

Keep for future reading
Battered No
Somme
fearsome, dreadful
victims of gas warfare

ROYAUMONT & V.C. ASSOCIATION of THE SCOTTISH WOMEN'S HOSPITALS NEWS LETTER



JANUARY, 1966

No. 5—Series 2

Object of the Association: To maintain our war-time comradeship.
Subscription: Five shillings per annum, payable 1st January, for the year.

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Chairman: Miss Ramsay-Smith, Whyteknowe, Peebles.

Hon. Secretary: Miss Leishman, Upper Loanside, Peebles.

Hon. Treasurer: Miss M. A. Stewart, Dunnydeer, Moniaive, Thornhill, Dumfriesshire.

Hon. Editor: Miss M. S. Miller, Meadowbank Cottage, New Galloway, Castle-Douglas.

EDITORIAL

A Happy New Year to all our readers. May it be brighter and bring more joys than 1965 has done. We have sadly to record the death of several members of the Association. Their names and tributes to their memory will be found in "In Memoriam." Tollit was our veteran. She became very disabled when arthritis developed in several joints and left her very crippled. But she was such an independent and courageous person that she seldom complained. One could see sometimes a twinge of pain pass over her face, but she said nothing. She could, until recently, do her own shopping and only gave this up after a rather serious fall outside. The Editor found for years a very hospitable corner at Tollit's home in Hampstead at the time of the London Reunions.

In the News Letter of 1945 was written: "Many of us in the old days of the Reunion dinners had laughably pictured the future of the Association with only a few aged ladies meeting for bread and milk in an upper room." True, we are certainly "aged ladies" but we do not retire into "upper rooms" with a bowl of bread and milk; in fact, we keep to the lower rooms as the stairs might inconvenience those, like myself, who have arthritic knees. Our

bowls do not contain bread and milk but something perhaps much more stimulating.

Still reading the battered, yellowing sheets of the old News Letters, the story of the S.W.H. Canteen Unit is a true epic, and it was a real disaster when the orderlies had to seek retreat. These Canteens were greatly appreciated in the district of Metz by the poilus, as there did not appear to be any such amenities in the district where we were. I shall stop now reminiscing and come forward to the present day.

Our tea-party in September was a very happy affair, although many were unable to come. We missed our President who was unable to be present owing to the illness of her husband. We are glad to hear that he has now recovered. Some of our members who live at some distance from Edinburgh want the next Reunion, if possible, to take the form of a lunch. By arranging this, they can return home the same day. The month of May has been suggested. Some say, "Keep off the Assembly weeks," others say, "Keep off the Festival weeks," so there are few dates left in the way of choice! Notices will be sent out nearer the time and we hope there will be a good attendance.

The Editor thanks all those members who replied to her appeal for contributions to the News Letter. If we want the News Letter, we must have News.

I should like to draw the members' attention to a booklet entitled, "Dr Elsie Maud Inglis, A Great Lady Doctor," a brief sketch of her life, most attractively written by Dr H. P. Tait, Edinburgh. It can be obtained from Miss D. Dinwiddie, 27 Park Road, Edinburgh, 6. It is now available, price 3s. Please enclose Postal Order with application.

Reunion Luncheon

Thursday, 9th June, 1966, at 12.30 p.m. at the Carlton Hotel, Edinburgh. Notices will be sent out later.

Letter from our President

Hare and Hounds Hotel,
Westonbirt,

Dear Members, near TETBURY, Glos.

This will be a short letter as unfortunately, as a consequence of my husband's severe illness, I was unable to come to the 1965 Reunion. I am sure, however, that other Members of the Committee will give a good account of it as it is always a very happy affair. I hope to be able to come to Edinburgh for this year's Reunion and am greatly looking forward to meeting you all again.

Several of our Members have recently died and we all regret their passing. Nevertheless, I hope that the Royaumont Association will carry on and continue to give pleasure with reunions and the excellent News Letter to all the remaining Members.

Please help Miller by sending to her all the news you can for the News Letter and I know that Stewart will welcome Members' subscriptions.

Thanking the Committee for all their good work in 1965 and with good wishes to all Members for 1966.

Yours sincerely,

SMIETON.

Letter from our Chairman

Whyteknowe,
Innerleithen Road, Peebles.

Dear Members,

Another year has gone since I last wrote you in the News Letter, and brought us varying experiences.

First of all, the reduction of our surviving Members by the deaths of Betty Macpherson (Mrs Bruce), Warner (Mrs Hodgson), and Little Murray, the chauffeur (Mrs Galbraith).

Betty had not been in good health for some time and neither had Murray who, after her husband died, returned to her old home, Murraythwaite, in Dumfriesshire.

On the bright side, however, Moffet has got over her motor accident very well and is as gay and energetic as ever, and Rolt, who spent a few nights with us after the Tea Party, is quite wonderful in the way she copes with stairs and gardens in spite of her bad leg.

Another wonderful person is Miller who has the true Royaumont spirit and will not be defeated by arthritis. She always reminds me of M'Gregor's retort (so I was told) to the French soldier who tried to tell her it was not possible for military reasons for her to go along a certain road, "Pour moi tout est possible" and she let in her gear and drove off in her ambulance!

It is always such fun to meet and exchange news with former friends, so I do hope that anyone who was at Royaumont or V.C., if they are near Peebles, will come and see me. It will give me the greatest pleasure to welcome them here.

Wishing you all the best in 1966.

Yours ever,

RAMSAY.

Royaumont and V.C. Association

Tea Party and Annual General Meeting

The Annual Reunion on 4th September, 1965, was a Tea Party held in the Scottish Women's Lyceum Club in Edinburgh, of which Leng is a member, and it was through her introduction that we were given the use of the dining room for the afternoon. The club also arranged the tea and a most excellent one it was, and everyone enjoyed it.

There were 14 members present, and we were all delighted to welcome Forrest, who happened to be in Edinburgh at the time. Alas, 27 members had to refuse owing to previous arrangements or "doctor's orders not to travel."

At the Annual General Meeting it was agreed that September was not a very good time for the Reunion, also that a luncheon would be better than a tea party, as it would allow members more easily to return home on the same day. It was left to the committee to arrange this for a date in May, avoiding a Saturday.

As the London Tea Party had been so successful in bringing together many members who could not often see each other, or come to Edinburgh, it was agreed to have a tea party in London in early October, 1966, and Moffet undertook to arrange for it being held at her club as before.

In Memoriam

With great regret, and with deep sympathy to their relatives and friends, we record the death of several of our members.

Tollit.—Died peacefully at her Hampstead home

on February 8th, 1966. Our President sends this loving tribute to her memory:

"I was much grieved to learn that Tollit had recently died. She was such a wonderfully efficient and responsible person on her job as 'store-keeper' at Royaumont. My first impression of her, as I went to the store as a very new orderly to collect my sheets and towels, was of meeting someone who knew what organisation meant, and the store was a model of neatness. Although Tollit was strict, she was fair to those who did not try to get more than their proper share of things, especially of soap and cleaning materials.

"I still remember Tollit standing in the store, tall, slender and with lovely blue eyes, an impression which I shall never forget. She served on the committee for many years and was most helpful with her sage remarks.

"All will regret the death of one of Royaumont's outstanding personalities."

"Betty" (Mrs Bruce).—Her death occurred on November 16th, 1965, after years of invalidism borne with great patience and courage. She was very fond of Royaumont, and everything to do with it. She was a most loyal member of the Association, and, up to a few years ago, was present at nearly all the Reunions. She was one of Royaumont's most useful workers, and, after a period in the wards, was put in charge of the stores. It was a busy life, one demanding tact and discrimination, both necessary qualities when dealing with the multifarious stores necessary for the upkeep of a hospital such as Royaumont. But Betty surmounted all difficulties.

At the outbreak of the Second World War she joined a group of Royaumont and V.C. orderlies who voluntarily offered their services to France—this time for the staffing and running of two canteens—the S.W.H. Canteen Unit—one at Mouzaia, the other at Créhanges, both near Metz. Betty's work was at Créhanges, where she was put in charge of the canteen there. The good work of both canteens was interrupted by the sudden advance of the German troops, and our enthusiastic workers had to escape at a moment's notice and make for the coast, from where, eventually, they managed to get to England.

On their return to Britain she ran a canteen for the Free French sailors at Oulton Park, Cheshire, and elsewhere. When there was no more work for the S.W.H. she joined the Y.M.C.A. and worked in various canteens and clubs. She was bombed out of one.

Pre-war she studied for 5 years at the Glasgow School of Art for her D.A. (Diploma of Art) and got great praise for her work. Design was her chief subject, but latterly she used it just for needlework

when heavier materials, like metals, etc., became too difficult to handle.

She was Artists' Secretary of the Lady Artists' Club in Glasgow for 10 years.

Merrylees.—Died on December 13th, 1965, at Harborne Hall, Birmingham, where she was much loved and looked after by the devoted Sisters of the Community. Some of us had just received Christmas Cards from her, so that her death came as a great shock. "Little Andy," with whom she had stayed on several occasions at Perros Guirec, writes: "I am pleased to have heard from the Convent that her passing was so peaceful. Nothing would have worried her more than to have been a helpless invalid. But she was wonderfully cheerful about her afflictions and so keenly interested in everybody and everything, and although her eyes were almost sightless they still seemed to flash as of old when anything aroused her ire. Twice she stayed with me at Perros Guirec in her beloved France. She loved the sea and we were close to it." Her many friends all over the world will miss her sadly, especially Leng and Moffie, with whom she had happy holidays. Barclay, far off in troubled Rhodesia, will be very grieved to hear of her death.

Mrs Robinson.—Along with Higgins (Mrs Phelps) Robinson was one of the House orderlies at Royaumont. After the closure of the Abbey she went to live near her friend, Mrs Phelps, in the little village of Swanmore, near Southampton. In a letter to the Editor, a Swanmore friend writes: "Mrs Robinson soon associated herself with village activities and became a founder member of the Women's Institute. She was also captain of the Girl Guides for many years, and was a member of the Girl Guides' Committee until her death. She also worked incessantly for animal welfare and everyone, finding an animal in distress, went to consult her as to the best method of getting its conditions improved."

On the outbreak of the Second World War Robinson joined the S.W.H. Canteen Unit at Mouzaia and Créhanges. The work of our orderlies was tremendously appreciated by the French poilus, but, unfortunately, the canteens (there were two) were short-lived. War conditions made them quite untenable, and our courageous band had to take to the roads again en route for the coast. We shall never forget reading about this "nightmare retreat," as one of the Unit described it (News Letter, 1941) on congested roads packed with soldiers, refugees, mules and camions. Mrs Robinson died on 12th January, 1965.

Warner (Mrs Hodgson) died very suddenly after a coronary thrombosis on August 31st, 1965. She

lived a very useful and busy life at Camberley. She was a Radionic Practitioner and masseuse, and had built up a very flourishing practice. She leaves one son (Assistant Bursar at Marlborough College) and a grandson.

Paley, with whom Warner was always coupled at Royaumont, writes: "We had been brought up together since early childhood, and had been very close friends ever since, so you can imagine how much I miss her."

"Little Murray" (Mrs Galbraith).—We remember her so well as one of our chauffeurs. She died last year, but we have got no date of her death. She was a bright, amusing person, dark-haired, brown eyes and full of fun. We wish we could have seen more of her after the Royaumont days, but we lost touch.

Dr Louisa Martindale.—We record with great regret the death of Dr Louisa Martindale. Hers was a wonderful life. She did a tremendous amount for medical women as far away as Austria and Munich, where she saved the lives of many women doctors who might otherwise have fallen victims of Hitler's gas chambers. She had been blind for a considerable number of years. She lived in London. Dr Henry visited her each time she was in this country. They were great friends. She was one of our Royaumont visitors, and did some surgical work while she was with us. Her honours are numerous, C.B.E., M.D., F.R.C.O.G., J.P. She died on February 5th, 1966, aged 93 years.

A Hospital in France

By Collum

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CHAPTER III

During the first years' service we were practically without rules of any description. We were roughly divided into doctors, nurses, and orderlies, but the lines of demarcation were fluid and hardly existed outside working hours. The doctors made no attempt in the early days to keep up their position as officers, except in the wards and the operating theatre and so on. From the point of view of discipline it may have been a mistake, but it produced a hospital organisation that is surely unique. The nursing Sisters, out of working hours, had to make their own tradition of conduct. As for the orderlies, once outside the wards and beyond the jurisdiction of their respective ward Sisters, they were under no restrictions at all. The result was that a body of tradition grew up, and

woe betide the individual who transgressed this unwritten code of conduct. There were no bounds except such as the French military authorities themselves set round certain districts, such as G.H.Q., which, for the first year of our existence, were within twelve kilometres of the hospital. G.H.Q.—magical letters which at once invested that little country town with mysterious import and romantic interest, so that it became the dream of many a nurse's and junior orderly's leisure hours to penetrate its guard. Those who had business there and were allowed to pass the cordon, found the town a very ordinary one, full of soldiers, as any other French town; but the desirability of penetration was a fetish kept up until long after the General Staff had gone and the kindly face of Papa Joffre in the recesses of a swiftly passing motor-car was no longer to be met with on the high road to Paris.

Military discipline was entirely absent, always, at our hospital. At first its absence in our dealing with the men rather worried the military authorities. Later on they realised that here, too, our experiment had been crowned with success. We were a body of women come out to help the French wounded soldier. We restricted him only within the easy limits of ordinary hospital rules designed for his own welfare and the smooth working of the staff's duties. It was an appeal, the *poilu* conceived it, to his French chivalry. It was thus he proved his gratitude for our coming. When you consider that during the (first) Somme, and after, the wards were crowded to overflowing with Colonials, men from the Punitive Battalions (i.e. old jail-birds, military prisoners, men who were being given a last chance to redeem their characters in desperate attacks on the German line), Arabs and blacks, not to mention adventurers and crusaders of the Foreign Legion, you will understand how wonderful that sense of chivalry was. Our men behaved themselves because they were Frenchmen (by birth or adoption), and we were British women. That was all there was about it. We had one punishment for offences—evacuation to a regular military hospital! Do not let me be misunderstood. I do not want to imply that French soldiers are all saints—far from it; after all, chivalry is not a Christian virtue, since it inspired a whole philosophy for the warrior gentlemen of Old Japan; it can be practised as prettily by the irreligious and the sinner as by any Christian knight of saintly character.

Though perhaps the staffing of the hospital with women surgeons was the greatest innovation on the surface, the crux of the experiment was working it with women orderlies. It was their work that made the women-officered hospital possible; it was their high standard of duty and efficiency that enabled the women-officered hospital to forge its way ahead to the very front ranks of surgical success in the

French Service de Santé. I do not mean to maintain that our orderlies were all perfect. Some of them were most imperfect. But on the whole they were a fine set; on the whole it is to them that the officers of the hospital owe their opportunities of carrying out their own high ideals. Surgeons and nurses, it must be remembered, were highly trained, specialised women; every sane critic expected them to make good; but the orderlies were untrained, raw material, most of them lacking even the personal discipline that comes from going down into the world's arena and competing there for a living. Even in the matter of physical strength they came up to a male standard for the first two years. Throughout the rush of work that came to the hospital during the Somme battle, when the convalescents who usually give a hand in hospital work had been evacuated, and the wounded poured in all day and all night long in a steady stream, every stretcher had to be carried upstairs to the wards, the X-ray rooms, and the operating theatre, by women. How arms and shoulders ached after it! The girl chauffeurs, too, handled all the cases and bales of equipment that came to our station about once a fortnight. I have known them, during the coal shortage of the winter of 1916, fill 1 cwt. sacks with coal from a wholesale yard half-way to Paris, load up the lorry with them (it had only a 15-cwt. capacity), discharge the load on the hospital coal dump, and drive back for more, till some 20 to 40 tons had been hauled in this way—just in time to prevent the ward stoves from going out.

In the end, orderlies became not merely highly efficient, but well-trained, specialised nurses. I say "specialised" advisably, for there was a great deal about ordinary routine medical nursing that they did not know.

Some of the ward orderlies did receive a measure of promotion. Others had greater scope for individual organisation and skill so they were placed at the head of such departments as the Dry Goods Store, and the Food Stores. The chauffeurs, also, had their own department under their own Chef de Service (always the senior chauffeur), with their own little room at the garage and their own separate life—a much wider one than that of any other part of the personnel, excepting the senior medical officers.

As our hospital grew in size and numbers it grew, too, in rigidity and convention. Where tradition had served as ample guide for the few who had watched over its birth and infancy, regulations and restrictions, rules and maxims, had to be introduced.

The Battle of the Somme, 1917

During the battle of the Somme the strain on us was terrific, physically, psychologically. We

were stretched taut, and not a strand of the rope was frayed. We held! To drop metaphor—very seriously wounded cases were brought to us straight from the forward dressing stations by train to C—, and thence to the hospital in our own ambulances. Sometimes we got the men on to the operating table within twelve hours of being wounded. That sounds an odd boast today, when wounded men are often operated on a few miles behind the firing line; but under the old system of evacuating them by train to a number of distributing stations on the railway, which, in turn, distributed them to the various hospitals in each district, it was considered to be quick work. One must remember that the men fought on the Somme, and that we were situated only 30 kilometres north of Paris.

The best comment on the system is that it was radically altered after the first battle of the Somme. Ninety per cent. of our cases were already gangrenous when they reached us. We had accommodation for 400, and for weeks we worked, once we were filled, with never a bed to spare. Our operating theatre was hardly left vacant long enough to be cleaned during the small hours, and it became a problem how to air the X-ray rooms during the short hours of dawn that stretched between the ending of one day's work and the beginning of another. We were fighting gas gangrene, and time was the factor that counted most. We dared not stop work in the theatre until it became physically impossible to continue. For us who worked, and for those patient suffering men, lying on stretchers all along the corridor outside the X-ray rooms and theatre, waiting their turn, it was a nightmare of glaring lights, of appalling stench of ether and chloroform, and the violent sparking of tired, rapidly hardening X-ray tubes, of scores of wet negatives that were seized upon by their respective surgeons and taken into the hot theatre before they had even time to be rinsed in the Dark Room. Beneath and beyond the anxiety of the theatre staff as to whether the boiling of instruments and gloves could be kept level with the rapidity with which the cases were carried in and put on the table, as to whether the gauze and wool and swabs would last—and with us, in the X-ray rooms, it was anxiety for the life of our hard-worked, overheated tubes, anxiety to get the gas gangrene plates developed first, to persuade them to dry, to keep the cases of each of the six surgeons separate, to see that they did not walk off with the wrong plates. It must be understood that we had pictures that were almost identical, duplications of names and such-like complications. And it all had to be done in a tearing hurry, at the end of a day that had already lasted anything from ten to eighteen hours, and no mistakes had to be made. I do not think we lost a single case from delay in locating the trouble and operating in all that first

*Memorable.
awful wounds
gas gangrene*

terrible week of July, 1917. The losses were due to delay in reaching the hospital.

Reorganisation by the French authorities of the system of dealing with the wounded

Hence in 1917, during the brief April offensive, and in the autumn of the same year during the successful attack on the Chemin des Dames, the French wounded were not evacuated directly by train to permanent base hospitals outside the danger zone. They were dealt with in enormous temporary camp hospitals installed as near the firing line as practicable, cutting out, wherever possible, any train journey at all. Here their wounds were cleaned up and drained freely by spartan surgical operations, and all foreign bodies removed which could be found without prolonged exploration and precise localisation. The happy result was that very few of the wounds became gangrenous, and hundreds of men kept limbs and life where, under the old system which hustled them off to the rear, they would have lost both. Such a system, apart from the geographical changes in the front, was bound to affect the work of our hospital. Instead of receiving the critical cases for operation on arrival by our own surgeons, we became, along with the other base hospitals, a sort of dépôt for the surgical cases that merely required skilled dressing or small secondary operations, and good care until they were sufficiently recovered to travel long distances to convalescent hospitals in the interior or, in the case of slight wounds, to go on leave preparatory to returning to the front.

It was during the summer of 1917 that we branched out into a second hospital.

(To be continued.)

From Far and Near

"Little Andy" (Madame Petitpierre). Andy hopes to be in England this summer—some time in May. Her daughter, Maryvonne, is married and lives in Essex, but she may get as far north as Hexham to see Dorothy before the grandchildren, four boys and a girl, descend on her for the summer. (Thanks, Andy, for your contribution to the literary part of the News Letter. I wish I could contemplate a visit to you at Perros Guirac, but I am afraid my knees would let me down in more ways than one. I haven't got to the stage of using even one stick yet, so nil desperandum.—The Editor.)

Mrs Alison writes: "Your readers may be amused to hear that 'Royaumont' is a great-grandfather! John, one of my small brats who lived in the village with Mrs Fox and used to infest Royaumont where he was always spoilt, has a daughter, Alison, who has married a Canadian and

produced a son. So now John is a grandfather and I am a great-grandmother, an honourable estate. I would have gone out to S. Africa this winter to stay with John, but I got ill and had to do with a week at Bournemouth instead, a poor exchange. Morgan drove over to see me. She is in great form and has an enchanting house in the New Forest. I am staying with her in August." (Hope you have kept well during the winter. The weather has been none too good. It's like old times to hear of Morgan again.—Editor.)

Daunt sent us two funny stories and a domestic catastrophe to balance them. She says: "It would be a very entertaining item if you were to collect amusing memories of happenings at Royaumont and V.C. I have been scratching my head and find it difficult to remember where episodes occurred. I have been in odd places as you know."

One incident I do remember at Royaumont. I think it was M—— who answered the telephone one day during the hectic 1918 summer. We were rung up from Creil, I think, to know "combien de lits disponibles," and M—— said she could not say as the hospitals were to collect from "une caniche toute pleine de blessés." I think that reply went round the whole army because, for weeks, I was greeted in the hall by passing officers who said they had been deputed to ask after the health of the "caniche" and the fate of her large family.

Another. I am having my usual trouble with recalcitrant tenants. I think our Editor would enjoy the remark of one whom I had beaten in the fight. After assuring me that he was "begorra'ed" and he would not pay, he sent his daughter to see if she could do something about it, but I was adamant. Finally, he returned himself, threw the notes on the table, and said: "I can well afford it, for 'tis no more to me than 'a daisy in a bull's mouth!'"

And now the catastrophe. Speaking of the bad weather, Daunt writes: "I had spent only one night baling out without injury to myself. James, my valued factotum, at the end of a stormy day, thought it advisable to take some precautions. He put a large bath in a corridor where he thought a drip might come in, as it did in torrential rain. He went home. But in the night I began to think of that possible drip. I took a candle and a basin. I put the candle in the basin and sallied upstairs. I hit the bath a whack, candle and basin flew in all directions. I fell into the bath and there I stuck in darkness until I gathered courage to look and see if I was in one piece—it felt as if nothing was where it ought to be. However, thanks to the steel horror I have to wear, all that happened was a glorious crop of bruises and—THERE WAS NO DRIP!

Dow. We were very sorry to hear that one of Dow's sisters died last September. She had never been very strong, and it was partly on account of her health that a visit to Switzerland was an annual event. Dow writes: "So far we have not been able to make any plans for going abroad this spring, although we should have been glad to escape this continuous bad weather and get to some place where there was no lack of domestic helpers! They are non-existent nowadays in Edinburgh. Too many light industries well paid are taking in the young and able-bodied."

Dr Henry seems to enjoy winter life in Canada. She can't understand why people flee to Florida to escape the snow. She loves it. Her grandchildren of very tender years seem to have a grand time skiing down the slopes towards the door of "Granny's" house in the Laurentians. They can apparently smell from afar the Scotch broth she makes for them. "Granny never takes soup out of a tin," they say to their little friends. (The other day I discovered the following when reading through some old numbers of the News Letter: "Dr Henry is now visiting Europe. Miss Ivens and Miller met her boat at Liverpool and saw the infant, John, 'not,' Miss Ivens says, 'quite the little plaster saint he appeared to me!'"—Editor.)

Howard-Smith writes: "I expect you have read all about the Festival here for the 100th Anniversary of the Battle of Hastings and of Battle (the right word!). If William had seen the new town as it is now he never would have invaded us. I think it would have been more 'U' had he invaded Bexhill or St. Leonard's, as the 'powers that be' are finding it difficult to lure the right people here. I am getting a new passport and Royaumontites will be glad to hear that the photo is not quite so awful as last time."

Jamieson. She writes: "It was a great disappointment to me not to be at the last two Reunions, but I will try to do better this year. At the moment, though still not very mobile, I am a great deal better than I was, and get about quite a bit now by private and public transport. If I do venture into Glasgow I just have taxis to and from wherever I want to go. May I suggest that a lunch party in Edinburgh would make it easier for long distance members to get home, rather than tea? I could have managed lunch last autumn, but had to get back to my 'board' at night. I have kept to my own bed since I had such bad sciatica—I must have a hard bed, the doctor stipulates."

Large tore a ligament in her knee that kept her a prisoner for a month. "I was unable to continue my voluntary work. Luckily, it is much better. I

had no idea a knee could throw out the whole of one's life." (We hope she will have a good holiday in the Highlands later on. Late summer can be lovely up there, and the weather is often better than it is earlier in the year.—Editor.)

Leng. She writes: "Last year at this time I was in Jamaica, but, alas, all those lovely Caribbean Islands are becoming more and more the playground of Americans and of those English who wish to escape our penal taxation. Prices soar and my few old friends out there on their old family plantations find life becoming more and more difficult, sugar prices descending and labour costs mounting."

After a very pleasant September in Canada I flew to Munich to attend a triannual Conference of Lyceum Clubs, of which our Edinburgh Lyceum is the only Scottish member and may soon be the only one in Britain. It is most interesting to meet and make friends with women from all parts of Europe and even Australia and New Zealand. Last year the theme was T.V. and its impact on children—a very debatable subject—and the discussion was lively indeed, but it interested me that so many young mothers from every country were so worried about the standard of programmes. By and large I feel our B.B.C. is, perhaps, the "least worst."

Speaking of Merrylees' death, Leng says: "I am so grateful to have read that letter from Sister Gertrude about poor dear Anna Lou. What a lovely end surrounded by people who really cared—as the writer says, 'A blessed end to a holy life.'"

Main (Mrs Breakey). We are very sorry to hear of the death of Main's husband and send her our deep sympathy. (So glad to see Poppet Forrest again. She gave me the latest news of you.—Ed.)

Moffet has made a wonderful recovery after her car accident. Her injuries were far from superficial and, thanks to excellent medical attention, she has emerged, "all in one piece," as Daunt would say, in the best of health and spirits. In a letter to the Editor she mentions that she had been put in charge of a "Bottle Stall," a side-line to a coffee party in aid of the church funds. She seems to have gained a reputation in her part of the country for making "Bottle Stalls" pay, and money flows freely into the church coffers. (Please enlighten an ignoramus from the "back woods" on the subject of "Bottle Stalls." We might try them here.—Ed.)

Nicholson ("Nicky") sends us a most interesting description of a holiday in Holland. It sounds so attractive and so comprehensive that members might like to do the same some day. But read her account for yourselves. Nicky's next trip is not to

be so far away, as she promises to appear later when the weather improves (if ever?) on the Editor's doorstep. Good hotel next door, please note.

Paley has lost an old friend in the death of Warner. Their names were always coupled together at Royaumont and we knew them well. We were very glad to see them at the last Reunion in London (1961). Paley leads a very busy life. She has been farming before and since the Second World War and is the proud owner of a herd of Jerseys. (She would be interested to see herds of the stocky little animals—Galloways—that live on the hills here. Perhaps she will motor up some day. New Galloway is not very far from Lancaster by car, or is it?—Ed.)

Peter (Madame Campora). writes to Nicky from Chailly-en-Bière that they have converted a chalet in the garden of their daughter, Andrée's home, into a cottage for themselves. She writes: "Lucien and I are finally settled in our doll's house and find it very comfortable and warm. We have got oil-fired central heating and what a difference it makes!" She gives details of their little home, which seems to be extremely well equipped with modern conveniences and labour-saving devices, so that with a little help weekly from a neighbour she can keep it in good trim.

They now have ten grandchildren: Elizabeth, their eldest daughter, and her British Naval Chaplain husband, have two sons; Yolande also has two sons, and Andrée, with whom they have lived since they left Africa, has two girls and four boys. Lucien misses his mill desperately, but there seems little chance of getting back to it, as all their relatives and friends are now in France, some having returned to Algeria and attempted to settle there, but, finding the conditions impossible, have had to return to France. Each summer Peter and Lucien go for a few weeks to Alsace, where they have friends and interests. Peter wanders for hours in the forest, which she has known since her childhood and dearly loves.

Rolt is always cheerful and pleasant to meet. She was able to come north to the tea-party in September, after which she stayed for a week-end with Ramsay and her sister in their lovely home. She was in raptures over the garden—"a gardener's paradise" she calls it, the whole place a blaze of colour when she was there. She felt like the Queen of Sheba after her pleasant stay with Solomon (some Royaumontites may have to refresh their memory on this story). On the Sunday, Leishman and she had a lovely drive among the hills and on Monday morning to Galashiels to catch a bus for Carlisle, where her friends met her and brought her home.

Rolt gives us this description of one of the snowstorms: "It could not have come at a more

inconvenient time as my friend was ill and the ambulance was to have come that day to take her to the hospital in Carlisle, but that was quite an impossibility, and our telephone was knocked out. However, the following day a bulldozer cleared the mile of snow up to our gate and this made it easier for the ambulance to turn after it arrived. The patient was carried out by two stalwarts between walls of snow and after a 25-mile journey arrived safely at the Carlisle Infirmary.

By this snow clearance a good turn was done to one farmer neighbour in our little hamlet as it enabled food, etc., to get up the hill; people further on were stranded for a week or ten days without being able to get out by road. An egg-producing farm had at one time over 25,000 eggs on its hands before they could be collected and taken to the packing station.

Rutherford (Mrs Riordan). This is sad news from Australia. Her husband died on 12th January, 1966, while out bird-watching, one of his favourite pursuits. He was found after a long search which must have been very trying for her.

Simpson (Mrs Gray). Simpson had her daughter and grandchildren round her for Christmas and, when she wrote to us, she was in the middle of "clearing up." Robin, her son, has gained a further architectural degree from Edinburgh University—Master of Architecture. This degree is the first to be given by Edinburgh, and he is the first to receive it.

In October Simpson was in Italy with a friend. The weather was lovely for a week or two—a real Indian summer. She says: "We went first to Rome, then south to Formia on the coast for some sea air, then we came north again to Florence—a lovely city. Rome seemed overpowering with its ageless monuments, while Florence was alive and glowing. Our next towns were Milan and Pavia, where we had Italian friends, so were privileged to see the inside of several homes. How one longs for the lovely sunshine of the south these cold days!"

Smeal. "You ask for news? My style is still being cramped by my wretched old diet (a form of restrictive practices!). My news is of the humdrum order as, for the above reason, I cannot take the 'wings of the morning' and fly off to furrin parts as I should like to do. I had the pleasure of seeing Howard-Smith and her sister in the spring of last year. They were staying at Littlehampton. They came to see me and we were regaled with vivid descriptions of the S.W.H. Canteen at Metz—all very interesting and amusing, although it was far from amusing at the time."

Stables writes: I am struggling back on to two feet again, but it is a depressingly slow business. I

am trying to get on with one walking-stick and have my shoe built up on one foot, but cold weather affects me rather badly. I still have nine dogs of all ages so it is company, and my housekeeper feeds them. (I wonder if it is still the Samoyeds that Stables has?)

Thorpe (Mrs Victor Smith). We were sorry not to see Thorpe at the Reunion in Edinburgh in September. She is very glad that her son and his wife are coming home for good in April and is looking forward to their arrival. "They are travelling overland in a Land Rover via French Sahara and Algiers and I only hope they don't land up in an Algerian gaol." (This will interest Peter!) Moffat is a quiet, peaceful town to rest in after the Nigerian troubles and a safari of the proportions that they intend to embark on. (Bon voyage from the Association.)

Warren. Warren's fractured arm seems to have done well, better than she expected taking into account the damage that was done. She can write and sew a little and can drive her car for which she is very thankful. She cannot straighten her arm nor can she carry weights. Members have missed her at the recent reunions, but now that she feels better, little Simpson must bring her to our next celebration. (Don't forget to read Warren's plaint on the weather in this issue. I think it very clever of her to have found so many words to rhyme with the word at the end of the first line. Who would have thought so many words existed, nor who would have thought that we had a real live poetess in the Association?—Ed.)

Williams writes us from the balcony of a Spanish hotel near Alicante. It is December 13. It is brilliant sunshine and she is wearing a cotton blouse. She wonders if she will go inside and get a hat, so bright and hot is the sun. She says that one great advantage about the winter in Spain is that, if fine, one can sit in the sun which is not possible in the summer. The hotel at Alicante where she is at present is on the coast, only a narrow road lies between the front entrance and the sea. She loves to sit and watch the wonderful sunsets from near at hand: one can see the same at Altea (where she and her sister have built their house) even more spectacular sometimes, but Altea is a mile from the sea. At the moment they are having a spell of ideal weather, calm and sunny for 10 hours, then it becomes sharp and cold at night, but the central heating is most efficient. (We should welcome Williams at an Edinburgh Reunion. Is there a chance of seeing her?—Ed.)

Simms. Smeal hears of her from time to time. She has a cottage in Devonshire. Her last letters were full of a very interesting holiday she had on a

coach tour in Morocco last autumn. "She is a great globe-trotter," Smeal says, "but I believe she still works part-time at a nearby local hospital—Teignmouth, I think." (We should be so pleased to have an account of one or other of her tours abroad. What about taking this appeal seriously, Simms, or visiting Scotland and coming to a Reunion?—Ed.)

Leishman. "It was in May, 1965, I went for a holiday to Eire. On arrival at Cork, and having Daunt's address with me, I went to see her one evening wondering whether or not she would know me after a lapse of so many years. But she did, and we had threequarters of an hour together, during which we recalled old friends, old 'flaps' and incidents. It was a wonderful meeting and we both enjoyed it.

"On saying 'Good-bye' to her I could see before me the Daunt of the Hall at Royaumont in her blue cap and with her roguish expression ready to blurt out any blarney that could protect her Chief from being disturbed by some importunate visitor. Although crippled with arthritis, Daunt is still the witty, gay and courageous Daunt of the old Royaumont days."

Adam (Mrs Bushey) is very happy living near her daughter, Norma, and her family at Bushey (Herts.). She has two big jolly grandsons of nearly 6 ft., who keep "Granny" well entertained. She writes: "I feel sometimes like an old car. Odd bits of me keep going wrong from time to time," but, nevertheless, she is very active and able to join in the town's activities.

Rose-Morris. The Editor met Morris in the Lyceum Club in Edinburgh for lunch during the Christmas festivities. It was Leng's invitation. Morris's sister, Mrs Murray, with whom she lives, was there, too, and we had a long chat during and after lunch. (Last but not least on the "From Far and Near" column. Have been waiting on your contribution to the News Letter, but in vain!—Ed.)

A Spanish Fiesta

A few miles away from where we live there is an old Spanish town, about eight miles inward, where each year in October the fight between Christians and Moors is re-enacted with full pageantry, and in order that no ill-feeling should be aroused the parts are played turn about. Some of the costumes have been handed down through many generations, and especially beautiful is the mule harness, crimson velvet round the buttocks decorated with coloured glass, and long fringes dangling from the head bands which almost sweep the ground. Now, alas, the petrol engine has invaded the town and nearly half the field workers have exchanged their beautiful "burros" for little

motor trucks. But being Spaniards they treat their trucks exactly as they used to treat their mules, and dress them up in mule-harness and priceless silk shawls for the occasion. The fiesta lasts a whole week but starts on Sunday at 8 a.m. with a full procession to the church on the top of the hill. There is always one white horse ridden by a "Christian" and a camel ridden by a "Moor," but the most incongruous sight is a workman dressed in his best Sunday suit, driving his little decorated open truck and smoking a huge cigar—these cigars are smuggled in from the Canary Islands and are openly referred to as "contrabandas."

The crowds are so dense that it is difficult to move, but the local hotel owner, Don Juan, is an old friend and allows us and our friends to watch from his windows. My sister took a ciné film which, I believe, turned out well, but I have not seen it as we left our projector with my niece in England.

"PETER" (WILLIAMS).

"Little Andy," writes from Brittany: "Before telling the readers of the Royaumont News Letter about my Breton home, I feel I must first describe the origin of our beautiful Chapelle de la Clarté and the statue in it of Notre Dame de la Clarté. Merrylees loved this little chapel and its beautiful statue, and my husband and I visit it often and light a *cierge* on behalf of Our Lady. La Clarté and the monstrous granite rocks of Ploumanac'h form part of Perros Guirac."

La Chapelle De La Clarté

Six hundred years ago, the Marquis de Barac'h, in command of a French naval Squadron returning from a cruise off the English coast, was surprised by dense fog behind the Seven islands, and was gradually being driven without guidance on to the rocks and certain death. Kneeling with his Breton sailors, he prayed: "O, Marie, Mère de Dieu, Queen of the Sea, have pity and save us, and I will promise to build in your honour a Chapel."

At once a ray of sunlight pierced the fog over the rocks of Ploumanac'h, clearing the fog little by little, enabling them to reach the port of Perros safely.

Faithful to his promise, the Marquis, in 1445, built a Chapel on high ground overlooking the sea and, in memory of the miracle that had saved them, wished that the Virgin should be honoured by the name of Notre Dame de la Clarté.

Throughout the years, the Chapel has become a centre of pilgrimage, and a Pardon, held on August 15, attracts a large number of people. Notre Dame de la Clarté protects the sailors and the blind.

In August, 1944, a pocket of German soldiers, entrenched very near the Chapel, were attacking the American positions. A dense fog, attributed to the powers of Notre Dame de la Clarté, descended on Perros, la Clarté and Ploumanac'h. The attack lasted three days and each day the fog descended. Finally, the Germans had to surrender without resistance. Notre Dame de la Clarté had saved her "fief." On 15th August, 1946, the Perrosians crowned, with their gold offerings, the Statue of Notre Dame de la Clarté.

I shall tell you more about my Breton home next time. Suffice it to say that our little cottage, on the cliff side at Perros, faces the sea and has a wonderful view of the beach. Just across the bay the spire of the Chapelle de la Clarté and the great rocks of Ploumanac'h can clearly be seen.

"LITTLE ANDY"
(MADAME PETITPIERRE).

Dr Henry has very kindly sent us this article on the preparations for and the family celebrations of Christmas, 1965, at Montreal:

Noël Chez Nous

"Excitement over the approaching Festival begins four-five weeks before the event and lasts until January 6th, Epiphany—when all cards and decorations are packed away.

In the preparations all the children play a big part. A trip to the Laurentians is made for two trees, one for the hall inside and one for outside the front door, the latter to be lit up each night, a week before Christmas. Cedar branches must also be brought down from the mountains to be woven into a huge wreath—the Advent wreath or Weihnachts Krantz—into which four tall red candles are fixed. This tradition started in our family 37 years ago when we spent a year studying in Europe and were introduced to the customs there. The wreath is hung from a ceiling, preferably in the hall. On the first Sunday evening in Advent, one candle is lighted—all other lights are extinguished—and we sing our carols. On each successive Sunday, an additional candle is lit until, on Christmas Eve, all four are alight. The children enjoy this. They sing in German the two carols, "Tannenbaum" and "Stille Nacht," German being the language in which we first heard them. A five and a half years old offers a little French carol taught her at Kindergarten, and her four years old brother asks if he may sing his. We feel that, all too soon, these uninhibited efforts will become self-conscious, so we share them as long as we can and watch the eager, happy faces upturned to the wreath.

Also, ahead of time, Christmas "cookies" or biscuits are made, rolled out and cut into shapes of

stars, reindeer and Santa Claus. A hole is punctured at the corner of each, and after baking and decorating by the children, they are stored until the time arrives for hanging them from the tree on Christmas Eve. Another variety is made with honey and flavoured with lemon. These "Liebküchen" are made from a recipe also acquired in Europe. After baking and decorating they are placed in cold storage for maturing.

Excitement mounts on Christmas Eve when the decorations that have survived two generations are hung on the tree with dozens of coloured lights. Last of all, the Angel is placed above on the highest branch. The stockings are hung by the fire before bedtime.

This past year we attended the early service on Christmas Day at Christ Church Cathedral, in which church we were married 40 years ago, so that we could be with the children as soon as possible. The church we attend now in the Laurentians is three miles distant, in the village of St. Sauveur des Monts. Beautifully built of logs, it was originally intended for the use of skiers, but now it is well filled in summer and in winter, in which season it is especially colourful with the gay outfits of the skiers.

So we were in the city on Christmas Day to enjoy the unloading of the Christmas tree and our dinner with the family. Far more interesting than watching each child's reaction to the gifts we had tied up for them, was to see what each had chosen for the others. These were bought with their own pennies and wrapped up in great secrecy. There are five grandchildren in the Montreal family ranging from nine years to three months—three boys and two girls, all different in character and, to us, most interesting. The five years old had decided that the sharp points of his Granny's knitting needles needed some protection, and, of course, I was thrilled! Nine years old had decided to take advantage of low prices at the Church Fair! At the White Elephant Stall he had spent ten cents on his seven years old sister. Knowing her love of dress, he had his reward in her enthusiastic response when she found herself the possessor of a PALE PINK OSTRICH FEATHER FAN! I have to emphasise its importance in capital letters. No doubt it will accompany her to her ballet class. I only hope she does not smuggle it into church. For me he had chosen two tiny cartons of Red Rose tea. On each was stamped "FREE SAMPLE," but he confided that he put five cents for each into the Church funds! For his grandfather there was a set of small coasters, tiny tiles set in a cement base. He explained: "Children probably made them. We used to do that kind of work!" And the other children have been equally thoughtful, tying up

each gift with loving care, watching intently for the grateful response.

After Christmas dinner it was decided whose turn it was to accompany us to our Laurentian home for the holiday week. Unfortunately, we are no longer able to accommodate the entire family, so a choice had to be made, after which we set off for the mountains. Although the snow had been cleared off most of the city streets, driving up north was like entering a Christmas card. Lights were beginning to twinkle on the little Christmas trees outside the farm houses across the snowy fields. And so, in time, we arrived at our own little home full of happy memories of children and of Christmas Day, 1965.

In our next issue we shall hear all about the house in the Laurentians and the wonderful skiing and tobogganing which start straight from the door. Dr Henry loves the snow and cannot understand why people flee to Florida to escape it.

Visit to the Dutch Bulb Fields Organised by the National Gardens Guild

(It is with great compunction that the Editor has had to shorten Nicky's account of her visit. It is all extremely interesting. The "harassed Editor" will welcome the deletion with joy next year. She offers apologies to her enthusiastic correspondent and assures her that she will not be asked to supply any new material for next year's issue!)

After describing the welcome given them by the Burgomaster and his deputy, Nicky proceeds:

Each day we left Amsterdam on a sight-seeing tour and visited briefly almost every part of Holland. One of the most interesting trips was to the Bloemenlust Flower Auction at Aalameer. We had to leave the hotel at 8.15 a.m. on that day, so as to reach the market in time to see the auction of the flowers. The sight and scent of the masses of roses, freesia, carnations, lilies and tulips were magnificent, and we were amazed at the organisation of the auction. Each type of bunch of flowers was displayed separately. The registration number of the buyer and the price to be paid were shown on a large clock. We watched the boxes of flowers being prepared for transport by air, rail and road to all parts of Europe. The day we were there most of the flowers were destined to reach West German shops in time to be sold before Mothering Sunday.

After visiting the flower market we went to Hillegom, where we lunched in a restaurant in the middle of a beautiful garden filled with beds of bulbs of every description, and then went on to Kgukenhof Estate, owned and cared for by the bulb growers' Association, where many growers advertise their bulbs and take orders for the coming season.

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The bulbs are displayed in hundreds of beds, all clearly marked, and we rushed feverishly from one to another with visions of wonderful shows in our own gardens this spring and early summer. In addition to the wonderful tulips, daffodils and hyacinths, there were masses of flowering cherries, silver birches, beeches and chestnuts, and many other shrubs and trees in the grounds, with lakes and fountains to add to the beauty of the scene which was being enjoyed by thousands of people of all ages, as this was Liberation Day, a national holiday in Holland.

Another very impressive expedition was to the Municipal Nurseries of Amsterdam, where we saw trees, shrubs and plants being prepared for the beautification of new housing estates. We found that the Dutch mostly plant out their young trees at six to seven years of age, in the hope that by that time they will no longer be subject to vandalism. We were shown an adjacent estate which has been given over to the people living in the old houses overlooking the canals which, owing to the type of architecture used at the time they were built, can have no gardens. Applicants are allowed to rent a piece of land in this estate and erect on it a small house, bungalow or wooden hut, and to cultivate the remainder of the plot as a garden. There they

and their families can live and work during suitable weather. Many of these gardens are beautifully laid out and cared for, and must give great pleasure to their owners.

NICKY.

This is what Warren thinks of the weather:

The Weather Grouse

The east wind blows,
It rains, it snows,
It cramps our toes,
It soaks our hose,
It reddens nose,
Our eyes half close,
Discomfort grows.

On, on it goes,
Far from jocose,
We feel morose.
I don't suppose
The forecast shows
An end to woes.
But goodness knows
We've had a dose.

C. D. WARREN.

Statement of Royaumont and V.C. Association Account from 1st January, 1965, to 7th February, 1966

RECEIPTS				EXPENSES			
Carried forward, 1st January, 1965	...	£59	12 4	George Outram, Printers	...	£19	10 0
Donation from Mr Phelps in memory of	...			Miller—News Letter Expenses	...	0	18 4
his wife	...	0	10 6	Bank Charge	...	0	1 0
Donation for News Letter from Simms...	...	0	15 0				
Donation for News Letter from Daunt	...	0	15 0				
Donation for News Letter from Main	...	0	5 0				
Donation for News Letter from Arthur	...	0	15 0				
Donation for News Letter from Torrance	...	0	15 0				
Subscriptions	...	16	6 0				
		£79	13 10			£20	9 4
				Balance in Hand	...	£59	4 6
				Royaumont Association Emergency Fund—Balance in Hand	...	£244	6 0