

DIARY TO SCOTLAND

28th August to September 1978

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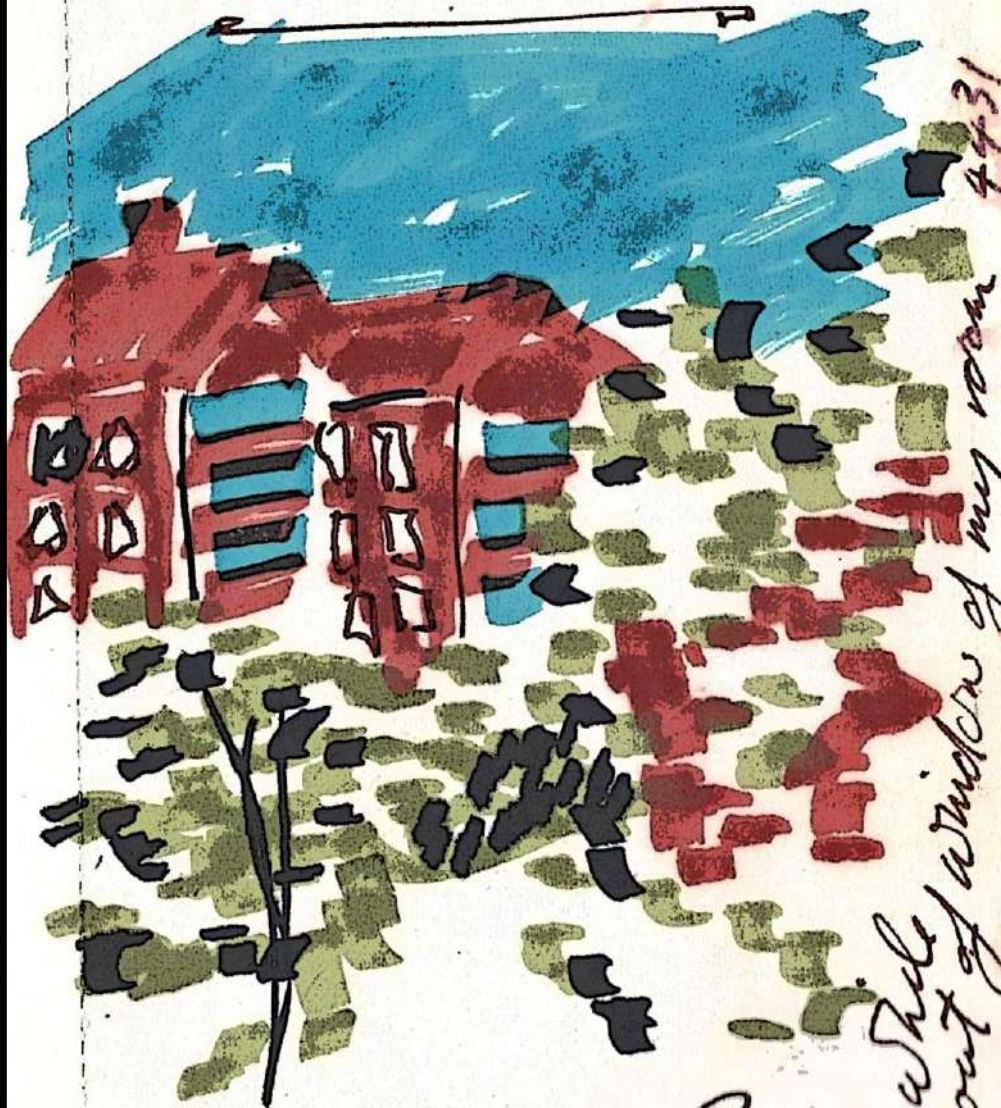
Drawing of student town (below):

This is a commentary for my diary-sketchbook to Scotland dated 28th of August 1978 to September of the same year. Page one notes that the drawings in the diary-sketchbook were done using Pantone pens by Letroset; the subtitle on page one says: "A diary from Norway to England and Scotland, and returning (with Danish boat from Newcastle to Gothenburg)."¹ Page 2 shows a drawing of Sogn Student Town looking out of my room window (room 4431) (28 August 1978).²

¹ The "Diary" is very sparse on information – but the "letter to Siri" clears up some of the 'mystery', as it comments on my purchase of a car - a Triumph TR5 sports car.

² I wasn't a student at the time, but I lived in the student town because it was very cheap accommodation, and you could meet lots of interesting people.

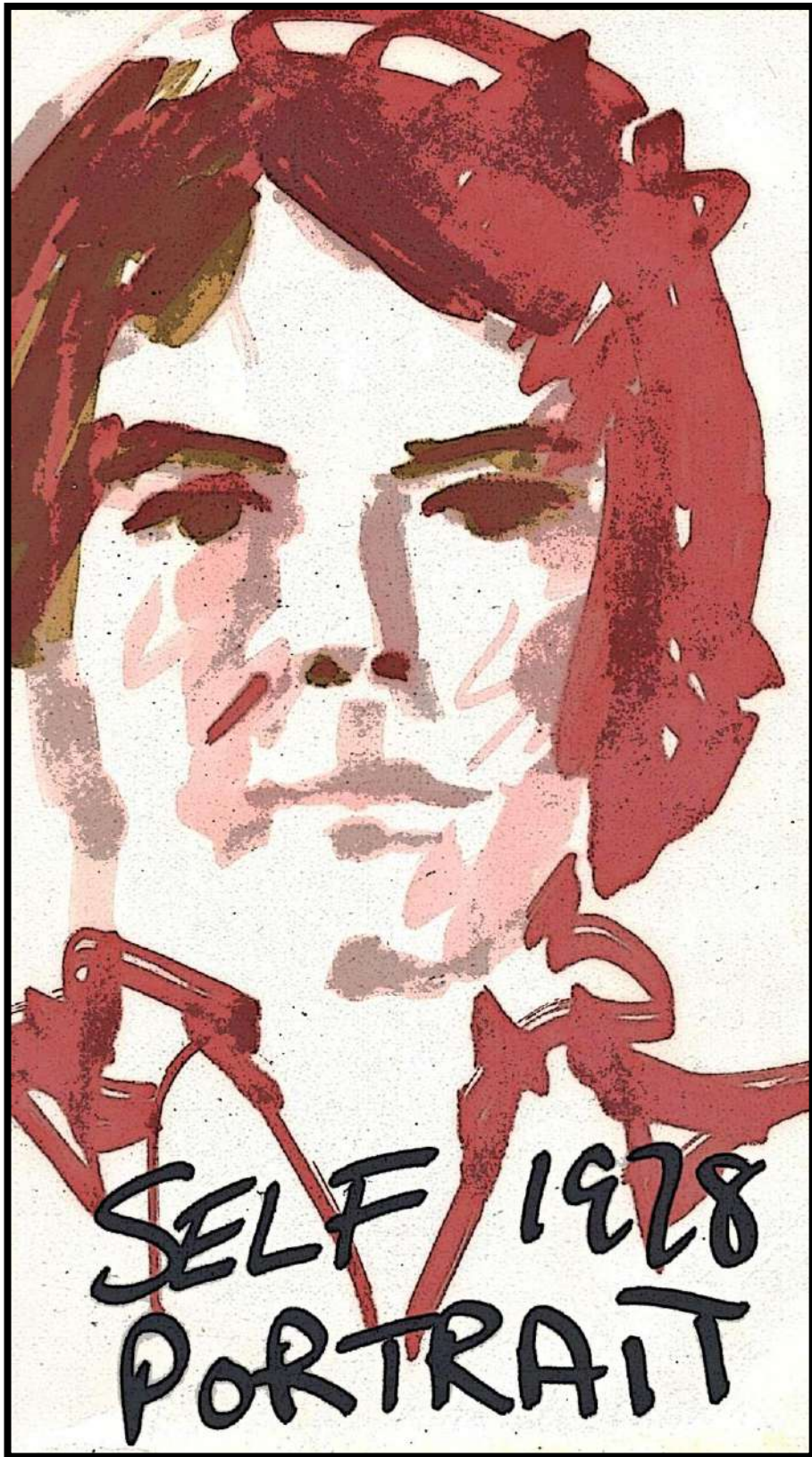
Another note book



4431

Drawn while
looking out of window of my room

Sogn Student Byen
28 August 1978



Friday Sept 8
1978

Dear Siri

I am now travelling towards the highlands of Scotland on a day trip, I have stopped off at a hotel called Kirkhouse Inn in a place called Strathblane which is about fifty miles out of Glasgow.

It never seems to stop raining in the West of Scotland and if it does it usually starts snowing.

My car is running quite well and it does use any oil and not much petrol so it seems I made quite a good buy. It's quite pleasant having a car so long as one uses it as a means of recreation and not to drive to and from work in the traffic queue.

at the moment I am just trying to get away from the masses.

It's a pity you couldn't join me up here but then you have to go back to work as I must in a weeks time.

When I arrived at my brothers I found him living in a caravan as his house has partly burnt down and destroyed all the wiring so there is no electricity now.

I am sleeping in a bed underneath a window in the attic, although it is all very basic I am much more comfortable here than I was in that terrible hotel in London.

Maybe if you decide to take a long holiday in the future we could make a trip to Scotland together and tour Scotland in a car stopping at various bed & breakfasts & hotels as they are very

reasonable up here costing say £14 for a double room in a first class hotel to say £7 in a bed and breakfast, using my brothers cottage as a base. He is now rebuilding both cottages and should be finished in about six months.

I suppose all this is jumping the gun a bit as we have both just finished our respective holidays but all in all I see no reason to let even fantastical ideas

I have just come back from Loch Lomond which was very beautiful and untouched very wild. Well this will be the end to a very short letter but I am quite

tired at the moment I
hope to hear from you soon

Love Jan xxx.

IAN HARKNESS

% BULL

RISBAKKEN 20

OSHO 3.

Comment on the letter to Siri, Friday, September 8th, 1978

It's surprising how your memory can be jogged by looking at old diaries and notes. In other words, I wrote this letter almost a quarter of a century ago, but I still remember quite a few details which I thought I had forgotten, until the letter jogged my memory.

The letter to Siri is dated Friday September the 8th. As far as I can remember, I met Siri on the plane from Oslo to London, and we got chatting. One thing led to another, so we ended up staying in the same hotel, which I comment on in the letter indirectly. I still remember it now; it was one of those terrible London so-called 3-star hotels. I remember it because of the incredibly narrow single bed in a small room, with creaky springs, with a mattress sagging in the middle. In other words, the creaky springs were quite comical. I'll leave the rest up to the reader's imagination.

Buying the TR5

Anyway, I've written the letter to Siri after I had left London, and after I bought the Triumph TR5 sports car (from a student-doctor I think).



Writing letters in diaries

I used to write letters in my diaries and make a carbon copy.

I'm not quite sure how I made a carbon copy of this letter, as I was using a calligraphic fountain pen. In other words, if you want to make a carbon copy you normally have to use a biro; so perhaps I never even sent this letter to Siri? At least I can't remember having further contact with her.

The stories 'behind' the letter

Of course there are many other stories in the letter 'hidden between the lines'. At the time I was working as a bus driver for the company, *Oslo*

Sporveit, in Oslo. This was in the good old days of social democracy, before the rule of the right wingers, such as Thatcher in Britain, and Reagan in the US, and before their implementation of neoliberal policies, which more or less destroyed the working conditions of working people over the next forty years; not least, wages stagnated during this period (Acemoglu & Autor, 2011). In 1978, a bus driver in Oslo could earn the equivalent of 75000 Norwegian kroner in today's (if he/she worked overtime); I remember this specifically, because before traveling to London I had this exact amount, as I intended to buy a sports car in London with one month's wages (in actual fact I had NOK 15000 (c. £1250), but in 1978, the NOK was worth 5 times more than it is today. In other words, my plan was to travel to London and buy a sports car. I remember looking at the prices; I figured for £1000 I could choose between a Triumph TR5 and a Mercedes 230 SL. Of course, stupidly I went for the Triumph as it was more or less the fastest sports car at that time (apart from the Jaguar E-type - which wasn't that more expensive, but cost about £1500, which was beyond my £1000 budget). The 1969 TR5 has a fuel-injected 150 BHP engine; it was often called 'the last of the hairy-chested sportscars'! In reality it could probably accelerate just as fast as the Jaguar E-type - both having 0-60 acceleration times of around 7-8 seconds. Of course today, TR5s and Mercedes 230 SLs are worth £50,000, and more. Taking inflation into account, this represents an increase in value of 5 or 10 times. But then this concerns cars in pristine condition. My TR5 was pretty worn out with 'bubbling rust' despite being 'only' nine years old. British cars during this period were on the whole not well made. Mercedes were mechanically superb, but were also often plagued by rust. Classic car enthusiasts like to fool themselves about the 'rising values' of classic cars. Despite the high prices of some TR5s, a TR6 can be bought today for twice (in real terms) of what I



paid for my TR5 (I think I paid around £900). Not only that – who wants to drive a 50-year old car at 120 mph, when it has 50-year old brakes and suspension – so these valuable old classics are not really usable – they are more like ‘toys’.

Neoliberalism

Getting back to the topic of neoliberalism – as mentioned, as a bus driver in Oslo in 1978, I could make the equivalent of NOK 75 000 a month, whereas, bus drivers in Oslo today earn about half this – NOK 40 000; bus drivers in the UK only earn half this amount again, around NOK 20, 000).³ In other words, a bus driver in the UK today earns about ¼ of what I was earning 40 years ago before the Reaganite/Thatcher plague was unleashed on working people. Without getting bogged down in statistics, it is evident that during the last 40 years there has been considerable GNP growth in Western countries, but a stagnation or reduction in wages. So I will ask a silly question: Where did all the money go? I won't answer this question. The reader can find the answer by doing their own Internet searches, by searching: “The rich get richer and the poor get poorer.”

Return to the content of the letter:

On the first page of the letter it states that I'm now traveling towards the Highlands of Scotland, and that I'm staying at the Kirkhouse Inn in Scotland. In other words, I had already bought the car, and I was on my way to visit my brother and his wife and their three sons in Leadhills, Scotland.

The letter goes on to mention that I was staying in my brother's cottage, and that it was partly burnt down, and that he was in the process of repairing it.

End of the letter

Another point of interest is that at the end of the letter I wrote “Ian Harkness, c/o Bull, Risbakken 20, Oslo 3.” At the time, as mentioned, I

³ <http://www.salaryexplorer.com/salary-survey.php?loc=228&loctype=1&job=226&jobtype=3>

was staying in Sogn Student Town, so I had no postal address. In one way or another, I had met an 'English' family called Bull, or rather, the mother was English and the father Norwegian, and they had three children, two sons and one daughter in their late teens, early twenties (I was about 30 at the time). Anyway they allowed me to use their address so I could pick up my letters there (often letters from creditors!). I would often visit them at around dinner time (get a free meal and have a good chat); but I remember the father of the house, without saying it directly, didn't seem to like this idea of welcoming a 'freeloader', so after a while, I usually had to visit them around the times when they were not eating dinner.

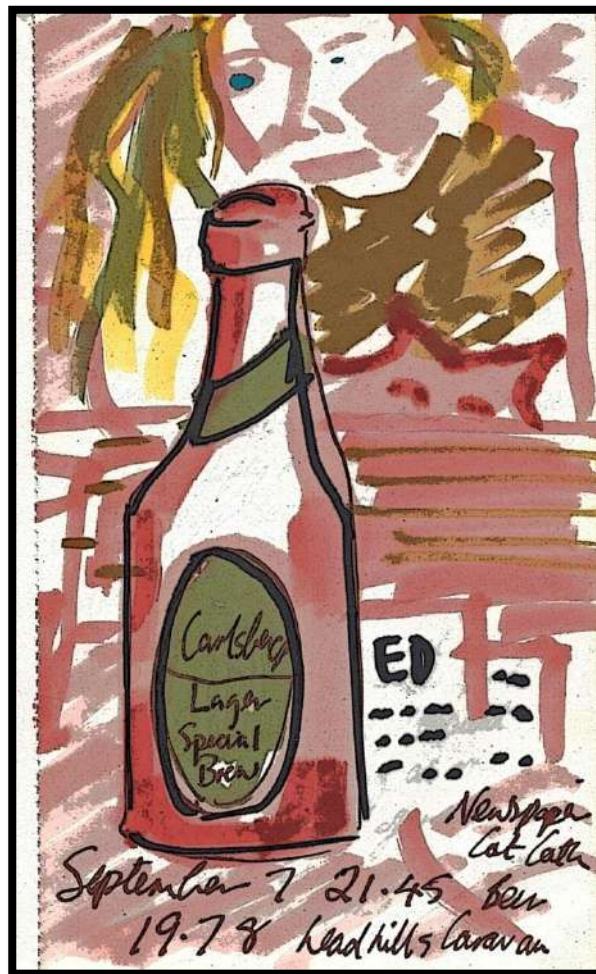




Leadhills: Visiting Stuart and Cath and their three sons

The drawing of the bottle of Carlsberg Special Brew (below)

The drawing of the bottle of Carlsberg Special Brew was done in a caravan in Leadhills, Scotland 7th of September 1978. Sitting opposite me on the other side of the table in the caravan is my sister-in-law Cath with her cat. As far as I can remember, Stuart and Cath were living in a caravan in the yard in front of their cottage, which had caught on fire.⁴



⁴ Various stories have circulated regarding the cause of the fire. One story was that it would have been better if the cottage had burnt down completely, because then they would have received the full insurance amount. But as luck would have it, although the local policeman was away that day on some errand (which he had reported to Stuart), the local fire brigade just happened to be having an exercise that day so were at the scene of the fire pretty quickly, so they were able to extinguish the fire before it totally destroyed the cottage. Leadhills is only a small village in a sparsely populated area of Scotland; in other words, so called public services, such as the police and the fire department are spread thin – so it was just sheer luck (or bad luck) that the fire brigade happened to be passing by that day.



Xander

During the course of a lifetime – at one point in your life, you feel very close to your family, your parents, your brothers, your brother's children and so on. In fact, I visited my brother Stuart in England and Scotland at his various homes on many occasions, and met his children. His eldest son is called Stuart, the next eldest Xander, and the youngest Torquil. The sketch shown here is of Xander when he must have been around seven or eight years old.

My mother, and my brothers, Alexander, Alistair and Gavin have all visited me in Norway over the last fifty years (not Stuart).

Amongst my nephews and nieces, Xander is the only member of the family who has visited me. He was working with IT and computers and had a job to do in Norway (before 2010 I think).

When on holiday with my son Alan around 2010 in our red VW camper, I remember I texted him from Gothenburg with the idea we could visit him and his wife and children in Stockholm. However, for one reason or other the logistics made it difficult, so it never happened.

We gradually lost contact, and I also gradually lost contact with his mother Cath.

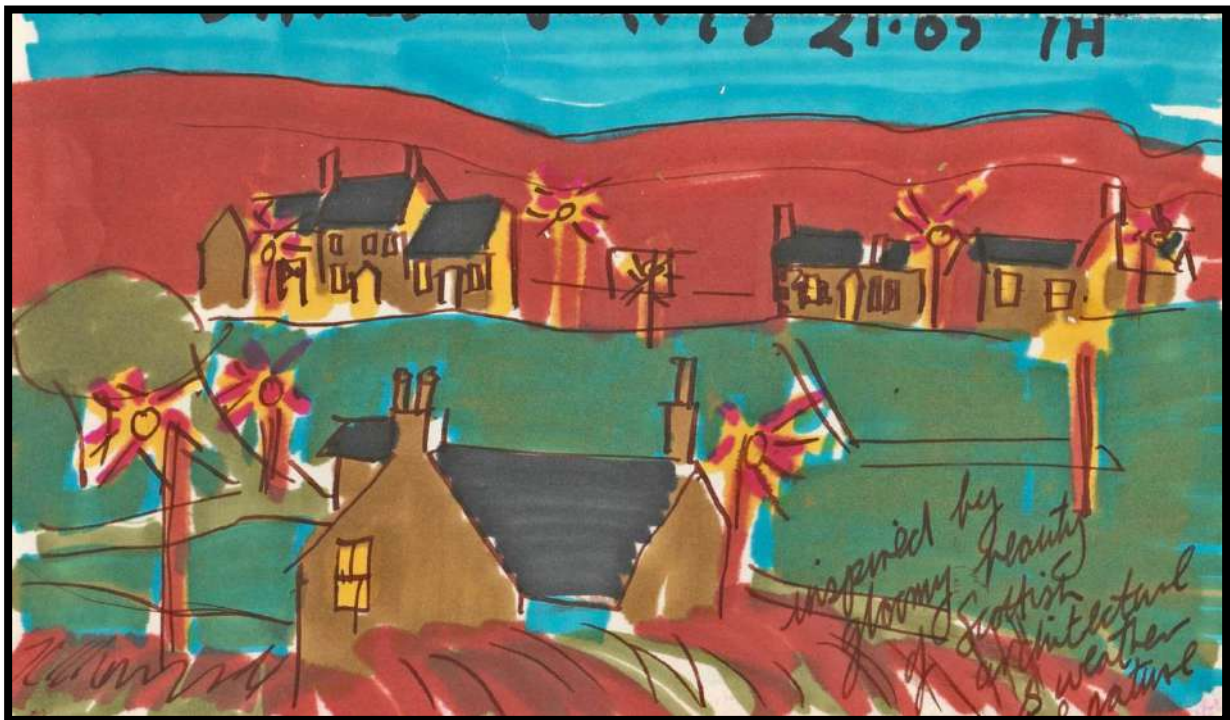
But then, some years later, my brother Gavin informed me that he had died from cancer of the throat. He was still quite young – perhaps in his forties – I'm not sure of his exact age.

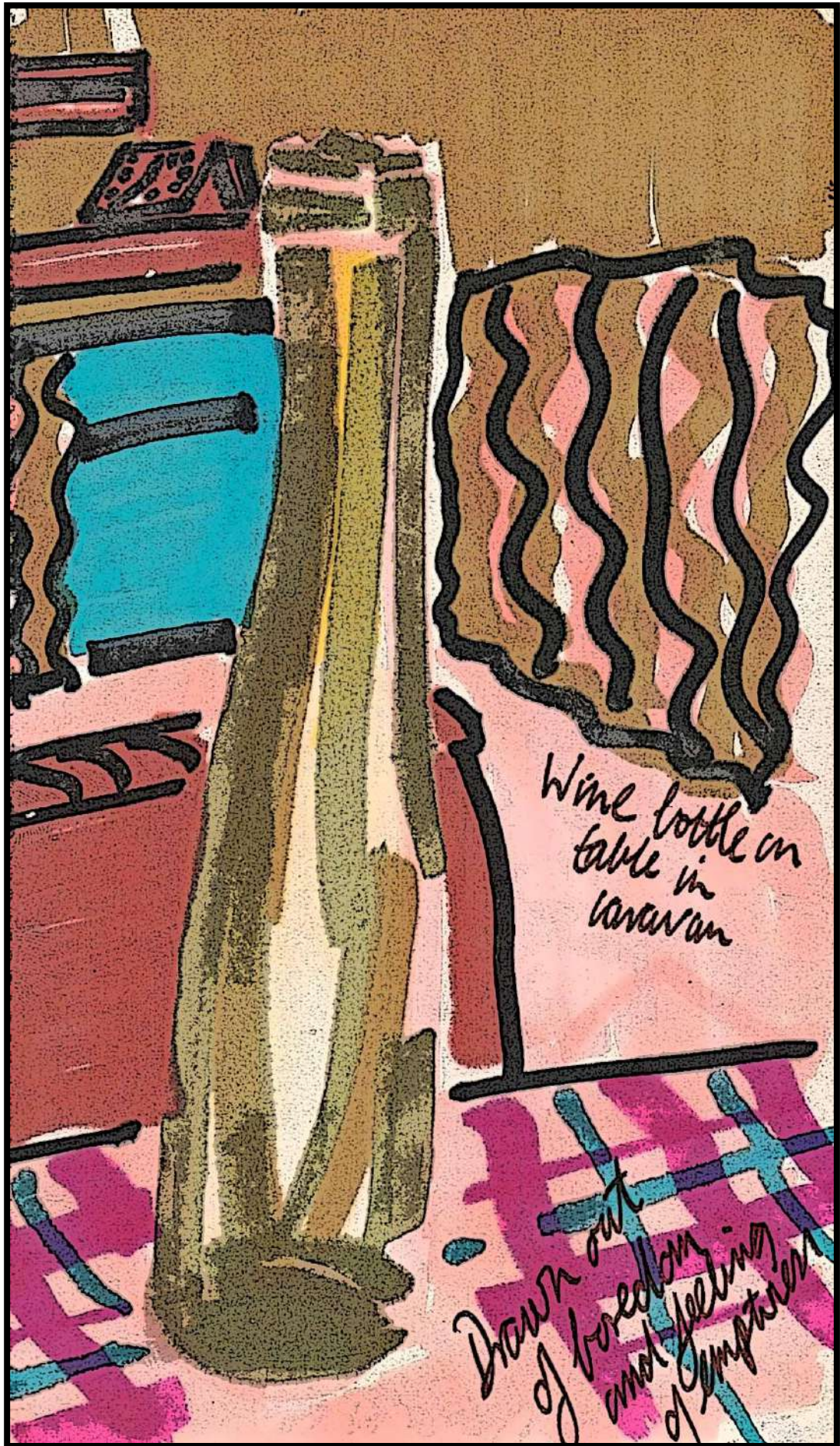
His mother's family seem to have some kind of 'genetic fault', as his aunties had also died from cancer.



Hopetown Place, Leadhills (sketched 8 40 pm, 8 Sept 1978)

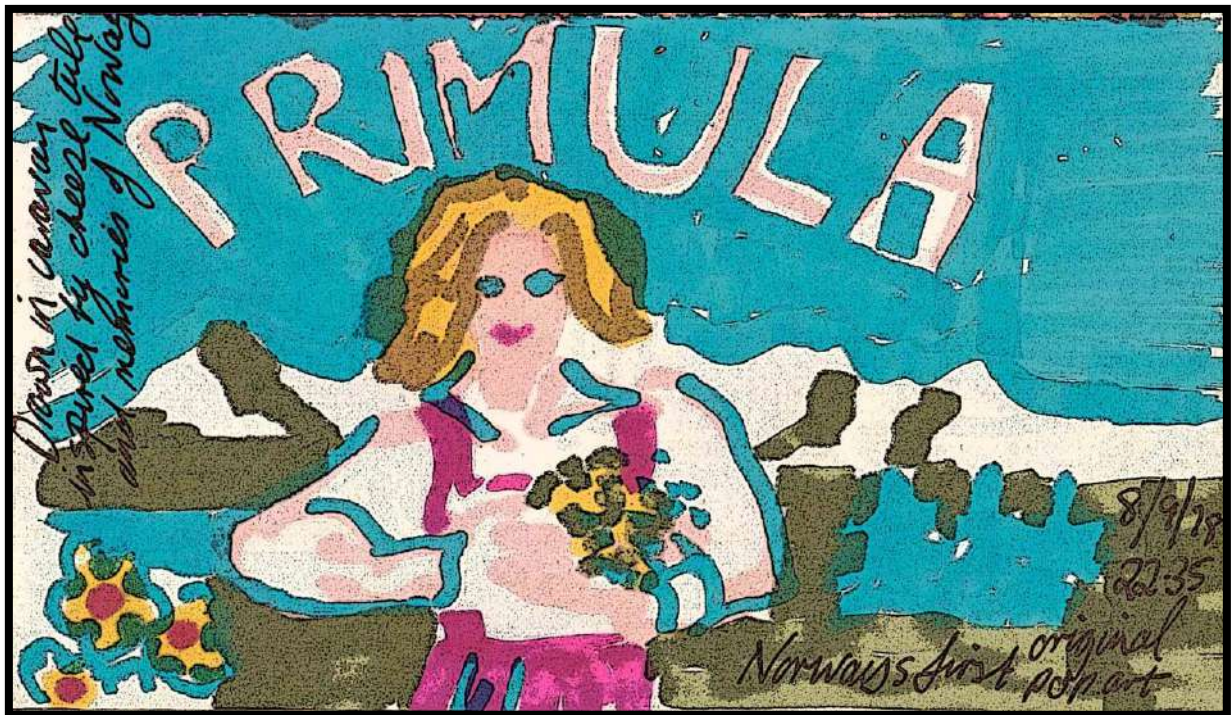
This is Stuart and Cath's cottage in Hopetown Place. The last time I drove past, some ten years ago, it had become derelict.





Wine bottle on
table in
caravan

Drawn out
of boredom
and feeling
of emptiness

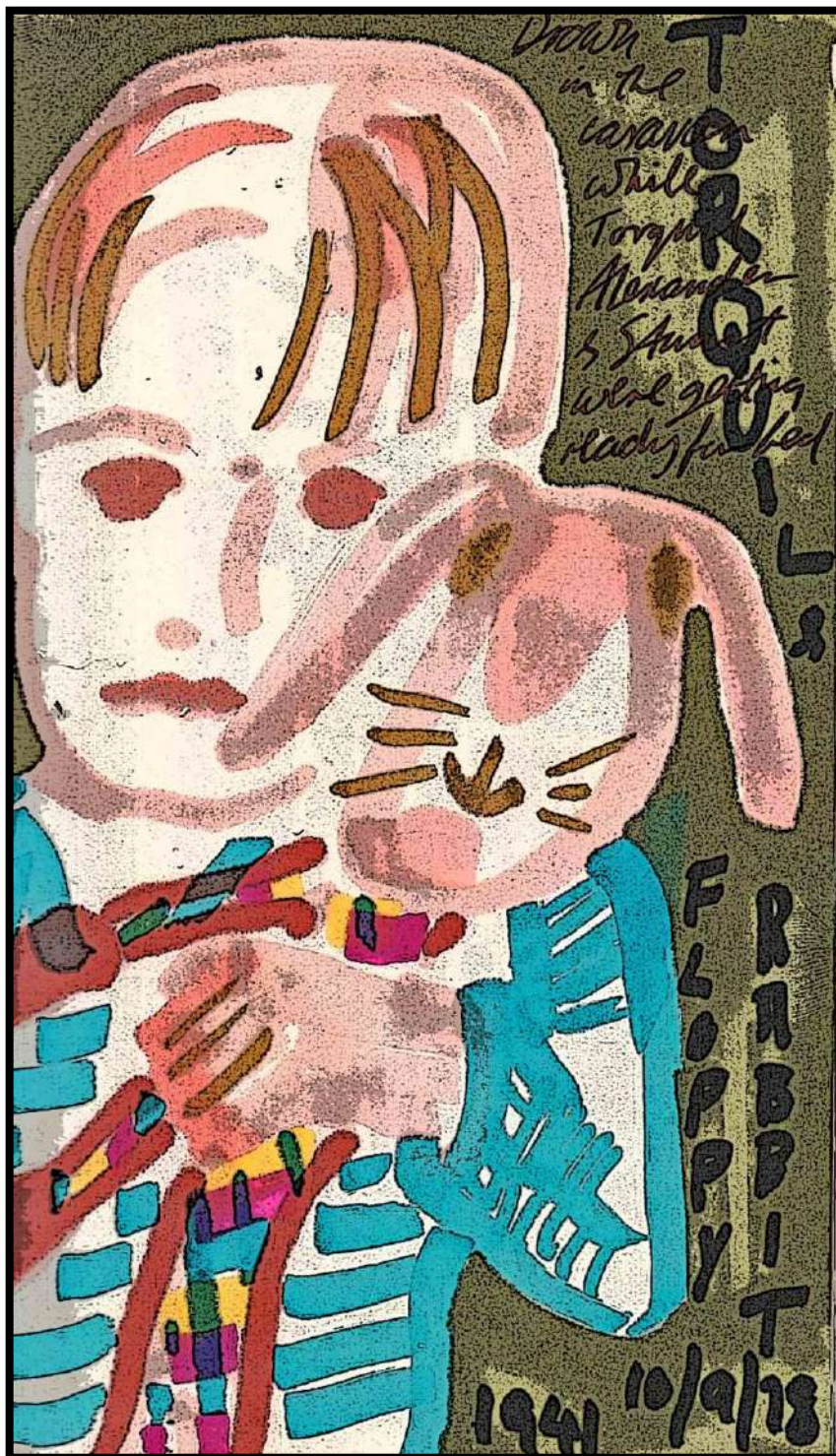


Tube of Primula cheese and 'Solveig'

When I was a boy growing up in England, I can remember Primula cheese spread as it had a nice fresh and salty, strong and smooth taste. Of course, at the time, I didn't know the cheese was produced in Norway; I hardly knew where Norway was. But I was intrigued by the blonde dairymaid with blue eyes staring out at me from the cheese packet; she was holding flowers, and smiling. In the background were snow-decked mountains and pine trees. She was the opposite of my black-haired mother. In my class at school, I was in love with the only blonde girl in the class, Susan Butterfield. When I was eating a sandwich with Norwegian Primula cheese spread, perhaps I made some kind of subconscious wish that when I grew up to be a man I would set out in the world and try and find such a girl; that is, discover the land of the beautiful blonde and



blue-eyed dairymaids who lived in the land of the fir trees and snow-capped mountains! So, like Peer Gynt, in Ibsen's play of the same name, I had this idea in the back of my mind of finding a pure and simple girl – a 'Solveig'!

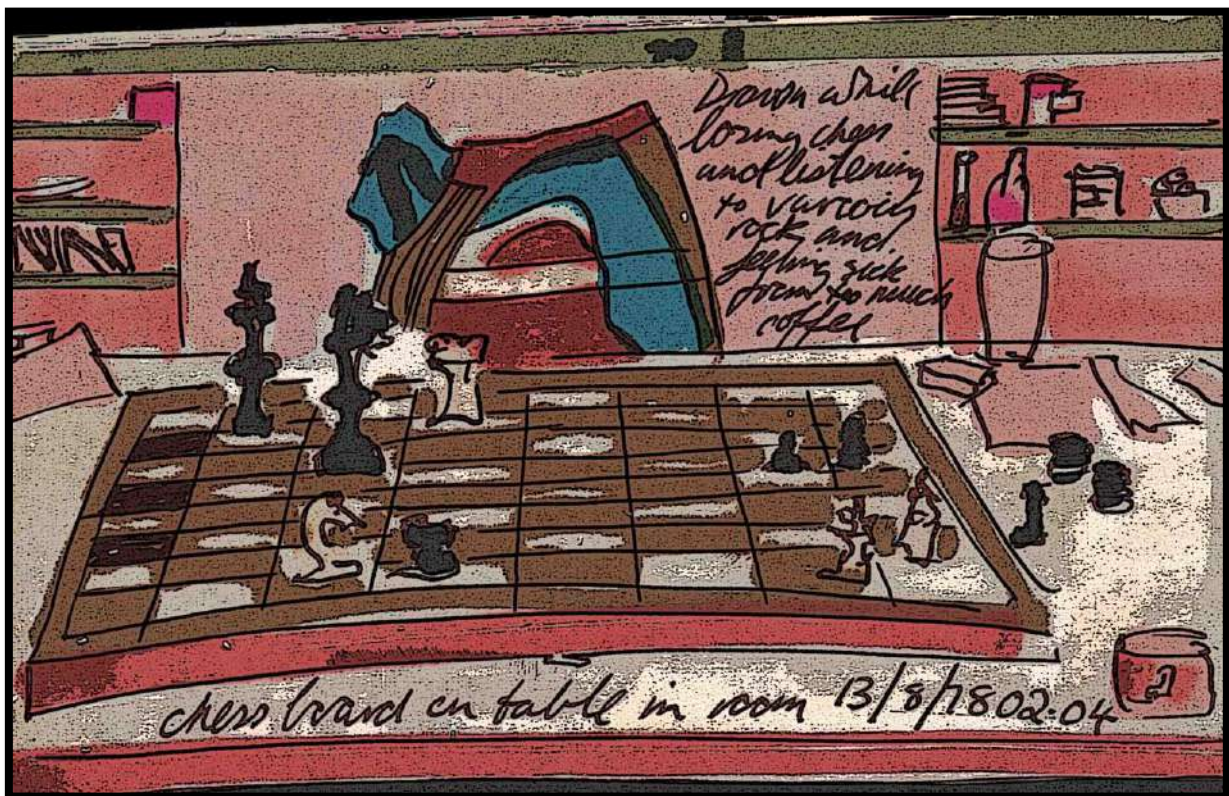


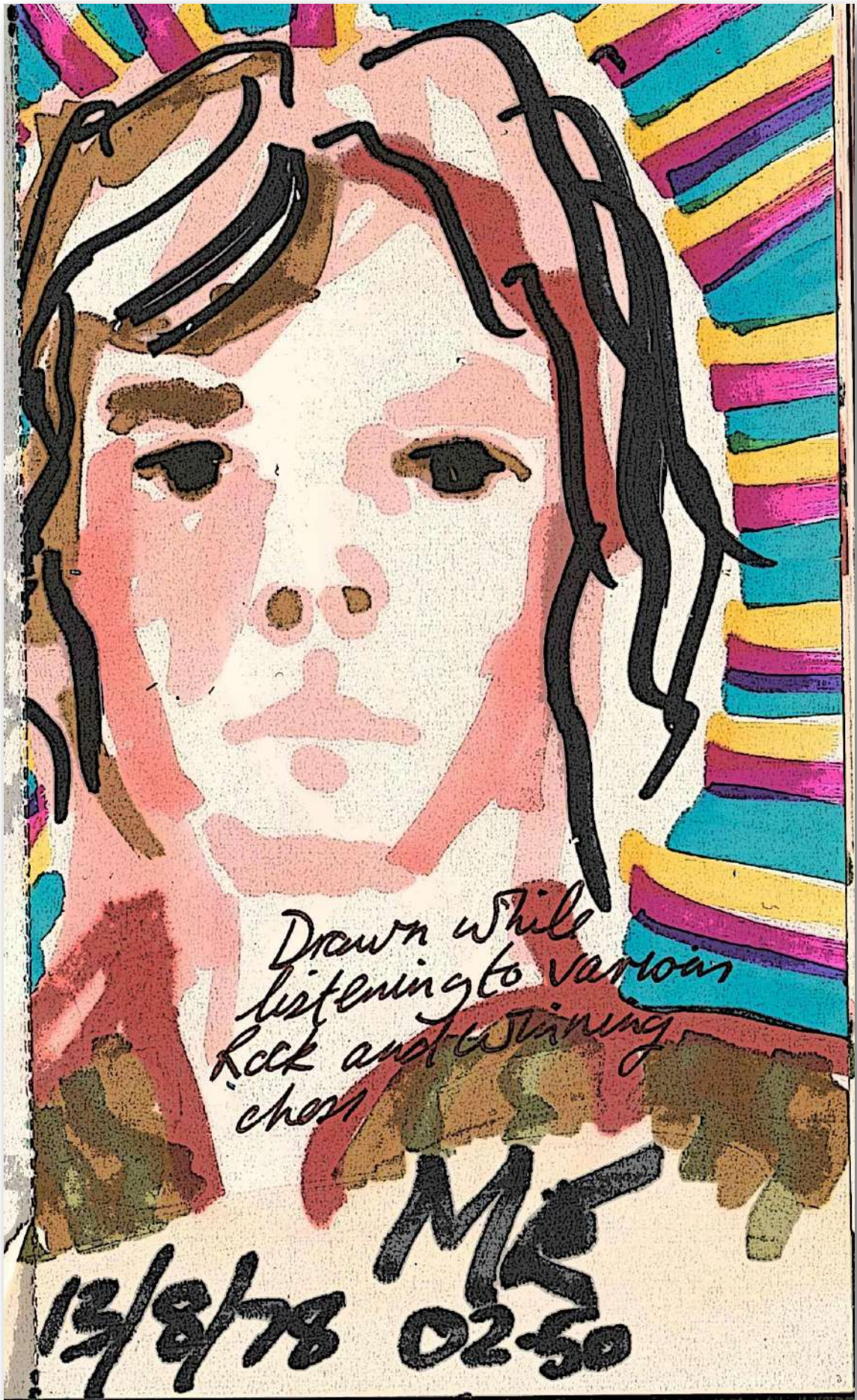
Torquil and Floppy Rabbit

Torquil is Stuart and Cath's youngest son.

Dates in the Diary

The dates in the Diary are quite confusing; the only thing that seems consistent is that the Diary starts off in August 1978 in Oslo, then moves on to September, and ends up back in Norway at the end of September. But the pages seem to be chronologically inconsistent. One explanation might just be that I have written the wrong dates, and that the pages are chronologically consistent.





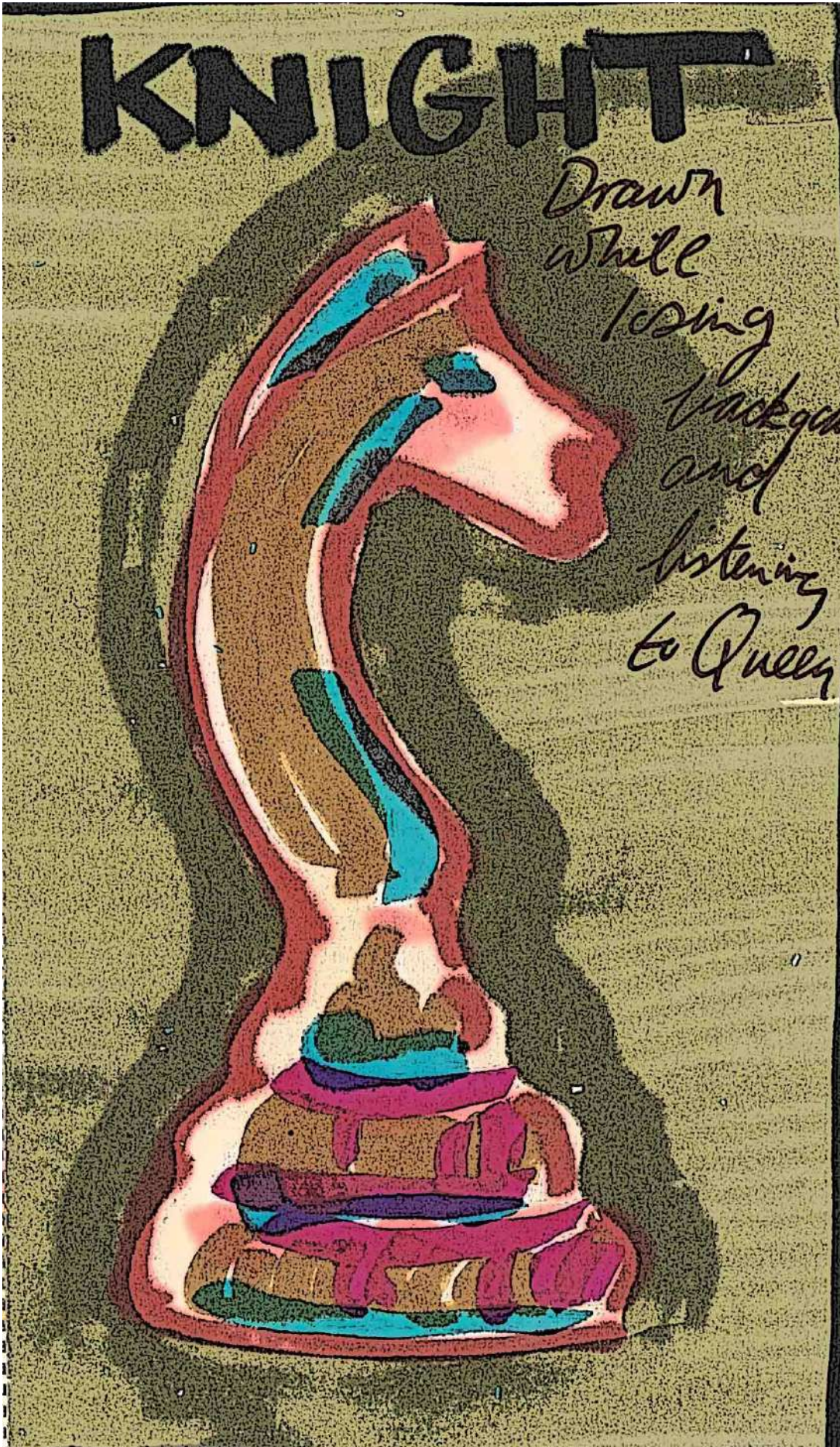
Drawn while
listening to various
Rock and listening
chess

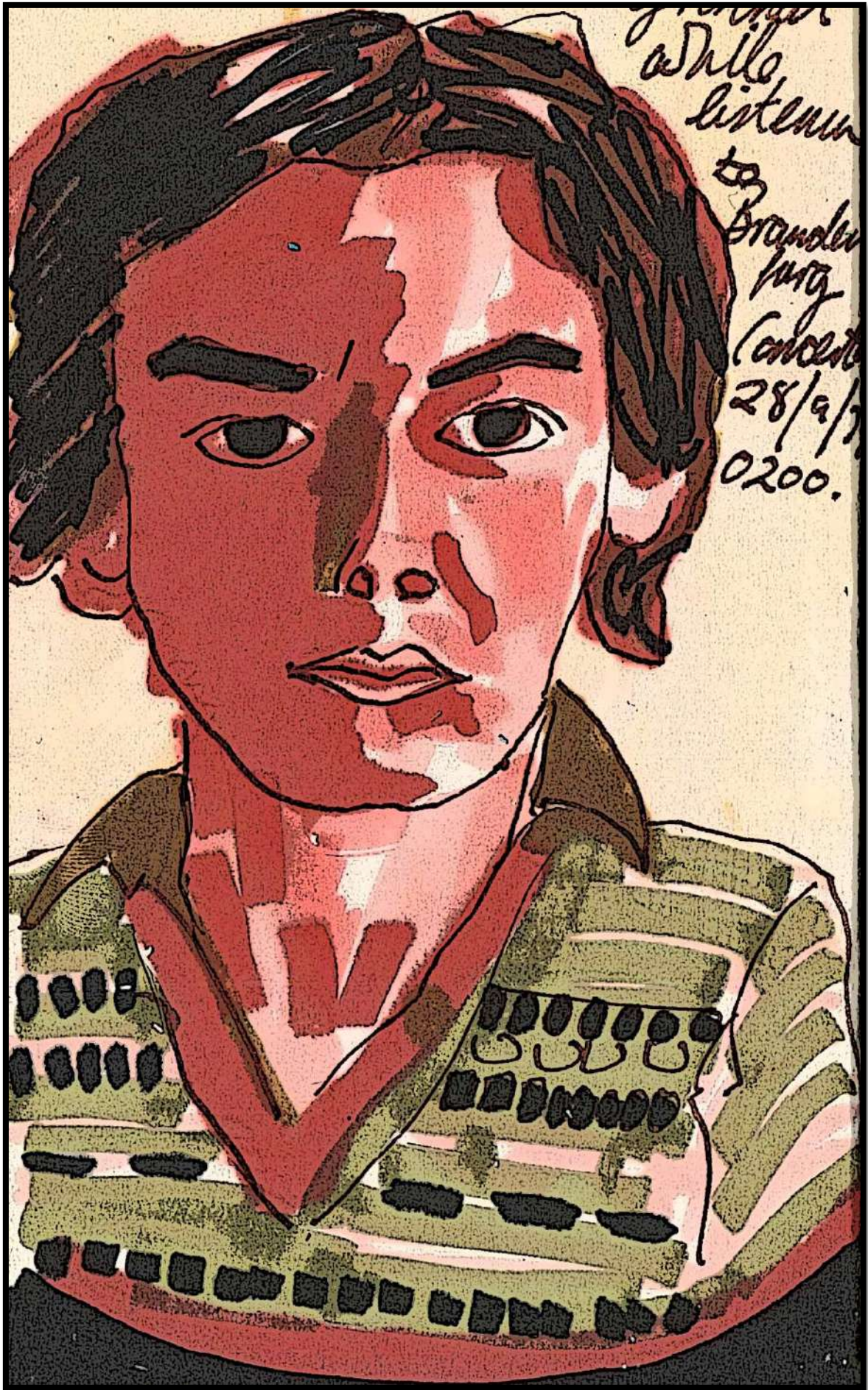
13/8/78

MS
0250

KNIGHT

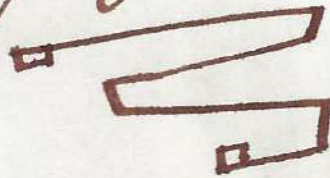
Drawn
while
losing
background
and
listening
to Queen





Mark time

Valid experience as practised
by any living organism
non experience shared by
both the living and the dead
The soldier who was told
to mark time has been
forgotten



Incomprehensible boredom
boat journey from Newcastle
to Göteborg dep 1800 13/9/78
arr 1900 14/9

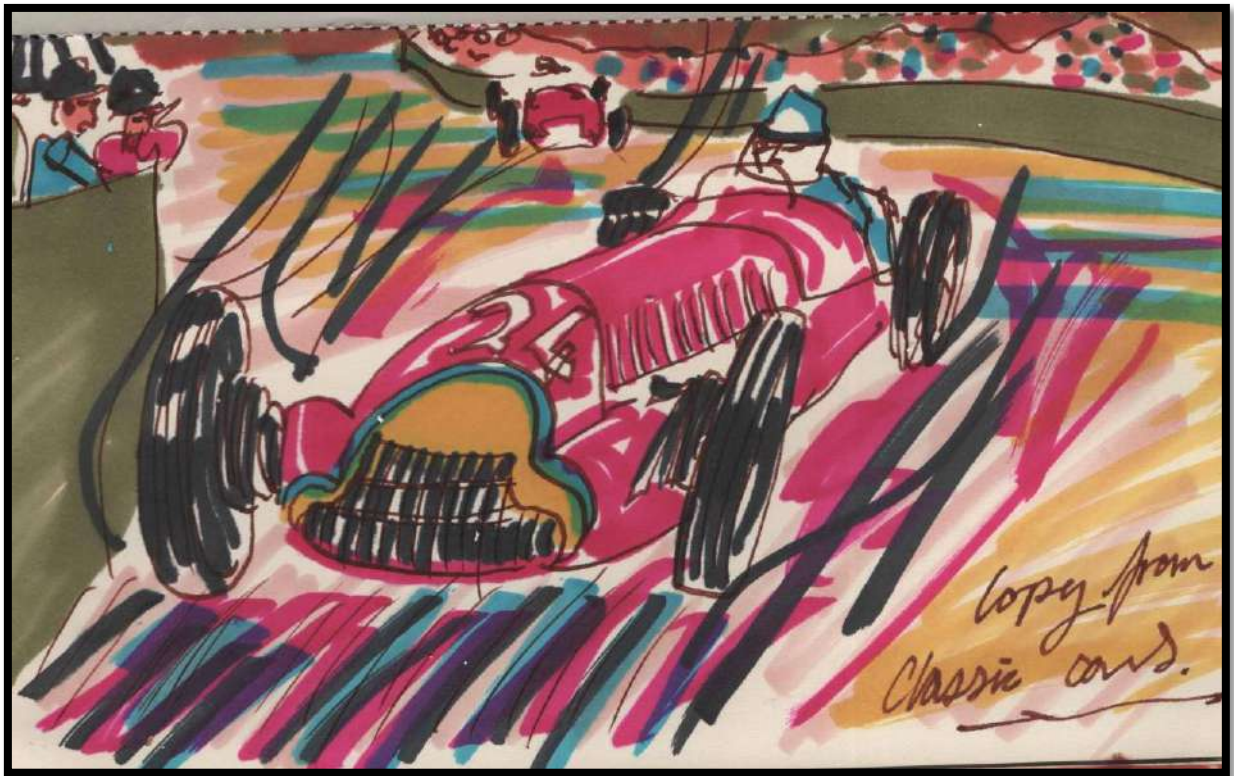
time now 07.27.
33 minutes to breakfast which I
can't really afford.

Too many fish in
the sea
don't bother me.



TR.2.

Drawn on seeking tract
14/9/78 16.27.



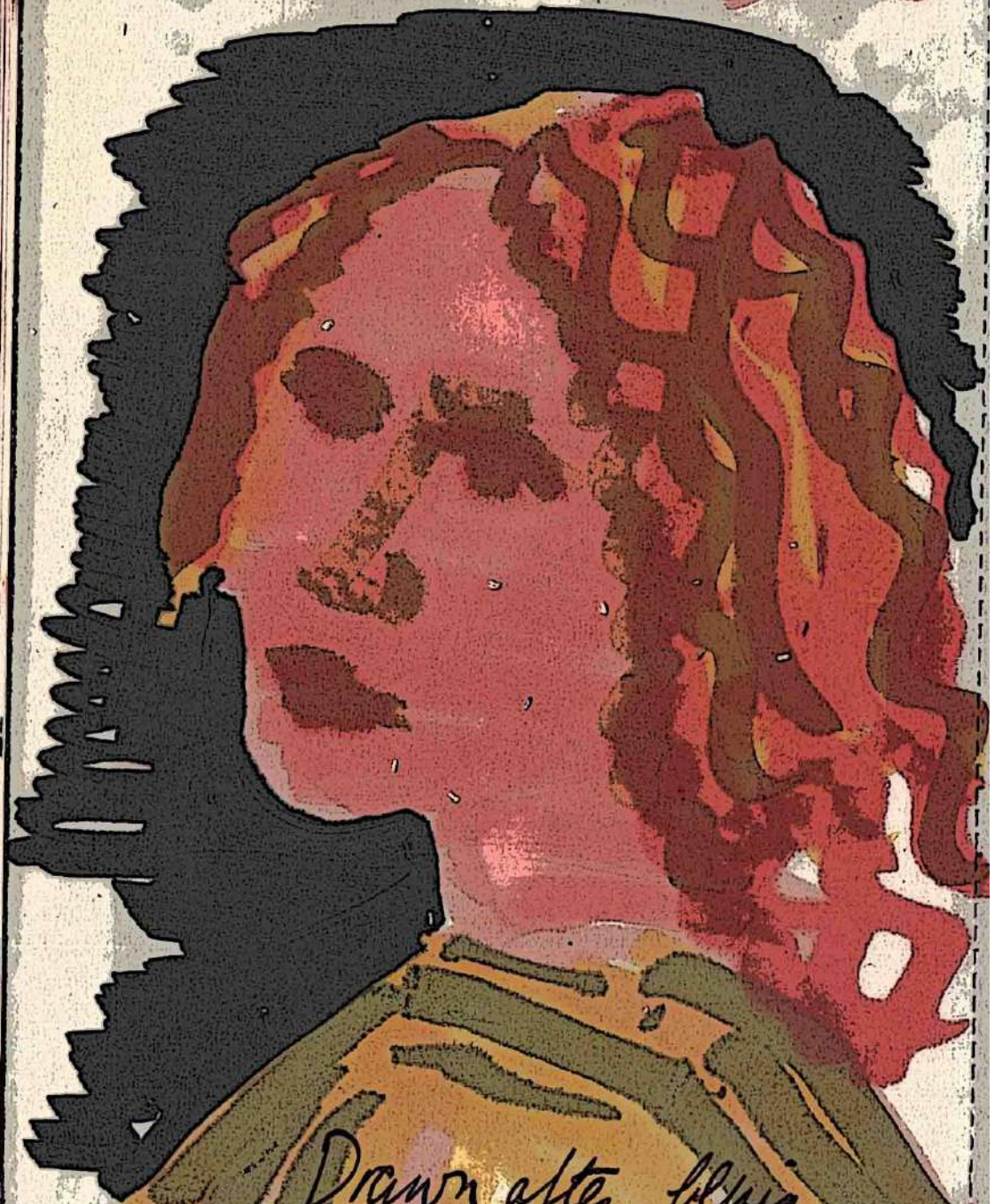
*
Art can be
observing
one environment
drawing being an
exercise in observation *

Coffee is bad for a
gentle stomach
* don't drink coffee. *

{ Denmark's
first pop art
to his hand-drawn }



MODERN ANGEL



Drawn after being
drunk for two nights
and moving into a room Sept
in Haverhill Mass

Comment on Hannah

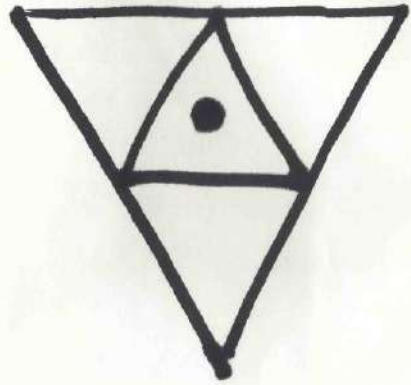
For one reason or another, I couldn't stay anymore in the student room in Sogn Student Town. But one of the other guys in the student flat had a friend called Hannah who lived nearby - in a flat that was in the same block of flats as her parents' flat. She had a vacant room, so I was able to rent a room there for a while.



Today Wednesday the 27th
September #1 1900 my
free day and I am at a loose
end, my car is in the garage
with no brakes and next to no
engine and I'm sitting here
here as broke as when I first
appeared on the scene.

Smoking a cigarette I stole
from Siszel on fetching some
clothes drinking some of Hanne's
tea that has turned lukewarm
and listening to Eric Upton's
handjive for the umpteenth
time. Outside the traffic is
queuing to see Hillstrom
play Linfield. Tomorrow is
pay day, I'll be lucky if I
have enough money to pay
the garage bill.

Sometimes I sit and think
Sometimes I just sit
And count saying

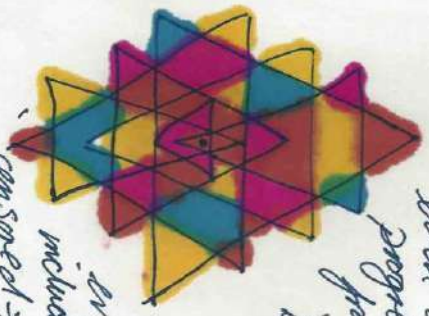


Days drift meaningslessly
 by leaving a vacuum of
 progress.
 A feeling of aimlessness and
 impending defeat difficult to
 lose the habit of
 The actual act of visiting about
 the way one feels being too
 melo-dramatic to
 continue with when it is on this
 water vein.

It seems as if this letter
 that took 3 journalled so 9
 will leave the last chapter
 to posterity and hope
 that if any one happens to
 read this in 2078 or 2178
 or even 3178 or 5178 I
 say 1000 A. that is
 say in the after this during

Monday 26 September 1978

"Hear now the wisdom of yoga,
 path of the Eternal and freedom
 from bondage. No step is
 lost on this path and no
 dangers are feared. And
 even a little
 progress is freedom
 from fear."
 Bhagavad
 Gita.



As with
 everything else
 including a trip
 conserved → yoga is
 a path, an action contradicting
 its own philosophy in so much
 as those who have the energy
 to begin on a path don't
 need to study yoga.

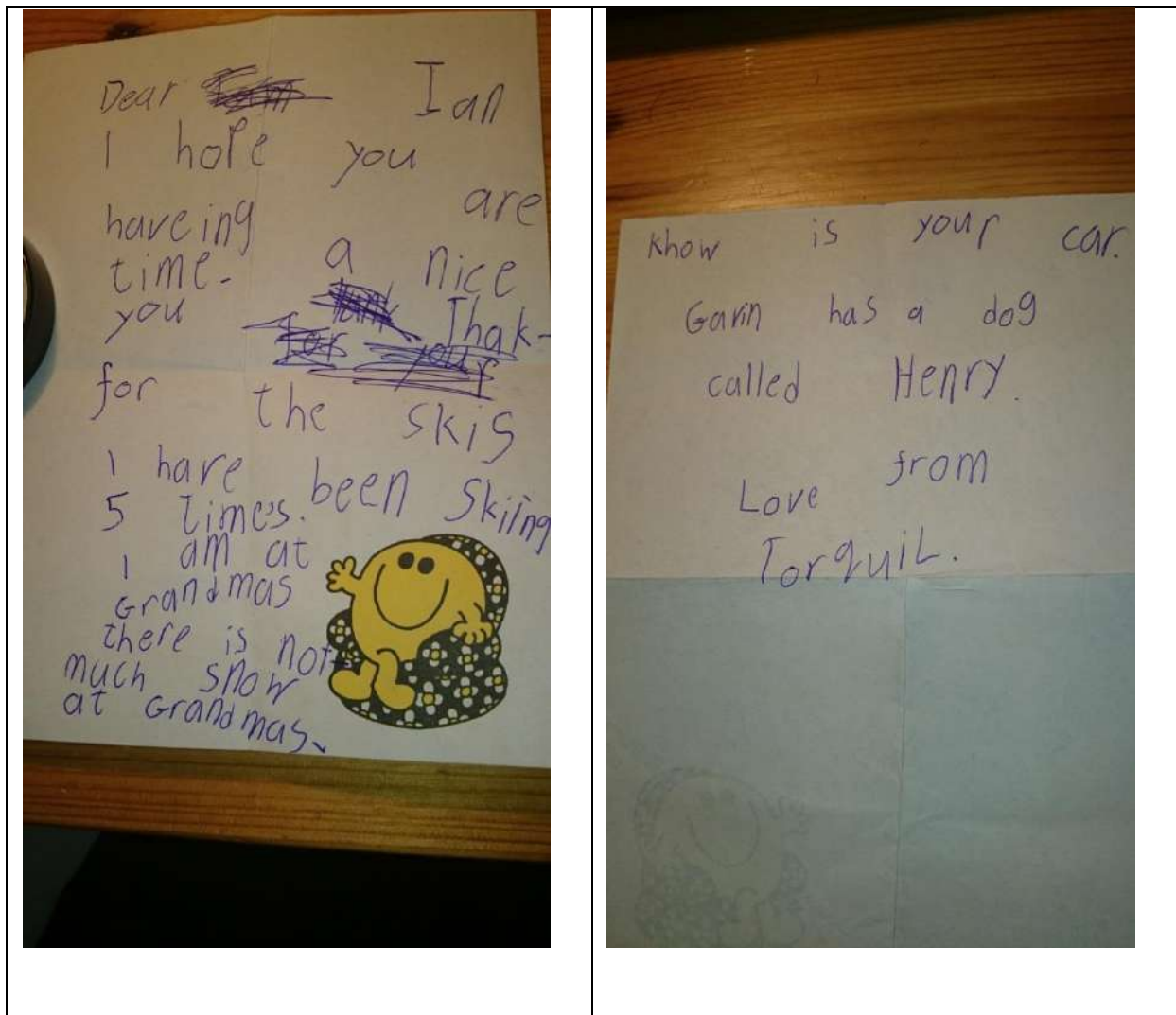
Epilogue

I include some letters here – which were not included in the diary, but just to provide some kind of context.

As mentioned, I was working as a well-paid bus driver in 1978/79, so could also afford to buy relatively expensive pre-Christmas presents (letter dated Nov. 1978) for my nephews; this was perhaps because of having a bad conscience about not being such a ‘good uncle’. When I was a kid, we would always get super presents from Auntie Violet and Uncle Gavin. Anyway, I had bought three pairs of ‘mini skis’ and sent them as a pre-Christmas present (1978), some months after the visit reported in the diary. Their mother, Cath, had probably instructed her youngest son, Torquil, to send a letter of thankyou, which I insert here.

Letter from Torquil November 1978





Of more interest is perhaps the next letter from Torquil dated 12 December 1978

Letter from Torquil 12 December 1978

The letter is comical from a literary point of view – as it provides the view of the ‘naïve narrator’ (I’m not sure how old Torquil was – between six and eight maybe). But the letter is comical in that he describes his father’s re-building of the house in such a matter-of-fact way.



1
Hello Ian are you
Having a nice
time. What have
you been doing.
I have won
a bike. DAD
dug up the floor
with a rik and

2 ~~#~~ shovel and put
a tile ~~there~~ there
and He had to move
everything
have you had many
Snow recently
because we have
a lot dad has pu
new scement on the

3 floor and there is
only planks of wood
to walk a kross
Love from
Torquill

References

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