

Chapter 12 After the war.

Although this booklet is intended to cover the years of World War 2 and the lives of people during that period, it seems correct to round off this narrative that, by intention, centres on Joan Dibdin and her deceased husband Tony, by seeing it through to the next major stage in her life which seemed to start when she was just 30 years old in 1950. In her diary for 1949 there is reference on 3rd October to 7th Anniversary, which was her wedding anniversary to Tony although there is no entry for the anniversary of his death on 23rd July 1944. The following narrative is guided by the short inserts into Joan's diaries, but most of the detail derives from my personal memories from the age of about 3½, so I hope the reader will forgive any change in style which may derive from an autobiographical mode of writing.



No. 81 is the LHS grey door nearly identical to 4 Pinfold Road. Joan lived on 1st Floor, Mary on top floor and in the house was also Ida James, Mr Embleton, The Ashcrofts and The Wonleys.

At the end of May 1945, Joan returned to London to the flat at 81 Stanthorpe Road, which she had left in a mess following a visit during the V1 and V2 bombing, with one son, no husband, no brother and a future to plan.

From a wartime letter: *“The place was in a filthy state with dust and plaster and the whole of the bedroom was just a carpet of glass – with enormous chunks of plaster as big as your hand thrown in for relief!! I really couldn’t do anything about it in the short time I had, so I just collected a few things I needed and threw moth balls into everything.”*

One cannot begin to imagine the emotions experienced by this woman who, 6 years before, was engrossed in the world of music and living the carefree life of a student and then, 2 years later was working as a First Aid Nurse in the middle of the blitz. So much had happened since and Joan had to plan what to do next. She had an ambivalence towards advice except that from professionals or those that appeared professional enough to give the impression that they knew what they were talking about. A free spirit, she tended to reject advice from others and yet had this ingrained attitude that elders knew better. This left her open to conflict and tremendous tensions right through her life.

The situation as it stood in 1945 was :

- ?? No husband or brother
- ?? She had a flat in Streatham which she considered to be inadequate for bringing up a son
- ?? A possible music career in the offering but this would entail more study and hard work
- ?? A desire to become more independent from the Guise family who obviously felt a degree of ownership over Tony's son.
- ?? A need to make a living.

- ?? A small amount of inherited money, coupled with expectations of a lifestyle inherited from her middle class family and childhood.
- ?? A number of friends, some of whom were to act as suitors.
- ?? A family of Aunts, some disapproving, and one wise uncle.
- ?? A promise to her husband to bring her son up a Roman Catholic and, if possible, to fulfil Tony's dream of sending him to Downside Public School.



A set of 50 letters to Joan from her friend, suffering with Tuberculosis make it clear that between Autumn 1945 and Spring 1946 she was extremely busy during the first year after the end of the war caring for two friends with TB as well as her son. These letters give tremendous insights into attitudes to life after the war and the whole sad struggle of fighting TB and living in a sanatorium. These insights are documented in the later section "An Interlude. 3 Young Ladies and Tuberculosis."

A tiny tortoise shell address book of Joan's not much bigger than two inches square, from that period, has been found. At the end of the clearly written out phone numbers and addresses, is a poem written by one of the Pre-Raphaelite women Christina Rossetti

Remember

Remember me when I am gone away,
 Gone far away into the silent land;
 When you can no more hold me by the hand,
 Nor I half turn to go yet turning stay.
 Remember me when no more day by day
 You tell me of our future that you plann'd:
 Only remember me; you understand
 It will be late to counsel then or pray.
 Yet if you should forget me for a while
 And afterwards remember, do not grieve:
 For if the darkness and corruption leave
 A vestige of the thoughts that once I had,
 Better by far you should forget and smile
 Than that you should remember and be sad.

Looking back now I think that she always had a liking for the Pre-Raphaelites but sadly, in my youth, art was of little interest to me and in later years we never discussed the issue.

Joan was living near her deceased husband's family and must, at that time, felt considerable support from being part of it, as she had when she first went there some 4 years before, but she must also have felt to the need to strike out on her own. Mater and her two daughters were a powerful team. During the year 1942 Yvonne and Neil Callow got married and on 23rd April 1946 Gabrielle was born to them. Sadly she died six months later and

this must have had a dramatic effect in the family, although there has never been any talk of it. The second child, Simon, was born on 15th June 1949.

Soon after the war, Joan wrote to Max Pirani, her original piano teacher at the Royal Academy. His letter back, in August 26th, 1945, indicates that he felt that she had the potential to be a concert pianist, but that she would not be able to muster the drive and application to achieve, as now any drive she had, would be tempered by the new responsibilities of a son. See Appendix 15 for letters to and from Max Pirani.

She did apply to the Royal Academy to regain entry but was rejected. However she got her piano back from Sutton and had it tuned and seemed to have gained entry later.

Joan's diaries give us some idea of her active life, preparing for piano study, visiting relations and friends and endless trips to the dentist. At some point during this period my memory clicks in and so the reader will have the delight of first hand experience within the limits of accuracy of memory.

Early memories are of life in the rooms of the flat in Streatham. Sitting in a cot, a brown bow ended wooden one with birds painted on the ends, and playing with a green glass tea set, offering tea to visitors. Another vivid memory, which



resurfaced when about the age of 37, was of the light apple green paint on the bathroom wall. Although a ghastly colour in some respects, it somehow gave a feeling of calm. Perhaps fortunately there is little memory of time in my pram, however my mother's diary indicates, as has been mentioned earlier, that I seemed quite happy to spend time in it, probably much to her convenience.

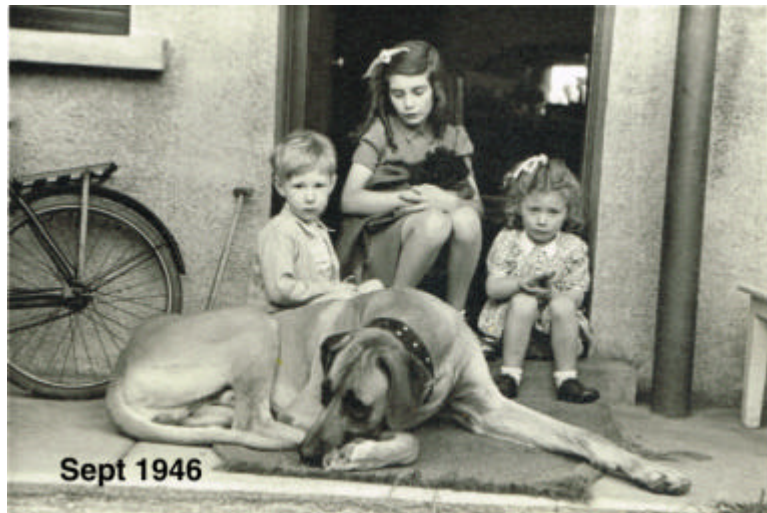
Joan had to put up with a fairly inquisitive and creative child although at that age creativity tends to be destructive if not managed.

The shock and panic after picking hot coals out of the fire, and need for Joan to recreate the curtains of the sitting room from strips of velvet and some other cheaper material because of my experimentation with a pair of scissors

While in Streatham we attended any number of those adult parties that were like the leftovers from the wartime activity. Rationing was in existence but somehow drink flowed and happy adults were pleased to indulge a three year old with time and care. It was strange wondering around the sitting room of 4 Pinfold Road amongst the legs of chattering adults, but somehow feeling at ease as the only child. A lifetime memory of learning the intricacies of making knitting wool bobbles threading the wool through two circles of card and then cutting with a pair of scissors. All this to the strains of "We'll meet again" and boisterous singing.

Although this was never discussed, her diaries show that for years, Joan had terrible trouble with her teeth, such that by about the age of 30 she probably had them all pulled. An interesting letter from a doctor in November 1945 tells us that she was fighting to treat warts and also had been given little yellow pills to help with "her stained and strung up condition" and "she was not to worry about her thyroid! "

In August 1945 and then again in 1946, we went on holiday to Croyde in Devon for three weeks. I remember the dunes with affection and the one clear detail of being with some other youngsters and a very large dog that, to me, was a horse. It was explained years later that this was a Great Dane and on seeing one in recent years, it is no wonder at my impression then. Joan was at ease with a camera and in an album are photographs of this very dog.



There has been no mention of Jean Irvine to date and yet there is reason to believe that she and Joan became friends at the Royal Academy. Jean attended her wedding and there is reference in 1944 to Joan visiting Jean and her son John who was born in 1941, in Chiswick – Beverley Court Flat at the bottom of Wellesley Road. Judging from this photograph there must also have been a seaside visit.



It is suspected that it was through visits to Jean in Chiswick that Joan found the enormous house at 33 Wellesley Road which offered space and a garden for Raoul to play in. Also she must have seen the potential for the house as a place for lodgers, and hence a source of income as well as somewhere to continue playing the piano. By the end of 1946 we had moved in and quickly settled. Chiswick also gave her the distance from all families, Guise and her own, to act out a fairly independent life.



John Irvine and Raoul 1946 in the grounds of Beverley Court.

Life seemed to have been moving very rapidly for Joan during that one and half years after the war. She had to sort out and settle all the details regarding Tony's death and on top of everything, not only did she had the grief of loosing her husband but also then in addition having the exasperation and despair of not having his few private possessions returned intact. There are letters from the Railways explaining that trunks and packages got misdirected and there is confusing paperwork.

Joan had already written to Peter in September 1943, just before Tony went to India, describing in no uncertain terms that she wanted to avoid visiting Pinfold Road, as she was not easily welcomed there. The girls used to ignore her and she realised that Mater hadn't much opinion of her anymore. It seemed to her that Mater thought less of her since she married her son and she was only really pleased to see her because of Raoul.

"Don't mention this if you write to Mater, I expect it will all turn out right after a time. This sort of thing is always happening but it will never be the same again for me."

Joan was not incorrect in this issue about "marrying her son". Twenty seven years later Mater informed Joan's relatively new daughter in law on the phone that Joan had got pregnant by Tony so she come marry him and steal him from her. This was nearly 40 years before Joan decided to let is be known to me that she had conceived with a love child although she had chatted to a cousin about it some twenty five years or so before.

It is not wonder that she felt the strong need to move some distance away from Streatham.

Judging from many of the condolence letters to Joan, most of her generation had the deepest respect for her and the young men were in one way or other attracted to her. More that just in the sideline was David Muir, her brother's close friend and the "boy next door" at Avondale in Carshalton. David's loyal longing for her continued from before the war, probably when she was 18 or 19 years old, through her marriage to Tony and after. There is a letter which amounts to a proposal in May 1946. He was a reliable fellow, an accountant and Joan was aware of his being available to offer advice during the difficult early years after Tony's death. In fact the letter to Joan while she was still at Streatham seems to be a follow up to a verbal proposal.

In the letter he expresses in no uncertain words how he would love to look after her and her son and apply his additional age to offer a few years of experience.

See Appendix 19



David Muir photograph by Peter in about 1936

An Interlude. 3 Young Ladies and Tuberculosis

Before embarking on life for the young Guise family as they moved into a new house in Chiswick, it is worth a short break to explore one aspect of life for Joan Guise, her son and her friends, during 1945 and 1946.

The writing and no doubt the reading of this article is complex. It is based on 50 letters, written from Pinewood Sanatorium near Wokingham by Joan Boxall, a friend of Joan Guise nee Dibdin between September 1945 and June 1946. Not only do these letters give some insight into the life and traumas of those suffering from Tuberculosis and their treatment but also further insights into the life and nature of Joan Guise by drawing on and expanding on aspects of life referred to elsewhere in this book. These letters have, for me, given a new slant on the understanding of my mother and my early life.

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The war in Europe ended on 9<sup>th</sup> May 1945. Joan had been staying in Meols for much of the 2<sup>nd</sup> London Blitz and returned to her 1<sup>st</sup> floor flat at 81 Stanthorpe Road to resettle on 30<sup>th</sup> May 1945. A couple of weeks before, Mary Cutforth, who had, if research into records is correct, been previously living in Leigham Court in Streatham, returned to the top flat (2<sup>nd</sup> floor) at no 81 Stanthorpe Road. Born in 1915, Mary whose maiden name was Laney had married Godfrey Martin (known as Mark) Cutforth in 1936 and it seems that he was in the military and both Mary and Mark settled at 81 Stanthorpe Rd. Joan had numerous friends and acquaintances many derived from relationship with 4 Pinfold Road, mostly men but the third young lady in our story is Joan Boxall. Maybe born in about 1922 in Camberwell, she had lived at one time at 4 Westbrook Road, Blackheath but it seems that she had spent quite some time at 81 Stanthorpe Road. The photographs show these three girls at Stanthorpe amid items which not only are referred in the

50 letters but also feature strongly in my childhood life and are still in my possession. These 50 letters written between September 1945 and June 1946 not only give immense insight into the lives of these three young women but also into life for Tuberculosis patients, their treatment and prognosis in that era. Joan Guise was 25 years old, had been widowed for a year, with a 2 year old son and the determination to live a very full life. Mary Cutforth, the oldest of the three at the age of 30, had, it seems, had Tuberculosis, been treated but had to return to a Sanatorium in Haslemere for further treatment. Her husband, referred to as Cutty or Mark was occasionally at home in Stanthorpe Road on leave from the forces and was about to be sent over to Germany. Joan Boxall was the youngest and was, at a guess, about aged 23 years. She, it seems, had Tuberculosis previously and at the time of her first letter to Joan had just re-entered Pinewood Sanatorium near Wokingham after sending Joan off on her well deserved holiday with Raoul in Croyde, Devon.

From the early letters, it appears that Joan Guise had been caring for both Mary and Joan Boxall at Stanthorpe Road before their respective entries to sanatoria. There is reference to Joan Boxall's X ray results in June 1945 being of concern. Although it is a difficult process, Tuberculosis nowadays can be treated with antibiotics, however, in 1945 the treatment, which was not a guaranteed cure, was months of rest, fresh air, good diet and if necessary a series of horrific operations designed to close up the cavities which were created in the lung tissue by the disease process as it destroyed that tissue.

This interlude not only give some insight into the issues surrounding TB and its treatment as an incurable disease and how the patient managed for a year in a sanatorium, living on death's door, but also in the relationship between these three women of similar ages and interests but in slightly different stages on their life's journey.



**The interior of Stanthorpe Road  
1945 -1946**

**Note items:**

**Standard Lamp, small lamp, mantelpiece clock, various pipes, telescope, small round table, brass trays, walking sticks, 3 book shelves, candelabras, cranes, Encyclopaedia Britannica.**

**All these items are still in the family, 75 years on. The large sideboard was sold.**

**Joan, Mary (Upstairs flat) & Joan Boxall**

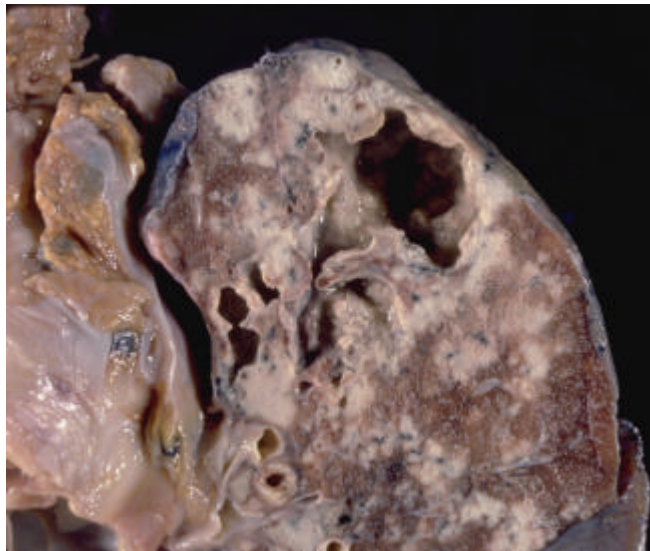


This set of photographs must have been taken in the second half of 1946.

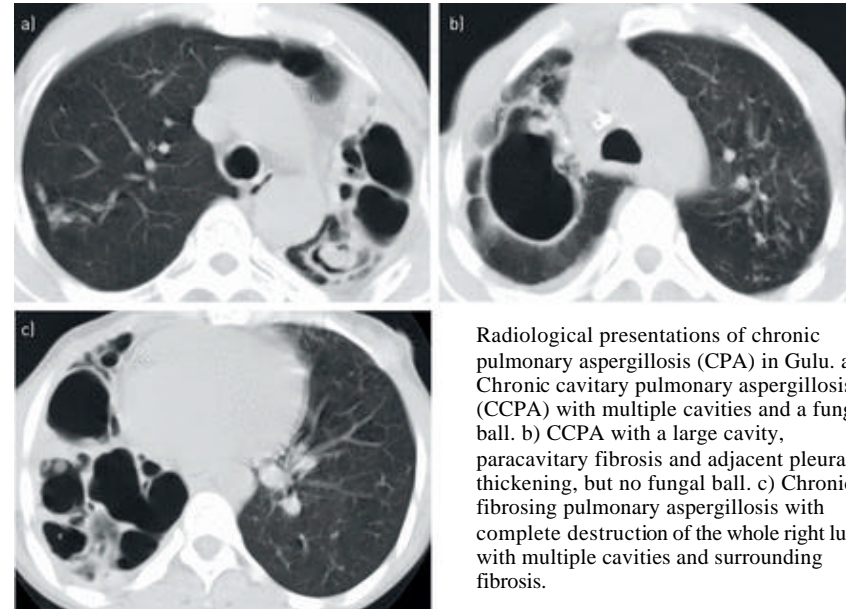
## A little about Tuberculosis

TB is a disease thought to have been around for thousands of years and is caused by bacteria.

Up until the 1940s it was only treatable by rest, good food, and the hope that, in modern day terms, the body's immune system would conquer the disease and keep it under control. The bacteria caused radical damage to the lung tissue killing it and so causing large cavities in the lung, hence many died of exhaustion and lack of breathe. Many known creative people are known to have died of TB or consumption as it was known; thought of as a Romantic disease.



If the patient was managing to fight the infection and their health improved then the damage to the lung was tackled by a number of operations to remove dead tissue and endeavour to collapse the lung so as to close up the cavity and enabling it to heal. These involved Thoracoplasty and Pneumoperitoneum



Radiological presentations of chronic pulmonary aspergillosis (CPA) in Gulu. a) Chronic cavitary pulmonary aspergillosis (CCPA) with multiple cavities and a fungal ball. b) CCPA with a large cavity, paracavitary fibrosis and adjacent pleural thickening, but no fungal ball. c) Chronic fibrosing pulmonary aspergillosis with complete destruction of the whole right lung with multiple cavities and surrounding fibrosis.

### Thoracoplasty:

The removal of series of ribs in order to collapse the chest wall providing rest for the tuberculous cavities in the underlying parenchyma was perfected in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The first convincing series of cases was presented by Schede, following de Cereville's "first" in 1885 to perform thoracoplasty.

**Pneumoperitoneum:** pushing the diaphragm upwards, was popular in Europe.

### Soft thoracoplasty:

The floor of the chest cavity, the diaphragm, a potent structure in narrowing the thoracic cavity where the diseased lung is struggling for survival, was targeted early in the 20th century. The phrenic nerve was paralysed first in 1911, allowing the diaphragm to move up and squash the lung.

During the WW2 Antibiotic became available, Penicillin being the first and in 1944 streptomycin and para-aminosalicylic acid was being used against TB.

For a report on the impact of this disease search internet for TB and Dr Citron" who not only suffered from it as a doctor but then spent his life working on it.

[www.whittington.nhs.uk/default.asp?c=37325&print=1](http://www.whittington.nhs.uk/default.asp?c=37325&print=1)



## September 1945

As has so often been the case in this family research the following account is based of a set of letters from one person, and from them it has been necessary to extrapolate and guess that which was written by the other side using other scraps of information.

Joan Boxall entered the Sanatorium at Pinewood near Wokingham for the second time in Sept 1945 having, in her terms sent Joan Guise and Raoul off on holiday in Croyde, Devon, where it seems that she already had connections. There is reference to Raoul needing to get fit and well again after Whooping Cough from which he had suffered in Meols, a few months earlier. It seems that in fact she planned the move into the Sanatorium without telling anyone, so as to ensure that Joan went on holiday rather than stay back to help. She explained all of this by leaving a long note, explaining that she had collected all that she needed like marmalade, chocolate and soap and that she was expecting it to be a year. Joan and Raoul went to Croyde on 4th September 1945 and did stay until the end of the month.



The first of the 50 letters from Joan Boxall at the sanatorium written on 5<sup>th</sup> September sets the scene for the narrative, making it clear that she was returning for the second time and

demonstrating that she was an old hand in the place.

“The first time I was so divinely confident, and now.. Oh well, as one of the sisters said today “we’ll really finish you off this time.”

The thorocoplasty was taken for granted.

“Hello Joan, back for your Thora”.”

She was delighted to be honoured by occupying a room with a poorly nursing sister and so got nicer food and horlicks as well as stimulating conversation. Her name was Margaret and it appeared later that she was an Irish Catholic SRN.

As soon as Joan Boxall was settled, she started writing letters to Joan and we note that during her first month at the sanatorium she writes six letters to Joan giving us a considerable insight into any number of issues in her life.

We see that she had a truculent nature and the confidence with which she managed the Dr. Johnnie McCann whose home happened to be in Streatham, with such replies to questions “as to when she got up and when she retired ?” being as outrageous as “11.00am and 1.00am” explaining that she talked too much with cups of coffee and joss sticks as well as the read the Encyclopaedia Britannica. She was put on bed rest with only 3 hours in the afternoon allowed up - to see a film and sneak off for a cigarette.

In her first letter she made it quite clear how fond she was of Joan and Raoul, making an effort to avoid crying when getting into ambulance. Her concern for them extends to worrying if they could have caught TB from her. Dr. Johnnie set her mind at rest but did suggest that they got X rays. Also she is aware of Joan’s need to find work and she is worried about pain that Joan is suffering.

The doctors proposed to do an artificial Pneumoperitoneum, pushing the lungs up rather than a more dramatic operation but she would have to lie flat for a while. This caused considerable

distortion of her torso. It is in her second letter that we begin to get some idea of how much Joan had helped Joan Boxall regarding the TB when she referred to her gratitude of her giving her a second chance, perhaps financially.

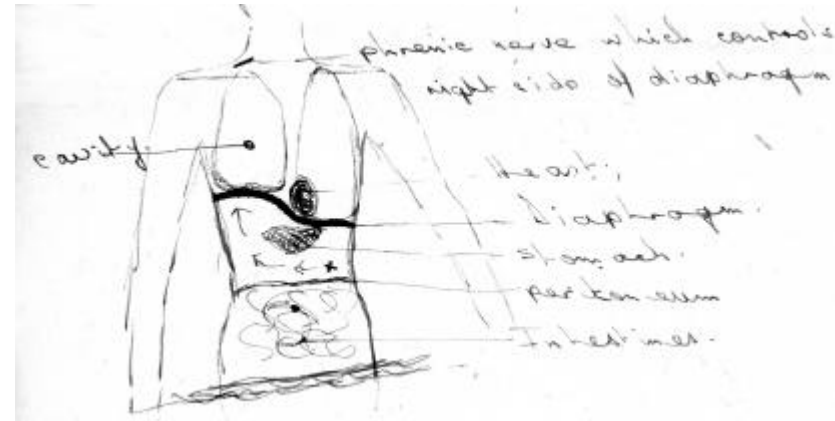
While in Devon, Joan obviously wrote letters to Joan Boxall, including fantasy and fairy stories.! These triggered off Margaret the room mate who being Irish was a little fey and so was able to continue the trend with wild ghost stories from Dublin.

Very quickly we begin to see the picture of life in a sanatorium which in so many ways reflects that of boarding school. The patients are there for their benefit and are to rest and so as to made life manageable, to obey rules. They were for the best of reasons stuck out in the country and kept in isolation and so they longed for the two hour Sunday visits from family and friends. Joan was not a super compliant patient and there are comments relating to her and Margaret going to the lavatory for a cigarette together.

One gets the impression that smoking was frowned upon in the Sanatorium, whereas to us this would be seen as obvious, in those days it was not seen as a serious medical risk other than being general part of a decadent life style with drinking and partying. Joan's mother visited regularly travelling from either Blackheath or Keston near Croydon.

She longed for the visits from Joan and later Raoul and Mary but was always conscience of the effort this entailed and tried to curtail her selfish need for outside company.

In the third letter there are complete details of the procedure called Pneumoperitoneum with the Phrenic nerve Crush and the follow up process called "Refill" which is to pump air into the cavity below the diaphragm to push it up.



In her fourth letter on 26<sup>th</sup> September, we are given some insight into Joan Boxall's confused love life involving a "boyfriend" in America, a story which no doubt she will have shared with her room mate, Margaret.

Joan Boxall was pleased to have advice and help from Joan Guise regarding all this, as she was really rather traumatised by renewed contact from this fellow after she had thought it was all ended.

By the end of September, she had had all the operations or procedures and was quite settled to the necessity of complete horizontal rest. There is, in the letters, reference to "Junior", expressed as a term of endearment or attachment. This sort of term is often applied by patients when referring to extra lumps or bumps attached to them as a result of radical treatments, such as a colostomy. Exactly what this was, is unknown but the effort to compress the lungs may have created all sorts of physical distortion in the upper body. She was now in for a quiet time with care and regular X rays to observe if the lung cavity was closing up.

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Three girls and their men

From the letters, one gets the impression that that significant topics of conversation between the 3 girls was sex, men and female issues. For Joan Boxall, these issues were only second in priority to the state of her illness and she was, it seems, very pleased to have such conversations with two experience women, one married to a military man and the other a widow. From just one side of the correspondence it is difficult to follow all the humour but it seems apparent that the dialogues were probably of a universal nature, much as they would be today and quick explicit.

As has been mentioned Joan Boxall had been involved with a fellow in America who seemed unsure about whether or not to break up and whether he could live with her possibly disabled or deformed. It seems that he, Owen Levy, was to be discharged from the army and Joan had obviously been very much in love with him but it is clear that he was not the same person that she ended up with in Carshalton in 1949. It seems that he was concerned about the prospect of having a disfigured wife. Over the month of September 1945, he seemed to have kept changing his mind, causing Joan much distress. Joan probably, with encouragement from her friends had got the situation in perspective and felt confident enough to start challenging Mary over issues about her husband.

Mary had married Cutty in 1939, as referred to earlier and they both lived in the upstairs flat of 81 Stanthorpe Rd. Cutty was in the forces and seemed to be in and out of the flat over the next year. Joan Boxall had little time for him, considering him to be ineffective and in one letter to Mary told her so, with the concessionary comment that it wasn't for her to get between husband and wife. The quality of his cooking seemed to be quite a joke amongst the girls and bearing in mind that Mary was very ill with TB and would have to be looked after for some time, it

was felt that Cutty would not be up to the mark and that he should make up his mind where his domestic priorities lay.

He had to go to Germany in 1945/46 and Joan encouraged Mary to challenge him to get settled and become a sound husband. It is noted with interest that Mary remarried in 1950 to a Mr Davis. Of the three girls, Joan Guise was probably the most active, both socially and by force of circumstances, as both Mary and Joan Boxall had succumbed to TB and would suffer long term effects. In one letter, from Joan Guise to Joan Boxall, which like the others from her is unavailable, she obviously related in detail, no doubt for Joan's amusement the lurid details of some romantic incident with one of the men known to all three girls. One gets the impression that of the three, Joan Guise was the most lively in this respect and maybe the most experienced. Comments from Joan Boxall's letters include remarks like "be tender to Sidney, he has a crush on you" and "you are very cold blooded." She took a keen interest in the budding relationship between Joan Guise and David who had in her childhood, prior to 13 year old, been the boy next door and a close friend of her brother. He was besotted with her and was a continual support throughout the early part of the war and later after Tony died.

More details of this relationship are discussed elsewhere, but for all observers, David would have been an obvious choice, with Joan's remark after meeting him at the Sanatorium, "isn't he a poppet".

It is noted from Joan Guise's diary that during this period of 1945-46, she was fair active and names such as Sidney, David and Bill{Smith} crop up as regular visitors.

See Appendix 20 for letters from Bill and Anna Smith

Coincidentally there is a letter from Bill Smith stationed in Caterick written in September 1945.

He obviously knew the whole Pinfold Road family and remarked how Marie had been very kind to him. He looked forward to returning to the Metropolis, Streatham being paradise compared to the desolation of Caterick and is longing for his wife Anna to come over from Italy.

It is also noted that Joan did often attend parties with her in laws at 4 Pinfold Road, despite the conflicts that must have occurred with Mater and the girls. There is deep in my memory, the ghosts of these parties and of me wandering around the room between people being shown how to make woollen pom-poms and listening to war songs.

It is interesting to note that there is reference to Hugh, Joan Boxall's later partner or husband, in January 1947 after Joan Guise had moved to Chiswick. The diary indicates that they both visited on the 4th January 1947 and then Hugh came to dinner on 7th. There is a suggestion that Joan Boxall was living at the time at Chiswick with her. Visits from David and Hugh occurred occasionally right through until the French Holiday in June 1947 when they both met up with both Joans and Raoul in Fontainebleau.

With regard to Cutty, Joan asked in November if he was at home, while Mary was in Haslemere Sanatorium, and goes on to say "Gently Joan, he's so vulnerable, Don't forget "Man and Superman - the discussion between the Devil, Don Juan, the Statue and Ana."

{It is the Statue who tells Don Juan that there are no beautiful women or artists in Heaven}.

Having in previous pages explored the intensity of the relationship between Joan and her husband, Tony, who died only 18 months before, it is difficult to imagine the state of her grieving mind and how she would choose to relate to the men around her.

Within many letters there is discussion about sexual frustration and in October, soon after Joan had entered the Sanatorium the is reference back to a letters from Joan Guise that seems to have related a series of humours semi sexual issues or encounters and conversations with the local males in their clan.

Much of the detail seems to be expressed metaphorically leaving the casual reader ample scope to muse.

Quote: "the outcome seemed to be a terrific waste of good beer on brass! How could you! Much as I love the mellow gleam of it in the firelight, there was always the thought back of my mind, tomorrow I'll have to clean it!". Their casual discussions regarding all of this can best be understood of that of young women who have "loved and lost" in a war.

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## Cultural pursuits

There is a very eclectic mix of cultural topics discussed in the letters and they give us some further idea of not only the interests of these three women but also how they have developed through the interaction with reading and the radio and, more importantly, other patients in the sanatorium.

For example Joan became very close to a lady, Rose Marie Duncan, whose husband Ronald Duncan had written a book "This Way to the Tomb". In 1945, this was produced as an opera by Benjamin Britten and as it was of a religious nature, it became of particular significance to Joan and possibly to Marie Guise. The reader is asked to remember that these patients were living "with death". The opera was to be put on at the Mercury Theatre in Notting Hill Gate. Later in the month of October, Joan noted that she was pleased that Rose Marie was released to go up to town to see the opera and in November it was going to be broadcast on the radio.

In one of her letters she includes a poem written by Ronald Duncan written on his way down to the Sanatorium on a Sunday visit.

Poem about the Sun in letter of Oct 15<sup>th</sup>.

The sun like a huge red ball  
Potent and Powerful  
Mounts the lustrous thighs of night  
And thrusts its phallus through  
Clouds which dissolve in light,  
Thus day lies in the womb of night  
And Dawn is born from mad delight  
Strides this city beautiful.

Joan in a later letter listed a visit to this opera as a priority for when she released for a weekend in the future.

This intense interest in such a cultural experience as going to "The Way to the Tomb" was not just based on knowing the author.

When she got out, she wanted to also see Lawrence Olivier in Henry IV or failing that in Oedipus.

While resting, she had time to read and amongst the many items request to be sent by Joan were such books as

Man and Superman G B Shaw

Opium Eater

The Works of Chaucer

Stories of Arthur and his Knights

The Road to Serfdom

A book of Chinese poetry 700ad.

with the hope that they would be able to discuss the content.

This desire for things to discuss expanded to music and items on the Radio including amongst others the work by B Britten - Peter Grimes.

Remembering back to my mother in those early years, I think that she also showed an interest in the issues raised by such literature but by the time I came old enough to become involved she was engrossed in the world of cars, lorries and transport and was working all hours. Joan Boxall not only enjoyed reading but enjoyed music and in that respect delighted in referring to works that she had heard on the radio such as Yehudi Menuhin playing a Bartok Concerto, knowing that it would be of particular interest to Joan Guise.

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Patients extra requirements

It is difficult to understand the full physical and mental state of a sanatorium inmate. The patient is ill but not so ill that they are beyond the desire to live a normal active life and enjoy the usual pleasures. The patient's inactivity is in fact forced upon them for their own good rather than because of feeling poorly so there is a continual tussle, rather similar, as mentioned before, to the pressures in a boarding school. All the basic needs of the patient, as understood by the medics, are met and so to a casual observer, it seems difficult to accept the endless stream of requests for special foods and bits and pieces.

It would be easy to puzzle as to why the patient cannot just lay in bed, do as they are told and get better. However there is a continual battle for normality and for life to be as it was before the illness had taken its toll. The following list has been collated from letters over the nine month period and shows how the items requested by Joan varied from those to satisfy some basic needs to items that were important in making life not just bearable but enjoyable.

After the war life was difficult and there were considerable shortages of goods and food.

While living in a atmosphere of austerity, it must have been these items, representative of everyday life, and the regular visits on Sunday, that gave the necessary hope that helped the patient to stay sane and journey towards recovery. A quote from one of the Doctors "A TB patient must feel wanted before she can get well". Remember some patients were not going to survive.

As time went by Joan's demand for items increased and widened in variety as she became more active.

List of items requested by or given to Joan over 9 months.

Cucumber or lettuce	Torquoise woollen frock
Chocolate	Silko for sowing
Cod liver oil and malt	Stockings
Vitamin C	Cleansing cream
Celery	Coty powder Rachel Neare
Watercress	Buttons
Sugar Biscuits	Pearls
Milk	Bras
Apples	Dresses
Butter	Her crepe sole shoes
Cake	Her special shoes by "Raoul" of Paris
Peanut butter	Pot of 5/6 Marvex Liquefying
Quart of beer	Cleansing Cream
Tooth mug	Knitting and sewing equipment.
Tampax	Cigarettes (occasionally referred to as firkins) and peppermints to cover up the smell
Silk for teeth	AA handbook.
Joss sticks	
Curtain net blouse	
Navy Dungarees	
Black dress	

Early on, Joan Guise made her a beautiful Pyjama Top as a special item with all the trimmings.

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### **The General routine of life.**

Joan Guise made her first visit in early October taking various bits and pieces and a freshly made cake. This meant so much to Joan Boxall who had to accept regular visits from her mother who was difficult and rather possessive. She could not really manage to accept Joan Guise visiting at the same time as her. In late October, Joan was looking forward to a visit from both Joan and Raoul

There is an indication from her diaries that Joan was not only looking after them both at Stanthorpe Road but also had been visiting Mary from time to time down at Haslemere, as well as looking after Raoul and struggling with very troublesome teeth finally having the whole lot extracted.



View of Haslemere, a religious based hospital

Coincidentally a new patient arrived from Haslemere and brought a package and note from Mary. Joan took a keen interest in not only the ins and outs of her relationship with her husband but also on her state of health. She was obviously very poorly and definitely not happy at Haslemere. For what every reason, probably economics, the patients had to do more for themselves and yet live an austere quiet life. She was considering going to Thrale Hall a residence in Streatham, where she could stay in bed until 11.00am. Her husband Cutty had been detained further in America. Joan was very worried about her.

It would seem that October and November were not good months for Joan. There was an upheaval at Pinewood as some of the huts had been condemned so patients had to be shifted around and the intake was reduced.

There were always minor irritations like when listening to the radio play in the evening the radio being turned off 5 minutes before the end.

In her letters, Joan was giving very intense, highly charged, descriptions of experience and her thoughts about them. She was conscious of making demands of her friends to grab a little happiness and then feeling selfish. Joan often expressed concern in the hope that Raoul and Joan did not get TB. She was aware of how much she depended on Joan for moral and physical support. Joan poured out sympathy, strength and selflessness.

Despite her dismal state of mind and struggle with survival under such dismal circumstance Joan Boxall continually showed concern for all the friends and family and was quick to help out a young lady in Norfolk with the sum of £4 in cash which had to be acquired and then posted on.

The letters give reports about other patients and their behaviour and attitudes as they experience long periods of relative isolation and forced rest and we see something of how those caring for the patients and, in effect, supervising them, the doctors and nurses have to cope with adults, not always cooperating and very often approaching death.

It seemed that there was an endless stream of X rays and often disappointing prognosis

She was infinitely grateful for visits and for seeing Raoul and for the encouraging letters from Joan and Mary.

In early November there is a quote from Dr. Johnnie "It's rather disappointing the pneumoperitoneum has not closed the cavity. It's smaller and the trouble around it is clearing up .... So we'll continue as we are". Joan had a "Refill" of 1000cc of air, to push the diaphragm up. And had to stay in bed. Joan reports that she is smoking only 2 a day.

Joan mentioned in a letter that Mary while at Haslemere had been treated with "gold" and wanted to go home but so much would depend on Cutty looking after her and so Cutty will have to change his spots. Her husband, a soldier was going to be sent to Germany and Joan in a letter to Mary tells here that she has got to get sorted with Cutty, her husband, so that he fully recognises that he has got to support her properly in future; Joan accepts that she is interfering but needs to encourage a close friend.

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The topics mentioned to date, men, culture, day to day extra needs and luxuries and the endless gratitude and concern for Joan, Raoul and Mary are the mainstay of all the letters over the 9 month period. This is repeated concern over the state of Joan's teeth and the pain they are causing and an insistence that Joan and Raoul get X rayed to ensure that neither have TB.

As has been mentioned October and November seem to be bad months

The letters from November onwards are useful in giving us not only a report on the progress on the healing of the disease and Joan Boxall's psychological state and behaviour, but also snippets of narrative about life within the sanatorium and for Joan and Raoul at home.

On 13th November we read that Mary home had gone home from Haslemere which was obviously a worry since she really would need looking after.

Joan was still very stressed, she had been offered a poor prognosis and just wanted to smoke a lot. She was deeply grateful to Joan Guise for sympathy, understanding and strength which seemed to be endless and in fact she made it clear that she held Joan on a pedestal.

On 15th November we hear a little more about Margaret Sparrow, her Irish room-mate who has 5 sisters all nurses. Although a sensible young woman and a compliant patient, they both could be found to be sitting on the bath smoking and discussing what was to go on their tombstones.

There is gratitude for Joan's parcels and doing various jobs to help.

Joan was pleased that Cutty is now at home, looking after Mary but was aware that he might have to go to Germany.

By 27th November Joan was coming up for air and was amused by Joan's letter reporting that Raoul was last seen in the linen basket.

Also Joan Guise had created quite a stir during her last visit, during discussions with Margaret who had very traditional Roman Catholic ideas about sex and marriage. Her rather blunt approach caused Margaret to burst out in girlish shrieks.

In this letter, there is a lesson to Mary about the type of men that frequent pubs and how they were not worth bothering with. It is noted that although on a very basic diet, those in the sanatorium were eating a better variety of food than most of the population. Hospital got priority to such as meat, fish, kippers and vegetables.

A letter near the end of November described the climax of Joan stress and concern about her TB. With the use of make up and a strong will, she prepared herself to ask Dr Johnnie about the state of her TB and then, at the last minute, was about to pull out when he realised she was wound up and gave her the time to discuss the situation. She was very impressed with his awareness and sensitivity and was pleased to hear that although the TB was not really resolving there was still hope.

At this time Joan Boxall asked Joan to go to the "Dispensary" at Lewisham, near the Hospital, and sort out her 5/- a week grant that seemed to have been available for TB patients.

Remember this was before the NHS which was formed in 1948, so it is unclear how people managed to get the intense and long term treatment that was necessary for survival. There is one letter from a charity in Sussex referring to a grant being offered to Joan. This was the Tunbridge Well Equitable Friendly Approved Society referring to the need for a receipt for the 17/6 sent. The letter also refers to "comforts" payments to date.

Joan seems to be occupying herself with needlework and asked for some silk or cotton for doing some work on Mary's bedspread.

She was intensely looking forward to a visit from Joan and Raoul and also waiting to hear the results of Mary's X ray.

December 1945

In December Joan seemed a lot more buoyant. She had clarification about the state of her TB and seemed to be looking forward to a weekend at home within the near future.

She was thrilled by a visit from Joan Guise in early December and noted with relish how exceptional she looked in beauty and style. She tried to ensure that she was reimbursed for all the shopping that she had bought and discussed various items of creative sewing that she was planning for the Guise family and friends, relying of Joan's judgement with regards to material colours.

Also she went on to tell Joan Guise that she had got to start looking after her life with a future with Raoul and stop running around after others. This letter accompanies a letter to Mary, who was by now at home, giving her firm but friendly advice about getting her husband to get his finger out and get on with doing the cooking etc or employ a housekeeper daily to look after Mary. "But it's about time he realised that worthwhile things must be looked after and cherished". Joan was aware that this talk may have upset Mary but it did seem that Cutty was a fairly self centred and insensitive man so perhaps Mary needed encouragement to take a firm line. Everyone was waiting for Mary's X ray result.

In letters in December, Joan often referred to a weekend leave in early January, when she would be able to stay up in town or at Streatham and enjoy freely the delights of smoking and drinking. So much depended of the results of X rays which would point to how the cavity in her lung was closing up. For the patient, so much understanding of their state of improvement depended on the non verbal from the doctors who, so often, were not prepared to commit themselves by making promising comments. In mid December the diaphragm was lifting up, the cavity was smaller,

and she was quite blunt in telling Dr Johnnie that she “did not like it here”. It is assumed that the demanding and somewhat truculent behaviour was as a result of the TB, the looming image of death and the extended hospital stay.

Towards the end of December after much nagging Joan was able to get the information that the cavity had closed up another ¼ inch but because of its position in the lung it was going to be difficult. However, a weekend away over the 4th January was agreed and she told Joan that during this time she would like tickets to be books for the play “This Way to the Tomb” and Lawrence Olivier in Oedipus or Henry IV. She was glad that Joan has sorted out the money at the Dispensary.

It is interesting to note how sufficiently involved in the Guise family Joan was, in that we read that she often supported Joan, encouraging her to patch things up with Mater, explain how Mater’s excessive energy meant that she was often going to argue and upset people as an outlet. In this letter there is reference to a 1st cousin for Raoul on the way ! It is worth mentioning that she also knew Joan’s friends from the prewar days including Jean Irvine, who by now had settled in Chiswick, and her sister Brenda.

In her last letter before leave, she was brimming with excitement and saw that on the notice board was “J.Boxall, weekend leave.” In this letter she hoped that Raoul was feeling better.

Returning to the Sanatorium after the weekend away was a bit of a jolt. Margaret’s sister, Lena, a nurse, was back for the second time after 8 months of freedom and Joan had to move out so the sisters could be together. She got short shift from Dr. Johnnie who after becoming aware of her somewhat wayward behaviour while away, asked when she was going to grow up. Joan was confident enough to give a feisty response. Another weekend away was booked for April 5th, in 3 months time. Joan’s state of

mind on returning to the sanatorium is expressed beautifully in this excerpt from her letter a few days later.

Quote

“On Wednesday I saw Johnnie and was questioned about the weekend. I sighed rapturously over it and mentioned, amongst other things, 5 pints of beer. We discussed the finer points of the various brews until he pulled himself up with a jerk saying “of course you went to bed early?” I then got a touch of your “truthitis”, Jo, maybe because he has such a penetrating gaze have and an amazing understanding of human types, I faltered “well no” and then added hurriedly to square things that we took taxis everywhere. For some reason he and sister found that very amusing and I smugly relaxed, congratulating myself on my ready wit, but then Johnny crushed me. “Isn’t it time we grew up” he asked “you’re coughing”. Then something happened to me, I flared, “I’m coughing because on my weekend I did a lot of talking and laughing too, things I don’t do very much here. I also smoked a lot because of the short-sighted smoking policy applied here and as for growing up are we not treated as children” Johnnie gazed speculatively (I hope) at my heaving bosom, reddened cheeks, and flashing eyes, grinned and said “you really are incorrigible I must get Margaret to lecture you”. Somehow I refrain from reminding him that Margaret and Lena are both back in Pinewood for the second time although they observed all the rules for TBs most faithfully. Surely it is better to have taken a few chances and deserved it in a way, than to have a crystal clear conscience and still come back.”

This exemplifies succinctly the difficulties with long term illnesses, that by nature demand discipline to manage them.

The next day Joan was introduced to her new room mate, Sister Holt, by Johnnie. *“Be on your guard for the next few weeks because you’re going to be subjected to the worst possible influence”*

In this letter Joan referred to feeling very aware of living in a “Vacuum of Despair” and without Joan’s help and inspiration would go berserk.

In the letter of Jan 25th, it is interesting to read that Joan Guise had played the piano at the sanatorium for the patients who were all very impressed. Amongst all her other activities Joan had already started to look into re-establishing her link with the Royal Academy of Music with the view to finishing her piano studies and becoming a professional teacher.

The problems with her teeth seemed to be coming to a head with reference to teeth fitting, however Joan Guise’s diary indicates the issue went on for another few months with an entry in her diary about impressions in March 1946 and a final entry regarding teeth in April.

This seems to be the end of a traumatic period of Joan’s life with really went back 10 years.

Joan Boxall was very proud to have been able to support Rose Marie’s room-mate, Hilda, who had a grumbling appendix. She referred to spending the morning comforting her “Joan Guise Style”

In February, Joan was looking forward to “getting out” so the three of them could function again as an “Unholy Trinity”. She realised that Cutty had gone back to army work and that Mary must have been lonely. Moving into organising mode, she suggested that Mary visits her at Pinewood and perhaps sees Dr Johnnie for a chat re TB.

One day, Joan had an enthusiastic Austrian Jewess doctor looking at her X rays saying how lucky she was and that everything was beautiful, so Joan was waiting to see Dr Johnnie to get a more realistic report.

She asked for Joan to bring down a quart of beer so that she and Muriel could get proper woozy on Sunday evening.

She was up and about more, making her own bed and sweeping and dusting.

A letter of February 5th is packed with little jewels of information that enliven the narrative at that time.

Once again Joan was ever so grateful for the visit on Sunday and had put some thought an “Acre” project being considered by Joan Guise. She had discussed this with Rose Marie whose husband had written a book on the subject which entails having 3 acres of land, building on it and living off a few animals and food grown on the land. Rose Marie had spoken to her husband who had just said “refer to Chapter 3”. This was obviously just one of the many ideas considered by Joan Guise when considering how she should develop her life in the future. It is not perhaps coincidental that some 30 years later, Joan was fulfilling that dream on a small holding in Cumbria.

A single sentence regarding what was happening to Mater’s house is indicative about the problems that may have been occurring within the Guise family.

It is interesting how some young people engage in timeless philosophical discussions. Joan and her inmates had embarked upon a discourse on peoples motives for doing helpful things. They all agreed that there was usually an element of self interest until the help that Joan Guise gave was considered as an example. Joan Boxall was conscious of introducing the support from Joan into the discussion, creating an argument because of using the personal instead of the general. It is noted that she had helped out Rose Marie by washing her hair.

This letter contains reference to Yvonne being back in England and the hope of a child.

Further insights are gleaned from the comment that there was to be another moving day when patients move rooms and beds. Joan was going to have to move in with a very sweet and rather intense young lady and then referred to “the Lesbian affair” and what

advice did Mary and Joan give her. All this just created more tension between patients at the sanatorium.

A week later she was concerned about not having heard from Joan and Mary and hoped all was well.

She was obviously feeling better and was excited to show off her new shoes, Black Velvet material, piped with silk Petersham.

These shoes inspires her to ask for her fur coat and black hand bag and clean trousers as dungarees were so inconvenient and skirts at that time of the year are too drafty.

The issue regarding lesbians came up again and Joan explained that the intensity of the relationships can create jealousies similar to those felt during first love affairs. She was aware that 5 months and 9 days in the sanatorium could create these neurotic imbalances.

She hopes that Joan and Mary were having wild and immoral parties!.

Feb 22nd

In this letter Joan refers to a porter at the sanatorium who made standard lamps. Knowing that Joan wanted one, she asked what colour she would like. No doubt this is the lamp that I have known all my life and is standing by my side now.

Joan embarked on a light-hearted introspective discussion about ego, based on an encounter with Dr Johnnie on the stairs

Quote

“ Saw Johnny the other afternoon, he followed me up the stairs and when we got to the top, I glanced back, simulating surprise, saying “hello Doctor McCann”. He also simulated amazement with “Oh it’s you Joan, I didn’t recognise you in a skirt” which leaves me with two thoughts. Did he really fail to recognise the famous legs or did he have a damn good look and was so stunned by their curvaceous perfection that he felt bound to remark upon them. I came here for my lungs but my inferiority complex seems to have had treatment and it’s my ego that’s having “refills” it seems”.

Joan continued her interest in the relationship between Joan and David and remarked that the idea of them building their own log cabin seemed brilliant. There was reference to them buying a lot of second hand books for 8/6d. Joan longs to see them.

My guess is that those all around, thought David would be a good choice for Joan and the reader is reminded that he always fancied her, however as will be seen, during the next few years Joan followed another path to matrimony.

Joan’s was obviously skilled with a needle as she was busy making, amongst other things, slippers for Raoul for his birthday.

In one letter she give lurid details from the Nursing Mirror about dealing with constipation.

Muriel and her had been living out the fantasy of being in balcony seats at the Albert Hall by sitting on the floor at the end of Muriel’s bed wrapped in a duffel coat and the hot water bottle supplied by Joan, listening to music through a shared pair of headphones.

On one occasion she sent her dinner back as the pie concealed only a piece of yellow gristle and no meat. She was planning to take it to Dr Fowler but the kitchen complied by supplying some meat. She felt very audacious and brave until she heard that millions in Europe were to die of starvation.

At the beginning of March, it seemed that the cavity in Joan’s lung has closed up so things looked promising although she commented that her diaphragm was up by her armpit.

The next letter from Mar 5th suggests that Joan was improving in health and also taking supportive advice from Joan Guise and getting more physically and mentally active.

She was endlessly grateful for the angelic support and advice but also indicated that she was worried about Joan’s looking so pale , mentioning that Rose Marie thought the same, and once again nagged her to get an X ray for herself and Raoul and she asked Mary to fix her an appointment. Rose Marie was more poorly and now confined to bed.

Once again, we read that the radio was turned off 5 minutes before the end of an evening play “Trojan Women”, however Joan was showing improvement and had been out for a walk. “The thaw started last night after the last fall of snow. I bundled myself into my duffel and tramp for miles through the saturation of drizzle and mist, my mood becoming withdrawn, grief and solitary, but not unhappy as I trudged through the unmarked snow, looking at small strange footprints and trying to decipher them. The dog ones were easy, but does a rabbit have prints in sets of four one and one then two together?” Again at the end of the letter she thanked Joan for encouraging her into a new way of living.



Joan Guise 1947

In a letter of Mar 14th, Joan was planning her next weekend in London in April. Another comment reflects her rather spellbound

attitude to Joan Guise whom she sees as “a willowy silent mysterious type of woman.”

Many in the group at the sanatorium were very poorly and Rose Marie was going to need another operation. Joan was having a busy time – washing up, filling bottles, tidying rooms and running errands and so got a grade 1 for work and was given a pass out to Wokingham on Saturday. She mentioned that she was looking forward to listening to Peter Grimes on the Radio.

Despite Joan Guise’s dislike of writing letters it is surprising to read so many grateful comments from Joan Boxall including on the 17th March that referred to the quality of Joan’s letters and how important they were despite her feeling them to be not good enough. Joan in March was upset and worried for Rose Marie whose health was failing and it was sad as she had such a lovely husband and two children. There were problems with operations and both lungs were in trouble.

On March 20th, she sent an article about the “Moral Influence of Needlework”, admitting that she still have not finished the slippers for Raoul, being rather slow at it. The Almond Blossom was out and she had pinched a bit but then so did Dr Fowler although, as he was in charge, she felt he had a right. And then she pointed out that they were all living in a democratic nation. This thought inspired her to report on a nationally published joke that was currently in vogue.

“Nationalisation of Public Conveniences under the direction of Sir Walter Latrine, Urine Bevan and Sir Stafford Crapps” .

It was still only 10 months since the threat of Germany had been dealt with and Labour had just come to power in July 1945, with its plans for the Welfare State and a Socialist United Kingdom.

A cursory look at the whole batch of letters suggests that Joan visited Pinewood at least every fortnight and the journey from Streatham to Pinewood had to be done by public Transport. The journey was about 40 miles and to those of us who have owned a car from an early age, this journey would be something like 1 to 1½ hours, door to door. In those days, Joan travelled exclusively by public transport, except on those special occasions when she got a lift from David and so the journey would take about 2½ hours, involving the underground and Southern Railways. Allowing my mind to drift back, I now remember those many journeys visiting friends and relatives to such places as Reigate travelling by the extension of the London Red Bus system, The Green Line Coach. Visiting took a long time and must have entailed considerable walking from bus stops or train station and late night journey back, asleep in a train or a bus.

The journey out to Wokingham must have been reminiscent for Joan of her journeys out to Shrivenham during her early courting days with Tony. This journey was in the same direction but about twice the distance. It seems that once Joan was allowed out of the Sanatorium for a day on a Saturday Joan was happy to travel down for the day and in a letter of the 21st March, Joan was excited to see her and wait for her outside the Post Office. She was also excited about the weekend in London, due in a couple of weeks, stating that all she wanted for her weekend in London was a man – She commented “Have I got Spring Fever and... the curse today”

As it happens, from a letter of the March 24th, it seems that Joan, Mary and Raoul did all go to Wokingham on the Saturday and

they had a great time although Joan was aware that Mary was struggling with back pain. They left her with a parcel which she enjoyed opening that evening. So much about sanatorium life seemed to be like boarding school judging from the following narrative:

“About the ride back you’ll be glad to hear that I’m still “virgo intacta” as the News of the World puts it, just a spot of knee fiddling, definitely worth it!

As I sneaked up the stairs at 5:10pm, passing the duty room door Gallagher’s voice hailed me; she’s a martinet. “Joan Boxall !!” Apprehensively, I turned and she glared back, and then brought my daffodils out from behind her back saying “did you drop these on the stairs” in an indescribable tone of voice. I meekly said yes and then the situation suddenly became too much for both of us and we burst out laughing at the same moment. By tacit consent, nothing further was said.

“That evening Rose Marie, Muriel and Hilda drank a bottle of Port and reeled drunkenly along to say goodnight at 8.45pm. They all sang loudly up and down the corridor! It was funny, they are usually most anxious not to defy authority – openly anyway” She asked after the results of Mary’s sputum test and then discussed her planning for the weekend, as she felt that she had to fit in seeing lots of friends and was busy trying to plan it.

March 30th.

There was an upset at the sanatorium as a local cat had swallowed a bone and needed a vet –but would there be one on a Saturday ? Joan is desperately looking forward to the weekend away and has been dressmaking and modifying her American Bra to suit her. 5½ days before weekend in London but still planning where to stay etc.

April 2nd

In a letter to Mary, Joan discussed her plans for the weekend and then mentioned that Rose Marie has left Pinewood and she would discuss this when she got home. There is a tone of sadness in the note.

On April 12th

Joan thanked them for the weekend and then on the 15th referred to Joan having been down to Pinewood again. One gets the impression that David had taken her down judging from the comment "David is really rather a poppet"

She gave thanks for the weekend.

This was followed by another letter on April 15th, thanking Joan and Mary for all the good things; Milk, cigarettes, Energen rolls and material which was just perfect for her suit.

She was now worrying about where to settle when she came out of Sanatorium either with Mary or Joan or perhaps go home to mother. She asked Joan to get from Boots, a Mason Pearson brush and Marvex liquefying cleansing cream and from London a tube of Elizabeth Arden's Sear Cream, "the darker colour that you and I have". In this letter there is a reference to a rabbit skin and a Mustard coat that Joan Guise was going to make. She wondered what was happening at Easter?

Again on April 26th, she referred to the delights of the weekend in London with some oblique comment about having had to razor her legs.

On May 8th she thanked Joan for the flowers, milk and cigarettes. The milk enabled her to absent herself from the dining room for two suppers, thereby breaking another rule. She was waiting to hear if the Phrenic Nerve Crush was to be done to further help collapse the lung. She mentioned that she enjoyed hearing about

Bill and Anna and David and Jimmie. She then embarked on a enormous list of books that she had been reading she asked again about the special make up stuff.

On May 13th, She described in considerable detail how she and Hilda were nearly caught smoking in one of the outside huts by nurse Gallagher. She thought that she would be staying for another month but and was planning to go to Devon for convalescence.

Her mother was leaving her job at Keston and moving back to Blackheath, to a very small flat at 12 Granville Park sharing with her sister. (Lewisham)

She is aware that Cutty was to be at home on leave and hoped Mary and him had a good time

Her Phrenic Nerve Operation was due to be done next Monday and then within a few days she will be out.



May 23rd "It's all over"

There was an issue about her missing suppers except when it was her turn to do the washing up. The "Gestapo" supper sister reported her. The issue seemed to be all about where she was getting her supper food from. Joan had got away with not going

to suppers for 9 nine months because the smell sickened her. She was going to be hauled up in front of Dr Fowler but she was all fired up to argue.

The last letter is undated, but probably was written in June and was from Combe Martin in North Devon where Joan was convalescing. She was pleased to be out from the Sanatorium but found she was very stressed and was fearful of people. Her mood would suddenly drop.

“And now to talk about Freedom. It is, of course, divine. The food, the cigarettes when I want them, absence of bells, bloody bloody bells, the space, people to whom TB is an unknown quantity. Yet I still have a lot of adjusting to do. People frighten me when they talk to me and I am often near to tears for no reason at all.”

Other convalescents included an Austrian person. She was impressed with their broad education. She was still to have “Refills” –pumped into her chest to compress the lung. These can be got at Brompton.

Joan Guise and Raoul went down to Croyde for three weeks holiday in September.

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### **After thoughts.**

This really is not the end of the story as a year later, there is in Joan Guise’s diaries entries about Joan visiting her new home in Chiswick and on occasions with Hugh and David and them all staying over because of the Train Strike. In June 1947, The Joans went with Raoul on holiday to Paris for a week, meeting up with David and Hugh then in 1949 Joan and Raoul, in December 1948 went to stay with Joan and Hugh in Carshalton for 4 months

during which time Raoul attended another school there and also contracted Scarlet Fever.

It is interesting that memory of Joan Boxall from that time was of a very organised and firm person who on one occasion was less than sympathetic to me when I gashed my knee on the gravel.

Mention in the last letter of the Brompton Chest Hospital reminds me that I did actually work there for 6 weeks as a porter after failing my 2<sup>nd</sup> year exams, pushing TB patients about in wheel chairs and moving corpses to the morgue. I had to be checked for TB and as had happened on entering Imperial College 2 years before, I reacted positive to the test suggesting that I had in my life been in contact with TB. A similar story applied to my wife, Joanna, when she entered nursing at the London Hospital. It was considered that Joanna may have contracted the TB bacteria from unpasteurised milk as a youngster while in Scotland. Throughout my childhood there was often comment about a shadow on my lungs but presumable my immune system was up to keeping the bacteria under control.

Following the letters in sequence gives a clear perspective of the variation of mood in the patients over a long period and how the development of treatment generated the intense ups and downs. The patients were in effect living with death, either their own or that of those around them.

Within Joan’s letters, there can be picked up references to many friends, family and acquaintances of Joan Guise. David Muir was no doubt of particular interest as he was a suitor and in fact did propose enthusiastically to Joan sometime during May 1946 as Joan Boxall was preparing to leave Pinewood. There may be reference to Johnnie Sloan who was writing to Joan from Greece at the end of the war, in some way acting as a surrogate for Tony and whose last archived letter was to Joan while she was at



Croyde in Sept 1945. There is a tentative reference to Jimmy, who may have been the brother of Paul Frankland. They were Tony's cousin, both who were special to Joan. Judging from comments in her letters, Joan Boxall knew well the Pinfold Road family and took a supporting interest in Joan Guise's relationship with them.

Perhaps the sadness aspect of the story is that Mary was treated with Streptomycin as a new antibiotic that was used to tackle the TB. This was in the early days and it seems that it caused deafness in Mary, who then may have become paranoid. I remember the time when Mary returned a Christmas parcel of biscuits to my mother, with the comment that as she had not been in touch over the year, what was the reason for sending her a present. It is noted from ancestry documents that in 1950 she married a Mr Davis, but no further details are known.

Continual thanks to Joan and Mary and recognition that Joan Guise was not only doing so much to help but also give so much psychological support and care.  
There was reference to Raoul being poorly quite a lot of the time.

I have left it for the reader to consider for themselves the issue of "the TB personality" as portrayed so often in the lives of famous consumptives such as the Brontes and Byron, Keats and Elizabeth Barrett Browning. The notes from the letters demonstrate the wide swings in mood and in some cases the imaginative and very creative nature of those suffering.

End of Short Interlude about Tuberculosis

RG. July 2022

## Wellesley Road

I remember the first day of moving in at 33 Wellesley Road. It was a large detached house, with for me enormous rooms and I remember standing in the dining room, surrounded by tea chests of stuff and two kindly neighbours, The Eidges, from number 31. My mother proposed to fill the house with lodgers so as to obtain an income and then once she fully qualified, she would be able to earn extra by giving piano lessons. I now find it quite remarkable that Joan must have return to Streatham soon after the end of the war in May 1945 and in about 18 months had bought property and moved to Chiswick.

Soon after we moved we seemed to have acquired a housekeeper, Mrs Crawford, who at least on one occasion baby sat for me and my toy monkey Mister Mustafa. This monkey crops up in my memories from time to time and was, I think, well worn.

In 1947, she was having lessons with Mr Myers Foggin at the Royal Academy and found his manner a little disheartening, so was pleased that Max Pirani was prepared to take her on again after having taught her before the war. In March 1950 Joan passed her Royal Academy Music exam and qualified as LRAM ( The Licentiate of the Royal Academy of Music ). This was soon followed by another qualification qualifying her to teach music.

Having moved into 33 Wellesley Road, Joan furnished the property with post war “utility furniture” and proceeded to take in lodgers. Her first dog, in adult life, was a wire-haired fox terrier called Pippa who was the sister of Jean’s dog, Buddy.

There were still the regular and painful visits to dentist; it must have been in the late nineteen forties, by the age of 30, that Joan finally had all her teeth removed.

The house was suffering from a minor degree of bomb damage after the war and was under continual repair for a couple of years.

Although, financially, life must have been a little difficult, Joan seemed to be determined to generate around her the sort of normality with which she was brought up.

This normality included regular visits to Harrods for Raoul’s haircut and use of the necessary services of, bank manager, a property agent and doctors and dentists at a time before the National Health Service. I went to an ENT specialist and later had his Tonsils and Adenoids out at the age of 4. A year later I went down with Mumps, as did Joan and her friend Jean and son John. At the age of 4½, I was sent to a small private school called Chiswick and Bedford Park Prep School.

The piano looms large for two reasons, the first being the endless times my mother was playing it when I returned home from infant school and the second, my own struggles at trying to learn to play. Lessons must have started when I was about 5 or 6, as I particularly remember the battle to play Old Macdonald had a Farm while having lessons at the infant school which was run by Madame and Mademoiselle Fellows.

## Holiday in France June 1947

Photographs show that there was generally a holiday taken each year and one major one that leaves odd isolated memories is the holiday in France. In retrospect this trip is astounding. Just two years since VE day and off we go to Paris.

We had just moved house in the autumn previous and it is astounding that this should have happened as of course it was just 2 years after the war. We were accompanied on this trip by the friend of my mother, Joan Boxall, who was to figure again a year or so later in our lives. This trip left vivid memories in the mind of a 4 year old child which add to any romantic notion that may



Forest of Fontainebleu June 1947  
Joan and Raoul



Forest of Fontainebleu June 1947  
Joan and Raoul



In the garden at  
Les Capucine



a la cafe

be felt over a trip to Paris.

The journey started at Victoria Station with a boat train and well remembered were moments on the ferry being sick in rough sea, although this was on the return journey. At that time in France,

whether Dieppe or Calais the boat train railway lines went right on to the quay.

The metro train was fun and I have a vague memory of getting onto the train with Joan and seeing my mother left on the platform behind the barrier. This vision has been enhanced somewhat by hearing the story related any number of times. How children interpret what they see is strange. I do, so much, remember looking down at the view from the Eiffel Tower and being convinced the river was the Thames. How I was aware that in London, where I can from, there was a river, I am not sure but the whole experience was quite vivid especial the view of people that seemed like ants, and I had seen many of these walking in and out of our house at Wellesley Road. On one occasion my mother felt she had to do something as there was two wide columns entering and leaving the kitchen by the front side door collecting food for their nest.

The memory that became part of my being was the smell and taste and feel of grape juice in little glass bottles with bobbles all over representing grapes – that smell and taste stayed with me

and had to be searched out and reinforced when returning to France with my mother, at the age of 14.

Many years later on a trip to France with my own family, I found it difficult to remember what the drink was and as the little glass bottles had gone it took some time to realise the juice could be obtained in cartons. But it was not the same. Although grape juice is very pleasant in a carton, it does not evoke the same sense of sense of delightful security and warmth as drinking from a small sticky bobbly bottle.

On this first holiday we stayed at in Forest of Fontainebleau and I have memories of collecting fir cones and a very detailed image of helping the lady of the house de-stringing runner beans in what must have been a very rural kitchen. It seemed at the time as if we were living in the forest.

Once back home there were regular visits to the family using public transport and, in particular, there are memories of the Green line buses which journeyed to the outskirts of London. The Montfords in Sutton and Aunt Gertie in Reigate were favourite destinations. Joan ran the house of lodgers, looking after their rooms, and taught the piano and had a fair number of visitors from family and friends, including the couple Bill and Anna Smith and their son Bernard. Bill came from Bradford and had known Tony during the war. He, in later years, became Mayor in Bradford. There is in fact a letter from them both written in June 1946, from Bradford, referring to sending Joan her case and thanking her for the kettle. Also there is an earlier letter from Bill while at Caterick, just after the war. If the case had been left on a visit that would fit in with a memory I have of visiting then and meeting their son Bernard, a very Italian little lad. Years later my wife and I did meet up with both Anna and Bill in Bradford. And Bernard has been in contact.

## **The caravan in Windsor**

In September 1948 Joan started a hare-brained scheme to buy a caravan near Windsor. This caravan was not like any other as it was an old Railway carriage and, if memory serves correct, she paid out £500 for it although there is an entry in the diary on £50 deposit.. This may have been connected to the hope of her son going to the Catholic Boarding School St Georges, as there is reference to visits to the School and to the local Priest in her diary, followed by a “unimpressed” comment. The caravan was parked in a large farmer’s field and I remember well the excitement of climbing up into this thing and running around in it.

The first trip down to the caravan was a momentous occasion. David had offered to drive us down to see the caravan and it was very foggy on the return journey. For some of the journey, Joan had to walk in front of the car carrying a white handkerchief while David drove very slowly. The car was of prewar style with wiper motors inside on top of the windscreen and the repetitive beat and the whirring noise associated with the wipers of cars of that era is etched into my memory.

This whole venture collapsed when on a second visit to the caravan one day, Joan found that the farmer had let pigs into the field and so the carriage’s train wheels were sinking into a quagmire of mud. Her new home to be had became inaccessible. It is believed that part of the reason for this venture was so that Joan could fulfil the wish of her deceased husband to send his son to Downside but as that school is down in Somerset, presumably St Georges was to be the next best thing.

## Move to Sutton

For some oblique reason, during a period that Pippa had puppies and there were lodgers in the house, we then moved to Sutton for four months and stayed with Joan Boxall and her new husband Hugh. Moving entailed a new school and the opportunity was taken to change my main Christian name to Peter, because of the difficulties created by the name "Raoul". This idea was abandoned when returning to Chiswick. However the legacy of this episode created delightful confusions because the quantity of "cash's name tags" with Peter Guise had to be used for years later by folding under the "Pete" while sewing, leaving as showing "r Guise". This caused considerable problems at boarding school, in later years, when the tags became loose and were re-sown on by the school matron who demanded an explanation as to who Peter Guise was.

The first day going into this new school in Sutton, Belmont, is well remembered and the walk across planks over muddy diggings at the entrance to the school.

At the age of six I was tricycling to school on a machine that had the style of a traditional bicycle and frightened myself free-wheeling down the hill to the house where we lived which was on the other side of a main road. The freedom that I had at the tender age of six was considerable when compared with the current security minded climate of the twenty first century. Although given this freedom, I was expected to arrive home at specific times and on one occasion there was the most tremendous upset because Joan's one and only son did not arrive home from school because of having gone home with a friend, without reporting in. By the time I did arrive home, my mother had contacted the police and was in quite a state.

This implicit training to be independent was further reinforced by the time, at the age of six, I fell down a large concrete hole a gashed my knee. I seemed to remember that my mother was not around at the time and Joan Boxall fairly abruptly cleaned the wound and told me to get on with it.

The exact reasons for this move to Sutton are not known but it seemed to be tied up with the collapse of the purchase of the Caravan in Windsor, puppies at Wellesley Road and lodgers. One reason may have been tied up with one of our lodgers who was quite remarkable. Richard Ellis was, in fact, a solicitor who had "drop out" of the business, to become a sculptor. He was allowed to use the Victorian glasshouse at the side of the house, which was next to his downstairs bedroom and there he would work with clay and plaster of Paris. Joan probably felt a kindred spirit as she, being artistic, would like to have spent her time indulging in purely creative ventures, but life was not like that and she had a dependent son and a house to run and an income to make. He didn't help by never being able to pay his rent. I think that she found the sculpturing activities of this man who could have been making a comfortable living as a solicitor and, by so doing, manage to pay his rent, a little frustrating and so she may have bottled out and left the puppies and lodgers to Jean Irvine to cope with.

There are few very vivid memories from my time in the Boxall household and one or two never to be answered questions. On the landing of their flat Hugh had a large ceremonial sword detailed patterning on it and the beautiful scabbard into which it slid. Hugh seemed a fun sort of person and we all lived in a first floor flat in this large house that backed onto a Railway line and was within tricycling distance of Belmont school. If I am correct about the Railway and the suggestion of the address in Joan's diary of 72 Cheam Road Sutton then this was very near

Mulgrave Road which, coincidentally was where Joan's father had his office in 1933, before his untimely death.

Illness with Scarlet Fever was a major event that had an impact in so many different ways. I was ill in bed for about a week and the only treatment available in those days was what was referred to as M & B tablets, one of the first generation of sulfonamide antibiotics. These I would not swallow and so they had to be crushed up into either syrup or honey and fed to me on spoon. The consequence of this expediency was to destroy, for years, any chance of me having honey, particularly the solid honey that was reminiscent of the grainy textured medicine that lay, evil looking, in a spoon. The Chinese puzzles that my mother bought were good therapy with hours assembling and disassembling them and the piles of comics that were acceptable reading material. These caused a huge source of grief at the end of the illness as they had to be destroyed because of possible infection. The room had to be fumigated with Sulphur Dioxide and it was the local doctor that had to come it and seal the room before setting of what I now know to be a sulphur candle as used by gardeners to kill off infections and bugs in greenhouses. The pungent smell of the gas impressed itself on me such that this part of my life came flooding back to me years later while doing experiments in school chemistry.

The doctor who performed this post illness cleansing insisted that the comics could not be left in the room and be fumigated so had to be disposed of, a precaution that would not be necessary nowadays.

There is a strange anomaly of the time that crops up in the light of the historical research in recent years. While living at Carshalton, we were but a short distance from the graveyard where my mother's family was buried. Not only were her parents there but

also her brothers, grandparents and an uncle. In fact her brother, Peter, had his own grave set up by the war graves commission.

Now, Joan did not avoid occasional reference in conversations to her dead family, but for some reason, she did not ever seem to think that it was worth taking her six year old son to the grave of his ancestors. Years later she did once mention that her cousin Pat Haycraft did the arrangements for Peter's funeral, and it was reported years later by Mrs Middleton that Joan had not attended her parent's funeral although she was 13 years old. Perhaps grief had taken its toll in ways we will never understand. Despite this

there is record in Joan's diary that she visited the graves in Carshalton on the 28 March 1946. Also there is a receipt from Truelove for attending to the grave in June of that year.



Perhaps, after that, Joan closed the door on the past and forgot because when I found reference to the family grave, by luck, on the internet in about 2007, she seemed to have no recollection of it. Unfortunately, at that time, the separate War Grave of Peter had not come to light but his name is also on the family gravestone. For completeness it should be mentioned that once she was reminded of the "family grave" she was pleased to have some of her ashes interned there as well as in Lanercost Priory with her second husband.

With the encouragement of the local Vicar and the person that looked after the graveyard at Carshalton, the grave was rebuilt while it was being engraved with Joan's name. There is also the suggestion that some ashes should be taken to Columbo, in Sri Lanka so that she can finally be reunited with the true love of her life.

The distress that Joan felt about the deaths of so many loved ones in her life only surfaced occasionally, but I have a feeling that it was always there lingering as a serious concern for the life of her last link to the past, her son. During those difficult years of his late teens she must often have been in anguish, knowing as only she did, the turmoil that could exist in the mind of an exploding youth.

At her lowest moments, there must have surfaced the story, the myth, of the curse that was placed on her ancestors in about 1800 by a member of the Catholic Church in Rome regarding the death of eldest sons in the family line. For the anguished mind, there could be too many coincidences and in her terms all those she loved died.

The details of this can be seen in Appendix 25.

Order No. \_\_\_\_\_

**W. A. TRUELOVE & SON,**  
LTD.  
MONUMENTAL MASONS

118, CARSHALTON ROAD WEST  
SUTTON, Surrey

Branches at  
WALLINGTON  
CHEAM  
EPSOM

Tel. Nos.  
VIGILANT 8211  
4 lines

From Miss J. M. Quise  
81, Northorpe Rd.  
Streatham SW.16

Date 19<sup>th</sup> June 1946

Approx. date of erection soon as possible

Cemetery Churchyard Carshalton 3/4

Grave Space "DIBDIN"

Design No. from H Stone + Kerb.

Material light marble

Vase added to match

Chippings grey granite to be added


Landing solid to be added

REMARKS:— Thoroughly Clean  
memorial.  
solid landing to be  
added underneath to  
raise up.  
Vase to be mounted on  
marble crazy as sketched  
below. with green plant  
in between joints

Quarry \_\_\_\_\_

INSCRIPTION Style as before Type as before

ALSO OF  
PETER HAYCRAFT DIBDIN  
1913 - 1943.



Cost of Memorial £ 2 : 15 : 0 to be clean

Landing Stone £ 3 : 0 : 0

Inscription £ 1 : 5 : 6

Chippings/Crazy Paving £ 2 : 2 : 0

Free Marble Vase £ 4 : 4 : 0 with marble crazy

Total Cost £ 13 : 6 : 6

Deposit £ : :

Office use only  
Account No. \_\_\_\_\_

Signal Joan M. Quise

## Return to Wellesley Road.

To see the extent of activity over this period it may be worth looking at a summary from Joan's diary in the period from July 1948 to April 1949, a total of 9 months.

**30/07/1948**

Gt Ormond Street

**01/08/1948**

Enter Richard Ellis –

**16/08/1948**

R paid due 14 Aug 10/- arrears

**25/08/1948**

R paid 10/- arrears

**26/08/1948**

R paid 17/6 arrears £1-7-6

**12/09/1948**

Pippa on heat

**20/09/1948**

Parents meeting 3.00pm St Peters Church Hall Southfield Road - 1st mating - no good

**21/09/1948**

Raoul Starts School -2nd mating no good (Reference to the bitch Pippa)

**22/09/1948**

Pippa mated !!

**23/09/1948**

Royal Academy of Music see Max Pirani

*Comment:*Max Pirani was an exceptional musician and Piano Teacher 1898 - 1975

**30/09/1948**

Windsor £50 - deposit on Caravan

**04/10/1948**

lesson Wigmore Street

**26/10/1948**

Windsor

**28/10/1948**

Windsor with David - Jean goes to Scotland

**06/11/1948**

Joan for the day - Hugh and David Redecorate Caravan - Back for dinner

**09/11/1948**

Jean and Jock go back to Scotland

**10/11/1948**

see Father Eldridge

**12/11/1948**

Father Twomey 44 Alma Road Windsor - Johnsons relative Staines - David in evening

**16/11/1948**

Windsor Elect company. Calling 11.30

**18/12/1948**

Move to Sutton

*Comment:*To live with Joan and Hugh - new School and name tapes and NAME - Peter. - "St Norbents" 72 Cheam Road Sutton Surrey

**13/02/1949**

Dr Hamilton - Raoul got Scarlet Fever

**01/03/1949**

Stayed night at Chiswick

**13/04/1949**

Move back to Chiswick

The above includes just some of the entries for that period which covers Raoul having tonsils out, the arrival of the solicitor-sculptor, Richard Ellis, the dog having puppies, the start and finish of the caravan project and the move to Sutton and back.

There was never a clear explanation for all of this but bearing in mind Joan's age of 28, her recent bereavements from the war and the need to fend for herself and a children, it is understandable that she was thrashing around trying anything.

It is so easy to remember this woman as a capable confident person for the next 50 years of her life that it may be difficult to think of her as a young widowed orphan, with very little experience in managing the turmoils of day to day living.

Piano lessons continued and at some point in time Joan and I suffered from Mumps which was a painful experience although considered to be worthwhile in the long as to encounter the disease in adulthood would have been very detrimental.



It was probably just after this period that my mother gave me the special treat after school of my first meccano set, or rather pre meccano kit. This came from my friend John Irvine who lived down the road and although a capable individual did not show any technical aptitude, preferring to read books. The kit was called Trixo and was delightful in so far as it had many more holes in it than the traditional meccano and contained an electric motor, batteries and wires. As mentioned later it was this and my next technical gift that introduced me to the world of invention. This next gift was from Norman and Mrs Middleton and was a huge box containing a set of 3 or 4 very large batteries and bell probably a left over from a house front door bell system. Hours of fun could be had with this and to make the bell clang at different speeds and experiment with ways of switching the circuit on and off. Like magic there was a way of stopping the bell by joining two wires. Sadly there was no one around to explain to me that what was happening was a short circuit to the batteries but fortunately they were large enough to survive. This delight in working with electricity did later branch out into experimenting with the mains electricity and not fully understanding all the science behind electrical flow and voltage, resulted in any number of shocks and blown fuses.



## Junior school – Bedford Park Prep School

On leaving Sutton, we returned to Chiswick and I went back to Chiswick and Bedford Park Prep School and no doubt was welcomed with open arms by Madame Fellows and her daughter Miss Fellows as, of course, for my mother private education was the only option to be considered. I had already started at the school at the north end of Turnham Green Terrace, before this upheaval in our living accommodation, to Sutton, since I believe I went there at the age of 4½ .

As I went to boarding school at the age of 7½, it means that packed into 3 years, were a tremendous number of memorable experiences some of which had a lasting effect on my latter life and particularly on my philosophy of education.

History teachers through the 1940s and 1950s and probably beyond used to love to write history on the blackboard for pupils to copy out. Looming large is Clive, a steeple and the Black Hole of Calcutta. In the corner of the classroom was a blackboard on an easel with two wooden pegs that held the board at a suitable height. Clive was portrayed as a hero, presumably who climbed a steeple in his youth and whether or not he had anything to do with the black hole, a horrific occurrence so it seemed, is unclear. What was significant was the trauma of copying this stuff off the board and being picked out of the class and walked downstairs to a more junior class because I could not write. Presumably I was about six years old. Going to school was an interesting challenge in problem solving because to get from Wellesley Road to the school at the bottom of Turnham Green Terrace entailed two bus rides, on the 91 and the 55, or one bus and a walk. For the middle part of the journey the route of the buses overlapped. Each bus ride was a penny and the allocation given was only two pence for the day, which was for one ride in the morning and one in the evening, so how did one get to school in the shortest time with

the least amount of effort? I do recall trying each combination in turn with no reference to my mother who must have assumed that she knew exactly what I was doing, this is what ever she had decided her obedient son should do.

The problem was solved with skill and cunning by sitting at the back on the top of the bus. With luck I would be missed by the conductor and so could get one journey at no cost, leaving a spare penny for the next journey. As long as there was always at least one spare penny available for the conductor in case he found me on the bus, I could enjoy two bus rides in each direction.

The Piano was always of some significance, either hearing it being played by my mother or having to do my practice on it. At very early age I was able to grasp the theory and pattern associated with scales and chords but somehow I always had difficulty making my hands do what they were meant to do. Chords made sense to me but reading a string of them and play at the same time was really rather too much. Looking back, I think I must have frustrated a number of willing teachers particularly my mother who must have assumed that I would have the ability to pick up piano playing with the desire and verve that she did. I could play "Old Mac Donald had a farm" at the age of six but not with any fluency.

Those early years at school, while at Chiswick and Bedford Park Prep school were a stressful challenging and sometimes surreal time. We had lessons in swimming, starting by lying on a table and learning the breaststroke and then doing it while being pulled along, in the shallow end of Acton Baths, by what seemed like a massive rope.

This was fine until I was asked to swim in the deep end being dangled by the rope. No way could I be persuaded to do this; my feet had to be able to touch the bottom, and so swimming lessons were abandoned until I was older. In fact, within a year I

somehow had overcome the fear on my own and was at ease swimming anywhere in the pool. This confidence extended to even swimming in the dark deep pool that was in the gardens of the local block of flats where John Irvine and his family lived. The bottom of this pool was so steep and so slimy that standing on the bottom resulted in a slipping exercise rather like skiing down a hill.

I was in the school orchestra, but felt very put out as my musical prowess limited me to playing the triangle.

School plays were another important feature and I remember vividly the effort my mother put into making an elf costume in green cotton with wire to hold up the ears. Alice in Wonderland was rehearsed with vigour but I was left totally confused by rehearsals in the hall pretending to be a rosebush being painted by the gardeners.

The last play, in which I was involved, was from the Merchant of Venice and I remember having to learn a speech by Shylock and being ignored when I strove to explain that I was not going to be at the school for the performance as I was leaving probably to go to Sutton or to leave to go to boarding school.

The more pleasurable memories were having the chance to read the Eagle, which was considered by adults to be a suitable comic, during break time and an afternoon modelling with plastercine, although these memories were tinged by the vision in my mind of the room which was upstairs, was where I had to copy about Clive of India and the Black Hole of Calcutta. That confused feeling of disgrace of being sent downstairs to a more junior class, lingers on and reoccurred some 8 years later.

Fortunately the general public did not seem to be so critical, and my failure to be able to hold my bladder in Chiswick High Road at the bus stop at the top of Turnham Green Terrace did not seem to bother anyone as I stood and weed in the gutter.

There were some memories of success. The skill with which I managed the bus journey to school, held in my memory dearly and also the memory of sitting of the top deck of the bus looking at the reflections in the side windows and somehow figuring out the rules, although without the knowledge of angles, of what I, many years later, learnt to be the “laws of reflection”.

It was about this time that my mother suggested that I may like to add another name to my long list. I already had three first names, Raoul because being French it fitted nicely with my supposedly French originated surname, Peter, after my mother’s dead brother, Charles, because I was a descendant of Charles Dibdin and now Anthony after my father, her deceased husband.

There was a bit of a tussle over this because it so happened that there was a boy at school with the name Anthony that I really did not like. Mother prevailed and somehow or other Anthony was added to my name and, after leaving the school, all memories of the disliked child faded although the memory of the incident did not.

As adults we overlook the perceptions of children at a young age. I remember returning home from school one evening to see through the window, not my mother playing the piano, as I think was usually the case, but her sitting on the large sofa with a strange man. Emotions ran riot. Was it fear, who was this stranger in the house, or was it jealousy, why was there a stranger usurping my position that took hold momentarily. As it happened it was either David Muir or Don Haycraft, in both of whom Joan had considerable trust and in her time and way had probably loved them.

See Appendix 19 and 21 for letters

It was David that drove us down to Windsor during this period when Joan bought a caravan made from an old railway carriage.

As has been mentioned the journey back was quite an experience. Judging from the fact that I remember him in 1948 suggests that Joan was happy to keep him on tap for some time. A letter from Don Haycraft, Joan’s early passionate love before she met Tony, is interesting as he invites her to his wedding in Nov 1947, indicating that another mutual friend called Victor is looking forward to sitting next to her. The name Victor crops up in Joan’s Diaries and also in a letter to Peter in 1943 in relation to Pinfold Road.

See the diary in Appendix 2

Obviously she was seen as a reasonable catch by many and her position was interesting in so far as she had her own needs to satisfy but was also very conscious of “finding a father” for her son. Another of my mother’s suitors was Bertie Strokes a local builder who was responsible for repairing the war damage to 33 Wellesley Road. After the war the Government responded to claims as a result of bomb damage so, to buy a property, slightly dilapidated, was not a problem as long as you could show that it was “war damage”. This fellow was a cheery soul and a useful person to know to get things done. I remember making a bedside light at the age of six or seven and needing a hole drilled down through the upright. He, with not hesitation sent me up to his works, further up Wellesley Road to see the carpenter who would sort it for me. I believe I have considered using a red hot poker and sticking it through slowly but a carpenter seemed to be the way. This experience was my initiation in the world of getting things done, not quite how you wanted it! The carpenter explained how he could not drill right down through the upright which was nothing more than a 10 inches of 2x2 timber, and that I would have to make do with the wire coming out near the top. The hole ended up as two holes, one down and one across, meaning that I had to feed the wire through a right angle in the wood.

This was always a deep disappointment to me and for years I lived with this lamp, as a constant reminder of the limitations of skilled tradesmen. I had already experimented with a hot poker and found that I could bore a hole down through a piece of wood with patience.

Far be it for a son to decide, in hindsight or for that matter at the time, who would have been the best husband for his mother however at face value David would probably have been the soundest and most reliable.

Joan probably always realised this, and in year 2020 it has come to light that she knew this in the late 1940's and stated to one of her granddaughters in about the late 1990's that she would have married him but could not face the idea of settling down to be a "Surrey Housewife". With the knowledge available it seems a shame that this is how things turned out.

One of the delights in my early life was rummaging in cupboards. This was always risky as so often I misinterpreted the function or value of the many items I found. The particular cupboard I have in mind was an old kitchen sideboard or dresser, painted cream and full of adult goodies. One item that particularly fascinated me was a small cotton reel like device that one could look through and see a number that indicated the light level for photography. As a measure of the make do and mend attitude of that era in British history and the value laid on hard won items of use, it is relevant that this cupboard stayed with my mother, acting as a bench in a workshop in Chiswick and finally ending up at the farm in Cumbria as a store in an outbuilding. Some of the tins of paint from the 1940's were still in use in 2005, including the tin of red lino paint with which I, at the age of 5, painted my pram that was stored in the shed, in hope of another child sometime.

During these early years at Wellesley Road, Joan seemed to be doing a considerable amount of piano practice and that sound of her playing as I arrived back from school, at 6 years old, lingers on. Listening to the radio now, 70 years later, I occasionally hear a concerto which takes me back all those years to that feeling of entering the front door and wondering what to expect.

It seems that in 1950, she did finally fully qualify and receive a congratulations from Max Pirani, although, she had been giving piano lessons from before that had in fact reached a satisfactory teaching level as a youngster in 1939. Perhaps she still hankered after the world of the concert pianist.

In September 1950, after the exploratory visit in the summer, I was sent to St. Hugh's Boarding school ( the junior part of St. Edmund's in Hertfordshire, near Ware ) and my future was mapped out along the lines of his father's dreams and Joan's marriage promises. At that visit the Head, Fr. Lucas, had already planned out my future, 10 years at school and then a degree course at Cambridge

Not a bad target to be set at the age of just seven. I appreciated some years later that most of the priests that were teachers at the school, had qualified at Cambridge so naturally this was always foremost in their minds.

As has been mentioned before, during the late 1940's Joan attracted a number of suitors, in part for her own needs but also with the view that her son would "need" a father. The third suitor, from that time, whom Joan married was Douglas Arthur Welburn, one of her lodgers, in July 1952.

While Joan and Douglas were “courting” they bought a car, and spent time together working to rebuild it. Joan’s practical capabilities showed themselves to the full and there is reference in a note written by Douglas as to how exceptional and capable she was.

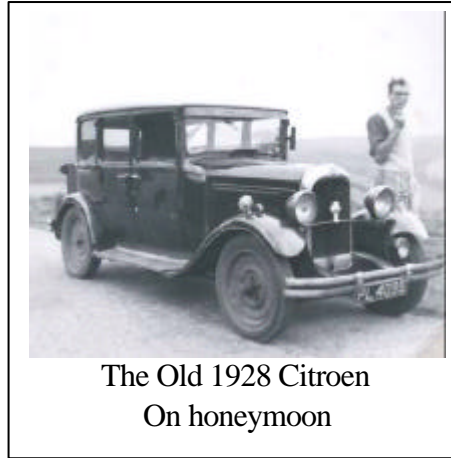
The car was to open up a whole new phase of her

life, changing the direction from an occupation in music, and possibly art, to one of running a transport and taxi- car hire business. Because Joan had acquired a car driving licence without any experience, lessons or test during the war, her introduction to car driving was when Douglas, gave her a few driving lessons in the Citroen, which was to be the first of a long run of cars.

They used this car for their honeymoon in Wales, touring and camping in the back. For this period I was shipped off to stay with Douglas’s sister June and her husband Jeff, a quiet man with a dry sense of humour who was manager of the local Co-op.

They lived in Deal on the south coast and I had free run of the town and the beech, which sadly was shingle.

Records show that during the summer of 1950 we went to Hayling Island for our holiday. Of this I have little memory except an issue over my wanting a kite. Joan was convinced that a cheap one would not fly and a quality box kite would be too expensive. However we did buy a cheap one and my mother spent time making a tail for it out of bits of newspaper and string.



The Old 1928 Citroen  
On honeymoon

From photographs, it appears that we had been the following year and on this occasion Douglas planned to join us some of the time. Also that year Mater, Tony’s mother, came down for a period of time and proceeded to quiz me about how I felt about him who was going to be my new stepfather. Douglas was living as a lodger in a room next to me at Wellesley Road and was sufficiently practical and enthusiastic to help me with any number of engineering ventures so he seemed a reasonable person to have around. A letter from Douglas indicates that he was planning to join us at Hayling Island for some of the time, perhaps the weekend.



**They wed in Turnham Green Parish Church on the 26<sup>th</sup> July 1952.**

Why my Grandmother was quizzing me left me somewhat bemused, but of course, she would have been concerned that her grandson, the son of her deceased son, Tony Guise, was going to be under the supervision of someone suitable.

This narrative has run on for another five years after the end of the war but it seems to take us to a turning point that occurred in the early 1950s. Joan was set up in a house in Chiswick that had tremendous possibilities, her son Raoul was settled at boarding school in Hertfordshire at the age of 7½ in 1950 and was there for 8 months of the year and Joan married on 26<sup>th</sup> July 1952 and she was about to start a new life, with the freedom to pursue her career or interests within the limits set but her finances.

The reader has been invited to observe the way that the fates have guided the life of Joan Dibdin and those near and dear to her over a ten year period. It is no wonder that at times she felt that is was no use loving anyone as those she loved always died. There is not doubt that she so desperately feared the death of her only son, an event that would have been like the climax of a Greek tragedy.

How she really felt about that possibility can only be surmised but there is general feeling backed up by the occasional letter in which she explains that she was striving to create an independent son and watch with gritted teeth as he stumbled towards adulthood.

Her ambivalence towards the use of the word “love” struck me when at the age of 80, sometime in hospital, having just pulled back from the jaws of death, she actually said “I love you”.

The shock of hearing this made it so noteworthy, that I realised that probably I had not heard this too often before from her. This term of endearment was usually replaced by “God bless”.

Maybe there lies the root of the question:

*What is meant by love ?*

Returning to the 1950s, as things turned out there was much more excitement to follow in the next 10 years or so with entry into the competitive world of chauffeur driven car hire, and general haulage entangled with considerable family turmoil. To top the turmoil, Raoul married Joanna Rowntree in 1965 and in 1973, this was followed by Joan and her husband moving to a small holding in Cumbria where she settled for the next 30 years, finding perhaps the peace that she deserved away from too many people and working with animals and plants.

Douglas was killed in a serious lorry accident in June 1981.

It has not seemed possible to write a narrative such as this from an impersonal prospective and the next fifteen years will be covered as the author’s autobiography with reference to the past as it has its influenced the life and relationships of a Joan and her newly created family life.

~~~~~ END ~~~~~

This Book and the Appendices can be found on
www.guise.me.uk
with additional archives.

Further details of life 1946 until 1950 can be gleaned from Raoul Guise Autobiography Chapter 1 Early Years.

Epilogues

Two letters written posthumously to Anthony Benoit Guise. 1945 and 2011

From Joan Guise

- expressing her love and her grief over the death of her husband 6 months before. Written over a period of time,

The first, was by Joan, his widow, which she started in January 1945 and finished in May 1945, It gives an interesting insight into the struggle of a grief stricken young women and her determination to sort out life for herself and her son on behalf of her husband. This hand written letter to Tony, early in 1945 in a notepad.

Regarding the notepad:

It needs to be noted that on a page at the other end of the notepad there is a hand written list of books that includes Dictionary of Modern Usage – Fowler
Roget’s Thesaurus
Dictionary of English Synonyms
English Synonyms
The Nuttall Dictionary of Synonyms and Antonyms
It is interesting to be aware that Joan had a lifelong interest in the detail of language although she failed to pass that on to her son while he was young.

Monday 2nd January 1945

It is nearly six months since you died, my dearest Husband. Six long months – Oh! How I have borne them !

I have just read in a book – The Farthing Spinster by Catherine I Dodd – quoting from the Diary of Great Aunt Jellis – Imlac was right when he said ‘Human life is everywhere a state in which much is endured and little enjoyed’.

I rather feel that the first part is right, yet I cannot quite agree with the latter ‘little enjoyed’. I have surely enjoyed much – Oh! So much. We have known one another on earth for three years – three short years, yet it might have been three hundred centuries –

we lived and loved so fully in that time – since that first night of our meeting in 1941 – June it was June 7th and Saturday. It was rain when I arrived with Jean, Uncle Mustafa and some Flowers for Mater – Gladioli I remember. You strode down the darkened hallway, a little man with a heavy tread – “You’re Joanna aren’t you, I’ve heard a lot about you” were just your first words – I was a little taken aback and I thought you looked rather an insignificant little man after all I had heard about you. – But not for long! Within half an hour or less, I saw something beyond that appearance, something vital and alive, that could not be passed by and something that drew me even against my will. Such a lovely evening it was – Mustafa was put to bed on the couch dressed in nappies ! Do you remember we stayed up later that the others playing the “Valse Triste” and you wanted to bring the radio up stair to bed with us. Oh my darling that night was the beginning... and the end was the morning – morning October 23rd 1943 when you went from me forever.

One long night of joy – yet sadness too. Much happened in that time. I believe we grew to know each other intimately in that time yet there was always something new to find. How wonderful you were when Peter died – a tower of strength when I was so helpless – Oh! I weep to think, and remember what I have lost. How cruel is life! There is so much to bear, yet I know my limit cannot be reached yet – I have one son, God bless him. He is a fine boy, you would be so proud, my Darling – so proud, so very proud. Poor little angel – he will never know a father’s love nor the companionship between father and son – he will be lonely with no brothers or sisters... Oh God! It hurts – how I dread the waking hours of the night when thoughts come unhindered to the mind and my whole body seems wracked with pain.. “pain is discipline to a mind noble!”

Tuesday 9th January 1945.

It has been a quiet day. I have not been out at all except to hang out the washing in the garden, where Raoul was playing most of the morning – I wrote to the ministry of education this afternoon asking about particulars about the new scheme for training men and women who are discharged from the services. According to the newspaper, it will be free training for one year- then a probationary period of two years teaching before receiving the final certificate. I do not know if I should like teaching – but how can I know until I have tried. It would mean a steady income with a pension later in life. It will need a great deal of thought before I make a decision – I must have enough income to give Raoul the very best income possible and yet I do not want my work to interfere with his home life and upbringing. Poor little chap – he will find life lonely enough with no brothers and sisters and he will need me with him to take their place – which I intend to do! I should like best to make a career on the stage. I feel that I must have some other absorbing interest in life besides Raoul – mainly for his sake for fear he should become spoilt - should I find that life interest in teaching?! But the latter is precarious and again- would it interfere with Raoul's life ? It may take a long time to get a start – then there are set backs – Oh! If I only knew someone who could help me – It's a hard problem which must be faced. My Tony what say you ? Help me to find the right course. My darling I am quite alone now and I know that I must make these decisions myself. I relied upon you so much before – now I must be strong. Oh God! give me strength and courage. “Ye shall be made free” John VIII 33. What can they mean? I feel more cheered tonight – sometimes life seems more worth living. There is much in life for those who look for it. You have gone from me my love – no more shall I see you or feel you on this earth – It is a thought I cannot completely realise – yet I know it is true. But I must raise my head and face the future – our son is worth fighting for. You died for him – I shall continue the fight – Oh God give me the strength and courage ! – lead me to the right road so I may not fail my son and my dead husband – Amen

Friday 12th January 1945

I have been with Auntie Tine tonight to see a film – “The song of Bernadette” The story of the legend of Lourdes. It was very beautiful --I really mean, the story , rather than the film. I have done much thinking since we came home – but it is hard to put my thoughts on paper- we are meant to suffer – yet there are many who suffer little in their lives and yet live by **** and kindness to others. But pain and suffering must bring more understanding. It is true that those who really suffer talk less of it than others who are more fortunate. Life is very strange and complex.

Saturday 3rd February 1945

It is some time since I have written down my thoughts and doings here. Thou' I have thought much and done much in the past weeks. Auntie has been ill with flu and I have spent a very busy and happy week nursing her and watching over the household and Raoul – I think it did me good – I was perhaps becoming a little lazy and in a rut – it woke me up again and gave me more to think of besides my own troubles. Dr Jamie praised my nursing of her patient which made me very glad that I was of some use. The day Auntie went to bed with a high temperature, and I realised I should be single handed for a while, I was so afraid I should make a mess of everything. Last Monday 29th Jan in the early evening I received a wire from Don Courtenay that he was in town and would be glad to see me if I could get up there. I phoned Mater and started packing immediately and left at 10.15 for the Midnight train in a snow blizzard which had blown up during the evening. It was a lovely night which gave me almost a sense of drama as I waited on the little snow clad railway station at Meols, warmly clothed in snow boots and furry hat and my thick warm coat – white with the snow- I did not reach Mater until 11.30 the following morning. I had rather dreaded going home and meeting them all again but it was not as hard as I had thought. Mater had a lovely fire going and steaming hot water for a bath which I thankfully wallowed in!

When I telephoned Captain Courtenay he was out, but he called me back and I invited him to Streatham. He arrived about an hour later. A short man, shorter than Tony, dark with kind eyes, a quiet pleasing voice and I thought rather a restful manner. I took him straight into the lounge alone and I could see that he was nervous and wanted to get the ordeal over as quickly as possible. He afterwards said that he had been rather dreading it. Oh I cannot write all that he told me, but I think I shall never forget it. I believe he had great love and admiration for you, my Tony, as did everyone that knew you. Before dinner he came round to the flat with me. I wanting to show him Tony's home – but- he couldn't see it – it was in such a mess. I hadn't realised what a change there could be in 7 months of raiding, thou' Gertrude would have looked after it as well as she could – I was disappointed and felt I must have brought him on a wild goose chase and he was probably bored to death – but he had given me the moral support and was so kind.

We spent the evening sitting round the fire with some beer chatting of many things but mainly of my darling, photos were exchanged as were anecdotes of his gay personality – and his mad doings in both England and Ceylon. It was a happy evening, yet a very sad one. The girls were very *** to me. Don stayed the night and in the morning I went into town with him as I had some shopping to do and a visit to the Midds to make. I was very loathed to see him go – it was as if the last human contact with Tony was going from me and leaving me with only the future to face – alone. I hope he will come back one day. He has been a good friend to me thou' he did not even know me and I should like some opportunity to repay him in part measure, at least, for his kindness and generosity.

God bless him where ever he goes and in what ever dangers he may meet with. He is a lonely man with no wife or close relatives and I hope one day he will find the happiness and comfort of a home and family of his own. He is only 31 – yet time for him to be happy. I am back now at Meols. I returned on Thursday and received such a gay welcome from my little "Sahib". I feel now more – what is the word – at peace. More ready to face the future with my head high and my eyes on the yet invisible goal. What is will be and who knows ! but

with Gods guidance I will win through for the sake of my son and my dear dear husband. You have taught me much my Tony in our life together and by your death too – and in you memory I shall find comfort – God give me strength.

Monday 26th February 1945

Quote “ to be loved, .. is ephemeral gain, but to love is to acquire something permanent” from Dance of the Years by Margery Allingham.

That may be true – I rather believe it is! I think I have gained something in loving Tony and as I shall always love him it will be permanent gain – even after death.

29th May 1945 Tuesday.

Tomorrow I go home again to London. Raoul is better although he needs more colour. Poor Darling he will miss the garden, and freedom altogether when we go back to the flat. He still whoops a little sometimes particularly at night. It is two months since he first went to bed – Maundy Thursday.

Little did we guess that there would be whooping cough with congestion of the lungs. Auntie will miss him I think very much. I am sorry to leave. It has been a haven here – but I have got to start facing the future – there is so much to do and I must begin to learn to stand on my own two feet. I shall miss Auntie terribly. She has been so kind and so helpful all along – but I am worried about her – she is not well. Perhaps she may improve when we have gone – when she can be quiet and do completely as she is inclined. She needs peace of mind. Our living will begin to improve little by little now that the war is finished in Europe and things may be a little easier in time. –

Oh! What can the future bring ?

Shall we go on quarrelling about how to make the world peaceful, for ever ?!

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## Letter to Tony Guise from his son Raoul Guise in December 2011

### Striving to explore issues not known or understood.

This second written by his son in December 2011, some 66 years later and in fact conceived and nearly completed before the letter by Joan came to light.

Dear Tony or should I start  
Dear Father.

I have recently managed to create fantasy meetings with a number of ancestors and, for whatever reason, found it amazingly easy to imagine dialogues with these people based on my knowledge of them from biographies, letters and other sources.

For some reason, I am unable to imagine your responses in a discussion and I think that this must be for one or two reasons. Despite copious letters to both your mother and Joan, your wife, it seems that you do not let it be known what you really think about situations except on a surface level and so “keep your own counsel”. Your conscientious behaviour in all things, including marrying my mother when you found out that she was pregnant, endears you to all but covers much. I suspect you functioned with two natures, and that which is seen by most is the outgoing, capable, cheery individual referred to by your fellow officers, and this bears no relation to the quiet, spiritual, artistic nature which only shows occasionally. Living with Mater for most of your short life must have trained you well and being so blatantly adored by your family must have created the outgoing flamboyant leader that you were. I think, in some respects, the issue is that having a dialogue with you would be like talking to myself, and so I write you a letter.

Dear Tony,

It is strange writing to my father as a young man, who never knew much of life and was never known beyond the age of twenty eight. Forty years older than you, with more experience and now time to reflect, I find as I read through the correspondence surrounding your last 4 years and bits from your earlier life that you are a tremendous inspiration. Tragic in some respects that you did not live and a puzzle as to what it would have been like to have had a real father. It is such a shame that, despite Joan possessing all the material that I have now been able to explore, she was never quite able to create, for me, a clear picture of you in my childhood and offer you up as a role model, although she indicates in her letters to your colleagues that she wishes for me to be like you and be the son you would be proud of.

I am sure that we both understand the reasons for this, bearing in mind the numerous tragedies she had experienced and how, for practical reasons, she had to forge ahead with living. She had to create a new world for herself based on her skills and the need to do that which she considered to be right, at each juncture in life.

Despite knowing so little during my childhood about you, your philosophy of life and your working life in the army, I am pleased to note that there are many small pointers that indicate that much of you must be within me, without my having a distinctive role model to look to. Coincidentally I did own and mess about with a 14 foot yacht for a couple of years in my early married life, but I must say I have never been attracted to golf. I find it interesting to learn that your “sideline” in the army was welfare and to read how much effort you put into that work.

I was never considered a proper pastoral leader when teaching in school and in fact there was a state of panic on one occasion amongst the staff when it was, somewhat tongue in cheek, suggested that I could be a Head of Year. However, I spent hours listening to

youngsters problems and, whenever the need arose, fought their corner in difficult situations. This was always for me a “sideline” to my main function as a somewhat cerebral teacher, although I spent an immense amount of time and effort studying pastoral issues, learning psychology and developing skills that enabled me to relate confidently with children and, for that matter, adults. This leads onto the challenging question that can, of course, only be rhetorical. Whereas, no doubt, you were concerned for others and demonstrated great leadership skills, were you really at ease with that persona? Were you, deep down, the extravert flamboyant or the quiet philosopher creator?

All the letters indicate the former but I still have my doubts. I have been shocked in recent years how many people indicate to me that they consider me to be outgoing and confident and that I am a natural at dealing with people. It is all an illusion. At the age of 25, having lived a withdrawn sort of life, not helped by 10 years under the fairly repressive regime of boarding school, (Thank God I did not end up at Downside, as you had hoped for, an even more oppressive environment than St. Edmund's), I set upon the task of socialising myself through the environment of the workplace in a large factory. I chose to work close to the shop floor as an engineer in the factory and then, after 5 years, followed this with the challenge of teaching adolescents. It was only after the age of 35-40 that I really became confident in this field and was prepared to take on further challenges by way of committees and leadership, nationally and within the church. But all my apparent skill and confidence, such that it is, is based on ruthless personal study and training, striving to learn how to do those things which I consider need to be done. I have, in this respect, been greatly helped by the role model offered by my wife Joanna, a extrovert by nature, a source of energy and a natural leader, in her youth, and inspired by the example of both our daughters who, at an early age, seemed to have, each in their own way, understood the requirements of social living.

And so we come to Anthony Benoit Guise, the artist. There is no reference to your artistic nature in letters other than those two that include details and drawings on the accommodation you had built in India and Ceylon. I lived with the picture of the bear and the sculpture of the bear, but that was all I saw of your work until about ten years ago, when I found, by chance amongst Joan's papers a picture of a cottage you painted at the age of sixteen.

There were occasional snide comments made to me by my stepfather about my artistic skills, which by my standards were non-existent. Despite coming from an artistic mother and father with a cascade of artistic ancestors, I never considered myself artistic and at the age of 14 failed “O” level art, being unable to draw – the concept of perspective completely eluded me although I had grasped the idea of railway lines and trains meeting in the distance at an early age. A little picture I painted at the age of about 12 of my imaginary dream cottage was commended by my Great Uncle Rex who was artistic, but how much of that was kindness we will never know.

A few years after Joanna and I were married I did buy some paints and had a go at painting scenes of the Yorkshire dales and later, on a few occasions, I spent a few hours painting but never with satisfactory results. I have always been conscious of a creative drive and this was expressed through engineering – making every effort to get someone else to do the drawings. When teaching I found the most satisfying part of the job was the generation of teaching material and, for that matter, whole courses including worksheets, experiments, packages of equipment and drawings and later with the advent of computers and the internet, I obtain considerable satisfaction from portraying information on web pages. This got round the endless worry of using valuable materials such as paint and paper to produce junk that was completely unacceptable.

Having said that I did recently find articles that I wrote about art to Joan in about 1985, to encourage her to take up painting again and try to realise the “artist within” and not just rely on copying or

working from life. Somehow, perhaps, I understood more than I was able to put into practice. "If you cannot do – teach ...".

The full avalanche of artwork and paintings occurred when I started to clear Joan's farm in about 2006. Then I started to explore the family archive that Joan had stored but seldom opened, and had never shown me.

This included some amazing paintings and drawings that you did at School and Art College of which I had been totally unaware and which seemed a revelation to Joan when I showed them to her. There was also a massive amount of work produced by her over the years, demonstrating considerable skill even at an early age, and then of course the full collection of portraits and paintings of numerous members of her family. The list is immense and it would be somewhat obsessive to produce one at this time.

When Joan died, I inherited all of this as well as boxes of paints, pencils, paper and other materials. This added to the recent collection of paintings and equipment from members of Joanna's family.

The issue of waste became irrelevant. Not only were we in a comfortable enough position to be able to afford anything we required, but also the vast amount of stuff that we had was all second hand and nowadays, unlike for your generation or for that matter mine, waste is of little concern against the need for newness. So I felt, within limited time constraints, complete freedom to plunder these resources with little or no worry about the results other than to satisfy my own need for creativity and personal improvement.

It is sad that despite the fact that you were probably often in Joan's consciousness, she did not really make a point of passing on the legacy in artefacts and knowledge that she had. I somehow picked up the point that you had sent over from India a number of the items that were always familiar to me, including the storks, the elephants and the benaries brass objects and possibly the desk.

I think that as a consequence of her marriage to my step-father she had to keep much of the passion and love that she felt for you deep

within and, despite the many hours that we had together when Douglas was away in long distance journeys, she never made more than occasional reference to you. Correct or not, she always felt that Douglas was "jealous of me" and, as I have already mentioned, there were those odd moments when he found it necessary to play down my heritage.

I am amused by your note to Mater regarding cigarettes. You certainly had a taste for the best in life and your letters show this in other respects, but more of than later. Coincidences are fascinating, and it is of interest that, at the age of 16, I was buying packets of Sobranie Black Russian.

Not only was I very pleased to be smoking those delightful cigarettes, but also I had a little scheme going in which I bought a packet at 4d a cigarette and sold them at 4½d. A small but ethical profit. Passing cloud was another preferred cigarette by many at school.

Judging from a few books of yours that I have found, you seemed to have been highly respected by your Parish Priest. A Facsimile of the *Mirrou of Vertue* St. Thomas More is no mean gift. As a Boy Scout you must have excelled at giving the most amazing impression of yourself.

Far be it for me to be sceptical, but comments in your letter to Yvonne, your sister, suggest that you saw much of humanity in a less rosy light than it saw you.

Bearing in mind the Church's view of sex, which was somewhat sterner then that it is now, in your own terms you say you found it easier to express your love in bed rather in than in the drawing room. Having said that, you wrote some heavy romantic words to Joan from Shrivenham.

The unanswerable question is how deep was your love for Joan and what was the basis for it. I only remember Joan either as a fairly stern mother, organising life for me before I was 7 years old and then struggling to fulfil her promise to you and your dream regarding my Catholic upbringing and quality education.

I may come back to that later. But when you met Joan was she a completely wild and passionate young woman recently released from the strictures of boarding school and a maiden aunt and enjoying the independence of army life in wartime London? One or two comments in letters and in her diaries suggest that this was the case, however I was only occasionally to see the fun loving individual. She was so often, I think, trapped in the tangle “of elders knowing better” although she did not wish to accept their powerful position.

The intensity of your love affair with Joan must have been great particularly living under the discipline of army life. Being born a love child has its blessings and it is interesting that Joan decided to inform me of this only during the last couple of years of her life. Would you two have ended up married if I had not been conceived? Despite your fun loving and romantic nature you also had a very discerning mind. I am impressed by the clarity of thought that you applied to answers to Joan’s tumultuous questions in letters while you were in India.

Having only now just read Joan’s posthumous letter to you, written 6 months after you died, I now see how much she not only loved you with an awe inspiring passion but also felt bereft without your guidance and support that she must have depended upon. I never saw this side of Joan; I saw the woman who, by the end of her letter to you, had developed a determination to strive and succeed on her own, for herself and for your son, and who probably locked away that needy aspect of her love, subduing it to a drive to survive independently. Her second marriage can only be understood, probably, in terms of satisfying a specific range and sadly skewed set of needs. Her strong acceptance of the unhappiness of life and her loyalty to a moral code locked her in a pattern of life that she lived for some thirty years.

She did have a determination to do the best for your son. Whether or not she always took the best decisions will always be debatable, but one could image the scene in which she and I lived in a mausoleum devoted to you and her bereft love for you, and that definitely would

not have been healthy. The move from Streatham to Chiswick was, I think, in part to close down on the past and move on to develop an environment suitable for survival. She seldom dwelled on what had been or what would have been.

I hope that you feel that she did her best and that your son grew to become someone that you could be proud of, although I must admit that I never developed those skills that made you such a well respected Lieutenant. I have been amazed how easily you dropped into the role of the “British Empire” Army Officer, not only with soldiers doing your bidding, but also Bearers, Goffers and, in your own terms, slaves. You did seem to relish your bit of power. In this respect, I can remember back distinctly to an occasion at school when I was about 14 years old. We were given a recruiting talk by an army officer about the benefits of joining the Army, of course for officer training. When given the opportunity to ask questions, my question was, much to the disgust of those around me, as to how one could join up as an ordinary soldier, not as an officer. Time and again over the years I have demonstrated that power never really fell easily on my shoulders.

You seemed at ease with all this and it would have been interesting to see how your life would have been in Civvy Street after the war.

It is sad that all the delights that you experienced in Asia were never shared with Joan but such is life. She, without the encouragement that you could have given would always have felt that to venture so far would be an extravagance. There is much to discuss, however until more information about your life and Joan’s life comes to light, this will act as a token introduction to what could be a fascinating discourse.

For now until we meet, God willing

*Raoul Peter Charles Anthony Guise  
26<sup>th</sup> December 2011*

## Second Letter - 7<sup>th</sup> March 2023

It is now just over 11 years since my last letter and since that time I have further expanded my acquaintance of you with the help of several dozens more letters. In a nutshell, these are all the letters from the moment you met Joan to the time you left for India having got married a year before.

It is difficult to imagine how significant it has been for me to follow your life from the very week that you first met my mother and expressed passionate love to her within a few days of meeting her. The descriptions of your feeling at that time, which could be neglected as the ravings of a besotted youth, are so significant as they reflect exactly my feelings for Joanna at the age of twenty.

Are there many who have experience or would admit to experiencing such emotion?

“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!”

Maybe a bit over the top but beautifully worded.

Having observed you through your letters to Mater before that time, it is an object lesson to see how you grew through the drive to become an officer in the army, a place you would rather not be, and through your growing love for Joan, culminating in your marriage to her because of some slip up in the heat of desire while on leave in June 1942.

I am bemused by the puzzle as to what age you are as I write to you. Are you 27 year old, the age that you died, while all the limited wisdom and experience of a man of that age, albeit much more than mine at a similar time or are you at an age when you have grown into the person with the potential you were destined to have? This does of course pose the problem of what age I am, the youngster, still blundering through life, distressed by my

limitations or an eighty year old that should feel that I really know what life is about and how to handle it.

There is no doubt that I am so inspired by what I have learnt of you and that I do wish, with quite a longing, that I had had the benefit of your parenting. With you and your brother in law, Peter, as an uncle I would have been set up to avoid so many of the pitfalls as I followed my path through life. I don't think I would have taken a different road but the journey could have been easier.

On that note, it is interesting that you had considered my future career path and that you felt that Music and Art would not be my forte compared with Engineering. How right you were, with no evidence to go on, however all those spheres of life are creative and all have stayed with me and enabled me to experiment in those fields that are difficult for me, with your bits of advice to my mother ringing in my ear.

What were you planning to do after the war? I have a clear idea of your dreams in terms of living out the ideal creative and adventurous family life but what about career?

I was impressed by the insight that enabled you to explain to Joan with ruthless honesty, about your somewhat over the top relationship with Mater as seen through letters. You were obviously adored by her and your young sisters, but you did seem to have it all in perspective.

Your approach to your job as an officer was so serious and sound and it is interesting that the young man Johnnie Sloan, that you met before the war, seems to have emulated you and shown in his work similar very caring attitudes.

So were you the outgoing, managerial, leader of the world type or were you the quiet introverted artist and thinker that had acquired the skills and strategies to function to your best ability in any situation whether you liked it or not.

Until we met again .....*Raoul 7<sup>th</sup> March 2023*