



LOAGHTAN BOOKS NEWS



www.loaghtanbooks.com

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Seventy years - and one hundred and twenty years

Sometimes the things we tell you in this newsletter, although interesting (we hope), can be a little footling. However, since our last edition Loaghtan Books has experienced two major events.



Barbara Hibberd holding the box containing the letters her parents wrote during WW2

Going home

As regular readers will know, three years ago Loaghtan Books published a book of WW2 correspondence under the title *Dear Ray*. The letters were written to a serving Gunner, Ray Hibberd, by Kathleen (Kay) Ford, his sweetheart serving in the ATS, who later became his wife.

We found the letters bundled together in a dealer's shop in London, purchased them, and tried to trace the family. Unfortunately we failed. We still thought, however, that the book would make an excellent publication, so went ahead with our plans.

Then we got a surprise, a nice one. After publication, we received an email from one of Ray and Kay's two daughters, now living in Canada. We hadn't looked there!

Continuing their story beyond the end of *Dear Ray*, the Hibberd family emigrated to Canada in 1950. The girls hadn't realised that their mother had written these wonderful letters, and certainly didn't know that they survived.

We were contacted by Barbara Hibberd, Kay and Ray's younger daughter, who naturally wanted to know whether the Hibberd family of *Dear Ray* was **her** family. It was! Barbara was therefore eager to see the letters and, if possible, get them returned to the family. We too were eager to see the correspondence go back to what we thought of as its rightful home. There was however the small matter of the Atlantic in

the way. Reliable as the postal service usually is, we really didn't want to trust something this precious and this old to it.

No-one from Loaghtan Books had visited Canada for some time, but Barbara did visit her English cousins occasionally. We kept in touch. Then Barbara let us know that she would be in London at the end of April. George Hobbs, the senior partner of Loaghtan Books, travelled from the Isle of Man to rendezvous with her, and Kay and Ray's letters were safely handed over to their daughter. We're really chuffed!

In another strange quirk of fate, Barbara and George were born in the same year and within two miles of each other. They might even have sat next to each other in their respective prams as Kay and George's Mum went shopping.

Tracking the trams

George's long awaited book *Stops along the Manx Electric Railway* has just been published. We're also delighted to say that it's being a howling success. (I told you so, George!) One of the shops we supply sold out its entire stock in the first day. (It's a nice problem to have.)

The Isle of Man is famous for its heritage transport and the tram system still uses its Victorian and Edwardian rolling stock on a daily basis. The line was built partly

to serve local farms, and partly for Victorian tourists from the UK, for whom, a hundred years ago, the island was 'abroad'.

The tramline still fulfils both purposes but many of the stops are now little known and seldom used. George thought this was such a pity as the trams stop at many places only accessible by footpath. He hopes his book will encourage people to explore. There is little to beat sitting on the back of an open trailer trundling through the Manx countryside and enjoying the views before getting off to walk in the fresh air.

Best wishes, Sara

Quote of the day

Mr Watson worked at the [MER] power station below the line between Dolland and Ballaglass. [The stop] Watson's Crossing marks the point where he crossed the line on his way to work every day, using the footpath down into the valley.
Page 95, *Stops along the Manx Electric Railway*