JOHN PAUL KIRKHAM

I Saw Her Standing There



The Autobiography – *new extended edition*

What The Book World Thinks

A true tale of serendipity, love, and second chances. A captivating book that takes readers on a journey of unexpected connections and the transformative power of love. When two strangers cross paths in a serendipitous encounter, their lives take an unforeseen turn. This enchanting true story follows their unfolding relationship as they navigate the complexities of the past, confront their fears, and embrace the possibility of a shared future. *"I Saw Her Standing There"* is a tale that explores the magic of fate, the resilience of the human heart, and the joy of discovering love when least expected.

Also by John Paul Kirkham

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I Saw Her Standing There

John Paul Kirkham

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The golden age of future comes
That which was dreamed in the past
Minds rich in wisdom to the last
Where freedom reigns on minds at peace
We are the Children of the Sun
And this our inheritance
No longer chaos and confusion
But love and laughter, song and dance

(Hawkwind: Children of The Sun)

The Beginning

When The World Was Young

“Jimmy Page & Robert Plant”

Sometimes we put off or postpone projects and things for later or maybe we get a bit lazy. Well my excuse over the last four decades is that we moved flats and houses several times and each time a rather large packet of enveloped letters tucked away in a box found itself stashed away in a series of cellars, attics and garden sheds ..... until that is recently.

On a big tidy up and sort out during the start of the 2020 Covid 19 pandemic and obeying (to a degree) the “stay at home” directive I opened that old Pickford’s Removals storage box and rescued a giant sized Liverpool University brown envelope stuffed with two large bundles of rubber banded handwritten letters starting in the summer of 1979 between two ordinary people otherwise known as correspondence d’amour or love letters.

This new 2026 revised edition of the book has been updated and expanded by a good few dozen pages from the original publication due to the discovery of further hidden away late 1970s greetings and post cards and some forgotten but full of memories pocket size diaries that reveal additional tales which perfectly augment the original book and this new version also includes a selection of photographs of Her Royal Highness - Diana Princess of Wales that have never been published before.

This latest book also has an unexpected surprise in store but that you will have to discover for yourself as we head towards the brand new ending.

When looking back as though it were yesterday, is it a case of growing older and becoming more wiser or knowing what I know now would I have done anything different or taken another path. Not likely!

It was 1979 and forgetting the politics, protests and strikes the music was ace. The glam rocker

and electric warrior Marc Bolan had kick started the decade riding a white swan and ten years later AC/DC were taking off on the highway to global domination with their powerfully loud and exciting live performances … the future of rock was in safe hands and whatever the music genre the 1970s had it in overdrive. Those were the fondly remembered long lost days of no social media, no mobile phones and no texting just biro's and inky finger fountain pens and a bit of Basildon Bond or a Woolworths writing pad with the red spiral bound card cover and everyone worked hard during the week and partied till dawn at the weekends.

Everybody has a year, a time or a place that means something. For me it was 1979, Led Zeppelin's great epic last ever gig at Knebworth, I was there and it was an era of magic and mystique, a time when the world was young and I fell in love with a girl from a distant shore.

This autobiographical account of back and forth letters is both a glimpsing snapshot and decibel

loaded soundtrack of the times. The songs of the chapter headings were already there, embedded within the pages of the letters, waiting to be released four decades later. In 1979 you could post a ten page letter for 9 pence or buy a round of five pints up north for just £1.

So sit back but whatever you do, do not relax but dig out that old turntable and some great vinyl from the past … or go on then they're all there on iTunes, Amazon Music or Spotify and see what you make of it all today.

I make no apologies to the reader as it would have been quite easy and save embarrassment perhaps to discreetly edit, sanitise or airbrush some of the letter's tales but this was the late 1970s when it was still cool to be children of the revolution and in a quest to fill our lives with freedom and peace there had to be a whole lotta love, other stuff and rock and roll and plenty of it there was.

Rory Gallagher one of Irelands greatest ever rock guitarists and singers of all time recorded *“Can’t Believe it’s True”* on his 1971 debut album and is a long seven minute plus song that I revisit many times these days. And so what you are about to read are our direct words exposed to the light for the first time in over 40 years and yes it’s wild to believe that it all really happened … believe me it is all true … and this book has come to life because we didn’t throw those letters, cards, photographs or diaries away.

June 1979

I Saw Her Standing There

“The Beatles”

These letters would never have been written but for a decision to go on holiday that wasn’t even suggested or planned by me. I had started work as a photographer at the University of Liverpool’s Department of Forensic Science and Pathology in 1976. I was offered the job on the same day straight after the interview. Out of six candidates I was the only one who made it through the specimen room containing large formalin filled tanks of human arms, legs, heads and torso’s. The starting pay would do at £20 a week before tax and buying a vinyl LP for £1.80 was just about affordable.

So I spent my days commuting on those ferries across the Mersey and photographing the scary stuff of todays “Silent Witness” and one day and evening each week for the next four years was

taken up at the Laird School of Art across in Central Park, Birkenhead.

If there were no parties to go to and Tranmere Rovers didn't have a home game then a Friday night was given up to pints of creamy headed black Burtonwood Mild ale at the Royal Oak in Liscard, Wallasey but if anything was fixed in stone it was every Wednesday evening at the The Ship Inn (now sadly demolished) at 208 Breck Road, Wallasey. We had our own unofficially reserved table in the corner for four or sometimes five of us: me, Mark Evans (aka Evo), Jim Mackie, Smidge (aka Pete Smith) and our sometimes fifth man Dave Owen. We sat right by the jukebox which only seemed to have three decent 45rpm's: Blondie's *"Heart of Glass"* or *"Sunday Girl"* and The Doors - *"Riders on the Storm"* which seemed decent value for money because of its long running time. A night out would set you back no more than a quid that could just cover a round of five pints that we rotated each week if we could remember who bought the last round last

Wednesday! Alternatively if we imbibed less there would be enough left over in the modest budget to buy chips and curry sauce on the way home.

In the 1970s holidays abroad were a rarity, money was tight and the Labour government only allowed travellers to take £99 out of the UK and any amount you did take out was hand written in your passport.

Into one of these Wednesday evenings Evo brought in just one brochure from the Belgium Tourist Board and offered it to the table and so for the fact that this option number one was the only option, the four of us agreed to leave Britain for ten days in the last week of June into the first week of July and so the prospect of a reason to be cheerful looked promising.

We had no idea if our estimated £9 per day budget would last and we each packed around half a dozen cans of Spam into our cases and bags as a back up in the event that we ran out of cash and on Saturday 30th June my dad agreed to ferry all four of us nineteen year olds through

the Mersey Tunnel to Liverpool's Lime Street Station to catch the early 6.00am train to London Euston from whence we would swiftly connect to Victoria Station and then on by boat from Dover to Ostend, Belgium and by that early Saturday evening we had made our transfer to the delightful old *Belle Epoch* Hotel George V, Vlaanderenstraat 42, Ostend. Within twenty four hours my life was going to change forever. And on that following Sunday morning I saw her standing there.

I was passing through the hotel lobby door and my attention was caught by an exotic looking girl who I guessed to be Japanese, studying in vain a large poster sized Belgium railway timetable. I stopped and offered to try to help decipher the bits in Flemish. This seemed a bit difficult so off the top of my head I said:

"Where are you going to?"

Then before I received an answer and not thinking about any consequences I came out with:

“I’m going to Bruges today do you fancy coming along?” And that was that.

Ostend would remain our base but I had to temporarily abandon my companions over the first few days to accompany my new (not Japanese but Japanese looking) Malaysian girlfriend Magdalene known as “B” which is short for Beng Imm meaning “clear bright sound” as we travelled to Antwerp, Paris and Amsterdam ..... that was some chance meeting and some doorway.

And at some point the beginnings of all true stories must contain a modest amount of drama.

B and her girlfriends Amy and Vicky had misread the date on their return boat ticket to the UK and on their last morning in Belgium had just 60 minutes to pack and get to the quayside and embark. In this hurried melee and hasty departure, unbelievably neither of us during the previous week had actually exchanged contact details other than I was in Liverpool and B was a

nurse, training somewhere in the Sussex countryside ... and so that ship had sailed!

It would have been very easy for both of us to walk away with the memories of an intense but brief encounter ..... but then later that day a hastily hand scribbled note on a scrap of paper that had been passed to a ships Purser then relayed when he returned on a later crossing back in Ostend Port to Gilbert at the Belgium Tourist Office who in turn tracked me down to that George V Hotel ..... Yes, I know it sounds like a series of slickly edited scenes from a film but this was real life and so the letters begin somewhere in the middle of the English Channel.

On the Sealink Cross Channel Ferry

30th June 1979

Dear John Paul,

I never expected to leave today as I am so looking forward to the Europa Tower trip with you, I just hate it that my holiday has got to end today, a real disappointment.

Sorry! I had to rush off like this but there's no alternative.

Hope to see you again some day.

Wishing you all the best and I'm keeping my fingers crossed for you about the success of your interview with the TV company.

Just hope that I can get this message delivered to you before you leave Ostend.

I enjoyed seeing all the places with you.

Magdalene Beng Imm (B)
c/o Edward VII Hospital
Midhurst, Sussex.

I received this note very late in the afternoon and it was over to me now. If I hurried I could just make the large retro looking neo modernistic Central Post Office before closing time including snatching a two tone purple and clear click biro from a tobacconists on the way. Entering Eysselinck's 1950s architectural masterpiece design creation, a striking emporium of communication I looked for a counter and any symbol that remotely suggested "Telegram"

POST OFFICE TELEGRAM

OSTEND BELGIUM

30th June 1979

MY DEAREST B. I RECEIVED YOUR NOTE AND AM MISSING YOU VERY MUCH WILL CONTACT YOU AS SOON AS I GET HOME LOTS OF LOVE. JOHN PAUL.

July 1979

No Second Thoughts

“Tom Petty and The Heartbreakers”

Liverpool 8th July 1979

Dear B,

I had no second thoughts at all about sending that telegram across the wire, across the sea and hope you share my feelings. Unfortunately I couldn't say much then due to the limited space on the telegram sheet. After long delays on the Sealink ferry and trains in London we all finally arrived home in Liverpool after a tiring day and are looking forward to a proper meal. Ever since the day you left Ostend I couldn't stop thinking about last week with you and all the places we went together. I just loved every second of it and you. The day you left you took the sunshine away with you for all it did from Monday was rain, rain, rain. I did however go to Brussels on Tuesday but visiting the Chinese Pavilion and the Atomium with its nine spheres then returning through the

City of Ghent just wasn't the same without you there. And when I woke on that first morning in July, the first day without you by my side I just had to see you again or my life just would not be the same.

I too was looking forward to our Europa Tower trip but I couldn't face the ascent of going up there on my own and I still have our two tickets in my back pack. Now that I am back in England I do very much want to see you again and I will be trying to sort out how to get from Liverpool to Midhurst on the train. It will probably be via London I would think, anyway we can work it out.

If you could write and give me details on how you get to and from London that will be an enormous help and hopefully we can arrange something next month. Till then it's back to work on a miserable Monday.

Missing you a lot ...

Love, John Paul (JP)

August 1979

Born In The 50s

"The Police"

Midhurst 3rd August 1979

Dear JP,

I am so happy to receive your telegram from Ostend and now your letter from Liverpool.

Glad that you arrived safely in England. The Sealink I came back with was 1 hour behind schedule as well and I must admit that I was so glad to be back in England again. It just seems like home after being on the Continent. We left Ostend at 11.35am (Belgium time) and reached the nurses home in Midhurst, Sussex around 11pm.

If I ever took the sunshine away from Ostend I certainly did bring a lot of rain back to England as well. Ever since I came back it has been so gloomy and cloudy. I have to run through the rain to get your letter from my pigeon hole in the

main hospital building as my own room is in a separate annex away from the main block.

This is the last week of my holiday. Yesterday I was up in London around Oxford Street, Covent Garden, Bond Street and Leicester Square - looking at the shops.

I go to London at least once a month because Midhurst is so quiet and at times extremely dull.

I feel homesick if I don't get out of Midhurst. Perhaps next time I can meet you in London and we can do some more sight seeing.

From the map of England which I looked up, Liverpool is so far away from Sussex like the end of the world. You'll be very tired by the time you come down here unless you can get long weekends off.

Sussex is beautiful especially the green fields with cows grazing on the pretty wild yellow and white flowers.

There is no station in Midhurst. Instead Haslemere is our gateway by train. It is about twenty minutes by car from our hospital.

Normally it takes an hour to get from Haslemere to Waterloo Station. Anyway I can always see you in London as I have learned how to get about with the guidance of my pocket London Tube Map.

I may not always get to have the weekends off, John, but I can request for it to see London with you.

Just wishing that I could see Brussels again but with you. I was really so disappointed for not having gone up the Europa Tower. Actually is was our fault too for not knowing exactly the date and time of our departure. We just followed an itinerary and I took everything for granted. I left some of my belongings behind in the hotel room in my haste packing.

Can I let you know that ever since I left Ostend I too couldn't stop thinking about those lovely places we visited. Lovely because you are there with me. I shall cherish these memories of those long, loving days forever.

Looking forward to hearing from you again. Do take care of yourself and I miss you too.
Fondly, B

Isle of Wight Postcard 6th August 1979

Dear John,
Just came back from the Isle of Wight. Spent the weekend there with Amy and Vicky. It was hot but not as hot as the Continent. Spent all of the time mostly walking by the beach and the sea. Did you have a nice weekend. Will write when free ..... *Love B*

Liverpool Wednesday 8th August 1979

Dear B,

I was so glad when I got your letter. I guessed it was from you when I saw the flowers printed on the envelope, the colour of the wildflowers reminded me of you and the flowers in your hair.

By the sound of it your journey from Ostend must have been tiring, twelve hours, even after all our delays we were still back in Liverpool by 8pm on the Wednesday night, mind you, our arms were just about dropping off with the weight of our bags.

I too was happy to be back in England because now only part of Britain separates the two of us; when I was still in Belgium the Channel seemed such an ominous obstacle as it appeared to stretch beyond the horizon forever.

One place that our Belgium gang did visit before we came home was to take the train (well two trains as we had to connect in the city of Ghent) and spend a day in Ypres where you can see for miles and miles the World War I British

cemeteries that stretch out and surround the town with all the clean white grave stones glowing in the light of day. It was a very sombre, silent and sad town holding all of the many thousands of souls of fallen soldiers. Sadder still it was a sort of pilgrimage for us as Jim's Grandad was killed here right at the end on the very last day of the Great War. He was in the Royal Highland Regiment. We searched and searched for his grave looking at all the record books which are kept immaculately in each grave yard wall behind little glass doors. As the day progressed we finally found his name etched within the huge memorial called the Menin Gate. As the sun sets each evening a lone bugler plays the "Last Post" and Smidge insisted on staying right to the end as a mark of respect. It was both beautiful, emotional and melancholic under a shimmering purple sky at the end of the day as dusk gently falls.

The weather up here has been cold, dull and rainy and only today has the sun come out. And

starting work was so hard to do after an exciting holiday.

I was so sorry to hear that you left some of your personal belongings back in the hotel, I hope they weren't valuable. I am still waiting for my Middleburg trip refund from the Belgium Travel Service to come through but with old Gilbert handling it I think that I may have to wait some time yet.

But the most important thing I have to say is that I can get down to London to see you any weekend even given short notice, so all you have to do is tell me when. I'd get an early train on a Saturday morning which would get me in to Euston at 9.15am and I could be at Waterloo soon after that, say around 10 o'clock.

The only thing I want to do right now is to see you again for as the night comes down over Liverpool and the golden sun sets, my thoughts go back to the warm calm evenings without a breath of wind we spent walking along the beach watching the night fall and Ostend lighting up

casting a peaceful shadow over the small fishing boats in the harbour, oh how I wish we could live it again.

In two and a half weeks there is a bank holiday 25th, 26th and 27th of August which means that I am on holiday on the Monday. This long weekend means that I could come down to Midhurst to see you and your description of the countryside was charming and I couldn't ask for more beautiful guide to show me around.

So I am looking forward to you letting me know when I can see you in London. I do hope it is soon because I miss you so much B, and look after yourself.

PS: I'll give you my phone number so you can contact me if any problems arise.

Home phone number 0151 639 8970

Work phone number 0151 709 0141 Ext 2835

Lovingly, JP

Liverpool 10th August 1979

Dear B,

Thanks for the postcard from the Isle of Wight and I hope you received my letter I wrote last Wednesday. If you did get it, your card and my letter must have passed each other in the opposite direction on their respective journeys.

Yes, I did have a good weekend. I went to the Knebworth Rock Festival at Stevenage in Hertfordshire. Jim managed to borrow a hippy bright orange Volkswagen (VW) Beetle that got us down there. The fab highlight was Led Zeppelin who came on stage at 9.45pm and rocked for nearly three hours. The show was really spectacular with lasers shooting into the night sky. Luckily it stayed sunny all day although it went a bit cold at night. But we didn't mind as we hitched up with a pony tailed old flower power medicine man kind of guy and we lit a small camp fire to keep us warm under the stars as he passed his "peace pipe" around and the herbal resiny sweet smoke hung dreamily and then

floated away. Led Zeppelin was just the most amazing gig ever under that clear indigo midnight sky. The performance ended with *“Stairway to Heaven”* then three encores - *“Rock and Roll”*, *“Whole Lotta Love”* and *“Heartbreaker”* … Sheer brilliance.

We drove back through the night stopping for a brief kip in a lay-by then had breakfast very early at a motorway service station …. there were so many fans returning home that the girl on the till couldn’t cope and we had eaten our full English while waiting to pay at the self service, so to help others and keep the queue down, all those who had finished, quietly but quickly returned their empty plates and trays to the racks and a free breakfast was had by all.

After a bright and sunny week it is now raining all day long but fortunately there isn’t a great deal of work to do at the moment. Anyway I hope you have brighter weather and that we can see each other soon.

Forever yours, JP

Midhurst 11th August 1979

My Dear JP,

I've got two letters from you this week and the one about the Knebworth Festival sounded like you and the gang enjoyed your Led Zeppelin weekend a lot.

I started work again on the 6th August and have been transferred to a surgical ward. Everything is so new to me as for the past few weeks I was on a medical ward. I've got to find out the routine and procedures of the ward and adjust to the way the ward is being managed but am doing fine now.

This week I had Wednesday and Friday off. I was disappointed that that I was not given the weekend as days off or else I could have gone up to London to see you.

Spent Wednesday indoors because of the rain and gloomy weather. Most of the time I studied, slept and rested. All my friends were working, so I had a very lonely day.

On Friday (yesterday) I followed my room mate Vicky, remember from Ostend, to Heathrow

Airport. One of her friends from Lebanon went there to meet his brother. It was a tedious journey and I almost wish I hadn't gone along. We got lost so many times because this Lebanese guy was not sure of driving in London.

The airport looks different to me compared to the time I landed three months ago. Everything was so strange at that time, the people, the hugeness of the airport etc. I felt like Alice in Wonderland back then.

John (JP), I am very surprised and pleased to see so much diversity and many international travellers, hundreds of overseas nationals pouring into the airport with a plane landing every few seconds. Planes from Cairo, Beirut and the Middle East and all over the world. London must be a non stop city with thousands of passengers arriving and departing all day long.

Have you got your Middleburg refund yet from Gilbert?

I wouldn't be surprised if you never see that money again. But we did have a marvellous time

in Meli Park along the Belgian coast at Adinkerke didn't we?

I enjoyed everything we saw and it was all so lovely. There is another place on the Isle of Wight - the Blackgang Chine. Haha I took a photograph with Humpty Dumpty, he was so cute and angry looking we'll have to meet up with him some time if he hasn't fallen off his wall.

I shall be looking forward to your visit. But I forgot to mention in my previous letters that King Edward VII Hospital is approximately 2 miles from Midhurst town centre and has about a mile long entrance driveway through a wood. I have a friend (he's a Taiwanese doctor and attached to the Midhurst Research Institute) and he has got a cottage on a temporary basis in the hospital grounds. I have asked him and he's glad to let us use it as he is away a lot of the time. Another alternative away from the hospital is Midhurst itself, there are a few Bed and Breakfasts for around £4 (and that does include a full English breakfast).

JP, just to confirm again that I can get away to meet you at Haslemere Station. I have requested to have at least one of the Bank Holiday days off but this all depends very much on the Sister. We have a long list of ward staff requesting for the bank holiday weekend off.

The following week I am having Wednesday and Friday off again (on Thursday I go back to the classroom for studies) so I can't come up to London to see you this week but there will certainly be other days to come. I'll just let you know.

Hopefully I shall take you to Arundel and Littlehampton when you visit. I have not seen these places properly but have passed through a few times and I like what I have seen. Or we can go to Chichester with its grand Cathedral and Priory Park.

I am going to make your visit a very "enjoyable" one.

Waiting to hear your plans.

All warmest thoughts, B

Liverpool 14th August 1979

Dear B,

Thank you very much for the birthday card and as you already knew I am a Leo. The actual date is this coming Monday 20th August and I will be 20 on the twentieth! But I'm just so glad that you were the first to wish me a happy birthday.

If you are getting any sun all I know is that Merseyside is making news headlines over its summer storms, winds and wetness. Well autumn is just around the corner, only it seems like winter up here already.

I got all of my films back that I took on the Continent, an incredible two hundred colour slides. The first ones I looked at was the Paris collection, some of my best shots were among these but there was one very special one, I don't know if you remember but I took a picture of you backlit against the Eiffel Tower, this out of the 200 is my favourite.

Before we went to Meli Park I didn't know that it was bee themed which must make it unique

perhaps in the world. We can't live without bees my nan says as they pollinate the planet and make it all so colourful. And another tip from nan … at the first sign of a cold or sore throat then a regular spoonful of honey and a small glass of whisky only it has to be a single malt and not a blended one. My boss at work Alan is his own expert on two things - Guinness Irish Stout and Scotch Whiskey. He seems to know some interesting people on Liverpool's vast dock network who regularly supply him with wooden crates of export strength Guinness and I have to say that Balvenie Single Malt is a whiskey that is remarkably golden and honey sweet and does the job!

So hope you're well and fine and take care and see you soon.

All my Love, JP

PS: Let me know the date of your birthday

Liverpool 16th August 1979

B ,

By now you should have received my letter and card, I hope you like it and the sentiments as printed are so true .... I miss you every minute of each day.

It's good that you are settling in to the surgical ward. I understand how things work as our Forensic Pathology Department whilst being part of Liverpool University is actually attached to the Royal Liverpool Hospital.

I can imagine your chaotic day out at Heathrow with that melee of the crowds. Getting into Belgium was quite enough for me with all that waiting to get through customs, mind you it was well worth it for what happened next.

Liverpool (Speke Airport) compared to Heathrow is only tiny. I remember years ago my dad used to take us there for day trips to watch the old propeller driven airliners and I could even sit in the cockpit and press a few buttons and pull some levers. How times have changed because

Concorde is coming to visit Liverpool next month (we have a super long runway for a small airport).
No I haven't got my Middleburg refund yet but it was worth me cancelling that trip so you could take me to Meli Park on that fab afternoon and evening.
Thanks for all the extra details you sent me about places to stay, the doctors cottage sounds excellent and the hotel rates are really quite OK and that old "English breakfast" sounds tasty.
As for my details, I will be getting that early train as mentioned and I have a giant British Rail National Timetable Book and trains as you know from Waterloo to Haselmere are 10 to and 20 minutes past the hour so I will aim for the 9.50am or 10.20am and with only 30 minutes difference you won't have to wait too long. I am so looking forward to seeing you and us spending the bank holiday together. Any and all of those places mentioned sound thrilling places but simply hanging out with you will do.
The Best of My Love, JP xxx

Midhurst 18th August 1979 10.45pm

Dearest JP,

Received your lovely card on Friday morning. Thank you so much. I like the lovable little cat and pasted the card onto the wall opposite my bed so that I can see it at all times but most of all it is the message that is truly touching.

As I am having this weekend off I'm able to come to London to see you JP, if you are free to come down from Liverpool. I shall take the 10.00am train from Haslemere and can be at Waterloo Station by 10.45am (Saturday), can't make it earlier because I have to depend on the hospital transport. The train usually comes in on Platform 7. Waterloo is always crowded but meeting should be easy - under the famous clock but that's where everyone meets! So Platform 7 first then the clock.

Hope you had a nice birthday and we'll celebrate it when we meet. As for me I am very unfortunate or maybe fortunate. I really don't know but I was born on the 29th February. Most years I even

forget my own birthday. Anyway birthdays always make me a year older which isn't too good a thought. But the good news is, I may be older than you but at the same time always younger so I am around 6 and a half .... so work that one out!

My photographs taken in Europe have been developed but I'm not very pleased with them because it shows much more of us than the places. We will have to see all your slides one of these days.

Isn't it exciting! I've picked the first apple from the tree and I intended to give it to the horses only I am so scared stiff of the horses huge teeth that before the horse can really eat the apple out of my hand I quickly withdrew it. I was so afraid the horse might eat my hand instead. I tried several times to try to let the horse take the apple from my hand but I'm just frightened of the horses enormous teeth. In the end I had to drop the apple on the ground. I shall try again the next time I go for a walk in the hospital grounds and woods.

It’s getting colder everyday I think - just like the time I landed in England. I’m waiting for the engineers to fire up the hospital boilers and turn the radiators on in our annexe of rooms.

JP, do let me know before the end of the week whether I can meet you at Waterloo Station. Most probably I won’t have time to reply to you again.

So until I see you next, keep warm and take the greatest care of yourself.

Love, B

Liverpool 21st August 1979

Dear B,

I received your letter today, I spent pretty much a whole lunch hour choosing that card with the cat so I guessed right then, you'd like it. I did have a nice birthday we all trundled over to the "Augustus John" which is a pub on the Liverpool University campus. We have such a large team if you include the doctors and technicians that there always seems to be a birthday or an excuse to pop over at any dinner time. Stuart who is one of the forensic post mortem technicians gave us a lift home in his original powder blue Ford Escort. In the evening I went out for a quiet drink with Jim at the "Farmers Arms" pub in Wallasey Village.

Its so strange even though we are young as one gets older and especially since I started working, the months seem to drift by extremely fast, too fast really and as you see out an old year into a new year, you wish that you were younger again.

Talking about ages and birthdays, Robert Plant, Led Zeppelin's lead singer, Dave Brock from the band Hawkwind and Phil Lynott from those Irish rockers Thin Lizzy have the same birth date as mine so I am in good company there and I went with Mac to see "The Police" at the Liverpool Empire and they have a great song called *"Born in the 50s"* which includes all of us and during the song, Sting their lead singer gets the crowd going by asking is anyone born in 1950 .... then 1951 and all the way up to 59 and the audience responds loudest from those born from the mid fifties onwards. It was brilliant.

The Police were supposed to play a small club in Liverpool "The Penny Farthing" but because of there being more fans than tickets the concert was hastily transferred to Liverpool's largest theatre across the road. It wasn't full but the band were incredible. Me and Mac bought their single *"Roxanne"* about eighteen months ago and it didn't really do anything but we used to take to it all the parties and play it loud. At the Empire The

Police played a new song that isn't even released yet. They said they wrote it on the tour bus and it was called *"Message in a Bottle"*. The audience went crazy and Sting was even pulled out of the shower in his boxer shorts and dressing gown to come back on stage to play it again as an encore. The Police are going to be massive and this song must be a number one! I am still humming the lines over and over again "a*nd I'm sending out an SOS"* - can't wait for their second LP.

Back to birthdays one shouldn't dwell on time because we have the future to look forward to.

I see that you fell into the holiday photographers trap, photographing one another all the time. Well at least you've got an indelibly genuine series of shots. I only hope that some of the backgrounds are recognisable and not too wonky.

Your description of the countryside around your hospital sounds so peaceful. Living in a city we have to travel a few miles before we can see any proper fields with horses. I think I would be a bit

cautious or brave to offer my hand up and into a horses mouth ..... my nan used to say that the way we eat chocolate sometimes is “like giving a donkey strawberries”. I’m not sure that donkeys eat strawberries but I have been known to feed them carrots which are long and dangly and is a lot easier than apples!

The most exciting thing (at last) will be seeing you again this weekend and am looking forward to catching you at Waterloo this Saturday (25th August). I will be there well before 10.45am and crowds or not, platforms or clocks I’ll find you.

Yet again as I write, the rain pours down against the window pane and is so depressing. It says a lot when the most exciting thing on the telly is hoping the weathermen predict fine weather.

On my birthday the postal rate jumped up from 9p to 10p (10%), that’s first class mail. Each day I walk past Liverpool’s main post office so I know my letters should travel a little quicker to reach you out in the sticks.

If you reply this week I will be probably have left and be on my way to London so see you Saturday.

All the Love in the World, JP xxx

Liverpool 28th August 1979

Dear B,

Difficult to express words when I opened my birthday present from you at the weekend. The solid silver Van Amstel pendant that you bought when we were in Amsterdam at the diamond centre. Well silver is a precious metal and so shall I treasure it.

Getting home from the hospital was much easier and quicker than I expected, all of the buses and trains seem to run in conjunction with one another. That 1.30pm bus from the end of the hospital drive from Midhurst got me to Haslemere Station and at 1.57pm I was heading to London. Arrived at Waterloo at 2.50pm then an easy connection to Euston and the by the time I bought my ticket the Liverpool train was in so I caught the 3.50pm and was back at Liverpool Lime Street by 6.25pm and home 30 mins after that, so five and half hours door to door was super fast.

As I promised I am sending you a stack of Liverpool postcards with all the famous landmarks, our two great cathedrals, parks, city centre, Liver Building, the Mersey Ferry and St. John's revolving restaurant tower that dominates the skyline.

On the journey back to Liverpool there was plenty of time to relive that wonderful bank holiday weekend in the lovely Edwardian cottage in the woods and waking up with you to the dawn birdsong and the soft summer light filtering through the thin bedroom curtains illuminating our intimacy. I only wish the days could have lasted longer.

Midhurst is quaint and so English with its duckpond and Cowdray Park, it was all calm and peaceful and also the great time we had in London and the time spent together meant the most to me.

The Chinese restaurant in Midhurst was only the second time that I've had a Chinese meal (unless a Vesta Chow Mein from a cardboard box counts -

nothing like the real thing!). We had our last Christmas works do at a Chinese restaurant in Liverpool and we just had all these dishes in the centre of the table, soupy dumplings, prawns on toast, seaweed that looked like shredded green plastic but tasted quite nice, spare ribs, crispy sweet and sour pork balls, noodles, fried rice, that's all I can remember and lychees for a sweet. The Chinese in Midhurst was nice and the food tasted much better and probably more authentic but Liverpool does have an old chinatown but I must confess that I've never been but when you come up here we will give it a try .... and you can do the ordering.

At last, summer has returned to Liverpool and its now super hot and probably the same in Midhurst.

I hope that we can sort out seeing each other again as soon as possible because not being with you really hurts .... take care.

Deep Love, JP xxx

Midhurst 31st August 1979

Dearest JP,

Thanks very much for the postcards of Liverpool. It's much nicer than I imagined Liverpool to be. The St. Johns Beacon in Cases Street must be the revolving restaurant you told me about.

Back home on Penang Island our 45 minute revolving restaurant built by the Merlin Hotel Group is based on a similar pattern and it is really posh and expensive to dine up there.

The Cathedral which has a roof like a crown is indeed beautiful and an unusual sight to behold.

I was surprised to see the postcard showing the parks of Liverpool though.

Since you went home to Liverpool the weather has been more sunny so guess it must be the same with you.

I don't think its fair that the weather is now so good just wish it had been brighter for longer when you came down. My only regret is that I didn't take you to Chichester or somewhere else.

I went to Chichester today to shop for winter (well I intended to) but ended up buying stuff to wear now and other things. Yes the countryside is nice and most of the crops have been harvested and I could see bundles of hay and the brown bare fields amid some still plots of green.

(August 31st is Independence Day in Malaysia and it's now 22 years since Malaysia gained independence from British rule).

JP, I'm glad that you like my birthday present. I remembered the way you kept looking at the silverware when we were in Amsterdam. If it's too big or awkward to wear keep it with your old family war medals in that tin box you mentioned and keep it until you're a grandfather one future day.

I shall try to arrange to have my days off again on the weekends so to see you in London.

Actually some of us girls do secret shifts on odd days when we are off and evenings at Charlie's Chinese Restaurant here in Midhurst. We help out washing the dishes or mixing drinks but we

don’t waitress up front because if matron found out she’d go spare but we get free meals and extra pocket money out of it.

It’s not bad in the nurses home as all our meals in the canteen are supplied and all our washing and bedding is cleaned and our rooms too. A small portion of our salary is taken off for all this but it’s worth it.

When you went home on that Monday and I was back on the afternoon shift I did wonder how your journey was especially as heavy summer rain was forecast and having to wait for buses and trains and am amazed that it went so smoothly and quickly.

Hope to be with you again soon and think of you daily.

Love, B

September 1979

Who Knows Where The Time Goes

“Fairport Convention”

Liverpool 5th September 1979

Dear B,

I knew you’d like those views of Liverpool and there are so many other places to see here as well. They don’t print a great selection of tourist cards anymore and most of the pictures seem to be left over from the 1960’s its just the famous views that sell the best.

For a city Liverpool has loads of parks big and small with boating lakes, funfairs and tropical plant houses …. where they even grow bananas and pineapples. Liverpool was built mainly by the Victorians and a lot of the red brick buildings, houses and parks will probably last until the end of time.

The Catholic Cathedral (called The Metropolitan Cathedral of Christ The King) with the crown of spires has its uppermost part completely made

up of richly coloured glass and when you are inside you become totally bathed in purple, blue, crimson, orange, red and green light, its amazing. For my final art college photography exam folio I chose this for my architectural exterior and interior shots and I must show you them.

This Indian summer is warming things up and working in the studio under the hot lights can be too much to bear at times. But once you get outside by the river it's just nice, sunny blue skies with the faintest wisp of a gentle breeze drifting in off the sea. I actually work facing one of the brightest and best views in Liverpool. Our photographic studio faces west and being on the top floors at the top of the hill near the Catholic Cathedral we get spectacular views towards the waterfront and look right into the fantastic sunsets.

Over the weekend someone broke into our forensic department in the hospital and stole one of our Nikon FM2 cameras worth £750, I doubt if we'll ever see that again so it's a good job we have

a couple more as spares locked away separately. Sometimes it is safer to lock expensive things in our ordinary private coat lockers to fool any intruders looking for official locked cupboards and drawers.

I thought the weather was perfect when I came down to Midhurst and maybe next time Chichester would be good.

Don't worry about the silver Van Amstel pendant, it's easy to wear with the light silver chain.

I also have been shopping recently, window shopping mainly just looking to see what to get next. Oh yes! The catering staff in our hospital canteen have gone on strike again and so now there are no cooked meals for the patients or staff, only snacks and cold salads.

I have been searching through a lot of my old colour prints and have many of London and Wales and tons of stuff from my folio work and loads of spares that I'll bring down for you next time.

If you are short of taped music, Sony have just launched a portable battery operated “Walkman” cassette player that you can carry around with you and it has ear phones. I have loads of LPs and singles and can record onto blank cassette tapes from my record deck. You name it and as long as it’s rock I probably have it, Blondie, The Police, Deep Purple, Free, Moody Blues, Rolling Stones, The Who and of course our Beatles and Led Zeppelin and tons of other bands. Let me know what you fancy and I can always post them down to you.

I walk past Liverpool Lime Street Station every day and British Rail have an offer of reduced weekend return tickets to London which is half the normal fare. Leaves Liverpool on a Friday afternoon so arrives about teatime and I could be in Haslemere early Friday evening which would give us a whole weekend together.

Miss you even more.

Lovingly, JP xxx

Midhurst 8th September 1979

Dearest JP,

Thanks for all your prompt replies. For the past few weeks I have not received any letters from home at all. Guess my folks are tired of writing to me already! So it is indeed a great pleasure to get yours so I can read them slowly over and over.

Your description of Liverpool's giant tropical trees with bananas and pineapples in the hot house sounds very interesting. We have lots of banana and pineapple plantations back home. Malaysia is one of the worlds largest exporters of canned pineapples especially the super sweet ones grown in our southern peninsula and they are also grown as a cover-crop.

It is sold at such a cheap price back home and I find banana's and all tropical fruits very expensive here in the UK. But still I love bananas and we have a tiny greengrocers in Midhurst.

Now that you mentioned boating lakes, I remember very vividly before I left for England and while I was in the Federal Capital (Kuala

Lumpur) applying to the British High Commissioner for my visa here I went boating with my cousins in our large man made river and lake in the pleasure grounds and park of the Lake Gardens. We managed to get our minute boat into the middle of the lake and then it started getting crazy and going round and round. Between the three of us we started paddling in different directions which made things worse. I really don't no how we did manage to get back to shore but we did. I jumped out of the boat onto the river bank as soon as I could and it was such a relief to let my feet touch land again. It was fun although so exhausting and I promised myself not to get into a boat again with these two cousins.

I'd love to see your photographs of Liverpool's Cathedrals and all your pictures. I like to see your pictures because as you realised when you leafed through my photo album, all the pictures, well most of them depict people. That's because I like remembering those good old days and those

once upon a time friends. It's mostly the occasions I want to look back on when you are far away from home. I can imagine myself as an old lady of 80 (if I live up to that age) thumbing through my album and recollecting faded memories … not to mention sitting in my rocking chair.

It is not surprising that your department was broken into. One hears about such horrible and awful news nowadays. About your camera which was stolen. At the going rate of £1 = Malaysian Dollars (Ringgits) $4.65 that's around $3487 which is a great deal of money that's roughly what I might earn in a year back home. Its a good job you have other cameras or else you might as well pack up and go home!

I have just realised my writing is getting smaller compared to normal so you may need to get a magnifying glass to read.

I have enclosed a printed pink sheet with a load of local Bed and Breakfast and Guest Houses in surrounding villages and whilst cheap they are

probably impractical and it must cost you a fortune coming down here each time to see me.

I bring good news as I have put in a request to have Saturday 22nd September off. Don't know if it will be granted but by then I will have my students railcard that gives me half price travel.

And I have a spare "Penang Island Malaysia" printed Tee Shirt for you next time.

Dear me! … those English strikes again! Poor you and poor patients! Do you like cold salads? We have a cold ham salad at least once a week and I'm beginning to hate salads so it must be awful to put up with them every day. By the time the strike is over you'll be saying believe me "I'll never want to eat a salad again".

P/S … Just remembering our continental breakfasts and how you and I had to "steal" those extra bread rolls and fillings from the buffet table to keep us going till evening time …. when we were running out of money.

Strikes are not allowed in Malaysia and you can be arrested and put in prison under the Internal

Security Act and it's worse if you are a Government employee.

The strikes in Britain at the beginning of the year nearly put me off coming to England. All my friends discouraged me, painting a black as picture as they can against England. My dad was the one who nagged me the most. I made many decisions openly contradicting my parents. I hurt my mother a lot by coming over here but as you put it, being away from somebody whoever it may be will always cause some kind of damage and pain.

It's really nice of you JP to want to tape those songs for me. I like the groups you mentioned but who are The Moody Blues? Anyway whatever your choice will do and it will be good to see if your choice is really mine. No need to post the tape or tapes I can wait till you next see me.

I'm not very happy on the ward today and displeased and angry with Sister because she made a remark to me which was partially my fault while this other nurse wasn't mentioned

because she was already off duty. While I'm still under training I won't say much but wait till I'm qualified then I shall start opening my mouth and speak up for myself. Now I depend very much on the report which I'm going to get before I leave this ward and I hate to be in such a position especially when I can't say what I feel.

I shall get this in the last post before the weekend but no need to hastily reply as I know you'll always be there for me. Anyway I travelled nearly 7000 miles to get here so there must be a good reason.

Counting the days, B

Liverpool 11th September 1979

Dearest B,

Your letters always arrive in the morning post after I have left for work so I always write mine in the evenings because I leave at 7.45am in time to get to work around 8.30am. It sounds messy but there is a bus stop outside our house and I take the number 1 bus to Seacombe and take the 8.00am Ferry across the Mersey then either hop on a 79 bus or walk through the city centre up the hill to the Duncan Building which is in Daulby Street off Pembroke Place (I always think that the address sounds very refined but its just ordinary really). We officially work an 8.45am to 5.15pm day but we are always on standby to cover and photograph any deaths that come into our hospital or the old Victorian City Mortuary and in 1976 we took over the work that the police used to do as the Liverpool Coroner requested that from that point on our Forensic Department would cover all photography especially unexplained deaths, murders, suicides, accidents

etc. Some will probably find it gruesome and scary but I am used to now after 4 years. We got the official go ahead for all Coroners cases because of the way we handled the Liverpool Speke Airport tragedy when a young Air Hostess didn't wait just a few seconds and she walked into the aircraft propeller blades. The police made a such a mess of the pictures that we were called in to start again and, well we ended up doing all the hospital and Coroners reports because of the quality of our photographs. Being a waterfront city and port we do get our fair share of unusual death's up here and you would be surprised how often the tide brings in "Floaters" (that is an official term). Sometimes they wash ashore but also we get bodies trawled up in fishing nets and if they have been in the water for ages then it can be almost impossible to determine the original cause of death. I am sure that many sailors from all over our oceans may have simply fallen or been pushed overboard. As with all major cities we have major fires, murders (guns, knives,

strangulations) and some very inventive suicides. I was called to photograph a guy in his late 30s who had thought out a very clean method of ending his life. He wrapped some lightweight fine metal wire around both wrists and hands and then connected the last length of the wire around a metal screwdriver and then he plugged himself into a mains socket. All I had to photograph was a tiny black scorch patch on the entry and exits of his clasped hands and wrists. All very sad.

We often have homeless tramps who have been discovered sometimes days or even weeks after dying in odd places or lonely old people who live alone and no-one has missed them and they have been found deceased later. One of the things I have learnt to do is to voluntarily close down my olfactory senses (sense of smell) as you can imagine how a decomposed corpse turns out. We once had some builders walk off a site behind the city morgue as they couldn't stand the smell from our external extraction vents from

one of the “floater” cases … never mind them I was inside the mortuary!

I once took a call and his will sound bizarre but I had to retrieve a head from a railway suicide in Liverpool and bring it back to the pathology studio. Not being able to find a taxi I had to carry what was a heavy and macabre specimen in a white bucket with a lid up Brownlow Hill, anxiously and quickly with the thought of not slipping or tripping on a pavement and the effect of what might drop out and roll down back into the city centre.

Anyway enough of what I am doing for the time being.

Your letters always seem to arrive at the start of the week but they cheer me up when I get home in the evening.

You mention about Malaysia’s fruit exporting, I don’t think England exports any at all. Liverpool is and always has been the UK’s major port for importing fruit. I know someone (in fact he knows everybody) and he’s called Michael, a

Rastafarian and has contacts with the dockers who unload the Jamaican banana boats. That's not all he imports and he carries a very high quality sweet resin "tobacco" in his gold pocket watch with a false back .... he is very generous and basically lets all his friends share his cannabis for free and he gets a lot of invites to our parties.

The dockers always seem to be on strike which means the ships have to wait a long time to unload their cargo and this delay causes a lot of fruit to go bad and this with other economic factors is what pushes up the shop prices.

Sugar is cheap on Merseyside because the big sugar company "Tate and Lyle" have their massively big sugar refinery situated right in the middle of Liverpool's Docklands with what must be the worlds largest sugar silo, an incredible arch dome shaped building that rises high into the sky above the docks by the river. The other commodities that come into Britain via Liverpool are iron ore and crude oil which are both basic raw materials.

I had a sort of similar experience to your fracas on the boating lake. About 30 minutes drive from us is the old Roman City of Chester and the River Dee runs right through it and the river is the border between England and Wales, a sort of natural boundary. Well anyway you can hire motorboats and “putt putt” up and down the river. You book a boat for 30mins, 60mins and so on. Only at one end there are some small rapids which are quite dangerous. They may be safe for canoeists to ride but definitely not for small motorboats. This one time my brother and I got caught in a swift current heading and taking us towards the dip and rapids and it took a police launch to help us out of a very tricky situation. It seems alright now but it was fairly frightening it seemed at the time.

I have sorted some large poster sized colour prints of my photographs that I will bring down and some extra spare pictures for your albums.

I also have a collection of very, very ancient old black and white and sepia prints dating from the

early 1900s of very old relatives and places during the Boer War and World War I. These are quite evocative and each image has left us a permanent record of a time gone never to return, there is a kind of mystical or supernatural aura that emanates from these pictures as they are trying to tell us something or warn us. But I believe in Peace and Love and if everyone else did and found peace within themselves we would all be in a better place. Anyway I'm looking ahead to the future and seeing you.

Your writing is getting smaller but its fine, mine seems rather large to me but you'll notice I've started using both sides of the sheets otherwise I think you'd probably be drowning in messy paper all over the place.

I looked at the pink sheet of places to stay around Midhurst and it's useful because it has phone contact details so we can book in advance if we fancy it. Don't worry about the expense it's not too bad and we could raise an eyebrow or two at

these guest houses … We could pretend to be John & Yoko when we check in!

You might think I am joking but scousers have a great sense of humour and some may take offence but believe me when you come up here, be prepared to be called Yoko and you may take that as an ultimate compliment because Liverpool is famous for welcoming everyone and your favourite song is Deep Purple's *"Woman from Tokyo"* and you don't half look Japanese so you can be my Yoko!

Keeping my fingers crossed that you can get those Saturdays off, just let me know and that's good news that you have your railcard sorted at last which helps make things easier and cheaper on any train in the UK.

At last you'll be glad to hear our catering strike is over. I have been taking in butties (that's Scouse for sarnies ….. sandwiches you'll need to learn our language up here). I got tired of those every day but at least the patients and us can look forward to some decent meals again. Salads are alright

though and the recent Pot Noodles are catching on here in Liverpool. We buy them in bulk from a warehouse store called Makro but there is only one flavour which is chicken and mushroom. They cost 25p in the shops ... you'll be laughing at our English efforts at Chinese noodles but I bet this new invention or creation catches on especially at these prices. But be warned they are super tasty as long as you give them a good stir at the bottom of the pot.

I will record a couple of LPs for you when I decide which ones to tape but I'll get it sorted.

Sorry to hear about your anxious moments you had to put up with on the ward and hope you still get a good report from the Sister in charge. We all have to get on with bosses and sometimes they can be alright and nice but when they are a pain they are a right pain.

It's a good job you shook off all of your friends warnings not to come to England because there is so much to do here, places to visit and explore, you are going to like it a lot B, and if you hadn't

come then you would never have entered my life so serendipity does exist and the two of us must be meant for something. And the “pleasures” of that time in Belgium and what we got up to that weekend in the old cottage in the woods can never be taken away.

You say you reminisce over the good old days (I smile because we are still young) but sometimes when I’m sitting in these empty train carriages watching the world speed by I too think back to childhood days of the early 1960s recalling memories and events then brought back to the present thinking how quickly time has flown past and how it keeps on going, waiting for no one just like John Lennon and Paul McCartney’s Beatle song *“For No One”* from their “Revolver” LP. It all seems so odd and so sad at the same time. And another of my favourite moody songs about time passing is *“Who Knows Where The Time Goes”* by the sadly now passed on Sandy Denny. Sandy recorded a few slightly different versions of it but the one I like best is her with

Fairport Convention and it is just so hauntingly atmospheric, sad and gorgeous at the same time ..... *across the evening sky* ..... *all the birds are leaving* .....
I just love that opening line. Love, JP xxx

PS, Looking forward to the Penang Island shirt as I only have a couple of T Shirts myself because it's always cool even during our northern summers ... well sometimes!

Midhurst 14th September 1979

Dearest JP,

I'm having Friday & Saturday off (21st, 22nd September), I shall be in London by Friday morning to catch up with a friend from Malaysia. Let me know your plans and most probably I can see you in London.

The radio just announced a dry and bright autumn forecast to last the weekend, in fact I hate it when it's too hot like back home, like being on the equator.

So just seven days and I'll be seeing you!

Lots of Love, B

PS, Just received your nine page letter and wonderful reading .... You'll have to stop making me hot and all blushing with your reminders of what we get up to!

Liverpool 17th September 1979

Dear B,

Fantastic news that your having this Friday and Saturday off (21st & 22nd) and that you will be in London on the Friday.

I will get the 12 noon train from Liverpool which is due at London Euston at 2.50pm so I could meet you there. The arrival platforms are always different not like Waterloo but Euston is London's most up to date mainline station and while it's an ugly place to look at, the platforms are close together in a straight line and you have to walk up an incline so the crowd come through the gates a bit more slower, its dead easy really.

Apologies for the short letter but I am shooting out immediately to post it straight away.

Weather forecast looking good and I have a cassette and some prints for you.

See you soon. All my Love, JP xxx

Liverpool 24th September 1979

Dear B,

Home safe and sound and we squeezed the most out of Friday and Saturday. I was back at Waterloo for 10.55pm on Saturday night then dashed on the tube to Euston. I caught an unscheduled train back to Liverpool. There is always the regular ten to one in the morning (through the night milk and paper train) but last Saturday there was this one at 11.55pm a really long one with twenty carriages. I think they must have been shifting spare ones up to Lime Street, Liverpool and I had my own private undisturbed carriage and compartment, nice and lonely and the heating for once was working. The journey at night always takes ages, nearly twice as long as normal, this one took four and a half hours so I was back at Lime Street at around 4.30am. I took a taxi home and was in the house at 5.00am and headed straight to bed. It was so difficult to sleep on the train because it was slow, bumpy and just rattly

and noisy and I was so sleepy and tired that I must of slept most of Sunday.

I did need to get into an extra gear for work on Monday following a beautiful weekend. I enjoyed Chichester and the Cathedral and the peaceful afternoon in the park in the shade of the sun watching the local hockey match (which was a first for me) and seeing the autumn leaves drifting aimlessly down to earth, all very English again.

A funny incident occurred on the Haslemere - London train on Saturday night. A couple got on at Guildford and they were returning from a wedding and they were very merry. They were throwing confetti all over the place and super happy and they did cheer all the passengers up in the carriage with all their antics and we all arrived at Waterloo rainbow coloured and plastered from head to toe in paper confetti stuck to us .... brilliant.

Hope your taxi finally came on time at Haslemere as it was getting very late, damp and cold to wait

around. The wind and rains have died down and sunny dry spells are hovering over Liverpool.

The T Shirt is a snug perfect fit and when I looked closely, saw how many different places there are to visit in Penang … I guess one day far in the future (if we can ever afford it) you might take me there. And it will never get cold out in Malaysia so no coats are needed, here we need all sorts for four seasons but I like seasons and change and the different colours they bring.

I have been writing poetry since I was in the 6th Form (A-Levels) and I shall try to compose a poem. Remember you asked if I could write one sometime whilst we were sitting together at the bus shelter on Saturday night. Let's see if I can compose a one off.

One of these days I am also going to write a message and put it in a bottle. I reckon that I will need a decent robust dark green or blue wine bottle with a strong cork and the best place to launch it is not off our shore at New Brighton (it will only get washed up on the beach at West

Kirby or Hoylake just a few miles away) but throw it from the back of the Mersey Ferry when the tide is rushing out of the estuary into the Irish Sea, then it will stand a good chance of making it to at least Ireland .... or who knows all the way to float up the Hudson River, New York or end up on a far flung beach in Montevideo, South America .... and what messages there must already be sailing the *"Seven Seas of Rhye"* .... (great song by Queen). Oh well what dreamers you and I are!

Your nurses home in Pine Lodge is really good being an Edwardian secluded single storey building and well away from the hospital in the wooded grounds. And it's actually quite private so it seems safe for me to stay over with you and yours is better and bigger than a hotel room and Vicky, Amy, Katharine and Anne are really true best friends for being so discreet and helping us and guarding us from any prying eyes.

As soon as I start each journey home from Sussex, in my head I'm planning the next one. So wishing you.

All my Love, JP xxx

Midhurst 27th / 28th September 1979

Dear JP,

Your letter arrived on Wednesday which is super quick .... I'm starting to talk like you with all this "super stuff". It sounded like a long and awful train journey to me but you seem to enjoy all this, especially being used to following Tranmere Rovers all over the country by trains and coaches and borrowed cars.

The hospital taxi came just a few minutes earlier than expected after the train departed carrying you further away from me. I went inside the waiting room reliving the weekend we spent together. The taxi didn't go straight to the hospital. I was the only person mean't to be booked and picked up at the station but we had to go into the town centre to pick up Albert at the Georgian Hotel in Haslemere (he's the man who works the hospital switch board and does the night shifts). He was dining and wining his newly acquainted Italian girlfriend and he's 65 but still behaves like he is the most eligible bachelor in

town. They were just about sober but a bit on the high side.

The next few days in the ward were quite quiet without much nursing to be done which left me at a loose end and since Sister doesn't like the nurses to be idle I had to look for something to do. I collected some of my patients dirty nightdresses and hand washed them. I didn't mind doing that because its part of the caring for them, in my own way. Other times I spent tidying up their individual rooms as the King Edward VII hospital was originally built like that as a sanatorium with most of the beds being in isolation for TB (Tuberculosis) cases and during the war it was an RAF hospital and it still has an RAF wing. By the end of the week I should be ready to move back to a surgical ward.

This week my days off are Tuesday and Thursday which is called "split duties".

On Tuesday morning I followed Ernie (he's the hospital bus driver) together with another nurse to Godalming. Ernie had to deliver some letters to

the hospital solicitors in Godalming. It wasn't very far about half an hours ride. Godalming is much the same as Haslemere except the rows of shops and houses seem longer and there are far more of them. It was quite a job finding where the office was as we were given the wrong address and he was glad he had three pairs of eyes which were better odds than his set of one.

After this he promised to take us to I.C.I. - its a kind of research sort of place for plants and fruits and its overall purpose is to produce and sell produce at a much lower price than what is on the supermarket shelves. I.C.I is sort of tucked away in Fernhurst but close to Haslemere but its away from the main areas as you have to negotiate a maze of narrow side lanes. There are lots and lots of green houses and rows and rows of apple and pear trees. It really is a huge and vast place. We are so tempted to stop the car and climb down and pick the apples and there was nobody in sight to stop us.

But in the end I.C.I have a tiny shop stationed there and we got all that we wanted and the prices were a great bargain compared to our local greengrocers. So it seems the next few days I will be eating a fruit and more fruit diet all day long.

Continued 27th September

The sun is shining again so it isn't depressing.

I have a box of chocolates given to me by one of the patients which we can share, I still haven't eaten the box of shortcake biscuits that you gave me yet.

I went into Midhurst the other day and made myself a member of the West Sussex County Libraries and it was free. We are allowed to borrow 3 books for up to 3 weeks. I borrowed the very large print books and the librarian kept on asking me whether I have bad eyesight and I just told her that I can read faster if the text is bigger. She was surprised, I though she was going to send me to the opticians in the High Street!

I woke up one morning at 5am and looked out of the window and remembering what you told me about UFO's it was really a sort of strange, scary and eerie feeling as though the aliens were looking down from above. If they were to land, then the secluded woods around here are very

ideal. Anyway I am not ready for a close encounter of the third kind just yet.

When are you going to attend this exhibition you told me about? Anyway enjoy it if you go. Posting both these letters as one on the 29th September in the morning.

Take care, B

October 1979

When The Lights Are Out

“Slade”

Liverpool 5th September 1979

B,

Our postal service must be in overdrive as our letters arrive super fast these days.

At work last week I have been just the opposite to your circumstances. Bernie my young trainee photographer that we have has been and still is on holiday which means we have had a gradual build up of work so I have been extra busy. Our replacement camera for the one stolen is arriving this week and hopefully the mad rushing around from studio to post mortem room to darkrooms will slacken off.

I.C.I. (International Chemicals Industries) have a large plant up on Merseyside too, only here it’s all about petroleum based products and paint and is as far removed from research into agriculture and fruit as you can imagine. The plant in

Fernhurst sounds a lot more glamorous and is helping the consumer and maybe our earth in some way. We get our fresh fruit and vegetables from the local market gardens which are just behind the coastal sand dunes next to the sea estuary. If I.C.I. are growing strawberries next year then count me in especially if they can produce sweet ones .... wonder what they might be doing to them though if they are experimental? Probably zapping them with ray beams from outer space!

With the nights drawing in faster now and getting colder which is something new for you, the library is a good idea to stack up on books. I have tons of paperbacks so let me know what you like to read: science fiction, thrillers, spy stuff, horror and adventure ... I can't do romance (well in books anyway). So if you have a particular preference let me know.

I think the exhibition is early next week. Its at the NEC (National Exhibition Centre), Birmingham. It will be an international display of all things

photographic and design. The NEC has only been open a couple of years and is supposed to be a state of the art series of buildings with lots of space. It seems to be used more for massive indoor rock concerts which is a move away from city theatres. I would rather be in crowd of 3000 than 10,000 what next!? All the details are in my locker at work so I need to sort that out tomorrow and how to get there.

Tomorrow (Tuesday) I'm off to Doncaster in South Yorkshire to watch Tranmere Rovers (footy match). I have been there before but it is always an adventure. The supporters (at most we have just one coach if the match is not too far) sometimes on weekdays at away games its just five of us who tramp up and down the country: me, Les, Denise, Steve and John. We sometimes hire a car if it's going to be a messy or far away place to get without a train station. There is a coach on for Doncaster which is about 100 miles away and we leave Prenton Park (Tranmere's ground in Birkenhead) at 3pm and will arrive at

5.30pm well in time for the 7.30pm kick off. We will probably get home at midnight.

I have been supporting the Rovers since my dad took me to watch a match versus Bury in 1968 and have become a mad Tranmere fan! In fact I can attest to over the last two years of going to 35 consecutive away matches without a seeing us win and that is a record for any league football team. Now you know why sometimes there are only five away fans. I have a season ticket for the home games and because of the low numbers travelling to away matches we always get “free” tickets to those games that the players give us for making the effort. The crazy but enjoyable things I do!

On Saturday I went to Hoylake its only 20 minutes away by car. I bought a new wool pullover. I was looking for a small fit as nowadays most clothes seem to only be in larger sizes.

Last Thursday I went to see the “Boomtown Rats” in concert at the Liverpool Empire, they were tremendous with an excellent stage and lighting

show and Bob Geldof is wild and it was a complete sell out and they had added a second night because of the demand and when they played *"I Don't Like Mondays"* that got a huge response from the crowd. This week I am seeing "The Darts" at the Empire you might have heard of *"The Boy From New York City"* and a few other singles. A couple of years ago I joined the Empire Concert Club, it costs £5 per year so the members get first choice of tickets for any gig. I go every week (sometimes twice) to see bands, some famous, some obscure and music is a passion of mine.

Oh, I did get a small pay increase this month, nothing to shout about really but it was welcome all the same.

The weather is unusually calm, quiet and misty. Because I live literally right next to the River Mersey, at night everything is so still, not a whisper or a rustle or a sound except maybe for the gentle hum of a ships engine slipping out in

the darkened moonlit hours. The silence can be a little eerie if you let your imagination run wild.

Save a chocolate or two for me and hope to be together with you soon. All my Loving, JP xxx

P.S. Enclosed is a poem “The Painter and The Seagull” written just for you. It’s really all about “Time Passing” in a sort of symbolic way - what has been, the now and what or where to be, if that makes any sense.

And I will get you a copy of the album “Old, New, Borrowed and Blue” by Slade … They are such a good live band and I have memories of Jim Lea their bass player wearing a bright yellow catsuit here in Liverpool standing on top of a tower or Marshall amp speaker cabinets belting out the song below:

`cos *“When The Lights Are Out”* especially when you have your lights off ..... *“and I feel a warm breath on my neck”* .... *“and you blow a beautiful blow and it makes me hit the sky”* .... Probably my favourite all time Slade song.

The Painter and The Seagull

The Painter sees within
through peeling frames
resting on a crumbling sill
what time has hid revealed

The Seagull glides
with outstretched wings
to an empty space
painted by the brushes of time
we can only stand transfixed and gaze
oh … to be that seagull, to move, to fly

Midhurst 5th October 1979

Dearest JP,

Thank you so much for the poem about “Time” I think it is beautiful and you are really marvellous composing a poem so quick. It would have taken me at least weeks and months and it wouldn’t be half as beautiful as yours. I would love to memorise it by heart but I am a bit forgetful now compared to the time I was in school, where we forced to remember long poems and then recite them.

I have clipped the sheet of paper to the wall very close to my bed.

And yes I always remember you “when my lights are out” and *“we'll be warm and willing”* haha.

P/S. I have moved rooms in Pine Lodge so the layout is quite different but still with a nice view of greens and trees.

9th October … continuing on

I went to East Croydon yesterday with my friend Kamala (you know her) and she is Indian Malaysian, to get her visa for another year. She is applying to work as a mental health nurse at the Holloway Sanatorium at Virginia Waters in Surrey. Once we're qualified we have to renew the visa ourselves in person and it's not an easy thing, also it depends on the person who renews it. If you happen to get your papers through to a kind soul in the Home Office then you'll be alright. Kamala happens to have all her papers dealt with this old fusspot who tried to make things very awkward and in spite of a letter from the Matron of our hospital she did have a difficult time with this "old lady". But she managed to get her visa for another year. I shall be very lucky if I do get my visa renewed I think, but I still have another 2 years before I need to apply.

You should get this letter by Thursday. Last week I did not feel very well so I stayed in bed to sleep it all off. I hate going to see the doctor and have the

administration Sister fussing and buzzing around me inquiring after my health and asking when I'm ready to go back to work on the ward. As it happened to be my day off I just popped into bed and slept until my temperature dropped. I know there is nothing much wrong with me just the gubbins of having a cold (and a touch of the "Old English Virus" - most probably Dr Gordon would say).

Did you scream yourself hoarse in Doncaster during the football match??

And what about the Birmingham exhibition?

You must have an amazing time attending so many concerts!

I have been doing a bit of studying and copying notes about drugs as these are the most difficult to remember and I suppose I have to keep on at it preparing for my medical assessment next year. My clinical teaching Sister always asks me not to worry about assessments yet. Whenever she sees me she always asks me to go out as much as

possible and enjoy myself as it is way too early to start thinking about exams yet.

JP, I'm so glad that I got a very good report from Sister during my previous ward despite a few anxious moments now and then. She was pleased with my work during the 8 weeks there and I actually did manage to like her a bit after the report she gave me. Anyway I did my best.

You must tell me about what you do to earn the increase in your salary. Did you go on strike?. Unfortunately for me the slight increase will only come through during my second year of training which won't be until end of April 1980.

Two months more "1980" will be upon us. At this moment I'm wondering whether I shall go through and live to the year 2000AD. I shall be in my forties then, Oh dear me! What a dreadful thought.

Do you like cartoons JP? There is a cinema in Victoria Station that screens non-stop cartoons, its a good meeting place as well, Looney Tunes a speciality!

How I wish you were in London instead of Liverpool. I go up to London so often during my weekdays off. I wish again and again that I had applied to be trained in or near London instead of out in the sticks. As it is I'm hoping that this two years S.E.N (State Enrolled Nurse) training will go by quickly.

My next holiday will be in mid January and after that my holidays will follow up with a month or two to work in between. Most probably I shall come up to Liverpool to see you during the next holidays but just how freezing does it get up north?

The first set of girls in my set have all gone off to Worthing and I am pretty much on my own in Pine Lodge. I like Worthing, it's a national type of hospital and a big town and at the seaside. We have to spend time in Worthing to do our geriatric training and they say Worthing is where all the old people live or have retired to the coast. Worthing is a nice place and the station is close to where we will be living. It may be further than

Midhurst but it's actually easier to get to and there are more frequent trains from Victoria Station. I am counting the days until they send me off to Worthing.

I wish I can see you again soon.

With Love, B

Liverpool 11th October 1979

Dearest B,

I received you letter and I'm sorry that you haven't been feeling too good. Colds are always miserable and to have to stay in bed on your day off, but hopefully these 2-3 day colds vanish quickly. I can see you are going to hate our winters so I will get you a super soft scarf from TJ's in Liverpool. Everyone shops at TJ Hughes, its a kind of ancient but a massive department store. My mum worked there for a short time in the 1960s. In fact my mum worked everywhere, she was an Auxiliary Nurse, then went into catering for private functions and was a barmaid at our local pub "The Magazine" in New Brighton. My mum also worked with Alvin Stardust (not sure if his music travelled that far to the far east) but in the early 70s he had some hit singles and my mum was a fan and much to my embarrassment asked me to go out and buy his record *"My Coo Ca Choo"*. To keep my progressive rock and glam rock credibility I had to find a record shop where I

wouldn't be recognised so I opted for a large branch of Rumbelows and my association and reputation with Bargain Box Records in Liscard was untarnished. It was the same when my mum became a fan of Bernie Flint, another Liverpudlian singer. The things you do for your parents.

I'm really "made up" (that's Scouse for feeling great) that you liked my poem, I don't find it hard too compose lines although some verses I write take a while and will build up into a poem over a number of days, adding bits and pieces here and subtracting lines and words until I think it is just right. I sometimes just sit down quietly and compose when everything is silent and there's no one around. But I can find inspiration in almost anything, dramatic sunsets or early misty morning sunrises which give great depth or just travelling home from work on the ferry especially in winter when its dark early and the lights from the waterfront and the city are sparkling and reflecting on the river. All of this I just have to

write about. Some of my poems are short, maybe only a handful of lines but I don't think its quantity of rhyme and prose, it's simply the content and that is what I work hard at.

I love to write, when I was in the junior school I had a teacher called Jane Turner who was quite old but radical. We used to use slate boards and slate pencils to write in class and Mrs Turner gathered them all up, took them away and gave us all real fountain pens with italic nibs and I was hooked for ever. When I later went to Mosslands Senior School in Wallasey I had another super English teacher Mrs. Gourlay. I wrote essay and story after story which she told me were very original and excellent but about 10 pages too long so rather than getting an A+ she used to give me C+ for disobeying her instructions on numbers of words. I guess I still am writing, only these days my letters seem to be 10 pages long. Still I did my own thing and literature was introduced to us .... I just hated Shakespeare after being chosen to play Shylock in the Merchant of

Venice, the words and lines were just plain tedious and boring to learn and then the whole class was given the book “A Kestrel for a Knave” written by Barry Hines which was made into a feature film called “Kes”. This book changed my whole life and attitude to the written word and I was smitten and just kept on reading and writing more. At school we never really did poetry, maybe that is why I enjoy writing poems now, because it was never forced on us and not knowing other works I can think up my own original lines and ideas without external influences.

A class mate of mine at Mosslands called “Coatsie” (Michael Coates) once asked me on the way home .... and this was a deep and serious question: Forget all about ambition and what you are expected to do ..... What do you REALLY want to do in the future ..... and I answered I want to WRITE a book and Coatsie said .... then you will, no I mean it, you REALLY will.

So maybe one day I WILL write a book of poems and who knows what!

Doncaster, following the Rovers last Tuesday is an old traditional mining town but I found it very quiet. To get there the motorway (M62) cuts through a range of hills like mini mountains and moors called “The Pennines” which is kind of like a border and on our side it was sunny but as soon as we passed into Yorkshire we hit dense banks of fog but we arrived on time at Doncaster’s Belle Vue Ground and yes we did shout at the match. Tranmere took the lead to go one up and then Doncaster got a late equaliser and that’s how it finished 1 - 1. It took us three hours to travel the 100 miles back due to that thick fog getting worse and it was 1.00am in the morning when I got home but Bert the Hardings Coach driver took me all the way back to my front door. Good old Bert.

Also last Saturday I travelled to Northampton to watch Tranmere, we were unlucky and lost 2-1. The football ground is odd as it is the County Ground and is also shared with the local cricket club and it is basically a kind of large open round

field and we sort of stand on the actual grass pitch behind a rope, you could even run on and score a goal we were that close.

Northampton is famous for its shoe making factories and the football team is nicknamed the "Cobblers" and Northampton is called Cobbletown. I must introduce you to Dr Martens boots and shoes … the only footwear you'll ever need.

It was a pity you were working on Saturday as Northampton is not that great a distance from London (about 60 miles) to the north and it has a very fast train service to London about 45 minutes to Euston and I could have been in Sussex later that evening but there will be plenty of other occasions in the future when I can do something like that. As it was it took 4 hours coach travel to get home.

Because we've been so busy at work this last week I was unable to go to Birmingham to that exhibition. I could have got official time off for free but it would have meant my colleagues at

work having to cover doing extra overtime during the evenings so I decided to stay and help then out.

The salary increase which came through in my last pay packet was our yearly rise, sometimes if we are lucky and our unions negotiate right we get two rises per year so I've never been on strike, yet!

Unfortunately "The Darts" concert I was going to last Friday night was cancelled just two days before it was due to take place. Whilst looking forward to it I did get my ticket changed to a rescheduled date in the future.

My next concert is under a fortnight away and me and Jim have to borrow that orange VW Beetle again to drive to New Bingley Hall in Stafford to see the huge American band "Boston" …. You may remember a track of theirs being played on the coach as we came back from Antwerp (where we almost got stranded late in the evening after almost missing the bus) … *"More Than A Feeling"*. I mentioned then that this

big American group was to eventually tour the UK.

Having a good report from your tutors makes me feel good as well and really the hospital can't ask for more when all of you are working hard to do your your best for the patients.

I know how you feel now that all of your friends have gone to Worthing. Most of my friends have all gone back to universities all over the country so we're both in the same boat.

And B you certainly must come to Liverpool to stay, no need to wait for warm weather! You can stay with us for as long as you like with so much to see and places to visit in the north; Wales, the Peak District, the Lake District for starters you can fill a lifetime up here.

We can sort something out as well for January I can easily take time off then no problem. And I am looking forward to seeing you in Worthing, I've never been there before and there's bound to be lots to do and see by the sea.

So don't let time get on top of you, yes 1980 a leap year (you can have a birthday wish at last) is just around the corner and I never contemplate the year 2000, when I will be 41 but we'll make it and let's hope we make it together.
My thoughts and love will always be with you.
JP xxx

P.S. I found a photo of Blackpool Tower, does it remind you of something similar, you go right to the top in a lift and get a spectacular view on a clear day of our north country. I will take you all the way to the top, that I can promise.

Midhurst 14th October 1979

My Dearest JP,

"I'm really made up" after reading your long letter which came through on Friday. I collected it on Friday morning during my first coffee break at 9.00am and I spent the brief 15 minutes reading through your letter while drinking tea. I read all the contents again after I came off duty. Thanks for the photograph of the ..... Eiffel Tower? in Lancashire. It looks like the one in Paris and I am certainly up for climbing all the way to the top with you. I'm sure to puff and pant but it'll be worth it. It will be like when we went out on our first date when we first met on that day in the hotel entrance lobby and you took me away to Bruges and we climbed the 366 steps of the famous Belfry Tower.

You must show me the short line poems which you compose JP. I like short ones better as I can remember them much easier.

Last week in London - Piccadilly Circus, I went to this shop that sells lots of posters and things like

that and there were a lot of short poems. It reminded me of your “TIME” and I think you’re just as good as all these prints that sell well.

Between my friend and me were were lucky enough to find and pick up a £1 and 2p at Victoria Station. Angie has sharp eyes and found the pound which she spent on a packet of cigarettes while I found the 2p and all I could spend that on was quick trip to loo.

JP, I have enclosed a copy of a 1980 pocket size calendar for you. It was given to me by one of our elderly patients. She’s around 70 years old and manages a firm. She is the Managing Director and has a factory that manufactures and prints mini calendars. On the calendar at least we can see all the bank holidays ahead for next year.

Have you read “Watership Down” by Richard Adams, it’s all about rabbits and their life and impressions of the English countryside, one of the girls lent it to me. I remember seeing the film version of Watership Down on the plane on my way here although I was too plane sick to really

enjoy it and never really got to know what it was all about.

Most of your books here in the UK seem to be written by men I think. I don't like spy stories and science fiction is beyond me and horror stories make me scared to go to the loo in the middle of the night. I like plain simple stories written about the real England and people's real or fictional accounts of life and then I don't have to look up some of these crazy words in a dictionary. I have an "O" Level English Language and now I wish I could have taken the exam for the "A" Level. But I admit I do like to frighten myself with a good ghost story and so I would welcome a few of your paperbacks.

What is the colour of your new pullover bought in Hoylake?

On Tuesday I'm going to Guildford since its my day off. I am going with a patients wife, she's Iranian (Persian) - you see she hasn't brought enough clothes to wear and so I'm going to shop with her. She speaks English and she's trying to

teach me a few words from Iran, the language is Farsi. Since her husband is a patient and doesn't speak English he gets so frustrated trying to makes us all understand him.

I'm surprised that some of these Autumn nights can be so "hot" and I have had to turn off my radiator in the room and open the windows ..... Still as it gets colder when you come down I can use you as my quilt to wrap around me haha that will keep us both warm.

Well - until we tangle under the quilt I'm off to bed now ... to dream about you!

Bye bye, thinking of you, B

Liverpool 19th October 1979

Dear B,

Just received your letter today and thanks for the calendar with all the holidays marked up. Thats a funny coincidence but last week I found a two pence piece on my way to work. I found it heading to the Post Office to drop off your letter. You're lucky to find anything up here now because all the pavements, avenues and streets are ankle deep in fallen autumnal leaves.

The weather is wildly erratic at the moment, one day cold and windy, the next hot, sticky and humid. I think it's only the English who have radiators and central heating but it was the Romans who invented it and gave us the idea.

My pullover which I bought from that small independent shop in Hoylake is light brown, the colour of set honey and it fits me perfectly anyway you will see it soon.

At long last - Hooray, I passed all my professional photography exams at the College of Art. I was so happy when I found out because the long theory

paper I was worried about I got a distinction for and a lot of other students failed. Wish you were here to celebrate. Next time I'm down I'm taking you out for a meal - anywhere you want to just name it. Getting this qualification means I now get letters after my name (L.R.P.S.) from the Royal Photographic Society and I should have all this officially approved after Christmas.

The exam pass means also that I have been promoted. The head of my department (Professor Donald Heath) must have been in a good mood because he has recommended an incremental increase of 3 grades. This means a lot and a substantial pay rise with it. So now maybe I can start to save seriously rather than just spending all the time.

Don't panic yet about your exams because they're still some time away yet. I hate exams, always have and its only natural to be apprehensive but once they're done, that's it over forever. The thing is in many ways what we both do is a kind of vocational practical sort of role of

jobs and if we can cope with the work and actually enjoy what we do then that is the secret of success and I know you will be alright.

You certainly are quite right about me being busy following the Rovers around the country. Last Saturday I went to Newport County's ground (Rodney Parade). Newport is a large city in South Wales on the coast. It's 200 miles from Liverpool and is across the Severn River from another city, Bristol. Bristol and Newport are connected by this enormous suspension bridge called the Severn Bridge. It's just like the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco in the USA.

I had a good look around Newport and it has as lot of docks that repair ships and it has a giant shopping precinct which reminded me a lot of Liverpool. Anyway Tranmere lost 2-0 so it was another long 4 - 5 hour coach journey home.

This Sunday the concert is on, we are off to see "Boston" which I mentioned is at New Bingley Hall in Stafford. This is a huge venue reserved for the big touring bands because it holds 10,000

fans. Jim is driving and Evo is coming along for the ride so its our Belgium gang getting it all together, well … three quarters of us.

Then on Monday night I am off to Port Vale Football Club to see Tranmere. I don't know why its so called because it's nowhere near the sea. It is about 60 miles from Liverpool and the town is called Burslem (just outside Stoke on Trent). Tell you about it next time and I have rounded up a book for you as well, so ghost stories it shall be!

I shall end with a short poem as requested.

Free

I am watching the lakeside

I am watching the starburst all around

Peace and silence echoes

through the forest trees

not a sound nor or a rustle or a scream

just then

for that moment

we were free

Can’t wait to tangle
and tango under the sheets and quilt with you.
Love John xxx

Midhurst 26th October 1979

Hi JP,

Did you receive my “Congratulations” card, I wish I was there to share your joy with you as well. I can well imagine the happiness you experienced when you found out the result. I can still remember very clearly when we splashed out and stayed at the Georgian Hotel, Haslemere a couple of months ago and you told me that particular exam paper did bother you quite a bit. Well! not anymore, you have every reason to celebrate and with a three grade promotion and a significant pay rise. I’m so pleased for you.

Have you heard anything about your interview with ITV now that they are back on air again after their two month strike? Or are you going to stay as you are now with this new promotion.

Before I go on I do like your poem dedicated to me “FREE”. In fact I prefer this one to “TIME” and I know by heart both verses. “I’m watching the starburst” reminded me of the other day when I went for a solitary walk around our hospital sports

field after 7pm. It was dark and quite cold and nobody wanted to accompany me, but under the clear skies and when I saw the multiple stars up there I just couldn't resist the beautiful sight and your "starburst" just came into my mind. It was very nice out there - just staring up into the sky and watching the silence all around. For a moment I really did feel free - from the pressures of work and life itself. Just wishing you could have been with me at that moment.

Did you get your inspiration from the stillness of Merseyside and the river? You mentioned before, that, at times it can have an eerie quiet calm.

How is (was) your trips to Stafford and Port Vale?

The weather certainly doesn't put you off going places! For the past whole week, the weather here is too depressing and bleak for words, always wet, cloudy and the atmosphere of the new ward, which I am working presently makes matters worse. One or two of the senior nurses here are so horrible especially to the trainee nurses. They are just watching and waiting to

jump at you for every false move and the tense atmosphere makes us pull the most miserable faces. But thank goodness, another 4 weeks then I can move off to another ward. It is best just to forget these whole ugly incidents and I won't be mentioning it again. But I shall be very relieved when the end of November comes.

The other evening it took four of us to open a bottle of red wine. It was so funny when we finally had it opened. You should have seen us, then you would have laughed out loud at us. The cork in the bottle was so difficult to pull out. One of us had to pull with a corkscrew from above while 3 of us had to hold the bottle down on the floor. It was hilarious and a mad frustrating 10 mins before we popped the cork ready for a drink. One of the English girls (Anne you know her as well) helped us and told us her dad also goes through this rigmarole especially during Christmas. Are all bottles of wine like this and do you find the same difficulty John? Have a nice weekend JP and take care of yourself. Love, B, Missing U

Liverpool 27th October 1979

Hi B,

Lovely card that you sent me, ta very much! I shall keep it in a place of distinction in my locker at work.

Last Sunday we went to the “Boston” concert at New Bingley Hall, Stafford. It is a large county show ground with an indoor arena which on some days is a giant cattle auction and market shed. I know, it doesn't sound glamorous does it? and to be honest there was a whiff of cow inside. We left Liverpool around 4pm and stopped once on the way down at Keele motorway service station. After some tea we pushed on to Stafford and arrived around 6.30pm. When everyone got in the hall via those cattle racks and straw (that’s 10,000 people) the support band came on. They were called Trickster and they were reasonably listenable. Then after they went off stage we had to wait a very long hour for Boston, but what a band they were, simply out of this world. Their light show was superlative, creating hovering and

floating saucer balls of rainbow coloured light in mid air right over our heads. Even when they finished the set they came back on stage to play four encores, wow. It took us half an hour to get out of the car park and after a stop at Sandbach motorway services I finally reached home at three in the morning.

On Monday it was off to Port Vale for the evening game and we won 1 - 0. This is the second time this season that I have been to Port Vale as we knocked them out of the League Cup back in August 3-1. Port Vale (Burslem) is in the centre of Britains pot making industry and this whole area around Stoke is known as “The Potteries”. If you come across those old tea sets in antique shops look out for those made by Wedgewood or Spode as they are the most famous makers in Stoke on Trent and they are still manufacturing today and their old stuff can be valuable.

Your antics with the wine bottle were funny. Sometimes when I pull out a cork it snaps halfway then it can be a nuisance to get the stuck

piece out as it will break up and crumble and bits of cork then fall back into the bottle and the wine. This reminds me I still have a bottle of white wine that I bought Duty Free on the way back from Belgium that I ought to get out .... time to crack it open. Wine is not my first choice I have to admit as I am a member of CAMRA (Campaign For Real Ale). This is a national organisation only recently founded in the 1970s which campaigns to keep the beer in British pubs “real” and traditional and meant how ale is supposed to be and taste as so much beer on sale over the last decade is now mass produced in metal kegs and is basically a chemical pissy fizz (as we call it) with added gas and don’t get me started on all the rubbish lagers that seem to be popular. Yes, it may sound like an odd thing to stand up and fight for, but real ale is the proper beer that comes conditioned like the old days in wooden casks and is produced by local breweries and is pulled into a glass at the bar by a hand pump called a beer engine. If we don’t fight and support this cause then

traditional brewing will disappear and we will be taken over by tasteless cheap brews from greedy large breweries and the heritage will vanish forever. So really we are campaigning (and I am passionate about this) for the future before it's too late. I will continue this debate when I see you.

And another beer tale of sorts. Alan our boss holds the local record for downing a pint of Guinness in a single go or gulp. Word got out the other dinnertime and quite a few staff and others popped into the pub (The Stags Head) opposite our City Mortuary to watch him with this mad feat of his. They had a bit of a wait as Guinness is pulled cold into the glass and he needs it to be at roughly room temperature otherwise his gullet will contract so he says. Anyway after about 20 - 25 minutes he takes up his pint and controls his swallowing reflex to stay open and the pint of dark stuff was basically poured down his oesophagus in around 4 - 5 seconds. It made me feel queer watching him and to be honest this

party piece of his looks and probably is crazy dangerous, I reckon a person could even drown by downing a pint like that.

The inspiration for the “FREE” poem came partly from the quiet flickering lights across the Mersey but also from thinking about the Lake District up here in the north. My uncle has a permanent caravan fixed on a site which is really quite a big affair as it can sleep up to 6 people and has two separate sort of bedrooms. Its in a very pretty woodland location at Newby Bridge just at the southern end of Lake Windermere. My uncle lets us use it when he’s not there and I spent much of the super hot heatwave summer of 1976 hanging out in the Lake District with Jim and Iain (Mac). For three months we had non stop blistering temperatures of nearly 100 degrees and the country was running out of water as the blazing sun caused a national drought. Odd when you think we are an island surrounded by so much water. We even had water rationing and couples (married or not) were asked by the government

to share a shower or bathe together, that's a good and an official excuse, and I can think of a couple of extra things we could do in the shower!

But those long hot days mooching about the lakes and watching the sun set from the Swan pub at the bottom of Lake Windermere has left me with a lot of inspiration.

You will enjoy travelling around the Lake District when you come up here so something else to look forward to.

I still have the posh rate card from the Georgian Hotel in Haslemere. We just turned up without a booking which was fun but pricey. £18.25 for a double room which is expensive but we need to treat ourselves from time to time. I'm keeping that rate card as proof and a souvenir. But our view of the greens and the peaceful gardens was nice.

Letter Part 2 Liverpool 30th October 1979

I have another letter from you and you should have my book by now. I had it weighed at the post office and the girl on the counter was a bit vague as to the various postage costs but said it should get through as a big letter rate.

About that interview for ITV. As yet I've heard nothing but I guess after all these weeks of striking they have a mountain of admin to get through so for the time being I'm just sitting tight waiting and content for the time being with my new promotion.

The trees in our parks are being stripped bare by the autumn winds but there is something beautiful in their bark and skeletal appearance. I can see another poem coming along someday soon.

This weekend I have another busy schedule. Tranmere are playing away at Halifax, North Yorkshire which is around 60 miles by road about an hour and a half drive. I hope the fogs have gone since my last Yorkshire trip to Doncaster.

And this Sunday yet another concert - “Whitesnake” at the Empire Liverpool. I love this heavy progressive rock band. Whitesnake is half of Deep Purple after they spilt up. David Coverdale is one of the great rock vocalists (along with Robert Plant of Led Zeppelin). This should be full of atmosphere. Just bought their debut E.P. (extended play single). It was difficult to get hold of but I managed to get a copy from “Probe Records” which is the place where everything happens in Liverpool and it’s near the famous Cavern Club where the Beatles used to play. Listen out for the songs there are three amazing tracks: *“A’int No Love In The Heart Of The City”*, *“Trouble”* and *“Long Way From Home”*, just excellent material and the best music of the year so far.

And what a day and night out last Thursday. Our Forensic Department in the university hospital arranged a trip to Blackpool for the Illuminations and Pleasure Beach. We all piled into a coach after work at 6pm and arrived in Blackpool about

7.30pm. We were all dropped off at the Pleasure Beach which is sort of like Disneyland and we spent 3 hours there. We went on so many rides especially all of the scariest ones: The Big Dipper, The Centrifuge and the then we saved till last for those who were brave the most dangerous and thrilling ride in the world, it was new and specially imported from the USA called “The Revolution” that loops the loop at 100mph. It has only just opened and cost £1,000,000 wow! The feeling you experience is way too much, just can’t describe it. After the forward loop, the car pauses for 60 seconds to enable people to get out before it gets really scary as then it does the loop again backwards. If you survive all this they actually give you a certificate to say that you braved the most daring ride in the world. Well I’ve done it now …. and just the once will do!

We finished off in the Fun House. The whole night was just fab and everyone forgot about work and enjoyed themselves. We’ll do all this and more sometime, B, even if it means waiting

till next summer, you'd like it so much, I know you would. In Blackpool we had a fish supper with chips around midnight before heading back towards Liverpool. I got home at 2.30am Friday morning. In fact as most of our department went on this jaunt and all got about 3 - 4 hours kip you can imagine how much (or how little) work was done on that Friday.

I hope you're OK at work B. By the sound of it you have been enduring more bad times than good and it happens to us all but be positive as things will improve and remember time is on your side no matter what. And we can talk these things through next time.

Anyway keep practising opening the wine and picking out the pieces of cork like I do.

I'm having an early night tonight because tomorrow Wednesday I am going to see The Moody Blues at New Bingley Hall (again) in Stafford. I am going with Len McCluskey our local union rep who is driving us and Eddie straight after work (we will knock off an hour early) to beat

the traffic, and I won't get home again until 2am Thursday morning (again).

It is Halloween as well tomorrow Wednesday, are you having any party or playing any scary games although "Duck Apple" is tame. It's supposed to be a night of fright but people seem to enjoy it and have fun. So have a good weekend.

In my dreams ..... missing you, JP xxx

November 1979

Born To Be Wild

“Steppenwolf”

Midhurst 2nd November 1979

Dear JP,

Thank you very much for your Alfred Hitchcock’s “Ghostly Gallery”. I’ve only read two stories so far and I like them both although the first one called “Waxwork” is scary but I simply like “Miss Emeline Jakes Takes Off” who flew about with her broomstick. What Alfred Hitchcock said about ghosts in his introduction dispels whatever fear I have about ghosts especially the part where he mentioned that when people see ghosts they shouldn’t scream or those poor souls will turn into nervous wrecks. And it’s so true that we tend to avoid places when we know that they are haunted and these poor souls lack human company and are so lonely.

Continued: 4th November

Presently I am also reading a book called “As I Was Passing” written by Adibah Amin. She is Malaysian and the book is all about Malaysia and our peoples everyday way of life. You might like it, it’s an interesting read.

Yesterday was wet, dull and windy and the ground was soggy but we went to pick chestnuts. Someone told us that this kind of chestnut is poisonous (it’s the one encased in the green prickly pods), but we still ate it because after roasting it smells so nice and we couldn't resist them and after all one or two of the English girls had eaten them before and they are still alive and kicking.

I have been given another bottle of white wine. Instead of having another frustrating time pulling the cork out, I pushed it in right into the bottle and whilst it floats we can all share it. Looking forward to sharing a good bottle of wine with you as too much makes me flush.

Your Guinness tale and your boss sounds daft to me but my father's favourite tipple in Penang is bottled Guinness Stout which tastes very bitter to me and everyone knows this drink with the giant pelican posters on billboards which say "Guinness is Good for You". Do you know we give Mackeson Stout to the patients and they keep it in their bedside lockers as this is supposed to be good for you and the blood. Our doctors prescribe it and allow us to dispense it off the medical ward round trolley and I have to admit it tastes sweeter and is quite OK.

Sussex seems to have a lot of your English quaint pubs and you already know the very old looking "The Angel Inn" in Midhurst … I'm still not sure if Midhurst is actually a village or town but it is small. Back home there aren't any pubs that you would recognise just American style bars, night clubs and disco's where the girls stick to Babycham or a Snowball and our national drink is called Tiger Beer which I'm sure you will tell me is not haha! real ale.

Your trip to Blackpool sounded so much fun and a team of horses wouldn't pull me to ride on The Revolution. Did you bring home your certificate of proof for travelling backwards on it ..... I want to see that!

The Hospital Social Club did arrange a Halloween Party in the Geoffrey Marshall Hall. Geoffrey Marshall is a famous consultant going back to the First World War and he was Winston Churchill's and the King's Physician and the Consultant in charge of all things pulmonary and respiratory at Guy's Hospital, London and as well as here at King Edward VII. His first wife died in the early 1970s (he married in 1918 during the Great War in "Belgium" of all places ... (Belgium must be a place where all true lovers first meet) and he just got married again recently (he's 92) and is famous in his own life time.

The party is the same as any other one but anyone can come from the local towns and join in. I missed the Bonfire Party on Guy Fawkes Day / Night in Horsham as I was working on a late

duty so I definitely want to see some fireworks next year.

I started this letter on the 2nd November and still writing today (9th Nov). I am still reading those ghostly stories and have not finished the book yet.

Autumn is really beautiful until the leaves have fallen and then they do look an untidy sight after the rain.

When I was up in London on my day off I shopped for a few winter clothes. As you mentioned, how is it that the shops cater mostly for big sized people and being a small size 8 - 10 is quite a problem for me.

We did have to drop into the National Gallery where there were a few Venetian paintings on display. We didn't have time to see all the rooms and galleries. This is my second visit and I need to return a few more times as I need lots of time before I can cover every room and every painting.

On Oxford Circus the Christmas decorations have

already been set up in the streets but not illuminated yet.

Tell me about all the interesting places you have been to.

Love and Fondest Thoughts, B

Liverpool 13th November 1979

From Me To B,

It seems you are enjoying the book I sent you even if it is a bit scary especially when you are reading at night and there is a howling wind raging through the tree branches. You can start imagining all sorts. I like short stories, any writer who can tell a tale in 30 or so pages is very talented and there are a lot of great “Golden Age” crime writers who are like that …. Agatha Christie for one. I also like the whodunnit authors like Freeman Wills Croft and George Bellairs. These two despite their great books seem to be long forgotten today but you can pick up their paperbacks quite cheaply from our local “Booklands” shop.

Yes save that Malaysian book for me it sounds interesting about life in Penang and the peninsula.

I can tell you a tale or two of strange experiences. The north west appears to be hot spot or centre of UFO sightings and activity. When I was about 5

or 6 years of age out of a blinding sun in my nan's back garden a golden hovering saucer shaped object appeared looking down over me about the height that a helicopter would fly. I rushed to the shed for some binoculars and just managed a glimpse through the transparent glass like section of an alien face which was green or greyish looking at me. Then in an instance the craft jettisoned straight upwards and vanished in a second.

I have written down and kept a record of these accounts of these happenings for which I have no known explanation. More recently in the 1970s myself, my dad and brother were coming back from Blackpool late at night and using the country lanes instead of the main road which was busy with the exodus of illumination traffic. Following our car at a very low (just above tree height level) were three bright shining and glowing large silver balls. As we slowed down, they slowed down. My dad parked the car off the road by a gate leading into a field and as we got

out of the car these three silver balls also stopped and just floated stationary in the middle of the field in front of us like they were watching us watching them. The whole experience was mesmerising and I suppose we weren't scared because we were probably adrenaline fuelled. Then after what seemed a long time but only a couple of minutes they (again) shot off upwards vertically at a hyper speed and vanished into the clear night sky like distant stars. Make of this what you will, but I promise you B, these events did really happen. I have never told anyone else about all this because .... well, I really don't know what people might think. But UFOs, aliens and things we can't explain .... there must be some reason .... and I'm sure I am not the only one. But in the meantime "UFO" the fab live rock band is close enough for me!

Hmmmm to things more earthly!

You mentioned that you picked some chestnuts. Well, funny enough as it sounds, although there are hundreds of trees up here, believe it or not,

I've never had a chestnut. You find chestnut sellers roasting them on what look like large metal dustbins during the winter on street corners. The sweet smoky smell is atmospheric and you can buy them hot in paper bags, so maybe I will give them a try. The Horse Chestnuts though we used to collect when we were kids we call them conkers. You drill a hole through the centre and pull a knotted string through then have a conker fight bashing your opponents conkers. Sounds daft but you win when you smash and break open the enemy's conker. We have a trick, we always soak our conkers in a jar of vinegar for a few days which turns them into rock hard nuts.

The weather has been bad, the icy winds are here and we've been subjected to hail storms and those icy hail stones are like marbles and very noisy at night crashing into the window panes keeping me awake. And freezing Mersey fogs in the sub zero temperatures are keeping everyone very cold so they need to wrap up to keep warm.

Oh yes B, I have my certificate for completing the "Revolution" its all red and blue and very American looking.

Last week the Yorkshire weather was clear and bright for the Halifax trip only it was very windy. Halifax is a small industrial cotton making town situated in the Hebble Valley. It's a very old town with all quarry stone brick houses and cobbled streets. It it wasn't for the traffic and modern dress you could imagine yourself back in the Victorian age at the turn of the century. The football ground is tiny, in fact some people can watch the match standing in the main road. However Tranmere only managed to get a draw (0 - 0), no goals but at least we got a point.

Because it has rained so much recently our last home game was postponed due to a waterlogged pitch.

I went to see "The Moody Blues" concert at Stafford, it was a good show supported by a singer (I don't know him though) Jimmie Spheeris. The Moodies played all their old hits

“Nights in White Satin” and *“Go Now”*went down well and they ended the set encore with *“Ride My Seesaw”*. We got home around 1.00am which was earlier than the last time we were in Stafford.

As we were driving back from Stafford through the late night, it was Halloween and with full moon only a couple of nights away it was eerie. All those strange shaped clouds encircling the hills and the moon appearing as a great silver eye peering down at us, and at that time we were the only car on the road, just lots of darkness as the highway stretched ahead, I was glad to get home especially after recalling those earlier encounters.

Wow! the “Whitesnake” concert was just so good, loud, brilliant and full of atmosphere. Everyone was on their feet from the start. They played for over two hours and on top of what the support band (a Liverpool group called Marseille) played, they didn’t come off stage until nearly 11.30pm and that is late for the Liverpool Empire. It was a gig to remember with David Coverdale belting

out the vocals and *"Ain't No Love In The Heart Of The City"* was pure superb.

In Liverpool and Wallasey everybody seemed to have a small bonfire on Guy Fawkes Night and all you had to do was look out of the window skywards to see a glowing blaze and orange colour tinted sky. Next year we'll sort you out some fireworks.

This Saturday it's Yorkshire again (3 times on the run) to Huddersfield Town Football Club.

Before that I have two more gigs to fit in at the Empire, Gallagher and Lyle who are a Scottish Folk Rock duo and their LP and single *"Breakaway"* was quite alright and it should give my ears a rest!

Also will be seeing the solo singer Judie Tzuke (pronounced Zook), she is new but I'm going to see her just because of her summer single *"Stay With Me Till Dawn"*.... what a song title ... Like I said I will just about go and see anybody at the Empire.

Christmas decorations in Liverpool will not be the same as London it's all a bit smaller here but we always have a massive Xmas Tree in Church Street here in the City Centre.

I love paintings and we have the Walker Art Gallery in Liverpool and the Lady Lever Art Gallery in Port Sunlight near the river. These two Art Galleries have amazing collections and you can spend all day going from room to room. Being at Art College for nearly four years .... well I just I can't get enough. I too like the Renaissance artists of Italy and my favourites also are the English painters from the 1800's called the Pre - Raphaelites .... They produced some of the best paintings ever and we have large collections here in Liverpool, you'll like seeing all these. I also like a Northern 20th Century painter "L.S. Lowry" who painted everyday northern life in a uniquely odd way .... they appear bleak to some but they have tons of atmosphere and my Grandad was a friend of his in the 1950s and lived in the same street and once or twice helped carry his painting gear

and even sat for him in Piccadilly Gardens, Manchester and was the “Man on a Bench” in another painting. There was even a massive hit poppy folk song that got to number one last year by a duo called Brian and Michael - *“Matchstick Men and Matchstick Cats and Dogs”* which is how Lowry portrayed all his characters and creatures in his paintings, there must be some of his work in the National Gallery for you to see. And L.S. Lowry only died recently, a couple of years ago, he had a good innings and almost made it to about 90 years old.

Ah …. One day I dream of visiting Rome, Florence and Venice with you to see the best of all the art in real life!

I have built up more than 5 working days in lieu that I need to take off before December 22nd so I have to sort these out for coming down so stay tuned for news shortly.

All of My Love .. to you B, JP xxx

Midhurst 18th November 1979

From B to JP,

I hope you enjoyed your trip to Huddersfield. All I know about Huddersfield is that it has a big hospital and that is where most of my other mates that came over to the UK are being trained. Before I came over to King Edward VII Hospital I did apply there as well but until today they still must be considering my application. It seems that some hospitals now in Britain only take students with “A” Levels nowadays. I do regret not taking my “A” Levels as I was so eager to leave to get out of school that I couldn’t bear to think of studies any more .....

Oh dear! The weather is so terrible and I didn’t know that the cold can penetrate into one’s bones. It is almost a great relief to soak myself in a hot warm bath after work. I run through and across the cold hospital grounds and dive back into our nurses home.

Last week was so busy which is a good thing as we don't have to hang around idle pretending to be busy and looking for things to do on the ward.
Starting next month I shall be working "Nights" due to a lack of night staff. You can't learn much on night duty every one is asleep and quiet, still it will come as great relief to get away from my present "military" ward. I remember your advice though and try only to remember the good times that I have enjoyed so far. It's not the work it's sometimes only the staff that makes it a dread. But now that I am leaving the ward the atmosphere has changed and I find it difficult to dislike them especially as they have been quite nice recently. After all every pupil nurse finds it the same down there, we're no exception.
When I go on nights the good news is I will have more days off. I will have 3 nights on, then have 4 nights off a week then vice versa the next week and so on. I also have the option of seven consecutive nights on then a whole week off but since Anne lives in Worthing and would like to go

home to her family, I have arranged to work the shorter shifts instead, she's very nice and a good friend.

Oh dear JP! your ghost stories and UFO encounters are beginning to make me imagine things and visions. I did have a fright in the ward the other evening when one of the Auxiliary nurses said she heard somebody or some BODY groaning. She was scared to investigate in which rooms the moans emanated from, so she pulled me along though I didn't hear it I got quite scared. Later we told it and Sister confirmed that she did hear groans as well early in the morning. Sister then recalled some weird incidents to us which really want to make me creep into a corner and how I wish my shift was over on that ward at that moment.

I hope when I work on nights I won't be sent to the T.C.U. (Terminal Care Unit). Down there one has to wash and wrap the dead bodies in shrouds, this is the nurses duty which is called "The Last Office". I guess I will try to be brave and

control my wild imagination but it will be something all ward nurses (especially on nights) will have to do and must get used to doing.

Have you tried the Liverpool chestnuts yet? Actually I enjoy picking them more than eating them but most of the time the ground is so soggy and I hate the wet slippery leaves.

Not so long ago there was a fair in Midhurst and Ernie took us all there in the hospital bus in the evening and I think it's nothing like Blackpool. There is no "Revolution" but there are lots of fairground games, a ghost train and dodgems cars. But it was so terribly cold outside at night. Went with Anne in a dodgem car but our small white vehicle kept going backwards instead of forwards and most of the time we were stuck as the track was really too small to manoeuvre and we needed the attendants to keep giving us a push and we soon got fed up with it.

Is Tranmere still playing in all this freezing weather as I try to keep warm even inside, don't

know how you manage not to freeze with all this outside stuff and sports.

Bye for now until I hear from you

Lots of Love, from your warm B

Liverpool 21st November 1979

Love You To B,

I certainly did enjoy the trip to Huddersfield even though Tranmere only managed a draw again (1 - 1) after we were winning as well and Huddersfield are top of the 4th Division so to bring home a point was a good achievement for the “Rovers”.

Huddersfield is a wool town, where wool is spun and woven just like it has been for centuries. It is a very old Victorian place and this reflects a lot in the architecture and it appears to be a grand gothic looking pile of a town with it’s textile mills, great high chimneys and canals but right in the centre you will find a thoroughly modern shopping centre precinct.

I know what you mean B, when you say how eager you were to leave school. I felt the same at first but then decided to stay on and do “A” Levels, only after a year I gave them up because I lost enthusiasm and I hadn’t really any idea what and where they would eventually lead to. Anyway since then I have managed one “A” Level along

the way (Photography) doing it in my own time and now no “A” Level compares to anything as important as my Art College City and Guilds in Photography. “A”Levels in general are little compensation for happiness.

Just today even as I write now, we have had the worst fog for years on Merseyside. From early this morning thick dense fog has enshrouded us and you can only see about a yard at the most in front of you. All traffic and public transport has been brought to a virtual halt. The motorways have been closed all day, trains running very late, Mersey ferries cancelled (and that is extremely rare) and it’s quicker although not much safer to walk. And what’s more this is a freezing fog and unpleasant to breath, you need a scarf to filter the cold air from reaching your lungs. All this chaos is awful especially for our a city hospital as ambulances cannot get to and from anywhere. This fog will leave a frost tonight and we have the same forecast for tomorrow so the port and and Speke Airport will both remain at a standstill.

And as for scary nights I can see that the next book I give you will have to be a little different as I possess another collection of even more scary stories than the ones you already have.

I might as well get some scary stuff out of the way as well as I have had some moments once or twice at work. I remember once it was three years ago. I was asked to install an Audio Visual system (TV monitor and cable) in the Necropsy Suite (Post Mortem Room). I was up a set of ladders placing the cable discreetly out of sight high around the ceiling sides. I was doing this all alone as a one man job and the Post Mortem Room is in a part of the Old Victorian Royal Infirmary that is remote and in much of a quiet deserted wing. Well, I was up the ladder sorting out the cable (and bearing in mind I was totally alone) when suddenly and very, very slowly the door to the body room freezer store started to open of its own accord. I tell you I just flipped out a bit (shitless! as we say) and I was down that ladder and out through the main door in about two

seconds flat. There was no real explanation at first but I guess what must have happened was, that the door somehow wasn't completely seal locked and that maybe gusts of the specially chilled cold air from the body freezer pumps must have caused the door to pop open. I think so .... I hope so. I did calm down and went in to see if any of the actual body compartment doors were open and we were safe! We have had cases of bodies put into the freezers too early and a rigor mortis reaction has caused them to contract on the freezer tray and when you open the freezer compartment draw, the white blanket has pulled away and you're left staring into the face of a .... corpse that might have moved upwards or sideways.

Anyway to more pleasant things or colder things!

The other Sunday (I forgot to tell you this last time) I went to Manchester to see Iain (McIntyre) he has always been my longest and closest friend, we were neighbours from birth and grew up together and even alphabetically by surname we

ended up being placed in the same school house and sitting next to each other in our last 3 years at the comprehensive school. He's at Manchester University and he shares a rambling old house with four other students and I have known it to be warmer outside than in the house. They each have their own room and when you enter your breath turns to mist immediately. Iain says it gets so cold sometimes that if he leaves a drink of water by the side of his bed it starts to ice over. He also says that the loo is so cold that if you are unlucky and dump a giant (shit) down the bog it can freeze into a large ice turd and be difficult to flush away, he even had a photograph of one of these turdbergs as proof to show the landlord. So they all sit huddled round a gas fire in the lounge and he tries to get home as often as he can.

The reason I went was to go to the Manchester Apollo (just like our Liverpool Empire) to see "Blue Oyster Cult" the American hard rock band with their famous stage show and special effects. I have seen them a few times before. This time we

were subjected to dramatic indoor fireworks from the large speakers and amps, flash bombs, light bombs, dry ice, spotlights bounced off mirrors and not forgetting strobe lighting and their famous laser extravaganza. The effect on the audience was just incredible when they played *"Don't Fear The Reaper"* and their version of Steppenwolf's *"Born To Be Wild"* that is such a cool song and I guess that maybe I was born just to be a bit wild or or a rebel. The concert was a spectacle of heavy rock and sound. I won't be forgetting this gig in a hurry if my hearing is still not buzzing tomorrow. Manchester is only an hour away from Liverpool by car and faster by train so I was home around 1.30am.

Last Wednesday I went to the Empire for that Gallagher and Lyle concert. It was a much quieter affair but really good songs. In fact the Liverpool gig was chosen for them to record a possible Live Album and their new single was also recored live on Wednesday night dedicated to *"The Year of*

The Child" so I finally might get to be on a record disc as part of the audience cheering.

We sometimes also get a fairground with all the attractions coming to our local Central Park and it sounds just like the fair you went to. Most people seem to win a goldfish in a clear plastic bag on the various stalls or one of those "sound a like" (not the real artists) Top of the Pops albums .... I have won a few of those and they always have models in bikinis on the cover which has nothing at all to do with the music. A couple of times a year we get "Billy Smart's Big Top Circus" as well. When I was small I used to get taken but to be honest I really can't stand the circus, sitting on hard benches for a couple of hours and it always was smelly (all those animals and straw) and sickly hot in that large tent with no fresh air to breathe.

So, now to important news. I have seven working days to take off before the 22nd of December. Mondays I can't do because I have to oversee the Monday afternoon Pathology student sessions

and I am in charge of the filming and sound stuff that is involved but any other day I'm fairly sure I get off at short notice so hoping to see you a few times before and during Christmas.

From 23rd December to January 1st inclusive the department shuts down anyway so including weekends I will have 11 days off, so I can definitely see you. Let me know your "night" days off and I will arrange to come down.

And to that question "Do Tranmere play in this weather"? Yes they do as long as the pitch is not waterlogged they play on hard ice and snow. Last winter we had snow which went deep into March and Tranmere played on a pure white pitch, locals thought the game had been postponed and our usual crowd of 4000 was only 800. Exeter City travelled all the way up to Birkenhead so the game went ahead and we used an orange football for the first time. Exeter should have won they were 2 - 0 up but we scored two goals in the last minute to make it 2 - 2. I actually felt sorry for Exeter in a way. I have a season ticket which gets

me in into the main stand but that night Smidge was skint so I joined him in the Cow Shed (our behind the goal covered standing terrace) which is called so because that is what it is supposed to look like, I suppose it does look like an old open fronted barn with a rusty corrugated roof, mind you that night it was warmer there than sitting high up in a cold wind in the stand. One of our old class mates who is a trainee PC (police constable) called Alan Cooper or just simply "Coop" was on touchline duty so we had a good natter. I remember once it was so cold (but I guess we just used to it in the north) that I was out for about an hour or so, I had my winter duffel coat on and when I arrived home my corkscrew permed hair was a block of solid white frozen ice curls. I have my eye on a thick winter herring bone tweed overcoat but they are so heavy and I've always had a duffel coat or rainproof cagoule to get me by.

You may be getting a surprise in the post very soon!! All My Loving JP xxx

Liverpool 24th November 1979

Here it is B,

That small surprise.

Now it's getting colder, you'll be getting warmer.

Hope you like it.

Love

JP ...

Liverpool 28th November 1979

Dear B,

I am writing this quick letter before you probably reply because I know the full dates of all my days off till the end of the year. Unfortunately due to us being incredibly busy I haven't been allowed to pick and choose as I would have wanted and find myself forced to take couple of days before the weekend.

Anyway the days off go like this:

Friday 30th November, Tuesday 4th December to Thursday 6th December inclusive.

Then I can do the 10th and 11th December.

And from 22nd December to 1st January inclusive as well.

So all those dates mentioned are weekdays and obviously any weekend is totally free. Hoping this letter travels quickly.

All of My Love, JP xxx

PS. In case of any super problems arising from these dates you can always phone me on 0151 639

8970 but I realise that you only have a work phone on the wards or payphone in the reception area which always has a queue to use but we should be alright if we need to get a message to each other urgently .... I can always phone Albert, your “night brigade chum” who mans the phones through the midnight hours .... I bet he doesn’t get any calls when he’s on duty ..... so he could note any urgent messages and pass them on to you.

Midhurst 28th November 1979

Oh! JP,

Your surprise packet arrived yesterday and thank you so much for the beautiful scarf. Everybody says its very nice and pretty. I wore it immediately having collected it after my lunch hour and being on a split duty I was supposed to go into Midhurst that afternoon. It goes well with my brown coat and beige skirt, in fact the scarf matches with so much of my wardrobe so the colour works. Its warm and cuddly too. Not having possessed any scarf before I shall keep this one forever because it is from you.

It's good news to hear that you still have so many days which you can get off work. After this week I shall be starting night duty. And will let you know when my nights off will be, so see you in December.

I wonder if you like this poem:

Joy sings in Beauty that surrounds us ….
Joy smiles through loved ones all around us ….
Joy speaks in gentle words that guide us ….
Joy smiles in feelings deep inside us ….

Wish I could compose poems like this but its from a Hallmark Greetings Card.
Right now I'm in the middle of packing again. Another nurse has moved off to Worthing so I had the choice of staying in this room or moving to a much bigger and more private room (which I had actually requested) so I move onwards and upwards to better things. I am spending a day rearranging my small amount of furniture but I am keeping that old school desk (the one with the lid top and inkwell) `cos its best for writing on.
Have your letters and title come through yet?
Shall be writing to u when free ….
But you'll never really know how much your scarf has rescued me JP.
Counting the days to your visit Love, B

Liverpool 30th November 1979

Oh My Busy B,

I'm so happy that you liked the scarf and colour. Choosing the colour was the most difficult part but I thought that being soft, smooth and warm was more important, so best of both worlds.

Last week my title did come through and I can now use LRPS after my name (Licentiate of The Royal Photographic Society).

From my letters you must imagine that it has been like the Arctic up here and a fortnight ago it was but now its the reverse and its become very mild with only gentle breezes.

And I suppose, B, that you are now use to it getting dark at 4pm in the afternoon. Now that the sun sets early I can take some night photographs around the full moon time. This gives me a fair amount of silver light to explore and if the weather stays clear I shall be off to the river and docks to capture some dramatic lighting and reflections in the water.

As I write, it is December tomorrow and traditionally decorations for Christmas should start appearing everywhere. We have just got out our tree and it is covered with tinsel and lights. This is the family tree that dates back to the 1950s and the decorations are that old and wobbly as well.

Liverpool city centre is a bit slow this year and the shops are only just starting to put up their Xmas displays now. And from now on we can expect or anyone in fact, carol singers to go round peoples houses and to start singing outside. These are mainly children and they usually get a few coins or some treats (mince pies) to eat or if they're adults then a glass of Emva Cream Sherry.

The odd couple of days off this week, well I must confess that I have been rather lazy, sleeping in till 10am and that’s a luxury for me when I’m normally up at six.

As for Tranmere we have had a spate of home games just recently and tonight we play Torquay then on Monday night we play Wigan. Last

Saturday in the F.A Cup we beat Leamington Spa (a non league team) 9 - 0 an incredible scoreline which equals our all time record which was set back in the 1930s.

Wigan is in Lancashire the next county from us and is famous for three things here up north.

1. Pies … they make the finest pies in the UK especially my nan's favourite a Meat and Potato Pie.
2. Wigan Pier. You have to see it to believe it, it's about 3 feet long and the smallest pier in the world but it is still famous and I'm not sure why. Although it is the title of a book by George Orwell - "The Road To Wigan Pier" but I think the book is about the miserable bleak industrial north of England and such like and not a cheerful read I guess.
3. Northern Soul Music at the Wigan Casino. That was in the mid 70s and for a short time Wigan was the centre of the universe for this kind of soul and dance music and it had and still has a cult following. Northern Soul was

always in the background for me with rock taking precedence over everything else but there are some great tunes and songs out there. My all time fave Northern Soul song has the most apt title for me and us: *"I Love Her So Much It Hurts"* by The Majestics, its only 2 minutes long but you can play it over and over again and never tire of it. So that's Wigan for you!

Over the weekend I cut my left ankle and had to get it bandaged up at the hospital so for a couple of days I was hopping around but its almost alright now. It was an injury I sustained playing five a side football as I play when needed for "Pathology All Stars" in the Liverpool University Staff League, last year we were champions but this year we have been knocked out by an all girl team …. They were good and I was a substitute …. They brought me on too late in the game to do anything! And after all that I got that injury so it made no difference at all me coming on.

I have included a postcard of Buxton, I have been there a few times and it is a small but beautiful picturesque town in Derbyshire in the Peak District. Very quaint and peaceful.
I like the verse you nicked from the card so I will let you have an original one of mine composed just for you:

So goodbye from me for now
and I will dream of you too
and perhaps those sparkling lights
and ochre eyes
will see and find the truth
and with sealed kisses
end in delight

Love u always
JP xxx

Midhurst 30th November 1979

Dearest JP,

I know have all your remaining holidays noted and having confirmed with the Administration Office I shall start my night duty on 3rd December (Monday night), I will be off all day Sunday (2nd December).

Did you do anything nice again on your day off?

Seems like all your days off are completely the opposite to mine. I shall be working Tuesday 4th, Wednesday 5th and Thursday 6th on nights. Then I'm having nights off for the rest of the week until I start again Monday 10th. If you're not working or not busy on 7th and 8th December you can come down to Midhurst. Anyway most of the days I shall be in but most of the time I shall be a "sleeping beauty" but your sleeping beauty. My room is now totally my responsibility (so there will be no cleaners and housekeeper poking around) which means just you and I together.

I would like to go down to Worthing to show you around for when I have to move there.

About these ghost stories which you have. You can bring one along so that I can read while you stay with me. I won't be scared then. At times I'm really frightened of ghosts and can imagine their presence in the room. In which case I keep the lights on and switch the radio on.

I love reading your extra long letters but me I can't fill up many pages when I write to you because there just isn't much to tell and I'm usually so tired having to be on the move all the time on the wards. I usually get more disappointed if you write me a short note.

At times I just take it for granted that you know everything that goes on down here day after day being the same!

You mentioned Dr. Martens boots and shoes which you say last forever. As nurses we have to stick to "uniform" type shoes that are black and ugly and are supposed to be stout and sensible like Miss Marple wears. But here in Midhurst they do bend the rules a bit and we are allowed to wear "Clarks Polyveldt's" in a brown or tan colour.

They are strange looking as well and still not very attractive with a triangular thick wedge sole but they are very, very comfy especially when you are on the wards and on your feet all day.
Didn't have time to buy any Christmas cards yet but perhaps we can go up to London to see the Xmas illuminations.

P.S. JP you promised to give me a treat ! Hooray ! Just let me know when you'll be coming so that I can "lay out" the red carpet for you.
Seeing you soon ! Bye for now. Love, B

December 1979

Rebel Rebel

“David Bowie”

Liverpool 2nd December 1979

Dear B,

Right, I just have your letter with all your time offs and dates so I will dive straight into sorting out arrangements. It’s a pity that you are working this week whilst I’m free all this time. It was just bad timing that I was forced to take these days off and you can’t argue with the bosses. Anyway although I will be busy on Friday I’m sure that we can sort out the rest of the weekend. I just can’t wait to see you again B.

So what I intend to do is to travel down to London through Friday night on the Intercity Sleeper. The train leaves Lime Street, Liverpool at 00.30am but I can board at 11.30pm and although it arrives into London Euston at 4.48am they allow you to stay in your cabin till 7.30am, so for anyone who can sleep on a train you get the full eight hours.

I will then take the 7.50am train from Waterloo that arrives in Haslemere at 8.45am and bus it to the hospital, well the end of the driveway at least and meet you at the hospital (Pine Lodge). I know it sounds super complicated but it will work out dead easy.

On my day off last week there was nothing tremendous to do so I just went out looking and browsing through and around the shops. We are not like London we don't have a Selfridges or Harrods Store but we do have a few good large department stores in Liverpool. We have the usual C&A, Littlewoods, BHS (British Home Stores), Woolies (Woolworths), Owen and Owen and we have three of our own super size stores, Blacklers, George Henry Lees and the biggest is Lewis's. Lewis's is famous for it huge nude "exceedingly bare" statue above the entrance (male bits, large and exceptionally detailed exposed to the world), we call it "Dickies" and you can meet people under Dickies dick! just like the clock at Waterloo Station. Our neighbour of many

years (Joe Bibby) came over from Eire (Republic of Ireland) in the 1950s as a young man, landed in Liverpool off the Irish Boat and got a job at George Henry Lees and is still there having worked his way up from tea boy to floor manager of the Haberdashery section. He's really nice and sometimes we look after his dog called Joby (JB - Joe Bibby) very clever. When we were kids we used to tease Joe with our tricks. When Television's came out with remote controls we bought a colour one. And when Joe came round for tea I told him he could control our telly by shouting the channel at it. So Joe shouted out " ITV" and it miraculously changed channels in front of him and then "BBC ONE" and so on and he was amazed … my brother was hiding behind our lounge door with the remote control.

On Friday night I went see a local band that I have an interest in. They used to be called "Graffiti" but now they call themselves "College". They are playing at the Grand Hotel, New Brighton. New Brighton is actually where I live

but we're just called Wallasey for the post code. New Brighton seafront is a sort of old fashioned seaside resort and its only ten minutes walk from our house in Hale Road. A coastal resort just down the road do I hear you say? Well yes its true, I know it does sound a bit funny and it was thee NEW Brighton when it was built but nowhere near the size of Brighton where you are going near Worthing.

The Grand Hotel (was an Art Deco grand hotel probably in the 1920s) but it is not as classy as it sounds and is more of a huge music night club than hotel. Anyway I work with the lead singer Jon Gobin who we all hope that one day big things may happen because he is a stunning rock vocalist with his long mane of ginger hair. I am his local "roadie" (the guy who helps him and the band set up and dismantle the gear for their gigs). What we do is sneak the photographic lights with their coloured glass filters out of our work darkrooms where we keep them and we rig

them up onto the stage, then smuggle them back into work the next morning.

They didn't start their first set till 11.30pm and they didn't go down too well as Jon had a mild cold and his voice was not as strong as normal. However they played a rousing second set that was exceptional when they took the stage at 20 minutes to one in the morning. After the gig had finished we were all very tired and when you are an unknown rock band sometimes the times are rough and sometimes they're just late. He has an old and well used red Mini that somehow we manage to get all this gear, lighting, him, his bongo's, his girlfriend Sally and me on her knee in, but I get a lift home to my door. My colleague Jon has sung on a Colgate toothpaste TV commercial and for Kiki Dee as a backing singer. He turned down a chance to go on a world tour with her, it was a very tough decision as the job he has is good and well paid and stable but going out on the road as a backing artist has no guarantees in the long run. I'm not sure though

that he thinks that way and may regret his decision albeit with a low chance of stardom.

I am really the rebel of my family (or black sheep?). I remember sitting on our back door steps to the garden when I was five years old and thinking this is my last summer of freedom before having to go to school for the next 10 - 12 years which seemed like forever and I made a vow with myself then not to waste future time and life being tied up studying and I just wanted to be free. My dad and his dad before him were engineers and technically minded, but all I ever wanted to do was the arts, film, photography, writing and music … it seems to be in my blood somehow.

I always loved music and growing up with *"She Loves You"* and our hometown Beatles as a youngster was thrilling, singing all the songs back then. My music teachers in the junior and middle schools singled me out with a few others as being potentially musically gifted and wanted me to take music seriously. They wrote and asked my

parents if they would allow me to develop this talent but it mean't paying for extra tuition and buying an expensive orchestral instrument (violin, clarinet, or something brassy etc) but my dad wasn't interested and I guess my parents thought it a waste of time or too soft a thing to do .... It had to be science and the boring old stuff.

When you are young and at school you just have to obey but I was at odds a great deal with my parents over the years. When I finally got to the comprehensive school in 1972 I started to do what I wanted and went against their wishes. I opted to do music instead of a technical course and my nan who is ace helped me out and bought me my first proper electric Kay Tulip guitar for £29 and I learned and practiced day and night and completed my music tuition (thank you Mr. Entwhistle at Mosslands school and Mrs. Rathbone at that earlier middle school for encouraging me).

I part exchanged my guitar (I saved and saved) and traded for a Stratocaster guitar, and today I

have a Japanese Marlin acoustic (£90) which is easier to cart round without amps and cables. Everyone in Liverpool wants to play in a group, this is a music mad city and for a short time I played in a band at school, they needed a bass player so I tried that and played and rehearsed on stage once but we didn't take off. Mr Entwhistle gave me the chance to join his dance and swing band which was made up from different schools and lent me his Gibson Archtop guitar. We did a gig of Glenn Miller classics but when we got to the venue he hadn't actually arranged or got any guitar music sheets and my friend Dave Steedman (Stead) offered to share his horn music sheets .... but that was no use at all. I had no idea of the rhythm chords and had to wing it on the evening and turning down my volume on the bits I had no control of and kind of mimed my way through. That was enough of the dance band for me!

Mosslands School did produce one hit band called "Buster" who shot to fame fleetingly for a

very short time and even made the charts and appeared on Top of The Pops. They were more of a teeny bop pop group and while they were popular overseas in Japan they quickly vanished from the scene here in the UK.

I think people who grow up in Liverpool are surrounded by music and we call it the “Mersey Sound”. There was never a time when I didn’t have records in the house. I have a cousin (Trevor) who lives in Bury, Lancashire he was always older than me by ten years and he always passed on to me his 7” singles that he no longer wanted (of course he kept all the really good stuff I suppose) but still I had a collection of 1960s rock and roll by Johnny & The Hurricanes and The Tornadoes and the like. But the very first record I bought with my own money saved up was back in the early 70s *“Ride a White Swan”* by T. Rex (Marc Bolan) and that was the song and record that just did it for me and the start of my serious addiction to music and bands. I play *“Ride a White Swan”* all the time and anything by T. Rex. Sadly Marc Bolan

died in a tragic car crash two years ago (1977) aged just 29. The music world lost a beautifully talented genius.

At school, yes the girls went for teeny bopper singers, David Cassidy, Donny Osmond etc but with the boys you were generally in one of three camps: Marc Bolan and T.Rex or David Bowie or Slade. Well me, I was in all three I loved the lot. In 1973 I queued up for 4 hours to buy tickets to see Slade in Liverpool and became the envy of all my school mates, I had been to a real gig. I was expelled from school for a short time because I dared to dye my hair metallic copper bronze (which sort of looked a bit shiny orangey) and copied David Bowie's Ziggy Stardust and Aladdin Sane look. They had to reinstate me later on because I was expelled without a written warning first but my credibility certainly rose in the school. I think David Bowie's song *"Rebel Rebel"* from his 1974 "Diamond Dogs" album speaks volumes and certainly resonated with me.

Then as music progressed this decade three more camps appeared, you either followed Led Zeppelin and the likes of Wishbone Ash or Pink Floyd or Fairport Convention (good folky stuff). Whilst I loved the progressive hard rock Led Zeppelin I still listened to the rest. But what it taught me was, is that music is what it is to all people and it is pure subjectivity is what is important and the one thing I never have done and never do is to criticise any other persons musical choice and in fact any other music. I may love hard rock but I can swing out and stamp my feet to disco or wind down when they play "slowies" at the end of a night out.

When Alice Cooper released *"Schools Out"* in that summer of 1972, some of the older students who were leaving that year burnt their school ties and blazer badges when they left …. I couldn't do that as I had to to still go back the next year for "O" Levels. But the rebel was here already!

I guess I wear my heart on my sleeve and go with my heart always rather than maybe the head and

the head being what is the sensible thing to do. But the best way is to step away from the prescribed route and do your own thing. No point in doing what you don't want to do. For me its simply the life of Peace, Love and Rock and Roll (care to join me) and to that end I will bring down some "extra stuff" (just a small amount) for you and me to stash away for those times when needed.

Worthing is a place that I have never been to before so that would be good to explore with you. We can catch the Christmas lights in London as everywhere is starting to light up at night, that must be a beautiful site. That reminds me apart from Blackpool there is another large coastal resort just across the bay in Lancashire from Blackpool called Morecambe and this place has Illuminations each year. I managed to dig out another postcard from the last time I went there. Only here the lights are set up in in a giant park so you can walk around and enjoy their

luminance at your own pace when the sun has gone down.

I must tell you this story it may make you smile. My friend Mac was home from Manchester University and when he left our house in Hale Road on his bright green Kawasaki 500 motorbike he was pulled over by the police for speeding (not way over the limit but still illegal). He was about to be booked or cautioned and the copper saw that Mac was wearing a badge on his leather jacket that said “I support The Police” - so Mac was just given a slap on the wrist this time and told not to speed again and the officer thanked him for his support - not realising the badge was all about the “The Police” rock band. I like that tale and it will probably be told for years and years from now on.

I am seeing the rock band “Queen” at the Empire and this will be a spectacle for they are renown for their live performances. They are playing two back to back sell out nights in the city here so that’s my plans for this week sorted. And I won’t

forget to bring down that scary book you wanted. I will try to sort out some of my pictures and find time to tape another cassette for you B although I haven't decided which albums to tape. The sound quality should be a lot better this time around, the last recordings I made for you was taped on an old deck but I have a new Music Centre Deck that has just come out so I will be recording a much better sound.

You are a long way from home, I always seem to be roaming here and there, I may be only 20 and you 27 but when I am with you there is a pulse, an electric charge when we touch one another .... a spark that ignites us.

Sorry if this long letter goes rambling on as I write late into the night but there you are, there you have it, two rebel hearts, two rebel souls and I am just happy with you and all that matters is that we can share this, our time and letting go, being free and able to do what we like and enjoying our little bit of love and that's the way we find peace and find freedom.

Till Saturday Love You Always, JP xxx

Midhurst 3rd December 1979

Sorry to hear about your ankle but glad to hear it was nothing too serious.

I shall be seeing you this weekend won't I?

I think a lot of our letters cross each other on their way up and down the country and we (me) gets behind sometimes and often our replies get out of step with one another. So do write and confirm if you can make it this weekend!

I went to Midhurst this morning to buy a few foodstuffs so that if the need arises I can cook for the both of us.

Thanks for the Buxton postcard. The Serpentine Walk in the Pavilion Gardens looks peaceful and lovely.

You mentioned you'll be taking some photographs in the moonlight. Sounds interesting and I'd love to follow you around one of these days and nights. The moon has been strong these last few nights down in Sussex and against and through a cloudless sky it really is beautiful.

Because we are in a wooded Sussex location often during the daytime the local landowners have shooting rights and you often hear the sound of gun shots echoing through the trees. I can see rabbits from my window, sometimes lots of them (like Beatrix Potter's Peter Rabbit). I think it's rabbit hunting that goes on or hares. But one thing for sure after a days shooting we always seem to get "*chicken chasseur*" on the hospital menu hmmmm!

I've got to get some sleep now in order to stay awake during the night as this will be the beginning of my night duty. I have used the initials L.R.P.S. after your name on the envelope. It does look distinguished doesn't it?

PS. Remember to give me a thought when you jump into bed tonight. I shall envy you in your bed sleeping soundly away whilst I work. But also I am keeping my bed warm for you here because we soon will be … you know!

Love till the weekend, B

Liverpool 11th December 1979

Dear B,

I have just unpacked all of my gear, in fact I've only been in the house an hour and as I write this letter you will be probably be sleeping and I'll be doing the same thing shortly.

My journey home was pretty straight forward. The train arrived at Haslemere only seconds after your hospital chauffeur driven car pulled away. You must have been back at the hospital by the time the train stopped at Witley. You were right B, it did start to rain and the ride to Waterloo was so gloomy and the 55 minutes seemed to stretch for hours. Still, at Waterloo it was much busier than what I would have expected, the whole train was full. A quick tube train saw me to Euston and there was my usual midday train so I only had to wait about half an hour for the Liverpool departure and it seemed strange to be travelling back at a "normal"time .... during daylight hours.

As I waited I looked at all the Christmas decorations. Euston station boasted a massive

Xmas tree all brightly lit for the public holidays ahead.

I alternately dozed and read on the train from London and read a large section of your Malaysian book and I am now up to the part about “festive seasons” such a charming and warm account of days gone by. The author has a certain way and her blend of humour is rich and extremely well written. I didn’t put the book down until the train actually pulled into Lime Street and I was the last person to get off that train.

I hopped on a bus to the ferry and was home by 3pm. I bought the Liverpool Echo (our local city daily newspaper) and it said it was very windy all over Britain but mainly in the south and around Brighton but hopefully it will only last a day or two.

The times I rested on the way home I thought about the weekend a lot and what a good time we had together. The trip to Worthing and Guildford, both places I have never seen before

might seem ordinary places to some folk but I loved them and the old world bits of Guildford and its strikingly modernist square red brick Cathedral, it looks like a smaller scaled down version of Liverpool's giant Anglican Cathedral .... Thorough enjoyment!

I certainly don't feel like work in the morning but at least there is the bonus of our works Christmas party on Friday so I can't see all the staff wanting to be too busy this week, well at least I hope not. Being off for the past few days I have no idea what the party plans are but usually there's loads of food and drink laid on for everybody with a help yourself buffet. We always have a live band and no prizes for guessing it will be Jon's "College" having a night off from the pub and club circuit. There's another of my friends "Stu" (Stuart) who always arranges some crazy festive games which normally involves a lot of "snogging" he's right mad honestly.

While I was away a friend of mine has left me a ticket for another Christmas party this Thursday

at New Brighton, I think it's a party for his old college. I don't know whether or not I'll be able to make it because tomorrow (Wednesday) I am going to see the band Lindisfarne at the Empire and with our party on Friday I may just find myself tired for once.

I had to laugh again thinking about your chicken chasseur story when I was down in Midhurst. Rabbit stew is probably just like chicken and it will be the gravy that disguises it. We have a dish in Liverpool called "Scouse" (you must think everything is Scouse this, Scouse that and you'd be right!), anyway it is a meat stew with potatoes, carrots and onions, you can make it with lamb but its beef for me. Traditionally it was the dish of the poor using leftover scraps but its famous here. My mum makes it too watery with mince beef and its usually all slushy, in fact my mum is a really bad cook and I seemed to be brought up on beans on toast, mince beef on toast, eggs on toast, cheese on toast or crackers. And she worked in catering but that was more front of

house serving .... probably all our leftovers came back with her from all the do's she served at. My dad brought home some artificial meat called soya! It looked like grey pellets in a clear plastic bag. My mum cooked it like mince, she just boiled these bits in water then put it on toast. It was really revolting and chewy and jelly like and had the texture and taste of sawdust. My dad says this is the new craze in Scandinavia, remind me then to give the Baltic states a miss for a few years!

I spend most of the time here with my nan (Wally) that's short for Walburga who was named after her local church in Preston, Lancashire. My mum and nan (that's my dads mum) have never got on at all and during the whole of the 1960s my nan brought me up and I stayed with her each weekend and summer holidays in Bury in the next county. My nan taught me to bake scones, Eccles cakes, Chorley cakes, egg custard tarts and her famous proper Scouse with proper beef and she lives off meat and potatoes pies. She

was born in 1900 when Queen Victoria was still around. Whilst we have a big detached 4 bedroomed house near the river my nan now lives just about 10 mins walk away in a Victorian terrace two up two down in Grange Avenue, Wallasey. It's old and like going back in time and I love it. My nan is 79 and she is so with it and upstairs the spare second bedroom is my getaway bolt hole and I have a twin sound system set up there for playing and recording music. Actually nan out of all my family is the most inspiring and is the only person who understands my ideals and is the one person who loves to hear about you whilst enjoying her rocking chair. My nan started work in the Lancashire cotton mills when she was still nothing more than a child and she had 9 brothers and sisters. She ran away in the 1920s to marry John (my grandad), he was born in the 1890s and she experienced the pain of loss as he was involved in the two World Wars and he died in 1965. My nan has never left the UK and never been to London but she once went to

Lands End in Cornwall. Her memory is sharp and she tells me hundreds of tales about her life and she is in my book a classic true romantic, she knows what love is and is the one person in my family who encourages me in my relationship with you and she calls you my far eastern princess …. You will really like her and you will meet her some day I'm sure. The road I walk up to nan's house is truly called Zig Zag Road …. I love that name and it does zig zag a bit in the middle.

I always think of you especially when are you are on nights and it must be strange working back to front and upside down hours.

But most of all I always have you and and the precious long hours we spend wrapped together in each other's arms.

All my Love, JP xxx

Liverpool 16th December 1979

Dear B,

I am writing this letter today, that's Sunday so I can post it tomorrow to beat the last minute Christmas post. All our letters are more than likely shuffling past each other again somewhere round about Crewe.

I can imagine that you are all wrapped up at the moment because Sussex has been making the national news headlines over the past few days with gale force winds up to 100mph hitting the coast. I wonder if Worthing had its promenade flooded by super high sea waves? I hope not as there are so many hotels and shops along the seafront. Yesterday, Saturday was very blustery here enough for Henry Pootel to take off wind blown into the skies (that's Piglet in Winnie the Pooh) and something I remembered because Pooh Corner and his world of A.A. Milne is also in Sussex but to the east of you.

Still, today it has gone all calm and sunny. I fail to understand the climate and I did complete a

Meteorology course when I did a year of “A” Level Geography before I left. Every weekday for a year I had to climb a ladder and squeeze through a hatch to get onto the high roof of Mosslands School with Evo to take and record all the 24 hour rainfall, barometric pressures, high and low temperatures and take wind speed readings. I don’t think the weathermen understand it either. It would be nice to see some snow over Christmas though to add some special flavour to the season.

Also on the TV news we were shown images of an aircraft that crashed near you at Petworth, Sussex, you are certainly getting a lot of exposure just now on the telly I just wish it was more happier news to make people more cheerful instead of being glum.

Last Wednesday night I went to the Empire to see Lindisfarne, one of the older great established groups and they always play a series of concerts in their hometown Newcastle and always come to Liverpool at Christmas time. Way back in 1971 -

1972 they were a consistent chart topping band with a string of hit songs like *"Lady Eleanor"*, *"Meet Me On The Corner"* and *"Fog On The Tyne"*. We were treated to all these plus many more and they gave the crowd a memorable performance.

I still can't get over that great "Queen" concert here. And when after performing *"Crazy Little Thing Called Love"* a girl ran on the stage and as security tried to remove her, Freddie Mercury invited her to sit on his stool with him and they sang Crazy Little Thing Called Love again together (acapella style) and with the audience .... magic!

As soon as I started back at work I did find myself busy all day last week but next week is looking that it could be fairly slack. On Thursday last, our department five a' side football team had a practice at a sports hall in Wavertree (a Liverpool district). We just tried to get match fit and it was plain that after a long lay off it was going to be difficult as we hadn't played together as a team for ages. The whole team came off the indoor

pitch wondering where their legs had gone to. Everyone was shattered but now that the aches and pains have gone we play our first competitive match of the new season at 6.30pm tomorrow with two more follow up matches in quick succession on Tuesday and Wednesday lunchtimes so we all have to sort out mad split lunch hours and fit in the games! So all we can do is keep our fingers crossed for three wins out of three .... unlikely! Our kit "Pathology All Stars" is bright canary yellow shirts and green shorts and yellow socks. Five a side matches are much shorter in length compared to normal footy games at 15 mins each half with a 5 min break for half time. The football practice meant that I missed the party in New Brighton but even if I had managed to make it I would not have known anyone there so I didn't mind at all really.

As for our work party ... Ha! ... I got the dates mixed up, it wasn't last Friday but this coming Thursday so that should brighten up the latter part of the week.

Tuesday night I'm off to Rochdale to watch Tranmere. Rochdale is another small northern Industrial town that used to thrive off its wool and cotton manufacturing and production. Its only about 1 hour 15 mins from Liverpool.

Since I came home I have read more of your book B, it really is totally absorbing and although there are some things and traditions I do not understand it still is fascinating stuff. Maybe you can explain some of the things that I am not certain about and history was not one of my favourite subjects and I didn't bother with it at "O " Level.

I have recorded a cassette of some greatest hits of different artists from a selection of my albums and singles and I'm sure you will like it.

I have also recorded two of my own songs. I have never attempted to record my own material before and I started writing songs when I was thirteen. You will be the first person in the world to hear these brand new ones. I have my little studio (that one at my nan's house) in the spare

bedroom and have a late 1960s quarter inch reel to reel tape system which can handle four tracks at a time. So in effect I can lay down the guitar track then live record the vocal on top. It's a bit crude but the home made arrangement of these large box on legs speaker cabinets linked by cables does the job.

In many ways when I write poems some actually look like song compositions and its not too much of a stretch to come up with a tune or melody to accompany the words or lyrics. I started doing this at school but my early "songwriting" seemed to sound like the band "Status Quo", everyone learns and loves those 12 bar riffs!

So I have copied out the lyrics for you in advance and the wait for the tape that I will bring down will have to keep you suspended in suspense ..... !

Song Number One

Think of the kind of acoustic led style type of songs played by the band “America”

Play it Out of Danger

The Road leads down to the water
the city can’t be far away
I think they’ll soon be on our trail now
the weather’s changed from yesterday

Chorus
So can’t you hear the voices echo
they're trying to bring us to a halt
we'll have to play it out of danger
and hope that they will have to stop

The arid plains lead to the mountains
beyond them lies a misty cloud
the chase just can’t go on forever
my mind begins to think aloud

Chorus
So can't you hear the voices echo
they're trying to bring us to a halt
we'll have to play it out of danger
and hope that they will have to stop

We met the state line by Lake Topaz
now we're free and on our way
looking back to Fremont California
San Francisco lies across the bay

Chorus (repeat twice)
So can't you hear the voices echo
they're trying to bring us to a halt
we'll have to play it out of danger
and hope that they will have to stop

And fade out with
So we've played it out of danger
the dangers over and we're free

Song Number Two - I just wonder who this girl might be then!

The Girl With Stars In Her Eyes

From the heart it came
from the heart it came
You, you, you
I saw you and I wondered
I thought that you would pass me by
and then I saw
the stars in your eyes

Chorus x 2
You're the girl with stars in her eyes

In the room
the lights were out
I took you there, I took you there
there was music distinct but not to loud
and the blue light
the night light
shone thru into your hair

Chorus x2
You're the girl with stars in her eyes

Together we lay
your arms around me
holding me tighter and tighter
as the music played on
no words just our lips together
our breaths, our bodies
so close it seemed forever

Chorus x2
You're the girl with stars in her eyes

I never will forget that night
from me
from you
I never will forget that night
from you
from me

And fade out with

Because your the girl with stars in her eyes
Because your the girl with stars in her eyes
And you're mine
And you're mine

Well there you have them and just wait to hear both in a few days. *"The Girl With Stars in her Eyes"* may look on paper a sloppy love song (maybe it is) however when you look back at some of the greatest and progressive or heaviest rock bands in the past, what are they often remembered for …. a very soft toned down melodic kind of tale. Just look back at Led Zeppelins gentle *"Thats The Way"* played on an acoustic guitar and mandolin or Barclay James Harvest's magic and mystical *"Galadriel"* … both beautiful like you.

As for the Christmas plans, like last week I will come down on the Intercity overnight sleeper train on Friday night, so all going well I should be

in Midhurst at the hospital round about 8.45am - 9.15am as this time I will get the earlier 6.52 am train from Waterloo to Haslemere which gets in at 8.18am. I might as well as I would just be wasting the extra time hanging around London for no purpose and nothing is open at that time anyway. I will use the local bus service to get me to the end of the hospital drive.

Have you seen the television guide for over Christmas. I can honestly say this is the best line up there has ever been in Britain, so much to choose from.

Your Christmas card is in the post as well and I will be bringing down one or two surprises. So till Saturday and I will see you then.

Christmas Love, JP xxx

Liverpool 28th December 1979

Dear B,

I write today after a longer than usual journey home from Midhurst. When the taxi finally came I was whisked away to Haslemere Station in the pouring rain. The taxi driver was moaning all the way about the bad weather. I was glad to get out of the taxi. Just as I hit the platform there was a train pulling in so there was no waiting at all. From Waterloo to Euston took a bit of time because it was the rush hour but at Euston I only had to wait fifteen minutes for a through train to Liverpool. This is too good to be true I thought to myself and I was right! There were so many delays of over an hour on the city to city train. At least at Lime Street all was calm but very frosty at night and I was home at half past nine on the Thursday night.

Although I don't start back at work till next Wednesday I will probably find myself at a loss at what to do so I will fill a fair amount of time recording more album tracks and singles again

for you. And I always seem to have so many pictures and slides to sort out. One of the perks is free film from work so I always shoot far more rolls than I need to. I have packed a screwdriver for my next visit .... to sort out your adapter plugs and things as all your wall sockets are the old fashioned round pin type so I will bring down some old or new plugs and wire up mains ready all your electrical bits and pieces.

I have found that “Tales from Topographic Oceans” poster that you are after, its quite a piece of artwork so I will roll it into a tube. Yes ... I saw “Yes” at the Empire a while back with Rick Wakeman on keyboards. I have a couple of old school friends (Stead and Pete Jones) who are musicians and I tag along to these keyboardy type of gigs with them to see other bands like E.L.P. (Emerson, Lake and Palmer), Van de Graaf Generator, Rush, Uriah Heep, Jethro Tull and the likes of Lynyrd Skynyrd but the latter is a more synchronised double or triple guitar band.

Tonight I am off to Tranmere Rovers home game against Bradford City (I think you must think that all the teams we play are from Yorkshire) but its only about four teams out of 24 in Division 4. Everyone will be wrapped up but I will be wearing the soft warm red and black check shirt you bought me for Christmas.

I hope you can wear your Xmas bracelet watch that was my gift. I knew you only had your nurses fob watch that you wear upside down so now you can tell the time the right way up on the wrist.

I was reading in the paper and its funny because we were only talking about it the other day about a reunion of The Beatles. Rumours are buzzing around Liverpool and London that all four with our fave John Lennon will get together on stage at the Hammersmith Odeon Theatre with Paul McCartney to see the Seventies out. What a gig that would be because it is being planned for charity as well. A lot of big names are planned to play over four nights, probably the

biggest rock stars in the world to raise money and awareness for Kampuchea (Cambodia).

On New Years Eve one my friends Dave, his girlfriend Wendy always has an incredible party at her house and I have my usual invite with the usual (Belgium gang), so it should be fun.

Today I spent time looking round the shops locally but all the sales seem to be starting next week so I must use my lunch hours next week checking out any Department Store bargains.

Next Friday …. I have checked all the new year time tables and my journey goes like this: 6.00pm from Liverpool gets into Euston at 8.30pm then 9.20pm from Waterloo to arrive Haslemere at 10.20pm. If for any reason (unlikely) that I miss that, there is the fast train form Waterloo at 9.50pm arriving at Haslemere at 10.42pm.

So take care and you know that I think of you all the time. Leaving you to come back to Liverpool is always the hardest part of my journey and is also the hardest thing I've ever known.

I wish we could see in 1980 together at midnight on Monday (you will be well into your night duty shift) but my thoughts will be with you as always but even more so that night because taking a breath of fresh air at midnight seeing in a brand new decade era is something a little bit special. My nan always has to have the tradition of sending me outside with a piece of coal then knock on her front door and there would be an exchange of coal for a silver coin .... well something like that and I believe it is a very old northern thing!

So till next Friday, I carry my love and heart for you into the New Year

Love, JP xxx



B in Penang 1978 & 1979



JP in 1979 Liverpool & the early 1980s in London and Brighton with B

January 1980

London Calling

“The Clash”

Liverpool 4th January 1980

Dear B,

Just finished my tea (that’s our evening meal here) and I needed it. You can’t imagine the fun I had getting home now that you’re finally in Worthing. I almost missed a connection in Brighton. I jumped on the train just as it was pulling away and it turned out to be the stopping train so I didn’t get into London Victoria (makes a change from Waterloo), until 11.30pm. I caught the last tube from Victoria to Earls Court then the last tube from Earls Court which irritatingly terminated at Hyde Park Corner. I dashed to street level to search for a taxi. I honestly thought this was going to be the first time that I was going to be stranded overnight in London. Whilst I was looking to flag down a cab an old banger of a car pulled up and this old Indian fella said

“where you going, need a ride” I got in and said “to Euston”, and he said “how do we get there”? he had no idea and wasn’t a taxi or mini cab driver, but following traffic signs into and out of Oxford Street (and £3 for his efforts) we arrived at Euston in time for me to get the paper train with an overnight sleeper. The guard was kind and as there was no one else travelling he let me use a sleeper instead of sleeping in the newspaper wagon cage (us Tranmere fans have often slept between the bales of newsprint in those rattly old cages). Having a sleeper meant that I could actually have a wash and shave on the train itself and I simply walked up the hill from Lime Street and strolled into work at 8.00am.

I hope you got back to sleep B, after I called you, but now its so easy with your new nurses accommodation being in Selden Road, its just like being in your own tiny apartment and just off the seafront promenade with that really good Chinese take away literally round the corner. The

egg foo young is amazing and I could survive on that alone!

At last it was now time to release our (my) big secret surprise that we had been keeping under wraps this last week or so. I was busy this morning but the afternoon was free at work and obviously I had to say something and my senior photographer Alan (not the big boss) sort of put two and two together as he did give me a handwritten reference to take to the interview at St. Bartholowmew's (Barts) Hospital when I managed to have my clandestine interview on one of those many recent days off last month. And the big news of the day was the announcement that I would be handing in my notice and leaving.

So now everyone knows and they are happy to see that I've got another job but very sorry to lose me and its true they have been the best crowd these last five years and they will miss me but I will miss them a lot more. And somewhere in the history of our department, hopefully I will not be

totally forgotten as a distant blip because I really do get on well with them all and together our gang is the life and soul of what goes on and I am the only Tranmere Rovers supporter the departments ever had .... so I'll probably be best remembered for that!

The congratulations mug you bought me survived my mad trip back to Liverpool, thanks again B for all you support and help. I am about to christen that mug with a good brew of tea when I have finished this letter.

The Police LP "Regatta de Blanc" is excellent (I have their first one "Outlandos d'Amour") so thanks for that as they are one of the best new bands around when I saw them at the Empire earlier this year and *"Message in a Bottle"* did get to number one after all. I will probably drive the rest of the house crazy playing it over and over again and I will tape it for you as well.

On Wednesday I am going to see Dave Edmund's Band "Rockpile" at Liverpool University's Mountford Hall and then I need to make use of

any spare time to start to sort out my things and work out the practicalities of my move to London at the end of next month (February).

As I write this letter my contract for Bart's Medical Illustration & Photography Department has not yet arrived in the post but it should come this week, as I'm not going to hand in my five weeks notice until I have signed and sealed the deal. I will let you know what's happening as soon as I find out.

I have included a postcard from Coniston, a small Lake District town that is popular in the summer months. I visited it twice over the last two years, its peaceful and can be tranquil down by the lakeside.

Today all it did was snow, snow and snow but it did not stick so everywhere is wet, slushy and muddy and the sky so dull … it must and can only improve.

Also, tomorrow at work, the Professor (we call him "The Prof") has requested that I have a private interview with him. I don't know what he will say,

I'll have to wait and see and I hope he doesn't try to persuade me to stay.

I forgot to buy the 2p stamps today so two 8p's should shoot this letter to you as ultra first class mail.

Did you get my early Valentines Day Card and I may write you a poem or say simply ... *I LOVE YOU - JP xxx*

Worthing 6th January 1980

JP,

Your early Valentine Card is a real surprise and having overcome this surprise I just want you to know how much I appreciate the lovely card and it now stands proudly on the dressing table. It came through in the 7.30am post Monday morning. I didn't know about it until later on or else I would have told you so on the phone. You may get a brown parcel as well with my whole "heart" wrapped in it.

P/S Would you believe it if I were to tell you that yours is the first Valentine card I received in *my life* !

Continued 7th January 1980

JP, I just feel awful reading about the rough time you had on your way back to Liverpool and just couldn't get over how you had to rush and dash for everything and I have had to put up with some of these things in the past. I wish I could share and endure these hard journeys with you not to mention the thought of being on a slow moving train and the anxiety of knowing ahead that you will have to make a run for last connections.

So I have decided that when you are living in London I'll do all the travelling and come to you on all my days off.

Thank you for the card of Coniston. I shall pin it to my "notice board" .

Instead of snow, snow, snow down here, all it has been doing is drizzle, drizzle, drizzle and the sky downcast and grey and depressing. During my days off (Monday and Tuesday) I roamed around Worthing town despite all the rain, having nothing to do. It was fun just having so many

shops to look at for once on the doorstep because although Selden Road is nice and handy it is a bit small. I bought a dress at Etam in the sale. It is white with black polka dots. I was thinking of the black polka dot shirt you have, the one we laughed over when you told me but dots work much better on dresses and you better like it and not laugh!

Most probably our letters will cross over as they usually do but I'm all ears regarding your contract at Bart's Hospital. If I can't help you pack all your bits and belongings I will definitely be around and be able to unpack them with you.

Right I'm off to bed its 11pm and am on the "early" tomorrow and each day till Sunday, then working through until Wednesday, Thursday, Friday which are my days off next week.

I was thinking if you have so much to do getting organised for the move then don't worry about coming down to see me. The New Year is now over and we can celebrate anytime and I am thinking about the enormous travelling expenses

as well on your side at the moment from Liverpool - London - Worthing and back, it makes my head ache all this thought of training around Britain.

If you remember, all the girls here initially decided to go to (your favourite) Charlie's Chinese Restaurant over the New Year but there seemed to be so much disagreement that I got fed up with them for once and so some of us are not joining the rest. Just too many opinions and it usually ends up with quarrels again (you'd be surprised what girls argue about). Maybe I'm too sensitive on some issues. Actually the girls here in Selden Road are quite alright, it's those in Southland's now that seem to "create all the havoc". It sounds childish I know but you'd be surprised that incidents still exist even among our own group. What has happened is one of my best friends has "stolen" the boyfriend of my other best friend and he is quite a catch (an aeronautical engineer) and I am in the middle of the fall out from both sides. There's always

jealousy when some of the girls get “proper boyfriends”.

I’ve had enough today … I really am going to bed now …. bye for now …. take care.

Love, B, I love you I Love you I Love you

Continued again! 7th January 1980

Dear JP

It is past 1.00am now but I just couldn't sleep as most of the time I spend wondering and worrying about your trips here and back and whether you grab meals here and there. I am back in Midhurst just for a temporary short time to arrange some admin and things and they are a bit stretched here so I sort of live and work in two places at the same time at the moment so to speak. I was too restless to wait for the evening 6 o'clock hospital transport so I took the 4.45pm local bus (Worthing to Midhurst), its only 30 minutes and then picked up the 5.25pm Ernie's hospital bus to get back to King Edward VII. It wasn't so cold but the bus ride was a bit nauseating, all the windows were shut and the heater on makes you feel dizzy.

When I got here (and the meaning of admin), there was letter with a bit of bad news but nothing among my immediate family. My uncle has passed away, the other one died before I left

for England so that makes me minus two uncles down. I am not very close to that side of the family, still it is sad news to receive from home knowing that I won't ever see him again if I ever do return home.

Forgot to mention that I have finished the Nancy Drew (Teenager's Detective Book) during Christmas (not your cup of tea at all). Now I guess I have to go off reading fiction for a while to really settle down and do some studies but I might dip into and read those Pan books of horror stories.

I love to see all those colour slides in that mini plug in viewer that you gave me. At last now I can picture when you look out of the window and see the things you see when out and about in Liverpool and the house in Hale Road and the red brick front garden wall that you painted.

Tomorrow I shall drop into Lloyds Bank in Midhurst to transfer my accounts to the Worthing branch (more admin). I find this too much of a fuss, you would think that one branch is the same as another, still it has got to be done.

Think I shall go to bed now. Have been listening to the songs you taped for me and those two that you composed. Been playing your tapes for the last two hours so will continue this letter tomorrow.

8th January 1980 continued

How fast the days go by! This is the second week of January already and the second day of my holiday. Spent the afternoon in Midhurst and later on in the afternoon went around the hospital compound looking for black soil for my plants. I have to be discreet about getting the soil though or else the hospital gardener will be coming after us.

Just discovered that you left your screwdriver here. Do you need it, anyway I shall hang on to it as I am useless and can't even change a plug.

Posting this to you quickly so you can receive it about the same time I receive yours.

P/S. Is everything going well with your contact lenses?

Missing you Terribly, B

Liverpool 8th January 1980

Dear B,

My journey home was much smoother, easier and faster than last time and I was back in Liverpool by 8pm. Yet again as I travelled home I'm thinking of how convenient it will be when I move to London and the end to long distance travelling and having to work the next day.

Work in the studio and darkrooms is very slack at the moment … but here is a hospital Sister gem of a tale. We had an emergency call from the mortuary (post mortem suites) to get over to the old Royal Infirmary as the pathologist had something immediate and interesting for us to photograph. Myself and Alan (my senior photographer) gathered our gear and white coats and were dashing (at trotting speed) when an angry ward Sister stepped out in front of us hand in the air like the traffic police and shouted "Stop, where are you off to", we explained and she said "you look like the Crash Team but you're not and I will have no running in my corridor, the dead can

wait … this hospital is for the living" … She was just about as fierce as you can get.

From time to time we do have to photograph very sad cases that have taken peoples lives just out of ordinary everyday situations. I had to photograph a death by choking. A family had gone out for lunch in a Liverpool restaurant and the young father had swallowed a tiny piece of steak that had lodged in his throat and he couldn't cough it up and despite help from the restaurant staff he keeled over and choked to death within a minute or two. The pathologist used a pair of small medical pliers to remove the small insignificant piece of meat that had killed him and that was the picture, pliers and very, very small sliver of beef.

Just as sad or sadder still and this next case affected the whole team and we are normally a hard lot. Three sisters aged 14, 16, 18 while their parents were away on a short break had a small house party and a half spent cigarette that had been carelessly discarded set fire to the ground

floor of the house. All three sisters were burned to death and seeing all 3 of them laid out on 3 adjoining post mortem slabs in their charred pugilistic form made a very depressing and horrific photographic call. I couldn't eat anything that evening and my clothes were tainted by the intense smell of fire, smoke, decay and death.

How in just an instance, bad timing, bad luck, being in the wrong situation at the wrong time, a chain of events that goes out of control causing so much agony and distress for all those involved.

We must take each day at a time and enjoy every minute of it and never, never ever worry about anything. This has altered my view a great deal and I believe if there is something you enjoy, something you need or want … then do it, go for it, buy it and don’t hold back and really there is no point in saving money for a rainy day from now on. I know that goes against what sensible people will say but I disagree and don’t care what anyone else might add.

Well .... Sorry but I had to get that off my chest and air these thought's. Let's move on to something much lighter.

I went down to the Contact Lens Centre today for another session and I had to walk around Liverpool city centre for a while trying them out. This Saturday the Lens Dispensing Practitioner says I should be ready and able to take them away permanently if he's satisfied I can manage them and the cleaning regime. A lot of faffing around if you ask me as you only tear for about 5 seconds when you put them in and then the eyes settle down immediately. I'll see how it goes.

I have the contract for Bart's Hospital and I need to fill in a whole stack of Questions and Answers. They actually wanted me to have a kind of meeting with their Personnel Section which is their policy when you get a job offer and they rang me up to see if I could go down. I don't think they realised that I was that far away in Liverpool. I was willing to go down but when I told them the train costs of a weekday peak ticket that would

get me there in good time would be five times that of an off peak one they agreed to do it all by post. I did receive my interview train fare expenses on the day of my interview and even then there was some huffing and puffing about the £30, but that was what it cost to be in London in time for business hours on a weekday.

Interestingly (and confusingly) Bart's also offered me another interview as I had applied for two jobs at the same time. The second job was to set up and run all their Audio Visual and Design stuff working solely in the School of Nursing for nurse training. This would have been a one man department (me) and this was my plan B if the I didn't get the Photographers position so I had to decline this second offer. What would I have done without the B.J. (British Journal of Photography) that carries all the UK photographic jobs each week.

I have been asked to show and give a talk about our Belgium trip and a family friend is organising putting together a slide projector and screen and

I need to sort out some narration. I will probably just make it up as I have no time to write a script.
I hope the weather stays sunny for the weekend and your trip to Littlehampton, so enjoy yourself. As for me its off to Stockport County on Friday night which is very near to Manchester and not very far at all to see Tranmere play.
On Saturday I should then pick up my contact lenses and kill two birds with one stone by buying a new flash gun that I need which will cost £10 - £12.
I suppose as work know that I will eventually be leaving they seem to be allowing me a lot of flexibility which is all down to “The Prof” and my private interview with him was quite revealing. He told me of his days as a young doctor specialising in all things pulmonary and how he started in Sheffield and moved onwards and upwards via Birmingham to Liverpool. He told me to go for it and was struck my “Love Affair” part of the story but his main concern was I able to transfer Tranmere Rovers to London. So all in all he

offered encouragement and support and I suppose transferring from Liverpool to one of the World's oldest and most renown hospitals (Bart's) is a big step up the ladder.

So all this waiting time for paperwork means that I will have had 3 months to play around with, so as it doesn't look like I'm going to be busy I can be at your disposal before you head back to "Geriatrics" at Worthing and help you cart any other extra bits down if you like. I will come down this Thursday night and be with you at 10.30pm. I bought a new album just to keep your pictures in.

All My Lovin, I Send To You, JP xxx

Worthing 10th January 1980

My Darling JP,

It is so bright and sunny today. I have just come back from a walk along the seafront and at last after a fortnight of rain and dullness it was today still bright after 5pm. I was on an early duty today and the promenade here in Worthing is truly beautiful and long, I wish you were here with me though. This is a great place for photographs and there are not many people out, the breeze is a bit chilly and in the distance the lights of Brighton were beginning to twinkle. I hope this weather stays settled.

For supper I had a take away fried rice. The kitchen here which we share as usual is a mess and nobody ever cleans the dirty dishes and its so untidy around the sink which makes the washing up and cooking difficult so take away is much easier at the moment.

I have my next duty rota so perhaps this is useful to know all my next lot of days on and off.

Monday 11th = Early, Tuesday 12th = Late

Wednesday 13th = Early, Thursday 14th = OFF

Friday 15th = OFF, Saturday 16th = Late

Sun 17th = Early, Monday 18th = Early

Tuesday 19th = Early, Wednesday 20th = Early

Thursday 21st = Early, Friday 22nd = OFF

Saturday 23rd = OFF, Sunday 24th = Late

Tentatively I shall be having the weekend off during the first week of March as well. So just come down as and when you can because at least in Worthing I will have loads more time to spend with you …. What do you think?

It's nice to think that you will be missed in Liverpool and if I worked with you and you were leaving I think I'd flood the whole office with my tears, doesn't it make you feel awful to leave Liverpool and all your friends behind?

Your new contract questionnaire seems to be taking its time and I thought they were in a rush, but I know just how long admin and paperwork takes these days to go backwards and forwards between departments.

I have bought you a Valentines card and anyway see you when I see you, just choose any convenient dates. Bye for now my love

All my Love, B, Lots of kisses

Worthing 11th January 1980

Dearest JP,

Nice to know that you'll be coming down again next weekend despite the cost that always worries me and the strain of travelling in the cold weather. You can always put off this long distance stuff, I don't mind because we will be much closer soon.

Tell me all about Stockport and we'll swap news as I promised the girls that we would all go out to Littlehampton and explore around.

You'll be having a lot of fun with your contact lenses won't you? I think you look more attractive in your usual little round "John Lennon" glasses but never mind and my contact lenses are used mainly for work. I'm sure they will let you loose with your lenses and it's amazing how our eyes these days can adapt to having what amounts to a foreign body in it. I'm sure this will be a new experience and you are looking forward but be careful and don't lose them or dislodge them around your eyes !

It is good to let loose and get things out in the open rather than get stressed with pressures of work and life and you more than most get to see the reality of life and death as no one else does, up close and in sometimes horrifying gruesome detail. You are certainly a stronger person than me who is weak at times. Maybe it is time to change how we do things and look forward to the now and the future will look after itself. Who wants to be rich money wise anyway, when we can enjoy the moment and simply be content with what we have.

I am so happy that the Bart's contract is sorting itself out and I am just keeping my fingers crossed because there seems to be so much for you to sort out and even then if you have job satisfaction there will be commuting expenses to and from work in London, a place to live to sort out and food and other things to pay for. But I'm sure the job will have benefits and the pros will outweigh the cons and for me it was getting use to a totally new environment and a new country.

Frankly, although I like England as a country and a place to stay I always feel like an alien from another planet among some English. There is always a sense of not belonging. For the English culture and way of life and the people are all so different for me who has lived a quarter of a century in another part of the world. Although we take the trouble to understand the English, they don't seem to take the trouble to understand us who come from the far east. They always take it for granted that we should know everything they do. Yes a minority are very understanding and helpful but unfortunately how few compared to the vast majority because this is still something so new to me.

But I won't be getting fed up with snow. I have yet to build my snowman. It might have to be a midget I bet considering the slow rate the snow is falling.

Before I forget to mention, I am going to have my hair curled on Monday at the hairdressers. If I don't like it or it doesn't suit me I shall cut it short,

so here's hoping that you will like my new hair do JP.

Oh! After my night duty it is so difficult for me to sleep. I seldom go to sleep until at least 2 - 3am. So I listen to songs that you have taped and study a bit of geriatric nursing and still write a few letters to any friends who still remember me back home in Penang.

PS. You are just adorable JP!

Tons of Love to You, B

Liverpool 13th January 1980

Dear B,

Two letters from you this week in quick succession. Oh yes most times I do get a reasonable meal when I arrive home eventually and there is always something leftover to pop in the oven or our crates of Pot Noodles to raid or simply a chase a cheese and pickle butty.

About your uncles, news like this is always saddening. I don't seem to be close to any of my uncles because they both live further up north and they only visit my nan rarely and they are quite old really so sometimes my dad will drive my nan and me up to them occasionally in rotation, that's my Uncle Harry who lives in Preston and Uncle George who lives in Bury mostly and sometimes for weeks in his caravan near Windermere in the Lake District and that's about it.

If you like the local slides I can see if I can find some old colour slides of a London holiday with my dad in 1968 and some more recent slide snaps

of holidays in Scotland, we have boxes and boxes kept somewhere.

Did you get enough soil for your potted plants? or did the gardener catch you and you have been sentenced to hospital porridge (will explain when I see you).

You're just like Jon my friend in the rock band, he is absolutely crazy on all kinds of plants and his house is like a jungle and he's forever getting new ones and caring ever so much for them … a hard rocker with a sensitive side.

Keep hold of the screwdriver its more use down there I will not miss it, my dad has a garage full of tools and more!

On that Friday I travelled to Stockport after work. Left at 5.15pm and arrived about 6.45pm. Its twelve miles from Manchester and a large town and it was nice and quiet for a Friday evening. Twice Tranmere were in the lead but we had to settle for a 2 - 2 draw. When I arrived I met the head of the Tranmere Rovers Supporters Club and he gave me a complimentary ticket (not

many Rovers supporters had turned up) so I used an allocated players ticket to get into the stand for free. Home after the match at 10.30pm ... early for once haha!

The weather is very eerie again, icy and misty with sub zero temperatures, but not a breath of wind and the nights are still and the waters of the River Mersey and the east and west float docks are like mirrors, so calm and so cold. I will definitely be out taking some shots if it stays like this.

Yes, I have my contact lenses and I have them at home and I have to wear them for 2 hours at first and then build up to a full day then go back in about ten days time for a follow up and check up. They don't seem any trouble at all.

I bought myself a new flashgun which was £16 but I managed to get a discount down to £10.50 including a chargeable battery cell. Its pretty good and I have tested it with a very long flash distance and its automatic with a clever manual

override adjustment, so something extra for my camera bag to carry around.

I can understand how you feel about being a “stranger in a strange land” or feeling ”alienated”. This is natural I suppose but don’t let it get you down and we can combat any negativity even if its hard. I also know that a lot of people are historically racist in this country of ours, sometime’s I have to work alongside one particular person and I admit he makes me sick at times with his all his shitty crap and rubbish he spouts out. And we are supposed to live in a modern society .....

The trouble is, is that these people think of themselves as being number one whilst everyone else who is a foreigner to them is a secondary citizen. They never think of what is going on in the rest of the world. I tend to avoid anyone who openly criticises other races. And if only people would stop and think what makes the world go round, the people in it and if they could live and

work together what a marvellous place it would be to live in.

You will find that Liverpool and the north of England especially is a very friendly and accommodating region with it large asian and overseas populations. I am always moved by a line in one of our Merseyside anthems *"Ferry Across The Mersey"* by Gerry and The Pacemakers when Gerry sings and tells us that people up here in Liverpool on every corner always smile and say that they don't care what your name is and that they'll never turn you away. And then we have Liverpool's "official anthem" *"You'll Never Walk Alone"* once again by Gerry and The Pacemakers. I think they should rename themselves the Peacemakers.

Mac my oldest friend, his mum and dad now live in Gerry Marsden's old house which is off Leasowe Road. They bought it off him and its a quite a big place with super large rooms and I guess that Gerry must now live in a mansion somewhere

expensive and posh near West Kirby on the Wirral with all his success and sixties hit records.

I think we are the future and its all about harmony, peace and love and nothing else matters.

That slide show the other day went well, it was supposed to last an hour but other people brought slides and the whole do lasted three hours, I felt like the magic lantern man.

At work as a professional we read about and see reports about future inventions and how long colour slides might last as they are complex to process and quite expensive rolls of film and getting exposures correct is sometimes a challenge. There is this new thing, a video tape starting to appear (mainly professionally) called Betamax or VHS (Video Home System), it's been out a couple of years but studios are starting to use it to record images. It will never take the place of still photography and the camera's are half the size of a suitcase so not very practical and expensive. It may catch on for a while but like

everything, new inventions come and go and video tape is like audio tape it is magnetic and prone to all sorts of things that can degrade its quality. One day something will come along (probably outer space alien technology) that we can't comprehend but that may be in the next century.

Has your snow got any deeper, you need a good 2 - 3 inches at least of virgin snow before you can start to roll it into shape .... and a carrot (nose), dark stones (eyes) and an old wooly hat.

I received my monthly copy of the Royal Photographic Journal and my name has been confirmed gaining the L.R.P.S. distinction, they sent me two copies by mistake so there is one for you.

The pictures of you are the most important ones I possess and they appear in my dreams and I'm sure that whatever you do with your hair will suit and you won't have to chop any extra off. So I shall see you on Thursday night after all and I have a spare salt pot grinder for your take away so

put away that horrible tub of Saxa and we'll get some real crystal sea salt.

With every second that goes by I miss you more.

All my Love, JP xxx

Liverpool January 21st 1980

Dearest B,

Just home from work today. The trip back to Liverpool passed by uneventful and I managed to sleep on the overnight train for once.

I arrived back in Lime Street at 7.00am so I had time to get a quick wash and freshen up in one of the darkrooms at work before Bernie my trainee arrived. The only people who are in really early are the cleaners but they don't bother to clean our darkrooms unless we specially ask them to as they have to navigate a dark maze like passageway that keeps any light at all from filtering in from outside and we have so much expensive equipment. We are so used to walking and working in total blackout conditions when processing film after years of experience … guess we have coalminers eyes. Probably need to wear sunglasses in the future as our eyes will get so used to the dark.

I don't normally, but at 8.30am I nipped down to the hospital canteen to see what was going on for breakfast, Tea and Toast! That was all.

Because later that morning the canteen was back on strike again so off to the shop for a Pot Noodle to keep me going till I got home to something a bit more substantial.

About half an hour's drive from home there is an old seaport called Parkgate which has long since silted up and the sea has been replaced by salt marshes and it looks like something from about 200 years ago. But often me and Jim or Dave or Iain take a drive there as there are these oldie worldly tea shops and cafes on the promenade and they do the most amazing Welsh rarebit (tastiest cheese on toast you'll ever have) and local potted shrimps.

On the way home I called in just passing at the opticians and he was pleased with my progress and has stepped my adjustment times by an extra half an hour a day and in one more week I shall have reached the recommended maximum

of 12 - 16 hours per day but I still wear the glasses as well.

I can print your colour negatives by the end of the week. We normally only do black and white but we have a dedicated colour darkroom that we invested in but never use (seems cheaper to outsource our colour printing) but we are going to start and a large batch of colour chemicals is arriving and one of the large tanks has been mixed up so we have to use them (or practice with) so I can try your negs then.

Also on my way home I called in at Probe Records to buy The Pretenders LP with those fab singles *"Stop Your Sobbing"* and *"Brass in Pocket"* .... that Chrissie Hynde is so cool and the best thing since Annie Lennox in The Tourists. But then I stumbled across an amazing offer. "Free" one of the all time great rock bands had their double album "The Free Story" which was a limited numbered edition Canadian import. It normally retails at £10 but I picked up a copy for £5.90, there were only two copies left and probably the

only ones in Merseyside. I then had to dodge the showers on the way to the ferry at the Pier Head.
I am slowly organising my prints into albums and they are a lot lighter than carrying my massive professional folio cases. Carting them to London for the interview was one big pain and they are just large and you need to use two hands as each case has at least 10 (A1 size mounted boards) so they are very, very bulky, but it worked so no complaints now.
Now that you are settled in Worthing for your next term of nurse training I'm having to get use to writing automatically your new address. So lots to do in Worthing and with this letter I fire off every ounce of love to you.
Yours Forever, JP xxx

PS. I am including a large newspaper cutting, a piece that I wrote for the Liverpool Echo and they ran the story about my ideas of how to change the fortunes of Tranmere Rovers, I got the whole massive headline on the back sports page ....

didn’t expect that. Maybe one day I shall write instead of taking pictures for a living and become a "Teller of Tales” or poems.

Worthing 21st January

1980

Dearest John

I Love You

Very Much

B xxx

Worthing 25th January 1980

JP,

Now that the initial training days and duties are complete I really have started proper my geriatric nursing in Worthing. You might not believe this but I'm so lost and lonely here and this is about the third time that I really feel homesick. Work wise everything is fine, the atmosphere is in fact too relaxed, procedures are a bit different and the standard of nursing is quite below that of Midhurst. I suppose I will adapt myself to the environment soon but in the meantime I must get through this period of "depression". What I'm worried about most is the assessment which will be the first assessment of three. Anyway shall tell you more about it when you come down.

Regarding our Lister House address in Selden Road. We are getting a reception warden and she is everything everybody told me about. You know what I mean … and the team of maids who clean our rooms are so unfriendly and unsmiling. She (the warden) states that no visitors allowed after

11.00pm, how stupid and ridiculous. But John you always have been a rebel and I don't care as well .... who do these people think they are and anyway she doesn't work weekends. If the worse comes to the worse we girls can always rent a private place.

Come down any day you like because even on an early or late there are loads of free hours in the day.

So many things to tell you about JP, wait till you come down. I am tired after a hard days work or "a hard days night" as you always call it as most of the elderly patients are so large and we spend a lot of time lifting.

I'm so pleased and glad to get your lovely letter and it has cheered me up since then. Must let you know that I miss you terribly at times and I think about you all day and always counting the days till you hold me and make love to me.

All my Love to You, B

Worthing 28th January 1980

Darling JP,

I'm having Monday and Tuesday off this week so perhaps I had better let you have my February timetable. I am so depressed that I'm not having weekends off, I'll make a request, but here it is.

Wednesday 30th = Early, Thursday 31st = Early

Friday 1st = Late, Saturday 2nd = Late

Sunday 3rd = Early, Monday 4th = Late

Tuesday 5th = Early, Wednesday 6th = Early

Thursday 7th = OFF, Friday 8th = OFF

Saturday 9th = Late, Sunday 10th = Early

Monday 11th = Early, Tuesday 12th = Late

Wednesday 13th = Early, Thursday 14th = OFF

Friday 15th = OFF, Saturday 16th = Late

Sunday 17th = Early

You see our Sister has already planned it all even before I came to Worthing. I very much wanted to request some weekends off but later on, it may have to be in March. I just can't approach her and ask her to alter the off duty lists. She has got lots to do and then she will only have to reshuffle

everybody else. We'll just chat about what we can do and when we can do things when you come down.

For today I went out shopping alone, mainly "window shopping" but I bought one or two things for you and I am anxious to see if you'll like them.

And I took the walk to the train station here. It seemed like a long walk to me to the other side of town and best to allow 15 - 20 mins to walk it. You can always call me when you arrive from the call box and I can walk to meet you half way unless I know your exact train arrival time. As Worthing is on the coastal line and from the timetable I think that there is no direct service at all to Waterloo and the best is to change at Brighton which is not that far away, about 20 minutes. And then from Brighton there is a very regular service to London Victoria. The complete journey is about 90 minutes. I think at certain times there is a slower but direct service to Victoria. We can also

take the train along the coast to Littlehampton and Arundel as well.

How are you at work and do not get pressurised about printing my negatives so don't bother if you are too busy.

There are many restaurants in Worthing where I can take you out to dine and bring that camera as we have so many interesting buildings from all different ages. Charlie also has another Chinese restaurant here as well and its much better and just off the seafront in Steyne Gardens. And we can watch the sunset, its very flat here and it really is beautiful. You must take the greatest care of yourself because you mean the most to me and as always I think about you all the time.

As you mentioned we can do so many things down here and I must plan in future better days off. Still no news from London about the move?

I Love You, B

Liverpool 30th January 1980

Dear B,

I received both your letters at the same time and they were posted a day apart, that's service for you!

After sounding miserable at settling in Worthing I feel that there is a light there somewhere shining on you to brighten your days.

Your description of the house warden sounds nasty with her self imposed strict ideals. We are all adults and can do what we like. Don't get me started about rule makers, rules are made to be broken and we can do anything we want to do, so that does not bother me.

We are a bit busy at the moment and we have a Comparability Commission coming to look around and inspect our Forensic Pathology Department and in simple terms it compares us with other medical sectors and departments: what we do, what our overall value is. It's all about pay in the end and is one thing worth more than another. It is all rather political and something

the Conservatives have dreamed up. Liverpool is a bright red Labour City and since that Thatcher got in at the last election …. Liverpool is a thorn in her side, but we all stand here un-divided and our unions are strong and really do fight for us. We have a good union representative called Len McClusky and he is quite a good mate and the guy who took us to the Moody Blues concert in Stafford. You tell him any issues and he get's it sorted immediately. Recently we had a new Health and Safety Directive which forbids us to photograph "fresh" specimens, organs and body parts in the studio, they have to be fixed or preserved using formalin. It's OK to photograph anything "fresh" and bloody in situ or in a post mortem room. Just after these new rules came into force, one of our more challenging pathologists (Dr. G) brought a heart attached with all the arteries in a bucket from the mortuary. He told me it was "fixed" and placed it on the light box ready for photography. It was clear right away with all the blood that this was

fresh from a body and I refused to photograph it and he got really angry saying that this was an important specimen and it would be ruined if left out under the hot halogen lights.

He actually threatened to report me and make an official complaint and take this to highest level. I told him to do what he liked and he stormed off after telling me to fuck off and I was in for it. I dashed to the lab where Len was hanging out and he was onto it straight away (no love lost between him and Dr. G). The upshot; that the complaint made to “The Prof” came right back into Dr. G’s face. He was made not only to make a full apology to me but also to clear away and mop up his bloody specimen. You just need to follow the rules, we gown up all the time in the post mortem room and to take pictures and we have all the correct gear and protocols. He was just abusing his status and trying on bullying tactics. But well done Len!

At home I have some more lighter tapes for you, a bit of soul and Motown to see if you like that.

On Sunday night I went to the Empire to see one of the UK's best touring bands, Wishbone Ash, another of my faves, a sell out and they have been around since about 1969 and their LP "Argus" is one of the best albums of the last decade and they are connoisseurs of rock.

The weather is still so cold, wet or frosty and all football matches have been postponed. Our own "Pathology All Stars" is waiting to play an important invitation match against an N.H.S select team and is scheduled for a fortnight.

You have been checking out Worthing with all the things to do, see and eat, I can't wait and my camera is ready. I like my Olympus, the OM1 is a classic and lighter to carry than the Nikon FM's. It cost £150 back in 1977 and is part of me, it goes everywhere, David Bailey the famous photographer uses it as his favourite camera.

In some ways I will miss Midhurst, I did get to enjoy the quiet countryside woodland walks which to me was beautiful and different but

Worthing as a big town will give us a lot to enjoy, I'm sure.

One thing which was a bit scary in your Midhurst woods are those regular game hunters. I remember once walking through the woods to join the main hospital drive and there was as lot of loud and close shooting going on, then I heard some distant voices and it went quiet as I turned into a less wooded area; there were about half a dozen meaty big men who were told to "hold fire" as I walked through them and they were all instructed to point their shotguns in the air away from me. For those seconds or so it was very unnerving and a little dangerous being there and I thought of that Burt Reynolds film "Deliverance" which made me shudder.

Still waiting for details from Bart's Hospital. When I got this job here in Liverpool, I had the interview on a Thursday and was offered the job on the spot before I left the department and I was starting the job on the following Monday just four days later. I think the health authority for that

area of London is so vast they must have so much information to process, still I had to jump through hoops as they only gave me 48 hours notice ahead of the interview.

As for plans this weekend, Tranmere play Portsmouth away at their Fratton Park ground so I get almost a free (well subsidised) coach down as I only need it one way. The supporter's coach is travelling through Friday night (to save hotel expenses for the fans) and we will arrive in Portsmouth on Saturday morning. After the match (ends about 4.45pm) I will catch the coastal train Portsmouth to Worthing (about 50 mins journey) and be with you as soon as I can.

Take care `cos I Love You, JP xxx

February 1980

Little Bit Of Love

“Free”

Liverpool 8th February 1980

Dear B,

Received you letter today the same day at last that my contract came through. More a bit later when I’ve read it through.

You want to share my rough times you told me but if you did then they wouldn’t be rough because you’d be with me. I am happy to keep on travelling knowing that you are always at the end of my journey. The worst bit is always leaving you on your own. Anyway I can officially work my five weeks notice now and that will immediately cancel out all this mileage that I have been clocking up but then no universe is larger or longer that I wouldn’t cross to be with you.

Is the weather truly better down south I wonder away from the grey, foggy, cold and dreary northern skies.

I need to sort out my clothes, what is new, what to leave behind and what I am short of before I come down. Not sure what they expect at Bart's Hospital. Here we just wear our Wrangler's and we can get away with being almost scruffy. I have my stuff all over the place and am living on top of a mess at the moment.

Back to the contract which seemed to be too many pages too long but never mind, I start work on MONDAY 3rd MARCH. I also have a few day's extra off here so all is good and don't worry I will be down this week.

Next Monday 11th February I have a day off work for clearing out my gear from the Art College because I was still going in once a week studying and learning design and advertising as an extra. So I need to go round to Birkenhead and the two Art College annexes to return their text books and bits of old equipment they lent me.

It's not too bad really because on Monday night, friends at work Stu and Dee have invited me for a farewell dinner at their house in Birkenhead and I

will take some portraits of their baby girl as a thank you for the past few years. I always promised that one day I would take a portrait of them.

Now, I definitely have Thursday 14th and Friday 15th off so I will certainly see you on the Thursday. The best thing for me to do is to ring you on Wednesday (you are on an early) so I will call you at around 6.00pm with details and times but I should be in Worthing for afternoon tea.

I see you are still in the centre of the dispute with your best friends so we can head to a quiet restaurant and you may just see me attired for the first time in a suit and tie, well it was lucky for me as it may have just swung the job interview .... who knows!

On Monday 11th I will be ringing Bart's to confirm their help with my initial accommodation relocation package. I am eligible for hospital accommodation at least to start with until I find something permanent but I don't know what or where yet.

“The Prof” has been very kind and has said I can have all the last week in February off for free and by then I should know my actual moving to London day. The moving day will probably be a bit mind boggling depending how much gear I can cram into the Fiat Mirafiori but at least its a long car with lots of space inside. My most valuable and fragile stuff is my sound system and my Marlin Guitar. Any help with unpacking gratefully received … Hint … Hint! I can teach you to play if you like or just sing along.

I have sold (traded in) two of my older camera’s including that large twin lens Yashica and bought another brand new Olympus OM1 so I now have two of those. I have a new plug in colour slide viewer that is better than the old one I let you have last year and also my last shots of Worthing are processed and back.

So ring you on Wednesday - See you on Thursday

I LOVE YOU AND I LOVE YOU AGAIN

AND I LOVE YOU FOREVER

JP xxx

Liverpool 8th February 1980

Dear B,

It's funny, odd and exciting to think that my journey back to Liverpool in the early hours today will be last "overnighter" back from the south and at least there were no hitches this time around.

Today was only mildly busy and I am winding down now at work but its still cold and icy.

It was on the news today that the shipwreck of the large cargo vessel "Athina" on the beach at Brighton that we saw has been salvaged (towed away) to the breakers yard for scrap so it won't be there next time we go. It was a dramatic sight though and we won't see the like of that again that very often.

I love Tom Petty and The Heartbreakers and have seen them twice before and I have been borrowing Jim's album so now that you bought me it I love it even more and Jim can have his back. Its really short, less that 15 mins per side but that makes it really great, short and sweet like some of the early Beatles albums and ten, two

minute brilliant songs just leave you longing for more.

Those portraits are ready for Stu and Dee and I am pleased how they came out. I often wonder that all these pictures that I or anyone takes how they will look in say 40 years time. The people themselves as they age, and we know that black and white prints will last pretty much forever but colour prints fade. Those family pictures just from the 1960s seem to be vanishing away, its because no photographic manufacturer has been able to invent or produce stable colour dyes and once a colour photograph is exposed to natural light it starts very slowly to decompose layer by layer. Anyway I am sure that Stu and Dee will like them.

Oh well! I can relax and look forward to my early leaving party on Wednesday at work but I don't know what to expect and what they are planning so I pretend not to notice what secrets they'll get up to behind my back.

All going well I should arrive in Worthing at 9.30am on Friday morning and I will call you on Thursday evening at 6.30pm.
We will discuss all my removal arrangements for Saturday March 1st.

Take care

From Heart to Heart

I Love You

John xxx

Right then I will sign off with a butterfly - a poem for you.

Butterfly

Stinging nettles
singing boys
with nets on poles
they capture souls
of little angels
with coloured wings
who gently whisper
don't crush my heart
oh! can't you see
our time is short
please set me free

Liverpool 25th February 1980

Dear B,

I arrived back from Worthing in the middle of the afternoon. I caught the National Express Rapide Coach, the reason being there was one just about to leave to Liverpool from Victoria Bus Station and they had lots of spare seats. The Rapide service is quite a new thing and the coaches are non - stop and they actually have telly's so you can watch TV on the move and you get a hostess that serves tea and biscuits off her trolley like an airline stewardess.

Still the weather is dismal and I hope it brightens up as I am going to Manchester tomorrow.

My "sniffles" seem to have settled so I hope the cold has gone as I don't want to see any doctor this week.

There were three letters waiting for me this week when I got home. My "Genesis" tickets for the Empire came through but I am giving them to Bernie (haha my apprentice) as a parting gift. I did hedge my bets a bit, I have seen Genesis before a

couple of years ago at the Knebworth Festival but I also bought two Genesis tickets for the Brighton Conference Centre (that's later in their UK tour) after I am down in London so that could be our first gig together.

Secondly I received a nice cheque from the Inland Revenue, finally after all these months of claiming against all the camera expenses that I use professionally. So I have quite a decent settlement which is better than a weeks salary.

And thirdly … more laughs, I won a travel bag in a competition that I had even forgotten about and that was a large parcel, but that will actually be useful to pack things for the big move this weekend or shoving last minute belongings in.

So then, everything seems to be coming together and let's hope there are no problems on my removal down to London.

I still have a stack of LPs to play that we're my leaving presents. *"Breakfast in America"* by Supertramp, *"Facades"*by Sad Cafe, more Police and the best of the lot *"Damn The Torpedoes"* Tom

Petty's latest. These are all some of the bands I love and have seen at the Empire over the last few years and I still have some record vouchers that were presented to me as well, so it really was a musical farewell for me. We can spend the vouchers in London. My boss told me that I had the biggest and best send off "collection" in our departments history. Now that could be that I was so popular or Alan my senior photographer was super efficient at twisting peoples arms and all those doctors must be big earners but I would like to think it was on my merit alone but my boss is an expert when it comes to extortion!

Tomorrow I am saying goodbye for now to my best friend Iain (Mac) who grew up with me and we are going to see Richie Blackmore (Deep Purple) and his band "Rainbow" at the Apollo Theatre in Manchester.

I am sending you a parcel to, so watch out. And get loads of sleep. I will call you Friday night with any last minute details but other than that we are driving down very early Saturday morning leaving

Liverpool at around 4.00am (with about 4 - 5 hours driving including a half hour service station stop) and should be at “my new nurses home” at around 9.00am as the motorway should be totally empty at that time. I have been allocated a large room with facilities at St. Leonards Hospital, Islington, Hoxton, (Nuttall Street - London N1), there is a Tube Station, “Old Street” which is in easy walking distance. All the regular nurses are on the ground floor and up to the 3rd floor, the 4th floor is totally empty and I shall be on my own as the only male with a whole floor to myself. So the nurses will be at a safe distance from me ... just ... hahah!

I will do all the driving down after studying the London A - Z map book. We will pack the car Friday afternoon and depending on how full it is will depend on who travels down. My dad will be there because he has to drive the car back to Liverpool later on Saturday afternoon, my brother David is only 13 and it would be an adventurous day out for him so it could be a squeeze and you will get the chance to meet them for the first time

if only briefly. To think everything I own only fits in a half a saloon car. Still we will now both be closer together and let's fill the world with our own little bit of love.

When I have dumped all my gear off in Islington I will collect you at Victoria Station and bring you back to "my place". Old Street (Northern Line Tube Station) is only 7 stops from Victoria with a change at Euston (from the Victoria Line).

Well, I'm not blaming all our French Kissing for both our minor sniffles and it's full steam ahead for Saturday so Hang on to Yourself and Damn those Torpedoes …. London here I come!

Love You, JP xxx

March 1980

Galadriel

“Barclay James Harvest”

London 3rd March 1980

Dear B,

This is my first letter that I have written in London. And you must have been too excited when you missed your stop at Worthing and had to get a train back from East Worthing the next stop along. I was back home here at 10.00pm. Now I know how you always feel seeing me off on a train. It was strange for me doing the same with you. It is always harder to watch someone moving out of a station than being the person travelling. I suppose it is because the person on the platform is at a standstill and sees the the train actually pulling away and fading into the distance.

This morning was so bright and sunny I decided to walk to work. It takes twenty five minutes and I am in the Old City of London. If it’s raining I can hop on a red bus which takes me all the way to Bart’s

Hospital opposite St Paul's Cathedral. The buildings and location is quite impressive.

My first day passed quickly and I didn't have much to do. After going to Personnel and setting up and transferring a bank account (Bart's have their own Barclays branch off the main Hospital Square just for staff) I was introduced to all my new colleagues and everyone seems nice and friendly. At lunch I was taken to the large staff canteen and had "Spag Bol" (Spaghetti Bolognese). The rest of my lunch hour I shopped for essentials and basics, bread, cereal, salt, butter and a tin opener!

The afternoon was spent photographically copying X-rays on a more modern system that I am used to, in fact it was much quicker and simpler. For your project on arthritis I will keep an eye open for any useful images.

I caught the bus back to St. Leonard's Hospital from St. Paul's Cathedral and its quick as well around 20 minutes. So day one over and done.

I have just taken a photograph from my window of a golden sky over the victorian rooftops and

chimneys of Hoxton looking towards the City of London. Atmospherically beautiful.

Most of the people in my Department of Medical Illustration are not Londoners either. We have a guy Duncan from Coventry, the other photographer on my pay scale is from Worksop in Nottinghamshire and my boss when she was a little girl lived in Wallasey and Liverpool (small world) and the big boss Mr. Tredinnick is Cornish and others from Stoke on Trent and Brighton so I am not a stranger at all, maybe half the work population of the capital are from elsewhere. I will relax to a good choice of radio and play the guitar tonight.

On Thursday I am off to the Hammersmith Odeon (my new Empire) to see Tom Petty and The Heartbreakers on their UK Damn The Torpedoes Tour and I do have three old school friends (those musicians) who are studying music at one of London's Universities and they share a house near the Oval Cricket ground in Camberwell, but that is south of the River Thames.

I want to explore Victoria train and coach stations more leisurely and in detail and get some timetables. And I will see you around 7.00pm on Friday. I may come down on a direct coach if there is one but the trains are very frequent and may be a lot easier.

Now that I'm in London we are almost neighbours and 60 minutes away is a lot better than 300 miles and several hours.

As I bring this letter to a close I can see a distant light (no its not a UFO this time) but a bright star high in the sky ..... flickering ..... gently ..... bringing me as only you can ..... closer to your heart

I LOVE YOU B, JP xxxx xxxx

Worthing 3rd March 1980

JP,

This is written after your phone call but not until I'd had my bath and washed my hair. I am so glad that like your new working environment which is the most important thing because you spend 8 hours or so working every day at least. You don't seem to feel homesick at all and I seem to be losing my attachments slowly to back home and you will soon be settled in anyway. Not sure how you manage your meals in the evening though, then washing, ironing and "housework" etc. But as I will be up every few days I can lend a hand.

Now to that unfortunate late night train mishap mainly through my own fault. That train I was on from Victoria finally stopped and stayed put at Brighton (it should have been a through train), Oh! Yes it sure was terribly bad leaving you behind on the London platform. Any way to continue, everyone had to alight from the carriages and change to their final respective destination train. The station staff were all very kind and managed to

direct passengers on to the next best forwarding connections and I was put on the correct train. What happened as we approached Worthing the guard announced “next stop Worthing coming up”, but he failed to say “East” Worthing and so late at night I got out at that station. As the train pulled away quickly it did seem strange that Worthing should be so quiet but I was at the end of the platform and then I saw the station name and I was at the wrong station and too late to do anything. I thought I could catch a taxi back to Selden Road but to my dismay and disappointment East Worthing is a dead station - no staff, guards, no taxi, no telephone box, just two sheds opposite the tracks for basic shelter. Damn, bother, fuck and shit! I was so angry with myself for getting off at the wrong place and I should have double checked and I was just fuming I couldn’t think straight. I spent about ten minutes deciding what to do, no taxi, no one else about and Worthing is only one stop away but it is very late at night. Then a scary “skin head” appeared and was

hanging around but in the end I have never been so glad to see one. He was very helpful, asked if I was ok (I must have looked agitated) and he said he was catching a train to Worthing and it was due in another 10 minutes at 11.15pm and so it did come rambling in on time. So from Worthing a taxi back to Lister House, bath, cuppa tea and straight for bed. My promise to myself … to be alert at all times when travelling … I don't know how you manage this all the time and not to miss the odd stop.

I like the very simple "fool proof" Halina camera that you bought me. No dials and things to have to twiddle with just point it and click away. I need to take pictures of you and catch you unawares as I know you told me that nearly all photographers hate having their own picture taken!! My late duty for this week is on Tuesday and Thursday and Saturday on an early in which case I shall come home and have lunch with you here and then I'm off Sunday, Monday, Tuesday so I can come back with you to London … hooray, so see you here on Friday evening … *Bye for the moment, I Love You, B*

London 4th March 1980

Dear B,

Just a quickie. We always finish work on Fridays at half past four so I should get the 5.25pm train from Victoria which arrives Worthing at 6.40pm There are regular coaches but they will take just too long … so see you Friday.

ALL MY LOVE JP xxxx

PS: The Liverpool Echo has caught up with me again and done a feature on me (including a photograph) and it's in the local papers up north. I have enclosed the newspaper cutting …… ***"John Snaps up Award"*** …… It must have originated by some press release as I certainly didn't organise it and it must have come from The Royal Photographic Society as it quotes as saying my LRPS has been awarded to me at a "remarkably young age"……. Anyway cringe and embarrassing is all I can say and as it is I shall hide it in a box forever and hope you do the same!

Worthing 12th March 1980

Dear JP,

Darling, I always miss you even though you are much closer to me here. We have just survived a dreadful and unpleasant incident during the week. The “Nasty Dragon” reception warden must have been tipped off by somebody and she caught poor Amy who had a small party and two overnighter’s staying in her room. And she even had the audacity to go banging and waking them up and barge in finding them all still asleep. The dragon kicked up one fucking hell of a blazing row and directly contacted our Matron and Mentor back in Midhurst. We all expected to be dragged over hot coals and receive some kind of warning letter but actually the Matron played it all down and “situation danger” is over. I can handle this sort of behaviour and it doesn’t bother me but the girls get stressed a bit. I think Matron may have actually supported us and I wouldn’t be surprised if the dragon disappears. She should apply to work in a prison! After all our salary is deducted at source so

in a way we rent our accommodation and the very least we should expect is privacy to live and do what we want.

Don't fret about us we can handle ourselves here. So I am coming down or is it up to London on Sunday evening after work and to hear your voice rather than be a complaining moaning old bag here. Give me a ring on Saturday around 9.30pm after I come off a late.

I have put (hidden away) that news cutting as I have a portrait of you now and you have fame without the fortune … one day you'll be super famous and still just as poor as me …. hahah!

Last time there were no issues with the late train and I reached Worthing smoothly at 11.15pm (the correct station this time). And coming back to my small room in Selden Road seemed strange after being with you for three whole glorious days in London. Even when you are at work the days go by and there is so much happening in London. Everyday with out you is a lonely day and you and

me are like you said two rebel hearts together that's why we get on … true soul mates.
Lousy weather is always brightened by you and don't let me end this letter without telling you how much I love you.
All Yours … B

PS. Counting the days till you caress me all over and let me … make lots of love to you.

Worthing 20th March 1980

John, Lover, Darling,

My trip back to Worthing was much easier than I thought. The “149” red bus took about one hour from your place to Victoria Station across London through all the traffic with a jam here and there. I arrived at 9.05 am (Victoria) and there was a train at 9.10am and that was an express to Brighton with just two stops at Gatwick Airport and East Croydon. By 10.15am back in familiar old Brighton and I caught the Portsmouth - Worthing train and back before 11.00am.

You should have seen the weather. Brrrrr! Its cold and windy and I was nearly blown off my feet by the icy wind so it made my walking NIL, jumped in a taxi for 60p howzat?

So it was tinned spaghetti for lunch then biscuits and yoghurt for tea and salad and ice cream for supper.

Today I had roast beef with Yorkshire pudding for lunch and a chocolate roll for dessert. Hope I’ve

managed to work up your appetite with all this delicious food.

Today my processed colour slides came back much earlier than expected. Some were very good, some a complete blank - need your explanation. On the whole I am very pleased with my attempts at photography and I am better than what I expected to be. Anyway this needs your constructive criticism my dear but don't forget to pay me compliments as well. I need to know anything that needs correcting so that I may improve. I can hardly wait to show you my "good" work.

I shall be seeing you again Sunday evening and we can hide from the cold under your duvet!!

I have listed below all my duties for the next three weeks and then I will finish at Worthing Hospital for the time being.

Monday 24th = OFF, Tuesday 25th = OFF

Wednesday 26th = Late, Thursday 27th = Early

Friday 28th = Late, Saturday 29th = Early

Sunday 30th = Early, Monday 31st = Early

Tuesday 1st = OFF, Wednesday 2nd = Early

Thursday 3rd = Early, Friday 4th = OFF

Saturday 5th = OFF, Sunday 6th = Late

Monday 7th = Early, Tuesday 8th = Early

Wednesday 9th = Early, Thursday 10th = Early

Friday 11th = Early, Saturday 12th = OFF

Sunday 13th = OFF

So we can chat to see what is the best arrangement over the coming days with a mix of London and Worthing for seeing one another.

By the way, starting April 1st (April Fools Day) the NHS is reducing our working hours from 40 hours per week to 37.5 hours which means after an early before a day off we will finish at 2pm so I gain an afternoon and this applies to all nurses.

I need to get some stamps and pack some bits for London on Sunday … any foodstuff that you would like …. or will I do?!

I love you, B

Worthing 27th March 1980

Darling,

How dreadful not to see you till Friday next (correction Thursday night I mean). How I wish the time would go by extra quickly but on the other hand as I've told you thousands of time I just dread going away from Worthing. You must think that I am a strange creature - first I feel very unsettled and homesick in Worthing and I wish I wasn't there and now I am not looking forward to my next training placement location at Chailey.

Oh! My journey home was quite uninteresting. I reached Victoria just a few seconds after 8.45am and very quickly hopped on to the 8.50am train to Brighton. It was such a slow train and stopped at all the in between stations and had an extra long stop at Gatwick Airport and Haywards Heath, I was really jumping out of my seat with impatience. To stop myself from going crazy I tried to concentrate on my new Denise Robbins book … books only meant for us girls and not for you!

The slow train was so slow that the later 9.10am from Victoria beat us to Worthing.

Did you have an early night on Wednesday? Just can't believe you fell asleep at 9.30pm .... aren't you lucky? You lucky cute devil, on Wednesday night I had to come back from the hospital to home through the silly rain as I forgot that pretty red brolly you bought for me and just when I needed it as well! But it was sunny when I left and I know, the weather is so unpredictable.

It was one of the patient's birthday today and the relatives brought in some nice cakes and chocolates. Have you been "greedy" lately? and don't forget the bar of chocolate which I left in your fruit bowl with the apples and oranges.

I am dying to see your new hair style but even if it's horrible I will still love you .... truly ! On the other hand you did say you'll be getting a "Tom Pettyish" cut so I can live with groovy.

I'm writing this letter before reading the one that has just arrived so if I'm talking gibberish don't

panic as I might write another one straight away but I might not if I'm too LAZY to lift up my pen.
It's already 5 minutes and 30 seconds to 11.00pm now and you know how sleepy I can be.
Bye - bye for now my lovely and I miss you.
From darling me. A devoted "Sleeping Beauty"

London 30th March 1980

Darling B,

Oh! yes, I too wish the time to fly to Thursday. Did you get my Easter card? There was only one card shop that I could find that was actually selling Easter cards and that was in Cheapside (the centre of the City of London's square mile)

Yes I will miss Worthing as well, we had some good times and there are lots of enjoyable eating places and views .... anywhere by the coast has to be good.

I think you are a beautiful and exotic creature and not a strange creature and I did manage to nod off on Wednesday at 9.30pm.

The weather is changeable this week with all the lot, wet, windy and sunny. I am now getting use to being busy at work, mind you on Friday we only had two patients to photograph but there is always a lot of variation and other jobs to fill in with. One thing I don't do here at Bart's is taking X-Rays (we simply just copy them). In Liverpool we had full radiographer training and we were

qualified and allowed to take X-Rays of organs, specimens and bones etc). We had a specially converted basement X-Ray room with all the walls made of thick concrete and lead and the door was several inches thick. We had to wear radiation clip badges at all times and they went off each month to be monitored for dosage but we were always working in a safe environment. I used to like going down into the basement because all our historical photographic record books are stored down there and it was fascinating reading the details about all the victims of the World War II Liverpool Blitz bombings all recorded and written in that fabulous pen and ink style in these huge leather bound ledger book volumes.

On Wednesday one of our medical Illustrators (artists), Sue, had a birthday and she brought in ten bottles of champagne, four bottles of wine, lots of nuts and she baked a very large chocolate cake and everyone had a very long lunch hour.

On Thursday my best friend Iain (from Liverpool) was passing through London and we went to see

the new Sherlock Holmes movie, “Murder by Decree” which I have to say was very engrossing and very good. It had Holmes and Dr Watson investigating the “Jack the Ripper”murders and was an exciting tale.

On Thursday my boss Carole was re-admitted to Bart’s and they finally found out that she has some painful cysts in her pelvic region and they are trying to pin point them exactly and decide what to do.

Friday was my shopping for comestibles, tinned fish, tinned mince and I can mix these with the noodles you bought for me, some spreads and beef burgers. I finished off that bar of chocolate and all the ground nuts … I call them monkey nuts and have almost depleted the fruit bowl.

On Saturday the West End was so packed as London Transport did stage their one day underground strike, their first strike since 1926, so all the buses back from Piccadilly were jam packed full but I got back here OK.

When you see me on Thursday I will look a bit different, maybe a little bit American with a touch of the Tom Petty's. I am undecided whether I like it, anyway you'll see. I almost didn't get it cut, all the hairdressers around St. Pauls are closed on Saturdays so I couldn't make an appointment but I had previously passed a "hair boutique" in Southhampton Row (near Shaftsbury Avenue) and I went along on speck and there was just a very small wait while I was deciding what to do. My hair was so long and some of the hidden corkscrew permy curls had become tangled over the last two years so they had to be cut out, any way its a bit more flowy and manageable now and you can tell me if it was all worth the effort.

Now that I made the move and left behind the north of England and like you, how your training sends you here and there, I am reminded that life is what you make of it especially when we have a choice for a change. People will sometimes reach a "crossroads" and have to decide to either "stay or go." In the mid 1960s my dad had several chances.

He went for an interview in Poole, Dorset on the south coast. At the college the snobby old panel asked him “what vessel do you sail”and he knew that he wouldn’t be getting that job offer. He also turned down being a director of the charity Oxfam and he was also offered good teaching and lecturing positions in Canada and Hong Kong and we almost went but I guess he changed his mind or chickened out at the last second. So it is what it is and I think a future of freedom favours the brave rather than fortune because you may only get the chance once and you know us, we follow our hearts. My nan would often say “you’re daft as a brush you are” - well better to be daft and happy!! Says I.

I have a couple of Easter treats for you B. One of which is “Jesus Christ Superstar” at the Palace Theatre. I was fortunate to get two tickets for the Good Friday afternoon performance as well, so that’s something to look forward to and Friday is looking to be warm and sunny so we can go on

somewhere else after maybe explore some parks or hang out by the river.
I will give you a ring on Tuesday evening so listen for the phone between 6 - 6.30pm. I shall hear your sweet voice and remember mine is so sexy, hahah so you keep telling me.

PS. I have been playing my records of the band Barclay James Harvest. And they have this incredible song called *"Galadriel"* from the early 70s. It is kind of hauntingly melodic and mystical and I keep playing it over and over again. Galadriel was a character from "Lord of The Rings" by Tolkien. We studied his works during our English literature lessons. Galadriel is a sort of ethereal Elf princess and her name translates to something like Lady of Bright Light or Radiance. I associate her with you B as your Hokkien translated name is (Lady of) Clear, Bright Sound … well similar but different I know. But still a beautiful song and they use John Lennon's Epiphone Casino guitar which

has a magical resonance. You'll hear it soon anyway.

Till Thursday Sleeping Beauty from your Scouse Prince Charming and Lover

xxx ... xxx ... xxx

April 1980

Highway Star

“Deep Purple”

Chailey 30th April 1980

JP,

I have enclosed a local map of the location of lousy Chailey. This is the middle of nowhere, it’s a tiny village of nothing and surrounded by forest type jungle and wide expanses of flat burnt grounds and bushes. I am in walking distance (15minutes) from the only place to go to, the Kings Head pub. I just hardly cannot talk about this place because it depresses me so much and I can’t wait for this placement to end so I can return to Midhurst.

The administration here is so disorganised. When Anne and me arrived we were each taken to our private accommodation which was still waiting to be cleaned and done over …. The previous girl had left my room in a mess and the bed has one leg missing!!!

A bad start here.

After we had dumped our luggage and bits we were both introduced to some “important” people like the Domestic Manager who gave us the same old story about visitors and overnighters Ugh! what a horrible lot.

Then there was a film about Chailey Heritage and its children and everything followed by a tour of the place afterwards. The buildings are all separated and seem to be in small outcrops here and there. The X-ray Dept is basically a small outdoor shed with a blue door, whitewashed walls made of wood and planks …. I have never seen anything quite like it or as crude as this.

The tour ended at 12 noon when we were sent away to unpack and then have lunch in the dining hall (which is quite expensive compared to Worthing).

At 2pm we attended a lecture here at Minor Grange about Spina Bifida (Parts 1 and 2). This presentation and images were produced by you it seems, well the Medical Illustration Department at St. Bartholowmews Hospital.

At 2.30pm we were in Physiotherapy - another lecture and explanation on how to fix leg callipers then a demonstration and exercise carried out on little Anthony aged 10 - who is now my friend and collects stamps and likes the ones I get from overseas.

Then myself and Anne went off to our designated wards and the ward is even more disorganised, they had no idea who I was and my name wasn't even on any rota. Then off duty on the first day at 4.45pm.

Chailey is a unit that specialises in handicapped children mainly who have Spina Bifida. All the children wanted to know my name so it's not "B" but we will go by my "adopted" English name Magdalene. I prefer nursing adults and while the children are nice and behaved they can get on your nerves at times and I am useless at talking children's language.

Time seems to drag down here, how I wish it would go extra fast, its just revision and sleeping,

day dreaming and mugs of tea and wondering how you are getting by without me.

There is no proper washroom and the washing machine in the kitchen discharges all the dirty water from the rinse drains directly into the crockery and utensil sink. The maid is a real sour face and so sloppy. There is no shower or hair dryer you just have to wash you hair in a hand basin or use a bucket in the bath.

One week gone by and I'm really fed up to my neck about everything. I am so looking forward to my official two weeks holiday away from all this and with you and at least I can have long weekends.

Can you imagine how much a Pot Noodle is in the Kings Head Pub? It's 42p, I can't believe my eyes, everything is expensive here with no competition to supplies.

Did you enjoy yourself on your night out ? And how was Tranmere's away game at Aldershot?

I am surprised that "Pancake Man" (from the staff social club) hasn't returned our antique plate that

we lent him at Bart's, I bet it's in that blonde's room. How I wish I could march up to him or her and demand our plate back. I detest people like him - borrowing and not knowing when to return. This just goes to show how much he takes care of other folks belongings and we won't be lending him anything else if there is a next time.

Tomorrow I shall be making a trip back into Worthing. I am eager to know how much my salary increase is for April, you must think I am a right miser. Most probably I shall lunch at Charlies Chinese Restaurant (our place). I will come back about 3pm so that it will still be bright when I walk from the Kings Head if I miss the mini ambulance hospital bus service.

Remind me to tell you about Mrs Waters later! Might as well mention it now. Someone back home in Malaysia gave me the details of an old English Maid ex-pat who was a teacher in Penang but came back to the UK and settled in Bedford. Not sure if I will make contact because Bedford is not around the corner and she would only be

someone to talk to, anyway she won't be expecting contact so maybe another day perhaps.

Anne has gone home (well escaped) to Worthing yesterday as she has got Thursday and Friday off as well. I haven't really been out for long walks yet as there is a notice saying "it isn't safe after dark".... It makes you think there is a Chailey serial killer at large. It is so bleak here honestly.

Although I have only been back four days here from our long weekend in London, it feels like forever. At least we still have Ernie our Midhurst chauffeur and the hospital bus to collect us at Haslemere Station to bring me back here. He's really one of your old school Englishmen and he always carries my bags, he is very nice and kind and looks after us like a father. And there was one new nurse on the train who is joining King Edward VII for the new 1980 intake course.

That Sunday, there was a train derailment in Portsmouth so all passengers for Portsmouth harbour had to catch a bus for the final part of the journey. What a great pity for all the holiday

makers with their luggage. I think if one travels as much as we do on the train then we're bound to have mishaps now and again.

You remembered how much I like “Deep Purple” and I know that you have seen all these guys in the past and their new greatest hits album that you bought me “Deepest Purple” has just all their best songs ever. Coming from the Far East *“Woman From Tokyo”* was incredibly popular out there back in 1973 and I am your Woman From Tokyo or Penang or maybe still your exotic *“Strange Kind of Woman”*. I know you like *“Highway Star”*, *“Burn”* and I know you play *“Smoke on the Water”* on your guitar. So many good songs they produced.

Any news on your future dwelling in London and have you had time to think about somewhere else to live?

Ernie thinks that the photograph that I took of him looks great and has asked for the negative. I haven’t told you yet, but I would like to do an album just on British flowers through the seasons and how lovely and colourful it would look. Good

idea but I need advice John on taking pictures close up that stay in focus all the time.

Thats all for the time being

Bye - bye and take care you Highway Star

From the one you love, B

May 1980

Hurry On Sundown

"Hawkwind"

Chailey 2nd May 1980

Darling,

How I miss you but the weekend will soon be here. I get off duty on an early by 12.30pm and after a lunch in the dining hall of roast beef costing 64p including vegetables I mooched around and decided to take a walk to the Kings Head pub.

On Thursday my day off I stayed in my room all day apart from fish and chips at lunch with a tasteless tomato sauce. Letters from Penang arrived with not much news, then I had a nap till 4pm. I did some revision of anatomy and stared out of the window thinking of you then I cooked my supper (Gooi Mooi left me her box of mainly instant noodles), so I am living off that at the moment. There are lots of magazines left over here to read but I might as well retire to sleep at 9pm.

On Friday I got up early at 6.45am and was out of the nurses home by 7.30am. Walked down to the Kings Head and then it was almost 8.00am. Another 15 minutes wait for the local bus to Haywards Heath. Cost me 49p and the bus went through Lindfield, then I caught the train to Worthing £1.85 return.

I visited the bank and was quite pleased with this months salary. Had lunch at Charlies and then there's the usual hastle of him not wanting to accept my money and he shoved the cash back in my bag and so that was that.

I was lucky to meet Anne in Brighton waiting for the connection to Haywards Heath. Her family lives in the village of Sompting (near Lancing) and she just had four days off. We managed to catch the 3.15pm bus from Haywards Heath back to the Kings Head then a walk through the light rain. Your letter was waiting in my pigeon hole for me.

We had supper together in the canteen, a pilchard salad then we went for an evening walk and watched a Disney movie on the Black and White

TV in Anne's room. Anne also makes a good coffee ("percolated") not instant she says, then we compared revision notes and more importantly our days purchases, then bed again.

At least there is Anne to go out with to the Kings Head in the evening.

Today Saturday there was an outing to Tunbridge Wells in Kent and we had to accompany the children in the Chailey bus designed to carry mainly and many wheelchairs. We went to see this display called "Tatoo 80" which is like the Royal Tournament, remember that we saw at Earl's Court last year.

It was cold and cloudy and all the 15 children started moaning about the weather. Couldn't blame them, we were frozen as well, we could stamp out feet but poor them sitting in their wheelchairs. The boys enjoyed the day but the girls seemed to hate it, forgot to mention that this was out in an open field.

The hospital flask tea didn't keep anyone warm and they kept asking when the show would end.

Tunbridge Wells is about one hour's drive down narrow country lanes and whenever the bus turned a corner the wheelchairs would either slide forwards or sideways which brought screams of laughter from all the kids ..... "and the wheels of the bus go round, round, round"

They have booked me and Anne for another outing by the river in Lewes on Monday. Hope we have better weather this time. We are starting early in the morning, bringing packed lunches (supplied free by the hospital) as well and we will come back to a specially laid on afternoon tea.

I am enjoying myself on the ward but not the place, I don't think I can ever like Chailey.

I am having this coming weekend off and it's good having these early's as I finish at 12.30pm Friday (9th May) and aim to catch a Kings Head bus at 2.20pm so I will probably be in Victoria around 4.00pm. I will meet you outside the cartoon cinema. I hope you enjoy the May Bank Holiday, did you say you are popping back to Liverpool to collect some bits and see Jim.

Can hardly wait till Friday so that I could be with you again. *All my Love and Kisses …. I Love You, B*

London 15th May 1980

B,

Still can't get over how hot it is so hoping this will stay for the weekend.

It seems that only two people made it into work on the London strike day last Wednesday, my boss didn't and neither did our head of department and the NHS are talking of docking the pay of anyone who is reported of not turning up for work, well let them try that one on!

Today I did some overtime (2 hours) so I didn't get back to Islington until 7.30pm but then on these days I have no reason to rush to get back. I had a late afternoon operation theatre call and the operation went on for an extra two hours. I am so use to photographing dead bodies that the living is something new for me and of course we have to do the full gown up and the Theatre Sister will always comment about my long hair so I have to net it up under a theatre bandana cap. I spend a

lot of time just hanging around then called for a few seconds here and there to take a picture .... But there is no room or time for errors. If an RTA (road traffic accident) is rushed into theatre you can be in theatre on call for up to 8 hours. There was a case when they had to re-attach both hands to an accident victim. Nerve by single nerve and vein and it was a painstakingly long procedure. We have some of the worlds best micro surgeons here. I thought about that 1960s film “Fantastic Voyage” did you ever see that one? with Raquel Welch when a team of scientists are shrunk down in size in a submarine by a ray beam and then injected into a patient’s bloodstream to fight their way to his brain or something. I can’t remember if the film is pure science fiction or set in the future and I wonder what the medical world will invent in twenty years time (The Year 2000) even that year sounds so futuristic. I can get so hot when I’m are gowned up waiting, the dead are certainly less stressful subjects to photograph. Working at Bart’s

does allow the chance to do overtime regularly if you want to.

That burn scald I had making your morning cuppa tea in bed is fairing well with just redness and no blistering ..... should have carried the steaming hot mugs by hand as tea trays are always slipping and sliding.

My friend Dave (Stead) in Camberwell cannot make the “Bread” concert at the Rainbow Theatre in Finsbury Park so I am going anyway and see if I can get a refund on his ticket. Sometimes ticket touts stand outside gig venues and they will buy the ticket off you (as a last resort), you can always get your money back but I bet they sell them on at an inflated profit margin for themselves, I will try the theatre first though.

Because I was not allowed to get my burn scald near anything infectious I had a couple of days off, the Accident and Emergency Sister insisted so I had to explain ten times at work how I managed to inflict hot tea on myself and now they all want to

meet lucky you though - the early morning tea in bed girl!

About housing and such things, I had an appointment with the hospital accommodation officer who says finding somewhere to live is not too difficult. He had a long list of landladies & landlords looking for tenants (they tend to trust NHS staff) but most of these seemed to be old fashioned rent a room bedsit sorts of things in Stoke Newington. I am also eligible to apply to the GLC (Greater London Council) for a council flat. Chris our other photographer did that and has a flat in a very, very high rise in Clapton, East London, he said it was a wreck but the council almost give them away so you can do them up. You don't get a choice and if you turn it down then you're off the list. He said the first time he saw it, it had used condoms lying around and blood stains in the bath, hardly a recommendation but he likes it now. I think I might visit some proper estate agencies and look for a decent rental flat.

I called my optician in Liverpool to ask him to post me down a spare pair of contact lenses as I am wearing mine more and more now each day.

Our holiday is now fully paid for and I went to the travel agent (Thomas Cook) in Cheapside to pay off the balance and all the tickets and information will come through a fortnight before we depart to Germany. DER (German National Railways) also informed us that we are eligible for a young (German) persons railcard (one card will cover two people) it costs around £40 but for two solid weeks we will have totally unlimited free travel anywhere in Germany. So I paid for this as well which means from our base along the River Rhine valley we can go to so many cities, Cologne, Koblenz, Bonn, Dusseldorf, Trier etc and they give you a German rail map.

I am looking out of my window and it's still light at 9.00pm.

Ring you soon, Love You, JP xxxxxx

London 17th / 18th May 1980

Dear B,

Two minutes ago I was talking to you on the phone and now I'm writing this letter, seems funny in a way.

Yesterday (Friday) I had to wait a bit longer in the Outpatients at St. Leonards here in Islington. The reason, an old man had walked in and he couldn't remember his name or address or anything and there was only one (Staff Nurse) on duty, so it was all rather hectic. So it was "Staff" who removed my minor burn dressing and I was just given, for your information "Flamazine" cream if I need it, such an apt name!

When I arrived at work at 10.00am I was the only photographer in our 3 studios. Carole was on theatre duty all day (8 hours), so I did everything, patients, copy work, poster work and a studio set up with a teacher and a little girl doing "word association". All this and I still managed lunch and got away at 5.15pm.

I have been introduced to the famous Bart's breakfast which is legendary say some and it's very handy. I don't need to eat till I get into work and arriving about half and hour early can be quite relaxing. Most people order the full works (full English) but I can't face that first thing so I normally meet Chris's girlfriend (Theatre Staff Nurse Sue) who is always there at the same time. We have toast and crispy bacon and coffee and that does us. In fact I always cut off the golden brown crispy fat bits and Sue always nicks them off my plate as an extra … the tastiest bits she says … cheeky girl!

The other evening around 7.00pm when it was still sunny I walked to Liverpool Street Station. It was a nice evening walk (about 25 minutes) down through Shoreditch. I grabbed a handful leaflets on cheap fares and a variety of places to go when you are up in London. So you can sift through and see if there is any place you fancy, Clacton on Sea, Walton on the Naze, Cambridge, Norwich, Kings

Lynn, Great Yarmouth are all on direct services from Liverpool Street.

After I had done that I walked down to Cannon Street Station then across the Thames and whilst I stood on London Bridge I saw a beautiful sunset over London and the river towards Waterloo. I thought of *"Waterloo Sunset"*, what a great song by the Kinks and I wonder if Ray Davies got the inspiration on an evening like this and who are Terry and Julie? and it could be any lovers ... you and me ... and it was just one of those perfect atmospheric magic moments that lingered for a while. I watched the golden sun sink slowly on the horizon and all the time wishing you could have shared that moment with me. Just before it went dark I caught the number "48" Bus to London Bridge Station and the tube home again.

As for the "Bread" concert at the Rainbow. I have never been to a gig where the sound was so clear and just right and not over loud. It was like listening to their twenty greatest hits LP, simply a

polished and professional performance by David Gates and the boys.

I see that Chailey Heritage is a few miles from another station in the village of Plumpton, but I guess that there are no public transport links to Chailey from there. Plumpton sounds like "Trumpton" a fictitious village in an old children's TV programme that we used to watch as kids called "Camberwick Green" - you won't have heard of it but ask Anne, she will. If you do ever pass through Plumpton and there happens to be a windmill, watch out for a funny guy called "Windy Miller" … ask Anne about him as well and I'm sure she will crack up laughing!

Today I did the usual shopping on Ridley Road Market then took a walk to Islington to check out this district and it is very nice. I bought a big hardback book of London. It tells you where to go, how to get there and what to see in 200 pages. And seems an indispensable guide.

I continued walking to Kings Cross Station then caught the tube to Tottenham Court Road and

mooched around the West End. It was so hot and crowded I didn't stay long and so I caught my number 22 bus back and skipped through the London book then went down to the local take away and that's when I called you. Time for a bath in those huge victorian stand alone tubs to wash away the London grime.

The next day (Sunday) I slept in till 11.00am (very lazy) so breakfast and lunch rolled into one.

In the afternoon I took the 22 bus to Piccadilly (not so crowded on a Sunday) and decided on the spot to see Kramer v Kramer at the Odeon, Leicester Square but I found it very disappointing. So another full week and weekend gone and I must get on with the washing.

From my window I do get one of those atmospheric London views. I face directly west as you know and each evening I can immerse myself in those smoky purple or mackerel pink and orange skies. As a photographer, I have always loved sunsets rather than sunrises because there is something so beautiful about something in nature

that you can't control. I want the sun to hurry down then during the last lingering seconds to freeze in time. The days pass, seasons pass but the sun will always set in the same place now and in ten thousand years …. Maybe a poem in there somewhere?

I Love you and miss you and will call you Wednesday night around 8.00pm. *Tons of Kisses, John xxxxxx*

London 19th May 1980

My Love,

This heatwave seems really endless with the temperature today soaring to 25 degrees. My guess is that it will break sometime this week and pour down.

Today was not all that busy. A couple of patients to photograph in the morning and a few colour slides to mount. The plumbers were in our department redirecting some pipes so we had no water today, instead we all sat around drinking coke and eating the usual Monday cakes. We have a Monday rota so at the beginning of each week one of us goes to to the cake shop in Cheapside and buys 4 boxes of assorted cakes and buns. So it works out about once every 3 - 4 months that your turn comes up. We also have the same for coffee and tea but one of the medical artists (Mark) buy's those huge Nescafe coffee drums and supersize boxes of tea bags from Makro (a discount warehouse) and we all chip in.

In the afternoon I was on location at Shoreditch Health Centre (we are allowed to use black cabs and claim the fares back) to take photographs of children having their feet treated for all things at the weekly foot clinic.

My burn scald has pretty much gone and is just a smooth pale pink and just a bit itchy.

I have just received a letter from the Greater London Council and they say my application for housing has entered their system but who knows how long the wait will be. I thought I would register regardless as a back up plan but we'll see if anything happens.

My contact lens practitioner has replied from Liverpool and as I guessed a spare pair of lenses will cost £50 so I will order them and they should be ready within a fortnight.

Oh yes! A bargain offer by saving packet tops from various washing powders and washing up liquids etc enable you to get a free British Rail voucher. Buy an adult ticket and another adult travels for free on any away day return service. Sounds good

and we can travel as far as possible. I have enclosed a leaflet for you that lists a handful of places and I thought that when you're staying with me in London on your days off we could go to York (£8 for two). You can travel to anywhere in the UK on British Rail and we just turn up at any station to buy a ticket and off we go. I chose York because it is a quite a distance but the trains are regular and fast so we go much further for a decent price, anyway have a think and let me know where you fancy and we can railroad out of London this coming Saturday.

Continued - 20th May 1980

Glad we spoke on the phone and you prefer going to Bath on Saturday. Thats perfect because I have never been there at all so I will enjoy somewhere new as well and it looks lovely and all very walkable and we must go and take the spa waters at thee Roman bath! Bath is about 1 hour 15 mins from Paddington Station, the trains are fast as they are the ones that go on to Cardiff and Swansea and are very frequent so we can stay till late in the day and find a nice restaurant for an early dinner before coming back to London during twilight.

Chris at work was supposed to go to Wembley Football Stadium this evening to watch England v Northern Ireland in the Home International Championships. He couldn't make it so he let me have his £8.50 ticket in the main stand. He said I would be sitting next to his best mate but left it to me to explain why I was there. Never been to an England game and never been to Wembley so it was exciting. It ended a draw 1 - 1 and Northern Ireland scored both goals right at the end of the

match. They scored into their own net first then equalised straight away at the other end.

I have over the years visited more than 80 of the 96 English football league club grounds mainly following Tranmere Rovers at away matches and being in London has allowed me to visit a few more, new bigger stadiums that are in Division One (Tranmere have always been a lower Division 3 or 4 team). I have managed to get to see Chelsea, West Ham United and Charlton Athletic so far.

Continued - 21st May 1980

NEWS OF THE DAY - WEEK - MONTH - I have found a furnished flat to rent. And so different from the Nurses Home that you and I are used to. I will gradually move in probably over the end of the May Bank Holiday by either hiring a car or van but you can always help me. The flat is 137 Amhurst Road, London E8.

I was looking at flats to rent in the Evening Standard Newspaper and I went to an Estate Agency in Kilburn that specialises in Flats and Lettings called “Busy Bees”.

They sent me to see this flat in Amhurst Road and it is four storey early Victorian house conversion which is still being renovated and almost complete. It is quite popular and when I had viewed it and agreed, the Italian owner (Landlord - Mr. Magooli) was quite understanding. He needed a deposit though that evening and of course I though I was just looking and could agree to take it. So I had to dash back to Islington to fetch my cheque book and take a taxi back to seal the deal

that evening as these places get snapped up very quickly.

It is very different to what you might expect and it does look a bit bohemian in the way it is laid out.

The bottom two floors (basement and ground) will be occupied by the landlords son Fernando and his wife Rosa and their bambino. They are Italian and they will manage the other apartment's. I will be above them on the first floor. My flat will have a large open plan room which is a living and bed room. I have a separate kitchen with a space for a modest dining table and chairs, a separate toilet and a large bathroom with a massive Victorian style bath and shower combined. The top floor is another independent flat which I am none the wiser about but I understand my neighbour up there is a touring opera singer called Russell who needs a London base to rent and somewhere to call home between tours.

The rent is £17 per week or I can pay £65 per month that gives me a £3 discount overall and it benefits all parties as the contract (well none

contract Italian style really) is a bit laid back and more of a “special” Italian handshake arrangement and each side only needs to give three months notice to quit which in a way is good as when you get your SEN qualification early next year and move or transfer to London permanently we have at least a home base and maybe we can search for larger place to rent or buy …. we’ll see then.

I shall call you at the usual time and tell you more and how I’m getting on. I love you and I hope that you will like our new place that is ours and totally free from “dragons”.

Its 11.00pm I need to sleep!

Love You To, JP xxxxxx

Chailey 21st May 1980

John, My Darling,

It's so dull and boring here without you, especially if I have those horrible late days off. The only good thing here is that because it is a charity handicapped home and for children and not administered by the NHS we don't have to wear a uniform and we can wear our own casual clothes on the wards which are like dormitories. Just had your phone call and what a relief to hear your voice and good news about the flat. When you called late I was a bit worried but things hopefully will be less busy now that you are getting organised and not running around looking for a place to live.

Excuse me I got the wrong end of the stick when I thought you'd scalded yourself with tea again. I have this on the brain after last week at tea time in the dining room I nearly did scald myself with coffee. But I was quick enough and the coffee and mug splashed and smashed onto the floor instead and poor Bernie (he works in the canteen, he is Filipino) had to mop up. I am so clumsy!

Great news that you secured a flat and your worries are now over John. I knew you were more worried than excited about finding you own place. Why didn't you let me share the worry with you ??? You better had next time or else!

I badly want to help you move your things but I may be working on that Bank Holiday, I wish I could be there right now with you.

I will miss that wonderful Ridley Road Bazaar Market, it is just as big and colourful as our ones back in Penang that run till late into the night sometimes past midnight .... as its evening and night when the temperature is less stifling. I was planning to do my shopping there next week and the next as well but never mind back to the supermarket.

Now you'll be able to sort out and play and listen to all those records you have been deprived of for so many weeks.

Haywards Heath is just a tiny town. The shopping centre is only a fraction bigger than Midhurst in a sense that it has a Tesco, a Sainsbury's and a

Woolies. Woolworths is only the size as your small one in Old Street in the city. I am so disappointed (again!) with the town.

Tomorrow I'm going down to Worthing and it is the one place down here that I genuinely can get excited about. So its banking then my usual lunch at Charlies (old Charlie, he always asks about you) remember when he gave us the keys to use his spare empty vacant flat for the weekend in Brighton after the Genesis concert, I think he secretly enjoys helping and encouraging our "love affair" maybe we remind him of something in the past from his younger days (I often wonder if he has or had an English wife but I don't ask and he doesn't say). Romance is such an emotive business. Poets and dreamers are you and I.

Well after all this I wandered around the shopping complexes then had to come back to Chailey again.

Our letters are more than likely crossing over as usual but remember to write your new address and postcode for me.

You know how I miss you and long to live with you (when all these nuisance exams are done and over). Counting these few days till the weekend until I will be with you.

I Will Love You Always, B

London 26th May 1980

Darling,

You've now got my first letter written from my new abode. Thinking back this is the seventh residence that I have lived in over the past twenty one years (not including two of my nan's)

Don't panic, you will not be missing Ridley Road Market as I forgot to mention that it is just round the corner from my (our) new flat.

Towards the end of last week at work it was sort of strange. On Thursday I didn't do a thing all day, no outpatients turned up and there were no appointments, yet on Friday it was the complete reverse, in fact I had to draft in Julie our Chief Photographer to help cope with the demand, the patients kept rolling up all day.

Most of Thursday night I spent packing my boxes, bags and that blue reinforced cardboard suitcase which will fall apart one day. It took me two hours and I kept thinking about the time we spent packing your bits in Worthing. It all seems endless and you find yourself with things left at the end

that you don't need or know what to do with them. I think in future I will endeavour to be minimalistic. To make things worse I had just finished packing here on the top floor and was washing some clothes and in the background I could hear a faint "swishing" sound. I didn't think much of it at that moment. When I went back round to my room one of the many toilets and bathrooms that I have solely at my own personal disposal (there are about a ten loos and 8 Victorian Bathrooms (well you know them all) and there is only me here. Anyway the WC and bathroom nearest to the stairway was about two inches under water. The ball cock inside the wall mounted water tank had ceased working. The water had cascaded down the stairs, down all four and even reached the basement. Luckily a nurse had already discovered the "waterfall" and knew how to isolate the incoming flow to the whole block. It took me an hour to help her mop up the floor below me. I suppose being on the top floor I escaped the worse as nearly all the deluge had descended.

Apparently, so the nurses told me this happens quite frequently at St. Leonard's. And as for clearing out the drowned cockroaches from the basement, I shall say no more!

Well! the big day, Saturday arrived. I had packed up all my food and so I had to go to bakery in the market to get a couple of rolls. As I was returning I bumped into our "old friend" the Pancake Man … at least you did eventually get your antique plate back. Just as I was moving out a young Scottish lad (operating theatre assistant) was arranging to settle in and on that top floor from next week there will be two more guys moving into rooms. It's so big that each person will still have their own corridor to themselves, I think each each floor has 50 rooms so it is still well under used.

I had a good chat with this new boy Ian and to think that I thought Liverpool was a far away place to locate from, he had come down from the highlands of Scotland. I have just been told that a Doctor from Finland is arriving as well. I leave from being on my own and a trio rush comes after me.

Anyway at mid day on the dot my friend Duncan from our Bart's Audio Visual Department arrived from Leyton at the main gate and just about found my room number "45". He was kind to offer to help as he has an ancient Austin A1300 car which saved me having to hire.

It took us about 30 mins to fill his car up and luckily it wasn't raining. At a slow speed (laden car) we set off for Hackney which is just up the Kingsland Road really and it only took half the time to unload as we could park outside my new front door.

We were so exhausted after the physical removing side of this affair (up and down those four floors several times) that we drove straight round to my colleagues flat (that's Chris who I work with). His tower block I told you about is in Clapton (next district to Hackney) and he rustled up pie, mash and peas and we certainly needed that. We then watched the afternoon footy (live England match) on his telly.

Saturday evening I spent unpacking and getting organised and that's when I gave you a call and at

least Fernando and Rosa have installed a BT phone for me so that makes things easier.

After my call I went to get my supper from the “Chippy” just round the corner and it is really cheap.

On Sunday morning I was up bright and early to get some food in. Yes there are two stores open seven days a week and they are only one minutes walk away.

Sunday afternoon I spent exploring the district. Not far away we have a very large Marks and Spencer's and a large “Woolies” and hundreds (well seems like 100s) of shops, it really is the centre of Hackney.

There are two stylish Art Deco cinemas just up the road (walkable) the Rio and the Konak which show all the current releases and they are still the old fashioned large single silver screen movie houses.

Two buses this time go all the way to the West End and work, the numbers 22 and 38. The 38 goes all the way to Victoria Station as well and the buses come along one after another and you don’t have

to wait long. I also have the buses 22A, 149 and the 243, in fact I am better served here.

I am opposite a large open green park called Hackney Downs which is a lung of London and wide green space for walking and there is another fabulous park with lots of seats set in the grounds of an old church, St. John's in Hackney a beautiful haven of a place.

One of the first things I did, yes you guessed it, was to set up my sound and music HiFi system and it has survived travelling again and works. So now we can have hours of good music. I will let you loose on the amp and it's multitude of buttons and slider controls … if you want to!

Sunday evening I went to see my friend Stead in Camberwell as if I walk to another near bus stop the number 35 takes me all the way to his place across London and to south of the river.

Tonight, Monday I am going to Wembley Conference Centre to see 10cc in concert, it should be good and I have a few of their albums and I have always liked them.

Right then I think I will describe a bit more of my place here. I mentioned the structure and layout before but now its decor and furnishings. Being a renovation I have a new blue patterned carpet, new pale soft yellow pattern wallpaper. All the sinks, bath and toilet are new and white. The furniture included is a white dining table and chairs with new kitchen cooker and fridge etc. Large antique wooden desk and a chair, large antique wooden wardrobe. The heating is electric wall mounted and I have this large very comfy bed which is really high off the floor with a massive antique solid wooden headboard ..... don't worry the bed is perfectly big enough for the both of us.

Because the whole building is still being modernised, builders are still finishing off bits and pieces so for a few days it will be a bit upside down but it will soon be complete and you can see for yourself.

The Kitchen will be having a new vinyl floor that is about to be laid followed by the kitchen cupboards. The toilet gets painted tomorrow and

the shower and Bathroom will be finished this week but at least it's all new and clean.

Next week I have a list of things to buy so I hope you don't mind shopping with me. Things like towels, a waste bin, large mirror, plugs, dusters and the mundane necessary cleaning toiletries and such like. I need an iron and ironing ironing board but there is a lot of stuff I can cadge from Liverpool if need be. I bought a new bedding set from Petticoat Lane Market (you'll like that market) on Sunday and I am going to search for a small table for the corner which can take a speaker and maybe one or two other things. I don't need a hoover because only one of the four rooms is carpeted the rest will be vinyl or wood. Anyway I am off to prepare some spaghetti bolognaise. I will call you on Wednesday night and then finally you can come up now that I'm settled in.

I Love You a Thousand Times Over, JP xxxxxx

London 27th May 1980

Dear B,

You should have read yesterday's letter by now which probably gave you a lot to read.

Last night (Monday) the 10cc concert … well I came away amazed by the set, the sound quality was beyond brilliance, I just can't get over how good it was and *"Rubber Bullets"* as expected was saved for the rousing encore.

Guess what? I found a Turkish Take Away on my rambles around Hackney centre and the kebabs are fresh every day and are superb with all the chillies and dressings on a pitta bread …. yum yum.

I am discovering even more buses and there is the 48 as well. I forgot to mention that Hackney Downs Railway Station is just around the corner. This is "overground" and not underground but there is a service to London Liverpool Street Station every 8 minutes and the train only takes around 10 minutes. Off peak it only costs 47p return and during the rush hour it's 60p return, so I will use the train at these prices. Liverpool Street to

Bart's Hospital is around 15 mins walk along the London Wall (Barbican) or I can hop on the Transfer Bus that stops at St. Paul's if it's raining.

I have spent most of this week notifying all those that need to my change of address and this list seems to get longer each time you move.

I am not as rushed this week because I'm on the Studio 2 rota and that roasting hot weather has subsided to being nice and warm.

The Rio Cinema up the road has an interesting take on refreshments. They have late night shows of offbeat films and I went to see Bertolucci's Italian film "1900" (Novo Cento) which runs in at an epic five and half hours. At half time the girl in the box office had baked whole trays of cannabis cake (big slices) which were sold for modest sums with a nudge, nudge and a wink from behind her glass screen.

Within the next fortnight all of our German tickets and information will be arriving at Thomas Cook and they will give me a ring when I can collect them.

Today I bought a large mirror, it's rather awkward to describe really, any way you'll see it soon enough.

Tomorrow Wednesday I am off to buy an iron and some 13 amp plugs and a smaller square mirror to put above the hand basin. Getting these things now means that the weekend won't be a mad one and we can shop locally and leisurely and explore those nearby green parks.

On Thursday night I will be at the Hammersmith Odeon seeing "Thin Lizzy" which should be amazing and loud .... one of the great Irish rock bands of all time. I have their Live and Dangerous LP so I just know it's going to a night of of all their best songs over the last ten years.

So I will catch you at Victoria outside the cartoon cinema around 6.00pm on Friday.

PS: I also have this poem that I composed during those days at St. Leonards inspired by my view out over the roofs of London ..... see what you think .... and think about what you see.

From a Window in Hoxton

Sunrise over the city
casts its light over my shoulder
Twists of smoke curl up to the skies
as wispy charcoal strokes and commuters scuttle

Sundown over the city
casts long shadows over anonymous faces
until they vanish
leaving a mesmerising glittering panorama of the night

Love Love ove
JP xxxxxx

June 1980

Whole Lotta Love

"Led Zeppelin"

Chailey 13th June 1980

Oh JP!

A quick postcard to you

In a way I think I shall alway miss Islington and St. Leonard's a bit for we did share and make a *"whole lotta of love"* there and getting away to be with you these past few months have been my most happiest times and refuge.

That Whole Lotta Love Again "B"

London 16th June 1980

B,

Just got home after the Audio Visual Aids Department party after work. There was loads of champagne, French bread and cheeses. Everyone here in London seems to drink champagne, whatever happened to proper ale, they would never get away with this in Liverpool. At our work parties back home you could always rely on Len and Eddie to acquire a full size cask of Higsons Bitter and maybe some wine for the ladies. It's too posh down here at the Bart's do's. The party ended early because everyone had to travel home and a lot live in Surrey or Hertfordshire. It was the end of a hectic day and with Chris on holiday we are very busy.

I think that I will be having a Bart's breakfast everyday this week. I have been back to the hairdressers to tidy up my mop as the hair was getting to unmanageable again. Looking back two days ago to the "Saxon" gig at The Rainbow, Finbury Park. It was loud, it was good and *"Wheels*

of Steel" is a really good rock album and *"Suzie Hold On"* got everybody going and I'm sure I have witnessed one of the biggest bands yet to be of the next decade and there is another new band that is just starting out with their first LP "On Through The Night" and they are called Def Leppard. We need new rockers because the 1980s for me are not the same anymore. We have all this "new" music and all this programmed electronic keyboard poppy stuff. The 70s had it all and it seems to have disappeared all too fast. Yes many of the big progressive bands have split up but at the end of the day these were the groups that could really play live and play well. There will always be rock music and Def Leppard sound like they could carry the flag and be a new "Rock Brigade" - The band that supported Saxon were called "The Tygers of Pan Tang" which reminded me of your Penang.

I called you late from a phone box after the concert then got a bus from Finsbury Park and I was back home at 11.00pm, not bad.

The next day Sunday I slept in till 10.00am had my brunch then took the 38 Bus to the West End. The Odeon in Leicester Square was showing “Star Wars The Empire Strikes Back” which I decided to see and it was spectacular.

Right after that I caught a bus to Camberwell and Stead cooked up some bacon, eggs and mash potatoes. We watched the England game on TV and then went out for a pint or two. He’s a good mate and always see’s me off home with our friend (Pete Jones) and makes sure I get onto the platform at the Oval Tube station as they both say that it isn’t very safe around Camberwell at night to be walking the streets alone.

All this brings me up to date and Iain Mac is passing through London (from Manchester) some time soon he says, so I may get to see him. In fact I will put him up overnight as he is going to sort out his arrangements to start his Masters degree at UCL (University College London), so another friend comes to London at last.

It is good to have friends and mates that are caring and go the extra mile. There are so many “users” around that don’t care about people. It’s better to have just a handful of those you trust with your life than depend on others who do things simply out of duty and look for a reward.

You B, also have Amy, Vicky and Anne who genuinely look out for you and each other and the two of us seemed connected telepathically. We seem to know exactly each others needs, worries and burdens and we seem to carry these loads for one another both in a physical and a mental sense …. soul mates meant to be together across time and space!

So listen for the phone at 9.30pm this Thursday and we can plan the weekend.

Love you with a thousand kisses, JP xxxxxx

July 1980

Do Anything You Wannna Do

“Eddie & The Hot Rods”

London 21st July 1980

B,

Well, in many ways I enjoyed going to and coming back from Midhurst and now that you are in back in Midhurst permanently till you qualify (and you will) your SEN exams I still love to catch you there as well. And with all those placements over maybe you can relax (but Worthing was very good). To think this time last year as complete strangers we had only just bumped into one another in that hotel doorway.

My journey back to Bart’s this morning felt like being a commuter from Sussex to London and such a happy relief that I wasn’t trailing and training all the way back north and this journey had such a normal feel about it. I caught the Haslemere Station bus at the end of the drive and in twenty minutes I was on the platform. Your

trains to Waterloo during the rush hour are every 10 minutes (what a service). From Waterloo I caught that station transfer bus the Number 502 which connects Waterloo to Liverpool Street. It stops at St. Paul's which is right outside Bart's and I was in my Medical Illustration Department before 9.00am. Now I know why and from where everyone commutes in from it's easy even if you live outside London. If you live in any county that surrounds London it must be quite simple as all trains converge North, South, East and West on the capital. If we ever move out of the city I think the property is a lot cheaper towards the east end and beyond.

You might have guessed that after a wet weekend the hot sun always shines.

I spent most of the day taking down single handed an exhibition in the Robin Brooke Centre which is a new state of the art conference centre building attached to us next door from the Medical Illustration Department. It was like hard labour but it did earn me a lot of free coffee and biscuits.

We have a new Medical Illustration secretary and receptionist, Christine who can be quite fierce (she who must be obeyed) and she found out I hadn't seen a dentist for years. She took it upon herself to actually book me an appointment at a dental surgery in Red Lion Square, Holborn which she recommends and I have no choice in the matter or so it seems.

Given my skill at mounting and installing Bart's exhibitions, Christine tasked me with wall mounting a brand new clock. My mistake was not using a ladder, I stood on a sturdy desk shelf and miss hit the nail and the clock rebounded back, hit the shelf, bounced on the floor then rolled in what seemed like slow motion towards the basement stairs and then bounced off each step into the deep depths of Studio 3. I boldly stated out loud "I can fix this" and chased it till I found what was left of it. I emerged a couple of minutes later minus the glass front (which had left a shattered trail), minus the circular white case (also destroyed), but triumphantly holding in my hands the disc of the

clock face and hands still power by its battery. “It still works” I announced and continued to hang up the working remains on the wall. Everyone watching was in tears of laughter …. not sure if it was me or our “new look” clock that caused the hysteria.

There was another departments party at work but nobody went to it from us and I wasn’t going to traipse along on my own without knowing anybody and so we all gave it a miss.

And what wonders awaited back in Hackney? It is a lot tidier. The entrance hall lobby has been cleared, all the builders debris has also gone and the works rubbish from the front of the house is now in a giant yellow skip on the road. So all is complete and they were good to their word and it was also good that I was way with you at the weekend whilst all this was happening. My fridge has an automatic defrost setting which stops ice building up in the freezer. I didn’t know about this feature but all the frozen food is safe. But I needed to remove a kind of plug bung that allows the

defrost water to drain away into its reservoir when I returned. I suppose being a new fitted kitchen I didn't have any fridge freezer instructions and there was a puddle (nothing major) on the kitchen floor.

That recipe for a simple quick and easy "Fried Rice" came in handy when Stead came over from Camberwell recently. It was my first attempt using the rice cooker and using frozen mixed veg and the tinned hot dog sausages sliced finely made for a tasty meal (I think your secret is cracking an egg or two into the mix) … well Stead enjoyed a second helping and thinks there's no end to my culinary skills. I shall endeavour to try more dishes on a see one do one basis.

I am seeing Fleetwood Mac at Wembley Arena next week, its a pity that you weren't free. This is one of the most anticipated tours of the year and all reviews say they play their entire "Rumours" album completely with just a few songs from their latest "Tusk" offering. I am always in two minds about Fleetwood Mac, I really like their earlier work,

the late 1960s stuff with Peter Green one of our greatest guitarists and *"Albatross"* is just superb but I have to concede that Rumours is one of those albums that is faultless (but over produced musically) and Lindsey Buckingham is a unique and talented guitarist who has created this newer Fleetwood sound with Stevie Nicks on vocals. And at every away game in 1977/78 our Tranmere Rovers Coach drive Bert would only play this taped album followed by Bob Seger's *"Hollywood Nights"* and *"Stranger in Town"* as we travelled back home to Prenton Park. Bob Seger and his Silver Bullet Band is also coming to Wembley Arena in three months so we must see them. Till then its Fleetwood's *"Don't Stop Thinking About Tomorrow"* and their *"Brown Eyes"* song reminds me of you and *"You Make Loving Fun"*as always.

The Personnel Department at Bart's reminded me that now I had left St. Leonards, Nurses Home, I was advised, in fact ordered to register with one of their (Bart's GPs). This I did and Bart's run a GP surgery in Hackney and Clapton. I made an

appointment for a checkover and you would be amazed and surprised at what I came away with. I was hitched up to a newly qualified young GP Doctor from Bart's who had just joined this surgery and we had a long chat and he is very progressive in his approach. He said if I ever feel low then partake of a good shot of single malt Scotch whiskey .... But more than this he advocates (but not to share this information with anyone else though) the use of "Uppers" and "Downers". Drugs to get you through the long hard days and nights that give you a buzz then the downers to bring you back to earth. The upshot is I now have a draw full of stimulants to get high and relaxants to chill out. He even made a note to let me have repeats whenever I feel the need. I guess he saw me as fellow bohemian health professional. You can check them out (with your drug index book) in case we become addicted! or save them for rainy days. Although passing the joints around is my preference.

I meant to tell you but you probably know much already about the English gardener Gertrude Jekyll who was famous back in her day and she lived in your part of the world in Sussex and she created hundreds of gardens. I was reading a bit about King Edward VII Hospital and she created the main Hospital gardens and lawns, those beautiful terraces that we still see, I am going to pay more attention next time I'm down now that we are in the midsummer. I also mention it because Gertrude often designed her gardens with Edward Lutyens who is one off my favourite art designer architects and he was a great creator of buildings, King Edward VII Hospital looks very much in his style but I don't think he worked on it, but in Liverpool he designed the original old crypt over which our new cathedral was built.

I have joined the Hackney Film Society. Our Chris at work is the president (sounds a bit grand) but he persuaded me to go along and check it out. It is mainly subsidised by Hackney Council Libraries and once a month, of an evening, they show a

classic film in their make do theatre in Hackney Central Library. There are about 15 - 20 members and if you are fully paid up for the year (about £10) then you are allowed to choose a movie of your own choice (no questions asked) and it is ordered from the film distributors. Anyway I joined and I chose for the next season of films later in the year a foreign film "The Lacemaker" starring Isobelle Huppert which is French and filmed on the coast near to the Belgian border. It won the 1977 Cannes Film Festival and I have always wanted to see this film. I can bring a paying guest along so no problems for you there.

The prints have all come back from our Germany holiday and there are some gems among them so I will get you some reprints sorted out. The German holiday was really good and we saw so many places and our Konigswinter hotel was so peaceful with those Rhine Valley views. Sitting out on the balcony with those sweet white German wines and smoking those odd *Ernte 23's*. But we had a good time and we did manage to tear

ourselves away from all those “afternoon delights” and breaking records for “doing things”…. I can’t wait till this Friday night and the weekend and forever when together we can and will do anything we want to do. There is a bus to Haslemere from the Hospital drive at 8.30pm and you should make the 8.58pm or 9.30pm train to Waterloo which means the latest you will get in to London is 10.25pm. I will phone you on Thursday and harden up on the plans. I’m washing clothes then off to bed.

See yer Friday …. Love You, John xxx

August 1980

Lofty Skies

“Tyrannosaurus Rex”

Midhurst 29th August 1980

JP,

John, how I long for you to be with me. Although it has only been three days since I last was with you it feels like a hundred years. At times it is unbearable but my consolation is that we are together each week.

As you are looking towards Haslemere through your Hackney window I shall sit on my bed and gaze through my window towards London E8 and under all this lofty sky and clouds we will collide together.

I have enclosed my unpleasant shift rota and how I moan and groan about it:

Monday 1st September = 2pm - 5pm,

Tuesday 2nd September = Study Day

Wednesday 3rd September = OFF

Thursday 4th September = 2 - 5pm

Friday 5th September = OFF

Saturday 6th & Sunday 7th September = 2pm - 5pm.

It is a messy week and unconventional due to staff holidays and I will explain on the phone.

Is it possible for you to take a day off on Friday so that I can spend a whole day with you? Don't do it at such short notice its only a mad suggestion from me!

That huge volume of a book on nursing that you bought me from Foyles bookstore is really useful. I have been studying (and only you know how I study or don't).

One of my patients best friends saves all her postage stamps for me ever since I asked to see one of the Queen Mother! Anyway I gratefully accept them because I know your brother collects them so I will save them.

My pay packet came through and this month I only got £152. I shall survive, though at this rate I will never be a rich lady. That reminds me I might buy some premium bonds that some of the girls

tell me about. I seem to have misplaced some of my photographs but I think you have some as you were going to make some copies.

The mystery of my missing contact lenses is more mysterious than I though it would be. I can't believe that I've lost them.

Though this is a short letter but you know just how much I love you, how I long to wrap my body around yours using my arms, hands and lips ..... From your Lady in Waiting.

B

London 31st August 1980

Dear me hahah,

I have just got out of bed at 1.30pm, that is way too much of a lie in.

Last Wednesday I got into work after seeing you off on the bus to Waterloo and by lunchtime Chris and Duncan and myself had decided to go and watch a football match at Leyton Orient. Leyton had been drawn in the League Cup against Tottenham Hotspur (Spurs) so during that lunchtime we all went out to buy some foodstuffs for our evening meal at Duncan's who lives in Leyton.

After work Duncan gave us both a lift back to his place and his speciality was fried liver (fresh from Smithfield's Meat Market) and onions, green beans and fried potatoes. After this we went to the match. Actually it was really boring and Spurs won 1 - 0. Still it was a nice warm night to stand on the terraces and then we had coffee back at Duncan's and he gave us both a lift home. Apparently after he'd dropped me off his old car broke down at

Chris's so he had to spend the night there. Oh by the way I did buy Duncan a bottle of whiskey and a new Police LP for helping me move on that Saturday and he was dead chuffed about that.

On Thursday my dad and brother came down to London (a very rare and distant outing for them). It was all last minute and they rang me at work and I arranged to meet them in Paddington at their hotel.

I took them round the West End which after dark looks colourful with all the neon lights. I think they enjoyed it. You know how it is when you see Trafalgar Square, Leicester Square and Piccadilly at night for the first time.

On Friday they decided to come to me for an evening meal so I prepared my famous fried rice - Hackney style again!, which they quickly gobbled down and thought was super tasty. It was pouring down so it wasn't worth hitting the West End again and they went back to Paddington at 10.00pm.

On Saturday morning they came round again at 10.00am for coffee. In that one night and one morning the pair of them (mainly my brother David) had eaten everything I had in and between them unbelievably over that previous evening and Saturday got through “eighteen” mugs of coffee.

The rest of Saturday morning we spent on the market (which was like a culture shock for them). They bought so much fruit and veg to take back to Liverpool because it was so cheap. They purchased 6 lbs of golden delicious apples, 4 lbs of bananas, 3 lbs of oranges, 3 whole cucumbers, 3lbs of tomatoes, one enormous water melon, peaches, radishes and that is as far as I can remember. Their car boot was jam packed. I was rather modest buying a few apples and oranges for my fridge.

But the big surprise (as it was my 21st birthday 11 days ago) my dad bought me a colour TV from Curry’s in Kingsland Road so you and I now have our Ferguson Tx Movie Star colour telly ..... so we can cuddle up in front of that.

The German holiday is always on my mind. Do you remember that old boy at the bus stop up on the hillside, well I came up with a poem after some philosophically profound inspiration. See what you make of it as it a kind of poetry and prose combined and its called “Reconciliation” and it is about friendship, contrition and forgiveness. We were born after the war but when you think about it, it was only the next decade when we came along, so there is a connection to these past but very real events.

Reconciliation

In the quiet Olberg woods and hills above the
meandering Rhine Valley
in it's meandering paths and lanes
I met a shabby old man at a bus stop

Eager to speak in fast flowing torrents
I hadn't a clue
so we talked single sided
Germanic versus Anglo until we slipped into
broken English

I mentioned Lancashire the place of my birth
and then I surrendered to his words *"Blackpool"*
and *"Prisoner of War"*
he was moved to declare that he had been
treated kindly in internment

The Germans had blitzed the chip shop .... my Gran had assured me
then I thought of our bombs on Bonn and Dresden and falling across the river here at Cologne
but I was too young to be contrite for our father's victories

And as the empty bus approached
he held out his hand
in an act of reconciliation and peace

Hope you like it anyway but it is exactly true and just as it happened.

Changing the subject considerably. Do you fancy seeing AC/DC ? their world tour "Back in Black" is coming to London for four nights in November. I missed them when they came to Liverpool (I was at a Tranmere Rovers game) but Bernie went to see them and his head and ears were buzzing for 3

days after. So we can get all loud and all shook up if you want to rock. And it's true what they belt out *"Rock and Roll ain't Noise Pollution"* Fab live band. I am going to get tickets anyway and I will call you on Tuesday evening at 6.00pm

I Love You , JP xxxxxx

September 1980

I Talk To The Wind

“King Crimson”

London 8th September 1980

B,

I will just about make it to Saturday without you, I can’t bear it not being with you, everyday hurts the more minutes we are not together.

At least next week won’t be so busy at work, Carole is coming in when she should be on holiday (she must be mad or loyal to a point)

My head of Department Mr. T. Arrived back from the IMBI Conference today which this year was held in Scotland so I collared him for my £25 IMBI exam fee. I thought I had seen the back of exams and qualifications but studying and sitting to get another professional qualification (Dip IMBI) after my name seem to be the done thing and is expected of me here. Oh! IMBI is the (Institute of Medical and Biological Illustrators)

He also brought back some Scottish shortbread, delicious.

And our dragoness Christine came back from her holidays (in Scotland) and guess what? yes! you are correct, even more shortbread.

I have an idea with some free days coming up I thought we could book an autumn break in Edinburgh. I have found a really nice (bit posh) Caledonian Hotel in a pretty Georgian Square overlooking some gardens. And guess what? yes! We can bring back some shortbread … or haggis!

Speaking of food it was back to the canteen for spaghetti Bolognaise, super tasty once more.

On Saturday the West End was as usual crowded out with the mass population of London so I avoided Oxford Street. I went straight to Foyle's to buy the Question and Answer Nursing Book for you. I just got half marks on the first test, oh dear! Looks like I'm a failure at some things but not ALL (only you know what I mean).

After a McDonalds lunch (cheeseburger and a coke) I went to see Al Pacino's latest controversial

movie “Cruising”. I don’t think you would have liked it at all and even by my open minded standards it was severely creepy and scary and one to file in the bin.

On the TV (Saturday night) “Paper Tiger”was on. That was the recent movie with David Niven and it was all filmed in your home Malaysia, and Malacca …. and all your talk of tropical island semi naked girls in leaf skirts and coconuts covering their tits …. you were really having me on about your Pearl of the Orient … just you wait! Still the scenery was breathtaking and one day you will be taking me there …. You better had and we should start saving now. The travel agent mentioned the air fare costs £600 per person return and that is without any hotels or spending money. So Scotland it is then!

Sunday morning I was up with the early morning birdsong (8.00am) that’s early enough because I was off to Liverpool Street Station then Petticoat Lane Market to purchase two large cushions and they really are super bouncy and soft and we can

try them out on the floor on Saturday night. Oh yes nothing like sitting on the floor watching the telly.
Sunday night was rubbish on the TV but at least your call brightened my evening. My gum is healed after the dental treatment but I still think it would have been a good idea for you to stay and nurse it better. The weather is holding on and this Indian summer continues.
In 1969 me and my dad had a weeks holiday in London and we stayed in a Bed and Breakfast in Paddington. When my dad and brother came down recently I wonder if it was the same place, it was the same road and the whole long stretch of Sussex Gardens was full of side by side guest houses back in the 60s and it is a good location near the station and the west end of Oxford Street. Going to Petticoat Lane Market set my mind back to when I went there in 1969 and I put together a short but true poem. And it happened just as it is written.

Petticoat Lane Market 1969

Blankets and sheets cheap as can be
buy one of these and the rest come for free

Kitchen devices for slicing and carving
a dinner set for six a guinea and a farthing

Hang on to your purses or wallets will fly
my bargain that Sunday a lime green and yellow
wide kipper tie

Harping back to those days and the early mid 1960s I sometimes get in a reflective mood. I suppose in Meadowside, off Leasowe Road where I lived there was just me and my best friend Iain, as my brother only appeared eight years later. As I mentioned before, I used to mooch and meander around our garden with hidden corners and wander across the road behind our house to the sand dunes and wide empty beaches (it was safe for kids back then). I would watch the estuary tides roll out and the white horse waves ride in and I had a contentment with nature, I would kind of talk in my head to the elements - the wind, the sky, the earth, the sea. I think that's were my life in the arts all started and I just needed or wanted to capture those moments of beauty and peace.

Love You Too, JP

October 1980

Sometime World

“Wishbone Ash”

London 9th October 1980

B,

Because we see and phone each other so often these days it seems to have put a brake on paper, pen and ink supplies but just a quick note ahead of next week. Just like the Fleetwood Mac tickets for Wembley Arena back in the summer, “The Jam” are playing some nights at The Rainbow which is not too far away in Finsbury Park and it is one of the great music venues and even bigger than the Empire in Liverpool. I am going to buy the tickets anyway as they will sell out immediately and then wait till next month and hope you will be free and then we will be *“Down in The Tube Station at Midnight”* again! . Also tickets are going on sale soon for “Blondie”, “Pink Floyd” (The Wall gigs at Earls Court) and “Kiss” at Wembley, I will be buying two tickets for each these as well.

Keeping with music OMD's (Orchestral Manoeuvres In The Dark) new single *"Enola Gay"* is really ace and OMD have finally made it from my home town district.

Back in Wallasey a couple of years ago Stead asked if I could photograph them at a pub in Egremont (near Seacombe Ferry). They were totally unknown and the gig was really a rehearsal session. I have to say it was very avant-garde and strange with odd electro noises. All the members went to the same schools as us in Wallasey and I even sat next to Martin Cooper at Art College, so who would have thought a couple of years later they would have made it big. As for all the rolls of colour film I shot ... I handed them to Stead and the band and to keep the costs down they had them processed at Max Speilmans and my fee for the whole night and handing over the films .... a couple of pints! I bet one day these pictures may or probably won't be worth a fair bob or two.

Your card full of real lipstick kisses came through and only we know where those lips have been.

I have been composing again and I have just completed a long epic piece of poetry - prose inspired by our teutonic journey in the summer down the Rhine and Moselle rivers, hills and valleys.

This Mythical Land of Legends

As early evening came upon us slowly
and the orange sun made the city golden
we set off on a journey

From a station beneath the stars we set forth
as the fingers on the clock completed a full circle
and then just a little more
to a priory town we travelled
from this hamlet we set sail

The castle on the cliffs was drowned by the night
we slept as we rode upon mythical white horses
galloping towards the awakening dawn

"At last" we said, as we saw a new coast
"We shall soon be landed in this foreign port"
and from floating through the dark night hours
to continue to glide on wheels of steel

Deep into the heart of this new continent
following a river, so long, so deep, so blue
to the centre of the world
surrounded by seven mountains
protected by medieval dragons
whose ferocity had been quelled by ages past

A window revealed a spread of enchanted valley
where grapes on the vine grow in a thousand rows
and when the sun went down
we watched the tiny lights in the distance
flicker and fade into the moonlight

On quiet days we would walk amid pine forests
pierced with silken rays of light
and as the mists came upon us the world swirled
in clouds of mercury silvered rain

To the cities adventure of bridges and spires
mastered to perfection over centuries gone by
a breeze whispers through our locks and curls
and jet black hair
and a golden barge bathes stealthy and the creatures gather and stare and chirp

This land conquered by love as dreamers love
water that flows, twisting, sparkling as diamonds
those last embers of the twilight sundown rubies
like the jewels you shall wear on your finger forever

PS. Anyway I will sign off after this marathon of prose and thoughts - but if I might draw you attention in this sometime world of ours to *the very last line of the above poem* ... and ... to be continued



September 1st 1981 - Barkingside, Essex, Registry Office

Midhurst
14th October
1980

My Darling
Just to let u
Know that I

Love you

and my answer

Yes

B

1980 to the 21st Century

Landslide

"Fleetwood Mac"

Rather than leave what happened next? suspended in time or having to write a whole new sequel, B qualified as a State Enrolled Nurse (SEN) in Midhurst then immediately joined me in Hackney after transferring to King George V and Barking Hospitals, Ilford which today is an extension of East London, to continue successfully and gain her RGN (Registered General Nurse) which had just replaced the old SRN (State Registered Nurse) examination format.

And on a lazy August morning in the summer of 1981, we decided after a lie in to get up and tie the knot and on September 1st 1981 the year of that super Royal Wedding (more of Diana later) we had a very quiet affair at Barkingside Registry Office with a only a handful of guests and friends as we only had a few days notice ourselves.

We moved to larger rented flats twice more in Ilford, Essex before risking a modest mortgage in 1983 also in Ilford. We bought a one bedroomed ground floor apartment that gave us a titchy garden and a large productive cherry tree but we also inherited the vendors purpose built freehold garage which he designed around his Ferrari as a place of safe keeping.

After two years we needed a little more space and those were the days when property sold incredibly quickly and within seconds of going on the market we had the actor Brian Cohen (from Eastenders) knocking on our door and buying it instantly.

After buying a two bedroomed flat in Chadwell Heath, Romford, Essex we bought a house in Chigwell (London Borough of Redbridge) and settled for the next two decades at the very end of London's Central Line and just a short walk from either Grange Hill or Hainault tube stations.

B became a Staff Nurse and then a Nursing Sister and moved briefly through Bethnal Green Hospital followed by five years seeing out the 1980s at The

London Hospital, Whitechapel running the STD (Sexually Transmitted Diseases Outpatients Department).

In 1990 there was a big change in how General Practitioners were allowed to run their surgeries and this allowed all doctors in the community to develop and manage their service provisions and budgets which meant that GPs could employ what were termed “Practice Nurses” and “Nurse Practitioners”. B was in the UK’s first batch to make this move out of a hospital and into this new community based setting. So much was this a rewarding and exciting role that B dedicated the next twenty years to this profession working at surgeries in London’s Bow, then Canning Town with the well known and much loved Dr. Malcolm Comyns, then back to Ilford and finally Barkingside. This allowed the great advantage of working “normal” weekday hours with at long last, all weekends and bank holiday’s off.

I stayed at St. Bartholomew's Hospital for only one more year. In 1981 I decided that general medical photography was not for me anymore although I did pass that IMBI (Institute of Medical and Biological Illustration) exam which meant I had letters after my name, which I never really use. I needed a new challenge and to literally refocus and put all my art college training and lighting skills into practice. And so I bade farewell to Bart's … no LP albums this time just a standard traditional gold (brass) mantlepiece clock.

I was fortunate to find a photographic studio within walking distance of home in East London (Barkingside) and this allowed me to use my talents in general photography, press, advertising, design and editorial work. It was here that I met for the first time Jan Kalinski who was an all round artist, designer, cartoonist and bass guitarist who would feature as a good friend over the next four decades.

I was probably in the right place at the right time because my next two decades allowed me to work with some of the legends of photography including David Bailey and Don McCullin and spend time photographing and working with everybody from the world of music, arts and film. Duran Duran, Ronnie Wood (The Rolling Stones) and Cliff (Richard) who invited me back to his place after a Christmas shoot that took place in the summer and then getting the chance to sit next to the Queen of Grease and now sadly departed Olivia Newton - John. I had the opportunity over the years to meet and photograph 100s of cinema screen and TV legends, sports stars, comedians and politicians with some memorable sessions alongside The Terminator (Arnie), Alan Bates, Glenda Jackson, David Attenborough, Selina Scott and Joanna Lumley who was such a dear … on many occasions.

Since the original autobiography came out in 2021 and whilst revising and proofing this expanded edition I heard that Dennis Waterman had sadly

died in Spain and I have great memories of photographing him a few times and of the day he invited me to join him for dinner at the Savoy Grill and found myself inserted at the table between him and George Cole. It didn't cost me a bean and they were hilarious and never mind what the waiters thought. Now they can share their partnership again upstairs!

Whilst in the main I spent 20 years with the stars it was often the mundane sounding photographic shoots that became special. I photographed the 1988 Barnardo's charity calendar. And as we shoot a year in advance the sessions took place in 1987. The winter (December) scene was art directed amid the peaks of the Cairngorms in Scotland at minus 15 - 20 centigrade and this was in March. Despite my large format camera shutters freezing I managed to complete the potential scenes in 35mm and when the snow and descending clouds eventually cleared we had gorgeous pastel blue skies and Barnardo's skiing teenagers.

The midsummer (June) image was left up to me to find and create something original. I met and talked to a Social Worker in East London and I arranged with her and all the necessary parental consent forms to take her and a young brother and sister from an East End deprived tower block to the seaside for a day and the project would be an “organic” as it happened kind of affair. We drove to Southend on Sea, Essex and what I didn’t know was that these two lovely children had never been to the seaside before. And the joy and smiles of pebbles and sand under foot, deckchairs, ice cream and candy floss on the promenade gave me priceless yet natural pictures of the English holiday resort. The double success of this project taught me right there and then just how lucky I was to have a job like mine and how happy those kids were who basically had so little and even today it halts me in my steps many times and reminds me just how we must take nothing for granted in this world of ours … and we must learn to foster a social conscience.

I am sometimes asked who was the best or favourite musician or movie star that I captured on film?

I had taken a call in the late 1990s from a friend and client who asked was I free to meet him and take some private photos. I duly turned up on time and with him walking across a quiet Essex village green towards me clad in leathers and jeans was non other than Dee Dee Ramone … wow! one of the great American Bass players and a true original Ramone … Just the best rock band that came out of New York in the 1970s. As I approached him, Dee Dee was a little unsure about having a series of pictures taken and presumed that I may have been paparazzi. I went straight up to him and said “I was there man … back in the 70s when The Ramones played the Cavern Club in Liverpool and you and the guys were just the best thing that happened in Liverpool that year”. Dee Dee became quite overwhelmed and emotional and reached out to me and he was a sensitive giant compared to me

and he took me and hugged me and and held on to me like that memory was yesterday and for that afternoon my new best friend in the world was a rock hero of mine. At this point in his life he was clean and off drugs, writing new songs and his own autobiography. Sadly in the summer of 2002 in Hollywood Dee Dee would succumb, revisiting his heroin addiction and leave his world of rock behind with an overdose aged just 50. Written on his gravestone, from one of Dee Dee's finest lyrical Ramones song compositions "Highest Trails Above" off the "Subterranean Jungle" album is engraved *"I feel so safe flying on the highest trails above"* and his final epitaph inscription simply says *"O.K. ... I gotta go now"*

Working as a photographer is not a nine to five vocation, far from it as assignments for me could be anywhere in the UK night or day and in those days you had to get back to the studio base to process and print all of the films and negatives. Travelling does come with dangers, yes I have had guns pointed at me in an Irish standoff and the

more you fly the chances of incidents increase. I had already overcome long haul holidays with plane engines catching fire on a British Airways route to Singapore and a Malaysian Airlines Boeing 747 running out of fuel and landing on fumes but twice over the skies of England and Scotland in a BAC 1-11 and a short haul BAe 146 I experienced an explosive engine blow out mid air. The Air UK flight on route from London Stansted to Edinburgh went terribly wrong over Manchester with a huge “bang” from one of the starboard engines and the aircraft suddenly dropped. We had to remain calm and passengers were asked to rebalance the plane by distributing our weight on the port side. The pilot was unable to turn his plane round and try for a Manchester landing so we had to push on and make an emergency landing at Edinburgh with a full crash team shadowing our touchdown on the ground. The white knuckle ride ended quite OK and I just disembarked and went off to the photo shoot. I had made a note that my return flight later

that day was to be on a larger British Midland Airbus that served cream teas!

I had already photographed the Queen at Bart's hospital and Princess Margaret when as a guest photographer I was invited and allowed to stay over at a big do at Blenheim Palace and given a room in the servants quarters on the top floor … but I had the best view from that window and it was a grand all night party ball. But all this was about to change in 1984 when HRH Princess Diana entered my professional life.

I call these my Diana years 1984 - 1996 when I was MI5 vetted and became a photographer on Kensington Palace's royal rota. Over those twelve years I must have taken thousands of pictures of Diana on a variety of her many visits around Britain and being on the royal rota allowed me also to photograph Diana privately and away from the general press. Whether it was a private dinner at her favourite restaurant Searcy's in Knightsbridge or one of her official royal engagements all these visits demonstrated her warmth and compassion

and from my own personal witnessing I honestly can confirm that her reaching out to people, her understanding care and empathy was 100% genuine. Diana was very much at home taking extra time whenever possible to find out and experience what living with disabilities and special needs amounted to and we are familiar with her reaching out to leprosy and AIDS/HIV sufferers but also acknowledging other less respected outcasts of society. Forgotten and rejected by the establishment I was with Diana when she paid a visit to give her own support publicly to the once shamed John Profumo who after his scandalous 1960s downfall spent the last forty years of his life as a charity volunteer with his wife and actress Valerie Hobson helping those in poverty in the East End of London. Diana was without doubt the most famous person in the world and even today the striking portraits from the mid 1990s still have the style, sheen and power that dazzles from the pages of books and magazines.

Many of the staff who I knew that worked closely with Diana went on to write books about her life, events and personal affairs and I made a promise to myself at the time that if you are behind the scenes working with anyone who is famous then that is were your loyalty should lie and the only official book that Diana sanctioned was Andrew Morton's "Diana - Her True Story In Her Own Words" and I can still remember be called to meet Andrew Morton and have a chat with him, with permission confirmed by Diana.

To get away from the stresses of working in London we had our bolt hole back in Sussex on the coast in a place we knew well, Seaford just a short drive from Worthing. Today it is a development of new houses looking out to sea but for two decades our escape was to a picturesque setting of mini bungalow type motor lodges away from the maddening crowds.

We were there over that August 1997 Bank Holiday weekend and waking up early to a breaking news

that would change the lives of many and have a great deal of rebounding repercussions.

Diana was dead at 37 in a Paris car crash.

Diana had all but left her life of official royal visits the year before in an attempt to step away from the public spotlight. And as we drove home through a height of a summer and shockingly deserted Eastbourne and back to London I wandered what might lie ahead.

It was probably naive of me to think that the immediate days ahead might be actually quiet as the country and world would go into mourning because it had been eighteen months since I had taken any pictures with Her Royal Highness but as soon as I was back in the studio after the short August weekend I was about to be busy and busier than I had ever been both productively and emotionally.

For what seemed day after day and night we printed, printed and printed photographs by hand of Diana, after all, the world was in need of images and every paper and magazine in the land, large



H.R.H Diana Princes of Wales

Taken between 1984 - 1996

and small, national and local wanted a picture of Diana with someone who she had met over the years.

My biggest problem came from within my own industry, as press and television caught on to the fact that I was a person of interest. To this day I do not know who but despite myself wishing to avoid all the glare and pressure somebody in our press office leaked without my permission my home phone and contact details.

I was exhausted and the last thing I needed was to be pestered by press, overseas film and television producers from Asia who tracked me down. I had this fear of tons of crew vans, satellite transmitter dishes invading our quiet close in Chigwell. They tried to compromise and meet me on neutral ground or any open air location and in some tiny way I was experiencing what Diana must have fought 24 hours a day … being hounded … a total invasion of privacy.

I held out with complete refusals because nobody can twist your arm or body if you categorically say “No”.

To appease my bosses who were quite irritated by my rejection of international publicity I finally agreed to be interviewed by the local East London press as this was my adopted home. I remember going into my local Sainsbury’s to buy a Radio Times and there was I front page news, a large full colour photograph of me with images of Diana. I just hated it. I acquired a copy of about three different syndicated news papers and to this day they lie neatly folded hidden in a box (just like all those letters) and in 25 years I still cannot bring myself to read the story or interview.

It was a nice and kind gesture that I was invited to Diana’s funeral and had the offer to walk in one of the groups in the cortège behind her coffin on the gun carriage. At the end of the day however I respectfully declined as I wished to grieve not in the public domain but privately with B and with countless millions world wide at home were tears

for once could flow away from the lens of a camera.

Apart from writing an obituary, the only occasion (other than these recent book pages) that I have ever written about Diana is a poem composed and published in a specially commissioned Diana Anthology, after her death. That poem is now reproduced at the end of this chapter in full almost twenty five years later along with a selection of photographs of Diana published here for the very first time from my own personal collection.

Maybe my time had come to rethink about what lay ahead. Diana's tragic demise might have ignited the catalyst in me for change. The professional photographic world was changing. We were on the cusp of the digital age and the art of old world processing and high quality hand printing would soon vanish, decades of skill simply removed and replaced by instant pictures. I had mentored new young photographers, they could and would take my place in this fast changing new age of capturing the visual image.

Years of carting around heavy camera gear and lighting was beginning to take its toll on my 1969 gymnastics injury and I initially opted to move sideways and take on the task of Studio Administration and look after what was then the UK's largest private Photographic and Film Archive Library and help to save and restore a visual heritage and history dating back to the Victorian era of the 1860s.

We had nearly escaped from our jobs in London back in 1990 when I was invited to work in Australia by one of my photographic protégées, Glenn, who was antipodean by birth and was deciding to set up a studio in Brisbane. Whilst my studio in East London was being refurbished from top to bottom, its temporary closure meant that we were able to fly to Queensland for several weeks to explore all the options and look at property and plan a move. We had already registered with Australia House in London and met the necessary criteria through their

emigration points system. It was an interesting trip and Brisbane, Canberra, the Gold and Sunshine Coasts and

Sydney all looked fine until two things happened. On our very last night in Sydney before returning home we were the guests staying on the upper floor of quite a decent four star hotel and at around midnight asleep in bed our door was forced open by a fire brigade team in breathing masks followed by wafting willowing smoke that smelled of heavily burning toast. In fact the rooftop restaurant was on fire and we had to be evacuated and finding our fire escape exit door chained up on the ground floor added to some minor panic. It was over in a couple of hours and we were given a lower floor room after collecting our smoky belongings. And given we were heading homewards we were definitely “dunroamin” and bleary before leaving for Sydney’s Kingsford Smith Airport.

On arrival back at work I was asked to meet with our Director of Publicity who had wind of my

Oceanic expedition and expectations and I was offered the position of Studio Manager … if I chose to stay in the UK.

So after the landslide of chaos and emotion in the wake of losing Diana, looking after and conserving old prints and moving picture films suddenly seemed a much safer environment to be in and at last … no more early starts to catch the first trains or planes out of London or hours of driving to and from locations and this would do at least for the next five years until it would be time to chase more of our dreams elsewhere.

Diana

You lived with the spring of youth
and glided through the days of summer

But autumn colours of sunset gold
will never now be yours to hold

The flowers will blanket and comfort you
from winters ice and snow
and the future shivering years

As jasmine blooms
we will think of you
as death brought an angels view
and we suffer your sorrow too

Beneath willowed trees
and royal oak
surrounded by an island moat
you slumber deep
beneath the fallen leaves

These Days

Northern Sky

“Nick Drake”

One thing that did happen during this more quiet less stressful phase was that I was interviewed for a big independent Sunday Magazine about photography, archives and saving the past by Blake Morrison the well known poet and author and I must have made a decent impression on him as I appeared as a “real life” character in his next book of short stories entitled “Too True”.

It was probably the aftermath of those fabulous and long “Diana Years” and a swing of changes in the photographic industry coupled with even more government uncertainty and NHS restructuring within community GP services that caused us to stop and think and the touch paper was ignited again after nearly three decades in the capital and we decided to sell up and head off into the wilderness for a really good rest and find inspiration. And into and under the wild North

Norfolk fenland skies we landed in the small medieval market town of Downham Market that would be our sojourn for three years.

I had always “written things” ever since school days and over the years I had produced feature film and book reviews, journal editorial and working all this time with journalists allowed me to easily put words to my pictures. When the 1980s government Youth Training Scheme (YTS) was rolled out they hadn’t considered photography as a worthy subject at first. But the art colleges across Britain were looking to place students in the workplace and I agreed to take on and train a student. The government suddenly realised they didn’t have a syllabus and asked me if I could write a definitive photographic text book or manual as soon as possible and my first book was published by a necessary accident of need.

Publishing is a strange kind of game in many ways and relies perhaps more than not on having the right connections, having a brilliant and original idea or plain simple luck.

I had always been fascinated with well or lesser known medieval female saints and a simple proposal to a London publisher resulted in a commission of three biographies over the years and a publisher in Dublin also brought in more commissions and asked for help in collaborating on more books and writing and producing one book a year seems to have worked well since the start of the 21st century. Writing biographies also had the added benefit of allowing travel and research to Italy several times to discover the life of Clare of Assisi from the middle ages and a more recent younger twentieth century Saint Gemma Galgani of Lucca.

The escape to the quiet flat and atmospheric fenlands of East Anglia proved to be the right move at the right time with no interruptions and allowing a schedule to which I could write all day and all night or simply do nothing and enjoy the wild unending Norfolk landscapes and vast stretches of coast with amber cliffs and beaches

that seemed to merge as one into the horizon at sunset.

In 2010 it was time to finally edit and put together my vast collection of poetry. I had been composing since the 1970s and had poems all over the place on scraps of paper, typed sheets and now it was time to make some sense and order out of these jottings.

Many of the poems in the anthology *"In Violet"* are autobiographical and the large volume of poetry in this well received collection in many ways makes a sister and companion book to what you are reading now and recalls many other tales through rhyme and prose of childhood and later years. First published in 2011 it is now in its seventh edition and complements further books of poetry *"Zig Zag Road"* , *"Afterglow of Zephyrs"* , *"Rebel Hearts"* and *"Last Tango of Clarence Clementine"* with further titles planned.

It is strange and most people would wish to escape city life permanently for the tranquility and the idyll that had kept us captivated but after three

years the solitude and remoteness of a 30 mile round trip drive for decent food and drink shopping gave us the motivation to return to noise again and city life that deep down we always craved, the city was in our blood.

We discovered that there was a very slow cross country two carriage train that left Norwich every hour and chugged and puffed through thirteen counties in five hours that terminated in Liverpool. There was nothing to lose and we made two of these trips back in quick succession and stayed in hotels on the waterfront and whilst sitting on the pier head watching those gorgeous violet sky sunsets on a balmy evening and those ferries on the Mersey sailing back and forth across my river *“and this land the place I love”* we both blurted and echoed out at the same time (synchronised telepathy again) …. “we can live here, why don't we just do it … sell up in North Norfolk and come back to my home city … there is nothing to stop us at all”

And that is where we returned to, living right in the city behind the lofty crown of spires of the

Metropolitan Catholic Cathedral (where you can catch us a lot of the time volunteering and helping out in this beautiful, peaceful and meditative spatial spectrum of glowing colour), just look out for the guy with a long ponytail and wearing bright hippy psychedelic shirts and it's nice to live within easy walking distance of this great city centre and be next to Liverpool's inspirational waterfront again.

John Lennon often talked, wrote and sang about the people in his life and now it's time to round up and acknowledge some of those places and players that contributed to our story.

I walk down Ashton Street, Liverpool so often and if you look carefully and closely you will see next door to the Liverpool School of Medicine what looks like a red brick Victorian chapel with a small steeple, this was the original Liverpool Royal Infirmary mortuary and post mortem building where I took my very first professional forensic photographs from the day I started working there. In many ways walking past gives me haunting memories of hundreds of past or passed souls as that first day in February 1976 my solo debut in photographing my first dead body, that of a young woman aged 32 who had died of toxoplasmosis, contracted by coming into contact with cat faeces. Her body had erupted all over in bright red fierce angry sores yet her face looked serene and in peace. If she hadn't come into contact with a cat then maybe she would still be alive today aged 80. The images and details I still remember very clearly. Life is full of many what if's and they provide stark reminders of the fragility of life.

All of our places of work mentioned and the hospitals still stand although the wonderful West Sussex 165 acre Midhurst estate of the well known King Edward VII Hospital and its magnificent Edwardian grounds is now a luxurious private development of expensive houses, cottages and apartments. We returned recently and after our short story to the contemporary estate manager we were welcomed in to look around and we headed straight out into those beautiful terraced Gertrude Jekyll Gardens.

The small block of nurses flats in Selden Road, Worthing have been demolished just recently to make way for a small row of exclusive 21st century eco houses just off the seafront promenade.

Our original 1979 Belgian gangs: B's friends Vicky returned to Malaysia straight after qualifying, Amy relocated as a nurse to Sydney, Australia and we caught up with her on a later visit there.

My Liverpool crew: Jim Mackie and Pete Smith (Smidge) have always lived here in Merseyside, Mark Evans (Evo) the architect and planner of our Belgian escapade that changed my future and gave us this story now lives in Swindon, Wiltshire but is dallying with the idea of a return home to Liverpool himself with his partner Dana.
Iain McIntyre, my oldest friend, since birth who went from Liverpool to London via Aberdeen and Paris still pops back to Merseyside when he's free and he is happy and very settled with his family in East Molesey, Surrey.

My dear friend Dave Steedman (Stead to us all) sadly died in July 2016 and I was glad to be able to catch up with him after many years and even though he was courageously battling cancer he was his old and considerate self, concerned more about my wellbeing than his and as always thinking of and helping others and he still had his ancient tin box of art photographs that I had taken and created of and for him … all those years ago alongside an attic crammed to the rafters with his

encyclopaedic collection of Tranmere Rovers memorabilia.

In 1992 my friend and artist Jan Kalinski was diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis (MS) resulting in permanent numbness of his fingers. When he could no longer hold a fine pencil or write his own name he would never let go of a paintbrush and never stopped creating remarkable images and found working in the new digital mediums exciting.

Jan produced hundreds of paintings, illustrations and cartoons and many original pieces globally reside in galleries, private collections and occasionally find their way back into the public domain through art auctions. In life he was very generous to many by giving away lots of his paintings when his studio space was filling up.

I had known Jan for forty years stretching back into the early 1980s from those East London studio days and he was a very talented painter who had an intense relationship with his easel and brushes.

We had a shared passion of all things Beatles and T.Rex in the days when the whole world seemed to be a little in love with Marc Bolan. We also had a shared obsession with guitars, the two of us having played with bands in the 1970s. In recent times he was looking to buy an old worn out Fender Telecaster so that he could slowly attempt restoration as a therapeutic hobby as he always lamented having to sell his Rickenbaker 4003 bass guitar to fund a trip back to Canada.

Jan had a very complex relationship with those closest to him and was searching for something inner that had been lost. When his mother died in Canada and he went to sort out her affairs he was devastated to find she had burnt and destroyed all the family photographs leaving him with no personal visual memories, a lost childhood. When he talked of Canada it was more of what he was missing in England and Canada was literally a wildness to him in his teenage years. And in his last year his unfulfilled longing was to return “home” to Rugby, the place of an

early boyhood surrounded by things and the places he remembered.

I cannot deny that many of his paintings had a simmering, tormented and in truth a degree of despair as subject matter which was also born out of his fascination with science fiction, the cosmos and alien lifeforms in far away galaxies but also due to family disintegrating relationships and previous and current marital breakdowns and yet it was always amazing that painting with Multiple Sclerosis did not deter him or in any way seem to hold him back and the attention to detail was in many ways outstanding and yes sometimes tangental.

In November 2022 just a day after completing the cover for my poetry book *"Rebel Hearts"* he sent me a text message and digital self portrait of himself holding his trade mark green ball of enlightenment and waving goodbye; his final written words to me at 2:16am on that Friday morning from across his own personal universe

echoing John Lennon last words to Paul McCartney

“And in the end .....

Remember me from time to time old friend ....

Jan”

It would be and (he knew this) that I would probably not open any messages until at least breakfast time. I was taken by complete surprise and he had caught me out as all had been totally normal during the week but whilst hoping this was one of his conceptual pieces I was concerned enough when I was unable to contact him that morning and took the decision to contact Kent police in Maidstone. Because I was neither family, relative or medical professional I was advised to report him as a vulnerable missing person.

My deepest fears were confirmed by a police car pulling up outside our house in Liverpool at midnight with a “death knock” informing me first as I was the person who had reported a concern. Jan had managed to hang himself well before dawn on 11-11-22 Remembrance Day making

those last words of his to me sadly unforgettable. He was 66 years old and just like Diana earlier in the book, this is the first time I have been able to write in detail about his intricate and often labyrinthine soul and actual death.

I try to remember that Jan was always at his happiest painting, he had designed my previous 18 book covers and when he ran out of creative ideas he would delve into my poetry and books and work with and interpret an image of a particular poem or title that we had come up with and we had so many collaborative projects and ideas whirling around, some completed, some started but unfinished and he left me many dozens of new digital pieces of artwork for any future book covers, so his suicide was well planed, sort of.

Also in the six years since this original autobiography was written and by the power of the internet, John Scott Gobin my old colleague, friend and rock vocalist from the 1970s has been in touch and the blast from the past retired to Spain

in 2001 but has recently returned to live permanently in Merseyside.

Bernie Totten who started working as a forensic photographer trainee in 1977 has always remained a close friend and even at that very short notice made the 500 mile round trip on his motorbike to our wedding and he now lives in East Anglia and became one of the UK's much sought after specialist film and TV camera persons whose work includes amongst many programmes: "Land Girls", "The Coroner", "Father Brown", "Shakespeare and Hathaway", "Sister Boniface "and "Casualty"

On September 2nd 2023 Jim Mackie's mother Beryl died and the funeral details were passed around. This brought with it a host of memories as back in that summer of 1979 it was Beryl's bright orange Volkswagen Beetle that we borrowed to travel down to Knebworth to see Led Zeppelin. I think Beryl herself would have come with us as she was a free spirited and great example of a



The Belgium Crowd Reunion September 2023

Completely together for the first time in 44 years

Left to Right

Jim Mackie, JP, B, Mark Evans (Evo), Pete Smith (Smidge)

bohemian single mum but she was content to hand over the car keys and wave us all off.

It seems by design that we were all destined to meet again as among the many at the Funeral Mass I caught sight of the Belgium gang arriving one by one with Mark travelling the longest distance from Swindon to Merseyside and then I knew that the following wake would allow for a happy reunion under sad circumstances.

Whilst individually we meet up in twos and very occasionally threes this was the first time in 44 years that the complete “Belgian 1979 crowd” were together in thesame room at the same time. It was also an opportunity to take a picture for the first time of us all together after all these years. I passed my camera to Mark’s partner Dana who snapped us and finally captured us side by side. I love the slightly grainy almost monochrome image set against a stark and plain brick wall and that moment in time caught us perfectly.

And so after all these adventures I am firmly back on home ground with Tranmere Rovers who have been promoted and relegated so many times, even spending a brief time falling out of the football league but now they are back and exactly in the same position today as they were when I and the world was younger.

Myself and B also returned to rediscover Belgium, this time by a more relaxing Eurostar and retraced much of our 1979 adventure. The *Belle Epoch* King George V Hotel remains exactly the same and the City of Bruges memorable for that very first date will always be for us a special destination. And here then is a good time to end our story back in that same hotel doorway and lobby in front of a new Flemish railway timetable.
And our return journey this time together … two rebel hearts back to our Northern Skies.

Epilogue And More Music

My long career as a photographer, poet and author has been very rewarding and good to me and allowed me to work closely with many of the worlds greatest stars, celebrities and royalty. In many of my books I have had the privilege of collaborating with some of those great rock and music artists that I went to see in those heady days in Liverpool and London: Hawkwind, Judie Tzuke, Nazareth, Saxon and more recently Kiki Dee.

During the long Covid - 19 lockdowns all book shops and libraries were closed for long periods and access to the written word for many became challenging. During this time I made the decision to legally negotiate exclusive publishing rights back to myself, a process that took several months. But the result is that now I am in a position to make nearly all of my books freely available with the help of teams of understanding publishers and global platforms and libraries from the USA to Japan, Europe to Australia and beyond where

many thousands of my books are read and downloaded every year thereby supporting the growing worldwide free reading initiative .... Enjoy all the Free Reads.

After my 2025 poetry book *"Last Tango Of Clarence Clementine"* was published and inspired by my musical collaborations with those 70's bands and singers plus rediscovering some old songs that I had written throughout those 1970's made me want to continue where I left off and *Moon Spruce* which is now my world of of songwriting and recording and releasing live intimately recored demos has come to life and during 2026 new material will be released in album and extended play formats on a dedicated YouTube channel. The songs are reminiscent of that folk rock era of the late 1960's and early 1970's and the lyrical and poetic style is driven by a passion for storytelling. So take a moment to track them down via the website at the end of the book and help share some Peace, Love and Rock And Roll.

I often wonder what would have happened to the both of us if we had never met in Belgium during that 1979 intoxicating summer of love. Would we somehow in this world of ours met somewhere else, would our paths have crossed in a future time and place.

Way back in 1971 our school class teacher sneaked in his Lindisfarne album *"Fog on The Tyne"* to play to us and many times I am taken back to Rod Clements opening song *"Meet me on the Corner"* and I would like to imagine that at some railway station that girl from another world to mine was trying to work out her connections and I was passing by or passing through on my way to a rock concert or an away Tranmere Rovers game … who knows at Portsmouth or Brighton and Hove Albion and we stumbled into each other by that other rail timetable or perhaps meeting on that corner where a pier meets an esplanade with the sun setting and promenade lights just flickering on and I'd be there as well … blown freely together by the wind.

Hey mister dream seller

Where have you been.

Tell me have you dreams I can see?

I came along, just to bring you this song,

Can you spare one dream for me?

You wont have met me, And you'll soon forget.

So don't mind me tugging at your sleeve.

I'm asking you,

If I can fix a rendezvous,

For your dreams are all I believe.

Meet me on the corner,

When the lights are coming on,

And I'll be there.

I promise I'll be there.

Down the empty streets,

We'll disappear into the dawn,

If you have dreams enough to share

(Lindisfarne: Meet me on the Corner)

Acknowledgements & Appendix

A massive thanks to

The legendary band Hawkwind and their founder member Dave Brock for permission to use the song lines *“Children of The Sun”* from the 1971 album “In Search of Space” as an introduction to the book.

plus

Rod Clements from the folk rock band Lindisfarne who was more than happy for me to use his lyrics *“Meet me on the Corner”* from the 1971 album “Fog on The Tyne” for the epilogue. 1971 was great year full of great LPs

For those about to rock or simply listen to those chapter headings here are the song titles. There are also many songs, solo artists and bands mentioned throughout the autobiography and hopefully there may some fun catching up with some of them as well!

When The World Was Young - Jimmy Page & Robert Plant
From the LP - Walking Into Clarksdale - 1998

I Saw Her Standing There - The Beatles
From the LP - Please Please Me - 1963

No Second Thoughts - Tom Petty & The Heartbreakers
From the LP - You're Gonna Get It - 1978

Born in The 50s - The Police
From the LP - Outlandos d'Amour - 1978

Who Knows Where The Time Goes - Fairport Convention
From the LP - Unhalfbricking - 1969

When The Lights Are Out - Slade
From the LP - Old New Borrowed And Blue - 1974

Born To Be Wild - Steppenwolf
Single from the LP- Steppenwolf - 1968

Rebel Rebel - David Bowie
Single from the LP - Diamond Dogs - 1974

London Calling - The Clash
Single from the LP - London Calling - 1979

Little Bit Of Love - Free
Single from the LP - Free At Last - 1972

Galadriel - Barclay James Harvest
From the LP - Once Again - 1971

Highway Star - Deep Purple
From the LP - Machine Head - 1972

Hurry On Sundown - Hawkwind
Single from the LP - Hawkwind - 1970

Whole Lotta Love - Led Zeppelin
From the LP - Led Zeppelin II - 1969

Do Anything You Wanna Do - Eddie & The Hot Rods
Single from the LP - Life On The Line - 1977

Lofty Skies - Tyrannosaurus Rex
From the LP - Beard of Stars - 1970

I Talk To The Wind - King Crimson
From the LP - In The Court Of The Crimson King - 1969

Sometime World - Wishbone Ash
From the LP - Argus - 1972

Landslide - Fleetwood Mac
From the LP - Fleetwood Mac - 1975

Northern Sky - Nick Drake
From the LP - Bryter Layter - 1971

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All the Music Releases

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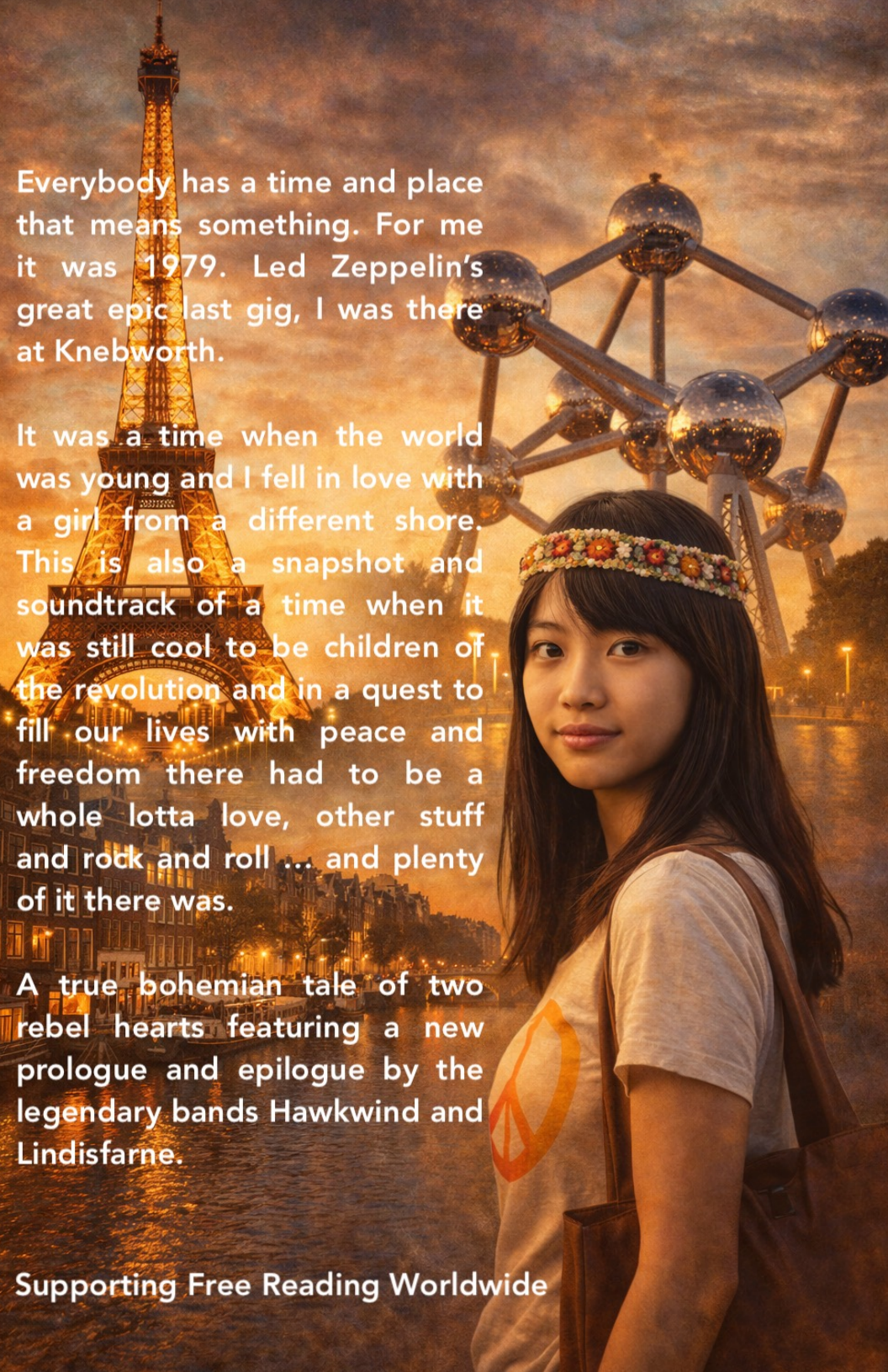
YouTube Channel


Poet, Author,
Photographer,
Songwriter



Everybody has a time and place that means something. For me it was 1979. Led Zeppelin's great epic last gig, I was there at Knebworth.

It was a time when the world was young and I fell in love with a girl from a different shore. This is also a snapshot and soundtrack of a time when it was still cool to be children of the revolution and in a quest to fill our lives with peace and freedom there had to be a whole lotta love, other stuff and rock and roll ... and plenty of it there was.

A true bohemian tale of two rebel hearts featuring a new prologue and epilogue by the legendary bands Hawkwind and Lindisfarne.

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