

From the time Kenneth Shawcross joined the Army in 1940 until he returned from India in 1945, he sent letters to Ivy. The letters here are ones she kept with her until her death in September 1999 when all else was gone. Obviously these are personal letters between a young man and a young woman caught up in the war. But since Kenneth and Ivy are both dead and these obviously meant so much to my mother, I feel no breach of confidence in presenting them here on my web page. After all these letter date back to the first moments of my existence and one letter was written by Dad on the night I was born and expresses all the thoughts of a very young father separated from his wife in wartime at a key moment. So for better or worse here are some of his letters. I have more to transcribe but will start with these.

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Transcript of an undated letter from my father Kenneth Charles Warburton Shawcross to my mother Ivy Binks

(I assume, but do not know, that they were not married at the time of this letter since Dad was in a military overcoat in his wedding photos and it would seem from this letter that he was in Aldershot to be inducted into the Army). Letter is on a small piece of folding paper with a Medical Corps insignia in the top left corner under the contact information. I have used italics bold where the words are unclear. John Frederick Shawcross

Telephone, Fleet 90.
Telegrams, Church Crookham.
Nearest Railway St'n Fleet.

OFFICERS MESS,
DEPOT, ROYAL ARMY MEDICAL CORPS,
CROOKHAM CAMP,
ALDERSHOT.

Friday.

Dear Ivy.

I hope you are feeling more cheerful again. I was very upset at you being so miserable the other night. I am very sorry dear but I shall not be able to leave this place this next week end. I might have been able to manage it, but unfortunately

as a result of a large influx of Militia; issue of Battle dress etc, has been held up, & the Colonel has decreed that it shall be issued on Sunday morning. So that's that! This is a very concentrated 2 weeks of preliminary training & that was my only chance of getting up to London.

However, when I am stationed with a unit, I shall have much more available time.

You are away next week end aren't you??

I hope to get a chance to spend 36 hrs in London the following week end before leaving here and reporting with a unit somewhere.

I had a terrible journey down. I left Waterloo at five to two, after having had some lunch, & was expecting to make here in 1 1/2 hours, but I had to change at a station only 3 stops from Fleet, & I got there at 3P.M. Next train was at 4.35 & got in at 5.15 , 40 mins late, so it nearly 6.0 PM when I got to Fleet, & that wasn't the worst of it, because I had to wait nearly another hour for a taxi to the camp, & got in very cold & hungry just in time for dinner at 7.30PM fortunately. (By the way my Stomach has been behaving)

Well anyway, I am getting used to Army ways already. This Saluting is the very deuce, there are so many privates who take delight in saluting so you have to salute in return, like a windmill continuous.

Well! Look after yourself & good luck to your cooking!
Yours Kenneth
P.S Write to me, it is pretty lonely out here.

Letter written from Kenneth Charles Warburton Shawcross to his wife Ivy Edith Shawcross on May 1st and 2nd 1941. Transcribed by John Shawcross (the it of the first two thirds of the letter) on January 21, 2001. Words difficult to read shown in bold italics with my best guess, if I have no idea, I show xxx with the approximate number of letters. Handwritten in ink (and some pencil) on five sheet of paper 4.5 inches by 7 inches. Line breaks follow original. Written both sides. Page breaks shown by double spacing. JFS

Mayday

My Dearest

I am writing this letter while
you are still in the throes. I thought
being so well up in and used to all
this baby business I should be
much less het up than most
prospective fathers are, but since
I rang up this morning and heard
that you would be having it labor on
today every time I stop working
I am all of a dither, you know

sinking feeling in pit of stomach.
Can't keep still, can't keep my mind
on anything want to run to the phone
and ring up about every half
an hour, but I won't let myself.
I couldn't bear it if I rung up
you still hadn't had it. Fortunately
I have been very busy today,
which has kept me occupied.
That was a very loving letter
you wrote me. I wish I could
begin to express on paper the tender
feelings of love and comfort I
would give anything to bestow
on you at this time.
Here I close for the present until

I have the news. I know
what you are going through while
I am writing, or who knows, perhaps
it is over and you have found
that tranquil tired peace, where
you will feel so calm & happy
after the violent pains which
took possession of you only half
an hour ago. Dearest I assure
you sympathise with you. I feel
what you are going through. I wonder
if I shall know when it is over,
by suddenly feeling much better
and easier in my mind the time now is 4.0 P.M.

10.30 PM

Mrs Giles was in such a fuss
this morning that it was
catching & after ringing her

I felt as if I was about to
have my head sawn off,
but after phoning St Davids
this evening & being told that
everything was perfectly normal.
That you were going slowly
but would have it tonight
I feel much more like
a Dr. again.
I'll bet you are cursing
me at this moment and vowing
you will never have another
as long as you live.
The Sister asked me
if I had a message for
you. That shook me.

I thought of saying "wish Ivy luck"
or "give her my love" but
rejected them as unsuitable for
repetition by a stranger and stammered
"just tell her I rang". After

I had rung off I thought of
a message and nearly rang up
again to give it to you. it was
“Tell Ivy to keep her pecker
up – the first half dozen are
the worst! When I ring up and
they say it’s a boy or it’s a girl I
am going to say “ has he learnt to
walk yet? Tell his or her Mother
to teach him or her to learn to walk before
he or she learns to run.
Well I am determined to get to

sleep and not to worry. After all
some member of the family must
get some sleep. I keep saying
to myself. I mustn’t ring up
during the night, everything is OK
even if it weren’t there is nothing I
can do until morning, so I mus’t
worry but get to sleep, then tomorrow
will soon come. Besides the
phone is in the middle of the
room where the picket (night)
5 of them sleep, so it rather
puts the phone out of bounds till
morning.

Well good night dear I hope it
is all over by now & you can
get a good nights rest. You
have had a long do.

I rang up this morning first
thing some damned silly old
woman answered the phone, I
spent two minutes trying to tell
her the name & she kept insisting
that there was no one called Shawcross
there. Then she went away –
after about 6 lots of pips, =
1st she still had not come
back & I was cut off. So in
a rage fit to eat nails I

rang up Mrs. Giles. No
REPLY. & have just got
the telegram. Boy oh boy it's
a boy. Aren't you glad
darling.

I am so delighted, I don't
know what to say. He
just missed being a May day
baby but that was because
it was a boy.
Last night I said
If a girl, will be born the 1st of May
If a boy, will be born early next day.
Mayday is a feminine
festival. May Queens
& dancing round the May pole etc.
Would suit a girl but
a boy would say huh! Sissy
I shall not be born until
all this May day business
is over.

And so my rhyming prophesy came
true. Now I have no one here
to drink my health and congrat' me
(its always the father who gets congrats
on these occasions god only
knows why. I suppose its because
he is the only member of the family
to be around for congratulating)
As I said no one to congrat me,
so I shall have to go to the
pub this evening & drink to
myself.
I had better enclose a
blank cheque for you
so you can pay your first
weeks lesson in baby keeping.

The siren has just gone.

I was truly thankful when
it went last night, because
I thought if the nazis' are
messing about down here, they
will leave London alone, &
you have enough trouble on
your hands without air raids
to worry you.
I shall write to your father
& to Mrs Giles today.
I think Mrs Giles has been
wonderful to you & I appreciate
what she has done for you.
Well good bye darling.
All my love to you and John (Frederick).
Kenneth.
P.S. I feel so bucked I feel like going out and making xxxxxx

Transcript (January 21, 2001) of an undated letter written by my father Kenneth Charles Warburton Shawcross to his wife on the occasion of their wedding anniversary. Italics show words I could not clearly read with my best guess. John Shawcross

*Letter folded in four on blue paper and marked:
Mrs.
K.C. Shawcross
Personal (personal underlined twice)*

My Dear Ivy.

This is a little present which I hope
doesn't arrive later than Jan 17th.
Jan 17th 1941 after I got out of the popping
car & after we got into that train together was
the happiest day of my life.
We had a very short time together, but what it
lacked in length it made up in sweetness.
Darling I love you so much. You and I will
have a little intimate celebration together, year after year
& I hope ; in fact I am sure that each year
will see us closer together, more in love, more in
unison and more thankful that January 17 1941
holds the cherished memory it does.
Each Jan 17th I will tell you that I love
you more than ever, that I have never had any regrets
and that I am the luckiest man alive, having

you for a wife.

This box , & I pray that you will get it,
if it weighs under 5 lbs gross. (I don't know yet)
contains , a unique carved box from Kashmir,
& a pair of Satin Chinese pyjamas, & trousers, blouse
& Coates for you. I am sure you will look cute
in them. Keep them for me to get an eyeful of you in them won't you.
Also, a petticoat or slip or whatever you call it

for your sister.

It is her Xmas present apologies for delay, but
that was due to the limitation in No. of parcels/month.

I hope you don't have to give up coupons, for
the various clothes etc. Let me know about that.

I must get on with the packing & god ! will
I swear if it is over 5 lbs.

Good bye darling & I feel sure
next Jan 17 th will see us making whoopee
together.

All my love always darling.

Your devoted Husband.

Kenneth . x x x .

Transcript of an airmail letter from Kenneth Charles Warburton Shawcross to his wife Ivy Edith Shawcross. Date of letter 31 August, 1942. Transcribed by John F. Shawcross on February 4, 2001. Page breaks double or triple space. Original line breaks kept. Also spelling and punctuation kept even where incorrect. Where it is hard to read I have shown my best guess with a ? and other comments in bold.

Capt. K.C. Shawcross
No154421 RAMC
C/O Grindlay and Co.
Bombay, India.
31/8/42

My Dear Ivy.

This will not be finished as it is now
getting latish. I first had to mend my pen, which
I dropped a couple of days ago & bend(? bent). It is now better
than it was before. Talking of pens, I hope that you got

the ones which I sent to you June 20, July 20, August 20, you should get it about Sept 20. So we are now entering the month which will give us the third birthday of the war. He is getting a very big boy isn't he this last six months.

There seems a chance that my theories about this war are liable to be correct. You remember I said that the allies were now producing trained pilots, soldiers, planes in particular & guns, to outfight the Germans, but we should not see a turn of the tide until, transport & supply difficulties had been overcome & the men(?) & the weapons were in position. Then we should see the turning of the tide and I thought that we should be seeing signs of that by Autumn. Now, the Russians seem to be holding the Germans in the South & starting offensives elsewhere. The Americans have captured the Solomon's. The Chinese have recaptured airfields and towns within effective bombing range of Japan proper. Things are still very critical, the initiative may fly back & forwards from us to the axis a few times, before the full power of the united efforts of R. E. & A can be brought to bear.

In the meantime I have had a very busy day, but rain, my god, the Monsoon is supposed to be over, so it is having a last fling & making(?) a real good job of it.

When I took over my Wards, they were ill equipped, transfer wards, where, the other two Medical wards bunged (?) their mild cases. Now, it is fairly well equipped. I don't take transfers only my own cases. Have got decent beds, everything shipshape

& being in a block on its own, with its own dining room & verandah, red cross equipment, I think it is easily the best Medical ward of the three now. Only I can't think how I can get my ward numbered A & the other two B & C, instead of mine being C. Still I suppose people will, begin to associate C with chief and cosiest etc. in time.

Nothing like being conceited is there?

I must buy some things to go with the green plush suite you are going to buy after the war. I shall always remember how you admired the one at Bonnyrigs!(?) My goodness, I always felt I wanted to sit on the floor didn't you. One sort of instinctively regarded it as a museum piece, with the notice, (PLEASE DO NOT TOUCH). One was sort of afraid of the moths being disturbed, or the death watch beetles running out & it crumbling into dust.

A thought flashed through my mind and here is a diagrammatical representation of it. I bet you don't

get it.

{In the text is a complicated little sketch showing two stick like figures entering an area marked with a track with arrows, presumably a walk Kenneth and Ivy took together and since it is so coded I assume it has some great significance to them, presumably a point of some importance in their relationship}

The clues are as follows.

F = a stretch of water.

G = bridge over water

A = a road through a cutting.

B = a fair ground.

C = an enclosure with wire fence round it.

D = a ditch with line of hawthorne trees down one side of it.

E = one of the hawthorne trees.

V = a large tree with a seat on it.

T = a diving board

I'll leave the rest to you, but I am OK now

it must have been psychological factors, now absent.

If you don't see it I will explain after the war.

(Also a little sketch of a dog apparently looking at a line of trees (not clear to me whether this is attached to the hawthorn line above or Dumbo below))

Saw the film

Dumbo the other day.

Have you seen it? Very

amusing although not as

good as Pinocchio (?) in my opinion. (Two more sketches. One of an elephant with large ears with a dog on its head and the other of a monkey).

Butterflies. This place can produce an amazing assortment at this time of the year.

Varying in size (?) from a titchy (?) 1/4" to big ones

4 or five inches across, with beautiful markings. Greens, maroons, blues, yellows etc.

The last film I saw was a wild west film

called Cherokee Strip with Richard Dix. Not a bad

film at all of the wild west. Bad men of the

West. Slick with the six

shooter. (Sketch of a man on a horse walking through a cactus and hilly area) Also a funny figure of a bony man sitting cross legged Notes to cross legged man says:)

Effort at feet failed.

Oriental spotlight on the Indian xxxxxxxx.

Unfortunately the clocks are being put on
1 hour tonight. So it is really 20 to 12. So
Goodnight sweetheart. Sweet dreems. Sorry sweet
dreams. (Little sketch of a long flat snake like creature with zzz coming from its nose. Caption
says) German asleep
on the Eastern front
completely unaware that
an 80 ton Russian tank has
passed over him.

This is next day, my madness of yesterday, in which
I did those ridiculous drawings has passed. Today it is
raining like stink again. I had to roll my trousers up to wade
across from my room to the dining room.
I have been very busy today, a cleaning up day, trying
to get up to date with all those odd little jobs, which one tends
to pu off because they are not urgent & turn ones attention on all the
more urgent jobs. Now they are all straight, tomorrow I expect
a big new influx of fresh cases, as I have had a good clear out
my ward.

Well Romell has started his attack again in todays
paper. Lets hope we have had time to build up
sufficient defence. The trouble is that its so much quicker
for Germany to send new stuff from Italy than for us to send
stuff from England or America.

Yesterday I received a letter from Barbara.
Supposed to be for my birthday. Actually it only arrived
5 weeks late, having been posted in the middle of June.
Of course it was really to tell me all about Jim. The
marvellous presents, marvellous dances he had taken her to. The marvellous
engagement party, the marvellous ring, the marvellous trip to Manchester (?)
etc. Still she did put a P.S. saying that on reading the letter through
she noticed the constant repetition of the word marvellous, still
she didn't care & wasn't going to change it because everything was
marvelous. Ah, to be young again quoth I.
My cold is much better thank you. It's a terrible
job getting letters off these days. I have to get the unit censor
stamp on , which means I have to take them up to hospital, an see
the Registrar, as he keeps ths stamp & often he is running(?), or I forget
the letter or he has locked it up again. Still it does mean cheaper
postage. I have just printed some more of my

Madras photos. They have all come out well, all though I really hadn't time to wait & get some really interesting elements(?) into the picture. The prospects of me joining the old unit are not quite so good now. I think it has only advanced a bit further into the picture. The later the better. I say as it is still very hot in many parts of India.

The other day in the pictures I saw a well remembered form of a 2d bar of Cadbury's Milk chocolate, & I thought I would like it. (How Much? Quoth I) 10 annas he said, nearly 1/- (shilling) for a 2d bar of chocolate, so I hesitated , & said to myself, well its worth it, just for once, & then said well I am damned if I will be party to 500% profiteering. So I had a cigarette instead. It think it would have choked me.

I bought a tin of boiled sweets, & suck one or two each night. I bet that reminds you of the old Rowntrees clear gums.

Well darling I will not write any more in this letter as I would like to send you some photos. And they weigh heavy. Received some picture posts the other day for which I thank you. Cheerio dear.
All my Love and kisses, Your devoted h.
Kenneth.

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