

Pre- and Post-War London

27 Upper Berkeley Street, Portman Square, W1 Bedsitter with Hilary, October 1938–August 1939

They lived in lodgings where, for £1. 5s. 2d. a week (paid for out of the small allowance her parents made her), Barbara had a tiny room at the top of the house. (ALTA)

As you see by my address I am at present living in London. Hilary and I are in rooms together – she is doing a secretarial course and I am writing a new novel. It is such a pleasant life – I don't think I've been so happy since I was a young girl of eighteen in my first year at Oxford! ... It is such a nice change being in London and our rooms are very comfortable and near everywhere – just by Marble Arch and Hyde Park. (AVPE, letter to Elsie Harvey, 31 October 1938)

Now I am back in London, in my minute little room at the top of a lodging house in quite a good district of London – conveniently near all the shops and art galleries and Mayfair – though why I should want to be near there you may well ask. ... We can't cook anything here and there isn't much space to put things. But we are very happy and the people in the house are nice and we are near Marble Arch and Hyde Park and Oxford Street (and the Edgeware Road which is not a very nice district for two young women to wander about in late at night). (AVPE, letter to Henry and Elsie Harvey, 11 May 1939)

To receive a love letter and to be eating honey on a June morning (in a bed-sitting room in London). This was in 1939 – me in Upper Berkeley Street. The letter was from Jay and the honey from Jock (Miel d'Hymette) from Athens. (AVPE, 10 October 1954)



41 York Street, Marylebone, W1 Bedsitter with Hilary, June–November 1945

Hilary had joined the BBC Gramophone Department in 1944 and was now working at Broadcasting House in London and living in lodgings at 41 York Street while her husband was still abroad with the RAF. Barbara was assigned to WRNS Headquarters in Queen Anne's Mansions, Queen's Gate, 'hanging around' as she put it, waiting to be demobilised. She was allowed to live out, so Hilary managed to get her a room in the house in York street as well. Although she describes it as 'a sordid furnished room – rather Katherine Mansfield' it was marvellous for her to escape from the communal living of the WRNS. (ALTA)