



June 1942

In the Pacific the Battle of Midway was to be fought, in North Africa the Eighth Army were forced back to Mersa Matruh and later General Auchinleck took charge. As the month drew to a close Rommel neared El Alamein.

In Norfolk Jack had a mishap and Betty lent a hand.

TUESDAY 2nd

Jack cut his hand badly today and I told him he should get along to the doctor for a stitch or two. Not him though, so I cleaned it and bandaged it. I hope it is all right. I can hardly believe that it is June already and nearly mid-summer's day again.

SUNDAY 7th

The ducks are laying well again and Doris is selling some for me in the shop. Fred has finished digging them a much bigger pond in time or the hot weather and they really are a sight when they start splashing about. They line up like little soldiers waiting their turn. Had several of the boys from Coltishall in the pub tonight. They seem in very good spirits and were talking about the big raid on Essen a few days ago. I can't even begin to imagine what a thousand bomber raid must be like. It must be terrible to be on the wrong end of one. I don't suppose the raids I saw in Clapham were anything like that but were bad enough. When I think back it is a wonder anything can live with so many bombs coming down. Poor old Norwich looks bad enough and that was small

by comparison but no worse for the people though. Still, it does not do to dwell on such things, much better to get on with doing what we can to see that we keep everyone's spirits up and win in the end. The odd set-back, however bad it is, is no reason to start feeling miserable.

WEDNESDAY 17th

Had a letter from Glim today. A friend of hers was hurt when an unexploded bomb went off last week. They think it had been there for six months or more. She said quite a few were killed and no end of houses knocked down.

SATURDAY 20th

It looks like being a good growing year. I have more lettuces than I could ever use so I am selling my surplus.

MONDAY 29th

I was helping at Mrs. Wentworth's today and there was a young officer there staying for a few days on leave. He was telling me about the events in North Africa. He sounds very posh but very bright. He said that Rommel was a man who looks as if he will be difficult to beat but that he isn't, as he is not a soldier who is capable of going as far to win as we are. He said that to knock the Nazis for six you have to be prepared to be more aggressive and determined than they are, and we are, because they started it all and we are damned angry that we have had to stop doing what we want to do and travel to God forsaken parts of the world where no Englishman in his right mind would ever go if he didn't have to. And to cap it all they bomb our houses and kill our families and get shirty if we do the same to them. "Well," he said and I wrote this out in Mrs. Wentworth's kitchen so I did not forget it, "we will do the same to them and we will very probably do much, much worse to them. So much worse that when this is all over the German's, and all those who helped them, will bleat about how horrible we have been to them. And I for one will

have no sorrow or sympathy for a single one of them because they are evil men and women who have done evil things to innocent people and who have forced civilised people to do terrible things so that even worse things are not done in the future". I will not forget that young man, he had a look of real hate in his eyes that would frighten me if I was a German or anyone who had ever lifted a finger to help them.



July 1942

In North Africa, in July 1942, things started to fall apart for Field Marshall Rommel – who was, incidentally, feeling the effects of numerous ailments, from liver disease to acute catarrh. General Claude Auchinlech was to be the allies instrument to begin Rommel's ultimate defeat, but was not destined to be in at the kill – that honour was waiting for one of Britain's greatest warrior tacticians, Field Marshall Bernard Law Montgomery.

In Norfolk the sun was shining.

WEDNESDAY 1st

Mrs. Wentworth is having a garden party next month and has asked me to go and to bring some friends. Mavis said she will come and Jennifer is trying to get an hour or two off. She asked if she could take Daniel. That would be a thing.

TUESDAY 21st

Had a very lazy day just pottering in the garden and going for a walk with Jennifer to feed the ducks, who are doing very well and laying as well as ever. Fred has done a lovely job on their new pond and it is being well used in this weather with all the splashing about that they do. Beryl being Beryl I had a bit too much sherry and felt quite flushed as it was quite warm in the van coming back. Jennifer certainly likes her gin. I was quite surprised. I hope she is not getting into bad ways. Some of the other girls with her now are a bit on the loud side and, although they mean well, do get a bit out of hand sometimes, so I hear.

WEDNESDAY 29th

What a nice surprise, I have had a letter from Barney Freed. I thought perhaps he was in North Africa, but he was not.

Dear Betty,

Yes, it is me. I hope this finds you well. I got here yesterday and have only just sorted my kit out at last. Do you remember me telling you about Bert Wormold? Well I nearly fell over him last afternoon as I brought my kit into the hut. He was sitting in front of the stove with his legs across the gangway. Trust him to find a warm spot. Like I told you, you will never find Bert standing, sitting or lying in a draught. The last I heard of him before yesterday he was down south somewhere and blow me here he is up the other end of the country. Still, he is a good lad and likes a game of cards. He saw Lennie, you remember Lennie, he was the bloke who drank that bottle of green stuff that George had behind the bar for years and went green himself. Well, Bert saw Lennie a few weeks ago on a train and he told him his family were bombed out last year. They were all in a shelter so nobody was hurt thank goodness. They have all moved up to his Gran's place in Kelso until things sort themselves out.

There is a nice little pub not far from here and the landlord used to be a boxer. He has a face like a well worn boot, from the days when he was boxing in the booths. He has loads and loads of photographs of some of the champions like Dempsey, Max and the like. It looks like some of us might be here for a long time so me and some of the lads are going to try to get a darts team up.

I often think of my stay in Norfolk and Stanley and his boxing yarns. Say hello to him and Beryl for me won't you?

We'll must close now and get my head down or I will be dropping my spanner in the morning, and my Sgt Major is funny about things like that. He has a habit of calling people names when they drop things.

Keep smiling,

Barney (Somewhere in England)



August 1942

This was the month when another major player entered the war and Eisenhower dug in; Montgomery took command of the Eighth Army; the name Guadalcanal earned its violent place in the lexicon of bloodshed and the allies' raid on Dieppe saw more than 3,000 casualties out of a force of 6,000; a curate's egg of a month.

In Norfolk the summer burnt on. We pick up the diary again in early autumn.