

**Letter to Jean Biggar from her friend Betsy RE: the impending war,
29th August 1939
(GB0232/D171/3/10/42)**

Cleevemoor Cottage,
Deepcut,
Nr Aldershot

Aug.29th 1939

My dearest Jean,

Everything is as black as possible. We expect that war will be declared today & there will be air raids tonight. We have all our lights in the house painted blue, & I am busy seeing to thick curtains etc., otherwise we have no special preparations beyond our famous trench. Lestock's two old aunts from London arrive tonight. They are frightened to stay where they are. I expect if we have air raids here they will have hysterics all over me, they are self-indulgent old women & I should think without any self-control, & I really shan't be able to feel that they matter, except of course that Lestock is fond of them.

I have left the children at Sandlodge & came back myself on Saturday. I was nearly distracted. At first Daddy made himself very disagreeable in his normal way, I rang up Margaret Leslie at the Sumburgh Hotel & asked her to have the children, to my astonishment she said it would be too much responsibility. I am in a black rage with her, what a way for a woman to behave who is established with her husband & children in the safest place you could find. However, Daddy suddenly changed round & said, "What was the use of a father if you couldn't rely on him", & the result is that I have left him & Aunt Nelly with the children, the two old people busily occupied in making excuses to each other for the fact that they both want to keep out of the danger zone, though I am sure no excuses are necessary. I think they will both stay in Shetland indefinitely now. I hope the children won't be too much for Aunt Nelly but I think she is very glad to have them & she is doing as much as any of the people who are taking in evacuated children.

Lestock expects to be sent abroad at once if war is declared – within ten days anyway. He has been recommended for double promotion by Col. Morgan, that is a jump from Major to Brigadier missing out Colonel, but he does not expect to get it. We are of course wretched and miserable & living in a nightmare as everyone is, but calm. In September I couldn't sleep or eat, now I do both in a normal manner. Hitler's war of nerves has failed completely as far as we are concerned, and indeed I think this applies to everyone. I do not feel at all frightened at the prospect of air raids, though with militia camps all round this is now rather a bad area, the only thing that terrifies me is the possibility of having to face the rest of my life without Lestock.

If L goes abroad I shall drive the car up the west coast (having shut up this house) & look for a house in a safe area to which I can bring the children, probably in Scotland.

What do you think of this Russian German pact? It seems to me that everything is so complicated that it is beyond comprehension.

The boat I came south in was packed to capacity & making her last voyage before being taken over by the Admiralty. Isn't it a terrible thing that we are all being forced into a war which nobody wants & which everyone knows can lead to no good result, we are being rushed headlong to destruction with eyes open to the consequences & we are powerless to save ourselves.

Love from Betsy