

## **A Brief Description of the World War Two Diaries of Dr. Harold Elliott (1907- 1973)**

### ***Rebirth: Diary of a Canadian Hospital: May to December 1940.***

The first section of this volume, from 6 May to 4 August, consists overwhelmingly of clippings from handbills and newspapers, photographs, some watercolours on heavy paper, and (occasionally) correspondence. These document war developments and commentary – e.g., Elliott has assembled four caricatures of Hitler by different artists – as well as Elliott’s travels, work, and preparations to ship out for England. This period includes the duration of the Montreal neurologists’ voyage to England (12 July to 1 August) and Elliott has preserved several menus from the Canadian Pacific steamer on which he traveled (?). However, in this first section of the diaries there are very few handwritten entries made by Elliott himself, and most of these are brief and relate to the various insertions. One exception is his first entry, dated 6 May 40, in which he records that he has been “Called up.” Another one-page entry is dated 1 August, beginning “If Hitler saw what we saw last night, he would give up.” This seems to refer to a flying boat that Elliott and his companions saw as they made their approach into Aldershot.

Elliott marks the beginning of the next section on a page containing only the words, “LIFE IN ENGLAND, 5 August 1940”. Here the handwritten entries become slightly more numerous, but the majority of space is still occupied by clippings, photographs, and other materials. These insertions continue to document developments in the ongoing conflicts of World War Two. Elliott’s personal entries describe his activities and travels as well as the demands of military life, and his thoughts of home.

### ***Growing Pains in Warwickshire: January to December, 1941.***

The year (November 1940 – November 1941) that Elliott spent in Warwickshire produced many more handwritten entries than in the previous volume. Entries are especially numerous in late January to March, and July to October, dwindling to almost none in November 1941; they are up to a page in length and are often made several times a week. However, pages sometimes seem to be out of order; dates, which are printed on the journal pages, are not always consecutive.

The entries mostly concern patients under his care at Marston Green; Elliott also makes note of notable persons he has met in Warwickshire, his fellow doctors, and other military personnel. Also documented are Elliott’s brief travels during 1941. The aftermath of a bombing raid on Coventry in April is also detailed.

Newspaper clippings, including maps, continue to document the events of World War Two, as well as commentary including cartoons, verse, and quotations. Also inserted are many photographs of nurses and patients in the hospital, and occasionally photographs of fellow doctors or of military personnel. In addition, there are a number of snapshots of

what may be assumed to be the scenery surrounding the hospital at Marston Green, and of doctors, nurses and others participating in recreational activity.

Dr. Elliott has also inserted some correspondence, as well as paraphernalia of military life, such as marching orders.

***Happy Busy Days in Sussex (Separation): December 1941 to June 1942.***

Elliott makes fairly regular and lengthy (i.e. one full page) entries from December through most of February, but after that their number declines and these handwritten entries are made only sporadically throughout the rest of the volume.

Many snapshots have been pasted in; some of these pictures show patients, nurses and doctors using medical apparatuses and these have been captioned by Elliott. Newspaper clippings concerning developments in the war and containing popular commentary (cartoons, etc.) and “human interest” stories (e.g. an account of an Argentinean father blaming Hitler for his son’s death) are inserted fairly regularly, but some pages are completely blank and others mostly empty. On May 27 is pasted an article written by Dr. Elliott on the “drop-wrist splint.”

There are also some short poems by a Dudley G. Davies, on war themes, which have been typewritten and pasted into the volume. The program for *The Maid of the Mountains*, “a musical comedy,” is bound into the volume. Less correspondence has been inserted into this volume as in the two previous.

***Basingstoke Blues: June 1942 to May 1943.***

This volume contains more newspaper clippings and fewer snapshots than previous volumes. In addition, Elliott seems to have captioned and commented on more of these clippings than previously; e.g., in an article that mentions Gaston Bergery, identified as Vichy Ambassador to Turkey, Elliott has drawn an arrow to his name and commented, “This man should be shot” (July 1942). A picture with caption of an American soldier named Aaron Moses, who took part in the Lille raid, is juxtaposed with an article on the deportation and execution of the Jews in Germany, and Elliott has commented, “We use what the Herr destroys” (October 1942).

Newspaper clippings are a mix of news items related to the war, maps, commentary, caricatures, and verse. There appear to be more caricatures of Adolf Hitler inserted into this volume than in previous volumes.

The diary includes more poems by Dudley G. Davies, and several programs for plays or other performances. Also inserted are Christmas gift tags (on December 25), and the rules for the Prestbury and Upton Golf Club (March 1943). Very little correspondence has been inserted into the diary.

Entries are infrequent throughout the year, with the least entries being made in August, September, December, January and March. In addition, some of the pages appear to be out of order, according to the dates printed at the top.

**NOTE:** *On the first page of Second Front: Vol. II, Elliot has written the following:*

“Before coming back to Canada I left part of the last chapter in England with Mr. Maltby and the final bit on arrival in Canada was to go back for binding.

“The binders bound it wrongly. There are two pages for each day but instead of grouping them, there are two halves – front and back.

“Vol I actually is Volume II. The opening note on the invasion is in the last part of this book.”

*As there are three volumes titled Second Front, and two with volume numbers, this explanation is inconclusive. Following is the most probable order of the three volumes, based on the dates contained within.*

Title printed on spine	Actual title
<i>Second Front</i>	<i>Second Front Vol. I</i>
<i>Second Front Vol. I</i>	<i>Second Front Vol. III</i>
<i>Second Front Vol. II</i>	<i>Second Front Vol. II</i>

***Second Front, Volume I [Actual title]: May 1943 to June 1944.***

Handwritten entries are sparse at the beginning of this volume, but their number increases in August, and entries continue fairly regularly for the duration of the volume, although there are a number of blank pages in February. Insertions consist mostly of newspaper clippings documenting the progress of World War Two, as well as editorial cartoons and other war-related articles.

The diary also contains poetry, military- and hospital-related papers (meeting agendas, etc.), theatre programs, snapshots, and “Instructions to Readers” from the Bodleian Library at Oxford University. In November, Elliott has pasted in several photographs – headshots of servicemen in uniform. However, these have not been labelled.

The page marked August 10, 1943 contains a small ink sketch of soldiers on horseback, located at the top of the page. On 20 August, there is a newspaper article detailing the heroics of Flight-Sergeant A.W.J. Larden, who flew and landed a bomber when the pilot was injured in an attack. Next to this article, Elliott has sketched a brief family tree in pencil showing his relation to Larden.

A possible source of confusion lies in the arrangement of the pages. Pages progress from January 1944 to May 1944, and then start over in January 1944 and proceed once more to May. This may be one of the binding errors referred to in introduction to the next volume, explained in the note above.

***Second Front, Volume II* [Actual title]: June 1944 to January 1945, in three parts (i.e. June through January, repeated three times)**

Postcards of English scenery have been pasted into the front of the diary. The first page contains a letter from the Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force: "Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen of the Allied Expeditionary Force! You are about to embark upon the Great Crusade, toward which we have striven these many months. ..." It is not dated.

There are lengthy entries throughout the volume, with the exception of October (all three parts) in which there are almost no entries. There are also, scattered throughout the volume, seven small sketches done in pencil and watercolour, mostly of soldiers, veterans or war workers, though there is one on January 30 (first part) which is labelled "Counter Girl." Many of these have been signed by Dr. Elliott.

The most common insertions are newspaper clippings featuring maps, cartoons and commentary, and information about the war as it progresses. There is some correspondence. There are a few snapshots in this volume, including four pasted in on August 16 and 17 (third part), one marked "P.O.W. who says he is near 18" and three which depict "Friends of Pfeffers in the Hitler Youth." In the newspaper clippings there are increasing mentions of prisoners of war.

On August 13, in the second part, are pasted two French banknotes.

***Second Front, Volume III* [Actual title]: January to August 1945**

Dr. Elliott has written in the front of this volume, "This is the first six months of 1945 when we burst through the Rhine and into Germany." The latest date in the diary, however, is August 8, and it also covers the Canadians' journey back to Canada.

There is some correspondence from the McGill University Department of Neurology and Neurosurgery, and one letter from Dr. Wilder Penfield in this volume. There are almost no entries in January of this year (possibly because January 1945 was also contained in the previous volume). After this, however, entries are made regularly and are very lengthy, with Elliott's handwriting much smaller, to accommodate almost twice as much writing to a page. There are five pencil and watercolour sketches throughout the volume.

Newspaper clippings continue to document the events of the war; some notable events include Heinrich Himmler's death, and the return of William Joyce (a.k.a. Lord Haw-Haw) to England for trial. May 6 has some clippings detailing the "vileness" of the Nazi

concentration camps. In addition, there is paraphernalia such as tickets, maps and programs from Elliott's travels. This volume contains many photographs, some apparently of friends, as well as more poetry by Dudley G. Davies.

In general the contents of the diary reflect the movement of the Canadians into Germany, with remarks on, for instance, prisoners of war or German workers that Elliott has encountered.

August contains lengthy entries and many snapshots of soldiers on the deck of a boat. Also inserted are a Berthing Card, an Officers' Dining Room card, and menus from the ship. August 8 contains a snapshot of Canadian soldiers disembarking from the boat, and the caption, "And so come the Canadians home."

After this are some loose newspaper clippings, notes, and a ship menu.