

## Letters from James Patrick Murray to his wife Betsy dating from 1809

Newport,  
Wednesday,  
Four o'clock,

My ever dearest Betsy,

Thank God I am safely arrived in the Island - I landed at Ryde this morning and have suffered so much both in the boat and the hack chaise, that I find it impossible to come on to Farringford this afternoon- so much as I wish it. I beg therefore you will request Mr Rushworth to let you have the carriage to come over and we will return with you tomorrow. Do pray come - Sir H. and Lady Holmes are both extremely kind and request you will come - I cannot write more; God bless you all, remember me most affectionately to Mr and Mrs Rushworth and all, and believe me ,  
Your truly affectionate husband  
Jas. P Murray

*( This letter was written by JPM on his arrival back in the Isle of Wight from Spain after having been severely wounded and having his arm shattered at the River Douro. It is clearly written in great difficulty with his left hand)*

*The following letters were written prior to receiving orders to embark for the Peninsular War in Spain. Clearly there is much speculation as to where and when they are going and Elizabeth Murray (Betsy) is not far away in Limerick. Her letters do not survive but she seems to want to join him for a time before he leaves.*

Middleton,  
14th February 1809,  
Tuesday two o'clock pm,

My ever dearest Betsy,

Your two letters, No. 1 and No. 2, have just been brought to me; how grateful I feel to everybody that pays you attention - your surmise respecting the battalion on a draft going to the West Indies is not correct, as you will see in the letter which I wrote to you yesterday, that we do not pack our heavy baggage, we are to go in the lightest possible order and camp equipage is to be delivered to us today; I am convinced we are going either to Cadiz or Cueta - General Sherbrooke's expedition is driven into Cork entirely and an officer of the 88th, Mr McCarthy, who belongs to it, came on shore this morning to see his brother, who is in this regiment. He says that the orders were yesterday that we are to join that expedition. The 53rd and 60th to form a brigade by themselves under General Campbell and the 83rd to join the brigade under General Tilson, this of course decides us going immediately. Colonel Wale has gone this morning to Cork, so tonight we shall have more particulars, and I shall of course tell you them all in my letter of tomorrow, you may rely on hearing everything that I know and I hope to God you will endeavour to keep your spirits up. Our separation is dreadful but we must hope that God Almighty has some great blessing in store for us to compensate for it.

I was interrupted here by the arrival of a Dragoon from General Campbell to say he will be here to inspect the Battalion at nine o'clock tomorrow morning; and bringing the forms of the embarkation returns with him- this implies that we shall certainly be off immediately and I have no doubt we shall embark on Friday. However I shall be able, I hope, to learn everything from the General tomorrow before I write. The bustle and hurry that everything is in, serves to keep my mind employed which is a happy thing; Col. Wale leaves everything to me - the regiment is in the highest order and the officers seem a very fine set of young men - a great many new ones have joined; Captain Dunbar is a Scotchman and I think appears to be very fine young man and an excellent officer; he says he is a great friend of Alexander Murray's, Lord Elibank's son; I shall write to your father today, as you wish me, of the paper I left with you- I will send you a copy of the letter. O my dearest Betsy how I missed you all yesterday evening. I came away from the mess at eight o'clock but when I came into my room I was alone and tried to write. I found my spirits too much gone and was obliged to go to bed; Cliff is very attentive. I wish always to be alone but when I am I become so wretched that I must seek society. I long for Wale to return from Cork - he must bring me some news - we get no papers here so we do not know how the world goes on. Poor Zobell was over on his road from Limerick to this, and most shockingly bruised, he cannot come out of his room. Captain Whitfield has been obliged to s\_\_\_\_\_ of the regiment, the Colonel tells me, but he does not say what his offence was. \_\_\_\_\_ for me it has in every respect fortunate I fear we could not have agreed. I like Wale very much I think he is a good-hearted man and if he stays I'm sure we shall be on the best of terms. I have told him I am determined to assist him in everything, He is really liked by the officers and as he says himself, feared by the Young Boys, which keeps them in order.

I must now, my ever dearest Betsy, conclude. God Almighty bless, preserve and protect you, my dear Catherine, James and little Pulteney, and kiss them all a thousand thousand times for me and believe me to be ever your most sincerely and truly affectionate husband,

Ja. P. Murray

Charlesville,  
Friday night,  
10th February,

My ever dearest Betsy,

I did not arrive here until seven o'clock, so of course it was too late to think of going on, especially as they tell me Butterant was the most miserable place and no Inn. This is a miserable enough Inn, but it is good enough for me in my present state of mind. Pray keep up your spirits as well as you are able and recollect that God will protect us both, and we shall be again happy again I hope very soon. They tell me that Mr Anderson has been at Butterant these two days waiting for me - as soon as I have seen the ground I should go on and reach Middleton at night as early as possible. I shall write the moment I have finished my journey.

God knows how I miss you, my dearest Betsy, and my little sweet prattling Catherine and James and pretty Pulteney, kiss them ten thousand times for me, make them continuously talk of me and make Catherine pray for me; tell her she must be a good girl and behave well to you. Write as often as you can and let me know everything about you all, it is the only comfort I can now enjoy - so pray do. Whenever you want anything send either for Dr Shore or Major Colquhoun and I am sure they will pity your distressed situation and do anything they can for you. This latter I shall put under cover to Major Colquhoun, but I think in future it will be better to direct to yourself. Let me know which you advise. God Almighty keep protect and preserve you ,my dearest Betsy, and precious little babes will be in my constant prayer; Believe me to be, My ever Dearest Betsy,

Your truly affectionate,  
And loving husband,  
Ja. P. Murray

Middleton,  
Sunday 19th February 1809,

My ever dearest Betsy,

Your letter of the 15th I received last night by the sergeant, I know from my own situation how wretched and unhappy you must be, but, my dearest Betsy, what can be done? Consider well what I said in my last letter respecting the situation of this place and suppose if you were to leave Limerick, it would take you at least two days to come here, and in that time and the probability is that we shall be embarked. You're arriving here and finding that to be the case, would be dreadful indeed, and the deplorable situation you would be in, without the possibility of any assistance, would most seriously add to our misfortunes. I can assure you I am constantly thinking of you, and what ought to be done, and everything convinces me that you're staying quiet at Limerick is the most prudent and proper plan at present, A few days I am convinced must decide everything. The reports that are constantly flying about here it is no use to attend to and they are so various that it is impossible to attach credibility to any one of them. I have been talking to some sailors and they say that several transports came into the harbour yesterday, and again Captain Goldie has rode over there this morning, and he says he was told her there were no empty transports in the harbour. What are we to believe when such diametrically opposite accounts are told. I'm out of patience, and if we do not get some decisive orders in two days I shall begin to think we are not going abroad Oh what pleasure I shall have in again enjoying the comforts of my beloved family!. But I dare not flatter myself with an immediate hope of that. However till we are actually embarked, chances may turn out favourable to our wishes. I went to Church yesterday that was some little comfort to me, and I prayed for you and my darling children. Colonel Wale has heard from Mrs Wale she got safely over the water. I believe I told you of the duel between Brodie and Pardy. Brodie is I am afraid going on very badly- he is over head and ears in debt and seems to be completely ruined. St George is in the hands of the Civil Power, he has got into some very serious scrapes but nobody knows what it is. Nothing can possibly exceed the irregularity of the post here, I'm sure you write constantly, and I

cannot conceive why I don't receive your letters. In my letter of yesterday I directed to go by Fermoy, as I find it is a more direct post, and all my other letters have gone by Cork. I wish you would therefore put on your letters 'by way of Fermoy'. This cannot go today as there is no post, so I shall conclude now and finish tomorrow. God Almighty bless you and the children.

Monday morning,  
11 o'clock 1809.

Your dear letters of the 16th and 17th I have just received- what can make them so long coming 50 miles; I have nothing new since last night, we are all in the same uncertainty, the report is now that we are not to join Shellbrooke's expedition, but that they are to sail immediately and that we are to go as was first mentioned under Beresford, one report is to Cueta, and the other is to South America, the former destination I believe to be the true one, as if we were destined for South America we should receive more than two months pay in advance. I really sometimes think that this is mere speculation that all these rumours of expeditions will end in the peace. I consider everything as so uncertain at present, that it is impossible to conjecture what will be done, it is impossible for us to remain in this place, we must either go on board ship or change to some other quarter. My poor grey is still lame, but Cliff takes great care of him. Your account of Mrs Saunders does not surprise me, it is horribly disgusting to see a young man and old women make themselves so truly ridiculous. I would like you to cultivate the acquaintance of Mrs Hall for she really appeared to be inclined to be very attentive to you and the feeling manner in which she behaved when I wished her goodbye in the street the day before I went, has made me form a good opinion of her. There are now 52 officers with this Battalion. Mills's affords me a great deal of diversion- he seems to be determined not to risk his precious life in the Patriotic Cause, and has actually hinted very broadly that he should like to be employed in the recruiting service, for he is convinced there is no expedition. He is the laughing stock of all the boys. I, of course, never joke with him, but I have began, as I am determined to go on, to be very strict and joke with nobody. I am very intimate with Col. Wale and like him more and more every day. Nothing has been heard of Lloyd yet, it is a most curious story. Mrs Lloyd is still with Lady Harrington, it is said she is a relation of hers, and Lloyd's popularity in the regiment was by no means so great as it used to be. I fancy he gave himself great airs lately. I cannot help thinking that he was considerably embarrassed and that that he destroyed himself. don't tell this to anybody. I enclose the letter I received through Captain Colquhoun; Do you ever use Major Lyon. General Lee, I am sure will be civil to you. I suppose he will not return to Limerick. I hope by tomorrow I will know something I cannot bear this dreadful suspense Wale has gone again to Cork to try if he can find out anything. I would have gone but there is an order that a the field officer must be constantly with the regiment. He comes back to dinner. If he brings no news I will go tomorrow morning and try my luck and write to you from the there. I will see General Floyd and colonel Dillon and find out if they know anything about us - kiss the dear children ten thousand times for me- God Almighty bless and protect you and them always- keep up your spirits and pray that we may soon meet. I cannot but flatter myself with the hopes that we shall very very soon. God bless you- believe me to be,

My ever dearest Betsy,

Ever your most sincerely,  
Affectionate and loving husband,

Ja. P. Murray.

*On the face of the envelope....*

After I had sealed the letter, a report reached me that the 30th 48th and 70<sup>th</sup>  
are stopped. I do not know whether it is true or not -

JPM.