

## Chapter 33

### Life after the RAF

*Although released from the RAF on 3 December 1945, my actual release date was 13th February 1946. Thus, for a period, I was being paid by both the RAF and AV Roe. On top of that, I was also receiving Income Tax rebates. I started work in the Jig and Tool Drawing Office. Everyone was very kind and helpful and I soon settled in to my new working life. AV Roe housed and fed me in their hostel in Horsforth which was well run. We each had a separate room and there was a games room, canteen, dining room etc. Each room was cleaned and tidied by staff employed for the duties. Coaches from all over the place took us to and from work. This arrangement also came under the jurisdiction of AV Roe and was a good set up.*

*At work I had a drawing board but instruments, rules and log books were our own. Drawings of the tools and fixtures were done in pencil on treated linen sheets of various sizes. Incidentally, spoiled sheets could be washed out and made excellent cleaning cloths. It struck me as an expensive method but AV Roe must have had a reason. After I settled down, I persuaded George Ritchie, my brother-in-law to apply for a job there. This he did and he was subsequently employed. At that time no-one could leave and change jobs without special permission, however after about March 1946 this was relaxed. When I was accepted for the job, I was told that there would be about three years work ahead of us but it seemed to me that this was an optimistic forecast. My section leader gave me some advice. He told me to apply for a job at English Electric, Bradford. He suggested that, after two years there, I could get a job anywhere. He had originally worked for them. I applied for a job and met the head of the Jig and Tool Drawing Office and Planning Department whose name was John Longden. He was interested and offered me a start at £7-2-6d. I spent an hour trying to get the extra 1/- that I was already getting. He wouldn't budge and in the end I accepted. I went to the interview in the Morris 12 and he was interested to see it. There were only 12 cars in the car park.*

*On the 22nd March, we were told that my Dad had died in Canterbury Hospital so George and I got time off to attend. Prior to this Betty had come up and we had a few days at the Golden Lion in Briggate, Leeds. We were looking for a place to buy. This was possible because, as well as the £130 gratuity on release, I had also been sent £750 gratuity for ex Officers. George and I trailed around all over Leeds looking for a suitable house. Eventually we found No 5, Leysholme Crescent, Wortley in Leeds. For a time, my sister Betty and George lived with us but eventually No 51 came up for sale and they bought that. We were a bit relieved as No 5 was certainly overcrowded.*



***A modern (2000) photo of  
5 Leysholme Crescent***

*George followed me to English Electric and, when he had settled in, I advised him to volunteer to design plastic moulding moulds. I had already done some of these and knew that it needed someone who was accurate. George did this and over the years became an expert at both the moulds and the moulding procedures. Although I had, initially, lost 1/- in pay, John Longden gave me a 10/- raise when he found that I was learning quickly and everything was done at speed. This was partly due to the great help that I got from my mentor, Dougy Barron. My original idea was to work for two years and then to move on to something better but in 1948 I was promoted to section leader in the New Development and Process Department (ND&P) which had been started by John Longden. By the time I moved there, Longden had been promoted to Works Manager and Mick Mascus had taken over as chief of ND&P. Thus, I had no need to move but, in two years? In 1950, Mick Mascus moved to Luton and I was promoted to Chief. This was a peculiar position because whilst working on site for the Works and General Manager, I reported directly to Mr Willie Hurton who was the overall Production Manager representing the Managing Director, Lord Nelson. This could cause me problems because, in effect, I had two masters and they did not necessarily agree with each other. Willie however, held all the aces. This was a time of rapid inflation and, in the space of a few months, I had to give four raises to the people who worked for me. Willie Hurton had forgotten to put my pay rise through so the General Manager sorted it out. ND&P was responsible for new methods, purchase of plant, erection of new buildings and shop layout all of which was interesting work.*

*In the Autumn of 1946, both George and I had booked into Leeds Technical College; George did the Ordinary National Certificate but I started with the Higher National and then did the Post Higher National Certificate. When I passed, and in view of my position, I was accepted as A.M.I. Mech E. in March 1953. I also won the Kirkstall Forge prize for Industrial Administration, about £20.*

*As regards our personal life, we had settled down in Leeds using the old Morris 12 as a*



**1948 - Bolton Abbey  
Betty expecting Michael**

*means of getting about. John went to Upper Wortley County Primary School. Every weekend we went out exploring the countryside, Ilkley, Bolton Abbey and Knaresborough etc. John had an exercise to carry out which was to collect, name and put into an exercise book, all the wild flowers that we could find. He did a grand job but wasn't given the prize because his writing wasn't good enough. That made me very cross because it wasn't a writing exercise. We discovered Filey in, I believe, 1947. The day that we went must have been cold because Betty had to go to the shops and buy John a blazer to keep him warm. When he was about six, we saw a small bicycle for sale on the way to*

*Ilkley. It was a girl's cycle but, as no new ones were available, we bought it for about £5. It also had to be fitted with blocks on the pedals to allow him to reach. He spent many happy hours on that old bike. In the Autumn of that year, he went off with an older boy to collect conkers at Tadcaster. By the time he got home he was worn out. It was at No 5 Leysholme that I bought a heavy, homemade hut which we had to move on rollers from the top of the estate.*

*In April 1949 our second son, Michael, was born in a nearby hospital. For Betty this was a much easier birth than for John. When Betty found out that she was pregnant, she told the lady next door who responded by saying "That's funny, so am I". I always called her young*



**1948  
Me at Bolton Abbey**

son "the General".

From time to time, we went south to Canterbury and Chatham and we also had one holiday in Filey in a very small caravan. Some holidays were spent wholly on different days out, usually somewhere fairly local. Blackberry picking in September was a favourite pastime.

At the end of 1952 we arranged the purchase of a new house "OAKROYD" in Thornton, Bradford. We were due to take this over in March 1953 and so we did, with difficulty because, unfortunately, Betty's mother had died. While John and I did our best with the move, Betty took



**May 1949  
Betty & Michael**



**Betty, Michael &  
AUW 264 at Filey**

Michael down to Chatham to the funeral and to arrange the clearance of the house. Of the two of us, she had the worse job. When Betty and Michael came home, things were slowly sorted out. Michael, aged four, decided to do a bit of gardening; he took his toy wheelbarrow round and filled it with rhododendron buds, thus, no flowers in 1953! Later on, another of his efforts was to cut down a silver birch

tree.

At work, I was doing alright and was intent on building up the department. Looking back, I have often wondered whether or not this was the right thing to do. Money was still tight and it took me many years before our position reached the equivalent to my RAF pay. Inflation had taken hold so we had to be careful.

Just before we moved to Bradford, John had won a scholarship to St Michael's College in Leeds. As a result of



**John ready for  
St Michael's College at  
5 Leysholme Crescent**

*the move, he was forced to transfer to St Bede's Grammar School in Bradford. I thought that he would be OK travelling to Leeds every day as he was a very self-reliant boy, but the authorities wouldn't agree. At the St Bede's interview I was a bit disappointed because the headmaster, Monsignor Sweeney, talked about the importance of handwriting. I thought back to the flower collection and thought "Here we go again".*

*As regards sports, in 1947 I contacted a chap in Leeds called Ian Major who was organising a hockey team at Adel for ex-servicemen. Both George and I were invited to join. I played for them until 1956. The last game I played, against the Army Apprentice College at Harrogate, I felt tired and got hit in the eye with a hockey ball. In the same game I missed scoring but my son John did score. It was after that game that I found that I had pernicious anaemia, for which I have had to be injected monthly ever since. George carried on playing for another season as goalkeeper and when he retired, they presented him with a Silver Mug; I got nothing! Ah well. During the time I played, I captained the second team twice. Both years we played the first team and drew both games. In a game at Leeds University, I was yelling at our Centre Forward, Edmund Clark, to get going; he scored two goals although injured. It was found out later that he had a cracked ankle and never played again although he became a very good umpire. I also joined Old Farnley Cricket Club and played for them until we moved to Thornton. Talking of cricket, when we were out in the country John and I would play, starting when John was six, however, he never really took to the game I loved; instead he made his mark at hockey playing for the RAF and Combined Services.*

*As I am becoming in danger of meandering from one subject to another, I think that I will concentrate on one subject at a time with the period ending in 1963.*

### **Religion.**

*Betty had always been a staunch Catholic and went to Mass whenever possible. When in Leeds she went to the local church but on special occasions, I went with her and John to the Cathedral. When we moved to Thornton, as Betty was at Chatham, I contacted the priest, Father W Moverley. He was a priest far ahead of his time and he told us that when Michael was ready to go to school we should send him to the local village school. Each Sunday, Betty would take John and Michael to the Mass at the Sacred Heart Church.*

## House & Home

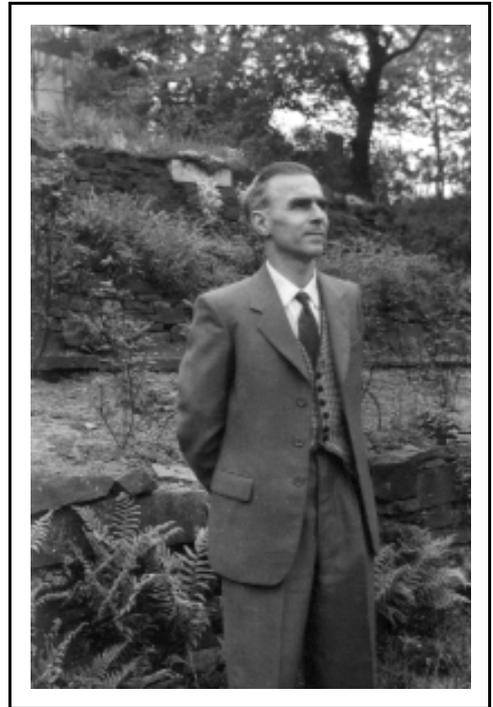
"Oakroyd" is a fairly large house with about 1 3/8 acres of land. When we moved there in 1953 an old man, Harold Priestley, had a large number of free running chickens in the bottom field. One day his huts caught fire and John, rightly, called the Fire Brigade. Harold's daughter was not pleased about this but I'm not sure why. Harold sold me

s o m e chickens so for a time when John was still at home he fed



**c. 1955 - John**

them at night and we did get plenty of eggs. We turned the large lawn into a tennis court. To do this, I bought a second hand net from the English Electric Sports Club and we played for several years. In the large cellar was a solid fuel stove and one year I planted mushroom spawn in a prepared bed. This was a successful operation and we had more mushrooms than we could eat. Betty was a good gardener and she and I moved tons of earth to create a level area around the pond which I had put in when we bought the house. John and his pal Paul Shackleton helped with this effort and moved a few tons of stone to create a retaining wall and seat which is still there today. Another area had several apple trees and for some time produced quite a lot of fruit. Most of them have now been cut down. In 1953 we bought our first television so that we could watch the Queen's Coronation.



**Me on the main lawn at Oakroyd**

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**Betty at Oakroyd**

## Dogs.

Betty's big interest had always been dogs. In Leeds we bought a black and white peke which unfortunately died. After that we bought a mongrel in the market which regrettably turned vicious when Betty bought two black Pekes, so we had to have him put to sleep which was a shame. The Pekes were brother and sister named Beau and Susie and somehow they got together and produced a litter of pups. My sister Betty had one but it died young whilst the others prospered. Susie developed a problem with her back legs and had to be put to sleep. Beau was quite a character and once, while we were still living in Leeds, he disappeared for three days, eventually turning up in Kirkstall. Beau came with us to Oakroyd and was killed by a lorry on Thornton Road.



*Betty with Beau at  
5 Leysholme Crescent*



*Michael with  
Lassie, Cho-Cho & Beauty*

After this we bought another Peke who gave birth to Cho-Cho and Beauty after which the mother died of kidney trouble. I saw an article in the Yorkshire Post about a Collie at the RSPCA centre in York and went and brought her home. She was the only dog who really took to me. She was fairly old but was a lovely dog and we had her for a couple of years before having to have her put to sleep; she had cancer. We then bought a black poodle called Tina; we

bred with her and kept her daughter Janie by which time Beauty had died. Betty really loved her dogs and she must have passed this on to Michael and his son Paul who now has three dogs.

## Cars.

In 1955 I finally parted with the Morris 12 (AUW 264) and bought a Ford Popular (UUG 724). Subsequently we had a Blue Ford Prefect (WKY 683), Red Ford Anglia (2055 UA) and a Ford Consul (3537 UB). Betty got interested in driving and took lessons. She failed her first test but passed the second. I bought her a Ford Popular (OVR 353); this was not an easy car to drive but she used to buzz up Thornton Road at a good speed and became a good driver. She bought John a 1935 Triumph Gloria (AKU 990).



*Ford Popular - UUG 724*



*Ford Anglia - 2055 UA  
John & Paul Shackleton*



*Ford Prefect - WUM 877  
Betty & Dogs*



*Ford Consul - 3537 UB*



*John's 1935 Triumph Gloria with  
Paul Shackleton's 1932 Morris 8*

## Holidays.

*We continued to explore the countryside and had a few holidays away at Hunstanton and Bacton, both in Norfolk. At first the Morris 12 was still going strong but the others took over and for the last holiday at Bacton, we had the Consul. At a fair in Bacton, I was ten minutes away from winning a live pig when someone just beat me. We enjoyed Norfolk including Sandringham and the lavender fields. We had booked to go to Bacton in 1963 but that was not to be. There were a couple of rather good holidays spent in Tankerton, in rented accommodation, where we played tennis and bathed etc. We also spent days at Filey and Bridlington.*

## Social.

*Our social life, which was limited, was connected largely with Works activities such as Foreman's Dinners held annually and the all male pantomime given in the Phoenix Works Sports Club. Whilst in Leeds we also paid regular visits to the Theatre where there was a different show each week, usually a farce. One summer I went on a Foreman's trip to Bridlington where I had my first try at playing golf. This got me interested and I joined Phoenix Golf Club. At that time I got down to a handicap of 22. The Forgan clubs which I bought then I used when I took up the game more seriously after retirement.*

## Golf

*As is usual with golfers there is a fund of stories of what happened and what might have been. Here are a few of mine from the early years, not necessarily in chronological order.*

- *Playing with John as my partner during the first period that I played at Headley. We entered and won the invitation Stableford Competition but we were not allowed the prize because it was said that I had not paid my annual subscription of £7. Neither did they return the 10/- competition entry fee. I promptly paid the subscription and handed in my resignation.*
- *Playing at Otley with our Works dentist. As we were about to strike off, one of the following pair hit off from their tee and his ball only just missed us. Norman promptly got hold of his wood and hit the ball as far as possible into a wood. On being asked if we had seen a ball we denied all knowledge.*

- *Playing in a competition at Headley and watching a chap take five putts from 18 inches. This was on the old 3<sup>rd</sup>, now 7<sup>th</sup>.*
- *Playing at Selby GC on our annual Works golfing trip. Standing on the first tee where our new Assistant Personnel Manager was attempting to strike off. After seven clean air shots, he dislocated his knee. It was seen that a doctor was on the 10th tee which was nearby. He was asked to attend and did so. He then returned to the 10th tee and promptly holed in One!*
- *Betting an unbeliever that I could hit a golf ball 100 yards with a hockey stick. He wouldn't come to see me demonstrate.*
- *On the same trip, to ensure that a large number of prizes were won, we invented two competitions. The main one used real handicaps and the other on used secret handicaps, sealed in an envelope and known only to me and a friend of mine, Fred Jowett. These handicaps were based on the results from the previous year. This proved to be quite successful and pleased everyone.*
- *Taking a bet with two chaps that I could hit a ball over the ravine facing the first tee at Northcliffe. As it happened I was allocated the tenth tee to start so when I got to the first I hit a very nice shot straight over the ravine. Cyril Brooksbank paid up but the other chap didn't. However after months of niggling and leg pulling he did finally concede. It was only 2/6d!*
- *Standing on the 18th tee at Seasalter (Whitstable) GC with Betty. I hit off straight but short of the green. I handed a No 2 Wood to Betty and said: "No one is looking, have a go". She hit the ball straight onto the clubhouse roof where it rolled down straight onto the green!*
- *Finding out that the Secretary at Seasalter had worked at Dawson's Mill in Thornton until retirement.*
- *Rumour: One of the chaps at Phoenix GC driving into a small tree and cutting it down. I didn't see it myself.*

### **Children's Progress.**

*In 1958, John, unknown to us, became unhappy at school and I told the headmaster that he would not attend any more. He applied to join the Royal Air Force as an Apprentice at Halton. With four 'O' Level GCEs, he was accepted. The passing out examination was a nightmare for him in terms of the oral tests. I thought back to Betty's attempts to answer a simple question for acceptance to Grammar School - same problem. I think that, in my day, they would have found some way round it, after all he had been considered for a Cadetship and passed the written exam on the same subject. Through this he was deemed to have failed but I always thought it grossly unfair. As usual, he faced it with some courage and eventually obtained the necessary grade. At Halton, he also passed the Advanced Level GCE in maths which had been the root cause of his trouble at school, related to a sarcastic teacher. Betty and I attended the Passing-out parade and I made some attempt to persuade his officer to think again but I got nowhere. In the end I wrote to the Air Ministry.*

*In the meantime Michael had been going to the village school and in 1960 passed a scholarship to St Bede's Grammar School. He did not like it as he was not academic and was only really interested in practical work. Helping him with homework was also difficult, particularly in maths where he was expected to use precise methods with which I was not familiar. I used much easier and direct methods.*

### **Betty and Work.**

*When we were established in Thornton, Betty thought of working again. She eventually took on the job of demonstrating knitting machines in a shop at the top of Church Bank, Bradford. Some time later the business moved to Swan Arcade (long since demolished). She was very clever with these machines and could design patterns as well as work on the machines. She became disillusioned with the owner of the shop and joined up with the husband of the lady who originally opened the Friendly Café in Thornton. They repaired and, I think, sold second hand machines which Betty demonstrated however this closed down when he and his wife moved south. Betty then joined Brown Muffs after a short stay in a shop near Hall Ings. At Brown Muffs, she worked for the Maintenance Engineer as a clerical assistant.*

## Neighbours.

*I should mention our immediate neighbours, the Brysons, who had bought "Rosedene" the house next door. They were grand people. Very much later they moved but I am still in touch. Years later Geoff Bryson employed Michael and then installed him in a garage of which more later.*

## Work.

*As regards work, by 1954/55 it had all gone pear shaped. Our General Manager, Percy Evans, was given three hours to clear his desk and John Longden was told that he was to move. It started really with the retirement of Lord Nelson who had handed over to his son. Representing him in the North was a man called Sheffield who was responsible for all General Managers, and Willy Hurton, already mentioned, who was in overall charge of production methods etc. A new General Manager, John Parker, a Cambridge Graduate, supported by the younger Nelson, was appointed at Bradford. Thus the hawks descended and the old ways were out. In Percy Evans, they had a very decent man. The trouble was that he had his own ways of how things should be run; he went to Brush Electric as a Director. In getting rid of John Longden, they got rid of the best Production Engineer in English Electric; he went to Crompton Parkinson also as a Director. The main Production Superintendent also left as he was not prepared to put up with the interference from outsiders who had been put in by Sheffield to reorganise. My job was also made uncomfortable as the senior ND&P man from Preston, Mr Instone, was sent to Bradford to ensure that the expansion, which was due to take place, would be in line with Sheffield's ideas. John Parker, the new General Manager really had no say. Jim Instone was supposed to represent Hurton but in fact was really working for Sheffield. At the time, Hurton was doing a lot of work in Canada opening a new factory. Whilst he was there Sheffield would come in and order me to do things, for instance put up another extension. Thus, I was very much a ping pong ball and tried to do what I thought was right. With Instone breathing down my neck this was difficult. We were not allowed to deal with our normal builders or steel erectors etc. Instead we had to use those specified by the Preston architect. At one point I was accused by Sheffield of doing something because I was afraid of Hurton and Hurton in turn accused me of doing something because I was afraid of Sheffield. This was grossly unfair particularly as they never consulted with each other.*

*Some useful work did get done. We organised a production line for Canberra actuators at our subsidiary factory at Carr Lane and tooled up the production of Canberra generators, the first of which was difficult to make. An improved one came later. The Canberra was being made at Preston in considerable quantities and we needed to keep up. A new office block was built to house Sales, Contracts, Accounts etc. The Works was given a complete facelift and all Departments rearranged. At this time ND&P was run down.*

*When all that was finished, I was moved for six months to work for John Parker to study various operations and ideas connected with improving same. In the six months I usually had two or three studies going on at the same time. On completion, each study was given a concise report and personal recommendation and submitted for consideration by the General Manager. Some he acted on some he didn't. On all of them I made sure that I had the backing of the Departmental Managers and the Chief Accountant. This came to an end early in 1956. I was then asked to be the Production Superintendent of the Aircraft Equipment Division. This would have been alright but a young man, F Kingston, from Preston was given the job of Works Manager of that Department. This made me responsible to him and, being shop floor related, I had to start at 7.30 am. He wasn't an experienced person so again it was unsatisfactory. It was at this time that I was found to have pernicious anaemia and was off work for a month. It was then decided that things were not going fast enough and a man from Preston, Cyril Brooksbank was brought over to give things a push. This upset Kingston who asked for a move back to Preston. While all these politics were going on, the rest of us had to do what we could to produce things and maintain targets; this wasn't easy.*

*Brooksbank was an experienced man working, in effect, for Sheffield. His knowledge was more in the line of Progressing. He was a driver and a man who worked on the divide and rule principle; he was subsequently made Works Manager. There followed some uncomfortable years until he fell ill in the late 1960s. I didn't like any of this period and made several attempts to jobs in other companies. Unfortunately no-one could match my pay or pension rights. As I have already said things had gone pear shaped but, for the moment, I'll leave it there. Things did get better later.*

*The Aircraft Equipment Department was then split from the rest of the Works and we had our own General Manager, John Rivett, who was our ex Chief Engineer. We got on very*

*well together with a good deal of mutual respect. He didn't like Brooksbank very much. John had a quirky sense of humour. One day I was invited, with Betty, to attend at his house for a cheese and wine party. When we got there, all the Engineering, Sales, Contracts and Accounts Managers were there with their wives but I was the only representative from the Works side. I asked John where Brooksbank and others from the Works were; he just gave me a great big grin. Brooksbank found out of course and was fuming. Betty and I had a pleasant evening. John Rivett was later transferred, as General Manager, to Luton. He subsequently asked me to join him at Luton; I turned him down because this was 1963 and coincided with a very sad period of my life which is chronicled in the following pages.*

### **Betty**

*Around the middle of 1962, Betty felt unwell but the doctor, having found nothing wrong, gave her indigestion medicine. This went on but she didn't get any better and in June 1963 she was taken into the Bradford Royal Infirmary for observation. It was decided that they would operate as it was said that she had an ulcer.*

*The following is the last letter I wrote to Betty and the last letter she wrote to me:*



***Betty & Me at Bridlington  
One of our last holidays***

*Wednesday*

*Darling Bets,*

*As I cannot visit you tomorrow (Thursday) I thought that I would write to you. You had written such a nice letter to me; it touched me very deeply. I looked back over our years together and somehow it became crystal clear how much I love you and miss you.*

*You put it so much better than I can and I just pray for your quick recovery so that we can once more be together, enjoying the simple things which seem so much of our lives. Again you have said what they are, tea outside, the touch of hands and so on.*

*Well love, I am just going to find the dogs who incidentally are in fine fettle. Mo is letting them out every day so that they can have a run.*

*Michael has gone to bed. He's been very good and trying to help. Tomorrow he is doing the shopping including your two oranges.*

*There still aren't many flowers out but the pinks might be out well enough to bring you some on Friday. They smell so nice.*

*The pot plants are doing alright. I planted the small geranium in our wall, but the Busy Lizzie and the large geranium are still indoors.*

*Cheerio My Bets - I do love you so. All my love, Jack.*

*Betty's letter:*

*Saturday.*

*My Dear Jack, Michael, John.*

*By the time you get this I hope that the op' will either be in progress or over. I also hope it will be a success. I've waited so long to be free of the pain etc. They say so little you don't know what to expect, as usual we must just wait. The other lady is having her tube out today, so I should be presentable by Wednesday if I do as well! Then you visit me and we can start crossing days off the calendar, my goodness I don't think I should have come in if I had known.*

*Sunday.*

*At last I can begin to think this time next week I shall be well on the way to recovery. I am so impatient to be well again. It seems so long since I felt like anything alive. I shall so enjoy my holiday, the thought of the sea, sand, you, the boys and dogs seems too good to be true. I shan't have any money this year but that won't have to matter, I'll have to wait to be treated to ice cream by the wealthier members of the family!!! Just to be altogether again, I can think of nothing better. Perhaps Michael will be a little easier to live with, or I will, don't know which. I know that I shall not sleep the first night home with thankfulness. I am so looking forward to going around the garden again too. It was a major effort before I came in here. Tea out on the front "patio" all those things will be so good again, after all I have always enjoyed our home. We're a bit stick in the mud but we've been happy that way so that's all that matters.*

*I hope there will be lots of strawberries at Bacton and that I shall be able to eat them; I hope for so much, but most of all that this op will clear all the trouble, it seems so hard to believe because I was not having any bother that way. I just can't understand the whole affair; but just must believe what they say.*

*When I start to recover, I shall want some knitting I don't know how we can work that out. I've two balls of white three-ply up in the attic on my work table. I shall have to think what I can do with it! There is also a little coat half knit of the same wool in my wool work box. I must get on my thinking cap during the next week. I am so pleased to be able to look forward at last. Nobody knows how miserable it has been just waiting despondently all this time. It's been so horrible.*

*I must soon have some nail varnish. My nails are getting quite presentable now. I just wonder how long I can keep them that way. I am closing now. I shall be seeing you soon, for the last time before the big do. I'm not worried just wishful for a success. Cheerio, all my dearest love.*

*Betty*

*See "The Miracle" for what followed:*