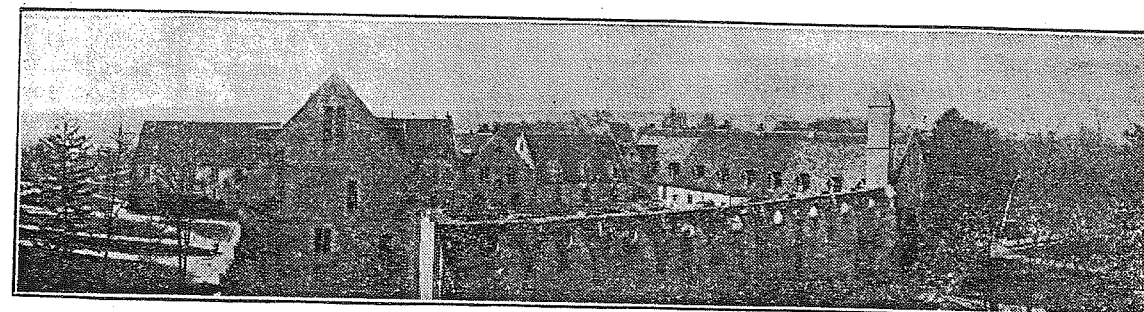


ROYAUMONT & V.C. ASSOCIATION of THE SCOTTISH WOMEN'S HOSPITALS NEWS LETTER



January, 1968

No. 7—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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EDITORIAL

A Happy New Year to you all! Let us hope by the end of it we shall have returned to sanity and security. In the pages of our News Letter we shall try to evoke happier memories of the years long since passed.

Our Association remains the same as regards membership. Two well-known members died during the past year, Figgis in Australia and Jean Macpherson in a Nursing Home in Glasgow. We shall say more about them in our "In Memoriam" page. Just before the News Letter was posted off to the printers, I received a long letter from Armstrong in which she speaks very feelingly about Figgis and regrets her death. Members will be able to read this letter further on in our paper.

We welcome letters received from Overseas members and, in return, we try to send them the news from home. Dr Henry sends us most interesting accounts of her home in Canada, her family and her travels, all of which are much appreciated.

Armstrong and Rutherford from Australia, Barclay from Rhodesia and, nearer home, Peter Campora from France, Andy Petitpierre from her Breton fastness, Williams (Peter) from Spain and Daunt from Eire. Most of these have sent letters this year. I have managed for the first time to get into touch with Davidson, "Daisy D" as she is known on her native heath, Dornoch. I always associate her with Mrs Hacon at Royaumont. She sent me recently a large parcel of photographs and snapshots taken at Royaumont. She thinks that some of us would enjoy looking at them during a Reunion. A good many, I reckon, have already disposed of our wonderful collections. Mine went quite a long time ago after a rather uncomfortable pulling at my heart-strings. We all remember with affection the souvenirs of "yester year"—the hundreds of very touching verses from our kindly and grateful poilus, verses that always evoke a smile, sometimes a laugh, pen drawings, water colour sketches, excellent of their kind, sheets of paper upon which dried lily of the valley (there was plenty of that at

Royaumont) and other local wild flowers, were gummed down in artistic form on the white paper—all very touching, but alas, fleeting memories.

When visiting Dorothy Anderson this summer in her charming cottage at Slaley, near Hexham, she showed me a copy of "La Revue hebdomadaire," April 13th, 1918, found among other books that came into her possession from her old home. In it, much to our surprise and delight, were two articles about Royaumont written by la Comtesse de Courson. The first article is an account of the History of Royaumont and the pious Life of its Royal founder, "Saint" Louis IX., roi de France. The second one is about US. I have translated some interesting facts chosen from these articles. These excerpts appear later on in the News Letter.

The Reunion took the form of a luncheon in the same Hotel as that of last year. We had an excellent lunch and a bright and cheerful room at our disposal. After the General Meeting it was a case of seeing and speaking to as many "camarades" as we could manage in the time that remained. It was a happy afternoon, conversation buzzed merrily and we were sorry to break up. I took a French friend with me and she thought it was a most friendly and enjoyable gathering.

A meeting will no doubt be arranged later on to discuss the date and place of this year's Reunion, and when once these are decided on, members will be notified. We hope as large a number as possible will be present.

Letter from our President

11th February, 1968.

Dear Members,

It is nice to know that the Royaumont and V.C. Association continues to exist. A few well-known members have died in the last year or two leaving a sad gap in our ranks, but those of us who still flourish continue to enjoy our yearly Reunions and are grateful to our Committee who organise them for us. We look forward to Miller's excellent News Letter which is such a feature of our Association. Please go on sending her items of interest for the News Letter, for our members overseas do enjoy hearing from their friends. Our lunch Reunion in Edinburgh last June was a very cheerful affair and I look forward to coming again this year to meet a large gathering of members. A word of thanks to our Committee for all their kind help and interest they take to keep our Association alive.

With good wishes to you all,

Yours ever,

SMIETON.

Letter from our Chairman

Dear Members,

Once more I must wish you all a very good 1968. I do not think 1967 was very pleasant in any way—Labour troubles at home and wars in various parts of the world, and the less said about the weather conditions everywhere, the better! Earthquakes, floods, gales, causing terrible damage and loss of life, so that one was afraid to open the morning newspapers.

We were lucky here except for gale damage throughout the county, and I hope none of you suffered from any of them. It was amazing to see tall, strong trees just snapped in two like a match. Where the beeches and other similar large trees were laid flat, they were completely uprooted, with huge blocks of soil and fencing clinging to their roots.

Today the hills are shining in the sun with a heavy coating of snow, but there is no snow on the low ground, and I found a few hardy crocus under the trees.

We did not go further than London and Hastings this summer as one sister had just had an operation and the other was far from well. I saw Howard Smith at Hastings, just as amusing as ever. Miller and her Edinburgh friend came to see us one day and were in grand form.

Let me again say how glad I would be to welcome any of you here and, with best wishes to you all.

Yours ever,

RAMSAY.

Annual Luncheon and Annual General Meeting

The Annual Luncheon was held once more at the Carlton Hotel, Edinburgh, and, as in 1966, the Management provided an excellent lunch which was much enjoyed.

Those present were: Dow, Jamieson, Leishman, Leng, Nicky, Rose-Morris, Simpson, Smieton, Stewart, Macnaughton, Miller and a French friend, Ramsay, Torrance, D. Anderson and Sinclair.

Regrets were received from: Sister Adam, Large, Littlejohn, Moffet, Thorpe, Whitehorn and Jackson.

The Annual General Meeting followed the Luncheon.

Ramsay reported that Smeal did not feel that she should undertake membership of the General

Committee owing to her bad health. Ramsay, however, met Howard Smith when she was in Hastings and she is willing to act.

Nicky gave a report of the Emergency Fund from which two Members had been helped during the year. It was agreed that in the event of the retiral or death of a Trustee, the remaining Trustees are empowered to appoint one of the following: Macnaughton, Manson or Leishman, to fill the vacancy.

It was also agreed that a draft statement regarding the final disposal of the Fund should be submitted at the next Annual General Meeting.

The Treasurer's Report showed a satisfactory balance in the Bank.

In Memoriam

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

Jean Macpherson ("Mac") died on the 27th October, 1967, in a Nursing Home in Glasgow. She came out to France in the same contingent as myself and, as she held a Diploma in Domestic Science, she became "ruler" of the kitchen. Jean was what we call in Scotland "a character." She was an individualist with strong views about everything and everyone. Her judgments were not too flattering sometimes but, coming from Jean, they were not very often taken au sérieux. Her wit was what might be called "astringent," like that of most Scots, but her philosophy was good and sound. She loved music but it had to be that of the old masters—Haydn, Beethoven, Mozart and Brahms. "Background" music that so often accompanies the morning chores and the flutter of a duster was not her choice nor was the cacophony of the moderns. To those whom she liked and made her friends Jean's loyalty, once established, was great and unchanging. Her last days were spent very happily and comfortably in a Nursing Home very near to where a favourite nephew and his family live. They were a great comfort to her.

THE EDITOR.

Figgis died at her home in Australia.

We got this information from Rutherford who writes: "Figgis died after a 'stroke.' Though

I was very fond of her and shall miss her, I cannot but be happy that her suffering is over. Lately she has been very badly crippled as a result of a fractured femur complicated by arthritis. The death of her sister was a severe blow to her. They had always been together and meant so much to one another. Her sister waited on her hand and foot and seemed to read her every wish before it was spoken. She was a very sad person when last I spoke to her shortly after her sister's death. She had to arrange to leave the old home in which they had lived all their lives and dispose of the family treasures. A sad task that is always very trying."

We wish to send "little Andy" (Lady Blood) and all her family our deep sympathy on the death of her distinguished husband, Sir Hilary Blood, G.B.E., K.C.M.G., LL.D. He died, after a coronary attack followed by a stroke, in Ashford Hospital, Kent, aged 74 years. Sir Hilary was former Governor of Gambia, Barbados and Mauritius. He retired in 1954 but did much public work after his retirement. He was Chairman of the Royal Society of Arts, Vice-Chairman of the Royal Commonwealth Society and of the Royal Commonwealth Society for the Blind. He was also Member of the Government Appointments Commission for Overseas posts. He lectured all over the country on Commonwealth subjects, bravely undeterred by lameness, the result of a wound received in Gallipoli during the First World War.

A Visit to Royaumont During the First World War — 1914-18

By Comtesse de Courson

As I mentioned in the Editorial, this account of Royaumont was written by la Comtesse de Courson. It appeared in *La Revue hebdomadaire* on April 13th, 1918. Parts have been translated by me and the original French retained where the language expressed better the ideas of the writer. La comtesse writes:

"Royaumont was the outcome of a vow made by a dying man, Louis VIII. of France who, before his death, expressed to his wife, Blanche de Castille, and son, his desire to build a monastery "pour la gloire de Dieu et pour le bien de mon âme." His wife, in agreement with her son Saint Louis, set about at once to carry out the fulfilment of her

husband's vow. The most noted architect of the time, Pierre de Montreuil, was put in charge of the building, and so, in a charming corner of the Ile de France, the monastery was erected. It was built on the banks of the Oise, surrounded by beautiful woods on the periphery of which grew up a number of picturesque towns. The old chronicles of the time evoke some delightful stories of how Saint Louis and his three brothers joined the workmen in helping to carry heavy loads of stones to the site of the building. Sometimes the young boys gave vent to their feelings in hearty laughter over some incident or other, but at this point Saint Louis said quietly: "Les moines tiennent silence, aussi devons nous le tenir."

There is much of interest that can be drawn from this story of the origin of Royaumont, especially of how Saint Louis visited the sick monks and lepers. His preference was given to a Frère Légier, a leper who was in an advanced stage of the disease and who, according to what was usual at that time, lived isolated from the rest of the community. Saint Louis, like a true friend, was anxious to give his leper the food he would enjoy and, on finding out that he was very fond of partridges, he brought him the bird at different times and saw that, on each occasion, it was cooked in the way that the leper preferred. Knowing that the Frère liked salt to his food, the King himself took the greatest pains to crush the coarse salt very finely so that the mutilated lips of his invalid did not suffer from anything hard coming in contact with them when eating.

The second article written by the comtesse deals with US — our life and work in the old monastery from the winter of 1914, when our pioneers got down (in more ways than one) to the removal of the accumulated dust of years, until the early months of 1919 when the hospital closed its doors. What these early pioneers achieved was no easy task as can well be imagined, but "force d'activité, de bonne volonté, de sens pratique at aussi de travail ardu," transformed this old monastery into what was to become a modern hospital, with all its modern equipment, under the name of L'Hôpital auxiliaire 301, de la Société de Secours aux Blessés militaires.

She speaks of the beauty of Royaumont, its old cloisters, the beautiful vaulted "Salles" with their Gothic windows and, outside, its calm "pièces d'eau" flowing between the greenest of green lawns. She speaks of the order and brightness of the wards, the beds with their red counterpanes, the perfection and discipline of it all.

"L'atmosphère morale est bonne à respirer," she says. She appears to have noticed too, that "la discipline morale" was "forte et souple." At the same time she remarks that the little worries and maladjustments, common in everyday life "n'existent pas pour ces dames. La tâche qu'elles ont entreprise si courageusement est trop absorbante. Le reste ne compte pas." (What about the FLAPS?)

The uniforms seem to have interested her, and she spends a little time in describing them. Her description may appear to some readers too flattering, for we had no great admiration for our "Highland Mary" outdoor apparel. I think we were much more attractive in the wards in our blue cotton dresses and "coiffes blanches flottantes," not to speak of the little round "Charlotte" caps (I wonder if Charlotte Corday wore a cap of this type on her way to the scaffold?). The comtesse noticed that only the "chauffeuses" wore Khaki, and she liked the plain tailor-made suits of our chirurgienne-en-chef and les doctoresses with their red velvet collars and embroidered badge of office.

The gratitude of the blessés for what was being done for them, she found very touching. "Madame" said one blessé, "c'est ici le paradis. Il est impossible d'être mieux. Il n'y a pas un hôpital pareil." Another blessé confessed that he wouldn't like a male surgeon to operate on him, now that he knew what the woman surgeon was like. "On a bien moins peur pour ces dames."

Last, but not least, she joins with so many others at the time in admiration for l'Abbé Rousselle, curé d'Asnières-sur-Oise. "Royaumont," she says, "had no better friend." He was a most devoted chaplain to the wounded soldier and would have come to the bedside of anyone of them who wanted to speak with him, day or night.

To finish—I quote the words of la comtesse when she wrote to Miss Ivens after her visit. "Miss Ivens et toutes ses collaboratrices ont pour leurs blessés une affection doublée d'espoir. Elles aiment leur patience, leur humeur facile, leur gaieté, forme charmante de courage."

I wonder if our members think those days are too far off to justify me translating a very small part of what are the delightful souvenirs of Madame la Comtesse de Courson? I hope not.

THE EDITOR.

Dorothy Anderson would no doubt lend the Revue to anyone interested.

Smieton
Our President's Last Nights at V.C.

I remember that last week at V.C. It was at the end of May just before we were to leave the hospital. I was seconded to the theatre and I was to spend all the time, day and night, as orderly with Inglis and some others. We could use only candles as we were under fire. I can see Inglis holding a candle at one side of the operating table and myself at the other, trying to keep our hand steady while loud explosions went on outside. The whole place was a shambles with men lying on the floor everywhere. It was so dark, on account of the lack of light, that it was difficult to know whether a man was dead or alive.

On our last morning, when we were feeling at our last gasp, Miss Ivens said to me: "Smieton, go and find another blessé. I shall do one more operation." There were so many wounded still lying on the floor, mostly badly wounded. It was difficult to know whom to choose. However, I saw a man with a tourniquet on his arm so I had him moved into the theatre. While Miss Ivens was operating, French officers burst into the place and asked why we had not left as the town had been evacuated. We eventually got away next day, only just in time, as shells were coming over. We all got away somehow. The Americans came to our aid and helped with the wounded. Finally, our ambulances from Royaumont came to our rescue. We were glad to see them.

Some of us, including myself, started to walk until we were picked up. We had many adventures on the way, some of them really funny.

*July 4
 Can't find 1918
 right*
Villers-Cotterets in 1918

A letter from Smeal sent to a friend in California on May 23rd 1918, arrived back in Britain tattered and yellow with age, almost crumbling under one's fingers, but still legible enough for the Editor to include it in the News Letter of fifty years later!

"It was lucky that your parcel reached me safely, wasn't it? For some time I had quite given up hope of ever seeing letters from you again. There were long weeks of despair when I got no letters at all. You can't think of how awful it was to see the Royaumont staff getting such piles, and day after day this poor dog got none; however, they are beginning to roll in once more and I am feeling more chirpy again.

I suppose you would notice by the papers that our beloved Villers-Cotterets was in the limelight a

little while ago and I must say we did have a fairly lively time before we left. For several days beforehand our poor little town was pretty severely bombed both by day and night. The camp began to fill up with not only wounded but with nurses and orderlies from hospitals which had to be evacuated further up, so that we could not help feeling—although we prayed for the contrary—it would be our turn next. Then about the fourth day of the attack—it was all so swift although it seemed a perfect eternity to us—we were told we would have to go.

It was all so desperately sad, but the only thing we could do was to pack for all we were worth. This we did until evening when we were asked if we would stay one more night and take in 'grands blessés. They were coming down in such numbers that there was no place near enough to take in such badly wounded cases. It seemed almost madness to attempt it with every piece of apparatus packed and nearly all the staff dead beat. However, everyone was so pleased at the idea of staying that we all set to work with a will, and within an hour we had theatre, X-Rays and wards all ready. The wounded began to pour in.

I shall never forget that night as long as I live; the sights were too appalling for words. I helped in the X-Ray room. Three bombs were dropped quite close to the hospital; and a munition train in the station was bombed and went on fire. The sky was all lit up and the row was terrific. The doctresses were simply splendid through it all. They dared not show any lights but went on operating all the same. Seven amputations were done that night by the light of two candles.

The next day the guns kept getting nearer and nearer and by mid-day we had orders from the military to get away as soon as possible. Accordingly, all the orderlies set off with little knapsacks on their backs to 'foot it in the direction of Royaumont, but we 'shovers' were fortunate in being allowed to remain till the last so that we could help with the evacuation of the 'blessés.' All our cars came up from Royaumont to help.

On our way to Royaumont

We were on the road all night. It would have been very thrilling had it not been so unspeakably tragic. The roads were quite a sight to behold, simply black with troops, convoys and big guns going in the one direction and, in the other, refugees and the poor blessés who were forced to go on foot as all the cars were needed for the stretcher cases.

*checked from Mrs Fairlie's original
 See Fairlie file*

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Some of the poor souls had trudged along for miles and miles, and they did look so dusty and weary—a truly pathetic sight.

The American Ambulances were very busy on the road and were a great help to us. They did a splendid work having been on the roads for nights without stopping.

Since we came down to Royaumont, we have all been kept busy as our 400 beds are full and the wounded kept coming and going all the time which meant plenty of work for the cars. Most of our Villers-Cotterets crowd are resigning pretty soon as we do not feel we belong here. I am remaining in the meantime and shall probably try for one of the other Units later on.

I shall have to take a trip home one of these fine days if only to replenish my wardrobe as alas, we lost most of our baggage in the retreat. We had to come away in such a hurry that it all had to be left behind. A few days later, when we sent for it, we found to our disgust that all our things had been pillaged and only the débris was left. However, we had got to the stage when we were thankful for even that.

The Boches have not actually got into Villers-Cotterets, thank goodness, but we hear the town is badly wrecked and totally evacuated. It is perfectly awful, though, to read that they are in most of our pet places round about. It is difficult to realise it, especially as we were picnicking in many of them only a short while ago."

SMEAL.

From Far and Near

A Letter from Australia

(This letter from Armstrong arrived at the last moment before sending away the News Letter to the printer. I am glad it came in time.—Ed.)

My dear Miller,

Thank you for your letter. It was good to hear news of you all, though some of it was sad. I hadn't seen Figgis of recent years but used to hear about her from a mutual friend living near her in Melbourne. In Royaumont days I knew her well and liked her so much. I think she must have been very good at her job as dispenser, careful and exact and so meticulous in her person and surroundings. In outlook she was conservative to the point of being old fashioned, but she had a nice sense of fun—used to observe and retail the

goings-on around us with an amused and often slightly scandalised air. She spoke French rather correctly but slowly, conceding nothing to Gallic vivacity. I have many memories of her. On one occasion we were on leave together in the South of France, and were obliged to call on a French family there (why, or who they were, I have now no idea). Anyway, we went—looking, I have no doubt, perfect frights (Do you remember some of our out-door uniforms?) and Grandpa, having taken a Parisian eye-ful of us, remarked in an aside which, I suppose, he thought we could not understand: "Vraiment, il y a des curiosités depuis la guerre." I can still see Figgis, after the visit, rolling her big eyes and chuckling as she quoted the old wretch. Dear Figgis, I wish she were still with us. But so many of my family and friends are gone that I often wonder why in the world I am still alive.

It was lucky, wasn't it, that our indoor uniforms were pleasant, and a lovely shade of blue. My first outdoor one was a very ill-fitting grey coat and skirt, with a heavy grey felt hat cocked up at one side, à l'australien, the whole get-up trimmed here and there with bits of tartan. Perhaps the Committee chose the design with a view to our protection among the licentious soldiery?

However, there were curiosities on the other side too. Were you at Villers-Cotterets towards the finish when a collection of Dames de la Croix Rouge descended on us from a French hospital already evacuated? They floated round on high heels, complete with voluminous veils and Red Crosses and heavy make-up and had no intention of soiling a hand with work. They fell foul of Ashton in the kitchen who afterwards used to refer to them briefly as the "dam' rouges."

Yes, I remember Sinclair and am so sorry she has been having eye trouble, and how revolting that her house was burgled while she was in hospital! I recollect her as trying to bring order in chaos and her hopeful notice: "UNE PLACE POUR CHAQUE CHOSE ET CHAQUE CHOSE A SA PLACE."

No, I don't remember Betty's sister and I have quite lost touch with Rutherford. The postal strike is over for the time being, and a great nuisance it was. Our part of N.S.W. is still in the throes of a long drought, and we, on the land, are getting rather frightened.

I expect my reminiscences may be too flimsy to be of any use to you. Think you are so good to try to keep us together.

ARMSTRONG.

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Barclay (Mrs Golding). Like Armstrong's letter, Barclay's one has come at the last moment. I am glad both have arrived in time for this News Letter. Thanks to both.—Ed.).

Barclay sends us some interesting facts about the economy of Rhodesia and the effects of sanctions on it. I quote: "The drought in Rhodesia has broken, but the rains have come too late to save most maize crops. However, there are other crops, such as sorghum, cotton, etc., that don't mind near-drought conditions and will revive with this general heavy rain. Also, pasturage will be greatly helped and so prevent much suffering to grazing beasts, both wild and domestic.

Due to the diversification crops, which became necessary when Britain applied sanctions and broke down the tobacco industry on which the country largely depended, the drought has not had such blasting effect as it would have had two or three years ago. Now, Rhodesia is planting many new crops and developing others, and tobacco has lost its importance.

I wish I could tell you that the divergence between Britain and Rhodesia looks like closing, but it seems instead to be widening. Much as I, and several others, regretted the unilateral declaration of independence I, like many others, have lived to be glad of it. In other circumstances, Rhodesia would have been in the same state as Cyprus and Aden by today.

My grand-daughter has just finished her first year of nursing training at Salisbury General Hospital and is luxuriating at home on her first leave. She is much interested in her work, and so it follows, she is happy in it. To date, there have been no grumbles—only a few wails at first about sore feet and a very big appetite! "That is all in the past," she says. My grandson is still at school. His pet subject is mathematics. (Keep your African story of a child for next News Letter please.—Ed.).

Littlejohn (Mrs Hedderwick). Miller writes: "One morning, during the autumn, I noticed a very lovely modern caravan in front of the cottage. When I opened the door, a head appeared from the interior of the caravan and a voice was heard saying: 'This is my 90th birthday. Will you come and have lunch with us and celebrate such a wonderful event?'" This was the voice of Littlejohn who reigned supreme in the kitchen at Royaumont in August, 1915. She had already been in New Galloway and was at one of our Reunions. Since then, her daughter, Rachel, who drives the caravan, has toured her mother all over Scotland, from John o' Groats to Galloway not to speak of

the Western Isles. We went to one of the hotels in the village and had a very pleasant lunch together and a long chat about many things. The 90th birthday party was most enjoyable.

This is an interesting story I am going to relate. Littlejohn's father, Sir Henry Littlejohn, was a very distinguished member of the medical fraternity in Edinburgh. He will always be remembered there and elsewhere, because he was the first Medical Officer of Health for the City of Edinburgh, an appointment made on 30th September, 1862. I received from Littlejohn last year the Commemorative Oration delivered in Edinburgh on the 2nd October, 1962, to celebrate the Centenary of the appointment. It was a pioneer post in Scotland and he made a tremendous success of it. His name is still mentioned in spite of the passing years for he was a great personality, and his work and the organisation of it saved the lives of hundreds of Edinburgh citizens both in these days and in our own.

Daunt. I quote from two letters from Daunt. On May 1, 1967, she writes: "I would have written sooner to say a very big 'Thank you' for the News Letter. I had another heart attack which laid me low once more, but I am picking up though still a bit wobbly. I expect I brought it on by my own indiscretion. My seedlings were dying of thirst, as James (my faithful retainer) had forgotten to water them, so I sallied forth and did the job.

I think of Royaumont friends very often and how wonderful it would be to meet them again. But I am afraid my wanderings are over. I have not even got as far as the village for weeks, though I can still potter around the grounds or at least those near the house. I hope one day to get down to the river which I can see from the house through the trees. I am luckier than other poor invalids and don't require yet a wheel chair."

In her second letter Daunt has revived (December, 1967) and writes more cheerfully: "It was joy to hear news of several of the Royaumont-ites. I had not heard of Nicky for so long (Nicky figures in all News Letters—Ed.). The faithful James has been in hospital for weeks and is still incapable of a day's work. His sister, who also looks after me, has been ill, too, so the only helper I have is my dog, Bonzo. His help consists in giving me sympathetic licks!

On the subject of arthritis I have shed the atrocious harness—the doctor has not yet discovered it. I just could not bear the sight of myself; the straps and buckles made ungainly 'lumps' on my anatomy and no garment looked as it ought to have

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looked. I had a brain wave (listen, Royaumont-ites). I managed to get a 'harness' with three stout bones at the back where I really needed the support and one at each side, all fitting snugly. One might as well look decent as one can without all those straps and buckles."

Daunt has a band of 25 children who blow in and out bringing tales of their joys and sorrows. "I am not to be pitied—my children grow in numbers yearly and are a great source of amusement." (Daunt must be a female Pied Piper?)

"Daisy" (Davidson), known as "D. D." to her friends on her native heath—Dornoch—is delighted to have got into contact with Royaumont-ites after so many years. Daisy was a contemporary of mine (the Editor), and what I remember best is that we washed soiled bandages, each standing at one end of a large arm bath. Our task, as we realised after we started, was none too pleasant and was abolished later on, but to produce a little fragrance for the occasion we used to sing together (*sotto voce*, of course) the old drawing-room ditty: "I'll sing you songs of Araby and tales of wild Cashmere." Talking of songs, Daisy has an amusing story in connection with her name. There were so many Margarets in the family that it was decided to shorten it to Daisy. I shall quote what she says: "As I grew up I would rather have been called Margaret, but the other stuck. At St Andrew's University I walked up to the rostrum to be capped, when my ears were greeted by:

Daisy, Daisy, give me your answer, do,
I'm half crazy all for the love of you.

and so on to the end!

It has been a great pleasure in these, my latter days, to have got into contact with you. I shall never forget the loveliness of Royaumont, the surroundings and the seething life within its walls. There was a great sense of peace and satisfaction in it all. I have many happy moments thinking of people—the 'Robin,' Cicely Hamilton, 'Big Andy,' Sister Amour and 'Disorderly' and her sister. 'Big Andy' is the only survivor of that wonderful group. What good people they all were and how gaily they faced up to all difficulties. Then there were Mrs Berry, Miss Nicholson, 'Mammy' Courtauld, and, striding above everyone, was our great Chief, Miss Ivens. They are good to remember."

Daisy sold her old home, Grange Cottage, Dornoch, to friends she had known from their school days. She has retained two rooms in it for her own use, and the present owners, old pupils of her own, are most kind and considerate. (I was

very happy to get in touch with Daisy. She is one of my earliest memories of Royaumont, 1915.)

Dow is one of the most regular attenders at our lunch party in Edinburgh, in spite of sorrows and illness at home. Her sister was very ill during the Christmas holidays but has now been able to return to Edinburgh and they both hope to be able to travel to Montreux in the spring. Switzerland is a country they know very well, and like.

Leishman, with whom the Editor has spent, at different times, a happy week in Peebles, is well and quite settled down in the country after a long time in Glasgow. I saw her twice when in Edinburgh at Christmas. We enjoyed a good lunch together and an exchange of news.

Leng. We were very pleased to see Leng at our Reunion last year and hope she will be able to come to the 1968 one—date not fixed as I write. She is a great traveller and it is difficult sometimes finding her at home. She is off at the moment to Bermuda and I fancy her lying out on the sunny beach under a brilliant parasol. We had a game of Bridge one afternoon in her flat before she left.

Macnaughton (Mrs Crowther) is in excellent form and lives very near her family whom she is able to see quite a lot. She and I always try to forgather when I happen to be in Edinburgh. At Christmas she invited me to meet a Royaumont-ite of the name of Todd, a name I associated with the old Royaumont Matron (long since dead, I fear) but age and appearance dispelled any doubts I held at the time. We had a good many laughs when we got on to reminiscing. She was one of the orderlies who came under the flail of Sister Amour! It was interesting to discover another of the old Abbey personnel after half a century.

Middleton. From London to Norfolk was a big step for anyone who had lived most of her life in the Capital, and Middleton and her sister did just that. They are very happy in their new home. "Norfolk people have been very kind and welcoming, and it is hard to realise that five months have passed since we left London." It appears that two Canadians from Montreal who live in one of the flats of the same building, were very interested in Dr Henry's article in our 1967 News Letter. Also an Australian, in Figgis' contribution on Commonwealth affairs. Another neighbour had served with the Scottish Women's Serbian Unit (So our little News Letter is going around. Thank you, Middleton.—Ed.).

Morris (Rose) is kept busy looking after Mrs Murray, her sister, with whom she lives. It is a

busy life, for it means much more than I have said, but Morris faces it with competent equanimity.

Nicholson ("Nicky"). After a wonderfully sunny summer during which my sisters and I were very busy in our garden and greenhouses—my main job is to produce vegetables and fruit in which I have the help of a retired miner who does the heavier work—I suffered a minor accident during a few days spent in Edinburgh at the Festival. The wound I got refused to heal and eventually took me to Hexham Hospital "for surgical intervention." However, a more serious trouble was then diagnosed, and the leg became of little importance, and my fate on the following day was to "jouer aux billiards." All went well and I was out of hospital in a fortnight and now feel perfectly well again and longing for the weather to make it possible to garden.

This was the first time I had been a hospital patient since the Royaumont days, when I was for a little while in the sick room being looked after by little Sister Adams (as she was then) after Miss Ivens had taken my appendix out. I remember having to ask dear old Newton not to visit me again because she made me laugh so much—and it hurt!

Hospital routine does not seem to have changed a great deal since those days except that the patient is encouraged by cries of "UP, UP, UP," to get out of bed at a very early stage and walk about the ward. There is a change too, in the method of bed-making that provides for a sort of pleat in the top sheet which allows a patient to stretch his or her toes more easily than our patients could do, without incurring the wrath of "Sister" in case of an unexpected visit from V.I.P.'s.

I am still doing a certain amount of Red Cross work as Director of the Newcastle Division (well over the age limit). The difficulty at the moment is making good our number of V.A.D.'s lost through the unpopularity of voluntary work, amongst the young of the present day. This is going to be made worse through the disbanding of the Civil Defence and the Civil Nursing Reserve. The public has come to expect a great deal from the Red Cross, St. John's Ambulance and other such organisations, and it is difficult to give them what they want when the necessary personnel is lacking.

Large (Mrs R. V. Wilson) has moved from Eastbourne into the country which she and her husband are finding much more pleasant than living in town. She has been very busy trying to get her new home to assume a more "creamy" look. Formerly the ceilings and walls were of deep

red, blue, green and in some parts yellow! Large has done all the painting and "snowcemming" herself (congratulations! It sounds a terrific job).

Moffet and an English friend came down by car to New Galloway in the autumn of last year. Miller acted as "guide, counsellor and friend," leading them to all the beauty spots—and there are many—in this rather unknown part of Scotland. We took lunch with us every day and enjoyed it by the wayside, and returned to the hotel just in time for a quick change and dinner. The weather favoured us, and the autumn tints were at their loveliest. We had a most happy holiday together and made the best use of the time at our disposal.

Rutherford (Mrs Riordan) still lives in her old home at Matingara, Mount Danengong, Victoria, Australia. Although her family are in Melbourne she sees them quite often. In fact, she is a very busy "granny." Dow hears from her frequently. (It is wonderful that friendships made at Royaumont are still "going strong" in spite of the lapse of years).

Smeal lacks her sparkle this time. I quote: "Like the pound sterling I have been feeling devalued what with "flu" and its after effects. An arthritic knee has complicated matters. I think I shall qualify for the Old Crocks' Race into Brighton. "I hope that, some day, she will arrive by her car, which she can still drive, at the hotel next door to me. We should have some fun together. Her description of the Retreat from Villers-Cotterets will be found in another part of the News Letter. It is contained within a letter (to a friend in California), one of a large number written to her between 1914-18. It is a delicate piece of paper to handle, yellow with age and almost crumbling under one's fingers. Thank you, Smeal.

Sinclair. At the time of writing Sinclair has been in hospital having a cataract removed. I hope that, after she gets accustomed to her new lens, her sight will be greatly improved. While she was in hospital things were made more trying by burglars entering her house and, although the thieves did not find any money, I hope that nothing else valuable was taken.

Simms sends us news of Summerhayes. "I stayed a couple of nights with Summerhayes last year at their nice new home near Stroud. It was lovely to see her again. She is just the same—very busy—Infant Welfare as well as all the household duties (may we have Summerhayes address, please Simms? Simms has written us a description of a tour in Portugal which forms part of our "travelogue.").

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Torrance will miss Jean Macpherson. It was a friendship started at Royaumont and continued till the very last week before "Mac" died. Torrance and her sister used to visit Glasgow regularly every year, expressly to see Jean, who was always on the spot to meet them.

Williams ("Peter") sends the Editor a very interesting article about a visit to Granada. As has been remarked, Williams has been living in Spain for some time, returning during the summer to England to visit her family.

I will record her impressions here in the "Far and Near" pages of the News Letter. They will make a very good finish to the 1967 issue.

She writes: "In September we took a trip down to Granada. I think that no one who visits Spain should miss seeing the Alhambra and visiting Generalife gardens (if possible by moonlight) to hear the nightingales although only a few hundred feet above the Alhambra Palace. The gardens were the summer retreat of Boabdil and his court, and the cypress hedges are cut in the form of Moorish arches with frequent view-points or Miradores through which one can see the snow peaks of the Sierra Nevada on the one side and, on the other, beyond the roofs of Granada, the gipsy town of Albaicin, where, if we drive in the late afternoon, one can see the gipsies in all their finery, putting the finishing touches to their exquisitely oiled and dressed hair, ready for the evening programmes at the various night clubs. If one stops the car they will crowd round and press one to buy tickets for their various entertainments, but the hardened traveller refuses to be cheated in this way.

The drive over the mountains from Granada to Malaga is spectacular beyond any words of mine, and from there, northwards, along the coast, one passes through miles of sugar cane followed by miles of vineyards from which come the famous grapes of Almeria, most of which are exported to Great Britain."

A Holiday in Brittany and

The Story of a Necklace

By Dr Henry

Many of our members may remember that our Reunions used to take the form of a dinner at which Miss Ivens wore a necklace; it was a very old and beautiful necklace, and I was with her when it was

bought. It had a history which remains unsolved.

In the summer of 1920 Miss Ivens and I were invited to join a group of Doctors in Brittany. We found we were the only British and the only females; the others were a mixture of French, Roumanian, Spanish and Russian. We did not find them very congenial, but we were interested in the surrounding country and took long tramps over the moors behind Douarnanez. I remember a very old and tiny chapel we happened to come across; inside the door was a wheel that we could turn and so invoke the Virgin. On another occasion we found, on the outskirts of Tréboul, a tiny cottage with a plaque on the wall to denote the birth-place of Laenec, the doctor who invented the stethoscope. We got the key and went in. The small room was sparsely furnished—a chair, a few old books and a desk on which was placed the original old-fashioned stethoscope used by the inventor.

We used to sit on a bluff overlooking the harbour of Douarnanez and watch the sardine fishing fleet come in with their blue nets ballooning out behind the mast. Below us, in the cobbled street, the peasants threshed their grain with long flails.

One lovely sunny morning, the first of the Breton Festivals proclaimed itself as the bells peeled out and the church doors opened wide. To the music of the *Cantique des Marins* the beadle emerged, resplendent in plumed hat and knee breeches. He was followed by a group of young boys led by a fair-haired lad bearing aloft the boat which hung before the altar. Maidens in long white Breton veils followed with the statue of the Virgin, the married women in black bringing up the rear. We joined the procession as it chanted its way down to the sea for the Benediction. The Bay of Douarnanez, beautiful always, excelled itself for the occasion. The colour of sea and sky, the heavenly blue of the sardine nets billowing out—all lent a vividness to the beauty of the day.

A few days later, the entire village attended the Pardon of Quimper in the old Cathedral some miles inland. Following the impressive service, three generations of peasants, in Breton costumes, knelt in the streets to receive the blessing of the old Cardinal. It was a memorable experience for Bretons and visitors alike. The young people gave themselves up to joyous abandon till dusk gathered them into the station for the homeward journeys. We noticed a group of young boys had climbed on top of the overladen train, and we remarked on the danger as it left the station and moved slowly towards the coast. All the way there was laughter and exchange of pleasantries as

peasants chatted and bobbed away into the dusk.

But there was tragedy ahead. Before reaching Douarnanez there was a sickening thud followed by shouts and cries from the rear. The train came to a grinding halt. The hush that followed was foreboding. Measured steps could be heard approaching the luggage van behind us. A whisper flew from carriage to carriage: "Il est tombé. Il est gravement blessé, le pauvre. Il va mourrir." Silence and fear gripped the passengers as the train crawled the last mile. We filed out past the open van. In it lay the fair-haired boy who had led the procession for the *Benediction de la Mer* the week before. We were surprised that not one of the European doctors offered his services.

We learned there was no doctor in the village. A bystander remarked that a box of Red Cross instruments had been left with the Mother Superior of the Convent on top of the hill. It was a strange procession that followed the station hand-truck on which lay the unconscious occupant, through the streets to the Convent. Bad news travels fast. The Mother Superior was waiting at the door and led us into a room, empty, save for chair and table on which we placed our burden. Only when we finished our sad task did we become aware that the chair in the corner was occupied. All we could distinguish in the fading light was a figure with Madonna-like countenance framed in a little black shawl. There was no outward display of the emotions that rent her as she gazed on her only son. We had done what we could, with the knowledge that another procession must be led, for the last time, by the fair-haired boy.

We found out afterwards that the boy died from a fractured base of skull. There had been a tunnel under a bridge and the boy had not lowered his head.

The tragedy cast a gloom over the little town.

And now for the story of the necklace! We were due to leave in a few days' time and, one morning, walked into Douarnanez to make a few purchases. In one of the shop windows we noticed a little water-colour of the harbour. It was beautifully done and Miss Ivens bought it to hang in her study at Gambier Terrace, Liverpool. From a tray of what looked rather like "junk," I picked up a tarnished necklace. It looked like silver, the unusual design of a cross forming its centre inter-

ested me. I urged Miss Ivens to buy it to wear with her grey velvet dinner gown. She did so. She wore it at several of the Royaumont Reunions.

Some weeks after our arrival home, Miss Ivens wrote to tell me that she had had a letter from the goldsmith to whom she sent the necklace to be cleaned. They asked her for the history of this very old "gold" necklace with the cross of strange design. They gave it a high value.

I remembered that, at the time of the French Revolution, aristocrats in Paris had been known to send their children to safer parts of France along with faithful retainers. It was said that many children from Paris came to share the homes and lives of Breton peasants where their identity would be unsuspected. No doubt jewellery of some value accompanied them in lieu of payment for their safe keeping. And I could not help wondering if, somewhere, in the family, there had been a forebear who had gone to the guillotine and perhaps the old necklace had been treasured and handed down through the generations. The mother of the boy was a widow and this was her only child. Was the treasure brought out and sold to pay for his last rites? I thought that, one day, I would return to Douarnanez and investigate the circumstances, but the opportunity never came.

An Interesting Holiday in New Brunswick

By Dr Henry

In August we drove down to the coast of New Brunswick. En route we visited and renewed memories of lonely beaches on which we had spent happy summer vacations with our children.

Our mileage there and back registered 2377 miles, far too long for one driver but it was a very successful trip.

Grand Manan

We had always wanted to visit Grand Manan, a small island 15 miles long and 5 across, a rocky outcrop, aeons of years in age, lying humped up like a whale in the Bay of Fundy, off the coast of New Brunswick. It is sometimes hard to reach on account of its high tides and frequent fogs.

Its history is a long and interesting one. It is a paradise for artists, archaeologists and naturalists. Birds on migration funnel their way across to Newfoundland and to the Arctic. Evidence of the variety of these can be seen in a museum supposed to be one of the best private collections in the world. There are plants and flowers growing on

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the island not found elsewhere, dating from the pre-glacial age. On that account, a group of naturalists, headed by Dr Roger Tory Peterson, the famous bird expert, who filmed the Galapagos Islands last year, visited Grand Manan this past summer, taking photos of the rocky bird colonies, to include in a life of Audobon who had been there in 1833. I believe this will be shown on television soon.

The Island is completely unspoiled; necessities of life come from the mainland. The population is small, some 200 of British stock, mostly fishermen who have long since left their primitive way of life to live in modern homes with modern equipment, fishing with the latest model of gear. From the fishing weirs they pump their silvery harvest into boats and transfer them to canneries on the mainland. On piers above the little harbours one sees rickety sheds reflecting their colour in the water. There, some of their herring catches are filleted, smoked and packed in containers—a delicacy for cocktail parties. There are "Pounds" on the Island where 150,000 lobsters can be kept until prices rise and demand is heavy on the Boston market.

We found ourselves in a small colony of most congenial guests, mostly literary people from Boston and New York who return year after year to enjoy a peaceful summer. There are few tourists, perhaps because it is peaceful, no T.V., no radio, no telephone.

We had our separate cottages scattered along a bluff overlooking Whale Cove; these dwellings were primitive because many years before they had been discarded by the fishermen for better quarters. But they had been made most comfortable and picturesque. We occupied the "Coopers" with an enormous stone fireplace in the sitting-room in which it is presumed he used to heat his tools in his métier of barrel-making. The well-known Willa Cather had written her novels in one of the cottages.

Among the guests our favourite was an old Bostonian who had spent 47 years in France and who migrates with the birds to spend her summer there. She told me something of life in Paris and of her enjoyment of concerts in "a very old Abbey, about 39 miles from Paris; the concert hall, an old refectory with Gothic pillars and Rose windows used by the monks 700 years before."

You have guessed it. She knew our Abbaye de Royaumont, but had no knowledge of a hospital run by Scottish women for the French Army during the First World War. She is only 94, physically

and mentally active, and a dear soul. I hope we meet again.

The natives are all very friendly and seem to lack for nothing. They are well provided with places of worship to meet all tastes. For a population of 2000 there are twelve places of worship of different denominations spread along the only main road entering the Island from North to South. We chose the Anglican—fifteen miles away, and arrived just before the service started to find the church full. Our pew was empty in front. I realised half way through that I was the only female attending without a hat. In the Laurentian village we attend a tiny English church, built 16 years ago for skiers. All are dressed in colourful ski outfits and no hats. But Grand Manan turns out in its best. After the service there was a solo rendered by a very elderly man who certainly had a voice and had been accustomed to use it to some purpose as an opera star of the day—and the roof nearly blew off.

We spent our days on cliffs and long sandy beaches. The weather favoured us and we were sorry to drive our car on to the ferry boat and make our way homewards.

Nicky in the Tyrol

Oddly, I ran into a Royaumont-ite when I was holidaying in Seefeld, near Innsbruck, in June last year. It was Howard-Smith. She was staying at the same hotel as my friend and I were, and where we spent a most enjoyable fortnight. There was still a good deal of snow in the mountains. Our flight to Innsbruck was marvellous. We left London in pouring rain but soon left that behind and saw little but snow and sunshine until we landed gloriously at the airport. On the return journey we were not so fortunate as the weather was very bad and we had to go by car to Munich which made the journey several hours longer. I was very sorry for two of our fellow passengers who had hoped to end their journey by a visit to the opera. I am afraid they would arrive too late to use their opera tickets.

I was very anxious that my friend should see the Dolomites of which I have many happy memories. We waited until the end of our holiday hoping that the weather would have taken a turn for the better. On the whole it did improve but, on the day we booked for our trip, the rain began immediately we reached Italy and continued until evening. The roads were very slippery as there was a tremendous amount of repair work going on, and

our driver did extraordinarily well to get us back to Seefeld intact. I was horrified to see the condition of the roads, bridges, and even houses, as the result of the floods that had devastated Florence, Venice and the Po Valley earlier in the year.

Simms in Portugal

I had booked a tour of Syria and Jordan, but of course that was cancelled on account of the war.

Instead, I went for a coach tour in September of Northern and Central Portugal, staying three nights in Lisbon, a lovely city, two nights each in Evora, Leiria, Oporto, and the university city of Coimbra, visiting other interesting places en route. Evora is beautifully situated on a low hill in a fertile plain. It is enclosed by ancient walls and towers, has many Roman and Moorish remains and is as interesting as it is ancient.

Portugal is full of marvellous old churches, monasteries and some interesting old cities. Some are dominated by the remains of a castle on the summit of a hill. Ruins of an important Roman town are being excavated at Conimbriga, where some wonderful mosaics have been found.

One hears a lot about Henry, the Navigator, and Vasco da Gama and England being Portugal's oldest ally, but there is great resentment at our allowing India to occupy Goa. The people were most friendly and helpful. It was a change to be in a country where the British are still popular. The food was good, especially the fish!

MacGregor's Last Gathering

MacGregor had a nightmare,
And this is what she dreamed—
She saw five brand-new taxi-cabs
That through the entry streamed.
MacGregor "wraithed" upon her bed,
I think MacGregor screamed!

For in these five new taxi-cabs
Were chauffeurs more and more!
They clung and clustered on the roofs,
They struggled on the floor.
So tightly were they packed, that some
Came bursting through the door!
They'd washed their hands upon the way,
Clean uniforms they wore.

MacGregor sobbed and beat her breast—
I think MacGregor swore!

The clean new chauffeurs seized the Ford,
The Daimler they got in it—
They drove to Paris and Viarmes
And never stopped a minute,
Announcing they had come to stay.
In Overland and Delahaye
They drove and drove and drove all day,
MacGregor fainted dead away!
I've got no rhyme to end my lay.
Oh, why did I begin it

Dedicated without their permission to chauffeurs
who meet trouble half way.

By their humble servant,

CICELY HAMILTON.

Accompanying the verses I have a letter from MacGregor herself explaining them, more or less. We hope that when once her grandson comes to Edinburgh to complete his studies we shall have the great pleasure of welcoming one of our Royaumont chauffeurs. At the time we rather held them in awe. Why, I can't think.

I quote now from MacGregor herself:
"Don't I remember old C. H. and the verses! I have a copy that she sent me when she wrote them. I'd better explain, as few of the readers of the News Letter will understand the poem. It was when "They" wanted to get what we knew were friends of the Committee in Edinburgh out as chauffeurs, thinking it was the best job (which I think it was!) and, naturally, we all resented being ousted after the time we had coped with the work. We may have been wrong—but at the time were happy in our work, and we just wanted to be left as we were.

(Regarding our poetic friends, I shall remember your request to insert Geraldine MacKenzie's "If," a parody of Kipling's poem of the same name, in next year's issue. There's nothing like hoping! —Ed.)

Change of Address

Mrs R. V. WILSON,
8 Thorrock Close, Willingdon, Eastbourne.

Cro/3/37