

MR B.G.BARLOW
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11th October, 2007

Dear Mr Wild,

I enclose herewith letters written by my Mother during the severe snow storms of February 1978, as mentioned in my phone call on the 8th of this month.

My Mother, Trudy Winward and my Stepfather, Stan Winward lived in the Managers House which adjoined Lairg Electric Laundry, in fact a door led from the hallway direct into the laundry. Stan was the Maintenance Man there which explains the reference to thawing out the fuel oil. The Laundry Manager was a Mr. George Dingwall who was a retired Bank Manager. He lived on the Main Street in Lairg. He was also the Local Correspondant for the 'Sutherland Times' and as such, was well known in the county. About this time, he was awarded either the M.B.E or the O.B.E. hence the trip to Buckingham Palace.

At this time the laundry had several vans which collected and delivered laundry to all parts of Sutherland. Alas, the trade declined as hotels bought their own washing machines and the laundry was forced to close a few years later. By this time, my parents had moved into a Pensioners bungalow in Tain.

Tom was a Cashier at the Royal Bank of Scotland in Lairg and lodged with my parents until he was able to obtain a place of his own. I think Alick would be Mr. Alick Gow who with his wife, Janice, lived at what at one time had been the Railway Station Building at Mid Clyth in Caithness. Janice and my Mother met when they were both working at the Inchnadamph Hotel several years before.

With the threat of Global Warming, it makes me wonder if such severe weather conditions will ever again be experienced by the people of Sutherland. I would like you to place the letters in your archive for future generations to wonder at. By all means let me know if you would like any more information about my parents and their time in Sutherland.

Yours sincerely,

Brian Barlow.

Lagbuie,
Sunday.

Dear Mary & Brian.

It was nice to hear your voices last night. We have had some funny thoughts during the past few weeks, wondering what was going to happen weather wise. Last Friday afternoon, we managed to get into Dornoch. It was almost blowing a blizzard, being much worse up there that day than it was with us. All the children had again been sent home from School. Will you make a note of the enclosed? Mr Gunn, he is the man we saw & we each made a new Will. Of course Stan & myself are in favour of each other, but if we both go before either of you two Mr Gunn & Brian are the Executors. There will be very little ready cash, but our Insurance will cover expenses. You are both named, which is the reason I wanted Mary's full name. Should (I hope not), you both go before us, it will be given to the Society of the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, in Scotland. Of course we now have the Graves in Lairg, but if we die outside Scotland, bury us in the nearest cemetery. We have a good Policy in case we are killed by accident. In any case, get in touch with Mr Gunn. Now that is done with. We could not anticipate the cost of a Cremation from here.

The Sun is melting the Icicles down the windows, it looks lovely, but still very cold. I see they are catching it in the South now. Poor beggars. It will be interesting to see how many Lambs there will be this year. All the sheep are now in Lamb, which is why there is so much concern about them. It is funny, when I go out & meet people in the High Street, we all walk so carefully, someone said,

we all look like Penguins shuffling along.

Elsie Rawkinson is coming up in May, with Fred's brother & Wife. They live in Ascot, so they will stay overnight with them in Peel Green, then all come up in one car. I do hope the weather is kind. They hope to do some Fishing on the Loch. Stan is organising that for them, so I am looking forward to that very much. Then you will be coming. There will be plenty going on when you are here.

How is the car now? I do hope your Chimneys & walls are now OK & you will not have to spend any more money on them. Stan has a tiny heater under ours, but this week he had a job getting into the garage, because the floor had swelled up & was catching the door. A good job we have it inside. The new Owners, from Lynn, are coming up at Easter for a week, they rang up Mr Dingwall, as they feared the house may have disappeared, they heard such bad reports.

Dingwall made it to Buckingham Palace, last week. His son went with him, they took a Sleeper there & back. The Queen had Flu, so Prince Charles made the presentations. Of course he was up here last year, & Mr D. said they had a little chat about it. I was very disappointed with the Medal & ribbon. Perhaps I expect too much.

Sorry about poor Uncle. Edith is still very poorly.

Am now taking a little walk & will post this on the way. Funny thing, the post is now coming faster than it ever has. Don't know why, I think they are using a different way since the emergency, long may it last.

Cheerio, all our Love, & to mum. Hope she is keeping well, I suppose she is looking after Uncle's House.

Mother + Stan
X X X

2/2/78

Thursday.

Lagbuie.

Dear Mary & Brian.
m m

I do not know if you have yet received my letter written on Monday. It was funny the way it was posted. Stabbly just managed to get the side door open, to be faced with a solid wall of frozen ice, the windows too, covered, it was very dark all day long. He broke a hole through it & managed to get his arm through & one of the men off the Snow plough took it from him. Poor beggars, they have worked hard, up & down day & night often getting fast in the drifts, of course you will have heard about the train, also 2 of our Bus Drivers from Tongue & Diurness were stranded for a day & 2 nights. We are in the middle of it all. Power Pylons are down & some families are without water. 2 days before it got bad, I had Alick from John O Groats for 2 nights. He brought us a sack of Potatoes, so they were very useful. He got away on Friday so he was very lucky indeed. Not being able to use any phone I was worried the missing man could have been him, now we know it was not. We are wearing layers & layers of woolies & full of colds, but we do have a fire, I can manage for food so far & today the Fish man got through, from Golspie, with a limited supply. Poor Stan has over 1000 gals of Oil to thaw out before he can attempt to start the boiler. The Van went out yesterday, 2 men & a woman & 2 shovels, but they could not deliver any of the parcels. They turned back. When the plough got past

the front of the house, all the snow they moved on our side, came right over the rails into the garden, what a mess. The Farmers have lost thousands of Sheep & Cattle. Has the snow got down to you yet? We have a thaw today, so I will venture out to the Post Office. We had our first mail today for a week, so they are open. Now we are getting accustomed to it all, I can see the funny side. It was dreadful at first not seeing anyone, & the silence was awful. We have a spare bottle of Calor Gas so will be alright for the coming weekend.

What a good thing it was for me that Tom is away. Did I tell you? he has now got the rent of a Caravan, on the road down to the Station. He will be away until almost Easter so I am having him for a few days until he can get it ready. The owner, we know him, he is a Ghillie at Oykel, says last year he was only able to let it for 7 weeks all during the season, so he decided to let it permanently. It also gives Tom another 2 points on the housing list. The houses by the side of the Boiler house are going up fast. Most of them are for Families, but we do not want one, they are too close together, I would not like to live like that again.

Well, will now get on with some more Potato soup & dumplings (A good job Stanley likes them) It looks much brighter today & what a difference it makes.

All our Love to yourselves

& Mum

Kothen + + +

LAGBUIE

MONDAY A.M.

DEAR MARY & BRIAN.

JUST TO SAY WE ARE
ALRIGHT, APART FROM HEAVY
COULDS. IT HAS BEEN FRIGHTENING
ALL WINDOWS & DOORS COVERED IN
FROZEN SNOW. JUST AS YOU SEE IT
ON T.V. IN WESTERNS. EVERYTHING
IS STOPPED. SHOPS WORKS ETC.
WE HAVE COAL & CAN ^{& CANDLES.} GAS, SO
CAN HAVE A HOT MEAL. WE
ARE SLEEPING IN THE LIVING
ROOM ON THE SEATTEE & CAMP
BED. CANT SEE THE GARDEN
RAILS FOR SNOW. EVEN THE PLOUGHS
ARE GETTING STUCK. THANK GOD,
TOM GOT AWAY TO ABERDEEN AT
7 AM SAT. CANT GET OUT TO THE
PHONE. ALL OUR LOVE MOTHER, X



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OVERLAND
9 15 PM

Mr & Mrs BG Barlow.
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Lancashire.