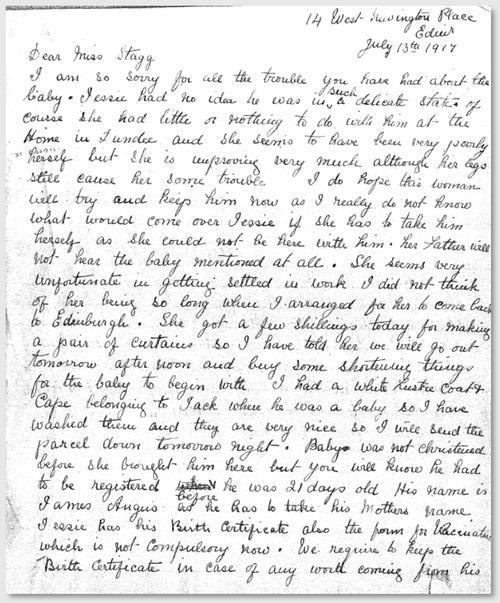
Jessie
Letters from a grandmother

Jessie was born in 1890 and lived with her parents and two brothers on Newington Place. She was working as an upholstery worker when, at the age of 26, she found herself unmarried, pregnant and suffering from TB. The father of her child had recently left for the war in Europe. The NVA arranged for Jessie to have her baby at a Salvation Army home in Dundee. However, it was several months before she was well enough to return home to Edinburgh. Her mother Annie asked the NVA to find a foster mother for her grandson as Jessie's father would not allow Jessie to bring him home.

There are no letters from Jessie herself but Annie was in regular contact with the NVA between 1917 and 1918 regarding the care of her daughter and grandson. Annie tirelessly pursued the father of Jessie's baby for financial support. In September 1917 she contacted James Myles Hogg MP but was told there was very little that could be done if the father was serving abroad. Annie was also desperately worried about Jessie's two brothers who were fighting in the war and by reports of a deadly flu.



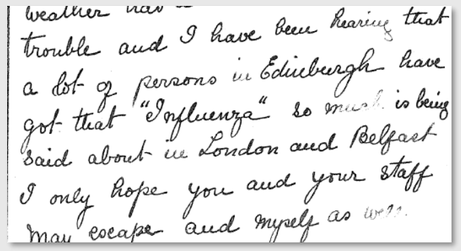
14 West Newington Place
Edin
July 13th 1917

Dear Miss Stagg
I am so sorry for all the trouble you have had about the baby. Jessie had no idea he was in such a delicate state of course she had little or nothing to do with him at the Home in Dundee and she seems to have been very poorly herself but she is improving very much although her legs still cause her some trouble. I do hope this woman will try and keep him now as I really do not know what would come over Jessie if she has to take him herself as she could not be here with him. Her father will not hear the baby mentioned at all. She seems very unfortunate in getting settled in work. I did not think of her being so long when I arranged for her to come back to Edinburgh. She got a few shillings today for making a pair of curtains so I have told her we will go out tomorrow afternoon and buy some shortening things for the baby to begin with. I had a White Rustic Coaly Cape belonging to Jack when he was a baby so I have washed them and they are very nice so I will send the parcel down tomorrow night. Babys was not Christened before she brought him here but you will know he had to be registered before he was 21 days old. His name is James Angus as he has to take his Mothers name. Jessie has his Birth Certificate also the form for Vaccination which is not Compulsory now. We require to keep the Birth Certificate in case of any world coming from his

"I am so sorry for all the trouble you have had about the baby. Jessie had no idea he was in such a delicate state, of course she had little or nothing to do with him at the Home in Dundee and she seems to have been very poorly herself. I do hope this woman will try and keep him now as I really do not know what would come over Jessie if she has to take him herself as she could not be here with him—her father will not hear the baby mentioned at all. She seems very unfortunate in getting settled in work. She got a few shillings for making a pair of curtains so I have told her we will go out tomorrow and buy some shortening things for the baby."*

* Babies, both girls and boys, were dressed in long dresses when first born. Once they began to crawl, the long dresses were replaced with shorts or short dresses. This was referred to as "shortening the baby"

Salvation Army Home, 31 Ward Road, Dundee

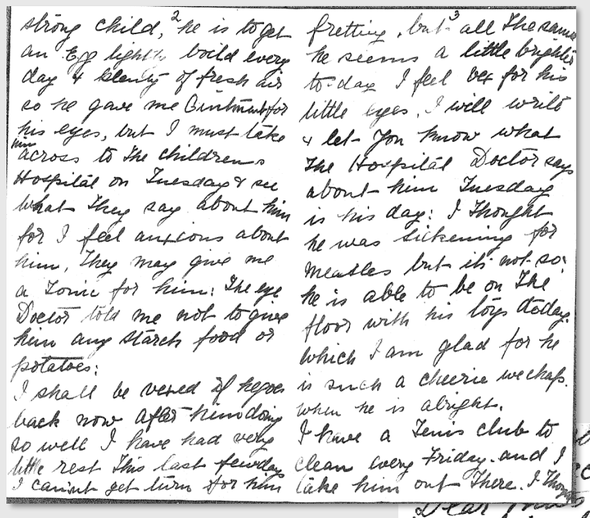


weather has ... trouble and I have been hearing that a lot of persons in Edinburgh have got that "Influenza" so much is being said about in London and Belfast I only Hope you and your staff may escape and myself as well.

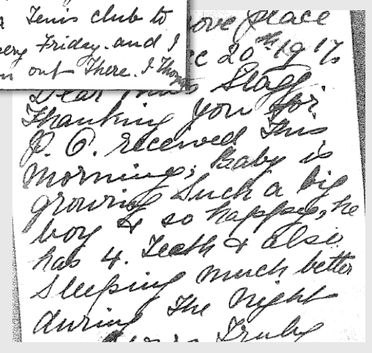
"June 25th 1918

I think this cold weather has a lot to do with so much trouble and I have been hearing that a lot of persons in Edinburgh have got that "influenza" so much is being said about in London and Belfast. I only hope you and your staff may escape and myself as well."

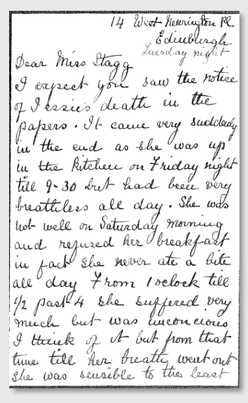
Letter from Clara, the baby's foster mother:



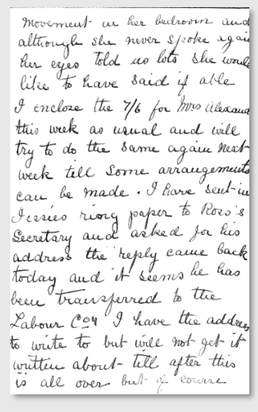
strong child, he is to get an Egg lightly boiled every day & plenty of fresh air so he gave me Ointment for his eyes, but I must take him across to the Childrens Hospital on Tuesday & see what they say about him for I feel anxious about him. They may give me a Tonic for him. The Eye Doctor told me not to give him any Starch food or potatoes; I shall be vexed if he goes back now after him doing so well I have had very little rest this last fortnight I cannot get him for him fretting, but all the same he seems a little brighter to-day I feel sorry for his little eyes. I will write & let you know what the Hospital Doctor says about him Tuesday is his day: I thought he was sickening for measles but it's not so he is able to be on the floor with his toys today which I am glad for he is such a cheerie wee chap. When he is alright I have a Tonic club to clean every Friday and I take him out there. I thank



love peace
Dec 20th 1917
Dear Miss Stagg
Thanking you for P.O. received this morning baby is growing such a big boy & so happy he is. Teeth 4 Alsie Rab 4. much better sleeping the night during



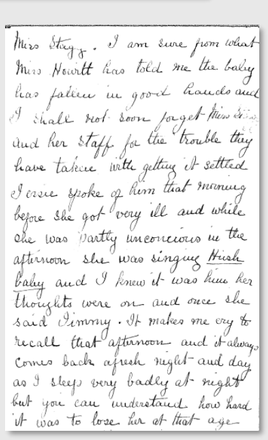
14 West Newington Pl.
Edinburgh
Sunday night
Dear Miss Stagg
I expect you saw the notice of Jessie's death in the papers. It came very suddenly in the end as she was up in the kitchen on Friday night till 9.30 but had been very breathless all day. She was not well on Saturday morning and refused her breakfast in fact she never ate a bite all day from 1 o'clock till 1/2 past 4 she suffered very much but was unconscious I think of it but from that time till her breathe went out she was sensible to the least



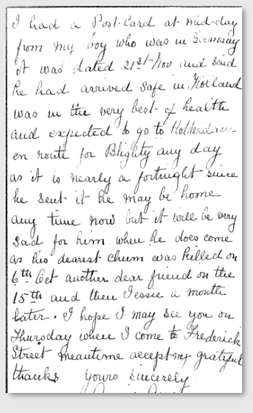
movement in her bedroom and although she never spoke again her eyes told us lots she would like to have said if able
I enclose the 7/6 for Mrs Abrams this week as usual and will try to do the same again next week till some arrangement can be made. I have sent in Jessies Insurance paper to Ross's Secretary and asked for his address the reply came back today and it seems he has been transferred to the Labour Coy I have the address to write to but will not get it written about till after this is all over but of course

"14 West Newington Place, Edinburgh, Tuesday night. Dear Miss Stagg

I expect you saw the notice of Jessie's death in the papers. It came very suddenly in the end as she was up in the kitchen on Friday night till 9.30 but had been very breathless all day. She was not well on Saturday morning and refused her breakfast in fact she never ate a bite all day from 1 o'clock till half past 4 she suffered very much but was unconscious I think of it but from that time till her breathe went out she was sensible to the least movement in her bedroom and although she never spoke again her eyes told us lots she would like to have said if able....I am sure from what Miss Howitt told me the baby has fallen in good hands and I shall not soon forget Miss Stagg and her staff for the trouble they have taken with getting it settled. Jessie spoke of him that morning before she got very ill and while she was partly unconscious in the afternoon she was singing Hush Baby and I knew it was him her thoughts were on and once she said Jimmy. It makes me cry to recall that afternoon and it always comes back afresh night and day as I sleep very badly at night but you can understand how hard it was to lose her at that age."



Miss Stagg. I am sure from what Miss Howitt has told me the baby has fallen in good hands and I shall not soon forget Miss Stagg and her staff for the trouble they have taken with getting it settled. Jessie spoke of him that morning before she got very ill and while she was partly unconscious in the afternoon she was singing Hush baby and I knew it was him her thoughts were on and once she said Jimmy. It makes me cry to recall that afternoon and it always comes back afresh night and day as I sleep very badly at night but you can understand how hard it was to lose her at that age.



I had a Post Card at mid-day from my boy who was in Germany it was dated 21st Nov and said he had arrived safe in Holland was in the very best of health and expected to go to Rotherdam en route for Blighty any day as it is nearly a fortnight since he sent it he may be home any time now but it will be very sad for him when he does come as his dearest chum was killed on 6th Oct another dear friend on the 15th and then Jessie a month later. I hope I may see you on Thursday when I come to Frederick Street meantime accept my grateful thanks Yours Sincerely