

A Preview of
The 70 Courtship Letters of
Ellen Holch to Norman Brooks



NORMAN
DEAREST

Please contact Ian Brooks for a copy of the eBook at ukusaman@gmail.com

On 23 May 1951, a 25-year-old American woman called Ellen Li Holch knocked on the door of a boarding house at 38, Oxford Gardens in London. She had just left her Rye, New York home to spend a six-month sabbatical in the U.K.

Also boarding at No. 38 was a 26-year-old Scotsman from Edinburgh, Norman Brooks, who was in London to further his Chartered Accountancy career. This entailed spending the Monday-to-Friday work week traveling outside London for his employer, a textile manufacturer.

On 8 June 1951, Ellen wrote the first of what eventually would become 70 letters of courtship, covering just one year of her life in post-World War II Britain and the United States from June 1951 to May 1952.

These letters start just two weeks after they met. They have been transcribed in full here and are unedited.

We reveled in learning more about our parents and the start of their extraordinary relationship that endured for almost 50 years.

As their three children, we have enjoyed discovering the first days of their love story and we hope you will too.

NORMAN DEAREST: THE COURTSHIP LETTERS OF ELLEN HOLCH TO NORMAN BROOKS was originally inspired by Ian Brooks.

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Digital book design and layout by Merkintilism.

Preface

On 23 May 1951, a 25-year-old American woman called Ellen Li Holch – our mother – knocked on the door of a boarding house in London, located at 38 Oxford Gardens and managed by a “Mrs. Olson”. She had just arrived to spend a 6-month sabbatical in the U.K. timed to attend a good friend’s wedding a few days earlier.

She was already quite familiar with the U.K. and Europe, having studied to European schools while her Danish father attended to his import/export business in Europe.

When World War II broke out, Ellen and her family returned home to the United States, where she completed a chemistry degree and proceeded to work “weighing oils” in a chemistry laboratory at American Cyanamid in Connecticut. Now Ellen was back in the U.K., on her own.

Also boarding at Number 38 was a 26-year-old Scotsman from Edinburgh, Norman Brooks, who was in London to further his chartered accountancy qualifications. This entailed spending the Monday-through-Friday work week traveling outside London for his employer, Courtaulds Ltd., to their factories in Coventry, Burton-on-Trent, and so on, whilst living at “Number 38,” his base every Friday night to Monday morning.

On 8 June 1951, Ellen wrote the first of what eventually would become 70 letters of courtship, covering one year of her life in post-war Britain and the United States from June 1951 to May 1952.

These letters have been transcribed here and are totally unedited. Unfortunately, only Ellen’s letters survived.

We reveled in learning a little more about our parents and the start of their extraordinary relationship that endured for almost 50 years.

We hope you enjoy this love story as much as we have.

Ian, Gordon, and Alison
2020

Who's Who in This Book

FAMILY OF NORMAN BROOKS

Based in Edinburgh, Scotland

One sibling:

- **Irene:** A primary school teacher living at "number 3."

One dog:

- **Gyp:** Who lived with Norman's sister, Irene.

Often-mentioned friends:

- **Emmy and Web Goodhue:** Their wedding was the reason for Ellen's visit to the U.K.
- **Mary Baker:** Friend at Putney School, London & Ellen's Matron of Honour.
- **Pam Lea:** Friend at Putney High School.
- **Mary Ficker and husband Joe:** Mary was Ellen's good friend from Greenwich High School in Connecticut.
- **John Nichol:** Pam's new boyfriend who worked at Courtaulds Ltd., London with Norman. It was Pam Lea's suggestion that Ellen stay at Mrs. Olson's boarding house.

FAMILY OF ELLEN LI HOLCH

Most live near 60 Mendota Avenue, Rye, New York, U.S.A. where Ellen lived with her parents.

Four siblings:

- **Carl:** Married Rita and lived in Massachusetts with their 2 children.
- **Helga:** Married John, lived initially in the U.S.A. and later in the U.K. They had two children. John's sister was "Aunt Kate."
- **Hunter:** Had medical problems all of his life. He was working in Vermont at the time.
- **Dick:** Ellen's "favourite" brother. They were "Irish twins", born 11 months apart.

PERSONALITIES RESIDING AT

38, OXFORD GARDENS, LONDON

- **Mrs. Olson:** the boarding-house owner.
- **Hubert** better known as "Tweedles": Mrs. O.'s "no-good" boyfriend.
- **Erik Olsen:** a Norwegian man, "attempting to study" in London. He would become Norman's best man.
- **Many other boarders:** Sprouts, Newbold, Cowsill/Cowslip, Daisy-Belle, Makings, Miss Sproule, Mary Bradley, etc.

AVION

W. N. Brooks, Esq.
Daighton House
38 Oxford Gardens
London, W. 10.
England



PAYS DU TOURISME

W. N. Brooks Esq.
38 Oxford Gardens
London, W. 10.
England.



W. N. Brooks, Esq.,
38 Oxford Gardens,
London, W. 10



AIR LETTER



38, Oxford Gardens, near the Portobello Road in West London

VIA AIR MAIL
AIR MAIL
15c
UNITED STATES POSTAGE

... 9 went
who is stay
sweet, 27 and
looking for a job.
she knows herself
- at the moment
hostess so she can
worked in a
gave

Dearest Norman,
It's now ten o'clock
and I thought I'd drop you
another busy week begins
First of all,
story about the Pre
Register - Here's
because of his
could out
the head of
walk "some day"

W.N. Brooks Esq.
38 Oxford Gardens
London, W.10.
England.

60 Mendota Ave
Rye, New York
U.S.A.
November

AIR MAIL

RYE, N.Y.
NOV 12
6-PM
1951



VIA AIR MAIL

W.N. Brooks Esq.
38 Oxford Gardens
London, W.10.
England.

AIR MAIL
NEW YORK
DEC 9
6-PM
1951

W.N. Brooks Esq.
3 House O' Hill Terrace
Edinburgh, 4
Scotland

NEW YORK
U.S.A.
NOV 30
12:30 PM
1951

AIR LETTER



60 Mendota Avenue, Rye, New York in 1952



Norman Brooks (pre-1951) and his younger sister, Irene



Norman's parents, May 1953

S. N. Brooks Esq.
 38 Oxford Gardens
 London, W. 10.
 England.

9 Strathmore Gardens
London, W. 8.
Wednesday night 9:45 PM

Norman dearest,
Only just over twenty-four hours ago I was
yet it seems so much longer than that. It
at a terrific pace and my thought
time. I just can't wait
hope it wasn't too
English "company"
She was talking a
wiches? Are they all
refrain from includ
the sandwiches "in te

PADDINGTON
18 DEC
1952
B

POST
for C

W. N. Brooks Esq.
House o' Hill Ter
4

W. N. Brooks Esq.
House o' Hill Terrace
4





Wedding Day
March 7, 1953

Wedding Reception



Norman and Ellen with best man, Erik Olsen, from 38, Oxford Gardens