

## Chapter 5

### Anthony Benoit Guise – Early war experiences

It is not clear when Tony left Camberwell Art College and if he had work before the war, except it is rumoured that he worked in the Catholic Book Shop in Victoria.

The first information that we have regarding the army is a card sent from Richmond (presumably Catterick Camp) on 24<sup>th</sup> April 1940 saying that he had planned to get home but that he feels quite ill because of inoculations. There is a mystery about this card as it is posted to V.A.Guise, 57 Tooting Bec Gardens, SW16. Maybe the Guise family moved to Pinfold Road later in 1940. This idea is supported by references in letters regarding his clothes elsewhere from Pinfold Road in storage and also talk of furniture moving and selling. Bearing in mind that Mater's husband had died only in the previous year none of this is surprising.

At the start of the war, Tony would have been 22 years old.

The narrative of Tony's life during his time in the army is related in four chapters which separate four clear phases of his time on active service.

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|-----------|---|
| Chapter 5 | From call up in April 1940 until June 1941 when he starts Officer Training. |
| Chapter 6 | From June 1941 until marriage in October 1942                               |
| Chapter 7 | From October 1942 until October 1943 when he left England for India         |
| Chapter 8 | From Nov 1943 until July 1944. His time in Africa, India and Ceylon.        |

All of this narrative is based on letters to his family and Joan Dibdin (to be Guise) and on her diaries and a very few letters from her either to Tony or from her brother Peter.

All of these letters are in Appendices 3,4,5 and Appendix 34, Volume 3 of W.J.Dibdin- A Glimpse of 3 Generations.

An even greater grasp of his nature and personality has been gained from the seventy or so condolence letters that were written after his death. Appendices 7,8,9.

It has become absolutely clear that he really did not like the idea of being in the army. Initially he hated the rough and tumble living of tent life and the

inconveniences that this created. He was not enamoured by many around him and indicated that he loved his own company or that of one or two selected friends. Having said that he had a strong sense of loyalty and duty, particularly once he became an officer and he demonstrated a strong sense of justice and honour to those under his command.

It is clear that this sense of responsibility was well beyond the call of duty. Although not referred to very often religion probably played a large part of his life, however the insights that he did give from time to time show that he had an open and questioning approach.



## Summary of Tony Guise activities in WW2

Approximate date	
3 Sept 1939	<b>War Declared</b>
March 1940	Tony joined up
April 1940	Catterick
About May-Sept 1940	Dishforth or Caterick
Sept 1940 to May 1941	<b>London Blitz</b>
October - Jan 1941	Dumfermline Fife Kinghorn Halbeat Dunfermline
Early 1941	Accepted for Officer Training – Commission!
May 1941	Middlebank House, Inverkeithing
May 1941	Turfhills Camp Kinross
7 June 1941	Tony met Joan for first time
15 June – Nov 1941	Officer training at Shrivenham nr. Swindon 3 months – hell -- Barracks like Catterick
16 June 1941	First letter to Joan - expressing deep love
6 Aug 1941	Intense love letter to Joan from Shrivenham
16 October 1941	Tony commissioned 2 <sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant
8 Nov 1941 – 9 Feb 1942	Poolewe, Achnasheen, North West Scotland, as an officer
Jan 1942	Ladybank Scotland on course
17 Feb 1942	Back near Kirkcaldy, Fife
6 Mar 1942 – 4 May	Skaw, Unst, Shetland with a batman
4 May 1942 - June	Grantfield Camp, Lerwick Shetland
9-14 June 1942	Tony at Stevenston, Ayrshire Scotland
7 June 1942	Tony on leave
1 July 1942	Lincoln
14 July – Oct 1942	Wigtownshire - Stevenstown, Blantyreferme Camp, Nitshill Glasgow, Uddingston Camp, Newton Stewart.
3 Oct 1942	<b>Got Married</b>
Oct 1942	Back to Uddingston Camp
Oct 1942	Kinross and then Blantyreferme Camp
Nov 1942	Larkfield Camp, Gourock near Greenock
Dec 1942	To Cheshire and back to Uddington Camp
January – March 1943	Oswestry Salop Officer Training
11 March 1943	<b>Raoul Born</b>

25 March 1943	Anglesey
1 April 1943	Larkhill Camp Salisbury Plain
May June July 1943	Battlements Cherry Hinton Cambridge
Aug Sept 1943	Meols Heron Camp, Gun emplacement Officer in charge
Sept 1943	Tony on leave
28 Sept 1943	<b>Peter killed nr Lymlington</b>
October – November	Woolwich – then embarkation for Asia -- about 20 <sup>th</sup> Oct 1943
Oct-Nov 1943	North Africa ( Boat torpedoed and sunk in the Mediterranean ) before 19 <sup>th</sup> Nov 1943
Late Dec 1943	India -- Arrived 24 <sup>th</sup> Dec 1943
March - 1944	Ceylon
13 June 1944	<b>Start of 2<sup>nd</sup> London Blitz</b>
June 1944	
23 July 1944	Died in Ceylon
5 May 1945	<b>VE Day - End of war in Europe</b>

It is thought that he started his time at Catterick, presumably training, and while there found a weekend haven with a local farm in Hudswell near Richmond, looked after and feed by a Mrs Beattie. He was very grateful for the company and probably the food and, when moving south to Dishforth asked Mater to write a thank you note to her. He really did not like the rough and ready existence of Dishforth where he was 1½ miles from the baths and food and where the company was less than inspiring. He was sending laundry home and was very concerned at one stage that Mater should be careful and return his lanyards (a neck cord to carry items such as a whistle) which he did like to wear clean. Despite his dislike for life at camp and the time wasting he made the best of it, as was his nature, and from time to time got to Boroughbridge where he was pleased to find some reasonable beers. In his letters from Catterick, he makes it quite clear that he hates the army, “it is so boring and brutal environment” and has little time for most of the other soldiers.

He notes that fortunately many are confined to barracks so that he can get time to himself walking in the local woods. At Dishforth, living in a tent seems to entail eating, drinking and breathing sand which got everywhere. There seemed to be no facilities for washing and drying and no way of storing food. In his down to earth way Tony points out that at least he is adaptable and can cope.

In a brotherly letter of September 1940 to his sister Yvonne, who then was about 21 years old, he gave some graphic details about his social life and his observations of men and their women. He also told Yvonne of the Aid Raids in the area and mentioned his work at the time.

Life did have its silly moments, as he later described an incident while on a road block one night.

“Pulled a motorcyclist and his wife on the pillion. Rifle on guard with 16 inches of gleaming bayonet. Wife ... “Oh! Oh! .. Don’t please” as husband stopped within an inch of the bayonet. Then “giggle giggle! May I touch you bayonet, I’ve never done so.. ouch ! May I touch your respirator .. ooh!” And so on .. silly bitch....”

“Queer people up here – even the ’igh class pubs are filled with funny men of the prosperous grocer type especially dressed in 50/- style – Their women are expensively (dressed) but oh so poorly turned out – most of the daughters seem to be “High School” educated and rather despise the fond p’s (parents). But I found some Tetley Beer – draught Worthington and Youngers in Boroughbridge – our nearest town”,

The 50/- style refers to 50 Shilling Tailors, founded in Leeds in 1907 and developed into a chain that became John Colliers in 1958, a leading competitor for cheap suits to Montague Burton.

He continued with reference to sympathy for Neil (Yvonne’s husband to be in June 1942) who had obviously just been rejected by her.

“Have communicated with Neil on his sad bereavement – still its your life and what you have done is no doubt for the best – Though why James ??”. James may have been a cousin Jiminy Cricket who features a lot in diaries and letters.

This letter to Yvonne can be seen in Appendix 3

It has become clear that while at Dishforth Tony was on active service, presumably in the Anti Aircraft Regiment protecting RAF Dishforth.



This is probably an example of an AA gun used for defence against the German bombers. This photograph was taken at the Heugh Gun Battery at Hartlepool.

[www.heughbattery.co.uk](http://www.heughbattery.co.uk)

Although a WW1 museum it contain WW2 artillery

By November 1940, Tony had moved to Dunfermline, Scotland, near to Edinburgh, and sent his mother a beautiful description of what he saw of the Scottish scenery. He also mentioned that he would be recommended for a commission but there may be a problem over his nationality. This is the second time this issue of nationality is mentioned, the first being in relation to Mater and getting a job for the government. Presumably the name Guise and his Grandfather's original name, Jules Carl Giese, and Danish origins as well as mother's name Fleuss, may have caused concern.

All got sorted, Mater got a job and Tony's application for officer training was accepted in the New Year 1941.

From November 1940 to May 1941 Tony spent his time in the Edinburgh region of Scotland either on active service at Dunfermline or training at either Middlebank House or Kinross.

Life seems a little more bearable but he becomes more aware of other aspects of army life. "Army makes you think Army". He demonstrated a certain elitism regarding other soldiers, perhaps with good reason, however he required Mater to send him his chess set as he was pleased to have met "another human being." Having registered this aloof manner it is important to note that Tony hated injustice and had a terrific sense of loyalty and responsibility to those around him, particularly once he became an officer. He referred to one NCO {Corporal or Sergeant} who was extremely rich and yet mean. "There is another bloke in the battery... an N.C.O. who has £1½ million and has the usual big car and does the usual dreary big things in a little way, and is so damned mean that if he buys you a beer you have to provide him two in exchange – Naturally I loathe him... Tho' he was little freer with the O'Goblins {Cockney slang for Sovereign} that wouldn't stop me milking him – pity he's so close even when drunk!!"

In his letters, for obvious reasons of security and also to avoid causing worry, he seldom mentioned details of war action however in writing to Yvonne he did refer to local bombing in Yorkshire and Scotland as he was well aware of what was happening in London.

Some remarks to his mother are delightfully interesting regarding religious issues. Because of war conditions the very firm catholic ruling regarding food or drink before communion had been put aside and Tony found this "very funny having a drink of tea before going to communion (on active duty we are allowed and advised to do this)". Also he was quick to admonish his mother for going to a Fortune Teller on one occasion and to a "Medium" on another. "Note with some interest your visit to the Medium... I do wish you wouldn't dabble in these things old girl. Still if it gives you any satisfaction!!!"

It is to be recognised that Mater was highly charged dramatically and to be remembered that she had lost her husband and father in law just one or two years before.

Most of the 40 letters from Tony to his mother can be seen in Appendix 3 with a few in the following two Appendices.

Fortunately Tony was accepted for Officer Training and this training seemed to have started in Scotland in about April to May 1941 before continuing at Shrivenham in mid June after a short period of leave.

It was while in training at Middlebank House, in early May, that he met Don Haycraft and arranged for him to visit home in Pinfold Road, instructing the family to look after him and give him a good time. Don did visit the Guise's during May accompanied by his young adoring cousin Joan Dibdin, and within two we embark upon a new era for both Joan and Tony Guise.