



Paul Middleton

The

LAST

BATTLE

LETTERS

May 1916 to Dec 1917

written by

JOHN SEYMOUR LINDSAY

DCM

**THE LAST BATTLE - LETTERS
MAY 1916 TO DEC 1917**

**Edited and Published by
Paul Middleton**

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FACTS ABOUT THIS BOOK

**This copy of The Last Battle - Letters May 1916 to Dec 1917
contains 62 letters**



FOREWORD

John Seymour Lindsay DCM (JSL) left a fine record for us to read. He wrote hundreds of letters to Mildred his fiancée then wife, and Frank his brother, describing his experiences and feelings, sometimes candidly but more often hiding the reality. I have shown every letter with a full transcription.

This Fifth Volume of Letters takes us from the end of May 1916 to December 1917, from Bienvilliers to the presentation of JSL's DCM and Commission in the field, the hell of the Battle of Gommecourt, hospitalisation, injury at Combles and final recuperation at Osborne House on the Isle of Wight.

The letters passed through the military Censor so it takes us some time to decipher where he actually was, but in hindsight and with some important clues it is possible to trace his career. He experienced devastating losses of his friends, he showed great bravery and privation, but above all what shines through is his enduring love of art. Maybe this saved his sanity. Among the platitudes of comments on the weather and his physical state, his letters continually refer to his sketching of colleagues, the trenches and the nearby villages. He obviously was well respected by all ranks in his Battalion – probably because of his age (in August 1914 he was 32) and his eccentricity.

Read his entry in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, which can be found at the end of this book. Here you will be convinced that he was a true hero and polymath.

Paul Middleton 2013

Chronology

FIRST WORLD WAR

Sept 1914 Private No.1006 5th London Rifle Brigade 2nd Battalion

16 Dec 1914 Served in France Theatre of War

Jan 1915 to Jul 16 1915 1st Battalion

12 Mar 1915 No.3 General Hospital, Le Treport.

12 Mar 1915 Transferred to Convalescent Depot

May 1915 Second Battle of Ypres

26 May 1915 Transferred to Base Depot Rouen

16 Jun 1915 Licence granted and married

Mildred Ethel Williams (died 1948)

at Holy Cross, St Pancras, London

Aug to Nov 1915 Cassel, Caestre and Poperinghe

11 Mar 1916 DCM (Distinguished Conduct Medal)

awarded to L/Cpl John Seymour Lindsay

for action on 3 May 1915

July 1916 Battle of Gommecourt

19 Jul 1916 Sgt gazetted with direct commission as

2nd Lieut at Bienvillers

Sept 1916 wounded and invalided home and then served

with 3rd Battalion LRB

8 Oct 1916 2nd Lieut wounded

23 Apr 1917 1st London Reserve Brigade, including LRB,

moved to Aisne Barracks at Blackdown

19 Jan 1918 Lieutenant

9 May 1919 Received Great War Invalided Certificate

Chapter 1

Letters 1 May 1916 - 29 June 1916

Bienvilliers

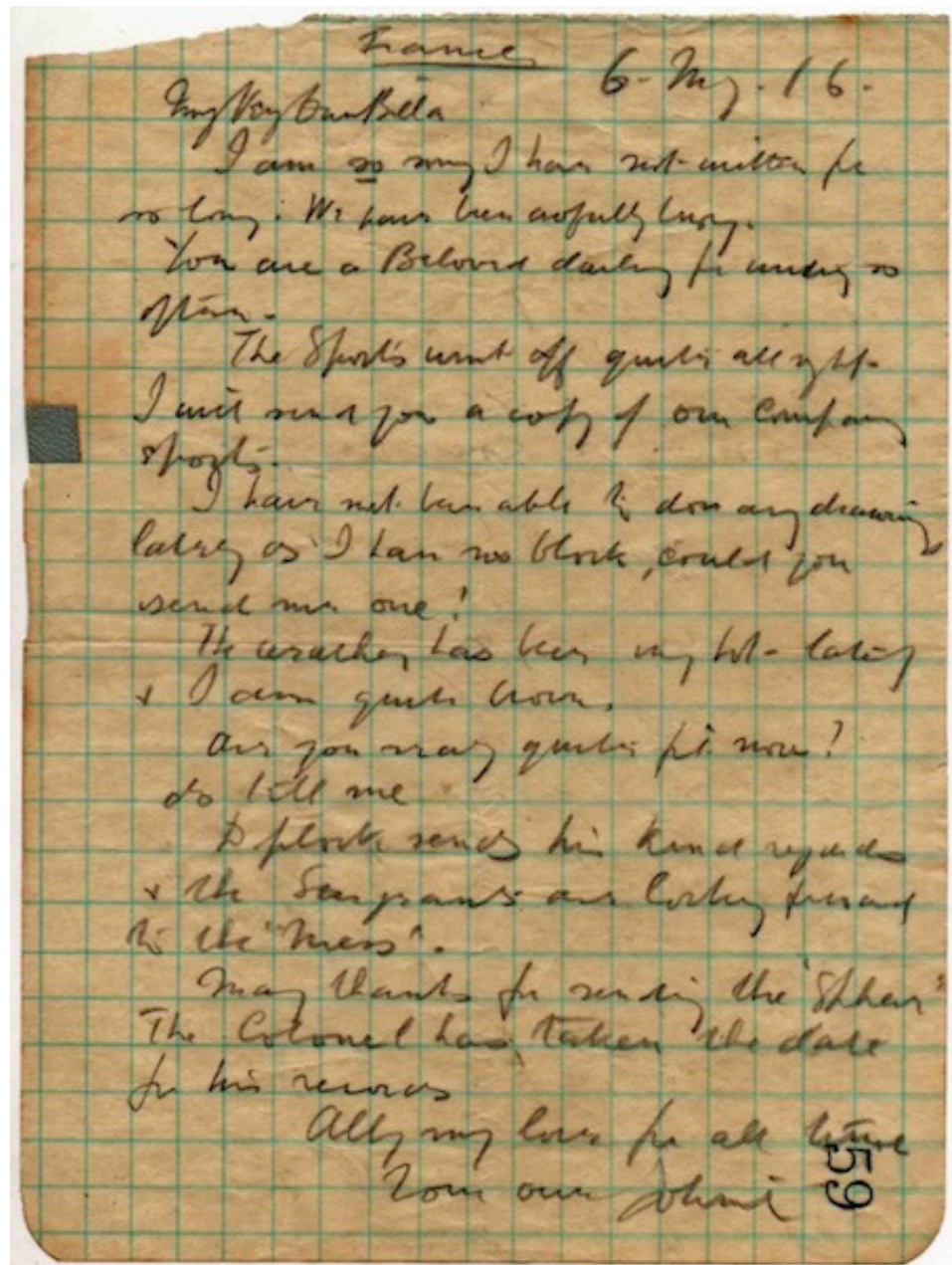
In May, JSL seems to have been close to his Colonel (Lt Col AS Bates DSO) because of his decoration and his obvious drawing skills.

On the 10 May *I am just off to make a drawing for the Colonel ... Sgt Diplock is now our Company Sgt Major ... I saw the Colonel today my drawing (landscape) was very satisfactory and has given me yet another feather for your cap. The General was very pleased.* Then more lightheartedly *Our Concert at our Company Sports was a great success. It was held in the midst of a wood with wild flowers in the thousand. The stage was made of ration boxes and an old barn door with blankets hung at the back and sides. I did not do anything but conducted my glee party.*

The 16 May was JSL's birthday *'Sitting up in bed 10.30 just after our Bat Concert. Great success. So was your cake – it was in the Sergeant's Mess and was much enjoyed. I will write again tomorrow darling but I had to write to you on my 35th.'*

On 19 May JSL again asks *'Can you get the enclosed paper filled up and returned to me with my birth certificate as soon as poss. First Nutter Barker Esq ... via Mr Hollis then Gilbert, please tell him to buck up ... I can do nothing till I get the papers again. Johna was awfully decent also the other officers. More drawings for the Gen(eral) today.'*

On 23 May a touching message to Mildred *'I will send you a few trench flowers in a day or two.'* At last on 30 May a positive *'Thanks so much for sending on the papers and getting my birth certificate. I did not manage to get the flowers as I had such a rush.'*



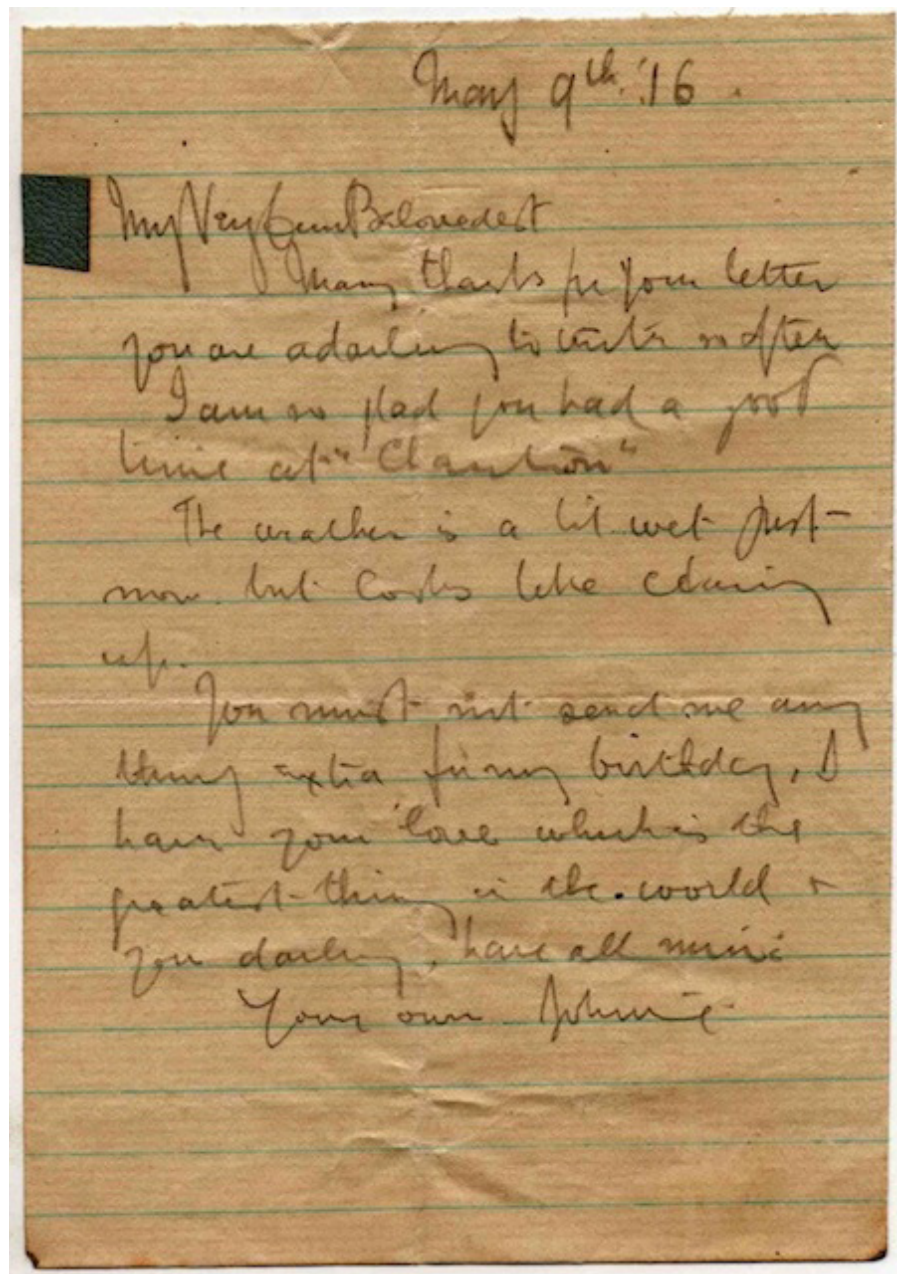
6 May 1916

France

My Very Own Billa

I am so sorry I have not written for so long. We have been awfully busy. You are a Beloved darling for writing so often. The Sports went off quite all right I will send you a copy of our Company sports. I have not been able to do any drawing lately as I have no block, could you send me one! The weather has been very hot lately and I am quite brown. Are you really quite fit now? do tell me. Diplock sends his kind regards and the Sergeants are looking forward to the "Mess". Many thanks for sending the "Sphere". The Colonel has taken the date for his records. All my love for all time.

Your own Johnnie

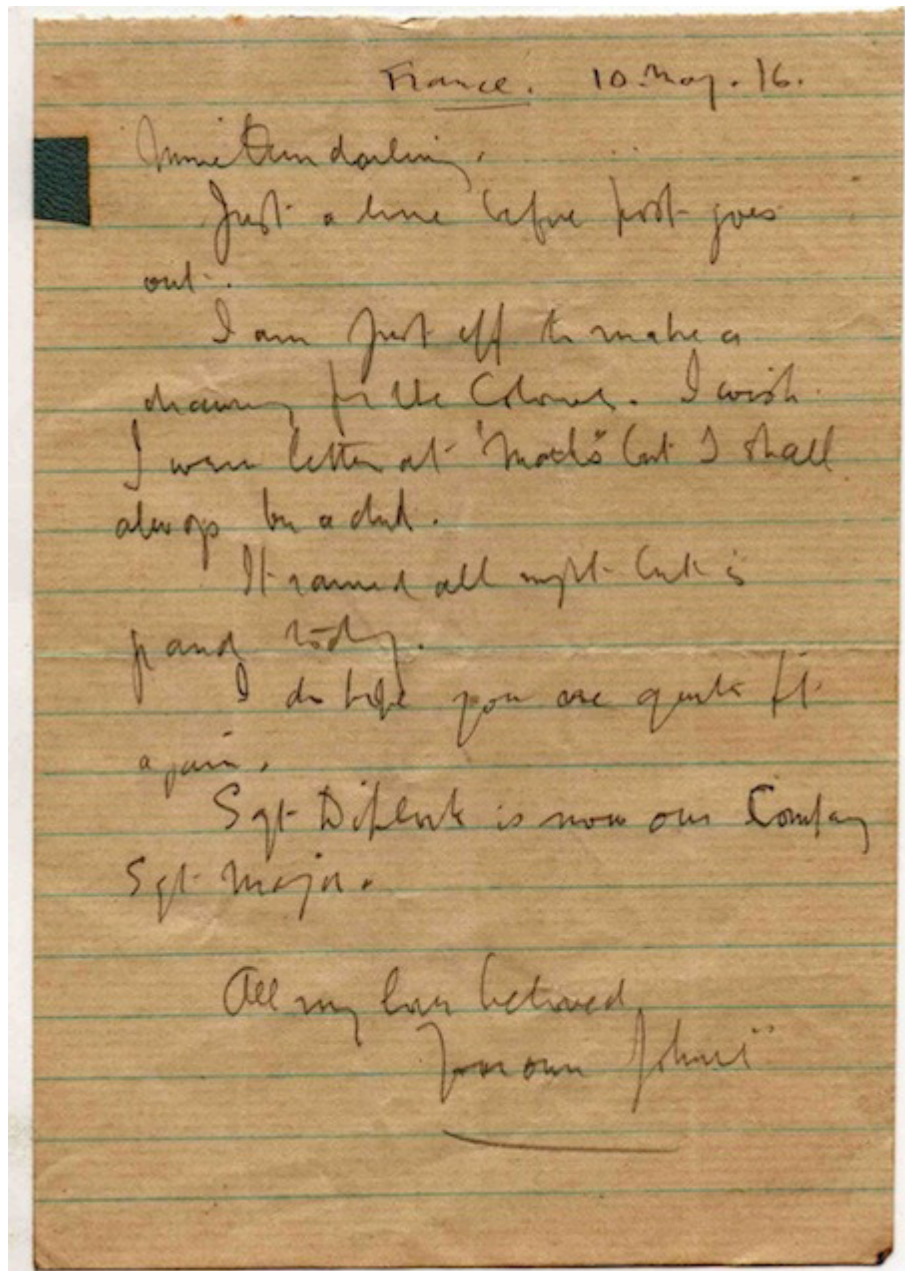


9 May 1916

My Very Own Belovedest

Many thanks for your letter you are a darling to write so often I am so glad you had a good time at "Churston". The weather is a bit wet just now but Corps like cleaning up. You must not send me any thing extra for my birthday, I have your love which is the greatest thing in the world and you darling, have all mine.

Your own Johnnie



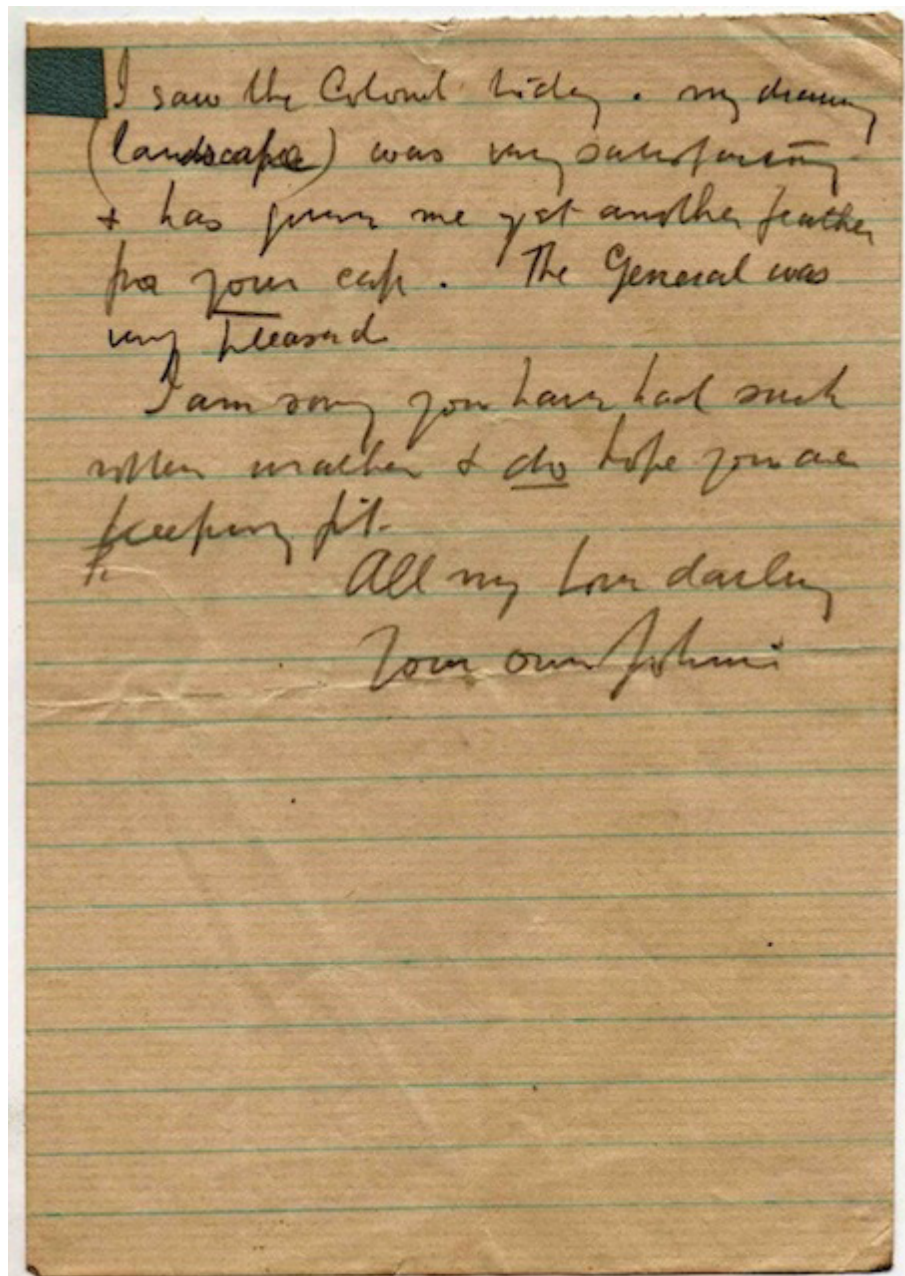
10 May 1916

France

Mine Own darling

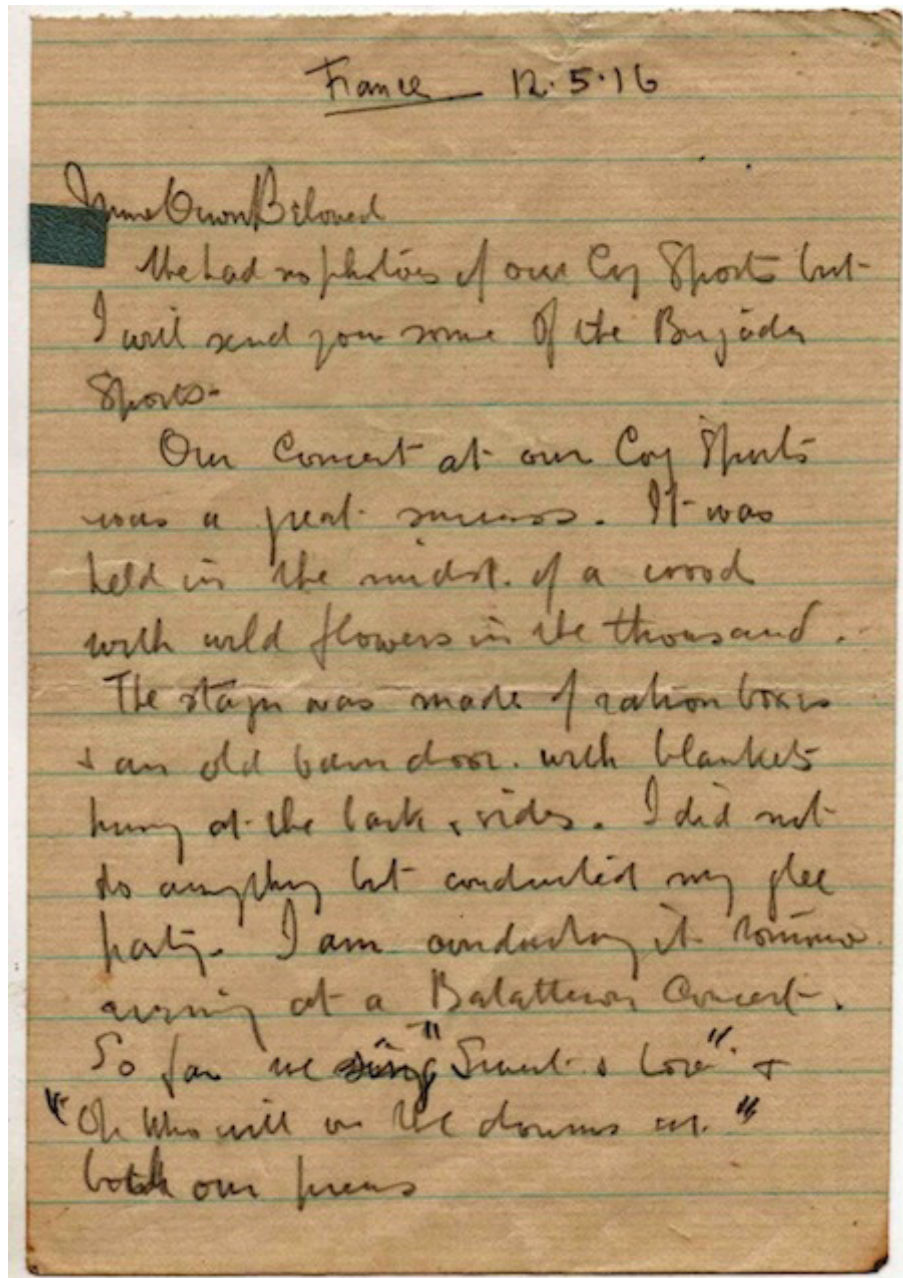
Just a line before post goes out. I am just off to make a drawing for the Colonel (?AS Bates). I wish I were better at "Maths" but I shall always be a dud. It rained all night but is grand today. I do hope you are quite fit again. Sgt Diplock is now our Company Sgt Major. All my love beloved.

Your own Johnnie



I saw the Colonel today my drawing (landscape) was very satisfactory and has given me yet another feather for your cap. The General was very pleased. I am sorry you have had such rotten weather and do hope you are keeping fit. All my love darling.

Your own Johnnie

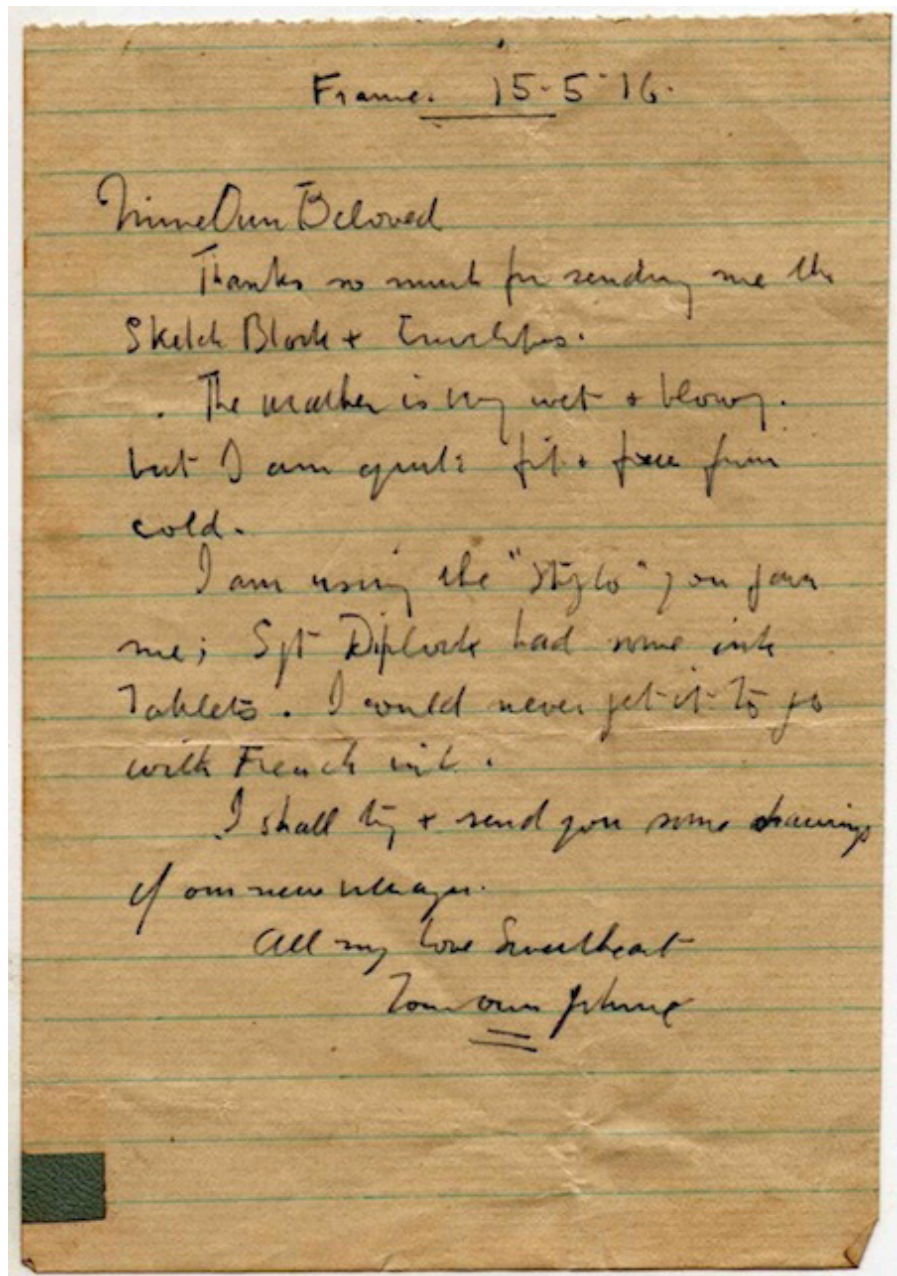


12 May 1916

France

Mine Own Beloved

We had no photos of our Coy Sports but I will send you some of the Brigade Sports. Our Concert at our Coy Sports was a great success. It was held in the midst of a wood with wild flowers in the thousand. The stage was made of ration boxes and an old barn door with blankets hung at the back and sides. I did not do anything but conducted my glee party. I am conducting it tomorrow morning at a Battalion Concert. So far we sung "Sweet and Love" and "Oh who will on the drums (?)" both our pieces.



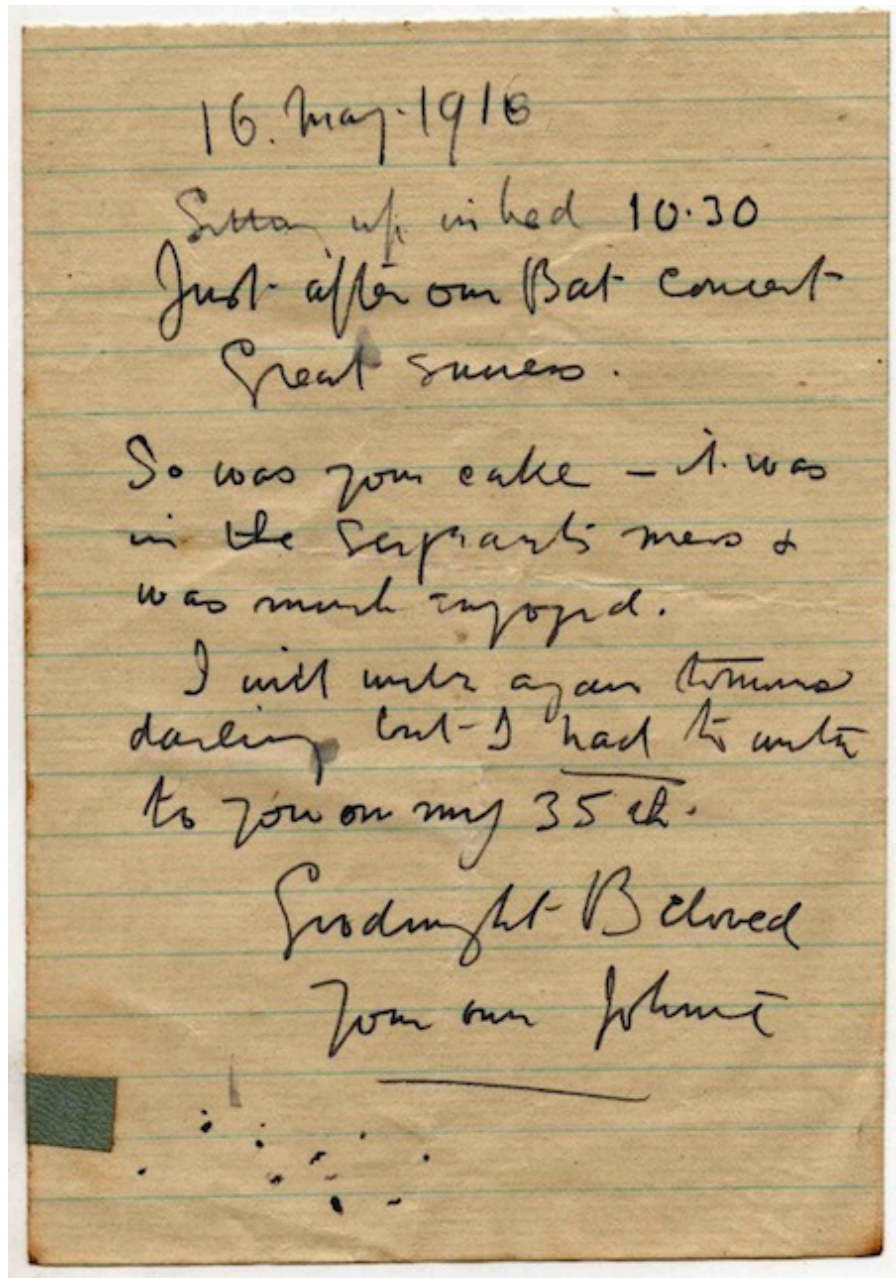
15 May 1916

France

Mine Own Beloved

Thanks so much for sending me the Sketch Block and Envelopes. The weather is very wet and blowy but I am quite fit and free from cold. I am using the "Stylo" you gave me; Sgt Diplock had some ink tablets. I could never get it to go with French ink. I shall try and send you some drawings of our new village. All my love Sweetheart.

Your own Johnnie



16 May 1916

Sitting up in bed 10.30 Just after our Bat Concert. Great success. So was your cake – it was in the Sergeants Mess and was much enjoyed. I will write again tomorrow darling but I had to write to you on my 35th.

Goodnight Beloved.

Your own Johnnie

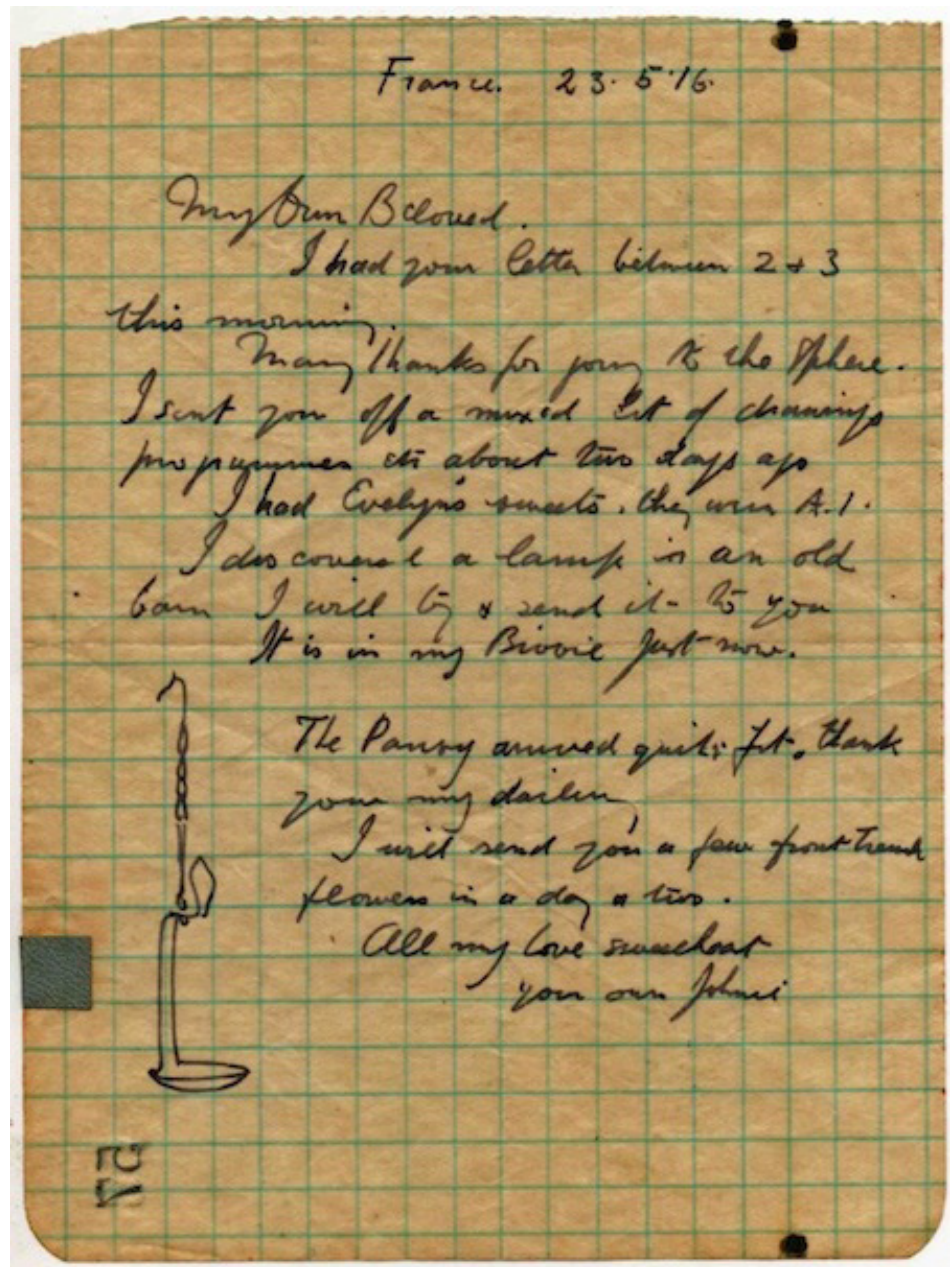
19.V.16.
Mine Own Billa darling
Can you get the enclosed
paper filled up & returned to me
with my birth certificate as soon
as poss.
First Nutter Barker Esq. Clewer
via Mr. Hollis
then Gilbert, please tell him
to buck up, also say how sorry I
am to have to trouble Mrs H
again.
I can do nothing till I get the
papers again.
Johnna was awfully decent
also the other officers.
More drawings for the Gen today
All my love darlingest
Yours own Johnnie

19 May 1916

Mine Own Billa darling

Can you get the enclosed paper filled up and returned to me with my birth certificate as soon as poss. First Nutter Barker Esq Clewer via Mr Hollis then Gilbert, please tell him to buck up, also say how sorry I am to have to trouble Mrs H again. I can do nothing till I get the papers again. Johnna was awfully decent also the other officers. More drawings for the Gen today. All my love darlingest.

Your own Johnnie



23 May 1916

France

My Own Beloved

I had your letter between 2 and 3 this morning. Many thanks for going to the Sphere. I sent you off a mixed lot of C(?) programmes etc about two days ago. I had Evelyn's sweets, they are A1. I also covered a lamp in an old barn I will try to send it to you. It is in my Bivvie just now. The Pansy arrived quite fit thank you my darling. I will send you a few front trench flowers in a day or two. All my love sweetheart.

Your own Johnnie