

April 1940

Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup>

I rang up Boston and he came round and stayed for lunch. We sent the steam train once — she played with Tinker and sat in the greenhouse.

## Family and Friends

Horrible news! Germany has practically invaded Denmark and is invading Norway by sea. The steiners disorganised and in the night they captured Narvik. Oslo surrendered in the evening and the British evacuated — but we can't know anything more.

**April 1940:** most of the Ryle family were at Glatting, an old farmhouse in West Sussex which was their main home. Anthony had his own 'house' (a habitable shed) in the garden. His elder sisters Nora and Margaret

Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup>

I didn't go to Boston, took him round as if the last day here.

News is that we have lost 3 or + cruisers, 2 or + destroyers, 3 submarines, 10 or more supply ships and 5 transports. We have lost 2 destroyers, and (I wish) one badly damaged. Norwegians holding out on land. ...

John and Martin were about to join the navy, and the research team developing radar, respectively.

Packed after tea, also bought two films which Mommy had given me. News very good.

to Glatting

Thursday 11<sup>th</sup>

Filthy journey. Train started at 9 and we got to Petworth at about 2.15.

News of the sinking of two more of our destroyers. We have now lost HMS Hardy, HMS Hunter, HMS Glowworm and HMS Geurka [Gurkha].

Glatting very well. Andy and Flopsy [rabbits] looking better than for a long time.

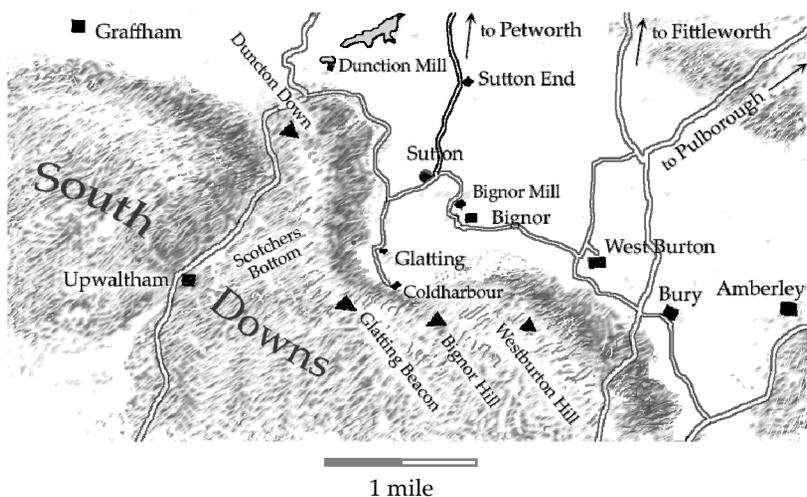
Friday 12<sup>th</sup>

I cooked breakfast in my house — porridge and bacon. Spent most of the morning there, and made the coffee for my lunch. During the morning I spilt paraffin on my sweater, and had a row with Margaret, not a very long one.

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*We went for a walk in the afternoon: through Scotchers Bottom and along towards the willow herb patch [this was in a crater, probably caused by an off-target sea mine; we called it the willow herb patch as this plant had been quick to establish itself, as in London's bomb sites]. Just before we got to the wood saw a stag! I just got in John's binoculars as ... it leaped over a bush about three foot high. He was the most graceful creature I have ever seen. Coming back through the wood we went very quietly, and though I saw no deer, I saw a fox slinking along in the wood. ...*

*Little news, except we have laid minefields in lots of places.*



*Saturday 13<sup>th</sup>*

*... Wonderful news. In Narvik Fjord we sank 7 German destroyers, losing two slightly damaged! ...*

Figures of losses which I quoted were taken from the news, and in time I realised that they were seldom accurate. Historical records show that there were two phases in the Norwegian naval engagements; in the first the British losses included 5 destroyers, in the second 8 German destroyers and two U-boats were sunk at little cost to the British.

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Monday 15<sup>th</sup>

*When I woke up (I was sleeping in my house) it was pouring with rain. It cleared up quite soon. After Margaret had drawn the fungus she found yesterday we went down to Sutton and bought lots of things. There was a hunt, and they were all outside the pub. Even the Armstrongs were there—disgusting. ...*

Fox hunting was not approved of in the family.

Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup>

*... 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant David Nash (Ex-Bombardier) came in time for tea. He is going to stay for a few days. He was all dressed up in his uniform [he had joined up in the ranks and then got a commission].*

*I have a chicken which lays just outside my house. I so far have two of its eggs and I leave one in the nest so that it will go on laying. It is very convenient. ...*

Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup>

*An absolutely marvellous day. I was so warm in my house that I didn't wake up until about 4 mins to eight. We have bombed Trondheim aerodrome for the 8<sup>th</sup> time, and bombarded it from the sea.*

*We all went for a long walk in the morning. I climbed two trees to investigate squirrels' nests. ... Going down the path from the willow herb patch I got the surprise of my life to see a Hawker Hurricane just through the trees! There were 12 or 15 planes altogether, the aerodrome stretched right to Gumber Farm! I had never seen a real fighter before—they are lovely little things! They are making an enormous road there too.*

I later realised that the 'Hurricanes' were plywood dummies intended, I imagine, to draw attacks from the RAF fighter base at Tangmere, a few miles to the south.

*We saw the first swallow ... by the sign post. Mommy came to supper in my house. Soup and omelette, quite successful.*

*B.E.F. [British Expeditionary Force] in Norway.*

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British, French and Polish troops were sent to Norway, a force which, combined with the Norwegian army, outnumbered the Germans, but lacked a clear, unified command. The eventual naval victory made it possible to evacuate them, leaving the Norwegian army with no choice but to surrender.

*Thursday 18<sup>th</sup>*

*David, Nora and I went for a walk. After finding a few pieces of pottery, we walked along the path right at the top of the sheep track—toward Scotchers Bottom. Just before we got out of the wood, we heard a crackling noise on the right of the path (in the big field) and ‘perceived that the vegetation was being devoured by flames’. With horrible war cries we lept up, and proceeded to beat it out. After about ten minutes arduous labour we succeeded in our object. I think it might quite possibly have burnt down the wood. Quite a lot of grass and several bushes were burnt. ...*

*Saturday 20<sup>th</sup>*

*... Margaret, David, his friend (Miss Shepard) and I went to the ‘Roman Rubbish Dump’ [an area in the woods where I had found a lot of bits of Romano-British pottery] and found several pieces of pottery. Then we lay in the sun, except for Margaret who looked for lichen to dye the wool she’s been spinning with. ... I heard the cuckoo for the first time this year.*

## **to Cambridge**

*Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup>*

*[Back to Cambridge for the rest of the holiday] ... We arrived in London at 10.45 and shopped. At 11.15 we had a sandwich and an ice-cream soda on Selfridge’s roof, then we shopped until 12.35, when we went to see Pinocchio. There was a very good film ‘Babes of the World’ showing several young animals, wonderful photography, then Pinocchio. It was wonderful; the music was not so good, but the drawing was much better than Snow White.*