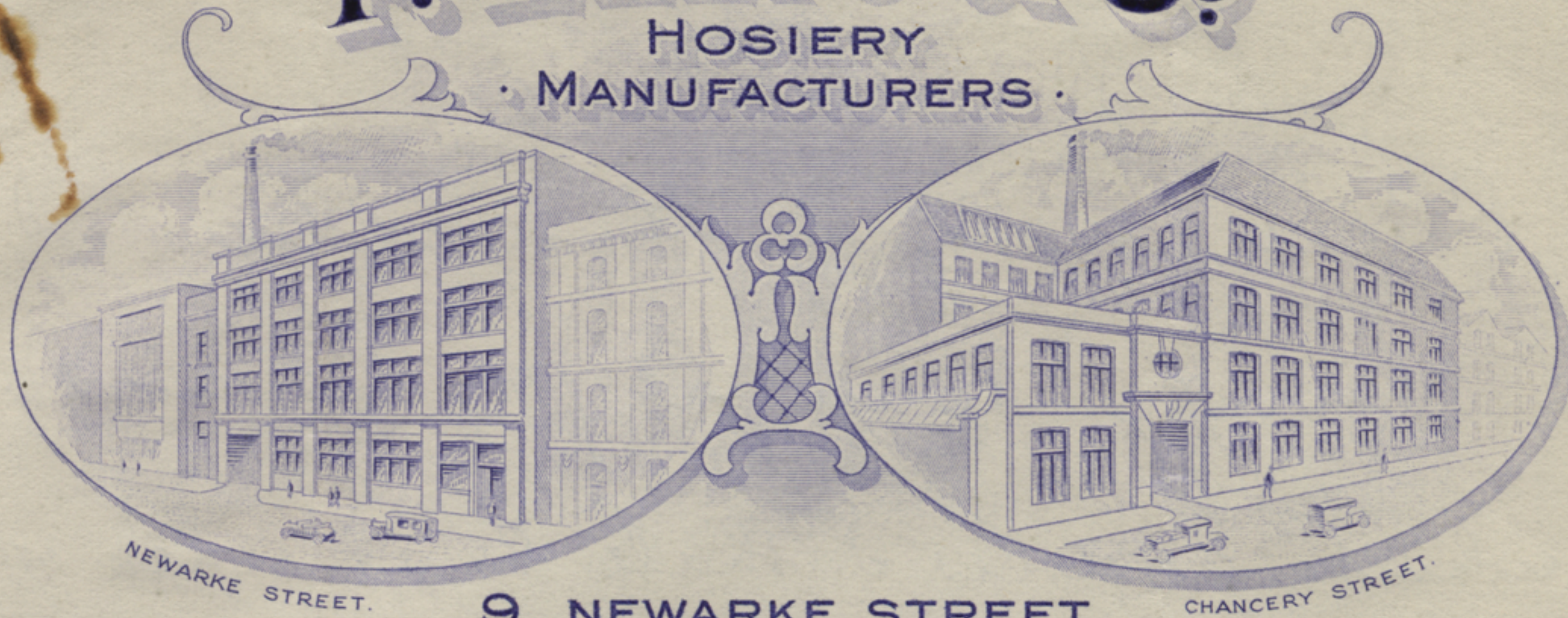


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9, NEWARKE STREET,
LEICESTER,

Feb 19

1947

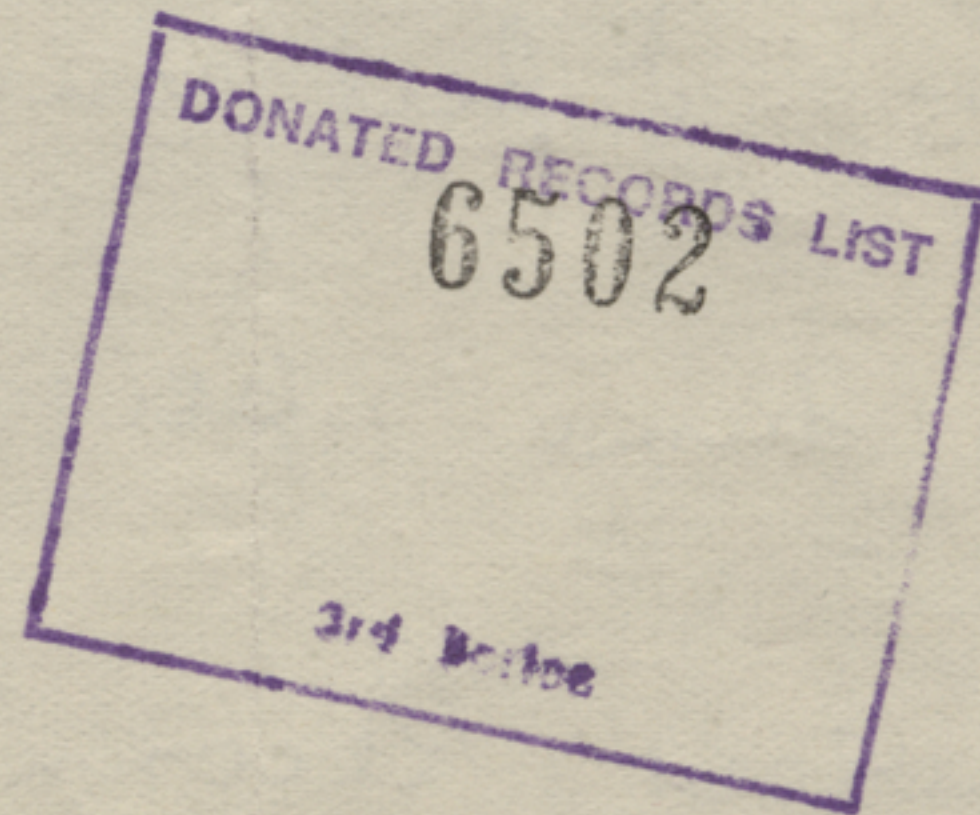
Dear Mr Harrison.

I received your letter this morning and I must apologize for my mistake, my brother did not arrive in Australia until about January 1945. I feel convinced that we are talking about the same person. His last unit was called Services Reconnaissance Department: perhaps this will confirm that we are.

F. ELLIS & Co

Please reply to this address. I am engaged in moving house at present and hardly know which address I shall be at when you reply. I am very much obliged to you for your quick answer.

yours sincerely
Jack Ellis



Sarawak (kbe)

25th February, 1947.

Jack Ellis, Esq.,
Messrs. F. Ellis & Co.,
9, Newarke Street,
LEICESTER.

Dear Mr. Ellis,

Yes, in that case it was indeed your brother and it is a pleasure, though a sad one, to tell you what I can.

Ben - as he was universally known in Australia - arrived and took over parachute training in our unit just before my operation was going into the field in 1945. He was a brilliant and sympathetic instructor, with a remarkable ability for parachuting, a complete fearlessness, self-confidence and cheerfulness, which made him a splendid leader, trainer and teacher. Some of my chaps had little parachute experience, and as the project of dropping into Central Borneo was a fairly frightening one, leaving plenty of scope for doubt and anxiety, a really good instructor and advisor was of especially importance. I myself very seldom get depressed and have not enough imagination to be afraid, but I am not particularly good at passing on my feeling to others, and here Ben was absolutely invaluable.

It was because of the difficulty of the project and the considerable nervous tension that was likely to evolve among the personnel engaged upon it, that Ben decided to come up north with us and actually see us out of the plane safely. So, we flew to the Philippines and spent nearly a fortnight together, under the most trying conditions, because we had to make a series of abortive flights over Japanese held Borneo, trying to find somewhere suitable to drop. During all this time, Ben radiated confidence and calm leadership, and kept up the morale not only of the paratroops, but also of the two Liberator crews involved in the operation. More than this, he was for me, personally, a delightful companion - the only other Englishman in that part of the world at the time - as well as a constantly sound advisor, not only with his expert knowledge of parachuting, but on all subjects related to operations of this sort and to the handling of people.

When eventually we managed to find a place to jump, and last

thing before we went out of the hatch was to shake hands with Ben, who himself had been through those appreciable risks and strains, simply in order to help us, and without any compulsion of duty to do so. In fact, Headquarters had wanted him to remain in Australia to train others and not go with us. But he had felt, and rightly so, that he should go up with the first party and make sure of its success. If he had not come with us, I doubt whether we should have ever got in, and therefore the whole operation would never have been carried out. This would have affected not only this immediate operation but all the Allied landings in the Borneo theatre, since we were the main channel of intelligence.

It was not until a month later that we knew that the plane which had dropped us, and which carried Ben, had never returned to base. Our headquarters withheld this information from us on the radio as they believed it would have depressed our morale seriously. So it would. We learnt the news from the next party parachuted into us in April, and we were all deeply distressed.

The exact facts of what occurred will never be known. But in actual fact it seems most probable that the Liberator was shot down by a disguised flak ship in Brunei Bay, on its way back to Mindaro in the Philippines, which they were using as base on that flight. No trace or evidence has ever been found. The pilot, Squadron Leader Graham Pockley, D.F.C. was one of the finest in the Australian Air Force and he had a fine crew. Only the mischance of war could have been responsible for their loss.

I, personally, was deeply affected and I determined to pay some tribute to the memory of Ben and of Graham, two of the finest people I have ever known. And I may add that I had spent many hours talking to Ben about personal things and in the peculiar circumstances of those days, perhaps one learnt to know a person more quickly and more intimately in a couple of weeks than one would under other circumstances in as many years.

So, when I stayed behind after the war was over, I devoted a month to the idea that had been turning over in my mind for some time. When we had made the first recon flight we had seen a wonderful white limestone peak right up in the interior, the most conspicuous landmark in Central Borneo. This was not on any map, and we had named it Mount 200 after the 200 Flight of the R.A.A.F., Pockley's unit with which we were operating. I determined to climb Mount 200 and to place on the top a simple plaque to Ben, Graham and the air crew who were lost. I carved a suitable plaque and in early 1946, set out from my interior headquarters with a party of natives. I will not detain you with all the details of our journey, which proved more difficult than I expected, since we had to cut our way for long periods through uninhabited country, previously unknown, even to the natives themselves. Suffice it to say that after 28 days travel, we completed the task we had set. The peak proved of great difficulty, and the summit was so exposed and windswept that I placed the plaque, protected by my groundsheet in a tiny cave just under the summit. This sort of memorial is in the native tradition, since they built

stone monuments to their departed. This they regard as the greatest stone monument of all and feel that it is in keeping with the men who dropped the original party who came to liberate their country. I, too, venture to feel that the memorial is a suitable one in its inadequate way. No words of mine could describe the wonderful beauty and peace of that mountain top, which, from a height of about 7,000 ft. looks out over hundreds of miles of the whole interior of Borneo, over innumerable ranges, valleys which have never been trodden by the foot of man and, way in the far distance the faintest suggestion of the China sea into which your Liberator, alas, must have plunged. I held a simple sort of service at the top in the native language and during it explained what the sacrifice of Ben and the R.A.A.F. boys had meant. My simple companions, several of them until lately expert headhunters, were moved to tears.

I am going back to the interior of Borneo for a while, shortly, and I hope then to revisit this mountain and see that all is well with the little plaque that I put there. Now we know the way and have cut a path, it will, of course, be much easier a second time.

On the pass, near the top of the mountain, we have cut a native door, of the sort I described in my article, which is visible from all the other peaks in the area and through which our track runs. This is an easily seen memory token, and I did not describe the more important and complicated one on the mountain, which I have now told to you and which means much more to me.

I am afraid this letter is very inadequate as I am bad at putting anything I feel about emotionally on paper. But I hope that it may have at least added a little to your knowledge, and I hope one day to have time to write a full book about our Borneo adventure and there pay a more adequate tribute to the memory of my friend, Ben Ellis.

If I can add anything which is of use or interest to you, I shall naturally be only too glad to do so.

Yours sincerely,

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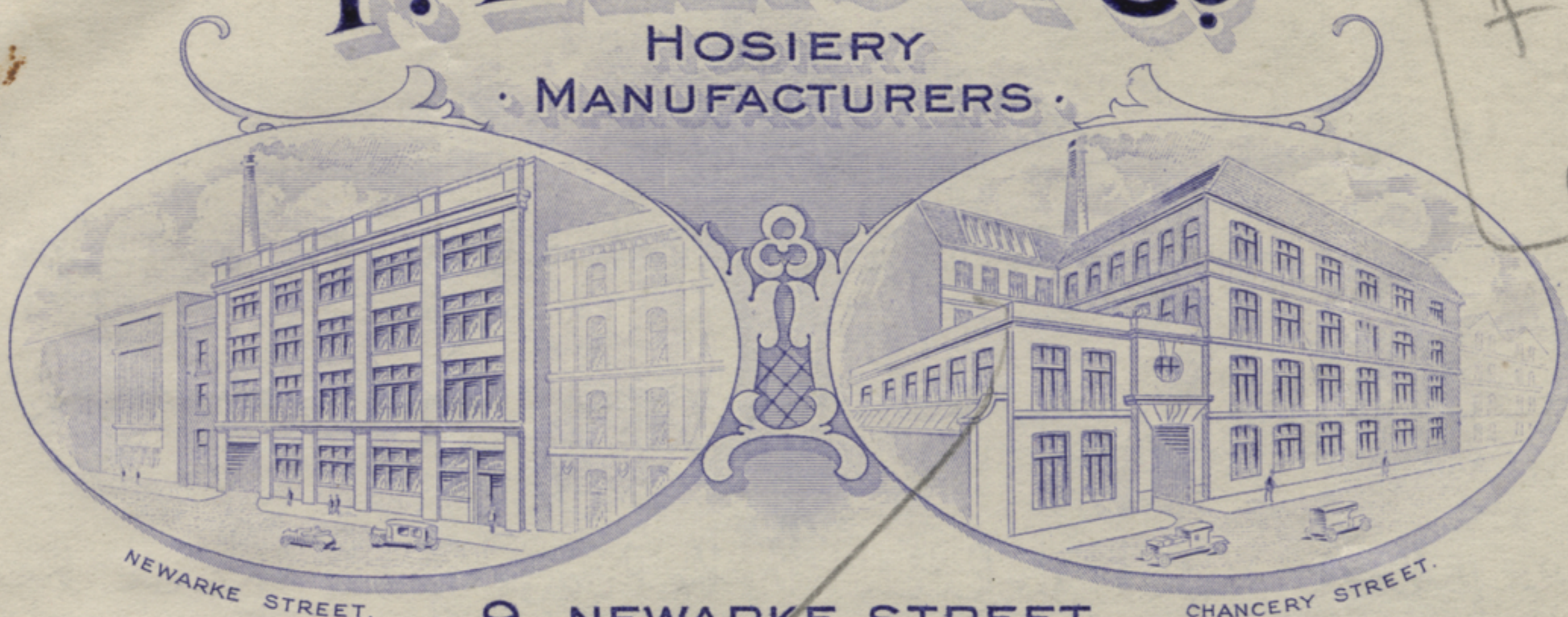
3rd Borneo

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9, NEWARKE STREET,

LEICESTER, March 13 1947

Dear Mr Harrison

I am writing to thank you for your letter of 25th February. I cannot put into words my great appreciation of your story of my brother's last tragic exploit, and of the very great trouble you have gone to in putting it together. It is a very great tribute to dear old 'Benny'.

I hope you will be agreeable that we should communicate parts of its contents to the press, as we feel that a number of Benny's friends whom we do not know, would like to learn a little more about him to implement the "presumed killed in action" that we announced

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+ [Handwritten signature]
(My [unclear] [unclear])

F. ELLIS & Co

only recently.

May I close this short note of appreciation by congratulating you on the part you yourself played in the exploit, for which I believe you have been justly rewarded the D.S.O.

Should you ever be in Leicester observing houses or on any other task, I should be most happy to offer you my hospitality.

Yours sincerely
Jack Elli

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