

Appendix 4
Letters from Anthony Guise to his mother Mater and to Joan Dibdin
15th June 1941 to 15th Sept 1943

04/06/1941

Comment Leave. After that to Shrivenham

07/06/1941

Comment TONY met JOAN - 1st TIME

15/06/1941

From Tony **To** Mater

Comment Date ?

Cadet A. B. Guise 1526211
Room 63 "B" Bty
Belford Unit
Shrivenham
Nr Swindon Wiltshire

Date estimated about 15th June 1941

Darling Mater

Very little to report. A very pleasant journey not too difficult and quite quick. The Barracks are built on the same plan as Catterick so I feel quite at home already!?! And of course we enjoy similar amenities to Gaza lines – decent showers and baths, locks, spring beds etc. At the moment of course we are suffering from the usual rookie indecisions and newness. Everybody is quite helpful and there seems to be quite a cheerful atmosphere... Tho' it's all rather like joining a new school, with senior "boys" rejoicing in special privileges and wearing bits of red tape and so on.

Have not as yet experienced any of the training but it looks very like my former stuff at Catterick so am hoping for the best.

There is one terrific snag so far – we are rationed to 20 cigs PER WEEK and there is not a cig to be obtained in any of the towns or villages for miles around – am quite smokeless. Perhaps you could send a few – and after this week I shall send you the money for them.

I know it's rather difficult to obtain them in the town – it's quite impossible here so perhaps you could help me – I shall have to buy a pipe.

There is some slight expense of 2/- or 3/- per week in buying hat bands but other than that there is very little else to do or spend money on. Have made enquiries re passes and so on to town and it's quite impossible. We may get 48 hrs in 3 months' time!! Allowed out for 4 hrs on Sat and 8 hours on Sunday only. Tho' we can if we please spend the whole of Sunday in bed!! Shall write some more later and tell you something of what we do – when we get down to it.

Provided the weather keeps nice, it will be lovely down here, the country is very pleasant and the villages perfect.

Give my love to everyone at home and tell them I shall be writing to them soon.

Love Tony

PLEASE SEND

6 coat hangers – the type you can hang trousers on.

Some cigs if possible.

A little money for stamps etc
which I will return

Thank you my dear, Love Tony

16/06/1941 From Shrivenham

From Tony **To** Joan

Comment First letter to Joan, expressing passionate love

Cadet A. B. Guise 1526211
Room no. 63 B Bty
Belford Unit
Shrivenham
Nr Swindon Wilts.

Darling

Have the most exasperating news re. leave... Shall definitely not be able to come home during the next three months or so, we may get a 48 hour pass about that time, if we are good! So am afraid you will have to come and see me. We can get an 8 hour pass for Sunday into Farringdon or Swindon etc but the local villages are quite beautiful and we are allowed into those without a

pass – all day if necessary. I will make some enquiries at the local hotels and find out about accommodation etc for a weekend. The journey itself is quite pleasant and takes but 2 ¼ hours. If you have any ideas on the subject and would like to take the run down, do let me know. I do so want to see you again.

There is but little to say re our experiences, have not yet started on the course, and everybody seems to be feeling acutely the “new boy” dilemmas. It is also frightfully like joining a new school, with the senior boys wearing bits of red tape and having their own dining room and other special privileges. While en masse, e.g. drill and so on, one seems to be treated like dirt, but... when dealing with you as individuals, everybody is very decent and one gets quite a lot of consideration. The officers appeared to address one as Mr. X and the instructors seem to address you as sir – all this is in itself a small thing but makes life so much pleasanter. My first impressions are that everyone is very helpful, enthusiastic and quite cheerful. I have met many of the blokes here and really there seems to be little of that browned off business that the papers are so fond of ascribing to OCTUs.

Do forgive these arid and unamusing notes, but I am bored stiff as there is not a cigarette in the place for miles around and I am smokeless... All inspiration seems to have withered.

In the process of achieving the usual metamorphosis after leave, I'm finding it quite difficult to let my pen fly and to fire you with those loving words that should come so easily; everything I can think of saying at the moment seems hopelessly inadequate and I yearn for the day when once again I can hold you to me and, inspired, pour forth those little endearments, those little nothings; and once again say... I love you!

Life seems such an empty worthless husk without you, such an awful placid uninteresting thing. I long for those mad wild flights of love and gently fluttering silences, when the earth stood still and time went mad and everything was annihilated to the green thought of our desire... broken only by the beating of our own hearts. And I long for the seducing fingers that stole my soul, and for the lips that enslaved my heart, and for the body that tore my bowels in an ecstasy of wonderment, and for you... You!! The whole of you that I love and love to love - - I hunger!

Oh God I'd sooner be a crossing sweeper that might I be with you, than all the officers in the British army and away from you.

However, as I am nearer here to you than I am likely to be anywhere else in the army, I suppose I must with joy except this business and do my best, that I may be worthy of you and take my rightful place in the scheme of things, so with a heart that is weary and sad, I shall sally forth and do my best in this sole crushing job and like it... for you, and that we might hope still more.

All my love sweetheart -

You are my heart and my mind and I shall sleep with your name upon my lips and in you rejoice, for the world is good again and made perfected by your memory and humbly shall I look upon the Moon and the Stars and the Sun and remember... she who shames them all

“Oh thou lovely incarnation of the nectar dropping Moon...”

I love you, Tony

21/06/1941

From Tony To Joan

Cadet A. B. Guise 1526211

Room no. 63 B Bty

Belford Unit

Shrivenham

Nr Swindon Wilts.

Darling

Do forgive me for not writing yesterday and thanking you for everything... We simply have to baptise, quite solemnly, the possession of cigarettes so Alan and I had a beer or two. We no longer smoked as an adjunct to drinking but drank a toast to our cigarettes. The ration went up to 30 a week today, so we hope for better times.

Business first darling... I understand you say that you would not be able to come until the 13th of July – then you said you could get off on Sunday week – does that mean that you will be coming on that Sunday? If so and you let me know the times of the trains etc. I shall be there to meet you of course. So sorry about Saturday... But in any case, I should have only the evening off.

The concert, I think it is a great work... Go ahead darling, with all my blessings upon the enterprise, and know that I am afraid I will be of little help. Have had a terrific time so far and a wonderful day yesterday (Wednesday). Your wonderful letter arrived for which darling 1000 thankyous, the cigarettes which overwhelmed me - darling how sweet of you, but really you mustn't do it again - you must have spent a small fortune!! Thurs, I had a good shoot on the range putting five shots into ½ inch group at 30 yards, then I won some money on the Derby and finally the Queen Mother dear old soul came and chatted to us and had a look round the camp. Alan and I rounded off today with a drink or two and I dream about you most of the night.

The rigours of the course seem at present to be greatly exaggerated – and anyway the compensations of practically hourly cold showers and cold baths

and other little courtesies that I mentioned are worth a whole lot of fatiguing work. In answer to my tentative enquiries, it appears that we do not clean lavatories or bathrooms or sort of sweat of that nature. In fact, we – extra the regulations! - employ some of the permanent cadet staff to polish the floor of the barrack room and the other little tiresome chores.

Had a very narrow squeak on Tuesday. They suddenly discovered that I know but little of the type of gun we shall be handling, being a “Z” battery man – so the old man wanted to send me away with 20 or so others on a course and I should have had to temporarily revert to Bombardier for a month... However, I asked to see people and told them that I had been a field gunner for six months and that satisfied them – though I may not yet be “out of the woods”. I should know in a week or so!

What ecstasy to see you again darling. Hurry Hurry the 13th of July.

Oh darling I have missed the post again!

Friday now.

Nothing new my darling... It's terrifically hot and everybody including the instructors are most lethargic and we are doing very little work other than PT and drill.

I spend most of the time in the shower or bath. Tonight, we have a hell of a flap on, cleaning personal kit etc. for tomorrow's inspection.

Poor Jimmy! I do hope you were not too cold and distant... He is so much in need of a friend, and I feel rather a cad pinching his girlfriend, he is so diffident. I fear he may be feeling a little bleak at the moment.

Goodnight... My heart's desire! Pray for us, but soon we may together sink into that cool shadow of peacefulness and understanding, that is our love; and together thread the mad way of a passion... That we may tempt the Gods with our happiness; and that I may love you as...

I love you!

Once more for my sweet... Just once more I kiss you – tonight my love and every tonight I will go out to find you... To find my love! Tony.

24/06/1941

From Tony To Joan

Darling,

What marvellous news, let me know as soon as possible: -

1. what nights you will wish to be spending here
2. train arrival.

And I will find accommodation for you; let me know soon if you can sweetheart because it's quite difficult to get things over the weekend.

Do you think darling you could bring with you a loose-leaf binder quarto size and some paper – I think they are about two and six now, though you used to be able to get them in Woolworths for all of up to six pence; any cheap thing will do and I shall pay you when you arrive.

What about asking Yvonne or Kay or somebody to come down with you – we couldn't make up a foursome perhaps and have a picnic or something.

I must rush this off, darling to get the post.

I love you. I love you.

Goodnight my sweetheart all my love.

I can scarcely wait until Saturday, Tony

25/06/1941

From Tony To Joan

Cadet A. B. Guise 1526211

Belford Unit

Shrivenham

Nr Swindon Wilts.

Darling,

I am wild with delight at the prospect of seeing you again. Thank you darling.

And thank you for all your letters, they are a great joy.

Have just spent a very hectic and very hot hour or two in finding accommodation for you, so shall miss the evening post. I could get nothing in Shrivenham which is of course the most convenient village – so have had to get you a place in Faringdon: a small double room was all they had left so I have taken that, in your name at the Bell Hotel Faringdon. It's not so good as the Crown but was all I could manage.

Hotel BELL HOTEL – FARINGDON

FRI SAT AND SUN NIGHT

Transport TRAIN, I SUGGEST, STRAIGHT THERE possible train to

Swindon and bus back to Faringdon

SITUATED 4 ½ miles from Shrivenham.

Transport between Faringdon and Shrivenham: occasional buses two or three times a day. Have not yet any information on times.

I WANT TO KNOW the time of train arrival – day you will arrive – and where you will come to i.e. Faringdon or Shrivenham. N.B. you could come to Shrivenham and I would meet you there and say walk into Faringdon with you - but the best way may be for you to go straight to Faringdon and I will try and get in Friday night.

Now darling – SEEING AND MEETING YOU

I have to attend hall for tea on Friday and luncheon on Saturday and am confined to the camp area which includes the village of Shrivenham with the exception of an 8 hr pass on Saturday and Sunday.

Well dear, best if you come into Faringdon by say 9 to 9.30 Friday evening. I will come in to meet you, but after that I would scarcely be able to get back in time for roll call. But I will ring up at the hotel if I can't get in – do your best and let me know in time and I would do what I can. Write if necessary, on Saturday: there is a 2.48 bus into Faringdon (or perhaps I could manage earlier) and I could call for you at the hotel or you might be able to get a bus into Shrivenham on Saturday morning and I will meet you here. In any case I can ring you on Saturday morning at the hotel.

All this may seem frightfully muddled but I know we are going to have a great time. The country here is gorgeous and Faringdon is the loveliest little town you could wish to see. I have enclosed a map sweetheart which may be of some use, so, shall we leave it at this.

1. If you arrive at Shrivenham, I will meet the train and get you into Faringdon. But !!! don't forget if the train arrives very late at Shrivenham, it will be almost impossible to get into Faringdon.
2. If you arrive at Faringdon in time for me to meet the train - I shall be there when it arrives. If you do not arrive in time for me to meet the train, make your own way to the hotel and I will ring you when I judge you have arrived. Gosh darling this is going to require some organisation.

Still, I guess we can manage it and I do get the whole of the Sunday off within the camp area and 8 hours out of it. Before I close all this organization biz.

Darling: -

Food is terribly short in the village so I think it would be a good idea to picnic out on Sunday so if there are any little things that will not be too heavy for you to carry - butter etc. you might bring them down with you.

So glad you had a good time at home darling. I take it that it is the first time that you have met John. He is not a bad bloke, I believe the army is doing him a lot of good!!

He should of course be here with me but I suppose too young.

Of course I didn't mind Kay writing! It's perfectly marvellous of you, my sweetheart, to miss this rehearsal: I do hope it won't upset than.

The weather is simply gorgeous down here – bring your swimsuit but I don't think there are any places to swim: however we can try. Oh God? Darling I can scarcely await until the weekend hurry time hurry!!

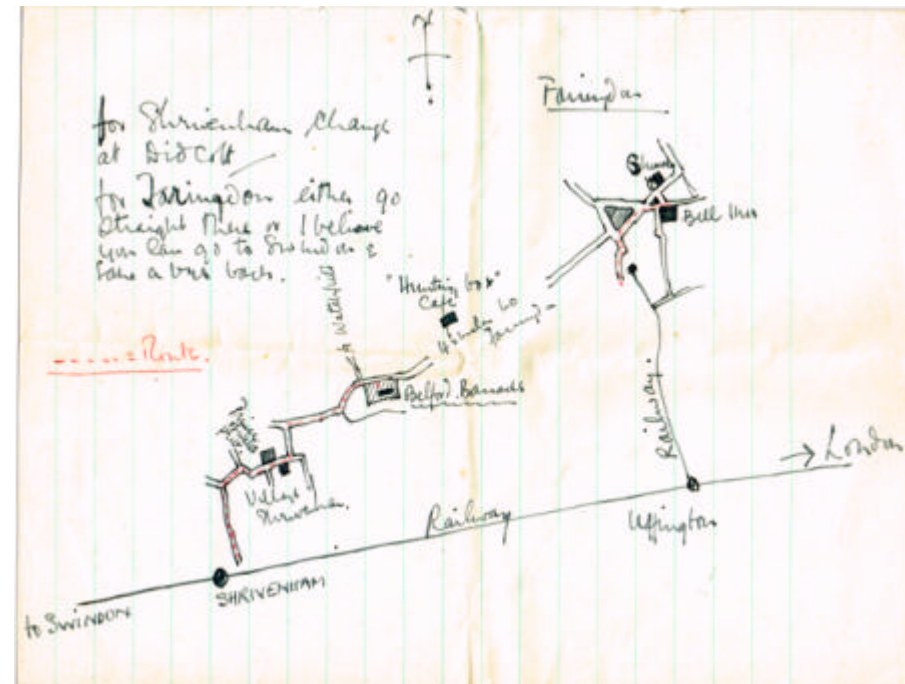
I am impatient... Come my love, come quickly!

I love you!

Goodnight my darling I kiss you... And you consume me with a devouring fire... I pant, and my soul is lost in you.

My love Tony.

PS please thank Kay for her note. T



26/06/1941

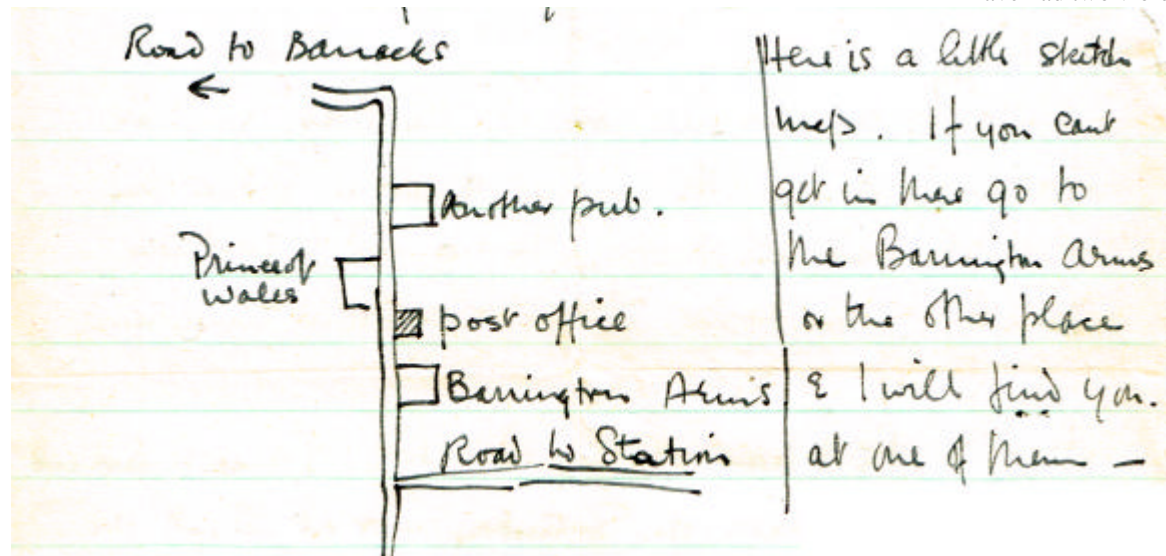
From Tony To Joan

Cadet A. B. Guise 1526211
Room 63 B Bty Belford Unit
Shrivenham
Nr Swindon Wilts.

Darling,

By now you will have my other letter, and I have received yours. I note you will arrive at Shrivenham at 11.25, there will of course be no need to confirm this – but if you decide to come at any other time send me a wire.

As I have explained before, I must attend hall for luncheon on Saturday – or at least the parade – but should be away by 2.00. So my darling... if you arrive by 11.25 amble slowly up to the village of Shrivenham and try and grab some lunch at one of the pubs or buy yourself something at the local stores, and have a look around the place – you will I'm afraid my sweet, have around 2 hours to kill. Then about 2 o'clock go to one of the village pubs in Shrivenham where I shall meet you at about 2 – 2.20. If the Prince of Wales has any beer or is open go there.



If these should all fail, most unlikely, I will meet you outside the post office. I'm terribly sorry my sweetheart, that there should be this long wait for you, but I will come down as soon as possible.
All my love till then darling. God bless and lead you to me. Tony

03/07/1941

From Tony To Joan

Darling,

Thank you so much for your letter, I was going to put off writing to you until I had some more information on your ring, darling it's most sad news...

The damn fools can't find the ring.

I have been in constant touch with them and have to see one more woman, the chambermaid on Saturday – will you in the meantime send me a description of the ring so that I can notify the police... And will you just make sure darling that you have not got it in your bag.

The last time I saw it, your bag was on the bed, your gloves on top of that, and on the top of your gloves your ring...

I have had two violent rows with the man at the Bell and Mrs Swan and I have

been over the room in the Salutation with a fine-tooth comb. She (Mrs Swan) is now going to chivvy the chambermaid who is said to be quite honest... Mrs Swan is terribly upset about it all and is going to no end of trouble.

It's worrying me dreadfully darling, I feel so sorry, as I feel I ought to have gone along on Sunday night and left you to go on to Swindon - I do hope you will forgive me.

Do send the description and a statement too if you like, (I think he should definitely) and I will take it along to the local police though God only knows what they are like.

Can you think of any other possibilities as to where you may have left it my darling?

I am so dreadfully sorry this should have happened and I was not going to let you know until had made exhausted enquiries. With all my love darling, Tony.

06/07/1941

From Tony **To** Mater

Cadet A. B. Guise 1526211
Room 63 "B" Bty
Belford Unit
Shrivenham
Nr Swindon Wiltshire

Date after 7th June 1941 calculated as 6th July 1941

Dear Old Thing.

Suppose you are still the working girl and haven't had time to answer my letter. Thanks a lot for the messages and fags via Joan (am enclosing 8/3 which is I think the amount of the 110 Gaspers you sent). So sorry to have kept you so long for the money but have had one or two expenses.

Life continues much as usual down here, still glorious weather and wonderfully hot. We usually manage a swim and a row on Wed. and Sat. afternoons but our duties are increasing now... so am digging this afternoon (Sunday) and shall be on guard for a night or two next week.

Our monthly exam comes off next Friday or Saturday so shall have to do some swot this next week – time has gone so quickly it scarcely seems possible in the few days we shall have been here a month – though my note books are already attaining gargantuan proportions.

Another month of this and we shall be in "technical" on the guns.

Jo may have told you that I thought I might get up for Sunday soon – I'll try, but.... We now have a 09.00hrs roll call on Sunday to ensure that we don't leave barracks before that time.

All my love to you and everybody old dear...

pray for me

Love Tony.

08/07/1941

From Tony **To** Joan

A postcard

Darling - hotel have found ring.

Shall be sending it on to you by registered post. All my love, Tony.

11/07/1941

From Tony **To** Joan

Darling

You have by now (I hope) got my card re: ring. The tweeny found it in a crack in the floor, so I had another row with the man at the Bell, grabbed the ring and hoofed it.

Have been terribly busy this week darling, gardening, guards and whatnot.

Also, a bit of swatting though not much. I got at 82% marks and third place in the exam which, considering that I have not worked too hard, wasn't bad.

I am trying to write this during a gas lecture so be patient darling... I know the subject backwards but may be called upon to come out and lecture.

Now re: Sunday I may come, if I do, I shall get a lift and will probably not be home for luncheon: shall have to see if I am on duty or not first.

Have now almost completed a first month and am looking forward to the next, though I'm afraid we shall have to work a lot harder.

We have just got in our reports and strangely mine is quite good!

May be on guard on Sunday, so shall have to wait Saturday's orders before knowing whether I can come. Can say little darling, re. Jimmy, you must decide on your own your course of action... And just make him as happy as possible, with the least hurt to yourself.

All love my darling please excuse shortness, I'm frightfully busy. Tony.

13/07/1941 Shrivenham near Swindon

From Tony **To** Mater

Comment Date ?

13 July 1941

[Tony at Shrivenham]

Dear V

Thank you so much for the fags and the letter etc.

Glad to hear that you are taking a rest from the job.

Little happens here except some hard work – we have been duty battery for the last 2 weeks – however that is all over now and I can get down to some real swot.

I did quite well in the monthly exam – with no swotting at all. I came in 3rd with 82% and got about the best report from the major... he seems to think I should do well – However I understand that if we are too good we are kept on here as instructors and I don't want THAT!!!

Sorry I was unable to turn up today – I am on guard tonight. May come up next

week.

When is Widdy to be called up?

The weather seems to have broken today and it is much cooler, tho' the Lord only knows what it will be like tomorrow.

Do you mind if I send on cig. money at end of week... am a little broke.

Have had a long letter from Neil... Do tell him that I am going to answer it when I get a moment, till then give him my love.

Thank Nita for procuring things.

TO you my dear and everybody

my love and best wishes.

Tony

13/07/1941

From Tony To Mater

Insert in a letter about Cigarettes

Circa July 1941

From Tony Guise to his Mother

Re: Fags

I quite like them – they are very strong and pungent – reminding me of the French or American cigarettes and suit me very well – but forgive me Mater if I have too discriminating taste – they are not good Turkish.

The essence of a Turkish cigarette is that soft balmy smoke which trickles in and out of your lungs without effort or noticing it. The aroma or bouquet is heavy but tends to well matured – no acidness –

Now the cigarettes you are sending me (mark you I like them) – as Turkish cigs. are harsh – you must have noticed that “catch” in the throat when you inhale – they are also acrid and have a very noticeable tang not found in the best Turkish.

I should say they are concreted from the courser tobacco leaves – also watch the ash it burns more like a cigar or Havana tobacco – not really like it of course but nearer that than a cigarette. Now this means that the shredding of the tobacco is not so fine, it should powder – also note the colour, black denoting a coarse tobacco.

NO! I still think Balkan Sobranie are the best Turkish cigarette I have yet smoked.

BUT!!

Don't worry – I say I like them as a smoke but not as a Turkish cigarette, just as one likes “Camp Coffee” as a drink but not as coffee.

Love and Thanks Tony

Note by R. Guise:

In 1959 I was very pleased to be smoking Sobranie Black Russian and in fact had a little scheme going in which I bought a packet at 4d a cigarette and sold them at 4½d – Passing cloud was another preferred cigarette by many.

14/07/1941

From Tony To Joan

13 July, '41

Darling,

So sorry that I could not come today, I am on guard... How did the show go? Thought of you a lot last night... Was so beastly annoyed at not being able to come and see you that I went out and had a drink or two with some of the boys, and later went to the local hop; it was terribly hot and the girls were terrible, but as we were all pretty well tanked, we had quite a good time.

Did I tell you that I had discovered the swimming and boating... We go two or three times a week and it's quite good fun. River of course.

Have been rather too busy and broke to do very much in this last week or two – most of our duties fall in the last two weeks of the first month, so that's all over and a damn good job. This next month I have to get down to some real swot.

However, I should be able to get any Sunday off now. You must let me know my love, the best Sunday for me to come. Also, if it would be better for me to come and spend the day with you, instead of going home, (incidentally have you found the flat yet??) we might be less bored just our two selves together, than if we had to start entertaining people at home.

I shall get this letter off in the post tonight darling from the barracks so shall not enclose the ring... I will send that as and when I get an opportunity to get to the post office.

Do hope you have a grand show and weekend my darling. All my love my dear. I shall be seeing you soon and once again... I shall love you!

Goodnight and God bless you. Tony.

17/07/1941

From Tony To Joan

Thursday

Darling,

Only got your letter on Wednesday. Digs seem impossible to get, but I will let you know finally when I have tried again tonight. If nothing available, I would do my best to come up on Sunday. I shall not have any duties.

No accommodation darling, we were too late this week. I shall strain every nerve to come up on Sunday, leaving as soon as possible and hitch hiking up and then get the 9.20 home from Paddington.

I'll bring the ring up with me.

You must try and forgive me not writing more often but have been very busy recently in the lecture rooms etc... This indoor life doesn't seem to agree with me very much and the heavy air is very sleep making after the clean, thin Scots Air. I seem to spend a lot of time asleep... Even in the lecture rooms!!

And I'm going to shoot this off into the evening post so that it will get to you by midday tomorrow.

If you can't get home on Sunday or have any other ideas wire me sometime.

All my love for now darling, we can swap notes and news when I see you over the weekend.

Love Tony.

24/07/1941

From Tony To Joan

N.B. We are going to do five months here, so shall not be gazetted until November 23!

My darling

Many thanks for your letter!! Will it be worth your while coming down and spending all that money for so little of time? I note that you say that there is no night train, so pressure must mean that you must go back on the 8.40. It is only 7 hours and will be rather expensive for you, darling.

However, should you decide to come, I will of course meet you at the station.

Re. riding – have been very busy this week and have not yet been out in the evening but think I have found a place – if this weather continues, it will I

think be too hot to enjoy a ride in comfort. But, you could if you so wish bring your clobber along and I will keep it down here for you...

Incidentally, if you do come, there will be but little time to get to the stables and everything will be too, too rushed my darling. Let me know if you coming or not. I shall understand if you decide against it; I shall look forward to seeing you in a week or two's time.

All my love dear, Tony.

25/07/1941

From Tony To Joan

Darling,

I shall come and meet you at Swindon.

Please forgive note, we are in the middle of pulling lots of cars to pieces.

All my love Tony.

N.B. Shall meet you at railway station.

30/07/1941

From Tony To Joan

29 July, '41

Darling...

We have terrific manoeuvres on during the weekend, in the tie up with the command, so it will be impossible to get out. Am terribly sorry my darling.

Perhaps we can manage something the following week. Am rather busy at the moment swatting for the exams, so please forgive brevity.

All my love for now, Tony.

Have waited a little to see if manoeuvres will be cancelled – no luck!

01/08/1941

From Tony To Joan

Darling

I shall not be coming home on Saturday... But! I think I can manage Sunday... Have just heard unofficially that the manoeuvres are off.

Shall not be able to travel by rail so shall try and hitch a lift into town. Of course, if this "flap" transpires after all, I shall not be able to come. I am sending more or less the same message to Donald so that you can:

1. Come up on Saturday if you care to and this letter reaches you in time
2. Then you can either stay here!!! Possibly no accommodation except in Swindon or
3. Go back on Saturday night and I would try and see you over Sunday at home.

All my love, Tony.

Wire me if you are coming Saturday.

01/08/1941

From Tony To Mater

Darling

I shall not be coming home on Saturday... But! I think I can manage Sunday...

Have just heard unofficially that the manoeuvres are off.

Shall not be able to travel by rail so shall try and hitch a lift into town. Of course, if this "flap" transpires after all, I shall not be able to come. I am sending more or less the same message to Donald so that you can:

4. Come up on Saturday if you care to and this letter reaches you in time
5. Then you can either stay here!!! Possibly no accommodation except in Swindon or
6. Go back on Saturday night and I would try and see you over Sunday at home.

All my love, Tony.

Wire me if you are coming Saturday.

06/08/1941 Shrivenham near Swindon

From Tony To Joan

On Duty on Sunday. Will return money on Thursday Thanks for letter.

6th August 1941

Darling

The sadness of high summer is upon me. Full of ripe fecundity and rich greenness, showering her fruits upon the earth; exhausted she wanes to a mellow of dullness leaving behind the sharp exquisite stirrings of pregnant spring. She becomes vital, and descends... to the aridness of winter that is my life without you. All the sap has gone from me with your going; I am but a decaying seed; until you with life and love do come again to quicken this sluggish being to a greater urgency.

I want to wander hand in hand beneath the stars, to play with the moonbeams and dance with the angels; I want to run and walk and ride, and shout and

laugh with you... to tear the gladness of the wind from out of the skies, so that might I watch it play in your hair; to gulp great breaths of the scented air that whirls with heavy intoxication around you. I want to listen to the hush of the wild things in your presence and watch the wild flowers bow beneath your feet and spring revitalised to a new pride in your caress. I want to kiss the brown earth with you and together press our bodies to the ground, becoming one with the awful rhythm.

I want!!

I want to drink from your lips. To lay my head in the lust valley of your breast "And seek lower where the greener pastures lie..." my darling.

I want you!!

And my soul must cry in agony... Alone!!

For you are gentle and sweet and kind and must not scorch in the hell of my grand passion... For you are careful and the heady earthy realities of desire must not touch the calm serenity of your brow.

Therefore my darling... forgive.

Forgive... these hot jumbled notes, that in wanton fever I have written...

forgive my mad importunity of Sunday night. Forgive and forget that I ever implied that I wanted you as anything but... a deity – no mistress but a statue, so quickly... jump!! my darling on to that pedestal from which you can look down in understanding sympathy on the wriggings of men – wrap your soul in your divine music and so habited walk with the Gods and never come down. The light is shining in my eyes, your soul is blinding me... and I cry!!

I am dead and dying a thousand deaths, with every death I worship a thousand times more your soul, your soul is choking me...

Oh Cruel!! arrows of desire my spirit is chained.

Look up mine eyes... I worship your soul

And kiss your hand...!!

God be with you in the days to come.

On rereading letter – Damn you,

My sweet for making me quote poetry and write like a pimply adolescent.

What I have been trying to say is that I had a marvellous weekend... and that I am that I seem preoccupied with the carnal – you must try to forgive me and remember that we live a blighted existence as far as women are concerned.

And that as far as I am concerned I am perhaps too apt to express my love in bed... and not sufficiently in the drawing room.

I worry you... and am ashamed.

I kiss your hand

Tony

PS Don's Address – Sergeant D. Haycraft 107 AA Z Battery RA Glasgow

07/08/1941

From Tony To Joan

T'is almost certain that I shall be up for the w/e on 15th.
Have applied for this so shall do my best to come.
Thank you so much my dear for the loan of the above.
Find that I am now commanding a platoon on some infantry stunt.
Do hope it will not interfere with my leave on the 15th.
Cheerio – I kiss your hand. T

11/08/1941 From Shrivenham

From Tony To Joan

Post card

Darling,
Have moved all the celestial bodies in an effort to come this w/e.
Can't be done.
Thank you so much for the cigs darling –
will you please let me pay for them.
I kiss your hand T.

13/08/1941 From Shrivenham

From Tony To Joan

This is the only reference I have come across to “The Governor” who is presumably Jules Guise, Tony's father.

Darling,
Thank you very much for your letter.
Sweet of you to resusc. the sparrow, don't be too hard on the cat... The hunting instinct is very much alive even in human beings: it was a lovely action and I wish I could have watched you nurse it. Mater will tell you endless yarns of the “Governor's” love of birds and some of the experiences with animals, so I know just the thrill...!
Am coming up on leave the weekend 22nd of August... I shall come up on the Friday night, this means I shall catch the 9 something in the evening and shall not arrive until quite late... Too late to get home. Can I come and stay with you for that night? And go on home later on Saturday. God bless you, I kiss your hand. Tony.

29/08/1941 From Shrivenham

From Tony To Joan

Darling,
All is well! Once again, I seem to have got through...
We have also had the results of the exam; I am a long way down the list I fear with about 41%. The best was 58% - low marking on the whole hey??
Nobody ever seems to get nearer the 100% mark.
Have not yet asked the Major's advice on whether to do another month or not... But I don't think I shall stop; I want to get down to some work.
Thank you so much for a lovely time dear, am so looking forward to the next four days leave.
Have just read your letter, noting your remarks on coming down again. You certainly must darling.
All my love Tony

22/09/1941 From Shrivenham

From Tony To Joan

Darling
And terribly sorry that I have not answered your letters before. I did not get them until Saturday and was quite exhausted by then... To explain...

On Thursday and Friday, we went out on our two days' scheme starting out at an unearthly hour throwing guns in and out of action all day then rolling ourselves in a blanket and groundsheet for about 3 hours sleep!! And then starting all over again at 3.30 on Friday morning. By Friday night, I was pretty well half racked – on Saturday morning, we had a ceremonial parade and, in the afternoon, I spent about 3 hours at my tailor while he put a 1/16 inch here and took it off there. After that I went to bed! And slept until 4.30 on Sunday morning when my platoon was called out to fight the home guard etc... During the exercise some bloody fool fired a 303 blank about 2 inches away from the top of my head and nearly blew it off. We returned in time for luncheon, so, stuffing some food, I fell into bed and stopped there until this morning. Wearily pulling myself together I did part of the exam... The oral i.e. lecturettes. I still have another lecturette to do and prepare and then the finals on Wednesday. The written stuff. Ye Gods after this week I hope we get it a bit easier.
If all goes well, I shall be home by about midday on Thursday week for the four days, we leave on the 9.30 train we should get into Paddington by about

11.30. I am quite tired darling, so please excuse this rambling letter. Oh gosh, thank you darling it was a sweet thought sending the £1.00 of course I shall return it when I come up on leave.

I hope you understand my sweet now, how impossible it was to come up this weekend... duty you know and of course as you will have read the schemes were so colossal this weekend that all passes and leaves were cancelled...

And now darling for some swot all my love, Tony. Goodnight.

25/09/1941 From Shrivenham

From Tony To Joan

Thursday

Darling,

I am so sorry but perhaps rather relieved that you did not manage to come on Wednesday. I had to swot a bit and the weather was not too good.

Have been trying to make up my mind whether to come this weekend...

I think I shall, that is, if you can let me know where to meet you darling. I don't know your new post, so shall it be the flat?? Isleworth or what?? You may have to wire.

Most of exams are over now, not frightfully happy about them all and I may ask for another month here!

All my love dear. Don't tell Mater I shall be coming to Isleworth, she will be a bit annoyed. Tact you know.

Goodnight darling. I am off on a binge with 30 of the lads, sort of clean up affair.

See you over the weekend, if not then on Thursday for sure. Tony

26/09/1941 From Shrivenham

From Tony To Joan

RTU = Returned to Unit

You poor darling,

We seem to be writing at cross purposes. Have you had the other two letters I sent you this week??

I note that you will not be going to Isleworth, so I shall (God and the army willing) come up to town this weekend.

So sorry if I appear brusque, but these last days in Technical are very trying and I should not have been able to devote myself to you... Though I would have enjoyed the peace of mind you would have bought to me. However,

competition is getting very fierce here, so many people were RTU'd last month, not that I work over much... Too tired these days, still there is the odd spot of swot.

If I get in around 5 o'clock I shall call at the post or flat; but don't await me.

Am feeling very dreary and looking forward desperately to see you... Quaint! I seem to have lost the facility for interesting myself in any of the gang and the girls down here.

And now, for the last time I hope, we are preparing the room for tomorrow's inspection.

Do hope that there are no exercises this weekend. It will "mess everything up" again.

Try and make some extended arrangements for my four days darling. I am looking forward to them so desperately.

Love Tony

29/09/1941 From Shrivenham

From Tony To Joan

Darling,

All is well! Once again, I seem to have got through...

We have also had the results of the exam; I am a long way down the list I fear with about 41%. The best was 58% - low marking on the whole hey??

Nobody ever seems to get nearer the 100% mark.

Have not yet asked the Major's advice on whether to do another month or not... But I don't think I shall stop; I want to get down to some work.

Thank you so much for a lovely time dear, am so looking forward to the next four days leave.

Have just read your letter, noting your remarks on coming down again. You certainly must darling.

All my love Tony

14/10/1941 From Shrivenham

From Tony **To** Joan

Comment This is the first letter of many in fact all, written to Joan c/o 4 Pinfold Road.

It is assumed she moved permanently out of Granville Place.

This is the first letter of all future letters until November 1942, written to Joan care of Pinfold Road.

It is assumed she moved permanently out of Granville Place.

2 A B Bty
Belford Unit
Shrivenham

Darling
Am ok.
Terribly busy shall be writing soon.
Love to Mater and everybody.
Goodnight darling, Tony.

16/10/1941 From Shrivenham

From Tony **To** Joan

Comment Tony commissioned 2nd Ltn

C.S. 21 B Bty
Belford Unit Shrivenham
Nr Swindon Wilts

Darling
Taboo on leave, so shall not be up this weekend.
The time is drawing very near when I shall be up for seven days, we are commissioned on the Thursday, should be up by 11.30 on that morning.
This fifth month is very strenuous indeed, giving us but little or no time to ourselves, seems to be one endless round of filling in forms, training, visiting the tailor, dress parades and "homework", polishing leather, brass and whatnot.
The mess is extraordinarily nice, and better than many officers' mess is. The Colonel, Major and other officers come and dine with us frequently and everybody is extremely matey. On our last day here, we have a special dinner in uniform, which should be dashed good and fun.

So hard have we been working that, on Sunday morning, I just had to relax a bit... so I got up fairly early and went for a long ride spending about 5 hours in the saddle, but had to make up for the lost time on coming back... polishing!
The weather is great down here, you would love it, but... I am rather glad that I did not drag you down here sweetheart, because I simply cannot spare an hour a day of time and, as it is so near the end, I am sure that you will appreciate that I want to go all out to round things off nicely and not leave any untidy ends down here.

The uniform, after all the fittings and trials and so on, has proved well worth it and is looking quite well but at the inspection the old Major could not understand the hand stitched edges and got quite worried over it.
Am so glad to hear you are better darling. Your first letter was very shakily written and I was a little worried, however, I knew you were in good hands. I suppose all the boys have returned by now to their various duties.
A great pity about Jean, do hope she managed to survive her visits to us... Poor child seemed very down when last I saw her... Guess she was glad to see Jock.

Well darling, I must get down to some more polishing and some more homework and some more standing orders. And other mysteries of an officer's life. We are forward dating most of our stuff and it feels damn funny to be signing everything 2nd Lieutenant instead of Cadet, but quite one of the thrills after all this time waiting for this opportunity... However, it's all too frightfully routine. In two weeks' time shall be doing it in earnest and then for some real work...

At the moment we are still just the very Senior Cadets.
Goodnight darling, Tony

20/10/1941 From Shrivenham

From Tony **To** Joan

Darling
Am OK
Lots of love till next Thursday week
Tony
Please post on my toothbrush Halex, with the nylon bristles.

25/10/1941 From Shrivvenham Note to **Joan** enclosed in another letter to Mater ?

From Tony **To** **Joan**

Comment Date Est

Darling

Don is coming down from Scotland on the 30th ... He should arrive some time that night...

Have written to Mater asking her if he may stay the week. We should have a very jolly and quite exceptional leave. I'm hoping!

Do start thinking about what you'd like to do... One of the boys will be coming along on Friday morning for a noozle.

All my love, Tony

29/10/1941

From Tony **To** **Joan**

Darling,

Arriving Paddington station Thursday {30-10-41} morning approx. 11.45am.

Meet me there or... If you miss me in the hurry shall be in Cocktail bar of the Great Western Hotel. I believe it is called the Royal.

All my love till tomorrow, Tony

08/11/1941 From Poolewe

From Tony **To** **Joan**

Comment Don R =dispatch rider

379 HAA Bty RA

Tournaig House

Poolewe

Achnasheen

Rosshire Scotland

8 /11/41

Darling

Finally arrived last night at about 8.30. Went straight into the BH queue for dinner and then attended the boxing match the boys had put up. Duty!

Have quite a pleasant day doing damn all!

Long and fairly wearisome journey up here. It takes just over 7 hours to get here from Inverness. A matter of just over 100 miles and that is the nearest

town of any size, any town! Nearest village 2½ miles away and I don't think that has a pub. You have no idea how really desolate it is. However, for the time being that is more than compensated for by the really glorious scenery. I could write pages on the Gorges and Glens, Burns, Rivers and mountains all heather-covered and snow-capped, the wonderful colours of the autumn tinted trees. It's absolutely terrific and the lochs are so beautiful that, until I get too, too bored with walking, I should manage to see some of this glorious country. If you look up the northwest corner of Scotland nearly as far north as possible you may find Poolewe and then you will guess how very highland we are - shall probably come home speaking Gaelic.

Should be able to save some money as there is nothing to spend it on up here except an occasional pint and cigarettes and apparently we can't get those, isn't life wonderful!

Have made a tentative enquiries Re 48 hours or 24 hours leave. There appears to be nothing doing at the moment; nobody (officers) seems to take it and in any case it takes at least 16 hours travelling time to get to Edinburgh not counting waits for trains etc. It looks pretty hopeless darling for you to come up.

Thank you so much my darling for the marvellous leave, had a simply terrific time, my only wish now is that I had spent more time with you and I am longing for the time when I shall see you again.

There are some very cheery and quite pleasant souls in the mess though how long I shall be here the lord only knows, everybody seems quite upset that I am not a heavy Gunner and take a poor view of the Division using them as a clearing house. However!

Have to write to Mater darling and must not miss the post so will you excuse me writing a long letter. All my love darling.

Goodnight and god bless you! Tony

08/11/1941 Poolewe Achnasheen

From Tony **To** Mater

Comment Now an Officer

379 HAA Bty RA
Tournig House
Poolewe
Achnasheen
Co. Ross
Scotland
8/11/41

Darling

Thank you so much for a glorious leave it was only too short!!

Arrived last night at 8.30 after a rather cold and trying journey relieved only by the glorious scenery.

The highlands at their best. The colour of the trees is too wonderful for words and the heather perfect... tho' there are but few trees here and little but shine copper. Mountain peaks which promise marvellous walks and some deer.

The shooting is all over and fishing does not begin until spring – there won't be much doing.

Shall be able to put some study in and learn a little about the job of work I have in hand... ready for the spring offensive on the extra pips.

There is little to spend our money on up here so should have a good leave when I return again.

Cigs are pretty difficult up here... so if there is anything you can do..! I will send the money. Also send money for lights at end of month... am pretty broke now as journey was very expensive.

Give my love to everybody my dear.

Again many thanks for a glorious time... and many thanks for keeping the atmosphere clear.

Do try to understand Joanna Darling – she's not very used to family life and may be a bit strange at times but she's a wonderful kid and does so want to be loved by you all and does so want a home – so be good to her.

All my love old dear.

Good night and God bless.

Tony

17/11/1941 From Poolewe

From Tony **To** Joan

17 Nov 1941

Darling

I am breathless with awe... Never have I seen such a miracle of perfection...

How do you do it? The socks darling - they are terrific! Thank you very much. I have not received the letter with ticket in sweetheart, presume you sent it to Ft Augustus, they may take some time in sending it on.

Did I not explain my dear that there is such a shortage of officers up here that the practice of taking 24 hours a week has fallen into disuse. If I am sent on some sort of course to Kinross or Edinburgh, then I could get off for the weekend. But it seems unlikely that I shall do a course yet. Will let you know if I do. It takes 7 hours from here to Inverness, which is a dreary place and not much fun... but... You can come as far north as that without a special permit.

To Edinburgh which is the ideal spot for a weekend takes about 16 hours – a longer journey than from London and I should need at least three days' leave to manage it.

If you feel you ought to get that railway ticket out of them, why not take a train say to Inverness and then hang on to it (until I get the course or something). It will last three months.

Owing to the long stay in the south, I think my resistance to cold is somewhat low and I have contracted a beastly cough and cold which, with any luck, will be all over by the time you get this letter.

And feeling it rather miserably... And missing you terribly – however...

The work is interesting and it is such fun being a little king, even if it's a tiny king. The men are a good crowd and have all seen some action, so should be reliable. Life must be terribly dull for them, though we do our best, with brains trust, whist drives and so.

I should be able to lead quite a bit up here and revive some of the bits of my brain which the army had completely atrophied! During my O.R. lifetime.

If you have (or come across) anything worth reading, you might send me a book up here occasionally darling - we greatly appreciate those sorts of things in the outposts of the Empire.

Thank you so much for the cigs sweetheart... Since joining my present section, I have been able to get about 20 per day and as I can't smoke at the moment owing to cough, I have some put by, so don't worry about the cig. question. It looks as though I am just going through the Mobile Gas Wagon. It will be DrS and I shall no doubt be too miserable to hold a pen – you know how the stuff gets you – "flu" pains teeth head and every damn thing.

All my love for now darling... I daren't even start to tell you how much I mean by that or how much I miss you... I should probably burst into tears.

Goodnight sweetheart, bless you, take care of yourself.

Tony

19/11/1941

From Tony To Joan

Comment Poolewe

19/11/41

Jo,

Thank you for the letter darling.

All my love for now - letter following.

God bless then.

Goodnight Tony

21/11/1941 From Poolewe

From Tony To Joan

22 Nov 1941

Darling,

'Fraid this will have to be a very short as the mail is going any moment.

Of course I shall not send you an authority to start buying out London for me...

It's such a sweet thought my darling. I appreciate it terribly... But you are too terribly generous and terribly kind and have spent much too much money on me already darling. I won't allow it anymore until I am in a position to lavish on you... In some very small return for all your little presents.

I am quite well off for cigarettes now - so please don't run yourself short again by sending me so many. Thank you a million times my darling for them, and for everything, you are too, too wonderful sweetheart for me to ever say how wonderful you are. And much too generous for me to ever begin to thank you.

But darling... Desist!!

You are making me feel very mean!

I understand really how you felt, when you had a job of work to do on the RAF boy... It's those sort of personal contacts which make nursing such a wonderful profession and how I loathe, with you, every minute you have to spend washing dishes and bedpans - even that is a NOBLE work! But how much more human must be the close contact with a suffering being... Giving them strength with your strength and helping them to grapple with the death!

Darling you are doing a fine job - whether it is emptying bedpans or holding the hands of the sick - it is all part of a greater job... confronting the sick!!

December 5 looks impossible. Courage darling!

Try and take an interest in the other lads and lasses - time will go quickly -

Christmas is almost upon us and four weeks later I shall see you.

If I can be sure you're trying to be happy... then I can console myself, in the knowledge that you will be happy. Go out with the other boys and with your other old friends... Jack and Ray and so on.

But don't! Darling don't fret, or moody get, or start pining... Look... Look for the other fish!

My darling you must not be unhappy. Especially NOT... because of me.

I love you too much to let you ever be, even the tiniest bit, unhappy.

This note is chaotic darling because I have scribbled it in about 10 minutes.

All my love.

N.B. Don't worry about the mac: I shall be alright.

Good night my sweet, sleep well and God bless you and take care of you.

Don't think of me. Tony.

24/11/1941 From Poolewe

From Tony To Joan

24 Nov 1941

Number of photo is on the back i.e. 33

Darling

Sorry about the scrawl I sent you the other day, wrote in a frightful hurry.

Our letters will of course always cross at a great interval of time, but mine, at least, should be arriving more often now; though I am afraid that I am not such a good or so prolific a correspondent as your own sweet self.

In the last letter I received from you, you propounded certain problems, and asked some questions which I shall endeavour to answer...

My cold is quite well (finished) and indeed must have been over by the time my letter reached you.

There is no railway line down the west coast of Scotland north of Ft William.

To go to Glasgow, one must change at Inverness, making a total journey of roughly 220 miles and something like 24 hours travelling time. The nearest railway station to us is 50 miles away.

Paul's mentality has always been difficult and I am about the only member of the family who can handle him. As you have admitted darling, quite unconsciously you were the cause of the trouble - but... don't fret... Paul has always been a great kid for the girls and since you were at home during the day and were naturally thrown together somewhat... I guess he just concentrated on you. Here's a nice bloke but terribly thoughtless. And you just have to lead him and point out where he is being unbearably rude. Will you give me his address and I will write and cheer the old boy up.

They don't make any allowances at home for the lousy effect the army has on these lads.

That also answers Jimmy's trouble, but you might give me his address as well as a I will write to him.

Don't bother about of the lining of the ??? darling I can't afford it just yet, until my money comes through. I am rather short.

I don't know what sort of books I do want... If and way and when Widdy has finished with Seven Pillars of Wisdom, you might get him to send that as I have only read the first chapter or two... Perhaps it was a silly request, since with all my books being in store there is nothing at home to send me; unless it is one or two of the latest Penguins of the more serious type or a so-called literary novel.

The enlargement of that passport photo must be terrible, and the thing itself was only too ghastly. Incidentally I have no real photo of you. If I send one of those Poly photos would you have it enlarged for me. I think I will enclose one!!

Our only telephone is I field thing and though you could get a message through in an emergency, we are not allowed to have private calls, because it is using the operational line.

Re: boots or stockings I should buy boots.

Will you send me

1. your stocking size
2. colour

I won't promise but I think I can get you a dozen or so pairs.

Am doing a little sketching up here of Mac: and so on... No landscapes it's a bit too windy. However since all my colours, brushes etc. are in store my activities are somewhat curtailed.

Your letters are not censored darling... It does not matter what comes up here in the way of information: it's what goes out.

My servant is quite a good lad, not extraordinary in any way, except maybe a dry sense of humour - we really manage to be surprisingly happy with nothing... We have to be!

The Don R is just off with the post darling so I must finish that...

Will you send me a birthday card for the Mater. I can't buy anything up here.

All my love darling.

Goodnight, I will write you a newsy in a day or so. God bless you, Tony.

26/11/1941 From Poolewe

From Tony To Joan

Wed 26/11/41

Darling

So sorry that I had to finish Monday's letter in such a hurry. The dispatch rider (Don R) was breathing down my neck in his panic!

There is of course but little news... Though I believe I promised a newsy...

However, a fearful gale is blowing - causing us much worry, as there is so little that can be done with the men. There is not much comfort for them in a hut with half of the roof blown off! And outdoor work is impossible.

The glass of our Tilley lamp melted the other night and fell in my hat burning the lining out and nearly ruining the whole thing.

Of such trivialities is our life!

Our bath is 75 yards away from the mess - in a hut with no lighting - the bath is always filled with earwigs and other bugs and the water comes out (when it comes out) a rich brown... So I bath in a teacup (sometimes!!) or use the shower (sometimes!!).

Existence is very dirty - bodily! - morally we are as driven snow... Not that I would be anything else, even if the opportunity knocked, but a little temptation would make life more interesting.

Last Sunday week, I went to confession and communion. It was very quaint in our little old shack.

There were of course no confessionals - we went boldly into this extremely well lighted hut and knelt down by the side of the Padre's chair, having made a somewhat lurid confession, I then asked him into the mess for a cup of coffee! (The girls will appreciate this!)

Incidentally I had to promise that I should never sleep with you again - awfully hard!!

Am eating and eating and it is all going to my tummy, ballooning it out as though I was six months gone. If only this was riding country and I could get a horse, I should soon get that down. So suppose I shall have to have do PT or play football or something.

The other day we annoyed the cooks by telling them they had to do PT every morning - so they retaliated by giving us corn beef or some rubbish for dinner. However, we fixed them! We turned them out at 9.30 pm and told them we wanted supper at 10.00 and for supper they would cook steak, chips and a fruit pie for sweet.

We got it! And ate it!

(This after our 8.00 dinner) and have had no more trouble from the cooks.

As you may have guessed our batmen rule us with a rod of iron... So when we tried to put them on PT, they simply threatened to go back to "duties" and to throw up their steward job. Being completely in their hands, we had to give in. So, the batmen don't do PT.

I had occasion to turn some blokes out of the NAAFI 20 minutes past closing time – this meant a war with the NAAFI manager... He capitulated! And presented us with a tin of golden syrup the next morning as a peace offering! So now we have syrup for tea.

This sort of semi comedy and mock tragedy goes on all the time so that, though life is very simple, narrow perhaps, and sexless, it's never boring. We have no radio therefore, no music... But, by the same token there is no chance of Jazz to drive me mad. There is no pictures (films) so we can't get bored with that!

No drinking, no sparkle, no dazzle, no garish lights, no shrill women, no jazz... NO anything... nobody has no... anything... with which to plunge, in boredom despair.

Just the ordinary lonely, lonely things, with perchance a quirk of humour! And often the slashing rain and hurrying, scurrying, howling, prowling, screeching, searching, wrecking buffeting WIND!

God bless you my love, Tony.

PS don't forget STOCKING SIZE AND UNDIES SIZE if you want them too I don't promise but here's hoping!

30/11/1941 From Poolewe

From Tony **To** Joan

Comment Tony moved from LAA to HAA.

Sunday the 30/11/41

Darling

I am in that after luncheon semi comatose state. So don't worry if this letter is not particularly vital.

Having got that far I went to sleep. It's now after tea.

Thank you darling for all the news from home... I am greatly worried about the whole show and don't know what to advise the Mater to do. Am trusting to providence!

I think I am answering two of your letters in one, this weekend. Note in one of them that you went to the Russian ballet and were disappointed in the show, you may have chosen the wrong thing to see, to begin an enthusiasm for the ballet. Surely Chopinara is a comparatively modern thing - a compilation of bits of Chopin's work... devised, unless I'm mistaken, as a sort of monument to him. But I forget who did the choreography... In any case my recollection of

the thing is so hazy that I may be completely wrong. There is quite a good little book published by Penguin called Ballet and written, I believe, by the funny man Askill.

Darling, please do not fret about wounding my pride my giving me presents... I think if anything it's my vanity that suffers as, owing to circumstances, I am unable to shower you with those pretties and things which you so appositively lash on me. Realising your too generous nature, I know that unless you really make a great effort to conserve your money, you will find that you have spent all of that available capital which you have behind you. So do be careful darling and don't splash your money around – from experience I know just how quickly money can be spent on frivolities.

You have spent so many, many pounds on me recently that I am more than ashamed every time you spend something else.

You say that you are looking forward to seeing some of my work in store...

There is nothing there darling! Except a few reference things that I did at school and saved before as notes for future use. Plus an odd scribble or two. I find that I am terribly out of practice, my hand won't play and I can get only the queerest things to work with, such as greaseproof paper and odd bits of blackboard chalk - it is making things rather difficult. It is rather too cold to sit out in the open sketching bits of Scotland. And in any case the result is likely to be only too Christmas cardy, in this dramatic countryside and my present sentimental mood.

If the things do come out of store, I would like you to lay hands on every available brush pencil, tube or paint and other drawing and daubing instrument and send them to me... The sight of them may inspire me – in any case, I need some sort of self expression and some sort of outlet for my energies.

Tried to play a little soccer on Saturday – but as I know but little of the game, I found it rather difficult – Mac is a Tunbridge bloke and therefore a great football player and cricketer, and of course absolutely revelled in the game, croaking himself completely. However, it's good fun and I am seriously wondering what I shall do to keep fit – gosh! I'm stiff.

Have heard from Neil recently with his devastating news. I suppose that he and Yvonne will get married now – there seems to be some divine act in this business of we four boys.

Neil will certainly stop at home now.

I, against my will, seem to have been shot into heavier whereas if I had been in LAA, I should almost certainly be on the sailing list. {Moved from Light Anti Aircraft Artillery to Heavy Anti Aircraft Artillery}

And Jimmy and Paul and Victor seem to be here for good. Wonder what's happening to Widdy?

Since you are doing such wonderful work already darling – I hope you won't have to do some petty ammunition job.
All my letters are censored darling. I know Mac and I sign the envelopes, and of course we have to censor all the section's letters, but sometimes they get an additional censoring by the army censors and I am not quite sure to what extent they do this.
Have not heard from Don yet, though I wrote to him some time ago.
Give my love and let me have the latest news from time to time. All my love sweetheart. Goodnight and God bless. Tony.

01/12/1941 Poolewe Achnasheen
From Tony **To** Mater
Comment unsure of date but maybe Jan 1942

379 HAA Bty RA
Tournig House
Poolewe
Achnasheen
Co. Ross
Scotland

Date – some time about Nov 41 Dec 41 Jan 42

Darling Mater

So sorry that I have been so long in writing to you – all my correspondence is in a ghastly state, haven't written to anybody except Joanna for weeks (and only one a week to her).
Very little to write about except that I have been frightfully busy since my M.T. course.
We are so frightfully short of officers that for the past two or three weeks I have been handling the site on my own – quite a big job. However the position has improved in the last two days – new officers have arrived in the last two days and prospects of leave are infinitely more possible and nearer.
For the first time for ages I have had quite a lazy day – which means that I have refused to do any work after tea! And so am luxuriating by scribbling of a note or two.
A padre turned up this morning so we had the unusual consolation of Mass.
Nobody could serve, so I did – took me back quite a day or three, to half-

forgotten times... I was quite thrilled, it seemed so absurdly "fitting" that I should be serving the mass for my men.
Weather here alternates between days of fierce frost (25 to 30 of frost) [Fahrenheit] and warm balmy weather reminiscent of Torquay. The snow has been down to within 300 feet of the M.S.L. [Mean Sea Level] but never seems to settle in the valleys
in the West of Scotland – in the East of course the snow is terrific. Gales much as usual – continuous. Am very glad to have my sheepskin waistcoat on the colder days... tho' the other day when I put it on for pure swank I was sweating within 5 mins.
Joanna tells me that you are not really well – I am sorry – terribly sorry to hear it... However I more or less guessed that you would have your usual winter troubles – you should come up to Scotland – preferably the East Coast – where the air is like wine and it is so cold, that you haven't time to think of colds and worry about them – you are too busy trying to keep warm!!! I don't think this warm Western climate can be too health making... however living in the open air one becomes more or less immune and quite hardy.
As I have no further news of the furniture I take it that the council has allowed you to keep it in store for a little longer.
Joanna's letters always seem to mention somebody who is on leave, so I guess you have a pretty lively time at home... and a fairly quite one now the raids seem to have fallen off.
As you have a radio and certainly the daily newspaper on the day they are published, there is but little news of general interest that I can relay – that you don't know already – except that the battery will be going mobile in May or thereabouts and I am supposed to be going to the Orkneys or India.
All my love Tony

04/12/1941 Poolewe Achnasheen
From Tony **To** Neil

379 HAA Bty RA
Tournig House
Poolewe
Achnasheen
Co. Ross
Scotland

This is assumed to be Neil Callow
judging from the remarks re
Yvonne and marriage.
They married in Jun 1942

Darling Old Son

Many thanks for your two letters, I am sorry mine has taken so long to find you – I wrote it about a month ago.

Re your book... I find much in it of interest but should soon have finished with it... SNAG.

It's secret info and mustn't be sent through the post however there should be a bloke going down to London on leave somewhere near Streatham and I will get him to drop it in.

Was rather shaken to get your newsy on the new job. Everything seems to be such a mess with our little old gang; however you will I suppose get lots more ?tapes? and practically a certainty of a home job, most amazing how you have managed to miss the bogey. With a more or less static job of good positions and income I don't suppose you will worry so much about the pip -

There is not a hell of a lot in this racket – tho' one is glad of the opportunity to use the grey matter and spot and look after the mess.

Suppose that when you know definitely how you stand in the army, thoughts of nuptial bliss will come to the fore again and you will be replanning your belated marriage. What does Yvonne think about things? For the Lord's sake if you do go all wedlock make it during or about the time of one of my leaves.

Next should be about beginning of Feb 42. Goes doesn't time fly another two months and I shall have been in t'army 2 years.

Can you sorta make a tentative effort for leave about that time or are you going down for Xmas?

Gofnall Hall sounds fun – but I suppose you are rather a long way from civilisation 7 or 8 miles... dear dear!! That would have destroyed me a few months ago and is I s'pose a plumy nuisance at times...

But... me old cock we are 50 miles from the nearest station and 98 miles from the nearest town... However the scenery is gorgeous, the sheep are... just sheep!! Lots of 'em tho' – and of course I have some of the amenities, morning tea and... no I think that's all...!! Never mind – it's damn good fun at times and once you get used to the idea there's a hell of a kick in it.

Today I asked some blokes cleaning Ammo if they were bored with the job..!

Selecting 4 of the smallest from the [group], I sent them to draw spades, sandbags and a pick... walked them up a hill (mountain not hill)... Arriving at the chosen spot, I threw off my blouse, hat and gloves and looked at my watch (great gesture), it was 16.00hrs...

“Now blokes you want some tea today... But we don't get it until we have dug a rifle pit 6 foot x 3 foot six and sandbagged an arm rest and parapet”.

Poor little buggers!! They knew I was bluffing and entered unto the spirit of things...

By 10 to 5, my hands were a perfect mess of blisters, but we had done it... it was 4 foot deep. And were they proud!!

I've got some great lads up here. They are all 5 foot nothing but work like stink... And I love working with them it's such a change from the Bumph War.

Incidentally having tried the pit for firing position... comfort etc.

I told one of the blokes to get in and try... Poor little devil couldn't even see over the top... so I shall have to build a firing step.

Pardon the trivialisation old son, but little happens up here. Its rather like running a community from scratch... Before the wheel was invented!! and the devil had introduced Radio.

We are not forgotten tho' – oh ho the NAAFI Cinema comes once every six weeks... when it can find it way up... The last one was blown off the road into some chasm or other – I hope the projector wasn't broken.

Awful thought.

All the best old boy – let me know from time to doings how everything is.

Here's to a pint or three on our next....

N.B. Have given up the whisky as I drank the bottle in two or three days and it is expensive.

So am now T.T. and don't mind one little bit – how the boy changes.

All my Love

Tony

04/12/1941 From Poolewe

From Tony To Joan

4/12/41

Good morning darling

Afraid you won't get this letter for some time as tonight's post has gone.

The leathers arrived last night. Darling they are gorgeous! Absolutely marvellous! You are good, sweetheart, and the coupons they must have cost you... why did you do it... you will be so short yourself now... And after all my little economy talks too!

I hunted among the things and practically tore the cigs to pieces, in a search for a letter – nothing!

I don't know how to thank you for the pretties, but you must consider them as Xmas and birthday present things for the next hundred years or so, as I absolutely refuse to accept any more of your hard-earned coupons and so on – and won't allow it... So there!

I was going to ask you a lot of questions but have just had your letter and it answers them all.

Thank you so much for the Mater's card and the sizes of the stockings, etc. The gloves are perfect darling, so is everything else. Please don't bother to buy the "Seven Pillars", I'll read it sometime. Am ordering your stockings first darling – I don't know how the supply is, so I am not so sure of the girls' or the Mater's, will do my best. Am sending under separate cover a wee thing or two which you might find of some use – a nighty or two and some panties – they are only cheap wee things darling, but things are rather difficult to get hold of. I tried to get you some Spanish Silk or some lace things – in gorgeous flame and so on – could only manage the good old oyster and pink, however, hope they will fit - send them back to me if they are N.B.G.

Stockings I shall have to send later when they come through.

So very afraid my dear that I shall not be able to give you anything really pukka for Christmas, as it does not look as though I shall get any leave before then to go to the shops. Will the nighties do for a little? Until I come up to town.

With this quaint post arrangement, I, of course, never know what letter you are answering, and I don't suppose you know which I am - it's all very difficult. Have now been in the regiment one month and time is flying. In 2 more God willing! I shall be home for a spot of leave.

Spend a fair amount of time on reading up here: Mac having fortunately collected some books together. Shakespeare, Ben Johnson – Sam of the same (or rather Boswell on him) and some Wilde. Was reading an appreciation on the Mortal Bard last night and became quite interested in the philosophies and arguments as propounded – so much so that, under the stress of these (intellectual!!) pursuits, my ego suddenly sprang like a startled buck from my earthy husk and wandered over the last two years, looking down the vista of the months to that far away time when I lived in a house (real one!) and was surrounded with my books and brushes and things and perhaps, for the first time, I saw my life in perspective over the last few years and realised how very different this life is... How much ground I have (perhaps) lost and what a long time seems to have elapsed since those early days of the war. And I saw me as a soldier (how I used to loathe them) and really wished this war would end, so that I might live, in paint, in music and in poetry.

My god... Two years ago, I said that "when I am in the army, then shall I die" and, in any case, I am not long here in the physical sense. What strange clairvoyancy was this?

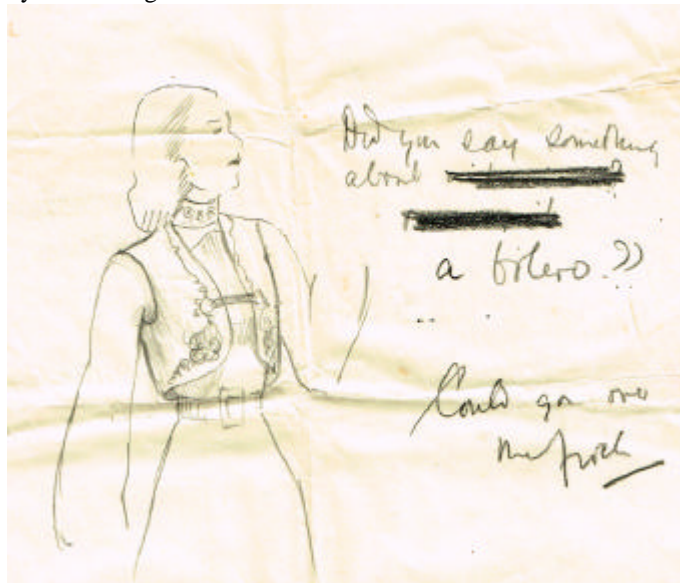
For it is time... I am dead! And... the extraordinary thing is I didn't realise until last night - no rather thought - I had this different life and a new life... but a WIFE!! Oh vague deceit.

Damn the yearnings for what is gone. This is a fight somewhere and we must slaughter and be slaughtered before...
Die for shame! This introspection. I have a job, a great job. On with the war...
Annihilation!
Had a marvellous time today – took 4 little blokes out with me and five spades and made the poor little devils dig like hell for ¾ hour - working like mad myself – until we had dug a bloody great hole. Then we sandbagged it and came home to muse our blisters - my uniform is getting so tight I must have some exercise. The blokes either think I am a blasted nigger-driver or a hell of a chap... I sweated with them throwing shovel full for shovel full with them and licked my calluses... Was it all frightfully demeaning? 'Tis a debatable point
but... grand fun!
Do forgive these scrappy trivialities my dear – we attach such minimal importance to the little things that make the whole wheels go round and we usually have to manage without the wheels. Our civilisation approximates to the happy state before such things were discovered and the devil had kicked the radio out of hell, to be a torment to us miserable sinners. In fact our civilisation is gorgeous but oh! that you were here to share this mountain vastness.
"Oh father, what a hell of witchcraft lies
In the small orb of one particular tear!"
I cry!! or
Shall I laugh with whirligig mad bad hurly burly?
Too, too ego.
Forgive... God bless, Tony.

5/12/41
Good morning darling.
Here to a new day.
Just a thought.
If the nighties don't fit, send them to me for exchange. DON'T give them to the girls... they are for you and you only!! Love Tony.

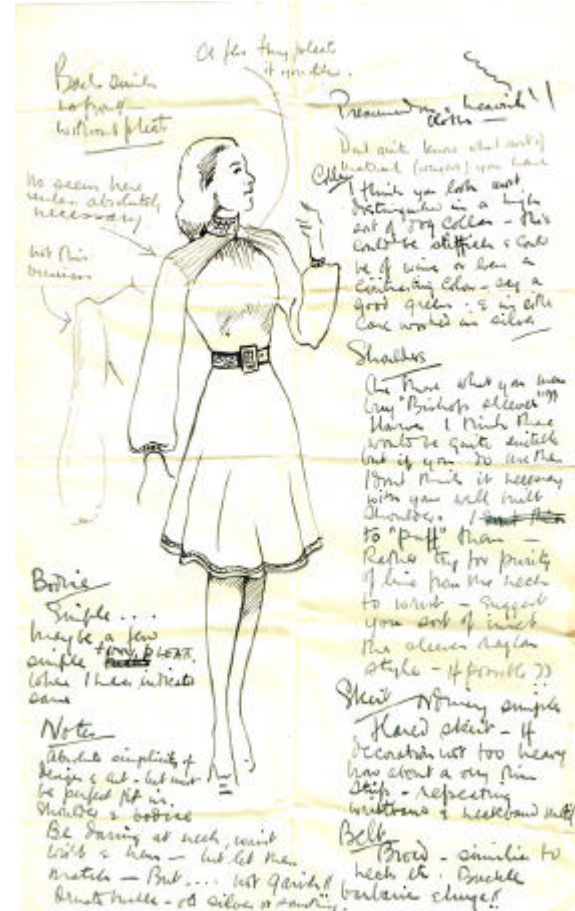
06/12/1941 From poolewe
From Tony To Joan
Comment see drawings of dress design

6/12/41
 Good evening!
 Darling
 I have been jotting down a few notes for your dress – am greatly handicapped by not having



1. some of the cloth to play with... I could drape you and find out something about it and so on...
2. not knowing about what you want the dress for... morning, night, afternoon, or evening – and just a tea gown or the complete works!

You suggested Russian – I have gone a bit Hungarian in one of these – or a tunic.
 Something about style I had jotted down may save you material as you could use an undergarment... with perhaps the Hungarian sleeves and a cravat... revealed by the jacket or some sort (sleeveless).
 The sketches are really only vague, intended to help you crystallise your ideas. I am very out of touch with contemporary fashion, so these are probably frightfully demode.



Monday 8/12/41

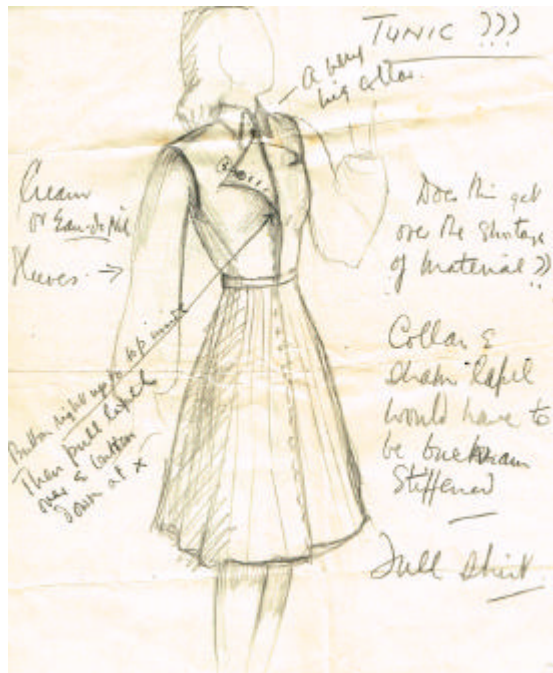
No letter so must finish off without darling.

Have just come in from some field works and am extremely damp with that peculiar Scots mist.

Have prostituted my art (???) and copied your photograph. Something I disapprove of very much... it's not ever good, or fair for that matter – still I am sending it as a sort of illustration of what a drawing shouldn't be like – the point is that Mac has dragged out all his photographs of his wife and has “commissioned” me to do likewise for him. Looks as though I am going to have a busy hour.

Whatever you do darling, let it be simple... but your ornament, if any, very bold.
 Forgive my weakness for high necks and cravats, but I think they are most flattering to one's carriage and usually look very distinguished.
 You are a little inclined to be flat breasted so do not be afraid of anything which accentuates your breast line – your shoulders are beautifully made and squared and don't really need the modern “puffs” and leg-of-mutton sleeves.
 If you have a tunic type of thing, make sure that it is cut well and tailored and I think I should have it buttoned down one side, i.e. “double breasted” style.
 And now darling I think I will await your next letter before finishing this.

The sketch of you is unfinished! Very.
 Have now been here just a month – it might be but a day or a year so
 meaningless is time – in two weeks' time Mac will be back from leave and six
 weeks after that I come home for a few days... But do we delude ourselves!!
 Give my love to Jean and so on, sometime.
 Goodnight and God bless, all my love, Tony.



07/12/1941 Poolewe Achnasheen Co.Ross

From Tony To Mater

Comment Date?

Assumed to be from Poolewe before the letter of 25th Dec
Estimate 7th Dec 41

Dear Mater

Many thanks for your letter.

I thought of you during your celebration... so sorry the card was so tatty – but things are difficult as you may appreciate.

Think it best that you should stay on at the house for the time being – it is a bit of an adventure to move into a larger place especially as rents seem to be so high still. The furniture will be rather a snag but there is not a dickens of a lot of it and it should go into the house somewhere – do hang on to what you have of it, though, old dear, because it's the only home you really have at the moment and tho' sadly knocked about it is no doubt serviceable.

I think I should hang on to the piano also.... It is the only one we really own isn't it and you'll only get a bob or two for it these days – it could be put in the lounge perhaps.

Nobody lets me know the position regarding Yvonne and Marie... am not qualified to offer an opinion on their probable call up. You seem to think Yvonne will go after Xmas – it will be quite a loss I imagine but you have been expecting it for some time eh!

I don't think that you will have to help... you almost have a business??

Re money and backing – I am very broke myself this month and if we are to have any sort of leave I shall have to start saving – what with the income tax I have to pay and other expenses I don't get much to save.

As you know my bootmaker, hatter and tailor's bills are fairly heavy – quite sufficiently to keep me poor for a month or two.

However you won't starve!! Let me know sometime how much you owe Joanna if you are not cleaning this off I guess the least I can do is to settle that little debt sometime. I guess she'll wait a day or two if necessary.

If there is anything I can do from time to time let me know – I feel rather out of it right up here and not able to help much but you always seem to handle your affairs so well yourself that it is almost an uninvited intrusion on my part

to babble.

You might be able to wangle a spot more out of the Wandsworth Boro' Council for the Colomal and damp – my books are worth quite a bit and must be very near ruined by now in that bally stable. Hope you will be able to dry a few things out and look after them when you get them to the house. It's all going to be a bit of a crush – still it will be nice to feel that you have your own furniture with you again instead of that frightful muck of the Rayment's.

What is happening to Nita??? Query Query!!

Give everybody my love.

Shall be seeing you (I hope !!) in 7 weeks.

All love

Tony

09/12/1941 From Poolewe

From Tony To Joan

9/12/41

Good evening

Darling,

Am not feeling up to a long letter... I didn't realise that we had to be inoculated every year and told paddy the (M.O.) so... As it is about 19 or 20 months since I was last done, he asked me if I would care for a jab now!

Anyway, he had bunged some TAB and anti-Tet. into a hypodermic and shot it into me. The effects wear off after about 48 hours, so it is nothing really – but while it lasts you have a mild attack of typhoid fever plus a very stiff arm and an astronomical temperature.

I must apologise for sending, in a weak moment, that sketch, it was pretty foul.

Have done one of Mac's wife from several photographs which is quite reasonable considering my long time away from the brush. Somewhat heartened I am tackling a sketch of Mac himself. However, was never very fond of the pencil.

Mac is bringing back from his leave some inks and a brush and some paper so that I can play around with some wash drawings.

Shall have to give this letter up when my right arm becomes infected.

Will you write and let me know if you want some more undies and colour preference, if you have any. You must save one of the night dresses for when I come on leave.

Please excuse the pencil and the writing. Am shivering because of it.

Only just over two weeks till Christmas. We are already preparing, by buying paper chains, beer, cigs and so on and planning some entertainment - we have to provide all our own of course. How I wish you could come up to play for us. The piano is of course ghastly with all the felts gone and makes a hideous row.

Mac has even tried to get his wife up here at Christmas but is impossible. They will not issue a permit.

On Sunday we have a debating society and I am proposing "that a town life is the finest possible" or something.

I shall probably win considering the country up here. There is too much of it for these blokes.

Did I thank you for the flannel - of course I had it about a week ago. And Mater hasn't written for about a week or more. Still I suppose she has nothing to write about.

Neil... neither have I. I let me know some time what you are doing with the crepe - am terribly interested in all you're doing.

You should have a great time with Peter on leave. Enjoy yourself and meet lots of nice boys. Goodnight darling, Tony.

13/12/1941 From Poolewe

From Tony **To** Joan

Joan darling

Your letter relieved the anxiety I was beginning to feel for you and everybody at home, not having heard from you for 6 to 7 days, I was about to send a wire. Rabbit or Hare skin is about the cheapest type of fur you can buy - you can buy a pair of rabbit gloves for about 10 shillings these days, I think, before the war they were even cheaper... If you really want to cure it the thing to do is to keep it supple and prevent it shrinking too much - the American aborigines cured their buffalo by rubbing ash into them (if I remember right) - anyway clean off as much of the under skin and fat as possible: and a little oil would no doubt keep it supple while trying

Sketching out of doors is still too much of a problem. If I do anything which I consider to be not entirely puerile attempts I'll send it on.

Shall do what I can for stockings for the girls and the Mater - don't think I can afford to give them clothes and things this month - had a rather heavy time with tailor's bills and so on.

Do you want any more things of a similar nature, i.e. panties and things? Let me know if you do and I will do what I can... but darling... this is terribly

difficult! I hate to be mean but am afraid that if we are to have a good leave, I shall have to save a spot of money during December and January.

The whole idea is revolting. If you want any more, I think I can get them, but am terribly afraid darling that much as I should like to - I shan't be able to give them to you. (There I've said it) - didn't think I should ever get to the point, it's abominable this poverty but guess you know my financial position as well as I do.

So glad you like the wee things anyway. It was but a meagre gift - and of no account, but I thought you might find them useful.

What have you done about the photograph I asked you to get enlarged?

Do hope you have put that in hand because I am longing for one.

Have never played Mahjong in my life but hear it is quite a fascinating game. So glad Peter has good leave.

You didn't say that Jimmy and Victor turned up for the weekend. Hope they had a happy time... Both are no doubt in need of a little consolation... Poor Jimmy and poor Victor being RTO'd from the commandos.

Mac has gone on leave and should be with his wife by now... I bet they are having a beautiful time!

The Don R has come up for the mail, so shall have to finish. Don't forget the photograph! Love Tony

16/12/1941 From Poolewe

From Tony **To** Joan

Comment dress.jpg

16/12/41

Joan darling

Many thanks for your letter - I don't know when you sent it but it wasn't the one with the sketch in.

Take it that my notes were of some use to you. On the whole the layout is eminently suitable but not very happy about the pleats in the skirt (under belt). I think it will probably look "bunchy"; you might try the effects of pleating the body only. Many thanks for the liquation.

You are certainly becoming a lot more articulate, by that I mean of course on paper. Your letters are longer and reading much easier!

Why not start those autobiographical notes on the parts of your life that you have told me nothing about?

Send it to me in letter form, instalment by instalment. It will be grand practice and get it off your mind. Also putting your thoughts on paper helps to collate and orientate them. Then we might knock the completed notes into a story?

On Sunday I proposed in the mess debating club. We had some great fun. They love an opportunity of a little friendly slanging and think it's great to be called Mr. So and So by an officer.

Tonight we are playing them in another darts competition... managed fairly well to keep the men amused (our greatest problem!), though it makes great inroads into our "spare" time and I have to literally grab an hour or two to write letters. Frightfully scrappy letter darling, am mulling too much over it. Could you get the Mater to make me a small laundry bag about 2 foot by 1 foot six hemmed top with a string to pull it up. My soil things are usually slung in a corner of my room and it doesn't do them much good.

Books you sent are huge success and should keep me happy for a time - the reading outwits chess you know and time goes quickly enough - too quickly during the day - there is so much to be done. Am putting a lot of spare time into making a sand model of the district for the men to play with - map reading practical exercises, etc. and getting a lot of fun out of it and shall be racing around tomorrow on the motorcycle if the weather permits. Have been trying to make leave look near by writing down a lot of dates.

Shall have been here just 12 weeks on January the 29th and actually on the site 12 weeks on Feb 2nd. That is the Monday and roughly the dates you suggested - with any ordinary luck I should get either of those dates.

With all this talk of dates, must not forget your periods or curse or whenever you call the menstrual thing. On a very rough calculation I make it about the 27th to the 30th of January - let me know if I'm a lot out. You must be on the top of your form during my furlough - don't want you to be down in the mouth or grouchy.

Mac is a rather older man than your cousins so he doesn't know them.

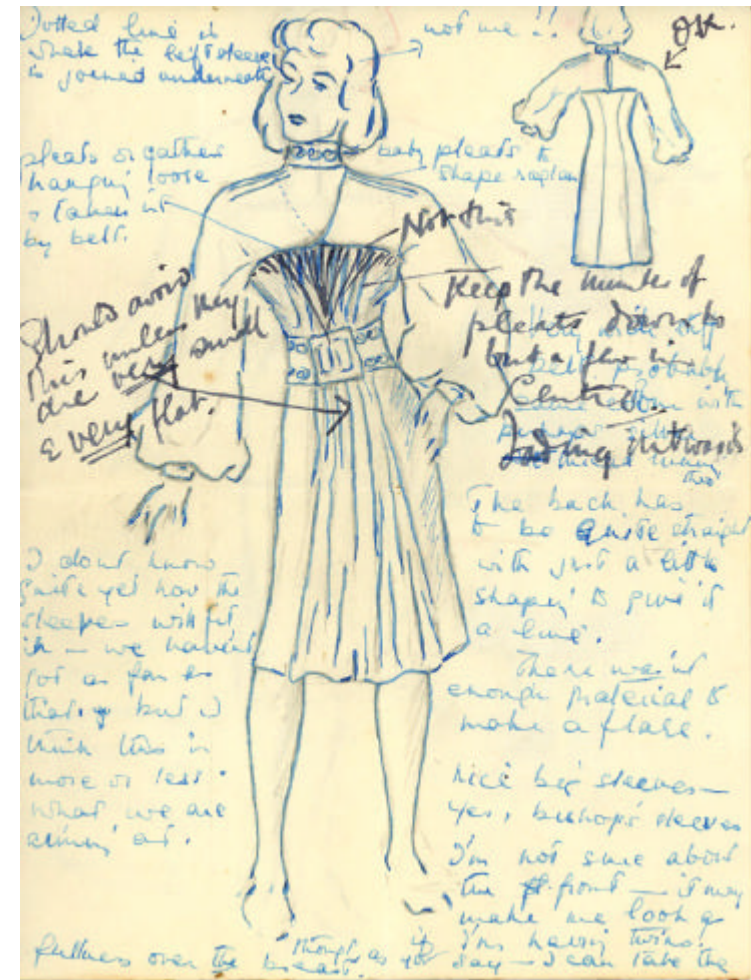
Curious coincidence the shop waller - you don't say how he knew the family.

Even I didn't know your grandparents were at Norwood - strange how little we really know of each other - or anybody for that matter - you certainly start those narrative letters at once.

Then when you have mastered the craft of verifying what a talented child you will be. Incidentally - I think your drawing shows more than attitude. It would seem though, that you have not had much instruction except at school. Dear, you are terribly clever.

The world will seem a very quiet place when I come home on leave. It's blown gales for the last five weeks and rained! Must away to our darts match, it is getting late. Don't forget PLEASE... photo and if you or the Mater could manage the linen bag.

Love Tony



20/12/1941 From Poolewe

From Tony To Joan

Comment Date Estimated

Estimate 20 December 1941

Darling

Your news is certainly disquieting - however you may be among the lucky 12... what chance? There are of course alternatives to the ATS... Home Service (fires and things), nursing (poor pay) and the factory - that sounds

pretty callous. But I suppose there are a lot of nice girls making balloons and things. I don't know? Of course, you could always apply for a commission in the ATS and I should think life is quite bearable in the mess.

Since this war is affecting our lives and our pockets so deeply, I see no reason why it shouldn't trample on our love life and harden our hearts - it's all rather terrifying and I am not being a lot of help or much consolation, I know.

But the jolly old country is demanding the supreme sacrifice of giving up or parting from our loves, mistresses, and mothers, our baths and our money (sic)! And I think the sooner we get down to the job in hand, the sooner it will be over - of course you, the girls and the whole family have been rather fortunate (though not more so than many) and I suppose we shall have to resign ourselves to all you girls doing odd and dirty jobs.

My heart bleeds for you, my prayers go with you and I think it is pretty rotten show when our women have to take up the sword.

But... there is damn all I can do about it darling. Try your damndest to remain in the mobile thing - if that fails - God! what then? Let us hope there will be no need to wonder!

Your remarks on home seem to suggest that life is becoming more normal... do hope that you are settling down with them and understanding their quaint ways.

Your ambitions and your hopes darling are your own - all power to you, perhaps they are keeping you alive - gosh I wish I could plan or hope or even foresee tomorrow... present life is too destructive for the castles - moon beams are rare in the army and the guns soon blow down playing cards.

It is all futile... tomorrow we shall be dead!!! Let us await!

Am ashamed of my impecuniosity... will let you know when and if the frillies - how much? Can't get anything for presents or any cards for Christmas - will you forgive me. All the very best for Christmas darling, have a good time. My thoughts will be with you and I shall raise a glass or two to you.

Goodnight my dear, every joy for the Nativity.

Tony

23/12/1941 From Poolewe

From Tony To Joan

23/12/41

Darling

You'll know you are a naughty girl to send that money on to me. I had no idea you intended doing that. Am ordering the necessary, but will you let me know first, exactly what you want and shall hold things up until then.

Have not heard from Mac yet so am not quite sure of the position re. the frillies. Do you want night dresses as well as briefs - will see what I can do for the girls in the stocking line. Must get down to something very soon. Christmas spirit seems to be in the air a bit but by the time you get this note everything will be all over.

Gerps sent me some hankies and Nita some fags, feel terribly mean, not being able to return all these things but simply cannot find any shops - cannot get out in any case.

Re: the bone... of course you have not read the letter but when you know the Mater a little more, you will realise how much she resents any of us "interfering" in the way she orders things.

I know this is a bit like a fool offering her advice when she asked for it... she also made a general complaint of how hard up she was, so I offered to help, saying that I could not do so this month because of expenses but offering to do something next month. I was twice a fool to do this because I thought she was in a jam for money and should have known that it was a general complaint, also foolish to have offered her money at all, the Mater thinks it is a slur on her independence and hates us offering to help, thinking it is a slight on her ability to manage their affairs.

Another thing - the Mater hates anybody to write to her about money because she can't answer back and stress her independence. I have in the past written her some charming letters offering help - but always with the same result of great offence! Finally, whenever I give advice or talk to her about the house, I naturally write "business"... considering each word and writing clearly and concisely and perhaps coldly without the "darlings", "mater dears" and all the other compliments that women seem to find essential and which, after all, only confuse the matter and the sense.

I think you would (quite rightly) be a little disgusted if you read my average letters to the Mater. A sort of slushy semi-love letter - which she demands and

is not happy unless she gets and is usually frantically annoyed if I dare suggest this is not quite applicable to details of gas and electricity like bills - the baker, the butcher and the candlestick maker.

Surely even the question of what is to happen to the furniture and demands are an orderly and closely reasoned argument. Of course, I am thrice a fool to let myself be inveigled into advice on this nature, however every time I write I hope for the best.

But it is always wrong, and I am usually told I am insulting!

Of course, I understand the Mater and all her little peculiarities and having written to apologise in the usual demented lover fashion, it will be all right and everything will blow over. This to my MOTHER!!

But my dear!! I do take a poor view of you taking up the cudgels - when not having read the letter or knowing the Mater's reaction to even the mildest form of reasoned argument. Actually, most of the trouble (knowing the Mater) is because I asked her if I could help by paying you the money she borrowed, when I pay you what I owe you. MATER HATES BEING REMINDED however obligingly OF HER DEBTS.

That's the bone over anyway!

Do hope you have a wonderful Christmas darling and that your worries will come light right in the New Year. Don't fret too much about the mobile units scheme but be looking around meanwhile for something to replace the job should you have to leave. I'm a little out of touch with things in town, maybe the girls could help, look up some of the reserve jobs and try and crash into one - it should be fairly easy.

There is such a great demand for labour... your inexperience will be a nuisance where an office job is concerned but the need may be so great that this will not be an insurmountable obstacle.

Should be only another five weeks to leave I wonder! Must away to our darts tournament.

Love Tony

25/12/1941

From Tony To Joan

Comment Poolewe

Sunday

Darling

Sorry you backed out of your promise to write an autobiography.

Here's to the chat.

Am looking forward to smoking the grand pipe when I can get some baccy.

Haven't the vaguest notion what to give you my dear for Christmas, must have a see when I come home on leave when! Mac has left us - have new Commanding Officer seems OK.

Doesn't seem to be an earthly... of getting back into LAA - Sort of guiding hand suppose we shall stay in England. Bad show the Jap biz.

Looking forward to New Year - should only be a month or two between me and a spot of civilisation. Now!

All the very best my dear for the New Year.

Here's hoping you won't have to leave the post. Say a prayer for me. Give my love and best wishes (to Kay and people) for New Year.

Goodnight old darling.

Thanks a million for everything - made me feel that one wasn't forgotten you know.

God bless you and look after you. Tony.

25/12/1941 Poolewe Achnasheen

From Tony To Mater

Assumed to be from Poolewe Achnasheen

23/12/41

Dear Mater

Was very hurt to hear from Jo that for some extraordinary reason you took exception to my letter - it was in the nature of a business letter and you know when I talk about the home and money in that vein - I always work clearly and perhaps coldly!!

I know that you don't ask for money and if my suggestions upset you and your marvellous independence I am truly sorry - but really old dear... I suppose it's quite natural that, considering my circumstances, I should want to help you as much as possible... Therefore, I made the usual suggestion - I don't see any reason for offence that a son should want to "help his mother out" with her financial obligations.

However so be it... I am terribly sorry, and I'll never mention money again. Incidentally, the Preamble re my brokenness this month was not intended as a complaint. But rather an apology for not being able to help you this side of Christmas. So sorry I annoyed you old girl – you must try to get used to my cold calculated letters when I am writing business... Guess I had better leave you to carry on in your own way in future; am sure you will know what is best and how best to handle things – I am so many miles away I have no realistic conceptions of your difficulties.

Am terribly sorry that you are finding money short but know you will find (and like best to find) your own method of overcoming the present temporary difficulty.

I rather think I may have made matters worse... Because I am not very sure that I enclosed a note for you in my Christmas Wishes and in any case I addressed it to Joanna so that I could censor it myself.

However have sent you a greetings telegram which should arrive before this – with any luck you should get it on Christmas Day.

If you don't you will have know that my thought and best wishes have been with you all over this Xmas and that I have lifted a glass to you all.

Good night old thing
God bless and help you in the New Year to sort out your trials and troubles.
Love Tony

27/12/1941 From Poolewe
From Tony **To** Joan

27/12/41
Darling
Hope you had a marvellous Christmas... Considering all things we had a very reasonable time.

Started things on Tuesday night with a darts match and had drink in the men's mess, they seem to enjoy it quite a lot and feted us. Christmas day was hard work but dashed good; men had plenty to eat and finished up with a "smoker"... Had a number of drinks and suddenly discovered I was quite popular with the men... It was quite a thrill, and I am sure I don't deserve it, but time and time again I was shouted for and quite spontaneously they sang "for he's a jolly good fellow". I was extremely proud and quite frankly more than a little surprised.

Thank you so much for the pipe, it's terrific... Can't get any baccy up here tho'... still I can try. Do wish you wouldn't get these expensive things for me.

Darling, I feel so mean especially now that I have asked you to pay you for your own undies. It all seems so beastly, incidentally I ordered them and they may have arrived, and sending under separate cover some stockings for the girls and Mater. And will send you things when I can get some packing... Have sent off a cheque for them and I am not very sure whether there is sufficient cash in the jolly old bank to cover it, would you mind very much dear slinging in a cheque for the balance. *They came to £5.00 altogether. I had £3.00 off you so the balance is £2. I hate to have to ask you for this but will make it up to when I come on leave *NB Barclays Bank, Streatham High Road.

The two sets are complete as before, nightie and undies in Eau de nil green and white.

The stockings I'm giving to the Mater and girls are 9, 9 ½ and 10 which should, I think, be about right. They are very cheap things but all I can get. Thank you very much darling for the linen bag, it is wonderful. You are extraordinarily clever with your needle, it's simply grand!

Sorry if this is a dreary letter but I'm still suffering from Christmas! And glad about the photograph and looking forward to getting it. Will you forgive me if I don't write any more – am a little tired just now.

All my love, Tony.

01/01/1942
From Tony **To** Mater

Thought to be Xmas 42 from Poolewe

Dear Mater

Many thanks for the card and the Xmas Greetings.

Am enclosing 3 pairs of stocking – all I could get for you and the girls. So sorry they are so cheap, but are the best I could get.

So hope you had a Grand Christmas; ours was quite hectic and very busy – but of course not "homey".

All the best for the New Year.

Love Tony

05/01/1942

From Tony To Joan

Royal Hotel Ladybank Fife Scotland

5 Jan 1942

Last Friday I was informed that I was to report here for an MP (motor) course so here I am. Fatuous what! Just completed the first day and am frightfully tired.

I had a fantastic journey down here in the usual Scots manner. Started out from my gun site at 8.00 Saturday morning and by 9.30 the same night I had arrived 30 miles away from my destination... However, there was no transport or railway until Monday morning. So I stopped at Perth and thereby hangs a long story! Sufficient, at the moment, that I spent most of the small stuff I had on me... relying on the hotel to accept a cheque for my bill and then they refused!! By dint of much economy, cadging etc. McKenzie and I have just enough to settle are... but it was a near thing. They usually send the bill on to the C.O. when that sort of thing that happens... nasty!

I'm here for two weeks and shall be able to manage next weekend in

Edinburgh!! I hope! Still have to make enquiries about trains. Do wish you could spend it with me. The whole thing has been so rushed that I have only just had time to take a bath and look around.

The course is a quite charming and most unmilitary affair... we just stroll down to the workshops and pull a motorcar to pieces. Then put it together again. Decoking and so on.

It is rather like teaching your grandmother to... etc... The staff seem to realise that, and have left me quite alone so I'm as happy as a sandboy just tinkering with engines... Another officer is working with me and as he knows damn all about motor transport, I am teaching him some engineering.

Now that I am out of censor area I can explain one or two things which may have puzzled you.

I usually enclose the family's letters in an envelope addressed to you... so that I can scribble my signature across the corner "Censored". If I address them to the Mater it would look rather odd to have my own name on it.

I have not sent your undies on by post because there is a risk of the parcel being opened by the "Base" Censor Girls and I am afraid you would not get them. I took the chance on the last lot but of course they were my loss if they had gone so I did not worry. If leave looms reasonably near I shall bring them with me.

Was up at 5.30 this morning darling and am rather tired so forgive me if I do not write a long letter. Do hope the girls got their stockings.

All my love dear, Tony.

20/01/1942 From Poolewe

From Tony To Joan

Comment Date Est.

Estimate date

20 Jan 1942

Darling

So sorry that I have not written before. Have been terrible busy since I returned from Ladybank.

Please excuse if this is only a short, hurried note. Am frightfully tired and have a wee chill on my tummy or something.

The O.C. is away so no news of leave yet; am hoping for the best.

Was greeted with news of a transfer to Orkneys – but have heard nothing further... I wonder ?? Certainly hope not !! That would put me back a month or two for leave.

All my love darling – a long letter soon to you and all the folk at home.

Give my love to everybody. Good night my darling. God bless you, Tony.

27/01/1942 From Poolewe

From Tony To Joan

27 Jan 42

Scotland

Darling

Many thanks for the baccy darling - absolutely lifesaver as I have run out just before it arrived. "Black and White" is quite a good smoking mixture. The jolly old pipe is giving many a contented puff and is behaving itself admirably. So glad you had a good time with Peter - guessed you must have had a pretty hectic "do" - by the absence of letters and by the references to the odd spot and snifter or three.

Had quite a useful course with weekends in Perth, Edinburgh and Inverness. All very expensive but a change. Do wish you had been there to help celebrate. Inverness is a grand town with one or two usable hotels and some great walks. Most of the buildings are a pinkish sandstone which glows in the morning sun, in a very warm and satisfying setting, of green-blue pines and Cypress, and river, lots of river, very wide and shallow and fast moving and dotted with islands. The seagulls bathed in the river as the sun set behind it...

Sunday is ghastly in Scotland... I suppose it's ghastly anywhere if you don't know a crowd of people... but the closing of the pubs makes a lot of difference.

However, we managed to gate crash an army show called the "Barmoral". They had Captain George Clarkson and one or two pros and some very good amateur stuff. In our plight... we thought the whole show very good - how on earth they managed to get a licence to play on a Sunday, the lord only knows. I believe in Glasgow the cinemas are opened in the afternoon on Sunday, other than that there is nothing, not even a decent (or other) orchestral concert in Edinburgh. Goodness only knows what the poor bloody troops do. Have been playing a fair amount of bridge, poker and pontoon with the Norwegians who were staying with us. Thank goodness they have gone... the strain was too great. I am not much of a gambler and after the first two nights I was about £3.00 down. We played solidly until 1.30 each night. However, I managed to win it back - plus some more so it wasn't a nuisance. Steve, the bloke who is with me at the moment, won on the week about 50/- so somebody is very light.

Steve is a Streatham man - used to live just behind us.

Broached the leave question. God only knows when I shall get it. Officer in Charge suggested July, but I think it will probably be the end of March or early April (I hope). The first thing I heard when I returned was that I had been posted to the Orkneys. But that seemed to have died a natural death. So now they have put me down for the Indian army. What a life at last!!

Gosh darling I am dying to see you - someday I suppose!!

Will you tell me how much I owe you for baccy darling. I think I had better send on your things - was rather hoping to be able to bring them myself.

Among my clothes, darling, in your room there is a sort of heather-mixture pullover. Would you send it to me... Also, if you can get hold of one... a small address book, I have so many of the lads' addresses on slips of paper that I'm sure I shall lose some of them one day - just a tiny affair that I can carry around in my pocket.

All my love for now darling.

God bless you and after you, Tony.

29/01/1942 From Poolewe

From Tony To Joan

379 HAA BTY RA
Tournaig House
Poolewe
Achnasheen Co. Ross
29 Jan 42
Darling

After the last two short weeks in civilisation, I cannot again get used to the idea of not being able to keep in touch with you by phone or get a letter to you within a day or so. Afraid you will get this note very late. Have not heard from you for about a week. I suppose it is the post.

No more news of leave but a sort of confirmation of a transfer to the Orkneys. Shall not mind that too much as will get much longer leave from there and there is usually a chance of picking up a plane down to the south.

Everything seemed to fall terribly out of hand while I was away. It is taking time and a lot of work to get things working to my liking again. We also have a certain amount of study to put in, in the evenings. There does not seem to be much time for writing letters. I believe you alone have heard from me in the last four weeks. Will you tell the Mater and girls, darling, that I shall be writing soon as possible?

It is gradually getting cooler now, nights are quite cool, and it freezes most of the day, but the change is gradual. Not so upsetting to the jolly old body as the sudden change I experienced on the East Coast. The snow on the mountains is down to within 400 to 500 feet above mean sea level and is a grand sight. On a clear, sunny day, the whole show is, I imagine, rather like Switzerland.

Your letter just this moment arrives. Tut Tut - how cross!

Many thanks for the photograph darling. Think it is charming. You might have signed it!

Re: asking for 14 days leave - the shortage of officers in this battery is so acute one hesitates to ask for any leave. However, I may try it sometime.

Please don't nag m'dear about shortage of letters. Really am very busy and I usually write several pages when I do start. Have only had two letters from you in the last two weeks so please don't nag or I shall get very cross.

You view with dismay the Orkneys, actually in travelling time I shall be just as near home and if I get a plane am only 4 or 5 hours away... and up there we shall get 14 days furlough (I believe).

If you are in touch with Victor, you might let him know how undecided my leave is and let him make his own arrangements. It might mean the old boy hanging about for months.

Didn't realise that Peter was up for such a long time. Thought he went back before Paulus.

You seem to have had a reasonably good time with Peter and his friends. Should think Don will be up on leave again soon... don't know whether he will go to town or to Nottingham. Am always glad to hear that the old gang are still coming - it must make a lot of difference to you and the girls. The shortage of men folk must be shocking.

It slipped my memory! But I meant to tell you that on a dull grey day, the mountains stand out against the sky, vivid white, beautiful! And very like a Japanese print.

Incidentally John's remarks re: the 14 days before March 31 are suggestive?? ... Eh??

Are there odd sticks out of store yet?

I would be awfully obliged if you would send me my painting things when you see the light of day.

Are you short of chocolate? I think I can get some for you.

Re: stockings have written off and ordered some more, they should be arriving next week.

Must pack up your undies and send them off - so afraid you'll do something stupid darling and give them away.

Will you write and promise that you will keep them... after all I've got them especially for your bottom drawer, etc. and you have brought them yourself - NB I owe you a pound on them (don't let me forget). You put too much money into my account.

All my love darling, God bless you and look after you.

Leave will soon be around again, love Tony.

05/02/1942 From Poolewe
From Tony To Joan

379 HAA BTY RA
Tournaig House
Poolewe
Achnasheen Co. Ross

5 February 1942

Darling I am sending this by Steve in the hope that you will get it a little sooner if he delivers it in time...

Gosh what a week!

So many officers have gone on courses etc... We are terribly short handed and I was sent to another site to takeover by myself. Have been absolutely frantically busy, and nearly exhausted. But thank God! am back on my own site where things are more or less in order. For the past week I have been working solidly throughout the day until 10 or 11 at night... Every day!!!

So you must try and forgive me my darling for not managing to write more often. Will try to dash off a few lines more frequently in the future.

Thank you so much for the address book. It is grand... will you tell me how much I owe you for it. It seems to be a very good Moroccan or something, so should think it would be about 7/6. Oh yes, do let me know how much I owe you for the baccy. If you're going to be very obstinate sweetheart, I shall not be able to ask you any more favours. And then I shall be quite stranded. With leave so near (only another month now I should think) I'm getting terribly impatient to see you again. Have enjoyed a tranquillity, really amazing, since I have been up here, but am now beginning to miss all the things which I thought my work would compensate me... You! And some music, some pictures, and good conversation. Books I have a few! But nothing can replace the music that I crave. So do keep playing darling that you may play for me. Keep yourself beautiful that I may enjoy you, and together we will race hand in hand through the mad riot of a lover's leave... in spring. Take courage in the thought that every day I am overdue for leave is a day nearer spring! Already I feel it is in my body... only this morning amusing my men on parade by dancing with a whoop of joy across the frozen iron-hard ground... intoxicated with a ring of iron-shod heels on ice in the still frozen air.

I saw a daisy last week.

Oh and I found a sea urchin and I have a pretty coloured stone worked smooth by the sea for a paperweight; and lots of other things. My dog and my steward - sources of never-ending wonder, and... oh! the joy of living, the mountains, the scene, the blasting wind and tempestuous clouds.

But I have not you! Alas... a daisy is but a daisy and a stone but a stone. Because there is no magic... half of me a ranting blustering soldier... the other half?? Asleep?? quiescent perhaps annihilated...

And so darling I'm half vacuum... can but scabble in the mind for a few words, a line or two of ill contrived sentences with which to conjure up a picture of half a life.

I cannot finish - too, too sad... perhaps soon when duty permits - we shall together become revitalised

Goodnight my love, forgive this appalling note. Think of me a little sometimes, and look forward, onward to the near future. Nothing can keep us apart for very long. India is a long way off and I shall probably never get there. But somehow, I must be worthy of you... To drape you silks and satins and the fire of a great love.

God bless you, sweetheart... have patience and forgive me. Have a good time with all the lads on leave, Jimmy I know will entertain you. He may even become your lover - if he isn't already... he seemed very fond of you. And Victor is always a staunch pal and a grand fun. Don't be lonely my dear.

I must to bed now - the day has been a long one and responsibility is great. So must have a clear brain, yours Tony.

My watch has given up the ghost. Do you think the little man could do something? Tony.

07/02/1942 From Poolewe
From Tony **To** Joan

7 Feb. 1942

Darling

Do hope Steve has managed to get along and bring your things... he promised he would!

Has been a glorious day here - barmy and spring like. I wanted to show off my new sheepskin waistcoat, so put it on and paraded it. It was so hot that in 15 minutes I was sweating.

Have heard that I may be going to another site in the Battery (with my section) it's about 16 miles away and we shall have to march. Should be good fun.

All my love for now darling. The Don R is a waiting to take this away.

Tell Mater I shall be writing over the weekend. Goodnight and God bless,
Tony

09/02/1942 From Poolewe
From Tony **To** Joan

Sunday

Darling

Have just told the Mater that I am luxuriating in idleness, refusing to do any work after tea, but my conscience is worrying me so I might make this quite a short note and then get down to some work. However, I am sitting in my mess in ease, to wit, a dressing gown. Thought seems to come easier and work is not such a chore in these Aires.

Some more officers have joined this month, so proposals of leaves are rather more rosy and very much nearer. Shall talk to the Major tomorrow. Don't be surprised if I just walk in one day; it might quite easily happen like that. So think you had better get rid of any odd men hanging about the place. I might shoot them.

And now my darling your tragedy... for is it. I seem to remember the last year you were quite anxious to leave the jolly old free booters and join some respectable gang. Don't you want to drive FANY's [First Aid Nursing Yeomanry] or something.

Perhaps nursing isn't quite your cup of tea old thing... It may all be for the best... ever considered ENSA [Entertainment National Service Association] in a grade A1 mob. I believe there are 11 or 12 to be a grade A party and sometimes they get quite decent performers: Gielgud, Novello, Peggy, I believe and oh! Novello at somebody I believe their own! Lots of others - It's a thought... Drury Lane is the address.

But don't forget it would take you long, long away from me so have a care my darling.

Perhaps you'd better give mummies a miss and concentrate on doing nothing till my leave.

Yvonne and Marie will know more about the business side of the doings than I do.

If only I could land some cushy job at Brigade or Division, I would have you up here like a shot... but apart from this being an enclosed area, the life just here would be too lonely for you and very wild.

Probably the best way out would be for you to put on your very pretty things and go and see Bevin.

Oh! here is a corking idea, why don't you girls who are all slung out get together and organise something, anything would do, say, ARAM Women's Home Guard, they should never have conscripted such a delicious gang of soldiers. There are of course always the fireside forces ARR, AFS and all the rest of the initials.

Give your things to the girls if you insist my darling - but don't think that you are going to pay for them - if you will finally decide to make a present of them let me know and I will deposit a cheque with your bank for £6.00, which is the total that you have paid for them.

I hate all this talk about money and I'm dashed annoyed that you won't accepted the things, despite my promise that as soon as I can afford it I will send the girls something.

However darling if that's how you want it, go ahead and I will try and get some more things for you.

I do so want you to have some pretty things when I come home on leave. Nature is grand and beautiful up here, but sometimes one looks forward to the purely superficial prettiness of the boudoir. Especially when one has so long been divorced from those lighter more flippant and exquisitely useless delights of civilised existence.

Am I obscure darling?

Do you ever understand anything I write?

Afraid I forget and ramble in the dark labyrinths of my mind only too frequently when writing - and I am so bad at the game that I cannot even catch a glint of sunshine off the burnished pebble that is my soul, when you write or blow me a kiss across those hundreds of miles. Even my pebble is slowly being calcinated in the fire of desire. How then can I write when I am burning alive? I kiss your hand and your feet. God bless you, Tony. Forgive me if my fun is mad, I am alone, T.

17/02/1942 Joan went to Station Hotel Kirkcaldy Fife to see Tony

27/02/1942

From Tony To Joan

7 Feb. 1942

Darling

Do hope Steve has managed to get along and bring your things... he promised he would!

Has been a glorious day here - barmy and spring like. I wanted to show off my new sheepskin waistcoat, so put it on and paraded it. It was so hot that in 15 minutes I was sweating.

Have heard that I may be going to another site in the Battery (with my section) it's about 16 miles away and we shall have to march. Should be good fun.

All my love for now darling. The Don R is a waiting to take this away.

Tell Mater I shall be writing over the weekend. Goodnight and God bless, Tony

27/02/1942

From Tony To Joan

27 Feb 42

Telegram

Safe but still travelling address Grantfield Camp Lerwick Shetland

06/03/1942 unst

From Tony To Joan

94 LAA Bty RA

c/o RAF Shaw UNST

Shetland

6/3/42

Apparently we are allowed to give our address - look it up on the map sweetheart - latitude north of Greenland - the most northerly point of the British Isles.

Darling

At last, I think I have arrived and after many vicissitudes, inter postings and other minor adventures, too fulsome and perhaps tedious to relate, I have managed to get back to my first love, i.e. the light anti-aircraft (LAA).

Life is somewhat easier in this type of battery and one is not chained down to a single gun site, however it remains to be seen whether I stay here or not.

I cannot of course tell you where I am or what we're doing - let it suffice to say we are miles away from Lerwick and that it is very, very bleak but not too lonely.

Lerwick itself is quite a town! About 5000 inhabitants, I should think, with most of the amenities of a small town - pictures, dance hall, girls, real people who work in offices and do other strange, every highly civilised jobs, policemen and motor cars (some). The islands are of course really quite wealthy with the Town Hall, Lerwick library and other public utilities and services. But!

They are dry. There are no pubs.

The women voted against drink while the men were away at sea.

However there are compensations. Remember my annoyance at the lack of birds and beasts at Poolewe... well the Shetlands have (I remember now) some of the finest bird sanctuaries in Great Britain.

The bird life is simply amazing - quite a few game birds too... Plenty of fishing... Trout, etc. (I hope I'm here during the season) deep sea fishing too.

Rock climbing - odd cliffs 600 feet or so of quite interesting stuff and, joy of joy, Shetland ponies. I am busy trying to buy one big enough to carry me without fatigue. I can get one for about £2.00 and I should break it in myself.

Other amusements here include, I believe, a weekly dance but there is certainly no picture palace to bore one and no other civilised pottering, with the exception of a radio.

To finish once and for all these notes, to help you picture the life up here, it is so cold that I have a continuous fire in my bedroom - everybody does. The sea freezes sometimes - our latitude is North of Greenland - it blows greater gales

practically continuously. Nothing or very little grows, mostly pasture and sheep, not a tree anywhere and not a horse... On the whole though I am terribly comfortable and in fact like it up here - cold is so terrifically invigorating, I feel quite alive.

Oh, incidentally, I am quite a good sailor. The first part of the sea journey was accomplished during the night in a very calm sea – I slept very well the whole time. The second part of the journey we sailed during the day with half a gale blowing and a mountainous sea. The jolly old thing is the oldest ship in the British register; it is 65 years of age but the buffeting it took was simply terrific - we simply rolled and pitched in the slough of the most terrific seas I have ever seen.

However I had a jolly good luncheon which I thoroughly enjoyed, unlike the other army blokes who got as far as the soup and regretted it very quickly. Some of the time during the trip I spent up on the bridge, but my favourite place was up in the bow where one looked alternately into the infinity of the sea and an infinity of sky.

There seemed to be so much to tell you, my darling and I have but little aptitude these days. I only wish you were with me to enjoy it with me, these bleak, bleak islands that everybody curses so... And darling - least you think that I am callous about your feelings with me so far away - this counts as overseas service and when we come off these islands we go to the bottom of the list again.

Sorry darling, I have just been called away to the phone and – have forgotten what I was going to say.

Do not know when you will get this letter - everything takes ages to get around up here - but do write to me soon darling so that I shall not have more than a week or so to wait without a word from you. Tell me everything that is happening and let me know all your worries because it is only by trying to share your life... that life away from you is endurable. Let me know as soon as the catastrophe occurs!! In the meantime – have a good time... Enjoy yourself darling and then if you have to go into the armed forces you will have a memory or too to help you - I lived on pleasant memories for three months when I first joined up, after that it is not too bad. And you will always be able to get leave coincidental with mine.

Must thank you darling for the most terrific and glorious leave – every moment of it was wonderful - it is a pity but am rather glad, in a way, that the odd blokes didn't turn up.

Could give my whole time to you. Jimmy, I suppose was rather shy in any case. And oh darling I left a towel at home and now have only one left - could you send it to me?

God bless you darling. Goodnight, all my love, Tony.

13/03/1942 from Unst
From Tony To Joan

94th LAA Bty RA
c/o RAF Station
Skaw Unst
13-3-42
Unst
Darling

Your letter arrived 7th of March. It took just seven days to arrive, but now you have my latest address they should only take four or five days to come. How long my mail takes to reach you the Lord only knows - they are of course only three collections and three deliveries per week.

Suppose all the usual crowd turned up over the weekend of the 8th. Peter, Jimmy and so on. You must write and let me know everything that you do.

Naturally feel somewhat out of touch with everybody being 1000 miles or so away. Our nearest big town is Bergen in Norway and 180 miles away.

The weather is still pretty cool here though the wind has dropped considerably, and the days are lengthening marvellously. Did I tell you that these are the "Isles of the nightless summer"? On midsummer's night the sun disappears for 1 hour 50 minutes and, of course, it is twilight all the night and is, in fact, during most of the summer from May to September.

"A dream and deftness memory

That gathers Glory more and more" - local poet.

Should think my next leave will be in May or June roughly the same time as last year. Am already beginning to look forward to it. Tho' God it is a long way off.

Went for a most marvellous walk on Sunday afternoon... to the most northerly point of the British isles, to Hermaness the bird sanctuary and Muckle Flugga lighthouse. The coast here is barbarically rocky with cliffs of 350 feet to 600 feet being quite normal.

On one of the isles there is a sheer cliff of 1000 feet, the highest in Great Britain. Hermaness simply teems with birdlife - all those fabulous birds that one only knew in the dusty books at school. Cormorants, puffins, guillemots, eider, skuas, fulmars, shag and every kind of gull imaginable. The fearsome black backed gull that dive bombs and eats the baby eider ducks, pink gulls, white gulls, every possible kind - gosh it's terrific - and as a background the most wild and desolate country, just great sweeps and rolling hills of coarse grass and peat bogs, dotted with the tiny Crofts that bury themselves in the ground, in an attempt to evade the blasting wind. And sheep, sheep, the curse and Glory of Great Britain, for which the despots laid bare great tracts of well

tilled ground, evicting the crofters so that they might have grazing and pasture for the little 4-legged gold mines. All over Shetland and indeed Scotland, one comes across these abandoned crofts... mute witnesses to the landlords' greed. Yet many good things have come of it. The women make quite good pin money with their knitting.
I can write no more tonight. Good night dear...

Snow again today with some rain so it will probably get a little warmer. Having investigated the seal question unfortunately the pelts are not valuable - but are the sort that make tobacco pouches and waistcoats. Not yet seen the sea otter, they are rather shy.
Am very busy at the moment darling, we will write lots more when I have more time.
All my love sweetheart - must hurry now to catch the boat. God bless you darling, good luck in the trying days ahead.
Have a good time, Tony.

15/03/1942 From Unst Shetland

From Tony To Mater

Comment Est. Date

Cascara is a laxative .

C/o RAF Skaw

Unst

Shetland

[Date: guessed March 1943]

Dear Mater

Am alive and kicking... Now! Just convalescing from a sick day or three - first time I have "been sick" in the army - usually managed to face it out and keep going... but the jolly old tem. got me 101.6. And tho' that is nothing compared to my efforts of 11 years ago - it was sufficiently unusual to have left me as weak as a kitten.

Medicine up here seems quite primitive so I took a couple of cascarias and a tot of rum or an A.P.s. before going to sleep and managed to sweat the fever out. Doc did come and see me and I told him to sound me around the left lung, he fished out a stethoscope about a hundred years old and after much mysterious and impressive ceremony, pronounced me "as sound as a bell" (there are a number of chronic consumptives labouring under a similar happy delusion.) Doc is a dear old boy tho' and his mother has written some quite exceptional folklore of the Shetlands.

Am still rather weak but recovering rapidly under tender ministrations of my batman who has the perspicacity of a woman without the small talk and found some oranges, eggs, beef tea, horlicks and so on.

At the moment am in too egotistical a mood to write an interesting letter - will let you know something of the isle later.

Hope you are well (March is a devil isn't it).

All my love.

God bless you.

Tony

19/03/1942 From Unst Shetland

From Tony To Joan

RAF Skaw

Unst

Shetland

19/3/42

Darling

The mail must seem to be very bad - haven't heard from you since the 7th...

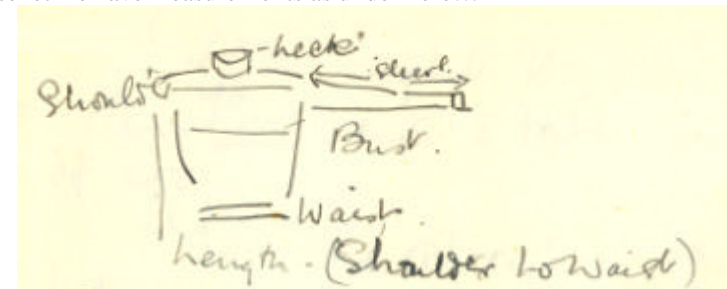
I confess that I haven't written since Friday, but have been somewhat incapacitated owing to illness - the first time I have gone sick in the army.

Am convalescing well at the moment, but had one or two desperate nights, when I wanted you to come and lay your hand on my head, I concentrated desperately hard but didn't seem to make any contact. Wondered if you were unsympathetic (joined the ATS or something)!! You did seem to be in desperate trouble on the 9th - apparently dissolved into tears... with some dreadful story!

Do write soon darling - I don't like these long silences - they make me a rather uneasy.

By the way if you want any money write and let me know at once - my pay should be in for this month.

Please let me have measurements as under here...



Also colour or colours i.e. predominant - styles, etc. and quantity.
Would you like a ski set, glove, scarf, pullover, ankle socks and cap to match?
Anything you want darling the rollneck pullovers are rather nice - cannot get any ponies over to the mainland for you - ships won't take them.
Keep up the music darling - next leave you're going to play for me alone - hours and hours.
Would you excuse me if I don't write any more, I am still rather weak and cannot concentrate.
Good night my darling, God bless you always and take care of you...
You are always in my thoughts sweetheart – Je t'adore, Tony.

01/04/1942 From Unst Shetland

From Joan To Tony

Comment Date Est.

Excerpt of letter from Joan about arguments with Yvonne.
Numbered phrases relate to Tony's answers in his letter of 24 April 1942.

..... my views on office windows (i.e. fresh air versus stuffiness) and Nudist Colonies. She we went completely off the deep end, (quite usual though in discussions where our opinions differ) and took her breakfast into the lounge to finish. Well I don't know if this has anything to do with it, but she won't speak to me now.

Unfortunately, Marie is terribly influenced by Yvonne and she has followed suit, consequently they are like a couple of mutes - it was sullen faces wandering around the house and they only speak to each other.

Mater of course is frightfully unhappy and terribly hurt. She apologised to Yvonne on Monday for anything she has said, but Yvonne has just pushed her aside.

It made me think a lot last night when I finally got to bed –

1. I don't see, Tony, how can one possibly be a good catholic when one can so wilfully say such wicked things as she has said and hurt so cruelly.

It's all very well to say these things are the spur of the moment when one's temper is aroused, but in keeping it up, refusing apologies or repeating the dose when one knows how sinful it is - I cannot understand it. I have been thinking a lot about your religion lately, particularly as I went to church on

Sunday, the first time I have ever been into a catholic church, and I decided last night that

2. I could never become a catholic, not as I see it,
3. though I would never interfere with your practice of the religion, or your children's.

Oh Tony, I feel bitter at the moment - yet it is also childish and I expect it will last about a week

4. or until they go to confession again. Yes I am terribly bitter
5. but why confess if you're going to be just as bad again.

I'm sorry darling this is a rotten letter, but I just felt I must get it off my chest and as you are not here to talk to, I have to try and make you understand how I feel with my poor feeble attempt on paper - you know how bad I am at expressing myself.

I'm trying my hardest to be pleasant.....

02/04/1942

From Tony To Joan

2/4/42

Skaw Unst

Darling,

Questions first

1. Birthday. The answer's the complete and final negative = nothing, absolutely darling – if you send anything, even a card, I shall feel infernally embarrassed – after all I did nothing about yours!
2. Don't know about leave... Paul may have to do the job.
{ie Paul, Paulus, Tony's cousin may have to be best man for Yvonne's and Neil's wedding which was probably on 2nd May }
3. Are you sure you want me to say I love you?

Darlingest, your telegram arrived last Saturday night... Silly old thing I should have wired you if anything had been wrong... I just feel dashed awful...

Telegram was taken down by one of the boys at the switchboard and phoned through to the mess... Usual comments!

It is Mater's own affair how much furniture she gets rid of. But... I hope she realises that furniture is very scarce now and will be very costly after the war.

The things she is selling now are all that is left of our home and Raymond will initially want his stuff back after the war...

Après Le Gare! If and when!

However, it is a possibility to be considered that Mater's problem will no doubt solve itself with Yvonne leaving home, and I suppose inevitably Marie and myself. She will then have only herself and Anita to worry about.

All in all this is very sad – bother the jolly old war.

Mater certainly seems to have contrived a bargain or three, congratters to her.

Glad about the rebate on your income tax.

Am feeling quite excited about Yvonne's wedding... Think she is doing a sensible thing with this threat of the armed services or something. Neil is an absolute rock too – not like your own volatile catastrophe – God help you my darling, if ever we tempt the future.

I don't think I know the petrol blue – but it sounds the damn awfulest thing NOT to kill.

The jolly old war work sounds absolutely revolting when you tell me about tired hands and fingers and calluses and things – what is going to happen to your playing? Dearest...

And gardening too! Oh gosh darling.

Thought Peter had garaged the car ages ago, don't forget to jack it up off the wheels darling – the tyres deteriorate so rapidly if you don't.

You haven't sent me measurements yet... do so please darling.

Pat has written me once or twice – she seemed frightfully happy and simply rolling in the stuff – her husband's old man is managing director of White Horse Whisky, ever heard of the stuff? They put up a most terrific advertising appropriation each year.

Why don't you do something like that darling? 'tis only seemly that you should be surrounded with luxuries – after all the gracious life is the great thing and you are too fine to be pauperised forever... or nearly for ever!

Gosh darling you are a great trial and a great worry. I love you so, and want to do what is best for you... Only that!

Went for a little walk this afternoon and took a gun out with me - feel better.

But must away a bed now...

Goodnight dearest – I've detailed my Guardian Angel to look after you – make use of him! God bless you darling. Love Tony.

06/04/1942

From Tony To Joan

3/4/42

Skaw Unst

Darling

Have received your expressed letter and parcel... Thank you so much - they came on 2nd of April. You're wicked darling sending all those cigarettes and things!

Am almost well now, but the jolly old cough hangs about a bit. There is no need to worry, however my darling. It seems to be quite a common complaint and most people seem to have bad coughs and "flu" at this time of the year. I am quite OK – pretty rough! You know.

Am in a most frightful hurry to catch the mail boat darling. Will you excuse this very short note. Weather is looking a spot better so am feeling a little more spring like. Second time my birthday has fallen on Easter second Sunday - quite a thrill.

Will you thank the Mater for me for mending my balaclava so beautifully - it really is a marvellous job - so neat. Will you tell her, I shall be writing and thanking her presumably by the next mail though.

Must hurry now my darling – will you send measurements and details of what you would like in the woolly line. What can I give Yvonne and Neil for wedding?

All my love, God bless

Have a good time darling.

Life is very short and we are getting older everyday. Gosh I'm 25!

Don't send anything for birthday, shall be only annoyed. Love Tony.

07/04/1942 Skaw Unst

From Tony To All

Comment with a note to **Joan**

7 April 1942

Skaw Unst

Dear All, (etc!!)

Last Saturday I had occasion to sign something or other... and date it – this is always a difficult job in the Shetlands because nobody knows the day or date... however one of my Sergeants volunteered the information that it was Sat 4th... Gosh I says! – tomorrow is my birthday and it will soon be Easter I

suppose?? – Oh yes... says
 Sergeant, yesterday was Good Friday and tomorrow it's Easter Sunday.
 Wow!! Things happen like that up here - but what annoyed me particularly
 was that I hadn't sent a card or an Easter Greeting to any of you souls.
 Am terribly sorry... I believe it is the first time I have missed sending you
 wishes of a peaceful... and compliments of the season.
 We of course did nothing special – one day is very much like another... tho'
 there was a rather unsuccessful attempt at a party in the NAAFI bar!! – I seem
 to have lost my taste for strong liquor and merely got a rather bad and
 “chemical” headache next morning.
 Spring is definitely in the air – we know that because the birds are beginning to
 mate and nest – and the sheep are big with lamb. That is only an indication, the
 weather is so indeterminate, it may be a warm winter day or a cold summer
 ditto - no I am forgetting - I saw some daffodils growing in a hothouse and a
 few crocuses and snowdrops actually growing in the open, in a sheltered part
 of a field and of course cultivated.
 The people continue to be charming and everything very quaint and interesting
 and now that the birds are arriving, we should have some good days exploring.
 All my love for now, Tony.

On extra sheet [to Joan]
 A long letter by the next boat. I am in a terrific hurry. Just heard the Brig
 [Brigadier] is coming.
 All my love darling, God bless you, Tony.

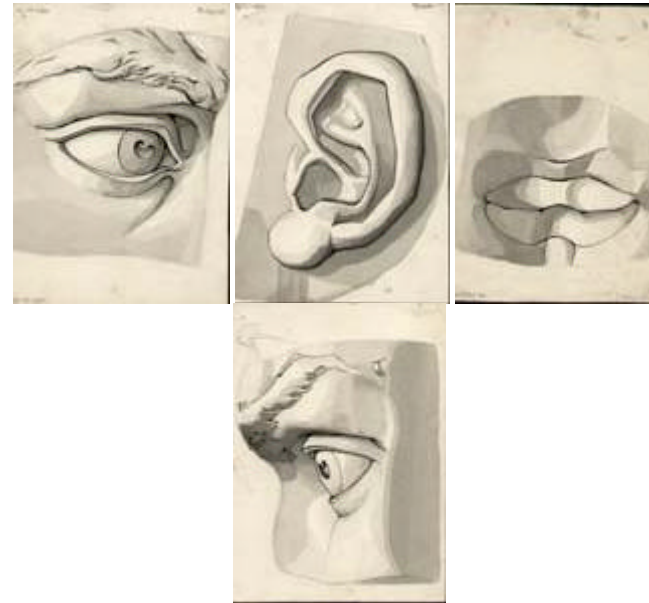
15/04/1942 Skaw Unst
From Tony **To** Joan
Comment Date Est.
 Art Advice

15 April 1942 Estimated Date
 Skaw Unst

Darling
 You have asked me to criticise your portrait of me. I will do my best - could
 show you much better than I can write what I mean.
 Am going to split the criticism into two parts. First the draughtsmanship,
 secondly colour.

Drawing.

If you can find among my things some studies of eyes, ears, mouths, faces and
 what not, I think it would help you if you copied them in black and white, and
 from those studies you might get an idea of the constructs of the face and
 figure.



When beginning, it is a good idea to think of the figure as being made up or
 constructed of planes. This will give your drawings solidity. Don't forget the
 figure has depth and that in the case of the face every plane such as the cheek
 bone has an opposite on the other side, always remember this and try and work
 round as tho' you were drawing the back or unseen portion of the object as
 well as the seen.

The trace may help you...

Think of the face as having first two main planes then several major ones...
 receding for eyes, protruding for lips and nose and so one. Build up in pattern.

Now the features.

Eye.

The eye is first a socket from the eye socket to the cheek bone. In this is placed a ball – say large marble – covered with a thick eyelid and then the whole covered is flesh. Think of the eyelid rather as the peel of an orange than the peel of an apple – see tracing.

Nose.

Don't forget it JUTS out from the face, nostrils are very thick. Not like tin.

Mouth

Consider it as a small half egg pushed on the face so – sketch – which has been slashed across and has opened up like a wound...

Now that is the answer to the curious formations of the mouth – watch how it has curled back and in fact given a cross section of the fleshy part of the face covering the teeth.

Don't ever use dark paint or pencil to define shadow as such BUT always use it to define and interpret modelling its form.

Don't copy from photographs – use your own face – mirror – if you cannot get a model and when noting the planes keep them broad and simple. There are thousands of planes or facets in the figure – your job is to simplify them.

Never put down an unnecessary line in the finished article.

Colour.

Don't touch colour yet – work up everything in black and white.

Don't scrub watercolour – let every wash go on clean and transparent.

Use lashings of clear water and soft rag to wipe your brushes.

Have scribbled everything in a terrible hurry darling.

Hope it will be of some use. Play about with still life, it is a great training for the “round”.

Don't forget the side you can't see. Some of my studies may help you.

Sorry if I have been harsh darling... Just one more thing...

Don't labour, sling the thing away if it doesn't come right and FEEL your way through a study – especially with figure work – you must be a bit sexy about it.

Let your study spring straight from your tummy, your womb if you like, and forget your hands, they will become your servants in time.

All my love darling, God bless you, Tony.

N.B. Always use tube colour and the finest brushes you can buy – student quality colour will be quite good enough for a year or so.

20/04/1942

From Tony To Joan

20/4/42

Darling

Have written a long letter - but have enclosed it in the parcel, so it may take weeks to arrive.

Just received watch, paints, picture and so on that you sent on the 9.4.42.

Thank you so much darling.

Will you send me bill for watch..? Now that you are as poor as I am I must start to support myself (sic)!

Will send along criticism of the portrait when I have a moment to spare.

Am rather busy with one thing and another – you know my cold is still hanging around but been very much better.

With any luck should be home in a month or two.

What does Yvonne and Neil want for a wedding present??

Hope to get some sketching in now that you have sent my things. Everything is just right darling! So many thanks for the books – a spot of Shelley is a great

consolation in this desperately celibate life – the peasant girls here live curiously promiscuous sexual lives but are pretty foul – in any case I am not in the least interested... To frightfully faithful!

All my love darling, God bless, Tony.

24/04/1942

From Tony To Joan

From: Shaw Unst

Note Yvonne married Apr- May June 1942

Includes Tony's response to Joan's letter of 1st/7th [?] April 1942.

Darling

Have been hanging on, waiting until enclosed was finished and now I have missed the boat and I expect you will have to await a week or 10 days for a letter - so sorry darling, but for the last week or so life has been very full, busy and exciting.

The shawl was the only Easter egg I could get you at the moment. And I think it will be rather divine worn over the head with evening dress. It should have to be properly washed when it gets soiled as that type of knitting is very scarce, not many people being able to do it now, or so I am told.

Re: leave. As you know boat leaves only once a fortnight and it went tip in with the wedding day.

As I have now received your letters of 5th and 7th I can answer both together. By the way darling your letters are arriving very regularly now and quite shame me - I believe I only write about twice a week.

Your arrangement of the room sounds grand fun – am so glad you are looking after things for me. Cannot think where you are finding the sketches. You will have to use the extra orange boxes or something for the books. They can all go into the bookcase.

What about clothes? Darling. There should be sports jackets and flannels and shoes and things are lots and lots of shirts and collars and ties, etc.

Your notes on the atmosphere at home or rather disturbing. You are all incredible people, with simply no understanding of human nature or frailties... Even though I am not at home it is perfectly obvious to me that Yvonne is terribly frightened of the marriage and is terrifically nervous. The reasons for this type two-fold.

- a. Despite her face and figure, she is a sort of natural virgin and is extremely frightened of cohabitation. I happen to know that she is extraordinarily inhibited over this, owing to some unfortunate incidences in her early childhood which conditioned her rather badly and, though may not be consciously remembered by her, are sure to be worrying her subconscious. She is also very scared of having children, whom she loathes. Yvonne has never, in fact, grown out of the schoolgirl horror at discovering that babies are not bought by the stork but are the product of a rather messy and degrading process.
- b. Secondly Yvonne is terribly ambitious in a worldly sense, she is very much the career girl and before the war absolutely refused to marry anybody except a man with thousands. And, indeed, would far sooner have carried on in business. The notion of the House Frau is probably causing her untold agony and, though I suppose she will carry on with the job, she will miss the freedom terribly.

That is my personal opinion and I think it is up to all of you to gather around and get her to forget the whole thing until it is over. Am sure that Mater can manage a reception and invitations with the rest of the family help. Yvonne will, I know, go through the whole thing as if it was a nightmare.

You must of course darling not breathe a word to anybody of what I have told you.

And now darling the last part of your letter of the 7th I'm going to answer this in some detail, NOT (please don't ever think this) because I want to argue you into an acceptance of Catholicism, but because your remarks are muddled, stupid and illogical - and most unfair to Catholicism. It is wonderful of you to write and tell me your difficulties and I will try and clear them up... but... Oh darling, what arrogant nonsense. I enclose your letter and have marked the paragraphs – it would take too long to quote – in any case I have tried to ignore what you have written and answered what I know you to be thinking...

Let us try...

1. Of course, one is not being a good Catholic when one sins. Or for that matter a good Christian or Mohammed or Buddhist or Confucian. Nobody ever suggested that any of us are a family of good Catholics, though the girls are extremely highly principled about some things and the Mater has a very deep religious sense. But .. being Catholics has made us all, and all Catholics, a little less sinful than we should have been without a religion. Don't forget that Catholics are just as human as are the rest of mankind and have just the same temptations, perhaps more because they have a higher ideal. Our religion teaches us and shows us how to be perfect but there has been only one perfect man and there are very few really good Catholics. But we do our best and too tragically often it is a rather poor effort. So don't assume that all Catholics are necessarily good, or even good Catholics. However, by this very assumption of yours, you have paid the greatest possible complement to Catholicism, and refuted practically everything you can say against it. More of this later.
2. Here of course you make a common mistake of condemning an institution or religion or what have you on the strength of the one thing that a person gets wrong. You might as well say that the whole of Christianity is bad because it produced Judas Iscariot or that an office filing system is bad because one letter is lost!!
3. Hardly worth mentioning darling you wouldn't have any hope of that.
4. You have of course put the cart before the horse, and incidentally, unconsciously, have made a wonderful defence of the practice of going to confession.
 - a) They will only keep up the quarrel UNTIL they go to confession.
 - b) But...!! when they have realised that the quarrel is futile and sinful they will make it up and because it is a blot and worrying their conscience they

will go to confession and having made it OK with each other AND NOT BEFORE will they make it up with God.

5. Have you ever made a “New Year resolution” dear? How many have you kept? Have you never as a child in an agony of self reproach asked God to make you a better girl and meant it and tried oh so hard. For how long has it lasted? Have you never promised mother... that “you’ll never do it again” and how often have you done it?

But surely darling I don’t have to tell you how difficult it is to learn the good life, how frail our human nature and how easy it would be to fall into temptation.

Each of us has our own particular faults which we try so hard to combat – and at times our efforts are pitifully unavailing.

Please don’t think I am condoning the weakness of human nature.

But darling... If everybody kept their vows and promises in the confessional and in private communion with themselves, this would be a perfect world.

One does not go to confession and come away with the idea that one can behave just as badly again with impunity... We know that that is quite likely to happen, being what we are - human beings. But every time you go to confession you make a jolly good resolution and promise that you are going to resist temptation (with God’s help) as you have never resisted it before.

I could write a whole treatise on a sacrament of penance (confession):

- a) On the psychological value of going to God with troubles and transgressions.
- b) On the value of making regular promises that one will be “a better boy”.
- c) On the spiritual help of being in a “state of grace” and free from sin.
- d) And thousands of other things.

But I am missing the mail boat again darling and must try to get it.

Will try and find my argument in the next letter.

God bless you my dear, much love, Tony.

Please don’t think that I am trying to “convert” you - but these plausible and only too common errors regarding our faith annoy me intensely.

Goodnight darling, Tony.

04/05/1942

From Tony To Joan

Telegram 4 May 1942

Address from Friday 8th May - Grantfield Camp Lerwick. Letter following all love Tony

04/05/1942

From Tony To Joan

Handkerchief enclosed.
4 May 42

Grantfield Camp
Lerwick
Shetland

Darling

Please note new address. So sorry that I have written so infrequently, have been very busy recently.

Have been told more or less unofficially that I come on leave on the 18th of May '42 i.e. in two weeks' time Yoick!! Would you get cracking on the preparations darling?

I think that if you could have the sleeves of my oatmeal-coloured sports jacket let down $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ inch and then have a whole suit (plus fours) cleaned it would do me for another leave or two...

The grey suit should be OK... It might need a press. There should be some gabardine slacks out of store which could no doubt do with a clean and another sports jacket, sort of loose brownny Harris thing.

Am not of course absolutely sure that I shall come home on that date but I'm certainly due for a leave within the next month. Hope you did not find my criticism too harsh darling. I thought I might have overdone it. As you will note from new address I am leaving Unst on Friday the 8th. Am dashed annoyed - it is such a grand place at the moment... now that the weather is a little kinder and now that the fishing has started. It is still a little early of course, however we have pulled 13 trout out of the local loch and have some grand sport and some wonderful suppers.

If I can possibly manage it before leaving here we are going out after piltocks. There are grand fun and beautiful eating.

Little else doing up here except the usual twice weekly dances and... Ah oh yes!

The RAF have managed to get hold of a cinema projector and so for the first time in the history of Unst there is a cinema show... every week too!! Some dashed good rock climbing, walking and sailing and that about completes the picture. So social activities for the last two weeks; however it is all good fun and the air is so much grander here that one seems to exist in a semi permanent state of mild intoxication and I have missed so many night's sleep – with dances and fishing and so on... that I seem to get along very well without it... Though when I come south suppose I shall feel as sleepy as usual.

Great schemes are afoot darling, all very advantageous. I may even be transferred back to the Heavies – though I don't want that... However, the outcome of it all is very secret I suppose. But... our tour of duty in the Shetlands should be very nearly finished. On the whole I am rather sorry.

Is Yvonne really married at last now, how did the wedding go. Have not brought her a wedding present yet... What am I going to get them? Bette gave them a cheque, I suppose.

Oh the jolly old watch has stopped again. It went for a few days perfectly and then suddenly collapsed again... Am sending it on to you some time.

Must finish this short note darling so that I can catch the boat.

And all my love for now, shall be seeing you very soon with any luck.

Wait for me and do your damndest to get a spot of leave.

God bless you sweetheart, love Tony.

12/05/1942

From Tony To Joan

Telegram 12th May 1942

Darling leave indefinite probably around June 6. Please send immediately all fishing rods lines tackle and haversack you can find in the cellar. Pack in wooden box and address to Grantfield Camp all my love Tony

14/05/1942

From Tony To Joan

Comment

The fish catching referred to must have happened on Tuesday 5th May just before he left Unst for Lerwick.

Grantfield Camp

Lerwick

Shetland

Darling,

Many thanks for your newsy. The wedding seems to have been a complete success... How does everybody feel about it?

Leave, as you will have gathered from my telegram, is rather indefinite but it will possibly be about June 10 or 6 or so... Certainly not before June 3 and may be a week or so later.

It's dashed hard luck... The experience of the S!

Would you send off to me darling all fishing rods, reels of line, catgut, flies and so on that you can find in the cellar. Am afraid you will have to pack them in a long wooden box.

N.B. there is a sort of haversack in the cellar with reels of line etc... Will try and bring home a salmon and some trout.

There is dashed little newsy up here that is not too intimately connected with censorable matters.

Took ten half pounders out of Loch Cliff on Tuesday night – 17 between us – had a grander supper!

Still trying to snatch odd quarter hours to finish this note.

Darling, I think I had better send it now.

Will it be possible for you to fix leave?

Sounds great... The Red Cross are sure to let you off if you explain what a comfort you are!!!

Lerwick is a small town, and a dreary place compared to the open heathery places of Unst. There is a curious charm in these Islands. There is little concrete things of beauty to rave about except the coastline... Yet it definitely exerts a terrific pull and most definitely "gets you". You must come and see at some time, all love, Tony.

18/05/1942

From Tony To Joan

Grantfield Camp
Lerwick
Shetland

Darling

Many thanks for your letter. It will of course be too late now to send the fishing tackle...

Re: ownership... Raymond is of the opinion that it was destroyed in the blitz... I will be able to sort it out myself when I come home in three weeks' time – or thereabouts.

Parcels may arrive at home for me from time to time, from the Shetlands.

Don't send them up here, they will be woollies and things for you darling.

And terribly sorry that leave has been such a mess for various reasons, it simply cannot be helped... And at the moment I can only give an approximate date. Do hope you manage to get leave - couldn't you say you were an unmarried wife or something... Leave will be quite hopeless without you to help me enjoy it.

Am not very fond of Lerwick... There is plenty of dancing and drinking, etc...

But it very much apes the big town: and the people are not nearly so nice and simple as the Unst peasants. Suppose I am rustivating in my extreme old age.

Have not heard from Neil yet, gather he is very busy on his course...

Incidentally darling you haven't given me any help with their wedding present.

Do you happen to know if there is anything they particularly want?

You mentioned that Paul and Jimmy are up for leave, did they have a good time? And did you have the usual parties?

Hope they enjoyed themselves. Have not heard from either for last six months.

What is happening to Victor?

I seem to be quite out of touch with the old mob.

Very little news darling, life is quite uneventful these days. Though quite busy at times - I do a dickens of a lot of dashing about on a motor cycle and odd spot or two of the things, but nothing very amusing.

Suppose I'm getting a leave complex. There seems to come a time when you get very stale and nothing but a spot of leave, a change of scenery and the beloved will put you right and refresh one for the work ahead. Am just longing to see you again darling... but must be patient.

I arise from dreams of thee,
In the first sweet sleep of night,

When the winds are breathing low,
And the stars are shining bright.
I arise from dreams of thee,
And a spirit in my feet
Has led me - who knows how? -
To thy chamber window, sweet!

Do your damndest to get leave sweetheart.
All my love, God bless you, Tony.

[Poem by Percy Bysshe Shelley, first verse.]

27/05/1942

From Tony To Joan

Grantfield Camp
Lerwick
Shetland

Darling

Just my dear... A bitter wail – a moan!

You must try and be more careful about your telegrams to me... unless you want to make me the laughing stock of the whole battery.

All telegrams coming to us are treated as very urgent and are telephoned over to the battery office clerk who takes them down as a phonogram and then telephones it over to my clerk who passes on the message to me, so the message has pretty well gone around the whole battery before I'd even read it. Then the confirmation comes through from the post office that is taken along to the officer's mess at battery; they thinking it urgent open it and phone contents through to me! Finally, I receive through the normal channel a written copy! The bloody thing has been chasing me for days!

Well after that - sorry dear...

Don't write any more letters to Grantfield Camp that will not arrive before June.

Am being chased around a bit and will wire you my new address.

Note your remarks re mother nature, and the difficulty of getting leave yourself – and terribly sorry that I have to be so vague re my own vacation... but nobody knows yet when I shall go.

Things are very difficult at the moment. I shall be able to explain all later.

Perhaps it would be as well to tentatively fix the 16 or so of June, whenever that is, and I will try and wangle 14 days' leave, it will be about 4 ½ months between leaves. Life is inclined to be dreary in this place, I miss most frightfully the rods I borrowed at Skaw and the good fishing we had there. However, I did manage to find a derelict boat near one of my sites, and with some tarpaulin groundsheet, etc. made some repairs and with a bamboo and some flies I managed to get hold off, the boys and I go out piltock fishing – we caught 50 the other night and had a grand breakfast. Went over to Scalloway on Saturday for a row round the islands – we bought about 12 pounds of haddock place and sole for a bob or so and had a terrific midnight supper. Oh yes on Thursday we took the guns out to get some eider duck. The sun was quite warmish and the sea looked tempting so we went in for a swim. Of course, it is very cold and we had no towels so we ran around like wanton boys to dry off, yelling like red Indians and firing a rifle was in the air. Two crofters digging peat showed some mild concern! Have done one or two things – suppose I have led a rather crowded two weeks... but it has seemed a dreary waste of time and I sigh for the charm of completely desolate Unst. Do you know that quasi sophistication of the small Scottish Town it's ghastly! The girls paint like whores and the men slick their hair and everybody is dumb... no conversation... no brains... no beauty... just apes. Met a rugged old man and his dame the other day – makes your heart good to see them. His legs were cut off at the thighs, but he sailed a 30-footer on his own – when I met him he was designing a new suite of sail and was having enormous fun with “moments of effort” and goodness only knows what – grand bloke! Am feeling tired and miserable darling – forgive me... I think I must want you terribly badly. All my love, God bless you, Tony.

01/06/1942

From Tony To Joan

Sunday

Darling

I have your news - fills me with horror and foreboding... What are you going to do?

I can quite appreciate your loathing of nursing, and factory life would be hideous, so I suppose you will go into the Air Force or the Army or something... My God, I hope they don't snatch you away before I manage a

spot of leave. For reasons which I cannot divulge leave is quite impossible before June the 6th and the Lord only knows how long after that I shall have to wait.

I imagine you will not be called up for another fortnight at least... And it may of course be longer.

Have got a feeling that all will be well and that I shall see you very shortly...

Looks as though we shall have a quietish leave... Have been saving up most assiduously to repay you the £20.00 I owe you. But suddenly discovered that I have to pay out a dickens of a lot of money for the odds and ends that I am bringing home. There are one or two delicious things amongst them, but I'm afraid your ski set will not be ready for another month or so. Did I tell you that I had designed the pattern to be knitted for you?

Now that I have some coupons, I have been doing a spot of shopping and bought some handkerchiefs for the first time for three years. Was shaken to the core when I had to pay 50 shillings for a dozen of them, are things as expensive as that in town? I remember that I never had to pay more than a Guinea a dozen. Life is getting very complicated!

Have done very little since I last wrote except catch the lobster. Did I tell you that there is a Catholic Church here? It is a great convolution!

Had quite a good gag last night... farewell to our old major - was nearly a Wolsey's farewell in Shakespeare sense, still it was an occasion and an excuse. Your dental problems disturb me not a little, do hope you can hang on to the jolly old teeth – get an awful sunken look when they go.

Darling my writing is foul and always has been – but yours used to be so nice, and now it's deteriorating and has been for some months – remember commenting last year on how refreshingly legible your first was.

This is roughly the anniversary of our meeting! Remember?? It is almost time you were tired of me... You must have plumbed the shallows by now.

I think I shall die when you go into the service... You will certainly be lost to me... There will be only too many handsome lads with lashings of good times who will be only too ready to take you to bed... And it is hardly in human nature to resist the temptation of a love affair (or 3) to break the monotony of military life. I rather pride myself on my celibacy during these dreary days... I don't suppose there is chap in a hundred who observes the proprieties in the army and the lord only knows how many fewer girls do likewise in the service! Suppose people kind of get out of hand when they are herded together. Would you give the enclosed note to Yvonne, do you think she would like sheepskin rugs, bedspreads and so on?

They will take a month or three. Give my love to everybody darling.

All my love, Tony.

09/06/1942 From Stevenston
From Tony To Joan

94th Light A.A. Bty R.A.
c/o GPO Stevenston
Ayrshire
9 Jun 42

The darling

As you will have guessed from my rather mysterious letters of the last two weeks, a secret move was about to take place - all moves are secret, so I can tell you nothing about it. We are now officially resting in Ayr after our long tour of duty in the Shetlands, but hear today that I am manning again for a week or so. Shall be able to give you my new address at the weekend.

Re. leave... Everybody is long overdue and as I was the last on to have leave, I shall probably be the last to get it... However, that should be on next Monday week. Unfortunately, the only man I could have swapped with is married... and he has to consider his wife's health... with greater excuse.

Am absolutely devastated with your news but should not think you will be called up before elapse of at least two weeks after your medical examination. It must take time to sort out the categories.

Shall try to get in touch with the Neil and Donald when I get on site... Believe I shall be near Glasgow or Dumbarton.

So sorry to be so vague darling but am very busy, in training at the moment and feel very much in the state of flux.

We had a very good move and trip over on the boat... The Brig. inspected us on board before we moved off - a charming gesture I thought. The usual farewell parties took place and we naturally celebrated rather freely - I personally am quite sorry to leave the Shetlands, however must admit that it was very nice to see lush fields and real trees again. And, of course, when the weather is normal here, we can bathe all day long and nearly all night... At the moment we are enduring a minor blizzard... The sea is marvellous and swimming perfect rather like the West Coast of Wales.

Stevenston town is quite a dreary place on the whole, however, shall only be here another day, shall write you from new address.

All my love, God bless darling, Tony.

09/06/1942 RAOUL CONCEIVED probably

14/06/1942 From Stevenston
From Tony To Joan

94th Light A.A. Bty R.A.
c/o GPO Stevenston
Ayrshire
14 Jun 42

My darling,

I come home on leave on Thursday the 18th. Should arrive sometime in the morning about eight 8.30 - 9.00 Will you tell the Mater?

I'm afraid this is the very earliest that I can manage - was angling for Monday, but it wasn't to be.

Have had no word from you for several days - how did you get on at your medical..? Or were you not having it until this Monday?

Weather is very dull here, am looking forward to the summery south!

Tried to get in touch with Neil on Friday, but I found their battery is no longer at Ayr - do you know where it is?

You must ask Yvonne darling. There will be several - or should be - registered parcels - don't trouble to readdress them - they are things from the Shetlands.

Have joined a sort of workers' club up here, with the other lads - sort of dancing, tennis, etc... The girls are all factory workers. And all those who are not actually ugly seem to be tarts - in any case I am not interested... But even as companions they are dull lot, and the Ayrshire males loathe we soldiers - sort of uniform glamour hatred!

This is quite a fascinating town with plenty to do... But apart from that most of the coast up here seems very dreary and a bit industrial, and we are certainly in the most unpleasant town of the lot.

Shall be seeing you on Thursday darling... I believe that it is really going to happen this time darling!

Shall swap all the news then - by the way you are going to get leave then - aren't you dear? If not you had better quit the job. All my love darling. God bless you, Tony.

30/06/1942

From Tony To Joan

To 4 Pinfold Road

From Stevenston

God bless you.

Darling, my love!!

How are you?

I had such a wonderful leave sweetheart - a marvellous time... Never better!

So sorry I was so grumpy on the last day but I always am like that when I have to leave you darling. You have probably noticed it before!

I am terribly worried about all the money you spent again, my dear. I did intend to do the whole thing this time... But somehow you always seem to have to come to the rescue. I must owe you £s by now. I'm going to put in some pretty hard savings to pay you back.

What is so galling is that I talk such a lot, of rich widows and so on... that you will be believing me soon. But! Darling it is absolutely awful, and I feel a filthy cad in taking money off the Gal I love.

I really think on the next leave, let it be soon, we shall have to manage on my pay... Do something very cheaply and help me regain my self respect.

Am afraid I wasn't terribly nice to you my darling, and so frightfully fond of teasing. But you did look wonderful and at times, very, very beautiful. Every time I see you, parting becomes an even greater agony than on past occasions. You must wield a terrific influence or something in my life darling.

Even the weather got worse as I got further from you, till now up here it is cold and lonely.

Here is to next year and the end of this frightfulness.

Can't write much, darling I am too sad.

I forgot to tell the Mater that her lunch box was delicious and quite saved the day.

Would you send my shoes sometime darling.

Goodnight sweetheart. Think of me sometimes. God protect you and look after you. I'm sure he will! All my love, Tony.

01/07/1942

From Tony To Mater

LAA Bty RA
C/o GPO Stevenston
Ayrshire

[Date: guess 2nd half of 1942]

Darling Mater

Should be home on leave soon dear. All the news then.

Till then

Would you let me know by return of post

1. The year of your birth
2. The yearly premium on my insurance policy
3. The name of insurance coy.
4. Does Yvonne get a remission of income tax for you??

Hope you are well my dear – though Jo has some disquieting news.

All my love Tony

05/07/1942

From Tony To Joan

RAF Station
Swinderby
Lincoln

My darling,

Forgive me for not writing earlier in the week. But... as you see from above, I have another move.

It is rather fun here, or rather looks as though it might be... And am very near London, or much nearer, so shall be taking my 24 hours off a little more seriously and of course you could come up here for a weekend. Though I must first get accommodation organised – may be able to do something about a local farm!

Country is of course glorious; have not had much opportunity for seeing it as yet... Seem to have been travelling for days. Rather sorry to leave the sea, it was grand.

But! Am oh so glad to once again be near you my darling. I feel rather as I did at Shrivenham - that I have only to leap on a bus and be home. Only one snag - messing with the RAF is going to be very expensive... still! who cares.
God bless you darling. What a wonderful stroke of luck... Be seeing you soon
All my love till then. Goodnight sweetheart, Tony.

07/07/1942

From Tony To Joan

Lincoln

Darling,

It was grand to hear the jolly old voice again.

Have had a very busy day, being quite on my own, means a lot of work to begin with, though things should be working smoothly soon.

It is the usual trouble shortage of NCOs - have only one sergeant, so have to do everything myself. However, the boys are very good.

I have not been able to get out today to make enquiries re. digs for you, but will try and find a nearby pub for you darling, though I do want you to realise that while I am on my own, I shall not be able to go far from the site, in case I am wanted and that wherever I go I must be at a telephone.

It is all very restrictive but am sure you will understand that it is a question of duty. We'll look up routes and everything for you... if you decide to come out here...

The change would possibly do you a lot of good. Will let you know if I think the proposition feasible.

Mater told me that you were not very well after my return...

Do look after yourself darling.

The weather is perfectly grand here compared to Ayrshire, but really hot.

All my love darling. God bless you and take care of you.

Goodnight sweetheart, Tony.

10/07/1942

From Tony To Joan

Lincoln

Darling,

It was grand to hear the jolly old voice again.

Have had a very busy day, being quite on my own, means a lot of work to begin with, though things should be working smoothly soon.

It is the usual trouble shortage of NCOs - have only one sergeant, so have to do everything myself. However, the boys are very good.

I have not been able to get out today to make enquiries re. digs for you, but will try and find a nearby pub for you darling, though I do want you to realise that while I am on my own, I shall not be able to go far from the site, in case I am wanted and that wherever I go I must be at a telephone.

It is all very restrictive but am sure you will understand that it is a question of duty. We'll look up routes and everything for you... if you decide to come out here...

The change would possibly do you a lot of good. Will let you know if I think the proposition feasible.

Mater told me that you were not very well after my return...

Do look after yourself darling.

The weather is perfectly grand here compared to Ayrshire, but really hot.

All my love darling. God bless you and take care of you.

Goodnight sweetheart, Tony.

14/07/1942

From Tony To Mater

[Date: guess 2nd half of 1942]

Monday

Just returned from course and just got your letter and telegram – thanks a lot old dear.

Have filled in form; you must complete it – best of luck!! If nothing happens I shall revert to my full pay as I have noticed that for some reason this allotment business always gets you into a mess with debts and it is no use arguing with the army – if you say you are in debt – then you are in debt!!! and that's that – ask Jimmy.

Have been passed out as an instructor in Gas – am hoping for a first class or perhaps a distinguished – should help.

All my love and hurry up the board because I don't want to go into this debt question until everything is settled – I haven't borrowed.

Love Darling Tony.

16/07/1942

From Tony To Joan

Forwarded from Pinfold Road to Pte J. M. Dibdin 10/182515
No. 8 Platoon, No. 4 Company, No. 8 ATS Training Centre
Glen Parva Barracks, Sth. Wigston, Leicester.

442 HAA Bty RA
Blantyferme Camp
Uddington
Nr Glasgow

Darling

So sorry that I have been somewhat tardy in writing. Have lived in a mad world for the last three or four days... As you see, I am still with the same Battery though my address has changed – am stealing an odd moment to scribble this off, am just going on a course, but my address will be as above – they can send on things.

It is a good thing that you did not come up here after all dear. I have been constantly on the move and very busy studying. The guns and equipment are entirely new to me. I have never even seen this type of gun before so you can guess it is hard work, especially as I am taking my turn of duty at once. Rather interesting as this is my first experience of a mixed Battery – must say the girls all seemed very happy – discipline seems to be relaxed a bit for them... And they have a very good time with the blokes. I don't think you need worry overmuch darling. Once you are over the initial training, things will become very much easier and happier. I wish you all the very best luck in the world sweetheart – look after yourself and apply for a commission. You will find life in the mess more congenial though not much different otherwise... You are still disciplined – but it is voluntary self discipline. Must fly now my Darling, you will be hearing from me at greater length soon. All my love sweetheart. Goodnight, Tony.

20/07/1942

From Tony To Joan

To 182515 Pte J. Dibdin
48 Camp – 3 Platoon 8 Trgn Centre
Glen Parva Barracks, Wigston, Leicester.

NO 2 HAA Practice Camp
Burrow Head
Newton Steward
Wigtownshire

Darling

Haven't written explaining the dearth of letters but am afraid that I could not have reached you in time before leaving for Leicester.

My God how horrid that old army joke ATS sounds Pte Dibdin.

Of course you'll never be a Private for a long time while to come... Are you with the guns?

As you will see from above, we are off to firing camp for the next three weeks or so – am not sure what sites we shall occupy in our return.

Life here is very uneventful, 'tis rather strange being among so many girls again.

They are all more or less hideous but seem to do their work very well... I hope!

Have had a short line from the Mater on things in general, she is very sorry to lose you my dear – quite sad.

Re. the good advice...

Peter is probably more up to date and will have given you more of the gen. If you get into Army trouble or want a spot of help, don't forget to let me know at once for experience will help you more than anything.

When you become operational and get away from your training camp... you will, I think, on the whole find your officers and sergeants quite good fun and not such bullies.

I should apply for a commission as soon as possible. Life is more bearable in the mess.

See that Neil is now a sergeant. He seems happier. Went to see the old Battery the other day – had quite a good evening with them. They seemed very pleased to see me (sic!!). Am up to the whites of my eyes in work - studying for this job... I remember a little about it, but not an awful lot.

Have asked our ATS lass if she knows anybody in Glenn Parva – she apparently does not. The country isn't too bad here but rather sleep making. Am terribly sorry my darling about this letter writing but I am simply all over the place, at the moment and with additional responsibilities of having to learn this job and the strange of biz of working with girls, I have been too exhausted to write anything like a readable letter - do forgive me - will promise to do letter in future - of course all your letters must be going to all the wrong places, so I haven't heard much from you – expect they will catch up with me soon. God bless you my darling, Tony.

25/07/1942

From Tony To Joan

To 182515 Pte J. Dibdin
3 Platoon, 4 Coy, 8 ATS Trgn Centre
Glen Parva Barracks, Sth Wigston, Leicester.

N0 2 HAA Practice Camp
Burrow Head
Newton Steward
Wigtownshire

Darling

I am so sorry that you have not heard from me for so long... My letters should be catching you up soon now... Have written several but they are possibly taking a day or two to come from town.

As you see... I have been moving around from site to site and now to firing camp with startling rapidity - shall be settled in here for three weeks... But! Expect to have to do a lot of swotting as we all have to take shoot.

Re. your future career

You will find, I think, a jolly nice crowd of girls in the MTC. But if you have to go into a mixed Battery or something like that, driving will be no use to you, it's a hard job and very dirty... There is quite a lot of maintenance involved.

This mixed Battery business seems to be quite a pleasant life for the girls.

They have lots of fun, and especially if you come under the control of men!

There is a lot to learn too, and the life is quite interesting, I think!

There is damn all to tell you darling. Am feeling rather browned off and quite uninterested. Weather here is lousy.

Goodnight darling. I love you, God bless, Tony.

01/08/1942

From Tony To Mater

Comment Date unknown but assume to be about time near Glasgow

442 HAA (M) Bty RA
Darnley Camp
Corselet Road
Nitshill Nr Glasgow

Darling Mater

Many thanks for the grand leave.

Herewith a wee cheque. Am afraid its not quite all I owe you shall see how things are this month.

Have had a terrifically busy few days since returning – starting work 7 hours after my arrival and haven't stopped for more than sleep once since then.

Everything has to be organised – stages, dances, concerts, etc.

However, it is all good fun!!

It's a week since I tried to write this letter... simply been terrifically busy darling not finishing until absolutely exhausted.

Love darling Tony.

03/08/1942

From Tony To Joan

To 182515 Pte J. Dibdin
3 Platoon, 4 Coy, 8 ATS Trgn Centre
Glen Parva Barracks, Sth Wigston, Leicester.

N0 2 HAA Practice Camp
Burrow Head
Newton Steward
Wigtownshire

Darling

And terribly sorry to have been so long in answering your letter... Now that you are in the Army, I expect that you understand how difficult it is to get the odd letter off.

Re. your problem!

Definitely stay at the training camp with a tape... Life is much easier and more comfortable at a training camp...

Then apply for your commission as soon as possible... Definitely apply and don't be put off by odd subalterns who think there are too many pebbles on their particular spot of beach. There is quite a demand for ATS officers.

Have done very little except work for days now... Apart from the odd half hour for meals, we worked solidly at training lectures and things until 18.30 hours – dinner and then a spot of swatting or sleep!

Have shot down 3 sleeves so far... Not too bad a show.

Weather fair... no swimming yet.

There are horses but have been too tired or hot or lazy to ride.

Money troubles a spot – am finding it difficult to sort things out – went over the top again this month.

Leave... Provisionally fixed for August 27th. Now about you my darling, shall I alter it... have they given you any idea when you get yours? Your Section Sergeant or Subaltern should be able to give you some idea when you will get it in training.

Am feeling terribly browned off at the moment darling and should not be writing this rather depressing letter. Forgive me, my sweetheart, shall try and be more cheerful in the future.

Your stories of the Army and the O.R.s are only too familiar; however, I must say that all the girls in this Battery seem jolly nice... Though they do sing a bawdy song or three at times.

Must go to bed darling. God bless you and take care of you.

Goodnight sweetheart, Tony.

17/08/1942

From Tony To Joan

Telegram

To

W/182515 Dibdin Dr Wing HQ battery 217 AA DTR Bradbury Barracks
Hereford

Darling am on leave can you phone me tonight. Tony.

18/08/1942

From Tony To Joan

To 4 Pinfold Road

Just about to move to

442 HAA (M) Bty RA

Darnley Camp

Corselet Road

Nitshill

Nr Glasgow

18 Aug 42

Darling

Have explained on the telephone the contretemps of my leave... It is an awful nuisance, still here I am.

Paul is coming up this weekend and I should be back by Wednesday night...

So I think I had better skip seeing Paulus and come up on Saturday morning so that I can see you in the afternoon and during the following days.

And feeling terribly depressed. Home is just not home without you darling. It's perfectly bloody and though the Mater is of course charming and doing her usual stuff, there is a terrible sort of vacuum.

If you could give me some directions, they will call at your Barracks for you sweetheart. Shall be glad to get out of town for a day or so... Though I expect it will upset the Mater. In any case I must see you my darling, we have such a lot to talk over... Am dry and a little browned off – forgive me if I cut this short .

Must get a midday post.

All my love till Saturday, Tony.

30/08/1942

From Tony To Joan

Estimate date 30 Aug 42

442 HAA (M) Bty RA

Darnley Camp

Corselet Road

Nitshill

Nr Glasgow

Darling

Arrived at 12.00 last night, having had a hellish time getting out here from Glasgow, had to walk about 1½ mile with those cases – it nearly broke my heart, and my back!

However, am here and it looks as though I am in for a busy time – very little seems to have been done during my absence – and I am very keen on getting the place decorated for the girls... It is a wee bit Barrackish at the moment – even stable like!

Seems to be a most God awful atmosphere here at the moment... Some new little twirp has taken over Site Commander and everybody seems terribly on the edge. Mess atmosphere can be absolutely electric – the pity of it is... that the repercussions can be felt by the O.Rs.

Thank you so much my darling for the few days, some of the moments were perfect, despite the nagging worry of your condition.
You look more than marvellous in your uniform... Am terribly proud of you and think you are doing a marvellous job of work – however as soon as it is possible, I think we ought to get you out of it... You seem so terribly unhappy my darling that my heart bleeds for you.

Action alarm, so shall have to go up to the command post in a moment darling for a spot of Air Co-operation.

Am sending you a towel darling – don't forget to let me know if there is anything else you require – I would try and get odds and ends for you.

[-----] All my love darling.

Goodnight and God bless you!

Be brave... I will be thinking of you.

Must get to work now sweetheart. Goodnight, all my love, Tony.

09/09/1942

From Tony To Joan

Forwarded from Don R wing
217 AA D.T.Reg Bradbury Barracks Hereford
to 1st AA GP ATS Rutland Gardens SW7

442 HAA (M) Bty RA
Darnley Camp
Corselet Road
Nitshill
Nr Glasgow

Darling

Thank you so much for your letter... I am so sorry that I have not written earlier, but I am practically desperate for want of time to attend to my own business...

You can have no idea of the colossal amount of work, which I have on hand at the moment... However!

Do you know that there is an acute shortage of ATS officers? They are supposed to be giving commissions away practically. There is very little news my darling... Nothing of any interest to you... Just the usual round.

[-----]

Am very worried about you... Do take care of yourself my sweetheart.

Gosh I am tired darling, do forgive this scrappy note but it is terribly late and I am really too tired to think at all coherently.

All my love my darling.

Goodnight and God bless you. I love you, Tony.

15/09/1942

From Tony To Joan

To 189 AA "Z" Battery
c/o GPO Hampstead N.W.3

Blantyre Camp
Nr Uddingston
Glasgow

Darling

I am so terribly worried about you... I feel so helpless, if only there was something I could do!

Am so entirely to blame for all this horrid affair that I feel like committing suicide. You poor darling... I am so sorry for you. Would it not be best to inform the M.O., get your discharge and come up here for a little while.

Life is dramatically complicated at the moment I'm almost exhausted. I simply can't think of anything... I know I am wearing myself out with overwork and not enough sleep and thinking of you and trying to plan ahead. Do forgive me for not writing more often, I simply have not written to a single soul except you for the last two weeks... but have been working solidly for training, construction of the camp, (making it fit to live in) and the men's and girl's welfare... There has been only two of us to do the necessary and that has meant mostly me, nobody seems to think of the lads and lasses much and it is hard work organising their recreation, when you have to carry on with operational work as well – spending many nights up all night.

Do forgive me for rumberling so darling my personal worries are nothing compared to yours ... (did you buy the other things that you were sent ??) and I have no right to worry you additionally... And of course, I love what I'm doing but soon must take a rest and call a halt. 24 hours a day is too much. I'd have to take to smoking again which grieves me!

God knows my darling what is going to happen... Have you written to Anne about it all?

What wonderful luck your being in town... You say of nothing of your duties. No, I have not put your cheque into my bank.

God bless you, my darling. Forgive my incoherence. Goodnight, Tony.

20/09/1942 Probably Blantyre Camp Glasgow- Marriage to sort
From Tony **To** Mater
Comment Date Est.

Darling Mater

Just a note in terrific haste..! Amazing how busy I manage to be!!
Hear Jo told you the glad news. The babble about special licences... can this be done in our Church??
Am going on a course – can't miss 30th to 15th or 20th of Oct. How about the following weekend?
Ask Yvonne what to do – am too busy to write a separate letter. P'haps she will know about licences – where you get them from, etc. Haven't seen C.O. yet.
God bless you all.
Love Tony.
Will you fix the banns?? That will be a load off my mind.

20/09/1942 Probably Blantyre Camp Glasgow- Marriage to sort
From Tony **To** Joan
Comment Date Est.

442 HAA Battery RA
Blantyferme Camp
Uddington
Glasgow

Darling

Forgive me if I seemed a little off hand on the phone – the line was so bad that I had to shout and the ante room was next door. Also that line can be tapped at the switch board or a number of other places.
Naturally I was a little shaken to hear that you had, without letting me know your intention, told the Mater, Peter and the girls – possibly it was the wisest and best move however definitely stunning!!
I think that now the issue has been forced – I am terribly glad... though these war marriages are much against my principles and (frankly) I can only hope that I shall survive sufficiently whole to be a comfort and pleasure in the years to come – I hope!!

Now dates etc...

First, I must ask the Colonel's permission to get married... he is almost bound to grant that... I do not plan to tell him in what circumstances – you don't know our Colonel!!

Secondly, we must have the banns published – i.e. three weeks – your suggestion of next week is impossible on those grounds – I believe!!

Thirdly, I am booked for a course T.C.O.s (which I cannot miss) on the 1st Oct finishing on 14th or 15th Oct - should be able to get a few days leave from 16th or so... how would that do.

About 3 ½ weeks from now I could write to Father [Kelly] straight away darling.

Question of money arises... Gosh darling, you know I am penniless and haven't really considered taking with me a wife until I was in a position to support you – you will of course never understand that – still there it is – you have induced the most gloomy prospects possible.

Write to me at once and suggest any alternatives you have in mind and especially [how....] you proposed to get our marriage legalised within a week – unless we are married in a registry office which is no marriage.

God bless you my darling and courage.

Tony.

22/09/1942

From Tony **To** Joan

TO 189 AA"Z" Battery
c/o GPO Hampstead N.W.3

Blantyre Camp
Nr Uddington
Glasgow

Darling

Have asked Yvonne to get a licence – will you contact her and see what can be done – and if she has not got one, will you do something about it – shall not arrive until 8 or 9 Saturday morning. God bless, Tony.

Can we buy the rings Saturday morning or will you go along to Aspreys or somebody? Tony.

25/09/1942

From Tony To Joan

To 189 AA"Z" Battery
c/o GPO Hampstead N.W.3

From Uddingston Glasgow

Darling

Preparing to marry Saturday, October 3.

Am moving heaven and earth.

Shall probably arrive early Saturday morning.

I have written English Martyrs. Hope for the best, Colonel OK now Major!

Keep your fingers crossed.

What about the ring? What size? Hell it's a hurry.

Love darling, God bless you, Tony.

01/10/1942

From Tony To Joan

To 4 Pinfold Road
Postcard

From Uddingston Glasgow

Darling

What about the jolly old gift for Matron of Honour??

Who does that??

Do something about it!!

Love, Tony.

03/10/1942 TONY and JOAN MARRY

14/10/1942

From Tony To Joan

To w/182515 Pte Joanna Guise

189 AA"Z" Battery

c/o GPO Hampstead N.W.3

6 AA Group School

Kinross

Scotland

Monday

My Darling

Thank you so much for the birth certificate and for your letters. Have courage sweetheart, sooner you will be out of the Army and will I hope be happier – making our home and preparing for the infant.

I also hardly realise the fact of a marriage – it is really only an incident in 18 months of happily married life. However, whenever I am able to grasp the fact, I get terribly restless and want to burst these chains of army restriction and fly home to you... To start building a future – I suppose I have a terrific creative urge – all mixed up with a lot of laziness – but I know I want to build and build a future happiness and possibly for the first time I realise the full ghastliness of this business – the reparations of man and wife.

Now poor darling, I can, I know make you but a very inadequate sort of husband and a very impecunious one too... That still rankles more than a little.

The jibes of them are only too much to the point... I have nothing to endow you with... except a child... And that will be more pain and worry for you.

Let us the only hope that with the grace of God things will turn out happily for you... I hope.

Course here is very concentrated and rather tiring.

Tummy is very much better.

It is terrifically colder here in very marked contrast to the mugginess of the south. I shall like it when am more used to it... The only warm place is the mess and that is always full of people, so it is very difficult to find a quiet spot – impossible in fact!

Shall get the letters off as soon as possible – if I get them off within a week it shall be OK. Nobody expects these things at once surely.

God bless you my darling – forgive the scrappy notes and infrequency of letters, will try and write as often as possible.

I was unable to see Neil over weekend, we work on Sundays!

Must write to Peter in near future – and am sure he will appreciate the line.

All my love my darling. Have courage, I love you, Tony.

19/10/1942

From Tony To Joan

To 4 Pinfold Road

6 AA Group School
Kinross
Scotland

Monday

My Darling

Thank you so much for your letter. I am terribly happy to think that everybody is being pleasant and that you will be out of the army by the Tuesday or Wednesday.

Re. living at home my darling. I have never suggested that you should, in fact I think it is a rotten idea and the sooner we can get a place of our own the better.

I have written to the Mater to tell her to keep an eye or two open for something... But now that you are out of the army, you will be able to find something and make a choice... I leave it entirely to you my darling.... The Mater will I expect help us out with some odds and ends until I can start to build our wee home.

Your allowance has not come through yet as the C.O. seems a bit dilatory in sending on the necessary papers. If all goes well, I shall be getting it by end of November if not then by the end of December. However, hope to see you in November. Am working for my next promotion - ruthless now and trying to make it by March - shall have to keep the baby a secret for a month or two, or I shall be disgraced in the eyes of the old folk of a Colonel and my chances ruined.

Am getting terribly excited and worried about you my darling. Do take care of yourself.

Get that income tax of yours stopped, place the whole matter in the hands of your bank manager. I am writing to my agents and getting mine stopped too though I have not got an immediate stoppage as I am paying for last year. I haven't the vaguest notion how much flats cost these days, but I should think we can go up to about £65 a year... when your money comes through and my second pips increase I shall be able to contribute at least £12 a month and more later I hope.

Forgive all these rotten money details darling, but want to get you some idea of what to look for. Don't worry about Yvonne and Maria, I will fix them with the letter, I hope. When I feel in the necessary eloquence moved.

The Mater will I know be sweet... The rest my darling lies with you...

You will have to try and understand and forgive them and remember that I am always with you in spirit and behind you in whatever you do.

I am so sorry my sweetheart that things have to happen like this during the war... Life would have been such fun finding our first home. But when all is over, we will make a real start... Don't be afraid of the future... If God is kind we shall find a niche for ourselves and show the doubters what enduring happiness real love can create.

God bless you my darling. I love you.

Have courage and let me know your difficulties.

I love you always. Goodnight sweetheart! Keep safe, Tony.

Say a prayer that I should get that Captaincy in the New Year, a lot depends on it!

27/10/1942 442 HAA Bty RA

Blantyferme Camp

Uddingston

Glasgow

From Tony To Joan

442 HAA Bty RA

Blantyferme Camp

Uddingston

Glasgow

27 Oct 1942

My Darling

As from Wednesday or Thursday I shall be at the above. Anyway, that address will find me. Thank you so much for the cheque – I am sure I shall not have to use it and will send it back if I don't. It is now near the end of the month.

Yes darling, I have now my second pip (Lieutenant) - have had it in fact since beginning of the month and nobody told me.

I am rather worried about you staying on at home instead of taking a flat - do you think it will work out alright?? I should be looking out for somewhere all the time darling. I don't want you to be tied to the Mater... the awful in-law business... she will be a great pal, I hope, but that is all.

Yes do take out the insurance - I will fix something so that the Mater will get the other.

Re: you coming up to Scotland darling, on careful thought I don't honestly think it is practicable. I fear that when I get back, I shall have to look forward to a month or so of very hard work... having taken this course, I am naturally bang up to date in all the latest drills and should have to teach the rest. We are also going to be short of officers again. Don't suppose I shall be able to get off site more than a few hours every two weeks or so. And my darling, I am afraid your condition rather precludes you from the mess at the moment... its terribly hard but if I see any possibility of getting any time off that is reasonable, I will let you know... Of course, I shall not be able to tell them, just yet, that you are out of the service and that I want to visit you - they will all want to meet you and that is quite impossible.

There is one other thing that I was going to say and that was that all your officers are damn fools and don't know their job, and that they don't seem to look after their blokes at all; I was going to tell you to go to one of them and demand "sick leave pending discharge". This is the correct procedure in all cases of illness, etc. which warrant a discharge. But... after all that I see from your last letter that at last they have awakened... About time too!! And now my darling I suppose and hope that you will be at home... and out of the army for good.

Do take great care of yourself... I honestly think the journey up here would be too much for you. You have no idea how tedious it is when you are alone. Let me know what you think about a flat when you have had time to look around... surely there will be a smallish place in one of those blocks... or something for about £65 - 70 a year.

God bless you my darling.

I love you terribly and am trying to work hard for you - goodnight sweetheart, Tony.

10/11/1942 From Larkfield Camp

Larkfield Road Gourrocks

From Tony **To** Joan

Comment Before Joan got the flat

Estimate Date 10/11/42

442 HHA Bty RA

Larkfield Camp

Larkfield Road

Gourrock

My darling

I am so glad you rang the other night. Lord only knows how you found me, but you see from above - have changed my address again...

As soon as I came back from Kinross, was thrown into an absolute maelstrom... Some sort of exercise, had hardly any sleep for three or four days and working hard all the time. Then this move and finally trying to settle in here with so much to do and only myself to do it.

However, Jimmy has rejoined us from the rear party so I shall have a little more time - I hope!

The course seemed to go quite well... And I have applied and been accepted for an IFC course, i.e. instructor of the control. I don't know when it will take place or where... But if I can bluff my way through it... it means a Captaincy with staff pay. I am hoping to make you a present of it in March - who can tell?

My leave has now been put forward to 19th until the 27th that is about eight days.

An absolutely thrilled with the idea of the flat, I think it is terrific. But darling you must be spending a terrible amount of money - I shall have to go into this when I come back - for some obscure reason they have not yet paid me your family allowance and though I have had my promotion money and some back field allowance - it rather looks as though I shall not get much more field allowance because they are beginning to furnish us - but I get another 30 shillings a month rise and 30 shillings reduction of income tax so, all in all, perhaps things won't be too bad and we shall live in dire poverty but not absolute starvation... The brat sounds healthy-ish... Do take care of yourself my darling.

I thought that when I came home for leave, I could work very hard with you to get you moved in and then to finish up with we could have a little house warming and so back to work.

You might keep an eye open for a bottle of hooch! Seems terribly difficult up here.

Only another ten days my darling and I shall be home... Do hope they are not treating you too badly at home. That will be all over when at last we are settled in.

I must go and take a parade or something darling.

Goodnight and thank you my darling for being such a wonderful wife... I shall never be worthy of you.

God bless you and the child.

Mrs. Middleton wrote a prosy. sermon to me... in the best manner and no doubt terribly kindly meant... but I do wish that other people would not seem,

by implication, so shocked at the so early conception of the child... There must be something very wrong with us.
God bless you, Tony.

30/11/1942 From Larkfield Camp
Larkfield Road Gouroucks
From Tony To Joan

442 HHA Bty RA
Larkfield Camp
Larkfield Road
Gourock
Darling

Thanks most awfully for the terrific leave... Had no sooner got back then I was pushed over to the satellite sites. Has taken me a day to settle down so have not written before.

Am getting the batwoman to send off to you the tray and fruit bowl, hope they arrived intact. Do hope you are not too lonely my darling, look after yourself and don't overwork.

What did Victor think of the flat??

My boots and breeches are a cracking success with the boys... And I think I am on the trail of a gee-gee. {horse}.

Rather think I overstayed my leave by about 30 hours but am not quite sure... And anyway nobody seems to know. All my love darling - no news.

I love you. God bless you - tell me all that Mrs. Midd is sending and what you are going. Goodnight darling, Tony.

06/12/1942 From Uddingston. Nr Glasgow
From Tony To Joan
Comment Tony worked for a while there before the war at the CTS shop from which he "borrowed" 3 candlesticks

Assumed address
442M HHA Bty RA
Blantyferme Camp
Uddingston
Nr Glasgow
Sunday

Darling

Thank you so much for your last two letters. I am afraid I have been bad again and not written to you during this week.

I am sorry about the lack of news interest in my letters... but we are in a protected area and I cannot tell you anything of what we are doing operationally or anything about the gun site.

Last Saturday i.e. the 1st of December or something like that {28th Nov} I was sent to another site as C.O. As I was merely attached to the battery there, I had nothing to do. So thought I should be able shall write you long letters full of news, however that did not last long because I was attached for all duties to the site. And as it was in such a dreadful state of chaos, I just rolled up my shirt sleeves and got down to it and from that Monday to the following Saturday just worked until late at night, often with a whisky bottle beside me to keep my nerves steady... Then I was recalled - the day before yesterday and told that as another of the Batteries in the regiment was very short of officers, I should have to join them.

So I am off, meanwhile they had without my knowledge put me down for a PT course and suddenly at 11.00 on Sunday told me I was to be tested at 14.00 hours that same day, I was rather annoyed! Had been smoking quite a bit and drinking and working too hard - so that I was all strung up... and feeling low about leaving my troop, when this damn thing turned up.

However, I did it and I hope failed, though I hate failing. The grass was wet, no cinder track and only same shoes and I had to do...

100 yards

1 mile

long jump

high jump

putting the weight

Then in full battle dress, carry a man 200 yards, leap 9-foot ditch and climb a 6-foot wall...

I did!!!

100 yards 15 seconds...

1 mile 6 minutes 50 seconds

Jumped 4 foot long jump, 10 foot 6 inches, carried my man in one minute 50 seconds and putt the ball 50 feet.

Not good enough, of course they want athletic athletes! And I was supposed to be trained or in good training with only three hours' notice - rather shocked me!

Anyway, I'm off to Liverpool tomorrow or first Tuesday, so you won't hear from me until Wednesday or so my darling.

My God darling, I'm too stiff and too browned off to write more.

I think Mrs. Middleton is grand.

I love the idea of your snooping around Vauxhall Bridge Road. The bathroom is a nuisance, I think, I should have another chat to her... But after the expense of the move, we may as well stay and if we stay it would be better to be on friendly terms. Won't you need the bathroom to hang out nappies and things darling?

What about an understanding with the woman upstairs. Don't be browbeaten by the older woman my darling. Everything sounds so marvellous and I am so homesick!

Do try and get out a little more my darling and please get your bank manager to write and explain the position to me or shall I go and see him in March.

Don't suppose we shall get a rebate until the new return goes in in April or shall we?? He ought to know!

Am enclosing a very little money which I would like you to try and manage with for the next three weeks. When I have heard from my manager and know what monies are coming in for you (I think it is 4 shillings a day), I shall know better how we stand, but for the moment we shall have to economise my darling... It looks as though I shall have to continue to pay income tax for a little while. So my income will be as follows

13/- for my work

4/- for you

17/- a day that is

£25.10 Ken per month less 30/- income tax

i.e. £24.00 with a pinch, I guess I can manage on about £8.00 a month and I am going to try!

Goodnight my darling. God bless you, I love you, Tony.

15/12/1942 From GPO Ince and Elton (nr Chester) Liverpool

From Tony **To** Joan

Comment or 11th Dec.

448M HHA Bty RA

c/o GPO Ince and Elton

Cheshire

Darling

Thank you for your letter reminding me of the Mater's birthday... Of course, I did not get it until late last night. However, I did not forget – walking down into the Command Post on Thursday I asked the telephonist the date. She told me it was the 10th and, for some reason, I said good God it's the Mater's birthday tomorrow... and promptly sent off a telegram.

As you will see, I am now here near Liverpool, in a new Battery but we are going to move again just after Christmas most probably North again, though where I don't know.

I expect the bedroom is finished by now, how do the curtains look with the green paint.

You poor darling, you must be having a hell of a time sorting all these things out. Am so glad that you are looking around before buying the carpet for the bedroom. How does the dresser look?

How are you in health my darling, do hope you are not being lonely or fretful and overworking – am sure that little place is going to be quite a handful for you and there will be no doubt some things that you will have to let slide.

What a stroke of luck getting that £55.00... You should certainly ask Peter about it – for all you know he may owe you a lot more!

Do you know anything more of the income tax question?

I suppose nothing more can be done until the next return in April... I am most terrifically vague and hazy on your exact standing... don't you think that I ought to write to your bank manager – I have not heard from him yet. And I am not very sure how you manage to get your income tax deducted from source. It is all rather a muddle. Perhaps I could see him in March.

Here I have the usual business of taking over another site... Come to work; much too much... learning new names, new faces, new habits and customs... However!! Let's hope it is only for another year or so... And when the war is over... Gosh I have got some terrific plans which should keep us amused for quite a year or three... And I hope to be able to repay you for these months of dreariness and loneliness. You poor darling!

Oh gosh, I wish for just one moment, I could tell you how much I love you my darling - for what a wonderful wife I think you are, far, far too wonderful really. Try and be happy darling and very soon, only another three months now, and I shall be home again - perhaps before then... Everything is so undecided and in such a state of flux that it is almost impossible to plan further ahead than say a week after Christmas.

God bless you my dear, I want to be with you so badly... Do look after yourself.
All my love,, I love you Tony.

You can always write to my old address... The letters will follow me up... please send details of baby clothes you require.
Good morning, darling!

30/12/1942 From Uddingston. Nr Glasgow
From Tony To Joan
442M HHA Bty RA
Blantyreferme Camp
Uddington
Nr Glasgow

Darling
Thank you so much for the sweet Compactum. It holds everything I need to carry around.

About your present... For some reason I got your letter much too late to do anything about it. Christmas Eve in fact... And I had managed the day before to get into Chester for an hour and tried to get you something... I just couldn't think of or find anything in the time but as I passed a very good saddler's I suddenly thought of a crop... I'm afraid you would think it's very awful, since you have asked for a dressing table set!! But I will try and get you one when I get out next - when! In the meantime, I have sent your pullovers and things.

As you will see, I have now come back to Glasgow... I thought I was going to be very glad... Now I am not sure!
I have had a damn awful Christmas, miserable as hell, leaving my own Battery and now I feel so depressed and hard done by for the last two weeks that I feel absolutely browned off... I can't understand it...

Do hope you had a fairly good Christmas darling.
There were so many reasons why I was so unhappy that it would take too long to tell you and must wait until I see you again.
God bless you my darling
Too fed up to write any more. Goodnight sweetheart, Tony.

01/01/1943 Parkhill Camp Oswestry
From Tony To Mater

Garrison Mess
Parkhall Camp
Oswestry
Salop

Assumed to be there for Xmas 1942 so letter written Jan 1943 (Married in Oct 1942)

Darling Mater
Do hope you had a good Xmas – am pretty sure it must have been. Mine was damned awful but expect Jo has told you all about that. I am at this training regiment for the next five weeks – was wondering what Marie is going to do.
Is she in the A.T.S. yet and what is her training Regt?
Also what has she decided to do?
If she is going into Ack Ack I should think that she will come here and it's about a one to three chance coming into this Bty which would be fun.
Let me know what is happening to everybody.
God Bless you all.
Love Tony.

07/01/1943
From Tony To Joan
Comment Date Est.

Notes:

1. A cadre is a group of instructors or a unit that trains potential instructors or non-commissioned officers (NCOs), in which case it usually also includes the trainees.
2. General Sir Frederick Alfred Pile, 2nd Baronet, was a senior British Army officer who served in both World Wars. In the Second World War he was General Officer Commanding Anti-Aircraft Command, one of the elements that protected Britain from aerial attack.

To 81 Stanthorpe Road
From Garrison Mess
Parkhill Camp
Oswestry
Salop

Darling

I have now left my old Battery and have joined my new Cadre of mixed H.A.A. here at Oswestry.

Thank you so much for your letter... And the photographs – actually I think they are pretty awful.

Am a little browned-off darling with leaving the old Battery but they don't seem a bad crowd here... Have been quite busy up to now, with old Tim Pile coming to see us here... Hell of a lot of preparation!

Shall be here for another two months, so am going to try and work a weekend very soon now... depending on the Major. When we have finished here, do a month at firing during which time all leave is cancelled and after that everybody gets seven days whether they want it or not... So that it would seem that life is going to be something for us for the next month or so.

So sorry I am late with the money darling... When you cash it, do you think you could find out what I am worth and get them to send me a statement.

I am in a complete fog as I have had to pay so many Mess bills with blank cheques as they have not time to make up my bills.

The couch sounds terrific but what a lot of money you are spending darling.

So glad Victor likes the flat, I am rather fond of it myself! Shall write to the Shetlands. The price of bookcase was 27/-6 I think... the fender about 15/-, two of our cheaper acquisitions!

Am so sorry for you my darling, you must be so fed up with the baby and having a perfectly foul time... However, it should soon be over now... another two months or so. How does Mrs Midd's carpet look... Should be quite amusing in the dining alcove... Darling may I send some darning home to you. I am getting in rather a bad plight and I have been working and fighting my way through flu and a bad chest cold. It is nearly over now but I am absolutely without a handkerchief or any coupons... Do you think you could find some, and send them to me as soon as possible?

For some reason, I feel shockingly tired, I think it must be this southern atmosphere again and of course my cough and cold have taken the stuffing out of me a bit.

Think I'll go to bed now darling... N.B. There is simply no reason why we should not be sent down to a Southern gun site – but should not bank on it.

Goodnight sweetheart. God bless you and look after you.

I love you, Tony.

16/01/1943 Telegram from Oswestry

From Tony **To** Joan

Comment Date Est.

To 81 Stanthorpe Road

Garrison Mess

Parkhill Camp

Oswestry

Salop

My poor darling,

How ill you must be... if only I could manage to come along... Am afraid that up to the moment it's quite impossible. We always seem to have some duty over the weekend.

I cannot understand why you do not get my letters! I always enclose them in the parcels and my batman assures me that he sends them. In the last parcel I sent you a Shetland shawl, so I do hope it has not been lost... If you can, give it another day or so to turn up and I will start enquiries. Of your last letter my darling, only the one half page that I am sending back to you... arrived and I can't read that!

Have you seen your Dr. recently darling?

You seem to be in a most frightful bad state of nerves and depression, am most horribly anxious about you.

We now seem to have finished the training here and are taking over the new Battery... On the whole a rather rough looking crowd... But we shall tame them I suppose...! Have most extraordinary weather here... Sometimes it is beautiful and sunny and then the next minute a most colossal storm of rain and wind. One of my height finders was blown over today and was damaged - and they cost about £3000 so I hope they don't try and make me pay for it. There will be a fearful lot of botheration... still that's our job!

I will try and write more often my darling – you poor dear, fed up you must be. I must go to bed now as tomorrow morning I shall be up at 6 o'clock and shall not be able to get to bed before 2.30 the next morning – guards and things. Goodnight dear.

God bless you and do try and keep your chin up.

I love you, Tony.

20/01/1943

From Tony **To** Joan

Comment Date Est.

Garrison Mess
Parkhill Camp
Oswestry
Salop

Darling

Was so scared that I should miss your birthday again that... I sent off a telegram to arrive on the 17th and then wasn't very sure whether it was the 27th or what.

Thank you so much for the hankies and the tapes they are terrific.

You poor darling - I see you didn't cash that cheque... The bank are rotters returning the cheque, fortunately it was only one and an awkward one too... the settlement of a bill for your riding crop.

I must write to Cox and Kings again and see what they are doing about the full pay that I should be getting for you and reduction in my income tax. Can you manage to hold that cheque over until February and I will send you another then...

Christmas has I suppose, been rather an expensive time and having joined so many different Messes, my Messing has been rather colossal. I only realised just how much it was costing when my statement came in - the pram sounds marvellous darling.

I am sending you some socks to wash and darn darling and some hankies. They are rather nice linen ones that I don't send to the laundry and some tapes for each sock and hanky.

Think I shall have to send you home everything for overhaul, so much each week.

There are some simply marvellous walks here, the country is quite amazing after Scotland... But the Cadre is boring, I shall be glad to get back on site. Hereford is quite near here... the next County.

Have found your cheque after much searching darling and sending it back to you.

Are you getting pally with the woman upstairs?

Will let you know if I can get a weekend off. Goodnight darling, God bless.

I love you, Tony.

30/01/1943

From Tony **To** Joan

Comment Date Est.

To 81 Stanthorpe Road

Garrison Mess

Darling,

Thank you so much for the socks and hankies they are beautifully mended. So glad that you had a party, it sounded good fun and you must be terribly bored with life all by yourself.

Of course, I forgot to send you the wire... Completely slipped; in this frightful place. It's wonderful I'm not suffering from a complete mental aberration.

Have written to the office again to try and get back some of the tax they are drawing off... And I have written to the pay office again to find out what the hell they are doing putting you on a lower rate. 3/- a day is scandalous and am not getting field allowance now. Horribly warm and muggy here and is raining cats and dogs - am right in the thick of the examination week - redrilling, lecturettes and goodness only knows what!

Do my best to snatch a weekend though God only knows how we can afford it. Hitch hike, I suppose.

You poor darling must take care of that cough and cold. You sound so depressed... Mustn't get flu or anything darling.

I have an awful bunged up eye, so we are in sympathy - as always.

God bless you my darling. Am sending you a week cheque - hold up the £12.00 until I let you know that the damned arrears have gone through.

Goodnight sweetheart.

I love you, Tony.

07/02/1943

From Tony To Joan

Comment Date Est.

To 81 Stanthorpe Road

Garrison Mess

Parkhill Camp

Oswestry

Salop

My darling,

So sorry to hear you are so browned off... You must be having a ghastly time... I'm terribly worried about you, do let me know if you feel really bad and I shall go to the commanding officer and asked for leave... Though we have been told we cannot have any, even for compassionate grounds until we leave here.

I am sending along the shawl with Mrs. Priest's letter... if you could answer her questions and let me know... I will write to her and order...

At the moment and until we get our troops, this jolly old place is just a school... All terribly wearing and most sleep making... Can't say I have done any extra swotting... We don't finish until 7.30. And after dinner there is only time for a drink or two then bed... However, in lecturettes and exams I came out top for some quaint reason and was passed as the Regiment Instructor. All the others got Battery Insts. recommendations... Everybody was not a little shaken because they had all been very helpful with advice and encouragement! Believing me to be a hero – but gosh it's not over yet... It's most terribly wearing.

God bless you my darling do hope you like the shawl. Mrs. Priest says you can change it if you want a heavier one.

Goodnight my darling. God bless you. I love you. Tony.

The shirt and everything was terrific. I want the cuffs shortened. Tony.

16/02/1943 From Oswestry

From Tony To Joan

Comment Date Est.

To 81 Stanthorpe Road

Garrison Mess

Parkhill Camp

Oswestry

Salop

My poor darling,

How ill you must be... if only I could manage to come along... Am afraid that up to the moment it's quite impossible. We always seem to have some duty over the weekend.

I cannot understand why you do not get my letters! I always enclose them in the parcels and my batman assures me that he sends them. In the last parcel I sent you a Shetland shawl, so I do hope it has not been lost... If you can, give it another day or so to turn up and I will start enquiries. Of your last letter my darling, only the one half page that I am sending back to you... arrived and I can't read that!

Have you seen your Dr. recently darling?

You seem to be in a most frightful bad state of nerves and depression, am most horribly anxious about you.

We now seem to have finished the training here and are taking over the new Battery... On the whole a rather rough looking crowd... But we shall tame them I suppose...! Have most extraordinary weather here... Sometimes it is beautiful and sunny and then the next minute a most colossal storm of rain and wind. One of my height finders was blown over today and was damaged - and they cost about £3000 so I hope they don't try and make me pay for it. There will be a fearful lot of botheration... still that's our job!

I will try and write more often my darling – you poor dear, fed up you must be. I must go to bed now as tomorrow morning I shall be up at 6 o'clock and shall not be able to get to bed before 2.30 the next morning – guards and things. Goodnight dear.

God bless you and do try and keep your chin up.

I love you, Tony.

20/02/1943

From Tony **To** Joan

Comment Date Est

To 81 Stanthorpe Road

Garrison Mess
Parkhill Camp
Oswestry
Salop

Saturday

Darling,

What a hell of a week.... we go to firing camp on Tuesday and we have been working morning and night to train the girls for camp.

Has been a terrific strain... Have had to drink like a fish to keep going.

Heard from Neil yesterday - he seems to be very happy to be back in England, though his lack of activity seems to be worrying him... Poor dear.

You seem rather more cheerful in your last letter my dear... I suppose the main thing will be something very soon now and I shall need to get leave from firing camp... which will upset the army very much still..!

Gosh darling, I do hope you get this business over very soon now... Am missing you so much... though of course I have the advantage of being able to concentrate on my work... Very wearing, but fun I suppose.

Has Peter been up for leave yet... I seem to be terribly out of touch with everybody... Not having much time to do anything.

Did I tell you, we worked from about seven every morning? Most weary making and this is the first half day I have had a off for a month.

We more or less just stayed in the Mess and corrected papers and studied and so on over a bottle or two... which reminds me that I shall have to cut down drastically on my Mess expenses...

Thank God we are leaving here... My Mess bill has been so colossal that I am absolutely stony broke... Even if I can pay the damned bill... Am writing to the manager to see if I have any money.

Don't worry about your teeth, my darling I shall love you as ever... God bless you my darling and keep you safe. I love you, Tony.

11/03/1943

Comment RAOUL born

13/03/1943 Telegram from Holyhead

From Tony **To** Joan

Comment 2 days after Raoul Born

13 March 1943 From Holyhead

TO MATERNITY WARD MIDDLESEX HOSPITAL
DARLING MY ADDRESS IS 4 AA PRACTICE CAMP TYCROES
ANGLESEY AM IN THE MIDDLE OF SHOOTING JEAN'S WIRE JUST
ARRIVED
WOULD YOU LIKE ME TO COME AND WHEN SHALL I GET LEAVE
GOD BLESS YOU ALL MY LOVE TONY

19/03/1943 To William Hunter Ward

Middx Hosp

From Tony **To** Joan

To Mrs AB Guise

William Hunter Ward Maternity

Middlesex Hospital W1

Darling,

Thank you so much for your letter... Don't worry in the least what the army think about your putting 1941 on the certificate. It will make things so much more comfortable for both of us and I can always fix our pay, somehow... quite easily in fact.

God bless you darling it was marvellous seeing you again. You do look very fit really considering your awful ordeal, and the baby is simply terrific. I think he will be a marvellous child... He's got to be! Caused enough trouble already?

The only train was at 10.50 so I took that - spent the interval of time in the News Theatre and gosh was a hot! I was nearly melting when I got in and by the time I had walked to Euston Station from Oxford Circus, 9 to kill time, I was completely exhausted... However it became frightfully cold in the train, eventually I had a somewhat varied night but little sleep.

Feeling better now though.

Goodnight my darling. God bless you, love Tony.

23/03/1943 To Middx Hospital
From Anglesey
From Tony To Joan

To Mrs AB Guise
William Hunter Ward Maternity
Middlesex Hospital W1
4 AA Practice Camp
Tycroes
Anglesey

Darling,
Am going to Larkhill on roughly 21st of April – so shall be able to get my leave before going... Thank God!
You can take it as being pretty definite that I shall be home on the 5th or 6th of April.

Am having a stab at this {letter} at odd intervals. Weather is foul so we are perpetually lecturing the troops.
Took them all for a road march and almost ruined them the other day.
Have got some of the Regimental Orderly Officers.
Gosh what a job, am tired as hell... I shall be very ready for my leave... Give anything for a real rest.
Usually filling in practice reports until about 11.00 and then up at 6.45 for PT!

How is Raoul?
Suppose the little brat is growing apace.
Do what you like about the circumcision my darling, I have no positive feelings about it either way.
Practically no news at all, just the same dreary round.
Shall be with you soon now.
God bless you both my darlings. Goodnight Tony.

01/04/1943 Larkhill Camp Salisbury Plain
From Tony To Joan
Comment Date Est. Before Easter

A Mess
School or Artillery
Larkhill
Salisbury Plain
Darling

Arrived very late last night in simply foul weather... which has continued to now.
Have just completed first day of course; the whole thing seems very complicated and shall have to concentrate like hell if I am to hope to get through.
I understand from the Colonel that a very high standard of efficiency is required and that some are bound to be RTU'd, more hard work!

Am still terribly depressed at leaving you my darling – don't think I shall ever recover... But must add that this seems a very happy mess and it is quite a pleasant change, to be in an entirely male mess... Though most of them seem the usual crowd of morons.

This is a wild and desolate place... So have little newsy - forgive me.
It would seem possible that I shall be able to get some weekends off – shall not be up over Easter as all travelling is definitely banned.
If all goes well, shall at the end of one month here go to Cambridge or Hatfield for a further three months...
Leave is a great query mark... It may be six months before I get another seven days. But... There will of course be the weekends. That is all the information I have been able to glean to date.
Sorry about the scrappy letter darling but am still in a state of flux... Trying to settle down.
God bless you darling. Kiss Raoul for me. I love you! Tony.

01/04/1943 School of Artillery Larkhill Salisbury Plain

From Tony **To** Mater

Comment Date?

It is totally unclear when Tony was at the School of Artillery, Larkhill Salisbury Plain.

A. Mess

School of Artillery

Larkhill

Salisbury Plain

Darling Mater

After several abortive efforts to find me a taxi and losing several trains meanwhile I finally arrived very late... very dull and dreary – am still trying to recover!!

Course seems ghastly stuff... lots of hard work.

Leave, nil for the next six months I think but shall have a few weekends. Tho' not Easter... travelling prohibited Definitely.

This is a pretty ghastly hole though the mess seems cheerful enough... but think I shall be too busy swotting to worry much.

Do hope you improve tho' looks like being a gradual job.

God bless you

Tony.

26/04/1943 Larkhill Camp Salisbury Plain School of Artillery

From Tony **To** Joan

Comment Date Est. After Easter

A Mess

School of Artillery

Larkhill

Salisbury Plain

Darling

Thank you so much for the letter and pattern. I think the mustard would be very much better as the khaki green is so exactly like ordinary khaki. Don't think they would have to be dyed either.

If you are thinking of getting some material for me from Widdy, should think the best thing to do would be to have my grey trousers copied in every detail except the top and back which goes like this (diagram enclosed) and it would be better to have them cut off straight for a belt fitting – but do get them to put

in that inset in the back, it makes the trousers hang so... I should go to a very small tailor... that little man who does alterations would possibly handle it... And I don't see why I should not have turn ups on the bottom- don't worry too much about it darling... But it would be nice to have something else to wear on leave – trousers only by the way and the stripes to run downwards. Would you try some time to get me a refill as pattern for my loose-leaf book?

Are you going to Jean's darling? Let me know so that I shall know where to send letters and also when I can make arrangements for weekend leave from Cambridge or Hatfield.

How are you my darling and what sort of Easter did you have. I went into Salisbury on Sunday but it is frightfully full of soldiers and on the whole is a dreary place.

Seem to have some tummy trouble again and general aches but by the time you get this shall be OK again, I hope.

Wind has not dropped here yet though we get occasional patches of the sunlight.

Gosh this course is quite a headache. Say a prayer that I pull through alright. Give my best love to Raoul. Do hope he is not squealing too much - you might get so frightfully worn out. God bless you my darling. I love you, Tony.

01/05/1943 Battlements Cherry Hinton Cambridge

From Tony **To** Joan

Comment Date Est.

Battlements

Cherry Hinton

Cambridge

Darling

Usual mad rush to get settled in with but little time to think... or do!!

Weather has been incredibly dreary... but then it always does seem to be dull... the sun vanishes when I leave you.

Believe that when have time to look around, shall be able to be put on the lodging list fairly easily... though can foresee my darling that practically the whole evening of most days will be swotting rather hard. Also, we have to be up at 6.30 to get to work in time, frightful bore.

And for three months! Also, we only get one day off for a week, i.e. Friday... an awful day.

Have a most odd arrangement of living. We dig in an empty house and buy our food from a special canteen, quite expensive, costs about 4/- a day to live like this... Suppose we shall get some of it back though...
Seem to have had several minor expenses in buying equipment needed for the course.
Still, it will be all come in useful someday.

How are you my darling and Raoul - not fretting, I hope.
Re. accommodation I think it is going to be fairly difficult but will have a "look see". It will not be much use unless so I can get somewhere very near the school... within walking distance... because of our very early start.
As usual with a new course am feeling very tired... It is really tiring to the nerves and body... However, hope this will wear off in time.

Forgive the delay in writing darling... But before I wrote to you, I wanted to pass the preliminary test to make sure that I should be here for at least longer than a day! And instead of having it on Thursday we did not have it until today, i.e. Saturday.

God bless you my darling - it seems an eternity since we parted - and will seem an eternity to our next leave unless I can manage to get you down here - incidentally would you mind coming down and being within say 10 miles or so of me so that at least I could see you once a week?

Please darling pray for me - I am on a very tricky job for me and it is only with the help of prayers and good wishes that I can ever hope to get through this course.

God bless you my darling and take care of you.
I love you. Goodnight, Tony.

05/08/1943 665 M HAA Bty RA
Heron Camp
Meols
Wirral
Cheshire
From Tony **To** Joan
Comment Date Est.

Darling
Had a shocking arrival at regiment... very late tired and fed up... Must say that everybody seems very pleased to see me though. Regiment kept me hanging about the whole of Friday until finally in the evening I manage to get to Battery at above address - everybody was terribly surprised and seemed quite glad to have me back. Most of my old pals are over the other site so of course they threw a party on the Saturday night for me and on Sunday we had our own site dance. On Monday we had to go to Preston and see the General (a complete waste of time) and to finish a very aggravating day we had an exercise on during the night and I could not get to bed until 3.30.

As I seem to be the only officer who worries about inspecting the troops before breakfast, I had been getting up at 7.00 each morning to do that job of work, so you can guess that I am a little tired... And now I hear that we have another exercise tonight!

The place here is absolutely filthy and getting on towards being unoperational. I've got tons and tons of work to do and am throwing myself into it with rather greater than usual enthusiasm - just to forget my disappointment - sometimes I wonder if it is worth it. I feel so very tired. However, whatever I do, I am not really happy unless I'm working too hard.
God bless you my darling. I love you, Tony.

20/08/1943 From Meols

From Tony To Joan

From Meols

20 August 1943

Darling

I'm so terribly sorry - I had no idea it was so long since I last wrote.... Time absolutely flies by here. I seem to live such full days - looking back. I suppose I have only written once since I sent you the photos and cheque... By the way I don't seem to remember an acknowledgement of either... But since Jerkie and one or two of the boys have complained of letters arriving all bunched I thought there might have been difficulties in that direction. This is an incredibly busy time of the year for us - and when all the work is done there is still sport to organise and take part in... And of course, you know, I am very busy running dances and concerts for them.

We always have one dance, one concert and one film show a week... and it means building a stage and taking it down again... decorations and lighting and the whole works each time... Of course everybody is very keen and grateful but I try not to let it interrupt my operational work and of course one gets pretty tired...

I took 24 hours off last Saturday and went to sleep practically the whole time... It sounds pretty tame... But after a mad social whirl it was damned useful. Have also been tramping the streets looking for digs for Maria.... Can't find any though.

I am terribly sorry to hear about your troubles with the family darling...

Suppose it is more or less inevitable!! Don't think you or the girls will ever understand each other - woman-like. I suppose they blame you for Raoul's premature birth. It's all very trying darling and I hate not being there to shield you... however we have been damned lucky - I have had 6 weeks' leave in three months... so much in fact, I think you were getting fed up with me - I didn't always feel that I was quite the unqualified blessing!!

Honestly darling you always ask me to answer questions - but you don't really pop any... except whether I have paid Mater yet... Well I still seem to be pretty broke.

I remember you saying that you had been working especially hard in the flat... I do hope you will not overdo it darling and oh by the way I have put in for leave for the 28th Sept - is that alright with you??

The weather here is pretty foul at the moment... warm but dull and drear - oh!! I haven't had time to call on your aunt tho' I did think of doing so when out hunting for Maria.

God bless you my darling. I love you lots. Give my love to Raoul. Tony.

27/08/1943

From Tony To Joan

Comment Date Est.

Sunday

Darling

Thank you so much for the laundry – the shorts are absolutely marvellous – it must have taken you ages to do them... The hankies were pretty welcome too – I have yay fever again.

Are you really giving up smoking – you poor darling it will be absolutely hell – is it really necessary – I can't understand why your bank man should be snotty – or have you been living much in excess of income?

On Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday had a demonstration squad here which kept the dull part pretty busy. On Thursday I spent a lot of time training and on Friday and Saturday we spent the whole day firing at a site practice camp – am very pleased with the squad, they pulled themselves together for me brilliantly. Now I am going to do Chief Safety Officer at another site on Monday – for the next 10 days I shall be Site Commander while the major is on leave... So am going to be pretty busy and try and organise something here. We are throwing our usual weekly dance tonight and though I am very tired shall have to go and I don't know if other officers will and somebody must attend these things.

The possibility of 48 hours seems remote as they insist on giving us 24 hours a week – of course I shall be much too busy to take it... But it will count against me, nevertheless.

Oh damn darling!

I have to go and make training programmes for the next week.

Gosh I am so tired – the air up here is marvellous but seems most soporific!

God bless you my darling. Kiss Raoul for me, give him my love.

Pray for me sometime.

I love you, Tony.

02/09/1943 From Meols

From Tony **To** Joan

Meols

Darling

We seem in some way to be quarrelling in our letters... You are quite severe...

I love you so much that I just can't tolerate the idea of this bickering.

I know I am shockingly bad at writing and answering letters... I don't know why!

There are 1000 excuses!

Am so sorry that I did not answer your questions – have no idea where I got the nut flour, I think it was Cooper's. Told my Batman to send pants on to you, have nothing to do with my clothes, he looks after them.

Illy's a bit stale, do not understand reference to hankies and clothes coupons – have you got any of mine? Coupons I mean?? I think I have them all.

Am not writing a lot because it is very early in the morning... And just waiting to "check dials" – evening seems an impossible time for writing – and taking an art class... which more or less fills up the evening. However, I am just sure my darling that you don't realise how very busy it is possible for an officer to be.

I don't understand at all your reference to when Raoul grows up... Don't follow that at all... Do you mean that I am bad mannered?

God bless you darling, love you, Tony.

07/09/1943 From Meols

From Tony **To** Joan

Comment Date Est.

Bty =battery

From Meols

7 September 1943 Estimated date

Photo no... 38

Am so sorry that I have not written for so long. I might have found an odd minute in which to write an odd line... but nothing like a letter.

Did I tell you that for the last 14 days I have been troop command... pretty hellish when you are so short of officers!! Last Monday week I heard that we were to have a regimental competition for the best gun... and as the Major was away, I naturally decided that we could not let him down and would have to win!! Gosh we worked night and day... painting, cleaning, greasing, etc. and the Battery came top in the competition. As well as this we had to carry on with normal proportion of dances, exercises, etc.

Gosh I'm tired for the last two weeks. I don't seem to have even had more than 4 hours sleep per night... However, one good thing - Brigade insists that we take 24 hours leave per week. The other officers usually manage it too... by walking off! But I don't see how any conscientious bloke can take it... However, I usually satisfy the Bty Commander's conscience by staying in bed, once a week, until about 10 and calling that my 24 hours. I went along to the baths yesterday to arrange cheap rates for my men and for the first time realised that we were nearly in the middle of a thriving holiday resort - people wandering about in bathing costumes and sea, sand, bands - everything in fact.

It's so dashed hot down here that I have introduced a revolutionary move by sending everybody to bed in the afternoon and doing all the work from 5.30 until 14.00 and having a heavy meal and so to bed for the afternoon – it's taking them a little time to get used to it, but the major has been most sporting and has given me a free hand with the troops.

Can't understand why Maria and Doreen want to come here.

Your letter has just come with watch. Thank you darling. Must get this off. Will answer all your questions later. Do hope you are keeping the other strap, I could have it mended - it is pigskin and silver.

God bless my darling. I love you - must go to see my guns now they have gone wrong.

Hate all this talk of you going to the Bank Manager... God bless you darling. Its sweltering here too. Love always, Tony.

11/09/1943 From Heron Camp Meols

From Tony **To** Joan

Comment Date Est

ATS was formed 9th September 1938

Meols

Darling

Am terribly sorry - have just realised that I have not sent your cheque - herewith.

Yes of course you may use some coupons for hankies darling – yes, I would like the pullover.

I cannot find Mrs Priest's letter anywhere.

It was the ATS's birthday the other day and to give them a good birthday party the Battery men took over the whole of the camp – spotting, telephony, guard, cooking – everything – not a single ATS moved a finger.

I cooked for the officers, a sergeant cooked for their mess and the gunners cooked for the girls. It was a terrific do and took a couple of days to prepare properly. Also we put on an entirely male concert with half of us dressed as ATSS.

We had the Major's wife up for a day or so and of course she had to be entertained -though she was very sweet and said she realised what a damned nuisance she must be. However it was quite fun and the Major took us all to see Tommy Trinder which was a great treat... Trinder is very good on the stage.

Then the Major's birthday cropped up – so it's been a hell of a week – I honestly think our Battery gets more entertainment than any other entertainments that I have ever seen – though we do it all ourselves. Of course the Major is very encouraging and we are allowed to do more or less as we please – which means that a hell of a lot gets done, one way or another.

Incidentally I shall, all being well, be home on the 28th of September so shall be seeing you soon now, my darling. God bless you and Raoul. I love you. Tony.

15/09/1943 Meols

From Tony **To** Joan

Meols

15 Sept. 1943 Estimated date

Darling

Just another 2 weeks to leave... Yoicks

Weather here is simply ghastly and, at the moment, am doing one of the most depressing jobs I have ever tackled... ie. regimental stooge... it is just frightful.

Nothing much has occurred since last I wrote... except this bally job.

The little animal is for Raoul... my servant made it for him... he is also going to make him a bear and an elephant.

I am so frightfully depressed that I shall only upset you if I write any more. I am jolly glad that you are getting out with Jean a bit. You must be rather lonely after all the leave I had at Larkhill and Cambridge.

I'm getting terrible interested in golf... So you can look forward to long years of grass widowhood!! If ever I can afford the game!! God bless you darling, Tony.