory bonus. 10 p. c. for those who have been here more than 5 years! Not bad! We get it in the middle of September. Took Chum for a walk. Did some studying. The exam is drawing close. Don't suppose I'll pass. Always an optimist.

Friday 31 August

Didn't do a lot. Went to the flicks. Saw "A Tree Grows in Brooklyn". Good. Peggy Ann Garner, Mary Maguire, James Dunn. At about 10 o'clock Chum barked furiously, the door opened & in walked – the kids & Frances! They having decided to come to-day! What a fuss & palaver!

Saturday 1 September

John came from Ipswich for a week. I went shopping in the morning, did some washing in the afternoon. Managed to get some cigarettes in the evening. Lucky, they're a job to get just now. There's a shortage of everything. This Labour government!

Sunday 2 September

Went to 8 o'clock Mass. (1st Sunday) B paid us a surprise visit this afternoon. She only stayed a little while. Went back in the evening. We couldn't persuade her to stay the night.

Monday 3 September

Went to a netball meeting at 5 o'clock. Not very many there. There will be a practise [sic] either this Saturday or next. Went to the Ritz with Zita. Saw "I'll Be Seeing You". Very good. Also "Senorita from the West" Quite good.

Tuesday 4 September

Went to the flicks again. Naughty girl! Saw "They Were Sisters". Very good. James Mason, Phyllis Calvert, Peter Murray Hill, Ann Crawford etc. Good acting. Also a short called "Guess What?" with Ronnie Waldman. Quite good.

Wednesday 5 September

Went to church, then to the library. Old Tom-Tom behaved very childishly to-day. (Doesn't he always?) Didn't do very much else. The others all went to the pictures.

Thursday 6 September

The Lord Mayor of London visited the works to-day. All the ARP services had to parade in the yard! Of all the balmy ideas! Months after the war is over. Went to the Select with Anita, saw "To Have & Have Not" good. Also "Thoroughbreds" quite good.

[The rest of the diary is blank, except for:]

12 September	Anniversary of Tony's & Barbara's Wedding
20 September	Zita's Birthday
6 November	B's Birthday
17 December	Mary's Birthday