*Extract from a letter from Iona’s Great Aunt Dolly to her brother Bob (Iona’s Grandad) at the end of the Second World War. Grandad Bob was called up to the Army when he was about 19. The house the family rented in London was bombed during the ‘Blitz’.*

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7/5/45

Dear Bob,

What a day it’s been waiting for the announcement today that it’s over, but it hasn’t come yet. People are still pretty calm but you can see they are simply bursting to cheer.

Flags are out on nearly all buildings and shops. People have little flags, rosettes and everything else that is red, white and blue pinned on their coats. I don’t think there were ever such times as there will be when the end is announced.

In my letter last week I said that wouldn’t it be nice if it was over by the time you got that letter. You may have it before it is, but I don’t think there is any doubt of it not being over by the time you get this one do you?

You could see people queuing for bread everywhere – we were told to get in extra bread because the shops will be shutting.... Everything is being got ready for flood-lighting and speeches, bells are going to ring to mark the finish of the war in Europe. All we are waiting for now is the word.

It doesn’t seem really possible does it Bob? I think that’s what has kept people so calm up to now because they can hardly believe it. I don’t know whether I will laugh or cry when it comes, but I think most people will do a bit of each don’t you? But the air is sure tense with excitement.

I said to Dad that I couldn’t help wishing that we were down the other end [*referring to home that was bombed*] to hear all this good news. But Dad said that we are lucky to be here to hear it. Dad also said that perhaps that was the price we paid for victory but that a lot of people have paid a lot dearer.

It’s turned out lovely today after the bad weather we have been having. It’s warm and the sun is shining. I think even the weather is going to be kind to us for victory.

Well Bob, it’s come. They have just stopped the performance of gramophone records on the wireless for a news flash. It’s half past seven and it’s on the forces. I wonder if you heard it? Tomorrow is V-Day. Mr Churchill will speak tomorrow afternoon at 3 o’clock and the King tomorrow night at 9 o’clock.

Mum is here and we just all looked at each other. Mum said, “Well, I won’t have to go to work tomorrow then will I?!”

Dad said nothing. I don’t think he could – he was too full. I just put my head down and carried on with my writing though it’s a blur. One or two tears did fall on the page but nothing to smudge.

It’s funny isn’t it the things you think you will say and do when it’s over, but when it comes to it you either can’t say anything or it’s something altogether different.

It sounds quiet in the streets but a lot of people won’t have heard it yet. No bells have rung so all that is to come tomorrow when everybody will know.

We told Bill [*about 5 years old*] so he said “Will all the soldiers come home tomorrow?” So we told him no not yet. I guess we still have a lot of explaining to do.

Everything you said is true Bob. What a long road from Stalingrad to Berlin and El Alamein to Berlin. This last few weeks things have happened so quickly that it almost leaves you breathless doesn’t it?   
I keep saying it to myself Bob and just can’t believe it’s true. I expect we will all realize it before the week is out.

I think that’s about all for this week. Dad and Bill are doing a dance so I can’t be left out! I am going to do one after. Billy sends you a great big kiss. Take care of yourself.

With much love from Dolly and all of us at home xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx