



**DURHAM**  
AT **WAR**



## YOURS TO A CINDER

The wartime correspondence of Lieutenant Angus Leybourne  
8th Battalion Durham Light Infantry  
and Connie Kirkup of Birtley, Co. Durham  
exchanged while Angus was a prisoner of war in Germany and Switzerland  
1915-1917

### PART 2: 1916

This correspondence was very generously loaned to the Durham at War project by the Leybourne family and portrays a very British wartime romance. All rights to this material are reserved by the family.

Angus Leybourne, from Gateshead, was an officer of the 8th Battalion Durham Light Infantry, who was wounded and taken prisoner at Ypres in April 1915. He was one of the first British prisoners of war to be transferred from Germany to internment in Switzerland at the end of May 1916.

Connie Kirkup was a family friend who wrote to him throughout his captivity. Angus proposed to her by letter from Switzerland and she eventually travelled out to visit him in January 1917. Connie was the matron of the hospital hut at Birtley Munition Works in 1916.

[Durham County Record Office](#) and Durham at War volunteers have assisted with the transcription and editing so that this correspondence can be shared with a wider audience online during the First World War centenary.



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**Connie Kirkup to Angus Leybourne, 19 January 1916**

Wednesday 19 January 1916

Dear old Angus

Not that I really mean it in the literal sense, only as old pals. I saw your photo this morning and so I thought I would be specially nice to cheer you up, you look so solemn in one of them. What were you thinking about? You mustn't forget how to laugh, that is what we all look forward to hearing again so much. The other one where you are showing off your socks is better, but they are both very nice to see.

I can't remember when I wrote to you last. I got my diary to find if I had made a note of it, but think it must have been in 1915. By the way do you keep a diary? They are a horrible nuisance to keep at the time, but they are sport (well not always) at any rate, interesting, to look back at. The only trouble is, it brings to mind what a fool one has been which isn't palatable. I am one of the biggest cuckoos out, even now at my time of life. I said something the other day to a stranger that I got a jolly good talking to about at home, but to spite you for not promising to tell me the good clash (or dusk whatever that is) story that you say you have got for Phil I shall not tell you this. I shall worm it out of Phil, possibly it will be safer to ask him.

Now for news, of which there seems little. New Year's Day was very quiet, I spent it at the Royal I [Royal Infirmary, Newcastle upon Tyne] in the Accident Room, & as there was not much doing, I got off early and went for a tramp over the Fell clad in strong boots & a mack. I felt better after that. We have had an awful lot of wind this winter, at present it is blowing a gale.

I was called up for service at the Munition Works on the 12th so had to stop my work at the RI [Royal Infirmary, Newcastle upon Tyne], since then I have spent most of my time superintending the fitting up & cleaning of the Hospital Hut where we are to work until the end of the war or until they sack us. We expect to start to attend to accidents about the middle of next week poor fellows!! Next letter I'll try to remember to draw you a plan, not one to pass W Milburn.



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The youngster at Hill House, Francis by name, continues to thrive, and is looking very intelligent. I believe little Willie is very proud of his brother. Mrs Leybourne & Muriel were out yesterday to tea. I telephoned your Mother on Sunday night to say I had received a postcard from you dated December 29th. I thought it might be later news than she had had, and she seemed very pleased to hear about it. Many thanks for sending me one. I was just going out for a ride on Lassie when the post came in & read it once quickly & then re-read it again on the hill above Kibblesworth. I rode round by Urpeth Lodge and Cookie & down by Kibblesworth. It reminded me of the last time I rode some of that route, about a year since, and the Brigade were having a sham fight. I had to ride through the whole crowd, every hedge held dozens of Tommies. I met Nelson & the Colonel in the village. Have you heard of the Mentioned in despatches & the decorations for TA Bradford, Colonel Turnbull, JAS Ritson, & Willie Johnson, but no doubt someone else will have told you.

What a good looking lass Muriel is growing, I am going up to St Andrews with Mrs Leybourne in the summer half term weekend to see Muriel and the place, won't it be jolly? And as Muriel said this morning it will be much jollier if Angus is there as well. Mrs Leybourne left her muff yesterday, so I called on my way to town to leave it hence seeing your family again so soon. Good Luck. Send another postcard when you can, I do like 'em. Muriel Richardson is now Mrs Macdonald of Bloomsbury, London N[orth].

Yours sincerely

Connie

Glad you liked the photo. It makes me look a Saint which I am not. Phil continues well. Your Mother got your letter & photos this morning. Did you get the music from Elsie in our parcel, just mention in home letter.



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## Connie to Angus, 7 February 1916

Monday 7 February 1916

Leafield House

Birtley

My dear Angus

Sorry not to have written a line to you last week. Don't you think I might call my letter the "Birtley Chronicle" or some such name? We are kept very busy at the Hospital that I told you I was going to work at. I am now installed there as Matron, Matron mark you!!! We have been working since January 26 and have had a number of accidents through our hands. It is simply astounding what a number of accidents happen, a great number of them are slight cuts, burns, bruises etc. but if they are not attended to they go septic, so the men trot in with gory fingers & scratched heads, I mean faces, it is really rather amusing, but I don't discourage them. I would rather they came at first, than after a day or two's dirt had got in. There is also a serious side to the work, we had a fatal accident the other day. A Belgian, internally injured by a crush, he died about 10 minutes after he was brought to our hut, unconscious all the time, nothing could be done. It depressed us a little, but we felt it must come in the day's work sometime. I go there at 9:30 in the morning come up for an hour at lunch time, and leave at 6:00pm. In a week we are to have continual attendance, night and day. At present, the Nurses, 2, 8 altogether have volunteered, come for 1 week's duty and then have 3 weeks off, this new arrangement will mean I must get more volunteers and work the others oftener, but I don't think they will jib, they seem to like the work. It is rather fun making out what the Belgians say, and worse trying to say something to them.

I took Dad round by the Works yesterday, when we were out for our ride. (I only get time for a ride on a Sunday now). He was surprised at the magnitude of the place, I don't mean the Hospital Hut. Huge sheds are being erected, the North Eastern Railway have about 5 lines north of Birtley station now, and run their wagons etc. right up to Mitchell Street. There is a new signal cabin at the South Side of the station, and crowds of workmen all over. The huts for the Belgians are going up



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again. Around your little pit, as we call the Leybourne Hold shaft, are 9 rows of huts erected this last fortnight. Colonel T [Turnbull] is coming home on leave this week I hear, Chester [le Street] people are going to give a reception of some sort to him and TAB [Thomas Andrews Bradford], (the latter is at Ripon training men). Ernest is now at Newcastle upon Tyne, the Officers have got a house in Windsor Crescent, Lance Penman is one of his subs, do you know him? L T Penman's son. Ernest seems to get on well with him.

Colonel B [William Cuthbert Blackett] is still in command. Ernest came out with him in his Cadillac on Saturday, they had a skid in Pilgrim Street, caught the end of a traction engine, turned round going straight for a shop window, then with another skid landed round looking up the street. Mother is waiting to have a game of cards, so I must stop. Hope you keep fit. We are all well including Phil. Mother joins in kindest regards.

Yours sincerely

Constance Kirkup

### **Connie to Angus, 20 February 1916**

Hospital Hut

Birtley

Sunday 3:00pm. 20 February 1916

My dear Angus

I haven't put my full address in because of Censors. I really still live at Leafield in the sense that I sleep there, but that is about all. Sunday is my off day, but when I looked in here about 9:30 this morning to see that all was well, I found one of the staff ill, so came on duty at 2:00 this aft. I don't mind a bit really, the only difference is there is a bit noise, motor rolleys rushing backwards & forwards, men hammering at the main offices which are being built just opposite our windows and in the distance the sound of iron girders being knocked up into sheds & such like, it is marvellous the rapidity in which this place is being erected.



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I have just been counting up the number of accidents we have attended to since we opened our shop 3 weeks since. 55 and a lot of these are redressed every day or so. I hope you got the plan of the hut I quite forgot to put dimensions on, but even here I have no idea of how many feet, the only way I can even make a rough guess is to imagine how many lengths of me it would take to cover the floor. I should imagine the full length is about 45 feet by 18 feet. Colonel Turnbull is home on leave, he got so far on his way, JAS Ritson was left in charge of the Battalion, when he (the Colonel) was wired for. JAS Ritson was wounded, not very badly but bad enough, in the thigh, Motum [Lieutenant E H Motum] was knocked over 4 times with shells & had his speech knocked out of him practically & is down at the base. Phil was left OC the 8th. The Colonel came back & saw things & then returned home for leave. The 1st inst. he had dinner with Dad & EHK [Ernest Hodgson Kirkup] at Tilleys'. I didn't see him but the others did, he looks fit & happy, he says they call Phil the prize baby he is so plump. Don't get dumpy with stories you hear, we are going on fine. I had the offer of a job this morning if I get the sack here, Uncle Austin wants a chauffeur, however, I advised him to get Mary taught to drive, she ought to make a good driver.

There have [been] some soldiers arrived here to work, & an Officer with them about 40 years of age, I should imagine. We had a Corporal who was carried in with an injury to the back on Wednesday, and the Captain came to see about him, he asked Miss Kirton (d'ye ken her, quite pretty) who was on duty, if one of the Nurses would go over to attend to the Corporal who was to be conveyed to the hut. She referred him to me as Matron & he repeated his request, the Matron said it would all depend on the Medical Officer if he required us, there the matter ended until Friday afternoon when we were just finished tea. Mother & Sarah had come in & with the addition of a mug that had originally had jelly in, & the top of the milk can, we had made up 5 drinking utensils, every bite of bread & cake was finished & the table looking very untidy & empty of food. Captain \_\_\_\_ marched in, as a rule visitors say what they have come about in the waiting room but he took it for granted & marched right into the room amongst us all. I introduced him, but naturally as we only had 4 seats &



there were already 5 of us, I didn't ask him to sit down. The others misled [mizzled] off into the Ward to see something & left the door open. I am jolly sure the Captain just came to see Miss Kirton, he wandered backwards & forwards trying to see into the Ward (it has since dawned on me). And all he came to ask was to know if any of us had been to see his Corporal which he would jolly well know before he came, then when he found this question had failed, he said with a bit of hesitancy that he wanted to ask my advice. I thought it was about the accommodation of the Corporal or some such, but when he asked my advice re cramp in the calf I was nearly exploding, but managed to keep [a] straight face until he asked if one of the nurses could massage it. Then I simply had to let go, I told him to go to his Medical Officer. I believe it was all a hoax all through, I was dense at the time. I shall have to forbid pretty nurses coming in sight when Officers etc. are about.

Goodbye, I'm dry, I consider this a long chat, don't you? I'm going to ring 300 [the Leybourne's telephone number] and up tonight to ask for news and won't seal this up until I hear from your Mater.

Goodbye again

Your Sincere chum

Con.

One of William Dodds' daughters is on duty with me here, he was asking after you.

9:30pm.

Could not hear very well over phone. Mrs Leybourne is coming out one day this week. Some stuff about my photo, who said it. Please say.

**Connie to Angus, 13 March 1916**

Hospital Hut

13 March 1916

My dear Angus,

Can't say if I'll get much of a letter written to you, Miss Kirton, who by the way is on



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duty, I believe I mentioned her in my last, and a bonny girl called Miss Agar, sister-in-law of Mr Hanman, who is head of the constructional part of these works is on duty also, they are chattering away. I can just imagine how you and Phil would have made excuses to come down to tea at the Hut this week if you had been at home. We have had a girdle cake today made on the oven shelf put over the top of the fire, rolled out with the Roller towel roller. Improvisation!! I am a marvel at it.

Mrs Leybourne came out the other day to see us, Mother brought her down to the Hut, but possibly she will have told you about it, it is nearly a fortnight since. She was very great on the house at Alston that she has taken, I am going to spend a weekend with her when she gets settled in, it will be something to look forward to, glad it is a place where clothes, I mean smart ones, are unnecessary because I'm saving up until after the War and then I shall have a bust up. What what!!

We had a returned Prisoner of War to see us the other day. Ainsley, do you remember him? The only thing that is wrong with him, is that one leg is 3 inches shorter than the other. I can't think why he has been sent back. The 8th DLI have been having a hot time again I believe, but are out of it now, Phil is alright, and the others that you know, I believe they had 50 casualties in the Ranks. Did you know Lieutenant Edgar of the 9th DLI? He has been killed, he was a Barrister in Newcastle upon Tyne, a brilliant young fellow, I hardly knew him, but remember him as my luncheon partner at a Wedding of about a year ago, he was told off to make a speech, and he really seemed so upset at the thought of it, couldn't speak for thinking what he was going to say, and had to have a glass of champagne he said to buck him up, which he had refused earlier. I sympathised with him, and when I heard his speech, absolutely top hole, and heard he was a Barrister I felt such a fool.

I had a letter from Win on Saturday, I asked her to come and sing at a Soldiers' Concert here, but she is in bed with a bad cold. Poor old Win she will be feeling sorry for herself, she is not going to Otley to make munitions now as she said in her last letter, but is hoping to go to Leeds, wonder if they will allow her to sing while the machines are going.



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What a silly letter this is, but there doesn't seem to be any news. Ernest's Battalion has been ordered to the South Coast, but not gone yet. EHK [Connie's brother Ernest Hodgson Kirkup] is digging trenches on the Fell, and is going to try to get left behind. I wish he could it wouldn't be so lonely for Elsie if he could stay at home. It is hard lines on the married men & women.

I had a letter from Muriel Richardson, she is now enstalled in a home of her own, a flat, Rutland Park Mansions, Willesden Green, London. She has asked me to go and stay with her, I might realise better that she was married if I was in the house with her, but as it is, I simply cannot.

I told you in my last about a Captain Grey, stationed here, he occasionally looks in, the other day he caught me up quick, when I said I had been rubbing my parents for rheumatism, he said, "I thought you said you couldn't massage". I told him I didn't believe he ever had had cramp in his leg, and he went out chuckling. Now goodnight I'm going off home it is 6:00 pm. Hope you keep fit and the others also.

Best of good luck

Yours Con.

### **Angus to Connie, 30 March 1916**

Kriegsgefangenensendung

Gutersloh, 30.3.16

Postmark: Gutersloh 10.4.16

UK postmark: London ES APR 18 [19]16

Miss Kirkup

Leafield House

Birtley RSO

Co Durham

England



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Allemagne. Germany. Offizier-Kriegsgefangenenlager Gutersloh

I am sorry I am not able to answer all your most edifying letters with a long letter but PCs are all that I can rise to in this land of restrictions. You are evidently saving up for a big splash in dress 'apres la Guerre', but I doubt if you will get anything more becoming than your Nurse's rig out. As you say I cannot imagine that youngster Muriel Richardson with a home of her own. Remember me to Mr E & Jane. And of course best of luck to you and all at home. Hope to see you at the end of the year. Sorry this seems hardly worth sending. Please forward Ernest's postcard. Thought Eighton Lodge might be closed.

**Angus to Connie, 16 April 1916**

Kriegsgefangenensendung

Gutersloh, 16.4.16

Postmark: Gutersloh 27.5.16

Miss Kirkup

Leafield House

Birtley RSO

Co Durham

England

Allemagne. Germany. Offizier-Kriegsgefangenenlager Gutersloh

'Here we are again' awfully interested in your plan of Hill House. I have commented on your? in my letter to mother, for further information apply there. That is a splendid photo of you & the kid, I am awfully surprised at her height. Your news re Batt[alion] most surprising. Now no more of your 'saucy' ways & you let me have some of the local gossip. There are some photos in my last letter which may interest you, as[k] mother to show you them; I am getting one taken of our corner. There is very little I can say in a postcard in fact I sometimes think they are not worth sending. Was it anywhere near Leafield that the last explosion took place.

E L



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**Angus to Connie, 2 June 1916**

Internement des Prisonniers de Guerre

ROSSINIÈRE – SUISSE

Postmark: Rossiniere 2.VI.16

UK postmark: London ES JUL 10 [19]16

Miss Kirkup

Leafield House

Birtley RSO

Co Durham

England

British Prisoner of War interned in Suisse

Lt E A Leybourne

8th Durh Light Infantry

Le Grand Chalet

Rossinières

Suisse

**Angus to Connie, 9 June 1916**

HOTEL GRAND CHALET

ROSSINIÈRES

VAUD (SUISSE)

VEUVE HALDI, PROPRIÉTAIRE

9 June 1916

My Dear Connie,

Now for a letter, instead of being restricted to the usual postcard. You will "no doubt" have read in The Times of our arrival in Suisse, it certainly was a most extraordinary show.



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We only got about 12 hours' notice to leave Gütersloh & proceeded on a long two days trip right through Germany, down the Rhine & on to Constance. I had not seen the Rhine before & I certainly found it well worth seeing. However during the whole journey we had the thought on our minds of possibly being rejected at Constance, and I can assure you it was certainly a most trying time.

There were 4 officers & about 100 men who were rejected. What made it worse was the fact that we were kept over the weekend in blissful ignorance as to whether we had passed or not. I am not sufficiently eloquent to describe my feelings on reaching Suisse soil or I would. I think you with all your ready wit would have been able to have done it very well but I am of too practical a disposition. For your information I may say that I did not rush at the first or the second girl I saw & throw my arms round her neck, much as I would have liked to. And I can assure you there was ample opportunity.

Still I intend to keep you to your promise when I return. I am afraid Mother & Muriel may have some difficulty in coming out to see me. Why the German & French are able to have their friends out & we are not; I cannot understand I suppose it is a little more of our usual red-tape. However after some of these restrictions have been removed you will no doubt be wanting to have a small holiday for a month or two in Suisse.

Winter sports are very good here I am told although of course not the best. But really do you think you could get a holiday & come out to see us for a short time? If you came in the Summer you would get plenty of tennis so I do not think you would find it at all dull. I wonder if you know this district. You think it over, you could come out with the Mater at the end of this month I am sure you need a holiday & you could come out on the plea that it was necessary to have a trainee nurse out here.

Another fellow called Saunders & myself are going in for a small pony & trap to drive about the country in; we are about 3 miles away from Chateau D'Oex at a most delightful Chalet. Write soon & let me know how you all are.



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Love from  
E. Angus Leybourne.

PS

Have read this through please excuse disjointedness, but have hardly settled down yet. Think over what I said about a small holiday.

**Angus to Connie, 10 July 1916**

Copy of telegram

Handed in Rossiniere July 10 @ 4:20.

Received: 9:30am July 11 1916

From Rossiniere

28 Words

To Miss Kirkup

Leafield

Birtley, County Durham

England

Got letter cheers why not come out with mother 22nd July. Should be no difficulty friends out here with Officers,  
Leybourne

**Angus to Connie, 10 July 1916**

Le Grand Chalet

Rossinieres

10 July 1916

My Dear Con,

I hope this gets to you quicker than my last letters have been travelling. If however you have acted upon my telegram you will no doubt be here before this letter arrives.



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I have not written to mother recently as I thought this would happen with her. So she knows nothing about me asking you out. However just you say to her you are coming with her and it will be all right. By jove I am looking forward to seeing you all. It will be too good to be true. There are girls "galore" here already, but I like them from the north with something in 'em, none of your "Folkestone flappers" for me.

I am at present negotiating for a small car but don't say anything about that as in these hard times it might be thought extravagance. I thought that Muriel might learn to drive & if I cannot get leave out the district the old thing could still get some work. So there is another inducement to come, you could take out a licence and there you are. What! What!

I was awfully pleased to hear of Phil having got a Military Cross, it's splendid. Congratulate him from me when you next see him. I was also very interested & rather surprised at your story of your father reading out the account of our arrival in Suisse. It must have been most touching. I wonder if you will get out here. Your Mar and Par seem to be quite willing so that is half the battle. It just seems to rest with yourself. So be a sport and we'll meet in a fortnight's time. I of course appreciate your sentiment about Phil & realize that that is the main thing that would hold you back.

Well I must close now hoping that this scheme will be feasible. I write today as I do not think you would find it easy to get someone to come out with you later & as mother is coming on the 22nd [July] why, as I said, not come then.

Yours with love

Angus

**Angus to Connie, 4 September 1916**

GRAND CHALET

ROSSINIERES

4 September 1916



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My Dear Con,

This is by no means the first attempt at writing a letter to you so I hope that this one will actually get so far as the letter box. You will be thinking I am an awful rotter for not writing you sooner, but like you I have thought a lot lately and also heard from mother about you. I feel perhaps that that telegram was rather stupid as of course under the circumstance it would be a little awkward for you to have come out, but I don't know, these conventionalities to a prisoner of war seem a little frivolous.

You were rather funny in your last letter about breaking it gently. Well! I don't know how to do it I'm sure. The fact is I am labouring under rather difficult circumstances in writing this letter. You must realize that I would not have sent that telegram without some thought, although you do put it down to my frivolous habits. My object was to get you to come as a friend of the family as some have done here but unfortunately that did not happen. Before the war in the position I was in, not having my ticket it was necessary for me to: (what should I say, one can only express it in slang)...keep off the grass. But I don't know what you think, but I feel that this war alters things somewhat. But what I am really getting at (and you can understand my reluctance in writing as I am not sure exactly of your feelings on the subject) is this. Will you come out to Suisse as my fiancée?

I would have much preferred asking you this question in person after having gauged your feelings on the matter, but "faint heart never won fair lady" so I am making the plunge and I can only trust that you do not think me too presumptuous as regards your affections. We have known each other a fair time now and personally I am quite sure about myself, more especially after you being such a brick to me during the whole of my imprisonment. The fact is you have jolly well got to come out here. The question remains will you?

As I said before the pity is that you could not have come out free, then we could have judged each other as we now are. Personally I do not think I have changed in any way and I am quite certain in my own mind that you are the girl I wish to become



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my wife. Where my difficulty comes is to know whether you like me sufficiently well to accept my proposal. It's rather a strange letter, but it is all in dead earnest. I am sure you will understand the difficulty I am in, in putting these sentiments down on paper. Still there they are and I am now anxiously awaiting your reply. So do say you will come. I am writing to your father on this subject and I can only hope that he will look at it in the same light as I do.

So heaps of love from your affectionate friend,

E. Angus Leybourne

### **Connie to Angus, 17 September 1916**

Dear old Angus,

How am I to begin? Talk about a bolt from the blues, well your letter was a little bit of a shock, and yet somehow in the back of my mind I had kept wondering if you had meant anything by that telegram, but being "only a girl", I could not do anything about it. When I never had a line from you for so long after Mrs Leybourne arrived I began to think oh Angus doesn't care he is absolutely happy now that his "own" are out and quite right too, but I also began to think that the other people out there must be nice and fascinating too.

"What a cat Con is" you will think, still you had better know the worst about me (that is by no means the worst) you'll find it all out by degrees, and will need a rare stock of patience. Well old man if I knew more about such like letters I suppose I ought to formally thank you etc. but no one has proposed to me by letter before & you wouldn't I know if you could have done otherwise, still I do thank you & now let me try to put things down on paper.

First of all I never had the faintest notion you had any more affection for me before you left England than you had for any other girl, you were a brick to "keep off the grass" so to speak. I often have thought since how selfish I was the day you said



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goodbye. I thought only of Phil apparently, but believe me I also had a thought for you, but Phil seemed to fill my horizon just then. Then when you were taken a prisoner I started writing you because you were such a good chum and I missed you. Someday I'll tell you rather a good joke about the first letter I wrote to you (but luckily for me it was never posted) however that will keep until we meet. And just gradually I missed you more, & wished you were home again & then when your wire came, I wanted to come out, but I also felt I could not leave Dad & Mother alone, with the uncertainty of anything happening to Phil, they think so much of him & are so proud of him, I do pray he may come through the War alright for their sakes. Also how could I go to Mrs Leybourne and say I'm going out with you, she would have thought forward hussy.

You say you don't think you have changed & I don't think I have a tiny bit, only I'm so afraid you will think I have, if you are willing to risk it I am and you are absolutely the only boy I have ever felt the slightest affection for, oh bother I can't put things down on paper & Dad hasn't made up his mind what to say about my coming out to see you, but at any rate we can write one another & I'm going to amuse myself by visiting [Thomas] Cooks' [travel] office in Newcastle upon Tyne the next time I go to town & find out things. By the way Dad seems favourably inclined towards you so cheers. But you never could hurry him could you, Dear old Dad, at any rate if we are engaged I shall feel I can write any 'tommy rot' I like to you & you to me & we will grow to understand & love one another more & more so let us be.

Love to Mrs Leybourne & Muriel, I hope Mrs L has at last got a letter from me.

My love to you & a kiss

Yours as before

Con



**Angus to Connie, 24 September 1916**

GRAND CHALET

ROSSINIERES

24 September 1916

Dear Connie,

Well! Well! "you are a brick", I can quite understand you having some difficulty in replying to my letter, but I hope you realize how difficult it was for me not only to write the letter to you & your Par but also to summon up courage to actually send it off. I used to write a letter to you at night & then put it in my drawer till the morning, knowing that when you are in difficulties a good night's sleep is the very best thing in the world. However courage has been rewarded. C[onnie] it's simply great. When your letter arrived I was standing on the steps of the Chalet, having just returned from church, there was a crowd standing round including mother who had asked me to go for a walk. I quietly slipped away to the veranda on the tennis court hoping to read it in peace but no sooner had I moved than there was a howl for me to come back. There is no peace for the wicked.

That is certainly the most exciting letter it has been my lot to receive. I did not know quite which way the wind was blowing until I got well into the letter, but it's all right & I suppose we are what is called "engaged" now, ie if your Dad agrees. I wonder when he will be writing. C! These are stirring times.

Now what about this [Thomas] "Cook's" business, mind you let me know immediately you fix anything up, you ought to have absolutely no difficulty in getting out. You are rather humorous about the telegram & you being only a girl & therefore could do nothing about it. That's always the way the girls sit tight & say they do nothing when all the time they are running the whole show. I feel I have such a lot to say but somehow it will not come. However for the present the main thing is that you have not said No & that there is every possibility of your Father saying Yes. All throughout my time in Germany (I hope the censor can stick out a fifth page) & the latter months here I have felt that this is a step I should take, but I will tell you all about that when



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you come out in October. In your next letter let me hear some of your real "tommy rot".

I will write again soon, short & often are more likely to get through. Now mind; two things, get your Dad to write me soon & you get that Cook's business fixed up right away. Remember me to your Mar & Par, with heaps of love from your old friend  
Angus

### **Angus to Connie, 4 October 1916**

Censor

ENGAGED

(Absolutely necessary to pass all)

Grand Chalet

Rossinieres

4th October 1916

Dear Connie

Well your Dad has written to me an exceedingly nice letter, I cannot tell you what pleasure it gave mother and I to read it; you of course know the gist of its contents. Really I cannot tell you how all this has bucked me up and given me quite a new object in life so you see perhaps to that extent I have changed in my views. Since I came to Suisse I have met a host of people and done a host of things but all along I have had in the back of my mind this idea. I do not know whether I dare have risked it had not mother put a certain amount of confidence into me when she came out about the subject, and so I would have waited until the end of the war. I have got your letter in which you recount your experiences at Cook's, Jove! I would have given the world to have seen it.

But there is one serious part about it and that is about the "3 weeks leave" which I may say at the beginning is ridiculous. Look here! If you make sufficient noise you can get most things, that of course particularly applies to Deutschland where you can get anything by shouting; but it also applies to a lesser extent to other places. So



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what you have to do is to fairly make things “hum” until you get out for Xmas and winter sports at the very least. Supposing it took 3 weeks from now before you got everything ready you would be out here by the beginning of November, not a very fine month I believe but that would not matter. I will try & find out if there is anyone coming out here for you to travel with but the matter of passports I am sure is entirely a question of getting the hold of the right people. A bit of influence at the W[ar] O[ffice] is far better than dozens of Cook’s pamphlets.

I have got a letter from Ernest and Elsie who write exceedingly nicely. It is awfully nice to find both families pleased about a thing like this. Mother is delighted. I think you will find the life out here very interesting, men who have lived in India say that it is exactly like an Indian Station with its little circle of English people with all their peculiarities. Time and space limit I think has been reached. I am writing to your father & mother soon. Tomorrow I go back to Lausanne for the dentist; going to be “bluming-well” ruined there too. I suppose you are now being talked about all over.

Well! keep smiling and don’t blush too much, I know you have reason to when you think who you are engaged to. It will knock Chateau D’Oex flat on their backs when I tell them, so you can expect to be a bit of a curiosity when you arrive here.

There is an extraordinary rumour going round that there is a possibility of us getting 10 days leave home, whether it is possible or not or whether it will ever come true I cannot imagine but perhaps in 6 months’ time I might be able to get leave to go home with you for 10 days; C’ it’s all too good to be true. “Sufficient unto the day” so hurry up and come out, write soon, be good, “if you can’t be good be careful”, feel I could write a lot more now that the “fluence” is working. Always have difficulty in starting a letter. Yours to a cinder.

With heaps of love I am yours ever,

Angus



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## Connie to Angus, 8 October 1916

Sunday October 8<sup>th</sup> 1916

My dearest Lad

Never started a letter like that before in my life. I positively blush when I think of the censor reading it. I hope he has been in love, it would be interesting to know. What an exciting week, stirring times n'est-ce-pas? First of all, I mean last of all really & most importantest of all, your first letter arrived, I mean the first one to really count after the all important one. It came this morning. E, F & Mary had driven down to see us & we were dodging about on the gravel in front of the house. I was taking a snapshot of them. I had just given Mary a wheel barrow for her birthday gift, it was rather late but I haven't been able to buy a nice big one until yesterday. Ryan (to continue) came up the drive with his postbag. I tried not to look keen and when Dad threw one from a girl, I didn't bother but suddenly a yell rent the air "Here it is", by Jingos didn't I sprint across the drive to get it, & then amidst "Oh we'll excuse you" etc. I disappeared into the house and up to my room to read it. Whoever would have thought I would have grown so keen on getting a letter? By now you will have got Dad's, he wrote it from BC & he let me read it before it went, it was a nice letter wasn't it? As I told you before he thinks a jolly lot of you, more than any boys he knows, it is rather awkward being thought so much of.

That reminds me I had a telegram from Helen, what a rambler I am, first of all, the excitement started on Tuesday night when Mrs Leybourne's wire arrived. Angus old man, I cannot tell you how grateful I was for that wire, I wondered time after time how she liked the idea of you being engaged, & what a relief when she wired, it was more than kind of her. Then Helen's wire arrived the next night & such a nice letter from her the following day, she is a brick to write as she does. Then I had a letter from Mrs Jowsey, I will answer that today, I would like her to come out to see us to Birtley, I wonder if she will come to the Hut to tea as I am on duty all this week.

Sunday duty has stopped from today, a jolly good thing. On Friday I received the congrats of the Officers at the Munitions Works, they are a crew! all married but one,



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& he is getting on, but such a good little sort, he teased my life out, but will tell you all about them all when we meet.

E[rnest] is going to write the Permit Office etc. and try to fire things up for me to get out, but I cannot come before November or December, there is such a lot to fire up & the shooting season coming on. I cannot leave Mother with 2 new maids to send out shoot lunches, I always do it all. In fact I sometimes I wonder if I can get out at all (that is when I get dumpy) but I'm not at present. I'm coming at Xmas or before.

Today I am sporting a ring Dad had given on his 21st & which he had made up for Mother, he likes me to wear it as it belonged to both of them. Don't worry about a ring, I'll get one when I come out & we can choose it together.

Goodbye old man, do write often, I long for your letters. Give my love to Mrs Leybourne & Muriel and heaps for yourself.

Always your loving Connie

So Muriel has put her hair up! More responsibility for you!

### **Angus to Connie, 13 October 1916**

BRITISH OFFICERS CLUB

CHATEAU-D'OEX

October 13 1916

Dear Connie,

Just a few lines while I await the 11.3 to Montreux. I am going down to cheer up a poor devil who has fallen madly in love with a girl up here; his people came out the other day and have absolutely squashed it on the grounds of health. Rather an awkward business but I suppose it is the least one can do.



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Now what I want to say particularly is that since I wrote your Dad I have heard of a suitable person to conduct you here. It is a certain Mrs Marshall and her daughter who have gone home to make all arrangements about dress etc. She is going to get married to a youth here by name Lieutenant Goode of the Flying Corps. They are coming out in about 3 weeks; you will be rather an interesting pair. Now you can take it from me that it is just what you have been looking for she is quite all right; bit of a gossip, but I think you could put up with her quite all right for the journey out.

The address is:

Mrs Marshall

c/o Ninton Goode

6 Netherhall Gardens

Hampstead

London

so you communicate with her as soon as you can & let me know what is happening.

Off to the train.

Heaps of love yours ever,

E. Angus Leybourne

### **Angus to Connie, 18 October 1916**

GRAND CHALET

Rossinieres

October 18 1916

My Dear Connie,

Here we are again; I have not much time for a long letter but mainly wish to give you some information re passports. I hear that the proper man to write to is

Hume-Williams

British Section Red Cross

83 Pell Mell

London



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A certain Lieutenant O'Grady of the 8th Winnipeg Rifles gave me his name and said that all the business had been put into his hands. It may or may not be true, however there is no harm in writing to him saying that you are a poor lonely wife! Turn your eyes heavenward and put on a pathetic look and I guarantee he will not refuse you. It's the same all the world over a man is always overcome when in such a predicament or when confronted by a flood of tears, you be "saucy" to them & keep on being "saucy" until you get what you want.

But really Con, I am looking forward awfully to you coming out & I am on tenter-hooks lest that d – d Permit Office make a fuss. O! you will enjoy it out here; it is of course quite in the country, but I assure you, for any of us who are fond of country life with a little society if you want it (a little goes a long way) this is an ideal place. Now things are very quiet but winter should be fine. A fine country and a fine girl, what more could one want.

Your apologies for your cooking were hardly warranted, I have had some excellent meals at Leafield which we supposed to be attributed to your skill. Still when a man takes unto himself a wife some risks are necessary, although I pride myself that in this case I have reduced them to a minimum. Of course it works the other way round and I am afraid you will find a much greater number of discrepancies in my case. Still! I am moderately cheerful in the morning, keep my bedroom fairly tidy, don't snore and bath quite frequently so that is not a bad recommendation for a start. Well I think that is all this time. I really cannot start describing this place you will be out soon & will see how we "carry on" here and I will endeavour, with your help, to make it one of the happiest holidays you have spent.

Heaps of love my dear

I am yours ever

E. Angus Leybourne



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**Angus to Connie, 27 October 1916**

Grand Hotel de la Paix

Lausanne

Suisse

October 27 1916

My Dearest Connie,

Now why do you think I do not want you out, I am doing my very best at this end to get you here. Now don't you get downhearted because I am certain it can be arranged if we get hold of the right authorities. I have as you will see, just got your letter in which you say you are feeling so downhearted. I hear that there is someone at Berne at the Legation worth writing to so I will get his address tomorrow & put the case pretty strongly to him. Have you written to Hume-Williams yet? Now just you keep your 'pecker up' & you will be out with Mrs Coulson in November. I am quite confident that if your father is willing for you to come out & he wishes you to, he will be able to work it for you. I do not know what else I can do at this end except get a written recommendation from Colonel Earl who moves in pretty influential circles; friend of the King etc., it might do some good. Now do not let me see you get downhearted about not getting out because it is all "rot", heaps of people have got out without being blood relations at all.

I was interested today in seeing the announcement in The Times, it looks rather "swish" I think, especially coming under the heading of "Court News".

I am just down here for two days visiting the dentist as usual, some bill I'm afraid. A few months out here will do you all the good in the world so hurry-up. I must really hop off to the dentist now.

Dining with Alexander & Saunders tonight, will have to exercise a restraining influence if possible. So goodbye for the present, be good, if you can't be good be careful. Remember me to all. Yours to a cinder.

With heaps of love,

I am yours very lovingly



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E. Angus Leybourne

PS

Please excuse the paper it looks like BS Company Invoice paper. Wish it was.  
Then some possibility of being at home.

**Angus to Connie, 28 October 1916**

Grand Hotel de la Paix

Lausanne

(Suisse)

October 28 1916

My Dear Connie

Still here. I have a few spare moments before I catch the train home ie if Rossiniere can be regarded as home and "upon my word" it is almost getting like that; we have our private sitting room which makes things much more comfortable. When I was at the dentists yesterday I fell asleep in the chair, I do not know whether it was a better advertisement for the dentist or the hotel at which I lunched; he was awfully tickled and most sorry to have to waken me up.

I am constantly meeting peculiar people down here. I suppose they all have histories which one generally gets to know, whether it is the truth or not I know not, but they are rather amusing. Still I can tell you later of these meetings when you come out.

I am going to write to your father about the matter of my exam which by all the rules I should have passed by now. I am anxious to know as to whether, if I studied for 6 to 8 months here, I could pass my ticket out here, there are plenty of competent authorities out here at Lausanne, capable of conducting an exam on proper lines.



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It is simply hopeless trying to study here with such a vague thing in view as the end of the war, however it's got to be done somehow.

I wonder how things are going on at home now. I would like to look into Leafield for a few minutes and see you sitting in the drawing room embedded in cushions with the dog making nasty noises by the fire or on your lap. I have not got very much to talk about at present so please excuse the shortness of the letter. I suppose you will have quite a business getting out of all your philanthropic affairs which you are embroiled in. Never mind, they will appreciate you all the more when you return. But do write soon and say that you have fixed things up to come out. Give my remembrances to the family.

I remain yours very lovingly

E. Angus Leybourne

### **Angus to Connie, 9 November 1916**

Grand Chalet

Rossinieres

9/11/16

My Dear Connie,

Just got a budget of letters, the first for about a fortnight. Why? Goodness knows, there must have been some interruption in the channel. However two were from you, one depressed me and the other elevated me. I see now you are placing some hope in what Hume-Williams says. I am going to write a "snorter" of a letter to the Legation here ie to Sir Horace Rumbold, he was up here having a look at us the other day and I had a word with him although not on the subject of getting you out. He used to be in the Foreign Office but now has come in place of Grant-Duff who was former British Minister here.

But to think that fiancées have been coming out up to now with no difficulty and when I get engaged with the idea of having you out, they refuse you, the position is



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absolutely untenable. So keep your heart up, I am confident that you will be able to get out. We have not done anything at present about horses but when you come out we can soon have that fixed up. The stable is here, but of course the horse flesh in this country is anything but good. I hope the winter is good, as I am looking forward to driving into Chateau D'Oex with you and the sleigh. I was awfully amused about you getting all those catalogues of various things suitable for Married A/c You never told me what your present from Lady Harmsworth was, can it not be put down on paper.

O! before I forget; if the worst comes to the worst, come out as a VAD nurse and bring some wives out with you and stay 6 months, the same as Captain Hill's sister is doing. I am also told that some of the men's fiancées are coming out, if so why not you? Got to go up to Chateau D'Oex now will write you again soon.

Heaps of Love,

Yours to a Cinder,

E. Angus Leybourne

P.S. Got a very nice letter from Phil and your Mar. Please thank her, will write to Phil.

### **Connie to Angus, 10 November 1916**

Leaffield House

Birtley

Co Durham

November 10 1916

Dear old Angus,

It was jolly nice getting a second letter from you so soon, especially when I wasn't expecting it, of course I always eye the postbag with a hopeful air nowadays. I never heard anything so strange in my life as the fact of you going to sleep in a dentist's chair, sure you hadn't gas? Or what did you have for lunch? Whoever are



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Alexander and Saunders with whom you were going to lunch? Was it yourself or them that the restraining influence was to be for, give them my kind regards, I hope to meet them some day, if not before, well après la guerre

Nothing startling happening here at present, I am writing this in the same place as the last letter I wrote to you, no I forgot, the last was from Fenwicks; this is by my bedroom fire, it is jolly cosy. Punch reclines at my feet, not making nasty noises, please apologise in your next, for making nasty remarks about the lovely little pet. Also remember times have changed since you went away. I no longer recline in the drawing room (like the old Sunday afternoons, do you remember one when Uncle Austin rode round to the side window?) I sit bolt upright on a polished slippery wood chair frequently carbolised, I mean the chair, at the hut. I have been on duty all the week, I seem to be running a Hostel, Canteen, and Hospital combined at present. Tonight before I left, I prepared 3 beds with linen etc. ready for the three Officers, Gardner, Tanner, & Bingham of whom I have told you. They are taking up night quarters at our hut when at the works at night, but I'll tell you all about them when we meet. I wonder when it will be. You will have got my letter telling what Hume-Williams says about bringing the matter before the War Office, nothing has yet been heard of it, I'm still hoping. Meanwhile I'm trying to concoct a pathetic letter to the Military Permit Office, saying I'm booked at the Munition Works, but badly need a holiday, will it work I wonder.

What is this about Mrs Coulson coming out? Is Willie Coulson in Switzerland now. How nice having a sitting room of your own, it will make it more homey. You will be able to recline amidst cushions & snore to your heart's content. I wish I was there also, I do have to stand some chaff. Time I stopped talking about nothing, I'm really rather tired, had to push my bike tonight, flat tyre!

Good night. Dad & Mother just looked in on their way to bed with various papers and various remarks, Dad's being "wonder what she says". I mentioned about exam but he thinks there is not much likelihood. Why not write the Home Office or Colliery Managers Association?



Yours with heaps of love

Connie

**Angus to Connie, 14 November 1916**

GRAND CHALET

Rossinières

14/11/16

My Dear Connie,

I have just today seen Colonel Earl whom I wrote to a few days ago stating the whole case; he was awfully nice and said that he would forward my letter on to Bern and also write home to the proper authorities. He is a man with considerable influence, one of those men who are personal friends of the King. He tells me that one of the fiancées of the men is now at Chateau D'Oex , so you see the ridiculousness of the situation. I certainly think that things ought to be in order for you coming out very soon now.

I am very anxious to know how you are getting on at that end as regards getting out as I have not heard from you for about 10 days. What's happening? Is it the post? Do write soon and let me know what you are doing. I don't think I ever mentioned anything about a ring; as you say you had far better choose it yourself when you come out as I would hate you having to wear something which you were not absolutely satisfied with. I find it difficult to talk about anything here or at home until we have this coming out business settled; as that is the main thing that is absorbing my attention at present. However the main thing is to "keep-smiling" and hope for the best.

I have spent the most of today digging hard as we are endeavouring to make a good skating rink for the winter. We have got some of the men to work at it so I hope to get the job finished before the frost comes. Re horses, they are a little difficult to get in this country but we can get two of sorts I think, so come prepared for anything.



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Have just seen Mrs. Henderson in the train but have no opportunity of speaking to her, very likely see her tomorrow and am of course anxious for any news.

Suppose you are still slaving hard at the Hut. Well it's 12pm so must stop. Be good, if you can't be good be careful. Write soon and give me good news. There's a sweet!! Yours to a cinder.

I am yours very lovingly

E. Angus Leybourne.

**Angus to Connie, 29 November 1916**

British Officers Club

Chateau D'Oex

29/11/16

Dear Connie,

Just a word. I have been up to Chateau D'Oex looking after my book-binder's shop and also the library and have not been able to get back to Rossinières so had to lunch here. I am just busy at present trying to get money out of Bern to run my shop, but as usual it is like getting blood out of a stone and I am d – d if I will take on the responsibility of a few thousand francs especially when I have recently taken upon myself such grave responsibilities in the shape of a young and charming fiancée.

Well, what about this coming out business. You really have got a passport now have you, it's too good to be true. I am rather interested to know if a letter from Bern or from Colonel Earl has had any influence on this matter. If I can find the scrap of paper I wrote on I will send you the copy of what I got Earl (the Commanding Officer here) to forward to Bern, which I heard had actually been forwarded to London.

Of course I quite agree with what you say about Xmas, I am not so unreasonable (much as I loves yer!) to bring you out before Xmas or ask you to come out before that time when Phil is still in the thick of it. You might have no difficulty in finding



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someone to come out with, very likely some young flighty thing who is married and it will end by you looking after her. However, being married gives one endless license ie the girls, so, I will have to watch you when that happy day arrives "n'est-ce-pas".

I have been down to Lausanne again with the Kid [his sister Muriel] for the dentist, it was for her this time and she has to go again but mother can take her next time. I'm absolutely "brony-stoke". I wonder if there is anything I want you to do or say before you come out. Well one thing you can do and do properly, go to Baron's in Newcastle and get some photos of yourself taken, they have to be just "comme sa" so you know. Don't dare to turn up here without a really good one. If you have to go back in 3 months I want a very nice one to keep. Of course that one you sent me in Germany is exceedingly nice but I want one now of you in "civvies". How I would like to have a look into Leafield as of old but I am afraid that is a long way off yet. However we have a happy time ahead of us in January, "God willing" so cheerio. I have nothing very new to tell you. You ought to get skating when you are out so bring your skates, you can borrow skis here.

Well be good "ma petite". Heaps of love to you and remember me to all at Leafield.  
I am yours ever  
E. Angus Leybourne

