Mary
Letters from Joppa

I Remain
your Loving Child
mary x

Wild defiant monkey - !

Mary was born in 1906 in Berwick upon Tweed. She had lost her mother at a young age and made her way to the NVA at the age of 15 when she could no longer stay at the Soldiers and Sailors Home, Register Street, Edinburgh where her sister was a cook.

In her file Mary is described as a "*wild, defiant monkey*" and while she was staying at the NVA flat in Frederick Street she attempted to escape through a window, badly hurting her leg. She stayed at the flat for a week and was then sent, with her father's permission, to St Andrews Home, Joppa.

St Andrews Home
[Archie Foley, Portobello in Old Picture Postcards, 1985]

St Andrew's Home, Joppa

Run by Episcopal nuns, the home on Milton Road provided accommodation and training in laundry work for girls and young women. The commercial laundry service contributed to the running costs of the home. It closed in 1953 and has been a hotel since 1955.

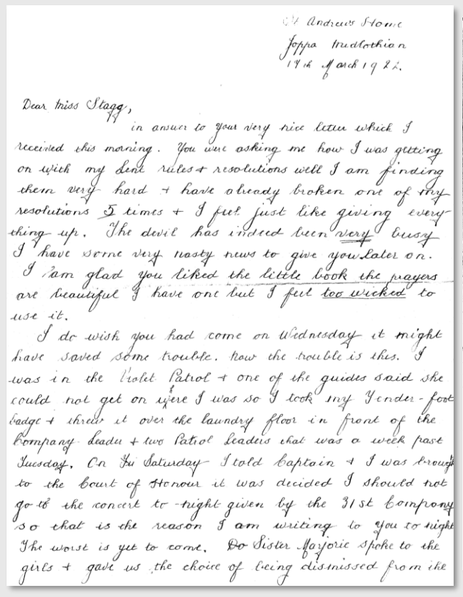
ST ANDREW'S HOME LAUNDRY,
JOPPA.

All LAUNDRY WORK DONE BY HAND. No Chemicals used.
DRYING done OUTSIDE during Spring and Summer Months.
The Work is called for by Van on Mondays and Tuesdays, PORTOBELLO; Wednesdays and Saturdays, MUSSELBURGH.
Returned—Thursdays, PORTOBELLO; on Saturdays, MUSSELBURGH.
Orders Punctually Attended to, and care taken with the Linen.

MOTHER SUPERIOR.

Musselburgh News [British Newspaper Archive]

"I do wish you had come on Wednesday it might have saved some trouble. Now the trouble is this. I was in the Violet Patrol and one of the guides said she could not get on where I was so I took my Tender Foot badge and threw it over the laundry floor in front of the Company Leader and two patrol leaders. On Saturday I told Captain and I was brought to the court of honour. It was decided I should not go to the concert tonight given by the 31st Company. The worst is yet to come. Sister Marjorie spoke to the girls and gave us the choice of being dismissed from the company or apologise to Captain. Well I decided to do the latter. Just about 3.30pm on Wednesday one of the girls said "I have made up my mind to be dismissed and what have you?" and me in my silly giddy way said "So am I" and she said "On your honour?". It happened all in a minute, I promised on my honour as a guide to be dismissed and rather than go back on my word I was dismissed in disgrace on Wednesday. I never felt the disgrace at first but when Captain cut off my shoulder tape and said you have disgraced the 91st Company I wished myself anywhere but the classroom."



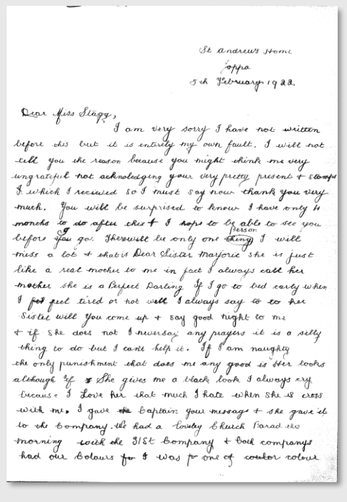
St Andrews Home
Joppa Midlothian
19th January 1922.

Dear Miss Stagg,

In answer to your very nice letter which I received this morning. You were asking me how I was getting on with my dear rules + resolutions well I am finding them very hard + have already broken one of my resolutions 5 times + I feel just like giving everything up. The devil has indeed been very busy I have some very nasty news to give you later on. I am glad you liked the little book the prayers are beautiful I have one but I feel too wicked to use it.

I do wish you had come on Wednesday it might have saved some trouble. Now the trouble is this. I was in the Violet Patrol + one of the guides said she could not get on where I was so I took my Tender-foot badge + threw it over the laundry floor in front of the Company Leader + two Patrol Leaders that was a week past Tuesday. On Saturday I told Captain + I was brought to the Court of Honour it was decided I should not go to the concert to-night given by the 31st Company so that is the reason I am writing to you to night The worst is yet to come. Sister Marjorie spoke to the girls + gave us the choice of being dismissed from the company or apologise to Captain + start afresh. Well I decided to do the latter. Just about 3.30 p.m. on Wednesday + I said I have made up my mind to be dismissed what + what have you + me in my silly giddy way said so I am I + she said on your honour it happened all in a minute I promised on my Honour as a guide to be dismissed + rather than go back on my word I was dismissed in disgrace on Wednesday. Captain + Sister spoke to me privately + asked the reason but I would not tell either of them about this promise I had made until I was dismissed I never felt the disgrace at first but when Captain cut off my shoulder tape + said. You have disgraced the girls Company I wished myself anywhere but the classroom. Sister + Captain are both very upset + I suppose you will be too. If you have time I hope you will answer this soon as I am very unhappy + I think it is a very big thing to ask you a Commissioner to forgive me.

I can assure you I am very very sorry + I hope you will write + tell me if you have forgiven me. I cannot tell you enough as I am so unhappy + miserable to write any more,

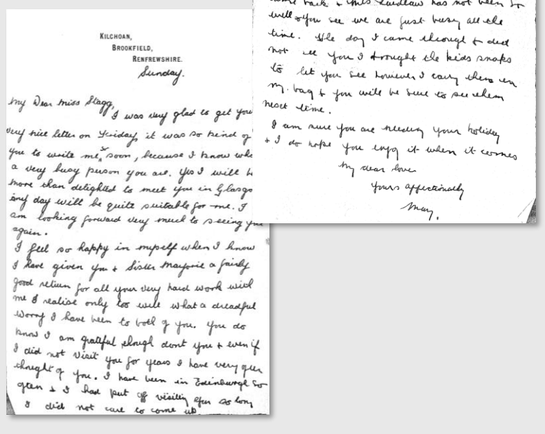


St Andrews Home
Joppa
5th February 1922.

Dear Miss Stagg,

I am very sorry I have not written before this but it is entirely my own fault. I will not tell you the reason because you might think me very ungrateful not acknowledging your very pretty present + cards I which I received so I must say now thank you very much. You will be surprised to know I have only 4 marches to do after this + I hope to be able to see you before you go. The will be only one thing I will miss a lot + that is dear Sister Marjorie she is just like a real mother to me in fact I always call her mother she is a perfect Darling. If I go to bed early when I feel tired or not well I always say to so to her Sister will you come up + say good night to me + if she does not I never say any prayers it is a silly thing to do but I can't help it. If I am naughty the only punishment that does me any good is her looks although if she gives me a black look I always cry because I love her that much I hate it when she is cross with me. I gave the Captain your message + she gave it to the company. We had a lovely March Parade this morning with the 31st company + both companys had our Colours for I was for one of certain colour

"There will be only one person I will miss a lot and that is Dear Sister Marjorie, she is just like a real mother to me in fact I always call her mother. She is a perfect darling. If I go to bed early when I feel tired or not well I always say to her Sister will you come up and say good night to me and if she does not I never say any prayers, it is a silly thing to do but I can't help it. If I am naughty the only punishment that does me any good is her looks, although if she gives me a black look I always cry because I love her that much I hate it when she is cross with me."



Kilchoan,
Brookfield,
Renfrewshire.
Sunday.

My Dear Miss Stagg,

I was very glad to get your very nice letter on Friday it was so kind of you to write me soon, because I know what a very busy person you are. You'll will be more than delighted to meet you in Glasgow any day will be quite suitable for me. I am looking forward very much to seeing you again.

I feel so happy in myself when I know I have given you + Sister Marjorie a fairly good return for all your very hard work with me I realise only too well what a dreadful worry I have been to both of you. You do know I am grateful though don't you + even if I did not visit you for years I have very often thought of you. I have been in Dalmuir for years + I had part of Paisley you so long I did not care to come up

however now I have found my way up to your Aunt + to St Andrews I will not let such a dreadful time elapse before coming back..

I am glad you had such a nice time in camp I know just what dreadful baggy feeling we are just really getting settled down now holy has been for words always we came back + miss Landlaw has not been so well of late we are just busy all the time. She say I came although to visit not see you I brought the kids snaps to let you see however I carry them in my bag + you will be sure to see them next time.

I am sure you are needing your holiday + I do hope you enjoy it when it comes

My dear love

Yours affectionately

Mary.

"My Dear Miss Stagg
I was very glad to get your nice letter on Friday. I am looking forward very much to seeing you again. I feel so happy in myself when I know I have given you and Sister Marjorie a fairly good return for all your very hard work with me, I realise only too well what a dreadful worry I have been to both of you. You do know I am grateful though don't you and even if I did not visit you for years I have very often thought of you."

Mary stayed at St Andrews for 3 years, beyond the 2 years that the girls would usually agree to, before leaving to train as a nurse. She contacted the NVA again in 1929 to say she had a post she liked in Glasgow looking after 3 children and earning £65 a year.