

Chapter 3

1939 Sept 3rd WAR DECLARED - World War 2

At the outbreak of war in 1939, Joan was 19 years old and had been in London for about two years, studying at the Royal Academy of Music. She had obviously lived a very active if not tumultuous life with tremendous support from Peter. We have no archive of letters between them once Joan had left school and come to London ie 1936 to 1939, but this is to be expected as they were able to see each other frequently.

The start of the war, in 1939, drew Joan into the Red Cross and the excitement of wartime London. The outbreak of war stopped her studies. She joined the Civil Defence in Marylebone, having had lunch with Max Pirani in October, no doubt to discuss the future. She went on to have lessons in Home Nursing, First Aid and anti-Gas training.

Although Joan was busy in the first year of the war at a Red Cross Post, it should be remembered that the bombing of London did not occur until about September 1940. At about the same time that she started there, she moved from 95 Queens Gate in South Kensington to 12 Granville Place, Portman Square W1. It seems that the main activity of this first wartime blitz in London lasted until May 1941.

Peter, her brother, had joined up at the beginning of the war and we quickly get the impression from his letters to her that she was a get support to him. As can be expected he did not really like army life and was grateful for her repeated visits to wherever he was camped in the south off England. He was very appreciative

of a parcel of fresh fruit. In late 1939 her last surviving grandparent died, Grandma Haycraft and about this time Peter advised Joan to get out of London to their Aunt in Reigate. Of course, she ignored this advice and joined up as a nurse in the Civil Defence in December 1939.

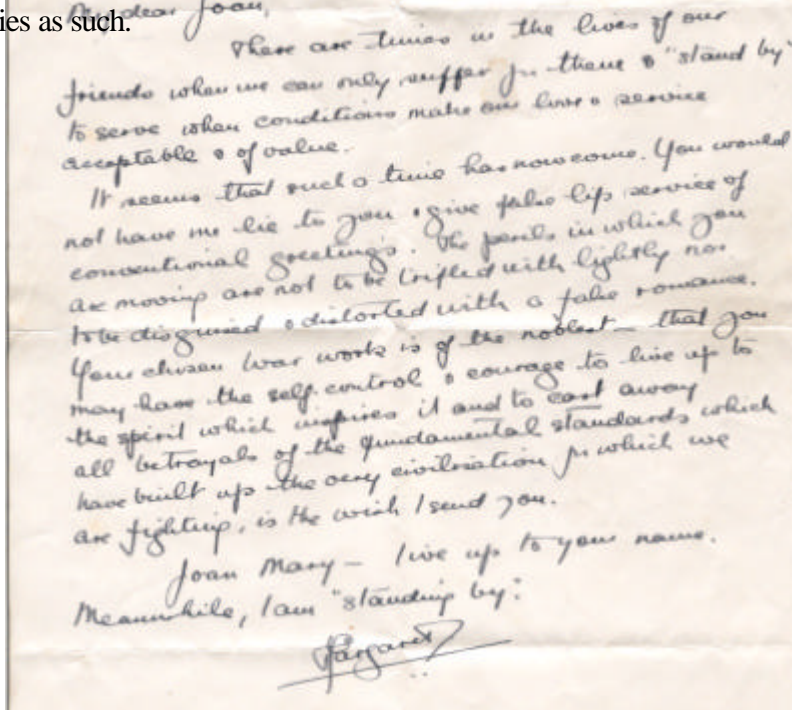
It seems that Peter really did enjoy the company of his kid sister 7 year younger, and on one occasion they met up with friends in the middle of Surrey at the Drift Bridge for a social time out. In May 1940 he wrote to Joan just as the Dunkirk evacuation was taking place explaining how he had just missed being bombed while in Bologne a week before.

In August Joan was obvious living the high life, just as the London Blitz was about to start. She seemed to have a close friend at the time called Jack and whereas there is one reference to a Jack in a diary entry of July 1938 it is considered that this person may have been connected to the Nottingham family.

From January 1940 there are regular entries referring to socialising with Jack, who contacted Peter when she got seriously ill in early November and was admitted to Middlesex Hospital for a week and then on to Mount Vernon in Northwood. After this episode Peter did want Joan to come and stay in a local hotel near his camp where he could keep an eye on her health.

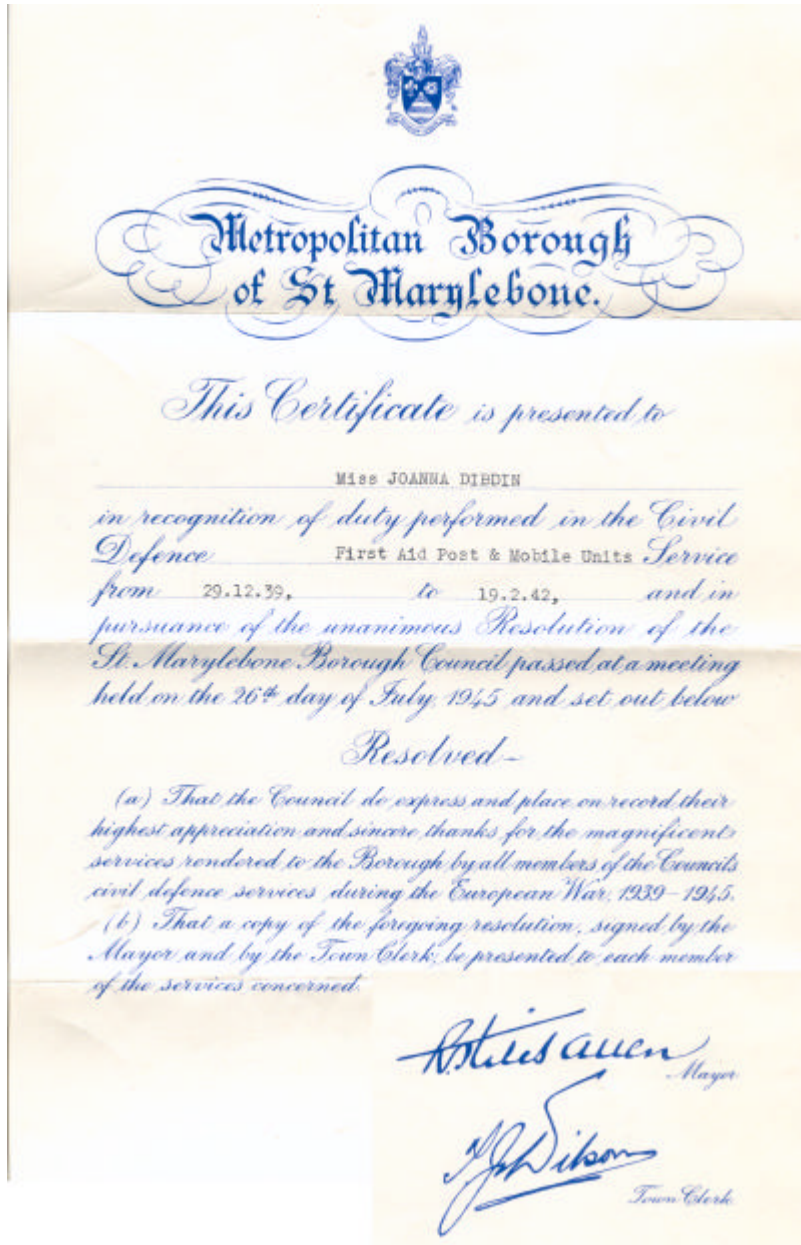
Joan's Aunt Margaret had something to say..

[Redacted text from a document, partially obscured by a dark horizontal bar. Visible fragments include:]
 ...in the City of ...
 ...of ...
 ...by day report of Paul's time in the ...
 ...
 ...Blitz ...
 ...two ...
 ...London citizen of the state and may God hold you and preserve you to carry out your responsibilities as such.



My dear Joan
 There are times in lives of our friends when we can only suffer for them and "stand by" to serve when conditions make our love a service acceptable and of value.
 It seems that such a time has now come. You would not have me lie to you and give false lip service of conventional greetings. The perils in which you are moving are not to be trifled with lightly not to be disguised and distorted with a fake romance. Your chosen war work is of the noblest - that you have the self control and courage to live up to the spirit which inspires us and to cast away all betrayals of the fundamental standards which have built up the very civilization for which we are fighting, is the wish I send you. Joan Mary - live up to your name. Meanwhile, I am standing by.





The complete details of the life of Peter Dibdin in WW2 are available in Volume 3 of William Joseph Dibdin and Family.

Only summary details are discussed in this book.